



INTERFAITH RELATIONS & THE PRESBYTERIAN FOUNDATION FINDINGS FROM THE NOVEMBER 2013 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. These pages summarize major findings from the eighth survey completed by the 2012-2014 Panel, sampled in the summer of 2011.

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PROXIMITY TO OTHER FAITH TRADITIONS

Specialized ministers are more likely to be aware of religious meetings of other faith traditions (besides Christianity) in their community than are members, elders, and even pastors. (See Figure 1.) If members and ruling elders rely on their pastor for information about the faith groups surrounding them, many Presbyterians may be missing out on opportunities to develop interfaith relationships.

Most panelists are making friends (and maybe even family) with people from another faith tradition. (See Figure 2.) Yet we see that specialized ministers are more likely than others to have these interfaith relationships. Perhaps the work or educational experiences of specialized ministers have more often introduced them to people of other faiths. Specialized ministers may also simply be more aware of the faiths of the people in their lives due to the nature of their work.

Figure 1. Percentages of Panelists Who Report That the Following Other Faith Traditions Have Religious Meetings in the Local Community

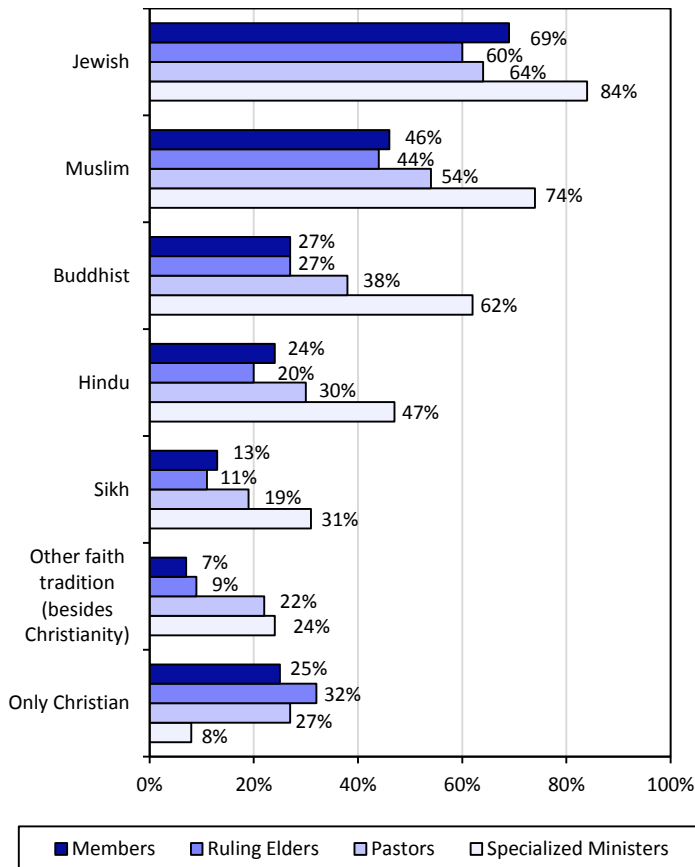
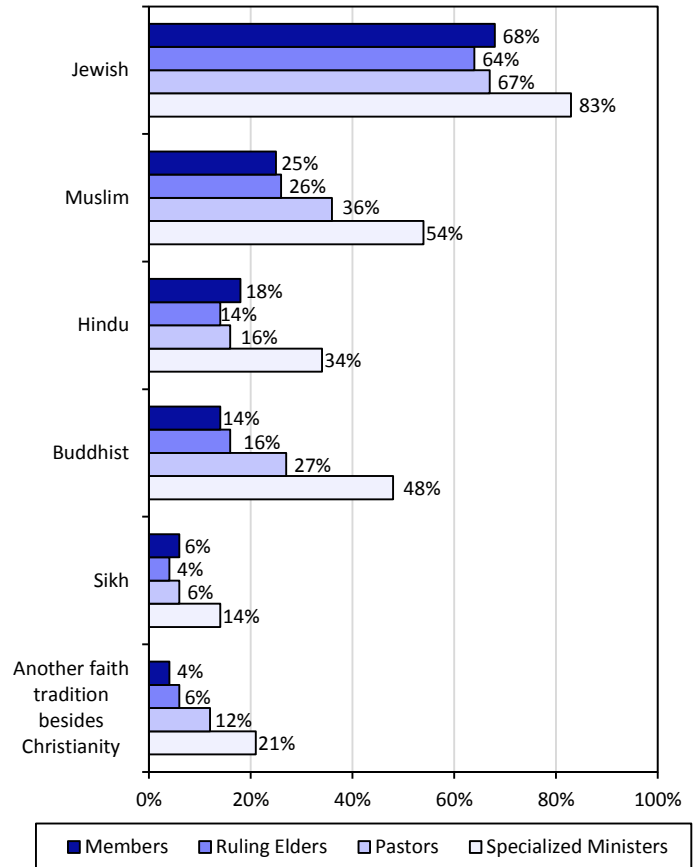


