

1 **OVERTURE 23** from the Westminster Presbytery (to CCB, OC)
2 “Restructure and Renumber *BCO* 14 for Clarity and Ease of Reference”
3

4 **Whereas**, *BCO* Chapter 14 has been proposed for amendment approximately forty (40) times
5 during the fifty-plus years of the Presbyterian Church in America, with seven (7) of
6 those proposed changes being ratified; and as a result, Chapter 14 is different from its
7 original form in the *BCO*; and
8

9 **Whereas**, *BCO* 14-1 currently contains fifteen (15) subsections that address a wide variety of
10 topics, including the principles of the organization of the General Assembly, the
11 Nominating Committee, the Permanent committees, personnel and salaries, the
12 Theological Examination Committee, and the procedures by which business comes to
13 the floor of the Assembly; and
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15 **Whereas**, these portions of Chapter 14 could more clearly and efficiently be presented as
16 separate sections for easier reference; for example, what is currently referenced as
17 *BCO* 14-1.12.b.4 could instead be referenced as *BCO* 14-3.2.d;
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19 **Therefore**, Westminster Presbytery overtures the 53rd General Assembly to amend Chapter
20 14 of the *Book of Church Order* by restructuring and renumbering its contents as listed
21 below, and to amend the cross-references to Chapter 14 found in other portions of the
22 *BCO*, the *RAO*, the *OMSJC*, and the Corporate Bylaws accordingly (underlining for
23 additions; ~~striketrough~~ for deletions).
24

25 **14-1.** The General Assembly is the highest court of this Church, and
26 represents in one body all the churches thereof. It bears the title of The General
27 Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America, and constitutes the bond of
28 union, peace and correspondence among all its congregations and courts.
29

30 Principles for the Organization of the Assembly:

- 31 1. The Church is responsible for carrying out the Great Commission.
- 32 2. The initiative for carrying out the Great Commission belongs to the
33 Church at every court level, and the Assembly is responsible to encourage
34 and promote the fulfillment of this ministry by the various courts.
- 35 3. The work of the Church as set forth in the Great Commission is one work,
36 being implemented at the General Assembly level through equally
37 essential committees.
- 38 4. It is the responsibility of every member and every member congregation
39 to support the whole work of the denomination as they be led in their
40 conscience held captive to the Word of God.
- 41 5. It is the responsibility of the General Assembly to evaluate needs and
42 resources, and to act on priorities for the most effective fulfillment of the
43 Great Commission.
- 44 6. The Church recognizes the right of individuals and congregations to labor
45 through other agencies in fulfilling the Great Commission.

- 1 7. The Assembly's committees are to serve and not to direct any Church
2 judicatories. They are not to establish policy, but rather execute policy
3 established by the General Assembly.
- 4 8. The committees serve the Church through the duties assigned by the
5 General Assembly.
- 6 9. The Assembly's committees are to include proportionate representation of
7 all presbyteries, wherever possible.
- 8 10. The committees are to be established on the basis of an equal number
9 between teaching and ruling elders.

10
11 ~~11.14-2.~~ A Nominating Committee shall be comprised of one representative
12 elected by each Presbytery in the following manner. Each Presbytery shall be
13 assigned to a class by the stated clerk based on its date of formation. The members
14 shall serve in classes of three year terms, alternating between ruling and teaching
15 elders. When necessary, unexpired terms shall be filled by an elder of the same
16 class, teaching or ruling.

17 This committee is to present all nominations for which it is responsible to
18 the next meeting of the Assembly from a slate of men nominated by the
19 Presbyteries. Presbyteries shall utilize the nominating forms provided by the
20 stated clerk for their nominations. Each presbytery may present one teaching
21 elder and one ruling elder for each committee or agency.

22 In addition to nominees for expired terms, the Committee shall nominate
23 for each permanent committee one ruling and one teaching elder as alternates to
24 fill any vacancies that may occur during the year. Each alternate should attend
25 each meeting and fill any vacancy necessary to meet a quorum. In addition to the
26 new nominees from the Presbyteries, alternates not assuming any vacancies
27 during a year will be automatically considered by the Nominating Committee as
28 candidates for nomination to that same committee.

