

REGULATIONS FOR SYNODICAL PROCEDURE

The United Reformed Churches in North America

**Adopted July 30, 2010; Revised June 15, 2012, June 5, 2014, June 2016, June 2018,
October 2022**

INTRODUCTION

Seeking to honor the apostolic command that in the churches all things be done decently and in order (1 Corinthians 14:40), we adopt the following regulations for our synodical proceedings. As synodical delegates, we commit ourselves to work in an ecclesiastical manner, to consult mutually and to consider carefully God's Word, and to deliberate thoughtfully the matters brought before the synod, as we endeavor to make decisions which are mutually agreed upon. These regulations are adopted to facilitate this deliberative process. However, when it seems advisable, they may be suspended, amended, or revised, by a 2/3 majority vote of the synod.

We have structured these regulations according to the following divisions:

- 1. Convening a Synod**
 - 2. Constituting a Synod**
 - 3. Matters Legally Before a Synod**
 - 4. Officers and Functionaries of a Synod**
 - 5. Committees**
 - 6. Rules of Order**
- Appendix A – Guidelines for Overtures**
Appendix B Guidelines for Appeals
Appendix C - Standardized Reporting Form for Advisory Committees

1. Convening a Synod

- 1.1.** Synod shall be convened and constituted in accordance with the *Church Order* and these *Regulations for Synodical Procedure*.
- 1.2.** “If a majority of the classes deem it necessary that a synod meet earlier than the regular time determined, the consistory charged with convening the meeting shall determine when and where the meeting is to occur.” (*Church Order*, Article 28)
- 1.3.** Each consistory shall delegate two of its members to synod. Consistories which cannot send two delegates shall be required to submit an explanation to synod.
- 1.4.** A synod shall convene at least once every three years at a time and place determined by the previous synod. Each synod shall authorize a consistory to convene the next synod. The meetings shall be convened by a consistory of each of the classes in turn.
- 1.5.** The convening consistory shall have the duties of announcing the next synod to the consistories at least four months in advance, preparing the provisional agenda with

- the assistance of the stated clerk, securing the facilities needed for the synod, arranging the lodging of the delegates, recommending to synod the assignment of each delegate to an advisory committee on the basis of a completed questionnaire, appointment of a synodical treasurer, and all other necessary items to facilitate the synod. Expenses incurred in connection with these duties shall be reimbursed by the synodical treasurer(s). The convening consistory shall give preference to experienced delegates to serve as chairmen and reporters of Advisory Committees and shall provide them with the material and the rules of procedure for their tasks.
- 1.5.1 The synodical treasurer will give a detailed financial statement to the next convening consistory by the end of the calendar year of synod, which shall then be reported to the following synod in the provisional agenda.
 - 1.5.2 The synodical treasurer will forward any excess funds to the next convening consistory, for the purpose of hosting the next synod.
 - 1.6. The convening consistory shall call and conduct a prayer service to be held prior to the opening of synod which shall include singing, appropriate prayer, and an exhortation from Scripture. Delegates of synod are expected to attend this service, which shall also be open to the public. This prayer service does not constitute, and shall be distinguished from, an official worship service.
 - 1.7. The time schedule for the sessions of synod shall be recommended by the convening consistory for adoption by the synod. The time schedule may be changed to facilitate the work of synod.
 - 1.8 Provide a handbook and other assistance to the next convening consistory describing the responsibilities and logistics of convening and hosting a synod.

2. Constituting a Synod

- 2.1. Synod shall be convened by the consistory appointed by the previous synod.
- 2.2.1 Synod shall be called to order by a member of the convening consistory designated by that assembly to serve as chairman *pro tem*.
He shall:
 - a. Conduct the opening devotions.
 - b. Call the roll of delegates identified by lawful credentials from consistories of the United Reformed Churches in North America.
 - c. Read the Form of Subscription to which every member of synod shall respond by rising to indicate his agreement.
 - d. Declare Synod to be constituted.
 - e. Preside over the following matters:
 1. Election of the officers, ensuring they are chosen by nominations made by delegates to synod in the following order: chairman, vice-chairman, first clerk, and second clerk. The delegate who receives a majority of votes cast shall be elected to each office.
 2. Determine by a vote of ratification (Church Order, Article 32) the status of all churches provisionally accepted by a classis.
 3. Request that new delegates rise to indicate agreement with the Form of Subscription.

4. Adopt the provisional agenda, including the advisory committee assignments of delegates, chairmen, and reporters.
 5. Approve the report of the convening consistory, including the stated clerk's report.
- 2.3. The stated clerk shall serve as clerk *pro tem* until the first and second clerks have been elected.
 - 2.4. Each delegate who takes his seat at a later time shall be requested to express his agreement with the Form of Subscription individually in the presence of synod.
 - 2.5. Each plenary session of synod shall be in *open session*. When synod holds *executive session*, in delicate or unusual situations, only synodical delegates and fraternal delegates may be present. When synod holds *strict executive session*, in very unusual situations, because of the personal honor of an individual or the welfare of the church, only synodical delegates may be present. Synod shall decide how the minutes of each executive session shall be recorded.
 - 2.6. Synod may recess from plenary session to enable the advisory committees to meet.
 - 2.7. Each advisory committee shall ensure that its report is prepared according to the standardized reporting format, and distributed to all of the delegates as soon as feasible. (See **Appendix C, Standardized Reporting Form for Advisory Committees**)
 - 2.8. The privilege of the floor may be granted to those not delegated when the synod considers it useful or necessary; such permission shall be granted by majority vote and restricted to the matter under discussion.

3. Matters Legally Before Synod

- 3.1. **Provisional Agenda** A provisional agenda is prepared for each synod by the convening consistory with the assistance of the stated clerk. Its contents shall be limited to a compilation of the reports, overtures, appeals, and communications addressed to the synod. Following the election of officers and the ratification of Article 32 churches and the seating of their delegates, this provisional agenda shall be acted upon for adoption before proceeding to act on any of its subsequent items.
- 3.2. **Report.** 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 one or more recommendations for action by synod.
- 3.3. **Overture.** An overture is a written proposal to a synod, originating from a consistory and processed through a classis, requesting a definite action regarding a specific matter for the benefit of the churches. In order to be admissible an overture must provide written grounds. (See **Appendix A, Guidelines for Overtures**)
- 3.4. **Appeal.** An appeal is a written complaint of having been wronged by a decision of an assembly within the federation. The appeal is made to an assembly by a consistory or an individual within the federation. An appellant is either a consistory

or an individual who submits and defends such an appeal either on his own behalf or through a representative. (See Appendix B, Guidelines for Appeals.)

