

## An Introduction to St Andrew's Text for an Anglican Covenant

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“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” (I John 1.2-3)

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 reflects 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” (*The Church and the Triune God*<sup>1</sup>, par. 1-2). 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 his own 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 very 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 his grace, to be faithful in our service of his purposes for the world. Joined to one universal Body, who is Christ the Lord, 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. 2:22-12). 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 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). (See *The Windsor Report*, par. 2).

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<sup>1</sup> The Cyprus Statement of the International Commission for Anglican Orthodox Theological Dialogue, 2007.

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 us a special charism and identity among the many followers and servants of Jesus. Recognizing 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, we covenant together as churches of this Anglican Communion to be faithful to God's promises through the historic faith we confess, the way we live together and the focus of our mission.
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 our commitment to one another, and our common understanding of the faith as we have received it in a solemn way, so that the "bonds of affection" which hold us together may be affirmed. We do this in order to reflect in our relations with one another God's own faithfulness in his 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 a common voice, made one across 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 in word only but 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 in growing our Communion into a truly global family; and the mission we pursue aims at serving the great promises of God in Christ that embrace the world and its peoples, carried out in shared responsibility and stewardship of resources, and in interdependence among ourselves and with the wider Church.
8. Our prayer is that God will redeem our struggles and weakness, and renew and enrich our common life so that the Anglican Communion may be used to witness effectively in all the world, working with all Christians of good will, to the new life and hope found in Christ Jesus.