

1 **OVERTURE 37** from the Pacific Presbytery (to CCB, OC)  
2 “Amend *BCO* 9-3 to Allow Women to Serve as Ordained Deacons”  
3

4 **Whereas** there has long been a sincere diversity of views among Reformed churches as to  
5 what Scripture says about the role of women in diaconal ministry;  
6

7 **Whereas** there seems to be strong evidence that the word *διάκονον* in Romans 16:1 is used in  
8 a technical manner to describe an office Phoebe holds rather than in a general  
9 descriptive manner;  
10

11 **Whereas** many conservative, complementarian scholars (e.g., John Piper, Mark Dever,  
12 Andreas Köstenberger, and Tom Schreiner) understand the biblical texts that touch on  
13 diaconal ministry to allow for women to serve in that role, specifically 1 Timothy 3:11  
14 and Romans 16:1;  
15

16 **Whereas** women who served as deacons are mentioned as far back as c. 111 A.D. (Pliny’s  
17 Letter to Trajan) and subsequently throughout church history;  
18

19 **Whereas** many conservative Reformed theologians and exegetes have argued that qualified  
20 women may be permitted to serve as deacons (e.g., John Calvin, B.B Warfield, Robert  
21 Strimple, John Frame, Ed Clowney);  
22

23 **Whereas** the Westminster Confession does not specifically address the office of deacon;  
24

25 **Whereas** the Westminster Confession 20.2 does speak of Christian liberty and not  
26 unnecessarily binding the consciences of men;  
27

28 **Whereas** it is in line with the historical spirit of the PCA to be a grassroots denomination and  
29 to defer to the judgment of local sessions in decisions regarding congregational  
30 ministry;  
31

32 **Whereas** several conservative, Reformed denominations, some within NAPARC, allow  
33 women to serve as deacons (i.e., Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, The  
34 Reformed Church of Quebec (ERQ), The Reformed Presbyterian Church of North  
35 America, and the International Presbyterian Church);  
36

37 **Therefore, be it resolved** that the PCA amend *BCO* 9-3 as follows in order to allow local  
38 Sessions to decide whether qualified women should be allowed to serve as deacons  
39 (underlining for additions; ~~strike through~~ for deletions):  
40

41 **9-3.** To the office of deacon, which is spiritual in nature, shall be chosen  
42 ~~men~~ members of spiritual character, honest repute, exemplary lives, brotherly  
43 spirit, warm sympathies, and sound judgment...  
44  
45

1 **Therefore, be it also resolved** that that the following 12 conforming amendments be made:  
2 *BCO* 5-9.c, 7-2, 17-3, 24-1, 24-6, 24-7, 24-8, 24-9, 24-10, 36-7, 37-1 and 37-6  
3 (underlining for additions; ~~strikethrough~~ for deletions)  
4

5 **5-9.c** When the temporary government determines that among the members  
6 of the mission congregation there are ~~men~~ some who appear qualified as officers,  
7 the nomination process shall begin and the election conclude following the  
8 procedures of *BCO* 24 so far as they may be applicable.  
9

10 **7-2.** The ordinary and perpetual classes of office in the Church are elders  
11 and deacons.... The office of deacon is not one of rule, but rather of service both  
12 to the physical and spiritual needs of the people. In accord with Scripture, ~~these~~  
13 ~~offices are open to men only~~ the office of elder is open to men only.  
14

15 **17-3.** As every ecclesiastical office, according to the Scriptures, is a special  
16 charge, no ~~man~~ one shall be ordained unless it be to the performance of a definite  
17 work.  
18

19 **24-1.** Every church shall elect persons to the offices of ruling elder and  
20 deacon in the following manner: At such times as determined by the Session,  
21 communicant members of the congregation may submit names to the Session,  
22 keeping in mind that each prospective officer should be an active ~~male~~ member  
23 who meets the qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Nominees for  
24 the office of ruling elder and/or deacon shall receive instruction in the  
25 qualifications and work of the office. Each nominee shall be examined in:

- 26 a. ~~his~~ Christian experience, especially ~~his~~ personal character and family  
27 management (based on the qualifications set out in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and  
28 Titus 1:6-9),
- 29 b. ~~his~~ knowledge of Bible content,
- 30 c. ~~his~~ knowledge of the system of doctrine, government, discipline contained  
31 in the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in America (*BCO* Preface  
32 III, *The Constitution Defined*),
- 33 d. the duties of the office to which ~~he~~ the member has been nominated, and
- 34 e. ~~his~~ willingness to give assent to the questions required for ordination. (*BCO*  
35 24-6).  
36

37 In the examination of the nominee's personal character, the Session shall give  
38 specific attention to potential notorious concerns. Careful attention must be given  
39 to his practical struggle against sinful actions, as well as to persistent sinful  
40 desires. The nominee must give clear testimony of reliance upon his union with  
41 Christ and the benefits thereof by the Holy Spirit, depending on this work of grace  
42 to make progress over sin (Psalm 103:2-5, Romans 8:29) and to bear fruit (Psalm  
43 1:3, Gal. 5:22-23)....

