

Proposed 2024 Amendments to the Constitution and Episcopal Presbyterian Agreement on Local Sharing of Ministries

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¹ Overtures 24-A and 24-C are linked together because 24-C references and incorporates 24-A. If 24-A is rejected, 24-C becomes moot and is automatically rejected. If 24-A is adopted, 24-C must be either adopted or rejected.

FROM THE STATED CLERK OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The 226th General Assembly (2024) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) approved and recommended to the presbyteries, for their affirmative or negative votes, proposed changes in the language of the *Book of Order* that, if approved, will amend the Constitution. In addition, the 226th General Assembly (2024) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) approved and recommended to the presbyteries pursuant to G-5.0203 for their affirmative or negative votes the Episcopal-Presbyterian Agreement on Local Sharing of Ministries.

Here are a few notes as you prepare for the vote of the presbytery:

- It is recommended that prior to voting, presbyters and clerks review each proposed amendment and its related information.
- Each amendment has an item number, which is how the General Assembly tracked the business in both committee and in plenary. The entire record for each item is available in PC-Biz.
- Live links to the General Assembly item numbers are available throughout this document. Another option is to go to *PC-Biz at www.pc-biz.org*, click “Search,” and enter the item number. “Click” on the item number to reach the summary.
- The rationale and advice from the Advisory Committee on the Constitution and other advisory and advocacy entities have been abbreviated. ...Please note that the advice applies to the original item of business and not necessarily the **Final Version** approved by the assembly.
- Presbyteries may use a consent agenda or omnibus motion to vote on amendments as long as each proposed amendment is identified separately. Each amendment and the agreement have a tracking number of 24-A, 24-B, etc.
- It is recommended that prior to voting, presbyters and clerks also review the proposed *Episcopal-Presbyterian Agreement on Local Sharing of Ministries*.
- Presbytery stated clerks are to report a tally of their votes to the Office of the General Assembly no later than July 4, 2025, at 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time. Votes on amendments and the agreement should be entered through the Stated Clerk’s portal. Each month an updated tally will be mailed to all stated clerks. In order to make changes and publish the 2025–2027 *Book of Order* in a timely manner, receipt of votes prior to this deadline would be appreciated.

Thank you for your time and careful attention as you prepare to vote on these proposed amendments and this agreement with The Episcopal Church.

Jihyun Oh,

Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the PC(U.S.A.)

FROM THE STATED CLERK OF THE SHENANGO PRESBYTERY

The following Index page lists the overtures the 226th General Assembly (GA) recommended to the presbyteries, for their affirmative or negative votes. The original submission from the GA's Stated Clerk consists of 53 pages, and contains many committee reports. Although these reports assist in understanding the subtleness of overtures from the perspective of specific committees, these committee reports comprise over half of the original submission. The deletion of most of the committee reports reduced the submission to a more manageable size of 25 pages.

The following redacted report contains the final overtures, as amended, followed by an abbreviated "Rationale" submitted by the sponsoring presbytery explaining the need and purpose for the overture. If the GA amended the proposed overture, an abbreviated committee report is included explaining the reason for amending the overture.

Each overture was designated with a code indicating the committee to which it was assigned followed by a number. For example, an overture referred to the Polity Committee is coded POL-01 or ORD-01 if referred to the Ordination Committee. Some overtures had two related proposals in which case the code of POL-01 1 and POL-01 2 are used to distinguish the proposals. There are two instances where this occurs, one proposed by the Olympia Presbytery (24-A and 24-C) and the other by the Northeast New Jersey Presbytery (24-F and 24-G).

The following Index arranged the overtures chronologically according to the *Book of Order's* (*BoO*) chapter and section. If an overture contained two recommendations, they may not appear consecutively if they refer to different sections in the *BoO*. For example, POL-01 1 seeks to amend F-1.0403, whereas POL-01 2 seeks to amend G-2.0104b. After the overtures are listed chronologically, they are assigned a number corresponding to the year of the GA (*i.e.* 2024 = 24) and a letter, A to Z. Since F-1.0403 (POL-01 1) is the first section in the *BoO* to be amended, it is assigned "24-A" and "24-C" is assigned to G-2.0104b (POL-01 2), the third section in the *BoO* to be amended. However, the amendment proposed to *BoO* section G-1.0104 is sequentially between sections F-1.0403 (24-A) and G-2.0104b (24-C) and is therefore assigned "24-B." This categorizing system is confusing because Olympia Presbytery's "Rationale" offered for recommendations POL-01 1 and POL-01 2 appears as one consolidated "Rationale" whereas the committee reports are specific to each recommendation. The same consolidated rationale is used for the Northeast New Jersey overtures (24-F and 24-G). The undersigned Editor has attempted to minimize this confusion; however, as described by the GA's Stated Clerk in her preceding introduction, complete information may be obtained at [PC-Biz at www.pc-biz.org](http://www.pc-biz.org).²

Editor's Coding. Except as specifically used in text of the final overtures:

- *(parentheses)* indicate an example.
- *[brackets]* indicate the insertion of information
- *Ellipses ...* indicate a deletion of text
- * * * asterisks indicate a deletion of paragraphs.
- *Notes and Footnotes* are inserted by the Editor to provide information not offered by the comments of the sponsors or committees.

John C. Reed,

Editor and Stated Clerk of the Shenango Presbytery

² Note that [PC-Biz at www.pc-biz.org](http://www.pc-biz.org) contains numerous errors in coding, insertions and deletions pertaining to the amendments; however, complete committee reports are included.

OVERTURES

24-A — F-1.0403

OPENESS TO THE GUIDANCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

F-1.0403 — Unity in Diversity (POL-01 1) [*Olympia Overture #1-Recommendation #1*]

On Amending the *Book of Order* to Include *Sexual Orientation*³ and *Gender Identity*⁴ among the Categories against which this Church Does Not Discriminate

Shall F-1.0403 *Unity in Diversity* be amended as follows:

Text to be added is [bracketed and underlined]

The unity of believers in Christ is reflected in the rich diversity of the Church's membership. In Christ, by the power of the Spirit, God unites persons through baptism, regardless of race, ethnicity, age, sex, [gender identity, sexual orientation], disability, geography, or theological conviction. There is therefore no place in the life of the Church for discrimination against any person. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) shall guarantee full participation and representation in its worship, governance, and emerging life to all persons or groups within its membership. No member shall be denied participation or representation for any reason other than those stated in this Constitution.

Rationale of Sponsor (Olympia) – The Rationale for POL-01 1 is consolidated with the Rationale for POL-01 2 [*“Olympia Overture #1- Recommendation #2, as amended”*] G-2.0104b — *Gifts and Qualifications*:

Twice in 2022 the Olympia Presbytery held ordination votes on the floor of presbytery involving ordinands with opinions that did not fully embrace the equal and affirmed status of LGBTQIA+ persons⁵ in the church. Those conversations were difficult because the *Book of Order* does not include *gender identity* or *sexual orientation* in its list of protected classes. These experiences reveal the need for

³ “*Sexual orientation*” is a component of identity that includes a person’s sexual and emotional attraction to another person and the behavior and/or social affiliation that may result from this attraction. A person may be attracted to men, women, both, neither, or to people who are gender queer, androgynous, or have other gender identities. Individuals may identify as lesbian, gay, heterosexual, bisexual, queer, pansexual, or asexual, among others. “Key Terms and Concepts in Understanding Gender Diversity and Sexual Orientation Among Students,” *The American Psychologist* (Dec. 2015), American Psychological Association; <https://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/programs/safe-supportive/lgbt/key-terms.pdf>.

