

GS Misc 966

**The Faith and Order Commission
The Anglican Covenant: a briefing paper**

Foreword

At its meeting in May the House of Bishops considered an assessment from the Faith and Order Advisory Group of the final text of the Anglican Communion Covenant that had been sent to provinces last December. The House noted that the General Synod had had five opportunities to discuss governance issues in the Communion and the possibility of a Covenant since the publication of the Windsor report in October 2004. It also noted that successive drafts of the Covenant had taken account of substantial comments submitted on behalf of the Church of England.

The House resolved to commend the Covenant to the General Synod for adoption. It also concluded that it would be better to start the process at the beginning of the life of a new Synod than at the outgoing Synod's final group of sessions in July, especially since the latter was primarily going to be devoted to the legislative business on women in the episcopate. The House accordingly invited the Business Committee to schedule the adoption of the Covenant for debate this November. This would keep open the possibility of concluding the process, following references to diocesan synods under Article 8 and the subsequent Article 7 references to the House of Bishops and, if claimed, to the Convocations and House of Laity, before the next meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council in 2012.

We are very grateful to the new Faith and Order Commission for the attached briefing note on the Covenant. It provides background material and an analysis of the text of the Covenant which will, we believe, be helpful both to those who have followed this subject closely since the first Synod debate in February 2005 and those coming to it for the first time.

+ Rowan Cantuar

+ Sentamu Ebor

Introduction: What is the Covenant?

1. The idea of an Anglican Covenant was first proposed in *The Windsor Report* of 2004, which was written in response to tensions within the Anglican Communion which came to a head following the election of Gene Robinson as Bishop of New Hampshire. The Covenant is intended to help the Anglican Communion address the challenges of living out the principle of autonomy-in-communion, by committing its member Churches to mutual accountability, consultation and the achievement of consensus. It is intended as a means by which the Anglican Communion can discern its calling to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world.

2. In the words of Archbishop Rowan in his 2009 reflections 'Communion, Covenant and our Anglican Future':

The Covenant proposals of recent years have been a serious attempt to do justice to that aspect of Anglican history that has resisted mere federation. They seek structures that will express the need for mutual recognisability, mutual consultation and some shared processes of decision-making. They are emphatically not about centralisation but about mutual responsibility. They look to the possibility of a freely chosen commitment to sharing discernment (and also to a mutual respect for the integrity of each province, which is the point of the current appeal for a moratorium on cross-provincial pastoral interventions). They remain the only proposals we are likely to see that address some of the risks and confusions already detailed, encouraging us to act and decide in ways that are not simply local.¹

3. The Anglican Covenant thus intends to offer a means by which the commitment of a member church of the Anglican Communion to the Anglican Communion as a whole can be reflected in the decision-making processes of that church.

How did we get here? The development of the Anglican Covenant and the Church of England's contribution

4. In December 2009, the final text of the Anglican Covenant was agreed by the Standing Committee of the Anglican Communion. The Secretary General of the

¹ <http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/2502>

Anglican Communion has now sent it to all the member Churches of the Communion “for formal consideration for adoption by your Province through its appropriate processes.”² The Archbishop of Canterbury begins his message about the final Covenant by expressing the “hope it will be adopted by as many provinces as possible.”³

5. In terms of the process, the Archbishop of Canterbury has said: “by the next meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council in three years time we hope that many provinces will already have said yes to this and adopted it into their own understanding and identity.” The Anglican Church of Mexico has already done so. There will be a review of where matters stand in relation to the adoption of the Covenant across the Communion at the meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council in 2012. The constitutional processes and timescales for adoption vary considerably from province to province.

6. The Church of England has already given much attention to the Covenant and its previous drafts. Following the first proposal of a Covenant in the Windsor Report of October 2004, in February 2005 General Synod received a paper from the House of Bishops (GS1570) which included the statement that “the House supports the drawing up of an Anglican Covenant.” The motion passed by General Synod welcomed that report from the House accepting the principles of the Windsor Report.

7. In July 2007, the Chair of the Covenant Design Group, Archbishop Drexel Gomez, addressed General Synod and the following motion, moved by the Bishop of Chichester on behalf of the House of Bishops, was passed:

That this Synod:

- (a) affirm its willingness to engage positively with the unanimous recommendation of the Primates in February 2007 for a process designed to produce a Covenant for the Anglican Communion;
- (b) note that such a process will only be concluded when any definitive text has been duly considered through the synodical processes of the provinces of the Communion; and
- (c) invite the Presidents, having consulted the House of Bishops and the Archbishops’ Council, to agree the terms of a considered response to the draft from the Covenant Design Group for submission to the Anglican Communion Office by the end of the year.

8. In February 2008, Synod debated the first (Nassau) draft of the Covenant. This took note of the Church of England’s December 2007 submission to the Covenant Design Group in response to that draft. This response made a number of proposals

² Letter; 18 December 2009, at http://www.anglicancommunion.org/commission/Covenant/docs/letter_from_the_secretary_general.pdf.

³ Message, 17 December 2009; at <http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/2687>.

that were adopted into the second (St Andrew's) draft in February 2008. In January 2009, the House of Bishops, providing the Church of England's draft response to the St Andrew's draft (GS1716), answered the question as to whether there were "any elements which would need extensive change in order to make the process of synodical adoption viable" by stating:

The St Andrew's draft is consistent with, and can be regarded as a development of, the earlier evolution of the structures of the Anglican Communion which the Church of England has welcomed. There is nothing in it contrary to Church of England faith and order and the Church of England has given a positive reception so far to the Windsor and Covenant processes. Approval of the Covenant would therefore be in keeping with the precedents set by synodical support for previous ecumenical agreements and Covenants.⁴

9. In February 2009, the General Synod had a further debate on the Covenant. It took note of the draft Church of England response, reaffirmed the principle of an Anglican Covenant, noted the procedures which the Church of England will need to go through to adopt such a Covenant, and noted ways in which the then current (St Andrew's) draft could be improved.

10. Following that debate, the third (Ridley) draft of the Covenant was published in March 2009, including a report and commentary. This was considered by the Anglican Consultative Council at ACC-14 in Jamaica in May 2009. The ACC approved the text of the Introduction and Sections 1-3 of the Covenant but requested further consultation and revision of Section 4.

11. The Church of England, along with sixteen other provinces, submitted comments on the proposed Section 4 which were considered by the Covenant Working Group in November 2009. In the light of these responses, the Covenant Working Group agreed a final text for Section Four which was incorporated into the final Covenant text at the meeting of the Standing Committee of the Anglican Communion in December 2009. The text is attached to this paper.

What does the Covenant say?

