

# Resolutions 32 and 33

## Virtual Meetings

### The Clerk

An enabling document, formally proposed by the Clerk, and formally seconded by the Assistant Clerk.

#### Basic Information

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<b>Action required</b>	Agreement.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<p><b>Resolution 32</b> Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council resolves to make the addition to the Rules of Procedure covering Virtual Attendance at Physical Meetings and Virtual Meetings, with immediate effect.</p> <hr/> <p><b>Resolution 33</b> Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) re-designates the Standing Orders as “Standing Orders for Physical Meetings”, with immediate effect;</li><li>b) adopts the “Standing Orders for Virtual Meetings”, with immediate effect;</li><li>c) declares, for the avoidance of doubt, that where a majority of those present at a meeting are physically gathered, it shall be a physical meeting conducted according to the Standing Orders for Physical Meetings, and where a majority of those present at a meeting are not physically gathered, it shall be a Virtual Meeting, conducted according to the Standing Orders for Virtual Meetings;</li><li>d) reminds the whole United Reformed Church of the longstanding provision in the Rules of Procedure: “1.3 ...The Standing Orders which are printed in the Book of Reports to General Assembly shall apply to all meetings of the Assembly and the Mission Council and, in so far as they are applicable, to meetings of Synods, district councils and their committees.”</li></ul>

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### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	Clarifying provisions for Virtual Meetings, and for Virtual Attendance, by updating the Rules of Procedure. Simplifying the Standing Orders to make them practical for Virtual Meetings.
<b>Main points</b>	<p>Enabling Virtual Meetings to occur in ordered but efficient ways.</p> <p>Many private and public bodies, including many charities, have had to devise rubrics of this kind. We have learned from good practice elsewhere. Within the new Rules of Procedure, a good deal of material relies heavily upon work already done by the Church of Scotland; while within the new Standing Orders, sections 1-6 are based upon material from local authorities, and sections 7-17 have largely been copied across, or nearly so, from our existing Standing Orders. What is offered here is not innovation and extensive new drafting, with the risk of it being full of holes, but rather much of this is already approved and used, and that which is new has been tested by others first.</p> <p>It is important to note that both the Rules of Procedure and the Standing Orders can be amended by the Mission Council, or its successor, on a single vote. What is offered represents our best endeavours to provide something workable now for immediate use. However, if it becomes apparent that improvements could be made these can be effected by a single vote of the General Assembly or Mission Council, i.e. if what we have is not perfect, it is not set in stone forever.</p>
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	None.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	<p>The General Secretary, the Synod Clerks, the Assembly Officers (current and elect).</p> <p>Guidance published by the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator, the Charity Commission of England and Wales, and the charity regulators in the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands.</p> <p>Ecumenical partners, particularly the Church of Scotland and the Methodist Church of Great Britain.</p> <p>Local authorities offering information on virtual meetings.</p>

### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	n/a
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	n/a

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### AN ADDITION TO THE RULES OF PROCEDURE TO COVER VIRTUAL MEETINGS:

#### 10. PROVISION FOR VIRTUAL ATTENDANCE AT PHYSICAL MEETINGS AND FOR MEETINGS HELD ENTIRELY VIRTUALLY

##### 10.1 *Definitions*

In this Rule, the following words shall have the following meanings:

10.1.1 “Designated Body” shall mean any Council of the Church, or its Committees, including the Mission Council, Advisory Groups and Task Groups.

10.1.2 “Relevant Meeting” shall mean a meeting called as meetings of the Designated Body are normally called.

10.1.3 “Virtual Attendance” means that a person is not physically present at a Relevant Meeting, but instead is able to participate in and is present at the Relevant Meeting by means of a video and/or audio platform, in like manner to any person who may be physically present. For the avoidance of doubt, in order to constitute Virtual Attendance the presence of such a person at a Relevant Meeting must entail:

- (a) the capacity for effective two-way communication, by visual and/or spoken means, between such a person(s) and those physically present and with other people attending virtually;
- (b) the ability of such a person to engage in debate with, and to ask questions of, those who are physically present and others attending virtually, and to answer questions from them; and
- (c) the ability of such a person to cast a vote contemporaneously with those physically present and others attending virtually.

