

GIDEON NEWS

Spring/Summer
2018



**Central London
Opens Doors**

Page 4

**Angry, Atheist,
Alcoholic**

Page 10

**Spiritual Aid
for Ambulance
Crews**

Page 18



4



10



12



14



23



21



24

CONTENTS

Regulars

From the Executive Director	3
Devotional – Take more risks	30

London Outreach

Central London opens doors	4
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Testimonies

My fresh hope	9
Angry, atheist and alcoholic	10
How a journey into darkness ended	12

Project Updates

Hotel survey bears fruit	14
Schools ministry adapts	16

Branch News

Spiritual aid for ambulance crews	18
A friend inside	19
Police order Testaments	20
A hundred out to cricket club	21

International

Pacific Island joins Gideon Family	22
------------------------------------	----

News and reports

New website launch	24
Become a <i>Torchbearer</i>	25
President's Report	26
Ladies' President's Report	28
Treasurer's Report	29

GET IN TOUCH...

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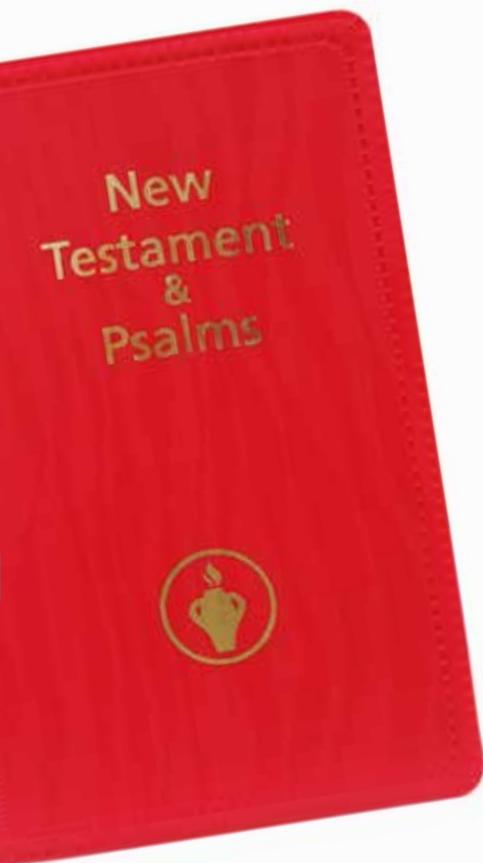
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FROM THE Executive Director



“Remember your Creator in the days of your youth.....” Ecclesiastes 12:1

“Even when I am old and grey, do not forsake me, O God.....” Psalm 71:18

These verses refer to people at both ends of life’s spectrum, age groups that Gideons seek to reach with the precious Word of God, age groups that need to know about Jesus; one group as they start out in life, the other as they reach the end of life’s journey.

We give thanks to the Lord for the, literally, millions of small red Youth Testaments that, by God’s grace and enabling, have been presented to school pupils. Many of us will remember receiving our ‘Gideon’ Testament and, for an increasing number of school pupils that Testament will be the first copy of God’s Word they will receive, let alone open and read.

- Please pray that the Lord will open the doors of every school in this country, allowing pupils to be offered Testaments, to receive them, to read them, and come to know Jesus. Let’s pray BIG prayers to our BIG God; too often we limit God.
- If you are aware of ‘closed’ schools in your area pray specifically for them by name, and encourage local churches and fellowships to pray. Let’s cry out to God for HIS intervention; for God to have mercy on these pupils who are being denied HIS Word.
- Many Gideon branches are struggling to visit every ‘open’ school in their area, and with more and more schools asking Gideons to take entire lessons rather than speak for a few minutes at a traditional school assembly, the pressure on time is growing. If you have a heart for this work and feel you could be involved in Gideon work in schools please contact National Office and we will put you in touch with local Gideons; we would love to hear from you and speak to you about Gideon membership.
- In the Spring/Summer 2017 edition of Gideon News we shared about the special project being

undertaken in London to support local Gideons in opening schools to receive Scriptures, a great number of schools not having been visited for many years, or never having been visited at all. The results have been so encouraging, thank you for your prayers; schools of different faiths and none have opened their door to Gideons.....but there is still so much to do in London and we would very much like to extend this work to other areas of the country. Please pray that we will receive the funds to enable this work to expand, and if you feel a burden from the Lord to help fund this vital work please contact us at National Office to find out more.

What about the other end of life’s journey? Gideons are well known for the Bible by the bedside in hotel rooms, but what about rooms in Care and Residential Homes, often occupied for 24 hours every day? We want to ensure that a Large Print New Testament and Psalms is available in every room in every Care and Residential Home.

- Again, please pray that this will be achieved and that many people in such establishments will, in their later years, come to know the Lord Jesus as Saviour.
- Maybe you are reading this as a resident in a Care or Residential Home; if you don’t have Bibles in every room please ask the owner to let us know and Gideons will be delighted to provide God’s Word completely free of charge.
- Or maybe you are reading this as a visitor to a Care or Residential Home; if there are no Bibles and the home is willing to have them please let us know.

We serve a gracious and merciful God “who wants all to be saved.....” (1 Timothy 2:4). May we do all we can to ensure that those at both ends of life’s journey, and every stage in between, have the opportunity to read about Jesus.....and be saved.

Thank you for your support.

Yours in Christ

Iain J Mair
Executive Director



“Hotel staff ran down the street after us and asked for Polish Testaments.”



CENTRAL LONDON OPENS DOORS

In September 2017 the third in a series of four annual periods of Scripture distribution took place in London in support of the local branches. Over 70 members from across the UK converged on Central London to visit hotels, hostels, care homes, funeral directors and surgeries. This leaves South London to be covered in 2018.

Teams went out from the base hotel in Golders Green and four churches: St Paul's Hammersmith, St Paul's Robert Adam Street, Lambeth Methodist Mission and All Hallows Bow. At each of these venues teams prayed together and were briefed before they went out with a list of establishments to visit. Within the congestion zone teams travelled mainly by public transport making small placements and taking orders for larger placements to be made from our delivery van.

A letter had been sent to Sadiq Khan, the Mayor of London, asking if he would accept a Bible. The reply said he did not have time to receive it in person but would be pleased to have one delivered to his office. Jane Mann, Cambridge Branch, duly delivered the Bible to City Hall.

Responses from the establishments varied. Many of the larger hotels were unwilling to accept Bibles for their rooms for fear of causing offence, but others were delighted to have them. At one top hotel the Manager was delighted to receive a New Testament but also said he had long wanted to read the Old Testament as well so was given a Bible too. Several hostels also accepted Bibles.

A Cypriot Christian hotel owner "wanted to promote Christianity".

At another hotel Neil and Rhoda Bourne, Westminster Branch, met the owner who was a Cypriot Christian. She had been in the business for many years but had never had Gideon Bibles and so was delighted to receive 75, saying she "wanted to promote Christianity".

At the Town Hall Hotel in Bethnal Green, Andrew and Sarah West, Cambridge Branch, were told by the receptionist that they do not put Bibles in the rooms.

They continued to talk to him about the hotels that take them and why they do and he suggested that they spoke to his Manager. The Manager said that he used to be the Housekeeper Manager at The Waldorf Hotel in the West End when two Gideons came to see him there. He had agreed to have the Bibles at The Waldorf and said that he would also love to have them here. He was pleased to accept 140 Bibles for the rooms.

Iain Gray, Oxford Branch, and Gillian Newham, London North West Branch, received a good welcome at one hotel and established that a further 10 Bibles were required for the bedrooms. They also handed out a number of New Testaments for members of staff. On their way out, the Head Concierge, Thomaz, came up to them. He shared some personal difficulties that he was experiencing and they could see the deep pain in his face and demeanour. He described himself as feeling like his wings had been clipped. They talked for a while, sharing the love of God, and pointed him to the Helps in both the English and Polish New Testaments. They went down the street and prayed that Thomaz might experience peace from God in his life.



Iain and Gillian experienced a very positive morning, with almost every clinic they visited in the Harley Street area accepting a Bible for their waiting areas. Consequently, they and another team ran out of Bibles. They stopped for lunch at a pavement café so that they could easily be restocked from the van.

“When a delivery of Bibles and New Testaments was piled on café chairs seven customers asked to have one.”

On its arrival, they quickly made the transfer, ending up with Bibles and New Testaments piled up on café chairs and their table. They were watched with surprise by the other customers and the lady adjacent to them asked if she could have one. They gladly gave her a New Testament, which led to another customer asking for one. The chain reaction continued, leading to six New Testaments being given to other customers and a passer-by. Gillian then had a long conversation with a Mexican lady on the adjacent table about her son, who was about to start a university course in London. The outcome of

this conversation was that she asked for a New Testament for her son. So a “chance” choice of a place to have lunch led to seven New Testaments being handed out.

On the Friday morning came the news of the explosion at Parsons Green underground station. The Lord had overruled as that area had been covered on Wednesday and Thursday and no teams were due to go near there on Friday. One of our teams was in the immediate vicinity of the underground station on Wednesday where they met a man at the reception of a surgery. Teresa Lovering, Devon North Branch, offered a Bible for the waiting room and the man said he would also like one for himself as he was intending to buy a Bible on Saturday.

Personal encounters

There were many opportunities for personal witnessing as members visited the various establishments and during special outreach events. Alan Hall, Coleraine Branch, met Philip, a homeless man, outside St Pancras station and was able to witness to him. As he left Philip was reading his New Testament.

