



YOUR MONTHLY MEMBER'S REPORT **MAY 2023**

ALBANIA

In 1944, Albania became a communist regime under dictator Enver Hoxha, who died in 1985. His successor tried to preserve the communist system, but it ended in 1992 following a decisive political victory for the Democratic Party. In 1990, a ban on religion, which had been put in place in 1967, was lifted with religious freedom being granted in 1998. Today, Albania is a Muslim-majority country (57 per cent), with seventeen per cent of the population professing Christianity. However, many Albanians are nominal in their faith, and superstition and folk religion abound. It is also one of the poorest countries in Europe with an economy that is still struggling to move away from being a communist (effectively medieval) economy.

It is in this environment that the Bible Society of Albania is reaching out to primary school children aged 5 – 9 years old with a programme entitled, "Open the Book." The aim of "Open the Book", which is adapted from

a British and Foreign Bible Society programme, is to equip people to share Bible stories with children in an accessible and enjoyable way, and to tell the stories in ways that enable children to engage imaginatively with the text.

It involves giving primary school children the opportunity to hear key Bible stories told by a team of Christians from local churches, who present the stories during assemblies or acts of collective worship. The material covers three years with an optional year of material based on Christian values for schools. Your gift to *Bible a Month Regular Giving* this month will help to support this project.



*Primary source: CIA World Factbook
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Give thanks that the Albanian Church is maturing from the infancy stages of the 1990s into a wide-ranging community of believers with good indigenous leadership.

Pray for the economy which is struggling to transition from a closed communist economy to an open modern economy with subsistence farming still accounting for half of employment.

Pray for leadership training of church leaders to reduce widespread biblical ignorance and for village churches that are showing signs of second-generational spiritual lapses.

Pray that Albanians can leave behind their grim past including the chaos, anarchy, and corruption of the 1990s and 2000s.



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FURTHER BIBLE MISSION PROJECTS



THAILAND

In the 16th century, Christianity was brought to Thailand by Portuguese missionaries. In 1828, the London Missionary Society arrived in Bangkok. Today, only one per cent of modern Thai people identify as Christian. It is a Buddhist-majority country with many Thai adhering to an intricate belief system that involves Buddhism, folk animism, and occultism.

Yet, Christian revival has been taking place among some ethnic minorities in Thailand including among the Urak Lawoi or Sea Gypsies, who live along the coasts and islands of the Andaman Sea. After the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami many Urak Lawoi began turning to Christ. For over twenty years, Ethim, a paraplegic, has been single-handedly translating the Old Testament into Urak Lawoi and the full Bible in digital format will be available soon.

Photo Credit ©Joseph Hong



PAPUA NEW GUINEA

In 1871, missionaries from the London Mission Society reached Western Province, Papua New Guinea. Today, Papua New Guinea is a Christian-majority country with 96 per cent of people identifying as Christian. It is also the most linguistically diverse country in the world with over 850 languages. This is because there are many isolated tribal groups scattered across 600 islands.

The Bible Society of Papua New Guinea is working on a revision of the Tok Pisin Bible, which was first published in 1989. Tok Pisin is an English-based creole spoken by over four million people. Since 1989 the language has changed significantly and so a revision was commenced. The aim is to create a new version which will play a vital role in strengthening the faith of Christians in Papua New Guinea.

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SOUTH PACIFIC

In 1796, the London Missionary Society's ship, The Duff, left England with thirty missionaries on board, arriving in Tahiti in 1797. In due course, missionaries from other denominations followed. These missionaries encountered many difficulties, including language and cultural problems, and some were killed. However, by the 1830s, local people were beginning to be converted to Christianity. Today, Christianity is the main religion found throughout the South Pacific.

The Bible Society of the South Pacific, which works across fourteen island nations, is translating the Bible into Pacific Island languages, distributing Bibles, and providing trauma healing programmes for people who have been impacted by natural disasters, such as cyclones and volcanic eruptions, or who are the victims of domestic abuse.

Photo Credit ©Bible Society in New Zealand



ALGERIA

Christianity reached North Africa during the Roman era becoming established among the Berber people. During the Islamic invasion of the 7th century, some Berber people fled to the Atlas Mountains. Since the 1980s, it is among the Berber people that revival has been taking place. Today, there are 200,000 Christians although the number may be more as many people hide their faith.

An Algerian person's first contact with Christianity is often through Christian broadcasting. At the end of the programmes the Bible Society phone number is given. When a person phones the number, this may be the first contact they have had with a Christian. These are the challenging conditions that the Bible Society of Algeria is working under to bring people the Word of God in their country.

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