

General Board

Business Item No. GB-09-0640

Title: Incorporation of the Standing Rules for the General Assembly into the Standing Rules for the General Board

Origin: The Standing Committee on Renewal and Structural Reform

Background Information:

The Design¹ calls for the General Board to establish procedures for continual renewal and reform of church structures. The General Board has established the Committee on Renewal and Structural Reform and tasked it with an on-going review of *The Design* and the associated standing rules for the General Assembly, the General Board, and the Administrative Committee.

The Standing Committee on Renewal and Structural Reform is proposing a governance model for the General Board and the Administrative Committee that more clearly defines how the work of these bodies is accomplished. Resultantly, the standing rules of all organizations have been redrafted by the Standing Committee on Renewal and Structural Reform over the course of the past sixteen months.

The Standing Committee members are: Barb Jones, Chair; Don Shelton; Geunhee Yu; Elizabeth Jewell Becker; David Vargas; Russ White; Scott Seay; Regina Morton; Rubin Cruz; Evangelina Perez; Chris Wilson; Jim Powell; and Todd Adams, OGMP staff.

Overview:

The amendments to *The Design*, as approved by the 2005 Portland General Assembly, created a need to amend the Special Rules for the General Assembly, Standing Rules for the General Assembly, Standing Rules for the General Board, and Standing Rules for the Administrative Committee.²

In particular the 2006 reduction in size of the General Board created a need to reorganize the General Board to effectively complete its work. The work of the Administrative Committee, the General Board, and the General Assembly are closely related. The incorporation of tasks formerly described in the Standing Rules for the General Assembly into the General Board will create operational consistencies and streamlining of governance.

¹ Paragraph 54

² The General Assembly has two supplemental documents, the Special Rules for Procedure for the General Assembly and the Standing Rules for the General Assembly. The Special Rules for procedure are amended by the General Assembly on the recommendation of the General Board. The Standing Rules for the General Assembly are amended by the General Board.

In redrafting the rules the Standing Committee on Renewal and Structural Reform utilized BoardSource's best practices for non-profit governance.³

Recommended Action by the General Board:

That the General Board approve the integration of the Standing Rules for the General Assembly into the General Board Standing Rules effective at the close of this meeting and that the Office of the General Minister and President create a transition plan for the implementation of the new rules by January 1, 2010.

³ BoardSource Governance Series Books 1-9; and the Committee Series Books 1-5. www.boardsource.org. BoardSource is dedicated to advancing the public good by building exceptional nonprofit boards and inspiring board service. BoardSource strives to support and promote excellence in board service, is the premier source of cutting-edge thinking and resources related to nonprofit boards, and engages and develops the next generation of board leaders. Board Source, formerly the National Center for Nonprofit Board was founded by Independent Sector and the Association of Governing Board of Colleges and Universities.

**Special Rules of Procedure for the General Assembly
Adopted by the General Assembly 1968 – Revised 1989
Proposed Revisions 2009**

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Introduction

The following special rules of procedure for the General Assembly define further its organization and prescribe additional procedures for the conduct of its business.

As provided in paragraph 48d of *The Design* for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the current edition of Robert's Rules of Order, Revised, shall govern the General Assembly in all other cases to which they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with *The Design* or special rules adopted by the General Assembly.

In addition, the General Assembly may from time to time adopt standing rules as needed for the effective conduct of its business.

The General Board and its Administrative Committee shall likewise adopt standing rules for the guidance of their operations.

1. Classification and Ordering of Business Items to be Considered by the General Assembly

- 1.1. All business items to be considered by the General Assembly, except in cases of emergency, shall be received by or shall originate with the General Board.
- 1.2. Business items may be filed with the General Board by any congregation, region, organization with a recognized relationship, institution or general ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) or by the governing structure of any such body.
- 1.3. Business items must be received by the Office of the General Minister and President at least 180 days in advance of a meeting of the General Assembly in order to allow sufficient time for the General Board to review and refer them with appropriate recommendations to the General Assembly.¹
- 1.4. All business items shall be circulated among the congregations and regions by the Office of the General Minister and President at least 60 days in advance of the General Assembly.
- 1.5. Upon recommendation of the General Minister and President, the Administrative Committee shall determine whether each item qualifies for consideration and its classification.
 - 1.5.1. When an item is disqualified or reclassified or combined, the Office of the General Minister and President shall notify the submitters and in the case of a resolution submitted by a congregation, the regional minister.
 - 1.5.2. The notification shall include the Administrative Committee's rationale.
- 1.6. The Office of the General Minister and President shall assist those who are considering filing business items and provide upon request guidelines and an interpretation of the classifications of business and *The Design*.
- 1.7. The classifications of items shall be included in the General Assembly Docket.

