

**GS Misc 878B**

**SPECIAL AGENDA III**

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS**

**BIBLE AVAILABILITY**

Re-issued herewith is the note by the House of Bishops on Versions of Scripture (GS Misc 698), referred to in Mr Tim Cox's Private Member's Motion on Bible Availability.

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Clerk to the Synod

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## VERSIONS OF SCRIPTURE

### A Note by the House of Bishops

1. While the Church of England authorizes the Lectionary – what passages are to be read on which occasion – it does not authorize particular translations of the Bible. Nevertheless, among the criteria by which versions of Scripture are judged suitable for reading in church during the course of public worship are the following:
  - Faithfulness in translating the Hebrew or Greek
  - Resonance with the language of prayer used in the particular authorized service
  - Suitability for reading aloud in a public gathering
  - Use of familiar language in well-known quotations or figures of speech
  - Familiarity to the listener
  - Intelligibility to the listener
  - Appropriateness to the linguistic register of the particular congregation
  
2. A distinction needs to be drawn between *translation* and *paraphrase*. Versions which are read in church during the course of public worship should be translations of the Bible, not paraphrases of it. In less formal contexts, paraphrases may be useful.

3. Versions of Scripture which are translations and appear to satisfy at least four of the criteria set out in paragraph 1 above include:
  - **The Authorized Version** or King James Bible (AV), published in 1611, of which a Revised Version was published in 1881-5
  - **The Revised Standard Version** (RSV), originally published in the USA in 1952 and based on the 1901 American Standard Version of the 1881 revision of the AV
  - **The New International Version** (NIV), copyrighted 1973-1984 by the International Bible Society
  - **The New Jerusalem Bible** (NJB), published in 1985 – a revision of the Jerusalem Bible (JB), originally published in 1966, which was based on the *Bible de Jérusalem* (1956)
  - **The New Revised Standard Version** (NRSV), an inclusivized revision of the RSV, published in an anglicized version in 1989
  - **The Revised English Bible** (REB), published in 1989 – a revision of the New English Bible (NEB), which was originally published between 1961 and 1970
  - **The English Standard Version** (ESV), published in 2002 and based on the RSV, with priority given, in the area of gender language, to rendering literally what is in the original
4. Decisions about which version to use on which occasion are best made as locally as possible.
5. It should be noted that the NIV and the ESV do not include the Apocrypha, which is a necessary resource for Church of England lectionaries.

7. Some of the translations listed in paragraph 3 are 'inclusive' translations which avoid the use of masculine nouns and pronouns when reference is made to women as well as men. Where a masculine noun or pronoun is used in the original language, making an English text 'inclusive' necessarily involves a degree of departure from accurate translation. A conscious choice would have to be made between the two criteria of inclusivity and accuracy in respect of any of these versions.

On behalf of the House

✱ DAVID EBOR:

9 October 2002