

Replica John's Gospel brings Bible's life words to World War One commemorations

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As its unique contribution to the 100th anniversary of the beginning of the First World War, SGM Lifeworlds has launched a re-creation of its 1914 Active Service John's Gospel for use in schools, memorial services and civic events. Drawing on its own work with the Bible across two world wars, this retro pocket gospel is a tool to encourage people in meaningful reflection, debate and prayer on the war and its legacy. It is available now at <http://www.sgmlifeworlds.com>

The charity is partnering with the Hope Greater Love campaign to invite churches to use the Gospels to help people reflect on WW1 and its legacy. Greater Love provides ways for churches and their local communities to get involved in the commemorations, from Remembrance Sunday to the anniversary of the 1914 Christmas truce. SGM Lifeworlds is working alongside Hope in creating Bible resources, films, and downloads to support this national initiative.

SGM Lifeworlds Executive Director Danielle Welch says: "In 2014 as we commemorate the start of the First World War, there is an incredible story to tell of the Bible in wartime – the life words that soldiers carried with them, offering hope and light even in the face of death. For some the horrors of war meant complete loss of faith; but for others, what they experienced led them to seek God, and the Bible's words brought comfort, consolation, and meaning even in the midst of chaos. Our aim this year is to encourage people to read the Gospel – the same Gospel that was read in the trenches – and to reflect on their own lives, and the meaning of the Bible's life words today."

Great care, attention and in-depth research have been employed to make the replica look and feel just like the original. As well as biblical text and newly commissioned artwork by David Henningham, there are also short accounts of wartime distribution and its impact.

During WW1, the then Scripture Gift Mission distributed over 43 million pieces of Bible literature to training corps, troops, and civilians. The Active Service John's Gospel was one of very few items of reading material allowed at the front: it contained hymns for chaplains to use in field services, and a message from Lord Roberts, hero of the Boer War, urging: "I ask you to put your trust in God". Also included was a "decision form" for soldiers to sign. Many of these were found, completed, among the belongings of sons killed in action, giving comfort to bereaved families.

The Active Service John's Gospel 100th Anniversary Edition is available now, free or for donation. It can be ordered (in packs of 10 and 100) online at <http://www.sgmlifeworlds.com> or by calling 0207 730 2155.

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