

# COGS Highlights



Council of General Synod

May 24 and 25, 2012

## Thursday, May 24:

The Council of General Synod started their spring meeting a day earlier than usual, gathering at Queen of Apostles (Mississauga, Ont.), at 7:00 PM on Thursday, May 24. The Primate, Archbishop Fred Hiltz, led the group in a hymn and a prayer before beginning the business agenda.

Opening business included the adoption of minutes from the November 2011 meeting, a list of regrets from members who could not attend, and the introduction of a new chaplain, Sister Elizabeth Rolfe-Thomas, Sisters of Saint John the Divine.

Members voted for the first delegate to the 2013 World Council of Churches assembly in Busan, South Korea. Another delegate will be selected later in the meeting.

The Very Rev. Peter Elliott, Dean of New Westminster and chair of the Planning and Agenda Team, explained that tonight and tomorrow will be the first of two full days devoted to clearly understanding the current issues that General Synod is facing. Another day in November will be spent charting action steps to address these issues.

This time is set apart in accordance with a resolution passed at the November 2011 meeting: "That the COGS set aside two full days to consider clear directions and a plan for the efficient utilization of financial staff and structural resources in the achieving of the priorities and practices set out in Vision 2019."

To begin delving into this work, COGS members took 45 minutes for a scripture study on Acts 1.

Members spent time in small groups then openly reflected on the significance of this liminal time between Ascension and Pentecost (both in this passage and currently in the liturgical year). Others noted that the disciples in this passage are focused on action and influencing their community.

The Ven. P.J. Hobbs and the Ven. Dr. Michael Thompson

presented highlights of reports from the Vision 2019 Implementation Team and the General Synod Leadership Circle, respectively.

These varied comments on staff and structural resources will lay the groundwork for the conversation tomorrow.

At 9:00 PM the council closed with evening prayer, led by Bishop James Cowan.

## Friday, May 25:

At 8:45 AM members gathered for worship around the maple tree that had been planted by Anglican and Lutheran council members at their joint meeting last spring. Co-chairs of the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples (ACIP), the Ven. Sid Black and the Rev. Norm Casey, welcomed COGS members to this site, traditional lands of the Mississauga New Credit First Nation.

General Secretary the Ven. Dr. Michael Thompson announced that Melissa Green (Anglican Parishes of the Central Interior) had been elected as the first delegate to the WCC assembly.

Members reconvened inside, where the Ven. P.J. Hobbs explained how the day's events would unfold, based on the World Café format. The meeting room had been transformed into a café with checkered tablecloths, centerpieces, and lots of markers and paper for scribbling.

Members spent the day working through three questions around finance, governance, and ACIP:

1. How might God be using the current financial situation of General Synod to tell us about our future in carrying out Vision 2019?
2. What might the Holy Spirit telling us about ourselves as we grapple with the complexities of our current governance and structural challenges?



3. How might Jesus be leading us on a journey of spiritual renewal through the presence of Indigenous peoples among us, and their witness in the Mississauga Declaration.

For each question, members moved through a cycle: they began with an open format discussion in the café. Then they moved into white space to be used as they wished (talking, walking, napping etc.) Then they reconvened in small circles where their reflections were recorded by a rapporteur.

At the end of the day, the rapporteurs wrote a draft report summarizing the reflections. Their many observations included an ongoing need for strong communications and stewardship education, a need to better understand the Indigenous journey towards self-determination, and a desire for future church structures to be nimble and flexible.

Members ended the day in a Sacred Circle. Each member shared their reflections on what they had heard—with both their minds and hearts. Comments included the following:

“At the 2007 General Synod I heard a lot of arguing and now I hear conversation. It’s good.”

“There are many assumptions underlying our comments. I think we have to go and uncover them if we’re going to do this right.”

“I am more energized than I expected to be.”

“I don’t know where to begin and what to think. We’re looking at the church of the future and mission. We don’t see it clearly yet.”

“COGS recognizes that the status quo is not sustainable, in carrying out the mission of the church.”

“We’re supposed to devote two days to this process and I feel disquieted thinking that we are 50% of the way. I think we are 10% of the way.”

“I appreciated hearing every voice in this room and being able to look every person in the eye.”

The Sacred Circle closed with a prayer, led by National Indigenous Anglican Bishop Mark Macdonald, and at 8:45 PM COGS closed with doxology, led by Bishop James Cowan.