



Presbytery of Florida

Furthering the Ministry
of Jesus Christ in Northwest Florida

AFFIRMING OUR HISTORY, CLARIFYING OUR IDENTITY, AND EMBRACING OUR CALLING

A Proposal to Become the Presbytery of Northwest Florida

Presbytery of Florida | October 2026



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***Guiding Question:** How Can Our Name More Faithfully
Communicate Our History, Identity, And Commission?*

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2 **AND EMBRACING OUR CALLING**

3
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6

7 *“FURTHERING THE MINISTRY OF JESUS CHRIST IN NORTHWEST FLORIDA”*
8

9 We are not proposing to update our mission to fit a new name.
10 We are considering a name that more faithfully reflects the mission we have already affirmed.
11
12
13

14 **AN INVITATION TO DISCERN TOGETHER**
15

16 Names tell stories. They communicate something about who we are, where we come from, whom
17 we belong to, and sometimes even where we believe God is calling us.
18

19 The name **Presbytery of Florida** carries a rich and meaningful history. According to our historical
20 understanding, our Presbytery received its name because it was the first and, at the time, the only
21 Presbytery established within the geographical boundaries of the State of Florida. The name
22 reflected both the place and the ecclesiastical responsibility entrusted to our predecessors.
23

24 We celebrate that history. We give thanks for the generations of faithful Presbyterians whose
25 worship, witness, leadership, and service helped establish and sustain the ministry of Jesus Christ
26 in this part of the country. Yet the Florida of today is not the Florida of those early days.
27

28 Our state has grown, communities have changed, and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has
29 organized its ministry across Florida through six presbyteries, each entrusted with particular
30 congregations, ministers, and communities.
31

32 Today, our presbytery serves 35 congregations across Northwest Florida, from the Tallahassee
33 area to Pensacola and the surrounding communities. Our name continues to honor our origins, after
34 all Florida is still in the name however it *no longer communicates as clearly the particular*
35 *geographical responsibility entrusted to us.* This presents an opportunity to ask...
36
37

38 **What if becoming the Presbytery of *Northwest* Florida is not so much a change**
39 **of identity as it is a renewed affirmation of the very geographical calling**
40 **that gave us our name in the first place?**
41
42

43 We bring this *proposal* before the Presbytery in that spirit: not to erase our history, but to honor it;
44 not to distance ourselves from our predecessors, but to continue their faithful witness; and not
45 merely to adopt a new name, but to clarify our shared identity and calling.

I. OUR HISTORY IS WORTH HONORING

We believe that remembering our history is essential to discerning our future. The name Presbytery of Florida reminds us of a time when the Presbyterian witness in this state was organized differently. Those who came before us accepted the responsibility of nurturing congregations, equipping ministers, and strengthening the witness of the Church within the geographical boundaries entrusted to them. That commitment remains ours today.

Our proposed name, **Presbytery of Northwest Florida**, seeks to honor the same principle: that a presbytery is called to exercise care, oversight, connection, and mission among particular congregations and communities.

Our history is not confined to the words of our name. It lives in our congregations, in the ministries we have supported, in the people who have been ordained and equipped, in the churches we have planted and celebrated, and even in those congregations whose ministries have faithfully concluded. The legacy of the Presbytery of Florida will not disappear because its geographical name becomes more specific. Rather, we believe that legacy can be carried forward with renewed clarity and purpose.

We are not proposing to become something entirely different. We are proposing to become more *intentional* about naming who we already are and where God has called us to serve.

II. IDENTITY, SELF-DIFFERENTIATION, AND OUR PARTICULAR CALLING

One of the important challenges facing our Presbytery is the question of self-differentiation. In the context of leadership and organizational life, self-differentiation involves developing a clear understanding of one's identity, responsibilities, relationships, and calling without losing connection to others.

For us, this means asking:

- a. Who are we as a Presbytery?
- b. Where has God placed us?
- c. Which congregations, ministers, and communities have been entrusted to our care?
- d. What gifts and opportunities are *particular* to our region?
- e. How do we faithfully exercise our responsibilities while remaining connected to the wider Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)?

These are not merely administrative questions. They are questions of...

- Ecclesiology (branch of Christian systematic theology that studies the Christian Church itself: its origin, nature, mission, identity, structure, and relationship to Jesus Christ.)
- mission, and
- identity.

