

1 **OVERTURE 13** from Southern New England Presbytery (to CCB, AC, OC)
2 “Form Ad Interim Committee on Domestic Abuse and Sexual Assault” (Version 3)

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
21 a 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 make no consideration for the unique heinousness of these
37 sins and their practical effect on victims;

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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_definitions-2009-a.pdf).

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

- 3
4 (1) the nature of domestic abuse and sexual assault;
5 (2) the pastoral resources available for the care of survivors of these sins;
6 (3) the best practices and policy guidelines for elders, church courts, and agencies for
7 protecting against these sins and for responding to them;
8 (4) the possibility of changes to the Rules of Discipline that would appropriately
9 protect victims of these sins within a biblical process; and
10 (5) the possible need for repentance as a church; 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
14 experts 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 Southern
18 New England Presbytery committed to offer \$3,000; 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 Southern New England Presbytery at its stated meeting, January 19, 2019*

24 *Attested by /s/ TE Ron Heald, stated clerk*