⁴ “*Gender identity*” is a person’s deeply felt, inherent sense of being a boy, a man, or male; a girl, a woman, or female; or an alternative gender (e.g., genderqueer, gender nonconforming, gender neutral) that may or may not correspond to a person’s sex assigned at birth or to a person’s primary or secondary sex characteristics. Because gender identity is internal, a person’s gender identity is not necessarily visible to others. “Affirmed gender identity” refers to a person’s gender identity after coming out as TGNC or undergoing a social and/or medical transition process. *Id.*

** Simply stated, *gender identity* is how we view ourselves; whereas *sexual orientation* is how we view others.

⁵ “LGBTQIA+” is an acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, and “+” (for others without a group identity). The original acronym, “LGBT” was adopted in 1988 by lesbian and gay activists to create a sense of identity and acceptance. Since then, other groups have added letters to the acronym seeking their own identity and recognition.

denominational clarity concerning the church's ministry to LGBTQIA+ individuals as full participants in all aspects of life in the church.

While affirming the freedom of councils of the church to make ordination decisions as guided by the Holy Spirit, we acknowledge that the Church has been called upon historically to be ever more faithful to the most inclusive and affirming statements of Scripture and promptings of the Holy Spirit. The Church continues to find and confirm that the limits of each council of the church in their "local option" are conditioned by affirmations found in the *Book of Order*: sex, race, or any other prejudicial category, now to include gender identity and sexual orientation.

We feel that the Spirit is working in the churches concerning this matter. The 223rd General Assembly (2018) approved a resolution affirming ... [the full celebration and inclusion of all gender identities and gender expressions in the life and ministry of our church. All are welcome to worship, serve and be free to be fully themselves.]⁶

We follow this encouragement by urging that gender identity and sexual orientation be established as protected classes against which we must not discriminate. As the PC(USA) continues to celebrate the gifts of our LGBTQIA+ siblings, we must amend our *Book of Order* to prevent discrimination against those same siblings.

We further feel that justice will be served and the children of God will be supported by this amendment. Studies show that LGBTQIA+ youth who have religious parents that share negative views on being

⁶ Specifically, the 223rd General Assembly (2018)'s resolution stated:

Celebrating the expansive embrace of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the breadth of our mission to serve a world in need, the 223rd General Assembly (2018) affirms the gifts of LGBTQIA+ people for ministry and celebrates their service in the church and in the world.

1. The assembly celebrates that over the years, LGBTQIA+ people have faithfully, lovingly, and courageously served in every kind of service to which Christian disciples are called— notwithstanding the church's efforts to exclude them from particular types of service.
2. The assembly laments the ways that the policies and actions of the PC(USA) have caused gifted, faithful, LGBTQIA+ Christians to leave the Presbyterian church so that they could find a more welcoming place to serve, as they have been gifted and called by the Spirit.
3. At the same time, the assembly gives thanks for the LGBTQIA+ pioneers of the faith who have persisted in relationship with the Presbyterian church, at great personal cost and sacrifice, together with the whole of the LGBTQIA+ community, moving the church toward a more generous, loving, and just understanding of God's grace.
4. The assembly also gives thanks for those who continue to seek deeper understanding, and more authentic welcome, even amid discomfort or uncertainty about how best to show hospitality, in the spirit of continuing Reformation.
5. Today, openly LGBTQIA+ people are leading churches, preaching the gospel, serving those in need, and otherwise using their gifts for ministry in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).
6. With an eye toward the future, the assembly affirms God's presence and call in the lives of all God's people and commits to seeking justice, equality, and inclusion for all in church and society.
7. The assembly calls on the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, the Presbyterian Mission Agency (through its Office of Public Witness), and all who represent the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to actively work for the protection of human and civil rights, both in the United States and around the world, especially the rights of marginalized and oppressed groups, including people facing discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.
8. The assembly calls upon mission co-workers and ecumenical representatives to advocate for justice and equality for all God's people in ways appropriate to their cultural and ecclesiastical context.

The assembly encourages all congregations and councils of the PCUSA continually to seek to expand their welcome so that all might know the Good News of Jesus Christ and encourages all other communions to do the same.

LGBTQIA+ have higher rates of suicide attempts.⁷ We believe that the Church is being called to affirm and support this at-risk population as children, youth, and adults. We pray that the PC(USA) will fully affirm our LGBTQIA+ siblings by adding language that protects these historically oppressed people.

Advice and Counsel on POL-01 from the LGBTQIA+ Equity Advocacy Committee (ACQ+E)

The LGBTQIA+ Equity Advocacy Committee advises that the 226th General Assembly (2024) approve POL-01.

Re. proposed F-1.0403: At the 223rd General Assembly (2018), the Assembly approved item 11-13 “On Celebrating the Gifts of People of Diverse Sexual Orientations and Gender Identities in the Life of the Church.”¹ This statement affirmed the faithful presence and service of LGBTQIA+ folks in the PC(USA). This is one of many overtures passed at past General Assemblies (dating to at least the 222nd General Assembly in 2014) in support of LGBTQIA+ people in the church and around the world.

Thus, the LGBTQIA+ Advocacy Committee advises the Assembly to continue to embody this commitment by stating explicitly in our Foundations that, alongside “race, ethnicity, age, sex, [etc.],” sexual orientation and gender identity are similarly fundamental dimensions of personhood that shall not be used as barriers from membership in the Church universal or participation in the “worship, governance, and emerging life” of PC(USA) churches.

Re. Proposed G-2.0104b...[see 24–C].

Advice from Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC) on POL-01. The overture seeks amendments to the Constitution in F-1.0403 and G-2.0104b. The Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC) has divided the overture into parts A and B and advises on each amendment separately [Part A is below and Part B follows 24–C—G-2.0104b].

A. On inserting “gender identity, sexual orientation” into F-1.0403 [POL-01 1]

The unity of believers in Christ is reflected in the rich diversity of the Church’s membership. In Christ, by the power of the Spirit, God unites persons through baptism, regardless of race, ethnicity, age, sex, [gender identity, sexual orientation,] disability, geography, or theological conviction. There is therefore no place in the life of the Church for discrimination against any person. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) shall guarantee full participation and representation in its worship, governance, and emerging life to all persons or groups within its membership. No member shall be denied participation or representation for any reason other than those stated in this Constitution.

While the Advisory Committee on the Constitution has expressed its **aversion to unnecessarily creating lists of requirements and rubrics**, in this present situation, the list affirms the mission of Christ’s Church. **Because a list is deemed exhaustive unless it states otherwise, an omission is regarded as exclusionary, not permissive.** We believe the witness of scripture and the Constitution testifies to the full inclusion of persons as members of the Church (universal), as noted not only in F-1.0403 but also reiterated in G-1.0302 regarding the church particular: “No person shall be denied membership for any reason not related to profession of faith” [emphasis added]

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution advises the General Assembly to **approve** Item POL-01.

For the full report on POL-01, go to — <https://www.pc-biz.org/search/3001122>

Editor’s Comments: In western culture, less than ten percent of the population identify as LGBTQIA+; the overwhelming majority of Western culture identifying as “straight” (*e.g.* that gender which a person identifies and corresponds to that sex assigned at birth [either male or female], also called “heterosexual,” “cisgender” or “cis”). Studies of Western cultures found that, on average, about 93% of men and 87% of

⁷ *The Trevor Project*: see web page – [Facts About Suicide Among LGBTQ+ Young People](#). **Editor’s note**—*The Trevor Project* is a youth LGBTQIA+ advocacy organization.

women identify as completely heterosexual, 4% of men and 10% of women as mostly heterosexual, 0.5% of men and 1% of women as evenly bisexual, 0.5% of men and 0.5% of women as mostly homosexual, and 2% of men and 0.5% of women as completely homosexual.⁸ LGBTQIA+ is not a single organization; rather, it is a collection of diverse communities with many, and often conflicting, advocated positions. However, a common factor among the LGBTQIA+ communities is the need for identity. Examples include the LGBTQIA+ rainbow flag, gay rights parades, LGBTQIA+ pride month (June), etc. Aside from the need for identity, there are a few other factors that bind most LGBTQIA+ communities:

1. Opposition to an age of consent younger than puberty;⁹
2. A sense of solidarity with each other based on their shared experience of prejudice, discrimination, and disrespect or their awareness of historical and contemporary oppression; and,
3. Exclusion of heterosexuals¹⁰ because, as the dominate sexual identity, they are viewed as the historical oppressors of the LGBTQIA+ community.

