



(Left): The Bible that unifies people from different backgrounds. (Top & Bottom Right): The Bible Society distributed Bibles and other necessities to the children in Uganda and Nepal.

Together WE STAND, United WE'RE STRONGER

“And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.” —Colossians 3:14

There is no denying that disasters and crises—floods, earthquakes, wars, political turmoils, and of course pandemics—shine an unforgiving light on society’s problems and tensions. In such a precarious situation, how can we move forward in beautiful unity? It will definitely not be easy. But the power of the Holy Spirit is there, working to unify us.

Unity Through God’s Word

Just as God loves the vulnerable, the poor and the underprivileged, we are also taught to show compassion to those who have been affected by these crises. That is why as a global, inter-confessional organisation with God’s Word as the unifying factor, **The Bible Society of Singapore (BSS) has been serving the community in Singapore as well as beyond our shores for 184 years—expanding the Bible Movement and serving the vulnerable amongst us with God’s Word.**

Standing Firm and United Through the Storms

Over the years, BSS has indeed gone through many challenges and phases of transformation but through the grace of God, we have weathered the storms. The Bible Movement in Singapore began in 1819, when the New Testament was first translated into Chinese. In 1823, 1,000 Chinese New Testaments were distributed

to the early settlers in Singapore through Rev Dr Robert Morrison, with the support of Sir Stamford Raffles. In 1837, The Singapore Auxiliary Bible Society was then officially registered in Singapore to serve the region.

However, as China began opening its doors to foreigners in 1841, all the Bible missionaries moved to China, leaving Rev Benjamin Peach Keasberry on his own in Singapore to reach out to the Malays and produce the Malay Bibles in 1853. The Bible Mission was halted for some years after his death in 1875, until John Haffenden was formally appointed to continue the Bible Mission.

The Bible Society faced strong opposition in the 1880s when the Bible was distributed through colportage (distribution of religious tracts). Despite the opposition, Sophia Cooke, who worked among Chinese girls, was so persistent in her outreach efforts until the Bibles were received by the Chinese and Tamil colporteurs in 1883.

Greater challenges continued to emerge in the later years as the Bible House was damaged during the Japanese occupation in 1942, and the Bible Society and its volunteers had to find a temporary shelter at St Andrew’s Cathedral. Despite all the challenges, they remained committed and united to distribute Scriptures and hold Bible Sundays



(Left): Blind people in Mongolia holding Braille Bibles, which were distributed to them. (Right): The children from refugee camp in Uganda remain hopeful amidst difficulties.

amid the occupation, until World War II ended in 1945. The determination of these people to stand firm and be united together in the face of trials is our motivation for how the Bible Society will also get through the challenges today.

Standing Strong Together Amid Dark Times

The work of the Bible Society is so vital in bringing transformation in the nation and the regions around. Placed in a strategic location, Singapore became gradually known as the *Antioch of Asia*, where Christians come together and be united in impacting other nations in spite of the challenges. As the crises have affected the Bible Mission overseas, the Bible Society strives to become a blessing to other nations through God’s Word.

“We aim to print Braille Bibles for about 16,000 blind people,” as Rev Bayarmagnai Bayardallai said, the Executive Director of the Mongolian Union Bible Society. **In Mongolia, COVID-19 has hindered the implementation of various literacy programmes—such as the production of Braille Bibles and Sign Language Bibles**—that aim to make the Word of God accessible to people with special needs. “When I read the Braille Bible, it is more interesting and alive. I find it more understandable and I feel closer to the things written in the Bible,” said Saikhantsetseg, a 19-year-old Mongolian girl who lost her sight as a child.

Hence, we are thankful for your generous donations, for it has enabled the distribution of the Bibles and made a great difference to many as we remain united with our sister Bible Societies in serving the marginalised communities in these unprecedented times. As the General Secretary of the Bible Society of Uganda, Simon Mukhama, said, “With grateful hearts, we are so thankful for everybody who has done whatever they have done.”

