Is the Treatment the Cure?
A Study of the Effects of Participation in Pastoral Leader Peer Groups

Austin Presbyterian Seminary
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In 2007, the Lilly Endowment, Inc. awarded a grant to Austin Presbyterian Seminary and co-principal investigators, Janet Maykus, Principal of the College of Pastoral Leaders, and Penny Long Marler, Professor of Religion and Grant and Research Coordinator of the Resource Center for Pastoral Excellence at Samford University to conduct evaluation research on the impact of Sustaining Pastoral Excellence (SPE) initiated pastoral leader peer groups. The grant idea itself was the product of many conversations with and between SPE project directors at national gatherings, in the SPE Southern Cluster, and at annual meetings of the Society for Continuing Education in Ministry (SACEM). In addition to SPE-related leadership, these conversations included the work, wisdom, and energy of Bob Reber and Bruce Roberts who pioneered a peer learning model which several SPE projects have intentionally integrated into their own peer group efforts.[1]

The study included a pilot survey of Austin Seminary's pastoral leader peer group participants in 2006[2]; initial focus groups with SPE project directors of programs with ongoing pastoral leader peer groups in 2007; a consultation with scholars and practitioners who are identified experts in peer learning and survey research; the development of two surveys also in 2007, one for identified SPE project directors who lead peer group programs and another for identified participants in SPE pastoral leader groups; the dissemination of on-line and mailed surveys (over 90% of which were distributed and returned in the spring of 2008); the preparation of basic reports of survey results for participating SPE project directors, for the omnibus 2008 SPE pastoral leader participants, and for individual projects with more than 10 respondents in 2008 and 2009; the identification of specific representative peer groups based on these data among 5 SPE projects also in 2008[3]; and the development and conduct of focus groups and other evaluation among the 5 representative SPE peer groups in 2009. Maykus administered the grant and facilitated the qualitative study along with consultants Reber and Roberts. Marler directed the research components including the overall design as well as survey development, selection of peer groups for qualitative study, and data analysis.

Other important pieces of the study included a module of questions on peer group participation that were replicated on two national surveys: the 2008 Faith Communities Today (FACT) survey and the 2009 U.S. Congregational Life Survey (USCLS). To date, final survey results have been received and analyzed from the FACT survey, and they constitute the primary comparison for the SPE sample reported here.[4]

The SPE participant survey was administered primarily from February to May 2008. The majority of respondents had two opportunities to complete either the mailed survey or an on-line version. The only exceptions were the later inclusion of Indiana peer group participants (a non-SPE but

Lilly-funded project) and follow-up surveys for one SPE project that was not included in the first administration. An additional opportunity to complete the survey was given to non-respondents for whom we had email addresses from late summer through the early fall of 2008.

A Tale of Two Surveys

SPE Pastoral Leader Participants in Peer Groups (N=2,098)

- **Administered in 2008**
- **Identified 31 SPE projects with ongoing pastoral leader peer groups**
- **A majority of projects contributed contact information for 100% of unique participants**
- **15-page survey with questions on peer group structure, content, & experience; characteristics of congregation or ministry setting; ministry roles & experiences; beliefs, attitudes, & approach to faith; and faith, ministry, & personal background**

Faith Communities Today (FACT) Survey of Pastoral Leaders (N=2,525)

- **Administered in 2008**
- **A key informant survey of congregations**
- **Based on a national general sample with over-samples from 12 Christian denominations/faith groups**
- **8-page survey focusing on a church's worship; programs; mission & identity; active participants; leadership; finances; & history, location & affiliation (also included questions about the pastoral leader's participation in a peer group)**

Contact information was supplied for 100% of current and previous participants by 29 of 31 identified SPE projects with ongoing pastoral leader peer groups. Original contact lists included a number of duplicate participants for two primary reasons: 1) some projects provided time-delimited grants, allowed groups to re-apply for funds, and included the same groups in their database as "new groups"; and 2) some potential respondents participated in more than one SPE-initiated peer group—either a different group within the same project or a group initiated by another SPE project during the five-year study period. About 9 percent of addresses (postal and/or email) were inaccurate or no longer current; less than 1 percent of potential respondents were deceased or reported that they had not participated in a group. Out of an initial contact list of 4,622 persons, the final sample of identified SPE pastoral leader peer group participants was 4,199 and 2,098 usable surveys were returned for a response rate of 50 percent.[5]

The survey included sections on the participant's SPE peer group participation, their work in ministry; ministry roles and experiences; beliefs, attitudes, and approach to faith; health and well-being; and faith and ministry as well as personal background. The section on peer group structure and experience was especially developed for this survey. A majority of survey items dealing with participants' work and experience in ministry were replicated from the FACT survey and the National Clergy Leader survey (Pulpit and Pew Project, Duke Divinity School) which is partially replicated in the USCLS; and most background items replicate standard social science questions about gender, race, marital status, and education.

FACT 2008 is a key informant congregational survey that is the third in a series of efforts to measure many aspects of congregational life. Prior surveys were conducted in 2000 and 2005. The FACT general sample contains 2,525 congregations and is broadly representative of all U.S. congregations. The sample is a composite of a national general sample of 676 congregations drawn from a random list of American congregations from a national congregational database. The remaining 1,849 congregations were drawn from representative over-samples from 12 Christian denominations, denominational clusters, and faith groups. Altogether, congregations representing 136 denominations or faith groups were included along with several non-Christian groups (Baha'i Faith, three Jewish traditions, and Muslims). Congregations were divided into five groups (Mainline Protestant, Conservative Protestant & Historic Black; Catholic & Orthodox; Other Christian; and Non-Christian). Congregations were weighted so that the proportion of congregations in each group represented the proportionate distribution of all U.S. congregations in each group as indicated by the earlier work of Hadaway and Marler identifying the number and proportion of congregations by denominational family.[6] Additional weighting was done so that the proportionate distribution of each denomination was representative within its own denominational family (e.g., United Methodists within the Mainline Protestant family).

FACT 2008 survey was an 8-page instrument that was completed through returning a mail survey or an online version. A key informant completed the survey and in most cases that person was the pastor or clergy leader. However, this was not the case in the Latter Day Saints Church and Baha'i Faith. Questions were included about worship, congregational programs, evangelism & outreach, mission & congregational identity, the characteristics of active members and participants, the leaders of the congregation, congregational conflict, finances, and the congregation's setting.

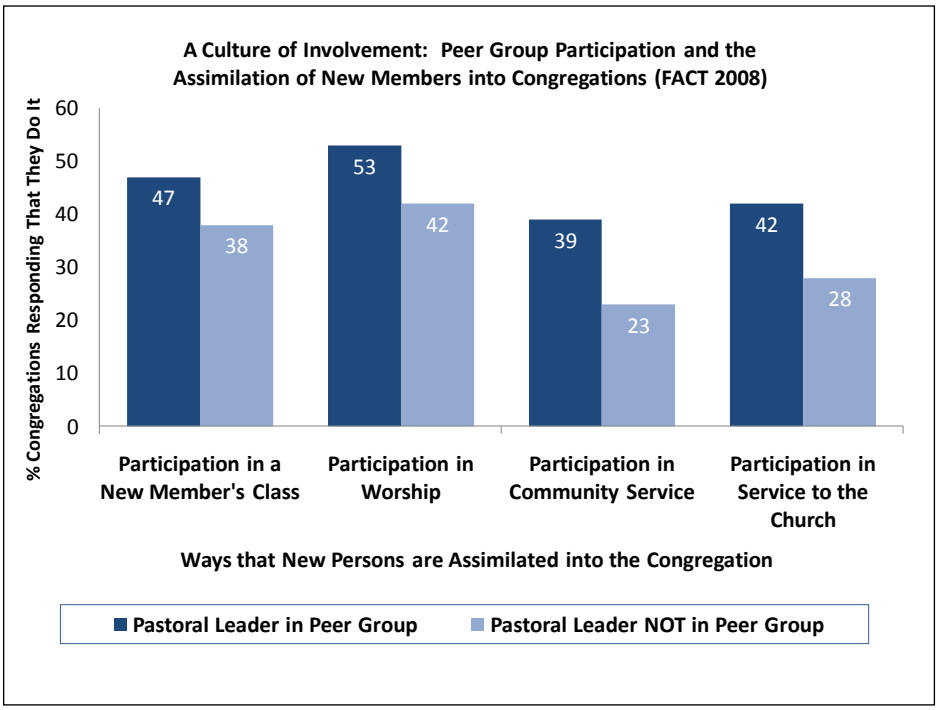
Among the items in the survey related to leadership, a number were included about continuing education and participation in a small group. All leadership questions were descriptive of one person serving as the sole or the primary leader of the congregation. In multi-staff congregations, the leader was the senior minister; in congregations led by co-leaders or ministry teams, the oldest leader was the referent for the leadership questions. The only community who failed to respond to the series of congregational leadership questions was the Baha'i Faith.

The two surveys provide the largest and most comprehensive statistical portrait of the impact of participation in a pastoral leader peer group to date. FACT 2008 allows us to do two important things: one, it answers the question of *whether peer group involvement makes a difference in a nationally-representative sample of pastoral leaders*; and two, it answers the question of *how peer group involvement affects the congregations that clergy serve*. The SPE Participants of Pastoral Leader Peer Groups Survey (2008), on the other hand, provides a comprehensive look into the nature of peer groups themselves in relation to congregational (and other ministry context) characteristics including motivations for joining and staying; characteristics of members and leadership; structure; practices; and personal and ministerial outcomes.

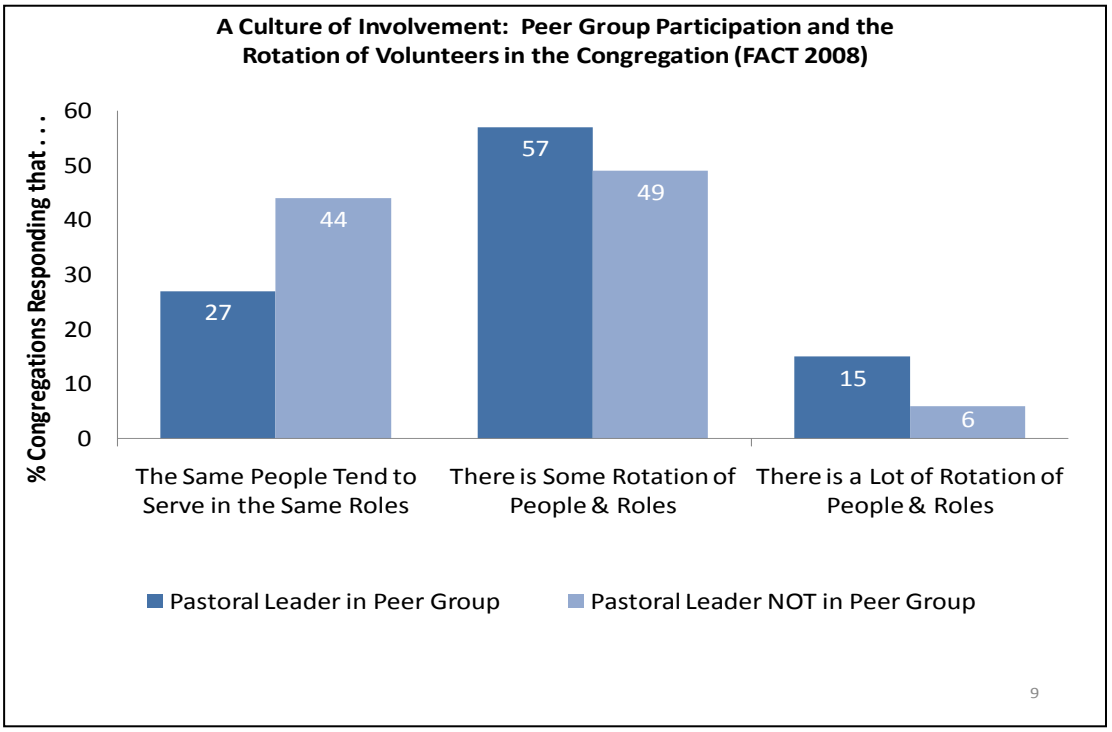
What Difference Does a Peer Group Make?

Does participation in a pastoral leader peer group make a difference? And perhaps most importantly, does participation in a pastoral leader peer group make a difference in congregations? Yes. In the FACT 2008, 72% of respondents said that their pastoral leader participated regularly in a small group of peers for continuing education and support during the last 5 years. *Preliminary* data from the USCLS 2009 indicates that 79% of pastoral leaders responded "yes" to the same question. The prevalence of peer group involvement therefore is quite high.

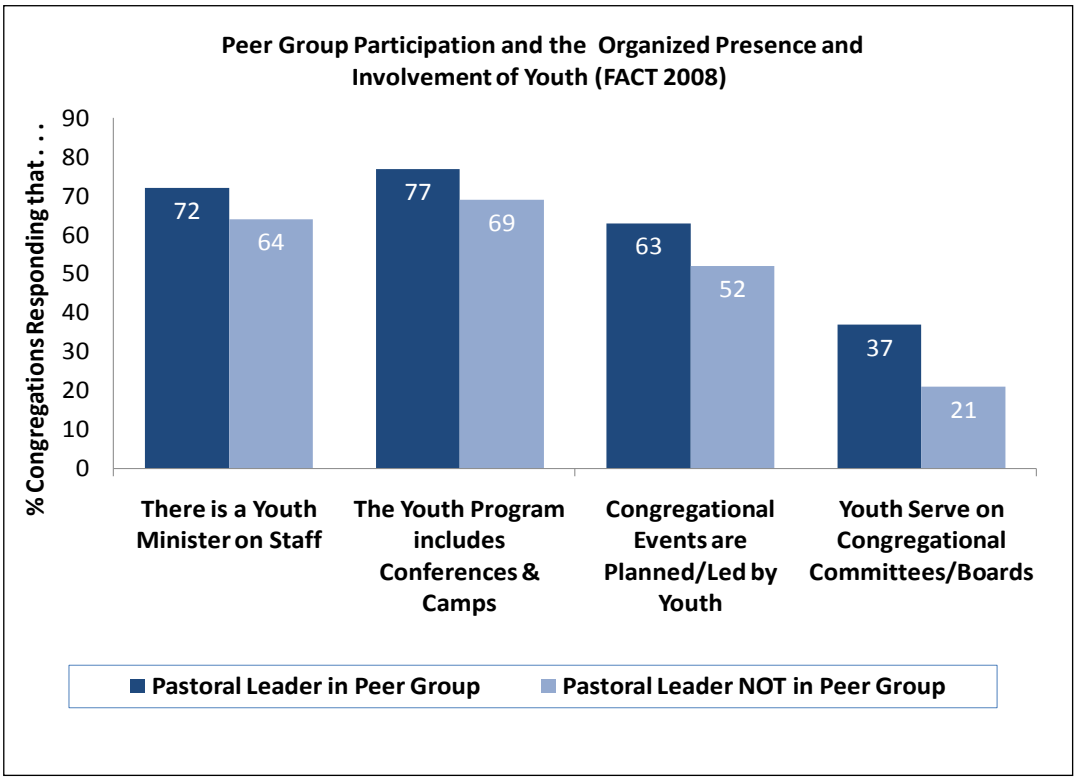
What differentiates congregations with pastoral leaders who participate in peer groups from those who do not? We found that congregations with pastoral leaders who participated in peer groups were significantly more likely to promote a "culture of involvement" that actively assimilates newcomers and fully involves members in leadership (see chart below).[7]



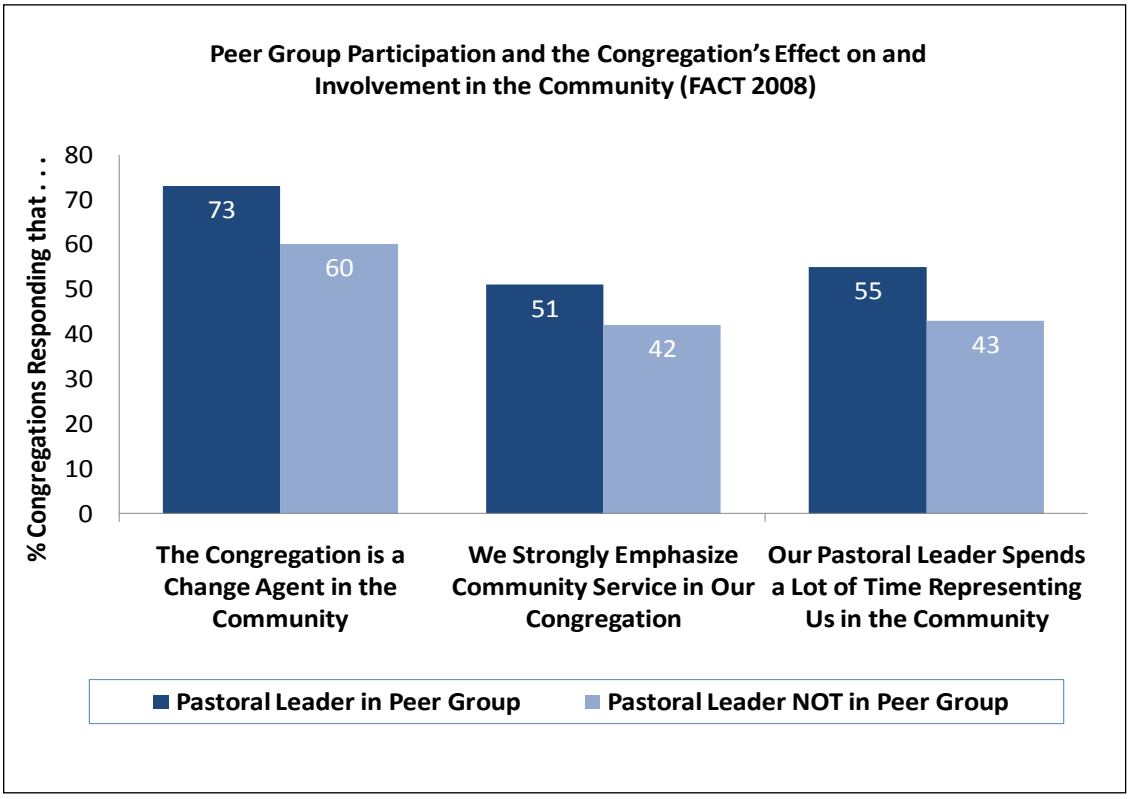
Interestingly, as seen on the next page, congregations that rotate lay people in leadership roles are much more likely to be led by a pastor with peer group experience. Congregations with a pastoral leader in a peer group are about half as likely to say that the same people tend to serve in the same roles and over twice as likely to report a lot of rotations of people and roles.[8]



Further, congregations with pastoral leaders in a peer group support an active youth ministry that also is integrated into the life of the church (see chart below).[9]

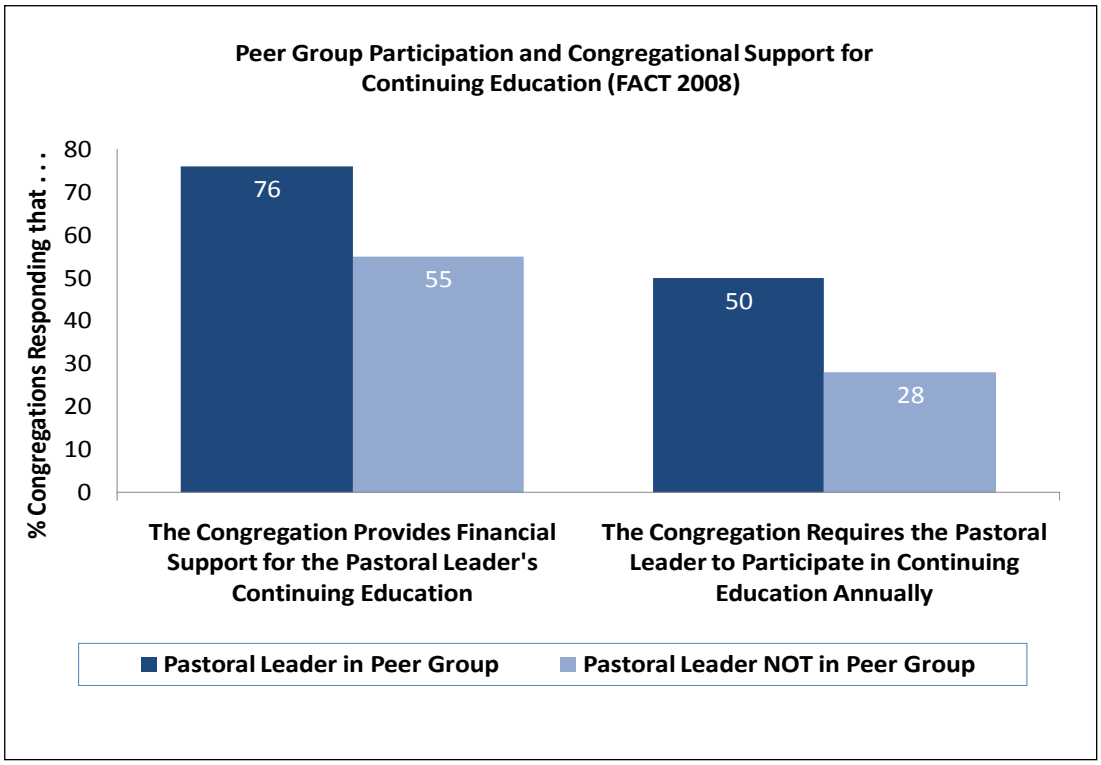


Such congregations are more likely to have a youth program, including a youth minister or director, youth conferences, and camps. They are much more likely to include youth in planning and leadership. In fact, congregations with pastoral leaders in a peer group are almost twice as likely to include youth on the committees and boards of congregations. A culture of involvement, then, extends to younger members.