Tristan Kinnear, Lagan Valley Branch, was just below Westminster Bridge when he met a young lad aged about 11 with his grandfather from Iraq. The lad said, “This is my most favourite verse” and opened the Testament and read

John 1:1. “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.”

As was the case in previous years, care homes were generally receptive to having Large Print Testaments for their residents and Testaments for their staff. Annabel Howes, Camberley & SE Berks Branch, and Ian Seabrook, Havering Branch, visited Barchester Cheverton Lodge, Archway, but had to wait to see the Manager, who was in a meeting. While they waited they were able to give out several Testaments to staff. Christiana, who was also waiting to see staff to make enquiries on behalf of her mother, accepted a Testament and was reading it while she waited. Eventually they were able to provide Testaments for the care home.

This year we had a number of foreign language Testaments available and several staff in hotels were delighted to receive a New Testament in their own language. The manager of one hotel not only accepted Bibles for the hotel but also a New Testament in Arabic for himself. We also had cards advertising the Gideon Bible App, which people can use to read or listen to the Bible in their own language. These were well received by many hotel receptionists from overseas.

Stort Valley Branch member, David Swindale’s team called at a hotel and the man at reception readily accepted a Testament and started reading it having



called for the Duty Manager. She arrived and announced that the hotel didn't have Bibles in the rooms and they were not interested in having Bibles, because the rooms were too small. She was asked what language she spoke and she said "Polish". She was then offered a Polish Testament which she said she would accept. When it was handed to her she was silent, and then, when prompted, said she was so excited that she would be able to show her mother at Christmas. She then said she would have a word with the owner about placing Bibles in the rooms.

We walked down the street and called at the next hotel a few doors away and, whilst we were inside, a member of staff at the first hotel ran down the street after us and asked if he could have a Polish Testament. Then he was followed by a female member of staff from the same hotel who said she was Polish and requested a Testament. So from an initial refusal came three Polish Testaments and the possibility of an open door. Mihaela, a Romanian lady who cleaned the room for Neil and Rhoda in the base hotel, had very little English, and her response on receiving a Romanian Testament was "Happy, Happy". She was overjoyed!

On Thursday evening teams were offering New Testaments at Oxford Circus and at Leicester Square. Altogether the two teams distributed 600 New Testaments plus a number of foreign language editions. It was a very satisfying evening: people took the Testaments willingly and there was an opportunity to pray with four Jordanian youths who wanted to know about Jesus.

On Saturday teams went out into Central London with Testaments, which included some foreign language editions. Neil and Rhoda led a team of seven in the morning in the Oxford Street area and handed out 150 Scriptures. One was offered to a young man who happily received it, saying he was on his way to a wedding where he was reading a Scripture which he produced on a piece of paper from his bag. He was very happy to be given a Testament and took another to give to the married couple.





In the afternoon Neil and Rhoda's team moved to the Grenfell Tower area where their team of five distributed 100 Scriptures. At Ladbrooke Grove Fire Station they gave 10 Testaments to firefighter Dan for his watch, who were first on the scene for the Grenfell Tower fire.

On Sunday members visited three churches to report on the Scripture Focus. Roger Howes, Camberley & SE Berks Branch, who was part of the team at a church in Kentish Town, noticed that the church was about a mile from where he had been a student and enquired if they had contact with students. This revealed that they owned accommodation for students with 10 rooms and so we were able to present 10 Bibles for them.

A van team at the London Scripture Focus met this Hotel Manager pictured above at his hotel in Kings Cross to deliver 90 Bibles requested earlier in the day.

When the team arrived the Manager was delighted to welcome them and insisted the driver and his mate stay for lunch while he emailed the other 12 hotels in the chain to make sure they were aware of the offer of Bibles.

When the team came to leave the Manager asked for a further 70 Bibles. 160 rooms now equipped with the Word of God.

The final estimate was that about 7,500 Scriptures were distributed. We thank all those who prayed for this event and those who took part, and request you pray that as people read the Scriptures placed in establishments or presented to them personally, many may come to know Jesus as their Saviour.



Former England footballer, Ian Wright MBE, was given a Testament and thanked Ian Mullen, Belfast Branch, with "Thank you and God bless." He was later seen reading it.

Submitted by Roger Howes,
London Scripture Focus Coordinator



MY FRESH HOPE

Neill Hudson wrote to National Office to explain how his faith was restored.

"I am a 50-year-old Christian who used to work for the Salvation Army. I had just got married, and like most young families we were finding things tough financially. I left the Salvation Army employment and as things became more difficult, the more hours I would work. Eventually I found myself working seven days a week just to keep our heads above water.

A few years came and went. I worked what seemed like incredibly long hours and saw less and less of my family, and I missed them as much as I know they missed me. I became incredibly tired and eventually went to see the family doctor who took some blood tests.

The following morning I received a phone call telling me I had late-onset type 1 diabetes. I was shocked but not particularly surprised by the diagnosis as all my family had

been diagnosed with the same condition. But I not only walked away from the Lord but I committed one of the worst sins I could: I led my family away from the Lord also.

In September 2017 I was admitted to Cheltenham General Hospital where I had my left leg amputated below the knee. The next day I was in my wheelchair feeling sorry for myself, packing my belongings away in my locker when I found a New Testament & Psalms placed by The Gideons.

I let it fall open and you hear of people having these wonderful epiphanies but there it was! Psalm 46, "Be still, and know that I am God."

What a foolish man I had been. I tried leading my family when all I needed to do was leave it with the Lord. I've done that tonight in my hospital bed. I rang my wife and we prayed together on the phone and we are going to go back to church.

Things are still quite tough but I am excited after rededicating my life to the Lord."



ANGRY, ATHEIST, ALCOHOLIC

Yvonne Edwards, pictured above, tells how she escaped her three A's.

In August 1995, shortly after my 35th birthday, I was admitted to hospital suffering from chronic alcoholism. I had everything to live for yet was unable to stop drinking. I came from a loving family, was well educated, had a good earning capacity and had married a kind, gentle, loving man who provided a beautiful home for me and our three sons. On admission to hospital I was two stone underweight, had an enlarged liver and my skin had a strange yellow hue.

I had no financial worries or health concerns (other than those caused by my alcoholism), a wide circle of friends and no external circumstances which could justify my drinking and my complete inability to leave it alone no matter how great my desire to do so. Through the kindness of my husband, doctor and friends I had been given access to every available means to do

something about my drinking. This included counselling, medication and reward-based abstinence – my dear husband would promise me a holiday, a new car, even a new kitchen, if I would only stop or control my drinking. There were brief periods of abstinence but they never lasted.

I had taken my first drink aged 15 and over the ensuing 20 years alcoholism had crept up on me. What had seemed for many years to be my friend had become my vicious master. I was drinking to satisfy a need far beyond my control.

In the early part of 1995 I had even attended meetings of an organisation which seeks to offer a programme of recovery to alcoholics. Yet again I managed a brief period of abstinence only to drink again after a matter of weeks. At these meetings I heard various people mention God or a higher power which had helped them. I was an ardent, angry atheist and immediately dismissed these people as foolish and deluded.

I'd been convent educated and rebelled utterly against any conception of God

(Christian or otherwise). I'd basically taken the reins of my life as a very young teenager and run things my own way with a complete disregard for any spiritual dimension. I had decided I could be kind, thoughtful, loving and giving on my own terms (although I must say if you lived with me over any period of time you would not use those adjectives to describe my behaviour!). As somebody said to me, "The shop window looked nice but what was going on in the stock room?" Well in my case I was suffering from complete spiritual bankruptcy and utter ignorance of my condition.

On admission to the hospital which specialised in the treatment of alcoholics and addicts I was given my own room. A very kind person I had met at the group meetings I attended had heard I was there and drove out to see me. She suggested I try and talk to God and when she left me I just felt sorry for her! However, I did start to think about what she'd said as I walked in the grounds. I returned to my room and sat on my bed. Deciding I needed a distraction I opened the bedside drawer hoping to see a copy of Vogue, Cosmopolitan, OK or Hello magazine. Instead there was a Gideon Bible.

I picked it up and began to flick through the pages and I stopped randomly in Luke's gospel at Luke 7:37 which begins, "And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner" Immediately I read those words I knew what was wrong with me. I fell on my knees besides my bed and whilst reading through the rest of this chapter I wept bitter tears in the knowledge that Jesus was real, God existed and I had been blessed with the gift of life which I'd spent 35 years living in sinful rebellion and in denial of the very existence of my Creator and Father. How could I have been so blind?

"I opened the bedside drawer hoping to see a copy of Vogue, Cosmopolitan, OK or Hello magazine. Instead there was a Gideon Bible."

An enormous sense of peace swept over me and I felt the presence of my loving Father in my mind, heart, soul and body.

My only fear was that, if I slept, the peace I'd experienced would be gone by morning. On awakening it was still there and has never left me. I knew there and then that my drink problem had been removed and, by God's grace and miracle-healing power, I have been sober for over 22 years now. The thought of a drink has never entered my head.

