

LATEST NEWS # 437, September 4, 2007

The following news concerns the West Indies.

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http://biblesociety.org/latestnews/index_latestnews.html

The following report by the Rev Courtney Stewart, General Secretary of the Bible Society of the West Indies (BSWI), of the effect Hurricane Dean had on Kingston, the Jamaican capital, paints a picture of a paralysed community, people confined to their homes with no power or water, trees uprooted and a teenager killed by flying debris.

Society partners Salvation Army in ministry to hurricane victims

Opportunity to offer financial help

WEST INDIES — The hurricane began to affect us in earnest at approximately 1.00pm on Sunday, August 19, *he writes*. As we had been advised by the authorities that the hurricane was heading our way, most of us were at home. Churches were closed, with worshippers undoubtedly praying for Dean's path to be changed or its intensity to be lessened.

Understandably, electricity and water were turned off, in preparation for the onslaught. The winds that lashed Kingston were stiff, strong and, at times, sudden. Trees which had stood for years were uprooted and roofs were separated from their buildings.

There were three reported cases of hurricane-related deaths. Perhaps the most horrifying was that of a 15-year-old girl who was killed when a building block from a neighbour's roof hit her on the head.

In the wake of Hurricane Dean, many places have no drinking water and food is scarce or non-existent; only a third of the city has electricity and only about half has water; some members of Bible Society staff have neither.

One effect of the State of Public Emergency is that after a particular hour movement is restricted. When life may get back to normal is anybody's guess. After much concern, confusion and complaint, the general elections which were scheduled for August 27 have now been put back to September 3. Our island is in a state of unsettledness in more ways than one.

The number of people living in shelters across the island is estimated at about 5000 and several of the shelters are schools, which has implications for the new term in September. The water company has said that in some areas of the island it could take weeks for water to be restored. The picture painted by the light and power company is not very bright, either. It could take weeks before the island is back to where it was before Hurricane Dean.

The BSWI has again partnered with the Salvation Army, which is distributing packages containing food rations and other relief supplies designed to serve a family of four for two days. Their goal is

to reach 3,000 families with a care package and a Bible Portion made available by the Bible Society. These Portions were originally sent to us by the American Bible Society as a part of its efforts to bring hope and comfort to a country hurting in the aftermath of the destruction of the World Trade Center in New York on September 11, 2001.

The books we found to be most appropriate are *Hold on, Love is on the Way* and *You Are Not Alone*. Lt. Col. Raphael Mason of the Salvation Army's Territorial Headquarters, a member of the Board of Directors of BSWI, praised the Bible Society for its continuous support in providing God's Word to those in need.

Since we have made this contribution, however, our supply of these Scriptures is now depleted and we are hoping to another Society will help us to replace them. With Jamaica and our other territories being located in 'Hurricane Alley', it is important that we have a constant supply of these Scriptures ready at all times.

Although Bible House suffered some leaks, there is no major damage. But the lack of electricity made it very uncomfortable, dark and difficult to work there. At times the heat was so unbearable that we allowed the staff to stop work at 3:30pm. Thankfully, by the evening of Wednesday, August 22, electricity was restored to the district where Bible House is located.

Our three main needs are now the aforementioned replacement Scriptures, a generator for Bible House and funds to repair or replace our leaky roof.

Our colleague in Belize, Pastor Gordon 'Dicky' Soutare, told me that the country in general was spared, though northern areas were hit pretty badly: in Corozal many people lost their homes and crops and the nearby Mexican town of Chetumal was also damaged quite badly.

Friday, August 24, 2007

NOTE Bible Societies wishing to offer financial contributions to the Bible Society of the West Indies in regard to the needs mentioned above should contact Simon Mort at the Grants Management Unit of the UBS World Service Centre, quoting project 89298.

For further information please contact comms@ubs-wsc.org