



the

SOWER

SUMMER 2023

"God loved the people in the world
so much that He gave his one and
only Son so that everyone who
believes in Him will not be lost
but have eternal life."

John 3:16 (EBD)

With
Prayer
Guide

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Dear Friends,

We have officially reached the final few months of 2023. Christmas decorations will soon adorn our homes and shopping malls, and December vacation planning will be in full swing.

Looking back at the year, we must be realistic about the challenges the Bible Society continues to face.

The current economic climate remains unstable. Inflation and the exchange rate make it increasingly difficult to uphold our mission of producing affordable Bibles. Yet, we press on with faith in the one whose kingdom we are building.

Thanks to the grace of God and our loyal donors, we can add another year to the Bible Society of South Africa's steadfast history.

I want to thank each of you for the support you have shown us in our mission to distribute God's Word to every corner of South Africa.

Your donations allow us to continue building on a 203-year legacy of Bible translation, production and distribution.

Our economy, government, country and its people are hungry for hope. The only one who can provide that hope, along with peace and joy in our lives, is Jesus Christ.

We are responsible for sharing that story with the world through Bible distribution.

May the Lord bless you and your family this festive season.

With blessings,

Rodney van Wyk
Chief Executive Officer



RESTORING HOPE through God's Word



"Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."
Romans 5: 3-5 (ESV)

The word "hope" appears in the Bible text more than 100 times. It is considered one of the most important Christian virtues, alongside faith and love. The word itself represents the possibility of a positive result – a glimmer of the good things to come.

During periods of hardship and suffering, we often fall into despair, losing all hope for a brighter tomorrow. In a world marked by trauma, pain and loss, it's not difficult to see why many people live with a daily sense of hopelessness.

Our *Restoring Hope* project aims to give hope to people whose lives have been severely impacted by sudden and devastating events.

Often, this includes the loss of already minimal material possessions, including valuable Bibles and biblical materials.

By placing the Word of God into the hands of vulnerable members of society, especially those who experience constant sorrow, we hope to rekindle the embers of hope, faith and love through the Gospel of Jesus Christ – the God who has the power to break every chain of oppression.

You can help restore hope.

Every R100 donated to this project enables us to distribute one Bible to someone who needs it most. Visit www.biblesociety.co.za to learn more.

Make a difference; be a sower of hope. **IS**

CELEBRATION FOR 90TH anniversary of Afrikaans Bible

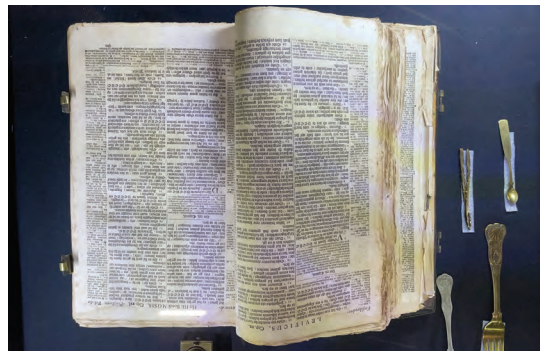
Earlier this year, thousands of South Africans celebrated the 90th anniversary of the first Afrikaans Bible translation. It was a historical event commemorated by Afrikaans churches, cultural organisations and individuals.

It also made headlines. Newspapers, online publications, radio stations and social media platforms looked back with nostalgia at how the 1933 Afrikaans translation eventually came to be. The Afrikaans community enjoyed a newfound appreciation for this Bible translation's role in establishing Afrikaans as a fully-fledged language.

The official celebration, hosted by the Bible Society in partnership with the *Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurvereniging* (FAK) and the Voortrekker Monument, took the shape of a Thanksgiving Festival at

the monument. The event was held on Sunday, 27 August 2023, exactly 90 years after the official launch of the 1933 Afrikaans Bible translation, which was also a Sunday.

