

COMMITTEE TO STUDY THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE GENERAL CONVENTION AND THE GENERAL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Membership

The Rt. Rev. Arthur B. Williams, Jr., <i>Chair</i>	Ohio, V	2018
The Rev. Cathy Caimano, Member	North Carolina, IV	2018
Mr. William R. Cathcart, Esq., Member	Oklahoma, VII	2018
Ms. Dianne Audrick Smith, Member	Ohio, V	2018
The Rev. M. Sylvia O. Vásquez, Member	California, VIII	2018
The Most Rev. Michael Bruce Curry, <i>Ex-Officio</i>	North Carolina, IV	2018
The Rev. Gay Clark Jennings, <i>Ex-Officio</i>	Ohio, V	2018

CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP

There were no changes in membership.

REPRESENTATIVES OF THE COMMITTEE AT GENERAL CONVENTION:

Ms. Dianne Audrick Smith

Mandate

2015-D075 Reinvalidate the Accountability of GTS to General Convention

Resolved, the House of Bishops concurring, that the Presiding Officers appoint a committee of no more than 5 members, including one of the Trustees elected at the 78th General Convention, to evaluate the relationship between the General Convention and the General Theological Seminary to determine whether this relationship is mutually beneficial at this point in the life of the Church; and be it further

Resolved, that the committee report to the 79th General Convention of The Episcopal Church with recommended action, including the possibility of ending this relationship.

Summary of Work

MEETINGS

The Committee to Study the Relationship of the General Convention and the General Theological Seminary met in New York, New York in February 2017 and in Cleveland, Ohio in August 2017. The Committee also met via video conference call eleven (11) times: June, July, September and December of 2016; and January, March, May, June, August, October, and November of 2017.

At its organizational meeting, Bp. Williams appointed William Cathcart as its Secretary. Subsequently, Bp. Williams appointed The Rev. Catherine Caimano to serve as Secretary, so that Cathcart could serve as host of the online meetings. At its initial meeting and in subsequent meetings, the committee received comments and took action as reflected in this report. For detailed accounts of the committee's proceedings, readers are referred to the minutes of the committee's meetings, available at the committee's webpage on the General Convention website.

REVIEW OF COMMITTEE'S WORK

Based on the mandate, the Committee finds that the current relationship between the General Convention and the General Theological Seminary is not mutually beneficial; however, the Committee does **not** recommend ending the relationship. The Committee recommends taking action to improve and strengthen the relationship. The Committee also recommends strengthening the relationship between the General Convention and **all** Episcopal seminaries.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE HISTORICAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE GENERAL CONVENTION AND THE GENERAL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

The General Theological Seminary was established by the General Convention of 1817. The General Convention of 1821 drafted the Constitution for the General Theological Seminary. An article of the original Constitution required that any amendment to the Constitution required approval of both General Convention and the Board of Trustees of the Seminary. The requirement for concurrent action of the General Convention and the Board of Trustees has remained unchanged.

Over the past two hundred (200) years, twenty-eight (28) General Conventions have considered resolutions relating to the General Theological Seminary. When it was formed, the General Theological Seminary was to "have the united support of the whole church in these United States, and be under the superintendence and control of the General Convention." Early resolutions included funding for General Theological Seminary until it could become self-sufficient. Funding by the General Convention has not been provided for some time, although efforts by the Committee to determine exactly when the funding ceased have been inconclusive.

Fifteen (15) General Conventions have acted on changes to the General Theological Seminary Constitution. Nine (9) General Conventions have acted upon changes in the makeup of the Board of Trustees.

The size of the Board of Trustees of the General Theological Seminary has been the subject of a number of amendments to its Constitution. When the Board of Trustees was established by the General Convention of 1820, it included all Episcopal bishops, twelve (12) clergy and twelve (12) lay persons appointed by the House of Deputies. At one point, each diocese of the Church appointed trustees, based on the number of clergy in the diocese. In 1874, the House of Deputies adopted a resolution to form a committee to study the number of General Seminary Trustees and how the number might be decreased in order to improve efficiency. In 1985, General Convention approved an amendment to the Constitution of the General Theological Seminary establishing the current makeup of General's Board of Trustees: two (2) bishops appointed by the House of Bishops, two (2) presbyters and two (2) lay persons appointed by the House of Deputies, twenty-four (24) appointed by the Board of Trustees itself, and nine (9) Trustees appointed by the General Theological Seminary Alumni.

