

COGS Highlights



Council of General Synod

Sunday, November 13, 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.

Eucharist

The Rev. Karen Egan, prolocutor of General Synod, gave the homily at the morning Eucharist.

Partner Reflections

The Rev. Chris Bishop, pastor at Faith Lutheran Church in Winnipeg, said he felt welcomed as the new CoGS member for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC). He was heartened to see CoGS hold up many of the same themes as the Lutherans' National Church Council such as making the church a safe space, especially for those who have undergone trauma. The meeting left Bishop with a sense of hope that the Anglican Church of Canada and ELCIC share a common understanding in where they find themselves and in living out the gospel of Jesus Christ.

A particularly important aspect of the meeting Bishop took away as a sign of great hope is the way the Anglican Church of Canada, through the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples and Sacred Circle, is journeying to redeem its relationship with First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples. Lutherans, he said, share the sorrow of Anglicans at the history of residential schools and the Doctrine of Discovery, and look with hope to see ways in which the full communion partners can walk together into new relationships between Indigenous and non-

Indigenous peoples.

Liza Anderson, professor of theology and church history at the General Theological Seminary in New York and newly elected representative for The Episcopal Church (TEC), credited CoGS for seamlessly integrating her into the meeting despite not knowing if she would be attending until 48 hours beforehand—a testament, she said, to “Canadian hospitality”. Now in her second six-year term on TEC’s executive council, Anderson found CoGS interesting in how it differed from Episcopal counterparts. She was impressed by the amount of prayer each day and intrigued by how CoGS as a whole spends a lot of time listening to reports; in TEC only the executive council receives equivalent reports. Anderson highlighted the report on dismantling racism, a topic part of every meeting of TEC’s executive council, and the focus on strategic planning, which she suggested TEC might do more of since the U.S. church often finds itself reacting to immediate concerns.

Anderson was struck by observations of clergy struggling to name places where they find hope. Episcopalians in the United States often find themselves in a despairing place, she said, with COVID accelerating trends of dwindling congregations. She said there is often confusion between the Christian virtue of hope and the sentiment of optimism, where the latter might presume things will get better. “What we’re called to is hope—simply accepting the work before us that we have to do,” Anderson said.

Jubilee Commission

Judith Moses, chair of the Jubilee Commission, said the commission was focused for the moment on an archival research project looking into the Anglican Church of Canada's historic funding base, past funding policies and trends in supporting Indigenous ministry.

Reconciliation animator Dawn Maracle is handling this work with the assistance of part-time staff.

A more in-depth report will be presented at the next CoGS meeting, Moses said. She put forward a motion to appoint two new members to the commission, which she said had suffered from lack of membership. The motion carried.

Resolution

Be it resolved that the Council of General Synod appoint the Rev. Dr. Ray Aldred and the Rt. Rev. Sidney Black as members of the Jubilee Commission for the remainder of its term.

Financial Management Committee—2023 Budget

Treasurer and CFO Amal Attia presented the 2023 General Synod budget. The Financial Management Committee was able to achieve a balanced budget in part because of a forecast surplus in 2022 of \$297,033, which will be used to increase annual transfers to reserves for General Synod. The committee proposed to use, as necessary, \$130,000 from the Ministry Investment Fund approved for 2023 projects. Total savings in the Financial Management department were approximately \$100,000 in the 2023 budget. Proportional gifts for 2022 were also forecast at \$7.1 million, or \$253,000 above budget.

"We're doing whatever we can to keep costs down," Attia said. The largest expense remains \$2.15 million in grants to Council of the North.

"We're proud to support them," Attia said, adding that General Synod is trying to be efficient with the funds it has. "If we can save from any area, we'll work together to make that happen." A motion to approve the 2023 budget was carried.

Resolution

That the Council of General Synod approve the proposed budget for 2023.

To welcome Bishop and Anderson into CoGS as partner representatives, General Secretary Alan Perry presented them with copies of the *Sing a New Creation* hymnal as gifts.

