

**West Jamaica Conference
of Seventh-day Adventists**

**Department of Leadership
Church Governance**

Action Plan 2025



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This material is intended to create a roadmap in charting the way forward by identifying the task and providing basic information to locate research material to inform the accomplishment of the task.

Critical Reality

1. Our mission is the same, connecting, collaborating, creating cooperation, alliance and synergy between leaders and those they lead — “honey catch more than vinegar”
2. Towards creating an ethos that furnishes the tool kit with essential elements to inform the ethos and values that inform approach to problem solving and conflict resolution
3. Church governance is about the ability to agree to disagree agreeably with the goal of making church a happy place.

Essential Elements of Goal Setting

- Goals-must be clear, specific and shared.
- Identifying key persons and materials needed to facilitate success.
- Determination of timetable and timeline.
- The necessity to customize and construct plans to address local situations.

Church Governance Principles

1. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is not congregational to mean each congregation acts in isolation independent of each other. We have policies, fundamental beliefs, conventions and an organizational structure.
2. The local congregation, while managed by a Board, is respectful of the will of the members—in a members’ meeting.
3. The leaders are to protect the unity in the faith as well as guard against threats from both inside and outside—that is about quality assurance.
4. Bible class is not optional. Presenters must be prepared, and studies must be planned, not ad hoc.
5. Every church must have an active discipleship program—qualitative and quantitative growth
6. Preachers must be properly vetted.
7. Those who work with children and youth must be properly vetted and certified—(Child Care and Protection Act).
8. There is a risk management protocol.
9. The Church disciplines, not punish offenders
10. The Church Board is not the final authority; it is the members’ meeting
11. No church has the liberty to vote on or reject conference programs, the church adopts them. They may tweak them, but only in extenuating circumstances, with a special dispensation negotiated with the conference by the Pastor can these be differed.
12. No church should plan a trip on the date for a conference programme.

Conducting Effective and Productive Board Meetings

Overview

- The chairman of the Board is the Pastor.
- The Elder is authorized/ permitted to conduct Board Meetings only by permission by the Pastor, excepting in extenuating circumstances, but even then, the Pastor should be consulted before recommendations are implemented.
- If the Pastor is unavailable, there is a Parish Coordinator, Ministerial Secretary and as a last resort the President.
- It is unethical and unconstitutional to call Board meetings behind the Pastor, especially when calculated to undermine and bypass him. If there is a problem, the Ministerial Secretary must be consulted before anyone goes off as a lone star ranger.

- **There are two basic kinds of Board Meetings:** Information gathering and sharing and decision making. Most board meetings combine them.

Setting the Agenda

- Before the Board Meeting, every committee is required to deliberate on and hammer out departmental matters and send recommendations to the Board through its leader. The Board should not be bugged down doing due diligence on the fly or off the cuff for committees.
- The Board is intended to handle policy related matters while committees carry out due diligence. All basic groundwork is at the departmental level. The Board is policy making and puts the stamp of approval on items ready for implementation.
- If further work needs to be done on an item coming from a committee, a sub- committee of the Board can be set up to do that and bring a report to the Board.
- Each department head brings items to the Clerk, who sits with the First Elder and make the first draft of the agenda. That draft is submitted to the Pastor for addition and approval, then returned to the clerk for final preparation.

Effective Meeting Procedures

- The main guide for any meeting is the agenda. The agenda is the outline which will guide the meeting and give direction regarding the sequence in which matters will be addressed.
- The meeting officially begins when the established quorum is present, and the chairperson calls the meeting to order. The quorum is the agreed number of persons required in order for the organization to transact its business. That number is set by the constitution and bylaws, the governing rules of order, or in case of the church Board, recommended by the nominating committee and voted by church or by the Board at its first meeting.
- That quorum cannot be changed without the presence of a quorum, and if the decision was made by the membership at large they should at least be informed. Once a quorum is established and the record of those present is taken, each one so recorded has a fiduciary responsibility for decisions made– even if they leave before such a vote was taken.
- There is no convention to record that a person departed the meeting...
- Among the first things to be done at the meeting is to vote the agenda for the meeting and approve the duration of the meeting. That duration should only be extended by a vote to do so. Meetings must have a time to begin and a time to end.
- Members must have a sense of responsibility to tender an apology if for any reason they are unable to attend a duly called Board meeting, and a register of those present must be taken.
- Every member is personally responsible to get adequate information before making a decision, and the chairman is obligated to supply such information. No Board member should vote blindly, especially because it is a litigious age, and people are taking the church to court. No vote should be solicited on the basis of suspicion, rumor or grape vine information, especially in matters that impugn character and affect reputation.
- On matters of discipline where people’s reputation and character are involved, be slow and deliberate in making decision. There is no virtue in haste. Get the facts.

