



# The Presbyterian Panel

*Listening to Presbyterians*



## SUMMARY

### BACKGROUND SURVEY FOR THE 2000-2002 PRESBYTERIAN PANEL

#### Overview

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 parish, and *specialized clergy*, serving elsewhere. New samples are drawn every three years. These pages summarize major findings from the first survey sent to all panelists asked to serve from 2000 to 2002. The survey was initially mailed in September 1999, and returns were accepted until January 2000.

### CHURCH ACTIVITIES AND INVOLVEMENT

#### Church Background

- ✓ About one in every seven members and elders were raised Methodist, and one in ten, Baptist. Among pastors, 7% were raised in a Methodist church, and another 7%, in a Baptist church.



- ✓ On average, members joined their current church 14 years ago; elders, 17 years ago.
- ✓ Almost one-half of pastors and specialized clergy, and one-third of members and elders, report having at least one relative, past or present, who served the church as a minister.

#### Church Attendance and Participation

- ✓ Over one-half of elders and 47% of members live within three miles of their church.
- ✓ More than six in ten members (63%) and almost nine in ten elders (87%) report that they usually attend worship services *every week or nearly every week*.

- ✓ On average, members report missing worship ten Sundays and elders six Sundays in the prior year. Frequently cited reasons for absences are vacations and illness.
- ✓ A majority of members and elders participate three or more hours per week in programs and activities of their congregations (e.g., church school).
- ✓ Most members and elders volunteer time each week to teach or lead activities at their church. The average amount of time involved is *1-2 hours* for members and *3-5 hours* for elders.

#### Church Leadership

- ✓ Almost one-half of members have previously been ordained as elders, deacons, or both.
- ✓ Four in ten elders, and 14% of members, currently chair a congregational committee.
- ✓ One in seven members and one in six elders serve as officers for a men's, women's, youth, or other group in their congregation.

#### Financial Stewardship

- ✓ Three-fourths of members and 84% of elders report that they or another family member completed a pledge card last year.
- ✓ Median giving to congregations on a per person basis averages \$800 for members, \$1,350 for elders, \$1,600 for pastors, and \$1,100 for specialized clergy.

**The Bible**

- ✓ Almost all panelists believe the Bible “was inspired by God,” but few members (8%), elders (8%), pastors (3%), or specialized clergy (<0.5%) believe “the account of Creation presented in Genesis” is *literally true*.
- ✓ Four in ten members and a majority of elders (52%) read the Bible at least *weekly*. More than one-half of pastors (53%) and one-third of specialized clergy (37%) read the Bible *daily* or *almost daily*.
- ✓ One in five members and one in three elders participate in weekly Bible study groups.

**Prayer**

- ✓ Around two-thirds of members (61%) and elders (67%) and more than eight in ten pastors (87%) and specialized clergy (81%) “pray privately” *daily* or *almost daily*.
- ✓ One in ten members (9%) and one in seven elders (14%) attend a weekly prayer group.

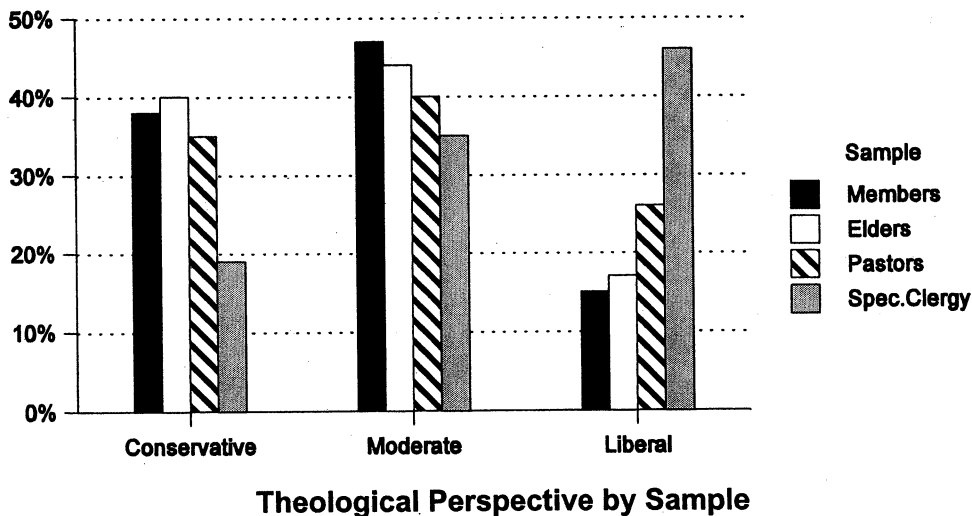
**Conversion Experience**

- ✓ About one-half of members (47%) and elders (49%) report having had a conversion experience.

