

COGS Highlights



Council of General Synod

Wednesday, June 16, 2021

Members of the Council of General Synod (CoGS) gathered together online at 7 p.m. ET via Zoom.

Opening Prayer

The Rev. Louise Peters, chaplain to CoGS, led opening prayers and reflection along with Valerie Kerr.

In-Camera Session

CoGS members spent five minutes in an in-camera discussion.

Strategic Planning Working Group

Judith Moses, chair of the Strategic Planning Working Group (SPWG), said the group wanted to provide an update for council members before the summer. Recapping the strategic planning process thus far, SPWG member Canon (lay) Ian Alexander said it had become clear that the work would result in a "transitional plan" for the Anglican Church of Canada. "It's a compass, not a road map," Alexander said, adding that "these are not just transitional, but also transformative times."

On the Saturday following the current meeting, the SPWG planned to give an update to the synod of the ecclesiastical province of Canada. In the fall, it would do the same for the provincial synod of B.C. and Yukon. "By the time we get to General Synod, we will have been able to engage at minimum each ecclesiastical province in this process," Alexander said. The SPWG also planned to report back to the listening groups who provided the initial feedback guiding that process.

Moses led CoGS through the working group's presentation, *Reimagining the Anglican Church of Canada During a "Triennium of Transition"*. In the course of its work, the SPWG had come up with five "transformational aspirations" to provide a vision that would lead the church into the 2025 triennium.

Each aspirational category included a Bible passage to offer scriptural guidance, what this aspiration might look like in practice, potential outcomes, and capacities and activities the national church could add.

1. We aspire to be a church that invites people into and deepens life in Christ.

Scriptural guidance: Colossians 2:7

What does it look like? "A rich variety of purposeful congregations and communities of faith where people can encounter Jesus, grow in discipleship, and participate in God's mission in the world."

The national church could add capacity to what dioceses and congregations are already seeking to do by catalyzing networks, hubs and working groups to respond to emerging opportunities in areas such as worship, Christian formation, pastoral care, etc. It could encourage the sharing of resources and best practices across the church, communicate to build understanding of diversity of ministry and mission, and draw and share insights from outside the Canadian church.

2. We aspire to be a church that is intentionally post-colonial and passionately inclusive.

Scriptural guidance: Mark 9:35

What does it look like? "Diversity in church membership, leadership, systems and structures so that peace and justice are revealed and that all people of every language, race, and nation may share the banquet God has promised." (Adapted from the *Book of Alternative Services*, Eucharistic Prayer #4)

The church could broaden its commitment to dismantling systemic post-colonialism and racism by taking steps to recognize and dismantle systemic racism in its structures, culture, policies and practices, following an action plan produced by a permanent National Advisory Council.

It could re-examine decision-making processes of CoGS and General Synod, training and education for national church staff and volunteers, provide support materials to dioceses and parishes, share stories of diversity and inclusivity, accept the Jubilee Commission archival research report's findings and adopt a new post-colonial narrative.

3. We aspire to be a church that embraces mutual interdependence with the Indigenous church (Sacred Circle).

Scriptural guidance: Amos 3:3

What does it look like? A self-governing Indigenous church that is a source of strength and renewal for Indigenous Anglicans, and which inspires and enriches the broader church to see God in each other and all of creation. Respectful relationships, generous listening, and the sharing of stories and customs. Full transparency, review and acknowledgement of

the church's historical legacy and a new joint narrative to help us move forward together.

The Indigenous church could live into its Way of Life and Sacred Circle Covenant supported by new Indigenous internal church structures, jurisdictions, practices and relationships with dioceses and the national church.

Incorporating such changes into the broader Anglican Church of Canada would be based on the national church's commitment to dismantle colonial impacts, to deeper knowledge and shared understanding of the values and gifts of Sacred Circle, to gospel-based discipleship and support for the Jubilee Commission's recommendations.

4. We aspire to be a church that stewards God's creation and attends to the well-being of humankind.

Scriptural guidance: Isaiah 61:11

What does it look like? A respected voice and action-oriented advocate for social, economic and environmental justice in Canada, internationally, within the church, and with ecumenical and interfaith partners. Our theology of abundance leads to a spirit of generosity inspired by tangible progress in building the Indigenous church, serving those in need, addressing inequities, and building social and theological justice. Humble in recognition that we are but part of God's creation with the honour, bestowed by God, of its care.

The national church could catalyze networks, hubs and working groups; nurture the sharing of insights and best practices, communicate to share our knowledge and understanding, and use the voice of the primate to focus attention on key issues.

5. We aspire to be a church that lives in

relationship with each other in local, diocesan, national and global communities.

Scriptural guidance: Romans 12:5.

What does it look like? A connected Anglican family through courageous conversations and robust networking. Appreciation of our interdependence across the church through different roles, responsibilities and talents. Innovation in how we work and communicate together to engage communities and accomplish shared goals. Capacity-building through sharing tools and information. Ongoing, collective liturgical innovation based on common worship traditions and contemporary lived experiences. An Anglican Church of Canada strengthened by national and international partnerships ecumenically and across the Anglican Communion.

The national church could nurture connections and networks, sustain a robust communications function, increase awareness of its role in international and ecumenical activities, and continue providing leadership as a centre of excellence in faith, worship and ministry.

Congregational development consultant Janet Marshall introduced questions for working groups to discuss. These included:

- How do the transformational aspirations inspire hope?
- How does this add value where you are?

Each working group focused on a different aspirational category and spent 20 minutes in discussion, providing initial feedback through the Mentimeter app. Each group then repeated the process for a different aspirational category.

Marshall thanked the council for their first impressions of the aspirational categories and said their feedback would be collected and

collated. Moses said that council members would see results sometime during the summer.

Closing Prayer

Louise Peters led a closing prayer. Archbishop Linda Nicholls, primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, thanked the SPWG for their update and said she felt encouraged by the possibilities opening up for the church in a number of critical areas.

Council adjourned at 8:30 p.m.