

COGS Highlights



Council of General Synod

November 18, 2011

The first day of COGS's fall 2011 meeting began with worship and Bible study. At this meeting, members are examining the theme of leadership in Numbers 11.

At 10:00, council gathered for business. The Primate, Archbishop Fred Hiltz, announced that this was the first meeting for the new General Secretary, the Ven. Dr. Michael Thompson. The Primate also welcomed new members, including the Rev. Norm Casey, co-chair of the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples, and the Very Rev. Peter Elliott, the new chair of the Planning and Agenda Team.

The Primate also shared regrets from members who could not attend. He noted that Bishop Tom Morgan has also resigned as chaplain of COGS.

Vision 2019 Implementation Team

The Ven. P.J. Hobbs, chair of the Vision 2019 Implementation Team, led an engaging two-hour session on how the church is living out its strategic plan, Vision 2019.

The team, which held its first meeting in the fall, has defined the scope of their work and consulted with staff and leaders of Church House. Mr. Hobbs confirmed that there is already evidence of movement in all areas of the Vision 2019 timeline.

After "shouting out" what they remembered from the Marks of Mission and Vision 2019 priorities and practices, members heard from a staff communications team that was tasked to promote the Marks of Mission throughout the national church.

The multi-faceted Marks of Mission promotion strategy includes print materials, three contests (relating to Sunday school curriculum, songs, and visual art) and a Mission Moments website. The website is a video project where people can share their two-minute stories of where they have seen God working in their lives.

The communications team emphasized that they are

presenting the Marks of Mission not as a memorization exercise but as a framework to identify and support current ministry.

Mr. Hobbs, Mr. Elliott, and General Synod's Senior Manager of Communications Bev Murphy shared stories of where they had seen the Marks of Mission and Vision 2019 at work. COGS members then shared their own stories in small groups. The session closed with a brainstorming session in which members shared ideas to keep in mind as the church moves forward into Vision 2019.

COGS members took a lunch break.

Together in Mission

Monica Patten, chair of the Resources for Mission Committee, gave an overview of Together in Mission, the nationwide initiative to identify and gather new financial resources for ministries that strengthen God's mission.

COGS received a Together in Mission "case for support" document that will be tested throughout the Anglican Church of Canada. Resources for Mission is testing a financial goal of \$25 million new (not reallocated) funds to be raised over five years. This would be raised through some major gifts but also modest contributions from average Anglicans.

The campaign seeks to address four broad challenges: leadership, worship, sharing (with partner churches), and peace and justice.

"These are areas that are presently unfunded or underfunded and we hope to make them sustainable," said Ms. Patten.

Resources for Mission will work closely with dioceses as they plan their own fundraising case for support. Each diocese will be invited to develop and launch own ideas and to present the General Synod story wrapped in its own case. Already General Synod is in conversation

with eight dioceses and will test this case for support with three dioceses.

Ms. Patten noted that Resources for Mission has signed an agreement with M&M (Money and Ministry) International to support this work. At the next COGS meeting they will report again on challenges and successes.

Ms. Patten and Vianney (Sam) Carriere, director of the Resources for Mission Department, answered questions about Together in Mission.

Resolution

Council approved a resolution to endorse the document entitled "Together in Mission: the Whole Church for the Whole World," as appropriate for the use in testing a case for support for the ministries of the General Synod.

Budget presentation

COGS members heard a detailed presentation of the budget from Rob Dickson, chair of the Financial Management and Development Committee, and Michèle George, General Synod treasurer.

First, members paused to mark the recent death of Mike Wellwood, a committed volunteer who served for many years on the Financial Management and Development Committee.

Mr. Dickson began his presentation by noting that Management Team had honoured COGS's 2008 request to eliminate deficit budgeting by 2012. General Synod in fact achieved this goal one year early, with a balanced budget in 2011.

The format of the 2012 budget also honours a request from COGS that Management Team develop a longer-term budget projection. At this meeting, COGS received a budget for 2012, a forecast for 2013 and 2014, and a two-year trend (2015 and 2016). This new format and process allows COGS to be more proactive in establishing General Synod priorities.

Mr. Dickson noted that at this point, with current revenue projections, 2012 and 2013 project balanced budgets. However, the 2012 budget and initiatives would not be possible without support from the Ministry Investment Fund.

The Ministry Investment Fund (MIF) was established in 2010 and will be funded by 90 per cent of unrestricted

bequests to the national church. Up to \$250,000 a year is available to General Synod ministries as seed funding for new ministry initiatives; funding for single-purpose, time-limited projects; or funding for specific transition initiatives that support Vision 2019.

