

# Paper M5

Assembly arrangements committee  
Standing orders

Church 2014  
**United**  
Church **Reformed**  
**Church** Church 2014

# Paper M5



## Assembly arrangements committee: Standing orders

### Basic Information

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<b>Action required</b>	Resolution
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>Mission Council resolves to change the standing orders, as detailed in paper M5, November 2014</b>
<b>Alternative options to consider, if any</b>	None proposed, but Mission Council may choose to enact all, some, or none of the proposed changes, or devise a wholly new wording.

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	Updates to standing orders.
<b>Main points</b>	Most points have been raised previously, or are in direct response to General Assembly.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Reports of General Assembly 2014, pages 58-69. Paper J3 of Mission Council, May 2013.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Mission Council (May 2013), members of General Assembly 2014, MCAAG and Assembly officers.

### Summary of Impact

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

# Standing orders

1. Mission Council approved some changes to standing orders in May 2013 (paper J3), with effect from then until General Assembly 2014. At that point, the intention was to ask General Assembly to approve the changes without time limit. However, pressure of business did not allow Assembly sufficient time to do consider that, and the resolution was withdrawn.
2. Technically this means that the changes agreed in May 2013 lapse. However, as the changes in Standing Order 1 permitting the use of groups A, B, and C did not attract any negative feedback, indeed much positive feedback, and no member of General Assembly raised any objection to the principle involved, the officers have continued to follow that Standing Order in preparation for Mission Council, in the hope this will be acceptable to Mission Council. Since Assembly, full account has been taken of the feedback forms and all other feedback received.
3. This paper now offers three categories of proposed changes:
  - a) Those previously offered, marked in **red**, which Mission Council is now invited to make on a standing basis, although one part of this is subject to a proposed variation.
  - b) A number of minor changes which are not thought to be contentious, marked in **green**, which are offered to remove known inconsistencies.
  - c) Two changes of substance, marked in **blue**, which are offered to test the mind of Mission Council as to whether the effect of making any changes of substance part way through a contentious debate is more helpful than making no changes.
4. Commentary on the changes marked in **red** was given in paper J3 of Mission Council May 2013, which is available on the website.
5. Commentary on the new minor changes proposed, marked in **green** is as follows:
  - a) Standing Order 2b(3a) is proposed for deletion. This is not to restrict contributions, but has never reflected reality, and such a bald statement might imply we offer a right to speak to any member of the public who happens to enter a room. The remainder of the paragraph is consequently renumbered.
  - b) SO 2c(b) is minor change to reflect the practicalities of what happens.
  - c) SO 3f (which was 4e) is amended to make clear which business is out of order applies in all modes of decision making. It is moved to 3f as all parts of SO4 do not apply when SO2 is being followed.
  - d) SO7b and 7d are very minor changes to avoid any possible ambiguity.
  - e) The new SO12, and consequent re-numbering, brings the 'Communications Protocol' into the Standing Orders. As it stands the 'Communications Protocol' may be seen as of temporary or limited status standing alone, and liable to be forgotten, and so it is proposed to incorporate this into standing orders.
6. Commentary on the two proposals of major substance, marked in **blue**, is as follows:
  - a) SO2b(7a) refers to 'agreement'. This description has been much criticised, and it has been pointed out that 'agreement' implies a level of acceptance which some do not feel, but that they would be willing to accept the will of the overwhelming majority if their views could be more honestly described than 'agreement', which feels, to some, as an attempt to force a measure of unanimity not present. For this reason it is proposed to replace 'agreement' with 'passed, recognising disagreement'.

b) SO2b(9vi) in the Standing Orders in use at the 2014 General Assembly (using a phrase of 'red' status) prohibited the option of moving to majority voting, unless notice had been given earlier. By proposing this phrase for removal, it means that notice still needs to be given, under SO2b(2) if urgency is known in advance, but the option for urgency to be discovered during the debate would now also be restored.

7. In any event, the current document is unwieldy, and requires considerable further work, not least in simplifying numbering systems in SO2, to create an understandable and workable document. This is under active consideration.