Figure 2. Percentages of Panelists Who Have Friends, Acquaintances, or Family Members from the Following Other Faith Traditions

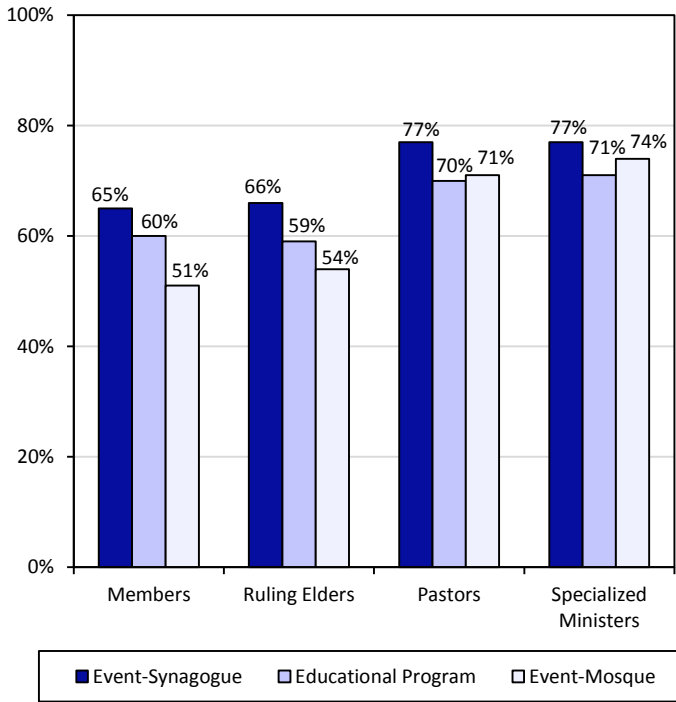


INTEREST IN AND INTERACTION WITH OTHER FAITH TRADITIONS

At least half of the panelists in each group would be “very interested” or “interested” in attending the following events, if offered by their congregation: a fellowship meal or community worship/prayer service with members from a nearby synagogue or mosque; or an educational program about the beliefs/practices of other faith traditions. (See Figure 3.)

Surprisingly, panelists in each group are about as interested in attending an event with members from a specific faith tradition (Judaism) as they are in attending an educational program about other faith traditions more generally.

Figure 3. Percentages of Panelists “Very Interested” or “Interested” in Attending an Educational Program about Other Faith Traditions, an Event with Synagogue Members, and an Event with Mosque Members



Pastors are around twice as likely to participate in interfaith activities as are members. (See Figure 4, next column; the responses of specialized ministers resemble those of pastors, while the responses of ruling elders resemble those of members.) In particular, pastors are eight times more likely to be an active member of an interfaith organization than are members, and seven times more likely than members to participate in an intentionally interfaith demonstration, march, protest, or political forum.

More than half of panelists in each group have not recently invited anyone to an interfaith event. However, many more pastors and specialized ministers have invited people than have members and ruling elders. (See Figure 5, next column.)

Figure 4. Percentages of Members and Pastors Who Have Participated in Each of Eight Interfaith Events in the Past Two Years

