

STANDING ORDERS OF GENERAL SYNOD

ADOPTED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
MAY, 1965

(amended 1970, 1971, 1972, 1975, 1979, 1984, 1985, 1987, 1988, 1997, 2000, 2003, 2009, 2011, 2017, 2018, 2021, 2022 and 2024)

General

1. The Holy Bible and the Book of Common Prayer shall lie in front of the President.
2. Each day's proceedings shall open with a reading from Holy Scripture and prayer.
3. The hours for the Synod when in ordinary session shall be as follows:-

First day: 11.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m.; 2.00 p.m. to 6.30 p.m. or, if the first and second readings of all Bills sent to the members with the summonses have not then been concluded, until such later hour as the Synod shall determine.

Second day: 10.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m.; 2.00 p.m. to 6.30 p.m.

Third day: 10.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m.; 2.00 p.m. to 4.30 p.m. or such other hour as the Synod may determine.

Provided that:

(a) The Standing Committee may by Resolution determine that –

- i. the number of days of the Synod; and/or
- ii. the hour at which the Synod shall commence or conclude on any day shall be otherwise than as stated above.

(b) The Synod by Resolution assented to by at least two-thirds of the members of the House of Representatives present and voting thereon may (unless the Bishops present by a majority object) prolong the period of any sitting to such hour as may be named in such Resolution.

The hours for the Synod when in special session shall be specified in the notice convening the meeting.

4. (a) Notice of each ordinary meeting of the General Synod shall be sent to every member thereof at least 21 days before the day fixed for such meeting.
- (b) Notice of each special meeting of the General Synod shall be sent to every member thereof at least 7 days before the day fixed for such meeting.
5. Every member shall be issued with details of how to gain admission to the meeting of the Synod, as will members of the Representative Body and its Chief Officer and Secretary, the Assessor of the General Synod and other officers of the Synod. Representatives of Churches invited by the General Synod or by the Standing Committee shall also be admitted to the meeting of the Synod
6. Reporters shall be admitted to such part of the Synod as the Synod may appoint except when the Synod shall exclude them by standing order or by an express vote.
7. Four honorary secretaries, two clerical and two lay, shall be elected by their respective orders from among their own members. Any casual vacancy may be filled by the Standing Committee provided

always that the clerical or lay representative so elected by the Standing Committee shall be deemed to hold office only until the day previous to the next meeting of the General Synod.

8. On the first day of each ordinary session the President shall appoint as Assessor a person having legal qualifications and experience of the form of government of the Church. The Assessor shall hold office until immediately prior to the following ordinary session and shall be eligible for re-appointment.
9. When the President shall have taken the Chair, no member shall continue speaking, except when addressing the Chair.
10. At a physical meeting of Synod, no member shall pass between the Chair and a member who is speaking.
11. If it appear on notice being taken that a quorum is not present, the President shall thereupon adjourn the Synod, without question put, until an hour to be named by the President, or until the next day of meeting, as he shall think fit.
12. A motion to suspend Standing Orders may be moved without notice and to be passed such motion shall require the consent of three-fourths of the members present and voting.
13. All questions of order and relevance shall be decided by the President.
14. The President shall regulate the proceedings of the Synod in all matters not provided for in these Orders by analogy to parliamentary practice.

Rules of Debate

15. Every member desiring to speak shall address the Chair, and when two or more members indicate a desire to address the Chair the President shall decide which of them shall speak.
16. The President shall confine each speaker to the subject-matter of debate; it shall not be in order for any member to interrupt the speaker, except through the medium of the President.
17. Whenever the President indicates that they wish to speak any member shall desist from speaking until the President indicates that the said member may continue.
18. No speech of more than five minutes' duration shall be permitted except

(a) the proposer of the reports of the Standing Committee and the Representative Body, who may speak for fifteen minutes each; and

(b) the seconder of the reports of the Standing Committee and the Representative Body and the proposer of any other report or of any bill, who may speak for ten minutes;

provided that the President (or person chairing the Synod at that time), having regard to the circumstances, including the gravity or complexity of the subject of the debate and the time available for the disposal of business, may decide that compliance with the above restrictions ought to be waived in regard to a particular speech.