The Constitution and Canons of the General Convention do not reference the General Theological Seminary. The only reference appears in the Joint Rules of Order of the House of Bishops and the House of Deputies:

VII. Joint Standing Committee on Nominations

17. There shall be a Joint Standing Committee on Nominations, which shall submit nominations for the election of:

- (a) Trustees of the Church Pension Fund, serving as the Joint Committee referred to in Canon I.8.2.*
- (b) Members of the Executive Council under Canon I.4.1(d).*
- (c) The Secretary of the House of Deputies and the Treasurer of the General Convention under Canons I.1.1(j) and I.1.7(a).*
- (d) Trustees of the General Theological Seminary.*
- (e) General Board of Examining Chaplains.*
- (f) Disciplinary Board for Bishops.*

The requirement for concurrent action of the General Convention and the Board of Trustees to amend the Constitution of the General Theological Seminary is the only formal relationship between the two (2) entities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE COMMITTEE'S ORIGINS

The Committee acknowledges that the original Resolution D075 - which ultimately led to the amended resolution and the formation of this Committee - was born from concern surrounding

events at the General Theological Seminary in the fall of 2014. These events, which culminated in several faculty members' dismissal and resignation under conflicted circumstances, reverberated throughout the Church. Frustration was felt on many sides: by those involved in these events; by those with ties to the General Theological Seminary; and by those who simply love the Church and desire the best for all of our relationships. Questions remain about lines of communication, accountability, and our responsibility to one another as members of the body of Christ.

Resolution D075 did not expressly address the issues of 2014 at the General Theological Seminary, and therefore neither has the Committee. Nonetheless, the Committee has heard others express their continued anger, pain, and grief over their perception of those events. The Committee feels this must be acknowledged, and hopes that its work is a step towards strengthening formal and informal relationships throughout the Episcopal Church.

RESEARCH AND INFORMATION GATHERING

The Committee considered its mandate and quickly determined input was needed from as many sources as possible. A nine (9) question survey was prepared:

- 1 What is your ministry status in the Episcopal Church?
- 2 Are you a member of the General Theological Seminary community?
- 3 Are you a member of the General Convention?
- 4 How familiar are you with the historical relationship between the General Convention and the General Theological Seminary?
- 5 Do you believe the current relationship between the General Convention and the General Theological Seminary is beneficial?
- 6 Do you believe the General Convention and the General Theological Seminary should have a relationship today?
- 7 Do you believe the relationship between the General Convention and the General Theological Seminary should be strengthened?
- 8 Is there anything else you would like to share with us about your understanding of the relationship between the General Convention the General Theological Seminary?
- 9 Would you be willing to be contacted for follow-up questions?

The survey was published online on August 1, 2016. Thereafter, the Committee used a variety of venues within the Church to broadcast the availability of the survey and invite participation.

E-mail notification was sent directly to members of the General Convention through the HoB/D listserv, to the Dean of the General Theological Seminary, and to the General Theological Seminary Alumni Executive Committee. No additional e-mail lists were made available to the Committee.

The Episcopal News Service published an article which described the survey and contained a link to it. Subsequently, the article containing the link was published by Episcopal Cafe on November 29, 2016. The link was also posted on several Facebook pages. The Committee also met with various groups in person at the General Theological Seminary on February 2 and 3, 2017. During each meeting, the Committee encouraged completion of the survey.

As of August 1, 2017, when data collection was concluded, a total of five hundred and thirty-nine (539) responses had been received. A summary of the survey results is attached as an addendum to this report.

On February 2, 2017, the Committee met separately with members of the General Seminary Alumni Association Executive Committee, representatives of the current General Theological Seminary student body and faculty representatives. On February 3, the Committee met with the General Theological Seminary Board of Trustees. In each meeting, three (3) questions from the survey were put forth for consideration:

- 1 Is the relationship between the General Convention and the General Theological Seminary mutually beneficial?
- 2 Should it continue?
- 3 Should it be strengthened?

As Chair of the Committee, Bishop Williams had several conversations with others who could give a perspective not readily available through written and oral surveys. These conversations included the President of the House of Deputies, the Secretary of the House of Deputies, the Canon to the Presiding Bishop, the Chair of the General Theological Seminary Board of Trustees, the President of the General Seminary Alumni Association, and the Deans of the accredited seminaries of The Episcopal Church, including the Dean of the General Theological Seminary.

The information gathered by the Committee yielded remarkably similar themes across constituencies. It was difficult to discuss the relationship between the General Convention and the General Theological Seminary without discussing the relationship between the General Convention and all Episcopal seminaries. Discussions led to conversations regarding the overall state of theological education in the Church, and what it means to receive an Episcopal theological education. Most discussions raised related issues such as local formation, online education, non-Episcopal seminary education, and theological education for both lay and ordained church leaders.

