

COGS Highlights



Council of General Synod

Thursday, November 5, 2020

Video of the evening prayer and installation was livestreamed on social media and the Anglican Church of Canada website.

Evening Prayer and Installation of General Secretary

Speaking from Church House in Toronto, Archbishop Linda Nicholls, primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, welcomed viewers to the livestream. While the COVID-19 pandemic made it impossible to meet physically, the primate said, it also allowed more people to view the installation of the Ven. Alan Perry as the new general secretary than would otherwise be possible.

Nicholls presided over evening worship while Perry provided the sermon. Soprano vocalist Catherine Kubash, accompanied by organist Jeremy Spurgeon, performed hymns throughout the service from All Saints' Anglican Cathedral in Edmonton.

In his sermon, Perry said that this day marked a new beginning both for General Synod and himself personally. If a person had told him a year ago that he would be general secretary or that he would take the office in the middle of a pandemic, he would have expressed disbelief.

Everyone, he said, had been affected by the pandemic. Many people had become infected. Many had died. Many had recovered only to face a lifetime of lingering health effects. Many had lost friends or family. Even those fortunate enough not to have been affected by the disease itself had faced some form of lockdown

or isolation, or had to pivot towards working from home, online worship, or home schooling for their children. Many people—perhaps most—had suffered some form of spiritual, emotional or mental health problems. Many had suffered economically through the loss of jobs, businesses and homes. Perry described a situation of “massive uncertainty around us with no easy end in sight.”

In the midst of crisis, he said, “Jesus draws our attention to a mustard seed.” In the gospels of Luke and Matthew, Jesus uses the mustard seed as a metaphor for the kingdom of God. Mustard seeds, Perry noted, are tiny objects, less than 1 mm in diameter. But this seed has incredible potential, for even such a small seed can grow into a large tree that shelters birds. The kingdom of God is similar; it can be ignored or seen as too small a thing, especially if one is distracted. “But no matter how small it seems, it has enormous potential.”

“The pandemic is big, yes,” Perry said. “But the mustard seed of faith is bigger, able to reveal the glory of God’s kingdom in all its potential even in the midst of a pandemic.” Though the path ahead would not be easy, he added, “we are armed with the mustard seeds God gave us, and we can plant them.” Each time Anglicans live out the Marks of Mission in their own ways, Perry said, they plant “mustard seeds of faith.” When they worship; when they check in on a neighbour; when they comfort those who grieve; when they raise their voices to pray for a just recovery from the pandemic and subsequent recession—“in short, every time we

do one of God's works, each of these acts is another mustard seed planted."

Such acts will help people get through the pandemic, Perry said. But Anglicans are also called to "look ahead and plant seeds of the future." Planting those seeds, he noted, would look very much like what members of the Council of General Synod (CoGS) have been doing together: caring for others; dismantling racism; working towards the eradication of human trafficking and to stop climate change; continuing the journey of reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples; building relationships across the church and the Anglican Communion, and with ecumenical and interfaith partners; and strategic planning laying the foundations for the post-pandemic church of the coming decades.

Perry quoted Martin Luther as saying that if he knew the world was ending tomorrow, he would plant a tree today. "That's faith," Perry said. "That's hope. And we are called to do the same in our own uncertain times." He invited all to take the "mustard seeds" of faith, of God's love, compassion and generosity, "with all this potential, and plant them even in the midst of a pandemic—that they might grow into a glorious forest revealing the presence of the kingdom of God in our midst and propelling us into God's glorious future."

The installation of Perry as general secretary followed. Prolocutor Karen Egan and Deputy Prolocutor Judith Moses stated Perry's tasks in his new role and he said he would carry out those duties. The primate then officially installed Perry as the new general secretary of the Anglican Church of Canada, presenting him with a copy of the *Handbook of General Synod*. She said the church would pray for him in his work going forward.

The Rev. Louise Peters, chaplain of CoGS, led intercessory prayers, which included prayers for the church and the world and for unity, peace and justice in times of division and hardship. The service ended with a primatial blessing and closing hymn.