

1 **OVERTURE 31** from the Westminster Presbytery (to CCB, OC)
2 “Amend *BCO* 58-5 to Specify that Ruling Elders Shall Distribute the Elements”
3

4 **Whereas**, our *Confession of Faith* (*WCF* 29.3), *Larger Catechism* (*LC* 169, 173, and 176),
5 and the declarations of our own denomination affirm that the Lord’s Supper is to be
6 administered by ministers, and the keys of the Kingdom and the sacraments are
7 entrusted to the ordained offices of the Church (Matthew 16:19); and
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9 **Whereas**, the role of the Session in discipline directly pertains to the serving of the Supper
10 (*BCO* 30-3; cf. *WCF* 30.1–4); and
11

12 **Whereas**, it is the responsibility of the Session to admit persons to the sealing ordinance of
13 the Lord’s Supper (*BCO* 12-5.a; 57), not only upon their initial admission but
14 throughout their walk, ensuring that members partake in a worthy manner, so as not to
15 eat and drink judgment upon themselves (1 Corinthians 11:27–32); and
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17 **Whereas**, since the beginning of Presbyterianism, the administering of the sacraments has
18 never been placed in the hands of the non-ordained membership (see also the Scots
19 Confession of 1560, Chapter 22); and
20

21 **Whereas**, in the Presbyterian tradition the passing of the elements by the laity has historically
22 been done while seated, while those standing in front of the congregation represent the
23 administering and serving role; having non-ordained persons stand with the minister
24 and serve the Supper confuses the role of the ordained office; and
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26 **Whereas**, Charles Hodge affirmed the common Presbyterian practice when he wrote: “*It will*
27 *be said, and very properly said, that it is practically this which is done in the mode of*
28 *celebrating the Supper which is now in ordinary use among us. When the minister*
29 *takes his place behind the table bearing the elements, and the elders range themselves*
30 *in front of it or at its sides, and thence convey the elements to the people—are we not*
31 *all gathered about the table of the Lord?*”; and
32

33 **Whereas**, there is no positive Scriptural warrant for non-ordained members to distribute and
34 serve communion that would encourage a change to our historic practice; and
35

36 **Whereas**, the Directory for Worship (*BCO* 58-5) states that “*the elders in a convenient place*
37 *together*”, thereby implying their responsibility for the oversight and distribution of
38 the Lord’s Supper;
39

40 **Therefore**, Westminster Presbytery overtures the 53rd General Assembly to amend *BCO* 58-
41 5 and the explanatory footnote to provide clear direction as to who shall ordinarily
42 distribute the elements of the Lord’s Supper to the congregation. (underlining for
43 addition, including the footnote)
44

1 **58-5.** The table, on which the elements are placed, being decently covered, and
2 furnished with bread and wine, and the communicants orderly and gravely sitting
3 around it (or in their seats before it), the elders in a convenient place together, the
4 minister should then set the elements apart by prayer and thanksgiving. Apart
5 from extra-ordinary circumstances, ruling elders shall assist the minister in
6 distributing¹ the elements, for they share the keys of the kingdom (Matthew 16:19,
7 cf. BCO 12-5.a).

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9 ¹ Distributing refers to the act of handing the elements to multiple communicants.
10 It does not refer to the passive action of passing trays or elements down rows or
11 pews.

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

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