

COGS Highlights



Council of General Synod

Friday, November 5, 2021

Members of the Council of General Synod (CoGS) gathered together at 9 a.m. ET. Some attended in person at Queen of Apostles Renewal Centre in Mississauga, Ont. and others attended online via Zoom.

Worship

The Rev. Louise Peters, chaplain to CoGS, led opening worship.

Orders of the Day

The Rev. Cynthia Haines-Turner, newly ordained as a priest, read out the Orders of the Day.

Introduction to Process—Hybrid Methods and Etiquette

Bishop Lynne McNaughton outlined the methods and etiquette for the hybrid in-person/online meeting of CoGS. Patience was the watchword, since CoGS had never held a hybrid meeting before. McNaughton encouraged council members to show spaciousness and grace with each other.

All members attending in person wore masks throughout the meeting. While those attending over Zoom were able to sing, members at Queen of Apostles were encouraged to "sing from their hearts" as the Very Rev. Peter Wall and Louise Peters sang hymns to piano accompaniment.

Opening Formalities

Archbishop Linda Nicholls, primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, welcomed council members. Council approved resolutions to adopt the minutes of its May 6-9 and June 16

meetings, and to adopt the agenda for the current meeting.

Primate's Remarks

The primate welcomed those attending in person back to the Queen of Apostles Renewal Centre. She recalled that the last in-person meeting of CoGS was in March 2020, as Canada was experiencing its first outbreaks of COVID-19. "Little did we expect at our last meeting in person that we would still be under restriction so many months later," Nicholls said. She also welcomed those on Zoom, noting that council had become more proficient in use of this technology since last meeting in person.

Hybrid meetings such as the current gathering of CoGS had become more common, the primate said, even as the pandemic appears to be waning in many parts of Canada. While some areas never had much restrictions, others such as Ontario experienced months of lockdowns. Now most provinces allow in-person worship with some restrictions, she said. The primate noted that 82% of eligible Canadians are fully vaccinated, while vulnerable populations are receiving booster shots. Some Indigenous communities remain under strict lockdown protocols concerning entry or exit. A few areas, such as Saskatchewan and Alberta, continue to suffer through fourth waves of the virus as government leaders are more "unwilling to impose restrictions used elsewhere," Nicholls said.

Regarding public health restrictions due to COVID-19 that have placed some limitations on

in-person worship, the primate acknowledged often competing claims of government authority and individual freedom. But, she added, "Our identity is not ultimately dependent on whether we have been inside a church building on Sunday. It is dependent on our relationship with God through Jesus Christ which includes worship, but never restricts its meaning to worship and gatherings. We have discovered ways to worship online, which is not the same, but has provided way to connect."

The primate reminded council that Christians are called by their baptism to be willing to make sacrifices for the well-being of the whole community. "If continuing limitations on worship in-person and vaccinations protect others, it is a sacrifice worth making," Nicholls said. She pointed out that the COVID-19 pandemic is not the first time Christians have been restricted in their worship, as other periods of disease and war have seen similar restrictions.

Reduced restrictions more recently have allowed the primate, National Indigenous Archbishop Mark MacDonald and other church leaders to begin travelling again. The House of Bishops met in October with a hybrid meeting in which the bishops spoke about discipleship, issues such as dismantling racism, and made time for prayer. They also held an open space evening about stress and mental health, which the primate noted is a significant concern at the moment both for the episcopal leadership and clergy. The house had welcomed Bishop-elect Helen Kennedy, representing the diocese of the Qu'Appelle, who will be consecrated on Jan. 22. Bishop Sam Rose is currently on leave, but Nicholls expressed hope he would return in the near future. "For a change, there are no impending episcopal retirements of which I am aware," the primate said.

"Conversations with bishops and clergy are

revealing new challenges," she added. The transition to online worship during the pandemic has taken a toll, along with a struggle to re-engage with hybrid forms of worship and fewer people returning or available for leadership. The hopefulness of the summer has given way to new concerns, the primate said, citing an episcopal colleague who said that 30% of parishioners in her diocese have not returned to in-person worship.

