

Responding to a proposal of a covenant

1. A theology for the life of a covenanted community

- 1.1 Everything about being Christian – worship, prayer, mission, fellowship, holiness, works of mercy and justice – is rooted in the basic belief that the one God who made the world has acted in sovereign love to call out a people for himself, a people through whom he is already at work to anticipate his final purpose of reconciling all things to himself, things in heaven and things on earth (Ephesians 1.10). This is what the creator God has done, climactically and decisively, in and through Jesus Christ, and is now implementing through the Holy Spirit. But this notion of God calling a people to be his own, a people through whom he will advance his ultimate purposes for the world, did not begin with Jesus. Jesus himself speaks of the time being fulfilled, and his message and ministry look back, as does the whole of earliest Christianity, to the purposes of God in, through and for his people Israel.

The Gospels tell the story of Jesus as the story of how God's purposes for Israel and the world reach their intended goal. Paul writes of the gospel of Jesus being 'promised beforehand through God's prophets in the holy scriptures', and argues that what has been accomplished in Jesus Christ is what God always had in mind when he called Abraham (Galatians 3; Romans 4).

The earliest Christian writers, in their different ways, all bear witness to this belief: that those who follow Jesus, those who trust in his saving death and believe in his resurrection, are carrying forward the purposes for which God called Abraham and his family long before. And those purposes are not for God's people only: they are for the whole world. God calls a people so that through this people – or, better, through the unique work of Jesus Christ which is put into effect in and through this people in the power of the Spirit – the whole world may be reconciled to its creator.

- 1.2 A key term which emerges from much Jewish and Christian writings and which brings into sharp focus this whole understanding of God and God's purposes is *covenant*. The word has various uses in today's world (in relation, for instance, to financial matters, or to marriage), but its widespread biblical use goes way beyond such analogies.

God established a covenant (*berit*) with Abraham (Genesis 15), and the writer(s) or at least redactor(s) of Genesis, in the way they tell that story, indicate clearly enough that God's call of Abraham, and the covenant established with him, was intended to be the means whereby God would address the problem of the human race and so of the entire created order. Genesis 12, 15 and the whole story address the problem set out in Genesis 3-11: the problem, that is, of human rebellion and death and the consequent apparent thwarting of the creator's plan for his human creatures and the whole of creation (Genesis 1-2). And these texts claim – this claim is echoed right across the Old Testament – that God has in

principle solved that problem with the establishment of this covenant. Already the story offers itself as the story of God's uncaused, gracious and generous *love*: God is under no obligation to rescue humans, and the world, from their plight, but chooses to do so and takes the initiative to bring it about. As the story develops throughout the Old Testament this *covenant love* is referred to in various terms, e.g. *hesed*.

- 1.3 The covenant with Abraham is then dramatically developed as God fulfils a promise made in Genesis 15, namely that he would rescue Abraham's family from slavery in Egypt. The story of the Exodus, with God bringing the Israelites through the Red Sea and pointing them towards their promised land, reaches a climax when they arrive at Mount Sinai and are given the Law (*Torah*) as the covenant charter, prefaced by God's declaration that Israel is to be his holy people, a nation of priests chosen out of and on behalf of the whole world (Exodus 19).

The Law is meant to sustain Israel as the *covenant community*, the people who are bound to the creator God as in a solemn marriage vow (as in Hosea), and to one another as God's people, and through whom God's purposes are to be extended in the world.

This vocation and intention is sorely tested as Israel repeatedly rebels against God, and the covenant is repeatedly renewed (Deuteronomy 31; Joshua 9, 24; 2 Kings 11.17; some have suggested that the Psalms provide evidence of frequent, perhaps annual, 'covenant renewal').

The prophets regularly call Israel back to the obligations of the covenant, obligations both to God and to one another. But Israel, the bearer of God's covenant promises which ultimately embrace the whole world, proves unfaithful, and is driven into exile – which the prophets interpret in terms of the covenant, understanding exile as covenantal punishment for covenantal disobedience. This is the more striking in that the covenant always envisaged Israel's being given the promised land, and the land being blessed when Israel is obedient to the covenant (see Deuteronomy, and e.g. Psalm 67).

