



The Presbyterian Panel

Listening to Presbyterians



SUMMARY

Church Camps and Retreats The August 2002 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 major findings from the twelfth survey completed by the 2000-2002 Panel, initially sampled in the fall of 1999.

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FORMATIVE FAITH EXPERIENCES

Important Contributors to Faith Development

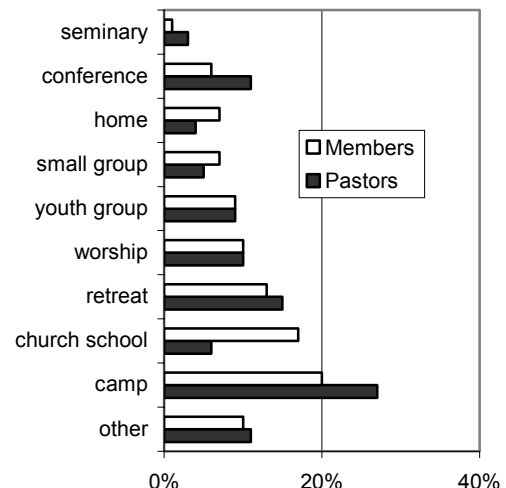
- ✓ “Worship services and sermons” have to a *very great extent* or a *great extent* contributed to the “understanding of Christian faith and the relation of faith to life” for 81% of members, 78% of elders, 85% of pastors, and 79% of specialized clergy.
- ✓ A majority of ministers (pastors, 64%) but not laity (elders, 40%) report that “camps and/or retreats” contributed a *very great extent* or *great extent* to their faith understanding.
- ✓ A majority of laity (elders, 56%) but not ministers (pastors, 46%) report that “church school experiences” contributed a *very great extent* or *great extent* to their faith understanding.

- ✓ Another sizable group of panelists report a singular spiritual growth experience in one of three church-based settings: *church school* (17% of members and 6% of pastors report an experience there); *worship* (10%; 10%); and *youth group* (9%; 9%).
- ✓ The person named by the most panelists in each group as “most instrumental” in making their spiritual growth experience a significant one is a *pastor/minister*: 35% of members, 36% of elders, and 48% of ministers so report.
- ✓ Other frequently named “most instrumental” persons include *teacher or small group leader* (elders, 35%; pastors, 28%), *group members* (22%; 25%), and *seminar leader/speaker* (12%; 19%).

Singular Spiritual Growth Experience

- ✓ Two-thirds of members (70%) and elders (68%) and nine in ten ministers (90%) recall “one particular learning or spiritual growth experience that had great significance” in shaping their Christian life.
- ✓ Among these panelists, half report that the spiritual growth experience took place prior to age 17.
- ✓ The most common setting for a singular spiritual growth experience is a *camp*, listed by 20% of members, 17% of elders, and 27% of pastors, followed by *retreat* (13%; 15%; and 15%). Adding *conferences*, the total who report experiences at such special venues ranges from around four in ten members (40%), elders (41%), and specialized clergy (43%), to a majority of pastors (53%).

Figure 1
Setting of Singular
Spiritual Growth Experience



CONGREGATIONAL RETREATS

Numbers and Types of Retreats

- ✓ 59% of congregations held or sponsored at least one retreat in the year prior to the survey, according to pastors. In these congregations, the median number of retreats reported by pastors is four.
- ✓ Majorities of pastors report at least one retreat for:
 - Youth 13-19 years old (75%)
 - Children up to 12 years old (59%)
 - Adults of all ages (58%)
- ✓ A majority of pastors (82%) and specialized clergy (63%) but only a third of elders (34%) and a fourth of members (24%) report attending at least one “church-related retreat or camp in the past year.”
- ✓ Of members and elders attending at least one retreat, most (75% and 79%, respectively) attended only one. Of pastors and specialized clergy attending at least one retreat, most attended only one (30% and 43%, respectively) or two (30%; 30%).