- 3.5. Communication.** A communication is a written document from a consistory or an individual expressing opinions or ideas to a synod, or its appointed committees. A communication requires an acknowledgment, but does not require a decision by the synod or committee to which it is addressed.

4. Officers and Functionaries of Synod

Officers

The officers shall perform the duties listed below and any others assigned by synod. Their official functions shall end at the conclusion of the synodical assembly.

4.1. The Chairman

- 4.1.1.** He shall call the meeting to order at the appropriate times and shall ensure that each session is opened and closed with devotions.
- 4.1.2.** He shall see to it that the members of synod observe the rules of order and decorum, and pastorally admonish those who do not.
- 4.1.3.** He shall see to it that the business of synod is transacted in the proper order and expedited as much as possible.
- 4.1.4.** He shall request any delegate who takes his seat at a later time to express his agreement with the Form of Subscription individually in the presence of synod.
- 4.1.5.** He shall welcome fraternal delegates and other guests of synod, and respond to their greetings, or appoint others for this purpose. (See **Appendix E, Guidelines for Addresses of Fraternal Observers and Fraternal Delegates**)
- 4.1.6.** He shall recognize only those who have properly asked for the floor.
- 4.1.7.** He shall place before synod every motion that is made and seconded, and shall clearly state every question before a vote is taken.
- 4.1.8.** While holding the chair, he may state matters of fact or inform synod regarding points of order. However, if compelled to speak on an impending matter, he shall relinquish the chair to the vice chairman until the matter under consideration is decided.
- 4.1.9.** He shall have, and duly exercise, the prerogative of declaring a motion or person out of order. If his ruling is challenged, synod shall sustain or reject the ruling by majority vote of synod.
- 4.1.10.** He shall retain his right to vote on any question. When there is a tie vote, the chairman may cast the deciding vote, if he has not already voted.
- 4.1.11.** He shall not preside in any matters that concern himself personally or his congregation specifically.
- 4.1.12.** He shall rule on all points of order. If any member is dissatisfied with the ruling of the chair and appeals to the floor, his ruling may be reversed by a majority vote of synod.
- 4.1.13.** He shall close the synodical assembly with appropriate remarks and with prayer.

4.2. The Vice-Chairman

- 4.2.1. In the absence of the chairman, the vice-chairman shall assume all of the duties and privileges of the chairman.
- 4.2.2. He shall assist the chairman as circumstances require.

4.3. The First Clerk

- 4.3.1. He shall keep an exact record of the synodical proceedings. This shall contain a record of:
 - a. Opening and closing of sessions.
 - b. Main motions whether carried or defeated.
 - c. All reports of advisory committees and all decisions of synod.
 - d. The names of fraternal delegates and others who address synod.
 - e. The names of all synodically appointed committees and their members.
 - f. Any document or part of debate or address that synod by majority vote decides to include in the minutes.
- 4.3.2. He shall not include in the record:
 - a. Any motion that is withdrawn.
 - b. Any incidental motion.
 - c. Any defeated motion except it be a main motion.
- 4.3.3. He shall distribute and review the concept minutes daily, section by section, and request the chairman to solicit the delegates' evaluation and approval.

4.4. The Second Clerk

- 4.4.1. The second clerk shall serve in the absence of the first clerk.
- 4.4.2. He shall assist the first clerk in keeping an accurate record of the synodical proceedings.
- 4.4.3. He shall assist the first clerk as circumstances require.
- 4.4.4. He shall prepare the synodically approved press release of the synod's actions.

Functionaries

4.5. The Stated Clerk

- 4.5.1. **Qualifications:** The stated clerk shall belong to a member congregation of the United Reformed Churches, currently serving, or having served as a minister or elder within a church of the federation. He must likewise possess:
 - a. Thorough knowledge of the *Church Order* and competence in interpreting it,
 - b. Ability to write clearly and succinctly,
 - c. Administrative and organizational ability,
 - d. And proficiency in current communication technology and word processing skills.
- 4.5.2. **Term:** Synod shall elect a stated clerk to serve from that synod until the conclusion of the next synod. An alternate shall be elected for the same term, who shall serve should the stated clerk be unable to do so. The stated clerk shall

serve no more than three terms consecutively. Synod shall stipulate his honorarium in the currency of his respective country.

4.5.3. Supervision: The stated clerk shall work under the supervision of the consistory of the church convening the next synod, and is ultimately accountable to synod for the performance of his duties.

4.5.4. General Responsibilities:

- a. Assist the convening consistory to determine questions of admissibility and good order with regard to overtures and other submissions to synod. Reasons for judging any matters to be inadmissible will be included in the convening consistory's report to synod. All matters in dispute between the Stated Clerk and the convening consistory regarding admissibility shall be referred, by way of the Stated Clerk's portion of the convening consistory's report, to synod for its judgment.
- b. Become thoroughly familiar with synodical regulations and past decisions as well as their bearing upon matters proposed for the synodical agenda.
- c. Assist the convening consistory with nominating advisory committees for synodical appointment, in order to help ensure that these committees consist of a fair and balanced representation of delegates to synod.
- d. Prepare and distribute the Acts of Synod in hard copy and digital form. One digital copy shall be sent to each federation or denomination with whom the United Reformed Churches are engaged in any ecumenical relations or contact. Hard copies shall be purchased by those who order them.
- e. Preserve original records of all proceedings of synod, and all documents, letters and papers having reference to its proceedings.
- f. Receive credentials of the delegates of synod, requesting them in a timely manner, ordinarily no fewer than eight weeks before synod convenes. As instructed by synod or its ecumenical committees, he shall invite other churches, federations, or denominations to send fraternal delegates or observers to synod, requesting them to forward credentials in a timely manner. He shall also sign the credentials of fraternal delegates and observers representing the United Reformed Churches among churches outside the federation.
- g. Notify all those appointed by synod of their appointment, their mandate, and the due date of their reports, including reminding the respective corporation boards of their annual meetings and reporting responsibilities.
- h. Supply advisory committees and other appointees a standardized format for reporting.
- i. Attend all sessions of synod, at which he shall be given the privilege of the floor.
- j. Submit a written report of his work to Synod, as part of the written report of the convening consistory. This report may include proposed changes to the *Regulations for Synodical Procedure* to bring them into conformity with prior synodical decisions and practices and shall be included in the

Provisional Agenda. Any such proposed conforming changes must be supported by citation to the prior decision or practice.

