

## ***Principles of Order Toward an Efficient, Fair and Principled Deliberative Process For the Glory of Christ***

*... submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. (Eph 5:21)*

### **I. Our Challenge**

How to consider a relative vast number of perspectives representing multiples of contexts and in a manner that is *efficient, fair and principled* resulting in a trusted consensus in as short a time as possible so that our church can get it on for the witness of Christ and the salvation of our city?

*with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel... complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.*

Phil. 1:27... 2:2

#### *A Way Forward*

The following are recommended as a general “principles/rules” of order in how we work/govern together. It is hoped that the recommendations are informed both by biblical principles applied to “order” and with some reliance upon a that proven method of order knowing as “Parliamentary Procedure or “Roberts Rules of Order”. (To be clear, the various rules/principles may be implemented in as formal or informal manner as desired. Its function is best when as an invisible skeleton that informs a body).

*The application of parliamentary order is the best method yet devised to enable deliberative meetings of any size, with due regard for every member's opinion, to arrive at the general will on the maximum number of questions of varying complexity in a minimum amount of time and under all kinds of internal climate ranging from total harmony to hardened or impassioned division of opinion.” [Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised [RONR (11th ed.), Introduction, p. liii]*

Our goal of course is unity in Christ- how best then to deliberate together and a few “best practices” should be helpful toward that in.

### **II. Our Process:**

First, the meeting will be divided into two parts with two dockets

Part 1: CPC New Haven and MA Docket-- 6:30-8:15 (Session Only) During this time, the WLB can meet on its own to work on its WLB docket and whatever issues that needs reporting to session-- Moderated by Preston

Part 2: CPC 135 Docket (A Commission of CPC New Haven)- 8:15 PM (special orders)- 10:30 (Session/WLB) WLB would join session and after brief devotion/training (30 min), would give WLB report to Session and participate in those docket items that have been designated for "Joint" (**Blue**).-- Moderated by Kevin

Second, the following process will be utilized for docket formation

1. Exactly 1 week prior to session/wlb meeting (Monday prior), a 1st draft of both dockets (excluding any executive session items) will be sent to all session and WLB member via google docs as contained within a folder designated for that meeting.
2. The following week up until midnight Friday, any individual member may utilize the google doc to add new recs or reports (**Red**), or substitute/emended recs. to existing recommendations (**Gold**) A you should also download into the folder any relevant supporting files necessary.
3. After Friday midnight (prior to weekend prior to session meeting on Monday), the docket is closed for further revision until final docket approval/revision on the day of meeting.

### III. Methodology During Meetings:

*The first to plead his case seems just, Until another comes and examines him. Prov. 18:17*

#### Why we deliberate

*The most God-honoring and saint-honoring thing an officer can do (when acting in an official capacity) is to argue. Rightly understood, arguing is not a matter of coercing, name-calling, or manipulating; it is a matter of indicating the reasons why you currently hold your current view. In doing this, you allow others to fulfil their responsibility to discern whether your view accords with truth (whether specially or naturally revealed). This honors God, who wishes believers (and especially leaders) to be discerning. This honors other saints, because it permits them to follow the wishes of God rather than our wishes. If, by contrast, we say, "I believe we should do x," without indicating the reasons why we should do x, we are essentially asserting our will over others. Yet these others are under no obligation to do our will, but to do the will of God, which can only be discerned by special revelation and natural revelation. If we do not give reasons, from natural or special revelation, we do not assist other people in their duty of obeying God.*

(Quote taken from Arguments and Argumentative Fallacies, by T. David Gordon

#### Best Practices In Moderating a Deliberative meeting:

- a. Gently rule out of order (formally or informally) comments that directly/indirectly, intentionally/unintentionally, impugn the motive/character of another member of session or presenter.

