

1 **IV. Survey Task Force**

2 This task force was charged with producing, at minimal cost, a trustworthy statistical
3 snapshot of the outlook and attitudes about the PCA of “leaders” within the denomination.
4 “Leaders,” for purposes of this survey, includes teaching elders, ruling elders, deacons, WIC
5 leaders, Sunday school teachers, and others considered to be in leadership roles in our
6 churches.

7 The task force, with professional assistance, designed a survey tool to elicit such opinions,
8 and administered that tool in a manner that would produce a statistically accurate result.
9 Some 887 individual surveys were completed, representing the broad geographical diversity
10 of the PCA, representing the diversity in size of churches, and representing the variety of
11 offices and positions held by the respondents. A professional opinion has been rendered that
12 the results are statistically accurate within a 3.3% margin of error—a margin considered by
13 the Strategic Planning Committee to be totally appropriate for our purposes.

14 The broad results of that survey (administered in late 2004) are available for all who wish to
15 analyze them, rendered in 17 charts in this document. These and more detailed charts, as
16 well as a technical summary, are available at <http://www.pcaac.org/StrategicPlan.htm>.

17 In submitting these many pages of summarized data, the task force wants to make a few
18 early observations:

- 19 1. Because all data can be, and often will be, manipulated for specific ends, the task force
20 urges caution by all viewers to see the material found in the study as illuminating but not
21 definitive—and to use the data accordingly.
- 22 2. Viewers should know that the body of available data is indeed much larger than what is
23 represented here. For example, only minimal cross-referencing of subsets has been done
24 yet—as in comparing responses of ruling elders to those of teaching elders, or
25 comparing respondents in small churches to those in large churches. While all that data
26 is available, more time and more money will be required to extract it. A party other than
27 this task force will have to determine what further questions are worth that additional
28 investment.
- 29 3. In its very early review of the data, the task force notes an overall optimism with the
30 PCA’s leadership in terms of attitude toward the Church and its work. There is a notable
31 lag, however, in the translation of that optimistic attitude into positive action within the
32 PCA by its leadership.
- 33 4. Progress toward denominational strategic priorities, however, is perceived as slow.
34 Dominant answers with reference to such progress tended toward “staying about the
35 same” or “getting a little better.”

- 1 5. Respondents lean toward local or presbytery level responsibility for much of the
2 “missional” work of the PCA—moving, or at least framing, a number of tasks from the
3 General Assembly (GA) level down to the presbytery and local church levels.
- 4 6. Even the leadership of the PCA professes little understanding of the goals and agenda of
5 the denomination they lead. An astonishing proportion professes no understanding of the
6 PCA’s “Partnership Shares.” The “unsure/no opinion” segments of one bar graph after
7 another suggest a significant failure to inform and enlist understanding. Yet at no point
8 does such mystery seem attributable to ingrained negative attitudes.
- 9 7. Almost no media or methodologies are seen as particularly effective in securing buy-in
10 from the Church at large to the work and programs of the GA and its Committees and
11 Agencies. “Direct contact,” which scores the highest, is nonetheless seen as just a bit
12 better than “moderately effective.”
- 13 8. The role of the teaching elder in local churches is suggested as being key to the
14 enlistment of support and buy-in for support of denominational causes. Logically, it may
15 be inferred that for whatever reason, teaching elders have not sensed and/or exercised an
16 adequate effort to fill that role.
- 17 9. Attitudes toward the structure, format, and schedule of the GA are not as negative as had
18 been initially hypothesized. On the other hand, only a small number of survey
19 respondents had attended even one GA, casting doubt on the significance of whatever
20 positive attitude may exist toward present structures. While nearly 80% of teaching
21 elders had attended GA within the past 3 years, only 22% of ruling elders had attended.
- 22 The Task Force recommends the survey and all its details to the Church at large for
23 appropriate analysis, edification, and action. Specific comments and questions may be
24 addressed to the consultants assisting in survey design, collection and analysis: Mr. Jim
25 Wert, Team Resources, (770) 956-0985 and Dr. Douglas R. Sizemore, Covenant College,
26 (706) 419-1535.

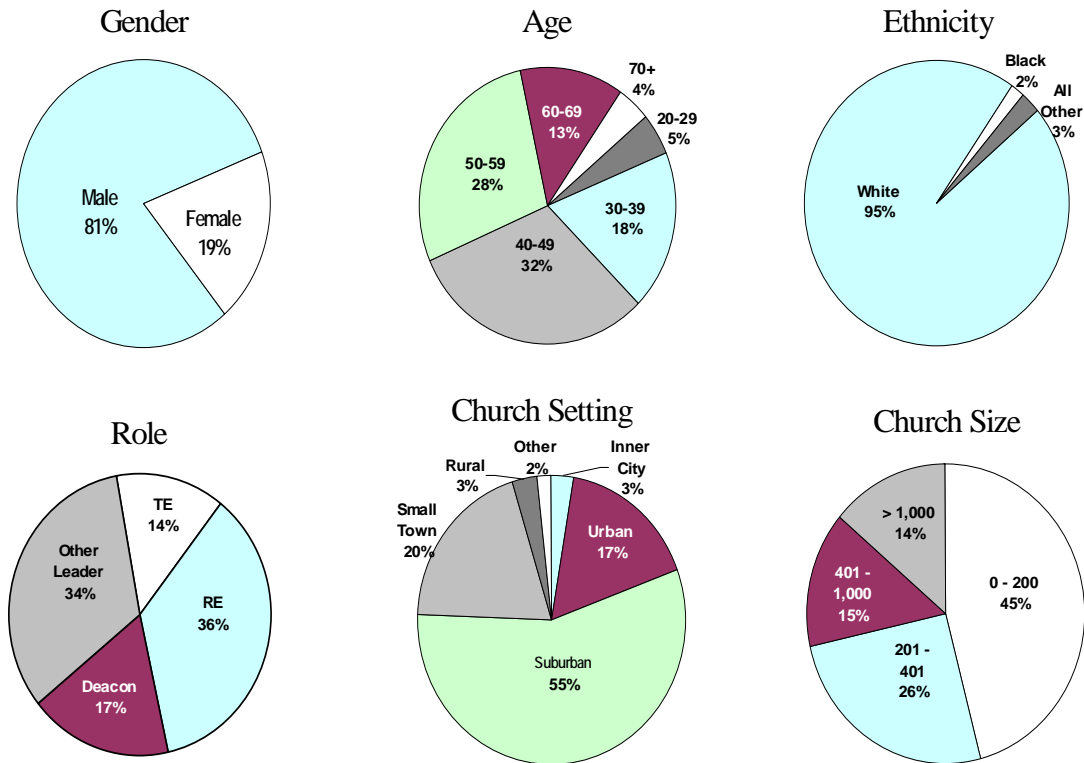
27 **Survey Demographics**

- 28 The survey was developed by computerized random selection of 250 churches across all
29 presbyteries, which were contacted for a list of ordained and lay leadership within the church.
30 These leaders were then invited to participate in the web survey. Note the following
31 observations regarding the survey respondent demographics in Exhibit 1 that follows:
- 32 a. The survey respondents have diverse representation as far as age and the setting of
33 their local churches.
 - 34 b. The survey, at least unweighted, is very “suburban.”
 - 35 c. There is an equal balance between elders and lay leaders.
 - 36 d. Nearly one in five respondents was female.
 - 37 e. There is very little ethnic diversity in the survey. Only 13 African-Americans
38 responded, 6 Hispanics and only 1 Korean (despite additional efforts to get responses
39 from Korean presbyteries).

1 f. Raw survey results may be skewed toward smaller churches versus true PCA
 2 membership statistics by size of church: 71% of respondents are from churches of
 3 less than 400 members. [For comparison, see the Statistical Analysis report which
 4 follows. 46% of the PCA's members attend a church with less than 400 members,
 5 and 91% of PCA churches have less than 400 members.]

