

# Presiding officers endorse plan to shorten General Convention to 4 days, July 8-11, and limit attendance

 [episcopalnewsservice.org/2022/05/17/design-group-recommends-shortening-general-convention-to-4-days-july-8-11-and-limiting-attendance/](https://episcopalnewsservice.org/2022/05/17/design-group-recommends-shortening-general-convention-to-4-days-july-8-11-and-limiting-attendance/)

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The design group formed by the Rev. Gay Clark Jennings and Presiding Bishop Michael Curry has released its first set of recommendations for the 80th General Convention. Photo: Sharon Tillman/Episcopal News Service

[Episcopal News Service] The 80th General Convention will now be held July 8-11 in Baltimore, Maryland, shortened from eight to four days under a recommendation from the design group charged with planning a “shorter, smaller, safer” gathering, according to a letter

to the church sent May 17 by Presiding Bishop Michael Curry and the Rev. Gay Clark Jennings, president of the House of Deputies.

In addition to the shortened duration, the Presiding Officers' General Convention Design Group recommended that attendance be restricted to bishops, deputies, essential staff and volunteers and a limited media presence, with visitors generally not allowed. Dioceses would be asked to send only two alternate deputies (one lay and one clergy) and inactive bishops would be asked to stay home. There would be no exhibit hall and all church-affiliated organizations would be asked not to hold events and receptions in Baltimore during July 8-11.

“Like many of you, we continue to grieve our inability to gather as a whole church this summer,” Curry and Jennings wrote, acknowledging they endorsed the design group’s recommendations. “But even since last week, when we first made the decision to reduce the scale of the meeting, COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations in the United States have continued to rise steeply. Although we regret that need to make this decision, we are confident that we have chosen the right path.”

General Convention is the governing body of The Episcopal Church. It typically meets every three years as a bicameral legislature that includes the House of Deputies and the House of Bishops, composed of deputies and bishops from each diocese. It is also the largest churchwide gathering, drawing together upwards of 5,000 attendees. The 80<sup>th</sup> General Convention was originally scheduled for July 2021 but was postponed a year because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Curry and Jennings first discussed their preliminary plan for a modified General Convention at a special meeting of Executive Council held last week. At the time, they said that neither cancelation nor another postponement of General Convention was a viable option and appointed the design group to reduce the size and duration of the convention and limit it to essential functions.

The design group, led by Bishop Sean Rowe and Deputy Bryan Krislock, parliamentarians in each of the respective houses, held its first of three scheduled meetings May 17. Next week, the design group is scheduled to develop recommendations on COVID-19 protocols and arrangements for worship and other large events. The week of May 30, it plans to develop recommendations on the legislative process, working with legislative committee chairs to prioritize the resolutions assigned to them. In the meantime, two-dozen bishops’ and deputies’ committees are holding hearings together online in advance of convention. (For a schedule of online hearings, click here.)

The design group plans to finish its work by May 31. During the first week of June, both the Joint Standing Committee on Planning and Arrangements and Executive Council will meet, allowing the presiding officers to formalize the new plan for General Convention.

“While these plans will not be official until the first week in June, we have every confidence that our colleagues in leadership will receive them well,” Curry and Jennings wrote. “We give thanks for those who are working tirelessly to make this General Convention safer for everyone who will attend and everyone who will receive us in Baltimore. As the United States marks the grim milestone of 1 million deaths from COVID-19, we ask you to pray for all those whose lives have been lost and all those whose lives will never be the same.”

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