

General Convention of The Episcopal Church 2022 Archives' Research Report

Resolution No.: 2022-A144
Title: Add Updated Editions of NRSV and New Jerusalem Bible to Canon II.2
Proposer: 12 - Prayer Book, Liturgy & Music
Topic: Bible, Canons, Liturgy

Directly Related: (Attached)

2015-A063 Amend Canon II.2 [Of Bible Translations] to Add Translation Criteria
2012-A061 On the Topic of Amending Canon II.2 [Of Translations of the Bible] (Rejected)
2012-D021 Amend Canon II.2 [Of Translations of the Bible]
2003-D067 Amend Canon II.2 [Of Translations of the Bible]
2000-A070 Amend Canon II.2 [Of Translations of the Bible]
1997-D090 Authorize Study of Non-English Translations of Scriptures for Use in Worship
1991-C029 Amend Canon II.2 [Of Translations of the Bible]
1988-D011 Amend Canon II.2 [Of Translations of the Bible]
1985-C008 On the Topic of the Canon on Translations of the Bible (Rejected)
1979-A010 Amend Canon II.2 [Of Translations of the Bible]
1976-A112 Amend Canon II.2 [Of Translations of the Bible]
1973-A149 Amend Canon II.2 [Of Translations of the Bible]

Indirectly Related: (Available in the [Acts of Convention](#) database, searchable by resolution number)

1997-D074 Consider the *Contemporary English Version of the Bible* for Approval

In preparing this report, the Archives researched the resolutions in the Acts of Convention database for the period 1973 through 2018, selecting “direct” resolutions that have a substantive bearing on the proposed legislation. The “direct” resolutions are attached and “indirect” resolutions are available in the Acts of Convention database. Committee members who require other research assistance should contact the Archives through the [Research Request Form](#) or call 800-525-9329.

A144 - Add Updated Editions of NRSV and New Jerusalem Bible to Canon II.2

Final Status: Not Yet Finalized

Proposed by: 12 - Prayer Book, Liturgy & Music

Requests New Interim Body: No

Amends C&C or Rules of Order: Yes

Has Budget Implications: No

Cost:

HiA: HB

Legislative Committee Currently Assigned: 12 - Prayer Book, Liturgy & Music

Completion Status: Incomplete

Latest House Action: N/A

Supporting Documents: No

Resolution Text

Resolved, the House of _____ concurring,

That Canon II.2.1 is hereby amended to read as follows:

<Amended text as it would appear if adopted and concurred. Scroll below the line of asterisks (***) to see the version showing all deleted and added text.>**

Sec. 1. The Lessons prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer shall be read from the translation of the Holy Scriptures commonly known as the King James or Authorized Version (which is the historic Bible of this Church) together with the Marginal Readings authorized for use by the General Convention of 1901; or from one of the three translations known as Revised Versions, including the English Revision of 1881, the American Revision of 1901, and the Revised Standard Version of 1952; from the Jerusalem Bible of 1966; from the New English Bible with the Apocrypha of 1970; or from The 1976 Good News Bible (Today's English Version); or from The New American Bible (1970); or from The Revised Standard Version, an Ecumenical Edition, commonly known as the "R.S.V. Common Bible" (1973); or from The New International Version (1978); or from The New Jerusalem Bible (1987); or from the Revised English Bible (1989); or from the New Revised Standard Version (1989, 2022); or from the Contemporary English Version (1995); or from the Contemporary English Version Global (2005); or Common English Bible (2011); from The Revised New Jerusalem Bible (2019); or from translations, authorized by the diocesan bishop, of those approved versions published in any other language; or from other versions of the Bible, including those in languages other than English, which shall be authorized by diocesan bishops for specific use in congregations or ministries within their dioceses.

