

**Responses Offered by the Executive Board and  
Clergy and Lay Deputations to General Convention  
of the Diocese of Southeast Florida  
to Questions contained in A Short Study Guide  
to Aid the Episcopal Church in Responding to the Draft Anglican Covenant  
as Prepared by the Covenant Design Group**

***(1) Do you think an Anglican Covenant is necessary and/or will help to strengthen the interdependent life of the Anglican Communion?***

There is no easy answer to this question. On one level, the current crisis in the Anglican Communion seems to demand an Anglican Covenant if the Communion, as it currently is ordered, is to hold. On the other hand, the order of the Communion is in many ways only “apparent” and is, in any event, already ruptured.

The documents that have emerged from the Instruments of Communion, and above all from the Primates, have displayed a clear bias, placing blame for this rupture on The Episcopal Church and the Anglican Church of Canada. While this placing of blame is, in some ways, understandable, this rupture has come as a consequence of actions by many, not just the actions of The Episcopal Church regarding the treatment of gay and lesbian persons.

The Communion at large has failed to acknowledge that the treatment of gay and lesbian persons in the church is a justice concern for a significant number of Episcopalians and Anglicans. As such, it is a central theological issue for consideration for all Anglicans. It is unlikely that an Anglican Covenant which ignores the just treatment of human beings will be acceptable to the sizable minority of Anglicans for whom justice is a central Biblical demand.

Beyond this, an Anglican Covenant that is imposed by a determined majority at the expense of a concerned minority can only be viewed as a mechanism of coercion and oppression. This is especially true for a Covenant that contains mechanisms to effect this oppression.

At present, it does not seem likely that a majority in the Communion is willing to honor the dissent of the sizable minority that favors acceptance of gay and lesbian persons into the full life of the Church. Therefore, for this minority, an Anglican Covenant would seem to be primarily a means of manipulation and control.

The dangers of a Covenant were articulated with clarity in Section 5 of the March 2006 Joint Standing Committee Report “Towards an Anglican Covenant.” These dangers included: (a) concern that a covenant might alter the Communion to a narrow confessional family; (b) agreement to the covenant might become a test of authentic membership in the Communion; (c) a covenant might establish a bureaucratic and

legalistic foundation at the heart of the Communion; (d) a covenant might put at risk inspired and prophetic initiatives in God's mission or threaten Anglican comprehensiveness; (e) the Communion might become a centralized jurisdiction; and (f) the covenant might be too detailed and thereby become restrictive or inflexible to meet future challenges.

It is noteworthy, that neither the JSC Report nor the Report of the Covenant Design Group (including the Introduction and the Draft Covenant) directly addresses any of the dangers expressed in the JSC Report. These dangers remain worthy of consideration and should be addressed fully. Many of our comments address some of these dangers.

In order for an Anglican Covenant to enhance the interdependent life of the Communion, the Covenant will have to be permeated (in all its Sections) by a recognition and respect for the different historical and cultural contexts in which each of the churches of the Communion exist and from which each arose. The Preamble to the Draft Covenant makes a mere gesture towards this recognition ("proclaim more effectively in our different contexts the Grace of God revealed in the Gospel"), but the remainder of the Draft Covenant is silent on this crucial component to the health and functioning of the Communion. Respect among all the churches of the Communion for the differing contexts of the other churches is part of the bedrock upon which the Communion can develop healthy and spirited cooperation and interdependence.

The Episcopal Church, because of our own particular historical and cultural contexts, has come to its particular understanding of the Biblical imperative of justice for all persons. This understanding is different from the understandings of some of the other churches of the Communion. Mutual respect by all churches of the Communion for these contexts and understandings is critical to developing a workable Covenant. The current Draft is not grounded on and does not reflect this essential mutual respect.

***(2) How closely does this view of communion [in the Introduction to the Draft Text] accord with your understanding of the development and vocation of the Anglican Communion?***

The Introduction to a Draft Text for an Anglican Covenant presents a series of broad statements that, on the surface, appear acceptable. Most compelling are those that emphasize the nature of communion as "gift" and "calling." Among the special gifts and charisms that have historically marked Anglicanism are its broadness and longstanding ability to accept and manage differences and diversity while maintaining unity of mission and ministry.

