

1 **OVERTURE 43** from Metro Atlanta Presbytery (to AC, OC)
2 “Formation of a Study Committee on Domestic Abuse and Sexual Assault”
3 (Version 8)
4

5 **Whereas**, the sins of domestic abuse, including physical, emotional, and verbal abuse, and
6 sexual assault are expressly forbidden in scripture (Deuteronomy 22:25-27; Eph. 5:25-
7 29; 2 Timothy 3:2-5; 1 Peter 3:7; Jude 7; Exodus 21:15; also WLC 135 and 139); and
8

9 **Whereas**, these sins are especially heinous because they are “against the express letter of the
10 law,” “break many commandments,” “admit of no reparation,” and often involve various
11 other aggravations (WLC 151); and
12

13 **Whereas**, these sins are grievously prevalent in our society as well as the Church; and
14

15 **Whereas**, these sins cause a complex set of physical, emotional, spiritual, and psychological
16 responses—including immense shame, fear and anxiety, depression, trauma, isolation,
17 anger, and denial—that persist with varying levels of severity throughout life; and
18 since these heinous sins do lasting damage to every aspect of a victims life (e.g., 2
19 Samuel 13:1-22); and
20

21 **Whereas**, it is the responsibility of the elders of the church to exercise their authority, sever-
22 ally and jointly, to shepherd those who are under their care by guarding against such
23 sinful behavior as much as possible, by wisely caring for the vulnerable and those
24 victimized by the sins of others, and by appropriately disciplining those guilty of such
25 sins toward a full repentance in each case in accordance with applicable law (Ezekiel
26 34:1-24; James 1:27; BCO 8-3; 27-4); and
27

28 **Whereas**, these sins have been a concerning subject of attention not only in other denomina-
29 tions (cf. the Roman Catholic Church and the Southern Baptist Convention) but even
30 in the proceedings of the 46th General Assembly of the PCA; and
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32 **Whereas**, the 42nd General Assembly previously exhorted the PCA and its courts to respond
33 boldly against one form of these sins, namely the sexual abuse of children; and
34

35 **Whereas**, the PCA report on “Divorce and Remarriage” was limited in its focus and does not
36 adequately define the scope and nature of domestic abuse and sexual assault nor ade-
37 quately address many pastoral concerns regarding the care of those victimized by such
38 sins; and
39

40 **Whereas**, no standardized resources for pastoral care on these sins and their complex conse-
41 quences exist for officers, church courts, and agencies in the PCA; and
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43 **Whereas**, no clear guidelines for policy or practice with regard to these sins exist for the
44 officers, church courts, and agencies in the PCA that would protect individuals and
45 congregations; and

1 **Whereas**, the Rules of Discipline protect against unjust accusation (*BCO* 31-8), they also
2 make no consideration for the unique heinousness of these sins and their practical ef-
3 fect on victims;
4

5 **Therefore, be it resolved** that Metro Atlanta Presbytery hereby overtures the 47th General As-
6 ssembly of the PCA to form a committee to study:
7

- 8 (1) the best practices and policy guidelines for elders, church courts, and agencies for
9 justly and lawfully protecting against these sins, for providing safety for potential
10 victims who come forward, and for responding to those guilty of these sins; and
- 11 (2) the possibility of changes to the Rules of Discipline that would appropriately pro-
12 tect victims of these sins within a biblical process; and
- 13 (3) the pastoral resources available for the care of survivors of these sins as well as
14 ministry and counsel for those guilty of such sins;
- 15 (4) the possible need for repentance as a church; and
- 16 (5) to include in their report a definition of the scope and nature of domestic abuse and
17 sexual assault; and
18

19 **Be it further resolved** that the committee shall be appointed by the moderator, and shall
20 include among its members or advisory members at least two subject-matter experts
21 and at least two women; and
22

23 **Be it further resolved** that the budget for the study committee be set at \$15,000/year and that
24 funds be derived from gifts to the AC designated for that purpose, with **Metro Atlanta**
25 Presbytery committed to offer **\$1,000**; and
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27 **Be it further resolved** that the committee shall present their findings and recommendations
28 for consideration by the 48th General Assembly.
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30 *Adopted by Metro Atlanta Presbytery at its stated meeting, May 7, 2019*

31 *Attested by /s/ TE Randy Schlichting, stated clerk*