<Proposed amended resolution text showing exact changes being made:>

Sec. 1. The Lessons prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer shall be read from the translation of the Holy Scriptures commonly known as the King James or Authorized Version (which is the historic Bible of this Church) together with the Marginal Readings authorized for use by the General Convention of 1901; or from one of the three translations known as Revised Versions, including the English Revision of 1881, the American Revision of 1901, and the Revised Standard Version of 1952; from the Jerusalem Bible of 1966; from the New English Bible with the Apocrypha of 1970; or from The 1976 Good News Bible (Today's English Version); or from The New American Bible (1970); or from The Revised Standard Version, an Ecumenical Edition, commonly known as the "R.S.V. Common Bible" (1973); or from The New International Version (1978); or from The New Jerusalem Bible (1987); or from the Revised English Bible (1989); or from the New Revised Standard Version (~~1990~~1989, 2022); or from the Contemporary English Version (1995); or from the Contemporary English Version Global (2005); or Common English Bible (2011); *from The Revised New Jerusalem Bible (2019)*; or from translations, authorized by the diocesan bishop, of those approved versions published in any other language; or from other versions of the Bible, including those in languages other than English, which shall be authorized by diocesan bishops for specific use in congregations or ministries within their dioceses.

Explanation

This proposed amendment to the Canons would authorize two updated English translations of the Bible for use in public worship in The Episcopal Church: The Revised New Jerusalem Bible and the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) Bible updated edition. For the NRSV, the amendment corrects the original publication date of the NRSV (1989, not 1990) and adds the publication date of the updated edition.

These updates are intended to improve clarity and accessibility. Because they are not new translations, they do not require review by the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music as stipulated Canon II.2.3.

The Revised New Jerusalem Bible is a revision of the New Jerusalem Bible, an English translation of the French Bible de Jérusalem by Henry Wansbrough, OSB. One aspect of the revision is to replace YHWH with "Lord" each time the Tetragrammaton appears. It helps to avoid pronouncing the name of God "YHWH" (Yahweh). The Hebrews consider the name (YHWH) sacred and not to be pronounced aloud. When reading the Hebrew Bible, the Hebrews would say "Adonai," meaning "Lord," whenever it appears. Another feature of the update is gender inclusion, remaining faithful to the meaning of the original scriptures while avoiding traditional male bias of the English language.

In November 2021, the National Council of Churches announced the completion of an updated edition of the New Revised Standard Version Bible (NRSV). Since the NRSV was first published in 1989, it has become widely used in The Episcopal Church. For example, Church Publishing Incorporated uses this translation for lectionary inserts.

A press release from Religion News Service, dated November 17, 2021, introduced the updated edition:

An updated edition of the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible includes thousands of changes in language, reflecting the research of a wide range of scholars who spent four years reviewing its contents as well as taking into consideration “modern sensibilities.”

A verse in the New Testament Book of Galatians that previously referred to the sons of Abraham as “one by a slave woman and the other by a free woman” will instead read “one by an enslaved woman and the other by a free woman.”

The second chapter of the Gospel of Matthew will tell of “magi” rather than “wise men” coming to Jerusalem after Jesus’ birth.

A reference to “sin offering” in the Hebrew Bible’s Book of Leviticus has been updated to the more precise “purification offering.”

The New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition Bible is the result of a commission of the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) by the National Council of Churches, which includes dozens of denominations representing 30 million church members.

A 36-page sampler details relatively few of the some 12,000 substantive changes — out of a total of more than 20,000 revisions — made for the new edition, which scholars made clear was not a new translation. Some of the updated wording is based on what SBL executive director John Kutsko called “new compelling textual evidence,” including findings in the Dead Sea Scrolls that were located in the Qumran region of the West Bank.

For example, more than 25 words are added to a reference to David in 1 Kings, which now reads, “Since the day that I brought my people Israel out of Egypt, I have not chosen a city from any of the tribes of Israel in which to build a house, that my name might be there, nor did I choose anyone to be a ruler over my people Israel. But I have chosen Jerusalem in order that my name may be there, and I have chosen David to be over my people Israel.”

