

RULES OF ORDER
As Amended by 2003 General Synod

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RULES OF ORDERS

It has been said that if there were no rules or established customs to guide an assembly of persons, and if each could talk on any subject as long and as many times as he pleased, and if all could talk at the same time, it would be impossible in most cases to ascertain their deliberate judgment on any particular matter.* Certainly, therefore, important business such as that relating to our Lord and Saviour should be carried out with decency and order as the Apostle Paul has indicated.

The following Rules of Order are written primarily for use during the meeting of Synod, but are to be observed by all Courts of the Church, insofar as they may be applicable.

- I. Constituting the Court. At the time appointed, the Moderator, or his alternate, shall call the court to order and the Court shall be constituted with prayer. At the opening service the retiring moderator will present a sermon, or if he is a ruling elder, will present an appropriate address. At the first business session the Principal Clerk shall constitute the Roll of Voting Members in a manner approved by the Court. For the meeting of the General Synod, the roll shall be prepared in the following manner:
 - A. Each Presbytery shall submit a list of ministers who are to be enrolled as voting members for the current meeting according to the Form of Government, Chapter XIII, C. Ministers must register at Synod's Registration to be recorded as present on the Official Roll of Synod.
 - B. Each elder-representative shall present from his Session a statement signed by the moderator and clerk, in the form specified in Chapter XIII, C, 6, Form of Government.
- II. Officers of the Court: The officers of the Court shall be the Moderator, Vice-moderator, a Principal Clerk, a Reading Clerk, a Bill Clerk, an Assistant Clerk, and a Parliamentarian.
 - A. Election of Officers.
 1. Moderator. A Moderator-elect shall be elected by the Court for a specific period. The Moderator-elect must be a Teaching or Ruling Elder and shall be nominated from the floor, and shall previously have assured his nominator of his willingness to serve, if elected. Voting shall be by secret ballot if more than one person is nominated. In the absence of any nomination from the floor, the Moderator will submit a name to the Court. In the event of the Moderator's death or his inability to perform the duties of his office within the first 180 days of his term of service, the Vice Moderator shall automatically become Moderator and shall nominate a Vice Moderator to the Executive Board of Synod which shall, acting on behalf of the General Synod, elect a Vice Moderator to fill the unexpired term. The records of the Synod shall certify that the initially elected Moderator and his successor, the Vice Moderator, were both Moderators of Synod for the year they served.
 2. Vice-Moderator. A Vice-moderator-elect shall be elected by the Court for a specific period one year before service. The Vice-moderator-elect must be a Teaching or Ruling Elder and shall be nominated from the floor, and shall previously have assured his nominator of his willingness to serve, if elected. Voting shall be by secret ballot if more than one person is nominated. The Moderator-elect shall be allowed to submit a name to the Court. The Vice-moderator-elect shall become the Moderator-elect in the event of the death, resignation, or other incapacities of the Moderator-elect.
 3. Clerks. The clerks will be nominated to the body by the Committee on Nominations and upon election serve for a specific period.
 4. Parliamentarian. The Parliamentarian shall be nominated by the Committee on Nominations and elected for a three year period. He may succeed himself.
 - B. Duties of Officers. (These duties are limited to duties during Court Sessions.)
 1. Moderator.
 - a. Open the Session. At the hour appointed, the Moderator shall take the chair, call the house to order, and open the meeting with prayer, unless a worship service has been held. If a quorum is present, the Court shall proceed to business.
 - b. Announce the business before the Court in the order in which it is to be acted upon, keeping in mind any "order of the day."
 - c. State and put all questions properly brought before the Court.
 - d. Take the vote and announce the result.
 - e. Decide all questions of order, subject to an appeal to the house by any two members. He may, without appeal, submit the question to the Court.
 - f. Appoint Moderator's Committees, subject to the approval of the Court.
 2. Vice-Moderator. The Vice-moderator shall preside in the absence of the Moderator, and assist in his official duties if desired.