For many Anglicans, their return to in-person worship is not just a matter of whether their church is open, but based on multiple factors including community transmission, personal risk evaluation, and even whether they can sing or not. "Some are re-evaluating their participation in church," Nicholls said. "Some are enjoying worship in their PJs with coffee. Others have simply lost the habit of Sunday morning as worship time." Still others have re-discovered the joy of the daily office, through morning and evening prayer. After lockdown, Nicholls said, the church must re-emerge with a society that is different from one that entered the lockdown. Ways to meet spiritual needs are changing. The earlier longing for the pandemic to end is giving way to anxiety and fear about what lies ahead. "We will need to engage with a realistic hope," the primate said.

Much of the primate's time during the summer was spent looking for people to fill key leadership positions. Those chosen include Amal Attia as the new treasurer and CFO of General Synod and Scott Brubacher as the new executive director of the Anglican Foundation. Nicholls commended the Anglican Foundation for the success of its *Say Yes! to Kids* campaign in the spring, which surpassed targets in raising funds for post-pandemic programs supporting children and youth.

At the beginning of the pandemic, Nicholls said, Anglicans felt like they were in a new period of

exile, which she compared to that of the ancient Israelites and their 40-year journey through the desert. "We had previously resisted change, but now we've been thrust into it," the primate said. While that period of exile is ending, what lies ahead is unknown. The primate warned that in the path ahead, "the greatest danger is not from outside church, but from within. Fear and anxiety can and will tear us apart if we do not pay attention." Success in navigating these challenges can happen at the parish or diocesan level "as we organically test our capacity for change and discover where God is already at work."

Nicholls, who said she has long valued the ability to plan things with certainty, realized recently that the pandemic had taught her the value of embracing situations where everything is more provisional and open-ended, subject to change at the last minute. The church too, she said, is being drawn to embrace what is provisional. "It is a frightening time, but it is also an exciting time as we begin to see possibilities before us," she said. The primate suggested that the triennial theme chosen in 2019—"A Changing Church, A Searching World, A Faithful God"—has turned out to be more even relevant now. Through all the church's provisionality, its experimentation, its fears and anxieties, the primate said, "What we do have is a faithful God. Thanks be to God."

Pension Committee

Bob Boeckner, trustee for the Pension Committee, and Judy Robinson, executive director of the General Synod Pension Plan, brought forward four motions. One related to the General Synod Pension Plan, one to the lay retirement plan and the other to the long-term disability plan. All four carried.

Resolution

Be it resolved that The Council of General Synod approves the

recommendation of the Pension Committee to make the amendments to Regulation 1 and 12 of the Regulations of Canon VIII, as attached to the report in Appendix 1, effective January 1, 2021.

Resolution

Be it resolved that The Council of General Synod approves the recommendation of the Pension Committee to cease contributions to Expense Fund and eliminate the 0.5% contribution that the participating employers are currently paying in accordance with the General Synod Benefit Plans Administration and Expenses Regulation, made pursuant to section 4 of Canon VIII, effective January 1, 2022.

Resolution

Be it resolved that The Council of General Synod approves the recommendation of the Pension Committee to make the amendments to Regulation 13 of Canon IX and Regulations, as attached to the report in Appendix 2, effective December 31, 2021.

Resolution

Be it resolved that The Council of General Synod approves the recommendation of the Pension Committee to make the amendments to LTD Trust agreement as attached to the report in Appendix 3, effective January 1, 2021.

Election—Anglican Consultative Council

Judith Moses on behalf of the nominating committee presented a motion for

appointments to the Anglican Consultative Council. Bishop Riscylla Shaw was nominated for the position of bishop-elect, while candidates for bishop alternate included Lynne McNaughton, Michael Oulton, Joey Royal and Geoff Woodcroft.

Result for the latter were announced in the late afternoon, with McNaughton receiving the most votes. The motion itself carried.

Resolution

Be it resolved that the Council of General Synod appoint The Right Reverend Riscylla Shaw to the position of Bishop Elect to the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) and The Right Reverend Lynne McNaughton to the position of Bishop Alternate to the Anglican Consultative Council.

In-Camera Session

Council members closed out the morning with an in-camera session.

