

COGS Highlights



Council of General Synod

Saturday, November 19, 2016

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

Eucharist

National Indigenous Anglican Bishop Mark MacDonald led the Eucharist. The worship service included a tribute to Elizabeth, Princess of Hungary (1207-1231), who devoted her life to serving the poor, sick, and homeless.

Orders of the Day

Dean Peter Wall, co-chair of the Planning and Agenda Team, began the Saturday morning session of the Council of General Synod (CoGS) by reading out the Orders of the Day.

ACIP Report

Vincent Solomon, urban Indigenous ministry developer for the Diocese of Rupert's Land—who also serves as a priest at St. Philip's Church in the Ojibwe community of Scantebury and at the Parish of St. Peter's Dynevor, both near Winnipeg—opened up the presentation from the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples (ACIP) by speaking about his efforts to raise up a local Indigenous worshipping community around Winnipeg. Solomon started his current position in May, and the community will be holding their first Sunday worship in February. The preparation time stems from a desire to plan with care, to examine and indigenize liturgy and consider Indigenous imagery within a Christian context.

Solomon spoke at length about reconciliation as a Christian concept. Reconciliation includes the need to take seriously the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) by providing ways to heal the wrongs that have been perpetrated against Indigenous people, particularly those impacted by the residential

school experience and resulting intergenerational trauma, he told the council. Yet it also includes the ways in which Christians can work together to “tear down the walls” that divide Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

Highlighting the healing component of ministry, Solomon described his own journey from someone who was broken and experienced pain to someone who, with the help of God, was able to find hope and healing through Jesus Christ. He pointed to the numerous aspects of healing ministry that will be included in the community he is shepherding, including Christian counsellors, suicide prevention programs, teachings from elders, recognizing the complicity of the church in stripping away traditional culture, and continuing to transform it into a body that builds up Indigenous people and provides them with a vital place in it.

Thanking the Anglican Foundation for its financial support to the work he described, Solomon underscored the importance of self-determination. He noted how many parallels he had found in the Old and New Testaments with Indigenous belief and ceremonies, and expounded on the need to celebrate Indigenous values, bolster the identity of Indigenous youth, and to work in conjunction with others even as Indigenous people are able to determine their own fate. “We want to take our place in this body,” Solomon concluded. “And we want to bless the socks off of the rest of the church.”

Next, Bishop MacDonald briefly recounted the work of ACIP since General Synod, noting that it had held two teleconferences and one face-to-face meeting, attending to work items such as appointments and planning. Aside from dealing with the response of their own communities to the

marriage canon vote, ACIP members had primarily been concerned with continuing work towards self-determination through the ongoing development of a Confederacy of Indigenous Anglican Lands.

ACIP members then led a presentation on continuing to walk the path towards Indigenous self-determination within the Anglican Church of Canada, described through the concept of the primal elements: air, water, fire, and earth, all of which are contained in Mother Earth. Each primal element is associated with one of four elements ACIP has identified in its journey to self-determination: spiritual formation, leadership formation, mission and ministry, and sustainability. The members of ACIP explained each concept and followed it with questions to ponder.

Air (Spiritual Formation). At the beginning of a spiritual journey, we meet many people who mentor us and give us teachings to lead us on the path towards right relations. Spiritual formation is about having a “good mind” even when we are in conflict. Historical trauma has broken many spirits, with young people being particularly vulnerable due to not knowing their traditional teachings and/or Christian values. The church must breathe air—which represents “vigilance, trust, clarity, independence and kind-heartedness”—into those who are hurting and nurture their spiritual formation.

Water (Leadership Formation). We cannot live without water, and plants cannot grow without it. Water is used to baptize, but is hard to find in many Indigenous communities. To grow leaders, we need living water, which represents “understanding, mildness, mercy, and forgiveness”. The current state of Indigenous church leadership is challenging. Currently there are 150 Indigenous clergy in the Anglican Church of Canada, most of who are not paid for their work. Many of those ordained are elders or at the cusp of being named an elder.

Communities are smaller and it can be expensive to send someone out of the community to receive training, which may not be culturally appropriate or relevant. Awareness of different learning styles,

providing the sacraments on a consistent basis, use of storytelling, and a high value on the traditions of the community can help in the formation of new leaders.

ACIP members put forward what they called *Circles of Faith: A Jesus Plan for Indigenous Leadership*, based on daily engagement with the gospel to create disciples in Indigenous communities. They discussed the significance of fire, a symbol of the Holy Spirit that has had a significant role in Indigenous spirituality, from the lighting of the Sacred Fire to the National Indigenous Anglican Bishop being referred to as a “Fire Keeper”.