The assertion of the ACC that “...a list is deemed exhaustive unless it states otherwise, an omission is regarded as exclusionary, not permissive,” gives pause for concern and raises the specter of an unintended discrimination.

The categories of *gender identity* and *sexual orientation* include traditional heterosexual people (about 90% of the general population). Indeed, by definition, the categories of *gender identity* and *sexual orientation*¹¹ include 100% of the general population due to its inclusion of deviate¹² behaviors and identities. If adopted, section F-1.0403 will provide that “...the Spirit, God unites persons regardless of race, ethnicity, age, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, geography, or theological conviction...” By classic definition, the categories of *gender identity* and *sexual orientation* are inclusive of 100% of the general population; thus, the proposed amendment seeks to include 100% of the general population. Therefore, this interpretation would result in the conclusion that there is no need to amend 24-A – F-1.0403 because it is deemed to be all inclusive of 100% of the general population.

However, such an interpretation is contrary to the prevailing philosophy of the LGBTQIA+ communities—that the heterosexual community has been historically repressive of the LGBTQIA+ communities—hence the need for the addition of *sexual orientation* and *gender identity* as non-discriminatory categories.

In conclusion, two mutually exclusive scenarios are presented:

1. If the heterosexual community is intended to be included in the categories of *sexual orientation* or *gender identity*, the proposed amendment includes 100% of the general population. Thus, such an amendment is nonsensical and, although contrary to the position of the LGBTQIA+ communities, there is no need for any amendment;
- or,
2. If, consistent with the philosophy of the LGBTQIA+ communities, the heterosexual community is not intended to be included in the categories of *sexual orientation* or *gender identity*, there is a need for LGBTQIA+ communities to be identified as the subjects of discrimination and the heterosexual community is therefore excluded. The ACC’s interpretation and the proposed amendment results in the

⁸ Bailey, J. Michael & Vasey, Paul & Diamond, Lisa & Breedlove, Stephen & Vilain, Eric & Epprecht, Marc. (2016). Sexual Orientation, Controversy, and Science. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*. 17. 45-101. 10.1177/1529100616637616.

⁹ Pedophiles are customary excluded from the LGBTQIA+ community.

¹⁰ Heterosexuals are not generally included in the category of “gender identity.”

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/love-and-sex-in-the-digital-age/201403/heterosexual-homosexual-bisexual-gender-dysphoric>

¹¹ See footnotes 2 and 3.

¹² Note that there is a distinction between “deviate” behavior and “deviant” behavior; the former referring to a deviation from normal behavior and the latter referring socially unacceptable deviate behavior.

heterosexual community becoming the subject of discrimination because they are an excluded category and are not persons that “God unites in Christ, by the power of the Spirit.” While this is a reasonable interpretation and consistent with the ACC’s Advice, it is theologically repugnant.

Concluding Observation – Classifying people into categories is probably the most invidious form of discrimination possible.

A Prayer for Devine Guidance



God made you, and God made me;
God made everything that we see.¹³

God loves you, and God loves me;
God loves our variety.¹⁴

Oh Father, Our Creator, — help us ... that we;
May love each other, — Your divine diversity.¹⁵

So, mote it be, ... so must it be, ... Amen.

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GA votes: Affirmative = 389; Negative = 24; Abstaining = 0

Shenango Executive Team recommendation: Adopt = 2; Reject =3; Abstain = 1

Shenango Presbytery votes: Adopt = ____; Reject = ____; Abstain = ____

24-B – G-1.0104

THE CONGREGATION

G-1.0104 — Other Forms of Corporate Witness (Worshiping Communities, etc.) (POL-03) (*Sante Fe Presbytery Overture*)

Shall G-1.01 – Congregation be amended by the addition of a paragraph G-1.0104, *Other Forms of Corporate Witness*, as follows:

(Text to be added is [bracketed and underlined])

¹³ “Then God said, ‘*Let us make man in Our image, after Our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.*’ So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” Genesis 1:26-27, Revised Standard Version.

¹⁴ “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. John 3:16, Revised Standard Version.

¹⁵ “And Jesus said to him, ‘*You shalt love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second like unto it is this, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*’ ” Matthew 22:37–39, Revised Standard Version.

See also: Deuteronomy 6:5, 10:12, and 30:6; Mark 12:29-30, 33; and Luke 10:27

[G-1.0104 Other Forms of Corporate Witness (Worshipping Communities, etc.)]

[In circumstances where the formation of a traditional ecclesiastically and legally organized congregation is not desired or deemed appropriate, and a worshipping community has been formally recognized by a presbytery according to its own definition, presbyteries and congregations may work together with such a group to provide supervision and support. Such recognized groups shall be under the mutually agreed upon oversight of a minister of the Word and Sacrament approved by the presbytery, shall include at least one ruling elder in their chosen leadership, and shall function under the financial, legal, and disciplinary sponsorship of an ecclesial council (either a session or a presbytery). The sponsoring council shall, in consultation with the worshipping community, authorize any celebrations of the sacraments within the group in accordance with the Directory for Worship. Membership records for group participants desiring to be formally enrolled as baptized, active, or affiliate members in the PC(USA) shall be maintained by the sponsoring council. Such groups shall not hold property, and may not undertake any financial, legal, or contractual obligations, apart from their sponsoring council. They shall adhere to the sponsoring council's required policies on sexual misconduct, harassment, child and youth protection, and antiracism. Presbyteries shall determine appropriate means of representation and participation of such groups in and through the sponsoring councils (session and/or presbytery).]

Rationale of Sponsor (Santa Fe Presbytery)

1. The intention of the proposed amendment is to provide a minimal, flexible, and adaptable level of historic Reformed polity for small worshipping communities that wish to identify with the larger church in worship and formation, discipleship, and mission. The wording is intended to be adaptable to current constitutional provisions and/or to whatever recommendations may emerge from the Task Force to Explore the Theology and Practice of Ordination.
2. There is currently no constitutional provision in the *Book of Order* of basic organizational guidance for small worshipping communities wishing to relate to the PC(USA) that are not organized as a congregation. But, as is recognized in the establishment of the Task Force to Explore the Theology and Practice of Ordination, there is a broadly felt need for such.
3. ...
4. ...
5. This vision encompasses varying types of small worshipping communities, such as:
 - a. New Worshipping Communities which are not at a place to be organized as congregations.
 - b. Small churches no longer deemed viable or sustainable as organized congregations but which may be able to continue in ministry and service under sponsorship.
 - c. Intentional small worshipping communities (fellowships, house churches, etc.) that desire to identify and be connected with the larger church without the burden of formal organization or legal incorporation.
 - d. Groups with a particular need or emphasis (linguistic and cultural, minority, recovery, differently abled persons, residents of retirement communities, etc.) that wish to focus ministry on those needs as distinct worshipping communities, but also identify and be connected with

the larger church.

6. The role of the sponsoring council (session or presbytery) would basically be that of an “umbrella organization” with oversight of financial, legal, and disciplinary matters as needed.

The principal body responsible for discerning the appropriateness of any such groups and their activities in relationship to the PC(USA) would be the presbytery, in consultation with any sponsoring congregation, acting under the authority of Scripture, guided by the *Book of Confessions*, and governed by the *Book of Order*.

