

COGS Highlights



Council of General Synod

Friday, May 1, 2015

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

Eucharist, Bible Study and Check-in

The day began with a Eucharist service. In his homily, Archbishop Fred Hiltz referenced Herbert O'Driscoll's reflections on St. Phillip and St. James from his book *Heralds of God: Homilies for Saints and Holy Days* and asked council members to ponder the question: What gifts do you recognize on yourself for your part in nurturing the life and witness of the Church in our time? A ten-minute discussion ensued.

Opening Formalities

During opening formalities, the Primate noted that the chaplain, Sister Elizabeth Rolfe-Thomas, was about to be installed as the new reverend mother at the Sisterhood of St. John the Divine in Toronto, and that the current meeting would be the last Council of General Synod (CoGS) meeting attended by Episcopal Church representative Martha Gardner.

Jane Osler, co-chair of the Planning and Agenda Team, presented the Orders of the Day. She noted that the theme of this Council of General Synod meeting was centred on trust – Trust in God, Trust in Each Other – and that the anti-racism training later in the day was a key part of this. A key part of the day's agenda would be listening to ACIP for its updated document on the 20th anniversary of the 1994 covenant.

Resolution

Council members adopted by consensus the minutes from the last CoGS meeting on Nov. 14-16, 2014.

Council members took a short coffee break from 10:15 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.

Primate's Commission on Discovery, Reconciliation and Justice

Archbishop Terry Finlay and the Rev. Andrew Wesley, co-chairs and co-chaplains of the Primate's Commission on Discovery, Reconciliation and Justice, offered an update on the commission's work since the last CoGS meeting. Wesley began by telling a story in which the Creator decides to have counsel with his Creation and says he will give humans a special gift, but it will hide it from them in a place where they will never find it – inside themselves. Drawing a parallel with the commission's work, Wesley noted that the commission included both higher-ranking figures and those from the grassroots and that the challenge was to meet in the middle and find a common denominator.

Acknowledging the territory of the Mississauga of the New Credit on which the CoGS meeting was taking place, Archbishop Finlay described the commission's last meeting on Nov. 7-8, 2014 at St. Peter's Church in Oshweken Six Nations, during which members spent a great deal of time reflecting on the political and theological ramifications of the Doctrine of Discovery. They are currently working on producing a theological reflection on the Doctrine as well as what reconciliation might look like in parishes and communities. The commission is also considering how the quality of life in Indigenous communities might be improved by understanding the nature of treaties and the Indian Act.

Archbishop Finlay noted that the commission's next meeting will take place two weeks after CoGS at the Carey Centre on the University of British

Columbia campus in Vancouver. At this meeting, members will look at the draft version of the *Indigenous Call to the Church Leadership* document as well as a paper produced by members of the Ecumenical Working Group on Residential Schools that challenges the theological understanding of mission. Archbishop Finlay suggested that all CoGS members should receive a copy of the study paper so they can read it and offer feedback to the commission, ideally by the end of October, so that their responses can be discussed at the commission's next gathering.

Archbishop Hiltz thanked the co-chairs for their report and led a prayer for the healing of divisions.

Primate's Report

Opening with a summary of the contents of his written report – which includes diocesan visits, activities, and statements offered from the Primate's office – Archbishop Hiltz put the tasks of the council members and that of the church as a whole in the context of the movement of the Holy Spirit.

The Primate noted that the present CoGS meeting comes halfway through the seven weeks of the Easter festival, when Gospel readings start to transition from stories of the Lord drawing people into the joy of his resurrection to an abiding conversation about what it means to dwell in him and go and bear fruit in the world. In this promised gift of the Spirit, the disciples were called to trust in the promise of the Holy Spirit's coming, as are the followers of Jesus today, including the members of CoGS who are invited to trust in God and each other.

"It's not about us," Archbishop Hiltz said. "It's about the world God lives and our call to serve that mission of God."

He described the present manifestation of CoGS, like the previous two, as entrusted with helping the "church nationally". The Primate used the term "church nationally," as opposed to "national church," to paint a broader and more reflective picture of the church from coast to coast, its parishes and ministries.