- 1.4 It is at this point that there emerges the promise of a *new covenant*, through which (this is the point) God will at last do in and through Israel what the earlier covenants intended but did not bring about. Jeremiah 31 (similarly, Ezekiel 36) speaks both of the forgiveness of the sins which had brought the earlier plans to ruin and also of a new knowledge of God which will come to characterise God's people.

It is this ancient promise which the earliest Christians saw as having been fulfilled in Jesus. Jesus himself, indeed, spoke at the Last Supper of his forthcoming death as establishing the new, sin-forgiving covenant, and of the bread and the wine as somehow symbolizing that event, with that significance – and thus also effectively symbolizing the way in which his followers could find new life, together as a community and as individuals, through feeding on him and his saving death.

From that moment on, believing in Jesus, following him, seeking to live out his accomplishment through mission in God's world (bringing it to new fruitfulness and justice, as Israel's obedience was to bring blessing to the land), take place within what can with deep appropriateness be described as the *new covenant community*, constituted and reconstituted as such again and again not least precisely through sharing (*koinonia*, 'communion' or 'fellowship') at his table.

According to Paul, all those who believe in Jesus belong at this table, no matter what their personal, moral, ethnic or other background, and are thereby to be renewed in faith and holiness and energised for God's mission in the world. Baptism, the sign of entry into the renewed covenant, marks out not just individuals but the whole community of the baptized. To live as God's covenant people is thus the basic call of Christians, of the church of God. To speak of being in covenant with God and with one another is nothing new for Christians. Indeed, not to do so – even by implication – is to call into question the classic model of Christian faith and life.

1.4.1 [We recognise that this early Christian understanding of the new covenant community raises sharply the question of the relationship between the emerging Christian family – most of whom, in the early period, were of course themselves Jewish – and the continuing community of those Jews who did not recognise Jesus as Messiah and Lord; and, today, the question of the relationship between Christians and Jews. This is not the place to discuss this complex issue, but it would be inappropriate not to mention it.]

1.5 There are indications that the earliest Christians drew on existing models within Judaism of what a 'new covenant community' might look like. In a way markedly similar to what we find in the Dead Sea Scrolls, the early Jerusalem Church held their possessions in common, and those in any individual family who were in need were the responsibility of all (hence the problems about widows in e.g. Acts 6 and 1 Timothy).

Though a strict sharing of everything was not followed in the Pauline churches, we should not underplay the practical meaning of *agape*, 'love', in Paul, but rather give it its full meaning of mutual practical support (e.g. 1 Thessalonians 4.9-12).

Paul chooses a special term ('*koinonia*') that has both commercial and social implications to describe his covenant friendship with the Philippians. They were in 'partnership' together for the spreading of the gospel and the mission of the church to the Gentiles in God's name. Although Paul and the Philippians are in different locations doing different tasks, they are nevertheless partners 'in Christ', sharing the risks as well as celebrating the successes of the gospel. The point is that Christians are to think of themselves as *a single family*, in a world where 'family' means a good deal more in terms of mutual obligations and expectations than in many parts of today's Western world at least.

The community of the new covenant thus quickly came to see itself – and to be seen by the watching, puzzled and often hostile world – as marked out from all other social, cultural and religious groupings, with the marking-out being primarily its devotion and loyalty to Jesus as Lord and its belief that the one God of Abraham had, by raising Jesus from the dead, fulfilled his ancient promises and launched the final stage of his world-transforming purpose.

The new covenant community thus exists to set forward the mission of God in the power of the Spirit, and is therefore called to a shared, common life of holiness and reconciliation. The message of forgiveness and healing for the world must be enacted and embodied by the community that bears the message.

