



The Presbyterian Panel

Listening to Presbyterians



SUMMARY

SPIRITUALITY AND HEALTH—THE FEBRUARY 1997 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, 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 February 1997 survey on issues of spirituality and health.

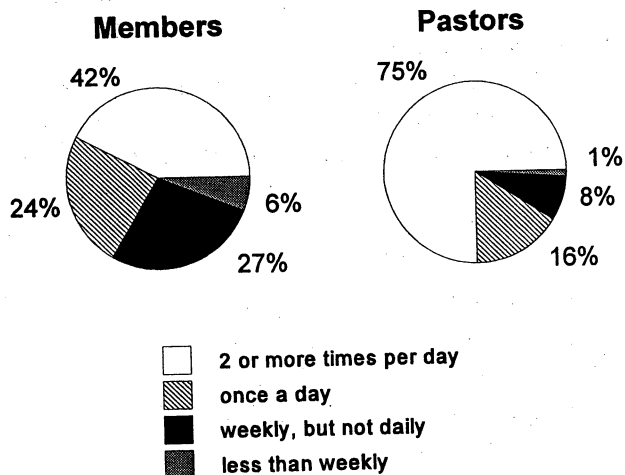
	Members	Elders	Ordained Ministers
Number of surveys mailed	1,360	1,314	1,870
Number returned	1,025	1,034	1,420
Response rate	75%	79%	76%

PRAYER LIFE

Frequency of Prayer

- ✓ Around 40% of members and elders, 75% of pastors, and 65% of specialized clergy pray two or more times a day.

How Often Do You Pray?



- ✓ 40% of members, 53% of elders, 61% of specialized clergy, and 87% of pastors pray with

someone else at least weekly. Less than 10% of elders and pastors, but 20% of members, never pray with other persons.

Types of Prayer

- ✓ Almost all panelists report that, when they pray, they talk with God in their own words. Around 90% in each sample also ask God to forgive their sins, ask God to provide guidance in making decisions, ask God for healing for others, and thank God for blessings.
- ✓ One-quarter of members and elders and almost four in ten ministers ask God for material things when they pray.

Satisfaction with Prayer Life

- ✓ Only a small percentage of panelists (ranging from 8% of elders to 14% of specialized clergy) are *very satisfied* with their prayer life. Around 45% in each sample are *satisfied*, and one-fourth to one-third said they are *neither satisfied nor dissatisfied*.
- ✓ No more than 18% in any sample are in any way *dissatisfied* with their prayer life.

FAITH AND BIBLE READING

Bible Reading

- ✓ Just under one-fifth of members and elders, one-half of pastors, and one-third of specialized clergy read the Bible privately *daily or almost daily*.
- ✓ About one-half of members, more than one-half of elders, four-fifths of pastors, and one-half of specialized clergy read the Bible in private at least weekly.
- ✓ Attendance at Bible study groups is at least a weekly occurrence for one-fifth of members, one-quarter of specialized clergy, 30% of elders, and more than 50% of pastors.

Problems with Faith

- ✓ Just under one-tenth of panelists reported that *evil in the world* has often caused doubts about their religious faith. At the other end of the spectrum, half of members and elders and a little more than a third of clergy reported that *evil in the world* has *never* caused them to doubt their faith.
- ✓ *Personal suffering* has caused religious doubt about as often as *evil in the world*, but few

panelists have doubted their faith due to *conflict between science and faith* or *the feeling that life has no meaning*.

How Often Have the Following Caused Doubts About Your Religious Faith?

	<u>Percent Responding <i>Never</i></u>			
	Members	Elders	Pastors	Spec. Clergy
evil in the world	48%	50%	35%	36%
personal suffering . . .	48%	50%	37%	40%
conflict of faith and science	68%	71%	74%	77%
the feeling that life has no meaning . . .	79%	80%	63%	56%

- ✓ Compared to members who never doubt their religious faith due to personal suffering, those who often do so are less satisfied with their prayer life—58% of those who never experience such doubt and 37% of those who often do so are satisfied or very satisfied with their prayer life.

