

COGS Highlights



Council of General Synod

March 16, 2013

*At 8:45, COGS members began their day with Bible study.
At 9:30 they gathered for business.*

The Very Rev. Peter Elliott, chair of the Planning and Agenda Team, said that the schedule for the day would be fairly flexible in order to give members time to discuss and make decisions on structures.

Conversations about structures: part four

Janet Marshall, structures consultation facilitator, and Archbishop Colin Johnson, member of the structures working group, summarized the main points that they had heard in the workshops yesterday.

Archbishop Johnson likened the structures work to the discipline of healthy weight loss: "Losing 15 pounds doesn't mean I'm going away," he said. "It means I'll be healthier and last longer."

Among other points of feedback, people expressed the need for clear terms of reference, job descriptions, and orientation for whatever new structures emerge.

Ms. Marshall said that by the end of the day, COGS would likely be passing resolutions relating to structures, some of which would be passed on to General Synod.

The Ven. Dr. Michael Thompson, General Secretary, presented a possible work-flow timetable that would move the structures work along between now and the next COGS.

The possible work flow would be

1. Describing the work of committees by June 2013.
2. Electing committees at Joint Assembly, July 2013.
3. Coaching committee chairs on new structures between summer and fall 2013.
4. Reviewing Resources for Mission, Communications, and General Synod's information technology capacity by October 2013.

5. Holding a proposed mission coordination meeting in early fall to plan what COGS and committees will do.

6. A joint COGS/committee meeting will happen by mid-November. This could be a time to decide on task forces to continue the work.

In a wide-ranging, open conversation, council members expressed their concerns around structural change.

Some of the participants focused on what was constitutionally possible. Others wondered how we would ensure accountability in these new structures. Still others wondered about the financial implications. For example, how much money would be saved by the proposed changes? (Treasurer Hanna Goschy said the absolute maximum would be "a couple hundred thousand" in the year.)

Council members took a break from 10:30 to 11:00.

Conversations about structures: part five

The Very Rev. Peter Elliott reviewed the process of consensus decision-making with the council.

Some discussion continued based on the earlier topics of the morning. Some members wondered whether to move the structures proposal further, even to the point of removing committees. Others commented that the look of a mission-focused church is very different from a maintenance-focused church.

The Primate led council members through a series of informal polls in order to gauge their feelings about pursuing resolutions on various topics relating to structures. If there was no clear sign of an emerging common mind, the Primate led the committee in conversation. Members of the structures working group considered these straw polls when designing resolutions for later in the day.

From noon to 1:30, council members took a lunch break.

Marks of Mission photo contest winners



Ali Symons announced the winners of the Marks of Mission photo contest. This is the last of three Marks of Mission contests (the others being a Sunday School curriculum contest and a song contest). The grand prize-winner was Daniel Brandsma, who will receive a \$250 gift certificates for photography supplies. Other winners will be announced through anglican.ca next week.

Vision 2019

Melissa Green and Michael Thompson updated council on the work of the Vision 2019 Implementation Team, which met last in early February. Ms. Green said the group has provided facilitation support at COGS meetings (through the Ven. P.J. Hobbs), has monitored priorities and practices in the work of General Synod, and reported on their findings. Measurement has been an ongoing but necessary challenge and the group commends this work to the next triennium.

Mr. Thompson said that all priorities and practices are visible in the reports of standing committees. He thanked the Primate, Archbishop Fred Hiltz, for his leadership in championing the priorities and practices of Vision 2019 and the Marks of Mission.

Later in the meeting, COGS will see a resolution recommending two co-chairs to lead the work of planning and agenda next triennium. One will focus on the work of General Synod and the other will focus on the priorities and practices of Vision 2019.

In table groups, members considered several questions:

1. How has Vision 2019 guided the work of COGS in this triennium?
2. Which three messages should be passed on to the next council regarding Vision 2019?

These messages were gathered and then grouped according to theme.

Partners panel

Bishop James Cowan chaired a panel of partners: Martha Gardner (The Episcopal Church), the Rev. Doug Reble (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada), and the Rev. David Pritchard (Primate's World Relief and Development Fund).

Partners were first asked to consider an incident in the life of the council that exemplified its spirit.

Ms. Gardner highlighted the joint meeting with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada's National

Church Council and their style of Biblical meditations called "Dwelling in the Word." Mr. Reble praised the respect of Indigenous voices at COGS but noted that COGS is often bureaucratic. Mr. Pritchard remembered Bishop Dennis Drainville's call for major structural change earlier in the triennium, and said that dissent has existed at COGS but the tone has been respectful.

Partners then reflected on messages to the next COGS.

Mr. Pritchard asked COGS not to forget the Council of the North, and to continue to give love and compassion in words and action to Indigenous Peoples. Mr. Reble reminded COGS not to take the ELCIC for granted and to continue to build on full communion relationship. He also called for the next COGS to move towards full inclusion of the GLBT community at all levels of church. Finally, Ms. Gardner reminded future COGS members to ground their work in the handbook's job description. She suggested organizing future meetings around Vision 2019, and to continue relationships with ELCIC and the Episcopal Church.