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

Surprised by the Spirit Video #1

CoGS watched the first of a series of videos documenting the response of Anglicans to the *Surprised by the Spirit* initiative. The project invited Anglicans to gather in conversation circles and discuss what they had learned during the pandemic and what God was calling them to now.

Governance Working Group

Chancellor David Jones presented a report of the Governance Working Group (GWG) that included five proposals for changes in the composition and membership of General Synod and the rules of order and procedure:

1. Change the bands for determining the

number of elected clergy and lay members from each diocese.

2. Change the threshold for *required* votes by orders from two-thirds of each order to two-thirds of General Synod as a whole with a majority in each order.

3. Eliminate the need for approval by two successive sessions of General Synod.

4. Enact the revised Rules of Order and Procedure.

5. Commission a short document describing the history, structure, and governance of the various levels of the Church in Canada, with particular reference to the role and work of the national Church by General Synod.

After discussion, council passed a motion for the GWG to proceed with the steps needed to put forward the five proposals to General Synod.

Resolution

That this Council of the General Synod direct the Governance Working Group to proceed with the steps necessary to implement the five proposals in the report of May 2021, including drafting necessary resolutions for presentation to the General Synod, and to report back to the Council of the General Synod at its meeting of March 2022.

The GWG also presented seven recommendations on other items. These included:

1. Second Reading to GS 2019 A051-R2: Prayer for Reconciliation with the Jewish People
2. Second Reading to GS 2019 A030: Amendment to the Declaration of Principles—Handbook Committee
3. Motion repealing Canon XIII on Diaconess
4. Motion to amend Canon III to extend the term of office of Primate if next session of

General Synod is scheduled to occur soon after Primate turns 70

5. Motion to amend Canon V (Archives)
6. Motion to amend Canon XVII (Licensing) to clarify that licences may be granted to bishops, priests and deacons ordained in The Anglican Church of Canada or a church in full communion with The Anglican Church of Canada.
7. Direction needed from CoGS about possible amendment to Canon XVIII (Discipline) to add bullying and harassment as ecclesiastical offences?

CoGS passed a motion to forward the first six recommendations to General Synod.

Resolution

That this Council of the General Synod forward the motions in proposals 1 through 6 of the GWG memo of November 2021 to the meeting of the General Synod in 2022.

Canadian Church Historical Society

Jones presented a third motion from GWG to establish a committee for the Canadian Church Historical Society, which carried.

Resolution

Resolved that the Canadian Church Historical Society be a committee of the General Synod with the attached Terms of Reference.

Members took a break from 2:35 p.m. to 3 p.m.

Surprised by the Spirit Video #2

CoGS watched a second video showing the responses of Anglican conversation circles to *Surprised by the Spirit*.

COVID-19 and the Church, with Theological

Reflection

Canon Neil Elliot, the Anglican Church of Canada's statistics and research officer, presented the results of a survey that Canadian Anglicans took part in on how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the church.

First, Elliot examining the hard data to determine whether COVID-19 represented a paradigm shift for the Anglican Church of Canada. The move to online worship should be celebrated, he said, but Anglicans must be cautious about growth claims. Online worship may be overreported by 40%. Church income is down by 10% in spite of a possible increase in donors. Survey results showed that 78% of lay people and 86% of clergy agreed with the statement that the pandemic offered "a great chance to rethink the Church's future." But 74% of lay people would prefer a return to pre-pandemic patterns of worship. The question for CoGS as church leaders, Elliot said, was whether members saw COVID-19 as a "game changer" or a temporary challenge.

Next, Elliot asked what COVID-19 has done for the Anglican Church of Canada. He divided these findings into three categories: The Good, The Bad and The Interesting. Good news was that Anglicans reported their spirituality had grown through COVID—a result that should not be surprising, Elliot said. "We know that faith grows in adversity." Anglicans had also proved adept at organizing online services.

Bad news concerned clergy health: 39% of clergy had found it hard to cope with the pandemic and 60% reported mental health issues. The question for both dioceses and the national church, Elliot said, was how to support and retain clergy.

