

GENERAL SYNOD REPORT

The 39th session of the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada met in Halifax June 4 – 11, 2010. The Diocese of Niagara was represented by Bishop Bird, five clergy, and six laity (including one youth delegate). The clergy and lay members had been elected by our diocesan Synod in November 2009. During the Synod, we celebrated the 300th anniversary of Anglican ministry in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, the 50th anniversary of PWRDF, and Archbishop Fred Hiltz's first General Synod as Primate and chair.

This report focuses on the work accomplished at the General Synod. For reflections on the tone of the event, how it felt to be part of it, what it meant for the life of the church, and Niagara's place in the Anglican Church of Canada, please speak to one of our General Synod members:

The Rt. Rev. Michael Bird, Bishop

Clergy

The Ven. Dr. Michael Thompson

The Ven. Dr. Steve Hopkins

The Ven. Lynne Corfield

The Rev. Canon Dr. Sharyn Hall

The Rev. Canon Robert Fead

Mr. Dean Sutton-Greenhalgh, Youth Member

Laity

Mrs. Susan Little

Mrs. Carol Summers

Mr. Ian Pratt

Mr. Greg Laughton

Ms. Janet Hope

You may also speak with others from Niagara who were present as volunteers or observers, including The Very Rev. Peter Wall (Co-Chair the General Synod Planning Committee and Chair of the General Synod Worship Committee) and Mr. Wayne Barnes (a member of the Vision 2019 Taskforce).

The primary work of the Synod could be summarized under four headings:

Governance and Vision 2019

The Synod adopted Vision 2019 (<http://www.anglican.ca/gs2010/wp-content/uploads/019-GS2010-Vision-2019-Report-and-Appendices.pdf>) based on the Marks of Mission (<http://www.anglican.ca/v2019/mm/index.htm>) to guide the work of the General Synod in the next ten years. This significant document merits study by members throughout the church and can be found through the links above. It signals a serious and realistic commitment by the General Synod to marshal and focus the resources at its disposal to address the critical issues facing the Anglican communities of Canada.

The Synod also adopted a number of resolutions related to the governance of the General Synod: clarifying the role of the Primate and General Secretary, reducing the size of the Council of General Synod (CoGS), enabling CoGS to meet by video and teleconference, adjusting the size and terms of reference of some committees. The Synod also gave approval on first reading to a motion to determine the number of General Synod members from a diocese on the basis of Easter attendance. To take effect, this resolution will need to be approved at the next General Synod as well.

As usual, General Synod elected members of its councils and committees. The Ven. Dr. Michael Thompson was elected to a second term on CoGS.

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Walking in Partnership with Indigenous Anglicans

The Synod approved a number of resolutions to consolidate the partnership of the General Synod with First Nations and Inuit Anglicans: providing canonical recognition for the roles of the National Indigenous Anglican Bishop, the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples (ACIP), and Sacred Circle; defining the process for electing the National Indigenous Anglican Bishop and his/her membership in the General Synod, adding two members of the ACIP to CoGS, establishing the National Aboriginal Day of Prayer and approving proper prayers for the observance. . For more information, see this article by the Anglican Journal: <http://www.anglicanjournal.com/nc/news-items/pm/6/article/a-new-vision-of-what-church-can-be-9221.html>. The Synod also repudiated the doctrine of discovery (<http://www.anglican.ca/g2010/resolutions/a086/>), endorsed the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and affirmed our commitment to support and participate in the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Beyond the formal actions of the Synod, the presence and participation of Aboriginal and Inuit members was (and usually is) one of the distinguishing marks of the gathering. We heard moving presentations from The Rt. Rev. Mark MacDonald (the National Indigenous Anglican Bishop), from Marie Wilson (one of the national Truth and Reconciliation Commissioners), and from various clergy and lay leaders (about their work to create a self-determining indigenous church within the Anglican Church of Canada). We were also honoured to welcome The Rt. Rev. Lydia Mamakwa, the first female indigenous bishop in Canada, who is serving a newly-created area mission in Northern Ontario.

Tending our International and Ecumenical Relationships

General Synod welcomed a number of ecumenical partners from within Canada and partners from other parts of the Anglican Communion, all of whom brought greetings and shared reflections on our common mission and relationships. These included The Rt. Rev. Miguel Tamayo (Bishop of Cuba and Uruguay), The Rt. Rev. & Mrs. Suheil Dawani (Bishop of Jerusalem and the Middle East and his wife, who spoke powerfully about the empowerment of Palestinian Christian women), The Rt. Rev. & Mrs. Duleep Kamil de Chickera (Bishop of Colombo (Sri Lanka) and his wife), The Rev. Kenneth Kearon (General Secretary of the Anglican Communion), The Most Rev. Katherine Jefferts-Schiori (Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church USA), The Most Rev. Anthony Mancini (Archbishop of the RC Archdiocese of Halifax), Mardi Tindal (Moderator of the United Church of Canada), and The Rev. Susan C. Johnson (National Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada). The Rt. Rev. Griselda Delgado del Carpio (Coadjutor Bishop of Cuba) was also present as a guest at General Synod.

While the Synod received the final text of the Anglican Communion Covenant (<http://www.anglicancommunion.org/commission/covenant/final/text.cfm>), the amendments to the resolution (<http://www.anglican.ca/g2010/resolutions/a137/>) reflect some of the concerns and reservations evident in the Synod.

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Sexuality

While previous General Synods were focused on debates and resolutions on homosexuality and blessing same-gender unions, Halifax 2010 proposed a discernment process focused on dialogue and oriented to consensus. Members were organized into mixed “dialogue groups” which reflected the geographic and demographic diversity of the church (and the country) where we were encouraged to speak honestly about where we stand and how we feel. Notes of all those conversations were collated into a summary statement which was then discussed by each of the dialogue groups. Again, comments from all those conversations were used to create a final statement which was formally adopted by the Synod (<http://www.anglican.ca/g2010/atsynod/sdr-june-9-2010/>). The document seeks to describe, rather than prescribe, and for those who participated at General Synod, it is an honest reflection of where we are as a national church. Reactions by those who were not part of the process have varied: for some it goes too far, for others it does not go far enough, and still others find it assuring and inspiring.

Thanks

General Synod offers its members a unique opportunity to experience more fully what it means to be an Anglican in Canada (and a Canadian Anglican within the Anglican Communion). On behalf of Niagara’s clergy and lay members, I want to thank the members of our diocesan Synod for entrusting us with this role and for the gift of sharing in the experience of General Synod 2010.

The next General Synod will be held in Ottawa in 2013 in partnership with the National Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada.