Proposed Amendments

to the Constitution

Amendments to the *Book of Order*

Approved by the 222nd General Assembly (2016) and recommended to the presbyteries for their vote.
NOTE FROM THE STATED CLERK

The 222nd General Assembly (2016) 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.

Please note that with each proposed amendment reference is made to an item number, which is how the General Assembly kept track of this business in both committee and in plenary. These item numbers can direct you to the complete action of the assembly as well as the full text of offered rationale and advice from the Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC) and other advisory and advocacy entities. You can access this information through PC Biz at http://www.pc-biz.org. In providing rationale and advice in this booklet, direct quotations are used whenever possible. However, rationale and advice in this booklet has been edited due to space constraints.

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It is recommended that prior to voting, presbyters review all the information for each proposed amendment found in PC-Biz at www.pc-biz.org/. Live links are provided that will take you to the General Assembly committee that handled the proposed amendment. From the list of committee business, click on the specific item number you wish to review.

Presbyteries may use a consent agenda or omnibus motion to vote on amendments as long as each proposed amendment is identified separately. Presbytery stated clerks are to report their votes to the Office of the General Assembly no later than June 25, 2017. However, in order to make changes and publish the 2017–18 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.

J. Herbert Nelson II
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly

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16-A. Child and Youth Protection Policy
On Amending G-3.0106 (Item 05-09)

The 222nd General Assembly (2016) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

**Shall the fourth paragraph of G-3.0106 of the Form of Government be amended as follows?**

[Text to be inserted is shown as italic.]

“All councils shall adopt and implement a sexual misconduct policy and a child and youth protection policy.”

**Background and Rationale**

This proposed amendment originated as a recommendation from the Advocacy Committee for Women’s Concerns as Item 05-09. The Advocacy Committee for Women’s Concerns provided the following rationale:

Since the child protection policy amendment went into effect after the 221st General Assembly (2014), issues have arisen regarding the interpretation of the text. Some councils have interpreted the amendment to mean that the sexual misconduct policy and child protection policy are one policy with one intent and purpose. However, the intent of the original amendment, when further reading the rationale, is that these would be two separate policies with two separate purposes.

The Advocacy Committee for Women’s Concerns is also requesting we expand the language of this amendment to include “youth” as well as “child” so as to clarify the intended scope of the policy.

In approving Item 05-09, the General Assembly also approved the following comment:

The General Assembly notes that two separate policies are intended by this sentence, with different intents. The child and youth protection policy is intended to address interactions involving children and youth within the church or in church-sponsored activities. The sexual misconduct policy is directed toward proactively preventing and responding to sexual misconduct involving all people of all ages within the church and in church-sponsored activities.

**Advice from the Advisory Committee on the Constitution**

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution advised the 222nd General Assembly (2016) that Item 05-09 presented the following issue that the General Assembly should consider:

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution recognizes the importance of the purposes of the policies listed or proposed for G-3.0106. The ACC directs the attention of the General Assembly to its advice on Item 05-05 regarding the practice of listing required policies in the Constitution; and thus moving its function from a constitutional document towards a manual of operations.

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution also advised amending Item 05-09 by inserting “and youth” after “child” in G-3.0106 and commenting on the reason for two separate policies.

The Assembly Committee on Mid Councils (05) amended and approved Item 05-09 with comment 41/0. The 222nd General Assembly (2016) then approved a motion to reinsert [sexual misconduct policy and a] in the fourth paragraph of G-3.0106 and then approved Item 05-09 with amendment by voice vote.

For the full report of Item 05-09 go to [https://www.pc-biz.org/#/committee/561/business](https://www.pc-biz.org/#/committee/561/business).
16-B. Parity in Committees  
On Amending G-3.0109 (Item 06-05)

The 222nd General Assembly (2016) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

Shall the second paragraph of G-3.0109 of the Form of Government be amended as follows? 
[Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“A committee shall study and recommend action or carry out decisions already made by a council. It shall make a full report to the council that created it, and its recommendations shall require action by that body. Committees of councils higher than the session shall consist of both teaching elders and members of congregations, with at least one half being members of congregations in numbers as nearly equal as possible.”

