



# The Presbyterian Panel

*Listening to Presbyterians*



**REPORT**

## LANGUAGE AND GOD—THE FEBRUARY 1999 SURVEY

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## HIGHLIGHTS

- ✓ The most widely and strongly held images of God include “Creator,” “Redeemer,” “Father,” and “Healer.”
- ✓ Almost all lay panelists and half of clerical panelists *agree* that “as a child I pictured God to be of male gender.”
- ✓ Among clergy, men are more likely than women to view God as “Father,” but among laity the opposite is true.
- ✓ Few congregations have official policies on gender and language about God for use in worship.
- ✓ Majorities of panelists believe that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) should *not* have a general policy on the use of gender in language about God. At the same time, most members and elders, and a quarter of both clergy groups, have no familiarity at all with the policy in this area adopted by the General Assembly in the 1980s.
- ✓ Most pastors report that use of gender-neutral terms for God is encouraged in worship in their congregations, although a majority also report that, more often than not, male terms for God are more common than female.
- ✓ Many traditional worship elements that use male terms for God, such as the Lord’s Prayer and the Gloria Patri, are frequently found in Presbyterian services, and very few pastors report ever omitting them from worship because of their male references to God.
- ✓ A comparison with 1984 shows some small changes in worship practice toward greater use of gender-inclusive language, at least in the estimation of pastors.
- ✓ Nine in ten lay panelists and around one-half of clerical ones address God as “Father” in their personal prayers either *always* or *often*.
- ✓ Most panelists prefer gender-neutral language when broad reference is made to the people of God.
- ✓ In Bible translations, large majorities of members and elders prefer that male terms for God and male collective nouns for the people of God keep the male gender when translated. Pastors and specialized clergy are more open to translations that use gender-neutral or gender-inclusive language in these instances, especially when the reference is to the people of God.
- ✓ Large majorities in all Panel groups prefer the conventional, male (“Father”) language for God in the Lord’s Prayer. Similarly large majorities of members, elders, and pastors favor the conventional, male (“Father, Son, Holy Spirit”) language for God as Trinity in the baptismal service. However, a majority of specialized clergy favor a shift to gender-neutral language.
- ✓ Few laity feel either *more included* or *less included* in worship when male terms are used for God. However, a quarter of pastors and a third of specialized clergy report feeling *more included* when gender-neutral terms are used in reference to God.
- ✓ Laymen and laywomen typically hold similar views on gender and language about God, but among the clergy, women are much more supportive than men of the use of gender-neutral language about God.
- ✓ Few members and elders but large majorities of clergy rate the issue of gender and language about God as *important* or *very important* to them personally.
- ✓ Among clergy, older women are somewhat more likely than younger women to favor the use of gender-neutral language in reference to God.

## OVERVIEW

The Presbyterian Panel consists of three nationally-representative samples of groups affiliated with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.): members, elders (lay leaders), and ordained ministers (for analysis, split into two groups based on current call: *pastors*, serving in a congregation; and *specialized clergy*, serving elsewhere). New samples are drawn every three years.

These pages summarize major findings from the tenth survey completed by the 1997-1999 Panel, mailed in February 1999 (with returns accepted through March 1999). The first half uses text and graphics to highlight important and useful findings. An appendix follows with comparative tables that display the percentage distribution of responses to every question for each of the four Panel groups.

Response rates for this survey are: members, 66%; elders, 69%; pastors, 74%. Results are subject to sampling and other errors. As a general rule, differences of less than 6% are not statistically meaningful.

In this report, the term *median* refers to the middle number in an ordered distribution. For example, the median age for a group of people aged 12, 21, 28, 35, and 64 years would be 28 years. The term *mean* refers to the mathematical average of values in a distribution; in the example, the mean age would be calculated as:  $(12+21+28+35+64)/5$ , or 32 years.

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### **Sponsor:**

This survey was requested by the Advocacy Committee on Women's Concerns (ACWC) at the 210<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (1998), and upon approval, referred to the offices of Theology and Worship and Research Services, General Assembly Council, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) For more information on Theology and Worship and its services and programs, contact Charles Wiley at 1-888-728-7228, extension 5347. For more information on ACWC, contact Unzu Lee at 1-888-728-7228 extension 5403.

### **Additional Copies:**

Additional copies of this *Report* may be purchased for \$5 from PDS—call 800-524-2612 and request item number 65100-99259. Copies of a four-page *Summary* of results are available for \$1.25 each directly from Research Services. Call for information on quantity discounts: 1-888-728-7228, extension 5139.

### **Panel on the Web:**

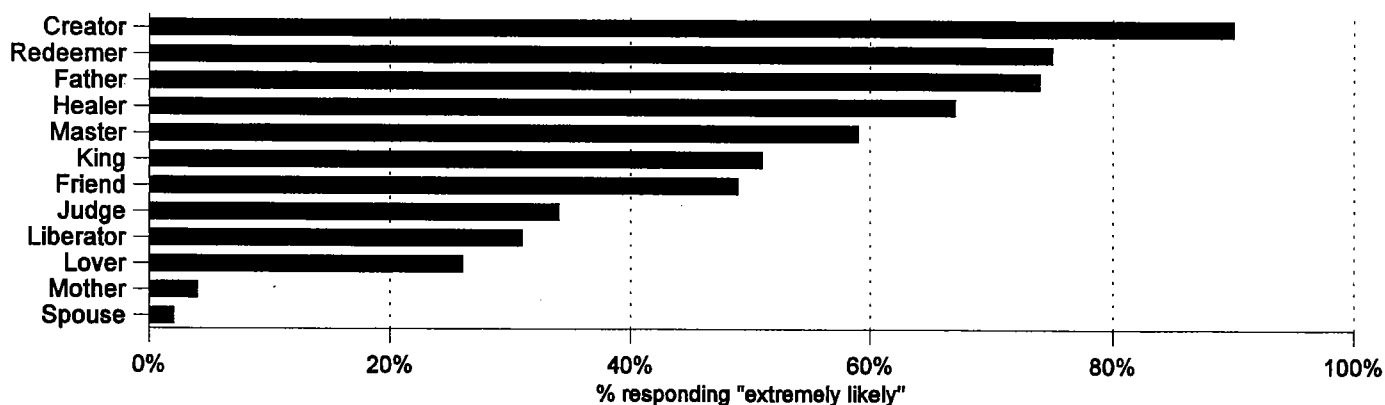
A catalogue of Panel topics, and *Summaries* of recent surveys, are available on-line at the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) web site: <<http://www.pcusa.org>>. Use the A to Z topic list to select *Presbyterian Panel*. Or select *Research Services* to learn more about our work.

## IMAGES OF GOD

### Picturing God

- ✓ The most widely and strongly held images of God include “Creator,” “Redeemer,” “Father,” and “Healer.” Around 90% in every sample are *extremely likely* to have the image of “Creator” come to mind when they think about God; three in four, the image of “Redeemer”; and two in three, the image of “Healer.” Around three in four members and elders imagine God as “Father,” compared to one in two ordained ministers.

Figure 1  
Images of God Held by Members



- ✓ Of the 12 images for God listed, the image least likely to come to mind in every sample is “Spouse,” described as *not too likely* or *not at all likely* to come to mind by 89% of members and 92% of the other three groups.
- ✓ Ministers and laity hold similar images of God in similar proportions, with two partial exceptions: clergy are somewhat more likely than laity to imagine God as “Mother” (e.g., 38% of pastors and 16% of elders are *likely* or *very likely* to have this image) and as “Lover” (73% and 44%, respectively).

### Male and Female Images

- ✓ Imagining God as “Father” is reported as *extremely likely* or *likely* by large majorities in all samples, ranging from 89% (pastors) and 84% (specialized ministers) among the clergy to 94% among both groups of laity. Corresponding percentages imagining God as “Mother” are 46% among specialized clergy, 38% among pastors, 16% among elders, and 13% among members.
- ✓ Few panelists—but twice as many laity (members, 24%; elders, 18%) as clergy (pastors, 10%; specialized clergy, 8%)—*agree* that they “sometimes imagine God as a powerful old man with a white beard.” Almost all laity (members, 94%; elders, 92%) and large majorities of ordained ministers (specialized clergy, 76%; pastors, 72%) *agree* that “as a child I pictured God to be of male gender.”
- ✓ Similarly, nine in ten lay panelists, and half of clerical panelists, *agree* that “using male terms to refer to God seems natural to me.”
- ✓ Only one in nine clergy but around one-half of both members and elders *agree* that “God is best understood in masculine terms.” Consistently, few members (13%) and elders (16%) *agree* that “the Bible contains many female images of God,” but most pastors (78%) and specialized clergy (73%) *agree* with this statement.
- ✓ Overall, around two in every three members and elders, and more than nine in ten ordained ministers, *agree* that “God is beyond gender . . . God is neither female nor male.”

