

Decision-making at Assembly

(summary from Assembly Handbook)

Assembly seeks to know and do God's will through communal discernment. We make most congregation decisions by consensus. This, however, does not mean we seek unanimity. It can be more helpful to think of consensus as something that everyone can live with rather than something that everyone must agree on.

We seek consensus through prayerful openness, respectful listening, a willingness to speak one's perspective, and taking the time that is needed to hear each other and the Holy Spirit. Taking the time needed means we usually bring a proposal to at least two congregational meetings before making a decision. If a decision cannot be made by seeking consensus, the Leadership Group may establish a different decision-making approach (including seeking approval by an 80% majority vote of resident members).

Small group discussion and congregational meetings are integral to this discernment. All participants are welcome to attend congregational meetings and to participate as appropriate; however, decisions are to be made by covenanted resident members. Members choosing not to attend meetings are signaling their willingness to abide by decisions made by the group without them.

Not all decisions come to the congregation as a whole. The Leadership Group is given authority for leading us, prioritizing decisions that need to be made, and determining the approach to be used. Individuals, small groups, and ministry teams can initiate an issue for discernment by proposing it to the Leadership Group

5-finger testing for consensus

A facilitator clearly states the proposal and then asks members for a show of fingers.

5 = Unqualified, enthusiastic "yes."

4 = I can live with the decision. It's okay with me.

3 = I have concerns but will not block approval.

2 = I have major concerns and stand against approving the proposal (blocking).

1 = It's too soon to make any decision. Needs more work/discussion.

Those showing 1, 2, or 3 fingers should be asked to help the group understand the problems they see with the proposal.