The greater majority of participants, in person and through the survey, expressed a strong desire for strengthening relationships - and accountability - between the General Theological Seminary, other seminaries, and the General Convention. Most agree the current relationships are not mutually beneficial, but few have concrete ideas of what mutually beneficial relationships might look like.

CONCLUSIONS

This Committee concludes that the relationship between the General Convention and the General Theological Seminary is not mutually beneficial.

From the perspective of the General Convention:

1. The General Convention has no oversight of the General Theological Seminary.
2. The General Theological Seminary and the Episcopal Church are cut off from one another in terms of official communication. In times of difficulty, there is no mechanism to influence the Board of the General Theological Seminary.
3. The General Theological Seminary has a formal relationship with the General Convention, established through the Seminary's Constitution. Other seminaries and local schools of theology have no formal relationship with the General Convention.
4. There is no vehicle to adequately address theological education and its reform within the church governance structure.

From the perspective of the General Theological Seminary:

1. The current relationship restricts the ability of the General Theological Seminary to make changes to its Constitution.
2. The requirement of concurrent action by the General Convention and the Board of Trustees of the General Theological Seminary necessitates a delay of up to three (3) years in amending the Seminary's Constitution.
3. The current size of the Board of Trustees is unwieldy and makes the nimbleness needed for effective governance difficult.
4. There is no clear way to identify vision and outline concerns between entities, which inhibits the wider church in providing guidance and support to the General Theological Seminary.
5. The General Convention provides no funding or resources to assist the General Theological Seminary.
6. There is no vehicle to provide the General Theological Seminary access to and collaboration with the wider Episcopal Church, its vision and mission.
7. Although a number of bishops sit on the Board of Trustees of the General Theological Seminary, there is no established vehicle for the General Theological Seminary to communicate with the House of Bishops, whose members are ultimately responsible for the form and focus of residential theological formation.
8. There is no required reporting, which would provide information about the status of the General Theological Seminary to the General Convention.

9. There is no established means of input from the General Theological Seminary on theological education and training as it is undergoing evolution throughout the Episcopal Church, including new models of local, regional, online and residential formation.

Potential benefits of an improved relationship between the General Convention and the General Theological Seminary could include:

1. Clear buy-in from the Episcopal Church on the success and challenges of the General Theological Seminary.
2. Eliminating isolation of the General Theological Seminary as it confronts challenges in the execution of its mission.
3. All seminaries could benefit from a relationship with the General Convention. The General Convention and seminaries could partner on issues of theological education and residential formation. Similar relationships exist in most other mainline denominations. Resources of the Church could then be utilized at the seminary and diocesan level to achieve the greatest impact and develop diversity and theological voice.
4. The current seminary system in the Episcopal Church faces challenges: rising costs, dwindling enrollment, and the feasibility of the three (3) year residential model. This causes a competitive rather than a collaborative environment. Clear communication, accountability, and shared resources could strengthen the Church's ability to face these challenges in the 21st century.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the mandate of D075, the input of a variety of constituents from throughout the Episcopal Church, and time in discernment and contemplation, the Committee makes the following recommendations regarding the relationship of the General Convention and the General Theological Seminary:

1. Reduce the number of General Convention-elected trustees to the General Theological Seminary Board from two (2) bishops, two (2) presbyters and two (2) laypersons to one (1) bishop, one (1) presbyter, and one (1) layperson.
2. Adopt a resolution to amend Article III of the Constitution of the General Theological Seminary reducing the size of the Board of Trustees overall. General Seminary's board is currently one of the largest among Episcopal seminaries.
3. Require the General Theological Seminary Trustees elected by the General Convention to report to the Executive Council annually, to improve communication and accountability to the body that elected them.
4. Require the President and Dean of the General Theological Seminary to report to Executive Council annually, to improve relationships and assist in developing overall ownership of the success of the

General Theological Seminary and vision of inclusion whereby the General Theological Seminary becomes fully part of the overall Episcopal Church.

5. Create a mechanism to enable integration of the work of the General Convention and the General Theological Seminary, whether it is oversight or some other formalized relationship.

THE COMMITTEE ALSO MAKES THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING THE GENERAL CONVENTION AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH ALL SEMINARIES AND OVERALL SUPPORT OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

1. Create a Standing Committee on Theological Education.
2. Create a position of Staff Officer for Theological Education.
3. Establish relationships between the General Convention and all Episcopal seminaries, which would include annual meetings with and reports to Executive Council by board members and deans of seminaries.
4. Establish a budgetary line item that supports theological education in all Episcopal seminaries, to be discussed, supported and incorporated into the overall budget of the Episcopal Church.
5. Implement the attached Resolution.

