

Reflections on
Towards an Anglican Covenant (JSC March 2006)
and
Responding to a Proposal of Covenant (IATDC 2006)

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The following reflections engage with the proposals of *Toward an Anglican Covenant* and *Responding to a Proposal of Covenant* in response to an invitation from Archbishop Drexel Gomez to contribute to the Covenant Design Group in January of 2007. I am grateful for the invitation. I write from the context of the Anglican Church of Canada and my comments have been shaped by conversations formal and informal in both local and national settings as Canadian Anglicans have over the past two years been involved in thinking about and responding to *The Windsor Report*.

At this point of writing, I am involved in planning and preparations for our next triennial meeting of General Synod, the highest governance body of the Anglican Church of Canada. My reflections here are shaped by the experience of these Synods and of national-level work within a church that lives out its communion in Christ across and within multiple diversities, in a way as a microcosm of the realities of the Anglican Communion. Like the Communion in miniature, we too face the challenges and gifts of the vast geographical and cultural spread of the church. In our case we face these in most situations not just nationally but within dioceses. From our journey together in history we have learned lessons that shape our current commitments. We are committed to nurturing the relationships in which we live out this *koinonia* across multiple diversities and seek face to face meeting and worship as often as we are able. These experiences are affirming, educational, challenging and transformative, and from them we learn that communion is a gift that needs careful nurture through and in *real relationships*. Attention to transparency and the enabling of full participation within processes of governance including laity and the ordained at the service of mission and ministry are of high importance to us. There are, I believe, lessons from our Canadian context (from which we continue to learn) to be brought to this current conversation. We are very aware of having a fragile gift that needs to be shared.

I write as a theologically educated lay person, whose first question to the proposal of a Covenant is “how does this serve the ministry and mission of the people of God in the world?” I believe at this still early juncture the best way to conceive of a Covenant is as that which enables mutual conversation – one whose aim is to build the body of Christ, strengthening us in mutual affection and in *discernment together* of God’s call. As such I welcome the efforts in the Covenant discussions that seek to deepen that conversation. I welcome the notion of a *covenanting process* that would help to keep us in mutual conversation.

The Windsor Report itself recognizes that no Anglican Covenant will resolve present or anticipated (or heretofore undreamt of) disputes. Therefore, it seems to me that the most important questions that need to be asked in the next stages of our conversation are those that will help us to build clarity about that which is needed, that which is desirable. What it is we want and need in such a Covenant, why do we want and need it, and to what purpose is it to be intended? Clearly we cannot, in a Covenant look for the embodiment of any quick ‘fix’ to problems. Might we rather through it grow a tool to help us strengthen and nurture communion from which deepened relationships of trust and mutuality of respect might allow more fruitful approaches to disputed questions in the future? One might ask how does a Covenant do any differently that which the existing structures of the Anglican Communion and agreements such as the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral offer already.

At the same time, I am also deeply aware of the relative youth and experimental character of the worldwide Anglican Communion on the one hand, and, on the other, of the need for the body of Christ ever to be thinking the faith anew in new contexts. The Quadrilateral and the Structures of the Anglican Communion, to my mind, work quite well for us when we employ them properly. That’s not to say that I stand against any new development! The theological task of rethinking older formularies and agreements is necessarily incumbent upon us in every age and I welcome work on a proposed Covenant as a part of that sort of faithful conversation. This is a part of creating new roadsigns and maps, not rearranging the landscape. My conservatism with respect to the Quadrilateral – and Anglican tradition generally! – is about my desire to protect the task of *authentic* development.

In the pages that follow, I shall address questions of *Process*, of *Expectations and Motivations*, of proposed *Content*, of *Tone and Style* as relating to *Function and Purpose*. Finally and briefly I take up the question of dispute settling mechanisms.

Process

1. Timing issues

It is not unusual for one to feel in a double bind around this question of a Covenant. Many are arguing publicly that, particularly based on the model presented in Windsor, such a proposal ought not to go on, yet the process is already underway, so the awkward question can become: how to contribute to it?