2. Classification of Business Items

2.1. Reports

- 2.1.1. Reports are summaries of ministries performed, plans for ministry, and audited financial statements of each general ministry, commission or other entity established or recognized by the General Assembly.
- 2.1.2. Annually the General Board shall review such reports and make whatever comments or recommendations it deems advisable.
- 2.1.3. In the year in which the General Assembly meets, the General Board shall forward the Reports to the General Assembly.
- 2.1.4. If a Report contains only an account of work done and is primarily for information, after appropriate General Assembly consideration, no action shall be required.
- 2.1.5. If a Report contains recommendations for action by the General Assembly or if the General Board proposes recommendations for action by the General Assembly, such recommendations shall be submitted separately as an Operational, Policy and Organizational Item.

¹ Items postmarked or e-mailed with a delivery receipt requested on the 180th day before the General Assembly shall be regarded as meeting the deadline requirement.)

- 2.1.6. When the timing of the General Assembly prohibits a General Ministry from including an audit of its financial statements in its report, such an audit shall be provided for the next meeting of the General Board. The most recently completed audit shall be provided to the General Assembly.
- 2.1.7. Covenantal relationships are demonstrated by annual informational reports of regions to the General Board and annual statistical reports of the congregations in the *Year Book and Directory of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*. The reports of regions and congregations are not business items for the General Assembly.

2.2. Operational, Policy and Organizational Items

- 2.2.1. Operational, Policy and Organizational Items are those which establish policy, institute or revise structures, or procedures, authorize programs, approve directions or mandate actions.
- 2.2.2. An Operational, Policy and Organizational Item may be originated by the General Board or by any other entity eligible to file business items for the General Assembly.
- 2.2.3. Actions called for in Reports whether recommended by the submitter or by the General Board, shall be transmitted to the General Assembly separately as Operational, Policy and Organizational Items.
- 2.2.4. The General Board shall submit a substitute Operational, Policy and Organizational Item when the substance of multiple items cover the same subject.
- 2.2.5. The submitter of an Operational, Policy and Organizational Item shall be encouraged through guidelines provided by the Office of the General Minister and President to attach a financial estimate of the item and how the expenses will be underwritten, if adopted.
- 2.2.6. The General Board shall review proposed Operational, Policy and Organizational Item(s) make whatever amendments or comments it deems advisable, and refer the items to the General Assembly with recommendation for appropriate action: adopt, not adopt or refer to a designated place for further investigation.

2.3. Calls for Action: (Provisional)

A Call is an invitation of the General Assembly to the Church for action on moral, ethical or justice issues that require urgent presence and witness by the Church in all of its expressions. Action may include reflection, discernment and response.

Pre-General Assembly

- 2.3.1. A Call may originate with any congregation, region, institution of higher education, organization with a recognized relationship and/or general ministry
- 2.3.2. Each Call shall include:
 - 2.3.2.1. A summary statement of the moral, ethical or justice issue proposed for action.

- 2.3.2.2. A rationale describing why this issue ought to be considered by the whole church, especially as it relates to the Church's vision to be a faithful, growing church that demonstrates true community, deep Christian spirituality, and a passion for justice.
- 2.3.2.3. Lists of resources shall be made available to the whole church to inform its consideration and action on the issue. The list of resources shall be provided by the submitting organization(s). The list of resources should include the widest possible variety of perspectives on the issue.
- 2.3.2.4. In the summary statement and rationale, care should be taken to present the moral, ethical or justice issue as objectively as possible, recognizing that faithful people hold divergent positions on issues.
- 2.3.2.5. Ecumenical perspectives shall be sought if not already included.
- 2.3.2.6. A Call must be submitted to the Office of the General Minister and President no later than 180 days prior to the General Assembly in which the Call could be considered.
- 2.3.2.7. A Call shall not be eligible for consideration if either of the two immediate previous General Assemblies has engaged a Call on the same issue, unless its content or the circumstances leading to its submission are substantially different. Moreover, according to its own judgment, the General Board may work with submitters to combine or amend Calls.

