I am not ashamed to admit it — I am a card carrying member of the National Association of Parliamentarians, and the Tennessee Association of Parliamentarians - the NAP and the TAP. You learn early on that parliamentarians love acronyms as much as the church does, but they do NOT use NAP and TAP.

This afternoon we are going to talk about parliamentary procedure, and the goal is to ratchet down your anxiety and I hope have a little fun with this...

Tricia is a Registered Parliamentarian — which means she ranks about me on the NAP scale — I am a P. So she’s going to correct me when I err, and contribute when we get into the weeds. . . And we will.

Here we go!
In 1862, 25-year-old Army Engineer, Henry Martyn Robert, was stationed in New Bedford, Massachusetts. The story goes that he was a deeply religious Baptist. Robert was asked to chair a meeting of the local Baptist Church – and did not know how. But he felt the worst thing he could do would be to decline. He said:
“My embarrassment was supreme. I plunged in, trusting to Providence that the assembly would behave itself. But with the plunge went the determination that I would never attend another meeting until I knew something of ... parliamentary law.”

He also said:
“One can scarcely have had much experience in deliberative meetings of Christians without realizing that the best of men (and women), having wills of their own, are liable to attempt to carry out their own views without paying sufficient respect to the rights of their opponents.”

Not sure I agree with Robert’s use of “opponents” when describing Christians, but who knows? Maybe Robert was on to something!

Robert set out to learn about parliamentary procedure. He found a few pages of “rules for deliberative assemblies” and he copied information on motions and carried this information in his wallet for several years. In 1875 he finished a 176-page parliamentary guide, *Pocket Manual of Rules of Order for Deliberative Assemblies*. He had 4,000 copies printed at his own expense, which were sold out within six months.

From that time on, Robert, and later his family, solicited comments and, in response, revised his manual. The current 11th edition of *Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised*, has 669 pages so it’s no longer pocket-sized.
So, in our time together, we’re going to go over these “Rules of Order” to make sure you will not lose control or be as embarrassed as Robert was, while moderating!.

Henry Martyn Robert
1837-1923

“It is difficult to find another branch of knowledge where a small amount of study produces such great results in increased efficiency in a country where the people rule, as in parliamentary law.”
So, what is parliamentary procedure?
Parliamentary procedure is an organized system that allows a group of people to come together and make decisions.
The system is made up of basic principles and rules that determine how the group will proceed through the decision-making process.
It’s common sense and courtesy, it’s subordinate to the church’s constitution and a council’s bylaws, and it’s the original form of conflict resolution!
Parliamentary procedure seeks to balance the constructive tension between individual rights of conscience and unity of the body. You know, like conflict management!

Parliamentary procedure can:
• allow all members, even when they disagree, to have a say;
• help a group stay focused on a single issue at a time;
• help a group come to a decision;

Robert said, “The object of Rules of Order is.....
Robert said, “The object of Rules of Order is…..

For us, the councils of the PC(USA), “The work for which we are designed” is to be the church of Jesus Christ. As the church, we are to seek together to discern the will of Christ for the church. Parliamentary procedure is not the work which we are to be about; it is a decision making process we use.

In the “best possible manner” Robert saw the need to balance the tension between the rights of the individual and the rights of the body, which in parliamentary procedure is simply stated in two sentences:
The Will of the Majority Shall Prevail

Which means:
More than half of the voting membership of the body has cast votes a particular way.
It doesn’t mean the majority has “won” – it’s not a battle - or even that the majority is “right”.
It means that our actions using parliamentary procedure are an attempt at reflecting God’s will.

The Rights of the Minority Shall Be protected

This means:
Everyone has the same opportunity to speak.
It only takes two people, one to bring a motion and one to second it, to bring a matter before the body.
The right of the individual conscience is preserved;
It doesn’t mean:
The minority is “wrong”. We know – as people of faith - that sometimes one lone voice can be the prophetic voice.
People are not allowed to yell, name-call, threaten, or berate other individuals or the body.
“...for the majority to give to the minority a full, free opportunity to present their side of the case....”

--Henry Robert

Robert said,

“The great lesson for democracies to learn is for the majority to give to the minority a full, free opportunity to present their side of the case....”

