

COGS Highlights



Council of General Synod

Sunday, March 13, 2016

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

Faith, Worship, and Ministry Resolutions

Dean Peter Wall, co-chair of the Planning and Agenda Team, read out the Orders of the Day before putting forward two resolutions related to Faith, Worship, and Ministry. The first resolution concerned the report *Gifts for Episcopal Ministry*, and the second was related to the Report of the Task Force on Physician Assisted Dying.

Resolution

That this Council of General Synod receive the report, *Gifts for Episcopal Ministry*, and commend it, along with the appropriate introductory materials, to be sent to the dioceses for study and as a resource to assist in episcopal electoral processes.

Resolution

That this Council of General Synod receive Resources to Assist Pastoral and Theological Approaches to Physician Assisted Dying from the Task Force on Physician Assisted Dying, and commend it for study and discussion throughout the church.

Members of the Council of General Synod (CoGS) voted and both resolutions were carried.

Marriage Canon—Process

The Rev. Dr. Karen Egan, member of the CoGS Working Group on the Marriage Canon, thanked council members for the productive time over the

last few days. The report that the General Synod Planning Committee would receive is effectively a set of recommendations for them to take up and use as they can.

Discussion of the Marriage Canon at General Synod, she suggested, would likely be introduced by the head table. She noted that Indigenous groups would also need to be consulted on the process. She also heard a strong call from some members to remain in diocesan groups during the discussion.

Resolution

That this Council of General Synod receive the report of the CoGS Working Group on the Marriage Canon and commend it to the General Synod Planning Committee.

Egan put forward a resolution to receive the report, which members accepted by consensus.

Nominating Committee

Deputy Prolocutor Cynthia Haines-Turner thanked the “eagle eyes” in the council who had picked up errors in the report offered by the Nominating Committee. She moved that the council ratify the report of the Nominating Committee for sessional committees, which was carried by consensus.

ELCIC Report and TEC Reflections

Reports followed from CoGS representatives of two partner churches, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) and the Episcopal Church (TEC).

Canon Noreen Duncan, TEC representative to CoGS, referred to the March council meeting as a “most amazing session” and expressed her

gratitude at being present, having first run for the position of representative a mere two weeks ago.

She noted her intrigue at the discussion on the Episcopal Church of Cuba, and found the mapping exercise organized by the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund to illustrate the Doctrine of Discovery to be very useful, helping her to see where the Episcopal Church fits in relation to Indigenous people. Canon Duncan recalled the orientation for deputies of colour that takes place before TEC General Convention and that occasionally struggles to bring everyone to the table. She suggested the Anglican Church of Canada was on a path to doing so with its focus on truth and reconciliation, a major item she would take away from her CoGS experience.

Though the Episcopal Church has completed its own debate on same-sex marriage by voting in the affirmative, Duncan said it was good to be a part of the process as Canadian Anglicans grapple with their own position on the issue. She concluded that she had learned a lot and—using a metaphor from the previous day on the relationship of an Indigenous Spiritual Ministry to the wider Anglican Church of Canada—prayed that members of the U.S. church would be “good in-laws” to their Canadian counterparts.

Ms. Pat Lovell, ELCIC representative to CoGS, noted that Canadian Lutherans were working on their own reports on physician assisted dying and the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

She reflected on the previous day's debate over statements related to proposed changes to the Marriage Canon, which she said were particularly intense and meaningful for her. Like the Episcopal Church, the ELCIC has also already gone through its own debate on same-sex marriage. But Ms. Lovell praised the depth of caring, sensitivity for one another in the diversity of opinion and coming together that characterized the Anglican debate, which allowed her to re-live the Lutheran debate all over again, but in a “kinder, gentler way.” She expressed her awe and respect for the process the Anglican Church of Canada was using to ensure everyone was included and feelings were

respected, concluding, “If CoGS is reflective of what may happen at General Synod, I think it's in good hands.”

