

**STANDING ORDERS FOR THE CONDUCT OF  
THE ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETINGS—2026**

- These Standing Orders are proposed for adoption by the Assembly at the start of the Annual Business Meetings.
- They may be suspended temporarily only on the proposal of the chairperson and by a two-thirds majority of those present and voting.
- The meetings will normally be chaired by the President. If someone other than the President does chair the meetings, that chairperson shall be granted the powers of the President in these Standing Orders.

**1. VOTING MEMBERS AT THE ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETINGS**

**1.1** As defined in the GA Constitution, the voting members of the Assembly at the Annual Business Meetings are:

- A. appointed delegates of Congregations, Regional Associations, and Affiliated Societies
- B. full individual members [i.e. Ministers, Lay Pastors, Lay Leaders on the appropriate Roll; Honorary Members; Honorary GA Officers and members of the Executive Committee]

**1.2** A voting card will be issued to each person entitled to vote and the signed card must be shown when voting.

**1.3** Associate members are *not* entitled to vote at the Annual Business Meetings.

**2. MOTIONS**

**2.1** Conditions for accepting motions for debate at Annual Meetings as defined in the General Assembly Constitution

2.1.1 Motions may be submitted:

- A. by Congregations, Regional Associations or Affiliated Societies on condition that they are supported by a majority of their governing bodies and evidenced by a signed copy of the appropriate minute
- B. by at least twelve individual Full Members of the Assembly [i.e. as listed in 1.1.B] who have endorsed the motion
- C. by the Executive Committee on its own authority

2.1.2 Motions shall be given to the Chief Officer

- A. in writing
- B. with the names a proposer and a seconder
- C. at least fifty-six days before the first day of the annual meeting

2.1.3 Motions for law reform or on public policy should, where appropriate, take into account different legal jurisdictions.

2.1.4 Motions should be accompanied by a background paper.

**2.2** The Executive Committee shall give members [of the Assembly] at least thirty days' notice of any motions, either by circular or by advertisement or by other reasonable means.

**2.3** The Steering Committee has authority

2.3.1 to help proposers and seconders write their motions in a manner most helpful to consideration;

2.3.2 to propose amalgamation of similar motions;

2.3.3 to facilitate the acceptance of helpful and clarifying amendments;

2.3.4 to arrange a Motions Workshop in advance of the meeting;

2.3.5 to determine the category of motions

**2.4** Once a motion has been proposed and seconded it belongs to the meeting.

**2.5** Emergency Motions

2.5.1 Emergency motions are about issues of public concern which have arisen since the announced closure date for the acceptance of motions.

2.5.2 They must be submitted:

A. at the earliest opportunity

B. in writing

C. with the names of a proposer and of a seconder

to the Chief Officer either before the meetings or at the earliest possible time during the meetings.

2.5.3 The Chair will seek permission from the meeting, without prior discussion, to admit an emergency motion to the agenda. A two thirds majority of those present and voting is required.

2.5.4 In all other respects the provisions of Clauses 2.1 to Clauses 2.4 hereof shall apply.

**2.6** Ordinary and/or emergency motions may not be used *either* to rescind a resolution already passed at the same Annual Meeting *or* to reintroduce the issue of a defeated motion at the same Annual Meeting with a new motion having the same effect.

**2.7** Administrative Motions

Administrative motions are intended to facilitate the business of the General Assembly, including, but not limited to: acceptance of the Annual Report and Accounts; appointment of Officers and Auditors; the grant of honorary membership; thanks and greetings; and minor changes to the Constitution or Standing Orders. Such motions are not taken into account in the limits on the number of ordinary and emergency motions.

### 3. SPEAKING

#### 3.1 The following people may speak:

- voting delegates from Congregations, Regional Associations, and Affiliated Societies
- voting full individual members [i.e. as listed in 1.1.B]
- Associate members
- non-voting observers from recognised small congregations [By-law 2.2]

Permission to speak for anyone not constitutionally entitled to do so may be granted only by the Chair.

#### 3.2 Speakers

- Speakers should give their names and the capacity in which they speak.
- Speakers are encouraged to notify the Chief Officer of their intention to speak and should indicate, if possible, whether they will be speaking for or against a particular motion or making neutral comment. The decision to call any speaker rests with the Chair.
- No member shall speak more than once on any motion without the consent of the Assembly; however the proposer of a motion (but not the proposer of an amendment that has not yet been voted on) may reply immediately before the vote is taken.

#### 3.3 Length of speeches

- Proposer and seconder of a motion have a maximum of 6 minutes between them.
- All other speeches, including the proposer's reply and any speakers to any amendments being debated, shall be limited to a maximum of 2 minutes each.
- but the Assembly, by a majority of those present and voting, may allow an extension in any particular case.