Towards an Anglican Covenant (TAC) expresses an obvious contradiction. It recognizes in paragraph 2 that there is no consensus on whether or not the Windsor-articulated proposal for a Covenant ought to proceed, with a full one-third of respondents to the Reception Reference Group clearly not in favour, and for reasons well discussed in TAC. Yet, paragraph 3 begins, “the proposal for an Anglican Covenant now has to be carried forward.” The weight in this judgement falls squarely with the fact that the Primates at Dromantine said they would welcome “the concept of a covenant.” Not all Provinces have yet made their formal responses to *The*

Windsor Report. The Anglican Church of Canada will bring a draft Response to our General Synod not until June 2007. This is not a sign of dragging of the feet or of avoidance, but rather much the opposite: it is evidence of the seriousness with which we have been taking the responsibility to engage with Windsor, through thorough study of the Report at all levels of our Church, thereby assuring a full, reasoned, careful and faithful response. It is also evidence of the importance of our Synodical processes – critical for us in the understanding of Anglicanism – of consultation, debate and ownership by the General Synod (laity and clergy and bishops) of decisions.

And so concerns about the rapid development of Covenant proposals are based not, as some might caricature, a reactivity to the notion of a Covenant in and of itself, but in real concerns about the processes by which these developments are occurring and might occur in the future. These are concerns that reflect central notions of authority and the participatory nature of the church in decision-making that are at the heart of Anglicanism as we have received and enfolded it.

2. Processes of Theological Conversations

Do we have clear enough agreement at present within the Communion on what truly are the ecclesiological foundations of the Anglican Communion? I note that this hints at the principal mandate of the IATDC for this part of its life – to explore the meaning of communion in the context of the diversities of the Anglican Communion. This work is ongoing, and I would suggest that any development of a covenant for the Anglican Communion would need to build on the findings of the IATDC in its Communion study. In other words, as a matter of process it is not adequate simply to have IATDC work on the theological notion of covenant (as one particular piece of its work given to it recently) without taking into account the far more substantial and foundational work that they are seeking to articulate in terms of Anglican ecclesiology. Having said that, it is also clear that events of the past few years and the perceived necessity by IATDC to respond to particular issues and events have derailed it somewhat from that foundational work. This has been further complicated by an imposed 3 year hiatus. They are slated to meet in September of 2007, and it is hoped at that time to bring to completion a certain phase in what is called ‘The Communion Study’. Whether or not the most substantial work on ecclesiological questions will be completed by that time remains to be seen – I suspect it will need to be carried on beyond 2007 in a next mandated group.

I would like to see emphasized the critical importance of IATDC’s work on theology of Communion as a place where the ecclesiology of the Communion can be worked out – where issues of theological conflict (models of ecclesiology, authority, autonomy-in-relationship) can be brought to light, explored and explained. With clarified views of the different ways in which, for example, synodality and authority function within the Provinces, we might be better equipped to understand how different models of covenant and covenanting processes might function.

It must, further, be recognized that the work of *The Virginia Report* is incomplete, though it has been taken in some quarters as something ‘done’ and treated as ‘received’ by the church (i.e. quoted as a substantial authoritative statement on the nature of the Communion and of the church by *The Windsor Report*). I say “incomplete” because of the ways in which its language (for example around “instruments of unity”) and concepts have been adopted in decision-making, while the process of discussion and study of and response to *Virginia* was pre-empted by the events of 2002 onwards and the creation of the Lambeth Commission. The process of study, critique, ‘reception’ of *Virginia* is incomplete: only one side of the conversation has been heard. In some very real ways, we need to go back to *Virginia* to re-engage the conversation, especially as it is not at all the case that all Provinces have wholly accepted *Virginia*’s assumptions and conclusions.

3. A Participatory Process at Every Stage

It is not enough, in my opinion, to have a process whereby a drafting group sends a text to the Primates then to the Provinces for consultation and adoption. A much wider process of participation needs to go into the stages of discernment regarding what it is that we are doing and why (i.e. the present discussions about whether the covenant ought to be motivational or more legalistic). It could be that some of that participation by Provinces in conceptualizing covenant will come as more Provinces submit their responses to the *Windsor Report* and also respond through various channels to the work of the Covenant Drafting Group. However, I think it incumbent upon the Drafting Group to solicit broad participation at the earliest stages. It is not enough for Provincial Synods to be on the receiving ends of a ‘fait accompli’ – as already noted by *Towards an Anglican Covenant*. I agree with *Toward an Anglican Covenant* that it has to be something “owned” by the whole Communion, not something to which some can opt in or out of in part. Wholeness in option presumes wholeness of participation in the creation of the object of that option!

