

# Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

## Financial situation for one-third of Presbyterian churches is at least “good” even with economic crisis

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Research Services

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Even though the income of three in five congregations has declined in the wake of the economic crisis that began in late 2007, leaders of more Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) congregations describe their congregation’s current financial situation as “excellent” or “good” (30 percent) than as “in serious difficulty” or “in some difficulty” (24 percent).

Leaders of half of congregations say finances are “tight, but we manage.”

Majorities of PC(USA) congregations have felt the impact of the economic crisis in the form of less money available from investments and savings accounts, less money available for mission and benevolence, more requests for cash assistance, more unemployment among church members, a staff salary reduction or a salary freeze, and challenges for capital campaigns and building programs. Few congregations, however, have delayed filling staff positions or laid off or furloughed staff as a result of the crisis.

These findings are from the **spring 2010 survey of PC(USA) congregations**, part of the larger Faith Communities Today 2010 survey.

Asked to assess the impact of the economic crisis on their congregation’s income, leaders of three in five PC (USA) congregations (59 percent) report that income declined “a lot” or “a little.” For one-quarter of congregations, there was no significant change in income. The income of one in six congregations (16 percent) either grew or rebounded after initially declining.

Fewer congregations face a financial situation that is “excellent” or “good” in 2010 (30 percent) than did so in 2005 (41 percent). Leaders of more congregations describe their congregation’s financial situation as “tight, but we manage” in 2010 (47 percent) than in 2005 (38 percent).

On the other hand, only a few more congregations report facing “serious” or “some” financial difficulty in 2010 (24 percent) than in 2005 (21 percent).

“Presbyterian churches are feeling the effects of the crisis, but most are getting by,” said Perry Chang, associate for survey research. “And some are thriving despite the economy.”

The economic crisis has had a “major” or “moderate” impact on sizable minorities of congregations through:

Fewer funds available from investments or savings accounts (37 percent)

More requests for cash assistance (35 percent)

More unemployment among members (32 percent)

Staff salary reduction or a salary freeze (30 percent)

Fewer funds available for mission and benevolence (28 percent)

Challenges for a capital campaign or building program (23 percent)

Only one in eight congregations (13 percent) have laid off or furloughed staff as a result of the crisis, and only one in six congregations (18 percent) have delayed filling staff positions.

The 2010 survey of congregations was the fourth that the denomination has undertaken as part of the Cooperative Congregational Studies Partnership's **Faith Communities Today (FACT)** surveys. Leaders of 700 randomly sampled PC(USA) congregations responded to questions about worship, programs, mission and identity, participants, leadership and finances.

Topics: **Research**

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