

QUICK OUTLINE:

1. Truths about the Bible
  - Divine Attributes – Authority; Inspiration; Inerrancy
2. Particular Preferences regarding Bible Versions
  - 2 Views – VPI vs VPP
  - Textual Criticism
  - Modern English Translations
  - Statement on Bible Versions – 2015

TRUTHS ABOUT GOD’S WORD – THE BIBLE:

1. The Bible **IS** the Word of God

- It does not “contain” the Word of God (Liberals); it does not “become” the Word of God (Karl Barth, Neo-Orthodox) – it **IS** the Word of God
- The Bible is the permanent, eternal, unchangeable revelation of God; His plan; & His message to man authored & preserved by the Holy Spirit

2. Because the Bible is the very Word of God, He has imbued it with divine attributes – AUTHORITY; INSPIRATION; INERRANCY.

Authority:

1. God’s Word is **AUTHORITATIVE** because it carries the full authority of God – **ABSOLUTE AUTHORITY**
  - God’s Word **DECREES**; **DECLARES**; **COMMANDS**; **SUMMONS**; **RULES**; **PROMISES**; sets **STANDARDS**; passes **JUDGMENT**
2. God’s Word is **POWERFUL** because it accomplishes **ALL** of God’s purposes
  - It fulfills God’s purposes in **CREATION**; **PROVIDENCE**; **COVENANT**; **SALVATION**; **JUDGMENT**
3. God’s Absolute Authority extends to the **WRITTEN** Word of God
  - Scripture itself claims to be the authoritative Word of God
  - Jesus Himself acknowledged the Scripture as the Word of God and submitted Himself to the written Word of God
  - The Apostles were extraordinarily called, commissioned & authorized to write Scripture
  - The Scriptures possess **SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS** of divine authority:
    - **RELEVANCY**; **CLARITY**; **NECESSITY**; **SUFFICIENCY**

Inspiration:

1. The actual word (Greek) is *theopneustos* and means ‘God-breathed’. All Scripture proceeds out of the mouth of God, carried by the breath of God. 2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:20-21
2. The purpose of inspiration is to secure an infallible record of the truth. God alone is capable of speaking authoritatively on subjects that are beyond the realm of human wisdom; and He has carefully chosen His own words to convey these particular truths to us. Inspiration ensures that the words the authors chose to use were the very words God chose. So that each word is decisive as it has divine authority behind it.
  - So, **INSPIRATION**; **AUTHORITY** and **INERRANCY** are immutably linked to the other.
  - All are infallible qualities. They do not stand independent of one another; they cannot fail.

Inerrancy:

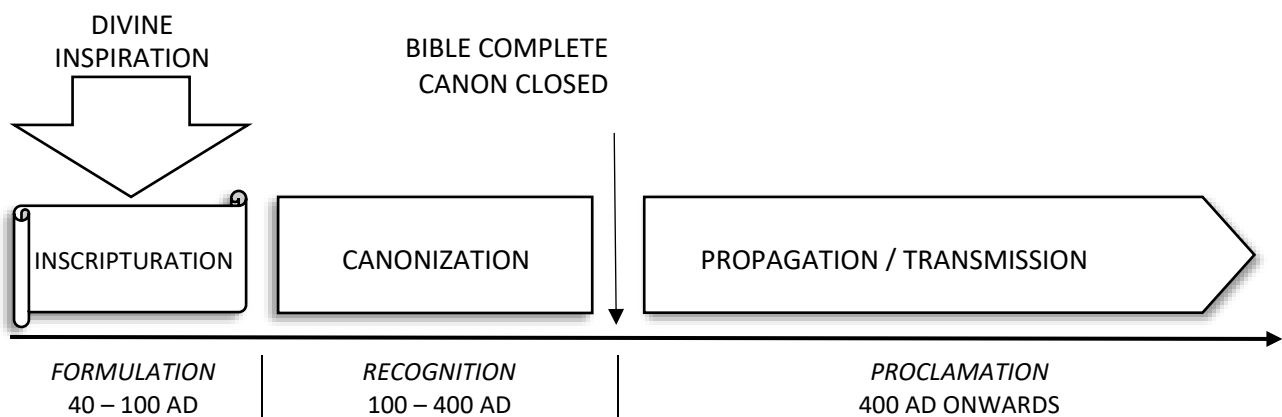
1. The Inerrancy of Scripture means that Scripture, in the original manuscripts; interpreted according to the intended sense; speaks truthfully and without error in all the truths that it affirms.

