

At the July 25, 2020 meeting of the Lowcountry Presbytery, the following motion was approved:

In light of the release of the report of The Forty-Seventh General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America Ad Interim Committee on Human Sexuality, the Presbytery moderator shall establish a study committee consisting of at least 2 RE's and 3 TE's for the purpose of examining said report and recommending any potential subsequent replacement overtures as well as recommendations for how congregations can address this topic. The committee shall further report on the orderliness and appropriateness of rescinding the overture previously submitted at the 17th stated meeting. The committee shall distribute their report to the Lowcountry Presbytery at least TWO weeks in advance of the November 5, 2020 Stated Meeting.

The members of the committee are:

TE Michael Walters (Convener)

TE Michael Bauer

TE Alex Mark

TE Jeremy Mullen

TE John Mark Patrick

RE Nate Arnold

RE David Walters Jr.

RE Richard Wyly

The Committee met on the following dates:

- August 7, 2020
- August 27, 2020
- September 10, 2020
- September 17, 2020
- September 24, 2020
- October 14, 2020

The Report is divided into four sections:

- I. An Overture concerning the examination of a candidate's character informed by the work of the report of The Forty-Seventh General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America Ad Interim Committee on Human Sexuality.
- II. Advice concerning how churches in Lowcountry Presbytery may make use of the report of The Forty-Seventh General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America Ad Interim Committee on Human Sexuality.

- III.A recommendation concerning the orderliness of rescinding/ withdrawing a previously submitted overture.
- IV.A recommendation concerning whether or not Overture 7 should be withdrawn or retained.

Part I: An Overture concerning the examination of a candidate's character informed by work of the report of The Forty-Seventh General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America Ad Interim Committee on Human Sexuality.

**OVERTURE TO THE 48TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PCA
TO CLARIFY MORAL REQUIREMENTS FOR CHURCH OFFICE
FROM LOWCOUNTRY PRESBYTERY**

Whereas a candidate for ordination's character is as important as his doctrine (1 Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:6-9) and specific areas and means of inquiry into doctrine, knowledge, views, and ability are enumerated in the BCO (BCO 21-4; 24-1); yet little emphasis or elaboration is given to the examination of the candidate's character (BCO 21-4-a-1; 24-1-a); and

Whereas the qualifications for a church officer particularly require that he be above reproach and blameless (1 Tim. 3:2,10; Tit. 1:7); and

Whereas scripture itself singles out sexual immorality as being worthy of particular note in the context of the church operating in the world (Acts 15:20); and

Whereas the Presbyterian Church in America has sought consistent and clear responses to questions of homosexuality throughout its history; and

Whereas recently the language of sexual and gender identification has caused much confusion, leading to the formation of a study committee and its helpful report; and

Whereas still other forms of actual sin and sinful desires raise similar concerns, and new issues will likely arise in the future; and

Whereas the Christian's identity is rooted in Christ so that he is a "new creation" in Him, his identity cannot be defined by any desires or lifestyles that are contrary to the Holy Scripture; for the Christian there is a clear distinction between self-conception ("this is who I am") and remaining indwelling sin ("This is what I must daily mortify") (Rom. 6: 1-14; I Cor. 6: 9-11; II Cor. 5: 17; Gal. 2:20; Col. 3: 1-5); and

Whereas some men may have experienced various struggles with sin in a manner that would have disqualified them from church office, yet through God's work of sanctification they have been faithfully and consistently, although imperfectly, mortifying this sin with its desires to the point where they may be qualified; and

Whereas all Christians should expect to experience progress in the Christian life (WLC 75; WSC 35) as a work of grace by the Holy Spirit and in time to be enabled more and more to die unto sin and to live unto righteousness; and

Whereas the mortifying of sin includes not only actual sins committed but also the battling of all sinful passions and desires that remain (WLC 78; WSC 35); and

Whereas the “Report of the Ad Interim Committee on Human Sexuality” offers the clarifying distinction that “we name our sins, but are not named by them”; and

Whereas the answer to contemporary debates is better made with biblical and confessional language rather than the introduction of contemporary terms which cause confusion; and

