



Commissioner and Advisory Delegate Video Summary Discernment About an Online GA

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General Assembly**

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly (COGA) and the Office of the General Assembly (OGA) have partnered over the past several weeks in discernment regarding the 224th General Assembly. After much prayerful consideration, the decision was made to hold an online assembly with an abbreviated timeline and limited business. This decision was not taken lightly.

The first line of action was a request of the Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC) in which COGA sought to postpone the assembly until 2021 or cancel the current assembly, convening instead in 2022. The ACC informed us the *Book of Order* requires that an assembly take place in 2020. We also were advised by medical professionals and the Center on Disease Control that travel would be difficult throughout the rest of 2020 and into 2021. Finally, we were most concerned with the health and well-being of the participants in the General Assembly. There could not be a safe GA if we gathered in person. The transition of the Baltimore convention center and our partner hotels to COVID-19 hospital units solidified our choice to move to an online assembly.

We became concerned with “bandwidth.” This applies not solely to the technical issues related to an online assembly, but also to the mental and emotional bandwidth of participants. We concluded that it was neither appropriate or practical to ask commissioners and advisory delegates to attend 10-12 hour virtual meetings to emulate the in-person work of General Assembly.

While this is not the assembly we had hoped and planned for, COGA believes that this moment is a gift to imagine church in a new way. Fully online assemblies are not what we foresee for future General Assemblies, however the opportunity to be creative and utilize new technological tools will inform the ways we approach business in the future for the better.