

Parliamentary Procedure Guide for Congregational Meeting

Cross Creek Presbyterian Church

This guide was prepared to assist members of the congregation in understanding the procedures of Congregational Meetings. The Presbyterian Church in America uses the Book of Church Order and Robert's Rules of Orders to govern its meetings. Congregants should feel free to participate in Congregation Meetings, but they should do so in accordance with the governing framework of the Church. This will allow us to have a meeting that is decent and in good order, demonstrating the love of Christ for one another and honoring the orderly character of God.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- 1. Address all remarks to the moderator.** If you agree or disagree with someone else who spoke, express your opinion toward the moderator, not toward another speaker.
- 2. Allow the moderator to recognize you before you speak.** Limit your comments to the matter before the group, not a previous action or forthcoming action.
Avoid speaking over others unless an urgent matter arises. If you want to read a report or quotation to the group, ask the moderator first.
- 3. Be quick to listen and slow to speak.** Make sure you understand what another speaker is saying before responding. If one or more speakers have already brought up an issue, not everyone with the same opinion needs to restate the opinion or position.
Avoid assuming or attacking others' motives.
- 4. If you don't understand a statement or a procedure, ask the moderator to clarify.** The moderator can then ask the relevant party (a previous speaker, the clerk, another officer, etc.) to clarify what was said or what is happening.
- 5. Err on the side of love and respect to all parties.** In a larger group (Presbytery, General Assembly), we would not address other speakers by name. In a smaller group where we all know each other, avoid using someone's name harshly or unlovingly, and address your remarks to moderator.

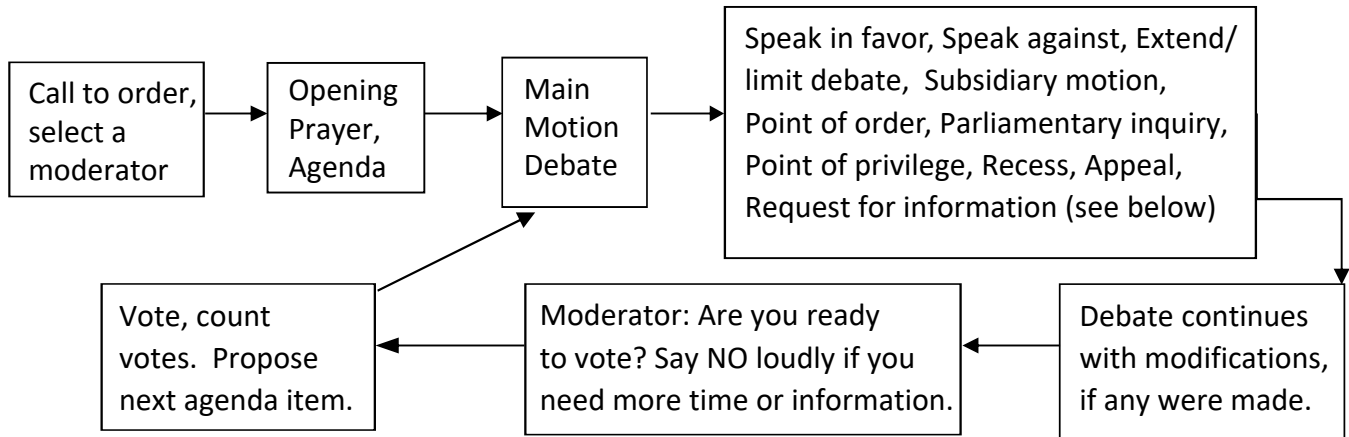
WHEN YOU WANT TO SPEAK

Step #1: Stand, move to the microphone, and address the moderator. The microphone allows all to hear what's said.

Step #2: Wait for the moderator to recognize you. Others may be speaking, or the moderator may need to recognize someone else.

Step #3: Speak in debate of a motion or make a motion. Make your intentions clear by opening your remarks with "I rise to speak in favor" or "I rise to speak against" or another option listed below.

