

COGS Highlights



Council of General Synod

Sunday, November 25, 2018

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

Orders of the Day

The Rev. Dr. Karen Egan and the Very Rev. Peter Wall, co-chairs of the planning and agenda team, read out the Orders of the Day.

Marriage Canon: Way Forward, Next Steps

Prolocutor Cynthia Haines-Turner summarized the meetings of the Council of General Synod (CoGS) Marriage Canon Working Group and the conversations that have happened at meetings of the council throughout the triennium. Discussions included the issue of translating the report *This Holy Estate* into Indigenous languages, a conversation which the CoGS engaged in and is still ongoing. A pressing question remains how the church can come out of General Synod with a sense of unity despite the contentious debate over changes to the marriage canon. General Secretary Michael Thompson said that the current CoGS had reached a point where its members worked together well and were poised to establish leadership and perspective on the issue.

The question was put before the council: What does General Synod need to be attentive to in order for us to continue to be the church together proclaiming the gospel?

After discussion, representatives of the table groups came forward with their responses. Ideas put forward by council members included:

- Providing a bracket clause for Indigenous peoples, respecting UNDRIP;
- Emphasizing the importance of dialogue;
- Making available video or in-person opportunities to hear from LGBTQ2SIA

- people;
- Using mixed groups for discussions to create a holy curiosity for the views of others;
- Assurance that the vote on the marriage canon will be transparent;
- Ensuring plenty of time to explain voting procedures and rules;
- Holding the marriage canon vote early to allow for people to process the results and continue to work together through the rest of the agenda;
- Creating a space for silence, which can be transformative for people of prayer;
- Paying attention to and respecting the views of everyone in the room;
- Embracing the language of holy manners and spiritual practices; and
- Declaring a collective commitment at the beginning of General Synod not to walk away regardless of the decision.

The Prolocutor and General Secretary subsequently put forward two additional questions to the council: Do you think it would be helpful if in considering the change to the canon, it would include an acknowledgement of and respect for a continuing variety of understanding of marriage within the Anglican Church of Canada? If so, what might such an acknowledgement include?

Another discussion followed lasting approximately 15 minutes. In their responses, the majority of table group representatives answered affirmatively to the first question. Some referred to the right of Indigenous people to make their own decisions, while others asked whether it might be helpful to identify different communities and understandings in the acknowledgement. One table group wondered if the concept of "bracketing" might not

be the most helpful way to describe such an acknowledgement, since it would suggest a division between views of marriage deemed “normal” and “bracketed”. A common response was the desire to keep any such acknowledgement as clear as possible in regard to having a variety of understandings about what marriage means and the nature of marriage.

Though there was a temptation to become weary, Haines-Turner said—since CoGS had had conversations about the marriage canon at every one of its meetings—it was obvious there was a real energy and care in the table groups this morning. Even if council members were tired of discussing the subject, they remained aware of the need to give the topic their fullest energy, care, and attention. As a personal comment, she added, “I see it as very hopeful.”

Archbishop and Primate Fred Hiltz led council members in prayer.

General Secretary’s Report

The Ven. Dr. Michael Thompson began his report as General Secretary by noting that the church was approaching the end of the 2016-2019 triennium. Over the course of the previous three years, he felt that CoGS members had gotten to know each other to the point where they had a sense of each other’s foibles and gifts and could work very well together. He called it “remarkable” that at its penultimate meeting, this community could absorb two new members and “have it feel at the end like they’ve been here forever.”

The position of General Secretary, he said, is often spoken of as the chief operating officer of General Synod. In that capacity, he is responsible for the staff of Church House in Toronto. Thompson spoke warmly of various staff members and their contributions, including executive secretary for governance Shannon Cottrell, executive assistant to the General Secretary and travel and venue manager Josie de Lucia; planning and agenda team co-chairs Karen Egan and Peter Wall; Primate Fred Hiltz; Andrea Mann, director of Global Relations; Ryan Weston, lead animator of Public Witness for Social and Ecological Justice; reconciliation animator Melanie Delva; treasurer

and CFO Hanna Goschy; recently retired Anglican Healing Fund coordinator Esther Wesley and her successor Martha Many Grey Horses; communications director Meghan Kilty; stewardship ministry associate Susan Graham Walker, Resources for Mission director (revenue generation) Deborah Barretto, and others. Thompson reiterated words from a letter he had written earlier this week to a donor who had provided an “extraordinary gift” to the church: “It’s my privilege,” he said, “to work with an amazing staff.”