"Firstly, we wanted to honour the Lord with a special thanksgiving service because only His grace has carried us this far. But it was also an opportunity to be festive and celebrate," said the Bible Society's




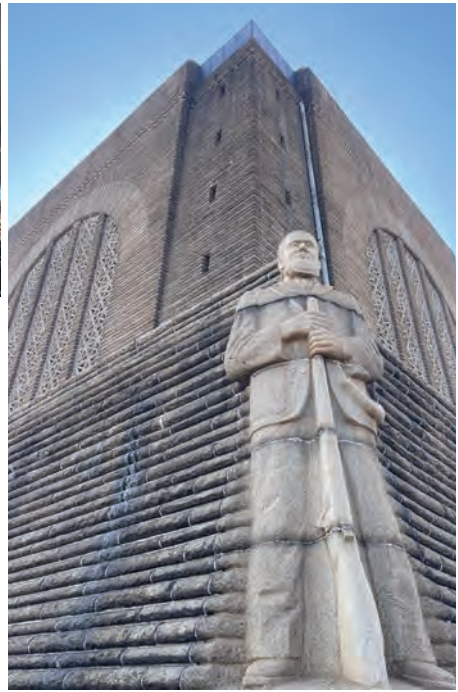


Dr Gerhard Lindeque, one of the organisers.

Several speakers, choirs, and artists performed at the event, and a special Sower statue was unveiled in honour of the Bible Society's involvement with the translation.

"The Afrikaans Bible has had a huge impact on the lives of Afrikaners. It has helped shape our identity and solidified us as a community. It also gave us the privilege to understand the Word of God in our heart language and to pass it on from generation to generation," said the Bible Society's Rev Carl Vermaak, who also attended the event.

"Through Scripture, man tackles the future and has a light to illuminate the path ahead. For this reason, we cannot face tomorrow without the Bible," he added. 



OVER 166 MILLION BIBLE TEXTS DISTRIBUTED IN 2022



2022 UBS Scripture Distribution Report

At the end of 2022, worldwide Bible distribution reached 166,4 million Bible texts, five times more than in 2021, thus approaching pre-pandemic trends. This shows the continuous interest in the transforming power of the Bible narrative and the extraordinary commitment of Bible Societies to provide the hope of God's Word to a world still in crisis.

The distribution figures revealed that 7 million New Testaments were distributed globally in 2022, 40% more than in 2021. Most New Testaments were distributed as follows: 5 million in Asia, followed by Central and South America and Africa, which accounted for 1,3 million of distributed New Testaments.

Meanwhile, the number of digital Bible downloads followed an ascending trend. In 2022, 28% of Bibles were internet downloads, compared to only 21% in 2021. Some regions show a greater demand for Scripture

downloads than others, with Central and South America leading the way with over 4,2 million Bible downloads, 42% of the overall 10 million Bible downloads. In Europe, 2 out of 3 Bibles provided were downloaded, compared to just 2 in 25 in Oceania.

Dirk Gevers, UBS Secretary General, said: "Bible distribution is deeply ingrained in the core of our Fellowship, just as translation is. Ensuring that every individual holds a Bible is intricately tied to efficient distribution. Our supply chains span the globe, diligently operating to fulfil this mission. By distributing Bibles, we empower individuals and communities, fostering spiritual growth, and promoting the values of generosity, compassion, and unity which tie our Fellowship together."

The Power of the Fellowship

After enduring two years of significant disruption to their distribution services, resulting in a direct impact on their

income, Bible Societies across the globe are steadfastly working towards regaining their momentum. The *Solidarity Fund* which was set up to provide support to the Bible Societies most affected by the pandemic continued to play a vital role in this post-pandemic transition period, followed by the war in Ukraine which impacted the economic activities worldwide.


Top 10 Bible distributors

The previous year, nearly two-thirds (62%) of all Bibles distributed in 2022 were provided by Bible Societies in 10 countries. Brazil tops the list of Bible distributors, with 4,8 million Bibles. It is followed by the USA (2,6 million Bibles), India (2,5 million Bibles), Nigeria (2 million Bibles) and China (1,8 million Bibles).

Among the new arrivals in the top ten distributors is Kenya which successfully distributed more than 1 million Bibles in 2022.



The United Bible Societies Fellowship continues to be one of the largest translators and distributors of Scripture on the planet; and 70% of the world's full Bible translations have been provided by Bible Societies.