8. It is very clear that the Church needs to undertake a thorough review of how it makes decisions. Various criticisms have been made of the consensus process. It would be imprudent to rush to decisions in the light of one difficult debate, but at some point a considered and thoughtful debate needs to be had. It would be silly to spend a great deal of time tidying the Standing Orders until the direction the Church wishes to choose is clearer. Mission Council can be assured that the Assembly officers will seek a review of the theology and practice of consensus.

# Standing orders of General Assembly

## 1. The agenda of the Assembly

1a. At its meetings the Assembly shall consider reports and draft motions prepared by its committees which include the Mission Council or by synods, and motions and amendments of which due notice has been given submitted by individual members of the Assembly.

1b. For the good ordering of General Assembly's time, the moderators for that Assembly, in consultation with the general secretary and the clerk, shall group the draft motions into three Groups which shall determine the manner in which the Assembly shall consider them: A – en bloc, B – majority voting and C – consensus. All matters covered by section 3(1) and (2) of the Structure of the United Reformed Church shall be placed in group B. In the case of any other matter the moderator may rule at any time that a motion be taken from group B and placed in group C.

1c. The motions in group A shall be taken en bloc. Notice in writing to the effect that one or more of the motions included in group A should be considered separately may be given to the general secretary by the close of business on the first day of the meeting of the Assembly. If such notice, which must be signed by at least six members of the Assembly, is duly received, then the motion(s) in question shall be removed from group A. It shall be for the moderators, in consultation with the general secretary and the clerk, to determine in which of groups B and C any such separated motions should be placed. When the single motion to approve group A is before the Assembly, the vote shall be taken immediately, the motion being determined by a majority of the votes of members of the Assembly present and voting as indicated by a show of voting cards.

1d. The motions in group B shall be determined by majority vote, and standing order 2 shall not apply.

1e. The motions in group C shall be considered by means of the consensus decision making process set out in standing order 2.

1f. The Assembly arrangements committee shall prepare before each meeting of the Assembly a draft order of business, and submit it to the Assembly as early as convenient in the programme.

1g. Motions arising from a report which have been duly seconded and submitted by individual members of Assembly under rule 4b shall be taken at a point in the business determined by the moderator on the advice of the convener of the Assembly arrangements committee.

1h. 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.

1i. The convener of the Assembly arrangements committee may, during the meeting of the Assembly, propose that the order of business be changed.

## 2. Consensus decision making

2a. Those motions in group C shall be determined by a process of decision making by consensus. For these purposes the following standing order 2 will apply and the standing orders 4, 5d, 5e, 5f, 6b, 6c, 6e will not apply.

2b. The process of consensus:

Consensus means a decision of the council reached unanimously, or where a small minority of members of the council is willing to accept a proposal that is not their first preference.

Agreement means a decision of the council where, after careful consideration of the options, a small number is unable to accept the majority opinion but agree to stand aside so that the matter may be resolved.

2b.(1) At each stage of the process the moderator will clarify the nature of the session, that is whether it is for information, discussion or decision making.

2b.(2) The information session:

This session aims to inform the Assembly on the issue to be considered. At the start of this session, if s/he judges that the matter before the Assembly is urgent, requiring decision during the current meeting of the Assembly, the moderator shall inform the Assembly that this is the case and advise that if following the consensus procedures there is continuing disagreement it may be necessary to move to a majority decision under standing order 2b(9)vi. A range of options may be presented by different people who shall speak in favour of their option. Those presenting issues, reports or proposals may speak for no more than five minutes unless the Assembly agrees to an extension of time. Members of Assembly are then free to ask questions on the issue or seek for clarification or further information.

2b.(3) The discussion session:

This is the opportunity for discussion of various viewpoints and vigorous debate on different opinions. Speakers may speak for no more than three minutes.

~~2b.(3a) All those present may contribute.~~

2b.(3a) The methods used may include prayer, buzz groups, group discussions, speeches to the whole council, time for thinking during a break etc. The moderator may invite Assembly to indicate opinions by the use of coloured cards at this stage.

