



The Presbyterian Panel

Listening to Presbyterians



SUMMARY

THE MISSION WORK PLAN OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY COUNCIL FINDINGS FROM THE AUGUST 2007 SURVEY

The Presbyterian Panel consists of three nationally representative samples of groups affiliated with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.): members, elders serving on session (lay leaders), and ordained ministers. For most analyses, ministers are split into two groups based on current call: *pastors*, serving congregations, and *specialized clergy*, serving elsewhere. New samples are drawn every three years. These pages summarize major findings from the seventh survey completed by the 2006-2008 Panel, sampled in the fall of 2005.

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OVERVIEW AND FAMILIARITY

Information for Panelists

- ✓ To insure that all panelists had some basic knowledge of the General Assembly Council, the following description was provided at the start of the questionnaire:

The **General Assembly Council**, or **GAC**, is an elected body of 48 individuals that oversees most of the national and international ministries of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The General Assembly Council staff, most of whom work in Louisville or in mission abroad, carry out its ministries and programs—including duties assigned to the General Assembly Council by the General Assembly. To guide the overall work of these staff persons, the General Assembly Council has adopted a Mission Work Plan.

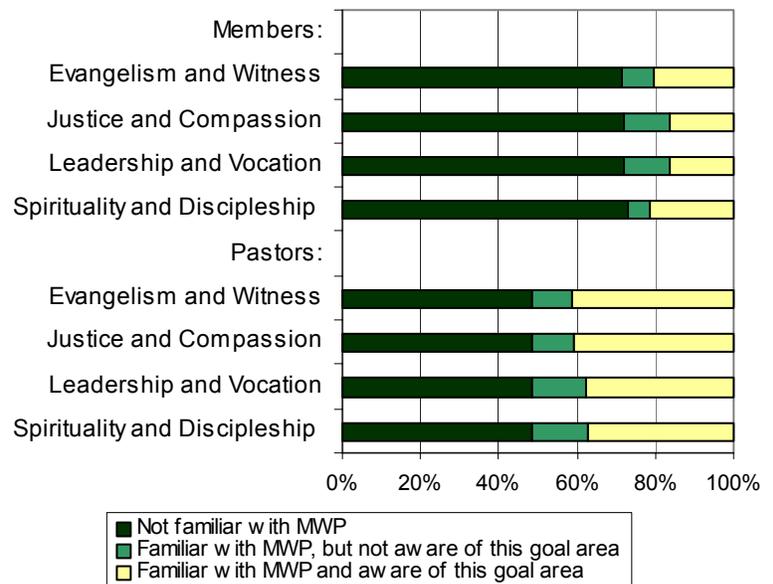
- ✓ Most questions (see pp. 2-3) ask panelists to report, for each goal area, the degree of need in the PC(USA) for several specific tasks or emphases. The exact instructions to panelists for these questions follows:

The General Assembly Council seeks to identify the most important church needs in each priority goal area. Once determined, these needs will guide the Council and its staff in their work with individuals, congregations, and middle governing bodies. To help identify and prioritize church needs, the Council seeks your opinions. Below are lists in each priority goal area of possible needs that have been suggested to the Council. For each one, indicate how great you believe the need is in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), if any, for ministry of this type.

Degree of Familiarity

- ✓ Majorities of members (71%), elders (64%) and specialized clergy (55%), and half of pastors (48%), are “not at all familiar” with the 2007-2008 Mission Work Plan of the General Assembly. Many others are “not too familiar” (18%; 21%; 21%; 23%).
- ✓ Panelists with some familiarity with the Mission Work Plan were asked their awareness of the four goal areas in the plan. In every group for every goal area, majorities in this subset are “aware” or “very aware”:
 - *Evangelism and Witness*—members, 71%; elders, 64%; pastors, 80%; specialized clergy, 84%
 - *Justice and Compassion*—57%; 59%; 78%; 87%
 - *Leadership and Vocation*—57%; 56%; 74%; 79%
 - *Spirituality and Discipleship*—80%; 61%; 72%; 81%