These figures are compiled from annual Scripture distribution numbers reported by Bible Societies worldwide and include local distribution and exports of Scripture material, and internet downloads. To read the full www.unitedbiblesocieties.org report, visit. 

Global Scripture Distribution by Bible Societies in 2022

**166,4 MILLION
SCRIPTURES**



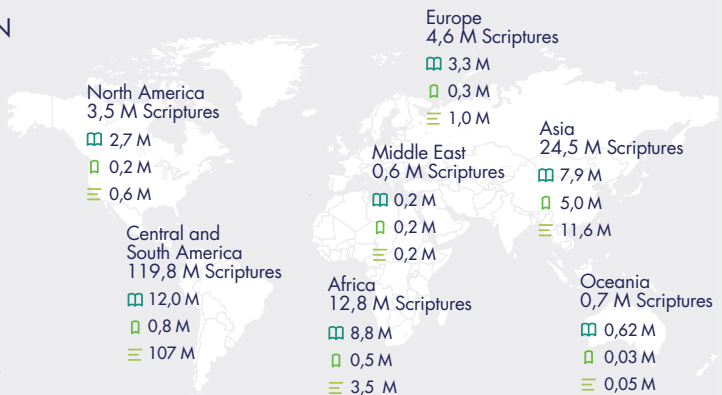
Full Bibles
35,5 million
(28% downloads)



New Testaments
7,0 million



Portions/Selections
123,8 million



BIBLE SUNDAY, 203rd birthday celebration & Bible Read-a-Thon

During a combined service, the Bible Society of South Africa's Eastern Region put on a joyous dual celebration of Bible Sunday, an annual day of celebrating God's Word, and the Bible Society's 203rd birthday on 27 August at the Faith Revival Church in Phoenix, KwaZulu-Natal.

Many congregants from various churches supported the special event, and the Eastern Region Team Lead, Pastor Brian Gopaul, had the honour of cutting the 203rd birthday cake alongside his wife, Sandra.

Throughout August, the Eastern Region also hosted a regionwide *Bible Read-a-Thon*, in line with the Bible Society's theme for the year: *Return to the Word*.

Various churches and church groups committed to reading a specific section of the Bible to support the initiative. They submitted pictures and video footage to the event organisers. The *Read-a-Thon* will now become an annual event based on its popularity amongst churches.



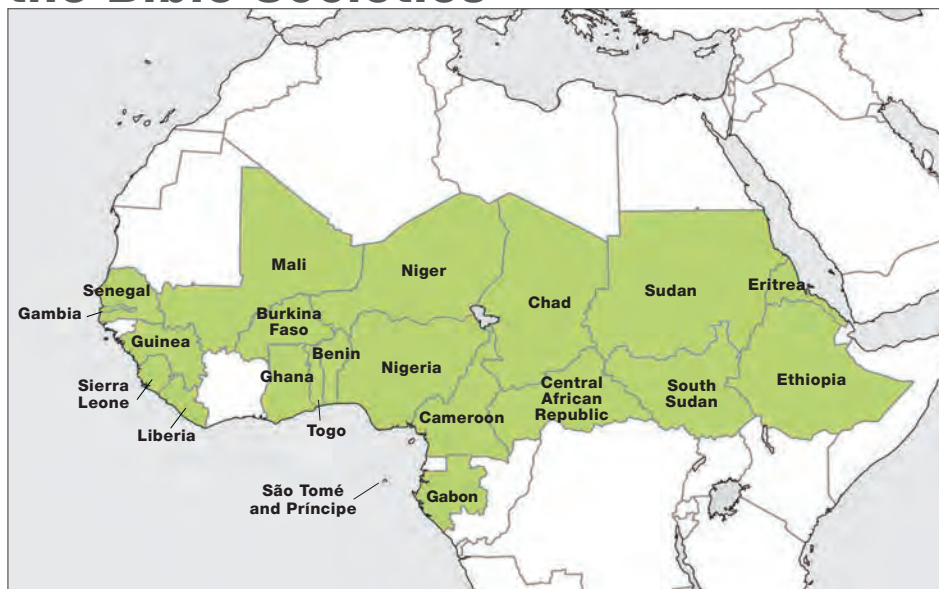
"It was such a blessing to have the body of Christ gathered to celebrate with us," said Eastern Region Relationship Ambassador Pastor Gershwyn Gopaul, who helped to arrange the combined celebration.

