

The Anglican Communion Covenant

A Study Guide

In December 2009 the Secretary General of the Anglican Communion sent the text of *The Anglican Communion Covenant* to all the member churches of the Anglican Communion, asking that they consider it for adoption according to their own internal procedures. It is hoped that there will be wide consultation within those churches, so that Anglicans around the world will have an opportunity to understand and rejoice in the commitment which the churches are being asked to make.

This study guide is intended to help Anglicans engage with the text of *The Anglican Communion Covenant*: to understand it, to deepen their faith as Anglican Christians, and to become more committed to life together in the Anglican family.

Other resources that may be helpful are:

A brief history of the development of *The Anglican Communion Covenant*

(which will soon be available on the Communion website)

The cover letter to the churches from the Secretary General

www.anglicancommunion.org/commission/covenant/docs/letter_from_the_secretary_general.pdf

The Commentary on the *Ridley Cambridge Draft* (an earlier version of the Covenant)

www.anglicancommunion.org/commission/covenant/ridley_cambridge/commentary.cfm

The Commentary on section 4

www.anglicancommunion.org/commission/covenant/final/commentary.cfm

The video commendation of the Covenant by the Archbishop of Canterbury

www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/2686

The Covenant can be understood as a description of life in the Anglican family. It contains an agreement about what the family's values are, what its purpose is, and how it lives together. As the introduction says (para. 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).

The Anglican Communion Covenant contains a Preamble and four Sections:

- 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; and a Declaration. It is accompanied by a theological Introduction, which is not part of the text but which sets it in context.

A study programme might be designed for 5 sessions, one each on the Introduction and each of the Sections.

Session A: Introduction

For each paragraph, read the Bible passages that are mentioned in the text, read the text and discuss it, and then ask 'How does this paragraph help me/us understand the Christian faith as Anglicans have received it?'

The first paragraph of the Introduction makes it clear that the church is not just a human institution that can be managed like a social or political institution. Its origin is in God, and its communal life is shaped by the very life of God who, as Father Son and Holy Spirit, lives in perfect communion. Our communion with one another depends on our first living in communion with God.

"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". This life of the One God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, shapes and displays itself through the very existence and ordering of the Church.

The second paragraph of the Introduction traces salvation history, as described in the Bible, showing a number of times when God established a covenant with human beings in order to bring them back into communion with God.

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.

The third paragraph describes how people who live in communion with God and with each other are to live together in this world.

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).

The fourth paragraph speaks of the specific Anglican community of faith and the need to work together within this family.

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.

The fifth paragraph says why Anglicans are making their commitment to each other through a Covenant.

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).

The sixth paragraph speaks of Anglicans as people engaged with Scripture, in worship, mission, service and proclamation.

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)

The seventh paragraph says more about our mission and how we are to undertake it.

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.

The final paragraph is a prayer for God to give redeeming strength to our family so that it may live and work as God means it to do.

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.

Session B: Preamble and Section One: Our Inheritance of Faith

Read each paragraph separately and discuss it. How is each of these affirmations and commitments lived out in your church?

The Preamble says why the churches of the Anglican Communion are making a covenant together. It is for proclamation (*kerygma*), the offering of God's loving service (*diakonia*), and maintaining unity (*koinonia*), so that we and all God's people can grow in holiness.

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).

The first three sections of The *Anglican Communion Covenant* are laid out with a series of affirmations followed by a series of commitments that arise from those affirmations. In each case, it is each church of the Communion that is making the affirmation and the commitment.

Section One: *Our Inheritance of Faith*, speaks of our core principles, what we believe as Anglican Christians. Many of these affirmations could in fact be made by most if not all Christians, but they reflect the particular way in which the churches of the Anglican Communion have spoken about their faith and the key marks of that faith.

Section One Affirmations

Each church affirms:

Its participation in the one Church, worshipping God the Holy Trinity
the faith of the Church and its sources

1.1.3–1.1.6 the four clauses of the (Chicago) Lambeth Quadrilateral. This statement was adopted by the Lambeth Conference of 1888 and by the churches of the Communion. It was originally intended as a statement of the 'basis for negotiation' in ecumenical discussions, but has evolved into a kind of basic statement of four key Anglican values.

1.1.7 that the Communion has a shared pattern of worship.

1.1.8 its participation in the mission of God, along with other churches and church families.

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. The historic formularies of the Church of England, 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.

(1.1.4) the Apostles' Creed, as the baptismal symbol; and the Nicene Creed, as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith.

(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.

(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.

(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.

Section One Commitments

The churches of the Anglican Communion live out this shared faith in many different contexts. The application of the faith may vary, depending on the needs of the mission of God in these different places. Each church, then, seeks the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and also makes commitments to a common approach to the application of the shared faith.

These include:

- 1.2.1 a way of teaching and action that is consonant with our shared faith and agreements
- 1.2.2 a way of teaching and discipline that rooted in Scripture and tradition
- 1.2.3 a way of witnessing for renewal and holiness
- 1.2.4 a way of reading Scripture
- 1.2.5 a way of interpreting Scripture
- 1.2.6 a way of leadership
- 1.2.7 a way of upholding communion
- 1.2.8 a way to seek the truth together

(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.

