

# COGS Highlights



Council of General Synod

Saturday, November 6, 2021

*Members of the Council of General Synod (CoGS) gathered together at 10 a.m. ET, either in person at Queen of Apostles Renewal Centre in Mississauga, Ont. or online via Zoom.*

## **Worship**

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

## **Strategic Planning Working Group**

Judith Moses, chair of the Strategic Planning Working Group (SPWG) and fellow SPWG member Canon (lay) Ian Alexander presented an update on efforts to craft a new strategic plan for the Anglican Church of Canada, joined via Zoom by SPWG member and congregational development consultant Janet Marshall.

The SPWG is currently holding consultations on the five transformational aspirations for the role of the national church it has identified over the course of its work. These aspirations are for the Anglican Church of Canada to be a church that:

1. Invites and deepens life in Christ
2. Is intentionally dismantling colonialism and passionately inclusive.
3. Embraces mutual interdependence with the Indigenous Church (Sacred Circle).
4. Stewards God's creation and attends to the well-being of humankind.
5. Lives in relationship with each other in local, diocesan, national and global communities.

Listening groups are ongoing as the working

group makes further changes and improvements, consolidating their input for CoGS and General Synod. Alexander encouraged CoGS members to go back to their dioceses and see if their diocesan executive councils would be interested in running one of the consultations.

The SPWG representatives showed how each of the five transformational aspirations link to the Marks of Mission. Marshall said the SPWG was hearing broad support from Anglicans for the transformational aspirations and a sense that it offered a compelling vision—though some concerns remain about its size and a lack of specifics at this point. The SPWG described each aspiration both as an “umbrella”, covering many different groups already trying to live out this vision of the church, and as a “bridge” linking where the church is at General Synod 2022 to where it needs to go through the next triennium.

The presenters went through each of the five transformational aspirations and shared feedback they were hearing from Anglicans and how the aspiration serves as an umbrella for current work and a bridge to the future.

## **1. Inviting and deepening life in Christ**

Anglicans approved of this as the first aspiration, since it addresses the “why” of the church. It encourages a greater focus on evangelism, discipleship and formation, but also speaks to deep concern for the sustainability of churches after the pandemic. The Anglican Church of Canada is on the verge of big change

and new missional developments don't look like congregations do now. Consultation groups asked if the aspiration could include this concern, as well as the need for younger voices and experiences.

The first aspiration serves as an umbrella for the national church's liturgical resources, spiritual formation groups, online gatherings and gospel-based discipleship; congregational development work across the country; and youth ministry. The specific ways this aspiration can serve as a bridge to the future remain to be worked out.

## ***2. Intentionally dismantling colonialism and being passionately inclusive***

Anglicans had questions about the meaning and assumptions of this language. It is a rallying cry, but also evokes our differences at the same time. There is much to do on this front. Some asked if church members can see past their assumptions and are ready for the difficult conversations.

The second aspiration is an umbrella for current work at the national level including the Dismantling Racism Task Force and social justice work such as working to eradicate human trafficking, as well as similar initiatives in many dioceses. Bridges to the future could include making the Dismantling Racism group permanent, sharing best practices across the country, and the next phases of governance work.

## ***3. Mutual interdependence with Sacred Circle***

"We need each other," Anglicans said of the relationship between Sacred Circle and the wider church. But are all church members ready for the change this represents? The emergence of the self-determining Indigenous church is an opportunity for the whole Anglican Church of Canada and national in scope. How will Anglicans work out the relationships between

Sacred Circle and dioceses, provinces and congregations?

The third aspiration is an umbrella for hearing, understanding and responding to the current work of the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples (ACIP) and Sacred Circle, the national reconciliation animator, Indigenous justice animator, Anglican Healing Fund and the Jubilee Commission—the latter of which is currently in a research phase. This aspiration could serve as a bridge to implementing Sacred Circle work, establishing a new governance structure for Indigenous ministries, equipping dioceses and congregations to learn how to "walk alongside", and the next phases of the Jubilee Commission's work.

## ***4. Stewards God's creation and attends to the well-being of humankind***

The fourth aspiration garnered the fewest comments, but much affirmation of connections with local dioceses and parishes. The Anglican Church of Canada owns a lot of land, and has much to steward and to use for ministry. Many Anglicans also saw this aspiration as encouraging a focus on immigrants and refugees. Such concerns must be integrated into the church's decision-making and decisions about investments.