19. The President shall leave the Chair when desiring to take part in a debate.

(Note - Appointment to the Chair - see appendix)

20. The proposer of a motion shall have a right of reply, but otherwise a member shall not be permitted to speak more than once on the same question except on the Amendment/Detail Stage of a bill. The seconder of a motion or amendment may reserve the right to make a speech to any period of the debate.
21. Members of the Representative Body and its Chief Officer and Secretary shall be entitled to address the House on any question before it. Ecumenical guests shall be entitled to address the House on reports and motions, but shall not be entitled to address the house on bills. Only those who are members of the House shall be entitled to vote.

Bills

22. Notice of motion for leave to bring in bills for specified purposes may be sent to the honorary secretaries of the Synod with the proposed bill at any time not less than one week before the day appointed for the opening of the session of the Synod, and shall appear on the Agenda for the first day of such session; provided that any bill which is lodged with the honorary secretaries not less than six weeks before the first day of the session (excluding the period from Sunday next before Easter (Palm Sunday) to Easter Day inclusive) shall be printed and sent to the members with the summonses.
23. On leave being asked to bring in a bill, the name or names of the member or members proposing to bring in the bill shall be stated and the name or names shall be printed with the bill.
24. (a) At the first ordinary session of each Synod a Bills Committee consisting of six members with the Assessor ex officio shall be elected to hold office until immediately prior to the first ordinary session of the following General Synod.
 - (b) The Bills Committee shall meet prior to each session of the General Synod to consider legal and drafting aspects of the Bills being presented. The proposer of each Bill shall be notified of the date and place of meeting, and the proposer or the proposer's nominee shall be entitled to participate during the consideration of such Bill.
 - (c) It shall be competent for the Synod to refer to the Bills Committee any amendments which may be proposed during the progress of a Bill through the Synod.
25. Bills shall be considered in the order of lodgement thereof with the honorary secretaries, save that bills introduced at the request of the Synod or the House of Bishops or the Standing Committee or the Representative Body or the Pensions Board shall have priority over other bills.
26. Where there are for consideration two or more bills dealing with the same subject matter, the President, if of the opinion that it is advisable so to do, may direct that the question be not put on the Principle Stage of any such bills until there shall have been a debate on the Principle Stage of the other or others.
27. Notice of any amendment proposed to a bill shall be given in writing to the honorary secretaries. (And see S.O.s Nos. 34 to 39.)
28. In the case of any Ordinary Bill which has been printed and sent to the members with the summonses, no amendment shall be considered, save with the leave of the Synod, unless it has been notified to the honorary secretaries on or before the Friday next preceding the session of the Synod; and in the case of such bill (not being a bill to which Standing Order 30 refers) the Synod, if it thinks fit, may proceed on the day of the introduction to the Principle and Amendment/Detail Stages.
29. Procedure on Ordinary Bills (Ch. 1 sec. 25 of the Constitution) shall be as follows:-

(a) Introduction

The member moving for leave to introduce a bill shall be permitted to make a brief explanatory statement of not more than five minutes' duration, and if the motion is opposed, a member opposing may make a statement in opposition of not more than five minutes' duration. The member moving for leave may postpone making a statement until after the member opposing has spoken.

Only the one speech in support of, and one in opposition to, the motion may be made, and the question shall then be put without amendment or further debate; provided that in the case of a bill proposed to be introduced at the request of the Synod or the House of Bishops or the Standing Committee or the Representative Body or the Pensions Board the resolution giving leave to introduce it shall be put without debate unless notice of intention to oppose the resolution has been given to the honorary secretaries of the Synod on or before the Friday next preceding the meeting of the Synod.

Leave to introduce having been given, the bill shall be read, without debate, and an order made fixing a day for the Principle Stage.

(b) Principle Stage

On the motion “that the bill now be considered in Principle”, the debate, if any, shall be confined to the question whether the Synod approves the proposal in principle, matters of detail being postponed to the Amendment/Detail Stage. The only amendment which may be moved to this motion is one proposing to delete all or some of the words after “That,” and the substitution of words which state some reason against the bill being considered in principle forthwith. The bill having been through the Principle Stage, an order shall be made fixing a day for consideration at the Amendment/Detail Stage.