For the full report on POL-03, go to — <https://www.pc-biz.org/search/3001126>

GA votes: Affirmative = 391; Negative = 14; Abstaining = 0

Shenango Executive Team recommendation: Adopt = 6; Reject = 0; Abstain = 0

Shenango Presbytery votes: Adopt = ____; Reject = ____; Abstain = ____

24-C — G-2.0104b

ORDERED MINISTRIES OF THE CHURCH ¹⁶

G-2.0104b — Gifts and Qualifications (POL-01 2) [*Olympia Overture #1- Recommendation #2, as amended*]

Shall G-2.0104b *Gifts and Qualifications* be amended as follows:

Text to be added is [bracketed and underlined];

- a. **To those called to exercise special functions in the church—deacons, ruling elders, and ministers of the Word and Sacrament—God gives suitable gifts for their various duties. In addition to possessing the necessary gifts and abilities, those who under-take particular ministries should be persons of strong faith, dedicated discipleship, and love of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Their manner of life should be a demonstration of the Christian gospel in the church and in the world. They must have the approval of God’s people and the concurring judgment of a council of the church**
- b. **Standards for ordained service reflect the church’s desire to submit joyfully to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all aspects of life (F-1.02). The council responsible for ordination and/or installation (G-2.0402 [Ruling Elders and Deacons]; G-2.0607 [Ministers]; G-3.0306 [Ministers]) shall examine each candidate’s calling, gifts, preparation, and suitability for the responsibilities of ordered ministry. The examination shall include, but not be limited to, a determination of the candidate’s ability and commitment to fulfill all requirements as expressed in the constitutional questions for ordination and installation (W-4.0404) [, the Historic Principles of Church Order (F-3.01), and in the principles of participation and representation found in F-1.0403].**

¹⁶ Overtures 24-A and 24-C are linked together because 24-C references and incorporates 24-A (F-1.0403). If 24-A is not adopted, 24-C becomes moot and is automatically rejected. If 24-A is adopted, 24-C must be either adopted or rejected.

Councils shall be guided by Scripture and the confessions in applying standards to individual candidates. (emphasis added)

Rationale of Sponsor (Olympia Presbytery) is included with the Rationale for POL-01 1 [*“Olympia Overture #1- Recommendation #1”*]

Advice and Counsel on POL-01 From the LGBTQIA+ Equity Advocacy Committee (ACQ+E)

The LGBTQIA+ Equity Advocacy Committee advises that the 226th General Assembly (2024) approve POL-01.

Re. proposed F-1.0403: ...[see 24–A]

Re. Proposed G-2.0104b: The heart of this proposal intends for emerging teaching elders, ruling elders and deacons to make explicit their intention, as part of the preparation/examination process for ordination (prior to an ordination service), not to discriminate in the course of their service based on identity markers named in F-1.0403. The committee believes that every person in the church has a right to be treated with equality, fairness, and dignity.

On one hand, this proposed measure may be seen as a redundancy since the constitutional questions for ordination already articulate a commitment “to be governed by our church’s polity,” which, obviously, includes the current version of F-1.0403. On the other hand, this commitment has not, in practice, preserved ordained individuals from discriminatory behavior in the course of their service based on race, age, sex, etc. Also, this overture refers to the examination process and therefore neither requests nor requires a change to the constitutional questions.

Thus, the LGBTQIA+ Advocacy Committee calls upon the Assembly to continue to support ordained individuals in keeping their ordination vows by making explicit in the preparation/examination process a determination of the candidate’s “ability and commitment to fulfill all requirements as expressed in the constitutional questions for ordination and installation (W-4.0404)” —including “the principles of participation, representation and non-discrimination,” [*Proposed addition to G-2.0104b*]. We also believe the changes to G-20104b are the action to the sentiments expressed in F-1.0403 and therefore they should not be separated into two amendments.

This assessment does not require uniformity of thought or conviction—only a commitment not to disrupt or block other individuals from living into their callings based on the identity markers named in F-1.0403. We not only support this regarding LGBTQIA+ identities, but also in regard to the other identities listed in F-1.0403 (all of which can and do intersect with LGBTQIA+ identities). People with a variety of identities and convictions exist in the church, are baptized in the name of the Lord, and are called to lay and ordained ministry, and all should be able to exist and serve in the church without discrimination or disruption.

Advice from Advisory Committee on the Constitution on POL-01. The overture seeks amendments to the Constitution in F-1.0403 and G-2.0104b. The Advisory Committee on the Constitution has divided the overture into parts A and B and advises on each amendment separately [Part A, in 24–A and part B below].

B. On inserting the wording “and in the principles of participation, representation, and non-discrimination found in F-1.0403” into G-2.0104b.

Inserting [this] wording adds a requirement for acknowledgment of F-1.0403 in the examination of all candidates for ordered ministry [teaching elders, ruling elders, and deacons] before ordination and/or installation. Under the proposed amendment, a council is required to examine candidates to be ordained and/or installed, to:

1. determine the candidate’s ability and commitment to fulfill all requirements as expressed in the constitutional questions for ordination and installation (W-4.0404), and
2. determine the candidate’s ability and attentiveness to fulfill the principles of participation, representation, and non-discrimination of church members found in F-1.0403 which pertains to

3. the foundational principles of unity in diversity of the Church (universal), and
4. the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), as a particular church, guaranteeing full participation and representation in its worship, governance, and emerging life to all persons or groups within its membership, and no member shall be denied participation or representation for any reason other than those stated in this Constitution.

The proposed amendment, in effect, would require the candidate to acknowledge, by some means, during the examination, what F-1.0403 states regarding the unity in diversity of the Church universal when it comes to non-discrimination, and church particular when it comes to participation and representation related to membership in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

The Authoritative Interpretation of the General Assembly (1987, 151, 15.252, Com. 17-87) states that the determination for church membership is different from the determination for ordination and/or installation to the ordered ministries of deacon, ruling elder, and minister of Word and Sacrament. Furthermore, the General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission in 1985 determined that the right to elect deacons, ruling elders, and ministers of Word and Sacrament is not absolute but is bound by the constitutional framework of the larger church (Minutes, 1985, Part I, pp. 118--23, *Union Presbyterian Church of Blasdell, New York, et al. vs. The Presbytery of Western New York*).

When a council is prayerfully discerning and examining candidates to be ordained and/or installed, the council is required to act with due diligence on behalf of the whole church in accordance with the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). As stated in G-2.0104b, standards for ordained service reflect the church's desire to submit joyfully to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all aspects of life (F-1.02). The council responsible for ordination and/or installation (G-2.0402; G2.0607; G-3.0306) shall examine each candidate's calling, gifts, preparation, and suitability for the responsibilities of ordered ministry... Councils shall be guided by Scripture and the confessions in applying standards to individual candidates.

Where membership within the greater church is to be inclusive, demonstrating unity in diversity, ordination, and/or installation into an ordered ministry of the church does require candidates to determine their ability to uphold the Constitution and principles of Presbyterian polity.¹⁷

In *Book of Order* G-2.0105, “in entering the ordered ministries of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), one chooses to exercise freedom of conscience within certain bounds. His or her conscience is captive to the Word of God as interpreted in the standards of the church so long as he or she continues to seek, or serve in, ordered ministry. The decision as to whether a person has departed from essentials of Reformed faith and polity is made initially by the individual concerned but ultimately becomes the responsibility of the council in which he or she is a member” or to become a member (e.g. a session or a presbytery).

The current examination standards already require a candidate to affirm W-4.0404e, to be governed by our church’s polity, and to abide by its discipline. Adding the proposed language to the examination requirements is redundant. [emphasizes added throughout]

For the full report on POL-01 02, go to — <https://www.pc-biz.org/search/3001122>

For the video of the GA Plenary 10 discussion on POL 01 2 go to — <https://ga-pcusa.org/videos/>

¹⁷ *W-4.0404 Constitutional Questions* :The moderator of the council of those to be ordained, installed, or commissioned shall ask them to face the body of membership and to answer the following questions:

* * *

e. Will you be governed by our church’s polity, and will you abide by its discipline? Will you be a friend among your col-leagues in ministry, working with them, subject to the ordering of God’s Word and Spirit?

Editor’s Comments: This Overture consists of two-parts: “...[a council must] determine the candidate’s ability and commitment to ... [1] *the Historic Principles of Church Order (F-3.01)*, **and** [2] *in the principles of participation and representation found in F-1.0403 [24–A, above]*.”

