

COGS Highlights



Council of General Synod

Saturday, March 12, 2016

Following an optional Eucharist, council members gathered after breakfast at 8:45 a.m. at the Queen of Apostles Renewal Centre in Mississauga.

Morning Prayer and Bible Study

Sister Elizabeth Rolfe-Thomas, Reverend Mother of the Sisterhood of St. John the Divine, led members of the Council of General Synod (CoGS) in morning prayer and a Bible study focused on John 10:9-19.

Communication Plan

Ms. Meghan Kilty, director of Communications and Information Resources, offered a presentation highlighting some aspects of the communications plan for General Synod 2016, with the hope of tapping the perspective and knowledge of CoGS members for outcomes from General Synod.

The purpose of the communications plan is to help the meeting of General Synod achieve its business and operational objectives, while safeguarding reputational capital—how our members and others outside of church regard the Anglican Church of Canada—and building or strengthening relationships across the church. A major goal is enhancing the connection between delegates and those not in attendance, including members of the church, the Anglican Communion, and civil and secular society.

New features of the plan include leveraging digital and new media technologies to help achieve objectives (leading to a reduction in print resources), and a change in the media relations plan that would offer regular opportunities for the media to talk to church leadership, including bishops, clergy and laity.

Opening up discussion, Ms. Kilty asked council members to ponder what it would mean to have a successful General Synod. Table groups conversed

for five minutes before representatives summed up the discussions. Responses for what would constitute success included: delegates still talking to each other in a kind manner after the meeting; the world seeing that the church stands with those on the margins by relating to people's lives, passions and struggles; and that the story of General Synod be as broad, deep and multifaceted as the issues discussed and people gathered for it.

Ms. Kilty thanked the council for offering the communications team something to think about, and pointed out the staff members who would be handling different aspects of communication at General Synod.

Council members took a coffee break from 10 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.

Indigenous Spiritual Ministries

National Indigenous Anglican Bishop Mark MacDonald opened the next part of the session by leading council members in a song, providing guitar accompaniment, and leading the prayer that followed. The Rev. Canon Ginny Doctor, Indigenous Ministries coordinator, then introduced a slide presentation featuring excerpts from a poem by Bishop Wesley Frensdorff, who served in the Episcopal Church as the bishop of Nevada in the 1970s, as well as the assisting bishop of Arizona and interim bishop of Navajoland. Tragically, Bishop Frensdorff died in a plane crash in 1988. Before his death, he published a poem entitled *The Dream*, which detailed his dream for the church.

Canon Doctor, Bishop MacDonald, Bishop Lydia Mamakwa of the Indigenous Spiritual Ministry of Mishamikoweesh, and Bishop Adam Halkett, diocesan Indigenous Bishop of Missinipi, took turns reading Frensdorff's script, augmented by

new Indigenous thoughts from Doctor that visualized a church where everyone could pray and hear liturgy in their own language; that welcomes everyone, including Indigenous people in urban and remote areas, within prison walls and rehabilitation centres, that welcomes everyone regardless of sexual orientation; and that confronts the root causes of social, political, and economic ills that affect Indigenous people especially, due to the impact of colonization.

The main subject of the presentation concerned the mission statement for an Indigenous Anglican Spiritual Ministry within the Anglican Church of Canada. Doctor noted that over the past years, Indigenous Anglicans had been moving forward with statements and actions towards their dream of self-determination within the Anglican Church of Canada. She once more offered reassurance that Indigenous Anglicans were not separating from the church: "I've got news—we ain't going away," she said. "And that might be more terrifying than us actually going away," she joked.

All council members had read the lengthy statement of a call to action for the wider church, and the mission statement, which had been requested by the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples (ACIP), represented a response to that. Doctor stressed that it was only the second draft and still an evolving work, with ACIP set to look at the document the following week. She noted that one of the goals of the document was to "indigenize" the Marks of Mission—not as a sign of disrespect to the writers of the Marks of Mission, but as an accommodation to reflect differences in language.

