

# Draft Proposed General Synod Regulations for a United Federation

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Prefacing Note: This document in its current state is only a working document formulated by a sub-committee of the committee. Though not finalized, this document has been included in the report to the general synods simply to give some indication of what regulations could be adopted to function with the PJCO in a federation made up of both United Reformed and Canadian Reformed Churches. Should the federations proceed with uniting together, the committee would willingly craft a final proposal.

## **1. The Convening Church**

- 1.1. The previous general synod appoints a convening church for the next synod (cf. PJCO 30). This is done in rotation between the regional synods.
- 1.2. The designated clerk (cf. PJCO 21B) appointed by general synod to serve the convening church shall serve this church in carrying out its duties. He is responsible in this work to the convening church.

## **2. The convening and constituting of a synod**

- 2.1. Nine months prior to convocation, the convening church shall publish:
  - 2.1.1. The time and place of the next synod;
  - 2.1.2. The time and place for the prayer service;
  - 2.1.3. The address of the convening church to which all material is to be sent;
  - 2.1.4. The address for obtaining a copy of the Church Order and the Regulations for General Synod;
  - 2.1.5. The requirements that:
    - 2.1.5.1. The convening church must be in receipt of all material for synod no later than six weeks prior to the convocation date of synod. Material received after this date may not be added by the convening church to the Provisional Agenda, but shall be submitted to synod for its judgment regarding admissibility;
    - 2.1.5.2. Materials submitted to synod that quote any foreign language source must provide a full English translation, and in a footnote the citation in the original language.
- 2.2. At least six months prior to convocation the convening church shall send the (first) Provisional Agenda to all the churches.
- 2.3. The convening church shall forward to the delegates and first alternates:
  - 2.3.1. A provisional agenda of all materials, including:

- 2.3.1.1. Reports;
- 2.3.1.2. Correspondence from the churches;
- 2.3.1.3. Overtures;
- 2.3.1.4. Appeals.
- 2.3.2. A copy of the current Regulations;
- 2.3.3. A copy of the Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship.
- 2.4. The convening church shall forward to the churches all overtures submitted by the regional synods for general synod.
- 2.5. The consistory of the convening church shall call an official prayer service to be held prior to the opening of synod.
- 2.6. The convening church shall provide a chairman to chair the meeting of the delegates until synod has been constituted. In the meeting of the delegates he shall call the meeting to order with scripture reading and prayer.
- 2.7. The convening church shall:
  - 2.7.1. Examine the credentials, reporting to the meeting of delegates;
  - 2.7.2. Oversee the election of the officers in this order: chairman, vice-chairman, first clerk, and second clerk. Election to office is to be by majority of valid votes cast (cf. PJCO 30);
  - 2.7.3. Declare synod constituted;
  - 2.7.4. Present a report of its work to synod.

### **3. Matters Properly Before a Synod (Admissibility)**

- 3.1. Provisional Agenda
  - 3.1.1. Immediately upon being constituted the synod shall use the provisional agenda to establish its agenda.
- 3.2. Reports
  - 3.2.1. A report is a written document from a committee or an appointee of a synod indicating the work performed in response to a synod's mandate and presenting recommendations to synod.
- 3.3. Overtures
  - 3.3.1. An overture is a written proposal to synod, originating from a consistory and processed through a classis and regional synod, requesting a decision regarding a specific matter for the benefit of the churches.
  - 3.3.2. In order to be admissible an overture must provide written grounds.
- 3.4. Appeals
  - 3.4.1. An appeal is a written request made to a synod by a consistory or individual within the federation for a judgment regarding a matter previously decided upon by an assembly within the federation.
  - 3.4.2. In order to be admissible an appeal must provide written grounds (cf. PJCO 31).
  - 3.4.3. An appellant has the right to defend his appeal personally or together with a spokesperson.

3.5. Correspondence from the churches

3.5.1. Correspondence from the churches includes:

3.5.1.1. Interaction with matters pertaining to committee reports;

3.5.1.2. Correspondence from churches in ecclesiastical fellowship.

**4. Officers and advisory committees of a synod**

4.1. The officers shall perform the duties listed below and any others assigned by synod (cf. PJCO 21F). Their official functions shall end at the conclusion of the synod.

