

THE DECISION PROCESS - TURNING IDEAS INTO ACTIONS

RESOLUTIONS AND MOTIONS

“Ideas” reach Synod in the form of Resolutions, which have been developed by the various standing committees of General Synod or by members of General Synod. Ideas are also in the form of Memorials which come from dioceses and individuals and express a concern or opinion. In order for a Memorial to reach the floor of Synod, the authors need to shape it into a Resolution. Resolutions are motions requesting Synod to take specific actions relating to the mission of the Church. They are found in the Resolutions section of your Convening Circular.

The Resolutions Committee has clear guidelines on the order in which resolutions come to the floor. Motions from standing committees are given the highest priority. Resolutions not already included in the Convening Circular must be written on the prescribed form (included in the Circular) and submitted to the General Secretary for consideration by the Resolutions Committee, prior to the deadline established at the beginning of Synod.

Often amendments to motions, or amendments to amendments, are proposed while a resolution is under consideration. Amendments, like motions, must be seconded and put in writing. Only one amendment to a proposed amendment is in order at one time. The procedure can get complicated, so it’s important to attend to the Chairperson’s directives. Procedural motions can influence the flow and length of debate, the style of voting, and the order of proceedings on the floor of Synod. Consult the “Motions and Debate” section of the Rules of Order and Procedure in the Handbook.

DEBATE

Effective participation in debate is an art. The finest debate artists are those who speak only when they know they have something useful to say. Don’t be overly concerned if your contribution is not as articulate as it might be. There will always be members who are more articulate, or less articulate, than the one speaking.

The mover of a motion is allowed to speak for a maximum of five minutes, and the seconder and other speakers for a maximum of three minutes. No one but the mover, who may speak for an additional three minutes at the close of debate, may speak more than once to a single motion. Only members of Synod may speak in debate.

VOTING

When the Chairperson perceives that the debate is ended, or when Synod votes to end debate, the “question” will be “put” to a vote and no more debate is allowed. Bishops vote as one order, and clergy and laity usually vote together, with the issues decided by a

simple majority in both groups. There are some types of motions which require larger majorities or “Votes by Orders” [i.e. bishops, clergy and laity voting separately] A vote by diocese may also be requested. Where a special type of vote is required the chairperson will announce it. (In any case, *every member must vote*; abstentions are allowed only for reasons of conflict of interest, and the chairperson must be notified.)

A WORD ABOUT FINANCING

Decisions about what actions the Church takes have financial implications. Staff, administration, travel and communication are just a few of the factors involved. In addition, the national Church financially supports the work of church partners overseas, ecumenical coalitions, and the Council of the North, which provides financial assistance to certain dioceses within Canada.

If a motion involves expenditure of new or additional funds, it must be referred to the General Synod Expenditures Committee for review. The Committee will report on whether or not funds are available and from what source.

The General Synod Budget provides for essential services to keep General Synod going. It pays for such things as national staff salaries, meeting expenses, national archives, Anglican Journal and national programs. A formula is used to calculate the proportional fair share, but actual payments reflect the diocese’s ability to pay and its commitment to the national program.