Background and Rationale

This proposed amendment originated as an overture from the Presbytery of Saint Andrew as Item 06-05. Presbyteries of Foothills and Mid-South concurred with the overture. The Presbytery of St. Andrew provided the following rationale:

The requirement for parity in our system of government is historic and is grounded in our theological understanding of the nature of the Christian Church. But while parity is essential in decision making, requiring it of all committees (which by definition do not make decisions, but only study matters assigned to them, make recommendations, and carry out decisions made by councils or their commissions), is an unnecessary restriction placed on councils. In particular, it is a burdensome requirement in the matter of committees of counsel, which, as defined in D-6.0302, may be composed of no more than three persons.

Indeed, the current constitutional language is even more restrictive for committees than it is for commissions, where, if they are composed of an uneven number of members, they may in fact have a slight majority of teaching elders.

While the Presbytery of St. Andrew would prefer that the entire sentence be deemed unnecessary and deleted, it respectfully requests the deletion of at least the final clause (“with at least one half being members of congregations”).

Advice from the Advisory Committee on the Constitution

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution advised the 222nd General Assembly (2016) to disapprove Item 06-05 and offered the following advice:

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution agrees that the requirement for parity in our system of government is historic and is grounded in our theological understanding of the nature of the Church and so we encourage participation of all members in every aspect of our life together. “The unity of believers in Christ is reflected in the rich diversity of the Church’s membership. … 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” (F-1.0403). Responsibilities of governance are shared jointly by presbyters (ruling elders and teaching elders), and the ministry of the Church is shared by all members (F-3.0202, F-3.0208, G-1.0304). While a committee may not always be empowered to make final decisions on behalf of a council, the committee members do decide how to study matters assigned to them, decide which recommendations will be presented to the council for final resolution, and decide how best to carry out decisions made by councils or their commissions. Because all committees must resolve questions or issues as part of their work, we believe it is important that we maintain the historic parity of teaching elders and members of congregations on all committees.

The Assembly Committee on Church Polity and Ordered Ministry (06) amended and approved Item 06-05, 46/13. The 222nd General Assembly (2016) approved the committee’s recommendation as amended by consensus.

For the full report of Item 06-05 go to https://www.pc-biz.org/#/committee/563/business.
16-C. Ordered Ministry Titles
(Item 06-08, Recommendations 1 through 8)

Background and Rationale

The following eight proposed amendments (16-C.1. through 16-C.8) originated as an overture from the Presbytery of Great Rivers. Each recommendation is presented separately for presbytery consideration. Presbyteries of Charleston-Atlantic, Huntingdon, Minnesota Valleys, New Castle and Santa Fe concurred with the overture. The Presbytery of Great Rivers provided the following rationale:

In 2012, the PC(USA) adopted a new Form of Government. Among its many changes designed to help clarify our polity were changes in the titles of ordered ministry: “Elder” was changed to “ruling elder,” “minister of Word and Sacrament” was changed to “teaching elder,” and “commissioned lay pastor” was changed to “commissioned ruling elder."

After observing the changes to these terms for a few years, it has been noted that there is still much confusion. As a result, the local church and many churches and pastors have simply ignored the change to the nomenclature: pastors are still pastors, elders are still elders, and mid councils and General Assembly seem to be the only bodies who tend to use the terms ruling elder and teaching elder with any regularity or appreciation for the historical and pragmatic rationale.

Furthermore, in speaking to younger clergy regarding this change, some have reported feeling disempowered in the formation of their sense of pastoral authority and professional development by no longer being ordained to the office of “minister of Word and Sacrament.” Some feel this title has been particularly disempowering to female clergy.

Lastly, the title, “commissioned ruling elder,” greatly minimizes the broad and important pastoral role and responsibility that is played by our commissioned ruling elders whereas the title “commissioned lay pastor” was a far more apropos title.