4.2. The chairman

4.2.1. He shall call the members to order at the appointed time, call the roll and shall see to it that each session is properly opened and closed.

4.2.2. He shall see to it that business is transacted in the proper order and is expedited as much as possible.

4.2.3. He shall recognize only those who have properly asked for the floor.

4.2.4. He shall ensure that members observe the rules of order and decorum and shall pastorally admonish those who do not.

4.2.5. He shall welcome fraternal delegates or other guests and respond to greetings received or appoint other members for this purpose.

4.2.6. He shall place before synod every motion that is properly made and seconded, and shall clearly state every question before a vote is taken.

4.2.7. He shall state matters of fact, inform synod regarding points of order, and duly exercise the prerogative of declaring a motion or a person out of order.

4.2.8. In case of a point of order, the chairman must make a ruling at once. If his ruling is challenged, it shall be submitted to Synod for decision by majority vote.

4.2.9. If he feels the need to speak on a pending question, he shall relinquish the chair to the vice-chairman until the matter under consideration is decided. He shall retain his right to vote on any question.

4.2.10. He shall close the Synod with appropriate remarks and with prayer.

4.3. The vice-chairman

4.3.1. He shall function as chairman in the absence of the chairman.

4.3.2. He shall assist the chairman as circumstances require.

4.3.3. He shall prepare the Press Release.

4.4. The first clerk

4.4.1. He shall keep a proper record of the business of synod. This record shall ordinarily contain:

4.4.1.1. The roll call;

4.4.1.2. The opening and closing of sessions;

4.4.1.3. All final reports of committees;

- 4.4.1.4. All decisions of synod, including all motions and amendments, whether carried or defeated. He shall not include in the Acts any motion that was withdrawn;
- 4.4.1.5. All fraternal greetings;
- 4.4.1.6. All documents that synod by a majority vote has decided to insert in the Acts.
- 4.4.2. Every morning he shall present the proposed Acts of the previous day for approval.
- 4.5. Second Clerk
  - 4.5.1. He shall function as the clerk in the absence of the first clerk.
  - 4.5.2. He shall assist the first clerk as circumstances require.
  - 4.5.3. He shall handle outgoing mail on behalf of synod.
- 4.6. Advisory Committees
  - 4.6.1. Advisory committees serve the synod by facilitating the work of synod during its sessions.
  - 4.6.2. The officers of synod shall propose advisory committees, with a convener, to serve for the duration of synod. A committee member shall have had no prior involvement in the matters he has to deal with.
  - 4.6.3. The officers of synod shall propose an arrangement of matters on the agenda to the appropriate committees. These committees shall serve synod with reports on their assigned agenda items. The reports shall include:
    - 4.6.3.1. Materials;
    - 4.6.3.2. Admissibility;
    - 4.6.3.3. Observations;
    - 4.6.3.4. Considerations;
    - 4.6.3.5. Recommendations;
    - 4.6.3.6. Grounds.
  - 4.6.4. Reports shall be distributed in adequate time before discussion.
  - 4.6.5. The committee reporter shall present the reports.
  - 4.6.6. During the discussion the task of defending the report shall rest primarily with one member of the committee of the committee's choice. Other committee members shall receive the privilege of the floor to elaborate on and clarify any point.
  - 4.6.7. If there is a minority report, both the majority and minority reports shall be given into discussion, but the majority report shall be voted upon first.
  - 4.6.8. The report may be referred back to the advisory committee for reconsideration.
  - 4.6.9. Non-delegate advisors shall not be appointed to the committee.
  - 4.6.10. Someone who has been requested to advise synod on a matter shall address synod on this point only when asked to do so by the chairman.
  - 4.6.11. Advisory committee meetings shall be opened to fraternal delegates.

