

COGS Highlights



Council of General Synod

Sunday, June 3, 2018

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

Orders of the Day

The Rev. Dr. Karen Egan, co-chair of the Planning and Agenda Team, read out the Orders of the Day.

General Synod Planning Committee

The Very Rev. Peter Wall, chair of the General Synod Planning Committee (GSPC), presented a report to the Council of General Synod (CoGS) on the work of the committee in preparation for General Synod 2019 in Vancouver. He began with a video showcasing the proposed theme for the gathering, "I Have Called You By Name". The theme refers to a passage from the Book of Isaiah:

But now thus says the Lord,
 he who created you, O Jacob,
 he who formed you, O Israel:
 Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;
 I have called you by name, you are mine.
 When you pass through the waters,
 I will be with you;
 and through the rivers,
 they shall not overwhelm you;
 when you walk through fire
 you shall not be burned,
 and the flame shall not consume you.
 (Isaiah 43:1-2)

The video presented logo ideas for the theme, as well as examples of the logo on various items such as pens and T-shirts.

Describing it as an "enormous privilege" to have been involved in the planning of eight General Synods, Dean Wall noted that while each General Synod is identical in the sense of bringing together Anglicans and partners to do work as one body, each General Synod is distinct in terms of having

its own themes and tasks to perform.

Moving into the particulars of General Synod 2019, he expressed the recommendation of the GSPC that electronic voting be used in Vancouver only at elections—those of the Prolocutor, Deputy Prolocutor, and Primate. He described the hotel that will host General Synod, the Sheraton Vancouver Wall Centre, as a good site that will cover all the needs of members in attendance. The Sheraton Vancouver is only three blocks away from Christ Church Cathedral, where the bulk of worship will take place. Parish visits are also planned throughout the lower mainland on Sunday, July 14.

The GSPC been able to confirm the attendance of Dr. Martin Brokenleg, who will work with Archbishop Melissa Skelton to prepare members of General Synod for their tasks at the meeting. Both have experience in how groups make decisions and people work together, and will spend some intentional time offering orientation to members to do their work in ways that are healthy and life-giving, so that the church can come out of General Synod as an intact body of love and discipleship.

Table groups took six minutes to answer a pair of questions posed by Dean Wall:

1. What would you say to the GSPC is your hope for the tone of these discussions, and suggestions as to how that tone might be achieved?
2. Two major items on the agenda are continuing the journey to a self-determining Indigenous church, and our church's response to human trafficking. As a table, offer two ways that GS might engage in these important discussions.

Notes from each table were sent into Wall, to be passed on to the rest of the GSPC.

Continuing his report, Wall said that the GSPC had received a draft communications plan at its last meeting. Having tried tablets and an app for the first time at General Synod 2016 to ensure the convening circular was in the hands of all members, the GSPC had decided to do the same thing at General Synod 2019—albeit without tablets, having concluded that distribution of tablets to members was not necessary. The forthcoming General Synod will have a well-developed app, and those in attendance will be asked to bring their own electronic devices, though additional laptops and smartphones will be available for those without devices to bring. The General Synod 2019 app is currently in development and will likely not be ready until early next year.

Finally, sponsorship and displays at the upcoming General Synod were “well in hand”. The presence of sponsors is an important part of the budget, and dioceses and individuals can be sponsors. Those in charge of displays are interested in expanding beyond purely church-related displays and trying to broaden the net, such as by reaching out to artisans and craftspeople from the city and surrounding region.

Wall concluded by putting forward a motion to the council formally proposing the theme for General Synod 2019, which was carried by consensus.

Resolution

Be it resolved that the Council of General Synod, meeting in Mississauga in June 2018, approve the theme “I Have Called You By Name” for the 42nd General Synod, taking place in the Diocese of New Westminster from July 10-16, 2019.

Partner Moments

Mrs. Pat Lovell, partner to CoGS from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC), and Prolocutor Cynthia Haines-Turner, partner to the ELCIC through CoGS, took to the podium to provide an update on the relationship between

the Anglican Church of Canada and its full communion partner.

Haines-Turner called it “a joy and a privilege” to serve with the ELCIC and to have Lovell with the council. Both recently attended a meeting of the Joint Anglican-Lutheran Commission, which provided context for the cooperation and shared ministry that takes place across Canada between Anglicans and Lutherans. Lovell noted that the ELCIC National Church Council had met in Winnipeg earlier in the year, working on its strategic plan from 2017 to 2022. Their four priorities going forward are Courageous Innovation, Reconciled Relationships, One Body Working Together—particularly significant for the history of the ELCIC due to a split over issues of human sexuality—and Empowered Disciples. The Prolocutor praised the ELCIC’s revision of its inclusive language guidelines at the meeting, which were brought before the Anglican representation for approval.

