



The Presbyterian Panel

Listening to Presbyterians



SUMMARY

Stewardship, Finances, and Allocation of Resources The May 2003 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 third survey completed by the 2003-2005 Panel, initially sampled in the fall of 2002.

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STEWARDSHIP IN CONGREGATIONS

Approaches to Stewardship

- ✓ Around half of pastors (54%) indicate that their congregation *primarily emphasizes stewardship during the annual fund-raising campaign*. Half as many (26%) indicate that it *emphasizes stewardship year-round*. Another 16% respond *both equally*.
- ✓ More members (24%) than pastors (17%) indicate their congregation *emphasizes stewardship as fund-raising*, while more pastors (58%) than members (43%) indicate that their congregation *emphasizes stewardship as a broad approach to life*.

Integrating Stewardship with Other Activities

- ✓ Almost all pastors report focusing on stewardship in a sermon during the past year, with most doing so *once or twice* (34%) or *three or four times* (46%).

- ✓ Most pastors believe that “stewardship is an integral part of your congregation’s worship,” but more believe it is integral to *some extent* (61%) than to a *great extent* (21%). Fewer pastors believe stewardship is integral to a *great extent* in their “congregation’s regular Christian Education program” (*great extent*, 6%; *some extent*, 37%) or “new member class” (*great extent*, 10%; *some extent*, 48%).

Financial Stewardship Campaigns

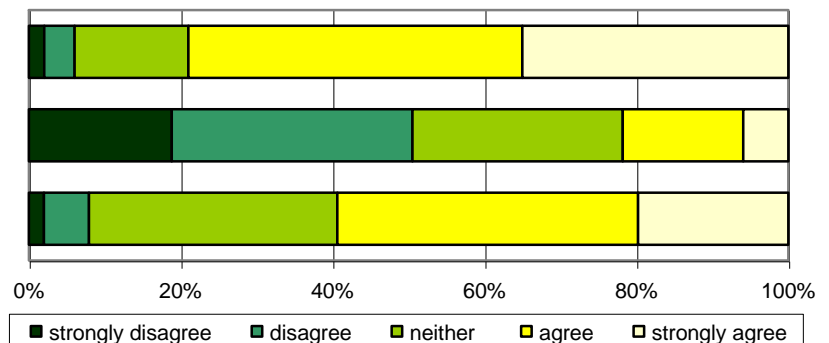
- ✓ 86% of pastors report that their congregation had a financial stewardship campaign in 2002.
- ✓ The most common features of these campaigns, from a list of five, were *direct mail* (reported by 66%) and *Consecration Sunday* (54%). Only 4% reported *every member visitation*, and 5%, *personal delivery* (e.g., *Pony Express* or similar).

Figure 1. Members’ Opinions on Stewardship Issues

I'd like my congregation to place more emphasis on time, talent, & other non-monetary aspects of stewardship

My congregation puts too much of its stewardship emphasis on fund-raising

Stewardship should be an integral part of church school and other regular Christian Education programs



ALLOCATION AND TRUST: CONGREGATIONS AND MIDDLE GOVERNING BODIES

Congregational Giving Estimates

- ✓ Most members (69%), a large minority of elders (45%), and one in nine pastors (11%) *don't know* "what percentage of the money received by your congregation in 2002 was sent to fund mission and program beyond your congregation."
- ✓ Of those who ventured a guess, the median estimates ranged from 11% (pastors) to 15% (members).
- ✓ Even more panelists (members, 84%; pastors, 27%) respond *don't know* as to the percentage of the money that their congregation gave in 2002 to fund mission and program beyond its bounds that went to the General Assembly and other national PC(USA) programs. Of those giving an estimate, the median figure ranges from 6% (members) to 8% (pastors).

Information and Trust in Congregations

- ✓ Almost all elders (91%) and pastors (94%) and a large majority of members (73%) report having *enough information* on "handling and allocation of funds by the leaders of their congregation."
- ✓ Almost as many (86%, 89%, and 72%, respectively) report a *high level of trust* regarding the "handling and allocation of funds" by congregational leaders.
- ✓ Most panelists report that they *have enough say* (members, 57%; elders, 79%; pastors, 85%) "when it comes to decisions by your congregation on allocating funds to mission and program." 19% of members and 14% of elders *would like more say*, while 24% and 7%, respectively, are *not sure*.

