

BOOKS, READING, AND STUDY RESOURCES—THE FEBRUARY 1998 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 analysis, split into two groups based on current call: *pastors*, serving in a congregation, and *specialized clergy*, serving elsewhere). New samples are drawn every three years. These pages summarize major findings from the sixth survey completed by the 1997-1999 Panel.

BOOKS AND BOOKSTORES

Books: Types and Numbers

- ✓ In the last year, Presbyterians read, on average (median), the following numbers of books: members, 8; elders, 9; pastors, 21; and specialized clergy, 20. Only a few—9% of members, 5% of elders, 2% of pastors, and 1% of specialized clergy—report reading no books in the prior year.
- ✓ Around three in four panelists in every sample report that their prior year's reading included at least a few "best-selling novels" and works on "history, current events, biography."

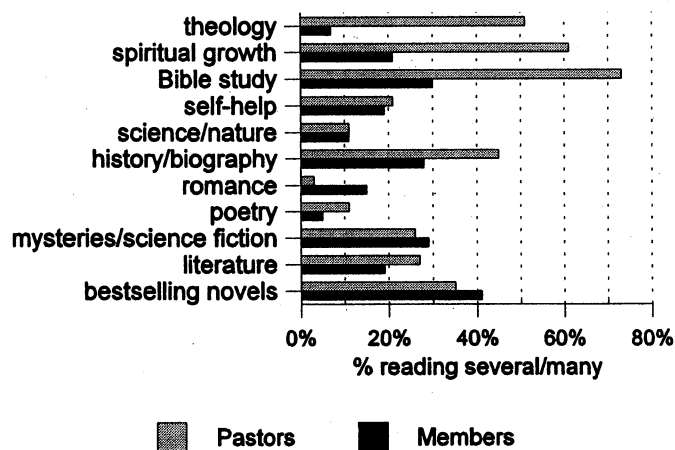


Figure 1
Presbyterians Read a Variety of Books

- ✓ Almost all pastors and specialized clergy have read at least a few books on faith-related topics in the last year—a majority have read many or several.

- ✓ Lay Presbyterians read a few more novels than pastors and other clergy, while pastors and specialized clergy read more books of poetry and of history and biography.

Bookstore Visits

- ✓ Almost all members (91%), elders (94%), pastors (98%), and specialized clergy (97%) report one or more visits to a "general-purpose retail bookstore" in the year prior to the survey. A third of members (33%), four in ten elders (41%), and majorities of pastors (52%) and specialized clergy (54%) report visiting such bookstores *once a month or more*.
- ✓ Around one in ten members report that they visit a religious bookstore (Cokesbury or other) *once a month or more*. However, 60% report that they *never* visit religious bookstores. About one-half of pastors visit a religious bookstore at least once a month; only one in ten *never* visit such stores.

Magazines and Periodicals

- ✓ "Home" magazines, such as *House Beautiful* and *Martha Stewart's Living*, are read *regularly* or *occasionally* by almost one-half of members (46%) and elders (44%), by 20% of pastors, and by 25% of specialized clergy. Majorities of both pastors and specialized clergy *never* read such periodicals.
- ✓ A third of members (34%) and elders (38%), but fewer pastors (20%) and specialized clergy (26%), *regularly* or *occasionally* read such business periodicals as *Business Week* and *Forbes*.

RELIGIOUS READING

Religious Books

- ✓ Majorities of pastors report that in the last year they read *many* or *several* books in the areas of “Bible study” (73%), “spiritual growth” (61%), “devotions, prayers” (59%), and “theology” (51%). Among specialized clergy, the combined *many* and *several* percentages for these topics are 46%, 38%, 35%, and 41%, respectively.
- ✓ Majorities of both members (74%) and elders (67%) respond *none* when asked about their previous year’s book reading in the area of “theology, philosophy.” Lay Presbyterians are more likely to read other types of religious books. In the last year, 30% of members have read *many* or *several* books on “Bible study” and also on “devotions, prayer.”
- ✓ Majorities of panelists in each sample respond *none* when asked about the number of “religious fiction” books they have read in the past year (e.g., members, 69%; pastors, 62%).

The Bible

- ✓ The majority of pastors (56%) choose the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) *always/almost always* when they read the Bible. Another 12% *always/almost always* read the Revised Standard Version (RSV), and 18% *always/almost always* read the New International Version (NIV).

