

1 **OVERTURE 30** from the Houston Metro Presbytery (to CCB, OC, AC, CC, CDM, CTS,
2 Geneva, MNA, MTW, PCAF, RH, RUF)

3 “Amend *BCO* 8-4, 20-1, 21-1, 21-12, and 23-1 re the Calling and Dissolution of TE
4 Relationships for Needful Works”

5
6 **Be it resolved** that *BCO* 8-4, 20-1, and 21-1 be amended as follows (underlining for
7 additions):

8
9 **8-4.** As the Lord has given different gifts to men and has committed to some special
10 gifts and callings, the Church is authorized to call and appoint some to labor as
11 teaching elders in such works as may be needful to the Church (cf. *BCO* 21-12). When
12 a teaching elder is called to such needful work, it shall be incumbent upon him to make
13 full proof of his ministry by disseminating the Gospel for the edification of the Church.
14 He shall make a report to the Presbytery at least once each year.

15
16 **20-1.** Before a candidate, or licentiate, can be ordained to the office of the ministry,
17 he must receive a call to a definite work. Ordinarily the call must come from a church,
18 Presbytery, a permanent Committee or Agency (see *BCO* 14-1.12), or the General
19 Assembly of this denomination. If the call comes from another source, the Presbytery
20 shall always make a record of the reasons why it considers the work to be a valid
21 Christian ministry. (See also *BCO* 8-7 and 21-1).

22 A proper call must be written and in the hands of the Presbytery prior to being
23 acted upon by a Presbytery. It must include financial arrangements (such as salary,
24 vacation, insurance, retirement, etc.) between those calling and the one called, and
25 assurance that the definite work will afford the liberty to proclaim and practice fully
26 and freely the whole counsel of God, as contained in the Scriptures and understood in
27 the *Westminster Confession of Faith*. It shall be in accord with the *BCO* 8.

28
29 **21-1.** No minister, licentiate or candidate shall receive a call from a church or a call
30 to a needful work (*BCO* 21-12) but by the permission of his Presbytery. When a call
31 has been presented to the Presbytery, if found in order and the Presbytery deems it for
32 the good of the Church, they shall place it in the hands of the person to whom it is
33 addressed.

34 Ordinarily a candidate or licentiate may not be granted permission by the
35 Presbytery to move on to the field to which he has been called, prior to his examination
36 for licensure or ordination. Likewise an ordained minister from another Presbyterian
37 Church in America Presbytery or another denomination, ordinarily shall not move on
38 to the field to which he has been called until examined and received by Presbytery.

39
40 **Be it resolved** that *BCO* 21 be amended by adding a new paragraph, *BCO* 21-12 as follows
41 (underlining for additions):

42
43 **21-12. Needful Works and Calls from Outside the PCA.**

- 1 a. A minister, licentiate, or candidate that receives a call from a body other than a
2 PCA church shall be considered to have a call to a Needful Work (cf. BCO 8-4).
3 Such calls shall include (without limitation): (i) calls from the General Assembly
4 or a Permanent Committee or Agency, (ii) chaplaincy calls from a presbytery,
5 MNA, other Permanent Committee or Agency, or other body, (iii) missionary calls
6 from MTW or other missionary society, (iv) campus minister calls from RUF, (v)
7 calls from outside the PCA, and (vi) calls to be a teacher in a school of divinity or
8 college or university.
- 9 b. **Ordination to a Needful Work.** The day appointed for the ordination having
10 come, and the Presbytery being convened, a sermon suitable for the occasion shall
11 be preached by a person appointed or invited by the Presbytery. The Presbytery
12 member appointed to preside shall afterwards briefly recite from the pulpit the
13 proceedings of the Presbytery preparatory to the ordination; he shall point out the
14 nature and importance of the ordinance, and endeavor to impress the audience with
15 a proper sense of the solemnity of the transaction.

