

Extra Shot | Ask the Parliamentarian

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

World Conference 2025, parliamentary procedure, Robert's Rules of Order, legislative sessions, resolutions, voting procedures, translation services, agenda setting, standing rules, amendments, bylaws.

SPEAKERS

Tyler Marz, Carrie Welch, Wim van Klinken, Joelle Wight, Matt Frizzell, Kat Hnatyshyn, Roger Rose, Robin Linkhart, Katie Harmon-Mclaughlin, Nicole Robinson, Karin Peter, Brad Bryant, Carla Long, John Wight, Daniel Harmon, Blake Smith.

Blake Smith 00:26

Hey, Project Zion Podcast listeners. This is Blake Smith, Project Manager for Project Zion Podcast, here with another Extra Shot episode. For this episode, we've gotten permission to cross post content from a "interview" in which a long list of World Church leaders and staff from International Headquarters ask questions of our world church parliamentarian, friend of the podcast, and member of the Project Zion Podcast team, none other than John Wight. Enjoy!

John Wight 01:01

Welcome to the Community of Christ Temple. My name is John Wight. I'm a professional, registered parliamentarian. Please join us as we visit various sites here and at the Auditorium across the street, where preparations are already underway for the 2025 World Conference. We'll be discussing some things that may be very helpful to you in your preparation for the conference as you come here to independence to enjoy that time together.

Carla Long 01:31

Hi, my name is Carla long and I'm a member of the Presiding Bishopric and a counselor to the Presiding Bishop. So what is your role at conference, and

John Wight 01:42

My job, relative to World Conference, is to serve as the conference parliamentarian. This actually starts months before conference. I work with the presidency in reviewing documents, creating documents, working on scripts together, interpreting different things from a parliamentary perspective. The hardest part, I guess, is that my job involves doing the very best I can to provide them with the very best information of a parliamentary sort during conference. Now I say the best I can because of something I heard when I first joined the National Association of Parliamentarians in 1982 and that was, if you put six parliamentarians in the same room and ask them the same question, they'll come up with six different answers. Now, what that said to me at the time and to this day is that there is not one absolute right interpretation of parliamentary procedure. I need to note also that a parliamentarian makes no rulings during a conference. That is up to the Chair, and so that's why I feel obligated to look for the

very best advice that I can give so that they have what they need to make those rulings. What is Robert's Rules of Order, and why is it important? Robert's Rules of Order is a book written by General Henry M Robert after he attended a church meeting and made the observation that there was not much agreement among people from various parts of the United States about how meetings should be run. And so, he wrote his initial book in 1867 to help people have a set of rules that would help them to run a meeting in an efficient and effective way. That book has been edited through the years, in some cases, since his death, by family members even, but it is now in its 12th edition, and is known as Robert's Rules of Order, newly revised 12th edition. It is used by many, many organizations throughout the world.

Katie Harmon-McLaughlin 04:11

Hi. I'm Katie Harmon McLaughlin, and I'm the Director of Formation Ministries for Community of Christ. I will see you at World Conference as a member of the World Conference Directors team, and particularly in the legislative sessions, the "Moment of Blessing," coordinator. So I have two questions, what is parliamentary procedure, and why is it important?

John Wight 04:38

Parliamentary procedure is a set of rules that help groups and organizations do business and complete tasks in an orderly and democratic way. It's used to maintain order. It's used to protect the rights of the majority, the rights of the minority, especially larger than 1/3 the rights of individuals, the rights of absentees, and then the rights of all of those combined. Parliamentary procedure also helps prevent errant leadership in organizations from silencing the voice of the people. Perhaps the best way to explain what it is, is to say that it helps us to follow the guidance provided by the apostle Paul in First Corinthians 14, where he said, "Let all things be done decently and in order."

Katie Harmon-McLaughlin 05:52

How long have we used Robert's rule of order in Community of Christ? Have we ever discussed using another system?

