

COGS Highlights



Council of General Synod

Nov. 15 and 16, 2012

Thursday, November 15

On the evening of Nov. 15, the council gathered at its usual location: the Queen of Apostles Renewal Centre in Mississauga, Ont.

At 6:45 p.m., members sat facing each other in a sacred circle and began their fall meeting with worship. The Ven. Sid Black and the Rev. Norm Casey, co-chairs of the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples, led a Gospel-Based Discipleship meditation on Luke 12:16-21.

Archbishop Fred Hiltz welcomed COGS members and introduced staff and guests. The Very Rev. Peter Elliott, chair of the Planning and Agenda Team, gave a brief overview of the agenda, and noted that the first part of the meeting—until Friday night—will continue last meeting's conversation about church structures.

The Ven. P.J. Hobbs, chair of the Vision 2019 Implementation Team, gave a presentation about the major moments in national church life since General Synod 2010. These highlights were presented as stepping stones, with the goal of reaching a balanced budget by 2014.

Archdeacon Hobbs acknowledged that recent news about General Synod's deficit has been a wake-up call for the church. He said that now, at the end of the third quarter, the national church is running a deficit of \$680,000. The full-year forecast is for a deficit of \$288,000. At this meeting, COGS members will consider a budget with a deficit of \$513,000. This is framed as a transitional budget and General Synod is aiming to establish a stable budget by 2014.

The budget conversation continued as the prolocutor, Canon Robert Falby, chaired a panel on finances with Rob Dickson (chair of Financial Management Committee), Hanna Goschy (interim treasurer), and Archbishop Fred Hiltz, Primate.

Questions included, "How did we get to this place of deficit?" (Answer: "We've been on this road for a long time and the root cause is declining diocesan apportionment.")

The Primate answered the question of how the church should now move forward. He reflected on the centrality of God's mission, noting that following God's mission is what distinguishes the church from other organizations. The Primate also said that the church needs to seize this transitional time as an opportunity provided by God.

A lively discussion followed. Some members wondered whether the current problem should be addressed by national level restructuring or parish congregational development. Other members noted that it was possible to feel both anxiety and hope during this time.

Friday, November 16

Council members gathered at 8:45 a.m. for Bible study and turned to business at 9:15 a.m.

Budgeting principles

The prolocutor, Canon Robert Falby, and the chancellor, David Phillip Jones, introduced the following budgeting principles, created by the General Synod officers:

1. The budget for 2013 be viewed as a transitional budget in order to permit the church to address the issues discussed below.
2. That the budget be a deficit for 2013 with the deficit funded by drawing down on undesignated reserves.
3. That during the period of 2012-2013 the whole church be asked to address the role of the General Synod, how it is structured and how it is funded, and,
4. Request that the issues identified in the previous paragraph be addressed in the National Consultation in January 2013, with the dioceses, the House of Bishops, and COGS.

Members discussed whether it was a good idea for General Synod to draw from undesignated reserves. Some members raised concerns about using funds that might not be replenished. Others expressed support for this action, noting that reserves were designed to be



financial cushions for times such as these. Another member asked what other budgeting principles were considered.

At the Primate's suggestion, members decided to postpone a decision on these principles until later in the day.

The Rev. Dr. Christopher Duraisingh

After a brief coffee break, members met in the chapel to hear the Rev. Dr. Christopher Duraisingh, professor at Episcopal Divinity School, speak about mission. Mr. Duraisingh will be the speaker at the 2013 Anglican-Lutheran joint assembly in Ottawa next July.

Some highlights of Mr. Duraisingh's presentation included

-“Mission is not a function of the church. To believe this is a theological error. Church is a function of the ongoing mission of God.”

-“The singular purpose of the body of Christ is to be broken for the life of the world....the Marks of Mission are examples of how this body is broken for the life of the world.”

-“Being apostolic means to be with and to be sent out. Without these two sides, the identity of the church is at stake....‘Sentness’ is our chief hallmark.”

-Matthew 28:19 (the Great Commission) used to be the way we thought about mission. Sometimes we turn this mission into a god. Acts 1:8 is a better way to consider mission: when the Spirit comes upon you, you cannot help but go.