## 2. Misconceptions about Inerrancy – 5 important misconceptions:

- Inerrancy does not imply a MECHANICAL DICTATION view of Inspiration – the Word of God can and does have a human origin and yet is FREE FROM ERROR
- Inerrancy does not imply ABSOLUTE ACCURACY & PRECISION or even inordinate standard of precision that is alien to the Bible
- Inerrancy does not imply PERFECT TRANSMISSION of Scripture – Inerrancy like Inspiration applies to the WRITING of Scripture; not the COPYING of Scripture
- Inerrancy does not depend on our ability to PROVE it is inerrant – it is Inerrant because it is Inspired and GOD says it is Inerrant.
- Inerrancy does not imply that there is no need for proper INTERPRETATION & APPLICATION of Scripture.

### PREFERRED BIBLE VERSION:

#### CANONIZATION & TRANSMISSION



- We believe that the Holy Spirit supernaturally inspired the original authors to write the original autographs
- We believe that the Holy Spirit has providentially preserved the original text, the original message, the original content of the original autographs and this is accessible to us through the thousands and thousands of copies, manuscripts and translations that are available to us.
- However, we do not believe that the Holy Spirit, by a separate supernatural action, preferentially preserved the original words of the autographs in English in the KJV and the texts underlying it – the Greek Textus Receptus and the Hebrew Masoretic.

#### TRANSMISSION OF SCRIPTURE

Some facts about the Transmission of Scripture:

- The OT was originally written in 2 languages, **Hebrew** and **Aramaic** (portions of Ezra and Daniel), from 1500 to 400 B.C. The NT was originally written in **Koine Greek** from 40 to 100 A.D.
- We do not have any original writing (autographa).
- All transmissions of the Bible were handwritten until the 1450s. The most common writing materials were **stone**, **papyri**, and **parchment/vellum**. Later (second century B.C.) the **codex** was developed.
- Manuscripts were subject to wear and tear, and therefore unlikely that any would survive.

#### TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Textual Criticism is the discipline of reconstructing the original text of the Scriptures based upon the available manuscript evidence. This is done mostly through the study of errors in the text.

#### TRANSMISSION OF THE OT

Masoretes – a group of scribes who carried on the meticulous transmission process of the standardized text from 500 to 1100 AD

## TRANSMISSION OF THE NT

*Three types of Evidence:*

1. *Greek Copies / Manuscripts*
2. *Commentaries of early church fathers*
3. *Translations*

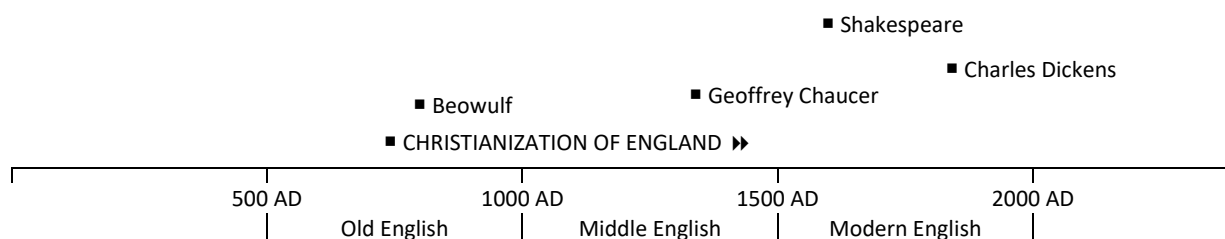
*Comparison between the Bible and Other Reliable Ancient Manuscripts:*

AUTHOR & WORK	DATE WRITTEN	EARLIEST COPY	TIME GAP	COPIES
Caesar (Gallic Wars)	100-44 BC	900 AD	1000 yrs	10
Livy (History of Rome)	59-17 AD	NA	NA	20
Plato (Tetralogies)	400 BC	900 AD	1300 yrs	7
Pliny the Younger (Histories)	61-113 AD	850 AD	750 yrs	7
Herodotus (History)	480-425 BC	900 AD	1300 yrs	8
Aristotle	384-322 BC	1100 AD	1400 yrs	193
Homer (Iliad)	900 BC	400 AD	1500 yrs	643
NEW TESTAMENT	50-90 AD	125 AD	25 yrs	25,000

## MODERN ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS:

### HISTORY OF EARLY MODERN ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS

*History of the English Language*



*History of the Early English Bibles*

*Wycliffe Bible 1384*

*John Wycliffe* (1320-1384), Oxford Professor, called the “*morning star of the Reformation*” was not really a reformer but wished to promote Bible reading among the people of England. He trained a cadre of Bible scholars and under his direction translated the entire *Latin Vulgate* into English between 1380 and 1384. The English he used was late *Middle English* and was very awkward and stiff but a literal translation of the Latin. A second Wycliffe version, after his death, by his student, *John Purvey* in 1388, was widely received but was the last manuscript English version. In 1456, the first printed Latin Bible was published.

