

JBS ANNUAL REPORT 2023

A Record of The Japan Bible Society

2023年度 日本聖書協会年報

Vol.124

April 2024 issue



We are pleased to report our journey through the FY 2023



日本聖書協会理事長
石田 学
Board Chairperson
Manabu Ishida

Reaching the milestone of 150 years

Next year, 2025, marks a significant milestone as it will be the 150th anniversary of Bible Work in Japan. Starting this year, various projects and events will be planned and implemented. We reflect on the pioneers who have carried forward the work of the Bible Society, and while we look back at our past, we also aim to forge a future that looks ahead to the next 50 and 100 years.

In today's increasingly complex world, I believe that Japan Bible Society has an important role to play. In addition to publishing and distributing the Bible, we are committed to supporting the Bible Societies and their work in various countries and regions around the world, contributing to reconciliation and peace based on God's Word.

It has been five years since the publication of Bible Society Interconfessional Version, which adheres to the strengths of the New Interconfessional Translation while demonstrating the high scholarly and literary standards of contemporary Japanese Bible studies. To spread this translation and gain new insights, Japan Bible Society will continue to hold committees and study groups regularly. We kindly ask for your continued prayers and support for the work of Japan Bible Society, for the General Secretary and the staff, and for the scholars who contribute to Bible translation. We pray for the Lord's grace and peace upon you all.



日本聖書協会総主事
具志堅 聖
General Secretary
Kiyoshi Gushiken

Reflecting on the New Normal of Post-Covid-19

On May 8, 2023, the government transitioned the classification of Covid-19 from Category 2 to Category 5. Day to day social activities have gradually normalized, allowing the Bible Society's operations to shift back to the usual mode. Undoubtedly, we have all experienced various changes during this period.

The pandemic has changed the world, giving rise to what feels like a new normal. For example, there has been an increase in people reading JBS publications like 'SOWER' in digital formats rather than in print. The number of viewers watching JBS events on YouTube has also definitely increased. Globally, the use of Bible apps has risen. Moreover, the use of online tools like ZOOM for meetings and gatherings has become the norm, allowing these events to be organized without concern for travel distances or costs. There are likely many other examples.

In this new post-corona virus normal, Japan Bible Society will begin planning for our 150th Anniversary starting in 2024. We hope these projects will serve as beacons for the next era. We ask for your continued cooperation and prayers.

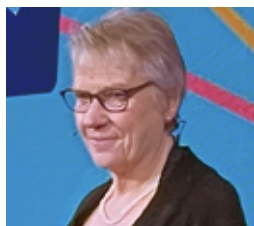


写真・Willem Jan de Bruijn

WA23-UBSWorldAssembly

From October 13th to 17th, 2023, the United Bible Societies World Assembly (WA23) was held in Egmond aan Zee, Netherlands. Approximately 390 representatives from 147 countries gathered to participate in lectures, meetings, panel discussions, workshops, and the general assembly. The theme of the assembly was "God's Word: Reconciliation for the World." Representing Japan at the assembly were Ms. Hikari Kokai, the Secretary of the board of Japan Bible Society (also representative director of the Wesley Foundation), and Rev. Gushiken, the General Secretary of Japan Bible Society.

The assembly was initially scheduled to be held in Ghana in 2022, but due to COVID-19 pandemic, it was postponed and the venue was moved to the Netherlands. Unfortunately, due to conflicts in Russia and Ukraine, as well as the tensions between Israel and Palestine, some countries were unable to attend the 2023 World Assembly.



Ms. Elaine Duncan, Chair of UBS Fellowship Council



Rev. Gushiken - JBS GS, Rev. Gevers - UBS Secretary General, Ms. Kokai - JBS Board Secretary



With participants from Asia

Despite such challenges, it was significant that colleagues from many countries were able to gather in one place. Preparations for WA23 began about two years ago, during which opinions were collected on issues to be discussed at the assembly. These were consolidated into '7 mission priorities,' and a statement outlining future actions to address them was unanimously affirmed. Japan Bible Society will also move forward with these priorities in mind.

