



# ANGLICAN CHURCH OF BURUNDI

## Provincial Office

B.P. 2098, Bujumbura, Burundi

Tél. + 257 22 22 43 89 – Fax + 257 22 22 91 29

Email. [peab@cbinf.com](mailto:peab@cbinf.com)

## Response for the Anglican Church of Burundi to the Ridley Cambridge Draft Section 4

### I. Preamble

The House of Bishops of the Anglican Church of Burundi has noted the request from ACC-14 that Provinces participate in a consultation regarding Section 4 of the Ridley Cambridge Draft of the Anglican Communion Covenant in order to identify issues of ambiguity and lack of clarity in the text.

It is clear that “the bonds of affection” that have held us together as a communion in the past are severely strained and, for some, are already deemed broken.

We are convinced that without some form of accountability there can be no real communion. An ordered life requires mechanisms to govern it that go beyond mere moral force. Such mechanisms should facilitate genuine, possibly mediated, discussion of contentious issues and offer wise theological discernment and advice to the Instruments of Unity.

It is necessary for section 4 to provide procedures that can be agreed upon for addressing actions that threaten the covenanted life of Churches. In light of the events over recent years, it is important that such procedures prohibit unilateral actions on issues that might threaten relationships between covenanted Churches. As the saying goes, “what touches all should be decided by all.”

### II. Our comments on section 4

In our discussions, the House of Bishops has noted that section 4 provides:

- a framework for adopting, maintaining, withdrawing from, and amending the Covenant.
- a framework for governing relationships with other covenanted churches based on commitment, mutuality, commonality, and interdependence without undermining autonomy of governance.
- a less juridical and complex approach to disputes than the one outlined in the appendix to the St Andrew’s Draft.
- procedures by which actions can be assessed and responses to issues can be formulated.
- the task of overseeing the maintenance and respect of covenanted life is assigned to the Primates’ Meeting and the ACC along with the JSC assigned

However we raise the following issues about section 4:

- That further clarification and definition of terms and concepts that are familiar and used in an Anglican context are still needed. An appended glossary might facilitate this and avoid confusion or misunderstanding in the future. (The terms needing explanation might be - “Church”, “Churches”, and “other Churches” – the notion of “controversial action”, “relational consequences” and “limitation of participation” that remain unclear – interdependence, shared discernment, accountability, and autonomy)
- Further clarification is needed regarding who may sign to the Covenant. It is generally indicated that Provinces sign. However, may there be circumstances when individual dioceses might wish to sign where and when a Province does not?

- No indication of time scale is given for the completion of processes relating to decisions pertaining to actions that are considered incompatible with the Covenant or breach it.
- Regarding 4.2.2 it is unclear as to which specific principles would be applied to decide whether actions are incompatible with the Covenant. In 3.2.4 there is reference to the notion of seeking a “*shared mind*” with other Churches but no mechanisms are identified for its facilitation.
- It is unclear at what point in the dispute resolution process the terms of the Covenant might actually be deemed to be impaired, and how a church in obvious violation of the Covenant is ultimately responded to. In 4.2.5 the JSC may only “make recommendations as to *relational consequences* to the Churches of the Anglican Communion or to the Instruments of the Communion”. It is then referred back to the *Churches*, or to any Instrument, so that it can make its own decision. It is unclear what actions appropriately follow this stage in the process and what level of response would be needed for some final decision or action to be taken regarding consequences for a Church that is in obvious violation of the Covenant, or threatening its life.
- The matter of some level of consistency between the covenanted Churches arises from 4.2.6 regarding what is put in place to oversee the maintenance of the Covenant. Without some guidelines the emphasis on the preservation of the autonomy of the Churches could undermine the integrity of the commitments made and render it impossible to ever reach conclusions on those actions deemed incompatible with the Covenant.
- The question of how covenanting and non-covenanting Churches participate together is not addressed. How do we define the Anglican identity of those Churches that have not signed the Covenant?

### **III. Conclusion:**

“... we recognise the importance of renewing in a solemn way our commitment to one another, and to the common understanding of faith and order we have received, so that the bonds of affection which hold us together may be re-affirmed and intensified. We do this in order to reflect, in our relations with one another, God’s own faithfulness and promises towards us in Christ.” (RCD introduction para.5)

It is important that the final text of section 4 renders the Covenant meaningful and has sufficient integrity and coherence so that those desiring to covenant may do so with confidence.

The Province of the Anglican Church of Burundi supports and approves the Covenant proposal as presented in the Ridley Cambridge Draft and therefore prays that the Covenant will enable the Anglican Communion to move forward as an effective witness in the world as it engages in the mission to which it has been called by Christ.

House of Bishops  
 Province of the Anglican Church of Burundi  
 Date: 10 November 2009