In summary, this overture seeks to honor the historical and pragmatic rationale given by the Advisory Committee on the Constitution in 2012, address the primary concerns raised by the Presbytery of Santa Fe, provide greater clarity to the local church, offer more empowerment to our younger clergy, and better reflect the important pastoral ministry of our commissioned ruling elders.

(The referenced action of the 220th General Assembly (2012) can be found on PC Biz at https://www.pc-biz.org/#/search/3737?print )

Advice from the Advisory Committee on the Constitution

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution advised the 222nd General Assembly (2016) to disapprove Item 06-08 and offered the following advice:

This overture seeks to amend the Book of Order in numerous locations to “clarify titles to ordered ministry.”

The ACC reminds the assembly the particular title for the ordered ministry is different from the functions a person performs locally. A teaching elder may perform the functions of pastor, counselor, chaplain, or minister. In the current Form of Government, teaching elders are twice also called ministers of the Word and Sacrament (G-2.0501; G-4.0301), making the terms interchangeable.

If the General Assembly decides to make the changes proposed by the overture in regards to the term “teaching elder,” the Advisory Committee on the Constitution advises the following:

• The proposed change from “teaching elder” to “minister of the Word and Sacrament” is clear and consistent. The General Assembly should review all uses of the term in the Book of Order for consistency.

• Recommendation 6 of the overture proposes amending G-3.0307 to strike out “teaching elders” and insert “its pastors, both ministers of Word and Sacrament . . . .” This section currently gives the responsibility to the presbytery to be pastor and counselor to all of its teaching elders, including those who serve in non-congregational ministries, are members-at-large, or honorably retired. The amendment would limit this responsibility only to teaching elders serving as pastors of congregations.
The Assembly Committee on Church Polity and Ordered Ministry (06) amended and approved Item 06-08 56/3. The 222nd General Assembly (2016) approved the committee’s recommendation as amended, 320/218.

For the full report of Item 06-08 https://www.pc-biz.org/#/committee/563/business

Editor’s Note on 16-C.: If the 16-C. proposed amendments that would change “teaching elder” to “minister of the Word and Sacrament” in the Book of Order are approved by a majority of presbyteries, where the term “teaching elder” is used in the Book of Order will be editorially corrected to “minister of the Word and Sacrament.” Editorial corrections will also be made for inclusion of the word “the” in the phrase “ministers of the Word and Sacrament” in the Book of Order.

If the 16-C. proposed amendments that would change “ruling elder commissioned to pastoral service’ to “commissioned pastor (also known as commissioned ruling elder)” in the Book of Order is approved by a majority of presbyteries, where the term “ruling elder commissioned to pastoral service” is used in the Book of Order, will be editorially corrected to “commissioned pastor (also known as commissioned ruling elder).”

If 16-H, the revision of the Directory for Worship, is approved by a majority of presbyteries any approved amendments 16-C.1. through 16-C.8 will be used to editorially correct in the revised Directory for Worship.

16-C.1. Ministers of the Word and Sacrament
On Amending F-3.0202 (Item 06-08, Recommendation 1)

The 222nd General Assembly (2016) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

Shall F-3.0202 be amended as follows? [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“This church shall be governed by presbyters, that is, ruling elders and teaching elders (also called ministers of the Word and Sacrament). Ruling elders are so named not because they ‘lord it over’ the congregation (Matt. 20:25), but because they are chosen by the congregation to discern and measure guide in its fidelity to the Word of God, and to strengthen and nurture its faith and life. Teaching elders. Ministers of the Word and Sacrament shall be committed in all their work to teaching the faith in word and in deed and equipping the people of God for their ministry and witness.”

