



# The Presbyterian Panel

*Listening to Presbyterians*



## SUMMARY

### Churchwide Special Offerings The November 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 sixth survey completed by the 2003-2005 Panel, initially sampled in the fall of 2002.

#### IN THIS SUMMARY

- ✓ *Offerings Received*..... p. 1
- ✓ *Suggesting Changes*..... p. 2
- ✓ *A Possible New Offering*..... p. 3
- ✓ *Giving to Special Offerings* .. p. 4

## CURRENT PRACTICES

### Offerings Received

- ✓ One Great Hour of Sharing is the most widely received of the four churchwide special offerings, followed by the Christmas Joy Offering:

**Table 1. Churchwide Special Offerings Received in the Congregation During the Prior 12 Months**

	Members	Elders	Pastors
OGHS.....	81%	88%	91%
Pentecost .....	24%	29%	37%
Peacemaking.....	38%	45%	55%
Christmas Joy.....	64%	73%	80%

- ✓ In congregations that receive specific churchwide special offerings, most pastors report that they have been doing so for *more than 10 years* when it comes to three of the four offerings: OGHS, 77%; Peacemaking, 52%; and Christmas Joy, 67%. The exception is the Pentecost Offering (30%).
- ✓ Most pastors (87%) report that their congregation received another type of special offering in the past year, besides any churchwide special offerings.
- ✓ The most frequent example of another type of special offering, reported by 85% of pastors, is a special offering for a *local cause* such as a food pantry, homeless shelter, or ecumenical community ministry.

### Why or Why Not Received

- ✓ In congregations where a specific churchwide special offering is received, pastors report that the main reasons are *we believe in the cause this offering supports, the pastor wants to participate, and habit or tradition*, and, for all but Pentecost, *members want to participate*:

**Table 2. Why Each Offering is Received: Pastors' Responses**

	OGHS	Pentecost	Peacemaking	Christmas Joy
Habit or custom .....	84%	60%	68%	82%
Felt obligation .....	38%	41%	40%	41%
Believe in cause offering supports..	85%	73%	81%	78%
Members want to...	65%	48%	59%	59%
Pastor wants to.....	66%	66%	67%	63%
Respect for PC(USA).....	42%	46%	42%	45%

- ✓ For three of the four offerings, the main reason pastors give for why it is *not* received is that *churchwide special offerings are low priorities in the congregation* (OGHS, 47%; Peacemaking, 33%; Christmas Joy, 38%). For Pentecost, responses are split among *members are not familiar with the offering* (23%), *no one takes the initiative to promote it* (21%), and *churchwide special offerings are low priorities in the congregation* (21%).

**Overview of Major Changes Desired**

- ✓ Given the chance to “make one major change in the causes/issues supported by churchwide special offerings,” most would opt to *make no changes* or have *no opinion*:

**Table 3. Making Major Changes in Churchwide Special Offerings: Overview**

Q. If you could make one major change in the causes/issues supported by churchwide special offerings, what would it be?

	Members	Elders	Pastors	Specialized Clergy
Add one new special offering .....	4%	4%	7%	10%
Delete one <i>entire</i> special offering .....	9%	9%	21%	11%
Add another cause to existing offering ...	2%	2%	5%	5%
Delete a cause from an existing offering ..	3%	3%	5%	3%
Replace one cause with a new one .....	0%	1%	4%	1%
Make no changes ....	29%	34%	36%	39%
No opinion .....	53%	46%	22%	32%

- ✓ Among the subset that prefers change, the largest percentage, including 21% of all pastors, would *delete one entire special offering*. Most of these panelists would delete the Peacemaking Offering (of members who would delete a churchwide special offering, 58%, or 5% of all members, would delete Peacemaking; of pastors who would delete a special offering, 53%, or 11% of all pastors, would delete Peacemaking).
- ✓ Overall, among members, 6% would add an offering or a cause, while 12% would delete an offering or a cause. The corresponding figures among elders are 6% (add) and 12% (delete); among pastors, 12% and 26%; and among specialized clergy, 15% and 14%.

**Reallocations within Existing Offerings**

- ✓ **One Great Hour of Sharing:**
  - Majorities in every group want “the share of funds from this offering that goes to Presbyterian Disaster Assistance” to be *kept the same* (members, 55%; pastors, 64%).

- Almost half of members and majorities in the other groups want the share *kept the same* that goes to Self-Development of People (members, 48%; pastors, 62%) and to the Presbyterian Hunger Program (members, 48%; pastors, 64%).
- At least one in ten panelists, including 22% of pastors, want the share that goes to Presbyterian Disaster Assistance *increased*. Even more, around one in five in every group, want the share that goes to the Presbyterian Hunger Program *increased*.
- Except for members, more panelists in every group want the share going to Self-Development of People *decreased* (pastors, 21%) rather than *increased* (5%).

