

1 **OVERTURE 16** from the Presbytery of Tennessee Valley

(to OC)

2 “Affirm Unordained Deaconesses”

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4 **Whereas** the Scripture calls us to “make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through  
5 the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3);

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7 **Whereas** the Scripture teaches us not to pass judgment on disputable matters (Romans  
8 14:1), and to “make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification”  
9 (Romans 14:19);

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11 **Whereas** there has been a history of disagreement within our Reformed and Presbyterian  
12 circles concerning the exegesis of Romans 16:1 in regard to the word “servant” or  
13 “Deacon” in describing a woman, namely Phoebe;

14  
15 **Whereas** that disagreement also extends to the exegesis of I Timothy 3:11 as to whether the  
16 translation should be woman or wife, and to the understanding of the symmetry of  
17 that passage without describing the qualifications of wives of Elders;

18  
19 **Whereas** there is enough Biblical evidence to support the theory, if not the idea, that women  
20 did serve the early church in the role of Deaconess, whether they were widows on  
21 the roll (I Timothy 5:9-10) or other godly women;

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23 **Whereas** there are Presbyters who in good and sincere conscience believe there is a biblical  
24 basis for the role of Deaconess;

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26 **Whereas** the Scripture is to be our only rule of faith and practice;

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28 **Whereas** to disallow what the Scripture does indeed and at least “might” appear to do would  
29 put the rules of men above Scripture;

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31 **Whereas** the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod (RPCES) did allow  
32 congregations to appoint women as “Deaconesses” and this practice was recognized  
33 upon the joining and receiving (J&R) of that denomination into the PCA;

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35 **Whereas** the practice of having women serve in the role of non-ordained Deaconess has  
36 been continued in some of our congregations for 28 years since the J&R;

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38 **Whereas** the practice is now much longer than the tradition of the PCA was before J&R  
39 (only nine years);

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41 **Whereas** in most of our congregations that have held to this practice there has been no  
42 dissension concerning the ordination of women, nor has it become a movement to in  
43 any way undermine the authority of Scripture;

1 **Whereas** this ministry has been conducted in all humbleness and love, with our  
2 congregations submitting to the brethren within the General Assembly in their  
3 concern that women not be ordained to the office of Deacon;  
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5 **Whereas** this ministry has brought great comfort and blessing to the churches and to the  
6 poor;  
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8 **Therefore be it resolved,** Tennessee Valley Presbytery requests that the 38th General  
9 Assembly adopt this statement: "The 38th General Assembly affirms that unordained  
10 deaconesses may serve the church, to the glory of God."  
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12 *Adopted by Tennessee Valley Presbytery at its stated meeting, April 17, 2010*

13 *Attested by /s/ TE Daniel S. Gilchrist, stated clerk*