

Organizational Charter for the Network of Anglican Communion Dioceses and Parishes

IN THE NAME OF GOD: FATHER, SON AND HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

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WHEREAS the Preamble of the Constitution of The Episcopal Church provides:

"The Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, otherwise known as The Episcopal Church (which name is hereby recognized as also designating the Church), is a constituent member of the Anglican Communion, a Fellowship within the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, of those duly constituted Dioceses, Provinces, and regional Churches in communion with the See of Canterbury, upholding and propagating the historic Faith and Order as set forth in the Book of Common Prayer. This Constitution, adopted in General Convention in Philadelphia in October, 1789, as amended in subsequent General Conventions, sets forth the basic Articles for the government of this Church, and of its overseas missionary jurisdictions"; and

WHEREAS the Preface to the original 1789 Book of Common Prayer of The Episcopal Church and each ensuing revision contains the following statement:

"In which it will also appear that this Church is far from intending to depart from the Church of England in any essential point of doctrine, discipline, or worship; or further than local circumstances require"; and

WHEREAS the Episcopal Dioceses of ALBANY, CENTRAL FLORIDA, DALLAS, FLORIDA, FORT WORTH, PITTSBURGH, QUINCY, RIO GRANDE, SAN JOAQUIN, SOUTH CAROLINA, SOUTHWEST FLORIDA, SPRINGFIELD and WESTERN KANSAS, by actions of their several bishops, standing committees, diocesan councils and/or conventions humbly have found it necessary to oppose certain decisions¹ of the General Convention of The Episcopal Church made in August 2003 that were in violation of the instruments of Anglican unity and contrary to the declarations of the Anglican Communion made by the Lambeth Conference in 1998, which were thereafter reaffirmed by the Primates' Meetings; and

WHEREAS the undersigned Dioceses and Convocations prayerfully believe these decisions and consequential actions taken by the General Convention of The Episcopal Church have departed from the historic Faith and Order and have brought immense harm, "tearing the fabric of our Communion at its deepest level"² within this Church and throughout the Communion, as well as damaging important ecumenical and interfaith relationships; and

WHEREAS, seeking to be instruments of God's will and to unite like-minded dioceses and congregations in this association, the undersigned Dioceses and Convocations resolve to maintain a faithful Anglican witness in submission to the sovereign authority of Holy Scripture and as reflected in the theological statement known as the "Confession and Calling of the Anglican Communion Dioceses and Parishes;" and

WHEREAS the highest priority of the undersigned Dioceses and Convocations is to seek to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ in unity with the See of Canterbury and the Anglican Communion, as members of that Communion;

THEREFORE the undersigned representatives of the Dioceses and Convocations here assembled agree to associate as follows:

ARTICLE I

Name. This association shall be known as the "NETWORK OF ANGLICAN COMMUNION DIOCESES AND PARISHES," hereafter known as the "Network," and shall operate in good faith within the Constitution of The Episcopal Church.

ARTICLE II

Purpose. The purpose of this charter is to establish said Network, whose associated Dioceses and Convocations will constitute a true and legitimate expression of the world-wide Anglican Communion.

ARTICLE III

Mission and Authority. We, as Dioceses and Convocations, commit ourselves to the propagation of the unchanging Gospel of Jesus Christ and the fulfillment of the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations. We further commit ourselves to the formation of disciples submitted to the historic Faith and Order of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church under the ultimate authority of the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

ARTICLE IV

Relationship to the World Wide Anglican Communion. We, as Dioceses and Convocations, commit ourselves to full membership in the Anglican Communion of Churches throughout the world, grounded in the classical Anglican formularies,³ and in submission to the moral and teaching authority of the Lambeth Conference and Primates Meeting. We commit ourselves to maintaining, rebuilding, and strengthening ecumenical relationships. We further commit ourselves to the ongoing re-union of the Anglican diaspora in North America.

ARTICLE V

Network Structure. The Network shall be structured as follows:

a) The Network shall consist of participating dioceses and convocations. A convocation will serve as the entity within which individual parishes and congregations not part of a Network diocese and wishing to affiliate with the Network will unite. Convocations shall be of two types: geographical and non-geographical. The Network will initially include five geographical and one non-geographical convocation. The five geographical Convocations, whose boundaries shall be specified by the Steering Committee, will be known as the New England Convocation, the Mid-Atlantic Convocation, the Southeastern Convocation, the Mid-Continental Convocation, and the Western Convocation. The non-geographical Convocation will be known as the Forward in Faith North America (FiFNA) Convocation. The Steering Committee shall ensure that the congregations of each convocation shall come under the spiritual authority of a bishop approved by the Steering Committee. A convocation shall be considered active when it consists of at least six worshipping congregations.

b) There shall be a Network Council consisting of the diocesan bishop, two clergy and two lay representatives of each participating diocese and of two representatives (order unspecified) from each convocation. Additionally, up to five at-large representatives may be chosen by the Global Mission Partners from among their missionary societies serving the Network and the Anglican Communion.

c) The Council shall: elect triennially a Moderator (President and Convening Authority; a bishop) and other officers (any order); meet annually or at the discretion of the Moderator; shape the policy and direction of the Network; and elect twelve members of the Council to serve, with the Moderator and other officers, as the Steering Committee to carry the Network mission forward between meetings of the Council. The Moderator shall have general powers of appointment.

d) The Moderator (President and Convening Authority) of the Network shall cause Network Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws to be prepared in accordance with this Charter.