MISFORTUNE

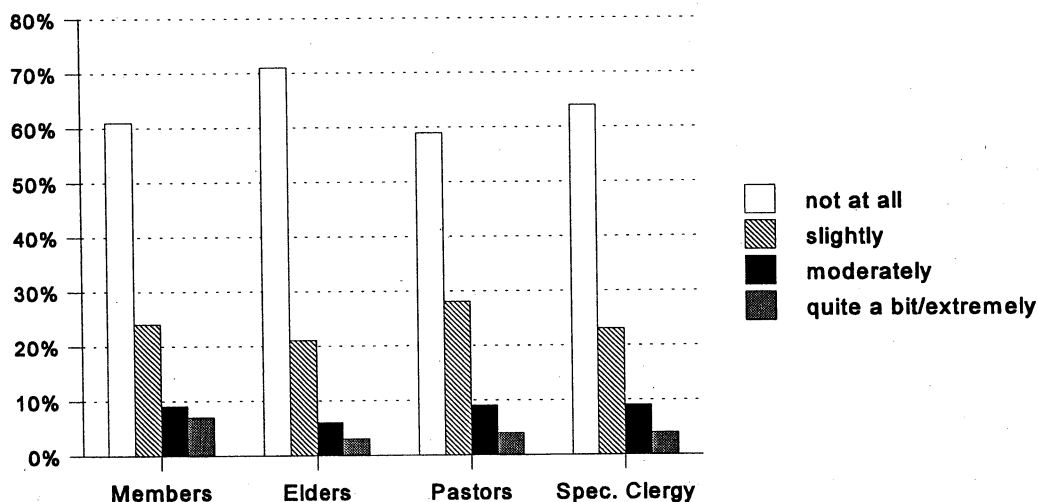
- ✓ About 10% of panelists in each sample had a spouse, child, parent, grandparent, or grandchild die in the last year. In addition, slightly more than one-quarter of panelists had a serious illness or accident happen to one of those family members.
- ✓ 9% of members, elders, and pastors, and 13% of specialized clergy, experienced a major financial loss (involving 20% or more of their income) in the past year.
- ✓ In the past year, 26% of members, 16% of elders, 27% of pastors, and 23% of specialized clergy had a major disagreement with a spouse, child, parent, grandparent, or grandchild. Much smaller percentages had disagreements with close friends in that period.

- ✓ When asked to name their most recent major problem(s) or challenge(s), the largest percentage of members (21%) described a matter involving their own health. In addition, 19% cited a problem at work, 17% named a health-related problem that someone else was experiencing, and 16% cited a family matter.
- ✓ The most common way panelists reported reacting to their most recent problem or challenge was to *look to God for strength, support, and guidance*—46% of members, 48% of specialized clergy, 54% of elders, and 59% of pastors relied *a great deal* on this way of coping.
- ✓ The least common response to misfortune was to *question whether God really exists*—less than 10% in each sample did so.

