

COGS Highlights



Council of General Synod

May 27, 2012

The final day of the spring COGS meeting began at 9:00 AM with a celebration of the Holy Eucharist on the feast of Pentecost. Members gathered in a Sacred Circle and the Primate presided and preached. The highlight of the service was a re-commissioning ceremony where the Primate laid hands on each member. He prayed that the Holy Spirit would continue the good work already started in each of them. Members spontaneously decided to pray the same for the Primate and they gathered around to lay hands on him.

COGS membership and General Synod elections

At 10:30, members returned to discuss whether to keep the two-term limit (six years total) for COGS membership. Some said that COGS needs to ensure that there is turnover in membership and fresh energy. Others say that the term limit deprives the electorate of decision-making power.

Resolution

COGS consented to delete the reference to the two-term limit in membership. (See below.)

COGS discussed the directions for General Synod 2013 elections as proposed yesterday by the Governance Working Group. Members spoke again of the advantage of first-past-the-post elections compared with seeking a majority over several ballots. It emerged, by consensus, that members were not comfortable with the current first-past-the-post method. They decided to return to the matter in the afternoon.

Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples

The Ven. Sid Black, co-chair of ACIP, introduced the ACIP report and National Indigenous Anglican Bishop Mark MacDonald spoke about the Mississauga Declaration, which was shared at the COGS fall meeting.

Bishop MacDonald said that this document had been misunderstood. Many fear that it means the Indigenous church will separate. Others have said they don't understand what "self-determination" means.

Bishop MacDonald said ACIP is pained by these

responses. ACIP realizes that most Canadian Anglicans do not understand the different reality and urgent needs of Indigenous Peoples. For example, numbers of Indigenous clergy peaked in the 1930s but have been in decline since then.

Bishop MacDonald explained that many Indigenous Anglican communities are growing rapidly so the need for ministry is great. He said ACIP's goal is simple: "Wherever there are Indigenous people, we want to create communities of two or three people to give spiritual birth to these people."

He asked that the Anglican Church of Canada give Indigenous People and communities spiritual authority—not necessarily jurisdiction—in the church. This means appreciating that these people have authority in their communities, so for example, elders should be given special respect.

Members responded with questions and comments. One noted that both Francophones and Indigenous Peoples struggle to live out their culture and spirituality in a dominant English society. Others wondered what it means to give "spiritual authority."

Bishop MacDonald closed by reminding members of the Sacred Circle, August 5 to 12 in Pinawa, Man.

From 12:00 to 1:00 COGS members took a lunch break.

Partners' reflections

Martha Gardner, partner from the Episcopal Church, spoke about her church's General Convention in Indianapolis in July. She noted that like COGS, General Convention is working to renew church structures. Ms. Gardner said that the convention will consider 58 resolutions relating to structural change. General Convention will also discuss several resolutions relating to the proposed Anglican Covenant.

The Rev. David Pritchard, partner for the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund, shared his reflections, emphasizing that PWRDF sees itself as "the mission arm of the Anglican Church of Canada." He



described how PWRDF has been successful in working with the Canadian International Development Agency. He commended the work of PWRDF partners and staff and ended by praising the work COGS has done at this meeting.

Resolutions

COGS members approved several resolutions:

Resolution

COGS requested the General Secretary to write to the Prime Minister, the Minister of the Environment, and the leaders of the opposition parties expressing disappointment and dismay that the Government of Canada has withdrawn from the Kyoto Accord and has not replaced it by any plan that sets a clear direction. Members further called on the Government of Canada to propose a plan for the international community that is morally and legally binding and that has clear and measurable outcomes.

Resolutions

COGS resolved to receive the statement of the House of Bishops of British Columbia and Yukon regarding the proposed Northern Gateway pipeline. Members also resolved that the General Secretary of the Anglican Church of Canada write to the Prime Minister indicating that the Council of General Synod supports this statement and urges integrity and fairness, with an opportunity for all voices to be heard in the National Energy Board hearings.

Resolution

COGS resolved to extend to the Episcopal Church President of the General Convention House of Deputies, Mrs. Bonnie Anderson, greetings, best wishes, blessing, and assurances of our prayers for her as she prepares for the upcoming General Convention of the Episcopal Church and then for her retirement as President of the House of Deputies at the conclusion of the Convention in July. COGS gives thanks for the partnership between our churches and for Bonnie's faithful leadership at all levels within the Episcopal Church.

Resolution

COGS resolved to uphold the work of peace,

conflict resolution, and reconciliation as a Mark of Mission and asked the General Secretary to communicate COGS's continued support to the Anglican Consultative Council to incorporate this work into the Marks of Mission at ACC-15.

COGS returned to examine the Governance Working Group motions that were discussed in the morning. Some members said they found the Intent of the motion confusion and that they feared that they might not have voted as they intended on the earlier motion about membership terms. The prolocutor, Canon Robert Falby, asked for clarification on whether members wanted term limits or not. The results of two straw polls were unclear so members decided to refer this, and the earlier resolution about General Synod 2013 elections, to the Governance Working Group.

Members' concerns

Cynthia Haines-Turner asked what role COGS would play in determining the agenda at the 2013 Joint Assembly, given that it is significantly shorter than Anglican national meetings usually are. Mr. Falby said that COGS will see a draft agenda at their November 2012 meeting and again at their March 2013 meeting.

Key messages

The Very Rev. Peter Elliott, chair of the Planning and Agenda Team, asked members to consider the key messages they would bring home from this meeting. Their input included:

-The Community (our new online discussion forum) is a great place to continue our conversations.

-We explored our ongoing response to the Mississauga Declaration.

-We realized the urgency of our financial situation, including declining diocesan apportionment.

-We met using the World Café format.

-We heard of a new staff position (shared with the Diocese of Ottawa), the Rev. Laurette Gauthier Glasgow, special advisor on government relations.

-We need willingness and courage to address structures for mission.

At 2:30 the Primate, Archbishop Fred Hiltz, prayed with COGS members, then council adjourned.