- ✓ About two-thirds of members (63%) and elders (72%) report having “tried to encourage someone to believe in Jesus Christ or accept Him as a personal savior.”

**Dimensions of Belief**

- ✓ 73% of members, 75% of elders, 74% of pastors, and 56% of specialized clergy *agree* that “the only absolute Truth for humankind is in Jesus Christ.”
- ✓ 46% of members and elders, 48% of pastors, and 22% of specialized clergy *agree* that “only followers of Jesus Christ can be saved.”
- ✓ Six in ten specialized clergy (58%), two-thirds of members (68%), and eight in ten elders (78%) and pastors (80%) believe “Jesus will return to earth some day.”
- ✓ Two-thirds of members and elders, but somewhat fewer pastors (62%) and specialized clergy (48%), believe in the existence of Satan.
- ✓ 86% of members, 87% of specialized clergy, 92% of elders, and 97% of pastors believe “there is life after death.”
- ✓ More members consider their “current stand on theological issues” to be *moderate* (47%) than either *conservative* (38%) or *liberal* (15%).



## PASTORS AND OTHER CLERGY: CHARACTERISTICS OF CAREER AND CALL

### Current Call

- ✓ Three-fourths of clergy in the Panel serve primarily as pastors in one or more congregations. 45% serve as solo pastors, 25% as senior pastors, and another fourth as associate pastors.
- ✓ 6% of pastors serve more than one congregation, one-half of them in a yoked parish.
- ✓ Among specialized clergy, one-fourth serve as faculty or staff at a seminary or other educational institution; one-fifth as chaplains; one-sixth as staff of a PCUSA body; and 11% as pastoral counselors.
- ✓ Six in ten chaplains serve in hospitals.
- ✓ 37% of specialized clergy are employed by an organization affiliated with the PCUSA, including 16% who serve as denominational staff.

### Education

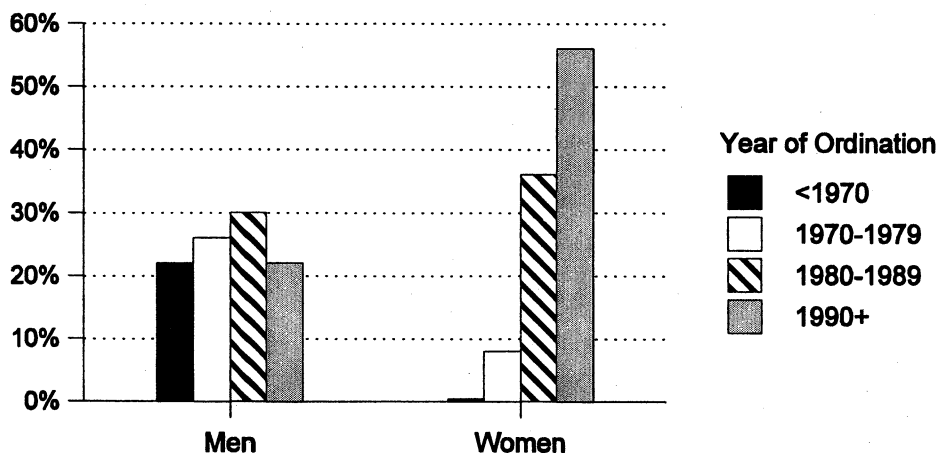
- ✓ 99% of pastors and specialized clergy have either an M.Div. or B.D. degree.
- ✓ Two of every three PCUSA ministers received their B.D. or M.Div. degree from a PCUSA-affiliated theological school. Overall, one in six ministers graduated from Princeton Theological Seminary, and 4% to 9% received the B.D./M.Div. from each of the ten other PCUSA seminaries (with the exception of Johnson C. Smith, where fewer than 1% of denominational clergy graduated). Of clergy who graduated

from non-PCUSA institutions, the largest proportions went to Fuller (8% of all clergy), Gordon Conwell (3%), Union (New York) (2%), and Yale University (2%).

