

Parliamentary Procedure – Assembly 2020

The Northeastern Ohio Synod is usually fairly casual in our synod assembly about the use of parliamentary procedure, enforcing it only as necessary to keep order. With this year's virtual assembly, however, there will need to be some difference in how things are done.

Since many of the visual cues that the "head table" leadership normally have – facial expressions, movement toward microphones, people shuffling and holding different color cards, and so forth – will be missing, there will be a need to more carefully enforce some procedures to keep order. Many of the processes for speaking at the assembly are different, and the possibility exists that some voting members may have trouble with technology issues. This suggests that flexibility may be needed by the assembly chair to accommodate any problems.

Please refer to pages 4-6 in the pre-assembly material, which contain a page on parliamentary *Language for Introducing Motions* and two tables that indicate the various motions that can be made during a meeting. Please refer to the "Language" page as a first source, and if you have specific questions, please send an email to assembly@neos-elca.org and you will be contacted with more information.

If you look at the charts, you will see several motions that are shaded in Yellow and marked "YES" under the column that is headed "Interrupt?"

The two such motions on the Ranking Motions page are:

First, *Raise a Question of Privilege*, which is more likely in a physical room, since it usually comes up in the context of a request for a change in temperature setting, a different level of lighting, or other physical arrangement issues. In the virtual assembly, the equivalent would be a bad internet connection, which is probably going to be identified by the chair from other reports via technical support people or inquiries to the help desk.

Second, *Call of the Orders of the Day*, which is used to call attention to the fact that some item of business has been discussed for so long that it has interfered with another item that has been scheduled to occur at a specific time. This can happen, but with the attention that needs to happen to get the tight schedule of the virtual assembly accomplished, there will probably be several people at the Knight Center who will be monitoring this

Which means that those priority motions that are most likely to arise are on the Nonranking Motions page, and are similar, indicating that there is an issue that has not been adequately explained or understood by a voting member – Parliamentary Inquiry, which asks for an explanation of the procedure and rules that are being used; Point of Information, which is a request for explanation of some portion of a motion that is not understood, or for some *relevant* context; Point of Order, which is a suggestion that the chair has not followed the rules (hopefully accidentally) and that there is a need to correct the process. The others arise in specific contexts, and given that there is no broad, controversial material in this year's virtual assembly agenda, are unlikely to be useful or necessary.

This takes us to the more general Ranking Motions and issues. Things start, of course, with someone being recognized to *Make a Main Motion*. Many of the motions at this assembly will automatically be ready for consideration, because they will come with either the recommendation or consent of the synod council, executive committee, or one of the assembly committees. Motions that do not come from one of those sources will need an additional person to *Second the Motion* before they can be discussed. The most common action that can occur during discussion is that someone will be recognized and will *Move to Amend* the original motion, which (if seconded) will mean that the focus for discussion will be on the amendment, until the assembly votes on it, after which the debate will return to the Main Motion, either as amended or as originally presented.

The other ranking motions are more specialized, and are less common in most of our assemblies. If you have questions about them, please review the *Language for Introducing Motions* page, and if you need additional information, please email assembly@neos-elca.org.