

COUNCIL OF GENERAL SYNOD (COGS) – DAILY HIGHLIGHTS



***We envision a church growing
in membership, faith
and service in God's world***

**Sunday, May 25, 2008
Queen of Apostles, Mississauga, Ont.**

At 9:00 council met in small groups for Bible study.

9:45 council reconvened for the third and final day of their spring 2008 meeting.

Strategic Planning

Dean Peter Elliott, chair of the Strategic Planning Task Force, spoke about the work that his committee is planning to do for the triennium. The November COGS meeting decided to form this task force, and several volunteers have already met as part of this group.

Dean Elliott then gave a presentation on the history of the General Synod, particularly how this body has understood its purpose. He began with the Solemn Declaration of 1893, which brought the General Synod into being. He pointed out that the formation of General Synod was about “not harmony, but strength.”

He touched also on previous strategic visions for the church, including the Netten Report (1968) and “Preparing the Way” (1994-2004). He remembered that in 2003 COGS wondered whether to extend “Preparing the Way” but decided to work on a new document, “Serving God’s world, strengthening the church: a framework for a common journey in Christ” (2004-2010).

Now in 2008, the church is deciding what strategic plan will be adopted at the 2010 General Synod. This new plan will look to 2019. Dean Elliott hopes that the task force will have something ready by Feb. 2010, then after COGS’s approval this new strategic

vision will be presented to General Synod in 2010.

The work plan will focus on mission, said Dean Elliott. Then he proposed five phases of the project, beginning with organizing a Lent 2009 mission study. This would be a time for Canadian Anglicans to reflect on their priorities for the church.

Dean Elliott said that COGS members can support this strategic planning process by providing leadership, consulting within their dioceses, praying, and giving critical feedback on this work.

Several COGS members had questions and comments about this process. Many supported the idea, and some anticipated challenges, such as engaging congregations, producing resources, and the need to sensitively translate the concept of “mission” into Indigenous communities. After some discussion about governance, members also decided that the task force will report to COGS twice a year.

***Resolutions**

Council approved the Strategic Planning Process Task Force’s name change to “2019 Visioning and Planning Task Group”

Council approved this group’s revised terms of reference

Council approved the overview of the planning process, as outlined by Dean Elliott.

Reflections from the National Indigenous Anglican Bishop

National Indigenous Anglican Bishop Mark MacDonald began his reflections by thanking God for the good things that have happened at the COGS meeting. He then shared a story to serve as a lens for his presentation:

A Lakota priest friend of his was staying in a hospital “family room” while his wife was undergoing chemotherapy. With some amusement, this man showed the “family room” to Bishop MacDonald—it was large but with only a single bed.

Bishop MacDonald explained that this room reflected a non-Aboriginal view of family. It was similar in that way to how the Anglican Church of Canada has made assumptions in

COUNCIL OF GENERAL SYNOD (COGS) – DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

constructing “rooms” for Aboriginals in the church. These well-intentioned “rooms” have inadvertently constrained Aboriginal Anglicans’ spirituality and ministry.

The bishop then described some of his work since the last COGS meeting. He spoke of his participation in the Remembering the Children tour and highlighted the diocesan boundary discussions in northern Ontario and Manitoba as “important breakthroughs.” Tomorrow he will go to the Vancouver School of Theology for an urban ministry summit.

He also announced that Thornloe College and Wycliffe College will co-sponsor a cross-cultural consultation on theological formation in 2009.

Then he turned to discuss non-stipendiary clergy, which he said was the biggest issue in the places he has visited. Bishop MacDonald proposed the idea of a summit on this topic. He said that supporting ministers is essential since in the Aboriginal communities he visits, most people are under 20 years of age. “The fields are ripe for harvest but we don’t have enough resources,” he said, and referred to his earlier metaphor: “We have put out such a small bed for such a big family.”

In conclusion, Bishop MacDonald quoted St. Herman of Alaska and challenged COGS, “from this day forward, from this hour, from this minute, let us love God above all.”

Several members responded to Bishop MacDonald’s presentation, including the Ven. Larry Beardy, who said that 17 Indigenous students had graduated this year from the Diocese of Keewatin’s William Winter School of Ministry. Bishop MacDonald called this “a historic milestone.”

Partners’ Reflections

Judy Kochendorfer, the partner from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, delivered reflections on behalf of the Rev. Canon Petero Sabune, COGS’s partner from the Episcopal Church, who had left the meeting May 24.

The Rev. Sabune, who attended the November 2007 COGS meeting and 2007 General Synod, emphasized the Anglican Church of Canada’s unique role in the Anglican Communion. He

said the Canadian church was not “the bad boy” like the Episcopal Church; the Canadian church is more neutral, but also refuses to give in to injustice and bigotry. The Rev. Sabune challenged the church not to domesticate the good news of the gospel, and to keep being honest around the legacy of residential schools. He said the church’s work on the Millennium Development Goals is a testimony to what the churches of the Americas can accomplish together.

Ms. Kochendorfer briefly summarized her own written report. She said a highlight of this COGS meeting was hearing the Eucharist in Cree and English, celebrated yesterday by the Ven. Larry Beardy. “This was an absolute highlight that knocked my socks off,” she said.

12:00 Lunch

1:00 Council reconvened.

Report from Afghanistan

Archdeacon Karl McLean, director of chaplain operations, delivered some highlights of his work in Afghanistan. He began with an overview of the population, geography, and history of the country.

He spoke of a recent visit to Afghanistan, where he visited the country’s operating bases. Archdeacon McLean emphasized that the soldiers there are involved in a very dangerous operation, and although many Canadians are reluctant to use the word “war” the troops are still involved in combat.

Archdeacon McLean said that five chaplains serve full-time in Afghanistan. They face many challenges, including compassion fatigue, trauma, and the physical dangers of combat. He said their ministry was one of presence. They also provide the sacraments, help notify families of casualties, and sometimes do reconciliation work. Anglicans play a significant role in this ministry, said the archdeacon.

He then offered some of his own reflections on the challenges in Afghanistan. The biggest, he said, was religious understanding and cooperation amongst Christians and Muslims. The drug economy is also an enormous problem, as are child abuse, poverty, and lack of health care.

COUNCIL OF GENERAL SYNOD (COGS) – DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

Archdeacon McLean ended his presentation with a slide show of this trip to Afghanistan.

Members' Concerns

During COGS, members had the opportunity to write their concerns on a flip chart in the main meeting hall. Based on these notes, the Primate led brief discussions on the length and frequency of COGS meetings (which have both decreased over the years) and respecting the contributions of COGS youth representatives.

Key messages

As a concluding exercise, the Rev. Stephen Andrews led COGS members in listing the key messages from this meeting. Members mentioned the following:

- We began each day with Bible study and prayer.
- The meeting had a real spirit of collegiality.
- We found the priority and visioning exercise to be important for our planning process.
- We heard particular challenges about developing a national Indigenous ministry.
- The party for Ellie Johnson, outgoing director of Partnerships, was full of joy.
- We sensed that the meeting focused less on the question, “what is the church?” to “what is the church for?” We also sense that the emerging answer to the second question is “mission,” and we hope the whole church will refocus this way.
- The Faith, Worship, and Ministry Committee has done a good job of working on very sensitive topics: human sexuality and the revision of the marriage canon.
- We responded to the second draft of the Anglican Covenant.
- We continued to use and find success with the consensus model of decision-making.
- We are enthusiastic about the Amazing Grace project

2:00 Eucharist

3:00 Council adjourned.

The next meeting of COGS will be Nov. 14 to 16 at Valhalla Inn, Toronto.