2b.(3b) The moderator shall ensure that those who have different backgrounds or who disagree or who are unsure are given space to contribute to the debate, as well as those who are enthusiastic.

2b.(3c) The Assembly may meet around tables so that small group discussion can happen quickly and easily.

2b.(3d) As the discussion session proceeds possible ways forward for the Church are developed until a specific proposal is reached.

2b.(4) The decision session:

Only those Assembly members present may contribute to this session, they may speak for no more than three minutes.

2b.(4a) Discussion continues with speakers outlining the advantages and disadvantages of the proposal. At all times, speakers are encouraged to suggest a way forward for the Assembly, rather than merely speaking with passion for a pre-determined view.

2b.(4b) Minor changes of wording may be agreed as the discussion proceeds. It is important to hear from those indicating disquiet or disapproval as well as those who are enthusiastic.

2b.(4c) The proposal shall be displayed throughout the discussion in such a way that all can see the text and any progressively agreed changes to it.

2b.(4d) If there is a major new insight expressed, the moderator may determine that it is appropriate to move back into a discussion session.

2b.(5a) After summing up where the Assembly seems to be heading, the moderator checks whether the Assembly is nearing consensus using one or more questions such as the following:

- i) What is your response to this proposal? (inviting a show of indicator cards)
- ii) Do you believe we have consensus in support of this proposal?
- iii) Do you believe we have consensus not to support this proposal?

2b.(5b) If there is strong but not unanimous support:

- i) Who supports the proposal?
- ii) Who does not support the proposal as your first option, but is prepared to accept it? Are you prepared to have the issue declared resolved by consensus?
- iii) Who is not prepared to accept the proposal?

2b.(6) Where some members of Assembly indicate an unwillingness to accept a proposal there shall be further discussion and then the moderator shall seek to ascertain that they accept that they have been heard and agree to live with the outcome.

2b.(7) The moderator shall ask:

2b.(7a) are you prepared to have the issue declared ~~resolved by agreement~~ **passed, recognising disagreement?**

If so they may choose to record their dissent.

2b.(8) Who is not prepared to accept the proposal?

2b.(9) Continuing disagreement

Assembly may, at the discretion of the moderator, look for further possibilities including:

- i) adjourning the discussion to another time or place perhaps with more work before reconsideration;
- ii) asking the moderator to continue to work on the issue with relevant people until the next Assembly;
- iii) referring the issue to another council or group to deal with;
- iv) deciding the issue is unnecessary/inappropriate to continue dealing with;
- v) declaring that there are diverse views which Christians may hold with equal integrity;
- vi) if the issue is urgent moving to majority decision. ~~but only if notice has been given under standing order 2b.(2).~~

2c. The moderator

2c.(a) The role of the moderator is very important.

The moderator:

- assists the Assembly to discern the will of God as far as possible
- is alert to the guidance of the Holy Spirit as members contribute



- pauses for prayer or buzz group reflection as appropriate
- encourages trust and integrity in contributions
- ensures care and support for those whose honesty or minority voice makes them vulnerable
- invites members to respond to speeches showing indicator cards, and reflects the mood of the meeting as it becomes apparent
- suggests or encourages creative modifications of a proposal, picking up insights expressed
- summarises discussion from time to time to assist in focusing the discussion.

2c.(b) The Assembly and moderator may be assisted by a facilitation group.

This will be appointed at the beginning of each Assembly by the Assembly. It will:

- enable group work, collate responses from groups and report back to the council
- help and support the moderator
- be responsible for the display of **providing the wording** of the text under discussion.

2d. Coloured cards

2d.(1) Coloured cards are not essential in consensus decision making but they are helpful.

Each member receives two cards:

- Orange – held at the end of a speech, so that the moderator can see, indicates warmth towards a point of view or approval of a proposal.
- Blue – held at the end of a speech, so that the moderator can see, indicates coolness about what has been heard or disapproval of a proposal.

2d.(2a) Cards held crossed indicate to the moderator it's time to move on to the next subject.

