



CHURCH OF IRELAND
THE GENERAL SYNOD
STANDING COMMITTEE

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Anglican Covenant Response

1. *Is the Province able to give an 'in principle' commitment to the Covenant process at this time (without committing itself to the details of any text)?*

The Church of Ireland is willing in principle to continue its existing commitment to the Covenant process. This process in itself, irrespective of any outcome, has a real value of its own. As this first question clarifies, we are not committing ourselves to the details of any specific text at this stage. We believe that a Covenant could assist the Anglican Communion in so far as it would set forth, in a relatively formal way, what we understand the nature of our common faith and identity as Anglicans to be; it would be an attempt to make explicit what until now has been implicit for Anglicans and could also assist us in our ecumenical dialogue.

2. *Is it possible to give some indication of any synodical process which would have to be undertaken in order to adopt the Covenant in the fullness of time?*

Presuming that the Covenant would not give rise to doctrinal change, we envisage that it should be brought before the General Synod for ratification or adoption by resolution; this would be a one-year process. As we do not view the Covenant in juridical terms, we anticipate that it would not be incorporated or enacted into the formal legislation or formularies of the Church of Ireland. Further, as each Church of the Communion may wish to place somewhat different emphases in different parts of the Covenant, a general assent appears to us as a more suitable approach. The General Synod, in our polity, is the body with relevant competence to give such assent; it would not be for individual dioceses in the Church of Ireland to consider the Covenant ratification or adoption, as the process involves the Church of Ireland as a whole.

3. *In considering the St Andrew's Draft for an Anglican Covenant, are there any elements which would need extensive change in order to make the process of synodical adoption viable?*

We feel that the purpose of the Covenant is intended as a positive statement of our common Anglican faith and identity. In relation to the Appendix, in so far as procedures for dealing with differences are included in the Covenant, we believe that these should focus on conciliation but that they will also need to allow for effective mediation. We have reservations about an overly juridical approach at Communion level; we feel that this could even preclude synodical ratification by the Church of Ireland. Areas of conflict between provinces will best be dealt with as individual instances require; we are wary about devising general rules in the midst of a particular but undoubtedly very serious crisis. While the Covenant should indicate that there would be consequences following any breach of its commitments, it should provide for the principles of conciliation as opposed to setting out further procedural details. Such details should then, naturally, be in the spirit of the Covenant.