- ✓ **Pentecost:**
  - Majorities of laity and more than one-third of ministers are either *not familiar* with the programs supported by this offering or have *no opinion* on possible reallocations.
  - Among those who favor shifts in funding, more would like to have the share that goes to youth and young adults *decreased* (pastors, 12%) than *increased* (6%), while the reverse is true for child advocacy (6%; 13%).
- ✓ **Peacemaking:**
  - Around half of laity and a fourth of ministers are *not familiar* with the causes this offering supports or have *no opinion*, and most with an opinion want the current allocations *kept the same*.
  - More want the share congregations keep for peacemaking *increased* (elders, 14%) rather than *decreased* (7%), with the reverse for the share allocated for synod and presbytery peacemaking (elders: *increased*, 3%; *decreased*, 12%) and for the Peacemaking Program (6%; 12%).
- ✓ **Christmas Joy:**
  - Large percentages of laity (four in ten members, one in three elders) and one in seven ministers are either *not familiar* with the programs this offering supports or have *no opinion* on its allocations.
  - Most with opinions favor keeping the 50/50 allocation between racial-ethnic schools and the Board of Pensions. Those favoring changes would like the share that goes to racial-ethnic schools *decreased* (pastors, 21%) rather than *increased* (4%), with the reverse true for the share going to the Board of Pensions (*increased*, 23%; *decreased*, 4%).

**Number and Timing of Special Offerings**

- ✓ Three in ten members, 38% of elders, and almost half of both minister groups (47%) select *four* when asked “how many churchwide special offerings would you like the PC(USA) to support?”
- ✓ Almost no panelists (members, 1%; pastors, 4%) want the PC(USA) to support more than four churchwide special offerings. In fact, 12% of members, 17% of elders, 30% of pastors, and 19% of clergy believe *there are too many right now*.
- ✓ On average, members would prefer *11 weeks* and the other three Panel groups would prefer *12 weeks* between “any two churchwide special offerings.”

**A Possible Special Offering for Mission**

- ✓ Only minorities want an existing offering replaced by a new one for mission, and they are split between eliminating the Pentecost or the Peacemaking Offering to accomplish this:

**Table 4. Opinions on Replacing a Current Special Offering with One on Mission**

Q. *Should one of the current Churchwide Special Offerings be replaced with a new one to support mission at home and abroad . . . ?*

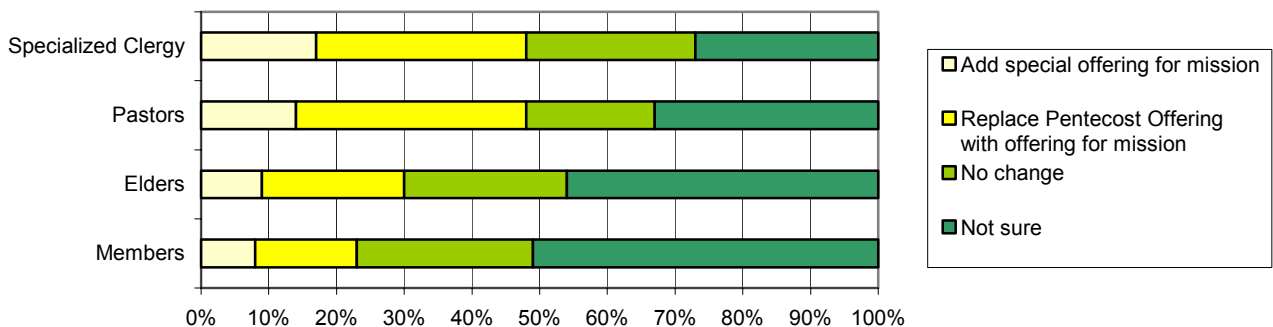
	Members	Elders	Pastors	Specialized Clergy
Yes, OGHS.....	1%	1%	1%	0%
Yes, Pentecost .....	9%	8%	17%	17%
Yes, Peacemaking ..	9%	17%	19%	9%
Yes, Christmas Joy .	2%	3%	4%	1%
Yes, total .....	22%	30%	42%	30%
No.....	37%	38%	44%	54%
Don't know.....	41%	32%	14%	16%

- ✓ Asked about a mission offering as either a new, fifth special offering or as a replacement specifically for

the Pentecost Offering, large percentages of all Panel groups are *not sure*. Among laity, the next largest choice is *no change*, while among ministers it is *reinstate the Witness Special Offering and the causes it supported (mission of the church at home and abroad) to replace the Pentecost Offering*. (See Figure 1.)

