

COGS Highlights



Council of General Synod

Saturday, March 4, 2023

Members of the Council of General Synod (CoGS) gathered together at 9 a.m. EST in the Best Western Toronto Airport Carlingview Hotel, for those attending in person, and via Zoom for those joining online.

Morning Prayer

Liza Anderson, representative to CoGS for The Episcopal Church, led morning worship. The Rev. Louise Peters, chaplain to CoGS, then asked the question of the day for members to respond to which would then be sent to the incoming council.

Saturday's question: "Name the one piece of ministry that the Council of General Synod has done you pray continues, grows and deepens."

Faith, Worship, and Ministry Committee

The Rev. Eileen Scully, director of Faith, Worship, and Ministry (FWM), directed council to the FWM report which provided a snapshot of recent work. She put forward several motions which all carried, though there was some debate around the resolution on Pastoral Liturgies for Journeys of Gender Transition and Affirmation which sparked debate.

Resolution

Be it resolved that this Council of General Synod forward to the General Synod the following motion:

Be it resolved that this General Synod receive and approve *One Flock, One Shepherd: Lutherans, Anglicans, and Moravians – Called to Walk Together in*

Full Communion - the Declaration on recognition of full communion relations between the Anglican, Lutheran and Moravian churches in Canada.

Resolution

Be it resolved that this Council of General Synod approve the following motion to be sent to the next meeting of the General Synod:

Be it resolved that this General Synod authorize *Deconsecration of a Sacred Building* for use in The Anglican Church of Canada.

Resolution

Be it resolved that this Council of General Synod approve the following motion to be sent to the next meeting of the General Synod:

Be it resolved that this General Synod authorize Pastoral Liturgies for Journeys of Gender Transition and Affirmation for use in The Anglican Church of Canada.

Resolution

Be it resolved that this Council of General Synod approve the following motion to be sent to the next meeting of The General Synod:

Be it resolved that this General Synod

authorize the *Table of Alternative Old Testament Readings for Eastertide* as commended by the English Language Liturgical Consultation (2011) for use as an updated alternative to the Revised Common Lectionary offerings for Eastertide.

Resolution

Be it resolved that this Council of General Synod approve the following motion to be sent to the next meeting of The General Synod:

Be it resolved that this General Synod commend *Revised Common Lectionary Daily Readings*, as commended by the Consultation on Common Texts (2005) as an alternative daily office lectionary for use in The Anglican Church of Canada.

Resolution

Be it resolved that this Council of General Synod approve the following motion to be sent to the next meeting of The General Synod:

Be it resolved that this General Synod authorize the following texts from the English Language Liturgical Consultation for use:

- *Gloria in Excelsis*
- *The Nicene Creed*
- *The Apostles' Creed*
- *Agnus Dei and Alternative*
- *Te Deum Laudamus and Versicles and Responses*
- *Benedictus and Alternative*
- *Magnificat and Alternative*

Resolution

Be it resolved that this Council of General Synod forward to the next meeting of The General Synod the following motion:

Be it resolved that this General Synod authorize for use in The Anglican Church of Canada the following contemporary language collect for Reconciliation with the Jewish People: *O GOD, who has chosen Israel to be your inheritance: Have mercy on us and forgive us for violence and wickedness against our brother Jacob; the arrogance of our hearts and minds has deceived us, and shame has covered our face. Take away all pride and prejudice in us, and grant that we, together with the people you first made your own, may attain to the fullness of redemption which you have promised; to the honour and glory of your most holy Name. Amen.*

A motion on the Anglican-Mennonite Dialogue went back for revisions after questions about the language regarding the number of members appointed by the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples (ACIP).

Public Witness for Social and Ecological Justice Committee

Ryan Weston, lead animator of Public Witness for Social and Ecological Justice (PWSEJ), drew the attention of CoGS to the PWSEJ report and introduced three motions, which all carried.

Resolution

Be it resolved: That the Council of General Synod commend the motion on Moving Toward Net Zero in the Anglican Church of Canada to General Synod 2023 for its consideration.

Resolution

Be it resolved: That the Council of General Synod commend the motion on Addressing the Climate Emergency to General Synod 2023 for its consideration.

Resolution

Be it resolved: That the Council of General Synod commend the motion on Water to General Synod 2023 for its consideration.