29
30 ~~12.14-3.~~ The Assembly permanent committees are the Administrative
31 Committee of General Assembly, Committee on Discipleship Ministries,
32 Committee on Mission to North America, Committee on Mission to the World,
33 and Committee on Reformed University Fellowship.

34 The Administrative Committee of General Assembly (AC) shall consist of
35 twenty (20) members:

36 1a. Eleven members in classes elected through the standard nomination and
37 election procedure,

38 2b. One member each from the following program committees or agencies:

39 a1. Committee on Discipleship Ministries (CDM);

40 b2. Covenant College (CC);

41 c3. Covenant Theological Seminary (CTS);

42 d4. Mission to North America (MNA);

43 e5. Mission to the World (MTW);

44 f6. PCA Foundation (PCAF);

45 g7. Geneva Benefits Group, Inc. (Geneva);

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- h8. Reformed University Fellowship (RUF);
- i9. Ridge Haven Conference Center (RH).

The eleven members at large shall serve a term of four years. The chairman of the Administrative Committee shall be one of its members at large.

Each program committee and agency shall designate its member each year at the last meeting of the committee or board before the meeting of General Assembly. The chief administrative officers of the program committees and agencies may attend any meeting of the Administrative Committee. They shall be entitled to the privilege of the floor but shall not have a vote and must be excluded when an executive session is called.

Committee on Discipleship Ministries, Committee on Mission to North America, Committee on Mission to the World, and Committee on Reformed University Fellowship shall consist of fifteen (15) men divided into five classes of three men each, with two men being TEs and one RE or two men being REs and one TE on alternate years, elected to serve five-year terms. Committees on Discipleship Ministries, Mission to North America, Mission to the World, and Reformed University Fellowship shall have one ruling and one teaching elder as alternates to fill any vacancy that may occur during the year.

Persons who have served for a full term, or for at least two years of a partial term, on one of the Assembly's permanent committees or agencies shall not be eligible for re-election to an Assembly committee until one year has elapsed. (Exceptions may be permitted in agency bylaws approved by the Assembly.)

~~14-4.13.~~ The General Assembly establishes personnel salaries after hearing recommendations from the appropriate committee.

~~14-5.14.~~ The Assembly shall elect a six-man Theological Examining Committee (three teaching elders and three ruling elders of three classes of two men each). Nominations for this Committee will be presented by the Assembly's Nominating Committee.

This committee shall examine all first and second level administrative officers of committees, boards and agencies, and those acting temporarily in these positions who are being recommended for first time employment. They are to be examined in the areas of:

- 1a. Christian experience,
- 2b. Theology,
- 3e. The Sacraments,
- 4d. Church government,
- 5e. Bible content,
- 6f. Church history, and the
- 7g. History of the Presbyterian Church in America.

No person will begin work or move on the field without prior examination and approval by the General Assembly's Theological Examining Committee. No first level administrative officer will be presented to the Assembly for election who has not met the approval of this committee.

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2 **14-6.15**. All business shall ordinarily come to the floor of the Assembly for final
3 action through committees of commissioners, except reports of the Standing
4 Judicial Commission, the Committee on Constitutional Business, the Committee
5 on Review of Presbytery Records, the Nominating Committee and Ad Interim
6 committees, which shall come directly to the Assembly.

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8 **14-72**. The General Assembly, which is a permanent court, shall meet at least
9 annually upon its own adjournment. It shall consist of all teaching elders in good
10 standing with their Presbyteries, and ruling elders as elected by their Session.
11 Each congregation is entitled to two ruling elder representatives for the first 350
12 communing members or fraction thereof, and one additional ruling elder for each
13 additional 500 communing members or fraction thereof.

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15 **14-83**. When an emergency shall require a meeting of the General Assembly
16 earlier than the time to which it stands adjourned, the moderator shall issue a call
17 for a special meeting at the request or with the concurrence of ten percent (10%)
18 of the commissioners who had seats in the Assembly at its preceding meeting, of
19 whom at least ten shall be teaching elders and at least ten ruling elders,
20 representing at least one-third (1/3) of the Presbyteries. Should the moderator be
21 for any reason unable to act, the stated clerk shall under the same requirements
22 issue the call.

