

COGS Highlights



Council of General Synod

Sunday, May 3, 2015

Following breakfast, council members gathered at 8:45 a.m. at the Queen of Apostles Retreat Centre in Mississauga.

Ms. Jane Osler began Sunday's session by reading the Orders of the Day. General Secretary Michael Thompson reported that most council members had replied to an email indicating that they were available between noon on Sept. 22, 2015 and noon on Sept. 23 for a special meeting of the Council of General Synod (CoGS) to receive the report from the Commission on the Marriage Canon. He also raised the possibility of a video link to convey the report of the commission for those who could not attend.

Archbishop Fred Hiltz, Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, noted that the special meeting of CoGS in September would be dependent on the commission having completed their report by then, but that at the moment it appears that will be the case.

Governance Working Group

Canon David Jones, chancellor, said his remarks were not so much a report as a request for feedback on proposed changes to the nomination and election procedures for CoGS members.

The current sequential "cascading" system calls for electing representatives from each of the four ecclesiastical provinces in the form of one bishop, one ordained person (deacon or priest), one lay person, and one youth, with a second ballot cast only when electors know the results of the first ballot. Canon Jones raised the possibility of a new system characterized by casting a single vote, wherein candidates from a diocese who do not receive the highest number of votes are automatically disqualified.

Council members debated the issue and then held a straw vote in which an overwhelming majority voted to maintain the current nomination and election procedure. Canon Jones thanked them for the input and said that the Governance Working Group would continue its work on the issue.

After the straw vote, council members discussed the current role of CoGS relative to General Synod, in which the former tends to deal more with business matters while the latter examines major issues affecting the church that have an impact on the ground where ministry takes place. Going forward into their last two meetings of the current triennium, members highlighted the need to reflect on things CoGS can accomplish to provide the necessary breathing space for General Synod to deal with larger issues.

Report Back from CoGS Associates

In a feedback session following up on the previous evening's New Ways of Working & Co-ordinating Committees (Associates), Jane Osler, Planning and Agenda Team co-chair, asked council members whether the survey they filled out addressed issues they believed needed to be addressed, whether it was missing anything, how easy or difficult it was to answer the questions, and whether they believed it would work as an online survey.

ELCIC Report

Mrs. Patricia Lovell, representative of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC), pointed council members to her written report and drew their attention to two elements.

The first was the Healthy Church section, which included observations on the Lutheran church's Human Sexuality Study that had many similarities to the Anglican Church's Commission on the Marriage Canon. Mrs. Lovell's report noted the

feeling of healing and inclusiveness that characterized the March meeting of the ELCIC National Church Council, which compared favourably to some dissension in the ranks that had followed the Lutherans' 2011 vote on Human Sexuality that included same-sex marriage. She surmised that similar developments might be in store for the Anglican church going forward, but pointed to the importance of transparency and praised the way that Anglicans had worked together on the issue as an example of a healthy church.

Secondly, Mrs. Lovell noted that as full communion partners of the Anglican Church of Canada, the ELCIC would be taking some resolutions to its July convention in Edmonton that align with much of the work done by Anglicans, including resolutions on the Doctrine of Discovery, climate justice, and welcoming strangers (including refugees and others). Not only was the ELCIC in step with the Anglican church, she said, but it was proud of its status as a full communion partner working together on similar issues.

General Synod Planning Committee

The Most Rev. Peter Wall, chair of the General Synod Planning Committee (GSPC), said that the GSPC was working hard on General Synod 2016, having last met in March and with another meeting scheduled for November. The group's worship committee was particularly busy developing musical resources and doing creative work with the space in the Sheraton Parkway North, the hotel in Richmond Hill, Ont. where the next General Synod will take place.

Dates for the next General Synod have been scheduled, with the meeting taking place from July 7-13, 2016. Archbishop Suheil Dawani from the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem and Bishop Griselda Delgado from the Episcopal Church of Cuba are both set to appear, and a list of ecumenical and interfaith partners is being developed. The GSPC is beginning to work on agenda matters and is keen on receiving advice from CoGS, the Commission on the Marriage Canon, ACIP and Indigenous communities.

