



The Presbyterian Panel

Listening to Presbyterians



SUMMARY

Current Issues in Church and Society The November 2004 Survey

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 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 findings from the tenth survey completed by the 2003-2005 Panel, initially sampled in the fall of 2002.

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DIVESTMENT AND THE SECURITY BARRIER

Divestment from Israel: Awareness

- ✓ Most lay panelists are *not aware* (members, 61%; elders, 51%) of actions taken by the 216th General Assembly (2004) “to begin a process that may lead to a phased, selective divestment by the PC(USA) of its holdings in corporations doing business in Israel.” While 39% of members and 49% of elders have at least some awareness, only 14% and 19%, respectively, are *very aware*.
- ✓ Large majorities of ministers are either *very aware* (pastors, 65%; specialized clergy, 50%) or *somewhat aware* (30%; 36%) of the General Assembly action regarding divestment.

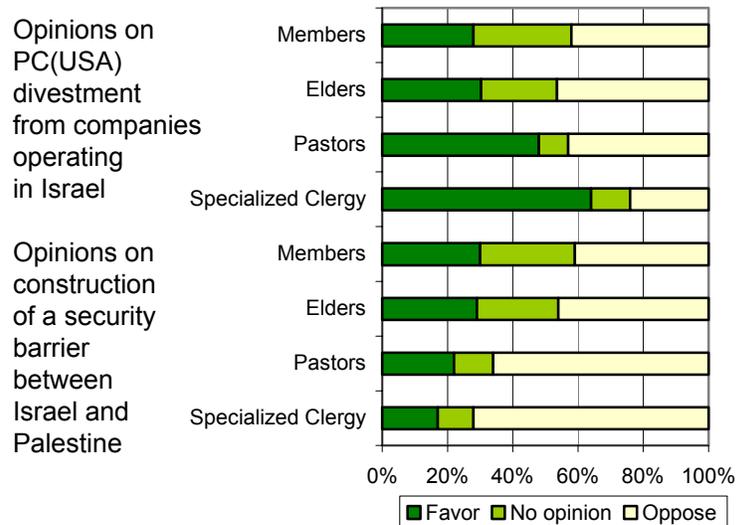
Divestment from Israel: Opinions

- ✓ Overall (among those aware and not aware of the GA action), more laity *oppose* (members, 42%; elders, 46%) than *favor* (28%; 30%) “the PC(USA) undertaking a phased, selective sale (‘divestment’) of the stock it owns in multinational corporations whose dealings in Israel support the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories.” Others have *no opinion* (30%; 23%).
- ✓ Overall, more pastors (48%) and specialized clergy (64%) *favor* than *oppose* (43%; 24%) divestment. Relatively few have *no opinion* (9%; 12%).
- ✓ Those *very aware* of the GA action are more likely (members, 73%) than those *not aware* (34%) to *oppose* the PC(USA) taking steps toward divestment.

Security Barrier

- ✓ A third of members (35%), 43% of elders, and large majorities of pastors (87%) and specialized clergy (78%) are either *very aware* or *somewhat aware* of the General Assembly action (2004) “to oppose the construction of a separation barrier (‘wall’) between Israel and occupied Palestinian territories.”
- ✓ Overall, more *oppose* than *favor* Israel’s construction of a security barrier (members: 41% *oppose*, 30% *favor*; elders: 46%, 29%; pastors: 66%, 22%; specialized clergy: 72%, 17%). The rest have *no opinion*.

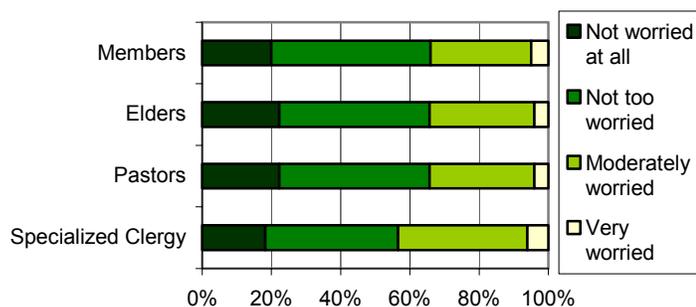
Figure 1. Opinions on Divestment from Israel and the Israel/Palestine Security Barrier



Economic Security

- ✓ Almost all panelists report that they have *enough* income (members, 60%; pastors, 45%) or *more than enough* income (32%; 48%) “to live simply.” Only a few (7%; 7%) report having *not enough*.
- ✓ Nevertheless, 43% of specialized clergy and 34% of the other groups are either *very worried* or *moderately worried* “about not being able to maintain the standard of living” they now have.
- ✓ Among the employed, however, relatively few (elders, 13%; specialized clergy, 15%) are *very concerned* or *concerned* “about losing your job in the next six months.”

