

Preliminary Comments on Overtures to the 52nd GA - June 14 ver.

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Overtures hyperlinked on their numbers. Titles paraphrased. No comments on Pby boundaries.
 + = Approve A = Approve if amended – = Disapprove R = Refer or answer by Reference to

I encourage you to review TE David Coffin's commentary found [here](#). At present, from what I can tell, for Overtures 1-50, my good brother and I have different views on 1, 24, and 30.
 TE Fred Greco's commentary recently came out and it is [here](#).

- + **1 Northern New England** - BCO 32-2 clarifying investigations & charges CCB, OC
- 2 South Florida** - Expand boundaries of South Florida Presbytery MNA
- **3 Arizona** - AIC on Christian Nationalism AC, OC
- **4 South Texas** - AIC on Christian Nationalism AC, OC
- **5 Calvary** - Give BCO Chapters 60, 61, 62, 63 constitutional status CCB, OC
- A **6 Rocky Mountain** - BCO 18-2 flexible deadlines for candidacy application CCB, OC
- **7 Missouri** - BCO 34-1 assumption of orig jurisdiction + non-voting advisors CCB, OC
- R **8 Nashville** - BCO 24-1 Confessional differences recorded for REs/Deacons CCB, OC
- **9 James River** - BCO 14-1 change 9 AC members to non-voting advisors 10 + CCB, OC
- **10 Central Florida** - BCO 22-3 mandate fixed terms for Asst P calls CCB, OC
- **11 South Texas** - Study incorporating Bitcoin into balance sheets 10 + OC
- **12 Providence** - BCO 58-5 mandate only officers distribute Lord's Supper CCB, OC
- **13 Great Lakes** - BCO 25-1 to match 24-3 only mbrs good standing may vote CCB, OC
- **14 Great Lakes** - BCO 38-1 re: who interacts with offended person CCB, OC
- A **15 Mississippi Valley** - BCO 36-4 add language for def. suspension from office CCB, OC
- + **16 Mississippi Valley** - BCO 36-5 to conform w 37-3 re suspension from office CCB, OC
- 17 Mississippi Valley** - Boundaries of Covenant & MS Valley Presbyteries MNA
- **18 Gulf Coast** - Direct RUF update a "Campus Ministry Manual" for GA approval RUF
- **19 Eastern Carolina** - Amend BCO 57-5 revising membership questions CCB, OC
- 20 Covenant** - Change boundaries of Covenant and MS Valley MNA
- 21 Covenant** - Change boundaries of Covenant and Hills & Plains MNA
- + **22 Pacific NW** - Amend BCO 20-3, 24-3 & 25-1 to clarify "regular standing" CCB, OC
- + **23 Pacific NW** - Amend BCO 41-3 to allow supplemental judges CCB, OC
- + **24 Evangel** - BCO 24-1 screening previously ordained officer nominees CCB, OC
- **25 NW Georgia** - BCO 46-4 create a category of associate mbrshp for HR TEs CCB, OC
- **26 NW Georgia** - AIC for constitutionalized Directory of Worship AC, OC
- **27 NW Georgia** - AIC to receive + provide ops suggestions to Perm C/Agencies 10 + OC
- **28 NW Georgia** - MNA apologize to US gov't, to PCA, & dismiss MNA personnel MNA
- A **29 Houston Metro** - BCO 15-5.c SJC minority reports to GA CCB, OC
- R **30 Houston Metro** - Amend 5 BCO sections on TEs & needful works 10 + CCB, OC
- A **31 Houston Metro** - BCO 31-10 to require full court to admin. suspend officer CCB, OC
- + **32 Houston Metro** - BCO 36 to increase censure without a new trial CCB, OC
- + **33 TE Fred Greco** - BCO 57-2 defining young person exam for Lord's Supper CCB, OC

- **34 Savannah River** - RAO 16 to require reports on Session/Diaconate CCB, OC
- + **35 Pacific NW** - Request AC to study and report on future GA locations AC
- 36 GA Foothills** - Boundaries of GA Foothills and Metro ATL MNA
- + **37 SE Alabama** - BCO 12-3 allow Session to elect moderator in judicial cases CCB, OC
- R **38 SE Alabama** - BCO 30-4 to require a new trial to elevate censure CCB, OC
- R **39 SE Alabama** - BCO 34-8, 33-5 re increasing suspension to deposition CCB, OC
- + **40 SE Alabama** - BCO 35-9 to require recording all parts of a trial CCB, OC
- **41 Calvary** - Direct AC to collect & report each congregation’s worship times AC
- **42 Calvary** - Direct Stated Clerk not to collect data on age or ethnicity AC
- **43 Calvary** - RAO 4-11 to disallow collecting data on age or ethnicity CCB, AC, OC
- **44 Pee Dee** - Change ByFaith to Press Release Publication AC
- 45 Hills & Plains** - change boundaries of Hills & Plains and Covenant Pbys MNA
- 46 Metro Atlana** - change boundaries of Metro Atlanta and GA Foothills MNA
- R **47 Great Lakes** - create AIC on Christian Nationalism AC, OC
- **48 TN Valley** - AIC to write letter/paper on Christian citizenship & church-state AC, OC
- 49 Pacific NW** - creat AIC on Artificial Intelligence AC, OC
- + **50 Chesapeake** - encouragement to discernment+compassion re immigrants OC

1 Northern New England - BCO 32-2 clarifying investigations & charges	CCB, OC
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Affirmative

(*Replace current BCO 32-2*) Prior to commencing process against an alleged offender, regardless of how allegations arose, the court shall investigate to the extent necessary to determine:

- a. if it is a personal or general offense
- b. if personal, whether Matthew 18 has been followed
- c. if the nature of the alleged offense rises to a level warranting judicial process
- d. if the accuser is like any of those described in *BCO 31-8*
- e. if there is a strong presumption of guilt
- f. if it is reasonable to expect the offense can be proven through judicial process.

A necessary revision. Many SJC cases arise from confusion about investigations, the difference between accusations and charges, and when formal judicial process must commence.

There will be instances where it would be unwise to require an offended person to confront the offender. And sins like abuse against a minor, for example, could be considered *general* rather than *personal* precisely because they cannot be equitably resolved at a personal level. Therefore there are other considerations apart from the personal harm involved in characterizing the nature of the offense. Matthew 18 does not strictly apply to *general* offenses (*BCO 31-7*).

Current SJC member RE Jim Eggert has written an excellent 13-page article on this topic. Here are links to [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#). One Presbytery uses a standing Preliminary Investigative Committee; sample Rules and Guidelines can be found [here](#).

Despite some assertions to the contrary, this change doesn’t effect “voluntary prosecutors.” (*BCO 31-9*, etc.) A voluntary prosecutor has never been a self-appointed prosecutor. It was always at the discretion of the court. 15-year old Johnny never had the right to demand the

Session appoint him as voluntary prosecutor and demand that the Session allow him to prosecute his 17-year old brother Billy for hitting him. When Matthew 18:17 says “tell it to the church” it simply means tell it to the elders. It doesn’t mean demand the right to prosecute it before the church. Overture 1 changes nothing regarding a voluntary prosecutor.

Some men seem concerned about item (d), which says “if the accuser is like any of those described in BCO 31-8,” arguing that a judgment like that is unfairly rendered without process. But SJC decisions have ruled that 31-8 *should be* evaluated when considering allegations. If that’s the only item that concerns men, the Overtures Committee can amend and delete.

A recent SJC Case ended in a 12-12 vote, something that has never happened. (Commissioner Handbook, p. 2003) This Overture would resolve the constitutional issue in question.

2 South Florida - Expand boundaries of South Florida Presbytery	MNA
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3 Arizona - create Ad Interim Study Committee on Christian Nationalism	AC, OC
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Negative

1. Rarely are AICs the optimum way to study an issue. They rarely make recommendations that have teeth. But more importantly, there are usually already some excellent books and papers on most subjects assigned to any AIC. And anyone in the PCA is free to write afresh on the subject, and if it is persuasive, it should accomplish as much as an AIC. Or, anyone could publish an annotated bibliography of the books, papers and articles he deems most helpful.
2. While many aspects of certain versions of "Christian Nationalism" are concerning, creating an AIC to study it could unintentionally give attention to something that’s best ignored. If an officer holds CN views that are contrary to the Westminster Standards or the Scriptures, then he should be confronted by his Session or Presbytery. If that original court "refuses to act" then the provisions of BCO 33-1 or 34-1 could be followed.
3. Procedurally, RAO 9-3 stipulates: "Only two (2) ad interim committees may be appointed or continued in any given year unless additional ones are approved by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Assembly." At least three are proposed this year, in Overtures 4, 26, and 27.
4. The AIC overtures were referred to the AC and OC. RAO 9-5 stipulates, "All ad interim and study committees shall be considered by the GA for appointment or extension at the time during the GA docket of the AC's report so that due consideration be given as to their priority and their effect on the budgets." AC is usually docketed to report at GA on Thursday morning.

