

REPORT OF THE COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATING COMMITTEE TO GENERAL SYNOD 2025

FOR INFORMATION

At the General Synod of 2019, the Communications and Information Resources Coordinating Committee and the Anglican Journal Coordinating Committee were combined to form the Communications Coordinating Committee. The new committee had an expansive mandate, covering all communications products of the Anglican Church of Canada as well as oversight of the Communications Department to “ensure that the communications department facilitates effective communication between General Synod and dioceses, and among and within dioceses.” 2025 concludes the second term under this new arrangement.

This report includes the work and deliberations of the Communications Coordinating Committee along with a report of the activities of the Communications Department.

There were two directors of Communications over the term from 2023-2025, Joe Vesci and Henrieta Paukov. Henrieta joined the Communications Department in November of 2023. The Committee was grateful for the work of both Joe and Henrieta and for their support of the work of the Communications Committee.

DELIBERATIONS OF THE COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE, 2023-2025

The Communications Committee met six times over the two years. We received regular reports from the Director of Communications as part of the mandate to provide general oversight of the work of Communications. We discussed in depth two particular areas related to the Anglican Journal and made recommendations to the Council of General Synod with respect to those discussions. We also proposed to the Council, a thorough review of communications for the next triennium.

EDITORIAL BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS: JOURNALISTIC POLICIES AND PRACTICES

The Communications Committee recommended the document, EDITORIAL BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS: JOURNALISTIC POLICIES AND PRACTICES for adoption by the Council of General Synod. Accompanying the motion in 2019 to combine the Communications and Information Resources Coordinating Committee and the Anglican Journal Coordinating Committee was a motion to create an editorial board for the Anglican Journal. Subsequently, a process was initiated to develop policies and practices for the Editorial Board. The process was coordinated by the Rev. Dr. Karen Egan (Prolocutor) and Canon (Lay) Ian Alexander (member of the Communications Coordinating Committee). The document was proposed by the editor and the Editorial Board. It was used as guiding principles for some months, was reviewed by various groups and constituencies, including the Management Team and the Communications Committee and edited accordingly before being approved by the Council of General Synod in November of 2023. It is anticipated that the proposal will be a living document, capturing the current state of understanding and agreement among the parties (Editorial Board, senior management, and journalistic leadership). As such, it is likely to be updated from time to time, by mutual agreement. The document is found in Appendix 1.

RECOMMENDATIONS RE: ANGLICAN JOURNAL PRINT PUBLICATIONS AND JOURNALISTIC STANCE

The Anglican Journal is arguably the most recognizable and most visible of all the various means of communications with Canadian Anglicans. It is also the one which can, and does, raise the most debate. That debate has often centred around the editorial stance of the Journal. In recent years, with the advances in electronic communications, it has expanded to include the print vs. digital conversation. Hypothesis #7 of the interim report of the Primate's Commission: Proclaiming the Gospel in the 21st Century, posited with respect to the Anglican Journal "It is time to end independent editorial journalism funded by General Synod." However, the term 'independent editorial journalism' does not actually apply to the current editorial policy. The current editorial policy of the Anglican Journal was adopted in 2019 and is found on pp. 151-152 in Appendix C of the ACC Handbook. It says in part: "The Anglican Journal (whether in print and/or digital formats) is a journalistic enterprise, and as such is expected to adhere to the highest standards of journalistic responsibility, accuracy, fairness, accountability and transparency. Its journalism is fact-based, fact-checked and in-depth, tackling important issues, asking and answering difficult questions. The Anglican Journal is committed to representing the widest possible diversity of information and opinion across the Anglican Church of Canada. It promotes informed engagement by Anglicans in the life of their church, and nurtures healthy self-reflection, respectful dialogue and constructive debate." Nevertheless, whatever the description, the journalistic stance is still a matter of debate.

