

# **227<sup>th</sup> General Assembly**

## **Parliamentary Procedures for Committee Leaders**

### **1. Parliamentary Procedures for Committee Leaders**

Preparation for your role as a General Assembly committee moderator, vice-moderator, or other GA committee leader includes becoming more familiar with how parliamentary procedure will be used within the GA committee context.

This training will review parliamentary procedures with which you may already be familiar, present new parliamentary procedures that are sometimes encountered in GA committees, and give you information and tools to be an effective leader in guiding the work of a GA committee.

### **2. Parliamentary Procedure for GA Committees**

Here is the path we'll follow in this talk. First, we'll speak to foundational principles of GA decision making; then we'll talk about how you as committee leaders can most effectively prepare for the business that will come before your committee; then (third) we'll discuss how you might handle the business when the committee meets; and then we'll talk in turn about the different kind of parliamentary actions that will help your committee find its way through the decision making. So to begin, let's talk about foundational principles.

## **PART 1 FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES**

### **3. Foundational Principles**

When the General Assembly gathers, it is not just "to get the business done." There are foundational principles that underlie the work of the assembly.

### **4. Part 1: Foundational Principles**

Under this heading, we'll go into more detail on the foundational values of the General Assembly and principles of Presbyterian government more broadly; we'll talk about general principles of governing by council; and we'll do a high-level review of the principles that guide parliamentary law.

## **5. Foundations and Values of the General Assembly**

While you should familiarize yourself with all the Standing Rules of the General Assembly, we lift up just a few lines from Part 1 of its Foundations and Values of the General Assembly. This particular quote comes directly from the *Book of Order*, G-3.0501.

## **6. Foundations and Values of the General Assembly**

This is also from the *Book of Order*, G-3.0501.

## **7. Foundations and Values of the General Assembly**

While the obvious work of the General Assembly is mentioned in faithful discernment and governance, note that worship of God and creation of community will also be part of your leadership role.

## **8. Principles of Presbyterian Government**

We now turn to the *Book of Order*, Foundations of Presbyterian Polity. Presbyterians believe that we make better decisions together, listening to the voice of the Spirit through one another's voices. One of your most important jobs is to ensure that all voices are heard.

## **9. Principles of Presbyterian Government**

As Presbyterians we gather as councils to discuss, discern, and vote, with the vote of the majority reaching decision. There are exceptions of the majority rule, which will be covered later.

## **10. General Principles of Councils**

We now turn to the *Book of Order*, The Form of Government. Council meetings in Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), including the General Assembly and GA committee meetings are conducted in accordance with *Robert's Rules of Order*.

## **11. General Principles of Councils**

If you are planning on bringing your own *Book of Order* and/or *Robert's Rules of Order*, please be sure you have the most current copies, as those seen here.

## **12. Principles Underlying Parliamentary Law**

The *Book of Order* and *Robert's Rules of Order* are consistent in their principles ensuring that both the opportunity for discussion and hearing one another are they are part of the discernment process.

Note that while *Robert's Rules of Order* allows for small committees to operate under less formal rules, General Assembly Committees will have about 50 members each. So, making use those more relaxed rules would not serve the committee well.

## **13. Principles Underlying Parliamentary Law**

The moderator, and vice-moderator when serving as moderator, have an important role in the success of the GA committee listening for the voice of Christ through the voices of the people.

The moderator has all necessary power to maintain the order and unity of the body, and no power with respect to the decisions made other than their one vote.

When a body knows that the moderator is in control of the process—is fair and *firm*—members are assured that their rights will be protected and that the unity of the body will be preserved even if conflict arises. Respect each participant and you will earn their trust.

## **14. Principles Underlying Parliamentary Law**

*Robert's Rules of Order* has general rules about how participants should behave within the meeting. These rules reflect the respect for one another that is part of being a Christian community. For the benefit of all, the moderator may interrupt to call a member back to order if any of these are violated.

Please also review *Standards of Ethics for Commissioners and Advisory Delegates to the General Assembly*, which you can find in the Manual of the General Assembly.

## **15. Principles Underlying Parliamentary Law**

*Robert's Rules of Order* has several different processes for discernment which your GA committee may wish to use. These options will be covered later.

