

1 Does the Synod work? Yes or no option with IDK option

- 2 • (all said YES)
- 3 • (YES)
- 4 • Yes, Yes, Yes
- 5 • Yes
- 6 • Yes
- 7 • Yes, better than expected.
- 8 • YES
- 9 • Yes. Appreciate the work of Synod to connect people and Presbyteries, as well as
- 10 making efforts to
- 11 • Mostly, staff does work very well, but lack of communication by commissioners and
- 12 such
- 13 • PW works as an organization because what we use it as is an exchange of ideas more
- 14 than anything else, the Synod is something because of I have friends etc. across the
- 15 boundaries ; I don't know as much as a whole lot of people don't know about the synod
- 16 or what it is
- 17 • What does "work" refer to? Work as in doing, or work as in functioning
- 18 effectively? Not sure
- 19 • Only consistency were pastors and EP's - lay people seem to be forgotten, didn't feel it
- 20 was worth their time
- 21 • People come in with history - EP's left, a lot of history was lost
- 22 • **Yes**, it has worked for me. We have received good guidance in dealing with our PJC
- 23 responsibilities. The one instance we had some minor concern was a moment when
- 24 everyone dealing with a particular situation was doing it for the first time. But the backup
- 25 from the GA PJC provided necessary support. And we all learned something.
- 26 • As for the conference I attended - It was very helpful and a great learning experience for
- 27 me. I'd like more of these sorts of things.
- 28 • Yes
- 29 • Yes
- 30 • Some things very well, others not so much.
- 31 • Yes. I think so, Pines for 5 years. Works really well.
- 32 • Yes
- 33 • Yes
- 34 • Yes
- 35 • Yes

37 How well does the Synod work? 1-5 scale with IDK option

- 38 • (4,4,4,5)
- 39 • 4: They help connect my context to the larger church and provide opportunities to grow
- 40 relationships, which is helpful for college students to see. Having students see the ways

- 41 in which the church in engaging in the world and with partnerships to help better the
42 kingdom, makes the church relevant for these young adults.
- 43 • 4 (always room for improvement); staff is responsive to needs and effective
 - 44 • One member had not yet been to the website; says things look good but he had no
45 actual connection other than attending one “Imagine” event. Wondered about whether
46 that was on him, the Presbytery or the Synod.
 - 47 • 4, very limited in staff, need a larger staff, IDK
 - 48 • 4,
 - 49 • IDK, PW works, Imagine Compassion was great, don’t know from overall church how
50 much the synod does
 - 51 • 2, pros and cons, with the nature of being separated that limits our responsiveness, not
52 as fast.
 - 53 • Depends - probably average 3
 - 54 • 4 (several said that they almost never give a perfect score on a survey – that there is
55 always room for improvement)
 - 56 • 5 – sometimes overfunctions
 - 57 • 4, I would like to see more digital options
 - 58 • 4
 - 59 • 5, 5, 5, 5, 2, 4
 - 60 • Doing well, improving better than few years ago, doing more
 - 61 • I have only attended one meeting –a training session for PJC. The training was excellent
62 and so were the arrangements
 - 63 • The Synod is very responsive, helpful, and collaborative. It is a new day across the
64 denomination for MidCouncils. The Synod of the Sun has done an excellent job find[ing]
65 new avenues of supporting presbyteries and churches.
 - 66 • The Synod Leader facilitates occasional face-to-face meetings of the stated clerks from
67 the presbyteries, and I find those meetings helpful, but not critical. If the synod did not
68 arrange for such meetings, I think the stated clerks would occasionally get together on
69 their own.
 - 70 • we offer opportunities for mission and learning that are excellent [but] these events
71 could/should be better attended. I sometimes question whether the effort and expense
72 are worth some of the events.
 - 73 • 4+
 - 74 • 4
 - 75 • It works well with my limited association
 - 76 • 4
 - 77 • 4, I never do perfect scores.
 - 78 • Well, based on my experience
 - 79 • 4
 - 80 • 4

- 81 • 4, not perfectly, but pretty well

82

83 **How well does the Synod work together? 1-5 scale with an IDK option (4,4,4,5,)**

- 84 • 4: In comparison to other synods, I believe we are living into what it means to be
85 connectional and working on ways to provide opportunities for growth and new
86 networks/ groups to gather for work.

- 87 • Synod Youth Workshop—excellent opportunity and very impactful

- 88 • --Imagine Conference—Grown and continuing to expand; great at connecting

- 89 • 5, lots of fellowship, mutual support very proud, IDK

- 90 • I don't know

- 91 • 4,

- 92 • IDK, as far as I know it works well together but haven't been related long enough to
93 know

- 94 • work really well together

- 95 • At committee level, probably 4, depends on the committee - some function better than
96 others - at group level - not sure, probably 3

- 97 • 3 (there was some confusion over what the question meant. The general thought was
98 that committees could be stronger – and that at times, depending on committee
99 leadership – they don't function as well as they could.)

- 100 • Can't comment – still getting acquainted

- 101 • 5

- 102 • 5

- 103 • 4, 5, 3, 4, 4, 5

- 104 • This is a connectional synod. We support each other in ministries. The network model
105 has worked well to unite those with [common] interests and needs.

- 106 • I understand a few presbyteries had not filled vacancies for election. Also, we were
107 asked to serve as clerk for PJC on the spot, which is not the best way to fill such a
108 significant position. I do not know enough to comment much on how things proceed –
109 just aware that this is challenging. ... I observed several people who knew each other
110 connecting in ways that suggested they worked together.

