

1 **OVERTURE 8** from Tidewater Presbytery (to CCB, OC)

2 “Amend *BCO* 13-2, 34-10, 24-7 and 24-9 regarding Ministers, Ruling
3 Elders, and Deacons without Call”
4

5 **Whereas** The PCA has over 300 ministers without call out of the 4,400 total reported last
6 year by the PCA Clerk. It is hard to estimate the number of ruling elders and
7 deacons without call; and
8

9 **Whereas** in *BCO* 13-2, there is currently no annual reporting requirement for ministers
10 without call, like that required for ministers laboring out of bounds (*BCO* 8-7);
11 annual reporting aids presbyteries in caring for their members effectively; and
12

13 **Whereas** we have some ministers in the PCA who have been without call for over a decade,
14 and some ruling elders and deacons probably longer than that. Many presbyters are
15 probably reticent to divest a minister, even when it is prudent, and thus it is unusual
16 for there to be a 2/3 majority to do so. That is a very high bar. And few Sessions
17 even think about the question of a ruling elder or deacon in extended without call
18 status; and
19

20 **Whereas** A Presbytery would still have the right to extend a minister’s without call status
21 indefinitely by simply majority vote each year, and would not need to record reasons
22 for doing so. Nor would it be required to adopt reasons for divestiture without
23 censure, other than noting the minister had been without call for three years. The
24 same would apply to Sessions reviewing without call status of ruling elders and
25 deacons.
26

27 **Therefore be it resolved**, to amend *BCO* 13-2, 34-10, 24-7 and 24-9 regarding ministers,
28 ruling elders, and deacons without call.

29 (Proposed additions are underlined. Proposed deletions are shown by strikethrough.)
30

31 **(1) Amend the present last sentence of *BCO* 13-2 and add a new final**
32 **sentence as follows:**
33

34 ***BCO* 13-2.** . . . When a minister shall continue on the rolls of his
35 Presbytery without a call to a particular work for a ~~prolonged period,~~
36 ~~not exceeding~~ three years, the procedure as set forth in *BCO* 34-10
37 shall be followed. Ministers without call shall report annually at a
38 stated meeting of their Presbytery.
39

40 **(2) Delete the two paragraphs of *BCO* 34-10 and replace with a single**
41 **paragraph as follows:**
42

43 (*BCO* 34-10. ~~Whenever a minister of the Gospel shall habitually fail~~
44 ~~to be engaged in the regular discharge of his official functions, it shall~~
45 ~~be the duty of the Presbytery, at a stated meeting, to inquire into the~~

1 ~~cause of such dereliction and, if necessary, to institute judicial~~
2 ~~proceedings against him for breach of his covenant engagement. If it~~
3 ~~shall appear that his neglect proceeds only from his lack of acceptance~~
4 ~~to the Church, Presbytery may, upon the same principle upon which it~~
5 ~~withdraws license from a licentiate for lack of evidence of the divine~~
6 ~~call, divest him of his office without censure, even against his will, a~~
7 ~~majority of two thirds (2/3) being necessary for this purpose.~~

8 ~~In such a case, the clerk shall under the order of the Presbytery~~
9 ~~forthwith deliver to the minister concerned a written note that, at the~~
10 ~~next stated meeting, the question of his being so dealt with is to be~~
11 ~~considered. This notice shall distinctly state the grounds for this~~
12 ~~proceeding. The party thus notified shall be heard in his own defense;~~
13 ~~and if the decision pass against him he may appeal, as if he had been~~
14 ~~tried after the usual forms. This principle may apply, provision also~~
15 ~~applies, with any necessary changes, to ruling elders and deacons.~~

16
17 **Replacement BCO 34-10. If a minister has been without call for**
18 **three years, Presbytery shall divest him without censure, unless a**
19 **majority of Presbytery votes in favor of extending the without call**
20 **status for another year or changes his status to honorably retired (BCO**
21 **23-2). Henceforth, the renewal of without call status requires annual**
22 **approval. Such ministers shall always be notified of the meeting**
23 **when Presbytery will consider this matter, and shall be given the**
24 **opportunity to speak to the matter. Divestiture without censure is an**
25 **action that may be appealed (BCO 42). This provision also applies,**
26 **with any necessary changes, to ruling elders and deacons.**

- 27
28 **(3) Add a new final sentence as a third paragraph to BCO 24-7 so**
29 **that 24-7 in its entirety reads:**

30
31 **24-7.** Ordination to the offices of ruling elder or deacon is perpetual;
32 nor can such offices be laid aside at pleasure; nor can any person be
33 degraded from either office but by deposition after regular trial; yet a
34 ruling elder or deacon may have reasons which he deems valid for
35 being released from the active duties of his office. In such a case the
36 Session, after conference with him and careful consideration of the
37 matter, may, if it thinks proper, accept his resignation and dissolve the
38 official relationship which exists between him and the church.

39 The ruling elder or deacon, though chargeable with neither heresy
40 nor immorality, may become unacceptable in his official capacity to a
41 majority of the church which he serves. In such a case the church
42 may take the initiative by a majority vote at a regularly called
43 congregational meeting, and request the Session to dissolve the
44 official relationship between the church and the officer without
45 censure. The Session, after conference with the ruling elder or

1 deacon, and after careful consideration, may use its discretion as to
2 dissolving the official relationship. In either case the Session shall
3 report its action to the congregation. If the Session fails or refuses to
4 report to the congregation within sixty (60) days from the date of the
5 congregational meeting or if the Session reports to the congregation
6 that it declined to dissolve such relationship, then any member or
7 members in good standing may file a complaint against the Session in
8 accordance with the provisions of *BCO* 43.

9 In either of these non-judicial scenarios, the ruling elder or deacon
10 becomes an officer without call, and he shall report annually to a
11 stated meeting of the Session of the church at which his membership
12 then resides. (See also *BCO* 34-10.)

13
14 **(4) Amend *BCO* 24-9 by adding a final sentence as follows:**

15 ***BCO* 24-9.** When a ruling elder or deacon cannot or does not for a
16 period of one year perform the duties of his office, his official
17 relationship shall be dissolved by the Session and the action reported
18 to the congregation. In this case, he becomes a ruling elder or deacon
19 without call, and he shall report annually to a stated meeting of the
20 Session of the church at which his membership then resides. (See also
21 *BCO* 34-10.)

22 *Approved by Tidewater Presbytery at its stated meeting, February 7, 2015*

23 *Attested by /s/ TE David Zavadil, stated clerk*