

PRESBYTERIAN PANEL SUMMARY

Listening to Presbyterians



VOLUNTEERISM AND OTHER ISSUES NOVEMBER 1994

	Members	Elders	Pastors	Specialized Clergy
Number of Panelists	1,426	1,325	1,254	683
Number of questionnaires mailed	824	855	886	460
Percent returned	58%	64%	71%	67%

The November 1994 questionnaire was developed by Presbyterian Panel staff at the request of the National Ministries Division of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The survey gathered panelists' opinions on a variety of topics.

“VOLUNTEER” COULD BE THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH'S MIDDLE NAME

Three-fourths of members (75%), almost all elders (95%), and around four-fifths of clergy (82% of pastors and 79% of specialized clergy) do volunteer work for their congregations. About the same percentage of clergy, but smaller percentages of members and elders, do volunteer work for their communities. A separate question about community service volunteer work for the congregation revealed that such work is more likely to be done by elders (50%) and pastors (67%) than by specialized clergy (41%) and members (34%).

Presbyterians of all ages volunteer—younger panelists are as likely to report doing volunteer work as are older panelists.

FEW CONGREGATIONS HAVE VOLUNTEER COORDINATORS

Elders' responses provide a good indicator regarding congregational practices and 16% of these panelists said their congregations currently have volunteer coordinators or directors of lay ministries. In contrast, 25% of members said they belong to congregations that have volunteer coordinators. This difference may be related to the fact that many members belong to larger churches and larger churches are more likely to have volunteer coordinators (see Figure 1).

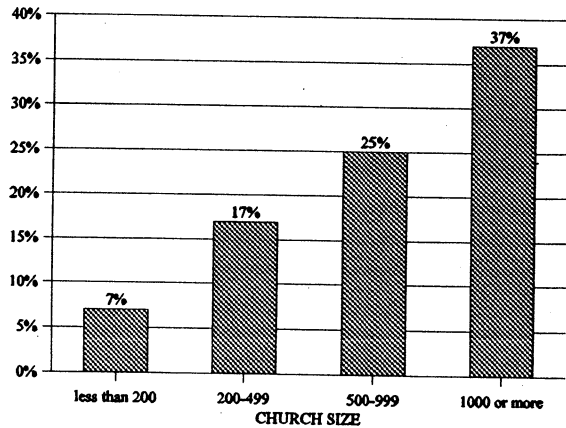


Figure 1: Percentage of Congregations with Volunteer Coordinators, by Church Size (based on elders' responses)

MULTIPLE WAYS ARE USED TO RECRUIT VOLUNTEERS

Most congregations use a combination of ways to recruit volunteers: announcements made during church services, announcements in newsletters or bulletins, and personal recruitment of individuals (all used by at least 70% of congregations). Personal recruitment methods are used more often to find volunteers for congregational committees than to recruit members for church service projects. Many congregations (somewhat more than half) also use sign-up sheets to recruit volunteers. Only 10% to 20% of each sample said their congregations distribute “a volunteer opportunity booklet” so that members can indicate interest in such opportunities.

SERVING AS A MISSION VOLUNTEER WAS A POSITIVE EXPERIENCE

Only 4% of members and 3% of elders, but 14% of pastors and specialized clergy, have served as mission volunteers for the PCUSA. Serving as a mission volunteer was a positive experience for almost all who had served, and over 90% said that, if given the chance to do it over again, they would.

PRESBYTERIAN PASTORS AND THEIR CONGREGATIONS ARE GOOD MATCHES

We asked panelists, "How good do you think the match is between your congregation and the pastor in terms of what the members of the congregation want and the pastor's talents/interests" in 16 specific areas. For every area, a majority in each Panel sample reported that the match is good or very good (see Table 1). Furthermore, respondents in the four samples are in agreement on this question—areas in which the largest percentages of members see good or very good matches are those that the largest percentages of other panelists rate similarly. (Note, however, that the samples are independent. Thus, in general, members are not rating pastors in the Panel sample and pastors are not rating congregations to which Panel members belong.)

