

Report of the Committee for Bible Translation, Synod Guelph 2022

The Committee

The Committee for Bible Translation (CBT) consists of two members:

1. Rev. Jeff Poort, Kerwood, ON
2. Rev. Rodney Vermeulen, Attercliffe, ON

Rev. Rodney Vermeulen has completed nine years on the committee and is scheduled to retire from the Committee. The CBT recommends that Synod release Rev. Vermeulen from the CBT and appoint a replacement.

The Mandate

Synod 2019 mandated the CBT to:

1. To solicit, receive and evaluate comments from the churches on the ESV;
2. To submit worthy translation suggestions to the ESV editorial committee, including recommending changing the wording of Genesis 3:16 back to the ESV2011 version;
3. To serve the churches as a resource for Bible translation matters brought to the attention of the Committee by a church;
4. To appoint one of its members to validate and submit to the treasurer of the General Fund all expenses being submitted for committee work.
5. To prepare and distribute a report to the churches 6 months in advance of the next General Synod.

Material from the Churches

On March 23, 2020, the CBT sent a letter (see Appendix A) to all the churches of our federation. We received one response from the Canadian Reformed Church at Sardis. They made the observation that the readability of the ESV leaves something to be desired. They encouraged the CBT to consider “other translations that remain true to the original text and at the same time has wording and grammar as is used in today’s English.” As committee we responded that we would pass on their observation regarding readability. We clarified that since 2016 our mandate no longer includes investigating other translations. We also noted the decision of Synod Dunnville 2016 that although the ESV is recommended for use, a synod cannot forbid a church from using a particular translation (Art. 111.3.5, 111.4.3).

The English Standard Version (ESV) since Synod 2019

Since 2016 there have been no updates to the ESV translation of Scripture. Our report to Synod Dunnville 2016 noted the changes made in that edition. That report also noted that a decision to make the 2016 edition the ESV Permanent Text was soon rescinded, a development we were thankful for.

In fulfillment of the second point of our mandate we wrote (see Appendix B) to the ESV editorial committee on June 23, 2021. We requested that they carefully consider reverting back to the pre-2016 translation of Genesis 3:16. On June 24, 2021 we received email confirmation that our letter had been received and submitted to the ESV editorial committee. We were also informed that it would likely be two years before the ESV editorial committee will meet again.

Submission of Expenses

Synod 2019 requested that one of our members “validate and submit” expenses accrued in the course of our work. We’re thankful to report that we’ve been able to conduct our work without incurring any expenses of note.

Conclusion

The CBT recommends that Synod maintain the CBT committee as a resource for the churches for Bible translation matters.

Appendix A – CBT Letter to the Churches

Committee for Bible Translation (CBT)
c/o Rev. Jeff Poort
218 Spence Dr., Strathroy ON
N7G 3S8
jeffpoort@gmail.com

20th March 2020

To: The Church Councils of the Canadian and American Reformed Churches

Dear brothers in the Lord,

Greetings on behalf of the Committee for Bible Translation (CBT).

General Synod Edmonton 2019 mandated our committee as follows:

Article 66

- 4.3.1 To solicit, receive and evaluate comments from the churches on the ESV;*
- 4.3.2 To submit worthy translation suggestions to the ESV editorial committee, including recommending changing the wording of Genesis 3:16 back to the ESV2011 version;*
- 4.3.3 To serve the churches as a resource for Bible translation matters brought to the attention of the Committee by a church;*
- 4.3.4 To appoint one of its members to validate and submit to the treasurer of the General Fund all expenses being submitted for committee work.*
- 4.3.5 To prepare and distribute a report to the churches 6 months in advance of the next General Synod.*

The two points relevant to the churches are 4.3.1 and 4.3.3. To assist us in these points, the CBT requests that the churches:

- 1) Submit to the CBT comments on the ESV for evaluation (4.3.1)
- 2) Be aware that the CBT is available to the churches as a resource for Bible translation matters. (4.3.3)

The CBT would ask that comments on the ESV and matters of Bible translation be brought to the attention of the committee no later than January 2021 in order to provide ample time to do the work mandated by Synod. You can submit these matters to the address details above.

May the LORD bless his churches in working faithfully with his Word of Truth.

On behalf of the CBT,
Rev. Rodney Vermeulen
Rev. Jeff Poort

Appendix B – Letter to ESV Editorial Committee

Committee for Bible Translations for Canadian and American Reformed Churches
c/o Rev. Jeff Poort
218 Spence Drive
Strathroy, ON, N7G 3S8
Canada
jeffpoort@gmail.com

June 23rd, 2021

ESV Translation Oversight Committee
Crossway
1300 Crescent Street
Wheaton, IL 60187 USA

Dear brothers in the Lord,

We are a small federation of 65 churches located mostly across Canada. While not all our congregations use the ESV as their preferred translation, the vast majority do. We are deeply grateful to our God for providing this translation and using your committee to ensure that God's Word, faithfully translated into the English language, is preserved for the generations to come.

At our most recent Synod, held in May 2019, our committee was mandated, among other things, "To submit worthy translation suggestions to the ESV editorial committee, including recommending changing the wording of Genesis 3:16 back to the ESV2011 version."

Since that synod we as committee have communicated with the churches of our federation but none have asked us to investigate any ESV translation issues with a view to proposing a change to your committee. We're thankful for that as it speaks to the high level of trust that our members, pastors and elders have for the ESV.

However, as per our most recent synod's mandate, we are writing to you with the request that you give additional consideration to reverting back to the ESV2011 translation of Genesis 3:16. Together with you we understand that scholarship is divided on the best translation of this verse. The ESV's change from the 2011 to the 2016 translation of the verse is evidence of that. Also, among our churches, pastors and other exegetes of Scripture will come to different translations of this verse.

The reason, then, that we are requesting your committee to revert back to the ESV2011 translation of this verse is because we believe that it is the more literal translation of the original Hebrew. It thus leaves it up to the individual exegetes to wrestle with the original and come to the conclusions that they believe to be most faithful. To say it another way, we believe that the ESV2016 translation is more an interpretation than a translation, and shifts away from the otherwise consistent translation philosophy the ESV provides.

We thank you for your ongoing work and wish you our God's blessing as you continue your oversight of the ESV translation of God's Word.

With Christian greetings,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeff Poort', written in a cursive style.

Rev. Jeff Poort
Clerk – Committee for Bible Translation