Step #4: Yield the floor. Limit your remarks to the time allowed and return to your seat to listen. If you run out of time, someone else can move that you be given more time.



TYPES OF PROCEDURES

Motions are how a decision comes to a vote before the body. If you want to make a motion, say “I move that...” in a single sentence. If your motion receives a second, you can speak to explain the reasons behind the motion. If there is no second, you cannot speak to explain the motion. Anyone can second someone else’s motion in order to hear the explanation.

1. **Main motions** propose a new action to be answered with a yes or no vote.
2. **Subsidiary motions** are related to the main motion but may alter part of the motion.
 - a. **Postpone indefinitely:** ceases debate and action on the main motion if the consequences of the motion are unclear or undesirable. Requires a majority vote.
 - b. **Amend:** an amendment changes the language of the main motion. The amendment can be debated if seconded. Requires a majority vote.
 - c. **Commit/Refer:** sends a motion back to a committee for further review. Requires a majority vote.
 - d. **Postpone definitely:** postpones the main motion until a specific time or a specific other event/decision has been reached. Requires a majority vote.

- e. **Limit/Extend Limits of debate:** proposes limits to number of speeches (total, per side, per day, etc.), length of speeches (total, per side, per person, etc.), a combination of these, or extend a speaker's time if more time is needed. This motion is non-debatable and requires a two-thirds vote because it limits the inherent right to debate.
 - f. **Previous question/Call the question:** immediately ends debate on the motion and all amendments. A non-debatable motion that requires a two-thirds majority. *This motion is often intended to save time but can take more time than continuing debate.*
 - g. **Lay on the table:** used to order more urgent business ahead of less urgent business. A non-debatable motion that requires a majority vote.
3. **Privileged motions** are related to the meeting and deal with aspects of the meeting.
- a. **Call for the orders of the day:** this motion returns the body to the set agenda. A non-debatable motion that requires a two-thirds negative vote to override.
 - b. **Question of privilege:** allows a speaker to address a problem within the meeting (bad audio, lack of clarity, temperature adjustments, extra seating, etc.). Typically the moderator addresses the problem, but it can be debated and requires a majority vote.
 - c. **Recess:** allows for a break in the meeting. The motion is not debatable, but the length of the recess can be amended. Requires a majority vote.
 - d. **Adjourn:** ends the meeting. Not debatable and requires a majority vote.
 - e. **Fix the time to which to adjourn:** determines the time to resume business later on. Amendable, not debatable, and requires a majority vote.
4. **Incidental motions** relate to procedure and help clarify procedure.
- a. **Point of order:** used to call the body back to order if rules are not being followed. Neither debatable nor amendable and is ruled on by the moderator.
 - b. **Appeal:** used to challenge a decision of the moderator. Can be amended. An affirmative vote sustains the decision. Only a majority can overrule the moderator.

- c. **Suspend the rules:** used to temporarily deviate from the rules of business for a specific purpose. Neither amendable nor debatable. Requires a two-thirds majority.
 - d. **Objection to the consideration of a question:** used to prevent the consideration of a motion after it is seconded but before debate begins. Requires a two-thirds majority.
 - e. **Parliamentary Inquiry:** used to ask the moderator clarifying questions about the current parliamentary procedure. Answered with an opinion, not a ruling.
 - f. **Request for information:** used to request information about something other than parliamentary procedure (not to provide information). Answered by the moderator.
5. **Restorative motions** bring previously decided or temporarily disposed of matters back before the assembly.
- a. **Take from the table:** used to remove something laid on the table. Neither debatable nor amendable and requires a majority vote.
 - b. **Rescind/amend something previously adopted:** used to nullify or alter something previously passed. Fully debatable and amendable. Requires a two-thirds vote or a majority vote, depending on how and when the motion was made.
 - c. **Reconsider:** this motion allows debate on work from the previous day. It must be proposed by someone who voted in the majority. It is sometimes debatable. A majority vote brings the old motion before the body again.