

Amy Powell

**24 • Church Relations,
General Baptist Ministries**

Poplar Bluff, Mo.

After graduating with a degree in communications and religion from Carson-Newman University in Tennessee, Powell took a leap of faith and moved to Missouri to work for General Baptist Ministries. At only 24, she's in her second year of handling and running registration for the group's five large conferences, as well as acting as an attendee services representative on-site at the events. She also plans the GB National Youth Conference, The Summit and Recharge ministers conference, which rotate locations around the country each year.



Jonathan T. Lee

**29 • Sales Manager,
Hilton Houston Post Oak**

Houston

Lee admits his goal is to "make meeting planners look good," but for a guy who brought in more than \$1.2 million in room revenue for his hotel in 2014, he doesn't appear too shabby himself. After graduating with a B.A. in hospitality administration and business from Michigan State University in 2008, Lee worked in every department of Hilton Houston Post Oak before being promoted to a position as event manager, which led him to where he is today at the property. His hard work isn't going unnoticed: For the past two years, Lee has been inducted into Hilton's Circle of Excellence, an exclusive club of employees ranking in the top 10 percent of the brand's guest satisfaction ratings.

Anastasia Northrop

**38 • Founder and Director,
National Catholic
Singles Conference**

San Antonio

Perhaps because she feels the event she founded 10 years ago—meant to bring religious singles together to form a union—serves a higher calling, Northrop loves climbing vast mountains. She's climbed 18 of them more than 14,000 feet high to gain perspective. The stress of planning the annual conference fades into the background when she reconnects with the teachings of Pope John Paul II. Northrop, who completed her master's in July, has touted the pontiff's "Theology of the Body" writings for 10 years during sessions at NCSC, which is expected to draw 600 attendees in Atlanta this fall. "It's rewarding to hear testimonies of the lives that are touched by the event," says Northrop, who's hoping to add regional events and an international conference.

Andrew Swanston

**37 • Head of Sales, Conferences
and Events, ExCeL London**

London

With more than 18 years in the hospitality and events industry, this globetrotter has earned his title as a meetings veteran. And, he has the stories to back it up: How many planners can say they've shaken hands with President Obama during his first presidential trek overseas? Swanston has done a little bit of everything in the industry, from managing wine bars in London to organizing events in Monaco. Now at ExCeL London, Swanston works as head of sales promoting London and its convention center to the North American market, and within two years increased convention business to London from 12 to 25 percent by bringing events like the 3,000-person Hillsong Conference to the space. Other faith-based clients include Kenneth Copeland Ministries and Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. His success has landed him a vital role in the development of a new training and meeting facility headed to the convention center.



Natasha Richards

39 • Owner and Founder, Natsel Management

Tamarac, Fla.

Richards has always been the first to volunteer within her church, from assisting the pastor to singing in the choir. Realizing she could turn the relationships she's made in the pews into event planning gigs, she started her own company, Natsel Management, handling strategic organizational planning for churches and ministries. Aside from planning the Florida Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Leadership Summit every year, she trains youth leaders from 147 churches on effective programming and also coordinates Adventist Campus Ministry in South Florida. "Serving people with the talents I was given—and seeing it help their events or organizations to be more effective—inspires me to do my job," says Richards, who's also a board member on the national Adventist Event Planners Association.

Genesis M. Watkins

**35 • Strategic Partnership Director,
National Baptist Convention, USA Inc.**

Country Club Hills, Ill.

For the last six years, Watkins has been coordinating events and overseeing new initiatives for the National Baptist Convention. Aside from helping organize many meetings for this large Baptist organization, including its annual conference in Memphis this year, Watkins also has served as logistics coordinator for Biblical Exposition Conference near Chicago for 10 years. A married mother of three, she's the daughter of NBC's Dr. George W. Waddles Sr. and was raised in the church. This made it a natural move for her to get her master's from Moody Theological Seminary and become the donor and prospect research coordinator for Moody Global Ministries before joining NBC to work alongside her father.