

PRESBYTERIAN PANEL SUMMARY

Listening to Presbyterians



FEBRUARY 1994 — SPIRITUALITY

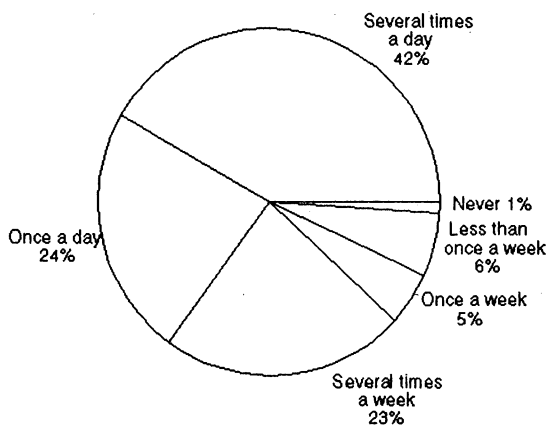
	<u>MEMBERS</u>	<u>ELDERS</u>	<u>PASTORS</u>	<u>SPECIALIZED CLERGY</u>
Number of Panelists	1,518	1,371	1,261	685
Number of questionnaires returned	1,161	1,086	1,071	600
Percent returned	76%	79%	85%	88%

VAST MAJORITY PRAY SEVERAL TIMES A WEEK

Ninety percent of Presbyterians pray at least several times a week and many pray more frequently. The percentage that pray several times a day ranges from 42% of members to 77% of pastors. Majorities of members and elders never participate in prayer groups (69% and 55%, respectively), but 26% of pastors do so at least weekly. Thirteen percent of members, but 32% of pastors, are part of a prayer group.

Few Presbyterians are dissatisfied with their prayer life (either “dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied,” ranging from 13% of members to 22% of pastors) and only about 9% are “very satisfied” with their prayer life. Most Presbyterians (about 75%) are either “satisfied” or “neither satisfied nor dissatisfied” with their prayer life.

Frequency of Prayer Among Presbyterian Members



PRESBYTERIANS ASK FOR GOD’S BLESSING AND GUIDANCE, NOT MATERIAL THINGS

When they pray, fully 96% of Presbyterians talk with God in their own words and thank God for blessings they have received. Over 90% are also likely to ask God to forgive their sins and to provide guidance in making decisions. Only 28% of members and elders, 35% of specialized clergy, and 39% of pastors ask God for material things they need. Whereas only 12% of members are likely to read from a book of prayers when they pray, 35% of pastors are likely to do so.

About seven in ten Presbyterians (from 68% of members to a high of 77% of elders) say that, as a regular part of the Sunday morning worship services they attend, the worship leader asks for prayer concerns.

In terms of their experiences during prayer, 70% of members said that at least once in the last year they received what they believed to be a deeper insight into a spiritual or biblical truth or felt divinely inspired by God to perform some specific action. Pastors and specialized clergy were even more likely than members to have received deeper insights and feel inspired to action as a result of prayer.

MANY PRESBYTERIANS REGULARLY SAY GRACE BEFORE MEALS

Forty-five percent of members, 50% of elders, 71% of specialized clergy, and 79% of pastors say grace before meals daily or almost daily. Pastors also read the Bible more frequently than do members: 81% of pastors said they read the Bible daily or almost daily; only 17% of members do so. In fact, 14% of members reported that they read the Bible once a year or less and 12% said they never read the Bible.

FEW PRESBYTERIANS HAVE SPOKEN\PRAYED IN TONGUES, HAD OUT OF BODY EXPERIENCE

Only 8 to 14% of panelists in the various samples have spoken or prayed in tongues at any time in the last year and another 1 to 3% were not sure if they had or had not. From 3% of members to 5% of pastors reported that they frequently pray or speak in tongues.

Only 4% of members, 5% of elders, and 7% of pastors and specialized clergy have had an out-of-body experience not associated with a near-death experience in the last year. Another 2 to 4% are not sure if they have had such an experience in the last year.

MORE PRESBYTERIANS BELIEVE IN REINCARNATION THAN ACT ON THEIR HOROSCOPES

Only 4% of pastors and 5% of specialized clergy, but 13% of members and 14% of elders, believe in reincarnation. A third of members, a fourth of elders, and approximately 10% of pastors and specialized clergy are not sure if they believe in reincarnation.

About a fourth of members and elders, 9% of pastors, and 14% of specialized clergy regularly read their horoscopes or astrological forecasts, but less than 2% of panelists plan their lives or act based on what they read. It appears that Presbyterians read their horoscopes for entertainment.

SUNDAY WORSHIP IS A POSITIVE EXPERIENCE

Large majorities of members and elders reported that positive experiences resulted from attending Sunday morning worship services in the last year:

Effects of Attending Sunday Worship Services
(Percentage Responding "Yes")

	Members	Elders
make you feel good	91%	92%
challenge you to lead a more faithful life	89%	92%
make you feel closer to God	87%	91%
lead you to serve God by serving others	81%	92%
make you feel a part of the body of Christ	77%	90%
lead you to want to learn more about God	77%	87%

LORD'S SUPPER IMPORTANT IN SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Among panelists who reported they had grown spiritually in the last year, 74% of members, 86% of elders, 84% of pastors, and 78% of specialized clergy said that sharing in the Lord's Supper had been particularly important in their spiritual growth. Additionally, private devotions and reading the Bible were important in helping at least 70% of panelists in each sample to grow spiritually.

PRAYER AND SERMONS ARE IMPORTANT IN NOURISHING RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

Majorities in all four samples reported that most of the options presented below were either "very helpful" or "helpful" in nourishing their relationship with God. The exception was "devotional magazines such as *These Days*," which was helpful to only one-third or fewer.

