

01 July 2025

Dear Colleagues,

Many of you will know that the issue of Dutch language in liturgies has been a live one since 2011, when the Mission Working Party of the Archdeaconry of NW Europe commissioned the translation of parts of the Church of England's liturgy into Dutch. Fourteen years later we have a wonderful set of translations to share with you.

I want to pay tribute to the Reverend Dorienke De Vries-Sytsma, now Assistant Chaplain in Arnhem-Nijmegen, for the extraordinary work that she and the whole team has achieved in bringing forward for consideration the fullest set of texts we have ever had. I want you to know about these texts, and to feel able to use them: it may well help you, and it will help us, as we make our recommendations to the Liturgical Commission and the House of Bishops, as part of the process of making a Dutch text finally available in fully authorised form. You will find in the Annexe Dorienke's description of the long road to get to where we are, and an explanation for some of the choices that were made.

I am happy to commend these texts for use to you on an experimental basis for the next two years. You may use the services as a whole or choose only some elements or prayers. Please do **not** use any older versions of these liturgies you may still have. These should be deleted / destroyed.

By the end of the two years (in July 2027), during which I hope that independent assessment can be made by the Liturgical Commission, these services will be either be approved in final form, or a modified version will be given further experimental authorisation.

There was very little feedback on the first set of texts. As it would be very helpful to hear from those using them what does and doesn't work well, please do let my chaplain Evelyn know how they are working in practice.

I commend these services to you with my grateful thanks to Dorienke and to all those who have been part of the team over the years. I pray that they will have a profound pastoral and missional impact, that God may be glorified in our worship, and all of us edified through word, prayer, and sacrament.

Yours sincerely

*+ Robert Gibraltar in Europe*

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## Appendix I: Reflections on the Translations

In 2011 the Mission Working Party of the Archdeaconry of NW Europe commissioned the translation of parts of the Church of England's liturgy into Dutch. This was motivated by an increasing demand for such texts, especially for the Pastoral Services. With a growing number of congregation members being Dutch or Flemish, the majority of attendants at funerals, baptisms and weddings also increasingly consisted of native speakers, who then often struggled to follow the service. It was thought that for these guests it would be helpful to have a Dutch translation at hand.

The project has known a long, winding and at times rocky road. Several people have worked on the drafts at various stages. The first team consisted of five people: Cees Bakker (lay reader and chair), Miriam Adan-Jones (who was studying theology at that time, and made responsible for the baptism liturgy), Martin Tensen (youth worker, marriage liturgy), Bernd Wallet (Old-Catholic priest, Eucharist), and myself, Dorienke de Vries (professional literary translator; funeral).

After the texts had been distributed for road-testing in 2016 for a period of two years, hardly any feedback was received. By then the Reverend Stephen Murray had been made responsible for the project, and I had joined him at the end of 2015. In the meantime, it had been decided to add a few Eucharistic prayers for the sake of variation. These additional texts were still in a very preliminary state. Stephen and I worked our way through them and then organised a few reading sessions with a variety of people.

The whole project came to a standstill in 2018, for various reasons (mainly because I started ordination training and Stephen became Area Dean), but in August 2021 a new attempt was made to revive it. As his other responsibilities were taking too much of his time and attention, in August 2022 Stephen asked me to take over. A team was gathered, consisting both of Flemish and Dutch native speakers from Catholic and Protestant backgrounds (for their names and qualifications, see below, 'The Dutch Translation Team').

This team went to work in the autumn of 2022. Every member read the texts at home, and in January 2023 we gathered in Church House in Brussels for a day and a half of reading and praying through them. A second day of reading was held in April, and after that we had four long sessions on Zoom. That it still took 2 years before we were able to submit this final document is mainly due to the vacancy in Arnhem-Nijmegen, where I was serving as a curate at the time, and to the fact that the Bishop's Chaplain, Canon Alan Strange, retired just after we had submitted the final draft in May 2024.