3. Principal Clerk. It shall be the duty of the Principal Clerk to keep a roll of the members and call it whenever required by the Court; to record the proceedings; to receive and record documents acted upon by the Court; to make record of all unfinished business to come before the Court; to sign all orders and official papers; to provide a presbytery a written report on disposition of its memorial to include a statement, if any, from the Moderator's Committee; and to publish the minutes of the proceedings.
 4. Reading Clerk. It will be the responsibility of the Reading Clerk to present the business to the Court in the order determined by the Moderator and agenda. In the absence of a directive from the Moderator or an order of the day, the Reading Clerk will determine the order in which business is to be taken from the table and presented to the court. The Reading Clerk will present reports to the body, except in those cases where the reports are presented by particular representatives of a board or committee.
 5. Bill Clerk. The Bill Clerk will receive, record, and distribute matters to come before the Court. It is his responsibility to see that papers and reports referred are placed in the hands of the proper committees, and properly returned by such committees.
 6. Assistant Clerk. In the absence of any clerk, the Assistant Clerk will perform the functions assigned to the clerk in absence.
 7. Parliamentarian. The Parliamentarian should be a person with expert knowledge of the rules and use of adopted parliamentary procedures. He should be a person who is impartial, systematic, knowledgeable, and reliable. He should see to it that the business procedures are carried out according to these Rules of Order. He should call attention to an improper procedure and on request advise the Moderator on procedural matters.
- III. Quorum No business may be conducted without the presence of a quorum as prescribed in the Form of Government. If a quorum has not assembled at the hour appointed, and if two or more members are present, the Court may adjourn to a set time to provide an opportunity for a quorum to assemble.
- IV. Moderator's Committees. At the first business session and immediately following unfinished business, the Moderator shall appoint committees to consider the reports of boards and records and reports of lower courts. These shall be referred without reading unless there is a request for reading. The Moderator is encouraged to direct memorials which address concerns that have been assigned to a particular Board of the General Synod to the Moderator's Committee which will be considering that Board's report. Reports of Committees shall be considered by the Court as a whole, unless referred by the Moderator to a Moderator's Committee.
- A. Membership. The Moderator will appoint the members, subject to the approval of the Court, and will designate a chairman and a vice-chairman. Voting members of the Committee must be voting members of the Court. Advisors and observers may be appointed by the Moderator, subject to the approval of the Court.
 - B. Duties. Moderator's Committees are to carefully consider and make recommendations on all matters referred to them. Moderator's Committees are not to change or alter the content of the matters referred to them. In those circumstances where the Moderator's Committee recommends that a Memorial NOT BE ADOPTED or where the Moderator's Committee recommends SUBSTANTIVE ALTERATIONS, the Moderator's Committee shall draft a statement explaining its actions and submit the statement with its official report.
 - C. Discharge. Action of the Court on a report from the Moderator's Committee discharges the committee. If the report is recommitted, the committee is to reconvene and resubmit recommendations until such report is accepted by the Court.
- V. Order of Business. Subsequent to the opening service described elsewhere, and following prayer or worship, the following order of business is to be observed:
- A. Declaration of Quorum
 - B. Presentation of Minutes from the previous session
 - C. Special Order of the Day, if there be such
 - D. Unfinished Business
 - E. New Business
- VI. Matters to be Considered by the Court.
- A. Reports from boards, standing committees, and special committees of the Court and reports and memorials from lower courts will be filed with the Bill Clerk prior to the close of the first business session. These reports should be submitted in typewritten form, in triplicate, signed by the Chairman, Secretary,