It is disturbing, therefore, that the Draft Covenant would compromise these gifts and charisms by acceding to pressures from those that seek to centralize authority in the person of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Primates' Meeting. This centralization would be unprecedented in the history of the Communion.

The need for “discipline” in the Communion is identified in this Introduction, and no doubt discipline is important. “Discipline” can easily become, however, a tool of repression and oppression. The Episcopal Church is seen by some in the Communion as “breaking discipline.” On the other hand, The Episcopal Church believes that it has taken its steps in response to both the Biblical demands of justice and its conviction that gay and lesbian persons are created in the *imago Dei* and are full members of the body of Christ whose dignity we are called to respect. Accordingly, The Episcopal Church must also ask how the implementation of “discipline” in an Anglican Covenant will promote Biblical justice so that gay and lesbian persons will no longer be degraded and treated with contempt – as they are in so many parts of the Communion.

The Introduction states that “we covenant together as churches of this Anglican Communion to be faithful to God’s promises through the historic faith we confess, the way we live together and the focus of our mission.” The current disputes within the Communion raise genuine questions concerning the “historic faith we confess.”

Different parts of the Communion have strong disagreements about the “essentials of the faith” and about “core doctrines.” To some extent, these differences in understanding arise from the different historical and cultural contexts in which the churches of Communion developed and presently exist. It will not be productive to pretend these differences are not genuine by using phrases such as “the historic faith we confess.” The use of these phrases allows some in the Communion to argue that “the historic faith” means only their understandings and positions.

The harm of pretending that differences do not exist also applies to the statement made in the Introduction that “Our faith embodies a coherent testimony to what we have received from God’s Word and the Church’s long-standing witness.” To what are the authors of this statement referring? Are they making this statement about the Church’s historic position with respect to homosexuality? Does this statement shut the door on the listening process demanded by Lambeth 1.10? It certainly appears to.

***(3) Is this [The Preamble of an Anglican Covenant Draft] a sufficient preamble for entering a Covenant? Why or why not?***

The statement that this solemn Covenant is made in part to “proclaim more effectively in our different contexts the Grace of God revealed in the Gospel” raises questions about the meaning of the word “effectiveness.” How will such a Covenant contribute to effectiveness? Who determines the definition or criteria of effectiveness? Does “effectiveness” mean the same thing in the United States as it does in Nigeria? Certainly, The Episcopal Church believes that its core value of “inclusiveness” is a central means by which it “offers God’s love in responding to the needs of the world.” It is precisely this value, however, that has forced a crisis within the Communion. For many in The Episcopal Church, the words of the Preamble ring hollow.

It is also disturbing to note that, while emphasizing the importance of maintaining the “unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,” the Preamble, as with all the documents that have emerged out of the present crisis, makes no mention of the Church’s obligation to “do justice.” The consistent failure to include the pursuit of justice as a significant theological and missiological concern of the Church seriously impairs the Preamble and the Draft Anglican Covenant. To paraphrase St. Augustine, without justice, there can be no real unity of the Communion.

As noted in the Response to Question 1, the Preamble is the only part of the Draft Anglican Covenant that even alludes to “different contexts.” We regard the recognition and respect for different contexts to be one of the central charisms of the Anglican Communion. To the extent the Draft Anglican Covenant gives only lip service to the reality and impact of these different contexts for living out the Gospel in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the Draft Covenant will remain fatally flawed.

***(4) Do these six affirmations [in “The Life We Share”] adequately describe The Episcopal Church’s understanding of “common catholicity, apostolicity, and confession of faith”? Why or why not?***

Insofar as Section 2, Items (1) through (4) restate the essentials of the faith in broad and general terms, they appear to be adequate descriptions of the “common catholicity, apostolicity and confession” of the faith from an Episcopal and Anglican perspective. Item (2) emphasizes that it is “the faith” which is “uniquely revealed in the Holy Scriptures.” Is there an accepted definition within the Communion regarding the content of “the faith”? Does “the faith” refer solely to faith in the Triune God and in Jesus Christ as the Second Person of that Trinity? Or is the intention of Item (2) to expand the scope of the “professed faith” beyond these core essentials held by all faithful Christians to other areas about which there is disagreement (e.g. matters of church governance and structure)?

