

COGS Highlights



Council of General Synod

Friday, March 11, 2022

Members of the Council of General Synod (CoGS) gathered together at 10 a.m. ET, either in person at Queen of Apostles Renewal Centre in Mississauga, Ont. or online via Zoom.

Worship

CoGS began the day with morning worship and prayer.

Gospel-Based Discipleship

Council members read and reflected upon Matthew 5:17-20.

Sacred Circle

National Indigenous Archbishop Mark MacDonald introduced a presentation on The Covenant and Our Way of Life, the foundational Sacred Circle documents for the self-determining Indigenous church. CoGS members heard a reading of the first two sections of Our Way of Life: Of the Sacred Circle and Of our Ways of Prayer. MacDonald said these two sections offered the best window for CoGS in understanding the document as a whole.

Small group discussions followed, with representatives from each group sharing some of their feedback to council. Responses include praise for the consensus decision-making model of Sacred Circle, in which groups attempt to build a consensus, listen to everyone's point of view, and arrive at a decision that all can live with, whether they agree or not. The national Indigenous archbishop thanked CoGS for their feedback and said he looked forward to more conversation.

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

In Camera Session

CoGS passed a motion to move into an in camera session to discuss the #ACctoo open letter, which criticizes senior Anglican Church of Canada leadership for its handling of a draft article by former *Anglican Journal* staff alleging sexual misconduct.

Members took a break from 3:30 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Anglican Healing Fund

Martha Many Grey Horses, coordinator of the Anglican Healing Fund, introduced herself in Blackfoot to start her presentation on the work of the Healing Fund. As a child, Many Grey Horses attended the Anglican-run St. Paul's Indian Residential School in Alberta, where she was forbidden to speak her own language.

Many Grey Horses outlined the history of the Healing Fund, going back to 1991 when the Healing Response Committee was first organized as the Residential Schools Working Group. The focus of the Healing Fund, she said, has been to support healing initiatives emerging at the grassroots level. Today, the Healing Fund supports initiatives under the leadership of Indigenous peoples.

From investigating Anglican archives over the past 17 years, Many Grey Horses has seen levels of funding that work out to \$15,000 per application each year. The largest amount of grants from the Healing Fund came from the Indian Residential Schools Settlement

Agreement. Much of the \$8 million that emerged from the settlement agreement was depleted by the time Many Grey Horses took on the position of coordinator at the Anglican Healing Fund. She expressed her gratitude for dioceses that have donated to the Healing Fund. Though donations can be sparse, she tried her best to be frugal with available funds. Her focus as coordinator has been on encouraging Indigenous people to be engaged in capacity-building, acquiring traditional knowledge, and to talk about their healing process.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic hit Canada, Many Grey Horses said, it has taken longer for projects to begin and to achieve project goals. Over the past year, the Healing Fund has shifted to more outdoor activities based on the land, since these allow people to interact more easily while still complying with health measures. Travel restrictions due to COVID-19 continue to be enforced in communities, especially those in remote and northern areas, which has interfered with the ability to implement projects. Two projects supported by the Healing Fund—one in northern Manitoba, the other in northern Ontario—are currently on hold for this reason. With the shift from in-person meetings to teleconferences due to the pandemic, the Healing Fund has tried to channel more money into the projects themselves.

Many northern communities have been vocal in expressing their concerns about limited funding for projects. Shipping in supplies through Yellowknife or Whitehorse, often by air, is expensive. Remote communities also face a lack of resources in terms of trained counsellors, psychiatrists, and other professionals needed to work with healing projects.

Among First Nations communities, Many Grey Horses has found many Anglican churches that have been open for nearly 100 years. Many

people there have attended and suffered at residential schools, yet remain loyal to the Anglican Church and still attend worship services. Some of these communities have not benefitted from the Anglican Healing Fund. Many Grey Horses believes the church must aim to help those communities now, along with groups such as two-spirit individuals (often marginalized even in their own communities) and those with disabilities.

Many Grey Horses proposed that the terms of reference for the Healing Response Committee should be changed to make it into a review panel, which would comprise both Indigenous and non-Indigenous clergy. The primary responsibility of the review panel would be to review Healing Fund applications, with all Indigenous clergy being invited to serve on the panel for a year. A major aim, Many Grey Horses said, would be for those serving on the review panel to gain greater insight into the needs of communities. She hoped for each panel member would receive a small stipend.

