



# The Presbyterian Panel

## Listening to Presbyterians



### SUMMARY

## Funding Christ's Mission Through the PC(USA) The May 2005 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 2003-2005 Panel, initially sampled in the fall of 2002.

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### KNOWLEDGE OF PC(USA) MISSION

#### How Well Informed

- ✓ Few laity are either *very informed* (members, 2%; elders, 2%) or *generally informed* (15%; 27%) about “the range and scope of PC(USA) mission.” Most are *a little informed* (52%; 54%); 32% and 16%, respectively, are *not informed*.
- ✓ Few ministers are *very informed* about “the range and scope of PC(USA) mission” (pastors, 16%; specialized clergy, 15%), but majorities are *generally informed* (64%; 52%). Only 1% of pastors and 6% of specialized clergy report being *not informed*.

#### Sources of Information

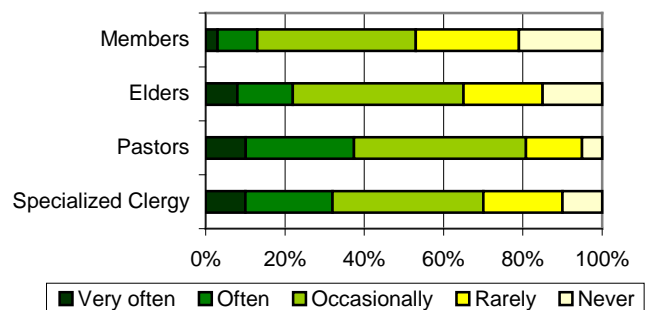
- ✓ The most widely used sources for “information about PC(USA) mission” among laity include:
  - Congregational newsletter (54% of members and 62% of elders “relied on or turned to” it either *very often*, *often*, or *occasionally* in the last two years)
  - One’s pastor or other ministers (50%; 67%)
  - *Presbyterians Today* magazine (25%; 41%)
  - Presbytery or synod newsletter/staff (23%; 37%)
- ✓ Most pastors turn to the same sources for information, but many also look elsewhere:
  - One’s pastor or other ministers (*very often*, *often*, or *occasionally*: pastors, 76%; specialized clergy, 72%)
  - Presbytery or synod newsletter/staff (76%; 69%)
  - PC(USA) Web site (72%; 62%)
  - *Mission Yearbook of Prayer and Study* (66%; 56%)
  - *Presbyterians Today* magazine (63%; 50%)
  - PC(USA) *News Briefs* (61%; 52%)

- ✓ Sources least frequently relied on include (combined *very often*, *often*, and *occasionally* responses):
  - *The Layman* newspaper/Web site (members, 12%; elders, 24%; pastors, 29%; specialized clergy, 21%)
  - *Horizons* magazine (12%; 17%; 23%; 23%)
  - GA or GAC staff persons (6%; 8%; 30%; 35%)
  - Presbyweb.com (5%; 10%; 18%; 20%)

#### Wanting to Know More

- ✓ Few panelists respond *no, never* when asked if during the last two years they “ever wanted to know more about PC(USA) mission” (members, 21%; elders, 15%; pastors, 5%; specialized clergy, 10%). (See Figure 1.)
- ✓ Overall, relatively few *very often* or *often* “wanted to know more about PC(USA) mission” (members, 13%; elders, 22%; pastors, 37%; specialized clergy, 32%). Instead, most “wanted to know more” *occasionally* or *rarely* (66%; 63%; 57%; 58%).

**Figure 1. Frequency of Wanting to Know More About PC(USA) Mission in Previous Two Years**



**Deciding Where to Give**

- ✓ Given a hypothetical \$200 to donate to “a charity or a religious cause,” panelists would give most importance to these factors in deciding where to donate:
  - Reputation of the agency (*very important or important*: members, 95%; elders, 96%; pastors, 98%; specialized clergy, 95%)
  - The nature of the cause (93%; 93%; 95%; 97%)
  - Low administrative costs (81%; 84%; 86%; 83%)
  - A personal connection to the cause or agency (73%; 78%; 84%; 79%)
  - A sound financial statement or annual report (67%; 74%; 77%; 75%)
  - Prayer (63%; 71%; 82%; 69%)
  - Had given money to this cause before (62%; 62%; 69%; 66%)
- ✓ Relatively few panelists, especially among laity, place much importance on these factors:
  - The agency is connected to/a part of the PC(USA) (*very important or important*: members, 27%; elders, 31%; pastors, 56%; specialized clergy, 56%)
  - The quality of the agency’s promotional materials (22%; 20%; 28%; 22%)