Congregations whose pastoral leader is involved in a peer group also tend to devote time and effort to community service and positive community change. Indeed, as shown in the chart above, if a pastoral leader is in a peer group, then, his or her congregation is significantly more likely to see itself as a change agent in the community and to emphasize community service. Reflecting as well as reinforcing a culture of involvement, the pastoral leader with peer group experience also is more likely to spend time representing the congregation in the community.[10]

Not surprisingly, although certainly not inevitably, pastoral leaders who are involved in a peer group lead congregations that support their continuing education (see chart on the next page).[11] Pastoral leaders are more likely to participate in peer groups when their congregations provide funds for continuing education, and especially, when their congregations require it annually. In addition to a culture of involvement, then, a kind of "structure of expectation" about the need for and value of continuing education is strongly associated with a pastoral leader's involvement in a peer group.



What are the **strongest predictors** of peer group participation? To answer this question, we created a model that tested the relationships between the characteristics of the leader such as gender, age, and education; the congregation's location, size, and theological orientation; the "culture of involvement" in the congregation; the "structure of expectation" for a pastoral leader's involvement in continuing education; and the leader's tenure and time in the congregation.[12]

What congregational factors predict pastoral leader participation in a peer group? (FACT 2008)

- **A culture of involvement (lay leadership is rotated a lot; the congregation emphasizes support and other small groups and assimilates new persons through service to the church and the community)**
- **A structure of expectation for continuing education (the congregation supports and requires it)**
- **A facilitative approach to leadership (pastoral leader spends more time in administration/supervision and representing the church in the community)**

As summarized above, the most powerful predictors of pastoral leader peer group involvement in FACT 2008 were: 1) **a culture of congregational involvement** that included rotating the laity in leadership, emphasizing support and other small groups, and assimilating new members through service to the church and the community; and 2) **a structure of expectation** (and opportunity) for continuing education as well as a **facilitative approach to leadership**.[13] Participatory congregations tend to encourage (or at least allow) their pastoral leaders to participate in peer groups. And peer group involvement also is greatly facilitated by a congregation that funds and/or requires their minister's participation in continuing education. In fact, from the SPE survey, we know that 91% of clergy consider their involvement in a peer group as an important part of their continuing education. From further analysis, we know that a pastoral leader's peer group involvement not only reflects but also powerfully shapes these features of congregational culture and structure. It really does work both ways.[14]

What is especially interesting is the fact that the way a pastoral leader spends her or his time is the strongest predictor of peer group involvement. Either the culture and structure of the congregation attracts (and is attractive to) the kind of pastoral leader who is good at facilitating involvement in the congregation and the community and that same kind of leader also is apt to be in a peer group OR joining a peer group is a necessary resource for a leader—no matter their personal proclivities—to effectively manage a congregation like this. Again, further analysis shows that the relationship is mutually reinforcing: peer group experience predicts how pastoral leaders spend their time just as strongly as how they spend their time predicts peer group involvement.

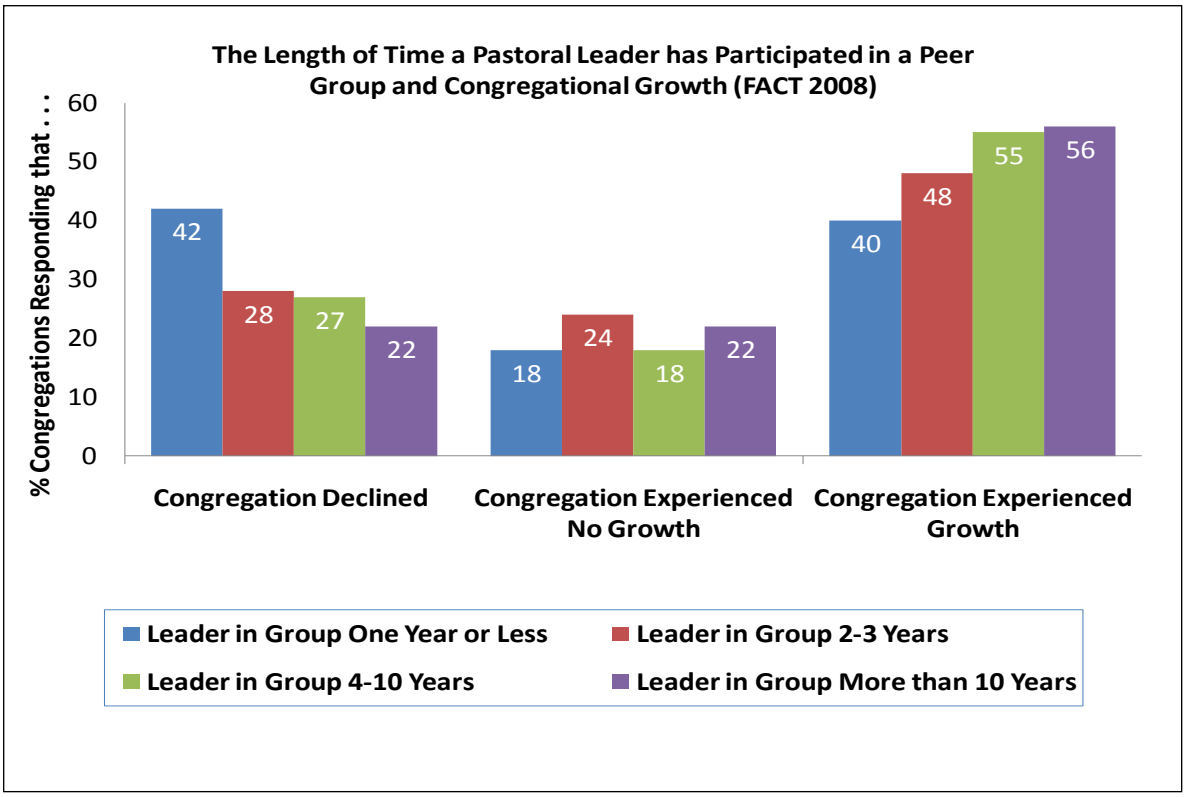
In our model, women clergy were twice as likely to be in peer groups as men—although gender is, in the end, less powerful as a predictor than other things because of the smaller proportion of women in the sample. Pastoral leaders of congregations that are perceived as "middle of the road" to "liberal" *within their denominations* are also more likely to be in peer groups. Pastoral leaders who are over 45 are slightly more likely and those in smaller, pastor-sized congregations are slightly less likely to be in peer groups.[15] It is very interesting that our SPE peer group participants reflect these tendencies closely: as we will see, the SPE sample is significantly more female and mainline Protestant than the nationally-representative FACT sample.

So a pastoral leader's participation in a peer group is related—in a mutually reinforcing way—to congregations that are highly participatory, supportive of the minister's continuing education, and in a real sense, "missional." These are important characteristics of health in congregations. Another indicator of health is numerical growth.

Is there a relationship between a pastoral leader's peer group participation and the growth of their congregation? Yes, in fact there is. Simply being in a peer group is not enough, however. Two specific characteristics of a pastoral leader's participation in a peer group were found to be strongly related to numerical growth in congregations: the length of time clergy have participated in peer groups and a particular kind of leadership and structure.

Since its first administration in 2000, the FACT survey has included a question about average worship attendance in the last six years, in this case, from 2003 to 2008. Respondents are asked to

record these numeric averages by year. A "growth" variable was created by calculating a percentage change in attendance over the five year period of measurement and then collapsing the measure into categories.[16] The data presented below reflect 3 categories: "congregation declined" is a five year percentage decline in attendance of 5% or more; "congregation experienced no growth" is a five year decline or increase of less than 5%; and "congregation experienced growth" is a five year percentage increase in attendance of 5% or more. When the growth variable is correlated with the survey item (asked toward the end of the survey itself) about the length of time the pastoral leader has participated in a peer group, the results are definitive. The longer a pastoral leader has participated in a peer group, the more likely is his or her congregation to experience growth.



In order to examine the nature of this relationship further, we created a model predicting numerical growth which included congregational variables typically associated with it.[17] As we see in the textbox on the next page, the involvement of the congregation in recruitment, a youthful congregation, and an active youth ministry program were the strongest predictors of numerical growth. The relative absence of congregational conflict also has a strong direct effect on a five-year percentage increase in worship attendance.

What was surprising, however, was the fact that having a pastoral leader with a history of peer group involvement turned out to be a strong predictor, too. It was stronger, in fact, than a measure of congregational dynamism also typically associated with church growth. Another characteristic of a peer

group also directly affected numerical growth: a peer group with a certain degree of structure, including a trained facilitator and/or a curriculum.[18]

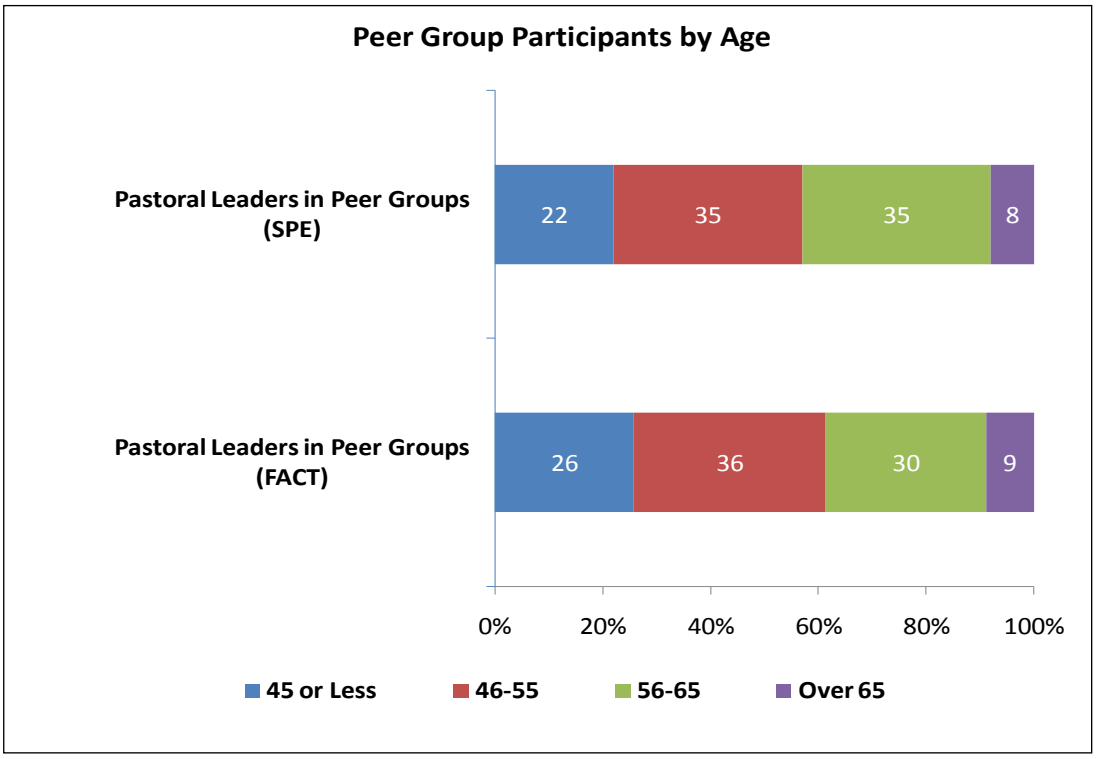
Indeed, reports from focus group interviews with our 5 representative SPE peer groups indicate that belonging to a peer group *legitimizes* activities that many of pastoral leaders intuitively knew were necessary for a long and vital ministry but found difficult to squeeze into their schedules. Time of Sabbath, fellowship with friends, creative endeavors, prayer, and laughter became parts of their pastoral rhythms and therefore parts of the rhythms of their calls. As we discussed above, peer group participation is made possible by a culture of involvement and a structure of expectations in a congregation. And when pastoral leaders internalize this rhythm and repeat the pattern, a history of peer group involvement emerges. The benefits, our analysis shows, can be quite tangible.

What congregational and peer group factors predict growth? (FACT 2008)

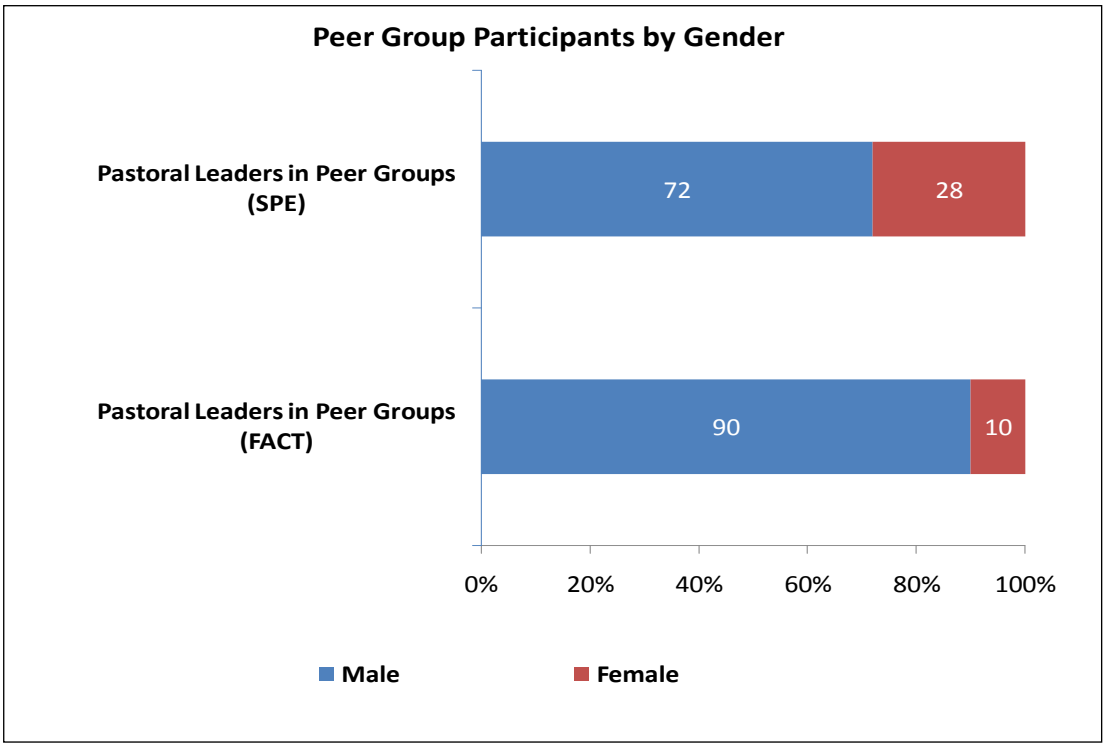
- **The involvement of the congregation in recruitment**
- **A youthful congregation with an active youth ministry program**
- **Little to no congregational conflict**
- **A pastoral leader with a history of peer group involvement**
- **A congregational culture that is perceived as exciting, spiritually vital, and has a clear mission**
- **A pastoral leader whose peer group has a trained facilitator and/or a curriculum**

So, how do SPE pastoral leaders participating in peer groups compare with pastoral leaders in FACT 2008? Participants in SPE peer groups include a number of ministers who are not pastoral leaders in congregations. In order to compare the nationally-representative sample of participants in peer groups with SPE peer group participants, it is necessary to exclude 23% of the SPE sample who are chaplains, pastoral counselors, spiritual directors, denominational ministers, or other extra-congregational ministers. This allows us to compare "apples to apples" and to gauge how our sample compares to a nationally-representative one. Focusing on the 77% of SPE pastoral leaders most similar, then, to FACT respondents, we see that they are similar in age.

