

**The Draft Anglican Covenant:
A Response from the Faith and Order Board
of the Scottish Episcopal Church**

1. We value greatly our membership of the Anglican Communion, and appreciate the many benefits that this Communion brings to its constituent Provinces. We are saddened by the conflicts in recent years which have given rise to the Windsor Report, and to the consequent preparation of the Draft Covenant; and we share the desire of all in the Communion to heal the divisions which have been emerging amongst us.
2. We are grateful to the Covenant Drafting Group for its efforts in this matter, and we appreciate the magnitude of the task it faces. There is much in the Draft Covenant which we wish to commend: we appreciate its rootedness in Scripture, and in the common tradition which the Anglican Communion affirms: we are grateful for its attempt to give voice to generally-agreed principles within our communion; and we feel that this is an immensely valuable exercise which should call us to celebrate all that we hold in common.
3. As in all Provinces of our Communion, different individuals and different congregations within the Scottish Episcopal Church have responded differently to the Draft Covenant, and we wish to honour and affirm the diversity of views which are present within our Province. Nevertheless, it appears to us from the comments we have received that a majority of our members would broadly affirm the response which we set out below.
4. We have three principle areas of concern regarding the Draft Covenant.
 - The discussion of the foundations which are traditionally held to undergird Anglicanism omits to mention reason, which has long been thought to stand alongside scripture and tradition.
 - The wording of section 6 of the Draft Covenant is potentially open to a wide variety of interpretations. For example, to take paragraph 6.3 alone, we feel that the expressions such as ‘common mind’, ‘matters of essential concern’, and ‘common standards of faith’, all require significant further definition before they can bear the weight being placed upon them in the context of this Covenant. We are led to wonder whether the wording of section 6 of the Draft Covenant is fit for purpose in any practical circumstance in which it is likely to be called upon.
 - We note that the Draft Covenant invests the Primates’ meeting with considerable and wide-ranging powers. We question whether the Primates’ meeting is the Instrument of Unity best suited to the task being entrusted to it (rather than the ACC, which contains a more wide-ranging representation of Church members).

5. We have two further observations to make from our particular, Scottish, context.
 - We feel that nuances which are of significance to particular provinces have been overlooked as a consequence of the quest for agreed principles. For example, our liturgical tradition has foundations other than just the Book of Common Prayer of 1662. As a consequence, the narrative of institution does not have the privileged place in our Eucharistic liturgies that is implied in section 2.3: indeed, the invocation of the Holy Spirit (the epiclesis), which does not appear in the 1662 prayer book, is equally as significant in our tradition. Instances such as this, taken singly, may appear trivial; but we are concerned that the production of any document of this type may fail to do justice to the rich pluriformity which exists within our Communion.
 - While we believe it to be regrettable that any formal document should be required for the continuation of relationships within our Communion, rather than the mutual bonds of understanding, trust, and respect which have hitherto underpinned Anglicanism, if such a document is felt to be necessary, within our own tradition in Scotland the term ‘concordat’ has been preferred to ‘covenant’ (the latter word having painful resonances in our context that would not be present in others’). A concordat, or bond of union, celebrates those things which its signatories have in common, reminding them thereby of their mutual affections and responsibilities. The American-Scottish Concordat of 1784 noted that the parties involved ‘agree in desiring that there may be as near a Conformity in Worship and Discipline established between the two Churches, as is consistent with the different Circumstances and Customs of Nations.’ We offer to our Communion such a model as a possible alternative to the Covenant proposal which is currently before us.
6. We are conscious that a full response to the Draft Covenant would require a document rather more detailed than this present one, in order to do justice to the arguments both of the Draft Covenant and of those in our Province who have offered comments on it; but in the interests of furthering discussions expeditiously, we offer this concise response to the Drafting Group for its consideration.