

1 **OVERTURE 3** from Gulf Coast Presbytery

(to OC, CCB)

2 “Change the Wording of Parental Promises upon the Baptism of  
3 Covenant Children, *BCO* 56-5, question # 3”  
4

5 **Whereas** Covenant Theology is one of the distinctives of Reformed and Presbyterian  
6 Churches, and particularly of the Presbyterian Church in America; and  
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8 **Whereas** we affirm that “children of believers are, through the covenant and by right of  
9 birth, non-communing members of the church,” and “hence they are entitled to  
10 Baptism . . . ,” (*BCO* 6-1), and “that the promise is made to believers and their  
11 children,” and therefore “children of believers have an interest in the covenant, and  
12 right to the seal of it . . . no less than the children of Abraham in the time of the Old  
13 Testament” (*BCO* 56-4-e); and  
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15 **Whereas** the *Westminster Confession of Faith* affirms that “the visible church, which is also  
16 catholic or universal under the gospel . . . consists of all those throughout the world  
17 that profess the true religion; and of their children (*WCF* 25-1),” and that “not only  
18 those that do actually profess faith in and obedience unto Christ, but also the infants  
19 of one, or both, believing parents, are to be baptized,” (*WCF* 28-4); and  
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21 **Whereas** the *Westminster Larger Catechism* asks: “Unto whom is baptism to be administered?”  
22 and answers: “Baptism is not to be administered to any that are out of the visible  
23 church, and so strangers from the covenant of promise, till they profess their faith in  
24 Christ, and obedience to him, but infants descending from parents, either both, or but  
25 one of them, professing faith in Christ, and obedience to him, are in that respect  
26 within the covenant, and to be baptized,” (*WLC* 166; cf. *WSC* 94); and  
27

28 **Whereas** many of us live in primarily Baptist cultures which reject the baptism of covenant  
29 children, so that we often labor to convince and persuade members coming out of  
30 such backgrounds and into our churches that their children ought to receive the  
31 sacrament of covenant baptism because God in his providence has placed them  
32 within the covenant people and so given their children the privilege of being taught  
33 the word of God with a view to leading them to walk in the footsteps of the faith of  
34 their parent(s) (cf. Romans 3:1ff and 4:9-12); and  
35

36 **Whereas** in Baptist church cultures they “dedicate” their children rather than baptizing  
37 them, the former having no Biblical warrant but apparently instinctively reflecting  
38 their desire that their children belong to the Lord; and  
39

40 **Whereas** the third promise we ask Christian parents to make, which says – “Do you now  
41 dedicate your child to God, and promise, in humble reliance upon divine grace . . . ,”  
42 (*BCO* 56-5) – sounds more Baptist than Covenantal, and undermines the distinction  
43 we make between what we do with our children and what God has in his providence  
44 already done by placing them in a Covenant home;

1 **Therefore, be it resolved** that the wording of the third promise be changed to read: “~~Do you~~  
2 ~~now unreservedly dedicate your child to God, and~~ Do you now acknowledge that  
3 God in his providence has placed this child within the covenant family, and entrusted  
4 (him/her) to your care, and do you promise, in humble reliance upon divine grace,  
5 that you will endeavor to set before (him/her) a godly example, that you will pray  
6 with and for (him/her), that you will teach (him/her) the doctrines of our holy  
7 religion, and that you will strive, by all the means of God’s appointment, to bring  
8 (him/her) up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?” (BCO 56-5) [Underlining  
9 for new wording; ~~strike through~~ for deletions]

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11 *Adopted by Gulf Coast Presbytery at its stated meeting February 10, 2015*

12 *Attested by /s/ Robert S. Hornick, stated clerk*