Though General Synod 2019 was originally planned to be a Joint Assembly with the ELCIC, Haines-Turner pointed out that the two churches will still be meeting during the same time. The next ELCIC National Convention will take place in Saskatoon from July 11-13, 2018, coinciding with General Synod, and based around the theme “To Journey Together in the Ministry of Reconciliation”. Lovell detailed numerous upcoming examples of national gatherings bringing Anglicans and Lutherans together, such as the National Worship Conference in Victoria, B.C. and the Canadian Lutheran Anglican Youth (CLAY) gathering in Thunder Bay, Ont.

Throughout the presentation, the close bonds between the two churches were underscored by Lovell and Haines-Turner referring to each other as “sisters”. Describing a recent visit by National Indigenous Anglican Bishop Mark MacDonald to her parish in Newmarket, Ont. to speak about the journey toward reconciliation—a subject of particular interest to the ELCIC global justice team—Lovell recalled how people came from all over Newmarket and as far as Oshawa and Kitchener to participate in the workshop. She called the visit another example of how the full

communion partnership between the Anglican and Lutheran churches continues to grow and flourish.

“We love our relationship, we are sisters, but we feel very much a part of your meetings as well,” Lovell said. Reflecting words from ELCIC National Bishop Susan Johnson, she added, “We continue to walk with you as you go through any decisions you have to make. And whatever the outcome, we pray for you, we love you, and we will continue to work with you.”

The second partner moment came from Canon Noreen Duncan, representative of The Episcopal Church (TEC) to CoGS, and the Rev. Canon David Burrows, partner to TEC through CoGS, who reported on the latest developments in the relationship between the Anglican Church of Canada and The Episcopal Church of the United States.

Canon Duncan related her visit to Havana, Cuba in March 2018 as the only TEC representative attending the 109th Synod of the Episcopal Church of Cuba. Feeling alone, she was enthralled when Bishop Griselda Delgado del Carpio and her clergy came in singing with joy—and experienced a further burst of happiness when she saw Primate Fred Hiltz, General Secretary Michael Thompson, Global Relations Director Andrea Mann, and Treasurer and CFO Hanna Goschy. In her time representing TEC on CoGS, Duncan said, she had grown to love the Canadians she had met. She thanked the Anglican Church of Canada for its unwavering support for their brothers and sisters in Cuba over the years, praising “your ongoing struggling to hear your own heartbeat in the pulse of others ... I think that relationship with Cuba is an illustration of that.”

Acknowledging that such struggling has not always been the case in the history of the church, Canon Duncan applauded the efforts of the Canadian church to atone for its sins in the centuries after first contact with Indigenous Peoples, and to recognize the Doctrine of Discovery as the source of so much suffering. As the Anglican Church of Canada treads new paths and walks its own “road to warm springs”, walking

shoulder to shoulder with Indigenous people towards self-determination, walking with LGBTQ people who lovingly share their lives with partners, fighting human traffickers, ensuring churches are safe and socially responsible environments, Duncan said that Canadian Anglicans should know TEC is with them, walking shoulder to shoulder. Though uncertain whether she would be able to attend the next meeting of CoGS due to an upcoming election for the representative position for TEC, she planned to work on being re-elected.

Since the last meeting of CoGS, Canon Burrows said, he had met with the executive council of TEC twice, once in Baltimore, Md. and once in Austin, Texas. Coming from Newfoundland and Labrador, Burrows arrived in the “spirit of a nomad” to the meeting, travelling thousands of kilometres to further the building of community and continuing the work of Jesus Christ. Arriving at the ancestral lands of three nomadic peoples, he was mindful in remembering the Indigenous people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

In the life and ministry the U.S. Episcopalians have shared with him, Burrows said that TEC has “act, means, and purpose”, revealing the redemptive love of their community of faith that breathes the Holy Spirit in its daily expression. He highlighted the diversity of dialogue among TEC members, and their ability to hold conversations with respect for one another despite differences. “No one walks away from the vote,” he observed. TEC lays great emphasis on mission and the sharing of the gospel, with Presiding Bishop Michael Curry travelling to places such as Honduras in his recent ministry. Burrows highlighted the focus of TEC on care and responsibility for the entire body of Christ, particularly those who are vulnerable and those who are in positions of responsibility.

Declaring that “We are nomads no longer, now we are God’s people,” Canon Burrows concluded by singing a well-known folk song that he had sang with members of TEC, “The Water is Wide”, illustrating the view that “We are in this boat together. We row together, and we row with God.”

