

SUMMARY OF AREA ASSEMBLY PROCEDURES

- HOW WE CONDUCT BUSINESS -

(adapted from "Summary of Conference Procedures" and the San Diego-Imperial Area Assembly Structure and Guidelines)

The Purpose of Area Assembly debate is to reach an informed group conscience – there are no winners or losers.

Generally speaking, we follow *Robert's Rules of Order* and proceed on as informal a basis as possible consistent with the rights of all concerned. However, over the years the Area Assembly has developed some exceptions to *Robert's Rules*, which help us to proceed more closely in accord with the Traditions.

It is important to remember that the purpose of rules of order is to make it easier for the Area Assembly to conduct its business; rules exist to allow the Area Assembly to do what it needs to do to carry out the will of the Fellowship by reaching an informed group conscience.

Area Assembly Quorum A quorum necessary to open the Area Assembly business meeting will consist of twice as many GSRs as the total number of DCMs and Area Officers present.

Committee System To the extent possible, important matters to come before the Area Assembly will be handled via the "Committee system." Each Committee considers carefully the items before it and presents its recommendations to the Area Assembly as a whole for acceptance or rejection.

General Rules of Debate

- People who wish to speak line up at the microphone and are called upon in order.
- Each person may speak for a maximum of two (2) minutes. Time is doubled if non-simultaneous translation is required.
- No one may speak for a second time on a topic until all who wish to have spoken for the first time.
- Voting is by show of hands (except for elections, which require a written ballot).

Calling the Question Calling the question brings debate to a halt while Conference members decide whether to proceed directly to a vote on the matter at hand or go on with the debate. A motion to call the question:

- Must be made in order at the microphone.
- Requires a second.
- Is not debatable.
- Requires a two-thirds vote.

Substantial Unanimity The Assembly will seek "substantial unanimity" on all matters before it. This is interpreted as at least two-thirds of those voting.

Reconsideration After the establishment or rejection of any matter before it by a two-thirds vote, the minority will always be given an opportunity to speak to its opposition. In some cases, the "minority" may be the side that had the larger vote; this happens if one side achieved more than fifty percent of the vote but failed to achieve the two-thirds vote needed to prevail.

- Only a simple majority is required to reconsider.
- No action may be reconsidered twice.
- If the majority votes to reconsider, *full debate*, pro and con, is resumed. (Assembly members are urged to limit discussion to *new* consideration of questions under debate.)

Tips, Hints, and Words of Caution Full discussion of a matter should take place before the vote. Premature actions (such as amending motions early in the discussion or hastily calling the question) can divert attention from the subject at hand, thus confusing and/or delaying Area Assembly business.

AVOID REPETITION. Everyone is entitled to, and should, express his or her opinion. However, **if your perspective has already been stated by someone else, it is not necessary to go to the mike and say it again.**

Remember, too that saving "minority opinions" for after the vote, when there is no rebuttal, is another time-waster, for it can force the Area Assembly to reconsider a question that might well have been decided the first time around if it had been thoroughly examined from all sides.

An informed group conscience is the result of discussion covering ALL points of view.