



# The Anglican Methodist Covenant



## Landmarks on the journey

At the outset we celebrate the many ways, both formal and informal, in which Anglicans and Methodists already share and work together, including common engagement in twenty-nine co-operative parish ventures. In particular we acknowledge:

1. Acceptance of each others church as part of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. (AGS 1976/MC 1980)
2. That the ministry of each of our churches is a real ministry of Word and Sacrament. (AGS 1976/MC 1980)
3. The apostolic content in the ordained ministry of each of our churches. (AGS 1986/MC2004)
4. That each church exercises a ministry of episkope. (AGS 1986/MC2004)
5. The commitment of our churches to seek a unification of ministries. (AGS 1980/MC 1980)
6. A mutual recognition of baptism and church membership. (AGS 1980/MC 1980)
7. That baptised members of each church are free to receive the Eucharist in each other's churches. (AGS 1980/MC 2004)

We recognise that in the past there have been disappointments as well as hopes in the relationship between our two churches. However we are resolved to work at closer relations within the search for the visible unity of the church.

## Our Aotearoa New Zealand context

We acknowledge each other's response to the Treaty of Waitangi – the three-tikanga partnership of the Anglican Church (Pakeha/Maori/Polynesia),

and the bicultural partnership of the Methodist Church (Maori/Tauīwi). Led by the Holy Spirit our two churches have each developed a model appropriate for themselves. Both churches have been significantly transformed and continue to evolve in response to Treaty of Waitangi and other contextual issues.

## In this covenant we affirm:

1. That the unity of the church is not incidental to God's purpose. The unity of the church (which is the prayer of Jesus in John 17) demonstrates God's ability to reconcile through Christ and supports the mission of God. The unity of the church serves the unity of creation.
2. That visible unity of the churches involves mutual acceptance of the apostolic faith, sacramental life and ministry, and a common mission to the world.
3. Each other's understandings of the mission of the church, including: the ministry of all the baptised; proclamation of the gospel; the nurture of all members; care of those who are new to the church; social service; transformation of unjust structures; and the care of creation.
4. That each church in its own way exercises the ministry of episkope or oversight. The Anglican Church does this through the office of bishops and synodical government. The Methodist Church does so through the annual conference, the presidency between conferences, and by devolution of the conference district superintendents and connexional boards and committees.

5. That episkope is to be expressed at three levels: the personal whereby the ordained are called to service and responsibility within the church; the collegial which calls the ordained to consult with each

other and act together in the exercise of the ministry of the oversight; the communal which recognises that all baptised members participate not only in the mission of the church, but also in the ministry of oversight.

6. That our two churches' different exercise of personal, collegial and communal oversight reflects ways in which our churches are variously nurtured in the faith, pastored, guided and disciplined.
7. The ministry of oversight in both our churches is concerned with the nurturing and maintenance of the community's fidelity to the teaching of the apostles, the preaching of the gospel, the authentic celebration of the sacraments, and the mission of the church.

8. That efforts at convergence in the practice of episkope challenge both our traditions. We note the call in the World Council of Churches Faith and Order statement 'Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry' (1982) that all churches need to examine their practice of episkope. Churches in which episkope is exercised in a presbyteral or corporate fashion need to consider the merits of a personal episcopacy. Churches which are episcopally ordered are challenged to seek the renewal of their practice of episcopal ministry, taking into account the positive contributions which can be made by systems of presbyteral and corporate oversight. A frank acceptance by all parties of the need for renewal and mutual enrichment would do much to remove negative perceptions and to advance koinonia and the process of convergence.

9. Our vision at this time is one of visible unity. We are not sure at this time what this would look like, or what its implications might be for our two churches. ("What we will yet be has not yet been revealed." 1 John 3:2) We see this search as a journey in keeping with the model of "Unity by Stages" already

affirmed by our two churches. We do not see one church absorbing another, or the extinguishing of any of the existing identities within our churches. The treasures all bring are to be preserved (e.g. spiritualities, cultural identities). We seek a visible unity for our two churches that receives and cherishes all the gifts, all the insights, and all the treasures, and holds them together in a creative way that serves God's mission in the world.

### **Covenant and ecumenical space**

We need to develop ecumenical space as a setting in which, even in a state of division, we bear witness to our common allegiance to Jesus Christ and cooperate to advance the visible unity of the church. Ecumenical space offers us a way forward. In such a space we affirm our common Christian identity and have the possibility for a new discourse as we talk to one another in a new way.

This provides a greater opportunity to discern together Christ's will for the church in ways that are not possible in isolation from each other. In this way ecumenical space brings the churches into living encounter with one another. We consider that the concept of ecumenical space has much to offer a covenant such as the one proposed. We commend the statement on ecumenical space in "Episkope and Episcopacy and the Quest for Visible Unity" (World Council of Churches Faith and Order Paper No. 183 1999 pages 43-45. See appendix to this covenant)

### **In this covenant we commit ourselves:**

1. To develop a safe ecumenical space in which there is opportunity to explore together uncomfortable questions.
2. To an ongoing dialogue that seeks to:
  - realise more deeply our common life and mission and to share the distinctive contributions of our

traditions, taking steps to bring about closer collaboration in all areas of witness and service in the world.

- To further explore together the meaning and exercise of episkope in both our churches' life and work
- Work towards a united and interchangeable ministry to more fully express the visible unity of our two churches.

3. To continue to provide opportunities to welcome each other's baptised members to participate in the fellowship, worship and mission of our churches, and to encourage forms of eucharistic sharing, including eucharistic hospitality, in accordance with the rules of our respective churches.

4. To provide opportunities to listen to each other and to take account of each other's concerns, especially in areas that affect our relationship as churches.

5. To provide opportunities to celebrate together annually throughout the country in an intentional way, our common faith through a focus on the offerings to the church of John and Charles Wesley who owned both the Anglican tradition and the Methodist way, on either the date set in the Anglican calendar (the Sunday nearest 8 March), or that provided for in the Methodist calendar (the Sunday nearest 24 May).

### **In this covenant we seek these outcomes**

1. An ongoing and intentional dialogue that will deepen the present relationship of our two churches and move us towards visible unity.
2. A greater commitment to dealing with the issues that presently prevent closer communion between our two churches.
3. An open and generous relationship that holds an awareness of the other in everything we do.
4. A focus on a common mission to the world.

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## 2008

'We, The Methodist Church of New Zealand (Te Hahi Weteriana o Aotearoa) and The Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia (Te Hahi Mihinare ki Aotearoa ki Niu Tirenī, Ki Nga Moutere o te Moana Nui a Kiwa), on the basis of our shared history, our agreement on the apostolic faith, our shared theological understandings of the nature and mission of the church and of its ministry and oversight, and our agreed vision of a greater practical expression of the unity in Christ of our two churches, hereby make the following covenant.'

