

# COGS Highlights



Council of General Synod

Saturday, November 12, 2022

*Members of the Council of General Synod (CoGS) gathered together at the Queen of Apostles Renewal Centre in Mississauga, Ont. and online via Zoom at 10 a.m. following an optional morning Eucharist.*

## **Dismantling Racism**

Irene Moore Davis, an Anglican educator, historian, author and member of the Dismantling Racism Task Force, led a workshop focused on addressing unconscious bias and microaggressions that reinforce racism. To explore biases and assumptions, Moore Davis said, it was worthwhile to engage in personal reflection on what we think and have been taught, plus community reflection on what might make our spaces more welcoming for our neighbours.

Moore Davis told a personal story about attending a conference in a new city and showing up for Sunday worship service at a local Anglican church. With her were two female cousins who, like her, were of Black/African/Caribbean descent and dressed in business casual attire. She recalled how a greeter came forward immediately and asked if he could help them, "in a way that did not suggest he really wanted to help us." As the women walked toward their seats, they heard him say not to take photos during the service.

Despite the three being experienced Anglicans who had attended services at different churches across the country, Moore Davis said her heart rate was elevated afterwards and she felt the greeter had some assumptions about them.

They had a constructive conversation with the greeter after the service, but Moore Davis used the story as an example of the ways we welcome people into our spaces.

To illustrate the need to be conscious of internalized narratives, Moore Davis showed a photo of a Black man in a hooded sweatshirt, asked what assumptions people might make about him, and revealed that he was a British MP who had taken part in a photo project to illustrate unconscious bias. Addressing unconscious bias, Moore Davis said, requires acknowledging that it exists, considering how people are being spoken about, changing the narrative, addressing representation and encouraging deep reflection at all levels.

Moore Davis also described microaggressions, which she defined as "everyday, commonplace verbal and nonverbal indignities, insults, and slights that communicate hostile or negative messages to members of a stigmatized, underrepresented or marginalized groups." Microaggressions, which can be intentional or unintentional, repeat or affirm stereotypes. To address microaggressions, Moore Davis said, requires addressing the behaviour or statement directly with the aggressor, remembering that "intent does not supersede impact", keeping feedback constructive, maintaining empathy, and asking whether a person wants your support in addressing a microaggression you have witnessed, overheard or heard about.

**Holding Up a Mirror: Women's Leadership in the Anglican Church of Canada**

Andrea Mann, director of Global Relations, introduced  *Holding Up a Mirror* , a project she conceived with executive archdeacon Linda Hill from the diocese of Ottawa that aims to “hold up a mirror” to the Anglican Church of Canada as it approaches the 50th anniversary of women’s ordination in 2026. Canon Neil Elliot, the church’s statistics and research officer, helped develop a survey in which dioceses reported the number of women in central decision-making bodies and in active ordained ministry. The project also included an archival search on the number of women elected to CoGS and appointed to national committees between 1995 and 2023.

At a time when Canadian Anglicans are beginning to accept greater fluidity in gender identity, Mann and Hill approached Wendy Fletcher, president and vice-chancellor of Renison University College, to ask whether it was still relevant to speak about “women” as a group. Their conclusion was that it was. Executive officers and archdeacons for each diocese then submitted data on persons publicly identified as women. To date, 20 out of 30 dioceses have offered their results.

The study found that in 2022, women make up 55% of central diocesan leadership in the Anglican Church of Canada, 41% of bishops, 35% of priests and 60% of deacons. The proportion of paid and unpaid clergy is similar between women and men, though there are significant variations across rural and urban divides.

Between 1995 and 2019, women in total made up 14% of bishops on CoGS, 18% of clergy, 58% of laity, and 61% of youth members. During the 2019-2023 triennium, women comprised 20% of bishops on CoGS (+6%), 75% of clergy (+57%), 50% of laity (-8%), and 25% of youth members (-36%). In terms of CoGS as a whole, 38% of members from 1995 to 2019 were women,

whereas 36% were women from 2019 to 2022.

Mann said the results show the Anglican Church of Canada has much to celebrate, but also room to grow. In a subsequent discussion, Hill—joining via Zoom—said many dioceses had been restrained in staffing, which made it difficult in some cases to get responses to the survey. She said they could make a third or fourth attempt to contact remaining dioceses.

