

1 **OVERTURE 29** from Metro New York Presbytery (to CCB, OC)

2 “Amend *BCO* 5-9.c, 5-9.i (1), 7-2, 9-3, 17-3, 24, and Add a Chapter 25

3 In Order to Allow Local Sessions to Decide Whether Women Are Allowed  
4 to Serve as Deacons”

5  
6 **Whereas** there has long been a sincere diversity of views among Reformed churches as to  
7 what Scripture says about the role of women in diaconal ministry; and

8  
9 **Whereas** conservative, complementarian scholars differ in their understanding of biblical  
10 texts that touch on the role of women in diaconal ministry, specifically 1 Timothy 3:11  
11 and Romans 16:1; and

12  
13 **Whereas** there seems to be strong evidence that the word *διάκονον* in Romans 16:1 is used in  
14 a technical manner to describe an office Phoebe holds rather than in a general  
15 descriptive manner; and

16  
17 **Whereas** the Westminster Confession does not specifically address the office of deacon; and

18  
19 **Whereas** the Westminster Confession 20.2 does speak of Christian liberty and not  
20 unnecessarily binding the consciences of men; and

21  
22 **Whereas** it is in line with the historical spirit of the PCA to be a grassroots denomination and  
23 to defer to the judgment of local sessions in decisions regarding congregational  
24 ministry; and

25  
26 **Whereas** several conservative, Reformed denominations within NAPARC allow women to  
27 serve as deacons (i.e. Associated Reformed Presbyterian Church, The Reformed  
28 Church of Quebec (ERQ), and The Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America);

29  
30 **Therefore**, be it resolved to amend *BCO* 5-9.c, 5-9.i (1), 7-2, 9-3, 17-3, 24, and add a chapter  
31 25 in order to allow local sessions to decide whether women are allowed to serve as  
32 deacons [Proposed deletions shown below by strikethrough, and additions underlined]:

33  
34 **5-9.c.** When the temporary government determines that among the  
35 members of the mission congregation there are men who appear qualified  
36 as ~~officers~~Elders, the nomination process shall begin and the election  
37 conclude following the procedures of *BCO* 24 so far as they may be  
38 applicable.

39  
40 **5-9.i (1)** The organizing commission shall ordain and/or install ruling elders  
41 ~~and/or deacons~~ according to the provisions of *BCO* 24-6, and/or install  
42 deacons according to the provisions of *BCO* 25-6 so far as they may be  
43 applicable.  
44

1 **7-2.** The ordinary and perpetual classes of office in the Church are elders  
2 and deacons. Within the class of elder are the two orders of teaching elders  
3 and ruling elders. The elders jointly have the government and spiritual  
4 oversight of the Church, including teaching. Only those elders who are  
5 specially gifted, called and trained by God to preach may serve as teaching  
6 elders. The office of deacon is not one of rule, but rather of service both to  
7 the physical and spiritual needs of the people. In accord with Scripture,  
8 ~~these offices are open to men only~~ the office of elder is open to men only.  
9

10 **9-3.** To the office of deacon, which is spiritual in nature, shall be chosen  
11 ~~men~~ members of spiritual character, honest repute, exemplary lives,  
12 brotherly spirit, warm sympathies, and sound judgment.  
13

14 **17-3.** As every ecclesiastical office, according to the Scriptures, is a special  
15 charge, no ~~man~~ member shall be ordained unless it be to the performance of  
16 a definite work.  
17

## 18 **CHAPTER 24**

### 19 *Election, Ordination and Installation of Ruling Elders ~~and Deacons~~*

#### 20 **Election**

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23  
24 **24-1.** Every church shall elect persons to the offices of ruling elder ~~and~~  
25 ~~deacon~~ in the following manner: At such times as determined by the Session,  
26 communicant members of the congregation may submit names to the  
27 Session, keeping in mind that each prospective officer should be an active  
28 male member who meets the qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 3 and  
29 Titus 1. After the close of the nomination period nominees for the office of  
30 ruling elder ~~and/or deacon~~ shall receive instruction in the qualifications and  
31 work of the office. Each nominee shall then be examined in:

- 32 a. his Christian experience, especially his personal character and  
33 family management (based on the qualifications set out in 1 Timothy  
34 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9),
- 35 b. his knowledge of Bible content,
- 36 c. his knowledge of the system of doctrine, government, discipline  
37 contained in the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in America  
38 (*BCO* Preface III, *The Constitution Defined*),
- 39 d. the duties of the office to which he has been nominated, and
- 40 e. his willingness to give assent to the questions required for ordination.  
41 (*BCO* 24-6)

42 If there are candidates eligible for the election, the Session shall report  
43 to the congregation those eligible, giving at least thirty (30) days prior notice  
44 of the time and place of a congregational meeting for elections.

1           If one-fourth (1/4) of the persons entitled to vote shall at any time request  
2 the Session to call a congregational meeting for the purpose of electing  
3 additional officers, it shall be the duty of the Session to call such a meeting  
4 on the above procedure. The number of officers to be elected shall be  
5 determined by the congregation after hearing the Session's recommendation.  
6

7           **24-2.** The pastor is, by virtue of his office, moderator of congregational  
8 meetings. If there is no pastor, the Session shall appoint one of their number  
9 to call the meeting to order and to preside until the congregation shall elect  
10 their presiding officer, who may be a minister or ruling elder of the  
11 Presbyterian Church in America or any male member of that particular  
12 church.  
13

14           **24-3.** All communing members in good and regular standing, but no  
15 others, are entitled to vote in the election of church officers in the churches  
16 to which they respectively belong. A majority vote of those present is  
17 required for election.  
18

19           **24-4.** The voters being convened, the moderator shall explain the purpose  
20 of the meeting and then put the question:  
21

22                   **Are you now ready to proceed to the election of additional ruling**  
23                   **elders (~~or deacons~~) from the slate presented?**  
24

25           If they declare themselves ready, the election may proceed by private  
26 ballot without nomination. In every case a majority of all the voters present  
27 shall be required to elect.  
28

29           **24-5.** On the election of a ruling elder ~~or deacon~~, if it appears that a large  
30 minority of the voters are averse to a candidate, and cannot be induced to  
31 concur in the choice, the moderator shall endeavor to dissuade the majority  
32 from prosecuting it further; but if the electors are nearly or quite unanimous,  
33 or if the majority insist upon their right to choose their officers, the election  
34 shall stand.  
35

### 36           **Ordination and Installation** 37

38           **24-6.** The day having arrived, and the Session being convened in the  
39 presence of the congregation, a sermon shall be preached after which the  
40 presiding minister shall state in a concise manner the warrant and nature of  
41 the office of ruling elder, ~~or deacon~~, together with the character proper to  
42 be sustained and the duties to be fulfilled. Having done this, he shall propose  
43 to the candidate, in the presence of the church, the following questions,  
44 namely:  
45

- 1           **1. Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments,**  
2           **as originally given, to be the inerrant Word of God, the only**  
3           **infallible rule of faith and practice?**
- 4           **2. Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith and**  
5           **the Catechisms of this Church, as containing the system of**  
6           **doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures; and do you further**  
7           **promise that if at any time you find yourself out of accord with**  
8           **any of the fundamentals of this system of doctrine, you will, on**  
9           **your own initiative, make known to your Session the change**  
10           **which has taken place in your views since the assumption of this**  
11           **ordination vow?**
- 12           **3. Do you approve of the form of government and discipline of the**  
13           **Presbyterian Church in America, in conformity with the general**  
14           **principles of biblical polity?**
- 15           **4. Do you accept the office of ruling elder (~~or deacon, as the case~~**  
16           **~~may be~~) in this church, and promise faithfully to perform all the**  
17           **duties thereof, and to endeavor by the grace of God to adorn the**  
18           **profession of the Gospel in your life, and to set a worthy example**  
19           **before the Church of which God has made you an officer?**
- 20           **5. Do you promise subjection to the Session?**
- 21           **6. Do you promise to strive for the purity, peace, unity and**  
22           **edification of the Church?**

