

COGS Highlights



Council of General Synod

Friday, November 14, 2014

Council members gathered from 8:45 to 9:15am for Morning Prayer and Bible study at Queen of Apostles Renewal Centre in Mississauga, Ontario. Business began with a check-in at 9:30am.

Check-in

The Very Rev. Peter Wall, co-chair of the Planning and Agenda Team, expressed the regrets of his co-chair, Ms. Jane Osler, who was unable to attend the meeting. He lightheartedly addressed concerns about a sporadic wi-fi connection, and challenged the members of COGS to share the most delightful hour they had experienced in the last week with other members.

Formalities, orders of the day

The Very Rev. Peter Wall provided an overview of the agenda, before turning the floor to the Chair, Archbishop Fred Hiltz.

The Primate offered a warm welcome to the council's members, smiling as he extended his hospitality to four month old Valerie Anne Regine Warren, playfully observing that she was present at the meeting six months before, and predicting that her voice would likely be heard during the council's discussions.

Archbishop Fred shared regrets from members who were not able to attend, and welcomed Church House staff, as well as ministry partners from PWRDF, the Anglican Journal, and the Anglican Foundation.

Special attention was given to significant events in the life of the community: Archbishop Percy Coffin's new role as Metropolitan of the Ecclesiastical Province of Canada, The Rev. Canon Ginny Doctor's journey from illness to healing, and the death of General Synod's former Director of Communications and Resources for Mission,

Vianney (Sam) Carriere. The Primate drew attention to a photo book titled *Dear Sam* that CIR staff had published, and invited COGS members to observe its pages, which would be projected during breaks.

Archbishop Fred thanked Andy Seal for a gift from Augsburg Fortress Canada: a replica of Timothy Schmalz' sculpture, [*Jesus the Homeless*](#), that would be displayed in the room as a focal point to guide the weekend's meeting.

Finally, the Primate invited Sister Elizabeth Rolfe-Thomas, SSJD to explain her role as chaplain, before calling for a resolution.

Resolution

COGS received the minutes from the May 3-5, 2014 meeting.

Budget

Ms. Hanna Goschy, Treasurer, began her budget presentation by reminding the Council of the priorities and practices of Vision 2019.

Ms. Goschy noted a \$396,000 surplus in 2014, due to three factors: ministry plans that were streamlined by the ministries of General Synod and by the financial management committee, proportional giving that is expected to be \$149,000 greater than the conservatively budgeted projection, and the givings of one diocese being higher than previously expected. The 2015 budget projects a \$59,000 surplus, with surpluses that should continue to decline through 2019.

The key messages of Ms. Goschy's presentation included budgeting for participation in God's mission, a conservative but realistic outlook on

revenues, the expectation of modest and declining surpluses between 2016 and 2019, and a realistic approach to the knowledge that three quarters of General Synod’s revenues come from diocesan proportional giving.

Resolution

COGS unanimously approved the adoption of the 2015 budget as presented by the financial management committee.

Resolution

COGS expressed its thanks to the dioceses for their generous support, and requested that the Primate and the General Secretary express this thanks via a letter.

Resolution

COGS ratified the grants approved by the Ministry Investment Fund committee, totaling \$80, 900 for 2015, \$12,000 for 2016, and \$12,000 for 2017.

Diocesan statistics

Archdeacon Michael Thompson, General Secretary, addressed the council, recalling that in the spirit of fairness, a new model of qualification for delegates to General Synod had been adopted. However, despite these attempts, statistics have been slow to come from some dioceses with minimal representation. A small number of dioceses have made it clear that they have no plans to collect and report these statistics.

The General Secretary identified research interests in congregational and diocesan life and mission that General Synod will be pursuing in the coming year:

“How can we understand what is going on in our churches and dioceses?” he asked, “How can we understand the neighbourhoods and contexts in which these ministries operate? How can we best allocate our resources based on that knowledge?” These questions, Thompson explained, have led to a commitment to a revised statistical return in 2015, as well as other research initiatives.

While the structure of this research program is still in formation, Thompson offered four distinct elements:

- A national congregational life survey that might provide a better profile of Canadian Anglicans, and identify the most effective points of mission.
- Missional census: an electronic platform that would allow congregations to report on missional activities in a way that they could be measured.
- Ethnographic research: the means to develop “official curiosity on behalf of the General Synod” about diocesan life, to pursue a national understanding of the diversity and shared realities that emerge in dioceses.
- Developing a process by which congregations could understand their missional contexts.

“There must be a way that captures what our true commitments are to share in God’s mission in and for the world,” said Archdeacon Thompson.

Responding to a question from the floor, the General Secretary agreed that similar survey models are already in place, in both the church and in other organizations. He invited examples for consideration. Other members from the council noted that without response from the dioceses, the use of statistical information for mission would be hampered—and that a clear statement explaining the importance of this data will be necessary.

Archdeacon Thompson will be exploring this research program with the House of Bishops next week, and inviting the Bishops to help refine the information that would be important to survey and report on.