In response, the Communications Committee led the Council of General Synod in an engagement that included the question of print vs digital and that of the journalistic stance of the Anglican Journal. Subsequent to that engagement, the Committee asked Henrieta to gather data on the net cost of printing the Journal. Along with the financial data, in her report, Henrieta also outlined some of the related issues accompanying the cessation of a print publication. The Committee made the following observations:

- ❖ The cost savings of discontinuing print are relatively small.
- ❖ There would likely be a negative impact on fundraising efforts such as Giving With Grace and the Anglican Journal Appeal.
- ❖ Discontinuing print would mean that those diocesan papers which are currently publishing would be forced to go online.
- ❖ Those diocesan papers which are on the digital platform, Anglican News Canada, would be well prepared for going digital, however not all papers are on the platform. Some of those that are not on the platform may well not have the staff and capacity to make that transition.
- ❖ There are those dioceses which have no paper which means the only publication they receive is the Anglican Journal.
- ❖ While there are options for delivery of papers in digital form for places without high-speed internet access, they are far from ideal.
- ❖ Much of what we have heard is anecdotal.

Given that there still exists differing opinions on both these issues, the Communications Committee recommended to the Council of General Synod that there be a comprehensive review of the communications needs of Canadian Anglicans during the next triennium and that part of that review would be to consider the journalistic stance of the Anglican Journal along with the question of print vs digital, or some hybrid version. Further, the Committee recommends that there be no changes to either of these pending that review. As any of the suggested changes represent a major departure from the

current status, these decisions need to be made in light of input from the various stakeholders involved and with the major decision making bodies - the General Synod and the Council of General Synod.

WORK OF THE COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT, 2023-2025

The Communications & Information Resources department (“Communications”) in the Office of General Synod is instrumental in carrying out one of the three core areas of work foundational to the ministry of the General Synod - communicating. The three core/foundational areas of work were identified by the Primate’s Commission on Proclaiming the Gospel in the 21st Century as communicating, connecting and convening.

This report outlines the work of Communications and some of its major accomplishments since General Synod 2023. Each item is framed in terms of the transformational commitments that it helps support.

SIGNIFICANT PROJECTS OF THE LAST BIENNIUM

Anglican Video: supporting General Synod, digitization project and more

Anglican Video helps General Synod carry out not only its responsibility to communicate but also, through its support of the General Synod and Sacred Circle meetings, its responsibility to convene. (See Appendix A for definitions.) It helps General Synod live into all five of its transformational commitments, but perhaps most especially that of embracing mutual interdependence with the Indigenous church.

Since General Synod 2023, Anglican Video has delivered the video footage from that meeting, as well as Sacred Circle 2023 and Sacred Beginnings 2023 and 2024. It has also continued to support all ministries of General Synod, producing joint Anglican/Lutheran Christmas and Easter video greetings, a video about the young adult pilgrimage for the Companions of Jerusalem and a farewell video from Primate Linda Nicholls.

For General Synod 2025, Anglican Video has been instrumental in making arrangements for AV, electronic voting and live-streaming. They have also created videos to help inform and educate General Synod members and all Anglicans about the role of the Primate and about the Primatial election process. Anglican Video assists many of those presenting at General Synod with the production of their presentations, both on video and in PowerPoint. They also work with others on the primatial election and the presentation of resolutions and nominations.

With the assistance of freelancers funded through a MIF grant, Anglican Video is undertaking a multi-year project that aims to digitize, name and index all footage from General Synod starting in 1989 and all footage from Sacred Circles dating back to the first one in 1988. The purpose of digitization is to preserve the footage from physical deterioration (video tape degrades over time) and the purpose of naming and indexing is to ensure it can easily be retrieved from General Synod archives in the future. The footage has now all been digitized. All Sacred Circle videos have been named and indexed; the naming and indexing of General Synod videos is ongoing. (See online archives.) By the end of 2024, staff/freelancers had completed naming and indexing eight of the twelve General Synod meetings held between 1989 and 2023. Work continues in 2025.

