

COGS Highlights



Council of General Synod

Saturday, November 25, 2023

Members of the Council of General Synod (CoGS) gathered at the Queen of Apostles Renewal Centre in Mississauga, Ont. at 9 a.m.

Morning Prayer

The Rev. Canon Carrie Irwin, chaplain to CoGS, led morning prayer.

Faith, Worship and Ministry Committee

The Rev. Eileen Scully, director of Faith, Worship and Ministry (FWM), described the terms of reference for FWM, its mandate and ways of working. She provided an overview of ministries under the umbrella of FWM including ecumenical and interfaith relations, youth ministries, worship and liturgy.

Ecumenical relations include full communion partnerships with the Lutheran and Moravian churches, as well as bilateral dialogue and relations with Roman Catholics, the United Church and Mennonites. The Anglican Church of Canada participates in international bilateral dialogues and ecumenical forums such as the Canadian Council of Churches and World Council of Churches. Current interfaith work consists of the Interfaith Coordinating Circle, which connects local Anglicans engaged in interfaith relations; Christian-Muslim relations under the banner *A Common Word Canada*; and review and revision of the Anglican Church of Canada Interfaith Guidelines.

Youth ministries include the Canadian Lutheran Anglican Youth (CLAY) gathering, the National Youth Project; and Stronger Together for youth ministry leaders. A highlight of youth ministry in

the last year, Scully said, was a pilgrimage of young adults to the Holy Land. The FWM committee and Youth Secretariat have been busy overseeing the creation of a national Cycle of Prayer for Youth Ministries and working with dioceses to implement youth mental health resources, including professionally accredited mental health training.

Among new liturgical developments, Scully highlighted task groups on Bible translation authorized for use in public worship and on ordinal revision; the National Worship Conference of the ELCIC and Anglican Church of Canada and the 2023 liturgical advisory committee. She concluded by inviting council members to offer written feedback about areas or projects they planned to follow with curiosity over the 2023-2025 biennium; what they were curious about at the moment, what they anticipated wanting to know more about at the next meeting of CoGS in May 2024 and what they needed from FWM.

Communications Committee

Chair Cynthia Haines-Turner explained the history and background of the Communications Committee. In 2019, General Synod recommended the creation of two committees: a communications committee and an *Anglican Journal* editorial board, a system that had now been in place for four years. CoGS cross-over member Andrew Stephens Rennie said the committee had examined its mandate and considered what the ideal relationship between it, CoGS and management might be, and whether there might be better ways of doing

things.

Canon (lay) Ian Alexander, another committee member, introduced a document of recommendations by the editorial board, "Journalistic Policies and Practices", that had been made to identify lessons learned from the handling of an unfinished, unpublished 2021 story for *Anglican Journal* sister publication *Epiphanies*. Alexander said the document tries to balance competing values that arise when the *Journal* is covering a story about or affecting the Anglican Church of Canada. Comparing the editorial board's document to the CBC Journalistic Standards, he said that journalistic integrity is not the same thing as journalistic independence. "The *Journal* is not an independent operation," Alexander said, referring to the fact that the Anglican Church of Canada owns and publishes the *Anglican Journal*. "But if it is to be effective, the *Journal* has to have journalistic integrity."

"Journalistic Policies and Practices" describes the role of the *Anglican Journal* editorial board as advising the editor, both proactively and reactively; being available to consult with General Synod management as requested; evaluating performance; dealing with concerns, complaints and referrals; and advising on policy. The document recommends "guard rails" such as a masthead statement reiterating the publisher's public commitment to principles of journalistic integrity, the editorial board, an episcopal advisor and procedure to follow if management feels the need to intervene.

In response to a question by CoGS member Bishop Susan Bell, Alexander clarified that the episcopal advisor would be called upon at the discretion of the editorial board. A motion to approve the document carried. Archbishop Linda Nicholls, primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, said that "the content of the policy is the basis on which we have acted in the last

couple of years."

Resolution

That the Council of General Synod approve for use the document "Editorial Board Recommendations: Journalistic Policies and Practices."

Members took a break from 10:15 a.m. to 10:45 a.m.

Revised Sexual Misconduct Policy

Chancellor Clare Burns, appearing via Zoom, described the latest, June draft of the revised sexual misconduct policy and the work required to produce it. Table groups spent 15 minutes in discussion to provide feedback. One table asked if the policy provided restorative justice measures. Another relayed the opinion of a member of the Anglican Communion Safe Church Commission who thought the policy gave too much power to the Office of the General Secretary, but who said this could be corrected by requiring the general secretary to speak to an advisory group.

Report from the Chancellor and the Primate

The primate shared a statement regarding what she called a "malicious cyberattack" last summer that targeted General Synod—specifically, an attack on an employee's email account using information available online. The attack was detected when General Synod was alerted to an unauthorized withdrawal from its bank account. General Synod promptly suspended withdrawals, which stopped the attack, and hired lawyers to investigate and remediate the breach, Nicholls said. Soon after, General Synod's financial institution fully reimbursed it for the funds stolen by the hackers.

"Except for legal costs that we have not recovered, General Synod has been made

completely whole," Nicholls said. She added that after discovering the incident, General Synod brought in a security firm to ensure the breach was contained and eradicated. "We are confident that General Synod's network and data are secure."