*Biblical Principle:* We are exhorted to be slow to judge the hearts of another—what may be “sin” given my assumptions of culture/habits/spirituality may not be sin given assumptions of another culture/habit/spirituality. (Rom 14:1-4<sup>1</sup>)

- b. Gently rule out of order an argument that indirectly/directly implies that to vote one way or another is to vote against “me” or another “person” rather than in favor of a confessed principle applied to the welfare of Christ’s church. *I.e. keeping it about Christ and His Church, not any one of us or congregation.*

*Biblical Principle:* “Its not about any single person or congregation. It’s about Christ and His church” (Psalm 119:36<sup>2</sup>, 1 Pet. 5:2-3<sup>3</sup>, James 3:14-16<sup>4</sup>)

- c. Be diligent and proactive in protecting parity in perspective and presentations of “pros” and “cons.” Judgment should be made to ensure that everyone is “safe” to participate and that both sides are sufficiently examined. If, for instance, there are several strong opinions expressed in support or against a particular motion, proactively solicit opinions that expresses the other “case.”

*Biblical Principle:* Respectful deliberation for the sake of wisdom. (Prov. 18:17<sup>5</sup>, Phil. 2:1-5<sup>6</sup>)

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<sup>1</sup> As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him. Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand. (Rom. 14:1-4)

<sup>2</sup> Incline my heart to your law, and not to selfish gain! (Psalm 119:36)

<sup>3</sup> Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful (selfish) gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. (1 Pet. 5:2-3)

<sup>4</sup> But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth... For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice (James 3:14...16)

<sup>5</sup> The one who first states a case seems right, until someone else comes and cross-examines. (Prov. 18:17)

<sup>6</sup> So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, (Phil 2:1-5)

- d. In order to empower every member in submission one-to-another for the sake of governing “jointly” within a deliberative process. Examples:
- The right to determine final docket, recommend motions and vote, is granted to all members equally except in cases where a member may be encouraged (not forced) to recuse himself if there is a conflict of interest.
  - Rules can't be suspended to give the right to vote to a nonmember (if straw-polls are utilized by session in a joint meeting of session with key leaders as is often helpful, session votes are recorded separately).
  - Absentee voting is prohibited (The logic here is that if a person is not present, then the deliberative process has been circumvented)
  - Virtual Voting: Members at their discretion, can utilize a method for concluding business in a time efficient manner by use of e-mail, google docs, etc. This works for those kinds of motions that are both time sensitive and/or do not require a deliberative process given the relative simplicity of the issue. The general rule, however is that if any member feels that the issue deserves a deliberative process, it should be removed from the virtual docket.
  - No matter of expediency or efficiency can ever be permitted to take precedence over matters of principle.
  - Distinguish main motions from subsidiary motions

e. Help member participants distinguish between a principled argument and a non-principled argument:

So examples of unprincipled arguments: (c.f. Arguments and Argumentative Fallacies)

**A. The *ad hominem* fallacy.** One of the most common errors of reason is the argument “against the person.” In this fallacy, a view is argued to be wrong because a bad person believed it, or right because a good person believed it. Also the danger of *celebrityism* applied to reasoning.

**B. The definitional fallacy** (equivocation). The fallacy of definition occurs when one of two things happens: when a definition is too general to be specifically useful: “Christians should be *loving* (general), so we should not excommunicate anyone (specific),” or when a definition is permitted to *change* in the middle of a discussion (which is what the term, “equivocation” refers to).

**C. The causal fallacy** (*Post hoc ergo propter hoc*). This particular fallacy suggests that, since one event *preceded* another event, it must have been the *cause* of the event. I wake up before the sun rises, therefore I cause the sun to rise.

**D. The “slippery slope” fallacy.** This is a slight variation on the causal fallacy mentioned earlier. This fallacy occurs when someone argues that embracing a particular view exposes one to the *risk* of embracing a dangerous or erroneous view.

**F. The question-framing fallacy** (fallacy of excluding the middle). The question-framing fallacy normally occurs when an individual begins the discussion of a matter by giving an either-or alternative. “Are we going to allow x to do z, or are they just going to sit around and do nothing?”

#### IV. Collaborative Thoughts?