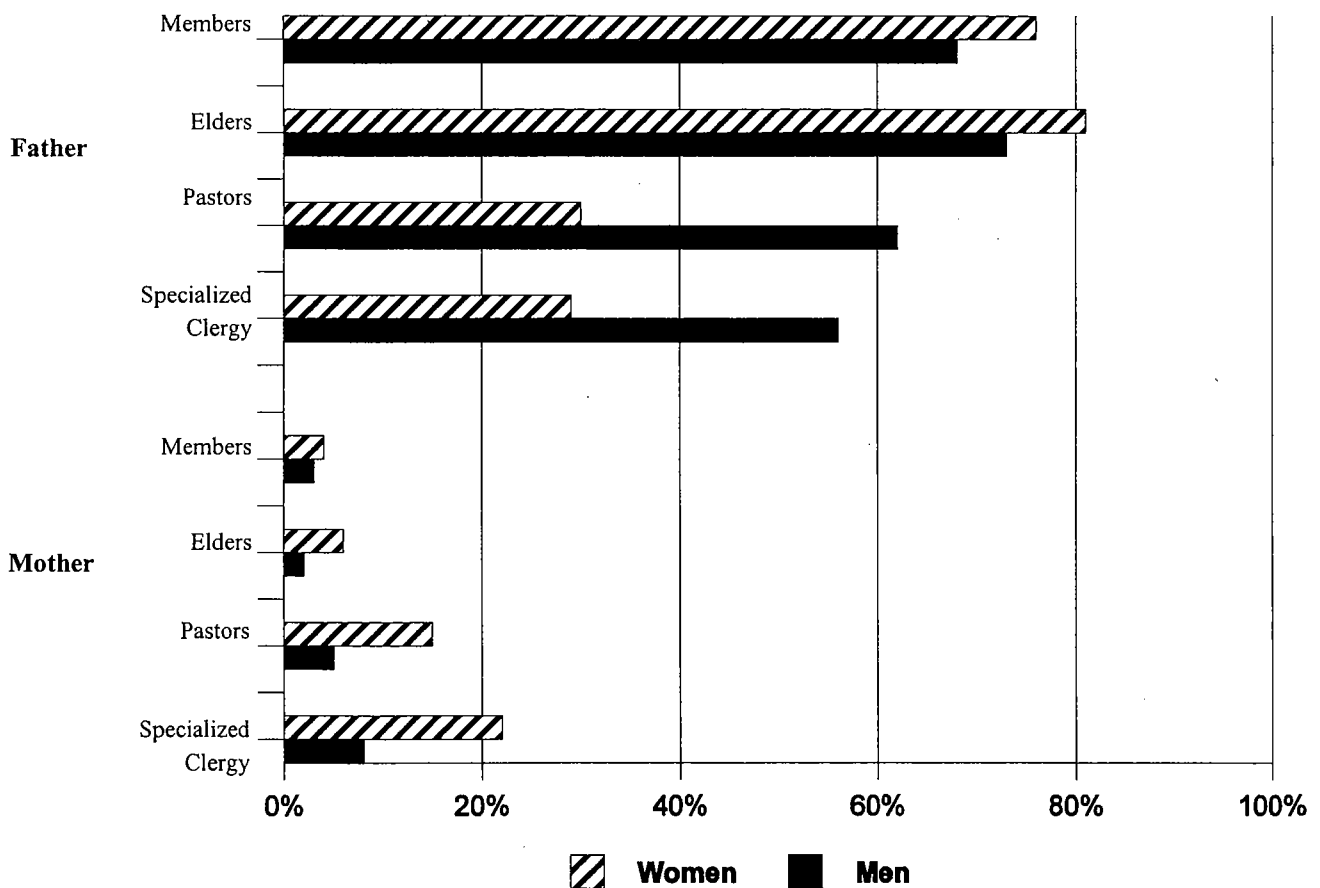
## IMAGES OF GOD

- ✓ Among the laity, level of formal education is related to images of God. The *more* schooling one has completed, the more he or she is likely to *agree* that “God is beyond gender” (e.g., 79% of members with a graduate degree, but only 47% of those with a high school education or less, *agree* with this statement). The *less* schooling one has completed, the more he or she is likely to *agree* that “God is best understood in masculine terms” (i.e., 72% of members with a high school education *agree*, compared to 38% of members with a graduate degree).

### How One’s Own Gender Affects Images of God

Most Presbyterians may believe that “God is neither male nor female,” but many of us still picture God using words with strong gender connotations, particularly *Father*. Not surprisingly, whether or not we view God as *Father* depends in part on our own gender. But it sometimes gets even more complicated, as the figure shows. Among laity, more women than men view God as *Father*; among ministers, more men than women view God as *Father*. In this case, gender affects images of God, but how it does so depends strongly on the nature of one’s relationship to the church (i.e., laity or clergy). For the image *Mother*, a different pattern emerges, with few panelists, but more women than men in every sample, *extremely likely* to view God as *Mother*. In this case, gender affects images of God similarly in all samples, but the size of the effect varies between laity and clergy.

**Figure 2**  
**Differences in Images of God Held by Men and Women, by Sample**



## Policies

- ✓ Few congregations “have an official policy, approved by the session, encouraging the use of ‘gender-neutral’ or ‘gender-inclusive’ terms in worship when referring to God.” Only 5% of pastors report the existence of such a policy.
- ✓ Majorities in three of the four samples believe that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) should *not* have “a general policy on what gender-related language is appropriate when Presbyterians refer to God”: 53% of members, 60% of elders, 64% of pastors, and 47% of specialized clergy express this view. At the same time, 31% of members, 26% of elders, 29% of pastors, and 41% of specialized clergy believe that the PCUSA *should* have such a general policy.
- ✓ Current policy on gender and language is based on a set of recommendations approved by the General Assembly in the mid-1980s, “Definitions and Guidelines on Inclusive Language.” Large majorities of members (75%) and elders (65%) are *not at all familiar* with this set of guidelines, and most of the rest *have heard of it, but don’t know any of the details*. Only 3% of members and 5% of elders report that they are either *generally familiar* or *very familiar* with the recommendations.
- ✓ Four in ten pastors (39%) and one in three specialized clergy (35%) are either *generally familiar* or *very familiar* with the set of guidelines on language about God and language about the church approved by the General Assembly in the 1980s. However, similar percentages (pastors, 39%; specialized clergy, 44%) respond either *not at all familiar* or *have heard of it, but don’t know any of the details*.

## Congregational Practices

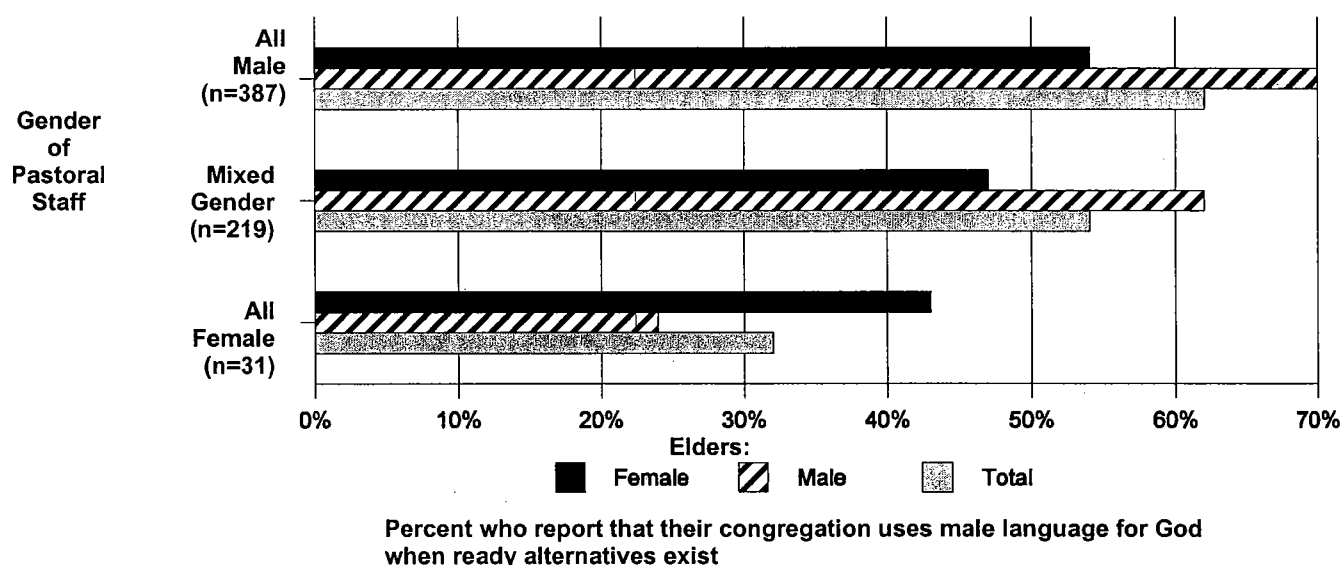
- ✓ According to majorities of pastors, it is “general practice . . . for worship services” at their church to:
  - avoid the use of “She,” “Her,” “Hers,” and other female pronouns when referring to God (78% of pastors so report)
  - refer to God more often with words that describe men than with words that describe women (62% of pastors so report, although only half as many, 33%, report that it is their congregation’s practice “to refer to God with words that describe men, even when widely-accepted gender-inclusive or gender-neutral options are available”).
  - encourage the use of gender-neutral terms for God (62% of pastors so report).
- ✓ Around one-half of pastors report that, in general, worship at their church involves:
  - avoiding the use of “He,” “Him,” “His,” and other male pronouns when referring to God (50% of pastors so report)
  - balancing male images of God with female images of God (49% of pastors so report).
- ✓ Majorities of pastors report that, at least occasionally during worship, the person reading Scripture will substitute “God” or another more gender-inclusive noun when the printed text uses a male pronoun such as “He” to refer to God. However, only one in five pastors report that such substitution occurs *always* (3%) or *almost always* (17%).

