



AMERICAN BIBLE SOCIETY

RECORD

March | April 2002

GOD'S WORD SUSTAINS NEW YORKERS

"Millions of Souls and Spirits Were Awakened."

FATHER JAMIE GIGANTIELLO

Chocolat for Easter

*Honor God by accepting each other, as Christ
has accepted you. —ROMANS 15.7 CEV*

Anyone seeing the movie *Chocolat* might be put off by its anti-religious tone. But exploring the possible tension between religion and Christian love is at its very heart.

In the story, the mayor and self-appointed moral guardian of a small French village coaches the young priest, Père Henri, to preach a narrow piety. It is part of the mayor's crusade against a single, unmarried mother — an itinerant chocolatier newly come to town.

Vianne struggles to make a living selling her chocolates, yet shows a generosity and freedom of spirit that the mayor finds threatening — that undermines his sense of ascetic righteousness. Gradually, under Vianne's kindhearted influence, the villagers loosen themselves from the mayor's self-righteous grip. By Easter Sunday, even the mayor has succumbed to a taste for a freer life.

In a transforming moment, Père Henri timidly approaches his Easter Sunday homily — searching for his own voice — this time unfettered by the mayor's repressive piety. He asks, "Do I want to speak about the miracle of our Lord's divine transformation? ... I would rather talk about ... how he lived his life here on earth, his kindness, his tolerance. ... We can't go around measuring our goodness by what we don't do, by what we deny ourselves, what we resist and who we exclude. ... [W]e have to measure ourselves by what we embrace, by what we create and who we include."

Chocolat's Easter message may miss the Apostle Paul's sense of spiritual discipline, yet fleshes out his message to the church in Galatia: "Christ has set us free! This means we are really free ... don't ever become slaves to the Law again."

Paul assures us that we are "chosen to be free. ... So use your freedom ... as an opportunity to serve each other with love. All that the Law says can be summed up in the command to love others as much as you love yourself. But if you keep attacking each other like wild animals ... you will destroy yourselves." (Galatians 5.13-15)

Harsh words. Yet how often do we dismiss differing points of view or church traditions by labeling them? How often do we keep differences at a safe distance by judging?

Faith, guided by a generous and accepting spirit, helps melt away social biases against religion. Love, informed and shaped by God's Word, celebrates the Easter resurrection in ways that may entice others to savor redemption's freedom.

Eugene B. Habecker



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The mission of the American Bible Society is to make the Bible available to every person in a language and format each can understand and afford. The Society is a member of the United Bible Societies, a partnership of Bible societies throughout the world cooperating to make Scriptures available to people everywhere in their own language.

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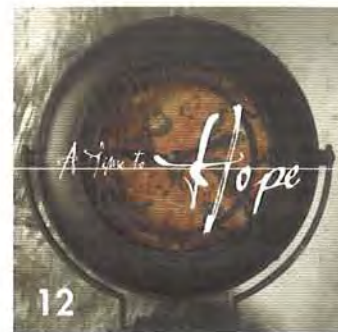
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We encourage you to send your letters to: Editor, American Bible Society Record, 1865 Broadway, New York, NY 10023-7505. Telephone: 212-408-8710. Reach the Bible Society on the web at www.americanbible.org

BASKETBALL, BIBLES AND BLESSINGS

BY FRANCINE LANGE

YOU WON'T FIND DAVID GOWAN, 62, dribbling a basketball on court. And you probably won't see him thumbing through rap music at the store. But he's including sports and music in his plans for a summer national event for Native American youth.

Mr. Gowan, manager of Native American Programs at the American Bible Society, has been involved in ministry to Native Americans for more than 30 years. Now he's taking his experience and using it to reach another group, one he feels is especially in need: young people. To do that, he's focusing on their interests to get their attention. "Basketball is the culture of the youth," he says. And rap music? Yes, but make that *Native American* Christian rap music. He chuckles. "This is something I didn't recognize until last year."

Young people on reservations face a recurring cycle of alcoholism, poor education, low literacy levels and unemployment — problems that have plagued Native Americans for so many years. Kids face limited opportunities. "So they go to town, get in with the wrong group or can't find work, and they run back home," says Mr. Gowan. With the event, he hopes to begin to break that cycle by promoting something positive and life changing.

The Four Winds Inter-Tribal Challenge is expected to draw more than 300 people on the Shoshone/Arapaho Reservation in Wyoming July 20. Co-sponsorship includes the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Forward Edge International, SportsNet, Christ for Native Youth and church youth groups.



David Gowan

Boys and girls 12 to 18 years old from reservations in the West will form at least 12 competing teams.

"Bible ministry comes in much earlier," says Mr. Gowan. Months before the event, during practices, teams will take 15-minute "time outs" to discuss topics such as respect, strength and attitude. The 10-week series, developed by ABS and SportsNet, points them to the Bible. Each team will use an ABS *Interactive Learning Bible* on CD-ROM for the study.

To publicize the event, youth groups will distribute invitations and coupons that visitors can exchange for the *Jesus* video, a film about Christ's life. The specially adapted version, which the Bible Society produced with Campus Crusade for Christ, will be English but voiced over with the cadences of Native American speech patterns. Mr. Gowan says, "You're going to see this white-bearded gentleman, who is a temple priest speaking like a Lakota Sioux."

The sports challenge and preparations leading to it are exciting enough, but Mr. Gowan wants more: "I would like to identify two to five Indian youth that we can invest our time, money and effort in to develop as leaders," he says. He wants Christian groups to get behind the young people, to help them stand as role models for other Native youth.

The liberating influence of the Scripture can permeate communities and reverse downward cycles. This year, with the Bible Society's support and partnerships with other groups, Mr. Gowan hopes to continue spreading that influence among the Native American people. ■



Jacquelyn Sapiie
Library Services Supervisor
at Bible House

askjacquie

Readers are encouraged to submit their questions about the Bible to Jacquelyn Sapiie, Library Services Supervisor at Bible House in New York City. Questions can be forwarded to absrecord@americanbible.org, or Jacquelyn can be reached at 212-408-1203 or via regular mail at 1865 Broadway, New York, NY 10023.

Q What is the meaning of "Selah," often found at the end of a verse in the Bible?
(G.L., Minnesota)

A The word "Selah" is an isolated term that occurs 71 times in the Psalms and three times in the Book of Habakkuk (3.3, 3.9, 3.13). The word should be understood in the context of the musical performance of the Psalms, although its specific meaning remains uncertain. It is probably a liturgical or musical notation. According to some sources, the most likely explanation is that it is a liturgical note calling for worshippers to lift up their voices or hands.

It may also be a musical direction to the singers and/or the orchestra to lift up their voices or to play forte or crescendo. Other sources suggest that the consonants of Selah form an acronym for voice modulation or repetition.

From the earliest times the Psalms have been both the hymnbook and the prayer book of the Christian Church. In addition to the religious and devotional qualities of the Psalms there are other factors that influenced the Christian Church to use the Psalms as a prayer book. The Book of Psalms had a prominent place in the life and teaching of Jesus. It was the prayer book he used in the synagogue service and the hymnbook in the Temple festival. He also used it in his teaching.

The meaning of many musical terms in the headings of the Psalms continues to elude Biblical scholars. They serve as a reminder, however, that the Book of Psalms is not merely a collection of poetry, but contains hymns and songs used in Israel's worship. ■

TRUSTEES

New Chairman Ready to Serve

A Bible story describes how Joseph's brothers, overcome with jealousy and hatred, and further angered by their brother's dreams, are moved to cruelty, and sell him into slavery for 20 pieces of silver. But what begins as a tragedy ends in triumph and reconciliation. In that account, by way of God's providence, the dreamer Joseph rises above slavery to govern Egypt through times of plenty and times of famine.

For Dr. R. Lamar Vest, the story has been a source of inspiration — for him it models the ability to be versatile, adapting to all circumstances. "It is a story of self-control in adversity and prosperity alike," he says. "Joseph shows a strength of character and a tenderness toward others. And throughout his life, he has an abiding, calm assurance that God is in charge and will fulfill promises. That is inspirational."



Dr. R. Lamar Vest

Reaching out to others with the divine, inspiring Scriptures has been a motivating passion for Dr. Vest, a trustee of the American Bible Society since 1991, and now its newly elected chairman. Along with his board duties, Dr. Vest is presiding bishop of the Church of God, one of the most influential worldwide Pentecostal denominations. A fourth-generation Church of God member, Dr. Vest began his ministry in 1955 and was ordained in 1965.

Talking about the events following last year's Sept. 11 tragedy, Dr. Vest says the American Bible Society quickly became aware of a greater opportunity to proclaim the relevance of the Word of God and to expand Scripture distribution. The Bible Society pursued that opportunity in different ways, including print advertising. "To the best of my knowledge, ours was one of the first Christian organizations to publish a full-page ad in the national news media after Sept. 11," he says.

Just as the Joseph of the Bible was able to adapt to his changing circumstances, Dr. Vest sees the Bible Society adapting to changes and seizing every opportunity to place the Scriptures in the hands of people everywhere.

"My role as chairman," he says, "is to support and encourage that effort." ■ — LAILA JONES

During last year's terrorist attacks and afterward, people

turned to the Scriptures for assurance and perspective.

