

PRESBYTERIAN PANEL SUMMARY

Listening to Presbyterians



PEACEMAKING NOVEMBER 1995

	Members	Elders	Pastors	Specialized Clergy
Number of Panelists	1,071	1,069	1,127	600
Number of questionnaires mailed	655	714	812	427
Percent returned	61%	67%	72%	71%

The November 1995 questionnaire was developed jointly by staff members of the Presbyterian Panel and the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program, both offices within the Congregational Ministries Division of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). This Panel survey is the fifth in a series on peacemaking issues, extending back to August 1982.

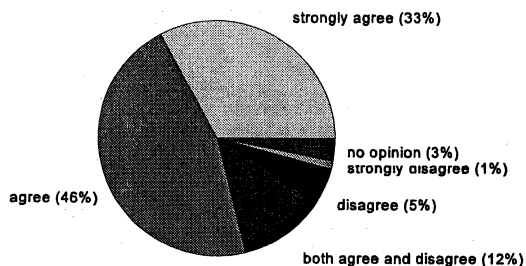
HIGHLIGHTS

- Majorities of panelists view peacemaking as integral to both the Gospel and to the church's ministry.
- All pastors and over one-half of members are aware of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s ongoing emphasis on peacemaking.
- Just under one-half of pastors report that their congregations have adopted the "Commitment to Peacemaking."
- Sizable minorities of panelists report that, in the year prior to the survey, there was at least one major conflict within their congregations.
- According to pastors, around one-half of congregations received the Peacemaking Offering in 1995 and are planning to do so in 1996.
- A large majority of members indicated either that there are no peacemaking activities in their congregations or that they are not at all involved in those that are offered.
- Few panelists view racism as the "most serious problem" facing the United States, but one-half or more view it as "one of the top two or three."
- Majorities of two-thirds or greater agree that it is appropriate for each of the church's governing bodies—the session, presbytery, synod, and General Assembly—to oppose racism.
- Majorities in every sample agree that "making peace with the earth—environmental justice—should be an urgent part of the peacemaking ministry" of the PCUSA.
- At least seven in ten panelists in every sample support Christian participation in public life. In the previous six months, majorities in every sample reported such participation, mainly active involvement in elections, and/or writing letters to public officials.
- Three-fourths or more of pastors and specialized clergy agree that the church has a role to play in peacemaking efforts in world "hot spots" such as Bosnia, Guatemala, Northern Ireland, and Rwanda.
- Around two-thirds in every sample agree that world peacemaking efforts require strong international organizations, such as the United Nations.
- Over eight in ten panelists in every sample support a worldwide nuclear test ban.

MOST PRESBYTERIANS BELIEVE THAT PEACEMAKING IS CENTRAL TO THE GOSPEL . . .

Around eight in ten panelists in each of the four samples agreed with the statement, "Peacemaking is a central declaration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ." Similar proportions agreed that "Christians are called to be peacemakers wherever they encounter brokenness and injustice."

"PEACEMAKING IS A CENTRAL DECLARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST": MEMBERS' RESPONSES



. . . AND TO THE MINISTRY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Majorities in all Panel samples view peacemaking as "central to the ministries of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)" (e.g., 67% of members and 69% of pastors so responded) and ". . . an *urgent* ministry of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in the 1990s" (54% of members, 58% of pastors). Majorities in all samples, including 53% of members, 61% of elders, and 63% of pastors, also responded in agreement with a third statement, "The congregations of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) need to be *more* involved in peacemaking."

PANELISTS FAMILIAR WITH PEACEMAKING EMPHASIS

From the beginning of the Peacemaking Program 15 years ago, General Assemblies have declared peacemaking an ongoing emphasis of the Presbyterian Church. Most panelists indicated their awareness of this emphasis—almost every minister (100% of pastors, 99% of specialized clergy), and majorities of members (59%) and elders (75%), so responded.

HALF OF SESSIONS HAVE ADOPTED THE "COMMITMENT TO PEACEMAKING" . . .

According to pastors, just under one-half of the congregations they represent have adopted the Peacemaking Program's "Commitment to Peacemaking."

. . . WHILE ONE-HALF OF SESSIONS *NOT* ADOPTING THE COMMITMENT HAVE PLEDGED IN OTHER WAYS TO INCLUDE PEACEMAKING

Among congregations whose sessions have *not* adopted the "Commitment to Peacemaking," about one-half (47%, relying on pastors' responses) nevertheless reported that their sessions have "in some other way promised to incorporate peacemaking into the life and mission" of the congregation.

