

Whereas, the Bible makes clear that the office of elder is for men only (see I Tim 2:12, I Tim 3:2 and Titus 1:6 [husband of one wife]) and

Whereas, the PCA has consistently and unashamedly held this view and

Whereas, while there may be some Biblical and exegetical disagreement about the ordination of women to the office of deacon among some in the PCA; yet at present the office of deacon is also available only to men (see I Timothy 3:2 [husband of one wife]) and

Whereas, the *BCO* 24-1, line one, says “persons” which is gender neutral rather than men;

Therefore Rocky Mountain Presbytery, meeting on April 26, 2001, respectfully overtures the General Assembly to replace the word “persons” in line one of *BCO* 24-1, with word “men”.

The new reading would then be **“Every church shall elect men to the offices of ruling elder and deacon ...”**

12. **That the General Assembly refer Overture 19** from Chesapeake Presbytery (“Erect a Study Committee on Ministry Amidst Ethnic Diversity”) to the Committee of Commissioners on Mission to North America for their recommendation to the General Assembly.

[For text and action, see 30-31, III, 18, p. 188.]

13. That the General Assembly pause for prayer before beginning consideration of Overture 20, [see text and action at 30-53, III, 14, p. 262] and that the General Assembly suspend RAO 17-4.d to allow 30 minutes on the main motion, without a motion for the previous question being in order, after the Committee, through its appointed representatives, has the opportunity to speak in favor of the Committee’s recommendation for 10 minutes.

Adopted in accordance with RAO 18

14. **That Overture 20** from Nashville Presbytery (“Racial Reconciliation”) be answered by the adoption of the following statement.

Adopted

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Whereas, the heinous sins attendant with unbiblical forms of servitude—including oppression, racism, exploitation, manstealing, and chattel slavery—stand in opposition to the Gospel; and,

Whereas, the effects of these sins have created and continue to create barriers between brothers and sisters of different races and/or economic spheres; and

Whereas, the aftereffects of these sins continue to be felt in the economic, cultural, and social affairs of the communities in which we live and minister;

We therefore confess our involvement in these sins. As a people, both we and our fathers, have failed to keep the commandments, the statutes, and the laws God has commanded. We therefore publicly repent of our pride, our complacency, and our complicity. Furthermore, we seek the forgiveness of our brothers and sisters for the reticence of our hearts that have constrained us from acting swiftly in this matter.

We will strive, in a manner consistent with the Gospel imperatives, for the encouragement of racial reconciliation, the establishment of urban and minority congregations, and the enhancement of existing ministries of mercy in our cities, among the poor, and across all social, racial, and economic boundaries, to the glory of God. Amen.

Note:

The Presbyterian Church in America participated in addressing the question of racial reconciliation as early as 1977, through her delegation to the NAPARC conference on race relations, and the resulting statement adopted.

That statement achieved a “consensus on a number of crucial issues” and it began by confessing serious inadequacies with respect to NAPARC member churches concerning race relations in the church:

We are convinced that we, as Reformed Christians, have failed to speak and act boldly in the area of race relations. Our denominational profiles reveal patterns of ethnic and racial homogeneity. We believe that this situation fails to give adequate expression to the saving

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purposes of our sovereign God, whose covenant extends to all peoples and races.

We are convinced that our record in this crucial area is one of racial brokenness and disobedience. In such a situation the credibility of our Reformed witness, piety and doctrinal confession is at stake. We have not lived out the implications of that biblical and confessional heritage which we hold in common with each other, with its emphasis on the sovereignty and freedom of grace, on the absence of human merit in gaining salvation, and on the responsibility to subject all of life to the Lordship of Christ.

The statement continued with a summary of faithful biblical teaching adapted to address the defects confessed above:

Although there are marked distinctions and even divisions among men, including those of race, mankind, according to the teaching of the Bible, has a single origin. Later distinctions and divisions are indeed significant and may not simply be pushed aside; nevertheless, the Bible clearly teaches that the gospel is universal in its offer and its call. All men are created in the image of God and have fallen into sin, and are in need of redemption. All those who are in Christ are united together with Him as their Head in a new humanity, in which the distinctions and divisions that otherwise separate men are transcended in a new unity. True, the distinctions mentioned in the Bible as having been overcome in Christ are not primarily those of race, nor does the Bible think along lines that correspond with the distinctions of race as we understand them today; nevertheless, racial distinctions and divisions as we know and understand them today certainly fall under those things that have been transcended in Christ. How, then, is the new unity in Christ to be expressed in the communion of the church today as it bears on the question of race?

The description of God's people in I Peter 2:9, 10, as a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, reveals the church's visible oneness as the community of those separated into the Lord. It is a oneness on the

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order of the racial, cultic, and national unity of Israel (Exodus 19:6), and it has as its purpose the declaration of the wonderful works of God. Therefore, the church's identity transcends and makes of secondary importance the racial, national and cultic identities of the world.

We see in Revelation 7:9, 10, the chosen race worshiping the Lamb in heaven. They come from different backgrounds, yet worship with one voice. Is not the unity of our worship here on earth to be a copy of that which takes place within the heavenly sanctuary? Should not all those washed in the blood of the Lamb joyously worship together?