7 Mission Priorities

聖書翻訳

Bible Translation

印刷された聖書の頒布

Printed Bible Distribution

聖書活用

Bible Engagement

ディアスポラ共同体への奉仕

Serving Diaspora Communities

地球環境への配慮

Creation Care

デジタル変革

Digital Transformation

使命遂行のためのレジリエンス (復元力)

Mission Resilience



Panel discussion at the 1st contest

1st & 2nd Bible Essay Contest

We co-hosted the first Bible Essay Contest with Kirisuto Shimbun, a Christian newspaper company, collecting entries from August 15 to December 31, 2022. The themes were 'My Bible' and 'The Bible and I,' and we received 75 original essays. The preliminary selection and commentary were conducted by Ms. Amari Hayashi (poet) and Mr. Ryusui Seiryoin (author), who shortlisted to 10 works. The award ceremony and special discussion session titled 'The Joy of Communicating through Words' were held on March 18, 2023, at the Kyobunkwan Gallery Stella as well as online. The second Bible Essay Contest opened for submissions from August 1 to October 31, 2023, under the theme 'That's Why I Love the Bible,' receiving a total of 58

entries. Like the previous contest, 10 works were nominated by the preliminary selection and commentary committee. The award ceremony and special discussion 'Exploring the Fascination of the Bible' were held on January 27, 2024, at Ginza Church of the United Church of Christ in Japan. This was broad casted online. You can view all nominated works on our official website.



Official page for the contest on our website
https://www.bible.or.jp/bible_essay_contest

● 1st Essay Contest Winners (titles and names in Japanese)

	作品名	作者
大賞	父の遺言	見澤 富子
準大賞	私につながっていないさい	吉國 選也
準大賞	きせきのくすり	小松崎 有美
あまり賞	聖書をなくした日	太田 浩登
流水賞	祖父からの書簡	河島 文成
佳作	『聖書』命との出会い	井上 英治
佳作	ぼろっちいのが良いんだ	赤松 真希
佳作	深夜に読む本は	石川 総子
佳作	王宮に住むヤモリ	王宮ヤモリ
佳作	あなたの目は見ておられた	mika

● 2nd Essay Contest Winners (titles and names in Japanese)

	作品名	作者
大賞	神様の計画	すず
準大賞	隣のバイブル	fuminaru
準大賞	幸い!心貧しき、私の夫	ヨグソミネバリ
あまり賞	わたしの光	おおやま ゆみ
流水賞	神様のことばと気迫	伊藤 走
佳作	だから私は、バイブルが好きだ	はとむぎ
佳作	苦しみに勝る希望があるということ。	米村 かなこ
佳作	私は宗教二世	kim202235
佳作	ヒーローに会いに行く	吉國 選也
佳作	信者ではないけれど	すずき まなみ

Dedication of Bible Society Interconfessional Version in Braille

To commemorate the completion of the Braille edition of the 'Bible Society Interconfessional Version,' which has been published in stages since May 2019, a dedication ceremony was held at Ginza Church (United Church of Christ in Japan) on June 6, 2023. The ceremony was attended by the translators of the 'Bible Society Interconfessional Version,' representatives from denominations, organizations for the visually impaired, as well as directors and staff of Japan Bible Society, totaling 54 attendees.



Attendees of the Dedication Ceremony

The ceremony began with an opening prayer by JBS Vice-Chair Archbishop Kikuchi Isao (Chair of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan and Chair of the Logos Braille Library). Following the prayer, General Secretary Gushiken reported on the Braille translation project of the 'Bible Society Interconfessional Version.' Mr. Masayuki Higo, the chair of the Tokyo Braille Publishing House, which handled the text translation and production, then gave a speech. Holding an actual Braille plate, he introduced the Bible as a Braille book that is specially bound by hand to ensure durability and maintain its open state. Mr. Fumihiko Tanaka, Chair of the Japan Christian Council for the Blind offered congratulations in his speech. He reviewed the history of Braille and Bible translation since the Meiji era, expressing gratitude and praise to God who reveals Christ to everyone.

The Bible reading was conducted by Ms. Haruko Nishiyama, a visually impaired member of the Shinjuzumi Church of the United Church of Christ in Japan. She read from the Gospel of Luke 4:16-21, using the Braille Bible.

In his message that followed, JBS Chair Rev. Ishida referred to the prophet's words that 'the gospel is proclaimed to the poor, the oppressed, and the blind,' and noted that Jesus declared, 'Today, as you hear these words, they are fulfilled.' He emphasized, 'continuing this fulfillment until the end of the world is our mission as disciples of Jesus and the mission of the Bible Society. The Braille Bible is a tangible testament to this work. May God bless and make use of this Bible, making it a witness in our mission to bring the Gospel to all people.'