Council members sang a hymn and prayed before moving to the next order of business.

General Synod Planning Committee

Continuing the March 10 report from General Synod Planning Committee, Dean Peter Wall noted that Anglican Video, General Synod Communications had been full and integral participants in the planning process for General Synod and expressed his gratitude for their help in coordinating space, equipment, needs, and some communications. Anglican Video is continuing to prepare and release a series of orientation videos about General Synod, with the first videos already online at anglican.ca.

Moving on to the Worship Committee, Dean Wall discussed the role of chaplains at General Synod, who are present to provide pastoral care for members and guests, pray with them, and be sensitive to their particular needs. The forthcoming General Synod will once again have chapel space, with a strong presence from the Anglican Fellowship of Prayer, who will be worshipping together every day. Pastoral caregivers will be made up of volunteers from General Synod who will be easily identifiable, potentially with a coloured badge.

Wall highlighted the serious approach to simultaneous translation on the floor of General Synod 2016. There will be three translation booths and 50 headsets, with volunteers brought in from around country to do the translating. While the language of General Synod and the working language of floor is English, spoken presentations, debate, and as much of the meeting as possible will be translated into Oji-Cree and two dialects from the north for Inuktitut. He added that simultaneous translation will require a different rhythm for General Synod, and a greater awareness that what is spoken on the floor is being translated.

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

After the break, Dean Wall showed council members the draft agenda for General Synod, offering a proposed schedule of events for the week starting Wednesday, July 6, when youth members meet a day before the formal start of the event.

Building a General Synod agenda, Wall said, is an art, not a science. This particular agenda at the moment is more flexible than often when council sees an agenda. CoGS had the duty of approving this agenda and sending it back to the General Synod Planning Committee, which would send it to Agenda Committee. He stressed that not all time blocks would necessarily be filled with the agenda items that are listed. The goal of agenda planners was to build enough time to allow time blocks to be more generous if need be.

Days of the meeting have a definite shape to them, beginning and ending with worship, featuring regular breaks, and allowing time to include greetings from different people and organizations. Wall described scheduling for discussion of the Marriage Canon as needing to be where it was in the agenda. Travel time from meeting rooms and into different groupings was also included, and Saturday evening include space for provincial caucuses.

Dean Wall moved that council adopt the third draft as the agenda for General Synod 2016. The motion was carried.

Primate's Reflections

Offering his own reflections for council members, Archbishop Fred Hiltz, Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, focused on the theme of communion. In recent months, the Primate had come away from gatherings with a sense of the promise and hope that communion holds not just for the church, but for the world. He had also become aware of the challenge of communion, and how challenging it is for Anglicans globally to be a communion. The worldwide Anglican Communion is a fellowship of churches that are autonomous and yet in relation with one another, based on the principle of mutual responsibility and interdependence in the body of Christ.

That communion can be strong, but also fragile. Notwithstanding comments people have made about the Primates' Meeting that took place in Canterbury in January, Archbishop Hiltz believed that the Primates had been able to emerge from the meeting with a sense of having worked hard at maintaining communion. He recalled the words of Archbishop Rowan Williams—then the Archbishop of Canterbury—when he spoke at the 2008 Lambeth Conference: that Anglicans were gathered there to celebrate communion, deepen it, and restore it.

Much of the work at the recent Primates' Meeting revolved around those three themes. However people felt about the decision of the Primates' Meeting to recommend consequences for the Episcopal Church for its recent changes around same-sex marriage. Archbishop Hiltz thought it was significant that all the Primates, except one, made a public commitment to walk together.

He noted that TEC would be attending the Anglican Consultative Council as full members. One focus of that event will be considering whether to put forward a resolution that reflects the counsel of the Primates' Meeting, which remains in question and raises the issue of how the Instruments of Communion relate to each other.