12. The Introduction, which, although not formally part of the Covenant, "shall always be annexed to the Covenant text" and "accorded authority in understanding the purpose of the Covenant" (4.4.1), provides a theological rationale for the Covenant, explaining the call to communion in Christ and with each other, on the basis of which it affirms "We recognise the wonder, beauty and challenge of maintaining communion in this family of churches, and the need for mutual commitment and discipline as a witness to God's promise in a world and time of instability, conflict, and fragmentation" (Intro, §4).

⁴ GS1716, para 23 at http://www.anglicancommunion.org/commission/Covenant/docs/06_england.pdf

13. **Section One**, entitled **Our Inheritance of Faith**, contains eight affirmations which, in summarising Anglican beliefs, draw upon both the Church of England's Preface to the Declaration of Assent (Canon C15) and the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral of 1886/1888. The subsequent eight commitments express the ways in which Covenant signatories will live out this inheritance of faith together, each in their own context.

14. These articulate a vision of our shared and interdependent life and enable each church to embrace the disciplines of faithful discernment, development and discipleship that are needed to nourish a communion of churches which has "the expectation that Scripture continues to illuminate and transform the Church and its members, and through them, individuals, cultures and societies" (1.2.5) and seeks "continually to discern the fullness of truth into which the Spirit leads us, that people from all nations may be set free to receive new and abundant life in the Lord Jesus Christ" (1.2.8).

15. **Section Two – The Life We Share with Others: Our Anglican Vocation** – is focused on mission. The five affirmations trace our communion to God's gift (2.1.1) and providence (2.1.2), acknowledge our failings (2.1.3) and define our Anglican vocation and mission in relation to the mission of God (2.1.4) and the wider church (2.1.5). On the basis of these affirmations, Covenanting Churches make commitments to mutually accountable evangelisation and mission (2.2.1) and to the Five Marks of Mission (2.2.2), each in full awareness of its own need for conversion (2.2.3) and promising to renew mission structures (2.2.4) and order mission in the worship of God (2.2.5)

16. **Section Three** turns to **Our Unity and Common Life**. Each church affirms its sacramental incorporation into the body of Christ (3.1.1) and its resolve to live in a Communion of Churches marked by "communion with autonomy and accountability" as defined by the 1930 Lambeth Conference (3.1.2). This communion acknowledges the "central role of bishops" (3.1.3) and "the importance of instruments in the Anglican Communion", all four of which are defined along with their common responsibilities (3.1.4).

17. Acknowledging this interdependent form of life, Covenanting Churches make seven commitments which express the way of life and virtues needed to sustain and deepen our common life. These include regard for the common good and the Instruments (3.2.1), respect for others' constitutional autonomy (3.2.2) and a patient shared discernment (3.2.3) in search of a common mind on matters of common concern (3.2.4).

18. In particular this requires a commitment to "act with diligence, care and caution in respect of any action which may provoke controversy" and whose "intensity, substance or extent" threatens the Communion's unity or mission (3.2.5), to seek mediation in conflict (3.2.6) and "to have in mind that our bonds of affection and the

love of Christ compel us always to uphold the highest degree of communion possible” (3.2.7).

19. **Section Four** is a more technical section in which Covenanting Churches affirm the principles and procedures for **Our Covenanted Life Together** and commit to their implementation. These relate to four areas. *First, adoption of the Covenant.* Here the meaning of adoption is explained (4.1.1-2) with the assurance that the mutual commitment entailed “does not represent submission to any external ecclesiastical jurisdiction” (4.1.3). All current members of the ACC are invited to enter (4.1.4) and a procedure established whereby “the Instruments of Communion may invite other Churches to adopt the Covenant” (4.1.5). The Covenant becomes active for any church once it adopts it according to its own procedures (4.1.6).

20. *Secondly, the maintenance of the Covenant and dispute resolution.* The Covenant expresses “common commitments and mutual accountability” which enable “mutual recognition and communion”; each church is responsible for its own actions (4.2.1) and undertakes to create necessary structures “to oversee the maintenance of the affirmations and commitments of the Covenant in the life of that Church, and to relate to the Instruments of Communion on matters pertinent to the Covenant” (4.2.9).

21. Within the Communion, the Standing Committee of the Anglican Communion, responsible to the ACC and Primates’ Meeting, will monitor the Covenant’s functioning on behalf of the Instruments (4.2.2). In matters of dispute, each church has undertaken commitments through signing the Covenant (4.2.3). The Standing Committee is charged with facilitating agreement where there is not a shared mind (4.2.4), requesting deferral of a controversial action (4.2.5) and, where necessary, recommending to any Instrument the “relational consequences” when a church declines to defer (4.2.5).

22. Ultimately, the Standing Committee may declare actions or decisions “incompatible with the Covenant” (4.2.6) and make recommendations as to the relational consequences from such actions but “each Church or each Instrument shall determine whether or not to accept such recommendations” (4.2.7).

23. *Thirdly, withdrawing from the Covenant* is permitted and its possible consequences outlined (4.3.1).

24. *Fourthly, amendment* of the text will follow agreement by three quarters of the Covenanting churches who will be advised by the Standing Committee after consultation with other bodies.

Does the Covenant represent a new departure in Anglican life?

25. Although there has never been a Covenant before, it is also important to understand the Covenant in the context of the developments since the mid nineteenth century which have formed the Anglican Communion. In particular, it

represents a further step in the Communion's recognition of the interrelationship between the member Churches.

26. As the Introduction to the Covenant reminds us, "the communion of life in the Church participates in the communion which is the divine life itself, the life of the Trinity. This life is not a reality remote from us, but one that has been 'seen' and 'testified to' by the apostles and their followers: 'for in the communion of the Church we share in the divine life'. This life of the One God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, shapes and displays itself through the very existence and ordering of the Church" (Intro §1). As Paul explains, the reality of the Church as the body of Christ means that we cannot say to another member of the body "we have no need of you" (1 Cor 12).

27. In 1867, the first Lambeth Conference of all Anglican bishops was called, when Canadian bishops objected both to the liberal tendencies in biblical exegesis demonstrated by the Bishop of Natal, John Colenso and to the chaos that ensued when Colenso was deposed by the Archbishop of Cape Town. 76 of the 145 bishops who were invited attended; the Archbishop of York and the Bishop of Durham declined to become part of what they viewed as a new and dangerous departure.

28. The first Lambeth Conference sought to bring some clarity to the relationships and authority structures within the Anglican Communion. It strongly resisted suggestions that the title of Patriarch be conferred upon the Archbishop of Canterbury. It asked questions about communication within the Anglican Communion, considered questions of recognition of new dioceses and of emerging provinces and discussed the balance between autonomy and interdependence across the Communion. Similar questions have been on the agenda and feature in the Resolutions of almost every Lambeth Conference.