An international conversation about what we want in a covenant (the ‘conceptualizing’ work) that is characterized by reasonableness (well prepared research and discussion), tolerance (habits of mutual respect) and openness, (transparency) will not only serve task of creating a covenant, but could help existing relationships. In a process of covenanting to be in a conversation, a process of discerning the nature of an Anglican covenant we might aspire to live the mutuality and interdependence within the process of the work itself. A process that is covenanted to these values (mutuality, interdependence, reasonableness, tolerance, openness) has, I believe, a fair chance of creating an expression of covenant that will help further to engage the Communion according to these values.

It needs to be said that this process has to involve the laity. Theologically articulate laity abound in the Anglican Communion, and it is of critical importance that those whose baptismal vocation is focussed in the worldly mission of Christ contribute to the process. The gifts of all orders of ministry – the whole *laos* -- each serve the common purpose of God’s work in Christ transforming the world and each has distinct perspectives to be brought to bear from the

particularity of one's principal vocational location, whether episcopal, presbyteral, diaconal, or lay vocations (and keeping in mind the multiplicity of particular locations of each, especially lay, vocation!)

Synodality is a key concept that has evolved within Anglicanism as ways of involving laity, clergy and bishops in the councils of the church. *The Windsor Report* speaks of the work of synods as expressive of the unity in diversity that is our life in communion, but holds up the Lambeth conference as the greatest expression of this synodality. In truth, of the so-called "instruments of unity" only the Anglican Consultative Council reflects that synodality that reflects all orders of ministry as well as diversity across language and culture. Therefore, the role of the Anglican Consultative Council is of critical importance within the consultative processes, just as engagement of whole Provincial decision-making processes is preferable to assent by primates only.

4. An Educational Process

It is good to hear from the Joint Standing Committee the affirmation of an educational process to be a part of the covenant process. It is unclear, though, whether the educational process intended is something to occur along with implementation processes ("now that it's done we're going to educate you about what this Covenant means") or in the process of discerning together what sort of Covenant we need (i.e. "let's learn together about what it means to be Anglican Christians covenanting together for mission in God's world today") or something else entirely.

I would suggest that some remedial education about the nature of the Anglican Communion, its structures, history, affirmations and ways of being is needed by all of us. When a community experiences conflict, it is altogether part and parcel of human inclination to want to create *things* to solve the problems. In social-psychological terms this is a way of externalizing personal conflicts. Where solutions are best found in interpersonal encounter (the mucky stuff of working out confrontation, better mutual understanding and where necessary confession and forgiveness), it is the case that humans sometimes prefer to build a new tool, or mechanism, or committee, to deal with what ought better to be dealt with within existing structures and with the tools of that society.

I participated in the drafting of the Anglican Church of Canada's Preliminary Response to *The Virginia Report (2001)*. During that time of broad consultation across our church, I heard repeatedly the observation that, rather than rush to create new structures in the Communion, we actually quite simply need to use the existing structures. Respondents affirmed that the structures of the Communion are adequate to the challenges of our day, so long as we actually use them properly, fully participating, with transparency and trust.

One might ask further: Why does it seem to some that the *Lambeth Quadrilateral* is not enough to articulate what binds us in common Anglican identity and commitment? Do we take it with full seriousness and hold each other mutually accountable to it? Why does it seem that the

Anglican Communion structures are not enough? Are we actually using them to their full potential, allowing for truly open, responsible participation? (To even ponder shutting down some from participation in conversation, or disinvitation, is effectively to say we can't live up to the demands and promises of the structures we've put in place.)

In the end, I would hope that the whole of the Covenant process would be self-consciously educational. That is to say that it be conducted within a spiritual commitment to a discernment process, learning from one another, being learners together, learning from our common heritage and from the insights that come from the challenges of facing the world, and each other, in response to God's call.

5. How long a process? Why so Long?

The Windsor Report called for "a long-term process, in an educative context, be considered for real debate and agreement on its adoption as a solemn witness to communion." Given all that has been said above, it should be obvious that I champion the notion of things taking as long as they need to take in order that timelines serve the processes of consultation, education, participation, and Provincial processes of decision-making and ratification, and not the other way around.

Recent planning conversations speak of five to eight years. But is even this useful, allowing only for one (2008) meeting of Lambeth and an inadequacy of Anglican Consultative Council meetings? If first participation in conceptualising, then drafting and then implementation are expected of Provinces, how many General Synods of the Anglican Church of Canada (meeting every 3 years) will we need?