## **PART 2 PREPARING FOR BUSINESS**

### **16. Preparing for Business**

Preparing can't guarantee a good meeting, but lack of preparation can almost guarantee a bad one. Preparation will bolster your confidence.

We'll talk briefly about General Assembly business broadly and then move on to handling that business in committee.

### **17. General Assembly Business**

All items of business submitted to the General Assembly must be dealt with in some way. Items of business are referred to the various GA committees, often grouped according in a similar category. All items of business can be accessed, online, through My GA.

### **18. Committee Business (Item of Business)**

Your committee is required to make a recommendation to the assembly on every piece of business that is referred to it, except items marked "-info."

Items of business come with some written background information to assist in deliberations. This could include rationale written by the submitting body or bodies, advice from the Advisory Committee on the Constitution for items affecting the *Book of Order*, advice and counsel memoranda from other committees, comments from entities named in the standing rules, and financial implications when there are any. Sometimes there may be additional information in an appendix.

### **19. Committee Business (Hearing From Others)**

During the course of committee deliberations, committees will often hear from other individuals. These include:

- ***Speakers at Public Hearings.*** Public hearings provide an opportunity for the committee to hear from others on matters before it. Only those who do not have other avenues for addressing the committee—including those who are not Presbyterian—may register to speak at public hearings.
  - Committees can choose to hold public hearings once for all items before you consider any business or hold several hearings before each topic.
  - The committee can decide how long to allot to each speaker—between 1 and 3 minutes, for example. If the time allotted is not sufficient to accommodate all persons wishing to speak, committee leadership will need to devise a fair method for choosing who will get to speak. Seek a way to allow an equal number of persons on each side of an issue to speak.
- ***Overture Advocates.*** Each council who submits an overture or a concurrence on a received item of business may appoint one advocate to provide information on the background and intent of the overture to the assembly committee to which the overture has been referred. The same holds true for one of the signers of a commissioners’ resolution. Overture advocates may pool their time and choose one or more to speak on behalf of them all, but they cannot be required to.
- ***Resource Persons.*** Resource persons offer special knowledge and/or expertise that may assist the committee in their deliberations. As staff, elected members, or other appointees of General Assembly entities, they are appointed by the entity to share information about particular items of business.
- ***Financial Representatives.*** When an item of business affects the budget, mission priorities, or organizational capacity of an entity of the General Assembly, a representative from that entity shall be entitled to speak to that item of business at an appropriate time.

## 20. Committee Business (Draft Agenda)

Within the time allotted time for your committee to do its work (June 22-24), the leadership team will need to think through the way in which the business will be taken up and propose an agenda for approval by the committee.

This will include: creating a community agreement/covenant for the committee, taking into consideration the amount and potential controversy of the business

before you, hearing from others who will be speaking to your committee on items of business, and the time needed for deliberations and decision making. Please note that each meeting of your committee must include a time of worship and opportunity for prayer.

Many moderators prepare by having a script written out that follows the agenda, with reminders about how to handle motions that may arise. It is also helpful to schedule times when the vice-moderator may take over moderating the meeting.

### **PART 3 HANDLING BUSINESS**

#### **21. Handling Business**

When your committee comes to order they will be considering and voting on the recommendations before it. This is where following *Robert's Rules of Order* will come into play. Please note: Each committee will have an assigned parliamentarian to assist the moderator.

#### **22. Options for Recommendation to the Assembly**

For each item of business before the committee, there are several options your committee has as they consider their recommendations to the Assembly.

- **Approve.** The committee thinks this should be done and recommends approval to the assembly. It may also add amendments and/or comments.
- **Disapprove.** The committee thinks this should not be done and recommends disapproval to the assembly. It may also add comments.
- **Refer.** The committee recommends to the assembly refer the item to a named entity or committee. This is often used when a committee thinks the item of business is not quite ready for prime time, but has some merit and needs further work.
- **Answer by an alternate resolution.** The committee could decide to start over and adopt an alternate resolution to recommend to the assembly.
- **Answer by action taken on a different item.** This is often used when more than one item of business addresses the same topic. The committee may decide to recommend approval of one item to the assembly, followed by

recommending that the Assembly answer the other similar items with the action taken on the one item.