Members took a break from 10:20 a.m. to 10:45 a.m.

Partners in Mission Committee

Andrea Mann, director of Global Relations, presented an Anglican Video clip documenting growing violence in Israel-Palestine, including in the Episcopal diocese of Jerusalem. Mann described her recent trip to the Holy Land in which she accompanied Archbishop Linda Nicholls, primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, and National Bishop Susan Johnson of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. On their trip they had seen a deteriorating situation for Palestinians, in light of what Mann described as the most right-wing Israeli government to date where human rights violations are committed with impunity. She criticized the Canadian government for failing the cause of peace in Palestine in favour of the status quo.

Mann once more outlined the planned trip to Ottawa in which Nicholls, Johnson, and leaders of other churches plan to meet with elected government officials as well as representatives of Global Affairs Canada, the Israeli embassy and the Palestinian Authority, and to participate in a public panel organized by Saint Paul University calling the Canadian government to

action. Anglicans and Lutherans have also begun conversing with Jewish and Muslim partners in Canada, who have reacted positively to a letter sent by Nicholls and Johnson to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in January regarding the vandalism of a cemetery overseen by the Anglican Church in Jerusalem. A pre-Assembly webinar has been held to discuss these matters with Anglican and Lutherans who will be attending the Assembly in Calgary this summer.

Mann introduced a motion to commend to the Assembly, which carried.

Resolution

The Council of General Synod is asked to approve the following Assembly 2023 Resolution on Peace and Justice in Palestine and Israel, for presentation and discussion at Assembly 2023 and decision at General Synod 2023. The Resolution will reaffirm the commitments of the Anglican Church of Canada and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada to the pursuit of peace with justice for all in Palestine and Israel.

Be it resolved that the Anglicans and Lutherans, gathered as Assembly 2023, reaffirm the commitment of our churches to the pursuit of peace with justice for all in Palestine and Israel. [Affirmations and calls follow.]

Anglican Award of Merit Committee

General Secretary Alan Perry announced the latest winners of the Anglican Award of Merit, established to recognize lay people for their service at the national or international level. The Anglican Award of Merit Committee has named the following individuals as this year's recipients of the Anglican Award of Merit:

- Canon (Lay) Donna R. Bomberry
- Mr. George E.H. Cadman KC
- Mrs. Elizabeth Hutchinson
- Mr. Dion C. Lewis

CoGS members reacted with audible enthusiasm and approval as the winners were announced, followed by applause. The primate said it was a “joy to hear the ways in which lay people across church have contributed to our life nationally and internationally.”

Members broke for lunch from noon to 1:30 p.m.

Bible Study

Council reflected upon John 4:1-30 for the afternoon Bible study.

Anglican Consultative Council

Primate Nicholls led off a report on the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC18) in Accra, Ghana, having been part of the Canadian delegation along with the Rev. Marnie Peterson, Anita Gittens, Bishop Riscylla Shaw, and Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby. The whole gathering was framed around the Marks of Mission, with the respective daily themes: Tell, Teach, Tend, Transform, Treasure. Each day of the council saw Bible study around that day’s theme and work around each.

ACC18, which took place in February, occurred at a moment of tension within the Anglican Communion following the Church of England’s report on human sexuality that recommended same-sex blessings, while maintaining the traditional definition of marriage. Nicholls said there was misunderstanding of the relationship of the Church of England to the Anglican Communion. In this context, the primate said, Welby had to maintain a delicate balance as leader of the Church of England and symbolic head of the Anglican Communion.

ACC18 also occurred during Phase 3 of the Lambeth Conference, Phase 1 consisting of pre-Lambeth Bible studies on Zoom and Phase 2 the gathered Lambeth Conference in August 2022. Phase 3 followed the in-person gathering and included continuing Bible studies and “call and response” to the Lambeth calls, a series of affirmations and calls to the Communion that served as a framework for discussion at Lambeth. Nicholls reiterated that Anglicans have not seen the final form of the Lambeth calls, with that work continuing since August. Final versions of the calls will be released gradually in the coming months.

