



The Presbyterian Panel

Listening to Presbyterians



SUMMARY

PUBLIC WORSHIP—THE MAY 2000 SURVEY

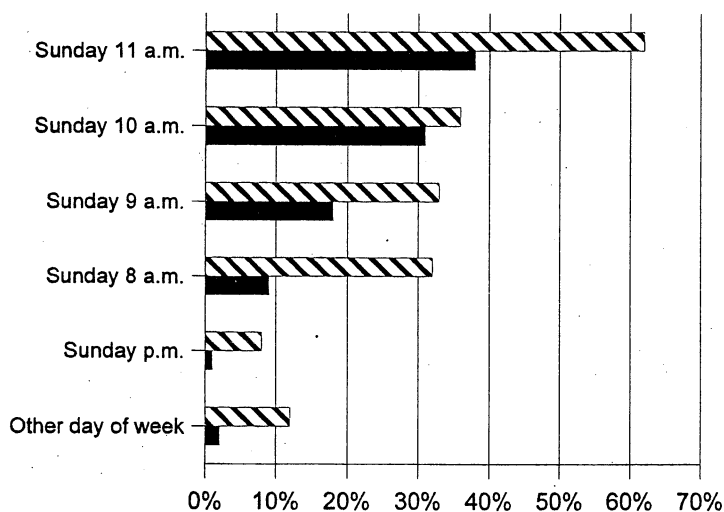
The Presbyterian Panel consists of three nationally-representative samples of groups affiliated with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.): members, elders (lay leaders), and ordained ministers. For analysis, ministers are split into two groups based on current call: *pastors*, serving in a congregation, and *specialized clergy*, serving elsewhere. New samples are drawn every three years. These pages summarize major findings from the third survey completed by the 2000-2002 Panel, initially sampled in the fall of 1999.

TIMES AND FREQUENCIES

Times

- ✓ Most Presbyterian worship services take place on Sunday morning. Late morning is most common: 62% of pastors report a service at around 11 a.m.

Figure 1
When Presbyterians Worship



- ▨ Service offered by congregation (pastor reports)
- Most recent service attended (member reports)

- ✓ The most recent worship service members attended took place on Sunday morning, typically beginning around 10 or 11 a.m.

- ✓ A majority of members (57%) report that this service lasted an hour or less.

Frequencies

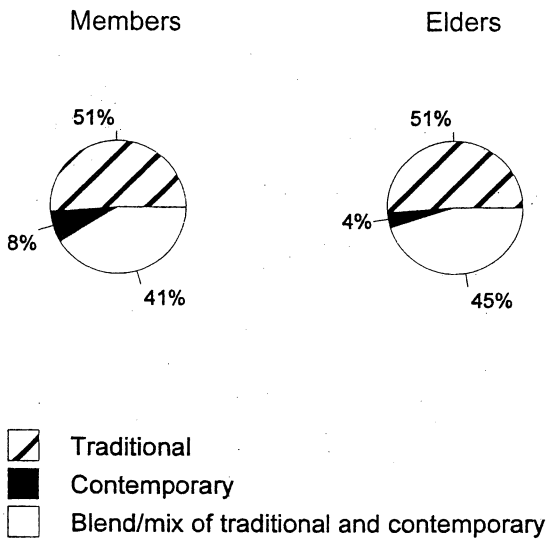
- ✓ A majority of pastors report multiple worship services at their congregation in a typical week, and a few (7%) report more than three services per week. Three-fourths of pastors reporting multiple services indicate that the services differ, typically in liturgy, music, and length.
- ✓ The most common reason for multiple services, given by three-fourths of pastors, is “to accommodate people who want to come at different times.” Other common reasons include:
 - “worship space is too small” (52% of pastors so report)
 - “to meet the needs of both traditional and contemporary worshippers” (46%)
 - “to offer services with different musical styles” (40%)
- ✓ Four in ten pastors report some change in the schedule or frequency of worship during the summer, often shifting the main service to an earlier time (reported by 27%) or having fewer services (16%).
- ✓ According to majorities of elders, most congregations offer additional services during Advent and Lent.

