The Ridley Cambridge Draft of the Proposed Anglican Communion Covenant

A Response from the Faith and Order Board of the Scottish Episcopal Church

1. We would again like to express our thanks for the work that the Covenant Drafting Group have undertaken on behalf of our Communion and for the opportunity to comment upon the Third (Ridley Cambridge) Draft, and specifically upon the text of Section 4. Limitations have been experienced in the responding process because of the time constraint, the obligation to limit comments to section 4 and no opportunity to present previous, still valid, comments. We are concerned that there are still some areas which require clarification, such as who (Diocese or Province) would sign the Covenant.

This draft has been discussed widely and with great interest throughout the Scottish Episcopal Church during the past few months. The interest has grown, and although this response is limited to Section 4 as requested, we commend to you comments on Sections 1 – 3 contained in the submissions which are attached. They concern the issue of whether excessive powers would be invested in the committee; the need to discern the way forward in the light of Scripture, tradition and reason; the importance of deep cultural differences in our life together in the Communion.

2. The proposed Anglican Covenant remains a topic of real debate within the Scottish Episcopal Church. Some welcome the proposed Covenant, seeking unity and mutual accountability within the Anglican Communion, believing that we must develop strategies for dealing with disputes and set out boundaries. Many others are very uneasy, believing that a Covenant cannot resolve the problems currently facing the Anglican Communion, and might actually be significantly divisive when a decision has to be made about a particular diocese or Province.

3. The relational approach to conflict resolution enshrined in Section 4 has been welcomed. Nevertheless, there is a general feeling that Section 4 as it currently stands is, in places, unclear and ambiguous, and indeed, could even lead to, and enshrine schism.

In particular, comments focus on the following points:

- Section 4.1 makes no mention of the status of a church that chooses not to sign the Covenant. We would welcome some clarity as to the status of such churches. Clarity would also be appreciated as to the status of dioceses or congregations within the Scottish Episcopal Church who find themselves at odds with a decision by the Scottish Episcopal Church regarding the acceptance or otherwise of the Covenant.

- The declaration in Section 4.1.3 that "recognition of, and fidelity to, the text of this Covenant, enables mutual recognition and communion" appears to imply that mutual "recognition and communion" will be impaired if one does not recognise the Covenant. Clarification on this point would be welcomed.

- The declaration in Section 4.1.3 that "nothing in this Covenant of itself shall be deemed to alter any provision of the Constitution and Canons of any Church of the Communion, or to limit its autonomy of governance" is undermined by the provisions of Section 4.2.
4. There remains within the Scottish Episcopal Church a great love and respect for the Anglican Communion. We believe that our life together is greatly enriched by our membership of the Communion and we hope and pray that God will help us to resolve our current difficulties.

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