- 1.6 From the beginning, this vocation constituted a severe challenge for Jesus' followers, and there never was a time when they met it perfectly. The early church proceeded by a series of puzzles, mistakes, infidelities, quarrels, disputes, personality clashes and a host of other unfortunate events as well as by faithful witness, martyrdom, generous love, notable holiness (remarked on with great surprise by some pagan observers, who didn't know such lifestyles were possible), and a genuine openness and obedience to God's often surprising and dangerous call.

Since (in other words) being an early Christian seems to have been no less challenging and often perplexing than being a modern one, it is no surprise that the early Christians quickly developed a sense of how God guided his people and enabled them to discern the way forward both in new mission initiatives and in matters of dispute within their common life. Central to it all was the sense of the presence of the risen Jesus Christ in their midst ('where two or three are gathered in his name', as Jesus himself puts it in Matthew 18), so that the covenant community is not a mere human institution following an agenda but a fellowship of disciples together seeking to know, listen to, worship, love and serve their Lord.

In particular, the community we see in Acts, the Epistles and the writings of the second century was constantly concerned to invoke, celebrate and be deeply sensitive to the leading and guiding of the Holy Spirit. Repeatedly this involved fresh searchings of scripture (for the earliest Christians, the Old Testament; for the next generation, the apostolic traditions as well) and serious prayer and fasting, waiting for a common mind to emerge.

- 1.7 In and through it all the *unity* of the church – unity both within local churches and between different churches – emerges as a vital strand, not least as persecution mounts and the church finds itself under dire threat. Indeed, the *koinonia* of the new covenant community, as the people who give allegiance to Jesus as 'Lord' in a world where there were many 'Lords', notably the Roman emperor, meant that from the beginning there was a necessary (and dangerous) political implication to the founding and maintaining of a trans-ethnic and trans-national covenant community. All kinds of attempts were made to fracture this unity, and many early writers

devote attention to maintaining it, to guarding it, and to re-establishing it when broken.

It is at that point (for instance) that Paul works out his position about 'things indifferent' (those aspects of common life about which the community should be able to tolerate different practice), as well as his position about those things (e.g. incest) which the community should not tolerate at any price (1 Corinthians 5, 8). The vital unity of the covenant community needs the careful and prayerful use of quite sophisticated tools of discernment, tools that were already developed in the earliest church and are needed still.

- 1.8 It is this complex yet essentially simple vision of the people of God which is invoked when the church today thinks of itself as a 'covenant community'. That is not to say that all uses of the word 'covenant' in today's discussions necessarily imply that the 'covenants' we enter into (for instance, those between different Christian denominations) are somehow the *same* as the fundamental biblical covenant between God and his people. But the use of the word in today's church carries, and honours, the memory of the biblical covenant(s). It seeks to invoke and be faithful to the themes we have explored above: the sovereign call of God to belong to him and to work in the power of his Spirit for his purposes in the world, and the consequent call to the unity, reconciliation, and holiness which serve that mission.
- 1.9 There is no sense, of course, that introducing the notion of 'covenant' into talk of mutual relationships between Christians implies the establishment of a *further* 'new covenant' over and above *the* 'new covenant' inaugurated by Jesus Christ. Rather, all use of covenantal language in relation to the church today must be seen as a proposal for a specific kind of recommitment within that same covenant, in particular situations and in relation to particular communities. And, once we start talking of being in covenant with one another, we are immediately reminded of our participation in the covenant which God has made with us in Jesus Christ. The horizontal relationship with one another is dependent, theologically and practically, on the vertical relationship with the creating, loving and reconciling God we know in Jesus and by the Spirit.
- 1.10 The notion of 'covenant' has not been prominent to date within Anglican traditions of polity and organisation ('covenantal' language has, of course, been familiar from teachings on, for instance, baptism and marriage). But the picture of the church developed by the sixteenth-century Reformers, by great theoreticians like Hooker (who explored the notion of 'contract'), and by many subsequent writers, sets out models of church life for which 'covenant', with the biblical overtones explored briefly above, may serve as a convenient, accurate and evocative shorthand.