4 South Texas - create Ad Interim Study Committee on Christian Nationalism	AC, OC
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Answer by Reference to Negative Answer on Arizona 3

5 Calvary - Give BCO Chapters 60, 61, 62, 63 constitutional status (Visiting Sick, Burials, Fasting/Thanks, Christian Life in Home)	CCB, OC
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Negative - Overture doesn't demonstrate the need for these Chapters to have constitutional force. If these were constitutionalized, what would be some examples of how those new parts of the Constitution could be violated?

1. The 8 Whereas clauses seem to argue as if the *entire* Directory of Worship should be constitutionalized. Why are these four Chapters proposed, rather than others? Will others be proposed later? Why not add, for example, Chapter 50: The Public Reading of Scripture, or Chapter 54: The Worship of God with Offerings? How many times do these Overtures need to fail to garner GA or super-majority presbytery support before they're considered dilatory? Just as a point of information, last year Pee Dee Overture 3 sought to constitutionalize BCO Chapter 53 on Preaching. By a vote of 857-906, the Richmond GA declined to approve a recommendation from 70% of the OC. (M51GA pp. 74, 87)
2. Appeal to the purported intent/desire of previous GAs/founding fathers is not a sufficient basis for making a change. The Overture's second Whereas clause contends: "[I]t was the desire of our founding fathers to have an authoritative Directory of Public Worship for our beloved denomination." If that statement were true, then they would have adopted one. We can only discern the "desire" of legislative bodies from what they do, not from what they don't do.

6 Rocky Mountain - BCO 18-2 flexible deadlines for candidacy application	CCB, OC
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Affirmative, if amended - On initial reading, it sounds simple and non-controversial. But why not just strike the whole sentence instead? Below is the Overture's proposal.

Every applicant ~~must~~ should file his application with the clerk of the Presbytery at least one month before the meeting of the Presbytery (unless a Presbytery has a different stated application deadline).

But that's akin to saying "Presbytery may stipulate the application deadline." The revision would end up being something like this hypothetical change to the Sixth Amendment: "In suits at common law, where the value in controversy shall exceed twenty dollars, the right of trial by jury shall be preserved, unless Congress elects another dollar amount..."

Granted, if we think the filing deadline warrants a constitutional requirement, then we should ensure the mandated deadline is a reasonable one. Otherwise, we should strike the whole sentence and let each Presbytery make its own decision. I would much prefer the latter because I don't regard the deadline as something warranting a constitutional mandate.

7 Missouri - BCO 34-1 re assumption of original jurisdiction ("AOJ") & non-voting advisors from outside Pby in judicial process	CCB, OC
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Negative, unless amended For a Legislative and Judicial History of BCO 34-1, see [here](#).

1. This Overture seeks two very different things. One is relatively benign (freedom to recruit advisors), but the other is unreasonable (revising the AOJ section for ministers). Regarding the first, Presbyteries already have the freedom to recruit anyone to serve as a non-voting advisor. No amendment is required for that.
2. The more substantial part of the Overture would delete the significant requirement that a presbytery must be deemed to have "refused to act" before the GA can assume original jurisdiction ("AOJ"). The amendment replaces it with the wide-ranging phrase "failed to uphold the Constitution." And the petitioning presbyteries simply need to "cite" the section of

the Constitution alleged to be breached and GA "shall" (must) assume original jurisdiction. That is far too low a bar. It permits 5 Presbyteries to *force* the GA to assume jurisdiction.

3. As written, the amendment would mandate the AOJ of a minister for an alleged violation of *any* BCO provision if just 5 Presbyteries request such (i.e., just 6% of our 87 Presbyteries).
4. The 5-presbytery threshold is too low. While Robert's Rules has no constitutional authority, it's recognized as prudent. It never envisions a minority of 6% having such significant power, i.e., to wrest jurisdiction from one court and mandate that it be taken up by another.
5. This Overture's proposal is as bad as the 34-1 we have. BCO 34-1 should be amended to
 - (1) replace "refuses to act" with something more measurable (like, declines to indict) and
 - (2) raise the petitioning threshold to 20% of the Presbyteries.

If an alleged offense is creating a public scandal, and the original presbytery declines to indict, we should assume it wouldn't be hard to get 18 Presbyteries (20%) to file one-paragraph AOJ requests to the Stated Clerk's office. If there aren't 18 willing to do so, then it's probably not something warranting AOJ. And those AOJ requests (not demands) would trigger an SJC investigation to determine if an indictment is warranted. (OMSJC 16), and one result could be an SJC judgment upholding the non-indictment.

8 Nashville - BCO 24-1 to require a statement of confessional differences from elder & deacon candidates
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CCB, OC

Refer Back to Presbytery

The Overture doesn't identify a problem that needs to be solved. That said, as an RE I have always reported my confessional differences in any examinations for Session membership, regardless of whether they were requested.

1. Even if this were adopted there is still no requirement that stated differences be recorded in Session minutes, unlike what RAO 16.3.e.6 requires for Presbytery minutes. So, it's unclear how this would be reviewed or enforced by Presbyteries, so it seems ineffective as written.
2. BCO 24-1(e) already requires examination of the prospective officer's "willingness to give assent to the questions required for ordination. (BCO 24-6)," and the second ordination question already asks: "Do you sincerely *receive and adopt the Confession of Faith and the Catechisms of this Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures*; and do you further promise that if at any time you find yourself *out of accord with any of the fundamentals of this system of doctrine*, you will, on your own initiative, make known to your Session the change which has taken place in your views since the assumption of this ordination vow?" (emphasis added)
3. A deacon should not ordinarily be expected to understand the Confession to the same degree as an elder because a deacon's teaching role is different than an elder's. Deacons do not exercise the keys of the kingdom (teaching and ruling).

9 James River - Revise BCO 14-1.12 to Make the 9 AC Members Appointed by Committees & Agencies to be Non-Voting Advisory Members instead of Voting Members CCB + 10 Perm Committees & Agencies + OC
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Negative AC Perm Committee recommends answering in the Negative. (Commissioner Handbook page 406.) The 8 other Permanent Committees and Agency Boards - all except MNA - recommend answering in the Negative. (CDM page 606, MNA 707, MTW 815, RUF 906, CC 1507, CTS 1627, Geneva 1706, PCAF 1803, Ridge Haven p. 1903) MNA did not supply any grounds.

This is a solution in search of a problem. Year after year, the AC Committees of Commissioners have supported recommendations from the AC Permanent Committee. If there was a fundamental problem with the composition of the AC, one would think the CoC would often recommend substitute recommendations, but that hasn't happened.

Some have suggested that since the formation of the Cooperative Ministries Committee, the changes to the AC allowing various other permanent committees to send a voting member may no longer be necessary. As one of the last six GA Moderators, I've served on the CMC for the last five years and I don't regard such a suggestion to have much merit. Different animals. AC still needs reps from Perm Comms and Agency Boards.

1. Members of Permanent Committees and Agency Boards have already been elected by a GA and ordinarily have also been vetted and recommended by the GA Nominating Committee. Granted, they were not specifically elected for any AC duties, they were elected nonetheless.
2. RAO 5.4 indicates the AC serves a "unique role as a service committee to the GA and to the entire denomination..." The Overture does not give any example of an *actual* problem with the current rule. This Overture would vest a smaller group the authority to fulfill that "unique role" without giving any example of a real problem with the current rule.
3. If there were a good reason to disenfranchise these 9 current members of the AC, thereby reducing it to an 11-man voting body, then perhaps we should then increase the size of the AC to 20 or 30 members, each elected by the GA. The decisions made by the AC are uniquely important to the PCA, and therefore, consideration of such an expansion might be warranted. For example, GA doesn't elect the 87 members of the GA Nominating Committee presumably because the NC's recommendation warrants fuller presbytery representation.

If the current AC was reduced to 11 voting members, two of the 11 would be from the same Presbytery - a Presbytery with just 19 churches. More than 30 Presbyteries have more churches, so it seems unbalanced for 2 of 11 votes to be from a single, smaller Presbytery.

