

COGS Highlights



Council of General Synod

Saturday, February 20, 2021

Members of the Council of General Synod (CoGS) gathered together online at 11 a.m. EST via Zoom conference.

Opening Worship

The Rev. Louise Peters led an opening worship service, which featured a reflection by the Rev. Marnie Peterson.

Opening Remarks

Archbishop Linda Nicholls, primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, welcomed council members to their first meeting of 2021 and the first CoGS meeting for new vice chancellor Canon Clare Burns. Motions to adopt the minutes of the November 2020 meeting and the agenda for the current meeting both carried.

The primate's opening remarks were brief and focused on the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. "We got through Christmas, which was a challenge for many because so many of us were in full lockdown and unable to be with family and friends, and still living with all the uncertainties of COVID," she said. A new year had brought with it a continuing shutdown. "But there is hope on the horizon," Nicholls added, with the vaccine rollout potentially bringing closer the time when people can meet in person again.

Nicholls said that one council member, Dale Drozda, had decided to withdraw from CoGS. The primate put forward a motion extending the thanks of the council to Drozda for her work on CoGS and various committees, which carried.

Judith Moses, chair of the nominating committee, presented two motions to approve nominations and appointments on different committees. The first carried, while the second awaited the results of an election by council members held via SurveyMonkey.

Resolution

Be it resolved that the Council of General Synod approve appointments to the vacancies before CoGS on February 20, 2020:

1. By acclamation for the balance of the current triennium:

Council of General Synod's Nominating Committee

- Canon Ian Alexander (B.C. & Yukon)

Council of General Synod's Resolutions Committee

- Dr. Michael Siebert (Rupert's Land)

Council of General Synod's Handbook Concerns Committee

- Ms. Jody Butler Walker (B.C. & Yukon)

- Mr. Kevin Smith

2. Confirmation of the Clergy Delegate on the Anglican Consultative Council for the balance of the current triennium from Clergy Alternate:

- The Rev. David Burrows

3. Confirmation of the recommendations from the Advisory Council of the Canadian Companions of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem:

- The Rt. Rev. Bruce Myers
- The Rev. Andreas Thiel

Small Groups

With CoGS in the middle of the 2019-2022 triennium, the primate said there was a need to reflect. She presented a colourful drawing by Reconciliation Animator Melanie Delva visualizing CoGS in the middle of a triennial "arc".

Council members broke into small groups to discuss responses to three questions based on the image:

- How is being on CoGS informing/inspiring your discipleship and ministry?
- Does this snapshot convey the reality of our present situation, our past and into our future?
- What does the arc image of our work evoke in you?

Financial Management Committee

Treasurer and CFO Hanna Goschy presented five motions to CoGS from the Financial Management Committee. All were carried.

Resolution

Be it resolved that the Council of General Synod receives the Performance to Budget Operating Results for the year ended December 31, 2019.

Resolution

Be it resolved that the Council of

General Synod approves the audited Consolidated Financial Statements of the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada for the year ended December 31, 2019, including net transfers of \$556,227 from Internally Designated Net Assets to Unrestricted Net Assets.

Resolution

Be it resolved that the Council of General Synod approves the audited financial statements of the Anglican Church of Canada Consolidated Trust Fund for the year ended December 31, 2019.

Resolution

Be it resolved that the Financial Management Committee recommends the following appointments to Audit Committee for the triennium 2019-2022.

Mr. Phil Arthur, Chair—reappointment, and appointment as Chair
Ms. Anne Brace—new member
Mr. Peter Lewis—reappointment
Mr. Paul Rathbone—new member

Council took a 10-minute break.

Situation Update—Original Assigned Work

General Secretary Alan Perry presented council with a list of General Synod 2019 resolutions assigning various tasks. He provided an update on each:

- *A102—Review the Mission of the Anglican Church of Canada (CoGS).* Outstanding item.
- *A103—Strategic Planning (CoGS/SPWG).* The Strategic Planning Working Group (SPWG) has conducted a series of

listening groups and determined a set of common themes, which have been prioritized by CoGS. These themes have been taken to management team for testing and consultation. SPWG continues to sift and prioritize.

