

A SNAP-SHOT OF PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE

Parliamentary procedures enable members to take care of business in an efficient manner and to maintain order while business is conducted. It ensures that everyone gets the right to speak and vote in an orderly meeting. Parliamentary procedure takes up business one item at a time and promotes courtesy, justice, Christian character, and impartiality. It ensures the rule of the majority while protecting the rights of the minority. The procedures, or rules, are found in the organization's bylaws, its standing rules (written or unwritten), and its adopted parliamentary authority (a reference book that helps the church decide what to do if it has no written rules concerning how certain actions are correctly address).

I. BASIC PRINCIPLES OF PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE

- **Take up business one item at a time:**
 1. Doing so maintains order, expedites business, and accomplishes the purpose of the organization.
 2. The meeting should follow an order of business or agenda.
 3. Only one main motion can be pending at a time.
 4. When a main motion is pending, members can make motions from a class of motions called secondary motions (discuss later).
 5. Only one member can be assigned the floor at a time.
 6. Members take turn speaking, only after being recognized by the moderator..
 7. No member should monopolize the meeting therefore, no member speaks twice on a motion until all other members have had a chance to speak. No member may speak more than twice to any motion unless he or she is the member making the motion and he or she needs to clarify.

- **Promote courtesy, justice, impartiality, and equality.**
 1. This ensures that everyone is heard. Members are expected to treat each other with the love of Christ, and that no individual has more rights than others. Unless other wise noted in the By-laws, all member have the same rights and privileges, it makes no difference as to how long the members have been a member of the church.
 2. A member should never try to manipulate the proceeding with anger or threats of retaliation or leaving the church. Such actions are not the result of the Holy Spirit and should never be accepted.
 3. The chair (moderator) or presiding officer shall call the meeting to order on time. This demonstrates courtesy for those present, since they shouldn't have to wait on latecomers.
 4. Members should take their seats promptly and all other conversation is expected to cease.
 5. Those members given reports during the meeting should sit near the front as to save time.
 6. No member is to speak until the presiding officer has first recognized him or her. If it is determined that all members should only speak at designated areas with microphones then the moderator has a responsibility to only recognize such who are in compliance. However, if a member begins to speak with out first being recognized by the moderator, or if they are not standing in the designated areas the moderator will call that person out of order.
 7. Members refer to officers by their title (such as brother or sister moderator). Members should refer to other members as "the previous speaker, my brother, or my sister. This helps to keep personalities out of the debate. There should never be any name-calling or personal attacks. If a member is guilty of name calling, or personal insults, that members should be called out of order and instructed to make an apology to the person slandered and to the body.
 8. During debate, members do not cross-talk, or talk directly to each other, when another member is speaking. This is rude and distracting.
 9. Members should keep the discussion on the issues, not to personalities or other member's motives.
 10. When correcting a member, the presiding officer doesn't use the member's name. Instead states, "will the speaker keep his (or her) remarks to the issue at hand?" Or, if a motion is out of order the chair states, "The motion is out of order," not "The member is out of order."
 11. All members should be asked to speak clearly and loudly so that all might hear. Some churches may want to set up microphones around the church so that speakers may use them.

12. The presiding officer doesn't take sides. If the presiding officer wants to voice an opinion about an issue under discussion, the presiding officer must relinquish the chair to another officer so that he or she can speak or vote.
 13. The presiding officer should know and apply the rules so that all sides of an issue are heard and that the rules of debate are followed.
 14. Members have the right to make a motion to take a vote by ballot during a controversial issue.
 15. Members have the right to a trial when they're accused of wrongdoing. This is a trial within the church (we don't take one another to court). Here the accused can face his or her accusers.¹
- **The majority rules, but the rights of individual and minority members are protected.**
 1. The minority's position may not be the final decision; however, they may feel better about the decision if they know that they have had an opportunity to be heard.
 2. Once the decision has been made the membership has a responsibility to go with the decision and not create ill will by bringing the same issue up again anytime soon, so as to promote unity within the body.
 3. **Note:** The majority can limit or stop debate on any issue. It can reject the minority's position by voting against the issue. It can refuse to give the motion a second, which will kill the motion. It can even prevent the consideration of a motion that is sensitive or objectionable with a two-thirds vote not to discuss such an issue.
 4. Members have the right to have notice of all meetings. There should be a policy for special called meetings that will ensure proper notice to the membership of the church.
 5. Members have the right to know when there is a proposal to rescind or amend something previously adopted.
 6. In any situation where rights may be taken away from a member because of inappropriate conduct or for some other reason, two-thirds of the membership present must approve the motion (rather than a majority). This deals with removing someone from office or membership.
 7. No one has the right to require a higher vote than a majority vote unless the bylaws or parliamentary authority specifically states that more than a majority is required.
 8. Members have the right to be informed of the work of the organization through the reading of the minutes and the hearing of reports.

