

Thousands of modern-day scribes lend a hand in Methodist Bible transcription project

by [Martin Revis](#)

July 5, 2011

London, July 5 (ENInews)--In a process hearkening back to the pre-Gutenberg era, when monks laboriously copied sacred texts by hand, more than 30,000

people throughout the United Kingdom recently participated in a handwritten transcription of the Bible. The completed project was presented at the annual Methodist Conference in Southport, England, set to conclude 7 July.

Delegates voted at last year's conference to undertake the project, the first of its kind in Methodist history, to mark the 400th anniversary of the King James Bible. According to a news release, guidelines were drawn up for the 31 Methodist districts, "enabling them to organize the project as creatively as possible in their regions." Public writing centers called scriptoriums were set up by volunteers in various places, including prisons, schools, libraries, airports, and shopping centers.

One scriptorium, located outside London's Westminster Central Hall, attracted so many people that participants were limited to writing one word per verse of the New Revised Standard Version, the Bible chosen for the initiative. Contributions were made in several languages, including English, Chinese, and Welsh, as well as in Braille.

"The hand-written Bible has been a tremendous success. It has enabled people to engage with Scripture at perhaps a slower pace than usual and to really think what they are copying," said the Rev Lionel Osborn, President of Conference. "For many it has been a deeply enriching experience."

The Rev. Jenny Ellis, the church's evangelism coordinator, said the exercise had captured the imagination of local Methodist churches--Britain has more than 5,000--by reviving the way scriptures were originally passed down, first by word of mouth and then through handwritten texts. "Asking people to write out verses was a particularly significant way of valuing scripture and its life-giving words," said Ellis.

According to a conference spokesman, the handwritten contributions will be bound in 31 volumes and taken on a tour of the country. They will eventually be available for display, either as a collection or in single volumes. An online version will be available at the Deepening Discipleship website. A news releases notes that many scriptoriums filmed the writing process and have posted the clips on YouTube.