

COGS Highlights



Council of General Synod

November 19, 2011

Council of General Synod (COGS) members began the second day of their fall meeting with a Bible study at 9:00. At 9:45 they gathered for business.

Faith, Worship, and Ministry

The Rev. Canon Andrew Asbil, chair of the Faith, Worship, and Ministry Committee (FWMC), led a presentation on the committee's work. He explained that the committee had divided itself into four sub-groups in order to better organize their work: Worship; Anglican, Ecumenical, and Interfaith Relationships; Ethics and Public Life; and Congregational Life and Leadership.

Mr. Asbil shared highlights of this work: the Worship group is producing a supplement to Common Praise. The congregational life and leadership group is working on making Vision 2019 a priority, and the Anglican, Ecumenical, and Interfaith Relationships group is working on theological issues surrounding the Anglican Covenant.

FWMC is also seeking to fill two vacancies following the retirement of Bishop George Bruce and the resignation of Sister Constance Joanna, SSJD. The General Secretary will work on fulfilling this request.

The Rev. Dr. Lynne McNaughton, FWMC member, noted that three General Synod groups are working on different aspects of the Anglican Covenant. The Primate, Archbishop Fred Hiltz, and the chancellor, David Phillip Jones, clarified that covenant-related work from FWMC and the Governance Working Group will be gathered by the Anglican Communion Working Group and will inform a resolution on the Anglican Covenant that will be brought to General Synod 2013.

Dr. Lela Zimmer, FWMC committee member, updated the council on FWMC's work on the solemnization of marriage. General Synod 2010 had asked FWMC to examine implications that might arise if the Anglican Church of Canada moved from solemnizing marriages to a European model of blessing civil unions.

At COGS's spring 2011 meeting, FWMC asked for

clarification on this task, then produced a report that addresses questions, implications and potential effects (canonical, liturgical, theological, and missional) of several options before the church.

Ms. Zimmer said that this report did not address all aspects of the issue, although it synthesized the information that FWMC received from those consulted.

The Primate noted that the House of Bishops will be discussing this report at their meeting next week.

Resolution

Council received the FWMC report on the General Synod resolution on the solemnization of matrimony.

Resolution

COGS received the FWMC call for nominations for delegates to the 10th assembly of the World Council of Churches (for use in its appointment process).

Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples

COGS members gathered in a sacred circle for the presentation from the National Indigenous Anglican Bishop and the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples (ACIP). The Rev. Norm Casey, co-chair of ACIP, welcomed members to the sacred circle and said this was an opportunity to experience this different way of meeting.

The ACIP report began with a prayer and a gospel reading. National Indigenous Anglican Bishop Mark MacDonald then described the faith among Indigenous Anglicans but also their crises. He reminded members of the drug abuse, alcoholism and suicides that many members experience in their home communities.

Bishop MacDonald said these crises dominated recent ACIP meetings, and provided the impetus to write the Mississauga Declaration, an urgent cry for self-determination. Bishop MacDonald emphasized that



these communities longed for sovereign identity and pastoral care.

ACIP will work on an aggressive timeline to achieve these goals: Sacred Circle in August 2012 will refine this work and COGS will receive a detailed description of an Indigenous ministry plan at their spring 2012 meeting.

"We're looking for practical accommodation to the culture and boundaries of Indigenous life," said Bishop MacDonald. "We're asking that you accommodate them within your structures."

COGS members then reflected on the presentation. Some said they were honoured to be in the sacred circle. Others expressed concern that the slowness of the non-Indigenous church to embrace the challenges identified in the presentation might mean that they might lose the opportunity to participate in the rich new possibilities spoken about. The Primate said he thought this was an Advent moment for the church: "The time is for this work is now," he said.

COGS members took a lunch break.

When COGS reconvened, the Primate said that he was deeply moved by the ACIP presentation. He suggested that COGS respond with a formal resolution.

Resolution

COGS received the Mississauga Declaration in a spirit of great respect and hope. They identified it as a gracious invitation and urgent call to walk and work with Indigenous Peoples.

Budget session two:

Bishop James Cowan, member of the Financial Management and Development Committee, reviewed the comments that COGS members had submitted about the budget. The questions largely dealt with priorities and revenues.

