

Bills & Overtures Task Group  
 Recommendations for Concurrences  
 4/4/2024

The full text and rationale for all overtures can be found at: <https://www.pc-biz.org/search>. (Hit Search button for listing.)

A “concurrence” to an overture (like a second to a motion) is needed to docket the overture for consideration by the General Assembly. It does not commit our commissioners to voting in favor of the overture, and the overture may be amended both at the committee level and before the General Assembly.

*The Bills & Overtures Task Group brings four overtures for the Consent Agenda and three for the regular agenda, as reflected below.*

**CONSENT AGENDA**

**The Bills & Overtures Task Group moves that the Boise Presbytery concur on the following overtures, as a whole and as part of a consent agenda:**

Overture #	Subject	Language	Summary of Recommendation
OVT-10	Protection of vulnerable adults	<p>Shall the fourth paragraph of G-3.0106 be amended as follows:</p> <p>(Text to be added is [in brackets]. Text to be deleted is <del>struck through</del>.)</p> <p>... “All councils shall adopt and implement the following policies: a sexual misconduct policy, a harassment policy, a child[,] <del>and</del> youth[, and vulnerable adult] protection policy, and an antiracism policy...”</p>	<p>Adds “vulnerable adults” to the protected categories in our policies, which most of us already have. As our membership ages, this is an increasingly important protection.</p>
OVT-11	Reviewing the Preparation for Ministry process	<p>The Presbytery of the Highlands overtures the 226th General Assembly (2024) to appoint a committee to review the overall Preparation for Ministry process, and to make recommendations for relevant and appropriate changes to the 227th General Assembly (2026).</p> <p>The Committee will be responsible for the following:</p>	<p>The process and standards for preparing and ordaining people to the ministry of Word &amp; Sacrament should be re-examined as a matter of periodic, good practice. The overture recognizes some recent missteps in testing and oversight.</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● An overall review of the Preparation for Ministry process including an assessment, evaluation, and recommendations for changes to the Presbyteries' Cooperative Committee on Examinations for Candidates (PCCEC): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ revision of the handbook, including the process</li> <li>○ development of ordination exams</li> <li>○ selection/nomination of the team responsible for overseeing exam writers.</li> </ul> </li>   <li>● Make recommendations for next steps to bring the process in line with today's church and its needs, or to develop a new process.</li>   <li>● The committee shall consult with presbytery leaders and committee on preparation for ministry (CPM) moderators concerning the process including a discussion on their understanding and suggestions concerning G-2.0607d: "examination materials, together with evaluations that declare those materials satisfactory in the areas covered by any standard ordination examination approved by the General Assembly. Such examinations shall be prepared and administered by a body created by the presbyteries."</li>   <li>● The committee shall consult with the Unification Commission on issues and concerns about the Preparation for Ministry process.</li>   <li>● The committee shall consider the following questions in their report to the 226th General Assembly: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Are ordination exams still necessary in the church today? Are the process and exams as they are now meeting the moment of the church and culture? Do they perpetuate white privilege culture and values?</li>   <li>○ Is the process helpful to form people who will be operating within this white privilege culture church or is the process missing the point at which the church is trying to move beyond?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>This also addresses the structure of which group has authority to oversee the process, which is unclear.</p>
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What are ordination exams looking for and are they the best way to find it? What is being examined that isn't already discovered through the CPM process and the requirement of a seminary education?</li> <li>○ If the exams are still necessary, how might they examine what needs to be understood in the multicultural, racial, and power-imbalanced twenty-first century? Are these exams still serving their greater intended purpose?</li> <li>○ How can readers come to the process without their cultural bias and perhaps “old school” view of the church, and provide an objective and impartial standard to test taker responses that may not reflect the reader’s cultural understanding? How does having evaluators who don't know the test takers or anything about them improve the preparation for the ministry process?</li> <li>○ How do we improve the integrity and relevance of preparing people for ministry to benefit the church and culture in the post-pandemic world?</li> <li>● The General Assembly moderator(s) appoint a team of twelve which will include at least four mid council leaders and two CPM moderators. The moderators should also consider for the committee recently ordained clergy, ruling elders, men and women, and a diversity of ages, cultures, racial and gender identity. The team should be staffed and receive support from the Office for Ordered Ministry and Certification, The Office of Racial Equity and Women’s Intercultural Ministries, The Office of Theological Education.</li> </ul>	
OVT-24	Creating a General Assembly Administrative Commission on Mid Councils	<p>The Synod of the Northeast overtures the 226th General Assembly (2024) to:</p> <p>1. Establish a permanent General Assembly Commission on Mid Councils, nominated by the General Assembly Nominating Committee in consultation with the General Assembly Committee on Representation, for the purpose of “approving the acts of synods to organize, divide, unite, or combine presbyteries or portions of presbyteries” (G-3.0502e) and approving exceptions to the minimum composition of a presbytery (G-3.0301). The commission is to be constituted no later than December 31, 2024.</p>	<p>Because the General Assembly only meets every other year, this Commission could streamline the process for making requested boundary changes of presbyteries.</p> <p>An existing commission that handles this function has expired.</p>

