

1 **OVERTURE 15** from Potomac Presbytery (to CCB, OC)
2 “Revise *BCO* 5-2; 5-3; 5-4; 5-8; 5-9; 5-10; 5-11; add new 5-5; and
3 Renumber Thereafter”
4

5 Note: Rationale is included as endnotes, which are not part of the proposed amendments.
6

7 **Whereas**, church planting is one of God’s primary means to extend and expand His
8 Kingdom, and
9

10 **Whereas**, the Presbyterian Church in America has been faithfully committed to church
11 planting since its inception and should only deepen that commitment, and
12

13 **Whereas**, church planting in the Presbyterian Church in America will be served by a
14 process that is clear where necessary and flexible where possible, and
15

16 **Whereas**, certain phrasing in the *Book of Church Order* has caused various degrees of
17 confusion, inconsistency and even frustration among those involved in church
18 planting, and
19

20 **Whereas**, the process for selecting ruling and teaching elders during the organization
21 process should mirror that of a particular church as much as practically possible,
22 and
23

24 **Whereas**, the rights of members to determine their own leadership should be affirmed, and
25

26 **Whereas**, the section “The Organization of a Particular Church” would provide greater
27 clarity and guidance if the elements were ordered chronologically,
28

29 **Therefore be it resolved**, that the 38th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in
30 America amend *BCO* 5-2, -3, -4, -8, -9, -10 and -11, as shown below, and add a
31 new 5-5, renumbering thereafter:ⁱ
32

33 Note: Strike-through for deletions; additions/revisions in bold and underlined.
34

35 **CHAPTER 5**

36 *The Organization of a Particular Church*

37
38

39 **A. Mission Churches**

40

41 **5-1.** A mission church may be properly described in the same manner as the particular
42 church is described in *BCO* 4-1. It is distinguished from a particular church in that it has
43 no permanent governing body, and thus must be governed or supervised by others.
44 However, its goal is to mature and be organized as a particular church as soon as this can
45 be done decently and in good order.

1 5-2. Ordinarily, the responsibility for initiation and oversight of a mission church lies
2 with a Presbytery, exercised through its committee on Mission to North America, or by a
3 Session, in cooperation with presbytery's committee on Mission to North America.
4 However, ~~if the mission church is located outside the bounds of Presbytery, the~~
5 ~~responsibility may be exercised through the General Assembly's Committee on Mission to~~
6 ~~North America.~~

7
8 **a. if an independent gathering of believers desires to form a congregation of**
9 **the Presbyterian Church in America, they shall submit to the appropriate**
10 **presbytery a written request to be established as a mission church and, upon**
11 **approval of said request, be assigned a temporary government (BCO 5-3),**
12 **which government shall take steps to oversee the election of a pastor**
13 **according to BCO 5-9.f.(1).ⁱⁱ**

14 **b.** if the mission church is located outside the bounds of a presbytery, the
15 responsibility may be exercised through the General Assembly's Committee on
16 Mission to North America **or Committee on Mission to the World, as the case**
17 **may be, according to the "Rules of Assembly Operation." In such a case the**
18 **powers of the presbytery in the following provisions shall be exercised by**
19 **the General Assembly through its appropriate committee.**
20

21 5-3. The mission church, because of its transitional condition, requires a temporary
22 system of government. Depending on the circumstances and at its own discretion,
23 Presbytery may provide for such government in one of several ways:

24 **a.** Appoint an evangelist in accordance with BCO 8-6.

25 **b.** Cooperate with the Session of a particular church in arranging a mother-daughter
26 relationship with a mission church. The Session may then serve as the temporary
27 governing body of the mission church.

