

Sun, The (Lowell, MA)

October 23, 2008

Section: Today's Headlines

Coast to coast, verse by verse: RV tour lets faithful take pens in hand for Bible celebration

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LEXINGTON -- In the halls of nondenominational Grace Chapel, which draws about 3,000 worshippers per week, services are beamed throughout the huge building with a plethora of high-tech equipment. The massive blue RV out front yesterday, painted with BibleAcrossAmerica.com, has a satellite navigational system to shepherd it along a 15,000-mile, 44-state, 90-city journey. Two young couples do the driving.

But when the van arrived at the church, the message was simplicity: the word of God, in the hand of man.

Since 1454, when Johannes Gutenberg's mechanical printing press cranked out 180 copies of the Bible in Latin, so much has changed. These days, you can call up the Bible on your iPhone.

Yesterday, on stop 21 of 90, the faithful inscribed Bible text by hand, **verse by verse**, as part of an effort to reconnect people with the Good Book. The tour, sponsored by publisher Zondervan, celebrates the 30th anniversary of the publication of its New International Version Bible, which has sold 300 million copies worldwide.

During the cross-country trek, each of the Bible's 31,173 verses will be transcribed by hand.

For centuries, inscribing the Bible was a job for only the elite and clergy. Yesterday, Ken and Jodi Fay each took a verse of Deuteronomy, Chapter 1.

They took a few minutes to write and drove three hours to do it, the longest trip so far by anyone. The Fays, of Bethel, Conn., planned the trek as part of the celebration of their 12th wedding anniversary.

"It's a treat to be part of something like this," said Jodi. "Years ago, only clergymen were allowed to do this. I think it's great to open it up to everyone."

"It's kind of an amazing experience," said Ken. "We live in a technological world, and don't get much of a chance to do something like this. ... It sort of shows in a way how we're all tied into God's family."

WEZE (590 AM), the Quincy-based Christian radio station, recommended the church as the lone Boston-area stop on the tour.

"It's the type of thing our listeners will support," said Scott Cohagan, the station's general manager. "And this is the most important book." (He wrote out Numbers 12:3.)

Tuesday, Portland, Maine. Today, Providence. It ends in San Diego on Feb. 12. It began in Grand Rapids, Mich., on Sept. 30, the day after Tim and Brooke Paneitz of Palm Court, Fla., celebrated their first wedding anniversary.

Tim, 28, a youth minister, heard "they were looking to round up some youth ministry couples, 20-somethings, no children," he says. "We fit the bill."

Along with Californians Jon and Mandy Jones, Tim and Brooke drive the state-of-the-art RV across country. There's a big-screen TV for movies or satellite broadcasts. A full bath and a half bath. A full kitchen "nicer than mine at home," says Tim.

"I feel so bad for you," a woman said to him at one stop.

"Then don't go into the RV," he said.

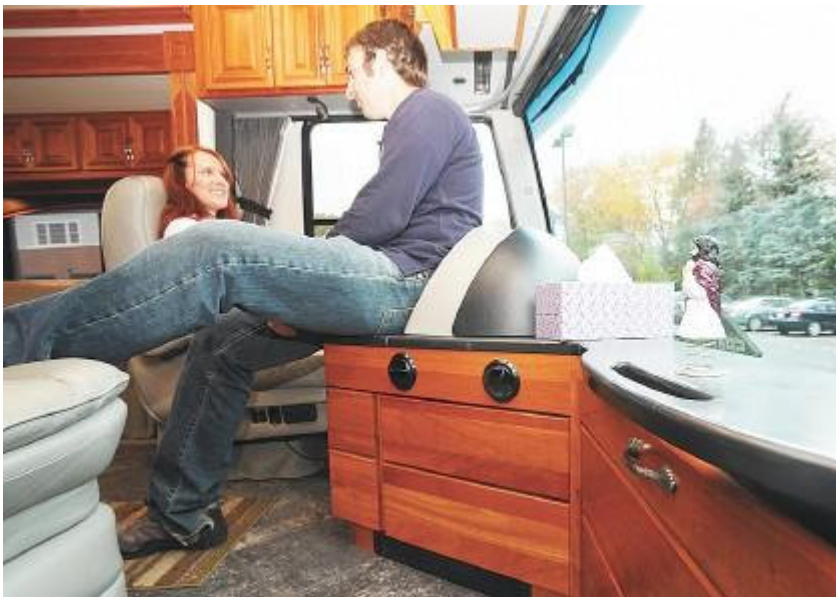
"It's a lot of fun," Tim says. "It's a job, but this is the best part, meeting people and seeing their reactions. We do the driving at night, recoup during the day. We've been welcomed everywhere we've gone."

Well, there was the guy at a NASCAR stop who yelled at them. "We had the 'wrong' version of the Bible," says Brooke, smiling.

"The Bible started as a generational book, handed down," says Tim. "Now, everything's disposable. You buy a new Bible because you like the cover. You outgrow the style, you get a new one. There's nothing wrong with that. But we're seeing families of three and four generations who are coming out to be a part of this. The significance of the book being the Bible is what makes it heartwarming."

Tuesday, a young man drove two hours to Portland to sign. His relatives were among 543 who signed at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Va., on Oct. 14. Maine produced the fewest signers, 55.

A photo facsimile of the handwritten Bible will be for sale by Christmas 2009, and one original will go to the Smithsonian, another will be auctioned to benefit the International Bible Society.



[Photo:](#)
[Jon and Mandy Jones relax in the Bible Across America RV during a visit to Grace Chapel in Lexington yesterday. The Joneses, of California, and another couple, Tim and Brooke Paneitz, of Florida, are driving across the country to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the publication of the](#)

New International Version Bible. SUN / TORY GERMANN



Photo:
Gregory Aragon, 8, of Lynn, writes a Bible verse as his mother, Norma Ochoa-Aragon, and brother, Joshua, 3, look on during the Bible Across America tour's stop at Grace Chapel in Lexington yesterday. SUN / TORY GERMANN

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