

# **PATHWAY FIVE: WALKING TOGETHER IN PARTNERSHIP AS INDIGENOUS AND NON-INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF THE ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA**

## **AN ACTION PLAN**

**April 17, 2026**

*Creating Pathways*, a report that was overwhelmingly supported by General Synod 2025, places a clear focus and priority on the relationship between the historic non-Indigenous and Indigenous Churches within the Anglican Church of Canada (see Appendix A for the full text).

The consultations that led to the framing of Pathway Five found that “there exists much hope of finding a good way forward between the General Synod and the Self-Determining Indigenous Church (Sacred Circle). There is a high level of commitment amongst Anglicans throughout Canada towards ongoing partnership and relationship in the future.” At the same time, there is evidently unease and confusion about how to bring about this desired partnership.

This Action Plan builds on the recommendation in Pathway Five that the Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada and the Presiding Elder of Sacred Circle consider instigating five specific tasks with the aim of bringing recommendations to the meeting of General Synod in 2028 (see Appendix A). In order to address each of them in a logical and cumulative manner, and to ensure that this important work is properly supported, the Primate and Presiding Elder, in consultation with the co-Chairs of ACIP, the General Secretary and the Director of Indigenous Ministries, have laid out the following action steps:

### **ACTION STEP ONE: Reframe the Indigenous Ministries Department in the National Office of the Anglican Church of Canada**

As part of the major changes mandated by *Creating Pathways*, every department, program, and position in the national office (Church House) has been reviewed. This review, undertaken by senior staff under the authority of the Primate and General Secretary, has resulted in significant modifications to staffing levels and departments. As part of the national office, the Indigenous Ministries Department was also included in this review, in consultation with the Presiding Elder, the Director of the Department, and the Co-Chairs of ACIP. Some issues have been addressed, while others are still in process. Foundational to this work is the clarification of the Department’s core purpose.

Action Step One seeks to reframe the currently named Indigenous Ministries Department to clearly serve the interests of Sacred Circle, ACIP and the Presiding Elder *at this time*—understanding that the journey toward a self-determining Indigenous Church continues to unfold.

Action Step One seeks to immediately equip the Indigenous Church as it works on internal matters and prepares to engage in the important work outlined in Pathway Five as a whole. It also sets the stage for the development of a sustainable financial and organizational relationship between the General Synod and Sacred Circle (as called for in Pathway Five). If deemed necessary, a mediation strategy could be set up to discuss past challenges between the members of ACIP and the General Synod Senior Staff and Directors (also identified in Pathway Five).

***Key Elements of Action Step One (to be overseen by the General Secretary):***

- The department (to be named by ACIP) would effectively be the “Office of Sacred Circle” ensuring as much autonomy as possible while existing within the legal and fiduciary responsibilities of the General Synod. It would provide governance support to ACIP, administer programs authorized by ACIP, oversee arrangements for triennial gatherings of Sacred Circle, and support the ministry of the Presiding Elder.
- The department’s director would be employed by the General Synod (in consultation with ACIP) and accountable to the General Secretary for the management of the department, including program staff. However, the director would have a direct relationship with ACIP and the Presiding Elder, and a key focus of their work would be to serve them, providing information and support as required.
- Resources for the department (human and otherwise) would be funded by the General Synod. The expenditure of funds (apart from staffing and equipping the positions of Presiding Elder, Director, and program staff), would require approval by ACIP before they could be authorized by the General Synod.
- Communications, development, financial management, human resources, administrative assistance, and office space would be provided by Church House.
- A detailed Memorandum of Understanding will be prepared to provide for the operation of the reframed department and the expectations of all parties.

## **ACTION STEP TWO: Establish a Pathway Five Team**

The Transformation Task Force (TTF) will appoint a dedicated Pathway Five (PW5) Team to oversee and enable this Action Plan (as called for in *Creating Pathways*). It will comprise non-Indigenous and Indigenous Anglicans, identified by ACIP and TTF/COGS, and will look at ways to walk together in partnership from where we are now to where we want to be through implementing Action Step Three.

## **ACTION STEP THREE: Generating dialogue, proposals and recommendations**

The PW5 Team will prepare a work plan to be implemented for the balance of the triennium (and beyond, as required). The plan will provide for the relevant dialogues with a view to producing a set of proposals and recommendations for review and revision before being finalized. Specifically, to develop:

- A) A clear definition of what is a church-to-church partnership between the General Synod and Sacred Circle and a clear articulation of what it means for both to be independent and yet connected as the Anglican Church of Canada.
- B) Effective governance processes (i.e. canons) to support and clearly articulate the mutual relationship between Sacred Circle and the General Synod.
- C) A new model or structure of committee processes, conversation and decision-making for the Meeting of General Synod that enables the full participation of Indigenous members and open and honest conversation amongst all participants (related to the work of Pathway #1, #2, and #3).
- D) Support for Sacred Circle to create an in-depth communication strategy across dioceses to increase awareness and understanding of the Covenant and Our Way of Life and the work of Sacred Circle; and to encourage consultation and information-sharing among Bishops. (This is connected to Pathway #4).
- E) An in-depth conversation between the General Synod, Sacred Circle and the Council of the North to determine how the three groups can move forward in a good way. This conversation should also inform and/or be done in partnership with the proposed work identified with Pathway #6.