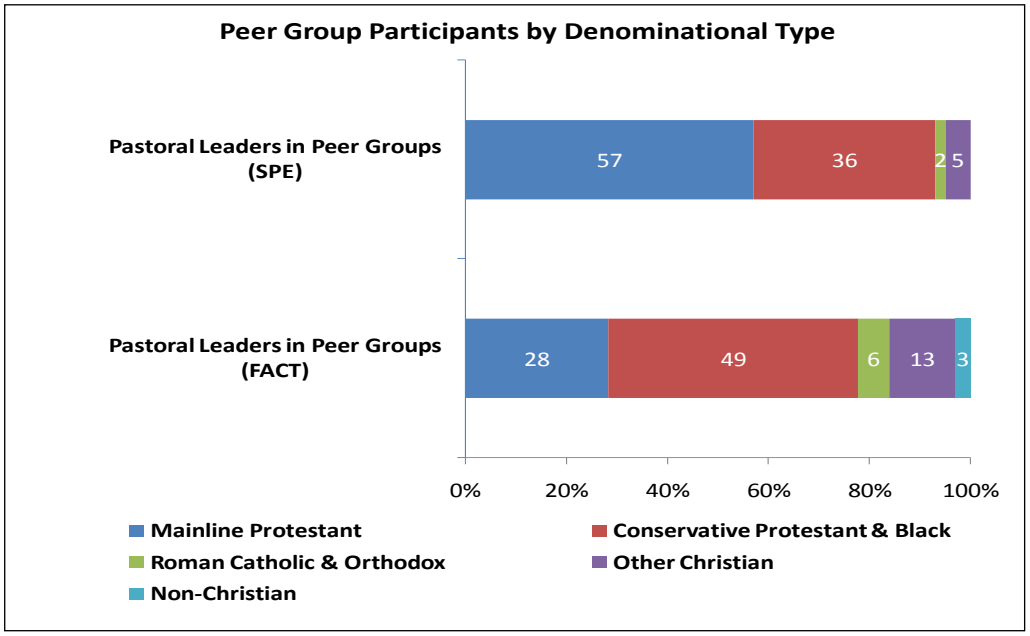
The bar chart on the next page shows that the FACT pastoral leaders in peer groups are slightly younger—26% are aged 45 or less in the nationally-representative sample as opposed to only 22% in the SPE sample. However, the differences are not significant.



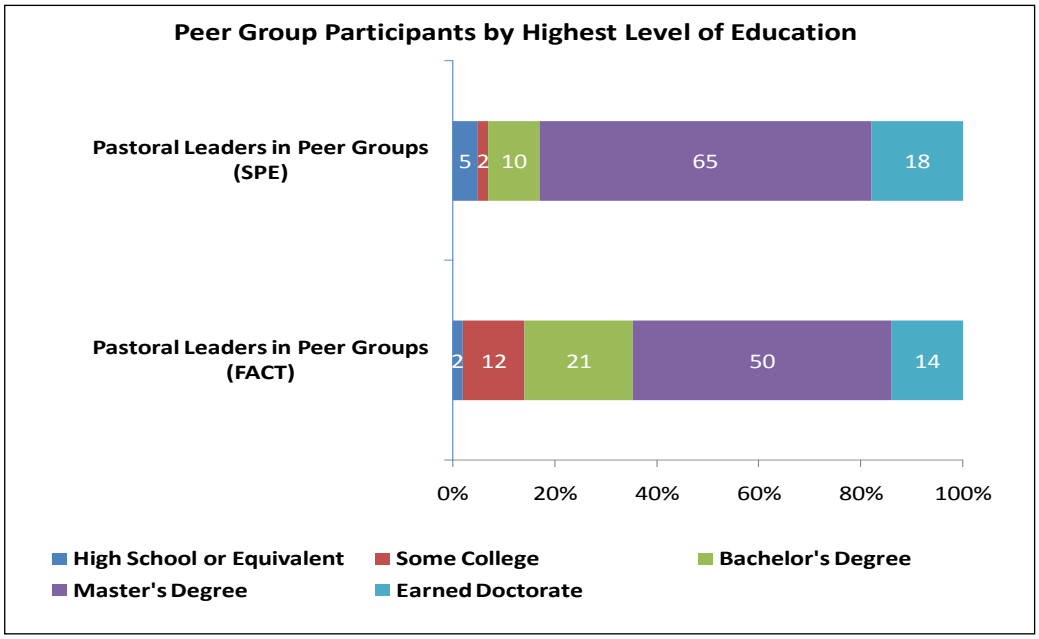
On the other hand, as shown in the chart below, there are significantly more female pastoral leaders in the SPE sample. In fact, there are nearly three times more female pastoral leaders.



As the next chart shows, the SPE sample also is more Mainline Protestant and better educated. Indeed, there are approximately twice as many Mainline Protestants in the SPE sample, and a quarter fewer conservative Protestants. There are three times more Roman Catholic and Orthodox respondents in the FACT sample. The other Christian and the non-Christian categories are also underrepresented in the SPE sample. The larger proportion of mainline Protestants may be partially explained by the fact that 51% of the SPE sponsor organizations of peer group programs are affiliated with Mainline Protestant denominations.[19] The Lilly Endowment, Inc. also has an historic interest in and connections with Mainline Protestant denominations and institutions.



Further, as we see below, SPE peer group respondents are better educated.



Over 80% of SPE pastoral leaders in peer groups have completed graduate degrees as compared to 64% in the FACT sample. This is consistent with a higher proportion of Mainline Protestant respondents and also not unexpected given the fact that 52% of the SPE sponsoring organizations are seminaries, divinity schools, universities, colleges or a partnership between a judicatory and a college or seminary. Finally, as noted above, in our model predicting peer group involvement, we discovered that women and mainline Protestants are much more likely to participate in such groups. For all these reasons, then, it is not surprising that the SPE peer group sample differs in these ways from the nationally-representative FACT sample of pastoral leaders with peer group experience.

How do SPE pastoral leaders compare, then, with a nationally-representative sample on peer group characteristics?[20] Not surprisingly, SPE peer groups have been meeting for fewer years; interestingly, they meet less often for longer periods.

As shown in the chart below, the average or mean number of years a pastoral leader has been in a peer group is 6 in the FACT sample. SPE pastoral leaders, as expected, report a shorter period of time in a peer group. FACT respondents also meet more frequently: FACT respondents meet an average of 14 times a year, and SPE participants, an average of 9.

Characteristics of Pastoral Leader Peer Groups	SPE (2008)	FACT (2008)
Mean # of years in group	2	6
Mean # of meetings per year	9	14
Mean # of hours per meeting	12	5
Median #	3	2

Pastoral leaders participating in SPE-initiated peer groups, on the other hand, meet for longer periods of time: a median of 3 hours per meeting and an average of 12. The intensity of meetings rather than the frequency is a key difference between group experiences. We know from our focus groups with project directors that many SPE groups are composed of persons who live more than an hour's drive from each other (in a few groups, members literally live across the country) and who

therefore tend to gather only a few times a year for retreats lasting several days or travel together for even longer periods of time. In addition, these groups often participate In conference calls and internet-based meetings between their face-to-face meetings.

In a comparison between FACT and SPE peer group respondents on other characteristics, we see that SPE groups have more agency, are less racially and ethnically diverse, are less focused on sharing ministry ideas as a primary group practice, and their congregations are more likely to contribute to group costs.

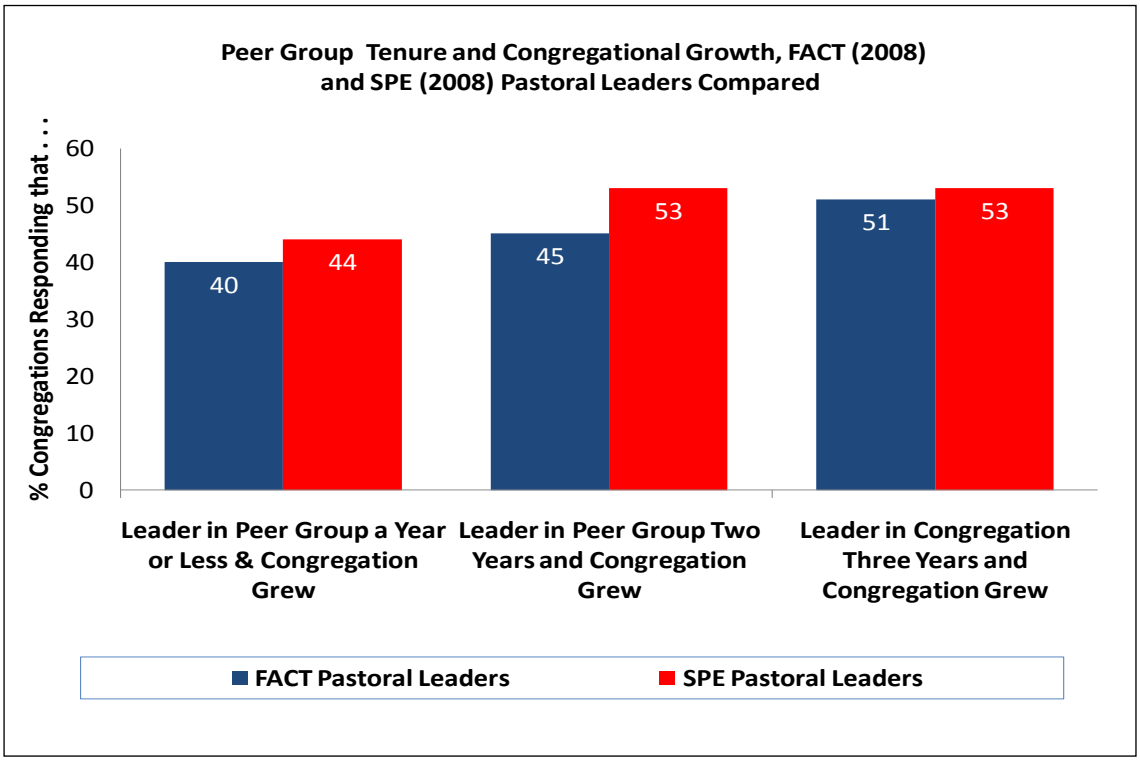
Characteristics of Pastoral Leader Peer Groups	SPE (2008) % responding "yes"	FACT (2008) % responding "yes"
Members make decisions about who belongs &/or what the groups does	90	51
Sponsor organization provides trained leaders &/or curriculum	46	45
Group includes persons of different races or ethnicities	44	57
Group includes persons of different denominations or faith traditions	38	35
Group's primary focus is sharing ideas & resources for ministry	66	79
Congregation contributes to the cost of participation in the groups	50	43

In fact, pastoral leaders in SPE peer groups are nearly twice as likely as FACT respondents to say that their members make decisions about who belongs and/or what the groups does. The very high level of group agency (90%) reported by pastoral leaders in SPE peer groups reflects the intentional incorporation of peer learning approaches. Even in SPE groups for whom a sponsor organization provides trained leaders and/or curriculum, group members still exercise a strong element of self-direction.[21]

The brief module on peer group characteristics in the FACT survey only included one option for a primary focus, "sharing ideas and resources for ministry," and a significantly higher proportion of pastoral leaders responded "yes" (79%) than did SPE respondents. As will be discussed below, SPE pastoral leaders reported a wide range of peer group practices beyond what might be considered typical for a pastoral leader peer group. Interestingly, "sharing ideas and resources" (66%) with each other was

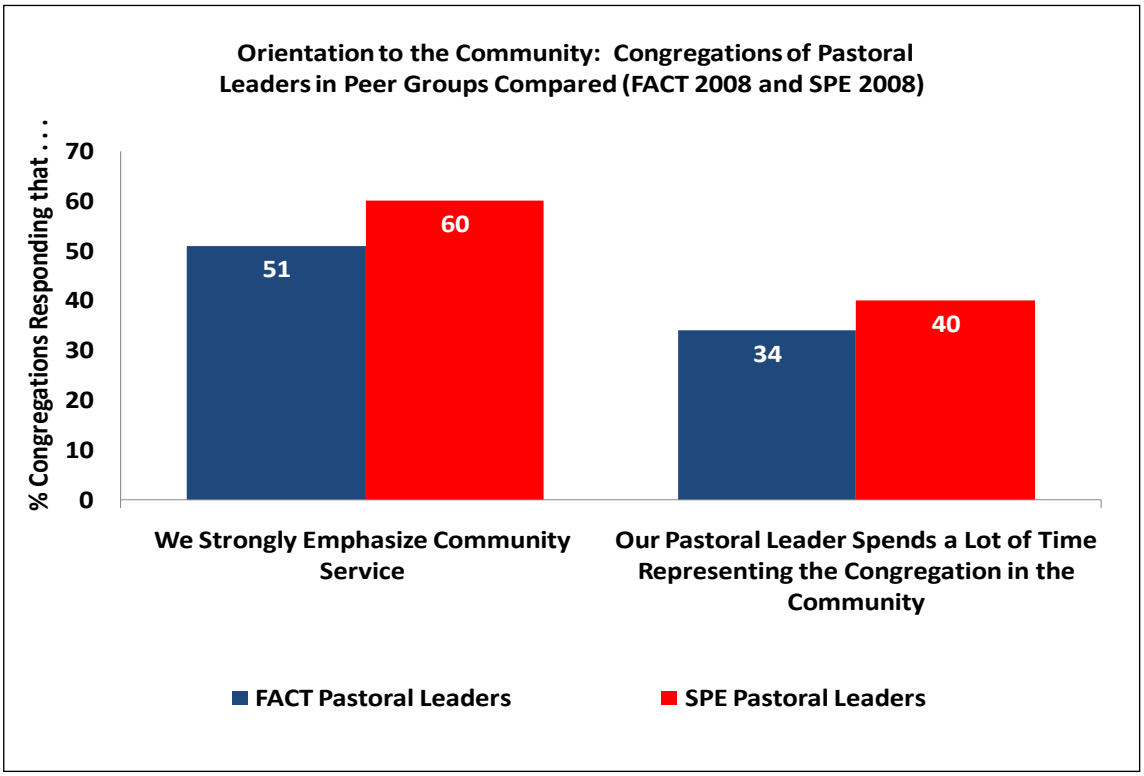
not as prevalent a focus as "sharing personal concerns and struggles" (83%) and "sharing and getting feedback on ministry problems or challenges" (80%) indicating, perhaps, a higher degree of trust among SPE participants. Their congregations also make a higher level of investment. SPE groups are more likely to report that their congregation contributes to the cost of participation in the groups. Finally, SPE pastoral leaders are significantly less likely to report that their group is diverse racially or ethnically, although they are similar in terms of denominational diversity.

Nearly 90% of SPE participants had been in groups for 3 years or less at the time of the survey. How do they compare with FACT group participants on numerical growth among their congregations?



As the chart above shows, a somewhat higher proportion of SPE than FACT pastoral leaders in peer groups for one year reported congregational growth; an even higher proportion of SPE pastoral leaders in peer groups for two years reported growth (close to 10 percentage points higher than FACT respondents). Finally, a slightly higher percentage of SPE pastoral leaders in peer groups for three years reported that their congregation grew. It is important to note that the SPE peer group trajectory in terms of the relationship between length of time spent in a group and congregational growth is similar to that observed among FACT pastoral leaders in peer groups. In fact, SPE results show an even stronger trend in the first two years. Since FACT results demonstrate that the greatest impact on congregational growth occurred for pastoral leaders with a history of four or more years in a peer group, this bodes well for the future of SPE pastoral leaders who continue their peer group involvement.

How do SPE and FACT pastoral leaders in peer groups compare in terms of the community (or in other words, "missional") involvement of their congregations?

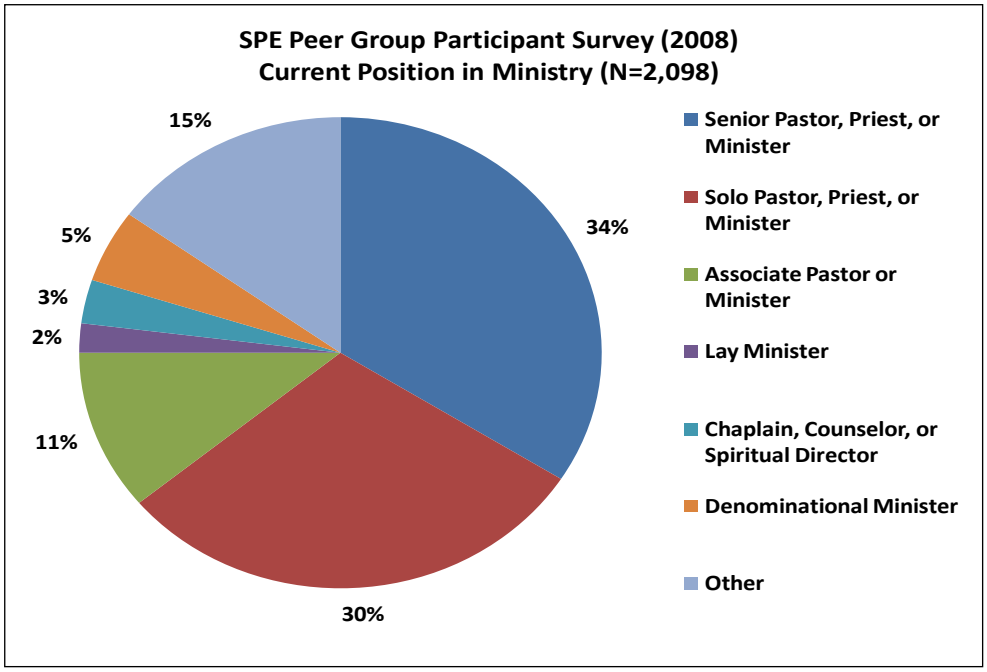


The congregations of SPE pastoral leaders in peer groups as compared to FACT respondents are more likely to emphasize community service. Their congregations also are more likely to report that the pastoral leader spends a lot of time representing the congregation in the community. Recall that in the FACT survey, congregations of pastoral leaders in a peer group were much more likely to report this kind of missional emphasis and activity than congregations whose pastoral leaders were NOT in a peer group. Further, the time that a pastoral leader spends representing the congregation in the community was one of the strongest predictors of peer group involvement in FACT. According to this nationally-representative survey therefore pastoral leaders without peer group experience do NOT spend a lot of time in community-related activity. That SPE peer group participants reported even higher levels of such community involvement than FACT participants lends confidence to our conclusion that SPE peer group efforts are especially effective.

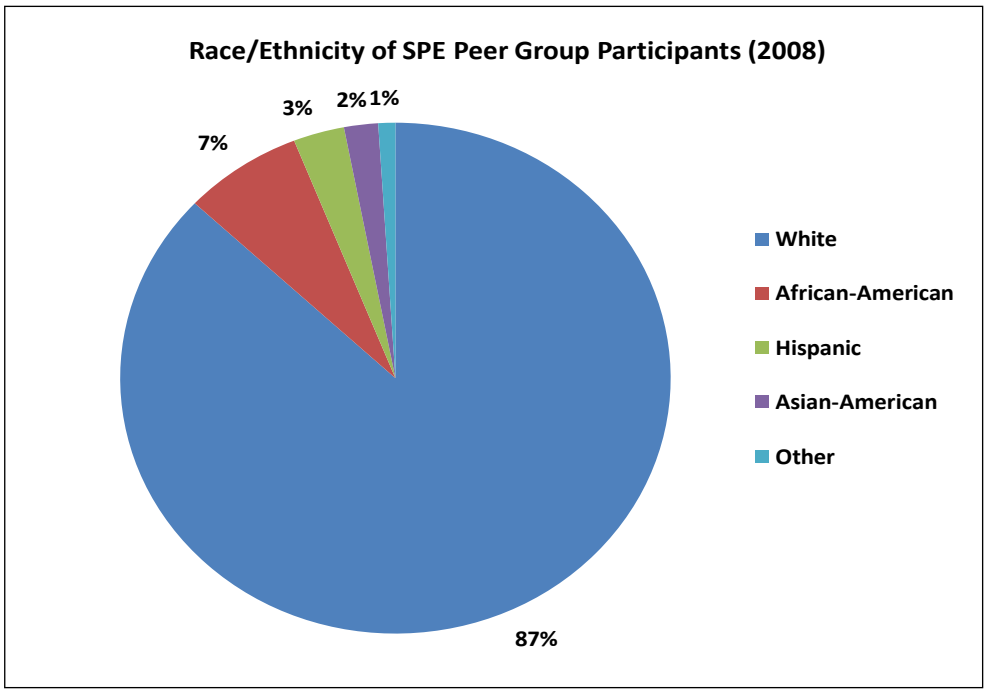
What Difference Does a Sustaining Pastoral Excellence Peer Group Make?

