

Vermont Conference of the United Church of Christ
2017 Annual Meeting
Definitions and Recommended Procedures

1. RESOLUTIONS

All resolutions except for emergency or courtesy resolutions must be submitted by the deadlines set, in advance of the meeting, so that delegates and churches may study the issues before the voting. Resolutions that have been submitted have been distributed to all delegates. Emergency Resolutions may be accepted by the Business Committee (the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors) no later than 3 PM on Thursday, April 27, 2017)

2. MOTIONS AND AMENDMENTS

All motions and amendments from the floor shall be presented to the Scribe and the meeting Chair in written form at the time they are moved.

3. DISCUSSION AND DEBATE

When necessary, the meeting Chair may impose the following limits on debating motions and resolutions:

- a. A limit on the total time for discussion of the motion or resolution.
- b. A limit of three minutes for any one speaker. Time to be kept by an appointed time keeper.

4. USE OF MICROPHONES

Delegates must go to one of the microphones in order to address the assembly. Specific microphones may be assigned for those supporting and those opposing the matter on the floor. Those waiting to be heard should line up behind a microphone and will be recognized in the order in which they are lined up.

5. VOTING

Delegates should be prepared to vote by standing (if able) and holding up their name tag when called upon to do so or to show a voting slip in order to receive a paper ballot if a ballot vote is called for. Tellers will be appointed to count the votes in the various sections of the auditorium. Please keep your voting slips raised until the teller for your area asks you to lower them.

6. RULES OF ORDER

Robert's Rules of Order shall be used to guide debate and action. The meeting Chair may seek the advice of the Parliamentarian at any time. A delegate, at a microphone, may seek a ruling by the Parliamentarian.

Significant Rules from *Robert's Rules of Order*

- a. A motion or resolution may be amended and an amendment to a motion or resolution may be amended, but an amendment to an amendment cannot be further amended.
- b. No speaker may speak to an issue more than twice unless the rules are suspended by the body to allow him or her to do so. Pro and con sides of the issue will alternate.
- c. An amendment may affect the action to which it is related by adding or inserting, striking out, striking out and adding, substituting, or dividing the question.
- d. When making a motion it is best to put it positively. It can be stated by saying, "I move that..." It must be seconded before it comes before the assembly for discussion or action.
- e. To obtain the floor, a delegate or guest who has been granted voice must approach a floor microphone then address the Chair stating name and church or office. After being recognized by the Chair, the delegate may speak to the issue.
- f. A delegate who has the floor cannot be interrupted except for one of the following reasons:
 - (1) a call for the Order of the Day (to return to the items scheduled on the agenda for that time);
 - (2) A question of Privilege (a pressing situation affecting the rights of the assembly.)
 - (3) Point of Order (questioning whether the present procedure is appropriate.)
 - (4) Parliamentary inquiry (a request for guidance on the correct procedure in this instance.
 - (5) A call for Division of the House (standing vote)
 - (6) Expiration of the time allotted to the speaker.
- g. To close debate, a delegate obtains the floor and says, "I move the previous question," or "I move to close debate." This motion cannot be debated or amended and must be carried by a two-thirds majority.
- h. A motion may be made to "lay on the table" one item of business so that another more pressing one may be addressed. This motion should be made with the intention of taking up the original matter again after the intervening matter is dealt with. A motion may also be made to "postpone indefinitely" when there is no intention of considering the matter further at this meeting. Both the action "to lay on the table" and the action "to postpone indefinitely" require a simple majority vote. "Laying on the table" is not a debatable motion, while "postponing indefinitely" is debatable.
- i. When a report is given, it is not necessary to move that it be accepted or received; it is, in fact, received by being presented to the assembly. The report, following its presentation, may be discussed and amended by the assembly.

7. SOME SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR A CHURCH MEETING

- a. As members of a faith community, we should consider the feelings of others on the losing side when deciding whether or not to applaud the result of the vote on a contested issue.
- b. Making a motion to get an immediate note on an issue ("I move the previous question" or "I call the question") is an important parliamentary tool, but if there are still those wishing to speak, they may feel treated as unimportant. This tool should be used sparingly in a church assembly.
- c. There are other more obscure parliamentary maneuvers which can sometimes be used to "win" a point. Those familiar with these should be careful about invoking them since decisions in a faith body should be made on the basis of discernment of the Spirit and rational argument rather than manipulation of the rules.