If the statement goes beyond the most basic theological declarations, it is unacceptable. While the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament do contain all things necessary to salvation, critical approaches to Holy Scripture has taught many within the wider Communion that not all things contained within Scripture’s pages “pertaineth to salvation.”

Item (2) also fails to acknowledge that the context in which each church in the Communion arose and exists also affects the way persons in these churches approach and interpret Holy Scripture. This, in turn, has an impact on their understanding of the content of “the faith” as revealed in Scripture.

***(5) The Thirty-nine Articles of Religion and the 1662 Book of Common Prayer (of the Church of England) are not currently authoritative documents for The Episcopal Church. Do you think they should be? Why or why not?***

The statement “led by the Holy Spirit, it [*i.e.* each member Church, and the Communion] has borne witness to Christian truth in its historic formularies, the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion and the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, and the Ordering of Bishops, Priests and Deacons,” is factually untrue and inappropriate for a Communion-wide Covenant.

While the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion and the 1662 Book of Common Prayer may have been authoritative for the Church of England on American soil prior to the American Revolutionary War, they were never authoritative for the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States. Instead, in the post-Revolutionary War period, The Episcopal Church authorized a Constitutional Convention that developed its own Prayer Book (1789). This Prayer Book was influenced not only by the 1662 Book, but also by the Scottish Rites. It contained American Articles of Religion that modified the English Articles of Religion. Moreover, the “truthfulness” of several of the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion is debatable (e.g. Articles VII, XIII, XVII, XVIII, XX, XXIX, and XXXIII). The validity of several of the Articles has been a subject of debate and doubt in The Episcopal Church since its inception. At no time were American clergy required to subscribe to them.

Asserting that the member Churches were “led by the Spirit” in developing flawed or false Articles of Religion is a serious problem that reflects a significant theological chasm between the drafters of the Draft Covenant and The Episcopal Church. If the truthfulness of the Thirty-nine Articles cannot be fully upheld today (and it cannot), then it follows that there never was a time when they were “true,” even if there are those who assert otherwise. Item (5) reflects a significant difference among the churches of the Communion in terms of their respective historical and cultural contexts, and it should be deleted in full.

If it is deemed necessary to cover this point in some way in the Covenant, language from Resolution 11, clause (d) of the *Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral* could be substituted in Item (5) by deleting the words “the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, the 1662 Book of Common Prayer” and inserting the words “the Historic Episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the Unity of God’s Church” in its place.

***(6) Is each of the commitments [Section 3 of An Anglican Covenant Draft] clear and understandable with respect to what is being asked of the member churches and are they consistent with statements and actions made by the Episcopal Church in the General Convention? Why or why not?***

6. Section 3 of *An Anglican Draft Covenant* is problematic on several counts.

The statement in Item (1) that the Church commits itself to “uphold and act in continuity and consistency with the catholic and apostolic faith, order and tradition, biblically derived moral values and the vision of humanity received by and developed in the

communion of member churches” wrongly assumes universal agreement about the meaning of each of these terms. The current crisis within the Communion has occurred precisely because there is strong disagreement about the content of “biblically derived moral values and the vision of humanity received by and developed in the communion of member Churches.” Because this disagreement already exists, the attempt to resolve these disagreements by adopting language that assumes that there is agreement is specious, intellectually dishonest, and harmful to the process of developing true communion.

While Item (2) represents an ideal, realization of that ideal was compromised years ago when some parts of the Communion ordained women and other parts of the Communion declared a state of “impaired communion.” This raises the question: is the intent of Item (2) to encourage greater grace and wider latitude on the part of member churches in welcoming to the Lord’s Table those with whom they are in disagreement? Or is the intent to impose more restrictive practices and reduce inclusion by member churches so that only those who are in full agreement on all matters are welcome to share in Eucharistic communion? The words “in accordance with the canonical discipline of that host church” perpetuate and underscore the problem. An Anglican Covenant should state without equivocation that members in good standing of all signing churches are in full communion with one another and that all members of those signing churches are welcome to Eucharistic communion in other member churches. Anything less than this full welcome to Christ’s table seriously undermines the purposes of the Anglican Covenant.