- *A128—Safe Church Carter: review policy base (CoGS)*. Outstanding item.
- *A180—Ambassadors for Reconciliation (CoGS)*. Reconciliation pathfinders have established terms of reference.
- *A181—Jubilee Commission*. Working in consultation with the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples (ACIP), the Jubilee Commission has developed a work plan proposal and is about to begin archival research to determining the historical funding trends for Indigenous ministry. The commission is also in the process of establishing a steering group to provide oversight of the work going forward.
- *A204—Human Trafficking (Global Relations/Public Witness for Social and Ecological Justice)*. Public Witness for Social and Ecological Justice (PWSEJ) and Global Relations have collaborated in establishing a Human Trafficking Task Force bringing together people from across the country who are involved in addressing the various aspects of this issue. In collaboration with Faith, Worship and Ministry, they have put in place plans for Freedom Sunday (21 February), assembling resources to learn about the problems of human trafficking and modern slavery in Canada and around the world.
- *C003—Climate Change (PWSEJ/Creation Matters Working Group)*. The Creation Matters Working Group is exploring ways to encourage Anglicans across the country to address climate change. Work is ongoing.
- *C005—Constitutional Review*

(*Governance Working Group*). The Governance Working Group (GWG) has consulted CoGS and the House of Bishops with a series of educative sessions exploring different options for changes to the composition of General Synod, and has drafted new Rules of Order and Procedure. Work is ongoing.

Two outstanding items—reviewing the church’s mission and reviewing the policy base for the Safe Church Charter—must still be assigned, Perry said.

Nicholls said it was good to hear that many of the assigned tasks are underway or about to be accomplished.

Strategic Planning Working Group

Co-chair Judith Moses presented an update on the work of the SPWG. Having completely revamped its methodology because of the pandemic and created listening groups instead, the SPWG had now received feedback from CoGS on the listening groups and which areas they wished the church to prioritize.

The SPWG has entered the second phase of its work, which involves looking at the implications of these potential priorities—both the trends that have led to the current point and how they might fit into the future. The listening groups are currently on hold, though one new listening group has been launched with the national church’s leadership team. More consultations are planned with bodies such as ACIP and the Jubilee Commission.

Moses confirmed that Anglicans will not be getting a strategic plan in 2022 similar to Vision 2019, describing such a goal as “simply not possible.” They will, however, receive something that is an overarching plan for the church.

Governance Working Group

Chancellor David Jones noted that over the past year, CoGS has received five different educative memoranda from the GWG to flesh out what concerns and possible changes might emerge from the constitutional review.

Since the November 2020 meeting of CoGS, the GWG had met and discussed what proposals it might recommend for CoGS to take forward to General Synod in 2022. Its target timeframe is to deliver this document at the May meeting of CoGS, but not for discussion by CoGS, in hopes that the council's November 2021 meeting will be in person. Such a timeframe would allow the proposal memorandum from the GWG to CoGS to be available for all four of the church's provincial synods, which would permit each synod to make comments. If an in-person CoGS meeting is not possible in November 2021, discussion of the proposal memorandum will take place on Zoom.

Indigenous Ministries

National Indigenous Archbishop Mark MacDonald said the pandemic had revealed some important truths. "One is that on a good day, we are stretched very thin," he said. Several senior clergy involved in Indigenous ministry had died of COVID-19, which had created what MacDonald described as a "horrible situation for us."

The major focus of Indigenous Ministries at the moment is preparing the structure of the self-determining Indigenous church—its constitution and canons, which are referred to as "our covenant" and "our way of life," respectively. Due to the pandemic, there will be no in-person Sacred Circle this year, but an online Sacred Circle will take place during the summer. A series of regional sacred circles are also planned to allow discussion of work being done on the covenant and "our way of life." Other initiatives of Indigenous Ministries include its online gospel jams, work on gospel-

based discipleship, lay ministers' training and training for ordination, and support groups for youth suicide prevention.

The Rev. Canon Dr. Murray Still, co-chair of ACIP, reported on an ongoing partnership between ACIP and the Red Cross that had led to joint organizing of suicide prevention workshops, including in Winnipeg. Gospel-based discipleship groups, including both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Anglicans, continue to meet across Canada. ACIP and the Indigenous House of Bishops Leadership Circle meet regularly to discuss the covenant and "our way of life" for the Indigenous church. ACIP has made appointments to anti-racism work, the National Church Council, and the joint planning group for the 2022 Anglican and Lutheran convention. Still described these initiatives as "challenging but exciting work that empowers us and we certainly think will benefit the whole church."

Council members took an hour break for lunch.

The primate announced the results of the election for nominated positions. The motion to approve the results carried.

Resolution

Be That the Council of General Synod approve the following appointments from the election:

Officers of General Synod—Officer-at-Large

- Ms. Jody Butler Walker

Dismantling Racism Task Force

- Ms. Pat Lovell

Anglican Consultative Council—Alternate Clergy Delegate

- The Rev. Marnie Peterson

Situation Update—Newly Assigned Work/Focuses

The primate gave a report on newly assigned work or focuses adopted during the triennium. One was the Dismantling Racism Task Force, which had been formed and approved by CoGS with a view to bringing to General Synod recommendations on ways the church could examine the impact of systemic racism in its midst. The task force has now begun its work.

