

COGS Highlights



Council of General Synod - "Embodying God's call"

Nov 14, 2013

COGS convened once again at its usual meeting place, Queen of the Apostles Renewal Centre in Mississauga, Ont. COGS members began their day with a celebration of the Holy Eucharist in the chapel at 8:45 am. After a brief break at 10 am, business began with opening formalities.

Introductions

The Ven. Harry Huskins, Prolocutor, began the morning session with opening formalities, including staff introductions.

Jane Osler, co-chair of the Planning and Agenda Team, spoke next, giving a run-down of the agenda for the next four days.

Sister Elizabeth Rolfe-Thomas, SSJD, COGS chaplain for this triennium, gave a summary of worship arrangements for the duration of the meeting, and fair warning to participants that she would be recruiting volunteers.

Melissa Green of the Planning and Agenda Team then led a community building game to help the new members of COGS get to know one another.

A shift in committee structure

The Ven. Dr. Michael Thompson, General Secretary, thanked General Synod staff for their hard work in preparing for the meeting.

Mr. Thompson then reflected on the role of the new coordinating committees in contrast to the standing committees of previous years. Coordinating committees will have a two-fold role: to identify needs within the church and convene task groups to address them; and to help organise and provide resources for grassroots movements in the church that arise spontaneously to meet needs.

Mr. Thompson then spoke on the role of 'COGS associates,' who act as liaisons between the committees and COGS. This development is intended to address communication challenges that occurred between COGS and committees in the past.

The General Secretary concluded his remarks with a request to COGS members to meet with staff of General Synod after each COGS meeting to increase the understanding of ministry "on the ground."

Clarifying business

David Jones, COGS chancellor, then spoke on the difference between the work of COGS (policy decisions, high level strategy), and General Synod offices (day to day administration). Mr. Jones noted that from time to time it will take some consideration to determine what is a policy/strategic decision, and what is a day to day administrative decision. It is, however a clear distinction in roles.

Mr. Jones then, in light of the change in committee meetings (being conducted almost entirely over conference calls, video conferences, etc. for the triennium) drew attention to and summarized the guidelines for telephone and electronic meetings.

Next, Mr. Thompson and Ms. Osler who spoke on a new template for planning process/work plan for coordinating committees, first introduced to General Synod's Management Team at their September 2012 meeting.

Preparation for "COGS Café"

The Ven. PJ Hobbs, chair of the Vision Implementation Team in the last triennium, introduced COGS to the World Café process—a process for facilitating group discussion—calling this afternoon event "COGS Café". The café was planned as a community building exercise for COGS in preparation for their work this triennium.

In final remarks to the morning session, Mr. Thompson spoke about relationships, and partnership as a base expectation—doing things together that we once might have done separately.

Mr. Thompson noted that we often look with a problem or blame-based perspective when we look towards the future as a church, and often ignore the very positive things going on. Mr. Thompson called on COGS to be



ready for a question in the afternoon session about how ministries of the church are already embodying God's call.

COGS then adjourned for lunch, with grace from the deputy prolocutor, and a hymn.

COGS reconvened at 1:30 pm for the "COGS Café."

"COGS Café"

After a scripture reading and introduction from Mr. Hobbs and the Rev. Monique Stone, COGS spent some time introducing themselves to each other, and then were given a series of questions covering topics from their inspiration to work in the church, where they see God's mission embodied in today's church, how to foster partnerships and who with, and much more.

Participants were asked to write their answers on the paper covering each table, and between each set of questions they were directed to change places among the tables to maximize exposure to different perspectives.

The event concluded at 4:30, and after thanks and announcements from Ms. Osler, COGS adjourned for the afternoon.

COGS reconvened at 7 pm without the members of the coordinating committees who were meeting elsewhere at the Centre.

The evening session began with a hymn, and with a prayer from the Primate, Archbishop Fred Hiltz.

Remarks from the Primate

The Primate, as chair, started business with remarks on the meeting of the board of the Anglican Foundation (of which he is also the chair). The Primate spoke about the transformation of the Foundation—a new look, profile, priorities, and strategic plan—under Executive Director the Rev. Canon Dr. Judy Rois, supporting "innovative ministries, Anglican presence, and diverse infrastructures."

The Primate continued, thanking everyone that made the meeting possible, including the General Secretary and Planning and Agenda Team; discussing the upcoming period of experimentation with new committee structure; and the evening's agenda.

COGS: Function and jurisdiction

After a community building exercise led by Ms. Green, and a brief time of introductions, Mr. Huskins made a presentation on the functional role of COGS, as well as a

review of the structure of COGS, and its powers.

Mr. Jones then spoke on the jurisdiction of General Synod, and its relation to the jurisdiction of ecclesiastical provinces, dioceses, and parishes. Mr. Huskins then returned to discuss the COGS decision making process, which owes its heritage to English parliamentary tradition. Included in this presentation was a review of a system of consensus decision making.

After announcements from Ms. Osler and Ms. Haines-Turner, COGS adjourned to the chapel for Holden Evening Prayer.

