

Annotated version after the first Evaluation/Implementation meeting held on October 7-10, 1998. The annotations are in Italics.

**A
COVENANT
between
THE ANGLICAN PROVINCE OF MEXICO (PAM)
*[Since January 1995 officially changed to
Iglesia Anglicana de Mexico (IAM)]*
and
THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN THE USA**

Historical Preface

This is not the first covenant made between the church in Mexico and the Episcopal Church in the United States. The first was written more than a century ago, in 1875, when the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, itself still a young church, entered into an agreement of support with the “Mexican Branch of the Catholic Church of our Lord Jesus Christ Militant on earth...until such time when the Mexican Branch would reach self-sufficiency in its Episcopate, and administer its own affairs.”

This “Mexican Branch” was a tiny indigenous religious community that owes its emergence to the widespread political reformist movements of the last century. Under the protection of favorable parliamentary legislation in 1857, reform-minded clergy and laity took advantage of the new freedom of thought and religious expression and gathered themselves into a community they called **la Iglesia de Jesus** (the Church of Jesus), the simple name by which they would be known for many years.

True to its word, the neighboring reform church to the north consecrated the Rev. Henry Riley, an American citizen who had been working with fellow Christians in Mexico, as bishop for the Church of Jesus in 1879, thus providing the much-desired gift of ministry in the apostolic succession. But PECUSA was less true to its word in others respects for in 1904 the General Convention created its own Missionary District of Mexico, with the Rt. Rev. Henry Damerl Alves as bishop. Presented with what amounted to a parallel diocesan Synod of the Mexican Episcopal Church (as the Church of Jesus had become known) successfully petitioned to be incorporated into the new missionary district.

The aspirations on the part of Mexico Episcopalians for autonomy have never flagged, through the years have seen many challenges to the existence of a truly self-governing, indigenous church. Government actions after the Mexican Revolution of 1917 severely restricted freedom of institutional religious practice. Churches could not own or property, clerics and to be born in Mexico and find their civil rights curtailed, religious schools were prohibited. Sadly, too, Episcopalians in Mexico, especially during the late 1940's, locally suffered attacks and persecution from Roman Catholic Church, which silently has the support of many government functionaries.

One positive consequence of state restrictions on institutional religious practice, however was the need to elect a national Suffragan bishop for the Missionary District of Mexico. Accordingly, on September 29, 1931, the Rt. Rev. Efrain Salinas y Velasco was consecrated in Denver. Three years later, on the resignation of the diocesan, Bishop Salinas assumed leadership as the first indigenous Mexican Bishop.

Anglican presence in Mexico has since grown, especially under the long, fruitful episcopate of the Rt. Rev. Jose Guadalupe Saucedo, presently the bishop of Cuernavaca. When Bishop Saucedo was consecrated in 1958, the Mexican Church was organized in one diocese, it now has five. A national structure established for mission has long been in place. A sizeable national autonomy fund created in 1990, largely from Venture in Mission funds unselfishly pooled by the five dioceses. Planning for full constitutional and financial autonomy has proceeded over the last decade in partnership with the General Convention, the Executive Council and the Presiding Bishop.

Furthermore, recent constitutional reform in Mexico has opened new horizons for the life and mission of la **Iglesia Anglicana de Mexico**, which now enjoys its own legal status (and a new name, differentiating itself from the "Mexican Episcopate" of the Roman Catholic Church). New responsibilities have in consequence been placed before it, which it accepts as a joyful challenge in fulfilling its mission, therefore, the new Anglican Province of Mexico (PAM) establishes with the Episcopal Church in the United States (ECUSA) the following

COVENANT

I. TRANSFER OF THE METROPOLITICAL AUTHORITY

- a) The Diocese of Mexico, Cuernavaca, Northern Mexico, Southeastern Mexico and Western Mexico having complied with the requirements for autonomy established by the General Convention, including the writing and approving of a provincial Constitution and Canons in the forms recommended by the Anglican Consultative Council, and with the approval of the General Convention and the support of ECUSA, constitute itself into an autonomous Province of the Anglican Communion.
- b) Metropolitan Authority for the Mexican dioceses will be transferred from the General Convention to the General Synod of PAM upon action of General Convention.
Transference officially took place on May 1995.
- c) In like fashion, any titles of real properties not already transferred will be transferred by its action from the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society (DFMS) of ECUSA to PAM.
There are three (3) properties under the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society ownership that need to be transferred. For that purpose the original property titles must be provided.

