



## UNDERSTANDING AND RESPONDING TO VIOLENCE AND WAR FINDINGS FROM THE NOVEMBER 2012 SURVEY

The Presbyterian Panel consists of three nationally representative samples of groups affiliated with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.): members, ruling elders serving on session, and teaching elders (ministers). For most analyses, teaching elders are split into two groups based on current call: *pastors*, serving congregations, and *specialized ministers*, serving elsewhere. New samples are drawn every three years. This is a summary of findings from the fourth survey completed by the 2012-14 Panel, sampled in 2011.

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## INVOLVEMENT WITH PEACEMAKING AND WAR

### ***Congregational Involvement***

- ✓ Minorities of members (10%), ruling elders (11%), pastors (24%), and specialized ministers (28%) report that their congregation has adopted the PC(USA) “Commitment to Peacemaking,” but a large majority of members (82%) and a smaller majority of ruling elders (66%) are “not sure” whether their congregation has adopted it. Only 17% of pastors and 49% of specialized ministers are “not sure.”
- ✓ Among panelists currently involved in a congregation, only about a third of members (32%), but small majorities of ruling elders (53%), pastors (57%), and specialized ministers (54%), report that their congregation received the 2012 PC(USA) Peacemaking Offering.
- ✓ Among panelists currently involved in a congregation:
  - A majority (members, 59%; ruling elders, 71%; pastors, 64%; specialized ministers, 57%) report that there have “frequently” been prayers or prayer requests in worship services during the past year for military personnel serving in a war zone.
  - About one-half to two-thirds (48%, 57%, 67%, and 57%, respectively) report prayers or prayer requests “frequently” during worship in the past year for peace in another country.

### ***Personal Involvement***

- ✓ A minority of panelists in each group have read one or more of two Peacemaking Program resources within the past year: *Peace Notes* newsletter (members and ruling elders, 7% each; pastors, 22%; specialized ministers, 15%) and *Path of Peace* daily reflections (5%; 4%; 7%; 8%).

- ✓ A minority of panelists in each group have, within the past 12 months:
  - Contacted an elected official about violence (members, 10%; ruling elders, 11%; pastors, 24%; specialized ministers, 30%).
  - Heard a talk by a PC(USA) International Peacemaker (4%; 5%; 21%; 20%).
  - Written an article, blog post, book, essay, or letter to the editor about violence (5%; 4%; 19%; 17%).
- ✓ A minority of members (36%) and ruling elders (37%), but a majority of pastors (62%) and specialized ministers (58%), report that they heard or preached a sermon about violence or a violence-related issue during the past 12 months.

### ***Personal Experience***

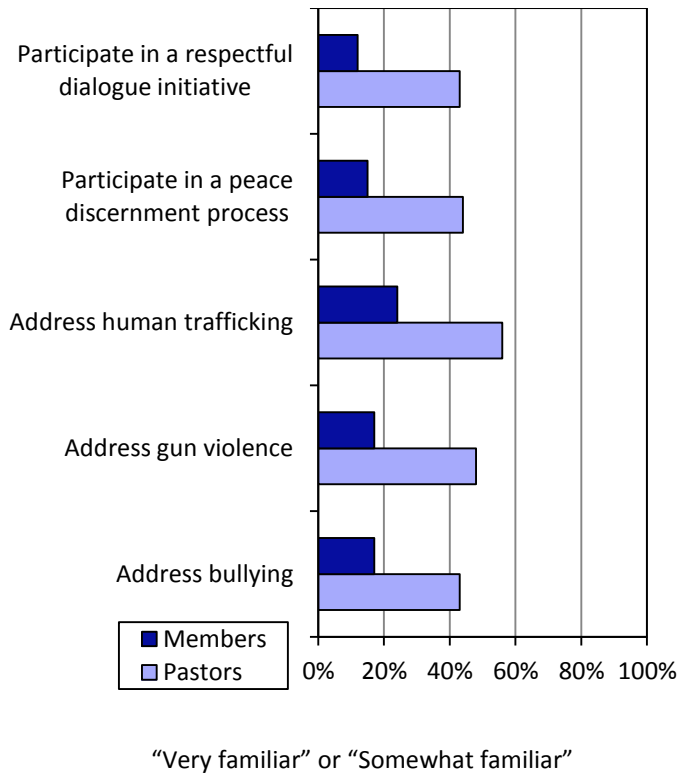
- ✓ Less than a fourth of any group of panelists has served in the U.S. military, but a third or more have a child, parent, or spouse who has served (members, 48%; ruling elders, 46%; pastors, 42%; specialized ministers, 35%).
- ✓ Fewer than 5% of panelists in any group have served in a war zone in the past ten years, but at least a third (members, 36%; ruling elders, 42%; pastors, 45%; specialized ministers, 42%) have had a close friend serve in a war zone within the past decade.
- ✓ Fewer than 5% of panelists in any group have been a victim of a violent crime within the past decade, but more report that a family member has been a victim (members, 8%; ruling elders, 7%; pastors, 12%; specialized ministers, 10%), and still more report that a close friend has been a victim (23%; 12%; 21%; 25%).