Regarding statistics, the GSPC was beginning to

hear back from dioceses who were submitting their numbers (described by General Secretary Thompson as "better and better every day in every way"). With a newly altered formula for electing delegates based on the number of church attendees rather than licensed clergy, General Synod 2016 was expected to see 20-25 fewer members than previous General Synods. The statistical reports dioceses have been submitting to the GSPC are allowing the committee to gain a more accurate picture going forward.

The local arrangements committee, Dean Wall said, had been making progress on arrangements for shuttling delegates from airports and train stations to the hotel.

"I think we're on track, we're on schedule, we're on budget," he concluded, before opening up the floor to questions and comments.

A recurring theme from council members' responses was the use of clickers (electronic voting) again to vote, which Dean Wall confirmed for the 2016 General Synod. Many raised concerns about how using clickers resulted in something of a secret ballot, as opposed to the more traditional open vote process. Stressing that delegates would not necessarily be using clickers for every vote, Dean Wall said he would ask the GSPC to consider the issue before the next meeting of CoGS to provide a framework for action, while council members suggested reflecting on the issue of secret ballots at a future CoGS meeting.

Responding to questions about dietary requests and media policy, Dean Wall pledged that the GSPC in the future would be as assiduous as possible in responding to the needs of those with special dietary requests, and that helpful advice about dealing with the media would be given to delegates at the forthcoming General Synod.

Anglican Foundation

Standing in for Anglican Foundation of Canada Executive Director the Rev. Canon Dr. Judy Rois, Dean Wall provided a run-through of the Foundation's activities. He noted with pride that the Foundation had become a generous supporter of ministry in Canada, had received a great deal of

money from Anglicans that it had given to good causes, and was constantly looking for new ways to be charitable and keeping important matters in front of CoGS. He complimented the staff and current board of directors at the Anglican Foundation for the work that they do.

Dean Wall listed some of the recent recipients of grants from the Anglican Foundation, which included numerous educational institutions. A successful development in 2014 was the Free Up Fifty campaign, which encouraged Anglican parishes to free up \$50 to support the Foundation so that it could respond generously to grant applications. Following one of the Marks of Mission, its focus in the coming year would be new community service or outreach projects that involve interfaith collaboration.

Other ongoing campaigns from the Anglican Foundation include Hope Bear (wherein each Hope Bear sold for \$20 contributes to breakfasts for children, after-school homework clubs, summer camp or choir school, or support for children in palliative care) and its partnership with Hope Air, a charity that provides free air transportation for financially disadvantaged Canadians to get necessary health care.

Dean Wall concluded by noting that the Anglican Foundation would be holding its Annual General Meeting in Ottawa at the end of May.

During a subsequent discussion, one council member asked where Hope Bears were sourced, since the tags say they are made in China. While “not trying to throw a damper on the campaign,” she pointed out that the church and Foundation would be closely watched for practicing what we preach, and that if we are helping distribute these items, it would be nice to know that they are being produced in a fair trade manner. Dean Wall said the issue had been raised and that work was being done on the sourcing of the Hope Bears.

Council members took a coffee break from 10:25 a.m. to 10:45 a.m.

Eucharist

Bishop Lydia Mamakwa, National Indigenous

Anglican Bishop Mark MacDonald, and the Ven. Sidney Black, co-chair of the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples (ACIP), led a Eucharist service in the M.J. Smith Room that included the singing of hymns in Ojibwe-Cree.

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

General Secretary’s Report

Describing his written report, General Secretary Thompson said it speaks of both “the work and the workers” with the sense of gratitude and privilege he feels to be in the work he finds himself in.

The General Secretary expressed his appreciation for the ministry of the Primate and thanked Archbishop Hiltz for his leadership and the trust he places in both the governance structures of the church and the people who participate in them. Council members then offered the Primate a round of applause with a standing ovation.

A centrepiece of the General Secretary’s report was the #22Days project, which marks the period between the closing ceremony of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that begins on May 31 and National Aboriginal Day on June 21. He noted that those 22 days represent an opportunity for the church to enter into a process of listening and learning, of prayer, witness and commitment.