- 111 • Indian Nations doesn't work with synod

- 112 • a bit uneven among presbyteries

- 113 • stated clerks meeting is helpful, gathering is helpful, starts relationships

- 114 • The Stated Clerks work very well together, and with Valerie Young, our Synod Leader. I
115 believe that GP/EPs would say the same. I believe that all of the presbyteries in our
116 Synod appreciate one another and enjoy the relationships that we have among
117 ourselves.

- 118 • 4+

- 119 • 4

- 120 • I have only participated in one synod conference

- 121 • 5
- 122 • 4
- 123 • 4
- 124 • 4
- 125 • 3
- 126 • 4, same as above
- 127

128 **In what ways has the Synod crossed/attempted to cross boundaries? Narrative**

- 129 • (Maybe someone believe Synod crossed to cross churches / Presbyteries boundary
- 130 when it plans to too much. But, from Covid-19 case, Synod do wonderful job for each
- 131 church and presbytery if it has problem with money and plan. I am impressing that
- 132 Synod care each church’s concerns also, and even it seems cross the line, those are need
- 133 it immediately.)
- 134 • In my experience, the Synod has facilitated gatherings and networking with people
- 135 across the Synod. I first saw this with Synod PJC trainings and work. Now I am
- 136 experiencing it with the Steering Committee or Planning Team for the Empowering
- 137 Commissioned Pastors Conference. Valerie also came to Lake Charles to preach on
- 138 Synod Sunday las t year.
- 139 • This synod is very collaborative across presbytery and state boundaries. The network
- 140 model helps to cross boundaries. The synod has helped to foster presbyteries working
- 141 together. Through the Commissioned Pastors Conference, the synod has reached out
- 142 across the country in powerful and helpful ways.
- 143 • I think about the Imagine events, I think about the lay minister event, and ways in which
- 144 the synod is working to provide access to ministry and settings for others to engage in
- 145 the work of the church. They are crossing boundaries by connecting others and allowing
- 146 the church to engage in the world in active ways.
- 147 • Bringing together Commissioned Pastors; going way beyond Synod boundaries—very
- 148 significant
- 149 • Valerie coming to preach in churches; appreciated
- 150 • Great training from PCUSA for Synod PJC
- 151 • Tom and Valerie at APCE, Presbyteries
- 152 • Imagine Event at the Border
- 153 • Next Synod meeting scheduled to be at a Korean church in Houston
- 154 • Intention is there and is good, but, not seen when you look at the diversity represented
- 155 in commissioners or committees, would not put all the responsibility on the synod side,
- 156 racial/ethnic communities are not responsive to presbyteries , the intention is there but
- 157 groups are not responding with equal intention. Can reach out through language, in
- 158 constant dialogue with GA to be more sensitive to provide other languages than English.
- 159 Not surprised at synod level if GA is not responsive, must be a wish, but more difficult to

- 160 produce since we don't have bi lingual staffers to translate to Spanish or Korean. We
161 need language to reach out to communicate work of Synod Be more intentional to
162 nominations committee to reach out to ethnic communities. Language in terms of
163 communication, how to encourage minority groups to get involved in synod ministry
- 164 • Talking with people in my church and community good efforts about working across
165 racial boundaries,
 - 166 • The obvious, the border, especially intentional about bringing in people who might not
167 have a voice at the table, working with nominations, reaching out to Hispanic Mission
168 Network, doing our part is key
 - 169 • Imagine Compassion, Solar, Border ministries, heard people speaking at different
170 meetings, not sure about other things, Synod as an organization can do bigger projects
171 than presbyteries, but not as big as PCUSA
 - 172 • Every day through statewide boundaries as a four state synod within our members. We
173 are fundamentally through different boundaries, separate things that are unique to
174 each state. It doesn't feel like a rivalry between states. Crossing boundaries of borders
175 beyond this by means of other borders like international lines, culture borders (with our
176 Korean brothers and sisters).
 - 177 • What boundaries do you mean? Don't know
 - 178 • The first response was highlighting the success of the Synod meeting in McAllen and the
179 Imagine event that followed. The group also appreciated the Imagine event in Norman
180 and visiting the unique housing development there. Plans for future discussions of
181 racism also received positive praise. The group felt that the synod had done great
182 work in breaking down the boundaries of the presbyteries. Networks that reach across
183 presbytery boundaries; meetings that have been held in locations beyond Dallas and in
184 the various presbyteries; the gathering at General Assembly for all presbytery
185 commissioners were highlighted as ways to reach beyond presbytery boundaries. One
186 raised the question – has synod reached through the walls of presbyteries? At one time,
187 that answer would have been “no”. But now the answer was an emphatic “yes”.
 - 188 • Synod event at the border
 - 189 • It is sensitive to minorities, from a white male view.
 - 190 • Networks – and expanding Networks would be good – possible Network on Youth? Also
191 Immigration Efforts
 - 192 • Valerie's strength, Imagine events, CP conference, Mexico
 - 193 • Valerie availability to co-chair GA committee
 - 194 • Communications plan with Tom going beyond synod boundaries
 - 195 • Solar under the Sun
 - 196 • This synod is very collaborative across presbytery and state boundaries. The network
197 model helps to cross boundaries. The synod has helped to foster presbyteries working
198 together. Through the Commissioned Pastors Conference, the synod has reached out
199 across the country in powerful and helpful ways.