Anglican News Canada: helping diocesan papers get online

Anglican News Canada is a project by the Communications Department to bring diocesan newspapers together on one online hub. This allows the newspapers to have an online presence in a professional, uniform and cost-effective way while being supported by the expertise of General Synod staff. It gives Anglicans across the country access to news from other dioceses, allowing them to learn and be inspired by one another and helping them live into the transformational commitment to nurture right relationships among people of faith. Anglican News Canada and the diocesan papers online cumulatively received more than 185,000 page views between March 2024 and March 2025.

As of mid-March 2025, 15 dioceses (out of 30) publish their diocesan paper on Anglican News Canada—a total of 11 diocesan papers (because some dioceses share a paper). Three diocesan papers have been added since General Synod 2023. Editors have received training from General Synod staff to be able to prepare and post their own content.

Of the remaining 15 dioceses, 8 print and mail a paper version of their newspaper along with the *Anglican Journal* and are not on Anglican News Canada. While training and other assistance are available from General Synod staff, many of these dioceses lack the staff to carry out this work. The remaining 7 dioceses do not have a newspaper.

Find a Church online: renewing a key tool

Findachurch.ca is a tool that allows users to find Anglican and Evangelical Lutheran churches by location, by name or by diocese/synod. This tool helps the church live into its central transformational commitment of inviting and deepening life in Christ by connecting people across Canada with local worshipping communities.

Findachurch.ca was at the end of its usefulness and in need of redevelopment for the purposes of modernization, standardization, simplification, cost savings and efficiency. In 2024, Communications staff worked with partners in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) to complete this work. Visitors can now search not only for Anglican churches across the country, but also joint congregations with ELCIC, United Church of Canada and Presbyterian Church in Canada. Between March 2024 and March 2025, Find a Church received more than 52,000 page views.

Publishing/digitizing liturgical and educational texts and eStore

Communications works with Faith, Worship and Ministry and other ministry partners to make available liturgical and educational resources for Anglicans. Typically, the ministry partner provides the content, subject matter expertise and editorial review, while Communications provides, manages or contributes design, page layout, editorial consultation, print production, inventory, branding and marketing.

Communications also oversees the operations of the eStore, where Anglicans can purchase worship books, hymnals, calendars and other resources. The eStore stands out with free shipping on qualifying purchases, ensuring Anglicans who live in remote areas - often excluded from other retailers' free shipping offers - have equitable access to resources. These activities are another example of the team's contribution to living out the central transformational commitment of inviting and deepening life in Christ.

In the fall of 2023, Communications worked with Faith, Worship and Ministry to make available electronically the resource *Faith Seeking Understanding: Medical Assistance in Dying*. This is a collection of essays and reflections compiled to assist theologically focused discussions and to increase understanding of the realities of MAiD. In 2024, the resource was also made available as a printed book sold in the eStore. To date, nearly 200 copies have been sold, with 15% in eBook format.

Also in 2024, Communications worked with Faith, Worship and Ministry to publish, in print, *Pray Without Ceasing: Morning and Evening Prayer for the Seasons of the Church Year and Ordinary Time*, a resource that transforms the Daily Office from the BAS by incorporating Anglican, Lutheran and additional ecumenical sources into a more comprehensive format. The book features the *Inclusive Language Liturgical Psalter* commended by the Council of General Synod in 2019. *Pray Without Ceasing* was also converted to eBook formats so it could be made available for eReader devices. More than 1,000 copies have been sold to date, with over 10% sold in eBook format.

Every year, Communications also works with Faith, Worship and Ministry to publish an array of calendar publications, including a pocket diary, a desk diary and a wall calendar. Faith, Worship and Ministry also provides editorial review of the annual publication McCausland's Order of Divine Service, editorially managed by the Ven. Dr. Edward Simonton in the Diocese of Quebec. Together, these resources help Anglicans observe the church year.

Approximately 30,000 wall calendars are sold annually. Many are purchased in bulk by parishes and dioceses at a discounted rate and resold as fundraisers for local ministries. Proceeds from eStore calendar sales also support eStore operations.

PROJECTS IN PROGRESS

Website refresh

General Synod's website, anglican.ca, is one of its primary communication vehicles. It provides a central hub for the resources that General Synod makes available to the church to help it live out all five of its transformational commitments. Between March 2024 and March 2025, the website had more than 251,000 visitors who logged 1.6 million page views.