16-C.2. Ministers of the Word and Sacrament
On Amending G-2.0102 (Item 06-08, Recommendation 2)

The 222nd General Assembly (2016) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

Shall the third paragraph of G-2.0102 be amended as follows? [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“Ordination to the ministry of teaching elder, ruling elder, or deacon, ruling elder, or minister of Word and Sacrament (also called teaching elder) is unique to that order of ministry.”
16-C.3. Ministers of the Word and Sacrament
On Amending G-2.0301 (Item 06-08, Recommendation 3)

The 222nd General Assembly (2016) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

Shall G-2.0301 be amended as follows? [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“As there were in Old Testament times elders for the government of the people, so the New Testament church provided persons with particular gifts to share in discernment of God’s Spirit and governance of God’s people. Accordingly, congregations should elect persons of wisdom and maturity of faith, having demonstrated skills in leadership and being compassionate in spirit. Ruling elders are so named not because they ‘lord it over’ the congregation (Matt. 20:25), but because they are chosen by the congregation to discern and measure its fidelity to the Word of God, and to strengthen and nurture its faith and life. Ruling elders, together with teaching elders ministers of the Word and Sacrament, exercise leadership, government, spiritual discernment, and discipline and have responsibilities for the life of a congregation as well as the whole church, including ecumenical relationships. When elected by the congregation, they shall serve faithfully as members of the session. When elected as commissioners to higher councils, ruling elders participate and vote with the same authority as teaching elders ministers of the Word and Sacrament, and they are eligible for any office.”

16-C.4. Ministers of the Word and Sacrament
On Amending G-2.05 and G-2.0501 (Item 06-08, Recommendation 4)

The 222nd General Assembly (2016) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

Shall G-2.05 and G-2.0501 be amended as follows? [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“G-2.05 Teaching Elders—Ministers of the Word and Sacrament: The Ministry of the Word and Sacrament—Teaching and Pastoral Care

“G-2.0501 Teaching Elder—Minister of the Word and Sacrament Defined

“Teaching elders (also called ministers of the Word and Sacrament) ministers of the Word and Sacrament (also called teaching elders and pastors) shall in all things be committed to teaching the faith in word and deed and equipping the saints for the work of ministry (Eph. 4:12). They may serve in a variety of ministries as authorized by the presbytery. When they serve as preachers and teachers of the Word, they shall preach and teach the faith of the church, so that the people are shaped by the pattern of the gospel and strengthened for witness and service. When they serve at font and table, they shall interpret and ‘show forth’ the mysteries of grace and lift in word and action, lifting the people’s vision toward the hope of God’s new creation. When they serve as pastors, they shall support the people in the disciplines of the faith amid the struggles of daily life. When they serve as presbyters, they shall participate in the responsibilities of governance, seeking always to discern the mind of Christ and to build up Christ’s body through devotion, debate, and decision.”
16-C.5. Ministers of the Word and Sacrament
On Amending G-2.0701 (Item 06-08, Recommendation 5)

The 222nd General Assembly (2016) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

Shall G-2.0701 be amended as follows? [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“Ordination to the ordered ministry of teaching elder—minister of Word and Sacrament is an act of the whole church carried out by the presbytery, setting apart a person to ordered ministry. Such a person shall have fulfilled the ordination requirements of the presbytery of care and received the call of God to service to a congregation or other work in the mission of the church that is acceptable to the candidate and to the presbytery of call.”

16-C.6. Ministers of the Word and Sacrament and Commissioned Pastors
On Amending G-3.0307 (Item 06-08, Recommendation 6)

The 222nd General Assembly (2016) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

Shall the second paragraph of G-3.0307 be amended as follows? [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“G-3.0307 Pastor, Counselor, and Advisor to Teaching-Elders-Its Pastors and Congregations

“Presbyteries shall be open at all times to communication regarding the life and ministry of their congregations.

“Each presbytery shall develop and maintain mechanisms and processes to serve as pastor and counselor to teaching elders—its pastors, both ministers of Word and Sacrament and ruling elders commissioned to pastoral service (also called commissioned pastors (also known as commissioned ruling elders)), as well as the and-certified Christian educators of the presbytery; to facilitate the relations between the presbytery and its congregations, teaching elders, ruling elders commissioned to pastoral service, pastors and certified Christian educators; and to settle difficulties on behalf of the presbytery where possible and expedient.”

