

The GA Planning Committee (GAPC) met from April 12-15 in Phoenix. In addition to the GAPC, members of the Arizona Immigration Ministries (AZIM) and representatives from the Accountability Group also attended the meeting. I attended the meeting on behalf of our regular liaison, Jackie Shanti who was unable to attend.

GA2012

My observation is that the GAPC, the Accountability Group and the Arizona Immigration Ministries are working well together in a highly collaborative way that is consistent with policy 5.1. Leslie Takahashi Morris and Paul Langston-Daley were in attendance from the Accountability Group, and Leslie indicated that the Accountability Group will be submitting a report to the Board.

Touching on the requirements that the delegates placed on the Board, the administration and the GAPC for 2012:

- The plans for this GA have been developed in close collaboration with the Arizona Immigration Ministries team. The AZIM, in turn, has been working closely with a variety of partners. The witness events and service events planned for GA have been planned based on the needs and requests from those partners.
- We have low cost registrations available to members of our partner organizations. There has not been a lot of take up yet on these registrations, but the AZIM continues to work with our partners to encourage them to register and be with us.
- There has been a great deal of attention paid to how we make every person who attends this General Assembly feel safe and welcome. During my time with them, the Committee discussed a variety of accessibility issues including items such as the sidewalks and suitability for scooters at the witness events; how and when to provide translation services at this GA; and how to provide for the wellbeing of some of our more vulnerable attendees.
- The planning for GA includes not only the witnessing that we will be doing together several times during GA, but also very intentional work around how we can help the delegates go home with new skills and insights to help them work for justice in their communities and in their states.
- The Accountability Group and the Planning Committee are working well together, and there was a general sense in the room that this structure has been very beneficial both for the Planning Committee and for the groups represented in the Accountability Group. It is unclear yet whether this particular structure is something that we will want to continue. Leslie Takahashi Morris reported that they are discussing this within the Accountability Group and that they will provide feedback to the Board and the GAPC.
- The group also discussed the need to report back to the delegates about how they have complied with the resolution from 2010. This is currently scheduled for the Friday morning plenary session.

The Planning Committee will be training volunteers to serve as “marshals” at the witness events. The marshals will be there to help with logistics, direct the crowd etc. To serve as a marshal, you must be

trained. The training will be held from 12:30 – 3:30 on Wednesday. Board members are welcome to attend the training and serve as marshals if we wish.

The Committee emphasized a number of times that we will not be undertaking civil disobedience at this Assembly. This is one of the messages that Board members should include as we talk to people about GA and encourage them to attend.

The Committee received a report from Jan Sneegas regarding registration to date for GA2012. We are running at a registration pace for about 3400 people. This is below the Committee's planning assumption, and if it holds would result in a loss that will be covered by the GAPC reserves. It is still important for the Board and the staff to use all available communication mechanisms to encourage people to attend GA this year.

Future GA Planning

The committee has approved proposals for the location of GA for 2016 and 2018. Our practices regarding the location of General Assembly has been to have it in the "middle of the country" every other year. We tend to have the best attendance when we are in a central location. Jan solicited proposals for 2016 and 2018 together as this puts her in a better negotiating position for both years. The GAPC has recommended to the Board that we meet in Columbus, Ohio for the 2016 General Assembly and that we meet in Kansas City, Missouri for General Assembly 2018. I have attached the rationale and research on these locations as Appendix A to this report. The Board may be interested to know that Detroit was one of the other locations considered. There were a number of reasons why Detroit was not selected, including the cost that our members would face to attend as well as other issues associated with the infrastructure available in Detroit to support a gathering such as ours. I will present a motion to the Board during our meeting that the General Assembly meet in Columbus in 2016 and in Kansas City in 2018.

Jan also reported that she is working on the locations for General Assembly 2017. She has one solid proposal and is expecting at least one more.

Make-up of the General Assembly Planning Committee

The Committee had a wide ranging discussion of its policies regarding the selection of GAPC leadership. One of the outcomes of this discussion was a question about the ongoing need for the Board to directly appoint members of the planning committee. Currently, 8 members of the GAPC are elected by the General Assembly, and 2 are appointed by the Board. The GAPC did not develop a recommendation for change at this meeting, but they did commit to spend time in deeper conversation on this topic at a future meeting. I reminded them that the Board is also reviewing its role relative to committees as part of our efforts to focus on "board work," particularly as the board reduces in size. This is a good opening for dialog with the GAPC as we move forward.

Appendix A

General Assembly Site Team Recommendation for 2016 and 2018 General Assembly

A site visit for GA 2016 and GA 2018, was conducted by Walt Wieder (Planning Committee Chair), Jan Sneegas (Director, General Assembly and Conference Services), and Don Plante (GA Program Planner). We received proposals from Detroit, St. Louis, Kansas City and Columbus, Ohio. We visited each city. **The Site Team recommends the 2016 General Assembly be held in Columbus, Ohio and the 2018 General Assembly in Kansas City, Missouri.**

The primary criteria guiding the site selection team was economic accessibility. Choosing sites in the Midwest every other year increases the number of people who are able to access General Assembly without flying from one coast to the other. **The two cities we recommend offered the lowest hotel rates (guaranteed!) and great community support.**

General Assembly 2016

Columbus, Ohio is the state capitol and the home of Ohio State University. Columbus is located within 550 miles of half of the U.S. population. With five highways running through the city, it is very accessible.

Travel

The Columbus airport is located about a ten minute drive east of downtown. Air service is provided by the major carriers (US Airways, United, Delta, Continental, American etc) as well as Air Tran, Frontier and Southwest. Cab fare is around \$25.00 from the airport to the convention hotels.