TABLE 1

Panelists' Perceptions of the Match Between Their Congregations and Their Pastors

	Percentage Responding "Good" or "Very Good Match"			
	Members	Elders	Pastors	Sp.Clergy
planning and leading worship	84	87	92	84
preaching	83	83	92	81
hospital and emergency visitation	73*	81	92	79
communicating with members	78	76	83	75
supporting Christian education	77	79	69	73
stewardship	72	71	71	65
involvement in presbytery	71*	77	78	73
administration	71	70	77	70
helping members grow spiritually	6	71	79	71
developing congregational				
fellowship	68	70	69	64
counseling	62*	59*	73	59
evangelism/outreach	59*	57	62	58
developing and supporting lay				
ministry	58*	55*	66	63
ecumenical and interfaith activities	58*	61	66	60
home visitation	54*	54	61	50
promoting the worldwide ministry of the Presbyterian Church	53*	55*	63	59

*the lower percentages for members and elders for some questions may be due to a relatively higher proportion of "not sure" responses for those samples; the asterisk indicates the questions for which "not sure" responses totaled 10% or more

BETTER THEOLOGICAL THAN POLITICAL MATCH BETWEEN PASTORS AND CONGREGATIONS

Forty-five percent of members and elders said the theological orientations of their congregations are "very similar" to those of their pastors, and another third said they were "somewhat similar." Results for the political orientations of pastors and congregations are less clear, in part because a fifth of members and elders said they were "not sure" how similar the two are on this dimension. Nonetheless, one-fifth of all panelists think members of their congregations and their pastors hold "very similar" political views and a majority said their views are "somewhat similar."

PASTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR ADMINISTRATIVE WORK IN MOST CONGREGATIONS

Fully 81% of pastors said they are responsible for at least some of the administrative work in their congregations, although many indicated that this responsibility is shared with other church personnel (e.g., administrative assistant or clerk of session). Among pastors serving small congregations, even larger percentages said that they handle some of the church's administrative affairs (see Figure 2).

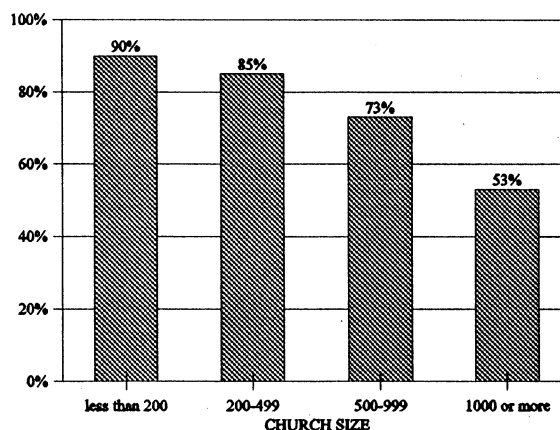


Figure 2: Percentage of Pastors Saying They Are Responsible for Part of the Congregation's Administrative Work, by Church Size

MOST OF THE LARGEST CONGREGATIONS HAVE A BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR

According to pastors serving congregations of 1,000 or more members, business administrators share responsibility for the administrative work of their congregations (72% said so). This figure drops to 25% for congregations of 500-999 members and to 14% for

congregations with 300-499 members. It is even lower for the smallest congregations.

AT LEAST HALF OF CONGREGATIONS HAVE STAFF SUPPORT COMMITTEES

Half of elders and 66% of pastors said their congregations have committees that are responsible for supporting congregational staff members and promoting positive relations among all staff, session members, and the congregation. Only 42% of members said their congregations have this type of committee and 38% said they didn't know. Of those whose congregations have staff support committees, three-fourths of members and elders, 69% of pastors, and 59% of specialized clergy said these committees are successful. From 10% to 20% of panelists in each sample do not know if these committees are successful.

PASTORS DO *NOT* HAVE MAJOR RESPONSIBILITY FOR CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Most members, elders, pastors, and specialized clergy agree that their pastors do not have the major responsibility for directing their congregations' Christian Education programs—only about 15% of panelists said the pastor has this responsibility. The largest percentages of panelists (49% of elders and 44% of pastors) said an “education committee or chairperson of that committee” has the major responsibility for Christian education. In addition, 12% of elders said that someone hired full-time as a Christian educator is responsible for the Christian Education program, and another 11% said that part-time Christian educators handle that responsibility. Panelists from larger congregations were more likely to say their congregations have full-time Christian educators responsible for the church's Christian Education program.