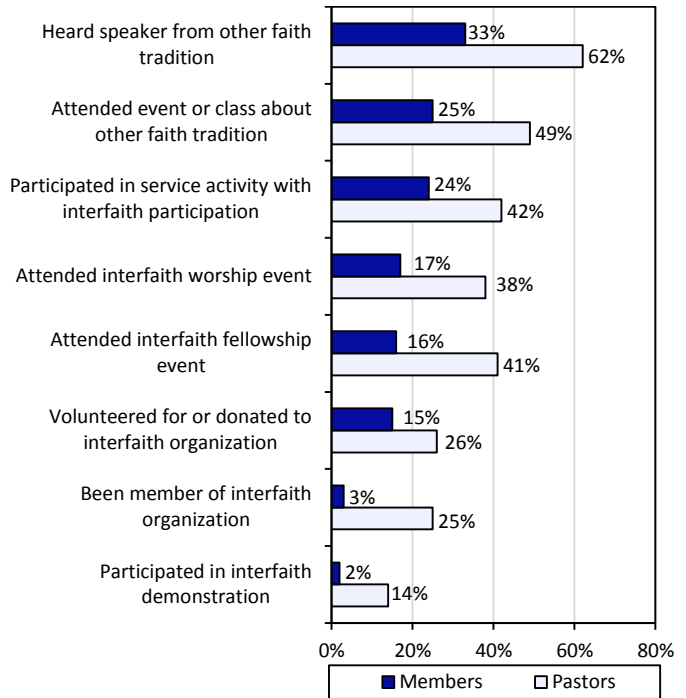
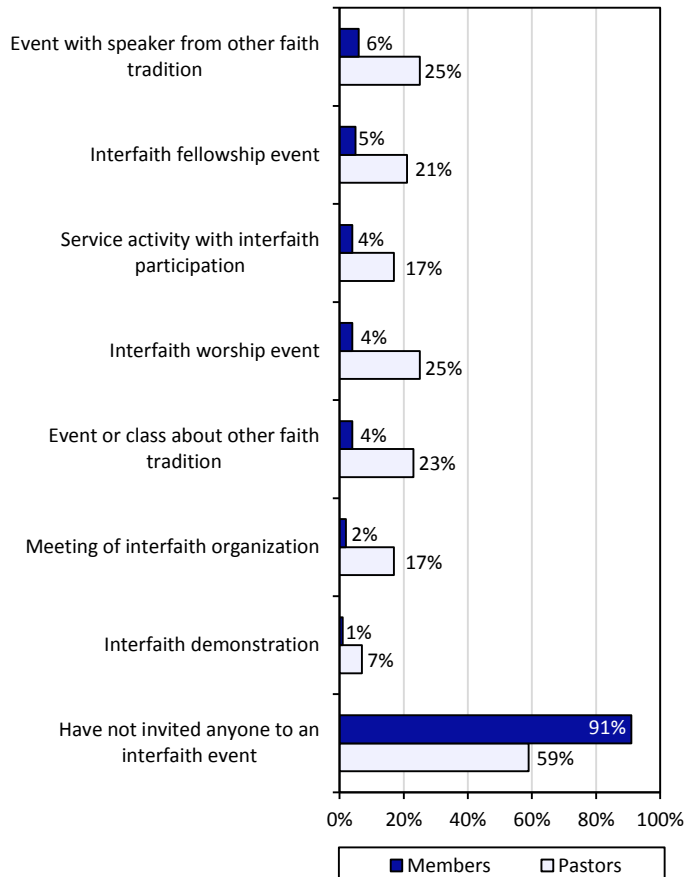


Figure 5. Percentages of Members and Pastors Who Have Invited Someone to Each of Seven Interfaith Events in the Past Two Years



INTEREST IN AND INTERACTION WITH OTHER FAITH TRADITIONS (CONT.)

Even though most Presbyterians are interested in participating in interfaith activities (see Figure 3, page 2), up to 20% of panelists in each group report obstacles to their own interfaith relations. The biggest obstacles are: they don't have any or many other faith traditions in their communities; they are not sure where to begin; and/or their congregations, family, or friends don't agree about whether the activities are worth the effort. (See Figure 6.)

Figure 6. Panelists' Top Two Obstacles to Interfaith Relations in Their Local Community in the Past Two Years

Members and Ruling Elders

- Few/no groups of other faith traditions nearby (members, 6%; ruling elders, 5%)
- Not sure where to begin to build interfaith relationships (6%; 3%)

Pastors

- Few/no groups of other faith traditions nearby (8%)
- Disagreement about whether interfaith relations are worth the time and effort (8%)