[1] F-3.01– *Historic Principles of Church Order* provides:

In setting forth this Book of Order, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) reaffirms the historic principles of church order, which has been part of our common heritage and which are basic to our Presbyterian concept and system of church government, namely: [F-3.0101 through F-3.0108] ¹⁸

Historic Principles – Freedom of Conscience:

F-3.0101 God Is Lord of the Conscience –

- a. That “God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in anything contrary to his Word, or beside it, in matters of faith or worship.”
- b. Therefore we consider the rights of private judgment, in all matters that respect religion, as universal and unalienable: We do not even wish to see any religious constitution aided by the civil power, further than may be necessary for protection and security, and at the same time, be equal and common to all others. That “God alone is Lord of the conscience and has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, and

G-2.0105 Freedom of Conscience provides, in part:

[It] is to be recognized, however, that in entering the ordered ministries of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), one chooses to exercise freedom of conscience within certain bounds. His or her conscience is captive to the Word of God as interpreted in the standards of the church so long as he or she continues to seek, or serve in, ordered ministry. The decision as to whether a person has departed from essentials of Reformed faith and polity is made initially by the individual concerned but ultimately becomes the responsibility of the council in which he or she is a member.

In the context of the proposed amendment to G-2.0104b, *The Presbyterian Outlook* (Jun 6, 2021 ed.) discussed the concept of *Historic Principles of Church Order*. This article stated that the Authoritative Interpretation (AI) adopted the 221 General Assembly (2014) “permitting teaching elders to perform any marriage service – ostensibly including same-gender marriages ... with the approval of the session, while at the same time **not requiring** the teaching elder to conduct any

¹⁸ F-3.0101 – *God is Lord of the Conscience*,

F-3.0102 – *Corporate Judgment*

F-3.0103 – *Officers*

F-3.0104 – *Truth and Goodness*

F-3.0105 – *Mutual Forbearance*

F-3.0106 – *Election by the People*

F-3.0107 – *Church Power*

F-3.0108 – *Value of Ecclesiastical Discipline*

marriage where their conscience directs against union.”¹⁹ The AI, as quoted in the *Outlook Emphasis*, stated, “[In] no case shall any teaching elder’s conscience be bound to conduct any marriage service except by his or her understanding of the Word and the leading of the Holy Spirit.” (emphasis in original)²⁰

“On May 9, 2024, a theologically diverse Presbyterian study group issued a statement affirming [24—A, *above*]...[but] their statement went on to call the change to [24—C, *above*] ‘bad practice’ because ‘it elevates one paragraph of the *Book of Order* over all of the rest.’ Many opponents to 24—C feel that the Overture should be rejected because it could encourage discriminatory practices toward theologically conservative or evangelical pastors “who seek responsibility to serve the denomination and who are promised non-discrimination on theological grounds by the same section that is proposed to be amended.”²¹

Conclusion: Due to its vagueness, presbyteries and congregations must decide whether A-24-C is merely an issue for discussion or a litmus test for ordination and/or installation of ministers, elders, and deacons. Proponents for A-24-C’s adoption insist that the addition to G-2.0104b only emphasizes topics of interest and awareness but adds nothing to ordinations and/or installations because W-4.0404 already requires that ministers, elders, deacons, etc. promise to be “governed by our church’s polity.”

Opponents to A-24-C counter that if the amendment to G-2.0104b is redundant to W-4.0404, the proposed amendment serves no purpose. Since A-34—C is historically linked to A-24—A, having been parts of the same overture proposed by the Olympia Presbytery, presbyteries and churches will logically be inclined to treat A-24—C as a litmus test for ordination and installation.

As observed in the Advice from Advisory Committee on the Constitution on POL-01, adding “the proposed language to the examination requirements is redundant” If the proposed amendment is redundant, what purpose is advanced except to placate a special interest group. This raises the specter divisiveness among presbyteries and their constituent churches.

Therefore, the proposed amendment adds nothing to the ordination/installation procedure and gives another reason for some churches to leave the denomination.

GA votes: Affirmative = 297; Negative = 130; Abstaining = 0

Shenango Executive Team recommendation: Adopt = 4; Reject = 2; Abstain = 0

Shenango Presbytery votes: Adopt = ____; Reject = ____; Abstain = ____

¹⁹ Brekke, Gregg, *Discussion on Non-Discrimination Overture POL 01 1 Heats Up Ahead of GA Committee Meetings*, The Presbyterian Outlook, June 6, 2024

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

24-D — G-2.0504b
PASTORAL RELATIONSHIPS

G-2.0504b — Temporary Pastoral Relationships (POL-05) [Mid-Kentucky]

Shall Section G-2.0504b, *Temporary Pastoral Relationships*, be amended as follows:

Text to be amended is [bracketed and underlined

Text to be deleted is [bracketed and ~~stricken~~]

...Titles and terms of service for temporary relationships shall be determined by the presbytery. A person serving in a temporary pastoral relationship is invited for a specified period not to exceed ~~[twelve-thirty-six]~~ months in length, which is renewable with the approval of the presbytery. ...

Partial Rationale of Sponsor (Mid-Kentucky) An increasing number of congregations are being served by temporary pastors. Extending the specified period of service from twelve to thirty-six months will provide these congregations a stronger sense of stability. It would save both sessions and presbyteries considerable time and paperwork if they did not have to renegotiate a contract every year, giving them more time to attend to the tasks of interim/transitional ministry rather than continuous contract negotiation. Finally, given that the average time that it takes a congregation to move from the end of one pastoral relationship to the start of another pastoral relationship is longer than twelve months, the church should be able to make provision for temporary pastor contracts that are longer than twelve months.

For the full report on POL-05 go to — <https://www.pc-biz.org/search/3001129>

GA votes: Affirmative = 397; Negative = 8; Abstaining = 0

Shenango Executive Team recommendation = Adopt = 6; Reject = 0; Abstain = 0

Shenango Presbytery votes: Adopt = ____; Reject = ____; Abstain = ____

24-E — G-2.0504b
PASTORAL RELATIONSHIPS

G-2.0504b — Temporary Pastoral Relationships (POL-08 2)²² [Northeast New Jersey]

Shall G-2.0504b *Temporary Pastoral Relationships* be amended as follows:

Text to be added is [bracketed and underlined].

- 2. Temporary pastoral relationships are approved by the presbytery and do not carry a formal call or installation. When a congregation does not have a pastor, or while the pastor is unable to perform her or his duties, the session, with the approval of presbytery, may obtain the services of a minister of the Word and Sacrament, candidate, or ruling elder in a temporary pastoral**

²² POL-08 sponsored by Northeast New Jersey consists of two parts, #1 = 24-G – G-2.0901 and #2 = 24-E – 2.0504b.

relationship. No formal call shall be issued and no formal installation shall take place.

Titles and terms of service for temporary relationships shall be determined by the presbytery. A person serving in a temporary pastoral relationship is invited for a specified period not to exceed twelve months in length, which is renewable with the approval of the presbytery. A minister of the Word and Sacrament employed in a temporary pastoral relationship is ordinarily not eligible to serve as the next installed pastor, co- pastor, or associate pastor.

[When the temporary pastoral relationship ends, no non-disclosure agreement shall be allowable.]

[(A non-disclosure agreement, also known as a confidentiality agreement, is an agreement that outlines confidential material, knowledge, or information that is to remain confidential. Such an agreement binds the party or parties who have signed it and prevents them from discussing any information included in the contract with anyone not authorized by the agreement.)]

Rationale of Sponsor ²³ (Northeast New Jersey)

In the vows we take at ordination, we (ruling elders, teaching elders, and deacons) promise to serve one another, God, and God's church with love (W-4.0404). Non-disclosure agreements indicate the opposite has happened, and tend to engender speculation rather than truth-seeking. While there are specific instances when police or a court may forbid the sharing of information, those circumstances would not require any non-disclosure agreement for the parties specified so the ruling can be honored without any agreement. Similarly, a proper order of a permanent judicial commission (PJC) would also take precedence over any such agreement entered into by the parties, and this would in no way preclude a PJC from making its own determination.

