

COGS Highlights



Council of General Synod

Saturday, March 14, 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.

Morning Eucharist

CoGS and NCC members held opening worship in the chapel.

Community Building

Members of the two councils held another community building exercise to get to know each other better.

Council members broke for coffee from 10 a.m. to 10:20 a.m.

Dismantling Racism

Archbishop Linda Nicholls, Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, introduced Bernadette Arthur, the facilitator of a workshop on dismantling racism. In her introduction, the primate referred to Scripture in explaining why the church must focus on anti-racism. "The reason we do this is because racism is sin," Nicholls said. She pointed to Genesis, which says that all humans are made in the image of God; to Galatians 3:28, which explains how all are "one in Christ Jesus"; and to Mark 12:31, in which Jesus tells his followers to "Love your neighbour as yourself."

Arthur, a consultant and anti-racism facilitator with a background in racial justice and biblical reconciliation, has conducted workshops in her hometown of Hamilton and as far away as South Africa. In her presentation, she used

multimedia and table group discussions to educate CoGS and NCC members on the definition, history and expressions of racism. Arthur discussed the roots of racism in the Doctrine of Discovery, so-called "scientific" racism in the 19th century used to justify European imperialism and the enslavement of African-Americans, and the myth of "Anglo-Saxon exceptionalism."

These attitudes, values and beliefs are embedded in the history and social structures of Canada. Arthur detailed a long history of doctrines and legislation discriminating on the basis of race or religion. Besides the Doctrine of Discovery in 1493, these included the Indian Act in 1876, the Chinese Immigration Act in 1885 and Japanese Canadian internment in 1942. Illustrating that such discriminatory legislation is not a thing of the past, she also included Bill 21, a Quebec law passed in 2019 that bans religious symbols for provincial public servants.

"For me it's not about shame, guilt or judgement," Arthur said. "It's about calling a spade a spade. If we can't talk about shared memory, we can't talk about reconciliation."

Racism remains alive and well in Canada. She showed CoGS and NCC members a spate of news stories from 2018 that included the coerced sterilization of Indigenous women, a Toronto restaurant asking black customers to prepay for their meals, vandalism telling Chinese business owners to speak English, and a First Nations youth team being subjected to racist taunts at a Quebec City hockey

tournament.

Arthur urged those present to “learn from Christ” and do the work of anti-racism “in gentleness and humility.” A handout suggested books and online articles to help CoGS and NCC members learn further, reflect and share lessons with others. Recommended readings included:

- *Ten Myths White People Believe About Racism*, essay by Carolyn B. Heslel, found at the website <http://christiancentury.org>;
- *Policing Black Lives: State Violence in Canada from Slavery to the Present*, book by Robyn Maynard;
- 2019 Racialized Poverty in Canada Fact Sheets, produced by Colour of Poverty – Colour of Change. Data can be found at <http://colourofpoverty.ca/fact-sheets>; and
- *21 Things You May Not Know about the Indian Act: Helping Canadians Make Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples a Reality*, book by Bob Joseph.

The primate thanked Arthur for sharing the breadth of racism in Canadian history and for calling Christians towards work that must continue. She recommended two more books, which she has found helpful and previously encouraged Anglicans to read: *How to be an Antiracist* by Ibram X. Kendi and *White Fragility* by Robin DiAngelo.

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

Bible Study

CoGS and NCC members participated in Bible study together. Table groups read and reflected upon Luke 10:29-37, in which Jesus tells the parable of the Good Samaritan. The two councils then split into different rooms to handle business of their respective churches.

Orders of the Day

Cynthia Haines-Turner, co-chair of the planning and agenda team, read out the remaining orders of the day.

Financial Challenges

Treasurer and CFO Hanna Goschy, Financial Management and Administration, presented a report on proportional giving in the church. She began with background information on the current system of proportional giving, which was developed by dioceses and General Synod in the 1990s with the help of finance officers. General Synod approved the system in 1998 and began to implement it in 2000.

The intention was that dioceses would be asked to give a common percentage of their income to General Synod, with that income reported on a consistent and common basis. The current percentage being asked for is 26% of diocesan income. Goschy emphasized that proportional giving is completely voluntary on the part of dioceses.

In 2010, General Synod voted to organize a review of the current apportionment system, and in 2013 the review recommended that the formula remain unchanged. At its March 2019 meeting, the outgoing CoGS strongly recommended that after General Synod, the new CoGS examine the process by which dioceses are invited to make and fulfill financial commitments to the ministries of General Synod.

