

COGS Highlights



Council of General Synod

Friday, November 10, 2017

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

Opening Eucharist and Primate's Report

Members of the Council of General Synod (CoGS) began their meeting with an opening worship service and Eucharist. During the service, Archbishop Fred Hiltz, Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, combined his sermon with a report to council.

In his report, the Primate recalled the great joy he felt in July of being present for the 200th anniversary of the church he grew up in, Christ Church in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. Visiting the church and celebrating the laying of its cornerstone, his mind was flooded with memories of the people who had such an influence on his early life and call to ministry. The upper hall of the church contained a copy of the book *Letters to Young Churches* by J.B. Phillips, which helps introduce the letters of St. Paul to young Christians. Seeing the book prompted Archbishop Hiltz to wonder: If Paul were to write such a letter to Anglican Church of Canada, how would it read?

The Primate noted that the conclusion of the present council meeting would mark the halfway point of the current triennium. With General Synod 2019 looming on the horizon, members of the church must be mindful of who we are and what we are about. In a recent speech at the Synod of the Diocese of Ottawa, Archbishop Hiltz quoted the World Council of Churches document *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, which describes the church as drawing life from the gospel while still needing to regularly examine itself and discover anew the direction of its journey. With that day's worship commemorating Pope Leo I, the Primate invoked Leo's renowned teaching ability, which never divorced Christian doctrine from

living—always answering the question "What should we believe?" by in turn asking "How then should we act?"

Across the church and the worldwide Anglican Communion, the Primate saw a new emphasis on discipleship, with the 2016 Anglican Consultative Council calling for a Season of Intentional Discipleship by Anglican provinces around the globe. He highlighted the continuing influence of Anglican heritage, characterized by qualities that include a questioning spirit, allowing space for ambiguity, and embracing diversity in unity.

Archbishop Hiltz discussed a recent visit by representatives of the Council of Anglican Provinces of Africa (CAPA), who visited several dioceses during a two-week tour of Canada in September. In doing so, they provided an outsiders' perspective on the Anglican Church of Canada, noting the commitment of the Canadian church to addressing issues faced by Indigenous peoples, helping refugees, and fighting human trafficking. Canon Grace Kaiso, general secretary of CAPA, acknowledged that the Canadian church does not wait for people to come to it, but actively reaches out to communities, challenging a perception of many Anglicans in Africa that "the church in Canada is dying."

The latest conference of the Anglican Indigenous Network, hosted in Six Nations, was another opportunity for Canadian Anglicans to hear the perspectives of their foreign counterparts. Representatives who attended the conference showed considerable interest in work related to truth and reconciliation in Canada, particularly in the Anglican Church of Canada. They would also contend, the Primate said, that reconciliation without self-determination would be incomplete—reflecting one of the first statements

out of the *Road to Warm Springs* gathering in Pinawa, Manitoba. A report from the AIN conference expressed support for Bill C-262, which would require Canadian laws to be in harmony with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

Returning to the question of how Paul would view the Anglican Church of Canada, the Primate believed that Paul might reiterate the counsel he gave to the Galatians—to put on the garments of God’s chosen people, to “clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience” (Colossians 3:12). In the council’s deliberation on the *Road to Warm Springs* at its present meeting, Paul might urge us to “press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:14). In the ongoing work of the Anglican Healing Fund, Primate’s World Relief and Development Fund (PWRDF), and Anglican Foundation, he might tell us to “not become weary in doing good” (Galatians 6:9) while reminding us that “God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7).

Finally, the Primate concluded, Paul might pray in the same way he did for the Ephesians—by praying that our church might understand the incredible greatness of God’s power and trust in it; that we might have the power to comprehend the extent of God’s love for us is; that we be filled with this knowledge; and that it may be known to the world through our own lives and actions.

Welcome, Opening Formalities, and Orders of the Day

Following the worship service, Archbishop Hiltz welcomed council members, guests, and officers to the present meeting and listed regrets. Planning and Agenda Team co-chair the Rev. Dr. Karen Egan read out the Orders of the Day, and Prolocutor Cynthia Haines-Turner listed all e-ballots that had been conducted since the last meeting.

