

COGS Highlights



Council of General Synod

Saturday, May 2, 2015

Following an optional Eucharist service at 7:30 a.m., council members gathered at 8:45 a.m. at the Queen of Apostles Retreat Centre in Mississauga.

Bible Study

Sister Elizabeth Rolfe-Thomas led Morning Prayer and facilitated a Bible study, using three versions of 1 Corinthians 12. 4-11.

Faith, Worship, and Ministry – Vital and Healthy Parishes & Youth Secretariat

The Rev. Dr. Eileen Scully, director of Faith, Worship, and Ministry, introduced liturgist and scholar the Rev. Dr. Jay Koyle, president of the Associated Parishes of Liturgy for Mission and a member of the Vital and Healthy Parishes initiative, to facilitate this section.

"The way we look at things often determines what we see," Dr. Koyle began. Looking back on his time through parish ministry and now as a congregational development officer, he recalled hearing time and again that the church is in crisis. While agreeing that the church faces a crisis today, Dr. Koyle believed there had been a misunderstanding of the nature of that crisis.

Typically, he said, the crisis we face is understood as a problem that must be fixed as soon as possible, of a church in decline that is losing members and resources on a daily basis. For years, congregational development has been focused on the question of how we can reverse that trend and return to strong churches so we can have a sense of our future as a church. But after gathering with people across Canada, Dr. Koyle believes that they have identified another crisis – one seen in the New Testament, where a crisis is not a problem to be solved, but an opportunity to be embraced, a moment of choice around allegiance, where we

have one foot planted in this world and another in God's promised kingdom.

While such sentiments may seem "pie in the sky" on their own, Dr. Koyle said, churches who make this important distinction start to see increased vitality. Rather than focusing on their current membership, vital churches orient outwards to the wider community and those not involved in the church. A common dilemma in churches is uncertainty about what difference they are trying to make, and a temptation to pay more attention to numbers that can be easily measured, such as the number of baptisms, money raised through the thrift shop, etc.

Describing language and conversation as "the currency of change," Dr. Koyle noted that two kinds of conversations have come to predominate in the church – maintenance conversations (taking care of what we have) and preferential conversations (How can we appeal to people beyond ourselves, such as attracting more youth to the church? How can we keep our existing members happy?). But the kinds of conversations that need to be sparked more in the church are missional conversations, which concern themselves first and foremost with asking what God is doing in the world and how we can be involved in those things.

Dr. Koyle argued that strong congregations do not represent the "why" of what the church is doing, but rather the "how". Vital and healthy parishes are important because that is where lives are transformed. Gathering people from across Canada involved in the revitalization of their churches, the Vital and Healthy Parishes project is a rich opportunity to network and learn from each other, with participants in the May 2014 Vital and

Healthy Parishes event taking back new skills and insights to their communities.

A subsequent discussion among table groups focused on the questions of where council members are seeing shifts of mission or signs of vitality in their congregations or dioceses. Common themes in the responses included a growing spirit of cooperation and sharing of resources between churches, an increased sense of community ownership, the importance of church activity outside Sunday mornings, getting outside the four walls of the church building, and the idea that growth is a by-product of doing things for others rather than for ourselves.

Following Dr. Koyle's presentation, Rev. Scully reflected on lessons learned from the Vital and Healthy Parishes project over the previous year and a half. Last year's national gathering attracted 74 people, with eight Lutherans from three Synods and Anglicans from 23 dioceses. This year registration was hovering around 66 or 67, including all synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada and fewer Anglican dioceses, albeit with some new participants such as the Diocese of Saskatchewan.

"There's an excitement as this is building," Rev. Scully said, noting that the high degree of trust between participants at the Vital and Healthy Parishes initiative paralleled that the present CoGS meeting. She recalled how the project evolved from its original concept of inviting plenary speakers (aka "the guru approach") to allowing every diocese to put together their own teams. By trusting that people would come willing to participate and help the agenda, the project saw healthy interplay and a further building of trust between participants.

Dr. Scully also introduced resolutions to change the terms of reference of the Youth Secretariat, and to delegate further such revisions to the Faith, Worship, and Ministry Coordinating Committee. Both resolutions were adopted.

Resolution

"That the Council of General Synod

approve the Terms of Reference for the Youth Secretariat, as recommended by the Faith, Worship, and Ministry Committee."

Resolution

"That the Council of General Synod authorize all future work on these Terms of Reference lie within the mandate of Faith, Worship, and Ministry."

Council members took a break from 10:30 a.m. to 11 a.m.

Financial Management

Archbishop Colin Johnson, Chair of the General Synod Audit Committee, presented a number of documents from by the Financial Management Committee and the Audit Committee, outlining budgetary figures in 2014 for the Anglican Church of Canada Resolution Corporation (ACCRC), Consolidated Trust Fund (CTF), and the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada.