## **5. Standing and Ad Hoc Committees**

- 5.1. A synod may appoint standing committees and ad hoc committees. The authority of these committees shall be limited to the mandates given them by synod. No committee may arrogate to itself duties or mandates not specifically assigned to it.
- 5.2. Standing Committees
  - 5.2.1. A standing committee, whose members and alternates are appointed by synod, serves on a continuing basis until discharged.
  - 5.2.2. A standing committee made up of individuals or a church may be appointed by a synod to carry out specific synod functions such as managing finances, archiving, etc.
  - 5.2.3. Its members are appointed for specified terms. The committee and its mandate continue even though the members of the committee serve only until their terms are completed.
  - 5.2.4. The members of a standing committee shall serve no more than three consecutive three-year terms, each term commencing at the time of synodical appointment. Members who have completed three consecutive terms are eligible for reappointment after one year. A church or a committee may suggest names to synod for consideration for appointment.
- 5.3. Ad hoc committees
  - 5.3.1. An ad hoc committee (and alternates) is appointed by synod to perform a specified task only. The deadline by which it is to report is determined by synod.
  - 5.3.2. An ad hoc committee shall report to an intervening synod on:
    - 5.3.2.1. Its progress;
    - 5.3.2.2. The need to review, alter, or continue its mandate;
    - 5.3.2.3. The need to alter or continue the committee's membership.
- 5.4. Reports from standing and ad hoc committees:
  - 5.4.1. The report of these committees shall contain the following:
    - 5.4.1.1. A review of the committee's mandate;
    - 5.4.1.2. A summary of the committee's activities;
    - 5.4.1.3. Recommendations for synodical action.
  - 5.4.2. These committees shall send their reports to the local churches six months prior to general synod for their review and recommendations to synod.
  - 5.4.3. The reports of these committees should stand on their own merit at synod. If synod requires some clarification, it can ask one of the committee members to elaborate.
  - 5.4.4. When synod has decided on a matter, it shall declare that its decision constitutes synod's answer to that particular matter.

## **6. Rules of Order**

### **6.1. Open and closed sessions of synod**

- 6.1.1. An open or plenary session is a session open to everyone.
- 6.1.2. A closed session is a session where only members of synod and office-bearers may be present. This shall be used in delicate or unusual situations.
- 6.1.3. A closed-restricted session is a session where only members of synod may be present. Such a session may only be held when synod judges that such a course is dictated by due regard for personal honour or the welfare of the churches in extremely delicate situations.

### **6.2. Main Motions**

- 6.2.1. A main motion is one which presents a specific matter for consideration or action.
- 6.2.2. A main motion is acceptable under the following conditions:
  - 6.2.2.1. The motion is in accord with the Scriptures as interpreted by the Three Forms of Unity, and the Church Order (cf. PJCO 21); and
  - 6.2.2.2. The mover has been recognized by the chair;
  - 6.2.2.3. The motion has been seconded;
  - 6.2.2.4. The chairman judges the motion acceptable;
  - 6.2.2.5. The motion is presented in writing.
- 6.2.3. A main motion is not acceptable under the following conditions:
  - 6.2.3.1. If another motion is before synod;
  - 6.2.3.2. If it conflicts with any decision already taken by this synod;
  - 6.2.3.3. If it interferes with any matter that has been tabled to a definite time;
  - 6.2.3.4. If it is substantially the same as a motion already rejected by synod.

### **6.3. A Motion to Amend**

- 6.3.1. This is a proposal to alter a main motion in language or in meaning before final action is taken on the motion.
- 6.3.2. A motion to amend may propose any of the following: to strike out, to insert, or to substitute certain words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs.
- 6.3.3. A motion to amend is not a proper amendment if it nullifies the main motion or is not germane to it. No new matter may be introduced to synod under the guise of an amendment. The chairman shall judge whether an amendment is acceptable or he may submit the matter to a vote.
- 6.3.4. A motion to amend an amendment is permissible and is called a secondary motion. Only one such amendment may be considered at a time.
- 6.3.5. All motions may be amended except the following:
  - 6.3.5.1. To adjourn;

- 6.3.5.2. To table, or to place again a tabled motion before the body;
- 6.3.5.3. To reconsider;
- 6.3.5.4. To rescind;
- 6.3.5.5. To take up a question out of its regular order;
- 6.3.5.6. Appeals to the floor from the decision of the chair;
- 6.3.5.7. Calls for the order of the day, requests or questions of any kind;
- 6.3.5.8. Points of order.

