Friends

This year, we mark the 500th anniversary of the publication of the William Tyndale Bible: the first English translation of the Bible printed from the original Greek and Hebrew texts and published in 1526. Life as William was growing up was dominated by the Roman Catholic Church, and prayers and Bible readings were in Latin, which few people understood. At this time, a group called the Lollards were meeting in small house groups, keen to encourage prayers and Scripture in English. They used an unofficial translation of the Bible made by John Wycliffe over a century before. It was translated from Latin and parts were memorised and copied out by hand by the few literate people in the groups. It was dangerous as anyone caught possessing or reading a Bible in English could be tried for heresy, punished, and sometimes burnt at the stake.

Tyndale was not anti-organised religion, graduating from Oxford University in 1515, and then being ordained first as a deacon in London and later as a priest. Although it wasn't strictly illegal to translate the Bible into English, you had to have the permission of your bishop, and he couldn't get this, fleeing to Europe in order to complete and print the New Testament in 1526 in the city of Worms on the River Rhine. People were keen to get their hands on a copy which were smuggled into England among other goods. There are only three copies left: one in St.Paul's Cathedral, one at the British Library, and one in Stuttgart. Sadly, although Tyndale was living in Antwerp, where it was not illegal to translate or print the Bible, many of his other views were considered heretical, and he was charged with heresy, strangled and burned at the stake at Vilvoorde near Antwerp in 1536, before completing his Old Testament translation.

One of the important things about Tyndale's work was his strong desire that the Word of God should be accessible to all and so it is a source of pride to me that Burnham and Cookham Rise Methodist Churches are a part of the inclusive church network and that Windsor (see elsewhere in the newsletter) is preparing to do the same. Jesus came to the world, the whole world, and there is no place in his church for exclusion.

God bless, Vicci