

1 **OVERTURE 9** from Philadelphia Presbytery (to CCB and OC)
2 "Erect Study Committee on Deaconesses"
3

4 **Whereas**, Crossroads Community Church Presbyterian Church in America, a member
5 church, filed a complaint (attached hereto as Exhibit A) with the Philadelphia
6 Presbytery in accord with *BCO* 43-2 against the action of the Philadelphia Presbytery
7 approving a candidate for licensure who took exception, with respect to the office of
8 deacon, to the provision of *BCO* 7-2 that states "In accord with Scripture, these
9 offices are open to men only"; and
10

11 **Whereas**, the 35th General Assembly's review of presbytery records cited an exception of
12 substance (attached hereto as Exhibit B) for the Philadelphia Presbytery for liberti
13 Church as follows "Diaconate of new church includes 4 Deaconesses commissioned
14 contrary to *BCO* 9-3 [S]";
15

16 **Whereas**, liberti Church responded to the General Assembly's citation by submitting to the
17 Philadelphia Presbytery an Overture (attached hereto as Exhibit C) to the General
18 Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America asking for a change to the *BCO* to
19 allow the election of women to the office of deacon equal with men and the freedom
20 to either ordain both or commission both men and women called to that office; and
21

22 **Whereas**, the Philadelphia Presbytery has noted a variety of differences among churches
23 across the PCA and within NAPARC regarding the involvement of women in
24 Diaconal ministries;
25

26 **Now Therefore**, the Philadelphia Presbytery overtures the 36th General Assembly of the
27 Presbyterian Church in America to create an ad interim study committee whose
28 members are representative of various positions within the PCA with respect to
29 women's involvement in Diaconal ministry, to study and report back to the 37th
30 General Assembly, on the following:
31

32 1) Scriptural teaching bearing on women's eligibility for election and ordination to
33 the office of deacon and recommending, if necessary, changes to the *BCO* in
34 keeping with any findings proceeding from the study of Scripture; *and*
35

36 2) Should no changes to the *BCO* be deemed necessary, clarifying an appropriate
37 range of practices for the involvement of women in diaconal ministry and giving
38 guidance regarding current differences in practice among PCA churches
39 including but not limited to the following: (a) may churches choose not to ordain
40 any male deacons? (b) may churches choose to commission but not to ordain
41 male deacons? (c) may women be commissioned as deaconesses without
42 ordaining them as deacons? (d) may the same constitutional questions, or similar
43 questions, used to ordain deacons be used to commission deacons or deaconesses
44 who are not ordained? (e) may Presbyteries license and ordain men who submit
45 themselves to the *BCO* but who also believe that women should serve as

1 ordained deacons? (f) may churches elect ordained men and commissioned
2 women to serve together in the diaconate? and (g) may churches use the title
3 Deaconess for an elected position of ministry in the church or selected to serve
4 according to *BCO* 9-7?
5

6 **And further**, that any expenses for this ad interim study committee be funded through
7 designated gifts through the Administrative Committee with expenses not to exceed
8 \$10,000. (*RAO* 9-2, 11-11).
9

10 *Adopted by the Philadelphia Presbytery, at the called meeting on January 26, 2008, and*
11 *reaffirmed at our stated meeting on February 10, 2008*
12 *Attested by /s/ Gregory C. Hobaugh, Stated Clerk*
13

14 **RATIONALE**

15
16
17 Minutes of the Called Meeting of the Philadelphia Presbytery
18 January 26, 2008
19 New Life Philadelphia Presbyterian Church
20

21 The Moderator, TE Marion Clark, called the meeting to order at 8:08am. A quorum was
22 established. The Moderator reviewed the voting requirements of TE and RE delegates per
23 the *BCO*. The Stated Clerk, Greg Hobaugh, read the purpose of this called meeting:
24

25 *At the November 11, 2007, Stated Meeting of the Philadelphia Presbytery, Presbytery*
26 *appointed a study committee to work on behalf of the Presbytery to address four separate*
27 *issues all pertaining to the role of women and the office of deacon. Today's meeting was*
28 *called to discuss and vote upon the finding of the committee.*
29