### **Council of the North**

Bishop David Lehmann, chair of the Council of the North, began his report by thanking the Anglican Church of Canada for its generosity in supporting the Council of the North, which in turn has “produced incredible ministry in northern and rural areas.” With donations from across Canada, he said, the council was able to assist the diocese of Saskatchewan’s pastoral response to the recent mass stabbing in James Smith Cree First Nation.

Another highlight was a partnership between the Anglican Church Women (ACW) and Anglican Foundation of Canada to assist retired clergy in the north. The ACW of New Westminster gave an initial gift of \$100,000 and encouraged other ACW branches to do the same. Lehmann said the gift has already grown to \$260,000 as a result.

The council is actively engaged in new education programs, Lehmann said. The Vancouver School of Theology’s Indigenous Studies program continues to produce clergy and lay ministers across British Columbia, while the diocese of Huron and diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador are also expanding their work in ministry education.

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

### **Gospel-Based Discipleship**

Deputy Prolocutor Judith Moses led gospel-based discipleship which included three readings of Luke 18:1-8, the Parable of the Persistent Widow.

### **Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples**

The Rev. Canon Murray Still, co-chair of the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples (ACIP), said the council continued its work and had held an in-person meeting since its report to CoGS. At that meeting ACIP had a visit from Archbishop Linda Nicholls, primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, and debriefed as Indigenous folk around the loss of Mark MacDonald following his resignation as national Indigenous archbishop over acknowledged sexual misconduct.

MacDonald's resignation "has been a blow for us and set us back a bit, but we were also encouraged to move forward and understand that what we have done is good work," Still said. ACIP chose eight members of a selection committee who have been hard at work nominating candidates for the new national Indigenous archbishop. Interviews are now over, but ACIP still has to hold a special meeting to make its choice for who will take over the position. Results will then be sent to the primate who will select the person for the job.

ACIP also received a number of reports at its meeting which included updates on the work of the Jubilee Commission and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Covenant. The first in-person meeting of Sacred Circle, the self-determining Indigenous church, will take place May 28 to June 2 at the Fern Resort in Ramara, Ont. Founding documents for Sacred Circle, the Covenant and Our Way of Life, will be presented at the gathering. Other recent work has included setting up a finance committee to explore ways to access available funds and continuing to host online gospel-based discipleship gatherings on Monday,

Wednesday, and Friday mornings.

### **All-Parties Covenant**

Reconciliation animator Dawn Maracle gave an update on the All-Parties Table's draft Covenant Agreement. The All-Parties Process emerged from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which convened a table of senior leadership from churches up to 2015 to see how they could work together on different TRC Calls to Action—particularly Call to Action 46, which called upon parties to the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement to develop and sign a Covenant of Reconciliation that would identify principles for collaborative work to advance reconciliation in Canadian society.

The COVID-19 pandemic, spars over legal language, and discovery of thousands of unmarked graves at residential school sites slowed the consultation. But a draft of the Covenant is now in place, approved in April 2021 by the Government of Canada, as is a general process to consult Indigenous organizations and communities. Maracle read through the current draft, which will come to General Synod next year. All other churches at the All-Parties Table are currently going through a parallel process. The draft Covenant of Reconciliation will also be brought before Sacred Circle at their upcoming meeting in May and June. Maracle said the document provided an opportunity for the Anglican Church of Canada to renew its commitment to reconciliation.

*Members broke for coffee from 3 to 3:30 p.m.*

### **Lambeth Conference**

Archbishops and bishops summarized the Lambeth calls and recounted their own experiences attending this year's Lambeth Conference. Archbishop Greg Kerr-Wilson described the Lambeth calls on Christian Unity,

and Science and Faith. Attending his second Lambeth Conference, he said, he had greatly enjoyed sharing time with Anglican Christians from around the world.

Bishop Andrew Asbil discussed the calls for Safe Church and Anglican Identity. He recalled emotional conversations at Lambeth with colleagues who described their experiences, such as the bishop of Madagascar, who lives every day with the threat of losing property and people—a reference to widespread suffering in the island nation, where the climate crisis has led to severe drought and famine. “I feel much better about the Anglican Communion coming home than I did going in,” Asbil said, though he expressed sorrow knowing some who attended Lambeth were not able to take the Eucharist.