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44

Notwithstanding the above, the Session may render a decision on Christian experience at any point in the process, and based on that decision, may judge ~~him~~ a candidate ineligible for that election....

**24-6.** The day having arrived, ...  
... The ruling elder or deacon elect having answered in the affirmative, the minister shall address to the members of the church the following question:

**Do you, the members of this church, acknowledge and receive this ~~brother~~ person as a ruling elder (or deacon) and do you promise to yield ~~him~~ all that honor, encouragement and obedience in the Lord to which ~~his office~~ such office is entitled, according to the Word of God and the Constitution of this Church, ~~entitles him~~? ...**

... Prayer being ended, the members of the Session (and the deacons, if the case be that of a deacon) shall take the newly ordained officer by the hand, saying in words to this effect:

**We give you the right hand of fellowship, to take part in this office with us.**

The minister shall then say:

**I now pronounce and declare that \_\_\_\_\_ has been regularly elected, ordained and installed a ruling elder (or deacon) in this church, agreeable to the Word of God, and according to the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in America; and that as such ~~he~~ is entitled to all encouragement, honor and obedience in the Lord: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen....**

**24-7.** Ordination to the offices of ruling elder or deacon is perpetual; nor can such offices be laid aside at pleasure; nor can any person be degraded from either office but by deposition after regular trial; yet a ruling elder or deacon may have reasons which ~~he deems~~ are valid for being released from the active duties of ~~his~~ the office. In such a case the Session, after conference with ~~him~~ the officer and careful consideration of the matter, may, if it thinks proper, accept ~~his~~ a resignation and dissolve the official relationship which exists between ~~him~~ the officer and the church.

The ruling elder or deacon, though chargeable with neither heresy nor immorality, may become unacceptable in ~~his~~ an official capacity to a majority of the church ~~which he serves~~....

1           **24-8.**     When a ruling elder or deacon who has been released from ~~his~~ an  
2 official relation is again elected to ~~his~~ an office in the same or another church, ~~he~~  
3 that person shall be installed after the above form with the omission of ordination.

4  
5           **24-9.**     When a ruling elder or deacon cannot or does not for a period of one  
6 year perform the duties of ~~his~~ the office, ~~his~~ the official relationship shall be  
7 dissolved by the Session and the action reported to the congregation.

8  
9           **24-10.**    When a deacon or ruling elder by reason of age or infirmity desires to  
10 be released from the active duties of the office, the officer may request the Session  
11 to grant a designation of he may at his request and with the approval of the Session  
12 ~~be designated~~ deacon or elder emeritus. When so designated, ~~he~~ the person is no  
13 longer required to perform the regular duties of ~~his~~ that office, but may continue  
14 to perform certain of these duties on a voluntary basis, if requested by the Session  
15 or a higher court. Persons who hold emeritus offices may attend Diaconate or  
16 Session meetings if desired, and may participate fully in the discussion of any  
17 issues, but may not vote. ~~He may attend Diaconate or Session meetings, if he so~~  
18 ~~desires, and may participate fully in the discussion of any issues, but may not~~  
19 ~~vote.~~

20  
21           **36-7.**     The censure of deposition shall be administered by the moderator in the  
22 words following:

23  
24                   **Whereas, \_\_\_\_\_, a teaching elder of this Presbytery (or**  
25 **ruling elder or deacon of this church), has been proved, by**  
26 **sufficient evidence to be guilty of the sin of \_\_\_\_\_, we,**  
27 **the \_\_\_\_\_ Presbytery (or Church Session), do adjudge**  
28 **~~him~~ disqualified for the office of the Christian ministry (or ruling**  
29 **eldership, or diaconship), and therefore we do hereby, in the name**  
30 **and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, depose from the**  
31 **office of a teaching elder (or ruling elder or deacon) the said**  
32 **\_\_\_\_\_, and do prohibit ~~him from exercising~~ the exercise**  
33 **of any of the functions thereof.**

34  
35           If the censure includes suspension or excommunication, the moderator shall  
36 proceed to say:

37  
38                   **We do moreover, by the same authority, suspend the said**  
39 **\_\_\_\_\_ from the Sacraments of the Church, until ~~he shall~~**  
40 **exhibit satisfactory evidence of sincere repentance is exhibited,**

41           or

42                   **We do moreover, by the same authority, exclude the said**  
43 **\_\_\_\_\_ from the Sacraments, and cut ~~him~~ off from the**  
44 **fellowship of the Church....**

1           **37-1.**     A person who has been definitely suspended from office shall be  
2 restored by the court at the end of the term of ~~his~~ the suspension by declaring  
3 words of the following import to ~~him~~ the suspended officer: ...

4  
5           **37-6.**     When a ruling elder or deacon has been absolved from the censure of  
6 deposition, ~~he~~ that officer cannot be allowed to resume the exercise of ~~his~~ office  
7 in the church without re-election by the people....

8  
9  
10       *Adopted by the Pacific Presbytery at its stated meeting, January 24, 2026*

11       *Attested by TE Jerrard Heard, Stated Clerk*