

Overture from the Southwest Florida Presbytery
To the 32nd General Assembly
Of the Presbyterian Church in America

Copies forward to:

The Stated Clerk
Administrative Committee
The Coordinator for the Committee on Mission to North America
Committee on Mission to North America

Subject: Formation of a new presbytery from within the present bounds of Southwest Florida Presbytery for the purpose of advancing God's kingdom on earth.

Whereas, the Southwest Florida Presbytery was established by blending a new presbytery out of the then South Florida Presbytery and Central Florida Presbytery to enable the better management of the increasing number of new churches and missions, and to further advance the establishment of new churches of the Presbyterian Church in America in the west and south areas of Florida;

Whereas, since the establishment of the Southwest Florida Presbytery the number of churches and missions have continued to increase, and, at the same time, it has become apparent that a distinct geographical unit within the bounds of our Presbytery have developed, namely, the most southern area focused on and around Fort Myers and Naples;

Whereas, the above distinct geographical regions have developed out of the growth patterns presently taking place within the Presbytery, the population growth and housing developments and the extensive driving times involved and other travel issues associated with ministering to the churches spread all across the vast area of the Southwest Florida Presbytery;

Whereas, after research, discussions and planning the MNA Committee of Southwest Florida Presbytery concluded at its June 2, 2003 meeting that for the further advancement of church planting and for the better coordination of the ministries of both new and established churches in these areas of southwest Florida it is essential that a new presbytery be established out of the present bounds of the Southwest Florida Presbytery;

Whereas, it is also noted from contact with churches in the Presbytery after announcement on the floor of Presbytery that the following was recorded; With the multiplying of the Presbytery a more manageable geographical size will offer more connectional relationships, not only with Elders, but to include the Deacons and other key church leaders. More Ruling Elders will be involved as they will join together in the planning and planting of churches, thus leading to enhanced strategizing, learning from one another and Presbytery funding more local church plants.

Whereas, at the July 12, 2003 Presbytery meeting an Ad Hoc Committee was established to address request from MNA committee for boundary of new Presbytery. The Ad Hoc Committee met and determined the following:

Recommendations to the Southwest Florida Presbytery

1. The Committee recommends that Southwest Florida Presbytery be divided into two new presbyteries. Churches located south of the Peace River (where the Peace River crosses I-75 in Charlotte County) will form a new presbytery. All churches north of this dividing line will continue as the Southwest Florida Presbytery.

2. The Committee recommends that the first reading of the overture creating a new presbytery take place at the October Presbytery meeting in order to facilitate the multiplication of the existing presbytery at the 2004 General Assembly.

Whereas, at the Southwest Florida Presbytery meetings in October 14, 2003 and January 17, 2004, an overwhelming vote to approve multiplying into two presbyteries was approved on the floor.

Whereas, this overture was approved by the Southwest Florida Presbytery Administration Committee on Bills and Overtures and presented to Southwest Florida Presbytery members at the April 27, 2004 meeting for approval to submit. Thus, this overture is sent to the Committee on Mission to North America-GA to be further processed as new business for the 32nd General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America, thereby creating the following two Presbyteries effective July 1, 2004:

Southwest Florida Presbytery will contain

1) The “*Tampa Area*”, comprising all of the areas contained in the following Florida counties - cities:

Pinellas - Lutz - Pinellas Park - Oldsmar - St. Petersburg

Hillsborough - Brandon – Riverview - Tampa

Polk – Lakeland – Winter Haven

The “*Sarasota Area*”, comprising all of the areas contained in the following Florida counties:

Manatee - Bradenton

Sarasota – Sarasota – North Port

Hardee – Wauchula

Charlotte - north of the Peace River (where the Peace River crosses I-75)

2) The “*Suncoast Florida Presbytery*”¹, comprising all of the areas contained in the following Florida counties:

Charlotte - south of the Peace River (where the Peace River crosses I-75)

Lee - Cape Coral - Fort Myers – Sanibel – North Fort Myers

– Lehigh Acres – Bonita Springs

Collier – Naples – Marco Island – Immokalee

Hendry – Labelle

¹ Name of Presbytery created by members of that new Presbytery and confirmed to be available for use by the Committee on Mission to North America-GA for purposes of this overture.