CoGS members adopted the minutes of their previous meeting by consensus vote before approving the agenda of the present meeting.

You Are My Witnesses: Moment 1

Throughout the meeting, a select group of

members who attended the *Road to Warm Springs* provided two-minute reflections on their experiences of the gathering.

Reconciliation Animator Melanie Delva was the first to offer a reflection. She expressed her gratitude at being invited to such a gathering, and pointed to one particular highlight: the signing of the call to the whole church that emerged from the meeting. “The tears that were in people’s eyes as they signed the Call from Warm Springs was really what struck my soul,” she said.

Members took a coffee break from 10 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.

General Synod Archives

Archivist Nancy Hurn resumed the meeting with a presentation on the General Synod Archives, which was established in 1927 to collect information and records of national significance. Many archival records, documents, and photographs related to Anglican-run residential schools have now been sent to the Centre for Truth and Reconciliation in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Hurn discussed the various kinds of records in the archives and the individuals and organizations who often access them, such as academic researchers, historians, and genealogists. She concluded with a demonstration of how to use the online database for the General Synod Archives.

Anglican Journal and CIRC Working Group Report

The Rev. Dr. Karen Egan introduced a presentation by the Communication and Information Resources coordinating committee’s joint working group on publications, providing an update and discussion on potential changes to distribution of diocesan newspapers and the *Anglican Journal*. Canon Ian Alexander delivered the presentation on behalf of the joint working group.

In his report, Alexander related how the establishment of the working group followed a request from the Diocese of Rupert’s Land pointing to the need to more clearly understand current and future trends in diocesan newspaper distribution and their potential impact on distribution of the *Anglican Journal*. Forming the

group also provided an opportunity to revisit and test assumptions about the *Journal* in light of financial realities and the need to rethink communications strategy.

The joint working group made an initial presentation at the June 2017 meeting of CoGS and has four surveys currently in field, distributed to diocesan publishers (i.e. bishops), diocesan editors, CoGS members, and senior staff. Having heard from half the editors, the group still plans to hold one-on-one interviews with selected respondents, and may distribute future surveys to all members of General Synod. Additional research and analysis may involve looking general media usage trends, business modelling, and meeting with the Anglican Editors Association. The working group hopes to present an interim report with options to CoGS in spring 2018, followed by a final report with recommendations in the fall of 2018.

At the end of the presentation, Alexander posed two discussion topics to council members. The first asked CoGS what criteria the working group should bear in mind as it develops options and recommendations for the future distribution of diocesan publications and the *Anglican Journal*, what factors should guide its choices, and whether some of these were more important than others.

After five minutes of discussion in table groups, members put forward various criteria:

- Cost, value, effectiveness, and target audience;
- Alternate models for distribution;
- Ease of print and accessibility;
- Diversity across the country, realizing that “one size does not fit all”;
- Sustainability for maintaining a useful model
- Need for flexibility
- Being mindful of users who are not online;
- Hearing from broad representations of Anglicans, including through a physical survey.

The second discussion topic related to the *Anglican Journal* and its mandate from General Synod to be “a national newspaper of interest to the members of the Anglican Church of Canada,

with an independent editorial policy and not being an official voice of or for the church.” Alexander asked CoGS members how important they believed it was for that mandate to continue, as well as how important they believed it was for diocesan newspapers and the *Anglican Journal* to continue to be mailed together to all Anglicans in their dioceses, free of charge.

In response, council members suggested that the mandate of the *Journal* needs to reflect diversity across the country and that editorial independence remains important, though some suggested that the mandate was not understood widely. Some highlighted editorial confusion, as most diocesan newspapers are not independent, while others questioned the value of independence and how the *Anglican Journal* fit into overall communications strategy. Suggestions including clarifying grant criteria and liability, exploring alternative mandates, and maintaining synergy in both directions for both the *Journal* and diocesan newspapers.

