

REPORT OF THE GENERAL SECRETARY CONCERNING THE COUNCIL OF THE GENERAL SYNOD TO GENERAL SYNOD 2025

Due to the postponement of the 2022 General Synod meeting and a desire to re-align with our previous three-year cycle, the Council of the General Synod in the previous quadrennium determined that General Synod would meet in 2025, following the 2023 Assembly in Calgary. This has implied that this incarnation of the Council of the General Synod has met for a biennium – a total of four face to face meetings over two years.

The theme for the biennium was “Rooted in the Word; Flourishing in the Spirit” building on the scripture passage “... and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.” (Revelation 22:2)

The biennium began with an ambitious amount of work that had been set for the Council of the General Synod by the previous meeting of the General Synod. Much of this was accomplished or at least begun during the course of the biennium, but as we arrived at the final meeting in March 2025, it was clear that the amount of work was a bit too ambitious for two years. We need to be clear about the mandate of the Council of the General Synod, and the jurisdiction of the General Synod, and realistic about the capacity of volunteers and a small staff to fulfil the hopes of a General Synod gathering. Please see the appendix for a list of items sent to CoGS by resolutions adopted by General Synod in 2023.

Under the Constitution of the General Synod, the Council of the General Synod is responsible for oversight of the finances, governance and programmes of the General Synod between meetings of the General Synod. Details of these areas of ministry will be found in the various reports to the General Synod. Full details of the CoGS meetings are available on-line in the [CoGS Highlights](#), which are published during and shortly after each meeting.

The Council normally meets for three days over a weekend, twice per year (fall and spring) at the Queen of Apostles retreat centre in Mississauga, Ontario. The first meeting of a bi/tri/quadr/ennium is a day longer to allow for orientation of the members. Participation in meetings, the necessary preparation for them, and follow-up is a significant commitment by the members, for which we can all be grateful. Members are joined by the staff of the General Secretary’s office, who arrange the logistics of the meeting, as well as the various department directors from the General Synod office. Staff of the Anglican Journal are present to gather notes for articles about the work of CoGS and to produce daily highlights that are posted on-line to inform the wider church of the activities of the meeting.

CoGS hears regularly from partners from The Episcopal Church (TEC) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC). During this biennium TEC has been represented by Sr Liza Anderson for the first two meetings, and then Mr. Warren Hawk. The ELCIC partner has been the Rev Chris Bishopp. The Anglican Church of Canada also sends partners to the equivalent bodies of TEC and ELCIC and regularly hears back from those partners who report on the work of our partner churches, as well as offering insights about similarities and differences among our churches. During this biennium Dorothy Patterson has been the partner to the ELCIC and the Rev Canon Dr Murray Still has been the partner to TEC.

Another regular feature of CoGS has been to hear updates and insights from the Primate. One of the matters that CoGS monitored throughout the biennium has been the ongoing conflict in Gaza. CoGS regularly heard of calls made by the Primate and Acting Primate, alongside National Bishop Susan Johnson of the ELCIC for an end to conflict, for humanitarian aid and for the release of all captives and hostages.

With the retirement of Archbishop Linda Nicholls as Primate, CoGS had an opportunity to express its appreciation for her ministry in June 2024. CoGS also welcomed Archbishop Anne Germond as Acting Primate at its November 2024 meeting.

CoGS continued to do its part of the work of dismantling racism, receiving training on microaggressions, and setting terms of reference for and populating the National Advisory Council on Dismantling Racism, as called for in General Synod resolution A200-R3 from 2023. As I wrote in my report to General Synod in 2023, “In 2001 General Synod adopted a resolution to ‘seek ways to work toward a more balanced representation reflecting the diversity of our Church at all levels and to encourage members of under-represented and minority groups to be involved in the councils and committees of the Church.’ We have made painfully little progress in this vital work.” Though it was encouraging to see a more visibly diverse CoGS during the biennium than previously, we still have a long way to go.

At its last meeting of the biennium, in March 2025, the Council of the General Synod was asked to reflect on messages it wanted to send to the General Synod. These appear (lightly edited and consolidated) in Appendix B below.