Staying United Amid Diversity

The pandemic has also made social distancing part of our new normal in order to curb the spread of the coronavirus. However, social distancing should not make us distance ourselves from one another spiritually. It is important to remain united even during these difficult circumstances—just as the Samaritan in the *Parable of the Good Samaritan* who helped out the injured Jew man in spite of the tensions between the two parties.

Such love and unity are reflected through our works with SowCare—the community service arm of The Bible Society of Singapore—and other partners, where we strengthen the values of mutual respect and positive attitudes amongst individuals of different faiths and races and at the same time nurture the spirit of volunteerism amongst the youth, to promote unity amidst diversity. (More information on these events can be found on Page 22.)

Building Strong Mental Resilience in the Pandemic

There is also no doubt that the pandemic has posed a serious threat to our mental health. With so much loss and uncertainty, it is vital that we take care of ourselves and others physically and mentally. During these stressful times, the Bible is the only source of hope that helps us cope with discouraging situations, including this pandemic.

With this in mind, The Bible Society of Singapore supported the inaugural **Christian Mental Health Conference** in July 2021, organised by Christian Mental Health Advocates, Association of Christian Counsellors and Promises Healthcare to provide clinical perspectives on the issues of mental health and its



(Top & bottom left): More than 50 countries participated in DECLARE 2021 held in May over five days. (Top & bottom middle): *Census 2020, Religions and Youth: Parsing the Trends, Pondering the Future* (photos taken before the Heightened Alert restrictions). (Top & bottom right): Performers at *The Road Ahead...Together! A National Day Celebration with our Guest Workers in Singapore*.

relation to Biblical teachings. Many Christian leaders and social service agencies, including the Christian community, came together in unity to make this event possible.

God’s Word as Source of Strength

Through the living Word of God, we can cling on to Christ and remain united as we are all knit together in Spirit. To help build up the faith of the Body of Christ in the midst of the pandemic, DECLARE 2021—an annual Bible proclamation event organised by BSS— was held over five days, where believers read the Bible aloud in various languages from cover-to-cover without ceasing. **More than 50 countries and 70 languages were represented in DECLARE 2021** from 13 to 18 May 2021 online, proclaiming blessings over their nation and other nations. One of the participants said: *“I’m grateful for taking part in DECLARE as it unites the believers in one accord from different churches and backgrounds through reading the Word of God so that integrity, intentionality and oneness are exercised in the Bible Mission.”* We pray that through similar initiatives, many will find comfort, strength and peace from God’s Word.

Together Impacting Lives with God’s Word

As The Bible Society of Singapore celebrates 184 years of making God’s Word available, accessible and credible to all peoples in 2021 and beyond, let us remember God’s graciousness for preserving the Bible Mission despite various challenges and continuously using us as His vessel to impact lives, for when God’s Word is made available to a person, a renewed life is created (2 Corinthians 5:17).

To sow the seeds of God’s Word for the next generation, a two-part event ***Census 2020, Religions and Youth: Parsing the Trends, Pondering the Future*** was held as

a response to the latest Census 2020 result which states that those who reportedly have no religious affiliation were more likely to be younger residents. This event helped the participants to reflect and gain perspective on the trends in religion and youth. (More information on these events can be found on Page 18.)

SowCare—the community service arm of BSS—in partnership with the Alliance of Guest Workers Outreach (AGWO), Ministry of Manpower (MOM) and other valuable partners, organised a virtual show ***The Road Ahead... Together—A National Day Celebration with our Guest Workers on 8 August evening***. The show aimed to celebrate Singapore’s 56th anniversary and appreciate the contributions of our guest workers and foreign domestic workers to Singapore. This event also sought to help bring them some cheer while away from their homes and families. (More information on these events can be found on Page 19.)

All these initiatives and events would not have been made possible without the support from our donors, partners and volunteers. You have been such an integral part of seeing such milestones come into fruition. Join us to stand in unity together in commemorating our 184th anniversary, as an effort to make God’s Word available to all nations and to accomplish The Great Commission for His glory.



Want to contribute to the Global Bible Mission? Scan the QR code to donate, or visit bible.org.sg/donate.