4. RAO 10-7 and 10-8 permit the AC to sign contracts with convention centers and hotels before the GA approves the location of that future Assembly. Because an Assembly's location might have an impact on the voting results of that Assembly, it seems wiser to have a larger and not a smaller number of voting members on the AC.
5. BCO 14-1.5 stipulates: "It is the responsibility of the GA to evaluate needs and resources, and to act on priorities for the most effective fulfillment of the Great Commission." A broader AC can do this more effectively than a narrower one. And 14-1.9 stipulates: "The Assembly's committees are to include proportionate representation of all presbyteries, wherever possible." Retaining these 9 reps from Perm Comms and Agencies as voting AC members better ensures a broader representation from all presbyteries on AC.
6. AC often deals with matters directly involving a Permanent Committee or Agency Board, like annual budgets, so it's reasonable for those Committees and Agencies to have representation. It's possible the 11 at-large AC members elected by the GA might have little or no experience on any of the four Permanent Committees or five Agency Boards. Thus, these reps are vital

to the broad tasks assigned to AC. In addition, RAO 5.4.a stipulates "The GA shall annually determine the specific contribution to be given by each Committee or Agency based on a recommendation from the AC, ..." And RAO 5.4.b stipulates: "Particular churches are encouraged to contribute to the AC on an annual basis a percentage of their operating budget. The GA shall annually determine the percentage of congregational operating budgets requested, based on a recommendation from the AC." It's unreasonable to disenfranchise the four Permanent Committees and five Agency Boards from voting on such AC recommendations.

7. No single Committee or Agency has significant influence in the AC. For example, the vote of the AC rep from the PCA Foundation represents less than 5% of the 20-member AC.
8. RAO 5-4.a stipulates "Each Committee and Agency of the GA shall annually contribute an equal share to the operating budget of the AC." Thus, it seems voting representation is appropriate and prudent, given that these entities are required to contribute funds.
9. Changing BCO 14-1 would also require a change to RAO 5-2 and RAO 5-1.b which defines the membership of the AC. Thus, GA should probably vote on the required RAO changes if it affirms Overture 9. If the required RAO change cannot also garner the requisite two-thirds (RAO 20), there's no point in sending a proposed BCO change to the Presbyteries.

10 Central Florida - BCO 22-3 Mandate Fixed Terms for Assistant Pastor Calls and Require 3/4 Congregational Approval to Extend Past 5 Years CCB, OC

Negative

1. If this amendment is adopted, then at the end of 5 years (at most) if a Session doesn't propose the congregation call the Assistant Pastor as an Associate Pastor, then his call is automatically dissolved. It's hard to imagine many Assistant Pastors will consider this a good idea.
2. On the other hand, if after 5 years the Session proposes the Assistant be called as an Associate, the Overture requires an extra-super-majority of the congregation to do so. Why require 75% to "promote" the Assistant when it takes a simple majority to elect an elder or call a senior pastor? It's not clear what problem this Overture is trying to solve.
3. Sessions already have the freedom to call an Assistant Pastor for a set term, if approved by Presbytery. A Session should be free to structure its church staff as it deems best.
4. Many Sr. Pastors have a reasonable preference that most if not all ministerial staff be Assistant Pastors. This amendment could negatively affect that.
5. A good argument can be made that we should have *more* Assistant Pastors rather than less. Many judicial cases have come to the SJC where the dissolution of an Associate Pastor's call is disruptive and divisive in the church, especially when he is not proceeding immediately to another call. This is because it requires a congregational meeting at which limited information can usually be shared with the congregation. That division can be significantly mitigated if the dissolution did not require a congregational meeting, i.e., in the case of an Assist. Pastor.

11 South Texas - Encourage Sessions, Presbyteries, GA Committees & Agencies to Study Incorporating Bitcoin into Balance Sheets 10 PCs/Agencies + OC

Negative - See also the recommendation to answer in the Negative from the Board of the PCA Foundation, on GA Commissioner Handbook page 1804.

Individuals and Presbyteries are free to communicate with Permanent Committees and Agency Boards their opinions on incorporating Bitcoin, but the GA should avoid such. All churches and presbyteries have the right and freedom to encourage other PCA churches and presbyteries to study particular matters. Individuals are free to write papers on any topic. There is no need to affirm an Overture to this end. This is not a good practice to invite.

12 Providence - BCO 58-5 Stipulate that only officers can distribute Lord's Supper CCB, OC
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Negative

1. In places, the Overture's rationale seems to confuse "administration" with "distribution" but they are very different things. Whereas 1, 4, and 6 mention "administration" and Whereas 3, 5, and 7 mention "serving" and "passing."
2. The Overture does not persuasively cite any Scripture or provision in the Westminster Standards in arguing for this change. In the first three Whereas clauses, the citations of WCF 29.3, 30.1-4, LC 169, 173, 176, Matthew 16:19, and BCO 30-3 are not relevant or germane to the specific question of who may hold trays with the bread and cups, and where they can or cannot stand when they hold them. Granted, the Westminster Assembly did not anticipate all practices that might be employed today.
3. Whereas 5 asserts that holding the bread or cups "while standing in front of the congregation represents the administrative role ..." but offers no persuasive support for the assertion. The minister is the only person that has an "administrative role."
4. The Overture does not demonstrate what might be the substantial difference between unordained Person A passing a tray to a fellow church member in the pew and the same unordained Person A holding that tray outside of the pew from which that same church member takes the bread or cup.
5. Sessions have the responsibility to oversee worship according to the principles of Scripture in their circumstances, and Sessions are in the best position to discern how the principles of biblical worship are followed in their own context. It would seem inconsistent for the BCO to allow a Session to determine *how often* the Lord's Supper is observed but not allow that Session to decide who holds the trays when it's being distributed.
6. BCO 58-5 seems to assume a particular form of distribution, that of bringing trays to the congregation sitting in pews or chairs. Its oblique mention of elders may imply the elders take the elements to the people, but it's not mandated in BCO 58-5. If it were, there'd be no need for Overture 12. But nowhere does Scripture require this format for the distribution or reception of bread and cups. We would do well to avoid laying down prescriptions in form.
7. The Overture refers to all officers but does not attempt to demonstrate why deacons, for example, are different from laypersons for distributing the bread and cup.
8. Officer-only distribution would be difficult for many mission churches that don't have onsite officers. Often, the members of the temporary session don't attend the mission church. If the Overture is adopted, the options for distributing the bread and cups would be limited and many mission churches would be forced to celebrate the Supper very infrequently. The 2024 Clerk's report showed 289 mission churches reported in the 2023 statistics. (M51GA, p. 996)

13 Great Lakes - Amend BCO 25-1 to match 24-3 stipulating only members in good standing may vote

CCB, OC

Negative - Well intentioned, but may actually confuse things. BCO 25-1 and 24-3 are *not* saying the same thing, so there is no need to match.

Both provisions are found in the PCUS Book of 1925 - 25-1 originated in the 1925 revision, and the language of 24-3 goes back to the 1879 BCO. But they're not saying exactly the same thing, so there's no reason to try to match them. (All emphasis is added below.)

24-3. All communing members in good and regular standing, *but no others*, are entitled to vote in the election of church officers in the churches to which they respectively belong.

25-1. The congregation consists of all the communing members of a particular church, and *they only* are entitled to vote.

Since 1879, BCO 24-3 has described who *among the communing members* may vote (i.e., those in "good" standing plus those in "regular" standing" - two different things.) Throughout US history, most Presbyterian churches restricted minors from voting because they did not consider them to be in "regular" standing. In 1879, BCO 24-3 was primarily intended to disenfranchise *contributing, non-communicant adults*, who previously had been able to vote. (See PNW 22 for how the US Presbyterian Church has understood "regular" standing, and especially [this paper](#) by Dr. Brant Bosserman titled: "*Regular: The Story of American Presbyterian Voting Practice.*")

Likewise, the 1925 change in BCO 25-1 focused on the clause "*they only*," which meant no non-communing member could vote - even if he financially supported the church. It did not mean *all* communing members of the congregation *could* vote, because communing, *non-regular* members still could not vote. Communing membership was a *necessary* condition for voting, but it was not a *sufficient* condition. In order to vote, the communicant also needed to be in "regular" standing. BCO 25-1 was likewise intended to end what was a long-time common practice of allowing adult, non-communicants to vote if they financially supported the church.