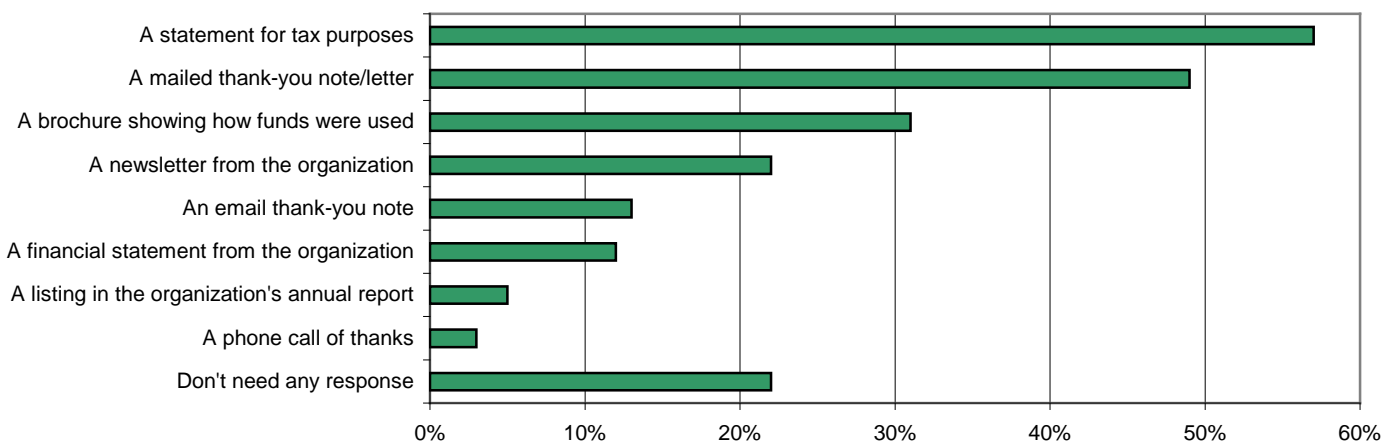
**Response Desired from Receiving Charity**

- ✓ When giving to “a charitable or religious cause,” the responses most panelists want from the receiving agency are *a statement for tax purposes* (members, 55%; elders, 57%; pastors, 62%; specialized clergy, 65%) and *a mailed thank-you note/letter* (48%; 49%; 52%; 48%). (See Figure 2.)
- ✓ Around one in five panelists do not need any response from a charitable cause to which they give money (members, 23%; elders, 22%; pastors, 19%; specialized clergy, 22%).

**Funding PC(USA) Mission**

- ✓ A third of members (34%), half of elders (48%), and more than four in five pastors (81%) *strongly agree or agree* that “more financial support is needed to fund PC(USA) mission.” Similarly, 39%, 50%, and 68% *strongly agree or agree* that “the denomination should find ways to increase undesignated gifts.”
- ✓ Nevertheless, a majority of laity (members, 54%; elders, 57%) *strongly agree or agree* with the statement, “I favor my congregation designating the dollars it gives to PC(USA) mission.” (Pastors, 35%.)
- ✓ Relatively few panelists *strongly agree or agree* that they would be willing to designate “more of [their] . . . charitable contributions to fund specific PC(USA) mission projects” if they knew how to do so (members, 23%; elders, 25%; pastors, 23%; specialized clergy, 29%). Even fewer would be willing to “give more of [their] . . . charitable contributions” as general (“undesignated”) contributions to PC(USA) mission if they knew how to do so (11%; 11%; 16%; 22%).
- ✓ In general, “since the PC(USA) is governed by a connectional system,” half or more *strongly agree or agree* that “governing bodies should be trusted to make the right decisions with the mission dollars given to them” (members, 51%; elders, 52%; pastors, 72%).
- ✓ However, other responses indicate that such trust is relative to proximity. While 60% of elders *strongly agree or agree* with the statement, “I am comfortable letting my presbytery make decisions about where to allocate the mission dollars it receives,” only 44% *strongly agree or agree* with the statement, “I am comfortable letting the General Assembly/General Assembly Council make decisions about where to allocate the mission dollars they receive.”