29. The first Lambeth Conference was called on the understanding that it could not enact any canons or reach any decisions which were automatically binding on the churches of the Anglican Communion. Resolutions and decisions had to be ratified by each member church before becoming effective.

30. This practice has continued with respect to the establishment of further bodies, such as the Anglican Consultative Council (established through acceptance of Resolution 69 of the 1968 Lambeth Conference by a 2/3 majority in the synodical processes of every member church). In recent years there has been some lack of clarity as to the status of the Resolutions of the Lambeth Conference, and the clarification of the role of the Lambeth Conference in the text of the Covenant may help to address this.

31. There have now been fourteen Lambeth Conferences. They have brought together Bishops from across the Anglican Communion on average every ten years since 1867. After the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lambeth Conference is

probably the best known of the Instruments of Communion in the Anglican Communion. The Covenant affirms it as one of those Instruments.

32. The Lambeth Conference was originally served by a “Continuation Committee”, which was superseded when the Anglican Consultative Council was established in 1969. According to its constitution, and amongst other responsibilities, the ACC advises on inter-Anglican, provincial, and diocesan relationships, including the division of provinces, the formation of new provinces and of regional councils, and the problems of extra-provincial dioceses, on ecumenical relationships, and on problems of inter-Anglican communication. The ACC is made up of between one and three representatives from each member church and, unlike the other Instruments, includes lay and clergy members. It meets every three years.

33. The Primates’ Meeting was established in 1978 by Archbishop Donald Coggan (101st Archbishop of Canterbury) as an opportunity for “leisurely thought, prayer and deep consultation” and has met regularly, also every two to three years, since then. Subsequent Lambeth Conferences encouraged it to take more significant roles including intervention in cases of exceptional emergency which are incapable of internal resolution within provinces and giving of guidelines on the limits of Anglican diversity.

34. Elected members of the ACC and of the Primates’ Meeting serve on the Standing Committee. The Covenant gives the Standing Committee the task of monitoring the functioning of the Covenant in the life of the Anglican Communion on behalf of the Instruments and of referring matters that arise to the Instruments of Communion.

35. The Covenant makes explicit appeal to all these Instruments, which have evolved over the past century and a half, seeking to use them more effectively to deepen relationships across the Communion and to improve communication between member churches. The Covenant should thus be understood as continuing and deepening the on-going process of defining the structures of the Anglican Communion.

36. At the same time, supporting the Covenant does not involve giving an uncritical endorsement to the Instruments in their current form. The Instruments of Communion will continue to develop as they have in the past. The Covenant provides an agreed theological framework in the light of which this continuing development can be shaped.

Will the Covenant create highly centralised, and un-Anglican, structures?

37. It is important to understand that the Covenant will function within the existing Anglican structures; it does not envisage new structures, although it will probably bring about some formalisation of what were originally more flexible arrangements. This is probably inevitable given the growth in the size of the Anglican Communion.

Whilst 145 Bishops were invited to meet at Lambeth in 1867, over 800 were invited to the 2008 Lambeth Conference.

38. The importance of the existence of the Anglican Communion as a worldwide communion should not be underestimated. It is its global character which makes possible the relationships with other global churches. Certain structures are necessary for the organisation of a global communion and the proper representation of its members. As the Archbishop of Canterbury has commented, “The Covenant text sets out the basis on which the Anglican family works and prays and lives and hopes.”⁵

39. The Covenant seeks to articulate what it means to be Anglican and the principles by which, together, the Communion can make decisions. It is clear that the role of the Archbishop of Canterbury is not to dictate but to assist and coordinate the work of the Instruments of Communion:

We accord the Archbishop of Canterbury, as the bishop of the See of Canterbury with which Anglicans have historically been in communion, a primacy of honour and respect among the college of bishops in the Anglican Communion as first among equals (*primus inter pares*). As a focus and means of unity, the Archbishop gathers and works with the Lambeth Conference and Primates’ Meeting, and presides in the Anglican Consultative Council. (3.1.4)

40. In clarifying the relationships across the Anglican Communion, the Covenant explicitly seeks to preserve a balance between the different Instruments of Communion and to preserve the autonomy of the Communion’s member churches. The Covenant is thus consonant with the Anglican principle of governance by Bishop in Synod.

41. Moreover, the Covenant explicitly calls on the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Instruments of Communion “to consult with, respond to, and support each other Instrument and the Churches of the Communion.” It affirms that “the Churches of the Anglican Communion are bound together ‘not by a central legislative and executive authority, but by mutual loyalty sustained through the common counsel of the bishops in conference’ and of the other instruments of Communion.” (3.1.2) The Covenant envisages a consultative process of discernment of the continuing call to Anglicans to proclaim God’s gospel in God’s world.

Is the Covenant basically a disciplinary measure?

42. This question focuses on Section 4 of the Covenant, especially 4.2. It is important to set this in the context both of the aim of the Covenant and of earlier drafts. The aims of the Covenant offer a means by which commitment to the

⁵ Message, 17 December 2009; at <http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/2687>.

Anglican Communion can be brought into the decision-making processes of the Communion's member churches.

43. Although many thought that earlier drafts of this section had a juridical, even punitive, tone, emphasis is put in the final text on "relational consequences". Furthermore, in contrast to earlier drafts, there is no longer any reference to a decision that churches have relinquished the Covenant and need to re-establish a Covenant relationship (Nassau, 6.6; St Andrew's Draft Appendix Section 8).

44. It would have been possible to word the Covenant only to include positive affirmations and commitments. This, however, would be to fail to take into account the reality that member churches may break – or be understood by others to have broken – such commitments. In the words of the commentary on the final text of section 4:

not all developments aid and nurture deeper communion. From our recent history it is evident that some developments bring dispute, disruption and tension. The clear majority of responses demonstrated that a section of the Covenant which seeks to provide an ordered way for the Communion to approach disagreement remains a necessary feature of the Covenant.

45. The section therefore sets out a procedure for maintaining the Covenant and resolving disputes. It recognises that questions may arise about the meaning of the Covenant or the compatibility of certain actions with the Covenant (4.2.3). In such situations the Standing Committee of the Anglican Communion monitors the functioning of the Covenant and oversees discernment on behalf of the Instruments. Its powers are restricted to (1) requesting deferral of a controversial action and recommending relational consequences to the Instruments if the request is declined (4.2.5); (2) declaring an action "incompatible with the Covenant" (4.2.6); and (3) recommending relational consequences of pursuing such action to the Instruments or Covenant churches (4.2.7).

46. The Standing Committee of the Communion has no power to enforce any of these declarations or recommendations within any province or in any of the Instruments and all it may recommend are responses which already exist in the life of the Communion, several of which have been used by member Churches and the Instruments during recent difficulties. There are no fixed penalties or new "star chamber". The Covenant text simply offers an ordered way of managing the consequences when a church is held by its Covenant partners to have denied its Covenantal affirmations or breached its Covenantal commitments.