From FACT 2008, we know that peer group participation matters. From the SPE survey, we can go further and explore a range of participant and peer group characteristics. In the section above, we compared the responses of SPE and FACT peer group participants. Comparable respondents included SPE pastoral leaders in peer groups who said they were senior pastors, priests, or ministers; solo pastors, priests, or minister, associate pastors or ministers; and lay ministers.[22] The remainder is not

congregation-based: 23% report that they are chaplains, pastoral counselors or spiritual directors, denominational ministers or others. The chart below shows the range of participants in SPE projects. Their responses provide a more complete picture of the impact of peer groups on pastoral leaders themselves, on their congregations or other ministry settings, and their families.



As the next chart shows, the full sample of SPE respondents (2,098)—we know already—is predominantly mainline Protestant and mostly white.[23]



Only thirteen percent of the sample is non-white, including 7% African-American, 3% Hispanic, 2% Asian-American, and 1% other.

According to responses from SPE pastoral leaders in a peer group, the median group size is 8 persons (see the textbox below). A median of 4 "knew each other before" they joined a peer group; and a median of 5 report that they live within an hour's drive of other group members.[24] Close to half (44%) of SPE pastoral leaders in peer groups participated in conference calls or email discussions as a part of their group process. Ninety-seven percent say they have attended a majority or all group meetings, and 91% say the group is an important part of their continuing education in ministry.

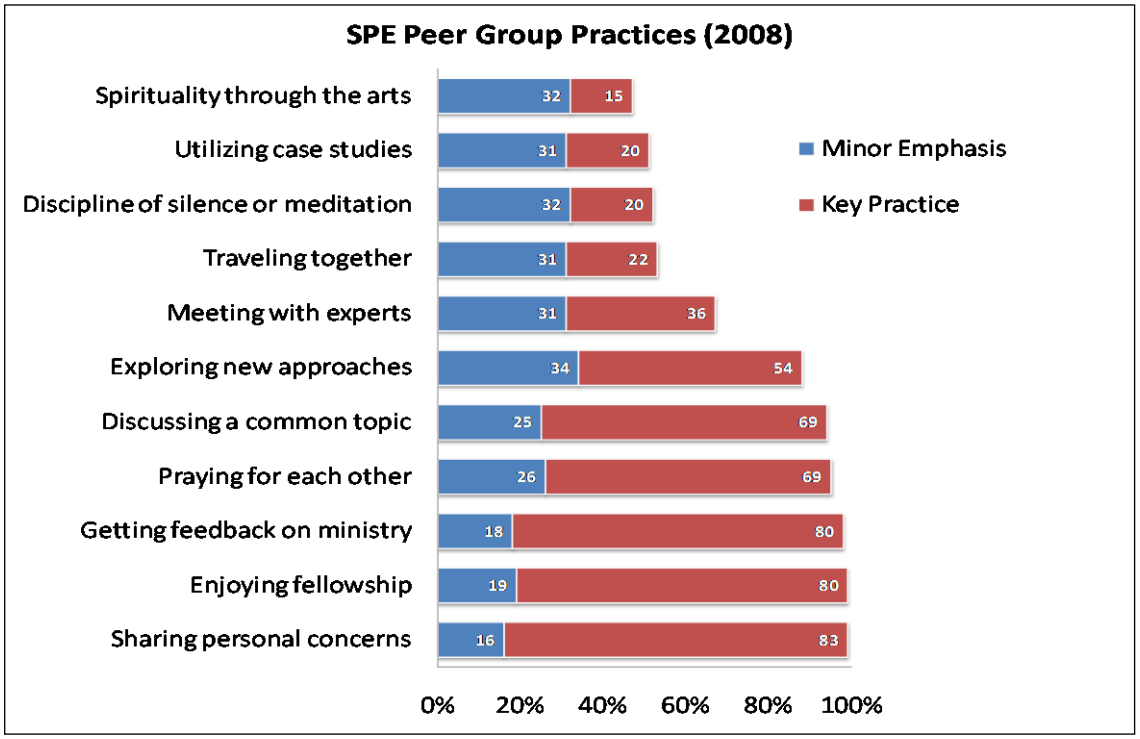
Interesting Facts about SPE Groups

- **Median SPE group size is 8**
- **44% of SPE peer group participants participated in conference calls or email discussions**
- **97% say they have attended a majority or all group meetings; 91% say the group is an important part of their continuing education in ministry**
- **70% met regularly with another small group over the past 10 years (52% of these say their SPE group is "better or much better")**
- **65% say their group continues to meet; 25% say their group no longer meets; & 10% say they have "officially ended" but continue to meet**

Seventy percent met regularly with another small group over the past 10 years. So SPE peer group participants do have a history of involvement in some kind of peer group. Over half of these say that their SPE group is "better or much better." Perhaps as evidence of the fact that these groups are valued highly, three-quarters of all SPE pastoral leaders report that their group continues to meet. Although it is important to note that the great majority of these (65%) do so with the support of a sponsor organization. Ten percent of SPE pastoral leaders in our sample report that their group continues to meet despite the fact that they have "officially ended."

As displayed in the chart below, the majority of SPE peer group practices include sharing personal concerns (83%), enjoying fellowship (80%), and sharing and getting feedback about ministry problems (80%).[25] Personal and ministry support and fellowship are therefore key components of SPE peer group experience. Praying for each other (69%), discussing a common topic (69%), and exploring new approaches to ministry (54%) are also important. It is interesting that a wide variety of intentional

spiritual, experiential, and intellectual practices are also either key or minor emphases in over half of SPE pastoral leader peer groups. Groups meet with experts, travel together, engage in a discipline of silence or meditation, utilize case studies, and express their spirituality through art, drama, and literature. And as we show below, some of these less conventional group practices directly affect a range of positive outcomes such as enhanced creativity, intimacy with God, and a peer group experience that is rated as "better or much better" than others. Pastoral leaders from our five representative SPE peer groups report these positive outcomes as being, "a reminder of my call to ministry," "water in a parched earth," "energy for the long haul," and "a light that I can share with others."



The SPE survey sample, as we have shown, differs greatly from FACT respondents as a result of a higher proportion of female pastoral leaders. So how do they differ from the men? In summary, the following tables show that female pastoral leaders in SPE peer groups are more likely to experience a "triple time-bind" in their personal and ministerial lives. Female pastoral leaders are much more likely to say that they join peer groups because they feel isolated in their ministries. They also tend to participate in SPE peer groups that are denominationally diverse. Much more frequently than men, they engage in group practices that focus on spirituality. And they are also more likely than male pastoral leaders to say that participation in their peer group helps them see the world in different ways and be better listeners.

Female pastoral leaders in peer groups, like male pastoral leaders, work in ministry careers; different from men, they are significantly more likely to spend time commuting to and from their jobs (see table below). Like many working women, female pastoral leaders in peer groups are much more

likely to spend time doing household chores than their male counterparts. Most female pastoral leaders are a minority presence in their denominations; and many are concentrated in smaller parishes in rural areas, small towns, and inner-urban areas.[26] This relative isolation from other pastoral leader peers in their day-to-day ministry may account for the fact that they are much more likely to spend 14 hours or more a week using the internet. Reflecting their generally pressured time schedule and raising the question of (perhaps) increased health risk is the fact that female pastoral leaders are less likely to engage in physical exercise.[27]

Hours spent in the last week spent. . .	Females % responding	Males % responding
Commuting to work (4 hours or more)	35	23
Doing household chores (7.5 hours or more)	40	25
Using the Internet (14 hours or more)	27	17
Engaging in physical exercise (4 hours or more)	36	45

As illustrated in the table on the next page, male pastoral leaders tend to participate in more traditional, structured, family and ministry-oriented peer groups. A peer group is an extension of and a support for their church and family life. Female pastoral leaders, on the other hand, are more likely to join a peer group as a response to a feeling of isolation in their ministry positions. Significantly more are single; and as before, their small and relatively isolated parishes make social, never mind collegial, support difficult. In fact, female pastoral leaders in SPE peer groups are more than 3 times likely to be never married and five times more likely to be separated or divorced.[28] Nevertheless, the majority of both are married (95% of men and 72% of women).

The kinds of SPE groups that female pastoral leaders join include all-women groups (from different denominations in the same community or the same denomination and geographically dispersed) and groups of men and women that tend to be interdenominational. Almost half (47%) of female pastoral leaders are in denominationally diverse peer groups; the majority of male pastoral leaders, on the other hand, are in peer groups with members from the same denominations (67%).[29] As we will show in the last section, denominational diversity directly predicts enhanced creativity as a

result of peer group involvement. Denominational diversity also is a key characteristic of a peer group that is rated as "better or much better" than others.

Characteristics of Pastoral Leader Peer Groups	Females % responding "yes"	Males % responding "yes"
A sponsor organization provides curriculum	26	36
Spouses or families are involved	15	28
Churches have worked together since the group began	53	64
Joined the group because "I was isolated in my ministry position"	57	49
Group includes persons of different denominations or faith traditions	47	33

Indeed, among a range of peer group characteristics, what predicts participation in a denominationally-diverse peer group for *both male and female pastoral leaders* are a lack of denominational pressure (and therefore more anonymity and safety), a recognized leader and a sponsor-delivered curriculum (some degree of structure), a focus on spiritual practices, and the twin outcomes of greater commitment to and energy for ministry.[30] In the absence of a common denominational culture, a diverse peer group requires a skilled facilitator and content of common interest for generating group cohesion. Such groups are more likely than homogeneous ones to experience some initial conflict. However, members of these heterogeneous groups are also more likely to report that group involvement has a strong, positive impact on their day-to-day ministry.[31]

Of course, surfacing and handling conflict is an expected stage in group formation. In the focus group interviews conducted with our five representative SPE peer groups, we discovered that a common theme across a diversity of SPE projects and group types was the importance of conflict. It was experienced at some point in the life of each group. Participants reported different methods for addressing and resolving conflict. Regardless of the method used, a sense of mutual respect and a new understanding of their group covenant and commitment emerged and provided foundations from which to work as they moved forward. These pastoral leaders stated that positive experiences of conflict resolution in their peer group inspired them to be bolder and more secure leaders. They also reported that participation in SPE peer groups helped them deal with conflict in their congregations.

SPE Group Practices & Outcomes	Females % responding	Males % responding
A discipline of silence or meditation (as a minor emphasis or key practice)	66	42
Spirituality through art, music, literature, or drama (as a minor emphasis or key practice)	61	42
A hunger for Scriptural study (present throughout group life)	33	46
Helps me see the world in different ways (very strongly agree)	31	22
Makes me a better listener (very strongly agree)	42	29

Shifting to SPE group peer group practices and outcomes, we see that female pastoral leaders tend to focus on spiritual and relational sustenance and support. For men, peer groups appear to meet more instrumental needs to improve ministerial skills or deepen scriptural knowledge. Further, the "take away's" from peer group participation for women seem to be about listening more deeply and cultivating a greater appreciation for different kinds of perspectives. In the case of women, enhanced spirituality, (inter)personal understanding and empathy are primary goals; in the case of men, the knowledge, skills, and collegial give-and-take required for increased ministerial competence seem most important.

Prescriptions for Sustaining Pastoral Excellence through Peer Groups

So, is the (peer group) treatment, the (pastoral excellence) cure? Our extensive SPE participant survey allows us to answer that question with some specificity and assurance. Following are five peer group "prescriptions" based on multivariate analysis of the SPE survey, specifically controlling for the impact of gender, denomination, and education. In all cases, we can say with a high degree of confidence that if a peer group has certain characteristics, it will: a) result in a feeling of renewal in a pastoral leader's ministry; b) have a positive impact on his or her family and close friends; c) lead to enhanced creativity; and/or d) produce greater intimacy with God. We also are able to identify specific SPE peer group factors that lead to a superior peer group—indeed, that contribute to higher evaluations of a peer group experience.

To formulate these prescriptions, we created the strongest possible model based on the survey data for predicting positive peer group outcomes. The model included items that measure a range of

characteristics including the gender, denomination, education and age of the participant; ***peer group characteristics*** like size, frequency and length of meetings, attendance, tenure, whether emails/conference calls are a regular part of group process, the presence/absence of a formal covenant, and whether the pastoral leader participated in other peer groups in the past 10 years; ***reasons to join a peer group*** such as desiring ministry improvement, feeling stuck in ministry, and knowing and trusting the sponsor organization; ***reasons to stay in a peer group*** like enjoying an intellectual challenge, recharging spiritual batteries, needing accountability, and desiring ministry improvement; ***peer group structure*** like group leadership (trained facilitator or leader and whether being "impressed by the leader" was a reason to stay in the group), predictability versus the spontaneity of group structure, and the group's curriculum (sponsor-delivered or self-directed); ***peer group composition and culture*** such as racial/ethnic and denominational diversity, group cohesion (feels like a family versus a loosely-knit association) and involvement (spouses or families are included); and ***peer group practices*** like sharing ideas and resources and exploring new approaches to ministry; practicing spiritual disciplines such as prayer, silence, meditation, and spiritual direction; traveling together; engaging in intentional biblical or theological reflection; expressing spirituality through art, drama, literature or music; and engaging in community service and teaching others to start similar groups.[32] We then used the same model to predict each of five different outcomes ranging from impact on the pastoral leader's ministry, personal life, spirituality, creativity, and comparative peer group experience. Definitive characteristics which directly affect each outcome are listed and discussed below.

To Renew Your Ministry

- **A high level of contact between group members (including meetings but especially emails/phone calls)**
- **A leader/facilitator who inspires confidence**
- **A group that provides accountability & practical help with some attention to intellectual challenge & spiritual refueling**
- **A group culture that is cohesive, "like a family"**
- **A group whose practices focus on ministry improvement through exploring innovative ideas & resources as well as sharing/getting feedback about personal & ministry problems**

What kind of peer group experience renews a pastoral leader's energy for and commitment to ministry?[33] Interestingly, a pastoral leader's age, gender, denomination, or education do not predict renewed ministry as an outcome of SPE peer group participation. As noted above, what does matter is a

peer group with a high level of contact between group members. This includes regular attendance at group meetings and, more importantly, the inclusion of emails and conference calls as a part of group process. The frequency and length of meetings do not matter; neither does the number of years members have participated. Whether the group has (or doesn't have) a formal covenant also doesn't matter.[34]

Further, it doesn't really matter why a pastoral leader joined a peer group although, interestingly, it helps a little if she or he did NOT join with the explicit desire to improve their ministry. What really matters is why they stay in the group. Pastoral leaders who report rejuvenated ministries stay in their SPE peer group for three important reasons: 1) the group provides accountability; 2) the group experience is a source of interest in and the means for improving their ministry (and this is a kind of happy surprise that they weren't looking for in the first place); and 3) the group's leader or facilitator impressed them. Secondary (statistically, much weaker) reasons for staying in a peer group with a ministry-renewal benefit include intellectual challenge and "recharging spiritual batteries."[35]

The degree of closeness of the peer group is the strongest predictor of renewed ministry among SPE pastoral leaders. A cohesive peer group culture, as reflected in high contact and accountability between members, is essential for leveraging personal support, ministry-related problem-solving, and innovation. Indeed, group practices that are especially recommended for renewing a pastoral leader's ministry are sharing resources and exploring innovative ideas as well as giving and getting feedback about personal concerns and ministry problems.[36]

In summary, SPE peer groups that renew their members' ministries provide a *stimulating mix of the practical, the intellectual, and the spiritual* along with a certain amount of "holding each others' feet to the fire" in terms of *accountability*. As with most peer-learning approaches, the wisdom and experience of the group itself is a key resource as is a good facilitator or leader. Peer group participants share ideas, trouble-shoot ministry problems, and provide pastoral feedback. They also explore new ideas and approaches to ministry. A balance is evident here: the kind of group that renews a pastoral leader's ministry appears to be about half, *personal support,* and about half, *ministry enrichment*.[37]

What kind of peer group experience has a positive impact on a pastoral leader's family and intimate friends?[38] Whereas gender, denomination, and education do not directly affect a pastoral leader's close family and friends, *age matters*. As we see in the textbox on the next page, pastoral leaders who report that peer group participation has a positive impact on their personal relationships are younger (45 years of age and younger). Other characteristics of peer groups such as size, frequency and length of meetings, and tenure don't matter. Regular attendance and a history of involvement in other small groups are somewhat important but they are not nearly as powerful as other elements of the group's culture, structure, and practices.[39]

For a Positive Impact on Family & Intimate Friends

- **Especially recommended for younger pastoral leaders**
- **An initial feeling that pastoral leaders are "stuck" in their ministry**
- **A group that is not highly structured but has a good facilitator**
- **A group that provides spiritual refueling**
- **A group that feels "like a family" and also involves families/spouses**
- **A group that focuses on intentional biblical/theological reflection & spiritual practices**

Younger pastoral leaders who realize a positive impact on their personal relationships were attracted to a peer group because *they felt "stuck" in their ministry*. No other motivations for joining peer groups predict this effect. The reason that these pastoral leaders stay in a peer group, however, is to *recharge their spiritual batteries*. Indeed, the group practices that strongly and positively affect a pastoral leader's personal relationships are engaging in *intentional biblical and theological reflection* and the *spiritual disciplines* of silence, prayer, and meditation. On the other hand, ministry support practices—such as discussing common topics, sharing ideas and resources, studying worship, and exploring new approaches to ministry—tend to negatively impact a pastoral leader's personal relationships.[40]

The kind of spiritual direction experienced in SPE peer groups that enrich a pastoral leader's personal life is *not highly structured*, although there may be a prescribed process, a competent facilitator and/or shared leadership. Further, the kind of peer group structure and practices necessary for positive impact on family and friends shapes and reinforces group cohesion. *A peer group that is "like a family" has the strongest direct affect on participants' own families.* And not surprisingly, peer groups that have a positive impact on the pastoral leader's relationship with those closest to him or her also tend to involve them in their corporate life.[41]

What kind of peer group enhances a pastoral leader's creativity? [42] Gender, denomination, and education do not matter but age does. As we see below, pastoral leaders whose experience in an SPE peer group enhances their creativity tend to be older (over 45 years of age) and perhaps in need of/ready for an intellectual and theological "stretch." Frequency and length of meetings, tenure, attendance, formal group covenants, or past small group involvement don't directly affect creativity one

way or another. The size of a peer group may be a bit larger but this effect is not very strong. Particular motivations for joining an SPE group also do not predict enhanced creativity.[43]

To Enhance Your Creativity

- **Especially recommended for older pastoral leaders**
- **A leader/facilitator who inspires confidence**
- **A group that is composed of persons from different denominations & is also "like a family"**
- **A group that provides intellectual challenge as a vehicle to ministry improvement**
- **A group whose practices focus on ministry improvement & intentional theological reflection with some attention to personal & ministerial problem-solving. Travel is important but not key.**

What does matter are a pastoral leader's reasons for staying in the group, the quality of group leadership, the character of group composition and culture, and most importantly, the focus of group practices. In SPE peer groups that enhance creativity, pastoral leaders stay for intellectual reasons rather than spiritual ones, and they emphasize ministry improvement rather than spiritual practices. That includes intentional biblical and theological reflection, although the goals of such reflection are more instrumental than spiritual or relational. Traveling together may also be a part of SPE peer group practice that enhances creativity among participants but it is not a key feature.[44]

The stimulus for creativity in these groups comes from three interrelated sources: a high-quality leader or facilitator and a membership that is denominationally diverse and also strongly cohesive. Denominational diversity, as discussed above, provides a measure of anonymity or safety as well as a variety of perspectives and resources. This kind of group composition also requires a skilled leader—often a trained facilitator—and a common focus in order to generate cohesion.[45] Further, as the prescription for enhanced creativity shares many characteristics of that for renewed ministry, it is expected that along with creativity a renewed energy for and commitment to ministry is also nourished. But if increased creativity is desired, of course, several key ingredients must be added beyond those prescribed for ministry renewal.

