

1 **OVERTURE 10** from Northern New England Presbytery (to OC, AC)
2 “Appoint Ad Interim Committee on Domestic Abuse and Sexual Assault”
3

4 **Whereas**, the sins of domestic abuse and sexual assault are expressly forbidden (2 Timothy
5 3:2-5; Jude 7; Exodus 21:15; Deuteronomy 22:25-27; also *WLC* 135 and 139); and
6

7 **Whereas**, these sins are especially heinous because they are “against the express letter of the
8 law,” “break many commandments,” “admit of no reparation,” and often involve
9 various other aggravations (*WLC* 151); and
10

11 **Whereas**, these sins are grievously prevalent in our society;¹ and
12

13 **Whereas**, these sins often produce in the victims a complex response of denial along with
14 immense fear and shame that persist with varying severity throughout life (e.g., 2
15 Samuel 13:1-22); and
16

17 **Whereas**, it is the responsibility of the elders of the church to exercise their authority,
18 severally and jointly, to shepherd those who are under their care by guarding against
19 such sinful behavior as much as possible, by wisely caring for those victimized by
20 the sins of others, and by appropriately disciplining those guilty of such sins toward a
21 full repentance; and
22

23 **Whereas**, these sins have been a concerning subject of attention not only in other
24 denominations but even in the proceedings of the 46th General Assembly; and
25

26 **Whereas**, the 42nd General Assembly previously exhorted the PCA and its courts to respond
27 boldly against one form of these sins, namely the sexual abuse of children; and
28

29 **Whereas**, no standardized resources for pastoral care on these sins and their complex
30 consequences exist for officers, church courts, and agencies in the PCA; and
31

32 **Whereas**, no clear guidelines for policy or practice with regard to these sins exist for the
33 officers, church courts, and agencies in the PCA that would protect individuals and
34 congregations; and
35

36 **Whereas**, the Rules of Discipline protect against unjust accusation (*BCO* 31-8), they also
37 make no consideration for the unique heinousness of the sins and their practical
38 effect on the victims;
39

¹ For example, the National Domestic Violence Hotline reports: “More than 1 in 3 women (35.6%) and more than 1 in 4 men (28.5%) in the United States have experienced rape, physical violence and/or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime” (available at <http://www.thehotline.org/resources/statistics/> accessed 6/15/18). For further sobering statistics on sexual violence see the National Center for Injury Prevention and Controls report entitled *Sexual Violence Surveillance: Uniform Definitions and Recommended Data Elements* (Atlanta: Center for Disease Control, 2014; available online at http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/sv_surveillance_definitions1-2009-a.pdf).

1 **Therefore be it resolved** that Northern New England Presbytery hereby overtures the 47th
2 General Assembly of the PCA to form a committee to study:

- 3
4 (1) the nature and causes of domestic abuse and sexual assault;
5 (2) the pastoral resources available for the care of survivors of these sins as well as
6 ministry and counsel for those overtaken by these sins;
7 (3) the best practices and policy guidelines for elders, church courts, and agencies
8 for protecting against these sins and for responding to them;
9 (4) the possibility of changes to the Rules of Discipline that would appropriately
10 protect victims of these sins within a biblical process; and
11

12 **Be it further resolved** that the committee shall be appointed by the moderator, and shall
13 include among its members or advisory members at least two subject-matter experts
14 and at least two women; and
15

16 **Be it further resolved** that the budget for the study committee be set at \$15,000/year and
17 that funds be derived from gifts to the AC designated for that purpose, with Northern
18 New England Presbytery committed to offer \$1,000, and
19

20 **Be it further resolved** that the committee shall present their findings and recommendations
21 for adoption by the 48th General Assembly.
22

23 *Adopted by Northern New England Presbytery at its stated meeting, February 2, 2019*

24 *Attested by TE C.S. Per Almquist, stated clerk*