47. In the words of Archbishop Rowan,

The last bit of the Covenant text is the one that's perhaps been the most controversial, because that's where we spell out what happens if relationships

fail or break down. It doesn't set out, as I've already said, a procedure for punishments and sanctions. It does try and sort out how we will discern the nature of our disagreement, how important is it? How divisive does it have to be? Is it a Communion breaking issue that's in question – or is it something we can learn to live with? And so in these sections of the Covenant what we're trying to do is simply to give a practical, sensible and Christian way of dealing with our conflicts, recognising that they're always going to be there.⁶

Is the Covenant confessional and biblical?

48. Concerns have been expressed by some that the Covenant's final text is insufficiently confessional and biblical. However, the doctrinal content and biblical underpinning of the Covenant and its commitment to supporting a confessing faith across the Communion must be recognised and affirmed.

49. Section 1 of the Covenant opens with affirmations about Anglican doctrine. Each signature church affirms "the catholic and apostolic faith uniquely revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds," and that "the historic formularies of the Church of England⁷ bear authentic witness to this faith" (1.1.2). Drawing on the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral, the Covenant also requires each signature church to affirm "the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as containing all things necessary for salvation and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith." These are formulations which have long been foundational to the definition of Anglican faith; they give shape and substance to the covenant and demonstrate its concerns are not solely procedural.

50. The commitments of section 1 emphasise the importance of these affirmations and especially of the authority of Scripture, with churches committing themselves "to teach and act in continuity and consonance with Scripture and the catholic and apostolic faith, order and tradition" (1.2.1); "to uphold and proclaim a pattern of Christian theological and moral reasoning and discipline that is rooted in and answerable to the teaching of Holy Scripture and the catholic tradition" (1.2.2); "to hear, read, mark, learn and inwardly digest the Scriptures in our different contexts, informed by the attentive and communal reading of – and costly witness to – the Scriptures by all the faithful, by the teaching of bishops and synods, and by the results of rigorous study by lay and ordained scholars" (1.2.4); and "to ensure that biblical texts are received, read and interpreted faithfully, respectfully, comprehensively and coherently, with the expectation that Scripture continues to illuminate and transform the Church and its members, and through them, individuals, cultures and societies" (1.2.5).⁸

⁶ Message, 17 December 2009; at <http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/2687>.

⁷ These are the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, and the Ordering of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons

⁸ The Covenant is thus consistent with, for instance, the Fourteen Tenets of the Jerusalem Declaration.

51. The Covenant, however, does not solely appeal to Scripture or offer a confessional basis as sufficient for communion. As the history of Protestantism has shown, there is a danger for churches which appeal to a particular confessional formulation when defining their identity. Such formulations tend to lack room for development, so that conflict soon arises about their interpretation, often leading to division.

52. The Covenant, on the other hand, opens with strong affirmations of faith founded in the authority of Scripture, but moves beyond simply seeking assent to doctrinal statements. It asks churches also to commit to cultivating certain virtues (such as openness and patience, 3.2.3) and practising certain disciplines (of prayer, study and debate together, 3.2.3, and mediated conversations in times of conflict, 3.2.6). These covenantal virtues and disciplines establish an ordered pattern of life in communion through which churches work with agreed processes for resolving conflict and discerning together the leading of God's Spirit.

Will the Covenant tend to quench the Spirit?

53. This question articulates the fear of some that the Covenant will give more power to those who do not want change to happen, and will limit the prophetic witness of those member churches who wish to proceed more quickly on certain questions.

54. Underlying the Covenant is its recognition that its member Churches are to "proclaim more effectively in our different contexts the grace of God revealed in the gospel" (Preamble). Recognising the complexity of discerning the meaning of that call in the many different contexts, it affirms explicitly that "Each Church, with its bishops in synod, orders and regulates its own affairs and its local responsibility for mission through its own system of government and law" (3.1.2). What is called for is "communion with autonomy and accountability" (3.1.2; citing the Primates' *Letter from Alexandria*, March 2009).

55. The Covenant encourages member Churches of the Anglican Communion to commit themselves to engage in a process of discernment with other Member Churches of the Communion as they seek to discern God's call to them in mission. Any process of discernment runs the danger of stifling the work of the Spirit; however, any call (whether to change or to stay the same) requires a process of discernment in order to determine whether it is of the Spirit. As Paul reminded the Thessalonians, discernment is necessary: "Do not put out the Spirit's fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil" (1 Thess 5:19-22).

56. Properly used, the processes outlined in the Covenant should assist this process of discerning the work of the Spirit within the Anglican Communion. However, this will only be possible if a conscious effort is made to foster proper lines of communication and deeper bonds of friendship across the Communion.

What difference will the Covenant make?

57. Currently, only those churches which are members of the Anglican Communion (i.e. those on the Schedule of Membership of the Anglican Consultative Council) are being invited to adopt the Covenant. The procedure by which churches will sign the Covenant will vary according to their Canon law. Consequently, for some years to come, there will be a developing and potentially complex situation.

58. Some member churches of the Anglican Communion may rapidly adopt the Covenant, others may take longer to adopt it, due to their constitutional procedures; others may decline to adopt it. Only those in the first two of these three categories will be able to be involved in making decisions on the Standing Committee or in the Instruments relating to the Covenant (4.2.8). The churches which sign the Covenant commit themselves to the principle of working with the Instruments as they exist, in the recognition that changes may be necessary as the Covenant Communion develops and takes shape.

59. However, these are not the only bodies for whom a relationship to the Covenant is possible. In the words of the Archbishop of Canterbury (referring to 4.1.5):

The Covenant text itself does make it clear that at some point it'll be open to other bodies, other Ecclesial bodies as they're called, other Churches and communities to adopt this Covenant, and be considered for incorporation into the Anglican Communion. Meanwhile, it's open to anybody that wishes to affirm the principles of the Covenant - to say that this is what they wish to live with.⁹

60. There may therefore be other churches not currently in the Communion, or individual dioceses within existing provinces or local churches, which wish to affirm the Covenant, and which could be invited by the Instruments of Communion to adopt it formally (4.1.5, through a process which remains rather opaque). It is consequently important to note that "adoption of this Covenant does not confer any right of recognition by, or membership of, the Instruments of Communion, which shall be decided by those Instruments themselves" (4.1.5).

