

APPENDIX 2

UUCT GUIDELINES FOR DECISION MAKING

Adopted June, 1997

Introduction

In considering UUCT decision-making, it is recognized that different situations require different types of decision-making on the part of Church leadership. The basic situations and decision-making types are as follows:

1. For crisis situations, situations of a confidential nature and situations where decision -making has traditionally been delegated to the Board or other church leaders, the leadership may go ahead and make the decision.
2. Some situations require a broad basis of knowledge and opinions. In these cases, consultative decision-making is best, where many people are asked and then the decision is made.
3. For situations when the expertise of a regular or ad-hoc committee is needed, delegative decision-making is appropriate. Here, taking an action or making a recommendation is delegated to a committee.
4. For important decisions involving the entire congregation, we need everyone involved to accept the decision made. In these cases, consensus decision-making as defined below, will be used in conjunction with our normal democratic process of voting, per the UUCT By-laws.

Consensus is a process for coming to a collective general agreement. This agreement is reached through gathering and providing information and viewpoints, discussion, persuasion, and a combination of synthesis of proposals and/or the development of new ones. In combination with the democratic process, it can enhance the sense of community within a group, by insuring that everyone feels heard.

In our congregation, the combination of consensus-building discussion followed by a democratic majority vote will be the general pattern for major decisions. The goal will be to build consensus prior to voting. However, the By-Laws requirements for a democratic majority vote will prevail, and unanimity does not necessarily have to be achieved before the vote is taken.

Standard parliamentary procedures, per Robert's Rules of Order, will be used at meetings where votes are taken.

Procedures For Board Decision Making

It shall be the practice of the Board, whenever possible, to refer questions and issues to committees, either standing or ad hoc, for the purpose of study, research, opinion gathering, and any other activity the committee shall deem helpful to prepare a recommendation to the Board.

Ad hoc committee members shall be chosen for technical expertise, or because they represent a known position on the issue that needs to be factored into the decision. If the ad hoc committee is created by the Board to address a particular issue, the committee will include at least one Board member.

Some decisions may not need Board action as long as the decision falls within established church policy and there is no impact on church finances. In such case, the committee will make an informational report to the Board.

Decisions that should be brought to the Board include the following:

1. Where expenditure of money not in the budget is required,
2. Where Church policy is not clear,
3. Where there is a conflict that a committee can not resolve, and
4. Where a proposal to the congregation needs to be made, such as in the proposed asking, or annual budget.

Some decisions are by By-laws definition decisions that the congregation must make. These would include the approval of the annual budget, building expansion, hiring a minister, taking out a loan, and any action regarding the Trust Funds.

No matter the level at which a decision is being made, it is recommended that preparations be made in advance of the meeting by giving:

Background information,
Reasons in favor,
Reasons against, and
Proposed recommendation(s).

If this preparatory work is done in advance of a meeting, be it committee, Board or congregation, the meeting will go more smoothly. Whenever possible, it is advisable to present a proposition that has the input of two or more persons.

Procedures For A Congregational Meeting

In general, the larger the group faced with making a decision, the more structure is needed.

Voting Meetings

For all congregational meetings where a vote is to be taken, the following is recommended:

1. Parliamentary Procedure. The President or other person presiding will use Robert's Rules of Order and have the services of a Parliamentarian.
2. Ending Debate. A motion may be made and seconded to take a vote to close debate.
3. Time Limits. In order to assure participation by everyone, the presiding officer may limit the amount of time by each speaker, depending on the amount of time available for discussion and the amount of discussion anticipated. No person will make a second statement until everyone wishing to speak has been heard. This will apply to the second round of statements, and so on for as many rounds as there are.
4. Designated Microphones. In cases where many statements in favor and against are anticipated, two other microphones in addition to the microphone used by the presiding officer shall be available for members of the congregation to speak. One will be labeled the "pro" mic and the other the "con" mic. Persons wishing to speak in favor or against the proposition would line up or sign up for the appropriate microphone.
5. Notification. Per the By-laws Article VI-Section D, "Notification of all membership meetings shall be given to members of the church at least ten days in advance of the meeting. The purpose of the meeting shall be clearly specified and, in the case of all special meetings, the business of the meeting shall be limited to the subject or subjects identified." Background information and reasons in favor or against will be given whenever possible. The goal will be a fully informed congregation.
6. Series of Votes. It is recognized that it may be appropriate at times when making major decisions to have a series of votes (at one or more meetings). These votes would progress from more general decisions to more specific ones.

Discussion Meetings

It is recognized that for some issues, one or more congregational discussion meetings prior to a voting meeting may be useful in: gathering information and opinions for developing a proposal for congregational consideration, or discussing or answering questions about an already developed proposal.