

## 19/10 The Anglican Communion Covenant

(A report from the Standing Committee.)

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### Reference from General Synod

- The General Synod of the Anglican Church of Australia at its meeting in September 2010, resolved – “That this General Synod –
  - Thanks the Covenant Design Group for their faithfulness and responsiveness in producing the Anglican Communion Covenant;
  - Recognises that an Anglican Communion Covenant seeks to provide a means to strengthen and promote our common life as a communion;
  - Affirms the value of the relationships we share with the other member churches of the Anglican Communion;
  - Renews our commitment to maintain and strengthen those relationships to further the mission we share;
 And further, this General Synod –
  - Receives the final text of the Anglican Communion Covenant as an expression of aspirations for the life of the Anglican Communion;
  - Commends it for further study, dialogue and deliberation in the diocese;
  - Requests the synods of all dioceses to consider the question of the Anglican Church of Australia adopting the Covenant by resolution and report to the Standing Committee by December 2012;
  - Requests the Standing Committee to produce a report for consideration at the 16<sup>th</sup> session of General Synod.”
- By resolution 19/10, the Synod of the Diocese of Synod resolved at its October 2010 session as follows – “Synod notes that General Synod 2010 received the text of the Anglican Communion Covenant and resolved to request the synods of all dioceses to consider the question of the Anglican Church of Australia adopting the Covenant by resolution and report the results of their consideration to the General Synod Standing Committee by December 2012. Synod asks Standing Committee to take any necessary steps to enable synod to consider the question at the 2011 session of Sydney Synod.”
- This report has been prepared by the Rev Gavin Poole, the Rev Dr Mark Thompson and Mr Robert Tong on behalf of the Standing Committee for the Synod session in 2011 in response to resolution 19/10.
- The text of the Anglican Communion Covenant is set out in the Attachment.

### Short history of the Anglican Communion Covenant

- Tensions within Anglicanism are not new. Arguably these can be traced back to the early years of the English Reformation, even if the nineteenth century brought new and continuing tensions with the emergence of the Oxford Movement and publication of *Essays and Reviews* in 1860 and *Lux Mundi* in 1889.
- Liberal Anglo-Catholicism has dominated the denomination since the end of the nineteenth century and as a result evangelical Anglicanism has struggled in a hostile environment for a very long time. However, since the 1960s a number of outspoken Anglican bishops have challenged rather than championed orthodox Christian doctrine, including the uniqueness of Christ, the bodily resurrection of Jesus, the nature of God, and biblical teaching on human sexuality. This has led to the marginalisation and increased pressure upon advocates of biblical teaching on each of these and other subjects.
- The catalyst of the current crisis has been the decision of some groups within the Anglican Communion to endorse homosexual practice as compatible with Christian faith. The temperature had been rising over this issue throughout 1990s. In August 1994 ‘A Statement in Koinonia’ was presented to the ECUSA House of Bishops. This statement was largely drafted by John Shelby Spong and included an affirmation ‘that homosexuality and heterosexuality are morally neutral’. In November 1995 the Church of England Evangelical Council produced the

St Andrew's Day Statement which spoke of the church's responsibility to assist 'all its members to a life of faithful witness in chastity and holiness, recognising two forms or vocations in which that life can be lived: marriage and singleness'. This perspective was expressed by a much wider constituency when in February 1997 the Second Anglican Encounter in the South issued the Kuala Lumpur Statement on Human Sexuality. However, in July that year the ECUSA General Convention voted against endorsing the Kuala Lumpur Statement. Then in May 1998 the Canadian Diocese of New Westminster voted to authorize clergy in the diocese to bless 'covenanted same-sex unions' (the bishop withheld his consent pending further consultations).

8. In this context the Lambeth Conference was held in July 1998, at which an overwhelming majority of Anglican bishops (526 to 70 with 45 abstentions) endorsed resolution 1.10 'Human Sexuality'.

