The Colors of GC Session

Children play together on the floor of the Alamodome during the 60th General Conference Session held in San Antonio, Texas, July 2-11, 2015. Photo by James Bokovoy/NAD

Colors of the Session: Diversity in San Antonio

Forget the tension. Forget the arguments and the debates. Forget for a moment that the General Conference Session is a business meeting. Instead think of this: there are
thousands of people from all over the world meeting new friends and reuniting with old ones, exploring the many ministries the Seventh-day Adventist Church can boast of, and overall enjoying themselves.

Vararaj Dakkumalla and Dhyagaraj Dakkumalla are brothers from India. Dhyagaraj, who still lives in India with his wife, has been a pastor his entire life. Vararaj moved to California with his wife and currently lives in San Diego. Both couples arrived on Friday, ready to enjoy some family time together. “It’s hotter and more humid in India than it is here.” Vararaj said. “So it has been too cold for us in the dome!” They unanimously agreed that their favorite day was the women’s ordination. “It’s what we came for,” said Dhyagaraj. “We did get the result we wanted.” They also enjoyed the Asian division program on Tuesday night, with the native costumes and the display of the various flags. “Seeing them all together as a mixture of cultures was very wonderful,” Dhyagaraj said.

Della Clement-Nwaoha is originally from the West Indies, Grenada specifically. She attended Andrews University in 1986 before settling in New York. While at the GC Session, she has been searching through the convention center for a place to send her son for high school. “I don’t mind which school I send him to as long as it’s out of New York.” she said. “I know that the Adventist academies all have that emphasis on mission which is what I want for him.” She’s also been attending the meetings in the evening as a spectator. “I loved the global missions report,” she said. “It’s very inspiring. It gives believers that electrifying boost in spirit. I know I feel motivated!”

Gerardo and Paola Oudri, are a couple from Canada. Paola is a female delegate at the session, working as a teacher at home in Ontario, while Gerardo is the youth director of the Ontario Conference. “To see the many ministries in our church, both official and independently supported, is my favorite part.” Gerardo said. “Seeing so many people passionate about their work is moving.” Paola agreed. “I enjoy seeing the reports at night and seeing how God works in different ways and in different parts of the word.” Gerardo thought that people might be confused about the grand scale the world church is on. “Very humbly, I think that many people have to mature in their understanding of how diverse the church is,” he said. “We cannot confuse fundamental beliefs and truth with church practices. It can be difficult.”

Chek-Yat Phoon, a delegate from South Korea, has met many people in his lifetime. He’s lived in South Korea for the last ten years after moving from his birthplace of Singapore. His work as education director for the conference there has allowed him to develop friendships with people he rarely sees. “At the General Conference, I am meeting new people from all over the world!” he said. “I have seen a friend of mine for 34 years but I just ran into him. It’s incredible.”

These few stories, brief though they may be, paint just a small picture of the enjoyment to be found in at GC. Not everything has to be a dramatic production. Sometimes joy can be found in a simple friendship or a unity in worship.

--Katie Morrison is a communication intern at the Rocky Mountain Conference, who is working for the NAD Communication team at the 60th General Conference Session.