

COGS Highlights



Council of General Synod

March 14, 2013

For their spring meeting, COGS members gathered at their usual setting: Queen of Apostles Renewal Centre in Mississauga, Ont. They began their day with Bible study from 9:00 to 9:30.

The Very Rev. Peter Elliott, chair of the Planning and Agenda Team, introduced the meeting agenda. He noted that this longer COGS meeting (four days instead of three) is a tradition for the last meeting of the triennium. This is to give enough time for business before the national meeting, Joint Assembly, in July.

General Secretary's report

The Ven. Dr. Michael Thompson, General Secretary, began his reflections by praising COGS as "a community of leaders, thinkers, and doers that comes together as a gift to the national life to the church." He thanked the council for their "activism" and said they will be remembered for their "transformative work."

Several times in his reflection he identified where God was doing "a new thing," of the kind referenced in Isaiah 43.

Mr. Thompson noted that General Synod has continued its commitment to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, led by the work of Henriette Thompson, public witness coordinator for social justice. The TRC will end in 2014 and the church will need to discern how to continue reconciliation work past this date.

A review of church life highlights continued. Mr. Thompson noted that the church's imagination had been captured at a December consultation about how Canadian Anglicans can be faithful partners in the global communion. The theme of "nodes and networks" arose here.

The General Secretary celebrated that the Episcopal Church of Cuba is establishing an office of missionary development to help clergy and lay leaders work on issues such as food security alongside spiritual development. This work is funded by the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund and Episcopal Relief and Development.

Finally, Mr. Thompson addressed the work of the Consultation on Structures, which met January 9 and 10 to consider the renewal of General Synod's structures. COGS will consider the consultation's recommendations at this meeting.

Mr. Thompson noted that this consultation of 40 people, many under 35, examined three levels of structures: those things that were fixed (including the Office of the Primate), things that were flexible (such as the standing committee structure) and things that were flexible in terms of application (including financial systems.)

Financial realities are a catalyst for this change, said Mr. Thompson, but this ongoing work follows God's initiative to "do a new thing." This work is being done together as a whole church.

"I invite you to cherish this," said the General Secretary, "When we roll up our sleeves, we will experience a renewal of joy and a sense of purpose that we can be agents of transformation in the Anglican Church of Canada."

Members took a morning break from 10:00 to 10:30.

Conversation on structures: part one

Janet Marshall, consultation facilitator, and Monica Patten, working group chair, spoke in more detail about of the January structures consultation. Ms. Marshall said working on this had been "like being on a moving walkway where at every step there has been conversation and consultation."

COGS will have an opportunity at this meeting to give input into this work. Members who presented here are part of the smaller working group that is carrying consultation work forward.

Archbishop Colin Johnson reminded members of the meeting's scope: to help the church shape General Synod structures so the church can embody God's call to mission. He noted that the conversation had moved



from considering “what can only be done by General Synod” to asking “What are we doing together as a church and what can the national church bring to this?” He emphasized that this work is done cooperatively, not competitively.

The missiological focus of this work continues to be about “engaging in the work that God is already doing,” said Archbishop Johnson. He noted that Sister Amy, SSJD, led an inspiring meditation on Hebrews 10:24: “Let us consider how to provoke one another to love and to good deeds.”

Melissa Green described the new realities and trends stated by the consultation. These include the reality of a post-Christian and post-denominational ministry context, a change in communication technologies, and the work for self-determination among Indigenous Peoples.

Ms. Green also described some ministries that are made possible through the national church: we have a voice in national Canadian life, we have the unifying symbol of our Primate, and we celebrate that the *Anglican Journal* supports the distribution of diocesan papers.

Cynthia Haines-Turner acknowledged that there was a “fair bit of anxiety” about what would arise at the meetings but “by the grace of God” they arrived at recommendations. They also realized that these affirmations support the priorities and practices of Vision 2019.

The recommendations are organized by the time period, from those that can be implemented at Joint Assembly 2013 to those that could be considered at General Synod 2016.