MEMBERS AND ELDERS UNAWARE OF THE PCUSA'S CERTIFICATION AND REFERRAL SERVICES FOR CHRISTIAN EDUCATORS

Fully 72% of members and 63% of elders, but only 8% of pastors, said they were *not* aware of the PCUSA's certification process for persons who direct congregational Christian Education programs. A larger percentage (77% of members, 73% of elders, and 29% of pastors) said they did *not* know that the National Ministries Division of the General Assembly provides a free referral service to help Christian educators find employment and to help congregations locate and hire Christian educators.

MIXED RECEPTION FOR THE IDEA OF CO-PASTORS

After defining co-pastors as two pastors filling equal full-time positions, we asked panelists how receptive they thought their congregations would be to hiring co-pastors. One-half of elders (48%), 40% of members, 35% of pastors, and 30% of specialized clergy said their congregations would *not* be receptive to this idea. (Respondents who said their congregations cannot support two pastors—that is, one-third of members, pastors, and specialized clergy and one-half of elders—were excluded from these analyses.) Less than 10% of panelists said their congregations currently have co-pastors.

MANY CONGREGATIONS ARE NOT READY FOR CLERGY-COUPLES

Clergy couples were defined as a wife and husband who share a single position or fill two positions (either full- or part-time). One-third of members and elders (33% and 32%, respectively), 21% of pastors, and 26% of specialized clergy said their congregations would *not* be receptive to hiring a clergy couple. One-third of panelists in each sample said their congregations would be “somewhat receptive” to this idea.

MAJORITY SUPPORT CHANGING THE BOOK OF ORDER CONCERNING PNCs

When asked, “Would you support a change in the Book of Order that would permit the Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) to be formed two to six months after the installed pastor has announced his/her intention to leave the present position (e.g., to retire, accept another call, etc.)?” 80% of members and elders and 60% of pastors and specialized clergy responded “yes.”

PASTORS MORE FAMILIAR WITH PRESBYTERY SEXUAL MISCONDUCT POLICIES THAN WITH PCUSA'S POLICY

The vast majority of members and elders are not familiar with the Sexual Misconduct Policy of either their presbyteries or the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Among clergy, 23% of pastors and 22% of specialized clergy are not aware of the PCUSA's policy on sexual misconduct, and 17% of pastors and 21% of specialized clergy are not aware of the Sexual Misconduct Policy of their presbyteries.

FEES FOR SERVICES NOT SUPPORTED BY PASTORS AND SPECIALIZED CLERGY

Panelists were presented with a list of possible fees for services provided by the national church and asked if they would support each. As can be seen in Table 2, 20% to 40% of members and elders responded "not sure" regarding each potential fee and in no case did a majority in any sample favor such fees. Large majorities of clergy said they did *not* support each possible fee.

TABLE 2

Support for Fees for Services

	Members		Elders		Pastors		Specialized Clergy	
	not no	sure	not no	sure	not no	sure	not no	sure
\$25 fee when applying to serve as a mission volunteer	60%	29%	71%	20%	83%	6%	81%	6%
\$25 fee when applying for a scholarship from the Financial Aid for Students Office	49%	31%	58%	22%	78%	6%	75%	10%
\$25 fee when applying for a loan from the Financial Aid for Students Office	49%	31%	59%	21%	77%	7%	77%	8%
\$25 fee when applying for a grant for education from the Financial Aid for Students Office	48%	31%	57%	22%	77%	6%	74%	9%
\$50 fee when a congregation or agency files an application to receive a mission volunteer	48%	33%	61%	25%	72%	8%	68%	9%
\$50 fee when a pastor circulates a Personal Information Form to seek a new call	40%	37%	52%	24%	75%	8%	71%	10%
\$100 fee when a congregation files a Church Information Form to call a pastor or church professional	39%	38%	54%	25%	67%	9%	59%	10%
\$50 fee when applying for certification as a church professional . . .	35%	35%	46%	24%	61%	9%	58%	8%

For a copy of the full *Report* of the November 1994 *Presbyterian Panel* questionnaire, send a check for \$5 (no cash, please) to the address below. The *Panel* is administered by the Office of Research Services of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

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