The General Board meeting prior to the General Assembly shall:

- 2.3.3. Select no more than three (3) Calls for Action to be forwarded to the General Assembly.
- 2.3.4. Become the submitting organization listed on the Call for Action.
- 2.3.5. Refer non-selected Calls to other expressions of the church deemed to be appropriate venue for reflection, discernment and response; and/or provide opportunities at the General Assembly, such as workshops and after-session, to address non-selected Calls for Action as appropriate.
- 2.3.6. Inform the submitters in writing of Calls that are not selected including the rationale for the decision and conversation as to other places where the call to action might be explored.
- 2.3.7. Publicize their decisions to the Church no less than sixty (60) days before the General Assembly.
- 2.3.8. Include in the General Assembly docket a list containing all of the Calls that were submitted for consideration (and not voluntarily withdrawn), the submitting organization(s), and respective decision, regardless of whether they were selected for engagement by the General Assembly.

At the General Assembly

- 2.3.9. The 3 Calls for Action will be scheduled for engagement during the General Assembly, including but not limited to:
 - 2.3.9.1. Presentation of the summary statement, rationale.

- 2.3.9.2. The reading of a Pastoral Statement from the General Minister and President as informed by the General Board discussion.
- 2.3.9.3. Speakers as determined by the Office of the General Minister and President and the General Assembly Program and Arrangements Committee.
- 2.3.9.4. Opportunities for question and answer in various formats.
- 2.3.9.5. Language translation(s) should be provided for the session(s).
- 2.3.10. The General Minister and President shall design the format and setting to engage the General Assembly in discussion, dialogue and discernment regarding each Call.
- 2.3.11. Calls shall be placed on the Agenda as Orders of the Day.
- 2.3.12. The vote of the General Assembly is to affirm or not affirm each Call as an invitation for action by all expressions of the Church. An affirmation is denoted by 2/3 of the votes.
- 2.3.13. Should a vote for a proposed Call for Action receive a simple majority but fail to receive a 2/3 vote of the General Assembly, the proposed Call for Action shall be referred to General Minister and President. In consultation with the General Board, the GMP shall determine if continued dialogue and research on the subject is needed.
- 2.3.14. The numeric and percentage results of a ballot vote shall be posted and shared with the Church.

Following the General Assembly

- 2.3.15. If the General Assembly votes to affirm a Call for Action, the General Minister and President shall write a Pastoral Letter on behalf of the General Assembly to all expressions of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), inviting the Church to reflect, discern and respond. The letter is understood to speak to the church and not for the church.
- 2.3.16. The letter shall include:
 - 2.3.16.1. The definition of a Call for Action.
 - 2.3.16.2. The Pastoral statement that was presented at the General Assembly.
 - 2.3.16.3. The reason why it is urgent for the Church to be present and to witness to this Call.
 - 2.3.16.4. The summary statement and rationale as presented to the General Assembly.
 - 2.3.16.5. A synopsis of the General Assembly's engagement including the numeric and percentage results of the ballot vote.
 - 2.3.16.6. Recommended resources for reflection, discernment and response.
 - 2.3.16.7. Information about the how the various expressions of the Church are currently responding, including suggested actions.
 - 2.3.16.8. The General Minister and President shall share the letter with appropriate ecumenical and interfaith partners.
 - 2.3.16.9. There will be a report on the response to the Calls at the following General Assembly.