Item (3), like many other parts of the Draft Covenant, assumes a level of common agreement and acceptance of terms which simply does not exist. Who, for example, determines that biblical texts are being “handled faithfully, respectfully, comprehensively and coherently?” Members of The Episcopal Church who supported the consecration of Gene Robinson as Bishop of New Hampshire and advocate for greater inclusion of gay and lesbian persons in the church have adopted these positions as a response to their “faithful, respectful, comprehensive and coherent” handling of Holy Scripture. On what basis and by whom will they be challenged? How does the Covenant decide who will arbitrate among conflicting “faithful, respectful, comprehensive and coherent” readings of Holy Scripture? Is it really necessary to have this kind of arbitration in order to fulfill the goals of communion? How are different historical and cultural contexts to be evaluated in determining whether an understanding of Scripture is to be respected by other churches in the Communion? How will differences among bishops and synods be resolved?

As Episcopalians, we have good reason to suspect the capacity of the Primates to be fair adjudicators of these issues because they each come from their own particular cultural contexts and many of them have made individual and collective public statements concerning these matters. Their pre-determinations of the issues have been evident throughout the current crisis.

The Episcopal Church certainly believes that “scriptural revelation must continue to illuminate, challenge and transform cultures, structures and ways of thinking.” It is these very things that led The Episcopal Church to consent to Bishop Robinson’s consecration and to greater acceptance of gay and lesbian persons in the life of the Church. The Episcopal Church’s decisions also represent our own fulfillment of Item (4), which states that each Church participating in the Covenant agrees to “nurture and respond to prophetic and faithful leadership and ministry to assist our Churches as courageous witnesses to the transformative power of the Gospel in the world.”

Similarly, as expressed in Item (5), The Episcopal Church is open to “a common pilgrimage to discern truth.” Unfortunately, some others in different parts of the Communion have not been willing to accept the fact that The Episcopal Church is also seeking an understanding of “prophetic and faithful leadership” and truth.

The Draft Covenant presents no fair or just way to resolve this dissonance and these competing claims to truth. It is not fair and just for the Covenant to provide that the only appeal in times of disagreement is to particular parts of the Instruments of Communion (*i.e.* the Primates’ Meeting) whose majority position on these matters is already known and with which The Episcopal Church is already at odds.

***(7) Is the mission vision offered here [Section 4, “The Life We Share”] helpful in advancing a common life of the Anglican Communion and does this need to be a part of the Draft Covenant? Why or why not?***

Section 4 presents an excellent vision for the Communion that might easily be agreed to by all member churches. There could, in fact, be great benefit in proposing Section 4, with slight modifications, to be the substance of the entire Anglican Covenant.

***(8) Does this section [Section 5, “Our Unity and Common Life”] adequately describe your understanding of the history and respective roles of the “Four Instruments of the Communion”? Why or why not?***

Generally speaking, this Section adequately expresses the history and respective roles of the “Four Instruments of the Communion.” The statement that the member churches of the Anglican Communion are bound together “not juridically by a central legislative or executive authority, but by the Holy Spirit who calls and enables us to live in mutual loyalty and service” is accepted by The Episcopal Church, but does not appear to be given credence by significant portions of the Communion. Some others in the Communion have shown a distinct lack of trust that the members of The Episcopal Church (and especially those who participated in the General Conventions of 2003 and 2006) are faithful disciples of Christ who were acting prayerfully and in good faith under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Most of the Section's description of the Primates' Meeting appears acceptable, particularly the parts about assembling for mutual support and counsel and monitoring global developments. We have concerns, however, about the implications of the phrase "works in full collaboration in doctrinal, moral and pastoral matters that have Communion-wide implications." If this is understood that the Primates will discuss these issues in a collaborative manner, this is consistent with the historic role of the Primates' Meeting. We fear, however, that the phrase amounts to an attempt to codify, institutionalize, and give approval to the recent attempts of the Primates' Meeting to arrogate power to itself and to exercise a conciliar authority that is unprecedented in the Communion's history. This seizure of power and unprecedented use of authority represents a danger to the historic freedom of the member churches of the Anglican Communion and their heretofore accepted autonomy. The language of "collaboration" in doctrinal, moral and pastoral matters is belied by the evidence of recent experience. Some of the Primates are clearly attempting to exercise power and control over other Primates and their churches. This hardly represents "full collaboration."

