

# Delegate Job Description

**Title:** Mennonite Church USA Assembly Delegate

**Function:** Acting for and on behalf of the entire Mennonite Church USA, delegates worship together, discern the leading of the Holy Spirit for Mennonite Church USA, determine major policy issues and evaluate and offer guidance for the work of the Executive Board and the program agencies of the church.

## Responsibilities and Duties:

1. Prepare in advance of Delegate Assembly meetings.
  - a. Read carefully all the material distributed to delegates.
  - b. Seek clarification from the Executive Board or its staff on materials or statements that are not understood.
  - c. Ask for prayer and advice and opinions of other persons in your constituency (congregation or area conference) about matters which will be the subject of discernment and discussion at the assembly.
  - d. Be prepared to engage in discernment regarding the vision, purpose, priorities and activities of Mennonite Church USA with delegates and others by listening, discussing, worshiping and praying.
2. Participate actively in the assembly.
  - a. Be present and on time for each session.
  - b. Listen carefully to input from the moderator, church leaders, members of your table groups and other delegates.
  - c. Work actively and cooperatively with other delegates to discern the voice of the Spirit in the assembly and to articulate God's desired future for Mennonite Church USA.
  - d. Offer suggestions on ways to improve the various programs and services of Mennonite Church USA.
  - e. Experience the assembly sessions as worshipful work that honors God and report highlights of these sessions back to the constituency which commissioned you.
3. Serve as a conduit for information between assemblies.
  - a. Receive and respond to requests for information and opinions from the Executive Board.
  - b. Register new ideas, advice and suggestions focused on improving the Purposeful Plan, the outcomes and the effectiveness of Mennonite Church USA.
  - c. Suggest qualified candidates to fill delegate-elected positions.
4. Provide for continuity with newly appointed delegates.
  - a. Pass along past information of interest to the next delegate before the end of your service.
  - b. Provide assistance as needed to orient newly-appointed delegates to their work.

## Qualifications:

1. Active membership in a congregation of Mennonite Church USA.
2. A commitment to discerning God's desired future for Mennonite Church USA.
3. Interest in dealing with vision, values, systems and long-term planning.
4. Willingness to make policy decisions in the best interests of the whole church.
5. Personal commitment of time and necessary resources to attend the assembly meetings.

# Procedural Rules for Delegates

The Delegate Assembly needs to attend to the church's business in a timely manner that allows for due consideration. Balancing these goals can be difficult, especially in decision-making bodies as large as ours. Much of the work of this assembly will be done in table groups, engaging in a process of Biblical/Communal Discernment. The outcome of these discussions will be shared through both written feedback and through reporting to the assembly via representatives from table groups.

On several items, however, we will call for a vote by individual delegates. During those business sessions, we will follow the rules laid out in the bylaws for Mennonite Church USA. Article V, Section 5 sets forth the following directions for the conduct of meetings of the Delegate Assembly:

*Bylaw provisions for decision making by the Delegate Assembly:*

- Normally floor privileges are granted first to all delegates, Delegate Assembly committee members, and members of the program boards and committees. Floor privileges will be extended to others during a discussion at the moderator's discretion.
- Each assembly delegate shall be eligible to cast one vote. There is no proxy voting.
- A majority of votes cast shall determine any matter, except when the assembly agrees otherwise or when otherwise provided in the bylaws.
- A quorum for conducting official business of the assembly shall be those delegates to the assembly who appear for any duly-called meeting.

Parliamentary procedure was developed as a tool to help groups, especially large ones, balance the goals of timely action and due consideration. It does that by standardizing procedures through a system of rules that establish who may speak, about what, at what time, and for how long. This document is an effort to make parliamentary procedure feel as user friendly as possible. This document and the rules described below are substantially the same as the Procedural Rules for Delegates successfully followed at most previous Delegate Assemblies, including the Phoenix 2013 Delegate Assembly

We may take three preliminary actions early in our sessions. The first action identifies the members of the delegate body so we know who can make motions and vote on them. Another establishes any special rules (see below) needed for purpose of efficiency and fairness. A third sets the agenda so that we collectively agree on what business we will do together during the sessions.