You Are My Witnesses: Moment 2

The second moment of reflection on the *Road to Warm Springs* came from Ms. Caroline Chum, a member of the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples (ACIP) who provided additional context for the gathering by discussing some of the previous work of the ACIP. She said that there was no single highlight of the gathering, but that “the whole event was wonderful.”

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

Bible Study

The meeting resumed after lunch with a Bible study. Table groups read Philippians 2:1-13 and discussed the meaning of the passage among themselves.

Primate’s World Relief and Development Fund

The work of PWRDF was the subject of the next presentation, as delivered by executive director Will Postma. Beginning with a brief history of the origins of PWRDF following the 1958 Springhill mine disaster, Postma discussed the current work of the organization in responding to emergencies globally and in Canada. He cited figures describing

2017 as seeing the highest level of human suffering since the Second World War in the face of the ongoing refugee crisis (nearly 60 million people around the refugees are now considered refugees), natural disasters, wars, and “stress multipliers” such as climate change that generate new tensions and exacerbate existing ones, particularly with regard to resource management, land availability and use.

In the face of such widespread need, PWRDF strives to work with local churches and communities, forming partnerships to enhance the effectiveness of its services, engaging with local governments and national leadership in affected countries, and ensuring gender parity in participation and decision-making.

Postma quoted former UN Special Advisor Jennifer Welsh, Canada’s 2016 Massey lecturer, to describe the current situation for relief agencies: “donors are fatigued, refugees are exhausted. Despite the worsening nature of world’s crises, metrics reveal growing public fatigue, a decline in interest, and a bigger gap between funds needed and funds given. In response, PWRDF has made increasing appeals to its Anglican constituency for funds, sending out three times as many appeals for emergency response in 2017 as it did the previous year.

This year also saw an increase of funds spent on emergency work. Among the emergencies that PWRDF has directed funds are mudslides in Sierra Leone, floods in Nepal and Bangladesh, an earthquake in Mexico, hurricanes in Cuba, Haiti, Dominica, Antigua, and the United States. Canadian Anglicans have also provided \$379,000 for famine relief through PWRDF to address drought, hunger, and famine in South Sudan, Somalia, Nigeria, and Yemen. PWRDF coordinates its efforts with ACT Alliance and the Canadian Foodgrains Bank to leverage and maximize impact, and Postma described a growing recognition of faith-based organizations as important actors.

There is a growing interest for PWRDF, he said, to do more to respond to emergencies in Canada such as the 2011 wildfires in Slave Lake, 2013 fires in Calgary, 2016 wildfires in Fort McMurray, and

2017 wildfires in British Columbia. Many such emergency situations across Canada are directly related to climate change.

The Rev. Gillian Hoyer, a PWRDF board member, briefly outlined future plans for the fund. PWRDF is currently in the process of developing its next strategic plan, which will cover the years 2019 through 2024. It also recently concluded an Independent Institutional Evaluation, which offered a set of recommendations for improvement, including for domestic emergency preparedness and response in Canada.

A subsequent table discussion allowed council members to ask questions and provide feedback on the PWRDF report.

You Are My Witnesses: Moment 3

In the third reflection on the *Road to Warm Springs*, Canon Grace Delaney described how privileged she felt to be part of the Pinawa gathering. “I came with an open mind and found such freedom to be part of that gathering we went to,” Delaney said. She recalled the bittersweet feeling of seeing Indigenous Anglicans who had signed the 1994 Covenant now signing the Call from Warm Springs; while there was a feeling of sadness at those who had died in the interim and could not be present, Delaney also felt a sense of optimism, “looking around and being hopeful of people that were willing to stand with us.”

She acknowledged the patience of Indigenous people who waited so many years to see movement within the church on the issue of self-determination. That process is now seeing some movement—in part, she told CoGS, “because of people like you who are willing to have an open mind and see us as part of you.”

