

COUNCIL OF GENERAL SYNOD (COGS) – DAILY HIGHLIGHTS



***We envision a church growing
in membership, faith
and service in God's world***

**Saturday, May 24, 2008
Queen of Apostles, Mississauga, Ont.**

The second day of COGS's spring 2008 meeting began with the Eucharist, celebrated by Larry Beardy. COGS members then spent time in Bible study with their assigned groups.

10:45 Council recovered.

Election

The deputy prolocutor, Canon Robert Falby, nominated the Rev. Helena Rose Houldcroft to be Anglican Church of Canada's representative to the Canadian Council of Churches. Council agreed to this nomination by consensus.

Canon Falby also announced the results of the balloting for the Anglican Consultative Council and noted that another ballot would be needed. He suggested that Council accept runner up in this ballot as the alternate delegate. This was also accepted by COGS members.

Anglican Communion Working Group

Director of Faith, Worship, and Ministry, Alyson Barnett-Cowan, introduced the Anglican Communion Working Group (ACWG), a subcommittee of the Faith, Worship, and Ministry Committee. Bishop George Bruce serves ACWG's chair, and he spoke about their work on the Anglican Covenant, a proposed document that if adopted would define the relationships amongst the provinces of the Anglican Communion.

Bishop Bruce outlined how the ACWG has solicited and collated Canadian responses to the covenant, now in its second draft (the St. Andrew's draft). He also explained some of the major differences between the two drafts, and fielded some questions about content and process. Members were interested especially in the lack of responses from communion provinces and noted the need for inclusive language.

Bishop Bruce said the Covenant Design Group, the communion-level body responsible for writing the covenant, will produce a third draft after the Lambeth Conference in July. The ACWG will meet again to discuss this draft.

***Resolution**

Council approved a resolution to receive the report of the ACWG and direct that it be forwarded to the Covenant Design Group as a preliminary response to the St. Andrew's draft covenant, and forward the ACWG's report to bishops of the Anglican Church of Canada for their use both before and during the Lambeth Conference.

Governance Working Group

Dr. Randall Fairey and the Ven. Harry Huskins listed the files that the governance working group plans to address in this triennium: changes to the amending formula; recommending changes to the composition and membership of General Synod and COGS; working on the structure for a national Indigenous ministry; and following up to the Primate's conversation with the provinces and dioceses about how they carry out their mission (both within themselves and with General Synod).

Randall Fairey noted that the structure of the national Indigenous ministry is a priority for this group, because of diocesan boundary discussions in the dioceses of Keewatin and Brandon. He mentioned that there are many more stakeholders to consult with.

COGS members offered their thoughts on these files and asked questions.

11:45 Council offered midday prayers

12:00 Lunch.

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1:30 Council reconvened.

Elections

Canon Falby announced that Stephen Andrews and Suzanne Lawson had been elected as the Anglican Church of Canada's representatives to the Anglican Consultative Council, with Peter Elliott and Sue Winn as alternates.

Canon Falby also announced the new board of the *Anglican Journal*: Sam Carriere, Tim Mae Christison, Tom Corston, Peter Davison, Robert Dickson, George Elliot, John Fletcher, Margaret Jenniex, Alison Knight, Dion Lewis, Catherine Pate, and Ana Watts.

Results of Priority Exercise

John Whincup and Susan Graham Walker from Kemerer Group International (KGI) returned to share the findings from yesterday's priority exercise. The vision that emerged for COGS this triennium was "leadership in building up the church, meeting the tasks set by General 2007 and advancing God's mission, grounded in the Gospel of Jesus."

In order to achieve that vision, COGS must concentrate on

1. Effective stewardship
2. Sound leadership and governance
3. Quality communication and education
4. Faithful community life
5. Active and focused mission

KGI will now submit a final report to the Planning and Agenda Committee.

***Resolution**

Council adopted the Governance Working Group's terms of reference

Primacy Task Force

Bishop Michael Ingham gave a report on the Primacy Task Force, which was asked by General Synod 2007 to review the role, function, and responsibilities of the Primate. Bishop Ingham said in 1971 the church decided the Primate would not have a diocesan Sea, but now conversations are turning back to that possibility. The Anglican Church of Canada and the Episcopal Church are the only two Anglican Communion provinces whose primates do not have diocesan Seas.

Other questions the task force will consider are whether certain canons limit the Primate's freedom to speak out on resolutions and whether Primates should have set terms.

Bishop Ingham said the task force will now give the church a series of focused questions about the Primate, and that they will present these in all four provincial synods. They also plan to consult with living former Primates and other sources to assess these questions.

***Resolution**

Council approved the following motions referred to COGS by General Synod 2007: A211, A220, A221, A225, A250, A251, A252, A253, C001, C006. They decided to refer C007 (which requires ordinands to receive anti-racism training) to the House of Bishops.

Faith, Worship, and Ministry Committee

Lela Zimmer, Bishop Greg Kerr-Wilson, Alyson Barnett Cowan, and Stephanie DeForest spoke on behalf of the Faith, Worship, and Ministry Committee.

***Resolution**

Council approved the French text of the Prayers of the People and the Ministry of the Sick for trial use and evaluation.