Braille Bibles



Prayer by JBS Vice-Chair, Archbishop Kikuchi



Benediction by JBS Chair Rev. Ishida



Mr. Higo of Tokyo Braille Publishing House



Ms. Nishiyama reading from the Braille Bible



Mr. Tanaka of Japan Christian Council for the Blind

Visiting the Bible Societies we support

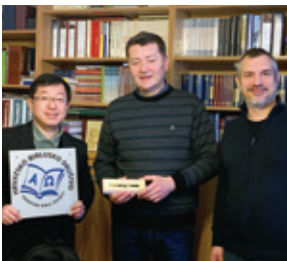
We had the opportunity to visit four countries—Croatia, Serbia, Albania, and Armenia—that we support through ISP. During the visits, we were able to interact with staff from the Bible Societies, local partners, and beneficiaries of the projects.



DATES : Feb. 26 - March 12, 2023
COUNTRIES : Croatia & Serbia (GS Rev. Gushiken, Fundraising Mgr. Ms. Takahashi)
 Albania & Armenia (Ms. Takahashi)

Croatian Bible Society

Croatia, which gained independence from Yugoslavia in 1991, has a majority Catholic population (86%). It is responsible for distributing Bibles to Catholics across the former Yugoslav region. Recently, it has initiated a Bible translation project for sign language.



With GS Mr. Damir Lipovsek and Mr. Filip Vacek



With the Sign Language team

Interconfessional Bible Society of Albania

After being under Ottoman and Italian rule, Albania became a socialist country in 1944. In 1967, the communist government declared it an 'atheist state'—a unique stance during the Sino-Soviet split, where it sided with China, marking an unusual history for a socialist country in Europe. In 1992, Albania abandoned socialism and embraced democratization, but today, about 70% of the population still identifies as 'non-religious.' The remaining 30% is almost evenly divided among the Orthodox Church, Sunni Islam, and Catholicism. The Bible Society is advancing the establishment of 'Bible Learning Center' to promote Bible study among this non-religious demographic.



Sign at the Learning Center



Bible Learning Center



With GS Mr. Altin Hysi and the staff

Bible Society of Serbia

Once the political center of the former Yugoslavia, became the Republic of Serbia in 2006. Majority is Serbian Orthodox, but there are also communities of Roma in the south with Catholic and Muslim backgrounds. A significant recent achievement is the publication of the OT in modern Serbian, and efforts are currently underway to translate the New Testament into contemporary Serbian language.



With GS Mrs. Vera Mitić



Religion class in a public school

Bible Society of Armenia

Armenia, the first country in the world to adopt Christianity as its state religion in AD 301, experienced the "Armenian Genocide" at the hands of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the 19th century, leading many Armenians to leave their homeland and disperse around the world. After a period of socialism, it gained independence as the Republic of Armenia in 1991. Armenia was involved in a conflict over the region known as Nagorno-Karabakh, also called the Republic of Artsakh, which is within Azerbaijan. In 2023, Armenia declared the dissolution of the republic, effectively ending the conflict. This led to an influx of up to 100,000 refugees into Armenia from the region. Most of the population adheres to the Armenian Apostolic Church, which is similar to the Orthodox Church and also known as Oriental Orthodox. The Bible Society, led by the Archbishop of the Armenian Apostolic Church as General Secretary, actively runs programs such as ecumenical camps for youth, healing for trauma caused by conflicts, and protection programs for Nagorno-Karabakh refugees.



Sign Language Glossary



Sign Language Glossary



With the facilitators of the Trauma Healing program

International Support Program

JBS allocated 20,374,519JPY in the FY2023

1. UBS Global Stewardship Fund 6,628,108JPY

This is a contribution to support the 'Global Mission Activities' of the United Bible Societies, aimed at sustaining the organization and supporting Bible Work efforts around the world.



Serbian Bible Society staff and the Roma Bible School children

2. Project support to sister BSs

8,697,990JPY

We supported the programs of 5 BSs

3. Emergency Funds 5,048,421JPY

We sent financial aid to three countries affected by conflicts and natural disasters.