If in the first place the value is on participatory, transparent process first in conceptualising (figuring out what it is that we need and want and how best to do that) and then in drafting, it of course remains to be seen what 'it' is that we are looking at. The most important assertion I wish to make here is that the timelines ought to serve the process of discernment and conceptualizing, and that this process ought to respect the timelines of the Provinces allowing for their full participation at all stages. The most important timelines, and those to be respected, then, are those governing the proper processes of the Provinces in their own constitutional lives.

There are those of course who feel that the calls for patience are ploys to avoid further conflict or the facing of difficult decisions. However, it would seem that those most pressing for something soon are also those holding out hopes for something definitive to come to judgement on those with whom they disagree.

Expectations, Motivations and Assumptions: what are we hoping to achieve by this?

There are, of course, competing expectations and assumptions surrounding the notion of covenant. On the one hand is the experience that we are falling apart and need a set of propositions to define what holds us together and sets out clearly who is 'in' and who has 'left' the playing field of the Anglican faith. On the other hand are the experiences of those, like the Bishop of Pretoria, who can say:

"Mysteriously the centre is holding. The Anglican Communion is still One Body of Christ, confessing One Faith and believes in One baptism despite many sceptics and the prophets of doom's speculation of schism. The challenges facing the Anglican Church worldwide makes it both difficult and exciting to be a spiritual leader of an Anglican Church today. Challenging because the issues that we are faced with are complex, since they are doctrinal but also deal with human rights. Exciting, because it has created a space for debate between people who would not otherwise have engaged with each other. There are many questions but few answers."
(The Journal of T.Z.A.B.A., Nov. 2006 issue, p. 20)

One voice asks for a tool for the settlement of disputed questions, another for a mechanism for growing relationship to help us in discovering who we are.

This is enough evidence to be able to state with boldness that we should not have excess expectations of what a Covenant will be able to achieve.

Beneath some of these obvious issues are other assumptions that need to be named and explored in any Covenant process. With the help of Dr. Walter Deller, Principal of the College of Emmanuel and St. Chad in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan (Canada), I name two of these, both assumptions of The Windsor Report.

"... one of the foundational assumptions of the (Lambeth) Commission and its report the idea that 'diversity' is both a cause and a manifestation of 'illness' in the Communion. This is in part because 'unity' is given such paramount value in the language and overall approach of the report."

... But neither can we pretend that organizations, movements, institutions, bodies—whatever language with which we might choose to describe ourselves—can exist with infinite diversity. While I might disagree profoundly with some of my...Christian friends about where the boundaries are, I can't wander along blithely assuming that the whole question of boundaries is a non-issue. Like it or not, this seems to me to be one of the fundamental paradoxes of Christianity.

... What I want to suggest here is that this state of conflict over diversity and boundaries is not a mark of illness at all in Anglicanism, but a sign that we are actually still

somewhere in touch with the very foundations and crucial matters that shape our faith. Christians are a healthy body if they are debating about who can be included and whether we're porous enough. The sign that we're getting sick is actually the desire to foreclose or terminate the debate, or to conduct the debate in such a simplistic way that we forget that something important and essential to our very identity as followers of Jesus Christ might be at stake. (Walter Deller, "Scripture, Diversity, Synodality in the Anglican Communion—Should Canadian Anglicans Walk the Way of Windsor?" A Lecture on *The Windsor Report* Given to a Gathering in the Diocese of Rupert's Land, May 26, 2005)

I have done work in the past several years relating to issues of clergy and lay leadership "wellness." One of the most difficult challenges it seems is to engage people in conversation not about the pathology – symptoms of unhealth, un-wellness, sickness – (which is often treated in a highly individualistic way) but to elicit imaginative visions of what church leadership and congregational health might look like. I would commend an exercise in seeking visions of "health" for the Communion as a perhaps helpful imaginative exercise for the Covenant Drafting Group. This would then be followed by an exploration of the metaphor of sickness. My sense is that a vision distinct from the treatment of Windsor would emerge.

A second set of assumptions involve the dominant metaphor for church living at the heart of Windsor. The Windsor Report draws predominantly on the metaphor from Ephesians of Christ the head of the church (the body) and from Corinthians for the image of apostolic leadership as that of discipline and punishing an unruly church. Deller comments further:

"But even in the New Testament, even in Ephesians, there are other metaphors for understanding the life of the church that might lead us to very different analyses of the situation of the Anglican Communion and recommendations about its life together. ...For instance, Ephesians 2:13-22, which also speaks of reconciliation and conflict draws on two totally different metaphors, that of a large and capacious building or home for an extended household and that of citizenship. "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God." (Eph. 2:19-22) To imagine Christ not as a 'head', but as 'foundation' or 'keystone' of a building that is being built up together is a very different metaphor system in which Christ is not some sort of central 'director' but rather functions as a point of 'stability' over and around which a huge variety of potential forms and shapes of house and household can be elaborated. And to imagine members of the Anglican Communion as citizens (even in the Graeco-Roman sense let alone in a contemporary democratic sense) might lead to a very different analysis of the institutions of the Communion and participation and autonomy."

