

## LATEST NEWS # 433, August 16, 2007

### The following news concerns Ghana.

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## Through the rain – with joy – to Dagbani Bible launch

**GHANA** — After waiting 20 years, nothing – not even torrential rain – was going to deter Dagbani-speaking Christians from holding a full-scale launch ceremony when ‘their’ full Bible finally arrived in June. Even though an unexpected storm forced them to switch to an indoor location at the last minute, their joy at receiving all of God’s Word in their own language was certainly not diminished.

The Bible Society of Ghana and churches and other stakeholders in the Dagbon area of north-eastern Ghana had been preparing for the launch of the first Dagbani Bible since late 2006. It was decided that local churches in Tamale, the capital city of the region, would hold a Bible Week for the first time, culminating with the launch on June 2 in Jubilee Park. Bible Society staff and Board members would make the 10-hour journey to Tamale for the occasion.

What nobody could have foreseen, however, was that a storm would hit the city just as local Christians were setting up canopies and public address equipment in the park and awaiting the arrival of a procession led by a brass band. The rain quickly drenched everybody there, including the recently arrived Bible Society group. The most obvious course of action was to abandon the ceremony, but nobody was prepared to disappoint the many people who were due to gather shortly. What happened next was a clear answer to prayer, as Nathaniel Nunoo, the Bible Society’s Northern Sector Manager, explained.

“Intensive prayer yielded the much-needed result. A hall with the capacity to seat 800 people at the Tamale Cultural Centre, close to Jubilee Park, had been booked for an event that day but was miraculously released to the Bible Society for the launch. The chairs and equipment were hauled into the hall. Quick phone calls to various parts of Tamale and beyond announced the change of venue. People from all walks of life started trooping to the new venue through the rain. Boxes of the Dagbani Bible were carried from the Bible Society van onto the hurriedly decorated stage and soon the hall was filled to capacity.”

And with the new arrangements in place, the launch was able to go ahead after all. Under the chairmanship of His Grace Kpabeiya, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Tamale, the full Dagbani Bible finally reached those who had waited for it for so long. The applause and shouts of joy which echoed around the hall as the Archbishop received the Bible on behalf of the Dagbon churches quickly grew into singing and dancing, interspersed with speeches from guests including the Rev Prof John Ekem, who supervised the translation project. He formally handed a copy of the new Bible to the Rev Kofi Owusu, Bible Society General Secretary.

“Some are saying that God now speaks Dagbani, but God has *always* spoken Dagbani,” Mr Owusu reminded the audience in his speech.

The speeches over, people were eager to obtain their own Bible. Some copies were auctioned, with many people making very generous bids, while others were sold later from the Bible Society van. As soon as people had a copy in their hands, they began to read it.

“Almost everybody was caught up in a reading fever,” said Mr Nunoo. “People both inside and outside the hall wanted to make sure that they had read some pages of the Bible they had bought before going home. One man commented, as if in response to the General Secretary’s earlier remark, ‘God *has* always spoken Dagbani, but today we can hear him clearly’.”

The rains that stopped just before the celebrations ended had left the roads outside the hall covered in mud. Nobody seemed to notice, though, as they made their way home with their Bibles clutched firmly under their arms. One young woman was heard to remark:

“Tomorrow’s service will be special. We will hear readings from the Old Testament in our own language for the first time.”

*This report refers to project 76906.*

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