The website is now 10 years old, and its content, templates and overall look and feel are due for a refresh. In 2024, Communications and Information Resources staff conducted consultations with key stakeholders and a review of content with General Synod ministry partners. That process is almost complete and work is now underway on determining site structure and design. It is anticipated that a refreshed site will be launched by the end of 2025.

New online lectionary

The lectionary on anglican.ca is by far the most popular tool on the General Synod website, helping clergy and lay leaders put together weekly worship services. Through the lectionary, Communications helps the church live into its central transformational commitment of inviting and deepening life in Christ.

A project is underway to renew the lectionary. Once completed, the tool will provide the lectionary plus liturgical texts, which means parishes will be able to use it to put together a document with the entire

worship service. It will supplement and expand on the print version of McCausland's. It is anticipated that the new lectionary will be ready by mid 2026.

DAY-TO-DAY COMMUNICATIONS WORK

E-mail and social media

Communications uses email and social media to keep Anglicans across Canada and beyond informed about the work of General Synod, church life and key events. These updates, along with liturgical, prayer, and other resources, all help to support Anglicans in living out the church's five transformational commitments.

Every week, Communications compiles and sends the *General Synod eNewsletter* to more than 5,400 recipients. The e-newsletter has an open rate of around 50%—above the 43.97% average for religious groups (according to MailChimp). It features updates from General Synod, as well as news stories, events, and resources from across the Canadian church and the wider Anglican Communion.

Through social media, the Communications Department reaches Anglicans and church partners where they spend time online. We have 14,000 followers on Facebook, 10,700 on X (formerly Twitter), 3,800 on Instagram, and 1,000 on LinkedIn. Our content includes news from General Synod, select updates from the wider Anglican Communion, resources from ministry partners, interfaith and ecumenical greetings, and other popular posts such as select collect prayers.

Anglican Journal

Communications is responsible for publishing the *Anglican Journal* newspaper, both in print and online. The print edition of the *Journal*, which comes out 10 times a year, has a circulation of 35,631. Between March 2024 and March 2025, the *Anglican Journal* website, anglicanjournal.com, received more than 100,000 visitors who logged more than 200,000 page views.

The *Anglican Journal* helps General Synod live into all five of its transformational commitments by covering relevant stories and enabling Anglicans to learn what others across the country are doing.

Membership

The membership of the Communications Coordinating Committee for 2023-2025 was as follows:

The Rev. Cynthia Haines Turner (chair)

Geoffrey F. McLarney

Ryan Ramsden

Andrew Stephens Rennie, CoGS crossover member

The Rev. Robert Towler

Karen Webb, Editorial Board crossover member

Charles Wilson

Canon Ian Alexander, ex-officio, Prolocutor

The Ven. Alan T. Perry, ex-officio, General Secretary

Submitted by,

Cynthia Haines Turner, Chair

APPENDIX 1

Journalistic Policies and Practices

The Editorial Board does not believe that a definitive codification of journalistic behaviour governing editorial staff, management and publisher is possible. However, over time, appropriate policies and practices can and should be developed in response to evolving circumstances, gradually accumulating into a journalistic handbook.

The Board proposes the following journalistic guidelines for adoption at the present time.