10.1.4 “Virtual Meeting” means that a Relevant Meeting is held entirely by means of a video and/or audio platform.

##### 10.2 *Permission for Virtual Attendance*

10.2.1 A Designated Body may permit any person(s) to be in Virtual Attendance at any Relevant Meeting(s).

10.2.2 If a Designated Body resolves to permit Virtual Attendance, it shall mean that, subject to 10.3, the person(s) in Virtual Attendance is/are deemed to be present at the Relevant Meeting for all purposes in the same way as if such person(s) had been physically present.

10.2.3 A decision to permit Virtual Attendance at all Relevant Meetings of a Designated Body may subsequently be revoked in respect of future Relevant Meetings.

10.2.4 For the avoidance of doubt, this section is permissive only and not directive.

##### 10.3 *Convener or Moderator at a Relevant Meeting*

10.3.1 It shall be the responsibility of the Convener or Moderator, as the case may be, of any Relevant Meeting where Virtual Attendance is permitted, to establish at the opening of the Relevant Meeting:

- (a) the identity of any person(s) who purport to be in Virtual Attendance, and

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- (b) that such a person(s) is/are in Virtual Attendance as defined in section 10, so that they are permitted to participate in the Relevant Meeting and have the right to vote.

10.3.2 If at any time during a Relevant Meeting the continuing ability of a person in Virtual Attendance to participate in the Relevant Meeting in terms of sections 10.1.3 and 10.3.1(b) is questioned, it shall be the responsibility of the Convener or Moderator to establish whether the person still meets those requirements and if not to deem that person to have left the Relevant Meeting.

10.3.3 In all cases described in these Rules the decision of the Convener or Moderator, as the case may be, shall be final.

10.3.4 If the Convenor, or Moderator, is in Virtual Attendance at a Relevant Meeting and becomes unable to participate in terms of sections 10.1.3 and 10.3.1(b), then the Relevant Meeting shall either appoint an alternative Convenor, or Moderator from amongst those attending, or else the Relevant Meeting shall be deemed to have ended. No substitute shall be so appointed unless qualified to perform the relevant function(s) in accordance with the rules and practices of the United Reformed Church.

### 10.4 *No appeal*

10.4.1 Providing that a Relevant Meeting remains quorate, no failure of technology however caused, or decision to deem any person to be or not to be in Virtual Attendance or to have left the Relevant Meeting, shall invalidate the Relevant Meeting or any decision taken at the Relevant Meeting, nor shall any such matter be a ground for appeal against any decision taken at a Relevant Meeting.

### 10.5 *Virtual Meetings*

10.5.1 For the avoidance of doubt, the United Reformed Church declares that all Designated Bodies may in principle hold Virtual Meetings of Relevant Meetings, unless explicitly prohibited from so doing by a constitutional provision.

10.5.2 In deciding whether it is appropriate for a Designated Body to hold a Virtual Meeting, the Convener, or Moderator, is required to consult with other Officers of the Designated Body to consider what proportion of the members of the Designated Body are able to participate in a Virtual Meeting, and to have particular regard if a greater proportion of members are unable to participate in a Virtual meeting than are able to participate in a Physical Meeting.<sup>1</sup>

10.5.3 The entirety of Rules 10.1 to 10.4 shall apply in full, as far as they are applicable, to all Virtual Meetings.

**Resolution 32 (wording on cover sheet) moves the inclusion of the rules above in our Church's Rules of Procedure.**

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<sup>1</sup> For example, if 30 people normally attend a Physical Meeting, but only 13 can attend a virtual meeting, the Officers would be ill advised to proceed with a Virtual Meeting; whereas if 20 people normally attend a Physical Meeting, and 18 can attend a Virtual Meeting, the Officers might consider this a reasonable basis to proceed. The Officers should also be aware that some people who cannot usually attend a Physical Meeting may be able to attend a Virtual Meeting. Timings should also be considered – if people cannot normally attend a Physical Meeting in the middle of the day, it should not be assumed that they can attend a Virtual Meeting then. This, and any other footnotes, are only examples and do not form part of the Rules.