16-C.7. Minister of the Word and Sacrament and Commissioned Pastor
On Amending the Directory for Worship and the Rules of Discipline
(Item 06-08, Recommendation 7)

The 222nd General Assembly (2016) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

Shall the Directory for Worship and the Rules of Discipline be amended so that the terms “ruling elder commissioned to particular pastoral service” or “ruling elder commissioned to pastoral service” and “teaching elder” shall be replaced with its former terms, “commissioned pastor (also known as commissioned ruling elder)” or “minister” or “minister of Word and Sacrament”, respectively?
16-C.8. Minister of the Word and Sacrament
On Amending W-4.4001a. (Item 06-08, Recommendation 8)

The 222nd General Assembly (2016) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

Shall W-4.4001a. be amended as follows? [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“a. In ordination the church sets apart with prayer and the laying on of hands those who have been called through election by the church to serve as deacons, ruling elders, and teaching elders. (W-2.1005) In installation the church sets apart with prayer those previously ordained as deacons, ruling elders, and teaching elders—ministers of Word and Sacrament (also called teaching elders), and called anew to service in that ministry.”
16-D. Relationship to the PC(USA) of a Person Who Has Renounced Jurisdiction of the Church
(ITEM 06-10, RECOMMENDATIONS 1 AND 2)

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

These two proposed amendments (16-D.1. and 16-D.2) originated as an overture from the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area. The Presbytery of Cimarron concurred with the overture. The Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area offered the following rationale:

In 2014–2015, G-2.0509 of the Book of Order was amended to create a permanent ban on teaching elders who renounce jurisdiction while being accused in a disciplinary process from working in or for the church in either a paid or volunteer capacity. While this amendment was written in response to the renunciation of a teaching elder accused of sexual abuse, the ban applies to all teaching elders who renounce while being accused “[w]ithout regard for the nature, seriousness, or truth of the alleged delinquency, irregularity, or offense.”

As Christians, we live in hope of reconciliation for all. This overture proposes a process by which a former teaching elder, after many years (perhaps decades) of therapy, may publicly face accusations that he or she had evaded before, as a step towards possible reinstatement to be able to work in the church (at least in some capacity).

ADVICE FROM THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE CONSTITUTION

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution advised the 222nd General Assembly (2016) to disapprove Item 06-10 and offered the following advice:

The proposed amendment to the Rules of Discipline “establishes a significant change in defining the time limits for disciplinary proceedings. Currently, the Book of Order states that “[n]o charges shall be filed later than five years from the time of the commission of the alleged offense, nor later than one year from the date the investigating committee was formed, whichever occurs first, except as noted below” (D-10.0401). That exception states that in “instances of sexual abuse of another person, the five-year time limit shall not apply” (D-10.0401b). This item would remove the time limit for beginning disciplinary proceedings for all alleged offenses.”

The Assembly Committee on Church Polity and Ordered Ministry (06) voted to answer Item 06-10 with an alternate resolution, 31/26. The 222nd General Assembly (2016) did not approve the committee’s recommendation but instead amended and approved Item 06-10, 474/78.

For the full report of Item 06-10 https://www.pc-biz.org/#/committee/563/business

[16-D.1. AND 16-D.2. CONTINUE ON THE NEXT PAGE.]
16-D.1. On Amending G-2.0509
(Item 06-10, Recommendation 1)

The 222nd General Assembly (2016) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

Shall the fourth paragraph of G-2.0509 be amended as follows: [Text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“Whenever a former teaching elder has renounced jurisdiction in the midst of a disciplinary proceeding as the accused, that former teaching elder shall not be permitted to perform any work, paid or volunteer, in any congregation or entity under the jurisdiction of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) unless and until the person rejoins the church, comes forward and resubmits to the disciplinary process.”