Factors Helpful in Nourishing Relationship with God

(Percentage Responding "Very Helpful" or "Helpful")

	Members	Elders	Pastors	Specialized Clergy
sermons	80%	85%	86%	74%
prayer	84%	89%	95%	87%
the Bible	71%	81%	97%	81%
music	73%	78%	88%	85%
The Lord's Supper	66%	81%	81%	76%
devotional magazines	33%	35%	23%	26%

CLERGY MUCH MORE LIKELY THAN OTHERS TO HAVE HAD A RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

When asked if they have had "a particularly powerful religious insight or awakening that changed the direction of your life," about 80% of pastors and specialized clergy said they had. In contrast, only 31% of members and 40% of elders reported such an experience. Among all panelists who have had this experience, at least 92% in every sample said the experience is still important in their everyday life. Four in ten pastors and specialized clergy and about one-half of members who have had such religious experiences described them as "a conversion experience."

PANELISTS CONTENT WITH RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

About three-fourths of Presbyterians say they are basically content in their relationship with God. Nonetheless, about one-third in each sample also said they felt something was missing in their relationship with God. In describing their relationship with God, approximately 50% said they are looking for "a relationship that makes sense." At the same time, 89% of members, 94% of elders, 97% of pastors, and 96% of specialized clergy said their relationship with God has been "positive and uplifting."

PANELISTS AS CONTENT WITH LOCAL CHURCH AS WITH GOD

Members and pastors are as content with their relationship with the local church as they are with their relationship with God. Somewhat more elders are

content with their relationship with the local church—80% said they were—than were content with their relationship with God—74% said they were. On the other hand, more specialized clergy are content with God than are content with the local church—76% to 60%.

MANY PANELISTS WORKED ON SPIRITUAL GROWTH IN PRIVATE; FEWER WENT ON A RETREAT

About 60% of members and elders said they worked on spiritual growth/growing in faith in private in the last year. Far fewer said they pursued spiritual growth through other means: 47% of members and 57% of elders discussed growing in faith with family or close friends, 13% of members and 23% of elders went on a retreat on spiritual growth/growing in faith, and only 5% of members and 7% of elders had a spiritual director.

PASTORS PREACH ON GROWING IN FAITH

Fully 90% of Presbyterians said their pastors preached on spiritual growth/growing in faith in the last year and 98% of pastors said they had preached on that subject in the last year. Over 50% of members and elders said their congregation had a class or discussion meeting on spiritual growth, but only 15% of members and 29% of elders discussed spiritual growth with their pastor in the last year.

PRESBYTERIANS WOULD TURN TO THEIR PASTOR IN A SPIRITUAL CRISIS

Among members and elders, large majorities would turn to their pastor if they were to have a spiritual crisis (85% for members and 88% for elders). A large percentage (about 80%) would also turn to their spouse, neighbor, or friend, and three-quarters would turn to a family member other than their spouse. Among pastors and specialized clergy, the largest percentages reported they would turn to their spouse (89% for pastors and 85% for specialized clergy) or to a neighbor or friend (79% for pastors and 80% for specialized clergy). Slightly more than a third of members and elders would turn to a professional counselor in a time of spiritual

crisis, but more than two-thirds of pastors and specialized clergy would seek the assistance of a professional counselor.

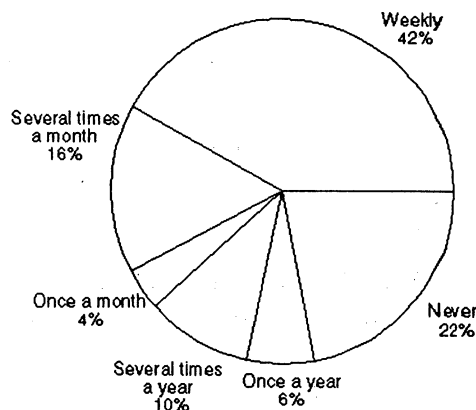
PRESBYTERIANS AS LIKELY TO FEEL SAFE TALKING ABOUT GOD WITH MEMBERS OF THEIR CONGREGATION AS WITH NON-MEMBERS

Panelists were asked, "How many persons are there in your congregation with whom you feel safe in talking honestly about yourself, your thoughts and feelings about God and your life struggles?" Panelists were also asked the same question concerning persons outside their congregation. The differences in responses were very slight. More than half of all panelists reported three or more people in their congregations and three or more people outside their congregations with whom they feel comfortable discussing such issues.

MAJORITIES ATTEND CHURCH SCHOOL AT LEAST ONCE A MONTH

Among members and elders, church school attendance is a habit: 58% of members and 71% of elders reported they attend church school several times a month or weekly. Among both groups, a plurality of respondents reported weekly attendance (42% of members and 58% of elders). Church school attendance is also the norm among pastors and specialized clergy. About half of specialized clergy and three-quarters of pastors attend church school weekly.

Frequency of Church School Attendance Among Presbyterian Members



CHURCH SOCIAL EVENTS NOT AS POPULAR AS CHURCH SCHOOL CLASSES

Although almost all respondents say they participate in church social events at least occasionally, only 25% of members do so more than once a month. Elders and specialized clergy are somewhat more frequent participants in social events: 45% of elders and 41% of specialized clergy take part in church social events more than once a month. Pastors are regular participants—72% say they participate in church social events more than once a month and 44% say they participate at least weekly.

The findings of this survey are presented in greater detail in the companion *Presbyterian Panel Report*, to be published in September 1994. Copies can be ordered (\$3.00; check payable to "Presbyterian Panel") from the Panel at the address below, and will be available in synod and presbytery offices, resource centers, and Presbyterian seminary libraries.

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