We are *one* of six presbyteries serving the State of Florida. We celebrate our relationship with the other five presbyteries, recognizing that we share in the ministry of Jesus Christ while serving different communities and geographical regions.

Our Presbyterian understanding of the Church teaches us that we belong to one another. Our connectionalism does not require us to have identical identities or responsibilities. Rather, our particular gifts and callings contribute to the ministry of the whole Church.

The goal: To gain a clearer geographical identity

The why: To help us communicate not only where we are, but also whom we are called to serve.

III. OUR VISION ALREADY NAMES OUR CALLING

Our Presbytery has articulated a clear vision:

“Furthering the Ministry of Jesus Christ in Northwest Florida.”

- i. These words are central to this proposal.

Notice that our vision does not speak of furthering ministry throughout the entire State of Florida.

- ii. It identifies the particular region in which we have been called to serve.

Our emerging mission language also speaks of: **“Connecting, equipping, and supporting congregations and its leaders to participate faithfully in Christ's ministry.”**

Together, these statements provide a theological and practical framework for our shared ministry. We seek to connect congregations and leaders across our region, equip them for faithful service, support them in times of transition and challenge, and encourage them to recognize the work God is already doing in their communities.

Our name should help communicate this vision.

When someone encounters the words *Presbytery of Northwest Florida*, they can more readily understand where we serve and where our primary responsibilities lie. This matters to our congregations, to pastors considering calls within our bounds, to community organizations seeking partnerships, to denominational colleagues, and to neighbors looking for Presbyterian congregations in their communities.

Our proposed name would bring our public identity into closer alignment with our stated vision.

Our name should not simply tell people *where* and *when* we have been.

It should also reveal *where* and *when* we are called to serve today.

IV. WHY NOW? WELL, NAMES MATTER.

The A Biblical and Theological Perspective

Throughout Scripture, names frequently communicate identity, relationship, vocation, and the unfolding purposes of God. We recognize that updating our name isn't going to take care of the challenges of our Presbytery, however updating our name will be a step in the right direction. As

you consider the proposal of update our name, we also want to name the obvious, this proposal is not equivalent to the profound encounters with God recorded in Scripture. Nevertheless, these biblical accounts remind us that names can carry deep significance

a. Abram and Sarai: A Promise That Expands

In Genesis 17:5 and 17:15, God gives Abram the name Abraham and Sarai the name Sarah in the context of God's covenant promises.

Contemplate: These new names do not erase their histories. They mark the unfolding of God's covenant and the future God promises.

b. Jacob and Israel: Identity Through Encounter

In Genesis 32:28, Jacob receives the name Israel following his struggle and encounter with God.

Contemplate: his new name becomes a testimony to an encounter that shapes his identity and the identity of God's people.

c. Simon and Peter: A Calling Made Visible

In John 1:42, Jesus tells Simon that he will be called Cephas, translated as Peter. In Matthew 16:18, Jesus connects the name Peter with the imagery of the rock and the building of the Church.

Contemplate: Simon does not cease to be the person formed by his previous experiences. Rather, the name Peter becomes associated with his developing identity and calling as a disciple and leader.

d. Women in Scripture: Names, Identity, and Faithful Witness

i. Sarah's renaming in Genesis 17:15 affirms her place in God's covenant promise.

ii. In Ruth 1:20–21, Naomi asks to be called Mara, expressing the bitterness of her grief and loss. Her story reminds us that names can also communicate lived experiences and the ways people understand their circumstances, time and place.

iii. Naomi's story does not end with bitterness; God's faithfulness continues to unfold through relationships, community, and unexpected hope.

iv. In John 20:16, the risen Christ calls Mary Magdalene by name. It is a deeply personal moment of recognition that leads to her witness to the resurrection. Mary is not renamed, but being called by name becomes part of her encounter with the risen Lord.

Contemplate: These accounts remind us that identity is more than a title. It is connected to relationship, experience, and calling.

e. Saul and Paul: A Clarification Worth Remembering

Although it is sometimes said that God changed Saul's name to Paul at his conversion, Scripture does not actually describe such a renaming. Acts 13:9 introduces him as “Saul, who was also known as Paul.” The two names reflect his Jewish and Greco-Roman contexts.

