

JOINT STATEMENT OF  
THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF ALABAMA  
AND THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF THE ADVENT

June 25, 2021

The Episcopal Diocese of Alabama is among the strongest dioceses in The Episcopal Church. With its wide breadth of expressions and strong diversity of churches and Episcopalians, the Diocese invites all people to the good news of Jesus Christ. While this diversity offers ample room in the Diocese for many expressions of Anglicanism, it can also cause tensions in our shared life.

The Church of the Advent, founded nearly 150 years ago, has been steadfast in its gospel ministry as a parish church with a living, daring confidence in God's grace through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is a vital part of the mission and ministry of the Episcopal Diocese of Alabama. Since 1981, the Advent has served as the Cathedral of the Diocese, thus holding a unique place in diocesan life and ministry.

The relationship of the Advent and the Diocese has at times been uneasy. In recent decades, The Episcopal Church has moved toward a more progressive theological understanding, while the Advent has purposefully retained a Protestant, evangelical expression. In these moments of tension, we are called into a purposeful, intentional relationship with each other.

To that end, the Diocese of Alabama, through Bishop Glenda Curry, and the Advent have entered into a Covenant that can be read here: <https://www.dioala.org/AdventCovenant>. The Covenant will serve as a path forward for the Diocese and the Advent, as they chart their course together in furtherance of effecting a generational peace. This agreement is the result of more than three years of prayer, discernment, and honest conversation.

The Covenant is a joint commitment to the relationship between the Advent and the Diocese, and will aid the ordering of our shared ministry while respecting the Advent's individual expression and convictions. The Covenant allows both the Advent and the Diocese to flourish as they discern more effective ways to support one another.

The Covenant does not answer every question. Instead, the Covenant invites us into a deeper relationship with each other through Christ. It is our shared hope that this Covenant will shape fruitfully the relationship between the Advent and the Diocese, providing a path forward for future bishops, deans, and other leaders.

It is the humble prayer of all involved that the purposes of Christ's one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church might be furthered, that our Lord's gospel would be proclaimed to the entire creation, and we would all go forth into the world, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

*The church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord;  
she is his new creation, by water and the word:  
from heaven he came and sought her to be his holy bride;  
with his own blood he bought her, and for her life he died.*  
Samuel John Stone, 1866



**Covenant**  
**Between The Rt. Rev. Glenda Curry**  
**As Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Alabama**  
**and**  
**the Cathedral Church of the Advent**

**WHEREAS**, the Cathedral Church of the Advent (the "*Advent*") holds a unique place and responsibility in the life and ministry of the Episcopal Diocese of Alabama ("*Diocese*") as its Cathedral and seat of the Bishop; and

**WHEREAS**, for nearly 150 years, the Advent has been steadfast in its gospel ministry as a parish church with a living, daring confidence in God's grace through the Gospel of Jesus Christ; and

**WHEREAS**, the Diocese and the Advent have a shared mission in the proclamation of the Gospel; and

**WHEREAS**, at times during the tenure of their relationship, tensions have arisen over various issues involving the manner in which the Advent and the Diocese have conducted their respective ministries, which have taken on a heightened intensity; and

**WHEREAS**, such tensions have been a distraction and have served to put a strain on the relationship of the parties, thereby hindering and adversely impacting their ability to perform and further their individual and shared ministries faithfully; and

**WHEREAS**, the Rt. Rev. Glenda Curry, having been ordained and installed as the XII Bishop of the Diocese, wishes at the outset of her tenure to recognize the ministries of the Diocese and the Advent; and

**WHEREAS**, the Advent wishes to recognize the ministries of the Advent and the Diocese;

**WHEREAS**, the parties desire to set forth certain acknowledgements, understandings, and agreements herein with the expectation and prayer that these may alleviate the tensions in order that a lasting peace and fulfilling relationship may be achieved for the betterment and benefit of both and their ongoing and future ministries,

**THEREFORE**, with the blessings of God and after much prayer, and in order to encourage, support, and foster the relationship between the Diocese and the Advent, the Bishop and the Advent covenant, offer, and agree with one another as follows:

**1. Affirmation of the Role of the Advent as the Cathedral and as a Member of the Episcopal Church**

The Advent affirms its willingness and desire to remain as the designated Cathedral of the Diocese, and, as such, acknowledges and affirms its agreement “to proclaim and interpret the gospel of Jesus Christ and to support the ministry” of the Diocese. Articles of Agreement, Preamble. The Diocese affirms that the Advent “shall not be deprived of any of the rights and privileges afforded a Parish under the Charter and the Canons of the Diocese and of the Episcopal Church.” *Id.* Accordingly, the Advent and the Bishop hereby affirm the Articles of Agreement entered into as of 19 February 1981 with no changes to the terms of that agreement.