"Interesting" news related to the Eucharist, which Anglicans had gone 18 months without observing in the traditional manner. Some had

attempted online communion, while others had still gone without both. Online services in some cases meant new congregants, but non-returners to traditional in-person worship remains a major concern.

Elliot put forward the following questions for discussion:

- How do we nurture and sustain spiritual growth?
- What role does the national church have in supporting online services?
- What can the ACC do to support and retain clergy?
- How does the conversation about Eucharist happen?
- What does “Surprised by the Spirit” have to say to this?

Afterwards, Louise Peters offered a theological reflection for the presentation on COVID-19 and the Church. She read the Old Testament story of Nehemiah and then posed two questions for CoGS:

1. How does the story of Nehemiah speak to our COVID and post-COVID experience as the Anglican Church of Canada?
2. What kind of leadership does this point to? What kind of leadership does God require of us at this moment in time?

Table groups engaged in 10 minutes of discussion, during which notes were taken and subsequently emailed to Canon Elliot.

Council of the North

Bishop David Lehmann, chair of the Council of the North (CotN), presented a report in which he thanked the church on behalf of northern dioceses for its support. “Work in remote and northern parts of church, it’s been difficult of

late,” Lehmann said. He noted sharp increases in the price of groceries, already expensive in the north, and boil-water advisories in many communities. A boil-water advisory in Prince Albert, Sask., where Lehmann was speaking from, had just been lifted.

CotN bishops had met in person at the beginning of October. News of retired clergy having problems with housing had struck a chord and funds were being organized to help alleviate the situation. In recent months, CotN had also received some generous donations that were being used to support training in ministry. The pandemic had brought the isolation of many northern communities into sharper relief. Although the council had established a grant to support online ministry, access to Internet remains a challenge in many places. Lehmann expressed gratitude to CoGS and the church for their continued support of ministry in remote parts of Canada.

Dismantling Racism

Ryan Weston, lead animator of Public Witness for Social and Ecological Justice, provided the first report from the Dismantling Racism Task Force established by CoGS, offering an interim account of its work thus far. The majority of its members are concentrated in British Columbia and Ontario, Weston said. The task force is conscious of a gap of on-the-ground experience in other regions of country and certain racialized groups not included in its membership.

The task force is sharing draft recommendations together, but hope to work with key stakeholders including the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples, Black Anglicans of Canada, and members of Asian communities to get feedback and see if they are heading in an appropriate direction, Weston said. Members still plan to update the church’s Charter for Racial Justice, which was part of their original

mandate, along with compiling existing resources and suggesting additions that might help flesh out the material. All that work will take place in the coming months and go into final recommendations for CoGS in March 2022.

Weston invited table groups to informally discuss what is happening in their dioceses regarding dismantling racism, to share their own experiences and their hopes for the future.

Council members broke for open time and dinner from 5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Anglican-Lutheran-Moravian Full Communion Proposal

The Rev. Canon Scott Sharman, animator for ecumenical and interfaith relations, and the Rev. James Lavoy, pastor at Rio Terrace Community Moravian Church in Edmonton, spoke about ongoing efforts to work towards full communion between the Anglican Church of Canada and the Moravian Church in Canada.

The Waterloo Declaration, which established full communion between the Anglican Church of Canada and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC), marked its 20th anniversary in 2021. Sharman described the Waterloo Declaration as not just an end to one process, but the beginning of another. He quoted part of the declaration's text which pointed the way forward for Anglicans and Lutherans: "As churches in full communion, we now commit ourselves to continue to work together for the full visible unity of the whole Church of God." Full communion between Anglicans and Lutherans in Canada, Sharman said, was always intended to "spill over".

The Anglican Church of Canada lived into this in a tangible way in 2019, he added, when it joined the ELCIC, The Episcopal Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for a four-way full communion partnership, known as

Churches Without Borders. Now discussions have pointed the way forward for full communion with the Moravians. The Episcopal Church itself established full communion with the Moravian Church in 2011 with the declaration *Finding Our Delight in the Lord*, which explicitly invited the two churches' Canadian counterparts to follow suit. In late 2020, the Faith, Worship and Ministry committee established in partnership with the ELCIC a working group that includes four Anglicans, four Lutherans and four Moravians to discuss full communion in Canada.

