

# **RULES OF ORDER FOR CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS**

## **Niles Discovery Church**

Adopted by the congregation on May 11, 2014.

**Introduction:** The purpose of all congregational meetings is to discern the will of God and to build consensus in our decision-making. While we have a history of running our congregational meetings by Roberts' Rules of Order, and while these rules of order are influenced by the general principles of Roberts' Rules, we establish these rules to allow for greater flexibility of process and greater participation. Our desire is that all voices and opinions be heard as we seek to discern God's will and build consensus in our church.

1. The Moderator or Vice Moderator will chair congregational meetings in accord with these rules and the bylaws of Niles Discovery Church.
2. Only members (as defined by the bylaws) can vote.
3. Only members can initiate business proposals at a meeting.
4. Votes on all business will be reported in the minutes and other accounts of the meeting by numerical or majority results. Discussions related to the business will be reported in the minutes.
5. Voice without vote is granted to friends (active non-members) of Niles Discovery Church.
6. There are seven types of business defined below. Each type of business needs a different majority to be adopted by the congregation. The Moderator is responsible for determining what type of business a proposed item of business is. The seven types of business are:
  - a. Bylaw amendments – rules are prescribed in the bylaws
  - b. Calling or dismissing a pastor – rules are prescribed in the bylaws.
  - c. Business proposals to sell or purchase real estate – require a 2/3 majority to pass.
  - d. Administrative Actions are internal policies, elections, or budget actions. They require a simple majority (50% plus one vote) to pass.
  - e. Position Statements are public positions of witness. They require a 70% majority to pass. When Position Statements are communicated to the general public, they will always be presented as being adopted “by a majority of the members of Niles Discovery Church” – unless the vote is unanimous (not counting abstentions), in which case the Position Statement may be presented as being adopted by “the members of Niles Discovery Church.”
  - f. Issues of Concern are items raised for study and discussion, but not a vote. These can be referred to the Cabinet or a Ministry Team of the church for further consideration.
  - g. Issues that substantially affect the structure of the church organization, such as a merger – require a 2/3 majority to pass.
7. Process for presenting items of business at the Annual Meeting of the Congregation:
  - a. While unannounced business can be presented from the floor at the Annual Meeting of the Congregation (much like a motion is made under Robert's Rules), it is requested that the Moderator be notified of business ahead of time, whenever possible.

- b. Prior to the Annual Meeting, the Moderator will consult with the person/persons planning to present business to determine how the congregation can best be informed about the planned business. Some issues are self-explanatory; others require the setting of the context and background so that they can be fully understood by the meeting attendees. Options the Moderator may consider include:
    - i. Town Hall Meetings, when discussion can take place about an item of business without the pressure of making a decision, held prior to the Annual Meeting.
    - ii. Special mailings to the congregation.
    - iii. Assuring there is sufficient time for discussion on the item of business at the Annual Meeting to allow for all voices to be heard.
    - iv. Recommending that the business be postponed to a Special Congregational Meeting so some or all of these options may be utilized.
  - c. The Moderator introduces the meeting presenter who presents the item of business.
  - d. The Moderator invites questions for clarification from the attendees.
  - e. The Moderator invites discussion about the item of business. Only in rare cases and at the Moderator's discretion, will motions to end discussion be entertained.
  - f. Once everyone has had his or her say on the motion, the Moderator will call for a vote. This may be done by voice, a show of hands, or (if requested by a member present at the meeting) written vote.
8. Process for presenting items of business at a Special Congregational Meeting:
- a. The bylaws detail who and how Special Congregational Meetings can be called. Special Congregational Meetings must be called for a specific purpose and this purpose must be communicated to the congregation in a timely manner (requirements are, again, in the bylaws).
  - b. It is recommended that, prior to calling a Special Congregational Meeting, the person/persons calling for and presenting the business to be conducted at the Special Congregational Meeting consult with the Moderator so the Moderator can determine how the congregation can best be informed about the planned business. Some issues are self-explanatory; others require the setting of the context and background so that they can be fully understood by the meeting attendees. Options the Moderator may ask those calling a Special Congregational Meeting to consider include:
    - i. Town Hall Meetings, when discussion can take place about an item of business without the pressure of making a decision, held prior to the Special Congregational Meeting.
    - ii. Special mailings to the congregation.
    - iii. Assuring there is sufficient time for debate on the motion at the Special Congregational Meeting to allow for all voices to be heard.
  - c. The Moderator introduces the meeting presenter who presents the business.
  - d. The Moderator invites questions for clarification from the attendees.

- e. The Moderator invites discussion about the business. Only in rare cases and at the Moderator's discretion, will motions to end discussion be entertained.
  - f. Once everyone has had his or her say on the motion, the Moderator will call for a vote. This may be done by voice, a show of hands, or (if requested by a member present at the meeting) written vote.
9. At his/her discretion, the Moderator may invoke strict Roberts' Rules of Order as the Rules of Order to be used for a business meeting of the congregation at any time.
  10. Regarding Proxies: The bylaws make no provision for members to empower another member of the church to vote for them at a particular business meeting by written proxy. Therefore, proxy voting is not allowed.
  11. The Moderator will make an effort to assure that childcare is provided during all business meetings of the congregation to increase participation.

- END OF RULES -