28 **c.** Appoint a commission to serve as a temporary Session of the mission church.
29 **When a minister of the presbytery has been approved to serve as pastor of**
30 **the mission church, he shall be included as a member of the commission and**
31 **serve as its moderator.ⁱⁱⁱ**
32

33 ~~5-4. At the discretion of the temporary governing body, members may be received into~~
34 ~~the mission church as prescribed in BCO 12. These persons then become communicant or~~
35 ~~non-communicant members of the Presbyterian Church in America.~~
36

37 **5-4. Pastoral ministry for the mission church may be provided:**

38 **a. by a minister of the presbytery called by presbytery to serve as pastor, or**

39 **b. by stated supply (BCO 22-5, -6), or**

40 **c. by a series of qualified preachers approved by the temporary government**
41 **(BCO 12-5.e.).**
42

43 **5-5. The temporary government shall receive members (BCO 12-5.a.) into the**
44 **mission church according to the provisions of BCO 57 so far as they may be**
45 **applicable. As members of the mission church those received are communing or non-**
46 **communings members of the Presbyterian Church in America.^{iv}**

47 **a. If there is a minister approved by Presbytery to serve the mission church as**

1 its pastor (BCO 5-4.a.), each member so received shall be understood to
2 assent to the call of that minister and to affirm the promises made to the
3 pastor in BCO 21-10.^v

4 **b. Meetings of the members of the mission church shall be governed according**
5 **to the provisions of BCO 25 so far as they may be applicable, and shall be**
6 **conducted according to the current edition of *Robert's Rules of Order Newly***
7 **Revised.**

8
9 **5-6.** Mission churches and their members shall have the right of judicial process to the
10 court having oversight of their temporary governing body.

11
12 **5-7.** Mission churches shall maintain a roll of communicant and non-communicant
13 members, in the same manner as, but separate from, other particular churches.

14
15 **5-8.** It is the intention of the Presbyterian Church in America that mission churches
16 enjoy the same status as particular churches in relation to civil government.

17 18 **B. The Organization of a Particular Church**

19
20 ~~**5-8.**—A new church can be organized only by the authority of Presbytery. The~~
21 ~~Presbytery may proceed with the organization directly, or through an especially appointed~~
22 ~~commission, or through an evangelist to whom the Presbytery has entrusted the power to~~
23 ~~organize churches. In the organization of a church, whatever be the way in which the~~
24 ~~matter originated, the procedure shall be as follows:~~

- 25 1. ~~The Presbytery shall receive and approve a petition subscribed to by those~~
26 ~~persons seeking to be organized into a congregation of the Presbyterian Church~~
27 ~~in America, appointing a time and date for a service of organization.~~
28 2. ~~At the service and following the preaching of the Word, testimonials shall be~~
29 ~~presented to the Presbytery by such persons as are members of the church, if~~
30 ~~there be any, and applicants for admission to the church on profession of faith in~~
31 ~~Christ shall, on satisfactory examination, be received.~~
32 3. ~~These persons shall in the next place be required to enter into covenant, by~~
33 ~~answering the following question affirmatively, with uplifted hand:~~

34
35 [See below – no change in wording of question]

- 36
37 4. ~~The presiding minister shall then say:~~

38
39 [See below – only one word changed in pronouncement]

- 40
41 5. ~~Action shall be taken to secure, as soon as practicable, the regular administration~~
42 ~~of the Word and Sacraments.~~

43
44 **5-9.** A new church can be organized only by the authority of Presbytery.^{vi}

45 **a. A presbytery should establish standing rules setting forth the prerequisites**
46 **that qualify a mission church to begin the organization process, e.g., the**

1 minimum number of petitioners and the level of financial support to be
2 provided by the congregation. The number of officers sufficient to constitute
3 the quorum for a session shall be necessary to complete the organization
4 process.^{vii}

5 b. The temporary government of the mission church shall oversee the steps
6 necessary for organization.^{viii}

7 c. When the temporary government determines that among the members of
8 the mission congregation there are men who appear qualified as officers, the
9 nomination process shall begin and the election conclude following the
10 procedures of BCO 24 so far as they may be applicable.^{ix}

11 d. The election of officers shall normally take place at least two weeks prior to
12 the date of the organization service. However, the effective date of service
13 for the newly elected officers shall be upon the completion of the
14 organization service.^x

15 e. If deacons are not elected, the duties of the office shall devolve upon the
16 session, until deacons can be secured.^{xi}

