

COGS Highlights



Council of General Synod

Nov. 17, 2012

Council gathered from 8:45 to 9:15 a.m. for Bible study in the Gospel-Based Discipleship format, often practiced in Indigenous communities. Members used A Disciple's Prayer Book and read the gospel of the day (Luke 18:1-8) through three times for deeper reflection.

General Secretary's Report

General Secretary the Ven. Dr. Michael Thompson reflected on his first year in this ministry. He said he found the language of "ecological change" to be helpful in describing the state of the church. He referred to a trail he hikes near Lake Superior where a piece of land burnt by forest fire has become fertile terrain for blueberry bushes. He wondered if the church needed to adapt similarly—from harvesting big trees to appreciating fresh, new gifts, surprising as blueberries.

Mr. Thompson spoke positively about his recent visit to the Diocese of Athabasca, where he was welcomed by Bishop Fraser Lawton and encountered many ministries that he said were "putting resources together in an imaginative way." One example was an octogenarian couple that runs a popular after-school program for children in Berwyn, Alta. Another example was the growing ecumenical shared ministry in Slave Lake, Alta.

The General Secretary said he's noticed that many Anglicans feel a sense of shame or failure because they feel they have fallen short in their task as church.

"We don't have trees anymore so God doesn't expect us to be in the lumber business," he said. "We have to be patient and kind with ourselves in the meantime, in this time of transition and transformation."

Mr. Thompson closed by thanking staff and COGS for their support in the past year. He also acknowledged the sadness many felt about the closing of the Anglican Book Centre.

Primate's Report

Archbishop Fred Hiltz began by noting that most of his time is spent away from the office. He described several trips he's taken since the last meeting: to the Diocese of the Arctic where he celebrated the opening of a new

cathedral and the first Inuktitut translation of the Bible, the Truth and Reconciliation gathering in Saskatoon, and the Sacred Circle Indigenous Anglican gathering in Pinawa, Man.

Archbishop Hiltz highlighted the church's ties to the Diocese of Jerusalem. He reminded COGS that at General Synod 2010 the Canadian church made several resolutions to strengthen ties with that region. Currently Major the Rev. John Organ, a retired Canadian military chaplain, is serving as chaplain to the bishop of Jerusalem. The Primate encouraged all bishops, dioceses, and individuals express their commitment to this region by joining the Canadian Companions of the Diocese of Jerusalem.

The Primate then described his October visit to Japan where he joined centenary celebrations for the Diocese of Chubu. Canadian Anglican missionaries were crucial in evangelizing this region and the Primate was touched by how much these missionaries are still appreciated in Japan.

One important stop on Archbishop Hiltz's tour was the region of Sendai, hit hard by the 2011 earthquake and tsunami. The Primate saw and heard about the devastation but also rejoiced in local Anglican response. He was especially touched by the Let Us Walk Together project, which focuses on housing, counseling, and fellowship for victims.

Archbishop Hiltz said he heard from local Anglicans that the disaster has given the church in Japan a new sense of vocation and witness.

COGS members took a brief coffee break from 10:30 to 10:45.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Henriette Thompson, public witness coordinator for social justice, reviewed what she had presented to COGS about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission since the beginning of the triennium in 2010. She said that TRC commissioners often refer to three journeys



people make in engaging with this work: head to heart, heart to lips, and lips to hands.

Ms. Thompson asked members to consider one new insight about healing and reconciliation they had gained in the past triennium. Members discussed this with partners in table groups. Next, Ms. Thompson asked members to consider and share where they found themselves in their own journey of healing and reconciliation and to then commit to advance this work in their own lives and ministries.

Council of the North

Council heard a joint report from outgoing Council of the North chair Archbishop David Ashdown and Bishop Michael Hawkins, who is taking over as co-chair, alongside Bishop Lydia Mamakwa. Bishop Hawkins was sporting a conspicuous Movember moustache—a trend spotted on at least two other council faces during this meeting.

Bishop Ashdown reflected on his time as council chair over the past six years. He said the General Synod 2007 decision to keep Council of the North grants stable was a great affirmation its ministry. However, the Council of the North's 2011 request to reduce the level of their grant by 5% per year each year was an example of how that council works to support the life of the wider church.

Bishop Ashdown noted that communications, accountability, and transparency are key values of the council.

Bishop Hawkins outlined exciting areas of new ministry in the council: more self-determining Indigenous ministries, urban Indigenous ministries in Thunder Bay and Montreal, and new funding models that also encourage council ministries to keep reliable statistics.

"We are moving from self-interest to mutual support," he said.

COGS adjourned and reconvened as the board of the Anglican Church of Canada's sister organization, the Missionary Society of The Anglican Church of Canada, a legal entity that is not active, but still holds funds.