Summary: The Episcopal Church/the General Convention should coordinate their efforts to assure mutual accountability with established seminaries and emerging theological formation programs, including staffing, reporting, funding, development and implementation of a common vision.

Proposed Resolution

Resolution A007 Proposing the Establishment of a Committee to Study the Relationship of Episcopal Seminaries with the General Convention, One Another and the Wider Church

Whereas, as we move into a time of evangelization and clarification in our branch of The Jesus Movement, having a coherent vision and mission for all seminaries will help strengthen the formation and education of lay and ordained leaders. And whereas a coherent vision assumes close working relationships with all seminaries so that we can appropriately steward all available resources to meet the needs of the Church in the 21st century,

Be it *resolved*, That a committee should be formed to carry out an investigation related to this work. This committee would be empowered to study and make specific recommendations regarding the restructuring of the relationship between the General Convention and those leaders engaged in theological formation, including the Episcopal seminaries. Its work would also include:

- Exploring the sharing of resources among the seminaries
- Reviewing the structure and relationship of other judicatories and their seminaries (especially ELCA)

- Consulting with the Association of Theological Schools regarding accreditation
- Surveying Bishops and diocesan Commissions on Ministry to determine their needs for theological education
- Reviewing seminary budgets and curriculum
- Surveying the student bodies to determine size and diversity
- Considering the possibility of elected/appointed representation of the General Convention on seminary boards of trustees
- Providing funding from the General Convention budget to be allocated for the work of seminaries
- Exploring how and where theological education and formation for ordination are being pursued throughout the Episcopal Church beyond its accredited seminaries including the exploration and review of local and alternative formation programs
- Exploring/reviewing theological formation for lay leadership

The committee would report regularly to the Executive Council between conventions and submit a final report to the General Convention 2024. An Interim Report would be provided to General Convention in 2021.

Membership:

The committee would be comprised of: two (2) bishops, two (2) priests/deacons, two (2) lay persons, one (1) dean of students/academic dean, one (1) seminary president, one (1) member of Executive Council and one (1) staff representative/consultant from the Episcopal Church.

Committee Budget:

Much of this committee's work would be carried out through online communications vehicles, however there would be periodic in person meetings. Seminary presidents/deans might meet in person to discuss strategies. Committee members might meet with the boards of Episcopal seminaries and various non-Episcopal seminaries. The committee may also convene a gathering of seminary representatives and students during the triennia.

Budget

Initial Request: \$33,000 per annum.

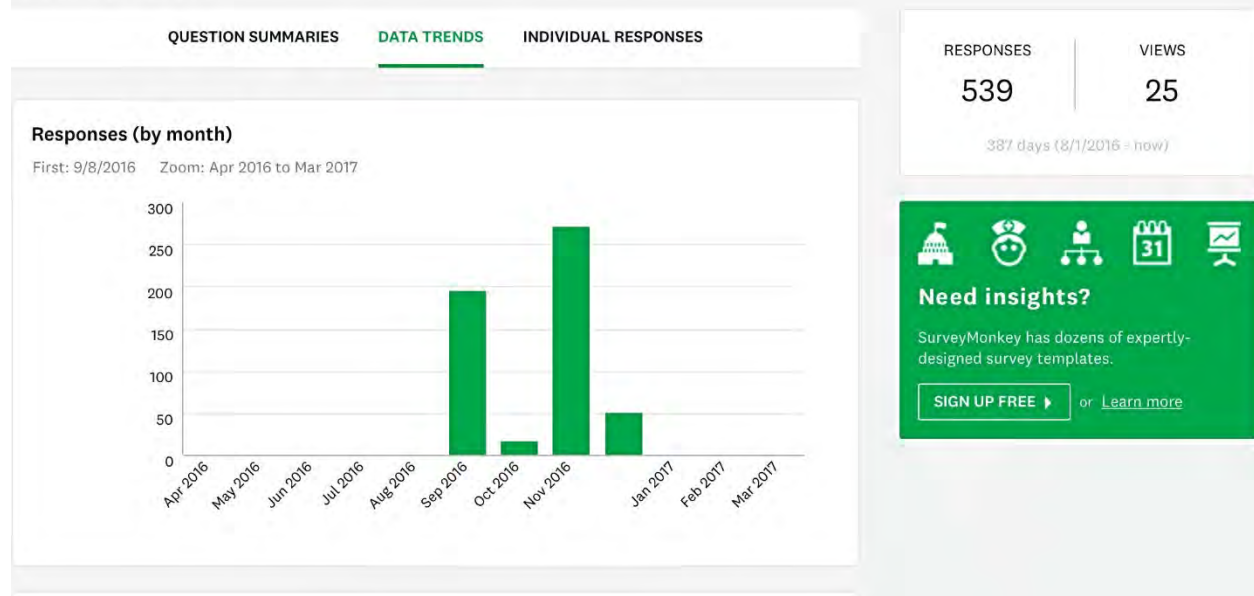
Continuance Recommendation

This committee recommends implementation of a new committee to continue the work identified in our recommendations.

