RESEARCH

Pastors Develop their Leadership through Spiritual Growth, Research Finds

A recent survey reveals United Methodist clergy focus most of their leadership development efforts on their own personal spirituality. Asked how much time they spend each week on various activities, respondents say most of their development time is spent praying and reading scripture. Likewise, books on devotion or spirituality are the most commonly read by pastors surveyed.

On average, pastors report spending just under three hours per week in prayer and almost that much time reading scripture. In contrast, relatively little time is spent in fellowship with others in ministry. Half of the pastors surveyed spend less than one hour a week meeting with other clergy.

Respondents expressed neither strong satisfaction nor dissatisfaction with their own leadership development efforts, most rating themselves average in response to the statement, "I am able to devote adequate time and energy to my development and enrichment as a leader."

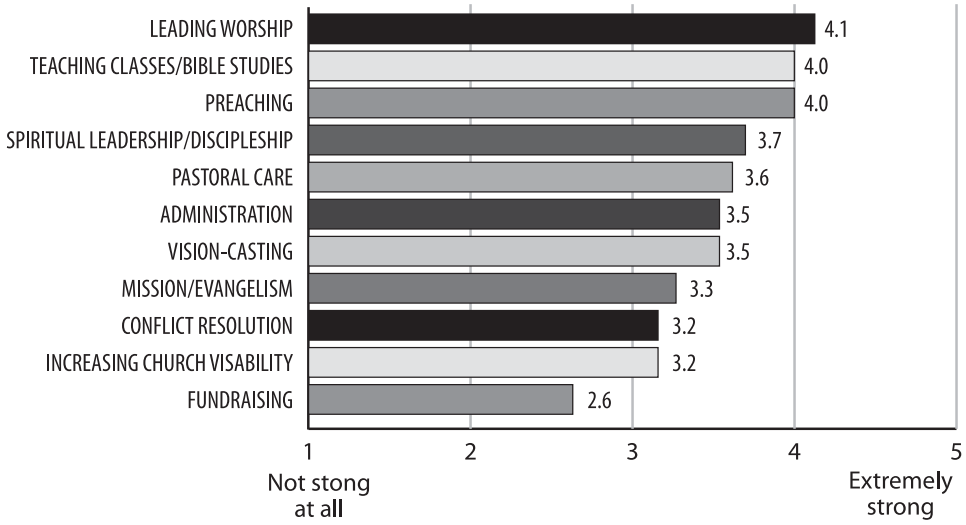
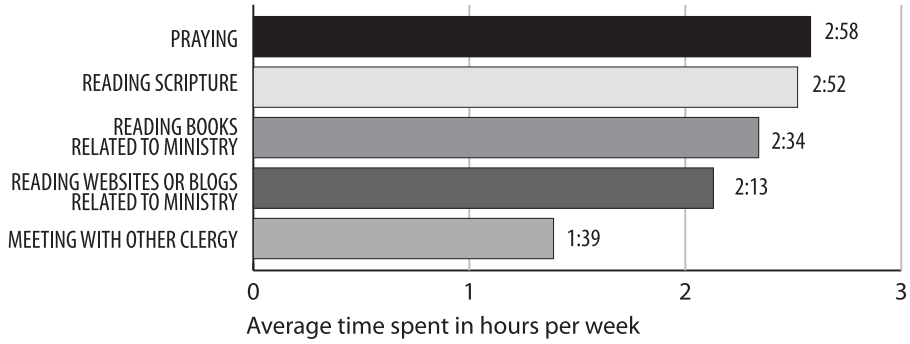
Most pastors spend approximately two and a half hours weekly reading books related to ministry. After devotion and spirituality books (read by 68% of respondents), the most popular subject areas were church leadership (66%), biblical studies (53%), and church growth (51%). When respondents were asked to name books they had recently found helpful in their leadership development, *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations*, by Bishop Robert Schnase, *Simple Church*, by Thom S. Rainer and Eric Geiger, and *UnChristian*, by David Kinnaman, were among the most frequently mentioned, evidencing a desire to revitalize the congregation and reach new people.

For more of the resources respondents found most helpful, see page 24

Most pastors (61%) attend two to three conferences or training events per year (not including Annual Conference). Twenty percent attend four or more. The most popular conferences focus on church leadership (65%), church growth (51%), and worship (43%). The high number of respondents specifically mentioning the Willow Creek Leadership Summit and Church of the Resurrection's Leadership Institute support that finding. While social justice issues ranked among the least popular conference topics in general (21%), Ginghamsburg Church's Change the World conference—which focuses on issues of poverty and global health—was among the most frequently mentioned by name.

Pastors surveyed considered themselves most skilled in the areas of worship leading, preaching, and teaching, and least strong in fund raising. While there was no correlation between these strengths and the books and conferences pastors prefer, the perceived weakness in the area of fund raising may reflect pastors' relative lack of interest in church administration and communications, the least popular subjects of books and conferences. ❑

How strong do you feel you are in the following areas of church leadership?



How much time each week do you spend on the following activites to develop yourself as a leader?