

1 **OVERTURE 9** from Ascension Presbytery (to CCB, OC)  
2 Title: “Amend *RAO* 15-6.s.2), 3) Regarding the Number of Members of the  
3 Overtures Committee Required to File a Minority Report”  
4

5 **Whereas**, minority reports from the Overtures Committee comprise an essential mechanism  
6 for allowing the General Assembly to hear and act upon different views that may arise  
7 in the Overtures Committee; and  
8

9 **Whereas**, minority reports allow a minority of the Overtures Committee to clear their  
10 consciences by expressing their differences to the General Assembly; and  
11

12 **Whereas**, *RAO* 15-6.s.2), 3) require that at least three ruling and three teaching elders sign  
13 a minority report; and  
14

15 **Whereas**, the procedure by which the General Assembly hears and acts upon a minority report  
16 from the Overtures Committee (see 15-8.g) can be complex and time consuming ; and  
17

18 **Whereas**, there is a need to maintain a reasonable balance between the rights of the minority  
19 of the Overtures Committee and the need of the General Assembly to conduct its  
20 business efficiently; and  
21

22 **Whereas**, that balance can be harmed if a very small minority is able to force the General  
23 Assembly to follow the procedure of *RAO* 15-8.g; and  
24

25 **Whereas**, at the 35<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (the first after the establishment of the Overtures  
26 Committee and related procedures) there were 67 members of the Overtures  
27 Committee (and a possible membership of 152), meaning that a 6 member minority  
28 would have comprised 8.95% of the members present (and 3.95% of the possible  
29 number of members); and  
30

31 **Whereas**, at the 47<sup>th</sup> General Assembly there were 134 members of the Overtures Committee  
32 (and a possible membership of 176), meaning that a 6 member minority would have  
33 comprised 4.48% of the members present (and 3.41% of the possible number of  
34 members); and  
35

36 **Whereas**, the continued growth in the number of presbyteries and of presbyteries sending  
37 both of their possible delegates to the Overtures Committee will likely mean that these  
38 percentages will continue to shrink; and  
39

40 **Whereas**, it seems that a better way to balance the rights of the minority and those of the  
41 majority would be to tie the number of signatures needed for a minority report to a  
42 percentage rather than a fixed number; and  
43

44 **Whereas**, a requirement that a minority report be signed by 10% of the membership of the  
45 Overtures Committee, at least 1/3 of whom must be ruling elders and at least 1/3 of

1 whom must be teaching elders would restore the balance to very close to what it was  
2 at the 35<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, while still underscoring the parity between ruling and  
3 teaching elders; and  
4

5 **Whereas**, at the 47<sup>th</sup> General Assembly this would have required 14 of the 134 members to  
6 have signed any minority report (of whom at least 5 would have had to have been  
7 ruling elders and 5 would have had to have been teaching elders); and  
8

9 **Whereas**, a requirement that 10% of the Overtures Committee agree to a minority report  
10 seems to be a reasonable threshold for invoking the procedures of *RAO 15-8.g*;  
11

12 **Therefore be it resolved** that the Presbytery of the Ascension hereby overtures the 48<sup>th</sup>  
13 General Assembly to amend *RAO 15-6.s.2, 3*) by deleting from both paragraphs the  
14 words “signed by at least three (3) teaching elder members of the committee and three  
15 (3) ruling elder members of the committee,” and replacing them with “signed by at  
16 least ten percent (10%) of the members of the committee of whom at least one-third  
17 (1/3) must be teaching elders and at least one-third (1/3) must be ruling elders,” (~~strike-~~  
18 ~~through~~ for deletions; underlining for new wording):  
19

20 *RAO 15-6*

21 s. Minority Reports.

- 22 1) With respect to any recommendation, prior to a recess or adjournment  
23 of the Overtures Committee following the adoption of said  
24 recommendation, any member of the committee may indicate an  
25 intention to file a minority report by giving notice to the chairman.  
26 2) Written notice of intent to file a minority report, ~~signed by at least~~  
27 ~~three teaching elder members of the committee and three ruling~~  
28 ~~elder members of the committee,~~ signed by at least ten percent  
29 (10%) of the members of the committee of whom at least one-third  
30 (1/3) must be teaching elders and at least one-third (1/3) must be  
31 ruling elders, must be delivered to the Office of the Stated Clerk  
32 within one hour of any recess or adjournment following the adoption  
33 of said recommendation. The Office of the Stated Clerk shall inform  
34 the chairman of the Overtures Committee of such notice as soon as  
35 practicable.  
36 3) The printed minority report, ~~signed by at least three teaching elder~~  
37 ~~members of the committee and three ruling elder members of the~~  
38 ~~committee,~~ signed by at least ten percent (10%) of the members of  
39 the committee of whom at least one-third (1/3) must be teaching  
40 elders and at least one-third (1/3) must be ruling elders, must be  
41 presented to the chairman of the committee as soon as practicable, but  
42 in no case less than fifteen (15) minutes before the recommendation  
43 in question is brought to the floor.  
44

45 So that the revised paragraphs would read as follows:

- 1                   2) Written notice of intent to file a minority report, signed by at least  
2                   ten percent (10%) of the members of the Committee of whom at  
3                   least one-third (1/3) must be teaching elders and at least one-third  
4                   (1/3) must be ruling elders, must be delivered to the Office of the  
5                   Stated Clerk within one hour of any recess or adjournment following  
6                   the adoption of said recommendation. The Office of the Stated Clerk  
7                   shall inform the chairman of the Overtures Committee of such notice  
8                   as soon as is practicable.  
9                   3) The printed minority report, signed by at least ten percent (10%) of  
10                  the members of the Committee of whom at least one-third (1/3) must  
11                  be teaching elders and at least one-third (1/3) must be ruling elders,  
12                  must be presented to the chairman of the committee as soon as  
13                  practicable, but in no case less than fifteen (15) minutes before the  
14                  recommendation in question is brought to the floor.

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16     *Adopted by the Presbytery of the Ascension at its stated meeting, November 2, 2020*

17     *Attested by: /s/ RE Frederick R. Neikirk, stated clerk*