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

As the board of the MSCC, COGS passed several resolutions:

Resolution

Resolved that Hanna Goschy be appointed as

an additional officer of the MSCC while she is acting treasurer of General Synod.

Resolution

Resolved that MSCC board of directors authorize the transfer to General Synod from its undesignated reserves, sufficient funds to cover the operating deficit of General Synod for 2012 and 2013 [a total of approximately \$800,000 of \$1.3 million in this reserve]

Resolution

Resolved that because the financial statements of General Synod for 2012 will incorporate the operations of the MSCC and will be audited by the auditors of General Synod, the requirement for a separate audit of the MSCC is waived for 2012.

COGS considered a motion to lease mineral rights on land the MSCC owns in Alberta (a site of a former residential school). The chancellor, David Phillip Jones, explained that the officers consulted widely about this issue, including with the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples, local Indigenous peoples, and a University of Calgary geologist who has advised the Diocese of Calgary on similar matters. The officers had agreed that any future royalties would be given to Indigenous Ministries.

Bishop Dennis Drainville asked if fracking (hydraulic fracturing of shale rock) would be used on this site and the chancellor said yes, at depths that are common elsewhere in Alberta. The bishop said he would oppose this motion based on environmental concerns. While acknowledging this concern, the National Indigenous Anglican Bishop, the Rt. Rev. Mark MacDonald, expressed the value of aligning with the sovereign intent of the local Indigenous band, who are partners in the venture and who have given their approval to this project.

Resolution

COGS consented to leasing mineral rights on NW ¼-Tsp 30-R 7W4 in the province of Alberta, subject to final approval of the terms by the chancellor, and that any proceeds from the lease of the mineral rights shall be transferred to General Synod to be devoted to Indigenous Ministries.

COGS adjourned as board of MSCC and reconvened as the governing body of the Anglican Church of Canada.

Financial Management Committee

COGS considered and passed several resolutions from the Financial Management Committee:

Resolution

Resolved that the internal restriction on the reserve for Sacred Circle be removed and these funds be made available to relieve the anticipated deficit for 2012.

Resolution

Resolved that notwithstanding this council's commitment to a sustainable and balanced budget, and given the extenuating circumstances in 2012 and 2013, that the unrestricted net assets of the MSCC be accepted and used to cover the deficit anticipated in the budget 2013 as bridging toward sustainable and balanced budgeting for 2014 and forward.

Resolution

Resolved that the anticipated deficit of 2012 be made up with unrestricted funds from the MSCC.

Resolution

Resolved that the budget for 2013 presented by the FMC be adopted.

Resolution

Resolved that COGS ratify the grants approved by the Ministry Investment Fund Committee totaling \$103,000 for 2013.

Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples

The Rev. Canon Ginny Doctor, Indigenous Ministries coordinator, gave an overview of the seventh national Sacred Circle, which gathered more than 200 people last August in Pinawa, Man. A brief video presentation showed the unanimous adoption of Canon 22, which solidified the position of the National Indigenous Anglican Bishop and moved the Indigenous church along the path of self-determination. Ms. Doctor also highlighted the work of the young people, who created a video of their time at Sacred Circle. This video is being edited and will be distributed throughout the church.

Ms. Doctor shared questions that table groups worked through, including "What makes an effective church?" The top answer to this question was "Do not be afraid!"

The Ven. Sid Black, co-chair of ACIP, shared what it has

been like for him to participate in Indigenous Ministries at the national level—a role he said he never expected to have. "It's been a real blessing for me to have done this work," he said, "just to walk with folks who are in deep pain and reaffirm their humanity, that they are beloved of God."

National Indigenous Anglican Bishop Mark MacDonald also reflected on Sacred Circle, noting that all bishops who attended said it was a spiritually inspiring, life-changing event. He reminded members that ACIP's powerful and positive vision is to restore all society and move all people—victims and practitioners—away from racism.

"Indigenous people becoming who God wants us to be isn't a taking away from the rest of the church," he said. "Keep an eye on that vision of a powerful church together."

The presentation closed with a reflection from Peter Kitchekeesik, who shared what it was like for him to go to residential school and learn about Christianity. He said it took a while for the message to sink in, but eventually he followed the teachings. He said to COGS members, "We certainly love you."

After these moving questions, the Primate led members in a hymn and a prayer. Council then adjourned for a brief break.

New diocese in Province of Rupert's Land

David Ashdown gave a detailed history of the Northern Ontario region in the Diocese of Keewatin. He noted that this region has, over several decades, taken firm steps towards self-determination. In 1975, Keewatin was separated into three regions—including Northern Ontario, primarily composed of Indigenous communities. In 2006, regions took on responsibility for their own funding, and in 2010, Bishop Lydia Mamakwa was elected as bishop of this region through traditional Indigenous methods.