(c) Amendment/Detail Stage

The Synod shall consider the bill, clause by clause, together with any relevant amendments which may be proposed, the preamble being taken last. At the conclusion of this consideration an order shall be made fixing a day for the Final Consideration and Final Decision stages.

(d) Final Consideration Stage

At this stage the Synod may consider amendments which arise out of the Amendment/Detail Stage and of which notice has been given at least one day before this stage. Amendments rejected during the Amendment/Detail Stage shall not be in order. Amendments may also be made without notice if in the opinion of the President they involve merely matters of drafting or the correction of grammatical or clerical errors.

When the bill has received relevant consideration, an order may be made fixing a day for the Final Decision, provided that such order must permit, unless the Synod otherwise direct, for a at least one clear day being interposed between consideration at the Detail/Amendment Stage and the Final Decision.

(e) Final Decision Stage

On the motion “That the bill be passed,” any debate shall be confined to what is provided in the bill.

30. Procedure on Special Bills (Ch. 1 sec. 26 of the Constitution) shall be as for Ordinary Bills; provided that:-

- (a) Leave to introduce such a bill may only be given at an ordinary session of the Synod; leave having been given, the bill shall be deemed to have completed the Introduction Stage, but it shall not be processed further until the next ordinary session when it will come before the Synod for the Principle Stage. No amendment to such a Bill may be moved at the Introduction Stage, but notice of any such amendment must be given at this stage provided that written notice of any such amendment if received by the Honorary Secretaries within one calendar month of the end of this Ordinary Session shall be deemed to have been given at the Introduction Stage. Amendments of which notice has been given at the Introduction stage may be moved at the Amendment/Detail stage, and no other amendment may then be moved except any dealing with omissions, grammatical or clerical errors.
- (b) Copies of the resolution giving leave to introduce shall be sent to each diocesan synod within one month after the ending of the session at which the resolution was passed.
- (c) The consent of not less than two-thirds of each order, present and voting, shall be required to pass the motions (i) for leave to introduce the bill, (ii) that the bill now progress through the Principle Stage and (iii) the bill now progress through the Amendment/Detail and Final Decision Stages, and
- (d) Debate on the motion that leave to introduce be given shall be governed by the rules of debate without the limitations imposed by S.O. 29(a).

31. (a) A notice of motion (other than a notice of motion referred to in (d) or (e) of this Order) shall be delivered to the Honorary Secretaries not less than one month before the day appointed for the opening of the session of the Synod at which the motion is to be moved.
- (b) A notice of motion duly delivered to the Honorary Secretaries in accordance with (a) of this Order shall be sent to the members of the Synod with the Summons for the Synod at which the motion is to be moved. Such notice shall also be printed on the agenda for the 1st day of such Synod, and may be taken into consideration without further notice.
- (c) A notice of motion shall be signed by the intended mover or by some member on the mover's behalf.
- (d) A notice of motion received during a session of the Synod shall be read to the Synod by one of the Honorary Secretaries on such day as the President shall direct, but such motion shall not be taken into consideration until the next following session unless:-
- (i) it arises out of business already transacted at the session at which it is received, or
 - (ii) The President and a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting consent to its being taken into consideration at the session at which it is received. If a motion is taken into consideration under (i) or (ii) it shall be taken into consideration on such day as the President shall direct.
 - (iii) A Notice of Motion received during a Session of the Synod shall be signed by the intended mover with a written indication of support signed by five other members.
 - (iv) The full text of such a Motion shall be submitted in writing to the Honorary Secretaries, shall be read to the Synod by one of the Honorary Secretaries on such day as the President shall direct and such Motion shall be made available for consideration by all members of the Synod as soon as possible after receipt from the person proposing the Motion and in any event not later than 12 noon on the final day of the Session unless in exceptional circumstances the President directs otherwise.
 - (v) All amendments to any such Motion shall be delivered in writing to the Honorary Secretaries and the text of such amendments shall be made available for consideration by all members of the Synod as soon as possible after receipt from the person tabling the amendment and in any event not later than 1.00 p.m. on the third day of the Synod unless the President shall direct otherwise.
 - (vi) Any such Motion which is not taken into consideration under (i) or (ii) above shall be sent to the members of the Synod with the Summonses for the next following Session.
- (e) A motion may be moved without notice by the unanimous leave of the Synod.
32. Motions shall be set down in the order in which the notices were given, provided that motions relating to the same subject shall be taken consecutively and provided that motions relating to any committee or board or commission shall be taken in conjunction with the report of such committee or board or commission.
33. A motion which does not propose that action be taken beyond its publication or transmission to certain persons shall not be moved unless the permission of the Synod has been previously obtained. When such a motion has been submitted the President shall put the question that leave be given to the member desiring to propose the motion to do so, and a vote shall be taken on this question without debate.
34. No motion or amendment, during the Amendment/Detail Stage, shall be taken into consideration unless it be seconded; but, if seconded, it shall not be withdrawn without the leave of the Synod.

