

COGS Highlights



Council of General Synod

Saturday, June 1, 2024

Members of the Council of General Synod (CoGS) gathered at 9 a.m. EDT at the Queen of Apostles Renewal Centre in Mississauga, Ont.

Gospel-Based Discipleship

National Indigenous Anglican Archbishop Chris Harper and Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples (ACIP) co-chairs the Rev. Canon Dr. Murray Still and Rosie Jane Tailfeathers led council in gospel-based discipleship.

Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples

Harper introduced two new staff members of Indigenous Ministries: the Ven. Rosalyn Elm, who takes over the role of Indigenous Ministries coordinator; and Krista Pura, who started as program associate April 15. Noting that Harper had been travelling across many dioceses presenting a vision of mutual interdependence and walking together, Elm said she was pleased to take that vision and put it into play. She said she was excited to be working with elders including Still, Tailfeathers and other members of ACIP whom she described as "holders of knowledge and wisdom." Elm told CoGS members, "I believe in this church and I believe in all of you."

After a video documenting Sacred Beginnings, a gathering of young Indigenous Anglican that took place in Beausejour, Man. at the Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre, Harper presented an update on Indigenous Ministries. Since General Synod 2023, ACIP has had a successful in-person meeting in Leduc, Alberta and expanded the Our Way of Life document. Currently ACIP is in the process of determining timelines and

scouting locations for the next Sacred Circle. The second annual Sacred Beginnings gathering took place this year. Indigenous Ministries is looking to expand the influence of its youth ministry as well as to increase the visibility of its suicide prevention programs.

For its in-person meeting in April, ACIP had extended an invitation to Bishop of Edmonton Stephen London and met with him in his diocese. Harper hoped this goodwill on both sides would help facilitate future meetings in other dioceses. The Ven. Travis Enright, archdeacon for reconciliation and decolonization in the diocese of Edmonton, also joined ACIP the same day and talked about uniting Indigenous traditions with Anglican liturgy.

The latter part of the April meeting saw members propose four internal committees of members working in different areas to report back to ACIP, with the goal of laying foundations for future ministry. ACIP will finalize these committees at its next meeting. Proposed committees included governance, glossary of terms and languages, policies and procedures, and finance and budgeting.

Tailfeathers said ACIP had been working to connect with Indigenous peoples in countries outside Canada, such as the Sámi peoples in the northern Scandinavian Peninsula. It has discussed expanding the presence of non-Indigenous leaders in its proceedings and the possibility of using sponsorship proposals to facilitate funding, though this is still in the

preliminary stages. Still spoke more about Sacred Beginnings, which he described as a “reclamation of our youth’s traditions” inspired by the apology for spiritual harm by former primate Fred Hiltz. Harper also touched on plans for Indigenous Ministries to increase its online presence on social media including Instagram and Facebook, as well as a podcast and the redesign of its website.

Members took a break from 10:42 to 10:47 a.m.

Anglican Healing Fund

Martha Many Grey Horses, coordinator of the Anglican Healing Fund, spoke about the history of her family’s relationship with the Anglican Church—going back to when Christian missionaries first came into her home territory in southern Alberta, where her maternal great-grandfather was head chief and signed Treaty 7 with the Canadian government.

She spoke about her father, who did not attend residential school and spoke Blackfoot all his life; and her mother, who attended residential school but in a rare experience was able to have her grandparents set up their teepee encampment on the residential school grounds, allowing her to see them. “I think about that experience and wish it was like that for every one of us that went to residential school,” said Many Grey Horses, who attended the same residential school as her mother. Both her parents valued education, both were leaders of their traditional societies and there was no conflict between their traditional ways of life and Christianity, Many Grey Horses said.

That history formed the background to her work in the Anglican Healing Fund, which began more than five years prior and included a range of grants and contracts. Many Grey Horses described the creation of a healing lodge centre in Dawson City, Yukon, spearheaded by local grandmothers who had approached their chief

and council in 2019.

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 greatly affected healing fund projects, she said, as safety measures became a priority for all projects and the number of participants declined. The healing fund saw fewer applications and projects took longer to complete. Many communities expressed a desire to go “back to the land” and the healing fund shifted to land-based projects. In 2021, the discovery of the remains of 215 children buried on the former grounds of Kamloops Indian Residential School further shook many Indigenous communities.

Many Grey Horses described various initiatives supported by the Anglican Healing Fund such as summer healing camps helping connect people to their traditional knowledge; and a Mohawk music project that aims to teach and revitalize the Mohawk language through sacred songs and connecting people to their traditional lands.