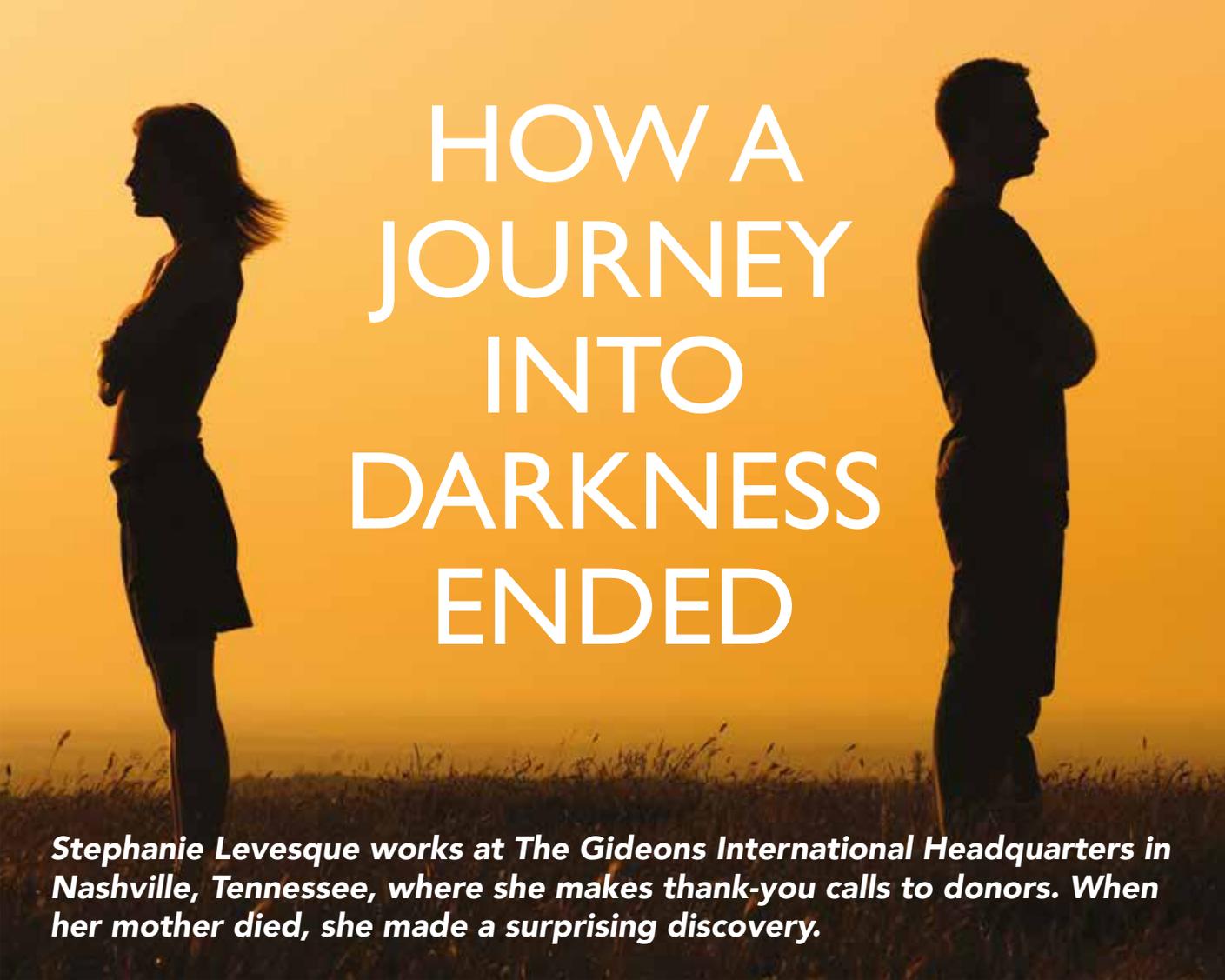
I remained in hospital for a further three weeks. Although my physical health also improved immensely I had agreed to stay for a month and I knew my family would be more convinced by my actions than my promises which I'd broken so many times. I continued reading the Bible and the first thing I did when I was allowed out was to buy my own copy in the local bookshop. I still have it today, very tatty and falling apart.

On returning home I wanted to join a church and went to the local Anglo-Catholic church. I knew I needed to hear God's Word and learn about Him.

I tried to talk with the Vicar about what had happened to me but it was a very confused and awkward conversation although I continued attending services. My middle son started nursery and I met a lovely mum in the playground who was also a parent and I also met her husband. They were so warm and friendly and we chatted each school day for a couple of weeks. It transpired he was the Pastor of a local Baptist Church. They invited me along and I have been a very grateful and happy member there for 21 years.

Life has not always been plain sailing. My husband died very suddenly and relatively young from a heart attack when our sons were aged 11, 13 and 19, but God has never left me. I can only ever give Him thanks that He sent His Son the Lord Jesus to die for me, become a sin sacrifice in my place, and to purchase my freedom and give me eternal assurance of life. It is all of Him and all of Grace.

"By God's grace and miracle - healing power I have been sober for over 22 years now."



HOW A JOURNEY INTO DARKNESS ENDED

Stephanie Levesque works at The Gideons International Headquarters in Nashville, Tennessee, where she makes thank-you calls to donors. When her mother died, she made a surprising discovery.

While on one of my many phone calls, I felt compelled to ask the donor why he faithfully supported The Gideons. He asked me if I knew that God's Word was powerful, did I know that it was life changing, did I know that God's Word was alive? Yes, I answered him. I did know all of those things. His questions caused me to think about a testimony I had read recently.

It was about a woman who grew up very religious. She was taught that her good deeds and her good behaviour would get her to heaven if she was good enough. She married a man who was in seminary to become a pastor, when she was very young. Their family felt complete after they had a little boy and then a little girl.

After a few years in seminary, her husband decided he no longer wanted to be a pastor, but instead wanted to pursue a career in law enforcement. He moved his family from Tennessee to South Florida to start this new career. He was promoted fast. He moved up the ranks to work undercover in organized crime, and eventually, as a homicide detective.

His family was the all-American family. They went to church every Sunday. He served as a deacon and taught Sunday School with his wife. They were very involved in the activities of the church. Life looked so promising. As time went on though this man's drive for success in his career served him well in law enforcement, but not at home. The long hours away from home began to take their toll on his family. The marriage fell apart, and soon they were divorced.

Gone were the plans to serve God as a pastor and pastor's wife. Gone were the church friends and church family. Gone were the dreams of being the all-American family. Everything was different now. The woman was devastated by the divorce. She was now a single mom raising two small children on her own. Her extended family lived in Tennessee and she was now in South Florida alone and life was not turning out the way she had planned it.

She was wounded by her divorce, and she felt rejected by the only man she had ever loved. She believed that she had disappointed everyone in her life, including, and especially, God. The day that she walked away from her marriage, she also believed that she had walked away from God. How could she serve God now? Disillusioned with life and with God, the woman started to do things she never thought she would do. Desperate for relief, she looked for anything that would ease the pain and fill the void inside her.

The next five years would take her on a journey into darkness that would almost take her life on more than one occasion. She wanted the attention and love of a man. Her self-esteem was so low that she would even sacrifice her well-being for that love and acceptance. The men in her life would hit her and would be verbally abusive. In fact, one man beat her so badly, her own two children did not recognize her when she came home from the hospital. That man would later be charged and convicted with attempted murder.



During this time she and her two kids basically lived on the run. They lived in fear, and learned to be ready to move at a moment's notice by packing all their belongings into her vehicle and making a quick get-away. Now her life was filled with constant abuse, constant running, and constant shame.

She moved her two kids around so often that they lost track of the number of schools they attended. They hated to see their mom hit and verbally abused. They would lie in their beds at night with the covers pulled up over their heads. Her little girl prayed that God would help her stay awake at bedtime. All the bad stuff seemed to happen at night and she reasoned that if she could stay awake when she was put to bed, then nothing bad would happen to her mom.

Their lives were total chaos now and the only way she could escape was through alcohol and prescription drugs. This only made her spiral deeper and deeper into depression. She even contemplated taking her own life. The shame weighed heavy on her now. If God was disappointed with her before, what did He think of her now? She no longer recognized the woman staring back at her in the mirror.

Now, in her early thirties, she was a shell of the person she once had been. Where there had once been so much promise, there was only pain. The years of hard living had finally caught up with her. She was rushed to a hospital in South Florida with chest pain and shortness of breath where she was hospitalized and diagnosed with Myocarditis (inflammation and damage to the heart muscle). She was placed in the ICU where a single curtain separated her from the next bed. The woman in that bed had been diagnosed with terminal cancer and she had friends who would come to visit her daily. Those friends would read the Bible out loud to her, they would pray for their friend, and sometimes they would sing to her.

Those precious friends never knew that the woman lying on the other side of the curtain, who was so disillusioned with life, was deeply affected by their time at the hospital. After these ladies would leave, she would reach into that nightstand beside her hospital bed and pull out the Gideon Bible, and she would read God's Word. This time was different though. The Words came alive to her. She was tired of running, tired of hiding.

She finally surrendered her life to God. Holding that Gideon-placed Bible in her hands she told God that if He would heal

her, she would never stop telling others what He had done for her. God did just that! She was released from the hospital and started a new life. She began attending a small church with her two kids. This small church literally loved her back to Jesus.

They took this little family under their wings and ministered to their needs. This woman fell in love with God and His Word. She became a mentor to many women over the years who had struggled just like she had. She was also a teaching leader for a Bible Study group. God had given her a second chance, and she did not waste it.

This woman was my mother. She was tragically killed in an automobile accident at 67 years of age on December 6, 2011.

I was devastated by her death. I received a phone call at the Gideons International Headquarters to rush to the hospital as she had been in a serious car accident. After leaving the hospital on that dark day I went to my mom's house. It was there I found a folder sitting on her desk where she had typed out her testimony. A few weeks before her death she had been asked to share it at a Woman's Shelter in Nashville.

For the very first time, I found her story of the Gideon Bible in that folder. I wept as I read her words. I never knew. This is what I do know. God can use your biggest failure as your biggest platform. He can take the thing that you think disqualifies you and use it for your good and His glory! That thing that causes you so much shame, can be your biggest opportunity for God. He came for the sick, not the well. We are all sin sick and He is a God of second chances.