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Exhibit 1
Demographic Composition of All Survey Respondents



8

887 Respondents

1 Highlights and Impressions

2 The following highlights and impressions have been drawn from the whole body of survey
3 response data. Certain of these conclusions are supported here with selected charts attached as
4 Exhibits, however the basis for all the following statements can be found in detailed charts
5 available at <http://www.pcaac.org/StrategicPlan.htm>.

6 1. Assessment of the PCA as a Whole

7 a. Progress toward denominational strategic priorities is perceived as slow at best. The
8 dominant answers on progress in these areas was “staying about the same,” or “getting a
9 little better.” See Exhibit 2, p. 2213.

10 b. Leaders lean toward local or presbytery level responsibility for much of the “missional”
11 work of the denomination:

12 • Many denominational leaders feel that church planting in North America should rest
13 primarily with the presbyteries.

14 • A large number also felt that training/sending missionaries, and supporting indigenous
15 missions work should also be handled at the presbytery or local church level.

16 • Evangelism, discipleship training and mercy ministries were clearly seen as local
17 church responsibilities.

18 c. GA/Denominational responsibilities tended toward policy/decision making (e.g., *BCO*,
19 Westminster standards), institutional sponsorship (Seminary, College, Foundation),
20 administrative functions (e.g., RBI) and resource development (e.g., children’s education)

21 d. “Biblical” was by far the dominant positive descriptor that leaders use in describing the
22 PCA. The next three most frequently cited adjectives were theologically oriented:
23 Reformed, conservative, and strong theology. See Exhibit 3, p. 2214.

24 e. The top three negative descriptors leaders used for the PCA include doctrinal arrogance,
25 cultural homogeneity, and rigidity. See Exhibit 4, p. 2215.

26 2. Assessment of Local Church Relationship to the PCA

27 a. Leadership attendance at PCA assemblies is very light. See Exhibit 13, p. 2224.

28 • Nearly a third of teaching elders responding had been to only one or no GA in the past
29 5 years. Among ruling elders, 14% had been to one, and 78% had never been to GA.

30 • 9% of teaching elders and 73% of ruling elders never or only occasionally attend
31 presbytery meetings. See Exhibit 14, p. 2225.

32 b. There is strong loyalty to the denomination among her leaders. See Exhibit 5, p. 2216.

33 • Solid endorsement of and agreement with PCA values and standards: 95% agreement

34 • Very high expectation of continuing membership: 94% agreement.

35 • 90% think their church is stronger because they are part of the PCA.

36 • Two-thirds agree that growing to the 2-3 million-member level would be a good thing;
37 only 6% disagree.

38 c. Nevertheless, there is only lukewarm connection between denominational support and
39 what’s going on at the local church level:

40 • 37% agree that denomination support is important at the church program level.

41 • 42% see local church support of the denomination as a high priority.

42 d. As a result, there is also only tepid support for greater giving to denominational causes:
43 44% agree, while 48% are neutral.

1 e. Those who feel that the denomination is getting either more liberal or more conservative
2 are a small minority. See Exhibit 5, p. 2216.

3 3. View of Committees and Agencies

4 a. Much of the work of Committees and Agencies is unclear to a majority of denominational
5 leaders. See Exhibit 7, p. 2218.

6 • The only agencies where more than half agree they have a good understanding of their
7 work and ministry are Covenant College, Covenant Seminary, MNA, MTW, and
8 RUM.

9 • A third or less of denominational leaders agreed that they well understood the
10 ministries of the AC, the PCA Foundation, RBI and Ridge Haven. This lack of
11 understanding extends to responses on whether or not these four Committees and
12 Agencies understand their purpose/importance.

13 • Most leaders have no idea whether or not Committees and Agencies are good stewards
14 with their finances.

15 b. In general, leaders also do not see much of a connection of Committee and Agency work
16 to their local churches. See Exhibits 8 and 9, pp. 2219-20.

17 • Less than half of respondents agreed that any Committee or Agency helped their local
18 churches, except for CE&P and MTW.

19 • Regional ministries in particular saw a lower sense of connection: more than 20%
20 disagreed that Ridge Haven helped their local church, and more than 25% disagreed
21 about Covenant College.

22 • The only Agency that more than 50% of the leaders saw communicating effectively
23 was MTW.

24 c. Ridge Haven’s profile with denominational leaders is similar to “behind the scenes”
25 Committees and Agencies like AC, PCA Foundation and RBI.

26 d. It appears that Covenant College could also do more to improve its connection with local
27 congregations, given its scores versus other Committees and Agencies in connecting with
28 and mobilizing resources from local churches.

29 e. The PCA Foundation had some of the highest “neutral”/“don’t know” scores, often
30 comprising nearly ¾ of all respondents.

31 f. The three Agencies receiving the strongest endorsement in their connection to
32 denominational health were (in rank order from the top): MTW, MNA and Covenant
33 Seminary. The three Agencies receiving the weakest endorsement were (also in rank
34 order, from the bottom): Ridge Haven, PCA Foundation and AC.

35 4. Committee and Agency Funding

36 a. Support for additional giving to Committees and Agencies is lukewarm at best. Less than
37 half of respondents agreed that more should be given to any agency. MNA, MTW and
38 RUM got the most favorable responses on additional giving. See Exhibit 10, p. 2221.

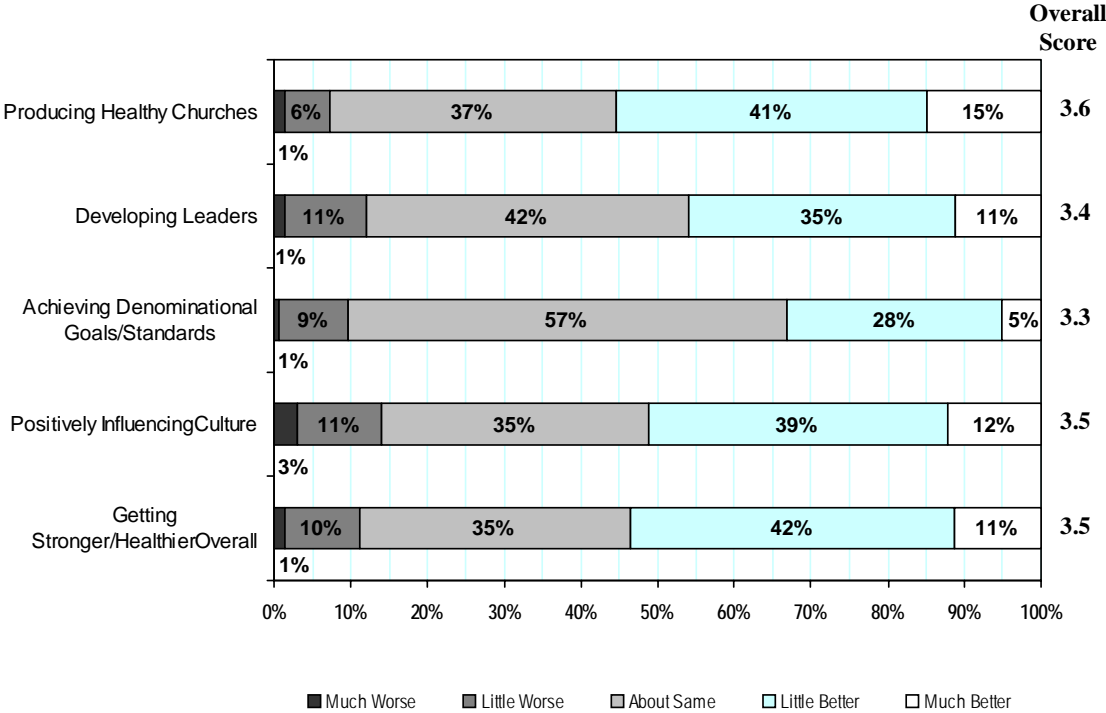
39 b. Committees and Agencies must determine how to connect effectively with local sessions
40 if they wish to secure greater levels of funding. This probably starts with a systematic
41 program that mobilizes teaching elders to explain the Partnership Shares program to their
42 sessions. The “Partnership Shares” approach to funding is a mystery to most PCA
43 leadership. See Exhibit 12, p. 2223.

