

PEP Argument Briefing Paper

Title: Resolution Poorly Drawn
Applicable to: Resolution (The Anglican Covenant)
Author: Lionel Deimel
Date: 10/1/2009

Background

Whereas an Anglican covenant is being promoted as a necessary means to maintain unity within the Anglican Communion, the more radically conservative elements of the Communion clearly see it as a mechanism to discipline churches such as The Episcopal Church for taking liberal, non-orthodox positions. It is clear that the General Convention is skeptical about a covenant, but it has been unwilling not to cooperate in the covenant development process. Resolution D020 (not DO20, as is twice stated in the resolution) was indeed passed by the 2009 General Convention, but the original text would have had the church “make a provisional commitment to abide by the terms of the Anglican Covenant.” That text was co-sponsored by the Rev. Bruce Robison, a Pittsburgh deputy and sponsor of the current resolution. The approved resolution is, of course, rather noncommittal as to the covenant’s ultimate fate at the hands of the General Convention, which will likely have to accept or reject it in 2012.

Argument

- It was reasonable for the General Convention to request that dioceses weigh in on the covenant text. This resolution goes a bit further in asking parishes “to submit their responses to the Ridley Cambridge Draft.” This, of course, is something parishes could begin to do immediately and would, no doubt, be a useful exercise. Unlike D020, however, this resolution does not address “any successive drafts” of a covenant. This is a significant omission, in that a revised Section 4 of the present draft is expected to be offered to the Communion, perhaps by the end of 2009.
- To whom are parish responses to the covenant to be submitted? To the diocese? To the Executive Council? The resolution is silent on the matter. Once submitted (perhaps to the diocese), what is to be done with them? Silence again.
- Responses by parishes are described as “a preliminary to a response by the Diocese.” What does this mean? In particular, is the diocese somehow to take the parish responses into account? How is this to be done? The General Convention left the mechanics of developing a response to the covenant to individual dioceses. It would be helpful if the present resolution specified how our diocese was to do that. It does not.
- The failure to specify how our diocese is to generate its response to the request from the General Convention found in D020 is disturbing. Too often in recent years, diocesan leaders have developed and articulated policy with little consultation or transparency. This resolution, as it stands, has the potential, perhaps inadvertent, to perpetuate that unfortunate history. The diocese deserves better.

- This resolution is very badly edited and should be corrected if it is to be passed. Errors include:
 - As noted above, the number of the General Convention resolution referred to is D020, not DO20.
 - “Episcopal Church of the United States” is not a recognized name of our church. (“The Episcopal Church” or the “Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America” should be substituted.)
 - The title of D020 is “Provincial Acceptance of Anglican Covenant,” not “Provincial Acceptance of *the* Anglican Covenant.” (The title is stated improperly in the resolution but is correct in the footnote.)
 - Covenant drafts have always been labeled “An Anglican Covenant.” Virtually nowhere is the covenant referred to as the “Anglican Communion Covenant,” as it is in this resolution.
 - “That diocese report” (in the statement of D020) should be “That dioceses report.”
 - In the final sentence of the statement of D020, “proposed” should be “proposed.”

Supporting Information

Current and past drafts proposed for an Anglican covenant can be found at the Anglican Communion Web site at

<http://www.anglicancommunion.org/commission/covenant/index.cfm>.

Original and final versions of 2006 Resolution A166 can be found at

http://www.gc2006.org/legislation/view_leg_detail.aspx?id=207&type=ORIGINAL and http://www.gc2006.org/legislation/view_leg_detail.aspx?id=207&type=CURRENT, respectively.

Original and final versions of 2009 Resolution D020 can be found at

http://www.gc2009.org/ViewLegislation/view_leg_detail.aspx?id=954&type=Original and http://www.gc2009.org/ViewLegislation/view_leg_detail.aspx?id=954&type=Final, respectively.

Resolution (from *Preconvention Journal 2009*, pages C-1–C-2,

<http://www.episcopalpgh.org/wp-content/uploads/file/Documents/2009%20DioConv/2009DioConventionPacketV3.pdf>):

5. Title: *The Anglican Covenant*

Resolved: That the 144th Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh of the Episcopal Church of the United States receives with gratitude General Convention Resolution 2009-DO20 (Provincial Acceptance of the Anglican Covenant) and commends it to its member parishes for study; and be it further

Resolved: That the parishes of the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh are encouraged to submit their responses to the Ridley Cambridge Draft of the Anglican Communion Covenant as a preliminary

to a response by the Diocese in accordance with General Convention Resolution 2006-A166 (Anglican Covenant Development Process).

Explanation: The proposal for an Anglican Covenant should be viewed as a development of the earlier notion of Mutual Responsibility and Interdependence (MRI) first articulated by Olympia Bishop Stephen Bayne almost half a century ago. Episcopalians cannot afford to be unmindful of the Covenant process, but must undertake a good faith effort to engage with the needs of other provinces in the Anglican Communion, something recognized by the General Convention in its adoption of Resolution DO20.¹

Sponsors: Dr. Jeremy Bonner, Trinity Cathedral
The Rev. William Geiger, Christ Church, Indiana
The Rev. Dr. Daniel Hall, M.D.
The Rev. Dr. Bruce Robison, D.Min, St. Andrew's, Highland Park
The Rev. Canon James Shoucair, Christ Church, North Hills
The Rev. Philip Wainwright, St. Peter's, Brentwood

¹ D020 Substitute Resolution Adopted by the House of Deputies, Concurred by House of Bishops, July 2009:

Covenant: Provincial Acceptance of Anglican Covenant

Resolved, the House of Bishops concurring, That the 76th General Convention of the Episcopal Church commend the Anglican Covenant proposed in the most recent text of the Covenant Design Group (the "Ridley Cambridge Draft") and any successive drafts to the dioceses for study and comment during the coming triennium; and be it further

Resolved, That diocese report on their study to the Executive Council in keeping with Resolution 2006-A166; and be it further

Resolved, That Executive Council prepare a report to the 77th General Convention of the Episcopal Church that includes draft legislation concerning this Church's response to an Anglican Covenant; and be it further

Resolved, That diocese and congregations be invited to consider the Anglican Covenant propped draft as a document to inform their understanding of and commitment to our common life in the Anglican Communion.