Amendments

35. A question having been proposed may be amended (a) by leaving out specified words or (b) by inserting

in lieu of specified words included therein other specified words, or (c) by adding or inserting specified words; provided that an amendment which is in effect a direct negative to the question may not be moved. All amendments shall be delivered in writing to the honorary secretaries.

36. All amendments shall be put according to the priority of the words proposed to be inserted in or omitted from the clause under consideration, and, except by leave of the Synod, no amendment may be proposed in any part of a question after a later part has been amended.
37. The question to be put in regard to any proposed amendment shall in all cases be whether the proposed amendment be made.
38. (a) At any time before the question has been put in regard to any proposed amendment the mover thereof may with the leave of the Synod alter the terms thereof, but no other amendment to a proposed amendment shall be in order.
(b) When an amendment has been made, the question thus amended becomes the substantive question and further amendments may then be proposed.
39. Where amendments have been made, the main question as amended shall be put and where no amendments have been made the question shall be put as originally proposed.
40. The Synod may order a complicated question to be divided.

Enforced Closure of Debate

41. (a) At any time after a question has been proposed in the Synod, a member may claim to move "that the question be now put," and, unless it shall appear to the President that such a motion is an abuse of Standing Orders, it shall be put forthwith and decided without amendment or debate.
(b) At any time after a question has been proposed in the Synod a member who considers that a vote on the question is undesirable may claim to move "that the Synod do now pass from this question to its next business," and, unless it shall appear to the President that such a motion is an abuse of Standing Orders, it shall be put forthwith and decided without amendment or debate.
(c) The proposer of a closure motion under (a) or (b) above may not interrupt a speaker to do so, and the President, before putting such motion, shall read the original motion (or the motion as amended as the case may be) which was being debated.
(d) If a closure motion under (a) or (b) above is negatived this shall not of itself preclude the proposal of (i) further amendments and (ii), at the discretion of the President, further closure motions, upon the subject in debate.

Motion for Adjournment of Debate or of the Synod

42. No discussion shall be permitted on a motion for adjournment; but the question shall be put immediately from the Chair, and decided by a show of hands on such motion, or by a division, if called for.
43. No adjournment of a debate or of the Synod may be moved if a similar motion on the same subject has been made within the preceding hour.

Voting Procedure

44. This Standing Order and Standing Order 45 shall apply to physical meetings of Synod.
(a) When any question is to be put to the Synod, the President shall rise and announce that "The question is that ...", thereupon reading or stating the question, and shall require that as many as are of that opinion shall say "Aye" and as many as are of the contrary opinion shall say "No".

The President shall judge from the answers to such requests and state the result, as an opinion, of putting the question.

- (b) After the President shall have stated the result, as an opinion, of the putting of any question, any member may call for a vote upon that question. If a vote is not called for, the President shall forthwith declare the result to be that which had previously been expressed as an opinion.
 - (c) When a vote is called for, it shall be taken by show of hands unless 20 members request a division; and the President, before calling for a show of hands, shall afford sufficient opportunity for requests to be made for a division or for a vote by orders.
 - (d) A vote by orders shall be taken if ten members of either order or the provisions of Ch. 1 sec. 25 of the Constitution so require, and such vote shall be by show of hands unless a division is requested by the requisite number of members.
 - (e) When a division is to be taken, an interval of five minutes shall be allowed after which the doors shall be closed and the question put a second time. The President shall appoint two tellers for each side and order the House to divide; whereupon every member of the House of Representatives present, and wishing to vote, shall record an opinion by passing into the lobby with the "Ayes" or with the "Noes". At the conclusion of the voting the tellers, having added their own votes, shall report the result to the President, who shall communicate it to the Synod.
 - (f) No question shall be deemed to be carried in the House of Representatives unless, in the case of both orders voting together, there is a majority in favour of the same of the representatives voting thereon, or in the case of the votes being taken by orders there is a majority in favour of the same of the representatives of each order voting thereon. (But see S.O. 29(c) in the case of Special Bills.)
45. When a division is called for, it shall be taken, notwithstanding that the time may have arrived at which, according to standing orders, the Synod ought to adjourn, or proceed to some other business.