For Greater Intimacy with God

Group characteristics like size, frequency and length of meetings, tenure, attendance & composition don't matter nor do motivations for joining but a group must . . .

- **Provide spiritual fuel, practical help for ministry, & accountability**
- **Be close, flexible, and have a good facilitator/leader**
- **Focus primarily on spiritual practices (prayer, meditation, and/or spiritual direction) and include intentional biblical and/or theological reflection**

What kind of peer group experience leads to greater intimacy with God?[46] This prescription has fewer ingredients and can easily be added to prescriptions for renewed ministry and enhanced creativity. And because it shares many characteristics of the prescription for positive impact on family and intimate friends, it is clear that the two go hand-in-hand. Indeed, for younger pastoral leaders who are feeling stuck in their ministries, SPE peer groups that impact their personal relationships positively also increase their intimacy with God. The two work together for the best result.

For greater intimacy with God, the gender, denomination, education, and age of the pastoral leader do not matter. Group characteristics like size, the frequency and length of meetings, attendance, tenure, and composition don't matter nor do motivations for joining a group. However, reasons for staying in the group matter quite a bit with "recharging my spiritual batteries" being most important followed by "I am always looking to improve my ministry" and "I need an accountability group." The kind of group structure that is necessary includes a good leader and flexibility. A group culture marked by strong cohesiveness is also vital.[47] Finally, practices like silence, prayer, meditation, and biblical and/or theological reflection are critical. Ministry support and expressing spirituality through art, music, literature, or drama may be practiced in the group but they are of lesser importance.[48] Like the prescription for positive impact on personal relationships for younger pastoral leaders, this prescription (for anyone) reflects pastoral leader experience in SPE groups that include spiritual direction as a primary or secondary focus.[49]

For a Superior Pastoral Leader Peer Group Experience

If you want to ensure that your SPE group experience is "better or much better" than other peer group experiences . . .

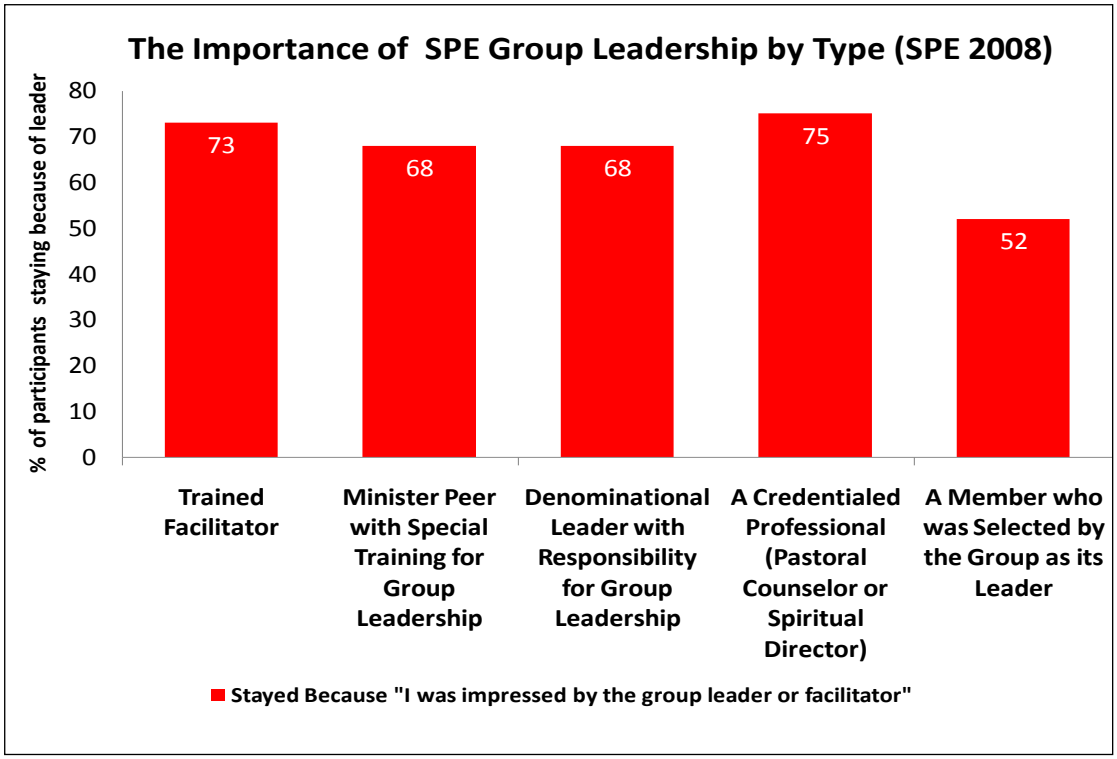
- **The group meetings should be regularly attended**
- **The group process should be guided by a formal covenant**
- **The group should have a high-quality leader or facilitator**
- **The group should be denominationally diverse**
- **The group should provide intimacy & accountability**
- **The group's practices should include expressing spirituality in creative ways, e.g. through art, music, literature or drama**

Finally, we asked pastoral leaders to compare their experience in an SPE group with other small group experiences (if any) in the past ten years. This makes it possible for us to explore what characteristics predict a superior peer group experience.[50] The results are tantalizing, if not definitive.[51] SPE peer group experiences that are rated as "better or much better" than other group experiences have a high level of attendance, a formal covenant or group guidelines, quality leadership, and a membership that is denominationally diverse, close, and accountable to each other. Moreover, superior SPE group practices focus on expressing spirituality in creative ways. These characteristics, indeed, set SPE groups apart. They reflect strong group commitment, a clear and well-managed structure, a diversity of perspectives, greater intimacy and trust, and innovative practice.[52]

Interestingly, although gender, age, and education don't predict a superior pastoral leader peer group experience, denomination does. In this sample, Conservative Protestant, Roman Catholic or Orthodox, and other Christian participants who are involved in peer groups rate their SPE experience as superior by all measures. Mainline Protestant pastoral leaders in SPE groups do not, which means that other group experiences available to them are better or their SPE groups are weaker despite a similar comparison pool.[53]

As our prescriptions show, *if a pastoral leader stayed in an SPE peer group because she or he was impressed by the group leader or facilitator* is a strong predictor of positive outcomes. This is especially true for predicting a superior peer group experience and also is important for renewed ministry and creativity. The quality of a leader or facilitator is much less important for a peer group experience that has a positive impact on family and intimate friends. But what kind of peer group leader or facilitator is rated as best? Our initial focus groups with SPE project leaders surfaced a variety of

leader or facilitator types. The chart below shows the relationship between pastoral leaders' responses to the types which best describe their peer group leader and whether or not the participants stayed in the group because they were impressed by that individual.



Clearly, there is a high level of adjudged quality across group leader types, especially those with training in group facilitation or recognized credentials in pastoral counseling or spiritual direction. Even group leaders selected from among members themselves are slightly more likely to respond that they stayed in their SPE peer group because they were impressed by that leader. Overall, 87% of SPE respondents say that their group had a designated leader or facilitator. The largest proportion of leader types is found among those with less specialized training. Forty percent of SPE respondents say their leader is a minister peer with special training; 18% say their leader is a denominational minister with group responsibility; and 23% say their leader was selected from within the group. Twenty-nine percent of SPE participants say their leader is a trained facilitator, and 13% say a credentialed professional. [54]

We analyzed SPE peer group leadership in more detail in a chapter entitled "Peer Groups Matter: Leadership, Composition, and Cost," in ***A Lifelong Call to Learn: Continuing Education for Religious Leaders*** (Alban Institute, 2010). Consistent with our prescriptions for renewed ministry, peer group characteristics strongly associated with a trained facilitator include a desire for accountability, high quality leadership, some structure, and diverse practices with an instrumental focus. Peer groups that are highly self-determined tend to focus on relational needs, have shared leadership and curricular autonomy, and travel together. Combinations of the two occur, and when they do, some of the benefits of both are present.[55]

The 2008 FACT and SPE surveys focus on pastoral leaders in peer groups who are active in congregations or other ministry-related settings. The only other large-scale study of men and women pastoral leaders that included a question about pastoral leader "support groups" was conducted in 1994 by Zikmund, Lummis, and Chang. Surveying over 5,000 ordained persons from 15 U.S. denominations, these researchers concluded that clergy men and clergy women "who participate in a clergy support group are very unlikely to consider leaving church-related work."[56] The results of our surveys shed much more light on how and why this may be the case.

In summary, our findings confirm the importance of peer groups for pastoral leaders themselves, their families and intimate friends, and their congregations. Involvement in peer groups both reflects and shapes participatory and missional congregations. Quite surprisingly, a history of participation in a peer group is related to numerical growth in a pastoral leader's congregation. Perhaps less surprising, women pastoral leaders are attracted to and participate in SPE peer groups for some different reasons and in different ways than men. Relational and spiritual foci and practices in a less-structured group context seem especially important for women, denominationally-diverse groups, and younger pastoral leaders. Pastoral leaders with more instrumental interests and who engage in group activities that employ intellectual challenge as a vehicle for ministry improvement, on the other hand, tend to be older. And it is a healthy balance of relational, spiritual, and instrumental interests and peer group practices, in the end, that yields renewed energy for and commitment to ministry for any pastoral leader. Further, as we have seen, quality leadership in a peer group matters across-the-board for positive ministry outcomes.

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[1] D. Bruce Roberts, "Motivated Learning and Practice: A Peer Group Model," in ***A Lifelong Call to Learn: Approaches to Continuing Education for Church Leaders***, eds. Robert Reber and D. Bruce Roberts (Nashville: Abingdon, 2000); D. Bruce Roberts and Robert Reber, "Indiana Clergy Peer Group Study Program: Final Report and Evaluation" (report, Christian Theological Seminary, 2007); D. Bruce Roberts, "Motivated Learning and Practice: A Peer Group Model" and "Energizing, Supporting, and Sustaining Religious Leaders through Peer Learning Groups," in ***A Lifelong Call to Learn: Continuing Education for Religious Leaders***, eds. Robert Reber and D. Bruce Roberts (Herndon, Virginia: Alban Institute, 2010).

[2] "Theological Depth, Creativity, and Ministry Impact among Clergy Peer Group Participants," ***Review of Religious Research*** 49, no. 4 (2006).

[3] In 2008, we conducted a statistical clustering procedure on the preliminary results of the SPE participant survey, employing 8 variables suspected to discriminate between peer group participants. They included age of the respondent; their religious denomination; the extent to which the respondent's group engaged in theological reflection and practical study *or* spiritual practice and personal support; the extent to which a respondent's groups included persons of other denominations or other races/ethnicities; whether the respondent's group had a designated leader or facilitator, and if they did, whether the group chose its own leader or the leader (or facilitator) was appointed; and whether a sponsoring organization provided a curriculum for the respondent's group. Four clusters were identified.

Clusters 2 and 3, on any and all other measures of peer group effectiveness, do "better" than clusters 1 and 4. These clusters, moreover, differ in terms of age (2 is younger and 3 is older), in terms of leadership (3 is much more likely to have an appointed leader rather than no leader or a group-chosen leader), and in terms of whether

the sponsor organization provides a curriculum (3 is more structured in this regard than 2). Further, the extent to which both clusters "do better" seems tied to what the group does: both clusters are associated with higher levels of theological study and spiritual practice. Since our goal was to produce instructional "how-to's" for general use, a deeper analysis of different transformational group types was desired.

Using the cluster procedure itself, then, we were able to identify respondents from particular SPE peer group projects in clusters 2 and 3. Five groups were chosen with special attention to diversity in terms of region and denomination. From cluster 2, we selected (and recruited) SPE projects and an identified peer group from the Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and Austin Presbyterian Seminary in Austin, Texas. From cluster 3, we selected (and recruited) three projects and identified SPE peer groups from the Church of God Seminary in Cleveland; Tennessee, Seattle University in Seattle, Washington; and Lott Carey Foreign Mission Convention, Washington, D.C. .

Among the peer groups selected there is denominational, regional, and racial diversity. There is also a diversity of peer group approaches ranging from groups with trained facilitators to groups without designated leaders; groups with a sponsor-delivered content and/or process curriculum (such as group spiritual direction or cross-cultural immersion) and groups who determine their own learning plan/curriculum; and groups that are homogeneous, denominationally and/or racially, as well as groups that are heterogeneous, denominationally and/or racially.

[4]A variety of research reports and other documents related to the SPE Peer Group Study can be found at www.austinseminary.edu/cpl .

[5]In the midpoint of the spring (2008) administration of the SPE peer group participant survey, we were asked to include another Endowment supported peer group project that was not a part of the SPE-initiated programs. Their data were included in the first omnibus statistics report that participating SPE projects received. For this analysis, however, they are excluded in order to provide the best portrait of SPE-related work.

[6]C. Kirk Hadaway and Penny Long Marler, "How Many Americans Attend Worship Each Week? An Alternative Approach to Measurement," ***Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*** 44, no. 3 (2005).

[7]The items are responses to the following question in the FACT 2008: "Once a person has begun attending your congregation, what procedures are used to help that person become integrated and accepted into the life of the congregation?" Respondents checked all that applied. The items that correlated significantly with the pastoral leader's participation in a peer group were "Newcomers are asked to participate in a class for new members or participants" (r=.082, p<.000); "Invitation to participate in worship (reading, singing, taking up offering, etc.)" (r=.102. p<.000); "Invitation to participate in community service" (r=.151, p<.000); "Invitation for service to the congregation (serving on boards, committees, task forces, etc.)" (r=.127, p<.000).

[8]The item is a response to the following question in the FACT 2008: "Do the same people tend to serve in volunteer leadership roles year after year or does your congregation rotate volunteer service among a larger group of people?" Possible responses included, "The same people tend to serve"; "Although there is some rotation, it tends to be among a limited group of people"; and "We have a lot of rotation among persons in volunteer leadership roles." The correlation between this item and the pastoral leader's participation in a peer group is statistically significant (r=.108).

[9]The items are responses to the following question in FACT 2008: "Does your congregation have the following activities for youth?" The items that correlated significantly with the pastoral leader's participation in a peer group were "Youth minister or other leader who coordinates activities for youth" (r=.079; p<.000); "Youth retreats, conferences, or camps" (r=.075; p<.000); "Congregational events planned or led by youth" (r=.106; p<.000); "Youth serving on congregation's governing committees or boards" (r=.147, p<.000).

[10]The items are responses to 3 questions in FACT 2008 and all are correlated significantly with the pastoral leader in a peer group. The first is "Do you agree or disagree that . . . our congregation is a force for positive change in our community?" (The response ranges from strongly disagree to strongly agree and the percentage in the bar chart reflects the sum of responses to "somewhat agree" and "strongly agree"; r=.101; p<.000). The second item is "During the past 12 months, did your congregation conduct any of the following programs or activities? If yes, how much emphasis or attention is given to the activity? Was it some emphasis, a lot of emphasis, or is the activity a specialty of your congregation (something you are known for?)" (The percentage in the bar chart reflects the sum of responses to "a lot of emphasis" and "specialty of the congregation"; r==.086; p<.000). The third question is "how much time and attention dos your leader spend on . . . "Representing the congregation in the community?" (The response ranges from "very little" to "a great deal" and the percentage in the bar chart reflects the sum of the two highest responses, "quite a bit" and "a great deal"; r=.087; p<.000).

[11] The items are responses to 2 questions in FACT 2008 and both are correlated significantly with the pastoral leader in the peer group. The first is "Does your congregation provide financial support for your leader to participate in continuing education or training?" (r=-.205; p<.000). The second is "Does your congregation or denomination require your leader to participate in continuing education or training on an annual basis?" (r=-.203; p<.000). The pastoral leader question is coded, "Yes=1" and "No=0" and the other 2 items, "Yes=1" and "No=2."

[12]The characteristics listed in the table are the result of a logistic regression model since the dependent variable is dichotomous. All variables from the FACT 2008 in the model were recoded as dichotomous and they included: pastoral leader participated in a peer group in the past five years (0=did not participate; gender (male=0); age (0=45 and under); education (0=bachelor degree or less); rural/urban location (0=rural village or small town); impact of population mobility (0=population mobility is not a problem); size of congregation (average attendance of 150 or less); theological conservatism (of congregation within its denomination) (0=right in the middle to liberal); new member assimilation through service (0=do not use invitation for service to the congregation or community); volunteer leadership rotation (0=same people tend to serve in leadership roles); emphasis on support groups (0=do not have support groups); emphasis on fellowship (0=no fellowships or only some emphasis on fellowship); financial support for continuing education (0=no financial support for continuing education); continuing education requirement (0=continuing education is not required); salary and benefits (0=staff salary and benefits 30% or less of total budget); clergy tenure in congregation (0=6 years or less); time spent in administration (0=little or only some time spent in administration, supervision, and committees); time spent representing congregation (0=little or only "some" time spent representing the congregation in the community); time spent organizing/leading small groups (0=little or only some time spent organizing/leading small groups). The number of cases is 1,569 and the Nagelkerke R Square is .194, indicating that the model explains approximately 20 percent of the variance in the dependent.

[13] The strongest predictors in the model were: the time the pastoral leader spends in administration (odds ratio=2.00; p<.000); the time the pastoral leader spends representing the congregation in the community (odds ratio=1.77; p<.000); continuing education required (odds ratio=1.66; p<.000); financial support for continuing education (odds ratio=1.54; p<.000); volunteer leadership rotation (odds ratio=1.52; p<.000); emphasis on support groups (odds ratio=1.50; p<.000); and new member assimilation through service (odds ratio=1.38; p<.000).

[14]The same logistic regression model was repeated with each of the predictors as dependents and pastoral leader in a peer group as an independent. In each case, pastoral leader in a peer group predicted these characteristics strongly and significantly, which demonstrates their mutually-reinforcing effects, e.g. experience in a pastoral leader peer group both predicts and is predicted by a culture of involvement in a congregation among other characteristics.

