

A Statement from the Diocesan Council (Convention) of West Texas, February, 2011
The Anglican Covenant

1. The Diocese of West Texas has endeavored to follow the Church-wide invitation of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Presiding Bishop, and the General Convention (Resolution D020, 2009) to study and comment on the Anglican Covenant prior to General Convention in 2012. We did this in a variety of settings in 2010, including Diocesan Council, a special clergy conference, convocational invitations, local congregational settings, and a called meeting of the elected leadership of the diocese in November. The statement below represents the themes which emerged in our discussions.
2. The members of our ninety congregations deeply value our joint “citizenship” as Anglicans and as Episcopalians. Being part of both bodies is very important to us as a diocesan family. Historically, we have been blessed in these relationships in countless ways, not least in our understanding and practice of Christian identity, apostolic tradition and mission. We have worked, and will continue to work, toward a strong and vibrant Communion through our membership in and relationship with both the Anglican Communion and the Episcopal Church.
3. Because we strongly value our joint citizenship, we believe the Anglican Covenant deserves our support and the support of the Episcopal Church. We urge the General Convention to adopt the Anglican Covenant in 2012.
4. The Anglican Covenant has implications beyond the current divisions and struggles within our Church and Communion. It offers an opportunity to visibly witness to the unity we share in Jesus Christ, not just to ourselves, but to other Christian bodies and those of other faiths. Beyond even that, in a world so deeply divided, the Covenant recalls us to the reconciling love of God in Christ. We believe we are being called into fellowship in greater and wider ways, rather than in diminished and narrower ways. We desire to build our common life as a diocese within the framework of both a vibrant province and a vibrant Communion.
5. Faithful Christians disagree about important things. As shepherds of Christ’s flock, lay and ordained leaders are called to care for all of God’s people, not just those with whom they agree. Like the other dioceses throughout the Communion, we are a diverse community of congregations that are themselves diverse communities. We are not always of one mind, but as St. Paul writes to the Church at Rome (12.5-6), we believe that *“we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another.”* Further, we recognize that *“We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us,”* and we seek to honor and serve one another in this spirit of mutual submission and forbearance. Simply put, our identity as Christians is one in Christ, but this identity is very diverse locally and globally.

6. Within the diversity of the Diocese of West Texas, we hold to this common conviction and proclamation: That Jesus Christ is Lord, and that he is our hope and salvation, and not ours alone, but for the whole world. We also affirm that all of humanity, regardless of gender, ethnicity, race, nationality, or sexual orientation, are loved beyond measure by God in Christ, and welcomed and valued in our collective life as we engage together in mission and ministry.

7. Like the wider church and our culture, we continue to reflect prayerfully and theologically on the meaning and intent of Christian marriage, and the complex issues surrounding human sexuality, including homosexuality. We are increasingly called to be mindful that behind all of these “issues” are precious human lives. In our life together and our care for one another, we seek to “*have the mind of Christ*” (1 Cor. 2.16), and are committed to “*bear one another’s burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ*” (Gal 6.2).

8. We know that adoption of the Covenant will not resolve the current debates and divisions, nor will it solve all of the challenges facing the Communion. We recognize that faithful members have concerns about an imbalance between provincial autonomy and mutual accountability. In addition, concern has been expressed that Section 4 does not offer much space for a minority voice. This is a reminder that, depending on our circumstances, there are times in which we are part of a majority view and other times in which we are part of a minority view. Remembering this should inform the ways majorities and minorities relate to one another.

9. We also believe that the Covenant is an effort, in the words of its own Introduction, to help “*redeem our struggles and weakness, renew and enrich our common life and use the Anglican Communion to witness effectively in all the world, working with all people of good will, to the new life and hope found in Christ Jesus.*” Further, we believe the Anglican Covenant accurately articulates many of our common hopes and beliefs, and that the Covenant represents an important step in our ongoing transformation into a true Communion of Churches.

10. We offer this statement out of our certain hope that, because of the saving work of Jesus Christ, we are “*no longer strangers and sojourners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God*” and through Christ as our cornerstone, we are joined together and being “*built together spiritually into a dwelling-place for God*” (Ephesians 2.19-22).