This echoes F-3.0205: “Decisions shall be reached in councils by vote, following opportunity for discussion and discernment, and a majority shall govern.”
“...for the minority...gracefully to submit and to recognize the action as that of the entire organization, and cheerfully to assist in carrying it out, until they can secure its repeal.”

There is a balancing act between the rights of the body and the rights of the individual. Moderators and stated clerks will be the ones guiding the process to assist in this balancing act.

Robert’s Rules of Order can be adapted to meet the needs of your presbytery. Remember that parliamentary procedure is subordinate to the bylaws of your council and to the Constitution of the PC(USA) - which we certainly hope are not in conflict with one another.
Parliamentary Procedure is a useful tool used by the councils of our church as we deliberate together.
It is not a weapon to:

➢ Force business through the body;
➢ silence the minority;
➢ obstruct the will of the body; or
➢ prevent individual members from participating in the decision making process.
Meetings of councils shall be conducted in accordance with the most recent edition of *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*, except when it is in contradiction to this Constitution.

G-3.0105

You’ve gotten this introduction because....

Parliamentary Procedure is how we conduct our meetings. So make Robert’s your friend.
You can order the 11th edition of Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised through Amazon, or through the National Association of Parliamentarians.

I want to put in a plug for Robert’s in Brief, 2nd Edition. It’s written in English, has some sample scripts, and very user-friendly.

I want to quote a good friend’s advice about Robert’s:

“You may want to rely heavily on Robert’s Rules of Order to get you through meetings of your council. But remember that it is our faith in Jesus Christ, and that faith confessed by those who have gathered as a council, that sustains who we are and what we are about. Our Book of Order tells us, “In affirming with the earliest Christians that Jesus is Lord, the Church confesses that he is its hope and that the Church, as Christ’s body, is bound to his authority and thus free to live in the lively, joyous reality of the grace of God.”

Live and serve your councils in “the lively, joyous reality of the grace of God.”” [Thanks to Joyce Lieberman for this good word!]

DISCLAIMER: I’m going to talk about basic Robert’s – information that will get you through your meetings. If your meetings are parliamentary war or parliamentary wrangling or one-upmanship, well, you have bigger problems, and should be working to address that.
Before you do anything else – after you’ve opened the meeting with prayer – you, the Moderator, determines a quorum is present. Your stated clerk can ADVISE you a quorum is present, but you, as the Moderator, determines the quorum.

A quorum is simply the number of commissioners necessary to transact business. For a stated meeting, it’s usually a majority. It can be a set number. In our presbytery – 100. Large enough so that a representative group is making the decision, but not so large that it’s hard to obtain. This should be in your standing rules.

For a called or special meeting – your standing rules should state what a quorum is for such a meeting.

What if you don’t have a quorum or you lose the quorum? Call out to Californians - California Assn of Parliamentarians has a great website.

And a great acronym for what to do if you don’t have a quorum: Fix time to Adjourn, Adjourn, Recess, Take Steps to Obtain Quorum

*Crude but effective.*
MOTIONS

- One thing at a time
- Orange sheet
A main motion brings a matter before a council while no other motion is currently pending (under consideration).
A well worded main motion clearly states a proposed action – including instructions who will carry out the action; when, why, and if the action will cost money; how it will be paid for.
And a motion is always in the affirmative – let your yes be yes and your no be no.

A person moves the main motion.
Most motions require a second. A second doesn’t mean the person seconding it agrees with the motion! It means the person thinks the motion is worthy of debate.

The Moderator states the motion. At this time, the motion now belongs to the body! It’s not Joe’s motion any more. The Moderator then asks, would you like to speak to the motion? The maker of the motion has the right of FIRST debate.

The Moderator then calls for debate and questions.
If there’s no more debate or questions, the Moderator can ask, “Are you ready for the motion?” And then restate the motion.

The Moderator asks all those in favor of the motion to say “Aye” and then all those opposed to the motion to say “No.” Always ask for the “no” vote. And you never say, all those opposed “like sign.” Because what does that do? It means people against the motion vote YES!

If it’s a voice vote – listen! Deep voices often sound louder. And I’ve seen people say Yes or No very loudly! Don’t be swayed by pitch!
And if you can’t tell, you can ask for a show of hands. Make sure you’ve identified tellers – people who will count – in advance of the meeting.