**2. Peaceful Relations Between the Diocese and the Advent**

The Diocese and the Advent, as the body of Christ, both seek a renewed relationship, and hope that by working collaboratively together, they will develop new opportunities to preach and share the Gospel throughout and beyond Birmingham and the Diocese for many years to come. It is the hope of both the Bishop and the Advent that with a renewed relationship, and with efforts made by the Advent and the Diocese as set forth herein, such a peace may be achieved, and mutual respect given, which would set forth a framework that the Diocese, Diocesan leaders, the Advent, and future Bishops will want to embrace and continue. This peace can best be achieved by allowing the Advent to express its theology and conduct its ministries as it is so led by God, within this framework. The Advent commits to participating in the life of the Diocese as may be reasonably expected and shall use its best efforts to develop a mutual respect of others within the Diocese while still maintaining its commitment to its particular theological perspective. Peaceful relations as the body of Christ are best achieved by building a life-long, growing, Spirit-led relationship, and by establishing a framework grounded upon that relationship.

### **3. Theological Expression**

The Diocese understands that the Advent's evangelical identity is rooted in Scripture being its primary authority and the Gospel's proclamation of God's salvation of sinners through Christ's atoning death and resurrection. The Diocese further understands the historical mission of the Advent, as with many other parishes within the Diocese, has been to proclaim the freeing power of the Gospel and to make disciples where God has placed the Advent. The Advent will continue its confidence in Scripture's authority, truth, and clarity and in God's grace revealed in Jesus Christ as it plans for the future of its ministry and mission. The Bishop affirms and agrees that the Advent will have the freedom to express its theology and conduct its ministries in a manner consistent with the above-described theological expression.

### **4. Agreement on the Advent's Use of Rite I of the 1979 Book of Common Prayer**

The Bishop continues to expect, as she does with all parishes within the Diocese, that the Advent will adhere to the use of the 1979 Book of Common Prayer for its principal worship service. In reliance upon the representations of the Diocese that it will not compel parishes like the Advent to move from or change Rite I, the Advent commits to an orderly transition from its current liturgy to the use of the 1979 Book of Common Prayer for its principal worship service. In addition, the Diocese and the Advent agree that the Advent can use other alternative liturgies approved for use by the General Convention. Like all parishes, permission for use of other alternative liturgies may be requested by the Advent and granted by the Bishop for certain special occasions.

### **5. Safe Environment for Theological Expression**

The Bishop will ensure that the Advent has a safe environment for its theological expression and will use her best efforts not to set the Advent apart in the Diocese. The Advent will use its best efforts not to set itself apart in the Diocese, except to the extent the Advent's theological expression is different from that of others in the Diocese. The Advent agrees that one way not to set itself apart would be to include visible recognition by the parish of its association with The Episcopal Church and the Diocese. This includes, by way of example, making reasonable efforts to place the name "Episcopal" on the Advent's public signage, newsletter, and website. Both the Diocese and the Advent acknowledge that the best way for either side to avoid reproach or public recrimination is to work collaboratively together.

## 6. **Calling of Clergy**

The Bishop covenants that she will not reject any otherwise qualified candidate for a clergy position at the Advent solely based on their commitment to the Advent's particular theological expression or because they are from seminaries other than traditional Episcopal seminaries, or from other backgrounds. The Bishop shall retain all canonical authority afforded her in the Charter and Canons of the Diocese, the Charter and Canons of The Episcopal Church, and all other binding and governing documents (hereinafter defined collectively as "*Charters and Canons*").

## 7. **Development of Clergy**

The Bishop covenants that she will not reject any otherwise qualified candidate for ordination solely based on that candidate's commitment to the Advent's particular theological expression. The Bishop is open to the consideration of sending candidates to seminaries other than the traditional Episcopal seminaries. The Bishop shall retain all canonical authority afforded her in the Charters and Canons.