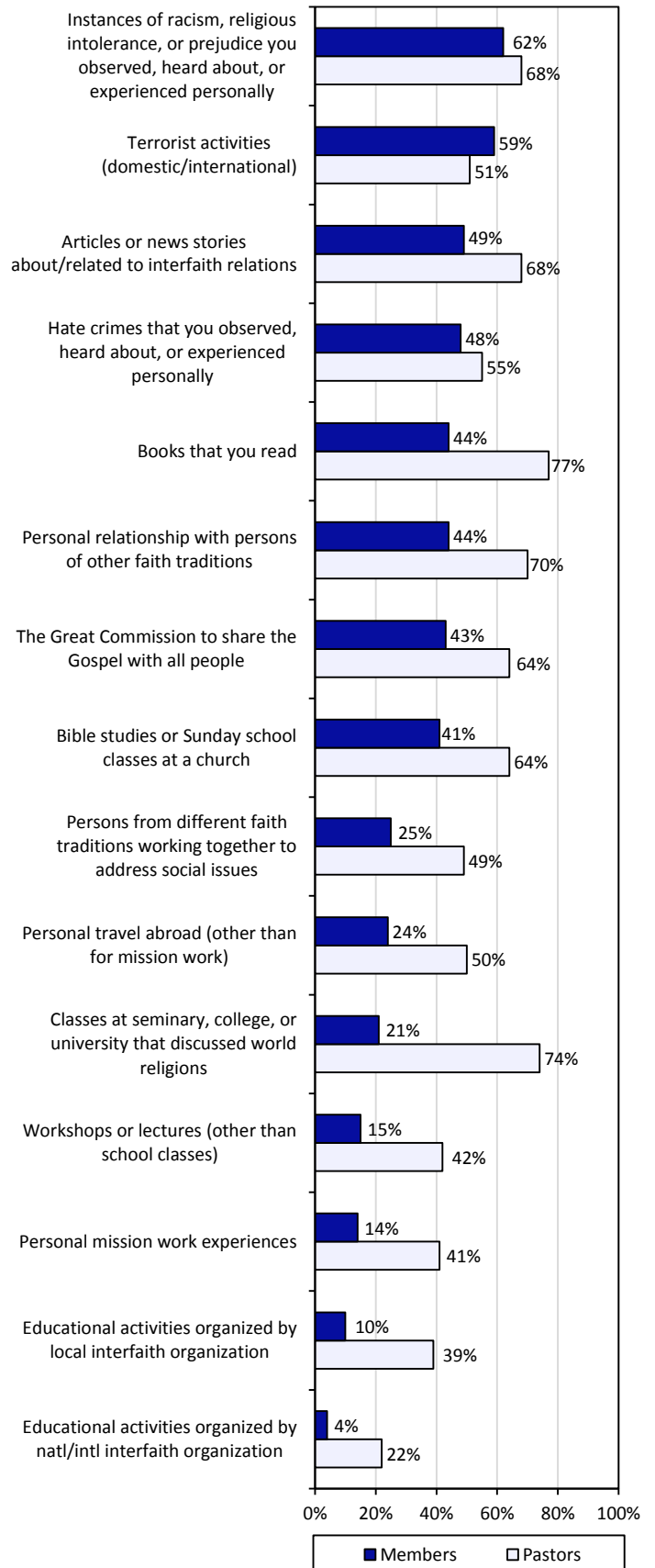
Specialized Ministers

- Disagreement about whether interfaith relations are worth the time and effort (8%)
- Not sure where to begin to build interfaith relationships (6%)

Overall, a greater number of issues or events have greatly shaped pastors' and specialized ministers' personal opinions about other faith traditions, compared to members and elders. (See Figure 7, next column; the responses of specialized ministers are similar to those of pastors, while the responses of ruling elders are similar to those of members.)

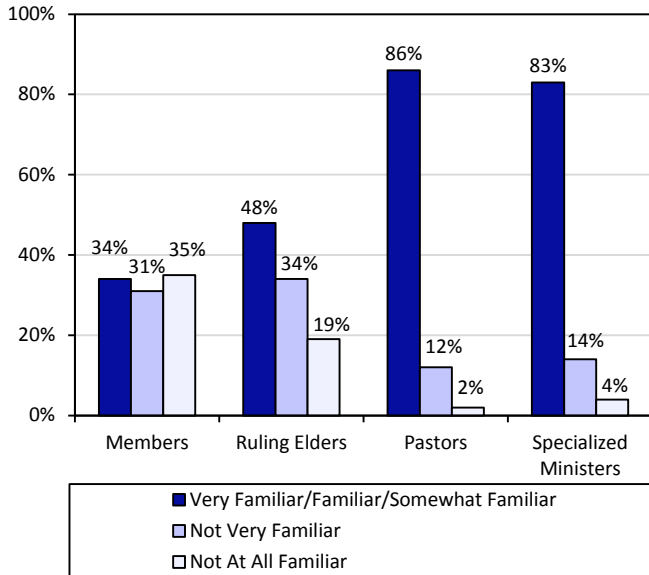
More than half of panelists in each group report that their opinions of other faith traditions have been highly influenced by instances of racism, religious intolerance, or other prejudice (other than hate crimes) they have seen, heard about, or personally experienced; and by terrorist activities.