You then announce the vote
Amendment is the most common and frequently used secondary motion. It is the means by which main motions can be “perfected” by the body to achieve a greater consensus.

Amendments

There are three ways to amend

- Insert or add *words* or *paragraphs*
- Strike out *words* or *paragraphs*
- Strike out and insert *words* *text*
Amendments

- Maker moves Amendment
- Requires a second
- Moderator states the Amendment
- Call for debate - only on the amendment
- Debate
- Moderator restates Amendment
- Take vote on Amendment
Layers of actions

2. Amendment: “insert word ‘red’ at the end of sentence.”

1. Main Motion: “That all church doors shall be painted.”
Secondary Amendments

- Can an amendment be amended?
  - Yes, becoming a secondary amendment.
Layers of actions

3. **Secondary Amendment**: “insert words ‘St. Louis Cardinal’ before the word ‘red’”.

2. **Primary Amendment**: “insert word ‘red’ at the end of sentence.”

1. **Main Motion**: “That all church doors shall be painted.”

Note that when you have a secondary amendment, the original amendment becomes the primary amendment.
Secondary Amendments

- Can a secondary amendment be amended?
  - No, only one thing at a time.
Layers of actions

**Primary Amendment:** “insert word ‘red’ at the end of sentence.”

**Secondary Amendment:** “insert words ‘St. Louis Cardinal’ before the word ‘red’”.

**Main Motion:** “That all church doors shall be painted.”

There is to be no more than one primary amendment and one secondary amendment pending at a time.
“Friendly” Amendments

There is no parliamentary process for “friendly amendments”

The maker of the motion loses “possession” of the motion once it is stated by the Moderator
**Substitute Motion**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perfected</th>
<th>Perfected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main Motion</td>
<td>Substitute</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Amendments to Main Motion

Amendments to Substitute

Shall the substitute motion become the main motion?
Substitute Motion

If approved...

Main Motion  Substitute

The Substitute becomes the Main Motion
Substitute Motion

If *not* approved...

Main Motion  Substitute

The Substitute disappears and
the Main Motion remains
Substitute Motion

Main Motion

*The motion is before the body for debate and vote*

Can there be further amendments?
Routine business can be handled by means of “unanimous consent,” which means that the Moderator simply says, “is there any objection?” and looks across the room. Or the Moderator can say, “hearing no objection” .... If no one immediately seeks recognition or says “I object,” then the Moderator says “so ordered” and moves on to the next item of business. In this form of voting, if *anyone* objects, then the Moderator proceeds to take the vote by another method.

NOTE: It is possible that you can get ahead of commissioners with the business. This happens especially when you are moving through business at a fairly quick pace. Be sure commissioners are with you as you go through each item. They can rebel against the use of unanimous consent if they feel they are being pushed or unduly hurried.

And – If you don’t use a consent agenda (we will talk about that), and there are a number of routine items to be approved, you can take more than one item at a time. *example*
A way to handle non controversial and routine business before the assembly is using the Consent Agenda. It is a good idea that if your council uses a consent agenda, there is a rule adopted about how this will be used and what can be placed on the consent agenda.

- **Consent Agenda presented.** No surprises. Don’t put anything on the consent agenda you think might be controversial or know that someone will want to discuss.

- **The Moderator asks, “Does anyone wish to remove any of the items?”** Any item asked to be removed is removed. It is not dealt with at this time; it is dealt with at its place on the agenda.

- **Items removed for later action.** Don’t forget to deal with the removed items later in the docket...keep track. And – if something was removed and no one speaks to it, move ahead to the vote on it.

- **The Moderator can use Unanimous Consent to adopt the remaining items.** “The Consent Agenda items (list the numbers) are before you. If there is no objection, these items are adopted.
Voting

> Know what vote is required
  > Majority, 2/3, or 3/4

> Methods of Voting
  > Voice Vote
  > Rising Vote (or Show of Hands)
  > Counted
  > Ballot

**Frequent Question: Should You Vote?**

- Know what vote is required
- Methods of Voting
  - **Voice Vote.** Voice vote is the most usual form of voting. The chair says “all in favor, say aye, opposed no,” and then declares which side prevails, and says the motion is either adopted or defeated, and announces the next pending item of business.
  
