

COGS Highlights



Council of General Synod

Friday, March 13, 2020

Members of the Council of General Synod (CoGS) and National Church Council (NCC) gathered at 8:45 a.m. at the Queen of Apostles Renewal Centre in Mississauga, Ont.

Opening Worship

CoGS and NCC members began their joint meeting by celebrating the Eucharist together at the opening worship service. Susan C. Johnson, National Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada (ELCIC), provided the sermon.

Opening Remarks

National Bishop Johnson first offered opening remarks on behalf of the ELCIC. Lutherans, she said, were experiencing many of the same challenges detailed in recent statistics for the Anglican Church of Canada, such as declining membership. Anglicans and Lutherans are currently living in a time in which many changes and disruptions occurring, creating a great deal of anxiety. The current crisis around the pandemic of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) simply highlights and intensifies all of the anxiety already present.

In the midst of these challenges, Johnson sought to remind the ELCIC and the Anglican Church of Canada that they are not small churches, but "medium-sized churches." Across Canada and around the world, there are many smaller churches with fewer resources that are nevertheless doing God's work and being God's church. "We have resources," she said, "and it's going to be about the choices we make on how we share them and how we adapt systems to

take best advantage of them" by managing partnerships and deepening discipleship.

Archbishop Linda Nicholls, Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, spoke about plans to deepen the relationship between the two churches. After conversations with the national bishop, the church leaders had made the decision to call their combined national gathering in 2022 "The Assembly," rather than its previous title of joint assembly. "It's not joint," the primate explained. "It's us together as God's community.... This isn't a partnership. This is a family in which we have to stop duplicating work."

The Anglican Church of Canada, she said, is in a moment of transition. It is shifting to new leadership, with Nicholls taking over as primate last year and with the upcoming retirement of General Secretary Michael Thompson. The church is in the midst of a strategic planning process, and figuring out what the self-determining Indigenous church will look like. As Anglicans move forward with this work leading up to the 2022 assembly, she said, they should be guided by two ideas: "calming anxiety and deepening discipleship".

Community Building

Monique Stone, co-chair of the planning and agenda team, introduced an exercise to help CoGS and NCC members get to know each other. She invited table groups to discuss three questions: who you are, what church community you come from, and a hope you have for the church in the future.

Members broke for coffee from 10:15 a.m. to 10:45 a.m. CoGS and the NCC split into separate rooms to do the work of their respective councils.

Orders of the Day

Stone read out the Orders of the Day for CoGS.

Opening Formalities

The primate said that given the number of members present, CoGS did not have quorum from General Synod, which meant that the council would not be able to conclude any resolutions. As a result, motions would be sent after voting to absent members via email.

A motion was put forward to adopt the minutes of the last CoGS meeting, with amendments correcting titles of two members. The motion carried.

Motion

That the minutes of the meeting of the Council of General Synod from November 7-10, 2019, be approved [with amendments].

Prolocutor Karen Egan announced the results of an email ballot on nominees for the search committee for a new general secretary and introduced the list in a motion.

Motion

That the Council of General Synod approves the following nominees to the Search Committee for a General Secretary:

- The Rev. Dr. Karen Egan – Prolocutor of General Synod
- The Rev. Canon Norm Wesley – Co-chair of the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples (ACIP)
- The Rt. Rev. Michael Oulton –

Bishop of Ontario

- Mr. Bob Boeckner – Member of Pensions Committee
- The Rev. Deacon Cynthia Haines-Turner – Co-chair of Planning and Agenda Team, former Prolocutor of General Synod (although recently ordained, her primary experience in the church has been as a lay woman)
- Canon Mary Conliffe (Lay) – Executive Officer, Diocese of Toronto
- The Very Rev. Ansley Tucker – Dean of Christ Church Cathedral, Diocese of B.C.
- The Most Rev. Linda Nicholls – Primate – Ex-officio

Email ballot distributed: January 28, 2020

Voting closed: February 3, 2020

Primate's Remarks

In her report to CoGS, the primate described representing the Anglican Church of Canada at a variety of international meetings of the Anglican Communion since the last council meeting. Soon after the last CoGS, Archbishop Nicholls travelled to the United Kingdom to meet with fellow primates, the Lambeth Conference design group, and the Archbishop of Canterbury, sharing the current context and challenges of the Canadian church.

The Anglican Church of Canada, she said, is generally viewed favourably and “known for the transparency with which we work on difficult topics.” During this visit, she spoke to the House of Bishops for the Church of England on the subject of colonialism and the Canadian church’s attempts to address its legacy in that regard, garnering a positive response from the bishops.