- 1 c. Mandatory dues or “pay for say” programs appear to be “non-starters,” with a large
2 minority disagreeing with these approaches (46% and 43% disagreement, respectively).
3 In contrast, voluntary/suggested giving levels continue to receive the most favorable
4 responses. See Exhibit 11, p. 2222.
- 5 d. There is a strong consensus (90%) that all churches should be giving something to the cost
6 of running the denomination. This may imply that a full disclosure of all churches’ giving
7 levels would be an effective strategy for increasing giving participation.
- 8 e. There is also general agreement that current giving levels to denominational causes are too
9 low (which appears to run counter to apparent apathy toward actually increasing giving
10 levels to Committees and Agencies).
- 11 f. Few feel that local church giving levels are too high, including giving to non-
12 denominational causes/agencies.
- 13 5. General Assembly Input
- 14 a. The “work” aspects of GA clearly get the strongest endorsements as reasons for
15 attendance, particularly establishing denominational positions on points of theology and
16 cultural commentary. See Exhibit 15, p. 2226.
- 17 b. Leaders also see the opportunity to worship together at the denominational level as very
18 important. See Exhibit 15.
- 19 c. Accountability management, both for Committees and Agencies and presbyteries, is a
20 further positive contributor toward GA attendance. See Exhibit 15.
- 21 d. “Resourcing” factors, e.g. learning about best practices, attending seminars and seeing
22 exhibits received lukewarm endorsement. Perhaps surprisingly, this moderate response
23 also extended to interaction with colleagues and friends; this interaction may be more
24 opportunistic, as opposed to a justifying reason for attending GA. This kind of networking
25 was much more important to teaching elders than ruling elders. See Exhibit 15.
- 26 e. Clearly, commissioners are not looking to GA as an opportunity for family involvement in
27 the PCA: 30% saw this as “not at all important” (46% among teaching elders). See
28 Exhibit 15.
- 29 f. In general, no particular barrier dominated as a reason for not attending GA. The highest
30 barriers were practical ones: total cost, weekday meetings and the overall length of GA.
31 Familiarity with issues and process were not significant barriers, nor was personal apathy
32 about denomination-level proceedings. See Exhibit 16, p. 2227.
- 33 g. Recent attendees give the current design of GA a fairly solid endorsement. This includes
34 comfort with the balance and process of floor debate, the number of commissioners, as
35 well as the length of time GA takes. See Exhibit 17, p. 2228. Issue areas could include:
- 36 • Relatively low value for reports from other denominations
 - 37 • Relative concern from a minority that the population of commissioners may not
38 accurately represent the overall composition of the denomination
- 39 h. 74% of recent GA attendees agree with retaining an annual meeting, versus moving to a
40 bi- or tri-annual format. See Exhibit 17.
- 41 i. Those who have attended GA do report encouraging others to attend; nearly half report
42 doing so frequently or very frequently.

1 **Assessment of the PCA as a Whole**

2 The PCA is making progress against its strategic priorities; the progress is viewed as being slow
 3 however, and for many it appears to be static.

