

COGS Highlights



Council of General Synod

Sunday, November 20, 2016

Council members gathered after breakfast at 8:45 a.m. at the Queen of Apostles Renewal Centre in Mississauga.

CoGS Photo

Members of the Council of General Synod (CoGS) posed for a group photograph outside the front entrance of the Renewal Centre before moving back inside.

Eucharist

Primate Fred Hiltz presided at the morning Eucharist, celebrating the Reign of Christ. Prolocutor Cynthia Haines-Turner provided the sermon for the Sunday Eucharist, focusing on the importance of living into our baptismal covenant.

Members broke for coffee and housekeeping from 10 a.m. to 10:45 a.m.

Haines-Turner then presented several motions to the council, some of which were carried over from the previous day. Members carried each of the resolutions by consensus.

Resolution

Be it resolved that this Council of General Synod support and encourage the timely translation of such materials related to the vote on the Marriage Canon as deemed appropriate by the Management Team in consultation with Indigenous partners and in such forms as may be determined appropriate.

Resolution

Be it resolved that the members of this Council of General Synod encourage the consideration of the resolution on the

Marriage Canon (A051-R2) in accord with the provision in the Declaration of Principles "that between first and second reading the matter be referred for consideration to diocesan and provincial synods."

Resolution

Be it resolved that in the matter of the consideration of GS resolution A051-R2, the members of this Council of General Synod invite each of their diocese to indicate their need for resources and/or to share their resources used, and to return said information to the office of the General Secretary by March 15, 2017.

Resolution

Be it resolved that the Primate, in consultation with the officers, appoint a task group from this Council of General Synod to facilitate the consideration of the resolution on the Marriage Canon (A051-R2).

Prior to the vote on the next resolution, council member Melanie Delva recalled speaking to the Rev. Laurel Dykstra after the latter returned from a week-long stay in solidarity just outside the Standing Rock reserve in North Dakota, where water protectors are protesting pipeline development. Delva noted that the situation in Standing Rock is not unique, with major decisions in Canada regarding resource extraction coming soon such as for the proposed Kinder Morgan pipeline in December.

She put forward a motion, describing it as a reaffirmation of the commitment of the Anglican

Church of Canada to the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the United Nations Declaration on the Right of Indigenous Peoples. Council members carried the motion by consensus.

Resolution

Be it resolved that the members of this Council of General Synod express their support for Indigenous peoples and their desire to grow and deepen that trust both within the church and without:

in asserting and advocating their right to free, prior and informed consent concerning the stewardship of traditional Indigenous lands and water rights, and

in acknowledging and responding to their calls for solidarity.

Council member Bishop Bruce Myers introduced the next motion, which concerned the church's response to the World Council of Churches (WCC) document *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*. He encouraged CoGS to see the response not as a definitive statement from the church but rather as a snapshot of the limited responses they received, which had numbered fewer than 10. Myers said that the fewer responses compared to those received during discussion of the Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry (BEM) document in the 1980s perhaps spoke to the reduced capacity of resources or focus on such issues for many parishes today.

At the behest of General Secretary Michael Thompson, Bishop Myers spoke more about the contents of the response to *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*. The Anglican response is organized into answers to a series of questions, as requested by the Faith and Order Commission of the WCC based on the positive manner in which responses to BEM had been received.

The response also includes a summary of different ecumenical dialogues that the Anglican Church of Canada is participating in. Bishop Myers believed that the response would allow the church to enter

into a wider discussion about what it means to be church, and that there was resonance between the document and the Marks of Mission as well as the baptismal covenant.

Members then voted on the resolution, which was carried by consensus.

Resolution

Be it resolved that this Council of General Synod receive and forward to the Faith and Order Commission, "A Response to *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* from the Anglican Church of Canada."

Archbishop Fred Hiltz, Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, thanked Bishop Myers and the continued work by the committees and task forces in Faith, Worship, and Ministry, and the department's Director Eileen Scully for their help in ecumenical work. He praised the response as very readable and not overly long, answering questions asked by the WCC while providing a good picture of some of the ecclesiological issues the Anglican Church of Canada struggles with as well as its various ecumenical relationships.

General Secretary's Report

Presenting his written report to the council, the General Secretary drew the attention of members to a supplemental document that addressed the issue of electronic voting at the last General Synod, when members including the General Secretary and the National Indigenous Anglican Bishop had had their votes incorrectly recorded. Thompson acknowledged the role that Chancellor David Jones had played in investigating the source of the confusion, and extended his special thanks to the Chancellor. He also thanked the Primate for his "gracious" leadership, not just during that moment of confusion, but throughout the General Synod.

Through the experience with electronic voting, Thompson said, we had learned about the importance of attending to details, as well as how gracious the church is when those details elude it in one way or another. With great gratitude, Thompson said that he had not received a single message of disdain or negativity since the General

Synod, which he believed said “something incredibly good about our church, its leaders, and members.” In the beginning of his report, the General Secretary noted, he invites reflection on the nature of the church’s unity.

Thompson thanked Eileen Scully and former Primate Michael Peers for their work on ordained ministries, and discussed the meaning of *episkopé* in the life of the church. He invited CoGS to continue its work of both governance and leadership. Even as Anglicans acknowledge differences, he said, they remain witnesses to the many ways in which the church is trying to celebrate God’s call, “You Are My Witnesses”. Extending praise to the staff members at General Synod, Thompson said it was his privilege to lead a growing team that he believed was an “extraordinary gift to the church” that embodied a spirit of servant-hood to the church.