Archbishop David Edwards spoke on the Lambeth call for Mission and Evangelism. Having studied for his master’s degree around Kent and Canterbury 30 years ago, Edwards said, his biggest takeaway from Lambeth was the clear evidence of a climate emergency. “What was a green and beautiful campus was burnt... That was a tremendous wakeup call for me,” he said. Other bishops similarly described the brown grass and suffocating heat at Lambeth. Bible study groups were an important part of the conference for Edwards. He remembered a conversation in his group with a bishop from the Democratic Republic of Congo, who said people in his diocese could soon be living in the woods again because their villages will be invaded as part of ongoing conflict and their seed crops will be taken. “Somebody in my position can’t imagine that,” Edwards said.

Bishop Joey Royal described the Lambeth call on Discipleship, highlighting a key guiding principle: “A disciple is a learner.” Royal said his experience at Lambeth was overwhelmingly positive, noting that his wife also spent a lot of time in the spouses’ group and made good

friends.

Archbishop Lynne McNaughton spoke about the Lambeth calls on Environmental and Sustainable Development, and Human Dignity. McNaughton said she came home from Lambeth “having rebuilt a lot of resilience to live through this time.” Hearing vivid stories of people’s experiences from around the Anglican Communion had greatly impacted the basis of her Bible study. She described global Anglican initiatives such as the Communion Forest, which promotes local activities related to forest protection, growing trees, and restoring ecosystems by provinces, dioceses, and congregations.

The primate discussed the Lambeth Calls on Interfaith Relations, and Reconciliation. For her own experience at Lambeth, she highlighted seeing videos each day of discipleship from across the Communion. These included scenes with hundreds of young people and churches that were growing in the midst of persecution. The videos are available at the Anglican Communion website and Nicholls encouraged CoGS members to show them to their parishes; to pray for Anglicans in other parts of the world and be encouraged by their ministry and mission.

### **Lambeth Stewards**

General Secretary Alan Perry introduced two youth stewards, Eliza Korner and Alexa Wallace, appearing via Zoom. The two shared their experiences attending Lambeth.

Korner said she was surprised by the immediate sense of family among stewards who were coming from so many diverse areas across the Communion. “We’re all united, so it was lovely to meet with people and talk about what their experiences are as Anglicans in so many different contexts,” Korner said. Having not grown up Anglican, much was new to her. “I

thought a lot more about what it means to be Anglican in the world and be connected," she said.

Wallace, a deacon, said youth stewards did a lot of the jobs around the conference. "Worship was an incredible experience," she said, with music that tended to be upbeat and exuberant alongside more serious readings from the Book of Common Prayer. Wallace recalled meeting Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, who she said became excited upon hearing she came from the diocese of Saskatoon and talked about his recent trip there, as well as what he had learned about Canada's experience of residential schools.

Asked about their most unexpected moments at the conference, Korner said she had found herself in many interesting conversations. As a steward involved in helping with transportation, she would end up on a boat talking about the beautiful coastline of the River Thames. Wallace pointed to "how Canadian the Canadian bishops are." With such a diversity of cultures at Lambeth, attitudes from bishops towards people in service positions can be very different, she said. Almost every day, she recalled, a Canadian bishop would come to her and praise the work of stewards and made sure they were being treated well. "The Canadian bishops established a reputation as the cool bishops that everyone liked."

### **A Journey of Pilgrimage and Discovery for Young Adults**

Mann returned to the podium to speak about an upcoming pilgrimage to the Holy Land by young members of the Anglican Church of Canada between the ages of 20 and 26. The Canadian Companions of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem is partnering with the Jerusalem diocese for A Journey of Pilgrimage and Discovery for Young Adults, which will take place May 1 to 12, 2023. After receiving 26

applications and conducting 26 interviews, 20 pilgrims were selected representing all ecclesiastical provinces and many dioceses. Facilitators on the ground during the pilgrimage will be Sheilagh McGlynn, youth animator for the Anglican Church of Canada, and Canon Richard LeSueur, a retired Anglican priest.

The first, online gathering of all pilgrims, facilitators and staff will take place Oct. 23. Further monthly online gatherings will follow leading up to May to form a sense of community and help them learn about pilgrimage and the biblical lands within Galilee, the West Bank and Jerusalem. Each pilgrim will engage in fundraising to help cover the costs of the trip.

*Members broke for open time and dinner from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.*

### **Strategic Planning Working Group**

Judith Moses, chair of the Strategic Planning Working Group (SPWG), offered an update on the group's work. Since March 2022, the SPWG has restructured and expanded, preparing for the implementation phase of the strategic plan.