General Secretary’s Report

In his report, General Secretary Michael Thompson

said that it continues to be a privilege to undertake his ministry as part of the life of the church. “My work is about the work of others,” Thompson said, and he expressed his appreciation for the gifts and skills of the staff members at General Synod.

The General Secretary praised Global Relations director Andrea Mann for maintaining close relationships with the church’s partners around the world; Faith, Worship, and Ministry director Eileen Scully, who has managed the successful transition of FWM from an unwieldy large committee taking on all kinds of tasks to a smaller coordinating committee seeking to network; Public Witness for Social and Ecological Justice lead animator Ryan Weston, for his role in the church’s response to the scourge of human trafficking; Resources for Mission director Deborah Barretto, a recent addition to the staff who believes RfM can find new resources for the church to do new things; Communications and Information Resources director Meghan Kilty, “who has the almost unmanageable responsibility of holding together a team of really strong-willed people whose strong-willedness is actually their great gift”; and Treasurer and CFO Hanna Goschy, whom Thompson said “has transformed the ministry of finance at General Synod and given it such a human face.”

The General Secretary became emotional as he highlighted the role of Archbishop and Primate Fred Hiltz—“the best supervisor I have ever had, and who loves this church in a way and at a depth that inspires us,” whose skill and determination have helped the Anglican Church of Canada maintain its unity over a difficult journey in its life. Though CoGS members had not met the new manager of Human Resources, Scott Hilborn, Thompson said they would at the next meeting, and that they would discover someone who sees human resources as a way to strengthen the ministry of Church House and ensure it is effective and humane.

Moving on from General Synod, Thompson thanked the people who had appeared in front of the council over the previous days. Members had heard from Canon Ian Alexander, a journalist and member of the *Anglican Journal* and

Communications and Information Resources Committee working group who brought with him “astonishing gifts and clarity”; Dean Shane Parker, who had helped members imagine what it would be like for the whole church to listen to its heartbeat; and Bishop Riscylla Shaw, whose clarity and sense of conviction about Indigenous justice and the Doctrine of Discovery offer concrete steps the church might take to move to a new place in the relationships between its Indigenous and non-Indigenous members. Bishop Shaw is part of a team of Indigenous leaders that includes Bishop Sidney Black, the Rev. Vincent Solomon, Ginny Doctor, Bishop Mark MacDonald, and—though unable to attend the present meeting—Canon Grace Delaney and Ms. Caroline Chum. “We have an extraordinary gift in our church in these Indigenous leaders, who speak of great wrongs, but also of great hopes,” Thompson said.

CoGS, he continued, had benefitted from the leadership of the Rev. Dr. Karen Egan and the Very Rev. Peter Wall, co-chairs of the Planning and Agenda Team. It had heard Mr. Will Postma, executive director of the Primate’s Relief and Development Fund (PWRDF), and the Rev. Gillian Hoyer, PWRDF board member, speak about work that changes people’s lives. It had heard Archbishop Colin Johnson and Mr. Rob Saffrey, chair of the Financial Management Committee, help members understand the financial life of the church. It had heard from its partners in the ELCIC and TEC. It had heard the members of the CoGS Working Group on the Marriage Canon, who helped the council understand the process of addressing the marriage canon ahead of the vote at General Synod 2019. Sharing his appreciation at the aforementioned team of people, Thompson described it the gift of individuals who weaved themselves together and became the gifts of the community.

The General Secretary then recounted a story about attending a concert featuring renowned cellist Yo-Yo Ma. As one piece of music came to an end, there was a moment when Ma’s bow was poised above his cello, with one more note to come. The entire hall was leaning into anticipation of this note, experiencing the reality that much of the beauty of music lies in the gap between the

notes, and the anticipation and pleasure when that note is struck. Just then, one audience member's cellphone went off. The air went out of the room, replaced by a sense of disturbance and even hostility. Yo-Yo Ma played the last note—and then picked out the ring tone on his cello. The room filled with joy, Thompson said, because “the cello defeated the cellphone, and did so by joining into a flaw, to something that had gone wrong, and lifting it into a thing of beauty and responsiveness.”

He drew a comparison between this story and the church. “We aren't always a community that always gets it right, or that we don't hurt each other,” Thompson said. There is always a proverbial “person with a cellphone” causing embarrassment, but there is also always someone waiting to pluck the ringtone on their cello and restore us to joy. “I'm grateful that in this community, we have the kind of space in which ways we can disappoint each other are outweighed by ways we love and support one another.”