***(9) Do you think there needs to be an executive or judicial body for resolving disagreements or disputes within the Anglican Communion? If so, do you think it should be the Primates' Meeting as recommended by the Draft Covenant? Why or why not?***

Unless the Communion were to adopt a constitution and canons acceptable and agreed to by all parts of the Communion, it makes little sense to establish an "executive body" or a "juridical body" to resolve disagreements or disputes. The proposal in Section 6 (5) can only have the effect of exacerbating already existing problems. Allowing the Primates' Meeting to serve in the capacity of arbiter of "matters in serious dispute among churches" contradicts and undermines the historic democratic polity and structures of The Episcopal Church.

A juridical structure and mechanism as proposed in Section 6 (5) does not insure that there will be respect for the many and varied ways that churches of the Communion "proclaim in our different contexts the Grace of God revealed in the Gospel." [Preamble]

As our House of Bishops stated in response to the Dar es Salaam Communiqué about the imposition of a Primatial Vicar upon the Episcopal Church, the establishment of such an executive or juridical body "is a very serious departure from our English Reformation heritage. It abandons the generous orthodoxy of our Prayer Book tradition. It sacrifices the emancipation of the laity for the exclusive leadership of high-ranking Bishops. And, for the first time since our separation from the papacy in the 16th century, it replaces the local governance of the Church by its own people with the decisions of a distant and unaccountable group of prelates" (See "Bishops' Mind of the House Resolutions" and the accompanying "Communication to the Episcopal Church from the March 2007 Meeting of the House of Bishops.")

There is no current provision in the Covenant for “checks and balances” in such a scheme and there is no mechanism for protecting the rights and dignity of oppressed faithful minorities within the church from the excesses of an overly-zealous faithful majority.

Section 6 also employs language that is both in dispute and is highly problematic. The churches of the Communion are, for example, not of one mind about “essential matters of common concern.” Again, it is the discord over matters of common concern that is at the heart of the current crisis. How reasonable is it for the proponents of the Draft Covenant to expect approval and acceptance of a Covenant that relies heavily on language that glosses over unresolved conflicts?

If one of the member churches of the Communion acts in ways that it faithfully believes promotes Biblical justice, how will the “common good” of the church and the Communion be determined (and by whom) if these actions are seen as contrary to the accepted “essentials” of other member churches that have different historical and cultural contexts?

With respect to matters of “openness and patience in matters of theological debate and discernment,” Section 6 (2) accepts the “myth of time” which the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, defined in his “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” as “the strangely irrational notion that there is something in the very flow of time that will inevitably cure all ills.” As King observed, *“Time itself is neutral; it can be used either destructively or constructively.”* In that same letter, Dr. King also recognized that *“people of ill will have often used time more effectively than people of good will.”* We should reject the portions of the Draft Covenant that establish a false or superficial unity at the expense of the demands of Biblical justice as faithfully understood in the historical context of The Episcopal Church.

Section 6, Item (5) proposes that the churches submit to structures of authority which have not been democratically selected by the member churches. There is no constitutional or canonical structure or basis of appeal in the proposed system. The Primates’ Meeting has already made evident its intention is to go beyond merely offering of “guidance and direction.” Instead, the demands from Dar es Salaam to The Episcopal Church amount to a raw exercise of power and authority. The Primates’ present arrogation of power already presents a serious challenge to the historical unity of the Communion and its bonds of affection.

Section (6), Item (6) is also a problem unless there is a previously agreed to constitution and canons for the entire Communion. The lack of checks and balances and the absence of mechanisms to protect faithful dissenting minorities both lend themselves to serious potential for the abuse of power and authority.

