

**Speech proposing the Motion on the Anglican Covenant
by the Most Rev David Chillingworth, Primus of the Scottish Episcopal
Church**

The resolution before us today is a simple one. It is in part procedural. In common with all other Anglican Provinces, we need to consider the questions which will arise if we decide to adopt the Anglican Covenant. Do we simply pass a resolution here in Synod? Or would we need a new Canon called 'Of the Anglican Covenant?' Or would the provisions of the Anglican Covenant need to be integrated into our Canons? Those are technical questions about which we need the advice of the Faith and Order Board. Any canonical change requires a two year process in Synod. So the procedures which we adopt will in turn shape the nature and the pace of our discussions of the Anglican Covenant.

The resolution also requests the Faith and Order Board to 'advise General Synod on what process or processes might be appropriate to be followed by this Synod to enable due consideration of ... the Anglican Covenant by the Scottish Episcopal Church.' As the Anglican Covenant has taken shape, we have commented on all the various drafts and some of our suggestions have been incorporated. We now need to talk about it and the issues which surround it. We need measured and respectful debate. Interdependence and co-responsibility are of the essence of Anglicanism. So the question can't be simply, 'Are we in the Scottish Episcopal Church going to adopt it or not?' What we say and do affects others - and what each province does affects the whole life of the Communion.

On one of the worst nights of a bad winter, I went down to Bridge of Allan to meet an Area Council to discuss the Anglican Covenant. There were about 35 people there. They wanted to talk about the Anglican Covenant and Communion issues. There was a very responsive and responsible discussion. And I came away feeling, 'There is a very deep sense of Anglicanism in this church.' At its simplest, you could describe the issues which we discussed in this way. Is the Anglican Covenant a reasonable and necessary instrument to strengthen the cohesion of a very diverse Communion? Is it helpful to attempt to define the essence of what we are - so that it becomes easier to see who we are and who we are not? Or is it an unhelpful and unanglican attempt to define a single view of what we are and to substitute a central authority for Anglican co-responsibility.

My task today is not to attempt to resolve those issues. Rather it is to say that I hope that we shall discuss this over the next year or two in a measured way. As a church we have found it very difficult to discuss the issues which have given rise to the Anglican Covenant. It may be that discussion of the Anglican Covenant may itself help us to go back and do that. As Primus, one of my tasks is to engage on your behalf with the church beyond our Province. We may be a small church. But I can assure you that other people look to us and want to know what we think - as we do from them.

Let me articulate two instinctive responses to this question which you will find in our province.

The first is an understandable reaction against the concept of Covenant - our history tells us to be cautious about covenants. Alongside and within that historical reaction, we say 'We are and will remain Anglicans. We don't need to sign anything to prove that. It is not for others to define our membership. There are other statements which define Anglicanism, such as the Chicago-Lambeth Quadralateral. What about them?'

The second and more positive reaction arises out of our roots in Anglicanism - indeed the feeling that we are part of the roots. The decision by the Scottish Bishops to consecrate Samuel Seabury as the first bishop of the American church in 1784 was one of the points at which we became a Communion of independent provinces. Then - and sadly now - colonialism influences the tone of debate in the Communion. But mix the metaphors as you wish - midwives ... foundation members ... we were part of the beginnings. And in our reflection about the Anglican Covenant, we need to think about how we can be part of a new beginning for the Anglican Communion.

The difficulties which the Anglican Communion faces are being faced or will be faced by every other church across the world. In our case, they arise contextually out of the spectacular success of Anglicanism as a missionary faith in the so-called developing world - while still being a strong presence in the most highly-developed societies of the world. They are rooted in fundamental questions about what it means to be human, about the authority and interpretation of scripture and about the nature of God. On some levels, our cohesion is remarkable - go to almost any part of the world where Anglicans gather and you will find yourself in the presence of authentic and recognisable Anglicanism. And yet obviously, our response to issues of human sexuality creates tension across the Communion between provinces - but also within provinces.

The period of Gracious Restraint called for by the Primates' Meeting and the Three Moratoria have been a temporary measure to try and deal with those tensions. They are a way of 'freezing' disagreement to try and limit damage and to allow time for discussion, exploration and resolution. Our College of Bishops took the view that we should respond positively to the request for Gracious Restraint in the interests of protecting Communion life. But two factors make that difficult. The first is that a Moratorium is intended to create a space for resolving issues - but it also tends to remove the pressure to seek such resolution. The second is that Moratoria are essentially an exercise in self-discipline. We do not have a central authority which can demand or enforce. We either exercise that self-discipline or our cohesion is gradually eroded by events and we find ourselves debating the Moratoria rather than the issues themselves.

I've taken this opportunity to set out for you my feelings about where the Anglican Communion is at the moment. I hope that we shall play our part in discussion of the Anglican Covenant within our province and beyond. But I also want to use this opportunity to say to those who feel the issues which have given rise to the Covenant most keenly that our ability to make that contribution to Communion life depends on our ability to deal with those issues within our own life. We are a diverse church and we value that diversity. We have sometimes failed to say that clearly enough. I know that in our Province there are warm and respectful friendships between individuals which span that diversity. I know from my correspondence and my dialogue with people that none of us wishes to pursue those discussions in extreme terms. The College of Bishops and I feel that we need to find ways of developing open and respectful dialogue within our province. We shall be happy to listen to suggestions about how we might achieve that. And, as with everything else I have said this afternoon, while that is for the good of our province, it is also for the good of the Anglican Communion.

I am happy to propose the Motion.