



# Bible Society News

Volume 77, Issue 1

Spring, 2015

*Since 1840*

**Board of Directors**

- Eugene W. Lyman, President
- Jeffrey M. Schwab, Vice President
- Joanne Twomey, Treasurer
- Dr. Berlean Burris, Secretary
- Rev. Jesus Nuñez
- Kenneth C. Oliver
- Rev. Arturo Perez Rodriguez
- Rev. Jaime Shedd
- Allen Stryczek
- Lydia Talbot

**Staff**

- Kenneth C. Oliver, Exec. Director
- Debbie Renaud, Office Manager
- William Seitz, Church Services

**In This Issue:**

- 175th Anniversary* 1
- Remembering Bob Murray* 1
- CBS At a Glance* 2
- Program Update* 2

## Happy 175<sup>th</sup> Birthday

**On April 7, 1840 Chicago Bible Society was born**

175 years ago, on April 7, 1840, the religious and civic leaders of the small frontier town of Chicago gathered at the old First Presbyterian Church on Clark Street and Washington to address a serious social problem in the city. Rising crime, murder, public drunkenness, gambling and broken families were identified as the problem. The moral underpinnings of civic life were threatened. The solution: more people needed to read the Bible.

And out of that need and out of that proposed solution came the Chicago Bible Society with a clear mission: to distribute the Bible and foster its serious reading. Bible societies, of which CBS is one, were unique organizations created some 200 years ago with a specific pur-



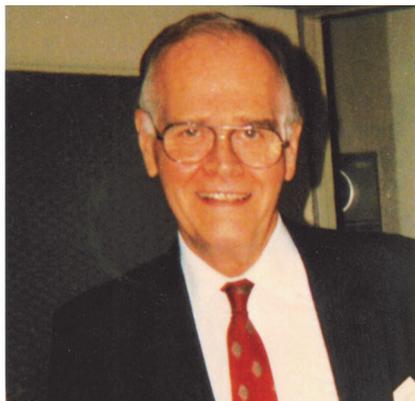
The 100th anniversary dinner held on January 26, 1940 at the Congress Hotel

pose: to bring the printed Word to the masses. Advances in printing technology and advances in education during the 17<sup>th</sup> century made this possible. Without a high degree of literacy, Bible distribution does not make sense. Interestingly, it was the availability of the Bible that prompted people to learn to read and teach their children

*(Continued on page 2)*

## Remembering Dr. Bob Murray

**By Ken Oliver, Executive Director**



Bob Murray 1926 - 2015

On January 30, we lost a dear friend. Dr. Bob Murray had been retired as Executive Director of Chicago Bible Society for seven years when I first arrived in 2006 as the new Executive Director. Yet every month, we would talk on the telephone and he would give me wise counsel. My background had been in Christian non-profit work. Bible societies were new to me, and I needed help understanding and navigating this world. I remember Bob's patience and kindness during those first few months here and for many years afterward.

## 175th Birthday (continued from page 1)

to read. Literacy did not just have commercial and intellectual value, it had profound religious value: reading the Bible brought one closer to God.

Over the next 175 years, the Chicago Bible Society followed that mission and succeeded – nearly everyone in metropolitan Chicago has a Bible or has easy access to the Bible. We did not do this alone, of course. Technological advances in printing made the Bible relatively cheap; economic prosperity meant that fewer people needed free Bibles, and in the past twenty-five years, the internet and Bible-related apps made the Bible ubiquitous. Today, the era of mass Bible distribution has ended. The need, as far as the general public is concerned, has been met. Yet as we go back to that day 175 years ago, we see that the social problems remain.

The focus of the Chicago Bible Society has changed from a “pure distribution model” to a program model that looks to Bible reading and Bible study to bring about personal transformation. It is still about making the Bible available, but more importantly, it is about making the Bible real in the lives of real people. Change comes from reading the Word.



Chicago Bible House in 1962

Today we understand that crime and poverty are the result of complex economic and cultural forces. Yet it is also true that after more than fifty years of combating these social ills through political and economic reforms, the problems remain. Social change will not happen without personal transformation.

Real change does happen in the lives of individuals. And transformation happens as a result of a life-changing faith. We can no longer promise that crime and poverty will be eradicated, but we can show how individual lives are changed.



## Chicago Bible Society At A Glance

### Where we have been

- 1840 - Founded in Chicago.
- 1871 - Provided Bibles to the city after the Great Fire.
- 1886 - Worked with Dwight Moody
- 1900 - Chicago Bible settlement house with Emma Dryer
- 1952 - Gutenberg Award established

### What we are doing

- 1,144 jail inmates enrolled in small group Bible study
- 235 inner-city school children learn to read using the Bible
- 23 churches in partnership to reach their community with the Bible
- 9,045 Scripture resources provided to jails, hospitals, schools and churches this year

## Program updates: our first quarter

**Project Philip** – In the last quarter, 34 inmates enrolled in Project Philip: 24 English speaking and 9 Spanish-speaking, 26 made a commitment or recommitment to follow Christ and 30 graduated after completing the 12-week program, a graduation rate of 88%.

**Children’s Literacy** – The first semester has ended and we are getting positive reports from our partners at By the Hands Club on the effectiveness of the Children’s literacy materials. A complete report on the school year will be available at the end of summer.

**Bibles for Jails** – We were able to provide 1400 complete Bibles to the chaplains at Cook County and Will County Jails this past quarter. This was made possible by our partnership with American Bible Society.

**New Media** – We continue our conversion to the new web-platform. We are expanding our blog content and moving our email addresses over to the “.org” address.