Style

- ✓ A slim majority of both members (51%) and elders (51%) describe the most recent worship service they attended as *traditional*. Most of the rest describe the service as a *blend or mix of traditional and contemporary*. Only 8% of members and 4% of elders describe it as *contemporary*.

Figure 2

Style of Most Recent Worship Service



Who Leads

- ✓ Nine in ten elders and members report that the most recent service they attended was led by the pastor.
- ✓ Around a quarter of the services had more than one worship leader, often including an elder or other lay member.

Order and Elements

- ✓ According to elders, most services had a written outline of the order of worship.
- ✓ Almost all elders report that the service they most recently attended included a sermon, congregational singing, and an offering.

- ✓ Other worship elements included in a large majority of these services were:
 - singing by a choir (85% of elders so reported)
 - a prayer of confession (84%)
 - silent prayer or meditation (78%)
 - a children’s sermon (73%)
 - reading from or reciting of a creed or confession (71%)
 - declaration of pardon (69%)
 - prayers of the people (68%)

- ✓ A quarter of the services included the Lord’s Supper; a fifth, baptism.

The Lord’s Supper

- ✓ A majority of congregations (61%) celebrate the Lord’s Supper monthly, according to pastors, and a few (7%) do so weekly. More than a third of pastors (38%) also report celebrations of the Lord’s Supper on Special Days and Seasons.
- ✓ Pastors are split in describing the mood during the most recent Lord’s Supper: 49% describe it as a *joyful feast*, while 46% as a *solemn remembrance*.
- ✓ 95% of congregations used grape juice exclusively; 5% had both wine and grape juice.
- ✓ The most common activity during serving of the elements was instrumental music (reported by 84% of pastors).

Music

- ✓ The most recent worship services included organ music, according to 90% of elders. Many also report the use of a piano (71%) and a few (16%), a guitar.
- ✓ Half of pastors (51%) report that their congregation *always* uses *The Presbyterian Hymnal* in worship, and another 15% report its use either *often* or *occasionally*.