23  
24           The ruling elder ~~or deacon~~ elect having answered in the affirmative, the  
25           minister shall address to the members of the church the following question:  
26

27                   **Do you, the members of this church, acknowledge and receive**  
28                   **this brother as a ruling elder (~~or deacon~~), and do you promise to**  
29                   **yield him all that honor, encouragement and obedience in the Lord**  
30                   **to which his office, according to the Word of God and the**  
31                   **Constitution of this Church, entitles him?**  
32

33           The members of the church having answered this question in the  
34           affirmative, by holding up their right hands, the candidate shall then be set  
35           apart, with prayer by the minister or any other Session member and the  
36           laying on of the hands of the Session, to the office of ruling elder (~~or deacon~~).  
37           Prayer being ended, the members of the Session (~~and the deacons, if the~~  
38           ~~case be that of a deacon~~) shall take the newly ordained officer by the hand,  
39           saying in words to this effect:  
40

41                   **We give you the right hand of fellowship, to take part in this office**  
42                   **with us.**  
43

44           The minister shall then say:  
45

1                   **I now pronounce and declare that \_\_\_\_\_ has**  
2                   **been regularly elected, ordained and installed a ruling elder (~~or~~**  
3                   **~~deacon~~) in this church, agreeable to the Word of God, and**  
4                   **according to the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in**  
5                   **America; and that as such he is entitled to all encouragement, honor**  
6                   **and obedience in the Lord: In the name of the Father, and of the**  
7                   **Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.**

8  
9                   After which the minister or any other member of the Session shall give  
10                  to the ruling elder (~~or deacon~~) and to the church an exhortation suited to the  
11                  occasion.

12  
13               **24-7.** Ordination to the offices of ruling elder ~~or deacon~~ is perpetual; nor  
14               can such offices be laid aside at pleasure; nor can any person be degraded  
15               from ~~either the~~ office but by deposition after regular trial; yet a ruling elder  
16               ~~or deacon~~ may have reasons which he deems valid for being released from  
17               the active duties of his office. In such a case the Session, after conference  
18               with him and careful consideration of the matter, may, if it thinks proper,  
19               accept his resignation and dissolve the official relationship which exists  
20               between him and the church.

21  
22               The ruling elder ~~or deacon~~, though chargeable with neither heresy nor  
23               immorality, may become unacceptable in his official capacity to a majority  
24               of the church which he serves. In such a case the church may take the  
25               initiative by a majority vote at a regularly called congregational meeting,  
26               and request the Session to dissolve the official relationship between the  
27               church and the officer without censure. The Session, after conference with  
28               the ruling elder ~~or deacon~~, and after careful consideration, may use its  
29               discretion as to dissolving the official relationship. In either case the Session  
30               shall report its action to the congregation. If the Session fails or refuses to  
31               report to the congregation within sixty (60) days from the date of the  
32               congregational meeting or if the Session reports to the congregation that it  
33               declined to dissolve such relationship, then any member or members in  
34               good standing may file a complaint against the Session in accordance with  
35               the provisions of *BCO* 43.

36  
37               **24-8.** When a ruling elder ~~or deacon~~ who has been released from his  
38               official relation is again elected to his office in the same or another church,  
39               he shall be installed after the above form with the omission of ordination.

40  
41               **24-9.** When a ruling elder ~~or deacon~~ cannot or does not for a period of one  
42               year perform the duties of his office, his official relationship shall be  
43               dissolved by the Session and the action reported to the congregation.