- or Clerk. These communications will be considered in the ordinary routine of business.
- B. Matters received directly by the Court will be filed with the Bill Clerk to be considered in the ordinary routine of business.
 - C. All other matters to be considered by the Court must be brought before the assembly by a motion of a member to that effect and seconded and then announced by the Moderator. If the matter is not to be considered at the time of the motion, it must be reduced to writing and submitted to the Bill Clerk. If the matter is to be considered by the Court at the time of the motion, the motion must be reduced to writing and submitted to the Principal Clerk. (This applies only to main motions and motions to amend, to include substitute motions.)
 - D. All requests for funding from the unrestricted funds of Synod are expected to be presented to the Board of Stewardship in time for the Board to give careful consideration to the request and to make recommendation in its report to the General Synod. Requests brought before the General Synod that have not been considered by the Board of Stewardship will be referred to the Board of Stewardship for consideration and for reporting its recommendation at the next meeting of the General Synod. Emergency requests may be made a matter of business at that meeting of the General Synod by two-thirds of the representatives present and voting and shall be referred to the Chairman of the Board of Stewardship or in his absence the Treasurer of Synod or the administrative officer of the Board of Stewardship for review and comment prior to a decision of the court.
- VII. Deliberations of the Court. Matters to be presented to the Court which were submitted to the Bill Clerk will be presented to the Court by the Reading Clerk or if they so desire, by a member of the committee or board making such report. Matters not considered by Moderator's Committees will be read to the Court while matters considered by the Moderator's Committees will have only the Report of the Moderator's Committee read, unless the Moderator's Committee or the Court determines that the original report be read. Following reading, the person presenting the report will make a motion that the Report be approved. Debate may then ensue. Other deliberations of the Court will be by motion and second as per paragraph VI, C.
- A. Motions, General Classification. Motions range from the "Main Motion" which is the lowest in rank to "To Fix the Time to Which to Adjourn," the highest. Motions fall into four general classifications.
 1. Main Motions. The object is to introduce business, such as accept or adopt reports and ratify or confirm action. No main motion can be made when any other question is before the Court. It is debatable, takes precedence of nothing, and yields to all privileged, incidental, and subsidiary motions. Motions to adopt a report are main motions. The "Motion to Reconsider" is a main motion and can be made only by one who voted on the prevailing side. Anyone may second the motion. The "Motion to Reconsider" is undebatable. If the motion is carried, the original motion is again open to discussion and vote. No question can be twice reconsidered unless it was materially amended after its first reconsideration. Certain affirmative votes and certain negative votes cannot be reconsidered.
 2. Subsidiary Motions. These are such as are applied to other motions for the purpose of most appropriately disposing of them. They take precedent of a main motion and must be decided before the main motion can be acted upon. They yield to privileged and incidental questions and are as follows (being arranged in their order of precedence among themselves):
 - a. Lay on the Table. The object is to postpone the subject in such a way that it can be taken up at any time, and if decided in the affirmative on the main motion or any amendment or substitute, remove the whole subject from before the Court until it is taken up again. This motion is undebatable and unamendable and may be applied to main motions, to questions of privilege, to specific orders of the day (but not as a whole), to appeals, and to reconsider when immediately pending. It cannot be applied to unfinished business or formal reports of boards, committees, or reports or memorials from lower courts. Business laid on the table should be brought up by the clerk when the docket is cleared.
 - b. The Previous Question. This is the name given to a motion "to close debate now, stop further motions to amend, and proceed to vote on the immediately pending question." It requires a second, is undebatable, and is unamendable. It does yield to privileged and incidental motions and to the motion to "Lay on the Table." A 2/3 vote is required.
 - c. Postpone to a Set Time. The object is to set a time when a matter must be considered. It requires a second and is debatable only as to propriety of postponing. It may be amended as to time and as to special or general order. If a matter is postponed to a certain day, it becomes a "General Order" of business and majority vote carries it. It can only be considered on the day appointed when all business has been disposed of. If the business is "Postponed to a Set or Certain Time," it becomes a "Special Order," requires a 2/3 vote to carry, and must be considered at the appointed time. Motions that hold over are "Previous Questions," "Table," privileged motions, and incidental

motions.

