

**MASSACHUSETTS CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
STANDING RULES VOTED JUNE 2013**

- I. Resolutions shall conform to the provisions explained below.
- A. A resolution is any main motion presented to the Annual Meeting for action. Resolutions may be related to: (1) procedure; (2) courtesy; (3) structure and organization, or (4) issues of conviction.
  - B. Resolutions adopted by an Annual Meeting are formal expressions of that particular body. The Annual Meeting may speak to the churches of the Massachusetts Conference, to the wider church, the government, or the society. It does not speak for the churches of the Massachusetts Conference. Resolutions may direct or make requests of the Board of Directors or Officers of the Conference; they may not direct persons or units responsible to the Board or Officers including commissions and staff.
  - C. Resolutions may be submitted by: (1) the Board of Directors; (2) program commissions; (3) any local church congregational meeting or governing board authorized to act for it; or (4) any meeting of an Association or Association Board of Directors or Executive Committee. No more than two resolutions may be submitted by any body except the Board of Directors.
  - D. Resolutions intended for submission to the next General Synod must include at least two proposers who are delegates to that General Synod.
  - E. All resolutions must be clear in language and intent and factually correct or the Business Committee may determine that they cannot be presented for consideration. Proposers must be prepared to present and defend the resolution at an Annual Meeting hearing and when the resolution comes up for a vote.
  - F. Resolutions related to issues of Christian conviction will follow either a one- or a two-meeting cycle at the discretion of the Business Committee. This means that a resolution will either be presented and acted upon during the course of a single Annual Meeting, or presented initially at one Annual Meeting and acted on at the subsequent Annual Meeting. Assignments to a one- or two-meeting process will be made in consultation with the proposers of the resolution.
    - 1. In general, a resolution will be accepted for action at the upcoming Annual Meeting when the topic of the resolution is so time-dependent that up to a year's study would cause it to be moot.
    - 2. A less urgent resolution will generally be accepted for action at the upcoming Annual Meeting when it meets the following criteria:
      - a. The Business Committee believes the resolution will command wide support among delegates without a great deal of study and discernment;
      - b. The proposers show evidence that they have already done substantial grassroots organizing on the matter – by, for example, engaging other groups to join them in making the proposal, or holding events or meetings to build support among the churches of the Conference;
      - c. The resolution includes a clear and specific action plan for implementation, and the proposers are ready to participate in its implementation.
    - 3. A resolution will generally be assigned to a process spanning two meetings when
      - a. the Business Committee deems the issue to be complex and multifaceted enough that understanding and consensus will not come easily to the plenary session, and therefore more study and discernment would be helpful;
      - b. The process of grassroots organizing and education on the issue is still in its early stages;
      - c. It is not yet clear what actions are proposed, or there is not yet a group personally committed to implementing the actions.
- A two-meeting resolution will proceed as follows: At the first Annual Meeting, proposers of a resolution will present information and resources related to the topic of the resolution to a gathering of interested persons at the Annual Meeting. During the months following this initial gathering, the proposers will facilitate education, discernment and the development of an action plan through meetings with local churches and/or Associations. The proposers will

recommend the resolution and action plan to the next year's Annual Meeting for adoption by the delegates.

- G. In the allocation of plenary time, resolutions of Christian conviction proposed by two or more groups acting in concert will be given priority over those proposed by a single group.
- H. All resolutions of Christian conviction will be given an open hearing prior to their presentation to the Annual Meeting plenary. Following the presentation of the resolution by its makers, the hearing's moderator will solicit comments, both pro and con, from those in attendance at the hearing. Equal time will be given to both sides of the issue if there are essentially equal numbers of participants for and against the resolution. The moderator of the hearing will work with the proposers and dissenters of the resolution to try to find a common ground, acceptable to the makers. If there is common ground acceptable to the majority in attendance but unacceptable to the makers, the moderator of that hearing may recommend a voice from that majority to present that opposing view to the plenary as stated in II.F.
- I. Resolutions of procedure, courtesy, or structure and organization may be given open hearing time if deemed appropriate by the Business Committee.
- J. Proposals in resolutions dealing with staffing, programming, or program assignments shall be in the form of recommendations to the Board of Directors, which is charged by the MACUCC Bylaws with staff employment and direction as well as program development and coordination.
- K. Resolutions related to issues of Christian conviction shall not be longer than two sides of one sheet and shall use a format that includes (1) a title; (2) a statement explaining the biblical-theological mandate for the resolution; (3) a statement clarifying why the proposed action plan should be adopted by the Annual Meeting at this time; (4) a statement of action to be taken including, where appropriate, implementers, time lines, and funding\*, and (5) the name(s) of the proposer(s) (see C).
- L. The Board of Directors may submit resolutions and other actions directly to the Annual Meeting. Resolutions from other sources (see C) related to structure and organization (excluding budget\*) or issues of conviction are to be submitted to the Business Committee at least 120 days before the Annual Meeting and sent to the churches at least 45 days before the meeting.

