

Committee on Ministerial Vocation

**Standing Committee Report
44th General Assembly**

The Standing Committee on Ministerial Vocation convened at 4:00 p.m. on Wednesday, June 19, 2024, and met twice. Chairman TE Carolyn Poteet opened the meeting with prayer.

A. Business Referred to Committee:

- 1. **Recommendation GA44-26**
- 2. **Recommendation GA44-27**
- 3. **Recommendation GA44-28**
- 4. **Recommendation GA44-29**
- 5. **Recommendation GA44-30**
- 6. **Recommendation GA44-31**
- 7. **Recommendation GA44-32**
- 8. **Recommendation GA44-33**
- 9. **Recommendation GA44-34**
- 10. **Recommendation GA44-35**
- 11. **Recommendation GA44-37**
- 12. **Minutes** of the MVC Permanent Committee
- 13. **Minutes** of the Chaplains Work and Care Committee

B. Recommendations:

- 1. **Recommendation GA44-26:** The Permanent Judicial Commission recommends that the 44th General Assembly **DECLINE** amending the Book of Government sections 9-5E and 9-11 concerning Chaplain’s endorsements and that Recommendation 44-27 be answered by this action **be adopted**.

- 2. **Recommendation GA44-27:** The MVC recommends that the 44th General Assembly **APPROVE** amending the Book of Government sections 9-5E and 9-11 concerning Chaplain’s endorsements **not be adopted**.

Current G. 9-5E	Proposed Changes for G. 9-5E Changes in <i>bold italics</i>
G.9.5E Chaplain A court of the Church, a hospital, the military, institutions, universities, or other appropriate fields of service may call a Teaching Elder as Chaplain if the Presbytery deems it appropriate. In such cases, the Chaplain shall always have as a primary responsibility the sharing of the Good News of God in Jesus Christ.	G.9.5E Chaplain A court of the Church, a hospital, the military, institutions, universities, or other appropriate fields of service may call a Teaching Elder as Chaplain if the Presbytery deems it appropriate. In such cases, the Chaplain shall always have as a primary responsibility the sharing of the Good News of God in Jesus Christ. <i>All Teaching Elders serving as Chaplains for institutions requiring Ecclesiastical Endorsement shall be endorsed through the Chaplains Work and</i>

	<p><i>Care Committee. Chaplains serving Institutions that do not require Endorsement should normally be endorsed to certify being fully qualified to serve in this specialized ministry. (See Rules for Assembly X.10-1 I)</i></p>
<p>G.9-11</p> <p>The Ruling Elder as a Commissioned Pastor</p> <p>A Ruling Elder may be temporarily authorized by Presbytery as a Commissioned Pastor for a congregation without a Pastor to preach the Word, evangelize, moderate a Session, administer the sacraments, perform marriages (if civil law allows), preside at funerals, and provide pastoral care. Presbyteries may also approve and give appropriate powers to a Ruling Elder to serve as a Commissioned Pastor in mission churches, church planting and church revitalization works, or in chaplaincy positions in hospitals, hospices, prisons, or other institutions.</p> <p>A. Authorization shall be for a term up to three years and may be renewed. Such authorization shall specify those powers granted and shall stipulate in which church(es) or ministry contexts those powers are authorized. Such powers shall be exercised only in those contexts.</p> <p>B. Potential Commissioned Pastors shall be examined by Presbytery and found to have sufficient knowledge in the areas in which they will be serving.</p>	<p>G.9-11</p> <p>The Ruling Elder as a Commissioned Pastor</p> <p>A Ruling Elder may be temporarily authorized by Presbytery as a Commissioned Pastor for a congregation without a Pastor to preach the Word, evangelize, moderate a Session, administer the sacraments, perform marriages (if civil law allows), preside at funerals, and provide pastoral care. Presbyteries may also approve and give appropriate powers to a Ruling Elder to serve as a Commissioned Pastor in mission churches, church planting and church revitalization works, or in chaplaincy positions in hospitals, hospices, prisons, or other institutions.</p> <p>A. Authorization shall be for a term up to three years and may be renewed. Such authorization shall specify those powers granted and shall stipulate in which church(es) or ministry contexts those powers are authorized. Such powers shall be exercised only in those contexts.</p> <p>B. Potential Commissioned Pastors shall be examined by Presbytery and found to have sufficient knowledge in the areas in which they will be serving.</p> <p>C. <i>Commissioned Pastors approved by their Presbytery to serve as a Chaplain for institutions requiring Ecclesiastical Endorsement shall be endorsed through the Chaplains Work and Care Committee. Chaplains serving Institutions that do not require Endorsement should normally be endorsed to certify being fully qualified to serve in this specialized ministry. (see Rules for Assembly X.10-1 I) [subsequent paragraphs are to be renumbered accordingly]</i></p>

3. **Recommendation GA44-28:** The Ministerial Vocation Committee recommends that the 44th General Assembly APPROVE amending the Book of Government section 10-7 & 9.5C.3 concerning Transitional Pastors **be adopted**.