Figure 2. Worries About Maintaining One’s Current Standard of Living



September 11

- ✓ Panelists are split in their opinions of the safety of the United States in the years after 9/11. More laity believe the U.S. is *more safe* now (members, 38%; elders, 39%) than *less safe* (25%; 25%), while the opposite is true among pastors (22%, *more safe*; 40%, *less safe*) and specialized clergy (12%; 52%). Around one-third in every group believe the nation’s safety is *about the same*.
- ✓ In all groups, more panelists themselves feel *less safe* (members, 26%; pastors, 28%) than *more safe* (20%; 12%) following 9/11. A majority, though, feels *about as safe* now as before 9/11 (54%; 60%).

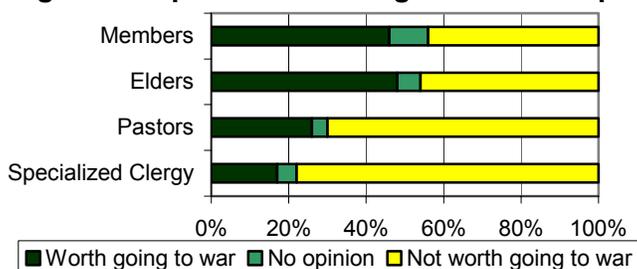
Service in Iraq and Afghanistan

- ✓ Few panelists, no more than 1% in any group, report having “served in the military in Iraq or Afghanistan” during the prior three years. Another one in 11 (members, 9%; pastors, 9%) report having “one or more relatives” who so served.

The War in Iraq

- ✓ Laity are split over whether “the situation in Iraq was worth going to war over, or not,” with 46% of members and 48% of elders responding *worth going to war*, and 44% and 46%, respectively, *not worth going to war*. Another 10% and 6% have *no opinion*.
- ✓ In sharp contrast, large majorities of pastors (70%) and specialized clergy (78%) believe the situation in Iraq was *not worth going to war*.

Figure 3. Opinions on Going to War in Iraq



- ✓ Small majorities of members (53%) and elders (53%) but larger majorities of pastors (73%) and specialized clergy (82%) believe the war in Iraq has *not been worth the cost* “in U.S. military lives.”
- ✓ A similar pattern is found for the “financial cost to the U.S.” of the war in Iraq, with half of laity, but 70% of pastors and 80% of specialized clergy, viewing the war as *not worth the cost*.
- ✓ Concerning the war in Iraq, more panelists believe the *U.S. is winning* (elders, 44%; pastors, 30%) than the *insurgents are winning* (5%; 10%), but even more believe *neither is winning* (47%; 56%). A small share have *no opinion* (4%; 3%).

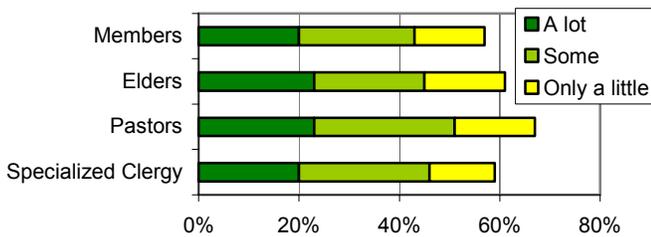
The Fight against Terrorism

- ✓ A small majority of laity judge that the U.S. war on terrorism is going *very well* (members, 6%; elders, 7%) or *somewhat well* (47%; 45%), while larger majorities of ministers rate the war as going *somewhat poorly* (pastors, 30%; specialized clergy, 30%) or *very poorly* (34%; 51%).
- ✓ Most laity (members, 58%; elders, 54%) deem the war in Iraq to be *part of the war on terrorism* “that began on September 11, 2001,” while most ministers (pastors, 60%; specialized clergy, 73%) deem the war in Iraq to be an *entirely separate military action*.