61. There is the possibility that some Churches of the Communion will choose not to adopt the Covenant. However, these churches will not thereby be excluded from the Communion. The Covenant itself does not address this possible outcome, although the Commentary to the Ridley Draft noted:

There may be members of the Instruments of Communion who represent a Church that has not adopted the Covenant, and there would be an increasingly anomalous situation as the Covenant becomes active and forceful in the life of the Churches which have

⁹ Message, 17 December 2009; at <http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/2687>.

adopted it...There will in time be a question of how both Covenanting and non-Covenanting Churches participate together in the life of the Instruments of Communion. ...such matters may become the subject of agreed conventions alongside the Covenant.

62. Similarly, the Commentary on the final text of section 4 suggests: “there should be flexibility for the Instruments of Communion to determine an appropriate response in the evolving situation that would accompany a process of reception and adoption of the Covenant.”¹⁰ Therefore, as the Archbishop of Canterbury has observed, “we could arrive at a situation where there were ‘constituent’ Churches in the Anglican Communion and other ‘churches in association’, which were bound by historic and perhaps personal links, fed from many of the same sources but not bound in a single and unrestricted sacramental communion and not sharing the same constitutional structures.”¹¹

63. It is thus conceivable – although most would agree that it would be deeply regrettable – that different parts of the Anglican family will, while retaining the kind of mutual sacramental recognition that exists between the Anglican Communion and the Old Catholic Churches or between the British provinces and the Porvoo Churches, work within different structures whose interrelations would need to be carefully worked out. All this is inevitably speculative and uncertain. Nonetheless, it is important to see the Covenant as a positive means of handling our diversity, not a tool for either control or forced division.

Conclusion

64. The outcome of the Covenant process across the Communion remains unclear. However, in the words of the Archbishop of Canterbury in his first address to the 2008 Lambeth Conference:

A Covenant should not be thought of as a means for excluding the difficult or rebellious but as an intensification – for those who so choose – of relations that already exist. And those who in conscience could not make those intensified commitments are not thereby shut off from all fellowship; it is just that they have chosen not to seek that kind of unity, for reasons that may be utterly serious and prayerful. Whatever the popular perception, the options before us are not irreparable schism or forced assimilation. We need to think through what all this involves in the conviction that all our existing bonds of friendship and fellowship are valuable and channels of grace, even if some want to give such bonds a more formal and demanding shape.¹²

¹⁰ Commentary on Section 4.1.

¹¹ Archbishop of Canterbury, *Challenge and Hope*, June 2006, at <http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/640>.

¹² Cited in *A Lambeth Commentary*, p. 30; at: http://www.anglicancommunion.org/commission/covenant/-docs/a_lambeth_commentary.pdf.

65. It is our hope, as the Faith and Order Commission, that Church of England will give the Covenant strong support and that, when adopted, the Covenant will help to strengthen the bonds of communion across the Anglican Communion.

ANNEX I

The Anglican Communion Covenant

Introduction to the Covenant Text

“This life is revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us – we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have communion with us; and truly our communion is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. These things we write so that our joy may be complete.” (1 John 1.2-4).

1. God has called us into communion in Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1.9). This communion has been “revealed to us” by the Son as being the very divine life of God the Trinity. What is the life revealed to us? St John makes it clear that the communion of life in the Church participates in the communion which is the divine life itself, the life of the Trinity. This life is not a reality remote from us, but one that has been “seen” and “testified to” by the apostles and their followers: “for in the communion of the Church we share in the divine life”.¹³ This life of the One God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, shapes and displays itself through the very existence and ordering of the Church.

2. Our divine calling into communion is established in God’s purposes for the whole of creation (Eph 1:10; 3:9ff.). It is extended to all humankind, so that, in our sharing of God’s life as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, God might restore in us the divine image. Through time, according to the Scriptures, God has furthered this calling through covenants made with Noah, Abraham, Israel, and David. The prophet Jeremiah looked forward to a new covenant not written on tablets of stone but upon the heart (Jer 31.31-34). In God’s Son, Christ Jesus, a new covenant is given us, established in his “blood ... poured out for the many for the forgiveness of sins” (Mt 26:28), secured through his resurrection from the dead (Eph 1:19-23), and sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit poured into our hearts (Rom 5:5). Into this covenant of death to sin and of new life in Christ we are baptized, and empowered to share God’s communion in Christ with all people, to the ends of the earth and of creation.

3. We humbly recognize that this calling and gift of communion entails responsibilities for our common life before God as we seek, through grace, to be faithful in our service of God’s purposes for the world. Joined in one universal Church, which is Christ’s Body, spread throughout the earth, we serve his gospel even as we are enabled to be made one across the dividing walls of human sin and estrangement (Eph 2.12-22). The forms of this life in the Church, caught up in the mystery of divine communion, reveal to the hostile and divisive power of the world the “manifold wisdom of God” (Eph 3:9-10). Faithfulness, honesty, gentleness,

¹³ *The Church of the Triune God*, The Cyprus Statement of the International Commission for Anglican Orthodox Theological Dialogue, 2007, paragraph 1,2.

humility, patience, forgiveness, and love itself, lived out in mutual deference and service (Mk 10.44-45) among the Church's people and through its ministries, contribute to building up the body of Christ as it grows to maturity (Eph 4.1-16; Col 3.8-17).

4. In the providence of God, which holds sway even over our divisions caused by sin, various families of churches have grown up within the universal Church in the course of history. Among these families is the Anglican Communion, which provides a particular charism and identity among the many followers and servants of Jesus. We recognise the wonder, beauty and challenge of maintaining communion in this family of churches, and the need for mutual commitment and discipline as a witness to God's promise in a world and time of instability, conflict, and fragmentation. Therefore, we covenant together as churches of this Anglican Communion to be faithful to God's promises through the historic faith we confess, our common worship, our participation in God's mission, and the way we live together.

5. To covenant together is not intended to change the character of this Anglican expression of Christian faith. Rather, we recognise the importance of renewing in a solemn way our commitment to one another, and to the common understanding of faith and order we have received, so that the bonds of affection which hold us together may be re-affirmed and intensified. We do this in order to reflect, in our relations with one another, God's own faithfulness and promises towards us in Christ (2 Cor 1.20-22).

6. We are a people who live, learn, and pray by and with the Scriptures as God's Word. We seek to adore God in thanks and praise and to make intercession for the needs of people everywhere through common prayer, united across many cultures and languages. We are privileged to share in the mission of the apostles to bring the gospel of Christ to all nations and peoples, not only in words but also in deeds of compassion and justice that witness to God's character and the triumph of Christ over sin and death. We give ourselves as servants of a greater unity among the divided Christians of the world. May the Lord help us to "preach not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake" (2 Cor. 4.5).

7. Our faith embodies a coherent testimony to what we have received from God's Word and the Church's long-standing witness. Our life together reflects the blessings of God (even as it exposes our failures in faith, hope and love) in growing our Communion into a truly global family. The mission we pursue aims at serving the great promises of God in Christ that embrace the peoples and the world God so loves. This mission is carried out in shared responsibility and stewardship of resources, and in interdependence among ourselves and with the wider Church.

