

Section Four: Our Covenanted Life Together

Each Church affirms the following 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. Participation in the covenant expresses a loyalty grounded in mutuality that one Church freely offers to other Churches, in whom it recognises the bonds of a common faith and order, a common inheritance in worship, life and mission, and a readiness to live in an interdependent life, but does not represent submission to any external ecclesiastical jurisdiction.

(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 consonant 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 an 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 any to one Church or any agency of the Communion control or direction over any Church of the Anglican Communion.

Each Church affirms the following 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 adopt this Covenant in its life according to its own constitutional procedures. Adoption of the Covenant by a Church does not in itself imply any change to its Constitution and Canons, but implies a recognition of those elements which must be maintained in its own life in order to sustain the relationship of covenanted communion established by this Covenant.

(4.1.5) It shall be open to other Churches to adopt the Covenant. Adoption of this Covenant does not bring any right of recognition by, or membership of, the Instruments of Communion. Such recognition and membership are dependent on the satisfaction of those conditions set out by each of the Instruments. However, adoption of the Covenant by a Church may be accompanied by a formal request to the Instruments for recognition and membership to be acted upon according to each Instrument's procedures.

(4.1.6) This Covenant becomes active for a Church when that Church adopts the Covenant.

4.2 The Maintenance of the Covenant and Dispute Resolution

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

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

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

4.2 The Maintenance of the Covenant and Dispute Resolution

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

(4.2.1) The Joint Standing Committee of the Anglican Consultative Council and of the Primates' Meeting, or any body that succeeds it, shall have the duty of overseeing the functioning of the Covenant in the life of the Anglican Communion. The Joint Standing Committee may nominate or appoint another committee or commission to assist in carrying out this function and to advise it on questions relating to the Covenant.

(4.2.2) If a question relating to the meaning of the Covenant, or of compatibility to the principles incorporated in it, should arise, the Joint Standing Committee may make a request to any covenanting Church to defer action until the processes set out below have been completed. It shall further take advice from such bodies as it feels appropriate on the nature and relational consequences of the matter and may make a recommendation to be referred for advice to both the Anglican Consultative Council and the Primates' Meeting.

(4.2.3) If a Church refuses to defer a controversial action, the Joint Standing Committee may recommend to any Instrument of Communion relational consequences which specify a provisional limitation of participation in, or suspension from, that Instrument until the completion of the process set out below.

(4.2.4) On the basis of advice received from the Anglican Consultative Council and the Primates' Meeting, the Joint Standing Committee may make a declaration concerning an action or decision of a covenanting Church that such an action or decision is or would be "incompatible with the Covenant". A declaration of incompatibility with the Covenant shall not have any force in the Constitution and Canons of any covenanting Church unless or until it is received by the canonical procedures of the Church in question.

(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".

(4.2.5) On the basis of the advice received, the Joint Standing Committee may make recommendations as to relational consequences to the Churches of the Anglican Communion or to the Instruments of the Communion. These recommendations may address the extent to which the decision of any covenanting Church to continue with an action or decision which has been found to be “incompatible with the Covenant” impairs or limits the communion between that Church and the other Churches of the Communion. It may recommend whether such action or decision should have a consequence for participation in the life of the Communion and its Instruments. It shall be for each Church and each Instrument to determine its own response to such recommendations.

(4.2.6) 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.

(4.2.7) Participation in the processes set out in this section 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.

4.3 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 or a repudiation of its Anglican character, it raises a question relating to the meaning of the Covenant, and of compatibility with the principles incorporated within it, and it triggers the provisions set out in section 4.2.2 above.

(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 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 4.2.2 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 the Joint Standing Committee for the amendment of the Covenant. The Joint Standing Committee shall send the proposal to the Anglican Consultative Council, to the Primates' Meeting and any other body as it may consider appropriate for advice. The Joint Standing Committee shall make a recommendation on the proposal in the light of advice offered, and submit the proposal with any revisions to the constitutional bodies of the covenanting Churches. The amendment is operative when ratified by three quarters of such bodies. The Joint Standing Committee shall adopt a procedure for promulgation of the amendment.

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(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.