

Robert's Rules of Order

Robert's Rules of Order can be complicated even during an in-person assembly, but they are necessary for an orderly discussion in such a large assembly. This simple guide can help you navigate the process and language you'll encounter during the assembly.

What is a motion?

A motion is the act of presenting an order of business to the floor of the assembly. A motion can be made to:

- Introduce or amend a resolution or item presented to the assembly for approval.
- Refer the issue for further study.
- Table (postpone) an issue for discussion at a later time.
- Call the question. (This will end discussion and allow for a vote on the motion.)
- Some motions can't be debated. The chairperson will inform you if this is the case.

A motion often requires a "second," another person who supports the motion. Motions coming from a congregation or committee do not need to be seconded. If a motion does not receive a second, it cannot be discussed.

Here's How it Works:

1. An item will be moved (presented for discussion) by a voting member or a committee chair
2. Someone asks to be recognized and the chair of the assembly (normally the bishop) invites them to speak.
3. That person will give their name, congregation, and their reason for speaking-- for example:
 - "I have a motion to present"
 - "I speak in favor of the motion"
 - "I speak in opposition to the motion"
 - "I have a question"
4. When addressing the assembly, please keep your comments to the topic at hand. Comments or motions that stray may be ruled "out of order" by the chair.
5. If a motion is made, the bishop will ask for a second. Motions coming from the Synod Council do not require a second.
6. If there is a second, the motion is "on the floor," and the presenter may speak to it and discussion can occur, including the consideration of possible amendments.
7. If someone wants to end the debate, they may be recognized and said "I call the previous question." A vote is then taken on whether or not to end debate. Please note that this process may slow down taking a final vote.
8. Once debate is completed (either by vote or by the natural end of discussion), a vote will be taken by the assembly on the motion that was presented.
9. At times, this procedure can get complicated, and the bishop or designated parliamentarian will assist the assembly in understanding what is happening.

Ten Tips for Synod Assembly-Goers for Using Parliamentary Procedure (AKA Robert's Rules)

Adapted from The Honorable David Lillehaug, Minneapolis Area Synod Parliamentarian (2021)

1. Don't treat procedure as a game, but as a fair, efficient way to deliberate and (if possible) reach consensus.
2. Respect the rights of both majority and minority.
 - The majority's rights include getting business done.
 - The minority's rights include being heard and dissent.
3. Be prepared to listen to one another and the Holy Spirit, to deliberate, and to decide.
4. On and off the floor, always treat the presider and other voters with respect. Make your points on merits, not personalities or politics.
5. When you want to speak, wait to be recognized by the presider. Identify yourself, your pronouns, and your congregation.
6. Don't lightly interrupt the Assembly with points of privilege, information, or order.
7. Don't act lightly when moving the previous question (cutting off debate)
8. Don't act lightly when moving to override the rulings of the presider or suspending the rules.
9. Feel free to consult the parliamentarian for procedural advice.
10. Whatever your feelings about contentious outcomes, work to move forward together in God's peace.

	Say...	Interrupt speaker?	Second necessary?	Motion debateable?	Motion Amendable?	Vote to pass...
Listed in order of precedence:						
Adjourn	<i>I move we adjourn</i>	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
Recess	<i>I move we recess</i>	No	Yes	No	Yes	Majority
Register complaint	<i>Chairperson, Point of Privilege</i>	Yes	No	No	No	No vote, chair decides
Suspend further consideration of a matter (to table)	<i>I move we table this motion</i>	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
End discussion/ debate	<i>I move the previous question</i>	No	Yes	No	No	2/3 vote required
To limit or extend debate on a motion	<i>I move we limit (or extend) debate for ___ minutes</i>	No	Yes	No	Yes	2/3 vote required
Postpone consideration of a matter	<i>I move we postpone this matter until ___</i>	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Move (refer) for further study	<i>I move we refer this matter to committee</i>	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Amend motion	<i>I move this motion be amended to read ___</i>	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Introduce new business, motion	<i>I move that . . .</i>	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Suspend the rules	<i>I move we suspend the rules concerning ___</i>	No	Yes	No	No	2/3 vote required
Point of Order	<i>Chairperson Point of Order</i>	Yes	No	No	No	No vote, chair decides
When a vote outcome is in question	<i>Chairperson, I call for Division of the House</i>	Yes	No	No	No	No vote, must be done
To withdraw a motion	<i>I withdraw my motion</i>	No	No	No	No	Majority
To close nominations	<i>I move to close nominations</i>	No	Yes	No	Yes	2/3 vote required
To reconsider a motion	<i>I move to reconsider (name the motion)</i>	No	Yes	Yes	No	Majority
To take from the table	<i>I move we take (motion) from the Table for consideration</i>	No	Yes	No	No	Majority