From the site of the most horrific attack on America

since Pearl Harbor come these frontline stories of faith.

GOD'S WORD SUST

BY DAVID SINGER
AND LARRY JERDEN

AINS NEW YORKERS

TUESDAY, SEPT. 11

was primary day in New York City.

Deputy Mayor for Operations Joseph Lhota went

to vote about 6:30 that morning near his home in Brooklyn

Heights, thinking, "What a beautiful day for a primary. The weather is

perfect — more people will vote." He arrived for work at City Hall shortly before

7:30. ¶ About 8:48, working at his desk, he heard the screech of a jet plane — so close it

reminded him of a fighter coming in to land on a carrier deck — followed by the sound of metal

crushing metal. He rushed outside to his waiting driver who said he had just seen a commercial jet

explode into the World Trade Center, three blocks away. They sped to the site. ¶ "People were pouring

onto the street from the towers," Mr. Lhota remembers. "You had all the commuters arriving on the

PATH trains from New Jersey and the subway.” He jumped from his car and began directing pedestrians and vehicles north, away from the area. Then a second plane struck the south tower.

Mr. Lhota said it was like standing under fireworks, except that chunks of flaming metal were showering down around him instead of harmless trails of light. He dove into a nearby abandoned postal police car. An instant later a chunk of debris struck the car roof, blowing out the windshield.

posito began yelling, “Get down! Get down! It’s coming down!” recounts Mr. Lhota, not knowing what he meant. Then the ground rumbled, followed by a cloud of ash, smoke and debris. The power went out. The south tower of the World Trade Center had collapsed, blocking the entrance and trapping the leadership of the city’s government, including Mayor Giuliani, in the building.

Under emergency lighting, the mayor’s team groped their way through the smoke and dust, frantically searching for a way out. They tried several basement exits; each one was locked. They returned to the main floor where one of the building’s custodial staff remembered a route that would lead them into an adjacent building.

In the dusty gloom, they clambered up and down stairways and walked through narrow, concrete-block corridors. It was a desperate time. Mr. Lhota drew strength and perspective by reciting, from memory, the beginning of Ecclesiastes, chapter 3. “There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven: a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance”

He also prayed, over and over, the Act of Contrition he’d learned as a Roman Catholic youth. “O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended You and I detest all my sins, because I dread the loss of heaven and the pains of hell, but most of all because they offend you, my God, who are all good and deserving of all my love”

The answer to his prayers came quickly when the group suddenly exited into an open space and into the lobby of 100 Church St. where, Mr. Lhota says, “I felt overwhelmed by a sense of peace. The setting was so familiar. We were in the

building where my wife works.”

Even though it had huge glass doors, the foyer was dark — a gray cloud of pulverized concrete and ash billowed through the street canyons outside, blotting out daylight. The wreckage was falling more rapidly now. Yet they needed to find working telephones.

“We started down Park Place toward City Hall but then decided that might be another target,” continues Mr. Lhota. “Someone gave me a face mask that I then gave someone else. I tried covering my face with a handkerchief but that didn’t do much good. Out on Church Street, looking south we watched as the second tower collapsed under its own weight, peeling away floor by floor, like an onion.”

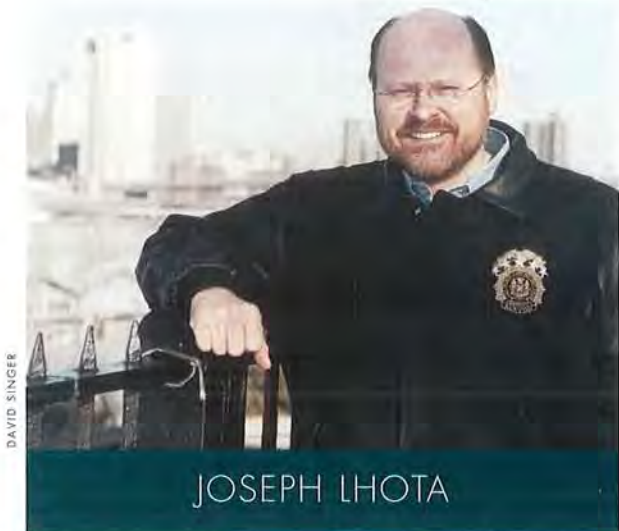
They ran as a wave of smoke and ash came rushing toward them.

“We finally settled into a fire station on Houston St. and 6th Ave. where we found three working phones and a fax line,” says Mr. Lhota. “By 11 o’clock the city was being run out of the firehouse, re-routing water, power, communications, transportation, medical relief and rescue operations, and fighting fires. Eventually the mayor and his team set up a command center on Hudson Pier 92.

“While the fire continued to rage downtown,” says Mr. Lhota, “we had to work with victims’ families, so we set up a family center to facilitate communications on Pier 94. We had global help with providing food and medical assistance. New Yorkers filled up our city’s blood bank, which is usually undersupplied, in 24 hours.

“New York City residents talk fast and are thought to be a little too liberal — a little too godless. But that day and for weeks afterward we showed the world what it meant to be an American,” he says proudly.

“People are inherently religious. It’s a shame it takes something like this to invoke God’s presence. People are now asking, ‘Why would God allow something like this to happen?’ Someone who prays and someone who asks, ‘Why God?’ are both thinking about God — 99 percent of New Yorkers are now thinking



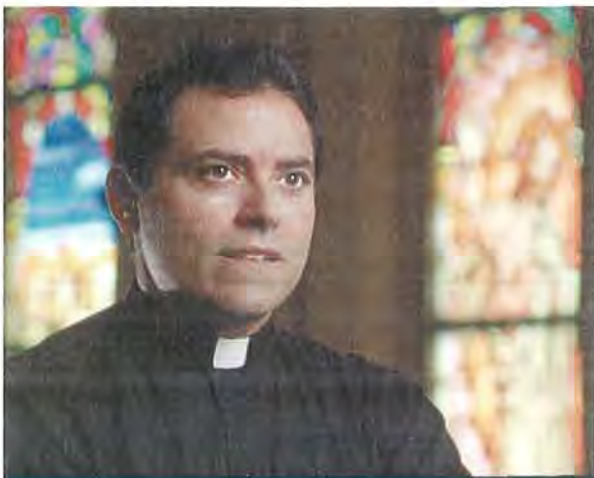
DAVID SINGER

Within moments Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani pulled up in his van, trying to round up his team of top officials and assess what was happening. They realized the city was under attack.

The city’s crisis command center was housed in WTC building No. 7, which sat in the shadow of the burning north tower and was already being evacuated. This meant setting up operations somewhere else, close, but safe. With cellular phone service disrupted, the most immediate need was to re-establish telephone communications. Mr. Lhota and the rest of the mayor’s team walked a block west to 75 Barclay St. where they took over a section of Merrill Lynch office cubicles on the ground floor.

One of the mayor’s aides called the White House; Mr. Lhota phoned New York Gov. George Pataki. The city needed air cover.

Suddenly Police Chief Joseph J. Es-



FATHER JAMIE GIGANTIELLO

many more people would have been killed. I kept seeing that we are made in God's image and likeness; for many days afterward I saw God-likeness in everyone. Religious, racial and ethnic barriers came down. Faith in God makes us able to withstand tremendous adversity. Remembering John 3.16 and the sacrifice Jesus went through gave me the strength to look forward — not back," says Mr. Lhota. "I turned to my faith and my faith was strengthened." — *by David Singer*

FATHER JAMIE GIGANTIELLO

On that day [Sept. 11] thousands of people were killed and thousands of lives were lost," notes Father Jamie Gigantiello, associate pastor of Mary Queen of Heaven Catholic Church in Brooklyn, "but at the same time, millions of souls and spirits were awakened."

Father Gigantiello has spent untold hours bringing encouragement to the gallant heroes of Ground Zero as well as to those left behind to mourn their loved ones. He prayed with those in shock on the day of the attack, and gave hugs to survivors as they cried in the weeks that followed. He spent hours in the morgue as wives and parents came looking for their husbands and children; and all the while, he pointed people to the God who loved them amid the horror.

"Life changes when death comes; it doesn't end," he explains. "It has changed for those who have died; it has changed for those who are left behind. But we all believe that one day we will be together with them. This promise gives people hope." — *by Larry Jerden*

about God," he says.

The following Sunday, Sept. 16, Mr. Lhota stopped in at All Angels' Episcopal Church on Manhattan's Upper West Side, where he and his family worship, to give a brief description of how God and God's Word had sustained him. Then it was back to his urgent duties at the crisis command center where he'd been putting in 18- and 20-hour days.

Two weeks later, after a worship service at All Angels', Mr. Lhota paused long enough to stuff his pockets with copies of the American Bible Society's special Scripture Portion, *God Is Our Shelter and Strength*. Tens of thousands of these Scriptures had already been distributed at Ground Zero, at shelters, fire stations, police precincts and churches.

"I handed some out at the command center and placed the rest on a table of toiletries — toothbrushes, razors, chewing gum — supplied by the Red Cross. When I came back an hour later, the Portions were gone.

"Throughout this period the Mayor was concerned to have men of the cloth available everywhere," says Mr. Lhota.

"God spared me from dying that day — the following Saturday CNN kept replaying what I had said that afternoon. I told everyone, 'It's the weekend. Please go to church. Find loved ones — friends and family — hug them a little longer. Hold them a little closer.'