16
17 **Questions for Ordination**
18

19 Then, addressing himself to the candidate, he shall propose to him the
20 following questions:

- 21 1. **Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as**
22 **originally given, to be the inerrant Word of God, the only infallible**
23 **rule of faith and practice?**
- 24 2. **Do you sincerely receive and adopt the *Confession of Faith* and the**
25 ***Catechisms* of this Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught**
26 **in the Holy Scriptures; and do you further promise that if at any time**
27 **you find yourself out of accord with any of the fundamentals of this**
28 **system of doctrine, you will on your own initiative, make known to**
29 **your Presbytery the change which has taken place in your views since**
30 **the assumption of this ordination vow?**
- 31 3. **Do you approve of the form of government and discipline of the**
32 **Presbyterian Church in America, in conformity with the general**
33 **principles of Biblical polity?**
- 34 4. **Do you promise subjection to your brethren in the Lord?**
- 35 5. **Have you been induced, as far as you know your own heart, to seek the**
36 **office of the holy ministry from love to God and a sincere desire to**
37 **promote His glory in the Gospel of His Son?**
- 38 6. **Do you promise to be zealous and faithful in maintaining the truths of**
39 **the Gospel and the purity and peace and unity of the Church, whatever**
40 **persecution or opposition may arise unto you on that account?**
- 41 7. **Do you engage to be faithful and diligent in the exercise of all your**
42 **duties as a Christian and a minister of the Gospel, whether personal**
43 **or relational, private or public; and to endeavor by the grace of God**
44 **to adorn the profession of the Gospel in your manner of life, and to**

1 walk with exemplary piety before the flock of which God shall make
2 you overseer?

- 3 8. Do you now undertake this Needful Work, and do you promise, in
4 reliance on God for strength, to be faithful in the discharge of all the
5 duties incumbent on you as a minister of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus
6 Christ?

7
8 The candidate having answered these questions in the affirmative, the
9 presiding minister shall propose to the calling entity the following questions:

- 10
11 1. Do you, the people of this calling entity, continue to profess your
12 readiness to receive _____, whom you have called to this
13 Needful Work?
14 2. Do you promise to receive the word of truth from his mouth with
15 meekness and love?
16 3. Do you promise to encourage him in his labors, and to assist his
17 endeavors for your instruction and spiritual edification?
18 4. Do you engage to continue to him while he is in this call that
19 competent worldly maintenance which you have promised, and to
20 furnish him with whatever you may see needful for the honor of
21 religion and for his comfort among you?

22
23 The people of the calling entity having answered these questions in the
24 affirmative, by holding up their right hands, the candidate shall kneel, and the
25 presiding minister shall, with prayer and the laying on of hands of the Presbytery,
26 according to the apostolic example, solemnly set him apart to the holy office of the
27 Gospel ministry. Prayer being ended, he shall rise from his knees; and the minister
28 who presides shall first, followed by all members of the Presbytery, take him by
29 the right hand, saying, in words to this effect:

30
31 We give you the right hand of fellowship, to take part in this ministry
32 with us.

33
34 The presiding minister shall then say:

35
36 I now pronounce and declare that _____ has been
37 regularly elected, and ordained, agreeable to the Word of God, and
38 according to the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in America;
39 and that as such he is entitled to all support, encouragement, honor, and
40 obedience in the Lord: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of
41 the Holy Ghost. Amen.

42
43 After which the minister presiding, or some other teaching or ruling elder
44 appointed for the purpose, shall give a solemn charge to the minister to persevere
45 in the discharge of his duties, and then after prayer and the singing of a psalm, or

1 hymn, the congregation shall be dismissed with the benediction. The Presbytery
2 shall duly record its proceedings.