Recent discussions of Anglican identity, addressing the uncertainty as to how Anglicans are bound together around the world, have explored the notion of 'bonds of affection', the powerful though elusive ties that hold us together in friendship and fellowship. This kind of *relational* bonding, we

believe, remains central to any appropriate understanding of our shared communion.

- 1.11 It is out of that relational understanding of worldwide Anglicanism that the proposal for a 'covenant' has now grown, and it is in that sense that the proposal is to be understood. The IATDC, the Windsor Report, and the Primates, have all suggested that we seek to work towards a more explicit 'Anglican Covenant', not in order to bind us to new, strange and unhelpful obligations, but rather to set us free both from disputes which become damaging and dishonouring and from the distraction which comes about when, lacking an agreed method, we flail around in awkward attempts to resolve them.

This is not seeking to introduce an alien notion into an Anglicanism which has never thought like this before. Rather, it seeks to draw from the deep scriptural roots in which Anglicanism has always rejoiced, and from the more recent awareness of 'bonds of affection', a more explicit awareness of those covenantal beliefs and practices which resonate deeply with many aspects of Anglican tradition and which urgently need to be refreshed and clarified if the church is to serve God's mission in coming generations. To the suggestion that such a new move appears to be restrictive or cumbersome, there is an easy reply. When the ground is soft and easy, we can walk on it with light or flimsy shoes. When it gets stony, muddy or steep we put on walking boots, not because we don't want to be free to walk but because we do.

2. Reflections on some models of covenants for today

- 2.1 Since the idea of 'covenant' has a long and powerful biblical tradition, it is filled with possibilities for the ordering of our life together as Anglican Christians. Discussions about entering into a possible covenant by member churches of the Anglican Communion raise urgent questions about how we can move forward together and what we ought to do. What sort of covenant might help to order our life together in fruitful ways? Because it is used primarily to define the relationship between God and Israel, the term 'covenant' has an overwhelmingly positive sense in scripture, as we have seen. At the same time, the term 'covenant' is ambiguous enough to require further clarification. Several models of covenant have been proposed and it is useful to tease out their strengths and weaknesses on the way to framing the covenant that will be most useful.
- 2.2 A 'largely descriptive' (WR62:118) covenant that simply reiterates 'existing principles' carefully worded to avoid any controversy or mention of the issues dividing us will probably not be of much use for overcoming those divisions. On the other hand, an overly specific and detailed covenant tied entirely to the present controversies may not be of much help in the future for the next set of issues that arises.

A covenant that consists merely of conforming constitutions and canon law throughout the Anglican Communion, helpful as that would be, would not pick up on the inter-personal and relational issues so prominent within the biblical examples of covenant. Nor would it address the 'bonds of affection' that commit us to discovering together the truth to which the Spirit of God is leading us.

Any 'workable' covenant must reflect carefully negotiated 'content' as well as 'form' or 'methodology'. It should clarify and simplify, reflecting both 'narrative' and 'visionary' aspects of covenant. Narrative aspects of covenant recall the context and circumstances leading to the present moment, while visionary aspects of covenant point to the goals and future directions towards which we move in hope.

A biblical example of a 'covenant' that combines narrative and visionary components is the Book of Deuteronomy. It has the typical 'shape' of a covenant in two parts: recitals (statements of past history, the present situation and the desired future) and commitments (binding agreements between the partners to the covenants).

- 2.3 A covenant for the Anglican Communion should reflect the memory of Anglican historical traditions and also summarise our present understanding of 'the Anglican way'. In addition, it should provide a way forward, a way of re-committing to the whole project of an Anglican Communion understood as God's gift and God's commandment: a vocation to be realised rather than a fact already achieved. The covenant as a vision for mission both stresses the importance of the work to be done and binds its members to one another for greater effectiveness in accomplishing it.
- 2.4 Most importantly the covenant envisioned for the Anglican Communion is not static. Instead, it is a dynamic process like a marriage covenant. Just as the marriage partnership grows as it is tested by unforeseen circumstances and new situations, so the provinces of the Communion can expect to change and grow in ways they might never have expected. In a marriage, the partners grow together, walking alongside one another into the unknown future. So also in the Church 'we walk by faith and not by sight'.
- 2.5 Two possible models of covenant have received considerable attention, both as to tone and content: The covenant draft included in Appendix Two of TWR has been described as 'juridical' in style: a 'set of house rules' designed to prevent misconduct and/or to specify procedures for dealing with it. By contrast the draft covenant produced by IASCOME is considered to be 'motivational' in form, providing a 'vision for Anglican faithfulness' to God's mission in relational terms quite apart from a juridical context.