- d. Commit. Object is to place business in the hands of a few. The motion requires a second and is debatable, as to propriety of committing, and is amendable. Motions that hold over are all motions except "Postpone Indefinitely" and "Main Motions." Majority vote is required. Instructions may be given to a committee any time before it submits its report by majority vote. It may be "Reconsidered" if the committee has not begun consideration of the business.
 - e. Amend. Object is to change or modify. It requires a second and is debatable, but debate must be confined to the amendment. It may be amended. All motions, except "Postpone Indefinitely" and "Main Motions" hold over a motion to amend. A majority vote is required, and it may be "Reconsidered." A "Substitute Motion" is an "Amendment."
 - f. Postpone Indefinitely. Object is to kill a motion, and requires a second. It is debatable and opens up "Main Motion" to debate. It is unamendable and cannot have any subsidiary motion applied to it except "Previous Question" and motion to "Limit or Extend Debate." All motions except "Main Question" hold over motion to "Postpone Indefinitely." It can be reconsidered.
3. Incidental Motions are such as arise out of other motions, and, consequently take precedence of, and are to be decided before, the questions which gave rise to them. They yield to privileged questions and cannot be amended. Excepting on appeal, they are undebatable. They are:
 - a. Appeal. Any member, with a second, may appeal from any decision of the Moderator. After debate, as allowed by Robert's Rules of Order, the question shall be put in this form: "Shall the decision of the Moderator be sustained?"
 - b. Objection to the Consideration of a Motion. An objection can be made to the consideration or any main motion, but only when it is first introduced. It can be made while another member has the floor and does not require a second. It cannot be debated or amended or have any subsidiary motion applied to it. When a motion is made and any member objects to its consideration, the Moderator shall immediately put the question, "Will the Court consider it?" If decided in the negative by a 2/3 vote, the whole matter is dismissed for that meeting.
 - c. Suspension of the Rules. This motion is not debatable and cannot be amended, nor can any subsidiary motion be applied to it, nor a vote on it be reconsidered. The rules of the assembly shall not be suspended except for a definite purpose, and by a 2/3 vote.
 - d. Other Incidental Motions include "Reading Papers," "Withdraw a Motion," motions relating to voting and nomination. They yield to "Table" generally and to privileged motions. They take precedence of the motions they affect.
 4. Privileged Motions. These are motions which take precedence of all other questions whatever, and on account of this very privilege, they are undebatable, except when relating to the rights of the Court or its members, as otherwise they could be made use of so as to seriously interrupt business. They are as follows, being arranged in their order of precedence among themselves.
 - a. To Fix the Time to Which to Adjourn
 - b. Adjourn
 - c. Questions Relating to the Rights and Privileges of the Court or Any of Its Members. The object is to get the attention of the Chair at once, to ask a question, to attend to some matter of business that cannot wait. Question cannot interrupt voting or verifying the vote. It is undebatable, unamendable, and may be reconsidered.
 - d. Orders of the Day. A call on the "Orders of the Day" takes precedence of every other matter, excepting "To Reconsider," and the three preceding, to which latter three it yields. It is not debatable nor can it be amended.
- B. Debate.
1. Addressing the Moderator. When any member desires to speak, he must rise and address the Moderator, and may not proceed until the Moderator recognizes him and announces his name.
 2. Obtaining the Floor. The member who first addresses the Moderator is to be granted the floor. If two or more address him at the same time, the one who is farthest from the chair is to be given the floor. The one who fails to obtain the floor is to be granted it next in order. The chair will refrain from recognizing a member who has risen and remained standing while another member is speaking, provided anyone else rises after the speaker has yielded the floor. EXCEPTIONS: The mover of a resolution, or in the case of official reports the chairman or some other member of the body making the report, is entitled to the floor immediately after the motion is announced, if he desires it; and when two members in succession have been heard on the same side of a question, the Moderator is to grant the floor to some member of the other side, if any member desires it.
 3. Decorum of Speakers and Attention of Members. Every member when speaking shall first address

himself to the Moderator, and then speak to the house in general, but shall not address any member individually except through the Moderator; he shall treat all members with decorum and respect, and shall attend closely in his speech to the question under consideration. Members of the Court shall attend closely to the business in hand, and shall not engage in private conversation or in anything that may cause confusion or disorder, while any member is speaking or the Moderator is taking a vote.

4. Debate by Officers of the Court. The Moderator may speak on questions of order without leaving the chair. However, when he would express his views on any subject under debate, he shall call on the vice-moderator to fill the chair and take the floor as other members of the Court. The other officers of the Court may speak on questions of order when requested by the Moderator and when necessary to perform their duties. However, to speak to subjects under debate, the officer shall call on the Assistant Clerk to perform the duties of his office and take the floor as other members of the Court.
5. Calls to Order. If a speaker acts in any respect in a disorderly manner, it shall be the right of any member and the duty of the Moderator to call him to order; and when thus called to order, he shall at once take his seat, until it is determined whether or not he was out of order, or until he is given leave by the Court to proceed.
6. Opportunity to Debate. Before putting any debatable question to a vote, the Moderator shall first give an opportunity for remarks.
7. End of Debate. When the "Call on the Question" and for "The Call for the Previous Question" have been decided in the affirmative, or when the Moderator has begun taking the vote, no further debate or remarks shall be admitted, unless there has evidently been a mistake; in which case, the mistake shall be rectified and the Moderator shall begin to take the vote.

