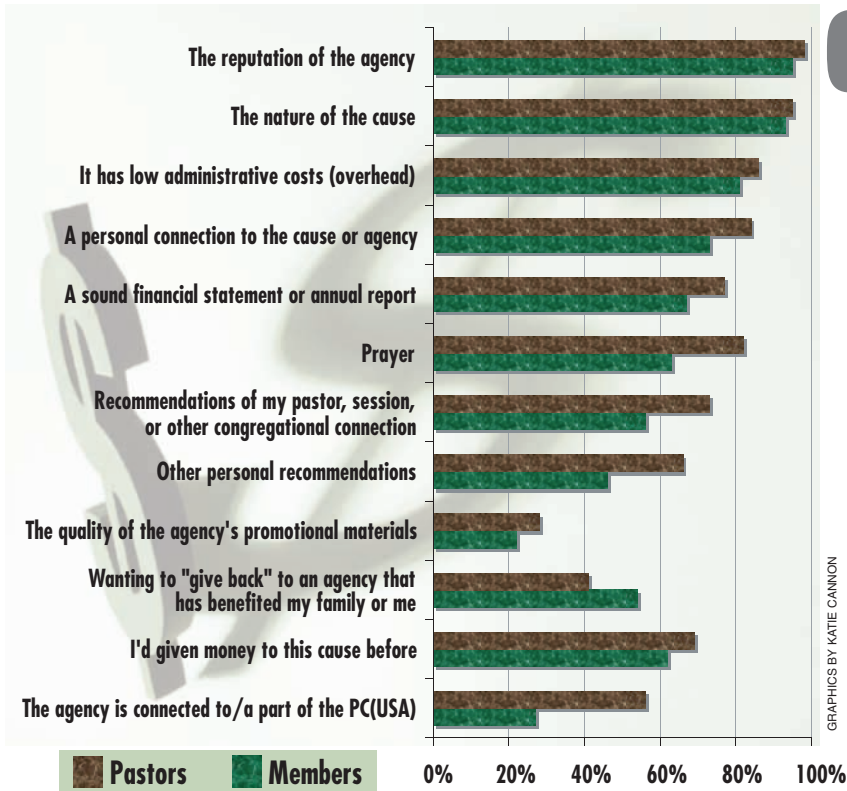


What most influences giving decisions



GO FIGURE

JACK MARCUM

What the research shows

This hypothetical exercise suggests that a mix of personal and pragmatic considerations influences charitable giving. Presbyterians draw on values and experience to identify potential recipients, helped along by familial and social networks. Fiscal integrity is important, too.

As the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) General Assembly Council explores ways to generate more contributions, these findings seem particularly relevant. They suggest that many Presbyterians would look favorably on supporting GAC mission, given the nature of its programs (disaster assistance, world mission) and low overhead (only 5 percent of designated dollars go toward administration).

What's missing for many is a personal connection to GAC mission. On the same 2005 survey, few members (4 percent) and pastors (9 percent) report hearing a representative of the national offices speak in their congregation in the prior two years.

More efforts to give the GAC a face, such as the successful "Mission Challenge '07," will be important in realizing the potential for contributions implicit in many of these responses. □

To donate directly to GAC mission

go to www.pcusa.org/navigation/giving.htm for links to a variety of worthy ministries and programs.

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Deciding where to donate

Suppose someone gave you \$200 to donate to a charity or religious cause. How would you decide where to contribute? We presented Presbyterians that scenario on a 2005 survey, asking them how important each of 12 factors would be in their decision making:

- **"The reputation of the agency" and "the nature of the cause" are key to giving decisions** (95 percent of members and 98 percent of pastors respond "very important" or "generally important" to the former, and 93 percent and 95 percent, respectively, to the latter).
- **Almost as important are "it has low administrative costs" (members, 81 percent; pastors, 86 percent), "a personal connection to the cause or agency" (73 and 84 percent), "a sound financial statement or annual report" (67 and 77 percent), and—especially for pastors—"prayer" (63 and 82 percent).**
- **Majorities also consider important "recommendations of my pastor, session, or other congregational connection" (members, 56 percent; pastors, 73 percent) and whether they had "given money to this cause before" (62 and 69 percent).**
- **Most pastors but fewer members assign importance to "other personal recommendations" (46 and 66 percent), while the reverse is true for "wanting to 'give back' to an agency that has benefited my family or me" (54 and 41 percent).**
- **Fewer than one-third in both groups rate "the quality of the agency's promotional materials" as "very" or "generally important" (22 and 28 percent).**

Other findings at www.pcusa.org/research