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

Market Place #1

Following the break, council members broke into separate market place discussions, which featured three themes: the Anglican Healing Fund, the Joint Anglican Lutheran Commission, and the Consultation of Anglican Bishops in Dialogue.

Primate's Commission on Discovery, Reconciliation, and Justice

Bishop Riscylla Shaw, chair of the Primate's Commission on Discovery, Reconciliation and Justice, offered a brief update on the work of the commission, which last presented a report at the June 2017 meeting of CoGS.

Members of the commission plan to meet the week after the present meeting of CoGS to discuss the *Road to Warm Springs* and finding ways of rooting the Doctrine of Discovery out of the church, among other topics. With 2018 marking the 25th anniversary of the apology of then-Primate Michael Peers for Anglican participation in the residential school system, the commission will discuss what that anniversary means for the nation and the fabric of our church.

Following Bishop Shaw's update, General Secretary Michael Thompson took the podium to declare that gifts designated to the Anglican Healing Fund from individuals and dioceses had brought the total amount raised for the Healing Fund to approximately \$700,000. "We are, I think, well on our way to our goal of \$1,000,000" for the year, Thompson said. He thanked General Synod staff members for their role in bolstering fundraising efforts—in particular Healing Fund Coordinator Esther Wesley, who received a standing ovation from council members.

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

Conversation with Mark Whittall

Bishop John Chapman kicked off the evening session with his introduction of the Rev. Mark Whittall, who discussed his shepherding of a church plant in the Diocese of Ottawa. Whittall is currently incumbent of St. Albans Ottawa, a congregation that describes itself as a "Spirit-led, Christ-centred, contemporary urban church".

Noting that society and culture have changed very much in the 21st century, Whittall describes how he approached the task of trying to find a new model for "being church" after Bishop Chapman called on him to help set up the church plant at St. Albans. With so many Anglican congregations

across the country, Whittall said, there is room for many different ways of expressing church, and St. Albans offered a valuable opportunity for "research and development" in that regard.

Early on, the congregation at St. Albans tried out a range of different ideas. They experimented with new approaches to social media, tried having a slam poetry night rather than a sermon, and embraced eclectic forms of music. Another experiment involved the use of open space, by turning the floor over to the congregation itself after the homily and giving them discussion questions. In this way, Whittall said, many members of the congregation got to know each other in the middle of the service. Meanwhile, he added, "social justice became part of our DNA", following an initial planning meeting in which Whittall and his team aimed to reach out to young adults and intentionally engage with contemporary issues.

Communications was also one of the central tasks for the fledgling church plant. For three or four weeks, Whittall's team immersed themselves in branding, creating a logo, putting together a welcome video, and setting up a website. On an Easter Sunday, they launched St. Albans on Facebook, declaring the date of the first worship service and inviting members of the community to start meeting and join their team to develop the congregation. In response, a diverse group of 18 people attended the first meeting at a neighbourhood pub, and weekly meetings subsequently took place there very Wednesday as the congregation tried to discern its mission, by answering the question of how God was calling them to proclaim the Good News in their time and place.

After continuing to meet weekly, praying together and individually, walking around the neighbourhood and getting a sense of its demographics, the team quickly came up with a mission focus. While striving to be an all-ages church rooted in the neighbourhood, St. Albans would focus especially on students, young adults, and homeless individuals. Illustrating the success of the church in reaching these individuals and bringing different groups together, Bishop

Chapman described a visit to St. Albans in which a homeless man from the area joined children during the liturgy. “No one gave it a thought”, the bishop said, adding that the man subsequently serenaded the congregation with a rendition of *Amazing Grace* during the Eucharist.

The Road to Warm Springs 1

The last major item of the evening agenda served as the first part of a discussion on the *Road to Warm Springs*. By the glow of candlelight at the altar, Archbishop Hiltz, National Indigenous Anglican Bishop Mark MacDonald, and event co-chairs Randall Fairey and the Rev. Norm Wesley read out the titular Indigenous translation of the *Road to Emmaus* story, which is known as the *Road to Warm Springs*.

