

1 **OVERTURE 2** from Southeast Alabama Presbytery (to CCB and OC)
2 “Amend *BCO 57-5* to Require Affirmation of the Apostles Creed for Membership
3 and Add an Additional Membership Vow [9]”
4

5 **Whereas**, the common creed of the Christian Church is the Apostles’ Creed, and
6

7 **Whereas**, our current order makes no provision for the affirmation of the Apostles’ Creed in
8 membership, and
9

10 **Whereas**, the Apostles’ Creed, though not authored by the Apostles, originated in the early
11 church from the solemn questions and answers required at baptism and the
12 catechetical instruction preceding baptism, and
13

14 **Whereas**, assent to the Apostles’ Creed has served as the primary creedal requirement for
15 admission to membership in Christ’s Church since the second century, and
16

17 **Whereas**, the Apostles’ Creed was published by the Westminster Assembly along with the
18 *Confession* and *Catechisms* with the following note, “Albeit the substance of the
19 doctrine comprised in that abridgement, commonly called the Apostles’ Creed, be
20 fully set forth in each of the Catechisms, so there is no necessity in inserting the
21 Creed itself; yet *it is here annexed*, not as though it were composed by the Apostles,
22 or ought to be esteemed canonical scripture, as the Ten Commandments, and the
23 Lord’s Prayer, but *because it is a brief sum of the Christian faith, agreeable to the*
24 *word of God, and anciently received in the churches of Christ,*” [emphasis added]
25 and^[1]
26

27 **Whereas**, the Apostles’ Creed is published in the hymnal of our denomination, along with
28 the Nicene Creed, and
29

30 **Whereas**, the use of the Apostle’s Creed is commended by our *Book of Church Order* (55-1),
31 and
32

33 **Whereas**, the current questions for Admission to Sealing Ordinances in our church require
34 no confession of faith concerning most of the doctrines contained in the Apostles’
35 Creed, and
36

37 **Whereas**, this practice is out of accord with Presbyterian tradition for receiving members
38 into our church^[2], and
39

40 **Whereas**, our *Book of Church* requires that those seeking admission to the Sealing
41 Ordinances make a public profession of their faith (57-3),
42

43 **Therefore be it resolved** that [the questions for membership in] *BCO 57-5* be amended,
44 [and answers be added,] as follows (new text in bold).
45 The time having come for the making of a public profession, and those who
46 have been approved by the Session having taken their places in the presence of
47 the congregation, the minister may state that:

1 Of the number of those who were baptized in infancy as members of the
2 Church of God by birthright, and as heirs of the covenant promises, the
3 Session has examined and approved (call them by name), who come now to
4 assume for themselves the full privileges and responsibilities of their
5 inheritance in the household of faith.
6

7 If there be present any candidates for Baptism, the minister may state that:
8

9 As applicants for admission into the Church of God by Baptism, which is a
10 sign and seal of our engrafting into Christ, and of our engagement to be the
11 Lord's, the Session has examined and approved (call them by name), who
12 are cordially welcomed into the fellowship of the household of faith.
13

14 The minister may then address those making a profession in the following terms:
15

16 (All of) you being here present to make a public profession of faith, are to
17 assent to the following declarations and promises, by which you enter into
18 a solemn covenant with God and His Church.
19

- 20 **1. Do you believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and**
21 **earth? *I do.***
- 22 **2. Do you believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was**
23 **conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary, suffered**
24 **under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; descended**
25 **into hell; on the third day rose again from the dead, ascended into**
26 **heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty;**
27 **and from thence shall come to judge the quick and the dead? *I do.***
- 28 **3. Do you believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy catholic church, the**
29 **communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the**
30 **body and the life everlasting? *I do.***
- 31 **4. Do you acknowledge yourselves to be sinners in the sight of God, justly**
32 **deserving His displeasure, and without hope save in His sovereign**
33 **mercy? *I do.***
- 34 **5. Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and Savior of**
35 **sinners, and do you receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation as He**
36 **is offered in the Gospel? *I do.***
- 37 **6. ~~Do you now resolve and promise, in humble reliance upon the grace~~**
38 **~~of the Holy Spirit, that you will endeavor to live as becomes the~~**
39 **~~followers of Christ? Do you promise to make diligent use of the~~**
40 **means of grace, to continue in the peace and fellowship of the people**
41 **of God, and with the aid of the Holy Spirit to be Christ's faithful**
42 **disciple to your life's end? *I do.***
- 43 **7. Do you promise to support the Church in its worship and work to the**
44 **best of your ability? *I do.***
- 45 **8. Do you submit yourselves to the government and discipline of the**
46 **Church, and promise to study its purity and peace? *I do.***

1 **The minister may then address those being baptized in the following terms:**
2

3 **9. Do you desire to be baptized into this faith and to be received into**
4 **membership in Christ’s Church? *I do.***
5

6 The minister may now briefly admonish those making a profession of faith as to the
7 importance of the solemn obligations they have assumed; then baptism may be
8 administered, if there be present any candidates for the ordinance, and the whole
9 concluded with prayer.
10

11 **And be it further resolved** that the Stated Clerk be authorized to make any changes in
12 denominational certificates necessary to bring them into conformity with the
13 provisions of this overture.
14

15 **Rationale:**

16 Our basis of membership (i.e., the vows for admission to the Lord’s Table) requires no
17 Trinitarian confession and gives no guidance as to the examination Sessions should give to
18 prospective members. Therefore, this above overture seeks to correct these issues with the
19 following:

- 20 1. Professions of Faith are defined in 57-5 and the vows changed to conform to 46-6.
- 21 2. All vows (Profession of Faith for non-communing members, Profession of Faith for
22 unbaptized persons, transfers from other churches) are clearly delineated and consistent.
23

24
25 ^[1] The Heidelberg Catechism also notes that the Apostles’ Creed is the summary of the Christian Faith: 22. Q.
26 What, then, must a Christian believe? A. All that is promised us in the gospel, which the articles of our catholic
27 and undoubted Christian faith teach us in a summary. 23. Q. What are these articles? A. I believe in God the
28 Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, our Lord; He
29 was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead,
30 and buried; He descended into hell; On the third day He arose from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sits
31 at the right hand of God the Father almighty; from there He will come to judge the living and the dead. I
32 believe in the Holy Spirit; I believe a holy catholic Christian church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness
33 of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting.
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35 ^[2] For example, the 1946 Book of Common Worship of the Presbyterian Church in the United States uses the
36 following questions for baptism: “Do you believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth: and
37 in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord: and in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life? Do you promise to
38 make diligent use of the means of grace, to continue in the peace and fellowship of the people of God, and with
39 the aid of the Holy Spirit to be Christ’s faithful disciple to your life’s end? Do you desire to be baptized in this
40 faith and to be received into membership in Christ’s Church?”
41

42 *Adopted by The Presbytery of Southeast Alabama at its stated meeting, October 25, 2007*

43 *Attested by: /s/ TE Henry Lewis Smith*