Pointing out the substantial progress that has been made on every priority and practice of Vision 2019, he noted that the entire church was watching and listening to the CoGS members, who must embrace their work by trusting in the Spirit's guidance. He praised the careful establishment of the Commission on the Marriage Canon and the work of the Primate's Commission on Discovery, Reconciliation and Justice as examples of that trust.

As Archbishop Hiltz recalled meeting with officers and members of the Indigenous House of Bishops Leadership Circle the previous day and listening for the third time to the Indigenous call to the church leadership, he recalled that his mind and heart were caught by the urgency of a plan for Indigenous ministries across the church in light of Indigenous bishops and priests describing the crisis in their communities. There was a new realization by the board of the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund (PWRDF), he added, there was much work to do here in Canada.

Struck by a reference in the Indigenous call to the church leadership to work to overcome "overwhelming death" to the people of this land, the Primate had spent a restless night dwelling on the nature of being a Gospel people, which promises new and abundant life for all, and saw the Indigenous Call as a movement of the Spirit among the peoples of this land to create a brighter, healthier, happier future for all – and saw the genuine will of the church to stay focused and addressed this crisis. He referred to the Timeline of the church's historical relationship with Indigenous peoples as "a story of resilience, hope, trust broken, and trust gradually being restored – a movement of the Spirit."

The statement on the #22Days project that emerged from a number of recent conversations, Archbishop Hiltz said, represented another movement of the Spirit, as Anglicans across Canada are called to devote the 22 days between the closing ceremony of the Truth and Reconciliation Day on May 31 and National Aboriginal Day on June 21 to prayer and a renewed commitment to healing and

reconciliation, by listening to the stories of residential school survivors and standing in solidarity with First Nations peoples.

Drawing attention to an ongoing crisis, Archbishop Hiltz quoted what he called the “staggering” and “heart-wrenching” statistic that 1,122 Indigenous women in Canada have been murdered or gone missing since 1980. Referring to the Spirit moving through the House of Bishops, he repeated the call that Anglican churches across Canada should ring their bells 1,122 times to draw attention to this situation and invite other churches to join us, arguing that it was “time to speak out – time to help our country come to grips with this national tragedy.”

Following the Primate’s report, table discussions ensued in which council members offered examples of moments in which they had seen sudden and unexpected movements of the Spirit.

Council members broke for lunch from 12 p.m. to 1 p.m.

Commission on the Marriage Canon

Canon Robert Falby, the chair of the Commission on the Marriage Canon appointed by General Synod, and Bishop Linda Nicholls, commission member, offered an update on the commission’s work since the last meeting of CoGS. Canon Falby said that the commission has met several times, with the last meeting taking place at Church House on April 9-10, 2015. A further all-member telephone conference is scheduled to take place in June with another meeting to take place in August.

With the commission moving quickly due to the members’ excellent working relationship, Falby anticipated that it could have a report ready by Sept. 1, 2015, well in advance of its mandate to deliver a report by the November 2015 CoGS meeting.

The consultation is almost complete; though the Commission has not yet heard from the Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue, it has been advised that it will receive something from Catholic participants in the dialogue by the end of May.

Reiterating the support role of the commission, Bishop Nicholls said a large part of the forthcoming report would be the biblical and theological rationale for changes to the marriage canon. An annotated bibliography has been collated to provide additional background material, and there will be a draft motion to consider. Finally, the commission has determined it might be beneficial to write a shorter document summarizing the report. Commission members have offered to be available to CoGS wherever helpful to prepare materials in advance of General Synod.

With no questions or comments from the floor, Archbishop Hiltz thanked Canon Falby and Bishop Nicholls for their comprehensive update and providing new information on the timing of the report’s release.

Anti-Racism Training

General Secretary Michael Thompson introduced the facilitator of the afternoon’s anti-racism/white privilege workshop, Anglican Fund for Healing and Reconciliation Coordinator Esther Wesley, by describing her as a leader of the Anglican Church of Canada and ecumenically on anti-racism. Peter Noteboom facilitated the workshop with Ms. Wesley.