1. The publisher (General Synod/CoGS) and senior Church management should at all times be aware that the *Journal* and its related publications (in print or digital formats) are journalistic enterprises, and as such are expected to adhere to “the highest standards of journalistic responsibility.”
2. The decision on whether the *Journal* should embark on an investigative story into the Church or any of its structures or officials rests with the editor. It is advisable that the editor should consult with the Editorial Board or, at the very least, inform the Editorial Board of such intentions.
3. It is the responsibility of the editor to inform the Primate, General Secretary and Director of Communications of the decision to publish any article that risks bringing any part of the Church into disrepute or institutional criticism, or exposes it to potential legal action.
4. If there is the slightest reason for the editor to decide to request legal advice regarding the development of a story, the editor should inform both the Editorial Board and the Director of Communications of their decision.
5. If the editor or Editorial Board perceive that work on, or publication of, an article will cause serious tension within the Church, the Board should consult with the Episcopal Visitor, as described under Principle #7 above.
6. At no time should CoGS or senior Church management intervene regarding a *Journal* story without first consulting with the Editorial Board, although the Board’s approval is not required.
7. At no time should CoGS or senior Church management intervene regarding a *Journal* story, or direct that a story be commissioned, de-commissioned, altered, or circulated for consultation in advance of publication, without the approval of the editor, or without making clear that the editor is being directly overruled.
8. In those extremely rare cases where CoGS or senior Church management have overruled the editor on the commissioning, de-commissioning, altering or pre-circulation of a story, this should be made known to readers in the form of an editor’s note printed in the applicable print issue and/or anglicanjournal.com, adjacent to the modified article, or where the absent article would have run.
9. It is the editor’s responsibility to ensure that work on any article “adhere[s] to the highest standards of journalistic responsibility.”

10. It is the editor's responsibility to ensure that staff seek above all to establish what is true and fair through sceptical questioning, researching and being open to different points of view, regardless of a writer's or editor's personal beliefs. Ultimately, truth and accuracy should prevail.
11. *Journal* writers and editors should acknowledge that striving for balance can give lies and misinformation the same treatment as truth, if the sources cited to achieve balance are dishonest or ill-informed. Where the honesty or reliability of sources is suspect, the onus is on journalists to check the facts they provide.
12. *Journal* writers and editors are permitted, where necessary, to designate, cite and quote sources as "confidential." However, they must first evaluate whether that person is in a position to know something, and whether they are trustworthy and their statements should be relied upon. They must also weigh the reasons for preserving confidentiality against the desire for transparency. In such cases, the story should include an explanation of why this decision was made.
13. The editor may decide if a source should be permitted to review an article before publication. In general, this practice is discouraged, because (a) stories change as they pass through the editing process; and (b) sources may press reporters on how a story should be written and what statements should be included or excised. In any event, it should be pointed out to the sources that the story belongs to the *Journal* and not to the sources. In certain circumstances, however – e.g. in the case of sources with a very complex quotation or explanation, or if there is a risk that quotations attributed to a confidential source may expose their identity — the editor may agree to a source having pre-publication access to what has been written for accuracy's sake. Pre-publication access does not constitute a veto over publication.

Other Related Matters

Training

1. Journalistic policies, practices and guidelines, as amended from time to time, should be brought together in a single, accessible form and made available to all journalists, relevant members of senior management, and members of the Editorial Board.
2. A simple, effective process of orientation for current employees and Board members should be undertaken whenever the standards and practices are amended, and for new employees and Board members when they join the organization.

The Editorial Board

1. The Editorial Board exercises no direct authority over the operations of the *Journal* and its related publications. Its role is to advise the editor on what constitutes "the highest standards of journalistic responsibility" and to provide a consultative body to the editor on developing and assessing journalistic ideas.
2. The role of the editorial board is also "to review journalistic performance in the light of its mandate and editorial policy [of the *Journal* and related publications]," and "to consider, in a timely manner, relevant journalistic matters referred to it" by senior Church management, CoGS

and the editor. The Appendix also notes that “editorial policy [of the *Journal*] may be modified from time to time by the Council of General Synod, on the advice of the Editorial Board.

3. It is hoped that the editor will see the Editorial Board as their consultative partner in journalistic endeavours.
4. If a member of the Editorial Board perceives that they may have an actual or potential conflict of interest in discharging their role on the Board, it is incumbent upon them to declare it. Likewise, any member of the Board should bring to the Board’s attention any actual or potential conflict which they believe exists on the part of another member. The Board as a whole will then decide how best to determine (a) whether or not a conflict exists; and (b) if so, what steps need to be taken. They may wish to designate someone to advise them about this. This advisor may or may not be a member of the Board, or could be the Episcopal Visitor, depending on the circumstances.