

Expectations of Commissioners and Advisory Delegates to the 225th General Assembly (2022)
DRAFT 1—April 15, 2021

The 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). Commissioners and advisory delegates serve and support this mission and witness of the whole church. God gives suitable gifts for their various duties. 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 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. (SR B.2.a) Commissioners and advisory delegates serve a term of two years.

Commissioners and advisory delegates serve through God's concurrence, with independent judgement, free of inappropriate influences. Commissioner training will be provided to familiarize commissioners and advisory delegates with PCUSA ethical standards, which will also be posted on the General Assembly website in advance of each meeting of the General Assembly. Therefore Commissioners shall serve with courage, kindness, love, and compassion as living witnesses to God's love and grace.

Planning Your Time for Assembly Meetings

The meetings of the 225th General Assembly will be split between in-person assembly committee meetings held at the Presbyterian Center in Louisville, Kentucky, and online plenaries convened via Zoom. All Assembly meetings will be held between Friday, June 17, and Saturday, July 9. Commissioners and advisory delegates are asked to hold this full block of time until they have been notified of their assembly committee assignment on or about March 15, which will include specific dates for travel to Louisville. *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.*

Most commissioners and advisory delegates will spend four nights and three full days in Louisville for assembly committee meetings. Commissioners assigned to four specific committees 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 twelve hours each day (including breaks) in assembly committee meetings and other assembly events. Meals and lodging during this time will be provided.

During the online plenaries on Saturday, June 18 and Tuesday, July 5 through Saturday, July 9, commissioners and advisory delegates should expect to spend up to twelve hours each day (including breaks) in worship, plenary gatherings, and other assembly functions. Each day will begin with worship at 11:00 am 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.

Prior to the Assembly

Prior to the Assembly, commissioners and advisory delegates are expected to: *(ordered here with numbers for reference and conversation—to become unordered in final)*

1. Pray for the Assembly meeting, its participants and leaders, and for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in making faithful decisions.
2. Provide accurate contact information to the electing presbytery and update the presbytery and Office of the General Assembly of any changes.
3. Participate in presbytery-sponsored orientation programs.
4. Register for and book travel to the Assembly in a timely fashion.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. Read and agree to follow the Standards of Ethics for Commissioners and Advisory Delegates to the General Assembly, the Standards of Ethical Conduct for Ordained Officers in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and the Virtual Meeting Code of Conduct.
8. 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.
9. Participate in the online 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.
10. Communicate with assembly committee leadership and other committee members as part of the community-building process for committees.
11. Make plans for coverage of family and work responsibilities while in Assembly meetings, including during online plenaries.

12. Inform the electing presbytery and the Office of the General Assembly of any situation that would prevent them from participating responsibly in the Assembly meeting so that an alternate can be seated.

During the Assembly

While the Assembly is in session, commissioners and advisory delegates are expected to:

1. Pray for the Assembly meeting, its participants and leaders, and for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in making faithful decisions.
2. 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.
3. Live faithfully in community with other Assembly participants in assembly committee and plenary meetings.
4. 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).
5. 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).
6. Follow the Standards of Ethics for Commissioners and Advisory Delegates to the General Assembly, the Standards of Ethical Conduct for Ordained Officers in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and the Virtual Meeting Code of Conduct.
7. Set aside time to rest so that they can be fully engaged in all Assembly meetings.
8. Use plans made for coverage of family and work responsibilities and avoid scheduling other commitments to enable the fullest possible participation in the meetings and discernment of the Assembly.
9. Participate in the Assembly with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love.
10. Inform the electing presbytery and the Office of the General Assembly of any situation that prevents them from participating responsibly in the Assembly meeting so that an alternate can be seated.

After the Assembly

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

1. Pray for the whole church and world, as they seek to understand and implement the actions of the General Assembly.
2. Present reports as requested by their electing presbytery.
3. Serve in any special meetings of the General Assembly called prior to the convening of the 225th General Assembly.

4. 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

This section will be drafted in consultation with appropriate parties prior to distribution.