



RCMA
EXCLUSIVE SURVEY

THE POWER OF **RELIGIOUS** MEETINGS

Tough economic times have put a damper on faith-based meetings, but RCMA's member survey shows that religious conferences continue to be a strong component of U.S. meetings.

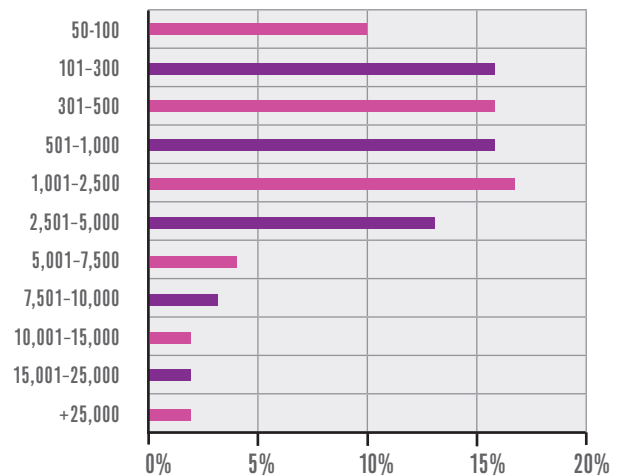
BY REGINA MCGEE

Photo of the 2008 General Assembly courtesy of the United Methodist Church. Photo by John C. Goodwin.

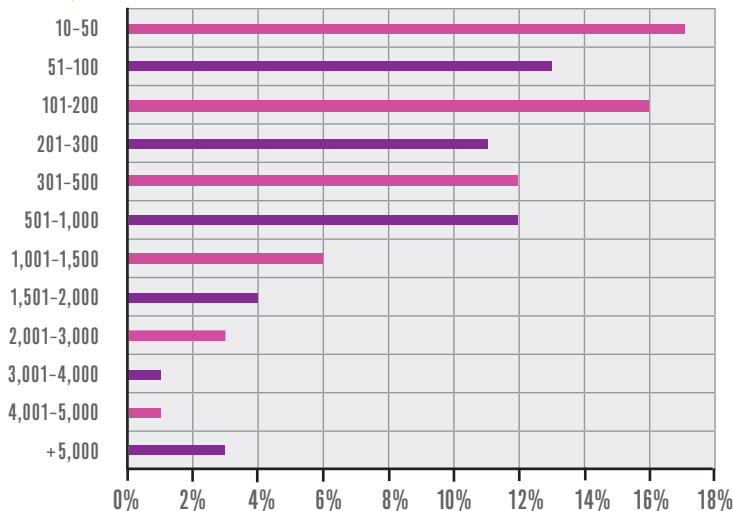
NUMBER OF MEETINGS AND ATTENDANCE

TYPE OF MEETING	# MEETINGS 2010	TOTAL ATTENDANCE 2010
CONVENTION/CONFERENCE	2,921	6,540,703
BOARD	1,783	77,335
COMMITTEE/SEMINAR	3,074	411,573
RETREAT	1,117	265,929
OTHER	1,695	1,026,714
TOTAL	10,590	8,322,254

LARGEST SEATING CAPACITY (NO. OF SEATS)



SLEEPING ROOMS REQUIRED AT LARGEST MEETING (NO. OF ROOMS)



TYPES OF MEETING FACILITIES USED

FACILITY

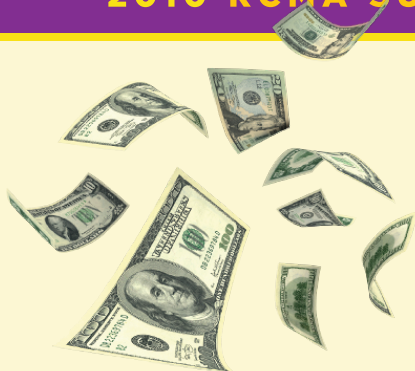
DOWNTOWN HOTEL	18.0%
CONFERENCE CENTER	16.3%
SUBURBAN HOTEL	12.5%
RESORT HOTEL	11.0%
CONVENTION/CIVIC CENTER	11.0%
AIRPORT HOTEL	11.0%
CAMPS/RETREATS	10.4%
COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY	7.5%
CRUISE SHIP	2.2%

More than eight million people attended religious meetings last year, according to the Religious Conference Management Association's newly released annual member survey. While 8 million is a big number—roughly equivalent to the entire population of New Jersey—religious conferences have not escaped the effects of the economic downturn.

"Certainly the economy has taken a toll on meetings," says Dr. DeWayne Woodring, RCMA's executive director. "We are still weathering the effects of the

worst recession since the Great Depression. But the religious meetings market continues to be more consistent and less volatile than corporate meetings and association meetings, which are always much more tied to economic ups and downs."

Indeed, religious conferences represent a significant chunk of the overall meeting activity in the U.S. The recently released "Economic Significance of Meetings to the U.S. Economy," conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers for the Convention Industry