Primate’s report

Archbishop Fred began his report by calling the assembly’s attention to the Marks of Mission and to the Priorities and Practices of Vision 2019, noting that the narrative of these documents that informs all that we do. He recalled [Embodying](#)

[God's Call](#), the Anglican Church of Canada's structures consultation, in the same light: a call to consider the way these narratives shape our corporate identity.

Looking globally, the Primate referenced the Communion's [Signposts on a Common Journey](#): a document that describes four points of unity common to all Anglicans who live out this identity:

- Formed by scripture
- Shaped by worship
- Ordered for communion
- Directed by God's mission

All of this, said Archbishop Fred, is the basis or Vision 2019. "It was not a strategic plan," he continued, "it was different than anything we had done before—accepted to be a guiding document in the hands of the members of General Synod. Its intention was to help us look over the next nine years."

Now halfway through this triennium, and midway through the stretch towards 2019, the Primate called the members of COGS to evaluate the church's progress: "Where are we lagging behind? What can we celebrate? What needs attention?"

Archbishop Fred went on to describe the church from his own perspective, identifying ways that the church is living out Vision 2019: the Vital and Healthy Parishes conference, as well as Conversation 2014, the church's first gathering for clergy under age 40; the Anglican Foundation's support for creative ministries that respond to Vision 2019; developing movement toward companion relationships with Council of the North parishes; the church's journey with Indigenous peoples; its relationship with the Diocese of Jerusalem, and many other initiatives.

But the Primate stopped there, stating quite simply, "Anything I do, I do in relationship. We're in this together." He proceeded to invite the feedback of the council's members, asking the following questions:

- What can we celebrate
- What remains a big challenge?

Praises from the council, in many ways, reflected those of the primate. Answers to his second question, which the Primate adopted graciously were varied:

- Rural ministry
- Environmental crises
- Support for local initiatives
- Evangelism
- Statistics and research

Primate's World Relief and Development Fund

The Rev. Laura Marie Piotrowicz, secretary of PWRDF's board, began the presentation by introducing the Director of its Canadian Anglican Partnership Program: Ms. Carolyn Vanderlip.

Ms. Vanderlip introduced CAPP to the assembly, describing it as "a network of representatives across the country, [that is] bringing Canadian Anglicans closer to the work PWRDF is doing." She noted events in which CAPP members have worked together around food security issues, like a recent meeting in Peterborough that included a visit to a local farm.

Likewise, The PWRDF youth council recently met in Toronto with the Bishop Francisco da Silva, Primate of the Episcopal Anglican Church of Brazil, and together, visited a First Nations community.

These groups, Vanderlip said, are instrumental in observing and participating in the work PWRDF is doing, and communicating it to local communities.

She noted new initiatives, like PWRDF's participation in [Ride for Refuge](#): a partnership that garnered 10 teams, coast-to-coast, 40 riders, and 383 donors. Over \$18,000 was raised.

Another projects of note were the [Fred Says](#) campaign, [Hunger is Not a Game](#), and [Sharing Bread](#).

Simon Chambers followed Ms. Vanderlip by describing PWRDF's continuing work in the Philippines following Typhoon Haiyan, one of the most powerful tropical typhoons ever recorded.

Chambers shared photos, and talked about seeing the damage, firsthand: the official death toll was 6300, but the actual number was likely much greater.

In response, PWRDF raised over \$800,000 in relief funds, which were released through The Visayas cluster, Episcopal Church in the Philippines, and ACT alliance.

"We've moved beyond the stage of giving food and water," he said, "we help communities to rebuild homes."

"Filipinos don't give up," he continued, and finished with a message offered on behalf of those in the Philippines: "thank you."

Anglican Foundation

Dean Peter Wall welcomed The Anglican Foundation's Executive Director, The Rev. Canon Dr. Judy Rois.

"We believe it's our responsibility to encourage all Anglicans to contribute to the foundation, and to access it as needed," said Rois, noting that while some dioceses give and receive, other do not give, but are still eligible to receive grants and loans. "However," she reminded the council, "we are actively encouraging full participation."

Dr. Rois provided updates on a wealth of projects the Foundation has supported: over \$500,000 has been offered to local projects in the last year!

At present, observed Dr. Rois, there are 1650 parishes in Canada, and 279 give an annual donation. There are 30 dioceses, and 17 give a donation. With this in mind, The Anglican Foundation plans to launch, "Free up \$50"—a new initiative that asks every parish to give \$50 in 2015.

As well, the foundation featured two promotional videos that will be available to parishes and dioceses in the near future: the first presenting the opportunities Foundation support might offer, and the second addressing the topic of legacy gifts.

Response to The Foundation's 2014 RFP, "New projects that train young adult leaders in ministry

evangelism, or mission," has been phenomenal. The RFP theme for 2015 will be announced in March, with a September 1 deadline.

Government relations

The Primate introduced The Rev. Laurette Glasgow, who invited laughter by saying, "I'm from Ottawa, and I'm here to help you!"