  **Rising Vote (or Show of Hands).** If the chair or anyone else is unsure of which side prevailed on a voice vote, any member has the right to call for a “division,” by simply calling out “Division!” A division is *not* a counted vote. It is simply a re-taking of the vote by either raising hands (in a small assembly) or standing.
  
  **Counted.** A counted vote can always be ordered by the chair. But otherwise, it requires a majority vote of the members – yes, sometimes you have to vote on how to vote! And of course in some meetings there are electronic forms of voting available that present counted votes more efficiently (and that are therefore used more often).
  
  **Ballot.** Finally, some votes are taken by secret ballot. This used to be a requirement for all congregational votes to call installed pastors (and is still a practice in many churches). If a vote by ballot is not required in an assembly’s rules, it requires a majority vote of the assembly. Always have ballots on hand. Always announce the vote count.

Should you vote?

The moderator and clerk should make every effort to maintain an appearance of impartiality so that members on both sides of an issue can feel confident that they will receive fair treatment.

To this end, the moderator and clerk do not participate in debate. The moderator may do so only if she/he gives up the chair until the issue is disposed of (which should seldom be done).

In addition the moderator votes only when either:

- The vote is by ballot, in which case the chair votes along with and at the same time as all other members, or
- The chair’s vote will change the result of the vote. (The judicious use of your vote to tie the matter)
Elections

- Is a ballot required?
- Nomination by committee
- Call for nominations from floor
  - If there is one, no second necessary (but second can imply endorsement)
- Do you have to act on one at a time?
- Uncontested: by acclamation
- Contested: elected by majority (ballot)

Custom of how this is handled probably guides your council more than anything else. However, rules may be better than custom!

- Do you have to act on one at a time? Can be done one of two ways.
  1. All nominations presented before voting
  2. Balloting for each position following nominations

Generally, any contested election should be handled by ballot. A plurality is the largest # of votes given to a candidate or position when three or more choices are possible. If it is not a majority, repeat until a majority is obtained for one candidate or position.

And the floor is always open for additional nominations.
These are amendments from the General Assembly to amend the Constitution.

Present the amendments so the presbytery is able to vote “yes” in favor of the amendment or “no” in opposition.

Majority rules...even Confessions

No absentee or proxy votes

Cannot be further amended
Other Useful Motions
Referral of business items to a committee is a time honored and effective way to encourage thorough and thoughtful consideration. Sometimes matters are referred to existing standing or special committees. Other times, the motion to refer includes the creation of a special committee to handle the consideration. If that is the case, then the motion needs to be specific about who will serve on the committee and in what role(s), and who names the committee and when. Motions to refer can include any instructions to the committee about processes to follow, timelines for their work and reporting, and any other details an assembly wishes to give them.
This is the usual way that an assembly makes adjustments to its schedule in the midst of a meeting – either when some other important matter needs to be addressed, or when it becomes evident in the midst of the consideration of a matter that additional time or information is needed. The motion maker would say something like, “I move to postpone this matter until 2:00 p.m. so that we can read the committee’s rationale over the lunch hour,” or “until after the report of the property committee,” or so on.

If the council or entity involved meets at least quarterly, a motion can even be postponed until its next meeting.
Limit or Extend Debate

- Motion to change or limit debate
- Requires second
- Is not debatable
- Is amendable
- Requires 2/3 vote
- Example: “I move we limit debate speeches to 2 minutes.”

Unless an assembly has adopted a special rules that states otherwise, members may speak twice on any motion on the same day (although anyone who hasn’t yet spoken is entitled to preference in recognition), and speeches may be up to ten minutes in length. Many assemblies find it necessary to limit speeches more severely than this, and they may do so even in the midst of the meeting by a two-thirds vote.

I encourage you to have special rules, or to ask the council to adopt rules when debating big issues. Two minutes is plenty of time to get a point across, three minutes is a really long time, and TEN minutes is an eternity in Church time!!
Moving the Previous Question (known as “Calling the Question”) is the means by which a council can end debate on one or more pending items even when there are some who still wish to keep debating. The motion requires a two-thirds vote. In its simplest form (“I move the previous question”), it only affects the immediately pending question. But it can also be made on the immediately pending question and any or all other consecutive pending questions. For example, if the immediately pending question is a secondary amendment, the previous question can be called on the secondary amendment, the secondary and primary amendments, or on “all pending questions;” namely, the secondary and primary amendments, followed by the main motion either as amended or not.