## PEACEMAKING PRIORITIES

### Familiarity with the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program

- ✓ In general, members are less familiar than are pastors with various peace efforts by the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program. (See Figure 1 for comparisons.)
- ✓ Of the five efforts asked about in the survey, members are most familiar with the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program’s efforts to help Presbyterians address human trafficking (24% report being “very familiar” or “somewhat familiar”).
- ✓ In contrast, more than twice as many pastors (56%) are “very familiar” or “somewhat familiar” with the same efforts.

**Figure 1. Familiarity with Efforts by the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program to Help Presbyterians to:**

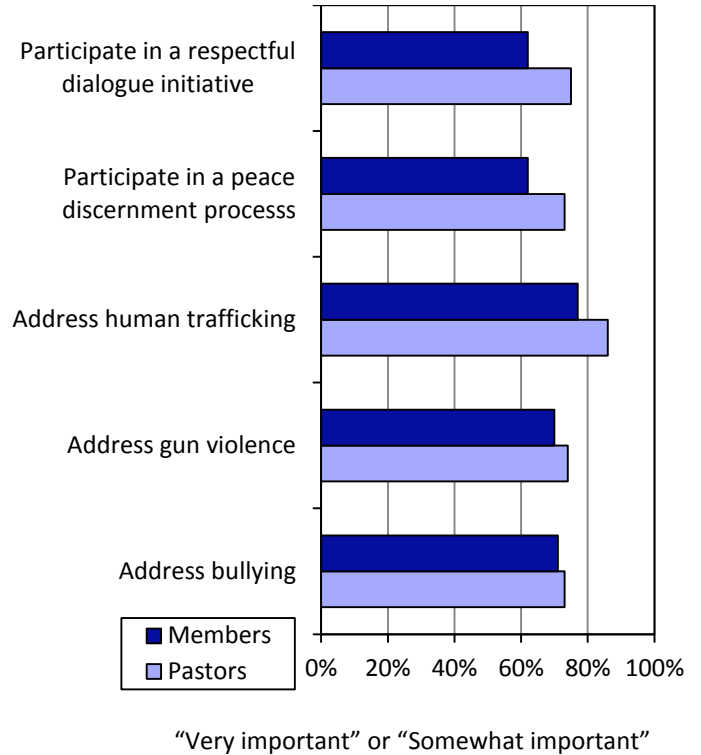


- ✓ Fewer than 20% of members are “very familiar” or “somewhat familiar” with each of the other four efforts of the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program listed in the survey.
- ✓ More than 40% of pastors report being “very familiar” or “somewhat familiar” with each of these other four efforts, however.

### Importance of the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program

- ✓ Although members and pastors differ significantly in their *familiarity* with various efforts of the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program, they don’t differ as much in their opinions about the *importance* of each of these efforts. (See Figure 2 for comparisons.)

**Figure 2. Importance of Efforts by the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program to Help Presbyterians to:**



- ✓ Of the five efforts asked about in the survey, the largest majority of members (77%) and pastors (86%) say that the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program’s efforts to help Presbyterians address human trafficking are “very important” or “somewhat important.”

### Familiarity with Other Initiatives

- ✓ Very few members and ruling elders (6% of each), and fewer than one-third of pastors (28%) and specialized ministers (31%), are “very familiar” or “somewhat familiar” with the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship’s Colombia Accompaniment Program, “which sends U.S. Presbyterians to Colombia to spend time with church leaders who fear for their safety because of their ministry and witness.”
- ✓ Few members (9%) and ruling elders (10%), but larger minorities of pastors (18%) and specialized ministers (28%), are “very familiar” or “somewhat familiar” with the Veterans Affairs Chaplaincy program.

