

COGS Highlights



Council of General Synod

Friday, November 18, 2016

Council members gathered at 8:45 a.m. at the Queen of Apostles Renewal Centre in Mississauga.

Eucharist

Deputy Prolocutor Lynne McNaughton led the opening Eucharist, which included a commemoration of Hilda, Abbess of Whitby.

Adoption of Minutes

Motions to adopt the minutes from both the last meeting of the Council of General Synod (CoGS) in March and General Synod in July were put forward. Both motions were carried after an amendment to correct the spelling of a name.

What Now?

The main part of the morning business revolved around the continuation of work that began at General Synod on July 12, 2016 following the previous evening's vote on changes to the marriage canon. Table groups the morning after the vote had held discussions based around three questions—what is next for the church prophetically, pastorally, and structurally? Archbishop Fred Hiltz, Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, noted the high level of feedback from those table groups and said that he had taken the comments shared in table groups very seriously, reading all of them.

Prolocutor Cynthia Haines-Turner distributed sheets to members of CoGS distilling the feedback of General Synod into a single document. She noted that much of the feedback related to the results of the vote. Many General Synod members had lamented how painful the process had been and expressed concern that those feeling hurt were cared for. There were reflections about how engaged dioceses had been before General Synod, how people might have been better prepared, and what bishops, dioceses, and CoGS could do to help

that happen and encourage future conversation. Some General Synod members also criticized structural aspects of the process, such as the legislative procedure requiring voting by orders and a two-thirds majority in each house.

Table groups took several minutes to read the document. Moving into questions and comments, some council members expressed feelings of fatigue and *déjà vu*, suggesting that many people in the church were tired of the debate and that legislative issues had already been explained in depth. One member, however, said that the constitutional process for changes to canon or doctrine is deliberately slow and conservative.

Subsequent table group discussion explored further members' feelings on the legislative process. Council members took turns at the microphones to share their thoughts afterward.

One member noted that while CoGS could start on the road towards changing the legislative process, the specific matter of the marriage canon had already passed its first reading at General Synod and must now be deliberated by dioceses and provinces—but that CoGS could ensure dioceses and provinces have enough information to give the matter due consideration. Another council member emphasized the importance of taking seriously the issue of translation to make sure all those deliberating changes to the marriage canon could do so in their own language.

Wrapping up the discussion, the Primate noted that there had been some practical suggestions made by the table groups, and that it might be helpful if the present meeting of CoGS ended with some specific referrals being made to the General Synod Planning Committee and the Governance Working Group.

Members broke for coffee from 10:30 a.m. to 11 a.m.

Financial Management Presentation

Treasurer Hanna Goschy resumed the meeting with a presentation on three documents from the Financial Management Committee: the proposed 2017 budget, financials from the third quarter of 2016, and criteria for the Ministry Investment Fund.

Ministries of General Synod sketched the work plans that informed the proposed 2017 budget, with the Financial Management Committee starting on multiple drafts in July 2016 and reviewing its proposed budget at the end of October. The final version of the proposed budget forecasts a \$47,000 surplus in 2017, compared to a \$124,000 surplus in the 2016 forecast.

Goschy described the proposed budget as “a budget for participating in God’s mission,” focused and guided by the Marks of Mission and Vision 2019 with a conservative but realistic outlook on revenue. According to the finances, 87 per cent of net revenues for the church came from diocesan provincial gifts. Goschy presented expenses for each ministry of the church, including costs such as grants, administration, and building maintenance.

The Financial Management Committee expects modest surpluses from 2017 through 2021. Goschy said it was critical for the ministries of General Synod that dioceses maintain proportional gifts commitments to the national church. The achievement of a balanced budget, she said, required the church to be “prudent in projecting revenues, vigilant in pursuing revenues, and judicious in managing expenses.”

During the period for comments that followed, council members raised questions about maintenance costs for Church House in Toronto and ensuring all General Synod staff members are paid a living wage with incremental increases accounting for inflation, along with inquiries about various program expenditures.

The Primate thanked Goschy for her presentation and said CoGS would make decisions on the budget on Saturday afternoon. Bishop Larry

Robertson led the saying of grace to close the morning session.

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

Bible Study

McNaughton opened up the afternoon session with a moment of silence, followed by a prayer. Table groups read Ephesians 4:1-6 and reflected upon the passage.