Archbishop Hiltz had strong praise for the "stellar" conduct of his U.S. counterpart, Presiding Bishop Michael Bruce Curry, at the Primates Meeting. Archbishop Hiltz also recalled the reflections of Jean Vanier at the closing Eucharist that the Primates are "the face of Jesus in the world" who "are leading millions of people"—a very direct statement which the Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada found both daunting and humbling.

"So what's it all about anyway, this thing called communion?" the Primate asked. He said that he was becoming more mindful of a phrase he had heard in the current meeting of council, "making room for one another." To Archbishop Hiltz, it seemed that what those gathered at the Primates' Meeting, at the House of Bishops, and at the Council of General Synod were all trying to do was

to make room for one another. He recalled an old Anglican Appeal poster that had read, "There's room for everyone in the Anglican Church of Canada."

"I've never forgotten that," the Primate said. "And I think it's something we need to hold onto." The challenge of making room for another he said, would be the challenge at General Synod, which itself has a very challenging theme in "You Are My Witnesses."

In his orientation video for General Synod offering a theological reflection on the event theme, the Primate had talked about the concept being rooted in Scripture, both in the Old Testament through Isaiah and the language Jesus uses with his disciples in the New Testament—a feeling of both invitation and instruction, call and commission. The hope and prayer of Archbishop Hiltz is that as General Synod does its work, particularly around the Marriage Canon, in the way in which it does its work and how it enters into synod and emerges from it, that the church will be found worthy of the theme "You Are My Witnesses"—"that we are the people of God, that we belong to Christ, and that we trust with confidence in the leading of the Holy Spirit."

The Primate also offered some interpretation on the logo for General Synod 2016, a cross made up of what appear to be lush, green palm leaves. He reminded council members that within a couple of days, the palm leaf would lose its sweet smell, become brittle, fade and even break. Comparing that image to General Synod, Archbishop Hiltz said he did not want the upcoming synod to be recalled for the stench of dispute, but rather for "the sweet scent of grace, holy patience, perseverance with one another, and unwavering commitment to remain together."

Alongside that call for communion, the Primate said he longed "for a time in our church when there is as much attention and conviction and passion and voice and action from the rooftops about sexual exploitation, about gender-based violence, human trafficking for the sex trade, missing and murdered Indigenous women, pornography, religiously based violence around

the world, and our violence against creation itself, and the greed and reckless consumption that drives us to it," as there is regarding same-sex marriage. He stressed that this was not a critique to say that the church had spent an inordinate amount of time on the latter subject, but that he urged Anglicans to look to a time when they could be as vocal, strong and passionate about these other issues as they had been for so long around this particular matter in the face of the church.

Looking to the agenda at General Synod, Archbishop Hiltz said he was pleased that a whole day had been set aside for Indigenous Ministries. Recalling the previous day's presentation on an Indigenous Anglican Spiritual Ministry within the Anglican Church of Canada, the Primate said it was clear that ministry was a greater focus than structure at the moment for Indigenous Anglican leaders on the journey towards self-determination, and that the wider church was in a very good place with the approach being taken and being invited to walk in partnership. He reiterated his desire to have a joint meeting of CoGS and the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples, and that the church should make every effort to hold that meeting early in the next triennium.

With the next meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council set to take place in Lusaka, Zambia later in 2016, the Primate praised the consultative work that international body had promoted so much in recent years. As the Anglican Church of Canada enters its next triennium, he hoped that the theme of relationship and communion would continue to undergird work at General Synod, turning first to the Lord and in his name to love, to one another and to what we are called to do in the name of the Gospel.

Town Hall

Council members held a brief "town hall" after the Primate's reflections to ask questions and comments.

Ms. Jane Osler, co-chair of the Planning and Agenda Team, thanked the Primate for his leadership of the council over the course of the triennium. "You have taught us how to make room and walk together," she said. "And I think that we

are going to be great examples going into this General Synod.”

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

Eucharist

The March meeting of CoGS closed with a Eucharist service. The council was adjourned following the service and departures began at approximately 3 p.m.