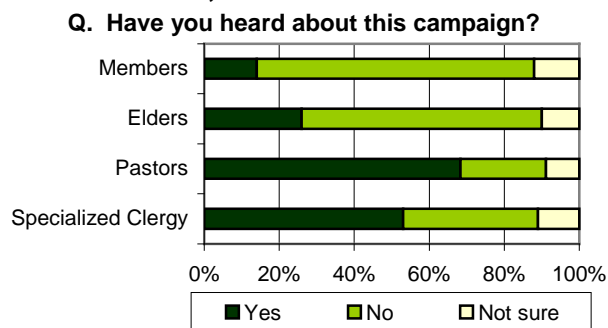
**Figure 2. What Elders Want in Return When They Donate to a Religious or Charitable Cause**



*Joining Hearts and Hands, A Mission Initiative*

- ✓ Most ministers (pastors, 69%; specialized clergy, 53%) but relatively few laity (members, 14%; elders, 26%) are aware of the PC(USA)’s “Joining Hearts and Hands, A Mission Initiative,” a campaign designed to raise funds for new church development, congregational renewal, and international mission. (See Figure 3.)

**Figure 3. Familiarity with Joining Hearts and Hands, A Mission Initiative**



*Per Capita Apportionment*

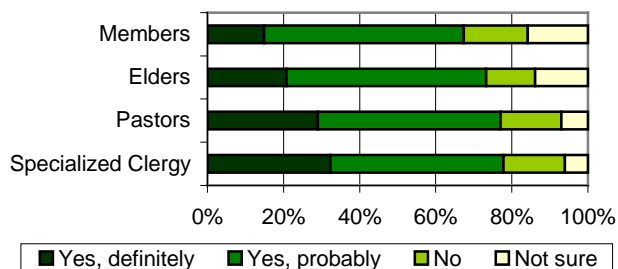
- ✓ Most panelists “have previously heard of per capita apportionment,” whereby congregations are asked to donate an amount per member as a way of sharing “the costs of coming together [in presbyteries, synods, and the General Assembly] to discern the Spirit’s leading for the future”: members, 78% (combined *yes, definitely* and *yes, probably*); elders, 92%; pastors, 99%; specialized clergy, 98%.
- ✓ Overall, 36% of members, 53% of elders, 67% of pastors, and 69% of specialized clergy have *definitely* or *probably* heard of per capita apportionment and are *very aware* or *generally aware* that its “main purpose . . . is to support discernment.”

*Mission Funding and Interpretation by Sessions*

- ✓ Two-thirds of members (69%), 82% of elders, and 95% of pastors report that their congregations “donate funds to presbytery-, synod-, or PC(USA)-related mission.” Most of the rest (except for pastors) respond *don’t know*; few (2%; 4%; 4%) respond *no*.
- ✓ Panelists whose congregations donate to presbytery, synod, or PC(USA) mission were further asked “how satisfied are you with the interpretation the session has done” regarding the mission work those funds support. Most are either *very satisfied* or *generally satisfied* (members, 69%; elders, 74%; pastors, 56%).

- ✓ Among panelists who can recall their session’s interpretation of mission, more report that this interpretation makes them want their congregation to give *more money* (members, 17%; elders, 12%; pastors, 33%) than to give *less money* (9%; 9%; 6%) to presbytery, synod, or PC(USA) mission. Even more, however, report that such interpretation doesn’t change their view on their congregation’s giving (57%; 64%; 47%).

*Special-Purpose Campaigns*



- ✓ Majorities believe it is “a good idea for the PC(USA) to conduct special-purpose campaigns to raise money for specific mission programs” (*yes, definitely* or *yes, probably*: members, 68%; elders, 74%; pastors, 77%; specialized clergy, 77%). (See Figure 4.)

**Figure 4. Opinions: Special-Purpose Campaigns**  
Q. Is it a good idea for the PC(USA) to conduct special-purpose campaigns to raise money for mission programs?