Bishop MacDonald read out the draft mission statement, which offered goals and objectives for an Indigenous Anglican Spiritual Ministry. The five goals outlined were:

- To create an Indigenous spiritual structure in accordance with traditional teachings and the dreams of the elders to more effectively proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom;
- To prepare leaders for ministry to teach, baptize and nurture new believers;

- To respond to human needs by loving service;
- To seek to transform unjust structures in church and society, to challenge violence of every kind, and to pursue peace and reconciliation; and
- To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

For Indigenous Anglicans, Bishop Mark said, self-determination is not a political act, but an act of mission. He pointed to the example of the Maoris, who became self-determining in the Anglican Church of New Zealand on the basis that decisions about mission are best made by the people involved in them. He asked church members to hold ACIP in their prayers as they discuss the mission statement the week after CoGS.

Though primarily focused on mission rather than structure at this point, Indigenous Ministries is grateful for the support it has received from the leadership of General Synod and the Primate's Office. It will continue to focus on the development of resources for catechists and catechist training, which it saw as the best way to inspire and animate those who will be involved in ordained ministry. Work on urban ministries and better responding to the needs of communities will also be a major focus, with Bishop MacDonald pointing to the ongoing issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women. Coming out of the TRC, he said, there was an increased awareness of the complex intergenerational trauma experienced by Indigenous people, the legacy of which continues to be felt today. The bishop noted the high rates of death (32 per cent) caused by violence or accidents for Indigenous people in North America, which was reflected in his own experience of attending funerals as a priest in Red Lake Nation.

Bishop MacDonald offered a special word of thanks to Doctor for her hard work, despite being ill much of the time, during the bishop's recent two-month hiatus. He then opened the floor up to questions and comments. One council member thanked Indigenous Ministries for helping them "think outside the box," and wished them the best

of luck in developing their own ministries. A young council member with an Aboriginal background, who is currently taking courses in university on Indigenous issues, thanked Indigenous Ministries for not backing down in their efforts toward self-determination.

Others also expressed their gratitude for the preparation of the mission statement, including Pat Lovell, representative for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC), who praised the document and said it would assist the ELCIC and National Bishop Susan Johnson as the Lutherans increase their own efforts to support Indigenous rights. Responding to a question about what a true partnership with an Indigenous Anglican Spiritual Ministry would look like, Doctor talked about the need to develop individual relationships by sitting down, talking and listening to each other.

Archbishop Fred Hiltz, Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, thanked Indigenous Ministries for helping the council find more faithful ways of walking with them. In the spirit of partnership, the Primate said, one of the ideas the church might seriously entertain moving forward is to make sure ACIP is viewed with as much authority in the church as CoGS, and that Sacred Circle have authority akin to General Synod. He expressed his hope for a joint meeting in the next triennium between CoGS and ACIP, which—rather than being burdened by an “overcrowded agenda”—would primarily be focused on helping members get to know each other and celebrate the relationships they are called into in Christ, sharing meals and conversation, praying together and doing gospel-based discipleship. He suggested that the idea might be addressed at the next week’s ACIP meeting.

The Ven. Paul Feheley, Principal Secretary to the Primate, closed out the morning session by leading council in saying grace before their ensuing meal.

Council members broke for lunch from noon to 1:15 p.m.

Pension Committee

Ms. Jane Osler, a member of the Pension

Committee, put forward a resolution from the committee, which would amend Section 5 (a) of Canon VIII. Council members voted to send the resolution on to General Synod, which must ratify the resolution for it to come into effect.

Resolution

Be it resolved that the Council of General Synod approves the recommendations of the Pension Committee to amend Section 5 (a) Canon VIII as follows with effect from January 1, 2016.

Bolded text is new and strikeout is removed
Amendments to Section 5 (a)

Section 5 (a) is edited to read as follows:

The Board of Trustees shall consist of not less than six and not more than eight [to] nine persons, who shall be individuals resident in Canada, provided that at least half of the Trustees are representatives of the Members. These representatives are not required to be Members.

Ethical Investing—Creation Matters

Ms. Henriette Thompson, director of Public Witness for Social and Ecological Justice (PWSEJ), recalled the 2013 Joint Assembly between the Anglican Church of Canada and the ELCIC, where the two churches adopted a joint declaration focusing on homelessness and affordable housing, and responsible resource extraction. The latter was the subject of the afternoon presentation by PWSEJ, which discussed the rationale for two of several resolutions council had approved the previous day to send to General Synod.