Each of these has both strengths and weaknesses as suggested above. A covenant that is entirely 'motivational' may lack the ability to require serious commitments and thus achieve too little. On the other hand, a

'juridical' covenant may achieve too much, actually provoking the schism it intends to prevent, by its judgements separating 'the wheat and the tares' prematurely, which for now should be left to grow together (Matthew 13). A serious question has framed our preliminary discussions of these matters: would a covenant create more divisions or fewer divisions among us?

3. The issue of persistent conflict in relation to a covenant and its operation

- 3.1 The power of the gospel as it intersects with new cultural and linguistic situations, unanticipated circumstances, and the complexities of an incarnated Christian existence produces both surprises and conflicts on a regular basis. Because the gospel has been both relational and incarnational from the start, it is entirely predictable that from the start Christians have been arguing about what it meant in the new cultural contexts in which they found themselves.

The gospel was proclaimed to Gentiles as well as to Jews; it travelled from Jerusalem, Judaea, and Samaria to the ends of the earth; it became written as well as oral; it was translated into a variety of languages; it travelled by land and sea accompanying monastics and pilgrims, monarchs and military operations, explorations and empires.

Moreover, the gospel continues to expand and develop, assuming ever new forms as it intersects with new questions and new cultural contexts. There never has been a time when the church did not experience conflicting interpretations of the gospel and the need to renegotiate its life together by some form of covenant renewal or ecclesiastical settlement.

- 3.2 Over time, the Church has learned that not all conflicts are on the same level of importance. Some differences of opinion are minor or matters of temporary or local significance. Other have lasting effects, involve large numbers of people, affect multiple situations, and treat issues of great weight and substance.

The principle of 'subsidiarity' suggests that disputes of local importance can most efficiently be decided at the local level; on the other hand 'what pertains to all ought to be decided by all'. In discerning whether a conflict should be addressed at the local level, the universal level, or at some level in-between, the three criteria of 'intensity, extent and substance', as proposed in our report of 2003 commend themselves.

If a conflict has become intense, it is less likely to be resolved easily at the local level; if its scope is extensive, involving many people in multiple locations, a universal solution is probably required; if the matter is substantial rather than trivial or peripheral, a larger structural resolution seems indicated.

- 3.3 These observations suggest an important corollary to the concept of covenant-making: any covenant requires an instrument to interpret it. There is no such thing as a self-interpreting covenant any more than there are self-interpreting scriptures. A covenant implies an interpretive body to decide on what level of polity it is best addressed and whether or to what extent it has been breached.

This result is more than a curiosity in a tradition such as Anglicanism where authority is dispersed rather than centralised in a pope and/or magisterium. The subtle interplay between persuasion and coercion characteristic of the Anglican way complicates any simplistic attempt to resolve conflicts by appealing them to one figure or body. Nevertheless, issues of intensity, extent, and substance require a solution in a way that will be satisfactory to the great majority. Otherwise resentment grows and mistrust materialises in ways harmful to the spread of the gospel, the mission of the church to anticipate the reign of God.

