

Suggestions for the revision of the St. Andrew's Draft of the proposed Anglican Covenant

Anglican Communion Institute (ACI)

Having received and reflected upon the summaries of the 2008 Lambeth Conference offered by, especially, the Archbishop of Canterbury as he sought to articulate a “consensus” vision from the gathered bishops for the Anglican Communion, ACI offers some suggestions on revising the Draft at the Covenant Design Group’s upcoming meetings. Bearing in mind concerns from some bishops not present at Lambeth, the recommendations of the Windsor Continuation Group, and the clear sense that the faith and witness of the Anglican churches of our Communion require the common commitments that a strong and clear Covenant would provide, we propose the following revisions of the current St. Andrew’s Draft *in light of the Lambeth Conference* itself:

1. Regarding the authority of Scripture:

The authority of Scripture, is an Anglican fundamental, and distinguishes the special witness of our tradition from at least the 14th century. As a fundamental in this regard it even surfaced clearly in the Lambeth Reflections and deserves greater and primary emphasis in the Covenant.

We suggest breaking up 1.1.2 of the current draft into three separate paragraphs, dealing with Scripture, the Creeds, and the historic Formularies respectively. Regarding the first paragraph on Scripture, we recommend adding the following descriptions of Scripture’s nature to our common commitments: that it is the “Word of God”; that “nothing be ordained” by the Church “against” “God’s Word written” or taught in a way that is “repugnant” to it (Articles 20 and 34).

2. Regarding the “procedural” directions to be adopted in the face of Communion-conflict (3.2.5.c-e) we recommend the following:

- a. Take up the Continuation Group’s proposal for a Faith and Order group for the Communion;
- b. Be explicit in describing its composition, of perhaps 10 persons, as necessarily including bishops, clergy, and laity, with the Chair of the Joint Standing Committee of Primates and ACC acting as Chair *ex officio*, and members selected for a period of 10 years by a process of the Lambeth Conference or initially some other representative means.
- d. Concerns regarding a province’s violation of the Covenant should be lodged with the Archbishop of Canterbury, who will refer the matter *pro forma* to the Faith and Order Commission. In the meantime, he may choose to address the matter himself pastorally if

that seems feasible and desirable, and the Commission may later, in light of this, choose to table the referral.

- e. The Commission will recommend a judgment to the Primates, who will provide a “provisional”, but authoritative decision; if the matter remains an issue, the Lambeth Conference will provide a final decision, without appeal.
- f. The Faith and Order Commission and the Primates Meeting will provide a decision that includes i. a determination of the concern’s relation to the Covenant; ii. a recommended course of response that will either drop the matter, direct mediation, or request a change of teaching or discipline on the part of one of the respondents, with a time table.
- g. The Pastoral Forum will be charged with implementing these decisions in a way that betokens Christian faithfulness and charity, while also seeking to understand and respect the laws and canons governing each local church involved.
- h. 3.2.5.e must be explicated so as to specify that a failure to heed the directives of the Communion’s recommending bodies will result in a loss of participation in the Communion’s covenantal relationships and of membership in the Communion’s common bodies of counsel, until such time as a petition and process for re-establishing such a covenantal relationship is completed.
- i. There be a time limit for this procedure that will not exceed two years.

3. Regarding the Instruments of Communion:

- a. The descriptions of the Instruments (3.1.4) should be refashioned to include the duties described above, and in conformance with the positive recommendations of the Windsor Continuation Group.
- b. In particular, and following recommendations of other reports, including the Windsor Report, the Lambeth Conference should be recognized as acting in an official “conciliar” role for the Anglican Communion on those matters that the bishops in conference themselves signal as bearing the full weight of their authority in prayer, counsel, and consent.

4. Regarding the Covenant’s adoption process we recommend the following:

- a. The Covenant should be adopted, as currently envisaged, by individual provinces according to their particular processes. In addition, the Covenant must include the provision that individual Anglican dioceses may also adopt the Covenant separately when their province or national church chooses not to.
- c. Individual dioceses who accept the Covenant apart from their provinces or national churches, or congregations whose bishops are not a part of the Covenant, are free to seek

informal partnerships with other Covenanted Communion bodies, and, if there is no change in status in the meantime, are free to petition the next Lambeth Conference for recognition of their partnerships as formal covenanting dioceses or provinces. Matters relating to property, however, are to be resolved solely within the negotiations and parameters of local law, seeking where possible to mediating counsel of the Pastoral Forum.

c. We urge an expeditious timetable for adoption: that the Final Draft be considered at the 2009 ACC and Primates' meeting, and forwarded to Provinces, for adoption over the next 2 years, serially as necessary, with final ceremony in 2011 or 2012.

In the midst of Covenant discussions, with whatever details of interest may emerge, we encourage our bishops and leaders, including the Covenant Design Group, to continue to acknowledge the seriousness of the situation in the Communion on all sides and also to further a positive way to keep matters from deteriorating further.

We give thanks for the example our bishops have given us of prayerfulness and attentiveness to the Lord during these last weeks. We ask His continued guidance of their ministries and protection of their persons and of their flocks. We yearn for the renewal of our common calling as we seek together to follow "the Way, the Truth, and the Life", who is Jesus, the Christ.

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