17 f. If there is a minister approved by Presbytery to serve the mission church as
18 its pastor, and members of the mission church have been received according
19 to BCO 5-5, no further action with respect to the call of that pastor to the
20 church to be organized shall be necessary. If no such minister has been
21 appointed, or if the minister serving chooses not to continue as pastor of the
22 newly organized church, a pastor shall be called as follows:^{xii}

23 (1) The temporary government shall oversee the election of a pastor
24 according the provisions of BCO 20 so far as they are applicable.^{xiii} If a
25 candidate is to be proposed before the organization, the congregational
26 meeting to elect a pastor shall take place at least two weeks before the
27 service of organization. This may be the same meeting called for the
28 election of other officers.^{xiv}

29 (2) The ordination and/or installation shall be according to the provisions
30 of BCO 21 so far as they are applicable. The service may take place at
31 the service of organization.

32 g. In order to proceed to organization as a particular church the members of
33 the mission church shall sign a petition to Presbytery requesting the same.^{xv}

34 h. Upon presbytery's approval of the petition, presbytery shall appoint an
35 organizing commission and shall set the date and time of the organization
36 service.^{xvi}

37 i. At the service of organization the following elements shall be included in the
38 order deemed by the organizing commission to be appropriate:^{xvii}

39 (1) The organizing commission shall ordain and/or install ruling elders
40 and/or deacons according to the provisions of BCO 24-6 so far as they
41 may be applicable.

42 (2) If a pastor is being ordained and/or installed at the service, the
43 organizing commission shall act according to the provisions of BCO 21
44 so far as they may be applicable.

45 (3) A member of the organizing commission shall require communicant
46 members of the mission church present to enter into covenant, by

1 **answering the following question affirmatively, with uplifted hand:**
2

3 **Do you, in reliance on God for strength, solemnly promise and**
4 **covenant that you will walk together as a particular church, on the**
5 **principles of the faith and order of the Presbyterian Church in**
6 **America, and that you will be zealous and faithful in maintaining the**
7 **purity and peace of the whole body? [note: no change in wording]**
8

9 **(4) A member of the organizing commission shall then say:**
10

11 **I now pronounce and declare that you are constituted a church**
12 **according to the Word of God and the faith and order of the**
13 **Presbyterian Church in America. In the name of the Father and of the**
14 **Son and of the Holy ~~Ghost~~Spirit. Amen.**
15

16 ~~**5-9.**—The following procedures shall be used in nominating and training ruling elders~~
17 ~~prior to organization and the election of a Session:~~

- 18 1. ~~All men of the mission church (unless they decline) shall receive instruction in the~~
19 ~~qualifications and work of the office of ruling elder by the organizing commission~~
20 ~~or the evangelist.~~
21 2. ~~These men shall be examined by the organizing commission or the evangelist~~
22 ~~concerning their Christian experience, their knowledge and acceptance of the~~
23 ~~constitutional standards of the church, and their willingness to assume the~~
24 ~~responsibility of the office of ruling elder according to the qualifications set forth~~
25 ~~in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. The organizing commission or the evangelist shall~~
26 ~~present a list of all who are found qualified to be nominated.~~
27 3. ~~Not less than thirty (30) days prior to the date of election, petitioners shall submit,~~
28 ~~from the list of all those found qualified, nominations of members for the office of~~
29 ~~ruling elder to the Presbytery designated organizing commission or evangelist.~~
30 ~~(Compare BCO 24-1)~~
31 4. ~~The congregation will determine the number of ruling elders following procedures~~
32 ~~outlined in BCO 24-3 and 24-1.~~
33 5. ~~At the organizing meeting ordination and installation shall follow the procedure set~~
34 ~~forth in BCO 24-6.~~
35 6. ~~Those elected, ordained and installed ruling elders should meet as soon as is~~
36 ~~practicable to elect a moderator and a clerk. The moderator may be one of their~~
37 ~~own number or any teaching elder of the Presbytery with Presbytery's approval.~~
38

39 ~~**5-10.**—If deacons are elected, follow the procedures of (1) through (5) above. If deacons~~
40 ~~are not elected, the duties of the office shall devolve upon the ruling elders.~~

