

1 **OVERTURE 12** from the Providence Presbytery (to CCB, OC)
2 “Amend *BCO* 58-5 to Specify Only Officers May Distribute the Lord’s Supper”
3

4 **Whereas** our *Confession of Faith* (29.3), *Catechisms* (*Larger Catechism* 169, 173, and 176)
5 and the declarations of our own denomination* call for the Supper to be administered
6 by ministers,
7

8 **And whereas** the keys of the Kingdom and the sacraments are to be in the hands of the
9 ordained offices of the church (Matthew 16:19),
10

11 **And whereas** the role of the Session in discipline impinges upon the serving of the Supper
12 (*BCO* 30-3; cf. *WCF* 30:1-4)
13

14 **And whereas** not since the beginning of Presbyterianism has the administering of the
15 sacraments been in the hands of the non-ordained membership (see also the Scots
16 Confession, Chapter 22**),
17

18 **And whereas** in the Presbyterian church the passing of the elements by the laity has
19 historically been done while seated, while those standing in front of the congregation
20 represent the administering and serving role, and having non-ordained people standing
21 with the minister and serving the Supper confuses the role of ordained office,
22

23 **And whereas** there are no positive Scriptural mandates to allow non-ordained members to
24 administer and serve communion that would encourage us to change our practice,
25

26 **And whereas** the Directory of Worship (58-5) only implies (or assumes) the role of the
27 officers in the serving of the Supper, not foreseeing the cultural trends in our
28 contemporary society,
29

30 **Be it resolved** that we overture the 52nd General Assembly to amend the Directory of Worship
31 in *BCO* 58-5, third paragraph as follows (underlining for additions):
32

33 Here the bread is to be distributed by the minister or to other officers for
34 distribution. After having given the bread, he shall take the cup, and say:

35 **In the same manner, He also took the cup, and having given thanks**
36 **as has been done in His name, He gave it to the disciples, saying, “This cup**
37 **is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for many for the remission**
38 **of sins. Drink from it, all of you.”**
39

40 While the minister is repeating these words, let him give the cup directly to the
41 people or to the officers for distribution.
42

43
44 *Adopted by the Providence Presbytery at its stated meeting, February 4, 2025.*

45 *Attested by TE Adam Tisdale, Stated Clerk*
46

Sources Referenced

1
2
3 **WCF 29.3** The Lord Jesus hath, in this ordinance, appointed his ministers to declare his word
4 of institution to the people; to pray, and bless the elements of bread and wine, and thereby to
5 set them apart from a common to an holy use; and to take and break the bread, to take the cup,
6 and (they communicating also themselves) to give both to the communicants; but to none who
7 are not then present in the congregation.
8

9 **WLC 169.** How hath Christ appointed bread and wine to be given and received in the
10 sacrament of the Lord's Supper? A. Christ hath appointed the ministers of his Word, in the
11 administration of this sacrament of the Lord's Supper, to set apart the bread and wine from
12 common use, by the word of institution, thanksgiving, and prayer; to take and break the bread,
13 and to give both the bread and the wine to the communicants: who are, by the same
14 appointment, to take and eat the bread, and to drink the wine, in thankful remembrance that
15 the body of Christ was broken and given, and his blood shed, for them.
16

17 **WLC 173.** May any who profess the faith, and desire to come to the Lord's Supper, be kept
18 from it? A. Such as are found to be ignorant or scandalous, notwithstanding their profession
19 of the faith, and desire to come to the Lord's Supper, may and ought to be kept from that
20 sacrament, by the power which Christ hath left in his church, until they receive instruction,
21 and manifest their reformation.
22

23 **WLC 176.** Wherein do the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper agree? A. The
24 sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper agree, in that the author of both is God; the
25 spiritual part of both is Christ and his benefits; both are seals of the same covenant, are to be
26 dispensed by ministers of the gospel, and by none other; and to be continued in the church of
27 Christ until his second coming.
28

29 **Matthew 16:19** I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on
30 earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed^[a] in heaven."
31 (English Standard Version)
32

33 **BCO 30-3.** Suspension from Sacraments is the temporary exclusion from those ordinances,
34 and is indefinite as to its duration. There is no definite suspension from the Sacraments.
35 Suspension from office is the exclusion of a church officer from his office. This may be
36 definite or indefinite as to its duration. With respect to church officers, suspension from
37 Sacraments shall always be accompanied by suspension from office. But suspension from
38 office is not always necessarily accompanied with suspension from Sacraments. Definite
39 suspension from office is administered when the credit of religion, the honor of Christ, and
40 the good of the delinquent demand it, even though the delinquent has given satisfaction to the
41 court. Indefinite suspension is administered to the impenitent offender until he exhibits signs
42 of repentance, or until by his conduct, the necessity of the greatest censure be made manifest.
43 In the case of indefinite suspension from office imposed due to scandalous conduct, the
44 procedure outlined in BCO 34- 8 shall be followed.
45

1 **WCF 30.1.** The Lord Jesus, as King and Head of his church, hath therein appointed a
2 government, in the hand of church officers, distinct from the civil magistrate.

3 2. To these officers the keys of the kingdom of heaven are committed; by virtue whereof, they
4 have power, respectively, to retain, and remit sins; to shut that kingdom against the impenitent,
5 both by the Word, and censures; and to open it unto penitent sinners, by the ministry of the
6 gospel; and by absolution from censures, as occasion shall require.