Trained Fire Keepers, in consultation with community leaders, selects “Faith Keepers”, disciples and catechists who follow the Jesus plan and come together to learn from the Fire Keeper. A Faith Keeper could be a priest or a deacon, who in turn recruits at least one “Fire Starter” from the community. Fire Starters motivate the community to take responsibility for local ministry, looking for people who might take care of tasks such as looking after the altar. They themselves would also carry out tasks such as coordinating Sunday school, maintaining buildings, training lay readers and preachers, and so on.

Fire (Mission and Ministry). The call to mission and ministry or God’s purpose for Indigenous people is symbolized by fire, associated with “vigorousness, zeal, enthusiasm, courage, and creativity.” The Sacred Fire, which serves as a source of energy, is central to this concept, as is living into the Marks of Mission. Ministry in Indigenous communities is their fire, the Holy Spirit “working in us to get God’s work done.”

Earth (Sustainability). “As Indigenous people,” ACIP members said, “we have a responsibility to protect Earth,” which represents “consistency, conscientiousness, perseverance, respectfulness, and responsibility” and which provides food and minerals necessary for existence. The presenters drew a connection between the historical self-determination of Indigenous peoples and their self-sustained lifestyle. For Indigenous Anglicans, self-determination within the Anglican Church of Canada entails considering everything that must

be in place before the creation of an Indigenous province.

In order to reach the goals outlined in their presentations, ACIP recommended:

- appointing a focus group to sort out details and ideas, with co-chairs Larry Beardy and Donna Bomberry;
- keeping the Sol Sanderson proposal as the overall “big” vision;
- starting small, in the manner of Jesus, with three or four areas that want self-determination, by planning and equipping for mission and ministry;
- consulting with Harry Huskins for directions on incorporation;
- drafting of “roles and duties” for the National Indigenous Anglican Bishop by Solomon, Bomberry, and Indigenous Ministries Coordinator Ginny Doctor;
- development of a regional model that has both Indigenous community and urban ministry;
- assistance by Bomberry in the financial plan to expand the office of the National Indigenous Anglican Bishop, to include an archdeacon, programs funding, and staff; and
- development of financial management for capital and operations and maintenance, ministry plans for regions and for the national office. The church is based on First Nations sovereignty and treaty rights.

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

After the break, ACIP members invited council to present any comments or questions they might have. In response to queries, Bishop MacDonald spoke in greater depth about the concept of idolatry, which had been brought up in relation to the issue of sustainability. Doctor discussed the work of urban ministry in the Diocese of Toronto as Chris Harper recently replacing Andrew Wesley as the diocesan Indigenous Coordinator.

Wrapping up the Q&A, Bishop MacDonald brought up his recent visit to North Dakota to serve as a “protective witness” for water protectors

protesting pipeline development near the Standing Rock reserve. He described the threatening nature of the militarized state response; the urgency of the matter, which has captured the imagination of the world; its tying together of issues such as water protection, Indigenous self-determination, and climate change; and its illustration of the importance of “free, prior, and informed consent” for Indigenous peoples.

Interim Report from the Primate’s Commission on Discovery, Reconciliation and Justice

Andrew Wesley and Terry Finlay, co-chairs of the Primate’s Commission on Discovery, Reconciliation and Justice, presented council members with a summary of their recent work. Wesley opened with a story about a chief from a reserve near Kenora, Ont. who ran away from home as a young man after being moved from foster home to foster home, became hungry, and entered a restaurant where he met Muhammad Ali, who told him to go home and encouraged him to return to his elders. The story, Wesley said, illustrated the lingering impact of the Doctrine of Discovery and the importance of leading people in a good direction.

Referring to the importance of the work discussed earlier in the morning on the journey toward Indigenous self-determination in the church, Finlay discussed the growing concern across North America and increasing challenge to what he referred to as “our baptismal covenant, our basic values” in the light of recent hate crimes such as the defacement of churches and mosques in Ottawa with swastikas.

Speaking about the draft report itself—still in draft form due to the fact that too much work remained to complete a report in 2016 as originally planned—Finlay said that a major task for the commission was learning to listen to one another, with members representing settler, treaty, and Indigenous cultures. He stressed the need to translate the report into Indigenous languages as necessary for all involved to be on “the same playing field”. Finlay briefly touched on the issue of finances, noting that several Indigenous clergy must live on welfare to support their ministry. Describing such a situation as unjust, he

encouraged an audit to verify conditions on the ground and how they might affect the church. He also spoke about the need for parishes to acknowledge at the beginning of each worship service that they were gathered on traditional Indigenous land, as well as the imperative to further explore the meaning of “free, prior, and informed consent.”

