

1 **OVERTURE 33** from Nashville Presbytery (to OC)
2 "Use Human Sexuality Report for Study, Examination, and Conciliation"

3
4 **Whereas:** In this time of confusion in the culture, and among Christians, about issues related
5 to human sexuality, the Presbyterian Church in America has been encouraged to make
6 a clear statement about qualifications for ordained office; and

7
8 **Whereas:** The Westminster Standards clearly state in Larger Catechism Question 139 that
9 both same-sex sexual activity and same-sex desire are violations of God's law; and

10
11 **Whereas:** The 47th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America approved the
12 constitutionality of *BCO* 59-3, which states, "Marriage is only to be between one man
13 and one woman (Gen. 2:24,25; Matt. 19:4-6, 1 Cor. 7:2), in accordance with the Word
14 of God. Therefore, ministers in the Presbyterian Church in America who solemnize
15 marriages shall only solemnize marriages between one man and one woman;" and

16
17 **Whereas:** *BCO* 21-4.c states that trials for the ordination of ministers, "shall consist of: (1) A
18 careful examination as to: (a) his acquaintance with experiential religion, *especially*
19 *his personal character* and family management (based on the qualifications set out in
20 1 Timothy 3:1-7, and Titus 1:6-9)," and *BCO* 24-1 states that each elder or deacon
21 nominee "shall then be examined in: a. his Christian experience, *especially his*
22 *personal character* and family management (based on the qualifications set out in 1
23 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9);" and

24
25 **Whereas:** The 48th General Assembly of the PCA declared the *Report of the Ad interim*
26 *Committee on Human Sexuality* (AIC) as "a biblically faithful declaration." And, the
27 grounds Calvary Presbytery unanimously adopted in sending up the overture stated,
28 "The PCA 'Report of the Ad Interim Committee on Human Sexuality,' is a biblically
29 faithful work by gifted churchmen within the PCA. It is a most useful resource
30 concerning the apologetic and pastoral task surrounding gender and sexuality
31 confusion within the PCA and the broader culture." and;

32
33 **Whereas:** The grounds adopted by the Committee of Commissioners on the Committee on
34 Discipleship Ministries stated, "The report of the ad interim on Human Sexuality is an
35 excellent resource for members and churches who seek to understand the biblical,
36 confessional, and pastoral issues involved with addressing the topics of
37 homosexuality, same-sex attraction, and transgenderism;" and

38
39 **Whereas:** The AIC clearly articulates the confessional doctrine of *sin and temptation* in
40 relation to Same-Sex Attraction (SSA) in Statements 3-6 (p. 7-10) and in its section
41 on "Confessional Foundations" (pp. 14-23), stating, "'actual' sin refers not to the
42 reality or non-reality of sin, but to its being an act of the soul as opposed to a
43 *disposition* or *inclination* only. While it is significant that a distinction is made
44 between original and actual sin, the emphasis at this point in the Confession is that
45 original sin, as a disposition or inclination, is truly sin," (p. 14, line 39-p. 15, line 3),

1 and “when the temptation arises from within, it is our own act and is rightly called
 2 sin,” (p. 9, lines 18-19); and the AIC clearly articulates the confessional view of sin
 3 and temptation, clarifying that, “There are some temptations God gives us in the form
 4 of morally neutral trials, and other temptations God never gives us because they arise
 5 from within as morally illicit desires (James 1:2, 13-14). When temptations come from
 6 without, the temptation itself is not sin, unless we enter into the temptation. But when
 7 the temptation arises from within, it is our own act and is rightly called sin.
 8 Nevertheless, there is an important degree of moral difference between temptation to
 9 sin and giving in to sin, even when the temptation is itself an expressing of indwelling
 10 sin.” (AIC p. 9, lines 14-22); and