## STANDING ORDERS FOR VIRTUAL MEETINGS

### 1. *Records of Virtual Meetings*

- 1.1 Any streaming and/or recording<sup>2</sup> of Virtual Meetings does not replace the formal minutes of the meeting and the decisions made. Formal minutes shall continue to be maintained and retained.

### 2. *Operating Procedure*

- 2.1 The Virtual Meeting will commence when the Moderator opens the meeting, within the requirements set out in the Rules of Procedure.
- 2.2 At the start of any meeting the Moderator shall make reasonable efforts to confirm that members can hear and be heard during the Virtual Meeting. The meeting will not start until the Moderator is satisfied that all is in order.
- 2.3 Where available video as well as audio should be normally used during Virtual Meetings. Where video is not available, or it is not safe for the attendee to use video, then audio only may be used.
- 2.4. The Virtual Meeting will finish when the Moderator formally closes the meeting.

### 3. *Managing contributions from members during Virtual Meetings*

- 3.1. All microphones should be set to mute at the start of the Virtual Meeting, apart from the Moderator and any (co)host(s). Microphones should only be unmuted when a participant is speaking.
- 3.2 The Moderator has absolute discretion to pause or adjourn the meeting at any time, and to remove any virtual attendees from the meeting if their conduct falls short of the expected standards in church.
- 3.3 In all but the smallest meetings, it is helpful if the Moderator is not also the host. The host may be a staff member(s) or volunteer(s) who are not a member of the meeting in the same way that such people may assist with stewarding a physical meeting.

### 4. *Voting on items during the meeting*

- 4.1 All decisions shall preferably be made by using any built in voting mechanism in the Virtual Meeting software, otherwise the Moderator will ask each individual member to raise their hand, either physically or using built in features, or to confirm verbally their agreement.
- 4.2 Voting shall normally use built in voting mechanisms, but where this causes a difficulty with more than one person joining a meeting from the same location in order for each person to have a vote then each person should log in on a separate device, or by telephone, or another piece of software used for voting. In a very small meeting, where the Moderator can see everyone on the screen at once, it may be possible to resolve this informally.
- 4.3 Voting on any motion whose effect is to alter, add to, modify or supersede the Basis, the Structure and any other form or expression of the polity and doctrinal formulations of the United Reformed Church, is governed by paragraph 3(1) and (2) of the Structure.

### 5. *Attendance*

- 5.1 All Virtual Meetings are required to meet any previously agreed quorum for meetings, where such a quorum has been specified.

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<sup>2</sup> Meetings should not normally be recorded, in order to comply fully with both safeguarding and data privacy policies.

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### 6 *Interpretation of Standing Orders*

- 6.1 Where the Moderator is required to interpret any Standing Orders in light of the requirements of a Virtual Meeting, they shall take advice from the Clerk before making a ruling. The Moderator's decision in all cases shall be final.

### 7 *En bloc business*

- 7.1 The Moderator, Clerk, and General Secretary shall together decide which items of business shall be taken en bloc. Placing business in the en bloc category does not imply anything about the importance of any item of business, merely that those planning the meeting think that it may be possible to agree the business without discussion. Any members wishing to have items removed from en bloc business should notify the Clerk by a stated time in advance of the meeting. If three or more members have so notified, then the business shall be added to the agenda of the meeting, otherwise en bloc business shall be voted upon without any discussion.

### 8 *Business requiring discussion*

- 8.1 It is not possible to use Consensus Decision-Making in its normal way during a Virtual Meeting, since Consensus Decision-Making relies upon the Moderator being able to sense the mood of the meeting and the members which requires senses not available in a Virtual Meeting. However, all meetings should still be conducted in the spirit and ethos of seeking consensus.
- 8.2 At any time during the debate, the Moderator may use the procedure indicated in Standing Order 4.1 to hold an Informal Straw Poll, which may be held purely to discern the mood of the meeting without making any decision. The Moderator may invite members to speak in the order they see fit. The Moderator may ask if anyone who has not yet contributed wishes to speak.
- 8.3 All decisions shall be made by vote, using the procedure set out in Standing Order 4.1. The Moderator, Clerk, and General Secretary shall together decide in advance which items of business require a simple majority, and which require a two thirds majority.<sup>3</sup> This Standing Order does not override any other provision for a specific majority set out elsewhere in the Standing Orders, particularly Standing Orders 10.12, 10.13 and 10.14.

