

The Rules of Order of the Reformed Church in the United States

Revised May 2014



I ORGANIZATION

1. The president shall take the chair at the hour to which the judicatory stands adjourned or is summoned to meet, and shall immediately call the members to order and open the session with the prescribed religious services.
2. In the absence of the president the stated clerk shall call the members to order and put in nomination a president pro temp., who shall preside until the president takes his place or until an election has been held. Should the president and the stated clerk both be absent, the oldest minister in attendance shall preside.
3. The roll shall then be called, on which the names of all those entitled to a seat and having proper credentials shall have been entered and about whose right there is no contest. If a quorum is present, the judicatory shall proceed to business; but if not, any two members present may adjourn from time to time to give opportunity for a quorum to assemble.
4. If a contest is made as to the right of any one claiming a seat, or if there are present two or more sets of delegates from a lower judicatory, the matter shall at once be referred to a committee, which shall examine into the case and shall report within twenty-four hours after its appointment.
5. As soon as an organization has been fully effected an election shall be held for such officers as may be required by the Constitution of the Church or the custom of the judicatory. When two or more persons are nominated for an office, a majority of votes cast shall be required for an election.
6. Immediately after the organization the president shall define the bar of the house and no one outside of its limits shall have the privileges of a member of the judicatory.
7. A quorum to transact business in any judicatory of the Church shall consist of the number of members required by the Constitution.

II. DUTIES OF THE PRESIDENT

8. When the president has opened the session and found a quorum present after the first day, he shall cause the minutes of the preceding day to be read, and, if necessary, to be corrected, when he shall declare them approved; and before the final adjournment the remaining proceedings shall be read and corrected; and when no further

corrections are required the president shall say: “Shall the minutes now be approved?” If no objections are made, he shall declare them to stand approved.

9. He shall preserve order, guard against a violation of the Constitution of the Church and the rules of order, and endeavor to conduct all business to a speedy and proper conclusion.
10. He shall, as soon as possible after the organization has been effected, appoint the several standing committees required for the prompt accomplishment of the business before the judicatory; and, unless otherwise provided for, he shall appoint all special committees that may be called for in the process of business.
11. He shall keep exact account of all items of business that have been laid over or assigned to a particular day and call them up at the proper time.
12. He shall receive all minutes, reports, communications, etc., addresses to or intended for the judicatory, and with its consent refer them to the appropriate committees.
13. He shall sign the minutes and all addresses or circulars, etc., issued by the judicatory; and shall decide all questions of order subject to an appeal to the judicatory by any two members.
14. He may state a question sitting, but shall rise to put it and shall say: “As many as are in favor (as the question may be) say ‘aye.’” After the affirmation is expressed, he shall say: “As many as are opposed say ‘no.’” If he is in doubt as to the results or a division is called for, those voting in the affirmative shall rise, stand, and be counted; after which those voting in the negative shall also rise, stand, and be counted. The president shall then announce the result.
15. When a vote is taken by ballot in any judicatory, the president shall vote with the other members; but he shall not vote in any other case, unless the judicatory is equally divided; when, if he does not choose to vote, the question shall be lost.

III. DUTIES OF THE STATED CLERK

16. The stated clerk shall have prepared in advance of the time of the meeting of the judicatory a complete roll of its members, and, as soon as possible, perfect a roll of those members present for the use of the president. Whenever any additional members take their seats, he shall add their names, in their proper places, to the said roll.

17. He shall make correct and concise minutes of all the proceedings of the judicatory and carefully preserve them. He shall, if required, prepare a correct and authenticated copy of the minutes and transmit them in due time to the higher judicatory for review. He shall read all papers by order of the president, shall publish due notice of the time and place of all stated meetings, and, by order of the president, of all special meetings.
18. A memorial, communication, or other paper confided to his care shall not be withdrawn from the files without the warrant of the judicatory.
19. He shall make, for convenient reference, a digest of the legislative actions and of all decisions made on constitutional questions or on the rules of order by the judicatory.

IV. THE ORDER OF BUSINESS

20. After the minutes have been read and approved, an opportunity shall be given to announce in the presence of recently arrived members or of secundi in order that they may be recognized.
21. Business unfinished at a previous session shall be taken up first, unless a special order has been set for that hour.
22. Reports from permanent committees shall have precedence, unless a matter has been set for a special hour.