4 **Exhibit 2**



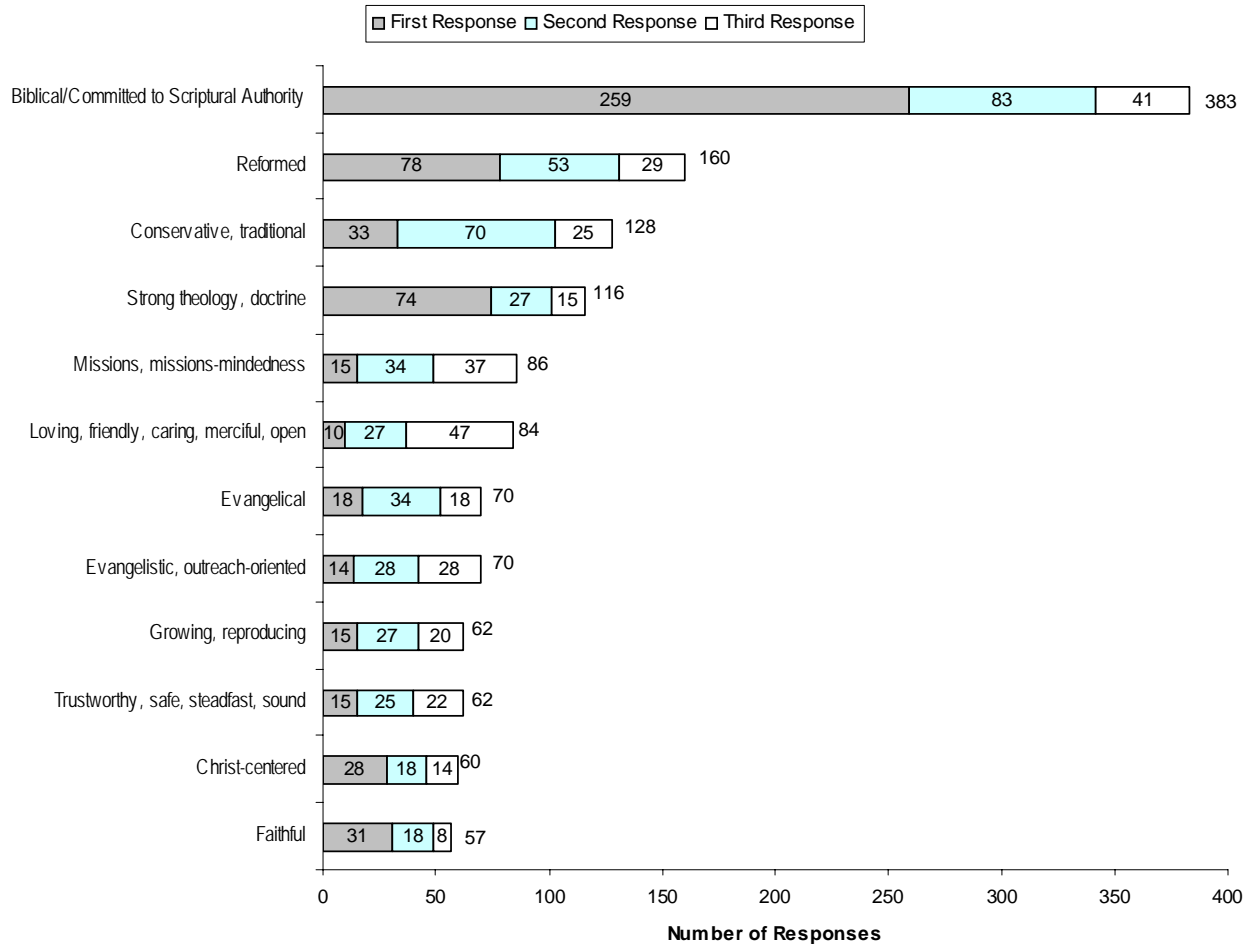
18

887 Responses

1 The top 12 adjective groups used to describe the PCA positively:

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Exhibit 3



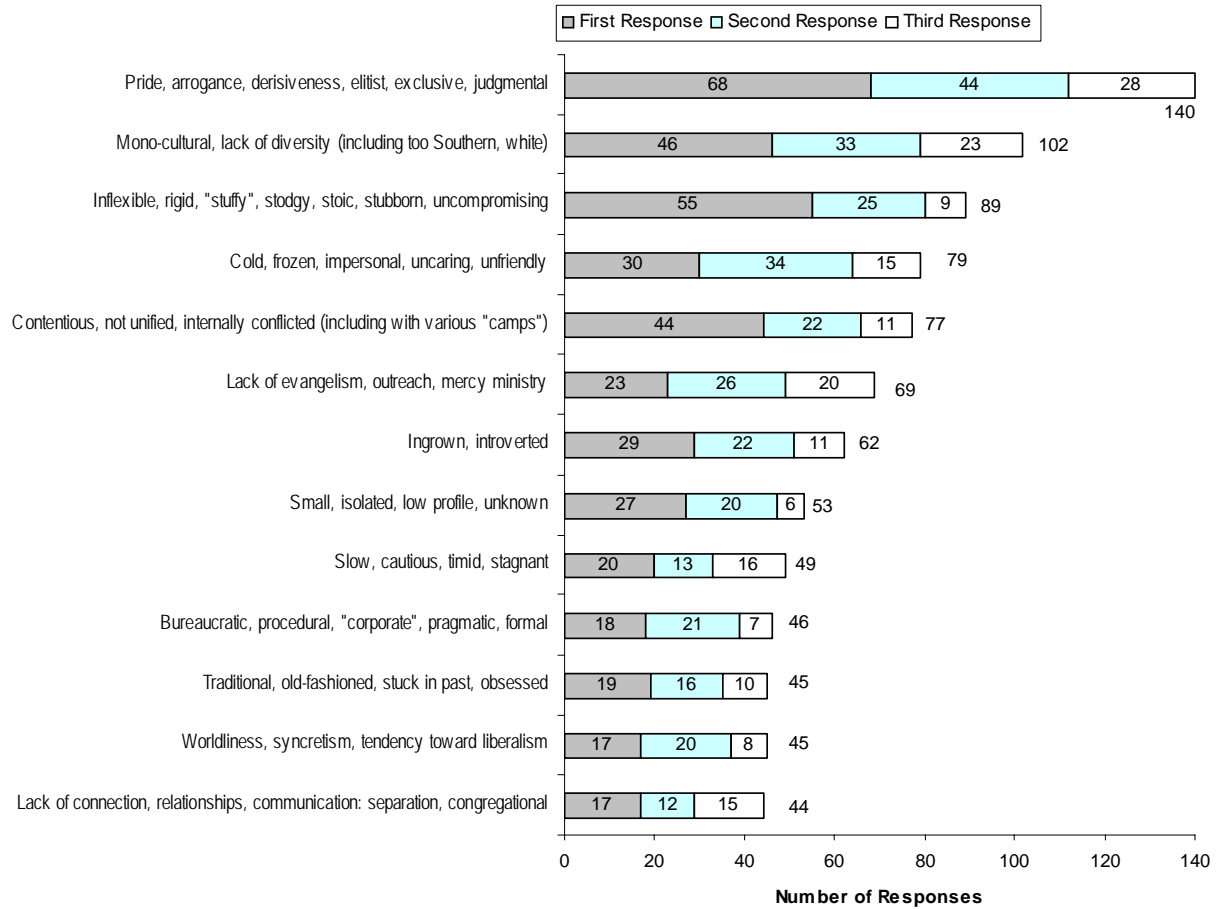
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887 Responses

1 The top 13 adjective groups used to describe the PCA negatively:

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Exhibit 4



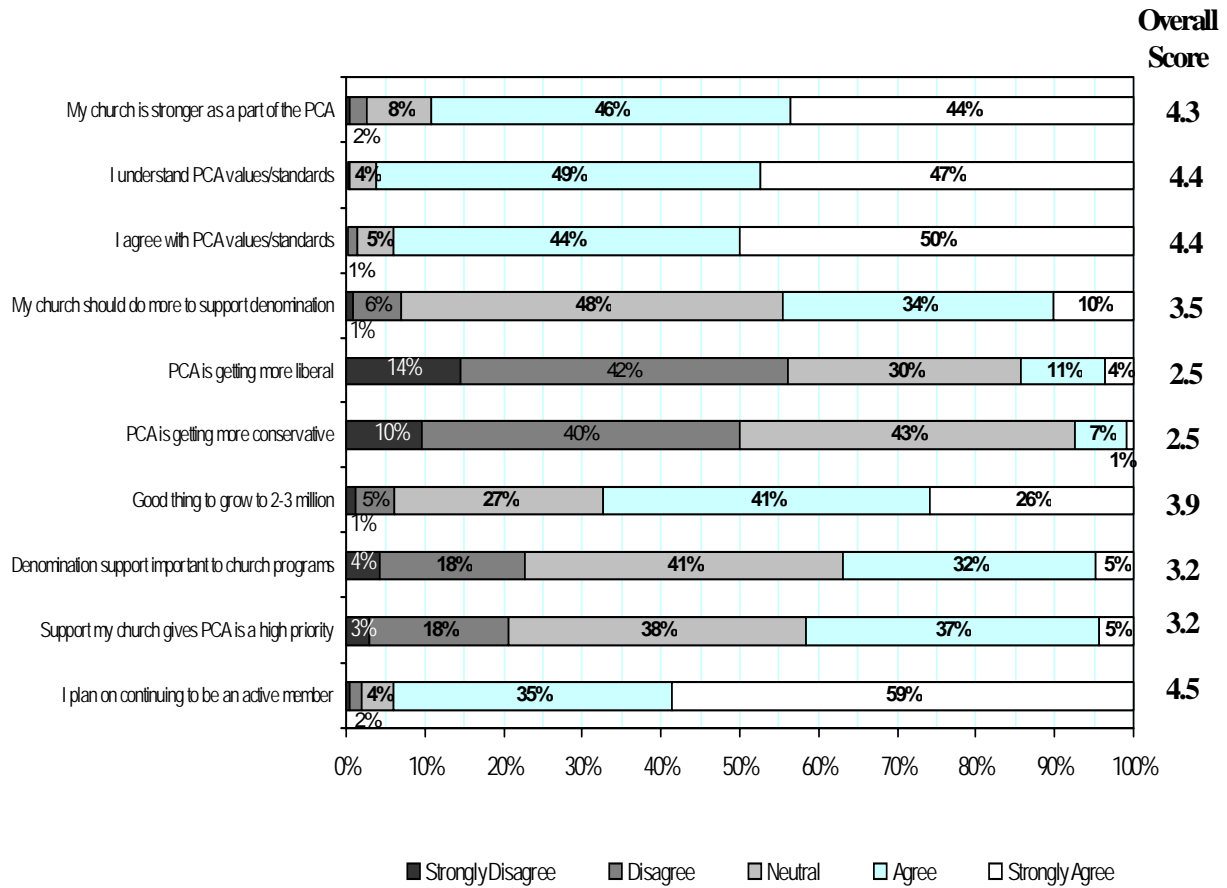
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887 Responses

1 **Assessment of Local Church Relationship to the PCA**

2 The various levels of agreement to these statements show the connectionalism between the
 3 local church and the denomination:

4 **Exhibit 5**

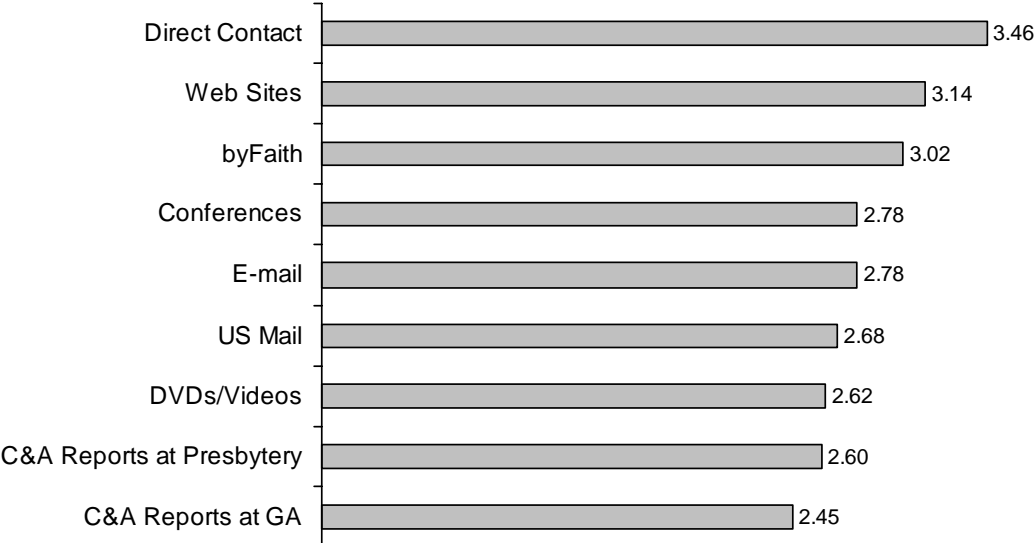


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887 Responses

1 Other than direct contact, respondents did not see a current denominational communication
2 vehicle as being particularly effective:

3 **Exhibit 6**



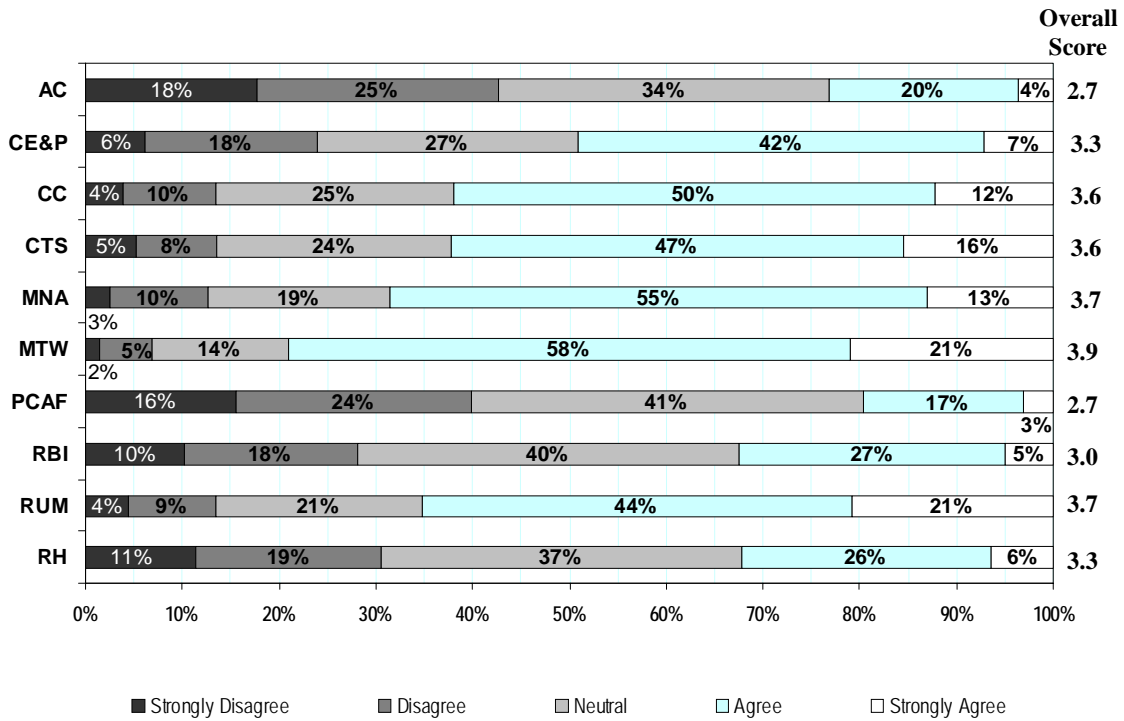
4
5 1 = not effective at all 3 = moderately effective 5 = very effective