How to handle the call the question person...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Previous Question!?!</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>➢ Motion (<em>Never in order when called out</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Requires second</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Is <em>not</em> debatable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Is <em>not</em> amendable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Requires 2/3 vote</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*How to handle the “Call the Question” person*
To Lay on the Table

- Motion to lay on the table
- Requires second
- Is *not* debatable
- Is *not* amendable
- Requires a majority vote
- Should be avoided in general
- Remember – fire or pizza!

The motion to Lay on the Table (or “To Table”) is a means to quickly and temporarily suspend consideration of a matter because of a very urgent matter that has arisen.

Although it only requires a majority vote, it *also* requires a majority to then take the matter from the table, and bring it back to the council. It is *not* the motion that should be used if the intent is to make the matter go away entirely. The motion to Postpone Indefinitely is a more effective way to accomplish that end.

Alyson Janke, stated clerk in John Knox Presbytery, likes to give this example: You will want to table an item if the building is on fire and you need to leave immediately, or your pizza has been delivered and you want to eat it while it’s hot.
To Postpone Indefinitely

- Motion to postpone indefinitely
- Requires second
- Is debatable
- Is *not* amendable
- Requires a majority vote
- Should be avoided. *Postpone to a Certain Time* is preferred

The motion to postpone indefinitely is a way a council can dispose of a main motion without having to state whether a majority are for or against the action; when it is something that you just don’t want to vote “no” on.

An item that has been postponed indefinitely cannot be considered again in the same session of the council (at the same General Assembly, for example) unless a majority of the members vote to reconsider the postponement. This motion can be very useful in cases where a council is aware that a reasonable consensus on an important or controversial matter does not exist yet – and isn’t likely to emerge at the current meeting.

And again, this can sometimes be used when you just don’t want to vote “no” on a matter.
The main motion comes to the floor and is seconded.
The moderator says, “We will proceed by going thru the document section by section. I will ask for any amendments. When there are no other amendments offered, I will declare that section perfected.”
No vote is taken on each section as presented or amended.
After all parts have been considered, the moderator opens the entire document to amendment.
The entire document is acted upon in a single vote.
GROUP PROCESS

Do we have to discern under the rules all the time? Using processes other than RONR.
Aids to Crystallization

- Use small breakout groups
- Different opinions expressed
- Conclusions brought back
- Reports in nature of debate
- Return to full assembly for action

Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised provides for the use of such methods in Aids to Crystallization of Opinion

P524 in RONR. Robert’s can’t use one word – discernment – when he can use FIVE!
Especially when dealing with controversial matters, councils of the church may wish to spend time discerning the mind of Christ and building consensus – which might involve temporarily suspending the consideration of a matter under the rules of order to allow for informal consideration, “open space” round table discussions, seasons of prayer, or the like. For while the majority rules, in our tradition, our strong desire for unity in the body of Christ compels us to seek a broader consensus whenever possible.

Such times can be built into meeting agendas or held as separate events. They can also occur spontaneously in the midst of the formal consideration of a matter.

Open Space

*How do we build engagement in an issue out from under the rules?*

- Imagine new solutions
- Share our concerns, as well as our commitments
- Build agreement
A privileged motion affects the meeting itself, as well as the rights and privileges of its members.

Look at orange laminated sheet
Privileged Motions

- Call for Order of the Day
- Question of Privilege
- Recess

Order of the Day
When an assembly has agreed to deal with particular matters at certain times, it is in order for a member to call the chair’s attention to the fact that the agreed upon time has arrived, even if another speaker currently has the floor. *example*

Question of Privilege
Questions of Privilege can be wide ranging, but are generally related to an assembly’s processes or arrangements – such as the inability to hear a speaker, or heating and cooling issues, but also including the need to dismiss visitors and meet in “executive session.”

Recess
While recesses are typically taken in long meetings for the purpose of attending to physical needs, they can also be helpful as a way for leaders to consult about meeting processes, or for “sides” in a debate to meet and work out their differences, or for other reasons. If a recess is moved as a privileged motion (while another item of business is pending), it is not debatable and can only be made for an *immediate* recess; however, it can still be amended with respect to the recess’s duration. If it is made when no motion is pending, then it can be debated, and the motion can be to set a recess for some future time in the meeting.
A privileged motion affects the meeting itself, as well as the rights and privileges of its members.