- ✓ Asked to choose one cause from a list of seven that they “would most like to have supported by a churchwide special offering,” most laity (members, 66%; elders, 59%) select one of three causes currently supported by the Pentecost Offering:
  - Children at risk (members, 30%; pastors, 17%)
  - Youth and young adult programs (28%; 15%)
  - Child advocacy (8%; 5%)
 . . . while a majority of pastors (62%) and half of specialized clergy (50%) choose one of four causes that might be part of a new mission offering:
  - supporting mission personnel overseas (pastors, 38%; specialized clergy, 26%)
  - supporting mission personnel in the United States (9%; 8%)
  - education of local church leaders overseas (9%; 7%)
  - assisting ecumenical efforts of partner churches overseas (6%; 9%)
- ✓ Were a churchwide special offering to fund mission created, majorities in every Panel group *strongly agree* or *agree* with using its funds to support these causes:
  - Mission at home (members, 88%; pastors, 86%)
  - Local needs (e.g., food pantry) (84%; 59%)
  - Mission abroad (74%; 90%)
  - Educating and training local leaders (62%; 62%)
  - Mission personnel (60%; 79%)
  - New church development (59%; 75%)
  - Evangelism (58%; 78%)
  - Congregational redevelopment (53%; 68%)

**Figure 1. Opinions on a New or Replacement Churchwide Special Offering for Mission**



## FAMILIARITY AND GIVING

### *Familiarity with Churchwide Special Offerings*

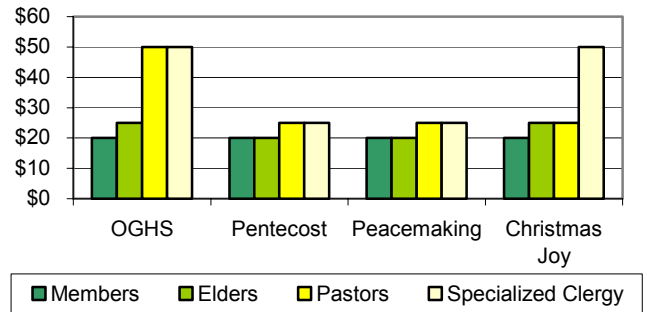
- ✓ Majorities of every group are *very familiar* with the One Great Hour of Sharing Offering. Combined *very familiar* and *familiar* responses total 81% for members, 91% for elders, 97% for pastors, and 94% for specialized clergy.
- ✓ Majorities almost as large are *very familiar/familiar* with the Christmas Joy Offering: members, 71%; elders, 78%; pastors, 93%; specialized clergy, 88%.
- ✓ Most ministers are *very familiar* or *familiar* with the Peacemaking Offering (pastors, 84%; specialized clergy, 83%), but more members are *not very familiar* or *not at all familiar* (43%) than are *very familiar* or *familiar* (42%). Another 15% are *somewhat familiar*.
- ✓ Seven in ten pastors, six in ten specialized clergy, half of elders, and 42% of members are *very familiar* or *familiar* with the Pentecost Offering.

### *Giving to Special Offerings*

- ✓ Majorities in all groups report making contributions when their congregation received a particular special offering for the past year. Percentages are highest for One Great Hour of Sharing: members, 70%; elders, 74%; pastors, 80%; clergy, 95%.

- ✓ Most panelists give small amounts when they make a contribution to a special offering. The median amounts given are either \$20 or \$25 among laity, and \$25 or \$50 among ministers. (See Figure 2.)

**Figure 2. Median Amount Given by Those Making a Gift to Each Special Offering**



- ✓ Panelists split on whether they would “like to see the PC(USA) make it possible to give money to causes supported by churchwide special offerings via the Internet with a credit card.” More laity respond *no* (elders, 41%) than *yes* (25%), while the reverse is true among ministers (pastors: *no*, 28%; *yes*, 41%).
- ✓ Few panelists are likely to give money to special offering causes via the Internet; in fact, 81% of members, 80% of elders, 72% of pastors, and 58% of clergy are *not too likely* or *not at all likely*.

	Members	Elders	Ordained Ministers
Number of surveys mailed .....	1,030	1,273	1,392
Number returned .....	414	622	764‡
Response rate .....	40%	48%	54%

‡Of the 764 returned surveys, 503 came from pastors and 261 from specialized clergy.

This survey was initially mailed in November 2003, and returns were accepted through January 2004. 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 November 2003 Presbyterian Panel results, a longer report with additional charts is available for \$10. Contact PDS (1-800-524-2612) and order PDS# 65100-03281. It includes an appendix with percentage responses to each survey question separately for members, elders, pastors, and specialized clergy.

**For more information on churchwide special offerings**, contact Alan Krome (888-728-7228 x5168; akrome@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>