CoGS members then watched a 24-minute video documenting the Pinawa gathering, produced by Anglican Video. The video featured opening remarks from the Primate and Bishop MacDonald; gospel-based discipleship; participation in mapping exercises; the sharing of stories, music, and history; eight key ministry moments; a presentation on Indigenous spirituality by Dr. Martin Brokenleg; report from a focus group tasked by Sacred Circle 2015 with looking into the possibility of a fifth ecclesiastical province; and the Primate’s final speech and signing of the Call from Warm Springs document, which committed the church to a renewal of the 1994 Covenant and to stand in solidarity with Indigenous peoples in their quest for self-determination.

After the video, the National Indigenous Anglican Bishop and the Primate both gave personal reflections on the *Road to Warm Springs* gathering.

Our society and our church, Bishop MacDonald said, have been infected by the systemic evils of racism and colonialism. Long after it became unacceptable to express outright prejudice towards Indigenous people and people of colour, these evils continue to shape people’s behaviour, institutions, and ideas. They shape people through fear and habitual ways of thinking and acting, to the point where it becomes very difficult and elusive to try and counter these ideas.

Good can emerge when a group of oppressed people decide that they will no longer be victims, but survivors—so long, he stressed, as it the oppressed who make this choice and not the oppressors. When the oppressed make the choice to reclaim their humanity, it can influence people, institutions, and ideas. Having experienced systemic evil, such changes allow us to begin to “experience what we might call systemic good,” Bishop MacDonald said. “As people become free of some of the internal forms of colonization and racism, they begin to live their lives in way that is positive that has positive impact on everybody and on the system.”

For the National Indigenous Anglican Bishop, the *Road to Warm Springs* was part of a larger trajectory of healing and reconciliation going on in life of our church and society. However, it is not a done deal, and now is not a time to celebrate the end of colonialism. Rather, it is a time for us to renew ourselves in this struggle, while understanding the positive changes that have resulted. At the *Road to Warm Springs*, Bishop MacDonald saw the beginning, or the continuation, of healing from the systemic evils of racism and colonialism—a healing that affects both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

Thanking the planning team who put together the Pinawa gathering, Archbishop Hiltz stressed that it is the deep commitment on the part of Indigenous leaders, elders and youth to address the crisis in many communities, and to put in place a ministry plan, that is at the heart of the church’s ongoing conversation.

“It’s not all about structures,” the Primate said. “It’s about ministry, and the structures that can support that ministry.” Invoked the words of Bishop MacDonald’s concept paper on self-governance that described “a self-determining church, a church of living hope in the midst of so much pain and despair,” he challenged those present: “Can we be that kind of a church?”

The Primate noted a sense of urgency behind the need for continued training of Indigenous clergy, the need to expand conversations about governance changes and funding Indigenous

ministries. He sensed that when people look back at the Pinawa gathering 25 years from now, they will remember the *Road to Warm Springs* as another watershed moment in the long journey towards healing and reconciliation. Coming out of Pinawa, the Primate discerned that it was not time for a new covenant, but to keep working on the Covenant of 1994 and the vision enshrined within it. He hoped that the dominant headline coming out of General Synod in 2019 would be that it was a moment to celebrate another major step on the road to self-determination.

You Are My Witnesses: Moment 4

Bishop Bruce Myers offered the final reflection of the day on the *Road to Warm Springs*.

Though those looking for “constitutions and canonical-type things” may have left disappointed, Bishop Myers said, the Pinawa gathering was primarily about meeting people, listening to them and their experiences, and trying to give living expression to what emerged from those conversations. The *Road to Warm Springs* was not so much about creating new structures—although that may be one of the outcomes—as it was about continuing the journey towards healing and reconciliation together. Though the end of that road might not always be clear, he said, we know Christ is at its centre and can continue to journey down that road together in faith, hope, respect, and love.

Evening Prayer

Planning Team co-chair Peter Wall concluded the evening session by leading council members in evening prayer.

Members enjoyed an evening social from 9 p.m. until 11 p.m.