6 887 Responses

1 **View of Committees and Agencies**

2 Respondents who agreed with the statement, “I have a good understanding of the work and
 3 ministry of ...”:

4 **Exhibit 7**

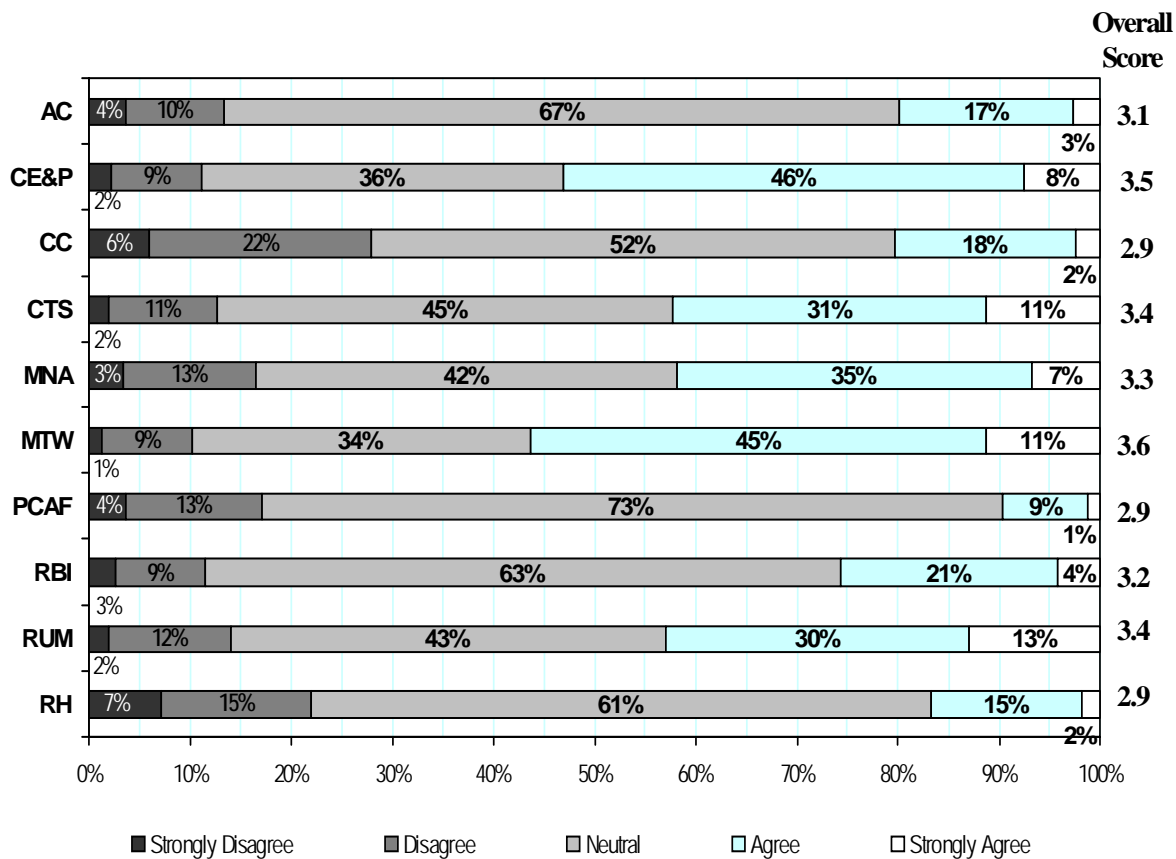


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887 Responses

1 Respondents who agreed with the statement, “This Committee/Agency helps us do our work
 2 in our local church”:

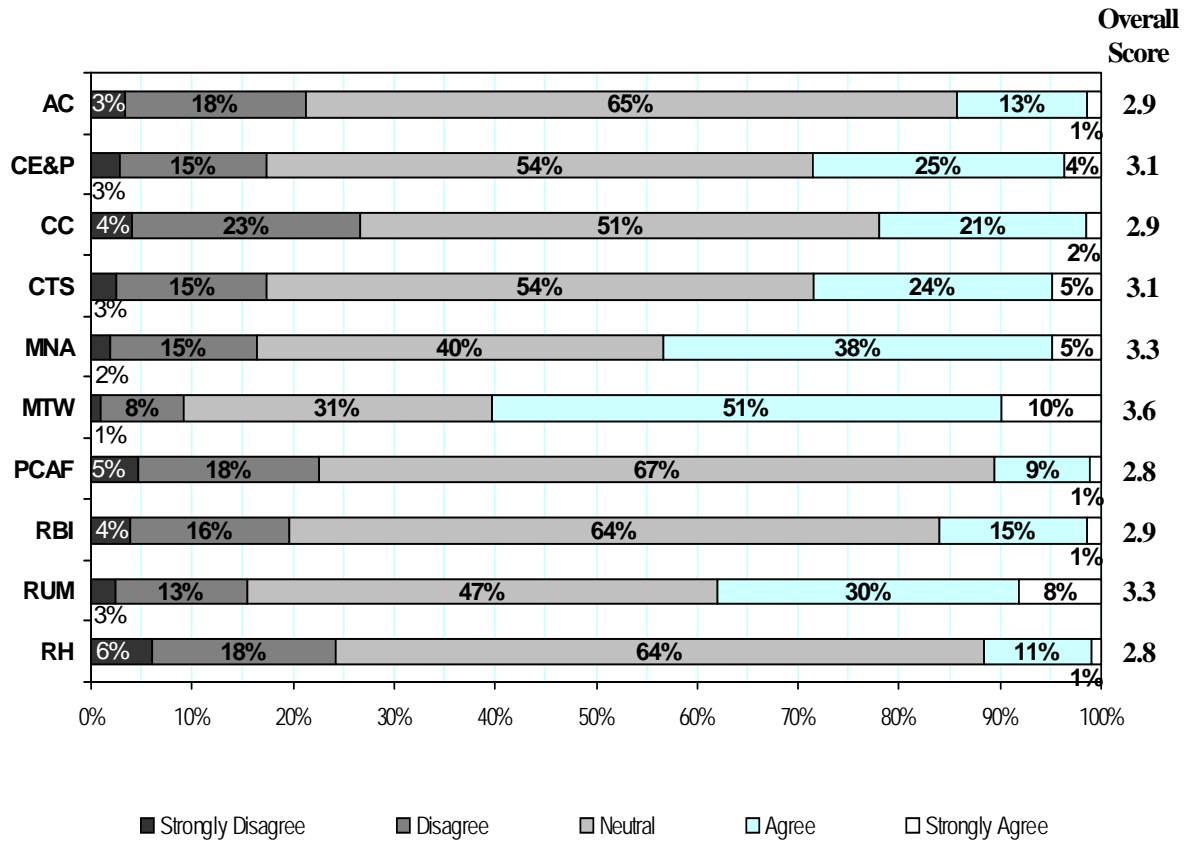
3 **Exhibit 8**



4
 5 887 Responses

1 Respondents who agreed with the statement, “This Committee/Agency communicates
 2 effectively with our local church”:

3 **Exhibit 9**

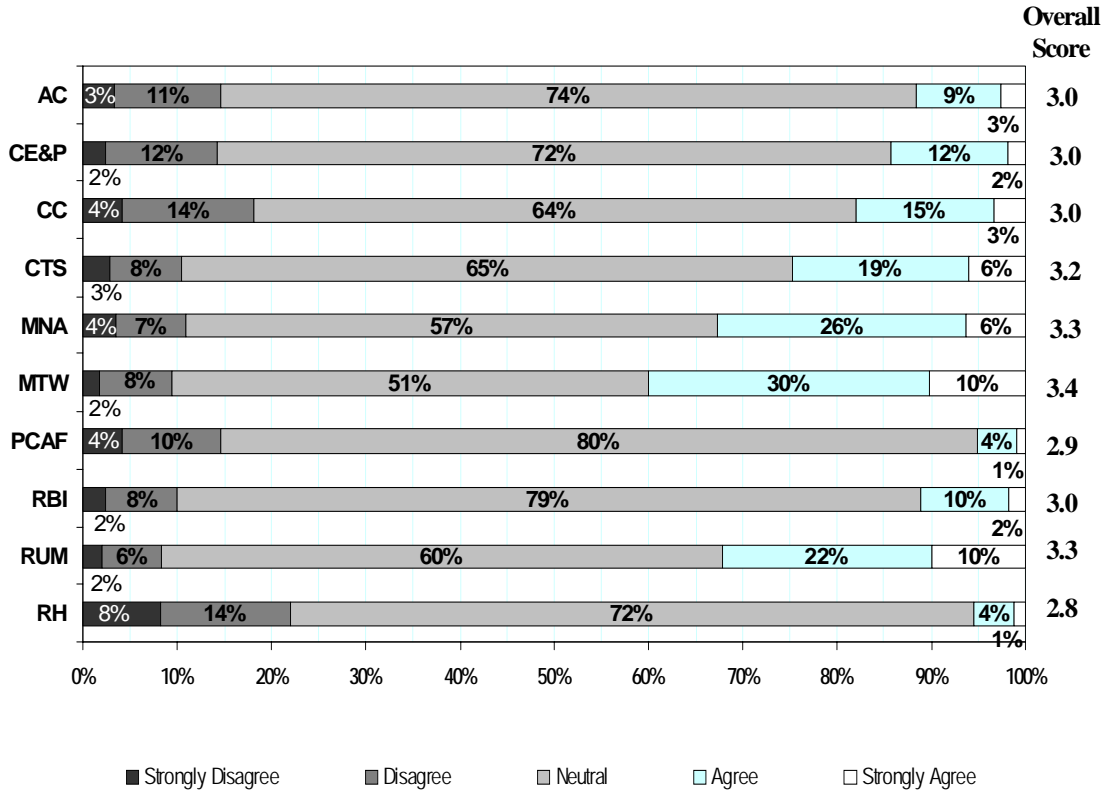


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 5 887 Responses

1 **Committee and Agency Funding**

2 Respondents who agreed with the statement, “My church should give more to this
3 Committee/Agency”:

4 **Exhibit 10**



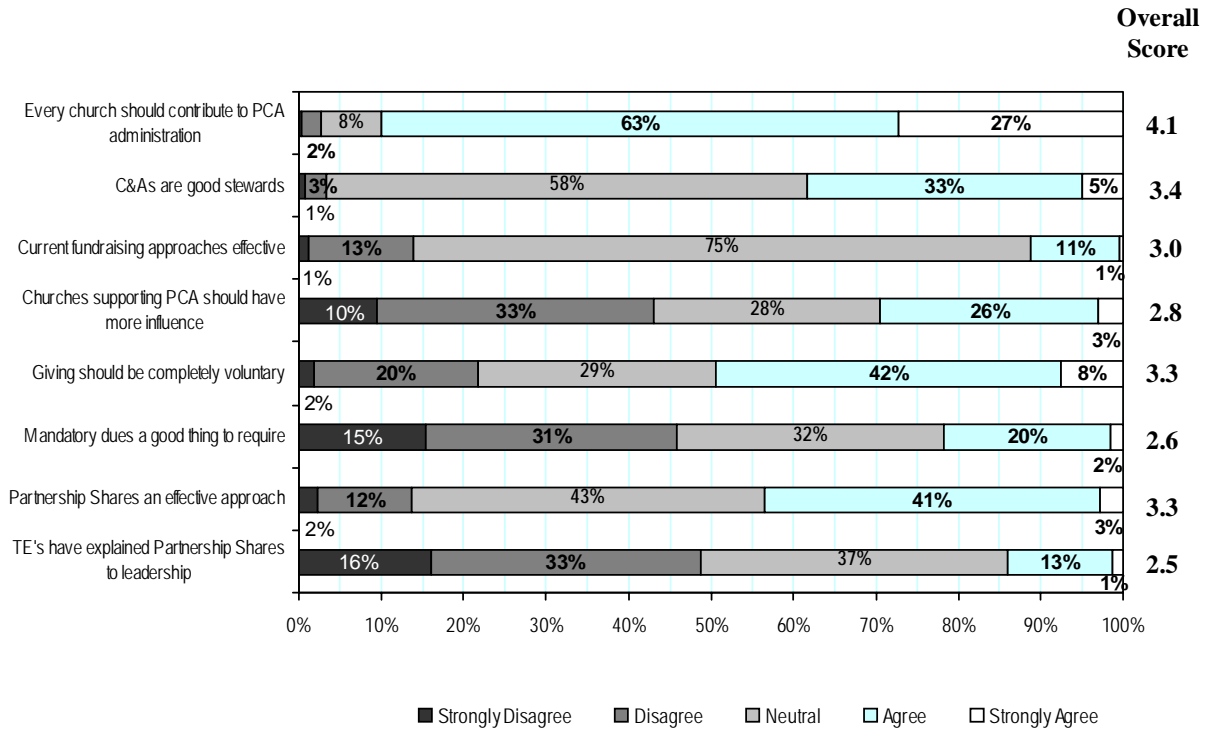
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887 Responses