- k. Serve as clerk *pro tem* of synod before synodical officers are chosen.
- l. Perform any other duties assigned by synod.

4.5.5. Correspondence Duties: The stated clerk shall carry out all correspondence specifically assigned to him by synod. The following guidelines shall be observed in handling correspondence between meetings:

- a. Correspondence requesting archival information shall be answered directly.
- b. Correspondence pertaining to committee work shall be referred to the appropriate committee chairmen.
- c. Correspondence requesting interpretation or evaluation of policies or decisions of synod shall be referred to synod or the convening consistory.
- d. Correspondence requesting any action by synod, or the opportunity to address synod shall be forwarded to the convening consistory for its consideration of placement on the provisional agenda, according to rules of admissibility.

4.6. Treasurers for the Board of Directors

4.6.1. Qualifications: Each treasurer shall belong to a member congregation of the United Reformed Churches in the country of each respective Corporation. A treasurer shall have proficiency in current communication technology and possess financial and bookkeeping capabilities. If required, the treasurers shall be appropriately bonded. No treasurer may be married to a Director of either corporation.

4.6.2. Term: Each Corporation shall appoint its treasurer to serve from one synod until the conclusion of the next synod. Each Corporation shall appoint an alternate treasurer for the same term, who shall serve if the treasurer is unable to serve. All appointees shall be approved by synod. A treasurer shall serve no more than three terms consecutively. Each Corporation shall stipulate its treasurer's honorarium subject to the approval of synod.

4.6.3. Supervision: The treasurers shall work under the supervision of their respective Boards which shall regularly report to the consistory of the church convening the next synod.

4.6.4. Responsibilities: The Board of each Corporation shall instruct its Treasurer to:

- a. Administer the finances of the federation in accordance with the requirements of its respective jurisdiction and in keeping with the decisions of synod.
- b. Pay synodical expenses as authorized by synod.
- c. Submit to the Board an audited or independently reviewed financial statement annually, which statement shall be forwarded to synod.

- d. Alert the Board concerning the financial needs of the federation, and submit quarterly statements to the churches via the Stated Clerk. The respective Boards shall notify the deacons of the churches whom they serve concerning such needs, requesting the churches to respond generously.

4.7. The Webmaster

4.7.1. Qualifications: The Webmaster shall belong to a member congregation of the United Reformed Churches, currently serving, or having served as a minister or elder within a church of the federation. He must likewise possess:

- a. Proficiency in the technical skills required;
- b. Ability to write clearly and succinctly;
- c. Administrative and organizational ability;
- d. Ability, inclination and resources to assist website users in a timely manner, including by phone or email.

4.7.2. Term: Synod shall appoint a Webmaster to serve from that Synod until the conclusion of the next Synod. Synod shall stipulate his honorarium in the currency of his respective country, with input from the Web Oversight Committee.

4.7.3. Supervision: The Webmaster shall be supervised by the Website Oversight Committee acting under the authority of the Oversight Consistory, and is ultimately accountable to Synod for the performance of his duties.

4.7.4. General Responsibilities:

- a. Attend to the day to day operation of the federation website;
- b. Respond to membership, help and maintenance requests in a timely and professional manner;
- c. Serve as the primary point of contact for website technical issues and queries;
- d. Assist the Stated Clerk of each classis in maintaining his respective classis page;
- e. Assist the administrator of each synodical committee in maintaining his committee's page;
- f. Assist the Synodical Interim Committee / Convening Consistory in maintaining its pages, links and documents on the website;
- g. Provide the Website Representative in each classis with details and statistics, as available, relevant to his classis' website usage, need for updates, etc. appropriate for his Report to Classis;
- h. Utilize information provided by each Classis' Website Representative to help ensure that changes within each Classis are promptly reflected on the website, including new churches, ministers, etc.;
- i. Prepare a weekly update of non-Directory changes, scheduled calendar events, and other relevant information, and distribute the update on demand to the churches and authorized individuals;

- j. Advise the Chairman of the Website Oversight Committee in the preparation of the committee's Synodical Report;
- k. Serve as an advisory member of the Website Oversight Committee;
- l. Periodically inspect areas of the website for evidence of tampering or potential security issues;
- m. Based on user input, industry developments and functionality, periodically determine and recommend potential improvements and upgrades to the website for consideration by the Website Oversight Committee;
- n. Submit a written report of his work to Synod, as part of the written report of the Web Oversight Committee. This report shall include website analytics and other technical statistics showing the usefulness of the website.
- o. Post the ministerial information received from the consistories of the federation, including the calling of pastors, the answer to this call, availability for call, dissolution of ministerial relationship, the sustaining of ordination and candidacy exams, receiving a license to exhort, suspension, reinstatement, deposition, emeritation, and the deaths of ministers that take place in our federation.

4.8 The Statistician

4.8.1 Qualifications: The Statistician shall belong to a member congregation of the United Reformed Churches. He shall be proficient in data collection and data management and be able to produce reports and the annual directory.

4.8.2 Term: Synod shall elect a Statistician to serve from that synod until the conclusion of the next synod. Synod shall stipulate the Statistician's honorarium in the currency of the Statistician's respective country.

4.8.3 Supervision: The Statistician shall work under the supervision of the consistory of the church convening the next synod and is ultimately accountable to synod for the performance of his duties.