Bishop Cowan and Treasurer Michèle George answered a variety of questions. Among other responses, they clarified the purpose of the General Synod Officers' Discretionary Fund. Ms. George explained that this was not for new initiatives or program funding, but for unplanned one-time items, for example, legal fees or emergency staff coverage.

Resolution

COGS adopted the General Synod budget for core operations for 2012 with a surplus of

\$4,512 and the forecast for 2013 and 2014.

Resolution

COGS resolved to ratify grants approved by the Ministry Investment Fund committee totaling \$250,000 for 2011 and \$130,000 for 2012.

Resolution

COGS resolved to authorize the use of previously allocated funds of \$268,640 from 2011 to be expended in 2012 for Together in Mission and Stewardship Education Initiatives.

COGS then discussed how they should set priorities for future budgets. Some members raised concerns that although the budget is currently balanced, the church will again be facing serious financial pressure in 2013.

Others wondered, drawing on the ACIP presentation, if they could create a church structure that the poor could afford. Still others suggested that the "church's institutionalism needs to decrease so that Jesus can increase."

Anglican Foundation

The Rev. Canon Dr. Judy Rois, new executive director of the Anglican Foundation, gave an overview of the foundation's work. She said the foundation needed to dispel myths that it was an exclusive club for rich Anglicans and only funded building projects.

Ms. Rois described some of the foundation's new initiatives, including a farm at the Sorrento Centre, B.C., and the Happy Adventures of Hope Bear, a new children's book that will raise money for the Kids Helping Kids Trust.

ELCIC Convention

COGS heard a report from Cynthia Haines-Turner, COGS's representative to the National Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC), full communion partners of the Anglican Church of Canada.

Ms. Haines-Turner shared highlights from ELCIC's June convention in Saskatoon, which she described as "intense" and "prayer-filled."

Among other work, the convention passed several resolutions relating to human sexuality. Delegates approved a policy statement allowing rostered ministers to preside at or bless legal marriages, including those between same-sex couples, according

to the laws of the province. They also approved a policy paving the way for the ordination and installation of gay and lesbian pastors.

The Rev. Doug Reble, ELCIC's representative on COGS, also shared insights from the meeting and current work of the full communion partners.

Anglican Covenant

Bishop George Bruce, chair of the Anglican Communion Working Group (ACWG) provided an update on his group's work. He said the ACWG has fulfilled its tasks as mandated by General Synod. The group has received the Anglican Covenant and has prepared study materials, which were organized into an online resource hub last May.

Bishop Bruce encouraged COGS members to use these materials and give feedback to the ACWG. COGS will ultimately decide what resolution on the Anglican Covenant will be taken forward to General Synod 2013.

The Primate said that he was planning to do a "cross country check up" on Anglican Covenant work at next week's House of Bishops meeting.

Resolution

Council resolved to thank the ACWG and the Governance Working Group (GWG) for their work. They also requested the General Secretary to write to dioceses commending Anglican Covenant study material from the ACWG and the GWG.

General Synod 2013

The Ven. Dr. Michael Thompson, General Secretary, gave an overview of the first joint Anglican-Lutheran national meeting, which will take place July 3 to 7, 2013, in Ottawa. The theme will be "Together for the Love of the World." Anglicans and Lutherans will meet together for approximately half the meeting.

Mr. Thompson encouraged COGS members to be champions of this event. He invited them to be open to how the structure will be different from previous General Synods.

COGS members asked questions about the event, including how the meeting will deal with time constraints and how youth will be involved.

At 3:30 COGS adjourned for the day and travelled to St. Peter's Anglican Church, Erindale, for a service celebrating the ministry of the new General Secretary, Mr. Thompson.

The Primate presided and the Very Rev. Peter Elliott preached.

During the service Mr. Thompson received symbolic gifts from General Synod staff, including a pair of "flexible but firm" red "Chuck Taylor" running shoes from the treasurer.

After the Eucharist, members enjoyed a special dinner in St. Peter's parish hall. Many friends and family members of Mr. Thompson joined to bless him in this new stage of ministry.