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

In their table groups, COGS members reflected on the same questions as the partners did before the break. The input from this conversation, the partners panel, and the Vision 2019 "sticky wall" will be shaped into key messages for the next COGS.

Structures conversation: part five

COGS members returned to consider resolutions arising from their informal polls earlier in the day. They passed the following resolutions by consensus:

Resolutions

1. That this COGS receive the reports of the consultation on structures "Embodying God's Call" and the structures working group and express its thanks to all who have contributed to this work.
2. This COGS affirms the principle that more of the work of General Synod should be done by task forces, working groups, and commissions.
3. This COGS calls on the General Secretary to ensure that the following reviews recommended in "Embodying God's Call" be done as a matter of priority:
 - a) Resources for Mission
 - b) Communications
 - c) The IT capacity of Church House to support electronically the meetings of councils and committees.

4. This COGS encourage the officers, staff, council, and committees of the General Synod to seek out new and expanded partnerships with dioceses and other Anglican entities, the ELCIC, and other partners.

[The above was amended to include “Anglican entities” so that partners such as PWRDF and TEC could be included]

5. This COGS encourages the Planning and Agenda Team, officers, and the next COGS to consider carefully what business of COGS which, in part or in entirety, might be done at any point in the year using communication information technologies and electronic methods of meeting.

6. This COGS recommends that the next COGS review the length and number of physically gathered meetings to minimize cost while ensuring it effectively fulfills its governance mandate.

7. Request Primate and Metropolitans to initiate with House of Bishops a review of the House of Bishops’ role and the focus and frequency of their meetings, recommended in “Embodying God’s Call.”

COGS members then considered a resolution to revise section 39 of the constitution in order to incorporate new changes suggested by the structures consultation.

Resolution

COGS passed, by consensus, a revised version of section 39 to present to General Synod.

This version includes the same descriptions of the Pensions Committee and the Financial Management Committee and names five coordinating committees: Faith, Worship, and Ministry; Partners for Mission and Ecojustice; Resources for Mission; Communications and Information Resources; and the Anglican Journal. Each coordinating committee includes three members elected by General Synod and two members appointed by Primate.

COGS returned to address a resolution on mission coordination meetings, which would organize General Synod work at the start of the triennium. Members considered and rejected an amendment that would only gather chairs of committees at this meeting. They felt a face-to-face meeting of all members was most important at the start of the triennium.

Resolution

COGS resolved that the members of the coordinating committees meet in conjunction with the fall 2013 meeting of COGS.

Cynthia Haines-Turner raised the question of how to potentially separate the work of Partner in Mission and Ecojustice so this work could be monitored by two separate committees. The Primate had reported earlier that this was desirable. The chancellor said he would look into this and return with a proposal to COGS.

After a heavy afternoon of consensus decision making, using the raising of hands, one bishop playfully offered a Vulcan salute.

From 5:15 until 7:00, members took a dinner break.

Governance Working Group

David Phillip Jones, chair of the Governance Working Group, introduced several resolutions that COGS will present to General Synod:

Resolutions

COGS resolved to present a resolution to General Synod that would eliminate duplication between the Declaration of Principles and the constitution.

COGS resolved to present Canon 23 on election of the bishop ordinary to General Synod 2013. (The bishop ordinary was previously a diocesan bishop but this office has become stand-alone so provisions need to be made for election and possible consecration of future bishops.)

At General Synod 2010, the GWG proposed a new formula for deciding on clerical and lay members of General Synod. A variation on its formula was passed at General Synod 2010 but the GWG realized later that it would result in a larger General Synod. The GWG is now proposing another formula, based on this previous work and statistics that they gathered from dioceses. (Not all dioceses submitted statistics as requested.)

Resolution

COGS resolved to present to General Synod the Governance Working Group’s proposed amendments to the proposed 2010 formula:

(a) “Average attendance” should be based on attendance averaged over four liturgical celebrations



(Christmas, Easter, Pentecost and the second Sunday in September) over two years. Using eight will provide a better measurement than using just one, and will mitigate the possibility that the average attendance figure might be unduly skewed in a particular place by a storm or other untoward event.

(b) The minimum representation should be one clergy and one lay member per diocese (in addition to the youth member and bishop) rather than two of each.

(c) A table should be used for determining the number of clergy and lay members from a diocese, rather than a mathematical formula.

(d) The size of General Synod should be decreased somewhat.

The GWG struggled to get accurate attendance data from all dioceses in order to do their work. Several members asked what General Synod was doing to improve the collection of such statistics, given that it is a stated priority of Vision 2019.

Handbook Concerns Committee

Mr. Jones introduced several changes to the General Synod handbook, including fixing typos and updating committee names.

Resolution

COGS approved an omnibus resolution with several handbook amendments, for presentation to General Synod.

COGS ended the meeting with a Vigil of the Resurrection in the chapel.

Following the service, members held a (early) St. Patrick's Day party, complete with green beer and a limerick competition. Party planners had set up such difficult first lines as "The language of meeting is acronym..."