Convention Center

The Greater Columbus Convention Center is an interesting building offering adequate space, natural light, state of the art technology, and a highly professional staff to support our needs. The Greater Columbus Community Support program will pay \$5.00 per actualized room night (estimated \$35,000) to help offset the cost of the Center, currently projected to be \$83,500.

The Convention Center recently hired a full-time staff person dedicated to coordinating their sustainability initiative.

Housing

There are approximately 2000 rooms available in the convention area (our peak is usually between 1500 and 1700). **The city is guaranteeing room rates for 2016 ranging from \$129** (Red Roof and Courtyard) **to \$140** at the Hilton Hotel, scheduled to be completed this Fall.

We toured the following hotels:

- Hilton – hardhat tour of hotel across from the Convention Center; has meeting space
- Crowne Plaza
- Renaissance Hotel
- Hampton Inn & Suites
- Courtyard by Marriott
- DoubleTree Suites
- Red Roof Inn
- Residence Inn by Marriott
- Sheraton
- Holiday Inn

There is a large Hyatt Hotel connected to the Convention Center. Due to the UUA's current boycott of Hyatt we did not tour this property. Should the labor disagreement with Unite Here be resolved, we would look to include this hotel in our block.

Accessibility

The area is relatively flat. Elevators in the convention center are small as is typical, holding only two or three scooters at a time. The service elevator can be made available. Lifts and ramping is available for staging in the convention center.

Food

There is an adequate assortment of restaurants in the Convention Center area, including North Market, an eclectic collection of local food vendors including the notable Jenni's Ice Cream. The North Short district is walkable and has a variety of restaurants, bars, galleries and shops.

UU Support

We met with ministers Mark Belletini, Eric Meter, Susan Ritchie. District Executive Joan Van Becelaere met with us as well as Planning Committee member Debra Boyd. There is strong congregational support with very strong leadership.

Summary

Advantages of Columbus

- Great guaranteed rates
- Community Support to offset rental costs of Convention Center
- Close airport with a variety of transportation options including economic carriers
- Supportive UU congregations with strong leadership
- Interesting and functional convention center
- Professional staff at both the Convention and Visitors Bureau and the Convention Center
- Last in Columbus in 1984; last in Ohio Meadville District 2001.

Disadvantages of Columbus

- No public transportation option from the airport

General Assembly 2018

Kansas City is a bi-state metro area that straddles the Kansas Missouri state line. It is literally in the center of the country. It is noted for barbecue, jazz, fountains and friendly people. The hotel package is very compact and close to the convention center. There is a bus rapid transit line, MAX, that connects the River Market, Downtown, Crown Center and Country Club Plaza entertainment districts.

Travel

The Kansas City airport is located 19 miles northwest of downtown. Air service is provided by the major carriers (US Airways, United, Delta, Continental, American etc) as well as Air Tran, Frontier and Southwest. Cab fare is around \$50.00 from the airport to the convention hotels. Several transportation companies offer shuttle service between the airport and downtown (e.g. Supershuttle).

Convention Center

The Kansas City Convention Center is a large building with lots of natural light that is very close to the hotels with plenty of meeting space for our needs. Estimated rental is on the order of \$75,000. The building was originally built in 1976 with expansions in 1996 and 2005.

Housing

The housing package is very compact, the centerpiece of which is the 800 room Marriott. The smaller hotels are historic – beautiful but presenting accessibility challenges. **The city is guaranteeing 1100 rooms at \$140 or less.** These rates include our Passkey housing fees and a \$5 rebate to offset the convention center. Additional rooms range from economy properties (Fairfield Inn, rates not set this far out) to \$163 at the Hotel Phillips (100 rooms) and \$188 at the Hilton President (125 rooms).

We toured the following hotels:

- Marriott: headquarter hotel of 800 rooms (\$137 guaranteed rate)
- Crowne Plaza
- Phillips Hotel
- Hilton President
- Aladdin

We did not tour but might utilize the Fairfield Inn by Marriot and Residence Inn by Marriott which are 12 blocks away but accessible via MAX. Dorms at University of Missouri at Kansas City are being investigated.

Accessibility

The area is slightly hilly and the infrastructure, eg. curb cuts are showing wear. The city has a new mayor that has made improvements on this a high priority. Elevators in the convention center are small as is typical, holding only two or three scooters at a time. Lifts and ramping is available for staging in the convention center. The historic hotels have accessibility limitations which will need to be made known.

Food

The Convention Center is located adjacent to the Power and Light District, which offers eight blocks of dining and entertainment establishments covering a wide range of price points.

UU Support

We met with ministers Jill Jarvis (serving the Lawrence, KS congregation), Thom Belote (Overland Park, KS) and Jennifer Brooks (All Souls KC interim). The Rev. Kendyl Gibbons will be the settled minister at All Souls. There is strong congregational support with very strong leadership.

Summary

Advantages of Kansas City

- Fantastic guaranteed rates for 2018 – affordable!
- Rates inclusive of Passkey fees and \$5 rebate to offset rental cost of Convention Center
- Supportive UU congregations with strong leadership
- Functional convention center with professional staff
- Professional Visitors Bureau staff worked very hard to provide us with the best possible rates
- General Assembly has never been in Kansas City; last in Prairie Star District 2010.

Disadvantages of Kansas City

- Distance of airport to downtown
- No public transportation option from the airport
- Will need encouragement and assistance to meet our green initiatives
- Historic hotels present accessibility limitations