4.8.4 General Responsibilities:

- a. Collect and compile statistical reports of the churches for the calendar year ending December 31.
- b. Review the information submitted by the churches to ensure its accuracy.
- c. Prepare an annual directory for digital download, which shall consist of a listing of: synodical and classical functionaries, synodical and classical standing committees, classical statistics; churches by province/state, including profiles of each church in the federation; alphabetical directories of all ministers of the United Reformed Churches, including those emeritated, deceased, released, and deposed from office, as well as licensed exhorters and candidates for the ministry.
- d. Prepare and present a report to synod with an explanation and analysis of the statistical reports for a meaningful understanding of them by synod.

5. Committees

- 5.1. Committees.** A synod may appoint a variety of committees to function on its behalf so that the various mandates of synod will be carried out in an orderly manner.
- 5.1.1.** The authority of 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.
- 5.1.2.** When synod creates a committee made up entirely of synodical appointees, synod shall appoint a chairman and reporter. When synod creates a committee that includes classical appointees, synod shall appoint a convener.
- 5.1.3.** The chairman shall convene the committee and ensure that it fulfills its mandate. The reporter shall present, explain, and defend the committee's findings, actions, and recommendations with their grounds for synodical action.
- 5.2. Advisory Committees.** Advisory committees serve the synod by facilitating the work of synod during its sessions. Such committees summarize the matters assigned to them and advise synod by formulating recommendations as to how to proceed with the matters on the synodical agenda. The convening consistory proposes for synodical approval the assignment of each synodical delegate to an advisory committee, and the chairman and reporter of each advisory committee. Each delegate shall be made aware of his proposed assignment at least two weeks in advance of synod.
- 5.2.1.** Advisory committee meetings shall be open to the public unless the committee decides that for weighty reasons it should enter executive session. However, any member of synod may appear before any committee for the purpose of speaking about a matter referred to it.
- 5.2.2.** Advisory committee reports shall list the chairman and the reporter of the committee. Where a minority report is presented, both the majority and minority report must list the members who favor them.
- 5.2.3.** The report of the majority shall be considered the report of the advisory committee. After the advisory committee's report has been read and the motion to adopt has been made and supported, any report of the minority of the advisory committee shall be read for information.
- 5.2.4** When the recommendation of an advisory committee is substantially different from that proposed by an overture or the report of a committee of synod, the reporter for such proposed material shall have the privilege to present and defend the proposal prior to synodical deliberation of the advisory committee's recommendation.
- 5.2.5.** While the report is being discussed the task of defending the report shall rest primarily with the chairman and the reporter of the advisory committee. These shall have precedence over every other speaker and shall not be limited as to the number and length of their speeches. Other committee members shall be subject to the accepted rules.
- 5.2.6.** Committee recommendations may be recommitted to the committee when this is helpful to synod.

5.3. Committees appointed by a previous synod

These committees include the following:

5.3.1. *Ad hoc* committee.

- a. Description. An *ad hoc* committee is chosen by synod to perform a specified task. Its membership, mandate, duration, and deadline by which it is to report are determined by synod.
- b. Reporting. An *ad hoc* committee shall report to each synod on its progress; on the need to review, alter, or continue its mandate; and on the need to alter, augment, or continue the committee's membership.

5.3.2. Standing committee.

- a. Description. A standing committee serves the synod under synodical regulations on a continuing basis. Its members are chosen by synod or classis for specified terms and are given a particular mandate. The committee and its mandate continue even though the members of the committee serve only until their terms are completed.
- b. Appointment. Any required nominations for committee members shall originate from the standing committee, be presented to the appropriate advisory committee, and then be presented to synod for final approval.
- c. Terms. The synodically appointed members of a standing committee shall serve no more than three three-year terms consecutively, each term commencing at the time of synodical appointment. Members who have completed three consecutive terms are eligible for reappointment after one year. When the term of a member-at-large ends in a year that synod does not meet, the synod preceding the end of the terms shall appoint or re-appoint a member to that at-large position to a term commencing on July 1 in the year the current term ends. The matter of term limits for classically-appointed members shall be left to the discretion of each individual classis.
- d. Reporting. A report shall contain the following:
 1. A review of the committee's mandate.
 2. A summary of the committee's activities.
 3. Recommendations for synodical action.
 4. A list of nominees required to fill vacancies.

5.3.3. Study committee.

- a. Description. A study committee is one which is assigned by synod, on the basis of an overture from the churches, to investigate and evaluate a particular problem, idea, or course of action on behalf of synod. The committee membership, mandate, duration, and deadline by which it is to report are determined by synod.
- b. Appointment. Nominations for committee members shall originate from the advisory committee proposing such a study committee, and be presented to synod for final approval.
- c. Reporting. A report shall contain the following:
 1. A review of the committee's mandate.

2. A presentation of the committee's study.
3. Recommendations for synodical action with the appropriate grounds for synodical action.
4. A list of nominees required to fill vacancies.

5.4. Reports and rules for *ad hoc*, standing, and study committees

- 5.4.1. In the event of a vacancy in a committee, an alternate appointed by the convening consistory shall complete the vacated term except for classical appointees to standing committees.
- 5.4.2. These committees have the right to explain and defend their reports before the advisory committees of synod as well as on the floor of synod. The spokesmen of these committees shall have the same privileges during the discussion as do the chairmen and reporters of the advisory committees.
- 5.4.3. If the recommendations of an appointed committee and an advisory committee differ significantly, the recommendations of the *Ad hoc*, Standing, or Study Committee shall have precedence and be considered as the majority report.
- 5.5. When synod has adopted a recommendation regarding a matter, it shall declare that its action constitutes synod's answer to that particular matter.

6. Rules of Order

- 6.1. **Main motion:** This motion presents a specific matter for consideration or action.
 - 6.1.1. The main motion is **acceptable** under the following conditions:
 - a. If the mover has been recognized by the chair and his motion has been seconded by a member of synod.
 - b. If, at the request of the chairman, the motion has been presented in writing.
 - c. If the chairman judges the motion acceptable.
 - 6.1.2. A main motion is **unacceptable** under the following conditions:
 - a. If it conflicts with the *Church Order* or is contrary to Scripture as interpreted by the Three Forms of Unity.
 - b. If another motion is before synod; if it conflicts with any decision already taken by synod in its current meeting; or if it interferes with the freedom of action by synod in a matter that was previously introduced but which has not been decided.
 - c. If it is substantially the same as a motion already rejected by synod.
- 6.2. **Motion to amend:** This motion seeks to amend a main motion in language or in meaning before final action is taken on the main motion.
 - 6.2.1. A motion to amend may propose any of the following: to strike out, to insert, or to substitute for certain words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs.
 - 6.2.2. A motion to amend may not nullify the main motion and it must be germane to the main motion; that is, 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.