Before continuing, Ms. Glasgow asked the assembly to sing hymn #434, "The Love of Jesus Calls Us," indentifying the hymn's lyrics as words that speak very powerfully to the ministry of Government relations.

"If we believe, as I think we do, that God invites each and every one of us to engage actively in God's mission and work throughout this earthly realm, then it is reasonable to believe that God invites us to do so not only within our churches, but also outside its walls, including the realm of governments and the halls of parliaments."

"How can we speak?" challenged Glasgow, referring to the church's difficulty finding a voice within the culture that surrounds it.

In the last year, Ms. Glasgow has been involved in a wide variety of conversations with the government officials: she has been actively engaged in topics around Syria, Iraq, and Gaza, focusing on humanitarian responses, and refugees.

She described her relationship with the Canadian Office for Religious Freedom, noting that its focus has largely been on persecution of people of faith.

Addressing the assembly, Glasgow said, "It's time to look ahead. October 19, 2015 is the last day an election can be called. It's time." She offered the following suggestions to the church:

- Set priorities. We cannot do it all, and we have limited airtime in the public square.
- We need to have the flexibility to respond to new priorities. How do we come to consensus on fast-breaking issues? Creative tension is a hallmark of Anglicanism, but stands in the way of making statements to policy makers.

Example: The CCC released a statement on the most recent prostitution laws. The Anglican Journal, on the other hand, reported only one Anglican voice, and in many cases, was interpreted as the Anglican view.

- Build relationships. This requires time and effort, but mostly intentionality. You have to have your facts and knowledge, but a respectful relationship is one that respects the needs of the other. More often than not, governments are looking for solutions and partnerships.
- Play to our strengths, for therein lies our credibility.
- We must be non-partisan.

Finally, Ms. Glasgow presented four questions to the council for their feedback and reflection:

- You are running for parliament. What 3 issues are going to be part of your platform?
- You are an elector. You are going to the polls. What 3 issues are your priorities?
- You are Fred Hiltz. What are the 3 things you tell your flock about what is important to the Church in regards to the election?
- What bumper sticker would you buy for the upcoming election. (What is our/your slogan)

Indigenous Spiritual Ministry of Mishamikoweesh

Bishop Lydia Mamakwa thanked the assembly for an opportunity to speak to them about her developing diocese.

“Having an indigenous diocese is unique and special,” she said, “we can communicate through our own language. When making a community visit, it is my duty to listen and acknowledge community concerns. Community leadership is very important and upheld.”

She described the challenges of running a diocese in an isolated region: “we have no roads.” The white highway, as the community calls it, is available for only 2-3 months each year.

Bishop Mamakwa noted that in the midst of issues: the legacy of residential schools, the history of abuses, there is hope. The diocese continues to live into self-determination, and the Bishop is aware that other Indigenous communities are watching.

Bishop Mark Macdonald, National Indigenous Bishop, affirmed her words, describing an Indigenous understanding of trailblazing: “when the snow is deep, and without a track, the person needs to get off the back of the sled, and lead the dogs through the snow.”

One of his communities’ most significant learnings, he said, is that Indigenous churches need not operate like Western churches, with a top-down structure. Instead, he explained, the Indigenous church is discerning how to be organized in a horizontal model, with everything moving to the centre: “every member is kin. We’re imagining a different way to see how this might work in our cultural reality: this diocese, in time, will be revolutionary to other Indigenous communities. It’s giving us a way forward.”

The primate concluded with these words for Bishop Lydia: “You’re such a good shepherd. We rejoice with you.”

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

Ms. Pat Lovell, COGS’ ELCIC delegate spoke to the assembly about some of the important events in the life of our full communion partner:

- Our 500th Reformation Anniversary: “Liberated by God’s Grace” and its three sub-themes: Salvation-not for hire; Human Beings-not for sale and, Creation-not for sale.
- Enhanced Communications: like the ACC, the Evangelical Lutheran Church hopes to encourage two-way dialogue with grassroots ministries, and has adopted the #MyELCIC hashtag to do so.
- Governance Committee Survey: new methods are being explored to improve the work council accomplishes between meetings
- Homelessness and Affordable Housing: alongside the Anglican Church of Canada,

the ELCIC has endorsed a commitment to learning, action, advocacy and prayer concerning homelessness and affordable housing.

The Episcopal Church

Our partner from The Episcopal Church, Ms. Martha Gardner, spoke to the council about important matters in her church:

- Intercultural partnerships: after a June meeting in Phoenix, TEC staff were invited to visit a Navajo community; likewise, the TEC House of Bishops recently met in the Episcopal Church of Taiwan, and fostered further relationship with the Taiwanese church
- TEC is in the midst of a restructuring process, and calls for our prayer: reports of the process will be published in parts, the first of which will be available in the next few months.
- Our prayers are requested, as TEC will be seeking a new presiding bishop after their General Convention meeting.
- Continued building issues at the national office: should the building be sold? Should TEC's offices leave New York?
- Like the Anglican Church of Canada, TEC is beginning to ask questions about how to engage parishes in more helpful statistical analysis.

The day concluded with Night Prayer.