

DELEGATE ORIENTATION

Welcome to the Annual Meeting of the Central Conference churches! Each year we come together to discern God's plan for our collective ministry, and as a delegate, you have a very important role in that task:

Two Roles of a Delegate:

1. Participate – attend the business session, discuss the initiatives and issues, and cast your vote.
2. Report – note the actions taken, and update your home church on the decisions and ministries.

PARTICIPATE

Although the business session is limited to Saturday, we encourage you to be present for all the elements that will bring us together to worship, celebrate, work, learn, and share.

The individual delegate is the “building block” of the meeting. You are empowered to receive reports, approve recommendations, and to question or debate the issues. Following are tips to participation as delegate, and a brief overview of parliamentary procedure.

Tips to participation:

- Arrive on time for the business sessions.
- Listen carefully for both the relevance to your home church, and the collective movement of the ministry.
- Keep your name badge with you – this is your “credentials check” for validating your vote.
- Silence may be interpreted as consent and you have a responsibility to speak if you think something is not proper or not wise for the conference.
- During debate, comments should relate to the issue under discussion and focus on the merits of the issue, not the motives of merits of the person.

Overview of parliamentary procedure:

1. Approach the microphone. A distance of two or three inches works well.
2. Wait to be recognized by the moderator (in this case, the Conference chairperson serves as moderator).
3. Identify yourself. Example: “Jane Doe, Antler Covenant Church, Fawn Lake, Wisconsin”.
4. Address the moderator about the topic at hand, and speak clearly in your normal tone of voice.
5. Conclude your comments within three minutes. You have two opportunities to speak on any one issue.

REPORT

As a representative delegate of your home church, you contribute comments and cast votes on behalf of your local congregation. It is important to report the decisions and direction of the Annual Meeting to them. Use the following ideas for reporting the news:

- Request a “ministry moment” during the Sunday worship service to share your experience and the decisions of the Annual Meeting in relevant areas of ministry.
- Author a brief article for the church newsletter.
- Prepare a bulletin insert that highlights conference ministries and meeting decisions.
- Offer to meet with your church council or board to brief them on regional activities and opportunities to participate.

A Brief Glossary of Common Parliamentary Terms

AMEND, MOVE TO. Most motions may be amended on the floor of the Meeting, particularly when they deal with the business rather than the procedures of the Meeting. All amendments must be germane to the original motion. Amendments can be made in three (3) ways: addition, deletion, or substitution. When an amendment has been seconded, it must be debated and decided, or otherwise dealt with, before the motion it seeks to amend may be further considered.

APPEAL FROM THE RULING OF THE MODERATOR. A delegate is testing the Moderator’s ruling against the opinion of the Meeting. The motion to appeal requires a second. An affirmative vote by the Meeting sustains the Moderator’s ruling.

BALLOT, TO ORDER THE VOTE ON A PENDING QUESTION TO BE TAKEN BY. The Bylaws and Rules specify that certain questions be decided by ballot. Questions other than these may also be decided by ballot if a majority of the Meeting concurs with a request from a delegate for it.

DIVISION OF THE ASSEMBLY. This is a vote by rising. It may be demanded by any delegate to verify a vote taken by voice or by a show of hands, or may be ordered by the Moderator when a show of hands or by voice has been “too close to call.” If it is still not possible to discern the outcome visually, the Moderator may order a count by the Sergeants-at-Arms. A majority of the Meeting may also order a count.

INFORMATION, POINT OF. Asking a question about the business at hand.

MR. OR MADAME MODERATOR. The traditional form for addressing the Moderator from the floor of the Meeting.

ORDER, POINT OF. A delegate calls the Moderator’s attention to a possible breach of the Rules. If the delegate is not satisfied with the Moderator’s subsequent explanation, he or she may appeal if the point has been raised concerning an actual ruling of the Moderator.

PARLIAMENTARIAN. An advisor to the Moderator and Members of the Assembly on Parliamentary Law.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY, POINT OF. Asking a question about the application of the Rules in the business at hand.

PERSONAL PRIVILEGE, POINT OF. A delegate believes that his or her rights or the rights of another are being infringed upon.

POSTPONE TO A CERTAIN TIME. A delegate may move to postpone the item under discussion until a later point in the Meeting. The motion requires a second and is debatable.

PREVIOUS QUESTION, MOVE THE. A motion to cut off debate on an issue which requires a second, and a two-thirds majority. An affirmative vote merely cuts off debate and is not a vote on the motion under debate.

PUTTING THE QUESTION. Taking a vote.

RECONSIDER, MOVE TO. A Motion to reconsider an item previously voted on may be made at any time, though it may have to wait until other business has been dealt with before it can be taken up. If a majority decides that the item previously voted upon will be reconsidered, debate on it re-opens, and another vote is taken or it is otherwise disposed of, by referral, etc.) The motion to reconsider has unique characteristics: it may be made only by a delegate who originally voted with the prevailing side on the item; it may be made no later than the day following the original vote; it cannot apply to an item when provisions of it have already begun to be carried out (such as the signing of a contract); and it cannot be itself reconsidered.

REFER, MOVE TO. (Not to be confused with a motion to table.) A referred motion goes to a Board or Committee as designated by the Motion to Refer. It requires a second and is debatable.

SECOND. A seconder need not agree with the motion or vote for it. The seconder need only agree that the motion deserves the attention of the Meeting.

SUSPEND THE RULES. It is possible to suspend a rule that is standing in the way of accomplishing what the Meeting clearly wants to do either by motion or by unanimous consent. Bylaws may not be suspended unless they are in the nature of “rules of order.” This is a complex issue, with each instance subject to the interpretation and ruling of the Chair.

TABLE, MOVE TO. (Or “LAY ON THE TABLE.”) Unlike a referred motion, a tabled motion goes nowhere. No one considers it, or studies it, or does anything with it until a motion passes to “take it from the table.” If this does not happen at this Annual Meeting, the motion is dead; i.e., we could not move to “take something from the table” that was put on the table at a previous Annual Meeting.

----- Adapted from “Delegate Orientation for the 2005 Covenant Annual Meeting”