11
 12 **Whereas:** The AIC clearly articulates the confessional doctrine of *sanctification* in relation to
 13 SSA in Statement 7 (p. 10) and in its sections on “Real Change” (p. 22), “Celebrating
 14 Sincere Efforts” (p. 23), and “Discipleship for Believers Experiencing Same-Sex
 15 Attraction” (p. 24-25), stating, “to teach that our sinful corruption must be entirely
 16 removed from any part of us in order to be considered truly repentant is a spiritually
 17 treacherous perversion of the doctrine of repentance,” (p. 22, lines 24-26), and
 18 “Someone with homosexual attraction ought not close himself or herself off to the
 19 pursuit of, and hope of, real change in those attractions, even if that change is
 20 incomplete and mixed,” (p. 22, lines 38-40); and

21
 22 **Whereas:** The AIC clearly articulates the confessional doctrine of *repentance* in relation to
 23 SSA in Statement 12 (p. 12-13) and in its section on “Confessional Foundations” (pp.
 24 14-23), stating, “Where we have mistreated those who struggle with same-sex
 25 attraction, or with any other sinful desires, we call ourselves to repentance. Where we
 26 have nurtured or made peace with sinful thoughts, desires, words, or deeds, we call
 27 ourselves to repentance,” (p. 12 lines 37-40), and, “We give thanks for penitent
 28 believers who, though they continue to struggle with same-sex attraction, are living
 29 lives of chastity and obedience. These brothers and sisters can serve as courageous
 30 examples of faith and faithfulness, as they pursue Christ with a long obedience in
 31 gospel dependence,” (p. 13, lines 2-5); and

32
 33 **Whereas:** The AIC clearly articulates a confessional approach to terminology with regard to
 34 *sexual identity and orientation* in relation to SSA in Statements 9-10 (p. 11-12) and in
 35 its section on “The Christian’s Identity” (pp. 26-31), stating, “Insofar as the term
 36 orientation is used descriptively to articulate a particular set of experiences, namely
 37 the persistent and predominant sexual attractions of an individual, it can remain useful
 38 as a way of classifying those experiences in contrast to the experiences of the majority
 39 of other people. However, insofar as the term orientation carries with it a set of
 40 assumptions about the nature of that experience that is unbiblical (e.g.,
 41 overemphasized rigidity, its normativity, etc.), then the terminology may require
 42 qualification or even rejection in some circumstances,” (p. 30, line 42-p. 31, line 4);
 43 and

1 **Whereas:** The AIC further addresses the issue of *terminology* on pages 29-30, stating, “We
 2 should choose our language carefully with the goal that it expresses the truth and
 3 communicates clearly and winsomely in our particular context... language itself is a
 4 secondary issue relative to the doctrine it expresses. Sometimes there are
 5 disagreements about language even when the underlying doctrinal commitments seem
 6 to be the same. Thus, while doctrinal truth is rightly understood as obligating our
 7 affirmation, *issues around terminology are more properly understood as issues of*
 8 *wisdom*, necessitating careful Scriptural and pastoral guidance,” (p. 29, lines 11-17).
 9 While the AIC does not forbid use of the term “gay,” it still issues caution stating, “the
 10 word gay is not a neutral word in our cultural discourse, and Christians should be
 11 mindful of these dynamics when considering use of the term,” (p. 30, lines 7-8). Of
 12 the term “Gay Christian,” the AIC states, “we believe it is generally unwise to use the
 13 language of gay Christian,” (p. 30, lines 28-29). On both terms “gay” and “gay
 14 Christian” the report concludes, “we would do well to *seek understanding before*
 15 *imparting advice*. In practical and plain terms, the issue of terminology is more likely
 16 *a matter for shepherding in wisdom, and not in and of itself grounds for discipline;*”
 17 (p. 30, lines 36-39); and
 18

19 **Whereas:** The AIC sets clear boundaries for ordained office in the PCA, stating, “Insofar as
 20 such persons display the requisite Christian maturity, we do not consider this sin
 21 struggle automatically to disqualify someone for leadership in the church (1 Cor. 6:9-
 22 11, 1 Tim. 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-9; 2 Pet. 1:3-11), (p. 31, lines 29-31)”; and
 23