Figure 1. Familiarity with the Mission Work Plan and Awareness of Its Goal Areas



EVANGELISM AND WITNESS

Rating Church Needs in this Goal Area

- ✓ Asked the need in the PC(USA) for each of ten evangelism and witness ministries, the response totals for “very great need” and “great need,” from highest to lowest based on members’ responses, are:
 - Developing vibrant, healthy congregations (members, 77%; elders, 82%; pastors, 91%; specialized clergy, 81%)
 - Helping people invite others into the life of Christ (66%; 72%; 81%; 64%)
 - Helping equip presbyteries, congregations, and individuals to share the gospel with those who have no church affiliation (60%; 69%; 76%; 62%)
 - Helping to bring people into community (58%; 65%; 75%; 66%)
 - Helping members see that they have a call from God to Christian witness in society and the church (50%; 58%; 76%; 72%)
 - Helping people become more comfortable with articulating their own faith story (49%; 58%; 79%; 66%)
 - Supporting the sending out of people to do mission (45%; 48%; 62%; 51%)
 - Supporting efforts to develop congregations that reflect the multicultural makeup of our society (41%; 46%; 50%; 58%)

- Helping people communicate what being Presbyterian “is all about” (37%; 46%; 45%; 54%)
- Supporting new congregations in the U.S. that reach out to immigrant populations (34%; 43%; 62%; 58%)

Ranking Church Needs in this Goal Area

- ✓ Asked the most- and second-most-important church needs from the same list, the combined top choices are:

Table 1. Most Important Needs, Evangelism and Witness

	M	E	P	SC
Developing vibrant, healthy congregations	46%	42%	46%	40%
Helping equip presbyteries, congregations, and individuals to share the good news of the gospel with those who have no church affiliation	26%	29%	27%	20%
Helping people invite others into the life of Christ	24%	27%	34%	23%
Helping bring people into community ..	24%	25%	17%	22%
Helping members see they have a call from God to Christian witness in society and the church	23%	21%	22%	21%

JUSTICE AND COMPASSION

Rating Church Needs in this Goal Area

- ✓ Asked the need in the PC(USA) for each of ten justice and compassion ministries, the response totals for “very great need” and “great need,” from highest to lowest based on members’ responses, are:
 - Preserving the environment as God’s creation (members, 53%; elders, 57%; pastors, 59%; specialized clergy, 70%)
 - Increasing awareness of non-violent options for conflict resolution, and of the skills needed to make use of them (52%; 50%; 53%; 70%)
 - Encouraging and supporting efforts to address the underlying causes of poverty (51%; 50%; 59%; 68%)
 - Supporting emergency relief operations (disaster assistance) (49%; 59%; 71%; 64%)
 - Improving people’s quality of life and well-being (48%; 45%; 45%; 52%)
 - Supporting efforts of people who are already taking steps to improve their social and economic situation (43%; 45%; 49%; 56%)
 - Providing opportunities for people to be involved in ministries of compassion and justice (38%; 43%; 58%; 68%)
 - Building networks that support justice and compassion ministries (31%; 39%; 42%; 52%)

- Helping people to discern matters of injustice in the world (31%; 33%; 42%; 58%)
- Sharing knowledge about what Presbyterians are doing in the area of justice and compassion (29%; 36%; 33%; 41%)

Ranking Church Needs in this Goal Area

- ✓ Asked the most- and second-most-important church needs from the same list, the combined top choices are:

Table 2. Most Important Needs, Justice and Compassion

	M	E	P	SC
Supporting emergency relief operations (disaster assistance)	30%	31%	43%	26%
Preserving the environment as God’s creation	26%	26%	23%	22%
Increasing awareness of non-violent options for conflict resolution	26%	24%	20%	26%
Encouraging and supporting efforts to address the causes of poverty ..	22%	20%	26%	27%
Providing opportunities for people to be involved in ministries of justice and compassion	20%	22%	31%	31%

