



# Overture 11-12



## SUMMARY OF OVERTURE

This overture recommends the 223rd General Assembly pass resolutions to: affirm the gifts of LGBTQ+ people for ministry, celebrate the dedicated and pioneering service of LGBTQ+ people in the life of the church for many years, lament the policies and actions of the PCUSA that have caused LGBTQ+ people to leave the denomination, and encourages all congregations and councils of the PCUSA continually to seek to expand their welcome.

## QUESTIONS

### What do you mean by LGBTQ+?

LGBTQ+ is an initialism that stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer persons. The plus sign is to indicate that while language is inadequate to keep up with the depth of human experience, our intention is to ensure all are included even as terms shift.

### What has the PCUSA said already about LGBTQ+ persons?

The Presbyterian Church (USA) has previously affirmed the need for the church to stand for the dignity and worth of “homosexual persons” (the term used at the time of passage). Given the disproportionate rates of discrimination and harassment faced by transgender and non-binary persons, the church is called to expand its affirmation of the dignity and worth to include transgender and non-binary people.

- The 117th and 118th General Assemblies asserted “the need for the church to stand for just treatment of homosexual persons [sic] in our society in regard to their civil liberties, equal rights and protection under the law from social and economic discrimination which is due all its citizens.”
- On Affirming Civil Rights and Nondiscrimination for All Persons, Regardless of Sexual Orientation. That the 214th General Assembly (2002) direct the Stated Clerk to communicate the following action to all clergy, congregations, and seminaries:
- The General Assembly reaffirms these resolutions adopted by the 190th General Assembly (1978) of the UPCUSA-
- 1. Calls upon Presbyterians to work for the passage of laws that prohibit discrimination in the areas of employment, housing, and public accommodations based on the sexual orientation of a person.
- In 2010 the General Assembly sent to presbyteries an amendment to the Book of Order, revising an explicit standard for elders and deacons in our denomination. That standard (added to the Book of Order in 1996) specifically stated that those ordained to office in our denomination were “to live either in fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman, or chastity



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in singleness.” The amendment, which was approved by a majority of presbyteries, removed the specific standard for faithful living with regard to sexual practice, instead underlining the responsibility of councils to assess candidates for ordination or for installation “guided by Scripture and the confessions. (Office of Theology and Worship)

- In 2014, the General Assembly passed two actions regarding marriage: an authoritative interpretation (AI) and a proposed amendment to the Book of Order.
  - The General Assembly issued an AI allowing pastors to conduct a same-gender marriage service and sessions to authorize the use of a congregation’s facilities for such a service, where the laws of the state allow.
  - The General Assembly also voted to send presbyteries an amendment to the Book of Order, changing its definition of marriage from “a man and a woman” to “two people.” That amendment was approved by a large majority of presbyteries and ratified into the Book of Order in 2015.

## **Why is this overture important to support?**

The Assembly celebrates that over the years, LGBTQ+ 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.

Since 2011, councils have been permitted under the constitution to ordain people without regard to sexual orientation or any other matter not related to their calling, gifts, preparation or suitability for the responsibilities of ordered ministry.

Today, openly LGBTQ+ people are leading churches, preaching the gospel, serving those in need, and otherwise using their gifts for ministry. Still, the General Assembly has never explicitly affirmed the gifts and lives of LGBTQ+ people, some councils have elected not to ordain some LGBTQ+ candidates; and some inquirers, candidates, and already ordained deacons, elders, and ministers do not feel free to serve openly. This assembly has a historic opportunity to ensure all LGBTQ+ persons know that they are included and celebrated in the PCUSA.



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