### 9 *Presentation of business*

- 9.1 All reports of committees, together with the draft motions arising therefrom, shall be delivered to the General Secretary by a date to be determined, so that they may be circulated to members in time for consideration before the date of the Assembly meeting.
- 9.2 A Synod may deliver to the General Secretary not less than twelve weeks before the commencement of the meeting of the Assembly notice in writing of a motion for consideration at the Assembly. This notice shall include the names of those appointed to propose and second the motion at the Assembly.
- 9.3 A local church wishing to put forward a motion for consideration by the General Assembly shall submit the motion to its Synod for consideration and, if the Synod so decides, transmission to the Assembly, at such time as will enable the Synod to comply with Standing Order 9.2 above.

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<sup>3</sup> For example, agreeing the minutes of the previous meeting might reasonably be taken on a simple majority, whereas a major strategic decision with significant financial implications requires a greater level of support than a one vote majority.

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- 9.4 A member of the Assembly may deliver to the General Secretary not less than 21 days before the date of the meeting of the Assembly a notice in writing of a motion (which notice must include the name of a seconder) to be included in the Assembly agenda. If the subject matter of such a notice of motion appears to the General Secretary to be an infringement of the rights of a Synod through which the matter could properly have been raised, the General Secretary shall inform the member accordingly and bring the matter before the Business Committee which shall advise the Assembly as to the procedure to be followed.
- 9.5 Proposals for amendments to the Basis and Structure of the URC, which may be made by the Mission Council or a committee of the General Assembly or a Synod, shall be in the hands of the General Secretary not later than 12 weeks before the opening of the Assembly. The General Secretary, in addition to the normal advice to members of the Assembly, shall, as quickly as possible, inform all Synod Clerks of the proposed amendment.
- 9.6 It shall not be in order, whether in en bloc business or any other decision-making, to move a motion or amendment which:
- 9.6.1 contravenes any part of the Basis of Union, or
  - 9.6.2 involves the Church in expenditure without prior consideration by the appropriate committee, or
  - 9.6.3 pre-empts discussion of a matter to be considered later in the agenda, or
  - 9.6.4 amends or reverses a decision reached by the Assembly at its preceding two meetings unless the Moderator, Clerk and General Secretary together decide that changed circumstances or new evidence justify earlier reconsideration of the matter, or
  - 9.6.5 is not related to the report of a committee and has not been the subject of 21 days' notice under Standing Order 9.4, or
  - 9.6.6 simply reaffirms existing work.

The decision of the Moderator (in the case of 9.6.1, 9.6.2, 9.6.3, 9.6.5, and 9.6.6) and of the Moderator with the Clerk and the General Secretary (in the case of 9.6.4) on the application of this Standing Order shall be final.

### *The business*

- 10.1 If notice has been given of two or more motions on the same subject, or two or more amendments to the same motion, these shall be taken in the order decided by the Moderator on the advice of the Clerk.
- 10.2 A report presented to the Assembly by a committee or Synod, under Standing Order 9.1, shall be received for debate, unless notice has been duly given under Standing Order 9.4 of a motion to refer back to that committee or Synod the whole or part of the report and its attached motion(s). Such a motion for reference back shall be debated and voted upon before the relevant report is itself debated. To carry such a motion two-thirds of the votes cast must be given in its favour. When a report has been received for debate, and before any motions consequent upon it are proposed, any member may speak to a matter arising from the report which is not the subject of a motion.
- 10.3 During the meeting of the Assembly and on the report of a committee, notice (including the names of proposer and seconder) shall be given to the Clerk of any new motions which arise from the material of the report, and of any amendments which affect the substance of motions already presented. During the course of the debate a new motion or amendment may be stated orally without supporting speech in order to ascertain whether a member is willing to second it.