These recommendations included a proposal for a new General Synod governance structure that would look different on several levels:

At the beginning of the triennium, a one-time mission coordination meeting would organize the strategic priorities arising from General Synod. COGS meetings would be reduced from six to four per triennium and traditional standing committees would be suspended (with the exception of Financial Management and Pensions). New standing committees of five (one a COGS rep) would meet electronically and then assign specific projects to task forces and working groups.

COGS members asked several questions for clarification. Some of these questions investigated the relationship between new structures and historic partners like the

Primate’s World Relief and Development Fund and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. Others wondered how a sense of unity could be cultivated in this new arrangement.

Council members left the rest of this conversation for after lunch.

Primate’s report

Archbishop Hiltz said he was “fresh off the rock,” having flown from Gander, Nfld., this morning at 5:00 a.m. He was in the Diocese of Western Newfoundland for a clergy retreat where he spoke about Mary, mother of Christ, and what she teaches about salutation, song, suffering and silence.

The Primate shared his reflection on the election of Jorge Mario Cardinal Bergoglio, elected yesterday to become Pope Francis. He recalled Christ’s prayer for unity “that they may all be one.”

As always, the Primate has been busy visiting dioceses across Canada. He highlighted his pastoral visit to three parishes in the Diocese of New Westminster that were returned to the diocese after a legal battle. For three days the Primate visited with people, accompanied by the Very. Rev. Peter Elliott. The Primate brought and blessed an Anglican Church of Canada flag for St. John’s Shaughnessy, but refrained from raising it because he did not want to convey a message of victory over those who had chosen to leave these parishes.

Moving on to Vision 2019, the church’s strategic vision, the Primate said that the church is “on mission, on task, and on time.” He’s especially pleased about the work of the structures consultation, which was called for in Vision 2019.

Earlier in March, the Primate attended a meeting of the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples. He also wanted to meet with retired bishop Gary Woolsey, who led in the dioceses of Athabasca and Calgary, and who is now terminally ill. Archbishop Hiltz also joined ACIP for a screening of *Walking the Dream*, the Sacred Circle documentary.

The Primate asked for ACIP’s advice on several matters, including what the church should say about the Idle No More movement and how the church should commemorate the upcoming twentieth anniversary of former Primate Michael Peers’ 1993 apology in Minaki Ont.

The work of truth and reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples is something

the Primate is tracking closely. He celebrated that the Anglican Healing Fund has distributed more than \$5 million to 500 healing projects across Canada—at least one in every diocese. He thanked fund coordinator Esther Wesley for her work.

Archbishop Hiltz reflected on the fact that the TRC will soon be finished. He recently shared some reflections on TRCs at a meeting of the Anglican Peace and Justice Network. “[TRCs] require commitment to hear the truth and summon us to apologize with integrity,” he said.

The Primate presented brief reflections on major upcoming events:

- Joint Assembly, happening July 2013, is “moving ahead,” he said. “It’s well in hand and I’m grateful beyond words.”
- Archbishop Hiltz and Principal Secretary Archdeacon Paul Feheley will attend March 21 enthronement of the new Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby. Adele Finney, executive director of PWRDF, will also attend as one of five people chosen to represent and bring gifts from various regions of the Anglican Communion.
- The Canadian Companions of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem program is growing, as is the companion diocese partnership between Jerusalem and Ottawa.
- On April 5, the churches begin a 1000-day countdown to the deadline for the Millennium Development Goals. The Primate has signed a letter to the Prime Minister about the importance of these landmarks.

Archbishop Hiltz closed with a meditation on servant leadership from Herbert O’Driscoll’s *Four Days in Spring*.

Members took a lunch break from noon until 1:30.

Gathering again with a sung hymn, COGS members convened for their afternoon session. The Primate recognized recent winners of the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee medals: National Indigenous Anglican Bishop Mark MacDonald, the Very Rev. Peter Elliott, and LCol the Rev. Canon Michelle Staples.