- 200 • Well... to be obvious, we attempt to cross the border with Mexico quite regularly, and
 201 even had a fabulous event on the border last fall. We also are/were offering a training
 202 event for CRE/CLPs ... that was originally for only our Synod and was expanded to
 203 include the whole denomination. I believe that Valerie Young, our Synod Leader, has us
 204 all thinking creatively which encourages us to cross boundaries – meaning thinking
 205 outside the box.
- 206 • 2 say IDK
- 207 • The Synod hosted a gathering of its Mission Partners two years ago and there was a strong
 208 desire for the collective group to sign a joint Covenant Agreement with the Synod and
 209 each other. The main goal was to be mutually beneficial. No funding was attached. In fact,
 210 the partners expressed some willingness to donate funds for the Synod to repeat the
 211 experience. I met several leaders of other Presbyterian nonprofit agencies whom I had
 212 never met. I always find this very rewarding. When the time came for PCHAS' covenant
 213 agreement arrived, and we hadn't seen the joint agreement, I forged a new three way
 214 covenant agreement for PCHAS with the Synod of the Sun and the Synod of Mid America
 215 because our ministry stretches across both. As far as my interactions with the Synod on
 216 behalf of the Presbytery, I attended the recent training that was offered and thought it
 217 was very rewarding. It was about strategy and thinking in new ways. We are now
 218 beginning to do that in larger ways within our presbytery. I've enjoyed the Synod
 219 Gatherings I've attended and hope to attend more when gathering is once again allowed.
 220 I would still be interested in signing a covenant agreement with the other Presbyterian
 221 related agencies. I just think the more we can do as PCUSA folks in unity the better.
- 222 • I have heard of mission projects to the Texas border
- 223 • Doesn't do a good job because the church does not do a very good job. Synod
 224 represents fairly the church it represents. Much work to do. The synod does reach out
 225 through the grants and process to touch minorities.
- 226 • Imagine compassion Hispanic, solar under the sun, living waters for the world; that speaks
 227 well to the synod crossing boundaries and meet human needs.
- 228 • By working not only across Presbyteries but Synods
- 229 • The IMAGINE mission conferences. We literally crossed the southern U.S. border engage
 230 with the people and ministries serving them.
- 231 • Working to provide relevant training.
- 232 • Between peoples? Attempts are being made and good reports shared at Imagine
- 233 • I think the Synod has done well to move our meetings to different locations around the
 234 Synod. I also very much appreciate the Synod's meeting in the Rio Grande Valley last fall,
 235 which gave commissioners a REAL chance to cross boundaries with the folks they
 236 encountered.

237

238 **What are the intentional/direct; unintentional/indirect ways the Synod has made visible the**
 239 **Good News? Narrative**

- 240 • Synod directly do fund and help from national concern. It is not Synod is bigger and has
 241 money; it is because Synod spread Gospel and love of Jesus Christ in the way of Synod

- 242 can do immediately. The action from Synod did is how Christ mentioned love spreading
243 to neighbor; do immediately.
- 244 • Working on the border with immigrants, Solar Under the Sun and Living Waters, offering
245 grants to support local church work
 - 246 • I think the both of the border trips that the synod sponsored last year made visible the
247 Good News in a lot of ways. The CSP has been invaluable, as well.
 - 248 • I think the intentional ways are through conferences and meetings/ gatherings. I think
249 through those gatherings, indirect ways emerge. People are able to work with others
250 that they might not have known before the event and to grow their ministry. The
251 connections and growth that comes from these gatherings is impactful in the lives of
252 those who attend, and I think that is an unintended, but powerful outcome.
 - 253 • Solar Under the Sun
 - 254 • Living Waters for the World
 - 255 • Grants for Local Church work
 - 256 • Work on the border
 - 257 • All very intentional and we're still benefitting from relationships formed from this work
 - 258 • Paso de Fe—International outreach providing beds for people at the border in Mexico
 - 259 • Imagine Events very intentional about drawing attention to existing ministries within the
260 Synod/Presbyteries: join the group or adapt to your setting—connecting.
 - 261 • We are still benefitting from these activities/ministries/relationships
 - 262 • It is difficult, for example Solar Under the Sun, a program that does a lot of outreach in
263 visible concrete work in changing lives, providing electricity for communication and
264 water purification, all the other conferences and training sponsored by the synod makes
265 the synod more visible. Concern is still a lot of people within the synod that don't know
266 nothing to the very little about the synod, if they do know, they don't care.
 - 267 • Can change through promotion/marketing, synod council, including synod members
268 must feel responsible for promotion. Commissioners, members at large to keep
269 promoting, posters/resources available to pastors/presbyteries. Synod of the Sun is the
270 most well kept secret in our area. Could be our own presbytery, and previous history.
 - 271 • When presbyteries are no longer sending benevolence, being gradually disconnected.
272 One point he sees is the appointment, nomination, connection to the synod is not a
273 priority.
 - 274 • IDK
 - 275 • Direct ways – especially with border trip, lots of word of mouth, lots of good press, CP
276 Conference, is huge, people, peaks to giving people identity as disciples, and how we
277 can help you
 - 278 • Indirect through the CSP program, more than just communication, don't always see it
279 that way
 - 280 • Imagine Compassion was an excellent event