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- 10.4 No motion or amendment shall be spoken to by its proposer, debated, or put to the Assembly unless it is known that there is a seconder. The only exceptions to this are motions presented on behalf of a committee, of which printed notice has been given, and the procedural motions in Standing Orders 10.13, 10.14, and 10.15. The procedural motions in Standing Orders 10.13, 10.14, and 10.15 may be moved and spoken to without the proposer having first obtained and announced the consent of a seconder. They must, however, be seconded before being put to the vote, and precedence as between the procedural motions is determined by the fact that after one of them is before the Assembly no other motion can be moved until that one has been dealt with.
- 10.5 A seconder may second without speaking and, by declaring the intention of doing so, reserve the right of speaking until a later period in the debate.
- 10.6 An amendment shall be either to omit words or to insert words or to do both, but no amendment shall be in order which has the effect of introducing an irrelevant proposal or of negating the motion. The Moderator may rule that a proposed amendment should be treated as an alternative motion.
- 10.7 If an amendment is carried, the motion as amended shall take the place of the original motion and shall become the substantive motion upon which any further amendment may be moved. If an amendment is rejected, a further amendment with a different outcome may be moved.
- 10.8 An amendment which has been moved and seconded shall be disposed of before any further amendment may be moved, but notice may be given of intention to move a further amendment should the one before the Assembly be rejected.
- 10.9 The mover may, with the concurrence of the seconder and the consent of the Assembly, alter the motion or amendment proposed.
- 10.10 A motion or amendment may be withdrawn by the proposer with the concurrence of the seconder and the consent of the Assembly. Any such consent shall be signified without discussion. It shall not be in order for any member to speak upon it after the proposer has asked permission to withdraw unless such permission shall have been refused.
- 10.11 Alternative (but not directly negative) motions may be moved and seconded in competition with a motion before the Assembly. It shall be for the Moderator, on the advice of the Clerk, to rule when motions shall be considered as alternatives under the Terms of this Standing Order.
  - 10.11.1 When such draft alternative motions have been received by the General Secretary, the Moderators may ask the General Secretary to convene a meeting (physical or virtual) of the proposers, to ascertain if it may be possible to agree on a single draft motion to put before the Assembly, or to clarify the areas of disagreement.
  - 10.11.2 If the Assembly has alternative motions before it, each proposer shall be given the opportunity to present their motion in an order decided by the Moderator.
  - 10.11.3 After any amendments duly moved under Standing Orders 3.5, 3.6 and 3.7 have been dealt with and debate on the alternative motions has ended, the movers shall reply to the debate in reverse order to that in which they spoke initially. The first vote shall be a vote in favour of each of the motions, put in the order in which they were proposed, the result not being announced for one until it is announced for all. If any of them obtains a majority of those voting, it becomes the sole motion before the Assembly.

If none of them does so, the motion having the fewest votes is discarded. Should the lowest two be equal, the Moderator gives a casting vote.



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The voting process is repeated until one motion achieves a majority of those voting.

10.11.4 Once a sole motion remains, further discussion is permissible and votes for and against that motion shall be taken in the normal way and in accordance with Standing Order 4.