16-D.2. On Amending D-10.0401
(Item 06-10, Recommendation 2)

The 222nd General Assembly (2016) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

Shall D-10.0401 be amended by adding new section “d.” to read as follows: [Text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“d. For instances where a former teaching elder comes forward in self-accusation to undergo a disciplinary process to regain permission to perform work under the jurisdiction of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (G-2.0509), no time limit from the time of the commission of the alleged offense to the filing of charges shall apply. Charges based on all accusations that had been made by the time that the former teaching elder had renounced jurisdiction may be brought regardless of the date on which any such offense is alleged to have occurred.”
16-E. Certified Service Requirements
On Amending G-2.1101 (Item 06-15)

The 222nd General Assembly (2016) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

Shall G-2.1101 be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“Persons may be certified and called to service within congregations, councils, and church-related entities, serving in staff positions. These individuals endeavor to reflect their faith through their work and to strengthen the church through their dedication. They should be encouraged by their session and presbytery to meet, or be prepared to meet, the certification requirements in a handbook provided by—of a national certifying body approved by the General Assembly. Names of those who have earned certification through a national certifying body shall be transmitted to the appropriate body of the General Assembly, which will forward them to the stated clerk of the presbyteries in which those persons labor.”

Background and Rationale

This proposed amendment originated as an overture from the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly (COGA) as Item 06-15. COGA offered the following rationale:

Current language in the Book of Order calling for a “handbook” seems antiquated and limiting. Most organizations maintain certification requirements on-line or in other electronic formats. This change would provide clarification and reflect current practice.

Advice from the Advisory Committee on the Constitution

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution recommended that the 222nd General Assembly (2016) approve Item 06-15 for the reasons cited in the rationale.

The Assembly Committee on Church Polity and Ordered Ministry (06) voted to approve Item 06-15 59/0. The 222nd General Assembly (2016) approved the committee’s recommendation by consensus.

For the full report of Item 06-15 https://www.pc-biz.org/#/committee/563/business
The 222nd General Assembly (2016) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

Shall G-1.0304 be amended as follows? [Text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“G-1.0304 The Ministry of Members

“Membership in the Church of Jesus Christ is a joy and a privilege. It is also a commitment to participate in Christ’s mission. A faithful member bears witness to God’s love and grace and promises to be involved responsibly in the ministry of Christ’s Church. Such involvement includes:

“proclaiming the good news in word and deed,
“taking part in the common life and worship of a congregation,
“lifting one another up in prayer, mutual concern, and active support,
“studying Scripture and the issues of Christian faith and life,
“supporting the ministry of the church through the giving of money, time, and talents,
“demonstrating a new quality of life within and through the church,
“responding to God’s activity in the world through service to others,
“living responsibly in the personal, family, vocational, political, cultural, and social relationships of life,
“working in the world for peace, justice, freedom, and human fulfillment,
“caring for God’s creation,
“participating in the governing responsibilities of the church, and
“reviewing and evaluating regularly the integrity of one’s membership, and considering ways in which one’s participation in the worship and service of the church may be increased and made more meaningful.”

Background and Rationale

This proposed amendment originated as an overture from the Presbytery of New Castle. The Presbyteries of Boston, Cascades, Heartland, Homestead, Inland Northwest, Lake Michigan, Monmouth, Northern New England, and Seattle concurred with the overture. New Castle Presbytery offered the following rationale:

Although a “green church movement” has long remained at the grassroots level in the U.S., the PC(USA) leads with a robust environmental ministry and “Earth Care Congregation” program. We recognize the importance of earth care issues and action, and we have an opportunity to add the concern to an important section of our constitutional documents.

Membership in the Church of Jesus Christ and in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is a joy and a privilege. It is also a commitment to participate in Christ’s mission. A faithful member bears witness to God’s love and grace and promises to be involved responsibly in the ministry of Christ’s Church. Caring for God’s Creation is a critical act of faith in today’s world and should be included in G-1.0304, “The Ministry of Members,” of the Book of Order.

Advice from the Advisory Committee on the Constitution

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution advised the 222nd General Assembly (2016) that Item 09-11 presents the following matters the General Assembly should consider:
There are several points already in G-1.0304 that encourage church members to live out faithful stewardship of God’s creation. The responsibility for caring for God’s creation already is included in our confessional documents, as noted in the rationale, and this should be instructive for all church members.