Other changes reflect a decision to avoid identifying people based on their disabilities.

A verse in Matthew that previously referred to “demoniacs, epileptics and paralytics,” now reads “people possessed by demons or having epilepsy or afflicted with paralysis.”

Shively T.J. Smith, a New Testament assistant professor at Boston University School of Theology who edited 1-3 John for the project, said she appreciated the range of voices that were heard and considered as the updated edition took shape.

“The NRSVue is an updated English translation that listened broadly and closely to a variety of faith-based constituencies, reading the Bible in our current times,” said Smith, who worked with focus groups and discussed the updated edition with African Methodist Episcopal Church bishops and students in her classroom.

“It attempts to reverse the historic trend in translation history from the 19th and 20th centuries in which some Christian communities and scholars of the Bible were historically excluded from the translation endeavors of our English Bibles.”

Bob Buller, director of SBL Press, said the new version also reflects “thorough and professional copy editing” that removed outdated aspects of the language and made other improvements.

“For example, the NRSV lowercased the names of some Jewish holidays and holy days, such as Passover, Sabbath and Festival of Unleavened Bread,” he said. “This could be interpreted as a sign of disrespect for these Jewish holy days, so we capitalized them just as we would for other religious communities.”

He noted the new edition does not use the word “girl” when referring to a young woman. Mark 14:69 now speaks of a “female servant” instead of a “servant-girl.”

Over two years, seven general editors and 56 book editors used Dropbox, track changes and other tools to organize their rationales for proposed revisions. They held 76 two-hour meetings about the Hebrew Bible, New Testament and the Apocryphal/deuterocanonical books, frequently used by Catholic and Orthodox communities, before a final review of their recommendations. The NCC governing board approved the NRSVue in October.



Resolution Number: 2015-A063
Title: Amend Canon II.2 [Of Bible Translations] to Add Translation Criteria
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 78th General Convention adopt the following **Criteria for Recommending New Biblical Translations for Use in Public Worship:**

I. Guiding assumptions:

1. There is no perfect translation. It is impossible to render the full meaning of a text in its original language and context into another language and context.
2. All translations make interpretive choices; there is no “neutral” translation. However, some translations conform more closely than others to the specific criteria listed below.
3. The goal of these criteria is not to advance any particular interpretations; but, rather, to help ensure that amendments to Canon II.2 will be generally received as reasonable, responsible, and suitable.
4. Ordinarily, for a translation to be considered, it must include the books of the Old and New Testament and the Apocrypha or Deuterocanonical Books as listed in the Articles of Religion.
5. No translation will be universally received as fully meeting all of these criteria. To be recommended, a new translation should be widely received as meeting most of these specific criteria.

II. To be recommended for use in public worship, a translation should meet the specific criteria of being:

1. Based on academically or historically accepted editions of the Hebrew and Greek texts;
2. Technically competent in approximating the meaning of the base text; Comprehensible to the target audience;
3. Fluid when spoken aloud;
4. Stylistically suitable to approved services.

III. While some translations obviously fail to meet these standards, measuring a text by these criteria is far from an exact science. We can, however, look for certain kinds of positive reception to indicate whether or not a text meets most of these criteria:

1. **Academic reception.** Do most biblical scholars recognize the translation as technically competent and comprehensible to the target audience? Do most liturgical scholars recognize the translation as fluid when spoken aloud and stylistically suitable to approved services?
2. **Pastoral reception.** Does a significant number of clergy consider the translation comprehensible to their congregations, fluid when spoken aloud, and/or stylistically suitable for their services?
3. **Anglican reception.** Have most other Churches in the Anglican Communion made provision for the use of the translation in public worship?
4. **Full Communion Partners’ reception.** Have most of The Episcopal Church’s Full Communion Partners made provision for the use of the translation in public worship?

