NORTH ZIMBABWE CONFERENCE

RULES OF ORDER

Procedural Rules for Meetings
of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

SEVENTH EDITION

Seventh-day Adventist® Church

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North Zimbabwe Conference 4th Constituency Meeting, 18-20 November 2026

North Zimbabwe Conference
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Procedural Rules for North Zimbabwe Conference
Business Sessions and Executive Committee Meetings

At the 1985 General Conference Session in New Orleans, a number of delegates expressed the desire for more precise and written rules of order for General Conference Sessions. In harmony with the wishes of the Session, the General Conference Executive Committee subsequently appointed a subcommittee to study the matter and draw up such rules of procedure.

In its work, this committee was guided by the desire to prepare rules of order for the Church which are in harmony with the Spirit of Prophecy instruction and Seventh-day Adventist policy and reflect a sensible approach to session and committee efficiency based on tried-and-true working methods.

The General Conference Executive Committee ratified the work of the subcommittee and the *General Conference Rules of Order* were approved. The current edition has been updated for the 2025 General Conference Session to assure consistency within the rules and for clarity.

A fundamental aim of these rules is to facilitate the participation by delegates and committee members in discussions and debates, and in the decision-making process. Rules of procedure are set up to facilitate free participation and are not set in theological concrete.

It was felt that it was not necessary to go into great detail. Specific provision has been made for most eventualities. Neither the Bible nor the writings of Ellen G. White are textbooks of ecclesiastical parliamentary law. Ellen G. White asks for harmony and simplicity in the business meetings of the Church and recommends the avoidance of unnecessary machinery which could sap the physical and mental energies of those called to participate in council and committee meetings (Ms 3, 1890, p. 9).

The purpose of this short compendium of *Rules of Order* is to guide Church leaders and other participants so that the work of Church sessions and committees can move along smoothly, expeditiously, and fairly. These procedures should serve Church business sessions like the clear signalization which enables traffic to move smoothly, safely, and rapidly without confusion and delay.

The Church is a voluntary society of those who have accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. She is the body of Christ. She is not a parliamentary body, a political forum, a service club, or a business corporation. When Seventh-day Adventists meet to transact the business of the Church, they are meeting with God. In the final analysis, it is the Holy Spirit who leads and guides. “If your committee meetings and council

meetings," wrote Ellen G. White, "are not under the direct supervision of the Spirit of God, your conclusions will be earthborn, and worthy of no more consideration than are any man's expressions" (Letter 81, 1896, pp. 8, 9).

The delegates at Church sessions and especially the General Conference Session are legislating, not to satisfy personal or party interests, not to cater to nationalistic or regional ambitions, but to work "for time and eternity" and participate in the divine mission for the salvation of the world—7T 258, 259. Delegates and committee members are warned against a spirit of selfishness, self-exaltation,
and pomposity in council and committee meetings (see Ms 29, 1895, p. 8).

The overarching concern of Church sessions and committees is to discover and understand God's will regarding the issues, plans, and appointments to be considered. In the light of this purpose, the object of rules of order is to facilitate accomplishing the will of God. In this sense, the delegated sessions of the Church are *sui generis* (unique), different from any other human organization.

These *Rules of Order* are intended to be used with a sense of reverence for the divine purpose. They are not intended to provide for quick or dilatory parliamentary maneuvers to gain a point, gain

Undeserved attention, gain advantage by suppressing the wishes of others, or to confuse the chair, fellow delegates, or committee members. These rules, furthermore, should not be used in such a way as to become an excuse for procedural wrangling which could keep sessions or committees from moving forward with dispatch. Ellen G. White counsels that there should be "constant effort for brevity in business meetings" (Ms 3, 1890, p. 9).

It must never be forgotten that the letter of procedural rules can kill; it is the spirit that gives life to Church order and government. The chair, with the support of the delegates, must use good judgment and not let the machinery get in the way of the advancement of God's work.