"For me, the biggest highlight was seeing the next generation march into the church with banners during praise, declaring a love for God's Word," he added. **IS**



Pray with the Bible Societies

Prayer Guide
no 1 • 2024



31 December – 6 January

Guinea: Pray for the successful completion of all our translation projects and for strengthening relations between the Bible Society and the Church. Also, pray for increased visibility of the biblical cause through significant partnerships.

Mali: Pray for the first Konabere Old Testament translation and the revision of the New Testament. Pray that the impact of the translation will be widespread and that the thousands of people who speak this language will be blessed with a complete Bible.

Senegal: Pray for our

Revitalisation of Sunday Studies project to help Christians stay in touch with the Word of God and give them a better knowledge of the Bible. Pray that it will help them engage in biblical work and equip them to serve God.

7 – 13 January

Gambia: Our *Literacy for Girls and Women* programme supplements our translation projects. It aims to empower marginalised young girls and women through literacy classes and biblical reading materials. Pray for an improved literacy rate amongst our women.

Liberia: Pray for our long-term objective to reach every

Liberian with the Gospel in the language they best understand. Pray for sufficient funding for our translation efforts and that the upcoming political elections will not hamper it.

Sierra Leone: Pray for our project to impact the youth culture in our country. Many of them have grown up in a hostile environment with no role models or guidance. Pray that the Holy Spirit will lead the volunteers of this project.

14 – 20 January

Burkina Faso: Pray for the success of our projects, including translating the Old Testament and Deuterocanonical books and

revising the New Testament in Birifor. Pray that the Lord will lead this project and for the necessary support to complete it.

Ghana: Our *Scriptures for School Pupils* project provides children in rural areas with Scripture portions. Pray for the sponsors of this project and that children who receive Bibles will experience lasting transformation in their lives.

21 – 27 January

Benin: Pray over our digital strategy aimed at distributing the Bible on social platforms. Pray that people interact with the Word of God through our various digital projects. Say a special prayer for the more than 2 500 orphans in our nation.

Niger: Pray for our *Core Presence* project that aims to ensure viable operation for Bible Society work in Niger. Pray for the safety of Christians in our nation as the climate becomes more hostile.

Nigeria: Pray for our project to complete the entire Eggon Bible by December 2028 and to produce 5 000 copies. Pray that the Eggon community will be more receptive to the Word of God.

Togo: Our country has a literacy rate of about 66%. Pray that we will be able to help many people read the Bible by facilitating literacy projects. Pray for our *Faith Comes by Hearing* programme, which offers the

Word of God in audio format.

28 January – 3 February

Chad: Pray for our country's socio-economic situation, where many people live in poverty. Also, pray for our translation projects, as we hope to supply Bibles to more than 100 language groups in our country, including projects such as revising the Moundang Bible.

Gabon: Pray for our translation of the new Omyènè Bible. Pray for a spirit of perseverance and that none of the translators will fall ill during the project period. Pray that we find funding and adhere to the project timeline.

Sahel Project: Continue to pray for the political instability in this region. Pray for the Bible Societies in the Sahel — working in the countries of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, and Sudan — as they work to bring the healing power of God's Word to places where there is violence and unrest.

4 – 10 February

Cameroon: In a country with more than 268 languages, it remains a challenge to fulfil our mission to see each inhabitant possess a Bible or a Scripture portion in their language. Pray for our translation projects and that the high level of illiteracy will improve.

Central African Republic: Pray for our goals to develop the Bible Society

with holistic projects that allow the beneficiaries of our programmes to interact with the Word of God and be transformed by it. Also, pray for our need to develop infrastructure and obtain equipment to fulfil our mission.

South Sudan: The old Bari Bible was first translated in 1979 by Protestant churches. Revising this Bible is necessary to meet the needs of the younger generations. Pray for this project's funding and the translators' health and wellbeing.

11 – 17 February

Eritrea: Keep us in prayer as we continue our mission to translate the Holy Scriptures into all Eritrean languages. Pray for developing relationships between churches and the government and that we will achieve financial stability.

