

1 **OVERTURE 39** from the Central Florida Presbytery (to CCB, OC)
2 “Amend *BCO 22* to Affirm the Consent of the Governed for Assistant Pastors”
3

4 **Whereas**, The *Book of Church Order 22-1* states that the “various pastoral relations are pastor,
5 associate pastor, assistant pastor”; and
6

7 **Whereas**, the pastor and associate pastor are elected by the congregation and become
8 members of the Session (*BCO 22-2*) but the assistant pastor is called by the Session
9 and is not a member of the Session (*BCO 22-3*); and
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11 **Whereas**, assistant pastors exercise ministerial authority in preaching the Word and
12 administering the Sacraments and exercise governing authority as members of
13 Presbytery and as commissioners to General Assembly; and
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15 **Whereas**, all elders, both teaching and ruling, being of one class of office have parity of office
16 (*BCO 8-9*); and
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18 **Whereas**, the Apostles did not appoint church officers without the consent of the governed
19 (*Acts 6:3*; *Acts 14:23*); and
20

21 **Whereas**, preliminary principle 6 of The *Book of Church Order* states “the power to elect
22 persons to the exercise of authority in any particular society resides in that society”
23 (see also *BCO 3-1*); and
24

25 **Whereas**, *BCO 16-2* further states “the right of God’s people to recognize by election to office
26 those so gifted is inalienable. Therefore, no man can be placed over a church in any
27 office without the election, or at least the consent of that church”; and
28

29 **Whereas**, the idea of an assistant pastor being called by the Session and not being called by
30 the congregation is contrary to historic Presbyterian polity; and
31

32 **Whereas**, the first time the assistant pastor relation was codified in American Presbyterianism
33 was in 1945 in the nineteenth edition of the PCUS’ *Book of Church Order* (see chapter
34 xxiv, paragraph 126); and
35

36 **Whereas**, assistant pastors are not infrequently called to serve PCA churches for many
37 years—even decades—without the direct consent of the congregations they shepherd
38 as teaching elders; and
39

40 **Whereas**, the present Overture improves Overture 10 from the 52nd General Assembly, which
41 was referred back to the Central Florida Presbytery for refinement and potential
42 resubmission.
43

1 **Therefore, be it resolved** to amend the *BCO* by adding/striking the following language of
2 *BCO* 22-3 and 22-4 to read as follows (underlining for additions; ~~strikethrough~~ for
3 deletions):
4

5 **22-3.** An assistant pastor is called by the Session, by the permission and
6 approval of Presbytery, under the provisions of *BCO* 20-1 and 13-2, with
7 Presbytery membership being governed by the same provisions that apply to
8 pastors. The Session may call an assistant pastor to serve only for a definite
9 period, set at the time of his call, ordinarily not to exceed 5 years. Should the
10 Session wish to retain an assistant pastor beyond that definite period, it shall
11 recommend him to the congregation for election as an associate pastor. If the
12 assistant pastor does not receive a majority vote, the Session shall move to
13 dissolve the assistant pastor's call in accordance with *BCO* 23. ~~He~~ The assistant
14 pastor is not a member of the Session, but may be appointed on special occasions
15 to moderate the Session under the provisions of *BCO* 12-4.
16

17 **22-4.** The relationship of the associate pastor to the church is determined by
18 the congregation. The relationship of the assistant pastor to the church is
19 determined by the Session (though not indefinitely, see *BCO* 22-3). The
20 dissolution of the relationship of both is governed by the provision of *BCO* 23.
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22 **Editorial Comment:** The General Assembly explicitly provided that the calls of
23 assistant pastors established prior to June 22, 2027, are not subject to the changes
24 it makes to *BCO* 22. (By order of the 54th General Assembly).
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27 *Adopted by the Central Florida Presbytery at its stated meeting, January 20, 2026*
28 *Attested by TE Don Mountan, Stated Clerk*
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Comparison of the current overture with Overture 2025-10

2025	2026	Notes
<p>“Amend BCO to affirm the consent of the governed regarding Assistant Pastors”</p>	<p>“Amend BCO to affirm the consent of the governed regarding Assistant Pastors”</p>	
<p>Whereas, <i>The Book of Church Order</i> 22-1 states that the “various pastoral relations are Pastor, Associate Pastor, Assistant Pastor”; and</p>	<p>Whereas, <i>The Book of Church Order</i> 22-1 states that the “various pastoral relations are pastor, associate pastor, assistant pastor”; and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Style edit only (capitalization consistency with BCO).
<p>Whereas, the Pastor and Associate Pastor are elected by the congregation and become members of the Session (<i>BCO</i> 22-2) but the Assistant Pastor is called by the Session and is not a member of the Session (<i>BCO</i> 22-3); and</p>	<p>Whereas, the pastor and associate pastor are elected by the congregation and become members of the Session (<i>BCO</i> 22-2) but the assistant pastor is called by the Session and is not a member of the Session (<i>BCO</i> 22-3); and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Style edit only (capitalization consistency with BCO).
<p>Whereas, Assistant Pastors are members of Presbytery; vote on both the church’s higher courts, and exercise ministerial authority in preaching the Word and administering the Sacraments; and</p>	<p>Whereas, assistant pastors exercise ministerial authority in preaching the Word and administering the Sacraments and exercise governing authority as members of Presbytery and as commissioners to General Assembly; and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rewritten for clarity and precision. • Removes phrase “<i>vote on both the church’s higher courts</i>” and replaces with “<i>exercise governing authority</i>”. • Adds explicit mention of <i>commissioners to General Assembly</i>.
<p>Whereas, all Elders, both Teaching and Ruling, being of one class of office have parity of office (<i>BCO</i> 8-9); and</p>	<p>Whereas, all elders, both teaching and ruling, being of one class of office have parity of office (<i>BCO</i> 8-9); and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Style edit only (capitalization consistency with BCO).