7 3. Church censures are necessary, for the reclaiming and gaining of offending brethren, for
8 deterring of others from the like offenses, for purging out of that leaven which might infect
9 the whole lump, for vindicating the honor of Christ, and the holy profession of the gospel, and
10 for preventing the wrath of God, which might justly fall upon the church, if they should suffer
11 his covenant, and the seals thereof, to be profaned by notorious and obstinate offenders.

12 4. For the better attaining of these ends, the officers of the church are to proceed by
13 admonition; suspension from the sacrament of the Lord's Supper for a season; and by
14 excommunication from the church; according to the nature of the crime, and demerit of the
15 person.

16
17 * Ruling Elders Administering Sacraments (pcahistory.org) "Recommendation No. 8: That
18 the General Assembly affirm that in keeping with the Confessional Standards of the Church,
19 only properly ordained Teaching Elders may administer the Sacraments. Adopted. (Minutes
20 of the Seventh General Assembly, 1979, pp. 83-84)."

21
22 ****Scots Confession, Chapter 22: Of the Right Administration of the Sacraments**
23 That sacraments be rightly ministered, we judge two things requisite: the one, that they be
24 ministered by lawful ministers, whom we affirm to be only they that are appointed to the
25 preaching of the word, or into whose mouths God has put some sermon of exhortation, they
26 being men lawfully chosen thereto by some kirk. The other, that they be ministered in such
27 elements, and in such sort, as God has appointed; else, we affirm that they cease to be right
28 sacraments of Christ Jesus.

29
30 And therefore it is that we flee the society of the Papistical kirk, in participation of their
31 sacraments: first, because their ministers are no ministers of Christ Jesus; yea (which is more
32 horrible) they suffer women, whom the Holy Ghost will not suffer to teach in the congregation,
33 to baptize. And, secondly, because they have so adulterated both the one sacrament and the
34 other with their own inventions, that no part of Christ's action abides in the original purity: for
35 oil, salt, spittle, and suchlike in baptism, are but men's inventions. Adoration, veneration,
36 bearing through streets and towns, and keeping of bread in boxes or buists [chests], are
37 profanation of Christ's sacraments, and no use of the same. For Christ Jesus said, Take, eat,
38 etc. Do ye this in remembrance of me. By which words and charge he sanctified bread and
39 wine, to be the sacrament of his body and blood, to the end that the one should be eaten, and
40 that all should drink of the other; and not that they should be kept to be worshipped, and
41 honoured as God, as the blind Papists have done heretofore, who also committed sacrilege,
42 stealing from the people the one part of the sacrament: to wit, the blessed cup.

43
44 Moreover, that the sacraments be rightly used, it is required that the end and cause why the
45 sacraments were instituted be understood and observed, as well of the minister, as the

1 receivers. For if the opinion be changed in the receiver, the right use ceases: which is most
2 evident by the rejection of the sacrifices; as also if the teacher plainly teaches false doctrine,
3 which were odious and abominable before God (albeit they were his own ordinances), because
4 that wicked men use them to another end than God has ordained. The same affirm we of the
5 sacraments in the Papistical kirk, in which we affirm the whole action of the Lord Jesus to be
6 adulterated, as well in the external form, as in the end and opinion. What Christ Jesus did, and
7 commanded to be done, is evident by the evangelists, and by Saint Paul. What the priest does
8 at his altar we need not rehearse. The end and cause of Christ's institution, and why the
9 selfsame should be used, is expressed in these words: Do this in remembrance of me. As oft
10 as ye shall eat of this bread and drink of this cup, ye shall show forth, that is, extol, preach,
11 magnify, and praise, the Lord's death till he come. But to what end, and in what opinion, the
12 priests say their Mass, let the words of the same, their own doctors and writings witness: to
13 wit, that they, as mediators betwixt Christ and his kirk, do offer unto God the Father a sacrifice
14 propitiatory for the sins of the quick and the dead. Which doctrine, as blasphemous to Christ
15 Jesus, and making derogation to the sufficiency of his only sacrifice, once offered for
16 purgation of all those that shall be sanctified, we utterly abhor, detest, and renounce.

17
18 **BCO 58-5.** The table, on which the elements are placed, being decently covered, and furnished
19 with bread and wine, and the communicants orderly and gravely sitting around it (or in their
20 seats before it), the elders in a convenient place together, the minister should then set the
21 elements apart by prayer and thanksgiving.

22 The bread and wine being thus set apart by prayer and thanksgiving, the minister is to
23 take the bread, and break it, in the view of the people, saying:

24 **That the Lord Jesus Christ on the same night in which He was betrayed took**
25 **bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it, gave it to His disciples, as I,**
26 **ministering in His name, give this bread to you, and said, "Take, eat; this is My**
27 **body which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me."** (Some other biblical
28 account of the institution of this part of the Supper may be substituted here.)

29
30 Here the bread is to be distributed. After having given the bread, he shall take the cup,
31 and say:

32 **In the same manner, He also took the cup, and having given thanks as has been**
33 **done in His name, He gave it to the disciples, saying, "This cup is the new**
34 **covenant in My blood, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. Drink**
35 **from it, all of you."**

36
37 While the minister is repeating these words, let him give the cup.