"Had the planes struck at 10 o'clock,

NAOMI LAUTURE

One American Bible Society staffer who felt deep pain was Naomi Lauture, associate director of Meeting and Travel Services. Her fiancé, Christopher Scutter, died during the attack. Ms. Lauture had known him from childhood — both had attended the First Baptist Church of Spring Valley, N.Y., from their youth, and they'd been dating about two years.

She was watching television that Tuesday morning and saw the second plane hit the second tower. "It didn't dawn on me that it was the WTC and that Chris worked there," Ms. Lauture recalls, "because that wasn't his main office. He was just servicing one of his clients. Then, 15 minutes later it hit me! Oh, my God! It's the WTC. Chris is there!"

He had called his mother from the 93rd floor of the second tower to say he was OK. Shortly after he called, the tower collapsed. He was never heard from again.

Ms. Lauture lost Mr. Scutter that day



NAOMI LAUTURE

PHOTOS BY STRATMARK CORP.

but is finding strength through the power of the Bible.

"To know that Chris is not right beside me is very hard," she says through tears, then refers to Psalm 91 as a source of comfort. "I know that Chris called on God and that God answered him," she

continued on page 15 >>

OFFERING THE BIBLE MESSAGE

BY PETER FEUERHERD

LATINO STYCLE

A prisoner asks for a Bible for his 8-year-old daughter. Some Baptist pastors in New Mexico want to provide Spanish-language Bibles to their congregations. Leaders of a New Jersey youth basketball program want Scriptures to reach their Latino youth, adding a spiritual dimension to athletic endeavors.

¶ All find help through the Office of Latino Affairs (OLA), the agency based in Plantation, Fla., that provides outreach to the Spanish-speaking across the United States

for the American Bible Society.

In seven years with the American Bible Society, the Rev. Emilio A. Reyes, vice president for Latino Affairs for the American Bible Society, has grown to understand ever so deeply that his fellow Latinos have “an openness, a hunger for God.”

“They want to read the Bible and they want Bibles they can understand,” says Mr. Reyes, a native of the Dominican Republic who spearheads Latino outreach for the American Bible Society.

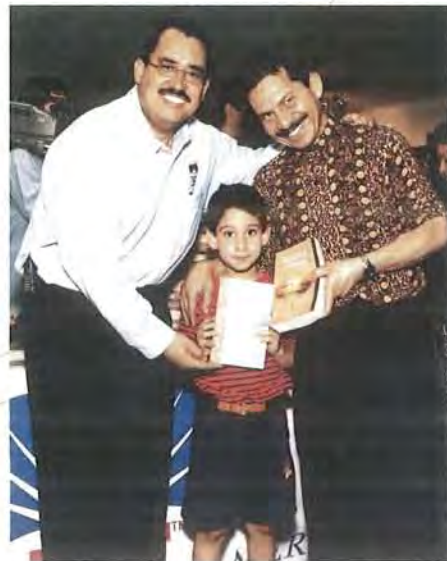
The Office of Latino Affairs changed its name — it was previously known as

the *Sociedad Bíblica Americana* — and expanded its mission over the past year.

Projects now being implemented include promotion of a new, easy-to-read Spanish Bible translation called *Biblia en Lenguaje Sencillo* (*Bible in Simple Language*), now available in a New Testament version and soon to include the Old Testament as well.

The OLA is about more than biblical products, however. It has also focused on ministry and service.

Over the past year OLA has sponsored Latino gospel music concerts in New York and Florida; participated in both



Emilio Reyes, left, presents Spanish language Bibles to Latino residents of a low-income housing community in Miami, Fla.

Catholic and Protestant church conferences; co-sponsored a Children's Day Parade in New York; led Bible seminars in Long Beach, Calif., and Miami, and sponsored a National Day of Prayer breakfast. A Bible Reading Campaign, with the



Staff members from the OLA work closely with Latino celebrities to draw attention to the Bible's universal appeal. From left: Beatriz Duarte, programs specialist; Federico Colloca, Christian singer; Yvette Rojas, marketing and sales manager; and Julio Cesar Cabrera, programs coordinator for Radio Vision Cristiana in New Jersey.

theme of *The Bible is My Guide*, enlisted the support of celebrity Latino musicians and athletes. A magazine and a radio program, *Palabra Eficaz (Effective Word)*, offers Bible education to hundreds of thousands of Spanish-language readers and listeners.

The OLA also supported fund-raising efforts for earthquake victims in El Salvador and for people in need in the United States, including drug addicts and prisoners, who desperately need Spanish-language Scriptures. The *Tomado de la Mano (Take by the Hand) Tour* raised funds to provide Latino chaplains and Spanish Scriptures to the Latino prison population. A Spanish-language outreach was also part of the American Bible Society effort providing consolation after the Sept. 11 attacks on New York and the Pentagon.

In total, OLA distributed more than a million Bibles and Scripture resources in the past year.

The latest figures indicate that the need for OLA has never been greater, notes Mr. Reyes.

Business investors now commonly know that Latinos comprise the fastest-growing market in the United States and that the growth rate for the Latino population is four to five times that for the U.S. population as a whole. Spanish-language media outlets have mushroomed in the past decade.

There are some 35 million Latinos

living in the United States. They are a diverse group with varying needs, coming from Caribbean cultures represented in the Dominican Republic, Cuba and Puerto Rico, as well as Mexicans, Colombians, and others from mainland Latin America. Most are Catholics, but a growing number attend evangelical and other Protestant churches.

About half of that population is almost exclusively Span-

ish-speaking; about 40 percent are partially assimilated, meaning they communicate in both English and Spanish, and a substantial minority — about 10 percent — are largely assimilated English speakers. Many of them are young. In fact, notes Mr. Reyes, one popular OLA product continues to be the *Contemporary English Version Bible*, a Scripture in language readily accessible to many young Latinos who have become solely English speakers and readers. Other OLA products help Spanish readers understand biblical texts, an asset for many Latino Christians raised in cultures that did not encourage private reading of the Scriptures.

The OLA is helped, he says, by the association it has with United Bible Societies national organizations from countries where Latino immigrants originated. Latinos, he says, “want to buy from those companies that are doing things for them.” That brand loyalty to easy-to-read Bibles transfers comfortably into OLA efforts in the United States.

The ongoing OLA outreach continues to pay dividends, most of them quiet advances in faith that frequently go unnoticed. Still some letters reach Mr. Reyes, indicating that lives have been changed among the recipients of the more than a million Scripture products sold and distributed by OLA each year.

“Today I received a wonderful gift, my own Bible,” noted one letter, from the prisoner who made the request for his 8-year-old. “I am as happy as my own daughter. I show my Bible to the prisoners and the guards with great pride. This is the only Bible I have ever owned. I will take good care of it and read it every day.” ■



AMERICAN BIBLE SOCIETY
Office of Latino Affairs

Edgardo Alfonso of the New York Mets promotes Bible reading in an OLA-sponsored campaign. Here the Latino celebrity appears on a poster that says, “Baseball is My Passion, the Bible is My Guide.” The New Testament version of the American Bible Society Spanish language Bible provides an easy-to-read translation.

A T I M E T

IT WAS A VISION OF HOPE IN A TIME OF HOPE. FOR THREE DAYS LAST DECEMBER, MORE than 24,000 vibrant Roman Catholic teenagers and their leaders from across the nation gathered in Indiana to celebrate. They rejoiced in their faith. They prayed. And they absorbed inspiration to take back to their home parishes. The American Bible Society was also there to provide some of that inspiration, including a new youth-oriented interactive, Scripture-based CD-ROM that representatives from the Bible Society introduced at the event.

The National Catholic Youth Conference, called "Hope at the Crossroads," took place at the RCA Dome and Convention Center in Indianapolis. Participants, much like delegates at a political convention, came to the biennial event adorned with accessories from their states — cow apparel from the Wisconsin delegation, Mardi Gras beads from the New Orleans group and racing gear from the Indianapolis host delegation. Regional identification did not, however, prevent them from uniting there with one purpose: to become visible signs of God's hope to the world.