14 Great Lakes - BCO 38-1 Specifying who interacts with offended persons

CCB, OC

Negative

1. The court (or its committee or commission) already has the freedom to choose anyone it wants to communicate with the offended person. The Overture is unnecessary.
2. The revision might cause more confusion. The Overture proposes replacing "the court" with "the Moderator of the court or his designee." At the Presbytery level, it's usually wisest for BCO 38-1 cases to be handled fully by a Commission. Such a Commission already has the authority and responsibility to "attempt to inform the offended person(s) of that part of the Confession the court deems pertinent to the offense against him or her." The Commission can already decide who makes the attempt to inform, and how it is done. A presbytery moderator might be one good choice, or he might be a bad choice because he will not likely be on that Commission and probably ignorant of the details that need to be communicated to an offended person. It would not be prudent for him to appoint someone outside the 38-1 Commission to attempt to inform an offended person. And if the offended person is a woman, it's more likely the 38-1 Commission will know which woman could best assist it in communicating the confession to the offended woman, etc.

15 Mississippi Valley - BCO 36-4 add language for def. suspension from office	CCB, OC
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Affirmative, if amended - Instead of stating the *duration* of definite suspension, it would be more helpful to specify the date on which the definite suspension begins and automatically ends. Ordinarily, it would be wise for that to be the date of a stated meeting. So, it might help if the proposed change was amended to replace "(here state the definite period of time of the suspension)" with "(here state the dates on which the suspension begins and ends)."

16 Mississippi Valley - BCO 36-5 to conform w 37-3 re suspension from office	CCB, OC
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Affirmative - Makes sense to amend to match.

17 Mississippi Valley - Boundaries of Covenant & MS Valley Presbyteries	MNA
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18 Gulf Coast - Direct RUF to update a "Campus Ministry Manual" for GA approval	RUF
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Negative - This puts the cart before the horse. And the RUF Permanent Committee recommends answering in the Negative. (Commissioner Handbook 907-09)

1. RUF does not use a "Campus Ministry Manual." The 1979 "manual" referenced in the Overture was a document drafted when a PCA campus ministry was in its infancy and under the auspices of the GA's Ministry to the US and primarily initiated and run by local presbyteries. Twenty-four years ago, when RUM became an GA Permanent Committee, it was not required to maintain or create such a manual. If the GA had wanted such a manual, the logical time to have codified such a requirement would have been in 2000 at the 28th GA in Tampa or in 2001 at the 29th GA in Dallas, or at least shortly thereafter.
2. There's never been a requirement for RUF to have such a manual. This is clear from RAO 4-21 "Guidelines for Keeping Minutes of Permanent Committees and Agencies of the General Assembly" paragraph J which stipulates: An up-to-date copy of the bylaws and manual of the Committee or Agency, *if such exist*, should be kept with the minutes. (emphasis added)
3. Even if RUF used such a manual, the RAO does not expect the GA to approve its contents. That would require an RAO amendment through a two-thirds vote of the Assembly. It cannot be accomplished simply through an overture asking the GA to "direct" a Permanent Committee to create and submit a manual for review and approval. For example, the RAO stipulates the GA approves the SJC Manual (RAO 17-5) and contains operating rules for its Committee on RPR (RAO 16). But there's no requirement, for example, for GA to approve an AC Manual. RAO 10.1 says "The Assembly's Administrative Committee and the Local Arrangements Committee shall operate under a Manual *approved by the Administrative Committee.*" The same applies to the GA Nominating Committee, which uses a manual that does not require GA approval.
4. The RAO already stipulates the minutes of a Permanent Committee "shall include":

A recording of information sufficient to demonstrate the Committee's or Board's implementation of instructions received from the General Assembly and of

material policies and *material* policy changes adopted by the Committee or Board *in that year*. (RAO 4-21.d.4; emphasis added)

The RAO 4-21 paragraph above is sufficient. Currently, whenever the RUF Permanent Committee adopts changes to various protocols, those actions are reported in Committee Minutes that are reviewed annually by the GA Committee of Commissioners. And exceptions taken to those minutes are reported through that C of C. Last year, the RUF Perm Committee reported a recommendation to the GA that the GA approve a revised Affiliation Agreement. The RUF Permanent Committee adheres to the obligations of RAO 4-21.d.4.

5. Requiring the RUF Permanent Committee to produce a lengthy operating manual that would need to be reviewed and approved by an Assembly of over 2,000 commissioners would be unnecessary and unwieldy. It would be akin to requiring sessions to recommend annual church budgets, church employee manuals, child protection policies, etc. to the congregation for scrutiny and approval by the members. That's why a congregation elects its elders. And that's why permanent committee members are nominated by presbyteries, reviewed by the GA Nominating Committee, and then elected by the Assembly.

19 Eastern Carolina - Amend BCO 57-5 Revising Membership Vows	CCB, OC
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Negative

1. While there isn't anything objectionable to the amendments, revising membership questions for all PCA churches is a significant act and should probably only be done when necessary. The Overture doesn't sufficiently demonstrate the need.
2. The 5 membership questions are not all "vows," per se. The first two are affirmations of belief, not promises: "*Do you acknowledge ... Do you believe ...*" The last three are promises: "*Do you resolve and promise ... Do you promise ... Do you submit ... and promise?*"
3. BCO 57-5 currently says: "The minister *may* then address those making a profession in the following terms ..." followed by the five membership questions. Thus, it seems, a Session might have some freedom in slightly revising some of the questions, as could the minister. For example, some churches have taken the liberty of adding a 6th question. A large church in the southeast adds a 6th question asking the prospective member to promise to refrain from "making a bad report" about someone without first raising it with that person.

20 Covenant - Change Boundaries of Covenant and MS Valley	MNA
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21 Covenant - Change Boundaries of Covenant and Hills & Plains	MNA
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22 Pacific NW - Amend BCO 20-3, 24-3 & 25-1 to Clarify "Regular Standing" and thereby Allow Congregations to Set a Minimum Voting Age. CCB, OC

Affirmative - Note: CCB advises there may be some conflict with other parts of BCO, and CCB's advice is addressed in #4 below. In addition to reasons offered below, the reader is encouraged to read the fine commentary on this Overture written by TE Coffin [here](#) on p. 8.

I've said to my brother Fred Greco I'm willing to support his Overture 33 if Overture 22 passes and I think he's willing to support Overture 22 if Overture 33 passes. Both Overtures recognize that, generally speaking, there is some requisite level of maturity required for admission to the Lord's Supper and also for voting. They just don't necessarily occur at the same age.

1. The need for this amendment arises from an SJC Decision in March 2024, where, by a vote of 15-5, the SJC ruled that the BCO does not permit a congregation to set a minimum voting age. (Case 2023-11: *Psiaki v. Pacific Northwest* (M51GA, p. 877).

However, the SJC did not define what "regular" standing means. In the *Psiaki* Case, there was a Concurring Opinion, three Dissenting Opinions, and an Objection.

Some authors have posted articles contending that "regular" standing and "good" standing refer to the same thing. But that's not the case historically, and it would be unusual in a constitution to refer to the same thing in such a way. Regular standing is not the same thing as good standing, and has not been so in the history of American Presbyterianism.

2. A paper was recently [posted](#) authored by my good friend and fellow SJC member Dr. Guy Waters that essentially contends the adjectives "good" and "regular" in the phrase "good and regular standing" mean the same thing. He wrote: "That "good and regular standing" means simply "not under censure" is the historically accepted interpretation of this Constitutional phrase. But Dr. Brant Bosserman's [paper](#) on "regular" standing, titled "*Regular: The Story of American Presbyterian Voting Practice*," strongly demonstrates otherwise.
3. If the OC is concerned that a maximum age is not stipulated, the OC could amend the proposal by adding the following underlined provision: "A congregation may establish a rule setting a minimum voting age (regular standing), no older than 18, and it must be adopted by a two-thirds (2/3) majority at a congregational meeting that is called with at least 30 days' notice. (cf. BCO 20-3, 24-3)". The filing Presbytery would not be opposed.

4. Here is CCB's opinion:

"In the opinion of the CCB, Overture 22 is in conflict with Preliminary Principle 6 and BCO 6-4, in that PP6 affirms that "the power to elect persons to the exercise of authority in any particular society resides in that society" and BCO 6-4 acknowledges that every communicant member is "entitled to all the rights and privileges of the church," while the proposed BCO 25-1 grants congregations the right to remove a communicant member's right and privilege to vote. CCB notes that adopting this change would create collateral consequences regarding the quorums specified in BCO 25-2, -3."

HD Response: First, the wording of Preliminary Principle 6 dates back to at least 1861, when women (and minors) were unable to vote in congregational meetings in the PCUS. So it's not clear if CCB considered that. And below is FP Ramsay's 1879 comments on BCO 6-4:

Those only who have made a profession of faith in Christ are entitled to all the rights and privileges of the Church.