- 281 • Imagine Compassion, border ministries, Solar
- 282 • Who participates in Synod has gotten smaller which makes it a different experience and
- 283 less people to make visible the Good News. The nature of the Synod directive has
- 284 changed. It isn't clear anymore to those who are not a part of the Synod what we do to
- 285 make the Good News visible. We do make it visible but it is much harder and we don't
- 286 have as much effect as we used to.
- 287 • Grants and Scholarships
- 288 • Work on Indian Nations Administrative Commission
- 289 • Comments were from recent events in the life of the Synod. The group appreciated the
- 290 flexibility to change the 2020 budget and offer zoom subscriptions to congregations.
- 291 One presbytery had a dozen zoom subscriptions and the congregations were very
- 292 appreciative. Again, the Imagine event in McAllen and ministry opportunities at the
- 293 border were mentioned and the many stories that continue to be shared from various
- 294 peoples' experience there.
- 295 • Grants & Scholarships giving to Children/Youth/Retreats; try not to give money to the
- 296 same people, try to spread it around; spreading the Good News is the Goal of the Grants
- 297 & Scholarships Committee
- 298 • The Synod symposiums, Support for lay pastors and EPs. Web work/support. Grants.
- 299 Worship at Synod meetings.
- 300 • Grants & Scholarships a Plus, Youth Triennium, Valerie attending Presbytery meetings,
- 301 Thomas connecting through the Communications Program
- 302 • During the training for PJC, the commitment of those present, as well as their reports of
- 303 their own PJC activity reflected the Good News. Healing was the desired outcome.
- 304 • I think the both of the border trips that the synod sponsored last year made visible the
- 305 Good News in a lot of ways.
- 306 • The grants given from synod funds directly make visible the Good News.
- 307 • Synod meeting in Norman, meal at homeless shelter was powerful
- 308 • Imagine conferences
- 309 • grants and scholarships making use of our assets
- 310 • social media for telling stories and sharing good news of synod work
- 311 • I believe that our border ministries are an embodiment of the Good News.
- 312 • Trainings, gatherings
- 313 • I think the border mission is excellent in making visible the Good News
- 314 • Through the grants and scholarship team and being available and answering the need,
- 315 feeding, and clothing people.
- 316 • The above ministries, living waters for the world meeting needs as well as Hispanic issues,
- 317 and Solar under the Sun making solar panels.
- 318 • Not sure how to answer
- 319 • Intentionally, being involved in time sensitive and appropriate situations in all areas of
- 320 the synod.
- 321 • Thanks to Thomas and IT, Synod's word is out within the synod and beyond

- 322 • One way is through Synod Sunday. Another is through the grants they made possible to
 323 presbyteries to provide Zoom licenses for congregations which needed the help. That
 324 LITERALLY made the Good News visible by enabling congregations to worship in a time of
 325 pandemic!

326
 327

328 **How has the Synod promoted wholeness in the Body of Christ? Narrative**

- 329 • Our presbytery, there are many small churches in this season. Some of them are really
 330 not know technology and even what kind of idea they can do. Synod provide the way of
 331 unique plan (providing technology fund and supporting small church salary) in this
 332 moments, so people and large church also can think about how hardly small church can
 333 handle in difficult season. This way, church can feel connect each other, no matter of
 334 size and power.
- 335 • Wholeness is promoted through the Synod's support of various mission work, but also
 336 by facilitating connectivity within the church
- 337 • The work that the synod AC has done with Indian Nations has promoted wholeness in
 338 the Body of Christ.
- 339 • See previous answer.
- 340 • Mission work—outward
- 341 • Connection—Inward
- 342 • Supporting existing ministries and seeking new ways
- 343 • Intention is there, is translated in the programs and ministries and the outreach, the
 344 results are not very good, not because the synod is not doing enough, the message is
 345 not being received/perceived in the way it has been intended. Cannot say in anyway the
 346 synod is not doing its job. The receptors are not being sensible to it.
- 347 • IDK
- 348 • That news is wholeness, some of the ways Valerie has worked with people, especially
 349 search teams, PJC training, Oklahoma
- 350 • Missions in where we saw a need
- 351 • We hold space for some of the larger and harder conversations within our Synod.
 352 Talking about things like racism and engaging leaders from all of our presbyteries
 353 around these ideas. The Synod was the first local sort of place that they could discuss
 354 these conversations then bring it back to your conversations. Sometimes conversation is
 355 theological, sometimes vague. Gathering people then figure out how they can bring it
 356 back to their area. What are the implications of this ministry?
- 357 • Grants and scholarships
- 358 • Indian Nations Administrative Commission
- 359 • The group mentioned the extensive efforts by the synod during disaster relief efforts in
 360 Mission, New Covenant and South Louisiana presbyteries in the aftermath of hurricanes.

361 They mentioned appreciation for the recent and upcoming PDA webinar sessions to help
 362 leaders and others deal with the stresses related to the Covid-19 crisis. They mentioned
 363 the efforts the synod goes to keep in touch with responsibilities with the denomination.
 364 And they appreciated that the synod (mainly through Valerie) is asking “How can the
 365 synod help?”

- 366 • Working on Immigration; PDA Disaster Assistance. Believe there are enough
- 367 members/commissioners and Committees are well represented
- 368 • The work of “Immigrant boarder ministry, Disaster assistance, Synod Perm. Judicial.
- 369 Team. Synod meetings/teams.
- 370 • By doing things from Youth to Older Adult – covers the lifespan; Resourcing; Programs;
- 371 New Church Development assistance
- 372 • IDK
- 373 • Concious effort to be inclusive
- 374 • sense of “shalom”/wholeness
- 375 • AC to Indian Nations
- 376 • Again, I point to the ministries at the border, but there are so many other ways. We
- 377 have had theological discussions that promote wholeness, as well as conferences on
- 378 how our presbyteries can thrive in this new era. Our Synod does a lot in this area.
- 379 • No answer.
- 380 • Not sure
- 381 • Coming together in the imagine events.
- 382 • ***Not familiar with***, other than expanding on the three ministries above.
- 383 • Same as 3. From helping Presbytery change form organization to showing up wherever
- 384 disaster happens.
- 385 • By reaching out and offering lay-pastor programming/training to help equip the saints for
- 386 ministry in smaller congregations.
- 387 • Sessions and congregations have heard about synod, but may not know entirely how they
- 388 are being touched. Synod Sunday. Grants and Scholarships is just one way synod is
- 389 available.
- 390 • I think in the ways I mentioned above.