Ethiopia: The 1962 Amharic Bible needs additional notes to explain unfamiliar cultural and historical concepts to its readers. The project is one of our most challenging tasks. Pray that we will find staff with the skills and understanding to complete the project.

Sudan: Pray for the first Bible translation for the Uduk community living in Southern Blue Nile State in southwest Sudan, due for completion at the end of 2023. Continue to pray for the safety of our people and the church.



18 – 24 February

Congo (Brazzaville): Pray for our project to translate the New Testament into Kuni to be published in print and digital form by 2025. Pray for the translators and their families, that God may bless financial service providers and for social and political stability in our country.

Congo (Democratic Republic): Pray for our *Trauma Healing through Audio* programme, aimed at victims of conflict. Pray that this project helps trauma victims engage with Scripture and achieve healing and recovery and that the need for Scripture in the local church is met

through the programme.

Tanzania: Pray for the completion of the Kirimi Bible. The project was delayed due to COVID-19 and is expected to finish in 2024. This is the first Bible translation for Kirimi speakers. Pray for wisdom and good health of the translators and the necessary funding to complete the translation.

25 February – 2 March

Burundi: Praise God for the supportive environment in which we conduct Bible work. Pray for our goal to see every inhabitant of Burundi transformed by the Word of God and to provide the Holy Scriptures to every

inhabitant in the language they understand best and in the appropriate format.

Kenya: Pray for us as we continue translating and publishing the Holy Scriptures in local languages and suitable formats. Pray for wisdom, strength and insight as we develop and implement effective Bible engagement programmes through partnerships.

Rwanda: The Bible-based *Healing Wounds of Trauma* programme started in 2012 to help people recover from emotional and spiritual wounds from the 1994 Tutsi Genocide. Pray that God will equip Bible Society staff with

the wisdom and capacity to help people heal through the Word of God.

Uganda: Pray for our goal to translate, publish and distribute Bibles, especially amongst the youth of our nation who have already witnessed a great deal of trauma.

3 – 9 March

Angola: We are grateful to God for the revised New Testament of the Ngangela Bible, launched in 2019. Pray for our current project to update the existing Lucazi Bible. Pray for the production of evangelism leaflets in Ngangela to meet the needs of churches.

Malawi: Pray for our *Sign Language Bible for the Deaf* project. Pray that we can offer an opportunity for the Deaf of Malawi to experience God's Word and inspire them to embark on a life-long journey with God. Pray for the health and well-being of translators and that the deadline will be met.

Zambia: The *Africa Biblical Leadership Initiative* (ABLI) seeks to engage African leaders with the Scriptures and position the Bible more centrally. Pray that leaders across the spectrum shall support this initiative and that the Bible Society's image shall be enhanced positively.

10– 16 March

Madagascar: The Malagasy Bible Society plans to provide 840 units of audio

Scriptures through our *Faith Comes by Hearing* project to reach souls in remote places and many illiterate groups. Pray that we can produce the Gospel of Luke in five dialects to be completed this year.

Mauritius: Pray for our ongoing mission to make the Bible accessible to all Mauritians and other Indian Ocean regions. Pray that Bible work will significantly impact thousands of lives and that citizens will receive Christ's message of salvation and unconditional love.

Seychelles: We thank God for the success of our completed projects. Pray for an increased use of the Bible in the Seychellois Creole language. Pray that we serve our partners effectively, address specific youth-related issues, and reach more people through social media.

17 – 23 March

Botswana: Pray for the translation of the Holy Scriptures in Botswana Sign Language. Pray for the successful implementation of this project and that the Deaf may experience God's love through His Word.

Mozambique: Please pray for our Bible translation revision project to provide the Ndau community with a Bible in a contextualised language that they can identify with. Pray for donors and partners to become a blessing to our people through this project's funding.

Zimbabwe: Pray for the funding needed to translate the Bible into Tonga to be published in print and online. This translation will help Tonga speakers to understand God's Word and connect with the message.

24 – 30 March

Eswatini (Swaziland): Pray for protection of staff members and Bible Society infrastructure. Please say a special blessing over our project to develop a Sign Language Bible and that our partnership with the *Association for the Deaf* works well in realising this dream.