I want to thank you for what you do, and to tell you to never, ever quit! My mom's life was changed for all eternity because, when she needed it the most, God's Word was within arm's reach. My mom's life was not the only one affected by her decision. I was the little girl hiding underneath the covers at night, begging God to help me stay awake to protect my mom.

When my mom surrendered her life to Christ, it changed all our lives. Thank you for your faithfulness! My mom is in heaven today because she found Jesus in the pages of the book in the bedside table.



Stephanie Levesque, pictured, gave this testimony at the 2017 International Convention in Kansas City

HOTEL SURVEY PROJECT BEARS FRUIT

If you fancy a night away in a hotel there are certainly plenty to choose from.

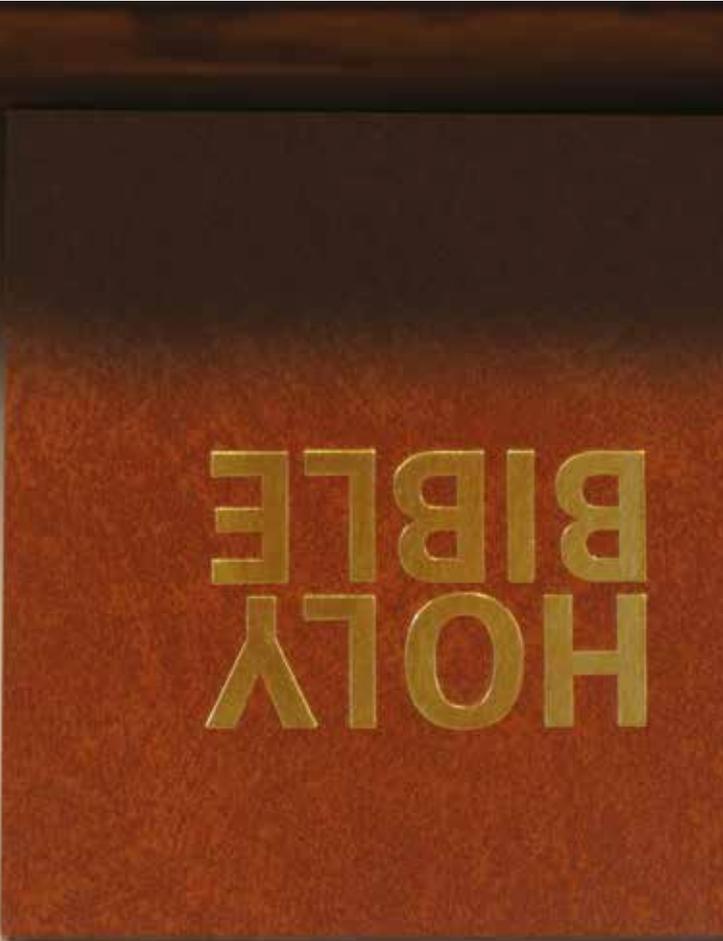
The Hotel Industry Magazine says that there are 45,000 hotels in the UK and that figure excludes small guest houses and B&Bs. A night away could be in the heart of a vibrant city or in a remote location, miles away from anywhere. It was once said that if The Gideons had not found a hotel it must be remote!

Over the past three years The Gideons have been running the Hotel Survey Project. This aims to contact as many hotels, guest houses and B&Bs as possible by letter and telephone to offer each one free Gideon Bibles. So far over 15,000 establishments have been contacted and Bibles placed in the rooms of many of them.

Some of these hotels had not previously been found by The Gideons. Now they have, and the Bible is in the room to prove it. One such guest house was on the Isle of Arran in the Clyde where a lady and her husband were overjoyed to be offered and receive four Gideon Bibles. The husband admitted that this was the first time in the 20 years of business that they had been offered Bibles. One of the Gideon Branch members said, "It may have missed the Branch radar but not that of the Hotel Survey Project team!"

The hotels, guest houses and B&Bs that were contacted included some where previous visits by The Gideons had not got beyond the receptionist. In others our letter had identified that the hotel's Gideon Bibles were old and tired and needed to be replaced with new ones. This has now happened and to date as a result of the Hotel Survey Project over 21,000 Gideon Bibles are in rooms waiting for guests to read them and for the Lord to speak through His Word to each reader.

As members have placed the Bibles they have been blessed with some encouraging responses from hotel



"The husband admitted that this was the first time in the 20 years of business that they had been offered Bibles. One of the Gideon Branch members said, "It may have missed the Branch radar but not that of the Hotel Survey Project team!""



staff. Please give thanks for the privilege of placing these Bibles where they are needed and pray that the Lord will use every one to bring someone to a closer knowledge of Himself.

Grand opportunity

Recently, the Brighton & Hove Branch have benefitted from help given by National Office in updating the database of hotels in the area and identifying some premises where Bibles can be placed. Branch member David Goldin followed up those requests, in some cases providing Bibles for the first time while, in others, further "top-up" supplies had been requested.

On one occasion, David was to visit the 5-star Grand Hotel (202 rooms) situated on Brighton sea front, where a further 60 Bibles had been asked for. On his arrival, he realised there would be difficulty in parking his car on site, due to extensive building work being carried out to the facade, seriously reducing any car access close to the main entrance. However, as David said, "I need not to have worried, because the Lord was obviously in control of the situation."

David telephoned his hotel contact, only to find she wasn't available, so he made the decision to leave the Bibles there anyway, rather than delay delivery. He says, "I drove to the front entrance as best I could, in spite of much scaffolding in the parking area, as well as a number of builders' vehicles in the vicinity. I was greeted by a commissionaire, who asked the purpose of my visit, to which I replied that we had been asked for some additional Gideon Bibles to be delivered." David continues his story by saying, "With great excitement

the commissionaire said, 'Gideons, that's great. We love having Gideon Bibles at our hotel.'"

The commissionaire allowed David to double park and, once that was done, he said to David, "I'm a born-again Christian and reading the parables at present. Which one do you like?" David admits to being put on the spot and says that he briefly shared some thoughts about the parable of the Prodigal Son. To this the man responded, "I agree, and we also really need Jesus in this dark city."

Another member of the hotel staff helped to carry the boxes into the building and, while the three of them were together, the commissionaire asked that he be allowed to hold the last box while he prayed. David says, "Of course, I readily agreed to his request and he prayed for these Bibles, that God would bless and use them to help many who visit the hotel. Still standing in the street, the commissionaire then prayed a lovely prayer, thanking God for the work of The Gideons. The Spirit of the Lord was truly there!"

David closes his story by saying, "I then presented both men with a Personal Worker Testament for which they were very grateful. I left the Grand, to go on my way to other hotels, amazed at the Lord's presence, knowing that He had overruled in providing an opportunity to know that one of our largest hotels now has a Bible in every bedroom! Praise God."

Submitted by Tony Lovering, Scripture and Membership Development Manager

SCHOOLS MINISTRY CHANGING TIMES

For many years Gideon members have been privileged to speak to school pupils at assemblies and offer each a copy of the New Testament & Psalms.

We are very grateful for the prayers of members and Friends who pray for this important aspect of Gideon work. Your prayers have ensured that the doors of many schools remain open to Gideons. Please continue to pray that this will be the case, and where doors are closed pray they will be opened.

However, although God's Word never changes, the way that Gideons are operating in schools is changing. Many schools are no longer holding traditional assemblies and so Gideons need to adapt their approach. Often we are asked to take classroom lessons, usually a Religious Education (RE) class. This obviously puts additional time and manpower pressures on Gideon branches. The task of covering say ten one-hour lessons in a week is obviously much greater than one fifteen-minute assembly, in order to speak to the same number of pupils and present the same number of Testaments. Your prayers are much needed and greatly appreciated.

In addition to the obvious requirement for more time to be given to schools work by local Gideons, we were also faced with the need to provide training to Gideons who are called on to deliver lessons. Most Gideons have no teaching experience and therefore need to be trained. When the Gideon leadership was praying and considering what to do about this, they were introduced to Lat Blaylock from the National Association of Teachers of Religious Education (NATRE).

Lat is the editor of RE Today magazine and an adviser with them. He provides professional development opportunities for several thousand primary and secondary school teachers every year in a variety of local authority, diocesan and other contexts, and has a national reputation for practicality and inspiration. Over the past three years Lat has worked with the Gideon Schools Working Group to develop practical and inspirational material, including lesson plans for Gideons and teachers, and has delivered training to many Gideon members in locations around the country.

As well as producing lesson plans for members and teachers, Lat has produced a Code of Conduct that Gideons present to schools in order to explain how they will work with them. Amongst other things, this document explains how Gideons work in different school contexts (see box on the opposite page). You can obtain a copy of the full document by contacting Gideon National Office. Please continue to pray for this important ministry.



ADAPTS TO

How we work in different school contexts

Members of The Gideons who visit schools recognise that there are three main contexts in which visitors from religious communities participate in school life:

- collective worship or school assembly
- the curriculum (including RE lessons for example)
- voluntary groups, such as lunchtime or after school Christian Union groups.

Each context is distinct, and requires a suitable approach.

In collective worship pupils are offered opportunities for spiritual and moral development. A visitor from The Gideons might explain with a story or personal experience why the Christian Scriptures have proved so valuable to so many, and ask pupils to think about the ideas presented from their own point of view. The invitation to receive a copy of the Scriptures always respects the right of the pupil to say 'no' politely!