8. Our prayer is that God will redeem our struggles and weakness, renew and enrich our common life and use the Anglican Communion to witness effectively in all the world, working with all people of good will, to the new life and hope found in Christ Jesus.

The Anglican Communion Covenant

Preamble

We, as Churches of the Anglican Communion, under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, solemnly covenant together in these following affirmations and commitments. As people of God, drawn from “every nation, tribe, people and language” (Rev 7.9), we do this in order to proclaim more effectively in our different contexts the grace of God revealed in the gospel, to offer God’s love in responding to the needs of the world, to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, and together with all God’s people to attain the full stature of Christ (Eph 4.3,13).

Section One: Our Inheritance of Faith

1.1 Each Church affirms:

1.1.1. its communion in the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church, worshipping the one true God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

1.1.2. the catholic and apostolic faith uniquely revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds, which faith the Church is called upon to proclaim afresh in each generation.¹⁴ The historic formularies of the Church of England,¹⁵ forged in the context of the European Reformation and acknowledged and appropriated in various ways in the Anglican Communion, bear authentic witness to this faith.

1.1.3. the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as containing all things necessary for salvation and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith.¹⁶

1.1.4. the Apostles’ Creed, as the baptismal symbol; and the Nicene Creed, as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith.¹⁷

1.1.5. the two sacraments ordained by Christ himself – Baptism and the Supper of the Lord – ministered with the unfailing use of Christ’s words of institution, and of the elements ordained by him.¹⁸

¹⁴ Cf. The Preface to the Declaration of Assent, Canon C.15 of the Church of England.

¹⁵ The Thirty Nine Articles of Religion, the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, and the Ordering of Bishops, Priests and Deacons.

¹⁶ The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral of 1886/1888.

¹⁷ The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral of 1886/1888

1.1.6. the historic episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the unity of his Church.¹⁹

1.1.7. the shared patterns of our common prayer and liturgy which form, sustain and nourish our worship of God and our faith and life together.

1.1.8. its participation in the apostolic mission of the whole people of God, and that this mission is shared with other Churches and traditions beyond this Covenant.

1.2 In living out this inheritance of faith together in varying contexts, each Church, reliant on the Holy Spirit, commits itself:

1.2.1. to teach and act in continuity and consonance with Scripture and the catholic and apostolic faith, order and tradition, as received by the Churches of the Anglican Communion, mindful of the common councils of the Communion and our ecumenical agreements.

1.2.2. to uphold and proclaim a pattern of Christian theological and moral reasoning and discipline that is rooted in and answerable to the teaching of Holy Scripture and the catholic tradition.

1.2.3. to witness, in this reasoning, to the renewal of humanity and the whole created order through the death and resurrection of Christ, and to reflect the holiness that in consequence God gives to, and requires from, his people.

1.2.4. to hear, read, mark, learn and inwardly digest the Scriptures in our different contexts, informed by the attentive and communal reading of - and costly witness to - the Scriptures by all the faithful, by the teaching of bishops and synods, and by the results of rigorous study by lay and ordained scholars.

1.2.5. to ensure that biblical texts are received, read and interpreted faithfully, respectfully, comprehensively and coherently, with the expectation that Scripture continues to illuminate and transform the Church and its members, and through them, individuals, cultures and societies.

1.2.6. to encourage and be open to prophetic and faithful leadership in ministry and mission so as to enable God's people to respond in courageous witness to the power of the gospel in the world.

1.2.7. to seek in all things to uphold the solemn obligation to nurture and sustain eucharistic communion, in accordance with existing canonical disciplines, as we strive under God for the fuller realisation of the communion of all Christians.

¹⁸ Cf. The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral of 1886/1888, The Preface to the Declaration of Assent, Canon C.15 of the Church of England.

¹⁹ cf The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral of 1886/1888.

1.2.8. to pursue a common pilgrimage with the whole Body of Christ continually to discern the fullness of truth into which the Spirit leads us, that peoples from all nations may be set free to receive new and abundant life in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Section Two: The Life We Share with Others: Our Anglican Vocation

2.1 Each Church affirms:

2.1.1. communion as a gift of God given so that God's people from east and west, north and south, may together declare the glory of the Lord and be both a sign of God's reign in the Holy Spirit and the first fruits in the world of God's redemption in Christ.

2.1.2. its gratitude for God's gracious providence extended to us down through the ages: our origins in the Church of the apostles; the ancient common traditions; the rich history of the Church in Britain and Ireland reshaped by the Reformation, and our growth into a global communion through the expanding missionary work of the Church; our ongoing refashioning by the Holy Spirit through the gifts and sacrificial witness of Anglicans from around the world; and our summons into a more fully developed communion life.

2.1.3. in humility our call to constant repentance: for our failures in exercising patience and charity and in recognizing Christ in one another; our misuse of God's gracious gifts; our failure to heed God's call to serve; and our exploitation one of another.

2.1.4. the imperative of God's mission into which the Communion is called, a vocation and blessing in which each Church is joined with others in Christ in the work of establishing God's reign. As the Communion continues to develop into a worldwide family of interdependent churches, we embrace challenges and opportunities for mission at local, regional, and international levels. In this, we cherish our mission heritage as offering Anglicans distinctive opportunities for mission collaboration.

2.1.5. that our common mission is a mission shared with other Churches and traditions beyond this Covenant. We embrace opportunities for the discovery of the life of the whole gospel, and for reconciliation and shared mission with the Church throughout the world. We affirm the ecumenical vocation of Anglicanism to the full visible unity of the Church in accordance with Christ's prayer that "all may be one". It is with all the saints in every place and time that we will comprehend the fuller dimensions of Christ's redemptive and immeasurable love.

2.2 In recognition of these affirmations, each Church, reliant on the Holy Spirit, commits itself:

2.2.1. to answer God's call to undertake evangelisation and to share in the healing and reconciling mission "for our blessed but broken, hurting and fallen world",²⁰ and, with mutual accountability, to share our God-given spiritual and material resources in this task.

2.2.2. to undertake in this mission, which is the mission of God in Christ:²¹

2.2.2.a "to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God" and to bring all to repentance and faith;

2.2.2.b "to teach, baptize and nurture new believers", making disciples of all nations (Mt 28.19) through the quickening power of the Holy Spirit²² and drawing them into the one Body of Christ whose faith, calling and hope are one in the Lord (Eph 4.4-6);

2.2.2.c "to respond to human need by loving service", disclosing God's reign through humble ministry to those most needy (Mk 10.42-45; Mt 18.4; 25.31-45);

2.2.2.d "to seek to transform unjust structures of society" as the Church stands vigilantly with Christ proclaiming both judgment and salvation to the nations of the world,²³ and manifesting through our actions on behalf of God's righteousness the Spirit's transfiguring power;²⁴

2.2.3.e "to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and to sustain and renew the life of the earth" as essential aspects of our mission in communion.²⁵

2.2.3. to engage in this mission with humility and an openness to our own ongoing conversion in the face of our unfaithfulness and failures in witness.