Designated Giving

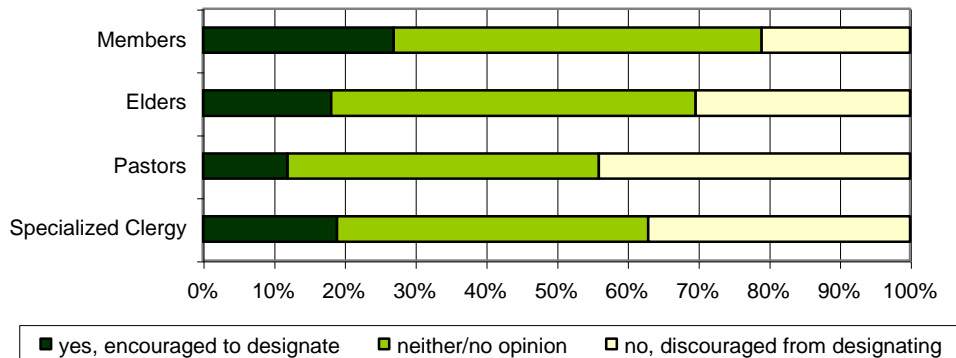
- ✓ A quarter of pastors (27%) and 20% of elders report that their congregations have at some time "encouraged members to bypass the regular funding procedures of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and instead give money directly to mission or program."
- ✓ More members believe that people should be *encouraged* (27%) rather than *discouraged* (21%) when they give to designate "what percentage should go to mission and programs beyond their congregation." The reverse is true among pastors (12%; 44%). In both groups a sizable proportion respond *neither encouraged nor discouraged* or have *no opinion*.

Allocation by Middle Governing Bodies

- ✓ Most ministers (pastors, 74%; specialized clergy, 65%) but many fewer laity (members, 24%; elders, 34%) believe they have *enough information* on the "handling and allocation of funds by the leaders" of their presbytery. Only a third of ministers and 15% of laity believe they have *enough information* about financial allocations made by their synod leaders.
- ✓ Similarly, more panelists have a *high level of trust* in "the handling and allocation of funds" by the leaders of their presbytery (elders, 35%; pastors, 56%) than by the leaders of their synod (22%; 28%).
- ✓ Overall, a large majority of those panelists with an opinion have at least a *medium level of trust* in the handling and allocation of funds by presbytery (members, 88%; pastors, 92%) and synod leaders (members, 83%; pastors, 71%).

Figure 2. Opinions on Designated Giving

Q. When people give money to their congregation, should they be encouraged to indicate what percentage should go to mission and programs beyond the congregation?



Rating PC(USA) Programs and Leadership

- ✓ Majorities of specialized clergy (68%) and pastors (57%), half of elders (49%), and a large minority of members (47%) have either *very high enthusiasm* or *moderately high enthusiasm* for “the work and programs of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A).” Most others respond *moderately low enthusiasm*.
- ✓ Excluding those responding *don’t know*, similar percentages *strongly agree* or *agree* that “the leadership of the PC(USA) is doing a good job” (members, 57%; elders, 54%; pastors, 61%).

Information Needs

- ✓ Half of elders (52%), more than four in ten members (44%), and one-third of pastors (35%) *would like to have more information available* “about the mission and program of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A).” Only a third of members (32%) and elders (35%) (but six in ten pastors) *have all I need*.
- ✓ More of those desiring more information would prefer to receive it *in printed form* (members, 72%; specialized clergy, 48%) rather than *via the Internet* (14%; 28%) or *in occasional e-mails* (14%; 24%).
- ✓ In the past two years, most pastors (87%) have seen “the stewardship magazine or other materials on stewardship prepared by the national offices of the PC(USA).” Among those who used the materials, 14% found them *very helpful*; 31%, *helpful*; 43%, *somewhat helpful*; and 12%, *not helpful*.

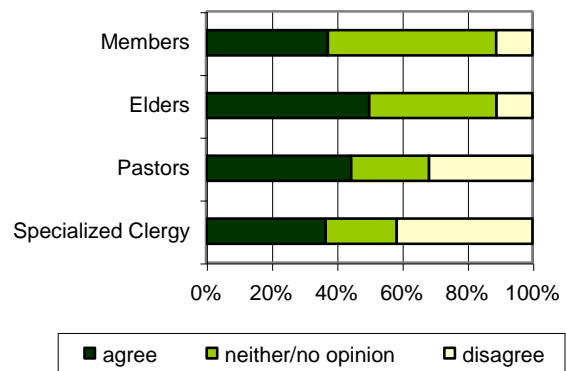
Financial Needs and Accountability

- ✓ Most panelists, ranging from 88% of specialized clergy to 77% of members, believe the PC(USA) has either *very serious* or *moderately serious financial needs*.
- ✓ Twice as many *strongly* or *moderately agree* (members, 38%; pastors, 61%) as *strongly* or *moderately disagree* (18%; 31%) that “leaders of the PC(USA) are sufficiently accountable to members regarding how church contributions are used.”
- ✓ Still, only minorities (members, 19%; elders, 17%; pastors, 47%) report that they currently have *enough information* about “the handling and allocation of funds by the leaders of the General Assembly Council and other national entities of the PC(USA).”

- ✓ Majorities in all samples (members, 53%; elders, 51%; pastors, 67%) report either a *high level of trust* or a *medium level of trust* when it comes to “the handling and allocation of funds by the leaders of the General Assembly Council and other national entities of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A).” A *low level of trust* is reported by 18%, 28%, and 29%, respectively. The rest have *no opinion*.
- ✓ A third of members (37%) and specialized clergy (37%), half of elders (50%), and 45% of pastors want “more oversight of national PC(USA) leaders when it comes to making decisions about which missions and programs to fund.”