C. Voting.

1. Presenting a Motion to the Court for Vote. In placing a motion before the Court for vote, the Moderator shall repeat the motion, and if there should be any cause for doubt, the result of the vote should be repeated. The motion shall be put in the following form, "All who are in favor of this motion will say aye;" and after the affirmative is expressed, "All who are opposed will say no." The Moderator will immediately announce the vote.
2. Division. If there is any doubt as to the result, the Moderator or any two members (motion and second) may call for a division. In that case, the Moderator shall repeat the motion and require first the ayes and then the noes to rise and be counted, and shall pronounce accordingly. The vote shall be taken by officers of the Court.
3. Recording of Votes. Should one third of the members present wish to have votes recorded, the roll shall be called and vote of each member recorded in the minutes. Those not voting will be counted with the majority, but recorded as not voting in the minutes. To have the vote recorded an "Incidental Motion" should be made and seconded and the question put to the Court should be "Should the vote be recorded?" Unless 2/3 vote negative, the votes shall be recorded.
4. Vote of Moderator. In a vote taken by ballot or by roll-call, he shall vote with the other members. In all other cases he shall have the casting vote if the house is equally divided. If he is unwilling to decide, he shall put the question a second time, and if the result shall be the same and he still declines to vote, the question shall be lost.
5. Majority Vote. In all cases not otherwise prescribed, a majority of the votes cast shall be sufficient for adoption or election.

VIII. Miscellaneous Procedures of the Court.

- A. Executive Sessions. All courts have the right to sit in executive session on any business which in their judgment ought not to be made a matter of public discussion.
- B. Leave of Absence. Members who are unable to attend the meeting of the Court shall submit a written excuse to the Principal or Stated Clerk. Members who leave the meeting before final adjournment shall submit a written excuse for that portion of the meeting to be missed. Reasons for the excuse should be stated. Members are encouraged not to leave the Court without the permission of the Moderator.
- C. Recording of Minutes. Minutes are a record of proceeding, and may be corrected at any time, without reconsidering the vote that approved them. Minutes should record all "Main Motions" (not withdrawn); name of maker of "Main Motions"; "Points of Order"; "Appeals" (whether lost or sustained); all other motions not lost or withdrawn; hour of meeting and adjournment; and roll call vote. Main Motions are interpreted to include official correspondence and reports submitted to this body for its consideration. All reports are to be printed in full in order to preserve the integrity of the reports. All actions of the General Synod which are intended to be of a binding nature are to be placed within the framework of the official docu-

ments of the church.

- D. Final Adjournment. Before the final adjournment the minutes of that day's session shall be read and adopted, the minutes of the meeting as a whole approved, the roll called and the names of those present recorded. Then, after prayer and the singing of praise, the Moderator shall declare the court adjourned to meet at the appointed time and place, and shall then pronounce the apostolic benediction.
 - E. Changes to Associate Reformed Presbyterian Retirement Plan. Proposed changes to the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Retirement Plan which are not submitted by the Board of Annuities and Relief must be referred to that Board for study and recommendation.
 - F. Commitment of Synod's Operating Reserve. Proposed commitments of Synod's operating funds which would reduce the operating reserve below 6 ½% of the anticipated funds for allocation shall be referred to the Board of Stewardship for study and recommendation.
- IX. Amendment of Rules. Amendments to the Rules of Order shall be proposed by the General Synod to the Presbyteries and must be approved by a majority of all those voting in all the Presbyteries. The General Synod shall certify the vote at its next meeting.
- X. Cases Unprovided For. All cases unprovided for in the foregoing Rules of Order are to be governed by the general principles of parliamentary law as per Robert's Rules of Order.

—END—

Listing of Amendments

Amendment No. 1 effective June 4, 1979 (II,A,2)

Amendment No. 2 effective June 2, 1980 (I, Constituting the Court; II,A, Election of Officers; II,A,2; II,B,1, Moderator; VI,A; VII,A,1; VIII,B)

Amendment No. 3 effective June 9, 1981 (VIII,C)

Amendment No. 4 effective June 11, 1985 (VIII,E)

Amendment No. 5 effective June 9, 1992 (VIII,F)

Amendment No. 6 effective June 9, 1998 (IV, Moderator's Committees)

Amendment No. 7 effective June 9, 1998 (IV,B)

Amendment No. 8 effective June 9, 1998 (II,B,3)

Amendment No. 9 effective June 11, 2001 (VI,D)

Amendment No. 10 effective June 10, 2003 (II,A,1)

