

1 **OVERTURE 1** from the Presbytery of Potomac
2 “Amend *BCO* 8-7 Regarding Chaplains”
3

(to CCB, OC)

4 **Whereas**, military and civilian chaplains from the PCA have a strong history of glorifying
5 God and faithfully proclaiming the Gospel of Christ within institutions and
6 organizations; and
7

8 **Whereas**, the Sixth General Assembly of the PCA (1978) approved the establishment of the
9 Presbyterian and Reformed Commission on Chaplains and Military Personnel
10 (PRCCMP or PRCC) in conjunction with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the
11 Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, “for the purpose of providing a
12 joint endorsing agency for military and institutional chaplains” (*Minutes of the Sixth*
13 *General Assembly*, 6-121, pp. 125-126/Full Report of the Interchurch Sub-Committee,
14 Appendix D, pp. 165-166); and
15

16 **Whereas**, the Sixth General Assembly assigned the duties of examination, endorsement, and
17 oversight of chaplains through the PRCCMP to the Mission to the United States
18 Permanent Committee, now known as Mission to North America, which subsequently
19 formed MNA Chaplain Ministries; and
20

21 **Whereas**, endorsement is a credential required for all federal government chaplain positions
22 and by many other organizations that educate, certify, or hire chaplains; and
23

24 **Whereas**, endorsement is also known as ecclesiastical endorsement because it is an official
25 declaration issued by the highest level of a denomination’s governing authority so that
26 chaplain organizations may be assured that any endorsee from that denomination has
27 been vetted through a consistent and unified process, and that the endorsee meets and
28 will be held to the denomination’s standards for theological, ministerial, and
29 professional integrity; and
30

31 **Whereas**, endorsement is a verification by a denomination that it will provide support and
32 discernment to those seeking to enter chaplaincy, and that it will provide support,
33 guidance, and oversight to those engaged in chaplain ministry; and
34

35 **Whereas**, endorsement verifies a denomination has at a minimum utilized a process of written
36 papers, interviews, and mutual discernment to address the following core standards
37 with each endorsee: ministerial and theological competence, good standing and
38 accountability within the denomination, ability to minister within diverse and
39 pluralistic settings, and willingness of the endorsee to maintain communication and
40 accountability to the denomination and the endorsing agent; and
41

42 **Whereas**, the PRCC can only ecclesiastically endorse a chaplain, or approve a candidate for
43 the Military Chaplain Candidate Program, if that teaching elder is a member in good
44 standing of a PCA Presbytery, or the candidate is under care and in good standing of
45 a PCA Presbytery; and

1 **Whereas**, there are currently over 200 PCA teaching elders ministering as military and
2 civilian chaplains who are ecclesiastically endorsed through MNA Chaplain
3 Ministries by the PRCC, and opportunities to become chaplains are numerous and
4 growing significantly; and
5

6 **Whereas**, there appears to be a significant number of teaching elders serving their
7 communities as paid or volunteer chaplains who are unaware of the availability and
8 value of endorsement for their chaplain ministry; and
9

10 **Whereas**, a teaching elder's ministry as a military or civilian chaplain, paid or volunteer, falls
11 outside the jurisdiction of a Presbytery, MNA Chaplain Ministries through the PRCC
12 is able to assist Presbyteries extend ecclesiastical care over its ministers who are
13 chaplains by helping with credentials, training, advocacy, oversight, accountability,
14 encouragement, and assistance as needed with religious liberty protections; and
15

16 **Whereas**, the important Gospel ministry of chaplaincy and the role of MNA Chaplain
17 Ministries and the PRCC in recruiting, equipping, endorsing, serving, and protecting
18 chaplains are not well known in all presbyteries;
19

20 **Whereas**, PCA military chaplains who were unaware of the PRCC have sought endorsement
21 through other agencies;
22

23 **Therefore, be it resolved** that *Book of Church Order 8-7* be amended by adding the
24 underlined paragraph below:
25

26 8-7. A Presbytery may, at its discretion, approve the call of a teaching elder to
27 work with an organization outside the jurisdiction of the Presbyterian Church
28 in America, provided that he be engaged in preaching and teaching the Word,
29 that the Presbytery be assured he will have full freedom to maintain and teach
30 the doctrine of our Church, and that he report at least annually on his work. As
31 far as possible, such a teaching elder shall be a member of the Presbytery within
32 whose bounds he labors. (See *BCO* 20-1.)
33

34 A Teaching Elder requiring ecclesiastical endorsement to serve as a chaplain
35 must be approved through the endorsing agency authorized by the General
36 Assembly for such purpose. Teaching Elders ministering as paid or volunteer
37 chaplains in settings that do not require ecclesiastical endorsement should
38 consider seeking the same endorsement.
39

40 So that *BCO* 8-7 as amended would read:
41

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46 the doctrine of our Church, and that he report at least annually on his work. As

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2 whose bounds he labors. (See *BCO* 20-1.)
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5 must be approved through the endorsing agency authorized by the General
6 Assembly for such purpose. Teaching Elders ministering as paid or volunteer
7 chaplains in settings that do not require ecclesiastical endorsement should
8 consider seeking the same endorsement.
9

10 *Adopted by Potomac Presbytery at its stated meeting, March 16, 2019*

11 *Approved by Potomac Presbytery at its September 17, 2019, meeting to resend to 48th General*
12 *Assembly*

13 *Attested by /s/ RE Charles D. Robinson, stated clerk*