

## Tips for Participating in a Congregational Meeting

First Parish Unitarian Universalist in Arlington, MA

[www.firstparish.info](http://www.firstparish.info)

As a Unitarian Universalist congregation, we affirm the democratic process. Parliamentary procedure is an expression of democratic process. First Parish observes *Robert's Rules of Order* in our congregational meetings. This is so all members have an opportunity to be heard and share their ideas in an orderly manner. To be democratic in a large meeting, it is helpful to understand the basics of parliamentary procedure.

### How to speak ....

The Moderator presides and recognizes those who wish to speak. Please raise your hand if you wish to be recognized. **On Zoom: you will not be able to speak or vote; you will be able to see and hear the livestreamed meeting.**

### How to make a proposal ....

A **motion** is used to propose a decision or action. Say "I move that...." Your proposal is stronger if it is clear and concise. We ask members to write motions out before they're made to ensure the clerk has them complete and correct. Discussion follows only after a motion is seconded. Majority vote is required to adopt.

### How to suggest a change ....

You may initiate changing a motion (an **amendment**) by saying, "I move to amend the motion by....." Again your motion should be clear and concise. Likewise, discussion occurs only after a second. A majority vote is required to adopt an amendment. Only then may the original or initial motion, amended or not, be voted upon.

### How to replace a proposal under discussion ....

If you want to offer a complete **substitute** for a motion on the floor, say, "I move a substitute motion: ....." It requires a second. The ensuing discussion must address the question as to whether to substitute. After a vote is taken on this question, discussion on the substance of the motion on the floor is in order.

### What to do with reports ....

Reports may be "**adopted**," in which case the substance of the report is approved, or "**received**," in which case the substance is not approved.

### How to end a discussion or debate ....

To end debate immediately, you may "**call the question**" or "**move the previous question**." It requires a second. No further discussion is permitted; a vote is taken immediately on whether to end debate. Passage requires a two-thirds vote. If it passes, a vote on the motion is taken immediately. If not, debate resumes.

### How to postpone deciding on an action ....

To postpone action on a motion (**table** a motion), say, "I move to table the motion until ....." and indicate when you wish to take the motion off the table for continued discussion. It requires a second and may not be discussed. A majority vote is required to table a motion. A motion to table precedes a motion to amend.

### How to reconsider a vote of the meeting

If you wish the assembly to reconsider a matter already voted upon, say, "I move to reconsider....." Only those who voted with the majority on the matter in question may move to reconsider. It requires a second.

### How to simplify or complicate things

(depending on the circumstances) ....  
If you want the parts of a motion to be considered and discussed separately, say "I move to divide the motion as follows:....." It must be seconded and adopted before discussion may continue.

### How to find out what is going on

If you have a procedural question, seek recognition from the moderator by saying "point of order." When recognized, ask your procedural question.

If you need information, seek recognition from the moderator by saying "point of information." When recognized, ask for information.