He highlighted the contributions of the church in opening up conversations about acculturation and Indigenous forms of ecclesiology. While not yet in the place it needs to be, he said, the Anglican Church of Canada is learning to think of itself as a church in which Indigenous people are full participants and in which their self-determination within that participation is seen not just as a value for Indigenous Anglicans, but for the whole church. Noting that the Anglican Church of Canada’s submission to the parliamentary committee on physician-assisted dying was the only submission that invited consideration of cultural realities within Indigenous communities at the time of death, Thompson described that moment as an example in which the church heard and spoke in a way that bears witness to who church members are and what they are trying to become as the Anglican Church of Canada.

In conclusion, Thompson said that it continues to be a great privilege for him to serve the church as its General Secretary, and very humbling when he considers the sacrificial ministries in which Anglicans are tirelessly engaged in from coast to coast.

Communications and Information Resources

Meghan Kilty, director of Communications and

Information Resources, then took the podium, noting all she had heard throughout the week in terms of stories of ministry and how God is alive in the church and its ministry down to the local context. The national communications team, she said, has been working since before General Synod to change the way in which the church talks about and shares stories of its life together.

Early manifestations of its new approach include the 2017 Canadian Church Calendar, a project this year that included contributions from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, marking a shift in focus from church buildings to stories of mission and ministry, as well as changes to the Anglican Church of Canada website that would appear within the next few months. Kilty described coming changes in the type of news shared and how it would be shared, with an increased emphasis on community-based curated content.

Finally, the communications team is encouraging the sharing of stories from across the country. Kilty invited council members to submit their stories and photographs, or to reach out if they have a story but are unsure of how to tell it. She planned to reach out to CoGS in the future because, as she told the council, “You represent our church in a wonderful, beautiful way.”

Members broke for lunch from noon to 1:30 p.m.

Reflections

After lunch, the meeting resumed with reflections from four council members on their experience of the current meeting: Bishop Larry Robertson, David Burrows, Katie Puxley, and Grace Delaney.

Bishop Robertson recalled the decision by the Primate to extend the theme “You Are My Witnesses” throughout the 2016-2019 triennium for dioceses and ecclesiastical provinces to pick up. Despite the challenges, Robertson believed there would be more energy in figuring out how to be God’s witnesses than continuing to talk about the marriage canon. He praised the report of the Anglican Fund for Healing and Reconciliation and its coordinator, Esther Wesley, highlighting the range of their projects reaching out for healing, mending, and reconciliation, “It made me proud to

be an Anglican, and that's something at times I haven't been," he said. Issuing a word of caution "as a conservative bishop" over ongoing conversations about the marriage canon, the bishop warned members against coming across as if they were "telling the diocese what to do or how to do it." He praised the work of the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund as a good news story, noting how respected the organization continues to be.

David Burrows praised the spirit of the first meeting of the new CoGS. He compared it favourably to General Synod, noting the divisions that had been felt at the latter, with controversial debates and some bishops choosing their own courses of action independent of the national body. He appreciated the voice given at CoGS to church partners, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada and The Episcopal Church, as well as the presentations on Indigenous ministries.

Katie Puxley highlighted the sense of unity she had felt since arriving at CoGS. She appreciated that the council had come in a spirit of openness and emotionally describe her passion for the church and its work. Puxley said that one of the saddest moments for her during the meeting was when Bishop MacDonald noted the lack of translation for some prayer books and core documents described by the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples (ACIP) into Aboriginal languages, and she urged the council to move forward in that area. She also underlined the sacrificial nature of lay people to serve on the council, and how the whole church needs to support lay peoples' full participation within the church at every level.

Grace Delaney described the yearning for unity and peace that characterized much of the church's work as it moved towards reconciliation, "a journey of mutual respect and honouring one another" with acceptance of the different cultures that the Creator had destined us to be a part of, and a willingness to share and see one another together as Christ's in God's kingdom. She expressed her enjoyment of the worship services, particularly the breaking of the bread together during the Eucharist, because, she said, "not everyone has breakfast."

Archbishop Hiltz thanked the four CoGS members for their reflections and said the council would take them into account as it planned its work for the next few years.

Word to the Church

The final item in the meeting agenda was the Word to the Church, an opportunity for the council to summarize the key messages it takes out of the meeting and what it has accomplished over the previous few days. During their brief and informal brainstorming session, council members identified the following key messages:

- Truth and Reconciliation Commission—how to be concrete in our actions
- Feeling positive—best CoGS
- Willingness to acknowledge but put aside pain of General Synod; that our unity comes from being part of the body of Christ
- ACIP presentation—steps taken to fulfill the vision of General Synod
- Received response to *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*
- Healing Fund—stats, projects, broad range, money
- Implicit—theme "You Are My Witnesses" set the tone for our meetings
- Altar frontal on messages
- Highlight the resolution on solidarity with Indigenous peoples
- We experienced joy
- Say to the church—we have thought/prayed deliberately about the next steps for the marriage canon
- Challenged to support the Reformation Commemoration and the ELCIC's commitments including planting 500,000 trees
- Celebrated what we do through PWRDF and through the Healing Fund
- We worship surrounded by prayer

The Primate thanked Shannon Cottrell, coordinator of resource development at Resources for Mission, and Josie de Lucia, travel and event planner at the General Secretary's office, for their role in helping organize the CoGS meeting and ensuring it ran

smoothly, before offering some final thoughts.

As CoGS drew to a close, Archbishop Hiltz said he felt the same as many others present about the experience, noting the positive atmosphere of the meeting. Over the previous few days, he had witnessed the council “hunkering down and getting on with its work” fairly quickly. The Primate thanked council members for the holy moments as well as the more lighthearted moments they had shared together.

The final day of CoGS ended with a prayer and a hymn before council members departed.

Members adjourned the meeting at 3 p.m.