1 **24-10.** When a ~~deacon or~~ ruling elder by reason of age or infirmity desires  
2 to be released from the active duties of the office, he may at his request and  
3 with the approval of the Session be designated ~~deacon or~~ elder emeritus.  
4 When so designated, he is no longer required to perform the regular duties  
5 of his office, but may continue to perform certain of these duties on a  
6 voluntary basis, if requested by the Session or a higher court. He may attend  
7 Diaconate or Session meetings, if he so desires, and may participate fully in  
8 the discussion of any issues, but may not vote.  
9

10 **Editorial Comment:** The General Assembly explicitly provided that those  
11 Elders and Deacons granted emeritus status prior to June 22, 1984, retain  
12 the privilege of vote. (By order of the Fifteenth General Assembly 15-83,  
13 III, 31).  
14

## 15 **CHAPTER 25**

### 16 *Election, Ordination and Installation of Deacons*

#### 17 **Election**

18  
19  
20  
21 **25-1.** Every church shall elect persons to the offices of deacon in the  
22 following manner: At such times as determined by the Session,  
23 communicant members of the congregation may submit names to the  
24 Session, keeping in mind that each prospective officer should be an active  
25 member who meets the qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 3. While the  
26 Church shall not neglect the raising up of qualified men to serve in this  
27 position, particular sessions may determine whether women can serve as  
28 deacons in their own particular congregation. After the close of the  
29 nomination period nominees for the office of deacon shall receive  
30 instruction in the qualifications and work of the office. Each nominee shall  
31 then be examined in:  
32

- 33 **a. His/Her Christian experience, especially their personal**
- 34 **character and family management (based on the qualifications**
- 35 **set out in 1 Timothy 3:8-13)**
- 36 **b. His/Her knowledge of Bible content,**
- 37 **c. His/Her knowledge of the system of doctrine, government,**
- 38 **discipline contained in the Constitution of the Presbyterian**
- 39 **Church in America (BCO Preface III, The Constitution Defined),**
- 40 **d. the duties of the office to which he/she has been nominated, and**
- 41 **e. His/Her willingness to give assent to the questions required for**
- 42 **ordination. (BCO 24-6)**
- 43

1           If there are candidates eligible for the election, the Session shall report  
2 to the congregation those eligible, giving at least thirty (30) days prior notice  
3 of the time and place of a congregational meeting for elections.  
4

5           If one-fourth (1/4) of the persons entitled to vote shall at any time request  
6 the Session to call a congregational meeting for the purpose of electing  
7 additional officers, it shall be the duty of the Session to call such a meeting  
8 on the above procedure. The number of officers to be elected shall be  
9 determined by the congregation after hearing the Session's recommendation.  
10

11 **25-2.** The pastor is, by virtue of his office, moderator of congregational  
12 meetings. If there is no pastor, the Session shall appoint one of their number  
13 to call the meeting to order and to preside until the congregation shall elect  
14 their presiding officer, who may be a minister or ruling elder of the  
15 Presbyterian Church in America or any male member of that particular  
16 church.  
17

18 **25-3.** All communing members in good and regular standing, but no  
19 others, are entitled to vote in the election of church officers in the churches  
20 to which they respectively belong. A majority vote of those present is  
21 required for election.  
22

23 **25-4.** The voters being convened, the moderator shall explain the purpose  
24 of the meeting and then put the question:  
25

26           **Are you now ready to proceed to the election of additional deacons**  
27 **from the slate presented?**  
28

29           If they declare themselves ready, the election may proceed by private  
30 ballot without nomination. In every case a majority of all the voters present  
31 shall be required to elect.  
32

33 **25-5.** On the election of a deacon, if it appears that a large minority of the  
34 voters are averse to a candidate, and cannot be induced to concur in the  
35 choice, the moderator shall endeavor to dissuade the majority from  
36 prosecuting it further; but if the electors are nearly or quite unanimous, or  
37 if the majority insist upon their right to choose their officers, the election  
38 shall stand.  
39

