

Survey of Pastors

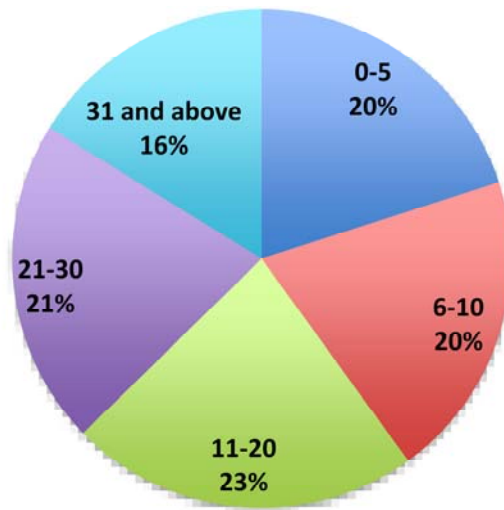
Mega Study 1

North American Division of the
Seventh-day Adventist Church

Source of Data in This Report

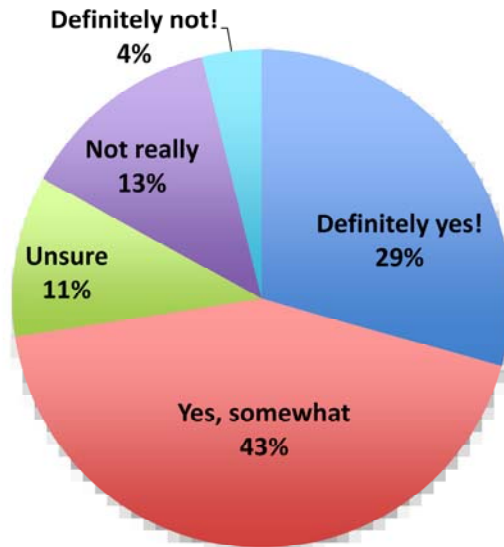
- A random sample of 500 local churches in the North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church were asked to have the pastor or pastors complete a questionnaire along with surveys of the members, youth and new members. A total of 261 pastors responded with completed questionnaires. The standard allowance for statistical error in a sample of this size is six to eight percentage points, plus or minus.
- This study was conducted for the NAD Office of Strategic Planning, Research and Assessments by the Institute of Church Ministry at Andrews University.

Years of Service in Pastoral Ministry



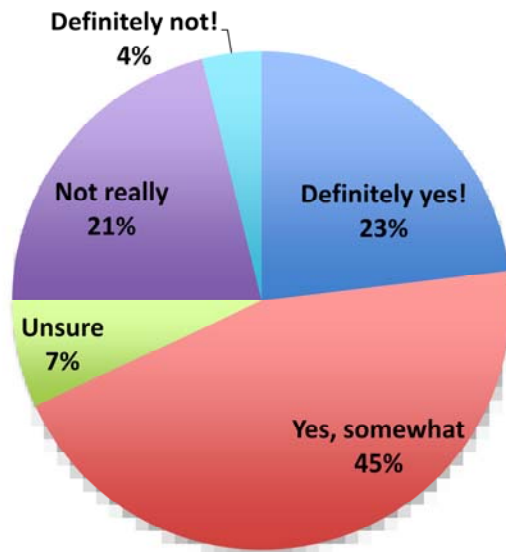
Four out of ten pastors in the North American Division have served ten years or less in pastoral ministry. About two in ten report tenure of service in each of the other decadal segments. Overall there are more pastors with less experience than pastors with a great deal of experience.

Think the Opinions of Pastors Count in Conference Decision-making



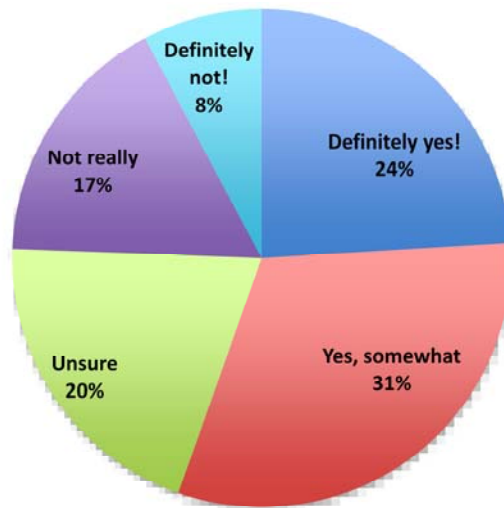
More than seven in ten pastors indicated that they believe “their opinions ‘count’ as decisions are made by Church leadership that impact them” (that impact the pastors). But the opinion of pastors leans away from the most positive response to this question. A majority (54 percent) indicated either “somewhat” or “unsure.” There is clearly a question in the minds of most pastors in the North American Division on this factor. Only 17 percent are negative (combining both versions of no), but less than a third gave the most positive response.

