

OVERTURE 14 from the Southwest Florida Presbytery (to CCB, OC)
“Amend *BCO* 7-3, 7-4, 9-2, and 9-7 to Regarding Titles for Unordained People”

Be it resolved that the 53rd General Assembly amend *BCO* 7-3, 7-4, 9-2, and 9-7 as follows
(underlining for additions; ~~strikethrough~~ for deletions):

7-3. No one who holds office in the Church ought to usurp authority therein, or receive any official titles of spiritual preeminence, except such as are employed in the Scriptures. ~~Furthermore, u~~Unordained people shall not be referred to as, or given the titles of, the ordained offices of pastor/elder, or deacon. Furthermore, unordained people, whether publicly or privately, shall neither be elected, commissioned, appointed, installed, designated, or otherwise given the title of pastor, elder, or deacon, nor shall they be denominated with any synonymous title including but not limited to shepherd/shepherdess, eldress, pastorell, minister, deaconess, or other designation which might reasonably communicate or imply the holding of the office of pastor, elder, or deacon, or their having the authority to exercise any of the functions thereof.

7-4. No churches shall invent new types or classes of church offices or officers which are not either pastors/elders, or deacons. Moreover, no churches may, through congregational action, elect, commission, appoint, install, ordain, or designate any unordained individuals into any ecclesiastical roles or offices, or confer titles of church authority besides those of pastors/elders, or deacons, particularly roles that appear to exercise a general authority over adults in the congregation. Any other appointed administrative or ministry support roles (such as other church staff or volunteer positions) shall be appointed by the Session, and their given titles must not be subject to confusion with the titles or unique responsibilities of the ordained offices of pastor/elder, or deacon, or any variation or synonym thereof.

9-2. It is the duty of the deacons to minister to those who are in need, to the sick, to the friendless, and to any who may be in distress. It is their duty also to develop the grace of liberality in the members of the church, to devise effective methods of collecting the gifts of the people, and to distribute these gifts among the objects to which they are contributed. They shall have the care of the property of the congregation, both real and personal, and shall keep in proper repair the church edifice and other buildings belonging to the congregation. In matters of special importance affecting the property of the church, they cannot take final action without the approval of the Session and consent of the congregation.

In the discharge of their duties the deacons are under the supervision and authority of the Session. In a church in which it is impossible for any reason to secure deacons, the duties of the office shall devolve upon the ruling elders. It is highly undesirable for churches to persist without ordained deacons, and Presbyteries should be diligent to assist all their churches in ordaining qualified deacons. If

deacons cannot be ordained, then the ruling elders must directly execute the responsibilities of the deacons defined herein and may not delegate these responsibilities entirely to unordained staff or volunteers.

9-7. It is often expedient that the Session of a church should select and appoint godly men and women of the congregation to assist the deacons in caring for the sick, the widows, the orphans, the prisoners, and others who may be in any distress or need. These assistants to the deacons are not officers of the church (*BCO* 7-2) and, as such, are not subjects for ordination (*BCO* 17). Therefore, these assistants may not be referred to as deacons or deaconesses or full members of the diaconate (or any translation or variation thereof), and in any communications of the church, care should be taken in order that they are clearly distinguished from the ordained deacons. It is also not allowable to appoint persons formally to be assistants to the deacons if there are no regularly ordained and installed deacons actively serving in the congregation.

So that the amended passages would read:

7-3. No one who holds office in the Church ought to usurp authority therein, or receive any official titles of spiritual preeminence, except such as are employed in the Scriptures. Unordained people shall not be referred to as, or given the titles of, the ordained offices of pastor/elder, or deacon. Furthermore, unordained people, whether publicly or privately, shall neither be elected, commissioned, appointed, installed, designated, or otherwise given the title of pastor, elder, or deacon, nor shall they be denominated with any synonymous title including but not limited to shepherd/shepherdess, eldress, pastorell, minister, deaconess, or other designation which might reasonably communicate or imply the holding of the office of pastor, elder, or deacon, or their having the authority to exercise any of the functions thereof.

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2 to which they are contributed. They shall have the care of the property of the
3 congregation, both real and personal, and shall keep in proper repair the church
4 edifice and other buildings belonging to the congregation. In matters of special
5 importance affecting the property of the church, they cannot take final action
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10 deacons, the duties of the office shall devolve upon the ruling elders. It is highly
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14 responsibilities of the deacons defined herein and may not delegate these
15 responsibilities entirely to unordained staff or volunteers.

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20 distress or need. These assistants to the deacons are not officers of the church
21 (*BCO 7-2*) and, as such, are not subjects for ordination (*BCO 17*). Therefore, these
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23 the diaconate (or any translation or variation thereof), and in any communications
24 of the church, care should be taken in order that they are clearly distinguished
25 from the ordained deacons. It is also not allowable to appoint persons formally to
26 be assistants to the deacons if there are no regularly ordained and installed
27 deacons actively serving in the congregation.

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30 *Adopted by the Southwest Florida Presbytery at its stated meeting, November 11, 2025*
31 *Attested by /s/ TE Freddy Fritz, Stated Clerk*