From the Director, Rev. Steve Bryant

Breaking News: Jesus Was A Publisher

Did you know Jesus was a publisher? The Bible tells us he was a carpenter by family trade, but it also tells us that at age thirty he became God’s favored publisher on earth. The English word, “publish,” simply means, “to make public.” Jesus laid aside his carpentry tools and made his whole life a means of making God’s love public. Jesus published “the way, the truth and the life” in and through his own life, death and resurrection (John xx). Jesus formed a publishing team of twelve. When he was killed for his message, the publishing went on. They traveled to the four corners of the earth and made it a global publishing network!

The Heart of Christian Publishing

The apostle Paul gave his friends in Corinth the highest compliment when he wrote, “You are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everyone. You show you are Christ’s letter, delivered by us. You weren’t written with ink but with the Spirit of the living God. You weren’t written on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts” (2 Cor. 3:2-3).

So we are like letters from Christ to the world. Christ is publishing himself through us, insofar as we open our hearts to the Spirit.

But Paul, the letter writer, shows us how we can multiply the impact of the message—by writing what Christ has written on our hearts and by sharing it with others far and near. We can help others to do the same. Letters from Christ can reach every household! This is the heart of Christian publishing.
Partnership with AAUMTI  By Kara Lassen Oliver

The African Association of United Methodist Theological Institutions was officially launched at the Africa University campus in 2011. The association seeks to collect African wisdom and to promote the referencing of African theological thinkers in the training of theological students. "The formation of this Association will enable us to retain our identity as the United Methodist Church in Africa," said Reverend Dr. Beauty Maenzanise, Dean at Africa University’s Faculty of Theology.

DRI is proud to partner with AAUMTI providing a Writer’s Workshop for the presidents of the association in June 2014. This weeklong seminar will include forums on identifying, cultivating and publishing African authors in academia; training sessions focusing on the skills of writing, editing and preparing manuscripts for publication; and peer review sessions of current manuscripts.

New GBOD General Secretary
Starting in January, GBOD has a new General Secretary—Rev. Dr. Timothy Bias. During the 1990s, Rev. Bias worked on the staff of GBOD in Evangelism and Preaching. He has pastored small churches and large churches. Rev. Bias is very supportive of our work with Central Conferences and of the publishing teams. He plans to join me on my visit to the DRC in August to witness the good work the publishing teams are doing.
Highlights from the Philippines

In each newsletter we will highlight a different publishing team. We can learn from one another’s trials and successes.

1. “Twenty four students and pastors attended and completed the *This is My Story: A Writing Workshop* we held at John Wesley College, Tuguegarao City on February 6-7, 2014. They were very attentive and participative. Everyone submitted their written meditations at the end of the workshop. One of them said that the workshop brought back “the writer” in her and encouraged her to keep a journal again to write her stories. A district superintendent also attended the workshop and said that the workshop helped him to practice focused writing that is different from writing reports and sermons. He is inviting us to go to his district and conduct the same workshop with lay people. The best thing about the workshop, all of them except for one, wrote in Ilokano!”

Earlie Pasion, Publishing Coordinator, Discipleship Resources Philippines (DRP)

2. “A mission pastor here in Quezon City (QCPACE) shared how she diligently saves money throughout the year in anticipation of her annual conference to be able to buy her own books and materials for ministry. She was so happy that her savings allowed her to buy all the Tagalog bible study series materials that DRP released last year. The lower cost of materials, she shared, enabled her to buy more and she was very happy at the same time to receive new and homegrown materials written in the Philippines.”

Jay Cunanan-Canlas, Team Leader, Discipleship Resources Philippines (DRP)

3. “The DS told me recently about the PAMPAC’s East District (Pampanga Philippines Annual Conference) which, under the DS’s leadership, decided collectively to develop their small groups with the help of the Tagalog bible study series, doing it simultaneously, one part of the series at a time.”

Jay Cunanan-Canlas, Team Leader, Discipleship Resources Philippines (DRP)
Cultivating International Writers by Rev. Steve Bryant

Most of us associated with Media Associates International (MAI) are probably working to cultivate international writers. Our goal at Discipleship Resources International is to expand the faith community’s access to affordable, contextually appropriate Christian resources by building indigenous capacity to write and publish them.

One of the most important things we can do is offer publishing channels—for those already motivated to write and for those who are willing to learn. The absence of channels to publish is discouraging to potential writers, which then also discourages reading in those same contexts. Reading increases when people find content that’s culturally familiar, that “sounds like us.”

Four years ago we began to work with regional church bodies to create and support publishing teams in many countries across sub-Saharan Africa, the Philippines, and Eastern Europe. These publishing teams engage local church people and pastors in writing, developing, and selling content to meet local needs at affordable rates.

We assist these same publishing teams to offer writing workshops three to four times a year in different regions and in a variety of formats. We nearly always start with devotional writing, which engages people in writing about what they know best—their own faith stories and scriptures through which God has spoken to them.

Three years ago we created another publishing channel for church leaders called the “Africa Ministry Series.” We launched that with a three-day writing seminar for faculty of theology at Africa University in Zimbabwe. We helped the faculty identify writing projects and then offered editorial support. We’ve published eight titles so far, all in English, but translated or being translated to French and Portuguese.

Advertising widely in your current publications that you are looking for international contributors is an obvious way to cultivate more writers. Offer simple guidelines for what’s expected and where to submit.

Finally, we pray and keep our eyes open for those we suspect have a word to share through writing. Giving them a bite-sized goal gives them a way to get started and gives us a way to start a relationship, see their writing, and call forth the gifts.
Welcome Two New Publishing Teams
In January, we welcomed two new publishing teams to the DRI Network, both in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The East Congo Publishing Team is based on Kindu, DRC. Rev. Antoine Okota, the Team Leader, is also director of communications for East Congo. Rev. Benoît Mahamudi Ngereza, the Publishing Coordinator, is also director of evangelization for the area and the dean of theology for the new East Congo Methodist University. They went to work immediately, distributing Swahili Bibles to pastors at an affordable price. They will also produce liturgy booklets and songbooks in Swahili in 2014.

The North Katanga publishing team is based in Kamina, DRC. The new team met for two days and created an ambitious publishing plan. Rev. Kimba Evariste, the team leader, is also president of Kabongo Methodist University in Kabongo, DRC. Rev. Wakubatwa, the publishing coordinator, is also District Superintendent in Kamina. Their priorities are Bibles for their pastors in Swahili and Kiluba, liturgy booklet, a newsletter named “Matunda,” and tapes of worship songs by North Katanga choirs which they believe many people will purchase.

May God bless the work of these two new teams to publish the Good News.

E-Reader Libraries for Schools of Theology
Do you know what an e-reader library is? As you know, an e-reader is a small hand-held device that allows a person to purchase and download a large quantity of e-books. It allows a school to suddenly have a whole library of theology books without constructing a building.

DRI started testing the idea of an e-reader library at Gbarnga School of Theology in Liberia in a remote setting with no Internet and irregular generator-powered electricity. We pre-loaded the e-readers with over 100 theology books. Faculty and students say the e-readers are revolutionary. They have access to books; they can carry a library in their pockets and read the books wherever they go. Teachers don’t have to write everything on the board.

Now, DRI is working with GBHEM (the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry) to develop a way for other United Methodist schools of theology to benefit from e-reader libraries. Students are expected to contribute to the cost of the e-readers.
Contacts

Publishing Teams

DRI publishing teams produce resources to meet local needs in UM churches and schools, in official and indigenous languages. For more information on local team resources and publishing plans, contact the team publishing leaders or contact DRI/GBOD:

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