CONFLICT HAS OCCURRED RECENTLY IN MANY CONGREGATIONS

Large minorities of panelists in every sample, ranging from 37% of both members and elders to 44% of pastors, indicated that, in the year prior to the survey, there have been "one or more *major conflicts* between individuals or groups" in their congregations. How satisfactorily were these conflicts resolved? In general, few panelists thought the process was handled either "very effectively" or "very ineffectively." The most frequent response was "effectively," chosen by large minorities of members (47%) and elders (46%), and by a clear majority of pastors (60%). The "ineffectively" response was also chosen by sizable proportions of these three samples, ranging from 24% of pastors to 29% of members.

In short, while majorities of panelists *in the minority of congregations with recent major conflict* indicated that that conflict had been resolved either "very effectively" or "effectively," minorities of one-third or greater in these conflicted congregations indicated that it had not. Overall, then, (relying on pastors' responses) we can conclude that around one in eight Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) congregations had, in the prior year, a major conflict that was rated by the pastor as resolved ineffectively. With 11,399 total congregations, that's around 1,450 congregations so affected.

A RESOURCE FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION IS WIDELY KNOWN AMONG CLERGY, BUT NOT LAITY

Awareness of a relatively recent and frequently-promoted publication of the Peacemaking Program, *Seeking to Be Faithful Together: Guidelines for Presbyterians During Times of Disagreement*, is low among laity: only 4% of members and 14% of elders reported familiarity with *Guidelines*. Among clergy, there is also room for further "market penetration": familiarity of pastors is 79%; of specialized clergy, 54%.

When pastors who had reported recent conflicts in their congregations were asked if the *Guidelines* had been used in handling the conflict, around one-half reported that it had (45%) and one-half reported that it had not (49%). Conflict resolution effectiveness ratings were similar in these two subgroups, with around two-thirds in both reporting that the recent conflict(s) had been resolved either “very effectively” or “effectively.”

SOME PEACEMAKING PROGRAM RESOURCES ARE WIDELY USED . . .

According to pastors, 45% of the congregations they serve have, in the last two years, used a Bible study or another of the printed resources produced by the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program.

. . . WHILE CONGREGATIONAL USE OF OTHER PEACEMAKING PROGRAM RESOURCES VARIES WIDELY

Many other activities and items sponsored by the Peacemaking Program are, by design, of limited appeal or availability. Nevertheless, a third of pastors reported that, in the last two years, one or more members of their congregations had participated in a Program-sponsored travel-study seminar in another country, and almost as many, 28%, reported member participation in a Program-sponsored peacemaking conference over the prior 14 years.

ONE-HALF OF CONGREGATIONS PARTICIPATED IN THE 1995 PEACEMAKING OFFERING

Just under one-half of pastors (48%) reported that their congregations had received the Peacemaking Offering, one of four churchwide special offerings, in 1995. Slightly more—50%—anticipate that their congregations will receive this offering in 1996 (it is taken the first Sunday in October).

FEW MEMBERS PARTICIPATE EXTENSIVELY IN CONGREGATIONAL PEACEMAKING ACTIVITIES

When asked about personal involvement in congregational peacemaking activities, a fifth of members and a fourth of elders indicated that their congregations have *no* peacemaking activities; 12% of pastors so replied. Of the remainder, most members (49% overall) indicated that they were “not at all involved,” as did 22% of elders, but only 4% of pastors. And while only 12% of members and 24% of elders overall reported that they were either “very” or “somewhat involved” in congregational peacemaking

activities, two-thirds of pastors (67%) and a majority of specialized clergy (53%) reported involvement at this level.

RACISM VIEWED AS MAJOR SOCIETAL PROBLEM—JUST NOT TOP ONE

Relatively few panelists indicated that racism is “the most serious problem” that confronts the United States today. No more than 4% of any one sample (elders, specialized clergy) so responded. At the same time, majorities of pastors (64%) and specialized clergy (68%), one-half of members, and just under one-half of elders (48%) labeled racism “among the two or three most serious problems” in the country.

Large majorities of all samples (65% or greater) supported each of the church’s governing bodies—the session, presbytery, synod, and General Assembly—in designating opposition to racism an “urgent ministry.” Very few panelists viewed such opposition as inappropriate; most of the remaining responses were of the “both agree and disagree” variety.

Nevertheless, fewer than one-third in any sample indicated that Presbyterian congregations are “well equipped” to deal with “racism in our society,” and almost no one—2% in every sample—indicated that our congregations are “very well equipped.”

