A Name Given by God

On July 1, 1899, our three founders were searching for a name. They bowed their heads in prayer, intending that the first man given a name by the Father should speak out. In a few moments, Mr. Knights said “Gideons.” That name was immediately adopted.

In September of that same year, an emblem was created so that Gideons could easily recognize one another. They wanted something to suggest the weapon used by Gideon’s army in Judges Chapter 7, so a flaming pitcher was chosen, along with the red, white and blue colors.

Though refined over the years, the flaming pitcher still represents the ministry today.

In all things, we continue to prayerfully seek the will of God, and we give Him the glory for the growing scope of the ministry and the souls saved through Gideon-placed Scriptures.
For Future Generations

History illuminates character, faith, courage and vision. It gives us something to celebrate . . . as well as something to live up to. The history of The Gideons illustrates faith in action, and as the song states, “Oh may all who come behind us find us faithful.” Here are some historical highlights.

**SEPTEMBER 1898**  Mr. John Nicholson and Mr. Samuel Hill share a room at the Central Hotel of Boscobel, Wisconsin. By the next day, they share a vision—an association to help Christian traveling men.

**MAY 1899**  Mr. Nicholson and Mr. Hill meet again on the street in Beaver Dam, Wisconsin, where they decide to take action and get the association rolling. Mr. W.J. Knights, an acquaintance of Mr. Hill, was contacted and immediately joined.

**JULY 1899**  The three men met at the Y.M.C.A. and prayerfully sought a name. The answer came: Gideons.

**SEPTEMBER 1900**  *The Gideon Quarterly* was first published. This was also the year the first U.S.A. Gideon camp was organized.

**1901**  The first constitution and bylaws were adopted.

**1901**  Auxiliary members (wives of Gideons) were recognized without formal organization.
1902  The first camp outside the U.S.A. was organized in Toronto, Canada.

1903  The Auxiliary emblem was designed.

1904  The “Gideon Circle” was introduced.

1908  The Bible Placement Ministry began with a distribution at the Superior Hotel in Iron Mountain, Montana.

1911  The Gideon ministry in Canada was organized on a national basis.

1923  The Auxiliary was organized with appointed officers.

1925  The first Auxiliary officers were elected.

1928  The Auxiliary constitution was adopted.

1934  The Auxiliary began to supply Bibles to women’s homes, hospitals and Y.W.C.A.s.

1937  The first Gideon Guidebook was published.

1941  The first distributions to individuals began with Service Testaments that were distributed to military personnel starting in April.

1941  Distributions of Testaments to service nurses by The Auxiliary began (eventually leading to the distribution of Testaments to all nursing personnel).

1945  The Gideon ministry was organized in Iceland.
1946 The distribution of New Testaments to students in the 5th through 12th grades started.

1948 The first country in Europe was added: The Netherlands.

1949 General Douglas MacArthur sent a telegram to The Gideons asking that a representative be sent to Japan to establish a Gideon work there.

1950 The first country in Africa was added: South Africa.

1950 The first country in Asia was added: Japan.

1954 The Information Bulletin was first published.

1954 The first year Gideons published “returns” (testimonies) in a book.

1955 The first country in South America was added: Ecuador.

1958 The 40 millionth Scripture was placed.

1959 Bibles with different colored covers were introduced.

1959 The first New Member Plan (then called the “Big City Plan”) was held.

1959 The first metro reorganization was held in Pittsburgh.
1964  The international headquarters moved to Nashville, Tennessee.

1966  The Memorial Bible Program began in the U.S.A.

1968  Service Testaments circled the earth with the astronauts of Apollo 8.

1970  Bible Blitzes began to be held in the U.S.A. with renewed emphasis (although they had been introduced as early as 1914).

1972  Distributions to college students began.

1978  The first Extension Action Program was held in Mexico.

1989  The first countries were opened behind the Iron Curtain: Poland, Hungary and Yugoslavia.

1989  The first camp was organized in the Soviet Union at Kishinev, Moldova.

2001  The 1 billionth Gideon Scripture was ordered on September 10.
Moving Under God’s Direction

The Gideons have had a headquarters since the very early days of the association in order to administer policy and serve the membership. Because of this focus, the history of the headquarters provides some insight into the growth of the ministry.