"This Conference –

- (a) commends to the Church the subsection report on human sexuality;
- (b) in view of the teaching of Scripture, upholds faithfulness in marriage between a man and a woman in lifelong union, and believes that abstinence is right for those who are not called to marriage;
- (c) recognises that there are among us persons who experience themselves as having a homosexual orientation. Many of these are members of the Church and are seeking the pastoral care, moral direction of the Church, and God's transforming power for the living of their lives and the ordering of relationships. We commit ourselves to listen to the experience of homosexual persons and we wish to assure them that they are loved by God and that all baptised, believing and faithful persons, regardless of sexual orientation, are full members of the Body of Christ;
- (d) while rejecting homosexual practice as incompatible with Scripture, calls on all our people to minister pastorally and sensitively to all irrespective of sexual orientation and to condemn irrational fear of homosexuals, violence within marriage and any trivialisation and commercialisation of sex;
- (e) cannot advise the legitimising or blessing of same sex unions nor ordaining those involved in same gender unions;
- (f) requests the Primates and the ACC to establish a means of monitoring the work done on the subject of human sexuality in the Communion and to share statements and resources among us;
- (g) notes the significance of the Kuala Lumpur Statement on Human Sexuality and the concerns expressed in resolutions IV.26, V.1, V.10, V.23 and V.35 on the authority of Scripture in matters of marriage and sexuality and asks the Primates and the ACC to include them in their monitoring process."

9. The Lambeth Conference resolution did not end the controversy. In July 2000 the General Convention of ECUSA resolved that 'the issues of human sexuality are not yet resolved' (D039). In June 2001 and again in June 2002 the Diocese of New Westminster voted to authorize blessings of same-sex unions. Then in June 2003 Gene Robinson, a practicing homosexual presbyter was elected Bishop of New Hampshire in the US, an election that was confirmed by the ECUSA's General Convention in August. At every point along the way the Primates of the Anglican Communion expressed their concern, called for restraint and warned of a serious rending of the fabric of communion if these provinces continued along this path. However, the consecration of Gene Robinson in November 2003 represented a decisive move away from the rest of the Anglican Communion.

10. Alongside these developments provision was made to care for those congregations and Christian men and women who were alienated by these developments. In January 2000 the Archbishops of Rwanda and South East Asia consecrated two American bishops to care for those out of communion with their diocesan bishop (the Anglican Mission in the Americas was established in August that year). Six years later, in 2006, the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) consecrated a bishop for the Convocations of Anglicans. As might be expected, ECUSA, which changed its name to The Episcopal Church (TEC) in 2006, protested loudly, declaring such action 'unwarranted intervention' in the affairs of an autonomous province.

11. In between Gene Robinson's confirmation and his consecration, the Anglican Primates met for an emergency meeting in October 2003. As a result of a request from this meeting the Archbishop of Canterbury established the Lambeth Commission on Communion. It was charged with addressing the developing crisis and proposing a way forward. A year later the Commission published its work as *The Windsor Report*. It recommended the adoption of an Anglican Covenant as a means of rebuilding trust in a time of strain as follows -

"118. This Commission recommends, therefore, and urges the primates to consider, the adoption by the churches of the Communion of a common Anglican Covenant which would make explicit and forceful the loyalty and bonds of affection which govern the relationships between the churches of the Communion. The Covenant could deal with: the acknowledgement of common identity; the relationships of communion; the commitments of communion; the exercise of autonomy in communion; and the management of communion affairs (including disputes)."

12. Various critical responses to *The Windsor Report* by both conservatives and revisionists followed. One of the fullest responses was *The Faith Once For All Delivered* (ed. by Peter Bolt, Mark Thompson and Robert Tong; Sydney: ACL/ACR, 2005). Among the concerns were the assumptions about a uniform structure of authority

across the Anglican Communion, a concentration of authority in the central institutions of the Communion, and most importantly, the absence of any distinction between issues involving doctrinal or moral departure from the teaching of Scripture and those on which Scripture is silent but around which conventions have developed over the past five hundred years.