- 10.12 In the course of the business any member may move that the question under consideration be not put. This motion takes precedence over every motion before the Assembly. As soon as the member has given reasons for proposing it and it has been seconded and the proposer of the motion or amendment under consideration has been allowed opportunity to comment on the reasons put forward, the vote upon it shall be taken, unless it appears to the Moderator that an unfair use is being made of this rule. Should the motion be carried, the business shall immediately end and the Assembly shall proceed to the next business.
- 10.13 In the course of any discussion, any member may move that the question be now put. This is sometimes described as “the closure motion”. If the Moderator senses that there is a wish or need to close a debate, the Moderator may ask whether any member wishes so to move; the Moderator may not simply declare a debate closed. Provided that it appears to the Moderator that the motion is a fair use of this rule, the vote shall be taken upon it immediately it has been seconded. When an amendment is under discussion, this motion shall apply only to that amendment. To carry this motion, two-thirds of the votes cast must be given in its favour. The mover of the original motion or amendment, as the case may be, retains the right of reply before the vote is taken on the motion or amendment.
- 10.14 During the course of a debate on a motion any member may move that decision on this motion be deferred to the next Assembly. This rule does not apply to debates on amendments since the Assembly needs to decide the final form of a motion before it can responsibly vote on deferral. The motion then takes precedence over other business. As soon as the member has given reasons for proposing it and it has been seconded and the proposer of the motion under consideration has been allowed opportunity to comment on the reasons put forward, the vote upon it shall be taken, unless it appears to the Moderator that an unfair use is being made of this rule or that deferral would have the effect of annulling the motion. To carry this motion, two-thirds of the votes cast must be given in its favour. At the discretion of the Moderator, the General Secretary may be instructed by a further motion, duly seconded, to refer the matter for consideration by other councils and/or by one or more committees of the Assembly. The General Secretary shall provide for the deferred motion to be presented again at the next Meeting of the General Assembly.

### 11. *Timing of speeches and of other business*

- 11.1 Save by prior agreement of the Business Committee, speeches made in the presentation of reports concerning past work of Assembly committees which are to be open to question, comment or discussion shall not exceed five minutes.
- 11.2 The Assembly may meet in parallel sessions or Breakout Rooms to consider the past work of Assembly committees for questions and comments. Any draft motions arising therefrom must be dealt with in a plenary session of the Assembly.
- 11.3 Save by the prior agreement of the Business Committee, speeches made in support of the motions from any Assembly committee, including the Mission Council, or from any Synod shall not in aggregate exceed 15 minutes, nor shall speeches in support of any particular committee or Synod motion exceed 5 minutes, (e.g. a committee with four motions may not exceed 15 minutes). The

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- proposers of any other motion of which due notice has been given shall be allowed an aggregate of five minutes, unless a longer period be recommended by the Business Committee or determined by the Moderator.
- 11.4 Each subsequent speaker in any debate shall be allowed 3 minutes unless the Moderator shall determine otherwise; it shall, in particular, be open to the Moderator to determine that all speeches in a debate or from a particular point in a debate shall be of not more than a different specified number of minutes.
- 11.5 When a speech is made on behalf of a committee, it shall be so stated. Otherwise a speaker shall begin by giving name and accreditation to the Assembly.
- 11.6 Secretaries of committees and members of staff who are not members of Assembly may speak on the report of a committee for which they have responsibility at the request of the Convenor concerned. They may speak on other reports with the consent of the Moderator.
- 11.7 In each debate, no one shall address the Assembly more than once without the permission of the Moderator, except that at the close of each debate the proposer of the motion or the amendment, as the case may be, shall have the right to reply, but must strictly confine the reply to answering previous speakers and must not introduce new matters. Such reply shall close the debate on the motion or the amendment.
- 11.8 The foregoing Standing Order (11.7) shall not prevent the asking or answering of a question which arises from the matter before the Assembly or from a speech made in the debate upon it.
- 11.9 An invited speaker, whether speaking to a draft motion or not, may address the Assembly for such period of time as may be agreed by the Business Committee.
- 12 *Questions*
- 12.1 A member may, if 2 days' notice in writing has been given to the General Secretary, ask the Moderator or the Convenor of any committee any question on any matter relating to the business of the Assembly to which no reference is made in any report before the Assembly.
- 12.2 A member may, when given opportunity by the Moderator, ask the presenter of any report before the Assembly a question seeking additional information or explanation relating to matters contained within the report.
- 12.3 Questions asked under Standing Orders 12.1 and 12.2 shall be put and answered without discussion.
13. *Points of order, personal explanations, dissent*
- 13.1 A member shall have the right to call attention to a point of order, and immediately on this being done any other member addressing the Assembly shall cease speaking until the Moderator has determined the question of order. The decision on any point of order rests entirely with the Moderator. Any member calling to order unnecessarily is liable to censure of the Assembly.
- 13.2 A member feeling that some material part of a former speech by such member at the same meeting has been misunderstood or is being grossly misinterpreted by a later speaker may request the Moderator's permission to make a personal explanation. If the Moderator so permits, a member so rising shall be entitled to be heard forthwith.
- 13.3 The right to record in the minutes a dissent from any decision of the Assembly shall only be granted to a member by the Moderator if the reason stated, either verbally at the time or later in writing, appears to the Moderator to fall within the provisions of paragraph 10 of the Basis of Union.