II. PARTNERSHIP IN MISSION

In the spirit of **partnership in mission, PAM and ECUSA agree to:**

- a) Establish the means to continue their partnership in mission and ministry in a wide variety of fields, including evangelism, Christian education, theological and liturgical studies, training and stewardship, programs for social action and specific programs by and for women, minorities, youth and children. ***More work needs to be done in this area for implementation. The weakness here is that Mexico still lacks a Provincial National Program Committee.***
- b) Collaborate to strengthen ecumenical participation and witness in their respective countries and in the larger region. ***ECUSA shared with IAM its negotiations of Full Communion with the Evangelical Lutheran Church.***
- c) Encourage and nourish companion diocese relationships and other means for grassroots sharing of human, spiritual and material resources. ***It is necessary to promote further the partners in mission relationship. Only 40% of the Mexican dioceses have a Companion Diocese Relationship.***
- d) Continue participation in the United Thank Offering and the Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief. ***Sharing with UTO will continue. It has been decided to***

create a fund to send 25% to UTO/ECUSA and keep 75% to create their own UTO. The same is valid in terms of the PBFWR.

- e) Welcome and seat bishops of the two churches as collegial members of their respective house of bishops. ***This is been partially accomplished; it must be broadened.***

Requests for major resources in the form of grants, loans and mission personnel originating in the dioceses of PAM and directed to ECUSA should first have the authorization of the General Synod or Provincial Council of PAM.

III. TOWARD ECONOMIC SELF-SUFFICIENCY

A church is authentically autonomous when it is self-governed, self-propagated, and self-supporting financially, in order to have such self-sufficiency, PAM and ECUSA agree that:

- a) ECUSA will continue to contribute to the general budget of PAM through its national program budget for a period of twenty five (25) years, based on a reduction of 4% annually of the present 1994 appropriation of \$918,864.00, the reduction to begin one year after the effective date of autonomy, that is, January 1, 1996. This contribution is subject to adoption by the General Convention on a triennial basis and to review by the ECUSA Executive Council and the PAM provincial Council as circumstances dictate. ***It is necessary to renegotiate the % of reduction given the constant devaluation of the Mexican peso.***
- b) PAM will make an annual contribution to the national program budget of ECUSA as mutually determined. ***The amount contributed to ECUSA is US\$3,000.00.***
- c) ECUSA and PAM, with the advice and cooperation of the Church Pension Fund (CPF), will devise and PAM will implement a national pension plan for the clerical and lay employees of PAM, based upon t and comparable to the present plan now enjoyed by the clergy of PAM. The Church Pension Fund will be asked to maintain PAM clergy in the present plan provided by the CPF for a period of three (3) years following the transfer of metropolitanical authority to PAM. ***The necessary studies have been done with the assistance and support of the CPF. The Anglican Church of Mexico is confident that a viable pension program will be in place by the year 2000.***
- d) ECUSA will provide appropriate technical assistance to PAM and its constituent dioceses in the development of stewardship programs and the raising of capital funds for missionary expansion. ***This is in process of outlining; effort needs to continue.***

IV. IMPLEMENTATION

- a) This covenant will be in effect from the first day of January of the year immediately following the approval by General Convention for the dioceses of Mexico to form the Anglican Province of Mexico and will continue for as long as mutually agreed. ***This has occurred as of January 1, 1995.***
- b) An evaluation of the covenant is to be undertaken periodically and at least every five (5) years, by the joint Covenant Committee (appointed by the two primates) and the results reported to the Executive Council and the Provincial Council, respectively, of ECUSA and PAM. ***This is the first evaluation.***

(end)

November 1998