

COGS Highlights



Council of General Synod

Sunday, June 25, 2017

Council members gathered after breakfast at 8:45 a.m. at the Queen of Apostles Renewal Centre in Mississauga.

Orders of the Day

Karen Egan began the Sunday session of the Council of General Synod (CoGS) by reading through the Orders of the Day.

Election Results/Election

Egan presented results from the elections for positions at the 2019 Anglican Consultative Council. Bishop Riscylla Shaw was elected as bishop alternate, Ann Bourke as lay delegate, and Melanie Delva as lay alternate.

The vote for clergy alternate, however, ended in a tie. As a result, council members held a new election for the position. Nominees for clergy alternate were David Burrows and Lynne McNaughton.

Rules of the Supreme Court of Appeal for the Anglican Church of Canada

Chancellor David Jones next put forward a resolution on rules for the Supreme Court of Appeal for the Anglican Church of Canada, clarifying the rules of how information sharing happens should the court be called to meet. The rules were clarified and written in contemporary language. The Supreme Court of Appeal does not meet very often, having last met in 1989 to discuss the Book of Alternative Services. Canon XX provides that there may be rules for the Supreme Court of the church and that when no members of the Supreme Court have been appointed, CoGS may make rules with respect to the duties of the court. The Chancellor explained to members that this was one of the housekeeping items passed on to him by the former Chancellor in 2010.

Members voted by consensus to adopt the new rules.

Giving with Grace and the Anglican Healing Fund

General Secretary Michael Thompson introduced Esther Wesley, Coordinator of the Anglican Fund for Healing and Reconciliation, for a presentation on Giving With Grace and the Anglican Healing Fund. Wesley, he said, had taught him much about the nature of racism—that racism from a “white” perspective is experienced as a matter of *intention*, but that in Indigenous and racialized communities it is experienced in terms of its *effect*. He thanked his “courageous and delightful colleague” for her work with the Healing Fund.

[Giving With Grace](#) and the Anglican Healing Fund have seen an increase in programs focused on supporting community-based language revitalization projects. Wesley spoke about the 60-65 different Indigenous languages across Canada, noting that there were 10 distinct language families. Each of these language families, in turn, has many dialects. She described the importance of language as a foundation of cultural and personal identity, presenting direct quotes from language learners who lamented that language transmission did not occur because their parents or grandparents went to residential school, and that learning a language is about more than the language itself, but interweaves culture, ancestry, geography, history, and identity.

The [Anglican Healing Fund](#) has provided funds for 705 projects from 1992 to 2017 totalling more than \$8 million. Wesley provided examples of different projects supported by the Healing Fund. One was Revitalizing Indigenous Living Languages: A Gift to Future Generations, a mentor-apprentice language immersion program supported by Aboriginal

Neighbours in British Columbia. There are currently 12 master-apprentice teams in different parts of the province, with elders serving as “mentors” to apprentices by spending time together while speaking their traditional language.

Another B.C.-based program is Healing Hearts from Homelessness to Helpfulness, which seeks to help the most vulnerable Indigenous people who are living on the streets and often face drug addictions. Many of these issues represent the intergenerational impact of residential schools. The project makes available healing tools for people on street to help them cope, living with the violence of streets.

As of June 22—the day after this year’s [#22Days project](#) culminated on the National Aboriginal Day of Prayer—funds directly designated to the Anglican Healing Fund stood at \$26,183, while designated funds for Giving With Grace were \$248,603, representing a total of \$274,786 in fundraising. “Anglicans are doing very well in this work—amazing work,” Wesley said. She also highlighted ongoing work in anti-racism initiatives, pointing to the progress that had been made since the turn of the millennium in being able to talk more openly about racism.

Reflections on Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples Presentation in Preparation for Consultation

General Secretary Michael Thompson invited council members to reflect on the presentation they had heard the previous day from the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples (ACIP). Table groups broke into discussion about the likes, concerns and hopes that had emerged for them out of the presentations yesterday, but also out of material circulated in the docket before the meeting. Members then wrote out the responses as described by table group representatives.

