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“Bible smuggling into China counter productive,” says Bible Society NSW CEO

Ninety percent of funds spent on smuggling are wasted

“Organisations that appealed for funds to smuggle Bibles into China were wasting ninety percent of their donors money,” said Bible Society NSW CEO, Daniel Willis.

“Complete Bibles and New Testaments are legally printed in China on the Amity Printing Press in Nanjing and distributed through 55,000 churches and meeting points throughout the country,” he said.

Speaking in China, where he recently visited the press in Nanjing, Daniel said, “If the western organisations that raised funds outside China for Bible smuggling used these same funds to buy Bibles from Amity, they would see a 90 percent increase in the numbers of Bibles distributed,” said Daniel.

“Whilst funding Bible smuggling trips might appeal to uninformed donors, if the funds spent on airfares and accommodation plus buying the Bibles were spent at Amity, where a complete Chinese language Bible costs around US\$2, there would be tens of thousands more Bibles available in China,” he said.

“In some cases, these organisations buy Bibles outside China that have been printed on the Amity Press – 20 percent of the presses production is exported – and then spend more money on airfares to ship these same Bibles back to China. The economics of such an activity are not viable,” said Daniel.

“Bible smuggling is also counter-productive as it alienates Church leaders and the government, with whom Bible Society and the Amity Press has excellent relations,” said Daniel.

The Amity Printing Press has now passed the 50 million Bibles and New Testament mark since it started printing in 1986. It has outgrown its current site and plans to move to a new 86,000 square metre site in 2007/8 at a cost of RMB 230,000,000. (About AUS\$40m)

“One of the additional benefits of buying Bibles from Amity is that they cannot be confiscated by the authorities as they are officially printed,” said Daniel.

“I acknowledge that some Chinese Christians are unable to afford a Bible or find a local distribution point, however this is more a problem of logistics than availability or legality,” he said.

“These problems can be overcome by additional funding and it is towards solving them that I would urge Christians to direct their funds. Smuggling Bibles is always presented as exciting and dangerous. In reality, it is inevitably a waste of donors funds,” Daniel said.

Bible Society NSW is planning two trips to China in 2007 and would encourage anyone who is interested in seeing the work of the Amity Press first hand to join them on such a trip. “Whilst we would rather donors support the work of the Amity Press, I am happy to take anyone interested on a tour of the printing plant and on a Bible distribution run,” said Daniel.

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Pictures of the Amity Press and Bible distribution are available on request.

Pictured: Daniel Willis, CEO Bible Society NSW with Peter Dean, Assistant General Manager, Amity Printing Company, Nanjing.