13. Nevertheless, a Covenant Design Group (CDG) appointed by the Archbishop of Canterbury, on behalf of the Primates, met in Nassau in January 2007 and produced a draft text which quickly became known as 'The Nassau Draft'. The CDG met again in February 2008 and produced a second draft, 'The St Andrew's Draft'. It met again in April 2009 in Ridley Hall, Cambridge and produced the third edition of the draft Covenant and invited responses from the Anglican Provinces of the Communion.

14. Twenty Provinces, including Australia, submitted responses to the Ridley-Cambridge draft. After adjustments by the CDG the Ridley-Cambridge version of the *Anglican Communion Covenant* was considered by the 14<sup>th</sup> Anglican Consultative Council meeting in Jamaica in May 2009. ACC 14 endorsed the draft, apart from the contentious Section 4 on implementation processes which was referred to a further working group for report to the next meeting of the ACC Standing Committee. After further amendment, Section 4 has now been approved and forms part of the document for consideration by the Provinces of the Anglican Communion. Each of these documents can be viewed on the Anglican Communion website <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/>.

### The encircling gloom

15. In the midst of the process of producing successive drafts of the proposed Covenant, the Archbishop of Canterbury called the decadal Lambeth Conference. In a succession of communications prior to the issue of the invitations, a number of the Primates called upon the Archbishop of Canterbury to act decisively by refusing to invite not only Gene Robinson but all those bishops who had consented to and participated in his consecration as well as the Bishop of New Westminster. If those who had acted in defiance of the rest of the Communion were to be invited, orthodox bishops indicated they would have to rethink their own attendance. Seven of the Primates planned a conference in Jerusalem prior to Lambeth at which Anglicans committed to the teaching of Scripture might plan for global mission. GAFCON, with attendees representing the vast majority of Anglicans worldwide was held in June 2008. A month later the Lambeth Conference met, with all but Gene Robinson and the missionary bishops consecrated for ministry in America invited and with a large number of orthodox bishops declining the Archbishop's invitation. A total of 214 bishops representing 206 dioceses boycotted Lambeth 2008.

16. More broadly across the Anglican Communion there were notable absences at the Anglican Communion Primates' Meeting in Dublin in January 2011. Fifteen Primates were absent with seven offering the recent developments in The Episcopal Church as their reason. Seven members were unable to attend the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) meeting in Kingston, Jamaica, May 2009. In addition Archbishops Anis (Jerusalem and the Middle East), Orombi (Uganda), Akrofi (West Africa) and Bishop Marshall (Iran) resigned from the ACC. Earlier this year Archbishop Mouneer Anis resigned from the Standing Committee of Anglican Communion (SCAC). In an open letter to its members he stated, "The current SCAC provides no effective challenge to the ongoing revisions of TEC ..." He furthermore lamented over the weakness of the current draft of the Covenant compared to previous ones stating "... it will not solve the current crisis."<sup>1</sup>

17. The GAFCON Primates made the following observation at their conference in London, November 2010, "And while we acknowledge that the efforts to heal our brokenness through the introduction of an Anglican Covenant were well intentioned we have come to the conclusion the current text is fatally flawed and so support for this initiative is no longer appropriate."

18. The Instruments of Communion (namely, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lambeth Conferences, the Primates Meetings and the Anglican Consultative Council) have been weakened as orthodox members have chosen to stay away, due to the unwillingness of the Instruments of Communion to confront the challenges presented by TEC and the Anglican Church of Canada. Key leaders have expressed that the Covenant is too little, too late and unable to mend the torn fabric of the Communion.