As pertains to a church and a pastor, a non-disclosure agreement invites speculation that is typically a disservice to all parties. The dissolution of pastoral relationships is similar to divorce in that the absence of information often results in speculation of the circumstances that can be far worse than the actual circumstance and can brand a pastor with erroneous behavior or brand a congregation as damaging to pastors. Further, if the dissolution involved a traumatic event from inappropriate behavior either on the part of a pastor or members of the congregation, the non-disclosure agreement would prevent the congregation from processing the collective trauma appropriately, so they would be unlikely to put it behind them. Dysfunction in the congregation as a result of unprocessed trauma typically carries over to negatively affect the next pastoral relationship.

For the full report on POL-08 2, go to — <https://www.pc-biz.org/search/3001169>

GA votes: Affirmative = 393; Negative = 11 Abstaining = 0

Shenango Executive Team recommendation = Adopt = 6; Reject = 0; Abstain = 0

Shenango Presbytery votes: Adopt = ____; Reject = ____; Abstain = ____

²³ Because POL-08 consists of two parts, this Rationale applies to both #1 = 24-G – 2.0901 and #2 = 24-E – G - 2.0504b.

24-F — G-2.0610
PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY

G-2.0610 — Accommodations To Particular Circumstances (ORD-05) [*Greater Atlanta*]

Shall G-2.0610 be amended as follows:

Text to be deleted is [bracketed and ~~stricken~~]

Text to be added is [bracketed and underlined].

When a presbytery concludes there are good and sufficient reasons for accommodations to the particular circumstances of an individual seeking ordination, it may, by a three-fourths vote, waive any of the requirements for ordination in G-2.06, except for those of G-2.0607d. If a presbytery judges that there are good and sufficient reasons why a candidate should not be required to satisfy the requirements of G-2.0607d, it shall approve by three-fourths vote some alternate means by which to ascertain the readiness of the candidate for ministry in the areas covered by the standard ordination examinations. ~~[A full account of the reasons for a~~ The existence of any waiver or alternate means to ascertain readiness, [with confidential details omitted.] shall be ~~[included in the minutes of the presbytery and]~~ communicated to the presbytery to which an inquirer or candidate may be transferred.

Rationale of Sponsor (Greater Atlanta)

Those persons who respond to the call to serve as a minister of the Word and Sacrament in the church have embarked on a sacred journey, accompanied by their home congregation and presbytery of care. Along the way, the presbytery and the inquirer or candidate develop a relationship of accountability and trust that enables and empowers the whole church to be a part of this journey of faithful response to God's call. Placing a detailed record of a potentially traumatic encounter in the permanent records of the presbytery does little to further this relationship of accountability and trust and only provides an opportunity to increase and intensify harm.

Removing this requirement for this full account of the reasons for a waiver of examination requirements for those under the care of a presbytery clarifies that the detailed record of a person's preparation for ministry process is independent from the long-term story of that person's faithful service as a minister. This amendment simplifies the text of the Constitution by making it less of a manual of operations and gives voice to emerging understandings of learning differences, cultural competency, and neurodivergence that are increasingly common within and beyond the church. The proposed amendment allows for greater pastoral sensitivity by presbyteries in their care of those preparing for ministry and encourages presbyteries to trust one another in their work with those preparing for this sacred calling.

For the full report on ORD-05, go to — <https://www.pc-biz.org/search/3001125>

GA votes = Approved by consensus upon recommendation of ACC

Shenango Executive Team recommendation = Adopt = 6; Reject = 0; Abstain = 0

Shenango Presbytery votes: Adopt = ____; Reject = ____; Abstain = ____

24-G — G-2.0901
DISSOLUTION OF PASTORAL RELATIONSHIPS

G-2.09 — Dissolution of Pastoral Relationships (Pol-08 1) ²⁴ [Northeast New Jersey]

Shall G-2.0901 be amended as follows:

Text to be added is [bracketed and underlined].

1. An installed pastoral relationship may be dissolved only by the presbytery. Whether the minister of the Word and Sacrament, the congregation, or the presbytery initiates proceedings for dissolution of the relationship, there shall always be a meeting of the congregation to consider the matter and to consent, or decline to consent, to dissolution. [No non-disclosure agreement shall be allowable.]

[(A non-disclosure agreement, also known as a confidentiality agreement, is an agreement that outlines confidential material, knowledge, or information that is to remain confidential. Such an agreement binds the party or parties who have signed it and prevents them from discussing any information included in the contract with anyone not authorized by the agreement.)]

Rationale of Sponsor²⁵ (Northeast New Jersey)

See the previous Rationale for **24-E — 2.0504b**.

For the full report on POL-08 1, go to — <https://www.pc-biz.org/search/3001169>

GA votes: Affirmative = 393; Negative = 11; Abstaining = 0

Shenango Executive Team recommendation = Adopt = 6; Reject = 0; Abstain = 0

Shenango Presbytery votes: Adopt = ____; Reject = ____; Abstain = ____

24-H — G-3.0106
GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF COUNCILS

G-3.0106 — Administration of Mission (POL-11) [Northeast Georgia]

Shall the fourth paragraph of G-3.0106 be amended as follows:

Text to be deleted is [bracketed and ~~stricken~~]

Text to be added is [bracketed and underlined].

All councils shall adopt and implement the following policies: a sexual misconduct policy, a harassment policy, a child[,] ~~[and]~~ youth~~[,~~ and adults with vulnerabilities] protection policy, and an antiracism policy. Each council's policy shall include requirements for boundary training which

²⁴ POL-08 consists of two parts, #1 = **24-G — G-2.0901** and #2 = **24-E — 2.0504b**.

²⁵ Because POL-08 consists of two parts, the Rationale for #2 = **24-G — G-2.0901** is included in the Rationale for #1 = **24-E — 2.0504b**.

includes the topic of sexual misconduct, and child sexual abuse prevention training for its members at least every thirty-six months.

Partial Rationale of Sponsor (Northeast Georgia):

This amendment builds upon the important work carried out by previous assemblies to provide for institutional protections for at-risk populations within our congregations and councils. Specifically, this amendment would create a constitutional mandate for all councils of the church to include vulnerable adults in our protection policies. The amended language fosters a deeper sense of accountability. By explicitly mentioning "vulnerable adults," we acknowledge our responsibility to protect those who may be at risk due to various factors. This enhancement to the policy framework demonstrates our dedication to a comprehensive approach in upholding the highest standards of ethical conduct. Inclusion is a key value of our faith community. By extending the protection of policies to vulnerable adults, we reaffirm our commitment to inclusivity, compassion, and justice. This addition reflects our core values and emphasizes our mission to create a community that embraces and protects every member.

For the full report on POL 11, go to — <https://www.pc-biz.org/search/3001131>

GA votes: Affirmative = 403; Negative = 1; Abstaining = 0

Shenango Executive Team recommendation = Adopt = 6; Reject = 0; Abstain = 0

Shenango Presbytery votes: Adopt = ____; Reject = ____; Abstain = ____

24-I — G-3.0302d
THE PRESBYTERY

G-3.0302d — Relationships with Synod and General Assembly (GAP-05) [*Office of General Assembly (OGA)*]

G-3.01 – General Principles of Councils; G-3.0302 – The Presbytery

Shall G-3.0302d in the *Form of Government* be amended as follows?

Text to be deleted is [bracketed and ~~stricken~~]

Text to be added is [bracketed and underlined].

d. proposing to synod such measures as may be of common concern to the mission of the church, ~~and/or~~ proposing to General Assembly overtures ~~that have received a concurrence from at least one other presbytery,~~ and/or concurring with proposed overtures, and ...

Partial Background and Rationale of Sponsor (*Office of General Assembly*)

The requirement for every overture from a presbytery to have at least one concurrence was designed to ensure that the business coming before the General Assembly was supported by at least two presbyteries. In practice, this requirement has created confusion within the deadlines for the submission of business, a flurry of activity among presbyteries seeking to have at least one concurrence, and the rise of at least one presbytery consistently voting to concur with all of the

overtures. In short, this requirement has created more difficulties while not solving the stated problem.

