

1 **OVERTURE 7 (Revised)** from Pacific Northwest Presbytery (to CCB, OC, AC)  
2 “Form an Ad Interim Committee to Address Matters Related to Domestic  
3 Abuse, Domestic Oppression, and Sexual Assault”  
4

5 **Be it resolved:**  
6

- 7 1. That the 47th General Assembly create a seven-man Study Committee on Domestic Abuse  
8 and Sexual Assault tasked to accomplish the following.  
9
- 10 a. The Committee shall prepare an annotated bibliography of resources the Committee  
11 endorses on topics related to child abuse and sexual assault, domestic abuse and sexual  
12 assault, and domestic oppression.<sup>1</sup> The annotated bibliography should also include  
13 pastoral resources for the care of victims of these sins, as well as ministry and counsel  
14 for those overtaken by these sins.  
15
  - 16 b. The Committee shall report regarding best practices and guidelines that could be  
17 helpful for elders, Sessions, Presbyteries, and agencies for protecting against these sins  
18 and for responding to them. However, no practice, policy, or guideline will be  
19 proposed for adoption or approval. It is simply information, which shall not be binding  
20 or obligatory in any sense.  
21
  - 22 c. The Committee may recommend to the 48th GA (Birmingham 2020) any statement(s)  
23 it believes would be prudent and warranted for the Assembly to adopt.  
24
  - 25 d. The Committee may recommend to the 48th GA any revisions or additions to *BCO*  
26 Rules of Discipline that might help prevent these sins, protect and care for victims,  
27 procure justice, and lead offenders to repentance. Reporting procedure is governed by  
28 *RAO 12-1*.

29  
30 *RAO 12-1: ...All recommendations [from permanent Committees and Agencies,  
31 special committees, and ad interim committees of the GA] proposing amendment  
32 to the constitution shall be referred to the Overtures Committee for their review  
33 and recommendation to the General Assembly under the rules governing a  
34 committee of commissioners as applicable (*RAO 14-6.d.-k.; 14-7.c.-d.; 14-9.d.-h.*)  
35 [Underlining added. See also *RAO 15-1*.]*

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<sup>1</sup> Rev. Warren Lamb (Th.M., MS, MA) Vancouver Bible Institute & Truth in Love Biblical Counseling Center  
"Domestic oppression is an ongoing pattern of intimidating and domineering behavior employed by one family  
member to control one or more other family members. A superior/inferior, hierarchical power differential is  
established, maintained, and increased more and more as time goes on...."  
"Domestic oppressors systematically tyrannize, intimidate, threaten, emotionally coerce, dehumanize, objectify,  
demean, degrade, manipulate, and bully at least one other person within the family home - usually their  
spouse."  
<https://pastorlamb.com/2018/05/08/domestic-oppression-time-to-talk-about-i>  
<https://www.vancouverbible.com/our-staff.html> & <https://www.tilbcc.com/biblical-counseling-team1.html>

1 Any proposed constitutional amendments shall also be referred to the Committee on  
2 Constitutional Business for advice. (RAO 8-2.b.3 & b.4)

3  
4 2. The 47th GA authorizes the GA Moderator to appoint the seven voting members of this  
5 Committee, per *RAO* 9-4 and *RAO* 19-1 (Robert's Rules, RONR, 11th ed., pp. 174-175,  
6 pp. 495-496, and p. 579).

7  
8 a. These members shall be PCA ministers or PCA ruling elders, and the Committee  
9 shall include at least two of each. (Anyone may suggest names to the Moderator.)

10  
11 b. The 47th GA authorizes the Moderator to make his appointments after the 47th GA  
12 adjourns.

13  
14 3. The 47th GA authorizes the Moderator to appoint others to serve the Committee as non-  
15 voting advisors, regardless of denominational affiliation or gender. The 47th GA  
16 recommends the Moderator consider appointing, as advisors, at least two subject-matter  
17 experts and at least two women.

18  
19 4. Committee budget shall be \$15,000. This expense shall be included in the Administrative  
20 Committee budget. Presbyteries, churches, and individuals are highly encouraged to  
21 contribute funds to the AC, designated for this work. (The Pacific NW Presbytery has  
22 approved \$1,000 to that end.)