II. ACCEPTED ORDER OF BUSINESS OR AGENDA

Many churches begin their Church Conference with Scripture reading (usually dealing with unity or Christian behavior) and a prayer asking that each member would be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit and to help the membership to realize that as a body of believers the question is not what we think is the best decision, but what would Christ want. Following is an order of business:

1. **The Moderator determining that there is a quorum of members present.** This number is determined in your bylaws. It could be all that attend any regular monthly (or bi-monthly, or quarterly) announced conference. It could be a whole number of members, or a percentage of the resident membership. This prevents an unrepresentatively small group of members from taking action that binds the entire congregation. Sometimes a church may have to have their conference at a different time since they were unable to make up a quorum.
2. **The Moderator shall call the meeting into order.** The Moderator will say, "The meeting will come to order."
3. **The minutes of the previous meeting are read and approved.** The Moderator will say, "Will the secretary (or clerk) read the minutes of the previous meeting?" Once they have been read and approved they become a legal document. It is important that the minutes are correct. Once the secretary reads the minutes the chair will ask, "Are there any corrections?" If no one has a question at this time the Moderator will say, the minutes are approved as read." If there is a correction the Moderator will say, "If there is no

¹ Webster's New World, *Robert's Rules of Order*, 2nd edition, 2001. p.7-10

Objection, the minutes will be corrected byAre there further corrections? Hearing none, the minutes are approved as corrected.”

4. **Reports from the spiritual and temporal officers (deacons and treasurer) directors and standing committees.** The Moderator may say, “The next order of business is the reports of the officers. May we have the treasurer’s report?” After the report the moderator will say, “Are there any questions?” If not the Moderator will say, “The treasurer’s report is filed.” If there is a question the Moderator says, “Will the treasurer please answer the member’s question?” After the question has been answered the Moderator will say, “Are there further questions? If not, the treasurer’s report is filed.” Then ask for all the other officers and standing committee to give their reports and give members a chance to ask questions. Any motions made by the above group does not need a second.
5. **Reports from special committees (or ad hoc committees). These are committees that are not regular committees, but temporary committees appointed by the moderator for special purposes.**
6. **Any special orders are presented.** Motions postponed to the meeting and by two-third vote made a *special order* so that it can come up before unfinished business.
7. **Unfinished business and general orders.**
8. **New Business.**
9. **Adjournment.** The Moderator will say, “If there are no objections, this meeting will now adjourn.” If no one objects, then the moderator may say, “Since there are no objections, this meeting is now adjourned (one rap of gavel).”

III. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PRESIDING OFFICER

Sometimes the presiding officer is referred to as the president, moderator, or chairperson (chair). Most Southern Baptist Churches refer to this person as the moderator. In all but a very few of our churches this position is filled by the pastor of the church. In most churches the deacon chairman is the vice-moderator, followed by the vice-chairman of deacons. If the church does not have a moderator at the time of the meeting and the bylaws do not provide anyone else to be moderator, then many churches will allow the clerk (secretary) to call the meeting to order and the first order of business is the election of a temporary moderator. However, it is recommended that the church address this in their bylaws. The moderator’s duties while presiding at meetings are:

- **Keep order**
 1. The moderator should be familiar with the basic rules of calling a meeting to order; how to establish and follow an agenda; the proper steps in making, debating, and voting on motions; and understanding the different classes or types of motions and how they are ranked
 2. The moderator should prepare the agenda and working with the clerk (also called secretary) is familiar with any unfinished business of any new business that must appear on the agenda. If the propose business is going to be controversial he may plan ahead for the problems. The moderator should not hesitate to consult the parliamentarian if the church has elected one.
 3. The moderator should call the chair- persons of any standing committee to check if they will be giving a report.
 4. The moderator should come with a Bible, a copy of the churches constitution and bylaws, rules of order, pen and paper to take notes, and the parliamentary authority.
 5. The moderator should call the meeting to order on time and check to see if there is a quorum present.
 6. The moderator should announce all business in the proper sequence and entertain all motions that is in order
 7. The moderator should recognize members on the floor.
 8. He or she should make clear, decisive rulings on all questions of order.
 9. The moderator is responsible for enforcing the rules and decorum of debate and alternating debates between pros and cons in a controversial situation
 10. Declare the meeting adjourned (when so voted, or when the time previously established comes, or in emergency).
 11. Set an example to the assembly in fairness, courtesy, and obedience to the rules.

12. The moderator can enter in to debate only if he leaves the chair and lets the vice-moderator or another preside. The moderator must stay out of his chair (not returning to preside) until the motion has been disposed of either temporarily or finally.
13. The moderator shall step down from the chair and let the vice-moderator preside when a motion has direct personal or monetary interest, or when he is censured. However, the moderator can stay in the chair during nominations and elections when he is a candidate for office or is being considered in a motion with others.
14. The moderator is allowed to give information or correct misinformation, and helps others with parliamentary procedures while serving as chair
15. The moderator refers to himself in the third person. Example' "The chair (or moderator) rules the discussion is out of order at this time."
16. The moderator does not vote except in four situations: 1. If the moderator's vote would break a tie vote; 2. If the moderators vote would create a tie vote; 3. If the vote is taken by ballot; 4. If the moderator's vote will cause a motion to pass on a two-thirds majority vote.²
17. The moderator is an *ex officio* (by virtue of office) member of all committees and departments of the church. However, he is not always expected to attend all of the individual meetings. He should always be informed of each and every meeting and when it begins. The moderator enjoys all privileges and power, including voting, while in attendance of each meeting.³
18. The moderator has a responsibility to keep members from abusing motions such as calling for the question, voting to adjourn, tabling the motion, etc.

IV. BASIC PROCEDURE TO PASSING A MOTION

Step One: A member makes the motion.

1. The member must first be recognized by the chair in order to make the motion.
2. The member can only be recognized to make the motion when there is no other business pending and there is no other person on the floor.
3. The chair will recognize the member by his name or pointing at him
4. The member will say, "Mr. Chairman or Mr. Moderator."
5. The Chair will say, "The chair recognizes Bro. Smith."
6. The member will say, "I move that _____."
7. As soon as the motion is made the member will sit down and wait for a second from the floor.

Step Two: Another member will second the motion.

1. The Chair will say, "Is there a second?"
2. The chair should pause for a few seconds and if there is no second the chair will say, "If there is no second the motion will not be considered." Then pause again.
3. If no second after the second pause, the chair will say, "There is no second. The motion will not be considered. We will go to the next item of business."
4. A second does not imply that the member, who seconds the motion, is in favor of the motion. It only implies that the member thinks it should be debated.
5. A motion made by a committee does not need a second.

Step Three: The chair states the question on the motion.

1. After the motion has been seconded, the chair formally places it before the assembly by using the exact wording used by the one making the motion.
2. The chair will say, "It has been moved and seconded that _____?" Or the chair may say are you ready for the question?" or "is there any discussion?"
3. This signals that the question is open to debate.

² Webster's New World, *Robert's Rules of Order*, Simplified and Applied, Robert McConnell Productions, 2001, P. 148
McCarty, Barry C., *A Parliamentary Guide for Church Leaders*, Broadman & Holman, Nashville, 1987, P.45

³ Webster's new World, *Roberts Rule's and Order*, p 169

4. The one who makes the motion has the exclusive right to modify or withdraw their motion up to when the chair states the question. At this time the motion belongs to the assembly.
5. If the chair rules the motion out of order and the member making the motion disagrees with the chair, he or she may appeal the ruling of the chair. He or she will need a second, in which case the whole assembly will sustain or overturn the ruling. The ruling has to be decided right then. It is not to be brought up at another time.