#### 6.4. A motion to table

- 6.4.1. A motion may be made to postpone a matter temporarily or to a definite time. A motion may not be made to postpone a matter indefinitely.
- 6.4.2. A motion to table temporarily
  - 6.4.2.1. Tabling a matter temporarily implies that synod will resume consideration on the matter at a later unspecified hour or date.
  - 6.4.2.2. This motion is not debatable or amendable.
  - 6.4.2.3. When synod wishes to resume consideration of the matter any member may move to place again the matter before the body. The motion to place the matter again before the body is not debatable or amendable.
  - 6.4.2.4. All matters that have been tabled temporarily must be placed before the body again before synod adjourns.
- 6.4.3. A motion to table to a definite time
  - 6.4.3.1. Tabling a matter to a definite time implies that synod will resume consideration on the matter at a specified hour or date.
  - 6.4.3.2. This motion is debatable and may be amended.
  - 6.4.3.3. If a motion to table to a definite time has passed, no other motion similar in word or thought to the tabled matter may appear before synod.
  - 6.4.3.4. The matter tabled to a definite time may be taken up before the specified time by a majority vote of synod.
  - 6.4.3.5. If a motion to amend has been tabled definitely, the main motion to which the tabled amendment is related is likewise deferred.
  - 6.4.3.6. Any number of matters may be tabled to the same time. When that time arrives, the matters tabled are taken up in the order in which they were tabled.
  - 6.4.3.7. When the hour arrives to which such matters have been tabled, and synod is at that time busy with another matter, synod may decide to finish this matter first.
  - 6.4.3.8. All matters that have been tabled to a definite time must be placed before the body before synod adjourns.

#### 6.5. Privileged motions

- 6.5.1. Call for the order of the day. When any member of synod believes that the regular business of synod is being obstructed or interrupted by irrelevant or unimportant material, he has the right to rise and to call for the order of the day. This means that he desires synod to return to the regular course of action. The following rules apply:
  - 6.5.1.1. A call for the order of the day may be made without recognition and may be done while another member is speaking;
  - 6.5.1.2. Such a call needs no seconding, is not debatable, and must be put to a vote;
  - 6.5.1.3. It has precedence over every other motion except a motion to adjourn or to take a recess.
- 6.5.2. Point of order. It is the duty of the chairman to apply the rules of order and to prevent infractions. Should a member believe that the rules have been misinterpreted or misapplied, he may rise stating that he wishes to make a point of order. Asked by the chairman to state the point, he does so, and the chairman renders his decision at once on the point in question. The following rules apply:
  - 6.5.2.1. A point of order may be raised at any time and must be recognized by the chairman;
  - 6.5.2.2. It needs no seconding and is not debatable;
  - 6.5.2.3. If the member making the point of order is not satisfied with the decision of the chairman he may challenge the ruling. When this is done the point of order becomes debatable and a simple majority is sufficient to sustain or reverse the chairman's decision.
- 6.5.3. Call for a division of the question
  - 6.5.3.1. With a majority vote of synod, a motion consisting of several parts must be divided into its component parts and each part must be voted on separately.
- 6.6. Right of protest
  - 6.6.1. It is the right of any member to protest against any decision of Synod.
  - 6.6.2. Protest should be registered immediately, or during the session in which the matter concerned was acted upon.
  - 6.6.3. Protests must be registered individually and not in groups.
  - 6.6.4. A member may request that his name and dissenting vote be recorded. Such a request must be made immediately after the vote is taken.
- 6.7. Motion to bring matters once decided again before synod
  - 6.7.1. If for weighty reasons any member of synod desires reconsideration of a matter once decided, one of the following motions may be used.
  - 6.7.2. Motion to reconsider