#### **Ordination and Installation**

40

41  
42 **25-6.** The day having arrived, and the Session being convened in the  
43 presence of the congregation, a sermon shall be preached after which the  
44 presiding minister shall state in a concise manner the warrant and nature of  
45 the office of deacon, together with the character proper to be sustained and

1 the duties to be fulfilled. Having done this, he shall propose to the candidate,  
2 in the presence of the church, the following questions, namely:

- 3
- 4 **1. Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as**  
5 **originally given, to be the inerrant Word of God, the only**  
6 **infallible rule of faith and practice?**
- 7 **2. Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith and**  
8 **the Catechisms of this Church, as containing the system of**  
9 **doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures; and do you further**  
10 **promise that if at any time you find yourself out of accord with**  
11 **any of the fundamentals of this system of doctrine, you will, on**  
12 **your own initiative, make known to your Session the change**  
13 **which has taken place in your views since the assumption of this**  
14 **ordination vow?**
- 15 **3. Do you approve of the form of government and discipline of the**  
16 **Presbyterian Church in America, in conformity with the general**  
17 **principles of biblical polity?**
- 18 **4. Do you accept the office of deacon in this church, and promise**  
19 **faithfully to perform all the duties thereof, and to endeavor by**  
20 **the grace of God to adorn the profession of the Gospel in your**  
21 **life, and to set a worthy example before the Church of which God**  
22 **has made you an officer?**
- 23 **5. Do you promise subjection to the Session?**
- 24 **6. Do you promise to strive for the purity, peace, unity and**  
25 **edification of the Church?**

26

27 The deacon elect having answered in the affirmative, the minister shall  
28 address to the members of the church the following question:

29

30 **Do you, the members of this church, acknowledge and receive this**  
31 **brother (or sister, as the case may be) as a deacon, and do you**  
32 **promise to yield him/her all that honor and encouragement in the**  
33 **Lord to which his/her office, according to the Word of God and the**  
34 **Constitution of this Church, entitles him/her?**

35

36 The members of the church having answered this question in the  
37 affirmative, by holding up their right hands, the candidate shall then be set  
38 apart, with prayer by the minister or any other Session member and the laying  
39 on of the hands of the Session, to the office of deacon. Prayer being ended,  
40 the members of the Session and deacons shall take the newly ordained officer  
41 by the hand, saying in words to this effect:

42

43 **We give you the right hand of fellowship, to take part in this office**  
44 **with us.**



1 The minister shall then say:  
2

3 **I now pronounce and declare that \_\_\_\_\_ has been**  
4 **regularly elected, ordained and installed a deacon in this church,**  
5 **agreeable to the Word of God, and according to the Constitution of**  
6 **the Presbyterian Church in America; and that as such he/she is**  
7 **entitled to all encouragement and honor in the Lord: In the name of**  
8 **the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.**  
9

10 After which the minister or any other member of the Session shall give  
11 to the deacon and to the church an exhortation suited to the occasion.  
12

13 25-7. Ordination to the office of deacon is perpetual; nor can such office  
14 be laid aside at pleasure; nor can any person be degraded from the office but  
15 by deposition after regular trial; yet a deacon may have reasons which he/she  
16 deems valid for being released from the active duties of the office. In such a  
17 case the Session, after conference with him/her and careful consideration of  
18 the matter, may, if it thinks proper, accept his/her resignation and dissolve  
19 the official relationship which exists between him/her and the church.

