

1 **OVERTURE 31** from Pittsburgh Presbytery (to CCB, OC)
2 “Amend *BCO* 21-4 and 24-1 by Adding Paragraphs Regarding Requirements
3 for Ordination”
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5 **Whereas**, the moral character of an officer is of highest importance in Scripture, and not
6 merely theological orthodoxy, and
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8 **Whereas**, there is great danger to the church if officers of the church practice sins in secret
9 which are scandalous, and
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11 **Whereas**, in our society there is an epidemic of sexual temptation in particular, which affects
12 all people, and
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14 **Whereas**, leadership in the church may bring increased temptation as the Devil seeks to
15 destroy those who preach the Word, and
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17 **Whereas**, some churches have brought shame on the Body of Christ by appearing to hide and
18 tolerate certain types of sin in their leadership, and
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20 **Whereas**, a uniform standard of examination should be the practice of our denomination, and
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22 **Whereas**, a previous overture on this topic was passed at General Assembly, and there is wide
23 support for the spirit of that overture, but substantial disagreement on the precision of
24 the language, which could be taken as discouraging men from confessing their sins,
25 and
26

27 **Whereas**, there is substantial concern that some officers of our denomination by confessing
28 their sins and sin temptations publicly may do more harm than good, giving the
29 impression that certain types of sins or sin temptation are not really so bad,
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31 **Therefore be it resolved** that

32 1. *BCO* 21-4 be amended by addition of a new sub-paragraph 21-4.e (with
33 subsequent sub-paragraphs 21-4.e-h being relettered to be 21-4.f-i), which shall
34 read as follows:

35 **21-4.** Ordination Requirements and Procedures
36 e. In the examination of the candidate’s personal character, the
37 presbytery shall give specific attention to potential notorious
38 concerns. Careful attention must be given to his practical
39 struggle against sinful actions, as well as to persistent sinful
40 desires. The candidate must give clear testimony of reliance
41 upon his union with Christ and the benefits thereof by the Holy
42 Spirit, depending on this work of grace to make progress over
43 sin (Psalm 103:2-5, Romans 8:29) and to bear fruit (Psalm 1:3,
44 Gal. 5:22-23). While imperfection will remain, when confessing
45 sins and sinful temptations publicly, officers of the church must

1 exercise great care to not normalize those sins in the eyes of the
2 congregation, as though they were matters of little consequence,
3 but rather should testify to the work of the Holy Spirit in Christ
4 Jesus in changing our sin nature (1 Cor. 6:9-11). In order to
5 maintain discretion and protect the honor of the pastoral office,
6 presbyteries are encouraged to empower a committee to conduct
7 detailed examinations of these matters and to give prayerful
8 support to candidates.

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10 2. *BCO* 24-1 be amended by the addition of a new second paragraph which shall read
11 as follows:

12 **24-1** (following 24-1.a-e)

13 In the examination of each nominee's personal character, the
14 Session shall give specific attention to potential notorious concerns.
15 Careful attention must be given to his practical struggle against
16 sinful actions, as well as to persistent sinful desires. The candidate
17 must give clear testimony of reliance upon his union with Christ and
18 the benefits thereof by the Holy Spirit, depending on this work of
19 grace to make progress over sin (Psalm 103:2-5, Romans 8:29) and
20 to bear fruit (Psalm 1:3, Gal. 5:22-23). While imperfection will
21 remain, when confessing sins and sinful temptations publicly,
22 officers of the church must exercise great care to not normalize those
23 sins in the eyes of the congregation, as though they were matters of
24 little consequence, but rather should testify to the work of the Holy
25 Spirit in Christ Jesus in changing our sin nature (1 Cor. 6:9-11). In
26 order to maintain discretion and protect the honor of church office,
27 Sessions may empower a committee to conduct detailed
28 examinations of these matters and to give prayerful support to
29 nominees.

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31 The amended *BCO* 24-1 shall thus read as follows:

32 24-1. Every church shall elect persons to the offices of ruling elder
33 and deacon in the following manner: At such times as determined
34 by the Session, communicant members of the congregation may
35 submit names to the Session, keeping in mind that each prospective
36 officer should be an active male member who meets the
37 qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. After the close
38 of the nomination period nominees for the office of ruling elder
39 and/or deacon shall receive instruction in the qualifications and
40 work of the office. Each nominee shall then be examined in:

- 41 a. his Christian experience, especially his personal character
42 and family management (based on the qualifications set out
43 in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9),
44 b. his knowledge of Bible content,
45 c. his knowledge of the system of doctrine, government,

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discipline contained in the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in America (*BCO* Preface III, The Constitution Defined),

- d. the duties of the office to which he has been nominated, and
- e. his willingness to give assent to the questions required for ordination. (*BCO* 24-6)

In the examination of each nominee’s personal character, the Session shall give specific attention to potential notorious concerns. Careful attention must be given to his practical struggle against sinful actions, as well as to persistent sinful desires. The candidate must give clear testimony of reliance upon his union with Christ and the benefits thereof by the Holy Spirit, depending on this work of grace to make progress over sin (Psalm 103:2-5, Romans 8:29) and to bear fruit (Psalm 1:3, Gal. 5:22-23). While imperfection will remain, when confessing sins and sinful temptations publicly, officers of the church must exercise great care to not normalize those sins in the eyes of the congregation, as though they were matters of little consequence, but rather should testify to the work of the Holy Spirit in Christ Jesus in changing our sin nature (1 Cor. 6:9-11). In order to maintain discretion and protect the honor of church office, Sessions may empower a committee to conduct detailed examinations of these matters and to give prayerful support to nominees.

If there are candidates eligible for the election, the Session shall report to the congregation those eligible, giving at least thirty (30) days prior notice of the time and place of a congregational meeting for elections.

If one-fourth (1/4) of the persons entitled to vote shall at any time request the Session to call a congregational meeting for the purpose of electing additional officers, it shall be the duty of the Session to call such a meeting on the above procedure. The number of officers to be elected shall be determined by the congregation after hearing the Session’s recommendation.

Adopted by Pittsburgh Presbytery at its stated meeting, April 2, 2022
Attested by /s/ TE LeRoy S. Capper, stated clerk