

## **A Response to the Anglican Covenant, St Andrew's Draft from the General Convention Deputation of the Diocese of Northern Indiana**

### *Précis*

We, the lay and clerical deputies of the Diocese of Northern Indiana, gratefully endorse the “St. Andrew’s Draft” of the evolving Anglican Covenant. In our response, we note several positive features that build on the strengths of the first draft:

- A vision of Christian communion rooted in the holy and undivided Trinity as the ground and shape of the one Church’s existence and order.
- An extraordinary and courageous ecumenical self-consciousness.
- A distinctly Anglican contribution to ecumenical ecclesiology.
- A persistent call to understand provincial autonomy in the context of deferential love toward the whole Body of Christ.
- A helpful move toward a stronger definition of the nature of Anglican unity.

Looking ahead to future revisions, we recommend that the Covenant Design Group consider:

- Citing *Windsor Report* §82 at 3.1.2 (in addition to the citation of *Windsor Report* §76), for its memorable statement that communion is “the fundamental limit to autonomy.”
- Granting a final adjudicatory role to the Joint Standing Committee of ACC and Primates at Appendix §8. The JSC is a much smaller group than either the Primates’ Meeting or the ACC, and possesses the strengths of each Instrument of Communion.

### *Our Understanding of the Context of This Response*

1. The lay and clergy Deputies from Northern Indiana welcome the opportunity to offer a response to the most recent draft of the evolving Anglican Covenant. In this time of high anxiety in the Anglican Communion, some fresh articulation of the bonds of our common life and witness seems both necessary and urgent. We cannot at this moment afford the luxury of relying on the sort of habitual and innate affection that may have served us well in the past, but no longer does so. This is a season for careful collective discernment of “the Spirit’s tether”<sup>1</sup> as the churches of our Communion move forward together. As privileged North American Anglicans, any response to the present crisis that does not call on an abundant measure of charity and patience—perhaps a greater measure than we even know we possess—would be profoundly impoverished.

2. We are aware that many within our own Episcopal Church find the very notion of an Anglican Covenant, as well as the particular draft currently under consideration, threatening to our cherished autonomy. We are likewise aware that many of the faithful in other Anglican provinces are similarly dismayed by the prospect of expectations of mutual accountability that are more formally defined than what we have come to know as

normative in the past. We are not naïve about the possibility that some of our Anglican brothers and sisters will find it agonizingly difficult, if not impossible, to live according to the principle that “communion is the fundamental limit to autonomy.”<sup>ii</sup> In our general endorsement of the St Andrew’s Draft, it is certainly not our intention to surrender to the specter of further schism within the Anglican fellowship. Rather, it is our hope that, in making this response, we will, in our own small way, move the process forward toward a positive outcome.

### *Scriptural Ecclesiology of Communion, Ecumenically Wrought*

3. In the St Andrew’s Draft, the Covenant Design Group (CDG) offers a vision of Christian communion rooted in the holy and undivided Trinity as the ground and shape of the one Church’s existence and order. In this way, the Draft sustains an extraordinary and courageous ecumenical self-consciousness, as may be seen in the consistency of distinction between “Church,” referring to the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church of the creeds, and “churches” (sometimes “Churches”), referring to Anglican and other members of the body. In this same spirit, the Draft initially articulates a trinitarian ecclesiology with reference to the Anglican-Orthodox “Cyprus Statement” of 2007 (§1 of the introduction); and at many points, texts of ARCIC might also have been cited, including the three agreed texts on authority (1976, 1981, 1998) and 1990’s *Church as Communion*, to say nothing of the influence of ARCIC on *The Windsor Report*.<sup>iii</sup>

4. The eight paragraphs of introduction capably articulate the scriptural terms of communion, especially as found in I and II Corinthians and Ephesians, as is typical in ecumenical literature. God’s mission is universal, seeking the restoration of a fallen creation, and takes a particular form in Jesus Christ, in whose person the Church is formed as a covenanted community of reconciliation—marked by faithfulness, honesty, gentleness, humility, patience, forgiveness, and love—for the sake of the world (§§1-3). Within the context of this larger, providential history, “which holds sway even over our divisions caused by sin,” the Anglican Communion finds itself as a family of churches called to “mutual commitment and discipline as a witness to God’s promise in a world and time of instability, conflict, and fragmentation” (§4).

