

# STANDING ORDERS FOR THE CONDUCT OF THE ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETINGS 2010

- These Standing Orders are proposed for adoption by the Assembly at the start of the Annual Business Meetings.
- They may be suspended temporarily only on the proposal of the chairperson and by a two-thirds majority of those present and voting.
- The meetings will normally be moderated by the President.

## 1. VOTING MEMBERS AT THE ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETINGS

1.1 As defined in the GA Constitution, the voting members of the Assembly at the Annual Business Meetings are:

A. appointed delegates of Congregations, Regional Associations, and Affiliated Societies

B. full individual members [i.e. ministers, lay pastors, lay leaders on the appropriate Roll; Honorary Members; Honorary GA Officers and members of the Executive Committee]

1.2 A voting card will be issued to each person entitled to vote and the signed card must be shown when voting

1.3 Associate members are *not* entitled to vote at the Annual Business Meetings.

## 2. MOTIONS

2.1 Conditions for accepting motions for debate at Annual Meetings as defined in the GA Constitution

2.1.1 Motions may be submitted:

A. by Congregations, Regional Associations or Affiliated Societies on condition that they are supported by a majority of their governing bodies

B. by at least twelve individual Full Members of the Assembly [i.e. as listed in 1.1.B] who have endorsed the motion

C. by the Executive Committee on its own authority

2.1.2 Motions shall be given to the Executive Committee

A. in writing

B. with the names of a proposer and a seconder

C. at least fifty-six days before the first day of the annual meeting

2.1.3 Motions on matters of United Kingdom law or public policy should, where appropriate, take into account the separate legal provisions of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

2.1.4 Motions should be accompanied by a background paper

**2.2** The Executive Committee shall give members [of the Assembly] at least thirty days' notice of any motions, either by circular or by advertisement or by other reasonable means

**2.3** The Steering Committee has authority

2.3.1 to help proposers and seconders write their motions in a manner most helpful to consideration;

2.3.2 to propose amalgamation of similar motions;

2.3.3 to facilitate the acceptance of helpful and clarifying amendments;

2.3.4 to arrange a Motions Workshop in advance of the meeting

**2.4** Once a motion has been proposed and seconded it belongs to the meeting

**2.5** Emergency Motions

2.5.1 Emergency motions are about issues of public concern which have arisen since the announced closure date for the acceptance of motions.

2.5.2 They must be submitted:

A. at the earliest opportunity

B. in writing

C. with the names of a proposer and of a seconder who must be voting members

to the Chief Executive either before the meetings or at the earliest possible time during the meetings

2.5.3 The President will seek permission from the meeting, without prior discussion, to admit an emergency motion to the agenda. A two thirds majority of those present and voting is required.

**2.6** Ordinary and/or emergency motions may not be used *either* to rescind a resolution already passed at the same Annual Meeting *or* to reintroduce the issue of a defeated motion with a new motion having the same effect.

### 3. SPEAKING

3.1 The following people may speak:

- voting delegates from Congregations, Regional Associations, and Affiliated Societies
- voting full individual members [i.e. as listed in 1.1. B ]
- Associate members

Permission to speak for anyone not constitutionally entitled to do so may be granted only by the President.

3.2 Speakers

- Speakers should give their names and the capacity in which they speak
- Speakers are encouraged to notify the Chief Executive of their intention to speak and should indicate, if possible, whether they will be speaking for or against a particular motion or making neutral comment. The decision to call any speaker rests with the President.
- No member shall speak more than once on any motion without the consent of the Assembly; however the proposer of a motion (but not the proposer of an amendment) may reply immediately before the vote is taken.

3.3 Length of speeches

- Proposer and seconder of a motion have 8 minutes between them.
- All other speeches, including the Proposer's reply, 3 minutes
- but the Assembly, by a majority of those present and voting, may allow an extension in any particular case.

### 4. AMENDMENTS TO MOTIONS

4.1 Amendments to motions:

- must be submitted at the earliest opportunity
- in writing either to the Chief Officer or to the President
- with the names of voting members as proposer and a seconder

4.2 The President:

- shall read out an amendment before anyone speaks
- shall have discretion to select between amendments which appear to have substantially the same effect

- may, with the agreement of the movers of any two or more amendments, put them to the Assembly as a single composite amendment with one proposer and one seconder.
- may rule that an amendment which is, in effect, a proposal that a motion be rejected shall be dealt with by voting for or against the substantive motion.

#### 4.3 Amendments

- shall be duly proposed and seconded
- shall be debated and voted on one at a time unless the President rules that – in order to facilitate debate – two or more amendments may be debated together.
- shall be voted on in the order in which they were moved and before the vote on the relevant motion.

#### 4.4 If an amendment

- is lost, other amendments may be moved on the original motion.
- is carried, the amended motion takes the place of the original motion and becomes the motion upon which any further amendment may be moved.

#### 4.5 Amendments to amendments shall follow the same rules as for amendment

- An amendment to an amendment which is, in effect, a proposal that an amendment be rejected shall be dealt with by voting for or against the amendment.
- An amendment to an amended motion which is, in effect, a proposal that an amended motion be rejected shall be dealt with by voting for or against the amended motion.

## 5. PROCEDURAL MOTIONS

5.1 When the President stands any person speaking or waiting to speak should sit down so that the President may be heard without interruption.

5.2 A debate on a motion may be brought to an end [“closure”] in the following ways:

- a member moves the closure of the debate on a motion so that the vote be taken immediately [“that the question be now put”]
- by a member moving the closure of the debate on a motion without further discussion and without a vote [“next business”]
- by a member wanting the proposer and seconder of a motion do some more consultation about a motion and then return with it to a subsequent general meeting [“refer back”]
- by a member moving an adjournment and the debate being resumed later [adjournment of debate]

**5.3** When any of these procedures has been initiated, the President, having considered whether or not reasonable debate has taken place, will put the procedural motion to a vote without discussion. A two thirds majority of those present and voting is required for procedural motions.

## **6. VOTING**

**6.1** Those voting must display their voting cards.

**6.2** Voting on amendments to motions and voting on motions is by a simple majority.

**6.3** Voting on procedural motions requires a two thirds majority of those present and voting.

**6.4** At the President's discretion or at the request of at least 40 voting members a counted ballot shall take place. Those abstaining from voting will be counted as well.

**6.5** In the event of a tie the President has a casting vote.

**6.6** Once the motion is passed it becomes a resolution.

## **7. STEERING COMMITTEE**

**7.1** Questions on the procedure for the conduct of the meetings shall be referred to a steering committee comprising of three people, appointed by the General Assembly on the advice of its Executive Committee. The members of the steering committee shall remain in office between meetings in order to advise the General Assembly Officers on matters of procedure as they arise.

**7.2** Members of the steering committee may be called upon by the President during the meeting to offer advice on questions of and disputes over procedure. Before or during the meetings the steering committee may ask proposers and/or seconds to amend or composite their motions by mutual agreement. If such an agreement is not reached, then the steering committee shall recommend to the President how the motions before the Assembly shall be dealt with.

*January 2010*