

2025 PNG/KLS/SPLC Reunion Survey: Summary

The Core Group conducted a survey of participants at the 2025 reunion. The response rate was high at 78%. 40 of the 51 eligible participants returned surveys. (**Note that eligible participants we removed ten of the total 61 registered attendees who were unable to reply or attended for only one afternoon.**) Here are key findings.

1. Enjoyed Most & Suggested Changes

Respondents overwhelmingly cited the people—reconnecting with old friends and making new ones—as the highlight of the reunion. The "MK Nexus" sessions and the specific PNG-focused presentations (George Weiblen, Jared Diamond, Barbara Goldhardt) were frequently mentioned as key drivers of satisfaction, creating a strong sense of shared history and community.

In Their Own Words

"Connecting with friends and meeting new people, with whom I surprisingly had connections! I loved hearing Pigin English spoken."

"The MK Nexus. The conversations with old and new friends sharing the same memories and experiences."

"Getting to know more wantoks better, through MK NEXUS stories and through conversations."

While satisfaction was high, the most consistent suggestion for improvement was to increase "down time" for unstructured conversations. Several attendees felt the schedule was too packed or that meal times were too short, and a few mentioned specific logistical tweaks like more coffee availability, and gluten-free dessert options.

In Their Own Words

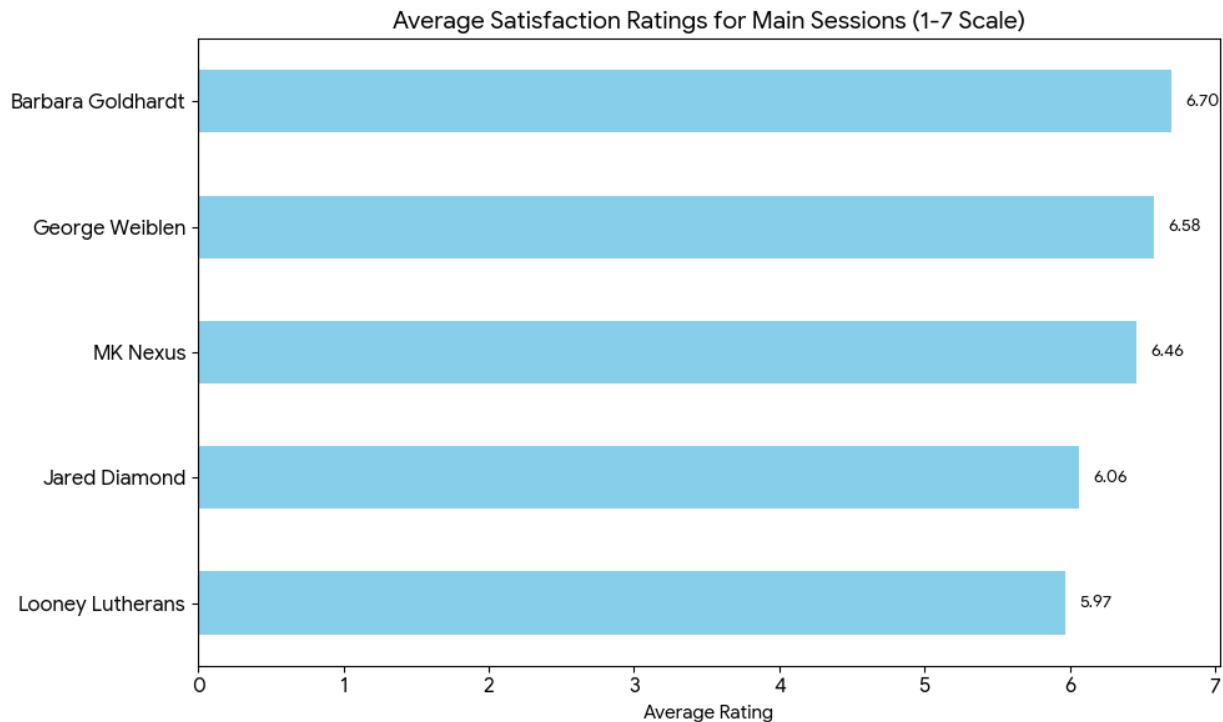
"More time for informal conversations. More open time."

"It would be nice to spend more than 20 minutes at meals."

"Finding a way for conversations while not missing any programs."

2. Five Main Sessions

The five main programmed sessions all received high marks, with average ratings falling between 5.9 and 6.7 on a 7-point scale. Barbara Goldhardt's presentation was the highest-rated event, followed closely by the George Weiblen and Jonathan Frerichs session and the MK Nexus storytelling.



Ratings of all five main sessions

MK Nexus Sessions

Participants found these storytelling sessions deeply moving and effective for finding common ground, though some felt the time limits (and the musical "cutoff") were a bit stressful or abrupt.