## **Parliamentary procedures commonly used**

During the delegate session, if you want to introduce a motion, raise a question or extend discussion, please follow these procedures:

- If you want to amend a main motion, limit or extend debate on a motion, or lay a motion on the table, you need to make a motion to that effect while the main motion is still under consideration. To do so, seek recognition from the moderator and then make the motion.  
(Simply say, "I wish to amend the motion," and then, when recognized, say, "I move that the motion be amended to say . . .")
- To object to the consideration of a motion, call for a more precise vote, ask a question about parliamentary procedure or offer information on a question, first seek recognition of the moderator and then state your business. (You might say, "Point of information." Then, if recognized, you might say, "In relation to the current motion, delegates may find it helpful to know that...")

- To call for a recess, an adjournment or a question of privilege (to rectify some problem that is distracting the assembly, for instance), seek the recognition of the moderator and after recognition make the motion. (You might say, “I rise to a question of privilege.” The moderator will ask you what the question of privilege is.)
- Many motions require a second. This guarantees that at least one other person is interested in the proposal. (To second a motion, rise and say, “I second that motion.”)
- Any motion that comes from a committee does not need a second since the support of a committee already indicates that the body is interested in the motion.
- Finally, if you think that it is time to end discussion, you can “call for the question.” However, if there is any objection to ending discussion, then the delegate body will need to take a vote on your proposal to end discussion.

### **Basic rules**

In an effort to allow as many persons as possible to be heard, please follow these basic rules:

- When you go to the microphone to address the assembly, wait to be recognized by the moderator. Once recognized, state your name and, if appropriate, the group you represent before making your remarks.
- Do not speak at the open microphone more than twice in a day on any one topic unless requested to do so by your table group.
- Before you speak a second time on one topic, make sure that others who have not yet spoken on that topic but wish to do so are permitted to speak.
- Speak on behalf of a group only if and to the extent you have been specifically commissioned to do so.
- In order to keep the discussion from becoming personal, always address the moderator rather than a previous speaker or someone else in the meeting.
- Always speak respectfully. If you disagree with another person who has spoken, please describe that point of view with respect.
- Only delegates may make motions or vote on them.

### **Special rules**

We will conduct our business according to the following special rules commonly used in large assemblies that meet for relatively short periods of time.

- Any motion that brings substantive business to the body must be taken to the Resolutions Committee before it can be brought to the floor. (See *Developing Resolutions for Mennonite Church USA*.) The purpose of the Resolutions Committee is to make sure that the assembly takes time to consider only clear and appropriate motions.
- Likewise, amendments to resolutions that appear on the agenda must be presented to the Resolutions Committee before they can be brought to the floor for discussion. The purpose for this rule is the same as above.

For more specific information on the kinds of motions you can make and the rules that apply to them, see *Roberts Rules of Order Newly Revised (10<sup>th</sup> edition)*. If you have questions about parliamentary procedure during the delegate sessions, you may seek the assistance of the parliamentarian appointed for our Convention 2015 Delegate Assembly.

We trust that the procedures described above will enable our delegate sessions to be genuine times of discernment. Please come prepared to hear God’s voice in the midst of our assembly.

# Table Group Processes for Discernment and Decision Making *(updated 6/1/15)*

Delegates and moderators at recent Mennonite Church USA assemblies have affirmed the use of table groups for discernment, for processing issues and agenda and to gather feedback. That pattern will continue at Kansas City 2015. Voting will continue to be according to Mennonite Church USA Bylaws.

## WHY TABLE GROUPS?

Open microphones in large group settings limit the number of people who are able to give input into the discussion. Microphones may also be dominated by the most extroverted among us. Beyond that, much discussion and many good ideas are shared in hallways and around dining tables but in many instances these conversations have no formal way of becoming part of the ongoing discernment or decision making processes of the assembly. Unfortunately, these informal discussions sometimes lack the accountability of going through the larger public filter where the accuracy of reports and assumptions can be tested.

The use of table groups provides a way to:

- engage in mutual discernment in a small group setting;
- hear the wisdom of the church from less outspoken delegates;
- ensure that all voices are heard;
- gain the wisdom from and give accountability to discussions that take place in hallways and dining halls;
- recognize and benefit from the wisdom, insight and knowledge of the greatest number of persons.