- 6.2.3.** A motion to amend an amendment is permissible and is called a secondary motion. Only one such amendment may be considered at a time.
- 6.2.4.** All motions may be amended except the following:
- a. to adjourn.
 - b. to amend an amendment.
 - c. to table temporarily or indefinitely, or to place again a temporarily tabled motion before the body.
 - d. to reconsider.
 - e. to rescind.
 - f. to take up a question out of its regular order.
 - g. appeals to the floor from the decision of the chair.
 - h. calls for the order of the day, requests or questions of any kind.
 - i. points of order.
- 6.3. Motion to defer or withhold action:** This motion seeks to postpone a matter either temporarily, to a definite time, or indefinitely.
- 6.3.1. Table (postpone) temporarily**
- a. Tabling a motion temporarily implies that synod will resume consideration on the motion at a later unspecified hour or date.
 - b. This motion is not debatable or amendable.
 - c. When synod wishes to resume consideration of the motion any member may move to place again the motion before the body. The motion to place the motion again before the body is not debatable or amendable.
 - d. All matters that have been tabled temporarily must be placed before the body again before synod adjourns.
- 6.3.2. Table (postpone) to a definite time**
- a. Tabling a motion to a definite time implies that synod will resume consideration on the motion at a specified hour or date.
 - b. This motion is debatable and may be amended.
 - c. If a motion to table to a definite time has passed, no other motion similar in word or thought to the tabled motion may appear before synod.
 - d. The matter tabled to a definite time may be taken up before the specified time by a majority vote of synod.
 - e. If a motion to amend has been tabled definitely, the main motion to which the tabled amendment is related is likewise deferred.
 - f. 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.
 - g. When the hour arrives to which such matters have been tabled, and synod is at that time busy with an undecided question, synod need not be disturbed or interrupted in its work by the consideration of the tabled matters, if those tabled matters can wait until the question then before synod has been decided.
 - h. All matters that have been tabled to a definite time must be placed before the body before synod adjourns.
- 6.3.3. Withhold action or table (postpone) indefinitely**
- a. This motion may be used when synod decides that it is wise and prudent to avoid a direct vote on a matter without deciding either positively or negatively.

- b. This motion is debatable, but not amendable.

6.4. Privileged motions

6.4.1. 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:

- a. A call for the order of the day may be made without recognition and while another member is speaking.
- b. Such a call is not debatable, needs no seconding, and must be put to a vote.
- c. It has precedence over every other motion except a motion to adjourn or to take a recess.

6.4.2. 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 chair to state the point, he does so, and the chairman renders his decision at once on the point in question. The following rules apply:

- a. A point of order may be raised at any time and must be recognized by the chairman.
- b. It needs no seconding and is not debatable.
- c. In case the member making the point of order is not satisfied with the decision of the chair, he may appeal to the floor. When this is done, the point of order becomes debatable, and a simple majority is sufficient to sustain or reverse the chairman's decision.

6.4.3. Call for a division of the question. 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.

6.5. Motion to reintroduce matters once decided before synod: If for weighty reasons any member of synod desires reconsideration of a matter once decided, one of the following motions may be used.

6.5.1. Motion to reconsider

- a. The intent of this motion to reconsider is to propose a new discussion and a new vote. This motion must be made by someone who voted with the prevailing side.
- b. The motion to reconsider must be made the same day on which the motion in question was passed.
- c. It is unacceptable if action has begun in accordance with the motion in question.
- d. The motion to reconsider may be tabled to a definite time, but it may not be amended, tabled (postponed) indefinitely, or referred to a committee.
- e. The motion to reconsider is debatable only insofar as the reasons for reconsideration are concerned.

6.5.2. Motion to rescind

- a. The intent of this motion to rescind is to annul a decision.
- b. The motion to rescind shall require a two-thirds majority to carry.

- c. The motion to rescind is debatable, including both the reasons for rescinding as well as the merits of the original question.
- d. Rescinding applies to decisions taken by synod while in session. It does not apply to decisions taken by a previous synod. A succeeding synod may alter the stand of a previous synod or it may reach a conclusion which is at variance with a conclusion reached by an earlier synod. In such cases the most recent decision invalidates all previous decisions in conflict with it.

6.6. Debate

- 6.6.1.** To obtain the floor, a member must be recognized by the chairman.
 - 6.6.2.** If a member obtains the floor, he shall address his remarks only to the chairman and never to any member of synod. He shall refrain from using personal names, and from addressing persons by name. 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.
 - 6.6.3.** A member may not call into question another member's motives or character.
 - 6.6.4.** Those who have not yet spoken twice on a pending issue shall be given priority over those members who have already spoken twice.
 - 6.6.5.** The chairman, when he believes that a matter has been sufficiently debated, shall have the right to propose cessation of debate. Should a 2/3 majority of the members sustain this proposal, debate shall end at once and the main motion and any pending amendments shall be voted on.
 - 6.6.6.** Any member, when he believes a matter has been sufficiently debated, may move to cease debate (call for the question). Having been seconded, this motion is not debatable and is to be voted on at once. If it passes by a 2/3 majority, debate shall cease only after all those who had previously requested the floor and been recognized by the chairman have had opportunity to speak. However, these speakers shall not be allowed to offer any amendments. This motion is not acceptable when a motion to table, to commit, to recommit, or to withhold action is before synod.
 - 6.6.7.** A member may not speak to a motion and then immediately move to cease debate.
- 6.7. Objection to the consideration of a question:** When a member rises to make such objection, the chairman shall ask him to state his objection. The chairman, having heard his objection, either sustains or overrules it and states his reason for so doing. If the objector is not satisfied by the ruling of the chair he may appeal to the floor. When he does so, the objection becomes debatable and requires a majority to be sustained.
- 6.8. Right of protest:** It is the right of any member of synod to protest any decision of synod. Protests must be registered immediately or during the session in which the matter was decided. Protests must be filed individually and not in groups. A member may request his name and vote be recorded in protest, or he may submit a written protest.