At the beginning, the office was in the home of John Nicholson, who was one of the founders and also the first secretary. From 1903 to 1944, office space was rented for headquarters activities. In 1944, the association, using only donations from the membership, purchased the property on East Superior Street in Chicago and constructed a headquarters building. From then on, all headquarters locations have been purchased outright, attesting to strength of the ministry and the dedication of its membership.

Headquarters Locations

PRIOR TO 1903 The first headquarters was located in the home of founder and Secretary John Nicholson in Janesville, Wisconsin.

1903 The first permanent headquarters was established in the Dexter Building at 84 Adams Street, Chicago.

1905 The headquarters moved to St Louis, Missouri.

JULY 1906 The headquarters moved to 52 Dearborn Street, Chicago, Illinois.

JANUARY 1907 The headquarters moved to 22 Quincy Street, Chicago, Illinois.

MAY 1919-1932 The headquarters moved to 140 S. Dearborn Street, Chicago, Illinois.

JANUARY 1933-1947 The headquarters moved to 202 S. State Street, Chicago, Illinois.

1944 Property at 212 East Superior Street, Chicago, Illinois, was purchased using only donations from members.

APRIL 1947 The new headquarters building (212 East Superior Street, Chicago) was dedicated.

FEBRUARY 1962 In response to the rising cost of operations and the difficulty of finding born-again employees, the Cabinet voted to relocate to Nashville, Tennessee.

JANUARY 1963 Land on Lebanon Road was purchased, again using only the profits from the sale of the old location and member donations. Construction of a new headquarters building began.

FEBRUARY 1964 The new headquarters building (2900 Lebanon Road, Nashville, Tennessee) was dedicated.

AUGUST 2003 The headquarters moved to 50 Century Boulevard, Nashville, Tennessee.
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Shown here are just a few samples of our Scriptures, centered around a black 1939 Bible.
Holding Forth the Word of Life

PHILIPPIANS 2:16

The Gideons International is perhaps best known for the placement of Bibles in hotels, but our Scripture Distribution Program is much broader than that. We place and distribute Bibles and New Testaments (with Psalms and Proverbs) in a growing number of countries around the world. These Scriptures include “helps” that make it easy for someone not familiar with the Bible to find important passages. Many of our New Testaments are pocket-sized to be easily carried and they come in multiple colors, indicating the way they are distributed. Here are some other interesting facts:

- The first hotel to receive Gideon-placed Bibles was The Superior Hotel in Iron Mountain, Montana, in 1908.
- The first Gideon Bibles placed outside of the United States were placed in Toronto’s King Edward Hotel by Canadian Gideons in 1911.
- The Scriptures the association distributes are printed in more than 80 languages, the most recent of which is Kyrgyz, spoken by the people of Kyrgyzstan.
- U.S.A. military personnel were the first to receive individual New Testaments (which were black at the time) in April 1941. Interestingly, Service Testaments reached the military base at Corregidor on the Bataan Peninsula the Saturday before WWII started.
- The first New Testaments distributed to individuals cost 25 cents each.
- The distribution of New Testaments to military nursing personnel by The Auxiliary started in 1941. Out of this grew the ministry of presenting Testaments to all in the nursing profession.
- The mass distribution of Personal Workers Testaments to prisoners began in 1957, although in the early years, some hotel Bibles were given to prisons.
- Gideon New Testaments have traveled in space. Service Testaments were carried around the moon by Apollo 8 astronauts in 1968.
- Our 1 billionth Scripture was ordered on September 10, 2001.
More than 100 Years of Information & Inspiration

Gideons have always had a publication through which they could keep up with association news and learn about new policies or initiatives. It helped to keep the growing and far-flung membership informed and working in concert.

**SEPTEMBER 1900** *The Gideon Quarterly* was first published.

**OCTOBER 1901** The name was changed to *The Gideon*.

1904 *The Gideon* became a monthly magazine.

1904-TODAY More than 100 years later, *The Gideon* continues to inform and inspire Gideons and Auxiliary around the world, who now number more than 250,000 in more than 180 countries.
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