Step Four: The members debate the motion

1. Sometimes a motion will not be debatable or amendable. In such cases the chair skips the step and proceeds to the motion to vote. If an undebatable motion is amendable, the chair allows amendments but no speeches.
 - a. **Debatable Motions:**
 - 1) **Main motions:** Motion on the floor
 - 2) **Postpone indefinitely:** Suppresses or kills a motion without permitting it to come to a direct vote.
 - 3) **Amendments:** Its purpose is to change the wording of another motion.
 - 4) **Refer to committee:** Sends a pending question or motion to a committee.
 - 5) **Postpone to a certain time:** Delays consideration of a pending question or motion until a certain time or until after a certain event.
 - 6) **Appeal from the decision of the chair:** This allows an individual who disagrees with the chair's ruling to appeal to the membership to vote on the chair's ruling.
 - 7) **Rescind:** A motion to amend or rescind something previously adopted can change the text of or strike out an entire motion no matter how long ago it was passed. This requires more than simply majority vote: 1) A two-thirds vote; 2) a majority vote if previous notice is given at the last regular meeting or in the call of the present meeting; 3) a majority vote of the entire membership (not just those present).
 - 8) **Amend something previously adopted.** Note Rescind: To change something previously adopted
 - 9) **Reconsider:** Sometimes an assembly makes a mistake. This motion enables an assembly to bring back for further consideration a motion that has already been voted on. If adopted the original motion comes back before the meeting as if it had never been voted on. However, only a member who voted on the prevailing side can make a motion to reconsider.
 - 10) **Recess** (as an incidental main motion): To take a short intermission and then resume where the members left off.
 - 11) **Fix the time to which to adjourn:** To set a time for the meeting to end. Later, if more time is needed a motion can be brought forth to extend the time.
 - 12) **Discharge a committee:** Takes a motion out of committee before the committee has made a final report and puts it back into the hands of the assembly. This takes two-thirds vote.
 - b. **Undebatable Motions:**
 - 1) **Limit or extend the limits of debate:** This motion enables an assembly to control debate by setting or extending a time limit for discussion. This requires two-thirds vote.
 - 2) **Previous question** (close debate): This motion is used to immediately close debate and bring one or more pending questions to a vote. This requires two-thirds vote.
 - 3) **Lay on table:** Enables an assembly to temporarily set aside pending business until something more urgent has been taken care of. It is laid aside until the assembly votes to resume consideration. This may happen during the same business meeting.
 - 4) **Take from table:** To take a motion or question that was previously laid on the table to now consider.
 - 5) **Call for the order of the day:** This motion is a demand that the assembly conform to its agenda.

- 6) **Raise a question of privilege:** Is any matters relating to the rights and privileges of the assembly. It must be considered with urgency. It generally relates to the comfort, safety, and integrity of its members. Example: Lighting, heating, cooling, address system, etc.
- 7) **Recess** (as a privileged motion): To recess when other business is pending.
- 8) **Adjourn:** Orders the presiding officer to close the meeting.
- 9) **Fix the time to which to adjourn** (as a privileged motion): Allows the members to set a time for another meeting to continue business if the hour is late. The time is set for the meeting.
- 10) **Point of order:** A member may call attention to an error in procedure or a violation of the rules. There is no need of a second. If there is an error the chair says, "Point well taken," if the chair recognizes the error. The chair rules "Point not well taken." If there is no error and explains.
- 11) **Withdraw a motion:** A member who makes a motion has the right to withdraw his or her motion before the chair calls for the question.
- 12) **Suspend the rules:** Occasionally, an assembly needs to do something that would violate its regular rules of procedures. Only procedure rules may be suspended. Bylaws cannot be suspended. This requires two-thirds vote.
- 13) **Object to consideration of the motion:** This prevents the main motion from being heard. This requires two-thirds vote.
- 14) **Division of the assembly:** Any member who doubts the results of a voice vote can call for Division of the assembly, which requires the chairman to take a rising vote. There is no need for a second.
- 15) **Division of the question:** The motion enables an assembly to divide a pending main motion that is composed of several independent parts. Therefore the assembly separately considers and votes upon the individual motions into which the question has been divided.
- 16) **Incidental motions** relating to voting, when the subject is pending
- 17) **Dispense with the reading of the minutes**
- 18) **Close nominations:** This requires two-thirds vote.