Pastors Receive Regular Mentoring, Coaching and Nurture



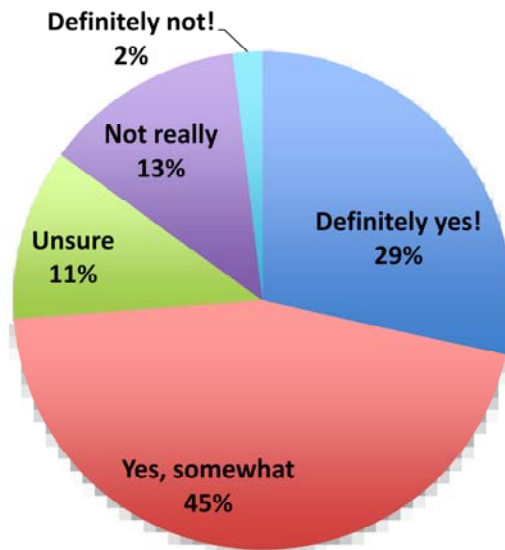
About a quarter of pastors in the North American Division (23 percent) selected the strongest positive response while slightly more (25 percent) gave negative responses. The majority lean toward the middle in their response, including both the “somewhat” and “unsure” answers. Overall this is less than the strongly positive evaluation that is undoubtedly needed on this item and indicates that more effective activity is needed in this area.

There is a Fair and Effective Process for Annual Assessment of Pastors



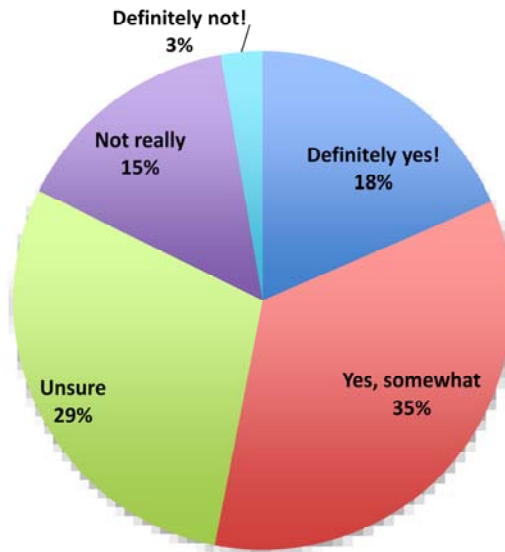
Half of the pastors in the North American Division (51 percent) lean toward an ambivalent opinion on this item. Less than a quarter selected the strongest positive response while a larger portion selected the two negative responses. Clearly most pastors do not feel strongly positive about the annual review and assessment process in their conference. Additional research needs to be done to find out what portion feel that way because there is no such process in their conference and what portion feel that the process is flawed or unhelpful. It can be said that conference executive committees, administrators and ministerial directors do not get an "A" on this item, in fact their grade is closer to a "B" or "C+" in most cases.

