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The following news concerns Uruguay.

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Bible Month marks bicentenary of Bible work in Uruguay

URUGUAY — September is always a special month for the Bible Society of Uruguay, as it is celebrated as Bible Month. In 2006, though, Bible Month had even greater significance than in previous years because it marked the 200th anniversary of the event through which Bible work began in Uruguay.



In 1806, a consignment of 600 New Testaments bound for Buenos Aires had to be diverted after the Spanish reconquered this city from British forces. The only port in the region that remained open was Maldonado, on the southern tip of Uruguay. Instead of reaching their final destination, the New Testaments were distributed here and in Montevideo. 200 years later, these two cities were selected as the main locations for Bible Month activities. One particular week, beginning on September 11, was chosen as the focal point.

Through a series of events throughout the chosen week, including church services, an exhibition of Bibles and postage stamps depicting biblical themes and performances of the musical telling the story of Mary Jones, the Welsh girl whose quest for a Bible led to the formation of the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1804, the Bible Society ensured that Bible Month served a number of purposes. As well as raising awareness of Bible work generally, it strengthened the Bible Society's links with the Roman Catholic Church. A young Catholic priest who has recently become an observer on the Society's Board played an active part in planning Bible Month. The local Catholic Bishop also preached at each of the main meetings during the week of activities, attracting many Catholics.

Bible Month also served to raise money to fund the printing of 5,000 New Testaments which will be distributed during October in a deprived area of Maldonado. The Catholic Bishop here has ordered a further 1,000 New Testaments for distribution through local Catholic churches.

The guest speaker at several Bible Month events was the Rev Stein Mydske, General Secretary of the Norwegian Bible Society. Mr Mydske has a special interest in Bible work in Uruguay, as his father, Per Olav Mydske, was the first General Secretary of the Bible Society of Uruguay and he lived in Uruguay as a teenager. He is full of admiration for the way in which Bible work is now developing there.

"I'm very impressed with the growth of Bible work in Uruguay," he says. "The staff visit all the main cities and churches several times a year. The bookshop is open 10 hours a day, including Saturdays."

Both Bible Month and ongoing activities throughout the year are vital if the Bible Society is to have a real impact, according to General Secretary the Rev José Beltrami.

“We really want to reach out into our secular society with the Bible,” he says. Another vital event for the Bible Society as it strives to achieve this goal is the annual International Book Fair, which runs until October 8. Attracting more than 50,000 visitors, this event offers a valuable opportunity for the Bible Society to place the Bible alongside products from leading publishers. (513 words – URUGUAY.28.09.06)

Photo (Norwegian Bible Society/Stein Mydske):

UUG06DJ-1: Visitors to an exhibition of Bibles and postage stamps depicting biblical themes staged by the Bible Society of Uruguay as part of Bible Month in September 2006.

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

Alternatively, write to:

**Andrew Mathewson,
UBS Editor
UBS World Service Center
Reading Bridge House
Reading
RG1 8PJ
England**