2. If the main motion is debatable the chair turns toward the maker of the motion to see if he wishes to speak to the motion.
3. Others may want to defeat or change your motion during debate.
4. Each member has the right to speak no more than twice on the same motion after being recognized by the chair.
5. Each member can speak up to ten minutes when they have the floor unless the rules of the assembly or a motion limit or extend debate says otherwise (some churches may want to shorten this time limit in their bylaws).
6. No member may make a second speech, however, so long as any member who has yet spoken on that motion seeks the floor.
7. You must address your remarks to the presiding officer, maintain a courteous tone, and speak only to the immediately pending question.
8. A debate continues until every member who desires to speak has spoken, the assembly closes debate by ordering previous Question, or a present time for debate expires.

Step Five: The chair puts the question to a vote:

When debate has ended, the chair rises and puts the question to a vote. To do this he stands, restates the question, and calls for the affirmative (aye) then the negatives vote. The common methods of voting are as follows:

1. **Voice vote:** This is the usual method of voting on motions that require a simple majority. The chair may say, "The question is on adoption of the motion to _____. As many as are in favor for the motion, say, 'aye.'" (Pause for response). "Those opposed, say 'no'(Pause for response)."
2. **Rising vote:** This is the usual method of voting on motions that require a two-thirds vote. The chair may say, "The question is on adoption of the motion to _____. Those in favor of the

motion will stand.... Be seated....Those opposed will stand....Be seated.” A single member, by calling for a Division of the Assembly can compel the chairman to take a rising vote. But he cannot compel the chair to count the vote unless the assembly adopts a motion to take a counted vote. If the chair believes that a rising vote is inconclusive; he can on his own initiative order that the vote be counted.

3. **Show of hands:** In smaller assemblies and committee meetings a show of hands may take place of a rising vote. In some cases the showing of ballots or credentials. The chair may say, “The question is on _____ . Those in favor of the motion will raise their hands....Lower your hands....Those opposed will raise their hands....Lower your hands.”
4. **General consent:** Routine or noncontroversial actions may be taken without formal vote. If you think no one in the meeting will object to your proposal. You may ask for general consent. The member might say, “Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent _____ (stating the action taken).” The chair may say, “If there is no objection, then _____ (state the action to be taken).... (Pause)....Without objection. It is so ordered.”
5. **Ballot vote:** Voting by marking a written or printed ballot allows members to express their decision without revealing how they voted. The chairman, secretary or other presiding officers should explain in detail how the ballots should be marked and counted.

Following are types of votes:

1. **Majority:** means more than half of the legal votes cast. Unless your assembly rules say otherwise, only the actual votes cast are used to compute a majority. Abstentions are not counted. They have consented to allow the other members to make the decision. It is possible for only one vote to constitute a majority. If in a meeting of 100 members, one member voted “aye,” no one voted “no.”
2. **Two-thirds vote:** The term means “at least two-thirds of the legal votes cast.”
3. **Tie-vote:** A tie vote is not a deadlock. It has the same effect as a negative vote. The chairman may choose to break the tie.

Step Six: The chair announces the results of the vote.

The chair announces the results of the vote immediately after putting the question, except when the assembly is waiting for the count of a ballot vote. The result of the various types of votes is announced as follows:

1. **Voice vote:** “The ayes (no’s) have it and the motion is adopted (lost).”
2. **Rising majority vote:** The affirmative (negative) has it and the motion is adopted (lost).
3. **Rising two-thirds vote:** “There are (are less than) two-thirds in the affirmative and the motion is adopted (lost).”
4. **Counted majority vote:** (ballot or counted) “There are 51 in the affirmative and 48 in the negative. The affirmative has it and the motion is adopted.” Or, “There are 30 in the affirmative and 55 in the negative. The negative has it and the motion is lost.”
5. **Counted two-thirds:** Same as above except then two-thirds difference.
6. **Counted majority vote when the chair makes or breaks the tie:** “There are 30 in the affirmative and 30 in the negative. The chair votes in the affirmative, making 31 in the affirmative and 30 in the negative. The affirmative has it and the motion is adopted.”
7. **Counted two-thirds vote when the chair’s vote affects the results:** “There are 59 in the affirmative and 30 in the negative. The chair votes in the affirmative, making 60 in the affirmative and 30 in the negative. There are two-thirds in the affirmative and the motion is adopted.

