

OVERTURE 15 from the Session of Crossroads Community Church
(Upper Darby, PA)

(to CCB, OC)

“Direct Philadelphia Presbytery to Adopt Specified Policy on
Role of Women in Mercy Ministry”

Note 1: Rejected by Philadelphia Presbytery (*RAO* 11-10)

Note 2: In the opinion of the Stated Clerk and the CCB (*RAO* 8-2.b.1)),
the overture is out of order. See Stated Clerk’s Report for reasons.

Whereas, on August 11, 2008, the Session of Crossroads Community Church, Presbyterian Church in America, unanimously adopted the attached overture; and

Whereas, on September 10, 2008, at the Stated Meeting of the Philadelphia Presbytery the attached overture was received by the Philadelphia Presbytery; and

Whereas, on March 31, 2009, at a Special Meeting of the Philadelphia Presbytery the attached overture was denied by the Philadelphia Presbytery;

Now therefore be it resolved, that the Session of Crossroads Community Church, Presbyterian Church in America, hereby overtures the 37th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America to direct the Philadelphia Presbytery to acknowledge and affirm the expressed provisions of the *Book of Church Order* of the Presbyterian Church in America with regard to the office of deacon, and membership and composition of the diaconate as set forth in the attached overture.

Adopted unanimously by the Session of Crossroads Community Church, Presbyterian Church in America, on the 13th day of April, 2009

**[Overture to Philadelphia Presbytery]
The Office of Deacon: Perpetual, Ordained, and for Men**

Whereas “A particular church consists of a number of professing Christians, with their children, associated together for divine worship and godly living, agreeable to the Scriptures, and submitting to the lawful government of Christ's kingdom” (*BCO* 4-1); and

Whereas, “The officers of the Church, by whom all its powers are administered, are, according to the Scriptures, teaching and ruling elders and deacons” (*BCO* 1:4); and

Whereas, “The officers of the Church, by whom all its powers are administered, are, according to the Scriptures, teaching and ruling elders and deacons” (*BCO* 1:4); and

Whereas, the officers of a particular church “are its teaching and ruling elders and its deacons” (*BCO* 4-2); and

Whereas, “The ordinary and perpetual classes of office in the Church are elders and deacons” (*BCO* 7-2); and

Whereas, “The office of deacon is set forth in the Scriptures as ordinary and perpetual in the Church” (*BCO* 9-1); and

Whereas, the *Book of Church Order* clearly affirms: “In accord with Scripture, these offices [elder and deacon] are open to men only” (*BCO* 7-2); and, “To the office of deacon, which is spiritual in nature, shall be chosen men of spiritual character, honest repute, exemplary lives, brotherly spirit, warm sympathies, and sound judgment” (*BCO* 9-3); and

Whereas, the *Book of Church Order* states that “every church shall elect persons to the offices of ruling elder and deacon . . . keeping in mind that each prospective officer should be an active male member who meets the qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1” (*BCO* 24-1); and

Whereas, the *Book of Church Order* is explicit that ordination to the offices of elder and deacon is required after a man's election: “Upon those whom God calls to bear office in His Church He bestows suitable gifts for the discharge of their various duties. And it is indispensable that, besides possessing the necessary gifts and abilities, natural and acquired, every one admitted to an office should be sound in the faith, and his life be according to godliness. Wherefore every candidate for office is to be approved by the court by which he is to be ordained” (*BCO* 16-3); and “Those who have been called to office in the Church are to be inducted by the ordination of a court” (*BCO* 17-1); and

Whereas, there have been some teaching elders transferring into PCA Presbyteries and candidates for ordination and licensure who have indicated that they have adopted the position that their congregations can elect men and women as deacons contrary to the provisions of the *BCO* that deacons “should be an active male member. . . “ (*BCO* 7-2, 9-3 and 24-1); and

Whereas, some of these teaching elders transferring into Presbyteries and candidates for ordination and licensure have indicated that they will not ordain the men who have been elected as deacons; and