***(10) What does the phrase “a common mind about matters of essential concern” mean to you?***

The persistent use of vague and undefined phrases throughout the Draft Anglican Covenant is a significant flaw that erodes its credibility and undermines its potential usefulness. Indeed, the suggestion that there is a “common mind” for 38 churches around the world is not realistic either as a description or as a goal. Each church has its own historic and cultural context in which the Grace of God is active, particularly in those matters that involve the mystery of persons. Similarly, it is not at all clear that the churches of the Communion could agree on what constitutes “matters of essential concern.” The Episcopal Church has been diligent in not seeking to impose its understandings on others, and instead seeks to work by example. The Episcopal Church deserves the same respect from the other member churches of the Communion to live out our historic faith as it evolves in The Episcopal Church.

***(11) Can you affirm the “fundamental shape” of the Draft Covenant? Why or why not?***

In its effort to be comprehensive, the Draft Covenant is too long for the purpose it is intended to serve. There is nothing, however, about its “fundamental shape” that cannot be affirmed as long as “fundamental shape” refers solely to the document’s organization and flow. If “fundamental shape” refers to content in any way, then the Draft Covenant’s “fundamental shape” cannot be affirmed. The Draft Covenant is vague and imprecise. It includes presuppositions that are not agreed upon and makes faulty assumptions as bases on which to build the Covenant. As a result, the Draft Covenant can only result in damage to the member churches, their relationships with each other, and damage to the wider Communion.

***(12) What do you think are the consequences of signing such a Covenant as proposed in the Draft?***

The most significant consequence of signing such a Draft Covenant would be an Anglican Communion characterized by a narrow and centralized conciliar form of government presided over by an un-elected Archbishop of Canterbury and a *curia* of unaccountable prelates. For The Episcopal Church, signing such a document would compromise a lively democratic church in which governance is shared by all the baptized – laity, bishops, priests and deacons. Instead, we would have a more hierarchical church required to follow the dictates of a group of Primates, many of whom are accustomed to autocratic governance with little accountability to others.

The Episcopal Church is democratic, and is also catholic and apostolic. As such, it is a gift to the wider church, not just within the Communion, but beyond. Signing the Draft Anglican Covenant and living into its undemocratic polity would mar the vibrancy of The Episcopal Church beyond recognition.

The Draft Anglican Covenant assumes agreement about much that is currently unresolved. As a result, the outcomes to signing such a Covenant include: (a) full capitulation by The Episcopal Church on positions it holds dear and over which it has wrestled, debated and prayed for decades; (b) loss of its special and particular identity; and (c) subjecting The Episcopal Church to the “guidance and direction” of parts of the Instruments of Communion whose positions are already clearly stated and widely known. For The Episcopal Church, the predictable consequences would include the erosion of the human dignity (and place) of gay and lesbian persons in the Church and in society throughout the world. Given previous resolutions by General Convection, these outcomes are unacceptable.

***(13) Having read the Draft Covenant as a whole, do you agree with the CDG’s assertion that “nothing which is commended in the draft text of the Covenant can be said to be “new”? Why or why not?***

The statement by the CDG that “nothing which is commended in the draft text of the Covenant can be said to be new” is manifestly false. Indeed, developing a formal Covenant that attempts to hold together formally what has heretofore been an informal communion of people of good will united by love and affection is (in and of itself) altogether new. The Draft Covenant proposes an architecture of governance for the Anglican Communion and a centralization of authority with disciplinary power. This is unprecedented in the history of both The Episcopal Church and the wider Anglican Communion. The Draft Covenant gives to the Primates’ Meeting authority that can only be described as “curial.” This is clearly “new.”

***(14) In general, what is your response to the Draft Covenant taken as a whole? What is helpful in the draft? What is not helpful? What is missing? Additional comments?***

Our general response to the Draft is negative. The Draft repeatedly assumes agreement to terms and understandings across the Communion where there is little or no agreement and great misunderstanding. Upon this weak foundation, the drafters build an architecture for the Communion that includes mechanisms for member churches to be disciplined. Within the Communion, there is no constitutionally-established body legitimately empowered to exercise and enforce this discipline, nor any agreed-to canons that establish a common set of understandings or uniform practices. Moreover, there is no system of “checks and balances” and no means to protect the decisions and actions of a faithful minority from the whims and excesses of a determined majority.

Given these architectural weaknesses, the Draft Covenant creates the possibility for capriciousness and the abuse of power, especially by those Primates of the Communion who have already shown themselves capable of excessive use of power across national boundaries.

