



The Presbyterian Panel

Listening to Presbyterians



SUMMARY

CHURCHWIDE SPECIAL OFFERINGS FINDINGS FROM THE MAY 2007 SURVEY

The Presbyterian Panel consists of three nationally representative samples of groups affiliated with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.): members, elders serving on session (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 2006-2008 Panel, sampled in the fall of 2005.

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RECEIVING AND GIVING

Offerings Received

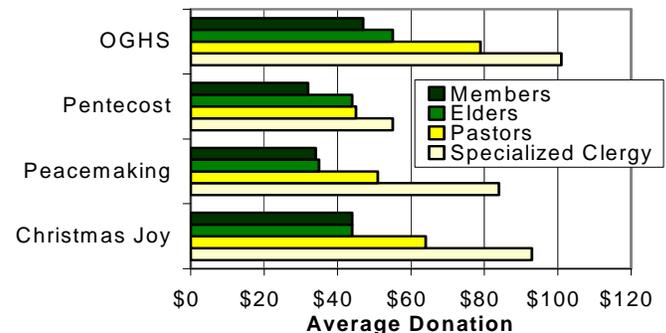
- ✓ Majorities of elders and pastors report that their congregation receives three of the four churchwide special offerings:
 - One Great Hour of Sharing (reported as received by 90% of elders and 90% of pastors)
 - Pentecost (48%; 40%)
 - Peacemaking (53%; 53%)
 - Christmas Joy (80%; 78%)

Individual Contributions

- ✓ In congregations that receive a particular special offering, most panelists report contributing to it:
 - OGHS (percent contributing: members, 78%; elders, 82%; pastors, 86%; specialized clergy, 86%)
 - Pentecost (64%; 65%; 72%; 70%)
 - Peacemaking (59%; 68%; 72%; 66%)
 - Christmas Joy (77%; 75%; 78% 78%)
- ✓ The above results reveal that higher percentages in all groups give to the OGHS and Christmas Joy Offerings than to the other two, and that higher percentages of ministers than laity give to each of the four offerings.

- ✓ Average donation amounts tend to be small, as Figure 1 shows. Individual gifts vary in size from \$1 to \$1,000, with the majority of donations \$25 or less for laity, and \$50 or less for ministers.

Figure 1. Individual Contributions to Churchwide Special Offerings



When Taken

- ✓ Only a small percentage of congregations have taken a special offering at a time of year different than the typical time, according to elders (4% so report) and pastors (6%).

Current Churchwide Special Offerings in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

1. **One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) Offering**, received in Lent or on Easter (March/April); supports three national/international PC(USA) programs: Hunger (36%); Self-Development of People (32%); and Disaster Assistance (32%)
2. **The Pentecost Offering**, received on or around the Day of Pentecost (May/June); supports national-level PC(USA) ministries with youth and young adults (50%); national PC(USA) advocacy for children at risk (10%); and children-at-risk ministries that congregations choose (40%)
3. **The Peacemaking Offering**, received on or around World Communion Sunday (first Sunday in October); supports the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program (50%); presbytery and synod peacemaking efforts (25%); and other peacemaking-related programs of the congregation's choice (25%)
4. **The Christmas Joy Offering**, received in Advent or on Christmas (December); supports needy retired ministers and missionaries (50%) and PC(USA) racial-ethnic schools (50%)

