

COGS Highlights



Council of General Synod

November 18, 2010

The first meeting of the 2010-2013 Council of General Synod (COGS) began with a celebration of the Eucharist at 9:00. COGS members met for business at 10:00.

The Primate, Archbishop Fred Hiltz, welcomed all members to COGS. He noted that the partners from the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples (the Ven. Sidney Black) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (the Rev. Doug Reble) are now full voting members of COGS.

Election of Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor

The Primate presented David Philip Jones, Q.C., chancellor of the Diocese of Edmonton, as a candidate for General Synod chancellor. He also named Ann Bourke, vice chancellor of the Diocese of Ottawa, as a candidate for General Synod vice chancellor.

Resolution

Council elected, by consensus, David Philip Jones, Q.C., as General Synod chancellor and Ann Bourke as General Synod vice chancellor.

Primate's Report

Archbishop Hiltz noted that his report would not cover the restructuring, the budget, or the June General Synod meeting, as these subjects will be addressed at other times during COGS.

The Primate's report focused on the theme of the church "turning out" to serve the world.

He spoke first of the 11th Lutheran World Federation (LWF) assembly, which he attended in Stuttgart, Germany last July. The theme was "Give Us Today Our Daily Bread" and the meeting addressed pressing world issues including the global economy and human trafficking.

At this assembly, the Primate was inspired by the words of Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America who also serves as president of LWF. Bishop Hanson said that Christians

have a tendency to become "curved in" upon themselves. He noted that "The dynamic of communion is that we're called out. We're called in a dance toward the neighbour."

The Primate said he observed the same outward-focused spirit at the Sept. 2010 "City, Street, and Church" conference he attended in Victoria, B.C. He witnessed how the Church of St. John the Divine was working on a collaborative approach to addressing homelessness in downtown Victoria.

The national church is also "turning out," said the Primate. He noted that at the General Synod meeting he sensed a renewed sense of Canadian Anglican identity as articulated in Vision 2019. General Synod also made several statements that showed a commitment to Indigenous justice. Among other actions, they encouraged the federal government to endorse the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The Primate expressed his desire for the church to grow into deeper full communion relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. He noted several joint ACC-ELCIC meetings, including a very lively Canadian Lutheran Anglican Youth in London, Ont. last August (CLAY 2010).

Archbishop Hiltz noted that Canadian Anglicans are more active than ever in the governing bodies of the worldwide Anglican Communion. He highlighted the Rev. Canon Dr. Isaac Kawuki Mukasa's work in the continuing Communion indaba process and Donna Bomberly, who serves as general secretary of the Anglican Indigenous Network.

Finally, the Primate noted that for the church to have an impact on the world it needs to work not only ecumenically but with interfaith partners. He said the 2010 Interfaith Leaders Summit in Winnipeg last June offered a glimpse of possible cooperative work.

"My hope and prayer as we enter this new triennium is that we will be given more and more to being turned out, not turned in to ourselves," he said. "The Gospel

calls us to be turned out to the world."

Resolution
COGS approved the minutes from the March 2010 and June 2010 meetings.

Team building

Suzanne Lawson gave a brief introduction to the role of the Planning and Agenda Team, which she chairs. Sue Winn then presented a series of questions for members to discuss in their small groups: What are your lasting impressions of General Synod? Why did you let your name stand for COGS? What skills do you have to offer? What are your hopes for what can be accomplished this triennium? Members shared their responses in plenary.

At 12:00 council took a lunch break and reconvened at 1:30.

Orientation to the work of COGS

The General Secretary, the Ven. Michael Pollesel, drew attention to the formal job description for COGS members. He reminded them they were responsible for the governance of the Anglican Church of Canada.

Archbishop Colin Johnson (Toronto) described the difference between governance and management. He described members' fiduciary responsibility to make decisions for the complex, large organization that is the Anglican Church of Canada.

Members discussed this distinction in small groups. Some inquired about developing a conflict of interest policy at COGS.

Looking back

After giving a brief overview of the General Secretary's report, Archdeacon Pollesel asked Margaret Shawyer, coordinator of General Synod planning, to give COGS a glimpse of what the work was like during 1988 to 1992, the first triennium she staffed COGS. (After staffing over 70 COGS meetings and working at General Synod for 39 years, Ms. Shawyer will retire in December 2010.)

Ms. Shawyer named many projects that COGS (then the National Executive Council) was working on over 20 years ago, including a large international partners consultation and considering a separate diocese for Labrador.