After answering questions from CoGS members, Many Grey Horses said she would present her proposal in writing for approval by the council.

Financial Management Committee

Amal Attia, treasurer and CFO, presented the report of the financial management committee. She reported an overall surplus and that revenue for 2021 was a bit less than 2020, but relatively higher than had been anticipated in the budget. CoGS passed a motion to approve the unaudited financial statements.

Resolution

Be it resolved that the Council of General Synod receive the unaudited financial statements for the year 2021.

Jubilee Commission

Deputy Prolocutor Judith Moses reported that the Jubilee Commission had been quite active in recent months. Despite suffering a setback due to the absence of reconciliation animator Melanie Delva, currently on leave, the Jubilee Commission has brought on board new member Diane Meredith, who is working with the primate and national Indigenous archbishop to assist the commission with its archival research project.

The commission is also currently in the early stages of creating a set of principles for conversations with the church on funding for Sacred Circle. It planned to bring a more detailed plan to the next meeting of CoGS. Moses put forward a motion to extend the commission's term to the next General Synod now scheduled for 2023, which carried.

Resolution

That the mandate of the Jubilee Commission be extended until the next meeting of the General Synod.

CoGS held a brief time of prayer to mark the second anniversary since the declaration of a pandemic by the World Health Organization.

Members took a break for open time and dinner from 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Green Shoot Moment

Dean Peter Wall shared the next green shoot meeting, discussing the work of Bishop Susan Bell and the diocese of Niagara in establishing the Niagara School for Missionary Leadership. A video showed lay and ordained Anglicans in the diocese describing their experience with the school, its benefits to spiritual life and introduction of new ideas that allowed greater flexibility in ministry.

Marking the 20th Anniversary of Full Communion

Wall recounted the signing of the Waterloo Declaration in 2001. The Anglican Church of Canada and Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) had met separately for their national gatherings in Waterloo, adopted and ratified the declaration to establish a full communion partnership, and come together to celebrate the Eucharist in a local hockey arena. In the two decades since, Wall said, full communion had provided many opportunities for the two churches to learn together, share each other's liturgical materials and build close relationships.

CoGS members watched a video message from Archbishop Linda Nicholls, primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, and National Bishop Susan Johnson of the ELCIC on the 20th anniversary of the Waterloo Declaration. They highlighted the theme "Common Ground, Holy Ground, Common Good", spoke of their close personal relationship and the shared work of Anglicans and Lutherans in areas such as communication, justice, and ecumenical and interfaith relationships. They noted that the two churches shared a common national youth event, the Canadian Lutheran Anglican Youth (CLAY) gathering, as well as the National Worship Conference, and had opened up the full communion relationship to include The Episcopal Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Nicholls and Johnson expressed their hope that the future would see Anglicans and Lutherans deepen and expand their shared ministry with the blessing of God. One new area of partnership on the horizon is a visit to the Holy Land to meet with the Anglican and Lutheran bishops in Jerusalem. To help parishes celebrate the anniversary of the Waterloo Declaration, a toolkit has been developed for local liturgies.

Communications Report

Joseph Vecsi, director of Communications and Information Resources, presented the proposed 2022 communications plan. Throughout 2020 and 2021, Vecsi said, Communications and the *Anglican Journal* had played a vital role during the pandemic by creating and distributing content and developing delivery channels for pastoral care.

He described the Communications department as now in a transitional stage, as it seeks to become more strategic in its planning, and to increase support for the transformational aspirations identified by the Strategic Planning Working Group and priorities of CoGS. Going through each aspiration, Vecsi suggested tactics for how Communications could support those goals. For example, to support the aspiration for a church that “embraces mutual interdependence with the Indigenous church (Sacred Circle)”, the department would introduce a new communications role to be filled by an appropriate candidate from within the Indigenous community, who would bring a needed lens to communications content. Communications would work closely with Sacred Circle to define this role.

Other proposed tactics for the Communications department to support the church’s transformational aspirations included catalyzing networks through national services and regional resources; promoting diversity in church membership, leadership, systems and structures; and using new and existing networks to actively promote messages regarding social, economic and environmental justice in Canada, internationally, within the church and with ecumenical and interfaith partners.

Evening Prayer

CoGS closed out the evening with Compline prayer.

Council members at Queen of Apostles Renewal Centre enjoyed an evening social from 8 p.m. to 11 p.m.