[15]Leader and congregation controls that predict pastoral leader in a peer group, even when other factors are considered, included gender (odds ratio=2.13; p<.000 but Wald is 8.5 which is lower than other variables in the model); age (odds ratio=1.20; p<.05); and theological conservatism (odds ratio=.67; p<.000).

[16] Attendance was used in FACT 2008 to measure growth because membership and adherence rates are fraught with problems due to inflated membership rolls and differing criteria for being counted. Attendance is an objective measure: one is either there to be counted or one is not. The procedure used to create the growth measure therefore was used in order to reduce the statistical impact of large percentage changes among small congregations and because of the recognition that church statistics are often not of the highest quality.

[17]A linear regression model was created which included the following items from FACT 2008: attendance change: 5 year % change in average weekend worship attendance (5 categories); leader's age in years; leader's gender (0=male; 1=female); education dummied variable (0=bachelor's or less); year congregation officially founded; denomination dummied variable (0=Conservative Protestant and Historic Black; all other=1); urban/rural location dummied variable (large town through downtown of a large city=0); a sponsoring organization provides trained leaders and/or curriculum for clergy group (1=yes; 2=no); years the small clergy group has met (6-category recode: 0-5 years=low); year individual became leader of the congregation; time leader spends doing evangelism and training lay leaders (2 item scale); age of members: % of members age 65 or older; congregation is described as welcoming to newcomers in worship ("not at all" to "very well"); youth ministry scale (additive scale combining youth minister, organized youth group, youth retreats and camps; Alpha=.804); extent members involved in recruitment ("not at all" to "a lot"); population in area stable or declining makes attracting new people difficult ("not at all" to "quite a bit"); conflict scale (conflict over finances, worship, leadership, program, use of facilities, actions of judicatory); and congregational dynamism scale (an additive scale combining rated characteristics such as exciting, vital and alive, clear mission and purpose; Alpha=.704). The total cases were 1,257 (the reduced number of cases are a function of responses to follow up questions about the pastoral leader's peer group). The adjusted R square was .218. The model explained approximately 22% of the variance in the dependent.

[18]The strongest predictors in the model were: involvement of the congregation in recruitment (b=.14; p<.000); youth ministry scale (b=.14; p<.000); age of members (b=-.13; p<000.); conflict scale (b=-.13; p<.000); years peer group met (b=.11; p<.000); congregational dynamism scale (b=.09; p<.01); and sponsoring organization provides leader/facilitator and/or curriculum for peer group (b=-.08; p<.000). Controls that remain significant include the leader's age (45 years or younger) and tenure in the congregation (six years or less).

[19]According to SPE project directors with peer group programs (n=31), 51% are affiliated with Mainline Protestant denominations (Presbyterian, U.S.A., United Church of Christ, Disciples of Christ, American Baptist Churches, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, United Methodists, Church of the Brethren, Reformed Church of America, and Cumberland Presbyterian); 16% are affiliated with Conservative Protestant groups (Southern Baptist, Missionary Baptist, Church of God, Anderson, Church of God, Cleveland, and Christian Reformed Church); 13% are affiliated with Roman Catholic institutions; and 19% are inter or non-denominational.

[20]The module of questions on peer groups in the FACT included the question on group participation, "Has your principal leader met regularly with other ministers or pastoral leaders in a small group for continuing education and support in the last 5 years? (If more than one small group, respond about the group in which your leader was most involved)." Follow-up questions, if yes, included "how long has your leader participated in that group?" (years/months written-in) and "the group met/meets _____ times a year for an average of _____ hours per meeting" and, finally, "does/did the group have the following characteristics?" (including "members make decisions about who belongs and/or what the group does"; "a sponsoring organization (denomination, seminary, etc.) provides trained leader and/or curriculum"; "the group includes persons of different races or ethnicities"; "the group includes persons of different denominations or faith traditions"; "the group's primary focus is sharing ideas and resources for effective ministries"; and "our congregation contributes to the cost of participation in the group"). Because of space constraints, several items about group structure and process that are asked separately in the SPE version were combined in FACT (see replicated items in the SPE survey attached, Section One, "Your Peer Group Participation," items 1., 2., 3. a.-c. , e., and f. Item on congregational contribution is also in Section One, items 12. f. and 21. b.)

[21]In response to the question "How would you describe the content and structure of your SPE groups? (check all that apply)" 84% of participating SPE project directors checked "peer learning" model among and in addition to a number of other approaches to group-based education. The second and third most chosen approaches included "group spiritual direction" (34%) and "reflective practice" (31%). A full report of questions and responses is available at www.austinseminary.edu/cpl.

[22]Section Two, "Your Work in Ministry," item 1. (See SPE survey attached).

[23] Section Seven, "Your Personal Background," items 3. and 4. (See SPE survey attached).

[24] Section One, "Your SPE Group Participation," items 10. and 11. (See SPE survey attached).

[25] Section One, "Your SPE Group Participation," Item 12. a.-r. (See SPE survey attached).

[26]For a discussion of differential geographic placement based on a survey of over 5,000 ordained men and women, see: Barbara Brown Zikmund, Adair Lummis, and Patricia Mei Yin Chang, ***Clergy Women: An Uphill Calling*** (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox, 1998).

[27]Section Five, "Your Health and Well-Being," item 4. a., c., d., and g. (See SPE survey attached).

[28]Eleven percent of women versus 3% of men report they are never married; 11% of women and 2% of men say they are separated or divorced.

[29]The correlation between gender and a denominationally-diverse peer group is statistically significant (r=-.126).

[30] For a summary of the impact of a diverse group composition, see: Penny Long Marler, "Peer Groups Matter: Leadership, Composition, and Cost" in ***A Lifelong Call to Learn: Continuing Education for Religious Leaders***, eds. Robert Reber and D. Bruce Roberts (Herndon, Virginia: Alban Institute, 2010), pp. 109-112.

[31]Group conflict is an additive scale (Alpha=.537) of responses to items 15. r. and 15. p., Section One "Your SPE Group Participation." The correlation between conflict and a denominationally-diverse peer group is statistically significant (r=.98; p<.000). Positive impact is an additive scale of responses to items 17 a. through e., Section One "Your SPE Group Participation." The correlation between positive impact and a denominationally-diverse peer group also is statistically significant (r=.128; p<.000). See SPE survey attached.

[32] The resulting regression model included 7 blocks of independent variables in the categories detailed. The variables and scales included: 1) *pastoral leader controls* included the year the pastoral leader was born, their highest educational qualification, and gender (all items can be found in Section Seven, "Your Personal Background" in the SPE survey), denomination (see Section Six, 7 "Your Faith and Ministry Background" in the SPE survey) was coded as mainline Protestant (1) and other (0); 2) *peer group background characteristics* (see Section One, "Your SPE Peer Group Participation" for all items and their response categories) included years participated in an SPE-initiated group, number of times a year the group meets, average number of hours per meeting, frequency of attendance at group meetings, total number of persons in group, group participation in conference calls or email discussions, whether group had a formal covenant/group guidelines, whether respondent has met regularly with other small groups in the past ten years; 3) *motivations for joining an SPE-initiated peer group* (see Section One, "Your SPE Peer Group Participation" for all items and response categories) included knowing and trusting the sponsor organization, feeling stuck in ministry, and always looking to improve ministry; 4) *motivations for staying in an SPE-initiated peer group* (see Section One, "Your SPE Peer Group Participation" for all items and response categories) included enjoying an intellectual challenge, needing an accountability group, desiring to recharge spiritual batteries, and always looking to improve ministry; 5) *peer group structure* (see Section One, "Your SPE Peer Group Participation" for all items and response categories) included whether the group has a designated

leader or facilitator, how self-directed the group is (computing responses to question about members deciding who belongs in the group and what the group does), the extent to which one stays in the group because the leader impresses, whether a sponsoring organization provides a curriculum, and whether the group meetings are structured or unstructured; 6) *peer group composition and culture* (see Section One, "Your SPE Peer Group Participation" for all items and response categories) included whether the group feels like a family or a loosely knit association of individuals, whether spouse or families are involved in peer group activities, whether the group includes persons of different races/ethnicities, and whether the group includes persons of different denominations or faith traditions; 7) *peer group practices* (see Section One, "Your SPE Peer Group Participation" for all items and response categories) included a ministry support scale (a scale summing responses to these practices: discussing a common topic, sharing ideas and resources, studying worship, and exploring new approaches to ministry, Alpha=.625), a "getting feedback on persons and ministry problems" scale (a scale summing responses to these practices: sharing and getting feedback on ministry problems and sharing personal concerns, Alpha=.601), a spiritual practices scale (a scale summing responses to these practices: engaging in silence/meditation, praying for each other, and seeking spiritual direction together, Alpha=.588), a service to and teaching others scale (a scale summing responses to these practices: engaging in community service and teaching others to start similar groups, Alpha=.573), and the single items, expressing spirituality through art, music, literature, or drama, engaging in intentional biblical and theological reflection, engaging in travel together, and enjoying fellowship with each other.

[33]The "renew ministry" variable is an additive scale which includes responses to items from Section One, "Your SPE Peer Group" (see the attached survey for wording and responses). Items include "makes you a better pastor," "gives you new energy for ministry," "renews your commitment to ministry," "is a lot of fun," "makes you accountable," and "is something you will need for years to come." (Alpha=.843).

[34]The final regression model on "renew ministry" included the seven blocks of independent variables discussed in footnote 33 above. In the final model, none of the pastoral leader controls independently affected the dependent. Peer group characteristics including the frequency of attendance at meetings (b=.074; p<.004) and whether the group participated in conference calls or email discussions (b=.079; p<.004) directly affected the renewal of ministry for SPE peer group participants.

[35]Final statistics in the model on "renew ministry" for direct effects of motivations to join, motivations to stay, and peer group structure included: as a reason to join "I am always looking to improve my ministry" (b=-.078; p<.02); as reasons to stay "I need an accountability group" (b=.173; p<.000), "I am always looking to improve my ministry" (b=.162; p<.000), and "my spiritual batteries need recharging" (b=.078; p<.003); and "I was impressed by the group leader" (b=.110; p<.000).

[36]Final statistics in the model on "renew ministry" for direct effects of peer group composition and culture and peer group practices included: "the group feels like a family or feels like a loosely-knit association of individuals" (b=-.289; p<.000); ministry support scale (b=.088; p<.004); getting feedback on personal and ministry problems scale (b=.098; p<.000); and expressing spirituality through art, music, literature, or drama (b.=.054; p<.05).

[37] Adjusted R square =.406. The model, then, explains approximately 40% of the variance in the dependent.

[38] Positive Impact on Family and Friends is an additive scale which includes responses to 3 items from the "To what extent has your_____ been affected by your SPE Peer Group involvement" subsection (scaled 1-5 from little to no effect to very positively). Items include "your children," "your spouse," and "your intimate friends" (Alpha=.788). Items can be found in Section One, "Your SPE Peer Group," survey attached.

[39] The final regression model on "positive impact on family and friends" included the seven blocks of independent variables discussed in footnote 33 above. In the final model, one pastoral leader control independently affected the dependent: year born (b=.092; p<.003). The peer group characteristic—frequency of attendance (b=.061; p<.05)—directly affected the renewal of ministry for SPE peer group participants in the final model.

[40]Final statistics in the model on "positive impact on family and friends" for direct effects of motivations to join, motivations to stay, and peer group structure included: as a reason to join "I felt stuck in my ministry" (b=.086; p<.005); as a reason to stay "my spiritual batteries need recharging" (b=.086; p<.009); "meetings are structured and predictable or unstructured and spontaneous" (b=.096; p<.002); "a sponsoring organization provides a curriculum" (b=.088; p<.01), and as a reason to stay "I am impressed by the leader" (b=.080; p<.01).

[41] Final statistics in the model on "positive impact on family and friends" for direct effects of peer group composition and culture and peer group practices included: "the group feels like a family or feels like a loosely-knit association of individuals" (b=-.155; p<.000); "spouses or families are involved" (b=.099; p<.002); "group engages in intentional theological reflection" (b=.107; p<.003); spiritual practices scale (b=.087; p<.01); ministry support scale (b=-.086; p<.02). Adjusted R square =.324. The model, then, explains approximately 32% of the variance in the dependent.

[42] Creativity is an additive scale which includes responses to items from Section One, "Your SPE Peer Group" (scaled 1-5 from strongly disagree to strongly agree). Items include "helps you see the world in different ways," "exposes you to fresh ideas," and "stretches you" (Alpha=.694).

[43]The final regression model on "creativity" included the seven blocks of independent variables discussed in footnote 33 above. Final statistics for direct effects of pastoral leader controls, peer group characteristics and reasons to join included only one item: year born (b=-.111; p<.000).

[44] Final statistics in the model on "creativity" for direct effects of reasons to stay, peer group structure, peer group composition and culture, and peer group practices included: as a reason to stay "I enjoy an intellectual challenge" (b=.133; p<.000); "I was impressed by the leader" (b=.114; p<.000); "the group feels like a family or feels like a loosely-knit association of individuals" (b=-.135; p<.000); "the group includes persons of different denominations or faith traditions" (b=.085;p<.003); ministry support scale (b=.144; p<.000); "the group engages in intentional theological reflection" (b=.108; p<.001); the getting feedback on personal and ministry problems scale (b=.091; p<.002); "the group travels together" (b=-.060; p<.05).

[45] Regression on "creativity" scale: adjusted R square =.278. The model, then, explains approximately 28% of the variance in the dependent.

[46] "Greater intimacy with God" is an additive scale which includes responses to items from Section One, "Your SPE Peer Group" (scaled 1-5 from strongly disagree to strongly agree). Items include "provides spiritual refreshment," "helps you feel closer to God," and "deepens your understanding of God" (Alpha=.807).

[47]The final regression model on "greater intimacy with God" included the seven blocks of independent variables discussed in footnote 33 above. Final statistics in the model on "intimacy with God" for direct effects of reasons to stay, peer group structure, and peer group composition and culture included: as reasons to stay "I enjoy an intellectual challenge" (b=.065; p<.01), "I need an accountability group" (b=.097; p<.000), "my spiritual batteries need recharging" (b=.114; p<.000), "I am always looking to improve my ministry" (b=.103;p<.004), and "I was impressed by the leader" (b=.109; p<.000); "group meetings are structured and predictable or unstructured and unpredictable" (b=.068; p<.01); and "the group feels like a family or feels like a loosely-knit association of individuals" (b=-.226; p<.000).

[48]Final statistics in the model on "greater intimacy with God" for direct effects of peer group practices included: the spiritual practices scale (b=.196; p<.000) and "the group engages in intentional biblical or theological reflection" (b=.111; p<.000).

[49] Regression on "greater intimacy with God" scale: adjusted R square =.364. The model, then, explains approximately 36% of the variance in the dependent.

[50] "SPE group is better" is an additive scale which includes responses to items from the "Compare your SPE Group to the Other Group" ***if the respondent indicated that they have participated in another small group regularly for support and continuing education in the past 10 years***. As a result, the total number of cases in this model is lower than the other models tested here. The items ask respondents to compare the SPE Peer Group experience with the Other Peer Group experience on a scale ranging from SPE is "much better" to the other group is "much better." Because of the coding scheme the lower the score, the higher the rating. Respondents are asked to compare groups on six criteria: positive ministry impact, spiritual growth, creativity, intellectual challenge, personal guidance and support, and group leadership. See Section One, "Your SPE Peer Group," survey attached.

[51] Regression on "SPE group is better" scale: adjusted R square =.174. The model, then, explains approximately 17% of the variance in the dependent.

[52]The final regression model on "SPE group is better" scale included the seven blocks of independent variables discussed in footnote 33 above. Final statistics in the model on "SPE group is better" for direct effects of peer group characteristics, peer group structure, peer group composition and culture, and peer group practices included: "group has a formal covenant or written group guidelines" (b=-.087; p<.01); as a reason to stay "I was impressed by the leader" (b=-.137; p<.001); "the group feels like a family or feels like a loosely-knit association of individuals" (b=.154; p<.000); "the group includes persons of different denominations or traditions," (b=-.088; p<01); and "the group expresses spirituality through art, music, literature, or drama" (b=-.129; p<.001).

[53] Final statistics for direct effects of pastoral leader controls included only one item: denomination (Mainline Protestant coded 1/other denominations 0) (b=-.111; p<.000).

[54] The total percentage of selected peer group leader types does not sum to 100 because respondents could check more than one type (about 20% did).

[55] ***A Lifelong Call to Learn: Continuing Education for Religious Leaders***, eds. Robert Reber and D. Bruce Roberts (Herndon, Virginia: Alban Institute, 2010), pp. 93-121. The impact of cost was also analyzed and those pastoral leaders whose congregations contributed more to the cost of their SPE group were better educated; joined because of close friends, interest in travel, and "feeling stuck" in their ministry; had longer peer group meetings and interacted via emails/conference calls with other members more often; had a denominationally and/or racially diverse group; practiced spiritual disciplines and traveled together; and reported spiritual refreshment as well as enhanced creativity and empathy.

[56] Barbara Brown Zikmund, Adair T. Lummis, and Patricia M. Y. Chang, ***Clergy Women: An Uphill Calling*** (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox, 1998), p. 122.

The Sustaining Pastoral Excellence (SPE) Initiative Survey of Participants in Groups for Ministers and Other Pastoral Leaders

Following are the summary survey results from 2,098 participants in SPE groups for ministers and other pastoral leaders. They do not include the non-SPE Indiana Clergy Peer Group responses which were a part of statistics report #2, and they do include responses from SPE peer group participants involved in the Institute of Clergy Excellence's program that were not a part of that report. Section IV, "Your Beliefs, Attitudes and Approach to Faith," also are not included here but are a part of the full survey report at www.austinseminary.edu/cpl.

Section One: SPE Group Participation

1. Median number of years respondents participated in an SPE-initiated minister or pastoral leader group:

   2 years

2. The groups met a median # of **9** times a year for a median # of **3** hours per meeting.

3. Does/did the group have the following characteristics? **(% response)**

	NO	YES	DON'T KNOW
Members make decisions about who belongs	**34**	**62**	**4**
Members make decisions about what the group does	**10**	**89**	**1**
A sponsoring organization (denomination, seminary, etc.) provides curriculum	**66**	**34**	**0**
Spouses or families are involved	**76**	**24**	**0**
The group includes persons of different races or ethnicities	**55**	**45**	**0**
The group includes persons of different denominations or faith traditions	**63**	**37**	**0**
The churches or ministry organizations of group members have worked together since the group began	**39**	**61**	**0**

4. Attendance of face-to-face meetings in the last year the group met: **(% response)**

   I attended less than half of meetings **: 3**
   I attended a majority of meetings **: 37**
   I attended all meetings **: 60**

5. Participated in conference calls or email discussions as a part of the group process: **(% response)**

   No **: 56**
   Yes **: 44**

5a. In the last year that each group met they participated in intentional conference calls or email discussions a median # of **4** times.