Early January saw Nicholls travel to Jordan for the primates' meeting. Despite apprehension over ongoing tensions in the Anglican Communion, based on the tenor of the last primates' meeting in 2017, the gathering saw much shared engagement and worship— notwithstanding ongoing differences between the primates, about a dozen of whom were new. Nicholls saw no indication that her gender or recent theological conversations on human sexuality in Canada were of any concern to other primates.

Nicholls discussed preparations for the upcoming Lambeth Conference, which will take place from July 22 to August 2. The theme of the conference is "God's Church for God's World: Walking, Listening, and Witnessing Together." The conference will invite Anglicans to engage, affirm and build into the life of their church issues such as ending human trafficking, addressing climate change, and affirming human sexuality while acknowledging diversity across the communion through measures such as supporting the decriminalization of homosexuality. Nicholls noted that the Canadian church has been able to raise \$60,000 with the help of the Anglican Communion Compass Rose Society to ensure all bishops and spouses in Canada can attend the conference.

In February, Nicholls attended the final Consultation of Anglican Bishops in Dialogue, which took place in Zanzibar. Since 2010, the consultation has brought together African, Canadian, American and English bishops to build common understanding among parts of the Anglican Communion with differing views on issues such as same-sex marriage.

The primate showed CoGS a clip produced by Anglican Video featuring footage from the consultation. She recalled being moved by testimony from African bishops who, in spite of

pressure to divide, were told by their colleagues that they must come to the Lambeth Conference. Everyone spoke of friendship as well as sensitivity to misinformation often felt around the communion. During the consultation, bishops visited a historical site of an East African slave market on which the cathedral had been built, reminding them of the need to combat modern slavery and human trafficking.

During a subsequent question-and-answer period, Nicholls responded to a CoGS member who asked how churches are responding to the COVID-19 outbreak around the world and how that might affect the Anglican Church of Canada.

The primate said that the threat of coronavirus had only emerged and become more serious after these meetings, and that it is important to pay attention to where the virus was most significant. At the moment, international gatherings such as the Lambeth Conference are still planning to go ahead. All the church can do, Nicholls said, is to continue to monitor the situation and take all possible safety precautions. With travel being a major factor in spread of the virus, she suggested that the church might ponder how to increase use of technology as an alternative to in-person meetings.

Green Shoot Moment

Monique Stone shared the first of three "green shoot" moments at the present CoGS—hopeful stories from across the Anglican Church of Canada. She described her experience as incumbent at Julian of Norwich Anglican Church, an amalgamation of two former parishes that involved selling the old properties and buying another on which to build the new church. Looking at the affordable housing crisis in Ottawa, parishioners wondered how they might be able to leverage their land assets to

address the crisis.

Over the last three years, Julian of Norwich has developed a partnership with the Multifaith Housing Initiative (MHI) in Ottawa, an organization made up of representatives from 70 different faith traditions. Working with MHI, the parish is building a development that will house differently abled people on the property and include space for Anglican services, but which will also include room for people of other faith traditions to use for feasts, celebrations and worship. The goal is to maximize the land for social good in a way that every single organization using the property will help serve the community.

Government grants have helped bolster the project, which is currently aiming to begin construction in 18 months for completion in five years. Archbishop Nicholls thanked Stone for her presentation: "We are rich in land and buildings, and the opportunity to use those in new ways is exciting to hear about."

Voting Refresher

The primate reminded CoGS members about the procedure for voting with different-coloured cards.

Announcements and Grace

Cynthia Haines-Turner, co-chair of the planning and agenda team, made some announcements and led council in saying grace before lunch.

Members broke for lunch from noon until 1:20 p.m.

Bible Study

The afternoon began with joint Bible study for CoGS and the NCC. Table groups read and discussed Colossians 3:12-17, then split into different rooms again to deal with the business of each council.

Theological Reflections on Nature of the Church

The primate invited CoGS to reflect on some of the assumptions Anglicans make about "being church" as they begin the process of creating a new strategic plan. Different Christian denominations have different models, she said: some denominations favour a more centralized model for making decisions, some give more power to the local level, and others prefer a model somewhere in between. Ecclesiology—the study of churches—consists of studying the many ways in which Christians live out the core principles of their faiths in community.

The church, Nicholls said, is first and foremost the people of God, a people who gather for prayer, worship, mutual care, education and fellowship in preparation to be sent out into the world. Jesus taught his disciples what it means to be that kind of community, in which no one is more important than another; in which each should "love one another as I have loved you" (John 13:34) and where serving each other is primary. One of the most common metaphors for the church is "the body of Christ," with Jesus as its head.