### A theological response to the final text of The Anglican Communion Covenant

19. The final text of the Anglican Communion Covenant consists of six basic parts –

Introduction to the Covenant Text

Preamble

1. Our Inheritance of Faith
2. The Life we Share with Others: Our Anglican Vocation
3. Our Unity and Common Life
4. Our Covenanted Life Together

20. The *Introduction to the Covenant Text* is essentially an attempt to provide a context for the document itself which, although it omits the language of truth and obedience, affirms quite strongly the need for mutual commitment and discipline. Section 4.4.1 of the Covenant text asserts that the *Introduction* 'is not part of the Covenant, but shall be accorded authority in understanding the purpose of the Covenant'. This gives considerable weight to the summary in the *Introduction* that 'we covenant together as churches of this Anglican

<sup>1</sup> The Most Rev. Dr. Mouneer H. Anis, Open letter "To the Primates and Moderators of the Anglican Communion", 30 January 2010, <http://www.dioceseofegypt.org>

Communion to be faithful to God's promises through the historic faith we confess' (§4). However, no historical context is provided, which might enable those who are called upon to sign the Covenant to see why it is necessary.

21. The **Preamble** describes what follows as a series of '*affirmations and commitments*'. It also gives a certain priority to proclaiming in our different contexts 'the grace of God revealed in the gospel'.

22. **Section One: Our Inheritance of Faith** affirms 'the catholic and apostolic faith uniquely revealed in the Holy Scriptures' (1.1.2). This is a very welcome affirmation. However, not so welcome is the way the following sentences downplay the 'historic formularies of the Church of England', which are 'acknowledged and appropriated in various ways', and give prominence instead to the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral of 1886/1888 (a document which was never intended as a description of Anglican essentials but as a workable basis for ecumenical discussion). This inevitably elevates 'the historic episcopate' (1.1.6), since the Quadrilateral placed this alongside Scripture, the Creeds, and the sacraments.

23. The first *commitment* is 'to teach and act in continuity and consonance with Scripture and the catholic and apostolic faith, order and tradition' (1.2.1). It is not entirely clear why it was felt necessary to supplement a reference to Scripture with a reference to 'the catholic and apostolic faith, order and tradition'. The fact that the second affirmation speaks of theological and moral reasoning and discipline rooted in and answerable to 'the teaching of Holy Scripture and the catholic tradition' (1.2.2) serves to underline the oddity. Are these two complementary sources or is catholic and apostolic faith, order and tradition that which is found in Holy Scripture? Similar questions are raised by a reference to 'the teaching of bishops and synods' alongside the 'attentive and communal reading of ... the Scriptures by all the faithful' (1.2.4). The effect is to raise questions about the sufficiency of Scripture for settling questions of faith and life, and this confusion is compounded by reference to our common pilgrimage 'to discern the fullness of truth into which the Spirit leads us' (1.2.8).

24. **Section Two: The Life We Share with Others: Our Anglican Vocation** affirms communion as a gift of God, gratitude for God's gracious providence and the imperative of God's mission. However, in its affirmation of 'our call to constant repentance', it highlights failure 'in exercising patience and charity in recognizing Christ in one another', the 'misuse of God's gracious gifts', the failure to 'heed God's call to serve' and the exploitation of one another (2.1.3). There is no mention at all of a failure to obey the word of God and a need for repentance from false teaching or immoral living. In addition, the affirmation of an 'ecumenical vocation of Anglicanism' (2.1.5) is built upon a confusion of the nature of the unity for which Christ prays. Visible, institutional unity is substituted for the unity which the Spirit creates, a unity in the faith that stretches across institutions, cultures and other marks of difference.

25. The *commitments* in this section are built upon a number of reports from the Anglican Consultative Council, the World Council of Churches, and the International Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission. Priority is rightly given to God's call to undertake evangelisation and the ministry of reconciliation (2.2.1). Proclaiming the good news is accented, as is a commitment to bringing all 'to repentance and faith' (2.2.2.a). However, a common life of humble and obedient submission to the word of God is not at the forefront. Instead, commitments with dubious biblical warrant — e.g. 'to transform unjust structures of society' (2.2.2d) and 'to safeguard the integrity of creation' — are given a position alongside the commitment to mission.