## **APPENDIX A: Full text from *Creating Pathways***

### **5. WALKING TOGETHER IN PARTNERSHIP: INDIGENOUS CHURCH (SACRED CIRCLE) WITH THE HISTORIC SETTLER CHURCH (GENERAL SYNOD, PROVINCES, DIOCESES AND TERRITORIES)**

#### ***Where we are now***

After years of dialogue, discernment and development, there exists much hope of finding a good way forward between the General Synod and the Self-Determining Indigenous Church (Sacred Circle). There is a high level of commitment amongst Anglicans throughout Canada towards ongoing partnership and relationship in the future.

While there is hope and desire to move forward together, there are feelings of unease around how to effectively do so. There is confusion about the nature of the desired relationship between Sacred Circle and General Synod and the role each plays in the life (and decision-making) of each. Differing governance and decision-making processes are a barrier to effective conversation and collaboration. Furthermore, there is confusion about how the Sacred Circle and the Council of the North function together (or separately) to serve Indigenous Anglicans in Canada in the future.

Amongst Indigenous Anglicans there is distrust towards the Anglican Church of Canada; specifically with Council of General Synod, Senior Representatives of the Office of General Synod; and processes at the Meeting of General Synod. With regards to the Meeting of General Synod a sense of hurt seems evident as well.

Amongst non-Indigenous Anglicans there remains explicit and implicit adherence to historic colonial structures along with a lack of knowledge about the 'Our Way of Life' Covenant. Non-Indigenous Anglicans are hesitant to engage in dialogue and discussion for fear of being considered offensive and/or racist.

#### ***Where we want to be next***

A strong desire and commitment exists around the development of an effective church-to-church partnership between the General Synod and the Indigenous Church (Sacred Circle) that is committed (structurally and financially) to the Truth and Reconciliation efforts of the Anglican Church of Canada. There is deep hope for a new way to be established that will be based on a trusted relationship between the Sacred Circle and the General Synod and will enable the entire Anglican Church in Canada to walk together to proclaim the Gospel and deepen and invite life in Christ.

The development of partnership processes that enable open communication and dialogue between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Anglicans engaged in the work of General Synod and the work of Sacred Circle will assist in continuing the mutual hope to walk together in the future. Methods of decision-making that include a commitment to creating safe space for mutual understanding, education and listening, as well as conflict resolution, will further enable success.

It should be noted that the work of the Organizational Pathway (as described above) should consider the aim of a church-to-church pathway as structures are reviewed and transformed.

### *Steps along the way*

The Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada and the Presiding Elder of Sacred Circle are invited to consider instigating the following tasks with an aim to bring recommendations to the Meeting of General Synod in 2028:

1. The development of a definition, clearly communicated to Anglicans across the country, of what is understood as a church-to-church partnership between the General Synod and Sacred Circle along with a clear articulation of what it means that both are independent and yet connected as the Anglican Church of Canada.
2. The creation of effective governance processes (i.e. canons) to support and clearly articulate the relationship between the Sacred Circle and General Synod.
3. The development of a Working Group, comprising Indigenous and non-Indigenous Anglicans, that will look specifically at ways to walk together in partnership from where we are now to where we want to be. This Working Group could be tasked with the following:
  - a. The creation and/or an adoption of a new model of committee processes and decision-making (some of which will unfold through the work of Pathway #1, #2, and #3).
  - b. The development of a new structure of conversation and decision-making for the Meeting of General Synod that enables the full participation of Indigenous members and open and honest conversation amongst all participants. (This should be done within the tasks outlined in Pathway #3).
  - c. Support for the Sacred Circle to create an in-depth communication strategy across dioceses to increase awareness and understanding of the ‘Our Way of Life’ Covenant and the work of Sacred Circle. (This is connected to the Communications Pathway).
  - d. If deemed necessary, the development of a mediation strategy to discuss past challenges between the members of ACIP, General Synod Senior Staff and Directors to create a good path forward for future work.
4. The development of a sustainable financial and organizational relationship between General Synod and the Sacred Circle.
5. An in-depth conversation between General Synod, Sacred Circle and the Council of the North to determine how the three groups can move forward in a good way. This conversation should also inform and/or be done in partnership with the proposed work identified with Pathway #6.