HOW OFFERING CAUSES AFFECT GIVING LIKELIHOOD

Offering Causes Many Would Support

- ✓ Asked whether they would contribute to various possible special offering causes, majorities in all groups respond “yes, definitely” or “yes, probably” to these:
 - Give people basic necessities (members, 88%; elders, 84%; pastors, 87%; specialized clergy, 87%)
 - Provide emergency relief following disasters (87%; 87%; 93%; 94%)
 - Help children (86%; 85%; 84%; 83%)
 - Provide food for the hungry (86%; 83%; 87%; 88%)
 - Help disadvantaged people (81%; 75%; 78%; 80%)
 - Address the root causes of hunger (72%; 73%; 80%; 85%)
 - Help retired ministers and missionaries (65%; 64%; 73%; 67%)
 - Support health ministries in impoverished parts of the United States (59%; 53%; 61%; 68%)
- ✓ Several other causes that special offerings might support would “definitely” or “probably” receive donations from a majority in one or both minister groups, but not from most laity:
 - Address environmental issues (members, 35%; elders, 34%; pastors, 49%; specialized clergy, 61%)
 - Establish new Presbyterian congregations (35%; 37%; 54%; 44%)
 - Support health ministries in impoverished parts of other countries (44%; 47%; 69%; 70%)
 - Support inner-city ministries (50%; 48%; 53%; 60%)
 - Promote peacemaking and conflict resolution (40%; 37%; 46%; 61%)
 - Support social justice ministries (39%; 28%; 42%; 61%)
- ✓ A majority of laity (members, 62%; elders, 56%) and pastors (55%) but not specialized clergy (44%) indicate that they would “definitely” or “probably” donate money to a special offering that supports “youth and young adult ministries.”

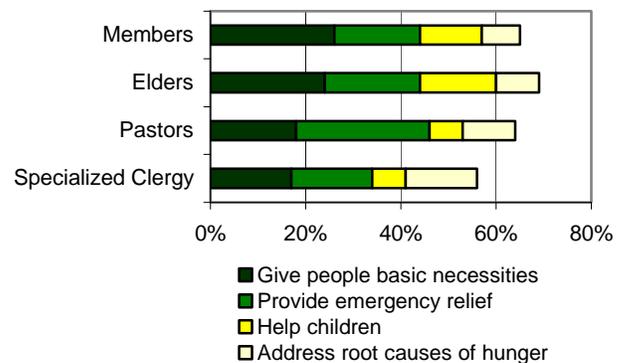
Offering Causes Fewer Would Support

- ✓ Only a minority in all Panel groups would “definitely” or “probably” contribute to these four causes:
 - Help struggling rural congregations (members, 48%; elders, 43%; pastors, 44%; specialized clergy, 46%)
 - Foster spiritual growth (38%; 41%; 44%; 31%)
 - Support PC(USA)-affiliated minority racial-ethnic schools and colleges (28%; 28%; 42%; 46%)
 - Support the National Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches (18%; 14%; 21%; 35%)

Most-Favored Causes

- ✓ When asked to choose one (from the same list of 19), the four causes that the largest percentages “most favor” are identical for the four Panel groups:
 - Give people basic necessities (percentages who would “most favor” this cause to receive special offering funds: members, 26%; elders, 24%; pastors, 18%; specialized clergy, 17%)
 - Provide emergency relief (18%; 20%; 28%; 17%)
 - Help children (13%; 16%; 7%; 7%)
 - Address root causes of hunger (8%; 9%; 11%; 15%)

Figure 2. Most-Favored Special Offering Causes
Percent selecting each cause as the one (of 19) they most favor



Letting the General Assembly Council Decide

- ✓ Asked about contributing to a special offering that would “provide money for the General Assembly Council to decide how to allocate,” only 10% of members, 9% of elders, 14% of pastors, and 19% of specialized clergy would “definitely” or “probably” make a donation.

What These Opinions Tell Us about Support for Current Special Offerings Causes

OGHS. Almost all panelists would contribute to the causes it supports.

Pentecost. Large majorities would give to the “children at risk” component, with smaller majorities (and only a minority of specialized clergy) giving to the youth and young adult portion.

Peacemaking. Except for a majority of specialized clergy, only four in ten panelists would contribute to this cause.

Christmas Joy. Large majorities would give to one of its causes—ministers and missionaries—but less than half would give to the other—church-affiliated racial-ethnic schools.