*Tyndale’s New Testament 1526*

*William Tyndale* (1490-1536) one of the earliest reformers in England, decided to imitate Luther by making a fresh English translation of the Erasmus Greek New Testament, using Luther’s German translation and the Latin Vulgate as guides. It was published in 1526, the *first printed English New Testament*. Tyndale wrote in an *Early Modern English* which was more readable and less Latinate. Tyndale provided cross-references and some marginal notes, mostly translated from Luther’s German version. Tyndale was arrested and burned at the stake for “*heresy*” before he could complete the Old Testament. His New Testament was banned in England by *Henry VIII*, who was still Roman Catholic at the time.

*Coverdale’s Bible 1535*

*Miles Coverdale* (1488-1569) worked with Tyndale in Hamburg and using Tyndale’s New Testament and Pentateuch, together with his own work published the first complete Modern English printed Bible in

1535, in *Antwerp*. Soon after the death of Tyndale, Henry VIII broke with the Roman Catholic Church and established England as a moderately Protestant land. He allowed English Bibles to be published in his realm and the Coverdale Bible was brought to England. Coverdale's Bible was the first English Bible in which the *Apocryphal books* were *separated* from the rest and set in a class apart. Coverdale's second edition was the first English Bible printed *entirely* in England.

#### *Matthew's Bible 1537*

In the same year as Coverdale's second edition, 1537, another English Bible appeared under the name of *Thomas Matthew*. This is believed to be a pseudonym used by *John Rogers*, a close associate of Tyndale. Evidently, while in prison, Tyndale continued his translations up to *1 Chronicles* and gave his manuscripts to Rogers. Rogers completed the work using Coverdale but published it under a pseudonym to avoid the same fate as Tyndale. *Archbishop Cranmer* prevailed upon *Henry VIII* to allow it to be distributed throughout England because he judged it to be superior to Coverdale.

#### *The Great Bible 1539*

This was *Archbishop Cranmer's* Bible. Ever since Henry VIII broke from Rome, he was urging his bishops to come up with an official version for the church. This Bible, published in 1539, was a revision of Roger's version. Another revised edition was released in 1540 with a footnote on the title page "*This is the Bible appointed to be used of the churches.*" This was the first officially approved English Bible. It was called Cranmer's Bible, or the Great Bible (because of its size). Every parish church in England had one.

#### *The Geneva Bible 1560*

In 1560, a new English translation of the Bible was published by the *English Puritans* who had fled to *Geneva* under persecution during the reign of *Mary*, a Roman Catholic. These men knew Hebrew and Greek and were at the heart of Protestant learning. Their translation was the most accurate and literal translation to date. It came with abundant marginal notes. Mary died in 1559 and was succeeded by her Protestant sister *Elizabeth*. When the Geneva Bible came out, it poured into England, becoming the most popular version of all. Every household in Scotland was *required by law* to purchase a copy.

#### *The Bishops' Bible 1568*

The English bishops (*Anglican*), who were not entirely in agreement with the Puritans (*Presbyterian*), were astonished at the popularity of the Geneva Bible and sought to produce a *new official version* to rival the Geneva Bible. Under *Archbishop Parker* (Mary had Cranmer burned at the stake), portions of the Bible were assigned to various bishops, so the version has been called the *Bishops' Bible*. Parker's bishops were not especially competent and as a result, the version did not gain wide acceptance although it was the official version. The Geneva Bible continued to be the most commonly used for instruction and daily reading in England and Scotland.

#### *The King James Version 1611*

*King James 1* succeeded Elizabeth and commissioned a new version for use in the churches to replace the Bishops' Bible. This is the *King James Version* of 1611. He wanted his version to be acceptable to all of his subjects and so directed that the notes to his version should not advocate controversial positions. This was also the period of "*Protestant Scholasticism*" with theologians refining doctrines by the very close application of Scripture. *Literalness* and *exactitude* were preferred as it involved minimal interpretation allowing room for various expositions of the text. The King James Version was generally superior to the Geneva Bible in literal exactness. It soon displaced all other versions, gradually becoming regarded as an *authoritative text* in England and America.

