

BEING A COVENANT COMMUNITY IN THE VIRTUAL COMMUNITY OF SOCIAL MEDIA Guidance for participants at a General Assembly

The Church of Jesus Christ has always been an epistolary community. We are a going and telling faith. The earliest church communicated through the written word - the media of their era - bringing the body of Christ together when they could not be together bodily. We lift up many of these epistles as scripture.

Social media brings immediacy to how and with whom we communicate Social media gives people a chance to share ideas and think aloud with many communities simultaneously. Attending or observing a General Assembly, we can instantly share our thoughts with others nearby and across the globe. We can post reflections, continue debates after the voting is over and point our friends to the thoughtful reflections of others by passing along links.

By virtue of our baptisms, our actions and words are not our own for we belong to each other. Our polity professes that we are bound by the Holy Spirit to Christ through our baptisms and that baptism also “unites the people of God with each other.” We live to make witness to that unity in the body of Christ Jesus and as a General Assembly work to the end that the whole church become “a community of faith, hope, love and witness.” (*Book of Order* G-3.05)

Social media can build up community or undermine community. Like any communication it can bring people together and enrich the dialogue among those participating. It is also important to be aware that what is written lacks the social nuances of words spoken in person and thoughts written in haste or even in jest have a life of their own in the internet.

In Councils like the General Assembly, we put our trust in the powerful discernment which occurs when women and men gather to speak and listen to each other in the Holy Spirit. Our councils are clearly defined in membership and in method. At a particular General Assembly we believe that the commissioners and advisory delegates who have gathered together are uniquely set aside for the decisions they will bring forth at that particular time.

The guiding principle for using social media at a General Assembly is to be attentive and in the present to the community gathered immediately around us and to the mysterious and wondrous movement of the Spirit of Christ in this place. Our baptisms call us to engage our hearts with each other in the moment during the business of a General Assembly.

- Mobile telephone conversations will continue to be banned from the floor during plenary.
- Through live video streaming people throughout the world will be watching the proceedings as they happen. The commissioners and advisory delegates with whom you serve trust that when you speak and vote you are reflecting your own heart and convictions as guided by the Spirit in this community.
- Remember that anything you write can be copied and distributed. Please do not make a comment about the proceedings that you would not make in person to other commissioners and advisory delegates.
- When sharing pictures, please be mindful of the Assembly’s policy on photography and the use of participants’ images.
- Participants in the assembly should identify themselves in their username. As a courtesy, profile information or the username should represent who you are and your affiliation with the General Assembly.