ARTICLE VI

Affiliation. The Network calls upon other like-minded dioceses, parishes, and congregations to apply for Network affiliation. Any diocese or congregation desiring to affiliate with the Network shall fulfill the requirements for membership as established by the Council and administered by the Steering Committee.

ARTICLE VII

Adequate Episcopal Oversight. In consultation with the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Primates of the Anglican Communion, the Network shall work for the provision of adequate episcopal oversight as mandated by the Primates of the Communion for parishes and congregations requesting such ministry.⁴

ARTICLE VIII

Ordination. The affiliates of the Network hold differing positions regarding the ordination of women and pledge that we shall recognize and honor the positions and practices on this issue of others in the Network.

ARTICLE IX

Stewardship. All assets, of every kind and nature, held by the Network are, and shall be, irrevocably dedicated to and inured to the benefit of the charitable, educational, and religious purposes of the Network, and used according to the requirements of the Internal Revenue Code #501(c)(3), and no part thereof shall inure to the private benefit of any individual or be used for any impermissible purpose. Each gift or contribution received by the Network shall be deemed restricted and designated by the donor to advance charitable, educational, and religious purposes of the Network. In the event of dissolution or termination of the Network, the Network's property shall be distributed as directed by the Network's Steering Committee in accordance with applicable law for missionary work.

ARTICLE X

Amendments. This Charter may be amended by the affirmative vote of two thirds of the members of the Council at a duly called meeting.

Executed this 20th day of January, in the Year of our Lord Two Thousand Four at Christ Church, Plano, State of Texas, in the United States of America, in the presence of Almighty God and the below named Witnesses who hereinafter have affixed their seals.

This Charter was adopted unanimously on January 20, 2004, by the Network's Organizing Convocation.

(Please note that the resolutions below are not resolutions to which the Network necessarily subscribes, but are simply included because they are cited in the organizational charter above.)

1 Resolution C045: Resolved, pursuant to Article II, Section 2, and Canon III.22.3 of the Constitution and Canons of the General Convention, the House of Deputies, consents to the ordination and consecration of The Rev. Canon V. Gene Robinson as Bishop Coadjutor of the Diocese of New Hampshire
Resolution C051: Resolved, the House of Deputies concurring, That the 74th General Convention affirms the following:

That our life together as a community of faith is grounded in the saving work of Jesus Christ and expressed in the principles of the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral: Holy Scripture, the historic Creeds of the Church, the two dominical sacraments, and the historic episcopate. That we reaffirm Resolution A069 of the 65th General Convention (1976) that "homosexual persons are children of God who have a full and equal claim with all other persons upon the love, acceptance, and pastoral concern and care of the Church." That, in our understanding of homosexual persons, differences exist among us about how best to care pastorally for those who intend to live in monogamous, non-celibate unions; and what is, or should be, required, permitted, or prohibited by the doctrine, discipline, and worship of The Episcopal Church concerning the blessing of the same. That we reaffirm Resolution D039 of the 73rd General Convention (2000), that "We expect such relationships will be characterized by fidelity, monogamy, mutual affection and respect, careful, honest communication, and the holy love which enables those in such relationships to see in each other the image of God", and that such relationships exist throughout the church. That, we recognize that local faith communities are operating within the bounds of our common life as they explore and experience liturgies celebrating and blessing same-sex unions. That we commit ourselves, and call our church, in the spirit of Resolution A104 of the 70th General Convention (1991), to continued prayer, study, and discernment on the pastoral care for gay and lesbian persons, to include the compilation and development by a special commission organized and appointed by the Presiding Bishop of resources to facilitate as wide a conversation of discernment as possible throughout the church. That our baptism into Jesus Christ is inseparable from our communion with one another, and we commit ourselves to that communion despite our diversity of opinion

and, among dioceses, a diversity of pastoral practice with the gay men and lesbians among us. That it is a matter of faith that our Lord longs for our unity as his disciples, and for us this entails living within the boundaries of the Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church. We believe this discipline expresses faithfulness to our polity and that it will facilitate the conversation we seek not only in The Episcopal Church, but also in the wider Anglican Communion and beyond.

2 The Primates Statement of October 16, 2003.

3 By this phrase we mean a commitment to the Scriptures, the Apostles and Nicene Creeds, the 39 Articles of Religion, The Book of Common Prayer (particularly in its 1662 version), and the Chicago Lambeth Quadrilateral.

4 Lambeth Conference, 1998, Resolution III.6.(b), "Instruments of Anglican Communion;" and the Primates Statement of October 16, 2003.