Figure 7. Percentages of Members and Pastors Who Report That Each of Fifteen Issues or Events Have Greatly Shaped Their Personal Opinion About Other Faith Traditions



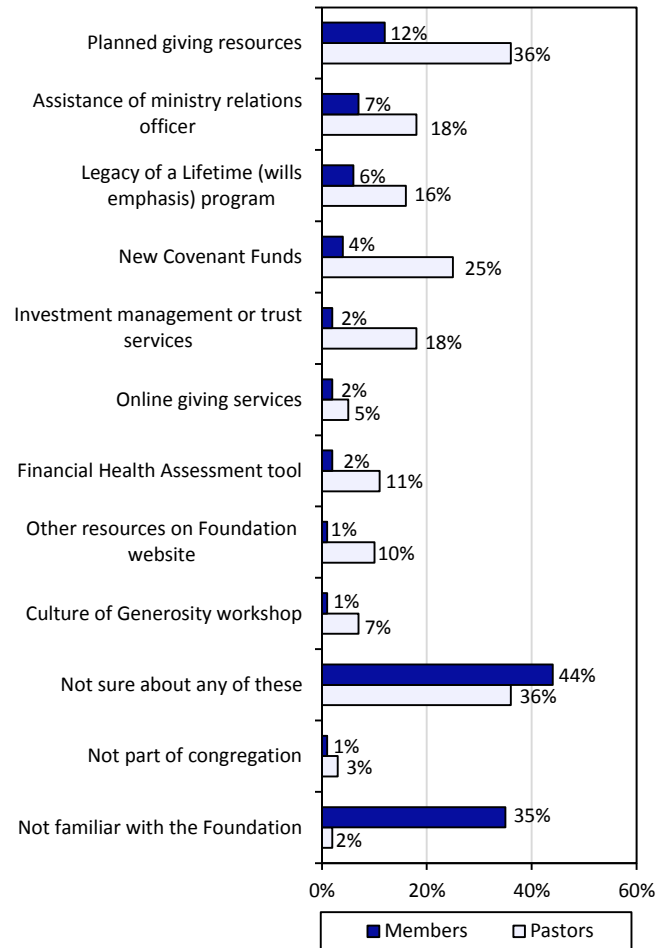
This survey also included a few questions about the Presbyterian Foundation. Members and ruling elders are much less familiar with the Foundation than are pastors and specialized ministers. (See Figure 8.)

Figure 8. Panelists' Level of Overall Familiarity with the Presbyterian Foundation



Even among panelists who are at all familiar with the Foundation, many are not sure whether their congregation has used the Foundation's services recently. Yet pastors are much more likely than members to know specific services their congregation has used recently, which isn't surprising due to their leadership role within the church. (See Figure 9, next column; the responses of ruling elders and specialized ministers resemble those of members.)

Figure 9. Percentages of Members and Pastors Who Are Aware Whether Their Congregation Has Used Each of Nine Foundation Services in the Past Three Years



	Members	Ruling Elders	Teaching Elders
Number of surveys sent	501	874	1,075
Number of ineligible respondents	0	0	0
Number of surveys completed	291	532	645‡
Response rate	58%	60%	60%

‡Of the 645 returned surveys, 453 came from pastors and 192 from specialized ministers.

The survey was distributed on January 10, 2014, with returns accepted through April 24, 2014. 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 for free downloading on the web or (for \$15 for a paper copy) from Presbyterian Distribution Service (800-524-2612; order PDS# 20056-14322). It will include tables with percentage responses to each survey question.

For more information about the entities that sponsored this survey, visit the websites for Interfaith Relations (www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/interfaith) and the Presbyterian Foundation (www.presbyterianfoundation.org).

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