1 The chart below reflects local church opinions on funding of denominational ministries:

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Exhibit 11



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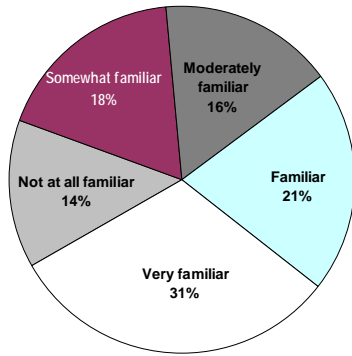
887 Responses

1 Lack of familiarity with Partnership Shares, while extending to a significant minority of
2 teaching elders, is a particular issue with lay leaders and many ruling elders:

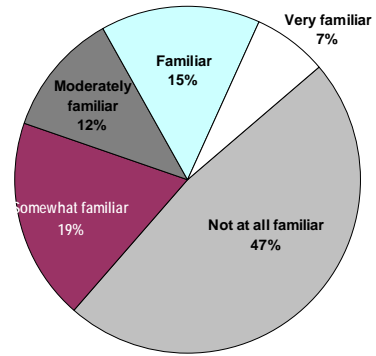
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Exhibit 12

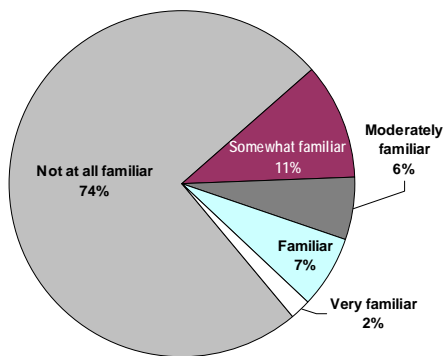
116 Teaching Elders



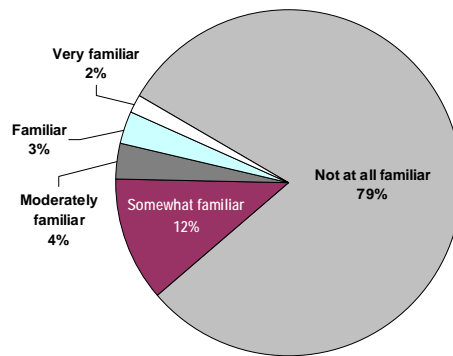
306 Ruling Elders



151 Deacons



282 Other Leaders



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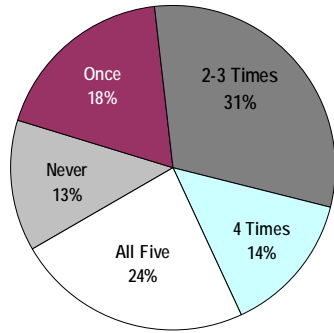
855 Responses

1 **General Assembly Input**

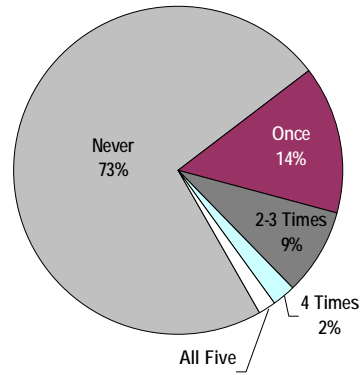
2 These charts show the breakdown of attendance at General Assembly over the past five
3 years:

4 **Exhibit 13**

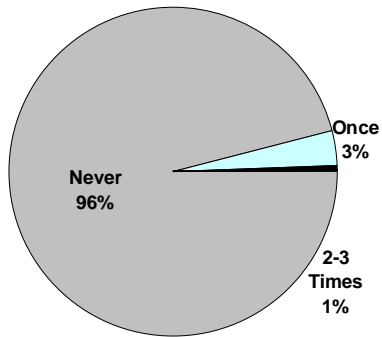
114 Teaching Elders



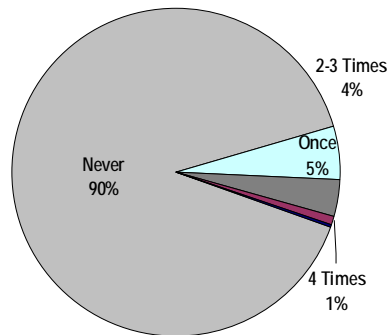
302 Ruling Elders



150 Deacons



278 Other Leaders



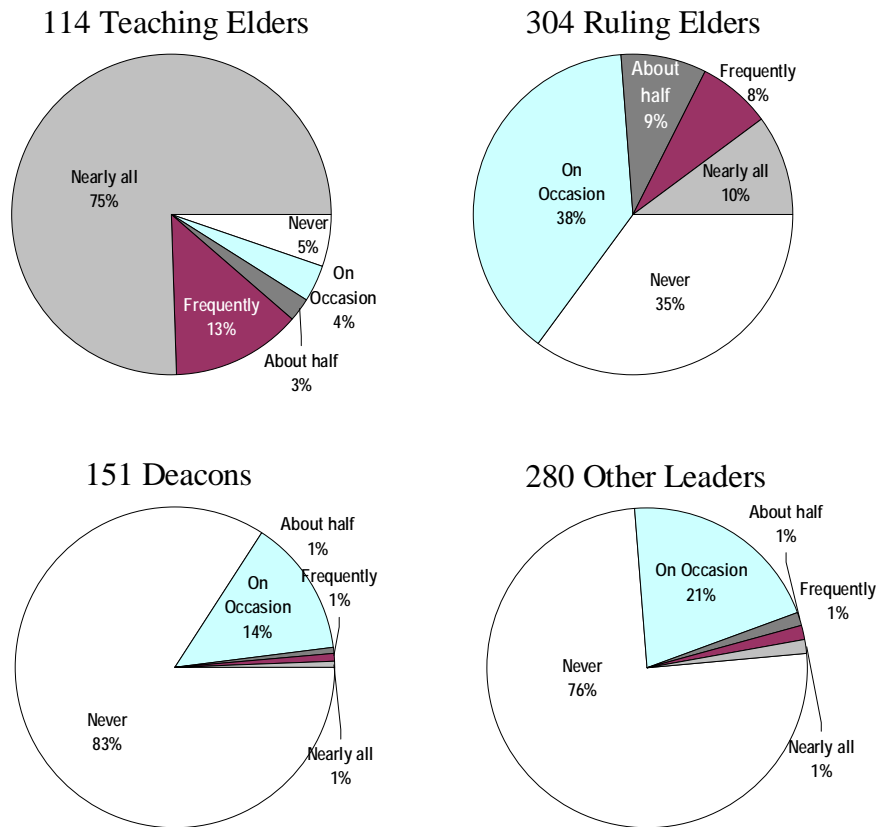
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844 Responses