41
42 ~~**5-11.**—The following procedures may be used in the selection of a pastor in a newly~~
43 ~~organized congregation:~~

- 44 1. ~~Not less than thirty (30) days prior to the date of organization the petitioners shall~~
45 ~~elect from their own body a Pulpit Nominating Committee. This election shall~~
46 ~~take place at a meeting of the petitioners announced at least one week in advance.~~

1 ~~Only those who have made a written commitment to membership in the new~~
2 ~~church are eligible to vote at this meeting.~~
3 ~~2. The Pulpit Committee may report at the organizational meeting of the~~
4 ~~congregation, or any subsequent congregational meeting called for that purpose.~~
5 ~~3. If at the organizational meeting a pastor is called who is a member of the~~
6 ~~organizing Presbytery, he may be installed at that time by the Presbytery or a~~
7 ~~Commission authorized by the Presbytery to do so. If the pastor elect is not a~~
8 ~~member of the organizing Presbytery, his call must be prosecuted under the~~
9 ~~provisions of BCO 21.~~

10
11 **5-10. Upon organization, the newly elected session should meet as soon as is**
12 **practicable to elect a stated clerk and formulate a budget. If there is no pastor, the**
13 **session may elect as moderator one of their own number or any teaching elder of the**
14 **Presbytery with Presbytery’s approval. Further, if there is no pastor, action shall be**
15 **taken to secure, as soon as practicable, the regular administration of Word and**
16 **Sacraments.**

17
18
19 **CHAPTER 5 AS THUS AMENDED WOULD READ:**

20
21 **CHAPTER 5**

22
23 *The Organization of a Particular Church*

24
25 **A. Mission Churches**

26
27 **5-1.** A mission church may be properly described in the same manner as the particular
28 church is described in BCO 4-1. It is distinguished from a particular church in that it has
29 no permanent governing body, and thus must be governed or supervised by others.
30 However, its goal is to mature and be organized as a particular church as soon as this can
31 be done decently and in good order.

32
33 **5-2.** Ordinarily, the responsibility for initiation and oversight of a mission church lies
34 with a Presbytery, exercised through its committee on Mission to North America, or by a
35 Session, in cooperation with presbytery's committee on Mission to North America.
36 However:

- 37 a. if an independent gathering of believers desires to form a congregation of the
38 Presbyterian Church in America, they shall submit to the appropriate presbytery
39 a written request to be established as a mission church and, upon approval of said
40 request, be assigned a temporary government (BCO 5-3), which government
41 shall take steps to oversee the election of a pastor according to BCO 5-9.f.(1).
- 42 b. if the mission church is located outside the bounds of a presbytery, the
43 responsibility may be exercised through the General Assembly’s Committee on
44 Mission to North America or Committee on Mission to the World, as the case
45 may be, according to the “Rules of Assembly Operation.” In such a case the
46 powers of the presbytery in the following provisions shall be exercised by the
47 General Assembly through its appropriate committee.

1 **5-3.** The mission church, because of its transitional condition, requires a temporary
2 system of government. Depending on the circumstances and at its own discretion,
3 Presbytery may provide for such government in one of several ways:

- 4 a. Appoint an evangelist in accordance with *BCO* 8-6.
- 5 b. Cooperate with the Session of a particular church in arranging a mother-daughter
6 relationship with a mission church. The Session may then serve as the temporary
7 governing body of the mission church.
- 8 c. Appoint a commission to serve as a temporary Session of the mission church.
9 When a minister of the presbytery has been approved to serve as pastor of the
10 mission church, he shall be included as a member of the commission and serve
11 as its moderator.^{xviii}
12

13 **5-4.** Pastoral ministry for the mission church may be provided:

- 14 a. by a minister of the presbytery called by presbytery to serve as pastor, or
- 15 b. by stated supply (*BCO* 22-5, -6), or
- 16 c. by a series of qualified preachers approved by the temporary government (*BCO*
17 12-5.e.).
18

19 **5-5.** The temporary government shall receive members (*BCO* 12-5.a.) into the
20 mission church according to the provisions of *BCO* 57 so far as they may be applicable.
21 As members of the mission church those received are communing or non-communing
22 members of the Presbyterian Church in America.