(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.

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

Read each paragraph separately and discuss it. How do you understand the work of your church in furthering the mission of God in the world?

Section Two sets out our purpose as Anglican churches. What are we for? What is our particular commitment to the mission of God in the world?

Section Two Affirmations

The affirmations in this mission section say that

- 2.1.1 communion is not an end in itself. It is for proclaiming and witnessing to God's reign.
- 2.1.2 God has been at work through our history shaping us for our worldwide mission.
- 2.1.3 we confess our failure to live up to our calling.
- 2.1.4 we cooperate with other Anglicans throughout the world as we engage in mission at all levels.
- 2.1.5 we cooperate with other Christians in this mission and are committed to the ecumenical task.

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.

Section Two Commitments

Because we recognize that we are called by God to be in mission together, each church makes commitments:

- 2.2.1 to share our resources in order to evangelize, to heal and reconcile a broken world.
- 2.2.2 to engage in mission through the Five Marks of Mission adopted by the Anglican Communion.
- 2.2.3 to be humble and open to our own conversion.
- 2.2.4 to renew our structures for mission.
- 2.2.5 to root our mission in the worship of God.

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", 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:

- (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 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, and manifesting through our actions on behalf of God's righteousness the Spirit's transfiguring power;
- (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.

(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".

Session D: Section Three: Our Unity and Common Life

Read each paragraph separately and discuss it. How do you experience each of these as equipping Anglicans for common life and mission?

Section Three addresses the way we live together as a family of churches, and the people and structures that exist to strengthen our common life.

Section Three Affirmations

- 3.1.3 we are called by Christ to live together in peace
- 3.1.2 as Anglicans we do not have a central authority structure; each church governs itself, but we belong to and are accountable to one another so we have some common 'Instruments of Communion' that help shape and sustain our common life
- 3.1.3 we affirm the role of bishops and the threefold ordained ministry in leading and equipping the ministry of all God's people
- 3.1.4 we acknowledge 4 Instruments of Communion that serve our life in communion: the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lambeth Conference, the Anglican Consultative Council, and the Primates' Meeting

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". 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" 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. 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.

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. 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. Each Instrument may initiate and commend a process of discernment and a direction for the Communion and its Churches.

Section Three Commitments

Each church commits itself to live and learn together with all the others:

- 3.2.1 to support the work of the Instruments and take their counsel seriously
- 3.2.2 to respect the autonomy of every other church while upholding mutual responsibility and interdependence
- 3.2.3 to try to discern God's will through listening, prayer, study and debate
- 3.2.4 to seek a shared mind with the churches of the Communion
- 3.2.5 to take due care in acting on controversial matters
- 3.2.6 to participate in mediation in situations of conflict
- 3.2.7 to live in the highest degree of communion possible

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, and the responsibility of each to the Communion as a whole.

(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.

Session E: Section Four: Our Covenanted Life Together

Read each subsection (4.1., 4.2, 4.3). What might this mean for your church?

Section Four sets out the procedures for adopting the Covenant and living together by it. It says who may adopt it and includes practical mechanisms for seeking resolutions in the case of disputes, for withdrawal from the Covenant, and for amending it. It seeks to strengthen relationships within the Anglican family.

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

- 4.1 describes who may adopt the Covenant and how:
 - 4.1.1 each church makes a commitment to the others when it adopts the Covenant
 - 4.1.2 each church affirms the statements about faith, mission and common life in the first three sections
 - 4.1.3 nothing in the Covenant limits the autonomy of any church
 - 4.1.4 every church in the Anglican Communion is invited to adopt the Covenant
 - 4.1.5 the Instruments of Communion may invite other churches to adopt the Covenant
 - 4.1.6 the Covenant becomes active for each church when it adopts it

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 provides a process for trying to reach agreement on disputed matters
 - 4.2.1 each church recognizes and seeks to live by the common commitments made in the Covenant
 - 4.2.2 the Instruments of Communion monitor the Covenant through the Standing Committee
 - 4.2.3 when a question arises in the life of the Communion, each church seeks to live out its commitments
 - 4.2.4 when there is not a common mind, the Standing Committee seeks to facilitate agreement and may seek advice from the Instruments (ACC and Primates)
 - 4.2.5 if a church takes a controversial action against advice, the Standing Committee can recommend interim relational consequences
 - 4.2.6 on the basis of advice, the Standing Committee may declare something incompatible with the Covenant
 - 4.2.7 on the basis of advice, the Standing Committee shall recommend relational consequences to the churches and/or the Instruments
 - 4.2.8 only churches that have adopted the Covenant can participate in the decision-making of this process
 - 4.2.9 each church agrees to put means in place to oversee its own participation in the Covenant

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 says that any church may withdraw from the Covenant though it may trigger relational consequences.

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 clarifies what the text of the Covenant is and provides an amendment procedure.

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

The churches declare themselves to be in Covenant and offer their life together to God.

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)