The Draft Anglican Covenant is helpful insofar as it articulates the concept of communion as “gift” and “mission shared.” Section 4 (“The Life We Share with Others: Our Anglican Vocation”) was especially helpful and could easily become the basis for the Covenant as a whole.

Missing from the draft document is any real consideration of the place of “justice” in the life of the Church and how to protect the “marginalized” and “weak” whom Jesus clearly called the church to serve. The Draft Covenant states that each church commits itself to “nurture and respond to prophetic and faithful leadership and ministry to assist our Churches as courageous witnesses to the transformative power of the Gospel in the world.” It is ironic that The Episcopal Church has been vilified and condemned by many of the Primates for doing these very things.

Parts of the wider Communion, and some of the Primates, have acted toward The Episcopal Church in ways that are oppressive and repressive. They seek to force The Episcopal Church to stop its efforts to include all persons fully and its opposition to the maintenance of an unjust status quo. Allowing the human dignity of gay and lesbian persons to be diminished would clearly contradict the letter and spirit of Section 3, Item (4) of the Draft Covenant.

### **Additional comments**

If the Covenant were limited to Section 4 of the Draft, it could be completed in the near term.

If, however, the covenant is to contain mechanisms for discipline and dispute resolution, a covenant drafted in a few months will not be sufficient to formalize the relationships of the member churches of the Anglican Communion with credibility and coherence.

Such a covenant would require a more rigorous worldwide process to develop a constitution and canons that can be agreed to by all the member churches. The constitution and canons would contain a common statement of the faith as understood and accepted by all members and would build an architecture of communion governance based on that common statement of faith. This architecture of church governance would have to include canons accepted by all member churches; executive, legislative and judicial bodies that have the consent of the governed to perform their duties; and mechanisms to protect the weak and to guard prophetic voices and faithful minorities from the excesses of tyrannical majority.

### **Recommendation**

Recognizing the inherent weaknesses and serious flaws of the Draft Anglican Covenant as presented, and believing that adoption of this Covenant poses a serious risk to the polity, governance, effectiveness and witness of The Episcopal Church, we, the Members of Executive Board and Deputies to General Convention of the Diocese of

Southeast Florida, strongly urge that no body or governing structure of The Episcopal Church be party to this Covenant, or accept or sign the current Draft Anglican Covenant.

### **Executive Board of the Diocese of Southeast Florida**

These Responses are submitted on behalf of 27 of the 30 members of the Executive Board as follows: The Rev. Fritz Bazin, Mercedes Busto, Alan Campbell, Doug Dozier, The Rev. Christina Encinosa, The Rev. Matthew Faulstich, Liz Hallford Ward, Arnett Hepburn, Bill Hess, Tom Huston, The Rev. Ron Johnson, Harry McDaniel, John Meade, Juanita Miller, Thomas G. O'Brien III, John Oeler, Carol O'Neill, The Rev. Bernard Pecaro, The Rev. Jennie Lou Reid, The Rev. Andrew Sherman, The Rev. Lloyd Stennette, Marcia Sweeting-Somersall, The Rev. Drew Van Culin, Bonnie Weaver, Cynthia Williams, The Rev. David Wilt and The Rev. Winston Wright.

The Responses are also submitted on behalf of The Ven. Bryan Hobbs and The Ven. Mary Gray-Reeves, advisors to the Executive Board.

The following members dissented from the Responses: William Carr, The Rev. David Peoples and The Rev. George Ronkowitz.

### **Clergy Deputation to General Convention**

The Ven. Mary Gray-Reeves, The Rev. William ("Chip") Stokes, The Rev. Horace Ward, The Rev. Carol Barron, The Rev. Jennie Lou Reid (Alternate) and The Rev. Wilifred Allen-Faiella (Alternate)

### **Lay Deputation to General Convention**

Thomas G. O'Brien III, Richard Miller, Char Vinik and LaVerne Comerie-Turck

**Dated: May 31, 2007**

*This document was prepared on behalf of the Executive Board and the General Convention Deputations by the Rev. William ("Chip") Stokes and Mr. Thomas G. O'Brien III.*