The IATDC paper on Covenant also provides further scriptural metaphors and images that can be of assistance to the Covenant Drafting Group.

A more difficult challenge is posed by the fact that we need to examine closely any assumptions that we might have about assumed fundamental agreements, especially as mentioned earlier, with respect to ecclesiology. The Anglican Communion is something that just ‘grew’, not haphazardly by any stretch of the imagination, but nor was it was planted in so many different places with a single mapped out ecclesiology. Diverse ecclesiological assumptions are held across the Communion, and if we are to live with those diversities we are going to need to face them squarely, and not, for example, fall into the situation where one particular ecclesiology dominates the creation of a covenant in such a way that does not allow space for other emphases. Just how the two dominant ecclesiologies can be reconciled is something that remains to be seen. I borrow a caricature from Alan Perry, a priest of the Diocese of Montreal in the Anglican Church of Canada, who has written, as part of his graduate work in Canon Law studies at Cardiff, “*From Waterloo to Windsor.*” He writes: there is the tendency which prefers centralized authority usually in the service of conformity, and the other of which favours decentralized authority, usually in the service of diversity. Caricatures to be sure, but a helpful way of laying bare some of the truly conflicting ecclesiologies that have been at work in Anglicanism for quite some time.

The IATDC paper does a fine job of laying out a variety of models of covenant, biblical and worldly. There are of course the covenants between God and God’s people; the covenant of the new blood that brings us to reconciliation; the baptismal covenant in our liturgical traditions that call us to new life. Whatever assumptions are operating about what it is that we *need* for our life together that we don’t already have (or that we need to articulate anew) will shape what sort of covenant is envisioned.

I hold up another model of covenant that is gaining in use in the Anglican Church of Canada: covenants in ministry. Several of our dioceses have developed covenants for mission and ministry to help to shape the life, work and witness of the Anglican Church in that place. Developed in open, participatory and transparent processes in the best of examples, these invite commitments by bishop, clergy and people in mutuality to serving mission of church in concrete ways identified for those particular places. While these might be considered “motivational” and therefore lacking the “teeth” looked for by some who are calling for an Anglican Covenant (they assume that those who are so committed to the doctrine, discipline and worship of the Anglican Church of Canada within that diocese are the ones to whom the covenant for mission is directed and are not concerned to set the parameters of who is in and who is out), they have the effect of focussing commitment to common life, witness and service, and include ways for mutual accountability to be explored. The assumption here – one from which I think the Communion-level conversations could learn – is the presumption of ‘membership’ by the most basic of traditional Anglican standards; the pre-eminence of the call to mission and service, which then also becomes the place where we hold each other accountable.

If it is true, and I believe it is, that no Covenant will resolve our most heated disputes, the question remains then what the presumed need for a Covenant is, honestly. My own hope is for the response to the need that we do have, in this relative youth of the Anglican Communion, better to think out our faith together amid the complexities and diversities and needs of the world.

The Covenant cannot be about resolving dispute simply because there is at this time no agreement on the diagnosis of the roots of the disputes. Leaving these expectations aside however can be freeing, if we welcome the gifts and the truly difficult challenges of what it means to covenant to be in discernment and learning together. Discerning together what ought to be our responses to God's call to mission and service in our own places, and discerning together the face of common response across the globe. Rather than the language of conflict management or dispute resolution, a covenant in mission could usefully employ the language of reconciliation and mission. If taken seriously, this assumption is not that a Covenant would be 'merely' motivational or aspirational, but truly involve the real, risky stuff of commitment to life together: face to face meeting, truth-telling, transparency, openness, discernment together, bringing the dynamics and insights of one church in its local integrity into honest engagement with the dynamics and insights of another church in its own local integrity. This is not running away from a hard-hitting Covenant, but a high challenge.