Supplemental Material

The Committee to Study the Relationship of General Seminary and General Convention Online Survey Data - August 1, 2016 to August 1, 2017

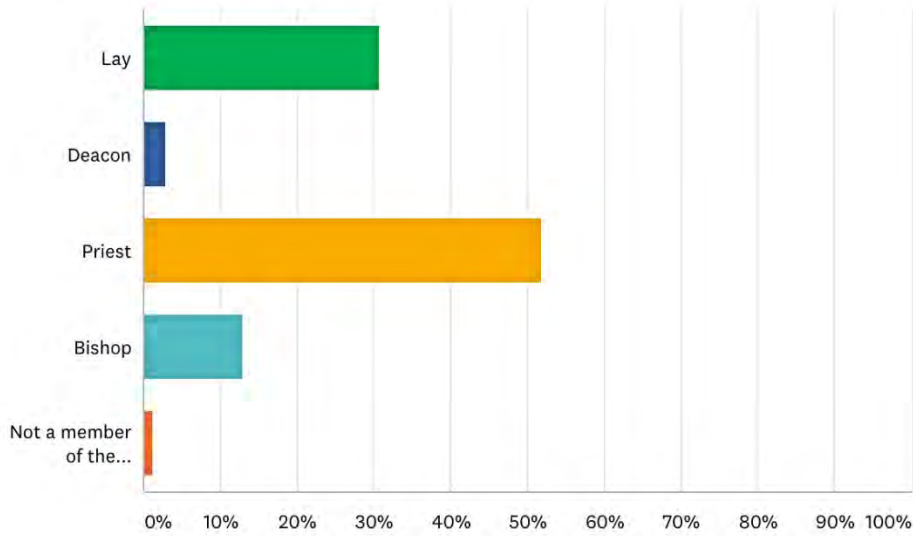
Survey from the Committee to Study the Relationship of General Seminary and General Convention



Q1

What is your ministry status in the Episcopal Church?
(choose one)

Answered: 539 Skipped: 0

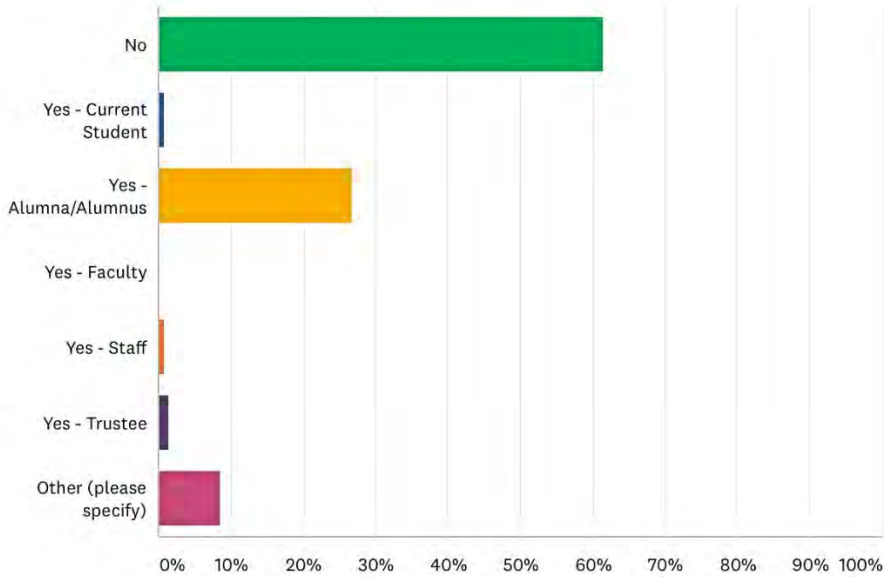


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Lay	30.80%	166
Deacon	2.97%	16
Priest	51.95%	280
Bishop	12.99%	70
Not a member of the Episcopal Church	1.30%	7
TOTAL		539

Q2

Are you a member of the General Seminary community?
(choose one)