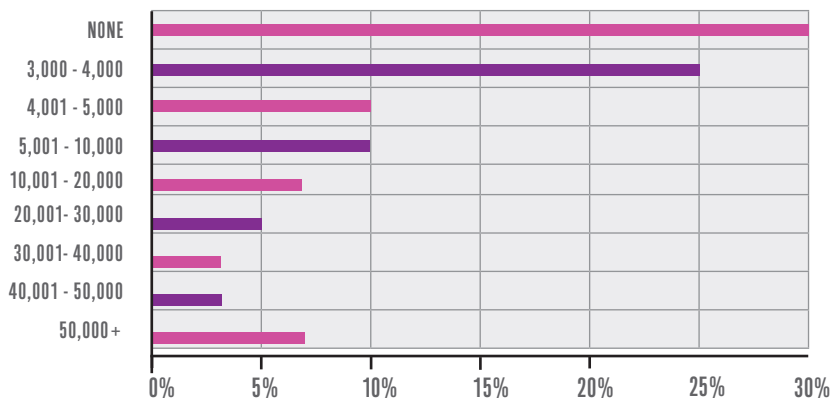
ESTIMATING DELEGATE EXPENDITURES: MORE THAN \$5.6 BILLION

While the annual RCMA member survey does not assess expenditures, it is possible to come up with a ballpark estimate for *delegate* expenditures (which doesn't reflect spending by the meeting sponsor) by using data from the recent Convention Industry Council's "Economic Significance of Meetings to the U.S. Economy." That study found that the average expenditure per convention/conference/congress delegate was \$1,430. This figure would no doubt be too high for average delegate expenditure at religious conferences and conventions, which typically involve a high drive-in attendance, value rates at hotels, and other factors driving a more conservative expenditure per delegate.

The CIC study also showed the "other" category of meetings to have an average \$850 delegate expenditure. Multiplying this lower figure by just the number of convention/conference participants in RCMA's latest survey (6,540,703), you arrive at roughly \$5.6 billion in delegate expenditures at RCMA members' conventions/conferences in 2010. This estimate doesn't account for the many religious meetings involving youth and family at which individual attendee expenditures would be lower than \$850. Still, it does provide a useful ballpark figure for the economic impact of RCMA members' conferences and of the religious conference market overall.



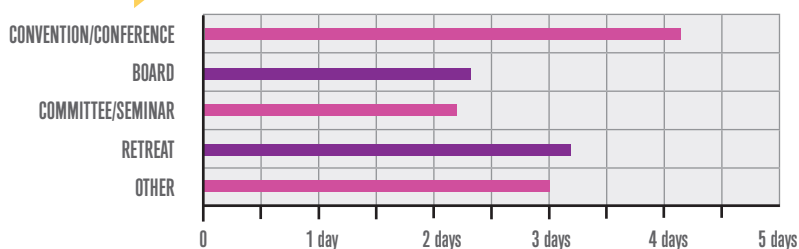
GROSS EXHIBIT SPACE REQUIRED AT LARGEST MEETING (SQUARE FEET)



NEED FOR SUPPLIER SERVICES



AVERAGE DURATION OF MEETINGS



Council, estimated just over 51 million people participated in U.S. conventions/conferences/congresses in 2009. RCMA's 2009 survey found that 8 million people had participated in religious conferences/conventions.

If one combines these two pieces of data, religious conference/convention attendees would likely account for about a sixth of convention attendees in 2009.

"The United States is one of the most religious countries in the

Western world,” Woodring says, “and on the basis of that fact and nothing else, religious meetings of all kinds will remain strong regardless of the economy.”

A SUMMARY OF OTHER KEY FINDINGS:

Downtown hotels were used by 18 percent of respondents, **conference centers** by 16.3 percent, **convention centers** by 11 percent, **college/university** by 7.5 percent, and **resorts** by 11 percent. This is fairly consistent with last year. **Cruise ships** jumped to 2.4 percent from 1.8 percent last year.

69 percent of respondents used 500 or fewer **sleeping rooms** at their largest meeting. This is consistent with previous surveys.

While 30 percent of respondents did not use **exhibit space**, 45 percent required up to 10,000 square feet. Moreover, 7 percent required more than 50,000 square feet.

Nearly 26 percent of respondents said they held meetings **throughout the U.S.**, up from 23.3 percent in 2009. Nearly 17 percent said they held meetings in the **Midwest**, 15.5 percent in the **Southeast**, and 14 percent in the **Northeast**. These figures reflect no significant change in trend line for the last decade.

Of respondents who hold meetings outside the U.S., the largest percentage (23.6) indicated that they held meetings in the **Caribbean**, while 22.2 percent said **Canada**, 15.3 percent said **Latin America**, and the same percent said **Africa**.

Catering and banquet services topped the list of supplier services needed, with 82 percent of respondents indicating they used these services. This continues the strong growth in this area for the religious conference market over the last decade.

Use of **ground transportation and tours** edged up from 57 percent of respondents in the 2009 survey

LOCATIONS WHERE MEETINGS ARE HELD OUTSIDE THE USA

COUNTRY	% Respondents
AFRICA	15.3%
ASIA	5.6%
AUSTRALIA	2.8%
CANADA	22.2%
CARIBBEAN	23.6%
EUROPE	11.1%
LATIN AMERICA	15.3%
MIDDLE EAST	4.2%

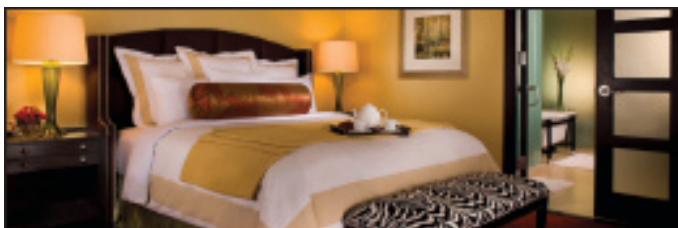
to 60 percent in the 2010 survey.

With 81 percent of respondents indicating they use **audiovisual services**, this category continues to be a strong service need for the religious conference market. n

Editor's Note: If you would like to download a PDF of this article, visit meetingsnet.com and click on Religious Conference Manager.

U.S. LOCATIONS WHERE MEETINGS ARE HELD

REGION	% Respondents
SOUTHEAST	15.5%
MIDWEST	16.9%
THROUGHOUT USA	25.7%
WESTERN	10.8%
NORTHEAST	14.0%
SOUTH CENTRAL	11.7%
OUTSIDE USA	5.4%



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- | The more room nights, the more perks
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