



BIBLE SOCIETY
NGĀ RINGA HĀPAI | TE PAIPERA TAPU KI AOTEAROA

THE WORD AT WORK

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on for Future Christian Generations from the
Bible Societies Global Fellowship on the occasion

The Fellowship Event 2026 was held in Jakarta, Indonesia,
graciously hosted by the Indonesian Bible Society

PHOTO CREDIT: ©SIMEON LAWSON

80 YEARS OF GLOBAL LEGACY AND FELLOWSHIP

In late April 2026, colleagues from across the global Bible Society Fellowship gathered in Jakarta, Indonesia, and online, for Fellowship Event 2026 (FE26), marking 80 years since the formation of the United Bible Societies.

For more than 300 delegates who attended the event, FE26 was more than a milestone celebration. It was a time to pause and give thanks for God's faithfulness, to listen deeply to one another, and to renew our shared commitment to making the Bible available to everyone, everywhere. At the same time, engage in conversations on serving diaspora communities and building mission resilience, both of which are critical areas as we look ahead.

Under the theme A Legacy of Purpose, A Future of Possibility, the gathering invited us to reflect not only on where we have come from but also on where God is leading us next. Across plenaries, workshops, and

conversations, there was a strong sense of unity in both mission and hope, recognising that while our contexts differ, we are bound together by a shared calling.

A significant moment of FE26 was the launch of The Bible for Tomorrow: A Global Commitment to Future Christian Generations. This declaration calls Bible Societies to invest intentionally in young people and emerging leaders, ensuring that they encounter Scripture in meaningful and life-giving ways. As the declaration affirms, "we commit ourselves to the flourishing of future Christian generations, and we call on the global Church, Christian communities, and all people of goodwill to join us in this purpose."

Beyond the formal programme, the gathering created space for connection and encouragement. Delegates shared stories from their own communities, experienced the richness of Indonesian culture, and joined

Dear Friends of Bible Mission,

My heart is filled with gratitude, and I am humbled as I reflect on the stories shared in this winter edition of Word at Work, and my prayer is that it would be the same for you, as your faithfulness and prayers make this work possible. Across our global Bible Society Fellowship, lives continue to be transformed through access to Scripture, and we give God all the glory.

In this issue, we highlight the 80th anniversary of the United Bible Societies, celebrated at Fellowship Event 2026 in Jakarta. Bible Societies gathered to give thanks, strengthen partnerships, and renew our commitment to future generations. The launch of "The Bible for Tomorrow" declaration reminds us to invest in young people so they may encounter God's Word in meaningful, life-changing ways.

We are inspired by stories such as Bristi Baroi's journey to faith in Bangladesh, the dedication of the first Zaiwa Bible in Myanmar, and global progress in translation, with Scripture published in 100 languages in 2025 alone. These milestones remind us that God continues to open doors for His Word to reach new communities.

Here in New Zealand, these stories are especially meaningful as we approach 180 years of Bible mission this September. For nearly two centuries, God has sustained this work, bringing hope and transformation to many through people like you.

As Psalm 126: 3 (NIV) says, "The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy." Our mission continues, with millions still waiting for Scripture they can read and understand in their own heart language.

Thank you for your prayers, generosity, and faithful partnership. As we approach this significant 180-year milestone for Bible Mission in New Zealand and in serving the church, I invite you to join us in praying and advocating for Bible Mission so that future generations in New Zealand and beyond may continue to encounter the life-changing message of God's Word.

In Christ



Neels Janse van Rensburg - CEO

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Neels Janse van Rensburg".

Bristi Baroi.

PHOTO CREDIT: @BIBLE SOCIETY OF BANGLADESH



together in worship, reminding us that we are part of one global movement serving the Church and all who seek God's Word.

For us here in Aotearoa New Zealand, the spirit of FE26 resonates deeply. As we look ahead to our own milestone of 180 years of Bible mission in this country, we carry forward the same sense of gratitude, unity, and hope. The commitment expressed in Jakarta is one we share, that future generations across New Zealand will encounter the Bible as a living source of faith, wisdom, and hope.

