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Pax Christi USA moves conference to Atlanta on labor justice grounds

by Eloisa Perez-Lozano

Catholic peace advocacy organization Pax Christi USA has changed the venue of its 2013 national conference from Washington to Atlanta.

The annual conference will now convene June 14-16 at the Sheraton Gateway Hotel in Atlanta, Pax Christi announced Feb. 5. The conference was originally supposed to be held at a Hyatt in Washington, D.C., because of "hotel workers' request for people of conscience to boycott Hyatt hotels," the group said.

At its December national council meeting, group members from the Metro DC/Baltimore region raised the issue of working conditions and wage issues linked to the Hyatt brand, Sr. Patricia Chappell said.

After researching the issue, the council decided to make the switch, said Chappell, a Sister of Notre Dame de Namur.

"Because we basically are a Peace of Christ organization and involved with justice issues, we honestly felt that it would not best for us to hold our national assembly [at the Hyatt]," Chappell said.

Because Pax Christi USA had not yet signed a contract, it did not lose money over backing out of those dates, Chappell said.

Pax Christi national council also looked at other areas, including Baltimore and St. Louis, for the conference. After Chappell reviewed various proposals with an event planner, the Sheraton in Atlanta was selected because it had the conference dates available and would be able to provide the necessary accommodations, she said.

About 500 people are expected to attend the June conference, which will include keynote speakers and breakout sessions for adults, young adults, teenagers and children. The theme is "Remembering the Past with Gratitude, Living the Present with Enthusiasm, and Looking to the Future with Confidence and Hope."

Chappell said many of the issues Pax Christi champions were addressed in Pope John XXIII's 1963 encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, including the spirituality of nonviolence; disarmament and demilitarization; economic and racial justice; and human rights and global restoration.

Pax Christi USA was started by mostly lay Catholics in 1972. Pax Christi International is made up of member organizations in more than 50 countries.

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