Faith and Presidential Voting in 2004

- ✓ Almost all panelists—98% or more—report voting in the 2004 presidential election.
- ✓ Of these, large minorities (members, 43%) or small majorities (pastors, 51%) report “the faith/religion of the presidential candidates” influenced their vote *some or a lot*.

Figure 4. Influence of Faith on Panelists’ Vote for President



Faith’s Positive Influence on Presidential Voting

- ✓ From one in six to one in three panelists report voting for a presidential candidate for each of these reasons:
 - *His religious beliefs were congruent with mine* (members, 26%; elders, 28%; pastors, 22%)
 - *I was impressed with his religious beliefs* (26%; 28%; 21%)
 - *I was impressed with how he lived his faith* (36%; 38%; 36%)
 - *I thought he had the stronger faith* (26%; 28%; 17%)
 - *One of his positions was congruent with my beliefs* (27%; 28%; 32%)
- ✓ Overall, around half or more of panelists (members, 50%; pastors, 55%) report voting *for* a particular candidate because of at least one these five factors.

Faith’s Negative Effects on Presidential Voting

- ✓ In general, somewhat fewer report voting *against* a presidential candidate for each of five factors:
 - *His religion/beliefs were contrary to mine* (members, 10%; elders, 11%; pastors, 18%)
 - *His lack of values* (22%; 25%; 21%)
 - *One of his positions was contrary to my beliefs* (19%; 26%; 30%)
 - *His religious beliefs were too conservative* (8%; 11%; 23%)
 - *His religious beliefs were too liberal* (13%; 15%; 12%)

- ✓ Overall, one-third (members, 35%) to one-half of panelists (pastors, 49%) report voting *against* a candidate for at least one of these five reasons.

Congregational Involvement in the 2004 Election

- ✓ According to pastors, 17% of their congregations “helped people register to vote” prior to the 2004 elections. An overlapping 12% “helped people get to the polls on November 2.”
- ✓ One in four pastors (25%) reports that the congregation “made an effort to inform people about particular issues in the presidential election.”

The Role of Pastors in Political Campaigns

- ✓ Majorities (61% to 79%) believe it is *always* “appropriate for pastors to use the pulpit to encourage people to vote.” Most of the rest (16% to 25%) respond *yes, occasionally*.
- ✓ However, almost no one believes it is *always* (1% or less) or even *occasionally* (4% or less) “appropriate for pastors to use the pulpit to argue for or against a candidate for political office.”
- ✓ Many members (44%) and elders (45%) believe it is *always* or *occasionally* “appropriate for pastors to use the pulpit to discuss political issues factually.” Even more ministers hold that view (pastors, 64%).
- ✓ Many fewer believe it is *always* or *occasionally* “appropriate for pastors to use the pulpit to discuss political issues in a partisan way” (members, 10%; elders, 8%; pastors, 6%; specialized clergy, 11%).

Influence of Religion

- ✓ More panelists think “churches and religious groups” have *too little* (members, 28%; elders, 32%; pastors, 31%) than *too much* (20%; 22%; 23%) “power and influence in Washington,” with the exception of specialized clergy (*too much*, 35%; *too little*, 27%). But many think religion’s influence is *about right* (32%; 26%; 24%; 19%). The rest have *no opinion*.
- ✓ More laity and specialized clergy believe “religion as a whole” is *increasing* (members, 43%; elders, 42%; specialized clergy, 42%) rather than *decreasing* (30%; 36%; 33%) its “influence on American life,” while pastors are more evenly split (*increasing*, 39%; *losing*, 41%).