1 These charts show the breakdown of attendance at local presbytery meetings over the past
2 five years:

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Exhibit 14



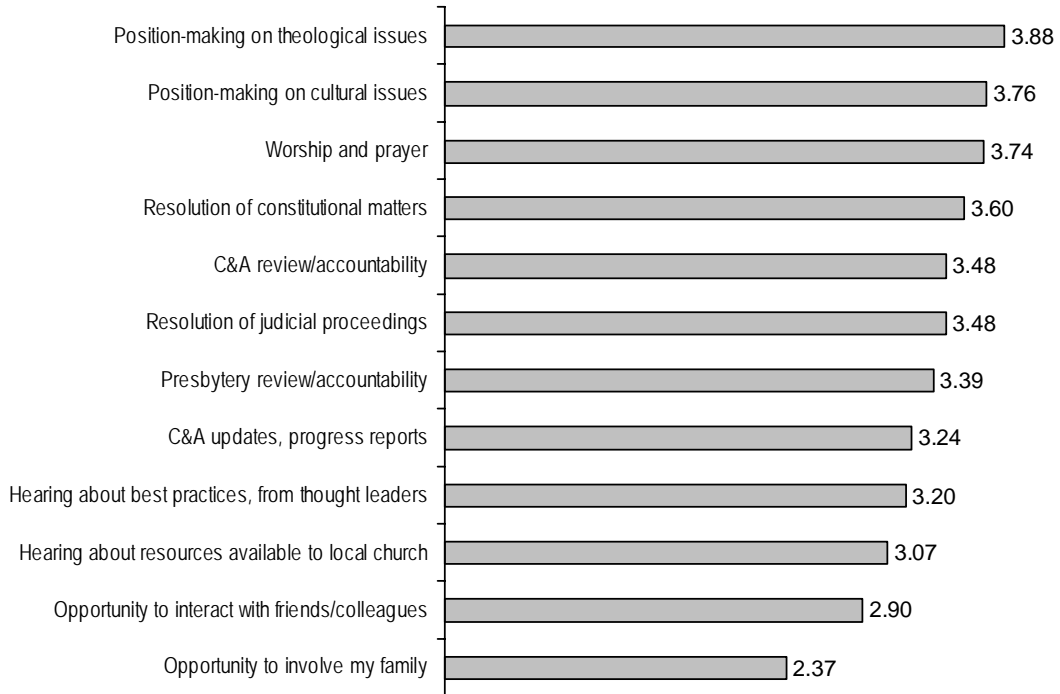
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849 Responses

1 The positive factors contributing toward General Assembly attendance can be summed up
2 with the phrase, “the business of GA”:

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Exhibit 15



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1 = not effective at all 3 = moderately effective 5 = very effective

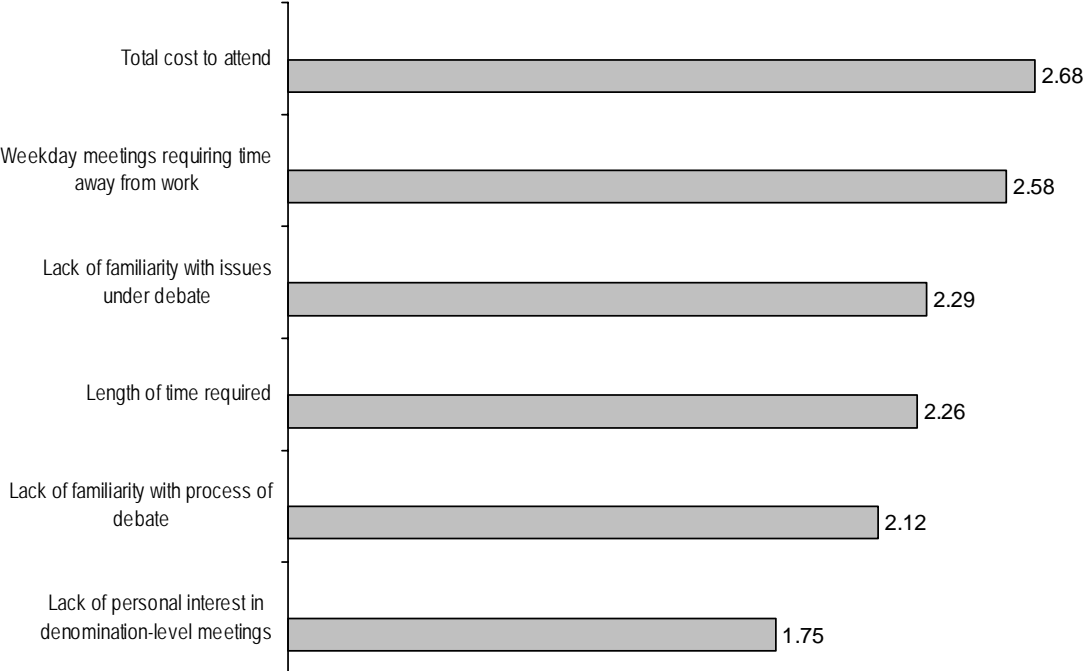
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887 Responses

1 The negative factors contributing to lack of attendance at GA are not too steep:

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Exhibit 16



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1 = not effective at all 3 = moderately effective 5 = very effective

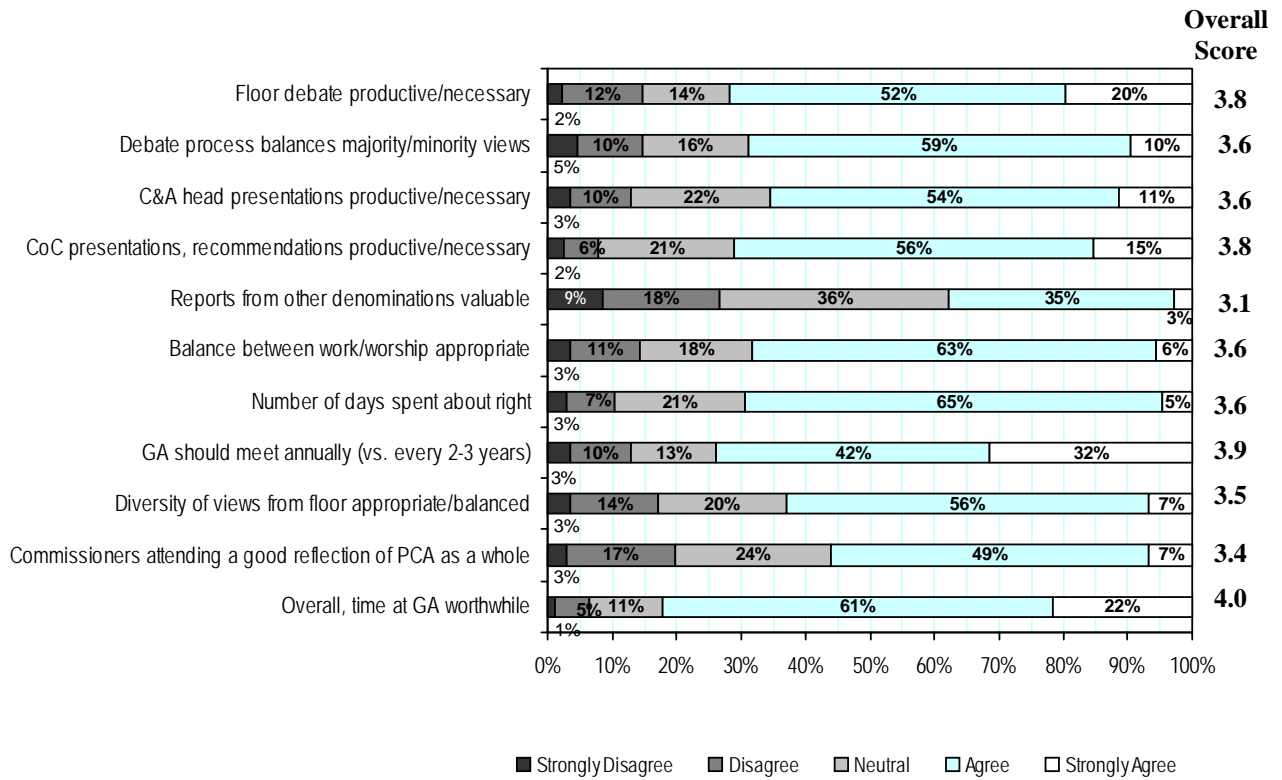
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887 Responses

1 The various levels of agreement to these statements give input on the General Assembly
 2 meeting design:

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Exhibit 17



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177 Responses

[Note: Responses are from GA attendees only.]