Look at orange laminated sheet
A motion is dilatory if it seeks to obstruct the will of the assembly.  

It is the duty of the presiding officer to prevent the misusing of motions.

- Don’t recognize members  
- Rule them out of order

A motion is dilatory if it seeks to obstruct or thwart the will of the assembly as clearly indicated by the existing parliamentary situation. 

It is the duty of the moderator to prevent members from misusing the legitimate forms of motions, or abusing the privilege of renewing certain motions merely to obstruct business.

Whenever you become convinced that one or more members are using parliamentary forms for obstructive purposes, you should either not recognize these members or rule such motions are out of order.
So you’ve ruled something out of order or ruled on an issue.
You can be appealed!

Here is where the trust and respect you have earned from the council comes into play. If you have been fair, and treated the council with respect, the council will sustain – uphold – your decision.
Reconsideration is a special way that an assembly can take a matter back up in the same session at which it was first decided when it believes it has acted rashly or when in the aftermath of a decision, additional information comes to light that is likely to change the vote. The motion maker is required to have voted with the prevailing side (or in committees, to have not voted on the losing side).

The making of this motion has a higher rank than its consideration. Therefore, the motion can be made and seconded at times when it is not in order for it to come before the assembly for debate or vote. In such a case the consideration of the motion can be taken up later. The moderator simply asks the clerk to record the motion as made and seconded. This temporarily suspends the action to reconsider.

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**Reconsider**

- Motion to Reconsider
- Moderator attests motion maker voted with prevailing side
- Requires a second
- Making the motion vs. considering the motion; can be taken up later

---

53
Reconsider

- Call up the motion
- Is debatable if the original motion was debatable
- Requires a majority vote

- Call up the motion. Any member can bring the motion back (*call up the motion*) at any time when its consideration would be in order.
- Is debatable if the original motion was debatable and if so can go into the merits of the motion to be reconsidered

Once you have voted to reconsider, you can take the matter up at a more appropriate time; you don’t need to deal with it right then.
Reconsider

- Time factor
  - Must be same meeting, or
  - The 2nd day of 2-day meeting
- To reconsider an amendment you must bring back main motion

- Time factor
  - Must be same meeting, or
  - The 2nd day of 2-day meeting

The motion is only in order at the same session as the original action, or in assemblies of multiple days, no later than the next day after the action. After that, the motion to Rescind or Amend Something Previously Adopted must be used.
Amendable: (ie motion to substitute the motion to rescind with a motion to amend what is proposed to be rescinded.)
When a member thinks that the rules of the assembly are being violated, the member can make a Point of Order, thereby calling upon the moderator for a ruling and an enforcement of the regular rules.

### Point of Order

- No second
- Not debatable
- Not amendable
- Moderator decides
  - Is the point well taken or not?
  - May wish to consult before ruling
Requests and Inquiries

- Parliamentary inquiry
- Request for information
- Request for permission to withdraw or modify a motion
  - Before moderator states the motion
  - After moderator states the motion

- A parliamentary inquiry is a question directed to the moderator to obtain information on a matter of parliamentary law or the rules of the organization bearing on the business at hand.

- A request for information is a request directed to the moderator, or through the moderator to another member, for information relevant to the business at hand but not related to parliamentary procedure.

- Conditions for withdrawing or modifying a motion depend upon how soon the mover states his/her wish to withdraw or modify it.
  - Before a motion has been stated by the moderator, it is the property of the mover, who can withdraw or modify it.
  - After the moderator has stated the motion, it belongs to the body, and the maker must request the assembly’s permission to withdraw.
ELECTRONIC MEETINGS
Meeting: “a single official gathering in one room or area .. at which a quorum is present.”
ELECTRONIC MEETINGS

- Authorized in organization’s governing documents
- Technology used must allow “simultaneous aural communication”
- Encourage adoption of rules
  - To ensure quorums
  - Be recognized by chair
Adjournment brings the current meeting to an end. It is nearly always a privileged motion, and it is important to ensure that councils do not adjourn without ensuring that necessary details of the next meeting have been handled.