- 3
4 **c. Installation to a Needful Work.** In the installation of an ordained minister to a
5 Needful Work, the following questions are to be substituted for those addressed to
6 a candidate for ordination, namely:

7
8 **Questions for Installation**

- 9
10 1. **Are you now willing to take charge of this Needful Work, agreeable to**
11 **your declaration in accepting the call?**
12 2. **Do you conscientiously believe and declare, as far as you know your**
13 **own heart, that, in taking upon you this charge, you are influenced by**
14 **a sincere desire to promote the glory of God and the good of the**
15 **Church?**
16 3. **Do you solemnly promise that, by the assistance of the grace of God,**
17 **you will endeavor faithfully to discharge all the duties of this Needful**
18 **Work, and will be careful to maintain a deportment in all respects**
19 **becoming a minister of the Gospel of Christ, agreeable to your**
20 **ordination engagements?**

21
22 The candidate having answered these questions in the affirmative, the
23 presiding minister shall propose to the calling entity the following questions:

- 24
25 1. **Do you, the people of this calling entity, continue to profess your**
26 **readiness to receive _____, whom you have called to this**
27 **Needful Work?**
28 2. **Do you promise to receive the word of truth from his mouth with**
29 **meekness and love?**
30 3. **Do you promise to encourage him in his labors, and to assist his**
31 **endeavors for your instruction and spiritual edification?**
32 4. **Do you engage to continue to him while he is in this call that competent**
33 **worldly maintenance which you have promised, and to furnish him**
34 **with whatever you may see needful for the honor of religion and for**
35 **his comfort among you?**

- 36
37 **d. Transfer of man in a Needful Work.** When a man who has a call to a Needful
38 Work desires to move from one field of labor to another, if the field of labor is in
39 another Presbytery, the minister must be examined and approved by the Presbytery
40 to labor in the field to which he is being transferred, and must be released for
41 transfer by his present Presbytery (see BCO 13-6).

42
43 **Be it further resolved** that BCO 23-1 be amended by adding the following at the end of the
44 current section as a new paragraph (underlining for additions).
45

1 In the case of a needful work (BCO 21-12), when any minister shall tender the
2 resignation of his call to his Presbytery, the Presbytery shall cite the calling entity to
3 appear, to show cause why the Presbytery should or should not accept the resignation.
4 If the calling entity fails to appear, or if its reasons for retaining the minister be deemed
5 insufficient, his resignation shall be accepted and the relation dissolved. If any calling
6 entity desires to be relieved of the minister called to the particular needful work, a
7 similar procedure shall be observed. In any case, the minister must not physically leave
8 the field until the Presbytery or its commission empowered to handle uncontested
9 requests for dissolution has dissolved the relation.

10
11 So that BCO 8-4, 20-1, 21-1, 21-12, and 23-1, as amended, would read:

12
13 **8-4.** As the Lord has given different gifts to men and has committed to some special
14 gifts and callings, the Church is authorized to call and appoint some to labor as
15 teaching elders in such works as may be needful to the Church (*cf.* BCO 21-12). When
16 a teaching elder is called to such needful work, it shall be incumbent upon him to make
17 full proof of his ministry by disseminating the Gospel for the edification of the Church.
18 He shall make a report to the Presbytery at least once each year.

19
20 **20-1.** Before a candidate, or licentiate, can be ordained to the office of the ministry,
21 he must receive a call to a definite work. Ordinarily the call must come from a church,
22 Presbytery, a permanent Committee or Agency (see BCO 14-1.12), or the General
23 Assembly of this denomination. If the call comes from another source, the Presbytery
24 shall always make a record of the reasons why it considers the work to be a valid
25 Christian ministry. (See also BCO 8-7 and 21-1).

26 A proper call must be written and in the hands of the Presbytery prior to being
27 acted upon by a Presbytery. It must include financial arrangements (such as salary,
28 vacation, insurance, retirement, etc.) between those calling and the one called, and
29 assurance that the definite work will afford the liberty to proclaim and practice fully
30 and freely the whole counsel of God, as contained in the Scriptures and understood in
31 the *Westminster Confession of Faith*. It shall be in accord with the BCO 8.