6.9. Procedural inquiry: 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 methods

- a. Voice.** This is the ordinary method of voting.
- b. Show of hands.** Whenever the chairman is unable to determine from the voice vote which opinion has prevailed, or if the chairman's determination is questioned by any member of synod, the chairman shall call for a show of hands.
- c. Roll call.** The name and vote of each delegate is recorded in the *Acts of Synod*. This method is to be employed only upon decision by a majority vote of synod.
- d. Ballot.** Synod must vote by ballot in election of officers. In other cases synod may vote by ballot if a majority so decides.

Appendix A

Guidelines for Overtures

In accord with articles of the *Church Order*, such as Articles 17, 25, and 29, the following guidelines must be observed in preparing an overture. These guidelines shall serve as the standard for the admissibility of an overture.

Definition: An overture is a written proposal to a broader assembly, originating from a consistory and processed through a classis, requesting a definite action regarding a specific matter for the benefit of the churches. In order to be admissible an overture must provide written grounds.

Guidelines:

1. An overture must originate from a consistory and “be considered by classis before being considered by synod” (Art. 25).
2. An overture must meet the requirement of *Church Order* Article 25, “In the broader assemblies only those matters that could not be settled in the narrower assemblies, or that pertain to the churches of the broader assembly in common, shall be considered.”
3. If an overture is not adopted by classis, the consistory may overture synod for its adoption.
4. Since an overture is a written proposal requesting a definite action regarding a specific matter for the benefit of the churches, an overture must:
 - a. Provide a brief background of the matter being proposed.
 - b. Provide specific grounds for the adoption of the overture.
5. An overture must meet the deadline for the provisional agenda in order to be considered, unless for weighty reasons the assembly decides otherwise.
6. Decisions of the broader assemblies shall be received with respect and submission, and shall be considered settled and binding, unless it is proven that they are in conflict with the Word of God or the Church Order (See *Church Order*, Article 29).
7. The consistory authorized to convene synod shall use these guidelines to determine the admissibility of overtures, and provide to synod the reasons why any overture has not been admitted on the provisional agenda.

Appendix B

Guidelines for Appeals

Introduction

In accord with *Church Order*, Articles 29 and 31, the following guidelines must be observed in preparing and adjudicating an appeal. These guidelines shall serve as the standard for admissibility of an appeal.

Definition of an Appeal

An appeal is a written complaint of having been wronged by a decision of an assembly within the federation. The appeal is made to an assembly by a consistory or an individual within the federation. An appellant is either a consistory or an individual who submits and defends such an appeal either on his own behalf or through a representative.

Guidelines

1. Appellant: An appeal may be made by a consistory or an individual who is a member of a church within the federation. The appeal may be submitted by the appellant himself or by a representative. Any consistory or church member may appeal against a decision of any assembly of the federation.
2. Origination: An appeal must first be made to the assembly whose decision is being appealed before appealing to broader assemblies. The assembly whose decision is being appealed is the respondent to the appeal.
3. Counselor for an Appellant: The consistory of an appellant shall explain to the appellant the process of an appeal and, if desired by the appellant, shall facilitate the identification of a counselor who can assist in ensuring that the appeal is written and submitted in a proper form and timely manner.
4. Timeliness of an Appeal:
 - a. Notification of an Appeal: Notice of intent to appeal must be filed with the clerk of the adjudicating assembly within 60 days of the announcement of the decision. This applies each time the appeal advances to the next broader assembly. For appeals advancing from one synod to the next synod, the notice shall be filed with the clerk of the convening consistory of the next synod.
 - b. Submission of an Appeal: The appeal must be submitted by the deadline for submitting materials for the agenda of the adjudicating assembly.
 - c. If a member objects to a decision of synod regarding a matter pertaining to the churches in common, he should bring the matter first to his consistory, urging it to appeal the decision of synod.

5. Format of an Appeal:
 - a. The notice of intent to appeal shall:
 - i. address the clerk of the adjudicating assembly,
 - ii. cite the decision being appealed and the date the decision was announced, and,
 - iii. identify the name and church membership of the appellant.
 - b. The appeal shall:
 - i. be submitted in writing, providing a copy of and reference to the specific decision of the assembly which is being appealed,
 - ii. provide a brief history or background of the appeal,
 - iii. specify the alleged error(s) of the decision being appealed, and include supporting grounds for each alleged error, and,
 - iv. include written evidence to substantiate the allegations being made.
 - c. An appeal that proceeds from a narrower to a broader assembly must remain the same in substance, with the following provisions:
 - i. documents relaying the disposition of the appeal by the narrower assembly must be included,
 - ii. new evidence shall not be added to the appeal, nor shall the appeal be altered when advancing the appeal to a broader assembly, and,
 - iii. the appellant may respond to the arguments, decisions, and grounds used by the narrower assembly in its disposition of the appeal. Such response does not alter or add to the appeal under consideration, but shall be treated as a communication under *Regulations for Synodical Procedure 3.5*.
6. Oral Presentations:
 - a. The appellant or his representative shall be given opportunity to present a concise oral summary and defense of the appeal to the adjudicating assembly, as well as to any advisory committee tasked with advising the adjudicating assembly. Such summary and defense shall not introduce new evidence not previously presented through written submissions.
 - b. One delegate from each of the narrower assemblies that have previously adjudicated the appeal shall also be afforded the opportunity to present a concise oral defense of its decision to the adjudicating assembly, as well as to any advisory committee tasked with advising the adjudicating assembly, without introducing new evidence not previously presented.
 - c. The adjudicating assembly shall set a time limit for oral presentations.
7. Adjudicating the Appeal:
 - a. In order to advance an environment of truth and fairness, the adjudication of an appeal shall take place in open session, unless the assembly decides

for weighty reasons to enter executive session by a two-thirds majority of the delegates.