In that same reflection, the General Secretary had spoken of the ministries of General Synod and realities in the church. He believed that the Anglican Church of Canada was beginning to turn a corner in the renewal of the relationship between the church and the Indigenous peoples within its body. Having attended the consecration one week before of the Rt. Rev. Chris Harper as the new bishop of Saskatoon, Thompson noted that there were now nine Indigenous Anglican bishops in the Anglican Church of Canada. “That would have been unimaginable 15 years ago,” he said. These nine bishops are working in a context, which he believed had been demonstrated the previous night at CoGS, of a church characterized by receptivity—not a perfect receptivity, but one Thompson felt marked a turn towards the beginning of the future God imagines for our church, in which Indigenous and non-Indigenous people live and work together to accomplish the ministry of God.

Thompson highlighted the church’s work towards the eradication of human trafficking and modern slavery, which found it collaborating with a number of outside individuals and organizations. He also pointed to the coming week’s meeting of Primates of the Americas and Caribbean in Toronto, hosted by Archbishop and Primate Fred Hiltz. The General Secretary viewed the meeting as a sign of our church’s commitment to the worldwide Anglican Communion, and also of Primate Hiltz’s leadership. In Indigenous relations, in combating human trafficking, in the life of the global communion, in collaboration with civil society, there was a great deal going on in the life of the church to celebrate.

Finally, Thompson pointed to the visioning process that will soon be upon the Anglican Church of Canada as it works towards a new strategic direction to follow Vision 2019. That process will involve grasping the financial realities of the church and having a clear understanding of how those realities will impact our capacity to carry out the mission entrusted to us by God. "Watch this space," he said. "We need to grow into those realities as a council. I will be asking the Financial Management Committee to show leadership in the coming months and years so CoGS can participate in a meaningful way in shaping the financial life of the General Synod."

He concluded his report by praising CoGS members for having moved through its agenda items at the current meeting with exemplary patience and timeliness, which Thompson characterized as a tribute to the council, the role of Archbishop Hiltz in presiding, and the work of the planning and agenda team.

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

Closing Eucharist

The Rt. Rev. Bruce Myers presided at the closing Eucharist, which was held in the chapel and featured a sermon by the Primate.

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

Primate's Commission on Discovery, Reconciliation and Justice

The Rev. Canon Andrew Wesley, co-chair of the Primate's Commission on Discovery, Reconciliation, and Justice, offered an update on the work of the commission and its fall meeting in Toronto. At the meeting, members spent some time discussing the 2018 Sacred Circle. They were encouraged by the way new members of the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples (ACIP) had been elected, and by the number of new faces at Sacred Circle. The presentation of the Rev. Dr. Martin Brokenleg was seen as a highlight of the gathering.

Aside from Sacred Circle, the commission also discussed recent developments such as the work

of the Vision Keepers Council and how that will be embedded into church work, as well as the establishment of the Jubilee Commission, which is tasked with finding ways to fund a self-determining Indigenous church. They spoke of pressing issues in Indigenous communities described as "spiritual violence" and how can they can address these issues, particularly those affecting young people.

Wesley highlighted the Anglican Video production of a feature documentary on the Doctrine of Discovery. The Rev. Canon Ginny Doctor, coordinator of Indigenous Ministries, is currently working on a study guide to accompany the video. Wesley concluded by noting that the work of the Primate's Commission on Reconciliation, Discovery, and Justice will resolve itself in 2019. After that point, each diocese will appoint two people as ambassadors of reconciliation, one Indigenous and one non-Indigenous, who will be trained in the language of the people they will be providing teaching to. A report from the Primate's Commission is planned to be ready when members make their final presentation at General Synod in Vancouver.

Archbishop Hiltz described the video documentary, which will run approximately 60 minutes, as a major part of the work of the Commission. The documentary was previewed at Sacred Circle. Since that time, Anglican Video senior producer Lisa Barry has worked hard to include the voices of church leaders, including Primate Hiltz and National Indigenous Anglican Bishop Mark MacDonald. The release of the video is tentatively expected in January. "That will be an important moment for our church," the Primate said.