V. DISCIPLINE

In meetings where controversial issues are debated, some members may get so excited that they talk out of turn and continue to seek the floor to rebut those who don’t agree with them. In a case like this, the chair should remain calm and firmly remind the member of the proper rules of debate. If the member is reasonable, nothing more need to be said. If the member doesn’t heed the remarks of the chair and continues his or her behavior, the chair states, “The member is out of order and will be seated.” If the member refuses to be seated and continues with his or her obnoxious behavior, the next step the chair can take is to name the offender. This action, in essence, prefers charges against the member and should be used as a last result. Before this action is taken, the chair instructs the secretary

(clerk) to record the obnoxious behavior or words. In naming the offender, the chairman uses the member's name and states what he or she has done wrong.

The chair may say for example, "Mr. Smith! The chair has asked you repeatedly not to speak after each speaker (or speak ill-will, or in anger). The chair had ordered you to sit down four times (or stop such behavior) and you continue to speak (or act unruly).

If the member sits down at this point, the assembly can choose whether to drop the matter or ask for a penalty. The chair cannot impose a penalty for misbehavior; only the assembly can do so.

A member can rise and make a motion proposing a penalty, or the chair can ask, "What penalty should be imposed on the member?"

Possible motions that assemblies can make concerning penalty:

1. A motion that the offending member must apologize.
2. A motion that the offending member must leave the area during the remainder of the meeting. If the member refuses to leave he may be escorted or endure harder penalties.
3. A motion to censure the member: This puts the member on notice that if he or she repeats the offence, he or she can be suspended or removed from membership or their church held positions.
4. A motion to suspend the member's rights for a designated period of time.
5. A motion to expel the member from membership.

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ORDER OF PRECEDENCE	CAN INTERRUPT	REQUIRES SECOND	AMENDABLE	DEBATABLE	VOTE REQUIRED
Privileged Motions					
1. Fix the time to which adjourn	no	yes	yes	no	majority
2. Adjourn	no	yes	no	no	majority
3. Recess	no	yes	yes	no	majority
4. Question of privilege	yes	no	no	no	no vote
5. Call for the orders of the day	yes	no	no	no	no vote
Subsidiary Motions					
6. Lay on table	no	yes	no	no	majority
7. Previous question	no	yes	no	no	2/3
8. Limit or extended debate	no	yes	yes	no	2/3
9. Postpone to a certain time	no	yes	yes	yes	majority
10. Commit or refer	no	yes	yes	yes	majority
11. Amend	no	yes	yes	yes	majority
12. Postpone indefinitely	no	yes	yes	yes	majority
13. The main motion	no	yes	yes	yes	majority
14. Main motion from committee	no	no	yes	yes	majority
Incidental Motions					
15. Point of order	yes	no	no	no	no vote
16. Appeal	yes	yes	no	yes	majority
17. Parliamentary inquiry	yes	no	no	no	no vote
18. Point of information	yes	no	no	no	no vote
19. Division of the assembly	yes	no	no	no	no vote
20. Division of a question	no	yes	yes	no	majority
21. Suspend the rules	no	yes	no	no	2/3
Restorative Motions					
22. Reconsider	yes	yes	no	yes	majority
23. Rescind or amend something Previously adopted	no	yes	yes	yes	2/3
24. Take from the table	no	yes	no	no	majority

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The following books were used in compiling this information:

Webster's New World: Roberts Rules of Order simplified and Applied. New York: Hungry Minds Publishing, 2001.

Hiscox, Edward T. *The Star Book for Ministers.* Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1994

McCarthy, C. Barry *A Parliamentary Guide for Church Leaders.* Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1987

Townsend, A. M. *The Baptist Standard Church Directory.* Nashville: National Baptist Convention, 1929

Please Note: Any rules that are included in your own rules and bylaws have precedence over the above information.

Please Note: Most Baptist churches refer to the main presiding officer as the moderator. In this *Snap-Shoot of Parliamentary Procedure* the main presiding officer is also referred to as the "Chair."

....but that thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law. Acts 21:24 c

For God is not the author of confusion. 1 Cor. 14:33

Let all things be done decently and in order. 1 Cor. 14:40

Compiled by Dr. Joe McGee