5. Ecumenical reception. Have other Churches made provisions for the use of the translation in public worship?; and be it further

Resolved, That Canon II.2 is hereby amended by adding two new sections:

Canon 2: Of Translations of the Bible

Sec. 1. The Lessons prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer shall be read from the translation of the Holy Scriptures commonly known as the King James or Authorized Version (which is the historic Bible of this Church) together with the Marginal Readings authorized for use by the General Convention of 1901; or from one of the three translations known as Revised Versions, including the English Revision of 1881, the American Revision of 1901, and the Revised Standard Version of 1952; from the Jerusalem Bible of 1966; from the New English Bible with the Apocrypha of 1970; or from The 1976 Good News Bible (Today's English Version); or from The New American Bible (1970); or from The Revised Standard Version, an Ecumenical Edition, commonly known as the "R.S.V. Common Bible" (1973); or from The New International Version (1978); or from The New Jerusalem Bible (1987); or from the Revised English Bible (1989); or from the New Revised Standard Version (1990); or from the Contemporary English Version (1995); or from the Contemporary English Version Global (2005); or from the Common English Bible (2011); or from translations, authorized by the diocesan bishop, of those approved versions published in any other language; or from other versions of the Bible, including those in languages other than English, which shall be authorized by diocesan bishops for specific use in congregations or ministries within their dioceses.

Sec. 2. All translations proposed for inclusion in Canon II.2.1 must conform to the *Criteria for Recommending New Biblical Translations for Use in Public Worship* adopted by General Convention.

Sec. 3. All translations proposed for inclusion in Canon II.2.1 must first be referred to the *Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music* for review according to the *Criteria for Recommending New Biblical Translations for Use in Public Worship*.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Salt Lake City, 2015* (New York: General Convention, 2015), pp. 723-725.



Resolution Number: 2012-A061
Title: On the Topic of Amending Canon II.2 [Of Translations of the Bible]
Legislative Action Taken: Rejected
Text of the Resolution:

Resolved, the House of Deputies concurring, That Canon II.2 be amended to read as follows:

Canon 2: Of Translations of the Bible

The Lessons prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer shall be read from the translation of the Holy Scriptures commonly known as the King James or Authorized Version (which is the historic Bible of this Church) together with the Marginal Readings authorized for use by the General Convention of 1901; or from one of the three translations known as Revised Versions, including the English Revision of 1881, the American Revision of 1901, and the Revised Standard Version of 1952; from the Jerusalem Bible of 1966; from the New English Bible with the Apocrypha of 1970; ~~or from The 1976 Good News Bible (Today's English Version)~~; or from The New American Bible (1970); or from The Revised Standard Version, an Ecumenical Edition, commonly known as the "R.S.V. Common Bible" (1973); or from The New International Version (1978); or from The New Jerusalem Bible (1987); or from the Revised English Bible (1989); or from the New Revised Standard Version (1990)(1989); *or from the Contemporary English Version (1995); or from the Contemporary English Version Global (2005) or from The Message (2002); or from the Common English Bible (2011)*; or from translations, authorized by the diocesan bishop, of those approved versions published in any other language; or from other versions of the Bible, including those in languages other than English, which shall be authorized by diocesan bishops for specific use in congregations or ministries within their dioceses.



Resolution Number: 2012-D021
Title: Amend Canon II.2 [Of Translations of the Bible]
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That Canon II.2 be amended to read as follows:

Canon 2: Of Translations of the Bible

The Lessons prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer shall be read from the translation of the Holy Scriptures commonly known as the King James or Authorized Version (which is the historic Bible of this Church) together with the Marginal Readings authorized for use by the General Convention of 1901; or from one of the three translations known as Revised Versions, including the English Revision of 1881, the American Revision of 1901, and the Revised Standard Version of 1952; from the Jerusalem Bible of 1966; from the New English Bible with the Apocrypha of 1970; or from The 1976 Good News Bible (Today's English Version); or from The New American Bible (1970); or from The Revised Standard Version, an Ecumenical Edition, commonly known as the "R.S.V. Common Bible" (1973); or from The New International Version (1978); or from The New Jerusalem Bible (1987); or from the Revised English Bible (1989); or from the New Revised Standard Version (1990); or from the *Contemporary English Version* (1995); or from the *Contemporary English Version Global* (2005), or *Common English Bible* (2011) or from translations, authorized by the diocesan bishop, of those approved versions published in any other language; or from other versions of the Bible, including those in languages other than English, which shall be authorized by diocesan bishops for specific use in congregations or ministries within their dioceses.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Indianapolis, 2012* (New York: General Convention, 2012), p. 718.



Resolution Number: 2003-D067
Title: Amend Canon II.2 [Of Translations of the Bible]
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That Canon 2, Title II be amended as follows:

The Lessons prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer shall be read from the translation of the Holy Scriptures commonly known as the King James or Authorized Version (which is the historic Bible of this Church) together with the Marginal Readings authorized for use by the General Convention of 1901; or from one of the three translations known as Revised Versions, including the English Revision of 1881, the American Revision of 1901, and the Revised Standard Version of 1952; from the Jerusalem Bible of 1966; from the New English Bible with the Apocrypha of 1970; or from The 1976 Good News Bible (Today's English Version) and its corresponding Spanish version "Dios Habla Hoy;"; or from The New American Bible (1970); or from The Revised Standard Version, an Ecumenical Edition, commonly known as the "R.S.V. Common Bible" (1973); or from The New International Version (1978); or from The New Jerusalem Bible (1987); or from the Revised English Bible (1989); or from the New Revised Standard Version (1990); or from translations, authorized by the diocesan bishop, of those approved versions published in any other language; or from other versions of the Bible, including those in languages other than English, which shall be authorized by diocesan bishops for specific use in congregations or ministries within their dioceses.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Minneapolis, 2003* (New York: General Convention, 2004), p. 683.



Resolution Number: 2000-A070
Title: Amend Canon II.2 [Of Translations of the Bible]
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Substituted
Final Text:

Resolved, That Canon II.2, Of Translations of the Bible, be hereby amended to read as follows:

The Lessons prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer shall be read from the translation of the Holy Scriptures commonly known as the King James or Authorized Version (which is the historic Bible of this Church) together with the Marginal Readings authorized for use by the General Convention of 1901; or from one of the three translations known as Revised Versions, including the English Revision of 1881, the American Revision of 1901, and the Revised Standard Version of 1952; from the Jerusalem Bible of 1966; from the New English Bible with the Apocrypha of 1970; or from The 1976 Good News Bible (Today's English Version) and its corresponding Spanish version "Dios Habla Hoy"; or from The New American Bible (1970); or from The Revised Standard Version, an Ecumenical Edition, commonly known as the "R.S.V. Common Bible" (1973); or from The New International Version (1978); or from The New Jerusalem Bible (1987); or from the Revised English Bible (1989); or from the New Revised Standard Version (1990); or from other versions of the Bible, including those in languages other than English, which shall be authorized by diocesan bishops for specific use in congregations or ministries within their dioceses.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Denver, 2000* (New York: General Convention, 2001), p. 657.



Resolution Number: 1997-D090
Title: Authorize Study of Non-English Translations of Scriptures for Use in Worship
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the Standing Liturgical Commission be instructed to study and recommend to the 73rd General Convention, for inclusion in Canon II.2, direct translations of the Holy Scriptures from editions of the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts into languages other than English for the use of Congregations whose language of public worship is not English; and be it further

Resolved, That such Congregations be authorized to use such translations of the Holy Scriptures as are linguistically accurate, with the advice and consent of the Ordinary.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Philadelphia, 1997* (New York: General Convention, 1998), p. 271.