As that body spread across the Middle East in the early years of the church, it developed positions such as deacons, priests and bishops. Today, the primate said, "we believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church." Anglicans have followed the ancestry of the Roman Catholic Church in many structures, but in a reformed way. The Anglican Church retains the form of dioceses over a certain geographic area led by the bishop. On a global basis, Anglican provinces coordinate ministry with other churches through the global Anglican Communion.

"Our primary purpose is not for ourselves or the survival of the Anglican Church alone," the primate said. "It is for the sake of the good

news.” A core component of spreading the good news is building communities, which requires a willingness to listen and share. In this sense, the church national has committed to sharing resources with dioceses and with the Anglican Communion. The Christian community is stronger in partnership and with transparency and honesty in its conversations. As the church engages in the work of governance and discipleship, Nicholls said, it might be guided by the same motto as the Three Musketeers: “One for all and all for one.” She asked council members to keep these thoughts in their hearts going forward.

Strategic Planning Working Group

Speaking as a member of the Strategic Planning Working Group (SPWG), Monique Stone gave an update on the group’s work. Since the last meeting of CoGS in November, the SPWG has met regularly. It has set up a website at www.anglican.ca/changingchurch with a general comment survey and begun a review of Vision 2019. Initial conversations have begun with staff members past and present as well as Link Bishops (a bishop for each ecclesiastical province, appointed by the primate to assist SPWG and provide contacts within dioceses). The SPWG has documents on its work plan as well as the scope and context for forthcoming work.

The SPWG work plan sets out three main phases:

- **Get Focused** (fall 2019-summer 2020). Consulting and engaging with CoGS on project scope, priorities, and accomplishments of Vision 2019; gain approval of CoGS for project scope; appoint and engage Link Bishops; set up website and logo; develop and test draft questionnaires on CoGS; design project methodology and financial capacity studies; develop consultation and

communication strategies; finalize workplan and report to CoGS.

- **Engage Anglicans** (spring 2020-summer 2021). Refine consultation materials, including for youth and Indigenous community; consult and brief dioceses on consultation strategy; launch financial capacity studies; finalize consultation and communications strategy; develop CoGS decision framework; launch diocesan consultations; tabulate consultation results and report to CoGS.
- **Build a New Plan** (summer 2021-General Synod 2022). Analyze financial capacity study results; develop options for CoGS; develop performance indicators and risk management strategies; prepare draft report for CoGS with options and recommendations; report to General Synod.

The SPWG document on scope and context reiterates that the strategic plan is focused “on the Anglican Church of Canada at the national level, otherwise known as General Synod.” It seeks to set out the ways and means by which General Synod serves provinces, dioceses, parishes, ministries and individual church members; to respond to current and future needs of Anglicanism in Canada; and to represent the church national in the worldwide Anglican Communion.

Table groups engaged in discussion to name one thing they found hopeful within the document and the overall strategic planning thus far, and to ask one question of the SPWG.

ACIP

Murray Still, co-chair of the Anglican Council of Indigenous (ACIP), presented a report on the work of ACIP. He began with a moment of silence to remember two “beloved elders” who had recently died and had played a major role

in the movement towards Indigenous self-determination: Norman Casey, a longtime member of ACIP heavily involved in efforts to reduce youth suicide, and Eli Morris, one of the signers of the National Native Covenant and a gifted translator. Bishop Joey Royal read a gospel passage and Still gave a prayer of thanks.

ACIP members described some upcoming events to CoGS members. First was the next Sacred Circle, set to take place from June 14-19 in Orillia, Ontario. An estimated 118 people are expected to attend the gathering, which will focus on the next steps forward for the self-determining Indigenous church. Indigenous Ministries Coordinator Ginny Doctor said that travel reservations are currently on hold for Sacred Circle as organizers monitor the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak.

The next planned event is a gathering of young Indigenous Anglicans—the result of pleas expressed by younger delegates at the last Sacred Circle. ACIP had “heard that plea,” Doctor said, and were able to secure a \$15,000 grant. Indigenous Anglican youth are planning the event and recently met in Toronto to set out that plan. The youth gathering is scheduled to take place from July 28-31 at the Sandy Saulteaux Spiritual Centre in Beausejour, Manitoba. Approximately 20 young people are expected to attend, during which they will seek spiritual growth, engage in gospel-based discipleship, learn about First Nations history and traditional culture, and enjoy fun activities and games. However, Doctor asked CoGS to pray for the gathering, which is not certain to go ahead. Whether or not the event takes place, she said, will depend on what happens with the COVID-19 outbreak.