In lessons, including RE lessons, pupils are engaged in the task of learning. Gideon visitors are not teachers, but are pleased to work with teachers to contribute to lessons in which the wisdom of the Bible is explored in interesting ways. Such lessons can build on the free gift of copies of the Scriptures, aiming to be informative, to help develop pupils' understanding, and maybe also challenge pupils to reflect on their own commitments. Visitors will want to think carefully about the educational aims of the session(s) or contributions that they offer so careful shared planning is always welcome.

In voluntary extra-curricular groups, such as a Christian Union in a school, some pupils may wish to share their belief through a regular meeting or club outside curriculum time. Pupils, teachers, parents or visitors may take the lead in organising this. Visitors to such groups from The Gideons are pleased to be participating in the life of the community of religion or belief, on school premises. This special opportunity is taken seriously, and Gideon volunteers seek appropriate liaison between staff and pupils in the school.

Extracted from the Code of Conduct

Schools Testament retrieved from kitchen drawer

In 2001, I was working at the then Midland Bank. I was in the office when a colleague came in saying that the Twin Towers had come down. My initial thoughts were one of shock and amazement that people would actually do something like that. I rushed home and watched the footage on the TV, but I realised that it was a spiritual battle that we were all involved in. This I believe was the starting point to my conversion.

I had always believed in God, but I was not born again. I had lived a sinful life in the world for 37 years, and had no relationship with the Saviour. Then three things happened to me in close proximity.

Firstly, as a family we had gone to York for a short weekend break. This was a very difficult time for me as I became convicted of my sin. The Holy Spirit had brought conviction into my heart, and I was reminded of past sins, and the way I had lived apart from God.

I returned home very unsettled, knowing I had to search for forgiveness. At that time, Christian TV had just started to be broadcast. I realise that it's very much a mixture of good and poor teaching, but as I listened to a Pastor explain and talk about Jesus I knew I believed.

We had always kept a small Gideon Bible that was given to Karen, my wife, in the kitchen drawer. I began to read the pages and it helped me understand. It would have been given to pupils at Stanley High School, by Gideons in the 1970s.

My wife Karen gave her life to the Lord six months after myself, praise God! How thankful we are, for God's grace, the conviction of sin, and the Bible, the Word of God. Please be encouraged in your work that God's Word does not return to Him void.

Pastor Richard Hardy (Birkdale Bible Fellowship)

SPIRITUAL AID FOR AMBULANCE CREWS



The North West Ambulance Service (NWAS) has 6,000 employees across the whole of Zone 2 (North West England) and is equal with London as the largest ambulance trust in the UK.

Last August Diane Hardwick of the Rochdale Branch and David Perris of the Bolton Branch were invited to present Badged Testaments to Chief Executive, Derek Cartwright, and Chair of the Trust Board, Wyn Dignan.

Also present was Madeline Edgar, Communications Manager, who was of great assistance in working with Diane Hardwick to get Department of Health approval for the logo. This was needed as both the NWAS crest and the NHS logo had to be included in compliance with Department of Health Guidelines. Diane is a former Executive Director of NWAS and a former colleague of Mr Cartwright, so the presentation was relaxed, friendly and informal.

Madeline and Derek had worked with staff representatives to choose a prayer for insertion in the Testaments (see right).

Mr Cartwright and Mrs Dignan spoke of the stresses that staff face and referred to the Manchester bombing only three months previously. Staff representatives had taken part in a special BBC Songs of Praise and spoke of how their faith helps them in times of crisis. The trust has been reviewing their pastoral care plans as a result of this major incident and both the Chair and Chief Executive believed that the Testaments would help with this.

They were delighted with the look of the Testaments and felt that they would be very helpful to staff as they would fit into uniform pockets or in vehicle glove compartments. As of the day of presentation 50 Testaments had been requested via Trust HQ. The Trust will now issue information about the availability of the Testaments through bulletins to staff.

Mr Cartwright and Mrs Dignan also each accepted a gift of a Presentation Bible with the logo but wanted photographs of them receiving the Badged Testaments to encourage staff to accept them.

A Paramedic's Prayer

*Lord, you know what lies ahead of me this day.
The calls I will be asked to respond to,
and those who find themselves in situations
they never imagined and see no way out.*

*For them I humbly ask that you would speed
me on with attending angels at my side guiding
every decision and procedure.*

*To all who plead and those who cannot, I pray
to be a Good Samaritan as they look to me for
help and rescue.*

*Help me to save as many as I can, and should
mine be the last face they see, I pray they will
have looked into eyes that reflected your love
for them.*

In Jesus' Name Amen.

Anonymous

Submitted by Diane Hardwick,
Rochdale Branch



A FRIEND INSIDE

The Cricket pavilion in the background of this picture is the Brigade memorial to commemorate those Surrey Fire and Rescue Service personnel who fell in the two World Wars.

I have known Peter, an elder at a local Church, for many years, and he is a Friend of our Surrey Mid Branch. However, I only discovered recently that he works as a Project Specialist at the Surrey Fire and Rescue Service HQ in Reigate. Immediately the thought of Badged New Testaments for the Surrey Fire and Rescue Service came to mind, so I suggested it to him and he said he would make enquiries.

Sometime later Peter reported that the Assistant Chief Fire Officer for the County was in favour. We discovered that the 28 Fire and Rescue Stations across the County, together with HQ administrative staff, employ just short of 700 personnel. So 700 Testaments were ordered with the Service's crest on the new bright red cover specified for Fire and Rescue Brigades.

Subsequently it was arranged for three branch members to meet up with Steve, the Assistant Chief Fire Officer, at the Headquarters to discuss how best to distribute the Testaments to the 28 Fire Stations. He said they would be delivered by their supplies vehicle and notification would be given to all staff beforehand in official communications.

Steve mentioned his Army tour of duty in Afghanistan and how his son was now serving there. He had given a New Testament he owned to his son before departure as he thought he might need it. He also showed us the cricket pavilion at the Wray Park HQ site which had fallen into disrepair and had now been refurbished as a permanent Brigade memorial to commemorate the 100 or so Surrey Fire and Rescue Service personnel who fell in the two World Wars.

The outcome was an excellent Memorial Dedication Service on a beautiful, sunny October day last year. After the ceremony, our Zone 6 Trustee, Reg Harris, Zone 6 Trustee, was able to present Badged Presentation Bibles to the Surrey Chief Fire Officer, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey, the Lord Lieutenant of Surrey, the High Sheriff of Surrey, the Chairman of Surrey County Council and our Gideon Friend, Peter, who acted so effectively as the mediator.

We also asked if Steve had contacts with other emergency services in the South East, and if he would be willing to ask if they also might like Badged Testaments. He has numerous such

contacts and said, "They will be jealous when they see how attractive our Testaments are!"

Of these contacts, so far the South East Coast Ambulance Service (SECAMBS) has shown the most interest. The Senior Chaplain has shared the idea with all the other Chaplains and they are keen to go ahead. Tony Lovering, our National Scripture and Membership Development Manager, has started discussions to plan implementation. SECAMBS covers Kent, Surrey, East and West Sussex and a part of Hampshire, with numerous Ambulance Stations and many staff.

We give thanks to God for this sequence of unexpected developments, apparently springing from a "chance" question about Peter's job.

Submitted by Handley
Hammond (Zone 6 Vice Trustee)



POLICE ORDER TESTAMENTS

Reading a Gideon article about Badged Testaments being presented to other police forces, prompted Airedale & Wharfedale member Colin Kingsman to ask his son Tim, a senior officer with West Yorkshire Police, about the possibility of similar presentations to this force.

Tim duly obtained approval and Wendy Hall of the local Christian Police Association was put in touch with our Scripture and Membership Development Manager, Tony Lovering. An image of the West Yorkshire Police crest was provided to be printed on the front of the Service Testaments.

The initial order was for 2,000. These have been funded thanks to a substantial donation from the York Branch and by Airedale & Wharfedale members. We are praying many more Testaments will be required as there are some 8,000 officers and staff in West Yorkshire Police.

A prayer applicable to West Yorkshire Police has been inserted inside the front cover of the Testaments. These 2,000 inserts were stuck in by the Airedale & Wharfedale members at a social meeting involving much fun and fellowship.

The Testaments have been delivered to the West Yorkshire Police Chaplain, Dudley Martin, and we are waiting to hear

about the presentation arrangements. Earlier this year we were honoured to present the Chief Constable, Dee Collins, with a personally inscribed Bible at the Police Headquarters in Wakefield with Tim Kingsman in attendance.

Zone 3 Trustee, John Coldwell, with Airedale & Wharfedale members, Ian Hutchinson and Colin Kingsman, were very encouraged by the warm welcome they received and the enthusiasm for the work of The Gideons, expressed by the Chief Constable.

Submitted by Colin Kingsman, Airedale & Wharfedale Branch

YOUTHFUL ANNIVERSARIES

Members of the Lanarkshire North Branch have been busy recently, contacting and arranging presentations both to the Girls' and Boys' Brigades in their area.

One such presentation was made to the Girls of the 4th Coatbridge Company at the Middle Church of Scotland, Coatbridge. It was their 70th Anniversary (1947-2017) and all sections of the Company received a Badged Testament.

It was also the 75th Anniversary (1942-2017) of the 7th Coatbridge Company of the Boys' Brigade at this Church, and they too were presented with their Testaments.

Both Brigades received special labels and prayers in the Testaments to commemorate their respective anniversaries. In all, 400 Badged Testaments were given out to the Corps.