2d.(2b) Cards should be shown only at the invitation of the moderator and held so that the moderator can see them. They indicate response to what has just been said. They help the moderator to gauge the strength of feeling for various ideas, and to invite speeches from those who are unsure or cool towards the proposal.

2e. Changes of order

Changes of order may be raised by any member of Assembly at any time during the meeting and must refer to the proceedings of the council. The moderator asks the member to state their change of order. The moderator rules on it immediately, or asks for a decision by the Assembly via a simple majority vote.

Changes of order include:

2e.(1) Out of order – the speaker is digressing from the matter being discussed.

2e.(2) Closed session – that the matter in hand is sensitive and should be conducted in private. This is voted on immediately without discussion. It can be raised more than once during a discussion. If it is agreed, all those who are not members of the council must leave. Members must treat the subsequent discussion in the strictest confidence and must not divulge its content or process to non-members.

2e.(3) Adjournment of the discussion – this is voted on immediately without further discussion. It can be proposed more than once in a discussion. It cannot be brought by a person who has already spoken. When the discussion is resumed the person whose speech was interrupted has the right to speak first.

2e.(4) Personal explanation – a member feeling that some material part of their former speech has been misunderstood or is being grossly misinterpreted by a later speaker may ask to make a personal explanation.

2e.(5) Objection – a member may raise an objection if the remarks of a speaker are deemed offensive or derogatory. On such an objection being raised the moderator shall immediately



rule as to whether the remarks are offensive or derogatory and if the ruling is in favour of the objection may require the speaker to withdraw the remark. Should the speaker refuse to do so the moderator may require the speaker immediately to terminate their speech.

### 3. Presentation of business

3a. All reports of committees, together with the draft motions arising there from, shall be delivered to the general secretary by a date to be *{the word 'annually' deleted}* determined, so that they may be printed and circulated to members in time for consideration before the date of the Assembly meeting.

3b. 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.

3c. 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 3b above.

3d. 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 *{the words 'or a District Council' deleted}* through which the matter could properly have been raised, the general secretary shall inform the member accordingly and bring the matter before the Assembly arrangements committee which shall advise the Assembly as to the procedure to be followed.

3e. 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.

3f. It shall not be in order, **whether in en bloc business, majority voting, or consensus decision-making**, to move a motion or amendment which:

- i) contravenes any part of the Basis of Union, or
- ii) involves the church in expenditure without prior consideration by the appropriate committee, or
- iii) pre-empts discussion of a matter to be considered later in the agenda, or
- iv) 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
- v) is not related to the report of a committee and has not been the subject of 21 days' notice under 3d.

The decision of the moderator (in the case of i, ii, iii, and v) and of the moderator with the clerk and the general secretary (in the case of iv) on the application of this standing order shall be final.

#### 4. Motions and amendments

4a. A report presented to the Assembly by a committee or synod, under rule 1, shall be received for debate, unless notice has been duly given under rule 3d 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.

4b. 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. The moderator shall decide whether such motion or amendment requires to be circulated in writing to members before it is discussed by the Assembly. 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.

4c. 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 exception to this being motions presented on behalf of a committee, of which printed notice has been given.

4d. A seconder may second without speaking and, by declaring the intention of doing so, reserves the right of speaking until a later period in the debate.

4e. 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 under standing order 4k.

4f. 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.

4g. 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.

4h. The mover may, with the concurrence of the seconder and the consent of the Assembly, alter the motion or amendment proposed.

4i. 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.

4j. Alternative (but not directly negative) motions may be moved and seconded in competition with a motion before the Assembly. After any amendments duly moved under standing orders 4f, 4g and 4h 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. The voting process is repeated until one motion achieves a majority of those voting. Once a sole motion remains, votes for and against that motion shall be taken in the normal way and in accordance with standing order 7.

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

5a. Save by prior agreement of the officers of the Assembly, 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.