Lesotho: Pray over our programmes to encourage Scripture use. Pray that we will continue to work alongside churches, individuals and other Christian organisations to distribute Bibles to as many people as possible.

South Africa: Pray for our translation and revision projects, and that the Lord will inspire and lead all the participants. Please also pray for our Bible-based literacy programme and our goal to expand the Bible Society's work digitally.

Namibia: Praise God for the completion of successful projects. Pray for our project to bring hope and healing to the children of Namibia. Pray that the Holy Spirit leads trauma victims to connect with our network and for our trauma-healing work in prisons. **IS**

GETTING ACTIVE FOR BIBLES

This year, the Bible Society of South Africa's wildly popular *Run Walk Cycle for Bibles* event took place from 1 to 28 August. The virtual event aims to make raising funds for Bible distribution inclusive and accessible. Entrants have the option of walking, running or cycling for any distance, anywhere, at any time.

Over 250 people from all walks of life participated this year, from as far afield as Australia and Germany. Participants covered over 3 000 km and raised over R30 000 for Bible distribution.

Participants also shared heartwarming video footage and photographs of their activities.

16-year-old Darrell Swanepoel cycled 321 km for Bibles, while Florence Tredoux and her trusty canine sidekick, Ludwig, reached their goal of 40 km and 10 km, respectively. Down under, members of the Lux Mundi Church in Joondalup ran or walked between 5 km and 10 km at Neil Hawkins Park. Ages ranged from under one year to 80 years old.

A massive thank you to everyone who participated in this event. We look forward to next year!

To read more about entrants and their stories, visit the Facebook page. 

RUN·WALK·CYCLE
FOR BIBLES



BIBLE-A-MONTH CLUB

outreach Initiatives

In celebration of the Bible-a-Month (BAM) Club turning 22 in July, the BSSA recently hosted two outreach initiatives at the *Hope Educare Centre* in Strandfontein and *Durbanville Children's Home*.

"This is a practical way to thank God for all He has done for and through the club over the years," said Bible-a-Month Club Administrator, Grezelda Williams.

The BSSA team treated the children to delicious cupcakes, snacks, and goodie bags, including Bibles, *Do-and-Learn* literacy booklets, and *Mary Jones* pamphlets. They

were also introduced to the Bible Society's mission through an exciting presentation and animated film. **IS**



BSSA AT SWARTLANDSKOU

Operations Office Coordinator, Carla Scheffer, and Sales Representative, Amanda van Rooyen (both from Head Office in Cape Town), recently made Bible Society history

when they attended the *Swartlandskou* in Moorreesburg and ran a BSSA stall for four days.

The ladies were honoured to meet donors, Bible-work supporters and kindred spirits, passionate about God's Word. The dynamic duo sold Bibles and various BSSA merchandise items and proudly flew the Bible Society flag high.

"We are very grateful for travelling mercies and the hospitality we received from everyone at the *Swartlandskou*," said Carla.

"And we can't wait to return next year with more people from our team and to meet more people who support the Bible Society's work!" Amanda added. **IS**



BSSA takes part in **RIDE FOR LIGHT OUTREACH**

Ride for Light is a new initiative that helps communities in South Africa and outside its borders through outreach events that include Bible distribution and social aid.

Dr Francois Sieberhagen, a former Bible Society of South Africa staff member and convenor of the annual *Word Riders* motorcycle outreach started the *Ride for Light* project shortly after the disbanding of the *Word Riders* that coincided with his departure from the BSSA earlier this year.

“The *Word Riders* focused on distributing Bibles to Grade 7 learners. With *Ride for Light*, we still distribute Bibles but also fulfil a material need among people of all ages in different communities. The great thing about this project is that smaller groups can do various outreaches at anytime, anywhere in the country or neighbouring countries,” Francois explained.

The Bible Society’s Bennie Francke and Charl de Kock were part of *Ride for Light*’s inaugural event in Swaziland

from 10 to 11 May.

In partnership with the Bible Society of Swaziland, 14 volunteers visited Lomahasha and handed out 512 Bibles and 512 pairs of shoes to learners from 12 under-resourced local schools.

