

A LOOK BACK AT THE 2015 ANNUAL MEETING

Due to vacations, illnesses, and schedules, this summary from the Executive Committee is being published later than we had wished, but we felt it was still appropriate, helpful and perhaps needed.

At any Annual Meeting, when we get to the New Business part of the agenda, any voting member can stand up to make any motion they wish. If it receives a second (and is not ruled out of order by the chair because it violates the church's constitution or bylaws, etc.), it is then restated by the chair. Following that the chair invites speaking for or against the motion until the chair asks if the assembly is ready to vote or a member of the assembly moves to close debate.

Robert's Rules of Order dictates that people can speak for up to ten minutes each (unless the assembly has previously voted to limit or extend this time). There are no rules for what they say, except to say that one hopes for a presentation that is concise, clear, logical and does not cross the boundary of good taste and decorum. It is not, however, appropriate for the speaker to engage in dialogue with others in the assembly. If one desires to ask a question of the member speaking, they should rise, and without waiting to be recognized, address the chair, saying "I should like to ask the speaker a question." **The chair** then asks of the speaker's willingness to be interrupted, or the speaker may at once consent or decline, **addressing, however, the chair, through whom the conversation must be carried on**, as members cannot directly address one another in a deliberative assembly. If the speaker consents to the question, the time consumed by the interruption comes out of the time of the speaker.

At our January 25th Annual Meeting, an item of new business was introduced by one of our voting members. It received a second and was restated by the chair (via a projection of the text of the motion on the wall). The chair then invited the maker of the motion to speak to the motion. Some minutes into this speech, something that was said seemed to raise a question or objection in the minds of one or more present in the assembly, at which time at least one question was shouted out. Pastor John, who was serving as something of an unofficial parliamentarian, asked that the questioning of the speaker not continue (this was somewhat inappropriate; he should have explained the proper way to ask a question of the speaker). A little further into the speech, things were said that, based on the reaction of several members of the assembly, crossed the line of good taste and decorum. Again, Pastor John asked for quiet so that the speaker could finish his ten minutes. The content of the speech and the reaction of some of the members of the assembly caught the Chair by surprise and neither the Chair nor the Pastor were aware of the rights of the chair to end a speech if it contained language or imagery that was deemed inappropriate to that time and place.

Following the speech by the maker of the motion, another member of the assembly made a motion to close debate, the motion passed, and the vote on the motion was taken.

What did we learn from this experience?

1. We need a current copy of *Robert's Rules of Order* on hand in the church office (it arrived in the office on March 7), so that the one presiding over these meetings is better prepared.
2. We need to clarify the rules and procedures for making a motion *before* the New Business section of the Annual Meeting begins. We plan to print a summary on the back of the Agenda page in next year's Annual Report.

We are open to other suggestions.

Sincerely,

The Mount Cross Executive Committee

Gayle Johnson, Council President
Bob Brundage, Council Vice President
Denise Sobolik, Recorder
Keith Selbrede, Treasurer
Jenny Christensen, Financial Secretary
John W. Soyster, Pastor