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13.4 The decision of the Moderator on a point of order, or on the admissibility of a personal explanation, or on the right to have a dissent recorded, shall not be open to discussion.

### 14. *Admission of the public and closed sessions*

14.1 Only those who are members of the meeting, staff members in attendance, or invited guests may join a Virtual Meeting. However, a meeting in open session may be shown as a live stream.

14.2 A closed session is one in which the business is highly sensitive. Only members of Assembly, the Legal Adviser, and any technical staff required to enable Assembly to function may be present. Neither content nor process may be divulged to non-members, save specific information authorised by the Moderator in consultation with the Clerk and the Legal Adviser. No social media in any form may be used during a closed session, nor to report upon such closed session. Any live streaming must be switched off. Minutes will be taken, but these will be held *in retentis* by the Clerk, and shall not be made available to non-members.

14.3 A closed session may be called for at any time in any decision-making mode, and voted upon by the Assembly, requiring a simple majority. This motion takes precedence over every motion before the Assembly. As soon as the member has given reasons for proposing it and it has been seconded, and the proposer of the motion or amendment under consideration has been allowed opportunity to comment on the reasons put forward, the vote upon it shall be taken, unless it appears to the Moderator that an unfair use is being made of this rule. Should the motion be carried the business shall immediately pause while non-members leave the meeting.

14.4 If a matter is known to be highly sensitive in advance, then the Assembly Officers, consulting the Legal Adviser if necessary, may announce in advance that a certain piece of business will be conducted in a closed session giving their reasons.

14.5 Members of Assembly who leave during a closed session may not be re-admitted.

### 15. *Communications during the course of debate*

15.1 The primary responsibility of members is to attend to the business and participate in the decision making. Those present must refrain both from posting on social media sites during business sessions and from commenting upon partially completed business.

It is the responsibility of the communications committee's staff to make official announcements. This restriction is only in place when in session; those attending are free to join in the online debates during breaks and after the close of business in respect of business that the Assembly has completed. Everything written and shared on social media sites at any time is the sole responsibility of the author, and is subject to the same defamation laws as any other form of written communication.

### 16. *Record of the Assembly*

16.1 A record of attendance at the meetings of the Assembly shall be kept in such a manner as the Business Committee may determine.

16.2 The draft minutes of each day's proceedings shall be made available in an appropriate form normally on the following day. They shall, after any necessary correction, be approved at the opening of a subsequent session. Concerning the minutes of the closing day of the Assembly the Clerk shall submit a motion

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- approving their insertion in the full minutes of the Assembly after review and any necessary correction by the Officers of the Assembly. Before such a motion is voted upon, any member may ask to have read out the written minute on any particular item.
- 16.3 A signed copy of the minutes shall be preserved in the custody of the General Secretary as the official record of the Assembly's proceedings.
- 16.4 As soon as possible after the Assembly meeting ends, the substance of the minutes together with any other relevant papers shall be published as a "Record of Assembly" and a copy sent to every member of the Assembly, each Synod and Local Church.
17. *Suspension and amendment of Standing Orders*
- 17.1 In any case of urgency or upon proposal of a motion of which due notice has been given, any one or more of the Standing Orders may be suspended at any meeting, provided that three-fourths of the members of the Assembly present and voting shall so decide.
- 17.2 Motions to amend the Standing Orders shall be referred to the Clerk of the Assembly for report before being voted on by the Assembly (or, in case of urgency, by the Mission Council). The Clerk of the Assembly may from time to time suggest amendments.

**Resolution 33 (wording on cover sheet) moves the adoption and use of the Standing Orders above for occasions when the Church meets virtually.**