(Note - Voting by bishops in Synod - see appendix)

46. This Standing Order shall apply to electronic meetings of Synod.

- (a) During an electronic meeting of Synod, when any question is to be put to the Synod or to a Committee of the whole Synod, the President shall announce that "The question is that ...", and thereupon call for an electronic vote to be taken.
- (b) A vote by orders shall be taken if ten members of either order or the provisions of Ch. 1 sec. 25 of the Constitution so require, and such vote shall be by means of an electronic poll or other appropriate mechanism unless a division is requested by the requisite number of members. A vote by division shall be taken if 20 members request a division.
- (c) When a division is to be taken, an interval of five minutes shall be allowed after which no one further shall be admitted to the meeting and the question shall be put a second time. The President shall ensure that there is a suitable means of recording the vote of every member of the House of Representatives present, and wishing to vote. At the conclusion of the voting the President shall communicate the result to the Synod.
- (d) No question shall be deemed to be carried in the House of Representatives unless, in the case of both orders voting together, there is a majority in favour of the same of the representatives voting thereon, or in the case of the votes being taken by orders there is a majority in favour of the same of the representatives of each order voting thereon. (But see S.O. 29(c) in the case of Special Bills.)

Committees of the Synod

- 47. All committees of the Synod shall make their reports available for inclusion in the Book of Reports to be sent to members. Such reports shall also be made available to lie on the table in front of the President.
- 48. The Synod may order any resolutions, presented by committees upon the first day of the session, to be

taken into consideration without further notice.

49. When a motion for the appointment of a committee is carried, the mover thereof shall then, or at the next meeting of the Synod, move the appointment of the members proposed to serve on the Committee, one of whom shall be named as convener. The name of the mover of the resolution for the Committee shall be included in the list of proposed members, provided that this shall not be obligatory when the resolution has been moved on behalf of the House of Bishops, the Standing Committee or the Representative Body.
50. No committee shall, without leave of the Synod, consist of more than fifteen members. Each Committee shall appoint its own chairperson.
51. Every report of a committee requiring action shall be accompanied by a resolution or resolutions for the consideration of the Synod, and the mere adoption by the Synod of a report of a committee shall not be an authority for the expenditure of money.

Request for Information

52. If any member ask for information with regard to the business of any committee, either of the Synod or of the Representative Body, it shall be the duty of the chairperson of such committee, or of some other member thereof or of the Chief Officer and Secretary of the Representative Body, if so requested, to reply: Provided that at least one clear day's notice of such question shall have been given. The terms of all such requests received by the Honorary Secretaries not less than one week before the first day of a session of the Synod shall be made available to members on the said first day. Any such requests shall be answered on each day of the session at 2 p.m. or as soon thereafter as may be practicable.

Allocation of Money in the Hands of the R.C.B.

53. No resolution relating to the allocation of money in the hands of the Representative Body other than (a) money to the credit of the General Purposes Fund, or (b) for the payment of the expenses of the Synod and its committees shall be put to the Synod until a report from the Representative Body on the subject shall have been first obtained.

Separate Consideration by Bishops of Any Matter in Debate

54. When the bishops shall express their wish to consider separately any matter in debate, and upon such separate consideration shall think fit to communicate to the Synod their opinion upon such matter, the communication so made shall be inserted in the printed orders of the day, and shall come before the Synod in due course for its consideration.
55. If the communication so made shall relate to a bill previously discussed at the Amendment/Detail Stage and then awaiting the Final Consideration and Decision Stages, the publication as aforesaid of such communication shall of itself have the effect of re-committing the bill for further consideration upon the subject of such communication, but for no other purpose.

