

# COGS Highlights



Council of General Synod

November 20, 2011

The third day of COGS's fall 2011 meeting began with Bible study at 9:00. At 9:45, members gathered for business.

## Resources for Reconciliation

The morning began with a three-part series on resources for reconciliation. Esther Wesley, Anglican Healing Fund (AHF) coordinator, gave an overview of the program's work. AHF was started in 1991 as a way for the Anglican Church of Canada to respond to residential schools issues.

Ms. Wesley outlined problems that are common in Indigenous communities, including lateral violence, suicide, substance and alcohol abuse, lack of parenting skills, and family violence.

She celebrated, however, the healing work that the AHF has been able to accomplish by supporting conferences, resource development, children and youth programs, and more.

Ms. Wesley noted that the healing fund has supported 425 projects since 1991 but there have been some geographical gaps. Much of the funding has gone to B.C. and Ontario where there are survivors organizations.

Henriette Thompson, General Synod's coordinator for ecumenical, interfaith, and government relations then gave an update on the church's work supporting the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Ms. Thompson worked with the theme "we are all treaty people" and shared a bit about the history of the traditional Mississauga lands where the council meets.

Ms. Thompson then invited National Indigenous Anglican Bishop Mark MacDonald to share more about the significance of treaties. He spoke about the role that churches often played in encouraging First Nations people to sign treaties. He also said that treaties were essential because they describe the humanity of First Nations people, with rights that include culture and government.

Ms. Thompson reminded COGS that there are two TRC events coming up: a regional event in Victoria next April and a national event in Saskatoon next June. She encouraged members to support this work.

Len Fortune, a special guest to COGS, spoke to members about his book *A is for Assimilation*. Mr. Fortune, who had been equipped as an ambassador of reconciliation in the dioceses of Toronto and Niagara, wrote the book to educate Canadians about Indigenous history.

Mr. Fortune encouraged COGS members to share this project and help spread awareness about Indigenous history. "First peoples are at a tipping point," he said. "Non-Aboriginals have the opportunity to prevent them from fading into the abyss."

## The Primate's World Relief and Development Fund (PWRDF)

Members heard a presentation from Adele Finney, executive director of PWRDF and the Rev. David Pritchard, PWRDF vice president and member of the PWRDF board.

Ms. Finney shared outcomes from key meetings she has attended since General Synod 2010. She focused in particular on her connections with the Anglican Alliance, a new body that is coordinating development work throughout the worldwide Anglican Communion. Ms. Finney recently attended one of their four regional consultations in Hong Kong.

Ms. Finney introduced a memorandum of understanding between PWRDF and General Synod. This statement does not officially change either body's structure. Instead, it states a spirit of cooperation: "General Synod's Relationships staff and PWRDF staff will seek to act collaboratively or together in all matters except those in which we must act separately for financial, contractual or legal reasons."

Mr. Pritchard shared some updates from the PWRDF board, which had a full meeting of staff, board, diocesan representatives and youth council in November. He



noted that there is a new website coming and that they are doing work to prepare for a new work plan next spring.

Members asked questions about the presentation. A discussion emerged about whether PWRDF should emphasize its Christian identity in official documents.

*COGS members took a lunch break.*

### **PWRDF continued**

Members returned to discuss the PWRDF presentation and the memorandum of agreement.

#### **Resolution**

Council approved the memorandum of agreement between the General Synod and PWRDF.

### **Companions of the Diocese of Jerusalem**

The Primate, Archbishop Fred Hiltz, introduced a new voluntary body called the Companions of the Diocese of Jerusalem that would support General Synod's partnership with the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem.

The Primate reminded COGS of General Synod's strong partnership with Jerusalem. In 2009, the Primate visited Jerusalem as a pilgrim and in 2010, the Right Rev. Suheil Dawani, bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem, attended the General Synod national meeting.

#### **Resolution**

Council approved the terms of reference for the Companions of the Diocese of Jerusalem.

### **Partner reflections**

The Rev. Doug Reble, partner from the ELCIC, shared a wide variety of reflections on the meeting. He encouraged COGS members to continue to embrace the Marks of Mission and to encourage stewardship in their parishes. He also reminded COGS that a "tsunami of demographic changes" would be hitting the church over the next couple of years and he encouraged them to prepare for it.

Martha Gardner, partner from the Episcopal Church (TEC) shared a variety of insights from her church that related to COGS's work. She compared COGS's yearly budgeting process to TEC's practice of setting budgets for the triennium at their national conventions.

Ms. Gardner noted that TEC prioritizes anti-racism work and that there were related activities at every meeting

of the executive council. She also reflected on the full communion partnership between the Anglican Church of Canada and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. She said this was an example to the American Episcopal and Lutheran churches.

### **Setting priorities for structure and budget decisions**

Bishop Dennis Drainville proposed a resolution, that "COGS set aside two full days to study, discuss, and set specific prioritized mission goals for the next five years and that the council establish a plan for the effective utilization of financial and staff resources in achieving those specific goals."

This resolution was suggested because although General Synod has just passed a balanced budget, it will need to make major budget and structural adjustments in the future if current trends continue.

A thorough discussion followed. Some members spoke in favour of the resolution because they wanted COGS to be ready for these major changes. Other members wondered about the logistics of accomplishing this goal at a COGS meeting and whether the House of Bishops should be involved.

After several amendments, the Primate proposed a rewrite that refocused the discussion along the lines of Vision 2019. He noted that Vision 2019 had already set priorities for such decisions. The Primate also noted that discussions were already happening around the church to improve current structures, including the agreement between PWRDF and General Synod, and work in several Indigenous area missions.

#### **Resolution**

COGS agreed to set aside two full days to consider clear directions and a plan for the efficient utilization of financial, staff, and structural resources in achieving the priorities and practices set out in Vision 2019.

### **Pension Committee**

COGS members heard a brief report from Bob Boeckner, a member of Pension Committee, a trustee, and chair of the central advisory group. COGS then passed four resolutions relating to leaves of absence and long-term disability plans.

### **French Translation**

Felix Cote-Gaudreau, COGS member, asked General Synod to translate Anglican Covenant study material—from the Anglican Communion Working Group and the Governance Working Group—into French.

### **Omnibus crime bill**

Bishop Drainville suggested a motion that challenged the Canadian parliament's action around the omnibus crime bill.

COGS members raised several points in response. Some wondered about strategies to engage the government and others noted that the church has already registered its concern through its partner, the Church Council on Justice and Corrections. Several amendments were made in response.

#### **Resolution**

COGS agreed to ask the General Secretary to write the Prime Minister of Canada in the spirit of restorative justice to give the omnibus crime bill significantly more study and debate in the Canadian parliament.

### **Key messages**

COGS members ended their meeting by naming several "headlines" that described their work. Here is a sample:

- Vision 2019 is gaining traction
- Change is coming
- Balanced budget approved
- We're creating structures for mission
- Historic joint Anglican-Lutheran meeting in 2013
- Significant progress on healing and reconciliation
- Stewardship education support available
- Church warmly welcomes new General Secretary

*At 3:00, COGS adjourned and members began their trips back home.*