Likes included:

- Progress begins with relationships
- Regarding the Confederacy model, members liked having ACIP at the centre and its ability to represent nations and communities across the country

- Carefully moving forward
- Things are doable
- Created with an eye to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action
- Intentionality of suicide prevention programs
- Insights: Letter from David Jones to Bishop Mark MacDonald: action and form
- Focus: moving vagueness to clarity
- Steps to preserve and recover languages
- Room to work on governance structures

Concerns were:

- Will Indigenous peoples remain within the Anglican Church of Canada or will they go outside?
- Have received several vision plans—how do we turn plan into reality?
- Are the finances presented sustainable?
- Don’t want undue delay
- Not being paralyzed by enormity of the task or finances required
- Need bravery and courage, and that we should not be fearful
- Complexity of the structures proposed
- Finance/structure: Where do we find them, how do we put them into reality—it would take a lot of work, structure, and people to make them successful
- New legal structure brings its own issues
- Budget costs projected to be high, significantly higher than other General Synod costs. Who’s going to cover cost?
- Healing mostly on West Coast—how to give attention to other places with voices not as strong

Finally, members expressed hopes:

- More clear definition and implementation plan
- That Indigenous Anglicans remain within the Anglican Church of Canada
- No undo delay—successful process
- Approach finances without fear
- Approach through a lens of reconciliation
- Reconciliation not be limited by resources
- That it is not a project that “comes to an

end” once the first phase is complete

- Languages do not die (Indigenous languages)
- That it comes to fruition sooner rather than later
- That it truly benefits communities
- That people trained in ministry may help, particularly regarding the suicide crisis
- Fill in the gaps—filling in all the places that need attention, taking it in phases and that it will be energizing for the church
- That we will journey together
- That God will lead us to the promised land where peace and justice reign

The General Secretary thanked members for their contributions.

Members broke for coffee from 10:30 a.m. until 11 a.m.

Eucharist

Council gathered together in the M. Smith Room after the break to celebrate the closing Eucharist, with Archbishop and Primate Fred Hiltz presiding. During the service, the Primate officially commissioned Melanie Delva as reconciliation animator for the Anglican Church of Canada.

Prior to dismissal, council members paid tribute to Archbishop Hiltz as he marked his 10-year anniversary as Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, having been elected to the position in June 2007. CoGS chaplain, Dean Peter Elliott, said a prayer for the Primate, and Prolocutor Cynthia Haines-Turner presented Archbishop Hiltz with a certificate commemorating the anniversary. She recalled her feeling a decade earlier of “rejoicing” that God had given the church a good servant, and indicated that the last 10 years had confirmed that initial feeling.

The Primate expressed his gratitude to God, noting that every day, he is lifted up in prayer by bishops, clergy, and church members across the country. He said it was a privilege to serve the church in all its diversity, and voiced his appreciation for his wife Lynne for her support through the years.

Members broke for lunch from noon until 1 p.m.

Partner Moments

Prolocutor Haines-Turner resumed the session after lunch with an introduction of representatives of church partners. She recounted reporting to the National Church Council (NCC) of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) the cares and concerns that are weighing on the Anglican Church of Canada, as well as the celebrations that we have—knowing that the ELCIC uphold us in prayer as full communion partners, having received plenty of messages offering prayers and support from NCC members during General Synod. By the same token, Haines-Turner aimed to report back to our church what had taken place at the NCC so Anglicans too can uphold Lutherans in prayer and concern.

Pat Lovell, partner to CoGS from the ELCIC, said that Haines-Turner was very much a part of the NCC group, noting, “We view her as one of us.” In July, the ELCIC will hold its next national convention in Winnipeg. The 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation will be a major focus of the convention, which has the theme “Liberated by God’s Grace”. Lovell highlighted one of the sub-themes, “Human Beings—Not for Sale” and its similarity to discussions at CoGS on fighting human trafficking. Offering an update on targets for the ELCIC Reformation Challenge, she noted that Canadian Lutherans had thus far sponsored 536 refugees, beating their target of 500. Continuing the challenge, they remain focused on providing 500 scholarships for students in schools of the Evangelical Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, contributing \$500,000 for the Lutheran World Federation Endowment Fund, and planting 500,000 trees.