At the last CoGS meeting, Doctor said, members had watched video clips of ACIP members talking about the apology for spiritual harm

given by former primate Fred Hiltz at General Synod 2019. ACIP is “very keen” on finding a way to not only help educate people about the apology, but also find ways to help people heal. Doctor took up her drum and sang a “Mohawk chant,” which turned out to be “Ubi caritas.” She then invited Still and Royal to join her in reading six “confessions” laid out by Hiltz in his apology, which detailed various ways in which the Anglican Church of Canada had suppressed the traditional cultures of Indigenous people.

Table groups then broke into discussions on the way in which Anglicans could educate people on the apology and promote healing. In their responses, table group representatives expressed some trepidation from non-Indigenous members about speaking on Indigenous issues, but said that the solution was to learn, reflect, talk, and pray more, and then to act. Wrapping up the session, the primate hoped that the confessions and discussion questions would circulate more widely in the church to encourage that process of education.

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

Full Communion

Peter Wall and Larry Kochendorfer, Anglican and Lutheran members respectively of the Joint Anglican-Lutheran Commission (JALC), facilitated the evening session, which focused on the full communion partnership between the Anglican Church of Canada and the ELCIC. CoGS and NCC members first began with a light-hearted game of *Jeopardy!* in which they answered trivia questions about each church.

After the game, Wall and Kochendorfer spoke about the relationship between the two churches and preparations for a significant commemoration. 2021 will mark the 20th anniversary of the Waterloo Declaration, the

document that officially brought the two churches together in full communion. JALC is currently planning how it will mark the anniversary—not only of the partnership between the Anglican and Lutheran churches in Canada, but between their counterparts in the United States. It was two decades ago that the Episcopal Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) signed their own full communion agreement, Called to Common Mission. Representatives of all four churches have held regular meetings in the years since in Niagara Falls, a convenient meeting point for both Canadians and Americans.

Ryan Weston, Anglican lead animator of Public Witness for Social and Ecological Justice, and Paul Gehrs, Lutheran assistant to the bishop for justice, and ecumenical and interfaith relations, gave an update on the 2013 joint declaration, “Together for the Love of the World,” which committed both churches to work towards affordable housing and responsible resource extraction. They pointed to shared initiatives such as the National Youth Project, the most recent of which has focused on homelessness and affordable housing. Leaders from both churches have put out annual statements on National Housing Day as well as Earth Day, combining education, suggested advocacy or policy changes, and calls to prayer. They have also worked together through ecumenical organizations such as KAIROS and Citizens for Public Justice.

Kochendorfer invited table groups to discuss planning for the upcoming assembly in 2022. He asked members to reflect on three questions:

- What are your hopes for the assembly in 2022?
- What are the two most important things that the planners for the assembly should bear in mind?

- How do we best do our work for both our churches?

In their responses, table group representatives expressed hope that the churches would work together on issues such as anti-racism, and that they would provide equal roles for Indigenous members, strengthen informal partnerships, and ensure meaningful involvement of youth in planning and running the assembly.

A Common Word

Wall briefly discussed involvement in A Common Word, an international effort to bring Christians and Muslims together by opening up and sharing their scripture, traditions, cultures and practices. Anglican and Lutheran leaders recently attended an event at Huron University College where A Common Word was presented and celebrated. Wall described being particularly moved by the “powerful” way in which young people at the event read the Qur’an, and said that JALC aimed to support A Common Word.

He advised CoGS and NCC members to visit the website <http://acommonword.com>, learn more about the initiative and bring it back to their own communities. Events that have taken place around the world in recent years, Wall said, underscore “just how critically important it is that we develop those relationships—that we know and meet and learn and understand our Muslim neighbours.”

Canadian Council of Churches

Alyson Barnett-Cowan, former president of the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC), and Pat Lovell, ELCIC representative to CoGS and CCC vice president, spoke about their work on the CCC governing board and the work of the ecumenical organization in general. The CCC had recently adopted a new motto: “Christ, Community and Compassion.”

At one point they asked CoGS and NCC members to stand up if they had been involved in advocacy against sexual exploitation and trafficking; action against nuclear weapons and arms trading; expanding access to palliative care; taking part in the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, or a number of other issues. By the time they finished naming these topics, the vast majority of those in the room were standing. All of these areas are major concerns of the CCC, which has helped coordinate related work across different churches.

In a context where Canadian churches are shrinking across the board, Barnett-Cowan said, it makes little sense for different denominations to “go down separately in our own corners.” Rather, there is an opportunity here for Christian traditions to learn from each other’s best practices, to “help carry each other’s burdens” and take that story into the public sphere.

The primate and national bishop closed out the day’s agenda.

Evening Prayer

CoGS and NCC members held evening prayer in the chapel.

Members enjoyed an evening social from 8:45 p.m. to 11 p.m.