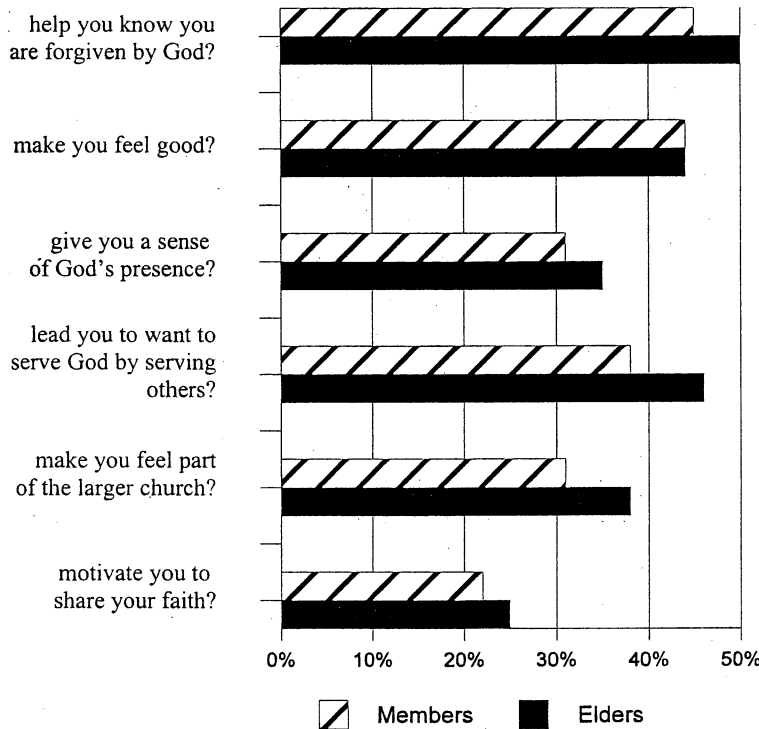
Evaluating the Worship Experience

- ✓ 85% or more of members report that at least *to some extent* the most recent worship service they attended:
 - gave them a sense of being in the presence of God (90% so responded)
 - renewed their spirits (90%)
 - made them feel good (87%)
 - helped them know they are forgiven by God (87%)
 - encouraged them to lead a more faithful life (85%).
- ✓ Half or fewer members and elders, however, feel that these and other features would describe their most recent worship experience *to a great extent*, as Figure 3 shows.

Figure 3

Worship Experiences of Members and Elders

To what extent did the most recent worship service ...



percent responding to a great extent

- ✓ Other terms that half or more of members and elders believe describe recent worship *to a great extent* include: well-organized, warmth of spirit, and reverent.

The Ideal Space

- ✓ The ideal worship *space*, according to elders, would:
 - be *spacious* (preferred by 50%) rather than *cozy* (32%)
 - have *carpets* (74%) rather than *bare floors* (13%)
 - have *pews* (87%) rather than *chairs* (6%)
 - have *lots of natural light* (89%) rather than *little natural light* (3%)

The Ideal Service

- ✓ The ideal worship *service*, according to elders, would:
 - be *traditional* (preferred by 64%) rather than *contemporary* (17%)
 - be a *blend of styles* (75%) rather than *one style* (12%)
 - be *ordered* (75%) rather than *spontaneous* (11%)
 - be *exuberant* (42%) rather than *reserved* (27%)
 - *only occasionally include the Lord's Supper* (64%) rather than *almost always include the Lord's Supper* (22%)
 - *usually include a children's sermon* (83%) rather than *usually not include a children's sermon* (9%)

Most Important Feature

- ✓ When asked to choose the one feature that is "normally most important to you" in a worship service, members' selections were:
 - clear and relevant preaching of God's Word (58%)
 - feeling moved by the power of God's Spirit (26%)
 - being moved to care and action for others (11%)
 - mystery and awe in the presence of God (4%)

Choosing Scripture

- ✓ Twice as many members with an opinion (a third were *uncertain*) prefer "expository preaching through books of the Bible" (44%) to preaching that "follows the lectionary closely."

RESOURCES AND PLANNING

Worship Committee

- ✓ 92% of pastors report a worship committee in their congregation.
- ✓ Three in four worship committees meet at least monthly. On average, seven people attended the last meeting.
- ✓ 36% of worship committees have recently studied "The Directory for Worship" of the PC(USA).
- ✓ In 84% of congregations, according to pastors, worship hymns are selected by the pastor. In about half (48%), the choir or music director is also involved.

Resources Wanted

- ✓ Of possible worship resources, pastors would be most interested in seeing the Office of Theology and Worship produce:
 - a book of contemporary hymns (68% indicate an interest)
 - prayers, litanies, or responsive readings (64%)
 - aids for planning worship (35%)
 - a hymnal supplement (29%)
 - "ready to use" services (27%)

Planning

- ✓ In almost all congregations (97%) the pastor is involved in planning worship. The music director is also involved in a majority of congregations (63%).

	Members	Elders	Ordained Ministers*
Number of surveys mailed	1,203	1,133	1,485
Number returned	772	768	1,053
Response rate	64%	67%	70%

*Of the 1,053 returned surveys, 826 came from pastors and 227 from specialized clergy.

This survey was initially mailed in May 2000, and returns were accepted through September 2000. 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 May 2000 Presbyterian Panel results, a longer report with additional charts and graphs is available for \$5. Contact PDS (1-800-524-2612) and order PDS# 65100-00265. Included is a data appendix that presents the percentage responses to each survey question separately for members, elders, pastors, and specialized clergy.

For more information on worship in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) contact Joe Small of the Office of Theology and Worship at 888-728-7228 ext. 5333.

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