

1 **OVERTURE 20** from the Westminster Presbytery (to CCB, OC)
2 “Add to *BCO* 5 a Section ‘C. Churches Without a Governing Body’”
3

4 **Whereas**, *BCO* Chapter 5 clearly stipulates, under two headings, “Mission Churches” and
5 “The Organization of a Particular Church,” but does not clearly outline the process for
6 unique situations in which a particular church does not have a governing body, nor
7 does it set forth the protections of the rights of the members, particularly under
8 Preliminary Principle Number Six which states, the power to elect persons to the
9 exercise of authority in any particular society resides in that society; and
10

11 **Whereas**, *BCO* 12-1 requires that the government of a particular church ordinarily be
12 provided from among its own membership, and *BCO* 24 provides the process for
13 electing elders, yet there is no stated process for situations in which this is temporarily
14 impossible; and
15

16 **Whereas**, it also does not address the unique situation in which a particular church or
17 Presbytery desires to change its status to that of a mission church; and
18

19 **Whereas**, this issue has arisen through the process of review and control, revealing the
20 difficulty of both protecting the rights of members and fulfilling the Presbytery’s duty
21 (*BCO* 13-9) to oversee congregations placed under their care; and
22

23 **Whereas**, while such situations are infrequent, it is important to clearly stipulate and protect
24 the rights of the members of the congregation while also ensuring that the Presbytery
25 carries out its due diligence in shepherding those under its care;
26

27 **Therefore**, Westminster Presbytery seeks to add an additional portion to Chapter 5 of the
28 *Book of Church Order*, outlining the steps by which a Presbytery might handle such a
29 situation, and ensuring those steps are consistent with the principles currently found
30 in the chapter;
31

32 **Therefore**, Westminster Presbytery overtures the 53rd General Assembly to add a new section
33 C to *BCO* 5 with new paragraphs 5-11 to 5-14, as set forth below (underlining for additions).
34

35 **C. Churches Without a Governing Body**

36 11. When a particular church, due to extraordinary circumstances, is unable to provide
37 government (*BCO* 12-1) from among its own membership, the Presbytery may, at its
38 discretion, appoint a transitory Session composed of elders from within the boundaries
39 of the Presbytery. These elders shall serve until such time as the congregation elects
40 temporary elders to serve as a provisional Session to exercise authority or until the
41 church is able to reconstitute its Session according to the provisions of *BCO* 24.
42

43 12. The transitory appointed Session shall, at the earliest convenience, call a
44 congregational meeting to seek the congregation’s concurrence with the transitory
45 Session and to initiate, if appropriate, the process for the election of elders in

1 accordance with BCO 24. If the will of the congregation is to affiliate with another
2 branch of the church (BCO 2-2), the transitory Session shall call a congregational
3 meeting for such a purpose (BCO 25-11).
4

5 13. A particular church may be changed to a mission church only by a three-fourths (3/4)
6 vote of the Presbytery. Members of the congregation, if any, shall be cited to appear
7 at the stated meeting of Presbytery at which such action is to be considered. Members
8 shall be given the opportunity to concur or petition the Presbytery regarding the status
9 of the church. The Presbytery shall record in its minutes the specific reasons for the
10 change of status.
11

12 14. Any member in good standing of the church, at the time of the change in status, shall
13 retain the right to file a complaint against the action of the Presbytery concerning the
14 change in status, in accordance with the provisions of BCO 43, as they would have
15 right if a Session took the action.
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18 *Adopted by Westminster Presbytery at its stated meeting, November 8th, 2025*

19 *Attested by /s/ TE Thomas E. Rickard, Stated Clerk*