Applications to MIF are reviewed and approved by a committee of the Primate, the Prolocutor and General Secretary in consultation with the treasurer.

Ms. George emphasized that from 2014 onward, General Synod needs to stabilize revenues. Currently proportional giving from dioceses makes up 67% of General Synod's budget. This giving has been decreasing by 3% annually. If this trend continues, by 2014 COGS may once again face the reshaping of national programs.

Turning to the subject of expenses, Ms. George reviewed Management Team's careful development of the budget so it would be in line with the Marks of Mission and Vision 2019.

Ms. George noted several changes to the budget, including a commitment to launch the Together in Mission campaign and a slight decrease in the grant to the Council of the North, as requested by the council.

COGS members had an opportunity to examine the budget and to ask questions. Further questions will be submitted and discussed on Saturday, when a resolution to pass the budget will be before the council.

Governance Working Group

David Phillip Jones, chair of the Governance Working Group, gave a brief overview of the eight files his committee is handing. This work includes

- Preparing a preliminary report on the legal and constitutional issues presented to the Canadian church by the proposed Anglican Covenant.
- Continuing work on the structure of the National Indigenous Ministry relating to the size, composition, and selection of the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples and the Sacred Circle, as well as the method of selecting any future National Indigenous Anglican Bishop.
- Working on a canon for the structure of the Military Ordinariate with a particular focus on the method of selecting any future Bishop Ordinary of the Forces.

- Considering the legal and canonical consequences if the church were to cease to be agents of the state in performing marriages for the purposes of civil law.

De-incorporation of the Journal

Mr. Carriere, speaking as director of Communications and Information Resources, updated COGS on the de-incorporation of the Anglican Journal. At its last meeting, COGS passed a resolution to wind up the Anglican Journal Corporation and bring it back into General Synod. This decision was made at the request of the Anglican Journal Board, which was seeking to be more efficient with administrative costs and human resources.

Mr. Carriere said it was expected that the Anglican Journal would be transferred from the corporation to General Synod by Jan. 1, 2012.

The Communications and Information Resources Committee was asked by COGS to consider governance for the Anglican Journal. The committee proposed that the new Journal committee would include members of the Communications and Information Resources Committee, plus a new chair and a representative, recommended by the Anglican Editors' Association and appointed by the Primate.

Bishop Colin Johnson asked that the terms of reference be modified to clarify the Journal's policy of editorial independence. This line was then added from the handbook: "When expression of opinion conflicts with official church policy, as stated by decisions of the General Synod or the Council of General Synod, the newspaper will, at the same time, carry an explanation by an informed spokesperson of the official position of the church." Mr. Carriere agreed to this friendly amendment.

Resolution

COGS approved the new terms of reference and membership for the Anglican Journal committee.

The council also approved the appointment of a committee having this membership and terms of reference and asked that this request be taken to General Synod with the appropriate consequential amendments to the constitution and Appendix C to the handbook.

Introduction to consensus decision-making

Mr. Elliott, chair of the Planning and Agenda Team, led COGS through a review of its consensus decision-making process. In 2007, the council decided to use this new model though in certain cases it sometimes still uses traditional votes.

Mr. Elliott reminded members of the Quaker roots of consensus decision-making and suggested a way of indicating their approval by raising a certain number of fingers.

COGS members reflected on the usefulness of this model. Some expressed concern that the process did not adequately record disagreement with motions. Others celebrated this new method and said it could help the council slow down and explore the Holy Spirit's movement in a meeting.

At 5:00, council ended their session to celebrate the ministry of outgoing General Secretary Michael Pollesel. Members enjoyed an Italian-themed dinner, which included checkered tablecloths, a serenading accordionist, and heartfelt speeches in Michael's honour.

Fireside chat

At 7:45, council reconvened for a "fireside chat" with the Primate and the new General Secretary, the Ven. Dr. Michael Thompson. The conversation was hosted by the prolocutor, Canon Robert Falby.

Mr. Thompson reflected on a wide range of topics, from the responsibilities of the General Secretary to how he views administration as ministry. Here are some key quotes from the evening:

On Indigenous Ministries: "Our relationship with Indigenous Peoples has the opportunity to be exemplary in Canadian civil society."

On Anglican-Lutheran relations: "How do we invite each other out of the grooves we've found great comfort in and into some new practices and possibilities?"

On ecumenical relations: "The brands matter less and less. It's about meaningful engagement with a God who loves us. The ecumenical agenda is now the agenda of the missional church."

Mr. Thompson ended by reading "Miracle," by Irish poet Seamus Heaney.

At 9:00, COGS closed with night prayer.