The result is a draft document, *One Flock, One Shepherd: The Lamb Declaration*, which Sharman presented to CoGS. The name of the document comes in part from the lamb present in the seal of The Moravian Church—and also, Sharman said, from the fact that Lutheran, Anglican and Moravian together create the acronym LAM. "If you know anything about ecumenism, you know you have to have a really good acronym," he joked.

The draft document, Sharman continued, leverages existing agreements between churches in other countries and goes beyond "theological formulas" to envision how a full communion partnership might allow the churches to work together in common witness to Christ—particularly in areas such as Alberta and Labrador where the churches are all very active on the ground. "Increasingly, as we come out of the pandemic, ministry is going to be something we do not as Anglicans, but together," Sharman said.

Lavoy thanked CoGS for inviting him, noting his long friendship with Sharman that dated back to their student days. He briefly outlined the history of the Moravian Church, highlighting in particular its global mission efforts dating from the mid-18th century that sought to work with "otherwise forgotten people or downtrodden

folks.” The earliest Moravian missions were among enslaved people in the Caribbean and among the Inuit in Labrador, Lavoy said. “Despite legitimate concerns about colonialism when we look back at our mission work,” he added, Moravians remain proud of that era, which is part of the DNA of their church today.

A U.S. citizen originally from Philadelphia, Lavoy described having highly positive experiences in that city based on full communion with Episcopalians and Lutherans. “Those helped us to get out of our bubble and think more creatively about mission and ministry in our neighbourhoods,” he recalled. “When I arrived in Edmonton in 2014, it was Anglicans and Lutherans who first reached out to me and who I formed some friendships with.” As Canada emerges from the pandemic, Lavoy added, the Moravians are looking forward to creatively rethinking how they do ministry and “fully believe our ministry will be in greater integrity and success if we do it with others.”

Sharman put forward two questions for CoGS:

1. What did you read either in the declaration or here in these comments that moved you or inspired you, or where you saw the Holy Spirit at work?
2. Are you left with any outstanding wonderings, questions or concerns?

Table groups spent 10 minutes in discussion and offered some feedback. Sharman said the working group hoped to continue work towards full communion leading up to the Assembly in 2022. National Indigenous Archbishop Mark MacDonald, one of the four Anglicans on the working group, has suggested holding a prayer service for Anglicans, Lutherans and Moravians online, which the working group hopes to organize.

CoGS members approved a motion accepting the draft document on full communion with the Moravian Church.

Resolution

Be it resolved that this Council of General Synod receive the declaration on recognition of full communion relations between the Anglican, Lutheran and Moravian churches in Canada for approval at the General Synod/Assembly 2022.

PWRDF

Will Postma, executive director of the Primate’s World Relief and Development Fund (PWRDF), offered a report on the charity’s work. The past year had been challenging for PWRDF as with all agencies of the church, he said, as it continued to work with partners throughout the pandemic. But throughout this time, church services had encouraged congregations to share with PWRDF—and Anglicans had responded with great generosity. While PWRDF feared that donations would decrease last year, Postma said, in the end they had actually increased, to the point where PWRDF had been named by publications as one of Canada’s top charities for 2021.

Much of PWRDF’s work involves responding to those in need around the world, but in this presentation Postma chose to highlight some of its work within Canada. One such area was emergency response. Based on its experience helping those affected by the Fort McMurray wildfire in 2018, PWRDF had refined its responses to such disasters and applied those lessons in dealing with events such as this year’s wildfire in Lytton, B.C. For example, it had identified that PWRDF support may be more helpful in responding to mid-to-longer-term recovery than short-term immediate needs.

PWRDF has also focused on supporting Indigenous communities through partnerships and reconciliation exercises. Postma cited churches that hosted suicide prevention training sessions and community suppers at local friendship centres. He also played a PWRDF video showing participation in the mapping exercise, designed to educate people on Indigenous presence on the land and the effects of colonialism over Canada's history.

Evening Prayer

Louise Peters led council in Compline evening prayer.

Council members attending in person held an evening social from 8 p.m. to 11 p.m.