The national work of Public Witness for Social and Ecological Justice and similar work in dioceses and parishes fall under the umbrella of the fourth aspiration, which could also act as a bridge to new initiatives. The SPWG found considerable appetite among Anglicans for a strong focus on advocacy and action regarding the climate crisis.

## ***5. Lives in relationship with each other in local, diocesan, national and global communities***

Canadian Anglicans felt that the fifth aspiration spoke to their very identity as an Anglican

church, both a strength and a challenge. Consultation groups felt it was important to be together across differences, not retreating to like-minded silos, with the former stretching the church in ways it didn't know it needed. Widening circles across dioceses and provinces to the national and international level offered purposeful mutuality and rich diversity. Some Anglicans asked if this transformational aspiration could be expanded to include ecumenical and interfaith relationships.

The fifth aspiration is already a major focus for Church House in areas such as Communications, Global Relations, Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations, Resources for Mission, Council of the North and the Primate's Office. But it may also act as a bridge to help the Anglican Church of Canada find new ways to embody the "gift of co-ordination" through CoGS and across the church; to respond to the most recent research trends, and provide resources to provinces and dioceses to plan for the future. The Proportional Giving Task Force may also play a role.

In putting the five transformational aspirations into practice, Marshall said the SPWG heard Anglicans express the following needs from the national church:

- Networking, convening and connecting
- Thought leadership—sharing best practices and emerging opportunities
- Listening and learning and building understanding
- Communicating
- The Primate—advocacy and voice

A period of discussion ensued, which included some debate on the nature of colonialism. Archbishop Linda Nicholls, primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, said she was "pleased with the direction we're going" with the five transformational aspirations.

Table groups then spent 25 minutes in discussion, with each group filling in a handout sheet in which they ordered the transformational aspirations in terms of priority; identified ways their parishes or diocese were actively working on them; and identified other groups or organizations they looked to for resources and support in developing and furthering these ministries. The sheets were given to the SPWG representatives, who would collate the findings and present them back to CoGS.

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

### **Surprised by the Spirit Video #3**

Council watched a third video showing the response of Anglicans to the *Surprised by the Spirit* initiative.

### **Bible Study**

Table groups engaged in Bible study by reading and discussing Philippians 2:1-5a, 14-18.

### **Assembly 2022/General Synod 2022**

The primate noted that the 2022 Assembly would be the second time the Anglican Church of Canada and Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) would gather jointly for their General Synod and National Convention, respectively. There are two planning committees, one for the Assembly and one for General Synod. The Ven. Tanya Phibbs serves as chair of the General Synod Planning Committee (GSPC).

The theme of both the Assembly and General Synod is "Let There Be Greening". Archbishop Nicholls noted: "We liked the play on the world greening, which has both a creation stewardship theme to it, but also a sense of greening of the church—what will it be for the church to green and blossom and flourish." Graphic artist and *Anglican Journal* layout editor

Saskia Rowley has also worked with the planning teams to create what the primate described as a “wonderful logo”.

The Assembly planning group has been working on a number of plenary sessions and that preparation is still in progress, Nicholls said. An in-person gathering is still planned, with a deadline until Jan. 14 to make a final decision. Though there may be some restrictions, the primate said, there are currently no indications to suggest that an in-person gathering will not be possible. Nicholls emphasized that while the combined gathering Convention of Anglicans and Lutherans had been referred to in the past as joint assemblies, the word “joint” had been discarded. “We decided to drop that term because we are in full communion together and when we are together, we are one,” the primate said.

Speaking via Zoom, Phibbs shared additional details on behalf of the GSPC. The Assembly will run from July 12-17, 2022, ending on a Sunday with a Eucharist and some form of celebration. Work is underway on display programs and location spaces. Sponsorship programs and staff are working on items such as contracts with audio-visual firms for voting. The worship committee is beginning its work on various services and considering what their space will look like, with hopes to have some kind of chapel or quiet space. They are also thinking about opportunities for people to share laments, hopes and challenges from the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, hopes for the future of the church, and updates on things that are going on at General Synod. The GSPC hopes to provide a way to share General Synod with the wider church who cannot attend in person.

The agenda itself is beginning to be populated with presentations. Phibbs acknowledged that the schedule will be packed and not every group or committee that wants time will get it.