Primate's World Relief and Development Fund

Mr. Will Postma, executive director of the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund (PWRDF), noted in the beginning of his report that PWRDF celebrated its 60th anniversary in 2018, which was marked by the debut of a new stained glass logo. A number of resources to herald the anniversary were available on the PWRDF website, including *At Home with PWRDF*, a video featuring farmer and PWRDF volunteer Dorothy Marshall; and *People*,

Partners and Progress: 60 Stories for 60 Years, which documents the history of PWRDF and some of the projects it has funded.

In his presentation, Postma shared details on projects such as Panzi House, a health facility in the Democratic Republic of Congo where women recovering from sexual violence learn new skills to build confidence and look after their own livelihoods. In South Sudan, rations provided by a PWRDF food distribution program have helped improve nutrition. PWRDF has worked in collaboration with other provinces of the Anglican Communion through the Anglican Alliance, helping to respond to humanitarian crises such as severe hurricanes and the ebola outbreak of 2014-15. It has also worked with other Christian denominations through organization such as the ACT Alliance and the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, providing food to respond to victims of flooding in Nepal and to Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh.

Partner Moments

Ms. Pat Lovell, partner to CoGS from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC), shared highlights from her attendance at the Parliament of the World's Religions (PWR) in Toronto from Nov. 1-5 on behalf of the Canadian Council of Churches. She pointed to certain themes of the PWR such as the promise of inclusion, the power of love, and an emphasis on harmony as opposed to unity, which she said applied to discussions at CoGS on the marriage canon and other issues. The focus on harmony at the parliament came from the existence of so many different religions around the world. It suggests working together and respecting differences. "That's what we're doing here with the marriage canon," Lovell said, noting that member of CoGS had said there must be room for acknowledging differences while remaining together and walking together.

Another theme of the PWR was the idea that there were three universal qualities that the world's religions held in common: love, justice, and compassion. As she listened to the presentation of the Vision Keepers on Saturday morning and the words of Bishop Mark MacDonald in the evening, Lovell was reminded of the civil rights movement

and its struggle for freedom and dignity, which is echoed today in the struggle for self-determination within Indigenous communities and for freedoms for the LGBTQ2SIA community. "We are on our way," she said. "I have faith we will find a way to deal with these issues in as loving and compassionate a way as possible."

Canon Noreen Duncan, representative to CoGS from The Episcopal Church (TEC), brought greetings on behalf of "the Episcopal branch of the Jesus movement", the executive council of TEC, and Presiding Bishop Michael Curry. Since the June meeting of CoGS, TEC had held its 79th General Convention in Texas, a 14-day event that saw big accomplishments for the U.S. church. One of its most celebrated achievements was the reincorporation of the Episcopal Church of Cuba back into TEC. Duncan thanked the Anglican Church of Canada for walking with the Cuban church for so many years through its stewardship and support.

She described her three years attending CoGS in Mississauga as akin to a university or college course, during which she had learned much through intensive study of history, geography, partnership, and grace. The way that CoGS had managed its approach to the marriage canon was seen as a model for Episcopalians in the United States. Duncan expressed her gratitude for being part of that process, as well as the tutelage the church had provided in working together with Indigenous communities.

With her three-year term as TEC representative to CoGS likely coming to an end at the present meeting, she noted her plans to run for another three-year term in the February election. If not re-elected, she wanted council members to know that the time she spent with CoGS had helped nourish her own ministry and sense of anti-racism work and reconciliation, which she would use in TEC and her own diocese. These included the Primate's admonition to live into "a humble humanity", the need for internal reconciliation based on the teachings of St. Paul, the innovative strategic communications plan of communications director Meghan Kilty, and the lessons imparted by the National Indigenous Anglican Bishop on systemic

racism and the need to “actively and prayerfully seek each other’s truth” in order to foster reconciliation.

Joint Anglican Lutheran Commission

The Very Rev. Peter Wall, co-chair of the Joint Anglican Lutheran Commission (JALC), provided an update on the work of the commission. In September JALC had welcomed members of the Lutheran coordinating committee from the United States to a meeting at the Mount Carmel Spiritual Centre in Niagara, Ontario.

JALC had also commended two important documents to the four heads of the Lutheran and Anglican churches in Canada and the United States (the Anglican Church of Canada, TEC, the ELCIC, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America), who would be meeting in May 2019. The first document was *The Arusha Call to Discipleship* from the 2018 meeting of the World Council of Churches in Arusha, Tanzania, which both Anglican and Lutheran committee members felt they could endorse very strongly.