Current Book of Government 10-7	Proposed <i>Book of Government</i> 10-7 Amendments in <i>bold italics</i>
<p>10-7 Temporary Pastoral Relationships</p> <p>A. Temporary Pastoral Relationships may be established with lawfully ordained Ministers or Commissioned Pastors when a church is without a pastor.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Transitional Pastor <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. A Transitional Pastor is called by the Session to serve during the period a congregation is seeking a Pastor. The Transitional Pastor intentionally leads the congregation toward greater health and readiness for their next pastor and will ordinarily be appointed by the Presbytery to moderate the Session during the time of service. b. Due to the temporary nature of the call, Transitional Pastors called from another Presbytery in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church will ordinarily maintain membership in their home presbytery. c. Upon approval of the Ministerial Committee, Transitional Pastors are introduced to the receiving presbytery and enrolled as corresponding members (voice but not vote). d. If a Transitional Pastor is called from outside the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, the presbytery shall examine and transfer the pastor according to 	<p>10-7 Temporary Pastoral Relationships</p> <p>A. Temporary Pastoral Relationships may be established with lawfully ordained Ministers or Commissioned Pastors when a church is without a pastor.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Transitional Pastor <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. A Transitional Pastor is called by the Session to serve during the period a congregation is seeking a Pastor. The Transitional Pastor intentionally leads the congregation toward greater health and readiness for their next pastor and will ordinarily be appointed by the Presbytery to moderate the Session during the time of service. b. Due to the temporary nature of the call, Transitional Pastors called from another Presbytery in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church will ordinarily maintain membership in their home presbytery. c. Upon approval of the Ministerial Committee, Transitional Pastors are introduced to the receiving presbytery and enrolled as corresponding members (voice but not vote). d. If a Transitional Pastor is called from outside the Evangelical Presbyterian Church and seeks to transfer ordination, the presbytery

<p>applicable provisions of this <i>Book of Government</i>.</p>	<p>shall examine and transfer the pastor according to applicable provisions of this Book of Government.</p> <p>e. <i>If a Transitional Pastor from outside the Evangelical Presbyterian Church is not seeking to transfer ordination, the Session may extend an invitation in the same manner as a Stated Supply Pastor except that the invitation will remain in effect during the period the congregation is seeking a Pastor.</i></p>
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Current <i>Book of Government</i> 9-5	Proposed <i>Book of Government</i> 9-5 Amendments in <i>bold italics</i>
<p>9-5 The office of Teaching Elder</p> <p>A. Pastor</p> <p>1. Titles</p> <p>A Teaching Elder may be called by a congregation to be a Pastor or Associate Pastor. Sessions may call a Teaching Elder as Assistant Pastor, Transitional Pastor, or invite a Teaching Elder as Stated Supply Pastor, or Occasional Supply Pastor. Presbytery must approve all such positions. These are the only recognized callings for Teaching Elders in a congregational setting.⁵⁴ The office of the “co-pastor” is not a constitutionally recognized calling in a local church. Except as otherwise provided in the Book of Government, the Pastor of the church shall be the Moderator of Session.</p>	<p>9-5 The office of Teaching Elder</p> <p>A. Pastor</p> <p>1. Titles</p> <p>A Teaching Elder may be called by a congregation to be a Pastor or Associate Pastor. Sessions may call a Teaching Elder as Assistant Pastor, Transitional Pastor, or invite a Teaching Elder as <i>Transitional Pastor</i>, Stated Supply Pastor, or Occasional Supply Pastor. Presbytery must approve all such positions. These are the only recognized callings for Teaching Elders in a congregational setting.⁵⁴ The office of the “co-pastor” is not a constitutionally recognized calling in a local church. Except as otherwise provided in the Book of Government, the Pastor of the church shall be the Moderator of Session.</p>