John Wight 06:04

I really can't answer that question absolutely. I can say that I know that we have been using Robert's Rules of Order since the mid 20th century. In other words, through my whole life, which is almost 73 years now, it's a little hard to figure out exactly when, but it appears that it was sometime in the mid 20th century when the Church, when the conference, adopted Robert's Rules of Order as the parliamentary authority. There is evidence in various Herald articles that our use of parliamentary procedure goes all the way back into the 1870s. There was a book by J W Smith and Joseph Smith, III, that was adopted by the conference as their parliamentary authority back in about 1873. And so, we've been using parliamentary procedure, but it appears that using Robert's Rules of Order started about the mid 20th century. There's a commitment to protecting the rights of all people involved in the conference, and that's what makes Robert's Rules of Order so valuable to us. It gives us ways to do things that protect the rights of the majority, the minority, absentees, the individual, and all of those combined together. We have, to my knowledge, not spoken, at least in my lifetime, of using another, different parliamentary authority. Robert's Rules of Order seems to serve us very well. Many people think that it helps us to preserve the desire and the attempted practice of common consent, and so that

is why it is now included in the bylaws of the church. There are others who don't think it goes quite far enough. And so, we have have done at several conferences some common consent practices to see to, to note that we are open-minded and that we need to be looking for possible alternative methods of dealing with the kinds of actions that we take at World Conference.

Tyler Marz 08:43

Hi everyone. My name is Tyler Mars, and I work in Formation Ministries as a Formation Ministries Specialist. If this is my first time coming to World Conference, how do I prepare?

John Wight 08:56

You can go to the World Church website and do a search for World Conference 2025 or you can use the QR code that you see on your screen that will take you directly to the World Conference pages. There you'll find all kinds of information about schedules, about different events, different activities, discussions that will be happening before Conference, all kinds of things you can study those to help you prepare. I also would suggest that you read in there where they talk about special offerings that will be before, during and after Conference, to help offset the expenses. Another thing you can do is to look on Project Zion, for the podcasts that deal with World Conference 2025.

Tyler Marz 09:47

And are there things I wouldn't think about, that I should know?

John Wight 09:51

In addition to the web pages that you can look at on the church's website, for additional information, I would recommend that you be prepared to examine the materials that you will get when you come to check in at the registration booth. There will be things like a map that shows where each of the delegations will sit and where the lecterns are, where delegates will go to speak. A whole lot of other things that will be included in that packet of material that you will receive. Just a quick note, it may be of interest to you to know that the bylaws call for 2800 delegates, divided up according to membership among all the mission centers around the world. So this is not a little meeting.

Daniel Harmon 10:42

Hi, I'm Daniel Harmon. I'm the Director of the Center for Living Water at the Community of Christ Temple. At World Conference, I will be coordinating the Prayer for Peace, and supporting the Moments of Blessing Team during legislative sessions. I have a couple of questions. First is, who can submit a resolution at World Conference?

John Wight 11:02

Mission centers, quorums, councils, orders, committees of the World Conference can all submit resolutions for consideration at a World Conference. Now, World Conference resolution 1290 established a deadline, though, and that deadline passed quite some time back. That deadline is one year before the first day of a given Conference. The main reason for that is to provide time for translations and other preparatory activities. WCR 1290 does provide one caveat, and that is that if the First Presidency approves of it, the quorums, councils, orders, committees of the World Conference, the mass meetings, the delegate caucuses and so forth, can submit resolutions during Conference if

there has been action that requires an additional resolution. So, that's up to the Presidency to make that decision, but normally there is that one year deadline prior to a World Conference by when resolutions must be submitted.

Daniel Harmon 12:21

What issues are brought before the Conference body, and what issues do leadership decide on their own?

John Wight 12:28

This is a rather difficult question to answer in a short amount of time, because it's involving a very complex system. For example, mission centers can bring resolutions to the World Conference for their consideration, as long as they don't violate or conflict with bylaws, other World Conference resolutions, etc, etc. The World Conference can determine which things they think the leadership should be responsible for. Sometimes it's scripture that makes that determination. So, it's not just an easy answer to this. Suffice it to say that, to a certain extent, the issues that come up and have to be determined by leadership or by the World Conference are on a case-by-case basis. Like I said, it's on a case-by-case basis, sometimes determined by Conference action, sometimes by bylaws, by World Church resolutions, and sometimes by scripture.

Nicole Robinson 13:31

Hi, I'm Nicole Robison. I work as an administrative specialist for the Council of Twelve Apostles, the Presidents of Seventy, Membership Records and several other places in the International Headquarters for World Conference. I am the official runner for the stage where, with that, holds the C 12, the First Presidency and the Senior President of Seventy, and get whatever they need that they've left behind or printed and bring them to the stage. What legislation will be discussed at conference?