3. Responsibilities of the Office of The General Minister and President(OGMP)

- 3.1.** The General Minister and President, working pastorally and collegially, may counsel to limit the number of business items, urge submitters to combine resolution on a single subject, and offer aid in the drafting of items. Regional Ministers shall be informed when resolutions are received from their regions and may be enlisted in extending interpretation and pastoral care.
- 3.2.** Upon request the Office of the General Minister and President shall provide printed guidelines for the preparation of business items. The guidelines shall include definitions and interpretations of the classifications of business, the standing rules, and *The Design*.
- 3.3.** The General Minister and President shall support the Administrative Committee in its preparation of the docket of business by making recommendations concerning the eligibility of items to be considered and the classification of items. Submitters shall receive appropriate and timely notification if their items are ruled ineligible or placed in classifications other than those under which they were filed and informed that appeals for final decisions may be made to the Administrative Committee.
- 3.4.** In receiving proposed business items and following them through the processes of the Administrative Committee, the General Board and the General Assembly, the General Minister and President shall see that the identity of the group first submitting an item is preserved even if the item eventually is transmitted to the General Assembly by a different entity such as a region, a general ministry or the General Board.
- 3.5.** The General Minister and President shall invite each submitting entity to designate a spokesperson to attend the meeting of the portion of the Administrative Committee and/or General Board in which business for the General Assembly is discussed.
 - 3.5.1.** The designated person shall attend or participate at his or her own expense.
 - 3.5.2.** Communication may occur through the use of technology at the discretion of the Moderator of the General Assembly and the General Minister and President.
 - 3.5.3.** If the entity does not send a person, the General Board through the Office of the General Minister and President shall inform the submitting organization in writing of the General Board's decision and rationale.
- 3.6.** At least 40 days prior to the opening of the General Assembly, the General Minister and President shall invite each submitting entity to designate a spokesperson to make the first affirmative speech when the item is placed before the General Assembly.
 - 3.6.1.** In the case of reports, the designated speaker shall summarize or supplement the printed report.
 - 3.6.2.** Submitting entities shall provide the name and contact information of the designated spokesperson including mailing address to the Office of the General Minister and President no later than 20 days prior to the opening of the General Assembly.

- 3.7. The General Minister and President shall recommend an order of business to the Moderators, which the Presiding Moderator shall propose to the General Assembly as the first item of business.
- 3.8. When a “division of the house” or counted vote is taken on a business item in a plenary session of the General Board, a responsibility of the Office of The General Minister and Presidents to record the count and report the count with the item in the General Assembly minutes.
- 3.9. The Office of the General Minister and President shall convene the General Assembly Program and Arrangements Task Force.
 - 3.9.1. The Task Force shall be comprised of 10 persons or more appointed by the General Minister and President in consultation with the Moderators, and staff from the Office of the General Minister and President.
 - 3.9.1.1. The 10 or more persons shall include the host Regional Minister(s) and at least one member from the Region hosting the next General Assembly.
 - 3.9.1.2. The First Vice Moderator shall chair the Task Force.
 - 3.9.2. The Task Force shall assist in the planning and preparation of the program of worship, education and business for the General Assembly as directed by the General Minister and President and the Moderators.
 - 3.9.3. In developing the program of the General Assembly, the General Minister and President and Moderators shall consult with general ministries, regions, the Administrative Committee and other church leaders as appropriate.
 - 3.9.4. The Office of the General Minister and President shall:
 - 3.9.4.1. Coordinate and administer the implementation of the General Assembly including all program and mechanical preparations in the host city.
 - 3.9.4.2. Coordinate and supervise the Local Arrangements Committees.
 - 3.9.4.3. Execute all contracts serving the General Assembly including the coordination and subletting of space.
 - 3.9.4.4. Survey all hotels and eating establishments contracted for use to assure compliance with General Assembly-established standards².
 - 3.9.5. The full Task Force shall normally meet once with ongoing responsibilities being supervised by the staff of the Office of the General Minister and President, the Moderators of the General Assembly and meetings of Task Force sub-groups.
 - 3.9.5.1. Staff members of the Office of the General Minister and President with responsibilities for program arrangements, promotion and interpretation shall attend Task Force meetings.
 - 3.9.5.2. Regular reports on General Assembly planning and preparations shall be made to the Administrative Committee.

4. Responsibilities of the General Minister and President and the Moderators of the General Assembly

- 4.1. Prepare the agenda for the General Assembly to be approved by the Moderators, including scheduling “orders of the day”.

² See the Office of the General Minister and President’s Event Planning Manual.