A committee votes on a recommendation to the Assembly. Your committee might find wisdom in providing advice or comments and also may choose to amend an item of business. Committees do not amend, approve or disapprove the rationale provided with items of business.

### 23. Getting to a Motion in Committee

This is an example process and script to help get a motion before your committee.

- ***“We will now consider item [##], [title or brief description].”*** This would be the number assigned to the item as found in MyGA.
- ***“We will first hear from [overture advocates, a representative of the committee or other group bringing the report, ACC, etc., in appropriate order]. I recognize [resource person] to speak to this recommendation.”***  
Usually, the making of a motion will be preceded by hearing from overture advocates of the committee submitting the report and other resource people.
- ***“Are there any questions?”*** The committee may wish to ask questions of those presenting.
- ***“Is there a motion?”*** When presentations are complete the committee may be ready to put a motion on the floor. Then you are underway.

### 24. Processing a Motion

This is the most straight forward way to handle a motion according to *Robert’s Rules of Order*. More information for some of these steps will be discussed later.

- Only one main motion (a motion that brings business before the body) can be on the floor at a time.
- The member bringing the motion identifies themselves by name, role and presbytery, then makes the motion.
- A second is offered, needing no recognition from the moderator.
- The moderator states the question to the committee, for example, “The motion is to recommend that the Assembly approve Item XX.” If a motion is lengthy or is

dealing with an amendment, you may wish to allow committee members time to read it on the screen.

- The moderator calls for debate. The maker of the motion has the privilege to speak first. The moderator should then call on someone who opposes the motion, if any, and proceed with debate alternating between pro and con as long as there are persons who wish to speak.
- Amendments may be offered; look for more on amendments later.
- When debate has ended, the moderator puts the motion once more before the committee and calls for the vote. It is the moderator's responsibility to make sure that everyone knows what they are voting on and what would be the effect of their yes or no vote. Voting on items of business in committees will be done electronically and therefore counted.

However, the most straight forward way to process a motion does not always happen in GA committees.

## 25. Tools to Handle Some Business

- **Multiple similar items of business.** It's not uncommon for a committee to have more than one item of business on the same issue. Fairness requires discussion of all similar items before voting on the one the committee may prefer. Sometimes there's a need for sorting things out that doesn't lend itself to starting with one proposal and being required to amend it formally in order to arrive at a solution that might work for all or most.

When dealing with competing or even complimentary overtures on the same topic you might plan in your agenda some time for discussion of all these overtures outside formal debate.

- **Division of a Question (RONR 27:1-15).** Occasionally overtures come before the committee that may have several different sections that could each separately stand alone. A committee may vote to divide the overture into individual parts as long as it aligns with *Robert's Rules of Order*.
- **Consideration by paragraph or seriatim (RONR 28:1-11).** Sometimes an item of business can be a long motion consisting of a series of resolutions and/or paragraphs. A motion to consider the business by paragraph takes each

section/paragraph, in order, for debate and amendments. Once all sections have been dealt with the entire document is then before the committee for a single vote.

## 26. Options for Discussion of Business

Especially when dealing with controversial matters, your committee 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. When built into the agenda a motion is unnecessary to use other methods of discussion and discernment. They can also occur spontaneously in the midst of the formal consideration of a matter. Whatever method is used, in the end, the pending actions must be returned to the full committee for final consideration under normal parliamentary process. The options listed have been most effective for GA committees.

- **Quasi Committee of the whole (RONR 52:19-23).** This is where the entire committee acts to discuss a topic informally without leaving the meeting itself. The moderator remains in charge, debate rules are relaxed (members can speak multiple times), and the body recommends actions back to itself.
- **Informal Consideration (RONR 52:24-27).** This option allows for an unlimited number of speeches in debate on a particular item. This action simply suspends the normal rules that limits debate, allowing individuals to speak a number of times. Any votes during this time are formal and minutes are taken. Once the matter is disposed of the body automatically returns to more formal consideration to take formal action by a motion to consider the question formally.
- **Aids to Crystallization of Opinion (RONR 52:28)** This can be used to establish breakout groups, sometimes during a recess, with every committee member able to discuss a matter that is coming before the committee. They can return to the

full committee with reports presented as debate on the matter or referred to a committee for return to the matter with a recommendation.