30 Today's special meeting was called in accordance with the requirements of the *BCO*, in
31 advance of the two-week notice requirement. According to *BCO* 13-12, the Moderator
32 called this meeting with the concurrence of the following Elders:

33 *Ruling Elders:* Hugh Taylor (Tenth), Dudley Reese (Crossroads), Mike Kelly (New Life
34 Philly). *Teaching Elders:* Tuck Bartholomew (City Church), Geoff Bradford (liberti), Chris
35 O'Brien (Third Reformed)
36

37 The committee's Report (*Attached*) and recommendations of the committee will be the only
38 issue discussed at today's meeting.
39

40 The Moderator challenged and exhorted the Presbyters with the words of Philippians 2:1-5.
41 This issue seems to be an initial test for our young Presbytery.

- 42 (1) We are to be determined to listen as much as we are determined to present our opinion.
43 We will not leave today without hearing each other
44 (2) We are to presume the best in other's motives.

1 (3) We [will] be wary of strategizing or trying to figure out what will make our cause be
2 heard better. All god is calling us to do is to present our conscience to him

3 (4) We are to understand that however important these decisions are, the process of making
4 this decision is even more important. This was followed by a season of open prayer, which
5 ended at 8:27a.m.

6
7 TE Steve Smallman, Chair of the study committee, led Presbyters through the report. He
8 introduced the committee members:

9 TE Stephen Smallman (Chairman, Honorably Retired)

10 TE Geoff Bradford (liberti PC)

11 TE Tuck Bartholomew (City Church PC)

12 RE Michael Kelly (New Life Philadelphia PC)

13 TE Chris OBrien (Secretary, Third Reformed PC)

14 RE Dudley Reese (Crossroads Community PC)

15 TE Phillip Ryken (Tenth PC)

16 TE Timothy Witmer (Crossroads Community PC)

17
18 The committee brought four recommendations to the Presbytery as outlined in the Report.

19
20 **Recommendation One:**

21
22 The Moderator read the Complaint from Crossroads Community PC. TE Smallman and TE
23 Chris O'Brien read the recommendation and rationale for the committee's decision.

24
25 The complaint was seen as having two parts: (a) The primary issue before us was with
26 regards to Mr. Jason Hsu. Either we sustain and receive Mr Hsu as a candidate or we would
27 revoke his license. (b) Secondarily, exceptions to the *BCO* are addressed in
28 Recommendation Four. Answering in the negative would uphold the Presbytery's actions of
29 licensing Mr. Hsu.

30
31 Various issues were raised for and against the motion, including exegetical arguments,
32 previous ecclesiastical rulings and practice, previous actions of this particular Presbytery.

33
34 The Moderator summarized the essence of Recommendation One by stating the committee
35 is not making a stand on whether or not women can or cannot be ordained. But in the
36 particular case of Jason Hsu, his exception was not out of line with the *BCO* or the
37 Standards. This will not prevent Crossroads from appealing to the General Assembly and,
38 simultaneously, would allow the Overture to move forward to have General Assembly
39 address the differences within the PCA (and address the larger issue of women and the
40 office of Deacon).

41
42 The study Chair added that in acting on this recommendation, whatever position, within our
43 own denomination, since at least 1984, the position articulated by Mr. Hsu has been
44 accepted. This is not something novel or new. We do think it is time that we need to address
45 it at the GA level, which is the essence of the attached Overture.

1
2 The Vote was called. The motion seconded and was carried by majority vote.

3
4 TE Neil Bech and RE J. Dudley Reese IV requested that their negative votes be recorded.

5
6 **Recommendation Two:**

7
8 The author of the Minority view presented his report. To accept this substitute motion is to
9 understand and affirm what RPR is saying and we are prepared to take action to correct it,
10 which would require further Presbytery action to be determined by Presbytery.