Goschy presented the 2020 budget for General Synod, which totals \$7.6 million including a \$60,000 contingency fund. The 2020 budget is \$862,000 lower than the actual budget for 2016. In the intervening years, contributions from 13 dioceses had decreased by a total of \$913,000 (ranging from \$2,000 to \$225,000); contributions from 11 dioceses had increased

by a total of \$111,000 (ranging from \$300 to \$30,000); and the contributions of six dioceses remained unchanged.

A number of developments had affected proportional giving during this time. The financial base of both General Synod and dioceses had eroded. Many dioceses have seen staff changes, with some new financial staff unsure how to complete forms. There remains uncertainty about the treatment of certain types of investment income. At present, 87% of revenue for the ministries of General Synod comes from diocesan contributions, 2% from Resources for Mission, and 11% from other sources.

Multiple rounds of table group discussions ensued. The first was a general reflection on whether any of this information was new to CoGS members and whether Anglicans in their dioceses knew or cared. One table group expressed concern about dioceses who might resent contributing 26% of their income while others do not. They asked whether the church might be able to offer greater context and awareness of the ministries of General Synod and how they affect Anglicans across Canada.

The next discussion asked table groups what they considered fair for proportional giving, what principles they believed to be important, and how these principles connected with the theological reflections on the church the primate had outlined on Friday. Among the responses, a table group suggested that principles should reflect the dioceses themselves and their own contexts. Another wondered about the possibility of a different percentage to ask for proportional giving. Responding to a question, Goschy said the average percentage of income contributed by dioceses to General Synod in the 2020 budget was 20%.

Finally, table groups discussed what steps CoGS should take to address the challenges to proportional giving, with an eye to making a decision by the end of the triennium in 2022. One suggested that it may be necessary to form a group specifically devoted to financial modelling with Goschy and executive officers.

The primate thanked council members for the good conversation and said that it would continue over the triennium. Given the effort to craft a new strategic plan, she said the church in some ways faces a “chicken-and-the-egg” quandary: do availability of resources drive the church’s vision, or should the church’s vision determine its allocation of resources? She highlighted the role of the *Anglican Journal* in telling the story of General Synod ministries and encouraged CoGS to read the paper, visit the website, and serve as “ambassadors for the national church” in their dioceses.

Members broke for coffee from 3 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Partners in Mission

The primate announced after the break that CoGS now had quorum due to an influx of two more voting members. A pair of motions from Partners in Mission were presented related to the Canadian Companions of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem. Both carried.

Resolution

That the Council of General Synod approve the following revisions to the text of the Canadian Companions of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem Terms of Reference:

- i. Under Responsibilities, b), to read:
To establish and promote
Jerusalem Sunday, the Seventh
Sunday of Easter, in the Anglican
Cycle of Prayer as day of
particular concern, awareness,

prayer and action for the Diocese of Jerusalem, and to encourage a portion of the Sunday offering to be directed through this body to specific ministries identified in and by the Diocese of Jerusalem.

- ii. Under Administrative Practices, Advisory Council, to read: The activity of the Canadian Companions of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem shall be overseen by an Advisory Council normally comprised of nine members appointed by the Council of General Synod. The Primate shall be an ex officio member.

Resolution

That the Council of General Synod appoint The Rt. Rev. John Organ, Mr. Amer Ayoub, and Mr. Robert Granke to the Advisory Council of the Canadian Companions of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem.

Reconciliation Pathfinders

Melanie Delva, reconciliation animator for the Anglican Church of Canada, presented a motion for “charting the course of reconciliation into the future”—the next stage in the enactment of a 2019 General Synod resolution that directed CoGS to establish a committee to strategize and guide ongoing work of truth, justice and reconciliation. That work includes building and supporting a network of ambassadors for reconciliation from dioceses and parishes.

Explaining the title of her presentation, Delva drew a distinction between “reconciliation ambassadors” and “reconciliation pathfinders.” General Synod had called for a network of diocesan ambassadors on the ground, in dioceses, ministry areas and parishes.

Reconciliation pathfinders, on the other hand, represent the group that will guide this work and advise Delva in how to strengthen and support this work across the country.

Delva put forward terms of reference laying out the mandate of the reconciliation pathfinders:

1. To raise up and support a network of reconciliation ambassadors.
2. To discern and set further priorities for this network.
3. To make regular reports on this work to the Council of General Synod, the General Synod, and by invitation, to the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples and the Vision Keepers Council.

Membership of the reconciliation pathfinders would include six to eight members, plus ex officio persons. These would include former co-chairs of the Primate’s Commission on Discovery, Reconciliation and Justice if they chose, invited to serve as either members or ex officio members. The reconciliation pathfinders would also include at least one—and ideally two—younger members and would aim to reflect the diversity of Canada, being inclusive of First Nations, Inuit, Métis, settlers and newcomers to Canada alike.

