

## **March 2011 House of Bishops Meeting Anglican Covenant Notes/Comments from Fred Hiltz**

Anglican Communion Working Group for the purposes of our church's consideration of the Windsor Report.

Covenant – ACWG reviewed several drafts of the Covenant – Nasau, St. Andrew's offering comment, critique, affirmation, concern to Covenant Design Group.

### General Synod 2010

- 5-Part Resolution. That General Synod:
  1. receive the final text of the Covenant
  2. request the preparation of materials through ACWG for use in dioceses and parishes
  3. request that conversation reflect the values of openness, transparency, generosity of spirit, integrity repeatedly called for in the context of discussion of controversial matters in the Communion
  4. refer the text to FWM (Faith, Works, and Ministry Commission) & GWG for advice on theological, ecclesiological, legal and constitutional implication of a decision to adopt or not adopt the Covenant
  5. direct the COGS, after this period of discussion and consultation, to bring a recommendation regarding adoption of the Covenant to Gen Synod, 2013
- Ang. Com. Working Group has begun their work of preparing resources. "Our role" they have said "is to open up conversation" throughout the Church.
- Format
  - A Preamble – introduces the Covenant
  - Section A – Sections 1, 2, 3 – for use in parishes
  - Section B – Section 4 – for Diocesan Councils for critical study
  - Section C – Additional material in Section 4 for use by HsBps, COGS, members of Gen Synod
  - Sections B & C not being discussed in parishes
  - Resources will be released June 12 – Pentecost (and will be on the web - [www.anglican.ca](http://www.anglican.ca))
- Timeline for Study and Action on Request of Gen Synod
  - Fall 2011
    - Study begins throughout Church
    - COGS considers the materials, members accept responsibility to conduct 3 group sessions in their dioceses, neighboring dioceses
  - Winter 2011-12
    - Study continues
  - Spring 2012
    - COGS receives reports from diocesan discussion groups and initial input from FWM & GWG
    - Progress Report for ACC-15

- Fall 2012
  - COGS receives reports from Diocesan Discussions
  - Further input from FWM/GWG
  - Process for an Emerging Consensus
  - Writing Group to be given task of drafting a Resolution for Gen Synod
- Spring 2013
  - COGS considers text of a Resolution for Gen Synod
- “The preamble section of the Covenant document itself states that the goal of Churches of the Anglican Communion solemnly covenanting together is as the following: “As people of God, drawn from ‘every nation tribe, people and language’ (Rev. 7.9), we do this in order to proclaim more effectively in our different contexts the grace of God revealed in the gospel, to offer God’s love in responding to the needs of the world, to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, and together with all God’s people to attain the full stature of Christ (Eph 4, 3, 13).” As people work through this study it would be important to assess the degree to which the *Covenant* in all its sections would contribute or help to facilitate this goal.”

#### General Comments - Sections I, II, III

- Affirmations
  1. Our Inheritance of Faith
    - clear reference to place of common prayer and liturgy
    - inclusion of the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral (primary reference for Episcopal dialogues)
  2. Our Anglican Vocation
    - Inclusion of the Marks of Mission (local, communion)
      - Local – Baptismal Covenant, parish/diocesan mission statement and ministry plans)
      - Communion – holding the Communion together in very meaningful ways
        - Networks
          - Environmental & Church groups (Alliance for Relief & Dev)
          - Family life
          - Healthcare
          - Environment
    - Calls for expression of humility and repentance (?) where churches take action seen by others to be controversial and threatening to the unity of the Church
  3. Our Unity and Common Life
    - Inclusion of reference to mediation

A succinct summary of who we are, what we hold in common, who we are in relation one to another in the service of God's mission in Jesus Christ. What it means to live out of the principles of autonomy and accountability inherent in our interdependence within the body of Christ.

#### General Comments – Section IV (Our Covenanted Life Together)

- 4.2 – The Maintenance of the Covenant and Dispute Resolution
- Considerable attention to the matter of determining whether a decision or action on the part of “covenanting” church is incompatible with the Covenant, to the process, to the players and the sequence of their participation and counsel.
- If the decision or action is deemed to be incompatible with the Covenant, the Standing Committee “shall make recommendations (4.2.7) as to relational consequences – and address the extent to which the decision impairs or limits the communion between that Church and the other Churches of the Communion and the practical consequences of such impairment or limitation.”
  - And it feels like that's it - - -
  - Communion is impaired.
  - Relationships are limited.
- There is no mention of a process for mediation, reconciliation, restoration of relationships and communion, one with another in Christ.
- In this respect Section IV falls short.

#### Concerns

- Why do we need a Covenant?
- Is it conversant with Anglican ethos and polity?
- What weight would it have in the life of the churches?
- Deeper Questions
  - What are the theological and scriptural foundations for the concept of covenanting?
  - Is this covenant consistent with those foundations?
- A lingering concern
  - The emergence of a reality within the Communion – in which we have some churches that are described as “Covenanting” churches – that is having signed on to the Covenant and some who have not.
    - Alongside consideration of Covenant, we need to consider the form and spirit of other means of worship through different com. Intentional liturgy (?)
    - If the Covenant was designed to address controversy in the Communion, it remains to be seen whether it accomplishes that purpose with grace.
  - What consequences or limitations might that have for our life together?