Identification of Resources and Process for Marriage Canon Study by Dioceses and Provinces

Resuming discussion on the marriage canon, Karen Egan, co-chair of the Planning and Agenda Team, returned to the question of how CoGS could ensure that conversations about the marriage canon continue in provinces and dioceses. Prolocutor Haines-Turner clarified questions about the legislative process, noting that certain amendments could still be put forward.

Egan put key questions before the table groups:

- Do you anticipate your diocese being able to have these conversations easily?
- What processes would they need?
- Are there ways the national church and CoGS could begin to facilitate these conversations, taking into account conditions in your particular place (diocese, provincial synod)?

After 10-15 minutes of discussion, representatives of each table group shared their responses with the council.

One table wondered what a mechanism might look like to share feedback from dioceses and provinces. Another table group spoke about the need to ensure consultation with elders and leaders in Indigenous communities. Others highlighted the importance of translating the report of the Commission on the Marriage Canon, *This Holy Estate*, into different languages, such as Cree, and pondered whether video resources might advance the conversation. A common sentiment was the fatigue that many sensed throughout the church on the long-running

debate over the marriage canon, but also the importance of episcopal leadership in ensuring that these ongoing conversations take place.

Table groups broke into several more minutes of discussion on questions they could ask to move conversations on the marriage canon forward at a diocesan level. In their responses, table groups wondered whether the General Secretary or another church leader might issue a clear, concise statement on the process. They pointed to the importance of episcopal leadership in facilitating conversations, and extolled the virtues of talking circles as one method of discussion that promoted mutual respect.

Archbishop Hiltz thanked all present for their conversations and suggestions. He said that CoGS perhaps needed more time to discuss how it could best serve as ambassadors for conversations in the provinces, and there was a lack of clarity across the church on what the phrase “for consideration” meant in terms of the responsibility of provinces and dioceses to discuss changes to the marriage canon. The Primate suggested that the council might consider the creation of a small working group, noting that many members of the Commission on the Marriage Canon had expressed their willingness to keep serving the church as it endeavours to continue the conversation.

PWRDF Presentation

An update on work by the Primate’s World Relief and Development Fund (PWRDF) featured transitional deacon Gillian Hoyer, recently elected to the PWRDF board of directors, and new executive director Will Postma.

Hoyer spoke first, asking council members to remember an early memory or experience they had with PWRDF. She recalled her own experience at age 12, when a parish representative of PWRDF—which was coordinating the Anglican response to the Rwandan genocide—spoke to her congregation about the dire situation in the small African country. Other CoGS members volunteered some of their own experiences. Hoyer described PWRDF as one the most significant ways that the church enacts social justice and expresses its unity, with its work reflecting Vision 2019 and the Marks

of Mission and connecting Anglicans across Canada and around the world.

After touching on his first months as executive director and expressing his appreciation for the support of Archbishop Hiltz, Postma highlighted the vision statement of PWRDF and how it aimed to achieve its vision of “a truly just, healthy and peaceful world” through five different ways of working:

- *Partnerships*. Building long-term relationships and providing support to partners to design programs and to help them monitor, evaluate, learn, and report on their experiences. PWRDF currently has 50 different partners.
- *Responding* to international humanitarian needs in countries such as Haiti, Nepal, Syria, and the Philippines; responding to requests from Indigenous communities such as Pikangikum, which desperately requires clean water; responding to communities and their priorities, such as human rights or gender-based violence; and responding to emergency needs in Canada, such as the work of PWRDF in helping those affected by the Calgary floods and Fort McMurray wildfire.
- *Innovation*, by supporting new projects such as bicycle ambulances, solar suitcases to provide light in medical clinics, and offering goats to families;
- *Collaboration* with organizations such as the 140+ member ACT Alliance and the Canadian Foodgrains Bank; and
- *Evaluation* for the sake of learning and finding better programming and improved ways of working. In 2017, PWRDF will conduct evaluations of its Africa programs as well as the Fred Says campaign for food security.

Closing out the presentation, Hoyer invited council members to look forward, asking themselves what gives them hope for the future of PWRDF, and how they think the agency might continue to move forward to a just and peaceful world.

Members enjoyed free time from 3:30 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Hospitality and dinner followed from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Evening Prayer

The deputy prolocutor led the evening prayer session.