## OPINIONS ABOUT VIOLENCE AND WAR

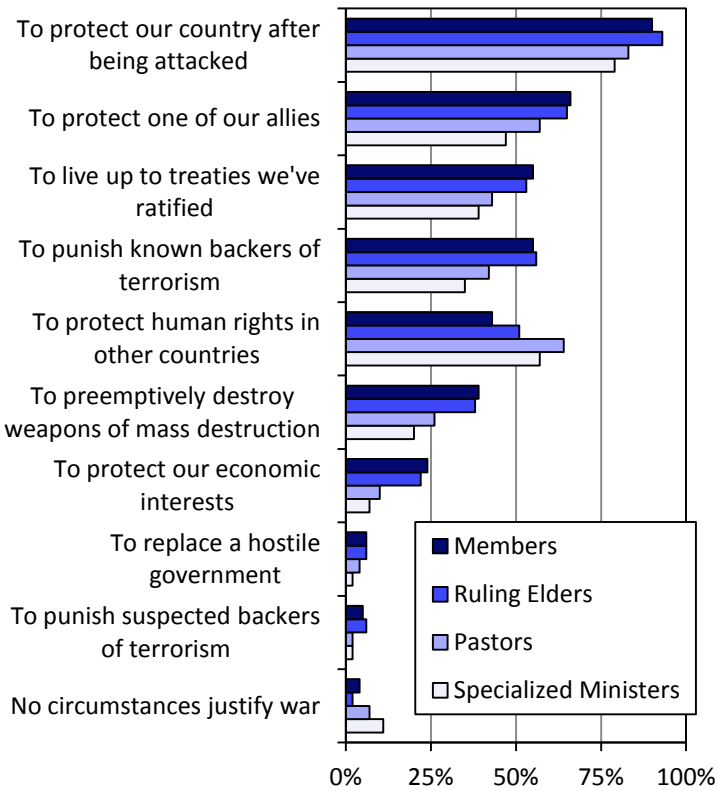
### Biblical Influences

- ✓ Three-fourths of pastors (76%) and more than two-thirds of specialized ministers (69%), but only a third of ruling elders (33%) and a little more than a fourth of members (27%), report that the Bible has been “very influential” for how they understand and respond to violence and war.
- ✓ A large majority of pastors (74%) and specialized ministers (80%), but only about half of ruling elders (54%) and members (48%), identify Matthew 5:9 (“Blessed are the peacemakers”) as being “very influential” for how they understand and respond to war.

### Reasons to Justify the U.S. Government Going to War

- ✓ Panelists were shown a list of ten possible reasons for going to war and asked to indicate which ones they believed would justify the United States going to war. Their responses are shown in Figure 3.

**Figure 3. Reasons That Justify the United States Going to War**



Percent indicating each reason justifies going to war

- ✓ The most frequently chosen reason by all groups (members, 90%; ruling elders, 93%; pastors, 83%; specialized ministers, 79%) is “to protect our country after attack by another country.”

- ✓ Smaller majorities of members (66%), ruling elders (65%), and pastors (57%), and nearly half of specialized ministers (47%), feel that protecting one of our country’s allies justifies going to war.
- ✓ Majorities of members and ruling elders but fewer pastors and specialized ministers think that other reasons that justify war include living up to treaties that we have ratified (members, 55%; ruling elders, 53%; pastors, 43%; specialized ministers, 39%) and punishing countries known to have backed terrorists (55%; 56%; 42%; 35%).
- ✓ Fewer members and ruling elders (43%; 51%) than pastors and specialized ministers (64%; 57%) think that war is justified to protect human rights in other countries.

### Reasons to Oppose War

- ✓ Roughly half of members (46%) and ruling elders (53%), but large majorities of pastors (80%) and specialized ministers (77%), believe that Jesus’ teaching to “love your enemies” is a “very strong” or “strong” reason to oppose war.
- ✓ Fewer than half of members (45%) and ruling elders (44%), but slightly more pastors (54%) and specialized ministers (50%), believe that the statement, “only God should have the final authority over life and death,” is a “very strong” or “strong” reason to oppose war.

