

Overture to the General Assembly of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church

The Mid-Atlantic Presbytery requests the National Leadership Team to approve the following overture for a first reading at the 2020 General Assembly *pending the final approval of the overture by the Mid-Atlantic Presbytery at its meeting on April 25, 2020*. The Overture:

That the General Assembly be requested to create three presbyteries from the current Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic. Working titles: Coastal Presbytery, Mountain Presbytery, and Piedmont Presbytery. (All current names are place-holders only; each future presbytery will be given the right to select name.)

Howard Shockley, our beloved late Administrative Director and Stated Clerk often signed off with “It’s still about the Great Commission.” This admonition has been the driving force of our discussion as we have sought to multiply our presbytery from one to three for the sake of the Kingdom. Our overarching purpose is to create *missional* presbyteries whose reason for existence is to plant new congregations and vitalize existing ones. By concentrating energy and leadership over a less-expansive geography and a closer affinity each of the presbyteries will have greater investment in the Great Commission.

Bounds

Coastal Presbytery is bounded on the north even with Hope EPC in Fredericksburg, VA, to the west by a line running Southwest to Raeford, NC, Southwest to Bishopville, SC, and due South to the Georgia border.

Mountain Presbytery is bounded on the east by the line from Fredericksburg, VA to Durham, NC. Its Southern boundary is contiguous with, and north of I-40 to I-77. Its North border is the Southern border of Presbytery of Alleghenies.

Piedmont Presbytery is bounded on the east by the boundary of Coastal Presbytery, on the north by I-40, to the west by the boundary line of Southeast Presbytery, and on the south by the Georgia border.

If the way be clear and each of the presbyteries reaches viability, we request that this action become effective July 1, 2022

~~Further, that any Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic retired Teaching Elders, associate members, Candidates under Care, and all other Teaching Elders serving out of bounds whether serving within or outside of the current geographic boundaries of the current Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic shall be included in the membership of the newly created presbytery which is created by the geographical boundary in which they currently reside or are included for oversight purposes, subject to any exceptions as provided for in the *Book of Government*.~~

[PJC REVISION] Further, any retired Teaching Elders, associate members, Candidates under Care, and all other Teaching Elders serving “out of bounds,” who have served as part of the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic, shall be included in the membership of the newly created presbytery according to the geographical boundary in which they currently reside. In the event

they currently reside outside of the geographical boundary of any newly created presbytery, for purposes of oversight, they will be included according to the geographical boundary where they previously served, subject to any exceptions as provided for in the Book of Government.

Grounds

With the growth in population within each of the three proposed presbyteries we believe that church planting will be more effectively accomplished with congregations closer to where the new church plants are needed. The Presbytery of Mid-Atlantic currently has 129 worshipping communities comprised of local churches, mission churches, church plants, campuses, and church sites spread across portions of 4 states. With the increase in the number of churches has come a decrease in the ratio of REs to TEs in our presbytery meetings. The distances required to travel to presbytery meetings has impeded the ability of many of the REs to take the time away.

Viability

The “Acts of the Assembly 12-05” states:

In order to be faithful to, and effective in, its mission a Presbytery must be self-sustaining, self-governing and self-perpetuating.

In order to be faithful to its mission, a Presbytery must be viable. It must have sufficient human and financial resources to carry out its work. The extent of the resources needed will vary, depending on the geographic scale of its boundaries, the experience and gifts of its members and the level of commitment of its churches. Currently, as of the date of adoption of this plan the presbyteries will consist of the following:

1. Total Church Membership

The Presbytery of Coastal Mid-Atlantic will include 36 churches; Presbytery of Mountain Mid-Atlantic will include 48 churches; and Presbytery of Piedmont will include 44 churches.

2. Total financial resources of churches within its bounds

Coastal	Per member askings: \$148,050
Mountain	Per member askings: \$137,750
Piedmont	Per member askings: \$146,100

3. Financial support for or pledges of support for its work

Coastal	Actual \$110,201
Mountain	Actual \$103,276
Piedmont	Actual \$97,979

4. Geographic scale and cost and mode of travel within its bounds

The current presbytery bounds require up to 6 1/2 hours of driving to reach presbytery meetings. With the new configuration the longest drive will be two and a half hours.

5. Presence of experienced and capable potential leadership

Our current presbytery is blessed with many leaders. Each of the nascent presbyteries has an abundance of leaders and well-distributed large and mid-size congregations.

6. Other clear indications of commitment by churches within its bounds

At the January 2019 Presbytery meeting, a vote was taken to establish the 3 regions as the precursors to the 3 presbyteries herein proposed. The vote was 93% in favor of moving toward 3 presbyteries. At each meeting since, reports have been made, questions have been answered, and the presbytery continues to support the establishment of the three presbyteries.

7. While the presence of one or more large churches may be desirable, sufficient commitment by medium-sized and small churches can provide a sufficiently strong foundation for an effective presbytery.

Each of the proposed presbyteries have both large and medium-sized churches as well as many smaller ones.