John Wight 14:09

At this point, there are 14 resolutions that have been submitted for consideration by the World Conference. These are included on the church website under the World Conference page, so you can read those for the details. The, having said that, some items may get ruled out of order because of conflicts with bylaws, etc, etc, etc. We don't know that yet. That's up to the Chair to decide. It is possible that, because of that and time constraints, that not all of these resolutions will be handled during the week of Conference. If that happens, they need to, they will be dealt with in some other way. In addition to these resolutions, though, the Conference will be participating in other kinds of legislative action and other activities. For example, they will sustain the leadership of the church. They will consider Stassi Cramm as the next Prophet/President of the church, that sort of thing that don't come in in the form of resolutions, but business that still has to be handled by the World Conference.

Nicole Robinson 15:33

When and where did the legislative sessions take place?

John Wight 15:38

The conference chamber inside the Auditorium is the space where the legislative sessions will be held during Conference because of fairly recent changes to the bylaws which allow for electronic meetings.

In addition to this space, there will be two remote sites that will be joining the conference electronically. The legislative sessions will be held every day, some in the morning, some in the afternoon, and on some days, both morning and afternoon.

Joelle Wight 16:11

Hello. My name is Joelle Wight, and I serve as the Director of Temple Ministries and as a President of Seventy. During World Conference, I help lead quorum meetings for the Seventy and I also sit in legislative sessions, just like all of you. My question is, what are the standing rules?

John Wight 16:30

There are 21 proposed standing rules. These rules guide how we do the procedures that we do as part of World Conference. They cover a variety of things, like how we will vote, the 16 allowable parliamentary actions, how long people will have an opportunity to speak to an issue, how do we adjust the agenda, a number of things that are included in those standing rules. I strongly suggest that you pay attention when those standing rules are being considered, because they are very important for a delegate to know in how they need to respond, how they need to do different things as part of their role at the conference.

Joelle Wight 17:20

I'm also curious, what are the 16 actions included in our standing rules? Why did we pick 16? If there's another action that I want to add to the list, how can I do that? Also, what is a privileged motion?

John Wight 17:36

There are 16 parliamentary actions that are proposed for use at the 2025 World Conference. Let me share those with you. Speak for, speak against, speak for an amendment, speak against an amendment, ask a question, amend, refer, that is, send to a committee, close debate, object to consideration, point of order, appeal the decision of the chair, reconsider, suspend the rules, division of the question, division of the assembly, which is a call for a different way to count the vote and make a nomination. These 16 were chosen because of the experience through the years that indicates these are the actions that cover virtually everything we do as part of a World Conference. The delegates will have an opportunity, though, to amend the list of 16 to add one or take one out during the consideration of the standing rules. And so, we're not locked into these. There will be an opportunity to discuss them in the materials that you get when you register. There is a detailed chart that goes into all the details of the parliamentary actions. Does it need a second? What's the vote required? etc, etc, etc. So, you can get the details about that. When you look through your materials, there are five motions known as privileged motions, and these privileged motions have to do with special situations that may require immediate action, and hence interrupt the business. But we have found through the years that those really aren't necessary, or they've been worked into the standing rules and or the 16 parliamentary actions, and so they are handled in a different way.

Roger Rose 19:43

Hello, I'm Roger Rose. I'm the Director of Hospitality and Visitor Ministries at the Temple. And my question is, how do we decide what pieces of legislation will be prioritized during the week at World Conference?

John Wight 19:58

It's the responsibility of the First Presidency to determine the agenda. Because they are so committed to understanding what the church feels are the most important issues, they conducted a survey that was open to the entire church to ask, "What do you think is the most important resolution that has come before the church?", and they will use that information in determining what the agenda will be. That survey ran through the end of 2024, and they're now evaluating to see how they will do the agenda. They have that deep commitment to that kind of understanding, though, and I'd like to share their words about how they use and why they use this information in determining the agenda, "They will consider these recommendations received through the results of the prioritization survey and the needs of the conference in establishing the tentative legislative agenda to be considered at this World Conference." Now that's their statement. And so, it's not just something they do for show. That survey, as I said, was open to the entire church. There were responses from 59 mission centers, some 700 people from throughout the world answered the survey questions, so they have quite a bit of information to help them in establishing the agenda.

Brad Bryant 21:32

Hi, I'm Brad Bryant. I'm a volunteer behind the scenes at World Conference, and I'll be orchestrating the team that does all the remote site support on Zoom. And so, you can see a little bit about the setup behind us. We're not all in place yet, but the pieces are coming together. My question for the parliamentarian is, how many languages do we translate into?