- 4.2. Determine appropriate classification of business items.
- 4.3. Work with the Administrative Committee in the event of an appeal of the classification.
- 4.4. Work with ministry partners to provide the General Board with educational material regarding General Assembly business items.

5. Responsibilities of the Administrative Committee of the General Board

- 5.1. Receives and reviews all business items on behalf of the General Board including communication with the submitting organizations.
- 5.2. Forwards recommendations regarding Reports and Operational, Policy and Procedure business items to the General Board including debate times (12, 24 or 48 minutes) and other actions as needed for approval by the General Board.
- 5.3. Receives and makes final decisions concerning appeals regarding eligibility of business items or classification of business items.

6. Responsibilities of the General Board

- 6.1. All business items³ for consideration by the General Assembly, except in cases of emergency, shall originate with or be presented to the General Board.⁴
- 6.2. The General Board shall review the recommendations of the Administrative Committee and present a docket of business to the General Assembly including: recommendation(s) for appropriate action and designation of the length of time for debate (12, 24 or 48 minutes).

7. Business Rules for the General Assembly

- 7.1. The General Assembly shall receive all business items submitted to it by the General Board, consider their comments and recommendations, and after appropriate discussion and debate, take action.
 - 7.1.1. Action on Reports: received by virtue of inclusion in the Docket of the Assembly; no action is required. The General Assembly shall allow the time designated by the General Board for presentation and discussion of each report.
 - 7.1.2. Action on Operational, Policy and Organizational Items:
 - 7.1.2.1. Adopt or not adopt,
 - 7.1.2.2. Commit to the Administrative Committee for revision and reported back to the current General Assembly, as feasible;
 - 7.1.2.3. Commit to the Administrative Committee for designation to the appropriate body or further investigation and reported to the ensuing General Board.
 - 7.1.3. A Call for Action
 - 7.1.3.1. The General Assembly shall vote to issue or not issue the Call. A vote to issue is an affirmation of the rationale and the matter as relevant to the Church.
 - 7.1.3.2. A counted vote with percentage results shall be distributed to the General Assembly and the Church.

³ Section 2 of this Document defines business items

⁴ Paragraph 44 of *The Design*

- 7.2.** The introduction of a business item, properly presented by the presiding Moderator, shall be regarded as the main motion and does not require a second, since the motion originated with a group.
- 7.2.1. After the business item's introduction and allotted debated time, the action of the assembly is on the main motion and not on the recommendation of the General Board, except when the General Board's recommendation is to refer for further investigation, which is a subsidiary motion.⁵
- 7.2.1.1. If the motion to refer fails, the original business item is immediately brought to the floor of the General Assembly.
- 7.2.1.2. The General Board shall prepare a contingent recommendation to adopt or not adopt the original item in case the motion to refer fails.
- 7.2.2. The Administrative Committee shall be limited to the same recommendations as used by the General Board as listed in Section 7.1 of these rules.
- 7.3.** Amendments are not permitted from the floor. A person desiring to amend an item may request that the item be committed to the Administrative Committee, serving as the Committee on Reference and Counsel, for consideration of amending and reporting back to the current General Assembly. When time does not permit for an item to return to the General Assembly, the item shall be assigned to the General Board.
- 7.4.** New business may not be initiated at the General Assembly except for an emergency item.⁶
- 7.5.** When the General Board presents a substitute business item⁷ to the General Assembly, the following procedures shall apply:
- 7.5.1. The moderator shall recognize a member of the General Board to speak in support of the substitute business item.
- 7.5.2. The moderator shall recognize a representative of the group or organization submitting the original business item.
- 7.5.3. If a substitute business item fails, the original item comes immediately to the floor of the General Assembly. The General Board shall have a contingent recommendation prepared.
- 7.5.4. If a substitute business item is replacing multiple business items on the same subject and fails, the originals come before the General Assembly in the order in which they were received by the Office of the General Minister and President.
- 7.6.** A proposed order of business shall be published, including all Orders of the Day, and is the first business item to be presented to the General Assembly for action.
- 7.7.** A motion to receive all General Ministry reports as a group shall be ruled out of order unless the allotted time has passed for discussion and review of all reports. Similarly, a motion to receive a single Report without allowing the designated time for discussion shall be ruled out of order.