### Congregational Practices and the Perception of Those Practices

Because men and women, especially among the clergy, have different perspectives on gender and language issues, we would expect that worship practices in this regard would differ between churches depending on the gender of the pastor. And that is indeed the case, as Figure 3 shows, based on the responses of elders. In congregations with an exclusively-male pastoral staff, 80% of elders report that “it is the general practice . . . for worship services to refer to God with words that describe men, even when widely-accepted gender-inclusive or gender-neutral options are available.” The corresponding percentage response in congregations with an exclusively-female pastoral staff is 64%.

But Figure 3 also shows how the nature of the respondents themselves can affect how they perceive language practices in congregations. When we look separately at the responses of male elders and female elders, we obtain very different patterns of response. Interestingly, *male* elders seem to be especially aware of the practice of gender-inclusive language in those congregations with all-female pastoral staffs. While more female elders see routine use of male images for God in male-led congregations than in female-led ones, the differences are relatively small (54% compared to 43%).

**Figure 3**  
**Elders’ Perceptions of Language Practices**  
**in Worship, by Their Gender and the Gender of the Pastor(s)**



- ✓ Two-thirds of pastors *never* use the “Inclusive Language Lectionary” when they read aloud from the Bible during worship, and another 15% do so only *rarely*. At the other extreme, 4% read from this lectionary *always* and 5% do so *often*.
- ✓ Almost all congregations represented by panelists pray the Lord’s Prayer during worship at least occasionally, and most (93%, according to pastors) do so weekly. Almost without exception, these congregations use the conventional wording, “Our Father [who art] in heaven,” to begin the prayer. Only 2% modify the wording to make it more gender inclusive, primarily by substituting a gender-neutral word (e.g., “Creator”) for “Father.”

## LANGUAGE ABOUT GOD: POLICY AND PRACTICE

- ✓ The Doxology and the Gloria Patri are common elements of worship in panelists' congregations. More than eight in ten panelists in every sample report weekly use of the Doxology in worship, and around two in three in every sample report weekly use of the Gloria Patri. A less frequent part of worship is the Apostles' Creed, which is said weekly in about one-third of congregations, according to pastors (about half of the rest report saying it *once or twice a month*).
- ✓ Few congregations have ever excluded the Lord's Prayer, the Doxology, the Gloria Patri, or the Apostles' Creed from worship "solely or primarily because, as conventionally worded, they refer to God as 'Father.'" In all, only 6% of pastors report any such language-based exclusions, primarily the Gloria Patri (5%) and the Doxology (3%). Only 1% report excluding the Lord's Prayer from worship because it refers to God as "Father." In all, 94% of pastors report *no* exclusions of this type.
- ✓ Nine in ten pastors report that whenever there is a baptism in their church, the minister leading the service uses the conventional language of the church to refer to the Trinitarian nature of God: "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit [Holy Ghost]." Only 2% report that other language is "always used" when referring to the Trinity, although 7% report that alternative language for the Trinity is used sometimes but not at every baptism.

### How Much Change in Worship Practices? A Look Back to 1984

Few previous Panel surveys have asked questions on gender and language about God. Of these, the November 1984 survey is the only one to assess congregational worship practices. At that time, as Table 1 shows, worship was typically not altered to make greater use of gender-inclusive or gender-neutral terms for God, and to the extent that it was, few lay Presbyterians were noticing. Reports of pastors in the 1999 survey suggest some change toward greater use of gender-neutral language for God, although the awareness among the laity remains limited.

**Table 1**  
**Reports of Steps Taken in Congregations**  
**to Use More Gender-Inclusive and Gender-Neutral Language:**  
**November 1984**

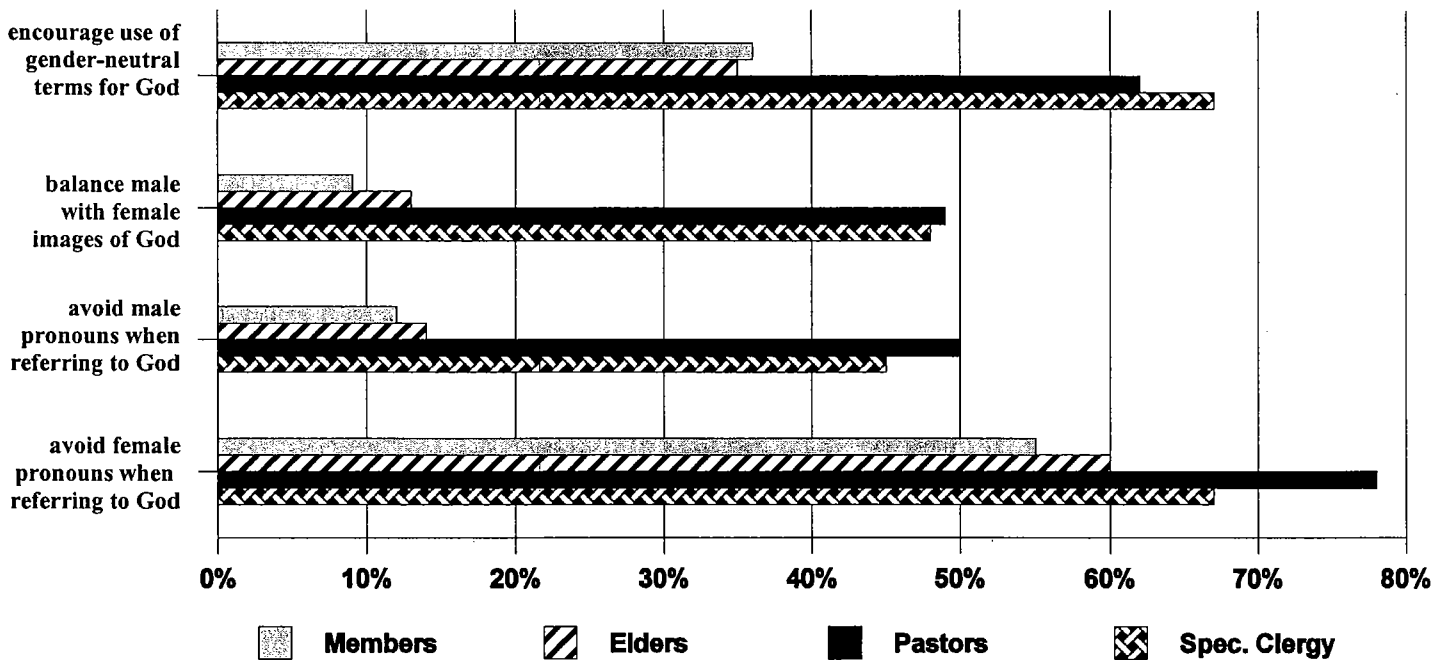
Step	Pastors Reporting	Elders Reporting
altering the words of hymns . . . . .	21%	9%
avoiding references to God as male in prayers . . . . .	44%	13%
references to God using a variety of words for God (e.g., creator, love, mother and father, light) . . . . .	53%	31%
use of the <i>Inclusive Language Lectionary</i> of the National Council of Churches . . . . .	8%	11%
changing the wording of scripture passages to avoid references to God as male (e.g., "Sovereign" in place of "Lord") . . . . .	18%	10%



**Personal Practices**

- ✓ When praying, most members (88%) and elders (89%) address God as “Father” either *always* or *often*. Among pastors the corresponding percentage is 59% and among specialized clergy, 47%.
- ✓ Few panelists address God as “Mother” in their prayers. Nine in ten members and elders *never* do so, and most of the rest do so only *rarely*. Even among clergy, about half *never* address God as “Mother,” and most of the rest do so only *rarely*. In all, 6% of both clergy groups report addressing God as “Mother” either *always* or *often* in their prayers.
- ✓ Most panelists address God as “Creator” at least *occasionally* in their prayers, but few do so *always*.

**Figure 4**  
**Percent Reporting Each Activity as a “General Practice” at their Church**



- ✓ In public prayers, majorities of pastors use “gender-inclusive or gender-neutral language about God” either *always* (29%) or *often* (37%). The corresponding percentages among members are 9% and 7%. In fact, half of members and elders *never* use gender-neutral or gender-inclusive language about God in their public prayers. Overall, 66% of pastors and 75% of specialized clergy *agree* that they “make an effort to avoid male terms when addressing God in public prayers,” but 81% of members and 79% of elders *disagree*.
- ✓ Most panelists report that they make no distinction between public and private prayers in the use of gender-inclusive language. However, among ministers, where there are differences, gender-inclusive language is more likely to be used in public rather than in private prayers.