Ms. Nancy Harvey, co-chair of the Creation Matters Working Group, offered background on the resolutions before reading the text of each. In promoting the two motions, Creation Matters and PWSEJ gave consideration to: the fifth Mark of Mission and associated baptismal promise; direction from the Primates Meeting in Canterbury in January 2016 to get behind United Nations

sustainable development goals that address root causes of poverty; the plea from a group of Anglican bishops gathered near Cape Town in January 2015, calling for a review of churches' investment practices; the experience of dioceses that have looked into divestment from fossil fuels; recognizing the right to decent work and well-being of workers transitioning to sustainable jobs within Canada; the principle of free, prior and informed consent outlined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; and the consideration of justice for non-human creation and the interests of future generations of humanity in support for environmental sustainability and justice.

The first motion asked General Synod to request that CoGS appoint a task force as soon as possible to review the investment policies and practices for the management of General Synod assets and those of the General Synod Pension Plan in light of the Church's faith and mission, including the Church's social and environmental responsibilities, building on previous work to address environmental, social and governance practices of corporations and industries in which the church invests, to develop guidelines for constructive dialogue, and where necessary divestment, leading towards a low carbon economy; to present an interim report by May 2017 to CoGS; and to report annually on actions taken or under consideration that would make visible the Anglican Church of Canada's commitment to environmental, social and governance principles and to propose a strategy for ongoing engagement and monitoring. The task force would include the widest possible range of internal stakeholders.

The second motion commended for consideration to General 2016 would have General Synod, as a tangible expression of its desire to move to a low-carbon economy, become a signatory to the *United Nations Principles for Responsible Investment*, and make full use of its affiliate membership with Shareholder Association for Research and Education (SHARE) while encouraging dioceses to become affiliate members.

Council members then watched a video featuring

Harvey's co-chair on the Creation Matters Working Group, Canon Ken Gray, who is also secretary of the Anglican Communion Environmental Network. He noted the extensive preparation of the motions and cited the document *The World Is Our Host*, published on Good Friday 2015, as a key inspiration. The document described climate change and environmental sustainability as a spiritual as well as political problem, since it relates to basic issues of how human life is framed. *The World Is Our Host* also included commentary from the Anglican Bishop of Fiji, which had been at the centre of the most powerful and damaging cyclone ever to hit the Pacific Islands.

Connecting environmental sustainability with the theme of General Synod 2016, "You Are My Witnesses," he posed a number of questions for council members:

- If we believe that carbon has altered delicate balance of atmosphere, what does earth caring witness look like?
- When I meet Anglicans from around the world and they ask us what is the Anglican Church of Canada doing in response to climate change, what should I tell them? What are we doing? How would you respond to the question?
- How are we as a nation and especially as a church moving to a low-carbon economy, in real time, in real ways, through a specific strategy?

In relation to these questions, Canon Gray believed the two motions would begin the conversations that would help move the church towards a low-carbon economy. The proposed model is influenced by the Church of England, which recently divested from fossil fuels, and draws inspiration from actions taken by the Anglican Church in New Zealand, Southern Africa, the Episcopal Church, the United Church of Canada, and various Anglican dioceses in Canada.

A succession of speakers followed at CoGS, presenting the issue from various perspectives. Bishop Mark MacDonald brought up the issue of Indigenous rights, closely linked to treaty rights, and the issue of free, prior, and informed consent,

which is often most important with regard to environmental concerns. Free, prior and informed consent is a key element of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, with both the UN document and Canadian courts affirming that Indigenous people have a say in what goes on their traditional territories, specifically and most importantly in those territories where they had engaged in subsistence hunting and fishing. Indigenous claims to these lands often pose an obstacle to development, such as mining. However, he noted that the issue is complex and that Indigenous people are not necessarily opposed to development, but want development that retains the integrity of the environment without too much damage.