### Positions on Violence and War

- ✓ A majority of members “strongly favor” or “favor” six of eight positions on violence and war: avoiding the use of nuclear weapons (76%), abolishing torture (70%), supporting nonviolent transitions to democracy (65%), affirming the U.N. as a peacemaking organization (62%), making human rights a major goal of U.S. foreign and military policy (62%), and encouraging all countries to become members of the International Criminal Court to enable the Court to prosecute war crimes committed by any country (55%).
- ✓ Sizable minorities of members “strongly favor” or “favor” two other positions: allowing conscientious objection to a particular war rather than to all wars (39%), and supporting the work of “truth and reconciliation” commissions in countries with relatively recent histories of political violence (47%). Responses of ruling elders are similar to those of members.
- ✓ Majorities of pastors “strongly favor” or “favor” each of these same eight positions on violence and war (89%; 83%; 78%; 72%; 78%; 67%; 57%; 77%). Slightly higher percentages of specialized ministers favor each of these positions (92%; 87%; 87%; 82%; 84%; 75%; 66%; 83%).

## OPINIONS ABOUT U.S. MILITARY POLICIES

### **U.S. Military Intervention: Afghanistan**

- ✓ Large minorities of members (42%), ruling elders (47%), and pastors (40%), but only 29% of specialized ministers, report that they had “strongly favored” or “somewhat favored” the intervention in Afghanistan *when it began* in 2001.
- ✓ When asked how they feel about the intervention *now*, smaller minorities of these Panel groups report that they think it was a “very good decision” or “good decision” (members, 26%; ruling elders, 29%; pastors, 26%).
- ✓ Specialized ministers as a group have not changed their opinions as much, however; 43% report that they had “strongly” or “somewhat” opposed the intervention *at the time it began*, and 43% report that they *now* think it was a “very poor” or “poor” decision.

### **U.S. Military Intervention: Iraq**

- ✓ Large minorities of members (45%) and ruling elders (39%), but majorities of pastors (57%) and specialized ministers (70%), report that they had “strongly opposed” or “somewhat opposed” the intervention in Iraq *when it began* in 2003.
- ✓ Now, half of members (50%), a large minority of ruling elders (44%), a majority of pastors (66%), and a larger majority of specialized ministers (70%) think it was a “very poor decision” or “poor decision.”

### **U.S. Military Intervention: Libya**

- ✓ Panelists are almost evenly split in the opinions they *had at the time* of the U.S. intervention in Libya in 2011, with roughly a third of each group reporting that they “strongly favored” or “somewhat favored” it (members, 27%; ruling elders, 32%; pastors, 29%; specialized ministers, 26%); another third reporting that they had a “mixed opinion” about it (33%; 33%; 34%; 32%); and the other third reporting that they were “strongly opposed” or “somewhat opposed” (33%; 28%; 33%; 37%).
- ✓ Now, only about a fourth of each group of panelists think that the Libyan intervention was a “very good decision” or “good decision” (members, 23%; ruling elders, 26%; pastors, 27%; specialized ministers, 26%); about three in ten think it was a “very poor decision” or “poor decision” (30%; 28%; 28%; 33%); and slightly more than a third have a “mixed opinion” about it (36%; 38%; 39%; 35%).

### **U.S. Military and Defense Spending**

- ✓ Majorities of pastors (76%) and specialized ministers (81%), but only about half of members (50%) and ruling elders (48%), think that the government spends “much too much” or “too much” on the military and national defense.
- ✓ More members (27%) and ruling elders (32%) feel that “about the right amount” is being spent on the military and defense than do pastors (14%) and specialized ministers (12%).

	Members	Ruling Elders	Teaching Elders
Number of surveys sent .....	998	1,391	1,476
Number of undeliverable surveys and ineligible respondents.....	9	8	21
Number of surveys completed .....	361	631	713‡
Response rate.....	36%	45%	48%

‡Of the 713 returned surveys, 504 came from pastors and 209 from specialized ministers.

**The survey was distributed on December 5, 2012**, with returns accepted through February 13, 2013. Results are subject to sampling and other errors. Small differences should be interpreted cautiously. In general, differences of less than 8% between samples are not statistically meaningful.

**For more numbers and interpretation** of these results, a report will be available on the web or (for \$15) from Presbyterian Distribution Service (800-524-2612; order PDS# 20056-13318). It will include tables with percentage responses to each survey question.

**For more information about** the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy and the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program, the two entities that sponsored this survey, visit: [presbyterianmission.org/ministries/compassion-peace-justice](http://presbyterianmission.org/ministries/compassion-peace-justice).

#### **LISTENING TO PRESBYTERIANS SINCE 1973**

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