## LANGUAGE ABOUT THE PEOPLE OF GOD: POLICY AND PREFERENCES

### Policy

- ✓ Few congregations “have an official policy, approved by the session, encouraging the use of ‘gender-neutral’ or ‘gender-inclusive’ terms in worship when referring to the church . . . the people of God.” Only 8% of pastors report the existence of such a policy.
- ✓ Panelists are split on whether or not “the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) ought to have a general policy on what gender-related language is appropriate when Presbyterians refer to the people of God (the church).” Among members, 36% favor the creation of such a policy, while 48% oppose it; among elders, the percentages are 33% in favor and 54%, opposed; among pastors, 43% and 52%, respectively. Only among specialized clergy is the pattern reversed: 54% would like to see the denomination have a policy on language about the church, while 38% are opposed.

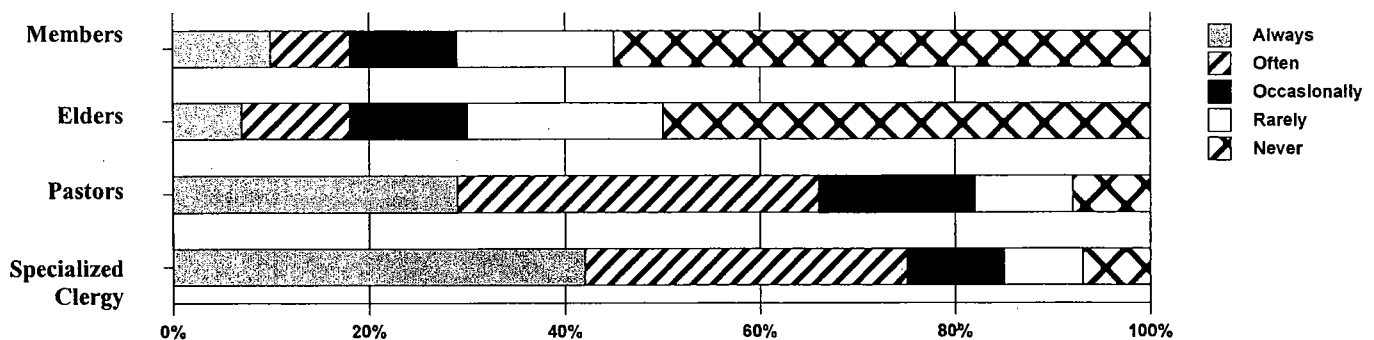
### Language in Worship

- ✓ When given more gender-inclusive and less gender-inclusive options for words and phrases that one might encounter in worship in reference to people, large majorities in every sample favor a more-inclusive option. For example, 2% of members prefer “brothers,” but 78% prefer “brothers and sisters” when the reference is to a group in the church that contains both males and females. Among pastors, less than 0.5% prefer “brothers,” and 98% prefer “brothers and sisters.”
- ✓ When presented with *three* wording options—traditional (non-inclusive) language, gender-inclusive language, and gender-neutral language—panelists show a strong preference for the gender-neutral option. For example, as an alternative to “men of God,” 68% of members and 86% of pastors would prefer “people of God,” while 24% and 13%, respectively, would prefer “men and women of God.”

### Bible Translations

- ✓ When the Bible uses male words in the original language to refer to people in general, three in four members (75%) and elders (71%) would prefer that the translation reflect this usage. However, 84% of pastors and 82% of specialized clergy would prefer another option—that the translator modify the language to find a word or phrase that is more gender-neutral or gender-inclusive.

**Figure 5**  
**Reported Frequency of Using**  
**Gender-Inclusive Language in Public Prayers**



**How Do Opinions on Language about God and about the People of God Compare?**

A fuller discussion of preferences on language about God is presented below (pp. 9ff.). As a preview, let's look at how those opinions compare with the ones just presented on language about the people of God.

**Bible Translations.** One question asked simultaneously about both areas of opinion as regards Bible translations. Large majorities of members and elders favor translations that stick closely to the wording in the original language when referring both to God and to people, even if the original language uses male nouns and pronouns to describe God and to describe people in general. Among those laity who favor more gender-inclusive translations, the majority prefer gender-inclusive wording in regards to people, but not in regards to God. Overall, only 5% of members and 7% of elders want gender-inclusive translations in reference to both God and people.

In contrast, large majorities of ministers favor gender-inclusive translations (pastors, 75%; specialized clergy, 74%), but among these, more favor such inclusive translations in regards to people only (pastors, 67%; specialized clergy, 51%) than favor them in regards to both people and God (33%; 49%).

**Worship References.** In brief, as Table 2 shows, there is considerably more support for gender-inclusive or gender-neutral language about God among those members and elders who believe it is *important* or *very important* that "when people in worship make broad references to the people of God, both male and female, . . . that they use gender-neutral or gender-inclusive terms." Still, we find that many of the laity—including almost two-thirds of members—who believe it is *very important* to use gender-inclusive language when referring to people, do not object to (or may even prefer) the use of masculine pronouns in reference to God. The pattern of response among clergy, while not shown, is broadly similar.

**Table 2**  
**Comparing Opinions on Language about God and Language about the People of God**

*Question: When people speaking in worship make broad references to the church and the people of God, both male and female, how important is it to you that they use gender-neutral or gender-inclusive terms?*

	Very Important		Important		Not Very Important		Not at All Important	
	M	E	M	E	M	E	M	E
Agree . . . . .	25%	40%	23%	27%	8%	6%	4%	3%
Not sure . . . . .	11%	17%	15%	10%	13%	13%	5%	4%
Disagree . . . . .	64%	42%	62%	63%	79%	81%	91%	93%
Total . . . . .	100%	99%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

*Question: I would prefer that masculine pronouns such as "He" and "Him" not be used when referring to God*

**M = Members      E = Elders**

## OPINIONS ON LANGUAGE ABOUT GOD

### The Big Picture

- ✓ Majorities of panelists in every sample *agree* that “our language about God should be varied and diverse, reflecting the wide range of terms to describe God that are found in the Bible and the Reformed tradition” (66% of members, 63% of elders, 91% of pastors, and 93% of specialized clergy express this view).
- ✓ Majorities of pastors (66%) and specialized clergy (76%) *agree* that “use of gender-inclusive language is consistent with the overall message of the Bible.” Lay panelists, however, are less certain: while 40% of members and 36% of elders *agree* with this statement, 21% and 26%, respectively, *disagree*, and 38% of both groups respond *not sure*.
- ✓ At least eight in ten panelists in every sample *agree* that “most people use male terms for God simply because that’s the traditional language of the church.”

### Wording Preferences in Worship

- ✓ Most panelists prefer that the traditional words at the beginning of the Lord’s Prayer, “Our Father [who art] in heaven,” continue to be used when the Lord’s Prayer is prayed during worship. This preference is held by 92% of members, 90% of elders, 80% of pastors, and 66% of specialized clergy. Most panelists who favor different words would opt for gender-neutral language (“Our Creator in heaven”) over a gender-inclusive construction such as “Our Father and Mother in heaven . . . .”
- ✓ Panelists generally prefer that the traditional language of the church—“Father, Son, and Holy Spirit [Holy Ghost]”—continue to be used when reference is made to the Trinitarian nature of God. The preference is greatest among members (88% prefer this wording) and elders (86%), but is also relatively strong among pastors (62%). Among specialized clergy, however, 45% prefer the traditional language, but 51% would opt for a change to gender-neutral language. Among pastors, 34% would opt for gender-neutral language.
- ✓ Half of specialized clergy (51%) and four in ten pastors (42%), but only one in ten members (10%) and elders (11%), would “prefer that masculine pronouns such as ‘He’ and ‘Him’ *not* be used when referring to God.” Similar percentages in each sample “prefer that people use nouns [“God’s”] rather than [masculine] pronouns [“His”] when referring to God.”

### Language and Feelings of Inclusion

- ✓ The use of gender-linked terms to refer to God during worship makes some panelists feel more included and others less included in the worship experience:
  - Use of male pronouns such as “He” to refer to God makes 13% of members and 4% of pastors feel *more included*, and 2% of members and 19% of pastors feel *less included*.
  - Use of female pronouns such as “She” to refer to God makes 2% of members and 8% of pastors feel *more included*, and 30% of both members and pastors feel *less included*.
  - Use of gender-neutral terms to refer to God makes 6% of members and 27% of pastors feel *more included*, and 16% of members and 13% of pastors feel *less included*.
- ✓ Large majorities of pastors (69%) and specialized clergy (76%), and large minorities of members (46%) and elders (49%), *disagree* with the statement, “It offends me when someone uses terms other than ‘Father, Son, and Holy Spirit’ to refer to the persons of the Trinity.” Nevertheless, somewhat fewer panelists in every sample *agree* that “It’s fine with me for people to substitute functional terms like ‘Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer’ when referring to the Trinity” (i.e., 39% of members, 40% of elders, 58% of pastors, and 73% of specialized clergy).

### Framing the Issue: Traditional vs. Inclusive Language, Not Male vs. Female

It's very clear from looking at the results that few Presbyterians think of God in female terms. To the extent they want more references to God that use feminine nouns or pronouns, it is largely to balance the extensive male imagery found in the Bible and traditional worship. God is, for most of us, beyond gender.

This point comes across most clearly when panelists are given two alternative choices to the traditional (male) language, one that is gender-inclusive and one that is gender-neutral. In these situations, fewer panelists choose the option that attempts change by adding a female image to a male one for God (e.g., in the Lord's Prayer, "Our Father and Mother"), opting instead for a gender-neutral choice ("Creator"). This suggests that many Presbyterians wanting change prefer references to God that eliminate any connotation of gender rather than references that make God seem to have both male and female genders.