Bennie expressed his gratitude toward Dr Ngceko Mbuli, General Secretary of the Bible Society of Swaziland, for running with this initiative and completing it successfully. “As a Society, we are proud to have been invited to participate in this distribution. We pray that every learner will get to know the Lord and experience the joy of living a Christian life, led by the Holy Spirit,” he said. **IS**



Seminary students VISIT BSSA

The Bible Society's South Eastern Region recently hosted 14 final-year seminary students from the United Presbyterian Church. The group was treated to coffee and cake and a slide show presentation by Relationship Ambassador, Rev Ben Fourie, informing them of who the Bible Society is, what the organisation does and how it partners with churches across South Africa.

Sales Representative Brian Ngxokolo was also afforded an opportunity to tell the students about the different Bible translations available at the BSSA. There was a particular interest in the *Do-and- Learn* booklets with several

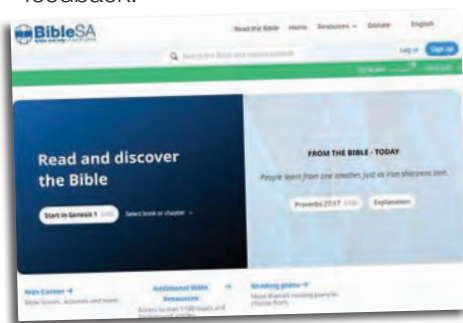


of the students buying these items to distribute at their respective congregations. Each student also received a copy of the New Testament Psalms and Proverbs. **IS**

New look and feel FOR BIBLESA

The Bible Society's online Bible reading platform, *BibleSA*, now offers users an even more enjoyable experience when they delve into God's Word.

Apart from adding new features to the platform, several improvements were implemented based on user feedback.



Some updated features include a dedicated section for highlights and notes, all stored in one area. The process to select a Bible translation, chapter and verse has also been improved.

Listening to Audio Bibles, available in all official South African languages, is also more accessible thanks to the user-friendly navigation bar, which allows seeking to different recording sections and changing audio speed. Other enhancements include improved search functionality and more options to customise the reading experience.

Visit www.biblesa.co.za and experience the new look and feel for yourself! **IS**

Voortrekkers commemorates **BIBLE WITH MONUMENT**

The Free State Voortrekkers unveiled a monument at Doornkloof farm on Sunday, 1 October, to commemorate the 90th anniversary of the Bible in Afrikaans.

The unveiling was part of a thanksgiving service attended by 630 Voortrekkers, Dr Karin Stoffberg, Chief Leader of *Die Voortrekkers* and Rev Pierre du Plooy, Team Leader of the Bible Society's Central Region.

The Voortrekkers' first Chief Leader, Dr NJ van der Merwe – who was buried at Doornkloof – proposed the translation of the Bible in Afrikaans during the Free State Synod of the



Dutch Reformed Church.

The monument is of an opened Bible, quoting Psalm 119:105.

Each child also received a special medal from the Bible Society. **IS**

Couple invests in children **WITH EDUCATION, BIBLES**

The kindness of Bible Society donors has paved the way for a Bible class for underprivileged youths in Komatipoort, Mpumalanga.

Marietjie Smit runs a preschool centre in an informal settlement of Komatipoort where 60 children are fed daily and prepared for school readiness.

The Lord led Marietjie and her



husband, Jan, to financially support 10 children of different ages to reach Grade 12. They also contributed to their basic daily needs.

Jan had been looking for English Bibles when he heard about Pastor Christo Maree of the Bible Society, who preached at a local church.

Christo was so touched by the Smits' dedication to this group of children that he donated Bibles and Bible-based literacy material.

"I can't believe there are still people willing to help us invest in their spiritual well-being," Jan said emotionally after hearing the news.

The group of children now attend a Bible class every Friday. **IS**

KIDS CORNER

"Her Son was born. He was her first Child. She put a cloth around Him and she put Him in a crib because there was no place for them in a guest house."

Luke 2:7 (English Bible for the Deaf)



Find this activity and more on biblesa.co.za/kids-corner

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South Eastern Region

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