

AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES USA

BIENNIAL MISSION SUMMIT

2025

LOCATION SELECTION REPORT

During the pandemic meetings were cancelled and hotel development projects were put on hold. What has happened in the past year is organizations have tried to return to pre-pandemic meeting schedules, only to find demand exceeding supply making it very difficult to find meeting space. To make matters worse the hotel community is trying to make up for lost revenue in 2020 and 2021 by raising rates and fees.

When this search for a location for the 2025 Biennial began in mid-July, we knew there were going to be some roadblocks. A return to the Midwest was requested after meeting in Puerto Rico in 2023. At the time of this report, I do not know how this year's meeting turned out financially.

Requests for Proposals were sent to the following cities:

Omaha	Salt Lake City	Minneapolis
Sioux Falls	Denver	Milwaukee
St Louis	Aurora, CO	St Paul

Out of these cities three bids have been received and are attached.

Omaha, which was the favorite prior to the search, can only offer the dates of June 30-July 7, 2025. The prime dates are over the College World Series and a booked city-wide convention. I understand meeting over the 4th holiday is not new to ABC-USA. The Omaha bureau has rolled out the carpet by offering to pay for the center rental. The Center does have a \$108,825 F&B minimum inclusive of service charges. The Hilton which is attached to the center via walkway has offered a very good rate of \$112 per room and many concessions. They can house the entire room block. For their meeting portion they have a \$15,000 + F&B minimum. I have held numerous meetings at the Hilton over the years and have found their quality and service to be outstanding. Omaha's Old Market District is just a short walk away. Eleven airlines service Omaha with 200 flights per day. Complimentary airport shuttle

Sioux Falls has the primary dates of June 23-July 1, 2025, available. I inspected the Denny Sanford Premier Center Convention Center on Aug. 18th, and I found the facility to be almost a perfect fit for the Biennial program. Rental value is \$72,000 and was offered for \$40,000. I was able to negotiate that down to \$30,000 with \$70,000 F&B minimum. The Sheraton is attached to the center and has limited meeting space and will provide 185 rooms at the rate of \$149. The meeting on Monday and Tuesday could be held at the Sheraton or in the center. There are plenty of nearby hotels that have offered rates from \$120-\$199 which we could select from. The newest hotel (Canopy by Hilton) will open in 2024 in the downtown area. The Holiday Inn downtown has 233 rooms and has offered a rate of \$149.

Transportation from downtown to the center would be needed if we use any of those properties. Attendees will be finding their way to the downtown and Falls Park area as that is where the most restaurants are located. Of the three choices air service in and out of Sioux Falls comes in third. I would guess many attendees will choose to drive if possible. If not, early planning for flights should be encouraged. Food costs in Sioux Falls is very reasonable and should provide some savings over the other cities. Complimentary hotel shuttle

Milwaukee is a third choice and should be considered due to its access and big city services. They are offering the dates of June 16-24, 2025, The Wisconsin Center District is going through a \$456 million dollar expansion that will be completed in May 2024. The Baird Center rental cost starts at \$227,220 which they lowered to \$30,000 which matches Sioux Falls. They are suggesting a \$10 rebate from the hotels resulting in \$10,760 cost. Labor and equipment rental charges are extra. We would want to know that cost before signing any contracts. The center F&B minimum is \$80,000. A rebate is a decision the ABC-USA will need to discuss as I know that is how the Puerto Rico costs were assisted. The Hyatt is connected to the center as is the Hilton. While we are still waiting for the Hilton bid, The Hyatt is offering a \$196 rate which includes the \$10 rebate. They would host the Monday through Thursday program with a \$40,000 F&B minimum. I think this is a cost that could be negotiated. Food costs will be more expensive in Milwaukee. Air service is the best of the three options with 250 daily arrivals and departures. There would be a shuttle cost to the hotels in Milwaukee. I also believe many attendees will choose to arrive by personal vehicle. Airport shuttle cost would be between \$15 and \$32 each way.

Aurora was a fourth option which I decided to not receive a full bid package from. Since the Colorado Convention Center was not available, I asked the Gaylord of the Rockies to provide me with some costs. They could not provide enough rooms on Wednesday of the program and the room rate would be \$299 plus a resort fee. The kicker was a \$475,000 F&B minimum.

In summary we have three options to consider. Omaha is the best deal but means meeting over the July 4th holiday. For some reason air service this year over the 4th was crazy but anymore you can make that case throughout the summer nationwide. Sioux Falls is an interesting option as they have a great center but an odd hotel support system. Milwaukee will be more expensive, but they have made it attractive.

Each city is holding the space pending a decision by the executive committee.

Submitted by Bruce Whitaker