

1 **OVERTURE 3** from Southeast Alabama Presbytery (to CCB and OC)

2 “Amend *BCO* 38-3-a, Move *BCO* 38-3-a to the vacated 46-5, Amend and
3 move a portion of *BCO* 57-5 to become 46-6, Add a new 46-7, and renumber
4 the following paragraphs (46-6, 7, and 8) to become 46-8, 9, and 10”
5

6 **Whereas**, our *Book of Church Order* 2-2 states, “[The] visible unity of the body of Christ,
7 though obscured, is not destroyed by its division into different denominations of
8 professing Christians; but *all of these which maintain the Word and Sacraments in*
9 *their fundamental integrity are to be recognized as true branches of the Church of*
10 *Jesus Christ,*” (emphasis added), and,
11

12 **Whereas**, our *Confession of Faith* 26-2 states, “Saints by profession are *bound to maintain*
13 *an holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God, and in performing such*
14 *other spiritual services as tend to their mutual edification; as also in relieving each*
15 *other in outward things, according to their several abilities and necessities. Which*
16 *communion, as God offereth opportunity, is to be extended unto all those who, in*
17 *every place, call upon the name of the Lord Jesus;”* (emphasis added), and,
18

19 **Whereas**, our current order provides that members of our church seeking to join another
20 branch of Christ’s Church which, in the judgment of the court of original
21 jurisdiction, is a true branch of Christ’s Church (*BCO* 2-2), they are removed as an
22 act of discipline under the rules for a Case Without Process (*BCO* 38-3a), and,
23

24 **Whereas**, “Nothing...ought to be considered by any court as an offense, or admitted as a
25 matter of accusation, which cannot be proved to be such from Scripture,” (*BCO* 29-
26 1),
27

28 **Therefore be it resolved** that *BCO* 38-3a be [amended] and [moved to the vacated 46-5]
29 (new text in bold):
30

31 **46-5.** When a member or officer in the Presbyterian Church in America shall
32 attempt to withdraw from the communion of this branch of the visible Church by
33 affiliating with some other branch of **Christ’s Church judged by the court of**
34 **original jurisdiction to maintain the Word and Sacraments in their**
35 **fundamental integrity** (*BCO* 2-2), if at the time of the attempt to withdraw he is in
36 good standing, the irregularity shall be recorded, his new membership shall be
37 acknowledged, **he shall be granted a Letter of Transfer**, and his name removed
38 from the roll. But if at the time of the attempt to withdraw there is a record of an
39 investigation in process (*BCO* 31-2), or there are charges (*BCO* 32-3) concerning the
40 member or minister, the court of original jurisdiction may retain his name on the roll
41 and conduct the case, communicating the outcome upon completion of the
42 proceedings to that member or minister. If the court does not conduct the case, his
43 new membership shall be acknowledged, **he shall be granted a Letter of Transfer**,
44 his name shall be removed from the roll, and, at the request of the receiving branch,
45 the matters under investigation or the charges shall be communicated to them.

1 **And be it further resolved** that [a portion of] *BCO 57-5* be [amended and] relocated to
2 Chapter 46 entitled “Jurisdiction,” [to become paragraph 46-6, and that a new
3 paragraph 46-7 be added and the other paragraphs renumbered]. New text in bold.
4

5 **46-6. Persons desiring to be received as communing members (*BCO 6-2***
6 **and 6-4) from other churches shall present themselves for membership to**
7 **the Session whose responsibility it is to receive members (*BCO 12-5*). They**
8 **shall be asked to give a testimony of their Christian experience and**
9 **required to answer the following:**

- 10
- 11 **1. Do you believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and**
12 **earth? *I do.***
- 13 **2. Do you believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was**
14 **conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under**
15 **Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; descended into hell; on**
16 **the third day rose again from the dead, ascended into heaven, and**
17 **sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; and from thence**
18 **shall come to judge the quick and the dead? *I do.***
- 19 **3. Do you believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy catholic church, the**
20 **communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the**
21 **body and the life everlasting? *I do.***
- 22 **4. Do you acknowledge yourselves to be sinners in the sight of God, justly**
23 **deserving His displeasure, and without hope save in His sovereign mercy? *I***
24 ***do.***
- 25 **5. Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and Savior of**
26 **sinners, and do you receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation as He is**
27 **offered in the Gospel? *I do.***
- 28 **6. ~~Do you now resolve and promise, in humble reliance upon the grace of~~**
29 **~~the Holy Spirit, that you will endeavor to live as becomes the followers~~**
30 **~~of Christ? Do you promise to make diligent use of the means of grace,~~**
31 **~~to continue in the peace and fellowship of the people of God, and with~~**
32 **~~the aid of the Holy Spirit to be Christ’s faithful disciple to your life’s~~**
33 **~~end? *I do.*~~**
- 34 **7. Do you promise to support the Church in its worship and work to the best of**
35 **your ability? *I do.***
- 36 **8. Do you submit yourselves to the government and discipline of the Church,**
37 **and promise to study its purity and peace? *I do.***
- 38

46-7. If the candidate seeks membership from a church that, in the
judgment of the Session, maintains the Word and Sacraments in their
fundamental integrity (*BCO 2-2*), he shall be received by Transfer of
Letter. If, however, the candidate seeks membership from a church that, in
the judgment of the Session, does not maintain the Word and Sacraments
in their fundamental integrity (*BCO 2-2*) or if he is unable to secure a

1 **Letter of Transfer, he shall be received by Reaffirmation of Faith. In either**
2 **case their names are to be announced to the congregation with a**
3 **recommendation of them to its Christian confidence and affection.**
4

5 **And be it further resolved** that the Stated Clerk be authorized to make any changes in
6 denominational certificates necessary to bring them into conformity with the
7 provisions of this overture.
8

9 Rationale:

10 Our *Book of Church Order* and *Confession* teach that there is a communion within the
11 church of Christ that we are obliged to maintain. Yet our current practice is inconsistent
12 with these mandates. We only receive members by Letter of Transfer if they are from other
13 PCA congregations and we do not transfer to other denominations. Further, the commonly
14 used terms of membership (Reaffirmations of Faith, Letter of Transfer, etc.) are defined
15 nowhere in our constitution. Lastly, our basis of membership (i.e., the vows for admission
16 to the Lord's Table) requires no Trinitarian confession and gives no guidance as to the
17 examination Sessions should give to prospective members. Therefore, the above overture
18 seeks to correct these issues with the following:

19
20 **1.** Remove transfers to churches that maintain the sacraments in their fundamental integrity
21 from the Cases Without Process chapter to the Jurisdiction chapter, thereby making it clear
22 that transferring to another church that maintains the word and sacrament in their
23 fundamental integrity is not an offense. Removals to churches that DO NOT maintain the
24 word and sacraments in their fundamental integrity will continue to be handled under the
25 Case Without Process.

26 **2.** All transfers in and out are moved to the Chapter on Jurisdiction (46-6) and are properly
27 defined – both for Letter of Transfer and Reaffirmation of Faith. Transfers out of the church
28 are handled in 46-5. The vows required for transfers in are clearly stated.
29

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

31 *Attested by: /s/ TE Henry Lewis Smith, Stated Clerk*