Answered: 539 Skipped: 0

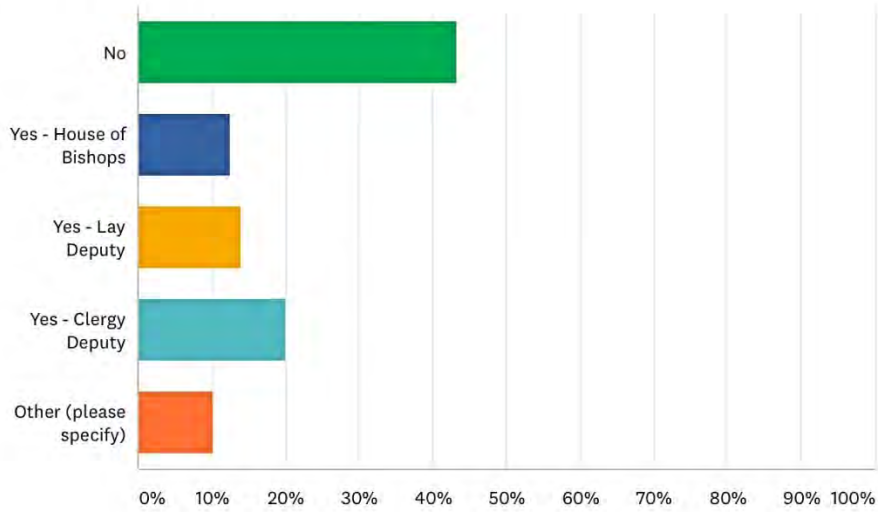


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
No	61.60%	332
Yes - Current Student	0.74%	4
Yes - Alumna/Alumnus	26.72%	144
Yes - Faculty	0.19%	1
Yes - Staff	0.74%	4
Yes - Trustee	1.48%	8
Other (please specify)	Responses 8.53%	46
TOTAL		539

Q3

Are you a member of General Convention? (choose one)

Answered: 539 Skipped: 0

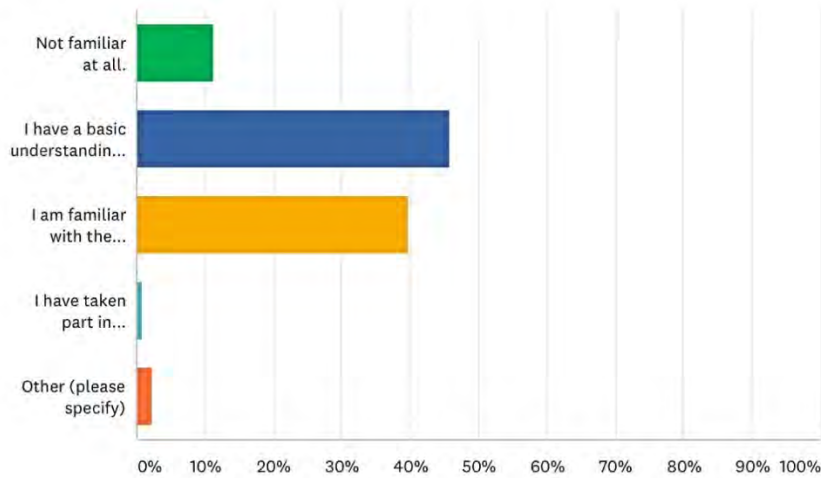


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
No	43.23%	233
Yes - House of Bishops	12.62%	68
Yes - Lay Deputy	13.91%	75
Yes - Clergy Deputy	20.04%	108
Other (please specify)	Responses 10.20%	55
TOTAL		539

Q4

How familiar are you with the historical relationship between General Convention and General Seminary? (choose one)