**Two notes would be good to mention here.**

First, to maintain the trust of the whole committee the moderator should not enter into debate. If the moderator really feels they must, the moderator should hand the chair to the vice-moderator and not return until the whole subject is disposed of.

Second, these tools are detailed and unfamiliar to many people who otherwise have a basic handle on Robert's Rules. If you choose to use any of them, you may want to ask your parliamentarian to provide a brief explanation before the committee acts.

**27. Parliamentary Chart, #1: The Ranking Motions**

This chart, which you can find in the resource *A Guide to Parliamentary Procedure in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)* will also be given to you as a laminated copy and serves as a helpful reference to keep handy during the meeting.

Chart 1 lists the ranking motions, 1 through 13, in relation to each other. Ranking motions are in a hierarchy that tells you what motions are in order when other motions are pending, or on the floor. The main motion is at the bottom of the chart, and thus lowest-ranking. A main motion is not in order when there is any other motion on the floor. Some look at this chart as a ladder, which you go up and down. Lower-ranking motions are not in order whenever a higher-ranking motion is pending.

When several motions are pending, the last one made must be disposed of first, until the committee works its way back in reverse order to the main motion.

Subsidiary Motions do something to or with the main motion. We'll talk in detail about those in a moment.

Privileged motions relate to the rights of members or the body, something immediate. We'll talk about those after we've addressed subsidiary motions.

## **28. Parliamentary Chart #2: Some Common Additional Motions**

This chart lists some Incidental Motions and procedural questions which are not hierarchical to each other. It also lists motions that can bring a question back again before the body.

In addition to these charts, *A Guide to Parliamentary Procedure in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*, *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*, the *Book of Order*, and the *Standing Rules of the General Assembly* help guide the GA committee through the business. There will also be a parliamentarian assigned to the leadership team of each GA committee who will have all these resources and a wealth of experience to assist the committee and advise the moderator.

## **PART 4 SUBSIDIARY MOTIONS**

### **29. Subsidiary Motions**

If you are moderating, please consider how you will best keep track of business as it moves through your committee. Some have used Post-it notes, others a sheet of paper, taking the business up the ladder like to chart does, and even others have relied on their committee parliamentarian to keep them on track.

### **30. Chart #1: Ranking Motions**

We will be moving our way through Chart #1: Ranking Motions, The Subsidiary Motions. We begin at the bottom with #1. Main Motion and will go through subsidiary Motion # 8 Lay on the Table.

### **31. Main Motion**

Please note that the primary business of your committee is to deal with the business referred to it and make a recommendation to the entire General Assembly. There will be other parliamentary motions that will be used as the committee reaches agreement on a recommendation. You should become familiar with these motions the help a committee move through the process.

So let's begin by walking through a motion, step by step, beginning with a main motion. Please follow along on your parliamentary chart.

### **32. Does it need a second?**

Most motions require a second, which any member can give in MyGA without being recognized by the moderator. If there is no second when one is required, business just moves on.

However, there are a few things that each member on their own has the right to do, generally ensuring clarity or proper process.

### **33. Can we talk about it/debate it?**

There are some motions that are not debatable. However, when dealing with a GA item of business there will ordinarily be time for the committee to talk about it.

The maker of the motion has the privilege to speak first. The moderator should then call on someone who opposes the motion (if any), and proceed alternating pro and con as long as there are persons who wish to speak or until debate is closed.

Alternative processes for debate and consideration were discussed in Part 3, Handling Business.

### **34. Can we change the motion?**

Most motions may be amended. Familiarize yourself with motions that cannot be amended.

### **35. Primary Amendment 3.1**

Amendments are probably what you will see the most.

First, there is no such thing as a “friendly amendment” to which the original maker of the motion can agree. Once the motion is on the floor, it becomes the committee’s motion and only the committee can amend it.

Only one primary amendment can be on the floor at a time. If someone wants to amend a different part of the motion, they will have to wait until the first one is disposed of. The moderator can say, “That motion is not in order at this time. I will recognize you to make that motion once we’ve dealt with this matter.”

Debate is limited to the amendment itself, and can’t extend to the main motion. (It’s not debatable if the motion to amend is undebatable—for example, if the

motion is to limit debate on this item to speeches of 1 ½ minutes, an amendment could be offered to change that to 1 minute—but there is no debate on either motion. The amendment would require a majority vote, but the main motion to limit debate would require a 2/3 vote.