26. **Section Three: Our Unity and Common Life** affirms a unity focussed in the bishops of the churches. We are bound together 'by mutual loyalty sustained through the common counsel of the bishops in conference' (3.1.2). The role of bishops is described as 'central'. They are 'guardians and teachers of faith', 'leaders in mission' and 'a visible sign of unity' (3.1.3). There is no suggestion that bishops too must be held accountable and that they stand under the authority of Scripture; no acknowledgement of the possibility that a particular bishop's life and teaching might be part of the problem. Further, the importance of four 'instruments of communion' is acknowledged: the Archbishop of Canterbury — described as a focus and means of unity, with a 'primacy of honour and respect'; the Lambeth Conference, an expression of worldwide episcopal collegiality; the Anglican Consultative Council, which 'calls the churches into mutual responsibility and interdependence'; and the Primates' Meeting, where these senior bishops operate as 'representatives of their Provinces'. There is little sense of a mandate for this fourfold authority within the communion and little recognition that the Archbishop of Canterbury so dominates the structure (he calls the Lambeth Conference, chairs the Anglican Consultative Council, and convenes the Primates' Meeting) that it might be more accurate to speak of this structure resolving into 'one instrument of communion'.

27. The commitments of this section include supporting the work of the 'Instruments of Communion' (3.2.1), respecting the 'constitutional autonomy of all the Churches of the Anglican Communion' (3.2.2), demonstrating 'openness and patience in matters of theological debate' (3.2.3), undertaking wide consultation (3.2.4), acting carefully in controversial matters (3.2.5), and participating in face to face meetings (3.2.6). There is no acknowledgement that all, including the bishops and especially the Archbishop of Canterbury, are accountable to maintain unity by speaking the truth in love, to drive out false doctrine, and to place loyalty to Christ above episcopal collegiality or loyalty to the institution.

28. **Section Four: Our Covenanted Life Together** abandons the structure of affirmations followed by commitments and instead affirms a series of principles and procedures, the implementation of which is committed to by the signatories of the Covenant. These include processes for adoption of the Covenant by national or regional churches, processes for maintenance of the Covenant and for dispute resolution, processes for withdrawing from the Covenant and for amending the text of the Covenant. The section struggles to hold together a 'commitment to relationship' (4.1.1), 'interdependence of life' (4.1.2) and each church's 'autonomy of

governance' (4.1.3). Critical to the processes outlined in this section is the role of the Standing Committee (formerly the Joint Standing Committee), which may make a declaration that an action or decision is or would be 'incompatible with the Covenant' (4.2.6), may recommend relational consequences to any Instrument of Communion (4.2.5), and may recommend proposal for amendment of the Covenant text, after seeking advice from any body it considers appropriate (4.4.2).

### Detailed comments on five theological objections to the Covenant

29. This final text represents a significant advance on earlier drafts, both in the inclusion of the *Introduction* with its theological framework and the regular references to the priority of mission, proclamation and evangelism. However, a number of serious theological objections to the document remain, though these have been signalled in previous submissions to the committee responsible for drafting the Covenant. Some of these have been touched upon in the survey above but five are presented here in more detail.