She highlighted the Governance Working Group and Strategic Planning Working Group as examples of groups doing major work. “They need time for adequate presentation, but also time for folks to have thoughtful conversation with them about it,” Phibbs said.

Given the limited time, such groups might hold “pre-sessions” that will allow General Synod members to pray and think about their work. Other groups may want to follow suit when they realize speaking time on the agenda is limited, which Phibbs said was an important part of the GSPC’s planning. Their goal was to keep days as strictly as possible to end at 9 p.m. “We want to do the work of God’s church in as clear-eyed a way possible,” Phibbs said.

The primate told CoGS that they would hopefully be able to see a tentative agenda at their March 2022 meeting. Nicholls added that international partners would not be present at the Assembly directly, due to uncertainties regarding travel due to COVID-19 and time limitations. “Asking them to travel and not giving them enough time did not seem fair,” the primate said. “But we hope to find other ways to incorporate them.”

### **Faith, Worship and Ministry**

The Rev. Eileen Scully presented four motions to CoGS, the first of which was an omnibus bill that included three items. She outlined the process by which the church continues to work on liturgical texts and some of the history in that area since the publication of the *Book of Alternative Services* in 1985. All of this work, Scully suggested, is ultimately about strengthening discipleship.

CoGS passed each of the four motions.

#### **Resolution**

Be it resolved that this Council of General Synod commend

*Deconsecration of a Sacred Building, Welcoming Those Preparing for Baptism/Rite for the Catechumenate and Pastoral Liturgies for Journeys of Gender Transition and Affirmation* for study, trial use, evaluation, and feedback for a period of one year, where permitted by the Ordinary.

### **Resolution**

Be it resolved that this Council of General Synod:

1. Commend *Proposed Calendar Revisions for the Book of Alternative Services* to the church for study, comment, and reflection;
2. Direct Faith, Worship, and Ministry beginning Dec. 1, 2021, to lead a period of study and use for a one-year period of time with appropriate consultative conversations and provisions for adequate feedback avenues take place with Council of General Synod members, bishops and dioceses; and
3. Direct Faith, Worship, and Ministry to report back with a final proposal for revision to be presented to the Council of General Synod by March 2023.

### **Resolution**

Be it resolved that this Council of General Synod commend the Table of Alternative Old Testament Readings for Eastertide as commended by the English Language Liturgical Consultation (2011) for study, trial use, evaluation, and feedback for a period of one year, where permitted by the Ordinary.

### **Resolution**

Be it resolved that this Council of General Synod commend Revised Common Lectionary Daily Readings, as commended by the Consultation on Common Texts (2005), as an alternative daily office lectionary for study, trial use, evaluation, and feedback for a period of one year, where permitted by the Ordinary.

*Members took a break from 2:30 p.m. to 3 p.m.*

### **Surprised by the Spirit Video #4**

CoGS watched a fourth video showing responses of Anglicans to *Surprised by the Spirit*.

### **Indigenous Ministries and ACIP**

National Indigenous Archbishop Mark MacDonald appeared via Zoom from Glasgow, Scotland, where he is attending the COP26 climate conference as an Anglican representative of the World Council of Churches. Tens of thousands of climate activists have marched in the streets during the conference to pressure global leaders to take action on the climate crisis. "Most of the activists are very upset," Archbishop MacDonald said. "But still, it's very encouraging to march with 50,000 people and all of them are especially concerned about Indigenous issues and their relationship to the future of the planet." He noted that a major worship service would be held the next day at a Glasgow cathedral and said it was encouraging to see faith groups working together, highlighting in particular the strong Roman Catholic presence.

Archbishop MacDonald kicked off the session on Indigenous Ministries and ACIP by leading CoGS in gospel-based discipleship. Council members read and discussed Luke 16:9-15 in their table groups.

The Rev. Canon Murray Still, ACIP co-chair, spoke at length about the latest developments

in Indigenous Ministries and ACIP. Indigenous Anglicans were currently gearing up for the next Sacred Circle, which would take place the weekend after CoGS. Still compared Sacred Circle to General Synod and ACIP to CoGS. At the last in-person Sacred Circle in 2018, which took place in Prince George B.C., members had highlighted issues such as the epidemic of suicides among young people in Indigenous communities.