Five new members have been brought onboard to cope with the workload and add new skills. A steering committee is overseeing the work and reducing the need for full SPWG meetings. Focused working groups have been added, including a communications committee to oversee the launch of a new communication strategy; a diocesan pilot projects subcommittee to work with dioceses, and an Office of General Synod work subcommittee to examine where and how the work of General Synod supports the plan's five transformational aspirations. The SPWG has met with 15 provincial and diocesan synods and councils and is exploring collaborations with four pilot dioceses.

Congregational development consultant Janet Marshall spoke about “experiential discernment” in creating the strategic plan. The pandemic had transformed the classic strategic planning approach into a process of engagement characterized by centring scripture and prayer, deep listening and mutual learning across the country including more than 1,000 Canadian Anglicans.

The SPWG representatives saw both a “serving” and “representing” function for General Synod. The serving function entails supporting diocesan work and leadership through sharing of insights and knowledge; conversations based on deep-listening that is Christ-centred and inclusive; and connecting people through common interests. The representing function means serving as the voice of the Anglican Church of Canada in national, international, and ecumenical contexts beyond what is possible for dioceses.

Communications Director Joe Vesci and Anglican Video senior producer Lisa Barry described the plan’s communications strategy, which Vesci said involved taking the five transformational aspirations and communicating them as widely as possible. To this end, a new webpage had been established at [changingchurch.anglican.ca](http://changingchurch.anglican.ca) to serve as a home for related multimedia. The site contains an accompanied Bible study for each aspiration.

A final ingredient is the promotion of videos through social media. Barry said Anglican Video is producing six videos, though there are five aspirations, because they felt the need to start with a video that sets the scene. CoGS members watched this clip, known as the Genesis video, which explains the strategic planning process, gives context, and shows the diversity of voices that went into the plan. The remaining five videos will each focus on one of the transformational aspirations. Anglican Video has

been in production on these videos through the summer and released one so far.

With so many stories across the church, Barry said Anglican Video had opted to focus on one story for each aspiration. “My guiding principle for this work has always been, the most personal is the most universal,” she said. In the long run, the goal was to provide a platform where people can show what they’re doing in their own context for the aspirations and help them tell their stories. The final video will concern the transformational aspiration “Invites and deepens life in Christ”, serving as a bookend to the Genesis video that pulls all the streams together and sets the scene for the work as it goes forward.

Marshall then outlined two of the current diocesan pilot projects. The diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador held an in-person gathering of canon missionaries and missional archdeacons on Oct. 1, which sought to connect strategic visioning in different regions with the transformational aspirations. The SPWG is supporting a local consultant. The diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island outlined what they need to move forward at their diocesan council on Sept. 23 and the SPWG is working with the bishop and diocesan leadership to design a deep listening process to inform strategic visioning.

Canon (lay) Ian Alexander, a member of the SPWG, described two other diocesan pilot projects. In the diocese of Toronto, two consultants and a staff lead who are also SPWG members are leading a “Cast the Net” vision and strategy process based on a broad, deep listening model that will last through the diocesan synod in November 2023. In the diocese of New Westminster, a Sept. 24 engagement with diocesan council strove to adapt the transformational aspirations and SPWG methodology to support diocesan

priorities. The SWPG is awaiting a follow-up after the October Mission and Ministry Conference.

Moses outlined key planning and implementation assumptions for 2023 to 2025. The SPWG will invite General Synod 2023 to take up the five aspirations as the basis for planning, setting priorities, resource allocation and collaboration with provinces and dioceses. It will also encourage General Synod to direct CoGS to set up planning teams for continuing work with the primate, Sacred Circle and provinces and dioceses, and to report on implementation to CoGS and General Synod 2025.

### **A Searching World Activity**

In the second of a three-stage reflection on the triennial theme ("A Changing Church, A Searching World, A Faithful God"), CoGS members were invited to think of words or phrases to describe how they had seen council respond to the theme "A Searching World." Responses included:

- Seeking to be prophetic
- Online services. Families used online church to connect households
- Journey of Pilgrimage and Discovery for Young Adults
- In the Arctic even radio shows asked for church involvement
- Steps to self-determination and reconciliation. Wider culture looking to take steps on this too.
- Searching for ways to dismantle racism and colonialism with real tangible commitment
- People are searching for community through COVID
- Liturgical renewal
- Deep listening
- In-person is slowly coming back
- Reflect a loving God to a searching

world

### **Compline**

The day's session ended with Compline evening prayer.

*Members broke for an evening social at 8:30 p.m.*