



# The Presbyterian Panel

## Listening to Presbyterians



### SUMMARY

#### MINISTRIES TO FAMILIES and SAME-SEX ISSUES IN THE PC(USA) The August 2000 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, ministers are 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 fourth survey completed by the 2000-2002 Panel, initially sampled in the fall of 1999.

#### ✓ IN THIS SUMMARY

- Families and Stress* ..... (p.1)
- Family Ministries in Congregations* .... (p.2)
- Rating Congregations* ..... (p.2)
- Resources* ..... (p.3)
- Presbyterian Mariners* ..... (p.3)
- Same-Sex Issues* ..... (p.4)

### STRESS AND SUPPORT

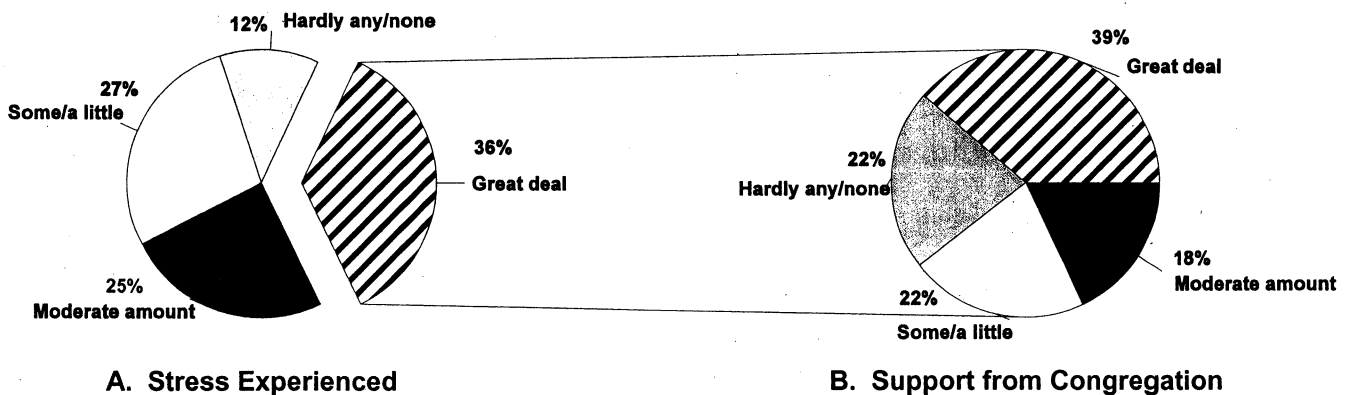
#### Families under Stress

- ✓ A majority of panelists report they or their families experienced at least a *moderate amount* of stress in the prior year.
- ✓ “Too much to do and not enough time” is by far the most significant factor stressing families in the opinion of panelists. Other stressors cited by sizeable minorities include “long work hours” and “family members with illness or disability.”

#### Support from Congregations

- ✓ A quarter of laity report receiving a *very great deal* or *quite a bit* of support from their congregations “to help you cope with stress,” about as many as reported receiving *none at all* or *hardly any*.
- ✓ In general, more clergy, especially pastors, than laity report receiving congregational support in coping with stress.