LEADERSHIP AND VOCATION

Rating Church Needs in this Goal Area

- ✓ Asked the need in the PC(USA) for each of 16 leadership and vocation ministries, response totals for “very great need” and “great need,” from highest to lowest based on members’ responses, are:
 - Attracting competent and highly motivated church professionals (members, 61%; elders, 69%; pastors, 65%; specialized clergy, 70%)
 - Helping churches find pastors (57%; 67%; 63%; 57%)
 - Helping members understand that, whatever their vocation, it is a call from God (48%; 50%; 63%; 59%)
 - Helping small congregations (47%; 64%; 60%; 57%)
 - Providing support and coaching for church professionals (46%; 55%; 51%; 51%)
 - Helping to ensure the relevance of theological education for church professionals (44%; 49%; 53%; 55%)
 - Providing elder, deacon training (43%; 42%; 54%; 58%)
 - Offering ministers opportunities and resources for continuing education (43%; 38%; 44%; 45%)
 - Creating new-member resources on benefits, expectations of church membership (41%; 49%; 46%; 41%)
 - Providing opportunities for leadership development among ministers and laity (41%; 48%; 52%; 51%)
 - Supporting opportunities for leadership by women (41%; 37%; 31%; 46%)

- Supporting education among racial-ethnic populations (34%; 32%; 35%; 49%)
- Supporting opportunities for skills development, such as mentoring (33%; 34%; 30%; 34%)
- Developing church leaders from under-represented populations (e.g., immigrants) (31%; 33%; 41%; 52%)
- Helping Presbyterians discern whether they have a call from God to serve as ministers (30%; 37%; 37%; 39%)
- Sending mission workers/missionaries to other countries (29%; 35%; 50%; 44%)

Ranking Church Needs in this Goal Area

- ✓ Asked the most- and second-most-important church needs from the same list, the combined top choices are:

Table 3. Most Important Needs, Leadership and Vocation

	M	E	P	SC
Attracting competent and highly motivated church professionals	30%	29%	19%	23%
Proving deacon, elder training	21%	19%	18%	15%
Helping members understand that their vocation is a call from God ...	18%	17%	25%	22%
Helping small congregations	18%	26%	21%	19%
Supporting leadership development	16%	18%	19%	18%

SPIRITUALITY AND DISCIPLESHIP

Rating Church Needs in this Goal Area

- ✓ Asked the need in the PC(USA) for each of 12 spirituality and discipleship ministries, the response totals for “very great need” and “great need,” from highest to lowest based on members’ responses, are:
 - Reaching college students and young adults (members, 73%; elders, 78%; pastors, 75%; specialized clergy, 68%)
 - Helping families of all types to identify and resist destructive pressures and temptations in society (61%; 66%; 63%; 60%)
 - Strengthening Christian education (59%; 63%; 63%; 61%)
 - Supporting military chaplains in their work with young adults (52%; 58%; 38%; 39%)
 - Providing resources to help strengthen faith practices (e.g., Bible reading, prayer) (47%; 55%; 61%; 49%)
 - Educating members to be exemplary citizens who are not only concerned with rights, but also accepting of their responsibilities (46%; 44%; 47%; 51%)
 - Articulating our faith theologically (41%; 45%; 59%; 60%)
 - Educating Presbyterians about stewardship (38%; 45%; 59%; 48%)
 - Interpreting our Reformed identity as Presbyterians (34%; 36%; 50%; 55%)

- Providing resources for individual spiritual discernment (32%; 34%; 44%; 39%)
- Providing help in the discernment of spiritual gifts (30%; 36%; 47%; 40%)
- Developing spirituality and discipleship materials for immigrants to the United States who speak other languages (28%; 32%; 35%; 44%)

Ranking Church Needs in this Goal Area

- ✓ Asked the most- and second-most-important church needs from the same list, the combined top choices are:

Table 4. Most Important Needs, Spirituality and Discipleship

	M	E	P	SC
Helping families of all types identify and resist destructive pressures and temptations in society	40%	32%	26%	26%
Strengthening Christian education	31%	30%	24%	23%
Reaching colleges students and young adults	26%	26%	26%	23%
Providing resources to help strengthen faith practices	21%	25%	29%	19%
Educating members to be exemplary citizens concerned with their rights and accepting their responsibilities ..	20%	18%	12%	27%

COMPARATIVE FINDINGS

Overall Ratings

- ✓ Large majorities rate each of the 48 needs as a moderate or greater need. The highest total of less-than-moderate responses is 21% (elders, for “helping people discern matters of injustice in the world,” and members, for “sharing knowledge about what Presbyterians are doing in the area of justice and compassion”).