11
12 TE William Krispin, who recorded the minutes in question, shared that the intention of
13 liberti was not to create a Diaconate *per se*, but wanted to create a leadership body to
14 develop works of leadership, hence the term “commission” of the one man and four women.

15
16 There was a motion, which was seconded, to postpone discussion of this Resolution until
17 after Motion Four. Approved.

18
19 Upon returning to this Recommendation, it was determined that the following would be the
20 Philadelphia Presbytery’s official response to the RPR:

21
22 “The Philadelphia Presbytery has overtured the 36th General Assembly to
23 clarify issues pertaining to women serving in the capacity of “deaconesses.”
24 Therefore, the Philadelphia Presbytery respectfully requests more time to
25 answer this exception, pending a response from General Assembly on the
26 issues raised in our overture.”

27
28 The vote was taken, 24 in favor, 17 against, to make it the main motion.

29
30 There was a vote was then called to approve the main motion, 28 in favor, 11 against. The
31 motion carried.

32
33 The moderator ruled that *BCO* 16-10 also allows for clarification from the RPR Committee,
34 and therefore it is an appropriate response to have General Assembly take up this matter.

35
36 TE Neil Bech and RE J. Dudley Reese IV requested that their negative votes be recorded.

37
38 **Recommendation Three:**

39
40 The motion was put forth by the study committee; it was unanimously approved.

41
42 **Recommendation Four:**

43
44 After discussion of the recommendation, and with some minor grammatical changes
45 reflected in the final version, the recommendation was passed by majority vote.

1 TE Neil Bech and RE J. Dudley Reese IV requested that their negative votes be recorded.

2

3 Per the requirements of *RAO* 11-11 and upon the advice of the Administrative Committee,
4 we will request that funds must be through designated gifts through the Administrative
5 [Committee] with expenses not to exceed \$10,000.

6

7 There was a motion for the commission to be dismissed with thanks. Seconded and
8 approved. TE Phil Ryken closed the meeting in prayer.

9

10 Respectfully submitted,

11

12 Gregory C. Hobaugh

13 Stated Clerk, Philadelphia Presbytery

14

15 **Teaching Elders Present:** Suler Acosta, Tuck Bartholomew, Niel Bech, Geoff Bradford,
16 Marion Clark, William Edgar, David Goneau, Ed Gross, Ronald Hammack, Gregory
17 Hobaugh, Steve Huber, John Julien, Jae Sung Kim, Robert Kim, William Krispin, Ilya
18 Lizorkin, Bruce McDowell, Glenn McDowell, David Miller, Chris O'Brien, Jonathan Olsen,
19 Philip Ryken, Stephen Smallman, Terry Traylor, David VanMeerbeke, David White,
20 Timothy Witmer, Carroll Wynne.

21

22 **Ruling Elder Delegates:** Scott Ashman (New Life Philadelphia), Frank Harder (Tenth),
23 Bob Heywood (Pilgrim), Fred Hill (Tenth), Joong Youn Kim (Korean United), Gene McGee
24 (New Life Philadelphia), James Polk (Pilgrim), J. Dudley Reese (Crossroads), Hugh Taylor
25 (Tenth), Marc Davis (New Life Glenside).

1 have good expectation that such an overture would receive serious consideration by the
2 General Assembly.

3
4 The Committee recognized that even if the overture requesting study is adopted, it would be
5 several years before the matter is resolved. It therefore set about to respond specifically to the
6 matters presented to it. Therefore we proceeded to act on each of the matters presented to us.

7
8 III. Recommendations to Philadelphia Presbytery:

- 9
10 1. With regard to the complaint from Crossroads Community Church:

11
12 **That the Complaint be answered in the negative with regard to the licensure of**
13 **Mr. Jason Hsu.**

14
15 **Rationale:** We affirm with the Crossroads session that our *Book of Church Order* limits
16 the ordination of men only to the office of deacon. However, we believe that
17 Philadelphia Presbytery acted properly when it licensed Mr. Jason Hsu. Mr. Hsu
18 promised to abide by his vow of only practicing what is consistent with the principles of
19 the *Book of Church Order* and not his own personal view in this matter. The General
20 Assembly of the PCA addressed a very similar case at the 1984 Assembly. This
21 decision is by no means binding on us as a presbytery. However, it does fit into the
22 category of precedent and should be given due consideration. (The sections highlighted
23 in italics and underlined are especially pertinent to the Crossroads complaint.)