According to the consolidated financial statements, General Synod had total assets of \$24.3 million, an increase of \$2.3 million over the previous year. Overall, revenue decreased \$636,000 from the previous year, or five per cent. The drop in revenue was due to a decrease in proportional giving contributions from dioceses, lower sales at ABC Publishing, and the fact that revenues (and expenses) related to Joint Assembly in 2013 did not repeat in 2014.

Meanwhile, overall expenses decreased \$645,000 from the previous year, also representing a figure of five per cent. The lower expenses were driven mainly by expenses incurred in 2013 related to Joint Assembly that did not repeat in 2014.

Excess of core revenue over expenses for General Synod was \$64,000, while excess investment income and undesignated legacies totalled \$1 million. The excess of revenue over expenses for the year, before transfers to internally designated assets, was \$1.1 million.

The CTF, which was set up to hold and manage investments for General Synod, the Missionary

Society, and dioceses and parishes who wish to invest in the fund, reported an increase in net assets of \$2.1 million, with its total net assets worth \$22.4 million.

The AACRC, incorporated to operate and managed a fund contributed to by General Synod, the Missionary Society, and all dioceses in Canada to settle claims related to residential schools and to promote healing and reconciliation, awarded \$589,656 in grants in 2014, paid from the Anglican Fund for Healing and Reconciliation.

The Settlement Fund balance was \$2,764,300 at the end of fiscal year 2014, which are funds held for matching to the fundraising of Catholic entities. In response to a question about the total contribution given the ending of the Catholic campaign last year, General Secretary Michael Thompson said the church had asked for confirmation from the Government of Canada on the outcome of the Catholic fundraising result as recently as three weeks before CoGS, but could not proceed further until it had formal confirmation from Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada.

The following resolutions were moved and adopted:

Resolution

“That the Council of General Synod approve the Consolidated Financial Statements of the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2014, including transfers to Internally Designated Net Assets of \$607,915.”

Resolution

“That the Council of General Synod approve the Financial Statements of the Anglican Church of Canada Consolidated Trust Fund for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2014.

Resolution

“That the Council of General Synod approve the Financial Statements of the Anglican Church of Canada Resolution Corporation for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2014.”

Resolution

“That the Council of General Synod approve the Conflict of Interest and Integrity Policy applicable to National Office and Volunteers of the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada.”

Financial Management – Missionary Society

The Council adjourned in order to re-convene as the Board of Directors of the Missionary Society of the Anglican Church in Canada. Ms. Hanna Goschy, treasurer, presented a report on the financial statements of the Missionary Society, which reported total net assets of \$2,959,490 in 2014 compared to \$2,902,737 the previous year – an increase of \$56,753 or two per cent.

Council members inquired about the level of support for car loans that was to be reviewed. Goschy said that beyond increasing the car loan to \$13,000, nothing else had been done to date. After being reminded that previous CoGS meetings had included a request related to car loans for non-stipendiary clergy, Goschy said the current policy applied to paid clergy and lay staff, but that she would report back on the matter at the next meeting of CoGS.

The following resolutions were moved and adopted:

Resolution

“That the Board of Management approves the Financial Statements of the Missionary Society of the Anglican Church of Canada for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2014 and that any two Officers are authorized to sign the statements on the Board’s behalf.”

Resolution

"That the meeting of the Board of Management of the Missionary Society of the Anglican Church of Canada be terminated."

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

ACIP – Follow-up Engagement Session

Five members of the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples (ACIP) led the meeting after lunch by displaying for council members a revised list of the critical areas of discussion mentioned the previous evening. The panel included National Indigenous Anglican Bishop Mark MacDonald; Bishop Lydia Mamakwa from the Indigenous Spiritual Ministry of Mishamikoweesh; former Indigenous Ministries Coordinator Donna Bomberry and her successor, the Rev. Ginny Doctor; and ACIP co-chair Sidney Black.

Referring to the changed language in the displayed document of critical areas for discussion, Bishop MacDonald noted that they had previously discussed associations of Indigenous ministries that might look different from a province, and that while ACIP had some strong ideas about how they might wish to congregate Indigenous ministries within the larger church, they were open to innovation.

Sending table groups outside (into a beautiful spring afternoon) to discuss the document, Bishop MacDonald asked council members to come up with questions of clarification, what they found exciting in the document, and what they found worrying.

After 30 minutes of discussion, Bishop MacDonald took out his guitar and welcomed CoGS members back inside by leading them in a song, *Alleluia Praise Ye The Lord*.

Presenting the results of their discussions, council members had many questions for clarification on issues such as: financial accountability, the specific relationship of self-determining Indigenous

ministries to the Anglican Church of Canada, how stakeholders would be brought in, the role of ACIP, the pace of change, the current status of Canon XXII, how the Indigenous model would compare to the Euro-Canadian model, how to approach mixed native and non-native congregations, and leadership development.

