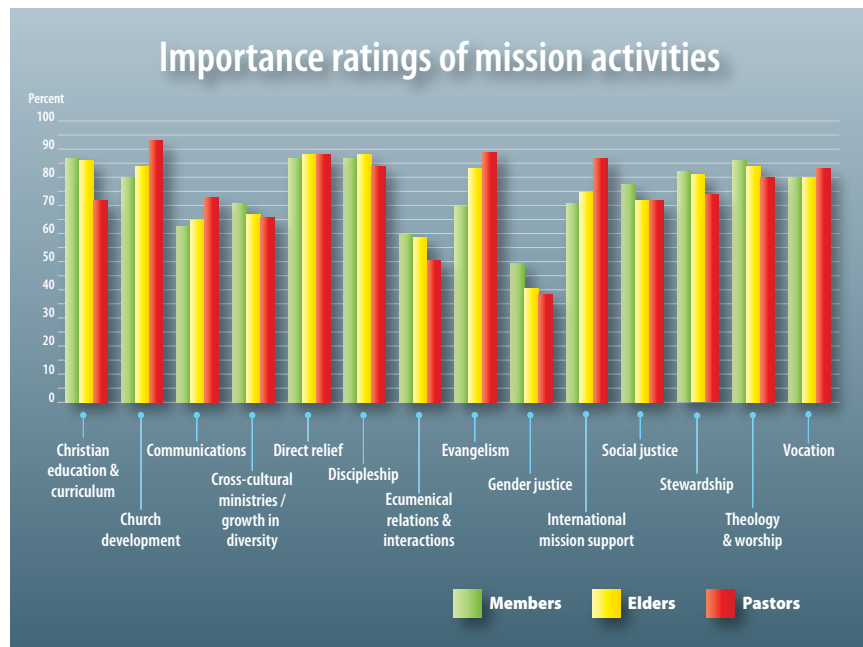


Mission priorities: Take 2



Recently (May 2010) I presented *rankings* of 14 possible General Assembly Mission Council activities, based on responses of members, elders and pastors, who were asked which two they considered the “most important.” For a different perspective, let’s examine importance *ratings* of these activities.

- **At least 60 percent of members, elders and pastors rated 12 of 14 mission activities “very important” or “important”** for the GAMC to carry out. Among members, highest ratings went to “Christian education and curriculum,” “direct relief” and “discipleship,” with 86 percent of respondents rating each activity “very important” or “important.” Two other activities rated almost as highly: “theology and worship” (85 percent) and “stewardship” (81 percent).
- **Among elders, the highest ratings were similar**, with “direct relief” and “discipleship” both rated “very important” or “important” by 87 percent. Closely following were “Christian education and curriculum” (85 percent), “church development” (83 percent) and “theology and worship” (83 percent).
- **Almost all pastors (92 percent) rated “church development” “very important” or “important,”** followed by “evangelism” (88 percent), “direct relief” (87 percent), “international mission support” (86 percent), “discipleship” (83 percent) and “vocation” (82 percent).
- **“Gender justice” was the only mission activity rated “very important” or “important” by a minority** (members, 49 percent; elders, 40 percent; pastors, 38 percent).

What the research shows

That no single activity emerges as much more important than the others is consistent with the findings presented in my earlier column. So why am I revisiting this issue? Because the results presented here lead to a more hopeful conclusion.

In the earlier rankings, respondents were asked to select only the two most important activities. However, when people can select only two from a list of things they view similarly (as the findings here show), the result is a small percentage choosing any one activity. Thus, readers may have come away with the impression that most Presbyterians do not think *any* of the activities are important.

That is not the case. As the current ratings show, 12 of the 14 mission activities are viewed as important by large majorities of members, elders and pastors.

The implications for prioritizing mission are much the same either way. But isn’t it a much more hopeful task to allocate resources among a group of tasks each rated very important or important by large majorities than among a group in which each is ranked as one of the two most important by only a few?

Jack Marcum is coordinator of Research Services of the General Assembly Mission Council of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

» Other findings

www.pcusa.org/research