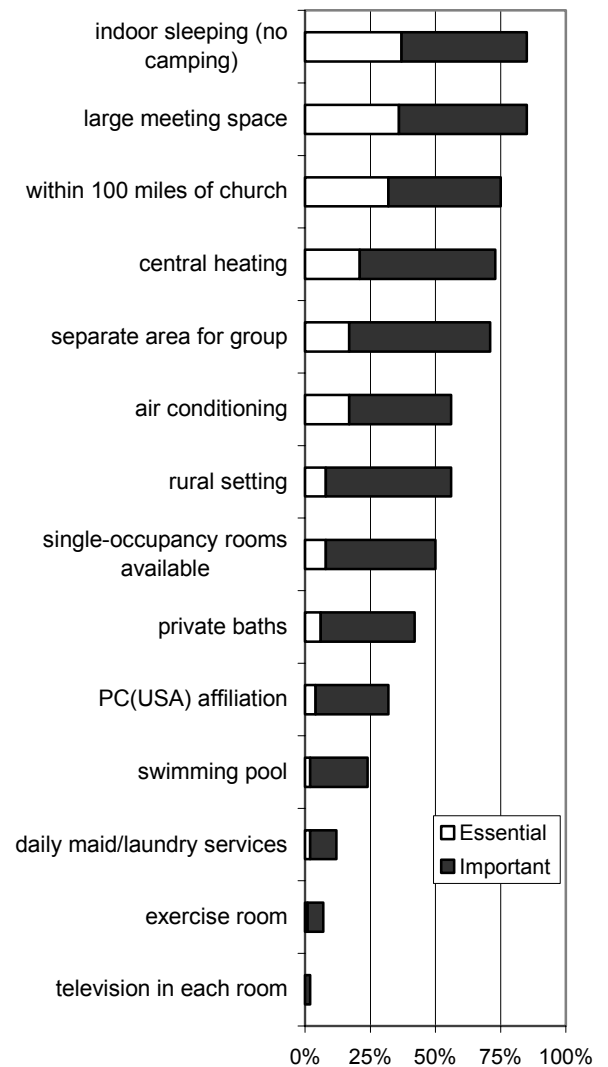
Planning a Retreat

- ✓ One in nine members (11%), one in five elders (21%), two in three pastors (67%), and one in four specialized clergy (26%) report helping to plan a “retreat or overnight event” for their congregation in the prior year.
- ✓ Features that a majority of pastors list as *essential* or *important* in the planning for the most recent retreat they helped to arrange include:
 - Indoor sleeping facility (no camping) (85%)
 - Large assembly hall or meeting space (85%)
 - Meals provided by the host facility (77%)
 - Within 100 miles of our church (75%)
 - Central heating (73%)
 - Separate building/branch for our group (71%)
 - Recreation activities (69%)
 - Rural setting (56%)
 - Air conditioning (56%)
 - Private group kitchen for meals or snacks (53%)
 - Motel-like sleeping facility (versus dorm) (52%)
- ✓ “Presbyterian affiliation” was *essential* or *important* to 33% of members, 39% of elders, 32% of pastors, and 28% of specialized clergy in planning their last retreat.

- ✓ Features that few pastors list as *essential* or *very important* in the planning for the most recent retreat they helped to arrange include:

- Television in each room (2%)
- Telephone in each room (4%)
- Internet access on-site (6%)
- Exercise room (7%)
- Boating/sailing/yachting (7%)
- Daily maid/laundry services (12%)
- Picnic facilities (19%)
- Swimming pool (24%)

Figure 2
Importance of Selected Factors in Most Recent Retreat Planned: Pastors’ Responses



RETREAT PREFERENCES

Facility Preferences When Attending a Retreat

✓ A majority of members indicate that it is *essential* or *important* for the “location of an overnight church retreat you were to attend” to have these features:

- Central heating (80%)
- Indoor sleeping facility (versus camping) (79%)
- Meals provided by host facility (71%)
- Air conditioning (70%)
- Walking trails (68%)
- Within 100 miles of church (61%)
- Private baths (59%)
- Recreation activities (55%)
- Rural setting (54%)

✓ Few list these facility features as *essential* or *important* for a retreat they would attend:

- Internet access on-site (6%)
- Boating/sailing/yachting (7%)
- Television in each room (8%)
- Daily maid/laundry services (10%)
- Swimming pool (11%)

✓ Facility preferences among members are similar to those of other groups, with these exceptions:

- More pastors (60%) and specialized clergy (70%) than members (45%) deem “single-occupancy rooms” *essential* or *important*

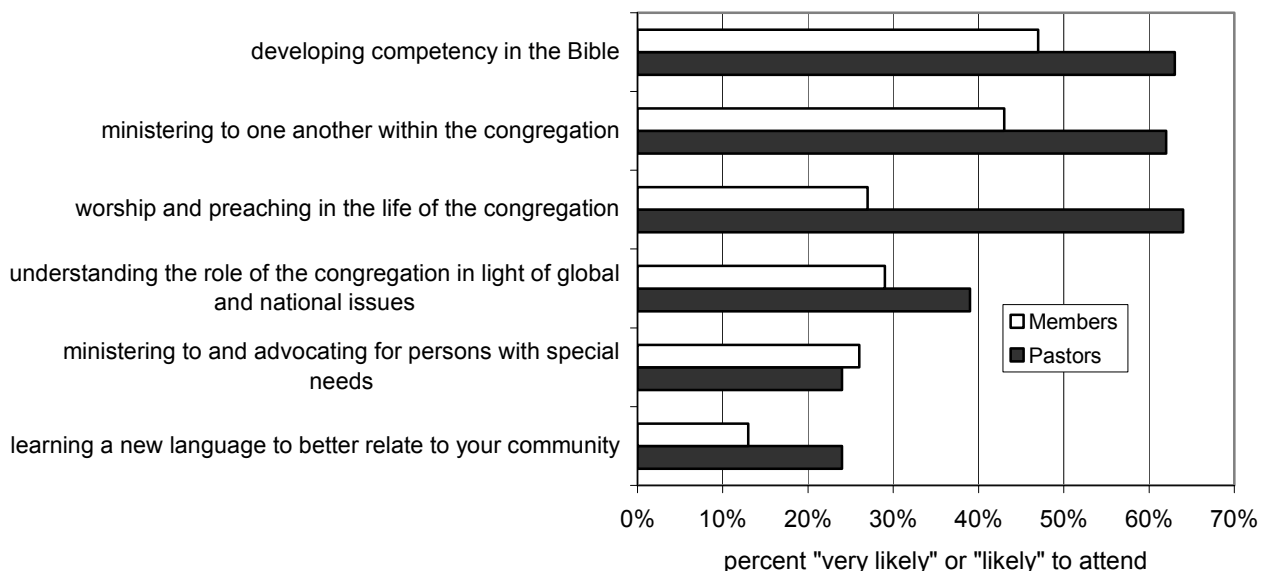
- More pastors (82%) and specialized clergy (83%) than members (71%) deem “meals provided by the host facility” *essential* or *important*
- More specialized clergy (20%) than members (6%) deem “Internet access on-site” *essential* or *important*
- More pastors (61%) and specialized clergy (66%) than members (50%) deem “motel-like sleeping facility (versus dorm-like)” *essential* or *important*
- More members (34%) than pastors (21%) deem “picnic facilities” *essential* or *important*
- More members (41%) than pastors (25%) or specialized clergy (24%) deem “Presbyterian affiliation” *essential* or *important*

