

Frequently Asked Questions

We probably all have some anxiety and questions about our GFM staff conference scheduled for March 22-24 (with day-ahead and day-after options) at Lake Williamson Christian Center in Carlinville, IL (75 minutes east of St. Louis). Here is how we are handling the question of going forward with the conference in light of the Omicron surge.

In short, we are (hopefully) planning to hold the conference, but we are prepared to cancel as late as March 8 if wisdom dictates.

Here is more about our thinking and our plans:

Are we planning to still be together in person?

We are eager to gather! We've designed the conference around an in-person experience, wanting to connect with one another and together with God so that we are revitalized for our shared mission in a changing landscape on campus. To echo the writer of 2 John 12: "Although we have much to communicate to you, we would rather not use Zoom and Chat; rather, we hope to come together and talk face to face so that our joy may be complete." For detailed COVID protocols in place for a safe conference, [click here](#).

Are full-time GFM Staff required to attend?

- Paid staff who work **20+ hours a week** are required to attend GFM National Staff Meetings ***in person or online***. Please speak with your supervisor if you have questions.
- Paid staff who work <20 hours a week and official volunteers are invited to attend in person or online.

If a staff member registers, then needs to cancel, contact Lorrey Thabet as soon as possible at lorrey.thabet@intervarsity.org or by phone.

How are expenses being handled differently in light of the tentative planning process?

Expenses for our in-person meeting will be higher due to covid-precautions (single rooms for all attendees, fewer staff per vehicle, etc.) If expenses are less than anticipated, staff will not pay the full amounts listed below. Staff accounts will be billed in May or June. Travel expenses are included and will be reimbursed from the conference account. Please use account 712115 GFM National Staff Conference to expense your travel.

1. In-person: **\$725** for the main meeting; **\$150** for each additional meeting
2. Online attendee: **\$125** for paid staff; **\$25** for volunteers

Cancellations and costs: Staff who register and expense flights to the conference account and then cancel will not be billed the full conference cost (\$725 including travel), however, *the cost of their flight will be billed to their staff account*. Flight credit from their ticket should be used for a future InterVarsity trip. Please ensure you book a refundable or "no change fees" flight, whichever is less expensive.

What if I don't feel comfortable attending in person?

We are concerned about the virus. We don't want to gather if it will be too risky, whether for the staff who would come, for those to whom they are connected, or for the burdened health care system. If we do

gather, we realize that some staff will appropriately choose not to come. The hope, of course, is that the Omicron surge will be widely abating bringing the risks of gathering into an acceptable range. The challenge, however, is when we will have sufficient information to discern that. In light of all this, please [review the COVID protocols](#) the venue and our planning team have in place before you decide.

I'm coming! When does registration open? When can I buy my plane ticket?

We will open registration on February 14. We will send a special email to all GFM staff with more information about the conference plans, including COVID-19 protocols for before and during the conference. We will ask everyone to make a good faith decision about attending and book **refundable or "no change fees"** flights by February 22 (a nine day window). We have asked all staff directors to have a conversation early that week with each of their supervisees, including Campus Ministry Volunteers, about their intentions and concerns. We invite everyone to lean toward attending but will make provision for anyone to decide not to attend at any point leading up to the conference. Knowing everyone's good faith plans by February 22 allows the conference team to plan accordingly. **Please do not book flights until you receive an email with travel parameters from Lorrey Thabet on February 14.** Arrival and departure times will be listed in the February 14 registration email.

If the event is cancelled, will the whole conference be moved online?

We will signal "go" or "no go" no later than March 8. We want to give everyone two weeks' notice if we cancel. If we cancel, we will not switch to a virtual conference, but we may invite all of GFM to a 75-minute Zoom gathering for vision and encouragement.

I'm a part-time staff or a volunteer. How can I participate?

Part-time staff and volunteers are welcome to attend in person or online. Please talk with your supervisor about the details of covering your costs.

I would like to attend online this year. What will the program look like for me?

Online participation will include one hour on Tuesday and 2.5 hours each on Wednesday and Thursday. Plenary sessions will be streamed live or can be watched later. Plenaries will be held:

- 7:45 – 8:45 pm Central (Tuesday)
- 11 am – 12 pm Central (Wednesday)
- 11 am – 12:15 pm Central (Thursday)

Participants will choose a small group (during registration) that meets at one of the following times: Wednesday and Thursday: 9:30 – 10:45 am or 12:15 – 1:30 pm. More details will be included in our February 14 communication.

Is childcare available?

Regrettably, we cannot offer childcare at the GFM Staff Conference this year.

Do you have other questions?

Please talk with your supervisor or email your questions to [Lorrey Thabet](#).