I end with another citation from Alan Perry:

“At its best, the Anglican Communion is a glorious project: a world-wide family of churches each of which seeks faithfully to incarnate the Gospel with attention both to its own particular context and to the wider Communion. In recent times, the Communion has not been at its best, marked by disagreement, mistrust and even open hostility. If an Anglican Covenant is to be adopted, it will be important to attend to the balance between setting forth the vision of the Communion at its best and enshrining mechanisms to protect the Communion from itself at its worst.” *From Windsor to Waterloo* p. 16

Models for Content

The communion of the Trinity is a *personal*. Because our human, Christian communion is a participation in the communion of the Trinity it too is fundamentally a *personal* communion. Communion is not an abstract, but a relationship amongst real people -- a dynamic. Whatever a covenant might hope to achieve, it needs to recognize and serve that dynamism. The genius of the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral is located in its brevity and in its ability, within that brevity, to get to the core that remains, or that is the still point, around which growth, dynamism, local cultural adaptation and particularity of interpretation all can travel.

Historically and recently, attempts have been made by various Anglican groups to identify definitively the fundamentals or essentials of faith – such as the Essentials Montreal Declaration

of 1995. The problem with essentialist movements is that (like the publication of *The Fundamentals* in 1905, from which “fundamentalism” got its name) in seeking to define doctrine, they tend to confuse normative and classic expressions of faith with actually more recent and particular interpretations, all in the name of eschewing “modernism” or some other perceived contemporary error. The particularly Anglican genius of the Quadrilateral rests in its comfort with simply letting the classic and normative statements just be for themselves: “The Holy Scriptures, as containing all things necessary to salvation; The Creeds... as sufficient statement of Christian faith; the dominical sacraments of baptism and holy communion; the historic episcopate, locally adapted” stand on their own, and in humility recognize that to say more is to impose a particular interpretation that *may not in all times and places be right*. There is more at work here than Anglican reticence, but an important principle, allowing for the dynamism of “local adaptation” and interpretation in the service of the Gospel. It avoids not only ethical specifics but any more doctrinal specifics than are contained within that to which it points.

And that I think is part of the staying power of the Quadrilateral: that it points beyond itself. To understand ‘it’, one must look to that to which it points: the Scriptures, the sacramental life of real worshipping communities, the exercise of ministry, the creeds – and one does not simply *assent* to these things but accepts – or not- the invitation to enter into them, to live within them. It in itself does not attempt to define something anew, or to create a new creed or confession of faith: it points to the lasting things within the dynamism of Christian living. It does not give us the executive summary of “all things necessary”, but insists that we use our minds and hearts to learn the witness of those texts and realities to which it points. This makes it lasting.

I would hope that the Covenant Drafting Group might consider this model in its thinking about possible “contents”. No covenant is going to resolve current disputes, but it might be able to point us beyond our current disputes to those lasting things in our life together that continue to feed and to shape us in faithfulness. It might also teach us the habit and disciplines of discerning and learning together.

The other genius of the Quadrilateral is of course that it was intended as a tool for recognizing others – here, these are the elements that need to be present for us to recognize the Church of Christ in another tradition. This model shifts the question somewhat (helpfully, I hope) from that which seeks to establish boundaries around who is “in” and who is “out”, to that which asks “what do we need to see in order to recognize each other as brother and sister within Christ’s body?” (as in communion with one another). Far from institutional navel-gazing, it’s actually about pulling us outside of ourselves and, paradoxically, finding ourselves in the process.

Another familiar tool for recognition of communion, also developed as the fruit of commitment to the ecumenical endeavour is the Waterloo Declaration (2001) of Full Communion between the Anglican Church of Canada and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. The full text deserves close study by the Covenant Drafting Group. I can only provide a brief overview of key methodological issues here.

Waterloo describes the ways by which we have come to recognizing each other as church, describing those elements of our lives that evidence our living as Christ's church. It asserts that we have come to the point through decades of intentional dialogue, tough theological work and sharing in ministry where we see, in the life of the other so much the church of Christ that we that we are compelled to be in a relationship of full communion with her. It is strong on the nature of communion as *gift* that has been discerned, and now, once recognized, must be engaged as we commit to further life together for the furtherance of Christ's mission. "The Waterloo Declaration in its brevity says what needs to be said to remove barriers to cooperation, and not much more, creating maximum freedom to allow the relationship of Full Communion to flourish." (Alan Perry, *From Waterloo to Windsor* p. 13, included as an Appendix to my own writing here).