John Wight 21:58

At this time, spoken language translations will be provided in French, Tahitian, Spanish and German. The translations will be transmitted electronically to those in the conference chamber using headsets and devices so they can hear those translations. In addition to the spoken language translations, there will be sign language translation provided for those who are hearing impaired. In addition to the cultural and language diversity in the chamber, we will have groups meeting at remote sites in Honduras and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, those individuals who are not delegates, but are not able to attend the conference, can register for streaming of the legislative sessions, and those would be available in French, English and Spanish. In addition, the worship services will be live streamed.

Karin Peter 23:05

Hi, I'm Karin Peter, and I serve as Senior President of Seventy and lead a quorum here at World Conference. I'm also part of the worship team, and so you'll see me around and stop and say hi, but I have a couple of questions. So, my first question is, if a delegate wants to speak, how do they get the Chair's attention and how will the Chair let them know it's their turn?

John Wight 23:35

The conference uses a very well developed computerized system. These lecterns are a vital part of that whole system. If a delegate wants to speak, they come to one of the lecterns. They show the lectern operator their card. They give them their delegate number, which is on their name badge. They use their card to indicate what action of the 16 they all want to speak to or call for the lectern. The operator then inputs that on their computer. That goes into the computer system, and depending on what the

item is that they've indicated they want to do, that goes on to the President's computer screen in the appropriate location, then the, whoever is in the chair can know what each individual wants to do and call them at the appropriate time to give them the opportunity to share what they want to share.

Karin Peter 24:39

How long does a person have to speak on an issue? And why is there a time limit?

John Wight 24:46

If the proposed standing rules are adopted, a delegate would have three minutes to speak to a question, the person making the motion and the first person speaking in opposition would each get five minutes. A person needing translations would get extra time for what they have to say. Without these kinds of limits, a person could conceivably stand up and if they wanted to, they could speak for an unlimited period of time, kind of like a filibuster, not a very efficient way to manage a conference. The other main reason for having these is to promote fairness. Some people like to talk a lot. Others not so much. And if you don't have these limits, then it becomes unfair to one side or the other. One thing to remember, whoever is speaking, whether they're for or against, it's important that they speak slowly to allow for the translations that have to be done.

Matt Frizzell 25:53

All right, I'll try again. Hi. My name is Matt Frizzell, and I'm the HR director. I've been to past conferences where a piece of legislation was ruled out of order before we could even discuss it. Why is that, and how can they determine when something's out of order?

John Wight 26:14

A resolution that is in violation of the bylaws, World Conference resolutions, etc, cannot be considered. The Chair makes that ruling if they believe that that kind of conflict and violation would occur. Prior to submitting a resolution, a mission center who is considering a resolution for submission can send it in to the Legislative Review Team, who will then report back to them and say, Well, this is a problem, but if you reword it this way, it won't be a problem. But, a mission center doesn't have to follow the advice of the Legislative Review Team, and so it's still a possibility that the item would be ruled out of order. If those changes are not made,

Matt Frizzell 27:06

Can you make amendments to a piece of legislation while it's on the floor? What is the amendment process?

John Wight 27:14

Yes, delegates can propose amendments. Following Robert's Rules of Order and parliamentary procedure, you can have a main motion, an amendment, and a secondary amendment on the floor all at the same time. So yes, delegates can propose amendments to do so they would follow the same procedure that they would follow wanting to speak to something, they would go to a lectern. Show the lectern operator their badge number and what they want to do, a lectern operator would put it into the computer system. The Chair would call them up at the appropriate time. Normally, at that point, the

Chair would call for a second, and if it's seconded, then it becomes the property of the body and the discussion would ensue. If the standing rules are adopted, one of the requirements for an amendment would be that a primary amendment would have to be submitted to the secretary 24 hours before the expected time when that would be considered by the Conference. This is so that time is provided for the translators to translate that for the rest of the Conference.

Wim van Klinken 28:26

Hi, I'm Wim van Klinken, a member of the Presiding Bishopric. When do we know when it's time to vote?

John Wight 28:35

When it's time to vote, the Chair will say something like, are you ready for the question? Or it appears that the body is ready to vote. Chair would then re-read the motion or the resolution that is to be voted on so the people know what they are voting on, and then the Chair would give instructions on the method used to take the vote.

Wim van Klinken 28:58

Can a non member vote?