Hosting ACC18 were Archbishop Cyril Ben Kobina Smith, primate of Ghana; the bishops of Cape Coast and Accra; and King Osabarimba Kwesi Atta II, Omanhene of the Oguaa traditional area. Reporting on the gathering to CoGS, Marnie Peterson spoke about the first two days, Tell and Teach, which focused on the first two Marks of Mission and recognized the priority of building a safe church throughout the Anglican Communion. General Secretary Alan Perry—who attended ACC18 as a member of the Anglican Communion Legal Advisors Network, but not as part of the Canadian delegation—described the third day, Tend, which centred on the work of various networks representing the Anglican Consultative Council in different areas. These networks include Family, Health and Community, Anglican Alliance; Unity, Faith and Order, Interfaith, Legal Advisors, Colleges and Universities, Indigenous, Francophone, and Lusophone (Portuguese speakers).

Anita Gittens spoke about the fourth day, Transform, based around the fourth Mark of Mission which speaks about transforming unjust structures of society. On this day, the Anglican Consultative Council received reports from the International Anglican Women’s Network, the Peace and Justice Network, Gender Justice, and

Ecumenical Relationships and Dialogue. Finally, Riscylla Shaw discussed the fifth day, Treasure, which pertained to the fifth Mark of Mission on care for creation and looked at sustainable development goals.

A special moment of the gathering was the council's visit to Cape Coast Castle on the west coast of Ghana, which took place at the midpoint of ACC18. This was the largest of the "slave castles" in West Africa that served as hubs of the Atlantic slave trade. Gittens, who is a Black woman, described the visit as a "stomach-churching experience." ACC members visited the men's dungeons and women's dungeons and a tunnel known as the "place of no return" where people were moved onto slave ships. Standing in a dungeon in groups of 30, the council heard how 200 enslaved people would be crammed into the same space, shackled without food or water. Some might have been ill. Council members entered the governor's mansion and saw the room where slaves were auctioned off. They saw a trap door in the home where there was a connection to the women's dungeons, and learned that women and girls would be brought up and raped for hours and thrown back.

A particular experience that stayed with Gittens was the presence of a church on the site. She wondered how people could go to church there and pray. "Could they not hear the cries and the wails and be very aware and conscious of what was happening in the depths of that church in the dungeons?" Gittens asked. After their visit to Cape Coast Castle, council went to Cape Coast Cathedral for a service of reconciliation, which Gittens and other Canadian delegates described as feeling too sudden after the visit to the castle. She joined a group that wrote a resolution presented to ACC18 and subsequently passed.

The resolution expressed the gratitude of the

Anglican Consultative Council for all who facilitated their visit to Cape Coast Castle. It lamented the widespread historic involvement of the church in the Atlantic slave trade, effects of which are still being felt across the Communion, and how slavery made a mockery of the life and teachings of Jesus. The resolution called on churches of the Anglican Communion to work with the Anglican Communion Office to build on work underway developing programs that seek to address this past, as well as its ongoing manifestations in the form of human trafficking and modern slavery. Gittens concluded by quoting the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. "Darkness cannot drive out darkness. Only light can do that. Hate does not drive out hate. Only love can do that."

The primate thanked Gittens for her "profound and moving reflection on that day", concurring that it was a difficult visit. Nicholls shared the sense of whiplash in the day's tone as, following the service of reconciliation, council members attended an outdoor ceremony at the tribal king's palace. The ceremony saw drums, celebratory dancing in the streets, waving of banners, and a gala dinner. During this ceremony, the Archbishop of Canterbury was clothed as a chief and bestowed with a ceremonial name, Nama Kofi Canterbury I, which Nicholls called an honour. While there was much joy in this celebration, Nicholls said, it rounded out a "curious day".

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

Message to Next CoGS

Table groups discussed messages they could give to the next CoGS to guide them in the next biennium. Responses highlighted the importance of diversity, listening to people at the margins, building community in person if possible, praying together, reading material in advance, and not to let lack of knowledge inhibit anyone from participating and asking

questions. Incoming CoGS members should be prophetic and bold, think outside the box, ask the planning and agenda team to modify the agenda if necessary, and have fun.

Council members were also given the opportunity to write individually to the incoming CoGS to bless them as they begin their ministry, putting their message in an envelope which would be presented to the next CoGS.