### TRANSLATION THEORY

#### *Approaches to Translation*

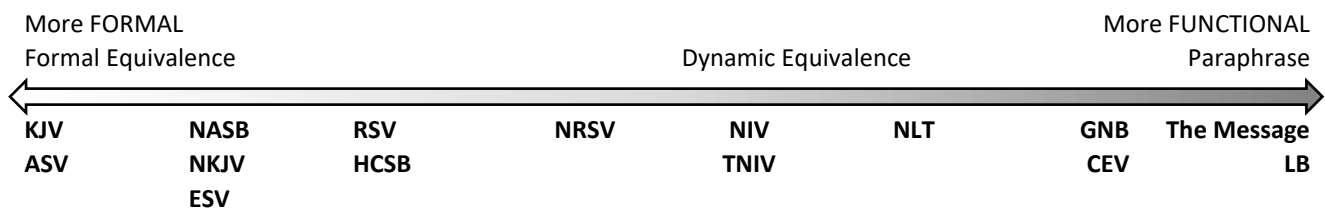
- The process of translation is far more complicated than merely *word substitution*. This assumes that the *source language* (Greek or Hebrew) and the *receptor language* (English) are exactly alike, or correspond perfectly. But they are not, in fact ***no 2 languages are exactly alike***.

- See **Matt 17:18**:

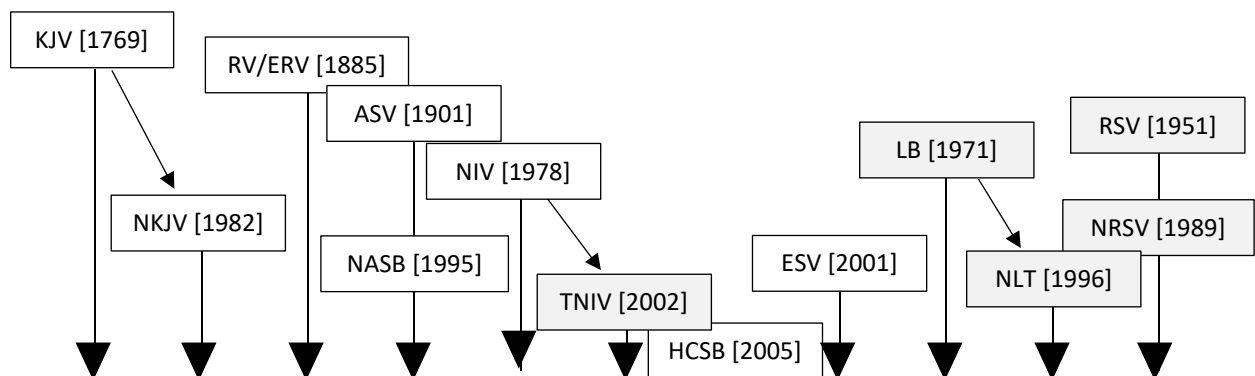
καὶ ἐπετίμησεν αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς, καὶ ἐξῆλθεν ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ τὸ δαιμόνιον  
And rebuked it the Jesus and came out from him the demon

- In translation, it is wrong to assume that *literal* automatically equals *accurate*. Translation entails reproducing the *meaning* and *message* of a text in one language as fully as possible in another language.
- The *form* of the original language is important but *form* should not have priority over *meaning*. When we can reproduce the meaning of the text while preserving the form of it – that is best.
- But there is a great difference of opinion over the relationship between form and meaning. There are 2 main approaches:
  - **The FORMAL approach** – sometimes called the *literal* approach; or *formal equivalence*; or *word-for-word* translation
  - **The FUNCTIONAL approach** – sometimes called *dynamic equivalence*; or *thought-for-thought* translation
- In reality, no translation is entirely formal or entirely functional. The *more formal* approach tries to stay as close as possible to the *structure* and *words* of the source language. The *more functional* approach tries to express the *meaning* of the original text in today’s language.
- In addition to formal and functional approaches, there is the *paraphrase*. Technically, the *paraphrase* is not a translation but an *interpretation* and *explanation* of the text.

#### A Translational Continuum



#### MODERN ENGLISH BIBLE TRANSLATIONS



#### The KING JAMES VERSION

The present KJV is the 1769 revision by Benjamin Blayney (also known as the Oxford Standard Edition). The KJV has undergone several major revisions (1629; 1638; 1729; 1762) and multiple editions. Today’s readers of the KJV face 2 major challenges – firstly, the translators of the KJV worked from an inferior Greek text constructed from only a few late NT manuscripts. Since KJV appeared, many older manuscripts have been discovered. A second is the archaic English words and phrases – many obsolete, others have changed meanings, some are misleading altogether. Nevertheless, the KJV endures due to its exceptional language and literary magnificence.

