

## 1. Meetings of Synod:

- a) The Synod Meeting is a gathering for worship, fellowship, support and inspiration. It is a council of the church receiving reports, considering, and if in agreement, authorising the implementation of strategies and goals. As the body operating between the local church and the General Assembly, it is a vehicle of information and a forum for the raising, and, if agreed, forwarding, of concerns and ideas.

The Synod Meeting shall take place two or three times a year, normally on Saturdays within March and November. The third meeting takes place in September in the years when General Assembly takes place, for the purpose of hearing the report of the representatives who attended Assembly. When there is no Assembly, the third Synod Meeting may happen at some other point during the year.

The Synod Moderator will normally preside but, in the absence of the Moderator, Synod will appoint a member of Synod to preside.

In subsequent Standing orders "Moderator" means the person presiding at the time.

- b) A special meeting of the Synod may be convened by the Synod Executive or the Synod Moderator.
- c) Quorum shall be  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the Synod voting membership as determined at the beginning of the year using the most recent information given by churches in their annual returns.
- d) If a member, for any valid reason, is unable to be present at a meeting, the apology for absence must be in the hands of the Synod Clerk not later than 15 minutes before the time appointed for that meeting. The acceptance by the Synod of an apology confers on the member concerned the right to raise a question on any business transacted in his/her absence, or to enter dissent from any decision made.

## 2. The Agenda of Synod

- a) The agenda shall be drawn up by the Synod Moderator, Synod Clerk and Synod Executive Convenor for consideration and approval by Synod Executive.
- b) Notice of any Meeting of the Synod shall be dispatched not less than 12 clear days before the date of the meeting and shall normally contain an agenda with the business to be transacted, and the reports to be received. No business other than that specified in the notice calling the meeting shall normally be transacted. The inclusion of other items, exceptionally, shall be at the discretion of the Moderator, and agreed by the members present and voting.

- c) The agenda dispatched to members of Synod shall be of a distinctive colour; that used by other than full members shall be white. Full members, having a distinctive colour agenda which shall be described in words on the paper and will be clearly marked as 'Voting Paper', may speak and vote; associate members, having a white agenda, may speak but not vote, and others may speak only with the permission of the Moderator.
- d) A church or Group/Committee may deliver to the Synod Clerk not less than 21 clear days before the commencement of the meeting of the Synod notice in writing of a motion for consideration at the Synod.

### **3. Changes of order**

- a) Changes of order may be raised by any member of Synod at any time during the meeting and must refer to the proceedings of the Synod. The Moderator asks the member to state their change of order. The Moderator shall rule on it immediately, or shall ask for a decision by the Synod via a simple majority vote.
- b) Changes of order include:
  - (1) Out of order – the speaker is digressing from the matter being discussed.
  - (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 Synod must leave. Members must treat the subsequent discussion in the strictest confidence and must not divulge its content or process to non-members.
  - (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. If the discussion is resumed the person whose speech was interrupted has the right to speak first.
  - (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.
  - (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.

#### **4. Appointments and Elections**

- a) The Synod shall at its Spring Meeting elect and appoint members of its Groups/Committees. Any appointees for vacancies remaining or arising during the year may be approved by the Synod Executive acting on behalf of Synod.
- b) At the Spring Meeting the Nominations Committee will submit a list of the appointments to be made and the Returning Officer will announce the results of elections carried out in accordance with the Synod's adopted procedures for the conduct of elections specified in Appendix A.
- c) All appointments made by Synod shall be for a term of three years renewable for one more term. If it is wished to appoint for a further term, the Synod Executive must present a special resolution to Synod for approval giving the reasons for the further term of service (see Appendix A).

#### **5. Synod's Decision Making**

- a) Synod shall use 'Majority Decision Making' (prescribed by sections 6 to 9) to govern business. However, there may be items of business that can be better dealt with using the consensus decision making process specified in Appendix B.
- b) The Synod Executive will set out in the circulated Agenda their recommendation that an item should be dealt with other than by 'Majority Decision Making'.
- c) The Moderator will put the Synod Executive's recommendations to the meeting and will have discretion prior to any agenda items to suggest an alternative decision making process, subject to the approval of the synod meeting.
- d) There are two areas where Synod needs to act by majority voting, and not by consensus decision making:
  - 1. When a Synod appoints Trustees/Directors to its Trust Company (Thames North Trust, in our case).
  - 2. When a Synod appoints Auditors and Legal Agents, but not if it is merely confirming the actions of its Trust Company.(The decision whether or not to support a constitutional change does not have to be made by majority. It does in the Assembly but not in the Synod.)