Starting on May 31, the 22 Days website (www.22days.ca) will make its first video available that will serve as a witness to those involved in the residential schools, as former students and staff members share their experiences and invite people to hear about them. Noting that each of the videos are quite long, the General Secretary related his conversation with Anglican Video Producer Lisa Barry in which they agreed that editing the videos into short sound bytes – a common media format in this day and age – would represent a form of disrespect. He advised that if council members hear people say that the videos are too long, they should patiently explain that it is necessary for us as we grapple with the legacy of colonialism and the residential schools in our country and in our church. It is a story that we need to hear.

General Secretary Thompson also pointed to the section of the website in which people can post their commitments to contribute to healing and reconciliation, which could include something as simple as listening to a residential school survivor tell their story, or reading a book on the issue, since it is an aggregate of small miracles that adds up to the big miracle of social transformation.

While many in church leadership circles may be more familiar with these issues at this point, the General Secretary surmised that many people in our churches remain virtually without knowledge about the residential schools, and particularly of their intergenerational legacy. He urged council members to take advantage of the 22 days, to take at least one person by the hand and invite them into this opportunity to learn and listen, to pray and bear witness and commit ourselves to further work.

Moving on to a major international news item from last month, General Secretary Thompson noted the appointment of Archbishop Josiah Idowu-Fearon as the new secretary-general of the Anglican Communion. Believing it to be important for the Anglican Church of Canada to recognize and welcome Archbishop Idowu-Fearon into his new position, the General Secretary said it could be very helpful to the Communion to have a senior leader from Nigeria and that the new secretary-general could be a remarkably gifted person to be that bridge.

A resolution was put forward and adopted.

Resolution

“That this Council of the General Synod asks the General Secretary to convey to The Most Reverend Josiah Idowu-Fearon, the new Secretary General of the Anglican Communion, our very best wishes and our prayers as he takes up his new duties.”

The remainder of the General Secretary’s report took the form of a prayer (see Appendix).

Offering some final announcements, Dean Wall

noted that the Planning and Agenda Team prior to and at the meeting had discussed ways in which the council might expand its use of electronic communications through the development of a password-protected intranet for CoGS members.

Key Messages

- We started a conversation with our Indigenous brothers and sisters
- We trust one another
- Our anti-racism work helps us learn to trust one another
- Thinking about how crisis is used in the New Testament helps us understand the situation of the current church
- Conversation is the currency of change
- Focusing less on the national church and more on the church national
- The intentional way we are to receive the Marriage Canon report
- Time was well used, and it did not feel rushed
- We see things not as they are, but as we are.
- Vital and healthy churches need a mission
- We are blessed by the presence of a child
- It has been a privilege to celebrate the ministry of Martha Gardner
- The Spirit moves among us in sometimes unexpected ways, and sometimes gradual and unexpected ways
- Every baby is a royal baby
- It is a highlight to have Bishop Lydia preside with us, and to sing in Ojibwe-Cree
- We are feeling prepared for General Synod and that at this time in the triennium we are feeling in good shape
- There is a good partnership between members and staff

The Primate reminded members that Sister Elizabeth Rolfe-Thomas would be installed as the new Reverend Mother of the Society of Saint John the Divine on May 6, and presented her with an envelope.

Dean Wall led fellow CoGS members in singing the hymn *Ubi caritas* before Archbishop Hiltz officially closed the council meeting.

The meeting adjourned just before 2 p.m.

APPENDIX

Thanksgivings for the presence of God's Spirit in what is and has been.

We give thanks...

For careful listening and deep trust in the council as a whole, and for the intimate depths of table conversations. We are people who meet only twice a year, and many of us began not long ago as strangers. It is God's Spirit who is causing this wonder.

For the staff of this place, for their responsive care for us as their guests. Underneath all our work is the work of others, always, and it is God's Spirit who is causing this wonder.

For those who gathered here just before us for their work, and for those who will soon arrive for still other work. They take up different work in the mission of God, but it is God's work, and it is God's Spirit who is causing this wonder.

For time for going deeper on the things that matter most. It is hard work to find that time, hard work to take that time, and hard work to dig deep towards the truth we find in that time. It is God's Spirit who is causing this wonder.

