

## Five Best Practices for Speaking on the Floor

Speaker: Hi...can you hear me? Is this microphone on?

*Bishop: Can we please recognize microphone 6 please?*

Speaker: Hi...umm...yes. I stand today to speak about speaking at Annual Conference.

*Bishop: Excuse me, could you please say your name, relationship, church, and district, please?*

Speaker: Oh....yeah. That's right, there is order to how we are supposed to speak at Annual Conference.

My name is Joshua King, Clergy, Bethany UMC on the Winchester District and Conference Secretary. I am speaking today about several basic aspects of how to speak on the "floor" of the Annual Conference. The "floor" of the conference is anywhere within the "bar" of the Annual Conference, and no I am not talking about alcohol either. The "bar" of the conference is the area where people can be seated in the meeting room at Annual Conference to have your votes counted and to be recognized to speak. And I am writing today to help you learn five key procedural guidelines to consider before standing up on the floor of the Annual Conference to speak.

- 1) You must wait to be recognized to speak before going to a microphone:
  - To be recognized to speak, you must do three things. Stand at your seat, raise your hand, and in the same hand that is raised hold the brightly colored half sheet of paper that is included in your Annual Conference packet that you will receive at registration. (This does mean if you are not a registered member of the Annual Conference, you do not have voice unless granted special permissions with someone seeking to strike the rules to hear from you).
  - Let me acknowledge a truth though from years of sitting on the stage. It is hard to see those pieces of paper, especially in the back. If you know that you plan to speak at Annual Conference, it may be helpful for you to plan to sit somewhere near the front. Finally, only one person can speak at the microphone at a time. You can bring others with you to the microphone, but only the one recognized by the Bishop can speak.
- 2) Once you have been recognized, go to the microphone that you have been directed to and say your "Name, your relationship (Clergy/Lay, Lay Member At Large, Retired Clergy), your Local Church and District."
  - As your Conference Secretary...THIS is very helpful in order to maintain accurate minutes. Thank you.
- 3) Unless the Spirit moves you to speak spontaneously, write what you plan to say. Even the most eloquent of speakers at Annual Conference often prepare before they speak. This will assist in getting your point across, while at the same time being concise as time is of the essence.
  - Our Standing Rules only give you two minutes to speak
  - In addition, there is a key word that you need to be familiar with when speaking on the floor. Whatever your speech is: a motion to amend, a speech

for/against, etc., it must be “germane” to what is being spoken about at that time. “Germane” is defined as, pertaining/relevant to the subject under consideration.

- 4) If you are speaking as to a motion currently under consideration, there is one more thing you need to add to your introduction. My name is Joshua King, Clergy member, Bethany United Methodist Church, Winchester District, and I am speaking for/against this motion.
  - Our Standing Rules dictate that: (i) no member Can speak more than once on the same question if any other member who has not spoken seeks the floor to speak; and, (ii) no member may speak twice on the same subject under the same motion.
  - Further, when debating a motion, the Bishop will alternate between speakers who are for the motion and who may be against the motion.
  
- 5) Finally, if you are making a motion. First and foremost, it either must be germane to the report that has been presented or there must not be any other business “on the floor” being considered at that time. After being recognized by the Bishop, you go to the microphone, state your identifying information, and state I move to... (state your motion) and then say, “If I have a second, I would like to speak to this.” You wait then for a second and for the Bishop to acknowledge the second, and only then may you proceed with your two minutes of speech as to why this motion is a good idea. Once it has been given to the Bishop, and the Bishop has re-read your motion and opens the floor for debate, the motion is no longer yours, but it is owned by the Annual Conference. This means the term “friendly amendment”, while often used, cannot immediately be accepted by the maker of the motion. Any proposed amendment must be considered by the full body of the Annual Conference.

Friends, I hope this information has been helpful to you. By following these best practices, it will truly be fruitful to your own presence while speaking at Annual Conference and it will be helpful to the stewardship and flow of the work of the Annual Conference. If there is something beyond what is discussed here that you would like to do, I would encourage you to consult the 2016 Book of Discipline, our Standing Rules of Order and Procedure (pg. 10-32), and Robert’s Rules of Order, Newly Revised. I may recommend for MOST scenarios that the “In Brief” edition would suffice.

Your Conference Secretary,  
The Rev. Joshua S. King