During the conference, which was hosted by the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry, Inc., teenagers attended workshops, prayer services, concerts and rallies. Among other celebrities, Miss America 2001's Angela Perez Bar-

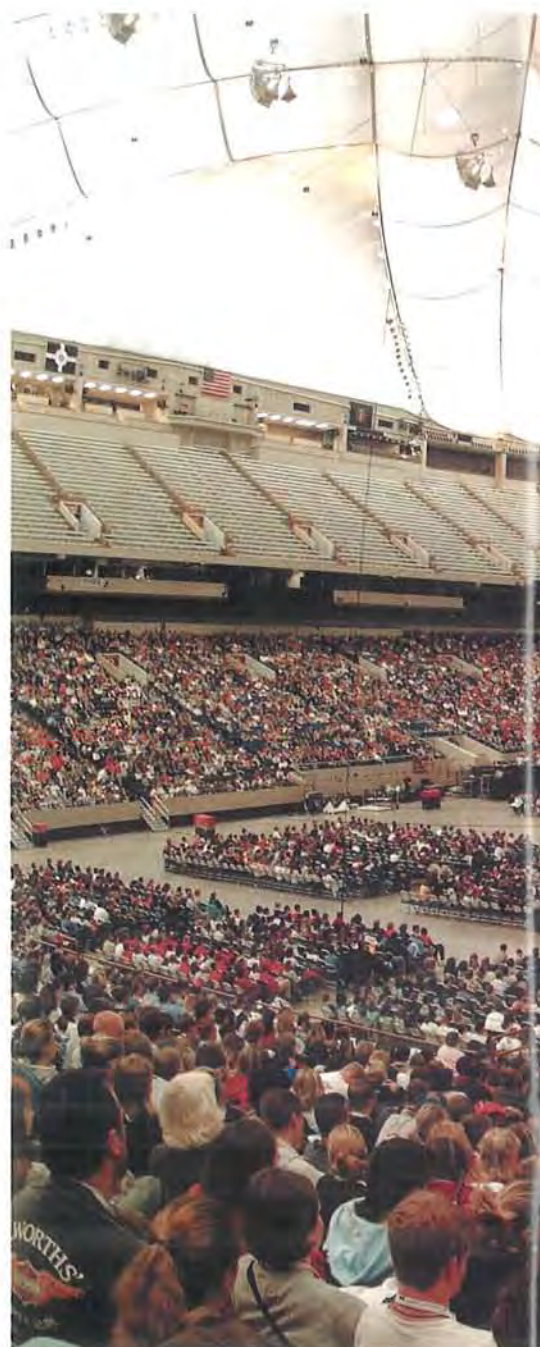
aquio (a fellow Catholic) made an appearance as well as MTV's Matt Smith (*The Real World*).

It was also an ideal opportunity for representatives of the American Bible Society to address the concern many

Catholic youth leaders have expressed — Catholic youth tend not to engage in as much Scripture reading as their Protestant peers. While they hear the Word at Sunday Mass and attend youth ministry activities, not as many study on their own or partici-

pate in weekly Bible studies. Leaders have been searching for ways to foster Scripture literacy and engagement with their young people.

The National Catholic Youth Conference gathered more than 24,000 Catholic youths from across the nation to the Indiana Convention Center and RCA Dome in Indianapolis last December.

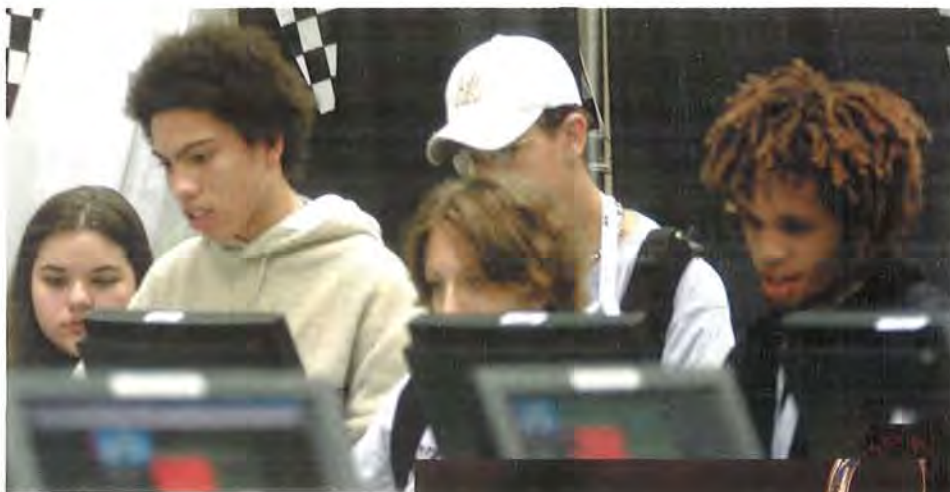


[BY JEAN E. BROSS-JUDGE]

O HOPE



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL FEDERATION FOR CATHOLIC YOUTH MINISTRY



Conference goers took part in a wide variety of activities. Clockwise, from top left: kids checked out a computer program at the indoor interactive learning center, where the Bible Society's *A Time to Hope* CD was demonstrated; a hip hop artist electrified his audience with his faith-based lyrics; and teen worshippers enriched their faith by participating in traditional liturgy.

In response, the American Bible Society's National Programs staff collaborated with Catholic youth leaders to produce an interactive CD-ROM that could be used by groups or individuals to help unleash the power of Scripture in the lives of young people. Representatives from the Bible Society's Sports Ministry and Children and Youth Programs worked with Interline and Forefront Records who had contracted with Christian artists and athletes to help create the CD-ROM.

The end result, *A Time to Hope*, includes music and testimonies from artists and athletes; Scripture Portions indexed to help young people deal with "real issues"; commentaries on the Sept. 11 tragedy; a search engine that allows direct access to the Psalms, Proverbs and New Testament; and links to the Web sites of Christian artists, athletes and organizations.

Conference emcee Jesse Manibusan, a popular singer and pastoral musician at St. Joseph's Basilica in Alameda, Calif., who appeared on *A Time of Hope* says, "The delivery of such an invitation — to go deeper in the Word — by Christians in the world of sports, entertainment and ministry is powerful, not because of the celebrities, but because the celebrities are pointing to the Word — Jesus."

During the event, two Bible Society ministry representatives, Bill Kuykendall and John Walker, demonstrated the CD-ROM on computers at an indoor exhibit



park. They also distributed 500 free copies of *A Guide to Planning Youth Retreats* to youth leaders. Says Mr. Kuykendall, "It was vital for the American Bible Society to have a physical presence at the conference. Catholic Parish youth ministers need to know that the American Bible Society has representatives in their areas who are able, willing and eager to assist them in the performance of their ministry."

One attendee, Vikki Kraetzer, who works in the Office of Religious Education for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, says she popped *A Time to Hope* into her computer after the conference. Her immediate reaction? "This is cool...very, very cool!" She knows the attraction the electronic format has for youth. "It's a med-



ium to which they respond in a language that they speak," she says. She also uses other Bible Society materials; during another youth event held at Dodger Stadium in May of 2000, her group distributed about 25,000 *Contemporary English Version* New Testaments. "The more often and the more methods we can use to expose Catholic young people to Scripture, the quicker they will be able to access it to transform their lives," she says.

Her words echo the commitment the American Bible Society has made to focus more intently on ministry to Catholic youth. Along with the CD-ROM, the organization is developing an array of materials and programs directed towards Catholics that will encourage young people to read the Bible. These include a Scripture study kit for Catholic athletic coaches to use with their teams and co-sponsorship of ecumenical prayer services being held in Salt Lake City during the winter Olympics this year.

With these Bible Society initiatives and partnerships, communities around the nation will surely see more and more Catholic youth become visible signs of hope to their world. ■

Jean E. Bross-Judge is senior administrator, National Programs at the American Bible Society.

<< continued from page 9

says, adding, "That's a promise right there in the Word and this is what I live by."

— by Larry Jerden

CHAPLAIN GERALD SILLCOCKS

A chaplain who serves some of America's new heroes — New York firefighters — received a personal reminder of the power of God's Word at the World Trade Center's Ground Zero one evening.



CHAPLAIN GERALD SILLCOCKS

Gerald Sillcocks and his crew, all from Engine Company 80, were assigned to search through the remains of one of the towers, where they had pulled out the bodies of 10 firefighters the night before. To get there, his team had to cross an area called the pit, a two-story-deep hole where the WTC foundation had collapsed. With rubble piled several stories high on both sides, the only way to cross the pit was to walk over ladders that had been lashed together and strung across the opening. A false step would plunge a worker into twisted steel girders below, resulting in serious injury or death.

Once safely across the hole, firefighters faced yet more difficulties. "When you came to the other side you met a ladder that was almost vertical," says Chaplain Sillcocks, who is also the New York City chapter leader of FireFighters for Christ. "It was at a twisted angle and there was nothing holding you — no ropes, no harnesses, no anything. When you got to the top there was a one-foot-wide steel I-beam to stand on. Below you the fires were

still burning. Our job that night was to keep the fire under control and to pass tools up and pass whatever bodies came down."

Behind Chaplain Sillcocks stood an unsupported 12-story-high steel facade. "I turned around, took a look at that wall leaning toward me and every inch of me wanted to run," he says. He was about to alert his supervisor to the danger and recommend they leave when he remembered the Bible passage he and his wife had read two nights before.

"I went back to that Scripture, 'Be still and know that I am God [Psalm 46.10],' " says Chaplain Sillcocks, "and I said, 'He's in control of this whole thing.' Even standing up on that tower, in a bad situation looking worse, the fires burning underneath me, the smoke going into my eyes and not knowing what's going to happen to that wall, I was able to stand there and do my job."

That night, Chaplain Sillcocks and his company brought out three more bodies. Equally important for him, he says, was understanding in a new way that "the Word has power."

"Many of the guys in the firehouse who have never opened a Bible in their life now know that Scriptures have answers," he says. "They come to me to ask about God. So I'm able to take them to the Scriptures — powerful Scriptures — where God says he's our protector, our strength and our fortress."

— by Larry Jerden

CHAPLAIN CARLOS AVILES

A New York City detective in the Special Victims Squad and a member of Police Officers for Christ,

Chaplain Carlos Aviles, is also excited about the response he received.

As Bible Society workers brought Scripture booklets to hand out, "people took them like they were gold, says Det. Aviles. He adds that after the attack he saw many people drawn closer to Christ, despite their fear and confusion.