2.2.4. to revive and renew structures for mission which will awaken and challenge the whole people of God to work, pray and give for the spread of the gospel.

2.2.5. to order its mission in the joyful and reverent worship of God, thankful that in our eucharistic communion "Christ is the source and goal of the unity of the Church and of the renewal of human community."²⁶

Section Three: Our Unity and Common Life

3.1 Each Church affirms:

3.1.1. that by our participation in Baptism and Eucharist, we are incorporated into the one body of the Church of Jesus Christ, and called by Christ to pursue all things that make for peace and build up our common life.

²⁰ IASCOME Report, ACC-13.

²¹ The five Marks of Mission are set out in the MISSIO Report of 1999, building on work at ACC-6 and ACC-8.

²² *Church as Communion* n.26.

²³ WCC 1954 Evanston, *Christ the Hope of the World*.

²⁴ Moscow Statement, 43.

²⁵ IARCCUM, *Growing Together in Unity and Mission*, 118.

²⁶ *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, WCC.

3.1.2. its resolve to live in a Communion of Churches. Each Church, with its bishops in synod, orders and regulates its own affairs and its local responsibility for mission through its own system of government and law and is therefore described as living “in communion with autonomy and accountability”.²⁷ Trusting in the Holy Spirit, who calls and enables us to dwell in a shared life of common worship and prayer for one another, in mutual affection, commitment and service, we seek to affirm our common life through those Instruments of Communion by which our Churches are enabled to be conformed together to the mind of Christ. Churches of the Anglican Communion are bound together “not by a central legislative and executive authority, but by mutual loyalty sustained through the common counsel of the bishops in conference”²⁸ and of the other instruments of Communion.

3.1.3. the central role of bishops as guardians and teachers of faith, as leaders in mission, and as a visible sign of unity, representing the universal Church to the local, and the local Church to the universal and the local Churches to one another. This ministry is exercised personally, collegially and within and for the eucharistic community. We receive and maintain the historic threefold ministry of bishops, priests and deacons, ordained for service in the Church of God, as they call all the baptised into the mission of Christ.

3.1.4. the importance of instruments in the Anglican Communion to assist in the discernment, articulation and exercise of our shared faith and common life and mission. The life of communion includes an ongoing engagement with the diverse expressions of apostolic authority, from synods and episcopal councils to local witness, in a way which continually interprets and articulates the common faith of the Church’s members (consensus fidelium). In addition to the many and varied links which sustain our life together, we acknowledge four particular Instruments at the level of the Anglican Communion which express this co-operative service in the life of communion.

I. We accord the Archbishop of Canterbury, as the bishop of the See of Canterbury with which Anglicans have historically been in communion, a primacy of honour and respect among the college of bishops in the Anglican Communion as first among equals (primus inter pares). As a focus and means of unity, the Archbishop gathers and works with the Lambeth Conference and Primates’ Meeting, and presides in the Anglican Consultative Council.

II. The Lambeth Conference expresses episcopal collegiality worldwide, and brings together the bishops for common worship, counsel, consultation and encouragement in their ministry of guarding the faith and unity of the Communion and equipping the saints for the work of ministry (Eph 4.12) and mission.

²⁷ A Letter from Alexandria, The Primates, March 2009.

²⁸ Lambeth Conference 1930.

III. The Anglican Consultative Council is comprised of lay, clerical and episcopal representatives from our Churches.²⁹ It facilitates the co-operative work of the Churches of the Anglican Communion, co-ordinates aspects of international Anglican ecumenical and mission work, calls the Churches into mutual responsibility and interdependence, and advises on developing provincial structures.³⁰

IV. The Primates' Meeting is convened by the Archbishop of Canterbury for mutual support, prayer and counsel. The authority that primates bring to the meeting arises from their own positions as the senior bishops of their Provinces, and the fact that they are in conversation with their own Houses of Bishops and located within their own synodical structures.³¹ In the Primates' Meeting, the Primates and Moderators are called to work as representatives of their Provinces in collaboration with one another in mission and in doctrinal, moral and pastoral matters that have Communion-wide implications.

It is the responsibility of each Instrument to consult with, respond to, and support each other Instrument and the Churches of the Communion.³² Each Instrument may initiate and commend a process of discernment and a direction for the Communion and its Churches.

3.2 Acknowledging our interdependent life, each Church, reliant on the Holy Spirit, commits itself:

3.2.1. to have regard for the common good of the Communion in the exercise of its autonomy, to support the work of the Instruments of Communion with the spiritual and material resources available to it, and to receive their work with a readiness to undertake reflection upon their counsels, and to endeavour to accommodate their recommendations.

3.2.2. to respect the constitutional autonomy of all of the Churches of the Anglican Communion, while upholding our mutual responsibility and interdependence in the Body of Christ,³³ and the responsibility of each to the Communion as a whole.³⁴

3.2.3. to spend time with openness and patience in matters of theological debate and reflection, to listen, pray and study with one another in order to discern the will of God. Such prayer, study and debate is an essential feature of the life of the Church as it seeks to be led by the Spirit into all truth and to proclaim the gospel afresh in each generation. Some issues, which are perceived as controversial or new when

²⁹ Constitution of the ACC, Article 3 and Schedule.

³⁰ cf. the Objects of the ACC are set out in Article 2 of its Constitution.

³¹ Report of the Windsor Continuation Group.

³² cf IATDC, *Communion, Conflict and Hope*, paragraph, 113.

³³ Toronto Congress 1963, and the Ten Principles of Partnership.

³⁴ cf. the Schedule to the Dar es Salaam Communiqué of the Primates' Meeting, February 2007

they arise, may well evoke a deeper understanding of the implications of God's revelation to us; others may prove to be distractions or even obstacles to the faith. All such matters therefore need to be tested by shared discernment in the life of the Church.

3.2.4. to seek a shared mind with other Churches, through the Communion's councils, about matters of common concern, in a way consistent with the Scriptures, the common standards of faith, and the canon laws of our churches. Each Church will undertake wide consultation with the other Churches of the Anglican Communion and with the Instruments and Commissions of the Communion.

3.2.5. to act with diligence, care and caution in respect of any action which may provoke controversy, which by its intensity, substance or extent could threaten the unity of the Communion and the effectiveness or credibility of its mission.