### **36. Forms of Amendment**

A motion to amend must be germane to the main motion (it cannot introduce a new subject) and may take three forms.

It might ask to add words, either by inserting them between other words or by adding them on to the end of a sentence.

It might ask to strike out words or paragraphs that are already there.

It might ask to do both—to strike out some words and insert/add others.

No matter which form we're talking about, *the words must be consecutive*. An amendment like this cannot ask to insert words in two separate places. A more complex change requires a different kind of amendment, which we'll address in a little while.

### **37. Example of an Amendment**

Let's look at an example of a straightforward amendment:

You have a main motion "that all commissioners receive a T-shirt commemorating the 1700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Nicene Creed."

Then the moderator recognizes a member who says, "Moderator, I move to amend by inserting the words 'and Young Adult Advisory Delegates' so that it reads "That all commissioners and Young Adult Advisory Delegates receive a T-shirt commemorating the 1700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Nicene Creed."

### **38. Secondary Amendment**

A secondary amendment is an amendment to the amendment.

### **39. Example of a Secondary Amendment**

Someone moves "to amend the amendment by inserting the words 'and Theological Student' before 'and Young Adult Advisory Delegates' so that it reads

“That all commissioners *and Theological Student and Young Adult Advisory Delegates* receive a T-shirt commemorating the 1700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Nicene Creed.”

No other amendments can be made after a secondary amendment. If someone wants to give T-shirts to other advisory delegates, they might say while the secondary amendment is pending, that if voted down, they will offer another secondary amendment to would include other advisory delegates, but they will have to wait until, at least, the secondary amendment is dealt with.

#### **40. Substitute Motion**

A substitute offered for a main motion or resolution, or for a paragraph within a resolution, is a primary amendment and can therefore be moved only when no other amendment is pending.

#### **41. Example of a Substitute Motion**

For example, the motion, “I move that everyone in attendance at the General Assembly be encouraged to celebrate the 1700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of The Nicene Creed by wearing a red T-shirt on Thursday” is considered a substitute because it would replace the current main motion on the floor.

#### **42. Handling a Substitute Motion**

After a substitute motion is made the moderator guides the body through the following process for handling a substitute motion:

- ***Perfection of the main motion.*** The moderator asks the body for amendments to the main motion and handles those amendments until there are no other amendments. The moderator then declares the main motion perfected.
- ***Perfection of the substitute motion.*** The moderator follows the same process for the substitute motion, asking for and handling amendments until there are no more. The moderator then declares the substitute motion perfected.  
The moderator needs to make sure that everyone understands the final form of the main motion and the substitute motion.
- ***“Shall the substitute become the main motion?”*** The moderator then asks the body, “Shall the substitute become the main motion?” at which point debate

begins where the merits of both motions can be debated. No amendments are in order at this time.

- **Vote on “*Shall the substitute become the main motion?*”** When debate has ended, the body moves to vote. If the vote is in the affirmative, then the original wording goes away and the substitute becomes the new main motion. If the vote fails, the substitute motion goes away and the perfected main motion remains.
- **Vote on the now current main motion.** After perfection of both motions, the time has passed for substantive motions on this matter. The body then moves to vote yes or no on the current main motion.

#### **43. A Word about Minority Reports**

Sometimes a committee has a significant disagreement about the response to an item of business. Those whose view does not prevail in committee may wish to submit a minority report to the assembly. *(Read Slide)*

#### **44. A Word about Voting**

- **Majority or 2/3 Vote?** Know what motions are determined by a majority vote and which are determined by a 2/3 vote (see Chart and/or ask you parliamentarian).
- **Counting the Vote, Doing the Math.** Each committee member’s vote on each item of business will be a counted vote through My GA. There may also be times when a voice vote or raised hands doesn’t always tell a moderator whether a motion has passed or failed. You may actually need to count.  
A majority means more than half; if the vote is exactly half or less, the vote fails. You’ll have to do the math on what constitutes 2/3 based on the number of votes cast. Abstentions are not included in the calculations.
- **Unanimous Consent.** Is a tool a moderator can use to help move routine and non-controversial business along.

