

An Anglican Covenant - St Andrew's Draft Text

Preamble

We, the 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”[\[1\]](#), 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 grow up together to the full stature of Christ.

Section One: Our Inheritance of Faith

1.1 Each Church of the Communion affirms:

(1.1.1) its communion in the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church, worshipping the one true God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit[\[2\]](#);

(1.1.2) that, reliant on the Holy Spirit, it professes the faith which is uniquely revealed in 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[\[3\]](#), and which is set forth in the catholic creeds, and to which the historic formularies of the Church of England[\[4\]](#) bear significant witness, which faith the Church is called upon to proclaim afresh in each generation[\[5\]](#);

(1.1.3) that it holds and duly administers the two sacraments ordained by Christ himself – Baptism and the Supper of the Lord – ministered with the unailing use of Christ’s words of institution, and of the elements ordained by him[\[6\]](#);

(1.1.4) that it upholds 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[\[7\]](#);

(1.1.5) that our shared patterns of common prayer and liturgy form, sustain and nourish our worship of God and our faith and life together;

(1.1.6) that it participates 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 of the Communion commits itself:

(1.2.1) to uphold and act in continuity and consonance with Scripture and the catholic and apostolic faith, order and tradition;

(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 and that reflects the renewal of humanity and the whole created order through the death and resurrection of Christ and the holiness that in consequence God gives to, and requires from, his people;

(1.2.3) to seek in all things to uphold the solemn obligation to sustain Eucharistic communion, in accordance with existing canonical disciplines as we strive under God for the fuller realisation of the Communion of all Christians;

(1.2.4) to ensure that biblical texts are handled faithfully, respectfully, comprehensively and coherently, primarily through the teaching and initiative of bishops and synods, and building on habits and disciplines of Bible study across the Church and on rigorous scholarship, believing that scriptural revelation continues to illuminate and transform individuals, cultures and societies;

(1.2.5) nurture and respond to prophetic and faithful leadership in ministry and mission to equip God's people to be courageous witnesses to the power of the Gospel in the world.

(1.2.6) pursue a common pilgrimage with other Churches of the Communion to discern the Truth, that peoples from all nations may truly be set free to receive the new and abundant life in the Lord Jesus Christ.

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

2.1 Each Church of the Communion affirms:

(2.1.1) that communion is a gift of God: that His people from east and west, north and south, may together declare his glory and be a sign of God's Reign. We gratefully acknowledge God's gracious providence extended to us down the ages, our origins in the Church of the Apostles, the ancient common traditions, the rich history of the Church in Britain and Ireland shaped by the Reformation, and our growth into a global communion through the expanding missionary work of the Church.

(2.1.2) the ongoing mission work of the Communion. 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 faith and mission heritage as offering Anglicans distinctive opportunities for mission collaboration.

(2.1.3) 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. It is with all the saints that we will comprehend the fuller dimensions of Christ's redemptive and immeasurable love.

2.2 In recognition of these affirmations, each Church of the Communion commits itself:

(2.2.1) to answer God's call to evangelisation and to share in his 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) In this mission, which is the Mission of Christ^[8], each Church undertakes:

(2.2.2.a) to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God;

(2.2.2.b) to teach, baptize and nurture new believers;

(2.2.2.c) to respond to human need by loving service;

(2.2.2.d) to seek to transform unjust structures of society; and

(2.2.2.e) to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and to sustain and renew the life of the earth.

Section Three: Our Unity and Common Life

3.1 Each Church of the Communion 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, episcopally led and synodically governed, 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 autonomous-in-communion^[9]. Churches of the Anglican Communion are not bound together by a central legislative, executive or judicial authority. Trusting in the Holy Spirit, who calls and enables us to live 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 develop a common mind;

(3.1.3) the central role of bishops as guardians and teachers of faith, leaders in mission, and as a visible sign of unity, representing the universal Church to the local, and the local Church to the universal. 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. In addition to the many and varied links which sustain our life together, we acknowledge four particular Instruments which co-operate in the service of Communion:

- I. The Archbishop of Canterbury, with whose See Anglicans have historically been in communion, is accorded a primacy of honour and respect as first amongst equals (*primus inter pares*). As a focus and means of unity, he gathers the Lambeth Conference and Primates' Meeting, and presides in the Anglican Consultative Council;
- II. The Lambeth Conference, expressing episcopal collegiality worldwide, gathers the bishops for common counsel, consultation and encouragement and serves as an instrument in guarding the faith and unity of the Communion and equipping the saints for the work of ministry and mission^[10];
- III. The Anglican Consultative Council is comprised of laity, clergy and bishops representative of our Provincial synods. 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^[11];
- IV. The Primates' Meeting is called by the Archbishop of Canterbury for mutual support, prayer and counsel. The Primates and Moderators are called to work as representative of their Provinces in collaboration with one another in mission and in doctrinal, moral and pastoral matters that have communion-wide implications.

3.2 Acknowledging our interdependent life, each Church of the Communion commits itself:

(3.2.1) to have regard to the common good of the Communion in the exercise of its autonomy, and to support the work of the Instruments of Communion with the spiritual and material resources available to it;

(3.2.2) to respect the constitutional autonomy of all of the Churches of the Anglican Communion, while upholding the interdependent life and mutual responsibility of the Churches, and the responsibility of each to the Communion as a whole^[12];

(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 therefore need to be tested by shared discernment in the life of the Church.

(3.2.4) to seek with other Churches, through the Communion's shared councils, a common mind about matters understood to be of essential concern, consistent with the Scriptures, common standards of faith, and the canon law of our churches.

(3.2.5) to act with diligence, care and caution in respect to actions, either proposed or enacted, at a provincial or local level, which, in its own view or the expressed view of any Province or in the view of any one of the Instruments of Communion, are deemed to threaten the unity of the Communion and the effectiveness or credibility of its mission, and to consent to the following principles and procedural elements:

(3.2.5.a) to undertake wide consultation with the other churches of the Anglican Communion and with the Instruments and Commissions of the Communion;

(3.2.5.b) to accept the legitimacy of processes for communion-wide evaluation which any of the Instruments of Communion may commission, according to such procedures as are appended to this covenant;

(3.2.5.c) to be ready to participate in mediated conversation between parties, which may be in conflict, according to such procedures as are appended to this covenant;

(3.2.5.d) to be willing to receive from the Instruments of Communion a request to adopt a particular course of action in respect of the matter under dispute. While the Instruments of Communion have no legislative, executive or judicial authority in our Provinces, except where provided in their own laws, we recognise them as those bodies by which our common life in Christ is articulated and sustained, and which therefore carry a moral authority which commands our respect.

(3.2.5.e) Any such request would not be binding on a Church unless recognised as such by that Church. However, commitment to this covenant entails an acknowledgement that in the most extreme circumstances, where a Church chooses not to adopt the request of the Instruments of Communion, that decision may be understood by the Church itself, or by the resolution of the Instruments of Communion, as a relinquishment by that Church of the force and meaning of the covenant's purpose, until they re-establish their covenant relationship with other member Churches.

(3.2.6) to have in mind that our bonds of affection and the love of Christ compel us always to seek the highest possible degree of communion.

Our Declaration

With joy and with firm resolve, we declare our Churches to be partakers in this Anglican 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)

Notes:

[1.](#) Revelation 7.9

[2.](#) Cf. The Preface to the Declaration of Assent, Canon C15 of the Church of England.

[3.](#) Cf. The Lambeth Quadrilateral of 1888

[4.](#) The Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, and the Ordering of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons

[5.](#) Cf. The Preface to the Declaration of Assent, Canon C15 of the Church of England.

[6.](#) cf. The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral 1886/1888, The Preface to the Declaration of Assent, Canon C15 of the Church of England.

[7.](#) Cf. The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral 1886/1888

[8.](#) Cf. The five Marks of Mission as set out in the MISSIO Report of 1999, building on work at ACC-6 and ACC-8.

[9.](#) The Windsor Report, paragraph 76

[10.](#) Ephesians 4.12

[11.](#) cf. the Objects of the ACC are set out in Article 2 of its Constitution.

[12.](#) cf. the Schedule to the Dar es Salaam Communiqué of the Primates' Meeting, February 2007