<p>Whereas, the Apostles did not appoint church officers without the consent of the governed (Acts 6:3; Acts 14:23); and</p>	<p>Whereas, the Apostles did not appoint church officers without the consent of the governed (Acts 6:3; Acts 14:23); and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None
<p>Whereas, preliminary principle 6 of <i>The Book of Church Order</i> states “the power to elect persons to the exercise of authority in any particular society resides in that society” (see also BCO 3-1); and</p>	<p>Whereas, preliminary principle 6 of <i>The Book of Church Order</i> states “the power to elect persons to the exercise of authority in any particular society resides in that society” (see also BCO 3-1); and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None
<p>Whereas, the idea of an Assistant Pastor being called by the Session and not being called by the congregation is contrary to historic Presbyterian polity; and</p>	<p>Whereas, <i>BCO</i> 16-2 further states “the right of God’s people to recognize by election to office those so gifted is inalienable. Therefore no man can be placed over a church in any office without the election, or at least the consent of that church”; and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional supporting rationale from BCO 16-2.
<p>Whereas, the first time the Assistant Pastor relation was codified in American Presbyterianism was in 1945 in the nineteenth edition of the PCUS’ <i>Book of Church Order</i> (see chapter xxiv, paragraph 126); and</p>	<p>Whereas, the first time the assistant pastor relation was codified in American Presbyterianism was in 1945 in the nineteenth edition of the PCUS’ <i>Book of Church Order</i> (see chapter xxiv, paragraph 126); and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Style edit only (capitalization consistency with BCO).
<p>Whereas, Assistant Pastors are not infrequently called to serve PCA churches for many years—even decades—without the direct consent of the congregations they shepherd as teaching elders;</p>	<p>Whereas, assistant pastors are not infrequently called to serve PCA churches for many years—even decades—without the direct consent of the congregations they shepherd as teaching elders; and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Style edit only (capitalization consistency).

	<p>Whereas, the present Overture improves Overture 10 from the 52nd General Assembly, which was referred back to the Central Florida Presbytery for refinement and potential resubmission.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procedural note.
<p>Therefore, be it resolved to amend the BCO by adding/striking the following language of BCO 22-3 and 22-4 to read as follows:</p>	<p>Therefore, be it resolved to amend the BCO by adding/striking the following language of BCO 22-3 and 22-4 to read as follows:</p>	

<p>22-3. An assistant pastor is called by the Session, by the permission and approval of Presbytery, under the provisions of BCO 20-1 and 132, with Presbytery membership being governed by the same provisions that apply to pastors. <u>The Session may call an Assistant Pastor only to serve for a definite period not exceeding five years. Should the Session wish to renew the assistant pastor's call beyond five years, it shall call a congregational meeting to seek the consent of the governed in support of his continued ministry. In this case, congregational consent shall be indicated by a three-fourths majority vote. The renewal of a call as an Assistant Pastor is subject to Presbytery approval. If no three-fourths majority is secured, the Session shall conclude that the assistant pastor does not have adequate support from the congregation for a continued ministry among them, and shall move immediately to dissolve his call, in accordance with the provisions of BCO</u></p> <p><u>23. He</u> The assistant pastor is not a member of the Session, but may be appointed on special occasions to moderate the Session under the provisions of BCO 12-4.</p>	<p>22-3. An assistant pastor is called by the Session, by the permission and approval of Presbytery, under the provisions of BCO 20-1 and 13-2, with Presbytery membership being governed by the same provisions that apply to pastors. <u>The Session may call an assistant pastor to serve only for a definite period, set at the time of his call, ordinarily not to exceed 5 years. Should the Session wish to retain an assistant pastor beyond that definite period, it shall recommend him to the congregation for election as an associate pastor. If the assistant pastor does not receive a majority vote, the Session shall move to dissolve the assistant pastor's call in accordance with BCO 23. He</u> The assistant pastor is not a member of the Session, but may be appointed on special occasions to moderate the Session under the provisions of BCO 12-4.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More concise • Removes requirement for 3/4 congregational vote for renewal. • Clarifies that the length of the definite call is set at time of the call and ordinarily should not exceed 5 years. • Keeps structure simpler, aligning with BCO's existing categories.
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<p>22-4. The relationship of the associate pastor to the church is determined by the congregation. The relationship of the Assistant Pastor to the church is determined by the Session (though not indefinitely, see BCO 22-3). The dissolution of the relationship of both is governed by the provision of BCO 23.</p>	<p>22-4. The relationship of the associate pastor to the church is determined by the congregation. The relationship of the assistant pastor to the church is determined by the Session (though not indefinitely, see BCO 22-3). The dissolution of the relationship of both is governed by the provision of BCO 23.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Style edit only (capitalization consistency).
	<p>Editorial Comment: The General Assembly explicitly provided that the calls of assistant pastors established prior to June 22, 2027 are not subject to the changes it makes to BCO 22. (By order of the 54th General Assembly).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adds editorial comment that specifies effective-date to avoid retroactive application. • This editorial comment follows existing constitutional precedent. See e.g., the editorial comment after BCO 24-10.