



## EFFECTIVE LARGE ASSEMBLY DECISION-MAKING AT ANNUAL DELEGATE SESSIONS/ASSEMBLY MEETINGS

**Introduction** When an organization or a collection of people assembled for the purpose of conducting/discerning the essential business of this assembled group, a process for making vital decisions must exist.

*Mennonite Church Saskatchewan (MC Sask)* may be regarded as such an organization of churches joined together through the holding of a common faith and structured in a composite of 31 individual congregations located throughout the province and directly affiliated with Mennonite Church Canada as an Area Church. As an accepted responsibility of each of these churches, an Annual Delegate Assembly is held which is expressly designed to consider all matters of importance to this 'faith-based' collection of Christian believing persons.

**Annual Assembly** In order to arrive at decisions which accurately reflect the expressed will of the assembled delegates, a decisional process is required which allows all those assembled to feel respected as valid participants in all matters brought before them through a formally established agenda.

Over time many and varied ways of making a 'group decision' have been tried with varying levels of satisfaction. Robert's Rules of Order are generally accepted as the most appropriate rules to follow to ensure a respectful and orderly meeting of a large assembly in which a positive decorum is maintained within a reasonable amount of allotted time.

All democratically oriented countries and organizations follow fairly rigorous parliamentary procedures during the debate and discussion of issues with ultimate decisions reached that meet the will of the majority of those assembled. The authenticity of the will of those gathered is determined by either a 'simple majority' or a larger majority such as two-thirds or even greater depending on the importance of the decision being made. In less democratic locations and situations, those in positions of power generally exert the most influence in the decisional process and frequently impose their views and will on the marginalized and less powerful.

As a Christian Community of believers it is a given that a respectful, courteous and fair decisional process will be followed by those in leadership and by the assembled body. In the context of *MC Sask* matters of noticeable importance are framed and presented to the assembly in the form of resolutions. In view of their importance they need to be stated clearly, unambiguously and implicitly relevant to the business of the assembled. In order for the delegates of this assembly to fully understand the resolution/s under consideration, they must be presented in a timely manner so as to allow the delegates adequate time to develop their own responses for the required debate/discussion times.

**Resolutions Committee** To assist in the presentation of clearly worded resolutions, it has become a well established practice to appoint a competent and considerate 'resolutions committee' that will in a non-prejudicial manner consider all resolutions to be presented to the annual assembly well in advance of the assembly dates. This committee will review each resolution for its clarity, relevance to the scheduled assembly, and distinctiveness with regard to all other resolutions appearing at this time. This committee will then present the resolutions in a format that meets the requirements, as stated earlier, to all the congregations of *MC Sask* and be available during the actual assembly meeting for continued assistance.

Drafted by Peter Peters and Ernie Epp

### **Resolutions for the Annual Delegate Assembly**

Approved, 2016

**Policy:** *Mennonite Church Saskatchewan (MC Sask) will appoint a Resolutions Committee consisting of no less than three (3) persons who are understanding of the need for distinctive and clearly written resolutions relevant to the work and mission of Mennonite Church Saskatchewan before the date established for submission of resolutions for consideration at the MC Sask Annual Delegate Assembly.*

#### **Procedures:**

1. a) As per *MC Sask* Bylaw Article 15(4) **Procedures**, all resolutions for advance reading by congregations should be submitted to *MC Sask* 60 days in advance of the annually scheduled Annual Delegate Assembly. However, at times it is appropriate for submissions to be made after the set deadline date. The Resolutions Committee has the responsibility to determine the acceptability of such a late submission.  
  
b) Resolutions or notices of motion may also be drafted at the actual delegate assembly and need to be submitted to the Resolutions Committee prior to their appearance on the agenda of the assembly.
2. Any member of a church of *MC Sask* or a group of such members may submit a resolution for consideration at the Annual Assembly of delegates.
3. When submitting a resolution a name and contact information must be provided for the Committee's use if issues or questions arise related to the resolution. Each resolution must be accompanied by explanatory commentary not longer than approximately 250 words so as to provide a complete picture of the resolution and its essence. Pertinent facts and related information must be checked to ensure the reliability and authenticity of their source.
4. Each resolution to be submitted begins with the words: Be it resolved...

5. When it is received, each resolution will be reviewed by the Resolutions Committee in preparation for the Annual Delegate Assembly.
6. As per *MC Sask* Bylaw Article 15(6) **Procedures**, after being put to the floor a resolution or motion may be\*:
  - a. Put to a vote and passed or defeated;
  - b. Amended/modified;
  - c. Deferred for further consideration at a later time in the session;
  - d. Postponed/tabled for consideration at a later session;
  - e. Suppressed;
  - f. Treated in any of the other manner provided in rules of order (suppression of debate, consideration of the question a second time, and preventing final action on a question in an unusually small or unrepresentative group).

\*These outcomes follow Bylaw Article 15(9) **Procedures**, which states “decisions about rules of order which are not clarified in the Act or these bylaws shall be guided by a recent edition of *Roberts Rules of Order*.”

7. These proceedings and the relevance of the rules of order shall be overseen by the Parliamentarian, in consultation with the presiding officer, typically the MC Sask Moderator, and Resolutions Committee as necessary.