Where procedural issues arise which are not specifically covered by the *General Conference Rules of Order*, the chair shall rule according to the chair's best judgment. However, any delegate has the right to appeal the ruling. In that case, if the appeal is seconded, the chair shall put the issue to the delegates for a decision by simple majority vote.

May these *Rules of Order* help Church delegates and committee members in their appointed work of "legislating for God" (Letter 81, 1896, p. 8).

—General Conference Executive Committee

Relationship of *North Zimbabwe Conference Rules of Order* to the *Church Manual* and *General Conference Working Policy*

The *Church Manual* and General Conference Constitution, Bylaws, and *Working Policy* take precedence over the *Rules of Order*, should there be any conflict.

DUTIES OF CHAIR

1. The chair shall preside over sessions and committee meetings in harmony with the *Rules of Order*.

2. The chair shall take up the various committee reports and items of business on the approved agenda.

3. The chair shall work for consensus in decision making by treating each side of an issue with fairness.

4. The chair may vote
   a. If the vote is by ballot, or
   b. To make a tie or break a tie (if the chair has not already voted by ballot).

5. It is the duty of the chair to hold speakers to their allotted time and help move business along as expeditiously and fairly as possible.

6. The chair shall decide points of order (though the decision may be appealed by any delegate).

7. While it is necessary for the chair to give leadership, in order to be impartial and give evidence that justice is done, the chair should not personally become closely involved in session floor debate while in the chair. Should the chair wish to express any views at length and take sides in the debate, the chair should step down calling upon another officer to take the chair temporarily. It

is understood, however, that in commit-tee meetings the president, even while occupying the chair, will be free to fully participate in the discussions and present his views.

DUTIES OF DELEGATES AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS

1. In view of the privilege of serving as delegates at Church sessions or as committee members, those acting in these capacities should conduct themselves with Christian decorum, realizing they are doing the Lord's business, not making frivolous, irrelevant, unnecessarily time-consuming, or obstructionist speeches or motions. In such cases, the chair has every right to rule these out of order.

2. Delegates or committee members, for reasons of fairness and respect for fellow delegates or members, should not expect to speak to a motion a second (or additional) time until others wishing
to speak have had the opportunity to do so (as far as this is feasible). However, the chair may give a person who has already spoken the opportunity to answer a question or clarify previous remarks.

3. Delegates or committee members have the right to speak in their own language, subject to the availability of interpreters.

QUORUM

The quorum for sessions or committee meetings shall be fixed by the bylaws of the respective Church organizations.

Unless otherwise specified in the bylaws, once the meeting is declared open, the delegates remaining present shall constitute a quorum.

VOTING

1. Voting shall be by means as specified by the chair, unless specified otherwise in the bylaws. Such voting can be by voice vote, raising of cards/hands, standing, secret paper ballot, or use by electronic device (if available).

2. If there is no objection, the chair can declare a vote by common consent.

3. Unless contrary to the bylaws, if the delegates prefer a different method of voting than the chair has specified, then by majority vote, the delegates can select the method to use from those listed above.

4. If there appears to be a reasonable doubt regarding the result of a vote, either the chair or any member may call for the votes to be counted/recounted (a division of the assembly).

5. The chair may ask the secretary for assistance in counting the vote and/or appoint tellers.

6. A simple majority, or absolute majority, means more than half of the total number of valid votes cast by eligible voters present. Abstentions, even if indicated on a ballot, are not considered cast votes and do not count for determining the outcome of any vote.

ELECTIONS

1. Elections shall be in harmony with the General Conference Constitution, Bylaws, and *Working Policy*.

2. All nominations for elective office or executive committee membership shall be made by the Nominating Committee. This precludes nominations from the floor or by any other body or person.

3. Only one name shall be presented to the floor by the Nominating Committee for each position to be filled. The Nominating Committee may choose to present successive partial reports when there are a large number of positions to be filled.

