

Protest as Gideons' attempt to get Scottish police forces to hand out Bibles

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Gideons International has offered commemorative editions of the New Testament and Psalms to the Scottish police forces for them to give out to their employees ahead of an amalgamation of the forces.

Gideons International wrote: "In light of the current situation with regards to the future amalgamation of the eight independent police forces in Scotland, we want to make the following offer: that as a memento, but more importantly as a valuable guide to life, we wish to make available a dark blue slimline New Testament and Psalms, duly badged, for each force wishing to accept them. These can be offered to all members of the individual force, both serving police officers and civilian staff."

It's understood that of the eight forces asked, Strathclyde Police, Dumfries and Galloway Constabulary and the Central Scotland Police Force have so far turned down the offer of Bibles. Grampian Police confirmed it has accepted the offer.

The move has been criticised by the Unison trade union and the Gay Police Association (GPA) which argue that the police should not be seen to be promoting one particular religion.

The GPA said: "The police must be seen to be representative of all peoples including their cultures, faiths and identities. If Gideon or, for example, the Christian Police Association wish to extend this offer to police officers and staff, then surely this can be done without the actual involvement of the police force concerned."

A Grampian Police spokesman told the press: "Grampian Police has accepted the offer of free Gideon New Testaments for police officers and staff. The commemorative Testaments were offered at no cost to the force and will only be issued to staff who request them. No offers have been received in relation to other scriptures or narratives from other faith or non faith groups and if they were, they would be considered in a similar manner."

Supporting forces who had declined the offer of badged Bibles, a UNISON spokesperson said: "It is not the role of a Police Force either to provide official endorsement of any religion or foist religious views on its staff.

"Police forces exist to serve people of all religions and none. As employers they should be aware that their staff are drawn from people of all religious outlooks and none. We are pleased that the majority of Scotland's police forces take their role as employers and impartial servants of the public seriously enough to reject this offer. We hope that the remainder will do likewise."

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