

1 **OVERTURE 28** from Calvary Presbytery (to OC, AC)
2 "Declare Message to All Nations a Faithful Expression of Biblical Polity
3 Shaping the PCA"
4

5 **Whereas** it is good for the PCA to remember the reasons for its founding, and there is no
6 more important statement than the 1973 "Message to All Churches of Jesus Christ
7 throughout the World," and
8

9 **Whereas** the Presbyterian Church in America has taken her place among the family of
10 Churches of the Lord Jesus Christ, "we take this opportunity to address all Churches
11 by way of a testimony" and to renew our original Message to all Churches (as
12 amended) on the 50th Anniversary of its adoption.
13

14 **Message to All Churches**

15
16 We gather as a true branch of the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ.
17 We affirm our allegiance to Him as the sole Head of the Church and
18 the sole Law-giver in Zion. We remember that "the gates of hell shall
19 not prevail" against His Church.
20

21 The constituency of this new denomination for the most part have
22 separated themselves from the Presbyterian Church in the United
23 States. The decision to separate has come only after long years of
24 struggle and heartache on the part of many of us to return the Church
25 to purity of faith and practice. Principle and conviction entered into
26 that decision, reached only after much soul searching and earnest
27 prayer. We have reluctantly accepted the necessity of separation,
28 deeming loyalty to Christ to take precedence over relationship to any
29 earthly institution, even to a visible branch of the Church of Christ.
30

31 In much prayer and with great sorrow and mourning we have
32 concluded that to practice the principle of purity in the Church
33 visible, we must pay the price of separation. We desire to elaborate
34 upon those principles and convictions that have brought us to that
35 decision.
36

37 We are convinced that our former denomination as a whole, and in
38 its leadership, no longer holds those views regarding the nature and
39 mission of the Church, which we accept as both true and essential.
40 When we judged that there was no human remedy for this situation,
41 and in the absence of evidence that God would intervene, we were
42 compelled to raise a new banner bearing the historic, Scriptural faith
43 of our forefathers.
44

45 First, we declare the basis of the authority for the Church. According

1 to the Christian faith, the Bible is the Word of God written and carries
2 the authority of its divine Author. We believe the Bible itself asserts
3 that it has been given by inspiration, or, more literally, has been
4 “God-breathed” (II Timothy 3:16). “No prophecy ever came by the
5 will of man; but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy
6 Spirit” (II Peter 1:21). We declare, therefore, that the Bible is the very
7 Word of God, so inspired in the whole and in all its parts, as in the
8 original autographs, to be the inerrant Word of God. It is, therefore,
9 the only infallible and all-sufficient rule of faith and practice.

10
11 This was the position of the founding fathers of the Presbyterian
12 Church in the United States. We affirm with them in their “Address
13 to All Churches” the application of this principle to the Church and
14 her mission:

15
16 Let it be distinctly borne in mind that the only rule of
17 judgment is the written Word of God. The Church knows
18 nothing of the intuitions of reason or the deductions of
19 philosophy, except those reproduced in the Sacred Canon.
20 She has a positive constitution in the Holy Scriptures, and
21 has no right to utter a single syllable upon any subject except
22 as the Lord puts words in her mouth. She is founded, in other
23 words, upon express revelation. Her creed is an authoritative
24 testimony of God, and not speculation, and what she
25 proclaims she must proclaim with the infallible certitude of
26 faith, and not with the hesitating assent of an opinion.

27
28 We have called ourselves “Continuing” Presbyterians because we
29 seek to continue the faith of the founding fathers of that Church.
30 Deviations in doctrine and practice from historic Presbyterian
31 positions as evident in the Presbyterian Church in the United States,
32 result from accepting other sources of authority, and from making
33 them coordinate or superior to the divine Word. A diluted theology,
34 a gospel tending towards humanism, an unbiblical view of marriage
35 and divorce, the ordination of women, financing of abortion on socio-
36 economic grounds, and numerous other non-Biblical positions are all
37 traceable to a different view of Scripture from that we hold and that
38 which was held by the Southern Presbyterian forefathers.

