

RMC - Decision Making

Excerpted from Organizational Structure / Church Procedures of Oct 25, 2008

Method of Decision Making

We believe a method for decision-making, as recorded in Acts 15, that seeks to find joint goals, or a solution in which all sides can win, is consensus. The central concern of consensus is that it seeks to involve all members, seeks to hear each view or idea, and seeks to find solutions with which everyone can live. Consensus may not always represent complete agreement. But where some differences remain, it represents the willingness of a minority to allow the discussion to be concluded and to join with the decision of the group. Formally, we follow a Consensus Minus Two (C-2) model; this approach seeks unanimity but does not allow one or two dissenting opinions to block a decision. In certain cases where consensus cannot be reached, a vote may be requested. Anything less than a 2/3 majority by covenant members means that more discussion and prayer is necessary. Any time serious differences persist over major issues an outside person (overseer or other mediator) will be brought in to help mediate and build group consensus.

As specified in Section A above, decisions involving staff discipline and contract termination, and for cases when the congregation has lost confidence in Servant Leaders, require a vote by covenant members.

Purpose of Consensus

Our purpose in consensus decision-making is to seek the will of God in a particular matter and to build up the faith of the church. The goal is not just to get everyone to agree on something or to find a compromise among differing factions, but to discern together the Holy Spirit's leading us as a congregation and to know that it is the right thing to do. It is not our opinions that we seek, but God's leading. Church Life Meetings are a continuation of our worship and require a prayerful waiting upon the mind of Christ. This prayerful listening is a listening to God, listening to our brothers and sisters in the church, and listening to our neighbors around us. In the end our desire is to be able to say, "It seems good to us and the Holy Spirit."

Participants

All covenant members and regular participants of Raleigh Mennonite Church are encouraged to attend and share in the discernment process as we seek to know the mind of Christ. Final decisions are limited to covenant members.

Guidelines

Take time to understand each person's interests and viewpoints.

Respect others and their perspectives when you present your views.

View disagreement as a chance to explore alternatives.

Hold out if you have serious concerns, but be prepared to suggest a workable solution.

Do your best to make it work once a decision is reached.

While unanimous decisions are valued, it is acceptable to reach a decision which is not unanimous, provided that no more than two individuals dissent.

The goal in consensus is that each person can say:

I've been heard.

The others understand my concerns.

I can live with the decision.

I am willing to try to make it work.

Testing for Consensus (The High Five)

At times, it may be useful to gauge the level of support to a proposal, in order to determine whether more discussion is needed. The high-five method provides a quick show of support by asking each one present to hold up the number of fingers corresponding to the following statements:

1. I think there are major problems with the decision and choose to block the group's action.
2. It's too soon to make any decision. More work needs to be done before the question can be asked.
3. I am concerned about this decision but will not block the group.
4. I can live with the decision. It's okay with me.
5. I can give an unqualified yes to the decision. I am excited or enthusiastic about it.