



THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION

18 December 2009

To Primates, Moderators and Provincial Secretaries of the Anglican Communion:

I am pleased to send you the final text of The Anglican Communion Covenant, approved for distribution today by the Standing Committee of the Anglican Communion, for formal consideration for adoption by your Province through its appropriate processes.

The presentation of the Covenant to the Provinces of the Anglican Communion represents an invitation to deepening of relationships among those Provinces. We have a long history of friendship, affinities and collaboration between Provinces, dioceses, parishes and people across the globe, and we celebrate these manifold expressions of our oneness in Christ.

The Covenant represents a further step in these relationships, building on and giving expression to the bonds of affection which shape our common life.

You will recall that the idea for an Anglican Communion Covenant was first mooted in *The Windsor Report* (paragraphs 113-120). The Joint Standing Committee of the Primates and of the Anglican Consultative Council commissioned a study paper on the idea in March 2005, *Towards an Anglican Covenant*.

At its meeting in May 2006, the Joint Standing Committee asked the Archbishop of Canterbury to establish a Covenant Design Group to further the project. This group gave a preliminary report to the Primates Meeting in Dar es Salaam in February 2007. The report included the *Nassau Draft*, which was sent to Provinces for their initial response.

The Covenant Design Group met again at the end of January 2008 and produced a second text, the *St. Andrew's Draft*, taking into account the submissions to the group. This draft was offered for further reflections to the Provinces. Extensive discussion was undertaken by the bishops at the 2008 Lambeth Conference. Their comments and discussion were received by the Covenant Design Group at their meeting in Singapore in September 2008. It issued a *Lambeth Commentary* which picked up on the bishops' thinking, as well as offering the further reflection of the Covenant Design Group.

In March 2009 the Covenant Design Group considered all of the submissions from Provinces received to that point, along with the bishops' reflections, and produced a third text, the *Ridley-Cambridge Draft*, which was presented to the 14th meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council in Jamaica in May 2009.

ACC-14 discussed the text in depth and welcomed its development, but expressed concern that the text of Section 4 had not received the same depth of consultation with Provinces which the first three sections had, and consequently requested that a small working group be set up to 'consider and consult with the Provinces on Section 4 and its possible revision', for approval by the Standing Committee.

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Secretary General: The Revd Canon Kenneth Kearon

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That group met in November 2009, considered 18 responses received from the Provinces, and revised Section 4 in light of these responses (3 further responses were received after this work was completed). This text was presented to the Standing Committee, which has now approved it for distribution.

In accordance with ACC resolution 14-11, I am sending this text only to the member Churches of the Anglican Consultative Council for consideration and decision on acceptance or adoption by them as The Anglican Communion Covenant; and asking those member Churches to report to ACC-15 on the progress made in the processes of response to, and adoption of, the Covenant.

May I ask that you keep me informed of progress as consideration of the Covenant takes place in your Province, so that I may report to the Standing Committee at each of its meetings, and to ACC-15.

The Standing Committee has decided that it will neither invite any other Churches (beyond the Schedule of members of the ACC) to adopt the Covenant (Covenant 4.1.5), nor propose any amendments to it (Covenant 4.4.2), until it has had an opportunity to evaluate the situation after ACC-15.

Section 4.1.5 of the Covenant refers to the 'procedures as set out by the Anglican Consultative Council for the amendment of its schedule of membership'. These procedures are to be found in the Articles of Association of the Anglican Consultative Council 2.2, which state '..with the assent of two-thirds of the Primates of the Anglican Communion (which shall be deemed to have been received if not withheld in writing within four months from the date of notification) the Standing Committee may alter or add to the Schedule'¹.

The Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Unity, Faith and Order will be assisting the reception process for the Covenant by developing educational materials and arranging for the translation of the text into several languages. Background materials, including previous commentaries and Provincial responses, will be posted on the Anglican Communion website (www.anglicancommunion.org) as they become available.

Wishing you God's blessing as we prepare to celebrate the coming of our Saviour,



The Revd Canon Dr Kenneth Kearon
Secretary General of the Anglican Communion

¹ See also the Constitution of the Anglican Consultative Council section 3a.
<http://www.aco.org/communion/acc/resources/docs/constitution.cfm>

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