Submitted by Roy Logie, Lanarkshire North Branch



A HUNDRED OUT TO CRICKET CLUB



During a visit to Durham Branch earlier last year, Chris Axelby, Membership Recruitment Manager, suggested that we might consider presenting Badged Scriptures to Durham County Cricket Club.

Durham are cricket's newest county team having been granted first-class status in 1992. They won the title three times in six seasons between 2008 and 2013, but in late 2016 had been relegated to Division Two of the County Championship as a punishment for their financial problems. The sanction also meant Durham were no longer eligible to host Test matches, although they are able to continue hosting One Day Internationals (ODIs) and T20 internationals. They accepted £3.8m in financial aid from the England and Wales Cricket Board, but the price for that was relegation.

It was thought that the offer of the Scriptures would be timely and that folk associated with the Club were in need of encouragement. Even those accustomed to success in the world of sport may face times of difficulty and disappointment.

In November 2017 the branch presented three Badged Presentation Bibles for Sir Ian Botham (Chairman), the former first-class cricketer who represented England in 102 Test matches between 1974 and 1993, Mr David Harker (Chief Executive), and three-times Ashes-winner Mr Paul Collingwood (Club Captain). A native of County Durham, he had led his country to win the ICC World Twenty20 in 2010.

One hundred Badged New Testaments were provided for players and administration, support, ground and security staff.

Please pray that these Scriptures will be read and that they might achieve the purposes of God.

Submitted by Kelvin Ashley
Durham Branch Chairman

GIDEON SUPPORT FOR FOOTBALL CLUB



All the players and some staff of the Scottish Championship football club Livingston assembled for a presentation of New Testaments last year. Andrew Tullis, Samie Ghauri and Alex Forsyth from the West Lothian Branch met with the Chaplain of the club, Ivor Forrest, who had been so supportive and made the arrangements.

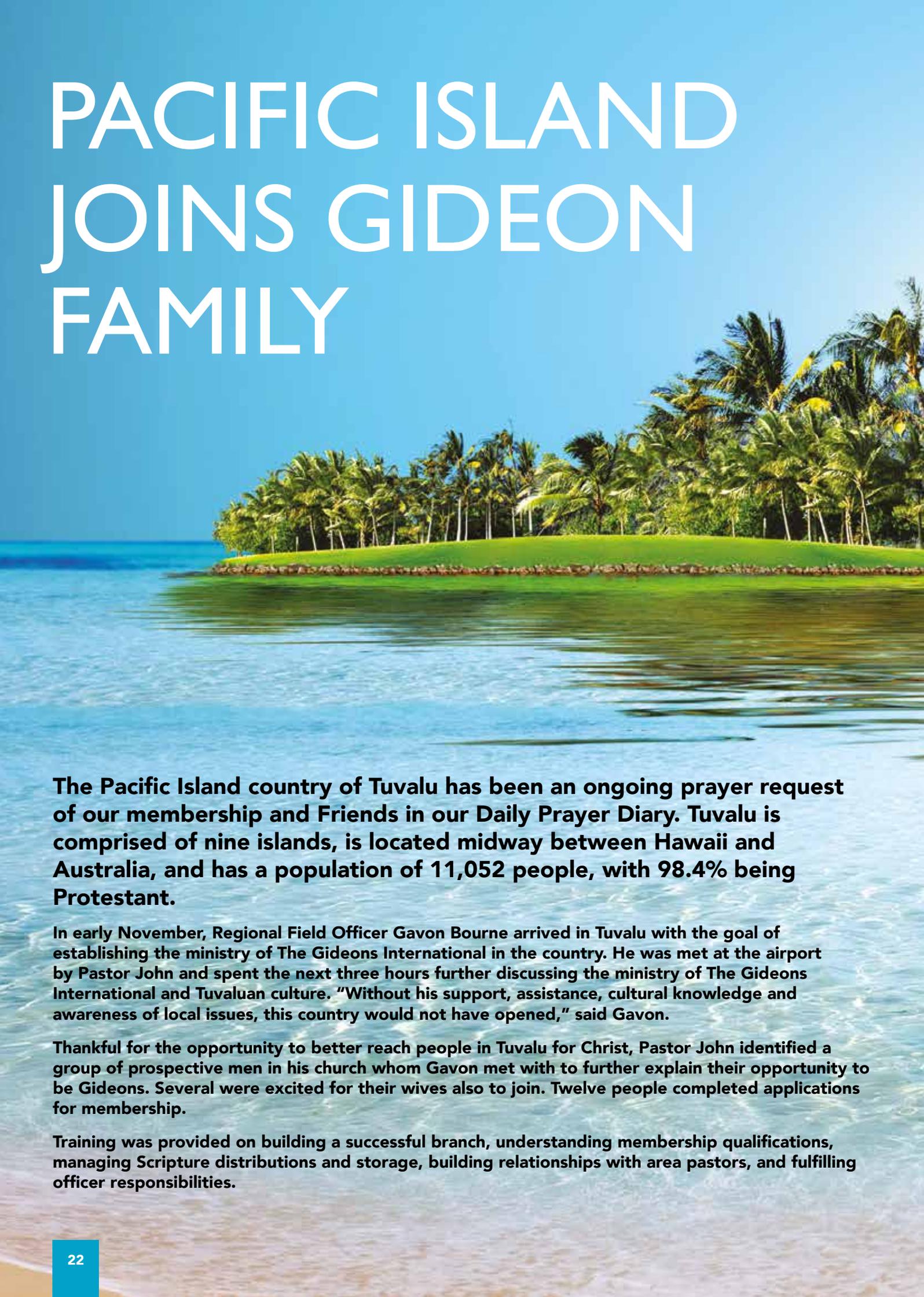
We were warmly received. Everyone present that morning accepted the gift of a Testament and Alex Forsyth gave a Presentation Bible to the Manager, David Hopkin.

Later that evening Board Members and other members of staff were given the special Badged Testaments. Over 50 Testaments were distributed that day.

For all of this we give thanks to God and pray that He will continue His good work in the hearts and minds of these men and women and that His Word will be read and accepted.

Submitted by Alex Forsyth, West Lothian Branch

PACIFIC ISLAND JOINS GIDEON FAMILY



The Pacific Island country of Tuvalu has been an ongoing prayer request of our membership and Friends in our Daily Prayer Diary. Tuvalu is comprised of nine islands, is located midway between Hawaii and Australia, and has a population of 11,052 people, with 98.4% being Protestant.

In early November, Regional Field Officer Gavon Bourne arrived in Tuvalu with the goal of establishing the ministry of The Gideons International in the country. He was met at the airport by Pastor John and spent the next three hours further discussing the ministry of The Gideons International and Tuvaluan culture. "Without his support, assistance, cultural knowledge and awareness of local issues, this country would not have opened," said Gavon.

Thankful for the opportunity to better reach people in Tuvalu for Christ, Pastor John identified a group of prospective men in his church whom Gavon met with to further explain their opportunity to be Gideons. Several were excited for their wives also to join. Twelve people completed applications for membership.

Training was provided on building a successful branch, understanding membership qualifications, managing Scripture distributions and storage, building relationships with area pastors, and fulfilling officer responsibilities.

GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATIONS (GDPR)

As you may already be aware the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) will come into force on 25 May 2018. This will mean changes to the rules that govern data protection and the requirements placed upon organisations such as The Gideons in relation to their controlling and processing of personal data.

In preparation for these new regulations we have been working with our legal advisers to ensure we have the necessary documentation and procedures in place in order to comply with the anticipated changes. National Office staff members have also received training on the GDPR.

This notice is to advise you in relation to the holding of your personal information.

You are receiving this edition of Gideon News, including a Daily Prayer Diary, in order to keep you informed about the Gideon ministry and to enable you to support our work. Your prayers and practical support are greatly valued.

To enable Gideons to send you this information we have a record of your name and address. This record is kept securely, either at our National Office and/or by the local Gideon Branch Friends' Secretary. Please be assured of our total commitment to keeping your name and address safe and secure, and not using your personal information for any other reason without your permission.

If you do not wish to continue receiving these publications please contact the person who sends them to you or, alternatively, contact Gideon National Office using the details found in this edition of Gideon News.

The full 'Privacy Policy' of The Gideons is available from National Office upon request. If you have any questions about the holding of your personal information please do not hesitate to contact us.

