

Paper M2

Changes to the Rules of Procedure

Clerk of General Assembly

Basic information

Contact name and email address	Michael Hopkins michael.hopkins@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision.
Draft resolution(s)	Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council resolves to make the changes to the Rules of Procedure contained within paper M2 of Mission Council November 2019, pursuant to the implementation of decisions of principle made by the General Assembly of 2018, with immediate effect.

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	Altering the Church's Rules of Procedure to effect decisions already taken about the frequency of General Assembly and about the election of its Moderators.
Main points	Assembly to be annual; candidates for Moderator to address Assembly in two defined ways before the ballot.
Previous relevant documents	Mission Council, March 2018, paper Y1 and minute 18/18 General Assembly, July 2018, resolution nine
Consultation has taken place with...	General Secretary.

Summary of impact

Financial	An annual Assembly has certain costs, to which we have already committed ourselves. Writing this decision into our Rules entails no further cost.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	As above: the decision to meet annually has some ecumenical impact; the legal drafting does not.

Changes to the Rules of Procedure

Resolution 17 of General Assembly 2018 instructed the Clerk to bring detailed proposals for changes to the Rules of Procedure to effect decisions of principle made by the Assembly. I now bring a first tranche of these. If either of the changes currently being considered by synods is agreed by Assembly next summer, there will be a further tranche of changes.

The numbered headings below refer to paragraphs in the Church's Rules of Procedure (The Manual, section C).

Changes to facilitate an annual Assembly

Current text:

- 1.1 The Assembly shall meet at least once in every alternate year. The scheduled meeting in each such year, the place and dates of which shall be determined by a preceding Assembly, shall be the ordinary meeting of the Assembly. At the completion of the business of the ordinary meeting of the Assembly, the Assembly is adjourned. The members of Assembly at any time between ordinary meetings of the Assembly remain those who were included on the Roll of Assembly at the constitution of the immediately preceding ordinary meeting of the Assembly. Any meeting of the Assembly other than the ordinary meeting shall be a special meeting.

Revised text:

- 1.1 The Assembly shall meet at least once in each year. The scheduled meeting in each year, the place and dates of which shall normally be determined by a preceding Assembly, shall be the ordinary meeting of the Assembly. At the completion of the business of the ordinary meeting of the Assembly, the Assembly is adjourned. The members of Assembly at any time between ordinary meetings of the Assembly remain those who were included on the Roll of Assembly at the constitution of the immediately preceding ordinary meeting of the Assembly. Any meeting of the Assembly other than the ordinary meeting shall be a special meeting.

Changes to the voting procedure for electing Moderators

Current text:

- 3.3 A nomination for election as Moderator of the General Assembly shall be made by a synod, the consent of the nominee not being required. The nomination shall be in writing under the hand of the Clerk of the synod and received by the General Secretary not later than the 31 March immediately preceding the Annual Meeting of the Assembly.
- 3.5 If after 31 March or after the period for withdrawal there shall be no nominations, in either or both categories, the General Secretary shall forthwith notify the Clerks of the synods and invite them to request nominations from the executive committees or equivalent of their synods. Such nominations, accompanied in each case by a note of the consent of the person nominated and a brief biography, must be in the hands of the General Secretary by 15 May.
- 3.8 Members of the Assembly shall vote by means of a voting paper containing the name, the usual designation and the church of membership, of each of those accepting nomination which shall be sent by the General Secretary by ordinary post to each such member before the commencement of the ordinary meeting of the Assembly. Brief indication of the reasons for the nomination, as supplied by the synod, may be circulated with the ballot paper. The General Assembly may in any case authorise further means of informing the members about those accepting nomination.

- 3.9 Normally, the General Assembly shall vote to elect the Moderators of the Assembly by secret ballot as an item of business following prayer during the meeting of the Assembly. The ballot boxes shall be delivered to the tellers by whom alone they shall be opened. They shall report the result of the ballot to the Assembly at a later session.

Revised text:

- 3.3 A nomination for election as Moderator of the General Assembly shall be made by a synod, the consent of the nominee not being required. The nomination shall be in writing under the hand of the Clerk of the synod and received by the General Secretary not later than the 31 March immediately preceding the Annual Meeting of the Assembly, and accompanied by a brief biography of the nominee and a note of the Synod's reasons for making the nomination.
- 3.5 If after 31 March or after the period for withdrawal there shall be no nominations, in either or both categories, the General Secretary shall forthwith notify the Clerks of the synods and invite them to request nominations from the executive committees or equivalent of their synods. Such nominations, accompanied in each case by a note of the consent of the person nominated, a brief biography, and a note of the Synod's reasons for making the nomination, must be in the hands of the General Secretary by 15 May.
- 3.8 Members of the Assembly shall vote by means of a voting paper containing the name, the usual designation, and the church of membership, of each of those accepting nomination which shall be sent by the General Secretary either by ordinary post to each such member before the commencement of the ordinary meeting of the Assembly, or on arrival at the meeting for those receiving their papers electronically. Brief indication of the reasons for the nomination, as supplied by the synod, and a brief biography will be circulated with the ballot paper. The General Assembly may in any case authorise further means of informing the members about those accepting nomination.
- 3.9 Normally, the General Assembly shall vote to elect the Moderators of the Assembly by secret ballot as an item of business following prayer during the meeting of the Assembly. Before voting commences each nominee shall address the Assembly on their biography for up to three minutes, and shall answer a question, in no more than three minutes, posed by the Moderator. The ballot boxes shall be delivered to the tellers by whom alone they shall be opened. They shall report the result of the ballot to the Assembly at a later session.

Draft resolution:

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council resolves to make the changes to the Rules of Procedure contained within paper M2 of Mission Council November 2019, pursuant to the implementation of decisions of principle made by the General Assembly of 2018, with immediate effect.