

## Factors Influencing the 2021 Biennial Mission Summit in Puerto Rico

We have been monitoring a number of factors that could influence the safety and success of the 2021 Biennial currently scheduled to take place in Puerto Rico June 25-27, 2021. As you review the information associated with each factor, please give each factor a rating from -3 to +3 where a -3 indicates a strong influence not to hold the event face to face and a +3 indicates a strong influence to hold the event face to face.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ **Conditions in Puerto Rico** – Currently, Puerto Rico is experiencing earthquakes on the southwest side of the island and recently experienced another tropical storm. Internet access on the island is intermittent at times, although much better at the Convention Center. Travel into the country currently requires a negative COVID-19 test within the last 72 hours, or the traveler is subject to a 14-day quarantine. Holding a convention in Puerto Rico would bring needed travel income to the island.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ **Health protocols** – Anticipated health protocols at the Convention Center include wider aisles, taller drapery partitions, one-way traffic flow, etc. The Puerto Rico Convention Center is part of a larger conglomerate of convention centers globally which will employ their own set of safety guidelines for conventioners. Social distancing and food protocols could affect the spacing and scheduling of events. Enforcing mask requirements would also need to be part of the discussion.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ **Willingness to travel** – Will persons be willing to fly to Puerto Rico for the Biennial Mission Summit? Recently, a survey was conducted of ABC congregations in which a question about attending large gatherings was posed to the 411 respondents. The results are shown below:
  - a. Given the present circumstances, how do you feel about attending large regional and national gatherings?
    - i. I would attend with no concerns (9%)
    - ii. I would attend if all of the proper health safeguards were put into place (39%)
    - iii. I would not attend until there was a dramatic change in the current conditions created by COVID-19 such as the widespread availability of an effective vaccine. (49%)
    - iv. The global pandemic has permanently influenced my desire to attend large gatherings. (1%)
  - b. A similar question was recently posed to the regional executive ministers:
    - i. I would attend with no concerns (19%)
    - ii. I would attend if all of the proper health safeguards were put into place (47%)
    - iii. I would not attend until there was a dramatic change in the current conditions created by COVID-19 such as the widespread availability of an effective vaccine. (29%)

- iv. The global pandemic has permanently influenced my desire to attend large gatherings. (5%)
  - c. A similar question is also currently posed on our website and has received 130 responses thus far :
    - i. I would attend with no concerns (2%)
    - ii. I would attend if all of the proper health safeguards were put into place (26%)
    - iii. I would not attend until there was a dramatic change in the current conditions such as the widespread availability of an effective vaccine to COVID-19. (61%)
    - iv. The global pandemic has permanently influenced my desire to attend large gatherings. (11%)
  - d. Some ABC staff may be unwilling to attend due to safety and health concerns.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ **Demographics of those attending previous Biennials.** Although persons of any age can contract COVID-19, older persons are at greater risk of experiencing severe effects from it. The age breakdown of the 302 persons who responded to the 2019 Biennial Mission Summit are shown below:
- a. 21 to 35 (9%)
  - b. 36 to 50 (21%)
  - c. 51 to 65 (42%)
  - d. Over 65 (28%)
5. \_\_\_\_\_ **Financial Insecurity** – How will the financial impact of COVID affect the ability of pastors and congregants to travel?
6. \_\_\_\_\_ **Optics** – What are the optics of not holding a face to face event in 2021 vs the optics of holding an event with potentially low attendance or a COVID-19 breakout?
7. \_\_\_\_\_ **Liability** – ABCUSA will have sufficient insurance to cover any liability that may result from participants attending the Biennial. There would need to be discussion about how to inform persons that they are assuming some risk by attending.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ **Cancellation penalties** - We are currently at a 40% cancellation penalty in our contract with the PR hotels. We also have a contract with CVent for registration assistance. Attrition penalties are different from cancellation penalties and could perhaps be less depending upon attendance. Seeking to negotiate penalties is always an option. Seeking to reschedule the event in the same location for 2023 could lessen a cancellation penalty.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ **Mandatory Business Meeting with quorum requirements** – Section 3b of the bylaws for BGM require Biennial Mission Summit delegates from at least 200 congregations and 10 regions. Since our bylaws do not expressly prohibit member

meetings from being held electronically, NY has adopted emergency provisions that allow for remote member meetings for the duration of the state of emergency.

10. \_\_\_\_\_ **Constituent support/concerns** – National and regional agencies have given input to this decision and recognize that it is a BGM decision to make. If the decision is made to proceed with a face to face event, the national agencies would need to hold their own board discussions regarding their level of participation.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Total Score** (Scores can range from -30 to +30)

## 11. Options

- a. **Hosting.** We can move forward with a face to face event recognizing that some of the factors that we have been monitoring could still necessitate the cancellation of a face to face event. As long as hosting a face to face Biennial Mission Summit in PR in 2021 remains an option, the following conditions will be monitored:
  - i. Conditions in PR
  - ii. Health Protocols for the Convention Center
  - iii. Willingness to travel and travel bans
  - iv. Constituent support/concerns
- b. **Hybrid.** One option would be to hold a hybrid event in which the event would be physically hosted as well as live-streamed. Considerations of this option include:
  - i. Ability to live-stream
  - ii. Bilingual considerations
  - iii. Percentage of persons who would exercise online vs travel options
  - iv. Fixed expenses related to hosting an event
  - v. Level of participation from regional and national partners
  - vi. Some persons have offered feedback that hybrid events have not gone as well as either fully online or fully in-person events.
- c. **Virtual.** If the factors influencing the hosting of the 2021 Biennial Mission Summit in PR suggest that the event should not be held, the following initial conversations would need to take place immediately:
  - i. We need to inform all regional and national partners and prepare a communication to our ABC constituents.
  - ii. Do we seek to reschedule the event in PR for 2023?
  - iii. Meet with the Biennial Program Committee to re-envision a virtual event.
  - iv. Do we hold an online OTABL event in 2021?
  - v. When do we hold the next Mission Table?
  - vi. What are the implications of holding a virtual business meeting of the Biennial delegates?
- d. **Rescheduling.** We could seek to reschedule the event in 2023 with no Biennial Mission Summit held in 2021.