

1 **OVERTURE 74** from the Eastern Carolina Presbytery (to CCB, OC)  
2 “Add a New Chapter *BCO* 17A ‘Of Commissioning for Non-Ordained Ministry’”  
3

4 **Whereas**, the Presbyterian Church in America affirms that ordination is the church’s  
5 authoritative act of setting apart qualified men to the offices of elder and deacon  
6 according to Scripture (*BCO* 7-2, 17-1); and  
7

8 **Whereas**, the Scriptures also present a pattern in which the church publicly sets apart,  
9 authorizes, and sends certain individuals for specific ministries without conferring  
10 ordained office—for example:  
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- 12 • Paul and Barnabas were commissioned by the church at Antioch through  
13 prayer and the laying on of hands for missionary service (*Acts* 13:1–3), prior  
14 to their later appointment of elders in the churches (*Acts* 14:23);
- 15 • The Jerusalem church, in *Acts* 15, sent Judas, Barsabbas, and Silas as  
16 authorized representatives to deliver the council’s decision and strengthen the  
17 churches (*Acts* 15:22, 27, 32), though these roles did not constitute ordination  
18 to office;
- 19 • As well as many other instances: 1 *Corinthians* 16:3-4; *Colossians* 4:7-9; 3  
20 *John* 1:5- 9; *Philippians* 2:25-30; *Romans* 16:1-2.  
21

22 **Whereas**, this biblical distinction between ordination to an office and commissioning to a  
23 ministry role provides theological grounding for the church to recognize, authorize,  
24 and support individuals—both men and women—who serve in significant ways that  
25 do not involve the authority or responsibilities of ordained office; and  
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27 **Whereas**, commissioning includes sending, appointing, approving, entrusting for particular  
28 tasks while commending, recognizing gifts, and support of ordained authority without  
29 the marks of ordination (an office, set Biblical qualifications, authority over the  
30 church, sacramental leadership or ruling authority); and  
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32 **Whereas**, many PCA congregations, presbyteries, and ministries (including Reformed  
33 University Fellowship) already depend on gifted and spiritually mature women and  
34 men who labor in teaching, discipleship, shepherding, mercy, counseling, and  
35 leadership capacities that do not require ordination; and  
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37 **Whereas**, the PCA's current polity does not provide clear or unified constitutional categories  
38 or terms for publicly setting apart such individuals for these non-ordained ministry  
39 roles, creating inconsistency between churches and ministries, confusion regarding  
40 proper responsibilities, and at times unnecessary tension within the denomination; and  
41

42 **Whereas**, establishing a clear constitutional category for commissioning would strengthen  
43 the peace, purity, unity, and mission of the church by:  
44

- 45 • Clarifying what is and is not an ordained office;

- 1 • Allowing congregations to formally recognize non-ordained servants without
- 2 creating de facto offices;
- 3 • Protecting the integrity of the offices of elder and deacon; and
- 4 • Giving pastors, sessions, and presbyteries an orderly and biblically grounded
- 5 means for authorizing ministry roles that do not involve the exercise of
- 6 ordained authority;
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8 **Therefore, be it resolved** that the Presbyterian Church in America amend the *Book of*  
9 *Church Order* by adding a new chapter 17A immediately following *BCO* 17 (“The  
10 Doctrine of Ordination”) to read as follows:

11  
12 **CHAPTER 17A**

13 *Of Commissioning for Non-Ordained Ministry*

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15 **17A-1. Definition.** Commissioning is an act of the church, through a Session or  
16 Presbytery, publicly recognizing and setting apart a qualified member of the church  
17 for a particular ministry role that does not involve the exercise of the authority vested  
18 in the ordained offices of elder or deacon.

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20 **17A-2. Biblical Basis.** Commissioning reflects the pattern in Scripture whereby the  
21 church—while reserving ordination for specific offices—also sends, authorizes, or  
22 sets apart individuals for ministry through prayer and public recognition (e.g., Acts  
23 13:1-3; Acts 15:22, 27, 32).

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25 **17A-3. Nature of Commissioning.**

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- 27 a. Commissioning does not confer ecclesiastical office and does not authorize the
- 28 exercise of the governing authority belonging to elders.
- 29 b. Commissioned individuals may serve in roles of teaching, discipleship, mercy,
- 30 leadership, administration, counseling, or other ministries under the oversight
- 31 of the Session or Presbytery.
- 32 c. Commissioning may be conferred upon men or women.
- 33

34 **17A-4. Authorization.** The Session of a local congregation may commission  
35 individuals for congregational ministries under its oversight. Presbyteries may  
36 commission individuals for presbytery-wide or denominational ministries.

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38 **17A-5. Process.**

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- 40 a. Candidates for commissioning will ordinarily be members in good standing
- 41 and examined in those matters relevant to their ministry assignment (e.g.,
- 42 Christian character, doctrinal understanding, spiritual gifts, and particular
- 43 skills).
- 44 b. The commissioning act shall clearly distinguish it from ordination to office.

1           c. A written description of the ministry role, responsibilities, and limits of  
2           authority shall be adopted by the Session or Presbytery and communicated to  
3           the church's or Presbytery's members.  
4

5           **17A-6. Accountability.** Commissioned individuals serve under the direct oversight of  
6           the Session or Presbytery that authorized them and shall report on their ministry as  
7           required. Commissioning may be concluded or revoked at the discretion of that court.  
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9           **17A-7. Safeguards.** Commissioning shall not be used to create new ecclesiastical  
10          offices, to introduce ruling or teaching authority apart from ordained office, or to blur  
11          the distinctions set forth in *BCO* 7 and 8 concerning church government.  
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14          *Adopted by the Eastern Carolina Presbytery at its stated meeting, April 18, 2026*

15          *Attested by TE Wes Martin, Stated Clerk*