### *The NEW KING JAMES VERSION*

The New KJV is a *conservative revision* of the KJV that uses the same base text as the KJV – the *Textus Receptus*. In fact, this distinguishes the NKJV from all other modern versions. The ancient manuscripts on which critical editions of the Greek NT have been based since the 1880's have been completely ignored. The NKJV is a *literal* translation and compares with the NASB, which is slightly more literal than the NKJV. Its English style is superior to the NASB

### *The NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION*

The NIV is a totally new translation produced by *evangelical* scholars in America. Work on it began in 1965. It was conceived as a version that would appeal to *evangelicals*. A high view of Scripture was maintained and the translators deliberately rejected the liberal approach of the RSV. There is some criticism as to its non-literal approach – the *dynamic equivalence* method, that accuracy is sometimes sacrificed for the sake of readability. But it must be recognized that for many readers, this approach is very helpful. The International Bible Society (copyright owner of the NIV) has come up with several “*gender-neutral*” and “*inclusive language*” versions that raised heavy criticism from conservative groups, leading them to promise to continue to publish the 1984 version unchanged.

### *The NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE*

This is a revision of the ASV of 1901. It is a literal and conservative revision as an alternative to the RSV which has proven unacceptable to most conservatives. It is widely accepted by conservative churches, the main criticism is the awkward and unnatural English. Charles Spurgeon commented on the ERV (counterpart of the ASV) “strong in Greek, but weak in English”. The 1995 edition was an updated version to address the uncomfortable English. Nevertheless, it is still one of the most literal versions today.

### *The ENGLISH STANDARD VERSION*

This is positioned as a totally new translation but is actually an evangelical revision of the liberal RSV. It has been long noted that the RSV has some of the best translations of the Greek and it is for this reason that it was chosen as a base text to work from. It corrects some of the liberal interpretations of the RSV and improves the accuracy throughout with more literal renderings. The ESV sets out (in its preface) to be more literal than the NIV and reject “gender neutral” language. The ESV is considered one of the best versions for teaching. It is more literal than the NIV but not so severe that ordinary readers will struggle to understand it. Its English recalls the classic style of the KJV and so it has some literary power. Its handling of the OT is conservative. For detailed close study, the NASB and NKJV may be better.

### *The HOLMAN CHRISTIAN STANDARD BIBLE*

The HCSB is slightly more literal than the NIV but much less so than the NASB or the ESV. In various ways the text is simplified (long and complex Greek sentences are broken down into smaller and simpler ones) and easy to understand by interpretive renderings. The style is on a level much lower than the NKJV or ESV. It sometimes fails to convey the literary qualities in the text. The HCSB has unusually large amounts of marginal notes. This marginal equipment is clearly its best feature.

# STATEMENT OF THE SESSION AND BOARD OF DEACONS OF ZION SERANGOON B-P CHURCH ON BIBLE TRANSLATIONS 2015

## Introduction

The motivation to review the position of the King James Version (KJV) as the Official Translation of the Bible for the Church for Public Reading, began in June 2014. This initiative gained added impetus in April 2015 with the formation of the Session Select Committee on Bible Translations. The report of the Session Select Committee was presented and accepted by the Session and BOD on 7 July 2015.

## Consideration

The chief consideration of the Session and the BOD is the adequacy and appropriateness of the KJV as the Official Translation for Public Reading –

- Does the KJV continue to fulfill all the requirements of an Official Translation?
- Is there a need to consider another translation of the Bible? *And if so,*
- Which modern translation of the Bible should we consider?

## The Value of the KJV

The Session and the BOD acknowledge the continuing value of the KJV as a faithful and accurate translation of the Bible. The KJV was written to be *read aloud* in the churches, in the best vernacular English of the time, from the best available manuscripts of the time. This primary aspiration – not only to be *read* but also to be *heard* – has enhanced its enduring beauty and literary excellence and set the standard for all subsequent English translations and for the English language itself.<sup>1</sup>

## The Need for a Modern Translation – Semantic Drift

The Session and the BOD, nevertheless, recognize that substantial and significant language change (*semantic drift*) has occurred in the English language in all its components.<sup>2</sup> This has brought the efficacy and adequacy of the KJV into serious question, for the present generation of English readers.