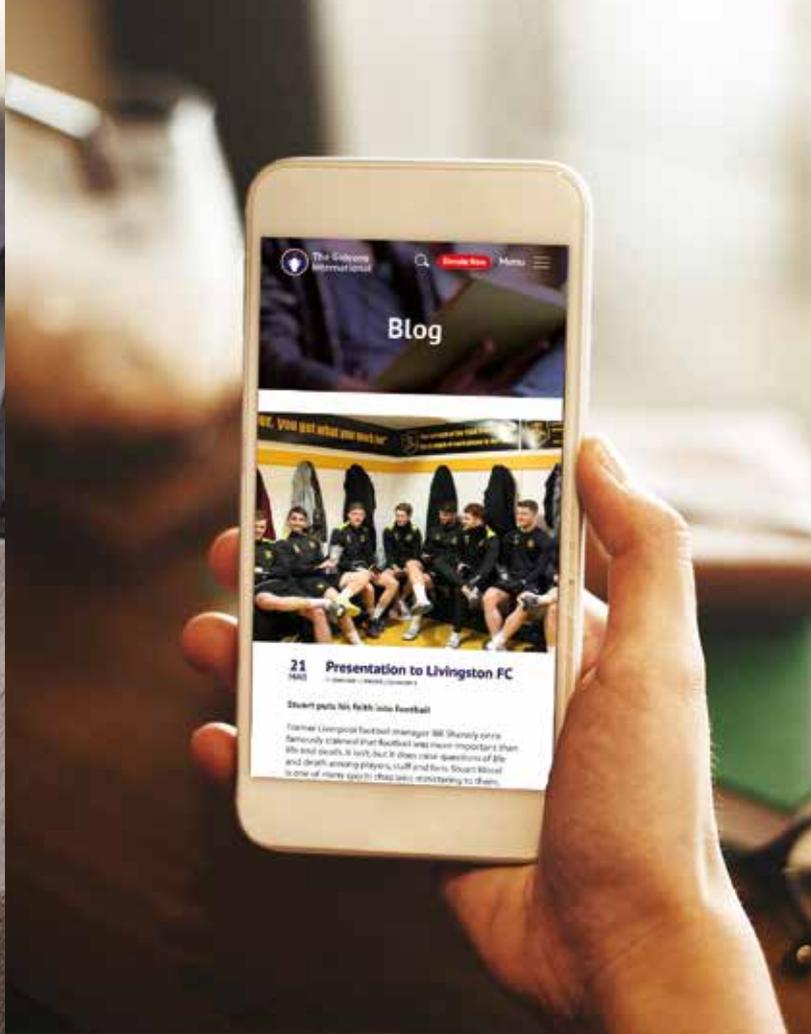
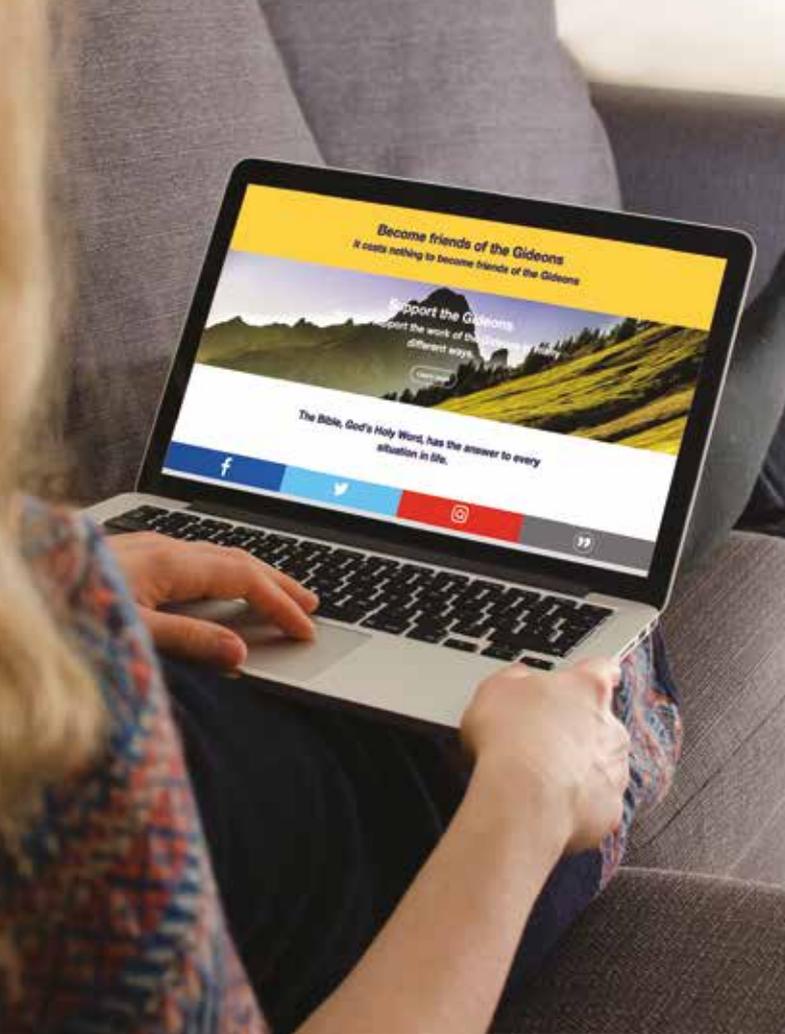
We will keep you updated in relation to General Data Protection Regulations from time to time in future editions of Gideon News. We will always be completely open and transparent with you in relation to how we use the personal details that you have entrusted to us.

Yours in Christ



Iain J Mair, Executive Director





COMING SOON

www.gideons.org.uk

- Explore our bold new site
- Read inspirational stories and testimonies
- Get the latest Gideons news
- Stay connected with us through Social Media
- Order from our online shop



The Gideons International

BECOME A TORCHBEARER

“My daughter Mandy was given a Gideon New Testament, which I started to read. While reading John 14:6, my eyes were opened – ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No-one comes to the Father except through me.’ This verse spoke to me forcibly. I shall ever be thankful to the Gideons for the New Testament which was put in Mandy’s school.”

The simple yet clear aim of The Gideons is to introduce people like this to the Lord Jesus Christ. We are very grateful to the many Gideon members and Friends of The Gideons who further their witness by leaving a gift in their Will for the work of The Gideons.

Torchbearers are a unique group of Gideon members and Friends of The Gideons who further their witness by leaving a legacy in their Will for the work of The Gideons. Torchbearers ensure that even after they have been called home to be with the Lord, what God has provided them with during their lifetime can still be used to carry out His will in reaching others for Christ. The name Torchbearers was chosen because, just like Gideon’s 300 men, they will be greatly used of God, but not singled out for public acclaim.

Peter and Susan Grange from Nottingham write, “Presenting and placing copies of God’s Word has been such a rewarding aspect of our Christian lives over very many years now. It has been such a joy to point those who do not know God to the help sections and to explain from the back page how much God loves them and suggest that they may wish to consider responding to that love. What a powerful and effective message God has given us.

“Supporting The Gideons International financially is something we feel very much called to do and by becoming Torchbearers and leaving a provision such as this enables our contribution to continue well into the future. There seems to be such a great feeling of fulfilment to our commitment and calling to be able to leave a legacy in this way.”

The generosity of our members and Friends is the lifeblood of the work God is doing through The Gideons International. As a member, Friend, or supporter of The Gideons, you are in a special position to significantly impact the world for the Lord Jesus Christ. Giving to The Gideons through your Will is a safe, easy and effective way to share God’s love around the world and reflect your desire to see men, women and young people won for Jesus.

Legal Advice

You can easily add a gift to The Gideons to your existing Will by using a Codicil. A Codicil is a supplement to a Will that can make changes or amendments. It allows additions to part of your Will. However, in some situations, creating a new Will might be a better option. Please consult a solicitor in relation to these matters.

The staff at National Office will be very happy to speak to you about the work of The Gideons and answer any questions you may have, but they are not qualified to give legal advice. For legal advice please speak to a qualified solicitor with expertise in this area.



Peter & Susan Grange



NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S REPORT

At the 2017 Annual General Meeting on Friday 28 April, members elected a new National President, Mr Andrew R Knight. Andrew previously served as National President from 2002 to 2005 and as the British Isles International Trustee on the International Cabinet of the worldwide Gideon Association from 2006 to 2012, in addition to serving in many other branch, zone, national and international roles. He therefore brings to the role of National President a wealth of 'Gideon' experience both nationally and internationally.

I was honoured and humbled to be elected National President of the UK Gideon Association at the 2017 Annual General Meeting. In this Gideon News Report as National President, I want to take this opportunity to express my personal, very grateful thanks, and those of colleagues in the national leadership, to you – members, Friends of The Gideons, church leaders, and other supporters – for the blessing and encouragement your prayers and financial support are to the work of The Gideons, here in the UK and overseas.

Over the past year, Gideons in this country have placed and presented over 780,000 copies of the Word of God, as well as providing a total of £1,445,011 for the purchase of Testaments to be distributed in the many countries around the world, where members and supporters simply cannot afford to purchase their own Scriptures; so, when I say "thank you", I am doing so on behalf of many, many, grateful souls, who, without your help, would most likely never have the opportunity to hold, let alone read, the Word of God. One such person is from the Democratic Republic of Congo:

Whilst working as a prostitute, a young woman discovered a Bible, placed by The Gideons, in her assigned room. She picked it up and began reading and was convicted by the words. She was moved to seek out a local church, where she was discipled, and decided to surrender her life to the Lord. Today, she is a faithful member of New Life of Hope Church in the city of Kipushi. She is married and serves the Lord with great zeal as her life has been completely changed by the love and grace of God.





Closer to home, we continue to receive many encouragements from people in all walks of life who have been helped through reading a Bible or Testament that you, collectively, have provided the funds to purchase. Martin wrote to our National Office:

I am a prisoner currently residing in HMP Wymott. It's almost a cliché about prisoners finding God in jail but He has been very patient with me and I have come to realise the love that Jesus has for every one of us, prisoner and saint alike. I was in church last Sunday and was given a Bible by one of the Chaplains. On the inside of the Bible it says that I can write if I have been helped. This letter is a thank you for this wonderful gift of God's Word. I find so much hope and inspiration in what Jesus did and His sacrifice for all of us. So thank you for spreading the Word of God.

These short evidences of God's Grace are just two of the great many personal stories of men, women and young people, who have been blessed and brought to a saving faith in Christ, through God's Word as it is witnessed and distributed. There are many more for you to read in this and every other edition of **Gideon News** – so be encouraged, and please do not cease to pray for us.

We too, in leadership, are greatly encouraged as we seek to faithfully respond to our Lord's leading regarding future developments required to make UK Gideons even more effective in reaching the lost for Christ. A few days before writing this I was reminded of a couple of verses from God's Word which tell us:

"Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland." Isaiah 43:18,19.