Of course, as is clear in the example of the Lord's Prayer, some important connotations contained in the original language are lost when a term such as "Creator" is substituted for "Father." The latter word conveys a personal relationship in a way "Creator" does not. So why, then, would more people opt for "Creator" than "Father and Mother?" After all, if anything, adding "Mother" to "Father" expands the personal connotation of the reference to God. One possible explanation is that, as already argued, many panelists want to eliminate any gender references where God is concerned, rather than adding a female image to a male image.

### Changing Opinions

As already noted, few previous Panel surveys have asked questions on gender and language about God. The earliest instance, in April 1980, in the context of a much longer survey on "Attitudes Toward Women in Ministry," has one relevant question: "There are ministers and laypersons today who question the necessity or desirability of using the traditional male language to refer to God (e.g., referring to God as 'He'). Do you think we should change this language?" In response, 5% of members, 7% of elders, 28% of pastors, and 46% of specialized clergy replied *yes*.

The November 1984 survey gave more attention to the language topic. In general, it appears that, 15 years ago:

- few lay Presbyterians indicated any sensitivity to the use of male terms in reference to God. Only 24% of members and 23% of elders reported ever noticing "when God is referred to as a male in worship." And only 7% of members and 5% of elders reported any "negative feelings" when, in worship, they "hear God referred to as male."
- clergy were more sensitive than laity to the use of male language, but even among pastors, 38% reported never noticing the use of male terms for God in worship.
- few members (10%) or elders (7%) believe that "the church should avoid male references to God in worship" to make individuals who might otherwise be offended to "feel more included."

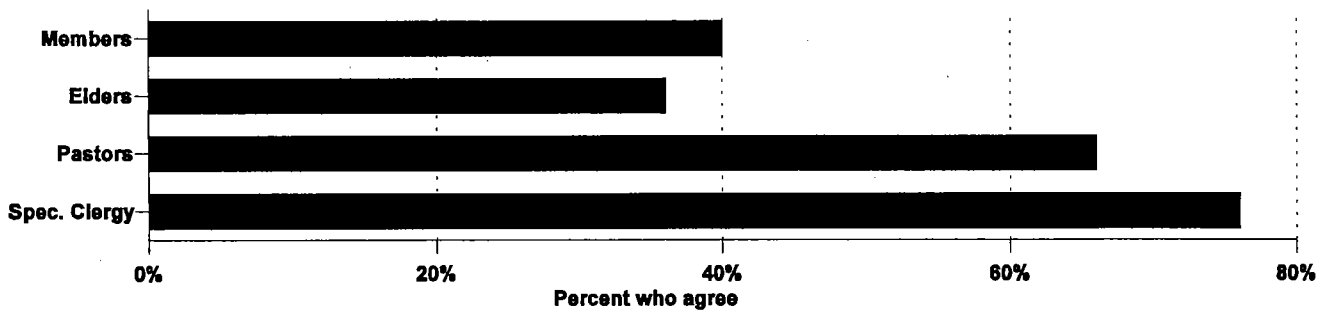
While the questions were not directly comparable to those asked in the 1999 survey, it appears that, in general, there has been incremental change toward greater use of gender-neutral and gender-inclusive language among the clergy, but that these changes remain largely unnoticed and unnecessary from the perspective of a large majority of members and elders.

## OPINIONS ON LANGUAGE ABOUT GOD

### Translating and Modifying Texts

- ✓ Few panelists, whether laity or clergy, would like to see masculine nouns for God (e.g., “King”) modified to gender-neutral terms in the course of translation if it would mean that “the original meaning is somewhat changed in the process.” In fact, large majorities of members (80%) and elders (76%) want *no* change at all in these circumstances: “keep the image the way it was in the original text.” Ministers, however, are more divided: while 49% of pastors and 37% of specialized clergy want a translation that sticks to the original, 43% and 52%, respectively, prefer an approach that would “modify the language to be more gender-neutral . . . as long as the general meaning does not change.”
- ✓ A similar pattern of results obtains when the issue is translation of male pronouns that refer to God. Four in five members (81%) and elders (77%) want a translation that sticks to the original, as do 46% of pastors and 34% of specialized clergy. However, even more pastors (49%) and especially specialized clergy (61%) would like to see the male pronouns replaced by more gender-neutral words (e.g., “God” could replace “He”).

**Figure 6**  
**“Use of Gender-Inclusive Language is Consistent with the Overall Message of the Bible”**



- ✓ Overall, nine in ten members (92%) and elders (90%) favor Bible translations “that stay as close as possible to the gender and language used in the original text” with reference to God. Somewhat smaller (but still large) majorities of pastors (74%) and specialized clergy (61%) hold this same view.
- ✓ Panelists are divided on the issue of what to do with hymns that contain non-gender-inclusive words or phrases. Exactly half of pastors, and at least 44% in the other samples, *agree* that “we shouldn’t change traditional texts and hymns, but efforts should be made to ensure that new hymns and texts are more inclusive.” At the same time, a quarter of members, a third of elders and pastors, and 40% of specialized clergy *disagree* with this statement. Another sizable segment in each sample responds *not sure*.

**Do Men and Women View Gender in the Language about God Differently?**

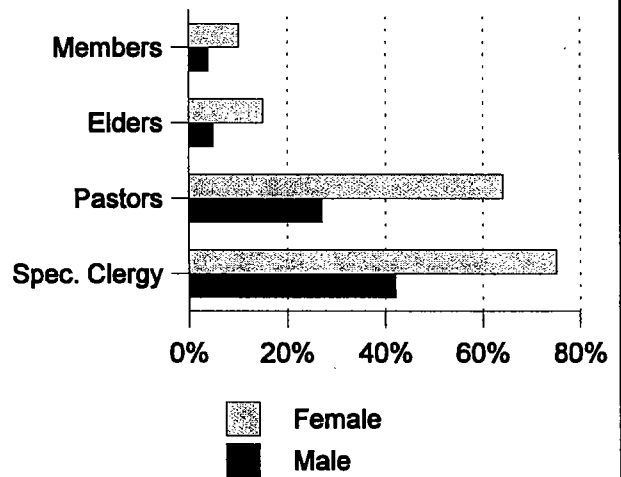
Male and female **members** typically hold similar opinions. Among the few exceptions, men are more likely to view God as “Friend.” Men are more likely to view God as “Judge,” and women are more likely to view God as “Friend.” Men are more likely to *agree* that “God is best understood in masculine terms.”

Male and female **elders** also express similar views on many items, but more differences are apparent. Female elders are more favorable than male elders toward modifying the language of the Lord’s Prayer or other Scripture to make it more gender neutral. And female elders are more likely than male elders to feel *less included* by the use of masculine terms and pronouns to refer to God.

Differences are even more widespread between men and women who are **pastors and specialized clergy**. On almost every question, more female clergy than male clergy favor increased use of gender-neutral language. Significantly, too, more female than male pastors and other clergy also see the issue of gender and language about God as *very important* to them, personally.

In brief, gender differences in opinions on language about God are small among laity, larger among pastors and specialized clergy. Table 3 shows this pattern in several example questions.

**Figure 7**  
Percent Who *Favor Gender-Neutral Language* When Referring to God as Trinity



OPINIONS ON LANGUAGE ABOUT GOD

**Table 3**  
**Gender Differences in Opinion on Language and God**

	Members		Pastors	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
% <i>extremely likely</i> to view God as:				
judge .....	27%	44%	8%	17%
mother .....	4%	3%	15%	5%
father .....	76%	68%	30%	62%
wording preferred for Lord's Prayer:				
"Our Father" .....	90%	96%	56%	85%
gender-inclusive .....	<0.5%	—	5%	2%
gender-neutral .....	7%	3%	28%	10%
wording preferred for Trinity:				
"Father, Son, Holy Spirit" .....	87%	90%	34%	3%
gender-neutral (function) .....	8%	3%	52%	21%
gender-neutral (collective) .....	2%	2%	12%	6%
% who feel <i>less included</i> when				
God addressed as "He" .....	3%	<0.5%	52%	12%
% who feel <i>less included</i> when				
God addressed as "She" .....	26%	35%	2%	32%
% who feel <i>more included</i> by				
gender-neutral language about God .....	7%	4%	55%	21%
preferences for Bible translating of male gender words for God:				
stick to original always .....	78%	82%	24%	54%
stick to original about God, modify to gender-neutral regarding people .....	13%	10%	61%	39%
modify to gender-neutral both language about God and language about people .....	2%	5%	10%	4%
<i>always</i> use gender-neutral or -inclusive language about God in public prayer .....				
	8%	9%	57%	23%
% who prefer that people use a gender-neutral noun (e.g., God) rather than a male pronoun (e.g., He) in references to God .....				
	16%	19%	68%	44%
% who find acceptable substitution of gender-neutral functional terms for "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" in reference to the Trinity .....				
	38%	39%	75%	54%

— = no cases in this category



## OPINIONS ON LANGUAGE ABOUT GOD

### **Importance of Language Issues**

- ✓ Large majorities of ministers, but fewer than four in ten lay panelists, rate “the issue of gender in language about God” as either *very important* or *important* to them personally. In fact, a majority of members (61%) and elders (60%) rate this issue as either *not very important* or *not at all important*.
- ✓ When asked how important the “issue of gender in language about God” is “to most people in your congregation,” only one in ten members (9%) and elders (12%), and even fewer pastors (5%) and specialized clergy (7%), responded *very important*. Disregarding the *don't know* responses, around two-thirds or more in every sample who gave an opinion on this question sized up fellow congregants as viewing this issue as either *not very important* or *not at all important*.
- ✓ With reference to language about people, less than a quarter of members and elders, but three in four pastors and specialized clergy, rate as *very important* or *important* that “when people speak in worship . . . they use gender-neutral or gender-inclusive terms” when referring to “the church and the people of God.”