3.2.6. in situations of conflict, to participate in mediated conversations, which involve face to face meetings, agreed parameters and a willingness to see such processes through.

3.2.7. to have in mind that our bonds of affection and the love of Christ compel us always to uphold the highest degree of communion possible.

Section Four: Our Covenanted Life Together

4. Each Church affirms the following principles and procedures, and, reliant on the Holy Spirit, commits itself to their implementation.

4.1 Adoption of the Covenant

4.1.1. Each Church adopting this Covenant affirms that it enters into the Covenant as a commitment to relationship in submission to God. Each Church freely offers this commitment to other Churches in order to live more fully into the ecclesial communion and interdependence which is foundational to the Churches of the Anglican Communion. The Anglican Communion is a fellowship, within the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, of national or regional Churches, in which each recognises in the others the bonds of a common loyalty to Christ expressed through a common faith and order, a shared inheritance in worship, life and mission, and a readiness to live in an interdependent life.

4.1.2. In adopting the Covenant for itself, each Church recognises in the preceding sections a statement of faith, mission and interdependence of life which is consistent with its own life and with the doctrine and practice of the Christian faith as it has received them. It recognises these elements as foundational for the life of the Anglican Communion and therefore for the relationships among the covenanting Churches.

4.1.3. Such mutual commitment does not represent submission to any external ecclesiastical jurisdiction. Nothing in this Covenant of itself shall be deemed to alter any provision of the Constitution and Canons of any Church of the Communion, or to limit its autonomy of governance. The Covenant does not grant to any one Church or any agency of the Communion control or direction over any Church of the Anglican Communion.

4.1.4. Every Church of the Anglican Communion, as recognised in accordance with the Constitution of the Anglican Consultative Council, is invited to enter into this Covenant according to its own constitutional procedures.

4.1.5. The Instruments of Communion may invite other Churches to adopt the Covenant using the same procedures as set out by the Anglican Consultative Council for the amendment of its schedule of membership. Adoption of this Covenant does not confer any right of recognition by, or membership of, the Instruments of Communion, which shall be decided by those Instruments themselves.

4.1.6. This Covenant becomes active for a Church when that Church adopts the Covenant through the procedures of its own Constitution and Canons.

4.2 The Maintenance of the Covenant and Dispute Resolution

4.2.1. The Covenant operates to express the common commitments and mutual accountability which hold each Church in the relationship of communion one with another. Recognition of, and fidelity to, this Covenant, enable mutual recognition and communion. Participation in the Covenant implies a recognition by each Church of those elements which must be maintained in its own life and for which it is accountable to the Churches with which it is in Communion in order to sustain the relationship expressed in this Covenant.

4.2.2. The Standing Committee of the Anglican Communion, responsible to the Anglican Consultative Council and the Primates' Meeting, shall monitor the functioning of the Covenant in the life of the Anglican Communion on behalf of the Instruments. In this regard, the Standing Committee shall be supported by such other committees or commissions as may be mandated to assist in carrying out this function and to advise it on questions relating to the Covenant.

4.2.3. When questions arise relating to the meaning of the Covenant, or about the compatibility of an action by a covenanting Church with the Covenant, it is the duty of each covenanting Church to seek to live out the commitments of Section 3.2. Such questions may be raised by a Church itself, another covenanting Church or the Instruments of Communion.

4.2.4. Where a shared mind has not been reached the matter shall be referred to the Standing Committee. The Standing Committee shall make every effort to facilitate agreement, and may take advice from such bodies as it deems appropriate to determine a view on the nature of the matter at question and those relational

consequences which may result. Where appropriate, the Standing Committee shall refer the question to both the Anglican Consultative Council and the Primates' Meeting for advice.

4.2.5. The Standing Committee may request a Church to defer a controversial action. If a Church declines to defer such action, the Standing Committee may recommend to any Instrument of Communion relational consequences which may specify a provisional limitation of participation in, or suspension from, that Instrument until the completion of the process set out below.

4.2.6. On the basis of advice received from the Anglican Consultative Council and the Primates' Meeting, the Standing Committee may make a declaration that an action or decision is or would be "incompatible with the Covenant".

4.2.7. On the basis of the advice received, the Standing Committee shall make recommendations as to relational consequences which flow from an action incompatible with the Covenant. These recommendations may be addressed to the Churches of the Anglican Communion or to the Instruments of the Communion and address the extent to which the decision of any covenanting Church impairs or limits the communion between that Church and the other Churches of the Communion, and the practical consequences of such impairment or limitation. Each Church or each Instrument shall determine whether or not to accept such recommendations.

4.2.8. Participation in the decision making of the Standing Committee or of the Instruments of Communion in respect to section 4.2 shall be limited to those members of the Instruments of Communion who are representatives of those churches who have adopted the Covenant, or who are still in the process of adoption.

4.2.9. Each Church undertakes to put into place such mechanisms, agencies or institutions, consistent with its own Constitution and Canons, as can undertake to oversee the maintenance of the affirmations and commitments of the Covenant in the life of that Church, and to relate to the Instruments of Communion on matters pertinent to the Covenant.

4.3 Withdrawing from the Covenant

4.3.1. Any covenanting Church may decide to withdraw from the Covenant. Although such withdrawal does not imply an automatic withdrawal from the Instruments of Communion or a repudiation of its Anglican character, it may raise a question relating to the meaning of the Covenant, and of compatibility with the principles incorporated within it, and trigger the provisions set out in section 4.2 above.

4.4 The Covenant Text and its amendment

4.4.1. The Covenant consists of the text set out in this document in the Preamble, Sections One to Four and the Declaration. The Introduction to the Covenant Text,

which shall always be annexed to the Covenant text, is not part of the Covenant, but shall be accorded authority in understanding the purpose of the Covenant.

4.4.2. Any covenanting Church or Instrument of Communion may submit a proposal to amend the Covenant to the Instruments of Communion through the Standing Committee. The Standing Committee shall send the proposal to the Anglican Consultative Council, the Primates' Meeting, the covenanting Churches and any other body as it may consider appropriate for advice. The Standing Committee shall make a recommendation on the proposal in the light of advice offered, and submit the proposal with any revisions to the covenanting Churches. The amendment is operative when ratified by three quarters of such Churches. The Standing Committee shall adopt a procedure for promulgation of the amendment.

Our Declaration

With joy and with firm resolve, we declare our Churches to be partakers in this Anglican Communion Covenant, offering ourselves for fruitful service and binding ourselves more closely in the truth and love of Christ, to whom with the Father and the Holy Spirit be glory for ever. Amen.

“Now may the God of Peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, make you complete in everything good so that you may do his will, working among us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.” (Hebrews 13.20, 21)