Perry continues:

Where Waterloo speaks of acquiring and exercising new freedoms, as a result of removing barriers to cooperation, Windsor speaks of exercising restraint in the use of autonomy. Thus the proposed Covenant is much more detailed in respect to the commitments of relationship and the necessary restraints on the exercise of autonomy than the Waterloo Declaration. The commitments in Waterloo are to worship, work and meet together in order that a relationship may flourish. The commitments in Windsor are to maintain and uphold the faith, continue to administer the sacraments, maintain the three-fold orders of ministry and to avoid causing disunity. The concern in Waterloo is to foster a new relationship; the concern in Windsor is to re-establish an old one, or to prevent it from disintegrating. Where Windsor contains a process for "Management of Communion Issues", described above as dispute-settling mechanism, Waterloo makes no such provision. (p. 13)

Like the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral, Waterloo is a type of covenant that aims toward new relationships in the future, but with a decidedly missiological commitment. I agree with Perry's assessment of the Windsor-proposed model of a covenant, and therefore it is my hope that any Anglican Covenant could be 1. Realistic about the past (not simply be about romantically clinging to some sort of notion of communion that has not ever truly existed); 2. Not fixated on controlling disintegration. It is my belief that only pointing beyond itself to those things lasting in evidence in our Anglican witness to the Christian faith – along the lines of Chicago-Lambeth – can the contents of a Covenant be lasting.

Tone, Style, Function, Purpose

Much has been said of late pondering what sort of 'style' and language ought best to express a covenant. Ought it to be aspirational or confessional, motivational or contractual? (Deller comments that it is interesting to note that when Jesus Christ says "this is the blood of the new

covenant” about himself and the eucharist, it is none of these things exactly!) The deficiencies of each of these options have been explored. Whatever expectations and aspirations are commonly decided upon it is important that there is a consistency between form, tone and style and purpose. Beyond the obvious, there are a few other contextual influences of which I trust the Drafting Group will be aware.

Situations of conflict have a way of shaping the language chosen for discourse. One of the challenges is to not have these particulars overtake the tone and process – so we don’t end up with a covenant that is all about the language of conflict, or that serves only an immediate context of conflict between some parts of the Communion.

I have stated earlier my interest in seeing attention paid to a living out, modelling if you will, of covenanting together to a process of creating a covenant. That is, by committing to work on this common project with seriousness and full, transparent participation, risking trust and honesty, we might work out in the process that to which we aspire. IASCER recently has suggested that the Drafting Group would do well to explore the use of covenant as a verb. This is an idea worth pursuing. There is, IASCER has suggested in their response to *Toward an Anglican Covenant*, a difference between signing on to a covenant and to action of covenanting with someone. I would suggest that these are not polarized notions but can be brought together within a single covenant document if the style and tone, as well as content, are such that they are inviting of participation.

If, for example, a covenant is developed from within a process of high participation in consultation, I have high hopes that what would emerge is a document – and a process -- truly ‘owned’ by Provinces in such a way that to ‘sign on’ is to be highly cognizant of the *presence* of others in what the symbol of covenant means. The more participatory the process, the less likelihood of something being developed that will behave like a so-called objective ‘test’ of orthodoxy, in which ‘signing on’ is compliance rather than commitment to real mission and real Communion relationships – a real sense of *covenanting together* for something greater than we are.

The language of a covenant must be that which invites conversation. The Archbishop of Canterbury some 15 years ago wrote on the integrity of theological language. Whilst a covenant will be more than *theological* language, still I believe his insights are helpful. The discourse that conceals its true agenda is without integrity, he argues (with further explanations about the meaning of integrity in relation to personhood).

“Why is it so important that speech should not conceal its purposes? Discourse that conceals is discourse that (consciously or not) sets out to foreclose the possibility of genuine response. By operating on two levels, one acknowledged and one not, it presents to the hearer a set of positions and arguments other than those that are finally determinative of its working. Thus the repudiation or refutation of the surface position leaves the body of the discourse untouched, since it will not engage the essential agenda. A two-level discourse is one which steps back from the risks of conversation – above all

from those two essential features of conversation, the recognition of an ‘unfinished’ quality in what has been said on either side, and the possibility of correction. (pp. 3-4)

“Having integrity, then, is being able to speak in a way which allows of answers. Honest discourse permits response and continuation; it invites collaboration by showing that it does not claim to be, in and of itself, final. It does not seek to prescribe the tone, the direction, or even the vocabulary of a response. And it does all this by showing in its own working a critical self-perception, displaying the axioms to which it believes itself accountable; that is to say, it makes it clear that it accepts, even within its own terms of reference, that there are ways in which it may be questioned and criticized. (p. 5)

Indeed, Rowan Williams is here speaking of the activity of theological discourse (whether spoken or written, say in articles or books). I would argue, though, that these insights have bearing on the covenant *process* of theological engagement and in the outcome. Whatever is developed cannot intend to be any last word about anything. It must be language that engages us, that *expects an answer*. The better it is, the more that *answer* will be in the form of commitment to engagement in common mission.