V. MEMBERS – THEIR RIGHTS AND DUTIES

23. Every member shall be present within the bar of the house while the judicatory is in session, unless excused or necessarily prevented, and shall vote on each question put, unless previously excused, or unless he has a direct personal or pecuniary interest in the determination of such question.
24. Every member, in speaking, shall rise and address himself respectfully to the president, and, and having been recognized, shall proceed to address the judicatory. He shall treat the president and his fellow members with decorum and respect, shall confine himself to the subject under discussion, and shall avoid all personalities.
25. During the transaction of business, members shall not engage in private conversations; in debate they shall not address themselves to any one save the president.

26. When two or more members rise at the same time, the president shall name the one who is to speak first. A member shall not speak on the same question more than twice, no longer than one-half hour unless by consent of the body. The chairman of a committee, however, may open and close when general debate has been had on a motion reported by him. A member who has spoken on the main question may speak again on an amendment.
27. When a member, in speaking or otherwise, shall transgress the rules of order or deviate from the subject under discussion or in any way act disorderly, it shall be the privilege of any member, and the duty of the president, to call him to order. He shall take his seat immediately, unless permitted to explain, when, if the judicatory is satisfied, he may proceed to order; but if the case requires it, he shall be liable to censure or reprimand.
28. A speaker shall not be interrupted unless with his permission, or when he is out of order, or for the purpose of correcting mistakes or misrepresentations.
29. While the president is putting a question or a member is speaking, members shall not pass between the president and the speaker or walk across the floor.
30. A motion cannot be made while a member is speaking or after the president has begun to take a vote.
31. A member may change his vote before the president has announced the result, or afterward in case it does not affect the result.

VI. COMMITTEES – THEIR POWERS

32. The first-named member of each committee shall be the chairman. In the absence of the first-named member or in the event of his refusal to preside, the second member of the committee shall take his place; the same order of succession is to be followed as often as a vacancy occurs.
33. A committee to whom papers have been referred shall return them with its report; and a paper cannot go before a committee or become a matter for its action, unless it has been properly referred to it.
34. A majority of a committee shall constitute a quorum and it alone can make a report. A minority may submit its views in writing, or any member may submit a motion that contains a view of the minority.

35. A committee may appoint one or more sub-committees in order to facilitate its work by thus distributing it among its several members, but the final report must come from the whole committee.
36. When a special committee has made its report and it is received, the committee is by this act discharged. A report, however, may be recommitted; or the committee may be reappointed for another purpose.
37. A judicatory may at any time resolve itself into a committee of the whole to consider any special matter, whereupon the president shall name some one to preside, and vacate the chair. Such committee may rise at any time, after which the president shall resume the chair and the chairman of the committee shall report its action, or report progress and ask leave to sit again.

VII. MOTIONS – THEIR PRECEDENCE

38. Every motion made to a judicatory and entertained by the president shall, on the demand of any member, be reduced to writing. The president shall state the question or cause it to be read by the stated clerk before it is debated. It shall then be in possession of the house, but may be withdrawn at any time before it has been amended or a decision has been taken on it.
39. When a question is under debate, a motion shall not be entertained excepting it is one of the following motions:
 - To adjourn.
 - To take recess.
 - To lay on the table.
 - To take the previous question.
 - To postpone to a certain day.
 - To refer or commit.
 - To amend.
 - To postpone indefinitely.

These several motions shall have precedence in the order named; and a motion to refer, to postpone to a certain day, or to postpone indefinitely, having been decided, shall not be entertained again on the same day at the same state of the question.

40. If a motion under debate contains several parts, any member may request its division and a question shall be taken on each part. A motion to strike out and insert is not divisible.
41. A subject, which has been indefinitely postponed either by the operation of the previous question or by a motion for indefinite postponement or by a motion to lay on the table unconditionally, shall not again be called up during the same session of the judicatory, unless by the consent of three- fourths of the members who were present at the decision.
42. When different motions are made with respect to filling blanks, the longest time and the largest sum shall be put first
43. A motion shall not be considered as before the house unless it has been seconded and the mover recognized by the president.

