

Using Social Media at the General Assembly

Social media has become a normal and integral part of our lives as a society. It covers an ever-evolving collection of programs and devices like Twitter, email, texting and Facebook. It might be tempting to dismiss these new technologies as tangential to a meeting of the General Assembly. They can be ignored, banned, or acknowledged. What we can't do is to expect that social media is not a normal part of life for many commissioners, advisory delegates, and visitors.

Social media is not a fad, it is a fundamental shift in the way we communicate.

Location no longer defines the number or immediacy of those with whom we are in communication. Social media gives people a chance to share ideas and think aloud with many different communities. People engaging in social media are potentially listening to, talking, and reflecting with many people at the same time. Being present with someone engaging in social media does not necessarily mean that you are the person getting their primary attention.

In contrast with this shift in the way we communicate are the principles of Presbyterian polity and governance.

A major affirmation of our faithfulness together is a trust in the power of discernment when men and women gather to speak and listen to each other and to the voice of the Holy Spirit. Our governing bodies 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 present to the community gathered immediately around us and to the mysterious and wondrous movement of the Spirit of Christ in this place.

Whatever our thumbs may be doing, our commissions call us to engage our hearts with each other in the moment during the business of a General Assembly.

- Please do not make using social media the primary focus of your attention during meetings of the Assembly.
- Cell-phone 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. Do not serve as a proxy for those outside the assembly who wish to ask questions or make motions. The commissioners and advisory delegates with whom you serve trust that your words are a reflection of your own heart and convictions.
- 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.
- 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.

The official 219th General Assembly (2010) social media

will include a Twitter feed located in the right column of the Web site maintained by the Office of the General Assembly under the username presbyGA. Those interested in reading what other Twitter users are saying can refer to a list created on Twitter by the Moderator of the 218th General Assembly Bruce Reyes-Chow.

Hashtags for General Assembly will help users find comments outside of their respective networks.

Among the tags for this year's assembly are:

- #ga219 - general comments about the assembly
- #pcusa – comments about the PC(USA) as whole
- #presbyterian – comments about issues that define being Presbyterian
- #oga – comments about the Office of the General Assembly
- #gamc – comments about the General Assembly Mission Council

Clicking on the hashtags while reading tweets will present search results of all posts that include that tag.