* * * * *

By eliminating the need for a concurrence, while allowing for that practice to continue as a way of showing broad support, we seek to remove an unnecessary barrier to the work of the General Assembly.

For the full report on GAP-05, go to — <https://www.pc-biz.org/search/3001247>

GA votes: Affirmative = 390; Negative = 14; Abstaining = 0

Shenango Executive Team recommendation = Adopt = 6; Reject = 0; Abstain = 0

Shenango Presbytery votes: Adopt = ____; Reject = ____; Abstain = ____

24-J — G-3.0501 **THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

G-3.0501 — Composition and Responsibility (GAP-04) [*Office of General Assembly (OGA)*]

Shall G-3.0501 *Composition and Responsibilities* be amended as follows:

Text to be deleted is [bracketed and ~~stricken~~]

Text to be added is [bracketed and underlined].

The General Assembly is the council of the whole church, and it is representative of the unity of the synods, presbyteries, sessions, and congregations of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). It shall consist of equal numbers of ruling elders and ministers of the Word and Sacrament elected by the presbyteries and reflective of the diversity within their bounds (F 1.0403 and G-3.0103), to serve as commissioners according to the following proportions:

~~[8,000 6,000]~~ members or less: 1 ruling elder and 1 minister ...

~~[8,001 16,000]~~ 6,001-12,000: 2 ruling elders and 2 ministers ...

~~[16,001 24,000]~~ 12,001-19,000: 3 ruling elders and 3 ministers ...

~~[24,001 32,000]~~ 19,001 or more: 4 ruling elders and 4 ministers ...

~~[32,001 40,000: 5 ruling elders and 5 ministers of the Word and Sacrament~~

~~40,001 48,000: 6 ruling elders and 6 ministers of the Word and Sacrament~~

~~48,001 or more: 7 ruling elders and 7 ministers of the Word and Sacrament]~~

Background and Rationale [*Office of General Assembly (OGA)*] Placing the proportions for determining the number of commissioners in the Book of Order creates a system that does not allow for flexibility and creates an exceptionally high threshold for change. The current wording is already out of date, with no presbytery fitting into the largest two categories and more presbyteries only being allocated one ruling elder and one teaching elder. This then causes a smaller and smaller number of commissioners to be elected, reducing the number of people who gather for the work of the General Assembly.

For the full report on GAP-04, go to — <https://www.pc-biz.org/search/3001246>

GA votes: Affirmative = 400; Negative = 12; Abstaining = 0

Shenango Executive Team recommendation = Adopt = 6; Reject = 0; Abstain = 0

Shenango Presbytery votes: Adopt = ____; Reject = ____; Abstain = ____

24-K — D-7.0501
INVESTIGATION

D-7.0501 — Referral to Investigating Committee (Pol-02)

Shall D-7.0501 be amended as follows:

Text to be added is [bracketed and underlined].

When a clerk of session or the stated clerk of a presbytery receives an allegation, without undertaking further inquiry, that clerk shall then report to the council only that an offense has been alleged without naming the [person] accused or the nature of the alleged offense and refer the statement of allegation promptly to an investigating committee, which shall conduct an inquiry as defined below. [Pursuant to G-4.0302, the clerk shall report to civil legal authorities any knowledge of harm, or risk of harm, related to the physical abuse, neglect, and/or sexual molestation or abuse of a minor or adult lacking mental capacity.] The clerk of session or stated clerk shall also inform the accuser of the disciplinary process and their rights and responsibilities in the process.

Rationale of Sponsor (Genesee Valley) (partial):

1. The context for D-7.0501 is the procedure by which submission of a formal accusation of a disciplinary offense prompts the council of a church or presbytery to form an investigating committee and commence the disciplinary process of the *Book of Order*.
2. In a case which alleges that the person harmed was a minor or an adult who lacks mental capacity, D-7.0501 presently requires the clerk to withhold this critically relevant demographic information. The possible negative consequences are serious. Withholding relevant information is an omission which prevents the council from exercising its ability to act, e.g., temporarily suspending a volunteer leader of a youth group, warning parents whose children may be at risk, informing legal authorities of potential statutory violations, or simply seeking consultation. If the case has possible civil or criminal law implications, failure to initiate reasonable risk management actions at this stage may expose the council to legal liability. ...

For the full report on POL-02, go to — <https://www.pc-biz.org/search/3001123>

GA votes: Affirmative = 401; Negative = 4; Abstaining = 0

Shenango Executive Team recommendation = Adopt = 6; Reject = 0; Abstain = 0

Shenango Presbytery votes: Adopt = ____; Reject = ____; Abstain = ____

24-L — D-7.0902b
ALLEGATIONS OF SEXUAL ABUSE

D-7.0902b — Administrative Leave be Paid Leave (POL--04) [*Charleston-Atlantic*]

Shall Section D-7.0902.b, regarding *administrative leave*, be amended as follows:

Text to be added is [bracketed and underlined]

Regardless of the employment status of the minister of the Word and Sacrament, the members designated in accordance with D-3.0102, shall determine as quickly as possible, after receiving the written allegations and providing the accused an opportunity to be heard, whether the risk to a congregation and/or to other potential victims of abuse requires [paid] administrative leave or other restrictions upon the minister's service when considered in light of the nature and probable truth of the allegations. Such [paid] administrative leave or restrictions will continue until either the matter is resolved in one of the ways prescribed in the disciplinary process or until the leave or restrictions are altered or removed by members of the commission. [The cost shall be borne by the employing entity whenever possible or be shared by the presbytery as necessary.]

Rationale of Sponsor (Charleston -Atlantic):

This amendment would preserve the due process rights of all ministers of the Word and Sacrament accused of sexual misconduct without diminishing the protections afforded to the alleged or potential victims of that misconduct.

Since the imposition of administrative leave was first authorized on July 3, 2005, until the adoption of Church Discipline on July 9, 2023, all ministers and presbyteries throughout the denomination were subject to a single, standard process when allegations of sexual misconduct were received. That process provided presbyteries the necessary mechanism for imposing administrative leave while requiring that the leave be paid.

The imprecision and ambiguity of the current language in D-7.0902 fails to provide a standard process applicable throughout the denomination. The text of D-7.0902 fails to define the administrative leave as either paid or unpaid. The conspicuous omission or deletion of “paid administrative leave” from the text of D-10.0106 in the Church Discipline, and the substitution of simply “administrative leave” in D-7.0902, lead to at least two plausible interpretations: first, that all administrative leave is to be unpaid, and second, that each presbytery can set its own policy as to whether the leave is to be paid or unpaid. Such imprecision and ambiguity do not provide an acceptable constitutional standard to be applied equally to all ministers of the Word and Sacrament.

- I. *Unpaid Administrative Leave is Improper*. If the drafters' intent was that all administrative leave is to be unpaid, that result unfairly and improperly deprives ministers of the Word and Sacrament of vital due process protections.
- A. *Unpaid Leave Undercuts the Presumption of Innocence*. The imposition of unpaid administrative leave within days of receipt of allegations, before even an investigative committee has been appointed, is completely inconsistent with and dramatically undercuts the presumption of innocence set forth in D-8.0201.c. Not only is a minister stripped of all ecclesiastical authority, but the presbytery immediately deprives the minister of any right to compensation as set forth in the terms of call to which the minister and congregation have agreed and which the presbytery approved.