The second was a joint statement, *Memorandum of Mutual Recognition of Relations to Full Communion*. Wall called the statement “a significant step” in building a full communion relationship between all four churches, which would allow for mutual recognition of each other’s ministries and for the unfettered passage of ordained people through each church.

General Synod 2019

Changing “hats” to his position as chair of the General Synod Planning Committee (GSPC), Wall reported on the latest developments in planning for General Synod 2019 in Vancouver.

The GSPC currently has the general shape and overview of General Synod in mind, such as knowing it will have parish visits on Sunday morning, a more relaxed afternoon and evening on one day, and when and where the Primatial election will take place. The committee has received many agenda requests and are beginning to sort them into a schedule. The visionary sponsor for the 42nd General Synod will be the Anglican Foundation of Canada, which is making a

significant contribution to do so and is looking forward to having a major role and public presence at the General Synod. A formal announcement will be made in January 2019.

Wall highlighted a few points of interest. The forthcoming General Synod, he said, will be an expensive one, since Vancouver is an expensive city in which to gather. The GSPC is working to make sure it is as properly stewarded as they can, and have cut costs in at least one way by changing a planned face-to-face meeting to a video conference.

At their last meeting, the GSPC talked about the ways in which the General Synod is a body for learning, and the ways in which it is a legislative body. With that in mind, they are looking at sessions so certain periods will be for learning and listening, some will be for discerning and deciding, and some will be purely legislative sessions.

The needs and expectations of the church are that General Synod have the space, time, and environment that will support discussing difficult matters without getting “tied up in procedural knots”. The committee is looking at seating arrangements, cognizant of the need to mix things up at some points so that members speak with new people, and in other cases to ensure that certain groups are diocese-centred.

The GSPC is looking very seriously at voting matters. While not yet prepared to make a recommendation, it will do so at the March 2019 meeting of CoGS to decide how members will vote, whether or not they will use electronic voting, and the specific rules of order. He stressed that the committee was very aware of the need to preserve privacy of votes and the conscience of the voter “without going down the rabbit hole of a secret ballot that we cannot defend.”

Wall wished to assure CoGS that they were aware of the sensitivity of the topic. “We know what happened in 2016 and what the issues were,” he said. The committee has worked with a potential supplier of electronic voting equipment with all these concerns in mind. “We’re not going to let anybody down,” Wall added. Technical choices will

also depend on what is affordable and what can go where in the venue.

Wall said that General Synod 2019 would be “a good synod, an important synod”, and that the committee will have a complete package for CoGS members at their March meeting that would include everything from an agenda to resolutions needing the approval of the council.

Key Messages / Preparing for March

Prior to members discussing key messages to take away from the meeting, General Secretary Thompson took to the podium to relay concerns about issues created by reporting by the *Anglican Journal* of CoGS both in their stories and in real time, but particularly through the *Journal's* use of social media. Many members of CoGS and officers of the General Synod had approached him with their concerns.

He pointed to the need for the council to be accountable for decisions, but also the importance of protecting its members' ability to speak openly and freely in seeking each other's truth. Much of the work that the Council does is in conversation, as we seek deeper understanding and allow ideas and decisions evolve. Some posts by the *Anglican Journal* contained factual errors, often lacked context, editorialized conversations, or only provided a slice of complex presentations.

As a result, the General Secretary planned to call on the Primate's Office, the Office of the General Secretary, the Director of Communications and the Communication and Information Resources Committee that CoGS revisit its open meeting policy—not to create a draconian new policy, but to take into account the new technological world in which members found ourselves. He would come back to the March meeting with reflections for CoGS so that the council could be confident of the way in which its open meetings have integrity, both for their participants and for accountability.

The Primate echoed the concerns that the General Secretary acknowledged and thanked Thompson on behalf of the council. Members then thought of key messages they wished to relay coming out of the meeting.

Key messages included:

- Bishop Mark MacDonald's presentation on marriage: deep, clear, helpful
- Three excellent sermons
- Good marketplace discussions
- Good progress toward General Synod 2019
- Heard from Vision Keepers
- Jubilee Commission
- Finances—don't panic (yet)!
- Good plan for *Anglican Journal* and communications
- Helpful partner reflections
- Synod planning on target
- Humble humanity
- Ministry sharing—Lutheran/Anglican

Members closed out the meeting by singing a hymn.

The council adjourned at 3 p.m.