4. **Recommendation GA44-29:** The Permanent Judicial Commission recommends that the 44th General Assembly APPROVE amending the Book of Government sections 10-7 & 9.5C.3 concerning Transitional Pastors **is answered by approval 44-28.**
5. **Recommendation GA44-30:** The Presbytery of Mid-America respectfully OVERTURES the 44th General Assembly to direct the Permanent Committee on Theology to examine the concept of sexuality as it pertains to identity/self-conception, progressive sanctification, and concupiscence **is answered by substitute recommendation 44-43.** *see proposed consolidated overture 44-43.
6. **Recommendation GA44-31:** The Presbytery of Mid-America respectfully OVERTURES the 44th General Assembly to direct the Permanent Committee on Ministerial Vocation to make recommendations to the 45th General Assembly on how churches as it relates to three specific questions **not be adopted.**
7. **Recommendation GA44-32:** The Presbytery of Central South respectfully OVERTURES the 44th General Assembly seeking a moderator appointed Ad-Interim Committee to study and address the items surrounding same-sex attraction, as well as to update the EPC Position Paper on Human Sexuality **is answered by substitute recommendation 44-43.** *see proposed consolidated overture 44-43.
8. **Recommendation GA44-33:** The Presbytery of Gulf South respectfully OVERTURES the 44th General Assembly to direct the Permanent Committee on Theology to examine the concept of sexuality as it pertains to identity/self-conception, progressive sanctification, and concupiscence **is answered by substitute recommendation 44-43.** *see proposed consolidated overture 44-43.
9. **Recommendation GA44-34:** The Presbytery of West respectfully OVERTURES the 44th General Assembly seeking to examine the concept of sexuality as it pertains to identity/self-conception, progressive sanctification, and concupiscence **is answered by substitute recommendation 44-43.** *see proposed consolidated overture 44-43.
10. **Recommendation GA44-35:** The Presbytery of Alleghenies respectfully OVERTURES the 44th General Assembly seeking to examine the concept of sexuality as it pertains to identity/self-conception, progressive sanctification, and concupiscence **is answered by substitute recommendation 44-43.** *see proposed consolidated overture 44-43.

11. **Recommendation GA44-37:** The Presbytery of New River respectfully OVERTURES the 44th General Assembly to APPROVE amending the Book of Government 9-3 **is answered by substitute recommendation 44-43.** *see proposed consolidated overture 44-43.

Current Language	Proposed Language Changes in <i>bold italics</i> or strikethrough
<p>9-3 Life and character of officers</p> <p>A. According to Scripture, those who bear office in the Church should exhibit certain characteristics of life. This includes being above reproach, sound in the faith, wise in the things of God, and discreet in all things. Persons who fill this office should exhibit a lifestyle that is an example to all, both in and outside the Church. A congregation preparing to elect persons to this holy office should carefully study appropriate passages of Scripture relating to the Ruling Elder and be very prayerful in selecting persons to this office.⁵²</p> <p>B. As the law of love places certain duties upon each Christian, Church Officers are especially bound by their calling to fulfill them and to be an example to all.</p>	<p>9-3 Life and character of officers</p> <p>A. According to Scripture, those who bear office in the Church should exhibit certain characteristics of life. This includes being above reproach, sound in the faith, wise in the things of God, and discreet in all things. Persons who fill this office should exhibit a lifestyle that is an example to all, both in and outside the Church. A congregation preparing to elect persons to this holy office should carefully study appropriate passages of Scripture relating to the Ruling Elder and be very prayerful in selecting persons to this office.⁵²</p> <p>B. As the law of love places certain duties upon each Christian, Church Officers are especially bound by their calling to fulfill them and to be an example to all.</p> <p>C. <i>Men and women who identify as homosexual, even those who identify as homosexual and claim to practice celibacy in that self-identification, are disqualified from holding office in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church.</i></p>

12. That the **Minutes** of the **Ministerial Vocation Committee (MVC)** Permanent Committee dated July 25, 2023, August 17, 2023, September 12-14, 2023, November 29, 2023, January 10, 2024, January 23, 2024, January 31, 2024, March 5-7, 2024, and May 21, 2024, **be approved with minor notations.**

13. That the **Minutes** of the **Chaplains Work and Care Committee (CWCC)** dated July 27, 2023, September 7, 2023, October 30-31, 2023, and March 4-5, 2024, **be approved with minor notations.**

C. Additional Recommendations from the Standing Committee:

1. Per *Rules for Assembly* 9-6, the Committee voted to place the following eligible recommendation(s) on an omnibus consent motion:

[NOTE: a recommendation amended by the Standing Committee, substitute recommendation or additional recommendation in C.2 are not eligible for the omnibus consent motion.]