CoGS voted on a motion to move forward with the reconciliation pathfinders, which was carried.

Motion

Be it resolved that the Council of General Synod accept the proposed Terms of Reference for the Reconciliation Pathfinders, and request that the Primate and National Indigenous Anglican Archbishop work together to name the membership as soon as possible.

Governance Working Group

The primate directed CoGS to a memorandum produced by the Governance Working Group (GWG), which concerned a review of the composition of General Synod and the rules of order and procedure. General Synod 2019 had directed such a review in Resolution C005, which also obliged CoGS “to bring forward any recommended changes for consideration at the 2022 General Synod.”

Chancellor David Jones, chair of the GWG, guided CoGS through the memorandum, speaking via Internet video chat. Going through the memorandum, he described the provisions in the church’s Declaration of Principles and Constitution specifying the current composition of General Synod membership, the amending processes that would have to be followed to change those provisions, and ideas for the process of consultation.

One idea was for the GWG to share the memorandum with CoGS in March 2020, asking for members’ initial thoughts with a view to coming back to the council at one or more future meetings. Additional consultations may need to be done with other organizations, such as the House of Bishops, provinces and/or dioceses. Any resolution for General Synod would need to be brought to CoGS by its March 2022 meeting at the latest, so the council could then pass on whatever recommendations it makes to the 2022 General Synod.

PWRDF

Will Postma, executive director of the Primate’s World Relief and Development Fund (PWRDF), and board of directors member Canon David Harrison gave a report on PWRDF and its recent work. Postma said that PWRDF was staying very conscious of COVID-19 and that the novel coronavirus outbreak could have many implications for partners and the communities

that those partners serve.

The two presented PWRDF’s strategic plan for 2019-2024, noting that they have just finished year one. They walked CoGS through the five elements of the plan, along with related challenges and opportunities pursued in the first year.

- A sustainable future: Stewarding resources wisely through innovative fundraising, volunteer engagement, sharing success stories and working with youth on global justice issues. *Challenges* include identifying Canadian Anglican donors given privacy issues, low visibility of PWRDF in many churches across Canada, and the large number of requests. *Opportunities*: Engaging volunteer teams, working closer with diocesan newspapers, coordinating requests with other Anglican agencies and using new software for donors and volunteers.
- Strong partnerships: Leveraging resources by partnering with local development organizations, especially those working to empower women and girls and respond to humanitarian crises. *Challenges*: Outcomes are often affected by the sudden onset of emergencies, and partners may not have sufficiently strong measurement, reporting or financial capacities. Partners need to prevent sexual exploitation, abuse and other unethical behaviour that could hinder gender equity and cause reputational damage to PWRDF. *Opportunities*: Working with partners to put in place effective procedures to stop sexual exploitation and abuse. Positioning gender equality as a key driver in all PWRDF’s work, and being very intentional in its support for partners to improve measurement

abilities and fundraising.

- **Meaningful results:** Striving for improved food security and resilience in the face of climate change, and supporting programs around gender equality and accessibility to health care, including for mothers and babies, in vulnerable communities. *Challenges:* High-performing partners approach donors directly. Funds are few in context of many needs. Climate change is growing in impact, often disproportionately, and this affects other areas such as food security, income generation and preventative health. *Opportunities:* Working with the ACT Alliance, Anglican Alliance and other networks. Developing and focusing on areas where PWRDF can specifically add value to partners and their programs, and developing emergency preparedness plans.
- **Collaborative approach:** Fostering a culture of learning and innovation for staff and volunteers in Canada, as well as partners, to support one another in pursuing inclusion, peace and justice. *Challenges:* Working and volunteer conditions affect performance, collaboration and retention. PWRDF volunteers are engaged in multiple activities and demands on their time from the church and elsewhere. *Opportunities:* Tailoring volunteer work plans and expectations. Ensuring safety, security and protection protocols are understood, observed and reviewed. Investing in learning opportunities for staff and volunteers.
- **Mutual reconciliation:** Accompanying and support First Nations, Métis and Inuit people, guided by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the priorities of Indigenous communities and organizations in Canada. *Challenges:* Lack of clarity on

delineating PWRDF work within other entities of the Anglican Church, causing duplication of work. PWRDF support may be replacing or displacing the support of federal and provincial governments to fulfill their responsibilities. PWRDF may not meet criteria for receiving institutional funds from in-Canada foundations or governments who provide funds directly to Indigenous governments or organizations. *Opportunities:* Working closely with Indigenous leadership, such as the Indigenous Program Advisory Committee, and Indigenous partners. Impacting investment with Raven Capital, which uses investment capital to invest in youth entrepreneurship, fresh foods and renewable energy. Engaging dioceses and volunteers to promote the PWRDF Mapping Exercise.