He has also seen changed lives among the police officers.

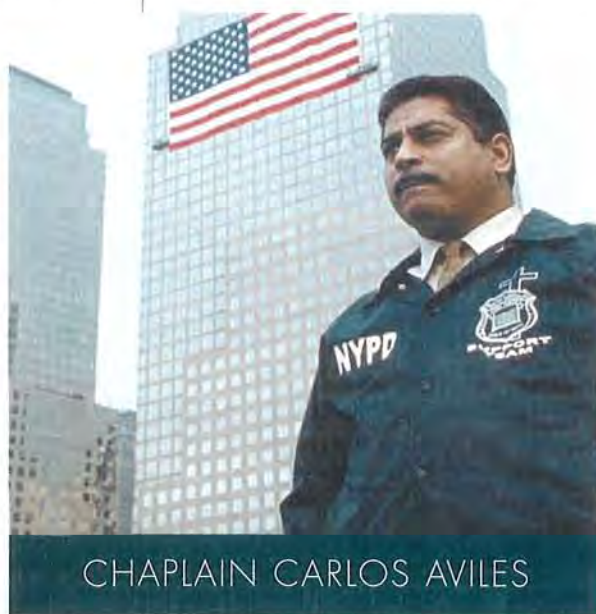
"God has broken down even the toughest guys," the veteran law officer says. "They are spending more time with their families.

"In the past, they would work overtime and talk about the money they were making. Now, they are saying, 'Oh, my kids — I've got to get home. Forget the overtime.' Some are going to church even though they haven't been in a long time."

Besides gaining hope through their faith, he says, many people in both police and fire departments are learning that God is in control.

"On Sept. 11," he says, "it was chaotic. People were running back and forth — even the police officers. They had never seen anything like this.

"The good thing is that after reading



CHAPLAIN CARLOS AVILES

the Scriptures, people are not running scared, they're gripping onto God. They're getting to know Him, not just about Him. Jesus is the anchor in this storm."

— by Larry Jerden



Using the Bible to Promote Literacy in Bangladesh

A literacy program initiated on a small scale in 1996 by the Bangladesh Bible Society (BBS) is now helping people improve their reading and writing — and their Bible knowledge — in more than 100 churches representing seven denominations. Of Bangladesh's 130 million people, at least 70 percent are categorized as illiterate or semi-literate. Most live in rural areas. They include many Christians who attend country churches and rely on others to read God's Word to them.

Partly with them in mind, the BBS started the literacy project in cooperation with the United Bible Societies and Bangladesh Danish Lutheran Mission. A volunteer drew up a plan for a set of study materials consisting of 16 books and 34 audiocassettes.

The plan aims to develop the reading and writing skills of semi-literate or illiterate Christians while increasing their knowledge of the Bible. The literacy program is intensive: Groups, usually made up of 10 or 15 people, meet for an hour and a half each day on five or six days each week; they listen to the tapes and read or sing along with them. It is expected that an increase in Bible knowledge will produce spiritual development as well.

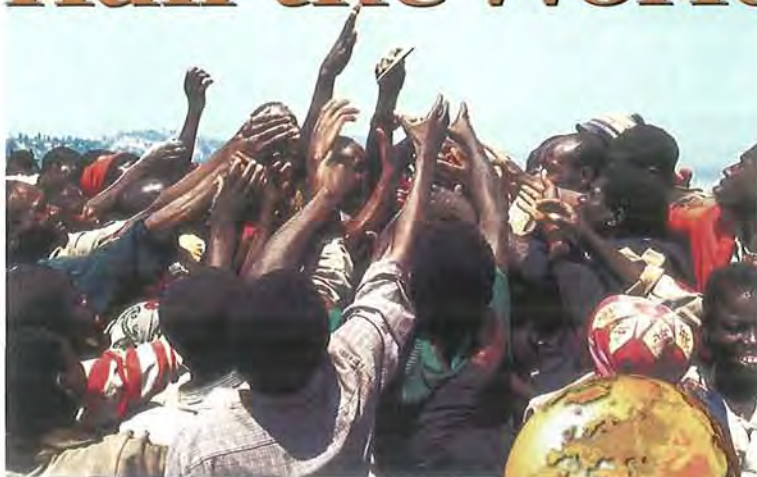
The program, launched in a few churches representing five different denominations in the north and south of the country, has grown to include 112 churches from seven denominations. ■

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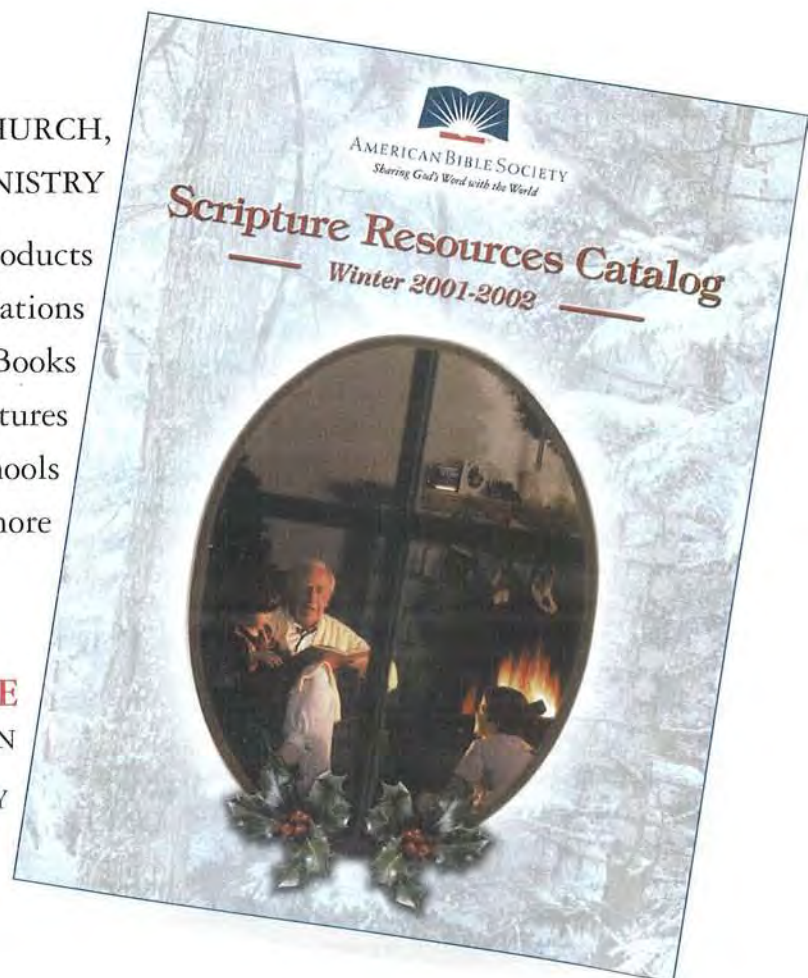
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 AMERICAN BIBLE SOCIETY



January 18 - March 9, 2002

FOR THE RECORD

Firefighters Become 'Bible Savers'

The American Bible Society has had a long friendship — dating back more than a century — with the New York City Fire Department. More recently the Bible Society provided Scripture Portions to Gerald Sillcocks, the city's chapter leader of Firefighters for Christ, to offer to his fellow firefighters at the Ground Zero site of the World Trade Center terrorist attack [see Page 15].

But on another fateful date, Dec. 16, 1848, only blocks away from where the Twin Towers later stood, firefighters stepped in to help the Bible Society when its headquarters were in danger. At the time, the Bible House was situated on Ann Street, just behind the Park Theatre in the downtown neighborhood.



Bible House circa 1830

That night, a fire broke out in the theater; luckily, the Southwark Engine Company No. 38 was located a few hundred feet from the building. Firefighters got to the scene quickly and went to work.

A history of New York firefighters, *As You Pass By*, describes what happened next:

They pumped water furiously on the theatre in the hope that at least parts of the hall could be saved, but, soon realizing it was doomed, they immediately transferred their attention to the building at the rear of the theatre, which housed the American Bible Society. Their efforts were successful and the building, along with the valuable collection of Bibles owned by the society, was saved.

In gratitude for their heroic work, the Bible Society gave them a rare and costly family Bible with the inscription: "Presented to the Southwark Fire Engine Company No. 38 by the American Bible Society for valuable services rendered in preserving their premises at the burning of the Park Theatre, December 16, 1848."

According to the historical account, "The Bible immediately became a cherished possession of the company and from that time until their disbandment in 1865, 38's boys were known as 'the Bible savers.'" ■

Jesus' Life Told in Images

Collector's Items: *Biblical Art and Private Devotion*, an exhibit now on display at the Gallery at the American Bible Society, reveals how artists have retold the story of Jesus through images on paper over the past four centuries. Through the printing press's mass production capability, art prints became widely available in Europe, and many people, artists as well as common people, began collecting them.

The 75 prints in this exhibit come from the private collection of contemporary artist Sandra Bowden and her husband, Robert, and include works dating from the 16th through 20th centuries — by artists such as Albrecht Dürer, Rembrandt van Rijn, Käthe Kollwitz and Georges Rouault, as well as prints by living artists.