Lovell hearkened back to themes discussed the previous day of “freedom from fear” and “freedom from want”. The Anglican theme of the last General Synod and the 2016-2019 triennium, “You Are My Witnesses”, spoke to the theme of freedom from want and fear, in light of continuing terrorism around the world and the previous night’s presentation on human trafficking. The video on human trafficking and the personal account of a CoGS member, Lovell said, were the most moving examples of what it means to stand up against

modern slavery and how churches must work together to defeat trafficking.

Canon Noreen Duncan, representative of The Episcopal Church to CoGS, offered a perspective from her work in the national executive and from her Diocese of New Jersey. She admitted to still reeling after the human trafficking presentation and that it too “hurt her heart”. She expressed her gratitude for the video on human trafficking and list of resources, which she planned to adopt into her own ministry on world mission and international justice issues. As a representative for her church at CoGS, Canon Duncan said she was grateful to be part of the Canadian part of what Presiding Bishop Michael Curry of The Episcopal Church calls “the Jesus movement”, and to see different ways of doing Anglicanism and Christianity.

The Anglican Church of Canada, she said, is embracing appreciation of Indigenous people both in CoGS and elsewhere, while the Episcopal Church has comparatively little Indigenous presence. Duncan thanked Bishop Mark MacDonald, Indigenous Ministries Coordinator Ginny Doctor, and all of CoGS for showing her the path to reconciliation. She also noted that while Canada is a new nation of immigrants and settlers, she did not see that same diversity in the leadership and governance of the Canadian church, asking where the Asian, African, Latin, and Caribbean members were in the church’s leading bodies, particularly after having seen such diversity at General Synod 2016 in Richmond Hill, ON.. However, Canon Duncan stressed that her critique was meant as a relative and not meant to be hurtful. More than a political imperative, she said, reconciliation is a spiritual practice.

David Burrows, a parish priest currently serving in the Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador, then provided his reflections on spending three weeks in Puerto Rico with the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society—staff members of The Episcopal Church who serve the church worldwide and seek partnerships for mission.

General Secretary’s Report

In his own report, General Secretary Michael Thompson noted that where his written report is customarily provided to CoGS before meetings and speaks more about the general state of the church, his spoken report taking place near the end of CoGS has tended towards an evaluation of the latest meeting and its implications for the church.

Directing members to his written report, Thompson said those reading it would find “an enormous regard for the work and imagination and creativity and collaboration of the Church House team” and specific examples of how that work is carried out. He laid praise on those staff members at Church House as a truly “gifted group of people”, led by an extraordinary leader in the Primate.

As he reflected on the latest CoGS meeting, the General Secretary said that the account from one CoGS member the previous day of her encounter with human trafficking offered a sobering moment that reminded council of the immediate impact and the human face of great harm and great suffering.

Thompson drew parallels to the story of Emmett Till, the 14-year-old black youth who was viciously beaten, murdered, and mutilated during the segregation era in the Southern United States, and whose mother insisted on an open casket at his funeral to dramatize the injustice of racism and Jim Crow. Our church, Thompson said, has similar stories it must grapple with—of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, of human trafficking, the legacy of the residential schools, and the ongoing legacy of racism. He thanked Canon Duncan for pointing out that racism in Canada had not only been directed against Indigenous people, but also at wave after wave of immigrants.

Our church sign, Thompson said, signifies that we are not afraid to look at harm and violence, not afraid to speak about it, to own the parts of it that belong to us, and to seek healing and forgiveness for places where we as a church have broken God’s heart—but also to bear witness to wider Canadian reality.

Drawing on the metaphor of a broken heart, he said that when a heart breaks open, it creates a space where other broken hearts may be safe. The General Secretary acknowledged that the Indigenous people of our church and Canada had somehow allowed their hearts to be broken in a way that has not sent shards flying out to harm others. For that gift, which he found “astonishing”, the General Secretary believed that we could offer thanks on our church sign and treasure that hospitality.