23 The members of the special meeting shall be the commissioners elected to
24 the preceding meeting of the Assembly or their alternates. A Session, however,
25 shall have the right to elect a commissioner or alternate in the stead of one who
26 had died since the last meeting of the Assembly, or of one who has notified the
27 moderator of the Session of his inability to serve. Notice of the special meeting
28 shall be sent not less than twenty (20) days in advance to each commissioner and
29 to the moderator of each Presbytery. In the notice the purpose of the meeting is to
30 be stated and no other business is to be transacted.

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32 **14-94**. Each commissioner, before his name shall be enrolled as a member of
33 the Assembly, shall produce appropriate credentials.

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35 **14-105**. Any one hundred (100) of these commissioners, of whom half shall be
36 teaching elders and half ruling elders, representing at least one-third (1/3) of the
37 Presbyteries, being met on the day and at the place appointed, shall be a quorum
38 for the transaction of business.

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40 **14-116**. The General Assembly shall have power:
41 **1a.** To receive and issue* all appeals, references, and complaints
42 regularly brought before it from the lower courts; to bear testimony
43 against error in doctrine and immorality in practice, injuriously

* Editor's note: "Issue" means "settling the issue of the case".

- 1 affecting the Church; to decide in all controversies respecting
2 doctrine and discipline;
- 3 2b. To give its advice and instruction, in conformity with the
4 Constitution, in all cases submitted to it;
- 5 3e. To review the records of the Presbyteries, to take care that the lower
6 courts observe the Constitution; to redress whatever they may have
7 done contrary to order;
- 8 4d. To devise measures for promoting the prosperity and enlargement
9 of the Church;
- 10 5e. To erect new Presbyteries, and unite and divide those which were
11 erected with their consent;
- 12 6f. To institute and superintend the agencies necessary in the general
13 work of evangelization; to appoint ministers of such labors as fall
14 under its jurisdiction;
- 15 7g. To suppress schismatical contentions and disputations, according
16 to the rules provided therefor;
- 17 8h. To receive under its jurisdiction, with the consent of three-fourths
18 (3/4) of the Presbyteries, other ecclesiastical bodies whose
19 organization is conformed to the doctrine and order of this Church;
20 to authorize Presbyteries to exercise similar power in receiving
21 bodies suited to become constituents of those courts, and lying
22 within their geographical bounds respectively;
- 23 9i. To superintend the affairs of the whole Church;
- 24 10j. To correspond with other churches; to unite with other
25 ecclesiastical bodies whose organization is conformed to the
26 doctrines and order of this Church, such union to be effected by a
27 mode of procedure defined in *BCO* 26; and
- 28 11k. In general to recommend measures for the promotion of charity,
29 truth and holiness through all the churches under its care.

30
31 **14-127.** Actions of the General Assembly pursuant to the provision of BCO 14-
32 6 such as deliverances, resolutions, overtures, and judicial decisions are to be
33 given due and serious consideration by the Church and its lower courts when
34 deliberating matters related to such action. Judicial decisions shall be binding and
35 conclusive on the parties who are directly involved in the matter being
36 adjudicated, and may be appealed to in subsequent similar cases as to any
37 principle which may have been decided. (See BCO 3-5 and 6, and WCF 31:3.)

38
39 **14-138.** The whole business of the Assembly being finished, and the vote taken
40 for final adjournment, the moderator shall say from the chair:

41
42 **By virtue of the authority delegated to me by the Church, I do now**
43 **declare that the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in**
44 **America is adjourned, to convene at _____ on the _____ day**
45 **of _____ A. D.**

1
2 After which he shall pray and return thanks, and pronounce or cause to be
3 pronounced on those present the apostolic benediction.
4

5 So that the amended *BCO* 14 would read as follows:
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7 **14-1.** The General Assembly is the highest court of this Church, and
8 represents in one body all the churches thereof. It bears the title of The General
9 Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America, and constitutes the bond of
10 union, peace and correspondence among all its congregations and courts.
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12 Principles for the Organization of the Assembly:

- 13 1. The Church is responsible for carrying out the Great Commission.
- 14 2. The initiative for carrying out the Great Commission belongs to the
15 Church at every court level, and the Assembly is responsible to encourage
16 and promote the fulfillment of this ministry by the various courts.
- 17 3. The work of the Church as set forth in the Great Commission is one work,
18 being implemented at the General Assembly level through equally
19 essential committees.
- 20 4. It is the responsibility of every member and every member congregation
21 to support the whole work of the denomination as they be led in their
22 conscience held captive to the Word of God.
- 23 5. It is the responsibility of the General Assembly to evaluate needs and
24 resources, and to act on priorities for the most effective fulfillment of the
25 Great Commission.
- 26 6. The Church recognizes the right of individuals and congregations to labor
27 through other agencies in fulfilling the Great Commission.
- 28 7. The Assembly's committees are to serve and not to direct any Church
29 judicatories. They are not to establish policy, but rather execute policy
30 established by the General Assembly.
- 31 8. The committees serve the Church through the duties assigned by the
32 General Assembly.
- 33 9. The Assembly's committees are to include proportionate representation of
34 all presbyteries, wherever possible.
- 35 10. The committees are to be established on the basis of an equal number
36 between teaching and ruling elders.
37

38 **14-2.** A Nominating Committee shall be comprised of one representative
39 elected by each Presbytery in the following manner. Each Presbytery shall be
40 assigned to a class by the stated clerk based on its date of formation. The members
41 shall serve in classes of three year terms, alternating between ruling and teaching
42 elders. When necessary, unexpired terms shall be filled by an elder of the same
43 class, teaching or ruling.

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45 the next meeting of the Assembly from a slate of men nominated by the

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2 stated clerk for their nominations. Each presbytery may present one teaching
3 elder and one ruling elder for each committee or agency.

4 In addition to nominees for expired terms, the Committee shall nominate
5 for each permanent committee one ruling and one teaching elder as alternates to
6 fill any vacancies that may occur during the year. Each alternate should attend
7 each meeting and fill any vacancy necessary to meet a quorum. In addition to the
8 new nominees from the Presbyteries, alternates not assuming any vacancies
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10 candidates for nomination to that same committee.

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12 **14-3.** The Assembly permanent committees are the Administrative
13 Committee of General Assembly, Committee on Discipleship Ministries,
14 Committee on Mission to North America, Committee on Mission to the World,
15 and Committee on Reformed University Fellowship.

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17 twenty (20) members:

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19 election procedure,
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31 of the Administrative Committee shall be one of its members at large.

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33 at the last meeting of the committee or board before the meeting of General
34 Assembly. The chief administrative officers of the program committees and
35 agencies may attend any meeting of the Administrative Committee. They shall be
36 entitled to the privilege of the floor but shall not have a vote and must be excluded
37 when an executive session is called.

38 Committee on Discipleship Ministries, Committee on Mission to North
39 America, Committee on Mission to the World, and Committee on Reformed
40 University Fellowship shall consist of fifteen (15) men divided into five classes
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2 term, on one of the Assembly's permanent committees or agencies shall not be
3 eligible for re-election to an Assembly committee until one year has elapsed.
4 (Exceptions may be permitted in agency bylaws approved by the Assembly.)
5

6 **14-4.** The General Assembly establishes personnel salaries after hearing
7 recommendations from the appropriate committee.
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9 **14-5.** The Assembly shall elect a six-man Theological Examining Committee
10 (three teaching elders and three ruling elders of three classes of two men each).
11 Nominations for this Committee will be presented by the Assembly's Nominating
12 Committee.

13 This committee shall examine all first and second level administrative
14 officers of committees, boards and agencies, and those acting temporarily in these
15 positions who are being recommended for first time employment. They are to be
16 examined in the areas of:

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- 19 3. The Sacraments,
- 20 4. Church government,
- 21 5. Bible content,
- 22 6. Church history, and the
- 23 7. History of the Presbyterian Church in America.