- b. For delegates who have been previously involved in the adjudication of the appeal:
 - i. These delegates may not be assigned to any advisory committee dealing with the appeal.
 - ii. In the plenary session dealing with the appeal, these delegates may not make motions or vote on them. If the appeal is from the decision of a classis, this shall apply to the delegates from that classis.
- c. The assembly shall consider and render a judgment to sustain or not to sustain each of the specified errors, giving grounds for its judgment.
- d. If the adjudicating assembly does not sustain any of the specified errors, the judgment of the narrower adjudicating assembly shall be affirmed.
- e. If the adjudicating assembly sustains any of the specified errors, it shall determine if the error is of such importance as to require a re-adjudication, modification, or reversal of the judgment of the narrower adjudicating assembly.

8. Disposition of the Appeal:

- a. If the adjudicating assembly decides to sustain the appeal, it shall direct, with grounds, the narrower assembly:
 - i. to re-adjudicate the appealed judgment, or,
 - ii. to modify the appealed judgment, or,
 - iii. to reverse the appealed judgment.
- b. Judgments of the adjudicating assembly shall be received with respect and submission, and shall be considered settled and binding, unless it is proven that they are in conflict with the Word of God or the Church Order (CO, Art. 29).
- c. This does not preclude appealing the decision further to the next broader assembly.
- d. If a synod does not sustain an appeal, the appellant may file that appeal for a final adjudication only once and to the next synod.
- e. If the appellant is not present for the adjudication of the appeal, an edifying communication regarding the decision of the assembly shall be given to the appellant by the clerk of the assembly within ten days.

Attachment 1
NOTICE OF INTENTION TO APPEAL

To _____, Clerk of _____ [insert title of the assembly from which the appeal is to be taken] of the United Reformed Churches:

And now, this _____ day of _____, AD _____, comes _____ [appellant] and gives notice of intention to appeal to _____ [insert name of assembly] from the judgment of _____, made on _____ [insert date] regarding

_____ [insert description of decision/judgment]

Date: _____, Appellant

Attachment 2
APPEAL

To _____, Clerk of _____ [insert title of the assembly to which the appeal is taken] of the United Reformed Churches:

And now, this _____ day of _____, AD _____, comes _____ [appellant(s) name] and appeals the judgment or decision of _____ [insert title of assembly from whom appeal is taken] in the matter of _____ [insert description of the judgment or decision appealed], and in support of said appeal states that _____ [insert title of the assembly from which the appeal is taken] committed the following errors:

1. Specification of Error #1: _____ [state concise description of the error].

Ground(s):

a) _____ [state ground supporting the Specification of Error].

[Additional specifications of errors and ground(s) for each error may be listed]

Date: _____, Appellant

Appendix C
Standardized Reporting Form for Advisory Committees

Synod Name and Year
Advisory Committee Name Committee Designation
Page n of x

Materials: From the list of assigned materials (page xx)

Chairman: Rev. Xxx Xxxx

Reporter: Rev. Zzz Zzzz

General Format:

Committee designation (in bold 18 point type)

List the Advisory Committee number and the letter of the report. Succeeding reports will keep the same Advisory Committee number but will be lettered consecutively (6-A, 6-B, 6-C, etc.).

List “Page n of x” on each page immediately under the committee designation of each report, starting over again with Page 1 of X when a new letter of the alphabet is used.

Only the Committee designation and page number need appear at the top of the second and subsequent pages (e.g., Committee 12C, Page 4 of 5).

Materials (bold and underline)

List only the materials that are specifically dealt with in this report. Cite the page number from the agenda where they are found.

Chairman and Reporter (bold and underline)

Summary (bold)

Recommendations (bold and underline)

List recommendations numerically.

Use left hanging indent (as under Procedural Notes, below).

Grounds (bold and italic)

List grounds alphabetically (using lower case).

Use left hanging indent.

Procedural Notes:

1. If the Advisory Committee is dealing with a Committee report, there is no need to request the permission of the floor for the committee members, if they are delegates to synod.
2. If the Advisory Committee is recommending a change the Church Order, they should note that this requires a 2/3 vote of synod. They should also recommend a date by which the change be ratified (usually at least 6 months after synod).

Example #1

If the matter is an overture, there are several possible recommendations

Synod Nyack 2012

Overtures

Committee 4-A

Page n of x

Materials: Overture 1 (page 39)

Chairman: Rev. John Calvin
Reporter: Rev. Martin Luther

Summary

Give a brief summary of the issues involved in the materials. For example, “This overture seeks to address the following situation . . . ”

Recommendations:

1. That Synod accede to Overture #1 *with* its grounds.
 -In this case, it is helpful for the Advisory Committee to QUOTE the overture and its grounds (unless it is very lengthy).
2. That Synod accede to Overture #1 *without* its grounds.
 -In this case, it is helpful for the Advisory Committee to QUOTE the overture, and may then choose to give its own grounds for the decision.
3. That Synod not accede to Overture #1.
 -In this case, it is helpful for the Advisory Committee to QUOTE the overture. Then the Advisory Committee should give grounds for their recommendation.

Grounds:

- a. The overture is unnecessary/unwise because . . .
4. That Synod . . . (take the following action.) Then explain the committee response to overture #1. This will include giving grounds for the recommendations. These

may be the same as the grounds for the overture or they may be your own. [Note: Do not recommend that Synod *amend* the overture. The overture cannot be amended. However, the Advisory Committee can offer its own suggestion as to how to address the matters raised in the overture. Also, if the committee offers a response that is different than the original overture, the following recommendation should also be made: “That this be Synod’s answer to Overture #1.”]

5. That this be Synod’s answer to Overture #1.

Example #2

If the matter is a committee report, there are several possible recommendations

Synod Nyack 2012

CERCU

Committee 6-A

Page n of x

Materials: CERCU Report (page 107-131)

Chairman: Rev. John Smith

Reporter: Rev. Bob Wesson

Summary

Give a brief summary of the issues involved in the materials. For example, “The CERCU committee has continued the work of their mandate in our ecumenical relations with other churches. . . .”

Recommendations:

1. That Synod accede to Recommendation #1, “QUOTE the recommendation.”

Grounds:

- a. This recommendation . . .

2. That Synod not accede to Recommendation #1, “QUOTE the recommendation.”

Grounds:

- a. This recommendation . . .

3. That Synod . . . (take the following action). Then explain the committee response to recommendation #1. This will include giving grounds for your recommendations. These may be the same as the grounds of the committee or they may be your own.