Albrecht Dürer, Resurrection, (detail) 1510

Ms. Bowden, president of Christians in the Visual Arts, began collecting religious art 20 years ago, in part, to inform her own creations. She describes her collection, displayed for the first time in a museum setting, both as a source for artistic inspiration and a means to devotion.

Ms. Bowden sees her collection as a graphic record of a vibrant faith. She hopes that her own work continues that tradition, an evidence "that faith was alive and well in the 20th and 21st centuries."

"The Bowden collection testifies to the continuing vitality of a traditional role of art — of prints, in particular — in enriching one's life, expressing one's faith and engaging in private devotion," says Patricia Pongracz, curator of the Gallery and exhibit organizer.

Collector's Items: Biblical Art and Private Devotion will be on view at the Gallery at the American Bible Society, 1865 Broadway in New York City through March 9, 2002. For more information and a listing of special events, call (212) 408-1500. ■

to the editor

We welcome letters from our readers. Letters should be fewer than 300 words and focused on articles that have appeared in the Record. We reserve the right to edit them for clarity or space considerations. You can send your letters to: Editor, American Bible Society Record, 1865 Broadway, New York, NY 10023-7505. You can also reach us via e-mail at absrecord@americanbible.org

Touched by Sept. 11 reporting

Nearly every magazine in my mailbox in the last six weeks has focused on Sept. 11 and what it means, but the October/November issue of the *Record* is in a class by itself. Reading and pondering, I was deeply moved, especially by the quote from Jeremiah 31.15, followed a few pages later by verse 16.

Thank you and your staff for putting together such a significant piece of reporting.

ELIZABETH J. MARBLE, SAN DIEGO

Love enemies, pray for all

Our tragedy in New York is terrible, and I am so glad that my loved ones and I weren't there. I realize the process of mourning and the stages we go through, but when that is done, we also have to remember Luke 6.27-37 [which directs us to love and pray for our enemies]. There are people in the Army stationed [in Afghanistan] who don't want to be there. There are also innocent people there who are being killed, so we have to pray for them too.

GAYLE SWEET, BROWERVILLE, MINN.

Remember Pennsylvania crash victims

Twice in the article, "A Call to Prayer," [October/November 2001] New York City and Washington, D.C., were mentioned as being ravaged by the results of terrorism. Perhaps the writer overlooked the airplane crash caused by terrorism that happened in western Pennsylvania. Many lives were affected as a result of that. Mourning and prayers need to be offered for these people also. Sorry they were omitted from the article.

SHIRLEY LONGNAKER, HARRISBURG, PA.

{EDITOR'S NOTE: We regret the omission.}

Prayer is the key

I just read your October/November 2001 issue of the *Record*. I was filled with joy over your distribution of *God is Our Shelter and Strength* and thrilled that you put Scripture verses in the newspapers. I am glad that the American Bible Society has used its resources to reach millions in the United States since Sept. 11. I have been praying for our nation for a long time. After Sept. 11, God has the attention of every American. Our nation has been radically changed. May every person in America and the world accept Jesus as Lord and Savior. May we continue to pray for our nation and our labors in the Lord.

JOANNE C. BRINSER, MIDDLETOWN, PA.

Direction through tragedy

Isn't it interesting that before the Sept. 11 tragedy occurred, the *Record* just issued the interview with Mr. Gallup calling for a "Quiet Revolution"?

Indeed, God has His own way of directing a nation such as America; all the world has been humbled and will never be the same again.

MARGOT, VIA E-MAIL

Will Daily Bible readings continue?

Where were the daily Bible readings for November and December [omitted from the October/November 2001 *Record*]? I always look forward to including that bit of Scripture in my daily devotions — have you ceased providing them?

MARTHA SQUIRES, BEAVERTON, ORE.

{EDITOR'S NOTE: To give readers more complete coverage of the Sept. 11 tragedy, we removed it from that issue. However, this valuable section will appear in all future issues.}

A GRATEFUL HEART INSPIRES GENEROSITY

GERTRUDE PORTER IS DEEPLY grateful for the good things God has given her.

She had a mother who worked long hours to provide for her after her father's death, when Ms. Porter was only six. "She had a very hard life," Ms. Porter says, remembering sacrifices her mother made.

She learned a diligent work ethic, inspired by her mother, which helped her find success, first as a secretary, then as a bank teller, and after additional schooling, as a branch manager for Chemical Bank. Her final full-time job took her to the rights and permissions department of Doubleday in New York City, where she contacted celebrities' agents and others to get photos for the publisher's books.

And because of her hard work, she's also grateful she was able to retire early, at age 52. Although Ms. Porter, who is now 70, moved to Florida to retire, she's not retiring. After a brief return to banking part time, she quit; now, this energetic lady has developed computer skills. She's a whiz with e-mail and digital photos, and she's gotten her church connected on www.forministry.com (See page 26 for news about this free Internet resource for Christians.).

She acknowledges and is most grateful for all these good things she's received, but points to one for which she is most grateful: the faith her mother shared. "I was raised in a Christian home," says Ms.

BY THOMAS D. SULLIVAN



Gertrude Porter

Porter, who faithfully attended a church in Brooklyn while living in New York. "The Lord's been very good to me."

As a sign of her gratitude, she's established three annuities from the American Bible Society. Ms. Porter's gratitude extends beyond her already generous annuities. She's done her estate planning, and has included the American Bible Society in her will.

Ms. Porter has made use of the innovative planned giving options that the American Bible Society offers. She established her most recent annuity with stocks she owned.

Speaking of the Bible, Ms. Porter says simply, "It's the Word of God." She's pleased to know that her gifts support the distribution of God's Word here in the United States and around the world.

She has a tremendous passion for sea cruises, paying frequent visits to the Caribbean. She's sailed through the Panama Canal seven times, across the Atlantic a number of times and eagerly looks forward to her next trip.

The American Bible Society thanks Ms. Porter for all her generosity, her faith and her desire to support the Bible cause. ■

More information about planned giving programs sponsored by the American Bible Society can be obtained by calling the Planned Gift Programs Department at 1-800-820-6227.



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update

NATIONAL

■ TEXAS

A literacy program created by the American Bible Society that uses Bible materials to teach children and adults to read has been established in Houston. The *Eleanor McCollum Faith Based Literacy Program* is named after the Houston philanthropist who provided a grant to the Houston READ Commission to support the effort.

Last November, tutors and students demonstrated the curriculum at the Meadowbrook Learning Center in Houston.

Mrs. McCollum, who has served on the American Bible Society Board of Trustees for more than 30 years, says that individuals who gain reading skills can become better educated. And

education, she says, “is the key to better living and incomes.”

The Rev. Trevón Gross, senior vice president for Programs, says, “The American Bible Society is committed to addressing the issues of literacy and moral character development. The most authentic source for developing good character is the Bible, and introducing people to Scripture will serve as a tool for the building of strong communities.”

Along with supporting the Commission’s mission — to improve the lives of Houston residents — the Bible Society plans to establish other partnerships. Dr. Gail Ayers, executive director of the Houston READ Commission, commends the Bible Society’s goal: “This is an educational commitment to literacy that the Bible Society has made to the nation, and it will be an important step forward as many churches and religious organizations use its material to help adults learn to read,” she says.

To learn more about the *Eleanor McCollum Faith Based Literacy Program*, call 713-845-2527.

■ ARIZONA

During an historic event honoring about 300 Navajo “Code Talkers” with Congressional Medals of Honor last November, the American Bible Society also presented Navajo language Bibles and certificates of appreciation to the Native American World War II veterans.

Code Talkers, Navajo men secretly recruited and trained by the U.S. Marine Corps during the war, developed an encrypted communication code. Their contribution, using the complex Navajo language to relay top-secret information, helped save thousands of lives during battle operations in the Pacific.



PETE BAATZ

▲ Eleanor Searle Whitney McCollum, an American Bible Society honorary trustee and literacy advocate, center, in red, provided a grant to support the Houston READ Commission’s efforts to improve literacy in the Houston area. The curriculum, created by the Bible Society, uses the CEV Bible and other aids to teach children and adults.

Because of the code's success — the Japanese could never decipher it — information about the Code Talkers was classified until 1968. The men were forbidden to reveal the code's existence or the part they played in the war.

As a consequence, many of these men died without receiving any acknowledgment. This event and the awarding of the medals of honor, held at the Navajo Nation Fairground in Window Rock, Ariz., paid homage to their record of secret service. During the ceremony, Tom Udall, a New Mexico congressman, said, "Using the Navajo language, we achieved victory."

David Gowan, manager of Native American Programs for the Bible Society, points out that the very complexity of this language was a major challenge to Bible translators. A Navajo translation committee pointed out mistakes in earlier Navajo language Bibles, helping the

Bible Society to produce a more accurate, modern version. The project was completed in 2000, and more than 1,200 copies of the New Testament have been distributed free to individuals, libraries, tribal offices and clinics on the Window Rock Reservation.

One surviving Code Talker, Jerry C. Begay, expressed gratitude about both presentations. "Getting this medal and the beautiful Bible, my service is now complete," he said.

"This event promotes my personal goal of making the Bible available to this generation of Native Americans in forms that they will receive," Mr. Gowan said. ■

Code Talker Dan Akee, left, shakes hands with Navajo Nation President Kelsey Begaye during a ceremony acknowledging the World War II veterans' heroism. New Mexico Rep. Tom Udall, center, and Sen. Jeff Bingaman, not pictured, co-sponsored a bill to recognize the Navajo veterans with the Congressional Medal of Honor.