In the light of such scriptural teaching, the statement continued in the acknowledgement of sin on the part of the member churches:

In repentance we acknowledge and confess that we have failed effectively to recognize the full humanity of other races and the similarity of their needs, desires, and hopes to ours; and thus we have failed to love our neighbor as ourselves... Within the church, our members have exhibited such attitudes and actions as discourage membership or participation by minority groups... Our churches have not been free from such formal actions as discourage membership or participation by minority groups. They have been guilty of a lack of positive action concerning mission to ethnic groups in their own neighborhoods and to ethnic groups at large. They have practiced a kind of cultural exclusivism, thinking of the church as "our church" rather than Christ's. This involves the sins of pride and idolatry.

Yet the statement was able to acknowledge the work of grace evident in this matter, particularly in the seminaries that serve the PCA:

We commend...Westminster Theological Seminary for its ministerial institute, which intends to assist inner-city pastors in their continued training in ministry and Covenant Theological Seminary for its Urban Ministers' Institute....

The statement concluded with a number of exhortations, among which are included:

We encourage congregations to reach out to the entire community around them.

We encourage congregations to rise to meet the challenge of racial diversity in changing neighborhoods. We encourage members of our congregations to remain in those communities where there are racially changing patterns.

We acknowledge that in order to change our unbiblical profile, we should urge churches in NAPARC to give priority to a vigorous pursuit of evangelism and church planting in racially, economically, and ethnically diverse communities....

In reaffirming the great commission, we recommend ...that cross-cultural evangelism be encouraged in our churches through preaching, modeling, and discipling, through the elders and pastors, beginning with the use of our covenant families and homes, and house-to-house neighborhood outreach.

OVERTURE 20 from Nashville Presbytery “Racial Reconciliation”

(to B&O)

Whereas, the Scriptures portray a covenantal pattern of both celebration of our rich heritage and repentance for the sins of our fathers; and,

Whereas, our nation has been blessed even as we have repeatedly addressed iniquity, redressed injustice, and assessed restitution for our inconsistent application of the ideals of truth and freedom; and,

Whereas, the heinous sins attendant with unbiblical forms of servitude—including oppression, racism, exploitation, manstealing, and chattel slavery—remain among the defining features of our national history; and,

Whereas, the issues surrounding that part of our history continue to shape our national life, even creating barriers between brothers and sisters of different races and/or economic spheres from enjoying

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unencumbered Christian fellowship with one another; and,

Whereas, the aftereffects of that part of our history continue to be felt in the economic, cultural, and social affairs of the communities in which we live and minister;

We therefore confess our covenantal involvement in these national sins. As a people, both we and our fathers have failed to keep the commandments, the statutes, and the laws our God has commanded. We therefore publicly repent of our pride, our complacency, and our complicity. Furthermore, we seek the forgiveness of our brothers and sisters for the reticence of our hearts, which has constrained us from acting swiftly in this matter.

As a people, we pledge to work hard, in a manner consistent with the Gospel imperatives, for the encouragement of racial reconciliation, the establishment of urban and minority congregations, and the enhancement of existing ministries of mercy in our cities, among the poor, and across all social, racial, and economic boundaries, to the glory of God. Amen.

15. That Personal Resolution 6 be answered by reference to the Assembly's action with regard to Overture 20. [See 30-53, III, 14, p. 261.] *Adopted*

Whereas, the Presbyterian Church in America was formed to preach and teach the truth of God's Word with the desire that its members would practice and live by the truth and as we are a young denomination meeting together for our 30th Annual General Assembly, we want to thank God for the enabling grace to do this as well as we have done it and confess that when and where we have failed it is our fault and because of our sin; and

Whereas, we acknowledge that corporately as a denomination and individually as members of the Presbyterian Church in America we have sinned, (Romans 3:23), and

Whereas, we acknowledge that along with our many other sins, we may have corporately or individually sinned by slighting or offending a brother in Christ, and we as the people of God are called on in Scripture to repent of our sins as God reveals them to us by His Holy Spirit (Rev. 3:19, Acts 16:19-20, Luke 5:32, & II Cor. 7:10); and

Whereas, we recognize that each one of us must repent for our own sins as God holds each of us accountable for them (Ezekiel 18:20, Romans 14:12, Jeremiah 31:29-30, Deuteronomy 24:16), and

Whereas, we also recognize that Scripture establishes precedents for the confession of the past sins of others without assessing personal responsibility for those past sins to the confessing party (Neh. 1:5-7, Neh. 9:1-3, Daniel 9:4-19), and

Whereas, we recognize the dangers of sins of omission as being grave as those of the sins of commission (James 4:17, Psalm 51:16-17, Proverbs 21:3, Luke 12:47), and

Whereas, God's Word warns strongly against mistreating or not loving a Christian brother (I Corinthians 6:8, I Thessalonians 4:6, James 4:11-12), and

Whereas, we recognize that some have in the past, by commission and/or by omission, offended and slighted their brothers and sisters in Christ (I John 1:8-10), and