MAJORITY SUPPORT A MINISTRY OF “MAKING PEACE WITH THE EARTH”

When we asked panelists their opinions on including “making peace with the earth”—that is, environmental justice—as an “urgent part of the peacemaking ministry” of their congregations, presbyteries, synods, and the General Assembly, a majority in each Panel sample agreed.

CLERGY APPROVE OF CHURCH ROLE IN INTERNATIONAL PEACEMAKING

We asked panelists whether or not the church should be involved in peacemaking efforts in several specific areas around the world where there is, or has recently been, armed conflict. In general, few members and elders were certain that the church should have a role in any of the locations—the greatest proportions of “yes, definitely” responses among these two samples were 12% and 15%, respectively, both for Northern Ireland (an area in which many Presbyterians live). More members and elders responded “yes” than “no” to

involvement in each of the locations, but the differences were typically small (e.g., for Rwanda, 40% responded "yes," while 39% responded "no"), and for every country, around one-fifth of each group chose "don't know" for their responses.

By comparison, over one-third of pastors and specialized clergy responded "yes, definitely" to church involvement in each of the listed settings, and similar proportions (often even slightly greater proportions) responded "yes, probably." Combined, at least three-fourths of pastors indicated their support for church involvement in peacemaking efforts in these various locations (ranging from 76% for Sudan to 82% for Northern Ireland).

PANELISTS SEE THE U.N. AS IMPORTANT FOR PEACEMAKING

A majority of panelists indicated that world peacemaking "requires strong, *international/political/economic institutions*" such as the United Nations and the World Bank. Around two-thirds of pastors (67%) and specialized clergy (69%) responded "strongly agree" or "agree" on this need, as did 63% of both members and elders. Around two-thirds of the remaining panelists in every sample—overall, about one-fourth of the member and elder samples and around one-fifth of the two clerical samples—responded either "both agree and disagree" or "not sure."

MOST PANELISTS WANT NUCLEAR TESTING TO STOP

Majorities of elders (54%), pastors (68%), and specialized clergy (69%), and just under one-half of members (49%), "strongly favor" an "agreement among the nations of the world to ban the testing of nuclear weapons." Combined, 84% of members, 88% of elders, 92% of pastors, and 91% of specialized clergy either "strongly favor" or "favor" such a ban.

MOST CLERGY, MANY LAITY WANT CUBAN RELATIONS NORMALIZED

Over a fourth of pastors and specialized clergy indicated that they "strongly favor" "normalization of relations

[between the U.S. and] Cuba," and an additional 37% in both samples responded "favor." Put differently, 63% of pastors and 67% of specialized clergy support normalization. Support is not quite so great among laity, however; 40% of members and 44% of elders either "strongly favor" or "favor" normalization—mostly "favor." Another one-third of both samples responded "both favor and oppose," and one in seven are "not sure."

PANELISTS SUPPORT CHRISTIAN PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC LIFE . . .

Large majorities in all Panel samples (71% among members; 93% among specialized clergy) either "strongly agree" or "agree" that "it is important for Presbyterians to exercise their Christian witness in the public arena." Not only did relatively more ministers support this statement, a majority of them chose "strongly agree" to express their opinion (among pastors, 58%, and among specialized clergy, 60%, responded "strongly agree"). Few panelists expressed any degree of disagreement, especially in the two clergy samples; most of the remaining responses were "both agree and disagree."

. . . AND MOST HAVE RECENTLY DONE SO

When we asked panelists if, in the prior six months, they had "exercised [their] Christian witness" in each of seven particular ways, majorities affirmed participation in two of the seven listed activities: "actively participating in an election campaign" (so reported by 64% of members and 55% of pastors) and "writing a letter to an elected or other public official" (69% of members, 76% of pastors). At the other extreme, anywhere from 2% (pastors and specialized clergy) to 5% (elders) indicated that they had run for public office, and 3% of members, elders, and specialized clergy—and 1% of pastors—indicated that they were currently serving in a public office to which they had been elected. Among others, panelists holding elective office include two mayors, six city councilpersons or county commissioners, and fourteen who serve on other local (e.g., school) boards.

The *Panel* is administered by the Office of Research Services of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). A copy of the *Report* of the November 1995 *Presbyterian Panel* can be ordered from PDS (Call 1-800-524-2612 and order PDS #70-360-95-207). Or, send a check for \$5 payable to the Presbyterian Panel (no cash, please) to this address:

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