4. The Nominating Committee shall meet in closed session. This does not mean that officers of higher Church organizations cannot be invited to sit as counselors with the committee.

5. Election shall be by simple majority vote.

6. If there is objection to a part or the whole of the Nominating Committee report, the objector(s) may request that the report (not an individual name) be referred back to the Nominating Committee for further consideration. The chair may accept the referral at his or her discretion. To facilitate deciding whether to accept the referral, the chair may request the person(s) seeking the referral to consult with the Nominating Committee chair regarding the reason for seeking the referral. If the request becomes a motion, it is nondebatable

and is decided by simple majority vote.

7. A request or motion to refer should be based on information which the objector(s) may have, and which could be helpful to the Nominating Committee. When referral is granted, all objections must then be made known to the Nominating Committee chair and secretary. In counsel with the chair and secretary, the Nominating Committee shall determine the procedure for hearing the objection(s) to the report.
8. Persistent referrals back, particularly from the same source, are inconsistent with fairness and good procedure. In this case, there is every right to refuse referral, and the Nominating Committee report can then be voted upon without further delay.

DEALING WITH MOTIONS

There are basically four types of motions:

1. Main motions
2. Privileged motions
3. Subsidiary motions
4. Incidental motions

Each category has its own purposes, characteristics, and order of precedence.

1. MAIN QUESTION OR MOTION

The purpose of a main motion is to introduce and propose the action regarding an item of business. Only delegates or members with the right to vote may make motions or speak to motions.

a. Requires a second.

b. A simple majority vote is required for the motion to pass unless the bylaws or these rules specify a different requirement.

c. It may be amended by a majority vote.

d. Another motion is not in order when a main motion is being considered, except

- ▶ Privileged motions (fixing time of future meeting, adjournment, and question of privilege), and
- ▶ Subsidiary motions (tabling, previous questions, refer to committee, amendments, postpone indefinitely, and limit time of debate), and
- ▶ Incidental motions (appeals regarding points of order, division of a question, and withdrawing or modifying a motion).

e. In case of a tie vote, the motion is lost. This provision respects the right of the chair, if the chair has not already voted, to do so in order to make or break a tie vote.

2. PRIVILEGED MOTIONS

This category of motions deals with the rights of delegates or committee members as a whole and the rights of individual delegates or members in regard to the session or meeting. No debate is allowed on privileged motions, and they cannot be tabled (except a question of privilege), postponed, or referred to a committee (committed).

These rules recognize three kinds of privileged motions: Fixing the time of a further meeting, calling for adjournment or recess, and questions of privilege.

a. Fixing the Time of a Further Meeting. *This motion*

- ▶ Requires a second.
- ▶ Cannot be debated.
- ▶ Is the highest motion in rank.
- ▶ Can be amended in regard only to time and place.
- ▶ Cannot interrupt a person speaking.
- ▶ Requires a simple majority.
- ▶ Can be reconsidered.

b. Calling for Adjournment or Recess. *This motion*

- ▶ Requires a second.
- ▶ Cannot be debated, though the chair or secretary may provide information regarding business requiring attention.
- ▶ Adjournment cannot be amended; recess may be amended.
- ▶ Requires a simple majority.
- ▶ Cannot interrupt a person speaking.
- ▶ Cannot be reconsidered.

c. Questions of Privilege or Points of Order.
A question of privilege or point of order is used to get the attention of the chair and meeting regarding a matter of business or procedure that cannot wait.

- ▶ **Questions of privilege or points of order refer to**
  - ☐ Organization of session or meeting.
  - ☐ Comfort of delegates or members.
  - ☐ Conduct of delegates, members or of others present.
  - ☐ A ruling by the chair that a member believes is contrary to the *Rules of Order* or the bylaws.