5b. Save by the prior agreement of the officers of the Assembly, speeches made in support of the motions from any Assembly committee, including the Mission Council, or from any synod shall not in aggregate exceed 45 minutes, nor shall speeches in support of any particular committee or synod motion exceed 12 minutes, (eg a committee with three motions may not exceed 36 minutes). The proposers of any other motion of which due notice has been given shall be allowed an aggregate of 10 minutes, unless a longer period be recommended by the officers of the Assembly or determined by the moderator. Each subsequent speaker in any debate shall be allowed five 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 three minutes.

5c. 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.

5d. Secretaries of committees and full-time executive secretaries who are not members of Assembly may speak on the report of a committee for which they have responsibility at the request of the convener concerned. They may speak on other reports with the consent of the moderator.

5e. In each debate, whether on a motion or on an amendment, no one shall address the Assembly more than once, 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.

5f. The foregoing standing order (5e) 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.

## **6. Closure of debate**

6a. A member of 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 that the General Assembly, for the better consideration of a specified resolution and its related documents, goes into a committee of the whole Assembly. Provided that the moderator, clerk and general secretary together decide that this rule may appropriately be applied in the case of the said resolution, the motion shall be presented immediately following the opening speeches in support of the primary motion. For such a motion to be carried, two thirds of the votes cast must be given in its favour. Committee procedure enables members to speak more than once

and exploratory votes to be taken on particular points or suggested changes. The number and length of speeches shall be at the discretion of the moderator. After discussion in committee and decision on any proposed changes the clerk shall draw the attention of the Assembly to any changes to the original text which have been agreed. The moderator shall then declare the committee stage to be ended, and the Assembly shall proceed to hear a closing speech from the mover of the motion under discussion and proceed to a vote on the motion, subject to any further motion under standing order 6. The decision of the moderator with the clerk and the general secretary on the application of this standing order shall be final.

6b. 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.

6c. 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.

6d. 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 represented at the next meeting of the General Assembly.

6e. The motions described in standing orders 6b, 6c and 6d above are exceptions to standing order 4c, in that they 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. Precedence as between motions under 6a, 6b, 6c and 6d 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.

## 7. Voting

7a. 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.

7b. Other motions before the Assembly, **not subject to the consensus process**, shall be determined by a majority of the votes of members of the Assembly present and voting as indicated by a show of voting cards, except:

- i) if the Assembly decides before the vote that a paper ballot be the method of voting or
- ii) if the show of cards indicates a very close vote, and the moderator decides, or a member of Assembly proposes and the Assembly agrees, then a paper ballot shall be the method of voting.

7c. To provide for voting in the case of a paper ballot, and to assist in taking a count of votes when the moderator decides this is necessary, the nominations committee shall appoint tellers for each Assembly.

7d. **Any electronic voting system approved by the Assembly arrangements committee shall be deemed to meet the requirements of these standing orders.**

## 8. Questions

8a. A member may, if two days' notice in writing has been given to the general secretary, ask the moderator or the convener 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.

8b. 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.

8c. Questions asked under standing orders 8a and 8b shall be put and answered without discussion.

## 9. Points of order, personal explanations, dissent

9a. A member shall have the right to rise and 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.

9b. 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 rise and 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.

9c. 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.



9d. 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.

#### 10. Admission of public and press

Members of the public and representatives of the press shall be admitted to the Assembly unless the Assembly otherwise decides, and they shall occupy such places as are assigned to them.

#### 11. Circulation of documents

Only documents authorised by the general secretary in consultation with the convener of the Assembly arrangements committee may be distributed within the building in which the Assembly is meeting.

#### 12. Use of Electronic devices and communications during the course of debate

12a. Although many meetings take place in wi-fi enabled rooms, and many attending will have access to systems of electronic communication and to social media sites during business sessions, their primary responsibility 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 and editorial 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. All electronic devices must be silent when a meeting is in session.

12b. Everything written and shared on social media sites at any time is the sole responsibility of the author, and is subject to the same libel laws as any other form of written communication.

#### 13. Record of the Assembly

13a. Record of attendance at the meetings of the Assembly shall be kept in such a manner as the Assembly arrangements committee may determine.

13b. 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 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.

13c. 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.

13d. 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.

#### 14. Suspension and amendment of standing orders

14a. 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.

14b. 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.