- (a) **Failure to give sufficient attention to historic Anglican formularies:** This final text of the Covenant fails to give sufficient attention to the place of the formularies (the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, the Ordinal and the Book of Common Prayer) in Anglican theology and practice. These 'historic formularies of the Church of England', while bearing authentic witness to the catholic and apostolic faith, are only 'acknowledged and appropriated in various ways in the Anglican Communion'. While it is simply a matter of constitutional reality that the Articles do not have the same place or function in all the provinces of the Communion, the doctrine they espouse remains the doctrine of the Anglican churches. In other words they are not just further authentic witnesses to the catholic and apostolic faith; they exercise a particular function in the structure of our doctrine and life together (whether acknowledged or not). It is beyond dispute that the Articles (which, it should be noted, enjoin the reading of the *Homilies*) arose in a particular historical location and bear the marks of that location. England in the sixteenth century is very different from Africa or Asia in the twenty-first century. However, the few articles which are specific to that original situation (e.g. Article 37) can easily be distinguished from those articles treating biblical doctrine.
- (b) **Confused ecclesiology:** The Covenant continues to operate with a confused ecclesiology. What is the basic unit of the denomination which would be able to enter into such a Covenant? Section 4 seems to rely upon the notion of Anglican provinces committing their member churches to this arrangement. However, such a notion of the nature and function of a province is quite novel and flies in the face of the two most enduring theological views: that the diocese and its bishop is the basic unit of 'church'; or that the local congregation is the basic unit of 'church'. The theological questions raised by giving provinces such a role in maintaining discipline are immense and yet this is assumed rather than established on the basis of Scripture.
- (c) **Inflated view of the Anglican bishop:** The final text contains a highly inflated view of the Anglican bishop. Why, for instance is the teaching of bishops highlighted in §1.2.4? They are authorised teachers within our polity but so is every priest or presbyter and even each deacon. Neither the Ordinal or the Articles presupposes a distinction between them at this point. The teaching of all is to be tested by the Scriptures themselves. Similarly, to suggest that 'Churches of the Anglican Communion are bound together ... by mutual loyalty sustained through the common counsel of bishops in conference' (§3.1.2) is problematic, notwithstanding the fact that this was the language of the Lambeth Conference of 1930.<sup>2</sup> In contrast to the trend in some circles to elevate the Anglican bishop, recent history and the current crisis make clear the need to highlight the accountability of bishops to live and teach according to the Scriptures rather than to suggest they (or anyone else) stand over the Scriptures as in some way privileged interpreters.
- (d) **Inordinate power given to the Archbishop of Canterbury:** This document involves ratifying an authority structure which gives an inordinate amount of power to the Archbishop of Canterbury. As mentioned above, he plays a significant role in each of the other three 'Instruments of Communion' which therefore cannot operate as effective counterbalances if he should himself be part of the problem at any point. His role in issuing invitations to Lambeth, chairing the ACC and also the Standing Committee, and convening the Primates Meeting raises serious questions about whether there are in reality four 'Instruments of Communion' or one.
- (e) **Failure to give due weight to the teaching of Scripture:** Perhaps most serious of all, the Covenant does not differentiate – and has no mechanism for differentiating – between those actions which are a departure from the teaching of Scripture and others which involve no such departure. The Covenant's focus on maintaining institutional unity blurs this most significant

<sup>2</sup> A previous Australian primate said in his Presidential Address to the 1981 General Synod –

"William Temple whose fame is in all the Churches is credited with having said: 'When people say that the Church should do something, they usually mean that the Bishops should say something'. The trouble is that the Bishops seldom agree among themselves, and in any case the Bishops are not the Church. The Church is made up of people: it is governed by an elected General Synod; when the Synod is not in session, its Standing Committee acts on its behalf. That is, as democratic a system of church government as can easily be devised, but it makes it impossible for the Church to speak with a single authoritative voice. Therefore what the Primate should choose to say, or what the Bishops decide to say may be no more than a personal utterance and may command no more support than those whose views it happens to reflect."

distinction. The abandonment of biblical teaching on human sexuality is of an entirely different character to the exercise of extra-diocesan jurisdiction for the sake of those faithful men and women who are suffering at the hands of an errant leadership. Neither the search for faithful episcopal oversight outside of the normal structures nor the approval of administration of the Holy Communion by persons other than presbyters are contrary to Scripture. On the other hand, both a public denial of the necessity of faith in Christ for salvation and an endorsement of homosexual activity are manifestly contrary to Scripture.