Vision 2019 and Marks of Mission

General Secretary Michael Thompson drew the attention of council members to the priorities and practices of Vision 2019 and offered a brief history on the background of the document. He praised Archbishop Hiltz for helping build a connection between Vision 2019 and the Marks of Mission, which played a major role in encouraging the Anglican Church of Canada to embrace the latter.

Thompson recounted how the last meeting of CoGS in March 2016 had decided that Vision 2019 was sufficient to carry the church to General Synod 2022, and that it was neither necessary nor apt at this point to develop a new strategic vision. As a result, CoGS had some time in its planning function to understand how a new strategic vision might emerge in the next five years—a process the General Secretary said was characterized not by a sense of hurry, but rather by a sense of hope and adventure.

The Primate took the podium to begin a discussion on areas of ministry that had been shaped by Vision 2019. He suggested dividing the council into groups based on those whose greatest passion and interest lay in one of four areas: enlivening leadership and worship formation; walking with Indigenous peoples; communications; and work in the Anglican Communion and ecumenical relations.

Archbishop Hiltz highlighted the large number of younger people in the present council, and invited them to form their own group if they wished. Council members then broke into groups for informal conversation based around the following questions:

- How has Vision 2019 supported and shaped some of the commitments of our church?
- What can we name in spirit of Vision 2019 as significant movements and

accomplishments?

- What can we discern as things in the spirit of Vision 2019 that are emerging and might need tending?
- What would you like us to pray for in light of your conversations tonight?

After 30 minutes of group discussion in separate rooms, council members re-assembled in the M. Smith Room to hear representatives of each group recount their conversations and suggest related prayers.

The *enlivening leadership and worship formation* group had largely focused its discussion on the meaning of “enlivening,” as well as the revision of liturgical texts to help people better understand them. Lively worship, the group said, is a form of being open to God’s presence through liturgy, and members discussed how they had been affected in their own lives by great liturgies. They suggested praying for those who risk their lives to provide gospel and to participate in worship, recognizing the depth of faith that must be a part of such commitment.

The *walking with Indigenous peoples* group had gratefully invited its Indigenous members to speak first during discussion. Over the course of their conversation, they reached a consensus that the trajectory of conversations in Indigenous communities and circles had shaped Vision 2019, and not the other way around. Members said there was a sense of urgency in the coming triennium to substantiate amendments to Canon XXII that would truly recognize the National Indigenous Anglican Bishop, Sacred Circle, and the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples. Indigenous people must determine what self-determination looks like, but the group reiterated the love of Indigenous Anglicans for their church. The desire for a uniquely Indigenous church with its own governance and structures has never been about splitting from the Anglican Church of Canada, group members said. Rather, the vision has always been about walking hand in hand. To walk with Indigenous people, non-Indigenous people must question their own assumptions and dedication to the status quo. The group proposed praying for those who fear change and also those who are

working for it, that they may be bold in Christ's wisdom, and that non-Indigenous people may have the wisdom of the Holy Spirit in knowing when to speak and when to be silent and make space.

The *Anglican Communion and ecumenical relations* group began by discussing the worldwide communion and the place of the Anglican Church of Canada within it, which they suggested might be a good subject to talk about at future CoGS meetings. Members talked about the importance of leadership, participation, and developing relations of trust and vitality, both with new and established partners. They reflected upon what the church had learned from other Christian denominations, particularly its full communion partners in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, and the value of learning, humility, and listening in helping the church grow. The group suggested praying to shine light on various ministries, to lead by support, and to dispel fear of the unknown.

The *communications* group opened its discussion with comments on effective ministries within the church that communicate well, praising the success of the Council of the North in making themselves better known as well as that of PWRDF in getting their message out down to the local level. That capacity to reach audiences at the local level, group members noted, is something that the Internet communication can offer to every ministry of the church, with the online world quickly developing its own sense of community. They talked about how to better communicate the work of CoGS, suggesting that paying greater attention on the experience of individual council members might personalize the meetings for a wider audience. In extolling the potential of new forms of communication, the group also acknowledged the need to take a critical look at older modes of communication, bypassing sentimental attachments and considering whether such forms cost more money than they produce in revenue. They advocated praying that the online community would be able to experience holy manners, and that all communications from the church around CoGS and any ministry in national church would be able to truly express God's grace

and mercy.

At the end of the evening session, lights dimmed and council members lit candles for closing prayers and hymns.

Members adjourned for the evening at 9 p.m.