

CCA consensus Principles and Practices

15th General Assembly

28 September - 3 October 2023

Kottayam, India




Consensus - More than a business Process

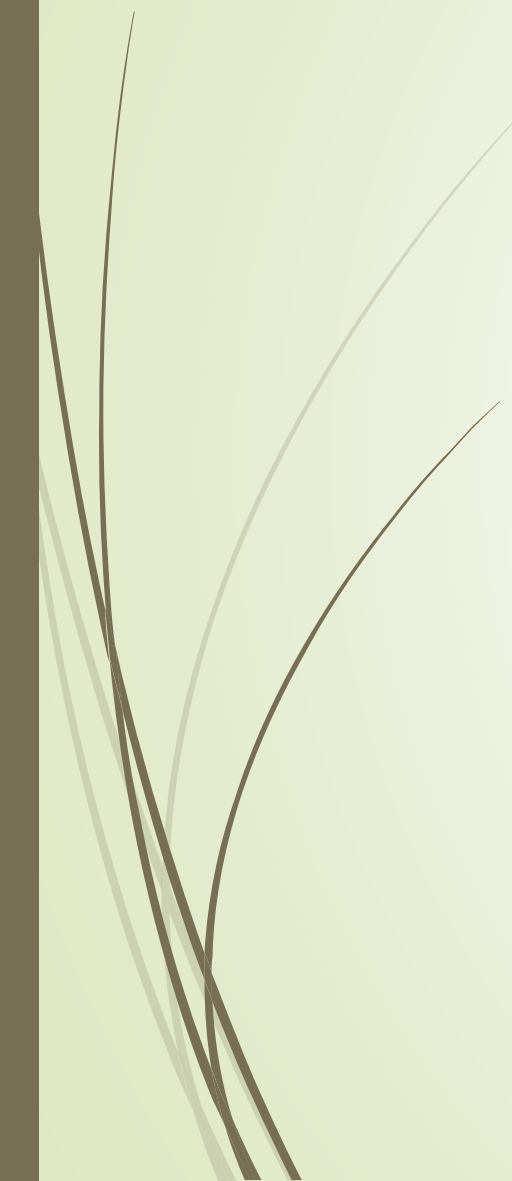
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Why Use Consensus?
What is Consensus?
Supportive Practices





Role of Moderators

- Supports an atmosphere that encourages sharing of ideas, collaboration on finding solutions to differences of opinions and helps to build trust and encouragement for the quietest people to participate.
- Tests the mind of the meeting by encouraging the showing of indicator cards after each contribution.
- Ensures that ideas that gain support are incorporated into the proposal.

Role of Delegates and Participants

- Actively listen and strive to build upon earlier contributions, seeking a way forward that the Assembly can agree upon
- Show respect when listening and speaking, even when their perspectives differ.
- Prior to speaking, a person shall state their name, the church or council represented and whether he/she is a delegate or in another capacity.
- Accept the wisdom of the majority and be willing to stand aside if they are sure their point of view has been heard.

Consensus Process

It is affirmed that the Assembly has reached a consensus regarding a decision when:

- all the delegates of the assembly, are in agreement about a particular business/outcome
- when most are in agreement, and the few who are not accept that they too have been fairly heard and could live with the present taken outcome, and so agree that the consensus can be recorded.
- Agreement can be more than just accepting the wording of a proposal. The agreement could be, rejecting a proposal, continuing work on a matter, or acknowledging that churches can have different positions on the issue.



Use of Indicator Cards

Indicator cards can help participants and Moderators to know the level of acceptance of a particular idea that has been raised in the discussion.

- The delegates will be provided with orange and blue cards with which they'll indicate their approval or disapproval to a particular idea or outcome.
- Orange denotes acceptance or warmth to a particular idea, while blue shows coolness or disapproval.


Use of Indicator Cards (continued)

- After a speaker finishes speaking or before recording a specific decision, the moderator will request delegates to raise a card to indicate their agreement or acceptance of a particular point of view.
- Indicator cards can also serve as a signal to the session moderator when it's time to move on from the current topic of discussion. Delegates can silently indicate that the debate or discussion has been prolonged by holding two cards crossed in front of their chest. If the moderator notices that many delegates are indicating the same desire to move on, they may ask the speaker to conclude their point or invite another speaker with a different perspective.



Small Conversation Groups

The moderator may ask the participants to break into small groups with their nearest neighbors and discuss a particular inconclusive topic for a few moments. This can help the assembly, to rejoin with fresh insights and may help achieve consensus.



Checking for consensus

The goal of any discussion during the assembly, is to reach a consensus. The moderator can summarize a potential agreement and then ask the meeting, "Do we all agree on this aspect at this point?" Delegates can use indicator cards to show their response, allowing the moderator to assess the level of consensus:

Checking for consensus (continued)

- If all participants show agreement (orange cards), the consensus is recorded, and further discussion can focus on more contentious aspects.
- If there is a mixed response (both orange and blue cards), it indicates the need for more discussion on the entire issue.
- If only a few participants disagree (mostly orange with one or two blue cards), the moderator can inquire if their viewpoints have been heard and if they can accept the position agreed upon by others for recording a consensus outcome, even if it doesn't match their preferred wording.

When Consensus is Difficult to Achieve

After making a reasonable effort to reach a consensus outcome and finding that it is difficult due to polarisation and multiple potential outcomes, the meeting, with guidance from the moderator, can consider the following possibilities:

- Consenting to refer the matter to a dedicated working group that will provide a report in a future session.
- Deciding to refer the matter to another organization or member churches for further examination, and not discussing it further in the current assembly.
- Consenting to acknowledge that Christian churches can have different opinions on the matter.
- Agreeing to cease further consideration of the matter.



From consensus to formal vote

In rare cases when it's crucial to make an immediate decision and consensus cannot be reached, formal voting procedures may be necessary.

To transition from consensus to voting, the moderator must declare that a vote will be conducted to decide on this change. An agreement from eighty-five percent (85%) of the delegates present is required to proceed with the voting process.



Conclusion

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