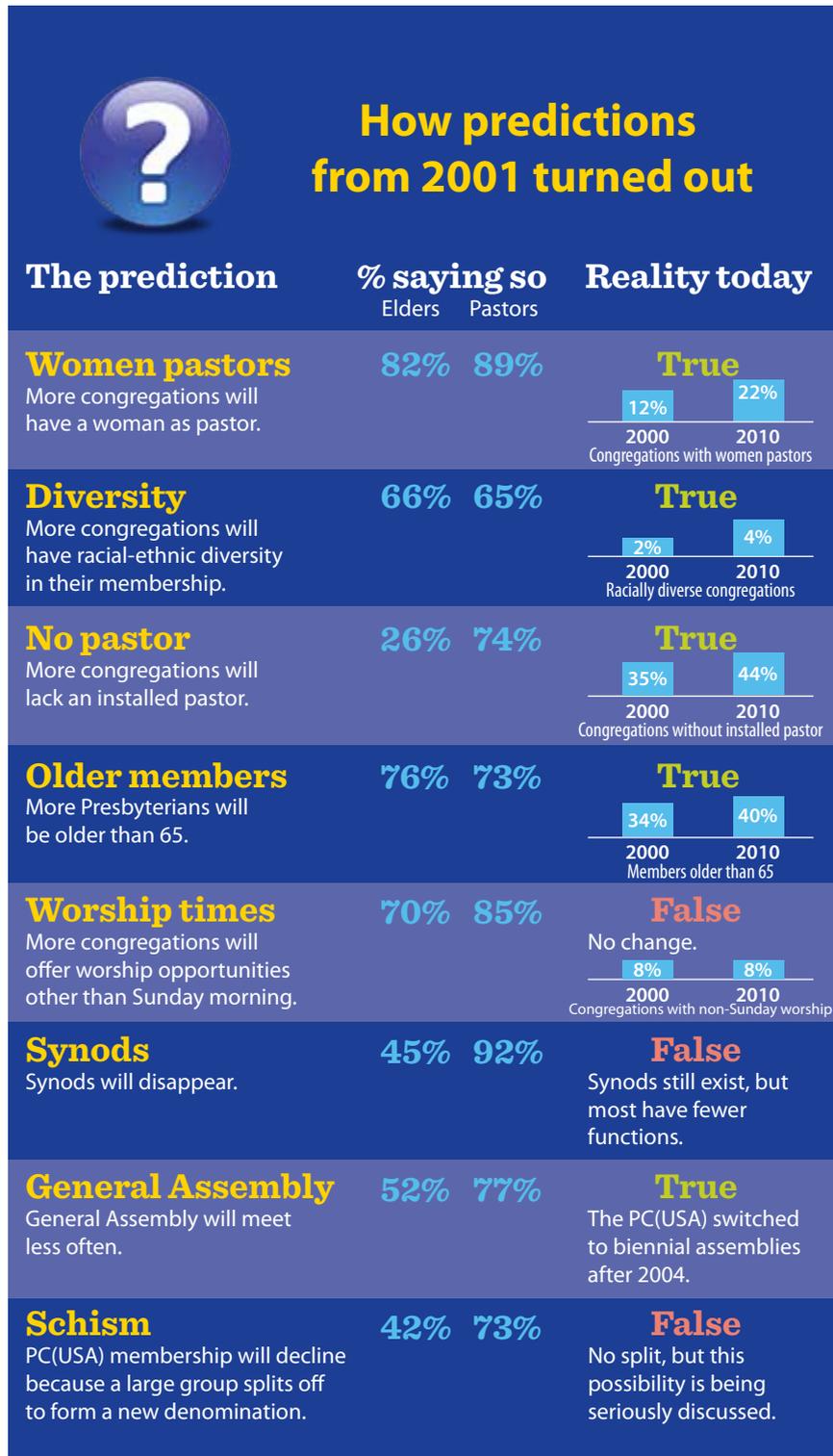


# Looking ahead



## What the research shows

The ability of Presbyterians to foresee the church's future, at least on most of these topics, has been fairly good. Of course, many of these predictions followed trends well underway prior to 2001, so it wouldn't have taken Nostradamus to anticipate their continuation. Yet some anomalies have occurred.

Most obviously, large majorities anticipated growth in the number of congregations offering worship services on evenings or weekdays. That makes sense: people lead busy lives, and an increasing number of alternative activities are available on Sunday mornings. Yet regular worship offerings are rarely found outside the prenoon hours on Sunday.

On other issues, many more pastors than elders correctly predicted particular outcomes, yet on two issues—the disappearance of synods and the likelihood of schism—elders have been significantly more accurate. One might think that pastors, with their greater involvement in the larger PC(USA), would be more perceptive about denominational trends. Nevertheless, in these instances outcomes that seemed inevitable to most pastors have not occurred.

So far, at least. Pastors may yet prove the wiser group: ongoing developments in the PC(USA) suggest that synods could disappear and a schism may occur soon. I don't pretend to know how this will play out, but I will venture one new prediction for 2012 based on what is apparent now: this year's General Assembly meeting will be very, very interesting!

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