32
33 **21-1.** No minister, licentiate or candidate shall receive a call from a church or a call
34 to a needful work (BCO 21-12) but by the permission of his Presbytery. When a call
35 has been presented to the Presbytery, if found in order and the Presbytery deems it for
36 the good of the Church, they shall place it in the hands of the person to whom it is
37 addressed.

38 Ordinarily a candidate or licentiate may not be granted permission by the
39 Presbytery to move on to the field to which he has been called, prior to his examination
40 for licensure or ordination. Likewise an ordained minister from another Presbyterian
41 Church in America Presbytery or another denomination, ordinarily shall not move on
42 to the field to which he has been called until examined and received by Presbytery.

43 **21-12. Needful Works and Calls from Outside the PCA.**
44
45

- 1 a. A minister, licentiate, or candidate that receives a call from a body other than a
2 PCA church shall be considered to have a call to a Needful Work (*cf. BCO 8-4*).
3 Such calls shall include (without limitation): (i) calls from the General Assembly
4 or a Permanent Committee or Agency, (ii) chaplaincy calls from a presbytery,
5 MNA, other Permanent Committee or Agency, or other body, (iii) missionary calls
6 from MTW or other missionary society, (iv) campus minister calls from RUF, (v)
7 calls from outside the PCA, and (vi) calls to be a teacher in a school of divinity or
8 college or university.
- 9 b. **Ordination to a Needful Work.** The day appointed for the ordination having
10 come, and the Presbytery being convened, a sermon suitable for the occasion shall
11 be preached by a person appointed or invited by the Presbytery. The Presbytery
12 member appointed to preside shall afterwards briefly recite from the pulpit the
13 proceedings of the Presbytery preparatory to the ordination; he shall point out the
14 nature and importance of the ordinance, and endeavor to impress the audience with
15 a proper sense of the solemnity of the transaction.

16 Questions for Ordination

17
18
19 Then, addressing himself to the candidate, he shall propose to him the
20 following questions:

- 21 1. **Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as**
22 **originally given, to be the inerrant Word of God, the only infallible**
23 **rule of faith and practice?**
- 24 2. **Do you sincerely receive and adopt the *Confession of Faith* and the**
25 ***Catechisms* of this Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught**
26 **in the Holy Scriptures; and do you further promise that if at any time**
27 **you find yourself out of accord with any of the fundamentals of this**
28 **system of doctrine, you will on your own initiative, make known to**
29 **your Presbytery the change which has taken place in your views since**
30 **the assumption of this ordination vow?**
- 31 3. **Do you approve of the form of government and discipline of the**
32 **Presbyterian Church in America, in conformity with the general**
33 **principles of Biblical polity?**
- 34 4. **Do you promise subjection to your brethren in the Lord?**
- 35 5. **Have you been induced, as far as you know your own heart, to seek the**
36 **office of the holy ministry from love to God and a sincere desire to**
37 **promote His glory in the Gospel of His Son?**
- 38 6. **Do you promise to be zealous and faithful in maintaining the truths of**
39 **the Gospel and the purity and peace and unity of the Church, whatever**
40 **persecution or opposition may arise unto you on that account?**
- 41 7. **Do you engage to be faithful and diligent in the exercise of all your**
42 **duties as a Christian and a minister of the Gospel, whether personal**
43 **or relational, private or public; and to endeavor by the grace of God**
44 **to adorn the profession of the Gospel in your manner of life, and to**

1 walk with exemplary piety before the flock of which God shall make
2 you overseer?