At General Synod 2019, Indigenous Anglicans had welcomed the apology from the church for spiritual harm offered by then-primate Fred Hiltz. Although primates had been regular guests at Sacred Circles stretching back to Michael Peers, who in 1993 offered an official apology from the church for harm caused by residential schools, the apology for spiritual harm was different, Still said. He described the loss of culture for successive Indigenous generations due to the residential schools. With this apology, he said, Indigenous people could move forward in recovering their traditional languages, cultures and spirituality. "Things that were withheld from them could be restored, [which] moved us forward into a very hopeful prospect," Still said.

At the first meeting of the new ACIP elected at Sacred Circle 2018, held in person, the council had briefly had three chairs before reverting to its traditional two co-chairs. Still expressed gratitude to have Caroline Chum, attending the presentation to CoGS via Zoom, as his co-chair. But after that initial gathering, the pandemic put a stop to in-person meetings of ACIP. With the assistance of Archbishop MacDonald, ACIP decided to continue advancing as best they could their own work and that of national Indigenous Ministries.

Indigenous Anglican leaders learned to use Zoom to gather from across the country, still putting gospel-based discipleship at the heart

of their work. Soon they began hosting regular online gospel-based discipleship on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays which were open to all. "Gospel-based discipleships are made up of non-Indigenous peoples as well," Still said of these online sessions. "So it hasn't just been Indigenous. That was a welcome thing, because as partners and family together, we want to be able to connect and be with folks. Every time we do gospel-based discipleship, it speaks to where we are at now."

The national connection forged through gospel-based discipleship allowed ACIP to move to other projects. Due to the pandemic, many Indigenous communities were locked in. "Clergy who were coming in to provide important ministries like funerals couldn't get into communities," Still said. "Lay folks couldn't get in." In response, the national Indigenous archbishop, late Indigenous Ministries co-ordinator Ginny Doctor, and their team put together a lay leadership development program that allowed lay leaders in communities to continue their studies and take up the task of pastoral care.

ACIP also worked with partners, in particular the Canadian Red Cross, to respond to the suicide crisis among young people. The Red Cross helped ACIP put together a package to support suicide prevention programs, and this work continues today. Elder Norm Casey, who had been a major supporter of suicide prevention work, died in 2020. The loss of so many elders and Indigenous Anglican leaders over the course of the pandemic had left a "huge hole in our hearts... We are picking up those pieces as we go along," Still said. Before her own death in 2021, Ginny Doctor had created educational podcasts that proved very helpful in the time of COVID-19.

National gospel jamborees held online had provided some spiritual levity during the

pandemic. "We have a lot of fun in those," Still said. "People bring instruments to in-person Sacred Circles and we have drums and guitars and a lot of dancing. It's an important part of our developing as families of faith. When we lost in-person gatherings, we then went to national jamborees and Archbishop Mark has hosted a number of them." Primate Nicholls had also participated in the gospel jamborees and Still praised her musical skills on the piano.

"Most recently," Still said, "we have had the unfortunate reality of discovery of remains of children in Kamloops, Saskatchewan and other places. We are now dealing with the grief and loss in our communities." In response, each time there has been a new discovery of remains, Archbishop MacDonald has called for a memorial, a celebration of these souls, over four days. "We take four days and we have a time of prayer and remembrance for the children and their families, and all those struggling with loss of their children and survivors," Still said.

The ACIP co-chair's voice became emotional as he continued. "We must do all we can for our children, grandchildren, so they can grow up and know they are loved and part of family that will support them—so they can be proud of who they are and their heritage ... so as they recover [their traditional language and culture], they will get stronger." These memorials will continue and anyone is welcome to attend, Still added.

In another example of hardship, many Indigenous communities have had to be evacuated recently due to forest fires. ACIP has worked with the Canadian Red Cross to support those affected. In Still's own city of Winnipeg, elders have joined a list of people contacted to visit those who come fleeing the wildfires and to offer them support.

Some of the most important work for ACIP and

Indigenous Ministries at the moment is shepherding in the new constitution and regulations for the Indigenous Church. These documents are known respectively as *A Covenant* and *Our Way of Life* and are being reviewed and edited by ACIP, the Indigenous House of Bishops Leadership Circle, and Sacred Circle. Indigenous Anglicans have also sought to get these materials into Indigenous communities for feedback—though this has presented difficulties due to many of these communities being very remote.