For if they are not yet competent to act for themselves, there are some rights and privileges that they are not yet capable of exercising and enjoying; and much more is this so if they neglect to have faith in Christ. They cannot be recognized as having this faith if they do not profess it.

Ramsay was saying that not only should minors be excluded, but "much more is this so" if they are non-professing. PP6 was not intended to be inclusive, but rather, *exclusive*. It was intended to outlaw the then widespread existing practice of non-professing but financially-supportive regular attenders from voting. It was *not* intended to grant voting rights to minors (or even women) and was never interpreted afterwards as doing so.

Second, there are some rights and privileges" that are not shared by or exercised by "every communicant member." For example, only some communicants are eligible to be officers.

Dr. Bosserman's paper on the American Presbyterian understanding and practice of "regular" membership (linked above) addresses PP6 and BCO 6-4 in great detail and demonstrates an understanding different than that reached by the CCB.

CCB also added its advice "that adopting this change would create collateral consequences regarding the quorums specified in BCO 25-2, -3." Pacific NW assumed it would be obvious that only voting members make up a quorum, but if OC and GA wish to amend the Overture to make this explicit it can simply add the adjective "voting." There are sample draft examples shown at the end of Overture 22 document, and below.

25-2. The Session shall always call a congregational meeting when requested in writing to do so:

- a. by one-fourth (1/4) of the voting communing members of a church of not more than one hundred (100) such members,
- b. by one-fifth (1/5) of the voting communing members of a church of more than one hundred (100) and not more than three hundred (300) such members,
- c. by one-sixth (1/6) of the voting communing members of a church of more than three hundred (300) and not more than five hundred (500) such members,
- d. by one-seventh (1/7) of the voting communing members of a church of more than five hundred (500) members but not more than seven hundred (700) such members,
- e. by one hundred (100) of the voting communing members of a church of more than seven hundred (700) such members.

25-3. The quorum of the congregational meeting shall consist of one-fourth (1/4) of the resident voting communing members, if the church has not more than one hundred 20 (100) such members, and of one-sixth (1/6) of the resident voting communing members if a church has more than one hundred (100) such members.

23 Pacific NW - Amend <i>BCO</i> 41-3 to Allow a Session to Request Presbytery to Provide Supplemental Judges for a Session Trial	CCB, OC
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Affirmative - The Overture explains the need and the helpfulness of such an amendment.

24 Evangel - BCO 24-1 screening previously ordained officer nominees	CCB, OC
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Affirmative - Unless the Assembly answers in the Negative on the grounds that the BCO **already** allows what this Overutre proposes. The Overture contends the "*BCO is unclear whether a Session has the authority to render a decision regarding Christian experience of a previously ordained officer.*" As in many other matters, absent any explicit prohibition to the contrary, the BCO allows such.

But if the BCO prohibits what Evangel is proposing, then the Overture should be Affirmed. It would apply to (1) an ordained RE who he transferred his membership from a PCA church at which he was previously on the Session and (2) to an RE who was already a member of the current church and had previously served a term on that Session. As the Overture points out, this would be analogous to TEs.

The members of a Presbytery would have the right to vote against receiving a TE w/o call seeking to transfer into that Presbytery without call if they judged there to be a deficiency in “Christian experience.” (BCO 13-6) Likewise, even if a TE w/o call had previously been installed as a pastor of a church in that Presbytery, if a congregation in that Presbytery sought to call him as pastor, the Presbytery members could decline to approve that call for reasons of character (Christian experience). Such a declination would *not* be a judicial censure. Likewise, a Session that evaluates the character of an RE without call is not engaging in judicial process, and if the examination results in the RE w/o call not being nominated to the congregation, it is not a judicial censure.

Here’s an example in a church that has chosen to have terms of service on their Session. If RE John Doe finishes his first three-year term on the Session, and the Session concludes it is unwise for him to serve another term, this Overture would explicitly allow the Session to decline to consider him at any point in the nomination or election process for a second term. It’s possible the Session could have concluded something about John Doe’s fitness to serve during his first term on that Session, and deems it best not to inform the congregation, and simply declines to approve John Doe for another term, at least not at that time.

This is simply the consequence of churches having the right to chose term limits for their elders. The unacceptable alternative would seem to require a Session to put a name on the ballot that it does not believe is currently qualified.. If what Evangel is proposing is not allowed, a Session might need to awkwardly and publicly recommend the congregation not re-elect John Doe even though his name is on the ballot.

Anyone who opposes Evangel’s Overture should realize that a congregation with term eldership is free to adopt something like the following into its Bylaws: “When an elder’s term ends, he will automatically be put on the ballot for consideration to be elected for another term.” In other words, if a congregation chooses, its Session would not render any opinion on the suitability of an elder being re-elected (although that Session could seek to pastorally dissuade him from having his name on the ballot for that next term).

Likewise, the BCO does not prohibit a congregation from calling a pastor for a set period of time. For example, while not common, Presbyteries have approved TE calls for a five year “term,” at the end of which the congregation can consider a non-debatable vote whether to renew for another term.

25 NW Georgia - BCO 46-4 Create Category of Associate Mbrshp for HR TEs	CCB, OC
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Negative

1. Doesn't seem necessary. It might help if the overture gave a real example of why this is needed. And it seems the change would foster a highly irregular situation concerning the jurisdiction of the retired TE.
2. The Overture focuses needed attention on the "pastoral care of an HR minister." The Overture proposes: "His Presbytery may request a Session to exercise pastoral care over him in its behalf." But a Presbytery can already communicate with the HR minister's local church and ask for the care envisioned in the Overture. Presumably, the leadership of that church is already doing so. And if a matter requires disciplinary attention, that church leadership can and should inform the Presbytery of the matter.
3. The proposal says the associate member status "may be approved by both the Presbytery and the Session." It's not clear in the proposed change whether the HR minister can decline the assignment of associate membership in a PCA or NAPARC church.

26 NW Georgia - Create AIC for Constitutionalized Directory of Worship

AC, OC

Negative - or Amend to simply conduct a survey

1. This puts the cart before the horse. Why go through all this effort before we first know whether Presbyteries want to constitutionalize ANY Directory of Worship? A simpler proposal would be: "That the 52nd GA direct the Stated Clerk to poll the Presbyteries on the following question: *"Do you want a constitutionalized Director of Worship?"* If in the next year, two-thirds indicate they do, then the AIC proposal could be considered at the 53rd GA as a way to begin to develop such a DOW. Attempting to accomplish the second step by a mere majority vote at one GA in the creation of an AIC seems to me an un-presbyterian procedure.

A survey would be a relatively simple and cost-effective way to avoid a possible great disruption of the peace of the Church. The PCA would not benefit by having an AIC propose a constitutionalized DoW and then have less than $\frac{2}{3}$ of the Pbs vote in favor. That would be disturbing the peace of the Church. And even if 60 voted in favor, there possibly be 27 that were greatly disturbed.). The older I've gotten, they more convince I am that you shouldn't do something that risks greatly disturbing the peace of a church/presbytery/denomination, unless it is vitally important to take that risk. The survey idea would help mitigate the risk.

2. Overture 35, as well as some others like Savannah River 40, seem to want a more centralized denominational authority, a bit akin to past years of Federal Government regulatory overreach. It's a bit like the US Dept. of Education burdening local school boards with more and more processes, regulations, constraints and mandates. It's a movement away from grassroots Presbyterianism and toward a centralizing of power in General Assemblies. While that might not be the motive, it will likely be the result.
3. There are some questionable assertions in the 17 Whereas clauses. For example, one asserts *"an updated Directory for Worship would be a great help to Sessions in ordering worship as well as a basis for biblical unity in the church (Ephesians 4)."* No evidence is offered demonstrating that Sessions or ministers currently have difficulty ordering worship. So, given the tenor of the Overture, it seems the sentence could read instead, *"an updated Directory for Worship would be a great help to prevent Sessions from ordering worship in an unbiblical way as well as a basis for enforced liturgical unity in the church."* Imposing a DOW on all PCA churches would probably *decrease* rather than increase the type of unity envisioned in Ephesians 4, which was not something achieved by creating more rules.