24 No person will begin work or move on the field without prior examination
25 and approval by the General Assembly's Theological Examining Committee. No
26 first level administrative officer will be presented to the Assembly for election
27 who has not met the approval of this committee.
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29 **14-6.** All business shall ordinarily come to the floor of the Assembly for final
30 action through committees of commissioners, except reports of the Standing
31 Judicial Commission, the Committee on Constitutional Business, the Committee
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33 committees, which shall come directly to the Assembly.
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35 **14-7.** The General Assembly, which is a permanent court, shall meet at least
36 annually upon its own adjournment. It shall consist of all teaching elders in good
37 standing with their Presbyteries, and ruling elders as elected by their Session.
38 Each congregation is entitled to two ruling elder representatives for the first 350
39 communing members or fraction thereof, and one additional ruling elder for each
40 additional 500 communing members or fraction thereof.
41

42 **14-8.** When an emergency shall require a meeting of the General Assembly
43 earlier than the time to which it stands adjourned, the moderator shall issue a call
44 for a special meeting at the request or with the concurrence of ten percent (10%)
45 of the commissioners who had seats in the Assembly at its preceding meeting, of

1 whom at least ten shall be teaching elders and at least ten ruling elders,
2 representing at least one-third (1/3) of the Presbyteries. Should the moderator be
3 for any reason unable to act, the stated clerk shall under the same requirements
4 issue the call.

5 The members of the special meeting shall be the commissioners elected to
6 the preceding meeting of the Assembly or their alternates. A Session, however,
7 shall have the right to elect a commissioner or alternate in the stead of one who
8 had died since the last meeting of the Assembly, or of one who has notified the
9 moderator of the Session of his inability to serve. Notice of the special meeting
10 shall be sent not less than twenty (20) days in advance to each commissioner and
11 to the moderator of each Presbytery. In the notice the purpose of the meeting is to
12 be stated and no other business is to be transacted.

13
14 **14-9.** Each commissioner, before his name shall be enrolled as a member of
15 the Assembly, shall produce appropriate credentials.

16
17 **14-10.** Any one hundred (100) of these commissioners, of whom half shall be
18 teaching elders and half ruling elders, representing at least one-third (1/3) of the
19 Presbyteries, being met on the day and at the place appointed, shall be a quorum
20 for the transaction of business.

21
22 **14-11.** The General Assembly shall have power:

- 23 1. To receive and issue* all appeals, references, and complaints
24 regularly brought before it from the lower courts; to bear testimony
25 against error in doctrine and immorality in practice, injuriously
26 affecting the Church; to decide in all controversies respecting
27 doctrine and discipline;
- 28 2. To give its advice and instruction, in conformity with the
29 Constitution, in all cases submitted to it;
- 30 3. To review the records of the Presbyteries, to take care that the lower
31 courts observe the Constitution; to redress whatever they may have
32 done contrary to order;
- 33 4. To devise measures for promoting the prosperity and enlargement
34 of the Church;
- 35 5. To erect new Presbyteries, and unite and divide those which were
36 erected with their consent;
- 37 6. To institute and superintend the agencies necessary in the general
38 work of evangelization; to appoint ministers of such labors as fall
39 under its jurisdiction;
- 40 7. To suppress schismatical contentions and disputations, according
41 to the rules provided therefor;
- 42 8. To receive under its jurisdiction, with the consent of three-fourths
43 (3/4) of the Presbyteries, other ecclesiastical bodies whose
44 organization is conformed to the doctrine and order of this Church;

* Editor's note: "Issue" means "settling the issue of the case".

1 to authorize Presbyteries to exercise similar power in receiving
2 bodies suited to become constituents of those courts, and lying
3 within their geographical bounds respectively;

- 4 9. To superintend the affairs of the whole Church;
- 5 10. To correspond with other churches; to unite with other
- 6 ecclesiastical bodies whose organization is conformed to the
- 7 doctrines and order of this Church, such union to be effected by a
- 8 mode of procedure defined in *BCO* 26; and
- 9 11. In general to recommend measures for the promotion of charity,
- 10 truth and holiness through all the churches under its care.

11
12 **14-12.** Actions of the General Assembly pursuant to the provision of *BCO* 14-
13 6 such as deliverances, resolutions, overtures, and judicial decisions are to be
14 given due and serious consideration by the Church and its lower courts when
15 deliberating matters related to such action. Judicial decisions shall be binding and
16 conclusive on the parties who are directly involved in the matter being
17 adjudicated, and may be appealed to in subsequent similar cases as to any
18 principle which may have been decided. (See *BCO* 3-5 and 6, and *WCF* 31:3.)