### 4. AMENDMENTS TO MOTIONS

#### 4.1 Amendments to motions:

- must be submitted at the earliest opportunity
- in writing either to the Chief Officer or to the Chair
- with the names of voting members as proposer and a seconder

#### 4.2 The Chair:

- shall read out an amendment before anyone speaks (including before the proposer of the motion speaks, if the amendment is submitted before the debate begins)

- shall have discretion to select between amendments which appear to have substantially the same effect
- may, with the agreement of the movers of any two or more amendments, put them to the Assembly as a single composite amendment with one proposer and one seconder
- which is, in effect, a proposal that a motion be rejected shall be dealt with by voting for or against the substantive motion

#### 4.3 Amendments

- shall be duly proposed and seconded by voting members, without speeches
- shall be debated and voted on one at a time unless the Chair rules that – in order to facilitate debate – two or more amendments may be debated together
- shall be voted on in the order in which they were moved and before the vote on the relevant motion

#### 4.4 If an amendment

- is lost, other amendments may be moved on the original motion
- is carried, the amended motion takes the place of the original motion and becomes the motion upon which any further amendment may be moved. The proposer and seconder of the amendment become the proposer and seconder of the motion for debate, including in relation to length of speeches and proposer’s reply.

#### 4.5 Amendments to amendments shall follow the same rules as for amendment

- An amendment to an amendment which is, in effect, a proposal that an amendment be rejected shall be dealt with by voting for or against the amendment
- An amendment to an amended motion which is, in effect, a proposal that an amended motion be rejected shall be dealt with by voting for or against the amended motion

### 5. PROCEDURAL MOTIONS

**5.1** When the Chair stands (or otherwise indicates) any person speaking or waiting to speak should sit down so that the Chair may be heard without interruption.

**5.2** A debate on a motion may be brought to an end [“closure”] in the following ways:

- by a voting member moving the closure of the debate on a motion so that the vote be taken immediately [“that the question be now put”]

- by a voting member moving the closure of the debate on a motion without further discussion and without a vote [“next business”]
- by a voting member requesting the general meeting to instruct the proposer and seconder of a motion to consult further and return with the motion to the next general meeting or the one following [“refer back”]
- by a voting member moving an adjournment and the debate being resumed later [“adjournment of debate”]

**5.3** A debate on a report may be brought to an end [“closure”] in the following way:

- by a voting member moving that a report presented to the Assembly should be referred back for further consideration either in whole or in specified part.

**5.4** A request for a “secret” ballot shall be moved and seconded by two voting members and approved by two thirds of the members present and voting.

**5.5** When any of these procedures has been initiated, the Chair, having considered whether or not reasonable debate has taken place, will put the procedural motion to a vote without discussion. A two thirds majority of those present and voting is required for procedural motions.

## **6. VOTING**

**6.1** Those voting must display their voting cards.

**6.2** Voting on amendments to motions and voting on motions is by a simple majority.

**6.3** Voting on procedural motions requires a two thirds majority of those present and voting.

**6.4** Voting on alterations to the General Assembly Constitution requires not less than two thirds majority of those present and voting.

**6.5** At the Chair’s discretion, or at the request of at least 40 voting members, a counted ballot shall take place. Those abstaining from voting will be counted as well.

**6.6** In the event of a tie the Chair has a casting vote.

**6.7** Once the motion is passed it becomes a resolution.

## **7. SELECTION OF MOTIONS**

In the event that a greater number of ordinary or emergency motions has been received than that permitted in the Constitution, a simple majority ballot of delegates shall be undertaken at the first Business Meeting as to which motions shall be taken. In the event of manual voting, the Steering Committee shall appoint appropriate persons to count the votes, and the vote shall be announced by the end of the first Business Meeting, or as soon as practical thereafter. In the event that electronic voting is to take place, and the votes automatically tallied, the votes may be announced sooner.

In the event of a tie for the fourth motion to be taken, the Chair shall have a casting vote.

## **8. STEERING COMMITTEE**

**8.1** Questions on the procedure for the conduct of the meetings shall be referred to a Steering Committee comprising three people, whose appointment shall be confirmed by the General Assembly. The Steering Committee shall remain in office in between meetings, and shall have the power to appoint to vacancies, in order to advise the General Assembly Officers on matters of procedure affecting the Annual Business Meeting as they arise.

**8.2** Members of the Steering Committee may be called upon by the Chair during the meeting to offer advice on questions of and disputes over procedure. Before or during the meetings the Steering Committee may ask proposers and/or seconders to amend or composite their motions by mutual agreement. If such an agreement is not reached, then the Steering Committee shall recommend to the Chair how the motions before the Assembly shall be dealt with.

Approved by the Steering Group in December 2024

***Note: Proposed changes from the previously approved Standing Orders are shown, with strikethroughs for removed text, and underlining to indicate new / replacement text. Changes to dates and document numbers, and corrections for minor typos or grammatical errors, are not shown.***