391

392 **What does the Synod need to do better? Narrative**

- 393 • From now, I satisfied what Synod are doing. Synod know what people and churchd
- 394 concern, and Synod care Presbytery well enough what presbytery may concern also
- 395 • There are many facets of the Synod that have not reached the local congregations yet.
- 396 Getting this information and opportunities isn’t the sole responsibility of Synod staff, I
- 397 realize we local pastors have a role in this as well.
- 398 • The synod needs to continue to interpret its mission to the presbyteries and the
- 399 congregations. The synod is doing amazing work. The local church needs to know about
- 400 the all the ways they are being assisted from the synod.

- 401 • I think they need to continue to look for ways to expand their gatherings and addressing
402 relevant topics in the church and world. Maybe also look to the work already being done
403 in the synod, such as PDA, and look for ways to create a network or opportunities for
404 others to serve.
- 405 • Still not great connection with smaller churches; need better connections going both
406 directions through Presbytery
- 407 • too far removed from local congregations
- 408 • shouldn't assume communications will get from Presbyteries to congregations
- 409 • Should we drive around the barricade? How do we make contact when communications
410 aren't getting to the churches?
- 411 • Synod Sunday—seeking direct communication with churches
- 412 • Do churches need a direct contact with Synod in order to access resources?
- 413 • Congregations in competition with the Presbyteries? Need clarity regarding Synod
414 grants; that those go through Presbyteries. (That was a communication problem—How
415 are things structured? Do they have to go through Presbyteries to access those
416 resources?)
- 417 • Valerie and Tom have been working extremely hard to make the Commissioned Pastors
418 Conference work
- 419 • It is doing a lot considering the staff. We are doing too much with too many resources,
420 on the other hand the work is not enough in times of crisis. In many aspects our
421 denomination is shrinking. Is heroic on one hand, and impossible on the other. Maybe
422 trying too much, one way or the other the message from and through the synod is not
423 being received.
- 424 • Ways to be more effective – when changed from caucuses to networks, ,not easy to
425 adjust, more receptive; networks come together to promote fellowship, training,
426 advancement in outreach, transmit the same message that synod has become a
427 network of presbyteries, not a governing body, need to serve to support, be more
428 intentional in that message that we are a network to equip, connect and empower.
429 May have more positive responses and more people involved.
- 430 • As a new commissioner, it would have been helpful to receive past information
431 newsletters, etc. would have a basis to answer more than IDK, send them history to get
432 them acclimated, using acronyms new people don't know
- 433 • You can't make people to do what you want them to do, there are limits on everyone's
434 time, don't think expectations too high for volunteers, maybe have more conversations
435 about that, so we all know where we know where each other are coming from,
- 436 • More of a presence in local churches, sometimes Synod Sunday happens sometimes it
437 doesn't
- 438 • Figure out how to streamline our business. Realize what we need to do and make the
439 process more efficient. It is already effective and it is already efficient but meetings give

440 us more time than we had planned. Stop scheduling for an hour when we need only 15
441 minutes.

- 442 • Synod reps at Presbytery meetings need to engage with people and not simply show up
443 - Synod exec does not need to go unless for a specific reason or is asked to attend -
444 unnecessary travel expense otherwise
- 445 • Synod should re-think assembly structure and travel requirements for commissioners
- 446 • Our conversation centered around experienced with committee meetings and the need
447 for more functional committees and more consistent “expectations and follow-through
448 with assignments”. The group wondered if our rotation model for synod leadership has
449 served us well – that our rotation sometimes prohibits continuity. The idea was raised if
450 it was possible to have elected leadership – moderator, vice-moderator, committee
451 chairs – that were not tied to being synod commissioners so that longer terms of service
452 could be utilized.
- 453 • More meetings via zoom and educating on how to do zoom; better communication
454 always a plus
- 455 • More digital face to face over face to face meetings or events. When possible.
- 456 • Getting the communication down to Congregations; Communication
- 457 • I’m not sure how successful, impactful or even well-attended synod sponsored
458 programs are (e.g. COM training, PJC training, EP Forums, etc.)
- 459 • The recruitment of members from the presbyteries, as well as the recruitment of those
460 to serve in critical PJC positions, could be better –but I imagine this is a perennial
461 challenge.
- 462 • When I think of the synod I think of Valerie, not bad, but not perfect perspective, need
463 to broaden the face of the synod
- 464 • Communication is good, but can always be better
- 465 • The synod needs to continue to interpret its mission to the presbyteries and the
466 congregations. The synod is doing amazing work. The local church needs to know about
467 the all the ways they are being assisted from the synod.
- 468 • I think that getting rid of the Synod office was a step in the right direction. The Synod
469 has seemed like a middle governing body that isn’t necessarily needed while being very
470 expensive. I believe that Valerie Young has gone a long way to change that in our Synod
471 because I believe that most of what the Synod now does is more valuable than
472 previously. Most Presbyterians have no clue what a Synod does – which isn’t the fault
473 of the Synod but of local pastors. Perhaps the Synod needs to listen to the needs of
474 presbyteries – or perhaps congregations - a little more closely. Sadly, I’m not sure that
475 presbyteries always send their best leaders as commissioners. I believe that the
476 Presbytery of Arkansas has gotten better about that recently, but we struggled in the
477 past.
- 478 • Mission Presbytery wishes it could give more of its budget to the Synod. I know it
479 continues to struggle to maintain its budgeted expenses but is doing better since Sallie
480 Watson arrived. As a PCHAS executive, we are grateful for Synod Mission Grants.

