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2 A Response to  
3 Resolution ACC 14.11: The Anglican Communion Covenant  
4 by the Executive Council of The Episcopal Church  
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6 1. Introduction  
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8 We are writing as the Executive Council of The Episcopal Church in response to  
9 Resolution 14.11: The Anglican Communion Covenant passed by the May 2009  
10 meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council asking Provinces to consider and  
11 report on Section Four of the Ridley Cambridge Draft (RCD) and its possible  
12 revision. We are grateful to ACC 14 for giving the provinces the opportunity to  
13 consider the RCD in the hopes of realizing a fully matured Anglican Covenant.  
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15 Resolution A166 of the 2006 General Convention asked the Executive Council to  
16 facilitate The Episcopal Church's response to "the development of an Anglican  
17 Covenant that underscores our unity in faith, order, and common life in the  
18 service of God's mission." In furtherance of that role, the Executive Council  
19 provides the following response to the RCD with special attention to Section  
20 Four.  
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22 This response is made up of five sections. Following this brief introduction there  
23 is a discussion of the process by which the Executive Council solicited input in  
24 the drafting of this response from the diocesan deputations of the 2009 General  
25 Convention of The Episcopal Church. Next is a detailed exposition of responses  
26 received from across The Episcopal Church relating to Section Four of the RCD.  
27 Following that will be additional material related to the Anglican Communion  
28 Covenant generated by various bodies in The Episcopal Church before and after  
29 the 2009 General Convention. The document concludes with a presentation on  
30 the next steps that The Episcopal Church envisions as our church's ongoing  
31 participation in the development of an Anglican Communion Covenant.  
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34 2. Process  
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36 Upon receipt of the letter of 28 May 2009 from the Secretary General of the  
37 Anglican Communion asking that Section Four of the RCD be considered by  
38 each province, Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori, President of the House  
39 of Deputies Bonnie Anderson, and Chair of the Executive Council's Task Force  
40 on the Anglican Covenant, Rosalie Simmonds Ballentine, communicated with the  
41 Bishops and Deputies to the 2009 General Convention in a letter of 29 June 2009

42 asking each deputation to consider the RCD and report back to the Executive  
43 Council by 1 September 2009 (See attached letter of 29 June, 2009). To facilitate  
44 the diocesan consideration of the RCD with particular attention to Section Four,  
45 the Executive Council's Task Force on the Anglican Covenant produced "Six  
46 Study Questions" (See attached).

47

48 The Executive Council's Task Force received 34 responses to the Six Study  
49 Questions from both diocesan deputations and from individual deputies. Full  
50 deputation responses were received from Atlanta, the Convocation of the  
51 Churches in Europe, Massachusetts, Michigan, Rhode Island, Northern  
52 Michigan, San Joaquin, Springfield, and Western New York.

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### 55 3. Responses to the RCD with Attention to Section Four

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57 We observe that as we approach the third draft of an Anglican Covenant, we are  
58 beginning to address some of the most difficult matters and substance relating to  
59 such a covenant. While the task at hand was to respond specifically to Section IV,  
60 comments on the draft covenant as a whole are so interwoven that separating the  
61 two is difficult.

62

63 The majority of deputations and individual deputies that responded are not  
64 convinced that the covenant in its current form will bring about deeper  
65 communion. Several stated that the overall idea of a covenant is "un-Anglican."  
66 One went as far as to say that the "document incorporates anxiety." However,  
67 another deputy observed that the covenant is "a presentation of the Christian  
68 community as a dynamic spiritual body in which God-given freedom is  
69 inextricably bound up with God-given accountability."

70

71 The majority of respondents do not support the fourth section of the draft  
72 covenant. One deputation stated that section 4 is "disturbing" because it creates a  
73 system of governance contrary to our understanding of Anglicanism and  
74 establishes a punitive system executed by a select committee. On the other hand,  
75 a deputation felt that the fourth section is important because a governance  
76 section is needed to maintain a covenant.

77

78 Many individuals and some deputations raised questions about internal  
79 contradictions in the draft. Some responses noted the tension between autonomy

80 of provinces and having some central body in the Anglican Communion that  
81 would ensure compliance with the Anglican Covenant.

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83 In addition to the above broad concerns, the following specific issues were  
84 raised:

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86 • Several comments expressed concern about the silencing of prophetic voices  
87 by the proposed necessity of seeking a “shared mind.” There is the sense that  
88 this shared mind might mean a uniformity in which differences are not  
89 tolerated. One person commented that a shared mind is “not our goal as  
90 Christians. Our goal is to ‘put on the mind of Christ.’” One deputation felt  
91 that there was a “contradiction between statements affirming diversity and  
92 autonomy with those suggesting that certain ‘controversial actions’ might be  
93 deferred with the threat of ‘relational consequences.’”

94

95 • The phrase “relational consequences” raised many questions. Some felt that  
96 this was a euphemism for punishment. One person expressed concern that  
97 there is not sufficient provision for hearings, due process or a listening  
98 process before judgment may be rendered. On the other hand, a deputation  
99 felt that this phrase “remains intentionally ambiguous so as to allow the  
100 processes and procedures... to determine the ‘consequences.’”