Consultation on human sexuality

Lela Zimmer explained the process that the Faith, Worship, and Ministry Committee is using to study the issue of human sexuality across the Anglican Church of Canada. The committee plans to hold focus groups led by experienced facilitators at provincial synods and elsewhere. Focus groups will begin conversations on the broad topic of human sexuality amongst interested participants. They will also compile an annotated list of existing resources on human sexuality. Ms. Zimmer emphasized that these consultations are about human sexuality in general; "That includes all of us," she said.

Several COGS members offered feedback on this process. This included learnings from previous consultations and concerns about how Aboriginal facilitators experienced the initial orientation. Members also discussed whether this process was a faithful interpretation of their assignment from General Synod 2007.

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***Resolution**

Council then affirmed the direction being developed in response to General Synod's resolution to develop a process to engage dioceses, parishes, and individuals of the ACC to study human sexuality through the lens of scripture, informed and interpreted by reason, tradition, and current scientific development.

Revision of the marriage canon

Lela Zimmer asked on behalf of the committee if COGS could clarify whether it wants to consider a revision of the marriage canon, or a process to consider such a revision. She also requested clarification on whether this work is to include all legally qualified persons, or the particular category that includes same-sex couples.

***Resolution**

As a result of the conversation, the following resolution was adopted: the Council of General Synod

- (1) concurs in the Faith, Worship and Ministry Committee's understanding that it is to address the particular category of "legally qualified persons," i.e. same-sex couples at least one of whom is baptized Christian;
- (2) agrees that development of a theological rationale for the marriage of such couples should precede the preparation of any draft amendments to or revision of the Marriage Canon;
- (3) requests the committee to report to the COGS no later than November 2009, and
- (4) directs that, if the Faith, Worship and Ministry Committee develops such a rationale, it should, in conjunction with the Handbook Concerns Committee, prepare draft amendments to, or a draft revision of, the Marriage Canon for consideration by the COGS in March 2010 for possible submission to the 2010 session of the General Synod.

***Resolution**

Council commended the World Council of Churches' Faith and Order document "The Nature and Mission of the Church" to the dioceses and the Primate's Theological Commission for their consideration and comment by January 31, 2009, and asked the Faith, Worship, and Ministry Committee to prepare a draft response for the council's consideration in spring 2009.

Youth Ministry

Stephanie DeForest gave an update on an ongoing youth ministries consultation, which has met once and plans to meet again at the Generation 2008 national youth ministry conference next month. Conversations have focused around the nature and direction of current youth ministry and how the national church can support, not direct, this ongoing work.

Pensions Committee

The Prolocutor moved COGS into parliamentary mode to pass the following Pensions Committee resolutions, which were presented by Laura Solomonian.

Council deleted a regulation that permits a member to transfer funds from another pension plan or an RRSP into the General Synod Pension Plan.

Council amended regulations to provide for joint and survivor death benefits for the benefit earned before 1987.

The Council adopted the new canon and regulations for the operation of the continuing education plan (CEP). (At the November 2007 meeting, council had approved certain changes for CEP to become compliant with the income tax act.)

Financial Management and Development Committee

Judy Darling spoke on behalf of the Financial Management and Development Committee. She said their report was focused around the new development office, and that the committee recently had the pleasure of distributing six grants to clergy and their families who had experienced unexpected medical and dental expenses.

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***Resolution**

Council approved the revised statement of investment policy and goals for the consolidated trust fund.

The Audit Committee

Council approved the financial statements of the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada, the Anglican Church of Canada Consolidated Trust Fund and the Anglican Church of Canada Resolution Corporation for the fiscal year ended as at December 31, 2007.

Council appointed the chartered accounting firm of Ernst & Young as the auditors for the same bodies as above, for 2008.

Council agreed that resolutions to approve the same three bodies' annual financial statements not be eligible for placement on the "no debate" lists at meetings of COGS or the General Synod itself.

Communications and Information Resources Committee***Resolution**

Council adopted changes to the Communications and Information Resources Committee terms of reference. (This reflected the new relationship of the Communications and Information Resources Department to the Anglican Book Centre.)

The Rev. Michael Thompson spoke about the Amazing Grace project, an initiative of the Communications and Information Resources Committee. For this project, all Canadian Anglicans are encouraged to sing the hymn "Amazing Grace" on Nov. 23, record it on video, and send it to General Synod to be made into a larger video, which will be aired on YouTube. He said "there are all kinds of lovely things about this project," and "Nov. 23 will become an important day in the life of our church."

Members of COGS responded enthusiastically and agreed to sing "Amazing Grace" at their November meeting.

***Resolution**

Council endorses the Amazing Grace project and encourage all Canadian Anglican ministries to participate.

Handbook Concerns Committee

Council approved the annexed guidelines for telephone and electronic meetings and recommended that they be included as an appendix in future editions of the General Synod handbook.

The chancellor clarified that "electronic meetings" can include such media as voice-over-internet programs and internet chat. He said the only qualification was that people could hear each other.

5:00 Council adjourned

Council spent the evening celebrating the ministry of Dr. Ellie Johnson, who retired as Director of Partnerships in March 2008. Queen of Apostles staff served a special dinner, and several members gave speeches in her honour.