

1 **OVERTURE 30** from Pittsburgh Presbytery (to CCB, OC)
2 “Amend *BCO* 6-5, 20-3, 25-1, and 24-3, Allowing Congregations to Establish Voting
3 Age Restrictions”
4
5 **Whereas**, there is vagueness in the *BCO* that can lead to a discrepancy in practice within the
6 PCA on when and how children should be welcomed into communicant membership
7 of the covenant community of God’s people; and
8
9 **Whereas**, covenant children should be encouraged to profess faith in Christ and their need for
10 him from an early age, and
11
12 **Whereas**, it is the duty of the church, the people of God, to assist in the nurture and admonition
13 of our covenant children, and
14
15 **Whereas**, the Lord’s Supper is a means of grace given by our Lord Jesus Christ for “spiritual
16 nourishment and growth in grace; have their union and communion with him
17 confirmed; testify and renew their thankfulness, and engagement to God, and their
18 mutual love and fellowship each with other, as members of the same mystical body”
19 (*WLC* 168), and
20
21 **Whereas**, Jesus said “Let the little children come to me, do not hinder them…” (Matt. 19:14),
22 and
23
24 **Whereas**, our covenant children who have professed a faith of their own should not be
25 hindered in coming to the table of our Lord Jesus, and
26
27 **Whereas**, the Church has historically equated physical, emotional, and mental development
28 with spiritual development, and
29
30 **Whereas**, our Lord Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, fully God and fully man,
31 sinless in all his ways, spiritually mature from birth, had to “increase in wisdom and
32 in stature and in favor with God and man” (Luke 2:52), and
33
34 **Whereas**, the practice of allowing all communicant members to vote in congregational
35 matters has not been shown by past General Assemblies to be rooted in either scripture
36 or in our confessional language; and
37
38 **Whereas**, it is our denomination’s stated goal to root our faith and practice in the Scripture;
39 and
40
41 **Whereas**, there is strong Reformed tradition limiting voting to those “with authority,” i.e.
42 heads of households; and
43
44 **Whereas**, a similar overture was approved by the 24th General Assembly, approved by more
45 than 2/3 of the Presbyteries, yet failed to be adopted by the 25th General Assembly,
46 and

1 **Whereas**, congregational voting on corporate matters requires a legal age of 18 or higher in
2 some states; and

3
4 **Whereas**, the *BCO* allows all communicant members to vote on non-corporation issues even
5 if they are younger than the legal age; and

6
7 **Whereas**, the *BCO* states that “It is expressly recognized that each local congregation or local
8 church shall be competent to function and to take actions covering the matters set forth
9 herein as long as such action is in compliance with the civil laws with which said local
10 congregation or local church must comply, and this right shall never be taken from
11 said local congregation or local church without the express consent of and affirmative
12 action of such local church or congregation” (*BCO* 25-11);

13
14 **Therefore be it resolved** that the 49th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in
15 America allow individual congregations the freedom to establish minimum voting
16 ages for ecclesiastical and corporate votes by making the following changes to the
17 *BCO*:

18
19 1. Add a new paragraph 5 to *BCO* 6 as follows:

20 **6-5.** A congregation may, at its discretion by a vote of 2/3, set the
21 minimum voting age for its communing members, provided it is not
22 greater than eighteen (18) years of age. The congregation may also; at
23 its discretion, set a different minimum voting age for different matters
24 provided it is not greater than eighteen (18) years of age.

25
26 2. Amend the last sentence in *BCO* 20-3 as follows (~~strike through~~ for deletion,
27 underlining for new wording:

28 **20-3.** When a congregation is convened for the election of a pastor it
29 is important that they should elect a minister of the Presbyterian Church
30 in America to preside, but if this be impracticable, they may elect any
31 male member of that church. The Session shall appoint one of their
32 number to call the meeting to order and to preside until the congregation
33 shall elect their presiding officer. ~~All communing members in good and~~
34 ~~regular standing, Communing members in good and regular standing~~
35 who have the right to vote (*BCO* 6-5), but no others, are entitled to vote
36 in the churches to which they are respectively attached.

37
38 so that *BCO* 20-3 reads as follows:

39 **20-3.** When a congregation is convened for the election of a pastor it
40 is important that they should elect a minister of the Presbyterian Church
41 in America to preside, but if this be impracticable, they may elect any
42 male member of that church. The Session shall appoint one of their
43 number to call the meeting to order and to preside until the congregation
44 shall elect their presiding officer. Communing members in good and
45 regular standing who have the right to vote (*BCO* 6-5), but no others,

1 are entitled to vote in the churches to which they are respectively
2 attached.

3

4 3. Modify by deletion and addition *BCO* 25-1 as follows:

5 **25-1.** The congregation consists of all the communing members of a
6 particular church, ~~and they~~ but only those given the right to vote (*BCO*
7 6-5) are entitled to vote.

8

9 So that the new *BCO* 25-1 reads as follows:

10 **25-1.** The congregation consists of all the communing members of a
11 particular church, but only those given the right to vote (*BCO* 6-5) are
12 entitled to vote.

13

14 4. Modify by deletion and addition *BCO* 24-3 as follows:

15 **24-3.** ~~All~~ Communing members in good and regular standing, but no
16 others, are entitled to vote in the election of church officers in the
17 churches to which they respectively belong. However, the congregation
18 may, at its discretion, set the minimum voting age for its members (*BCO*
19 6-5). A majority vote of those present is required for election. (See also
20 *BCO* 20-3.)

21

22 So that the new *BCO* 24-3 reads as follows:

23 **24-3.** Communing members in good and regular standing, but no
24 others, are entitled to vote in the election of church officers in the
25 churches to which they respectively belong. However, the congregation
26 may, at its discretion, set the minimum voting age for its members (*BCO*
27 6-5). A majority vote of those present is required for election. (See also
28 *BCO* 20-3.)

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30 *Adopted by Pittsburgh Presbytery at its stated meeting of April 2, 2022*

31 *Attested by /s/ TE LeRoy S. Capper, stated clerk*