

# COGS Highlights



Council of General Synod - "Embodying God's call"

Nov 16, 2013

*At 8:45 am, COGS members gathered for Bible study. The morning session began at 9:15.*

## General Secretary's Report

The Ven. Dr. Michael Thompson, General Secretary, presented his report.

Mr. Thompson emphasized early on that the national church's work is made possible by the generosity of parishes and dioceses. It's "...the incredible gift of sacrificial giving that makes it possible to do the work of General Synod."

Canada is diverse and it takes effort to remain united and loving towards each other, but as a church we are held together by prayer and grace. "We depend on God for our communion, and we offer ourselves to God in that communion to be a witness to the world." Our unity is not defined by sameness or agreement, but rather "the generous and unstoppable love of God which holds us in communion."

Mr. Thompson then enumerated the roles of COGS associates in committee meetings with four Ls: to Listen to the church and to COGS; to find the Links between what they hear in the committee, what they hear in the church and what they hear in COGS; to Learn the priorities and values which drive the work of COGS and the committees; to Loop together the life of the committees and the life of COGS, making sure to bring issues from committees to COGS. The ultimate goal is to weave committees into the life and consciousness of COGS.

Mr. Thompson ended his report by giving thanks for the privilege of serving.

## Primate's Reflections

The Primate, Archbishop Fred Hiltz, offered news of his ministry and his reflections thereon.

The Primate shared the life-giving nature of parish and diocesan visits and noted the importance of that part of his ministry. "It's about relationships, connection, and belonging—seeing the church at the local level, seeing

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people living out the Marks of Mission faithfully in local context. I could not imagine this ministry without that opportunity every week."

The Primate then spoke about his sabbatical time. He thoroughly enjoyed the change of pace, and spent much time digging into the history of the church via his reading, particularly through presidential addresses of past Primates—their themes revealing much about the church, particularly a consistent commitment to ecumenism—and a biography of past Primate Howard Clark.

The Primate also spoke about a discussion he had with Archbishop Michael Peers on Archbishop Peers' memoirs, to take shape with editing by Bishop Michael Ingham and input from major figures in Peers' ministry.

Archbishop Hiltz told COGS that upon his return from sabbatical he went directly to a meeting of the House of Bishops (House and Spouse) and felt immediately reconnected. Notable was the bishops' joy at the creation of the Indigenous Spiritual Ministry of Mishamikweesh.

The Primate requested for prayer for the Diocese of the Arctic for the financial crisis facing the cathedral and for the many parishes without clergy.

After a brief break to pray for the episcopal election happening at that moment in St. John's, Nfld. for Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador, the Primate noted more episcopal elections were approaching rapidly and called the House of Bishops "an ever-changing community."

The Primate called for a retreat for the House of Bishops. House meetings are very busy, and bishops arrive already tired from their work at home. One frustration is that meeting agendas are so busy that conversations can't "go deep" and follow through on important issues. This retreat is intended to be a time of deep reflection on the nature of the bishops' vocation, prayer, and building a sense of community within the house.



The Primate went on to speak on commitments made at Joint Assembly, and the need to continue to act on those commitments in partnership with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC)

Remarking on this meeting of COGS, the Primate said that COGS associates liaising between COGS and committees are a sign of working together in partnership. The Primate also called the clarity of the 2014 budget a great sign of the commitment and hard work of General Synod ministry directors, and thanked the treasurer and management team for “an incredible piece of work.”

Reflecting next on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the Primate spoke of his debt of gratitude to Henriette Thompson, Nancy Hurn, Esther Wesley, and Terry Finlay for their work. Anglican presence at TRC events across the country has been *strong*. The Primate thanked staff, bishops, and Anglicans on the ground for their support for TRC events. The Primate was pleased to see that the mandate of the TRC had been extended to 2015.

The Primate spoke of his strong commitment to the Primate’s World Relief and Development Fund and their food security campaign “Fred Says.” The Primate will be giving as much time as possible for travel and speaking to promote the campaign. Archbishop Hiltz also spoke of giving more time to the Anglican Foundation, promoting their work through speaking engagements.

On the Companions of the Diocese of Jerusalem, the Primate said he was pleased with this new ministry of our church. He would like to see the Companions grow, and challenged all bishops of the ACC to become Companions.

The Primate gave a recap of his attendance (along with Principal Secretary Paul Feheley and PWRDF’s executive director Adele Finney) at the installation of the new Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby. Archbishop Hiltz told those assembled that Archbishop Welby will be visiting all Primates before gathering them together, and will be visiting Canada in early April 2014.

In conclusion, the Primate expressed his gratitude for the chance to serve the Anglican Church of Canada. After the Primate finished his reflections, it was announced that the Ven. Dr. Geoffrey Peddle had been elected Bishop of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador.

#### **Resolution**

COGS resolved (by applause) to send the bishop-elect personal congratulations and prayers.

*After a brief break, those assembled broke into coordinating committees (along with COGS associates) for meetings and training sessions, adjourning just before noon to gather in the dining hall to say grace before lunch. At 1pm, all present gathered at the entrance of Queen of the Apostles for group photos.*

#### **A moment for the Philippines**

*At 1:30 COGS reconvened and began the session with a time of silence and prayer for the people and the churches of the Philippines.*

Laura Marie Piotrowicz shared a letter she had received from a bishop in the Philippines regarding the prayers and support of the Canadian church.