HOW OFFERING CHARACTERISTICS AFFECT GIVING LIKELIHOOD

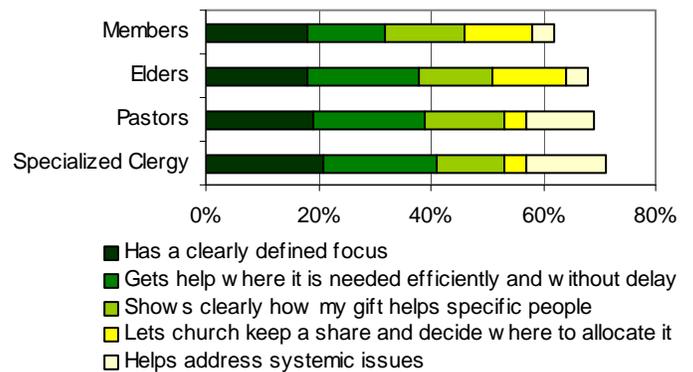
Offering Characteristics and Likelihood of Giving

- ✓ Majorities in three or more groups report they would be “much more likely” or “more likely” to donate in response to these 11 (of 17) churchwide special offering characteristics:
 - Gets help where it is needed efficiently and without delay (members, 89%; elders, 89%; pastors, 92%; specialized clergy, 95%)
 - Has a clearly defined focus (89%; 90%; 94%; 90%)
 - Shows clearly how my gift helps specific people (87%; 89%; 91%; 86%)
 - Has rigorous financial accountability (81%; 82%; 85%; 86%)
 - Serves ministries in my local area (78%; 74%; 62%; 50%)
 - Helps me relate to a specific ministry (73%; 73%; 84%; 82%)
 - Is a tradition at our church (71%; 71%; 80%; 73%)
 - Remains faithful to deserving causes even when they recede from widespread public attention (70%; 69%; 76%; 84%)
 - Serves ministries located in the United States (57%; 53%; 41%; 36%)
 - Helps address systemic issues (“root causes”) (55%; 55%; 69%; 75%)
 - Helps me connect with other Christians (52%; 53%; 68%; 75%)
 - Lets our church keep a share of gifts and decide where to allocate them (68%; 68%; 56%; 48%).
- ✓ Characteristics that would make half or fewer in all groups “more likely” or “much more likely” to give are:
 - Shifts emphases often to reflect emerging needs and ministries (members, 45%; elders, 43%; pastors, 44%; specialized clergy, 48%)
 - Is ecumenical in history and design (41%; 44%; 37%; 50%)
 - Addresses public policy issues (22%; 23%; 29%; 50%)
 - Serves ministries located overseas (30%; 26%; 36%; 39%)
 - Primarily serves people outside the church (29%; 24%; 34%; 34%)
- ✓ For all 17 characteristics, the majority of other panelists respond “no effect/not sure.” To only these five do more than 10% in any group respond “less likely” or “much less likely” to give:
 - Addresses public policy issues (members, 21%; elders, 29%; pastors, 29%; specialized clergy, 20%)
 - Primarily serves people outside the church (members, 17%; elders, 14%)
 - Serves ministries located overseas (members, 14%; elders, 12%)
 - Is ecumenical in history and design (pastors, 12%)
 - Shifts emphases often to reflect emerging needs and ministries (elders, 13%; pastors, 15%; specialized clergy, 13%)

Most Important Offering Characteristics

- ✓ From the same list, the largest percentages in all groups select one of these three as the “most important characteristic for a special offering to have”: “has a clearly defined focus” (members, 18%; elders, 18%; pastors, 19%; specialized clergy, 21%); “gets help where it is needed efficiently and without delay” (14%; 20%; 20%; 20%); and “shows clearly how my gift helps specific people” (14%; 13%; 14%; 12%).

Figure 3. Most Important Special Offering Features
Percent selecting each feature as the most important one (of 17)



- ✓ The fourth-highest most-important characteristic is “lets our church keep a share of the donations and decide where to allocate them” for members (12%) and elders (13%), and “helps address systemic issues” for pastors (12%) and specialized clergy (14%).

Giving and Local Control

- ✓ Both the Pentecost and Peacemaking Offerings allow congregations to disperse a share of the contributions (40% and 25%, respectively) to one or more theme-related organizations or projects of their own choosing. Sizable minorities indicate that they made a donation at least in part because of this “local option” feature:
 - Pentecost Offering responses:
 - I gave but didn’t know about this feature (members, 18%; elders, 13%; pastors, 2%; specialized clergy, 8%)
 - I gave primarily/entirely/partly because of this feature (41%; 46%; 38%; 18%)
 - I definitely/likely would have contributed even without this feature (40%; 42%; 60%; 74%)
 - Peacemaking Offering responses:
 - I gave but I didn’t know about this feature (members, 22%; elders, 16%; pastors, 1%; specialized clergy, 8%)
 - I gave primarily/entirely/partly because of this feature (33%; 36%; 36%; 15%)
 - I definitely/likely would have contributed even without this feature (45%; 48%; 63%; 74%)

