

Scottish Episcopal Church

Scottish Charity No SC013463

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Rev Canon Gregory K Cameron
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Dear Gregory

In the course of the last few months, our College of Bishops has given consideration to the continuing debate following the publication of the Windsor Report and, in particular, to the paper produced in March this year "Towards an Anglican Covenant: Consultation Paper on the Covenant Proposal of the Windsor Report" issued on behalf of the Joint Standing Committee.

In an initial response to the Windsor Report issued by the Bishops in March 2005, it was recognised that, as a Province, the Scottish Episcopal Church would hope to continue to take obligations to other Provinces in the Anglican Communion seriously. The Bishops acknowledged that, as a College, they would not in principle be against certain aspects of this being enshrined in the Church's Canons in the context of some form of covenant being agreed.

In the light of the debate which has ensued since the publication of the Windsor Report, the Bishops recognise the practical difficulty of trying to arrive at a common text for a covenant which would be acceptable to all, or at least a significant majority, of the Provinces of the Anglican Communion. The Scottish Bishops would, therefore, like to suggest that consideration be given to approaching the notion of "covenant" from a different angle.

Hitherto, the working assumption of the Windsor Report and the subsequent debate appears to have been that of that a single, multi-lateral, covenant to which Provinces would be invited to sign up. The concept of "covenant" could, however, be treated as an active verb rather than as a noun. In other words, individual covenants could be offered, on a unilateral basis, by Provinces to the Archbishop of Canterbury. On the basis that a covenant is freely undertaken by the covenantor, the text of such a covenant would be for each individual Province to determine and would articulate how that Province, as a "shoot" of the Anglican Communion, defined its relationship with the "mother plant". This would place each Province in a "covenanting relationship" with the Communion.

The entering into of such a covenant would not be envisaged as a static, one-off, act. Rather, the covenant offered by a Province would then be subject to critical examination and response on the part of the other Provinces. This would allow for mutual accountability and inter-dependence, and such a process might in turn lead to the covenanting Province re-assessing and revising its original covenant. It would, therefore, be a continually evolving process, involving all Provinces, in the context of a covenanting framework.

The principle described above in terms of Provinces covenanting to the Archbishop of Canterbury could, of course, be achieved in a variety of ways. It would not necessarily be the case that the General Synods, or equivalent, of the Provinces would be the bodies to approve such a unilateral covenant. An alternative would be for the College or House of Bishops within a Province to enter into such a covenant. Indeed, it would be possible for individual Diocesan Bishops to offer such a covenant to the Archbishop.

The same principle could equally apply within a Province so that individual congregations could offer their own covenant to a diocese, or dioceses to a Province.

The Bishops are keen that these suggestions are considered as part of the continuing, postWindsor, debate.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely

John Stuart
Secretary General