

# New Ministry Prints Literature

The students gathered around as the missionary opened the back door of the rusted old Jeepney, the Filipino version of a pick-up truck. The dirt-court basketball game died when all the players saw what was happening. All the students of the high school campus gathered around to receive their very own children's Sunday School book. It was an English language book designed for third graders, but these high school students all immediately opened the book and, sitting on the grass under the hot Philippine sun, began to read with interest. "My eyes flooded with tears for people so eager to learn about the Scriptures" Dr. Bill Johnson says.

Missionary Glenn Knight had encouraged Bill to visit his work in the Philippine Islands to explore the possibility of providing study materials for children to be used in the missions. While there, Bill bought an Apple computer from personal funds and demonstrated the ease of opening a BTC book from a CD, translating it and printing it for use by the Sunday School teachers. (The Lord later returned the cost of the computer and printer through contributions from churches and individuals). "It was a very impressive visit."



**Children in Romania color the Vacation Bible School material printed for the first time in their own language this summer.**

A new ministry was beginning. This ministry is translating children's literature into a country's native language and printing and distributing it there with local missions and churches. Bill and his wife, Rita, have answered the call to serve in this ministry.

Bill has pastored churches in Arkansas and Texas. He has also served as director of promotion and public relations for BSSC (6 years), director of meeting arrangements for ABA (5 years), editor in chief of publications (17 years) for the American Baptist Association and Baptist Sunday School Committee. He is currently a missionary endorsed by Calvary Baptist Church of Hamburg, Arkansas, in this

ministry of printing children's materials on foreign fields in their own languages.

Bill's wife, Rita, has served the American Baptist Association as Secretary to D. S. Madden, Secretary Treasurer of Missions, ABA (12 years) and Editor of Youth Materials, BSSC (3 years). Rita and Bill have been married more than 40 years. Their overall mission statement in their ministry is "Helping children of the world understand the Word of God by translating and publishing literature in the language of their birth."

About eleven years ago the "Iron Curtain" fell and the whole of eastern Europe opened to the preaching of the

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gospel of Christ. "The churches of the ABA joined together to send eager missionaries to proclaim the glorious gospel to a spiritually destitute people." Bill says the result has been the establishing of many churches and missions. "In order to assure the growth and stability of these churches a printing ministry is essential," Bill said. "No other group of churches or publishing company has come forward to meet this need." Since Bill and Rita have committed themselves to this ministry, they will need the prayers and financial support of the churches at home to enable them to reach their goals. "We simply cannot afford to fail in our efforts to reach these gospel-hungry people," says Bill. "The door may not always be open. The churches of the American Baptist Association may not always be blessed with the resources to do this work."

In July 2000, Missionary John Sanders and his wife, Sharon, invited Bill and Rita to come to Romania with a Discovery Missions Team. During this visit, Bill bought a computer and printer with personal funds and funds contributed for the purpose.

He then demonstrated to young Romanian minister Liviu Cliniciu how to open the Baptist Training Course *Listen and Learn* leaflet, as well as how to translate and print the lesson for use by the children's Bible classes. A church had been sending the missionary's wife, Sharon Sanders, one of the

# in Foreign Languages, in Foreign Lands

Sunday school books for each age group every quarter. She had been getting each lesson translated and pasting the translated sheet over the English text.

She then took the page to the copy machine and with great care made enough copies for each class to use. This was very time consuming. Sharon was very excited when she saw how quickly the lesson could be translated and printed from the compact disc that Bill had brought.

During the following months, the people of Romania joined in the effort. First Landmark Baptist Church of Sheridan, Arkansas (the Sanders' sending church) committed funds. Brother Johnson continued to email advice. Interested churches supplied funds for another computer. John and Sharon Sanders coordinated the work. One by one, books were translated. Sunday School, Baptist Training Course, Discovery and Vacation Bible School lessons were made available to any missionary who requested a copy. Within two years, more than one thousand

children and adults were studying weekly lessons using the translated materials.

By the time Bill and Rita arrived with the Discovery Missions team (4th visit for the two - 3rd time to take the missions team) in July 2003, The "S" Files VBS curriculum Bill produced through the BSSC was translated. The team helped with VBS in three churches and missions. They witnessed more than forty professions of faith. Several hundred Romanian children, for the first time, had VBS leaflets to color, study and take home. What a blessing it was for all!

Before the ABA meeting in June 2003, Bill asked Rita to join him in his office for prayer. They briefly discussed the open door for literature and the tremendous need all the foreign missionaries had. "After that prayer it was clear to both of us that the Lord was calling us to help His churches with this very special need," Bill said.

Two weeks later he announced to the messengers of the ABA that he would no longer be available to serve as editor in chief, but would answer the Lord's call to this new ministry.

Since then another great milestone in the work has been reached. In late October 2003, the first Primary Sunday School quarterly was printed in full color, top quality in Romania. The national missionaries supported by the churches of the ABA have agreed to get behind the printing. They will ask their missions to purchase the materials at a price of about half the total production cost. The immediate goal is to provide quarterly materials for at least three age levels on a regular basis.

Dr. Ben M. Bogard, a great leader during the early days of the American Baptist Association, saw the need for a publications ministry among the churches. In 1903 he established the "Baptist Publishing Company" and began to write literature, using his own funds, for the churches. The ministry grew until, in 1915, Dr. Bogard saw that it would be able to sustain itself. He gave his interest in the ministry to the General Association (predecessor to the American Baptist Association).

"Our hope is that Rita and I can be used of the Lord to help 'jump start' a similar ministry in as many countries as we have missions and churches," Bill said. "As the Lord used Dr. Bogard to initiate the work in Texarkana, so we trust He will help us in Romania, the Philippines, Thailand, Burma and maybe several other countries."

In addition to these four countries Bill's International Christian Publishers ministry is already working in, he is striving for several other countries as well including Albania. Currently, the ministry is printing literature in seven different languages. In Burma, the Bible has not yet been printed completely in the language of Chin, so Bill said he is excited about helping to complete this Bible translation as well.

More information can be seen at their website, [www.icplit.org](http://www.icplit.org). Bill's email is [billjohnson@icplit.org](mailto:billjohnson@icplit.org).



*Missionary Jerry Chandler (left) shows the newest children's literature which just came off their printing press in October with Romanian native pastor Liviu Clinciu and his wife.*