FLOURISHING THE FUTURE CHRISTIAN GENERATION IN BANGLADESH

One of the enriching aspects of Fellowship Event 2026 (FE26) was the opportunity to hear stories of impact from across the global Fellowship. Among these was the inspiring Student Action for Christ programme from the Bible Society of Bangladesh, a powerful example of how Scripture engagement is transforming young lives in challenging contexts.

In many parts of Bangladesh, particularly in rural and under-resourced communities, young people often grow up without access to a Bible. For families already struggling to meet daily needs, school supplies take priority, leaving owning a Bible out of reach. Recognising this need, the Bangladesh Bible Society, together with local churches and Christian partners, has committed to walking alongside children, teenagers, and young adults through a long-term, faith-building programme.

Each year, they organise 20–30 one-day Bible seminars and workshops across the country, creating spaces where young people can encounter God's Word for themselves. Bibles and Scripture resources are made available at very low cost, or freely where needed, and digital tools such as Bible apps and audio Bibles are also used to reach even more students. Through these efforts, around 4,000 young people each year are being equipped to grow in their faith and to become leaders within their schools, churches, and communities.

Over time, the fruit of this work has become evident. Many young people who first received a Bible through the programme have gone on to serve as pastors, Sunday school teachers, and church leaders, testimonies to the lasting impact of God's Word when placed in the hands of the next generation.

One story shared at FE26 was that of Bristi Baroi, a 16-year-old girl whose life was transformed through this initiative.

Growing up in a Hindu family in a remote village, Bristi came to Dhaka to make a living, with many hopes but little understanding of the Bible. That changed when the Bangladesh Bible Society visited her area and led an event titled "The Bible is My Best Companion" and "Jesus is My Role Model."

Hearing the story of Mary Jones (a young girl who became a believer at a young age) and her deep longing for a Bible, Bristi began to understand the value of Scripture in a new way. At the end of the programme, she received her very first Bible.

"It felt very special," she shared, "as if I had received a treasure."

When she returned to her village during Christmas, Bristi began reading the Bible with her siblings. As they read together, she experienced a deep sense of peace she had never known before. In time, she chose to follow Jesus and was baptised, marking a new chapter of faith in her life.

Today, the Bible she received continues to guide and comfort her. It has become, in her words, “my companion... a source of peace, hope, and a new direction for my life.”

Stories like Bristi’s remind us of the far-reaching impact of Scripture engagement and the importance of investing in young

people. As we reflect on what was shared at FE26, we are encouraged by the ways God is at work through our global Fellowship, and challenged to consider how we, too, can continue to place the Bible into the hands and hearts of the next generation here in Aotearoa New Zealand and globally.



Children are reading scripture in a group.

PHOTO CREDIT: ©BIBLE SOCIETY OF BANGLADESH

2025 GLOBAL BIBLE TRANSLATION UPDATE

In 2025, the United Bible Societies continued to make strong progress in global Bible translation, publishing Scriptures in 100 languages and reaching around 566 million people.

This work included both first-time translations and revisions of existing Bibles, ensuring that more people can access God’s Word in a language they understand, and in ways that remain clear and relevant today.

A major highlight was the completion of the first translations in 66 languages, reaching about 32 million people. These included:

- 13 full Bibles
- 3 New Testaments
- 50 portions of Scripture

For many communities, this marks the first time they can read or hear the Bible in their own language, opening new opportunities for faith, worship, and discipleship.

At the same time, 34 languages received new or revised translations, impacting over 534 million people. Encouragingly, translation work is also reaching smaller and endangered language communities, helping preserve both faith and cultural identity. These updates help ensure that Scripture remains accessible as languages and cultures continue to change.