A major aspect of the report was its request for the National Office of the Anglican Church of Canada to hire a *reconciliation animator*, who according to the proposed vacancy posting, would work “on a permanent full-time basis to further reconciliation, including by engaging Anglicans across the country in the support of the TRC Calls to Action and the implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.” The person hired as a reconciliation animator would need to possess in-depth knowledge of truth and reconciliation and Indigenous justice issues, which Wesley noted was in part due to the need to educate the church further about issues such as the Doctrine of Discovery, the Indian residential school system, and the Sixties Scoop.

While the co-chairs expressed their hope that CoGS would move forward on hiring a reconciliation animator, General Secretary Michael Thompson said in a subsequent question period that the 2017 budget had allocated resources for a position very similar to what was described by the commission. He surmised that it was perhaps a sign of the Holy Spirit moving among the church, to which Finlay responded, “Amen, alleluia!” With no further questions from the council, Finlay encouraged members to maintain close communication with the commission.

Bishop MacDonald led the council in a singing of a hymn to close out the morning session.

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

Bible Study

The afternoon session opened with a Bible study. Table groups read Ephesians 4:17-32 and reflected upon the passage.

Election

Deputy Prolocutor Lynne McNaughton reiterated that council members should nominate candidates for the 2019 Anglican Consultative Council by March 1, 2017, Ash Wednesday.

She presented a motion from the Nominations Committee for an appointment of a council member to the Ministry Investment Fund, which passed by consensus.

Resolution

That Council of General Synod approve Dale Droza as CoGS representative on the Ministry Investment Fund.

Open Letter and Proposed Event

After the resolution passed, Archbishop Fred Hiltz, Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, brought up a pair of matters that council had not gotten to during the morning discussion.

One was an open letter, signed by the Primate and National Indigenous Anglican Bishop, which would bring wider attention to the work of the Commission, on the ways Anglicans could respond to the TRC Calls to Action, and on increasing the focus in parishes on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The open letter would be built around four themes: pray, learn, relate, and act. At the moment, the plan is to release the letter close to Dec. 10, which marks Human Rights Day.

The other matter related to the ongoing issue of consultation. Archbishop Hiltz referred to the 1994 Anglican Indigenous Covenant as well as the response to the covenant by the 1995 General Synod, which passed three related resolutions. One accepted and affirmed the covenant, called the church into unity through its commonality in Christ, and pledged to work towards self-determination for Indigenous Anglicans. The second changed the name of the Council for Native Ministries to its current moniker, the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples, and the third called for establishing the position of a National Indigenous Anglican Bishop.

With more than two decades having passed since

the 1994 covenant and 1995 General Synod, the Primate suggested that it was time for the church to pause and take stock of where it was now in the long journey towards reconciliation. Though often the subject of conversation in ACIP, CoGS, the Indigenous House of Bishops leadership circle, and the national House of Bishops, Archbishop Hiltz believed it was time for that conversation to extend to the entire church.

The Primate envisioned co-hosting an event in spring 2017 with the National Indigenous Anglican Bishop, bringing together a representative group of 50-60 Indigenous and non-Indigenous people from across Canada, including youth and elders, people involved in Aboriginal Friendship Centres, urban Indigenous ministry, and corrections, among other areas. The event would be a time for stories, songs, prayers, the Sacred Fire, talking circles, healing circles, discernment, and learning. Participants would reflect on good news stories they could celebrate from the past two decades, lessons learned on the path to reconciliation and Indigenous self-determination, continuing challenges, and possible next steps as Anglicans continue to move forward together in the spirit of building a truly Indigenous church, with the hope of a possible renewed covenant for the whole church.

A planning team has not yet been put in place for the proposed event, though Archbishop Hiltz and Bishop MacDonald plan to discuss the issue in mid-December. The event is also not included in the 2017 budget, but the Primate was optimistic that funds were available to support the event. The planned date for the event would come either in anticipation of, or on the day of, June 21, 2017, National Aboriginal Day.

The Primate invited questions and comments from council members about the idea before moving on to the next item of business.

Financial Resolutions

Treasurer Hanna Goschy presented the 2015 financial statement from the Missionary Society of the Anglican Church of Canada, commonly known by the acronym MSCC from its original identity as the Missionary Society of the Church of England in

Canada.

Due to the MSCC being a separate legal entity from the Anglican Church of Canada, council members temporarily adjourned CoGS and reformed as the MSCC Board of Management to approve the financial statements. Goschy presented three documents to the MSCC: the 2015 financial statement, definitions of the financial statement lines, and a brief history of the MSCC written by General Synod archivist Nancy Hurn.