You shouldn’t adjourn if you haven’t finished all the business of the council.
And before you adjourn, you should announce the date, time, and location of the next meeting.
Adjournment

- Motion to **Adjourn**; requires a second; if approved, the meeting is over
  - **Recess** if you need a short break
  - **Stand at ease** if you need a few minutes

- In case of a docket-mandated adjournment time, a member may “**Call for Orders of the Day**” which can require schedule to be enforced

- “Since there is no further business”

- Always end with prayer

- **A short intermission is a Recess.** Don’t adjourn if you are taking a coffee or lunch break. If you need to ask the stated clerk a question, you can ask the council to **stand at ease** for a few minutes while you consult with the clerk. No one should leave the room!

- **Motion to Adjourn.** Any member can move to adjourn...even while business is pending, provided that the time for the next meeting is established.

- **Call for Orders of the Day.** If a docket was adopted that includes the adjournment time, Call for Orders of the Day can require that the schedule be enforced, unless the body votes by 2/3 to set aside. NOTE – you do not want to set the time to Adjourn as an Order of the Day. What if you haven’t finished with all the business?

- **Fix the Time to Which to Adjourn.** Don’t be confused by this motion (if anyone uses it). The assembly may wish to fix a date and hour and/or place for another meeting before the next regular meeting. This motion has no effect on when the present meeting will adjourn.

- “**Since there is no further business...the meeting will be adjourned with prayer.”**

- **Always end with prayer.**
To Learn More

- *Robert’s Rules in Brief, 2nd Edition*
- [www.parliamentarians.org](http://www.parliamentarians.org)
- [www.robertsrules.org](http://www.robertsrules.org)
- [www.roberts-rules.com](http://www.roberts-rules.com)
- Your Presbytery’s Stated Clerk!
The moderator possess the authority necessary for preserving order and for conducting efficiently the business of the body.
G-3.0104
Tricia’s Cringe-Worthy Presbytery Meeting Moments

Brought to you by presbyters – well, you know who you are!
You don’t have to vote to receive a report!
If the report is provided in advance – in writing, as part of the packet for the meeting, or the chair or committee member gives the report, either reading it (try not to allow that!) or pointing out the highlights, the body has received the report.
Don’t want to step on any traditions here – in Middle Tennessee, we ordinarily recognize retirements by reading a resolution about the person’s life and ministry, and then the motion is made to “spread this upon the minutes” and everyone votes and feels good. We’re not trying to stop that.
We’re just trying to stop people from reading their reports, word for word, and then asking the body to vote to “receive” it.
Because – anything someone can vote YES on, they can vote NO on. What if someone – or the majority of someones – votes NO? You are now in a parliamentary pickle.
You only want to vote to receive a report if it is important that the report be included in the minutes.

Not asking for discussion . . . Some moderators get mired in their scripts. When you think there is not going to be discussion, and you can “short order” a motion – you know, seeing no objections – you ask if there are questions, if there is any discussion, and then you say, seeing none, this is so ordered. But you pause after questions, pause after discussion, all the while looking up! Don’t do this to squelch debate. As moderator, you are supposed to use your powers for GOOD!

We want your meetings to be efficient, with everyone treated fairly, or everyone feeling like they were treated fairly. I think there is a fine line between efficiency, fellowship, and wasting time. Know your context.

“As applied to an assembly’s action with respect to board or committee reports or any of their contents, the expressions adopt, accept, and agree to are all equivalent - that is, the text adopted becomes in effect the act or statement of the assembly. It is usually best to use the word adopt, however, since it is the least likely to be misunderstood.”

Exception – Financials and Audit. You receive a report from the Treasurer; Robert says “no action of acceptance by the assembly is required — or proper — on a financial report . . . Unless it is of sufficient importance, . . . And then you vote that the Treasurer’s report be referred to the auditor(s). When you receive the audit report, the assembly votes to accept the Auditor’s report. Robert says, “The adoption of the auditors’ report has the effect of relieving the treasurer of responsibility for the period covered by his report, except in case of fraud.” Chapter 15, Section 48.
Don’t raise your hands – because I will embarrass you – but who has ever said, all those in favor, say “aye”; all opposed, like sign?

If you’ve done that, all you’ve done is ask for the “ayes”, the “yes” votes! Let your yes be yes, and let your no be no!