▶ **Procedure for questions of privilege or points of order**

- ☐ Do not require a second.
- ☐ Cannot be debated.
- ☐ Cannot be amended.
- ☐ Can interrupt a person speaking.
- ☐ Are usually decided by determination of the chair (though two delegates can appeal from the decision).
- ☐ Can be reconsidered if the chair puts the question to a vote of the delegates.

A question of privilege or point of order is not to be used to debate the pending motion or to gain the floor ahead of other delegates. When recognized for a question of privilege or point of order no other motion may be made. Delegates raising such a question or point should immediately state the basis for the question of privilege or point of order. If the chair does not immediately hear the reason for the question of privilege or point of order, the chair should interrupt the delegate and ask that it be stated. If the chair believes that delegates are raising frivolous questions of privilege or points of order for an improper purpose (to be recognized ahead of other delegates, to delay, or to obstruct the work of the body), the chair may, after having given warning to the body, decline to recognize speakers who rise to raise a question of privilege or point of order.

3. SUBSIDIARY MOTIONS

Subsidiary motions apply to a main motion and take precedence over the main motion because they need to be decided before the main motion can proceed. Privileged motions have precedence over subsidiary motions.

These *Rules of Order* recognize six kinds of subsidiary motions: motion to table, calling previous question, refer to committee (commit), amendments, postpone indefinitely, and limit time of debate.

a. Motion to Table

A motion to table should be used when delegates or committee members wish to postpone to a later time consideration of an item that has been moved. It is not used to "drop" or suppress a motion; the correct motion for this is "postpone indefinitely." A motion to take from the table business previously tabled, is treated in the same way as a motion to table, though it can be renewed if it fails to pass. *A motion to table*

- ▶ Requires a second.
- ▶ Cannot be debated.
- ▶ Cannot be amended.
- ▶ Requires a simple majority.
- ▶ Cannot be reconsidered.

▶ Does not apply to committee reports or unfinished business but only to a pending motion.

b. Motion to Call the Previous Question

The purpose of this motion is to stop and close debate immediately and vote on a main motion or amendment under consideration. If previous question is ordered regarding an amendment, debate can continue on the main motion after the previous question on the amendment is voted. Privileged motions, motion to table, and incidental motions take precedence over previous question. Simply calling out "question" is not formally moving "previous question," but indicates to the chair that a delegate or committee member feels it is time to vote. *This motion*

▶ Requires a second.

▶ Cannot be debated.

▶ Cannot be amended.

▶ Requires a two-thirds vote.

▶ Cannot interrupt a person speaking.

▶ Can be reconsidered.

c. Refer to Committee (Commit)

The purpose of the motion to commit is to refer an item of business to a committee. *The motion to commit*

▶ Requires a second.

▶ Can be debated.

▶ Can be amended.

▶ Requires a simple majority.

▶ Takes precedence, except the motion to postpone indefinitely and the main question.

▶ Can be reconsidered if the committee has not already begun its work.

d. Amendments

The purpose of the motion to amend is to change or modify a main motion, and thus it must be germane to the business matter to be amended. A motion to amend (first level) may itself be amended (second level), but there can be no amendment (third level) to an amendment to an amendment. A "substitute motion" is really an amendment. *The motion to amend*

▶ Requires a second.

▶ Can be debated with discussion limited to the amendment itself.

▶ Requires a simple majority.

- Only one amendment can be considered at a time. As each is voted, other amendments offered are considered in succession.
- Amendments are usually done by inserting, striking out or substituting, or a combination of these.
- Can be reconsidered.

Motions to amend must clearly and precisely state the proposed change to the original motion. Motions to amend that state an intent or desire but lack the necessary language are out of order and should not be accepted by the chair. If, in the opinion of the chair, it would be helpful to the body, the chair can request that any motion to amend be in writing.