Figure 1  
Family Stress and Congregational Support  
Among Members



## FAMILY MINISTRIES IN CONGREGATIONS

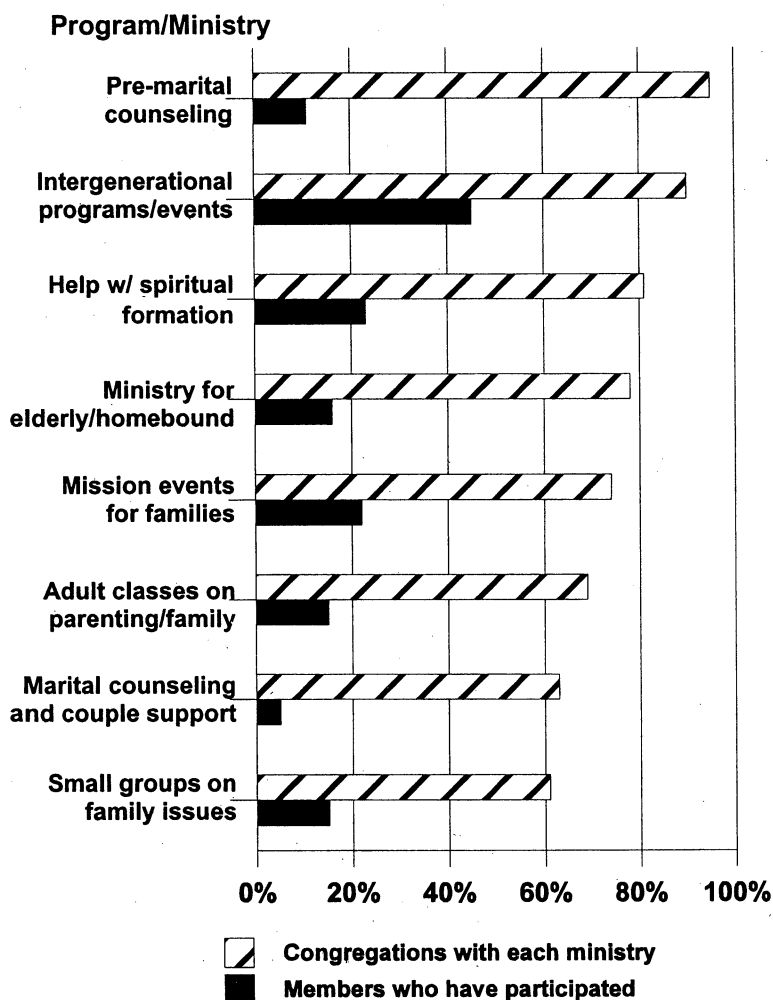
### Committees and Staff

- ✓ Around a third of elders report that their congregation has a committee “whose primary responsibilities are for family ministries.”
- ✓ Even more elders, 43%, report that one or more pastors or other staff persons have responsibilities that “explicitly include family ministries.”
- ✓ 48% of pastors report “my congregation ministers to families mostly ‘unconsciously’ as a byproduct of supporting individuals,” while 49% report “my congregation ministers to families because of a conscious effort to do so.”

### Programs

- ✓ The most widespread family-related ministries in congregations are:
  - pre-marital counseling
  - intentionally-intergenerational events
  - help with spiritual formation
  - ministry for elderly/homebound/nursing home
- ✓ Specific family ministries tend to serve only a small minority of members in most congregations.
- ✓ Rare programs include (14% or fewer pastors report):
  - ministry for perpetrators of domestic violence
  - adult daycare
  - family life center
  - support for single father families

**Figure 2**  
**Most Frequent Family Ministry Programs**



### Rating Family Ministries

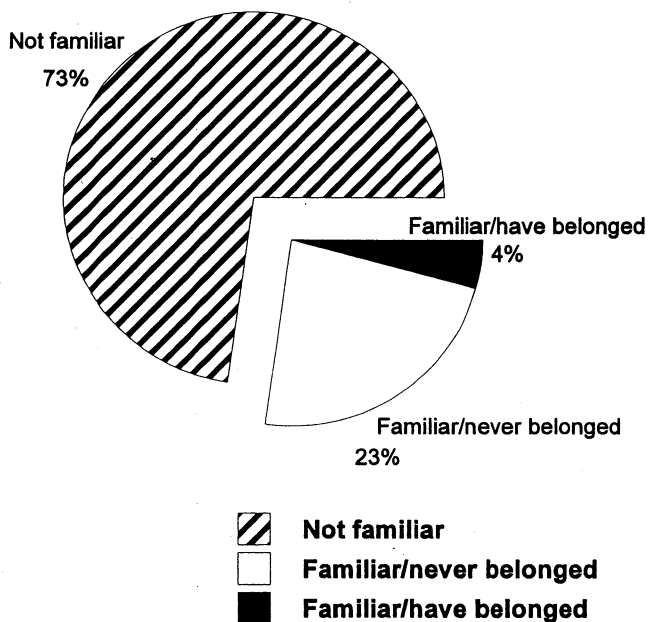
- ✓ Most panelists choose *excellent*, *good*, or *very good* to describe their congregation’s efforts “in ministering to the needs and concerns of families.”
- ✓ Majorities in all Panel groups *agree* that their congregation “does a good job”:
  - supporting marriages
  - supporting parents
  - making worship family-inclusive
  - making other activities family-inclusive
- ✓ Panelists are less positive about other particular family ministries. Only around a quarter to a third of panelists believe that their congregation does a good job:
  - ministering to singles
  - ministering to divorced persons
  - ministering to blended/step families
- ✓ Of programs and ministries to families that congregations do *not* currently have, pastors express the most interest in offering these:
  - support for adults caring for both their children and their parents (“sandwich generation”)
  - family life center
  - ministry to caregivers
  - support for blended families

## FAMILY MINISTRY IN THE NATIONAL CHURCH

### Presbyterian Mariners

- ✓ Three in four ministers but only one in four lay panelists indicate familiarity with the PC(USA)-related family ministry known as Presbyterian Mariners.
- ✓ Around one in eight members, elders, and specialized clergy, and one in seven pastors, have ever belonged to a Presbyterian Mariner group.
- ✓ Only a small minority who have never belonged to a Mariners' group report having had an interest in joining. Most never joined because there was no Mariners' group in their congregation.
- ✓ One in 12 pastors—8%—reports a Presbyterian Mariners' group in their congregation. Twice as many, 19%, report such a group in the past.
- ✓ A small majority of pastors rate the Mariners' groups in their congregations as either *effective* or *very effective*. At the same time, only 14% describe their Mariners' group as *growing*, while 49% describe it as *declining*.