4. The Overture doesn't include a sufficiently specific funding plan. RAO 9-3 stipulates, "Any overture proposing an ad interim committee should ordinarily include a plan for how sufficient, designated funds for the ad interim committee will be raised." RAO 9-3 also stipulates, "Any motion to task the Administrative Committee with the funding of an ad interim committee through undesignated giving would require the approval of a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Assembly as an amendment to the AC budget (per RAO 4-11)."
5. In late May, Rev. Jared Nelson published an [article](#) on Presbyterian Polity, titled "Four Reasons for Revising & Fully Adopting the Directory for Worship." [Here](#) is a link to my interactions with that article. In his article, my good brother seems to contend that the PCA has, for a half-century, intended to finish and constitutionalize a DOW, but I'm not convinced. If I told my wife 40 years ago when we married that I would start working out, and never did, she'd reasonably conclude I never really meant to. That doesn't necessarily mean I shouldn't do so now. But it is reasonable to conclude I never really intended to do so.

27 NW Georgia - AIC to receive/provide ops suggestions for Perm Comm/Agencies 10 + OC
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Negative - AC Perm Committee recommends answering in the Negative, or refer it to the 53rd GA. (CH 407) Six other Permanent Committees and Agency Boards each also recommended answering in the Negative. (MNA page 707, RUF 909, CC 1508, CTS 1628, PCAF 1805, and Ridge H 1904)

1. The Overture does not adequately demonstrate the need for this AIC. Ironically, AIC's are not ordinarily the most efficient way to effect change in the PCA.
2. Anyone with suggestions for a Permanent Committee or Agency Board is already welcome to send those suggestions directly to the Committee, or Board, or one of its members. Those member names and presbyteries are published in the first section of all GA Minutes, along with the name of the chairman and secretary. In addition, the name, address, email, and phone number of every Coordinator and President are also published in that section.
3. Each Committee and Agency budget is reviewed and approved annually by the GA.
4. The sixth Whereas clause awkwardly seems to raise an issue other than efficiency: "Whereas we may give thanks for each of our elected Coordinators and leaders, we are also blessed with many gifted servants, relieving the practice of lengthy tenures of office." That employment decision is a matter that for many years has been reviewed annually by the GA-elected Permanent Committees and Agencies and reviewed by each Committee of Commissioners and voted on by the Assembly.

28 NW Georgia - Direct MNA to Apologize to US Government Entities, Repent to the PCA, and Terminate MNA Personnel for Online Counsel to Undocumented Persons	MNA
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Negative - MNA Permanent Committee recommends the GA answer this in the Negative, and its rationale is persuasive.. (CH 707) I agree with TE Coffin that the [OC should not consider this Overture](#) and should recommend the same to GA.

1. The appropriate place to raise concerns on this matter, and any further concerns, is with the Assembly-elected MNA Permanent Committee, not the floor of the Assembly.
2. MNA addressed this matter on its website in its statement of February 12, 2025, shown below.
<https://pcamna.org/mna-statement-refugee-and-immigrant-ministry/>

MNA serves the PCA for the advancement of Christ's kingdom through our churches in the U.S. and Canada. We do this through a two-pronged focus on church planting and church vitality. Our church planting efforts facilitate starting and supporting new PCA churches. Our church vitality efforts provide ministry resources that enable our churches to grow in their outward facing missional engagement in their communities, loving neighbors as our Lord commands (Matt 22:39). One such long-standing MNA ministry is our Refugee and Immigrant Ministry (RIM).

Recently, we posted links on our webpage to external organizations offering a wide range of recommendations and frequently asked questions on immigration. MNA's leadership erroneously allowed the posting of content that advised undocumented persons on ways to avoid being detained by authorities. We affirm that it is our Christian duty to obey the lawful commands of the civil magistrate and be subject to their authority (WCF 23.4; Romans 13:1-4; 1 Peter 2:13-14). To counsel otherwise is a sin. We confess that we fell short of our Biblical and Confessional standard. We repent and apologize. We also apologize for causing confusion and consternation in our church. We have removed all the previously posted information from our website.

MNA's Refugee & Immigrant Ministry, along with other MNA ministries, seeks to serve our churches with resources that enable them to faithfully follow our Lord's call to love the stranger. However, MNA does not engage in providing legal advice, political campaigning or partisan positions. The information we post going forward will provide ecclesiastical resources in line with our Confession for guidance on the matter. The MNA Permanent Committee is holding its Spring Meeting during the first week of March and this issue is docketed for further focused discussion as part of the Committee's regular oversight of MNA's ministries. The Committee does this work on behalf of the General Assembly of the PCA, which meets annually in June.

3. Because all overtures are published online for two years at *pcaga.org*, and then in GA Minutes which are also accessible online indefinitely, men should be careful and temperate when composing them. For example, it's not appropriate for an overture to publicly accuse a person or a committee of "unlawful conduct" or of violating civil law. While it hasn't previously seemed necessary to have an RAO provision authorizing the Stated Clerk to withhold publishing an overture if it contains intemperate or inappropriate material, it now seems it might be necessary. Remember, RAO 11-10 allows a *single* TE or RE commissioner to Presbytery to file an overture. One idea (for next year) is the italicized addition below:

RAO 11-4. An overture ordinarily is the request of a presbytery for action by the General Assembly upon a specific matter. If the Stated Clerk deems an overture contains intemperate language, he shall refer it back to the filer identifying the language. If the filer does not repair the language before the filing deadline, it will not be included in that year's list of overtures, unless the Administrative Committee instructs otherwise, and the annual Clerk's Report shall report any such instance.

Affirmative, if amended - First, neither the proposal nor our current BCO 15-5.c.2 mentions whether such an SJC Decision would be accompanied by any Concurring or Dissenting Opinions from SJC members. That should be clarified

Second, the amendment to BCO 15-5.c.(3).e proposes: "There may be no complaint or appeal from such a final decision of the General Assembly." But it doesn't mention whether a GA Commissioner could have his Dissent or Protest recorded (since he had a right to vote on the final matter).. It would be wise to specifically *disallow* such, given that there could be dozens of commissioners filing different Dissents (and without any page limit specified).

Third, it might be better if any special commission has 13 members instead of 12. This year we had an SJC Case where the SJC vote was 12-12, so appellate courts with an even number of judges is probably not optimum.

30 Houston Metro - Amend 5 BCO sections related to TEs in needful works

10 PCs/Agencies, CCB, OC

Refer Back to Presbytery - AC Perm Comm recommends refer it back to Presbytery without prejudice, or to the 53rd GA. (CH 408)

1. The Overture was received after all Permanent Committees and Agency Boards (except AC and CTS) had held their stated meetings. Each Committee and Agency should have the opportunity to review and comment on to this Overture because it potentially affects the legal employment relationships for each of them, and they should have the chance to evaluate the proposal with legal counsel. Referral to next year is also warranted because the Overture proposes a large number of words to be added to the BCO..
2. I applaud Houston Metro's attempt to address confusion about TE employment in jobs other than on a church staff in a member church of a Presbytery. However, Overture 30 still needs significant modification and is not acceptable in its current form. In short, it still confuses the jurisdiction of an employer and a credentialing entity.

Whenever there is a "needful work" not under the jurisdiction of a Presbytery, the Presbytery is the minister's credentialing entity, but it is *not* his employer. The situation is not unlike that for doctors, lawyers, and pilots. The Medical Board credentials the doctor, but the hospital is his employer. And if the Medical Board suspends or rescinds his credentials, he can probably no longer work in the hospital. But if the hospital fires him, the Medical Board has no say in that employment decision and his credentials could remain in good standing at the discretion of the Medical Board. The same analogy holds for the State Bar Association and an attorney's law firm. And it holds for the FAA and a pilot's airline. One is the credentialing entity, and one is the employer, and either of those entities *individually* can take action that will result in ending the attorney's or the pilot's employment without needing consent from the other. But ending employment never requires agreement from both entities. The employer is only the hospital, the law firm, or the airline.

In its present form, Houston Metro 30 would mandate, for example, that CC, CTS, RUF, etc. would need to "appear" before a Presbytery and give reasons and request Presbytery to "dissolve the call" of a minister working for CC, CTS, RUF, etc. The problem is made clear in the closing sentence of the Overture's rationale:

Finally, the Overture seeks to give the permanent committees and agencies the *same flexibility* with respect to calls that congregations currently enjoy while underscoring the responsibility of Presbyteries to approve or dissolve calls, *just as they do* with congregational pastoral calls. (emphasis added)

But expressed another way, the Overture *creates and imposes* the same restrictions and requirements on Permanent Committees and Agencies (and any "calling entity") as presently exists on congregations. But a Presbytery does not have jurisdiction over the *employment* of a minister unless he is employed by the Presbytery or by a church in that Presbytery.