30. *The Anglican Covenant* is fundamentally concerned with maintaining structural and institutional unity rather than biblical faithfulness. The real problem is a departure from the teaching of Scripture. The New Testament's focus is on 'the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace' which involves 'speaking the truth in love' (Eph. 4:3, 15). 'Our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ' and it involves walking 'in the light' (1 John 1:3, 6–7). Genuine unity, which can exist even where there are multiple and divergent institutional expressions, arises from a common commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ. For this reason, departures from the apostolic faith are to be vigorously challenged, as Paul challenged Peter at Antioch on the basis of the gospel (Gal. 2:11–16). Where there is no repentance, exclusion from fellowship is the appropriate sanction (1 Cor. 5; cf. Matt. 18:15–20). Ultimately *The Anglican Covenant* is the wrong remedy because it wrongly diagnoses the critical problem.

### How would Australia enter into the Covenant?<sup>3</sup>

31. The Covenant contemplates that Provinces will adopt or enter into the Covenant in accordance with their own constitutional procedures (4.1.4 and 4.1.6).

32. There are 3 ways in which the Covenant could be adopted under the constitutional procedures of the Anglican Church of Australia. These are –

- (a) by an amendment to the Constitution of the Anglican Church of Australia,
- (b) by the General Synod passing a canon to adopt the Covenant, or
- (c) by the General Synod passing a resolution to adopt the Covenant.

33. **Constitutional amendment:** Amending the Constitution is not easy or quick. Generally, changes to core provisions of the Constitution require majorities in each of the houses of bishops, clergy and laity and, subsequently, the assent of the three quarters of the diocesan synods including all Metropolitan Sees. While most diocesan synods meet annually, the General Synod meets about every 3 years.

34. **Adoption by canon:** If a canon is promoted to adopt the Covenant on behalf of the Anglican Church of Australia, the canon will need to comply with particular provisions of the Constitution which apply to canons depending on their subject matter. In particular –

- (a) Any statement of faith, ritual or ceremonial or discipline of the Anglican Church of Australia (as those terms are defined in the Constitution) and any ordering of its forms of worship and rules of discipline made in or by the Covenant as adopted by canon must be consistent with the Fundamental Declarations and be made as prescribed by the Constitution (section 4 Constitution).
- (b) Any alteration in or permitted variations from the services in the Book of Common Prayer or the Thirty-nine Articles made in or by the Covenant as adopted by canon must not contravene any principle of doctrine or worship laid down in the Book of Common Prayer or the Thirty-nine Articles being the authorised standard of worship and doctrine in the Anglican Church of Australia (section 4 Constitution).
- (c) A canon which adopts the Covenant must, unless three-fourths of the members of each house of the General Synod otherwise decide, be dealt with as a special bill if any provision of the Covenant deals with or concerns the ritual, ceremonial or discipline of the Anglican Church of Australia (section 28 Constitution).
- (d) A canon which adopts the Covenant does not come into force in a diocese unless and until the diocese adopts the canon by ordinance if any provision of the Covenant affects the order and good government of the Church in a diocese (including a provision which affects the ritual ceremonial or discipline of the Church) or the property of the church of a diocese (section 30).
- (e) The authority of the General Synod to make a canon which adopts the Covenant and the authority of a diocesan synod to make an ordinance to adopt such a canon are also subject to the Fundamental Declarations (section 5 Constitution).

35. **Adoption by resolution:** A resolution to adopt the Covenant may be made by the General Synod under section 26 of the Constitution. A resolution only needs a simple majority of the whole Synod voting together unless the required number demand a vote by houses, in which case there must be a majority in each house for the motion to pass. Although the requirements referred to in 34(a) and (b) above probably also apply to the adoption of the Covenant by resolution of the General Synod, there is a serious question as to whether adopting the Covenant by resolution has any legal force throughout Australia. Adoption by resolution has no legal force in New South Wales.

<sup>3</sup> See, Robert Tong 'How would the Anglican Church of Australia commit itself to an Anglican Covenant?' in *The Faith Once for all Delivered*, Bolt PG, Thompson MD and Tong R (eds) Australian Church Record 2005 and Robert Tong (2006) 'Australia and the Anglican Covenant' *Ecclesiastical Law Journal*, 8, pp 464-469

### **Consequences of not entering into the Covenant**

36. The text of the Covenant does not engage to any significant extent with the consequences of a Province not adopting the Covenant. However a couple of observations can be made.