For attentiveness to our work. These are long days, late nights, and early mornings. Sure we yawned sometimes, but mostly we stayed with the work. It is God's Spirit who is causing this wonder.

For the primate's invitation and our conversation about the sudden and the patient spirit. We do not always notice the breeze, and sometimes we even miss the tempest in our conviction that we alone are making the leaves whisper and blowing the obstacles away. We notice, sometimes, though, and when we do, it is God's Spirit who is causing this wonder.

For gracious honesty about what is broken by privilege and power used by some and lacked by

others. It is not easy to lack power and not blame those who have it. It is not easy to have power and imagine how much better it would be to relinquish it. It is God's Spirit who is causing this wonder.

For the Indigenous Call to the Church – for two times to listen and two times to talk and for time in between to settle towards truth. How much easier it would be to divide into teams and struggle for ascendancy. It is not so among you, says Jesus, and it was not, and it is God's Spirit who is causing this wonder.

For the meals of Eucharist into which we are gathered, out of which we are sent. For the meals at other tables that have nourished our bodies and brought us into conversation. We are well-fed. It is God's Spirit who is causing this wonder.

For the first real spring weekend of the year; we give thanks for the beauty of this place in spring, and for opportunity to enter into that beauty. After the long winter, it is surely God's Spirit who is causing this wonder.

For all the moving parts of our life that worked together in our primate's heart to bring us to a decision in which we could delight, and for the prospect of seeing one another sooner than expected. It is God's Spirit who is causing this wonder.

For Martha Gardner's six years of witness and friendship among us, for our partnership with The Episcopal Church, and for the ministry of Katharine Jefferts-Schori as their Presiding Bishop. For the global Anglican Communion and for all who serve its unity and witness across startling diversity and in the face of contested truth. It is God's Spirit who is causing this wonder.

For the witness and ministry of congregations across Canada, in cities and towns, at rural crossroads and in remote (and not so remote) indigenous communities, for their embodiment of the marks of God's mission, for their faithfulness in living into the covenant of our baptism. For their sacrificial giving and sacramental living. It is God's Spirit who is causing this wonder.

Prayer for the presence of God's Spirit in what is to come

For the November meeting we will share with the National Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. For the blessings and challenges of full communion. May God's Spirit refresh us in God's blessings.

For next week's gathering of leaders and learners in the Vital and Healthy Parishes network. May God's Spirit refresh us in God's blessings.

For our church's engagement in the closing event of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. For our "22 Days" of prayer, learning, witness and commitment, that we may grow in all our ministries of healing and reconciliation. May God's Spirit refresh us in God's blessings.

For Indigenous organizations who call us to account in our church and in our nation, and remind us that we are all treaty people. The strength of their voice helps us listen with care. For the Assembly of First Nations, for Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, for regional and local chiefs and councils. For the Primate's Commission on Discovery, Reconciliation and Justice, as they interpret among us the voices that call us into a new future. May God's Spirit refresh us in God's blessings.

For challenging conversation about climate justice, in all its troubling complexity. For those on whom the consequences land most heavily, for those whose food or land or livelihood is at risk. For those who work in resource industries, and for those on whom those industries have destructive impact. That in our common life in Christ we might see one another more as partners in addressing a common threat, and less as "interests" to be defended or blamed. May God's Spirit refresh us in God's blessings.

For faithful electoral stewardship among Anglicans, all people of faith, and all Canadians, as issues of justice and compassion come before the Canadian people in a federal election campaign. May God's Spirit refresh us in God's blessings.

For the work of the Commission on the Marriage Canon yet to come, and for our meeting in the fall to receive its report. For the work of the General Synod Planning Committee as it plans a gathering that will take up the question of marriage in a holy and faithful way. May God's Spirit refresh us in God's blessings.

For each of us as a child of God, leaving this community, and returning to the communities of household, work, and spirit in which we love and serve. That our travels may be supported and made safe by the work and care of others. That we may carry with us a national sense of our church as local ministries from coast to coast to coast making common cause for the mission of God. May God's Spirit refresh us in God's blessings.