

1 **OVERTURE 51** from the Mississippi Valley Presbytery (to CCB, OC)  
2 “Amend *BCO* 5 to add a Section on ‘Assisted Churches’”  
3

4 **Whereas**, The Presbyterian Church in America has experienced healthy growth both  
5 geographically and numerically over the last 53 years, adjusting to changing  
6 demographics and an ever-shifting population that has resulted in the decline of several  
7 congregations across our denomination; and  
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9 **Whereas**, the Preliminary Principles of *The Book of Church Order* states that “our blessed  
10 Savior, for the edification of the visible Church, which is His body, has appointed  
11 officers...”, and that this edification should aim for the encouraging equipping, and  
12 enlarging of all churches in their various situations and challenging providences and  
13 for the safeguarding and shepherding of the members of these churches; and  
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15 **Whereas**, *The Book of Church Order* provides two categories for “Mission Churches” and  
16 “Particular Churches” that primarily focus on upward growth and expansion, but does  
17 not provide any category for those in decline and facing situations whereby they may  
18 lack a governing body and thus lacking the clarity and categories needed to best assist  
19 these churches; and  
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21 **Therefore**, The Presbytery of the Mississippi Valley seeks to add an additional category to  
22 Chapter 5 of *The Book of Church Order* to define what churches would need the  
23 assistance of the Presbytery and to provide the necessary steps to best assist them in  
24 their need;  
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26 **Therefore**, The Presbytery of the Mississippi Valley overtures the 53<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly to  
27 add a new section C to *BCO* 5 with paragraphs 5-11.a to 5-11.c, as set forth below  
28 (*underlining* for additions).  
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30 **C. Assisted Churches**

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32 **5-11.**

33 a. An assisted church is a church that has only one ruling elder and no pastor and  
34 has been assigned by Presbytery a *BCO* 15-1 commission to serve as a temporary  
35 Session of that church (cf., *BCO* 5-3.c). The church’s one ruling elder shall be a  
36 member of that temporary Session.  
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38 b. In such cases, the Presbytery shall acknowledge the condition of the church as  
39 an assisted church and shall determine one or more of the following courses of  
40 action, as it deems most conducive to the peace, purity, and progress of the  
41 church:

- 42 1. To encourage and assist the church toward the election and training of  
43 additional ruling elders;  
44 2. To recommend dissolution, merger, or other reorganization of the church,  
45 should such action appear necessary (*BCO* 13-9.f).

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c. The Presbytery shall review the status of an assisted church at least annually and shall record its actions and determinations in its minutes.

*Adopted by the Presbytery of the Mississippi Valley at its stated meeting, February 3, 2026*

*Attested by TE Chris Wright, Stated Clerk*