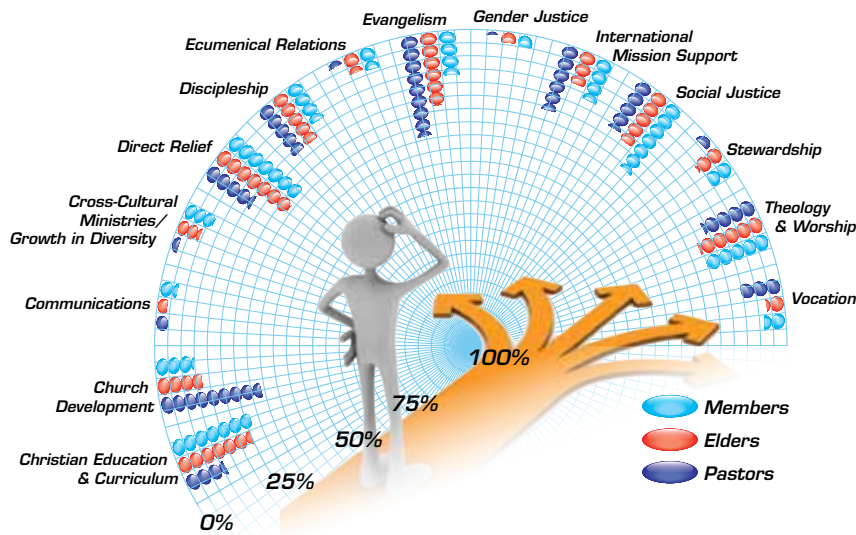


Mission priorities



Where should the General Assembly Mission Council (GAMC)—the mission agency of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)—focus its energies? A 2009 survey asked representative samples of members, elders and pastors to indicate the two most important activities from a list of 14.

- **Among members**, 27 percent chose direct relief; 27 percent chose Christian education and curriculum; and 26 percent chose social justice, as the most important mission activities.
- **Among elders**, 27 percent chose direct relief; 25 percent chose Christian education and curriculum; and 24 percent chose evangelism.
- **Among pastors**, 34 percent chose church development; 33 percent chose evangelism; and 22 percent chose international mission support.
- **At the other extreme, very few chose gender justice**: members, 3 percent; elders, 3 percent; and pastors, 1 percent.
- **Also chosen by few** were communication (members, 6 percent; elders, 3 percent; pastors, 4 percent) and ecumenical relations (6 percent; 6 percent; and 2 percent).

» Other findings

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What the research shows

It's tempting to discuss the differences presented at left. To do so, however, would be to focus on the trees instead of the forest.

The major finding is *the lack of consensus* on the most important mission activities. In no group did as many as 35 percent rate any one of the 14 listed activities as most important. Put differently, majorities of 66 percent or more failed to rank each activity as being of top importance.

Beyond de-emphasizing or eliminating gender justice and, perhaps, communications and ecumenical relations, these results provide limited guidance. There are no “sure things” that all Presbyterians want the GAMC to do. Make direct relief a priority? Well, 73 percent of members and elders and 83 percent of pastors want something else. How about church development? Again, 88 percent, 85 percent and 66 percent have other preferences.

Hence, opposition might be expected, whatever choices the GAMC makes.

That might be preferable to a collective yawn: In a 2005 survey 87 percent of members and 71 percent of elders considered themselves only “a little informed” or “not informed” about PC(USA) mission. Few (18 percent; 22 percent) had “very often” or “often” wanted to know more.

Whatever the GAMC decides, the reaction or lack thereof will be interesting to watch. Apathy might be easier to handle in the short run, but a general “ho-hum” now might be more troublesome for the GAMC in the long run.

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