### **Does Age Affect Opinions Among Clergy?**

Some speculation exists that younger female clergy may be less concerned than older female clergy about gender and language issues. The argument, briefly, turns on generational differences, rather than age per se. Older ministers matured in a time period when the right of women to serve equally as pastors was being fought for and won; it was a new privilege, earned with hard work, and still somewhat precarious. Younger ministers, by contrast, grew up with the “new paradigm” already in place; women had already obtained the right to serve as ministers, and were doing so in increasing numbers. To these younger ministers, the situation of gender equality was normative, or nearly so; they would take it for granted, unaware, at least personally, of the earlier struggles necessary to arrive at this circumstance.

The Panel results provide some support, especially in the case of this question: “When a pastor or worship leader refers to God as ‘He,’ does that male term make you feel more included or less included in the worship experience?” As Table 4 shows, the percentage of women who report being offended by male language in reference to God grows as age increases, while among men, the opposite pattern occurs (albeit smaller in magnitude). However, for other factors, such as opinions on gender in reference to God as Trinity (also shown in Table 4), the relationship is much less pronounced and the pattern not as uniform.

**Table 4**  
**Opinions on Gender and Language Issues:**  
**Age Patterns among Male and Female Clergy\***

Age	% Who Feel less Included By Male Terms for God		% Who Prefer Gender-Neutral Language in Reference to Trinity	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
<40	49%	16%	64%	33%
40-49	56%	15%	72%	30%
50-59	62%	13%	64%	35%
60+	71%	10%	85%	29%

\* Combined data for pastors and specialized clergy

THE PRESBYTERIAN PANEL

LANGUAGE AND GOD – FEBRUARY 1999

Appendix

	Members	Elders	Ministers
Number of questionnaires mailed .....	928	1,052	1,591
Number of questionnaires returned .....	618	731	1,184 *
Percent returned .....	66%	69%	74%

\*798 pastors; 386 specialized clergy

Q-1. When you think about God, how likely is each of these images to come to your mind?

	Members	Elders	Pastors	Specialized Clergy
<b>a. Judge</b>				
extremely likely .....	34%	34%	16%	15%
somewhat likely .....	38%	39%	44%	37%
not too likely .....	18%	18%	31%	32%
not likely at all .....	10%	8%	9%	16%
don't know .....	1%	*	*	*
<b>b. Redeemer</b>				
extremely likely .....	75%	76%	78%	71%
somewhat likely .....	20%	19%	19%	23%
not too likely .....	2%	3%	2%	4%
not likely at all .....	2%	1%	1%	2%
don't know .....	*	*	—	*
<b>c. Lover</b>				
	+			
extremely likely .....	26%	27%	43%	37%
somewhat likely .....	17%	17%	30%	26%
not too likely .....	17%	19%	16%	19%
not likely at all .....	36%	34%	11%	18%
don't know .....	3%	3%	*	1%
<b>d. Master</b>				
extremely likely .....	59%	61%	38%	28%
somewhat likely .....	25%	25%	32%	29%
not too likely .....	10%	10%	21%	22%
not likely at all .....	6%	4%	8%	20%
don't know .....	1%	1%	—	*
<b>e. Mother</b>				
	+			
extremely likely .....	4%	4%	7%	12%
somewhat likely .....	9%	12%	31%	34%
not too likely .....	25%	22%	32%	28%
not likely at all .....	60%	59%	29%	26%
don't know .....	3%	3%	*	1%

\* = less than 0.5%; rounds to zero

— = zero (0.0); no cases in this category

+ = nonresponses of 10% or more on this question (reported percentages for all questions omit nonresponses)

n = number of respondents eligible to answer this question

◆ = percentages add to more than 100 because respondents could make more than one response

	Members	Elders	Pastors	Specialized Clergy
Q-1. When you think about God, how likely is each of these images to come to your mind? (cont.)				
f. Creator				
extremely likely	90%	91%	87%	88%
somewhat likely	8%	8%	12%	11%
not too likely	1%	1%	1%	*
not likely at all	1%	*	*	*
don't know	*	*	—	*
g. Father				
extremely likely	74%	77%	56%	49%
somewhat likely	20%	17%	33%	35%
not too likely	4%	3%	8%	12%
not likely at all	2%	2%	2%	4%
don't know	1%	1%	—	*
h. Spouse				
	+			
extremely likely	2%	1%	2%	1%
somewhat likely	5%	3%	5%	6%
not too likely	17%	16%	22%	20%
not likely at all	72%	76%	70%	72%
don't know	4%	4%	2%	2%
i. Friend				
extremely likely	49%	46%	44%	36%
somewhat likely	34%	37%	39%	43%
not too likely	10%	9%	14%	13%
not likely at all	7%	7%	4%	8%
don't know	1%	1%	—	*
j. King				
extremely likely	51%	49%	41%	28%
somewhat likely	22%	24%	34%	32%
not too likely	15%	16%	17%	22%
not likely at all	10%	10%	8%	17%
don't know	1%	1%	—	1%
k. Liberator				
extremely likely	31%	33%	39%	46%
somewhat likely	30%	30%	37%	35%
not too likely	24%	23%	18%	15%
not likely at all	12%	12%	5%	4%
don't know	3%	2%	*	*
l. Healer				
extremely likely	67%	67%	66%	65%
somewhat likely	28%	28%	28%	29%
not too likely	4%	4%	5%	5%
not likely at all	1%	1%	1%	1%
don't know	1%	*	—	*

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— = zero (0.0); no cases in this category

+ = nonresponses of 10% or more on this question (reported percentages for all questions omit nonresponses)

n = number of respondents eligible to answer this question

◆ = percentages add to more than 100 because respondents could make more than one response

Next, take a few moments to think back over Sunday worship services at the church you usually attend or serve.

Q-2. How often, if at all, does worship at your church include:

a. the Lord's Prayer ("Our Father [who art] in heaven")				
every week	92%	91%	93%	90%
once or twice a month	6%	6%	5%	5%
less than once a month	1%	3%	2%	2%
only on special occasions	—	1%	1%	2%
never	—	—	*	1%
don't recall	1%	—	—	1%
b. the Apostles' Creed ("I believe in God the Father Almighty")				
every week	44%	42%	32%	38%
once or twice a month	26%	26%	27%	22%
less than once a month	15%	19%	21%	19%
only on special occasions	12%	12%	18%	17%
never	2%	1%	2%	4%
don't recall	1%	*	*	1%
c. the Doxology ("Praise God from whom all blessings flow")				
every week	87%	87%	86%	84%
once or twice a month	6%	6%	5%	4%
less than once a month	3%	4%	5%	4%
only on special occasions	2%	2%	2%	4%
never	1%	*	2%	4%
don't recall	1%	*	—	1%
d. the Gloria Patri ("Glory be to the Father")				
every week	70%	69%	66%	62%
once or twice a month	9%	10%	9%	7%
less than once a month	8%	8%	8%	10%
only on special occasions	7%	8%	9%	8%
never	3%	3%	8%	11%
don't recall	3%	2%	*	2%

Q-3. When your congregation prays the Lord's Prayer during worship, what wording is typically used to begin the prayer?

the conventional wording, "Our Father in heaven"	99%	99%	98%	96%
wording modified to be gender inclusive, e.g., "Our Father and Mother in heaven"	—	—	*	1%
wording modified to be gender neutral, e.g., "Our Creator in heaven"	*	1%	1%	2%
other wording (specify) _____	1%	*	*	—
don't recall	*	—	—	*
not applicable (we never pray the Lord's Prayer)	*	—	*	1%

\* = less than 0.5%; rounds to zero

— = zero (0.0); no cases in this category

+ = nonresponses of 10% or more on this question (reported percentages for all questions omit nonresponses)

n = number of respondents eligible to answer this question

◆ = percentages add to more than 100 because respondents could make more than one response

Q-4. Do services at your congregation ever *exclude* any of the following items from worship solely or primarily *because*, as conventionally worded, they refer to God as "Father"? (Check the  for *all* that apply.)

yes, have excluded the Lord's Prayer because it refers to God as "Father" .....	1%	*	1%	*
yes, have excluded the Apostles' Creed because it refers to God as "Father" .....	1%	1%	2%	3%
yes, have excluded the Doxology because it refers to God as "Father" .....	1%	1%	3%	4%
yes, have excluded the Gloria Patri because it refers to God as "Father" .....	1%	1%	5%	5%
no, have never excluded any of these because of the word "Father" .....	94%	97%	94%	86%
don't know .....	5%	2%	*	7%