- 3 **8. Do you now undertake this Needful Work, and do you promise, in**
4 **reliance on God for strength, to be faithful in the discharge of all the**
5 **duties incumbent on you as a minister of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus**
6 **Christ?**

7
8 The candidate having answered these questions in the affirmative, the
9 presiding minister shall propose to the calling entity the following questions:

- 10
11 **1. Do you, the people of this calling entity, continue to profess your**
12 **readiness to receive _____, whom you have called to this**
13 **Needful Work?**
14 **2. Do you promise to receive the word of truth from his mouth with**
15 **mekness and love?**
16 **3. Do you promise to encourage him in his labors, and to assist his**
17 **endeavors for your instruction and spiritual edification?**
18 **4. Do you engage to continue to him while he is in this call that**
19 **competent worldly maintenance which you have promised, and to**
20 **furnish him with whatever you may see needful for the honor of**
21 **religion and for his comfort among you?**

22
23 The people of the calling entity having answered these questions in the
24 affirmative, by holding up their right hands, the candidate shall kneel, and the
25 presiding minister shall, with prayer and the laying on of hands of the Presbytery,
26 according to the apostolic example, solemnly set him apart to the holy office of the
27 Gospel ministry. Prayer being ended, he shall rise from his knees; and the minister
28 who presides shall first, followed by all members of the Presbytery, take him by
29 the right hand, saying, in words to this effect:

30
31 **We give you the right hand of fellowship, to take part in this ministry**
32 **with us.**

33
34 The presiding minister shall then say:

35
36 **I now pronounce and declare that _____ has been**
37 **regularly elected, and ordained, agreeable to the Word of God, and**
38 **according to the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in America;**
39 **and that as such he is entitled to all support, encouragement, honor, and**
40 **obedience in the Lord: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of**
41 **the Holy Ghost. Amen.**

42
43 After which the minister presiding, or some other teaching or ruling elder
44 appointed for the purpose, shall give a solemn charge to the minister to persevere
45 in the discharge of his duties, and then after prayer and the singing of a psalm, or

1 hymn, the congregation shall be dismissed with the benediction. The Presbytery
2 shall duly record its proceedings.

- 3
4 **c. Installation to a Needful Work.** In the installation of an ordained minister to a
5 Needful Work, the following questions are to be substituted for those addressed to
6 a candidate for ordination, namely:

7
8 **Questions for Installation**

- 9
10 1. **Are you now willing to take charge of this Needful Work, agreeable to**
11 **your declaration in accepting the call?**
12 2. **Do you conscientiously believe and declare, as far as you know your**
13 **own heart, that, in taking upon you this charge, you are influenced by**
14 **a sincere desire to promote the glory of God and the good of the**
15 **Church?**
16 3. **Do you solemnly promise that, by the assistance of the grace of God,**
17 **you will endeavor faithfully to discharge all the duties of this Needful**
18 **Work, and will be careful to maintain a deportment in all respects**
19 **becoming a minister of the Gospel of Christ, agreeable to your**
20 **ordination engagements?**

21
22 The candidate having answered these questions in the affirmative, the
23 presiding minister shall propose to the calling entity the following questions:

- 24
25 1. **Do you, the people of this calling entity, continue to profess your**
26 **readiness to receive _____, whom you have called to this**
27 **Needful Work?**
28 2. **Do you promise to receive the word of truth from his mouth with**
29 **meekness and love?**
30 3. **Do you promise to encourage him in his labors, and to assist his**
31 **endeavors for your instruction and spiritual edification?**
32 4. **Do you engage to continue to him while he is in this call that competent**
33 **worldly maintenance which you have promised, and to furnish him**
34 **with whatever you may see needful for the honor of religion and for**
35 **his comfort among you?**

- 36
37 **d. Transfer of man in a Needful Work.** When a man who has a call to a Needful
38 Work desires to move from one field of labor to another, if the field of labor is in
39 another Presbytery, the minister must be examined and approved by the Presbytery
40 to labor in the field to which he is being transferred, and must be released for
41 transfer by his present Presbytery (see *BCO* 13-6).

42
43 **23-1.** When any minister shall tender the resignation of his pastoral charge to his
44 Presbytery, the Presbytery shall cite the church to appear by its commissioners, to
45 show cause why the Presbytery should or should not accept the resignation. If the

1 church fails to appear, or if its reasons for retaining its pastor be deemed insufficient,
2 his resignation shall be accepted and the pastoral relation dissolved.