39
40 Change in the Presbyterian Church in the United States came as a
41 gradual thing, and its ascendancy in the denomination, over a long
42 period of time. We confess that it should not have been permitted.
43 Views and practices that undermine and supplant the system of
44 doctrine or polity of a confessional Church ought never to be
45

1 tolerated. A Church that will not exercise discipline will not long be
2 able to maintain pure doctrine or godly practice.

3
4 When a denomination will not exercise discipline and its courts have
5 become heterodox or disposed to tolerate error, the minority finds
6 itself in the anomalous position of being submissive to a tolerant and
7 erring majority. In order to proclaim the truth and to practice the
8 discipline which they believe obedience to Christ requires, it then
9 becomes necessary for them to separate. This is the exercise of
10 discipline in reverse. It is how we view our separation.

11
12 Some of our brethren have felt that the present circumstances do not
13 yet call for such a remedy. They remain in the Presbyterian Church
14 in the United States. We trust they will continue to contend for the
15 faith, though our departure makes their position more difficult. We
16 express to them our hope that God will bless their efforts, and that
17 there may come a genuine spiritual awakening in the Presbyterian
18 Church in the United States.

19
20 We trust that our departure may cause those who control and direct
21 the programs and policies of the Presbyterian Church in the United
22 States to reexamine their own position in the light of the Word. Our
23 prayer is that God may use this movement to promote spiritual
24 awakening, not only in the new Church, but also in that from which
25 we have separated. If in the providence of God, such were to occur,
26 we would gladly acknowledge that the grounds for separation and
27 division would have to be reassessed.

28
29 We declare also that we believe the system of doctrine found in God's
30 Word to be the system known as the Reformed Faith. We are
31 committed without reservation to the Reformed Faith as set forth in
32 the Westminster Confession and Catechisms. It is our conviction that
33 the Reformed faith is not sectarian, but an authentic and valid
34 expression of Biblical Christianity. We believe it is our duty to seek
35 fellowship and unity with all who profess this faith. We particularly
36 wish to labor with other Christians committed to this theology.

37
38 We further renew and reaffirm our understanding of the nature and
39 mission of the Church. We have declared that Christ is King and only
40 Law-giver in Zion. He has established the Church. His Church is a
41 spiritual reality. As such it is made up of all the elect from all ages.
42 This spiritual entity is manifested visibly upon the earth.

43
44 The Church visible is found wherever there are those who profess the
45 true faith together with their children. As an assembly of those who

1 do so profess this faith, we have established this denomination in the
2 belief that it is a true branch of the Christian Church.

3
4 We believe the Church in its visible aspect is still essentially a
5 spiritual organism. As such, its authority, motivation and power
6 come from Christ, the Head, who is seated at the right hand of God.
7 He has given us His rulebook for the Church, namely, the Word of
8 God written. We understand the task of the Church to be primarily
9 declarative and ministerial, not legislative or magisterial. It is our
10 duty to set forth what He has given us in His Word and not to devise
11 our own message or legislate our own laws.

12
13 We declare that the ultimate purpose of the Church is to glorify God.
14 We believe this includes giving top priority to Christ's Great
15 Commission. We reaffirm the substance of the position taken by the
16 founding fathers of our former Church regarding the mission of the
17 Church:

18
19 We desire distinctly and deliberately to inscribe on our Church's
20 banner, as she now unfurls it to the world, in immediate subservience
21 to the authority of our Lord as Head and King of the Church His last
22 command: "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations,
23 baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the
24 Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I
25 commanded you, and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of
26 the world." We regard this as the great end of our organization, and
27 obedience to it, as the indispensable condition of our Lord's promised
28 presence. It is the one great comprehensive objective, a proper
29 conception of whose grandeur and magnitude is the only thing which,
30 under the constraining love of Christ, can ever sufficiently arouse our
31 energies and develop our resources so as to cause us to carry on with
32 that vigor and efficiency, which true loyalty to our Lord demands,
33 those other agencies necessary to our internal growth and prosperity
34 at home."