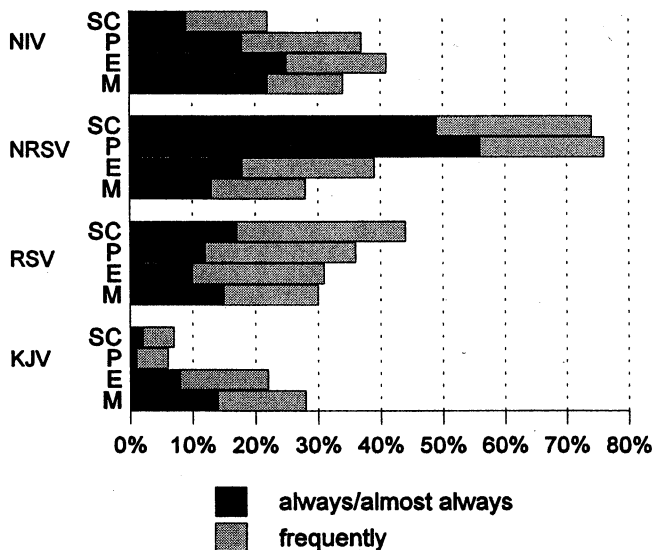


Figure 2
NRSV Most Popular Bible Translation

- ✓ Members and elders are more divided than clergy over their preferred Bible translations. No more than a quarter of either sample list a particular translation as the one they read *always/almost always*. At the top is the NIV, read *always/almost always* by 22% of members and 25% of elders. Combined, about as many read the NRSV *always/almost always* (13% and 18%, respectively) or the RSV (15% and 10%).

Presbyterian Periodicals

- ✓ About one-half of members (48%) and elders (57%) read their synod’s newsletter at least *occasionally*. A majority of both pastors (56%) and specialized clergy (52%) report reading their synod’s newsletter *regularly*.
- ✓ *HORIZONS*, *Presbyterians Today*, and *These Days* are each read *regularly* by around one in ten members. The regular readership of *HORIZONS* and *These Days* is similarly low among elders, but more elders than members regularly read *Presbyterians Today* (21% vs. 9%).
- ✓ More than a third of pastors (38%) and specialized clergy (38%) *regularly* read *Monday Morning*. Almost no members (1%) or elders (1%) *regularly* read *Monday Morning*.
- ✓ Many pastors and specialized clergy read the independent periodical *Presbyterian Outlook* either *regularly* (57% and 35%, respectively) or *occasionally* (15%, 16%).

Other Religious Periodicals

- ✓ Few lay Presbyterians read either of two major non-denominational magazines, *Christianity Today* and *Christian Century*. 94% of both members and elders report that they *never* read *Christian Century*, and 81% of members and 77% of elders report that they *never* read *Christianity Today*.
- ✓ A quarter of pastors (25%) and a fifth of specialized clergy (20%) *regularly* read *Christian Century*. One in six pastors (16%) and fewer specialized clergy (5%) *regularly* read *Christianity Today*.
- ✓ More pastors *regularly* read *Interpretation* (14%) and *Theology Today* (11%) than *Christian Ministry* (6%).

AWARENESS OF PPC AND ITS RESOURCES

Presbyterian Publishing Corporation

- ✓ More than a third of members and a majority of elders have some degree of familiarity with the Presbyterian Publishing Corporation (PPC), including 15% and 23%, respectively, who are either *very familiar* or *generally familiar*.
- ✓ Most pastors (84%) and specialized clergy (69%) report that they are either *very familiar* or *generally familiar* with PPC.
- ✓ A third of members (32%) and one-half of elders (49%), but 94% of pastors and 89% of specialized clergy, are aware that the Presbyterian Publishing Corporation is an “official entity of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)” Similar percentages are aware that Westminster John Knox Press is an “official entity.” Somewhat fewer—15% of members, 17% of elders, 52% of pastors, and 45% of specialized clergy—are aware that another imprint, Geneva Press, is also an “official entity of the PCUSA.”

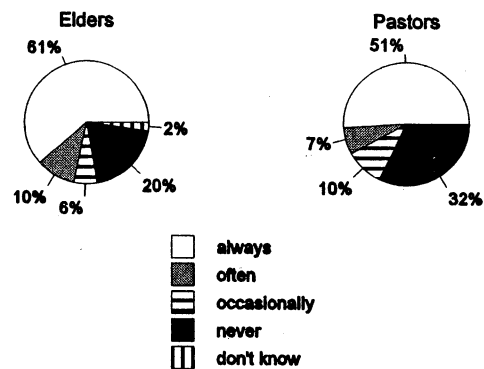
Cokesbury

- ✓ A third of pastors (34%) report that they live within an hour’s drive of a Cokesbury Bookstore. Another third (31%) live 1-2 hours distant.
- ✓ Most members (73%) and elders (66%) *don’t know* how far they live from the nearest Cokesbury Bookstore. Only 13% of pastors and 21% of specialized clergy *don’t know*.
- ✓ Among members who know how far they live from a Cokesbury store, 53% of those who live within an hour’s drive have visited the store at least once in the last year, but only 25% of those who live three or more hours away have visited the store in the past year.
- ✓ Most ministers (80% of pastors, 59% of specialized clergy), but few lay Presbyterians (5% of members, 8% of elders), *regularly* “review Cokesbury catalogs.”