19
20 **14-13.** The whole business of the Assembly being finished, and the vote taken
21 for final adjournment, the moderator shall say from the chair:

22
23 **By virtue of the authority delegated to me by the Church, I do now**
24 **declare that the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in**
25 **America is adjourned, to convene at _____ on the _____ day**
26 **of _____ A. D.**

27
28
29 Below are the cross-references found in the *BCO* and *RAO* that would be amended with the
30 restructuring of Chapter 14.

31
32 *BCO* 15-4

33 Nominations and vacancies shall be filled according to *BCO* ~~14-1(11)~~ 14-2, with nominations
34 allowed from the floor. No person may be elected if there is already a member of the
35 commission from the same Presbytery; but if a person is elected and changes Presbytery, he
36 may continue to serve his full term.

37
38 *RAO* 3-5.g

39 He must understand and be committed to the proposition set out in *BCO* ~~14-1,3~~ 14-1.3: “The
40 work of the Church as set forth in the Great Commission is one work. . .” Therefore, such
41 person must recognize and be committed to implementing the important principle of the
42 interdependency of each court, Committee, and Agency of the PCA.

1 *RAO 4-5*

2 The membership of Committees or Agencies shall be limited to the constitutional provisions
3 for the permanent Committees or Agencies (~~BCO 14-1.12~~ 14-3): namely, that those who have
4 served for at least a full term, or at least two years of a partial term on one of the Assembly's
5 permanent Committees or Agencies shall not be eligible for re-election to an Assembly
6 Committee or Agency until one year has elapsed, unless provision has been approved by the
7 Agency bylaws. Nominations shall be handled according to the ~~BCO 14-1.11~~ 14-2. These
8 provisions shall not apply to ad interim committees, study committees or other committees
9 appointed.

10
11 *RAO 8-3*

12 In accordance with ~~BCO 14-1.14~~ 14-5 there shall be a Theological Examining Committee
13 composed of three teaching elders and three ruling elders of three classes of two men each.
14 There shall also be one teaching elder and one ruling elder as alternates to fill any vacancy
15 that may occur during the year.

16
17 This committee shall conduct its work as specified in ~~BCO 14-1.14~~ 14-5. Furthermore this
18 committee shall record all nominees' differences to our denominational standards in their own
19 words, as set forth in *RAO 16-3.e.7*. Those differences shall be included in this committee's
20 annual report which is submitted to the General Assembly for approval.

21
22 *RAO 14-2*

23 Each presbytery shall, prior to the meeting of the Assembly, elect one of its commissioners to
24 each of these committees of commissioners (cf. 14-1), dividing them as to ruling and teaching
25 elders by a formula established by the Stated Clerk. In the event that presbytery does not have
26 sufficient teaching elders to supply the committees thus assigned, the presbytery may, at its
27 own discretion, elect ruling elders to these committees (or vice versa, may elect teaching
28 elders for insufficient ruling elders). In the event that presbytery is not able to supply members
29 for all the committees, the presbytery may select the committees to which they wish to appoint
30 representatives. Commissioners serving on permanent Committees or Agencies or sub-
31 committees of the Assembly or the staffs thereof are not eligible to serve on any of these
32 committees of commissioners. For the purpose of defining those ineligible for service in
33 committees of commissioners, permanent Committee or Agency "staff" is to be understood
34 as persons required to be examined by the Theological Examining Committee (~~BCO 14-1.12~~
35 14-5) and all permanent Committee and Agency support personnel. All commissioners should
36 bear in mind Robert's Rules of Order regarding abstaining from voting on a question of direct
37 personal interest (RONR (12th ed.) 45:4-5).

38
39 *RAO 16-3.9*

40 Minutes of executive sessions are not exempt from the general requirement that presbytery's
41 actions shall be recorded in the Presbytery's minutes and that these minutes (even if kept in a
42 separate section on executive sessions) shall be submitted to the General Assembly for review
43 (~~BCO 13-11; 14-6.e~~ 14-11.3; 40-1). Presbytery may ask that the Committee on Review of
44 Presbytery Records deal with these minutes confidentially. However, any exceptions to these
45 minutes must be submitted to the General Assembly through the normal procedures.

Overture 23, Westminster Presbytery

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3 *Adopted by Westminster Presbytery at its stated meeting, November 8th, 2025*

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