At a General Conference Session or any other meeting where time allows, a motion to amend may be referred to a standing committee for consideration if that committee will meet before the meeting adjourns. All items the delegates wish to address should be directed to that standing committee which will meet with all delegates desiring to address the referred item. If after the referral a delegate is not satisfied with the item as it comes back, then the amendment may be considered as any other amendment.

e. Postpone Indefinitely
The purpose of this motion is to suppress a motion. Subsidiary motions do not apply, except previous question and limit (or extend) time of debate. *!e motion to postpone indefinitely*

- Requires a second.
- Is fully debatable, including both the main question and the propriety of postponing indefinitely.
- Cannot be amended.
- Requires a simple majority.
- Applies essentially only to main motions, though it can be applied to Questions of Privilege or Points of Order.
- Can be reconsidered if the vote was affirmative.

f. Set Time of Debate.
The purpose of this motion is to establish limits regarding the length of individual speeches in a discussion or to limit the time period provided for discussion before voting. *!e motion to set time of debate*

- Requires a second.
- Can be debated.
- Can be amended.
- Requires a two-thirds vote.
- Can be reconsidered by moving to extend time of debate (twothirds majority required).

4. INCIDENTAL MOTIONS

These motions deal with incidents concerning main motions and must be decided before the main motion. These *Rules of Order* recognize as incidental motions only appeals regarding points of order, division of a question, and withdrawing or modifying a motion.

a. Appeal Regarding Points of Order.
The purpose is to object to a decision or ruling of the chair at the time it is made regarding a point of order or to relieve the chair from having to make a decision by placing responsibility on the delegates or members. *The appeal*

- ▶ Requires a second.
- ▶ Generally, is debatable, but not when the decorum of the session or meeting is in question or when an undebatable question is pending.
- ▶ Cannot be amended.
- ▶ Requires a simple majority.
- ▶ Motions to table and privileged motions take precedence, as does "previous question" when the appeal is debatable.
- ▶ Can be reconsidered.
- ▶ In a question of appeal, a delegate or member may speak only once, except by special permission of the chair, and the chair has the right to present the arguments in favor of the chair's decision or ruling.

b. Division of a Question.
The purpose of this motion is to divide a question having several propositions or sections (e.g. document with several pages or paragraphs) into separate parts which are to be considered and voted on as distinct questions. When divided, each part is voted on separately as if it had been offered alone. For practical purposes, it is better to divide a question when it is introduced, though the motion can be made any time while the question is pending.

The formality of a vote on division of a question can be dispensed with, the chair ruling by common consent regarding the method of division. If this procedure is objected to, then a formal motion to divide becomes necessary, specifying how the question is to be divided. *The motion to divide*

- ▶ Applies only to main questions and amendments.

  ☐ Requires a second.
  ☐ Requires a simple majority.

- ▶ Yields to all privileged and subsidiary motions and to the incidental motion to appeal from a decision of the chair, except the motions to amend and to postpone indefinitely over which it has precedence.

- Can be amended, but the other five kinds of subsidiary motions do not apply to the motion to divide.
- Cannot be debated.
- Can be reconsidered.

c. Withdrawing or Modifying a Motion

Before a motion has been stated by the chair, it is the property of the mover, who can withdraw it or modify it without asking for consent. After the motion has been stated by the chair, the maker must ask the assembly's permission to withdraw or modify the motion. If there is no objection, the chair shall treat the request as a unanimous-consent request. If there is an objection, the chair shall put the request to a majority decision vote. *A motion to modify or withdraw*

- Does not require a second.
- Cannot be debated.
- Cannot be amended.
- Requires a simple majority.
- Cannot be reconsidered.

After a motion has been withdrawn, the situation is as if the motion had never been made.

d. Reconsideration of Motions

When these *Rules of Order* permit it, a motion already voted on can be reconsidered. The purpose of reconsideration is to permit correction of an erroneous action, especially when added information has become available or a changed situation has developed since the vote was taken. In order to protect against possible abuse, the motion to reconsider must be made by one who voted with the prevailing side. The motion to reconsider is appropriate when made during the same meeting or council. (After adjournment, the motion to rescind is the appropriate motion to be used at a subsequent meeting.)