6. Does/did your SPE group have a designated leader or facilitator? **(% response)**

No	**: 13**
Yes	**: 87**

6a. Descriptions that best fit that person's preparation and role: **(possible to check multiple answers, % response per item, does not sum to 100)**

A trained group facilitator	**: 29**
A minister "peer" with special training for group leadership	**: 40**
A denominational minister with responsibility for group leadership	**: 18**
A credentialed professional such as a pastoral counselor or a spiritual director	**: 13**
A member who was selected by the group as its leader	**: 23**

6b. Does/did your facilitator or leader do an effective job: **(% response)**

No	**: 4**
Yes	**: 96**

7. Tell us whether each of the issues below was a reason to join and/or a reason to stay. **(% response)**

		Reason to Join			Reason to Stay		
		NO	YES	NOT SURE	NO	YES	NOT SURE
A.	A close friend influenced me	**47**	**53**	**0**	**52**	**48**	**0**
B.	There is denominational encouragement/pressure	**47**	**53**	**0**	**60**	**40**	**0**
C.	I am energized by being with people	**13**	**87**	**0**	**10**	**90**	**0**
D.	I was isolated in my ministry position	**49**	**51**	**0**	**49**	**51**	**0**
E.	I enjoy an intellectual challenge	**9**	**91**	**0**	**11**	**89**	**0**
F.	I need an accountability group	**31**	**69**	**0**	**28**	**72**	**0**
G.	The travel opportunities are appealing	**65**	**35**	**0**	**65**	**35**	**0**
H.	I felt "stuck" in my ministry	**75**	**25**	**0**	**74**	**26**	**0**
I.	I was impressed by the group leader or facilitator	**49**	**51**	**0**	**42**	**58**	**0**
J.	My "spiritual batteries" need recharging	**22**	**78**	**0**	**19**	**81**	**0**
K.	The subject matter is important to me	**12**	**88**	**0**	**11**	**89**	**0**
L.	I am always looking to improve my ministry	**3**	**97**	**0**	**4**	**96**	**0**
M.	I need a break from my day-to-day routine	**37**	**63**	**0**	**35**	**65**	**0**
N.	I know and trust the sponsor organization	**20**	**80**	**0**	**21**	**79**	**0**

Other reasons to join: **(% of "Other" response)**

Having relationships for enhancing ministry	**: 30**
Starting and developing friendships	**: 25**
Having funds for group activities and/or programs	**: 5**
Improving interdenominational understanding and working toward unity	**: 5**
God's leading	**: 0**
All other reasons	**: 35**

8. Does/did your group have a formal covenant or written group guidelines? **(% response)**

No	**: 34**
Yes, our covenant/guidelines keep us "on track" or help handle disagreements	**: 36**
Yes, but our covenant/guidelines have rarely, if ever, been referred to	**: 30**

9. Listed below are several alternatives touching upon important dimensions of experience in an SPE group. Using the seven point scale between each set of alternatives, *please check the number which best describes where your group falls, "1" means most like the characteristic on the left, "7" means most like the characteristic on the right, "4" means an equal mix of both.*
(✓ one on each line)

A. My group is made up of people who are very similar to each other **Average = 3.75**	❒1 ❒2 ❒3 **x** ❒4 ❒5 ❒6 ❒7	My group is made up of people who are very different from each other
B. My group meetings are structured and predictable **Average = 3.5**	❒1 ❒2 ❒3 **x** ❒4 ❒5 ❒6 ❒7	My group meetings are unstructured and spontaneous
C. My group feels like a family **Average = 3.0**	❒1 ❒2 **x**❒3 ❒4 ❒5 ❒6 ❒7	My group feels like a loosely knit association of individuals
D. Leadership in my group is shared **Average = 3.8**	❒1 ❒2 ❒3 **x** ❒4 ❒5 ❒6 ❒7	There is a clearly recognized leader in my group

10. The total number of persons in each SPE group: **(% response)**

Less than 6	**: 13**
6 - 7	**: 32**
8 - 9	**: 28**
10 or more	**: 27**

A median # of **8** persons participated in each SPE group.

11. Out of a median # of **8**, how many persons in your SPE group . . . .

Were original members of your group **(median #)**	**: 6**
Knew you before this group **(median #)**	**: 4**

Socialize with you outside of group meetings **(median #)**	**: 1**
Agree with you on most things **(median #)**	**: 5**
Live an hour or less by car from you **(median #)**	**: 4**
Dropped out of the group **(median #)**	**: 1**

12. Does/did your SPE group engage in any of the following? *If yes*, is it a relatively minor emphasis or a key practice of your group? **(% response)**

(✓ one on each line)		NO	YES. . . MINOR EMPHASIS	YES. . . KEY PRACTICE
A.	Discussing a common reading or topic	**6**	**25**	**69**
B.	Participating in a discipline of silence or guided meditation	**48**	**32**	**20**
C.	Praying for each other	**5**	**26**	**69**
D.	Sharing and getting feedback on ministry problems or challenges	**2**	**18**	**80**
E.	Engaging in community service or mission activities	**74**	**17**	**9**
F.	Sharing ideas and resources for more effective ministry	**2**	**32**	**66**
G.	Expressing spirituality through art, music, literature, or drama	**53**	**32**	**15**
H.	Sharing personal concerns or struggles	**1**	**16**	**83**
I.	Enjoying fellowship (eating, drinking, laughing, talking casually)	**1**	**19**	**80**
J.	Traveling together	**47**	**31**	**22**
K.	Engaging in intentional Biblical or theological reflection	**12**	**36**	**52**
L.	Meeting with experts in fields of common interest	**33**	**31**	**36**
M.	Studying issues related to worship, including preaching	**27**	**39**	**34**
N.	Seeking spiritual direction together	**26**	**33**	**41**
O.	Exploring an interesting subject or new approach to ministry together	**10**	**34**	**5**
P.	Teaching others how to start similar groups	**73**	**22**	**5**
Q.	Utilizing case studies to improve pastoral skills	**50**	**30**	**20**
R.	Other: (retreats, exploring social justice issues, etc.)	**55**	**5**	**40**

13. To what extent do you disagree or agree that your SPE group **. . . (% response)**

(✓ *one on each line*)		STRONGLY DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	NEUTRAL/ UNSURE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
A.	Helps you see the world in different ways	**1**	**3**	**15**	**55**	**26**
B.	Makes you a better pastor or minister	**1**	**1**	**4**	**36**	**58**
C.	Provides spiritual refreshment	**1**	**2**	**6**	**33**	**58**
D.	Allows for frank disagreement	**1**	**4**	**12**	**42**	**41**
E.	Is different than anything you've done before	**6**	**19**	**14**	**30**	**31**
F.	Helps you feel closer to God	**2**	**4**	**19**	**42**	**33**
G.	Is cliquish	**50**	**26**	**13**	**9**	**2**
H.	Exposes you to fresh ideas	**1**	**2**	**5**	**49**	**43**
I.	Makes you a better listener	**1**	**3**	**14**	**50**	**32**
J.	Is a lot of fun	**1**	**3**	**10**	**40**	**46**
K.	Has given you new energy for ministry	**1**	**3**	**9**	**39**	**48**
L.	Provides balance in your life	**2**	**4**	**16**	**43**	**35**
M.	Helps you wrestle with doubt	**5**	**13**	**26**	**36**	**20**

N.	Helps energize your congregation/ministry	**2**	**7**	**21**	**44**	**26**
O.	Holds you accountable	**3**	**8**	**16**	**44**	**29**
P.	Stretches you	**1**	**4**	**10**	**48**	**37**
Q.	Is a safe place	**1**	**2**	**6**	**29**	**62**
R.	Has renewed your commitment to ministry	**2**	**5**	**22**	**38**	**33**
S.	Encourages complaint or self-pity	**56**	**27**	**9**	**6**	**2**
T.	Helps deepen your understanding of God	**2**	**5**	**18**	**50**	**25**
U.	Is something you'll need for years to come	**3**	**7**	**17**	**38**	**35**
V.	Makes an impact on the larger community	**4**	**12**	**27**	**36**	**21**
W.	Fosters openness and empathy towards people who are different	**1**	**5**	**22**	**42**	**30**

14. Dynamics in small groups tend to change over time. Please indicate which of the following characteristics were present in your group only at the start, more so later than in the beginning, or were present throughout the life of your group. **(% response)**

(✓ one on each line)		NOT A CHARACTERISTIC	ONLY AT THE START	MORE SO LATER	PRESENT THROUGHOUT
A.	People "put on their best face"	**46**	**45**	**2**	**7**
B.	One or two strong personalities dominate	**61**	**21**	**7**	**11**
C.	Some group members show up late or leave early	**54**	**6**	**13**	**27**
D.	You can say anything without fear of harsh judgment	**11**	**2**	**21**	**66**
E.	People talk to the leader rather than to each other	**87**	**9**	**1**	**3**
F.	You check your ego "at the door"	**24**	**3**	**17**	**56**
G.	You get the feeling that you are really being heard	**3**	**2**	**15**	**80**
H.	People need to "dump" a lot of stuff	**39**	**11**	**20**	**30**
I.	There is an undercurrent of discomfort	**79**	**14**	**4**	**3**
J.	Working together for community change is important	**48**	**2**	**13**	**37**
K.	Our agenda is abandoned for prayer or deeper discussion	**32**	**2**	**23**	**43**
L.	The group "gelled"	**5**	**3**	**35**	**57**
M.	The leader or facilitator is a "good fit" for the group	**12**	**3**	**7**	**78**
N.	Constructive criticism is welcome	**7**	**1**	**22**	**70**
O.	There is a hunger for Scriptural study	**42**	**3**	**12**	**43**
P.	There is significant conflict	**89**	**5**	**4**	**2**
Q.	The group is a model of what it means to be "community"	**11**	**1**	**26**	**62**
R.	There is competition for leadership	**93**	**3**	**2**	**2**

15. Not including your SPE group, have you met regularly with any other small group of ministers or pastoral leaders for continuing education and support *in the past ten years*? **(% response)**

No : **30**
Yes : **70**

15a. Number of additional small groups within the past ten years: **(% response)**

1

2	**: 24**
3	**: 8**
More than 3	**: 3**

15b. When you compare that other group to your SPE group, would you say that the SPE group or the other group provided a better experience in the following areas: (If more than one group was listed above, compare your SPE group to the group that you participated in most recently) **(% response)**

(✓ one on each line)	SPE MUCH BETTER	SPE BETTER	ABOUT THE SAME	OTHER GROUP BETTER	OTHER GROUP MUCH BETTER
A. Positive ministry impact	**27**	**25**	**32**	**10**	**6**
B. Spiritual growth	**25**	**27**	**30**	**12**	**6**
C. Creativity	**27**	**28**	**29**	**11**	**5**
D. Intellectual challenge	**30**	**26**	**27**	**11**	**6**
E. Personal guidance and support	**27**	**25**	**28**	**13**	**7**
F. Group leadership	**26**	**23**	**38**	**7**	**6**

16. To what extent have the following persons or groups been affected by your involvement in a SPE group?
(% response)

(✓ one on each line)	LITTLE OR NO EFFECT	VERY NEGATIVELY	SOMEWHAT NEGATIVELY	SOMEWHAT POSITIVELY	VERY POSITIVELY
A. Your work colleagues or staff	**24**	**0**	**1**	**56**	**19**
B. Your intimate friends	**35**	*****	*****	**50**	**15**
C. Those you minister to on a day-to-day basis	**12**	*****	**1**	**56**	**31**
D. *If* married, your spouse	**20**	*****	**3**	**48**	**29**
E. *If a parent*, your child or children	**40**	*****	**2**	**43**	**15**

***** = less than 0.5 %

17. Overall, how would you rate your level of satisfaction with your SPE group *in the last year that you met*? **(% response)**

Very dissatisfied	**: 4**
Dissatisfied	**: 2**
Somewhat dissatisfied	**: 4**
Somewhat satisfied	**: 7**
Satisfied	**: 31**
Very satisfied	**: 52**

18. Compared to your level of satisfaction with your SPE group at the beginning of your involvement, would you say that your satisfaction has . . . **(% response)**

Decreased a great deal	**: 2**
Decreased somewhat	**: 11**
Stayed about the same	**: 25**
Increased somewhat	**: 35**
Increased a great deal	**: 27**

19. What is the official status of your SPE-initiated minister or pastoral leader group? **(% response)**

a. The group no longer meets	**: 25**
b. The group officially ended its SPE participation but has continued to meet	**: 10**
c. The group continues to meet with the support of its sponsor organization	**: 54**
d. The group continues to meet but I am unsure of its official status	**: 11**

19a. The group no longer meets. The last gathering was: **(% response of "a")**

This year	**: 7**
Last year	**: 54**
Two years ago	**: 27**
More than two years ago	**: 12**

19b. The group officially ended its SPE participation but has continued to meet for a median # of **6** months and a median # of **3** hours per meeting.

20. What is/was the average *annual* contribution from the following sources toward your SPE group participation? If there was no "out of pocket" or congregation/ministry organization expenditure, simply write "0" in the space provided. **(% response)**

A. Personal, "out of pocket" annual contribution:

$0	**: 54**
$1 - $100	**: 20**
$101 - $500	**: 19**
$501 - $1000	**: 5**
More than $1000	**: 2**

B. Your congregation's or ministry organization's annual contribution:

$0	**: 52**
$1 - $100	**: 7**
$101 - $500	**: 21**
$501 - $1000	**: 11**
More than $1000	**: 9**

21. Do you consider your participation in an SPE group an important part of your ongoing education in ministry? **(% response)**

No	**: 9**
Yes	**: 91**

22. Are you the designated leader of your SPE group? **(% response)**

No	**: 85**
Yes	**: 15**

Section Two: Your Work in Ministry

1. How would you describe your current position in ministry? (✓ one option only) **(% response)**

Senior pastor, priest, or minister	**: 34**
Solo pastor, priest, or minister	**: 30**
Associate pastor or minister, responsible for specific program area(s)	**: 11**
Lay minister or pastoral leader	**: 2**
Chaplain, pastoral counselor, or spiritual director	**: 3**
Denominational minister, working for an association, conference, diocese, synod or other regional body	**: 4**
Other	**: 16**

2. Is your current position paid or volunteer? **(% response)**

Volunteer	**: 5**
Paid	**: 95**

3. How many years ago did you begin your current ministerial or pastoral position? **(% response)**

2 or less	**: 17**
3 – 10	**: 56**
11 – 20	**: 19**
More than 20	**: 8**

4. Approximately how many hours in a typical week do you spend in work related to your position in this congregation or ministry organization? **(% response)**

20 or less	**: 9**
21 – 40	**: 19**
41 – 50	**: 37**
More than 50	**: 35**

5. How much time and attention do you spend on the areas listed below? **(% response)**

(✓ one on each line)	VERY LITTLE	SOME	QUITE A BIT	A GREAT DEAL
A. Planning and leading worship	**12**	**20**	**39**	**29**
B. Developing and promoting a vision & purpose	**7**	**36**	**39**	**18**
C. Evangelism or recruitment	**22**	**52**	**20**	**6**
D. Recruiting and training leaders	**18**	**46**	**28**	**8**
E. Pastoral care, such as visiting the sick and counseling people	**8**	**29**	**39**	**24**
F. Teaching people about the faith and Scripture	**4**	**21**	**43**	**32**
G. Contacting inactive persons	**50**	**39**	**9**	**2**
H. Organizing/leading small groups for sharing, support and spiritual growth	**22**	**43**	**25**	**10**
I. Representing the congregation/ministry organization in the community	**17**	**43**	**27**	**13**
J. Administration, supervision and committee meetings	**6**	**26**	**45**	**23**
K. Dealing with conflict and disagreements	**24**	**50**	**19**	**7**

6. Do you currently serve as a paid professional minister in more than one congregation or other setting? **(% response)**

No	**: 93**
Yes	**: 7**

6a. If *yes,* how many? **(% response)**

None	**: 5**
1	**: 23**
2	**: 50**
3	**: 12**
4 or more	**: 10**

7. Do you work at any other job outside of your ministry position(s)? **(% response)**

No	**: 84**
Yes	**: 16**

7a. *If yes*, what is your other job? **(% response)**

Education	**: 21**
Other church-related occupations	**: 16**
Social service, public service, & healthcare	**: 14**
Sales & management	**: 18**
Farming, labor, & trades	**: 13**
Science & technology	**: 3**
All other occupations	**: 15**

8. How many **paid** program or ministerial staff positions and **paid** support positions do you have in your congregation or ministry organization? Count all positions, whether currently filled or not. If you have a school, don't count school employees.

   Average of **2** full-time program or ministerial staff.
   Average of **2** full-time support staff.
   Average of **2** part-time program or ministerial staff.
   Average of **2** part-time support staff.

9. Not including your SPE group, how often during the past year did you take part in some form of ongoing education in ministry lasting at least a full day? (✓ one option only) **(% response)**

Never	**: 7**
Once or twice	**: 49**
Three to five times	**: 33**
More than five times	**: 11**

10. Does your congregation or ministry organization provide financial support for you to participate in continuing education or training? **(% response)**

No	**: 17**
Yes	**: 83**

11. Does your congregation, ministry organization, or denomination require you to participate in continuing education or training on an annual basis? **(% response)**

No	**: 62**
Yes	**: 38**

12. Do you regularly take a day off each week? **(% response)**

No	**: 20**
Yes	**: 80**

13. Have you taken a sabbatical leave from a congregation or ministry organization *in the past ten years*, and if so, for how long? **(% response)**

Yes	**: 25**
No	**: 75**

13.a. Yes, I took my most recent sabbatical leave for _____ weeks: **(% of "yes" responses)**

Less than 6 weeks	**: 26**
6-8 weeks	**: 19**
9-12 weeks	**: 36**
More than 12 weeks	**: 19**

Median length of sabbatical was **10** weeks.

14. In the past two years, how many persons have you personally encouraged to consider becoming a pastor, priest, or minister? **(% response)**

0	**: 19**
1	**: 17**
2	**: 28**
3	**: 15**
More than 3	**: 21**

Median # of persons encouraged to consider ministry was **2** per respondent.