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

Bible Study

Table groups read and reflected upon 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, which describes how individuals are given different gifts, but by the same Spirit: "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."

Primate's Commission

Nicholls offered a brief update on the Primate's Commission, which she said she called earlier this year in response to emerging questions that arose through the work of the Strategic Planning Working Group: where are the gaps in current church structures? Who are emerging demographics? What alternatives might there be to existing structures? The primate said she needed people who could reflect on these questions for the church and bring responses to General Synod.

With only a short window of time before the next General Synod, Nicholls said, members of the Primate's Commission wanted to make clear they will not be able to reorganize the church in 18 months. Though the project has begun, its full working out might take 10 years, she said, with commissioners testing ideas with key constituencies and stakeholders such as bishops, diocesan councils and synods, the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples and the Council of the North; then bringing their recommendations back to General Synod for feedback and further testing.

Part of this process, the primate said, will be identifying "elephants in the room": aspects of

church structures that are not working or are assumed to be untouchable. The Primate's Commission is not tasked with solving these issues, but simply identifying them. Nicholls said the church will need to consider what it needs to decide at the level of General Synod, as the commission reports back to CoGS and metropolitans on their progress. She noted that the four current metropolitans have all committed themselves to engaging with this process and providing feedback.

The Primate's Commission meets primarily on Zoom and has had two meetings so far, one in early October and one the week before CoGS, Nicholls said. Members have said that they need time to meet in person. The primate— noting the limits of prolonged work on Zoom— committed to finding funds for an in-person meeting to allow commissioners to build teamwork and dive intensely into the conversation they need to have.

Members of the Primate's Commission include:

- The Rev. Monique Stone, diocese of Ottawa
- The Rev. Kyle Wagner, diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island
- The Ven. Rhonda Waters, diocese of Ottawa
- Dion Lewis, diocese of Montreal
- The Ven. Peter Elliott, diocese of New Westminster
- The Rev. Nick Pang, diocese of Kootenay
- The Rev. Cole Hartin, diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island
- The Rev. Jasmine Chandra, diocese of Fredericton
- Sarah Johnson, dean of Anglican studies at St. Paul's University

The primate acknowledged that there were many clergy in the commission. Many laity were approached but had declined for good reasons,

Nicholls said. There are also currently no Indigenous members because no names were forthcoming, she added. "If there are any forthcoming, we would be happy to receive those."

Governance Working Group

Chancellor Clare Burns explained the role of the Governance Working Group (GWG), which operates at the behest of General Synod and CoGS. Council refers matters to the GWG that require a detailed look at canons or underlying legal principles in regard to how Anglicans conduct their life as a church, Burns said. Most recently the GWG had been focused on the question of proportional representation in General Synod, as required by Resolution C008. That matter is currently being discussed in the House of Bishops, after which it will go to CoGS who will then potentially direct it back to the GWG.

Members took a break from 3 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Resolution Writing

General Secretary Alan Perry gave CoGS a primer on how to write resolutions, based on the reference text *Kerr and King's Procedures for Meetings and Organizations*. He described three types of resolution: regulatory (governing the operation of a meeting), procedural (providing mechanisms for modifying the conditions of a debate, e.g. closing the debate or referring to committee) and substantive (all other resolutions).

General Synod 2023 C Resolutions

Perry presented council with a list of C resolutions from General Synod. These are submitted by General Synod members and take lower precedence on the agenda than A resolutions, which come from CoGS or General Synod committees, and B resolutions, which come from dioceses and provinces. General Synod often refers C resolutions, which it has

not considered or adopted, to CoGS when time on the agenda runs out.

The C resolutions included:

- C001—Affirm Lund Principle and "Towards a Renewed Ecumenical Strategy"
- C002—Medical Assistance in Dying
- C003—Supporting Orange, Blood and Tissue Donation
- C005—Anglican Congress
- C006—Discipleship and Evangelism Task Force
- C007—Use of Non-Disclosure and Non-Disparagement Agreements (NDAs)
- C011—Communications Policy and the GS Office
- C012—Process of election to the Council of General Synod
- C013—Survey of the Order of Bishops

Table groups divided up the resolutions and discussed them. Returning to plenary, groups recommended moving forward with some resolutions, such as by forming task forces or working groups, and not moving forward with others. The primate thanked CoGS for their thoughtful reflections and reminded them that in order to move any of the resolutions forward, CoGS members would need to draft resolutions with a mover and seconder.

Partner Reflections (Part 1)

Liza Anderson, representative to CoGS from The Episcopal Church (TEC), said in her partner reflection that the Anglican Church of Canada and TEC had been developing close relationships over the last 30 years, particularly through church councils, having informally started an exchange program where Anglicans and Episcopalians attend each other's council meetings.

A layperson, theologian and Anglican nun,

Anderson is currently serving the last year of her term on TEC's executive council and was set to attend one more meeting of CoGS. She noted that part of the reason for the exchange program between the two churches is that they are often discussing the same questions. TEC's governance, liturgy and music, and ecumenical relations committees, on which Anderson serves, are currently having similar and parallel conversations to those in the Anglican Church of Canada, she said.

Members broke for hospitality and dinner from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Holden Evening Prayer

CoGS held Holden evening prayer in the main chapel.

Games Night

Council members played board games together.

An evening social took place from 9 p.m. to 11 p.m.