4. Staging a covenantal response to conflict

- 4.1 The proposal for a covenant from the Windsor Report is an attempt to find a way for Anglicans to walk together with love and openness. As a pilgrim community Anglicans have often explored institutional possibilities. Just as Paul had his 'ways' in order to serve the churches (1 Corinthians 4.17), so Anglicans have sought to find 'ways' of serving the gospel. By stepping out in faith Paul began his mission to the gentiles, and in a further step went to Macedonia (Acts 16.9). Some centuries later, Theodore (Archbishop of Canterbury 668-690) sought to reform and renew the life of the church through the instrument of synods. The church has regularly approached new situations by living faithfully one step at a time.
- 4.2 The present proposals for a covenant will inevitably take time to emerge, since the covenant is recognised as a significant institutional development. These proposals are an attempt to discern the will of God for the life of the Anglican churches around the world.
- 4.3 Anglicans now face the challenge of dealing with an acute conflict. Some churches in the Communion have acted in a way which other churches find contrary to Christian belief and practice. This is a conflict over an element of the faith within the church. For the Anglican Communion this is complicated by the fact that the conflict is among churches within the Communion as well as within individual churches. It is not just a question of how to deal with an individual person within a parish. It involves relations between institutions, between churches with their constitutions and organisations; their polities, by which they have agreed to walk together in obedience to the will of God.
- 4.4 In order to maintain unity and meet new challenges, Anglicans have in the past developed new institutional arrangements, such as the informal gathering of bishops at Lambeth. We have created Networks to listen to

each other and Commissions to serve the churches of the Communion in various aspects of their life and mission. Just as the Lambeth Conference has evolved its modes of operating, so perceptions of the role of the Lambeth Conference have changed over the years. The development of appropriate institutions is part of a pilgrimage of discernment as Anglican churches seek to walk together with love and openness in the service of Christ.

- 4.5 The present crisis is now urgent, substantial and a source of conflict and pain for many Anglicans across the world. Responding to conflict is never easy. We recoil from the hurt it brings and shudder at the implications of failure which it seems to have for our fellowship and witness to the love of Christ. But conflict should prompt us to greater contact not less, to more intense commitment to love each other and to understand the forces at play in our own faltering pilgrimage.
- 4.6 Love binds us together and provides the basis for honesty with each other especially where there is profound disagreement and division. In such a situation Anglicans will again return to the scriptures. There are many examples of conflict in the churches of the New Testament. Matthew reports on a way of dealing with conflict in stages (Matthew 18.15). Paul often had to deal with conflict. Acts 15 reports conflict in the early church over the circumcision of gentile Christians. This conflict did not lead the protagonists to distance themselves from each other. On the contrary they came together openly to lay before each other their differences. They testified to their experience of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church and by the same Spirit sought to live together in openness and love.
- 4.7 Lobby groups are a natural form of persuasion in any large community. However, this process is open to corruption when persuasion and influence are exercised in private. Such a tendency can have the effect of corroding the trust and openness which is vital to our walking together. It may be that there should be some code of ethics among us in regard to private lobbying activities. Such a code would inform our common understanding and fellowship.
- 4.8 The faith which we bring as Anglicans to any encounter will include our essential commitment to listen to scripture together, to be aware that in our pilgrimage we walk by faith a step at a time in humility. We will be aware that our tradition of dispersed authority emphasises the priority of loving persuasion and we will be conscious that we are part of the One Holy Catholic Church of Christ and stand in the shadow of the saints of God who have gone before us. We live out the catholic faith in engagement with each other in the wider fellowship of Anglican churches. The test in what we do will be that given by Jesus himself; 'by this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another' (John 13.35).