The Northern Ontario region has now requested to become its own diocese and the diocesan council of Keewatin and the province of Rupert's Land have approved this request. If this is approved at General Synod, the Diocese of Keewatin will cease to exist (except as a legal entity) and parishes from the remaining two regions will need to join with other dioceses for continuing sacramental and pastoral care—a move that is under discussion.



Bishop Ashdown emphasized that this new diocese will be able to support itself financially; it is already on its way to doing so. He also noted that the Northern Manitoba region of the diocese, also primarily Indigenous, is also exploring ways of becoming self-determining.

Faith, Worship, and Ministry Committee

The Rev. Canon Dr. Todd Townshend, committee member, gave an overview of the work that the committee has put into creating the Competencies for the Ordination to the Priesthood in the Anglican Church of Canada.

Work on this topic traces back decades, but this particular task force has been at work since 2010 and built on the work of the D'Youville Report. To write the competencies, they consulted widely, including with the Primate, the National Indigenous Anglican Bishop, each provincial synod, and other parties. Mr. Townshend said the response has overall been very positive.

The Rev. Canon Eric Beresford, another committee member, presented the competencies, which cover these principles:

1. The candidate must have a personal faith and spiritual life adequate to leading others.
2. The candidate needs to understand who we are as people of God and what it means to be Anglican within the wider family.
3. The candidate can translate their ministry into the context of the community.
4. The candidate should have the capacity to provide effective leadership in communities.
5. The candidate should have capacities for both teaching and learning.

Mr. Beresford noted that the competencies were aspirational and provided a framework—not a checklist—for ministry. They were developed to enhance transferability between dioceses and at the encouragement of full communion partners, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, which already has produced a similar, though longer, set of requirements.

Resolution

COGS received the Competencies for

Ordination to the Priesthood in the Anglican Church of Canada document for information and discussion.

Dr. Lela Zimmer, committee member, spoke about the broad mandate of the committee and explained how their many pieces of work—from developing a hymnal supplement to participating in ecumenical dialogues—align with the priorities of Vision 2019.

Ms. Zimmer presented two questions for later discussion at COGS:

-How important to the mission and identity of the Anglican Church of Canada is the work of the FWMC?

-If FWMC were to be reconceived or restructured, what might replace it? What would it look like?

At 5:00, council adjourned for hospitality hour and a dinner to honour outgoing Treasurer Michèle George. Ms. George requested that instead of a gift, members donate to the Girl Power/Wolf Spirit Indigenous PWRDF youth program from the shared national gift guide. Council members donated more than \$800. The dinner featured songs in Ms. George's honour, sundry accountant jokes, and warm speeches celebrating her faithful service.

Planning for Joint Assembly

The Very Rev. Peter Wall updated COGS on plans for the Anglican-Lutheran Joint Assembly next July. J. P. Copeland, a representative from Data on the Spot did a demo of new clicker technologies that will be used for electronic voting on the floor of Joint Assembly. The celebratory mood continued as members clicked their way through several silly but informative test polls.

COGS heard that Data on the Spot has worked with clients including the Liberal Biennial Convention and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. Mr. Copeland said the advantages of electronic voting were its speed, the option of anonymity, the opportunity for ranked questions, and different data outputs (Excel, pie charts, etc.)

Mr. Wall clarified that only Anglicans would be using this technology at Joint Assembly and it would help speed the voting process during a national meeting that is four days instead of the usual nine.

Other Joint Assembly updates included a soft launch of the website, www.jointassembly.ca, and progress in creative joint worship planning.

The Ven. Harry Huskins introduced a resolution that would empower the officers of General Synod to ensure that the General Synod had adequate time to address significant structural and strategic challenges. He said some members felt anxiety that there would not be enough time to make necessary national decisions.

Members discussed various ways of addressing this need for assurance, noting this was a crucial time in the life of General Synod—especially in terms of finances—so members should take the time needed.

The Primate suggested that the motion should allow for flexibility in the sessions during Joint Assembly, but not the length of the meeting itself. Members agreed and adopted the resolution with this wording:

Resolution

COGS directs the officers to ensure that there is the time needed on the agenda of the upcoming General Synod session for the synod members

- a) to do the business required of them as a corporation
- b) to deal properly with the legislative matters (constitutional and canonical motions) coming before them; and
- c) to discuss among themselves the future of our Canadian church and changes that may be needed to the way it functions to better carry out mission.

This COGS directs the officers to make any modifications to the agenda or the length of sessions in synod that they consider is needed to ensure proper consideration of the matters coming before the synod session and delegates to the officers the power needed to do this.

At 9:00 p.m. Council closed the day with night prayers. The prayers of the assembly for the life of the world were patient, holy and profound.