101

102 • Some responses worried about the increased power abrogated to the Joint  
103 Standing Committee (now understood as the Standing Committee of the  
104 Anglican Communion) that constitutionally has not had such authority.  
105 There is some concern that the new standing committee could become a fifth  
106 or a super Instrument of Communion. If there were to be a body that  
107 determined membership and implementation of a covenant, deputies and  
108 deputations felt that should be exclusively the role of the Anglican  
109 Consultative Council. One deputation expressed its fears about 4.2.2 because  
110 the powers were so “ill-defined as to endanger the very essence of  
111 Anglicanism.” Further, some also wondered who would define “the highest  
112 degree of communion” and what this means.

113

114 • Most responses found that the concept of “church” in 4.1.5 of the RCD was  
115 confusing, specifically: does the word, “church” mean other Anglican bodies

116 that are not part of the scheduled membership of the ACC or does it refer to  
 117 ecumenical partners? As one person wrote, “The use of ‘other churches’ in  
 118 Section 4.1.5 is particularly unclear and it also seems to be aimed at a different  
 119 purpose than the overall covenant proposal...” This individual suggests  
 120 creating a glossary to flesh out this and other “broad brush terms.” Other  
 121 persons queried whether “church” means a parish, or an Anglican religious  
 122 order, or a competing province in a geographic location can join. If a province  
 123 in one geographic area chose not to sign the Covenant, could a new  
 124 “province” in that geographic area do so?

125

126 • Some deputations and deputies focused on the lack of attention given to the  
 127 laity. As noted in our responses to previous drafts of the covenant, the role  
 128 and authority of the laity — all the baptized — again is neglected. One  
 129 deputation observed that Section 3.1.3 neglects the primacy of baptism.

130

131 • One deputation suggested that in lieu of using the word, “covenant,” the  
 132 document should be called a “Declaration of Communion.”

133

134 • Another deputation wondered what would constitute enactment of the  
 135 covenant. No draft has specified who is needed or what percentage of the  
 136 Anglican Communion needs to sign on for the covenant to go into effect. This  
 137 deputation suggested 3/4 membership to affirm the covenant.

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140 4. Additional discussions related to RCD

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142 The Executive Council is aware that reactions to the RCD are not limited to the  
 143 responses received to the “Six Study Questions” prepared by the Executive  
 144 Council’s Task Force.

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146 In response to some actions of the 2009 General Convention, 36 active and retired  
 147 bishops of The Episcopal Church have signed the Anaheim statement, parts of  
 148 which are germane to The Episcopal Church’s discussions related to the  
 149 Anglican Communion Covenant process. Specifically the statement says, “We  
 150 reaffirm our commitment to the Anglican Communion Covenant process  
 151 currently underway, with the hope of working toward its implementation across  
 152 the Communion once a Covenant is completed.”

153

154 In these many discussions and in the Executive Council's formal responses to  
155 both the Nassau and St. Andrew's drafts, it is clear that The Episcopal Church  
156 takes very seriously its role as a constituent member of the Anglican Communion  
157 and is committed to participating in the development processes of the Anglican  
158 Communion Covenant.

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## 161 5. Next Steps

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163 The 2009 General Convention of The Episcopal Church reaffirmed The Episcopal  
164 Church's ongoing commitment to participate in the development of an Anglican  
165 Communion Covenant. More specifically Resolution 2009-D020 states the  
166 following:

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168 Resolved, the House of Bishops concurring, That the 76th General  
169 Convention of the Episcopal Church commend the Anglican Covenant  
170 proposed in the most recent text of the Covenant Design Group (the  
171 "Ridley Cambridge Draft") and any successive drafts to the dioceses for  
172 study and comment during the coming triennium; and be it further

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174 Resolved, That dioceses report on their study to the Executive Council in  
175 keeping with Resolution 2006-A166; and be it further

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177 Resolved, That Executive Council prepare a report to the 77th General  
178 Convention of the Episcopal Church that includes draft legislation  
179 concerning this Church's response to an Anglican Covenant; and be it  
180 further

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182 Resolved, That dioceses and congregations be invited to consider the  
183 Anglican Covenant proposed draft as a document to inform their  
184 understanding of and commitment to our common life in the Anglican  
185 Communion.

186

187 As the highest legislative authority of The Episcopal Church, the General  
188 Convention is the body that will ultimately decide The Episcopal Church's  
189 position with respect to its participation in an Anglican Communion Covenant.  
190 There are some in The Episcopal Church and beyond who want to prejudge The  
191 General Convention's decision on the Anglican Communion Covenant. We find  
192 such predictions and pronouncements premature and unhelpful.

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194 As directed by Resolution 2009-D020, the Executive Council continues its  
195 commitment to facilitating The Episcopal Church's response to the Anglican  
196 Communion Covenant. We on the Executive Council entrust this work to the  
197 leading of the Holy Spirit and look forward to the next three years as we grow  
198 more deeply into our common life in the Anglican Communion.

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202 ECTFAC/DC

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