

COGS Highlights



Council of General Synod

Thursday, March 10, 2022

Members of the Council of General Synod (CoGS) gathered together at 10 a.m. ET, either in person at Queen of Apostles Renewal Centre in Mississauga, Ont. or online via Zoom.

Worship

The Rev. Monique Stone led opening worship.

Opening Formalities

CoGS voted to approve the agenda for the meeting.

Primate's Remarks

Archbishop Linda Nicholls, primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, recounted the events of the 2019-2022 triennium, beginning with its theme: "A Changing Church, A Searching World, A Faithful God". The primate noted the ongoing effects and growing frustrations from the COVID-19 pandemic after two years, culminating in the convoy calling for an end to all COVID-related public health measures which caused prolonged disruptions, especially in Ottawa. Nicholls condemned Russia's recent invasion of Ukraine, which she said gave a sense of déjà vu to those who have lived through previous wars and revived concerns about the threat of nuclear war.

"We live in a searching world—searching for peace, for health, for justice, and in that the church continues to be a changing one," the primate said. Though Anglicans are returning to in-person worship, an online/hybrid approach is still needed, she added. With a "deep weariness in our midst" and in a time of radical uncertainty, Nicholls said, the church is

continued to be called to uphold the gospel of Jesus Christ, "because that is our one certainty."

Nicholls described some of her activity as primate since the last meeting of CoGS, which included attending the consecration of Helen Kennedy as the 13th bishop of the diocese of Qu'Appelle and celebrating the life of late bishop Tom Corston in the diocese of Moosonee. The primate next plans to deliver a keynote address at a global interfaith conference focusing on human rights for LGBTQ people and to attend the upcoming primates' meeting at Lambeth Palace. Following a meeting of the House of Bishops, she intends to spend Holy Week in the diocese of Saskatchewan, to be followed by a visit from Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby to meet with Indigenous peoples.

The primate extended her congratulations to three Canadian Anglicans who have been announced as recipients of the 2022 Lambeth Awards. National Indigenous Archbishop Mark MacDonald received the Cross of St. Augustine for Services to the Anglican Communion, in recognition of his support for the Communion's role in creation care and climate justice, including for the voice of Indigenous peoples. Suzanne Lawson received the Langton Award for Community Service for her lay leadership, non-profit community service and volunteer administration. Bishop (ret'd) Philip Poole, former suffragan bishop of the diocese of Toronto, received the Cross of St. Augustine for his leadership and support of the Compass Rose Society and the Princess Basma Centre

and St. George's College in Jerusalem.

Celebrating What CoGS Has Done

General Secretary Alan Perry presented a slideshow outlining developments over the triennium, changes in the church and accomplishments of CoGS.

During the 2019-2022 triennium, General Synod saw a new primate (Nicholls), general secretary (Perry) and treasurer (Amal Attia). In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, the church pivoted towards online worship and stopped travelling. Many Anglicans took part in the *Surprised by the Spirit* initiative, sharing music, poetry, art and reflections on their experiences during the pandemic and what the Holy Spirit was telling them.

CoGS moved forward in putting together a new strategic plan, undertook a governance review for General Synod and focused on dismantling racism. Sacred Circle developed its founding documents for the self-determining Indigenous church, The Covenant and Our Way of Life.

The Anglican Church of Canada developed a new online news platform bringing together content from the *Anglican Journal* and diocesan newspapers. It navigated an uncertain financial landscape and managed to offer a one-month holiday for diocesan contributions. CoGS approved new liturgies and ecumenical documents, continued the church's campaign against human trafficking, advocated for justice issues such as vaccine equity, completed a merger of the General Synod Pension Plan and Lay Retirement Plan, and deepened relationships with global partners.

Green Shoot Moment

The primate shared the first "green shoot" stories of the meeting, offering hopeful developments from the ecclesiastical province of Canada. Nicholls read a description from

Bishop John Watton on how the diocese of Central Newfoundland is expanding its offering of online courses; 40 people have already registered for its next course, Deepening Discipleship Through Pathways for Ministry.

Meanwhile, the diocese of Montreal swiftly reacted to the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020 by organizing an anti-racism task force. Parishes took the initiative to organize with community groups against racism. An anti-racism workshop led by psychologist Myrna Lashley saw large participation from across the diocese. The next diocesan synod will also include a major focus on the struggle against racism.

Members took a break for lunch from noon until 1:30 p.m.

Bible Study

Small groups read and reflected upon Luke 24:13-21a.

What Next? Discussion and Decision-Making

The Assembly Planning Committee, tasked with planning a joint meeting of the national gatherings of the Anglican Church of Canada and Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC), decided at its Feb. 18 meeting against holding an in-person gathering this summer. As a result, CoGS needed to decide when General Synod would meet next.

General Secretary Perry put forward two possible options to the council: either General Synod could meet in 2023 and then again in 2025, or it could meet in 2024 and then four years later in 2028, which would bring its schedule back in line with that of the ELCIC's national convention. He noted to members that there would be no difference for the Anglican Church of Canada in terms of cost, since the church puts aside money each year for its next meeting of General Synod. Perry suggested that

the key question was how to meet as a General Synod and Assembly in a way that would build and strengthen relationships, both within the Anglican Church of Canada and with the ELCIC.

Primate Nicholls noted that the Assembly originally scheduled for 2022 had been planned to coincide with the 20th anniversary of the Waterloo Declaration, which established full communion between Anglicans and Lutherans. After a discussion among council members, Prolocutor Karen Egan put forward a motion for the next two meetings of General Synod to take place in 2023 and 2025, which carried.