## 8. **Pastoral Integrity with Regard to Diocesan Covenant and Financial Stewardship**

The Advent will continue to financially support the Diocese as the Advent and its parishioners feel so called. In so doing, and beginning with the next annual stewardship campaign, the Advent agrees to remove the "Advent Only" category as an option on its pledge card. The Advent's lay and ordained leadership also agrees not to overtly or indirectly promote, encourage, or otherwise endorse restricted giving by its parishioners which limit monies going to the general operations of the Diocese. The option of utilizing the Perkins Fund (or other similar mechanism) provided by the Diocese to restrict giving to The Episcopal Church shall continue to be allowed by the Diocese so that the Advent parishioners can elect such restrictions without adversely affecting the monies given to the Diocese, but such decisions by parishioners should not be manipulated or otherwise encouraged by the clergy or other Advent leadership. Further, neither members of the clergy nor the Advent leadership should restrict parishioners' giving, but will follow any specific directives from a parishioner with regard to any gift or bequest.

9. The Bishop agrees that a lay member of the Advent will be nominated by the Vestry and appointed by the Bishop as an Ex Officio Member of the Diocesan Council as a liaison to the Cathedral. This position will have seat and voice, but canonically will not have a vote. This does not preclude a member of the Advent from being elected as a full voting member of the Diocesan Council. Each Ex Officio member would serve a three-year term so as to allow the candidate an opportunity to become fully engaged in the

work of the Council over the course of that term. This arrangement shall continue so long as both parties agree that the position is helpful to the ongoing and future shared ministries.

10. The Bishop agrees that a lay member of the Advent will be nominated by the Vestry and appointed by the Bishop as a member of the Diocesan Commission on Ministry. This arrangement shall continue so long as both parties agree that the position is helpful to the ongoing and future shared ministries. The Bishop is also open to suggestions of other Diocesan groups to which a member of the Advent may be nominated by its Vestry and appointed by the Bishop.

11. The Bishop and Dean will continue to meet with one another regularly, recognizing the value of these meetings in the development of a positive long-term relationship between the Advent and the Diocese.

12. The Bishop welcomes and requests, as she does with other parishes, at least one yearly meeting with the Advent Vestry.

13. The Bishop would welcome the opportunity to partner with the Advent to plant or revitalize parishes in growing communities in our Diocese. The goal of this partnership would be to share the gospel, build up the church, and develop leaders for the future.

14. The Bishop recognizes that the Advent's Lenten Preaching Series and Lunches are an important outreach to the community. She will encourage ECW delegations, Diocesan Council, and others to attend the Preaching Series and Lunches as a part of their seasonal meetings.

15. The Bishop recognizes that the Advent is a leading church within the evangelical expression of Anglicanism and that many robust and thriving churches and ministries in The Episcopal Church have deep and generative connections with the Advent. The Bishop will also recommend the gifts and experience of the Advent in numerous areas for the benefit and education of other churches in the Diocese, including church planting, mission, ministry development, preaching, teaching, youth and young adult ministries.

16. It is the mutual hope and expectation that this Covenant will provide a foundation for a stronger relationship between the Diocese and the Advent that will deepen over the course of this Bishop's tenure. The parties hope that this Covenant will serve as a template for relationships between the Advent and future Bishops of the Diocese. The Advent and the Bishop further recognize that actions of the General Convention of The Episcopal

Church and/or any actions by future Bishops of the Diocese that are contrary to the spirit or text of this Covenant may affect and alter what is enumerated herein.

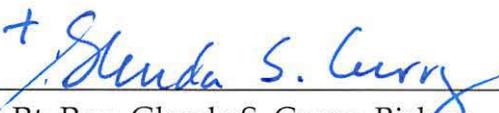
17. The Advent and the Bishop acknowledge that they are bound by the Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church and the Canons and other controlling documents of the Diocese, and nothing in this Covenant is intended to replace, supplant, amend, or modify any rights or duties thereunder.

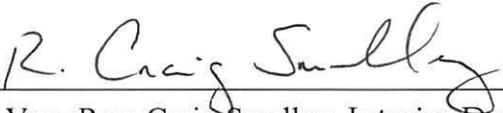
18. Both parties acknowledge and agree that the terms of this Covenant are not confidential and may be freely shared by all in the hope that all may share in the blessing of a renewed ministry together.

IN TESTIMONY to our Lord on this 23<sup>rd</sup> day of June in His Year, 2021.

**The Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Alabama**

**The Cathedral Church of the Advent  
Birmingham, Alabama**

By:   
The Rt. Rev. Glenda S. Curry, Bishop

By:   
The Very Rev. Craig Smalley, Interim Dean and Rector of the Advent

By:   
Augusta S. Dowd, Chancellor

By:   
John W. Hargrove, Senior Warden

By:   
I. Ripon Britton, Jr., Asst. Chancellor

By:   
Jay M. Ezelle, Junior Warden