CHRISTIAN ZIONISM AND EVANGELIZING JEWS

Christian Zionism

- ✓ Few laity (members, 17%; elders, 26%) but most ministers (pastors, 72%; specialized clergy, 63%) are *very aware* or *somewhat aware* that the 216th General Assembly acted to “declare ‘Christian Zionism’ inconsistent with the basic values of Reformed theology.” (“Christian Zionism” was defined as “the belief that the modern state of Israel, and Zionism in general, are divinely mandated and the fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:3.”)
- ✓ Overall, more laity *strongly agree* or *agree* (members, 41%) than *strongly disagree* or *disagree* (26%) that “because of God’s promises to Abraham, the modern state of Israel maintains a divine right to exist.” The pattern is reversed for ministers, with majorities responding *strongly disagree/disagree* (pastors, 53%).
- ✓ Responses of ministers to a related question (“The state of Israel will be the catalyst for the ‘end times’ described in the Bible”) are similar, with only 12% of pastors and 8% of specialized clergy responding in agreement, and 63% and 69% in disagreement.
- ✓ Among laity, the *strongly agree/agree* totals (members, 22%; elders, 24%) are also relatively low for the “end times” question, but few *strongly disagree/disagree* (24%; 33%). Even more respond *neither agree nor disagree/not sure* (54%; 43%).

Converting Jews: General Opinions

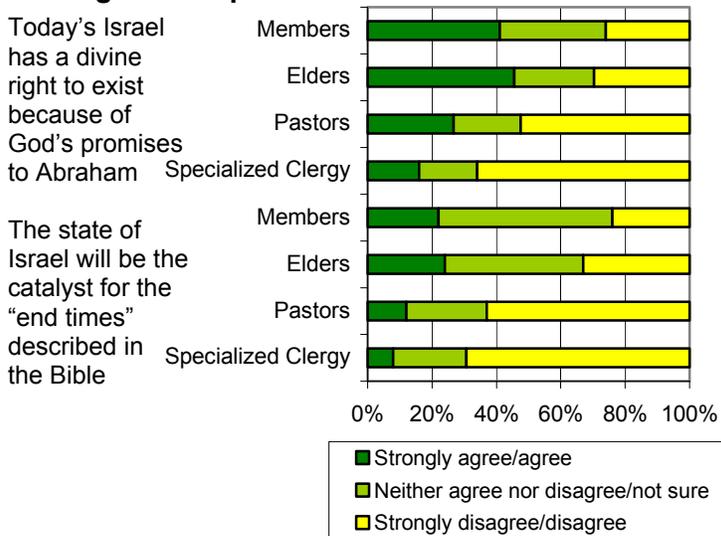
- ✓ More panelists *strongly disagree* or *disagree* (members, 46%; pastors, 43%) than *strongly agree* or *agree* (30%; 39%) that “Christians should seek to convert Jews to Christianity.” Others (15% to 24%) respond *neither agree nor disagree/not sure*.

- ✓ Consistently, more panelists *strongly agree/agree* (e.g., elders, 36%; pastors, 47%) than *strongly disagree/disagree* (35%; 33%) that “Jews are already in covenant with God, and do not need to become Christians to achieve salvation.”

Converting Jews: “Messianic” Congregations

- ✓ When asked “Should the PC(USA) seek to establish ‘Messianic’ congregations . . . inviting those of Jewish background to explore Christian faith while maintaining Jewish religious and cultural practices,” more laity and pastors respond *yes* (members, 44%; pastors, 54%) than *no* (28%; 35%), while the reverse is true for specialized clergy (35%, *yes*; 46%, *no*).
- ✓ Few laity (members, 12%) but most ministers (pastors, 78%) are *familiar* “with the controversy over a Presbyterian ‘Messianic’ congregation organized in Philadelphia in 2003.”

Figure 5. Opinions on Christian Zionism



	Members	Elders	Ordained Ministers
Number of surveys mailed.....	730	1,052	1,213
Number returned.....	398	603	781‡
Response rate.....	54%	57%	64%

‡Of the 781 returned surveys, 516 came from pastors and 265 from specialized clergy.

This survey was initially mailed in November 2004, and returns were accepted through January 2005. Results are subject to sampling and other errors. Small differences should be interpreted cautiously. As a rule, differences of less than 8% between samples are not statistically meaningful.

A longer report is available for free on the Web (www.pcusa.org/research/panel/index) or for \$10 from PDS (800-524-2612; order PDS# 65100-04284). It contains percentage responses to each question separately for members, elders, pastors, and specialized clergy.

For more information on Presbyterian-Jewish relations and actions related to Israel from the 2004 General Assembly, go to www.pcusa.org/israelandjewishrelations.