5. We note here a distinctively Anglican contribution to ecumenical ecclesiology. In 1886, the American House of Bishops adopted a statement (now part of the Historical Documents section of our Prayer Book) that formed the basis of what would later become the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral, the classic articulation of an Anglican ecumenical stance. The statement acknowledged that, for the greater good of the larger Church’s unity, “this Church is ready in the spirit of love and humility to forego all preferences of her own.”<sup>iv</sup> Such an embrace of provisionality—forbearance on the part of the *local* for the sake of the welfare of the *global*—became a hallmark of many Anglican writings of the 20<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>v</sup> in the service of the conviction that the visible brokenness of the Body of Christ must never be permanently institutionalized. In this tradition, many have concluded that Anglicans in particular may be called by God to take the lead in straining

toward a time when we surrender our particularity, so that the Holy Spirit may “reveal [our] unity”<sup>vi</sup> as part of a larger, catholic whole.

6. If this much can be said of Anglicanism *in toto*, then much more may it be said of its “constituent members.”<sup>vii</sup> Consequently, we are encouraged to find in both the introduction and the text proper of the St Andrew’s Draft a persistent call to understand provincial autonomy never as existing in a vacuum, but always in the context of deferential love toward the whole—at once, the Anglican Communion and the larger Church. This is both admirable and practical in approaching and working through our difficulties as a Communion.

7. This thread of the Covenant Draft performs a serendipitous teaching function for the benefit of all Anglicans in that it shines a light on the cutting edge of our Communion’s evolving ecclesiology. In managing the tension between unity and diversity, we are called at this time in our history to a clearer articulation of the elements of unity between the various provinces of the Communion. In view of present difficulties, we affirm the appropriateness of a more concrete definition of the “bonds of affection” that have historically held us together. The St Andrew’s Draft moves us helpfully in the direction of such a stronger definition of the nature of our unity. Moreover, it is consistent with the trajectory of Anglican thinking going back over a half century to the notion of Mutual Responsibility and Interdependence, articulated at the third Anglican Congress in 1963, and taken up at the Lambeth Conference in 1968, at successive meetings of the Anglican Consultative Council, and by the Mission Issues and Strategy Advising Group (MISAG) in 1993.<sup>viii</sup>

### ***More Particular Textual Observations***

8. Section 1.1 sets out clearly the trinitarian faith shared by all churches of the Anglican Communion, along with the common marks we share. Section 1.2 provides a useful outline of the elements of our common commitment, consistent with these marks.

9. 1.2.2 presents an apt revision of the earlier phrase, “biblically derived moral values.” We commend also the statement in Section 1.2.3 about the joys and obligations of our eucharistic life as Anglicans, placed within a larger ecumenical context. Sections 1.2.5 and 1.2.6 state well the connections of ministry and mission for the churches of the Communion and our common journey to God.

10. In the Episcopal Church during the last few decades, the notion of stewardship, in both its theological and spiritual dimensions, has received increasing attention and emphasis, and has been fruitfully developed in a number of contexts. From this perspective, we agree that “communion is a gift of God” (2.1.1), an affirmation that underlies any concept of stewardship, not the least with a view to “reconciliation and shared mission with the Church throughout the world” (2.1.3).

11. Section 3 takes the next logical step and develops what might be called an ecclesiology of stewardship. The CDG breaks open in 3.1.1 that which we are stewards *of*, namely, the Paschal Mystery, incarnated sacramentally in Baptism and Eucharist and manifested concretely in the life and mission of the Church. This underscores yet again the fundamental Anglican understanding that we, as a global communion and still moreso as constituent parts thereof, hold the gospel and the faith of the Church in trust; it is not our own, but that which has been handed on,<sup>ix</sup> which we in turn have a duty to deliver intact to those who follow us. This rubric of stewardship is a source of energy that can help the several churches of our Communion, including our own Episcopal Church, resist the devolution of healthy autonomy into unhealthy insularity and provincialism. It enables us to realize more fully that we *possess* the gospel only inasmuch as we do *so for* one another and for the life of the world. We exercise the diverse gifts of the Spirit responsibly only when we do so for the edification of the whole.<sup>x</sup>

12. Any understanding of provincial autonomy must be situated in this context of stewardship—shared trust. 3.1.2 appropriately cites *Windsor Report* §76, which argues persuasively to this end. The drafters might also have cited *Windsor Report* §82 for its memorable statement, already noted above, that communion is “the fundamental limit to autonomy.”

