OVERTURE 43 from Potomac Presbytery
"Pursuing Racial Reconciliation and the Advance of the Gospel" (to OC)

Whereas, the 43rd General Assembly considered a personal resolution on racial reconciliation and referred the matter to the 44th General Assembly, so that lower courts could perfect and propose a resolution encouraging “heartfelt repentance”; and

Whereas, in the 1973 “Message to All the Churches,” the founding generation of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) expressly declared our denomination to be the “continuing church” of the Presbyterian Church in the United States (PCUS), saying, “We have called ourselves ‘Continuing’ Presbyterians because we seek to continue the faith of the founding fathers of that Church”; and

Whereas, the formation and identity of the PCA was shaped through the honorable and courageous commitment of our founding denominational leaders and churches to be faithful to the Scriptures in doctrine and in practice, and these convictions remain with us to this day; and

Whereas, during the Civil Rights period, there were founding denominational leaders and churches who not only failed to pursue racial reconciliation but also actively worked against it in both church and society through sinful practices, such as the segregation of worshipers by race; the exclusion of persons from Church membership on the basis of race; the exclusion of churches, or elders, from membership in Presbyteries, on the basis of race; the teaching that the Bible sanctions racial segregation and discourages inter-racial marriage; the participation in and defense of white supremacist organizations; and the failure to live out the gospel imperative that “love does no wrong to a neighbor” (Romans 13:10); and

Whereas, the vestiges of these sins continue to affect our denomination to this day and significantly hinder efforts for reconciliation with our African-American and other minority brothers and sisters by: often refusing to lay down our cultural preferences so that these brothers and sisters might feel more welcome in our churches; not sufficiently encouraging minority culture brothers into leadership within our General Assembly Committees and Agencies, presbyteries, and churches, as evidenced by our history; failing to lovingly confront our brothers and sisters concerning racial sins and personal bigotry; and failing to “learn to do good, seek justice and correct oppression” (Isaiah 1:17); and

Whereas, the 30th General Assembly adopted a resolution on racial reconciliation that confessed “heinous sins” connected with unbiblical forms of servitude, but did not deal specifically with the racial sins committed during the much more recent Civil Rights period, which betrayed the visible unity of all believers in Christ (Ephesians 2:11-22), the command to love our neighbor as ourselves (Mark 12:31), and the image of God in all people (Genesis 1:27); and
Whereas, God has once more given the PCA a gracious opportunity to show the beauty, grace, and power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ through confession and through the fruits of repentance: such as, formative and corrective discipline for racial sins; in understanding and appreciation of minority cultures; intentionally establishing interracial friendships and partnerships inside and outside our denomination; renewing our church’s commitment to develop minority leadership at the congregational, presbytery, and denominational levels; and encouraging a denomination-wide vision for and commitment to a more racially and ethnically diverse church in obedience to the Great Commission; and

Therefore be it resolved, that the 44th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America does recognize, confess, and condemn these past and continuing racial sins and failure to love brothers and sisters from minority cultures in accordance with what the Gospel requires; and

Be it further resolved, that this General Assembly praises and recommits itself to the gospel task of racial reconciliation, diligently seeking effective courses of action to further that goal, with humility, sincerity and zeal, for the glory of God and the furtherance of the Gospel; and

Be it finally resolved, that the General Assembly urges the congregations and presbyteries of the Presbyterian Church in America to make this resolution known to their members in order that they may prayerfully confess their own racial sins as led by the Spirit and strive towards racial reconciliation for the advancement of the gospel, the love of Christ, and the glory of God.

Adopted unanimously by Potomac Presbytery at its stated meeting, March 19, 2016
Attested by /s/ RE Charles D. Robinson, stated clerk