Contemplate: Paul's story nevertheless offers a helpful lesson: identity and calling can be communicated differently in different contexts without abandoning one's history.

For our Presbytery, this is especially meaningful. We are not seeking to become a different Church or abandon the identity of those who came before us. We are seeking language that more clearly communicates our calling within the communities we serve. The theological invitation is not simply to ask what name we prefer, but what our name communicates about our identity, our relationships, and our participation in God's mission.

V. WHY CONSIDER THIS PROPOSAL NOW?

Timing matters.

Our Presbytery is already entering an important season of organizational development and strategic planning. We are considering and implementing improvements in communication, technology, administration, congregational support, and regional relationships. This is all part of the strategy plan that was set in motion not too long ago.

Among these initiatives are the modernization of our website, the development of a coordinated social media strategy, improvements to our newsletter, and the strengthening of our connectionalism with the help of Regional Advocates and digital infrastructure and information security that will support us all.

f. These are not isolated technical projects.

Together, they represent an opportunity to build a more accessible, consistent, secure, and mission-focused Presbytery. If we are going to invest time, financial resources, and energy into updating our public presence, *this is an appropriate moment to consider whether the name appearing on those platforms accurately communicates who we are.*

By our assessment, it would be an error to redesign our website, establish new email addresses under Google Workspace for Non-for-profit, update communication materials, and introduce a new digital strategy, only to continue to face matter of self-differentiation.

VI. A CLEARER AND MORE EFFECTIVE DIGITAL IDENTITY

Our existing digital presence illustrates some of the practical challenges of our current arrangements.

- g. Our website has historically used the **presbyteryofflorida.net** domain,
- h. while our email addresses use **@presbyteryofflorida.com**

These two domains create a distinction between our website and email identity. Furthermore, the extensions themselves do not necessarily communicate our organizational character. The *.net* extension originated in association with network-related organizations. The *.com* extension originated in association with commercial entities.

Nevertheless, as a religious nonprofit organization, we have an opportunity to choose a domain that more clearly communicates our identity.

We propose exploring: **nwflpcusa.org**

This domain offers several advantages:

- **nwfl** identifies “Northwest” + “Florida” the region entrusted to our care.
- **Pcusa** communicates our denominational relationship
- **.org** is widely associated with nonprofit, religious, and mission-oriented organizations.

A unified domain would allow us to establish a consistent digital identity across our website, email addresses, newsletter, and other communications.

For example:

- Website: www.nwflpcusa.org
- General inquiries: office@nwflpcusa.org
- Staff: insertname@nwflpcusa.org

These are illustrative addresses, subject to domain availability, technical review, and final approval. The purpose is not simply to have shorter email addresses or a more contemporary website. It is to make our Presbytery easier to identify, easier to contact, and easier to recognize as a ministry of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

VII. COMMUNICATIONS: AN EXPRESSION OF CONNECTIONAL MINISTRY

Our proposed name and digital identity also connect directly with our broader communications strategy. Communication is not merely the distribution of information. For a presbytery, communication is one of the ways we practice our connectional identity.

A healthy communications strategy helps congregations know they are not alone. It creates opportunities to celebrate ministry, share resources, respond to challenges, and strengthen relationships across geographical distances.

a. Our Website

A modern website should serve as more than an online directory or repository of documents. It should be a welcoming and accessible resource for congregations, ministers, church leaders, prospective pastors, community partners, and members of the public.

An updated website could make it easier to find congregations, access forms and policies, learn about presbytery ministries, identify leadership contacts, locate upcoming events, and discover opportunities for training and service. *A truly a place where congregation without an official website could have a page of their won. e.g. www.nwflpcusa.org/nameofcongregation*

It should also be mobile-friendly, accessible to people with disabilities, regularly maintained, and organized around the needs of those who use it.

b. Our Newsletter

Our newsletter should help tell the story of God's work throughout Northwest Florida. Not simply a glorified bulletin board where there is an overload of information. Beyond sharing announcements, it can celebrate congregational ministries, communicate important decisions, connect leaders with resources, and highlight opportunities for participation. A clearer organizational identity will help make those communications more consistent and recognizable.

