

Translation update: Pennsylvania Dutch

Pennsylvania Dutch-speaking translator Hank Hershberger grew up in a small Ohio town, born and raised in an Amish home. When he joined Wycliffe, they sent him to jungle camp in Mexico “to learn how to live without electricity,” he jokes.

After training, God called Hank and his wife, Ruth, to the jungles of Australia to translate for 25 years.

“When we were there, the Lord often reminded me that my own people don’t have the Word of God in their own language,” Hank recalls emotionally. “I made a promise to God that I would finish this translation and then go translate the Word for my people.”

After leaving Australia in the mid-1980s, Hank and Ruth made their home in Ohio, ready to begin their next project – translating Scripture into Pennsylvania Dutch, Hank’s heart language.

The Pennsylvania Dutch-speaking Amish group the Hershbergers work with has been using Martin Luther’s gothic Scripture, which most of the people don’t understand.

“It’s not our language at all,” says Hank. “I remember, as a child, as soon as they started quoting Scripture, I’d turn off because I didn’t understand it.”

Hank worries about the idea most Amish have about salvation. They believe the Amish way of life and hard work will save them, rather than giving their lives to Christ.

At 82 years old, Hank still translates Scripture longhand, trusting his wife to handle the computer work. He prays the Lord will give him enough time on earth to finish the Pennsylvania Dutch translation for his people. Please pray for Hank’s and Ruth’s physical and spiritual health as they continue to serve, bringing God’s Word to the Amish in their heart language.