37. Firstly, adoption of the 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). Presumably, therefore, a decision not to adopt the Covenant would not, of itself, remove any right of recognition by or membership of the Instruments of Communion (to the extent they exist), although the Instruments of Communion may have regard to any non-adoption in deciding these issues.

38. Secondly, the Covenant does provide that participation in the decision making of the Standing Committee or the Instruments of Communion in respect of the maintenance of the Covenant and dispute resolution under 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 (4.2.8).

### **Recommendations**

39. The Standing Committee recommends that the Synod of the Diocese of Sydney –

- (a) oppose the adoption of the Anglican Communion Covenant by the Anglican Church of Australia, and
- (b) adopt this report and request that a suitable form of the report be sent to the Standing Committee of the General Synod.

For and on behalf of the Standing Committee

ROBERT WICKS  
*Diocesan Secretary*

6 September 2011

## 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"<sup>1</sup>. 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, 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

<sup>1</sup> *The Church of the Triune God*, The Cyprus Statement of the International Commission for Anglican Orthodox Theological Dialogue, 2007, paragraph 1.2.

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<sup>2</sup>. The historic formularies of the Church of England<sup>3</sup>, 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<sup>4</sup>.

(1.1.4) the Apostles’ Creed, as the baptismal symbol; and the Nicene Creed, as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith<sup>5</sup>.

(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<sup>6</sup>.

(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<sup>7</sup>.

(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.

<sup>2</sup> cf. The Preface to the Declaration of Assent, Canon C15 of the Church of England.

<sup>3</sup> The Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, and the Ordering of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons

<sup>4</sup> The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral of 1886/1888

<sup>5</sup> The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral of 1886/1888

<sup>6</sup> cf. The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral 1886/1888, The Preface to the Declaration of Assent, Canon C15 of the Church of England.

<sup>7</sup> cf. The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral 1886/1888

(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.

(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"<sup>8</sup>, 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<sup>9</sup>:

(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 Spirit<sup>10</sup> 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<sup>11</sup>, and manifesting through our actions on behalf of God's righteousness the Spirit's transfiguring power<sup>12</sup>;

(2.2.2.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<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> IASCOME Report, ACC-13

<sup>9</sup> The five Marks of Mission are set out in the MISSIO Report of 1999, building on work at ACC-6 and ACC-8.

<sup>10</sup> *Church as Communion* n26

<sup>11</sup> WCC 1954 Evanston, *Christ the Hope of the World*

<sup>12</sup> Moscow Statement, 43

<sup>13</sup> IARCCUM, *Growing Together in Unity and Mission*, 118

(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"<sup>14</sup>.

### 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.

(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"<sup>15</sup>. 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"<sup>16</sup> 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.
- III. The Anglican Consultative Council is comprised of lay, clerical and episcopal representatives from our Churches<sup>17</sup>. 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<sup>18</sup>.
- 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<sup>19</sup>. 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<sup>20</sup>. Each Instrument may initiate and commend a process of discernment and a direction for the Communion and its Churches.

<sup>14</sup> Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, WCC,

<sup>15</sup> A Letter from Alexandria, the Primates, March 2009

<sup>16</sup> Lambeth Conference 1930

<sup>17</sup> Constitution of the ACC, Article 3 and Schedule

<sup>18</sup> cf. the Objects of the ACC are set out in Article 2 of its Constitution.

<sup>19</sup> Report of the Windsor Continuation Group, 69.

<sup>20</sup> cf. IATDC, Communion, Conflict and Hope, paragraph 113.

### **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<sup>21</sup>, and the responsibility of each to the Communion as a whole<sup>22</sup>.

(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 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

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<sup>21</sup> Toronto Congress 1963, and the Ten Principles of Partnership.

<sup>22</sup> cf. the Schedule to the Dar es Salaam Communiqué of the Primates' Meeting, February 2007

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)*