**Figure 3**  
Familiarity of Elders with  
Presbyterian Mariners



### PC(USA) Resources

- ✓ One in ten ministers and one in 20 lay panelists express some degree of familiarity with the “family ministry” page on the PC(USA) Web site ([www.pcusa.org](http://www.pcusa.org)). Of those reporting familiarity, about as many rate the page as *helpful* as *not helpful*.
- ✓ Overall, the most widely-known family-ministry resources among pastors are:
  - *Alert* magazine, familiar to 82%
  - PC(USA) resources on human sexuality, familiar to 66%
  - Parenting resources available through the church school curriculum, familiar to 41%
  - Family Ministry Packet, known to 36%

### Mariners' Resources

- ✓ One in ten pastors expresses familiarity with workbooks produced by Presbyterian Mariners. The majority (6%) describe these resources as either *not helpful* or *only a little helpful*.
- ✓ 2% of members and elders and 7% of pastors have visited the Mariners' World Wide Web site ([www.unidial.com/~mariners](http://www.unidial.com/~mariners)).

### Other Resources

- ✓ Almost half of pastors (45%) are familiar with family-ministry resources produced by other denominations.
- ✓ Only minorities of pastors are familiar with family-ministry resources produced by the Parenting for Peace and Justice Network (43% so report); Active Parenting publishers (36%); or the Religion, Culture, and Family Project book series (15%).

### Needed Resources

- ✓ Less than one in ten pastors (9%) and elders (6%) report that there are “issues affecting families for which you have been unable to find resources.”

## SAME-SEX ISSUES IN THE PC(USA)

### Opinions on Homosexuality

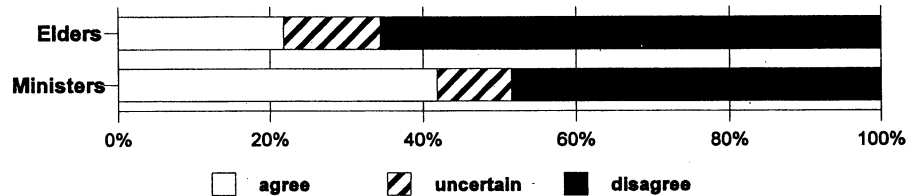
- ✓ A majority of specialized clergy (61%), four in ten pastors (41%), and around three in ten members (28%) and elders (28%) *agree* that “homosexuality should be considered an acceptable alternative lifestyle.” In a national Gallup Poll taken in early 2000, 50% of U.S. adults responded *agree* to the same statement.
- ✓ Majorities of pastors (51%) and specialized clergy (67%) *agree* that “gay partners who make a legal commitment to each other should be entitled to the same rights and benefits as couples in traditional marriages.” Only a quarter of members (28%) and elders (26%) respond *agree*, however, as do 40% of U.S. adults.

### Opinions on Same-Sex Ceremonies

- ✓ Majorities of members (57%) and elders (61%), half of pastors (50%), and 30% of specialized clergy *agree* that “Presbyterian ministers should be prohibited from performing a ceremony that blesses the union between two people of the same sex.”
- ✓ Similarly, majorities of members (67%), elders (66%), and pastors (53%), and a third of specialized clergy (33%), *disagree* with the statement, “It’s OK for two people of the same sex to hold a union ceremony in a Presbyterian church.”

**Figure 4**  
**Opinions on Same-Sex Union Ceremonies**

Q. It’s okay for two people of the same sex to hold a union ceremony in a Presbyterian church



	Members	Elders	Ordained Ministers*
Number of surveys mailed	1,192	1,110	1,486
Number returned	614	648	983
Response rate	51%	58%	66%

\*Of the 983 returned surveys, 776 came from pastors and 207 from specialized clergy.

This survey was initially mailed in August 2000, and returns were accepted through October 2000. Results are subject to sampling and other errors. Small differences should be interpreted cautiously. As a general rule, differences of less than 8% between samples are not statistically meaningful.

**For more numbers and interpretation** of the August 2000 Presbyterian Panel results, a longer report with additional charts and graphs is available for \$5. Contact PDS (1-800-524-2612) and order PDS# 65100-00266. 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 ministries to families in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)** contact Sherrie Schork (888-728-7228 ext. 8013) or Carl Horton (888-728-7228 ext. 5453) of the Congregational Ministries Division.

### LISTENING TO PRESBYTERIANS SINCE 1973

The Presbyterian Panel  
A Ministry of the General Assembly Council  
Research Services  
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)  
100 Witherspoon Street  
Louisville KY 40202-1396  
www.pcusa.org/rs