Speaker 1 29:01

The bylaws are quite clear that only members have the right to vote. There are some jurisdictions that have extended as a custom, voice and vote to others, but that's really not in harmony with our bylaws and other documentation. There are times when it may be appropriate to extend the opportunity to have voice however.

Robin Linkhart 29:30

Hi, I'm Robin, and my question is, when we vote, is that anonymous, or do people actually know who votes for and who votes against?

John Wight 29:41

In most instances a vote would be anonymous, because we use voting devices. [It's] highly unlikely that anyone would be able to see which button a delegate pushed on the device. The exception would be at the remote sites where they do not use the voting devices. Also, there are those rare instances where a delegate could call for voting in a different way, such as a raised hand vote, and if that's approved, then it would be by raised hand. Before we started using the voting devices, virtually every vote was taken by raising one's hand, or in some cases, having to stand up to indicate their choice. But even at though, in those times, it was made pretty clear, very, very clear, I'll put it that way, very clear that a delegate should vote how he or she or they need to vote. What, there's no, there's no, nothing wrong with voting your conscience, with voting what you feel strongly about.

Robin Linkhart 30:46

Do the votes have to be unanimous for something to pass? And if it's not unanimous, what do you have to do to get it to pass?

John Wight 30:55

No, a vote does not have to be unanimous. Most of the time, a majority, or as Robert's puts it, more than half, is sufficient to adopt a motion resolution, whatever it is. In some instances, there does need to be a greater percentage, normally, in a two-thirds vote, because of the nature of the legislation that's being considered. If it has an effect on the rights of the body or what kind of freedoms they have, then the higher percentage is necessary. Robert's Rules of Order has a long list of those kinds of situations where a two-thirds or higher, even in some instances, vote is required to adopt an item.

Kat Hnatyshyn 31:43

I'm Kat Hnatyshyn and I am an apostle designate. Is it a requirement to have a two-week's notice for church business meeting? What if it's an emergency?

John Wight 31:55

The bylaws say normally, two-week's notice should be given prior to a business meeting. They don't say two-week's notice must be given in advance. For me, that suggests that there are times when that may just not be possible, and so normally is the word that works, and hence that if there's an emergency, if you can't do two-week's notice, so be it.

Kat Hnatyshyn 32:28

Does the Secretary have to include the name for the person who seconds a motion?

John Wight 32:35

Robert's Rules of Order is quite clear and very specific about this one. It says directly, the name of the person making the motion should be recorded in the minutes. The name of the seconder should not be recorded in the minutes.

Carrie Welch 32:52

Hello, I am Carrie Welch, apostle designate. Do we have to read the minutes at the beginning of every business meeting or mission center conference?

John Wight 33:01

No, the minutes don't have to be read before a business meeting. Robert's has two or three ways to deal with that. One is that the body can appoint, or ask for the chair to appoint a Minutes Review Committee. This is the method that World Conference uses. They have a Minutes Review Committee made up of members of the Standing High Council who consider the minutes after Conference. Another way that it can be dealt with is if you print and send out the minutes to members of the body in advance, then they don't have to be read unless there is objection, in which case they would need to be read.

Carrie Welch 33:44

And finally, are there any resources you would suggest that might help me learn more about Robert's Rules of Order?

John Wight 33:51

There are many, many great resources to learn more about Robert's Rules of Order, parliamentary procedure, etc, etc, etc. I guess the one that I would recommend first and maybe foremost is to use Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised. In brief, it's much smaller than the full version of Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised 12th Edition. This gives a person more understandable ways of learning Robert's Rules of Order and parliamentary procedure. But there are many, many other resources, webinars, books, articles, etc, etc. You can use the QR code that appears on your screen to access those. It takes you to the National Association of Parliamentarians. There's even a tab when you get there that says NAP University, and it's known as a premier way to learn about parliamentary procedure. Another way that I would recommend is join the NAP. There are many, many ways to on an ongoing basis. To learn things. There are state associations of the NAP. In 39 states, there are 200 local units of the NAP. You could join those and have access to that kind of education, learning, etc, etc, etc, on an ongoing basis. So yes, there are many resources. Thank you very much for joining us on this discussion of parliamentary procedure and preparation for World Conference 2025. I hope to see you there. Blessings to you all.

Blake Smith 35:36

You've been listening to an Extra Shot episode of Project Zion Podcast. Check out the show notes for a link to the original video and John's limited tour of the temple auditorium complex, where staff and Volunteers are already gearing up For World Conference 2025.