



# Expectations of Commissioners and Advisory Delegates to the 225th General Assembly (2022)

## What is the General Assembly?

The Book of Order, G-3.0501 states that,

“General Assembly constitutes the bond of union, community, and mission among all its congregations and councils, to the end that the whole church becomes a community of faith, hope, love, and witness. As it leads and guides the witness of the whole church, it shall keep before it

- the marks of the Church (F-1.0302),
- the notes by which Presbyterian and Reformed communities have identified themselves through history (F-1.0303) and
- the six Great Ends of the Church (F-1.0304).”

## Who can serve as a commissioner or advisory delegate to the General Assembly?

Commissioners shall consist of ruling elders and ministers of the Word and Sacrament elected by the presbyteries and reflective of the diversity within their bounds (F-1.0403 and G-3.0103).

Advisory delegates are persons who are active members in one of the constituent churches or councils of the General Assembly (or, in the case of ecumenical advisory delegates, of a denomination of Christians designated by the General Assembly) who are selected to attend the meeting of the General Assembly in an advisory role so that the Assembly may be assured of hearing and taking cognizance of their special viewpoints (Manual of the General Assembly, Standing Rule [SR] B.2.a).

## What is the role of commissioners and advisory delegates to the General Assembly?

As God gives suitable gifts for their various duties, commissioners and advisory delegates serve and support this mission and witness of the whole church.

- In addition to possessing the necessary gifts and abilities, commissioners and advisory delegates should be persons of strong faith, dedicated discipleship, and love of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.
- Their manner of life should be a demonstration of the Christian gospel in the church and in the world. They must have the approval of God’s people and the concurring judgment of their sending presbytery.
- Commissioners and advisory delegates serve through God’s concurrence, with independent judgement, and free of inappropriate influences.
- They “are not simply to reflect the will of the people, but rather seek together to find and represent the will of Christ” (F-3.0204).

- Training will be provided to familiarize commissioners and advisory delegates with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) ethical standards. In all their work, commissioners and advisory delegates shall serve with courage, kindness, love, and compassion as living witnesses to God's love and grace.
- Commissioners and advisory delegates serve a term of two years.

### **Planning Time for Assembly Meetings**

The meetings of the 225th General Assembly will be a blend between in-person Assembly committee meetings held at the Presbyterian Center in Louisville and online plenaries convened via Zoom.

### **How will this work?**

**All Assembly meetings will be held between Friday, June 17, 2022, and Saturday, July 9, 2022.**

Commissioners and advisory delegates are asked to hold this full block of time until they have been notified of their Assembly committee assignment. **Assembly committee assignment and specific dates for travel to Louisville will be distributed on or about Feb. 28, 2022.** Requests to change committee assignments due to scheduling conflicts or other preferences cannot be honored due to the committee assignment requirements of the GA Standing Rules.

### **What are the time commitments for commissioners and advisory delegates while in Louisville for Assembly committee meetings?**

Teaching elders and ruling elders considered for election as commissioners must be able to be in attendance for the duration of the General Assembly (SR B.1.c.). This will mean a considerable commitment of time to participate fully in both in-person and online meetings that will make up this Assembly.

- Most commissioners and advisory delegates will spend four nights and three full days in Louisville for Assembly committee meetings. There will be some commissioners assigned to four specific committees who will have an additional two days and nights in Louisville so that they can constitute the in-person quorum required for Plenary 1.
- While in Louisville, commissioners and advisory delegates should expect to spend up to 12 hours each day (including breaks) in Assembly committee meetings and other Assembly events. Meals and lodging during this time will be provided through the per capita budget.

### **What are the time commitments for the Zoom online plenary sessions?**

- During the online plenaries on Saturday, June 18, 2022, and Tuesday, July 5, 2022, through Saturday, July 9, 2022, commissioners and advisory delegates should expect to spend up to 12 hours each day (including breaks) in worship, plenary gatherings and other Assembly functions. Each day will begin with worship at 11 a.m. (EDT).
- Commissioners and advisory delegates should make plans to be present for the full day on each of these days, as if attending a meeting out of town. Presbyteries are encouraged to make plans

to gather their commissioners and advisory delegates in person for plenary meetings when possible.

Please take time to carefully review the [Assembly docket](#).