Well Acquainted with the Conference Strategic Plan



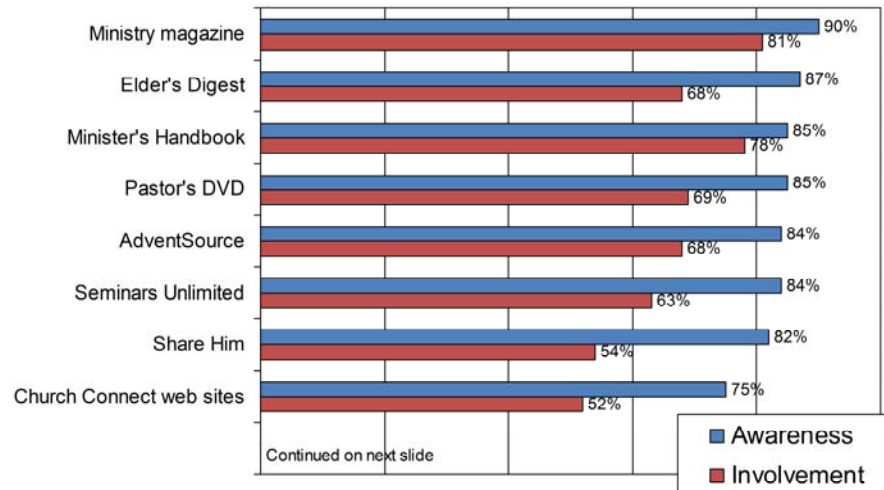
When asked if the “pastors as a whole are well acquainted with the strategic plan of your conference,” the majority leans toward the middle with 56 percent indicating “somewhat” or “unsure.” Less than a third feel that it is definitely true that the pastors are well acquainted with a plan, but only one in six indicate that it is not true. To understand these data more clearly it is necessary to do additional research in which questions are asked that permit for cross tabulation of this item with the level of agreement that pastors have with the plan in their conference. The more ambivalent response displayed above could be the result of disagreement with significant aspects of the plan as well as a sense that it is not widely understood. These data do indicate that in many places there is relatively little informal conversation among pastors about the conference strategic plan. One observation that could be drawn from this fact is that the strategic plan in many conferences is not compelling or challenging, sparking a lot of discussion among the pastors.

Pastors Have a Strategic Plan for Their Churches



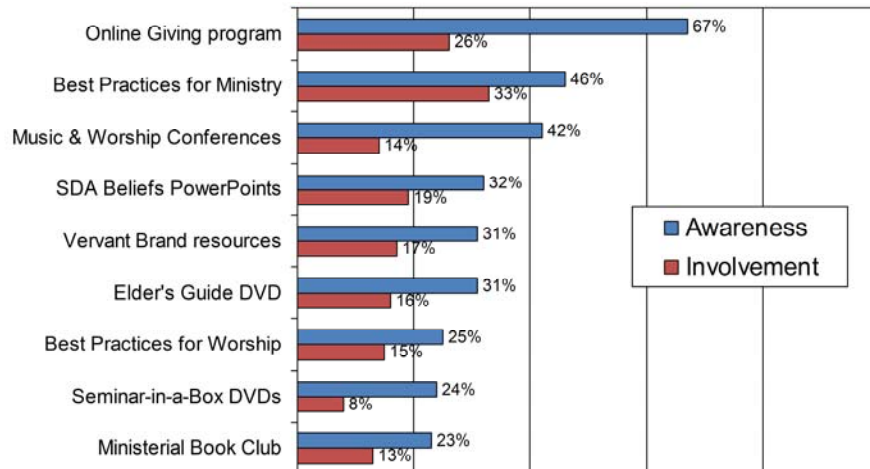
There was greater ambivalence in the responses to a question about how common it is for local churches to have a written strategic plan than there was in the response to the previous item about awareness of a conference strategic plan among pastors. A strong majority (nearly two thirds) of the pastors in the North American Division indicated they were “somewhat” or “unsure” that “most pastors have a written strategic plan for each of their churches that guides church activities.” Additional research must be done to tease out various elements of this general reality. To what degree are pastors reporting that they do not have such plans in place or reporting that they don’t know how widespread such planning is? To what degree are they responding to the existence of such plans and to what degree are they evaluating how much the plans guide church activities? Previous research has shown that there is more often resistance to implementing local church strategic plans than to creating them. Research is also needed to determine to what degree the lack of planning is due to pastors lack of planning skills or resistance on the part of church members.