MVC Permanent Committee Minutes

CWCC Permanent Committee Minutes

The Standing Committee commends the members of the Permanent Committee on Ministerial Vocation for their good work during the past year.

TE Carolyn Poteet closed the meeting with prayer.

***44-43**

Proposed Consolidated Overture from Mid-America Presbytery [New River Leadership Team Concurring]

(Consolidating the Current overture 44-30 from Mid-America Presbytery with overture 44-32 from The Presbytery of the Central South, overture 44-33 from Presbytery of the Gulf South, overture 44-34 from the Presbytery of the West, overture 44-35 from Presbytery of the Alleghenies, and overture 44-37 from New River Presbytery)

Resolved that:

Whereas:

The EPC's position paper on Human Sexuality rightly states "The Scriptures teach that human sexuality is indeed a gift for our enjoyment, its primary purpose is to glorify God. . . . [A]ll humans are obligated to glorify our Creator in our sexuality through faithful conformity to God's design, revealed in the Scriptures."

Whereas:

The 44th General Assembly of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church is agreed that the only proper context in which human sexuality is fully and rightly expressed is in the covenant union between one man and one woman. Any expression of sexuality outside this biblical norm is sin, and this includes the unmortified corruption and disordered inclinations of original sin that give rise to homosexual desires and impulses as well as the particular acts of sin that proceed from original sin such as same-sex sexual attraction, same-sex sexual intimacy and acts of lust.

Therefore,

to clarify our witness to the world that has increasingly denied God's design for sexuality, and to strengthen our understanding of biblical norms and standards—especially as they apply to our standards for office-bearers in the Church, the General Assembly directs the moderator to appoint a nine-member *Ad-Interim* committee made up of:

- RE Tom Werner
- TE Shelley Kral
- TE Rufus Burton
- TE Sandy Willson
- TE Cameron Shaffer
- TE John Dorr
- TE Case Thorp
- RE Carol Williams
- TE Aaron White

And charges them to study the Scriptures, The Westminster Confession of Faith, and Catechisms to bring clarity to our witness regarding:

- 1) Theological anthropology, with respect to human sexuality as it pertains to contemporary usage of the sexual self-conception and how such language comports with Scripture and the Westminster standards;
- 2) Progressive Sanctification and how it informs the Reformed understanding of the mortification of sin and the doctrine of repentance;
- 3) Concupiscence as it relates to a Reformed conception of the Christian's new nature in Christ and when homosexual temptation, like other temptations disqualifies one from ordained office;
- 4) The Christian hope for those who experience and flee sexual temptation, especially homosexual temptation; and
- 5) How the answers to these questions might inform standards for officers who have struggled in these areas but have mortified such temptation and desire.

The Committee is further charged to review our Position Papers, Pastoral Letters, and the *Book of Order* and to recommend potential changes that will clarify, align, and strengthen our witness to the larger world.

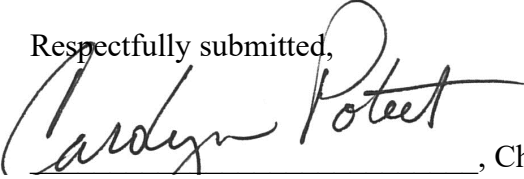
The Committee shall make an interim report to the 45th General Assembly, and a final report and recommendations to the 46th General Assembly.

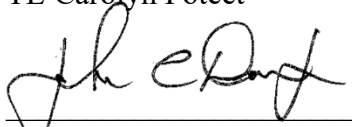
The General Assembly commits to fund this committee's work. The National Leadership Team shall review and approve any necessary expenses.

Be it further resolved that it is the opinion and wish of the 44th General Assembly that no presbytery shall take action on petitions or matters before them that might touch on these areas of inquiry and exploration until the final report is received and acted upon by the 46th General Assembly.

Signature Page for Standing Committee Ministerial Vocation Report

Respectfully submitted,


_____, Chairman
TE Carolyn Poteet


_____, Clerk
TE John Dorr