Ukrainian Bible Society staff distributing calendars with Bible verses in the front-line areas

FY2023 ISP Contributions

Europe	Croatia	Core presence	¥1,898,015
	Serbia	Core presence	¥1,898,015
	Albania	Bible Learning Center	¥1,898,015
Asia	Armenia	Trauma Healing Facilitator Training	¥1,105,930
		Refugee support	¥205,494
	Kazakhstan	Bible distribution	¥1,692,521
Emergency Funds	Ukraine	Bible distribution	¥1,494,500
	Turkey	Earthquake support	¥3,395,504
	Slovenia	Flood support	¥158,417
UBS		Global Stewardship Fund	¥6,628,108
Total			¥20,374,519

Sign Language Bible Translation

In the FY2023, we received donations from 290 donors totaling 2,341,844JPY, which were granted to the Japan Deaf Evangelical Association

Since 2003, JBS has financially supported the translation of the Sign Language Bible undertaken by the Japan Deaf Evangelical Association. This project aims to enable the hearing-impaired from birth or early childhood who consider Japanese Sign Language as their mother tongue, to understand the Bible in their own language. We are grateful to report that all the donations received have been granted in full to the Japan Deaf Evangelical Association, which handles the translation and production of the Sign Language Bible.

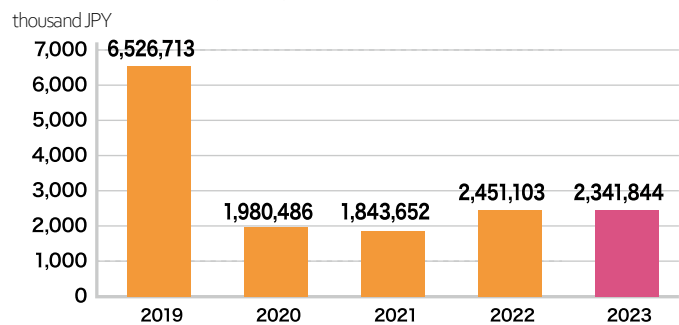
New Releases in FY2023

Nov. 2022 Romans Ch. 1 - 8 (App & YouTube)

Currently, translation work is underway for Romans ch. 9-16 and 1st Corinthians. To date, 32 books consisting of 34 volumes of the Sign Language Bible have been made available.

Supported by your generous donations, we are providing free distribution online and offering the app at no cost. DVDs are distributed for 100 yen per volume. *DVD distribution will end in August 2024. Please use the app and YouTube thereafter.

Donations 2019 - 2023



TOPICS

The Japan Deaf Evangelical Association celebrated its 30th anniversary

On October 28, 2023, a commemorative event was held at the Biblical Church of Tokyo in Nerima ward. Congratulatory messages were received from overseas Sign Language Bible translation teams. While expressing gratitude for the 30 years of progress, new initiatives for future Bible translations were also announced.



30th anniversary event



『Bible Society Interconfessional Version』
Pulpit Bible
SI98



『Bible Society Interconfessional Version』
Pulpit Bible with DC
SI98DC

『Bible Society Interconfessional Version』 Pulpit Bible

Since the launching of our standard edition (medium-sized Bible with references and footnotes) in December 2018, four and a half years passed. Finally in June 2023, the large-sized pulpit Bible of the 'Bible Society Interconfessional Version' was completed. Pulpit Bibles, which are bound one at a time by hand using traditional techniques, have been used as a symbolic presence in churches for many years. However, due to a sharp decline in demand and a shortage of artisans since the 2010s, the production of domestic pulpit Bibles ceased. Driven by both domestic and international calls for the necessity of pulpit Bibles in order to adopt the 'Bible Society Interconfessional Version' as the official translation to be used in church services, the publishing department approached several bookbinderies abroad

and ultimately partnered with Fopma Wier in the Netherlands. After countless online meetings with the craftsmen, a sample of exceptionally high quality was produced, leading to the official production of 200 copies of SI98 Old and New Testaments and 100 limited editions with Deuterocanon. It took a whole year to carefully bind the Bibles and the first shipment arrived in Japan at the beginning of June.

The launching ceremony was held at Takenogawa Church on June 18. By the end of September, all the Bibles had safely arrived in Japan.

With the completion of the pulpit Bibles, there are high hopes that this will accelerate the adoption of the 'Bible Society Interconfessional Version.'



Each pulpit Bible is manually bound



Rev. Higashino at Takenogawa church
holding the 1st pulpit Bible distributed



SOWER 49 features stories about
the history of pulpit Bibles (Japanese)
[https://www.bible.or.jp/wp-content/
uploads/2021/03/Sower_No49.pdf](https://www.bible.or.jp/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Sower_No49.pdf)