3 If any church desires to be relieved of its pastor, a similar procedure shall be
4 observed. But whether the minister or the church initiates proceedings for a
5 dissolution of the relation, there shall always be a meeting of the congregation called
6 and conducted in the same manner as the call of the pastor. In any case, the minister
7 must not physically leave the field until the Presbytery or its commission empowered
8 to handle uncontested requests for dissolution has dissolved the relation.

9 The associate or assistant pastors may continue to serve a congregation when
10 the pastoral relation of the senior pastor is dissolved, but they may not normally
11 succeed the senior pastor without an intervening term of service in a different field of
12 labor. However a congregation by a secret ballot with four-fifths (4/5) majority vote
13 may petition Presbytery for an exception which by a three-fourths (3/4) majority vote
14 Presbytery may grant. Presbytery needs to determine if the dissolution of the pastoral
15 relationship with the senior pastor was brought about in Christian love and good order
16 on the part of the parties concerned.

17 In the case of a needful work (*BCO* 21-12), when any minister shall tender the
18 resignation of his call to his Presbytery, the Presbytery shall cite the calling entity to
19 appear, to show cause why the Presbytery should or should not accept the resignation.
20 If the calling entity fails to appear, or if its reasons for retaining the minister be deemed
21 insufficient, his resignation shall be accepted and the relation dissolved. If any calling
22 entity desires to be relieved of the minister called to the particular needful work, a
23 similar procedure shall be observed. In any case, the minister must not physically leave
24 the field until the Presbytery or its commission empowered to handle uncontested
25 requests for dissolution has dissolved the relation.

26
27 **RATIONALE:**

28
29 The current provisions of the *BCO* allow for calls to come from entities other than
30 congregations but do not specify how those calls should be presented and prosecuted or
31 dissolved. Additionally, the ordination and installation questions presume a man is being
32 ordained and installed into a pastoral role in a congregation. That means that the questions are
33 inapplicable in the context of a campus minister or a chaplain, for example.

34
35 Current *BCO* 8-4 is the result of an editing process from material in the *BCO* of the PCUS,
36 which included additional material describing “works as may be needful to the Church” as
37 follows:

38
39 “When a Minister is appointed to be a teacher in a school of divinity, or to give instruction in
40 the doctrines and duties of religion to youth assembled in a college or university, it appertains
41 to his office to take a pastoral oversight of those committed to his charge, and to be diligent
42 in sowing the seed of the Word and gathering the fruit thereof, as one who watches for souls.”
43

44 There are several common categories of calls to a Teaching Elder that are not to a
45 congregation. Among them would be campus minister (*RUF*), military and other chaplains

1 (MNA), missionary (MTW), and teachers (CTS and CC). Other permanent committees and
2 agencies (e.g., Ridge Haven, Geneva Benefits) may or could issue calls to a teaching elder.
3 The Stated Clerk (*RAO* 3-1) is called by the General Assembly. All of these calls are legitimate
4 to the ministry (teaching elder) and require a minister to hold his membership in a Presbytery
5 (*BCO* 13-2). The Overture seeks to regularize how those calls are presented and dissolved and
6 to avoid the confusion that has sometimes resulted from a lack of clarity.

7
8 The Overture sacrifices brevity for the sake of clarity in the ordination and installation of men
9 in the case of a needful work. It adds a new subsection to *BCO* 21 to set forth questions
10 applicable in a non-congregational context to avoid numerous footnotes or an entire new
11 chapter to the *BCO* that would necessitate renumbering of all subsequent chapters.

12
13 Finally, the Overture seeks to give the permanent committees and agencies the same flexibility
14 with respect to calls that congregations currently enjoy while underscoring the responsibility
15 of Presbyteries to approve or dissolve calls, just as they do with congregational pastoral calls.
16

17
18 *Adopted by Houston Metro Presbytery at its stated meeting, April 14, 2025*

19 *Attested by RE /s/ Eric Manthei, stated clerk*