

1 **OVERTURE 8** from the Nashville Presbytery (to CCB, OC)
2 “Amend *BCO* 24-1 To Require REs and Deacons to State Confessional Differences”
3

4 **Whereas**, the Presbyterian Church in America is a confessional denomination, as defined by
5 its Constitution (*BCO*, Preface, III) and the vows that its Teaching Elders, Ruling
6 Elders, and Deacons are required to take concerning that Constitution (*BCO* 21-5, Q.2;
7 24-6, Q.2); and,
8

9 **Whereas**, the PCA clarified this confessional position to be “good faith subscription” at its
10 30th General Assembly (2002)¹ by adding to the examination of Teaching Elder
11 candidates what is now *BCO* 21-4.f,g, which includes: “While our Constitution does
12 not require the candidate’s affirmation of every statement and/or proposition of
13 doctrine in our *Confession of Faith* and *Catechisms*” and that the Presbytery “shall
14 require the candidate to state the specific instances in which he may differ with the
15 *Confession of Faith* and *Catechisms* in any of their statements and/or propositions.”;
16 and,
17

18 **Whereas**, *BCO* 24-1 is the parallel description of required examinations for Ruling Elder and
19 Deacon nominees, but does not contain the clarifications concerning good faith
20 subscription of *BCO* 21-4.f,g; and,
21

22 **Whereas**, the vow pertaining to the Confession and Catechisms that Ruling Elders and
23 Deacons take is identical to the vow for Teaching Elders (*BCO* 21-5, Q.2; 24-6, Q.2),
24 suggesting that their relationship to the *Confession* and *Catechisms* is the same as that
25 of Teaching Elders;
26

27 **Therefore, be it resolved** that the 52nd General Assembly amend *BCO* 24-1 to include the
28 following two paragraphs:
29

30 While our Constitution does not require the nominee’s affirmation of every statement
31 and/or proposition of doctrine in our *Confession of Faith* and *Catechisms*, it is the right
32 and responsibility of the Session to determine if the nominee is out of accord with any
33 of the fundamentals of these doctrinal standards and, as a consequence, may not be
34 able in good faith sincerely to receive and adopt the *Confession of Faith* and
35 *Catechisms* of this Church as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy
36 Scriptures (cf. *BCO* 21-5, Q.2; 24-6, Q.2).
37

38 Therefore, in examining a nominee for ordination, the Session shall inquire not only
39 into the nominee’s knowledge and views in the areas specified above but also shall
40 require the nominee to state the specific instances in which he may differ with the
41 *Confession of Faith* and *Catechisms* in any of their statements and/or propositions.
42 The court may grant an exception to any difference of doctrine only if in the court’s
43 judgment the nominee’s declared difference is not out of accord with any fundamental

¹ https://www.pcahistory.org/pca/ga/30th_pcaga_2002.pdf (pgs. 218-221)

1 of our system of doctrine because the difference is neither hostile to the system nor
2 strikes at the vitals of religion.

3
4 And enumerate the paragraphs to match the format of *BCO* 21-4, so that the amended section
5 will read as follows:
6

7 **24-1.** Every church shall elect persons to the offices of ruling elder and deacon in the
8 following manner: At such times as determined by the Session, communicant members of the
9 congregation may submit names to the Session, keeping in mind that each prospective officer
10 should be an active male member who meets the qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 3 and
11 Titus 1. Nominees for the office of ruling elder and/or deacon shall receive instruction in the
12 qualifications and work of the office.
13

- 14 a. Each nominee shall be examined in:
15 1. his Christian experience, especially his personal character and family management
16 (based on the qualifications set out in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9),
17 2. his knowledge of Bible content,
18 3. his knowledge of the system of doctrine, government, discipline contained in the
19 Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in America (*BCO* Preface III, The
20 Constitution Defined),
21 4. the duties of the office to which he has been nominated, and
22 5. his willingness to give assent to the questions required for ordination. (*BCO* 24-6).
23
24 b. In the examination of the nominee's personal character, the Session shall give specific
25 attention to potential notorious concerns. Careful attention must be given to his
26 practical struggle against sinful actions, as well as to persistent sinful desires. The
27 nominee must give clear testimony of reliance upon his union with Christ and the
28 benefits thereof by the Holy Spirit, depending on this work of grace to make progress
29 over sin (Psalm 103:2-5, Romans 8:29) and to bear fruit (Psalm 1:3, Gal. 5:22-23).
30 While imperfection will remain, when confessing sins and sinful temptations publicly,
31 the nominee must exercise great care not to diminish the seriousness of those sins in
32 the eyes of the congregation, as though they were matters of little consequence, but
33 rather should testify to the work of the Holy Spirit in his progress in holiness (1 Cor.
34 6:9-11).
35
36 c. Notwithstanding the above, the Session may render a decision on Christian experience
37 at any point in the process, and based on that decision, may judge him ineligible for
38 that election.
39
40 d. While our Constitution does not require the nominee's affirmation of every statement
41 and/or proposition of doctrine in our *Confession of Faith* and *Catechisms*, it is the right
42 and responsibility of the Session to determine if the nominee is out of accord with any
43 of the fundamentals of these doctrinal standards and, as a consequence, may not be
44 able in good faith sincerely to receive and adopt the *Confession of Faith* and

1 *Catechisms* of this Church as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy
2 Scriptures (cf. *BCO* 21-5, Q.2; 24-6, Q.2).

3

4 e. Therefore, in examining a nominee for ordination, the Session shall inquire not only
5 into the nominee's knowledge and views in the areas specified above but also shall
6 require the nominee to state the specific instances in which he may differ with the
7 *Confession of Faith* and *Catechisms* in any of their statements and/or propositions.
8 The court may grant an exception to any difference of doctrine only if in the court's
9 judgment the nominee's declared difference is not out of accord with any fundamental
10 of our system of doctrine because the difference is neither hostile to the system nor
11 strikes at the vitals of religion.

12

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

16

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

22

23

24 *Adopted by the Nashville Presbytery at its 120th Stated Meeting on November 12, 2024*

25 *Attested by R. Neil Spence, Stated Clerk*