- 481 • This is a tough job. There are many issues hitting churches and presbyteries each day. It
- 482 is difficult to rise above the crowd and have your message heard.
- 483 • Develop & implement programs targeted for people below the age of 50.
- 484 • Continue to promote the Synod itself and its programs.
- 485 • I don't know
- 486 • I believe the average layperson doesn't know much about the synod of what it does. That
- 487 needs to change. Synod Sundays alone are not enough.
- 488 • At meetings perhaps there can be orientation, much like what some presbyteries do. On
- 489 a grander scale – more diversity.
- 490 • I feel that our committees do not function as well as they could. I believe that folks put
- 491 too much responsibility to do work that we should be able and willing to do ourselves. I
- 492 also believe that that constant change in commissioners impacts this. At the VERY least I
- 493 think we need to be more intentional above providing training for the committee
- 494 moderators, but perhaps for all commissioners.
- 495
- 496
- 497

Tell us about a time when the Synod has failed to impact lives in a positive way.

- 498 • I am newly called small church, and I had only one Synod conference meeting. So I have
- 499 not many ideas, but I only have a good memory of Synod until now.
- 500 • IDK
- 501 • I do not know of a time.
- 502 • IDK
- 503 • Could the Synod work with the Korean churches for a gathering or other type of
- 504 support?
- 505 • Have set aside \$ in the budget for translation services to help bolster connection with
- 506 Latino and Korean Churches
- 507 • Not a lot of connection because of the language barriers; how do we overcome that?
- 508 • Could the Synod offer a course in Korean? Spanish? Even a little might go a long way.
- 509 • Minwoo's church tried to worship in English, Korean and German at the same time;
- 510 interesting and a bit painful. 😊
- 511 • Would like to see more Hispanics involved in work and ministry of synod. Number of
- 512 active ordained ministers is extremely low, only one in Grace Presbytery. Not in a
- 513 position to ask them to get involved in synod, we are just leaving them alone When we
- 514 have entire presbyteries with no Hispanic pastors.
- 515 • Maybe ways to reach out to the ones that are retired or non active pastor, and others to
- 516 invite them to be involved. It is just hard to find them.
- 517 • Idk
- 518 • In the time when there was a lack of communication, people who have come on board
- 519 as commissioners, and didn't feel communicated with and didn't feel valued or needed
- 520 • Don't know of any specific failures.

- 521 • Conflict and tension at Synod assemblies over the years
- 522 • The group had to go back many years to share stories – but there was a consistent
- 523 feeling that in the past synod work was not seen to be a priority for them. They
- 524 mentioned a “corporate office” type feel when the office was located in Denton. They
- 525 wondered what the purpose of synod was in those years and had difficulty articulating
- 526 its purpose and mission to others. They mentioned dysfunctional committee work –
- 527 and that a couple of times first-time commissioners were asked to moderate
- 528 committees that they had no idea of what the committee did.
- 529 • “Failure is too strong a word” – can’t do all things well all the time
- 530 • Meetings that are too far away for people to attend – symposiums, even the boarder
- 531 event, but some things have to be experienced – like border ministry.
- 532 • Could not come up with a time
- 533 • 4 could not cite any example
- 534 • Fumbled and stumbled through transition, but has become stronger
- 535 • I can’t think of anything. Perhaps now is a time for the Synod to speak up or speak out
- 536 in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis.
- 537 • No answer
- 538 • Don’t know enough about Synod activities, unfortunately.
- 539 • Creative ways to help churches with spiritual leadership when they lack resources. No
- 540 response.
- 541 • I can’t think of one honestly, I am coming up blank. I am not connected enough to the
- 542 synod to know if there has been one.
- 543 • Reaching out and working to assist Presbyteries to fill executive positions
- 544 • Scholarships, grants, just to name a few
- 545 • I don’t know.
- 546 • Can’t think of any.
- 547 • The Book of Order is followed, however, at times there may be a need for interpretation,
- 548 keeping in mind presbytery mandates.
- 549 • I don’t know
- 550

551 **Tell us about a time when the Synod has impacted lives in a positive way.**

- 552 • The conference I attended 2 years ago, it was lots of discussing and class how church
- 553 can forward positively. Synod provided a speaker who has experiences, and I love the
- 554 concept that educate and care people, especially small church and pastor, how might
- 555 concern about future of church. I believe that church need it; bigger or small. Continue
- 556 learning is important to church growth and future, and learning from other church and
- 557 method it one of my favor from that conference.
- 558 • The Synod gave St Andrew a grant to help with our college ministry that has impacted
- 559 many students over the years.