Resolution Number: 1991-C029
Title: Amend Canon II.2 [Of Translations of the Bible]
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred
Final Text:

Resolved, That Title II, Canon 2, be amended by striking the period and adding these words at the end of the present Canon:

or from the "Revised English Bible (1989); or from the "The New Revised Standard Version Bible" (1990).

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Phoenix, 1991* (New York: General Convention, 1992), p. 748.



Resolution Number: 1988-D011
Title: Amend Canon II.2 [Of Translations of the Bible]
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred As Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That Title II, Canon 2, "Of Translations of the Bible" be amended to read as follows:

The Lessons prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer shall be read from the translation of the Holy Scriptures commonly known as the King James or Authorized Version (which is the historic Bible of this Church) together with the Marginal Readings authorized for use by the General Convention of 1901; or from one of the three translations known as Revised Versions, including the English Revision of 1881, the American Revision of 1901, and *The Revised Standard Version* of 1952; from *The Jerusalem Bible* of 1966; from *The New English Bible with the Apocrypha* of 1970; or from the 1976 *Good News Bible* (Today's English Version); or from the *New American Bible* (1970); or from *The Revised Standard Version*, an Ecumenical Edition, commonly known as the *R.S.V. Common Bible* (1973); or from *The New International Version* (1978), or *The New Jerusalem Bible* (1987).

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Detroit, 1988* (New York: General Convention, 1989), p. 545.



Resolution Number: 1985-C008
Title: On the Topic of the Canon on Translations of the Bible
Legislative Action Taken: Rejected
Final Text:

Resolution Rejected. See Legislative History for original text of the resolution.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Anaheim, 1985* (New York: General Convention, 1986), pp. 144-145.



Resolution Number: 1979-A010
Title: Amend Canon II.2 [Of Translations of the Bible]
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred As Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That Title II, Canon 2 be amended to read:

The Lessons at Morning and Evening Prayer *prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer* shall be read from the translation of the Holy Scriptures, commonly known as the King James or Authorized Version (which is the *historic* Bible of this Church), together with the Marginal Readings authorized for use by the General Convention of 1901; or from one of the three translations known as Revised Versions, including the English Revision of 1881, the American Revision of 1901, and the Revised Standard Version of 1952; from the Jerusalem Bible of 1966; from the New English Bible with the Apocrypha of 1970; or from the 1976 Good News Bible (Today's English Version); or from The New American Bible (1970); or from The Revised Standard Version, an Ecumenical Edition, commonly known as the "R.S.V. Common Bible" (1973).

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Denver, 1979* (New York: General Convention, 1980), p. C-169.



Resolution Number: 1976-A112
Title: Amend Canon II.2 [Of Translations of the Bible]
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred
Final Text:

*Resolved, that Canon II.2 be, and the same is hereby amended, by the substitution of the title **The Good News Bible in Today's Speech (1976) for Good News for Modern Man: The New Testament in Today's Speech (1966) [sic].***

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Minneapolis, 1976* (New York: General Convention, 1977), p. C-42.



Resolution Number: 1973-A149
Title: Amend Canon II.2 [Of Translations of the Bible]
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred
Final Text:

Resolved, the House of Deputies concurring, That Canon II.2 be, and the same is hereby, amended, so that the same shall read,

CANON 2.

The Lessons at Morning and Evening Prayer shall be read from the translation of the Holy Scriptures commonly known as the King James or Authorized Version (which is the Standard Bible of this Church), together with the Marginal Readings authorized for use by the General Convention of 1901; or from one of the three translations known as Revised versions, including the English Revision of 1881, the American Revision of 1901, and the Revised Standard Version of 1952; or from the Jerusalem Bible of 1966; or from the New English Bible with the Apocrypha, of 1970; or from Good News for Modern Man: The New Testament in Today's Speech (1966); or from the New American Bible (1970); or from the Revised Standard Version, an Ecumenical Edition.

Citation: General Convention, Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Louisville, 1973 (New York: General Convention, 1973), p. 325.