

COGS Highlights



Council of General Synod

November 21, 2010

Queen of Apostles Renewal Centre, Mississauga, Ont.

From 9:00 to 10:00, members met in their Bible study groups. They gathered to begin business at 10:00.

Agenda-setting at COGS

In their table groups, members discussed what advice they would like to offer the Planning and Agenda Team, which sets the agenda for the council.

In plenary, members shared their feedback. Some said they appreciated the spaciousness of morning Bible studies, and others commented on the need to keep the implementation of Vision 2019 front and centre.

COGS members took a break from 10:30 to 10:45.

Resolutions

COGS members addressed three outstanding resolutions:

Resolution

Members addressed a resolution from General Synod that asked COGS to "organize a review of the current apportionment system, including consulting with diocesan finance officers, and report to General Synod 2013." They decided, by consensus, to refer this resolution to the Financial Management Committee (FMC) for action, and asked the FMC to report progress to COGS in fall 2011.

Resolution

Members adopted, by consensus, a policy for the administration of the Ministry Investment Fund, which was established in 2008 by the Financial Management and Development Committee to limit the funding of operational deficits with unrestricted bequests to the national church.

Resolution

Members resolved, by consensus, that the Financial Management Committee work to foresee trends/statistics over the next 20 years to better manage funds.

Partners' Reflections

COGS heard from the partners who had been present at this meeting. This triennium partners include Martha Gardner from the Episcopal Church and the Rev. Doug Reble from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC). The ELCIC representative is now a full voting member of COGS.

Officers from the ELCIC's National Church Council (NCC) were also in attendance to prepare for a joint COGS-NCC meeting next March. ELCIC National Bishop Susan Johnson and Sheila Hamilton, vice president, offered reflections on the panel. Don Storch, ELCIC secretary, and Ken Hartviksen, ELCIC treasurer, were not present as they had to leave COGS early.

Partners first offered their affirmations. They named, among other things, the enthusiastic participation of COGS youth members and the powerful language of Anglican night prayers.

Then partners challenged COGS with more critical reflections. Ms. Gardner noted the lack of multilingual worship and the need for members to represent a wider variety of cultures. Mr. Reble and Ms. Hamilton noted the challenges of consensus decision-making. Several partners noted that members needed to learn the distinction between governance and management, and that possibly a structure with active working committees might make this easier. Bishop Johnson said that General Synod must be realistic in assessing capacity after the restructuring.

Finally, the partners shared the insights they had gained from working in institutions that are experiencing similar challenges. The ELCIC representatives said they had done some very serious restructuring in the past several years and were working to live into their motto

"in mission for others." Ms. Gardner shared that TEC was working to align their budgeting principles and their strategic plan. They have also had to reassess their philanthropy initiatives.

Key messages

COGS members brainstormed key messages to take back to their communities. These included:

- The Marks of Mission belong to us all and shape us.
- We are a group that works together with respect, cooperation, understanding, and thoughtfulness on behalf of the whole church, with the Holy Spirit guiding the way.
- We have to stay connected to and take responsibility for the work of Vision 2019.
- What happens here is only effective if and when it reaches parishes and dioceses.
- The Council showed commitment and witnessed progress towards supporting the Council of the North and the continuing journey with Indigenous Peoples on this ongoing journey toward healing and wholeness.
- We did anti-racism training for a day to examine our own racist attitudes and this training will form our work together as a national church going forward.
- We structured our meeting and engaged with each other in a hopeful attitude to look into God's future rather than panicked respond to declining resources.
- We worked to improve our process of consensus decision-making.

Council adjourned at 12:00 for lunch. At 1:30, they closed the meeting by celebrating the Eucharist.