JEFF JONES/CALLUP INDEPENDENT

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Memorials of \$500 or more for one individual or family unit will be published in the American Bible Society Record.

For further details about the memorial program, please write to:

Donor Relations, American Bible Society, 1865 Broadway, New York NY 10023-7505.

BIBLE IN THE NEWS

Bibles found in World Trade Center ruins

■ Ironworkers found two Bibles in the wreckage of the World Trade Center, reports the *New York Post*.

Columnist Rod Dreher wrote that the two ironworkers who discovered the Bibles tried to return them to Gail Pridgen and Gregorio Lopez, whose names were handwritten inside the Bibles. Neither Mrs. Pridgen nor Mr. Lopez had been listed among the missing or dead.

A few days after the article appeared, Mrs. Pridgen's family was located. She died three years ago, and her family does not know how her Bible, published by the American Bible Society, ended up at the Twin Towers.

The workers are still trying to contact Mr. Lopez, whose Bible includes a Spanish inscription, which is partially legible. Translated, the note says "... that reading and studying this book will help you rebuild your life. God bless you."

Possible clue to Noah's flood discovered

■ Robert Ballard, the American deep-sea explorer who discovered the wreck of the Titanic, is leading a team that has found ancient ruins under the Black Sea, according to the BBC. PBS also produced a one-hour *National Geographic Special*, "The Quest for Noah's Flood," that aired on the television show last October.

These ruins indicate that people may have lived in the area before a disastrous flood. Some scientists have linked the event to the Old Testament story of Noah.

"This is an incredible find," Dr. Ballard said, adding, "It's clear a vast amount of real estate is under water." He said he considered it far more significant than his discovery of the Titanic.

The research team, which is sponsored by *National Geographic*, discovered a rectangular structure 297 feet below the ocean's surface, off the coast of Turkey.

A passion for the Word remembered

■ After postal worker Joseph Curseen Jr. died of an-

thrax, friends and relatives told the story of his life, highlighting one aspect: his great passion for the Bible.

According to the *National Catholic Register*, Mr. Curseen ran a Bible study group for colleagues at the postal facility where he worked. A friend told a reporter that as many as 15 co-workers joined him to deepen their understanding of God's Word.

While he was never obtrusive, said the Rev. Lowell Case in the article, Mr. Curseen "was like a mini-evangelist." Waiting for the seeker to ask, he "would push up his glasses and say, 'Would you like to know more about that?'"

"Joe had a real love of God," Father Case added. "He extended his religion beyond church on Sunday. ... A kind of spirituality came from him even when he wasn't talking about God. I admired him for that."

Early Scripture encounter sets his life course

■ In a *New York Times* profile of the Rev. Robert A. Watson, the retired Salvation Army national commander, he recalled an early childhood encounter with Scripture that changed his life.

Mr. Watson described helping a teacher spell out John 1.12 during a Salvation Army after-school activity: "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name" (*King James Version*). That verse "had a profound impact on my mind and heart," Mr. Watson told the *Times*, and the class was a "moment when God took an interest in a scrawny kid from a struggling family."

Later, he returned that interest by joining the organization and heading up various chapters during his 44-year career. Eventually he became the highest-ranking Salvation Army officer in the United States, representing it in sessions before Congress, at the White House and with other world leaders in the business and non-profit community. ■



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The Chariot and the

In Acts 8.26-40 we read the story of Philip and the Ethiopian official. At first glance, this well-known post-Easter conversion account is about an encounter, orchestrated by God's Spirit, between two men, one of whom will be completely transformed.

I suggest it might also bear the subtitle, "A Tale of Two Technologies."

First, we have a transportation technology in the form of the Ethiopian's chariot. By means of this technology he had gone to Jerusalem to worship, and in it he is now returning home. Without this high-speed (for his day) technology, he likely would never have made the trip at all. The temple services he'd attended moved him to return to the Scriptures with an even greater desire to know God through his Word.

Thus we come to the book, an information technology conveying God's Word according to the prophet Isaiah. Without it, the Ethiopian would not have read the passage that so moved his heart. And so we have the Ethiopian, riding along in his chariot, reading the book.

He is puzzled. He needs help to understand what he had read. Something is still missing. There is a comprehension gap that technology cannot fill, one only another person can satisfy. And so it is that God's Spirit tells Philip to fill that gap in person, in the flesh.

So Philip hops onto the chariot, "began at this place in the Scriptures and explained the good news about Jesus," the life-changing gospel of the crucified, risen and ascended Savior.

And in due course, this chariot will take them both past a body of water in which the Ethiopian's life will be changed forever.



▲ *Saint Philip Baptizes the Ethiopian Eunuch*, Herman Nauwincx (1619-1651), Louvre, Paris, France.

GERARD BLOT/© RÉUNION DES MUSÉES NATIONAUX/ART RESOURCE, NY

BY CHRIS THYBERG

Much is the same with today's digital technologies. They can aid in bringing people to church Web sites, giving them access to the Scriptures and more. Yet more often than not, these technologies merely set the stage for us to personally enter the gap and share, by our words and deeds, "the good news about Jesus."

As we celebrate this Easter season, ForMinistry offers tools — using today's technologies — for sharing the resurrection. May they enable us to be like Philip: ready to explain the hope that's revealed in God's Holy Word and in which we "live and move and have our being."

You may check out the following Web sites for a selection of articles:

▶ *Franciscan and Lay Partners Reach "Once Catholics" via Internet*
by AmericanCatholic.org

With Easter quickly approaching and many people making their annual or semiannual "pilgrimage" to the church, a Catholic order is preparing to convince "once Catholics" to make a lasting return to the fold.

Read the full article online at

<http://www.forministry.com/Article.asp?Record=2672>

▶ *In the Steps of the Savior: A Lenten Meditation*
by Marlee Alex

Having walked on this earth, Jesus understands our lives more intimately than we may understand. "Only one thing is necessary," he told his friends Mary and Martha. One Christian woman embarks on a Lenten journey to unearth the treasure in those words.

Read the full article online at

<http://www.forministry.com/Article.asp?Record=2645>

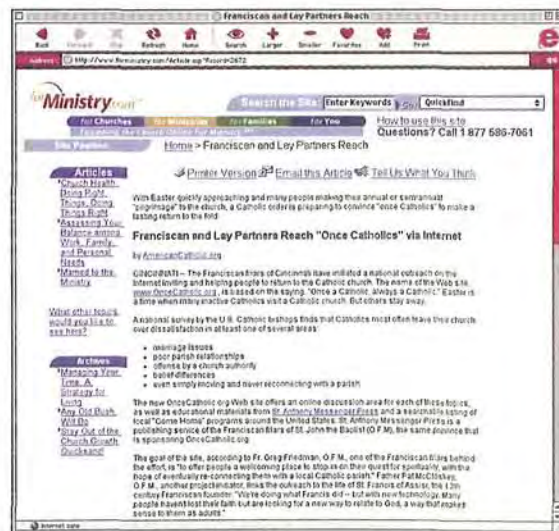
▶ *Signs of Easter*
by Dr. Robert Hodgson

The first followers of Jesus developed several different strategies for proclaiming in word and image Jesus Christ's triumph over death.

Read the full article online at

<http://www.forministry.com/Article.asp?Record=2673>

(Chris Thyberg is director for Ministry Development for ABSInteractive and executive producer of ForMinistry.com)



update

I N T E R N A T I O N A L

■ PAKISTAN

Pakistan Bible Society workers and volunteers were on hand last September to pass out more than 1,000 New Testaments to many of the thousands who flocked to a three-day religious festival in Mariyamabad, Pakistan. The tiny village, located 55 miles west of Lahore, celebrates a yearly Roman Catholic tradition dating back to 1952.

Each September, people visit the village to pray for miracles in their own lives. The majority of those who come for the *mela*, or festival, are Catholics, but other Christians as well as non-Christians attend.

During the *mela*, food and refreshment for body and soul are provided. The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Lahore and priests and nuns from parishes across the nation spend time in meditation and prayer. Vendors set up stalls and tents and sell sweets and traditional toys on festival grounds. Music blasts from tape players and drummers pound out joyful rhythms.

In the middle of last year's colorful marketplace, Bible Society staff and a team of 20 volunteers, known as the Promotion of Word Evangelism & Resources (POWER) team,

pitched their tent. "Our volunteers worked for about 18 hours each day," said Anthony Lamuel, the Bible Society general secretary. "They distributed Scriptures, New Testaments and charts at the stall, in the buses and even to the workers in the surrounding fields. We thank God for their commitment."

In addition to the New Testaments, workers distributed 3,000 prayer Portions, 1,100 wall calendars and 500 Scripture coloring book packets. Materials were specially designed to introduce people to Jesus.

■ SOUTH AFRICA

Welcoming the November launch of the *Contemporary English Version (CEV)* Bible in South Africa, one speaker stressed the role the Bible Society of South Africa must play in the country's moral and spiritual renewal. Professor L. G. B. Ndabandaba, minister of Education and Culture for the state of KwaZulu-Natal, described the decay: "Daily we witness rampant crime, rape of the old and young, gruesome murders, corruption, marriage disintegration and rebelliousness." He added, "We need inward transformation that will resuscitate reverence for God and the spirit of *Ubuntu-Boho* [Zulu for an African philosophy of living together humanely]."