To us – members (men and ladies), Friends of The Gideons, church leaders, and supporters, I believe the Lord is saying: ***"See, I am doing a new thing!"*** We are not to ***'dwell on the past'***, but humbly acknowledge all that He has done already. Now we can see that He is ***'making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland'*** of former structural constraints, and revealing what He has prepared for us, giving us a renewed vision to see 'His kingdom come, His will done, on earth as it is in Heaven'.

Your servant for Christ's sake

Andrew R Knight, National President

LADIES' PRESIDENT'S REPORT

At the 2017 Annual Business Meeting on Friday 28 April, members elected a new National Ladies' President, Mrs. Annabel Howes. Annabel previously served as National Ladies' Vice-President and Ladies' Chaplain; in addition to serving in several branch and zone roles.

I am pleased to present my report on the work of Ladies of The Gideons International in the British Isles during 2017, although I have held this post for only part of the year, Jane Mann having faithfully served and led the Auxiliary in the British Isles for the previous three years. I would also like to thank Catherine Erbetta who served as Auxiliary Chaplain. It has been a privilege to serve alongside these ladies who have been committed to furthering the work of the ladies in this country.

I did not expect to find myself in this position, but sometimes the Lord calls us and it is our responsibility to respond. I know that I can only serve in this role as long as God gives me strength and I am very grateful for the prayer support I have received from so many, members and Friends, as we move forward in the Gideon ministry.

This year has seen changes within the Gideon ministry here in the British Isles but we are encouraged that we serve the Lord God who has not and will not change.

Prayer

The ladies have been active throughout the country faithfully fulfilling their calling. Whilst we work together as husband and wife, men and women together, within our branches or in national initiatives, there are still many women who meet together to pray earnestly for the Gideon Ministry. These local prayer meetings have seen answered prayer: closed doors opened; Church Leaders inspired; prospective and new members integrated into the ministry; safety for those travelling nationally and internationally; and for our many Gideon brothers and sisters serving in other countries.

Ladies' Meetings

More women are employed outside the home and the age profile in the remaining Ladies' Meetings is increasing and it is important to inform and encourage Friends who are prayer warriors. Sometimes this is the only branch contact with that church but it may be a 'foot in the door'. Some members have openings into groups with a younger age profile with opportunity to offer Personal Worker Testaments to carers who do not yet know Jesus. We are very grateful for all these opportunities, for the prayer support and also the financial support from Friends and Church groups.

Zone Conventions

We met many of you at your Zone Conventions this year and hopefully you were inspired by all the presentations organised by your Zone Cabinet. The title of our talk was 'Sit – spending time with Jesus; Walk, considering how we walk and work; Stand,

fully equipped to face any opposition, Run, with perseverance; but don't run ahead – we must wait for God's time.'

Scripture Distribution

Traditionally the Ladies have been responsible for the Distribution of Medical Testaments, Large Print, Ultra Giant, and the places where these can be placed e.g. Libraries, Medical Centres, Care Homes. Sadly the numbers of these Scriptures placed has decreased in the past year, even allowing for large numbers placed during national distributions. In branches it is important that the emphasis on Scripture distribution is not wholly on areas which provide large numbers, to the detriment of those places which have been opened over recent years as a result of much prayer and hard work by many ladies.

Membership

It has been my joy to welcome into this ministry those ladies who have joined, to encourage them to be a blessing to their local branch – and I know they will receive many blessings as they are enabled to serve the Lord God who called them. We look forward to more ladies joining this organisation in the year ahead and working together to introduce people to Jesus Christ and to hear more testimonies of those giving their lives to Christ.

Our Aim

The aim of this organisation has always been to win the lost for Christ. Whether we work as individuals or collectively, we face the same challenge to 'Go into all the world...' In many of our cities the world has been brought to us, and it has been a joy to work in teams at festivals and national distributions, providing Scriptures in English, foreign languages, and sharing the Bible App.

Let us take up the challenge of Haggai 2:4-5:

Be Strongin the strength of the Lord, not our own.

Work ... not being distracted.

Do not Fear: we need courage, we can choose to discourage or to encourage others.

I am with you...Our God is for us and not against us.

May I thank my colleagues of the current National Ladies' Cabinet: Teresa Lovering and Rhoda Bourne, as well as Elaine Harvey, for their support as we have worked together under the Lord's guidance, and for the diligent work of the Zone Chairmen. Thank you to all the National Office staff at Lutterworth – each one is a valuable part of this ministry.

Especially I would thank our many loyal, faithful prayer and financial supporters, whose help enables Scriptures to be placed in so many different areas of life both here in the British Isles and in other parts of the world.

Annabel Howes, National Ladies' President

NATIONAL TREASURER'S REPORT

Jesus has much to say about how we use our money and there is nothing more instructive than His observation of a poor widow giving her offering of two small copper coins (Luke 21:1-4). That the Son of God, with all His access to the world's riches, should draw our attention to this event is surely significant. God, in His infinite wisdom, has chosen to use "jars of clay" to reach the lost for Christ and no gift, however large or small, is insignificant to Him.

So it is my privilege to thank all our Friends, supporting churches and members for their consistent, generous and sacrificial support over another year.

You will see from this analysis of income that the overall total for 2017 is slightly down on the previous year due mainly to a reduced level of income from Friends and legacies.

Source of income	2017	(2016)
Members	£1,333,829	£1,230,669
Friends	£692,565	£765,924
Legacies	£553,930	£639,383
Churches	£267,905	£276,881
Other	£419,832	£409,978
Total	£3,268,061	£3,322,835

These figures include gifts for the Scripture Fund and members' donations to the General Fund, that covers all the running and development costs of the Association.

On the expenditure side for 2017 we used funds to provide Scriptures for use in the British Isles (£877,786) and internationally (£1,445,011). We give God thanks that we have been able to help pay the printing costs for Scriptures to Ghana, Romania, Russia, Ukraine, Serbia, Greece, Thailand Egypt and Israel.

Expenditure	2017	(2016)
Scriptures - British Isles	£877,786	£829,582
Scriptures - International	£1,445,011	£1,562,836
Scriptures - Total	£2,322,797	£2,392,418
Other activities	£164,820	£166,888
Support costs	£982,966	£1,002,954
Total	£3,470,583	£3,562,260

Savings were again made in General Fund expenditure and this allowed the reserves to build up to £257,552, representing approximately four months of budgeted expenditure and within our target of between four and six months. I would like to pay tribute to the staff at National Office, with the guidance of the Finance Committee, for making this possible, especially when there is much that could be done if more funds were available.

Once again we can look back over another year of God's gracious provision and we give Him all the praise and glory. Thank you to all who have been led by God to make this possible. Coming back to the widow who gave her two copper coins, what impressed Jesus was not so much what she gave but that she kept nothing back. May we all learn from that godly lady.

Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the Gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift! (2 Corinthians 9:13-15)

David J Killer, National Treasurer



WE SHOULD TAKE MORE RISKS

The Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30) is a familiar story. A master puts his goods in the hands of his servants whilst he is away from home. The story doesn't say whether the master advised what to do with the wealth but it was significant. Greek, Roman and Babylonian talents differed slightly but basically the quantity was the same as the amount of water required to fill an amphora (large jar). The Babylonian talent was 30.3kg. At the current London bullion spot price of £31,274.55/kilo, one talent is therefore worth £947,618.86, two are worth £1.89m and five are worth £4.74m!

The context of Matthew 24 and 25 is one of warnings to the disciples. Is this Jesus teaching his disciples how to manage resources? It comes between the parable of the wise and foolish virgins ("Keep watch, because you do not know the day or hour.") and the separation of sheep and goats ("Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared

for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.'").

The third servant was admonished for not investing with the bankers – something that would have required less effort than digging a hole and burying the talent. But of course usury was frowned upon in Jewish law. Should we therefore have sympathy for the servant? He was, after all, seeking to ensure that the gilt-edged investment was not at risk.

Traditionally this parable is supposed to teach that Jesus was encouraging His disciples to use their gifts. Failure to use wealth and skills, it seems, will result in judgement.

However, we could be missing the point. The first and second servants took risks to double their stakes. The third did not. Risks don't always reap rewards but these two servants were

wise and invested well. We don't know whether all their investments went well but I think we can assume that there were times when things didn't always go as they might have hoped. But on balance they came out well.

So, in looking at this parable shouldn't we also be asking whether Jesus expects us to take risks – knowing that we might not always back a winner but that, in taking risks, we are more likely to further His kingdom on earth than if we keep our hands in our pockets? Is He encouraging us to be less risk averse? When we review the management accounts of our lives how might we score on God's risk register?

Placing a Scripture into someone's hands entails risk – so how often do we keep the gold that we know exists between the covers of a Gideon Bible or Friends Testament buried in a handbag, pocket or briefcase? In a risky world are we always as prepared for failure as we are for success?

Michael Hodges, Zone 4 Trustee



FRIENDS PERSONAL WORKER TESTAMENT ORDER FORM

Name:

Address:

Day time telephone number (in case of query):

How many Testaments do you require (£2.50 each or £20 for 10):

Payment: You can either send a cheque made payable to 'The Gideons International' or complete your credit card details below:

PAYMENT DETAILS (please tick)

I enclose a cheque payable to Gideons International

or

Please charge to my debit/credit card (give details below)

Maestro Visa Visa Delta Master Card

American Express

Card Number

Issue Number Start Date Expiry Date

Cardholder's Name

Signature

Card Billing Address

Postcode

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The Gideons International in the British Isles is a registered charity in England and Wales (221605) and in Scotland (SC039224).



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