

## REPORT OF THE GENERAL SECRETARY CONCERNING THE COUNCIL OF THE GENERAL SYNOD

The Council of the General Synod (CoGS) is responsible for oversight of the financial, governance, and programmatic life of the General Synod in the three-year (triennium) between meetings of the General Synod itself.

### **Self-Determination, Justice, Reconciliation and Healing**

In the past triennium, as has been the case for a number of triennia, there has been a strong emphasis on the development of a self-determining Indigenous Church within the Anglican Church of Canada. Over the course of the triennium, Council received regular updates and reports from the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples (ACIP), from the Vision Keepers (established to sustain our church's focus on the articles of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), from the Primate's Commission on Discovery, Justice, and Reconciliation, as well as from the National Indigenous Anglican Bishop, the Right Reverend Mark MacDonald and the Indigenous Ministries Coordinator, the Rev. Canon Ginny Doctor.

Council adopted a number of resolutions to establish or continue bodies that would support the development of the self-determining Indigenous Church, and to strengthen the ministry of reconciliation among Indigenous and non-Indigenous Anglicans. A new body, the "Jubilee Commission", will explore the funding of the self-determining Indigenous church, exploring both a historic understanding of how Indigenous ministries have been funded, and a prospective vision for meeting the continuing financial needs of an Indigenous Church. Council mandated the Vision Keepers as a continuing body, and work of the Primate's Commission will continue through the establishment of a national body "to strategize and guide the ongoing work of truth, justice and reconciliation, including building and supporting a network of Ambassadors for Reconciliation from dioceses and regions."

The steady articulation of a vision for a national Indigenous ministry that is equipped to respond to the crisis in Indigenous communities has been a blessing and a challenge to our church. This year we mark the twenty-fifth anniversary "A Covenant and Our Journey of Spiritual Renewal". (See Appendix "A") That Covenant expressed clearly both the crisis facing Indigenous Communities and the challenge to the whole church to support a self-determining Indigenous church in addressing it. As we consider a resolution to include the signing of the Covenant in the Calendar of the Church Year, General Synod will also consider a resolution expressing solidarity with the People of the Land, as commended by the Council of the General Synod.

Council also heard a number of reports concerning the Anglican Fund for Healing and Reconciliation. Of particular note was its decision, by virtue of a December 2016 electronic ballot, to dedicate all undesignated contributions to "Giving with Grace" to the Healing Fund. In the end, an amount of over \$800,000 was added to the fund for its continuing work. It was a privilege to hear about this work from Esther Wesley, the fund coordinator, on a number of occasions.

### **Marriage Canon Working Group**

In its first meeting (November 17-20, 2016) Council authorized the primate, in consultation with the Officers of General Synod, to appoint a working group from among the members of Council to facilitate

Council's engagement with the process leading to second reading of A051-R2 in this General Synod. Members of the group, the Marriage Canon Working Group, included the prolocutor, Cynthia Haines-Turner (Province of Canada), Susan Little (Province of Ontario), Sidney Black (Province of Rupert's Land) deputy prolocutor Lynne McNaughton (Province of British Columbia and Yukon and convenor), and Beverly Kean-Newhook (Anglican Military Ordinariate).

Throughout the triennium, the working group provided opportunities for Council to engage with one another about a range of issues related to the required second reading of A051-R2 in 2019. Much of that engagement explored ways in which members could understand differences among them, in hope that Council itself could produce something to nurture a sense of communion at General Synod that could contain difference and conflict as members come to terms with the range of understandings of marriage that will be among us during General Synod.

Of particular importance to Council was the recognition that the proposed changes to the Marriage Canon would have some unique impacts among Indigenous peoples. Council considered the question of translation of *This Holy Estate* or its executive summary, and received counsel from both the co-Chair of the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples (the Rt. Rev. Sidney Black) and the National Indigenous Anglican Bishop (the Rt. Rev. Mark MacDonald) that, for a number of reasons, translation of either document would not be a priority for Indigenous communities. While not translating either document is at odds with the desire expressed by General Synod 2016, the very expensive project of translating either document, to no effective purpose, and contrary to the counsel of Indigenous leadership, was not undertaken. What has emerged in light of the counsel of the National Indigenous Anglican Bishop and the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples is language both in a proposed amendment to A051-R2 and in *A Word to the Church* that acknowledges the authority of Indigenous communities to make their own decisions with respect to same-sex marriage.

Council also considered the concerns represented by some members on behalf of Anglicans who find themselves at odds with this change, and seek reassurance that they may continue to teach that marriage is a covenant relationship between one man and one woman.

Council has had an opportunity to engage with difference over time, patiently, in the context of growing relationships. In its final meeting, Council found itself able to reach consensus to "adopt and commend for consideration the document *A Word to the Church*..." (See Appendix "B") At the same meeting, Council adopted a resolution commending an amendment to A051-R2 that calls us to recognize and respect the differences among Anglicans on the question of same-sex marriage. (See Appendix "C") Council also received from the House of Bishops a message that spoke of the "currency of grace" (See Appendix "D") that prevailed among the bishops during their January meeting. While the members of General Synod do not have the gift of time, the vision of a church able to live graciously with profound difference about important matters would seem to be growing among us as a church. It is my prayer that it will continue to grow among the members of General Synod during this meeting.

### **Engage Freedom**

At the 2013 meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council, ACC called the communion to learn and act in response to global human trafficking. At the beginning of this past triennium, that call came to the Council of General Synod both in a "programmatic" and in a highly personal manner. As the conversation moved towards the end of an evening, one of the members of Council gave an account of a close brush with trafficking through an encounter in a border city hotel.