13. This serves as a theological basis for the trajectory of Section 3.2, which presents the necessity of the Church taking counsel (see esp. 3.2.3 and 3.2.4), a part of her orderly life that the Draft Appendix further navigates by proposing a framework for conversation, consultation, resolution, reconciliation, and restoration when disagreements threaten the unity of the Communion. It is difficult to see how some such framework can be avoided, given that Anglicans presently lack “a common mind about matters understood to be of essential concern” (3.2.4), and we commend the CDG for the restrained charity informing their present proposals.

14. In its commentary on the present Draft, the CDG notes that the “procedural appendix will need much scrutiny and careful analysis,” and to this end “particularly welcomes comments and response on this appendix, while at [the same time] recognizing its provisional nature in the St Andrew’s Draft.” In this regard, we note the change from a special role for the Primates as final arbiter, as presented in the first draft, to the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) as final arbiter in this draft (see §8 of the Appendix). We believe that some compromise between these should be struck, to wit, that the Joint Standing Committee of ACC and Primates play this final, adjudicatory role. The Joint Standing Committee is a much smaller group than either the Primates’ Meeting or the ACC, and combines admirably the strengths of each Instrument of Communion.

### ***Concluding Comments***

15. Many, particularly within the Episcopal Church, have already argued that the very idea of an Anglican Covenant, and all the more the St Andrew’s Draft, is inherently alien to the Anglican tradition and ethos. We do not share this perception. We have tried to

note several points in the documents of Anglican history which reveal a developmental arc that would lead us to this place even absent the present crisis. The formal embrace of an Anglican Covenant is an organic and natural next step in the growth to maturity of a Christian tradition that we believe God yet wills to use as a vehicle of great blessing on behalf of “all who profess and call themselves Christians.”<sup>xi</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> From the hymn text “Draw us in the Spirit’s tether” by Percy Dearmer.

<sup>ii</sup> *Windsor Report* 82.

<sup>iii</sup> See esp. the submission to the Lambeth Commission by the ad hoc sub-commission of IARCCUM, “Ecclesiological Reflections on the Current Situation in the Anglican Communion in the Light of ARCIC” (available on the Anglican Communion website).

<sup>iv</sup> BCP, p. 876.

<sup>v</sup> See e.g. the ecclesiological writings of scholar-bishop Michael Ramsey, and again, Stephen Neill, appropriated by the current occupant of the See of Canterbury (e.g. in his contributions to *Glory Descending: Michael Ramsey and His Writings*, ed. Douglas Dales, John Habgood, Geoffrey Rowell, and Rowan Williams [Norwich: Canterbury Press; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005]). Alongside the Quadrilateral, the statement of the 1920 Lambeth Conference that the growth of the Anglican Communion “presents an example on a small scale of the problems which attach to the unity of a universal Church. As the years go on, its ideals must become less Anglican and more Catholic” casts a long shadow in this literature (quoting from the “Report of the Whole Committee on some important results of the extension and development of the Anglican Communion”).

<sup>vi</sup> Eucharistic Prayer D, BCP 1979.

<sup>vii</sup> Among which the Episcopal Church numbers itself in the Preamble to its constitution.

<sup>viii</sup> This is the apparent allusion of 3.2.2 of the Draft. Cf. the 2006 report of the Special Commission on the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion, *One Baptism, One Hope in God’s Call*, §32.

<sup>ix</sup> An expression that gives the sense of the Greek *paradosis*, which is usually rendered “tradition.”

<sup>x</sup> This lies at the core of what it means to be Catholic, from the Greek *kata holos*, “according to the entirety.”

<sup>xi</sup> 1928 BCP, p. 18.