

1 **OVERTURE 23** from Southeast Alabama Presbytery (to CCB, OC)  
2 “Amend *BCO* 16 by Adding Paragraph 16-4 on Qualifications for Ordination”  
3

4 [Note: Only the wording of the second sentence of this overture’s proposed *BCO* paragraph  
5 differs from the proposed wording in Overture 20.]  
6

7 **Whereas**, the Westminster Standards make a categorical distinction between the “state of sin”  
8 and the “state of grace” (*WCF* 9.3-4); and  
9

10 **Whereas**, ever since the Fall, man is naturally in the “state of sin” in which he has lost all  
11 ability to will and to do any spiritual good and is a slave to the penalty, guilt, and  
12 power of sin (*WCF* 9.3); and  
13

14 **Whereas**, in the state of sin, his sin defines who he is, and he must rightly conceive of himself  
15 and label himself as a fornicator, idolater, adulterer, homosexual, thief, drunkard,  
16 reviler, and swindler (1 Cor. 6:9-10); in this state of sin, that is how he is to consider  
17 himself and identify himself because he is a slave to sin; and  
18

19 **Whereas**, when the Holy Spirit works faith in man, uniting him to Christ in his effectual  
20 calling, he is translated into the “state of grace” (*WCF* 9.4; *WSC* 30) and partakes of  
21 the benefits of justification, adoption, and sanctification (*WSC* 30-32); and  
22

23 **Whereas**, in this state, while he does not perfectly or only will that which is good but also  
24 that which is evil (due to his remaining corruption), he is freed from bondage to sin  
25 and by grace is enabled freely to will and to do that which is spiritually good (*WCF*  
26 9.4); and  
27

28 **Whereas**, the conversion from the state of sin to the state of grace is so dramatic and the  
29 distinction between the two so vast that the Christian is no longer to conceive of  
30 himself and label himself as a fornicator, idolater, adulterer, homosexual, thief,  
31 drunkard, reviler, and swindler; Scripture says such will not inherit the kingdom of  
32 God, “and such *were* some of you” (1 Cor. 6:9-11); in the state of grace, the believer  
33 is no longer to identify that way (e.g. as a fornicator, idolater, adulterer, etc.) for “you  
34 were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus  
35 Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:9-11); because of his union with Christ,  
36 his specific sins no longer define who he is; and  
37

38 **Whereas**, due to remaining corruption, the Christian can still speak of himself as a sinner in  
39 the present tense (1 Tim. 1:12-16) as one who continues to experience and battle with  
40 the presence and pollution of sin (Gal. 5:17; Rom. 7:14-25) and even at times feel as  
41 though he is enslaved to sin (Rom. 7:14); however, the truth is that the believer is no  
42 longer a slave to sin, having been freed from slavery to its guilt (Rom. 3:24; Eph. 1:7),  
43 its penalty (Gal. 3:13), and its power (1 Pet. 1:18-19; Rom. 6:6); and  
44

1 **Whereas**, while of course the Christian is (and can say he is) a sinner (1 Tim. 1:12-16), he is  
2 no longer to identify himself with his specific sins; as Paul says, “Such *were* some of  
3 you” (1Cor. 6:9-11), and “Though *formerly* I *was* a blasphemer, persecutor, and  
4 insolent opponent... I received mercy... in Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 1:13-14); and  
5

6 **Whereas**, instead of considering himself as a drunkard or an adulterer or a homosexual, the  
7 Christian is commanded to have a different self-conception: “You must consider  
8 yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 6:11); and  
9

10 **Whereas**, the Christian may continue to struggle with the same sins all his life long; such a  
11 believer should not *consider* himself a drunkard or an adulterer or a homosexual but  
12 rather a Christian who struggles with the temptation to drunkenness, adultery, or  
13 homosexuality; and who is repentant if or when he succumbs to such temptations; and  
14

15 **Whereas**, *BCO* 16-1 reads, “Ordinary vocation to office in the Church is the calling of God  
16 by the Spirit, through the inward testimony of a good conscience, the manifest  
17 approbation of God’s people, and the concurring judgment of a lawful court of the  
18 Church;” and  
19

20 **Whereas**, *BCO* 16-2 reads, “The government of the Church is by officers gifted to represent  
21 Christ, and the right of God’s people to recognize by election to office those so gifted  
22 is inalienable. Therefore no man can be placed over a church in any office without the  
23 election, or at least the consent of that church;” and  
24

25 **Whereas**, *BCO* 16-3 reads, “Upon those whom God calls to bear office in His Church He  
26 bestows suitable gifts for the discharge of their various duties. And it is indispensable  
27 that, besides possessing the necessary gifts and abilities, natural and acquired, every  
28 one admitted to an office should be sound in the faith, and his life be according to  
29 godliness. Wherefore every candidate for office is to be approved by the court by  
30 which he is to be ordained;” and  
31

32 **Therefore**, be it resolved that *BCO* 16 be amended by adding 16-4 as a new paragraph with  
33 the following wording (underlining for new wording):  
34

35 16-4. Those whom God calls to bear office in His Church shall demonstrate  
36 maturity of faith and growing conformity to Jesus Christ. While these office  
37 bearers will see spiritual perfection only in glory, they will continue in this  
38 life to confess and to mortify remaining sins. Thus, those who identify or  
39 describe themselves according to their specific sins, or who teach that it is  
40 acceptable for Christians to identify or describe themselves in such a manner,  
41 shall not be approved for service by any court of Christ’s Church.  
42

43 *Adopted by Southeast Alabama Presbytery at its called meeting on March 31, 2022*

44 *Attested by /s/ TE Kevin Corley, stated clerk*