#### **Housing and homelessness**

The Primate introduced Henriette Thompson, General Synod’s public witness coordinator for social and ecological justice, who spoke on the Joint Declaration on Housing and Homelessness and Responsible Resource Extraction, and the efforts to continue the process initiated with that declaration.

Ms. Thompson offered the example of Edmonton and its 10-year “Homes First” strategy. After a short clip from a news program detailing the strategy, Bishop Jane Alexander of the diocese of Edmonton spoke about the church’s involvement in that plan, and the resistance they have met while supporting the work to eliminate homelessness in Edmonton.

Bishop Alexander then answered questions from the floor, and heard comments from those assembled on efforts to alleviate homelessness in their own communities.

#### **Responsible resource extraction**

Ms. Thompson then moved to the next part of her presentation, covering responsible resource extraction. “We all consume these resources, so we all need to find our place in this story.” Ms. Thompson spoke on inter-organizational connections the church has (e.g. KAIROS) in dealing with this issue.

National Indigenous Anglican Bishop Mark MacDonald spoke on the connection between resource extraction and Indigenous concerns. The major concern at the pre-assembly Indigenous meeting in Busan was resource extraction, particularly mining, and particularly by Canadian companies. Bishop MacDonald made further remarks on the issue of Canadian mining.

*COGS adjourned for a brief break.*



### **Commemoration of the Primate's Apology**

The Primate began the commemoration with a welcome, calling it "an opportunity to pay tribute to Michael Peers for his leadership in considering, enacting, and delivering the apology with such passion."

"Michael Peers set this church on a trajectory towards healing and reconciliation from which we must not and never will turn back."

A presentation by Ginny Doctor, coordinator of Indigenous Ministries, followed. She noted that the Archbishop Peers' apology in 1993 changed her life, leading her to dedicate it to shaping whole and healthy Indigenous leaders. She showed two videos on the legacy of residential schools, the apology of Primate Michael Peers, and the reception and acceptance of that apology.

ACIP co-chair Sidney Black offered a deeply emotional reflection on Archbishop Peers and the apology. "Good things, wonderful things, sacred things happen when we walk with people who are culturally distinct from who we are. In 1993 I believe such a thing happened. I believe that God sent a man to begin that journey of healing... Your grace, my love and admiration for you is exceedingly great. I pray that we will continue always to grow in our love and friendship with each other."

After a recitation of the Apostle's Creed, prayer, confession of sins and an exchanging of the peace, Archbishop Peers addressed the group, recounting his past growing up near a reserve in British Columbia and his early encounters with First Nations people; his growing awareness of the church's treatment of and attitude toward Indigenous Anglicans during his first years in ministry; and his involvement in the beginning of Indigenous self-determination in the diocese of Keewatin.

Archbishop Peers' address was marked by frequent moments of personal reflection and humour, recounting a lifetime of relationship with Indigenous Anglicans.

Bishop Mark MacDonald gathered Indigenous elders and clergy to present a blanket to the Archbishop, which they draped across Peers' shoulders. They then gathered around the Archbishop, while the Rev. Margaret Waterchief prayed for him, as she did at his apology in 1993.

A hymn was sung and those assembled celebrated the Holy Eucharist.

Afterwards there followed another hymn, brief announcements from Bishop Mark, and a message of thanks from the Primate to Archbishop Michael Peers.

### **The Primate's Commission**

The Primate then spoke on the commission on the doctrine of discovery, the nature of reconciliation, and justice for indigenous persons and communities. Both prayer and the UN declaration of the rights of Indigenous peoples will ground the work of commission.

*After a multi-language benediction from the Primate, Archbishop Peers, Bishop Mark MacDonald, Bishop Adam Halkett, and Bishop Lydia Mamakwa, a closing hymn was sung and COGS adjourned for dinner.*

*COGS reconvened at 7:30 with a prayer from the Primate. Coordinating committees were given the option of meeting separately or observing the COGS session.*

### **Canon XXI on marriage**

On the agenda was a motion from General Synod for COGS to author a motion on an amendment of Canon XXI to allow marriage of same-sex couples for consideration at General Synod 2016.

The Primate shared reflections on the matter from the House of Bishops meeting last month. Archbishop Hiltz had proposed at the House of Bishops that a commission of the council (mandated and appointed by the council; not a Primate's commission) be set up to consider the matter, said this Fall meeting of COGS should deal with it, and opened the floor for comments from the House.

The bishops expressed concern that the commission would have insufficient time, and it would be difficult to have theologically diverse membership. There was also interest in a suggestion that the House give attention in its meetings regarding supporting documentation, and international consultation.

Some of the House had observed that in 2010 the church had appeared to have arrived at a place of peace, but no longer since General Synod 2013. Those concerned asked if there were a way to hold the peace.

The Primate invited COGS members to have conversation in table groups on two questions. The first: What are you hearing with respect to this matter on the ground in your context? The second: Assuming that a commission were established, what messages would you want to give that commission at the very outset of its work?



At the end of table conversations, the Primate asked that notes from COGS members' tables be collected to be passed on. The Primate then invited representatives from each table of COGS members to share their discussion points with the room.

**Resolution**

COGS resolved that, in conformity with the General Synod resolution:

1. That this council establish a commission to carry out a consultative process as directed by the General Synod.
2. That this commission report to COGS its findings and any recommendations as to what matters COGS should consider in writing the text of the directed enabling motion.
3. That the Primate and the officers of General Synod appoint the members of this commission before December 31, 2013.
4. That the commission bring a progress report to the next meeting of COGS as to how it is carrying out its work.

*COGS adjourned after announcements and Night Prayer.*