Dispute-settling mechanism

Toward an Anglican Covenant is clear in saying that the creation and adoption of a covenant will not be able to solve current disputes – or, I would add, future, even unforeseen disputes. So, what is it that we need? Similarly, IATDC has offered helpful theological underpinnings to a notion of covenant in its various biblical and ecclesial expressions, but then stops short of any precise formulation, reflecting, I believe, the impossibility of a Covenant to be a dispute-settling mechanism. Instead, the document from September 2006 (*Responding to a Proposal of Covenant*) proposes another body, specifically a theological body, to clarify and decide on contentious theological issues at the heart of disputes.

On the one hand, I think it is laudable and indeed highly responsible to encourage Communion-level hard theological work, particularly that sort that aims to clarify and deepen understanding of just what the theological issues are at stake in a situation of conflict. It is too easy sometimes, as Windsor itself suggests, to be fooled into thinking that a presenting issue is the only theological issue at stake. On the matter of human sexuality, Windsor quite rightly explains that these are only the superficial issues, underneath which are issues of authority, including biblical authority, the relationships between Gospel and culture, ecclesiology and the basics of theological anthropology.

However, it seems that we already have the structures in place for such detailed and hard theological work, within the IATDC itself. In *Responding to a Proposal of Covenant*, then, something else is being asked for, and at the level of an authority that can make decision with some sort of weight and consequence not already within the power of IATDC (*or any other body*

of the Communion). Conceivably, the theological commission of the Anglican Communion is in a position to work theologically on disputed questions and to offer opinion and even a consensus decision. This in turn would then be reported through the usual channels in the Communion and if so desired by the Provinces picked up, discussed, weighed, judged and acted upon by the Provinces within their own lives. But it is not clear to me how the sort of authority that is being asked for would work outside of this present reality.

Of further consideration are questions of how such a body would be created and agreed upon, how a mandate of “conflict resolution” might unhelpfully push certain assumptions into the theological conversation processes, and how appeals or requests for assistance would be offered to such a body.

Can we, as a Communion reach agreement on who the “best” theologians are? How would the interests and methodologies of all of the schools of theological expression currently held in Anglicanism, let alone the interests of Provinces be represented? Rather than a smallish body, we could be looking at something triple the size of the IATDC. Second, when the expressed task of a body is to resolve a conflict, that in itself begs questions about what are discerned to be conflicts necessitating “resolution.” Who discerns what issues need to be raised to this level? Who decides what a “Communion-level issue” is? At its best, a well formed theological body might have as its mandate the discernment of the nature of communion in the Anglican Communion and the provision of helpful parameters for a wider discernment of what are Communion-breaking and Communion-building actions and decisions. That, in effect, takes us back to the present and ongoing mandate of the IATDC.

By way of Conclusion

There is much made in *Windsor* and subsequent commentaries on the need to discern the mind of the Communion. This notion is applied in particular with respect to discerning whether a new doctrinal assertion is to be recognized, whether it is of such a gravitas as requires agreement in the whole Communion, or whether it can be tolerated as local development. It is hoped by some that the Covenant process will help to clarify how the “mind” of the Communion can be discerned and decided.

A Covenant process that is open, transparent, and participatory, engaging Provinces as early as possible in the process, and with respect for the Provinces’ own timetables and decision-making processes will be an experiment to be sure. But it will be the sort of experiment that will come closer to actually reading the “mind” of the Communion than any lesser or more centralized process will allow. Furthermore, sometimes it is only in committing to pastoral attentiveness and mission that we discover what our “mind” is. In the context of the Anglican Communion at present, it seems that the ministry of self-giving pastoral attentiveness to each other in humility and the mission of self-giving service to the world that God loves, ought to be the marks of a covenant process, underpinning the “Whys” and “Wherefores” of this project. To the extent that these commitments are made real, our communion will be uncovered in the fullness of the reality that it truly is.