24
25 With regard to the question of whether or not there can be “exceptions” to the *Book of*
26 *Church Order*, made in the complaint, note the attached overture (recommendation #4)
27 to request the GA to clarify this position.

28
29 *Note: The complainants (RE Dudley Reese and TE Tim Witmer of Crossroads*
30 *Church) served on our committee, participating fully in the discussion, but recused*
31 *themselves from voting.*

32
33 **NOTES:**

34
35 ***PCA Digest, 1973 – 1993, 21-5 (See PART III: JUDICIAL CASES, #23) 1984,***
36 ***p. 142, 12-53, III, 69, 2(A).*** [I]s this the intent of the General Assembly? ([T]hat a
37 person who believes that the Scriptures do not prohibit the ordination of women as
38 deacons should not be ordained in the Presbyterian Church in America, nor admitted as
39 an officer of the PCA even if he agrees to comply in practice with the standards of the
40 PCA which do not permit the ordination of women to any office.)

41
42 **2(B).** *Is it permissible for a court of the PCA to ordain a man or receive an ordained*
43 *man who believes that the Scriptures would permit the ordination of women as deacons*
44 *but who agrees to submit in practice to our present standards?*

1 **ANSWER:**

2 **2(A)** It is the opinion of the Committee on Judicial Business that the Eleventh General
3 Assembly sustained the complaint (Barleman, et al. vs. Ascension Presbytery) as a result
4 of the cumulative effect of the sustained specifications, which included specification E.
5 (regarding the ordination of women as deacons), thereby rendering the trails for
6 ordination unsatisfactory. *However, this specification by itself was not the subject of the*
7 *judicial decision of the Assembly. (See the Response of the Assembly to the Protest,*
8 *especially reason #3). The position that one believes that it is Biblically valid to ordain*
9 *women as deacons, but who agrees to abide by the position of the BCO 7-2 and 9-3 is*
10 *not sufficient reason by itself to deny ordination or reception in the PCA.*

11
12 **2(B)** It would be unwise, improper, and unconstitutional for the General Assembly to
13 determine abstractly apart from the process afforded by our Constitutional Standards
14 what would disqualify a man from holding office in the Presbyterian Church in America.
15 The Constitution provides that the Standards of our Church may be modified if it should
16 be proved from the Word of God, our only inerrant and unalterable guide to faith and
17 practice, that the Standards are in any way not in agreement with the Word. Also, as the
18 result of proper judicial processes, judgments may be made which determinately
19 interpret what may or may not be in accord with our Standards. Any other procedure of
20 setting forth or compiling a list of essential or nonessential doctrines would, in effect,
21 amend the standards by an unconstitutional method ...(MIOGA, p. 103, Recommendation
22 25, Answer to Question 2 and 3, paragraph 1).

23
24 2. With regard to the minutes of November 11, 2006:

25
26 That the Stated Clerk of Presbytery respond to the exception taken by Review of Presbytery
27 Records Committee of the 35th General Assembly from Philadelphia Presbytery to the
28 action of liberti Church in their Organization Service in the following manner:

29
30 We note that the exception taken to our minutes of November 11, 2006 state, “Diaconate
31 of new church includes 4 Deaconesses commissioned contrary to BCO 9-3” (p. 1262).
32 Philadelphia Presbytery respectfully requests more information from the RPR. Please
33 clarify how the commissioning of 4 unordained women as deaconesses is out of accord
34 with BCO 9-3.