5. Bringing theology to bear in situations of conflict

- 5.1 The covenanting process is about how the churches of the Anglican Communion relate to each other in their common vocation. Conflict often arises because of different theological perceptions on matters in the life of the Communion. This is true whether or not the issue at stake in a conflict is located in the ethical part of the theological spectrum. The life of the Anglican Communion would be enhanced by the contribution of a serious theological consideration of the subject of any conflict of sufficient 'intensity, extent and substance'. A body which was able to provide such a contribution would greatly assist in clarifying the theological issues at stake.
- 5.2 Such a body would be concerned with doctrine because it would address matters of truth about the faith we share. It would therefore be made up of the best of our theologians, people whose competence and wisdom as theologians was recognised and respected by all. The body should have the power to co-opt consultants to advise them on any specific aspects of any question they were considering.
- 5.3 The task of this body would be to clarify the issues at stake, to identify the agreements and disagreements and to shape a view of these things in the light of the Anglican heritage of scriptural faith.
- 5.4 It should report publicly and its report should go to the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Anglican Consultative Council, the Primates Meeting and the Lambeth Conference. The effect of such a sequence of reports would be to introduce into the sensibilities of the common life of the Anglican Communion a growing corpus of wisdom on the nature of Anglican faith in relation to matters drawn out of the actual life of the churches. That wisdom would be available to any of the institutions of the Communion.
- 5.5 Such a body could be created very quickly. In the present circumstances this would greatly encourage many that there is a forum which directly addresses the issue in conflict at a significant level of recognition in the Communion.

6. The covenant proposal and the vocation of Anglicans to communion in a fallen world

- 6.1 The communion that Anglicans share is a precious gift. The present crisis in the Anglican Communion constitutes an opportunity to re-commit ourselves to one another in renewed obedience to God's call. A covenant which expressed that commitment would not be something entirely *de novo* but rather a development of the 'bonds of affection' which bind us to one another. In making such a covenant at the present time we would be acknowledging that in specific situations, especially situations of conflict, threat or opportunity, God calls his people to discern his will afresh and to re-commit themselves to him and to one another. There is much we can

learn here from the annual Methodist Covenant Service as it has been incorporated into the Church of North India.

- 6.2 In a situation of conflict the discernment of God's will for his people is not an easy task. It demands fresh study of scripture, the careful presentation of arguments, patient listening to one another and preparedness to wait in uncertainty and hope until a clearer understanding of the truth emerges.

All of this will, for God's people, be grounded in love for one another, trust that we are together committed to seeking God's way, and hope that the Holy Spirit will indeed lead us into all truth (John 16.13). This need for patience with some person, or with an entire body, that expresses contrary views is expressed very clearly by Augustine, when he says,

Let him, again, who says, when he reads my book, 'Certainly I understand what is said, but it is not true', assert, if he pleases, his own opinion, and refute mine if he is able. And if he do this with charity and truth, and take the pains to make it known to me (if I am still alive), I shall then receive the most abundant fruit of this my labour. ... Yet, for my part, 'I meditate in the law of the Lord' (Psalm 1:2) ... hoping by the mercy of God that he will make me hold steadfastly all truths of which I feel certain; 'but if in anything I be otherwise minded, that he will himself reveal even this to me' (Philippians 3:15), whether through secret inspiration and admonition, or through his own plain utterances, or through the reasonings of my brethren. This I pray for ... (*De Trinitate* 1.1.5, translated by A W Haddan, revised by W G T Shedd, ed. P Schaff, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers Series, vol. III, Edinburgh: T and T Clark/Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, reprinted, 1993).

Augustine speaks of a commitment to truth that entails dialogue with the other – who is my sister or my brother in Christ. He speaks of an increasing understanding of truth within the Body of Christ and of the human grasp on truth as corporate and fallible. Within the communion of the Church he looks to the other as someone through whom he may grow in knowledge of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

- 6.3 In the same Spirit, Anglicans, bound together in communion, need each other in order to grow in faith, knowledge and love (cf. 2 Peter 1.5-7). We are committed to encouraging one another and to learning from one another's experience of discipleship in particular situations. Since we are weak, fallible and living in a fallen world, there is always the need for humility and mutual forgiveness.

Anglicans, like all Christians, have to face honestly the ways in which hurt has been given within the Body of Christ, for example, through colonialism, patriarchy and other mechanisms of exclusion. We know that truly to discover the mind of Christ we have to go by the way of self-emptying, humility and obedience which is also the way of the cross (Philippians 2.5-11). A re-affirmation of our commitment to one another in

covenant would thereby become a re-commitment in hope of the reconciliation of all things in Christ, who has established our peace by the blood of his cross (Colossians 1.20).