He referred to a novel he was reading at the moment, *The Gospel According to Jesus Christ* by Portuguese writer José Saramago, which features a scene in which Jesus leaves home at the age of 13. As part of his coming into adulthood, the young Jesus visits Bethlehem and the tomb of 25 children who 13 years prior had been executed by King Herod’s troops. The General Secretary said the scene provided a “powerful image”, not just around the graves of children, but one that spoke to their experience and the relationship of our church to Indigenous children and all children—to those who will not have enough food today, for those who are victims of war, for those warehoused in refugee camps, for those who cannot even make it to refugee camps. To remember the importance of children in the life of the church and world, Thompson said, is another way of letting our hearts be broken.

On a related note, the General Secretary acknowledged an initiative that Bishop Mark MacDonald is participating in that focuses on repealing the section of the Criminal Code of Canada that allows corporal punishment of children by parents and teachers. A group at Queen’s University is currently working on a theological statement that would help the church ground its opposition to violence against children.

The General Secretary concluded his report by thanking the members of CoGS for their witness.

Faith, Worship, and Ministry Resolution

Prolocutor Haines-Turner put forward a resolution from Faith, Worship, and Ministry that prompted some discussion among the council members.

After amending the resolution, members passed the motion by consensus.

Resolution

Be it resolved that the Council of General Synod (CoGS) approve for trial use the prayers of Thanksgiving over the Water presented in Appendix #1 of the Faith, Worship, and Ministry (FWM) Report to CoGS, June 2017, and request the texts be posted with the other liturgical texts for trial use on the website of the Anglican Church of Canada.

Report on Decision-Making

The Prolocutor suggested to council that members refer the question of decision-making to the Governance Working Group, in order to get some initial thoughts and ideas that the group could present to council. At that point, when presented with material to start a conversation, CoGS might be able to form a group to assess the viability of consensus decision-making or other forms of procedure.

Council members approved her suggested course of action with no objections.

Final Report on Elections

The Rev. Clara Plamondon presented the final results of the elections, reporting that David Burrows had been elected clergy alternate for the 2019 Anglican Consultative Council.

Full election results were as follows:

- General Synod Planning: Siobhan Bennett
- Anglican Consultative Council
 - Bishop Alternate: Bishop Riscylla Shaw
 - Clergy Alternate: David Burrows
 - Lay Delegate: Ann Bourke
 - Lay Alternate: Melanie Delva

Plamondon put forward a motion to destroy the ballots, which council passed unanimously.

Key Messages/Word to the Church

As is customary, CoGS members ended the meeting by brainstorming key messages that they wished to present to the church coming out of the council. Suggestions were written down on a large sheet of paper.

Key messages put forward by members included:

- CoGS is encouraging the church to move forward with the nature and extent of Indigenous ministry, including questions of self determination
- How profound the need for work against human trafficking. Wake-up call for the wider church
- Need to encourage Indigenous languages and support language recovery and preservation
- Inspired by the presentation around PWRDF and water projects. Call to the wider church and our nation to “get our act together”
- Expression of thanksgiving for Bishop Mark MacDonald and the Primate’s ministries and work
- How easy it is for the average person to plug into the work of the Anglican Foundation and the Primate’s World Relief and Development Fund. We are all members.
- As we gather, we are steeped in prayer, worship, and Bible study
- We are pursuing a model of consensus building, using silence, reflection and dialogue
 - We hope that other communities will use these models and that God’s spirit is guiding us to our conclusions
- Responsible investment Task Force is alive and well. Give an update on the work that they are doing
- Thankful for new ministry of the reconciliation animator
- Impressed with thoughtful work around a national communications strategy
- How much CoGS appreciates the pastoral support of the Planning and Agenda team and our chaplain
- We are so lucky to have clean water, and

we need to thank God

- We need to pray about people who need clean water
- We complain about so much...when we should be so thankful

As members prepared to leave, Peter Wall offered some final announcements regarding departure and what lay ahead before the next meeting of CoGS in November 2017.

The Primate closed out the meeting by recalling his predecessor Archbishop Michael Peers, who had led the church in significant directions in the spirit of gospel and the reign of God. He also described his “enormous respect” for Peers’s own predecessor as Primate, Archbishop Ted Scott, whose Primacy was marked by a focus on mission. Archbishop Hiltz concluded with a prayer written by Ted Scott in 1978 during a nation-wide mission focused initiative, remembering him with affection and respect.

Council members stood and said grace before departing for the journey home.

Members adjourned the meeting at 3 p.m.