

Translation Liaison Committee

Formation and purpose of the committee

The 2013 synod convention resolved that a new standing committee be appointed by the Conference of Presidents (COP) for Bible translation matters. The purpose of the committee is “to evaluate major Bible translations; to communicate with their editors and publishers; to offer, when appropriate, suggestions to improve such translations; and to share its findings with the synod at large” (*Proceedings*, p. 68).

In November 2013 the COP established this committee and gave it the title “Translation Liaison Committee” (TLC). The COP appointed four professors—two from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary and two from Martin Luther College and three parish pastors, all of whom were involved in the WELS translation discussions of the previous three years. The TLC held its first meeting in December 2013.

Initial work

The TLC expects that it will eventually interact with the oversight committees of the English Standard Version, the New International Version, and other translations, in keeping with the directive of the 2013 WELS convention.

The TLC began its work, however, by focusing on the Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB), since the HCSB is currently in the process of producing a revision. As the result of an initial inquiry, TLC members were invited to meet with representatives of the HCSB in Nashville to discuss the upcoming revision. A meeting was held on Jan. 15, 2014, at the LifeWay headquarters, involving Dr. Micah Carter; Dr. Ray Clendenen; Dr. Jeremy Howard; and two members of the TLC, Pastor Geoffrey Kieta and Prof. Thomas Nass.

HCSB plans

At this January meeting, the HCSB overseers shared information about the upcoming revision. Though the release date cannot be disclosed, the HCSB publishers are taking a top-to-bottom look at the HCSB with a view toward improving it in whatever way they can.

The HCSB overseers emphasized repeatedly that they want the HCSB to be a Bible translation that serves Christians of many denominations including Lutherans. As proof of their intent, they have put two confessional Lutherans on the nine-person oversight committee for the HCSB—Prof. Andrew Steinmann of the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod and Prof. Andrew Das of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. The HCSB overseers went so far as to say that they would be delighted someday to help in the production of an HCSB Lutheran Study Bible.

The HCSB overseers stressed that they welcome input from WELS and will consider it carefully. They had read the WELS “Review of the 102” on the Internet and already had a pretty good idea of the major concerns of WELS about the HCSB. They also reacted quite favorably to some of the suggestions that we shared in the meeting.

The TLC is not naïve to think that all of the suggestions of WELS will be accepted and that in the end the HCSB will win easy acceptance in WELS. But the TLC recalls that in the “Review of the 102” there were many favorable comments about the HCSB, with a number of reviewers commenting that the translation could use a good revision.

The HCSB does have some things in its favor. It does not do anything controversial with gender language or gender roles. It is stronger in its presentation of messianic prophecy than the NIV. The publishers are Christians who would like to make it easy for others to use their text. Maybe if a good revision is undertaken that addresses the concerns of WELS, the HCSB could become a translation that WELS could coalesce around in the future. Time will tell.

As a result of the meeting, the TLC is making plans to submit recommendations from WELS to the HCSB overseers during the next year. Regardless of whether or not the HCSB becomes a translation widely used in WELS, the TLC is looking forward to helping it become a better vehicle for communicating God’s Word.

Input welcome

The TLC welcomes suggestions from WELS members, especially concerning the HCSB, as the TLC formulates official recommendations from WELS for this translation. For more information, visit www.wels.net/tlc.

Prof. Thomas Nass, reporter

Prof. Thomas Nass, chairman
Rev. Glenn Schwanke, secretary
Rev. Brett Brauer
Prof. Kenneth Cherney, Jr.
Prof. Joel Fredrich
Rev. Geoffrey Kieta
Prof. Paul Zell