A development that tends to occur in new periods of the church, Nicholls said, is that new questions arise. One of the questions that came up during lockdown were the implications for Eucharistic practices. Many Anglicans engaged in lengthy discussions on the Eucharist and directed questions to Eileen Scully, director of Faith, Worship and Ministry. In response, Scully collected a large number of theological essays from across the church—clergy, laity, bishops, seminaries, etc.—addressing the Eucharist and other spiritual practices in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

These essays are now available as a resource on the Anglican Church of Canada website. Nicholls thanked Scully for collecting the material, which she said has received “accolades from other parts of the Anglican Communion who were impressed we were able to collate all that material on the website so quickly.” The primate encouraged CoGS to read and share that material, noting that such reflections would likely be part of an ongoing period of discernment.

During the present triennium, the Anglican Church of Canada has also engaged in ecumenical work within the Canadian Council of Churches. The primate, general secretary, and in some cases national Indigenous archbishop had been part of meetings with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Chief Public Health Officer

Theresa Tam, and Minister of Justice and Attorney General David Lametti.

A particular focus is Bill C-15, which recently passed its first reading in the House of Commons. If passed, the bill would require that the Government of Canada take all necessary measures to ensure that Canadian laws are consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and that it produce and implement an action plan to achieve the declaration’s objectives. With the national Indigenous archbishop and reconciliation animator, Nicholls said, “we have consulted with Indigenous leaders and strongly supported passing this legislation as part of our commitment to reconciliation.”

Finally, the primate noted that theological colleges across Canada, including Anglican institutions such as Wycliffe College, had been using Zoom to allow people across Canada to gather for educational webinars. Nicholls encouraged council members to keep their eyes out for such webinars, which she said offered “wonderful opportunities to participate in really good theological conversations” and discussions for “thinking about who we are as church.”

Small Groups (Cont’d)

The council broke into small groups again to discuss three more questions reflecting on the triennium:

- What inspires you about what we’ve accomplished so far at the Council Team?
- What concerns do you have as we move forward?
- What excites you about what we as Council of General Synod will deliver to the body of General Synod in 2022?

Plenary

Council reconvened in plenary. Representatives shared responses to the questions from their small groups, which were put in a bubble chart:

- Governance: still so much to do and understand.
- Discipleship in all we do!
- Concern: Our ability to communicate out all the good things. The excitement about the building of Indigenous ministry.
- Excitement about Dismantling Racism Task Force. Need to continue to listen and learn in all aspects.
- Indigenous ministry and finances ... and how they connect also.
- Hope that the work on Safe Church would get picked up.
- To sustain our remarkable adaptability and build our capacity to be proactive and prophetic and visionary.
- Hope to be creatively prophetic and pastoral as we recommend change to General Synod 2022.

Closing Remarks

The primate marvelled once more how quickly CoGS had been able to adapt to the changes wrought by the pandemic. More frequent, day-long online meetings allowed the council to see where it was. Not only CoGS, but the SPWG, GWG, and other committees are “working extremely hard to try and fulfill the mandate that’s been given,” Nicholls said.

“I hope we recognize, even as we try to fulfill that mandate, that we may not be able to,” she added. “And that’s OK. I don’t think in the middle of a global pandemic we can expect to meet everyone’s expectations in 2022.” The primate reminded council to “be a little gentle with ourselves amid the stresses and strains of this time. I’m just thankful for the creativity that’s in our church and the ability to make change, and this group is demonstrating that.

I’m hoping that’s one thing we’ll celebrate in 2022, and that we can do it in person.”

The next meeting of CoGS is scheduled to take place on March 13, followed by a three-day meeting from May 7-9. Before closing prayers, Judith Moses noted she had forgotten to mention earlier that Clare Burns, as vice chancellor, is an *ex officio* member of the council’s Handbook Concerns Committee.

Closing Prayers

Louise Peters led the closing prayers. Council members prayed for people in Myanmar, India, the Philippines and Texas. They prayed for Indigenous communities disproportionately affected by COVID-19, for those who are homeless during the pandemic, for frontline workers and friends battling health issues. They prayed for their families, children and elders. They offered “thanks and praise for those who continue to offer themselves and their skills in these pandemic days: health-care providers; for those working towards the vaccination rollout; for teachers, for cleaners, grocery store employees.”

CoGS prayed for impoverished communities significantly affected by hard times; for those who are vulnerable; for victims of the opioid crisis and all those who live with addiction. They prayed for temporary foreign workers and for all migrant workers. They prayed for all those who grieve and for those who have lost their lives in the midst of the pandemic. The primate concluded the meeting with a blessing.

Council adjourned at 4 p.m.