35
36 *Note: the pastor of the church in question (TE Geoff Bradford of liberti Church)*
37 *served on our committee, participating fully in the discussion, but recused himself*
38 *from voting. Dudley Reese asked that his negative vote be recorded and his dissent be*
39 *included in this report (See Appendix 1).*

40
41 3. With regard to the overture from the session of liberti Church:

42
43 **That the Overture of liberti Church Session to Allow Churches to Ordain Women**
44 **as Deacons be answered in the negative.**

1 **Rationale:** The Committee has prepared a substitute overture that we believe speaks
2 more effectively to the issues.

3
4 Note *RAO* 11-10 which states: "No overture will be considered by the General Assembly
5 until it first has been presented to a presbytery. If approved by the presbytery, it will
6 come before the Assembly as the overture of that court. An overture requested by an
7 individual communicant, a teaching elder, or a session, but rejected by the presbytery,
8 may be presented to the Assembly, provided the fact that it was rejected by the
9 presbytery is clearly stated with the overture.

10
11 *Note: the author of the Overture (TE Geoff Bradford of liberti Church) served on our*
12 *committee, participating fully in the discussion, but recused himself from voting.*

13
14 4. That Philadelphia Presbytery approve and forward the following overture to the 36th
15 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America:

16
17
18 **To the 36th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America:**

19
20 **Whereas,** Crossroads Community Church Presbyterian Church in America, a member
21 church, filed a complaint (attached hereto as Exhibit A) with the Philadelphia
22 Presbytery in accord with *BCO* 43-2 against the action of the Philadelphia Presbytery
23 approving a candidate for licensure who took exception, with respect to the office of
24 deacon, to the provision of *BCO* 7-2 that states "In accord with Scripture, these
25 offices are open to men only";

26
27 **Whereas,** the 35th General Assembly's review of presbytery records cited an exception of
28 substance (attached hereto as Exhibit B) for the Philadelphia Presbytery for liberti
29 Church as follows "Diaconate of new church includes 4 Deaconesses commissioned
30 contrary to *BCO* 9-3 [S]";

31
32 **Whereas,** liberti Church responded to the General Assembly's citation by submitting to the
33 Philadelphia Presbytery an Overture (attached hereto as Exhibit C) to the General
34 Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America asking for a change to the *BCO* to
35 allow the election of women to the office of deacon equal with men and the freedom
36 to either ordain both or commission both men and women called to that office; and

37
38 **Whereas,** the Philadelphia Presbytery has noted a variety of differences among churches
39 across the PCA and within NAPARC regarding the involvement of women in
40 Diaconal ministries;

41
42 **Now Therefore,** the Philadelphia Presbytery overtures the 36th General Assembly of the
43 Presbyterian Church in America to create an ad interim study committee whose
44 members are representative of various positions within the PCA with respect to

1 women's involvement in Diaconal ministry, to study and report back to the 37th
2 General Assembly, on the following:

- 3
- 4 1) Scriptural teaching bearing on women's eligibility for election and ordination to
5 the office of deacon and recommending, if necessary, changes to the *BCO* in
6 keeping with any findings proceeding from the study of Scripture; *and*
7
 - 8 2) Should no changes to the *BCO* be deemed necessary, clarifying an appropriate
9 range of practices for the involvement of women in diaconal ministry and giving
10 guidance regarding current differences in practice among PCA churches
11 including but not limited to the following: (a) may churches choose not to ordain
12 any male deacons? (b) may churches choose to commission but not to ordain
13 male deacons? (c) may women be commissioned as deaconesses without
14 ordaining them as deacons? (d) may the same constitutional questions, or similar
15 questions, used to ordain deacons be used to commission deacons or deaconesses
16 who are not ordained? (e) may Presbyteries license and ordain men who submit
17 themselves to the *BCO* but who also believe that women should serve as
18 ordained deacons? (f) may churches elect ordained men and commissioned
19 women to serve together in the diaconate? and (g) may churches use the title
20 Deaconess for an elected position of ministry in the church or selected to serve
21 according to *BCO* 9-7?
22

23 **And further**, that any expenses for this ad interim study committee be funded through
24 designated gifts through the Administrative with expenses not to exceed \$10,000.
25 (*RAO* 9-2, 11-11).
26

