

Excerpts from the U.S. Congregational Life Survey

Giving – Financial support connects people to the congregation and its mission. In PC(USA) congregations, 94% of worshipers make financial contributions to the congregation, including 18% who report regularly giving 10% or more of their net income to their congregation, and 36% who regularly give 5% to 9%. Nationally, 26% of all Protestant worshipers give 10% or more of their net income, and 31% give between 5% and 9%. The contrast between mainline and conservative Protestant worshipers in the percentage who give 10% or more is striking—only 16% of mainline Protestants give at this level compared to 44% of conservative Protestant worshipers.

Serving the Community – Almost six in ten PC(USA) worshipers take part in community service, social justice, or advocacy activities. One-third overall join in community service activities organized through their congregation (35% in PC(USA) congregations take part in such groups). Even more (46% in PC(USA) congregations) participate in social service or advocacy groups not connected to their congregation. This is another area where Presbyterians excel. Just 18% of all worshipers are involved in service or advocacy through their congregation, and 34% serve their communities through groups not connected to their congregation.

Good Neighbors; Good Citizens – Worshipers in Presbyterian pews are especially good neighbors and good citizens. They are more likely to have made a contribution to a charitable organization other than their congregation, prepared or given food to someone outside their family or congregation, worked on community problems or issues, and contributed money to a political party or candidate. Given that just 50% of the American adult population voted in the last presidential election, it is particularly noteworthy that worshipers in general (83%), and Presbyterians in particular (88%), voted at such high rates.

What is the U.S. Congregational Life Survey? – The U.S. Congregational Life Survey, conducted initially in 2001 and again in 2008 and 2009, records the voices of 500,000 people in more than 5,000 congregations. It remains the largest and most representative profile of worshipers and their congregations ever conducted, including Presbyterian participants and a broad variety of other faith groups and denominations—from Methodist to Mormon, from Catholic to Baptist—including many nondenominational congregations. In participating congregations, all worshipers age 15 and older completed a survey in worship. *A Field Guide to U.S. Congregations*, second edition (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010) describes the latest findings. In the most recent survey (conducted in the fall of 2008 and the spring of 2009), 40,555 worshipers in a random sample of 521 PC(USA) congregations participated. Their voices are reflected here.