The Call to Order

This meeting of the is now called to order on this day of.....in the year of our Lord..... at

Agenda of the (name of the organization)

Date, time and place

- Call to order
- Devotion and prayer
- Welcome and apologies
- Announcements/ information sharing and affirmations
- Quorum ascertained
- Agenda voted
- State the objectives of the meeting
- Minutes
 - Corrections, adoption and matters arising from minutes
- Unfinished business from last meeting (If any)
- New business
 - 1.
 - 2.
- Any other business (AOB)
- Next meeting (date, time and place)
- Adjournment and prayer

Duties of the Chair

1. Preside over meetings in harmony with regulations and protocols governing the organization.
2. Pilot the reception of reports from committees and guide the sitting in dealing with items of business on the approved agenda.
3. Work for consensus in decision making, by treating each party to an issue with fairness and impartiality. The idea is to deal with issues not just individuals.
4. May vote (A) ***if the vote is by secret ballot*** or (B) ***in order to make or break a tie (if he/she has not already voted by secret ballot)***.
5. Hold speakers to reasonable time, in an effort to move business along as fairly and expeditiously as possible.
6. Decide on points of order or any motion that is allowed to interrupt the free flow of the meeting.
7. While it is necessary for the chairman to give leadership, to be impartial and give evidence that justice is done, the chair should not become personally embroiled in debates and controversy while acting as Chair. Should it become necessary to do so, the Chair may step down and appoint a Chair to conduct the meeting (PRO TEM).

Cultivating Skills in Chairing Committees

- Know the policies and the manual of the church
- Understand the administration process, inter-church relations and structure of the church is embraced
- Know the agenda
- Understand that the position should not be for lordship or dominance
- It is important to be people oriented in partnership with the team as player/coach

Writing the Minutes

- The minutes is the official record of decisions made and should capture important information to include:

1. Date and place of the meeting
 2. The Chair and members present
 3. A description of action— *“Voted that we secure a 30- seater bus for the trip to convention on January 11, 2025*
- The minutes is a legal document that should be guarded and preserved as private and confidential.
 - The minutes becomes official at the subsequent meeting when it is corrected and voted approved and a true reflection of the meeting. It should then be signed by the Chair and recording secretary then filed as official church records, which should be preserved. **Old church clerks’ books must not be destroyed.**
 - Signatures must be protected from tampering. If minutes are stored in soft copies signatures must be protected. Soft copies must be backed up against systems failure.
 - Any member present is responsible for the decisions made, whether he comes late or leaves early.
 - The clerk records voted actions, not discussions, or who said what.
 - Each member has a fiduciary responsibility to demand adequate information before making a decision. Refuse to vote on trust, as decisions can have legal implications.
 - Board members cannot hide behind anonymity and confidentiality to be deceptive. People on the Board must be truthful and ethical.
 - It is wrong to present assumptions, hear so, speculations and beliefs as facts, especially when people’s reputation and character is involved. And there is need to be extra careful when its someone you don’t like or cannot get along with.
 - Remember there are different kinds of discipline. Discipline for the church is redemptive; the church does not punish people.
 - Whenever in doubt leave it out. Board decisions can be subject to litigation.
 - Proper and accurate records must be kept, and those records are sacred. They are legal documents.
 - Before a motion is put to a vote- restate it. Sometimes the essence of the motion is lost through protracted discussions.
 - Once the vote is taken, the Clerk should read what has been recorded. . .
 - It may be helpful to determine who is responsible for implementing voted action and timeline if any

Parliamentary Procedure

For any meeting to be successful, effective and meaningful, the chairperson must be fully prepared for the task.