Rob Saffrey, CAO of the Cathedral Church of St James in the diocese of Toronto and Chair of the General Synod Investment Committee (a sub-committee of the Financial Management Committee), gave council members a sense of how investments are currently done and how the church can screen ethically for what it invests in. He noted the Statement of Investment Policy agreed to at the November meeting of CoGS, which set out socially responsible investment criteria. Saffrey explained the ESG (environmental, social and governance) model by which companies are often given ratings and deemed eligible or ineligible for investment.

The Ven. Canon Terry Leer, Archdeacon for Mission Development in the diocese of Athabasca, gave a presentation in which he reminded fellow council members of their focus on people, not policies. He discussed the many people in his diocese who are employed in resource extraction and suggested that the push toward divestment from fossil fuels in the church had been made without due consideration of the negative impact it could have on the lives of workers and their families.

If the goal is to reduce use of fossil fuels, Leer said, attention must be paid to consumption, not just production. Divestment closes doors to efforts within the resource industry itself to mitigate environmental impact. He argued that General Synod should pursue actions and pronouncements that affirm the church's care for Christians who

work in the oil and gas industries, and considering the impact of divestment on families and communities, including Indigenous communities. Leer suggested that General Synod resist calls for divestment to the extent that they distract from the real work of reducing demand for fuel consumption; that General Synod continue further conversations within dioceses more directly engaged in resource extraction, especially in relation to Indigenous communities, which might also involve conversation with resource executives; and that General Synod more specifically identify its policies toward climate change to enact policies capable of reaching those goals.

After watching a six-minute video on the Church of England's divestment policies, council members broke into conversation in their table groups to generate more questions for the task group that would meet in the next triennium should General Synod pass the resolution. Members noted the contradictory issues involved and suggested that the church could provide a forum for how to move forward with all of those involved, including extractive companies, environmentalists, Indigenous people, perhaps doing so in an ecumenical environment.

Archbishop Hiltz thanked the presenters for illustrating the complex matter facing the church and the world, and asked whether there might be a place on the task force, as outlined in the resolution to General Synod, for someone representing SHARE. Assuming General Synod passes the resolutions, he wondered whether a fall 2017 meeting for an interim report might be more realistic than a spring meeting.

Council members took a coffee break from 3 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Marriage Canon—Response and Commentary Review

The Primate asked the first-ever chancellor of the Anglican Military Ordinariate, Ann Bourke, to speak about the first election held since Canon XXIII allowed the AMO to elect their own bishop. Bourke noted that the election was entirely electronic, thanks to assistance from Web Manager Brian Bukowksi.

Council members then examined two statements drafted by a writing group appointed by the Planning and Agenda Team. The first was a response to the statement sent from the House of Bishops in February 2016 stating that the Order of Bishops was unlikely to reach the two-thirds majority necessary for a change to the Marriage Canon at General Synod. The second was a statement to the church that would accompany the resolution to General Synod on proposed changes to the Marriage Canon.

Both statements were read aloud before copies were distributed. Table groups then engaged in conversation to gauge the feelings of council members on the statements. Council ultimately voted by consensus to adopt the Response to the Statement from the House of Bishops.

The Statement from the Council of General Synod provoked more debate, but ultimately council voted to adopt the statement with one small change (modifying one sentence to read, “We recommend the greatest pastoral response possible”). However, a small minority of members expressed their displeasure with the statement, while others did not participate in the vote.

Both statements were scheduled to be published on the church website later that evening. Council concluded the day’s session with a prayer.

Hospitality, Dinner, Celebration

CoGS members enjoyed hospitality at 5:30 p.m., followed by dinner shortly after 6 p.m. Many wore green as part of a St. Patrick’s Day theme for the evening celebration marking the last CoGS meeting of the triennium.

At the conclusion of the dinner, Deputy Prolocutor Cynthia Haines-Turner gave a speech honouring Adele Finney, the departing executive director of the Primate’s World Relief and Development Fund, while Archbishop Hiltz and General Secretary Michael Thompson offered remarks honouring Henriette Thompson as she retires from her role as PSWEJ director. Each council member received certificates and pins honouring their time as part of CoGS over the last three years.

Council members continued the celebration throughout the evening.