- 6.7.2.1. The intent of such a motion is to propose a new discussion and a new vote. This motion must be made by someone who voted with the prevailing side.
- 6.7.2.2. Such a motion is not acceptable if action has begun in accordance with the motion in question.
- 6.7.2.3. A motion to reconsider may be tabled to a definite time, but it may not be amended or referred to a committee.
- 6.7.2.4. The motion to reconsider is debatable only insofar as the reasons for reconsideration are concerned.
- 6.7.3. Motion to rescind
  - 6.7.3.1. The intent of such a motion is to annul a decision.
  - 6.7.3.2. A motion to rescind shall require a two-thirds majority to carry.
  - 6.7.3.3. A motion to rescind is debatable, including both the reasons for rescinding as well as the merits of the original question.
  - 6.7.3.4. Such a motion can only be used to rescind a decision taken by synod while in session. It cannot be used to rescind decisions taken by a previous synod.
- 6.8. Deliberation
  - 6.8.1. In order to facilitate the discussion on a pending issue, the chairman shall ordinarily call for the discussion in two rounds. In the first round opportunity is given to members to express remarks related to the issue in question. In any following rounds members may react to the discussion on the issue in question.
  - 6.8.2. The discussion may be extended by discretion of the chairman or by a decision of synod.
  - 6.8.3. To obtain the floor, a member must be recognized by the chairman.
  - 6.8.4. When a member obtains the floor, he shall address his remarks exclusively to the chairman, and may not call into question another member's motives or character.
  - 6.8.5. If he fails to adhere to the point under discussion or becomes unnecessarily lengthy, the chairman shall call attention to these faults and insist on pointedness and brevity.
  - 6.8.6. In subsequent rounds the chairman shall give priority to those who have not yet spoken.
  - 6.8.7. When the chairman believes that a matter under consideration has been deliberated sufficiently, he may propose cessation of discussion at the end of a round. If a majority of synod votes to sustain his proposal, discussion shall cease immediately and the vote shall be taken.
  - 6.8.8. Any member of synod, when he deems a matter to have been discussed sufficiently, may move to close the discussion. Should a two thirds majority be in favour, the vote shall be taken, but only after those who have already requested the floor have spoken. However

these speakers shall not be allowed to offer any amendments. A motion to cease deliberating is not acceptable when either a motion to table or a motion to commit or recommit to a committee is before synod.

6.8.9. A member may not speak to a matter and then immediately move to cease debate.

6.8.10. A notice of a motion or of an alternative motion may be given during the discussion.

#### 6.9. Procedural inquiry

6.9.1. Any member of synod may request advice of the chairman regarding how to accomplish a purpose for which he does not know the proper means.

#### 6.10. Voting

6.10.1. The chair shall normally call for a show of hands.

6.10.2. Voting about persons shall always be by ballot.

6.10.3. A member shall not vote on any matter in which he himself or his church was particularly involved (PJCO 21C).

## **Appendix A**

### **Guidelines for Overtures to General Synod**

#### **Definition**

An overture is a written proposal to synod requesting a decision regarding a specific matter for the benefit of the churches.

#### **Guidelines**

1. An overture must originate from a consistory and be processed through a classis and regional synod before being sent to synod.
2. An overture must deal with a matter pertaining to the churches in common (cf. PJCO 21D).
3. If an overture is not adopted by classis, the consistory may appeal this decision to regional synod.
4. An overture must:
  - 4.1. Provide a brief background of the matter being proposed;
  - 4.2. State clearly what is being proposed;
  - 4.3. Provide specific grounds for the proposal;
  - 4.4. Meet the deadline for the provisional agenda.

## **Appendix B**

### **Guidelines for Appeals to General Synod (cf. PJCO 31)**

#### **Definition**

An appeal is a written request for a judgment regarding a matter previously decided upon by a regional or general synod.

#### **Guidelines**

1. An appeal may be made by a consistory or individual who is a member of a church within the federation.
2. A consistory which is convinced that a decision of a regional synod or of the previous general synod conflicts with the Scripture, the Three Forms of Unity, or the Church Order, shall appeal the decision to the next general synod.
3. When a consistory appeals a decision, the matter being appealed must first have been dealt with at the regional synod or at the preceding general synod.
4. When an individual appeals a decision against his personal appeal, the matter he appeals against must first have been dealt with at the regional synod or at the preceding general synod.
5. When an individual wishes to appeal a decision of general synod regarding a matter pertaining to the churches in common, he must bring the matter to the consistory and urge it to appeal the decision to the next general synod.
6. An appellant must
  - 6.1. Provide a brief history or background of the appeal;
  - 6.2. Provide a written copy of and reference to the specific decision of the narrower body which is being appealed;
  - 6.3. Interact with the grounds of the decision of the assembly that previously judged the matter;
  - 6.4. State clearly what is being appealed;
  - 6.5. Stipulate specific grounds for the appeal.