Whereas, we desire that all members of the Presbyterian Church in America conduct themselves first as the people of God – without favoritism, prejudice or partiality (Leviticus 19:15 & I Timothy 5:21), and

Whereas, we desire that all members of the Presbyterian Church in America not only show love for their brothers but that they actually have love for their brothers in their hearts (I John 4:21, Hebrews 13:1, Psalm 133:1 & John 13:34-35), and

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Whereas, we desire the blessings of God Almighty upon the work of our churches and of our denomination, and fear His withholding those blessings due to a lack of personal repentance for sins committed against our brothers in the Lord (Proverbs 10:22 & Proverbs 24:23-25), and

Whereas, we want as a denomination and as individuals the blessings of being used of God to see souls saved and the work of His kingdom furthered therefore we strive to be obedient to God; and

Whereas, we recognize the need for the work of the kingdom to progress wherever the descendants of Adam are to be found and desire the work of the kingdom to grow as the lost are saved (Matthew 28:18-20 & Acts 1:8),

Therefore, we-the undersigned do humbly ask this 30th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America to resolve,

That, every member, Teaching Elder, and Ruling Elder in the Presbyterian Church in America be urged to examine themselves in the light of Scripture and by the leading of God's indwelling Holy Spirit to determine if there be any unrepented of and unconfessed sins of partiality, favoritism, or prejudice (Lam. 3:40 & II Cor 13:5), and

That, if any such sins be discovered, either present or past, that these sins be admitted to and forgiveness sought from God and from those brothers so sinned against (Matt 5:23-24), and

That, the Presbyterian Church in America, at the denominational, local church, and personal levels, be encouraged to continue and/or begin to search out the lost wherever they are and lovingly and powerfully proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ in culturally relevant and meaningful ways as God leads by His Holy Spirit and gives the wisdom to understand (II Tim 4:5 & I Peter 3:15-16), and

That, the Presbyterian Church in America seek to lead the way denominationally in racial reconciliation, regardless of color or ethnic background, for the sake of the Body of Christ and for the glory of God (Col. 3:23-24 & I Cor 10:31-11:1).

16. That Personal Resolution #2 be answered in the **affirmative.**
Adopted

Whereas, in the Great Commission of our Lord Jesus Christ commanded the church to “Go and make disciples of all the nations” (Matthew 28:18), and

Whereas, the theme of this 30th General Assembly is “Equipping the Saints – Evangelizing the Nations”, and

Whereas, God’s providence has now brought those from every nation to our very doorsteps, and

Whereas, amongst the responsibilities of the General Assembly are “carrying out the Great Commission” (*BCO* 14-1) “to devise measures for promoting the prosperity and enlargement of the church” (*BCO* 14-6.d.), and “to recommend measures for the promotion of charity, truth and holiness through all the churches under its care” (*BCO* 14-6.k.), and

Whereas, our mother church, the Presbyterian Church in the United States (“Southern church”), in 1865, in response to an inquiry concerning the appropriateness of the races worshipping together, expressed the hope that the rich fellowship such united worship in the past would continue, concluding “we see no reason why it should be otherwise” (from E. T. Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, Vol. II, p. 209),

Now Therefore, this 30th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America calls up all those under its care to search their hearts before the Triune God, who is “no respecter of persons” (Acts 10:34), and to repent of and renounce any racism and/or class-consciousness, and

Further, this Assembly encourages its local churches to make known that the doors to its worship and the arms of its fellowship are open to warmly welcome all persons without regard to race, class or national origin, and that it welcomes into its membership all who, according to Book of Church Order Chapter 57 (and any general provisions including those regarding discipline) come with a credible profession of their faith in the Great King and Head of the Church and Savior of the body, the Lord Jesus Christ.

17. **That Overture 25** from the Presbytery of the Ascension ("Revise *BCO* 12-2, add 12-11, revise 25-6 and 15-1 Regarding Procedures to Be Used if a Session Cannot Function Or Needs to Be Augmented") **be answered in the negative.** [See also 30-29, III, p. 102.] *Adopted*

Grounds: There are sufficient resources in the *BCO* to address a number of the concerns raised by the overture (e.g., *BCO* 15-1,2). In other areas (e.g., the nature of the consent of the congregation (*BCO* 16-2)), Presbytery has identified legitimate concerns, but the proposal needs further refinement.

OVERTURE 25 from Ascension Presbytery (to CCB & B&O)
"Revise *BCO* 12-2, add 12-11, revise 25-6 and 15-1 Regarding Procedures to Be Used if a Session Cannot Function Or Needs to Be Augmented"

Whereas, in God's providence, some of the organized churches within the Presbyterian Church in America may find themselves without any qualified ruling elders (due to death, ill health, relocation, etc.); and

Whereas, if there are no ruling elders there is no way for a Session to meet (*BCO* 12-1), call a congregational meeting (*BCO* 25-2); examine prospective officers (*BCO* 24-1); exercise formal church discipline; or carry out any of the duties of (*BCO* 12-5); and

Whereas, many would argue that the implication of lack of a Session and the language of *BCO* 5 and 13-9 indicate that the only choices for a Presbytery in the face of the