



February 13, 2025

To: TE Dean Weaver, Stated Clerk, and the Office of the General Assembly

Subj: Two Overtures from the Presbytery of the Midwest

Please find two overtures attached from the Presbytery of the Midwest.

The first is a request for the Permanent Committee on Theology to review the Position Paper on Divorce and Remarriage. This overture was approved at our 183<sup>rd</sup> Stated Meeting on September 13-14, 2024 and then amended at our 184<sup>th</sup> Stated Meeting on February 7-8, 2025.

The second is an overture to amend the Book of Government to allow ruling elders to serve as advisors to candidates under care. This was approved at our 184<sup>th</sup> Stated Meeting on February 7-8, 2025.

We are grateful for the General Assembly's consideration of these two matters.

To God be the glory,

[Pete Scribner \(Feb 12, 2025 16:06 EST\)](#)

TE Pete Scribner

Stated Clerk

Presbytery of the Midwest



**Overture of the Presbytery of the Midwest (EPC)**  
**to**  
**the 45th General Assembly of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church**  
**on the matter of**  
**A Revision of the EPC Position Paper on Divorce and Remarriage**

**Whereas**, The EPC Position Paper on Human Sexuality rightly begins by acknowledging “In a time when views of human sexuality and marriage are rapidly changing, we believe it is necessary and helpful to state clearly and compassionately to the church and the world our beliefs about God’s design for human sexuality” and

**Whereas**, the 37th General Assembly provided helpful guidance to the Church and the world that was both clearly stated and compassionate in its adoption of the Position Paper on Human Sexuality as to God’s design and purposes for sexual unions and

**Whereas**, the same position paper offers only limited commentary on the institution of marriage and none on the challenge of divorce and

**Whereas**, the extant EPC Position Paper on Divorce and Remarriage does not achieve the level of clarity and compassion of the EPC Position Paper on Human Sexuality and

**Whereas**, the extant EPC Position Paper on Divorce and Remarriage fails to address many questions the contemporary reader has regarding a biblical theology of divorce and remarriage therefore

**Be it resolved** that the 45th General Assembly of the EPC direct the Permanent Committee on Theology to review the current position paper on Divorce and Remarriage; to study the scriptures, the Westminster Confession, the EPC Position Paper on Human Sexuality and other relevant theological works and to revise the EPC Position Paper on Divorce and Remarriage to the end that it clearly and compassionately communicates what we believe the Bible teaches about the matter to a contemporary audience.

**Be it further resolved** that the committee is directed to address such questions including but not limited to the following:

- What constitutes a true marriage in the eyes of God? (The State identifies some unions as “marriages” that the Church would not accept as such. It is therefore incumbent upon the Church to clarify its teaching as to precisely when a relationship becomes a marriage).
- What biblical guidance is given to the wife or husband who suffers abuse at the hands of their spouse?
- What biblical guidance is given to the wife or husband whose children suffer abuse at the hands of the other spouse?



- What is the definition of abuse, and specifically the form(s) of abuse that may prove to be sufficient grounds for a biblical divorce?
- What is the counsel of the Church in the case where both partners are penitent yet remain unwilling or unable to manifest God's design and purpose for their marriage? (In this question the assembly critiques the assumption in section V of the existing position paper that there exists in all or most cases of marital duress an "offending" and an "offended" party. In reality this dichotomy often proves false).
- What counsel does the Assembly give couples who have experienced the trauma of adultery? The extant position paper directs only that forgiveness be offered. How is the Church to seek to protect, in the case of adultery, the offended party if and when he/she offers forgiveness and reconciliation and how does the Assembly counsel such couples to move toward reconciliation?
- What is the counsel of the Church to persons who are, in the eyes of the state, married in a same-sex union and, potentially, with children?
- What resources does the Assembly recommend for further study, premarital counseling and marriage counseling?

**Be it further resolved** that the committee shall report its preliminary findings/draft revision to the 46th General Assembly and submit its final draft for consideration by the 47th General Assembly.



## Overture Concerning Ruling Elders as Candidate Advisors

### Summary

The Presbytery of the Midwest overtures the General Assembly to edit the Book of Government 11-2.E. to allow for ruling elders to serve as advisors to candidates under care.

### Proposed Change

Current Reading: The Presbytery shall assign a **Teaching Elder** in the Presbytery, ordinarily not the Candidate's Pastor, to serve as advisor to the Candidate. The advisor and the Candidate's Pastor shall submit regular reports to the appropriate committee on the progress of the Candidate.

Proposed Reading: The Presbytery shall assign a **Teaching Elder or a Ruling Elder** in the Presbytery, ordinarily not the Candidate's Pastor, to serve as an advisor to the Candidate. The advisor and the Candidate's Pastor shall submit regular reports to the appropriate committee on the progress of the Candidate.

### Rationale

A candidate under care needs two types of supervision, spiritual supervision as they discern a call to ministry and administrative supervision from the presbytery as they seek to navigate the complicated process of ordination. A candidate's pastor (or pastoral designee) is well equipped for the first task, and a candidate's advisor is well positioned for the second. This is in line with the Procedure Manual for Ministerial and Candidate Committees, which describes advisors as "project managers" who connect the candidate to the presbytery.

In the Midwest Presbytery, the candidate care director defaults to this 'project manager' role since the candidate's advisor typically does not serve on the Ministerial Committee. At other times, a ruling elder has been assigned as a 'liaison' to fulfill this role instead, but the Book of Order forbids a ruling elder from serving as the candidate's advisor. In these cases the advisor is a third elder with an unclear responsibility for the candidate.

This change would allow us to simply have two roles for the candidate: their pastor, who provides them career guidance and oversees their discipleship, and their advisor, who serves on the Ministerial Committee and oversees the candidacy process.