23  
24 **Rationale for the Need:**

25  
26 A. The sins of domestic abuse and sexual assault are expressly forbidden by Scripture and  
27 the Westminster Standards. (For example, see 2 Timothy 3:2-5; Jude 7; Exodus 21:15;  
28 Deuteronomy 22:25-27; also, *WLC* 135 and 139.)

29  
30 B. These sins are especially heinous as they are “against the express letter of the law,” “break  
31 many commandments,” “admit of no reparation,” and often involve various other  
32 aggravations (*WLC* 151).

33  
34 C. Sadly, these sins are prevalent in our society<sup>2</sup>, and, to some extent, even appear in the  
35 Church.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> For example, the National Domestic Violence Hotline reports: “More than 1 in 3 women (35.6%) and more than 1 in 4 men (28.5%) in the United States have experienced rape, physical violence and/or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime.” (Available at [www.thehotline.org/resources/statistics/](http://www.thehotline.org/resources/statistics/), accessed 6/15/18). For further statistics on sexual violence see the National Center for Injury Prevention and Controls Report titled *Sexual Violence Surveillance: Uniform Definitions and Recommended Data Elements* (Atlanta: CDC, 2014; available at [www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/sv\\_surveillance\\_definitions1-2009-a.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/sv_surveillance_definitions1-2009-a.pdf)).

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/investigations/article/Southern-Baptist-sexual-abuse-spreads-as-leaders-13588038.php>

- 1 D. These sins often produce in the victims a complex response of denial along with  
2 immense fear and shame that persist with varying severity throughout life (e.g., 2  
3 Samuel 13:1-22).  
4
- 5 E. It is the responsibility of the elders of the Church to exercise their authority, severally  
6 and jointly, to shepherd those who are under their care by guarding against such sinful  
7 behavior as much as possible, by wisely caring for those victimized by the sins of  
8 others, and by appropriately disciplining those guilty of such sins, with an aim toward  
9 a full repentance.  
10
- 11 F In 2014, the 42nd General Assembly (Houston, TX) exhorted the PCA and its courts  
12 to respond boldly against one form of these sins, namely the sexual abuse of children.  
13 (M42GA, pp. 58-60.  
14
- 15 The OC, by a vote of 89-0, recommended the Houston GA adopt a revised version of  
16 Georgia Foothills Overture 6, and the GA adopted it. Twenty-three other Presbyteries  
17 had filed similar child-protection overtures, and all were answered by reference to the  
18 action on Overture 6.)  
19
- 20 G Many PCA ministers, ruling elders, and candidates report a desire to be resourced in  
21 order to provide better pastoral care on these sins and their resulting complex  
22 consequences.  
23
- 24 H. Many PCA ministers, ruling elders, and candidates report a desire to learn of "best  
25 practices" in these matters. For example, some ministers and elders are unaware of  
26 the different levels of background checks that can be utilized in screening. Some do  
27 not know what their State's laws are regarding mandatory reporters, or in what  
28 situations those laws may or may not apply.  
29
- 30 I. Our *BCO* Part II Rules of Discipline might benefit from additions or revisions that  
31 address these matters. The following *BCO* provisions are examples of some that *might*  
32 benefit from review and revision (at least, for example, in the context of a minor who  
33 accuses an adult of abuse or sexual misconduct):  
34
- 35 *BCO* 32-20. Process, in case of scandal, shall commence within the space  
36 of one year after the offense was committed, unless it has recently become  
37 flagrant.  
38
- 39 *BCO* 32-13. In order that the trial may be fair and impartial, the witnesses  
40 shall be examined in the presence of the accused,...Witnesses may be cross-  
41 examined by both parties,...  
42
- 43 *BCO* 35-4. No witness afterwards to be examined, unless a member of the  
44 court, shall be present during the examination of another witness on the  
45 same case, if either party object.

1 **Review of RAO Procedures on Proposed Constitutional Amendments**

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3 While ad interim and study committees ordinarily report recommendations directly to the GA  
4 floor, if they propose constitutional amendments, *RAO* 12-1 requires them to be referred to  
5 the OC. But in such instances, the OC would act in many regards like a committee of  
6 commissioners.