In Their Own Words

"Wonderful way to learn about the experiences of individuals and to find things we have in common."

"Incredibly affirming, emotional, thought provoking, wonderful."

"The sharing was personal and touching - I could relate to many experiences that were shared."

Jared Diamond Presentation (on Zoom)

Attendees respected Diamond's vast knowledge and academic perspective on PNG, though a few found the session "heavy" for directly after lunch or wished for more personal anecdotes over prehistoric data.

In Their Own Words

"Jared has a wealth of knowledge about past and present-day PNG. A great speaker on topics that interest our group!"

"I was hoping he would talk more about his personal experience and interactions and less about the prehistoric data."

George Weiblen & Jonathan Frerichs

This session was praised for providing a tangible, inspiring connection to current conservation work in PNG, with many appreciating the "on-the-ground" update.

In Their Own Words

"George is doing amazing work.... A great link for all of us MK's to that work and to the PNG people."

"Loved hearing about the project that is making a world of difference to PNG."

Barbara (Goldhardt) Carlyon Presentation (on Zoom)

Despite some technical delays, this session was often cited as a highlight due to Barbara's unique and resilient life story, which offered a PNG perspective distinct from the typical MK experience.

In Their Own Words

"It was really special to have Barbara share her unique early life story... She was a wonderful story-teller!"

"Such a brave woman who was willing to share so much about her childhood and later life, too."

Looney Lutherans

Most enjoyed this as a fun, lighthearted break from the serious content, though the humor didn't land for everyone, and a small minority suspected it was expensive or found it slightly risqué.

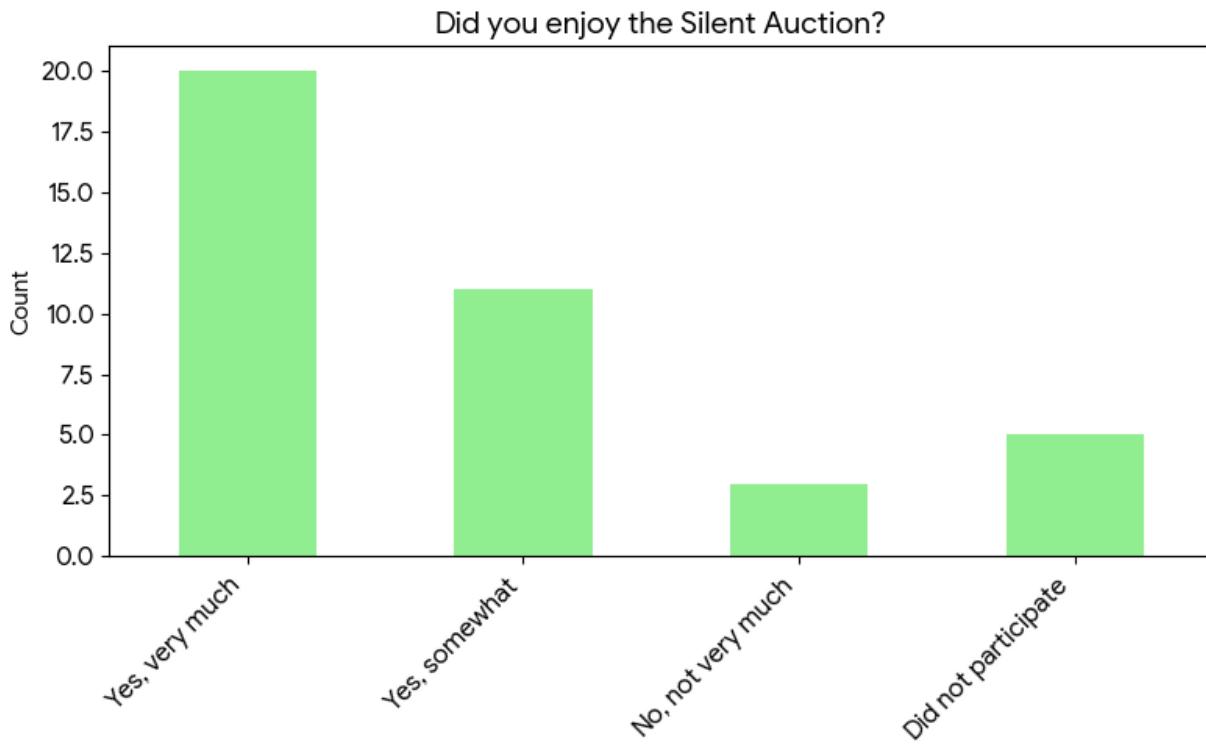
In Their Own Words

"This was a fun, uplifting event... The laughter was what we all needed!"

