

1 **OVERTURE 38** from Georgia Foothills Presbytery (to AC, OC)  
2 “Establish a Study Committee on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault”  
3 (Version 7)  
4

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

8 **Whereas**, these sins are especially heinous because they are “against the express letter of the  
9 law,” “break many commandments,” “admit of no reparation,” and often involve  
10 various other aggravations (*WLC* 151); and  
11

12 **Whereas**, these sins are grievously prevalent in our society;<sup>1</sup> and  
13

14 **Whereas**, these sins often produce in the victims a complex response of denial along with  
15 immense fear and shame that persist with varying severity throughout life (e.g.,  
16 2 Samuel 13:1-22); and  
17

18 **Whereas**, it is the responsibility of the elders of the church to exercise their authority,  
19 severally and jointly, to shepherd those who are under their care by guarding against  
20 such sinful behavior as much as possible, by wisely caring for those victimized by the  
21 sins of others, and by appropriately disciplining those guilty of such sins toward a full  
22 repentance; and  
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24 **Whereas**, these sins have been a concerning subject of attention not only in other  
25 denominations but even in the proceedings of the 46th General Assembly; and  
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27 **Whereas**, the 42nd General Assembly previously exhorted the PCA and its courts to respond  
28 boldly against one form of these sins, namely the sexual abuse of children; and  
29

30 **Whereas**, no standardized resources for pastoral care on these sins and their complex  
31 consequences exist for officers, church courts, and agencies in the PCA; and  
32

33 **Whereas**, no clear guidelines for policy or practice with regard to these sins exist for the  
34 officers, church courts, and agencies in the PCA that would protect individuals and  
35 congregations; and  
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37 **Whereas**, the Rules of Discipline make no consideration for the unique heinousness of these  
38 sins and their practical effect on victims;  
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<sup>1</sup> 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](http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/sv_surveillance_definitions-2009-a.pdf)).

1 **Therefore, be it resolved** that the Georgia Foothills 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 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 that  
17 funds be derived from gifts to the AC designated for that purpose, with the Georgia  
18 Foothills 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.

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23 *Adopted by Georgia Foothills Presbytery at its stated meeting, April 9, 2019*

24 *Attested by /s/ TE Don Aldin, stated clerk*