

Ten Reasons Why the Proposed Anglican Covenant Is a Bad Idea

1. **The proposed Anglican Covenant would transform a vibrant, cooperative, fellowship of churches into a contentious, centralized aggregation of churches designed to reduce diversity and initiative.** The Covenant would institutionalize the “Instruments of Unity” as never before and would give extraordinary power to the newly enhanced Standing Committee.
2. **Under the Covenant, churches will be inhibited from undertaking new evangelical or mission initiatives for fear of offending other Communion churches and becoming embroiled in the disciplinary mechanisms set up by the Covenant.**
3. **The centralization of authority envisioned by the proposed Covenant is cumbersome, costly, and undemocratic.** In an era in which power and authority are being distributed in many organizations in order to achieve greater efficiency, responsiveness, and accountability, what has been proposed for the Communion seems out of step with current thinking regarding large organizations.
4. **Although the proposed Covenant is offered as a mechanism to achieve unity, its immediate effect is to create divisions.** Churches that cannot or will not adopt the Covenant automatically become second-class members of the Communion. The inevitable application of the disciplinary provisions of Section 4 will likely further distinguish between “full” members of the Communion and less-than-full members.
5. **The proposed Covenant is dangerously vague.** Sections 1–3 of the Covenant, which are seen by many as innocuous, leave much room for divergent interpretations. Section 4 makes it all too easy for any church to “ask questions” about the actions of another, which may then be subjected to unspecified “relational consequences.” There is no sure measure of what behaviour is likely to be acceptable, no checks provided against unreasonable complaints, and no guarantee that “consequences” (i.e., punishments) meted out will be commensurate with the alleged offence.
6. **The proposed Covenant runs counter to the gospel imperative of not judging others.** It is all too easy for Communion churches to complain about the sins of their sister churches while ignoring or diverting attention from their own failures to live out the Gospel.
7. **The proposed Covenant encourages premature ending of debate.** Rather than taking the advice of Gamaliel (Acts 5:38–39) and seeing how controversial matters play out, the Covenant evidences an eagerness to “settle” them. This is an unfortunate temptation to which the Communion seems subject. It has too quickly concluded that “homosexual activity” is “incompatible with Scripture” and that the Covenant is “the only way forward,” neither of which is either intuitively obvious or universally agreed upon.
8. **The notion that we need to make “forceful” the “bonds of affection” is fundamentally flawed.** If we need force and coercion to maintain relationships between Communion churches, there is no true affection, and the very foundation of the proposed Covenant is fraudulent.
9. **The proposed “Covenant” seems more like a treaty, contract, or instrument of surrender than a covenant.** In the ecclesiastical context, a covenant is usually thought of as an agreement undertaken in joy and in an atmosphere of trust—baptismal and marriage covenants come to mind. The proposed Anglican Covenant, on the other hand, is advanced in an atmosphere of anger, fear, and distrust, and with the threat of dire consequences if it is not adopted.
10. **The proposed Covenant is not the only way forward; there *are* better options.** The Anglican Communion would be better served by remaining a single-tier fellowship of churches, allowing disaffected members to leave if they must, while keeping the door open for their return. Any alternative position cedes too much power to those willing to intimidate by threatening to walk away.