Resolutions to be presented for action at the upcoming Annual Meeting shall be referred by the Business Committee to the appropriate Conference body (Board of Directors, commissions or other) for a recommendation of action by the Annual Meeting. These recommendations will be reported to the Annual Meeting by the Business Committee.

Resolutions from other sources related to structure and organization (excluding budget) or issues of conviction which are received less than 120 days before the Annual Meeting, or during the meeting, shall be submitted by the proposers to the Business Committee in sufficient quantity for distribution to delegates. All resolutions which fail to meet the 120-day deadline shall be reported by the Business Committee to the meeting after all other items of business are concluded. Each such resolution shall be referred to the appropriate MACUCC body unless the rules are suspended (requires a two-thirds vote) or unless the Business Committee determines that a resolution could not have been submitted in conformance with the deadline because it deals with subject matter which could not have been anticipated at that time. In this case, the Business Committee will accept the resolution for presentation to the Annual Meeting for action as long as it conforms with the provisions above.

## II. Debate shall conform to the provisions listed below.

- A. Voting members and others wishing to be recognized shall obtain use of a microphone, address the chair, and identify themselves by name and church.
- B. Pro and con microphones may be designated by the Moderator as needed.
- C. A delegate placing a motion before the body must make the motion and have it seconded before speaking to the motion.
- D. A delegate may not speak on an issue and conclude by moving the previous question.

- E. No one may speak to the same debatable motion more than twice except to answer questions from the floor or the chair.
  - F. A maker, or the designee of the makers of a motion has a maximum of three minutes for the first speech in favor of the resolution. A maximum of three minutes is also allowed for the first speech in opposition of the motion. Each of these initial pro and con speeches should include a statement of the theological basis for the speaker's stance. Subsequent speakers, pro and con, are limited to 90 seconds each.
  - G. Main motions not relating to procedure and not distributed in printed material shall be presented to the Business Committee in writing, signed by the maker and a seconder. Only voting members may make motions
  - H. A motion to limit or extend the limits of debate is itself undebatable; such motions require a second and a two-thirds vote unless decided by general consent.
  - I. No amendment from the floor shall be in order before a second speaker in favor and a second speaker opposed to the pending resolution have had the opportunity to be heard.
  - J. No more than one amendment will be considered at a time. Anyone wishing to offer an alternative amendment later should announce that intention before action is completed on the pending amendment. Debate on amendments and all other motions other than main motions shall not exceed 10 minutes. Any amendment that changes the general intent of the original main motion will be declared out of order by the Moderator.
  - K. All amendments must be submitted in writing before presentation. Amendments of more than 35 words must be submitted to the Business Committee in time to be entered into a computer for on-screen projection before debate commences on the related main motion. Amendments of 35 words or less may be proposed from the floor and must be presented to the Moderator, signed by the maker and a seconder.
  - L. Non-members, not otherwise authorized to speak, may speak only by a two-thirds vote of the Annual Meeting.
  - M. Out of compassion and respect for each other, there shall be no applause or floor demonstrations when a motion passes or fails unless the vote on that motion has been unanimous.
- III. All matters of business presented to the Conference Meeting shall be referred to the Business Committee unless referred to some other committee by special vote of the Conference. All matters of business referred to the Business Committee shall be reported for action before the final adjournment of the meeting.
  - IV. All those desiring to have materials distributed at plenary sessions of the Annual Meeting must receive the prior permission of the Business Committee before distribution can be made.
  - V. These Standing Rules shall remain in effect until changed by a vote of a subsequent Annual Meeting or Special Meeting.
- \* The Massachusetts Conference Bylaws require that "Changes to the proposed budget will be considered at an Annual Meeting only if a written proposal outlining the desired changes to the proposed budget and signed by at least five members of the Annual Meeting has been filed with the Treasurer at least two weeks prior to the date of the Annual Meeting. However, changes to the proposed budget may be considered at the Annual Meeting if two-thirds of the delegates present vote to consider such proposal." (Article IX, 1)