Whereas there is precedent for amending the BCO to address emerging cultural issues;

Therefore be it resolved that, for the examination of Teaching Elders, *BCO* 21-4 be amended to add a new sub-paragraph 21-4-e, as follows, with the subsequent sub-paragraphs re-lettered:

In the examination of the candidate’s personal character, the presbytery should give specific attention to potentially notorious concerns, such as but not limited to relational sins, sexual immorality (including homosexuality, fornication, and pornography), addictions, abusive behavior, and financial mismanagement. Careful reflection should be given to his practical struggle against sinful actions, as well as persistent sinful desires. The candidate shall give clear testimony of his 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; Galatians 5:22-23). While imperfection will remain, he should 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 Corinthians 6:9-11). In order to maintain discretion and protect the honor of the pastoral office, the presbytery may empower a committee to conduct detailed examinations into these matters and to give prayerful support to candidates.

Be it further resolved that, for the examination of Ruling Elders and Deacons, *BCO* 24-1 be amended as follows (additions are underlined):

24-1. Every church shall elect persons to the offices of ruling elder 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 and Titus 1:6-9),
- b. his knowledge of Bible content,
- c. his knowledge of the system of doctrine, government, discipline 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 should give specific attention to potentially notorious concerns, such as but not limited to relational sins,

sexual immorality (including homosexuality, fornication, and pornography), addictions, abusive behavior, and financial mismanagement. Careful reflection should be given to his practical struggle against sinful actions, as well as persistent sinful desires. Each nominee shall give clear testimony of his 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; Galatians 5:22-23). While imperfection will remain, he should 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 Corinthians 6:9-11). In order to maintain discretion and protect the honor of church office, the session may empower a committee to conduct detailed examinations into these matters and 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 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.

A motion to recommend this overture to the Presbytery was unanimously approved.

Part II: Advice concerning how churches in Lowcountry Presbytery may make use of the report of The Forty-Seventh General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America Ad Interim Committee on Human Sexuality.

Our committee found the report of the Ad Interim Committee on Human Sexuality to be a resource that winsomely and helpfully addresses perhaps the most polarizing topic in our culture today. While we do not expect that every member of every congregation in Lowcountry Presbytery will read this report, we do recommend three ways in which congregations can make use of this resource for the benefit of Christ's Church:

1. We recommend that all active ruling and teaching elders review the report in its entirety.
2. We recommend that Sessions actively seek opportunities to teach on this topic, with specific regard to the "Twelve Statements", found on pages 6-13. Settings such as adult Sunday school, small groups, etc may be appropriate venues for these opportunities.
3. We recommend that Sessions review the Annotated Bibliography section, found on pages 45-47. Furthermore, Sessions could make resources from that bibliography available to their congregations, either via recommendation or actually making them available in a church bookstore.

A motion to give this advice to the Presbytery was unanimously approved.

Part III: A recommendation concerning the orderliness of rescinding/ withdrawing a previously submitted overture.

After seeking substantial counsel and considering a wide variety of input received, we recommend a path that we believe would create the least procedural conflict:

It is the advice of this committee that a presbytery may request to withdraw a previously submitted overture, assuming that no formal action has been taken yet by the denomination.

We recommend following a similar procedure to that which Roberts Rules (RONR (11th ed.), p.76, article 6, lines 10-24 and article 35:1-8, pp.305-307) outlines in order to rescind a motion: The procedure for doing so would be for a majority of the entire membership (under BCO 13-1, this would be one-half plus one vote of the total TEs in the Presbytery plus the number of RE commissioners eligible to vote at Presbytery) to vote to withdraw the overture.

Furthermore, we strongly advise that notice for doing so be posted in the docket at least one week prior to the meeting. If such notice is given in the docket one week prior to the meeting, then a simple majority shall be able to withdraw the overture.

A motion to give this advice to the Presbytery was unanimously approved.

Part IV: A recommendation concerning whether or not Overture 7 should be withdrawn or retained.

A motion to recommend that Lowcountry Presbytery retain Overture 7 was approved by vote of 4 in favor, 2 against, 1 abstention.