## TABLE GROUP MAKEUP AND ORGANIZATION

**Size:** Delegates have been pre-assigned to groups of no less than eight due to the number of tables that can fit in the room.

Non-delegates may form themselves into groups of at least five and no more than eight, preferably made up of people who aren't attending the convention together. If non-delegates have not received written information, they should request it from an usher.

**Commitment and participation:** The group covenant should be reviewed by each member of the table group.

**Leadership:** A leader has been assigned to each delegate table. Non-delegate tables, if available, should designate a leader.

**Record keeping and reporting:** Each group should identify a person who will serve as a recorder. The recorder will complete written reports or summaries. Oral reporting (during "open" microphone time) should be done as directed by the moderator.

## **TABLE GROUP PROCESS**

### **1. Table Group Dialogue and Discernment**

- a. The table leader will give direction to the discernment process and moderate the conversation.
- b. There will be a time for getting acquainted, reviewing the covenant, and prayer.
- c. The moderator will introduce the issue, or resolution under consideration.
- d. Each person in the table group should be given an initial chance to speak, or be allowed to “pass.” Hearing everyone’s voice is important.
- e. At some point, the table leader will test for consensus. The moderator will ask for results. A 5-finger method may be used to test for consensus.
  - 5 fingers held up signals complete agreement, with NO hesitation or questions
  - 4 fingers held up signals agreement, with some hesitation
  - 3 fingers signal ambivalence, can see both sides
  - 2 fingers signals strong concerns, but not wanting to block consensus.
  - 1 finger signals opposition, and choosing to block consensus at this time.

### **2. Table Group Reporting:**

- a. The moderator will gather written reports by the table groups after each session.
- b. At times, the moderator may call for oral reporting. Persons should speak at the microphone only if they have been asked to do so by their table group.
- c. If another speaks the concerns, questions or comments of one table, there is no need to repeat them.
- d. Persons who carry more than one issue from their table may begin their report with, “Our table supports the speaker who ... and additionally we bring the following...”
- e. Hearing minority positions is an important part of discernment. It is not necessary that the majority of persons at the table agree if a member wants to share publicly, but the table group must agree the entire assembly should hear the opinion.

## **DELEGATE VOTING USING ROBERTS RULES OF ORDER**

After the table deliberations and testing for consensus, the moderator will call for the resolution or issue to be voted to be “moved and seconded.” Delegate voting will be as directed in Article V, Section 5, Decision Making. Voting may be by voice vote, visible signal or ballot as called for by the moderator.

# **Table Group Covenant**

## **The Delegate Body of Mennonite Church USA**

*Adapted from "Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective"*  
*Article 16. Church Order and Unity*

We gather as a part of the church of Jesus Christ, one body with many members, who by the work of the Holy Spirit are brought together into a dwelling place for God.

As God's people gather at Convention 2015 in Kansas City, Missouri, we are the church, a holy temple, a spiritual house, with Christ Jesus himself as our foundation.

We recognize the need to consult together in order to maintain unity on important matters of faith and life. Love and unity in the church are a witness to the world of God's love.

In our deliberations and decision-making we covenant with each other to listen and speak in a spirit of prayerful openness and with the Scriptures as the constant guide. In humility we are open to both give and receive counsel. We know that discernment will include points of agreement and of disagreement, words of affirmation and of dissent. In our discernment we are prepared to wait patiently as we seek a word from the Lord leading toward consensus rather than make hasty decisions.<sup>1</sup>

We rejoice in the multiplicity of people, gifts, ideas, and opinions that are present in this gathering of the Delegate Assembly of Mennonite Church USA.

We covenant together:

- to assume the best intentions of all participants at this table and in this assembly.
- to pray for one another and the assembly leaders.
- to be patient and kind.
- to speak directly, and listen carefully, while curtailing interruptions.
- to practice humility and be willing to change or be corrected.
- to respect the views of those who may not agree with the majority.
- to participate in the group process, forego distractions and be ready to make a decision.

<sup>1</sup> Consensus means that the Delegate body has listened carefully to all voices, majority and minority together, and sought the unity of the Spirit. Consensus is reached when the Delegate body has come to a common mind on a matter, or when those who dissent have indicated a readiness to accept a group decision. Consensus does not necessarily mean complete unanimity.