While there was a general feeling of excitement about the church developing a closer relationship with Indigenous people, sharing accountability, and fostering greater self-determination, concerns tended to relate to the specific mechanisms of change and restructuring down the road.

Bishop MacDonald was the first member of the panel to respond. He recalled the surprise and disappointment of many in the Indigenous Spiritual Ministry of Mishamikoweesh when some non-Indigenous congregations voted to join the Diocese of Brandon instead. The bishop noted that many people in Canadian society were still used to thinking in racial categories, when the Indigenous view is to see everyone in familial and relational terms.

Pointing out that many of the questions assume that Indigenous ministries are the same as non-Indigenous ones and asked why they would want to be different, Bishop MacDonald said that the desire of Indigenous people, as expressed by their Elders, was simply to be part of the church while having the freedom to practice their own unique culture. He described the task facing Indigenous peoples as rebuilding nations within a nation (Canada) that does not recognize the rights of those nations to exist, with a government and society that still remains hostile to Indigenous self-determination.

Taking up the question of urban native ministries, Bishop Mamakwa said ACIP did not wish to dismantle what was already there, but to enhance them and invite more people to be involved to care for Indigenous people in cities, who often come from isolated northern reserves. Ms. Bomberry addressed structural questions by describing her role in developing Indigenous Ministries and how its relationship with the larger church had evolved, with the 1992 apology of

Archbishop Michael Peers helping Indigenous people find their voice in the church, the 1994 covenant opening the doors for them to discuss their views and their wish to move forward and subsequent documents such as *A New Agape*, the *Mississauga Declaration* and the *Indigenous Call to Church Leadership* representing further steps on the road to self-determination.

Describing how he became the co-chair of ACIP, the Ven. Sidney Black spoke to the deep feeling of hopelessness he was familiar with in Indigenous communities, having spent much of his life on a reservation and seeing the disparities within them. Pointing to the important role of the Gospels and meditation on Scripture within ACIP, he stressed the importance of missional concerns in their meetings and noted how moved he was by the Faith, Worship, and Ministry presentation that morning, due to their similar goals and outlooks and their focus on revitalization of Indigenous communities.

Bishop MacDonald explained the different forms of spiritual authority in Indigenous communities and the high level of individuality within their collective structures, before he turned the floor over to Rev. Doctor, who answered questions on leadership development. Having worked in Indigenous ministries for many years, she identified a three-pronged tactic for raising leaders based on healing (from residential schools and historical trauma), empowerment (equipping people with leadership skills, teaching them to be assertive and to work with others from different backgrounds), and equipping them for ministry. She gave the example of Indigenous catechist training, which incorporated traditional values that may vary between nations.

The Primate thanked the panel for enabling CoGS to have the conversation and Bishop MacDonald thanked council members for their good questions that got to the heart of the matter, before concluding the session with a prayer.

Council members took a 20-minute coffee break from 2:50 p.m. to 3:10 p.m.

Primate's World Relief and Development Fund

The Rev. Laura Marie Piotrowicz offered a status report of the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund (PWRDF) that contrasted negative news stories from around the world with positive stories on how PWRDF was helping those afflicted.

Where the recent earthquake in Nepal had killed thousands, PWRDF had responded within hours through the ACT Alliance, with members at their offices in Kathmandu providing immediate relief with food, water, shelter, and medical supplies. Piotrowicz noted that PWRDF Humanitarian Response Coordinator Naba Guring, who was originally from Nepal, had family members affected by the quake. In another positive development, the Government of Canada had pledged to match all donations made to PWRDF between April 25 and May 25 for Nepal earthquake relief dollar for dollar.

Referring to the recent drought in California that had affected food security, air quality and the livelihoods of farmers while leading to ever-increasing numbers of insects, Piotrowicz pointed to the focus on PWRDF on food security through the "Fred Says" campaign, presentations at the Sorrento Centre, and a delegation in March to Cuba to explore food security initiatives.

Where the newspapers had been full of news on the Royal Baby, Piotrowicz suggested that as children of God and heirs of God's kingdom, we are all royal babies deserving of proper delivery, health care and nurturing. She then discussed work of the PWRDF promoting midwife training in Mexico, women's groups, nutrition education and bicycle/boat ambulances.

Governance

Council members introduced a resolution relating to the previous day's report by the Commission on the Marriage Canon, which proposed that when the commission was ready to deliver its report, it should be circulated to CoGS members. Members of CoGS would subsequently have a teleconference in which they would decide how and when the report would be more widely circulated.

An amendment was introduced that the report would be circulated to members “in confidence.” A lengthy debate then ensued among council members on the amendment and its effects on the transparency of the commission’s work.

With CoGS members seemingly at an impasse, the Primate drew their attention and, in a hushed tone that left members listening in attentive silence, gradually began to suggest an alternative plan.