- 560 • The EP Forum is one of the most impactful and supportive ministries of the synod. I am
561 thankful for the colleagues and the resources that we bring together.
- 562 • Through the various gatherings, where we are intentional about our mission and our
563 purpose of what it means to be a part of the kingdom.
- 564 • 6 members of one church went to OK for Imagine Event; it was a big deal that they left
565 the valley. They had a great time, learned a lot.
- 566 • Synod creating opportunities for people to leave their home and go experience and
567 minister elsewhere.
- 568 • Synod Youth Workshop—“I learned I can make friends anywhere.”
- 569 • Group from Lyon College attended the event at the border—now one person will be
570 doing a YAV year, another is considering it a YAV year, and a third has gone back as a
571 translator
- 572 • The Imagine Conferences, even on a personal basis have had an impact on me. Have
573 sent people, not related to the synod, to come even though we may not get more
574 people involved in the work of the synod, in the imagine conferences have been life
575 changers. Participating in those conference is providing very positive impact. Wants to
576 say thank you for putting them together.
- 577 • Idk
- 578 • I can't think of a certain time but I think our Synod could understand what is impacting
579 each of our presbyteries locally with more staff members then engaging the other
580 presbyteries with what is happening in other ones. If we knew about more things we
581 could make more of an impact.
- 582 • Grants and scholarships awarded - work on Indian Nations Presbytery Administrative
583 Commission
- 584 • The group shared several examples. Imagine events – one presbytery even tried to
585 replicate its own imagine event after being greatly impacted by one of the synod's
586 events. They mentioned the response of the last few weeks to the pandemic. They
587 mentioned good work and help provided by PJC's. They mentioned the many students
588 who had been impacted by synod scholarships. They mentioned the leadership events –
589 such as those for COM issues and highlighted the upcoming conference for CRE's. There
590 was a lot of talk about the importance of Synod Youth Workshop. The group happened
591 to be joined by two youth who professed a great love for SYW. They had been to
592 Triennium and felt disappointed by some aspects of that event because it wasn't done
593 like SYW. One EP mentioned the incredible impact SYW had made upon the church that
594 person served.
- 595 • Grants & Scholarships; Last Fall's Border Ministry Event
- 596 • Grants, training events, boarder ministry event last year, web creation and
597 management.

- 598 • Communications; Immigration Trip; PW Grants for Churchwide PW Gatherings allowed
599 PW members to participate
- 600 • I served as organizing pastor of a New Church Development in Mission
601 Presbytery. Synod grant support was critical. When I retired a few years ago, we were
602 blessed to have a congregation of 320 members. I assume the Synod continues such
603 support. I also was blessed to participate in a pastor mentoring experience over several
604 months, whose format and leadership were inspired by the Synod of the Sun.
- 605 • Grants and scholarships
- 606 • network grants
- 607 • networks, etc leverage resources and expertise
- 608 • I'm not sure. For example, Solar Under the Sun is a good program, but I'm not sure
609 synod's role is critical to its success.
- 610 • The EP Forum is one of the most impactful and supportive ministries of the synod. I am
611 thankful for the colleagues and the resources that we bring together.
- 612 • Arkansas sent a group of college students from Lyon College to the border event. One
613 of these young people has committed to being a YAV following graduation, and all
614 reported that their lives will never be the same. That's a positive impact! They spoke at
615 our March meeting of presbytery and each spoke of how their experience on the border
616 has changed the way that they think about people who are struggling to be safe and to
617 have food to feed their families, whether those people are at our border, in another
618 country, or in their own community.
- 619 • No answer
- 620 • The trips to the border have to be positive for the few people who you talk to/interact
621 with, however, the situation is huge and really needs a comprehensive immigration
622 policy.
- 623 • Imagine event done outside of a social justice issue promotes connectedness of the
624 church. The country is divided, the churches are divided so when we work on divisive
625 issues, boarder issues for example.
- 626 • Yes, sending people to and proving scholarships to Ferncliff, we send students there and
627 we are the poorest parish in Louisiana. There are other programs, like, helping fund
628 scholarships through the kaleidoscope conference on stewardship.
- 629 • Reaching out and working to assist Presbyteries to fill Executive positions.
- 630 • Scholarships, grants, just to name a few.
- 631 • Synod members getting to know about other presbyteries, sharing information and
632 working with wonderful people on committees.
- 633 • See my answers above about the Zoom licenses.

634

635 **What missional needs do you see that the Synod has yet to address or that the Synod could**
636 **address in the future?**

- 637 • I believe if Synod provides more chance of education and do exercises moment with
638 church leader and congregation. For example, if synod provide plan for hunger, ask
639 some of presbytery can join with Synod from part of plan progress. Presbytery also can