## 6. Motions and amendments

- a) A report presented to the Synod meeting by a Group/Committee shall be received for debate unless 7 days' notice has been duly given of a motion to refer back to that Group/Committee 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.
- b) During the meeting of the Synod and on the report of a Group/Committee, notice (including the names of proposer and seconder) shall be given to the Synod 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 or displayed in writing to members before it is discussed by the Synod. 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.
- c) No motion or amendment shall be spoken to by its proposer, debated, or put to the Synod unless it is known that there is a seconder, the exception to this being motions presented on behalf of a Group/Committee, of which printed notice has been given.
- d) 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.
- e) It shall not be in order to move a motion or amendment which:
  - i) contravenes any part of the Basis of Union, or
  - ii) involves the Synod in expenditure without prior consideration by the Synod Executive, 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 Synod at its current or preceding meetings held within the previous 18 months unless the Moderator and the Synod Clerk and the members present and voting together decide that changed circumstances or new evidence justify earlier reconsideration of the matter, or
  - v) has not been the subject of 21 days notice under 2d.

The decision of the Moderator (in the case of i, ii, and iii) and of the Moderator with the Synod Clerk and the members present and voting (in the case of iv and v) on the application of this Standing Order shall be final.

- f) 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.
- g) 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.
- h) 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 Synod be rejected.
- i) The mover may, with the concurrence of the seconder and the consent of the Synod, alter the motion or amendment proposed.
- j) A motion or amendment may be withdrawn by the proposer with the concurrence of the seconder and the consent of the Synod. Any such consent shall be signified without discussion.

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

- a) The time allowed for the presentation of a report or any other speeches, motions including the moving of an amendment or an additional resolution shall be limited to 5 minutes unless the Moderator allows otherwise.
- b) The time allowed for a single agenda item shall not in aggregate exceed 30 minutes, unless the Moderator allows otherwise.
- c) When a speech is made on behalf of a Group/Committee, it shall be so stated. Otherwise a speaker shall begin by giving name and accreditation to the Synod.
- d) In each debate, whether on a motion or on an amendment, no one shall address the Synod 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 matter. Such reply shall close the debate on the motion or the amendment.
- e) The foregoing standing order (7d) shall not prevent the asking or answering of a question which arises from the matter before the Synod or from a speech made in the debate upon it.

## 8. Closure of debate

- a) 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 Synod. 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. To carry this motion, a simple majority of the votes cast must be given in its favour. Should the motion be carried the business shall immediately end and the Synod shall proceed to the next business.
- b) 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 Standing Order, 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.
- c) During the course of a debate on a motion any member may move that decision on this motion be deferred to the next Synod. This Standing Order does not apply to debates on amendments since the Synod 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. The Synod Clerk shall provide for the deferred motion to be represented at the next Meeting of the Synod.
- d) The motions described in Standing Orders 8a, 8b and 8c above are exceptions to Standing Order 6c, 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 8a, 8b, 8c and 8d is determined by the fact that after one of them is before the Synod no other motion can be moved until that one has been dealt with.

## **9. Voting**

- a) Other motions before the Synod shall be determined by a majority of the votes of members of the Synod present and voting as indicated by a show of voting papers, except
  - i) if the Synod decides before the vote that a paper ballot be the method of voting or
  - ii) if the show of voting papers indicates a very close vote, and the Moderator decides, or a member of Synod proposes and the Synod agrees, then a paper ballot shall be the method of voting.
- b) To provide for voting in the case of a paper ballot, and to assist in taking a count of votes, the Moderator will ask the meeting to appoint tellers.

## **10. Questions**

- a) A member may, if two days' notice in writing has been given to the Synod Clerk, ask the Moderator or the Convener of any Group/Committee any question on any matter relating to the business of the Synod to which no reference is made in any report before the Synod.
- b) A member may, when given opportunity by the Moderator, ask the presenter of any report before the Synod a question seeking additional information or explanation relating to matters contained within the report.
- c) Questions asked under Standing Orders 10a and 10b shall be put and answered without discussion.

## **11. Points of order, personal explanations, dissent**

- a) 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 Synod 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 Synod.
- b) 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.

- c) The right to record in the minutes a dissent from any decision of the Synod shall be granted to a member by the Moderator.
- d) 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.

## **12. Admission of public and press**

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

## **13. Circulation of documents**

Only documents authorised by the Synod Clerk in consultation with the Convener of the Synod's Executive Committee may be distributed within the part of the building in which the Synod is meeting.

## **14. Records of the Synod**

- a) The minutes of Synod shall be circulated to members of Synod as soon as practicable after the closure of the Synod.
- b) A signed copy of the minutes shall be preserved at the Synod Office as the official record of the Synod's proceedings.
- c) A record of attendance at the meetings of the Synod shall be kept.

## **15. Suspension and amendment of standing orders**

- a) In any case of urgency or upon proposal of a motion of which due notice has been given, anyone or more of the Standing Orders may be suspended at any meeting, provided that three-fourths of the members of the Synod present and voting shall so decide.
- b) Motions to amend the Standing Orders shall be referred to the Synod Executive before being voted on by the Synod.