- 23 a. If there is a minister approved by Presbytery to serve the mission church as its
24 pastor (*BCO* 5-4.a.), each member so received shall be understood to assent to
25 the call of that minister and to affirm the promises made to the pastor in *BCO* 21-
26 10.
- 27 b. Meetings of the members of the mission church shall be governed according to
28 the provisions of *BCO* 25 so far as they may be applicable, and shall be
29 conducted according to the current edition of *Robert's Rules of Order Newly*
30 *Revised*.
31

32 **5-6.** Mission churches and their members shall have the right of judicial process to the
33 court having oversight of their temporary governing body.
34

35 **5-7.** Mission churches shall maintain a roll of communicant and non-communicant
36 members, in the same manner as, but separate from, other particular churches.
37

38 **5-8.** It is the intention of the Presbyterian Church in America that mission churches
39 enjoy the same status as particular churches in relation to civil government.
40

41 **B. The Organization of a Particular Church**

42

43 **5-9.** A new church can be organized only by the authority of Presbytery.

- 44 a. A presbytery should establish standing rules setting forth the prerequisites that
45 qualify a mission church to begin the organization process, e.g., the minimum
46 number of petitioners and the level of financial support to be provided by the
47 congregation. The number of officers sufficient to constitute the quorum for a

1 session shall be necessary to complete the organization process.

- 2 b. The temporary government of the mission church shall oversee the steps
3 necessary for organization.
- 4 c. When the temporary government determines that among the members of the
5 mission congregation there are men who appear qualified as officers, the
6 nomination process shall begin and the election conclude following the
7 procedures of *BCO* 24 so far as they may be applicable.
- 8 d. The election of officers shall normally take place at least two weeks prior to the
9 date of the organization service. However, the effective date of service for the
10 newly elected officers shall be upon the completion of the organization service.
- 11 e. If deacons are not elected, the duties of the office shall devolve upon the session,
12 until deacons can be secured.
- 13 f. If there is a minister approved by Presbytery to serve the mission church as its
14 pastor, and members of the mission church have been received according to *BCO*
15 5-5, no further action with respect to the call of that pastor to the church to be
16 organized shall be necessary. If no such minister has been appointed, or if the
17 minister serving chooses not to continue as pastor of the newly organized church,
18 a pastor shall be called as follows:
- 19 (1) The temporary government shall oversee the election of a pastor according
20 to the provisions of *BCO* 20 so far as they are applicable. If a candidate is to be
21 proposed before the organization, the congregational meeting to elect a
22 pastor shall take place at least two weeks before the service of organization.
23 This may be the same meeting called for the election of other officers.
- 24 (2) The ordination and/or installation shall be according to the provisions of
25 *BCO* 21 so far as they are applicable. The service may take place at the
26 service of organization.
- 27 g. In order to proceed to organization as a particular church the members of the
28 mission church shall sign a petition to Presbytery requesting the same.
- 29 h. Upon presbytery's approval of the petition, presbytery shall appoint an
30 organizing commission and shall set the date and time of the organization
31 service.
- 32 i. At the service of organization the following elements shall be included in the
33 order deemed by the organizing commission to be appropriate:
- 34 (1) The organizing commission shall ordain and/or install ruling elders and/or
35 deacons according to the provisions of *BCO* 24-6 so far as they may be
36 applicable.
- 37 (2) If a pastor is being ordained and/or installed at the service, the organizing
38 commission shall act according to the provisions of *BCO* 21 so far as they
39 may be applicable.
- 40 (3) A member of the organizing commission shall require communicant
41 members of the mission church present to enter into covenant, by answering
42 the following question affirmatively, with uplifted hand:

43
44 **Do you, in reliance on God for strength, solemnly promise and**
45 **covenant that you will walk together as a particular church, on the**
46 **principles of the faith and order of the Presbyterian Church in**

1 **America, and that you will be zealous and faithful in maintaining the**
2 **purity and peace of the whole body?**