The *Book of Order* is a constitutional document, not a manual of operations. Although there is no impediment to approving this overture, there is no compelling reason to add this to the *Book of Order*.

The Assembly Committee on Immigration and Environmental Issues (09) voted to approve Item 09-11 43/11. The 222nd General Assembly (2016) approved the committee’s recommendation 429/120.

For the full report of Item 06-15 [https://www.pc-biz.org/#/committee/569/business](https://www.pc-biz.org/#/committee/569/business)
16-G. Access to the Lord’s Table
On Amending W-2.4011a. and b. (Item 14-03)

The 222nd General Assembly (2016) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

Shall W-2.4011a. and b. be amended by striking the current text and inserting new text to read as follows? [Text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“**Theology of the Lord’s Supper**

“a. The opportunity to eat and drink with Christ is not a right bestowed upon the worthy, but a privilege given to the undeserving who come in faith, repentance, and love. All who come to the table are offered the bread and cup, regardless of their age or understanding. If some of those who come have not yet been baptized, an invitation to baptismal preparation and Baptism should be graciously extended.

“Worshippers prepare themselves to celebrate the Lord’s Supper by putting their trust in Christ, confessing their sin, and seeking reconciliation with God and one another. Even those who doubt may come to the table in order to be assured of God’s love and grace in Jesus Christ.

“**Welcoming to the Table**

“b. In cases where baptized children who have not yet begun to participate in the Lord’s Supper express a desire to receive the Sacrament, the session should provide an occasion to welcome them to the table in public worship. Their introduction to the Lord’s Supper should include ongoing instruction or formation in the meaning and mystery of the Sacraments.”

**Background and Rationale**

This proposed amendment is an alternate resolution from the original overture from the Presbytery of Southeastern Illinois, Item 14-03. Presbyteries of Cimarron, Florida, Huntingdon, and Palo Duro concurred with the original overture. The Presbytery of the Southeastern Illinois provided the following rationale:

We acknowledge the importance of Baptism in the life of a Christian and fully support the goal that every Christian should be strongly encouraged to acknowledge the lordship of Christ in her/his life with the act of Baptism. Having said that, we also realize that the current wording in the *Book of Order* regarding who can partake in Holy Communion excludes those developing Christians who have not yet made the baptismal declaration. Children whose parents decided to not partake in infant baptism would be excluded until such time as (usually during the Confirmation experience) they themselves choose to be baptized. People who are new to the faith and are being nurtured by a congregation would also be excluded. In both of these cases it appears that the *Book of Order* would exclude these people from participation and require them to stay behind in the pews while everyone else goes forward to receive the elements.

We believe that few congregations actually follow the *Book of Order* in this regard. Holy Communion is routinely open to all who profess faith in Jesus Christ, with no mention of having to have been baptized.

We feel strongly that the *Book of Order* should be changed in the above ways so that we can walk arm-in-arm with all of our seeking brothers and sisters as we go forward to receive this holy sacrament.

**Advice from the Advisory Committee on the Constitution**

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution advised the 222nd General Assembly (2016) to approve Item 14-03 and provided the following advice:
The Advisory Committee on the Constitution notes that the proposed Directory for Worship addresses this concern by providing that “All who come to the table are offered the bread and cup” and that “an invitation to baptismal preparation and baptism should be graciously extended” (proposed W-3.0409) to those who come to the table but have not been baptized.

**Editor’s Note:** The proposed Amendment 16-F is wording taken directly from the proposed revised Directory for Worship (see W-3.0409 and W-4.0202). If 16-H, the revised Directory for Worship, is approved by a majority of the presbyteries and Amendment 16-F is also approved by a majority of the presbyteries, the wording in the Amendment 16-F will already be in the revised Directory for Worship.

The Assembly Committee on Theological Issues and Institutions (14) voted to approve an alternate resolution, 73/3. The 222nd General Assembly (2016) approved the committee’s recommendation on the alternate resolution, 516/45.

For the full report of Item 14-03 [https://www.pc-biz.org/#/committee/579/business](https://www.pc-biz.org/#/committee/579/business)