Overview of restructuring

The Primate explained the process that led to the recent restructuring of the national office. He emphasized that

it was shaped by the priorities and practices outlined in the strategic plan, Vision 2019.

The Primate described the areas of work that he will oversee. The ministries are "Nurturing our Common Life" (Faith, Worship, and Ministry) and "Building Relationships" (Global Relations within the Anglican Communion; Ecumenical, Interfaith, and Government Relations; and Indigenous Ministries).

The General Secretary outlined the work that he oversees. The ministries are "Stewarding our Resources" (Financial Management and Philanthropy), "Telling Our Stories" (Communications and Information Resources), and "Honouring our Commitments" (Residential Schools Settlement Agreement and Anglican Fund for Healing and Reconciliation).

Council had a brief coffee break and reconvened at 3:15.

Orientation continued

Suzanne Lawson highlighted other meeting norms that COGS will abide by. She noted that this triennium COGS can meet by telephone or through electronic means.

Members discussed putting their orientation handbook online. This led to a discussion about the privacy of members' personal contact information. The chancellor agreed to review this matter of privacy.

Messages from COGS 2007-2010

Members reviewed recommendations and comments from the previous council. The previous COGS called for a continued commitment to deficit budgeting, a fleshing out of Vision 2019, and the ongoing mentorship of new members and youth members.

Proposals to improve the life of COGS

Bishop James Cowan (British Columbia) presented a proposal for a "paperless" COGS. The council has worked to reduce their paper consumption over several meetings but Bishop Cowan noted that there is room for growth. This proposal will be formally reviewed later in the meeting.

Ali Symons, senior editor at General Synod, presented a proposal from the Communications and Information Resources Department about how information can be shared from COGS. She proposed that staff distribute (online and in print) a package that would include a synopsis video from the General Secretary. In this video Archdeacon Pollesel would invite people to send in their feedback on the COGS meeting.

At 4:30, council adjourned for social time and dinner. They reconvened at 7:00.

Budget

Michèle George, treasurer, and Rob Dickson, chair of the Financial Management Committee, led the first of two sessions on the 2011 budget.

Ms. George and Mr. Dickson noted that the 2011 budget achieves one year early COGS's goal of a balanced budget for General Synod. In order to achieve this, General Synod's Management Team has cut just under \$1 million from General Synod's operations. This has meant cuts to program and to staff positions.

Ms. George led the council through a detailed presentation of the major changes in General Synod expenses and revenues from 2008 to 2011. She described General Synod's current financial commitments, which total \$4.2 million annually. \$2.4 million of this is committed to support pastoral and sacramental ministry in the Council of the North.

Mr. Dickson noted that General Synod's future sustainability depends on two factors: creating affordable structures and stabilizing revenues. Over the past several years, proportional giving from dioceses has dropped steadily.

Management Team is proposing a number of methods to ensure financial sustainability:

-COGS may now use a prioritization process for resolutions that have financial implications but for which funding is not budgeted. The Primate, the Prolocutor, and the General Secretary, in consultation with the Treasurer, may determine if these resolutions are financially feasible.

-The 2011 budget establishes a Ministry Investment Fund, created from the restricted portion of undesignated legacies. This fund is available to assist in new initiatives.

-The 2011 budget also establishes a General Synod Officers' discretionary reserve to help fund non-recurring, unbudgeted, unplanned costs.

Management Team is also examining certain areas of work where funds could be saved. They are also working to support the Department of Philanthropy as they raise funds.

COGS will vote on the proposed 2011 budget on Saturday.

Youth secretariat

Archdeacon Pollesel and Judy Steers, General Synod's coordinator for youth initiatives, gave an update on a General Synod resolution that asked the General Secretary to consider establishing a youth secretariat.

Judy Steers gave a presentation on youth initiatives within the last triennium. She described the revitalization of youth ministry in dioceses and regions and noted a large number of joint ecumenical projects, especially CLAY 2010 with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada.

Archdeacon Pollesel noted that Ms. Steers will continue to work as quarter-time staff at General Synod. He is seeking funding for a second quarter-time youth initiatives staff person.

Climate/context in which COGS will work

Suzanne Lawson led a brainstorming session on the Canadian situation that the Anglican Church of Canada operates in. Members offered their impressions on Canadian demographics, economy, politics, volunteerism, fundraising, healthcare, and religion. The Primate said this exercise was to help members "understand the broader context in which we are church."

At 9:00, Bishop Dennis Drainville (Quebec) led COGS in night prayer. Council adjourned for the evening.