Reflections from Prolocutor and Deputy Prolocutor

The Rev. Karen Egan, prolocutor, and Judith Moses, deputy prolocutor, shared their reflections on the past quadrennium through the lens of the triennial theme: “A Changing Church, A Searching World, A Faithful God.” Moses advised anyone who takes on the position of prolocutor or deputy prolocutor to do their homework on what the job involves. One of her formative experiences was hearing the report of Canon Neil Elliot, the Anglican Church of Canada’s statistics and research officer, on declining membership that made her realize the situation the church was in. Despite this “trial by fire”, she said, the lines on statistics can change. Egan compared the experience of the changing church over the quadrennium to childhood memories of walking on muskeg, a bog-like mixture of water and vegetation: “You can keep going, but it doesn’t feel like there’s much under your foot.”

Moses highlighted working with the Indigenous church and seeing what self-determination really means. Thinking of Indigenous people as a homogenous group is inaccurate, she said, since colonialism separated Indigenous people in all kinds of ways—status and non-status; First Nations, Métis, and Inuit; on-reserve and off-reserve—creating a need to overcome the divisions imposed upon them. Moses called developing the Covenant and Our Way of Life a

“wonderful exercise to work on” and appreciated the love and sharing that went into these documents. “The broader church will benefit from the gifts that the Indigenous church can bring, and there’s a lot there that we haven’t unpacked yet,” Moses said. Indigenous people look at ministry in a community-based rather than church-based way, connecting spirituality to all of creation, she said, and noted the primate had commented on the sense of humour Indigenous Anglicans bring to ministry.

The challenge of dismantling racism also stood out for Moses in the quadrennium, with the primate having set this as one of her main priorities upon taking over the primatial leadership. The Black Lives Matter movement, she said, resonated with Indigenous people who found parallels with their own history of oppression after colonization. Part of this experience for Moses was seeing the inter-relationship between Indigenous Anglicans, Black Anglicans, and other Anglicans of colour. The building of a rich new set of relationships was a major experience for her as deputy prolocutor.

The COVID-19 pandemic encompassed both “A Changing Church” and “A Searching World”. Moses said the church had not just survived, but thrived during the pandemic. As an example of how Anglicans adapted to changed conditions, she cited her experience as chair of the Strategic Planning Working Group (SPWG). “We thought we started out with a good idea of what strategic plan might look like,” Moses recalled. “Then COVID hit. We threw everything out the window and went back to the drawing board, but there was nothing there. We had to re-think how we were going to do this.” The SPWG went out and formed listening groups to hear from Anglicans across the country, using the Bible to centre themselves.

The prolocutor and deputy prolocutor pointed

to the work of coordinating committees as an example of reaching into a searching world. Egan highlighted partnerships such as those with the Lutherans, Moravians, and Mennonites, and thanked Faith, Worship, and Ministry for its faithful work in building those relationships.

"A Faithful God", Egan said, had been evident through the work of CoGS over the past four years. "I think God has been incredibly faithful in this group," the prolocutor said. At some times the council had been compelled to have difficult discussions, such as through the #ACCtoo movement. In other ways, the pandemic had offered a struggle that obliged CoGS to find new ways to move forward, organizing through the planning and agenda team, coming up with idea on how to animate meetings, and improving and fostering relationships. "COVID offered us these opportunities and we will forever know that we are capable of moving forward and God is with us wherever we go," Egan said.

The prolocutor and deputy prolocutor cited the self-determining Indigenous church as a sign of hope and a place in the national church where the presence of God is evident. Finally, they highlighted their experience of grace. Moses said as a lay person she had often had trouble wrapping her head around the concept of grace, but now felt that the Anglican Church of Canada was working in a state of grace. The primate thanked both for their reflections and recalled an Inuktitut definition of grace that Bishop Joey Royal mentioned the previous day that he had heard the course of his ministry in the Arctic, as "the kindness of God that enables you."

Evening Prayer

The Rev. Louise Peters, chaplain to CoGS, led evening prayer.

Members broke for dinner from 5:30 p.m. to 7

p.m.

Celebration and Evening Social

CoGS members gathered that evening for a celebration and social marking the end of the present council. Each member received a certificate for their work in CoGS over the course of the quadrennium. The celebration included demonstration of artistic talents from members including recitation of poems, limericks, and jokes, as well as karaoke that prompted much singing, dancing, laughter, and fellowship.