And in a related matter – don’t ask for abstentions! To abstain is the same effect as a “no” vote – because it doesn’t move the motion forward.

If a person doesn’t want to vote, they don’t have to vote! And I know we do this at the General Assembly, but that’s a whole different way of meeting!

Suspension – I’m not talking about cars . . . I’m talking about bylaws and standing rules. Can you suspend or set aside your bylaws? [NO]

Can you suspend or set aside your standing rules? [YES] In fact, I have an acronym for that – SASR – so when I have my annotated agenda, I note when that is to happen.

Friendly Amendment – remember, there is no such thing!! Once the Moderator states the motion, it belongs to the assembly. It is no longer John’s motion, or Carol’s motion, it’s the presbytery’s motion. So if someone wants to amend it, they don’t ask John or Carol, they make an amendment to the motion.
The CW – PCUSA Style

Let’s avoid the cringe-worthy. . .
“Stop it! Just stop it!”
– Bob Newhart
Things I Thought I Knew

➢ Second
➢ Quorum
➢ Call for Question in Committee

Things I thought I knew until I talked to Tricia – who learned this as she studied for the RP exam...

You don’t have to ask for a second in a committee meeting. No, really.

But I am going to disagree here. One thing most Southerners hate to do is hurt someone’s feelings. And sometimes voting NO on a motion in a committee will hurt the feelings of the maker of the motion. We Southerners don’t want to point out how dumb someone is, because that’s mean. Voting NO on that dumb motion is a smart thing to do but a mean thing. So often, in committees, we ask and wait for the second. And the committee moderator needs to be poised to say, “the motion fails for lack of a second” before some good-hearted goober says “second” and then we have to talk about the dumb motion and then we have the hard decision of voting NO and hurting someone’s feelings, or voting YES on a dumb motion. Sometimes it’s hard to live in the South.

But you all know that if a committee report with motions comes before the assembly, it doesn’t require a second . . . Since the committee is composed of more than one person.

And Quorum – I always taught Moderators that they “declare” the quorum, upon advice of the clerk. Well, turns out that the Moderator DETERMINES the quorum, and doesn’t have to announce it. I had to change my slides!!

Calling for the Question in Committee – I knew this, but bet you don’t . . . Robert says you can’t call the question in committee! *In order that there may be no interference with the assembly’s having the benefit of its committees’ matured judgment, motions to close or limit debate (15, 16) are not allowed in committees.* *If a member abuses his privilege of speaking an unlimited number of times in debate in order to obstruct the business of the committee, such dilatory behavior should be reported to the committee’s parent, which may then remove that member from the committee, adopt an order limiting or closing debate in the committee, or take such other action as it deems advisable. However, if there will be no opportunity for this to occur within the time needed to effectively resolve the problem, it is the duty of the committee chairman to deny such a member any further recognition to speak in debate on the pending question. [Chapter XVI, Boards and Committees, § 50 Committees, Conduct of Business in Committees.

Some of you have been to General Assembly – GA committees allow members to call the question. If they didn’t, the committee meetings, and then the General Assembly, would go on forever!
The two times the word “dangerous” is used in RONR:

“Another error - less common, but dangerous - is to move, after the report has been read (or even before the reading), that it "be accepted," when the actual intent is that of the mistaken motion to receive, as just explained, or of a legitimate motion to receive made "before" the report is read. If a motion "to accept" made under any of these circumstances is adopted and is given its proper interpretation, it implies that the assembly has endorsed the complete report.”

It’s not what you think! “In the event of fire, riot, or other extreme emergency, if the chair believes taking time for a vote on adjourning would be dangerous to those present, he should declare the meeting adjourned—to a suitable time and place for an adjourned meeting (if he is able), or to meet at the call of the chair.” Chapter 4, Meeting and Session, Section 8, Meeting, Session, Recess, Adjournment, Interrelation of the Concepts
REMEMBER

- Five Helpful Motions
  - Amend
  - Commit / Refer
  - Postpone (to a definite time)
  - Previous Question (both versions)
  - Consideration by Paragraph or Seriatim

You know the seven last words of the Church – “We’ve never done it that way before”

Well, here are the Five helpful motions:

Remember these – or make sure your clerk knows them!

Amend, Commit / Refer; Postpone (to a definite time); Previous Question (both versions); Consideration by Paragraph or Seriatim