Content Preferences

✓ A majority of elders and pastors are *very likely* or *likely* to attend a retreat on “developing competency in interpreting the Bible” (59% and 63%, respectively) and on “ministering to one another within the congregation” (54%; 62%), as are 47% and 43% of members, respectively.

✓ “Worship and preaching in the life of the congregation” is a topic that almost two-thirds of pastors (64%) indicate would make them *very likely* or *likely* to attend a retreat, but only 27% of members and 35% of elders so respond.

Figure 3
Percent Who are Very Likely or Likely to Attend a Retreat on Each Study Topic

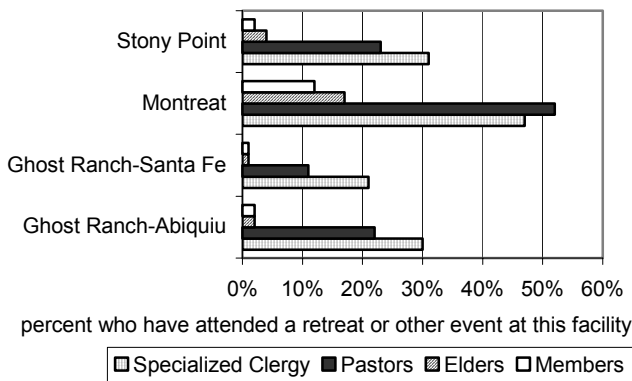


CONFERENCE CENTERS AND OTHER TOPICS

PC(USA) Conference Centers

- ✓ One in seven members (14%), one in five elders (20%), and seven in ten pastors (70%) and specialized clergy (71%) have “ever attended a retreat, conference, class, or seminar” at one of the four PC(USA) national conference centers (Ghost Ranch-Abiquiu; Ghost Ranch-Santa Fe; Montreat; Stony Point).
- ✓ Most pastors and specialized clergy but very few laity (members, 14%) have been to more than one conference center. The most widely visited conference center by far in all Panel groups is Montreat.

Figure 4
Conference Center Attendance



Congregational Priorities

- ✓ Almost half of members (48%) and pastors (44%) chose *accessibility to church facilities* as one of two priority items (from a list of nine) that a “congregation might provide for members and staff.” Similar numbers (45%; 50%) chose *scholarship help to attend camps, conferences, or other events*.
- ✓ When asked to select “lowest priority” items from the same list, 90% or more in every sample chose *entertainment videos*, followed by *recreational equipment for children and youth* (members, 31%).

Learning Needs

- ✓ Around two in three laity (members, 63%) and four in ten ministers (pastors, 42%) chose *biblical interpretation/Bible study* as one of three areas (from a list of 11) of Christian faith and life that they “feel the greatest need to learn more about.” Around four in ten in every group chose *prayer and meditation*.
- ✓ A third of pastors (31%) but only 16% of members and 23% of elders chose *evangelism* as the area they feel a great need to learn more about. Similarly, 22% of pastors, but only 9% of members and elders, chose *modifying lifestyle*.

	Members	Elders	Ordained Ministers
Number of surveys mailed	888	929	1,292
Number returned	427	464	754‡
Response rate	48%	49%	58%

‡Of the 754 returned surveys, 586 came from pastors and 161 from specialized clergy.

This survey was initially mailed in August 2002, and returns were accepted through October 2002. 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 the August 2002 Presbyterian Panel results, a longer report with additional charts is available for \$6. Contact PDS (1-800-524-2612) and order PDS# 65100-02274. It includes an appendix with percentage responses to each survey question separately for members, elders, pastors, and specialized clergy.

LISTENING TO PRESBYTERIANS SINCE 1973

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