

2023-2024
BCO AMENDMENTS SENT DOWN TO PRESBYTERIES
BY THE 50th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
FOR VOTING, and for ADVICE AND CONSENT

NOTE: The Stated Clerk's Office sends the proposed amendments only in their final form, as approved by the General Assembly.

ITEM 1: Amend BCO 7-3, regarding titling of unordained people, by the addition of a sentence (underlined).

[Overture 26 was answered in the affirmative as amended by the Overtures Committee.]

7-3. No one who holds office in the Church ought to usurp authority therein, or receive official titles of spiritual preeminence, except such as are employed in the Scripture. Furthermore, unordained people shall not be referred to as, or given the titles of, the ordained offices of pastor/elder, or deacon.

ITEM 2: Amend BCO 8-2 and 9-3, to require officers' conformity to Biblical standards for chastity and sexual purity in self-description, by the addition of the underlined wording.

[Overture 23 from Mississippi Valley Presbytery was answered in the affirmative as amended by the Overtures Committee. (Overtures 9, 16, 17, and 24 were answered with reference to Overture 23.)]

8-2. He that fills this office should possess a competency of human learning and be blameless in life, sound in the faith and apt to teach. He should exhibit a sobriety and holiness of life becoming the Gospel. He should conform to the biblical requirement of chastity and sexual purity in his descriptions of himself, and in his convictions, character, and conduct. He should rule his own house well and should have a good report of them that are outside the Church.

9-3. 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, conforming to the biblical requirement of chastity and sexual purity in their descriptions of themselves and in their convictions, character, and conduct.

ITEM 3: Amend BCO 38-1, regarding confessions and offended parties, as follow (strike-through for deletions, underlining for new wording).

[**Overture 27** from Pacific Northwest Presbytery was answered in the affirmative as amended by the Overtures Committee.]

38-1. When any person shall come forward and make his offense known to the court, a full statement of the facts shall be recorded and judgment rendered without process. In handling a confession of guilt, it is essential that the person intends to confess and permit the court to render judgment without process. Statements made by him in the presence of the court must not be taken as a basis of a judgment without process except by his consent. In the event a confession is intended, a written Confession (i.e., a sufficient summary of the facts, the person's specific confession, and any expression or evidence of repentance) must be approved by the accused, and by the court, before the court proceeds to a judgment, and the co-signed document shall be appended to the minutes (regular or executive session). No other information may be presented without written consent from the accused and the court, and this prohibition includes individuals, prosecutors, committees, and commissions. A censured person has the right to appeal (*BCO 42*). The person has the right to be assisted by counsel at any point, in accord with the stipulations of *BCO 32-19*. [See Stated Clerk's note below.]

In any instances involving a personal offense (*BCO 29-3*), the court shall attempt to inform the offended person(s) of that part of the Confession the court deems pertinent to the offense against him or her. The court shall invite the offended person to provide the court comment on the Confession prior to final approval of the Confession by the confessor and the court. The court shall encourage the offended person to enlist the help of an advisor in preparing any such comments. In all instances, the court shall report the way such offended persons were informed of the parts of the Confession pertinent to them.

[**Stated Clerk's Note:** The last two sentences in paragraph one above are necessary because the 50th GA Overtures Committee adopted wording prior to the 50th GA's adopting Items 9 and 10 of the Amendments Sent Down to Presbyteries by the 49th GA, thereby amending the same section of the *BCO*. See below, note 7 of the Rationale accompanying Overture 27.]

Rationale #7 from Overture 27 to 50th GA:

7. Note: The 49th GA approved two amendments to *BCO 38-1* and sent them to presbyteries for a vote. As of April 11, 2023, presbyteries had voted 77-1 & 78-0 in favor. If the 50th GA in Memphis also approves them, then the current final sentence in *BCO 38-1* ("*The accused person has the right of complaint against the judgment*") will be revised to read: "A censured person has the right to appeal (*BCO 42*)." And an additional sentence will be added after it: "The person has the right to be assisted by counsel at any point, in accord with the stipulations of *BCO 32-19*." These two new sentences would not be touched or affected by this Overture.