

## **The Ridley Cambridge Draft of the Proposed Anglican Communion Covenant**

### **A Response from the Faith and Order Board of the Scottish Episcopal Church**

1. We would again like to express our thanks for the work that the Covenant Drafting Group have undertaken on behalf of our Communion and for the opportunity to comment upon the Third (Ridley Cambridge) Draft, and specifically upon the text of Section 4. Limitations have been experienced in the responding process because of the time constraint, the obligation to limit comments to section 4 and no opportunity to present previous, still valid, comments. We are concerned that there are still some areas which require clarification, such as who (Diocese or Province) would sign the Covenant.

This draft has been discussed widely and with great interest throughout the Scottish Episcopal Church during the past few months. The interest has grown, and although this response is limited to Section 4 as requested, we commend to you comments on Sections 1 – 3 contained in the submissions which are attached. They concern the issue of whether excessive powers would be invested in the committee; the need to discern the way forward in the light of Scripture, tradition and reason; the importance of deep cultural differences in our life together in the Communion.

2. The proposed Anglican Covenant remains a topic of real debate within the Scottish Episcopal Church. Some welcome the proposed Covenant, seeking unity and mutual accountability within the Anglican Communion, believing that we must develop strategies for dealing with disputes and set out boundaries. Many others are very uneasy, believing that a Covenant cannot resolve the problems currently facing the Anglican Communion, and might actually be significantly divisive when a decision has to be made about a particular diocese or Province.

3. The relational approach to conflict resolution enshrined in Section 4 has been welcomed. Nevertheless, there is a general feeling that Section 4 as it currently stands is, in places, unclear and ambiguous, and indeed, could even lead to, and enshrine schism.

In particular, comments focus on the following points:

- Section 4.1 makes no mention of the status of a church that chooses not to sign the Covenant. We would welcome some clarity as to the status of such churches. Clarity would also be appreciated as to the status of dioceses or congregations within the Scottish Episcopal Church who find themselves at odds with a decision by the Scottish Episcopal Church regarding the acceptance or otherwise of the Covenant.
- The declaration in Section 4.1.3 that *“recognition of, and fidelity to, the text of this Covenant, enables mutual recognition and communion”* appears to imply that mutual *“recognition and communion”* will be impaired if one does not recognise the Covenant. Clarification on this point would be welcomed.
- The declaration in Section 4.1.3 that *“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”* is undermined by the provisions of Section 4.2.

- It is unfortunate that conflicts within the Communion are spoken of as future events (Section 4.2.2), when they are current and as yet unresolved.
- The suggestion that a Covenanting Church may be asked to “*defer action*” (Section 4.2.2) implies that offence will only be caused by an action that is taken, when in fact offence may be caused by the failure of a church to take action when faced with a particular situation.
- The role of the Archbishop of Canterbury in questions relating to the meaning of the Covenant or of principles incorporated in it (Section 4.2.2) needs to be clarified.
- There should be a clear definition as to what constitutes “*a controversial action*” (Section 4.2.3).
- The status of churches who are under investigation in terms of Section 4.2 seems unclear. At what stage would a church cease to be a Covenanting Church and at what stage would it cease to be able to vote on any proposed change to the Covenant (Section 4.4.2)?
- Section 4.2.5 speaks of consequences of controversial actions “*for participation in the life of the Communion and Instruments*” but does not state whether such a church ceases to be a Covenanting Church or not. Clarity as to if and when a church ceases to be a Covenanting Church would be appreciated.
- The implications for the Communion should the Church of England be deemed to have relinquished its status under the Covenant, should be set out. This issue arises because of the place of the Archbishop of Canterbury as definitive of unity in many parts of the Communion, deemed to be Anglican because they are in Communion with the See of Canterbury.

4. There remains within the Scottish Episcopal Church a great love and respect for the Anglican Communion. We believe that our life together is greatly enriched by our membership of the Communion and we hope and pray that God will help us to resolve our current difficulties.

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