Introduction and Remarks: Archbishop Anne Germond

Archbishop Anne Germond, metropolitan of Ontario and bishop of the dioceses of Algoma and Moosonee, spoke to CoGS about her plans as acting primate following the retirement of Archbishop Linda Nicholls, current primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, in September. Germond said as acting primate, she will do everything possible to support CoGS and other groups in the church.

Referring to a statement by Nicholls that the next primate would need to be a “change agent”, Germond said she did not see her role as acting primate that way, but rather as a bridge—between Nicholls as 14th primate of the Anglican Church of Canada and whoever would become the 15th primate. Given her responsibilities as a metropolitan and bishop,

Germond said it would not be possible for her to act as a full-time acting primate. While stressing that she was not abandoning her work in Algoma and Moosonee, Germond was in conversation with retired bishops to ask for their assistance in these dioceses so she can give attention to her role as acting primate. Nicholls, she added, had been helpful in outlining priorities for the eight months between September 2024 and June 2025, when General Synod will elect a new primate.

Members broke for lunch from noon to 1:15 p.m.

Anglican Foundation of Canada

Executive director Scott Brubacher gave a report from the Anglican Foundation of Canada (AFC), having just returned from its board meeting in Edmonton. Recent highlights of the foundation's work had included the launch of a new strategic plan, more accessible grants and the establishment of a new Community Ministries Fund with initial funding of \$2 million. In 2023, the AFC had seen a record-breaking year by providing \$1.5 million in disbursements, with grants to 28 of 30 dioceses.

In his two and a half years since taking over as executive director, Brubacher had looked at how the AFC compares to similar organizations such as the United Church of Canada Foundation, the Episcopal Church Foundation and the Presbyterian Foundation. He described a shift in the AFC away from a "donor-centred" to "community-centred" philanthropy, which seeks to provide not just charitable relief but system-level changes that will eliminate the problem charity is trying to solve.

Brubacher invited CoGS to respond to three discussion questions to help guide the foundation in its work going forward:

- What roles can/should the Anglican Foundation of Canada play in the

Anglican Church ecosystem?

- How can the Anglican Foundation of Canada work strategically with General Synod and with dioceses as a community-centric philanthropic partner?
- What are the pros and cons of the "peanut butter approach" (spread too thin)?

Addressing Microaggressions in Faith Communities

Irene Moore-Davis, an educator and member of the church's Dismantling Racism Task Force, led a workshop on how to address microaggressions in faith communities. Moore-Davis said that diversity and inclusion are complementary but distinct. She referred to a quote by authors Liz Fosslie and Mollie West Duffy: "Diversity is having a seat at the table, inclusion is having a voice, and belonging is having that voice be heard."

Moore-Davis described diversity, inclusion and belonging as moving toward equity: fair treatment, access, opportunity and advancement for all while eliminating barriers that have prevented full participation for certain groups. She encouraged CoGS to view this process as an opportunity and a blessing, not a problem. "Cultivating an inclusive culture is good for our communities," she said, which enables participants to thrive individually and to bring out the best in each other. Part of integrating these values into practices, Moore-Davis said, involves examining one's implicit or unconscious bias.

The concept of microaggressions, she said, refers to "everyday, commonplace verbal and nonverbal indignities, insults and slights that communicate hostile or negative messages to members of a stigmatized, underrepresented or marginalized group" and which repeat or affirm stereotypes. People may target others with

microaggressions because of their race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, class, disability, weight or age, among other factors. Microaggressions can be intentional or unintentional, Moore-Davis said, but it is the impact that matters.

CoGS learned about how to address microaggressions whether as a perpetrator, target, observer, or leader. In discussion, members highlighted the importance of listening, constructive criticism, taking responsibility, apologies and continual education.

Members took a break from 3:20 to 3:50 p.m.

Partner Reflections #1

Liza Anderson, representative to CoGS from The Episcopal Church (TEC), offered a partner reflection for her last council meeting in this role. Having worked at multiple seminaries, parishes and monasteries that closed, Anderson spoke about her recognition that institutions, like people, are not permanent.

"Institutions die," she said. "But the gospel of Jesus Christ doesn't die." As church people, she said, Christians can often fall into the trap of equating the gospel of Jesus Christ with the institutions to which they have dedicated their lives. She described TEC as currently in a process that many organizations engage in before collapse: adding more and more bureaucracy, such as the addition of dozens of new task forces.

In becoming acquainted with the Anglican Church of Canada, Anderson said she was "enchanted" by the fact that the Canadian church does strategic planning, which TEC does not. She had told TEC they might try doing that. But after completing an MBA, Anderson said she was now more skeptical, because strategic plans rarely work and are almost never

implemented by any organization.