Conversation on structures: part two

The General Secretary, the Ven. Dr. Michael Thompson, returned to the subject of the national structures

consultation. He outlined the various reviews that the consultation is recommending:

- A review of national ministries in light of Vision 2019
- A review of the House of Bishops, specifically the focus and frequency of their meetings
- An operational review of General Synod’s Resources for Mission department, possibly with an external consultant, in order to gauge its effectiveness
- A review of General Synod’s communications department to test its adherence to Vision 2019.

The General Secretary then turned to describe General Synod’s collaborations with dioceses, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada and other partnerships.

Mr. Thompson also reflected on the current realities and future possibilities of decentralized staffing. Archdeacon Bruce Myers (Quebec) and the Rev. Laurette Glasgow (Ottawa) are two staff members who work part-time for other dioceses and part-time with General Synod.

Finally, Mr. Thompson reflected on finances. He said that General Synod will need to examine how to gain major gifts for their work. At the same time, he said General Synod needs to be “attentive to how much we spend on governance” because “this subject is critical to our public integrity.”

COGS members were given 40 minutes to discuss these questions in small groups: “What are my first impressions?” “What helps me be enthusiastic about the future of the national church?” “What are my concerns?”

They then reflected in silence and wrote out their affirmations, questions, concerns, and significant reservations.

People shared a sampling of comments and then handed them in. Monica Patten thanked members for their thoughtfulness and said the presenters would respond to these comments later in the meeting.

Council members took a break from 3:15 to 3:45.

Future of the Diocese of Keewatin

A delegation from the Diocese of Keewatin spoke about the three regions of their diocese: Northern Ontario,



Southern Keewatin, and Northern Manitoba. Present were Archbishop David Ashdown, Bishop Lydia Mamakwa, the Very Rev. Jim Dugan, the Ven. Kenneth Kitchekeesik, and Stanley Sainnawap.

Archbishop Ashdown provided a timeline of Indigenous leadership in the Diocese of Keewatin. Highlights included the election in 2010 of Lydia Mamakwa as area bishop of Northern Ontario.

Bishop Mamakwa shared how the Northern Ontario area of Keewatin has grown and matured into a self-determining church. She said this vision started with the elders and although there is pain and disappointment through the history of residential schools, her people have embraced the gospel.

“Our desire is to have the gospel at the centre of our lives,” said Mamakwa.

Stanley Sainnawap spoke about the future viability of the diocese. They have been self-administered since 2006 and have always produced balanced financial statements. Their ministry includes non-stipendiary clergy, healing centres, a ministry school, and a camp.

The Keewatin leaders will now request that General Synod concurs with the province’s decision to create a new diocese of the Northern Ontario region.

If these plans are approved, the Diocese of Keewatin will cease to function on Dec. 31, 2014, though it will continue as a legal entity. Archbishop Ashdown will remain as archbishop of Keewatin until Sept. 30 2015 to complete his term as metropolitan and wind up Keewatin’s administrative details. Keewatin’s assets will then be distributed equitably between the three regions. Keewatin’s archives will be transferred to General Synod.

The Very Rev. Dugan, also archdeacon of Keewatin’s southern region, said that the 15 parishes in his area have decided, after much consultation, to realign themselves with the Diocese of Rupert’s Land. The diocese is open to this idea and this plan will be confirmed at a May 25 regional synod.

Kenneth Kitchekeesik shared his family’s history as lay readers and faithful Anglicans in northern Manitoba. He said that his elders had a dream to be self-determining and therefore the people in his region have decided to align with northern Ontario. They are now consulting with local congregations about next steps.

Council members asked questions of the delegation

and commended Archbishop Ashdown and Bishop Mamakwa for their leadership.

Resolution

COGS resolved to support and affirm Keewatin’s proposal of a new diocese. The council expresses its gratitude for the courageous and visionary leadership in this diocese.

“We have walked together and now we are starting to dance together,” said Bishop Mamakwa. “Join us in the dance. You are most welcome.”

Council members responded with a standing ovation.