Answered: 539 Skipped: 0

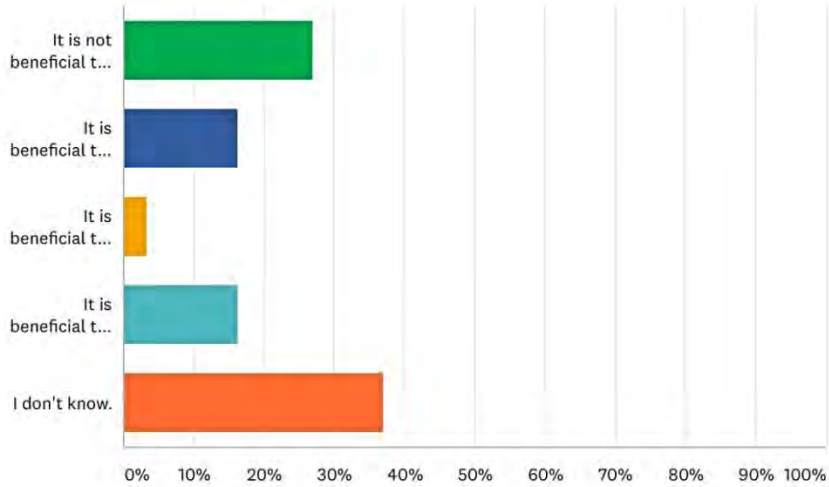


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Not familiar at all.	11.32% 61
I have a basic understanding of how General Seminary was started.	45.83% 247
I am familiar with the Canons/Resolutions of the Episcopal Church and what they say about this relationship.	39.70% 214
I have taken part in drafting/establishing Resolutions pertaining to the ongoing relationship.	0.93% 5
Other (please specify)	Responses 2.23% 12
TOTAL	539

Q5

Do you believe the current relationship between General Seminary and General Convention is beneficial? (choose one)

Answered: 539 Skipped: 0



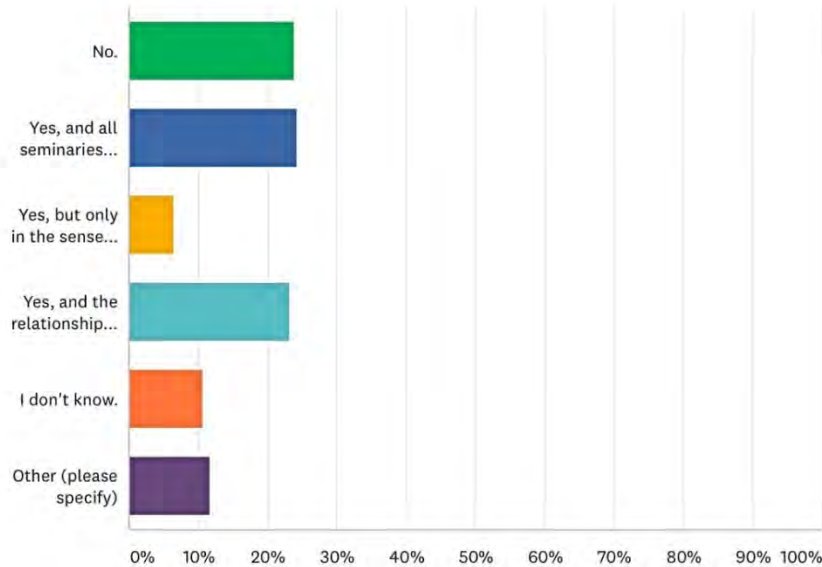
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
It is not beneficial to either General Seminary or General Convention.	26.90%	145
It is beneficial to General Seminary but not to General Convention.	16.33%	88
It is beneficial to General Convention but not to General Seminary.	3.34%	18
It is beneficial to both General Seminary and General Convention.	16.33%	88
I don't know.	37.11%	200
TOTAL		539

Comments (248)

Q6

Do you believe that General Convention and General Seminary should have a formal relationship today?
(choose one)

Answered: 539 Skipped: 0

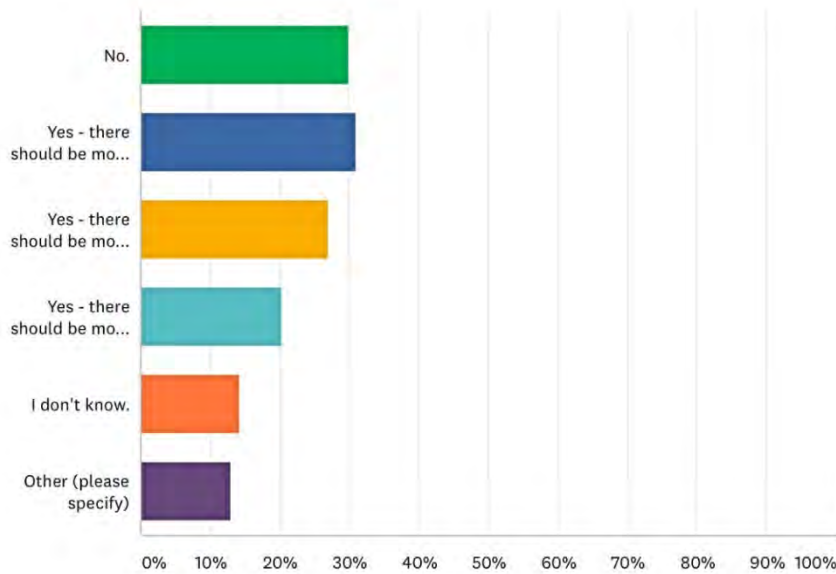


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
No.	23.75% 128
Yes, and all seminaries should have a formal relationship with General Convention.	24.30% 131
Yes, but only in the sense of preserving the unique history between the two.	6.49% 35
Yes, and the relationship should have some sort of accountability from both.	23.19% 125
I don't know.	10.58% 57
Other (please specify)	Responses 11.69% 63
TOTAL	539

