

## General Proposal 4

# Guidance to the Synod Standing Committee for the period of the 35<sup>th</sup> Synod

### That the Synod direct that the Synod Standing Committee

1. abide by the following principles in relation to what matters are determined by it and what matters should be brought to the general Synod for decision and
2. that these principles be applied for the next 18 months, and then be subject to review at the 36<sup>th</sup> Synod.

#### The principles

1.Changes to By-Laws are only to be made after appropriate consultation across the Synod.

2.That it shall deal with all matters:

- that require a timely response.
- requiring long term preparation and research.
- which pose an unacceptable risk to the church if left unaddressed.
- of appointment to governing entities.
- which require ongoing, sustained oversight in execution.
- of a simple or technical nature.
- which require regular reporting.
- which require annual reporting or approvals.

3.That it shall refer matters to the general Synod when:

- Is it a matter that has been previously considered by the general Synod and should be returned and reported to the 36<sup>th</sup> Synod.
- It is a resolution of the general Synod that a matter should be dealt with.
- If it is a matter of such missional importance, that the general Synod should be the decision maker or provide guidance.
- If it is a decision that can be deferred until the next meeting of the general Synod without posing a serious risk for the church.

## Rationale

At the 34th Synod, a resolution regarding the operating relationship between the general Synod and the Synod Standing Committee was adopted.

*It was **RESOLVED by Consensus** that the Synod requests the Synod Standing Committee to provide an understanding of the roles, responsibilities and decision-making delegations of Synod in Session, the Synod Standing Committee and the relationship between them. This is to be provided to Presbyteries for their discussion, engagement and feedback prior to the 35th Synod.*

*[resolution 19.72]*

A discussion paper around this matter was issued in April 2020 and the consultation period occurred over three months. In August 2020 the results of the consultation were presented to the SSC.

The paper noted that The Synod Standing Committee (SSC) is empowered to act on behalf of the Synod between meetings of the general Synod. This means that the SSC can make any decision relating to the responsibilities outlined above, **unless a Synod meeting specifically excludes them from dealing with those matters.**

As a Synod has not excluded the SSC from dealing with any matter, the SSC has over many years determined which matters it will deal with and those that are referred to a general Synod.

In practice this has meant that it deals, among other things, with matters:

- that require a timely response
- requiring long term preparation and research
- which pose an unacceptable risk to the church if left unaddressed
- of appointment to governing entities
- which require ongoing sustained oversight
- of a simple or technical nature
- which require regular reporting
- which require annual reporting or approvals.

It refers matters to the general Synod when:

- Is it a matter that has been previously considered by the general Synod and should be returned and reported to that meeting.
- It is a resolution of the general Synod that a matter should be dealt with.
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### Responses to the discussion paper

The responses were generally in favour of the principles outlines in the discussion paper as a guide to what matters were dealt with by the General Synod and what matters should be referred to the General Synod.

Other matters that arose in the responses were:

<b>Issue Raised</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
As Synod By-Laws are a principle governance method within the Synod, the Synod must be given a chance to review any recommended changes through consultation.	Agreed. The changes to the Bylaws over the last years have been as a result of a By-laws review undertaken in 2017. This included consultation with the broader Synod before a staged implementation.	Mandatory appropriate consultation before Bylaws changes are enacted forms part of this proposal.
All matters considered by the SSC should be brought to the general Synod for review.	Under the regulations the SSC is obliged to bring a list of all the decision made to a general Synod. The SSC report to the general Synod always includes a table of decisions made.	This practice is already observed. The general Synod has capacity to review those decisions.
Consideration should be given to publishing the matters that are considered by the SSC (subject to confidentiality provisions).	Agreed. The SSC considered this request and agreed that non confidential and non-sensitive matters would be published monthly.	This request has been put into place.
The General Synod should meet annually and have responsibility for approving annual matters, including budgets.	This proposal to conduct annual Synod meetings was brought to the 34th Synod but was not endorsed.	No further action.
If the SSC are seriously divided on a matter, then it should be referred to the general Synod.	If the SSC are seriously divided on a matter, then it is usually the case that further consultation and development is required, including referral to the general Synod.	No further action.

Ensure that there is greater transparency and accountability.	Any further approaches to ensuring there is greater transparency and accountability to the general Synod would be welcomed.	This proposal attempts to capture this sense of accountability. It is reviewable after 18 months to ensure the desire for greater transparency has been met.
That delegations to other boards and operating entities be reviewed and endorsed by the general Synod.	The By-laws act as the governance “delegation” document to Synod Commissions, Committees and Boards.	The concept that there be consultation before By-laws changes are enacted forms part of this proposal

The SSC recommends that the following proposition be adopted to give guidance and clarity to both the General Synod and the SSC over the next 18 months. The proposal limits these arrangements for the period of 18 months as a way of ensuring that this approach can be evaluated and reviewed at the 36<sup>th</sup> Synod to ensure that the desire for greater accountability and transparency is being met.

## Proposers

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