

1 **OVERTURE 6** from the Presbytery of Susquehanna Valley (to CCB, OC)
2 “Amend BCO Sections to Require Background Checks for Church Office”
3

4 [Editorial Note: This overture is similar to Overtures 16, 17, 23, and 24.]
5

6 **Whereas** the Scriptures declare that elders and deacons must be “above reproach: (1 Tim. 3:2;
7 Titus 1:7), “self-controlled” (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8), “not violent but gentle” (1 Tim.
8 3:3), “not quick tempered” (Titus 1:7), and “proven blameless” (1 Tim. 3:10); and
9

10 **Whereas**, regarding elders, 1 Timothy 3:7 says, “he must be well thought of by outsiders, so
11 that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil”; and
12

13 **Whereas** the sixth commandment requires us to “comfort and succor the distressed and
14 protect and defend the innocent” (WLC 135); and
15

16 **Whereas** the ninth commandment forbids us from “concealing the truth, undue silence in a
17 just cause, and holding our peace when iniquity calleth for either a reproof from
18 ourselves, or complaint to others,” and from “hiding, excusing, or extenuating of sins
19 when called to a free confession” (WLC 145); and
20

21 **Whereas** the church must be a community that creates a safe environment for children where
22 they can learn about the Lord (Proverbs 22:6; Mark 9:42); and
23

24 **Whereas**, on six separate occasions the Ad-Interim Committee on Domestic Abuse and
25 Sexual Assault recommended that Presbyteries and churches require background
26 checks to better protect their members – including the statement, “Churches protect
27 their members with policies that take into consideration the most vulnerable in the
28 congregation” by including, but not limited to, “Presbyteries enacting policies to
29 require background checks and abuse training for all ordinands and transfers, and
30 policies to protect whistleblowers against retribution.” (DASA Report, pg. 2314); and
31

32 **Whereas** an ordained minister coming into a new Presbytery is relatively unknown to the
33 members of the Presbytery; and
34

35 **Whereas** BCO 13-6 requires Presbyteries to examine ministers seeking admission to the
36 presbytery regarding their Christian experience...
37

38 Therefore, **be it resolved** that the following sections of the BCO be amended as follows:
39

40 13-6. Ministers seeking admission to a Presbytery from other Presbyteries in the
41 Presbyterian Church in America shall be examined on Christian experience, and also
42 touching their views in theology, the Sacraments, and church government. If
43 applicants come from other denominations, the Presbytery shall examine them
44 thoroughly in knowledge and views as required by BCO 21-4 and require them to
45 answer in the affirmative the questions put to candidates at their ordination. Before
46 receiving the minister from a Presbytery in the PCA or from another denomination,

1 the Presbytery shall obtain and review with the candidate an “Identity History
2 Summary”¹ from the FBI and a state/local background check or a “Vulnerable Sector
3 Check”² from the Canadian Government. Ordained ministers from other
4 denominations being considered by Presbyteries for reception may come under the
5 extraordinary provisions set forth in BCO 21-4. Presbyteries shall also require
6 ordained ministers coming from other denominations to state the specific instances in
7 which they may differ with the *Confession of Faith* and *Catechisms* in any of their
8 statements and/or propositions, which differences the court shall judge in accordance
9 with BCO 21-4 (see BCO 21-4.e,f).

10
11 BCO 18.3 The Presbytery shall obtain a and review with the applicant an “Identity
12 History Summary” from the FBI and a state/local background check or a “Vulnerable
13 Sector Check” from the Canadian Government. The applicant shall appear before the
14 Presbytery in person, and shall be examined by the Presbytery on experiential religion
15 and on his motives for seeking the ministry.

16
17 BCO 19-2. Examination for Licensure.

18 The examination for licensure shall be as follows:

- 19 a. The Presbytery shall obtain and review with the candidate an “Identity
20 History Summary” from the FBI and a state/local background check or
21 a “Vulnerable Sector Check” from the Canadian Government.

22
23 The rest of 19-2 shall be renumbered accordingly.

24
25 BCO 21-4

26 c. Trials for ordination shall consist of:

- 27 (1) The Presbytery shall obtain and review with the candidate an “Identity
28 History Summary” from the FBI and a state/local background check or
29 a “Vulnerable Sector Check” from the Canadian Government.

30
31 The rest of 21-4.c shall be renumbered accordingly.

32
33 BCO 24-1. Every church shall elect persons to the offices of ruling elder and deacon
34 in the following manner: At such times as determined by the Session, communicant
35 members of the congregation may submit names to the Session, keeping in mind that
36 each prospective officer should be an active male member who meets the
37 qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Nominees for the office of ruling
38 elder and/or deacon shall receive instruction in the qualifications and work of the
39 office. The session should obtain and review with the candidate an “Identity History
40 Summary” from the FBI and a state/local background check or a “Vulnerable Sector
41 Check” from the Canadian Government.

¹ The FBI Identity History Summary is a listing of certain information taken from fingerprint submissions kept by the FBI. It provides a uniform reporting process for the United States.

² Vulnerable Sector Check is a federally mandated standard set by the national Royal Canadian Mounted Police. The process determines whether or not an applicant has a record suspension (formerly known as pardons) for a sexual offence.

Overture 6, Susquehanna Valley Presbytery

- 1 *Adopted by Susquehanna Valley Presbytery at its stated meeting, November 18, 2023*
- 2 *Attested by /s/ TE Tucker York, stated clerk*