#### **45. Unanimous Consent**

In cases where there seems to be no opposition in routine business or on questions of little importance, time can often be saved by the procedure of

unanimous consent. Under these conditions, the method of unanimous consent can be used either to adopt a motion without the steps of stating the question and putting the motion to a formal vote, or it can be used to take action without even the formality of a motion.

To obtain unanimous consent in either case, the chair states that “If there is no objection... [or, “Without objection...”],” the action mentioned will be taken; or may ask, “Is there any objection to...?” The chair then pauses, and if no member calls out, “I object” announces that “Since there is no objection...,” the action is decided upon. If any member objects, the chair must state the question on the motion, allow any desired debate (unless it is an “undebatable” parliamentary motion), and put the question in the regular manner.

It is possible for the moderator to get ahead of commissioners with the business. This happens especially when you are moving through business at a fairly quick pace. Be sure they 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.

#### **46. Postpone Indefinitely (2)**

This motion effectively kills the pending motion. ***This motion is not in order in GA committee*** meetings because the Assembly has already decided to deal with business by referring it to your committee, and your committee is required to bring some sort of recommendation to the Assembly.

#### **47. Commit/Refer (4)**

If your committee thinks the Assembly should refer an item of business before you to a task force or standing committee for further consideration, the motion to Commit/Refer could be used. Motions to commit/refer should be clear about:

- what committee/task force/commission (already existing, or special) will consider the matter
- its task or charge
- when it shall report.

#### **48. Postpone Definitely (5)**

To postpone definitely is an appropriate motion to use, for example, to postpone something until after something else has happened in the committee, until more information can be gathered, until a particular presenter is available, or postponed to a particular hour. Example: "I move to postpone until after we have been able to hear from the Stated Clerk."

The moderator can gently redirect someone moving to Lay on the Table or Postpone Indefinitely to the correct motion to, Postpone Definitely.

#### **49. Limit Debate (6)**

The committee, by a 2/3 vote, can modify debate by setting more or less strict time limits on individual speeches, the number of speeches, the total time for further debate, or the hour by which a vote will be take. The motion should be made clear on whether it is intended to apply to the immediate matter pending, all pending matters, or all business you have left.

#### **50. Previous Question (7)**

This is a popular motion, "I call or move the previous question" which, if passed, ends debate immediately and proceeds directly to the vote on the pending matter. Anyone wishing to move the previous question must first be recognized by the moderator; the motion cannot be shouted out.

Because the *Book of Order* (F-3.0205) stipulates decisions "following opportunity for discussion and discernment," this motion should not be used to cut off debate prematurely. If the moderator senses the body has not ceased debate, they can refuse the motion or tell the mover you will return to them for the motion when it appears that discussion is complete.

If someone moves the previous question and the moderator senses no one wishes to continue debate, and if no one objects, the moderator can proceed to the vote on the pending motion by using unanimous consent. If some still wishes to speak and does object, after the motion to all the question is seconded you immediately call for the vote to close debate.

By the way, in GA plenary meetings “Motions for the previous question on more than one pending item are not in order at any time.” (SR, Part 4, C.5.)

### **51. Lay on the Table (8)**

Lay on the table is properly used when something urgent comes up while a motion is pending—such as the arrival of a speaker who can only be present for a limited time. It will require a later motion to take the matter from the table, but there is no specified time for this to happen.

“Postpone definitely” is a more appropriate motion to postpone to a particular time or circumstance. The moderator has the authority to suggest this more appropriate motion, or to propose it by unanimous consent. For example: “Without objection, the pending matter is postponed until after we have heard from the Advisory Committee on the Constitution...” Pause to see if there are any objections. If not, then just move on.

## **PART 5 PRIVILEGED MOTIONS**

### **52. Privileged motions**

These motions are considered privileged if moved when there is another motion on the floor. Otherwise, they are mostly treated as incidental main motions.

### **53. Chart # 1: The Ranking Motions**

Privileged Motions are found at the top section of Chart #1: The Ranking Motions, and numbered 9 through 13.

### **54. Call for the Orders of the Day (9)**

The “call for the orders of the day” is used to require business to be taken up at certain times, if those times have been made special orders. It forces the body to stop current discussions and address items formally planned for that time, ensuring adherence to the intended schedule. However, the orders of the day can be set aside by a 2/3 vote.