27 IV. Request for dismissal.

28
29 Having fulfilled its mandate, the Committee requests it be dismissed.
30

31 Respectfully submitted,

32 TE Stephen Smallman (Chairman)
33 TE Geoff Bradford
34 TE Tuck Bartholomew
35 RE Michael Kelly (New Life Philadelphia)
36 TE Chris OBrien (Secretary)
37 RE Dudley Reese (Crossroads Community Church)
38 TE Phillip Ryken
39 TE Timothy Witmer
40

41 Appendices:

- 42 1. Dissent of RE Dudley Reese to Recommendation #2
- 43 2. Complaint of the Crossroads Community Church
- 44 3. Overture proposed by liberti Church

1 **MINORITY VIEW—Dissent of Dudley Reese on Recommendation #2**

2
3 I would not request additional information from the Review of Presbytery Records Committee
4 (RPRC) since the issues that they have raised are clear. To ask for additional information
5 from the RPRC when the Presbytery is able to address the matter is inappropriate and an
6 unprofitable use of the time of the Presbytery and the General Assembly.

7
8 The position of the Review of Presbytery Records Committee of the 35th General Assembly
9 is clear for the following reasons:

- 10
11 1. The *Book of Church Order* leaves no doubt about who is to serve in the Office of Deacon.

12
13 *BCO 9-3.* To the office of deacon, which is spiritual in nature, shall be chosen
14 *men . . .* (emphasis added)

15
16 *BCO 7-2.* The ordinary and perpetual classes of office in the church are elders
17 and deacons. . . . The office of deacons is not one of rule, but rather one of
18 service both to the physical and spiritual needs of the people. *In accord with*
19 *Scripture, these offices are open to men only.* (emphasis added)

20
21 *BCO 24-1.* Every church shall elect persons to the offices of ruling elder and
22 deacon in the following manner: At such times as determined by the Session,
23 communicant members of the congregation may submit names to the Session,
24 keeping in mind that each prospective officer should be an active *male* member
25 who meets the qualifications set forth in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1. (emphasis
26 added)

- 27
28 2. When organizing a particular church, the procedure to be followed in electing deacons is
29 clearly set forth in section 5-10 of the *Book of Church Order* by referring to the
30 procedure for electing elders in Section 5-9.

31
32 *BCO 5-10.* If deacons are elected, follow the procedures of (1) though (5)
33 above. If deacons are not elected, the duties of the office shall devolve upon
34 the ruling elders

35
36 *BCO 5-9.* The following procedures shall be used in nominating and training
37 ruling elders prior to organization and the election of a Session: 1. All *men* of
38 the mission church (unless they decline) shall receive instruction in the
39 qualifications and work of the office of ruling elder . . . (emphasis added)

- 40
41 3. The term “deaconess” means female deacon. The title “Deaconess” means a female
42 “Deacon.”

- 43
44 4. In its organization meeting, liberti Church elected four Deaconesses and one Deacon.
45 These five people were commissioned together and were charged with vows similar to

1 those set forth in the *Book of Church Order* for the ordination of deacons. No attempt
2 was made to explain that (a) according to Scripture the office of deacon is specifically
3 open to men only (*BCO* 7-2); (b) in the Presbyterian Church in America deacons are to
4 be ordained not commissioned; or (c) the position of “Deaconess” is not recognized in
5 the *Book of Church Order*.

6
7 In summary, liberti Church’s actions were not in conformity with the *Book of Church Order*
8 and they should be directed by the Philadelphia Presbytery to correct those actions and to
9 bring their diaconal practices into conformity with the Constitution of the PCA. As a
10 Presbytery we should thank our brethren on the RPRC for their assistance and diligence in
11 this matter.

12
13 Respectfully submitted,

14
15 RE J. Dudley Reese IV

1 October 11, 2007

2

3 Philadelphia Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in America

4 Rev. Greg Hobaugh, Stated Clerk

5 4846 Pulaski Ave.