The final texts that are now being submitted have been thoroughly read and prayed through by one team, which we hope has created consistency. This team now takes full responsibility for the final result.

We would like to draw attention to a few points of consideration, and to explain some of the choices we have made.

1. Not only did we aim for an accurate translation, but we also felt that the end result should be a liturgical text in its own right, one that could carry the people's prayers in the same way as the original. This meant we also had to work on the rhythm of the text and the poetry of the language; at first sight this made the end result look less 'accurate'. The choices that we had to make took much debate; sometimes it felt as if we had to invent a whole new language. Of course, we did not want to hear the English shimmering through, but we definitely wanted to

hear the Anglican; and so far Anglican Dutch did not yet exist. Doing justice to the unique mix of the domestic and the grand, for which Common Worship is famous, was a real challenge; and the fact that the end result had to be acceptable to both Flemish-Dutch and Dutch-Dutch speakers, and to both people from a Protestant background and people from a Catholic one, made it even more complicated.

2. We are aware that many of the alliterations of which Cranmer was so fond have had to disappear. We have tried to compensate for this loss elsewhere in the text, whenever a natural sounding possibility presented itself.
3. We had been told to use the Nieuwe Bijbelvertaling 2004 of the Dutch Bible Society as a reference. This wasn't always a straightforward thing, as some of the Bible quotations were so different from the English original, that they couldn't be used. For instance: the words 'peace at the last', in the Dismissal Prayer of the Funeral Service, are a quote from Psalm 37:38 in the version of Common Worship: 'Keep innocence and heed the thing that is right, for that will bring you peace at the last.' The NBV has: 'wie vredelievend zijn hebben de toekomst' ('the future belongs to those who love peace'), which has a completely different meaning, and besides is an impossible phrase to work into the Prayer. We therefore had to sacrifice the reference to the Psalm for a solution that preserved the multilayered meaning of the phrase. In this case, the literal translation turned out to be the best one: 'en aan het einde vrede' can refer to a peaceful death, but also to the peace that awaits us at the other side of death; and even to the peace at the end of all things, when God will be all in all.
4. The third issue was a consequence of the process taking so long, as in 2021 a new version of the NBV was published. A major difference with the 2004 version was the re-introduction of the use of capitals for the pronouns for God: *Hij* and *Hem*. The decision to do so had been made at the request of the more strict Reformed denominations in the Netherlands. We had to decide whether or not to go along with this, and we unanimously agreed to keep following the 2004 version in this respect. Not only did the use of capitals have a negative effect on the layout of the text, it also gave the liturgy as a whole a distinct Dutch Reformed flavour; and producing a text with a very distinct character, be it Catholic or Protestant or Reformed or Dutch or Flemish, was something we had been trying to avoid from the start – other than being distinctively Anglican.
5. I am sure that I am not the only one who occasionally was driven to despair by the lack of progress. However, looking back I notice an enormous blessing in disguise: as the chair who eventually has seen the project through to the end, it has made an enormous difference that somewhere along the line I was ordained, and so became a liturgical practitioner myself. I have been dumbstruck by the power of good liturgy. I have felt carried by it, especially when standing behind the Holy Table, and when leading funerals. Even my body has come to recognize the poetry and the rhythm of the language, as a sacred space that holds and enfolds us. Being an ordained minister has also given me the opportunity to road-test some of the texts myself, not just reading them out loud at home, but using them in the setting of a church service. I am convinced that this has in no small way contributed to the quality of the final translation, which herewith we offer to the church, with gratitude for the trust we received and the patience that was shown.