VIII. AMENDMENTS

44. When a motion or proposition is under consideration, a motion to amend and a motion to amend that amendment shall be in order, and it shall also be in order to offer a further amendment in the form of a substitute for the entire proposition, and to this substitute an amendment may be offered which shall not be voted upon, however, until the original motion is perfected.
45. A motion to amend cannot be modified after the previous question has been seconded.
46. An amendment to the rules of order shall not be entertained, unless it has been seconded by a majority of the members present.

IX. RECONSIDERATION

47. When a motion or resolution has been offered and carried or has been lost, it shall be in order for any member, who has voted with the majority, to move on the same or succeeding day a reconsideration of it. Such a motion shall take precedence of all motions, excepting the motion to adjourn or to take recess.
48. A motion to reconsider is not debatable, unless the question proposed to be reconsidered was debatable.

X. THE PREVIOUS QUESTION

49. The previous question on any motion, after a reasonable time has been allowed to discuss it, may be called. The call, to be entertained, must be made by at least one-fifth of the members present rising in their places for the purpose. The previous question shall be presented in the following form: "Shall the main question now be put?" And, until it is decided, it shall preclude all further amendments or debate on the main question. The effect of this motion, when sustained, shall be to bring the judicatory to a direct vote on all the amendments then pending, in their proper order and on the main question itself.
50. The previous question shall apply in questions of privilege as in motions generally.

XI. QUESTIONS OF PRIVILEGE

51. Questions of privilege shall be:
- a. Those affecting the rights of the judicatory collectively; its safety, dignity, and the integrity of its proceedings.
 - b. The rights, the reputation, and the conduct of the members individually in their representative capacity.

They shall have precedence of all questions except to adjourn and to take recess.

52. It shall not be a matter of privilege to have received and entered upon the minutes a protest of a member or members against the action of a judicatory.
53. The ayes and nays on any question shall be recorded when required by any member who dissents from the acts of a judicatory.

XII. APPEALS

54. An appeal from the decision of the president on any point of order may be taken by any member who may briefly state the reasons for his appeal, to which the president may reply if he deems it needful. The vote shall then be taken without further debate. The form of stating the question shall be: "Shall the decision of the chair stand as the decision of this judicatory?"
55. A question of appeal cannot be reconsidered after other business has been done.

56. An appeal is not in order while another appeal is pending.

XIII. THE MOTION TO LAY ON THE TABLE

57. The motion to lay on the table may be made to consider more important matters, or to take up the matter at a more convenient time, or quickly to make a final disposition of it.

58. This motion shall take precedence of all other motions except the motion to adjourn, or to take recess, and shall be decided without debate.

59. All that adheres to the subject of the motion goes on the table with it except it pertains to a motion for correcting the minutes.

60. When this motion is made and lost, it cannot be made again until some change has been made in the question under consideration.

61. When a motion to lay on the table has been lost, it may be reconsidered; but when a motion to reconsider is laid on the table, that motion cannot be reconsidered.

XIV. MISCELLANEOUS

62. The rules of order may be suspended by unanimous consent.

63. A motion to amend the rules of order shall lie over one day; and it shall require a two-third vote to carry the amendment.

64. A judicatory may sit with closed doors if, in its judgment, the matter under consideration requires it.

65. Officers, delegates to higher judicatories, members of boards, etc., shall be elected by ballot; but a judicatory may make such elections by acclamation as do not conflict with any existing law.

66. It shall be in order to take recess only when a quorum is present.

67. A motion to take recess may be offered while another question is pending, or when another member is holding the floor providing he gives his consent.

68. The motion to adjourn, to take recess, to lay on the table, or for the previous question, shall be taken without debate.

69. The ayes and nays on any question shall be recorded on the demand of any member.
70. A member shall not retire from a judicatory without the permission of the president, nor withdraw from it to return home without the consent of the judicatory.
71. Before the final adjournment of a judicatory the roll shall be called, and all members absent without permission shall be reported by the stated clerk to the body that they were sent to represent.
72. At the final adjournment, after the judicatory has united with the president in the repetition of the creed and the Lord's Prayer, he shall pronounce the apostolic benediction and declare the judicatory now adjourned to meet as ordered.