



## ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF CANBERRA AND GOULBURN

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### GUIDELINES FOR COVENANTS as 24 August 2015

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#### **What is a covenant?**

A covenant is an agreement entered into by a licensed minister, the community within which the ministry is being exercised (eg a parish, a chaplaincy), and the Bishop.

In contrast to the covenant, the licence issued to a minister is the formal, legal entitlement of the minister to exercise the ministry to which he or she is called and forms the basis for the canonical relationship with the Church, the bishop and the parish.

The covenant sets out the mutual objectives and expectations for the ministry of the licence holder of the Bishop and the parish or chaplaincy unit to which he or she is appointed.

The objectives and expectations set out in the covenant are an expression of the intention of the parties and do not impose legally binding obligations on any party to the covenant.

The Covenant sets out the mutual objectives and expectations that the Bishop, parish and minister intend that the ministry will achieve, after discussion, reflection and prayer by the parties. It is a record of the part that each intends to play in order to achieve the agreed ministry.

The covenant is not and is not intended to be a legal document giving rise to enforceable legal rights and duties, but to express the mutual understanding of the nature and intent of the ministry to be exercised.

It is not an employment contract and does not cover conditions of service. It outlines a mutual understanding of the particular areas of ministry, as well as specific needs and expectations. A list of appropriate issues to be considered when drawing up covenants is available from the Bishop's Office.

#### **What is the point of a covenant?**

Covenants recognise that ministry is a mutual undertaking. It is a matter for the whole community, not just the licensed ministers. A covenant encourages a community to reflect on its needs and expectations, its strengths and weaknesses. The covenanting process also acknowledges that people bring very different gifts, skills, strengths, weaknesses and needs to ministry positions. Covenants enable both the community and the minister being appointed to reflect jointly on the ministry ahead and to be open about expectations, needs and priorities.

Archdeacons are encouraged to take the time to work with the clergy person and the parish representatives in articulating their expectations, the relationship they hope to build and the ministry and mission they would like to work towards together. This conversation must address the particular needs or circumstances for this ministry position eg. part-time or full-time, a first incumbency or where there has been significant dysfunction in the parish or ministry unit previously.

**When are covenants agreed and how long do they last?**

A covenant is to be discussed and drafted within 6 months of the beginning of a ministry and where more time is needed then permission is sought from the Bishop to extend the process. The Covenant may last the length of the ministry or may be varied to reflect the changing opportunities, needs and circumstances of the ministry unit. Any party to the covenant may initiate a review in consultation with the Regional/Portfolio Archdeacon.

**Who agrees to a covenant?**

In the first instance, the regional Archdeacon convenes a meeting of the clergy person who has been appointed and representatives from the appointing body (including Parish Wardens and Parish Clergy Appointments Board members, chaplaincy supervisor) to discuss the terms of the covenant. Once general agreement has been reached, a draft is sent to the Bishop for his comments and agreement.

The signatories to the Covenant are the Bishop, the clergy person and the Parish wardens (and may also include the Chair of Parish Council). Signatories for a Chaplaincy are the appropriate equivalent.

The Regional/Portfolio Archdeacon ensures the Bishop, clergy person and parish signatories have signed copies of the covenant.

**Other questions?**

In the first instance, contact the relevant Regional or Portfolio Archdeacon.