

# COGS Highlights



Council of General Synod

Saturday, May 8, 2021

*Members of the Council of General Synod (CoGS) gathered together online at 11 a.m. ET via Zoom conference.*

## **Opening Prayer**

The Rev. Louise Peters, chaplain to CoGS, led an opening prayer.

## **Orders of the Day**

The Rev. Monique Stone, co-chair of the Planning and Agenda Team, read out the Orders of the Day.

## **Dismantling Racism: Sharing Stories**

Dr. Martin Brokenleg led a panel on dismantling racism in the church, lighting a candle and setting a "prayerful intention" at the outset.

He introduced the three panel members: the Rev. Canon Ginny Doctor, Indigenous Ministries coordinator; Dion Lewis, co-chair of the Anti-Racism Task Force for the diocese of Montreal; and Pastor Chung Yan Lam, incumbent priest for the Anglican parish of Bearbrook, Navan and Blackburn, and Vars Chapel in the diocese of Ottawa. Each panel member spoke about their own personal experiences with racism.

Council members then broke into listening groups for 10 minutes, with different panel members in each. Rather than verbal explanations, Brokenleg asked members to focus on visual images they saw in their minds from hearing the stories and emotions they felt.

Afterwards, the council reconvened. Panel members shared brief conclusions they drew

from their respective listening sessions. "We need to become a whole people, united by God and in the Holy Spirit ... We can't be whole until we know our histories," Doctor said. "Learn from our past mistakes and teach others to do better," Lewis said. Lam offered the council a blessing, which she sang in Mandarin.

Archbishop and Primate Linda Nicholls thanked the panel members for sharing their stories. "You've given us a lot to think about, to reflect on, and continue to work on ... Thank you for your courage and your passion for a better vision of what God is calling us to do and be. May we have the courage to respond."

*Members took a 10-minute break.*

## **Insight Sessions**

Council split into breakout rooms for insight sessions with two more speakers. Joseph Vecsi, director of Communications and Information Resources, and Scott Sharman, animator for ecumenical and interfaith relations, each discussed their respective General Synod ministry. CoGS members listened to the speakers for 20 minutes each.

## **Motion – Faith, Worship, and Ministry**

Sharman presented a motion to council on trial use of the prayer for reconciliation with the Jewish people. He noted that General Synod 2019 had approved the first reading of a proposed replacement in the *Book of Common Prayer* of the Prayer for the Conversion of the Jews with a new Prayer for Reconciliation with the Jewish People. The proposed change will

come back for a second reading at the next General Synod and Assembly in 2022.

The process thus far, Sharman said, has been a “good example of how God can take a delicate matter and turn it into something beautiful that we might not have expected.” He noted that the first reading of the new prayer had led to positive Christian-Jewish dialogue on its content, reaffirming mutual friendship and the efforts of Christians to reach out to their Jewish neighbours and push back against anti-Semitism. Sharman’s motion carried.

### Resolution

Be it resolved that this Council of General Synod authorize, for trial use and evaluation, 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.

*Members took a 50-minute break for lunch.*

### Bible Study

Council members went into breakout rooms for Bible study. They read James 3:13-18, which concerns “wisdom above” and “wisdom below”, and reflected on a series of questions about the text.

### Global Relations & Public Witness for Social and Ecological Justice

Ryan Weston, lead animator of Public Witness for Social and Ecological Justice, and Andrea Mann, director of Global Relations, presented on the church’s work to combat across Canada and around the world to combat human trafficking and modern slavery.

Weston began with background going back to the Anglican Consultative Council in 2012 and its resolution against the trafficking of persons, progressing through 2017 with a resolution by CoGS and national reference group, and continuing with the *Engage Freedom!* gatherings in each ecclesiastical province. In 2019, General Synod passed Resolution A204, which committed the church to take up the struggle against human trafficking at every level through education, advocacy, and building relationships with partners.

In the fall of 2020, the Anglican Church of Canada held its second national reference group, which focused on some core areas for the church’s work against trafficking: missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls (MMWIG) and the exploitation of Indigenous Peoples; protecting and empowering youth to eliminate trafficking and exploitation; and action and education for migrant justice and international solidarity.

Subsequent actions by the national church prioritized three main areas:

- Education. Freedom Sunday gatherings in February 2020 and 2021; presentations to diocesan leaders and events in Niagara, Yukon and Algoma; promoting education events, highlighting key dates
- Advocacy with government. Support for national hotline; pushing for the federal government to adopt Bill S-216,

the *Modern Slavery Act*, which seeks to eliminate the use of slavery and child labour in the supply chain for goods produced in or imported into Canada; campaigns in support of migrant worker rights;

- Ecumenical collaboration on trafficking, migration and exploitation. Establishing Churches Witnessing With Migrants – Canada.

At the local and diocesan level, actions have included:

- Articles in diocesan publications;
- Synod sessions for raising awareness;
- Local partnerships with civil society groups and networks for marches and vigils;
- Advocacy with local government concerning exploitation of temporary foreign workers;
- Fundraising; and
- Designated diocesan staff

Next steps for the Anglican Church of Canada in its work to eradicate human trafficking and modern slavery include creating information and prayer resources for key times in the year: specifically, National Indigenous Peoples' Month in June 2021 and 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence in November-December. In August, the National Youth Project will launch a new project focused on fighting human trafficking and slavery. Ongoing advocacy by the church will focus on vaccine access for migrant workers and continued support for the *Modern Slavery Act*, which as of March 30 is still being studied in a parliamentary committee.

Mann also directed the attention of CoGS to church partnerships at the international level, offering solidarity and funding to efforts to fight trafficking in different parts of the globe. These

partners include the Council of Anglican Provinces of Africa, Asia Pacific Mission for Migrants, and Pacific Conference of Churches.

### **Strategic Planning Working Group**

Council members broke into small groups for approximately 30 minutes to reflect on and discuss two questions from the Strategic Planning Working Group:

1. Imagine that you are at General Synod 2022 looking into the plenary all filled with tables and people, about to begin the strategic planning presentation and discussion. What do you think synod members will be:

- Expecting?
- Hoping?
- Fearing?

2. Given the transitional nature of our time, what will it be OK for synod members not to know? What is the tolerance for going forward with a strategic plan based on imperfect knowledge?

Primate Nicholls ended the day's business by leading members in a prayer. She drew the attention of council to Archbishop Maimbo Mndolwa, primate of the Anglican Church of Tanzania, who was recently added to a list of targets for assassination by an Islamic militant group. Nicholls asked members to pray for Archbishop Mndolwa and for other Christian leaders in the region.

*Council adjourned for the day at 4 p.m.*