274 c. **Our Social Media Presence**

275 Social media offers an opportunity to reach beyond traditional communication channels and share
276 the life and ministry of our Presbytery. Through coordinated messaging, consistent branding, and
277 thoughtful storytelling, we can celebrate congregations, recognize faithful leaders and what they
278 are preaching and teaching, share ministry and mission opportunities, and communicate the ways
279 God is at work across our region.

- 280
- 281 ➤ The goal is *not* simply to increase visibility or engagement statistics.
 - 282 ➤ It is to strengthen relationships, encourage participation, and bear witness to Jesus Christ.
- 283

284

285 **VIII. ALIGNMENT WITH OUR STRATEGIC PLANNING**

286

287 The proposed name is not intended to stand apart from our emerging strategic plan.
288 Rather, it supports the broader work of clarifying our identity, strengthening relationships,
289 equipping leaders, improving communication, and developing sustainable systems for ministry.

290

291 As our Presbytery continues its strategic discernment, we recognize that meaningful organizational
292 development requires attention to both technical and adaptive challenges. Technical challenges
293 involve practical matters such as updating a website, establishing email accounts, revising
294 documents, or creating communication systems.

295

296 Adaptive challenges ask deeper questions about identity, culture, relationships, expectations, and
297 the ways we understand our mission. ***Updating a domain name while significant it is primarily a***
298 ***technical task. Clarifying who we are, whom we serve, and how we understand our shared***
299 ***calling is an adaptive task.***

300

301 The proposed name invites us to engage both dimensions.

302

303 It also complements our work to strengthen regional relationships, support congregational vitality,
304 improve administrative systems, and equip leaders to participate faithfully in Christ's ministry.
305 Our Presbytery's future will not be secured by a new name, website, or logo. Those things are
306 tools, not the mission itself.

307

308 But well-designed tools can help us fulfill our mission more effectively.

309

310 Our strategic direction calls us to be a Presbytery that is increasingly connected, equipped,
311 supportive, encouraging, accessible, and responsive to the needs of our congregations and
312 communities. A clear and consistent identity can help us pursue those commitments together.

IX. WHAT THIS PROPOSAL DOES—AND DOES NOT—MEAN

We want to be clear about the intention of this proposal.

This proposal does not seek to reject the history of the Presbytery of Florida, diminish the contributions of earlier generations, separate us from the wider Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), or suggest that our mission is limited to the boundaries of Northwest Florida.

Our congregations will continue to participate in mission locally, nationally, and globally. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is not confined by geographical boundaries. Rather, this proposal seeks to clarify the particular region in which we have been entrusted with ecclesiastical responsibility, congregational support, and connectional ministry.

It also seeks to align our public identity with our stated vision, strengthen our communication systems, and prepare our Presbytery for the next chapter of faithful service. We believe it is possible to honor our past while embracing the opportunities of the present. Indeed, faithful stewardship of our history sometimes requires us to ask how that history should guide our future.

**We are not asking the Presbytery simply to approve a new name.
We are inviting the Presbytery to consider how our name can more
faithfully communicate our history, identity, and calling.**

X. PROPOSED ACTION

Recommendation to the Presbytery:

1. **Receive, consider and accept** the proposal to adopt the name **Presbytery of Northwest Florida**, affirming its historic identity “Florida” and its present geographical calling “NW”
2. **Authorize the Equipping Presbyter/Stated Clerk**, in consultation with the appropriate councils, ministries, and advisers, to identify the ecclesiastical, constitutional, corporate, legal, financial, and administrative requirements associated with a possible name change.
3. **Direct that the proposed name be considered in coordination with ongoing strategic planning**, including the development of the Presbytery's website, communications strategy, newsletter, digital infrastructure, and information security practices.

The Presbytery of Florida has a history worth celebrating and a future worth discerning together. Our predecessors faithfully responded to God's call in the geographical and ecclesiastical circumstances of their time. They organized, worshiped, planted, taught, served, and helped build the foundations upon which we continue to minister today. We inherit that legacy with gratitude.

Today, we are called to exercise that same faithfulness within the particular communities, congregations, and relationships entrusted to us. We believe that the name **Presbytery of Northwest Florida** can help us communicate that responsibility with greater clarity. This is not an effort to become less than we have been. It is an invitation to become more intentional about who we are called to be.