3
4 (4) A member of the organizing commission shall then say:

5
6 **I now pronounce and declare that you are constituted a church**
7 **according to the Word of God and the faith and order of the**
8 **Presbyterian Church in America. In the name of the Father and of the**
9 **Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

10
11 **5-10.** Upon organization, the newly elected session should meet as soon as is
12 practicable to elect a stated clerk and formulate a budget. If there is no pastor, the session
13 may elect as moderator one of their own number or any teaching elder of the Presbytery
14 with Presbytery's approval. Further, if there is no pastor, action shall be taken to secure, as
15 soon as practicable, the regular administration of Word and Sacraments.

16
17 *Adopted by Potomac Presbytery at its stated meeting, March 20, 2010*

18 *Attested by /s/ RE Richard L. Larson, stated clerk*

ⁱ In considering this lengthy overture, it may be helpful to understand the background and rationale behind the proposed changes.

Emmanuel Presbyterian Church of Arlington, Virginia, completed the organization process in the spring of 2009, thereby becoming a particular church of the PCA. In so doing, *BCO 5* was carefully studied to ensure the correct process was followed. While the organization was relatively smooth, *BCO 5* was found to be confusing in many parts, open to various interpretations, and in some places, contradictory to the practices of a particular church. Hearing similar reactions from church planters and others familiar with the organization process led to a consensus that mission churches would benefit from a revision of *BCO 5*.

In developing this overture, input was received from several church planters, and presbytery and denominational leaders. Because it was felt the chapter should work together more coherently, all of the issues were addressed in a single overture. Further, the sequence of the chapter was re-ordered to more closely follow the actual organization process. In this way, the *BCO* can serve as a helpful—but necessarily limited—procedural checklist for the mission church. These changes will hopefully help make for a more consistent and fruitful organizing process.

A guiding principle for the overture is that mission churches should mirror the practices of particular churches as nearly as possible. Not only would doing so thereby adopt the reasoning behind such practices, it also helps establish in the minds of the mission church the correct procedures they will be using after organization.

ⁱⁱ The vast majority of new churches begin as mission churches. However, there are some instances where a group of people from one or more churches, for geographical, philosophical or other reasons, may wish to organize into a particular church. This phrase acknowledges those circumstances and creates a process whereby this group would be formed into a mission church, recognized by the Presbytery, and overseen by a temporary government.

ⁱⁱⁱ This addition allows the minister's participation in the governance of the mission church and mirrors the pastor's role as moderator of the session.

^{iv} The current wording of *BCO 5-4* does not require people to join the mission church. Pastorally, the lack of membership makes it difficult to know who will be committed to the new church and

what shepherding relationships already exist. Further, the lack of membership means nominations and elections to office would be conducted by people who are not members—a clear contradiction to the current provision in *BCO* 5-9.4 to follow *BCO* 24-3. Receiving members would be a major step forward in mirroring the requirement of particular churches that only members cast such critical votes.

^v In a particular church, new members never actually vote on the existing pastor’s call; their joining the church is an implicit vote on accepting the minister as their pastor. The new wording mirrors this practice. Furthermore, this understanding helps the minister to see himself—and be seen as—not only the church planter but also the pastor of a flock. See proposed *BCO* 5-9.f and its endnote for additional rationale.

^{vi} The overture expressly retains the authority of Presbytery to organize churches. In re-structuring the chapter, this authority more clearly extends to the entire process of organizing, and not simply to the organization service.

^{vii} Some presbyteries have developed benchmarks as to when organization can begin, which have been helpful to mission churches during an ambiguous time. Presbyteries are simply encouraged to develop their own guidelines. Furthermore, to complete the organization process, a minimum number of elders shall be required—something the current language of the *BCO* does not include. To mirror the practices of a particular church, this minimum was tied to the requirements for a quorum for a session.

^{viii} In a particular church, the session oversees the training process, which is commonly conducted by the pastor and/or another elder(s). To mirror this practice, the revision puts this oversight into the hands of the temporary government, allowing them to work out a training process that best fits their context.

