

Southern New England Conferences, UCC
Annual Meeting
Nov. 1-2, 2019 DCU Center, Worcester, MA

Behavioral Covenant and Rules of Procedure

The CT, MA, RI and SNE Boards of Directors recommend: *“The Annual Meeting approves the Behavioral Covenant and Rules of Procedure for the 2019 Annual Meeting as presented.”*

I. Behavioral Covenant

To create a fruitful and faithful space for discussion, discernment, deliberation, and decision-making, the Board of Directors of the Southern New England Conference, UCC, along with the Boards of the historic Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and Connecticut Conferences, affirms the following behavioral covenant and recommends its adoption by the delegates to the 2019 Annual Meeting. Together we commit to:

- **Speak for Self.** We will share from our own individual perspectives, avoiding statements like, “Everyone knows...” or, “I think we all can agree...” (which exclude people who may not know or agree) and, “Some people are saying...” (which avoids accountability for the speaker).
- **Share the Air.** We will pay attention to how much time and space we take up. If we have spoken already, or if someone else has given voice to our viewpoint, we will consider making room for other voices. If we have remained silent, we will consider sharing our perspective.
- **Communicate with Care.** We will choose words that are respectful and inclusive of the various characteristics and life experiences represented among our conferences, congregations, and communities. We will use language to build up, not break down. We will attend to the impact of our words and actions, and when harm is identified, we will listen and respond with care and respect.
- **Turn to Wonder.** If we find ourselves inclined to make a snap judgment or dismiss another person’s perspective, we will get curious. We will wonder (or ask) why they think the way they do and be open what we might have to learn from one another.
- **Lean on Spirit.** We will remember that God is present in our conversation and be intentional about listening for that still-speaking voice. We will leave time for prayer and stay receptive to the Spirit’s leading.

II. Rules of Procedure

(Note: these rules are intended for use in all four plenary sessions: RI, CT, MA and SNE. The boards and committees to which they refer are the boards and committees of the four respective conferences.)

The goal of these rules is to allow for maximum participation by our constituencies while keeping the meeting within reasonable time limits. Meetings will be conducted in accordance with Robert's Rules of Order as interpreted by a Parliamentarian, except as indicated below.

1. The Board of Directors appoints a Business Committee for the Conference. The Business Committee includes the Moderator and Vice-moderator of the Conference, with additional Board members, officers or others at the Board's discretion.
2. Visitors are welcome and encouraged to participate in worship, storytelling sessions, and networking opportunities. Voting members of the Conference, and those who have voice without vote in business sessions, are defined in the Bylaws of the Conference.
3. The Board of Directors may submit proposed actions directly to the Annual Meeting. Proposed actions from other sources are to be submitted to the Business Committee at least 90 days before the Annual Meeting. If the Business Committee deems an action appropriate to the goals of the Annual Meeting, the action will be placed on the agenda and sent to the churches in a Call to the Annual Meeting at least 30 days before the meeting.
4. Reports required by the Bylaws of the Conference, plus any proposals presented by the Boards, will be included in the Call to the Annual Meeting and placed on the Agenda.
5. In order to receive consideration, any matter not included in the call should be placed in the hands of a member of the Business Committee before the meeting convenes. The Business Committee will determine whether the matter is appropriate to the goals of the meeting and whether there is sufficient room on the agenda for the matter to be added.
6. No new matters may be introduced after the meeting is convened, unless there is a two-thirds vote to place such matters on the Agenda.

7. The following shall be the procedure for considering votes coming to the floor of the Conference:
 - a. A designated sponsor shall be allowed three minutes to explain the proposed action.
 - b. The floor will then be open for conversation and discernment as follows:
 - i. Each authorized member desiring to speak will come to a microphone.
 - ii. At the microphone, the speaker will choose a colored paddle indicating the kind of comment they wish to make. Paddles will be designated , “I believe...”, “I wonder....”, and “I pray ...”
 - iii. Each speaker will identify themselves by name and local church membership.
 - iv. Each speaker may speak for a maximum of 90 seconds.
 - v. Conversation will be guided by the Behavioral Covenant as voted by the meeting.
 - vi. Moderators will be responsible for ensuring that all perspectives are sufficiently heard.
 - c. Where amendments are allowable in the Bylaws, proposed amendments shall be presented in writing to the chair of the Business Committee before being presented on the floor. Only one amendment to a main motion shall be considered at a time. Any amendment that changes the general intent of the original main motion will be declared out of order by the Moderator.
 - d. No speaker shall speak to the same issue twice until all those that wish to speak have been heard once, except to answer questions addressed to them by the Moderator.
 - e. A motion to limit or extend the limits of debate is itself undebatable; such motions require a second and a two-thirds vote unless decided by general consent.
 - f. The Moderator may call for a motion to close debate when discussion is deemed as revealing no new light. The Moderator may call for a moment of silent prayer and reflection before taking a vote.
 - g. In the event that translation is needed, the Moderator will recognize a translator for equal time for the moving of a motion or responding to a motion.
 - h. Out of compassion and respect for one another, there will be no applause or floor demonstrations when a motion passes or fails, unless the vote on that motion has been unanimous.

8. Only materials prepared by the Southern New England conferences may be distributed in the plenary area.
9. Media equipment is for the use only of the Southern New England conferences.
10. The conferences will stay in session until all matters described above have been dealt with, or until the scheduled end of the business meeting, whichever is earlier.
 - a. If at the scheduled end of the business meeting there is still unfinished business, the Moderator will call for a vote on whether or not to continue for 15 minutes. If the vote carries by a two-thirds majority, the meeting will continue. If it does not carry, all matters remaining on the Agenda will be referred to the Board of Directors.
 - b. If the Conference votes to stay in session, the process described above will be repeated at 15-minute intervals until all business is completed, or the meeting is adjourned with items leftover for later consideration by the Board of Directors. The Annual Meeting will then adjourn following worship.
11. These Rules of Procedure shall remain in effect until changed by a vote of a subsequent Annual Meeting or Special Meeting, or unless modified between Conference meetings by a vote of the Board of Directors for purposes of collaboration or adaptation during the start-up of the new Southern New England Conference of the United Church of Christ.