

**Minutes of the General Synod Program and Planning Committee
of the United Church of Christ Board of Directors**

Cleveland, Ohio

5:00 PM EDT Friday, October 11, 2013

Committee members present: Ms. Sue Art (Vice-chair), Mr. Robbie Carlson, Ms. Sheldon Culver, Mr. Brian Holeman (Chair), Ms. Julia LeBrell, Mr. James Moos, Mr. Gary Schulte, Ms. Jeanne Tyler, and Ms. Kimberly Wood.

Committee members absent/excused: Mr. William Edwards and Mr. Nevan Strobelt-McCann.

Representing the Local Arrangements Committee: Mr. Derry Wimer and Ms. Sue Wimer (LAC Co-chairs).

The Chief Executive of the General Synod: Mr. Geoffrey Black was present.

Staff members present: Ms. Sue Blain, Mr. Lee Foley, Ms. Kristina Lizardy-Hajbi, Ms. Waltrina Middleton, Mr. Scott Ressman, Ms. Christina Sattler, Ms. Denise Shimell and Ms. Valerie Smith.

Ms. Art began by sharing her hopes for the Thirtieth General Synod. She would like to see a Synod filled with spirit, an event that is filled with great times for all and a place filled with God.

Mr. Holeman reflected on his experience at the Twenty-ninth General Synod, saying that he felt well supported and protected. He stated that with absolute certainty the reason for this feeling was because of the national staff that is present at this meeting. Mr. Holeman appreciated the staffs' ability to deal quickly with issues or problems that may have arisen and in keeping that away from the committee members. He asked the committee to keep in mind that there is no finer support group than this staff.

Mr. Foley spoke to the role of the General Synod Program and Planning Committee, stating that the committee's role is to shape General Synod. He referred to a March meeting of this committee that would include a tour of the Convention Center, hotels and downtown Cleveland, as well as the business items to come before the committee at that time. The March meeting will be the primary opportunity for this committee to shape the Thirtieth General Synod. The committee will have lots of input, as much or as little as it wants. Some committees are more comfortable asking much from their staff, while others have taken on more responsibility.

The committee was informed that they will receive much support from both national staff and the Local Arrangements Committee of the Ohio Conference. Mr. Foley explained that the Local Arrangements Committee recruits volunteers, has many sub-committees, and chairs and vice-chairs of those committees that will also support the work of the General Synod Program and Planning Committee's vision.

Mr. Foley presented the committee with a timeline for its work. (Appendix A – The Committee Time Line to Cleveland). During his review of this timeline, Mr. Foley focused on the committee's March, 2014 meeting, stating that the March meeting is the committee's opportunity to put its "thumbprint" on the Thirtieth General Synod. The committee will meet the day before the full United Church of Christ Board of Directors meeting begins. This meeting used to take place in the host city in late January or early February, but in an effort to be fiscally responsible, the meeting has been added to the existing Board of Directors meeting. Mr. Foley apologized for making the committee members' trip a day longer. The committee will meet again in October, 2014 which will be its final opportunity to change anything and to have a major impact on the Thirtieth General Synod prior to turning it over to the staff. After the October, 2014 meeting the committee will be kept up-to-date on the progress of Synod.

Mr. Holeman noted that the committee and the staff want to be well prepared to provide guests and delegates alike with some of their best experiences in the life of the Church, changing lives. Mr. Holeman then called on Ms. Lizardy-Hajbi to review the survey results from the Twenty-ninth General Synod (see Appendix B – General Synod 29, Survey Results Report).

Ms. Lizardy-Hajbi informed the committee that the survey produces over all positive results, with seventy percent (70%) of people completing the survey stating that they had an excellent or above average experience. More than one third of the people completing the survey stated that they were first time attendees, the delegate experience was positive, and people seemed to appreciate the extra free time. In comparison to survey results from the past two General Synods, the Twenty-ninth General Synod had similar ratings. Ms. Lizardy-Hajbi shared several very positive comments with the committee.

Mr. Holeman shared with the committee that he does not wish to see this process become entirely committee driven. He expressed his desire to see the committee and staff work together to exchange ideas and recommendations and asks the committee to feel comfortable in turning over much of this process to the expertise of the staff. He reflected on the importance of the General Synod theme and the pressure that comes with determining that theme. His recommendation is to turn this process over to Ms. Ann Poston and her PIC team who have the

experience and resources to produce a theme. Between now and March, Ms. Poston and her team will put together two themes and proposals for each. When the committee meets in March it will have dialogue and together select the theme. In concert with that, Ms. Blain and Mr. Ressler and their incoming new team leader, Ivy Beckwith, will also work with Ms. Poston to develop a view of worship given the theme ideas. Mr. Black asked if it was possible and appropriate for committee members to send ideas to PIC. Mr. Holeman welcomed that idea.

There was discussion around Saturday and what that day will look like. Ms. LeBrell asked for a general outline of General Synod. Mr. Foley stated that the committee will determine what Saturday will look like. The committee may choose to follow the Long Beach model which relieves some of the pressure of business on Monday and Tuesday or return to models of previous Synods. He went on to provide an overview of General Synod.

Mr. Holeman provided positive thoughts surrounding the Cleveland location for 2015, from budget to ease of commute, and (knock on wood) currently no labor issues. There will be no need for outlying hotels, and because the hotels are within walking distance of the convention center, there will be no need for additional transportation/shuttle costs. The production company that the UCC works with is also the preferred production company of the convention center, and this will provide for a better handle on actual costs as they relate to the General Synod budget. There are a total of 677 conference delegates. Registration numbers in Hartford, CT were at 9,300 due to the 50th anniversary of the Church and 3,500 in Grand Rapids, MI due to the location. However, the average registration count is 3,300. It is believed that the United Church of Christ will host approximately 5,000 delegates and visitors for its Thirtieth General Synod in Cleveland, OH.

Review of comments on the survey regarding the youth program show a want for more involvement on the floor and the business of Synod and less time off by themselves. Ms. Middleton said that she would like to see the youth fully integrated into General Synod, with a youth program taking place two or three days prior to Synod and then evening youth programming only during Synod. Ms. LeBrell stated that she would like to see the youth and young adults integrated into worship, perhaps hosting one of the worship services entirely. Ms. Middleton agreed to make time between now and March to have conversations with youth and young adults and to take a look at the data from the survey analysis in order to bring a full report to the March meeting of the committee.

Conversation around sponsored meals revealed that many believed them to be very expensive and were not complimentary of the food itself in Long Beach. It is believed that the UCC will not experience the high cost of meals in Cleveland that was the case in Long Beach, and it is hoped that the meals themselves will be improved.

Noted once again was the March meeting of the committee. It was felt that the facility and city tour will be very helpful when the committee then sits down to begin its work.

Mr. Black noted that the Disciples of Christ will be holding their biennium event around the same time as General Synod, and it is hoped that in some way the two could be connected.

There is nothing definitive at this time. Mr. Foley pointed out to the committee that Mr. William Edwards, the Disciples of Christ representative to this Board of Directors, also sits on this committee, but was unable to attend this weekend.

Ms. Artt closed the meeting with a prayer, and Mr. Holeman adjourned the meeting, the time being 6:00 PM Eastern Time.

Respectfully submitted,

Denise M. Shimell
October 23, 2013

APPENDIX A

The Committee Time Line to Cleveland October 11, 2013-June 26, 2015

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| September 2013 | Initial staff organizational meetings |
| October 11, 2013 | First meeting of the Program and Planning Committee Introductions, organization |
| March 12-13, 2014 | Second meeting of the Program and Planning Committee Theme determination, worship considerations, youth program discussion, facilities tour, revenue stream consideration, etc. Recommendation to the Board of Directors on fee structure and budget |
| March 2014 | Board of Directors adopts GS Standing Rules, including deadlines |
| October 2014 | Third Meeting of the Program and Planning Committee This is pretty much the last opportunity for the Committee to provide input. After this it is in the hands of staff to implement. |
| March 2015 | Fourth Meeting of the Program and Planning Committee Staff updates and assessment |
| May 28-29, 2015 | General Synod Walkthrough (not a committee function) |
| June 26-30, 2015 | The Thirtieth General Synod-Cleveland, Ohio |

GOD'S VISION:

General Synod 29 | June 28-July 2, 2013

Survey Results Report

Center for Analytics, Research and Data
United Church of Christ
August 29, 2013

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Results

Demographics

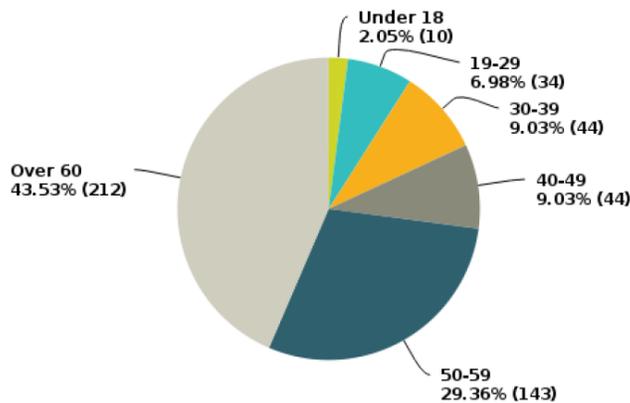
In total, 511 individuals completed the post-event survey. With a total General Synod registration of 2,934, this indicates a 17.4% response rate to the survey. The breakdown in terms of response type was as follows:

- 188 (36.79%) Voting Delegates
- 156 (30.53%) Visitors
- 53 (10.37%) National Staff (from covenanted, affiliated and/or associated ministries)
- 49 (9.59%) Volunteers and/or Local Arrangement Committee members
- 46 (9.00%) Others
- 19 (3.72%) Exhibitors

Although “Voice without Vote” participants were invited to respond to the survey, no one selected this identification option. Individuals in the “Other” category included the following: Conference Staff, Associate Delegates, Synod/Production Staff, Youth, Youth Chaperones, and Guests.

The great majority of respondents were age 50 and over (72.89%). (See Figure 1)

Figure 1: Participant Ages



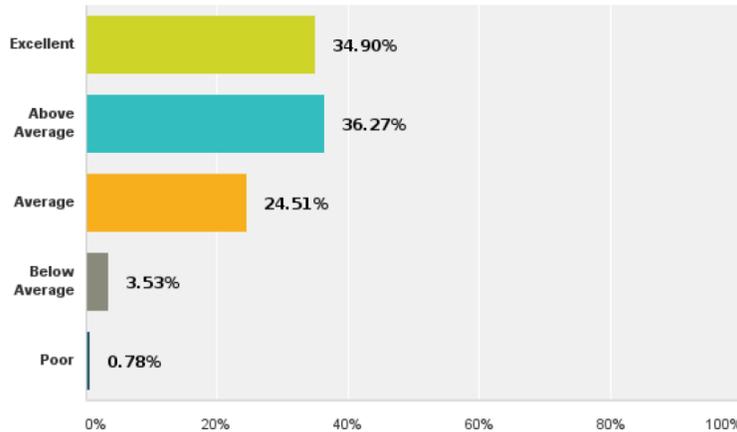
In terms of race/ethnicity, individuals self-identified as follows:

- Asian/Pacific Islander: 3.73% (18)
- Black/African-American: 6.42% (31)
- Caucasian/Euro-American: 85.09% (411)
- Hispanic/Latino(a): 3.31% (16)
- Native American: 0.83% (4)
- Biracial/multiracial: 2.69% (13)

Overall Experiences

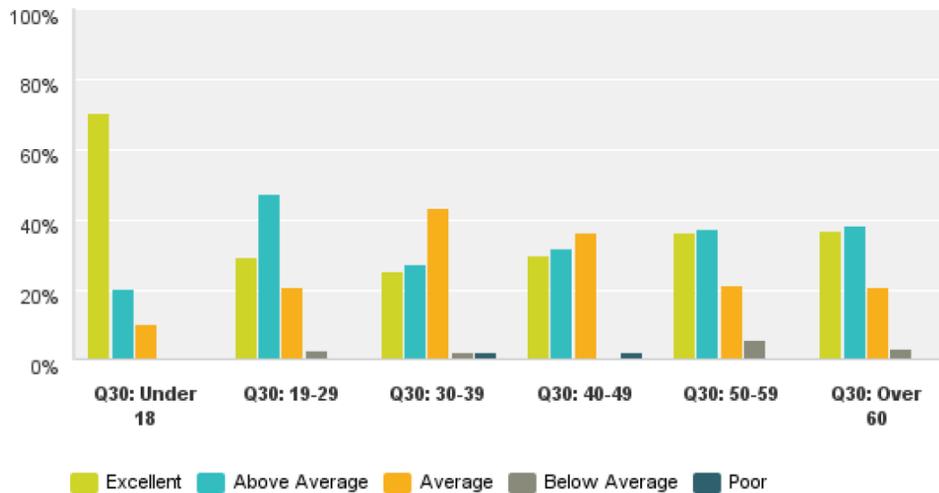
When asked to rate their overall General Synod experience, a majority indicated it was either “Above Average” (36.27%) or “Excellent” (34.90%). (See Figure 3)

Figure 3: Overall Experience



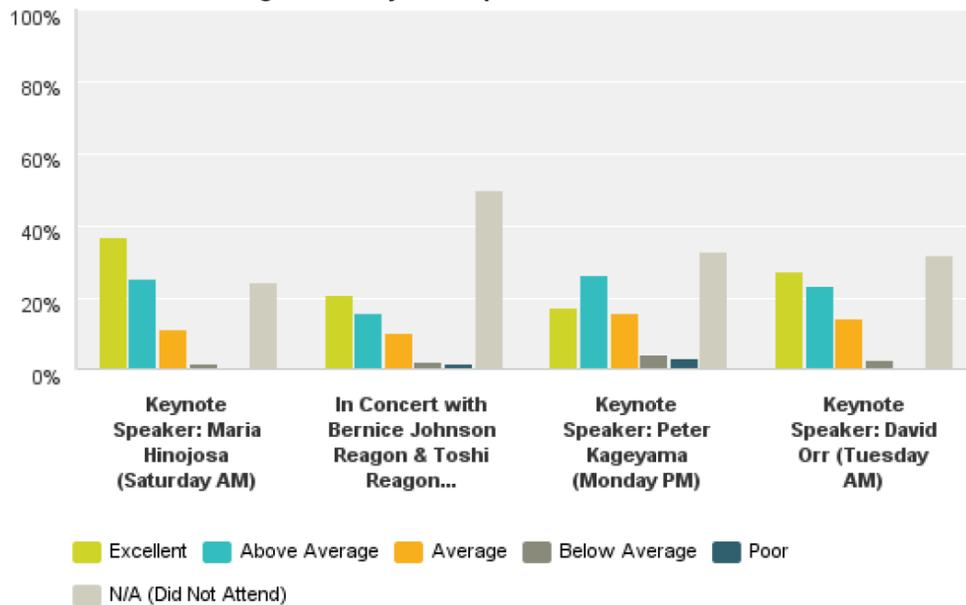
With regard to specific groups, Visitors, Voting Delegates, and Volunteers rated the experience more favorably than National Staff and Exhibitors. In terms of age, participants 50 and over rated General Synod experience more favorably than participants ages 30-49. (See Figure 4)

Figure 4: Overall Experience by Age



Keynote Speakers / Entertainers: The most highly rated speaker was Maria Hinojosa, with 62% of individuals rating her as “Excellent” or “Above Average.” On average, 34.5% of people who responded to the survey indicated that they did not attend speaking / entertainment sessions. (See Figure 5)

Figure 5: Keynote Speakers / Entertainers



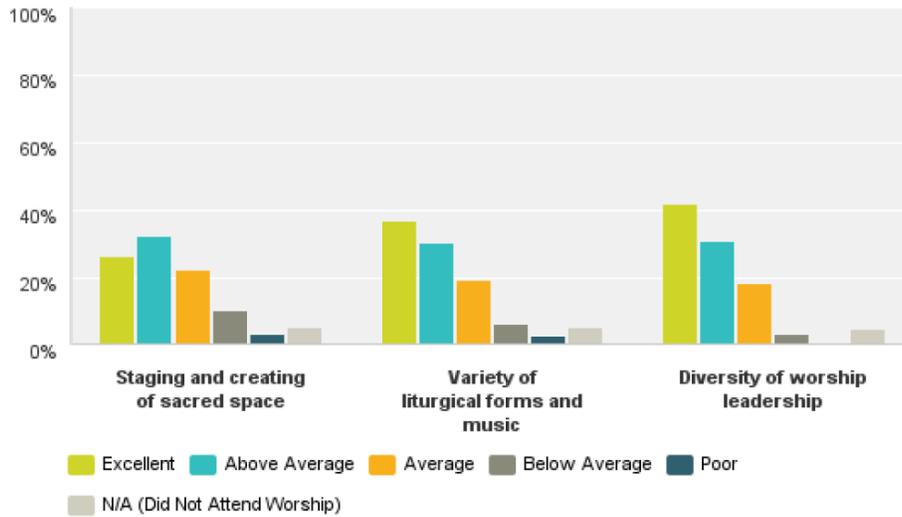
Seventy-four individuals offered comments on the speakers and entertainers. Several found Hinojosa to be compelling, and many found Kageyama to not be relevant to the context or setting of Synod and the church. Comments about the concert were both positive and negative. Several individuals touched on the desire for the speakers to more intentionally connect their work with the UCC, both theologically and contextually.

Worship: On the staging and creating of sacred space, 58.72% indicated that this was either “Excellent” or “Above Average.” Regarding the variety of liturgical forms and music 66.8% (2/3 of respondents) thought it was “Excellent” or Above Average.” And 72.62% indicated that the diversity of worship leadership was “Excellent” or “Above Average.” (See Figure 6)

For this area, 122 individuals offered comments on the worship, most of which were critiques. Overall, comments focused on the following issues: lack of theological depth, lack of cohesion within individual worship services (too many different styles/performative elements within a single service), and length of services. Some comments offered praise and gratitude for the worship services.

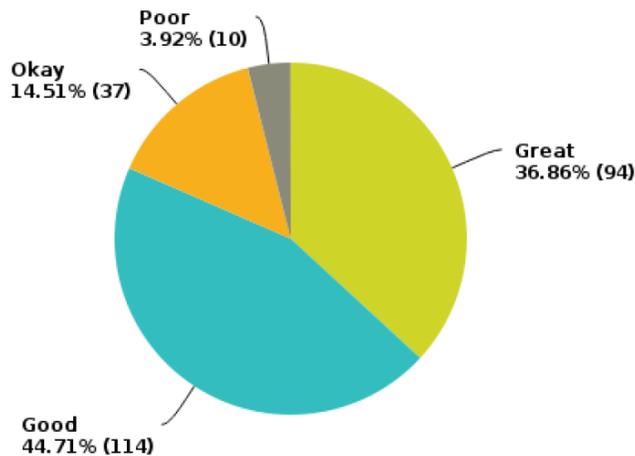
Theological Reflection: When asked whether individuals would be in favor of the presence of theological reflection at future General Synods, 88.59% said “Yes” (11.41% indicated “No”). With 170 respondents offering comments, most were favorable regarding this element and contained suggestions for future theological reflections. Most frequent suggestion was a desire for the reflections to relate more directly to the work or topics that pre-ceded them (as a response to plenaries and less pre-scripted). Overall, individuals stated that they appreciated both Caldwell and Brock as reflectors; but there were more favorable comments regarding Caldwell.

Figure 6: Worship



Workshops: When asked whether individuals attended workshops on Saturday afternoon, 53.32% responded “Yes.” Regarding the quality of the workshops people attended, a majority (81.57%) indicated that they were either “Great” or “Good.” (See Figure 7) Comments on workshops (49 in total) were both positive and negative.

Figure 7: Saturday Workshops



Individuals indicated that workshops varied in both quality and scope but were overall satisfied with the variety/selection of workshops available (76.96% indicating this aspect was either “Great” or “Good”). For the 25 comments on this aspect, many respondents articulated that they would have liked time to attend more workshops and that there “too many wonderful choices.”

Sponsored Meals: 60.79% of those surveyed indicated that they attended Sponsored Meals at General Synod. For those individuals who did not attend a Sponsored Meal (39.21%), nearly

half (48.15%) indicated that cost was the greatest deterrent. Other deterrents included scheduling (25.40%) and lack of interest (17.99%). Complete results are as follows:

- I didn't know they existed: 5.82% (11)
- The tickets were too expensive: 48.15% (91)
- I missed the deadline for purchasing tickets: 7.41% (14)
- In the past, I have not found the programming to be helpful nor informative: 4.23% (8)
- I did not know what they were about: 12.17% (23)
- My schedule did not permit me to attend: 25.40% (48)
- There were just none that interested me this year: 17.99% (34)
- Other: 19.05% (36)

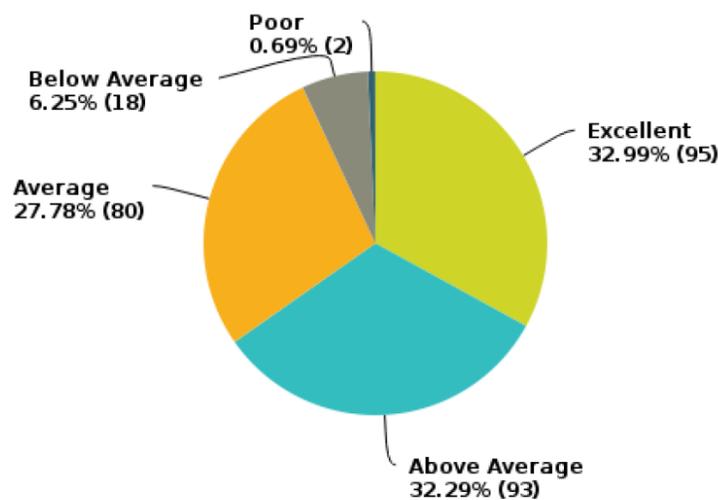
Comments in the “Other” category included several statements about cost, as well as needing non-programmed “down time,” not knowing whether they were supposed/allowed to attend meals, and not knowing about how/where to purchase tickets.

For individuals who did attend Sponsored Meals, the most highly attended meals included the following:

- Testimony! Gala Luncheon (102)
- UCC Coalition for LGBT Concerns (55)
- Our Church’s Wider Mission (47)
- Wider Church Ministries (37)
- Justice and Witness Ministries (36)
- Pacific Islander and Asian American (PAAM) & Association of Hawaiian Evangelical Churches (34)

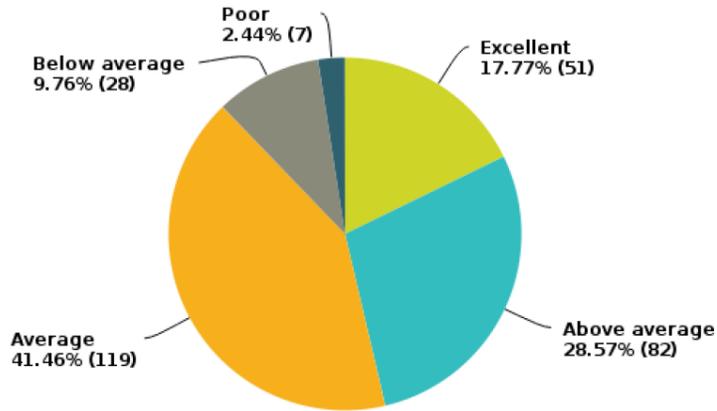
Overall, respondents were satisfied with the meals they attended, with 65.28% (roughly 2/3) either indicating them as “Excellent” or “Above Average.” (See Figure 8)

Figure 8: Overall Satisfaction with Sponsored Meals



Ratings on the quality of food for Sponsored Meals were mixed, with 41.46% of individuals indicated that the food was “Average.” (See Figure 9)

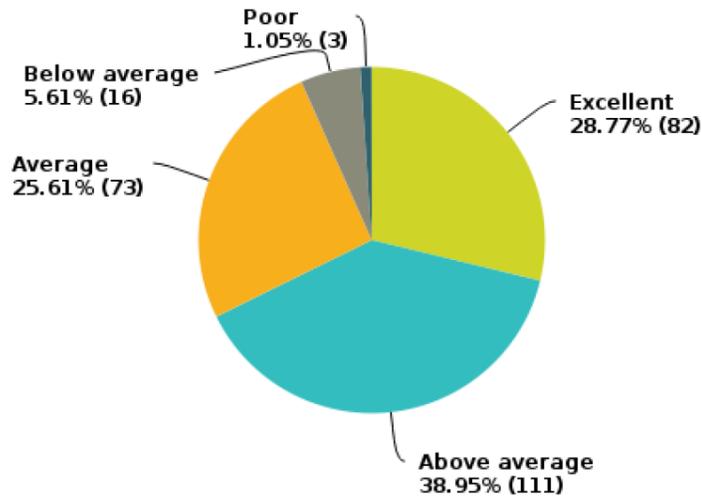
Figure 9: Satisfaction with Food at Sponsored Meals



Comments on the food (65 in total) mainly included critiques of the uses of salad as a main meal, the repetitiveness of salads for several Sponsored Meals, and the lack of understanding/options for vegetarian, vegan, and gluten-free eaters. Specific meals with the greatest critiques were the Testimony Gala, Justice and Witness Ministries, and Luau.

For programming, results mirrored overall satisfaction rates, with roughly 2/3 (67.72%) indicating either “Excellent” or “Above Average.” (See Figure 10)

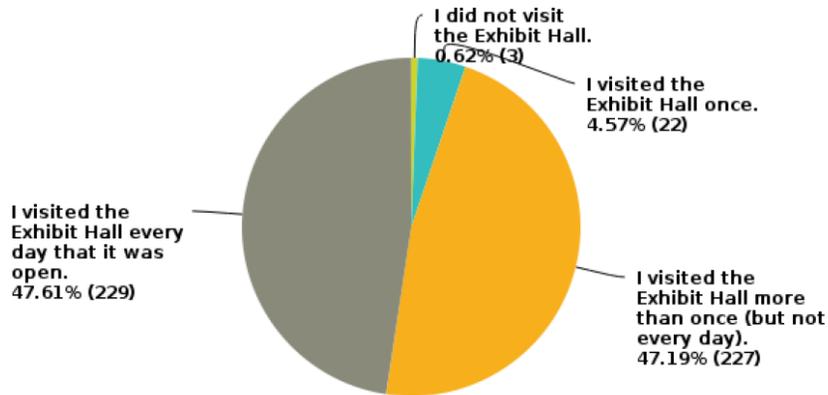
Figure 10: Satisfaction with Program at Sponsored Meals



Comments on programming (61 in total) with both positive and negative in nature. Meals that received the most comments (negative) were the Testimony Gala and OCWM. A few other comments (positive and negative) were given for JWM, Women’s, Luau, and CYYAM meals, among others.

Exhibit Hall: An equal number of individuals indicated that they either visited the Exhibit Hall more than once (but not every day) (47.19%) or visited it every day that it was open (47.61%). (See Figure 11)

Figure 11: Exhibit Hall

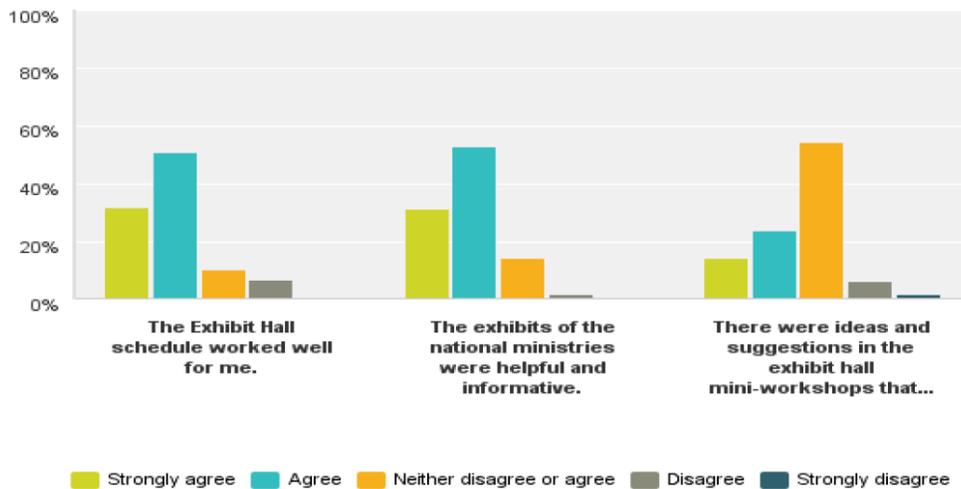


More than three-fourths (77.49%) indicated that they did not attend any of the performances/ talks at the Exhibit Hall stage. However, almost three-fourths (72.75%) stated that they purchased an item from Exhibit Hall vendors.

Overall, individuals responded favorably regarding the Exhibit Hall schedule (82.14% indicating “Strongly Agree” or “Agree”) and the exhibits of the national ministries being helpful and informative (83.90% indicating “Strongly Agree” or “Agree”). However, when asked whether there were ideas and suggestions in the exhibit hall mini-workshops that people will use in their local church, over half (54.44%) marked “Neither Agree or Disagree.” (See Figure 12)

Comments in this regard (77 in total) were mostly critiques that focused on the following: lack of knowledge/awareness of mini-workshops and presentations, inconvenient hall schedule, disorganized nature/arrangement of the exhibits in the hall, and lack of activity/exhibitors compared to previous Synods.

Figure 12: Exhibit Hall Details



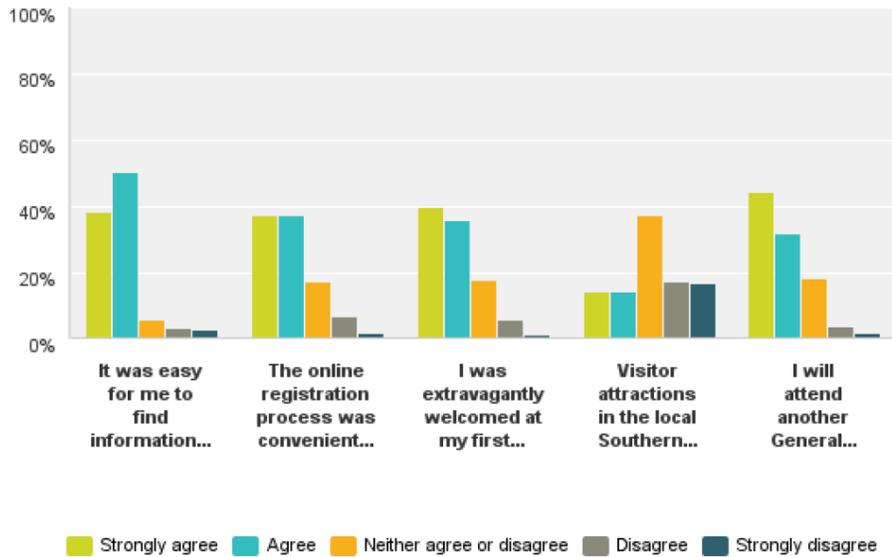
General Synod 30: Over half (54.33%) of individuals indicated that they were “Very Likely” to attend General Synod in 2015 in Cleveland, 17.71% were “Somewhat Likely,” 9.05% were “Neutral,” 10.26% were “Somewhat Unlikely,” and 8.65% were “Very Unlikely.”

Additional Comments/Feedback: 231 individuals offered final comments regarding their experiences at General Synod 29. Comments varied greatly, from positive praise and gratitude for various Synod elements, to critiques of certain aspects such as worship, business sessions, housing, plenaries, and overall hospitality, to suggestions and ideas for improving future Synod experiences such as adding sports activities, incorporating youth into General Synod activities, and lowering costs by utilizing more talent within the UCC. All comments can be provided upon request.

First-Time Attenders

Survey results indicated that over one-third (35.47%) of respondents were first-time attenders. On the whole, these individuals articulated that it was easy for them to find information about the event (88.31% “Strongly Agree” or “Agree”); the online registration process was convenient and easy to understand (74.5% “Strongly Agree” or “Agree”); they were extravagantly welcomed (75.32% “Strongly Agree” or “Agree”); and they will attend another General Synod in the future (75.66% “Strongly Agree” or “Agree”). Visitor attractions in the local Southern California area strongly impacted decisions to attend for almost one-third of respondents (28.38%). (See Figure 13)

Figure 13: First-Time Attenders

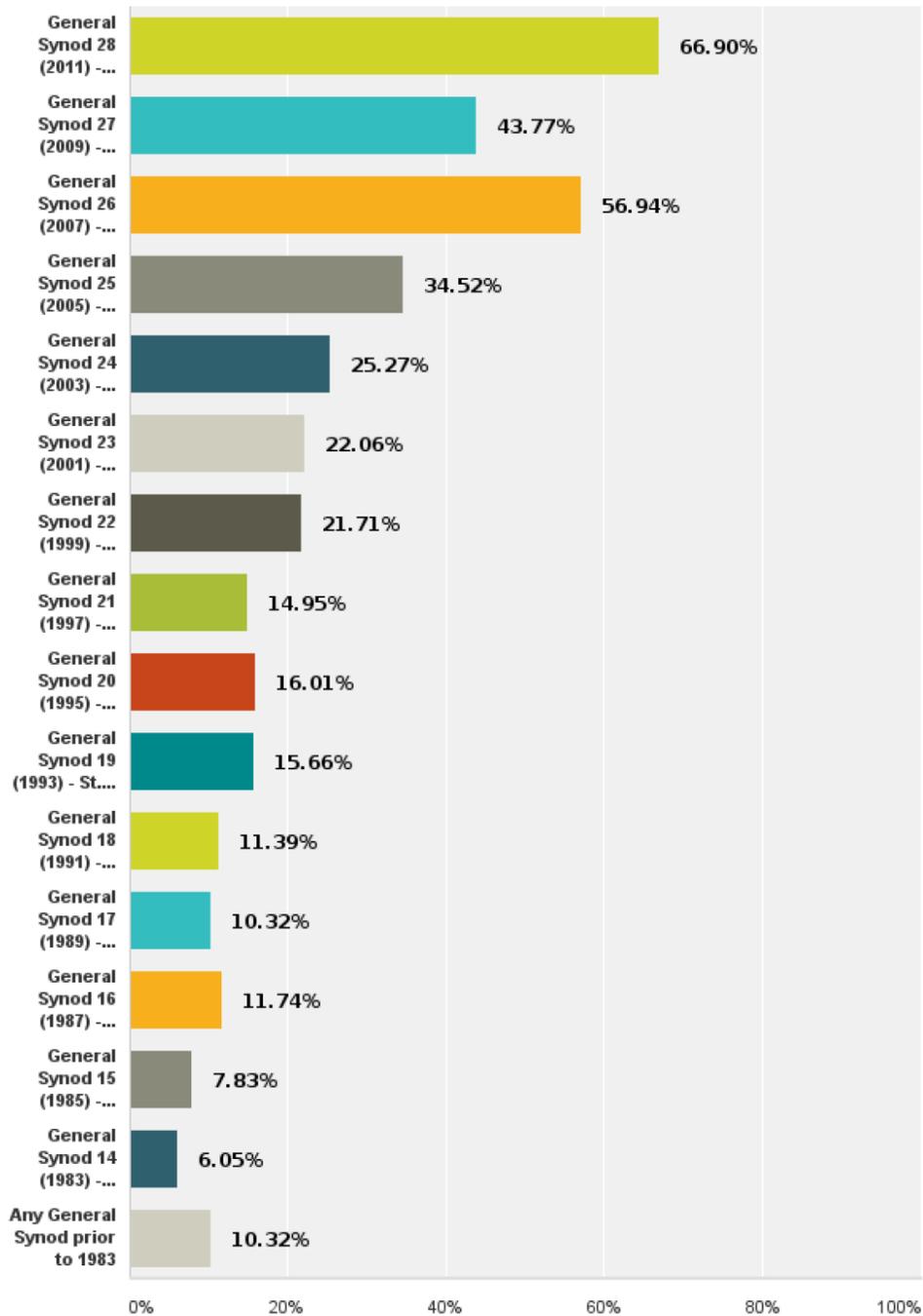


First-timers offered comments on the location of Synod in California as having an impact on their attendance. A few comments indicated difficulty in finding information prior to attending, as well as issues with registration. Several said they attended because they were Conference delegates or volunteers.

Return Synod Visitors / Delegates

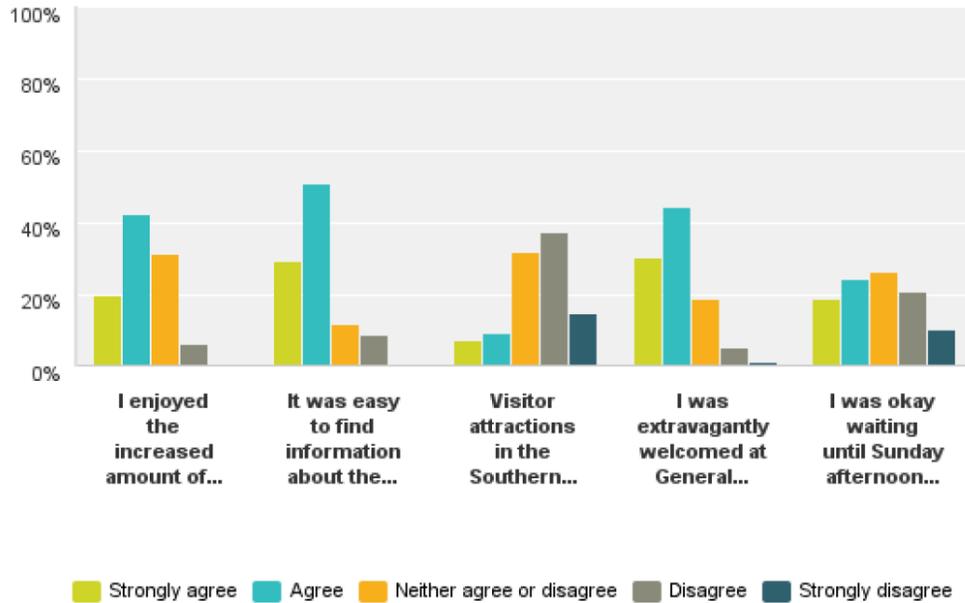
Almost two-thirds (64.53%) of those surveyed were returning Synod participants, and two-thirds (66.90%) of these participants had attended General Synod 28 in Tampa. (See Figure 14)

Figure 14: Return Synod Visitors/Delegates



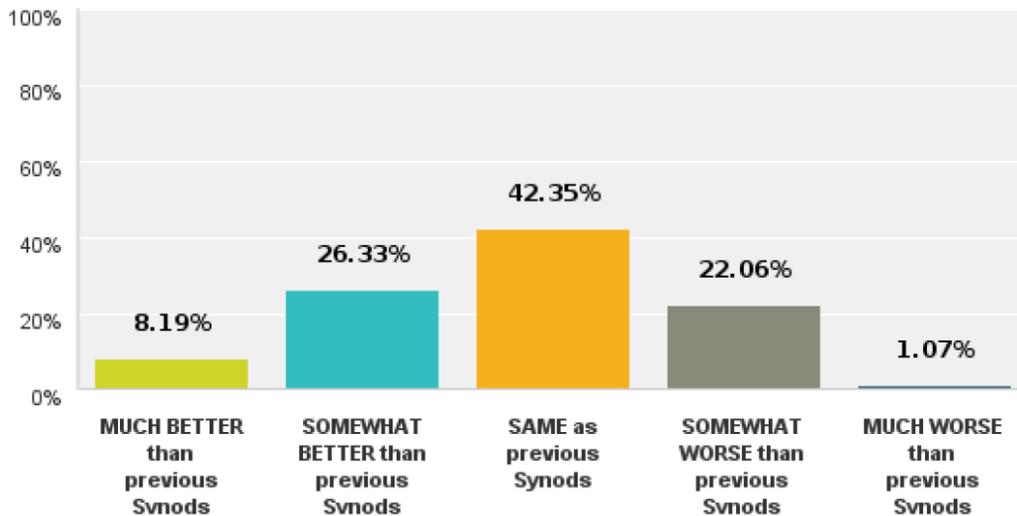
For the most part, return Synod attendees enjoyed the increased amount of free time available in comparison to other Synods (61.96% “Strongly Agree” or “Agree”), easily found information about the event (79.64% “Strongly Agree” or “Agree”), and were extravagantly welcomed (74.18% “Strongly Agree” or “Agree”). Visitor attractions in the local Southern California area did not strongly impact individuals’ decisions to attend (16.36% “Strongly Agree” or “Agree”). Overall, return participants had an evenly divided response regarding waiting until Sunday afternoon for cookies to arrive. (See Figure 15)

Figure 15: Return Synod Participant Experiences



The greatest number of individuals indicated that this year’s Synod, in comparison to other previous Synod experiences, was the same (42.35%). A similar number of respondents said that it was better (26.33%) and worse (22.06%) than previous Synods. (See Figure 16)

Figure 16: Previous Synod Experience Comparisons

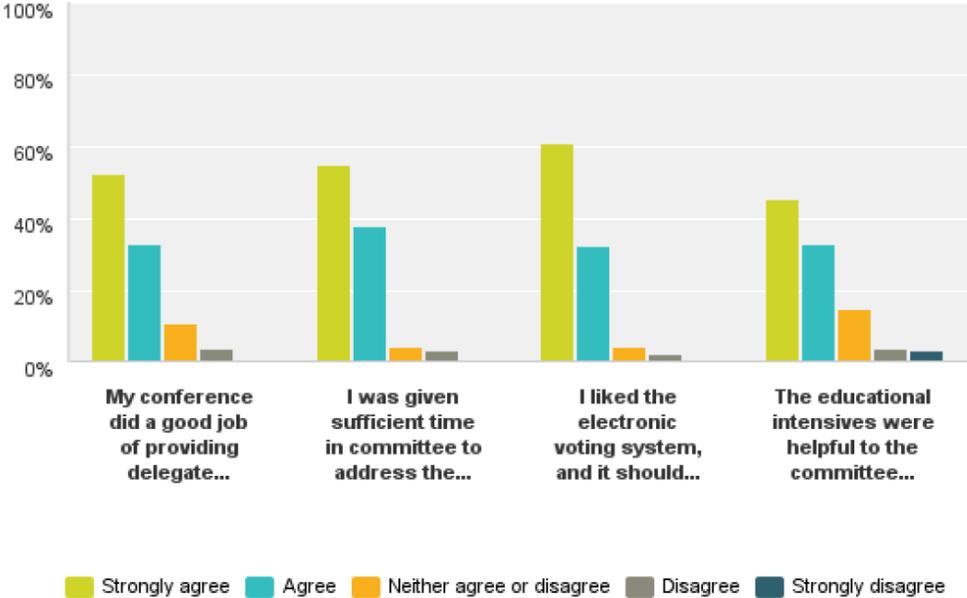


Comments (107 in total) offered a mixture of both positive and negative feedback. Several individuals commented on the unique nature of each Synod, which made it difficult for comparison purposes. Some people enjoyed the additional free-time. Many individuals noted their disliked for worship this year when compared to previous years.

Delegates

Delegates were favorable about particular aspects of their experience. Their Conferences did a good job of providing delegate orientation (85.25% “Strongly Agree” or “Agree”), they were given sufficient time in committee to address the business assigned (92.43% “Strongly Agree” or “Agree”), they liked the electronic voting system and it should be continued in future Synods (92.94% “Strongly Agree” or “Agree”), and educational intensives were helpful to the committee process (77.9% “Strongly Agree” or “Agree”). (See Figure 17)

Figure 17: Delegate Experiences



Many of the comments (41 in total), however, described negative experiences regarding educational intensives, citing issues with unpreparedness, facilitation, and overall knowledge about topics. Several individuals mentioned that they were unable to attend educational intensives due to travel schedules. A few people discussed issues with their electronic voting devices.

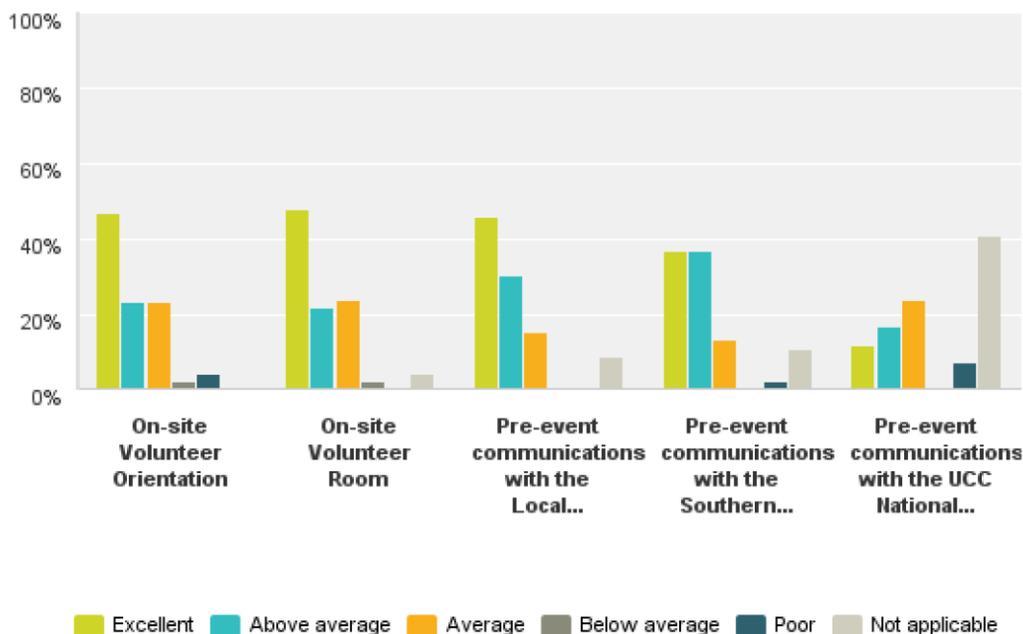
Volunteers

Overall, volunteers favorably rated particular aspects of their experience. They appreciated the on-site Volunteer Orientation (70.21% “Excellent” or “Above Average”), on-site Volunteer Room (69.57% “Excellent” or “Above Average”), pre-event communications with the Local Arrangements Committee (76.08% “Excellent” or “Above Average”), and pre-event communications with the Southern California Nevada Conference (73.92% “Excellent” or

“Above Average”). A majority indicated that their pre-event communications with the UCC National Staff (Cleveland) were either “Not Applicable” (40.48%) or “Average” (23.81%). (See Figure 18)

Most comments (11 in total) were highly positive, but a few individuals were frustrated by lack of communication and conflicting information. Comments from volunteers at the end of the survey (24 in total) stressed both their positive experiences and also their lack of information and communication, articulating a need for clearer time guidelines and expectations.

Figure 18: Volunteer Experiences

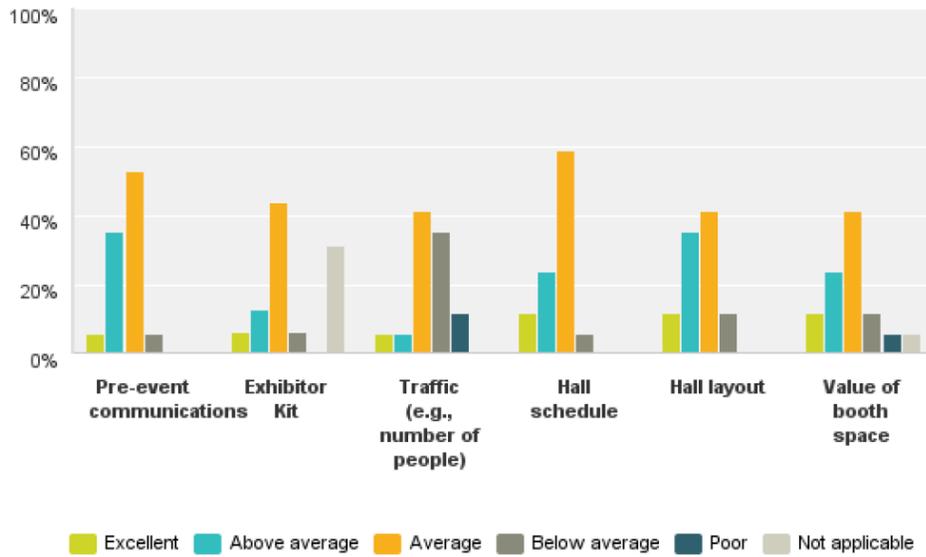


Exhibitors

Overall, a majority of exhibitors rated their particular experiences as “Average” in all categories: Pre-event communications (52.94%), Exhibitor Kits (43.75%), traffic (number of people) in the hall (41.18%), hall schedule (58.82%), hall layout (41.18%), and value of booth space (41.18%). However, individuals were more pleased overall with pre-event communications (35.29% “Above Average”) and hall layout (35.29% “Above Average”), and less pleased with the traffic (35.29% “Below Average”). (See Figure 19)

Comments from exhibitors (10 in total) indicated that the traffic was not as high as previous Synods, and some had lower revenue as a result. A few individuals suggested adding in more Exhibit Hall hours. In final comments/feedback (6 responses in total), however, some individuals suggested shortening Exhibit Hall hours or altering them to be at different times.

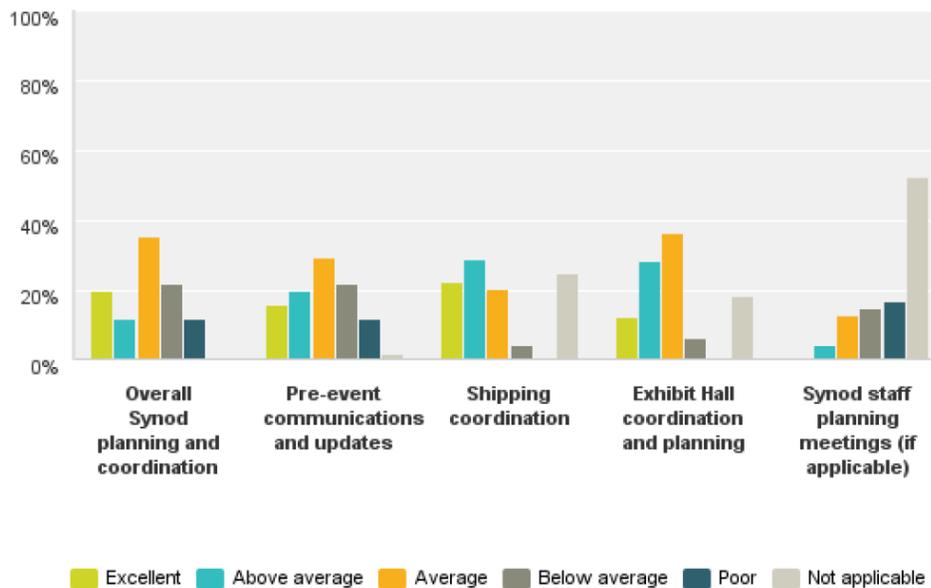
Figure 19: Exhibitor Experiences



National Staff

National staff most frequently rated overall Synod planning and coordination (35.29%), pre-event communication and updates (29.41%), and Exhibit Hall coordination and planning (36.00%) as “Average.” Shipping coordination was more highly rated (48.98% as “Excellent” or “Above Average”). For those who attended Synod staff planning meetings (47.92% of respondents), nearly two-thirds (65.22%) rated this aspect unfavorably (“Below Average” or “Poor”). (See Figure 20)

Figure 20: National Staff Experiences



Comments (8 in total) most frequently mentioned a lack of communication, leadership, and planning for General Synod. In the final comments/feedback section 16 national staff also shared thoughts on increased collaboration in the future on worship, youth programming, and other Synod planning, made requests to include non-official and after-hours events in the program book in future Synods, and offered some positive comments regarding their experiences. There were, however, several comments regarding a lack in leadership from an executive administrative perspective.

Results Comparison to Previous General Synod Surveys

Some questions that were similar in nature were compared with surveys from General Synod 28 (2011) and General Synod 27 (2009). Overall, response ratings were fairly similar from previous years, although this year the number of respondents was lower than the previous two Synod surveys (739 and 670, respectively). Some differences were evident in the areas of impact of visitor attractions, exhibits of national ministries, worship elements, and workshop variety.

Please note that questions are not always identical from survey to survey. Ratings are approximations and are sometimes based on different scales.

Questions from General Synod 28 (2011)

2011 survey scaled from 1 = Completely Agree to 5 = Completely Disagree

2013 survey scaled from 1 = Strongly Agree to 5 = Strongly Disagree in most cases

Noteworthy differences ($\geq .3$) are indicated with an asterisk ()*

| | <u>2011 Ratings</u> | <u>2013 Ratings</u> |
|---|---------------------|---------------------|
| 1. It was easy to find information about General Synod | 1.7 | 1.9 |
| 2. The registration site was easy to use. | 1.8 | 2.0 |
| 3. Visitor attractions in the local area impacted my decision to attend General Synod. | 4.0 | 3.3* |
| 4. My conference did a good job of providing delegate orientation. | 1.5 | 1.7 |
| 5. The Exhibit Hall schedule worked well for me. | 1.8 | 2.0 |
| 6. The exhibits of the national ministries were helpful and informative. | 1.6 | 1.9* |
| 7. The educational intensives were helpful to the committee process. | 1.8 | 1.9 |
| 8. I liked the electronic voting system and it should be continued at future synods. | 1.4 | 1.5 |
| 9. The staging and creating of sacred space was very well done. | 1.6 | 2.3* |
| 10. The variety of liturgical forms and music, and the diversity of leadership well represented the diversity of persons and of worship experiences in the UCC. | 1.6 | 2.0* |

Questions from General Synod 27 (2009)

Noteworthy differences (≥ 3.0%) are indicated with an asterisk ()*

| | <u>2009 %</u> | <u>2013 %</u> |
|--|---------------------|---------------|
| 1. How would you rate the quality of the workshop(s) you attended? (% rated better than “Okay”) | 81.0 | 81.6 |
| 2. How would you rate the variety/selection of workshop(s) available? (% rated better than “Okay”) | 81.2 | 77.0* |
| 3. Did you attend any of the workshops on Saturday? | Yes 51.3 No 48.7 | 53.3 46.7 |
| 4. Did you attend one or more sponsored meal? | Yes 58.1 No 41.9 | 60.8 39.2 |
| 5. If no, why did you choose to not attend? | | |
| The tickets were too expensive. | 48.0 | 48.2 |
| I missed the deadline for purchasing tickets. | 8.7 | 7.4 |
| In the past, I have not found the programming to be helpful nor informative. | 6.1 | 4.2 |
| I didn’t know they existed. | 4.3 | 5.8 |
| I did not know what they were about. | 14.4 | 12.2 |
| My schedule did not permit me to attend. | 24.2 | 25.4 |
| There were just none that interested me this year. | 17.7 | 18.0 |
| 6. Was this your first time attending Synod? | Yes 33.9 No 66.1 | 35.5 64.5 |
| 7. Do you plan to attend General Synod in 2011 in Tampa / 2015 in Cleveland? | Yes 74.5 No 25.5 | 76.6 23.4 |

Conclusions / Recommendations

Overall, 7 out of 10 survey respondents rated their General Synod experiences very favorably (“Excellent” or “Above Average”). Maria Hinojosa garnered the most positive responses, but many individuals desired the speakers to have more of a connection to the context and theology of the UCC.

Diversity of worship leadership and variety of liturgical forms were highly rated in worship; however, staging and creating of sacred space was rated significantly lower than the previous General Synod (2011). It is recommended that the issues lifted up in comments—lack of theological depth, lack of cohesion within individual worship services, and length of services—be reviewed for future Synods.

About half of respondents attended workshops, and a majority rated them very favorably. However, it is interesting to note that when compared with General Synod 27 (2009) responses, the variety/selection of workshops available were rated significantly lower for this Synod. It is recommended that variety/selection of workshops be carefully considered for future General Synods.

Sponsored Meals were also rated favorably as a whole, but food was rated lower than programs. It is recommended that future Synods consider variety and options for food choices,

as well as cost and clarifying communications regarding purpose, function, and audience for such meals.

Respondents indicated that the schedule and exhibits of the national ministries were helpful; however, when compared with responses from the previous General Synod, the exhibits of the national ministries were rated significantly lower. It is recommended that increased communication about mini-workshops and presentations occur for future Synods, as well as a review of the nature/arrangement of exhibits.

Over one-third of individuals were first-time attenders, and they rated their experiences favorably on the whole. Two out of three returning Synod participants enjoyed the increased free time; and a majority of them articulated that this Synod was the same as previous Synods in terms of their experiences. It is recommended that ways to enhance the experiences of both first-time and returning participants be reviewed for future General Synods.

Delegate experiences were positive overall, and the electronic voting system was rated extremely favorably. Educational intensives were helpful to the committee process; but it is recommended that a review of preparedness and facilitation levels for future intensives be undertaken.

Volunteers rated their experiences favorably as a whole, and it is recommended that all aspects of the volunteer experience be reviewed and considered for future Synods to ensure continued excellence and confirm clear communication and guidelines.

Exhibitors rated their overall experiences as average, with traffic and revenues being experienced as lower for several exhibitors than in previous Synods. It is recommended that exhibitor experiences, as well as methods to increase traffic and revenues, be reviewed prior to the next General Synod.

National staff, on the whole, also rated their experiences as average; and those who attended staff planning meetings rated them highly unfavorably. It is recommended that communication, leadership, and planning for General Synod, from a national setting perspective, be reviewed prior to planning for the next Synod in Cleveland. It is also recommended that suggestions for increased collaboration and quality of programming on the part of national staff be considered in the planning of the next General Synod.