- ✓ Almost four in ten pastors and other clergy have at least one graduate degree in theology in addition to the B.D./M.Div. One-fourth have a doctoral degree, typically the D.Min—20% of pastors and 12% of specialized clergy have this degree. Overall, two-thirds of clergy with the D.Min. degree received it from a PCUSA-affiliated school; one-quarter received it from McCormick Seminary.
- ✓ 9% of pastors and 7% of specialized clergy are currently enrolled in a graduate school, seminary, or theological school. Among these students, nine in ten pastors and eight in ten specialized clergy are pursuing a doctoral degree, typically the D.Min.

### Career Background

- ✓ One-third of all clergy had a “long-term secular job or career” prior to entering the ministry.
- ✓ 94% of ministers of the Word and Sacrament were ordained for that office in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) or one of its predecessor denominations. Of the remainder, more than one-fourth (about 2% of all clergy) were ordained in a Baptist denomination.
- ✓ 60% of pastors were ordained since 1980, including 29% ordained in the 1990s. 46% of specialized clergy were ordained after 1980.



Gender Differences in Year of Ordination: Pastors

## SOCIAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

### Age, Sex, and Race-Ethnicity

- ✓ The median age is 55 years for members, 56 years for elders, 48 years for pastors, and 53 years for specialized clergy.
- ✓ 60% of members are female, as are 48% of elders, 22% of pastors, and 29% of other clergy.
- ✓ 96% of members, 95% of elders and pastors, and 91% of specialized clergy list their race-ethnicity as white.

### Marriage and Households

- ✓ Large majorities of members (76%), elders (84%), pastors (89%), and specialized clergy (85%) are currently married. Overall, 9% of members and 6% of pastors have never married. Among the ever-married, 19% of members, 18% of elders, 18% of pastors, and 25% of specialized clergy have been divorced.

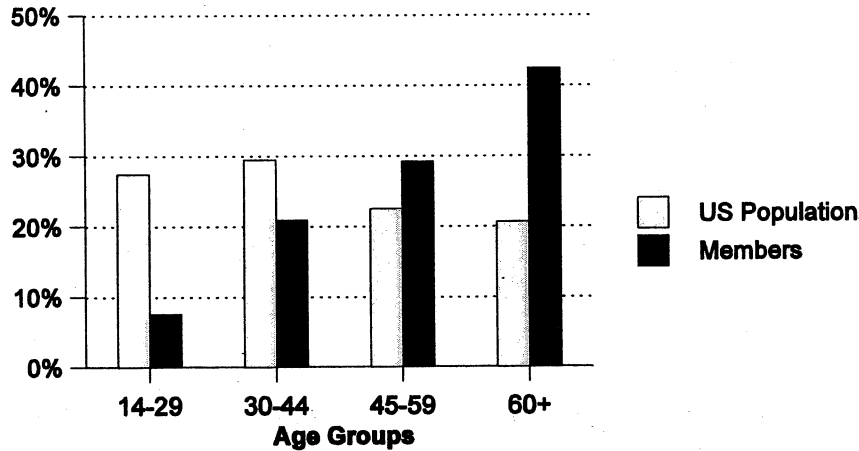
- ✓ One in seven members, one in eight elders, one in ten pastors, and one in nine specialized clergy live alone. The average household size overall is 2.5 persons for members and elders, 2.9 for pastors, and 2.6 for specialized clergy.

### Employment Status and Income

- ✓ Six in ten members and elders are currently employed, most full time. One-third of members and one-fourth of elders are retired.
- ✓ Median family income is \$60,000-69,000 for members, pastors, and specialized clergy, and \$70,000-79,999 for elders.

### Political Preference

- ✓ 55% of members and 53% of elders describe themselves as Republicans. One-half of pastors (50%) and six in ten specialized clergy (60%) label themselves as Democrats.



**Age Distribution: U.S. Population (age 14+) and PCUSA Members**

	Members	Elders	Ordained Ministers
Number of surveys mailed	1,994	1,634	2,197
Number returned	1,206	1,145	1,502*
Response rate	60%	70%	68%

\*Of 1,502 returned surveys, 1,145 were from pastors and 357 from specialized clergy.

These results are subject to sampling and other errors. Small differences should be interpreted cautiously. As a rule of thumb, differences of less than 8% between samples are not statistically meaningful. For more details, see the "Technical Appendix" in *The Background Report for the 2000-2002 Presbyterian Panel*. This Report includes numerous charts and graphs, and a data appendix displaying percentage responses to each survey question for members, elders, pastors, and specialized clergy. Cost: \$5. Call PDS at 1-800-524-2612 and order PDS # 65100-99263.