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

Green Shoot Moment

Reconvening CoGS after dinner, the primate made some brief comments about whether the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak might help push the church forward in its technology use. In the face of disruptions to normal patterns of worship, many dioceses were shifting their services online. Nicholls pointed to the use of livestreaming in the diocese of Toronto, where public worship had been cancelled until further notice. Instead, St. James Cathedral would livestream Choral Mattins on the coming Sunday through the diocesan Facebook page, with Bishop Andrew Asbil bringing words of comfort and hope to the city and diocese. In the diocese of Quebec, where public worship has also been cancelled, Bishop Bruce Myers planned to livestream prayers from his home via Facebook Live.

For the second “green shoot moment” of the meeting, the primate described the experience of Bishop Susan Bell in the diocese of Niagara. Shortly after her consecration in May 2018, Bell met church planters in Hamilton. One was Matt Pamplin, a pastor at the thriving church plant St. Clair Community Church. Pamplin in turn introduced the bishop to Rob Miller, a member of St. Clair who had been experiencing a call from God to the Anglican Church as well as a call to “a neighbourhood, a ministry and a community.” Bishop Bell and Miller began discussing what that might look like in relationship with St. Clair.

A few months later, Miller and his partner Jamie moved into the rectory at St. Luke’s Anglican Church, which had been disestablished in 2017. The Millers began gathering a community of Christians who met around their dinner table three times a week. A few months after that, the community had grown too large to worship around the dinner table anymore. The diocese put some thought into the matter and made the decision to reopen the old St. Luke’s, which they had been on the verge of selling or redeveloping.

By January 2019, Bell could walk through the old wooden doors of St. Luke’s, now freshly scrubbed, and find pews and nave turned to face each other; a paschal candle in the centre, sweet smells, and a “warm and calming” atmosphere. Sitting there were more than 25 mostly young people quietly chatting, the majority less than 30 years old. Bell recalled a friend and colleague who had said of St. Luke’s, “God is not done with this place.” She joined the worshippers in evening prayer. Worries about “roofs, boilers and insurance,” she thought, “could wait until tomorrow.” That night Bell thought of the church, “We’re on our way. We’re going to do this with God’s help.”

Having told this story of St. Luke’s, the primate

said she was struck by how God called this young leader out of a church plant in another tradition into “our Anglican church.” This story, she said, suggested that much of the liturgy and the life of the church, “things we think are too old and traditional, are actually gifts that we need to rediscover.”

Strategic Planning Working Group

Ian Alexander, member of the Strategic Planning Working Group (SPWG), led the second session on the group’s work.

He presented preliminary results of the SPWG pilot survey, which was still open, based on a small sample of voting and non-voting members of CoGS. The results thus far indicated that “making choices is difficult” and that members saw no obvious areas in which to reduce activities. There was a consensus on top priorities for the strategic plan, which included social justice and the Indigenous church. There was also a consensus on new activities: members favoured a focus on issues such as anti-racism and climate change.

Alexander asked table groups to engage in several minutes of discussion to compile notes on what they found encouraging, concerning and surprising in the SPWG report. Tables also discussed possible implications of these results for the development of a new strategic plan for the national church. Notes were passed onto the SPWG. Next, table groups discussed whether the list of 2017 activities in the report were an accurate picture of what the national church does, and whether members had any suggested adjustments.

Part of any strategic plan, Alexander said, is looking at and evaluating the last plan—in this case, Vision 2019, which has guided the Anglican Church of Canada since 2010. Alexander noted that Vision 2019 was explicitly described as a “strategic vision,” not a strategic

plan. It was based on the Five Marks of Mission and included seven “priorities” and five “practices,” but did not set out concrete ways to measure progress made towards goals. More research will be taken in the future to evaluate Vision 2019, such as diocesan surveys.

In preparing for the church’s new strategic plan, consultations will take place across the church. Though surveys can be helpful, Alexander said, they are not equivalent to consultation. The question is how to best respond to General Synod’s call to do this work “in partnership with the church.” How can the SPWG reach out most effectively to particular groups, such as Indigenous and/or younger Anglicans? Who else does the working group need to speak to, and what is the best way to do it?

Council members responded to these questions in a plenary discussion and Alexander thanked them for their feedback. Archbishop Nicholls wrapped up the session by noting that conversations at the present CoGS were just the start of the process: “There’s lots of work ahead,” the primate noted. She encouraged members to talk about these early stages of the strategic planning process with anyone they have connections with.

Holden Evening Prayer

CoGS and NCC members held Holden Evening Prayer together.

Members from both councils enjoyed an evening social until 11 p.m.