Q-5. Would you say it is the general practice at your church for worship services:

a. to encourage the use of gender-neutral terms for God, for example, "Creator," "Sovereign," "Almighty"				
yes, definitely .....	12%	13%	32%	32%
yes, probably .....	24%	22%	30%	35%
not sure .....	12%	7%	2%	4%
no, probably not .....	33%	35%	26%	20%
no, definitely not .....	19%	23%	10%	9%
b. to balance male images of God with female images of God				
yes, definitely .....	2%	3%	18%	21%
yes, probably .....	7%	10%	31%	27%
not sure .....	13%	12%	5%	6%
no, probably not .....	42%	39%	32%	35%
no, definitely not .....	35%	36%	14%	11%
c. to refer to God more often with words that describe men than with words that describe women				
yes, definitely .....	27%	31%	14%	21%
yes, probably .....	46%	45%	48%	44%
not sure .....	9%	8%	7%	7%
no, probably not .....	11%	12%	24%	21%
no, definitely not .....	6%	4%	8%	7%
d. to refer to God with words that describe men, even when widely-accepted gender-inclusive or gender-neutral options are available				
yes, definitely .....	18%	18%	6%	9%
yes, probably .....	38%	39%	27%	26%
not sure .....	19%	18%	8%	11%
no, probably not .....	19%	19%	40%	37%
no, definitely not .....	7%	6%	19%	16%

\* = less than 0.5%; rounds to zero

— = zero (0.0); no cases in this category

+ = nonresponses of 10% or more on this question (reported percentages for all questions omit nonresponses)

n = number of respondents eligible to answer this question

◆ = percentages add to more than 100 because respondents could make more than one response

Q-5. Would you say it is the general practice at your church for worship services:  
(cont.)

e. to avoid the use of "He," "Him," "His," and other male pronouns when referring to God				
yes, definitely	3%	4%	19%	16%
yes, probably	9%	10%	31%	29%
not sure	10%	6%	2%	4%
no, probably not	42%	43%	31%	35%
no, definitely not	36%	37%	16%	15%
f. to avoid the use of "She," "Her," "Hers," and other female pronouns when referring to God				
yes, definitely	29%	31%	38%	29%
yes, probably	26%	29%	40%	38%
not sure	14%	11%	3%	8%
no, probably not	18%	20%	15%	23%
no, definitely not	13%	10%	4%	3%

Q-6. When pastors or other worship leaders read the Bible aloud during worship in your congregation, do they ever substitute the word "God" (or another gender-neutral or gender-inclusive word) where the printed text uses "He" to refer to God?

yes, always	1%	1%	3%	4%
yes, almost always	2%	5%	17%	15%
yes, often	6%	7%	20%	25%
yes, occasionally	15%	18%	21%	18%
yes, rarely	14%	16%	13%	14%
no, never	62%	54%	26%	24%

Q-7. Does your congregation have an official policy, approved by the session, encouraging the use of "gender-neutral" or "gender-inclusive" terms in worship when:

a. referring to God?				
no	58%	80%	93%	63%
yes	1%	2%	5%	7%
don't know	42%	18%	3%	30%
b. referring to the church, that is, the people of God?				
no	48%	72%	89%	54%
yes	7%	7%	8%	12%
don't know	45%	21%	4%	34%

Q-8. When there is a baptism in your church, is the individual baptized "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," or is other language used? (✓ one □ only.)

customary phrase always used ("in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" [or "Holy Ghost"])	95%	95%	90%	78%
other language always used (for example, "in the name of the Creator, and of the Redeemer, and of the Sustainer")	1%	*	2%	6%
it varies—customary language used sometimes and other language used sometimes	2%	3%	7%	12%
don't know	2%	2%	*	4%

\* = less than 0.5%; rounds to zero

— = zero (0.0); no cases in this category

+ = nonresponses of 10% or more on this question (reported percentages for all questions omit nonresponses)

n = number of respondents eligible to answer this question

◆ = percentages add to more than 100 because respondents could make more than one response

Q-9. Overall, how important *to you personally* is the issue of gender in language about God, whether or not the words we use to refer to God are masculine, feminine, or gender-neutral?

very important	19%	19%	27%	38%
important	18%	20%	40%	34%
not very important	27%	32%	24%	21%
not at all important	34%	28%	9%	7%
don't know	2%	1%	—	*

Q-10. And how important *to most people in your congregation* is the issue of gender in language about God, whether or not the words we use to refer to God are masculine, feminine, or gender-neutral?

very important	9%	12%	5%	7%
important	20%	23%	20%	23%
not very important	31%	36%	55%	50%
not at all important	11%	13%	17%	11%
don't know	29%	17%	3%	9%

Q-11. Which wording would you *personally* prefer that churches use to begin the Lord's Prayer?

traditional or customary wording: "Our Father in heaven"	92%	90%	80%	66%
wording modified to be gender inclusive: "Our Father and Mother in heaven"	*	1%	3%	7%
wording modified to be gender neutral: "Our Creator in heaven"	6%	6%	13%	21%
other wording (specify) _____	*	*	*	*
no preference	1%	2%	4%	6%
don't know	*	—	—	—

Q-12. In general, what phrasing would you *personally* prefer to be used in worship when reference is made to the Trinitarian nature of God?

traditional, customary language, that is, "Father, Son, Holy Spirit [Holy Ghost]"	88%	86%	62%	45%
gender-neutral language that refers to the Persons of the Trinity by their function, for example, "Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer"	6%	8%	27%	43%
gender-neutral language that refers to the Trinity as a whole, for example, "Triune God"	2%	2%	7%	8%
other (specify): _____	—	—	*	1%
no preference	3%	4%	3%	4%
don't know	1%	1%	1%	*

Q-13. When a pastor or worship leader refers to God as "He," does that male term make you feel more included or less included in the worship experience?

more included	13%	12%	4%	4%
neither more included nor less included	63%	65%	72%	62%
less included	2%	3%	19%	29%
don't know	1%	1%	2%	2%
never thought about it	21%	19%	3%	3%

\* = less than 0.5%; rounds to zero

— = zero (0.0); no cases in this category

+ = nonresponses of 10% or more on this question (reported percentages for all questions omit nonresponses)

n = number of respondents eligible to answer this question

◆ = percentages add to more than 100 because respondents could make more than one response

Q-14. When a pastor or worship leader refers to God as “She,” does that female term make you feel more included or less included in the worship experience?

more included .....	2%	4%	8%	19%
neither more included nor less included .....	28%	33%	52%	51%
less included .....	30%	31%	30%	23%
don't know .....	9%	7%	6%	4%
never thought about it .....	32%	25%	4%	4%

Q-15. When a pastor or worship leader refers to God in gender-neutral terms (avoids both male and female terms like “He” or “She”), does that make you feel more included or less included in the worship experience?

more included .....	6%	7%	27%	34%
neither more included nor less included .....	42%	46%	54%	51%
less included .....	16%	17%	13%	9%
don't know .....	7%	6%	4%	3%
never thought about it .....	29%	24%	2%	3%

Q-16. Often the Bible uses traditionally masculine images or words to refer to God (e.g., “King” or “Father”). How would you like to see such words translated today? (✓ the *one* □ that *best* describes your view)

keep the image the way it was in the original text .....	80%	76%	49%	37%
modify the language to be more gender-neutral (e.g., “King” could become “Ruler”), as long as the general meaning does not change .....	12%	14%	43%	52%
modify the language to be gender-neutral even if the original meaning is somewhat changed in the process (e.g., “Father” could be changed to “Creator” or “Almighty”) ...	2%	4%	5%	8%
no preference .....	5%	5%	3%	2%
don't know .....	1%	1%	1%	1%

Q-17. Often the Bible uses masculine pronouns (“He,” “Him,” “His”) when referring to God. How would you like to see these words translated?

keep it the way it was in the original text .....	81%	77%	46%	34%
modify the language to be more gender-neutral (e.g., the pronoun “He” could be replaced by the noun it refers to, “God”) ..	13%	16%	49%	61%
no preference .....	6%	5%	4%	3%
don't know .....	1%	2%	1%	2%

Q-18. When the Bible uses a masculine word to refer to people, both men and women, how would you prefer that the term be translated?

keep the original form (e.g., “mankind”) .....	75%	71%	15%	15%
find a more gender-neutral word to convey the meaning (e.g., “humankind”) .....	17%	21%	80%	76%
find a more gender-inclusive phrase to convey the meaning (e.g., “mankind and womankind”) .....	1%	3%	4%	6%
no preference .....	7%	4%	1%	2%
don't know .....	1%	1%	*	*

\* = less than 0.5%; rounds to zero

— = zero (0.0); no cases in this category

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n = number of respondents eligible to answer this question

◆ = percentages add to more than 100 because respondents could make more than one response



Q-19. Which approach to gender and language do you favor for Bible translations? (✓ the *one* □ that *best* describes your general preference.)

one that stays as close as possible to the gender and language used in the original text, both with words that refer to God and with words that refer to humankind . . . . .	76%	72%	24%	23%
one that stays as close as possible to the gender and language used in the original text when referring to God, but one that uses more gender-neutral or gender-inclusive language when referring to humankind . . . . .	16%	18%	50%	38%
one that substitutes gender-neutral or gender-inclusive language both for male-gender words that refer to God and for male-gender words that refer to humankind . . . . .	5%	7%	25%	36%
don't know . . . . .	4%	4%	1%	3%