Being a Christian is so counter-cultural today, Anderson said, it is more akin to the life of a monastery than other ways of being church. Even for those born into a particular faith, "at a certain point you have to decide whether or not you're all in on this." She compared church institutions to the institution of marriage which statistically often fails, yet people continue to get married. Recent experience has made church members more aware of the ways their institutions have failed, yet they love and commit to them anyway.

"A lot of the deep existential work our church is doing is not just navel-gazing, but the equivalent of psychotherapy for institutions, where we're trying to be really honest about ourselves," Anderson said. She also described despair as a way of preventing people from doing the work they need to do. Anderson concluded by telling CoGS members it had been a privilege and joy to share this journey with them.

Guidelines for Confirmation in Shared ELCIC/ACC Ministries

The Rev. Canon Dr. Scott Sharman, animator of ecumenical and interfaith relations for the Anglican Church of Canada, spoke about proposed new guidelines for confirmation in shared ministries of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) and Anglican Church of Canada, who are full communion partners.

Church unity, Sharman said, doesn't mean everyone being the same. He described the underlying principles as "reconciled diversity" and "differentiated consensus", with confirmation being an example. Where Lutherans have viewed the local pastor as the appropriate minister to conduct confirmations, Anglicans have seen that as the bishop's role. Since the establishment of full communion, this

issue had come to a head in local ministry where Anglican and Lutheran congregations or ministers are working together, such as joint congregations—perhaps with shared clergy or joint services. Lutheran congregations might be served by an Anglican priest, or vice versa.

After years of discussing who the appropriate minister is in such contexts, representatives from the ELCIC and Anglican Church of Canada had put together proposed guidelines in a new document. Nicholls said the methods outlined in the document are often influenced by geographical considerations, such as the availability of a certain cleric in a given local context. The proposed guidelines were as follows:

For confirmation in shared ministry parishes, with the permission of the diocesan and synodical bishops, the congregation may choose to use an Anglican rite, a Lutheran rite, or a blended service confirming the two traditions.

For confirmation in single-tradition congregations:

- 1) In a Lutheran congregation, the local cleric confirms all candidates, whether Anglican or Lutheran.
- 2) In an Anglican congregation, a bishop, whether Anglican or Lutheran, confirms all candidates.

For confirmation in a joint Anglican/Lutheran parish with candidates from one or both traditions, the bishops, in consultation with the congregation, shall choose one of the following options:

- 1) All candidates shall be confirmed by a bishop and the local cleric by the joint and concurrent laying on of hands.
- 2) All candidates shall be confirmed by a bishop, whether Anglican or Lutheran.
- 3) Anglican candidates shall be confirmed

by a bishop, whether Lutheran or Anglican, and Lutheran candidates by the local cleric, whether Anglican or Lutheran.

These proposed guidelines, Nicholls said, had come through consultation with various groups including the Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Unity, Faith and Order. The primate noted that Anglicans are the only denomination that still only allows bishops to perform confirmations.

Sharman, as the Anglican Church of Canada's ecumenical officer, cited three rationales in why he felt the new guidelines were appropriate: the expanded and growing nature of congregational full communion shared ministries, multi-denominational belonging as a sign of the future Church, and the Anglican ecumenical concept of "bearable anomalies".

During discussion of a motion to approve guidelines for confirmation, Bishop of Qu'Appelle Helen Kennedy asked whether the guidelines might be amended to say "bishops, priests and pastors" rather than clerics. Nicholls said they could ask Lutherans if it would be possible to amend the guidelines accordingly. Murray Still, having served in a joint Anglican-Lutheran congregation, spoke in favour of the motion, which carried.

Resolution

That this council approve the guidelines for Anglican and Lutheran bishops, priests and pastors regarding confirmations in shared ministry congregations for use where permitted by the ordinary.

Evening Prayer

CoGS held evening prayer in the chapel.

Members had a banquet dinner from 5:30 to 7 p.m.

Primatial Farewell

Recognizing the primate's love of music, council held a farewell programme of hymns for Nicholls, who was attending her last CoGS as primate before retirement. Dean Peter Wall served as master of ceremonies and a vocal soloist. Vocal ensemble OPUS 8 sang a set of Nicholls' favourite hymns, with Adam MacNeil providing keyboard accompaniment. Speakers including the Rev. Cynthia Haines-Turner, Bishop David Lehmann, Canon (lay) Ian Alexander and General Secretary Alan Perry shared memories and paid tribute to Nicholls. Perry presented the primate, an avid outdoorswoman, with the gift of a canoe paddle bearing her name and the Anglican Church of Canada logo.

The primate thanked CoGS. She said that hers had been an incredible journey of ministry and she would pray for those who took on church leadership in these times. "God's church will survive," she said. Nicholls introduced members of her family to CoGS. The programme concluded with OPUS 8 singing "Amazing Grace".

Council members held a reception from 9 to 11 p.m.