6 Philadelphia, PA 19144

7

8 Fathers and brethren:

9

10 Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

11

12 It is after much deliberation and with heaviness of heart that we, the Session of Crossroads
13 Community Church, have been unanimously moved to complain against the action of the
14 Philadelphia Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in America. The action of the
15 presbytery against which we complain is the approval of a candidate for licensure who, at
16 the September 12, 2007 meeting, affirmed his belief in the ordination of women to the office
17 of Deacon.

18

19 Our reason for complaining against this action is that the licentiate's view directly
20 contradicts Chapter 7-1 of *The Book of Church Order* where, in describing the offices of
21 elder and deacon, it states: "In accord with Scripture, these offices are open to men only."

22

23 We believe that the licentiate's view is a significant challenge to the biblical order in the
24 offices of the church. This view could lead to confusion in our churches and deterioration of
25 the standards to be applied for appropriate recipients of ordination in the church. This
26 licentiate's view contradicts the PCA's biblical understanding of the offices of the church.
27 This understanding was and has continued to be a foundational principle of the PCA and one
28 of its distinctives.

29

30 We are also concerned that the presbytery is allowing an exception to *The Book of Church*
31 *Order*. It is our understanding that these are not allowable inasmuch as there are other means
32 for amending the *BCO*.

33

34 This complaint follows an earlier letter expressing our concern (not an official complaint) to
35 the Credentials Sub-team in the wake of the approval of another licentiate at the May 12,
36 2007 meeting who held a similar viewpoint.

37

38 We would appreciate your prompt consideration of this complaint and are eager to grow in
39 our understanding if we are in error.

40

41 Sincerely in His service,

42

43 Timothy Witmer, Moderator

1 **Overture to the PCA from the session of liberti church regarding changes to *BCO* 9-3,**
2 **to allow churches to ordain women as deacons**
3

4 **Whereas** *BCO* identifies deacons as necessarily men and only allows a particular Session to
5 “appoint godly men and women to assist the deacons . . .” (*BCO* 9-7);
6

7 **Whereas** Romans 16:1 names a woman, Phoebe, as a deacon (literal Greek translation) and
8 clearly calls her “sister” (therefore a woman serving in that calling);
9

10 **Whereas** 1 Timothy 3:11 speaks of “their women” connected with the deacons (not wives,
11 as the NIV interprets), yet has no similar statement about wives of elders—a much
12 more significant role—this interpretive translation of the NIV is questionable, and
13 suggests that Paul meant for women to be included as deacons in our churches;
14

15 **Whereas** the office of deacon is an office of service rather than ruling, with no word or
16 teaching gifts required for it, therefore it is consistent with Paul's defined gender
17 roles within the body to allow women to serve as deacons in the church;
18

19 **Whereas** it has become common practice in the PCA across many churches and presbyteries
20 to allow churches to elect and commission women to serve as deacons equal to men
21 serving in the office (which is out of order with *BCO* 9-7);
22

23 **Whereas** the practice of commissioning women to the office of the deacon and ordaining
24 men to the same office is inconsistent in its approach to office and therefore an
25 injustice;
26

27 **Whereas** ordination is to a particular office of elder or deacon and not conferral of general
28 “rule” within the church, and is instead, conferral of status necessary to fulfill the
29 calling of a particular office;
30

31 **Whereas** a position on the ordination of women as deacons does not strike at the “vitals of
32 religion;”
33

34 **Whereas** the gifts of women in our congregations are arguably underutilized by denying
35 them the opportunity to use their gifts in accordance with Scripture as an ordained
36 deacon;
37

38 **Whereas** we are a denomination which is always charged to submit our constitutional
39 standards to the authority of Scripture alone;
40

41 **Therefore,** we the session of liberti church, do overture the PCA to resolve the
42 inconsistency and injustice by either:
43

- 44 a. Allowing but not requiring individual congregations the constitutional freedom to
45 ordain women as deacons, with equal status with men who are called and ordained to
46 this office, OR
- 47 b. Allowing congregations to commission men and women to the office of deacon in
48 the church in equal standing, but not require congregations to ordain the men.