The Presbyterian Hymnal

- ✓ Majorities in every sample, ranging from 60% of members to 72% of pastors, rate *The Presbyterian Hymnal* as either *excellent* or *good*.

- ✓ Only a few panelists—7% of pastors, 5% of members and elders, 2% of specialized clergy—rate it as *poor*.
- ✓ A majority of the congregations represented by panelists *always* use *The Presbyterian Hymnal* in worship, including 59% of those represented by members and 51% of those represented by pastors. Another 7% (pastors) to 11% (members and specialized clergy) *often* use *The Presbyterian Hymnal* in worship. A third of pastors (32%) report that their congregations *never* use this hymnal in worship.



How Often The Presbyterian Hymnal is Used in Congregational Worship Services

Figure 3
***The Presbyterian Hymnal* Widely, Frequently Used by PCUSA Congregations**

Other PPC Resources

- ✓ Except for *The Presbyterian Hymnal*, most PPC publications are unfamiliar to members and elders. The small percentage who do offer opinions generally rate each publication favorably, however. For example, while 77% of members have *no opinion* on *The Book of Common Worship*, of the remaining 23% almost all (83%, or 19% of all members) rate it *excellent* or *good*.
- ✓ Among pastors, the percentage who rate each of the follow publications as *excellent* or *good* include (percent *no opinion* in parentheses): *The Book of Common Worship*, 72% (4%); The Interpretation Bible Commentaries, 66% (21%); The New Interpreter’s Bible, 41% (50%); The Daily Bible Study, 30% (59%); and The Westminster Bible Companion series, 26% (63%).

STUDY AND RESOURCE INTERESTS

Church Study Groups

- ✓ Majorities of pastors (83%) and elders (58%), one half of specialized clergy (50%), and 43% of members report participation in a “church-related study group” in the prior year.
- ✓ Most church study group participants report that their groups use one or more books “as part of the study process,” ranging from 68% of participating specialized clergy to 79% of participating members. In a majority of these groups, the book or books include the Bible and/or a Bible study guide.

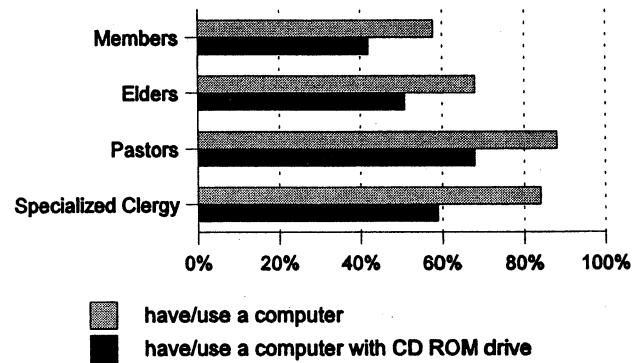


Figure 4
More Pastors and Specialized Clergy Have Computers than Members, Elders

Computers & Resources

- ✓ More than one-third of members (35%), a fourth of elders (27%), 8% of pastors, and 12% of specialized clergy *never use* a computer.
- ✓ Among panelists with computers, about one-half in every sample have an “IBM-compatible PC with a Pentium chip.” About three in four have a “CD-ROM drive.”
- ✓ 17% of members, 19% of elders, 41% of pastors, and 32% of specialized clergy are either *interested* or *very interested* in having “a CD-ROM containing the *Interpretation* Bible commentaries as a searchable infobase.” On average, pastors and specialized clergy would be willing to pay \$200-\$299 for this resource.

Interest Areas for Further Reading

- ✓ When asked about their interest in reading more on “various church and ministry-related” topics, the most interest (a response of *very interested*) in each sample is expressed for “Biblical study” (members, 31%; pastors, 64%) and “spiritual growth and development” (members, 31%; pastors, 55%).
- ✓ 32% of pastors are *very interested* and 37% are *somewhat interested* in further reading on “sermon construction and preparation.”
- ✓ Few panelists believe that there are “areas of interest or concern *to the church in general* that are not adequately covered by publications currently available.”

	Members	Elders	Ordained Ministers*
Number of surveys mailed	1,297	1,284	1,848
Number returned	709	830	1,252
Response rate	55%	65%	68%

* Of the 1,252 returned surveys, 861 were from pastors and 391 were from specialized clergy.

This survey was initially mailed in February 1998, and returns were accepted until May 1998. Results are subject to sampling and other errors. Small differences should be interpreted cautiously. As a general rule, differences of less than 6% between samples are not statistically meaningful.

For more numbers and interpretation of the February 1998 Presbyterian Panel results, a longer report with additional charts and graphs is available for \$5. Contact PDS (call 1-800-524-2612) and order PDS # 70360-98255. Included is a data appendix that presents the percentage responses to each survey question separately for members, elders, pastors, and specialized clergy.

For more information on the Presbyterian Publishing Corporation and Westminster John Knox Press contact Richard Brown at 502-569-5022.

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