On behalf of the translation team,

*Reverend Dorienke de Vries, Chair*

## Appendix 2: The Dutch Translation team

### The Flemish

**Joris Geldhof** is Professor of Liturgical Studies and Sacramental Theology at the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies of KU Leuven, and chairman of the Liturgical Institute. In the same capacity, he also acts as editor-in-chief of the bilingual Questions Liturgiques/Studies in Liturgy. After studying philosophy, religious studies and theology at KU Leuven, he obtained a doctorate in theology in 2005 on *De provocatie van het christelijke openbaringsbegrip*, which was subsequently published as *Revelation, Reason and Reality. Theological Encounters with Jaspers, Schelling and Baader* (Leuven: Peeters, 2007). His research and expertise focus on the theology of the Eucharist, liturgical theology and fundamental issues of sacraments and sacramentality. He has published *Mediating Mysteries, Understanding Liturgies: On Bridging the Gap Between Liturgy and Systematic Theology* (Leuven: Peeters, 2015) and, with Marianne Moyaert, *Ritual Participation and Interreligious Dialogue: Boundaries – Transgressions – Innovations* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2015 ). He is the author of *Liturgy and Secularism: Beyond the Divide* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2018).

**Sam Goyvaerts** is Assistant Professor of Liturgical Studies and Sacramental Theology at the Tilburg School of Catholic Theology (TST), where he has a half time teaching and a half time research position. He obtained his Phd at the KU Leuven with research on the liturgical and eucharistic theology of the Catholic Tübingen School and Döllinger. Nowadays, his main focus is on the Liturgical Movement and the liturgical reforms of the Second Vatican Council, both from a liturgical theological and a liturgical pastoral perspective.

<https://www.tilburguniversity.edu/nl/medewerkers/s-h-goyvaerts>

**Thomas Pott OSB** is a Benedictine monk of the Monastery of Chevetogne, and author of *Byzantine Liturgical Reform, a Study of Liturgical Change* (together with John and Lyn Breck). In 2008 Pope Benedict appointed him advisor of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. He is an expert on Eastern Orthodox Liturgy, and lecturer Byzantine Liturgy and Theology at the Pontificio Ateneo Sant'Anselmo in Rome.

**As Roman Catholics, Joris and Thomas are both involved in the Malines Conversations, the Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue in Belgium.**

### The Dutch

**Marja Flipse** is a Dutch Anglican priest. After training for ordination at Westcott House she served in the Church of Wales (Diocese of Llandaff) for 12 years, before coming back to The Netherlands in 2020, to serve the Protestant Kloosterkerk in The Hague. She studied Philosophy of Religion and Music at the University of St. Andrews, and Theology at Leiden University. She obtained her Master's Degree in Philosophy and Theology at Cardiff University. Since 2010 she is the Duty Chaplain of Westminster Abbey. She returned to Wales in August 2023, to take up a post as Vicar for Liturgy and Worship in the East Cardiff Ministry Area.

**Martin van Bleek** is heritage consultant and conservation architect at the Gelders Genootschap, an advisory organization for local councils on issues concerning the public space and regional heritage. He is a member of the Anglican Chaplaincy of St. Anna & St. Mary Haarlem, NL. where he serves as Director of Music, organist and choir master. As such he is the coordinator for the Royal School of Church Music (RSCM) in North-West Europe; festival

coordinator for the Archdeaconry of NW Europe; conductor of the Anglican Singers, Amsterdam; conductor of the European Cathedral Singers; validated examiner for the RSCM in NW Europe; member of the Voluntary Forum of the RSCM; member of the Guild of Church Musicians and member of the Church Music Society.

**Marleen Buijs** is a hospital psychiatrist, and member of St. Mary's Rotterdam, where she sings in the choir. She has a special interest in Theology, Liturgy and Church Music.

**Dorienke de Vries** is a Dutch Anglican priest and a professional literary translator (English, Afrikaans and German). Having been involved in the translation project in 2011 and 2012, and then from 2016 onwards, she was asked to take over the final responsibility and coordination from the Revd Canon Stephen Murray in August 2022. She was ordained in 2020, after training at the Eastern Region Ministry Course from 2018-2020, and is currently serving as Assistant Chaplain in the Chaplaincy of Arnhem-Nijmegen, NL.

*Over the years several people have contributed to the project, by providing drafts, by sending comments and by proof-reading. The members listed above are the only ones who have been through all the texts, and therefore the only ones willing and able to take full responsibility for the final result.*