OTHER SPECIAL OFFERING-RELATED OPINIONS

Times and Seasons

- ✓ Large minorities have “no opinion” when asked “what is the *minimum* number of weeks that . . . should separate each churchwide special offering and the next” (e.g., elders, 37%; pastors, 24%).
- ✓ Of panelists with opinions, the majority choose either eight (members, 13%; elders, 14%; pastors, 20%; specialized clergy, 14%), ten (12%; 12%; 16%; 17%) or, especially, 12 (40%; 33%; 25%; 33%) weeks as the minimum gap between any two special offerings.
- ✓ Asked about the length of the interval between each specific offering and the next, majorities in every group respond “right interval” for every time gap except the one between OGHS and Pentecost, where sizable minorities respond “too short” (members, 25%; elders, 28%; pastors, 43%; specialized clergy, 33%).
- ✓ Most panelists rate the match between OGHS and the time of year it is received (Lent/Easter) as “very appropriate” or “appropriate” (members, 74%; elders, 77%; pastors, 79%; specialized clergy, 79%). Similar results are obtained for Peacemaking and World Communion Sunday (59%; 59%; 68%; 72%) and Christmas Joy and Advent/Christmas (65%; 65%; 75%; 59%).
- ✓ While sizable numbers rate the match between the Pentecost Offering and Pentecost Sunday to be “very appropriate” or “appropriate” (members, 55%; elders, 54%; pastors, 45%; specialized clergy, 53%), those who deem it only “somewhat appropriate” or “not appropriate” (15%; 15%; 34%; 29%) provide the largest share of those responses for any of the four special offerings.

Number of Special Offerings

- ✓ Half of pastors (50%) and specialized clergy (56%) believe the current number of special offerings—four—is “the right number,” while four in ten members (40%) and elders (44%) express that view. Many others are “not sure” (39%; 30%; 18%; 24%).
- ✓ Of the rest, many more respond “too many” (members, 19%; elders, 25%; pastors, 31%; specialized clergy, 16%) than “too few” (2%; 1%; 1%; 3%).

An Offering for Mission?

- ✓ More than four in ten laity and most ministers are in favor of a special offering “to support overseas mission personnel,” but among those, opinions split on whether it should replace a current offering or be a new one:
 - Favor as a new offering (members, 7%; elders, 10%; pastors, 9%; specialized clergy, 14%)
 - Favor as a replacement for all or part of a current offering (16%; 17%; 35%; 24%)
 - Not sure whether a mission offering should be a new or replacement one (18%; 18%; 15%; 16%)
- ✓ The subset of panelists who respond in favor of a special offering for mission as a replacement for an existing offering further indicate which existing one (or part of one) they think it should replace:
 - OGHS (members, 4%; elders, 4%; pastors, 1%; specialized clergy, 0%)
 - Pentecost (18%; 13%; 36%; 42%)
 - Peacemaking (43%; 62%; 53%; 38%)
 - Christmas Joy (18%; 17%; 6%; 14%)
 - Not sure (16%; 5%; 4%; 4%)
 - All offerings, or parts of more than one (2%; 0%; 1%; 2%)

	Members	Elders	Ordained Ministers
Number of surveys mailed.....	1,029	1,108	1,423
Number returned.....	340	481	696‡
Response rate	33%	43%	48%

‡Of the 696 returned surveys, 480 came from pastors and 216 from specialized clergy

The survey was mailed between May 11 and 14, 2007, with returns accepted through mid-August 2007. 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 these results, a longer report with more charts is available for free on the Web (www.pcusa.org/research/panel) or for \$15 from PDS (1-800-524-2612; order PDS# 02056-07295). It includes tables showing percentage responses to each survey question separately for members, elders, pastors, and specialized clergy.

For more information on churchwide special offerings in the PC(USA), contact Alan Krome (akrome@ctr.pcusa.org; 888-728-7228 ext. 5168).

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