Q7

Do you believe the relationship between General Convention and General Seminary should be strengthened? (select all that apply)

Answered: 539 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
No.	29.87%	161
Yes - there should be more accountability between them.	30.98%	167
Yes - there should be more education about the relationship.	27.09%	146
Yes - there should be more oversight by General Convention.	20.22%	109
I don't know.	14.29%	77
Other (please specify)	Responses	12.99% 70
Total Respondents: 539		

Q8

Is there anything else you would like to share about your understanding of the relationship between General Seminary and the General Convention?

All open-ended responses were coded and categorized. Many of the answers simply said ‘No’ or ‘I have nothing else to add’.

Of the substantial responses, the following twenty (20) general statements summarize the majority viewpoints, in descending order:

1. We must look at the broader issue of theological education reform.
2. The General Convention should be in relationship with - and mutually accountable to - to all seminaries.
3. The General Convention should hold the General Theological Seminary accountable for its decisions and questionable actions during the faculty crisis of 2014.
4. The General Theological Seminary needs financial support from the General Convention.
5. The relationship between the General Convention and the General Theological Seminary should end.
6. It would be a loss to the church for the historic relationship between the General Convention and the General Theological Seminary to end.
7. I have no idea what is going on here.
8. The General Theological Seminary needs help returning to a strong, healthy place and the General Convention should give it.
9. There is not a lot that the General Convention can do for the General Theological Seminary.
10. The General Theological Seminary is suffering from years of terrible decision-making and lack of leadership.
11. The General Theological Seminary can and should become a model for the future of theological education.
12. What is the relationship between the General Convention and the General Theological Seminary now?

13. The General Theological Seminary and the Episcopal Church Center (815 Second Avenue in New York) should have merged when they had the chance.
14. I am grieved and heartbroken over what has happened at the General Theological Seminary.
15. The General Theological Seminary needs to broaden its perspective and appeal.
16. When does it mean to be an 'Episcopal' seminary today?
17. What would a mutually beneficial relationship between the General Convention and the General Theological Seminary look like?
18. The relationship between the General Convention and the General Theological Seminary has always been fraught and complicated.
19. There is no actual relationship between the General Convention and the General Theological Seminary.
20. The General Theological Seminary should be closed.

Q9

We may be interested in asking follow-up questions of some people who answer this survey. If you are willing to answer follow-up questions, please provide your name and contact info below. We may not contact everyone who offers information.

Answered: 271 Skipped: 268

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Name	Responses	99.63%	270
Company	Responses	0.00%	0
Address	Responses	0.00%	0
Address 2	Responses	0.00%	0
City/Town	Responses	0.00%	0
State/Province	Responses	0.00%	0
ZIP/Postal Code	Responses	0.00%	0
Country	Responses	0.00%	0
Email Address	Responses	99.26%	269
Phone Number	Responses	90.04%	244

Over two hundred and fifty (250) survey respondents supplied an e-mail addresses or telephone number for follow-up conversation. This far exceeded the ability of the Committee to contact, so a sample was chosen.

In order to choose follow-up recipients, the Committee first considered the demographics of the majority of those who answered the survey: General Convention deputies, priests, and bishops, with some of those categories overlapping. The Committee also considered the demographics of the groups at in-person meetings.

Weighing this data against all survey respondents, the Committee chose a random contact sample from the least well-represented groups: lay people, clergy who are neither Trustees nor alumni of the General Theological Seminary, and those with indirect relationships to the General Theological Seminary such as former students (not alumni) and spouses or other family of students, trustees, staff and faculty. From members of these groups who had offered contact information, the Committee

selected twenty-five (25) and randomly assigned five (5) people to each Committee member for contact.

The vast majority of those contacted (21) did not reply, or simply replied that they had nothing more to say. Those who did respond gave largely the same overall opinions already collected:

1. The General Convention should have a relationship with the General Theological Seminary and so should all seminaries.
2. The relationship between the General Convention and the General Theological Seminary should be strengthened.
3. Theological Education should be explored by the General Convention in a comprehensive manner.
4. There is still a great deal of pain and anger within the Episcopal Church over the events of 2014 at the General Theological Seminary.