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**T**he important business from the March meeting is available on the

Anglican Church of Canada website:

[www.anglican.ca/about/cogs/index.htm](http://www.anglican.ca/about/cogs/index.htm). This was the final meeting of CoGS before General Synod and the agenda will be predominantly determined from this executive body. I hope to comment in May.

In January, the Rt. Rev. James Cowan, Bishop of British Columbia, released a Diocesan Transformation Team Report, encompassing five years of careful consultation and study. Among its many considerations was the challenge to significantly re-examine the mission of the diocese that may include the closing of failing parishes. Additionally,

## Commentary

# CoGS wheels

there are recommendations how the diocese might more efficiently conduct its affairs. This report was presented to their recent synod and the outcomes are pending.

Considerations in downsizing parish and diocesan structures, and improving governance effectiveness, have inexorably come among us.

It is a fundamental mistake to only blame financial shortfalls as the main reason for this. Excellence in stewardship involves making better use of the resources we have received from God, including not only the use of buildings and money but also the use of human resources. This includes an honest look at what roles, and how many clergy and lay are needed, to optimally define and carry out God's Mission.

Such is the challenge facing the delegates to General Synod when early in the agenda they will be asked to consider a resolution from the Governance Working Group

to not only change the election process for CoGS membership, but also, and more radically, to decide if CoGS itself should be downsized. The proposal is to reduce CoGS by one-third, from 42 to 28 members. Elections to the Council are conducted using a complex formula resulting in nearly equal numbers of ordained members (balanced between Bishops and other Clergy) and Laity, with each member coming from a different diocese. However, the elections are held at General Synod by the Ecclesiastical Provinces in caucuses (not the dioceses), and the General Synod itself confirms the results.

Any move to downsize CoGS meets obvious resistance from those who say "but my diocese may not be represented." Therein lies the dilemma; you cannot downsize CoGS if each of thirty dioceses plus the officers and other representatives from the national church must be rep-

resented. And a corollary is that if CoGS is indeed downsized, then communication from National Church to dioceses that do not have representation will demand significant attention.

The costs of bringing 42 CoGS members regularly together in Toronto, is becoming prohibitive. A 42-member conference call is unmanageable and the business of CoGS is best done face to face in an atmosphere of mutual prayer, reflection, debate and daily interactions.

That costs and practicalities are not the only factors are exemplified in a comparison with the Episcopal Church. ECUSA has about two and one-half times the membership of the Anglican Church of Canada but it effectively conducts its executive business (Synods or General Conventions conduct legislative business) with 38 members, which meet in regional subgroups. So Canada has a single Council with 42 mem-

bers conducting the business of a church that is 2.5 times smaller.

It remains to be seen if General Synod will have the courage to constitute a new Council structure. And if it does, what means will be put in place to ensure that the Ecclesiastical Provinces will communicate to every diocese that is in their jurisdiction, regardless from where the elected members come.

Recall that in this triennium I am a member of CoGS who happens to be a lay member from Kootenay, and who has felt a responsibility to report particularly to this Diocese via both Diocesan Council and in this column. That is not always the case, and it is natural for some dioceses whose "representative" member is their Bishop, for example, to receive reports in quite a different manner. We shall see!

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## Music

# What is a classic hymn?

BY NORENE MORROW

**I**f you ask churchgoers what they consider to be some of the classic hymns, you will likely get a variety of answers, but you will also find that many of the titles will be the same. I would suspect that the list would include *Holy, Holy, Holy; Nearer My God to Thee; Amazing Grace; How Great Thou Art; Onward Christian Soldiers; Jesus Loves Me; Abide With Me; What a Friend We Have in Jesus; The Lord is My Shepherd; The Old Rugged Cross; O God Our Help in Ages Past.*

So, what makes a hymn "classic" and why does it endure? First of all, these are hymns that reflect their time and have become part of the common culture. They are known by most Christian denominations and are even recognized by those who do not attend church. They have brought comfort in times of need; have become associated with special people in our lives, family events or associated with significant

moments in history. Many have also been made popular through their use, or overuse, in films. I cannot tell you the number of times I have sung at least one of the following hymns at a funeral: *Amazing Grace, How Great Thou Art, and The Lord is My Shepherd.* *O God Our Help in Ages Past* is another old chestnut. It reminds me of Remembrance Day ceremonies as a child. For others, it may be associated with having heard it on the radio at the outbreak of World War II. From that time on, this hymn has been sung often, giving voice to people's distress and their hope through dark times. Not surprisingly, it was used at the funeral of Sir Winston Churchill in 1965.

While many of these older hymns will always remain classics, it is important to realize that as times change, newer songs will be added to this list. Now when I speak of "newer," it must be noted that most have already been around for at least 30 years.

After all, something can't be labelled a classic unless it has stood the test of time! These include *On Eagle's Wings; Will You Come and Follow Me; One Bread, One Body; God of the Sparrow; Here I Am, Lord; Be Not Afraid; Shine Jesus Shine; She Flies On.*

Like the older classics, the newer ones have many of the same features. They reflect our times and are shared by many Christian denominations. People want to sing hymns with words to which they can relate. And certainly, many of these hymns address issues in ways that we may not have experienced in the past. Hymns such as *Will You Come and Follow Me* and *God of the Sparrow* ask questions and challenge us to think about ourselves, our faith, our treatment of others and our world. *On Eagle's Wings* is a song of comfort that rose to popularity after it was sung at a televised memorial service for the victims of the

1995 Oklahoma City bombing. *Be Not Afraid* is another song of comfort that, for me, became even more powerful after seeing "Dead Man Walking" — a film based on the true story of the relationship between Sister Helen Prejean and a death row inmate in a Louisiana State Penitentiary. When the inmate's execution is imminent, Sister Prejean sings a verse of *Be Not Afraid* to him through the bars of his cell. It is one of the ways she helps him face what is about to happen.

Further to the idea that newer hymns address issues in ways that we may not have experienced in the past, I can't help but think of older classics like *Onward Christian Soldiers* and *Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus*, where God is depicted as mighty and we Christians are warriors against evil. At one time, these hymns were staples at Sunday services, but now they are no longer considered appropriate in many churches. Hymns about

God's "might" have been replaced by hymns that describe God's majesty and also more songs about peace and social justice. This is just a sign of our times. We are also demanding more hymns that are inclusive when it comes to descriptions of God, gender, race, and our varied lives. Couple these kinds of texts with a beautiful, easily learned melody and you have a hymn that is on its way to becoming a classic. *She Flies On* certainly fits the bill when it comes to describing the Holy Spirit with a feminine image. It, along with *Shine Jesus Shine*, also has a memorable, easily learned melody. Like many of the older classics, both are hymns that we have come to love or hymns we love to hate, but nonetheless, they have the qualities that have made them modern classics. It will be interesting to see what other hymns will turn out to be classics in the years to come!

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