- 640 ask their church who are interested with, and in this communication process will
641 provide lots of ideas and ways to learn each other.
- 642 • Perhaps with the stresses of the Corona Virus, the Synod could offer a workshop or two
643 for small church pastors to whom this idea of virtual worship is akin to parting the Red
644 Sea. Just a “Basic Internet Tools” for the Pastor class.
 - 645 • The synod needs to continue to expand our work among the immigrant and minority
646 communities.
 - 647 • I think they could look at work already being done in the synod, and work to build a
648 network or system to help members engage in the work being done (like PDA, Solar
649 School)
 - 650 • More missional events for college students/young adults
 - 651 • Allowing opportunities for engagement in ministry
 - 652 • Crossroads group from Grace Presbytery (young adults group) Can this group be
653 expanded?
 - 654 • College age and young adults (in-between youth group and older adults)
 - 655 • Steep learning curve for Coronavirus for online worship
 - 656 • Can Tom lead a workshop on how to do this (Zoom, technology, other)
 - 657 • How do we respond to natural disasters?
 - 658 • Already in conversation with PDA to help Synod develop disaster response procedures
659 and to have a full time person devoted to coordinating this ministry
 - 660 • At any given time, there could be mission trips to somewhere in the Synod to do
661 disaster recovery work.
 - 662 • Desire to create more Synod Networks around felt needs; (networks consist of members
663 from at least three Presbyteries)
 - 664 • Some monies available to help churches and Pastors during COVID-19.
 - 665 • Across the board, evangelism, comes growth planning, outreach, evangelism in general.
666 Becoming a missional church becoming a Matthew 25 church. Start responding in the
667 message and the call of Matthew 25.
 - 668 • Idk, systemic racism, not in Presbyterian church, but as a global issue, if the church isn't
669 at the forefront, we are lost, sometimes the only one there; sometimes it is cultural,
670 PCUSA does a lot to step out in the forefront, very impressed with how they step up and
671 fund information, impressed with commitment to education,
 - 672 • This current situation bringing out is helping our smaller churches with technology, and
673 new things...any time there is a financial anything, people lose hope and commit suicide,
674 church is going to have to be proactive, are there resources that we have, that we may
675 have forgotten about,
 - 676 • Solar Under the Sun is what people relate to because it is really cool, but feel good
677 about Solar as a project and great for the Synod of the Sun
 - 678 • Border ministries is a great Synod project.

- 679 • Communication plan was good for PW because we used it for gathering because it is
680 hard for an organization that only meets every three years it was a great offering,
681 • Don't have a physical office is a great disadvantage makes it hard for the presence to be
682 there as much because you kind of want it to have a place...could arrange for meeting
683 through synod at the office,
684 • Last time had a terrible mix-up with the hotel, the person who no longer works with the
685 synod, cost them a lot of money because they had to pay full price for one night,
686 complaining about it but knows it won't happen again because it doesn't exist anymore
687 • No suggestion
688 • We ran out of time and didn't have a lot of opportunity to reflect on this question. But
689 the idea that surfaced was that of Institutional Poverty. The worry was that the poor
690 may become even poorer as a result of Covid-19. There was also a worry that more
691 churches may be closing sooner as a result of Covid 19.
692 • Missional work is the work of the local church – Synod shouldn't be blamed for not
693 much missional work. However, more training is a plus – remembered a Mission
694 Training Event held at APTS with Ted Wardlaw that Synod sponsored – was great.
695 • More support for pastors and congregations needing to transform into ministry to
696 others in 2020 – move from a very strong consumer ministry to ministry that focuses on
697 others more than self – especially worship.
698 • More Immigration Trips/joining Mission Presbytery with their Immigration Outreach;
699 Communications – need more “buy in” to Synod and for congregations to understand
700 they are part of Synod; New Ideas for Networks (Youth)
701 • Small rural churches and their communities – food, shelter, safety
702 • try to perceive and discern new world post-covid19
703 • What would happen if Valerie were to vanish? Succession planning (sabbatical
704 planning?)
705 • The synod needs to continue to expand our work among the immigrant and minority
706 communities.
707 • The training [for synod PJC] was excellent. Years ago I served on the PJC in Mission
708 Presbytery; it would have been great to have such training. I do not know otherwise.
709 • We are possibly doing less with regard to Native Americans living in our Synod, and
710 could have a Synod event focused on LGBTQ+ issues. There are many opportunities.
711 • Not sure
712 • I would like more publicity and coordination about the mission to the border among
713 churches. A coordinated effort may increase the impact. I am aware of several groups
714 trying to assist, but this issue will take time and the government to assist with a solution.
715 • Lack of clergy in rural churches. Covid-19 has helped us look at things – like virtual worship
716 and communion. How can technology be used to share clergy resources and/or how can
717 technology be used to strengthen the church.
718 • Missional needs – continue the ministries that already exist and expand those ministries.
719 No more needs to be done, don't spread yourself too thin.

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- I don't know as a I feel they are on the cutting edge of moving with the changing world such as virtual services and training
 - The Synod tries to do this, but I believe more could be done to help our small churches with part-time or lay-lead pastoral leadership
 - The Synod of the Sun is here and can help. Christ is Risen indeed. We are blessed and have much to offer.
 - I don't know. We're discussing this in the EP Forum.

728 **Additional Comments:**

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- At all levels of the church we have hopes for the future, but what is the reality going to be?
 - From my limited experience these days with the synod, I feel as though Valerie Young is doing her best at fulfilling her responsibilities. She certainly sees to it that the essential functions of the Synod happen in accordance with the Manual of Administrative Operations.
 - Those who are engaged with the synod appreciate the synod; those who are not "touched" by synod work/programs do not value the synod.
 - **As for the rest of these questions** - I don't really have time for the pondering and assessment.
 - I don't think in terms of judging how the Synod functions. My experience has been good.
 - ***I am appreciative of the way our Synod functions, which seems to be effectively to me.***
 - **I appreciate when Valerie shows up at Presbytery meetings.** I see the ways justice drives the functioning of the Synod and I appreciate that. It is particularly helpful to me since I serve a church which is inwardly focused (and slowly dying because of it). While I know some of these issues would not be received well in knee-jerk reaction by my congregation, I perceive them as being important.
 - **I would be interested in more helpful continuing ed events.** Although it isn't aimed at me, ***I am particularly hopeful about the CLP conference*** - whenever it is finally realized. This is a critical ministry/mission for our presbytery, and is a growing need for the denomination. In particular, ***training for CLPs being coordinated by Synod could be very helpful*** (something less than Seminary coursework and more than what gets done in Presbyteries - especially presbyteries with dwindling resources).