Selected Comparisons within Goal Areas

- ✓ On average, panelists rate:
 - Creating healthy congregations as a greater need than helping people become witnesses to their faith (Evangelism and Witness).
 - Activities that directly address problems as a greater need than activities that inform or connect people on such issues (Justice and Compassion).
 - The need for attracting competent church professionals as a greater need than training or resourcing those already serving (Leadership and Vocation).
 - Needs containing the word “spiritual” or “spirituality” among the lowest of any in the goal area with that name (Spirituality and Discipleship).

Selected Comparisons between Goal Areas

- ✓ Needs that specifically mention Presbyterians (e.g., “helping communicate what being Presbyterian ‘is all about’”) receive relatively low ratings.
- ✓ Needs concerning racial-ethnic and immigrant populations receive relatively low ratings.

Selected Comparisons between Panel Groups

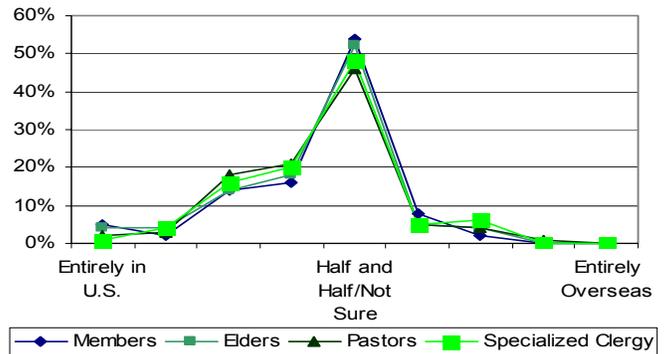
- ✓ For most needs, the average rating of ministers is greater than the average rating of members or elders.

- ✓ For most needs, the average rating of pastors is greater than that of specialized clergy. The major exception is for Justice and Compassion. Of the ten needs in this goal area, only “supporting emergency relief” received a greater rating from pastors than specialized clergy.

National or International?

- ✓ A final question reminded panelists that the work of the General Assembly Council “takes place in the United States as well as internationally,” then asked: “Would you like to see the Council do mission entirely in the U.S., entirely in other countries, or some combination of both?” With 1=entirely in the U.S. and 9=entirely in other countries, the median response is the midpoint, 5 (“half in U.S., half in other countries”) for all groups.
- ✓ Few panelists would like all General Assembly Council mission done either entirely in the U.S. (5% or less) or entirely abroad (0.5% or less). Instead, most want a balance, although many want that balance tipped slightly in favor of domestic mission.

Figure 2. Funding Priorities: National, International, or Somewhere In-Between



	Members	Elders	Ordained Ministers
Number of surveys mailed.....	989	1,090	1,408
Number returned.....	340	476	707‡
Response rate	34%	43%	50%

‡Of the 707 returned surveys, 476 came from pastors and 231 from specialized clergy

The survey was mailed on August 20, 2007, with returns accepted through mid-October 2007. Results are subject to sampling and other errors. Small differences should be interpreted cautiously. As a general rule, differences of less than 8% between samples are not statistically meaningful.

For more numbers and interpretation of these results, a longer report with more charts is available for free on the Web (www.pcusa.org/research/panel) or for \$15 from PDS (1-800-524-2612; order PDS# 02056-07296. It includes tables showing percentage responses to each survey question separately for members, elders, pastors, and specialized clergy.

For more information on the 2007-2008 Mission Work Plan of the General Assembly Council, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), go to www.pcusa.org/gac/resources/mission_work_plan_07-08.pdf.

LISTENING TO PRESBYTERIANS SINCE 1973
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