

LATEST NEWS # 431, August 8, 2007

The following news concerns the South Pacific.

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

Bible drought at an end for Tonga's Christians

SOUTH PACIFIC — The riots that broke out in Nuku'alofa, the capital of Tonga, in November as campaigners for political reform took their protest onto the streets merited little more than a passing mention in the world's media. Locally, though, their impact was substantial, with much of the city's business district being destroyed. One of the victims was the Friendly Islands Bookshop, which lost its entire stock of 2,500 Bibles. Within a few months, however, Tonga's Bible drought became a glut, thanks to a new publication from the Bible Society in the South Pacific.

Many Tongans enjoy giving and receiving Bibles to mark all sorts of occasions, but especially at significant times of the year such as Christmas and Easter. So to lose its stock of Bibles just weeks before Christmas was a disaster for the Friendly Islands Bookshop.

"We had to keep turning customers away, telling them we did not expect to have any Bibles for six months," explains Malo, a member of staff. "Customer after customer left in despair. We were in a drought. People were parched of the Word of God."

Early this year, staff at the bookshop turned to the Bible Society for help. Their spirits lifted immediately when they heard that the Bible Society had just printed the third edition of a diglot New Testament in contemporary Tongan and English. Arrangements were quickly made for a shipment of 2,000 copies to be sent to Tonga, and a launch ceremony at Centenary Church attended by Her Royal Highness Princess Pilolevu Tuita guaranteed maximum publicity for the product's arrival.

"Very soon, everyone was talking about this new Bible and copies were flying out of the window," says Malo. "Everyone wanted a copy. This Bible is leather-bound, gold-edged – and affordable - perfect as a gift.

"Our customers are happy now. No more helpless looks, no more gift-less celebrations. Now the Word of God is amongst us."

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