Motions were put forward to approve the statements, and subsequently to adjourn as the MSCC. Both motions carried and CoGS officially reconvened.

Resolution

Be it resolved that the Board of Management approves the Financial Statements of the Missionary Society of the Anglican Church of Canada for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2015 and that any two Officers are authorized to sign the statements on the Board's behalf.

Resolution

That the meeting of the Board of Management of the Missionary Society of the Anglican Church of Canada be terminated.

Meeting Norms Report Back

Karen Egan, co-chair of the Planning and Agenda Team, presented feedback from table groups on the discussion of meeting norms for the new council. She described all feedback, even minor changes or additions, as helpful. Feedback pertained to the conduct of members before the start of council meeting and during meetings, along with the promotion of mutual hospitality.

A motion to approve the norms was carried.

Resolution

Be it resolved that the Council of General Synod adopt these standards as meeting

norms during the present triennium.

Resolutions from Marriage Canon Conversation

Prolocutor Cynthia Haines-Turner presented three motions related to the previous day's discussion over the General Synod vote on proposed changes to the marriage canon.

The motions pertained to how to continue the conversation as the matter returned to dioceses and provinces for deliberation. Specifically, they involved: translation of materials related to the marriage canon vote; inviting CoGS members to act as "ambassadors to encourage the conversation in their local contexts; and identifying resources that would allow the conversation to take place.

After a protracted discussion among council members over the precise wording of the motions, the Resolutions Committee recruited volunteers from the council to help them modify the language. Voting on the motions was moved to take place on Sunday's session of CoGS instead.

FWM Discipleship Video

Eileen Scully, director of Faith, Worship, and Ministry (FWM), introduced a video that was originally scheduled for viewing at General Synod. The lengthy debate over the marriage canon vote, however, had compelled Scully to voluntarily relinquish the space for FWM in the General Synod agenda to allow for further discussion.

In recent years, Scully said, FWM has been undergoing extensive changes, serving as both a department and set of committees in addition to its numerous task forces and dialogues. Producing numerous resources over the last triennium, it had experienced a shift in direction that increasingly prioritized leadership formation. The process of creating new liturgical texts, for example, had led to a discussion about the need to form liturgical leaders. Production of its resource on physician-assisted death had left participants talking about the need to form pastoral leaders. Work on the hymn book supplement resulted in an awareness of the need to form communities of disciples in congregational song.

The prevalence of such conversations led to the production of the video, in which some of the 144 people on various FWM committees described what they had learned in their time on the various committees, task forces, etc. about being a follower of Jesus. Among those who shared their reflections in the video were members of the Vital and Healthy Parishes project, Liturgy Task Force and Congregational Vitality Working Group, the Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue, and the Task Force on Physician Assisted Dying. Individuals spoke about feelings of mutual support, learning about their faith through questions from those with differing views, encouraging others to tell stories and share ideas, and finding common ground even in the midst of the most controversial issues.

After the video, Scully asked council members to reflect with others in their table groups what they had learned about discipleship and being a follower of Jesus over the past few days at CoGS.

The prolocutor then presented a report and a proposed resolution from the Pensions Committee. Members voted in favour of the motion for amendments to certain pension plan regulations.

Resolution

Be it resolved that the Council of General Synod approves the recommendation of the Pension Committee to make the following amendments to Section 3, 1, 4(a) and Section 5 of Regulation 19 ("Compliance with Quebec Supplemental Pension Plans Act") of the General Synod Pension Plan Regulations, effective January 1, 2017.

Encounter With Our Partners

After hymn singing and prayer the Primate opened the evening session by introducing four individuals representing some of the church's closest partnerships:

- Noreen Duncan, partner to CoGS from The Episcopal Church (TEC)

- Cynthia Haines-Turner, partner to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) through CoGS
- Melanie Delva, partner to TEC through the Anglican Church of Canada; and
- Pat Lovell, partner to CoGS from the ELCIC.

Archbishop Hiltz noted that the full communion partnership between the Anglican Church of Canada and the ELCIC continues to deepen and mature, being now past its “honeymoon stage” to the point where the two churches can have frank conversations on areas where they greatly differ. That maturing relationship, the Primate said, is in no small part due to his own personal friendship with ELCIC National Bishop Susan Johnson, between Church House and the ELCIC staff, and through the Joint Commission. Meanwhile, the Anglican Church of Canada’s relationship with TEC continues to grow and mature, with the two North American churches widely recognized across the worldwide Anglican Communion for their steadfast embrace of the Marks of Mission. He then invited each of the four partnership representatives to speak about their own experiences.

