

## **SELECT OVERTURES FROM THE OVERTURES COMMITTEE TO THE FORTY- EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN AMERICA**

### **OVERTURE 23:**

The Gulf Coast Presbytery overtured (requested) the 48th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America to amend *The Book of Church Order* chapter 17 to add a new clause, *BCO* 17-4. The effect of the new language was to include additional descriptions of qualifications for men pursuing vocational ministry. The Assembly moved the recommended language to Chapter 16 rather than Chapter 17 and substituted new language to the same effect, but which was more amenable to the Assembly. The final version, which was approved by the Assembly in a vote of 1438 to 417, reads as follows:

**16-4.** Officers in the Presbyterian Church in America must be above reproach in their walk and Christlike in their character. Those who profess an identity (such as, but not limited to, “gay Christian,” “same sex attracted Christian,” “homosexual Christian,” or like terms) that undermines or contradicts their identity as new creations in Christ, either by denying the sinfulness of fallen desires (such as, but not limited to, same sex attraction), or by denying the reality and hope of progressive sanctification, or by failing to pursue Spirit-empowered victory over their sinful temptations, inclinations, and actions are not qualified for ordained office.

### **OVERTURE 37:**

The Eastern Pennsylvania Presbytery overtured (requested) the 48th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America to amend *The Book of Church Order* chapters 21-4 and 24-1. The effect would be to clarify the moral requirements for church office. Chapter 21 has to do with men being examined for the office of teaching elder. Chapter 24 has to do with men being examined for the offices of ruling elder and deacon. The Overtures Committee amended some of the language and recommended it to the Assembly. The final version, which passed 1130 to 692, reads as follows (the underlined language is new to the BCO):

#### **BCO 21-4**

e. In the examination of the candidate’s personal character, the presbytery shall give specific attention to potentially notorious concerns, such as but not limited to relational sins, sexual immorality (including homosexuality, child sexual abuse, fornication, and pornography), addictions, abusive behavior, racism, and financial mismanagement. Careful attention must be given to his practical struggle against sinful actions, as well as to persistent sinful desires. The candidate must give clear testimony of reliance upon his union with Christ and the benefits thereof by the Holy Spirit, depending on this work of grace to make progress over sin (Psalm 103:2-5, Romans 8:29) and to bear fruit (Psalm 1:3; Gal. 5:22-23). While imperfection will remain, he must not be known by reputation or self-profession according to his remaining sinfulness but rather by the work of the Holy Spirit in Christ Jesus (1 Cor.

6:9-11). In order to maintain discretion and protect the honor of the pastoral office, Presbyteries are encouraged to appoint a committee to conduct detailed examinations of these matters and to give prayerful support to candidates.

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

- a. his Christian experience, especially his personal character and family management (based on the qualifications set out in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 38 and Titus 1:6-9),
- b. his knowledge of Bible content,
- c. his knowledge of the system of doctrine, government, discipline 41 contained in the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in America (*BCO* Preface III, *The Constitution Defined*),
- d. the duties of the office to which he has been nominated, and
- e. his willingness to give assent to the questions required for ordination (*BCO* 24-6).

In the examination of each nominee's personal character, the Session shall give specific attention to potentially notorious concerns, such as but not limited to relational sins, sexual immorality (including homosexuality, child sexual abuse, fornication, and pornography), addictions, abusive behavior, racism, and financial mismanagement. Careful attention must be given to his practical struggle against sinful actions, as well as to persistent sinful desires. Each nominee must give clear testimony of reliance upon his union with Christ and the benefits thereof by the Holy Spirit, depending upon this work of grace to make progress over sin (Psalm 103:2-5; Romans 8:29) and to bear fruit (Psalm 1:3; Gal. 5:22-23). While imperfection will remain, he must not be known by reputation or self-profession according to his remaining sinfulness but rather by the work of the Holy Spirit in Christ Jesus (1 Cor. 6:9-11). In order to maintain discretion and protect the honor of church office, Sessions are encouraged to appoint a committee to conduct detailed examinations into these matters and to give prayerful support to nominees. If there are candidates eligible for the election, the Session shall report to the congregation those eligible, giving at least thirty (30) days prior notice of the time and place of a congregational meeting for the elections. If one-fourth (1/4) of the persons entitled to vote shall at any time request the Session to call a congregational meeting for the purpose of electing additional officers, it shall be the duty of the Session to call such a meeting on the above procedure. The number of officers to be elected shall be determined by the congregation after hearing the Session's recommendation.