

1 **OVERTURE** from Presbytery of Southwest Florida (to MNA)
2 "Restructure Boundaries of SW Florida Presbytery"
3

4 **Whereas**, a presbytery confined to a smaller geographic region can lead to more efficient
5 oversight, cooperation, and connection between particular congregations in the
6 presbytery; and
7

8 **Whereas**, fostering a sense of connectionalism and cooperation of churches, teaching elders,
9 and ruling elders beyond the local congregation is a hallmark of historic
10 Presbyterianism; and
11

12 **Whereas**, a presbytery that has greater concentration within a specific geographic region
13 may and should lead to a greater emphasis on church planting within that region; and
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15 **Whereas**, a presbytery that encompasses a smaller geographic region should permit shorter
16 meetings and shorter driving distances for presbyters to such meetings; and
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18 **Whereas**, shorter distances should lead to greater participation in presbytery by ruling elders,
19 thus allowing ruling elders to better fulfill their established calling to "govern the
20 church well;" and
21

22 **Whereas**, the Guidelines for Dividing Presbyteries, as adopted by the 26th General
23 Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America, attached hereto as Exhibit A (the
24 "Guidelines"), include "regional cohesiveness," "member churches hav[ing] a potential
25 for shared ministries," and "member churches hav[ing] a common commitment to the
26 region;" and
27

28 **Whereas** the Lord has greatly blessed the working of the Presbytery of Southwest Florida
29 giving us a total of twenty six churches (plus three mission works) within the bounds
30 of our Presbytery, and
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32 **Whereas**, the Guidelines encourage Presbyteries with over 30 churches to "consider
33 whether subdivision would lead to more effective ministry"; and
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35 **Whereas**, the Suncoast Florida Presbytery, having heard of the discussion of the Presbytery
36 of Southwest Florida to multiply, requested that the churches in the southern portion of
37 the Presbytery of Southwest Florida join them;
38

39 **Now therefore be it resolved**, that Presbytery of Southwest Florida overture the 43rd
40 General Assembly to restructure the boundary of the Presbytery of Southwest Florida
41 so that all churches and mission works in the counties of Manatee, Sarasota, that
42 portion of Charlotte north of the Peace River, DeSoto and Glades join the Suncoast
43 Florida Presbytery, effective July 1, 2015.
44

45 *Adopted by the Presbytery of Southwest Florida at its stated meeting, February 14, 2015*
46 *Attested by /s/ TE Freddy Fritz, stated clerk*

1 **Exhibit A- Guidelines for Dividing Presbyteries**
2 **(Approved by the 26th General Assembly [M26GA, 26-44, p. 180])**
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4 As presbyteries grow in the number of congregations and membership they include, there
5 may come a time at which division of the presbytery may be helpful. Presbyteries should
6 take care that they do not divide prematurely, causing one or more of the resulting
7 presbyteries to lack the resources necessary for their future growth. On the other hand, a
8 presbytery may become so large that it cannot give adequate attention to the needs of the
9 churches and ministers within its membership, and may find even its efforts at church
10 planting and other growth in ministry difficult.

11
12 The 16th General Assembly (1988) established guidelines for the division of presbyteries
13 presented below unchanged. These guidelines are sufficient in addressing most options.
14

15 Special care should be taken to ensure that the division of a presbytery is not made in haste
16 or without adequate consideration of the needs of all parties involved. Therefore, at the very
17 earliest stages of discussion of a possible division, those initiating the discussion: (a) should
18 take care to ensure that all churches and teaching elders (including missionaries and other
19 out of bounds members) who will possibly be affected are fully informed of the discussion
20 as early as possible; (b) should communicate with the stated clerk of the presbytery, who in
21 turn should communicate with the entire presbytery; (c) should be encouraged to contact
22 General Assembly Mission to North America and the General Assembly Stated Clerk very
23 early in the process as well, for any assistance they may be able to offer in making a smooth
24 transition and in giving advice that may be helpful to the planning process; and (d) should
25 target the first meeting of a presbytery in the summer or fall of the year so that they may be
26 able to fully participate in the nominating process of General Assembly without undue delay
27

28 (Following are Guidelines taken from the *M16GA* 1988, p.143, 16-63, III, 16-17):

- 29 (1) A presbytery should have a radius of 2-1/2 hours maximum driving distance.
- 30 (2) A presbytery should have a minimum of 10 churches.
- 31 (3) A presbytery should have a total communicant membership of at least 1000.
- 32 (4) Presbytery boundaries should not partition metropolitan areas.
- 33 (5) A presbytery should have regional cohesiveness.
- 34 (6) A presbytery should have at least 3 churches each having a membership of at least
35 125 communicant members.
- 36 (7) Presbytery boundaries should be such that its member churches have a potential for
37 shared ministries.
- 38 (8) Presbytery boundaries should be such that its member churches have a common
39 commitment to the region within the boundaries and sense their shared responsibility
40 to cover the region with the Gospel.
- 41 (9) When a presbytery reaches 30 churches, it should consider whether subdivision
42 would lead to more effective ministry. Reasons:
 - 43 (i) It is often to the advantage of very large presbyteries to subdivide for more
44 efficient oversight and closer cooperation.

- 1 (ii) Additional presbyteries are urgently needed in most of the United States, other
2 than the South, and in Canada in order to make the Presbyterian system of
3 government operate efficiently. A presbytery in an area where the PCA is not
4 particularly strong could be viable with as few as ten churches, and even with
5 less. (The first presbytery in this land had but seven.)
6 (10) A presbytery should limit its boundaries to that geographic area for which it is able
7 to take meaningful responsibility for evangelism and church development.
8 Reasons: M12GA, 12-67, III, 8.
9 (11) We acknowledge the existence of language presbyteries.
10 (12) We recognize the “ideal nature of guidelines such as these and understand that
11 several existing presbyteries do not presently meet all of them.”
12

13 *Approved by the MNA Committee, Oct 97*