If the Overture were adopted in its present form, the same restrictions and requirements in place for congregations would be imposed on any "calling entity" outside the PCA. But it's hard to imagine the Air Force appearing before Presbytery to justify why it's firing TE John Calvin as a base chaplain, or St. Luke's Hospital appearing to justify why it's firing TE Martin Luther from his job as hospital chaplain, or Westminster Seminary appearing before Presbytery to justify why it's not renewing the contract of Professor TE John Knox.

Here's an excerpt from Overture 30 on dissolution of employment [with brackets supplied].

If any calling entity [PCA Perm Comm, CC, CTS, Geneva Benefits, PCAF, RH, Air Force, St. Luke's Hospital, WTS, Belhaven University, Bent Tree, Serge, Ministry to State, Campus Outreach, Ligonier Ministries, CCEF, etc.] desires to be relieved of the minister called to the particular needful work, a similar procedure shall be observed." (p. 5 line 5)

That "similar procedure" stipulates the calling entity must appear before Presbytery and "show cause why Presbytery should or should not" dissolve the call. Furthermore, the minister "must not physically leave the field until the Presbytery or its commission empowered to handle uncontested requests for dissolutions has dissolved the relationship." (5:7) The GA should refer Overture 30 back to Houston Metro for reconsideration.

31 Houston Metro - BCO 31-10 to disallow a commission from administratively suspending an officer
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CCB, OC

Affirmative, if amended

I'm sympathetic to the goal of ensuring administrative suspension is not a censure. I helped draft the overture a few years ago that revised BCO 31-10 from a simple majority vote to requiring a two-thirds majority. But we should still retain this authority for a Commission. Perhaps Overture 31 could be amended as shown below (by striking the main part of the overture's proposal ("even if ...") and replacing it with the italicized clause).

31-10. When a member of a church court is under process, all his official functions may be administratively suspended at the court's discretion; but this shall never be done in the way of censure, and this requires a two-thirds (2/3) majority of the entire court, ~~even if the process is being conducted by a commission.~~ *or a unanimous vote of a commission.*

Requiring a unanimous vote by a commission raises the bar from our current rule, without taking authority away from judicial commissions. There will be instances where an investigative or judicial commission determines there is a strong presumption of guilt and time is of the essence regarding the administrative suspension. In such instances, requiring a presbytery to call and

convene a meeting to vote on an administrative suspension might be unwise, and perhaps even harmful to a local church or to the reputation of the broader Church. Sessions and presbyteries should be encouraged to appoint their wisest and most experienced men to such commissions.

32 Houston Metro - BCO 36 to increase censure without new trial

CCB, OC

Affirmative * (*revised May 2*)

BCO 36 needs to be revised. *Some* process needs to be described in our BCO. But when a man is under the censure of indefinite suspension, he is not in same the position as a man who is innocent until proven guilty. the burden is on him to demonstrate the repentance necessary for the censure to be removed. But in the original trial, the burden was on the prosecutor. In addition, the court that censured a man with indefinite suspension from office would probably have censured him with deposition had it known at the time of initial censure that two years later he would not have satisfied the court that he should be restored.

*I initially favored SE Alabama 38 but have been persuaded otherwise.

33 TE Fred Greco - Amend BCO 57-2 defining parts of a "careful exam" for young persons for Lord's Super

CCB, OC

Affirmative - IF Pacific NW Overture 22 is answered in the Affirmative

- While I still have some reservations (below) about Ov 33, after several conversations with TE Greco, I believe that if men are hesitant to approve Pacific NW Ov 22 on “regular standing” due to the matters TE Greco addresses in Ov 33, I’m happy to endorse Ov 33 if it helps the GA adopt Pacific NW Ov 22.

The Overture contends:

Guidance as to what would be the minimal elements of such an examination [of young persons] would be helpful for Sessions, as well as reminding Sessions that such elements are mandatory: hence the “shall” in the proposed language.

However, Sessions don't need instruction on how to conduct this exam; they've been doing it for decades. In addition, the BCO does not presently delineate "mandatory elements" so this proposed BCO amendment would not just "remind" Sessions, it would actually codify three specific "mandatory elements."

The Overture also references Pacific NW Overture 22 and contends:

Concerns that a young person would be more readily admitted to sealing ordinances without sufficient understanding because he could be prohibited from voting on various matters (e.g., a pastoral call) would be relieved by the explicit setting forth of the content of the examination of young persons.

But there aren't any reasonable concerns. I've tried to alleviate the concerns of the author of Overture 33 (my good friend) and assure him it's not reasonable to expect Overture 22 to result in Sessions admitting persons to the Supper without sufficient understanding. To date, I have failed in that task. But there's little chance any Session today withholds the Supper from a qualified covenant child because the Session doesn't trust him to vote wisely. That's because to them, admitting a qualified child to the Supper is far more important than letting that same child

vote immaturely and obliviously on important church matters. Overture 22 will not result in any change to that Session calculation, so that concern is unfounded.

34 Savannah River - Revise RAO 16 to require things regarding Sessions and Diaconates
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CCB, OC

Negative

1. If men believe an ordained diaconate is mandatory, for example, they should propose an amendment to the BCO, not an RAO amendment. The RAO contains the Rules for *Assembly* Operation, not Presbytery or Session operations. This Overture seeks to stipulate polity rules that would more properly belong in the BCO, or perhaps in a presbytery's standing rules.
2. Procedurally, an RAO change like the one proposed here should *follow*, not precede, a BCO change. (See similar comments on James River 9.) At a minimum, the Overture should propose a BCO amendment mandating a change, along with an RAO addition that would reference it. It would be procedurally inappropriate to revise the RAO to enforce a rule before that rule is ever codified in the BCO. It would be a sort of "end around" the normal process of revising the Constitution. A single GA is not authorized to create a constitutional requirement for Sessions in the RAO when it's not in the BCO. Overture 34 proposes a recordkeeping requirement before the PCA ever establishes the matter as a constitutional requirement. For example, the proposed RAO change would mandate a Session "report why [an ordained diaconate] has not been established." But our BCO never requires a lower court to report why it has declined to do something that's not constitutionally required. (BCO 5-9.e.)
3. The Westminster Standards don't mandate that a church have an ordained diaconate. And until the BCO is revised, neither does the BCO.
4. BCO 5-9.e - If an ordained diaconate is not required when organizing a church, then it is not of the essence. It seems the Overture should have proposed a change to BCO 5-9.e instead. Fifteen years ago, Potomac Presbytery's Overture 15 proposed an extensive revision of BCO Chapter 5: *The Organization of a Particular Church*. The revision included BCO 5-9.e, which stipulates the following when particularizing a church:

If deacons are not elected, the duties of the office shall devolve upon the session, until deacons can be secured.

The 2010 OC recommended approval of Overture 15, with some amendments, and the 2010 Nashville GA affirmed the change. The following year, Presbyteries voted 70-3 to approve the version we have now, and it was enacted by the 39th GA in Virginia Beach in 2011. Ascension, Calvary, and Central Carolina were the 3 votes against. (M39GA, pp. 95-107; 357)

5. Overture 35 moves toward centralizing denominational authority and more uniformity. It's away from grassroots Presbyterianism and toward centralizing power in GAs (achieved through RAO changes). While that might not be the motive, it will likely be the result.
6. Savannah River presented four reasons why an RAO change should be adopted, paraphrased in italics and addressed below.
 - a. *The 45th GA adopted a motion, "That sessions, if possible, establish a diaconate of qualified ordained men."* But contrary to the Overture, this was not a recommendation from the AIC on Women in the Ministry of the Church. It was a substitute for AIC recommendation 4. (M45GA, 639) Nothing new regarding diaconates was adopted by the 45th GA in Greensboro in 2017. Thus, until and unless BCO 5-9.e is changed (and

perhaps BCO 24-1), the BCO does not require a congregation to have an ordained diaconate in order to become, or continue as, a PCA church.

And BCO 24-1 does not say: "Every church shall elect persons to the offices of ruling elder and deacon." It says such persons shall be elected "... in the following manner." The "shall" pertains to the election process, not to a mandatory polity provision.

- b. *There are some PCA churches without ordained diaconates.* True, but that's simply an observation, not an argument against the practice. (See BCO 5-9.e.)
- c. *BCO 9-7 mentions "assistants to the deacons."* That's not germane. The mention of possible assistants does not mean an ordained diaconate is constitutionally mandatory.
- d. *The title "Deacon" cannot be assigned to non-ordained congregants.* True. This was codified in June 2025. But a church without a diaconate does not commonly give this title to non-ordained people, and if it does, then it's contrary to the provision recently enacted.