(Note - Voting by bishops in Synod - see appendix)

Orders of the Day

56. Prior to each session of the Synod the honorary secretaries shall prepare an agenda paper which shall include (a) all items required by the Constitution or Standing Orders to be discharged by the Synod, (b) all items which the Synod at a previous session has directed to be included, and (c) all bills, reports and notices of intention to propose motions or amendments which have been received by them by the appointed date. Motions relating to any committee, board or commission shall be placed on the agenda paper in conjunction with the report of the appropriate committee, board or commission.

57. On the first day at such time as the President shall deem appropriate and in any event not later than 12 noon, the Synod shall consider a motion or motions to be presented by the honorary secretaries with the approval of the President to allocate the time available under Standing Order 3 between the items listed on the agenda paper. In allocating the Synod's time the Honorary Secretaries shall bear in mind that the first priority of the Church of Ireland is spiritual not material. On the adoption of such motion or motions (with or without amendments) business shall be conducted in accordance therewith. Such motion or motions shall include provision of not less than one and a half hours each for consideration of the reports of the Standing Committee and the Representative Body.
58. The minutes of the proceedings of the session as certified by the honorary secretaries shall be presented to the next meeting of the Standing Committee and shall be confirmed by the signature of the Chairperson.

Consideration of the General State of the Church

59. On any day of meeting it shall be open to any member, at an hour when motions have precedence, to move that in priority to all other motions the Synod shall proceed to take into consideration the general state of the Church, its progress, prospects and needs. Such motion shall be put without discussion.
60. On such motion being passed, any subject then brought forward by any of the bishops shall have precedence of all others.
61. During such consideration neither strangers nor reporters shall be admitted to any part of the Synod hall or gallery.
62. Such consideration, if not sooner concluded, shall automatically cease at the expiration of one hour, unless prolonged by a special vote.
63. It shall not be necessary for a member bringing forward any subject to conclude with a resolution.
64. A separate record of the proceedings during such consideration shall be kept, and shall be authenticated by the signature of the President before the resumption of the business of the Synod.
65. During such consideration the discussion shall be regulated by the President, whose decision shall be final in all matters not provided for in the foregoing orders.

Petitions

66. A petition in writing may be made by any person or persons of the age of 18 years or upwards being a member or members of the Church of Ireland. Such petition shall be sent to the honorary secretaries of the Synod not later than one week before the day appointed for the meeting of the Synod. Any such petition shall be presented to the Synod by a member thereof and shall be referred to the Petitions Committee which shall be elected at the first session of each Synod.

APPENDIX

Voting by Bishops in Synod

Procedure relative to voting by the bishops at meetings of the General Synod is in accordance with the provisions contained in the following sections of Chapter I of the Constitution:

20. If at any time the bishops express their wish to consider separately any matter in debate, the further discussion of that matter shall be postponed until the bishops shall have had the opportunity of so doing.
21. The bishops shall vote separately from the representatives, and no question shall be deemed to have been carried unless there be in its favour a majority of the bishops present, if they desire to vote, and a majority of the clerical and lay representatives present voting conjointly or by orders: Provided always, that if a question affirmed by a majority of the clerical and lay representatives present and voting, conjointly or by orders, but in favour of which there shall not be a majority of the bishops, shall be re-affirmed at the next ordinary session of the General Synod, by not less than two-thirds of the clerical and lay representatives present and voting conjointly or by orders, it shall be deemed to be carried, unless it be negatived by not less than two-thirds of the then members of the House of Bishops, the said two-thirds being present and voting, and giving their reasons in writing.
22. The bishops shall not vote until after the declaration of the votes of the clerical and lay representatives. If they desire to vote, the bishops may withdraw from the General Synod for that purpose, and may reserve the declaration of their vote until the following day.

Appointment to the Chair

Procedure relative to the appointment to the Chair at meetings of the General Synod is in accordance with the provisions contained in the following section of Chapter I of the Constitution:

18. The President may, at his discretion, invite any member of the House of Bishops to take the Chair for such period during a session as the President may determine; any person so taking the Chair shall have, and may exercise, all the powers and functions conferred by Standing Orders on the President.