- ✓ Most pastors think it is *very appropriate* or *generally appropriate* for the PC(USA) to use each of seven approaches in a special-purpose fund-raising campaign, but most elders give similar ratings to only two of them:
  - Asking sessions to share campaign information with their members (elders, 91%; pastors, 90%)
  - Approaching foundations (74%; 86%)
  - Asking sessions to donate to the campaign out of their regular budgets (44%; 66%)
  - Asking sessions to conduct a pledge drive for the campaign among their members (41%; 51%)
  - Asking presbyteries to donate to the campaign out of their regular budgets (40%; 54%)
  - Asking synods to donate to the campaign out of their regular budgets (40%; 53%)
  - Approaching individuals directly to ask for donations to the campaign (37%; 54%)

*Speakers in Congregations*

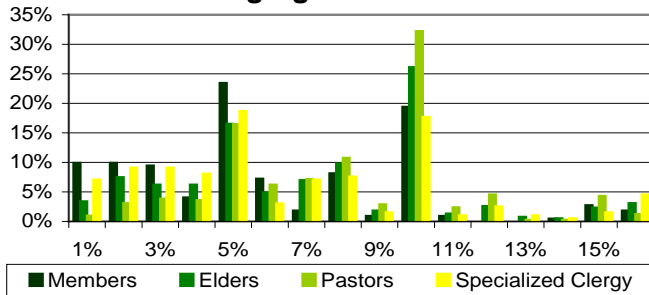
- ✓ Few pastors (9%) report that a representative of the “national offices in Louisville . . . spoke in my church in the last two years.” Of those so reporting, only 35% also indicated that the person “asked for/encouraged contributions” to the national church.

## PERSONAL GIVING AND BEQUESTS

### Giving to the Congregation

- ✓ Almost all panelists report that they or their family gave money to their congregation in 2004 (members, 97%; elders, 99%; pastors, 99%). The median share they reported giving was 5% of family income for members, 7% for elders, and 8% for pastors. (See Figure 5.)

**Figure 5. Percentage of Income Given to Congregation in 2004**



- ✓ Three-quarters of members, and 85% of elders and pastors, have made a financial pledge to their congregation for 2005. The median amount reported pledged is 5% of family income for members, 7% for elders, and 9% for pastors.

### Giving Credit for Contributions

- ✓ Large majorities believe that “when an individual makes a direct contribution to fund PC(USA) mission . . . his or her congregation [should] receive credit” (yes, definitely or yes, probably: members, 73%; elders, 71%; pastors, 72%; specialized clergy, 64%).

### Giving to Help the Asian Tsunami Victims

- ✓ Majorities of panelists (members, 59%; elders, 65%; pastors, 74%; specialized clergy, 72%) report making a contribution “to help the victims of the tsunami that devastated parts of Indonesia and South/Southeast Asia on December 26, 2004.”
- ✓ Most panelists who gave money to tsunami victims did so, at least in part, through their congregations (members, 63%; elders, 64%; pastors, 70%; specialized clergy, 53%). Another 5%, 11%, 22%, and 25%, respectively, made a contribution directly to Presbyterian Disaster Assistance.

### Wills and Bequests

- ✓ Most panelists, ranging from 75% of specialized clergy to 82% of elders, have a will.
- ✓ Among those with wills, most (members, 83%; elders, 77%; pastors, 64%; specialized clergy, 64%) have not included a bequest to a Presbyterian entity. Overall, the numbers who have included such bequests, by PC(USA) recipient, are:
  - Your congregation (members, 12%; elders, 16%; pastors, 18%; specialized clergy, 10%)
  - Another PC(USA) congregation (2%; 2%; 5%; 4%)
  - A PC(USA) college, university, or seminary (1%; 3%; 10%; 15%)
  - PC(USA) mission (1%; 1%; 4%; 9%)
  - Other PC(USA) affiliated institution (2%; 2%; 3%; 3%)

	Members	Elders	Ordained Ministers
Number of surveys mailed.....	692	1,029	1,181
Number returned.....	330	502	714‡
Response rate.....	47%	48%	60%

‡Of the 714 returned surveys, 453 came from pastors and 261 from specialized clergy.

This survey was initially mailed in June 2005, and returns were accepted through mid-August 2005. 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 2005 Presbyterian Panel results, a longer report with additional charts is available for free on the Web ([www.pcusa.org/research/panel/index.htm#2005](http://www.pcusa.org/research/panel/index.htm#2005)) or for \$10 from PDS (1-800-524-2612; order #02056-05287). It includes tables showing percentage responses to each survey question separately for members, elders, pastors, and specialized clergy.

**For more information on funding the mission of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.),** go to [www.pcusa.org/gac](http://www.pcusa.org/gac) and [www.pcusa.org/navigation/giving.htm](http://www.pcusa.org/navigation/giving.htm).

### LISTENING TO PRESBYTERIANS SINCE 1973

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