35
36 As a Church, we consciously seek to return to the historic
37 Presbyterian view of Church government. We reaffirm in the words
38 of that earlier "Address to All Churches" the following:

39
40 *The only thing that will be at all peculiar to us is the manner*
41 *in which we shall attempt to discharge our duty. In almost*
42 *every department of labor, except the pastoral care of*
43 *congregations, it has been usual for the Church to resort to*
44 *societies more or less closely connected with itself, and yet*
45 *logically and really distinct. It is our purpose to rely upon*

1 *the regular organs of our government, and executive*
2 *agencies directly and immediately responsible to them. We*
3 *wish to make the Church, not merely a superintendent, but*
4 *an agent. We wish to develop the idea that the congregation*
5 *of believers, as visibly organized is the very society or*
6 *corporation which is divinely called to do the work of the*
7 *Lord. We shall, therefore, endeavor to do what has never*
8 *been adequately done--- bring out the energies of our*
9 *Presbyterian system of government. From the session to the*
10 *Assembly, we shall strive to enlist all our courts, as courts,*
11 *in every department of Christian effort. We are not ashamed*
12 *to confess that we are intensely Presbyterian. We embrace*
13 *all other denominations in the arms of Christian fellowship*
14 *and love, but our own scheme of government we humbly*
15 *believe to be according to the pattern shown in the Mount,*
16 *and, by God's grace, we propose to put its efficiency to the*
17 *test.*

18
19 We agree with the Presbytery of the Mississippi Valley who in 2016
20 declared:

21
22 *We rightly own the good Gospel legacy of the movement of Bible-*
23 *believing, Reformed Christians who brought us into being, and*
24 *recognize our indebtedness to them, while we also acknowledge*
25 *the sins and failures of our movement and denomination,*
26 *including in those areas that have ongoing and significant*
27 *negative ramifications for the unity, ministry and witness of the*
28 *church today.*

29
30 As this new member of the family of Churches of the Lord Jesus
31 Christ comes into being, we necessarily profess the Biblical doctrine
32 of the unity of all who are in Christ. We know that what happens in
33 one portion of His Church affects all of the Body of Christ. We covet
34 the prayers of all Christians that we may witness and serve
35 responsibly. We desire to pursue peace and charity with love towards
36 fellow Christians throughout the world.

37
38 To the Presbyterian Church in the United States, in particular, we
39 express our continued love and concern. You are our spiritual mother,
40 in your arms we were nurtured, under your ordinances we were
41 baptized, in your courts we were ordained to serve our Lord and
42 King, and to your visible organization we thought we had committed
43 our lives. We sever these ties only with deepest regret and sorrow.
44 We hope that our going may in some way recall you to that historic
45 witness which we cherish as our common heritage.

1 We greet all believers in an affirmation of the bonds of Christian
2 brotherhood. We invite into ecclesiastical fellowship all who
3 maintain our principles of faith and order.
4

5 We now commend ourselves to God and the Word of His power. We
6 devoutly pray that the Church catholic may be filled afresh with the
7 Holy Spirit, and that she may speedily be stirred up to take no rest
8 until the Lord accomplishes His Kingdom, making Zion a praise in
9 the whole earth.
10

11 December 7, 1973, the First General Assembly
12 June of 2023, the Fiftieth General Assembly
13

14 **Therefore**, be it resolved that the 50th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in
15 America declare the “Message to All Nations” a faithful expression of Biblical polity
16 which shaped the founding of the PCA in 1973. And
17

18 **Therefore**, the General Assembly directs its Stated Clerk to send this letter to the Presbyterian
19 Church in the USA via its Stated Clerk as a communication from a loving daughter to
20 a prodigal mother.
21

22 *Adopted unanimously by the Calvary Presbytery at its stated meeting January 28, 2023*

23 *Attested by /s/ RE Melton L. Duncan, stated clerk*