Thompson prayed that the church would be attentive to that gift going into General Synod 2019 and as members go back into their communities, allowing the broken moments of their lives to be redeemed and turned into relationships and new life. Reiterating his remarks the previous day about the centrality of self-determination and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples in the life of the Anglican Church of Canada, Thompson believed that if there is something the church will be known for in 50 years, it will not be its attitude towards same-sex marriage, but rather the way it had addressed a deep wound across the church and across the country and moved towards healing.

The General Secretary concluded by describing Savona, B.C., a small town with an official population of 650, founded in 1844 as a stagecoach post and place where the ferry crossed the river. Savona, he said, is the smallest community in the history of the Anglican Church of Canada to have provided two members to the governing body of the church: Ms. Dale Drozda and Ms. Melissa Green, who were each present at the current meeting. “I think it says a lot about our

church that a little community that many of you will be hearing about for the first time provides the leadership of two strong, wise young women. [...] Our church finds the inner bigness in small things.”

The Primate thanked Thompson for his insight, wisdom, and service and said that Anglicans were blessed to have him in the role of General Secretary, especially at this time in the life of the church.

Key Messages / Word to the Church

Concluding the morning session, council members brainstormed key messages for the church coming of the latest CoGS meeting. These key messages included:

- We have a Jubilee Commission!
- We are concerned with those being enslaved and trafficked.
- The Heartbeat of the Church
- Courage and forbearance in walking together with Indigenous peoples.
- August 6-11: Sacred Circle will take place with a new council to be elected, and based around the theme “Making Disciples, Being Disciples”.
- New theme for General Synod 2019: “I Have Called You By Name”.
- Concerned about and monitoring future of *Anglican Journal*—Anglicans want a communications tool.
- Marriage canon is out for consultation to provinces and dioceses.
- Sidney Black and Noreen Duncan
- Keep working on Safe Church.
- Previous concern re: finances → Happy with changes and figures
- Working hard to be faithful to the Mission of God
- Respectful listening → Gentle hopefulness
- Resources re: responsible investing

Members took a break from 10:30 a.m. to 11 a.m.

Closing Eucharist

The Rev. Dr. Karen Egan presided at the closing Eucharist, with Archbishop and Primate Fred Hiltz preaching.

Members broke for lunch from noon until 1:15 p.m.

Dismantling Racism: Blanket Exercise

As the final segment of the meeting, reconciliation animator Melanie Delva and Healing Fund coordinator Esther Wesley facilitated members as they took part in the KAIROS Blanket Exercise. In light of the passing of a resolution establishing the Jubilee Commission, the facilitators offered background on the biblical origins of Jubilee in Leviticus 25, which reflected the blanket exercise's focus on land and the displacement of peoples. As detailed in Leviticus, the jubilee referred to a period of emancipation every 50 years, provided for by Hebrew law, which was marked by the freeing of slaves, restoration of lands to their former owners, and—rather than cultivating the fields—eating the produce from the land.

An interactive learning experience to teach the history of Indigenous Peoples in Canada through colonization and the resulting loss of land, the KAIROS Blanket Exercise involves participants standing on a large number of blankets which are gradually removed, allowing them less and less space to stand on. Throughout the exercise, participants read texts that take them through the experience of pre-contact, the making and breaking of treaties by European settlers, colonization, development of reserves, the residential school system, and ongoing Indigenous resistance.

Following the blanket exercise, council members gathered again in a circle and opened up for discussion. Many related personal life experiences sparked by their participation in the blanket exercise. Some non-Indigenous members expressed feelings of shame at their descent from settlers who had gained from the historical subjugation of Indigenous Peoples. Meanwhile, some Indigenous council members recalled the pain that they felt due to racism and the intergenerational trauma rooted in colonial policies such as the residential school system.

The discussion touched on social ills that disproportionately affect Indigenous communities, such as poverty and disproportionately high levels of incarceration. There was a sense of loss for what

might have been, had Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples walked together in a good way from the beginning. Throughout, a common sentiment was the desperate need for healing.

Closing the discussion, Archbishop Hiltz expressed thanks to Wesley and Delva for facilitating the blanket exercise and for their work in advancing healing and reconciliation, noting they had developed into a strong team. In recognition that the present CoGS meeting may be the last for Bishop Sidney Black, representing the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples, the Primate asked Bishop Black to bless the council before its members' departure.

Adjournment

The meeting concluded with Peter Wall leading the council in singing and humming the hymn "Ubi caratas". As members continued to hum the melody, the Primate recited once more the verses of John 15:12-17 that underpin the Heartbeat of the Church initiative: "This is my command, that you love one another as I have loved you..."

Bishop Black blessed the members of council, sending them on their way as they began the journey home.

The meeting adjourned at 3 p.m.