15. How well does each of the following describe your congregation's or ministry organization's approach to ministry and mission? **(% response)**

(✓ one on each line)	NOT AT ALL	SLIGHTLY	SOME-WHAT	QUITE WELL	VERY WELL
A. This is an exciting place where people can get involved in a variety of meaningful activities	**2**	**7**	**25**	**42**	**24**
B. We encourage and foster intense, intimate experiences with God	**2**	**10**	**35**	**35**	**18**
C. We are engaged in and energized by the serious study and discussion of scripture and theology	**2**	**12**	**33**	**37**	**16**
D. We hold and teach strong beliefs and moral values	**1**	**8**	**25**	**41**	**25**

16. To what extent do you agree or disagree that your congregation or ministry organization . . . **(% response)**

(✓ one on each line)	STRONGLY DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	NEUTRAL/ UNSURE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
A. Is like a close-knit family	**2**	**9**	**9**	**51**	**29**
B. Is spiritually vital and alive	**1**	**7**	**10**	**56**	**26**
C. Has a clear mission or purpose	**3**	**10**	**15**	**44**	**28**
D. Is a force for positive change in our community	**3**	**8**	**16**	**45**	**28**
E. Welcomes change and is always ready to try something new	**6**	**18**	**17**	**45**	**14**
F. Is not that different from other congregations/ ministry organizations in our community	**15**	**33**	**17**	**30**	**5**

17. Compared to other congregations or ministry organizations in your denomination or faith tradition, how would you describe the *theological outlook* of the *majority* of your organization's active participants?
(% response)

Considerably more conservative than most other congregations or ministry organizations	**: 7**
Somewhat more conservative	**: 26**
Right in the middle	**: 37**
Somewhat more liberal	**: 23**
Considerably more liberal than most other congregations or ministry organizations	**: 7**

18. *During the last five years,* has your congregation or ministry organization experienced any disagreements or conflicts in the following areas? **(possible to check multiple answers, % response per item, does not sum to 100)**

(✓ all boxes that apply on each line)	NO	YES, BUT THE CONFLICT WAS NOT SERIOUS	YES, AND SOME PEOPLE LEFT	YES, AND SOME PEOPLE WITHHELD FUNDS	YES, AND A STAFF MEMBER WAS DISMISSED OR REASSIGNED
A. Money/finances/budget	**40**	**35**	**9**	**9**	**4**
B. How worship is conducted	**40**	**32**	**17**	**4**	**2**
C. Minister's leadership style	**47**	**19**	**19**	**5**	**7**
D. Program priorities of the congregation or organization	**44**	**32**	**12**	**4**	**2**
E. Actions of the denomination or other supervisory body	**54**	**23**	**10**	**5**	**1**
F. Other (e.g. leader behavior, staff conflict, political / theological issues)	**6**	**1**	**5**	**2**	**1**

19. How old is your congregation or ministry organization? **(% response)**

10 years or younger	**: 7**
11 – 50 years	**: 24**
51 – 100 years	**: 24**
101 – 150 years	**: 25**
Older than 150 years	**: 20**

20. How would you describe the place where your congregation or ministry organization is located?
(% response)

Rural area or open country	**: 11**
Village or a *town* of less than 10,000 persons	**: 20**
Larger town or a *small city* with a population between 10,000 and 50,000	**: 22**
A *newer suburb* around a city with a population of 50,000 or more	**: 9**
An older suburb around a city with a population of 50,000 or more	**: 13**
An older residential area in a city with a population of 50,000 or more	**: 13**
A downtown or *central area* of a city with a population of 50,000 or more	**: 12**

21. For each of the last 6 years, what is your best estimate of the average attendance at your congregation's or ministry organization's weekend worship services? *If you have more than one weekend worship service, use the average attendance for all worship services combined.*

    Total average worship attendance for all respondents' congregations or ministry organizations:

    2007 : **411,489**
    2006 : **388,070**
    2005 : **370,307**
    2004 : **354,090**
    2003 : **339,417**
    2002 : **334,844**

22. *During the last 12 months*, did your congregation or ministry organization conduct any of the following programs or activities? *If yes*, how much emphasis or attention is given to the activity? Was it some emphasis, a lot of emphasis, or is the activity a specialty of your congregation (something you are known for)? **(% response)**

(✓ one on each line)	DO NOT HAVE	SOME EMPHASIS	A LOT OF EMPHASIS	SPECIALTY OF CONGREGATION
A. Church school or Sunday School classes	**10**	**22**	**54**	**14**
B. Scripture study groups (in addition to Sunday School)	**10**	**38**	**43**	**9**
C. Support groups (such as bereavement, divorce, 12-step, etc.)	**51**	**34**	**12**	**3**
D. Evangelism or recruitment activities	**23**	**54**	**19**	**4**
E. Community ministry & mission	**6**	**34**	**39**	**21**
F. Student activities (for school-aged children & youth)	**14**	**26**	**43**	**17**
G. Prayer, meditation, or spiritual development activities	**7**	**50**	**34**	**9**

Section Three: Ministry Roles and Experiences

1. Listed below are 12 images or dominant roles to which pastoral leaders may orient their ministry. To what extent do you emphasize or embody these roles? Does your current congregation or ministry organization expect or encourage these particular roles? **(% response)**

	I Emphasize or Embody			Congregation Expects		
	NOT REALLY	TO SOME EXTENT	A GREAT EXTENT	NOT REALLY	TO SOME EXTENT	A GREAT EXTENT
A. Preacher	**5**	**23**	**72**	**6**	**18**	**76**
B. Teacher	**2**	**35**	**63**	**3**	**46**	**51**
C. Prophet	**36**	**50**	**14**	**56**	**37**	**7**
D. Administrator	**11**	**48**	**41**	**10**	**48**	**42**
E. Team-Builder	**5**	**44**	**51**	**12**	**54**	**34**

F. Celebrant/Worship Leader	**12**	**33**	**55**	**14**	**34**	**52**
G. Spiritual Mentor and Guide	**5**	**46**	**49**	**11**	**51**	**38**
H. Witness/Evangelist	**23**	**57**	**20**	**28**	**54**	**18**
I. Counselor/Healer	**15**	**56**	**29**	**15**	**58**	**27**
J. Visionary Leader and Motivator	**8**	**47**	**45**	**13**	**48**	**39**
K. Community Organizer	**47**	**40**	**13**	**53**	**37**	**10**
L. Friend/Fellow Traveler	**12**	**45**	**43**	**19**	**51**	**30**
M. Other	**3**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**1**	**2**

2. *In the past three years*, how often have people in your congregation or ministry organization . . .
(% response)

(✓ one on each line)	NEVER	SOMETIMES	FAIRLY OFTEN	VERY OFTEN
A. Made you feel loved and cared for	*	**18**	**40**	**42**
B. Listened to you talk about your private problems or concerns	**14**	**57**	**20**	**9**
C. Told you that they prayed for you	**3**	**28**	**36**	**33**
D. Publicly praised some aspect of your ministry	**3**	**29**	**37**	**31**
E. Expressed concern about new directions or changes	**11**	**62**	**20**	**7**
F. Took notice of or affirmed your involvement in an SPE group	**41**	**43**	**12**	**4**

***** = less than 0.5 %

3. When you think of your current job in ministry, how satisfied are you with . . . **(% response)**

(✓ one on each line)	VERY DISSATISFIED	SOMEWHAT DISSATISFIED	SOMEWHAT SATISFIED	VERY SATISFIED
A. Your overall effectiveness as a pastoral leader in this congregation or organization	**2**	**11**	**57**	**30**
B. Your spiritual life	**1**	**17**	**61**	**21**
C. Opportunities for continuing theological education	**3**	**19**	**49**	**29**
D. Support from your denomination or other supervisory body	**8**	**21**	**46**	**25**
E. Relations with clergy and staff members in your congregation or organization	**2**	**10**	**46**	**42**
F. *If you work in a church or church-related setting,* your relations with lay leaders	**1**	**6**	**51**	**42**
G. Your salary and benefits	**5**	**15**	**46**	**34**
H. *If married*, your family life	**1**	**5**	**30**	**64**
I. *If unmarried*, your personal life	**9**	**14**	**49**	**28**

4. Looking back over *the past year*, how often have you . . . **(% response)**

(✓ one on each line)	NEVER	SOMETIMES	FAIRLY OFTEN	VERY OFTEN
A. Doubted that you are called by God to the ministry	**69**	**28**	**2**	**1**
B. Thought of leaving pastoral ministry to enter a 'secular' occupation	**51**	**40**	**6**	**3**
C. Experienced stress because of the challenges you face in your current position	**4**	**45**	**33**	**18**
D. Experienced stress as a result of dealing with people who are critical of your work	**22**	**56**	**15**	**7**
E. Felt lonely or isolated in your work	**20**	**55**	**16**	**9**

Section Five: Your Health and Well-Being

1. In general, would you say your health is . . . **(% response)**

Poor	**: 1**
Fair	**: 7**
Good	**: 35**
Very good	**: 40**
Excellent	**: 17**

2. Compared to one year ago**,** how would you rate your health in general now? **(% response)**

Much worse now than one year ago	**: 1**
Somewhat worse now than one year ago	**: 10**
About the same as one year ago	**: 59**
Somewhat better now than one year ago	**: 23**
Much better now than one year ago	**: 7**

3. How much of the time during the past four weeks have you. . . (% response)

(✓ *one on each line*)	NONE OF THE TIME	A LITTLE OF THE TIME	SOME OF THE TIME	MOST OF THE TIME	ALL OF THE TIME
A.Felt calm and peaceful	**1**	**11**	**36**	**40**	**12**
B.Had a lot of energy	**1**	**13**	**39**	**34**	**13**
C. Felt downhearted and depressed	**26**	**50**	**17**	**2**	**5**
D. Felt worn out	**11**	**49**	**26**	**6**	**8**
E. Been happy	*****	**5**	**29**	**51**	**15**

***** = less than 0.5 %

4. Within the last week, how much time did you spend in the following activities? **Average # of hours spent…**

A. Using the internet (including the web and email)	**: 9.5**
B. Family life (family activities including meals)	**: 17**
C. Household chores (cleaning, errands, shopping, etc.)	**: 6.5**
D. Physical exercise for your health	**: 3.5**
E. Recreation and hobbies	**: 3**
F. Prayer, meditation, Bible reading, and other spiritual disciplines	**: 7**
G. Commuting to work	**: 3**
H. Socializing with friends	**: 3.5**
I. Watching television	**: 8**
J. Reading for pleasure	**: 4.5**

Hours spent in above categories. (**% response)**

A. Using the internet (including the web and email)

Less than 4	**: 21**
4 – 7	**: 28**
7.5 – 14	**: 31**
More than 14	**: 20**

B. Family life (family activities including meals)

Less than 4	**: 6**
4 – 7	**: 11**
7.5 – 14	**: 30**
More than 14	**: 53**

C. Household chores (cleaning, errands, shopping, etc.)

Less than 4	**: 27**
4 – 7	**: 44**
7.5 – 14	**: 23**
More than 14	**: 6**

D. Physical exercise for your health

None	**: 17**
Some, but less than 4	**: 41**
4 – 7	**: 34**
More than 7	**: 8**

E. Recreation and hobbies

None	**: 26**
Some, but less than 4	**: 42**
4 – 7	**: 23**
More than 7	**: 9**

F. Prayer, meditation, Bible reading, and other spiritual disciplines

Less than 4	**: 28**
4 – 7	**: 40**
7.5 – 14	**: 21**
More than 14	**: 11**

G. Commuting to work

None	**: 24**
Some, but less than 4	**: 49**
4 – 7	**: 19**
More than 7	**: 8**

H. Socializing with friends

None	**: 14**
Some, but less than 4	**: 49**
4 – 7	**: 26**
More than 7	**: 11**

I. Watching television

Less than 4	**: 27**
4 – 7	**: 32**
7.5 – 14	**: 29**
More than 14	**: 12**

J. Reading for pleasure

None	**: 12**
Some, but less than 4	**: 40**
4 – 7	**: 31**
More than 7	**: 17**

Section Six: Your Faith and Ministry Background

1. What was the denomination you were most involved in while you were growing up?

10 most frequent responses: (% response)

Southern Baptist Convention	**: 11**
Christian Reformed Church in North America	**: 10**
American Baptist Churches	**: 9**
United Methodist Church	**: 8**
Presbyterian Church USA	**: 7**
Reformed Church in America	**: 6**
Roman Catholic Church	**: 5**
Church of God – Cleveland	**: 3**
United Church of Christ	**: 3**
Church of the Brethren	**: 2**
Other Conservative Protestant	**: 14**
Other Baptist	**: 7**
Other Presbyterian	**: 5**
Other Moderate or Liberal Protestant	**: 4**
Other Methodist	**: 4**
Other (Judaism, Eastern Orthodox, Bahai, Islam, etc.)	**: 1**

2. How would you best describe your church attendance during your teenage years? **(% response)**

Did not attend	**: 4**
Occasional (a few times a year)	**: 6**
About once a month	**: 4**
Weekly attendance	**: 86**

2a. If you attended during your teenage years, how well did the congregation you were most involved in…

(% response)

	NOT AT ALL	SLIGHTLY	SOMEWHAT	VERY WELL	DON'T RECALL
A. Encourage a call to ministry	**26**	**15**	**21**	**34**	**4**
B. Invite serious questions	**17**	**24**	**30**	**26**	**3**
C. Confront issues of injustice	**29**	**29**	**24**	**14**	**4**
D. Include others who are different	**27**	**34**	**22**	**14**	**3**

3. Were you involved in youth activities sponsored by a congregation during your teenage years? **(% response)**

No, I did not attend	**: 13**
Yes, occasionally (a few times a year)	**: 12**
Yes, about once a month	**: 13**
Yes, weekly attendance	**: 62**

3a. If you were involved in church-based youth activities during your teenage years, did you have a leadership role? **(% response)**

No	**: 35**
Yes	**: 65**

4. Have you ever seriously considered that you were called to the ministry? **(% response)**

No	**: 5**
Yes	**: 95**

4a. At what age did you first seriously consider that you were called to the ministry? **(% response)**

Younger than 16	**: 23**
16 – 20	**: 40**
21 – 30	**: 23**
31 – 40	**: 9**
Older than 40	**: 5**

4b. If you seriously considered you were called to the ministry, how much influence did each of the following have in your discernment process? **(% response)**

(✓ *ONE ON EACH LINE*)	NOT AT ALL	SOMEWHAT	QUITE A BIT	A GREAT DEAL
A. Positive experiences in church leadership	**12**	**25**	**35**	**28**
B. Counsel from your pastor or other minister	**16**	**28**	**29**	**27**
C.The example of a parent or other family member	**38**	**25**	**18**	**19**
D. Encouragement from lay person(s) in your church	**19**	**35**	**33**	**13**
E.The support of family	**17**	**31**	**31**	**21**
F. A clear sign or message from God	**9**	**22**	**26**	**43**
G. A group or class for those considering ministry	**74**	**14**	**8**	**4**
H. Other: (e.g. friends, camps & retreats, “slow process”)	**3**	*****	**2**	**7**

***** = less than 0.5 %

5. Are you ordained? **(% response)**

No	**: 9**
Yes	**: 91**

5a. How old were you when you received full ordination as a pastor/minister? **(% response)**

Younger than 25	**: 10**
25 – 30	**: 45**
31 – 40	**: 23**
41 – 50	**: 15**
Older than 50	**: 7**

6. What is the highest level of theological training you have obtained? **(% response)**

None	**: 3**
Certificate from denominational training program, Bible college, or seminary	**: 8**
Bible college degree or a degree in religion from a Christian college or university	**: 5**
Master of Divinity or Bachelor of Divinity	**: 49**
M.A., S.T.M, Th.M. or other Masters degree	**: 13**
Doctor of Ministry degree	**: 16**
Ph.D. or Th.D.	**: 3**
Other	**: 3**

7. What is your present religious denomination, if any?

10 most frequent responses: (% response)

American Baptist Churches	**: 13**
Presbyterian Church USA	**: 11**
Christian Reformed Church in North America	**: 10**
United Methodist Church	**: 8**
Reformed Church in America	**: 8**
United Church of Christ	**: 6**
Church of God – Cleveland	**: 5**
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship	**: 4**
Church of the Brethren	**: 4**
American Baptist Association	**: 3**
Other Conservative Protestant	**: 10**
Other Baptist	**: 5**
Other Moderate or Liberal Protestant	**: 4**
Other Presbyterian	**: 2**
Other Methodist	**: 1**
Other (Judaism, Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Bahai, etc.)	**: 4**

Section Seven: Your Personal Background

1. What is your gender? **(% response)**

Female	**: 29**
Male	**: 71**

2. How old are you? **(% response)**

20 – 39	**: 10**
40 – 49	**: 23**
50 – 59	**: 39**
60 or older	**: 28**

3. Which of the following racial categories best describes you? **(% response)**

African-American or Black	**: 7**
Asian-American or Pacific Islander	**: 2**
American Indian or Alaskan Native	**: ***
White	**: 87**
Other	**: 4**

***** = less than 0.5 %

4. Would you categorize yourself as Hispanic or Latino/a? **(% response)**

Yes	: **3**
No	: **97**

5. Which of the following best describes your current marital status? **(% response)**

Never married	**: 5**
In first marriage	**: 76**
Divorced or separated	**: 4.5**
Widowed	**: 2**
Remarried after death of spouse	**: 1**
Remarried after divorce	**: 11**
Other	**: 0.5**

6. How many children age 18 or under do you have living at home? **(% response)**

No children at home	**: 60**
Children living at home	**: 40**

Of those with children living at home, the # of children: **(% response)**

1	**: 37**
2	**: 38**
3	**: 17**
4	**: 6**
More than 4	**: 2**

7. What is the highest educational qualification you have completed? **(% response)**

High school diploma or equivalent	**: 5**
Community college diploma	**: 2**
Bachelor degree from a four year college or equivalent institution	**: 10**
Masters degree	**: 62**
Earned doctorate	**: 19**
Other	**: 2**

Participating Organizations in the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence (SPE) Group Survey

- Akron Area Association of Churches: Pastor Parish Peer Study Groups of Northeast Ohio
- American Baptist Assembly: Green Lake Conference Center
- American Baptist Churches USA Ministers Council: Together in Ministry
- Ashland Theological Seminary: Sustaining Pastoral Excellence
- Asociacion para la Educacion Teologica Hispana: Tertulias Pastorals
- Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary: College of Pastoral Leaders
- Bethany Theological Seminary: Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership
- Christian Reformed Church in North America: Creating a Culture of Pastoral Excellence
- Church of God Ministries: Sustaining Health and Pastoral Excellence (SHAPE)
- Church of God Theological Seminary: Walking in the Spirit
- Columbia Theological Seminary: S3 (Sabbath, Study and Service)
- Cooperative Baptist Fellowship: Initiative for Ministerial Excellence
- Dominican House of Studies: Sustaining Excellent Pastors-Promoting Pastoral Excellence
- Ecumenical Theological Seminary: Sustaining Pastoral Excellence
- Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Convention: Building Networks, Broadening Visions
- Loyola University: INSPIRE
- MACUCC: Sustaining Pastoral Excellence Project
- Memphis Theological Seminary: Sustaining Pastoral Excellence through Scholarship, Piety, and Justice
- Millsaps College Center for Ministry: Center for Ministry Pastoral Excellence Project
- Nebraska Conference United Church of Christ: Transforming Covenants
- North Alabama Conference of the UMC: The Institute for Clergy Excellence
- Presbytery of San Francisco: Healthy Pastors for Healthy Congregations
- Reformed Church in America: A Revitalized Leadership for a Renewed Church
- Samaritan Counseling Center of Albuquerque Inc.: Called Back to the Well
- Samford University: Resource Center for Pastoral Excellence
- Seattle University School of Theology and Ministry: Pastoral Leadership Program
- St. John's School of Theology Seminary: Conversatio—Cultivating a Pastoral Conversation
- Texas Methodist Foundation: Clergy Leadership Initiative
- Triangle Pastoral Counseling: Sustaining Pastoral Excellence Project
- Union Theological Seminary and Presbyterian School of Christian Educators: Rehoboth Project
- Western Theological Seminary of the Reformed Church in America: Journey Groups