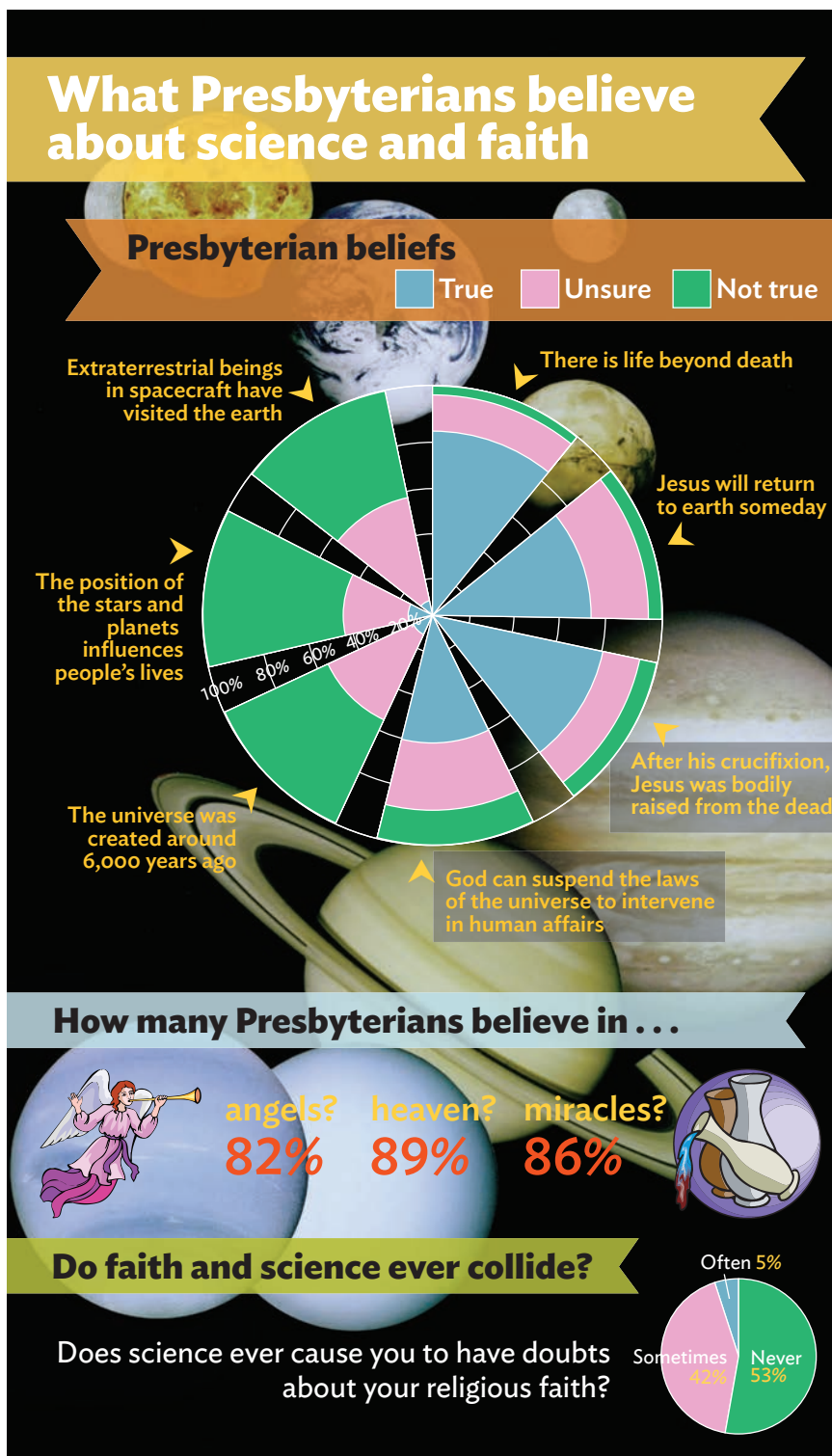


# Integrating what faith and science tell us



Large majorities of Presbyterians accept as true such Christian teachings as life after death, miracles, heaven, and the bodily resurrection of Jesus. On one level, that's not surprising: the New Testament witnesses to the reality of all of these. But on another level, it's eye opening: none are—nor could they be—confirmed by the findings of mainstream science.

On some matters most Presbyterians are in agreement with present-day scientific conclusions. Only a handful believe that the universe is only 6,000 years old, that astrology is true, and that extraterrestrial beings have visited the earth. They seem to accept, for instance, scientific evidence that the earth is older than a literal reading of biblical chronology would indicate.

The key to understanding this varying posture may lie in the statement "God can suspend the laws of the universe to intervene in human affairs." Six in 10 Presbyterians believe—and only 13 percent reject—that this assertion is true. In other words, God, as the very creator and sustainer of all that is, including whatever general patterns the scientific community has observed, can of course intervene in the affairs of that creation in various ways. So, where Scripture indicates that God has indeed intervened by setting the general course of things on its head (e.g., Jesus' bodily resurrection), most Presbyterians accept this testimony. But on matters where Scripture is silent (e.g., aliens) or ambiguous (e.g., the age of the earth), Presbyterians are very comfortable looking to the scientific community—those careful and systematic observers of creational patterns—for an answer.

*Jack Marcum is coordinator of Research Services of the Presbyterian Mission Agency.*

» Other findings [pcusa.org/research](http://pcusa.org/research)