Resolution

Be it resolved that the next session of General Synod take place in 2023 with the hope that it can be concurrent with an Assembly meeting with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, and that the time be determined by the Assembly Committee. The following session of General Synod will take place in 2025.

Pension Committee

CoGS watched a fourth video showing responses of Anglicans to *Surprised by the Spirit*.

Resolution

Be it resolved that the Council of General Synod approves the recommendation of the Pension Committee to approve the restated Regulations attached to the report in Appendix 1, with the following changes in Part 3 (Contributions), paragraph 1(a), and paragraph 2(a) to read "2.1 or 2.2".

Resolution

Be it resolved that the Council of General Synod approves the

recommendation of the Pension Committee to increase pensions accrued to December 31, 2021 by 9% starting on July 1, 2022, subject to Trustee discretion to change the amount and/or effective date of this improvement at their meeting in May 2022.

Members took a break from 3 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Strategic Planning Working Group

Judith Moses, chair of the Strategic Planning Working Group (SPWG), and fellow SPWG members Canon (lay) Ian Alexander and Janet Marshall described the strategic planning process over the triennium and revisited the five transformational aspirations that will serve as the foundation for the strategic plan.

The SPWG, Moses said, had integrated all the feedback it had received from discussions with CoGS and expects to continue its work until it reports to the next meeting of General Synod. Looming over the creation of a new strategic plan is the COVID-19 pandemic, which the SPWG said had accelerated existing trends within the church, created new challenges, revealed values and priorities—but also highlighted the ways in which leaders and congregations can adapt to changing circumstances.

They presented a timeline on the strategic planning journey of General Synod, from the first wave of the pandemic, through surges and declines, and looking ahead to a period of endemic virus and transformation. The SPWG representatives invited council members to share their experiences of the pandemic over the triennium. CoGS members then broke into small groups for 15 minutes to discuss whether the timeline resonated with them and what they had learned from the past two years about planning in such times.

Members of the SPWG and/or CoGS offered reflections to the council on the five transformational aspirations. The aspirations state:

A Healthy Church is a Church That...

1. Invites and deepens life in Christ
2. Embraces mutual interdependence with the Indigenous church (Sacred Circle)
3. Champions the dignity of every human being; works to dismantle racism and colonialism
4. Stewards and renews God's creation: protects and sustains the earth; pursues justice for all people
5. Nurtures right relationships among people of faith in local, national and global communities and networks.

CoGS members spent a few minutes undertaking quiet personal reflection on what resonated from the aspirations and how the church might live into them.

Members broke for free time and dinner from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.

PWRDF

Will Postma, executive director of the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund (PWRDF), gave an update on the work of PWRDF.

In the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, many Ukrainians were forced to flee their homes attempting to find safety. PWRDF supporters had donated more than \$167,000 in the weeks since the war started. Many of those funds went to the ACT Alliance. PWRDF is working with Hungarian Interchurch Aid, one of two fellow ACT members in Ukraine, to provide food and shelters to refugees on Hungary's border with Ukraine. It also working with other partners to see where donations can best be used.

Afghanistan remains a focus for PWRDF. The United Nations has reported that 97% of the population of Afghanistan could fall below the poverty line in 2022. PWRDF recently signed a letter to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau calling on Canada to make it easier and legal to provide humanitarian aid in Afghanistan to women-headed households and families.

Closer to home, the COVID-19 pandemic remains a concern. The spread of the Omicron variant has led to a particular crisis in many Indigenous communities. Tataskweyak Cree Nation, located in the Indigenous Spiritual Ministry of Mishamikoweesh (ISMM), declared a state of emergency in January. The cost of basic goods in remote northern communities is more expensive than in southern and urban parts of the country.

PWRDF has provided a gift of \$50,000 to the Indigenous People's Alliance of Manitoba-North (IPAM-N), working closely with IPAM-N vice president Freda Lepine to get much-needed food and personal protective equipment to First Nations communities. They allocated another \$30,000 to the diocese of Algoma to work with the ISMM, where food and basic supplies were in high demand. Lepine spoke to CoGS about how happy people in these communities were to receive help from PWRDF. Many—especially elders—were moved to tears as they opened packages containing cleaning supplies and basic necessities. A bar of soap in some areas can cost \$15, Lepine said. Students also benefited from this PWRDF support, she added.

Council members watched a short video of Anglican leaders encouraging people to "pay it forward" and donate to PWRDF's Vaccine Equity Fund, which provides support for worldwide efforts to vaccinate people against COVID-19.

Partners in Mission Committee

Andrea Mann, director of Global Relations, gave a presentation on the Partners in Mission Coordinating Committee. She paid tribute to her late colleague Ellie Johnson, the Anglican Church of Canada's longtime director of partnerships who died on Jan. 7. Mann highlighted current members of the Partners in Mission Committee, work with partners such as the Council of Anglican Provinces in Africa, and a proposed research study with the International Anglican Women's Network on gender parity in ordained leadership.

She put forward a motion on revised terms of reference for the committee, which carried.

Resolution

Be it resolved that the Council of General Synod approves the revised (February 9, 2022) Terms of Reference for the Partners in Mission Coordinating Committee.

Evening Prayer

The Rev. Canon Murray Still led closing worship.

Council members at Queen of Apostles Renewal Centre enjoyed an evening social from 8 p.m. to 11 p.m.