- Requires a second.
- Is debatable, except when the motion proposed for reconsideration is undebatable.
- Cannot be amended.
- Requires a simple majority.
- Cannot be reconsidered, except by unanimous consent.

e. Rescinding or Amending Previous Actions

The purpose of the motion to rescind is to repeal or annul an action previously voted. The motion to amend a previous action aims at changing only a part of the text previously voted.

- ▶ Requires a second.
- ▶ Can be amended.
- ▶ Is debatable, except when the motion proposed for repeal is undebatable.
- ▶ Can be reconsidered only if vote was in the negative.
- ▶ Needs two-thirds majority, unless prior notice has been given that consideration will be given to rescind a previous action.

Suspending North Zimbabwe Conference *Rules of Order*
Under special circumstances, and for the purpose of facilitating the business of the Church, these *Rules of Order* may be suspended by a two-thirds vote of the delegates or members.

Official Languages of the Conference Rules of Order
For the benefit of the delegates and the world Church, these *Rules of Order* may be translated into other languages. The English version of these *Rules of Order* remains the official version and any other translations are only for the convenience of the delegates and not the official version of these rules.

Changing Conference *Rules of Order*
These *Rules of Order* may be changed by a two-thirds vote of the Conference Executive Committee.

***Rules of Order* for Conference** These *Rules of Order* shall apply to both the Conference Sessions and Executive Committee meetings.

Adapting *General Conference Rules of Order* to Union or Conference Sessions and Executive Committee Meetings
These *General Conference Rules of Order* apply in principle to the world Church. Division committees may adapt, where necessary, these *Rules of Order* for use at sessions and executive committee meetings within their territory. Any adaptation by a division for use in its territory shall be done by way of supplemental rules or addendum and not by modifying this document.

Use of *Conference Rules of Order* by Other Church Organizations Other Church organizations, such as local churches, boards, and faculty meetings, may use these *Rules of Order*.

MOTIONS SUMMARY TABLE

RANK	MOTIONS	INTERRUPT	SECOND	DEBATE	AMEND	VOTE	RECONSIDER	NOTES*
10	Fix Time of Further Meeting (P)	No	Yes	No	Yes*	Majority	Yes	As to time and place
9	Adjourn/Recess (P)	No	Yes	No	No	Majority	No	
8	Question of Privilege/Point of Order (P)	Yes	No	No	No	Chair*	Yes	Chair's decision can be appealed by two members
7	Table (S)	No	Yes	No	No	Majority	No	
6	Previous Question (S)	No	Yes	No	No	2/3	Yes	
5	Limit/Extend Debate (S)	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	2/3	Yes*	To extend debate only
4	Refer to Committee (S)	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	Yes*	If committee has not begun consideration
3	Amendment (S)	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	Yes	
2	Postpone Indefinitely (S)	No	Yes	Yes	No	Majority	Yes*	Affirmative vote only
1	MAIN MOTION	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	Yes	
-	Appeal Points of Order (I)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Majority	Yes	
-	Division of Question (I)	No	Yes	No	Yes	Majority	Yes	
-	Reconsider (I)	No	Yes	Yes	No	Majority	No	
-	Motion to Rescind	No	Yes	Yes[1]	Yes	Majority[2]	Yes	
-	Refer Back to Nominating Committee (I)	No	Yes	No	No	Majority	No	Usually accepted
-	Take from the Table (I)	No	Yes	No	No	Majority	No	
-	Withdraw Motion (I)	No	No	No	No	Majority	No	

2/3 Two-thirds Vote; P—Privileged Motion; S—Subsidiary Motion; I—Incidental Motion

[1] Except when motion proposed for repeal is undebatable.

[2] If notice of motion to rescind was previously given, otherwise requires a two-thirds majority.



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