## **55. Question of Privilege (10)**

Examples:

Member: "I rise to a question of personal privilege"

Moderator: "State the question."

Member: "It's too hot (or cold, or loud) in this room."

Or:

Member: "I believe this discussion is so sensitive that it should be conducted in executive session under the exceptions allowed in the Open Meeting Policy."

In this case the question of privilege becomes a motion with a second and is debatable and amendable and requires a majority vote.

## **56. Recess (11)**

To recess is to take a short intermission, and then you can take up business where you left off. When it's a privileged motion, that is made while another motion is pending, the recess begins immediately. It can be amended, as in how long to break.

If no motion is pending, you can move to recess at a later time, but that is an incidental main motion and would be debatable. If a recess is listed in the adopted docket, no motion is necessary.

## **57. Adjourn (12)**

To adjourn is to close the meeting. The word "meeting" refers to the gathering for business you might do in one morning or afternoon, whereas a whole series of meetings (like the GA from start to finish) is called a session.

## **58. Fix the Time to Which to Adjourn (13)**

You likely won't need to fix the time to which to adjourn unless the business goes long and you have to return for an additional meeting when you didn't plan for it.

## **PART 6 INCIDENTAL MOTIONS**

### **59. Incidental Motions**

Incidental Motions are a variety of motions that may come into play in the work of your committee.

### **60. Parliamentary Chart #2: Some Common Additional Motions**

You can find these motions listed on Parliamentary Chart #2: Some Common Additional Motions. Please note that these motions do not have a hierarchy to this list. We will cover a few of these motions.

### **61. Point of Order**

When a member believes that the rules are being violated, they may raise a point of order, which must be raised at the time of the alleged breach unless the breach is continuing.

### **62. Request for Information or Parliamentary Inquiry**

Request for information or parliamentary inquiry asks for information or clarification about the rules. It is not supposed to be part of debate. The moderator responds to the request or asks someone else to do so, such as the committee parliamentarian.

### **63. Appeal a Ruling of the Chair**

A member who thinks the moderator made a mistake serious enough to challenge it may appeal a ruling of the chair.

After a second and stating the question at issue, the moderator can explain the reasons for the decision, if desired, and then puts it to a vote asking: "Shall the decision of the moderator be sustained?" Those who support the chair vote in the affirmative, and a majority or tie will sustain the ruling.

#### **64. Divide the Question**

When a motion contains several parts and each would stand on its own if the others were removed, a member can move to divide the question. This may be an efficient way to deal with some items of business that contain multiple recommendations. This was also mentioned in Part 3, Handling Business.

#### **65. Consider by Paragraph (Seriatim)**

This motion was also mentioned in Part 3, Handling Business. This can be used on long items of business, taking one section at a time to debate and amend each section. The moderator could simply propose this process “without objection” (unanimous consent) if confident the motion would pass. Once the body has gone through the whole document, the entire document is opened up once more for debate and additional amendments.

#### **66. Division of the Assembly**

This motion requires a vote be taken by rising if a member doubts the result of a vote taken by voice or show of hands. Voting on GA items of business will be done through My GA where votes are counted and reported so you are unlikely to see this motion.

#### **67. Reconsider**

The motion to reconsider may be made by someone who did not vote on the losing side of an item of business, that is, someone who voted on the prevailing side or did not vote.

The motion can be made at any time, even if the matter cannot be taken up at that point because another motion is pending and it can be considered later. In debate the merits of the question, not simply to reconsider, can be addressed.

If the motion to reconsider is adopted, the motion that was reconsidered is back before the body as it was before the vote that adopted it originally.

## **68. Overwhelmed?**

GA committees each have a leadership team that work together to help the business referred to them move through the business faithfully and efficiently for the entire General Assembly to consider.

During committee meetings there will be times for worship and prayer. There will be time to hear from folks throughout the church. There will be times to deal with the business before you. And there may be times of difficulty and frustration.

Leaders do make mistakes in the course of any meeting. Remember there is no mistake that can't be undone. It's best to admit the mistake, be calm, courteous, and humble, and you will be forgiven. Give yourself (and others) some much needed grace. We all need it.