In July 2021, due to continuing restrictions related to the pandemic, Indigenous Anglicans held their first-ever online Sacred Circle. Those in attendance reviewed *A Covenant* and *Our Way of Life*. They will return for another online Sacred Circle the week after CoGS to present feedback from their communities on the documents. An in-person Sacred Circle is planned to take place in May 2022.

CoGS members watched a video that documented the history and meaning of the journey towards Indigenous self-determination within the church. Afterwards, table groups held discussions, using the same questions from gospel-based discipleship, on the video—asking what words or phrases stood out and what members felt God was asking them to do.

The session ended with members voting on a motion to endorse a statement asking the federal government to repeal section 43 of the Criminal Code of Canada. This demand reflected Call to Action #6 from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Section 43 of the Criminal Code states:

Every schoolteacher, parent or person standing in the place of a parent is justified in using force by way of correction toward a pupil or child, as the

case may be, who is under his care, if the force does not exceed what is reasonable under the circumstances.

The use of corporal punishment against children is directly related to residential schools, where many Indigenous children experienced physical abuse. CoGS members discussed whether to support the motion. Some mentioned knowing parents who “in a loving way” have used physical force against children. The national Indigenous archbishop offered the following response.

“What we’re trying to do is eliminate the possibility that Canada will beat children to death again,” MacDonald said. “A vote to keep [section 43] is a vote to keep that possibility, and that’s why it’s part of the truth and reconciliation process. That’s why we’re supporting it. We don’t wish Canada to do this again.”

The motion carried.

#### **Resolution**

Be it resolved that the Council of General Synod join with other signatories and a coalition of churches on the attached statement requesting the repeal of Section 43 of the Criminal Code to implement the TRC Call to Action #6.

*Members broke for dinner from 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.*

#### **Financial Statements and 2022 Budget**

The Ven. Alan T. Perry, general secretary, presented the financial report and proposed 2022 budget. He made a few comments regarding the consolidated financial statements for the third quarter.

First, Perry thanked dioceses for their generous contributions to support General Synod. More than three-quarters of General Synod’s income is from diocesan contributions—all voluntary, he noted. “We’re very grateful for those,” Perry added. While there are some red numbers in the consolidated financial statements, the general secretary said these were by design: due to a surplus, CoGS in May had given a holiday to dioceses for their contributions for the month of August. Even so, “some of those numbers are black, because there are some dioceses that contributed more than we thought they would. That’s good news... We’re grateful for that.”

Secondly, the general secretary noted that Resources for Mission was slightly above budget, by \$46,000, because of Anglicans supporting the operations of General Synod. “If for any reason that’s not you, it’s not too late in the year to make your contribution,” he joked.

Finally, Perry highlighted the fact that General Synod was running a surplus this year to date, of more than \$600,000. “That’s really extraordinarily good news,” he said. He characterized some of that surplus as due to management, some due to good luck, and some due to bad luck in the form of COVID, which meant less travel and resulting savings. Some General Synod staff members had left and not been immediately replaced. All of these together added up to the surplus.

A motion to receive the third-quarter consolidated financial statements carried.

#### **Resolution**

That the Council of General Synod receive the third Quarter Financial Statements of the General Synod ending September 30, 2021.



The Moving on to the budget, Perry noted that 99.9% of the work was due to recently retired treasurer and CFO Hanna Goschy. "She left us with a very good budget ready for 2022, and I would like to acknowledge that," Perry said.

The 2022 budget includes various requests that have come in, the most significant change being a request for Communications to hire a new staff writer at the *Anglican Journal*—a key indication of why the budget is higher for next year, Perry said. Another element affecting finances in 2022 will be hosting General Synod. The proposed 2021 budget forecast is \$6.9 million and General Synod is conservatively budgeting \$6.7 million in income from dioceses in 2022.

A motion to approve the 2022 budget carried.

**Resolution**

That the Council of General Synod approve the proposed Budget for 2022.

"I want to acknowledge again the diligent work for a number of years by Hanna Goschy, who takes credit for the very good financial situation we're in at this stage, and thanks again to the dioceses and donors," Perry said. "That support says an enormous amount about how much the work of the General Synod is valued."

**Evening Prayer**

Bishop Lynne McNaughton led CoGS in Compline evening prayer.

*Council members at Queen of Apostles Renewal Centre enjoyed an evening social from 8 p.m. to 11 p.m.*