Members broke for lunch from noon to 1 p.m.

General Secretary's Report

In his report to CoGS, General Secretary Perry reminded council of the various deliverables General Synod 2019 had tasked it with: reviewing the mission of the Anglican Church of Canada, strategic planning, reviewing the policy base for the Safe Church Charter, supporting ambassadors for reconciliation and the Jubilee Commission, taking action against human trafficking and the climate crisis, and undertaking a constitutional review. He noted council had also undertaken work that did not emerge from General Synod resolutions, such as publishing a new hymn book and working on dismantling racism. "For these and for God's mercies we give huge thanks," Perry said.

He directed the attention of CoGS to the upcoming Assembly planned for Calgary in late July 2023, which as of Nov. 13 was 225 days away. The Assembly Planning Committee recently visited the site where the event will be held, and Perry shared photos of the venue taken at the site visit.

Finally, Perry noted a change in the location of

the next CoGS meeting in March, since a rescheduling from May meant that the Queen of Apostles Renewal Centre will no longer be available. The March 2023 meeting of CoGS will instead take place in Toronto at the Best Western Premier Airport Hotel.

Gathering Together the Threads

Archbishop Lynne McNaughton asked CoGS members to integrate what they had learned from the meeting to decide both what their next steps are as a council and how members should apply those lessons within their own contexts. Table groups discussed what they had heard at the meeting, what they needed to share, lessons they would be taking home with them, and changes to consider about how to operate at CoGS meetings.

A Faithful God Activity

In the final part of a three-stage reflection on the triennial theme (“A Changing Church, A Searching World, A Faithful God”), CoGS members thought of words or phrases to describe how they had seen council answer the theme “A Faithful God.” Responses included:

- Courageous conversations and courageous listening
- Leaning on God’s faithfulness allows us to keep perspective and risk big questions
- Prayer and worship “re-minds” of God’s faithful presence
- Safe travel, COVID-safe meetings
- Through the preachers
- Faithful God evident in community, keeps talking and singing
- Constancy of the Holy Spirit in our midst in challenges
- Prayer and deep listening
- In spite of our best efforts, God still works among and through us
- Changes are happening—new question. We’re still here, still relevant

- Work is God/Spirit-inspired
- Through fellowship and shared worship (and networking, especially in person)
- We are here and God is too
- Hear voices of Spirit in voices of each other

Closing Remarks and Prayer

Archbishop Linda Nicholls, primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, expressed gratitude for the feedback about CoGS and said council would pick up those responses at its March meeting, which would also form the basis for the recommendations and legacy it would pass on to the next CoGS.

One decision the primate said CoGS would have to make would be whether to continue meeting in person, online, or in hybrid forms. Nicholls thanked the Rev. Monique Stone for helping develop community among those who attend council meetings online. However, she pointed out that CoGS also lost time it could have had together in conversation, since it is unable to start early in the day due to having people tuning in online from across the country. CoGS will have to evaluate the respective losses and gains of online or hybrid models, Nicholls said. “Frankly we’ve lost the companionship and fellowship and presence of those online in ways we’re missing,” she added.

Council had heard many presentation over the weekend and the primate thanked members for their close attention. She asked them to consider whether the current mode of presentation is helpful. Nicholls noted that the Strategic Planning Working Group (SPWG) is concluding its work, which will be presented next year to CoGS in March and to General Synod in summer. After that, she said, the work of prioritizing where to go from there will begin. The primate anticipated that the next several months would be intense and asked for prayers for General Synod.

Nicholls wished CoGS members safe journeys home and asked them to share messages they had heard at the meeting, and to invite their dioceses and ecclesiastical provinces into discussion on topics such as dismantling racism and reviewing safe church practices. She encouraged them to share the videos on the SPWG's five transformational aspirations, and ended the meeting with a closing prayer.

Council adjourned at 3 p.m.