

1 **OVERTURE 43** from Hills and Plains Presbytery (to OC, AC)
2 “Form Study Committee for Biblical Ethics in Digital Media”
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4 [Editorial Note: This overture is identical to Overture 32 from Central Indiana Presbytery]
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6 **Whereas**, Jesus desires his church to be “sanctified in the truth” (John 17:17); and
7

8 **Whereas**, the ninth commandment forbids bearing false witness against another (Exodus
9 20:13); and
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11 **Whereas**, our confessional standards thoroughly outline what is required (*WLC* 144) and
12 forbidden (*WLC* 145) by the ninth commandment; and
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14 **Whereas**, the Westminster divines wrote before the age of the internet, social media, and
15 other forms of rapid digital communication; and
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17 **Whereas**, these forms of communication are increasingly prevalent in our churches; and
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19 **Whereas**, new forms of communication create new opportunities both to advance the
20 Kingdom of God and to violate God’s commandments; and
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22 **Whereas**, there has been growing concern among PCA elders regarding online gossip and
23 slander, especially in areas of controversy and debate; and
24

25 **Whereas**, pastors, elders, and those they shepherd need wisdom to apply God’s eternal word
26 to contemporary questions about digital speech and communication;
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28 **Therefore, be it resolved** that Central Indiana Presbytery hereby overtures the 48th General
29 Assembly of the PCA to form an Ad-Interim Committee to study and report on:
30

- 31 1) How the ninth commandment applies to digital forms of communication (such as
32 blogs, social media, public and private online groups, and other developing
33 technologies).
- 34 2) Biblical and confessional teaching regarding godly speech, charitable debate, and
35 wisdom in discerning truth from falsehood.
- 36 3) Pastoral guidance on how to address questions of public concern without
37 unintentionally spreading false or misleading information, or disparaging the good
38 name of others.
- 39 4) Distinctions between private and public offenses (*BCO* 29-2, 29-4, 34-3), when
40 private online groups with substantial membership are increasingly common.
- 41 5) Practical steps for accountability and discipline; that our members might be
42 edified, and our officers remain “above reproach” (1 Timothy 3:2).
- 43 6) Should the findings of the study committee warrant *BCO* changes, the study
44 committee will propose such changes for the General Assembly to consider.

1 **Be it further resolved** that the moderator of the 48th General Assembly appoint the seven
2 voting members who shall be either PCA teaching or PCA ruling elders; and

3
4 **Be it further resolved** that the Committee be permitted to recruit others, within the confines
5 of its budget, to serve as its advisors, regardless of denomination or gender; and

6
7 **Be it further resolved** that the budget for the study committee be set at \$15,000 and that
8 funds be derived from gifts to the AC designated for that purpose; and

9
10 **Be it further resolved** that the committee shall present their findings and recommendations
11 to the 49th General Assembly.

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13 *Adopted by Hills and Plains Presbytery at its stated meeting, May 4, 2021*

14 *Attested by /s/ TE Wesley Dean Martin, stated clerk*