[**Note:** If the Advisory Committee is dealing with an *ad hoc* or study committee report which has fulfilled its mandate, it is proper to conclude with the following recommendation:

4. That the committee be dismissed with the thanks of Synod.

Example #3

If the matter is an appeal, there are several possible recommendations

Synod Nyack 2012

Appeals

Committee 7-A
Page n of x

Materials: Appeal #1 (page ____)

Chairman: Rev. John Calvin

Reporter: Rev. Martin Luther

Summary

Give a brief summary of the issues involved in the materials. For example: “This appeal is from the decision of [assembly that rendered the appealed decision] regarding [summarily state the appealed decision].

The appellant has alleged Specification of Errors as follows: _____”

Recommendations:

1. That Synod find Specification of Error #_____ is [sustained/not sustained]

Grounds:

a. [In the grounds, it is helpful to cite key documentary evidence and/or biblical and confessional authorities. The advisory’s committee’s grounds need not be any of the grounds cited by the appellant]

2. That Synod [sustain/not sustain] Appeal #____. [If no Specification of Error is sustained, then the appeal is not sustained. If a Specification of Error was sustained, the appeal still may either be sustained or not sustained).

Grounds:

a. [If recommending sustaining the appeal, state grounds showing how the Specification of Errors warranted sustaining the appeal.]

b. [If not recommending sustaining the appeal, state grounds explaining either no Specification of Error was sustained, OR why the sustained Specification of Error(s) did not warrant sustaining the appeal]

3. [If sustaining the appeal]: That Synod direct [assembly which rendered the appealed decision] to [select one]: reverse the appealed decision; modify the appealed decision in a particular manner; or re-adjudicate the appeal.

Grounds:

Appendix D

Definitions and Authority of Synodical Actions

1. **Doctrinal Affirmation:** A *Doctrinal Affirmation* is an interpretation of the Ecumenical Creeds and the Three Forms of Unity on a specific point of their teaching (*Acts of Synod 2004*, Article 76.B.b., p. 29).
 - 1.1 A Doctrinal Affirmation serves the churches by directing them to the Ecumenical Creeds and the Three Forms of Unity, applying them in response to doctrinal questions that has arisen in the churches.
 - 1.2 A Doctrinal Affirmation should be received by the churches with respect and submission, and it may not be directly or indirectly contradicted in preaching or in writing (Church Order Articles 29 and 31; *Form of Subscription*). The Scriptures, Ecumenical Creeds, and the Three Forms of Unity alone may serve as grounds in matter of discipline (*Acts of Synod 2007*, Article 67.4., p. 36).
 - 1.3 A Doctrinal Affirmation may be appealed as outlined in Church Order Articles 29 and 31 (*Form of Subscription, Regulations for Synodical Procedure* 3.4 and Appendix B).

2. **Pastoral Advice:** *Pastoral Advice* is Synod's application of the Scriptures, the Ecumenical Creeds and the Three Forms of Unity to particular circumstances in the life of the churches.
 - 2.1 Pastoral Advice expresses the collective wisdom of Synod to guide the churches in their pastoral care.
 - 2.2 Pastoral Advice should be received with respect. It would be unwise to disregard Pastoral Advice in preaching or writing. It may not, however, serve as grounds in matters of discipline.
 - 2.3 Pastoral Advice may be appealed as outlined in Church Order Articles 29 and 31 (*Regulations for Synodical Procedure* 3.4 and Appendix B).

3. **Study Committee Report:** A *Study Committee Report* is the documentation of the work performed in response to a Synod's mandate, presenting one or more recommendations for action by Synod (*Regulations for Synodical Procedure* 3.2 and 5.3.3.a.).
 - 3.1 A Study Committee Report recommends an action to be taken by Synod on the basis of specific grounds (*Regulations for Synodical Procedure* 5.3.3.c.3.). If a recommended action calls for Synod to adopt Doctrinal Affirmations or to provide Pastoral Advice, such an action should be clearly identified and distinguished as such.
 - 3.2 A Study Committee Report as such shall not be adopted by Synod. However, if Synod judges that a Study Committee Report is of value to the churches, it may be referred to the churches for study. Any Doctrinal Affirmations adopted or Pastoral Advice given by Synod in response to a Study Committee Report should be received by the churches as agreed in 1.2 or 2.2, respectively.

3.3 A Study Committee Report cannot be appealed; however, Synodical actions arising from a Study Committee Report may be appealed as outlined in Church Order Articles 29 and 31 (*Regulations for Synodical Procedure* 3.4 and Appendix B).

4. **Synodical Judgment:** A *Synodical Judgment* is the answer of Synod to an appeal (*Regulations for Synodical Procedure* 3.4 and Appendix B).

4.1 A Synodical Judgment either sustains or denies an appeal by:

- a. adjudicating whether each specification of error should be sustained and stating grounds for such judgment; and
- b. adjudicating whether the appeal has been sustained and stating grounds for such decision (*Regulations for Synodical Procedure* 3.4 and Appendix B, 7 and 8).

4.2 A Synodical Judgment should be received by the appellants with respect and submission and shall be considered settled and binding, unless proven to be in conflict with the Word of God or the Church Order (Church Order Articles 29 and 31; *Regulations for Synodical Procedure* 3.4 and Appendix B, 8.b).

4.3 A Synodical Judgment may be appealed as outlined in Church Order Articles 29 and 31. (*Regulations for Synodical Procedure* 3.4 and Appendix B).

Appendix E

Guidelines for Addresses of Fraternal Observers and Fraternal Delegates

We welcome you to address our Synod at an appropriate time which will be made known to you. In order to best serve the purpose of our broadest assembly (Synod), we ask that you follow the following guidelines with regard to time and content of your speeches.

We require speeches to be no longer than 10 minutes. After 10 minutes the chairman of Synod will rise, thus indicating to the speaker that they should bring their comments to a close.

Suggestions for items to be addressed:

1. The history of your denomination/federation if it is relatively unknown to the URCNA.
2. Recent decisions or movements in your churches.
3. Encouragement and advice to the URCNA, especially in light of their Synod meeting.
4. Items of prayer that we may remember on your behalf.
5. We would request that you refrain from spending a significant amount of time promoting particular seminaries or other particular ministry causes.