Council members took a break, for fellowship and dinner, from 5:00 to 7:00.

Japanese-Canadian presentation

Archdeacon Jim Boyles, former General Secretary of the Anglican Church of Canada, introduced speakers representing the Japanese-Canadian Vancouver Consultative Council: Joy Kogawa, Lynne Shozawa, and Greg Tatchell.

The speakers shared the story of how two Vancouver Japanese-Canadian churches—Holy Cross and the Church of the Ascension—were sold by the Anglican Diocese of New Westminster after World War II.

In 1942, 22,000 Japanese Canadians were sent to internment camps. On April 1, 1949, they were allowed to return. The church sold Church of the Ascension in 1945 and Holy Cross Church was sold just months after Japanese Canadians were allowed to return to Vancouver.

JC-VCC researchers have spent years piecing together the stories of these properties and were finally able to prove the story in 2009.

Bishop Michael Ingham, Diocese of New Westminster, apologized for these actions in 2010.

“Racism is and has been part of our church,” read Bishop Ingham’s apology, “and we should acknowledge and repent of it.”

Resolution

COGS adopted the following resolution from the Partners in Mission and Ecojustice Committee:

1. Acknowledges the injustices experienced by Japanese Canadian Anglicans at the hands of our Church during and after WW II; and confesses the error of our ways.
2. Expresses its gratitude for the activities of the Japanese Canadian Vancouver Consultative Council (JC-VCC) and the Diocese of New Westminster, which since 2008 have braved to tell the truth about a long, hidden story of racism at numerous levels of our Church, including the naming of the 1,500 Japanese Canadian Anglicans who were exiled in 1942.
3. Supports the 2010 apology made by Bishop Michael Ingham for the sale of Japanese Congregation Churches in the Diocese of New Westminster in 1949.
4. Recognizes that deep-seated historic racism continues as a source of pain to Japanese Canadian Anglicans across Canada, and commends every effort in the interests of healing and reconciliation.
5. Recommends that the Council of General Synod study the Episcopal Church's Asiamerica Ministries to explore ways of our participation in it.
6. Encourages the dioceses of the Anglican Church of Canada to be mindful of the growing multi-cultural membership of our Church, to celebrate that diversity, and to enhance partnerships in common ministry.

The Primate spoke to the resolution. "I want to express gratitude to those who came to tell this story," he said.

"This is a sign to the whole church to acknowledge sins of the past and expresses a desire to be continually reconciled."

JC-VCC members gave the Primate a plaque that tells the story of their churches.

TRC document collection

The General Secretary, the Ven. Dr. Michael Thompson, presented the issue of digitizing archival documents for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The TRC has a mandate to gather relevant archival material from parties involved with running residential schools (including General Synod). The TRC has started this work but lacks adequate resources to complete it.

Mr. Thompson asked COGS to use reserves from the Missionary Society of the Anglican Church of Canada to contribute to these costs.

He thanked Nancy Hurn, General Synod archivist, for her leadership and advocacy on this matter. He also thanked former General Secretary Jim Boyles, who is volunteering his time to do this archival work.

Council adjourned and reconvened as the Missionary Society of the Anglican Church of Canada.

Resolution

MSCC resolved that up to \$125,000 be made available from the unrestricted surplus of the Missionary Society of the Anglican Church of Canada for the following purposes:

1. Up to \$30,000 to support dioceses in meeting their obligations to provide their archival documents, in fulfillment of their obligations under the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement.
2. Up to \$95,000 to create a digital version of documents provided by the Anglican Church of Canada (in fulfillment of a legal obligation) to ensure that those documents will be accessible through the National Research Centre (in fulfillment of a solemn moral obligation) to former students and their families and communities, as well as to researchers and educators and the general public.

MSCC adjourned and reconvened as COGS, which passed a similar resolution in order to properly transfer the funds.

The Primate thanked the General Secretary for his leadership. He also noted that the United Church of Canada has made a similar commitment to offer extra funds for archival work.

COGS ended the day with night prayers.

