

**GENERAL SYNOD 2023
RESOLUTION**

Resolution Number C009

Subject: Consensus decision making

Moved By: Bishop Bruce Myers

Seconded By: Bishop Riscylla Shaw

Be it resolved that this General Synod:

Direct the Council of the General Synod to determine what would be necessary to implement a consensus model of decision making for future meetings of the General Synod, drawing on existing models currently used by other churches, as well as by the Sacred Circle, the Canadian Council of Churches, and the World Council of Churches and report to the next meeting of the General Synod.

Source: Members of General Synod

Submitted By: Bruce Myers

Does this motion contain within it any financial implications? Yes **No**

If yes, has the General Synod Expenditures Committee considered the implications? Yes No

EXPLANATORY NOTE/BACKGROUND

Successive meetings of the General Synod have demonstrated the limitations and challenges of using parliamentary procedure as the primary means of decision making for the national expression of the Anglican Church of Canada.

This motion invites our church to set aside colonial forms of debate and settler structures of decision making and instead embrace a method of ecclesial discernment that seeks, with the leading of the Holy Spirit, to find the church's common mind rather than simply the will of the majority.

The World Council of Churches (WCC), of which our church is a founding member, has used a consensus model of decision making for nearly 20 years. The WCC's experience is that, "Consensus procedures allow more room for consultation, exploration, questioning and prayerful reflection, with less rigidity than formal voting procedures. By promoting collaboration rather than adversarial debate, consensus procedures help the assembly (or a commission or committee) to seek the mind of Christ together. Rather than striving to succeed in debate, participants are encouraged to submit to one another and to seek to 'understand what the will of the Lord is' (Eph. 5:17)" (*Achieving Consensus: A Guide for Conducting Meetings*, Geneva: WCC Publications, 2014).

The Canadian Council of Churches, of which our church is also a founding member, has used a form of consensus decision making since 1997. The 2008 Lambeth Conference set aside parliamentary-style

debates and resolutions in favour of an Indigenous South African method of consensus-driven talking circles called *indaba*, a Zulu word translated as “purposeful discussion.”

Our own church’s Sacred Circle and the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples use consensus decision making, and this method was commended by members of the Council of General Synod (CoGS) as recently as last year: “Responses include praise for the consensus decision-making model of Sacred Circle, in which groups attempt to build a consensus, listen to everyone’s point of view, and arrive at a decision that all can live with, whether they agree or not” (*CoGS Highlights*, Friday 11 March 2022).

CoGS itself has used a form of consensus decision making for several years. It is time this form of collective discernment is extended to the deliberations of the whole of the General Synod.

PROCEDURE FOR ADOPTION (G)

In the normal course, an ordinary motion must be passed by a majority of the members of General Synod present and voting together.

Six members of General Synod may, prior to the question being put, require a vote by Orders, with a majority of each Order being necessary to pass.

If a question passes on a Vote by Orders, any six members (two from each of three different dioceses) may immediately before the next item of business require a vote to be taken by dioceses. A motion passes if a majority (or a tie) of dioceses vote in favour.

Source: Sections 4 and 5 of the Declaration of Principles and sections 18, 19 and 20 of the Rules of Order and Procedure.