20 The deacon, though chargeable with neither heresy nor immorality, may  
21 become unacceptable in his/her official capacity to a majority of the church  
22 which he/she serves. In such a case the church may take the initiative by a  
23 majority vote at a regularly called congregational meeting, and request the  
24 Session to dissolve the official relationship between the church and the  
25 officer without censure. The Session, after conference with the deacon, and  
26 after careful consideration, may use its discretion as to dissolving the official  
27 relationship. In either case the Session shall report its action to the  
28 congregation. If the Session fails or refuses to report to the congregation  
29 within sixty (60) days from the date of the congregational meeting or if the  
30 Session reports to the congregation that it declined to dissolve such  
31 relationship, then any member or members in good standing may file a  
32 complaint against the Session in accordance with the provisions of BCO 43.  
33

34 25-8. When a deacon who has been released from his/her official relation  
35 is again elected to the office in the same or another church, he/she shall be  
36 installed after the above form with the omission of ordination.  
37

38 25-9. When a deacon cannot or does not for a period of one year perform the  
39 duties of his/her office, his/her official relationship shall be dissolved by the  
40 Session and the action reported to the congregation.  
41

42 25-10. When a deacon by reason of age or infirmity desires to be released from  
43 the active duties of the office, he/she may at his/her request and with the approval  
44 of the Session be designated deacon emeritus. When so designated, he/she is no  
45 longer required to perform the regular duties of his/her office, but may continue to

1 perform certain of these duties on a voluntary basis, if requested by the Session or  
2 a higher court. He/She may attend Diaconate meetings, if he/she so desires, and  
3 may participate fully in the discussion of any issues, but may not vote.

4  
5 **Editorial Comment:** The General Assembly explicitly provided that those Elders  
6 and Deacons granted emeritus status prior to June 22, 1984, retain the privilege of  
7 vote. (By order of the Fifteenth General Assembly 15-83, III, 31).

8  
9 Chapters to be renumbered after Chapter 25 and further, that the subsequent chapters be  
10 renumbered accordingly.

11  
12 Chapter 26 Congregational Meetings

13 Chapter 27 Amending the Constitution of the Church

14 Chapter 28 Discipline – Its Nature, Subjects and Ends

15 Chapter 29 Discipline of Non-communing Members

16 Chapter 30 Offenses

17 Chapter 31 Church Censures

18 Chapter 32 The Parties in Cases of Process

19 Chapter 33 General Provisions Applicable to all Cases of Process

20 Chapter 34 Special Rules Pertaining to Process Before Sessions

21 Chapter 35 Special Rules Pertaining to Process Against a Minister (Teaching Elder)

22 Chapter 36 Evidence

23 Chapter 37 The Infliction of Church Censures

24 Chapter 38 The Removal of Censure

25 Chapter 39 Cases Without Process

26 Chapter 40 Modes in Which the Proceedings of Lower Courts Come Under the Supervision  
27 of Higher Courts

28 Chapter 41 General Review and Control

29 Chapter 42 References

30 Chapter 43 Appeals

31 Chapter 44 Complaints

32 Chapter 45 Vacated

33 Chapter 46 Dissents, Protests and Objections

34 Chapter 47 Jurisdiction

35 Chapter 48 The Principles and Elements of Public Worship

36 Chapter 49 The Sanctification of the Lord's Day

37 Chapter 50 The Ordering of Public Worship

38 Chapter 51 The Public Reading of the Holy Scripture

39 Chapter 52 The Singing of Psalms and Hymns

40 Chapter 53 Public Prayer

41 Chapter 54 The Preaching of the Word

42 Chapter 55 The Worship of God by Offerings

43 Chapter 56 Confessing the Faith

44 Chapter 57 The Administration of Baptism (The Baptism of Infants and Children)

45 Chapter 58 The Admission of Persons to Sealing Ordinances

1 Chapter 59 The Administration of the Lord's Supper

2 Chapter 60 The Solemnization of Marriage

3 Chapter 61 The Visitation of the Sick

4 Chapter 62 The Burial of the Dead

5 Chapter 63 Days of Fasting and thanksgiving

6 Chapter 64 Christian Life in the Home

7

8 *Adopted by Metro New York Presbytery at its stated meeting on March 13, 2019*

9 *Attested by /s/ TE Jeffrey Choi, stated clerk*