“What’s turning in my gut and rumbling through my soul right now is that this matter is one of the most critical and crucial matters before our church,” Archbishop Hiltz began, adding that the Indigenous call to the church leadership was equally crucial and critical.

Noting the good working relationship of the CoGS members among themselves and with the commission, he suggested calling a special meeting of CoGS members early in the fall in which the commission could formally present its report to the members who could then discuss it face to face.

While such a meeting would be costly, the Primate added, “I think this matter is that important.”

Council members reacted to the Primate’s proposal favourably. The original resolution was withdrawn and a new one put forward and adopted.

Resolution

“That the Council of General Synod affirm the Primate’s proposal to call a special session of council to receive the report of the Commission on the Marriage Canon when it is available.”

Public Witness for Social and Ecological Justice

Introducing Ms. Nancy Harvey, the new co-chair of the Creation Matters Working Group which reports to the Public Witness for Social and Ecological Justice (PWSEJ) coordinating committee, PWSEJ Director Henriette Thompson offered a report that linked the Anglican Church of Canada’s work on

climate change with Indigenous rights and responsible resource extraction, referring to the church’s commitments in the 2013 Joint Declaration with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada.

Bishop MacDonald noted that one of his roles as National Indigenous Anglican Bishop was to speak for Mother Earth and the symbiotic relationship between Indigenous people and the land. As part of that role, he recently attended the World Is Our Host climate justice conference in South Africa, where it became clear that while those in attendance were aware that the Arctic was the epicentre of climate injustice in the world, many were unaware that there were people living there.

One of the big problems in Canada, Bishop MacDonald said, is that “the wealth that the land has produced has obscured the poverty of who the land belongs to.” The term climate injustice, he added, emphasizes the fact that those who most adversely suffer the impacts of climate change are those who had the least to do with causing it, and he described the resulting dispossession of land in as only its latest manifestation among Indigenous peoples.

The Rev. Ginny Doctor went into detail about the many ways that climate change has adversely impacted those who live in northern regions, including the lack of snow that acts as an insulator and the inability of animals to migrate or salmon to spawn due to the warmer weather, which prevents hunting and fishing and obliges people to eat unhealthy processed foods. Meanwhile, other forms of environmental damage have their own effects, such as mining extraction that requires arsenic, which leaches into the local water supply, causing arsenic poisoning.

Henriette Thompson described the refusal of the Government of Canada to meet its own targets for reductions of carbon emissions and the recent meeting of provincial premiers to set their own goals. The need to call for a national policy on carbon pricing was widely recognized as a key goal in the fight against climate change, and leaders of the Anglican Church of Canada have recently signed a joint letter with other denominations

urging Finance Minister Joe Oliver to adopt such measures.

With the Church of England announcing on April 30, 2015 that it would end its investment in heavily polluting fossil fuels – divesting £12 million from tar sands oil and thermal coal – Ms. Thompson said a working group was beginning to collect the investment policy of General Synod, the Anglican Foundation, etc., to study the Church of England's decision and how it can be instructive to the Canadian church through conversations with its managers.

Reiterating the interrelated nature of climate change, Indigenous rights and responsible resource extraction, Ms. Thompson pointed to a flip chart at the back of the room for council members to write “wicked questions,” questions on the subjects where there are no easy answers, to take back to their working group for discussion. She closed the session with a Chinook prayer.

Pension Committee

Ms. Judy Robinson, director of pensions, began her report by introducing Ms. Josephine Marks, head of the board of trustees. She submitted motions, offered data on the early retirement motion affecting those who retire before age 65, and answered questions from council members.

The following resolutions were put forward and adopted:

Resolution

“That the Council of General Synod approves the recommendation of the Pension Committee to amend plan with respect to early retirement subsidies for benefits earned from January 1, 2016 and that a formula reduction of 6 per cent per year be implemented from normal retirement age; and approve the following changes effective January 1, 2016.”

Resolution

“That the Council of General Synod approves the recommendation of the

Pension Committee under the new Benefit Plan Regulation to require GSPP investment management fees be paid from the Pension Office Corporation's administrative expense account for 2015.”

Hospitality and Dinner

The Rev. Peter Wall and Archbishop Fred Hiltz gave speeches and presented a gift to Martha Gardner, representative of the Episcopal Church of the United States, who is attending her last CoGS. Ms. Gardner thanked them and expressed gratitude for her experience attending CoGS and working with its members over the years.

New Ways of Working and Co-ordinating Committees (Associates)

Council members broke into their work as associates of Coordinating Committees and engaged in evaluation of new ways of working, testing an evaluation process for wider use.

Evening Prayer

The Saturday agenda for CoGS concluded with a Holden Evening Prayer in the chapel at the Queen of Apostles Retreat Centre.