-We should understand the church as people in movement, following the Spirit. COGS must be like a midwife as this movement is born. How do we facilitate the birthing of God's people in mission?

-Measuring success in terms of quantity of programs and functions is a sign of ecclesiastical decadence.

-Jesus's baptism was not baptism for forgiveness of sins, but an identity marker as being enlisted in the kingdom of God's movement. We've turned baptism into sin-management rite. We need to put our baptism in line with Jesus's baptism.

Members returned to their table groups to discuss questions provided after Mr. Duraisingh's presentation, They then began to brainstorm their own questions for discussion later in the day.

From 12:00 to 1:00, members enjoyed a lunch break, conversations, and walks on a sunny fall afternoon.

Workshops

Divided into small groups, members rotated through three workshops—on the budget, Church House ministries and structures, and missiology and mission—from 1:00 to 4:00.

At 4:00, members met again in plenary to prioritize the questions they had generated earlier in the day. They walked around the room and placed dots beside the questions that they considered most important. Popular questions included “How do local Anglicans understand the programs of General Synod that only General Synod can do and without which there would be a gap?” These questions will be used by several groups in the future, including the Primate's consultation on structures, to be held in January 2013.

Budgeting principles adopted

Members returned to consider the motion on budget principles. They agreed unanimously to pass the principles, as presented earlier in the day:

Resolution

In order to allow the General Synod to determine a way to carry out its ministries in service to God's mission within the resources available to it and in light of the principles and practices of Vision 2019 and the Marks of Mission, this Council of General Synod endorses the following principles:

1. The budget for 2013 be viewed as a transitional budget in order to permit the church to address the issues discussed below.
2. That the budget be a deficit for 2013 with the deficit funded by drawing down on undesignated reserves.
3. That during the period of 2012-2013 the whole Church be asked to address the role of General Synod, how it is structured and how it is funded, and
4. Request that the issues identified in the previous paragraph be addressed in the National Consultation in January 2013, with the dioceses, the House of Bishops, and COGS.

Before the council adjourned for dinner, General

Secretary the Ven. Dr. Michael Thompson, announced that he needed an extra stud for his clerical collar. Bishop James Cowan offered to lend one, but not before a mischievous member chimed in, "Wait, why is the General Secretary looking for a stud?"

At 5:00, council adjourned for hospitality hour and dinner. Members returned to business at 7:00 p.m.

Opening business

Resolution

COGS approved the minutes from the spring 2012 meeting.

Report from Anglican Consultative Council 15

The Very Rev. Peter Elliott and Suzanne Lawson gave a whirlwind PowerPoint tour of their time as delegates at the 15th meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council. ACC-15 met in Auckland, New Zealand, from Oct. 27 to Nov. 7. Bishop Sue Moxley was also a delegate but is not at this COGS meeting.

Mr. Elliott and Ms. Lawson spoke about the richness of the three traditions woven into the Anglican church in New Zealand: Maori, Pacific Islanders, and descendants of European settlers.

Canadian delegates listed many highlights, including seeing the active life of Anglican Communion networks and watching youth ask tough and touching questions in a public session with Anglican leaders.

ACC-15 also approved a revised fourth Mark of Mission—a change championed by the Anglican Church of Canada: "To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation." COGS members applauded this news.

Archdeacon Paul Fehleley, Principal Secretary to the Primate, also spoke about his time seconded to the communications staff of ACC-15. He highlighted the re-launch of the Anglican World, magazine, designed by General Synod Saskia Fielder, General Synod's coordinator of graphics and print production. Mr. Fehleley has been to three ACC meetings and found this one very encouraging. "I have great hope for the Anglican Communion," he said.

After a brief time of questions, the Primate reflected on the positive presence of Canadian leaders around the Anglican Communion. "I want to say how proud I

personally am...of people from this church who have served as delegates to ACC," he said. He noted that Canadian delegates have served through difficult ACC meetings, including the 2005 Nottingham gathering where they were relegated to observer status because of the Canadian church's position on same-sex blessings.

COGS members gave a standing ovation to thank ACC-15 delegates for their service.

At 9:00, members closed with Holden Evening Prayer, a contemporary setting of vespers by American composer Marty Haugen.

