

## **A Covenant between the Episcopal Church of Liberia (ECL) and The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of The Protestant Episcopal Church in The United States of America (also known as: The Episcopal Church (TEC))**

### **I. A Brief History of the Episcopal Church in Liberia**

The Episcopal Church of Liberia (ECL) was established more than 170 years ago in the Republic of Liberia, a country situated on the west coast of Africa, bounded by Cote d' Ivoire, Guinea, Sierra Leone and the Atlantic Ocean. The church is visible throughout the political subdivisions of the country.

The Episcopal Church of Liberia (ECL) and The Episcopal Church (TEC) have a long history of mutual involvement in the ministry of Jesus Christ. It formally began in 1836 with the sending of missionaries and the subsequent establishment of the episcopate in the years following. A Covenant was adopted by both churches in 1979, in their respective Conventions.

The ECL undertakes social programs to meet the education, health and community development needs of the people of Liberia as well as the work of spiritual development and financial sustainability. However, due to the civil crisis which started in late 1989, most of ECL facilities were badly damaged or completely destroyed.

In 1998, a needs assessment of the ECL was carried out with the view of determining the status of the ECL and the rehabilitation required early on in the civil crisis. This document was updated in 2000 to stress the following priorities: education, health, income generating programs, evangelism, spiritual growth and community development. In 2006, this document was again further updated. In preparation for a new Covenant this document was reviewed in 2008.

With the successful election and inauguration of Her Excellency Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf as the first female president of Liberia on January 16, 2006, signals from the international community indicates a strong support for the government in terms of security which is cardinal to economic stability and development. Since the inauguration, the country continues to make considerable strides. Development activities are progressing in many parts of the country.

In 2008, the ECL also held the successful election of the Right Reverend Jonathan B.B. Hart as the twelfth Bishop of Liberia. Under his leadership the Church is enjoying a new dynamic spirit that incorporates more fully the clergy and laity in the administration of the Diocese. Churches and their partners are now concentrating on long term development strategies rather than relief and short term projects which have been limited in scope.

## **II. Partnership in Mission**

In the spirit of partnership in mission, the Episcopal Church of Liberia (ECL) and The Episcopal Church (TEC) agree to:

- A) Establish the means to continue the partnership in mission and ministry in a wide variety of fields, including evangelism, education, stewardship, programs for social action and specific programs by and for women, youth and children and people with disabilities.
- B) Assist in the implementation of the ECL five-year Development Plan, 2009-2013, which encourages the reconstruction, rehabilitation and development of both urban and rural areas.
- C) Assist ECL in developing theological and Christian education programs.
- D) Promote Cuttington University's search for loans, grants, and other forms of technical/financial assistance by using TEC's contacts and influence to assist in the growth of the University, as well as the expansion of the Cuttington University Trust Funds.
- E) Encourage and nourish companion diocese relationships and other means for grassroots sharing of human, spiritual and material resources. TEC Partnership Office, in collaboration with the Bishop of Liberia, will provide the medium to link TEC dioceses with the Diocese of Liberia. Technical assistance will be particularly welcome in terms of missionary technicians in various fields of expertise.
- F) Continue partnership relationship with United Thank Offering (UTO) and Episcopal Relief and Development (ERD), working together through the ECL to support and assist urban and rural churches and parishes. The ECL will continue to participate in the annual UTO ingathering as well as raise funds for ERD.
- G) Continue to include the Bishop of the Episcopal Church of Liberia as a collegial member of the House of Bishops of TEC. Representatives of ECL shall continue to be provided through the Rules of Order, a "seat and voice" in the House of Deputies of TEC, when that body meets.
- H) Encourage ECL to develop, with the support of TEC, a coordinating committee for the Episcopal Church of Liberia which can identify and publicize ministry needs and companion opportunities for parish-to-parish relationships.
- I) Filter all communications with ECL through the Office of the Bishop.

### **III. Toward ECL Economic Self-Sufficiency and Self-Sustainability**

A Church is authentically autonomous when it is self-governing, self-propagating and self-supporting financially. In order to achieve such self-sufficiency, The Episcopal Church of Liberia (ECL) and The Episcopal Church (TEC) agree that:

- A) TEC will continue to contribute to the general budget of ECL through its national program budget for a period of 20 years based on a progressive reduction of 5% annually of the present 2009 appropriation of \$215,000. This 5% reduction commences in 2010. This contribution is subject to adoption by the 2009 TEC General Convention on a triennial basis (2010-2030) and to review by the TEC Executive Council and the ECL Diocesan Council as circumstances dictate.
- B) In view of declining support from TEC, ECL will continue to develop internal resources towards full financial independence. ECL will develop and share with TEC a diocesan business plan reflecting how the ECL will develop financial independence in line with decreasing TEC support. TEC will continue to provide technical advice through missionary expertise as required to manage, expand, and maximize efficient use of the ECL Trust Funds and other assets.
- C) Toward the ongoing establishment and administration of a sustainable ECL pension plan, and in accordance with Diocesan Canons, the ECL will initiate quotas and assessments for parishes able to contribute compensation and pension payments in support of the diocesan budget. Both ECL and TEC are encouraged to continue developing sources of partnership funding, among companion diocese and parish to parish networks in support of the pension plan. TEC, through the offices of the Church Pension Fund (CPF) and the DFMS Treasurer, will provide for an annual pension valuation review, and updating of the ECL pension administration agreement.
- D) Representatives of ECL consisting of the Bishop, the Chancellor, the Archdeacons, the Treasurer, the President of the Standing Committee, the President of Cuttington University, and the Chairs of the following Diocesan boards and committees: Planning and Development, the Trustees, Education, the Pension, and Budget and Finance; will continue to communicate with members of the TEC Covenant Committee, to consult, cooperate, and exchange advice and information on a regular basis. The ECL Bishop will name a four to six member Covenant Committee to include the Bishop, clergy and laity.
- E) This Covenant shall be subject to a performance review every 12-18 months and modified as may become necessary. It shall continue in effect until agreement by both parties to terminate. A one-year notice of termination shall be provided to the other. Upon the completion of the economic self-sufficiency of ECL, a new covenant which does not include specific financial support will be developed to express our ongoing commitment to partnership in the Gospel of Christ.