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<sup>1</sup> Burke, 2011. pp 242-244; Maxey, 2011. pp 265-270; Stine, 2011. pp 196-197, 204-205.

<sup>2</sup> Phonology/Phonetics; Semantics/Meaning; Syntax/Grammar; Pragmatics/Usage; Vocabulary

## A Considered Alternative to the KJV

In consideration of an alternative for the KJV several other faithful and accurate translations in modern English were examined.<sup>3</sup> These are:

- a. *The New King James Version* (1982)
- b. *The New American Standard Bible* (1995)
- c. *The English Standard Version* (2001)
- d. *The New International Version, 1984 Edition* (1984)
- e. *The Holman Christian Standard Bible* (2005)

## The Case for the ESV

In our deliberations on the ESV, the Session and the BOD noted the following advantages of the translation over the KJV:

1. The ESV offers better READABILITY and UNDERSTANDING than the KJV for the present generation of English readers in the church.<sup>4</sup>
2. The ESV offers greater ease and opportunity for SPIRITUAL GROWTH for members as they have greater access to God's Word and are so encouraged to read independently.
3. The ESV offers better EFFICACY and EFFICIENCY for preachers of the Word because preaching time is optimized between exegesis and application.
4. The ESV offers greater word COMPREHENSION than the KJV because of the familiarity and relevance of the modern English text.<sup>5</sup>

## Decisions of the Session and the BOD

The Session and the BOD have approved the following initiatives:

1. That our church ADD a second Official Translation of the Bible for Public Reading. This means that we will have TWO Official Translations – the KJV and the ESV.
2. That for Responsive Scripture Reading at both the Morning and Evening Worship Services, we will continue to read from the KJV.
3. That the Scripture text for the message, at both the Morning and Evening Worship services, will be read from either the KJV or the ESV according to the Preacher's choice.

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<sup>3</sup> The criteria for consideration by the committee are:

- a. They should be modern English translations
- b. They should be considered highly accurate and readable by the majority of Bible scholars
- c. They should be generally accepted by the conservative Christian community

<sup>4</sup> Readability scores vary widely depending on the position and bias of the reviewers. However, it is salient to note that Readability Scales are measures that assign scores to texts based on: the number of letters per word; the number of syllables per word; the number of words per sentence; the percentage of long and short words in the text; etc. Scales do not take into account vocabulary, syntax, word order, familiarity of words, etc. Lerer, 2008. pp 172-177.

<sup>5</sup> Cognitive ability, reading comprehension and understanding are strongly dependant on word knowledge, relevance, and usage. Ability to read and pronounce words does not necessarily translate to comprehension – there is a studied difference between phonetic and semantic apprehension. What is essential is effective practice, fluency, and competence in the word vocabulary and learning. Because of the particularity of the vocabulary and syntax of Elizabethan English, this is not achieved.



4. That at all other church meetings, the Scripture text will also be read from either the KJV or the ESV according to the speaker's / preacher's choice.

## Implementation Procedures

The Session and the BOD will implement the following steps to help make the transition from the existing one Official Translation (KJV) to the new two Official Translations (KJV and ESV) position:

1. All church members and friends will be encouraged to have and own the ESV Bible in addition to the KJV Bible. However, the ESV Bible need not be in a print or book form. Online; electronic; computer software; and smart phone application versions will be introduced to our members as alternatives to a print ESV Bible.
2. All members will NOT be required to bring BOTH Bibles to worship services or any other meetings of the church. However, we will continue to encourage our members to bring EITHER the KJV OR the ESV Bible to all church meetings. They may be print Bibles, or electronic Bible software on laptops; tablet computers; or handphones.
3. At all church meetings, the Official Translation of the Bible to be read will be provided for members by a PowerPoint projection, or print, or other means.

## Recommendations for Collateral Reading

The Session and the BOD affirm that a clear statement on what we consider to be faithful and accurate English translations of the Bible is important to give our members assurance and confidence in reading and hearing God's Word. The Session and the BOD recommends the following modern English translations to our members for collateral reading and study:

- a. *The New King James Version* (1982)
- b. *The New American Standard Bible* (1995)
- c. *The New International Version, 1984 Edition* (1984)
- d. *The Holman Christian Standard Bible* (2005)

## Detailed Statement

A detailed statement on the deliberations of the Session Select Committee on Bible Translations 2015 will be available at the end of September 2015 to any member or interested party. Request for this can be made through the Session, the BOD or church office.

The Session and the Board of Deacons

ZION SERANGOON BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

7 July 2015

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