- B. *Diminished Standard of Proof.* The current language in D-7.0902.b. allows the forfeiture of all compensation based upon a demonstrably lower standard of proof than that required for an ultimate finding of guilt. D-7.0902.b. allows the imposition of administrative leave based on the “probable truth of the allegations.” D-8.0902 allows a finding of guilt only “when a comparison and consideration of all the evidence compels an abiding conviction that the material facts necessary to prove the charge are true.” Relying on phraseology from the Rules of Discipline, those standards of proof would have been probable cause and beyond reasonable doubt. Regardless of the phraseology incorporated into Church Discipline, the quantum of proof required under D-7.0902.b. is dramatically less than that in D-8.0902.
- C. *Pretrial Forfeiture of Compensation is Punitive.* “[The] exercise of church discipline is one for building up the body of Christ, not for destroying it, for redeeming, *not for punishing.*” D-1.01 (Emphasis added). The forfeiture of all compensation within days of receipt of allegations, before an investigation or trial, is tantamount to punishment before an adjudication of guilt and is contrary to the constitutional objectives.
- II. *Constitutional Due Process Must Have Consistent Application.* The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has long been committed to equal protection of all persons. The Foundations of Presbyterian Polity proclaim that commitment: “The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) shall guarantee full participation and representation in its worship, governance, and emerging life to all persons or groups within its membership.” F-1.0403. The 225th General Assembly implemented that guarantee when it chose to require the inclusion of a specified amount of family leave for all installed pastors rather than allowing each presbytery to adopt its own policy. G-2.0804. The 226th General Assembly should provide a similar denomination-wide requirement for administrative leave.

The provisions of Church Discipline apply throughout the denomination to afford all involved equal protection and equal access. “The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is infused with principles and standards to which all active members of congregations and ministers of the Word and Sacrament voluntarily submit.” D-1.0201 (emphasis added).

Individual presbyteries cannot establish their own quorum requirements for their permanent judicial commissions. D-3.0602. Individual presbyteries cannot establish their own time periods for filing a notice of appeal. D-10.0201. Individual presbyteries cannot establish their own criteria for the composition of the special committee authorized to determine the necessity of administrative leave. D-3.0102. Each of these and other judicial processes have been established by the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) for equal application throughout the denomination. Why then should the issue of compensation during administrative leave be left to individual presbyteries to determine?

The right of a minister of the Word and Sacrament to be informed of a pending disciplinary process does not depend on the rules of the presbytery to which the minister belongs. D-7.0501. The right of a minister of the Word and Sacrament to be presumed innocent does not depend on the rules of the presbytery to which the minister belongs. D-8.0201.c. The right of a minister of the Word and Sacrament to be represented by counsel does not depend on the rules of the presbytery to which the minister belongs. D-7.1003.c. and D-8.0103.d.(2). Each of these and other rights have been established by the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) for equal application throughout the denomination. Why then should the entitlement of a minister of the Word and Sacrament to compensation while on administrative leave depend on the rules of the presbytery of the minister’s membership?

The full participation in the governance of our church, guaranteed in F-1.0403, demands that the provisions of Church Discipline be enforced and implemented equally throughout the denomination. The current text of D-7.0902 does not meet that constitutional guarantee.

Conclusion – For the foregoing reasons, the provisions of D-7.0902 should be amended to require paid administrative leave as set forth in the proposed overture.

For the full report on POL-04, go to — <https://www.pc-biz.org/search/3001127>

GA votes: Affirmative = 403; Negative = 9; Abstaining = 0

Shenango Executive Team recommendation: Adopt = 6; Reject = 0; Abstain = 0

Shenango Presbytery votes: Adopt = ____; Reject = ____; Abstain = ____

24-M

Episcopal-Presbyterian Agreement

The Stated Clerk shall send to Presbyteries for their affirmative or negative vote:

Episcopal-Presbyterian Agreement on Local Sharing of Ministries (ECU-05)

[General Assembly Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations]

Sharing in ecumenical ministry

We agree with the World Council of Churches' 2013 *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* in regard to ordered ministry, there is no single pattern of ministry in the New Testament, though all churches would look to Scripture in seeking to follow the will of the Lord concerning how ordained ministry is to be understood, ordered and exercised. At times, the Spirit has guided the Church to adapt its ministries to contextual needs (cf. Acts 6:1-6). Various forms of ministry have been blessed with the gifts of the Spirit. Early writers, such as Ignatius of Antioch, insisted upon the threefold ministry of bishop, presbyter, and deacon. This pattern of three related ministries can be seen to have roots in the New Testament; eventually it became the generally accepted pattern and is still considered normative by many churches today... Among the several means for maintaining the Church's apostolicity, such as the scriptural canon, dogma and liturgical order, ordained ministry has played an important role. Succession in ministry is meant to serve the apostolic continuity of the Church.

Both The Episcopal Church and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) reflect the threefold ordered ministries expressed by Ignatius of Antioch (bishop, presbyter and deacon), however in our polities express them differently or "locally adapted" and both denominations hold, in the broad ecumenical sense, apostolic succession.⁷ Both The Episcopal Church and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) have recognized the gift of *episkopé*, the ministry of oversight, locally adapted, as expressed in the 2017 Churches Uniting in Christ mutual recognition or ordered ministry.

Specifically, the ecumenical dialogue between The Episcopal Church and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), in round two and in this round three, recognize that diocese bishops and presbytery moderators have similar constituted ecclesial authority and expression of the gift of *episkopé* as it relates to presiding at ordination, as well as installing or instituting a presbyter to a pastoral relationship.

Guided by the World Council of Churches' 1982 foundational paper, *Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry*, Chapter VI, as well as the 2013 *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* (Faith and Order Paper No. 214), presbyteries and dioceses are strongly encouraged to invite presbytery moderators and diocese bishops to participate in each other's celebrations of ministry, [to include:]

Limited orderly exchange of ministers ...

The Ecclesiastical Authority of the inviting body initiates the process of the limited orderly exchange between the placement or ecumenical ministry to be served and the presbyter. The presbyter does not initiate the process of exchange.

The inviting body shall consult with the appropriate Ecclesiastical Authority of the presbyter to determine the suitability of the potential service and to receive the concurrence of the sending body. The presbyter remains accountable to the sending church for the continuation of ministerial status.

Both The Episcopal Church and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) agree that experience in and knowledge of one's own tradition is seen as necessary before serving in a different tradition. Therefore, the limited orderly exchange of minister's opportunities is only open to presbyters who have been ordained for at least three years and active within the ministry of their denomination.

Presbyters serving in a limited orderly exchange position shall be temporary under this agreement. The service of presbyters should ordinarily be for a two- to four-year period, which may be renewed. Should a presbyter of one church intend to serve permanently in another church then the process of the transfer or reception of ministerial status should be followed according to the rules of the receiving Church.

Should a disciplinary process be necessary, the presbyter remains under the jurisdiction of the sending body, but the inviting body may be asked to participate as necessary.

Functions – When a presbyter is licensed or commissioned by the appropriate Ecclesiastical Authority, the presbyter is authorized to:

- to exercise pastoral or administrative responsibility;
- lead public worship as a presbyter under the direction of diocesan bishop or presbytery;
- preach the Gospel;
- celebrate and administer the sacraments within the guidelines specified below;
- prepare persons for Baptism, Confirmation, Reception, and the Reaffirmation of Baptismal Vows, and shall function under the direction of diocesan bishop or presbytery;
- and present the good news of Jesus Christ in such a way that people are led to receive Christ as Savior and follow Christ as Lord in the fellowship of the Church, assisting with the diocese or presbytery's ministry of evangelism partnership.

Training, Examination, and Oversight – ...

Celebration of an Ecumenical Ministry – ...

Partial Rationale of Sponsor: (ECU – Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations):

[Our] current time finds our world amid many challenges, including a global pandemic with still yet unknown overall effects on the Church. The global Christian Church around the world has found itself in a season of reinvention and redefinition. The events of 2020 have called us to ask ourselves what it truly means to be Christian.

Individual congregations have been challenged to adapt to a changing world in ways that have shattered our links with the past and old ways of doing church. In so doing, we have focused on the core duties of being Christ in the world. This has created both challenges and opportunities ,[such as].

Global Pandemic and Racial Endemic
Tearing Down Ecclesiastical Barriers

For the full report on ECU-05, go to — <https://www.pc-biz.org/search/3001207>

GA = Approved by consensus upon recommendation of ECU

Shenango Executive Team recommendation = Adopt = 6; Reject = 0; Abstain = 0

Shenango Presbytery votes: Adopt = ____; Reject = ____; Abstain = ____