The workshop kicked off with CoGS members filling in the “Power Flower” wheel which offers a variety of identity components (denoting gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, etc.) as petals on a flower to determine their relationship to the existing power structure. Subsequent sections explored definitions and meaning of white privilege, its invisibility, and its enduring nature, as well as the concepts of internalized racial superiority and internalized racial oppression.

Following a coffee break, council members returned and broke into groups to discuss five “power tools” – resource sharing, expertise recognizing, storytelling, network building, and decision-making – that could help change the status quo of power and privilege. In subsequent

exercises, different tables analyzed manifestations of white privilege at CoGS and how they might be overcome, and then met with members of their respective ecclesiastical provinces to reflect on how white privilege might be overcome in their own dioceses.

Interventions by CoGS members after the discussion revealed widespread recognition of the fact that leading bodies in the church tend to be largely white, but also how existing power relations within the Anglican Church of Canada itself contrast with the relative powerlessness of the church at the moment in secular society as a whole. Council members made it clear that the work of anti-racism did not end with one workshop, but was a lifelong process of learning and self-reflection, as indicated by one bishop who mused, "The more I learn, the less I know."

Council members took a break for dinner from 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples

The evening presentation by members of the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples (ACIP) was preceded by the hymn *Many and Great, O God, Are Your Works*, which historically was once sung by 38 Lakota warriors being led to their execution by the United States army.

The centrepiece of the statement was the reading out loud by ACIP members of the latest draft, dated September 2014, of the group's document *Where We Are Today: Twenty Years after the Covenant, an Indigenous Call to the Wider Church*. The members included the Ven. Sidney Black, ACIP co-chair; National Indigenous Anglican Bishop Mark MacDonald; and Bishop Lydia Mamakwa from the Indigenous Spiritual Ministry of Mishamikoweesh.

Timed to coincide with the Primate's Commission on the Doctrine of Discovery, Reconciliation and Justice, the summary statement of the document noted that "there has been great progress towards Indigenous self-determination in the past few years," but that "Indigenous realities show us that there is more to do." Steps to be taken "include the

evaluation of the historical and present resources used for Indigenous ministries, a strategy for the just and sustainable use of these resources, and a plan for walking together, in ministry, fellowship, and advocacy."

The body of the document contained sections detailing background information, progress and challenge, the vision of our Elders, the next steps towards self-determination and towards the implementation of the vision, and an attached copy of the original 1994 covenant for reference.

After the statement was read, council members watched a video, created by Anglican Video, that included interviews with prominent Indigenous Anglicans answering frequently asked questions on Indigenous ministries and the path toward self-determination. Their responses touched on the unique nature of Indigenous cultures and spirituality, the meaning of the Sacred Circle and consensus decision-making, issues of financial accountability, and how to walk together with Anglicans and those of other traditions.

Following the video, Bishop MacDonald discussed the previous history of the Indigenous call to church leadership commissioned by ACIP, which had recently passed the present draft and which will stay in this form until passed by the Sacred Circle. Future consultations remain with different communities to determine whether the document needs to be translated into different languages.

He noted that a rough draft of another document has been produced by the House of Indigenous Bishops Leadership Circle outlining critical question for discussion, primarily steps for implementing the strategy for Indigenous ministries across Canada. This would involve:

- Creation of a group to steer the process;
- Development of a timeline for the process, which initially would apply to the next triennium;
- Consultation with partners, including the Council of the North, House of Bishops, Council of General Synod, and ecumenical partners;

- Consultations on specific issues, particularly administration, governance, and mission;
- The need to develop a strategy for support working with the rest of the church; and
- Co-operation with evaluation of funding regarding Indigenous Ministries.

Bishop MacDonald also pointed to the need to address some changes in Canon 22, starting with the term of the National Indigenous Anglican Bishop and the method of representation, which will need to be revisited before Sacred Circle. Others include the creation of Indigenous forms of gathering together, training ordination under Indigenous guidance, and the presence of alternative Indigenous organizations where necessary and appropriate, such as Indigenous liturgical commissions.

Following the presentation by ACIP, the Primate suggested moving questions and comments to the beginning of the following afternoon to allow council members to ponder their thoughts overnight.

Sister Elizabeth Rolfe-Thomas then led the council members in Night Prayer.