Whereas, this practice of electing men and women as deacons or/and deaconesses and not ordaining either one, or ordaining the men and commissioning the women and then allowing both to serve together on the same board of deacons (diaconate), is contrary to the expressed provisions and teachings of the *PCA Book of Church Order* (*BCO* 29-1); and

Whereas, the 36th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America declared that “only ordained and elected men can be members of a diaconate,” and that women “are

not considered to be members of the diaconate,” and in support of this declaration adopted the following responses to the actions and minutes of Northern California and Philadelphia Presbyteries:

Response to Northern California Presbytery:

Presbytery's response does not adequately address the specific issue identified by the 35th GA. The newly installed Session of the particularized church “commissioned” unordained men and women for a body which the Presbytery minutes called the “diaconate” (*BCO* 9, 19-15, 24-10). However, *BCO* 9 is clear that only ordained and elected men can be members of a “diaconate.” The appeal to *BCO* 9-7 is flawed because 9-7 addresses people appointed by the Session, not members of a diaconate (Board of Deacons, 9-4). According to *BCO* 9-3 and 9-4, a diaconate may only include men who are elected, ordained, and installed. Therefore, the body referenced in the exception must not be called a diaconate. In addition, this practice, coupled with the minister's expressed view that he intends not to ordain deacons “until the *BCO* is amended,” denies qualified men their constitutional and biblical right to be considered for this office.

Response to Philadelphia Presbytery:

We agree with the Presbytery that *BCO* 9-3 would not directly apply to the commissioning of unordained women, if they are not considered to be members of the Diaconate. However, the record indicates that “four deaconesses and one deacon were commissioned,” and the record of the particularization service refers to “Vows/Commissioning of Diaconate.” *BCO* 9-3 and 9-4 are clear that only ordained and elected men can be members of a “Diaconate.”

Now therefore be it resolved, that the Session of Crossroads Community Church, Presbyterian Church in America, hereby overtures the Philadelphia Presbytery to acknowledge and affirm the expressed provisions of the *Book of Church Order* of the Presbyterian Church in America with regard to the office of deacon, and membership and composition of the diaconate as follows:

1. That the office of deacon is one of the ordinary and perpetual classes of office in the Church (*BCO* 1-4; 4-2; 7-2; 9-1); and
2. That as a perpetual office in the Church, each particular church should elect men only to the office of deacon, unless providentially hindered, in which case the ruling elders will assume those duties until such time as men can be elected to the office of deacon (*BCO* 5-10; 24-1); and
3. That the office of deacon “in accord with Scripture is open to men only” (*BCO* 7-2; 9-3; 24-1); and

4. That since the expressed position of the *Book of Church Order* of the PCA is that the office of deacon is a perpetual office, is reserved for men only, and is an office for which ordination is to be administered (*BCO* 5-10; 163; 17-1; 24-6):

The Presbytery require ministers transferring into the Presbytery or candidates for ordination and licensure to acknowledge this expressed position in the *Book of Church Order* and to promise to conform their practice to this expressed position;

The Presbytery remind its teaching elders who have been granted substantive exceptions of belief regarding the office of deacon that such exceptions are only exceptions of belief, that there is no permitted exception of practice with regard to the office of deacon, and that they must conform their practices to the expressed position of the *Book of Church Order* with regard to the office of deacon;

The Presbytery remind the Sessions of its member churches that they must conform their practices to the expressed position of *the Book of Church Order* with regard to the office of deacon, and that men only are to compose the membership of their diaconates;

The Presbytery remind its mission churches that they must conform their practices to the expressed position of the *Book of Church Order* with regard to the office of deacon, that men only are to compose the membership of their diaconates and that they should be endeavoring to nominate and train deacons as set forth in the *Book of Church Order*; and

The Presbytery provide its member churches with specific direction as to how they should come into conformity with the recent decisions of the 36th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America by the November 2008 meeting of Presbytery.

Adopted unanimously by the Session of Crossroads Community Church, Presbyterian Church in America, on the 11th day of August 2008

Attested by: Clerk of Session