

Rules of Order for Heritage Universalist Unitarian Church Congregational Meetings

Derived from Democratic Rules of Order, 7th Edition 2007

- 1) **Chair:** In accordance with the Church Constitution, the President of the Board of Trustees presides at all congregational meetings and, therefore, acts as Chairperson for this meeting. It is the Chair's responsibility to lead the meeting, moderate the discussion and call for votes. The Chair is assisted, as needed, by a Parliamentarian to preserve order and fairness by following the Heritage Church Constitution, enforcing these Rules of Order, and applying common sense. The Chair and the Parliamentarian will be formally introduced at the beginning of the meeting and indicated as such in the meeting agenda and minutes.
- 2) **Quorum.** The Chair must find out if a quorum exists before the meeting begins and be kept informed of any drop in numbers that might cause a loss of quorum. The Chair should warn the members if this is likely to occur. The meeting may proceed informally without a quorum but no final decisions can be made.
- 3) **Agenda:** The agenda should be made known to members beforehand but can be changed by the members any time during the meeting except when a motion is on the floor. A decision to change the agenda, as with all other decisions, is made in accordance with Rule 4.
- 4) **Decision making.** Decisions can be reached informally or formally, as described below:
 - a) **Informal.** For issues that do not require a motion, a decision can be reached by consensus. If in the course of discussion, it appears that the group has reached agreement, the Chair says "If there are no objections then [the decision is described]." If an objection is raised by any member, a motion must be presented for the issue to be resolved. Otherwise the decision is recorded in the minutes as passing unanimously.
 - b) **Formal.** For all other issues, decisions must be reached by motions. A motion should be worded affirmatively and must not conflict with any higher law. Each motion must be seconded before it can be discussed. Once a motion is made and seconded, The Chair will cause the motion to be written down, repeat it to the members, and open the floor for discussion under Rule 5. Every motion not withdrawn must be voted on in accordance with Rule 8.
- 5) **The final authority** is the majority of voting members, provided a quorum is present, subject always to any applicable higher law (a law of the land, a constitution, a bylaw, or an existing standing rule).
- 6) **Fairness** (equal rights of members) and good order are the underlying principles of these Rules. To that end:
 - a) Members must wait for permission before speaking. The Chair will tell the members how to seek permission (e.g. standing in place, raising hands, or getting in line.) If several members wish to speak, the Chair will select one and note who should be next.
 - b) Members must show mutual respect. Speakers must not use personal criticism or ridicule to persuade a meeting. Members must not interject or interfere with another member's right to speak except as allowed under a point of order.
 - c) A member must not take more than a fair share of floor time. The Chair may give a polite reminder to a speaker about speaking too long. If the speaker persists, the Chair may interrupt to ask the meeting for a decision on whether the speaker should keep speaking.
- 7) **Good order:** Members should discuss only one motion at a time. **A new motion cannot be made until the motion on the floor has been withdrawn or voted on, except for the following which directly affect the motion on the floor:**

- a) **The mover's privilege.** During discussion, ideas for improving the motion may occur. If not more than one member objects, the mover may reword or withdraw the motion any time before it has been voted on. A seconder is required, but there is no vote. Once the mover submits new wording and it is seconded, and not more than one member objects, the Chair shall read out the reworded motion which immediately replaces the original motion for discussion and voting.
 - b) **To Amend.** Any member may move an amendment to the original motion. An amendment may delete, substitute, or add words that will modify the original motion but must not negate it or change the topic. When accepted by the Chair and seconded, the amendment becomes a new motion on the floor, temporarily replacing the original motion. This grants mover's privilege to the mover of the amendment. The amendment is discussed and voted on. **An amendment cannot be amended.** It can be defeated and replaced by another amendment.
 - c) **Postpone, refer:** A motion can be postponed to an indefinite or a specific future occasion or referred to a committee for further study. A member wishing to do this can so move, and if seconded the motion is discussed and voted on before returning to the original motion.
 - d) **To change the voting procedure.** The Chair determines the method for voting. A member who believes there has been a miscount may ask, or if necessary move, that the vote be retaken using a more certain method. If the motion for a new procedure is seconded and passes, then the original vote is retaken.
 - e) **Point of Order.** A member who believes that a rule or the meeting's good order is being breached may rise immediately and say "point of order." The chair should allow the member to explain and, if necessary, should immediately call for a vote for a decision.
- 8) **Voting:** Common voting methods include voting by ballot, standing, show of hands, show of voting cards, and voice. The Chair decides on the method for voting, subject to any motion for a different procedure. Yea, Nay, and abstention votes must be solicited, counted and recorded in the minutes for every motion, regardless of voting method utilized.
- a) For a motion to pass, a quorum must be present and **more than half** the votes cast must be affirmative. An equal number of Yea and Nay votes defeats the motion.
 - b) Members who believe that discussion is complete may get permission to speak and ask that a vote be taken, or the Chair may ask "are you ready to vote?" The Chair should not accept or make a call for a vote if members who have not yet spoken are waiting to do so. A member who believes that the chair is calling for a vote too early or delaying too long can rise on a point of order and move for more discussion or an immediate vote. If seconded, that motion should be voted on with little or no discussion.
- 9) **Other Motions.** All motions require a second.
- a) **Informal discussion:** A motion to informally discuss some topic, if passed, allows members to consider an idea without the formality of a motion.
 - b) **Rescind, reconsider:** A previous decision can be reconsidered by the members at any appropriate time during the same or subsequent meeting if new discussion or decisions call into question the appropriateness of the earlier decision.
 - c) **Ratify a previous decision:** A decision exceeding the authority of a member, committee or meeting can be ratified at a later meeting.
 - d) **Adjourn, and set new date.**
- 10) **The Chair decides any matters not covered by these rules, in accordance with *The Democratic Rules of Order*, applicable constitution, law, or bylaw, and common sense.**