

## WHAT IS GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND WHO WILL BE THERE?

NARRATOR 1: Hello, my name is NARRATOR 1.

NARRATOR 2: And my name is NARRATOR 2.

NARRATOR 3: And I'm NARRATOR 3. We have the privilege of telling you more about your role as a commissioner or advisory delegate to the 218<sup>th</sup> General Assembly meeting of the Presbyterian Church (USA) in San Jose, California, June 21-28, 2008.

NARRATOR 2: Thank you for serving as a commissioner or advisory delegate of the General Assembly. It is an honor and your work will make a difference for years to come.

NARRATOR 1: The PC (USA) includes almost two point three million members in more than eleven thousand congregations. Some congregations are urban, some are in suburbs, and many are in rural areas or small towns. The PC(USA)'s members spread across our country from Alaska to Puerto Rico - from Maine to Hawaii.

NARRATOR 3: In spite of this diversity of location and background they all belong to this one body of baptized believers that we know as the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). So what is the General Assembly?

ONSCREEN: What is the General Assembly?

NARRATOR 2: The General Assembly is the highest governing body in the PC (USA). As you know, other governing bodies are the session, presbytery and synod. Commissioner and advisory delegates to the General Assembly gather to do the business of our church assigned to the assembly. Through prayer and the guidance from the Holy Spirit the commissioners and advisory delegates deliberate and determine how the PC (USA) will look and act in the future. The General Assembly gathers every other year in different locations. Birmingham, Denver, Columbus, Long Beach, and Charlotte have all hosted assemblies in the recent past.

The General Assembly has several specific responsibilities outlined in Chapter 13 of the *Book of Order* and you are encouraged to take some time to read through that chapter

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and consider how you will help the assembly carry out those responsibilities. In general, the assembly reviews the work of synods, resolves controversies in the church, is responsible for matters of common concern for the whole church, and serves as a symbol of unity for the church. It seeks to protect our church from errors in faith and practice, is responsible for assuring that the expression of our theology remains true to the biblical standards in our historic confessions. The General Assembly presents a witness for truth and justice in our community and in the world. It sets priorities for our denomination and establishes relationships with other churches or ecumenical bodies.

As a commissioner or advisory delegate, these become your tasks. It's a big responsibility that can only be met with sufficient preparation and the help of the Holy Spirit.

ONSCREEN: What is a Commissioner?

NARRATOR 3: A Commissioner to a General Assembly serves on behalf of all the members of all the congregations of this denomination. You are not representing your particular congregation or presbytery, but rather serving the whole church and God as guided by the Holy Spirit. To be a commissioner is to carry a great responsibility.

Half of the 752 commissioners are Minister of the Word and sacrament, while the other half are elders. Commissioners are elected by the presbyteries, and each presbytery is allotted a proportional number of commissioners in accordance with the *Book of Order*.

ONSCREEN: What is an Advisory Delegate?

NARRATOR 1: Advisory delegates serve in an advisory role so that the Assembly may be assured of hearing and recognizing their special viewpoints. These delegates represent youth, theological students, missionaries and ecumenical partners. Advisory Delegates have voice and vote in committees, meaning they have the privilege of speaking to issues as well as voting on them. However, in plenary business sessions, advisory delegates become just that – advisors to commissioners on their votes through the voicing of their

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opinions. Through more representation and inclusion, broader wisdom is brought to seek God's will.

Each presbytery is invited to elect one Youth Advisory Delegate, while each of the ten Presbyterian-related seminaries is invited to nominate two Theological Student Advisory Delegates. Other seminaries with historically large numbers of Presbyterian students are invited to name a theological student on a rotating basis. Eight Missionary Advisory Delegates are invited by the General Assembly Council and fifteen partner churches are invited to send an ecumenical advisory delegate also on a rotating basis.

NARRATOR 2: From now till the assembly and even while in San Jose, you will receive volumes of materials, official and unofficial. Please be sure to pay particular attention to the mailings from the Office of the General Assembly related to logistics, registration, and preparation for the assembly.

NARRATOR 3: This is only a brief introduction to the General Assembly. We hope that you will take advantage of other opportunities and materials available to you as part of your orientation.

NARRATOR 2: We are grateful that you are serving our church as a commissioner or advisory delegate. We hope that you will enjoy the experience and that you will learn more about all that God is doing through Presbyterian Church (USA).

NARRATOR 1: We look forward to seeing you in San Jose!

ONSCREEN: for more information, contact:  
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