24 **Whereas:** All those in leadership in our churches should remember that the Westminster
 25 Standards clearly state in Larger Catechism Question 144 that “The duties required in
 26 the Ninth Commandment are, the preserving and promoting of truth between man and
 27 man, and the good name of our neighbor, as well as our own; appearing and standing
 28 for the truth;...a charitable esteem of our neighbors; loving, desiring, and rejoicing in
 29 their good name; sorrowing for, and covering of their infirmities; freely
 30 acknowledging of their gifts and graces, defending their innocence; a ready receiving
 31 of a good report, and unwillingness to admit of an evil report, concerning them;
 32 discouraging talebearers, flatterers, and slanderers;” and Larger Catechism Question
 33 145 states that “The sins forbidden in the Ninth Commandment are, all prejudicing the
 34 truth, and the good name of our neighbors, as well as our own, especially in public
 35 judicature...speaking the truth unseasonably, or maliciously to a wrong end, or
 36 perverting it to a wrong meaning, or in doubtful and equivocal expressions, to the
 37 prejudice of truth or justice; speaking untruth, lying, slandering, backbiting, detracting,
 38 tale bearing, whispering, scoffing, reviling, rash, harsh, and partial censuring;
 39 misconstructing intentions, words, and actions;...raising false rumors, receiving and
 40 countenancing evil reports, and stopping our ears against just defense; evil suspicion;”
 41 and

1 **Whereas:** CDM has already published the AIC report in book form for easy distribution
2 ([https://www.pcabookstore.com/p-6275893-a-body-for-the-lordpca-papers-on-human-](https://www.pcabookstore.com/p-6275893-a-body-for-the-lordpca-papers-on-human-sexuality.aspx)
3 [sexuality.aspx](https://www.pcabookstore.com/p-6275893-a-body-for-the-lordpca-papers-on-human-sexuality.aspx)),
4 and the PCA History website has all PCA studies available for easy download
5 (https://www.pcahistory.org/pca/digest/studies/2021_human_sexuality_report.pdf).
6

7 **Therefore, be it resolved:**

8 **A.** That the 49th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America advises
9 all presbyteries and sessions to:

- 10 1. Fulfill the duty to “give due and serious consideration” (*BCO* 14-7) by making
11 careful study of the 2021 *Ad interim Report on Human Sexuality*,
- 12 2. Consider requiring all candidates for ordained office to do the same, and
- 13 3. Utilize said report as a guide in examining the personal character of candidates
14 for ordained office (*BCO* 21-4, 24-1); and

15
16 **B. Be it further resolved:** that the 49th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church
17 in America advises the courts of the church not to use certain terms as mere ‘litmus
18 tests’ for biblical faithfulness or grounds for discipline but to seek understanding
19 before imparting advice, in keeping with the 2021 *Ad interim Report on Human*
20 *Sexuality's* statements on terminology (p. 29-30), and the Biblical teaching (e.g.
21 Rom 6-8; Col 3, 2 Cor 5:17) on how believers are to understand, define, and
22 describe themselves in union with Christ as it relates to Christian identity (AIC
23 Statement 9, p. 11); and
24

25 **C. Be it further resolved:** that the 49th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church
26 in America, in keeping with Westminster Larger Catechism 144 and 145, urges
27 pastors and elders to de-escalate the contentious nature of discourse surrounding
28 issues of human sexuality and identity, particularly online, by extending Christian
29 charity to all members of Christ’s church in their public and private discourse and
30 exercising caution and restraint when interacting with the views of another; and
31

32 **D. Be it further resolved:** that the 49th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church
33 in America exhorts pastors and elders to instruct their congregations on the historic
34 teaching of the Bible and the Christian church on human sexuality, especially as
35 stated in Gen. 2:24,25, Rom. 1:24-32, 1 Cor. 6:9-11, 1 Cor. 7:1-28, Westminster
36 Larger Catechism 139, and *BCO* 59-3; and
37

38 **E. Be it finally resolved:** that the 49th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church
39 in America encourages presbyteries, sessions, and congregations to seek the Lord
40 in prayer for wisdom to navigate changing cultural contexts faithfully as a church
41 committed to the scriptures, and to earnestly ask “the Lord of the harvest to send
42 out laborers into his harvest fields,” (Luke 10:2).
43

44 *Adopted by Nashville Presbytery at a called meeting on May 3, 2022*

45 *Attested by /s/ TE R. Neil Spence, stated clerk*