

## A COVENANT FOR THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

At this time in the life of the Church of England and the Anglican Communion, faced with a faulty view of revelation, false teaching and indiscipline, we believe that it is necessary to set out where we as orthodox Anglicans stand, and to invite others to join us.

### OUR IDENTITY

We are members of the Church of England, part of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church, who share with others throughout the world a commitment to the biblical truths on which the Anglican Communion is based. This is what guarantees our fellowship with Anglicans historically and globally. We pledge ourselves to strengthen this fellowship.

The love and grace of God in the gospel saves and converts individuals to a relationship with God, introduces people to life in the Spirit, and draws members into the Body of Christ. It produces holiness of life, unity in the Spirit and life-giving and life-transforming mission. Therefore in dependence on God, we are committed to spreading the unchanging gospel of Jesus Christ, to making disciples who make disciples of Christ, and to reviving existing and planting new churches. We wait for heaven to belong to a pure and perfect church – indeed, we confess our own guilty part in the church's present failings. Nonetheless the gospel challenges the church to faithful obedience.

We are committed to faithful biblical orthodoxy as defined by the classic formularies of our tradition. Canon A5 states: "The doctrine of the Church of England is grounded in the Holy Scriptures, and in such teachings of the ancient Fathers and Councils of the Church as are agreeable to the said Scriptures. In particular such doctrine is to be found in the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, the Book of Common Prayer, and the Ordinal". The Preface to the Declaration of Assent declares that the Church of England professes "the faith uniquely revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds." This is what the Church of England confesses and true unity belongs in this common confession. It is departure from this common faith that is responsible for causing schism.

Commitment to the gospel has the following implications for action at this time.

### OUR ACTION

**Mission** Jesus' Great Commission to "Go into all the world and make disciples" has renewed force for us in our post-Christian society. As is being increasingly recognised, the historic focus on the traditional patterns of parishes, clergy and ecclesiastical buildings is now inadequate by itself to meet this great challenge and must be transformed by one that is dynamically evangelistic, committed to using every available means to reach the unchurched. "Existing ecclesiastical legal boundaries should be seen as permeable".<sup>1</sup> This means there cannot be any no-go areas for gospel growth and church planting. Best practice will always involve appropriate consultation, including with non-Anglicans. We will support mission-shaped expressions of church through prayer, finance and personnel, even when official permission is unreasonably withheld.

**Appointments** The local congregation is the initial and key seed-bed for recognising, authorising, raising up and releasing new leaders. We affirm the need for the wider recognition and authorisation for leaders. We recognise the vital importance of biblically orthodox training both regionally and nationally. But many parishes have lost confidence in the institutional centre to discern and train suitable ministers, and fund and deploy them in sufficient numbers and appropriate contexts. Local churches must in future also play a major role in the selection,

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<sup>1</sup> Mission-Shaped Church, 8.4.3.

training, funding and appointment of ministers. This means that we can no longer be constrained by an over-centralised and increasingly ineffective control that is stifling the natural development of ministry. If the local Bishop unreasonably withholds authorisation, we will pay for, train and commission the ministers that are needed, and seek official Anglican recognition for them.

**Fellowship** Fellowship is based on the faith “once delivered to the saints”. Global Anglicans observe that the Church of England is increasingly polarizing into two churches: the one submitting to God’s revelation, Gospel-focused, Christ-centred, cross-shaped and Spirit-empowered; the other holding a progressive view of revelation, giving priority to human reason over Scripture, shaped primarily by western secular culture, and focused on church structures. We reaffirm the Church of England as a confessing church, built supremely not on administrative or human structures but on biblical authority, belief and behaviour. This means that we can no longer associate with teaching that is contrary to the clear teaching of the Scriptures either doctrinally (for example, on the supremacy and uniqueness of Christ) or morally (for example, on issues of gender, sex and marriage), or church leadership which advocates such teaching. We will therefore encourage new informal networks of fellowship, augmenting where necessary the institutional geographical groupings, and will respect and support those who cannot in good conscience maintain Christian fellowship with neighbouring Anglicans who do not uphold the authority of Scripture.

**Money** Money is an aspect of gospel partnership in the New Testament. It is entrusted to church leaders by church members who generously and sacrificially give to Christian ministry. Under charity law there is a responsibility that those who handle the church’s money steward those resources with integrity. Funds are expected to be directed towards the churches and causes in line with the beliefs and expectations of those who give. To direct the church’s giving elsewhere is a dereliction of duty for which leaders will be held accountable by God. This means that we can no longer support ministries or structures increasingly marked by the doctrinal and ethical heterodoxy outlined above. Our congregations will seek actively to become self-sustaining when and where we can, to donate a reasonable yet modest amount to support the administrative centre, to be part of mutually accountable financial partnerships, and to give generously to gospel ministries, at home and abroad, that share the same values.

**Oversight** Christian leaders are servant leaders, servants of the gospel. As Anglicans, we affirm Episcopal oversight for the sake of God’s mission. But it must be ordered for the church’s well-being. This means having biblically orthodox oversight that will teach the apostolic faith, refute error and discipline the wayward. We can, therefore, no longer accept churches being denied such oversight. Ensuring that such biblically orthodox oversight is available for the health and well-being of the church is more important than arguments about jurisdiction. The immediate crisis is over the fundamentals of revealed truth. We are aware of those who justifiably consider that their communion with their bishops is impaired, and will support and help them to find alternative oversight.

We are committed, as authentic Anglicans, to praying, believing and working for a restored, reformed and renewed Church of England, holding its traditional convictions: confidence in the truth of God in his Word, in the sacrificial death of his Son for his world, and in the power of God’s Spirit to fulfil his mission.