Q-20. In your own private and personal prayers, how often do you address God as:

a. Father?

always . . . . .	64%	64%	24%	19%
often . . . . .	24%	25%	35%	28%
occasionally . . . . .	4%	4%	17%	19%
rarely . . . . .	3%	4%	13%	19%
never . . . . .	4%	3%	10%	13%
not applicable—I never pray privately . . . . .	*	*	1%	1%

b. Mother?

always . . . . .	*	*	1%	1%
often . . . . .	1%	*	5%	5%
occasionally . . . . .	2%	2%	13%	21%
rarely . . . . .	6%	7%	28%	29%
never . . . . .	90%	90%	52%	44%
not applicable—I never pray privately . . . . .	1%	*	1%	1%

c. Creator?

always . . . . .	8%	8%	9%	12%
often . . . . .	24%	30%	48%	48%
occasionally . . . . .	29%	28%	27%	25%
rarely . . . . .	16%	17%	8%	9%
never . . . . .	22%	17%	7%	5%
not applicable—I never pray privately . . . . .	*	*	1%	1%

Q-21. When you have said public prayers during the last year, how often did you use gender-inclusive or gender neutral language about God?

always . . . . .	9%	7%	29%	42%
often . . . . .	7%	10%	37%	32%
occasionally . . . . .	10%	11%	16%	10%
rarely . . . . .	14%	19%	10%	8%
never . . . . .	50%	48%	8%	7%
not applicable—I never pray in public . . . . .	11%	6%	*	2%

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Q-22. In general, are you more likely to use gender-neutral and gender-inclusive language about God in your private prayers or in your public prayers?

private .....	8%	4%	6%	8%
public .....	8%	10%	30%	28%
no difference .....	55%	59%	60%	60%
don't know .....	5%	3%	1%	2%
not applicable .....	24%	24%	3%	3%

Q-23. Do you agree or disagree with each of these statements?

a. Our language about God should be varied and diverse, reflecting the wide range of terms to describe God that are found in the Bible and the Reformed tradition

agree .....	66%	63%	91%	93%
not sure .....	18%	18%	5%	3%
disagree .....	16%	18%	4%	3%

b. I prefer that people use nouns rather than pronouns when referring to God (e.g., "God shows *God's* love" rather than "God shows *His* love.")

agree .....	18%	16%	48%	56%
not sure .....	20%	21%	15%	16%
disagree .....	63%	63%	36%	27%

c. It offends me when someone uses terms other than "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" to refer to the persons of the Trinity

agree .....	37%	36%	20%	13%
not sure .....	18%	15%	11%	11%
disagree .....	46%	49%	69%	76%

d. It's fine with me for people to substitute functional terms like "Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer" for "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" when referring to the Trinity

agree .....	39%	40%	58%	73%
not sure .....	20%	17%	12%	8%
disagree .....	41%	42%	30%	19%

e. As a child I pictured God to be of male gender

agree .....	94%	92%	72%	76%
not sure .....	4%	6%	12%	10%
disagree .....	2%	2%	16%	13%

f. God is best understood in masculine terms

agree .....	52%	47%	12%	11%
not sure .....	26%	27%	11%	9%
disagree .....	22%	26%	77%	80%

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	Members	Elders	Pastors	Specialized Clergy
Q-23. Do you agree or disagree with each of these statements? (Cont.)				
g. The Bible contains many female images of God				
agree .....	13%	16%	78%	73%
not sure .....	41%	34%	7%	10%
disagree .....	46%	51%	16%	17%
h. God is beyond gender, i.e., God is neither female nor male				
agree .....	64%	71%	94%	96%
not sure .....	18%	14%	3%	2%
disagree .....	17%	15%	3%	2%
i. I sometimes imagine God as a powerful old man with a white beard				
agree .....	24%	18%	10%	8%
not sure .....	9%	8%	3%	3%
disagree .....	68%	75%	87%	89%
j. Using male terms to refer to God seems natural to me				
agree .....	90%	89%	56%	49%
not sure .....	6%	5%	10%	7%
disagree .....	4%	6%	34%	44%
k. Use of gender-inclusive language is consistent with the overall message of the Bible				
agree .....	40%	36%	66%	76%
not sure .....	38%	38%	15%	10%
disagree .....	21%	26%	19%	14%
l. We shouldn't change traditional texts and hymns, but efforts should be made to ensure that new hymns and texts are more inclusive				
agree .....	44%	46%	50%	44%
not sure .....	31%	23%	17%	16%
disagree .....	25%	31%	33%	40%
m. I would prefer that masculine pronouns such as "He" and "Him" not be used when referring to God				
agree .....	10%	11%	42%	51%
not sure .....	11%	9%	8%	10%
disagree .....	79%	80%	49%	39%
n. I make an effort to avoid male terms when addressing God in public prayers				
agree .....	10%	13%	66%	75%
not sure .....	9%	8%	4%	4%
disagree .....	81%	79%	30%	21%
o. Most people use male terms for God simply because that's the traditional language of the church				
agree .....	82%	80%	81%	87%
not sure .....	10%	9%	8%	6%
disagree .....	9%	11%	10%	7%

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Q-24. When people speaking in worship make broad references to the church and the people of God, both male and female, how important is it to you that they use gender-neutral or gender-inclusive terms?

very important . . . . .	6%	7%	38%	48%
important . . . . .	17%	17%	36%	32%
not very important . . . . .	32%	37%	17%	14%
not at all important . . . . .	40%	37%	8%	6%
don't know . . . . .	4%	2%	*	1%

Q-25. Below are four sets of terms/phrases. For each set, indicate which one you would prefer be used in worship when referring to broad groups of the church that contain both males and females?

a. brothers . . . . .	2%	2%	*	*
brothers and sisters . . . . .	78%	84%	98%	96%
no preference . . . . .	20%	15%	2%	3%
b. men of God . . . . .	2%	2%	—	—
men and women of God . . . . .	24%	22%	13%	11%
people of God . . . . .	68%	71%	86%	87%
no preference . . . . .	7%	5%	1%	2%
c. church fathers . . . . .	13%	17%	11%	11%
church founders . . . . .	58%	59%	77%	80%
no preference . . . . .	29%	24%	12%	9%
d. God's sons . . . . .	*	1%	*	1%
God's sons and daughters . . . . .	10%	11%	14%	18%
God's children . . . . .	82%	84%	84%	80%
no preference . . . . .	7%	5%	1%	2%

Q-26. Do you believe the PCUSA ought to have a general policy on what gender-related language is appropriate when Presbyterians:

a. refer to God?				
yes, definitely . . . . .	13%	12%	11%	19%
yes, probably . . . . .	18%	14%	18%	22%
not sure . . . . .	16%	13%	7%	12%
no, probably not . . . . .	32%	34%	32%	29%
no, definitely not . . . . .	21%	26%	32%	18%
b. refer to the people of God (the church)?				
yes, definitely . . . . .	12%	13%	20%	28%
yes, probably . . . . .	24%	20%	23%	26%
not sure . . . . .	15%	12%	6%	8%
no, probably not . . . . .	29%	31%	25%	24%
no, definitely not . . . . .	19%	23%	27%	14%

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Q-27. In the mid-1980s, the General Assembly adopted a set of broad recommendations on gender-related language issues, "Definitions and Guidelines on Inclusive Language." How familiar are you with this set of guidelines?

not at all familiar .....	75%	65%	21%	24%
have heard of it, but don't know any of the details .....	15%	18%	18%	20%
only a little familiar .....	6%	12%	21%	21%
generally familiar .....	3%	4%	31%	25%
very familiar .....	*	1%	8%	10%

Q-28. How many ordained pastors serve on the *staff* of the church you serve or attend?  
(Write the number on the line: \_\_\_\_\_ )

	+			+
none .....	*	1%	1%	—
one .....	47%	46%	54%	52%
two .....	30%	28%	25%	27%
three to five .....	19%	21%	15%	16%
six to ten .....	3%	3%	4%	4%
eleven or more .....	1%	1%	1%	1%

Q-28a. Of this number, how many are male? \_\_\_\_\_ female? \_\_\_\_\_

<b>male</b>				+
none .....	5%	5%	9%	11%
one .....	58%	60%	61%	60%
two .....	23%	19%	18%	18%
three to five .....	13%	14%	10%	9%
six to ten .....	1%	2%	2%	2%
eleven or more .....	*	—	*	1%
<b>female</b>	+	+		+
none .....	60%	61%	61%	52%
one .....	35%	33%	33%	39%
two .....	3%	5%	4%	5%
three to five .....	2%	1%	2%	3%
six to ten .....	—	*	—	*
eleven or more .....	—	—	—	*

**Ordained ministers only—others skip to Q-30**

Q-29. How often do you read from the "Inclusive Language Lectionary" when you read the Bible aloud during worship?

		<b>Pastors</b>	<b>Specialized Clergy</b>
		n=798	n=386
always .....		4%	8%
often .....		5%	12%
occasionally .....		9%	15%
rarely .....		15%	19%
never .....		67%	46%

Q-30. Please use the space below to add any other comments about the issues raised by this questionnaire.

[not tabulated]