Figure 3. Trust in PC(USA) Funding Decisions

Q. I would like more oversight of national PC(USA) leaders when it comes to making decisions about which missions and programs to fund



Making Decisions

- ✓ In every group, more panelists *strongly agree* or *moderately agree* (elders, 44%; pastors, 63%) than *strongly disagree* or *moderately disagree* (23%; 25%) with the statement, “I approve of the decision-making processes in the PC(USA).”
- ✓ Nevertheless, when it comes to decision making about funding mission, social service, and outreach programs:
 - Majorities of members (54%) and elders (59%) and four in ten pastors (42%) would prefer *more decision-making by sessions*.
 - Half as many laity (members, 25%; elders, 30%) and slightly more pastors (47%) *like the situation now*.
 - Almost no panelists want *more decision-making by presbytery or national church leaders* (members, 4%; elders, 3%; pastors, 4%).

PERSONAL STEWARDSHIP

Congregational Giving Rates

- ✓ The median household pre-tax income given in 2002 to congregations was 5% for members, 6% for elders and specialized clergy, and 9% for pastors.
- ✓ 26% of members, 30% of elders and specialized clergy, and 47% of pastors give 10% or more of household pre-tax income to the church.

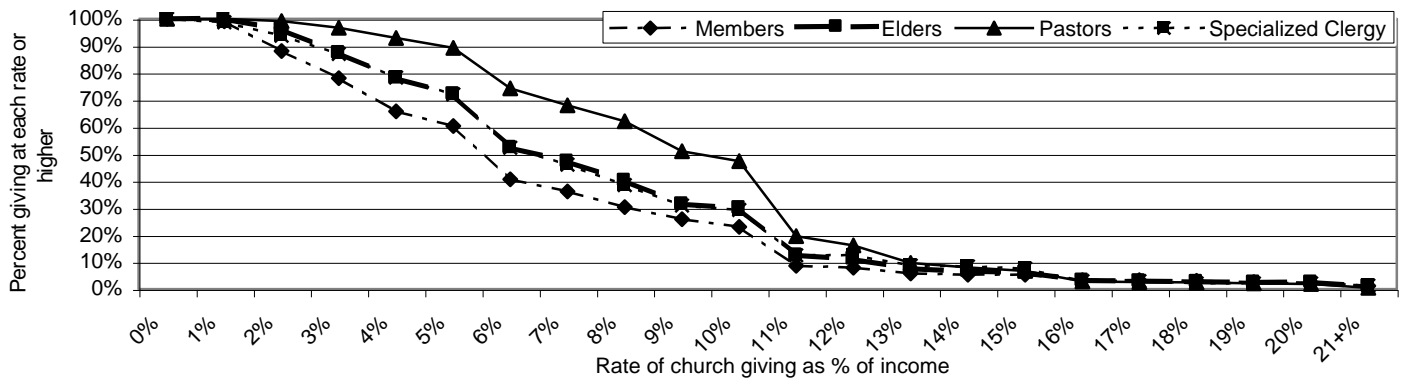
Reasons for Giving

- ✓ Most choose *sense of gratitude for God's love and goodness* (members, 52%; elders, 61%; specialized clergy, 70%; pastors, 80%) when asked to pick "two factors that influence you the most in your decisions about giving to your congregation." Among laity, the next most frequently chosen factor is *a sense of obligation to support the work here* (43%; 42%).

Increasing Contributions

- ✓ Several factors have led many panelists to increase their congregational giving in the past five years. These include:
 - Felt God wanted me to do so (members, 40%; elders, 53%)
 - Family income went up (35%; 42%)
 - Saw the good done by a church program (39%; 40%)
 - Church budget was in the red (30%; 41%)
 - Specific program or mission was threatened by lack of funds (24%; 24%)
- ✓ Half of members (49%) and a majority of elders (56%), pastors (62%), and specialized clergy (70%) believe they *could give more* to the church "if there was a significant need." Only 29%, 26%, 25%, and 20%, respectively, report *giving all I can*.

Figure 4. Percentage of Income Given to Congregations in 2003



	Members	Elders	Ordained Ministers
Number of surveys mailed	1,101	1,301	1,418
Number returned	525	749	873 ‡
Response rate	47%	57%	61%

‡Of the 873 returned surveys, 600 came from pastors and 273 from specialized clergy.

This survey was initially mailed in May 2003, and returns were accepted through early August 2003. 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 2003 Presbyterian Panel results, a longer report with additional charts is available for \$10. Contact PDS (1-800-524-2612) and order PDS# 65100-03276. It includes an appendix with percentage responses to each survey question separately for members, elders, pastors, and specialized clergy.

For PC(USA) stewardship resources, contact David Johnson (888-728-7228 ext 5140; djohnson@ctr.pcusa.org).

LISTENING TO PRESBYTERIANS SINCE 1973
 The Presbyterian Panel
 A Ministry of the General Assembly Council
 Research Services, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
 100 Witherspoon Street
 Louisville KY 40202-1396
<http://www.pcusa.org/research>