

1 **OVERTURE 6** from South Texas Presbytery (to CCB, OC)  
2 “Amend *BCO* 13-6, 21-4.b, and 24-1 To Require Criminal Background  
3 Checks of all Minister and Officer Candidates”  
4

5 **Whereas**, the qualifications for elders and deacons includes being “above reproach” (1 Tim.  
6 3:2 and Titus 1:7), “self-controlled” (1 Tim. 3:2 and Titus 1:8), “not violent but gentle”  
7 (1 Tim. 3:3), ”not...quick-tempered” (Titus 1:7), and “proven blameless” (1 Tim.  
8 3:10); and  
9

10 **Whereas**, the qualification of every believer is to “keep your conduct among the Gentiles  
11 honorable” (1 Pet. 2:12); and  
12

13 **Whereas**, our confession warns leaders against the “careless exposing, or leaving [those in  
14 their care] to wrong, temptation, and danger” (*WLC* 130); and  
15

16 **Whereas**, the *Book of Church Order* states that church courts perform “a careful examination”  
17 including “personal character” (21-4.c; 24-1.a) and “Christian experience” (13-6); and  
18

19 **Whereas**, the report of the Ad Interim Committee on Domestic Abuse and Sexual Assault to  
20 the Forty-ninth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (the “DASA  
21 Report”) says, “Churches protect their members with policies that take into consideration  
22 the most vulnerable in the congregation” by, at a minimum, “Presbyteries enacting  
23 policies to *require background checks* and abuse training for all ordinands and  
24 transfers, and policies to protect whistleblowers against retribution” (emphasis added,  
25 DASA Report, *M49GA*, p. 949); and  
26

27 **Whereas**, the DASA Report recommends: “Candidates for the gospel ministry and others  
28 employed for spiritual oversight (Sunday school teachers, youth leaders, etc.) should  
29 be examined carefully to determine their godly character. Presbyteries and Sessions  
30 are encouraged to carefully investigate a candidate for leadership roles including but  
31 not limited to the candidate’s knowledge of theology. *Background checks*, social  
32 media checks, and careful reference checks should be used to screen for abusive  
33 leadership.” (emphasis added, DASA Report, *M49GA*, pp. 1128, 1159, 1183)); and  
34

35 **Whereas**, the 42nd General Assembly resolved that churches prevent types of abuse “by  
36 screening staff and volunteers” (*Overture 6, M42 GA*, p. 59.); and  
37

38 **Whereas**, the 42nd General Assembly resolved that churches “must cooperate with those  
39 authorities as they ‘bear the sword’ to punish those who do evil ‘in such an effectual  
40 manner as that no person be suffered . . . to offer any indignity, violence, abuse, or  
41 injury to any other person whatsoever’ (Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-14; *WCF* 23.3)”;  
42

43 **Therefore, be it resolved** that *BCO* 13-6 be amended by adding language as follows  
44 (underlining for additions, ~~strike through~~ for deletions):  
45

1 13-6. When a minister is ~~Ministers~~ seeking admission to a Presbytery from  
2 another Presbytery ~~other Presbyteries~~ in the Presbyterian Church in  
3 America, or from another denomination, the receiving Presbytery shall  
4 cause a criminal background check to be performed on the minister. The  
5 results of the background check shall be shared with the members of the  
6 receiving Presbytery, with the members of the dismissing Presbytery, and  
7 with the calling church or other organization that is calling the minister. He  
8 shall be examined on Christian experience, and also touching his ~~their~~  
9 views in theology, the Sacraments, and church government. If applicants  
10 come from other denominations, the Presbytery shall examine them  
11 thoroughly in knowledge and views as required by BCO 21-4 and require  
12 them to answer in the affirmative the questions put to candidates at their  
13 ordination. Ordained ministers from other denominations being considered  
14 by Presbyteries for reception may come under the extraordinary provisions  
15 set forth in BCO 21-4. Presbyteries shall also...

16  
17 **Therefore, be it further resolved** that BCO 21 be amended by adding a new 21-4.b, and  
18 renumbering the succeeding paragraphs (underlining for additions):

19  
20 21-4.b. Prior to ordination, the examining Presbytery shall cause a criminal  
21 background check to be performed on each candidate. The results of the  
22 background check shall be shared with the Presbytery and with the calling  
23 church.

24  
25 **Therefore, be it further resolved** that BCO 24-1 be amended by adding language as follows  
26 (underlining for additions):

27  
28 24-1. ...set forth in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. The Session shall cause a  
29 criminal background check to be performed on each candidate eligible for  
30 election. The results of the background check may be shared with the  
31 congregation if deemed prudent by the Session. Nominees for the office of  
32 ruling elder and/or deacon shall receive instruction...

33  
34 So that the amended paragraphs will read as follows:

35  
36 **13-6.** When a minister is seeking admission to a Presbytery from another  
37 Presbytery in the Presbyterian Church in America, or from another  
38 denomination, the receiving Presbytery shall cause a criminal background  
39 check to be performed on the minister. The results of the background check  
40 shall be shared with the members of the receiving Presbytery, with the  
41 members of the dismissing Presbytery, and with the calling church or other  
42 organization that is calling the minister. He shall be examined on Christian  
43 experience, and also touching his views in theology, the Sacraments, and  
44 church government. If applicants come from other denominations, the  
45 Presbytery shall examine them thoroughly in knowledge and views as

1 required by *BCO* 21-4 and require them to answer in the affirmative the  
2 questions put to candidates at their ordination. Ordained ministers from  
3 other denominations may come under the extraordinary provisions set forth  
4 in *BCO* 21-4. Presbyteries shall also require ordained ministers coming  
5 from other denominations to state the specific instances in which they may  
6 differ with the *Confession of Faith* and *Catechisms* in any of their  
7 statements and/or propositions, which differences the court shall judge in  
8 accordance with *BCO* 21-4 (see *BCO* 21-4.e,f).

9  
10 **21-4.b.** Prior to ordination, the examining Presbytery shall cause a criminal  
11 background check to be performed on each candidate. The results of the  
12 background check shall be shared with the Presbytery and with the calling  
13 church.

14  
15 **24-1.** Every church shall elect persons to the offices of ruling elder and  
16 deacon in the following manner: At such times as determined by the  
17 Session, communicant members of the congregation may submit names to  
18 the Session, keeping in mind that each prospective officer should be an  
19 active male member who meets the qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 3  
20 and Titus 1. The Session shall cause a criminal background check to be  
21 performed on each candidate eligible for election. The results of the  
22 background check may be shared with the congregation if deemed prudent  
23 by the Session. Nominees for the office of ruling elder and/or deacon shall  
24 receive instruction in the qualifications and work of the office. Each  
25 nominee shall be examined in:...

26  
27 *Adopted by South Texas Presbytery at its stated meeting, January 28, 2023*

28 *Attested by /s/ RE Michael W. Simpson, stated clerk*