		<p>2. Amend the Standing Rules of the General Assembly by adding Section K1 as follows and renumbering other paragraphs of section K, or placing in the appropriate section of any revised version of the Standing Rules approved by the 226th General Assembly (2024):</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">K.1 The General Assembly Administrative Commission on Mid Councils has the authority to act as the General Assembly, upon request of synods and presbyteries, with the authority of the General Assembly to “approv[e] the acts of synods to organize, divide, unite, or combine presbyteries or portions of presbyteries” (G-3.0502e), and to approve exceptions to the minimum composition of a presbytery (G-3.0301). The administrative commission shall be composed of seven members whose length of term will be 4 years with eligibility for an additional 4-year term.</p>	
OVT-x	Communion in virtual settings	The Presbytery of Milwaukee respectfully overtures the 226th General Assembly (2024) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to issue an Authoritative Interpretation regarding the Directory of Worship W-3.04 on the celebration of the Lord’s Supper: What does the term “public worship” include, and may a congregation celebrate the Lord’s Supper within an electronic worship service?	During the pandemic, many churches moved to celebrating the Lord’s Supper through online formats, which was allowed by an advisory opinion from late March 2020. That opinion was non-binding and suggests that congregations should move back to a traditional in-person practice once the emergency is past. An Authoritative Interpretation is a way of gaining clarity on the continued propriety of communion in virtual contexts.

**AGENDA**

**The Bills & Overtures Task Group moves that the Boise Presbytery concur on the following overtures:**

Overture #	Subject	Language	Summary of Recommendation
OVT-1	Amending the Book of Order to include sexual orientation and gender identity among the categories against which this church does not discriminate	<p>The Presbytery of Olympia overtures the 226th General Assembly (2024) to direct the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendments to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:</p> <p>(Text to be added is <i>[underlined, in brackets and italics]</i>.)</p> <p>1. Shall F-1.0403 be amended as follows:</p> <p>“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, <i>[gender identity, sexual orientation,]</i> 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.”</p> <p>2. Shall G-2.0104b be amended as follows:</p> <p>“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; G-2.0607; G-3.0306) 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) <i>[and in the principles of participation, representation, and non-discrimination found in F-</i></p>	<p>Because we have named the values of respecting individuals and recognizing all people are made in the image of God, we recommend this overture to make unequivocal our inclusion of all and without regard to sexual orientation or gender identity. People across the denomination report continuing discrimination on these grounds.</p>

		<u>1.0403</u> ]. Councils shall be guided by Scripture and the confessions in applying standards to individual candidates.”	
OVT-12	Development of Christian Education Curriculum	<p>The Presbytery of Riverside overtures the 226th General Assembly (2024) to direct the Presbyterian Mission Agency’s Office of Christian Formation (and/or their successor entities) and the Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, in collaboration with Research Services, to study and formulate a plan for the future development of educational resources for faith formation and nurture especially for congregational use.</p> <p>Research should be qualitative, including methods such as focus groups and interviews with practitioners. Relying on this and pertinent prior research, collaborators shall pay particular attention to affordability and the needs of the small church. The Office of Christian Formation and the Presbyterian Publishing Corporation shall bring a concrete proposal regarding funding, staffing, and implementation to the 227th General Assembly (2026).</p>	<p>Due to funding cuts, the denomination has not planned for the ongoing creation of educational curriculum. We value Christian education and believe this should be prioritized. We especially believe that ceasing development of Reformed theological curricula will have an outsized negative impact on small or rural churches and presbyteries like ours.</p>
OVT-28	Use of Non-Disclosure-Agreements in the Dissolution of Pastoral Relationships	<p>The Presbytery of Northeast New Jersey overtures the 226th General Assembly to adopt the following changes, for ratification by presbyteries, to the following provisions in the Book of Order. (Changes shown in <b><i>bold italics.</i></b>)</p> <p>1. That G-2.0901 should read as follows:</p> <p>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. <b><i>No non-disclosure agreement shall be allowable.</i></b></p> <p>2. That G-2.0504b should read as follows:</p> <p>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 relationship. No formal call shall be issued and no formal installation shall take place.</p>	<p>Non-disclosure agreements have been used to keep secret information detrimental to the church or its pastors. We believe transparency is an important value to uphold and one that prevents ongoing problems or abuse.</p>

		<p>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.</p> <p><b>When the temporary pastoral relationship ends, no non-disclosure agreement shall be allowable.</b></p>	
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