

COVENANT

The Japanese theologian, Kosuke Koyama, once posed the question that he thought was the most crucial in our current world, "How do we live together?" This may indeed be an apposite question for the Anglican Communion at present. The proposed covenant may be seen as a means of addressing this question and of helping us as Anglicans to remain in "the bonds of affection."

Therefore a suggested purpose for the covenant could be to help us live together and our attitude to "consider others better than ourselves" (Phil 2:3). This could shape how we frame the covenant document.

I have been grateful to read the documentation provided by the ACO, ("Towards an Anglican covenant" JSC and "Responding to a Proposal of Covenant") as well as several articles on the Global South and Fulcrum websites.

A lot has been written and the thorny issues such as type, time frame, composition, how is it embodied etc have all been alluded to with some suggestions made. I would like to make a few brief points as a lay-woman from outside the British context (I come from Aotearoa/NZ) with experience in East Africa and who works for CMS here in UK.

1. The covenant needs to be developed and expressed in terms of mission – yes, we want to be able to live together and get our own house in order first, but we live for others. In other words, we exist as a Communion to point others to Christ and to engage in mission for the sake of Christ. If the covenant can be framed in a missional context, using dynamic language drawn from a holistic understanding of mission, I believe people will understand its intent and subscribe to its purpose.
2. This has implications for the language and framework of the covenant. I think the language should be simple and clear – eg active rather than passive verbs. I prefer motivational and aspirational language rather than juridical and canonical. This could be seen as more heavy verbiage from the West.
3. Covenant is about relationship – this is referred to in both documents. Therefore it should be framed using relational language and concepts. It should also be dynamic in nature and

- intent. This is in keeping with mission and relationship as the backdrop and purpose. A relational approach allows for difference while an attitude of humility can help to bring some agreement and compromise, if necessary.
4. I would keep it short and not too detailed. There is enormous diversity within the Communion and not everyone is going to understand it in the same way. Too much detail will exacerbate that.
 5. Please invite a variety of people to the drafting group (I am sure you will) but the small group that produced the working paper was noticeably male and British. I know the reasons for that – presumably timescale and expense – but noticeable all the same. It would be good to hear some different (and fresh?) voices.
 6. Please do not make the time scale so long – I groaned when I saw the proposed time scale (JSC, pp6-7) which, if one adds it up consecutively, comes to 7-9 years. Another lengthy, long-winded process which could just bog people down. Could we not produce something that communicates energy and lightness of touch? Of course consultation is needed but the energy and goodwill will be lost over such a long period, I think. I suspect some diocese may think that they have more pressing issues on their agenda and we do not wish to alienate them.
 7. I hope that it will be drawn up in all the major languages of the Communion and communicated in the appropriate language.
 8. Finally, I am sure we are all familiar with the language of the centre and periphery. Is Britain at the centre or periphery of the Communion? Do we even know that there is a majority in favour of creating a covenant within the Communion? These are important questions when we consider how the covenant will be drawn up, who will draw it up, where this will be done and how it will be communicated. For example, maybe it would be more appropriate to work on and develop the covenant in a non-British context.

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