

2000 ELCA Youth Gathering Evaluation of Youth Participants

Evaluation Report

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February, 2001

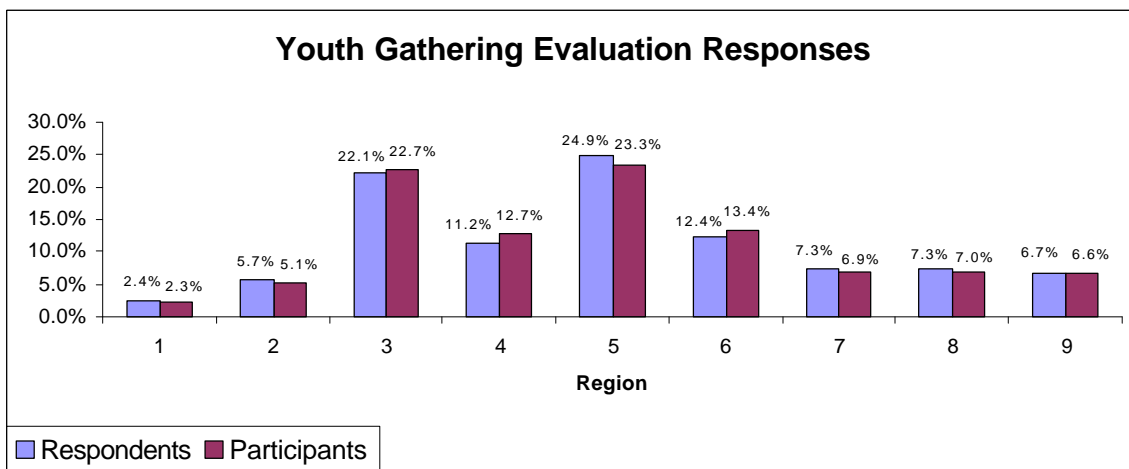
From June 28 through July 2 and July 5 through July 9, 2000 over 29,000 ELCA youth gathered in St. Louis, MO for the ELCA 2000 Youth Gathering (G2K). The Department for Research and Evaluation (DRE) has conducted both qualitative and quantitative evaluations of G2K. This is a quantitative report that only addresses the experiences of youth participants.

Response Rate

In order to evaluate the experiences of youth participants, we invited a random sample of 1008 youth participants to complete and return a gathering evaluation questionnaire (see the attached appendix for a sample questionnaire). The youth sample was representative of the youth attendance at the gathering by age, region and gender. From the original youth mailing of 1008 questionnaires, 495 were returned for a response rate of 49 percent.

Although the response rate is slightly less than half, the youth response rate is representative of the youth gathering attendance by age and geographic region of the ELCA (See Figure 1). The mean age for youth responses was 15.5 and the mean age for all youth participants was also 15.5. There was a slightly higher percentage of female and lower percentage of male youth respondents in comparison to the youth gathering attendance.

Figure 1



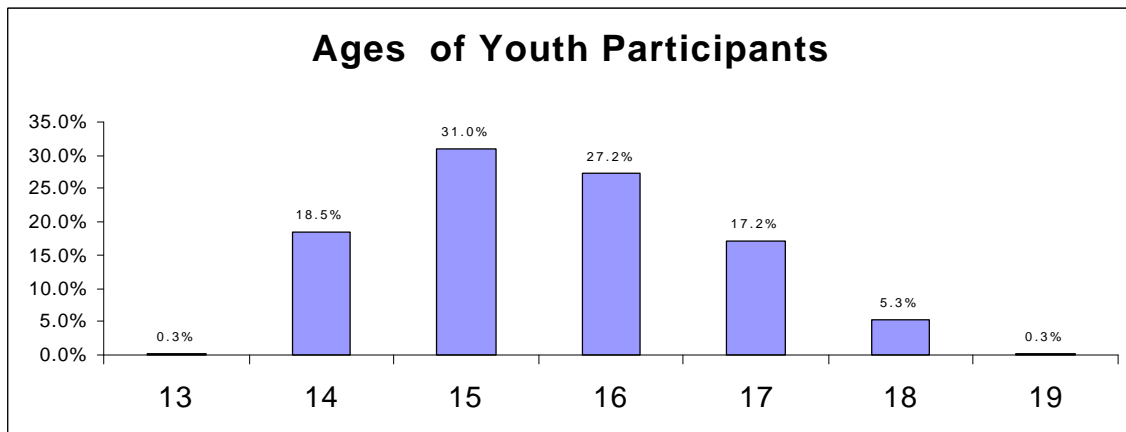
This was the first ELCA youth gathering for 85 percent of respondents. Ninety-seven percent of the respondents attended G2K as youth participants. Three percent of the respondents attended the LYO convention as voting members. One percent of respondents attended G2K as synod youth committee members. Less than one percent of respondents were gathering volunteers. Also, less than one percent participated in the Multi-cultural Youth Leadership Event, as well as the Definitely-abled Youth Leadership Event.

The youth respondents participate in the life of the church in many ways. The most frequently mentioned positions include: youth group member (91%), Sunday school student (58%), acolyte in worship (50%), usher (40%), vacation Bible school teacher (40%), music member (39%), lector during worship (36%), and nursery volunteer (34%).

Characteristics of the Gathering Participants

Based on the evaluation, we found that slightly over 77 percent of the youth respondents were 16 or younger, which compares to 65 percent in 1997 (See Figure 2). Over 60 percent were entering the tenth or eleventh grade. Among all youth participants from the registration materials, 58 percent were female and 42 percent were male.

Figure 2



The registration materials for G2K asked for the racial/ethnic characteristics of each participant. After the analysis, we found that 93 percent of youth participants identified themselves as White Caucasian, one percent of youth participants identified themselves as Multiracial, and three percent of youth participants identified themselves as one of the following: African American, Arab/Middle Eastern, Asian, Hispanic/Latino, or Native Alaskan/American Indian. Three percent of youth participants left this section of the registration materials blank.

Findings¹

Planning for G2K

A G2K promotional video was sent to all congregations prior to the gathering. Twenty-nine percent of youth respondents indicated that they saw the video before deciding to attend the gathering. However, of those respondents who saw the video, 79 percent indicated that the video was either somewhat or very helpful.²

Prior to G2K, materials were sent to youth counselors that encouraged youth to complete a “spiritual gifts inventory” as part of their preparation for the gathering. Thirty-nine percent of youth indicated that they completed a spiritual gifts inventory. Of those, 45 percent indicated that the inventory was used when planning for events at the gathering.

In addition, youth were encouraged to identify and build a relationship with a mentor as another part of their gathering preparation. Forty-two percent indicated that they identified and built a relationship with a mentor. Of those, 91 percent indicated that this relationship was either somewhat or very valuable.³

Fifty-three percent of youth respondents indicated that they lead or took part in a worship service related to the gathering prior to G2K. Over half of those respondents indicated that their participation was part of their congregation’s normal worship service, while almost one quarter indicated that they participated in a special worship service just for G2K participants.

When asked for additional comments on pre-gathering activities or resources, 15 percent of respondents made a comment. Of those, 23 percent shared their ideas on fund-raising activities.

¹For more detailed information, see the youth frequencies found in Appendix 1 at the end of this report.

²In this context, helpfulness was measured on a five-point scale, with 1 being “very helpful” and 5 being “not very helpful.”

³ In this context, value was measured on a five-point scale, with 1 being “very valuable” and 5 being “not very valuable.”

Hotel Life at the Gathering

There were both morning and evening activities at the G2K hotels. The most heavily attended events included dance clubs, “Club Live” and breakfast clubs. The least attended hotel events included comedy clubs and morning exercise classes (See Table 1). The fun clubs and “Club Live” were given the highest average ratings, while the breakfast clubs and morning exercise clubs were given the lowest average ratings on a five-point value scale.⁴ On average, the youth rated their *overall* hotel experience as a 2.3 on a five-point scale.

Table 1

Hotel Event (in order of greatest participation)	Participation (percentage)	Mean
Dance Clubs	72.7	2.1
Club Live!	41.0	2.0
Breakfast Clubs	37.2	2.6
Fun Clubs	29.1	1.9
Morning Eucharist	25.5	2.1
Rest Stops	20.8	2.3
Comedy Clubs	12.1	2.1
Morning Exercise Clubs	6.3	2.3

When asked to comment on hotel life at the gathering, 40 percent made a comment. Of those, 31 percent expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of hotel life at their hotel. Also, nine percent indicated frustration with transportation problems to and from their hotel.

Events and Activities

There were many activities and events for youth to participate in during the gathering. The evening mass gatherings were rated as the most valuable (1.5), while the house party was rated as the least valuable (2.4, See Table 2).

⁴In this context, value was measured on a five-point scale, with 1 being “very valuable” and 5 being “not very valuable”

Table 2

Event (in order of greatest participation)	Participation (percentage)	Mean
Evening mass gatherings	94.1	1.5
The Beat	89.1	1.9
House Party	75.8	2.4
Morning Bible Study	73.7	1.8
Hip Hoppin’ Around St. Louis	35.6	2.0
Two Step Service	33.5	2.0

Youth were also asked about what their favorite activity/exhibit/area at the Beat. Eighty-four percent of respondents responded. Of these, 15 percent favored art and craft areas, while another 15 percent favored sporting event areas. The climbing wall and zip line were the next most frequently mentioned (11% and 8% respectively).

Youth were also asked to identify a speaker, emcee, Bible study leader, musician, or band that was particularly important to them. Eighty-eight percent of respondents responded. Desmond Tutu (16%) was mentioned most often, followed by Mike Yaconelli (10%), Lost and Found (9%) and Ken Medema (8%).

The youth were asked to indicate how well they liked the G2K theme “Dancing at the Cross Roads.” Eighty-three percent indicated that they really liked it, and found some sort of meaning in the theme.

G2K Learning Community

Learning opportunities were organized into three different styles or “hoods” (as in neighborhood) which included houses (traditional workshops), parks (large group experiences), and streets (interactive experiences). Thirty-six percent indicated that they participated in at least one G2K learning community. Of those, 68 percent described a learning session that they liked best. The two learning sessions that were most frequently mentioned were the labyrinth (17%) and the bishops’ beach (10%).

Of those who attended a learning community hood, 14 percent identified a spiritual gift or faith practice, but there was no consistent comments that identified a specific spiritual gift that was remembered or learned.

Of those who attended a learning community, the houses were least appealing (12%), while the parks were most appealing (28%). However, 35 percent indicated that all three types of learning opportunities were appealing.

Respondents were also asked to share any additional comments on the G2K learning community. Sixteen percent made a comment in this section, but, there was no consistency of comments in this section. Also, there appeared to be confusion in this section because some respondents commented on speakers that were not part of the learning community, such as Desmond Tutu and Mike Yaconelli.

Safety

Ensuring safety has always been a priority for gathering organizers. Eighty-three percent of youth indicated that they were not worried about their individual or group safety, while 17 percent indicated that they were concerned or worried at a specific time during the gathering. Of those that indicated a concern, 27 percent stated that they felt unsafe using the public transportation. The second most frequently mentioned safety concern was the respondents' hotel or hotel area (13%).

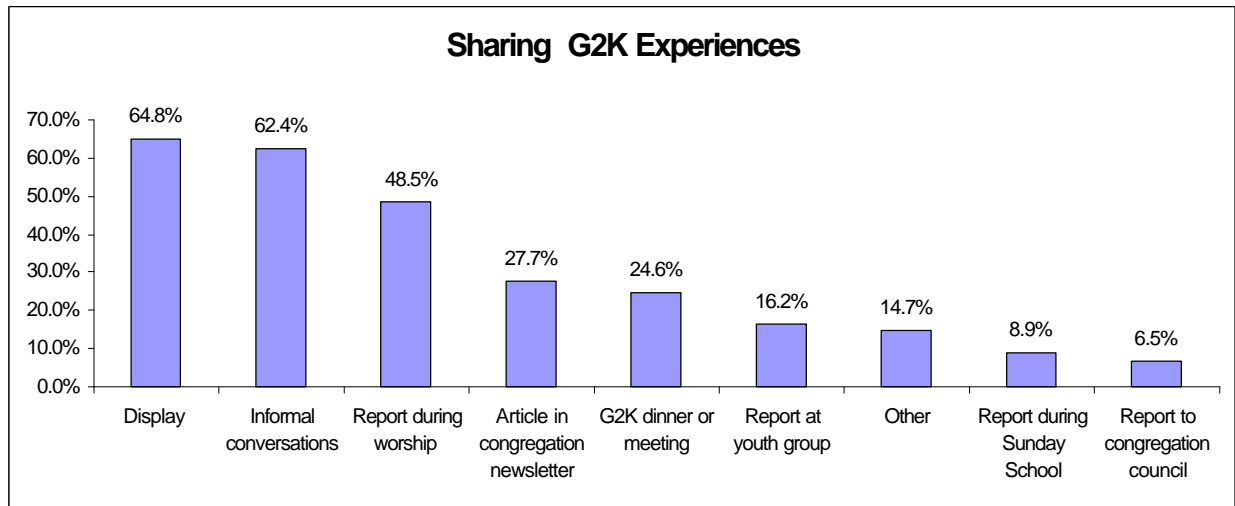
Diversity in G2K Events

It was the gathering organizers' intent to reflect and support the ELCA goals of racial, gender and disability inclusiveness and diversity in all of the G2K events. Over 80 percent of youth felt that these goals were met to a "great" or "very great" extent. Less than 5 percent felt that these goals were not met.

Reflections after the Gathering

There were many ways for youth to share their G2K experiences with their congregations. The most frequent way of sharing G2K experiences included informal conversations, displays, or presentations during worship services (See Figure 3).

Figure 3



Youth were asked to write about an experience that had a significant impact on them at the gathering, either positive or negative. Eighty-one percent responded to this question. Of these, 91 percent of the comments were positive, while nine percent were negative. Eighteen percent of the comments shared how Desmond Tutu’s talk influenced their lives, while seven percent shared that the mass gathering experiences of G2K had a significant impact on them.

Finally, respondents were asked to help planners for future gatherings by suggesting one aspect of the gathering that they should keep and one aspect of the gathering that they should leave out. Eighty-nine percent made a comment on what to keep, while sixty-six percent made a comment on what planners should leave out. The most frequently suggested aspects of the gathering that were suggested to keep included: Lost and Found (12%), the Beat (10%), Desmond Tutu (9%), and Ken Medema (8%). The only aspect of the gathering that many believed could be left out was the House Party (40%).

For the conclusions of the youth and adult G2K reports, please see the attached executive summary.