

## THE BUSINESS OF SYNOD

### **People Overseeing the Actions of the General Synod**

General Synod is people. The decisions made, and the spirit in which they are made, depends on the collective wisdom of all members. At General Synod you contribute your experience, skills, interest, ideas, and convictions to decisions and processes that affect the health of the Church as a whole.

### ***Elections***

Elections will be held for Prolocutor and Deputy Prolocutor of General Synod on Thursday afternoon, July 4<sup>th</sup>. The process is outlined in the *Nominating and Election Procedures for use at General Synod 2013* in the Information Section of the Convening Circular.

### ***Council of General Synod***

On Thursday evening members will assemble in groups according to their ecclesiastical province to select their nominees for the Council of General Synod. The process is outlined in the *Nominating and Election Procedures for use at General Synod 2013* in the Information Section of the Convening Circular.

While the selection process itself can get complicated, experience has proven that the procedure works. The outcome leads to a formal election by General Synod of those selected in provincial caucuses.

### ***Standing Committees***

There is a resolution coming to General Synod about Standing Committees/Coordinating Committees. Please see *Resolution A041*.

### **Structural and Procedural Matters/Enabling Ideas to Become Actions**

#### ***Sessional Committees***

Sessional Committees are put in place at the beginning of Synod to ensure that Synod accomplishes the goals of the session. For example, the Agenda Committee monitors the daily progress of the agenda and makes necessary adjustments; the Resolutions Committee determines the priority of resolutions and motions; the Nominating Committee receives nominations and oversees the elections process; the Expenditures Committee assesses the cost implication of actions proposed to the Synod. The Sessional committees are appointed by the Council of General Synod, in consultation with the Prolocutor, prior to General Synod.

#### ***Structure***

There are a great number of decisions made on the floor of Synod that are of a structural nature. These range from procedural motions to adopt the minutes of the previous session of General Synod, or extend "courtesies of the house" to guests, to motions that determine the mechanisms by which the Church will operate over the long term, such as changes to the Declaration of Principles, Constitution, Canons and Rules of Order.

Many of the decisions determining structure are made towards the beginning of Synod. Certain structural decisions require more complex procedure than others. Amendments to the Declaration of Principles, for example, require two-thirds majority approval in each Order at two successive sessions of Synod, and in some cases, consent from each Provincial Synod.

The intention of what may often seem tedious and time-consuming is to make sure that the rules and structures reflect the Church's goals and enable the Church to carry out its mission

### ***Rules of Order***

Considering how many decisions need to be made by such a large and diverse group, it's not surprising that the Rules of Order and Procedure (in the Handbook of General Synod) govern virtually everything that takes place, or can take place, on the floor of the Synod. In cases where the answer to a procedural question isn't clear, the Chairperson decides what procedures will be followed, perhaps after seeking the advice of the assessors.

In any case, the rules are intended to enable, not stifle, Synod or its members. While you should be familiar with the rules, it is no embarrassment to breach a rule unintentionally. You may wish to consult an assessor in a particular situation.

For a discussion of some specific rules for making, debating, and voting on a motion, see The Decision Process below and the Guidelines for the Resolutions Committee. For information about elections refer to the Nominating and Election Procedures for use at General Synod 2013, or speak to a member of the Nominating Committee.

### **The Decision Process – Turning Ideas into Action**

#### ***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 provinces, 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 Convening Circular) and submitted to the General Secretary consideration by the Resolutions Committee, **prior to the deadline established.**

Often amendments to resolutions, 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 motion or an amended motion 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 length and flow 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 (*p. 34, Rules of Order and Procedure, The Handbook of the General Synod 2010*)

#### ***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.