"Really good, but wouldn't repeat if it were to be the same act next time."

3. Silent Auction and Services

Silent Auction



This auction raised funds for George Weiblen's research and education in Papua New Guinea, supporting conservation efforts by PNG communities. Auction participation was high, with 78% of respondents saying they enjoyed the auction "Very much" or "Somewhat." It was viewed as a fun way to support a good cause, though a few noted it requires significant effort from organizers and was sometimes crowded.

In Their Own Words

"There was a great variety of items. Loved the friendly bidding wars."

"The amount of funds raised for the Binatang Center was impressive!"

Services (Memorial, Church, Devotions)

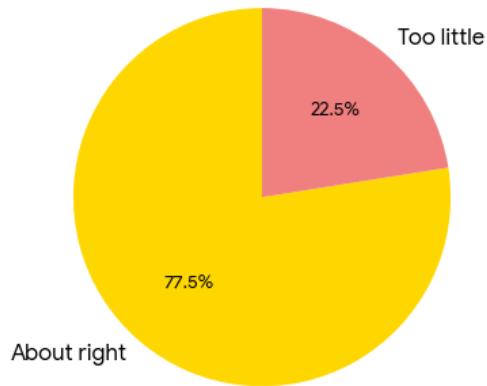
The services were described as meaningful and a good way to honor shared faith and history, particularly through the music. Some suggestions included reorganizing and shortening the memorial service to avoid repetition, and incorporating more familiar hymns.

In Their Own Words

"Singing 'Oh for a thousand tongues to sing' with the descant arrangement."

"Would like less repetition in the memorial service. More familiar hymns."

Amount of Time for Casual Conversations



4. Time for Conversation

While the majority (78%) felt the amount of time for casual conversation was "About right," nearly a quarter felt it was "Too little." This aligns with the qualitative feedback requesting longer mealtimes and more "white space" in the schedule.

In Their Own Words

"The reunion committees have done an excellent job of balancing scheduled events... while also allowing plenty of down time."

"Schedule more 'free time' and encourage using the time to informally connect."



5. Volunteering

There is a core group of attendees willing to help with future planning. While about 10 respondents indicated they could not help, 6 offered to help "wherever needed," and others expressed interest in specific roles like programming or communications.

6. Mt. Olivet Retreat Center

Feedback for the venue was overwhelmingly positive, with high marks for the food, the beautiful setting, and the helpful staff. Minor issues included the coffee machines being unavailable at times and some confusion over locked doors in the evening.

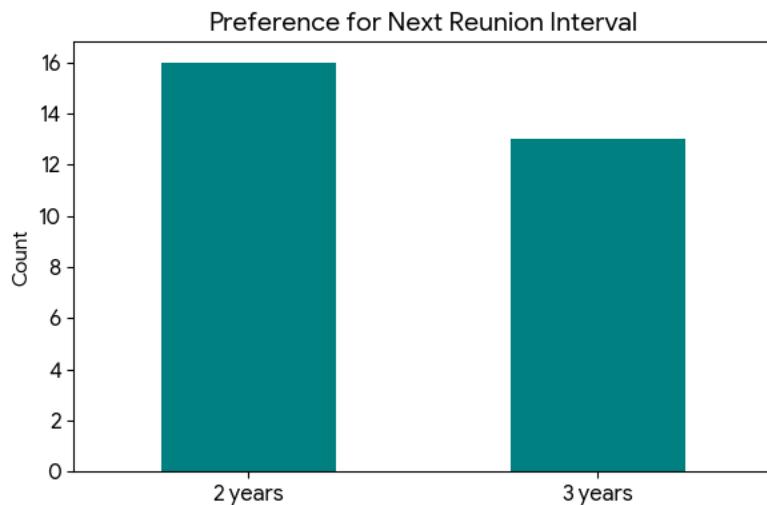
In Their Own Words

"The beautiful setting and comfortable accommodations offered by Mt. Olivet are great reasons to hold our reunions there."

"I was quite surprised at the multiple occasions there was no coffee available."

"Why are the buildings locked up so early at night?"

7. When to Hold the Next Reunion



The preference for the next reunion interval is split, with a slight edge for **2 years (16 votes)** over **3 years (13 votes)**.

In Their Own Words

"We are aging so the sooner the better."

"3 years is better for those who work and/or travel farther."

Cross-Tab Analysis: Reunion timing preference

Interestingly, those who served on committees (Volunteers) were more likely to prefer a 2-year gap than those who did not. This suggests that the people doing the work are not the ones asking for a break; rather, the hesitation comes more from non-volunteers, possibly due to travel or cost concerns. Similarly, those who stayed on-site were strongly in favor of 2 years, while off-site attendees (day scholars) leaned toward 3 years. The charts below summarize these responses.