35 Pacific NW - Request AC to study and report on GA locations

AC

Affirmative - AC recommends answering in the Affirmative.* It's likely there are some significant advantages to holding GAs in larger cities with airline hubs. Hopefully, the AC will reach a balance between managing financial costs and having GA's in cities that are most conducive to being broadly representative of the PCA. For example, the 10 US airports with non-stop flights to the most US cities are, in order: ORD, DEN, DFW, ATL, CLT, IAH, LAX, EWR, MIA, and JFK. They have nonstops to between 70 and 195 different US cities per day. For example, ORD has nonstops to 195 cities, DEN has 194, DFW has 193, ATL has 158, and CLT has 146. By comparison, Chattanooga has nonstops to 11; Louisville has 28; Milwaukee has 27.

AC might even consider recommending using Atlanta for *every* GA. For example, the ARP meets in the same location each year, and some of our PCA presbyteries meet in the same location for each stated meeting (e.g., Potomac). While churches in PNW Presbytery are far from Atlanta, it would be preferable for us if GA was in Atlanta or Dallas *every year* or alternating years rather than holding GA in cities that are not major airline hubs. We realize it might be less prudent to meet in a city west of the Rockies, given the current geographical distribution of PCA churches. But that still leaves, DEN, DFW, ATL, CLT, IAH and MIA.

* AC Grounds: "Post-Covid costs, recent historically high GA attendance, and even higher commissioner registration numbers required to break even, make it imperative that the Administrative Committee research General Assembly arrangements as they bear on future attendance, costs, and fees that affect our GA's ability to function as a truly representative body responsible for determining the doctrinal fidelity and gospel mission of the larger PCA." (CH 408) Contrary to what some online reports seem to indicate, this Overture, and earlier versions, were discussed at length with the appropriate business personnel most responsible for GA costs.

36 GA Foothills - Boundaries of GA Foothills and Metro ATL

MNA

37 SE Alabama - BCO 12-3 allow Session to elect moderator in judicial cases
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CCB, OC

Affirmative - This is a helpful amendment, but it is too modest. The proposed change in Overture 37 could be amended by adding the italicized provision below.

BCO 12-3. When a church is without a pastor, the moderator of the Session may be either a minister appointed for that purpose by the Presbytery, with consent of the Session, or one invited by the Session to preside on a particular occasion, or one of its own members elected to preside. In judicial cases, the Session may elect one of its members to preside as moderator or shall be a invite any ruling elder or a minister of the Presbytery to which the church belongs to preside as moderator.

This amendment to the Overture is prudent for the same reasons SEAL offers for the original Overture. For example, *any* Session in SEAL should be able to invite the RE Moderator of the 51st GA and current SJC member (and member of a church in SEAL) to preside as moderator in a trial. This fits well with Pacific NW Overture 23, which proposes a Session be given the freedom to request supplemental judges.

38 SE Alabama - BCO 30-4 to require new trial to elevate censure	CCB, OC
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Answer by Reference to an Affirmative Answer to Houston Metro 32.

39 SE Alabama - BCO 34-8, 33-5 re increasing suspension to deposition	CCB, OC
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Answer by Reference to Affirmative Answer on Houston Metro 32 (which is different than what SEAL 39 proposes.)

40 SE Alabama - BCO 35-9 to require recording all parts of a trial	CCB, OC
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Affirmative - This is a helpful revision. In a recent SJC Case, a Presbytery argued that BCO 35-9 only requires *testimony* to be transcribed, and not things like the opening and closing statements from the parties, and motions and objections from the parties along with the decision of the court on those motions and objections. A trial should be recorded from the convening to the adjournment and this amendment will make that clearer.

41 Calvary - Direct AC to collect & report congregations' worship times"	AC
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Negative - AC's rationale for answering in the Negative is persuasive. (CH 408)
This idea is also counterproductive as Churches occasionally change their service times, for a summer schedule, or moving to two services, or Easter Sunday, etc. Unless there's some mechanism to keep times always current, posting times on our PCA website could be a disservice, as it's likely to cause those who rely on it to show up for church at the wrong time. It's better if they rely on local church websites as those are more likely to be up to date. Finally, it's at least curious that one Whereas clause seems to have something else in mind: "Whereas the charge of keeping the Sabbath is more specially directed to superiors (WLC 15 118);" It's unclear how that pertains to the Overture.

42 Calvary - Direct Stated Clerk <i>not</i> to collect data on age or ethnicity	AC
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Negative - I don't recall why such collection was sought, but the AC's recommendation to answer in the Negative is persuasive. GA Commissioner Handbook page 411.

The argument that it's unhelpful (or disallowed) to identify people in any way by ethnicity must sound interesting to the men and women in our 213 Korean churches in 9 Korean presbyteries. I'm curious what our Korean brothers think about this Whereas clause in the Overture: "There is no clear usefulness or theological justification for further subdividing either of these two categories (i.e., covenant-keepers and covenant-breakers) in terms of either age or ethnicity ...". We have [727 Korean ministers](#) in the PCA (14% of the TE total).

43 Calvary - Amend RAO 4-11 to disallow collecting data on age or ethnicity CCB, AC, OC

Answer by Reference to a Negative answer to Calvary 42 - If the GA affirms Ov 42 and directs Stated Clerk to refrain from collecting this data then there is no need for an RAO amendment. If the GA declines to affirm Overture 42, then Overture 43 is mooted. AC recommendation to answer in the Negative is on CH 413.

44 Pee Dee - Change ByFaith to Press Release Publication AC

Negative - The AC Permanent Committee provided several satisfactory reasons why this should be answered in the Negative. (CH 415)

45 Hills and Plains - Change boundaries of Hills & Plains and Covenant Pphys MNA

46 Metro Atlanta - Change boundaries of Metro ATL and GA Foothills MNA

47 Great Lakes - Creat AIC on Christian Nationalism AC, OC

Answer by Reference to Negative Answer on Arizona 3

48 Tennessee Valley - AIC for Pastoral Letter on Christian Citizenship AC, OC

Answer by Reference to a Negative Answer on Arizona 3. In addition, the Overture's likening the proposed "pastoral letter" to the 1975 "Pastoral Letter Concerning the Experience of the Holy Spirit Today," *adopted by* the Second General Assembly, raises Chrisitan Nationalism to a much higher plane that is warranted. The PCA does not need to adopt a statement on Christian Nationalism. Individual men are free to try to write persuasive papers.

49 Pacific NW - Create AIC on Artificial Intelligence 10 PC/Agencies, OC

Since this is my Presbytery, and I was not present at the meeting where it was proposed, I'll refrain from comment. However, just for fun, I asked ChatGPT40 to write me two, 1,000-word papers - one titled, Why the PCA Should Appoint an AIC on AI and one on Why the PCA Should Decline to Appont an AIC on AI. Both are persuasive.

50 Chesapeake - Discernment and Compassion re Immigrants OC

Affirmative or Postpone Consideration Indefinitely - The Overture expresses some beautiful Christian sentiments. But if the OC decides not to recommend the GA answer in the Affirmative, it would be better for OC to recommend "postponing consideration

indefinitely” rather than answering in the Negative, which could easily be misunderstood and misreported.

Ordinarily, it’s not a great idea to propose GA adopt statements or “encourage” churches to think or act a certain way - regardless of the merit. There are too many things about which PCA minister and elders are passionate, but the GA need not be. The Gospel covers all of life, but the *General Assembly* does not need to apply it to lots of different subjects.

Practically speaking, the Overture contains 11 “Whereas” clauses, which are presented as arguments in favor of the 8 Resolutions. It’s hard to quibble with the assertions in the Whereas clauses, but the Resolutions don’t *necessarily* follow. But that’s not necessarily a problem.

For any Overture, it’s important to understand the impact and significance of the verbs in the Resolution clauses. The first Resolution says “the Church *should* view immigrants ... primarily as neighbors.” It’s unclear how the 52nd GA can act on that specific Resolution. Below are the verbs in the other (unnumbered) Resolutions:

2. “*encourages* all churches, Presbyteries, officers, and members *to*...”
3. “churches and members of the PCA be *exhorted to*...”
4. “churches be *encouraged to offer* tangible care and support *to*...”
5. “*encourages* its churches *to speak and act* toward the sojourner in ways...”
6. “the PCA *affirm the call to* love, evangelize, disciple, and enfold...”
7. “that when our churches and agencies interact with individuals who have no valid legal pathway to attain legal immigrant status, *we should*...”
8. “the PCA *commends to* all believers a life of faithful citizenship...”