HEALTH

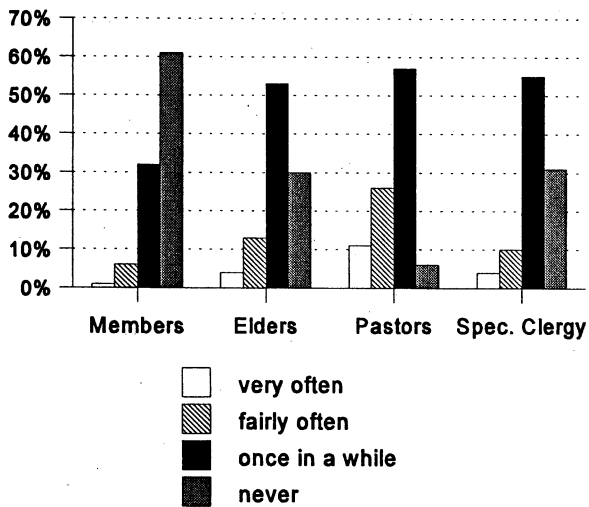
- ✓ One-quarter of members and elders and one-third of clergy describe their health as *excellent*. Another four in ten in each sample report that their health is *very good*. Two percent, or less, describe their health as *poor*.
- ✓ The vast majority of panelists (65% or more) indicate that there has been no change in their health in the past year. More panelists report improvement in their health in the past year (ranging from 19% of members to 26% of pastors) than report that their health has gotten worse (about 10% in every sample).
- ✓ 28% of members, 23% of elders, 9% of pastors, and 18% of specialized clergy are *limited a lot* in doing vigorous activities (e.g., running, lifting heavy objects).
- ✓ Only 2% of panelists are *limited a lot* in dressing or bathing themselves. 8% or less are *limited a lot* in walking several blocks.
- ✓ During the last four weeks, one-quarter of members, 18% of elders and specialized clergy, and 13% of pastors experienced difficulty performing work or other activities due to their physical health.
- ✓ Physical or emotional problems interfered *not at all* with normal social activities in the last month for 59% of pastors, 61% of members, 64% of specialized clergy, and 71% of elders.
- ✓ One-fourth to one-third of panelists accomplished less than they would have liked in the last four weeks *due to their physical health*.
- ✓ 17% of members, 15% of specialized clergy, 14% of pastors, and 11% of elders cut down on time spent on work or other activities in the last four weeks due to their physical health.
- ✓ Between 25% and 30% of panelists have not experienced any bodily pain in the last four weeks. Four percent or less experienced *severe* bodily pain in that period.
- ✓ Pain interfered with normal work *not at all* in the last four weeks for 61% of members, 66% of elders, and over 70% of clergy.
- ✓ In the previous four weeks, around 40% of panelists felt *full of pep* most or all of the time.
- ✓ 48% of members, one-half of elders, 42% of pastors, and 45% of specialized clergy have felt *calm and peaceful* all or most of the time in the last four weeks.
- ✓ The vast majority of members (79% of members, 83% of clergy, 77% of pastors, and 80% of specialized clergy) have felt *downhearted or blue* never or only a little of the time in the last four weeks.
- ✓ Around 60% of panelists believe that they do *not* get sick *a little easier than most people*.

During the Last 4 Weeks, to What Extent Has Your Physical Health or Emotional Problems Interfered with Your Normal Social Activities?



RELATIONSHIPS WITH CONGREGATIONAL MEMBERS

How Often Have the People in Your Congregation Been Critical of You and the Things You Have Done?



- ✓ 7% of members, 14% of specialized clergy, 17% of elders, and 37% of pastors reported that people in their congregation *very often* or *fairly often* made too many demands on them in the last year.
- ✓ Between 10% and 16% of elders, pastors, and specialized clergy acknowledge that other members of their congregation have listened to them talk about personal problems or concerns very often in the previous year.

- ✓ Larger percentages have listened to other members' problems very often in the past year (17% of members, 28% of elders, 37% of specialized clergy, and 73% of pastors).
- ✓ 54% of specialized clergy, 58% of members, 72% of elders, and 78% of pastors believe that members of their congregation would do a great deal to help them out if they were ill.
- ✓ 56% of elders and pastors and around 42% of members and specialized clergy reported that people in their congregation make them feel loved and cared for *very often*.
- ✓ 18% of members and 28% of elders reported that they themselves *very often* make other people in their congregation feel loved and cared for.

Relationship Between Caring for Others and Feeling Cared for by Others in One's Congregation: Members' Responses

Others Make You Feel Cared For:	Made Others Feel Cared For:			
	very often	fairly often	once in a while	never
very often	88%	45%	15%	7%
fairly often	9%	45%	40%	17%
once in a while	2%	9%	45%	41%
never	1%	1%	1%	35%
total	100%	100%	101%	100%

These results are subject to sampling and other errors. Small differences should be interpreted cautiously. As a rule of thumb, differences of less than 6% between samples are not statistically meaningful.

Want more numbers or interpretation? The February 1997 Presbyterian Panel Report—*Spirituality and Health*, containing numerous charts and graphs, is available for \$5 from PDS (call 1-800-524-2612 and order PDS # 70360-97251). It includes a data appendix with the percentage responses to each survey question for members, elders, pastors, and specialized clergy.

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