CoGS is supported by a dedicated staff team, whom I must acknowledge in this report. We are grateful for their work in arranging the logistics and travel, assisting in the planning process, setting the agenda disseminating reports, preparing minutes, and supporting the leadership and members to do their work. CoGS is also supported by a Planning and Agenda Team that plans the time spent together at each meeting and oversees the progress of each gathering. We are grateful to the Very Rev Dr Tim Dobbin and the Rev Lucia Lloyd, the co-chairs, and to the Rev Canon Carrie Irwin, who served as chaplain to CoGS for the biennium.

Thank you to the members of the Council of the General Synod, in particular to the Prolocutor, Canon (lay) Ian Alexander, and the Deputy Prolocutor, the Ven Tanya Phibbs, and to the many volunteers who staff our various committees and task forces. And thank you as well to our many faithful and generous donors who support our work.

I am very grateful to our Primate, Archbishop Linda Nicholls, for her wisdom and leadership, and to our Acting Primate, Archbishop Anne Germond, who has stepped in so ably into the role with energy and good humour.

Respectfully submitted,

The Ven. Alan T. Perry
General Secretary

Appendix A

Specific items sent to CoGS for follow-up from resolutions adopted in 2023, and their status:

A101 - Commissioning a Document on History, Structure, and Governance of The Anglican Church of Canada

This work has not been undertaken yet.

A102 – Strategic Planning Working Group

An implementation group was established by CoGS and has begun this work.

A129 – National coordinating committee for unity and mission with United Church

A joint committee has been established and has begun this work.

A200 – National Advisory Council on Dismantling Racism

The Council has been established and has begun its work.

A202 – Call to Action 59

This is ongoing work.

A202A – Dismantling Racism

This is ongoing work.

A203 – Net-zero – travel & carbon offsets

Travel has been reduced this biennium and carbon is being tracked.

A205 – Bottled water

We do not use bottled water

C009 – Consensus decision making

CoGS has used consensus decision making for its meetings and the question of whether this might be adopted by General Synod has been reported on by the Governance Working Group.

Appendix B

Messages to General Synod from the Council of the General Synod

- The Church is not broken. We are on a journey of healing. We need not feel stuck in a place of despair and anxiety about the future of the Church. Our discussions and deliberations at CoGS revealed those pathways of healing out of despair.
- There are bright lights in the church, such as Sacred Circle and Alongside Hope. CoGS creates a space to hear extra-ordinary examples of mission and ministry across Canada. We need to share these exciting stories out into the church.
- Diversity is our strength. The respectful collaboration and community building experienced at CoGS are gifts and practices we must lean into as a Church going forward. We need to continue providing opportunities to hear the voices of both introverts and extroverts in our Church.
- The concerns of General Synod 2023 were heard and addressed at our CoGS meetings.
- The consensus model of discernment and decision making is a helpful way to move forward together as a Church.
- The church is in a time of great change, and we must keep the Gospel in the centre of all that we do, using the Transformational Commitments as a lens for making difficult decisions in the next triennium.
- The Pathways document is a helpful guide to the research, discussions and recommendations that the next Council of General Synod must undertake and make in the next three years concerning structures needed for the growth and ministry of the Anglican Church of Canada in the 21st century. It will be important to continue to ‘touch base’ with the focus of the work, which is on structures. It will be important to explain or argue how goals and recommendations for structure will actually impact ministry; e.g.: It has been suggested that fewer structures will liberate and enhance ministry. How, in concrete terms? What will be gained and what will be lost?
- More work needs to be done on the financial future of the General Synod, including understanding how best to use restricted funds honouring the restrictions and serving the needs of the Church.
- More work needs to be done on the safeguarding policy framework.
- The bishops (House of Bishops) are listening and working on what's best for the Anglican Church
- The General Synod in the next triennium must embrace and develop the analysis and perspective of the Sacred Circle: that we are all in resurgence, all in revival. It is early days, yet something new is emerging, something different is walking on the land. Is our church’s collective understanding of the Covenant and Our Way of Life sufficient to do this with integrity?
- A question to the General Synod: How would you like to learn about the ministries of the General Synod, its various departments and committees, work priorities and achievements? Would this knowledge be interesting and helpful in discussing and recommending structure proposals?