Awareness of & Involvement with More Well-known Resources & Programs



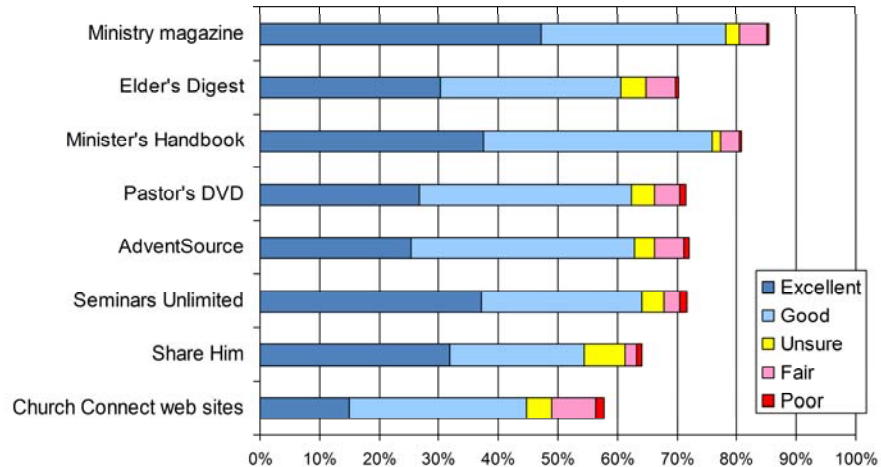
More than three out of four pastors in the North American Division (80 percent to 90 percent in almost every case) were aware of these eight resources and programs. The majority report that they have actually made use of these materials and resource organizations. These represent the major tools with which the NAD provides a support system for pastors and congregations. The top three are published by the General Conference and have a history that extends back much further than the organization of the NAD as a separate entity in the late 1980s. The next three are the major resource activities that have been developed by the NAD since 1985. The differential between the impact of these two sets of resources is not statistically significant.

Awareness of & Involvement with Less Well-known Resources & Programs



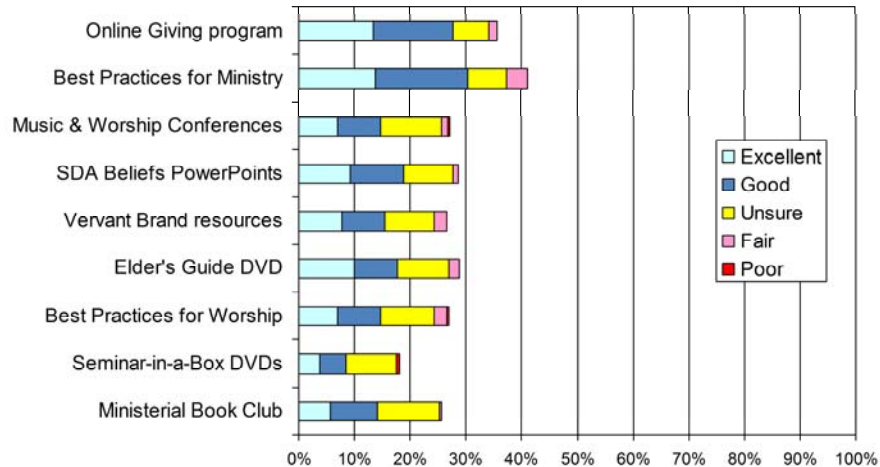
The nine resources and programs displayed above are newer items than those listed on the previous page. They all have fewer years of history and less investment in promotion, although the level of acceptance in the field is not directly related to the years of history per program or resource. Almost all of these have been developed within the NAD, some by organizations not directly under the control of the NAD. It may be time to evaluate whether some of these items should be continued or not, while clearly others need additional promotion and history in order to make themselves more widely used by pastors.

Assessment of Pastoral Ministry More Popular Resources & Programs



These are the same programs and resources displayed on page 9; the more popular support activities among pastors in the North American Division. Close to nine out ten pastors rated each of these as “excellent” or “good.” Very small percentages rated any item as “fair” or “poor.”

Assessment of Pastoral Ministry Less Popular Resources & Programs



These are the same resources and programs displayed on page 10, the less popular items that have been started more recently and have less history and promotional development among pastors in the North American Division. With the exception of the first two items at the top of the graphic—Online Giving program and the Best Practices for Ministry email newsletter—the percentage of pastors giving negative assessments to these items is larger than on the previous page. The NAD electronic newsletter for pastors, *Best Practices for Ministry*, although young has clearly established itself more strongly among the pastors in the division than have other resources on this page.

- This report was produced by Peter Cincala, Roger Dudley and Monte Sahlin, April 2014.

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