The Bible Society chose KwaZulu-Natal from which to introduce the *CEV* because it is South Africa's most populated province. More than 200 people attended the affair, including staff from the Bible Society and the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture.

Along with hardcover and leather-bound editions, the Bible Society also introduced a youth edition. Its front cover incorporates several winning designs submitted by high school

▼ **Pakistan Bible Society volunteers distribute New Testaments and other Bible materials to people attending a three-day religious festival in Mariyamabad.**



PAKISTAN BIBLE SOCIETY

and art students in a Bible Society-sponsored competition. And winners, who also attended the launch, received an exhortation from Professor Ndabandaba in addition to cash prizes. Calling the Bible a book that some regard as a God-authored instruction manual for humans, he told them, "You are therefore challenged to strive to live according to that instruction manual. Be exemplary in your conduct!"

■ DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Church leaders, civil representatives and members of the Christian community welcomed the publication of the modern Lingala Bible at its official launch last September in Kinshasa. The Bible, translated in an easily understandable style, is the product of 30 years of dedicated labor, sometimes done under the adverse conditions of war and political turmoil in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Addressing the gathering, the Rev. Christophe Kongo, the new general secretary of the Bible Society of the Democratic Republic of Congo, praised the translators and thanked the churches for their support. He noted that the new Lingala version is the 21st language the Bible Society has translated and asked for support for its distribution. (Approximately 8.5 million people speak Lingala, many of them as a second language.)

The translation is already receiving enthusiastic response from laypeople and clergy alike. "My heart is full of joy because when I read the new Lingala Bible, I feel that God is speaking to me directly," said Alice Miswanga, a bread vendor in Kinshasa. "This translation is so important because it will help Christians to grow in their faith," she added. Lessere Wisakumbo, a Salvation Army captain, said, "I have waited for this version for many years and it has arrived at a very good time because many young Lin-

gala speakers have been complaining that the language in the old version is difficult to understand." He added that, with the old version, "Even we pastors had to consult a number of other Bible versions in order to understand certain texts."

Others are also benefiting. "Even those who are unable to read can easily grasp the meaning of a passage simply by listening to others read it out loud," said Father Lukula Bikaba. In fact, because of the country's poor economy — due to decades of civil war — many people can't afford their own copy. They must either read it in church or listen to others recite.

During the ceremony, Father Charles Kombé, representing the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Kinshasa, underscored the importance of communities uniting around Bible reading. Mathieu Bosunga, the Bible Society board chairman, and the Rev. Thomas Nlandu Mukoko, the former general secretary, presented copies of the new Bible to church leaders, heads of Christian organizations and political dignitaries.

In order to make the new Lingala Bible widely available, the Bible Society is promoting it among the major churches in the country's capital. ■

▼ These children from one of the poorest areas in Haiti's Port-au-Prince give a "thumbs-up" to the education and hope they've received through the Bible.



quiet time

We hope you will use this guide in your daily study of the Bible, and that you will write to tell us what you think of this feature and how you use it.

MARCH

God's Word:

Source of Prayer

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER

- 1 Matthew 6.1-18
- 2 Philippians 1.1-11

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

- 3 1 Samuel 2.1-10
- 4 Ezra 9.5-15
- 5 Nehemiah 1.1-11

6 Jonah 2.1-10

7 Habakkuk 1.1-17

8 Habakkuk 2.1-20

9 Habakkuk 3.1-19

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

- 10 1 Chronicles 29.10-25
- 11 1 Kings 3.1-15
- 12 1 Kings 8.1-13
- 13 1 Kings 8.14-21
- 14 1 Kings 8.22-40
- 15 1 Kings 8.41-53
- 16 1 Kings 8.54-66

FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

- 17 Psalm 4
- *18 Psalm 5
- 19 Psalm 11
- 20 Psalm 12
- 21 Psalm 16
- 22 Psalm 22
- 23 Psalm 31

PALM/PASSION SUNDAY

- **24 Matthew 21.1-11
- 25 Matthew 21.12-22
- 26 Matthew 26.17-35
- 27 Matthew 26.36-56
- 28 Matthew 27.11-31

GOOD FRIDAY

- 29 Matthew 27.32-56
- 30 Matthew 27.57-66

EASTER SUNDAY

- 31 Matthew 28.1-10

**Orthodox Lent begins on Monday, March 18, 2002.*

***See the note on April 28 about Orthodox observances.*

APRIL

God's Word:

Source of Hope

1 Matthew 28.11-20

2 1 Corinthians 15.1-11

3 1 Corinthians 15.12-34

4 1 Corinthians 15.35-58

5 1 Peter 1.1-12

6 1 Peter 1.13-25

SUNDAY

7 1 Peter 2.1-17

8 Hebrews 4.14 – 5.10

9 Hebrews 6.13 – 7.10

10 Hebrews 7.11-28

11 Psalm 33

12 Psalm 42

13 Psalm 71

SUNDAY

14 Job 5.1-16

15 Job 5.17-27

16 Romans 5.1-11

17 Romans 5.12-21

18 Romans 6.1-14

19 Romans 6.15-23

20 Romans 15.1-13

SUNDAY

21 Isaiah 25.1-12

22 Isaiah 35.1-10

23 Isaiah 65.17-25

24 Jeremiah 29.1-14

25 Lamentations 3.1-24

26 John 11.1-16

27 John 11.17-44

SUNDAY

*28 Revelation 7.9-17

29 Revelation 21.1-27

30 Revelation 22.1-21

**Orthodox Christians will observe Holy Week starting Palm Sunday, April 28-May 5, 2002, and may wish to substitute the readings for April 28-May 5 in place of the readings for March 24-31 and the readings for March 24-31 in place of the readings for April 28-May 5. This substitution will allow for the Passion and Resurrection readings to coincide with the Orthodox dates.*

PLEASE PRAY

PUERTO RICO – Thank the Lord that work has begun on *Path of Hope for Our Children*, an *Opportunity 21* project. The initiative will adapt the New Testament in Basic Spanish to make God's Word more accessible to children.

CAMBODIA – Through support by *Opportunity 21*, the Bible Society has been able to visit local churches and is better equipped to meet their needs. Please offer thanks for increased Scripture distribution. Ask for God's blessing for an English-Khmer New Testament that the Bible Society plans to produce, which will help young Cambodians who need English skills to find jobs.

CHINA – Give thanks that the Amity Printing Company has printed 28 million Bibles and New Testaments, and pray that this work continues. Thanks to funds from *Opportunity 21*, vans are bringing Scriptures to rural distribution points. Pray for more vans for this work.

SUDAN – Despite a civil war and religious persecution, Sudan is in the midst of a spiritual revival. Please pray that God will help our United Bible Society partners to distribute 10 million Scriptures there in the next seven years.

RWANDA – Offer thanks for peace and stability in the country. Pray for distribution of 100,000 *Living in Hope* Scripture Portions to people with HIV/AIDS.

BIBLE FILLS 'VALUE VACUUM' IN ROMANIA

BUCHAREST, ROMANIA — THE doors of the Sfanta Macrina Drop-in Center for Street Children in Romania are always open. Day or night, kids living on the streets of Bucharest can come in for a hot meal and a bath. And they can also hear the Word of God.

On a recent morning at the center, during a Bible lesson, 12-year-old Alexandra reads fluently from Luke's gospel while other children listen intently: "... He has brought down mighty kings from their thrones and lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things." The words have a particular resonance for this street child, who has experienced much suffering in her young life. The daughter of an abusive, alcoholic mother, Alexandra ran away from home and now lives in a hut she built outside Bucharest. Every day, she makes her living by begging and selling merchandise to drivers waiting at traffic lights.

She is one of the thousands of Romanian children who survive by their wits on the streets, the legacy of a collapsed communist regime and social disarray.

Deacon Valentin Badescu from the cultural sector of the Orthodox Church says, "Since the fall of communism, many Romanians have suffered a 'value vacuum.' We need to restate the values of God in our society and a good way of doing this is through teaching children about God's Word."

The center, which the Christian community in Bucharest opened in 1994, does that, providing a safe haven, in which children read the Bible and learn how to live a life that is rooted in God's Word. The Bibles distributed by the Interconfessional Bible Society in Romania are



UNITED BIBLE SOCIETIES/RUNE HANSEN

▲ Alexandra receives care for body and spirit from Dr. Deaconu at a Romanian center for street kids.

provided through support of the *Opportunity 21* program. This project, jointly sponsored by the American Bible Society, the United Bible Societies and the Maclellan Foundation, works to translate and distribute Scriptures around the world.

The charity at work mending lives at the center makes the Gospel message all the more persuasive. Dr. Deaconu says, "We teach them that the God of the Bible created us and cares about all of us. And that God forgives us for our sins. God's mercy is as large as an ocean, which swallows all our sins."

With the care the center gives, along with the hope the Scriptures promise, Alexandra and other street children can hope for a better future. ■



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CELEBRATE THE PROMISE

The people who live in darkness will see a great light.

Matthew 4.16 GNT



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