

LATEST NEWS # 356, July 5, 2006

The following news concerns Ghana.

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Refurbished Bible House opens in Accra

GHANA— Heads of Churches and para-church organisations, Ga chiefs and elders, MPs and political leaders and Bible Society officers were among those present at the official dedication of the refurbished Bible House in Accra on Sunday May 7.

Drumming and brass band music added rhythm, music and colour to the solemn ceremony, which was held in the James Town district of Accra. After a short service at a Methodist Chapel nearby, the dignitaries led the large procession to the refurbished Bible House for the dedication and opening ceremony.



Addressing the gathering, the guest of honour, Jake Obetsebi Lamptey, Ghana's Minister of Tourism, commended the Bible Society for its decision to refurbish the old building, which is in a strategic location.

James Town is Accra's historic port and the Bible House building is recognised as part of Ghana's architectural heritage. Its location nevertheless places it close to one of the capital's busiest streets.



"It is not enough to produce and distribute Bibles," Mr Obetsebi Lamptey added. "The Society must help the people to read and understand the Bible so that they apply the lessons in their lives. Those of us who use the Bible must help bring change or transformation to our community."

Mr Obetsebi Lamptey's father was one of 'the Big Six', a group of prominent politicians in the Gold Coast (as it then was) who led the colony's struggle for independence and were imprisoned by the British government.

Mr Obetsebi Lamptey said that many freedom fighters had been inspired by the Bible to fight for liberation. Pioneer Bible translators, he said, had been burnt at the stake for producing translations in local languages, and many more were still being killed today for possessing and using the Bible.



"The Bible House in Accra must stand as a continual memorial to all our forebears who fought for the production and dissemination of God's Word," he declared.

The Rev Kofi Owusu, General Secretary of the Bible Society of Ghana, said one reason why the Society decided to refurbish the existing Bible House was the difficulty it had had in acquiring land for a new building.

The estimated cost of the project, US\$280,000 (C2,562,000,000), was met from various sources. UBS provided a grant of US\$100,000 (C915,000,000) and a concert organised by Ghanaian friends of the Bible Society at a Baptist church in England raised more than £4,000 (US\$7,220 or C66,066,660). The Society's own staff contributed about US\$5,200 (C47,580,000) by sacrificing one meal every week for 16 months. Further needs for the refurbished premises include a generator for use during Accra's power failures.

A number of partners and sister-organisations brought the Society their greetings on the occasion: Maxime Bakiono brought greetings from the UBS Africa Management Team, Overseer Dr Solomon Abe, President of Bible Society of Nigeria, from the national Bible Societies of UBS in Africa, and the Rev Dr Fred Deegbe, General Secretary of the Christian Council of Ghana, from the Christian Churches in Ghana. A message from Ghana's para-church organisations was presented by the Rev Theo Asare, President of Theovision International.

According to the records, the building which houses the Bible Society of Ghana is about 95 years old. In 1964, the British and Foreign Bible Society bought it from a shipping company and donated it to the newly founded Bible Society of Ghana in 1965.

Prof Irene Odotei, the UBS Vice President from the Africa Region, congratulated the Society on the facelift given to the old building and prayed that the Bible House would continue to serve as the nerve-centre of Scripture production and distribution in Ghana. She assured the Society that the UBS fellowship would be prepared to support major projects such as the proposed Bible Village in Ghana as long as they would ultimately advance the Bible cause.

Five surviving key celebrants of the first opening of the Bible House in 1965 were presented with token gifts at the ceremony. But the man who had performed the opening on behalf of President Nkrumah, Kwaku Boateng, then Minister of Education, died peacefully on May 1, less than a week before the event.

Last year the Bible Society marked the 40th anniversary of the opening of Bible House and the beginning of organised national Bible Society work in Ghana.
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Photos (Bible Society of Ghana):

GHA06DJ-2: The front of the refurbished Bible House in Accra, Ghana. The refurbished building was dedicated on May 7, 2006.

GHA06D-3: The Rev Dr Harry Insaidoo, a member of the National Council of the Bible Society of Ghana, saying a prayer during the dedication of the refurbished Bible House on May 7, 2006. On the far right is Prof Irene K Odotei, UBS Vice President for Africa. Accra, Ghana.

GHA06DJ-4: Guests, including some traditional rulers, inspecting the facilities of the refurbished Bible House in Accra, Ghana, at its dedication on May 7, 2006.

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