1. Parliamentary procedures also known as rules of order, help those presiding to keep order during meetings, as well as guide participants in transacting business.
2. The two Authorities on parliamentary procedures used within this organization are:
 - A. *ROBERTS RULES OF ORDER (CURRENT EDITION)*
“Always, the will of the majority must be implemented, or effected, while the will and rights of the minority must be respected.”
 - B. *GENERAL CONFERENCE RULES OF ORDER*
“Rules of order protect the rights of the minority while respecting the will of the majority.”

Motions

- A motion is a question or proposition that is put to the “house” for discussion, deliberation and ultimate decision, for the advancement and success of the organization. A motion is introduced by the words, “I MOVE THAT....”
- Before an item can be voted it must be formulated into a motion, so it can be discussed.
- When someone moves a motion, the person who seconds the motion does not have to agree. What he/she is saying in effect is “lets discuss it”.
- If a motion is not seconded, it dies.
- If a member calls the “question” during the discussion of a motion, he/she is calling for the cessation of discussion. The chairman calls for a second and votes on whether discussions end.
- If the majority agree then the main motion is put to the vote.
- During a committee discussion, if there is a motion to call the previous question, it means we should cease discussion and go to a vote– in order for that to happen there needs to be a two-thirds majority.
- A point of order or privilege is to highlight actions that affect the rights of individuals (use of unfamiliar terms, contravene the rules and protocol).

Four Categories of Motions

1. **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.
2. **Privileged motions**—deal 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.
3. **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.
4. **Incidental motions**—deal with incidents concerning main motions and must be decided upon before the main motion.

Methods of Voting

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| 1. By the show of hands | 5. By electronic means |
| 2. By the living voice (viva voce) | 6. By general /unanimous consent |
| 3. By standing | 7. By roll call |
| 4. By secret ballot | 8. By color cards |
- When a vote is taken everyone should vote, those who abstain are counted/ regarded as supporting the will of the majority who voted.
 - Those who oppose the position taken by the majority of those voting must now surrender their position, in the spirit of democracy.
 - There should be no canvassing or leaking of information to influence the vote on the floor.
 - Board members should not be on the floor making open objection to voted decision, whether they were present at the voting meeting. If such persons have pertinent information, it should be discussed with the chairman in a side bar.
 - When persons are to be affected by Board decisions, they should be brought into the loop and that cannot be an afterthought.

- If a motion is on the table and emotions get too hot or information is inadequate it may be appropriate to table the motion to give time for consensus building.
- When a vote is taken it should not be win/lose but what is in the best interest of the organization.
- If after a decision is made critical information becomes available, it is appropriate for a decision to be changed by a vote to rescind the earlier decision. This is by motion and discussion. If such is done there is no need to correct the minutes of the former meeting as it would have reflected what actually happened at that meeting and the current minutes would carry the adjustment.
- The church board does not accept transfers, censure or dismember persons, nor does it decide on baptismal requests. The board considers such matters and makes recommendation to a duly called business session for a decision.

Ensuring Meeting Effectiveness

A meeting is effective when it achieves its objectives in a minimum amount of time to the satisfaction of its participants/members. The fundamental principles required for the achievement of this purpose may be summarized as follows:

1. Only one subject may claim the attention of the assembly at any time.
2. Each proposition presented for consideration is entitled to full and free debate
3. Every member has rights equal to those of every other member.
4. The will of the majority must be carried out, and the right of the minority must be preserved.
5. The personality and desires of each member should be merged into the larger unit of the organization.

Please refer to the Church Manual for information on the following:

1. Baptismal Vows pp.55-57
2. Commitment pp.57-58
3. Rebaptism pp.59-60
4. Profession of faith p.6
5. Discipline pp.73-78
6. Divorce and Remarriage pp.179-184