Significant progress is also being made in inclusive and digital Bible formats. Sign languages, audio Bibles, Braille, and digital formats help make the Bible available to Deaf, blind, and oral communities. First-time Braille Bibles or portions were published for languages including Akan (Asante-Twi) in Ghana, Sogo (Lusoga) in Uganda and Ndebele in Zimbabwe. Today, digital Scripture is reaching billions of people worldwide.

Despite this progress, the work is not yet complete. While most of the world's population has access to some Scripture, over 123 million people still have none, and many more do not yet have the full Bible in their language.

Overall, 2025 reflects both real progress and a continuing call, to keep working together so that everyone, everywhere can engage with God's Word. There is much to celebrate, yet the call remains. With faith, partnership, and perseverance, we continue the journey of bringing God's Word within reach of every person and every generation.

FIRST ZAIWA BIBLE DEDICATED IN MYANMAR

While the 2025 translation report highlights global progress, each milestone is ultimately a story of lives and communities being transformed. One such story comes from Myanmar, where Zaiwa-speaking communities recently celebrated a historic moment, the dedication of the first Zaiwa Bible.

On 19 March, people gathered in Myitkyina, Kachin State, to give thanks for the

completion of this long-awaited translation. Published in 2025 by the Bible Society of Myanmar, the Zaiwa Bible now allows speakers to encounter God's Word in their own heart language for the very first time.

Although many Zaiwa people are familiar with the Jinghpaw Bible, having Scripture in their own language will deepen their understanding and encourage regular reading and Bible study.

The dedication brought together community members, church leaders, and the translation team in a joyful celebration. For the translators, this was a deeply meaningful milestone. Hpakawn La Bawk, who also helped complete the Zaiwa New Testament in 2009, described the work as both a calling and a blessing, giving thanks for God's guidance throughout the journey alongside fellow translator Sumlut Gun Seng.

Spoken by around 100,000 to 140,000 people, the Zaiwa language is part of the wider Kachin ethnic community across Myanmar and neighbouring China. This translation now opens new opportunities for many to engage more personally with Scripture.



The release of the Zaiwa Bible at Myitkyina Church.

PHOTO CREDIT: ©BIBLE SOCIETY OF MYANMAR



WRITE YOUR WILL FOR FREE, IN JUST 10 MINUTES

By leaving a gift in your Will, you are sowing seeds of faith that will grow far beyond your lifetime. Your legacy can help children like Nancy in rural Kenya.

Nancy, 12, walks five kilometres to school each day. She loves counting, science, and reading the Bible. Until recently, she had to borrow a Bible, but now she has her very own. She reads it at school and home, sharing God's Word with her family. For Nancy, her Bible teaches honesty, forgiveness, and hope for the future.

Through gifts in Wills, the Bible Society can provide thousands of Bibles to disadvantaged children, giving them the same opportunity to grow in faith and wisdom.

We've partnered with Gathered Here, a trusted, free online Will-writing service. It's simple, secure, and legally valid, and you can create your Will in as little as 10 minutes, at no cost to you.

Scan the QR code or visit
biblesociety.org.nz/onlinewill
to start your FREE online Will today, at no cost.



GET INVOLVED, BE PART OF THE STORY!

There are so many ways you can help share God's Word and bring hope to others



Pray with us – join in prayer for lives to be changed through Scripture.



Volunteer with us – use your time and talents to make a difference.



Donate – help place Bibles in the hands of those who need them most.



Work with us – become part of a mission that transforms lives.

Visit our website at
biblesociety.org.nz/be-involved/
or scan the QR code to learn more — we'd love you to join us on this journey.



IN MEMORIAM

Bible Society has learned of the passing of the following friends. Gifts towards the work of Bible Society's mission have been made in their memory. Their work of love goes on.

Marj McLaren
Treydon & Sariyah Taefu Tia
Mrs Liz Spackman
Violet Grace Donoghue
Rosemary Robinson
Tuula Airaksinen

CLOSING WITH GOD'S WORD

*The Lord has done great things for us,
and we are filled with joy. Psalm 126: 3 NIV*



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