7  
8 *RAO* 12-1 The permanent Committees and Agencies, special committees, and  
9 ad interim committees of the Assembly shall make annual reports, which shall  
10 be transmitted to the Stated Clerk by at least ninety (90) days prior to the  
11 opening of the General Assembly. The Stated Clerk shall refer these reports to  
12 the relevant committee of commissioners for their review and recommendation  
13 to the General Assembly (cf. 14-6; 14-7). The Nominating Committee, the  
14 Committee on Review of Presbytery Records, the Standing Judicial  
15 Commission, the Committee on Constitutional Business, and ad interim  
16 committees shall report directly to the General Assembly without reference to  
17 a committee of commissioners. However, all recommendations proposing  
18 amendment to the Constitution shall be referred to the Overtures Committee for  
19 their review and recommendation to the General Assembly under the rules  
20 governing a committee of commissioners as applicable (*RAO* 14-6.d-k; 14-7.c-  
21 d; 14-9.d-h). [Emphasis added. See also *RAO* 15-1.<sup>4</sup> ]

22  
23 The OC would function under certain *RAO* 14 rules, instead of entirely under *RAO* 15 rules  
24 (i.e., the fifteen paragraphs from *RAO* 14 cited in the parenthesis). Thus, if any of those fifteen  
25 provisions stipulate something different than what is stipulated in *RAO* Chapter 15 (Overtures  
26 Committee), the *RAO* 14 (Committee of Commissioners) provision governs. One difference,  
27 for example, regards the allowance or disallowance of an OC minority report.

28  
29 *RAO* 15-6.s allows minority reports from the OC when the OC is acting in its ordinary *RAO* 15  
30 capacity. But *RAO* 14-6.h prohibits minority reports from committees of commissioners. And  
31 since *RAO* 14-6.h is included in the parenthetical list in *RAO* 12-1, that prohibition would  
32 govern the OC when it reports a recommendation on a constitutional amendment proposed by  
33 any study committee.

34  
35 Presumably, this is because a substitute motion from a Committee of Commissioners is like a  
36 minority report when it proposes something different from what is proposed by a Permanent  
37 Committee. Likewise, a substitute recommendation from the OC would be akin to a minority  
38 report on a GA-appointed Study Committee recommendation.

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<sup>4</sup> *RAO* 15-1 Overtures Committee shall consider and make recommendation upon all overtures or  
recommendations (cf. *RAO* 12-1) proposing amendment to the Constitution, and all other overtures referred  
by the Stated Clerk.

1 In the event there was a minority report from a study committee on a proposed constitutional  
2 amendment, the OC would also consider it. The OC would report recommendations on each  
3 to the GA.  
4

5 And if the OC recommends a substitute for a constitutional amendment proposed by the study  
6 committee, the procedures and time limits for debate are the same as those for handling an  
7 OC minority report on an ordinary OC recommendation (i.e., *RAO 14.9.h.1-3* and *RAO 15-*  
8 *8.g.1-3*).  
9

10 *RAO 14.9.h.* If a committee of commissioners [OC in this case] offers a  
11 substitute for a recommendation of a permanent Committee or Agency [or  
12 Study Committee in this case], the substitute shall be presented to the Assembly  
13 as follows ...  
14

15 Regardless of whether the OC recommended approval or a substitute, *RAO 14-9.e* would  
16 apply to the debate on the GA floor. (The same rule applied to recommendations that  
17 ordinarily come from OC, that is, *RAO 15-8.c.*)  
18

19 *RAO 14-9.e.* A recommendation [from a committee of commissioners] shall be  
20 considered under the standard rules governing debate, but Subsidiary Motions  
21 (*RRO VI*) to *Postpone Indefinitely*, to *Amend*, to *Commit*, and to *Limit Debate*;  
22 and Incidental Motions (*RRO VIII*) to *Divide a Question*, to *Consider Seriatim*,  
23 and *Constitutional Inquiries*, shall not be permitted. A motion to *Recommit*  
24 shall be permitted, but a motion to *Recommit with Instructions* shall not be  
25 permitted. (Italics original)  
26

27 *Adopted by Pacific NW Presbytery at its stated meeting on January 25, 2019*

28 *Revised by the Overture Revision Commission of Pacific NW Presbytery on April 17, 2019*

29 *Attested by /s/ RE Brett Chase, stated clerk*