First up was Delva, who in October attended her first meeting of TEC’s executive committee in New Brunswick, N.J. She was deeply impressed with the warm welcome she received, and praised Presiding Bishop Michael Curry as a “dynamic and inspiring leader” who had helped build momentum for what Curry referred to the “Jesus movement”—following Jesus into a life-giving relationship predicated on three pillars: evangelism, racial reconciliation and justice, and environmental stewardship. Delva toured 815, the name given to the main office of TEC, and noted recent dysfunction between the staff and executive that was beginning to heal. The U.S. presidential election was clearly on people’s minds, she said, and she had assured members of TEC that they had the prayers and support of the Anglican Church of Canada. Delva was particularly impressed with the church’s standing committees, and going forward will likely split her time between the Advocacy and Networking for Justice group and the World Missions group.

Duncan spoke next, declaring how integrated she felt at CoGS. Noting that it had been “a difficult week for us in the lower 48”, she expressed her love for the spirit of CoGS, which managed to balance discussion of business and serious issues—some of it painful—with an atmosphere of levity. “There’s a great sense of fun at CoGS,” Duncan said, comparing it the more formal culture of TEC. Attending CoGS less than two weeks after the U.S. presidential election, she was grateful for the respite from the charged political situation, but had received plenty of questions from Canadian counterparts eager to hear her thoughts. Having chosen to become an American citizen, she admitted feeling emotions such as betrayal, anger, and a sense of mourning over the election results, in part because she did not believe Christian values had been espoused in the election. At the same time, Duncan was keenly aware that many of those with different views also self-identify as Christians. Many priests in TEC, and now Presiding Bishop Curry, are currently trying to figure out how they fit into the current situation, she said. Wrapping up her reflection, Duncan thanked Bishop MacDonald and members of ACIP for opening TEC up to new ways of being as Christians.

Representing the ELCIC in her second term at CoGS, Lovell described how many of her fellow Lutherans jokingly described her as a “Lutheran” due to her strong relationship with the Anglican Church of Canada. In that sense, Lovell was proud to be identified as such because the Anglican and Lutheran churches in Canada share so much in common, not least the friendship between Archbishop Hiltz and Bishop Johnson. She compared the four vision priorities of the ELCIC—spirited discipleship, compassionate justice, healthy church, and effective partnerships—to the Marks of Mission as driving factors for her church. While the two churches have work together well at the national levels, Lovell suggested there were many more things they could do at a congregational level. She identified issues of social justice as a potential area to work together, in particular around the issue of anti-racism. With reported hate crimes on the rise, Lovell believed Anglican and Lutheran leaders might “dust off the Birkenstocks we wore in the ‘60s and ‘70s when we were marching” and engage together in grassroots

activism. Through her interactions with the Anglican Church of Canada, Lovell said she had learned a great deal about issues related to Indigenous people and the legacy of the residential school system, which the ELCIC has lent an increasing focus to, despite not having played a historical role in running residential schools. Having met “tremendous people who have enriched my life beyond words” through the Anglican Church, Lovell looked forward to future opportunities for Anglican-Lutheran cooperation on pressing social issues.

Finally, Haines-Turner described her “amazing” experience with the ELCIC and the support that Lutherans have provided the Anglican Church of Canada as it works through its own struggles. She recalled members of the ELCIC National Church Council staying in contact with her throughout General Synod and sending prayers. The prolocutor noted that despite being a much smaller church, the ELCIC has done incredible work in myriad areas, a testament to their church, faith, and mission. After discussing some of the differences in the role of bishops in the National Church Council, Haines-Turner highlighted the ELCIC’s Reformation Challenge accompanying the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation.

The challenge includes four main areas: sponsoring refugees, raising scholarships, planting trees, and contributing to the Lutheran World Federation Endowment Fund. Recounting how they had expanded their original targets in these areas after one prominent Lutheran encouraged members to “add a zero” to the different target numbers, Haines-Turner said that for a small church to aim so high sums up the ELCIC, and added that it was a great privilege for her to continue to be a part of that.

The Primate then opened up the floor to questions and comments from council members, which included discussion of different governing models among the churches, as well as effusive praise for Presiding Bishop Curry and his presentation at General Synod.

Vigil of Resurrection

Closing prayers and hymns for the day took place

in the M.J. Smith Room. Members lit candles as they marked the Vigil of Resurrection in anticipation of Sunday, the Lord’s Day.

Members adjourned for the evening at 9 p.m.