Following the first meeting, Council “engaged freedom” in one way or another at each of its meetings, as Global Relations and Public Witness staff and volunteers carried out for consultations, one in each of the ecclesiastical provinces.

### **Responsible Investment Working Group**

Among the resolutions adopted by General Synod in 2016 was one involving responsible investing, particularly but not only in regard to fossil fuels. As a result of that resolution, the Responsible Investment Task Force met on a number of occasions. The task force, chaired by Monique Stone, a priest in the Diocese of Ottawa, met a number of times, undertook extensive research into the current holdings and practices of the General Synod, dioceses, and other Anglican bodies, and produced a set of guidelines for responsible investing. It also made seven specific recommendations in its report to the Council, which in turn endorsed the recommendations and referred them to the Investment Subcommittee as well as to other appropriate bodies and staff of the General Synod. Also as a result of the task force’s work, General Synod increased its commitment to our partnership with SHARE (Shareholder Association for Research and Education) Canada.

### **Anglican Journal Working Group**

In response to the cessation of publication of three diocesan print newspapers (Calgary, Territory of the People, Rupert’s Land) and a direct request from Rupert’s Land that the Anglican Journal no longer be mailed to members of that diocese, a Joint Working Group of the Anglican Journal Coordinating Committee and the Communications and Information Resources Coordinating Committee began meeting. It reported to Council on a number of occasions, on the last of which Council adopted its recommendations. Some of those recommendations will come to General Synod for its consideration because they have to do with the structure and terms of reference of the two committees – Anglican Journal and Communications.

### **Prayer for Reconciliation with the Jewish People**

As you may recall, a 2016 resolution to remove from the *The Book of Common Prayer* “Occasional Prayers” a prayer for the conversion of the Jews failed to receive the necessary two-thirds majority in the order of bishops, and was therefore defeated. In the intervening three years, with leadership from Bishop Bruce Myers (Quebec) and in consultation with the Prayer Book Society, a thorough conversation on this matter took place over the course of multiple meetings of the Council of the General Synod. Council is commending to this General Synod a resolution to replace the existing prayer with a prayer for reconciliation with the Jewish people.

### **Planning**

Beginning with an extensive conversation in the June 2017 meeting, Council reflected at some depth on its responsibility to lead strategic planning for the ministries of the General Synod. In the previous triennium, Council affirmed the continuing use of the priorities and practices of Vision 2019 until 2022, allowing the new primate to be involved in a planning process that will begin following this 2019 meeting of General Synod.

At its final meeting of the triennium, Council passed the following three resolutions:

1. That this Council of General Synod commend to the General Synod that it direct the Council of General Synod to develop and initiate a process to re-examine the mission of General Synod in relation to the dioceses, provinces, including the self-determining Indigenous Church, with a goal to allow the structures of General Synod to best enable and serve God's mission.
2. That the Council of General Synod commend to General Synod 2019 that it direct the Council of General Synod, in partnership with the entire church, to prayerfully undertake a strategic planning process that will lead to the presentation of a proposal to the 2022 meeting of the General Synod for the ministry and mission of the General Synod.
3. That this Council of General Synod strongly recommend to the incoming Council of General Synod that it examine the process by which dioceses are invited to make and fulfill financial commitments to the ministries of General Synod.

These three resolutions represent three ways of focusing the planning mandate of the Council of the General Synod. The first mandates an exploration of structures and relationships, the second an exploration of priorities, and the third focuses the relationship between General Synod and its major source of revenue, the dioceses, as we search out a way forward from a formula based on circumstances, assumptions and practices from a quarter century ago.

### **Leadership**

While it is true that every member of the Council of the General Synod takes on leadership in the course of its three-year mandate, there are some whose work stands out. Peter Wall and Karen Egan, as co-chairs of the Planning and Agenda Team, were effective leaders who helped ensure that the agenda of the Council reflected the life of the church and the Council's governance and planning responsibilities. The prolocutor, Cynthia Haines-Turner is among the most diligent and thoughtful leaders of our church. Lynne McNaughton not only served as Deputy Prolocutor, but convened the Marriage Canon Working Group throughout the triennium. Donna Bomberry served as ACIP's member of Planning and Agenda Team, both reflecting her long experience and knowledge of the Indigenous communities of our church, and also with rich understanding and appreciation of the life and ministry of the whole church. Peter Elliott not only provided for resources and planning worship and learning during meetings, but also shared his long, deep love and understanding of this church as the Planning and Agenda Team did its work. Bishop John Chapman brought imagination and breadth of vision to the team, along with his thoughtful reflections on the wider ministry of the church from his episcopal perspective.

Bishop Mark MacDonald brought to the life of the Council his national and international perspective, including his work as North American president for the World Council of Churches, and a capacity for theological reflection that often called us into a renewal of our sense of God in our work and in the life of the world.

In its responsibility to oversee the governance of the ministries of the General Synod, Council was very well-served by the enthusiasm, attention to detail, and patience of the Executive Secretary for Governance, Shannon Cottrell, and the Executive Assistant to the General Secretary and Travel and Venue Manager, Josie De Lucia.

Finally, there is our primate, our friend, and God's servant leader, Archbishop Fred Hiltz. Through his sensitive, practical, and insightful attention to the work and members of the Council, Fred led the Council through more than one tense moment into an outcome that all could affirm. I know that Council

is not the only body so well-served by Fred's gifts and generosity of spirit, and grateful for his leadership in our church for the past twelve years. As we prepare to elect a new primate, we will also elect a new Council. May the church be as well-served by both as they have been by this Council and this primate.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Thompson,  
General Secretary