^{ix} By referencing *BCO* 24, this short clause brings the entire process of nomination and election in line with that of a particular church—something that is missing in the current wording of the *BCO*. For example, the current wording of the *BCO* specifies training and examination of possible officer candidates to be conducted *prior* to nominations. Doing so allows for a high degree of “self-selection” whereby any man who desires can be trained and examined for office without the affirmation and support of church members. At the very least, this can prematurely and falsely raise expectations for the individual. Furthermore, the congregation may infer that any man who has been deemed “qualified to be nominated” by a Presbytery commission (as per current wording) comes with their endorsement to office. Not only does this weaken the members’ role in determining their leadership, they may put a man into nomination they otherwise would not have considered. All such philosophical and procedural inconsistencies are eliminated by referencing *BCO* 24 for the entire process.

^x In some cases, mission churches have held officer elections at the organization service. Spacing the election at least two weeks prior to the organization service avoids the appearance of a pre-determined or perfunctory election, and lessens the problems that would arise should a sufficient number of elders not be elected. However, the proposed wording does not require the two-week minimum should extraordinary circumstances dictate otherwise.

^{xi} Mirrors the practice of the particular church.

^{xii} This change would mirror the practice of the particular church, which forms a pulpit committee only in the circumstance where the pastor will not continue in that role. In the case of a particular church, to form a pulpit committee merely to affirm the existing pastor’s call would be both

perfunctory and confusing; to do so in order to seriously consider other candidates would destabilize his pastoral leadership.

How, then, to affirm the right for members to determine their leadership? Again, this change mirrors the particular church with the clarification of 5-5.a that joining a mission church will be considered as assenting to the pastor's call. In fact, that is the typical experience of most churches who retain the same pastor for several years: a significant number of members have joined since his installation, thus never formally casting a vote to call their pastor. Instead, their very joining is an implicit vote of support.

Furthermore, the actual experience of watching a church planter lead the mission church, preach regularly, and develop pastoral relationships with his flock provides far more practical information on a pastoral candidate than a pulpit committee could ever hope to have. Joining the church is thus a highly informed decision by new members regarding whom they would like to see as their pastor. In this way, the right of members to determine their leadership is retained and affirmed.

This change also answers a critical question for prospective members, who want assurance of a continuity of leadership and vision in an admittedly tenuous setting. Their joining the new work is in many ways tied to the expectation that the church planter will be continuing as pastor. This overall solution significantly empowers the minister and the congregation, allowing them to focus on developing ministry that will continue after organization.

There are cases, however, where a pulpit committee may need to be formed. This section provides for those situations and gives practical guidance how to proceed.

^{xiii} This change would mirror the particular church by providing oversight and guidance to a pulpit committee should one be formed; the current language of the *BCO* is not explicit on this matter.

^{xiv} The *BCO* currently allows for the installation of the pastor at the organization service—something that is commonly done. However, in the current *BCO* wording, the pulpit committee may “report at . . . or subsequent to” the organization service, meaning that the election can take place no sooner than this report. In order to install the pastor at the organizing service, the current wording therefore requires the awkward and presumptuous practice of calling (i.e. electing) the pastor in the same service at which he is installed. Instead, by conducting the election prior to the service, the pastor can be more orderly installed at organization.

^{xv} This change clarifies who may sign the petition. Further, the proposed wording does not require the date on the petition itself, should the date of the organization service need to be adjusted—thereby eliminating the technicality of having the petitioners amend and re-approve the date.

^{xvi} Confirms the organizing commission shall have authority to conduct the organization service, which is not clear in the current *BCO* wording.

^{xvii} Clarifies all the required elements of the organization service and who is to conduct these elements. The elements follow a logical order, but flexibility is also allowed in the arrangement of the service. For example, some commissions have declared the church as organized following the installation of ruling elders (i.e. a session has formed) and prior to the installation of the pastor. Other commissions have preferred to declare the church as organized following the installation of ruling and teaching elders, making the declaration the climactic note of the organizing service.

^{xviii} This addition allows the minister's participation in the governance of the mission church and mirrors the pastor's role as moderator of the session.