### **What are responsibilities of commissioners and advisory delegates?**

*Prior to and during the Assembly, commissioners and advisory delegates are asked to:*

- Pray for the Assembly meeting, its participants and leaders, and for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in making faithful decisions.
- Provide accurate contact information to the electing presbytery and update the presbytery and Office of the General Assembly of any changes.
- Participate in presbytery-sponsored orientation programs.
- Register for and book travel to the Assembly in a timely fashion.
- Work with presbytery and Office of the General Assembly staff to ensure that they have access to an appropriate internet connection and the equipment required to participate in Assembly meetings.
- Complete required technology orientations to learn about the systems used by commissioners and advisory delegates to build community, learn about the issues before the Assembly and participate in Assembly meetings.
- Read and follow the [Standards of Ethics for Commissioners and Advisory Delegates to the General Assembly and the Standards of Ethical Conduct for Ordained Officers in the Presbyterian Church \(U.S.A.\)](#), the [PC\(USA\) Sexual Misconduct Policy](#), and the [PC\(USA\) Child/Youth/Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy](#).
- Review all items of business before the Assembly, with particular focus on those items to be considered by the Assembly committee to which they have been assigned.
- Participate in the online General Assembly educational space for commissioners and advisory delegates to learn more about the General Assembly, its processes and entities, and build community with other commissioners and advisory delegates.
- Communicate with Assembly committee leadership and other members of the commissioner or advisory delegate's assigned committee as part of the community-building process. Make and implement plans for coverage of family and work responsibilities while in Assembly meetings, including during online plenaries.
- Inform the electing presbytery of any situation that would prevent them from participating responsibly in the Assembly meeting so that an alternate can be seated.
- Participate as fully as possible in the events of the Assembly, including worship, plenary meetings, Assembly committee meetings and other opportunities to be the church at worship, work and discernment.
- Live faithfully in community with other participants in Assembly committee and plenary meetings.
- Seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit on the business before the Assembly, "not simply to reflect the will of the people, but rather to seek together to find and represent the will of Christ" (F-3.0204).
- Speak, vote and act in ways that honor our historic principles of polity and church governance, in particular that "God alone is Lord of the conscience" (F-1.0301a), that "there is an inseparable connection between faith and practice, truth and duty" (F-1.0304), and that "it [is]

the duty of both private Christians and societies to exercise mutual forbearance toward each other” in times of disagreement (F-3.0105).

- Set aside time to rest.
- Participate in the Assembly with energy, intelligence, imagination and love, with respect for all other participants.

*After the Assembly adjourns, commissioners and advisory delegates are asked to:*

- Pray for the whole church and world, as they seek to understand and implement the actions of the General Assembly.
- Present reports as requested by their electing presbytery.
- Serve in any special meetings of the General Assembly called prior to the convening of the 226th General Assembly.
- Act as continuing ambassadors for the work of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and particularly for the actions of the 225th General Assembly.

### ***Special Concerns in Light of the COVID-19 Pandemic***

The 225th General Assembly (2022) will convene in a world changed by the COVID-19 pandemic. While the arrangements of the Assembly are already substantially different from those of previous Assemblies in response to these concerns, electing presbyteries, commissioners and advisory delegates should still be aware of the following potential concerns as they consider people’s willingness to serve in this time.

- Approximately 170 commissioners and advisory delegates will be in meetings at the Presbyterian Center in Louisville at a time. Each group of commissioners and advisory delegates will overlap with another group on a Wednesday afternoon and evening, meaning that up to 340 people may be in attendance at that time.
- All in-person Assembly meetings will follow the guidance of the Centers for Disease Control and local health authorities in effect at the time of the meeting. Commissioners and advisory delegates are required to comply with that guidance regardless of the guidance in place in the state where they reside.
- Any plans for vaccination and/or COVID-19 testing requirements will be announced closer to the time that the Assembly convenes based on the advice of health authorities.
- Commissioners and advisory delegates should take all these matters into account when deciding whether or not to accept their nomination to serve. If their situation changes, they should notify the electing presbytery as soon as possible so that an alternate can be identified and seated.
- Presbyteries are urged to elect alternate commissioners and advisory delegates in case a primary commissioner or advisory delegate cannot attend due to these concerns.
- If additional changes become necessary to Assembly plans due to health and safety concerns, the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly will consult with appropriate parties and make necessary changes to the date and place of the General Assembly meeting when the General Assembly is not in session.