⁵ See General Assembly Special Rules 7.13.

⁶ Paragraph 45 of *The Design*.

⁷ A substitute item of business is defined as the General Board creating a new business item based on a resolution submitted by another organization.

7.8. The total time for debate

7.8.1. Shall be set by the Administrative Committee and reviewed by the General Board.

7.8.2. Shall govern the debate on any given business item.

7.8.3. May be changed by the presiding Officer with the approval of the assembly.

7.8.4. May be changed by the assembly.

7.9. Each person with floor privileges⁸, when recognized by the presiding Officer, may speak to each business item and debatable motion once and for no more than 3 minutes, and may speak again only if all other persons desiring to speak to the motion have had the opportunity within the total time for debate.

7.10. The length of time allotted to each speaker may be reduced by motion and approval of the assembly.

7.10.1. The reduction does not apply to the designated spokesperson⁹.

7.10.2. In the event a substitute resolution fails and an original resolution is brought to the floor, the designated spokesperson representing the original motion shall also be allowed 3 minutes.

7.11. If there is a desire to close debate, the following procedure should be used: The chair shall receive the motion, "I move the previous question." When that motion has been seconded and carried by a two-thirds majority, the presiding Officer shall immediately put the main question without debate.

7.12. When the debate is closed:

7.12.1. On a Report, no action is required.

7.12.2. On an Operational, Policy and Organizational Item, it is recommended that the presiding Officer shall say: "The question is on adoption of Business Item No. ____ entitled _____. All those who are in favor of adopting Business Item No. _____, say yes. All those who are opposed, say no." Following the vote it is recommended that the presiding Officer shall say: "The yeses have it and the business item is adopted" or "the noes have it and the business item is not adopted." When a counted vote is taken, the results shall be recorded in the General Assembly minutes.

7.12.3. In a recommendation to refer, it is recommended that the presiding Officer shall say: "The question is on the recommendation of the General Board (or Administrative Committee) to refer Business Item No. ____ entitled _____ to _____ for further investigation. All those who are in favor of referring the business item, say yes. All those who are opposed, say no." Following the vote it is recommended that the presiding Officer shall say: "The yeses have it and the business item is referred" or "the noes have it, the business item is not referred, and it now comes to the floor of the assembly for action."

⁸ Paragraphs 38 a-d of *The Design*.

⁹ See 3.5 and 3.6.2 of the Special Rules for the General Assembly.

7.13. In general, the basic rules of parliamentary procedure as described in the current edition of Robert's Rules of Order, Revised, shall be followed. The following motions, for instance, are in order, the first taking precedence over the second, the second over the third, and so forth.

- 7.13.1. To adjourn
- 7.13.2. To take a recess
- 7.13.3. To raise a question of privilege
- 7.13.4. To call for orders of the day
- 7.13.5. To rise to a point of order
- 7.13.6. To withdraw a motion
- 7.13.7. To close debate (move the previous question)
- 7.13.8. To limit or extend time for discussion and debate
- 7.13.9. To postpone discussion to a certain time
- 7.13.10. To commit
- 7.13.11. The main motion

7.14. Additional notes on motions

- 7.14.1. "Privileged" or "incidental" motions are 7.13.1-7.13.6
- 7.14.2. Motions subsidiary to main motion are 7.13.7-7.13.11
- 7.14.3. Debatable motions are 7.13.9-7.13.11
- 7.14.4. The following cannot be amended: 7.13.1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
- 7.14.5. The following do not require a second: 7.13.3, 4, 5, 6
- 7.14.6. The following may interrupt a speaker: 7.13.3, 4, 5
- 7.14.7. Simple majority votes carry, except for a two-thirds affirmative vote required for 7.13.7 and 7.13.8

8. Procedure for Amendment

8.1. A two-thirds affirmative vote of the voting members of the General Assembly present and voting, a quorum being present, shall be required for any subsequent amendments.¹⁰

8.2. Any proposed amendments shall be circulated in advance as regular business items of the General Assembly.

¹⁰ Paragraph 46 of *The Design*.