

## Our Centre Participant Online Survey – March/April 2008

### What You Had to Say

Anyone who had attended an event tied to the Centre or who had been part of our past research had opportunity to complete the survey.

### **Who Took Part**

Of the 88 respondents:

- 62.8% were female
- 72% were married or with partner
- 70% were from south, central or eastern Ontario and 15% were from the Maritimes
- 43.6% were Presbyterian and 37.2% were United, with only 5.3% Anglican and the remaining 13% from 9 other traditions
- 94.7% were clergy
- length of time in ministry varied, but 5 yrs or less was the biggest group at 37.6%
- 80.9% were in a parish or congregation and of those 88.4% said their ministry role and focus was worship leadership, followed closely by pastoral care/visitation at 80.2% and then administration at 58.1%, adult ministry at 52.3% and Christian Education at 48.8%
- 37.8% served in a rural setting, 30% were small town, 21.1% were urban, 16.7% were suburban and 10% were city

How you found us:

- 25.9% were part of our research
- 23.5% heard through word of mouth
- 19.8% saw our print materials
- 17.3% found out at denominational gatherings
- 14.8% got a personal mailing
- 8.6% saw us in a denominational magazine

Staying connected:

You said you were most interested in staying connected to us through e-mail updates (79.5%), the website (54.2%), attending one-time events (42.2%), online learning (25.3%), forming an ongoing support network (25.3%) and attending a series of events (20.5%).

You requested website or e-mail updates on retreat and event dates (43.9%), information on self-care (18.9%), creative/non-traditional continuing education opportunities (13.5%), reading resources and reviews (13.5%), lectures/seminars/courses (8.1%) and retreat centres, support opportunities and worship all got 5.4%.

### **Centre Event Considerations:**

When events were offered mattered most to you, followed by distance, type of site, cost and, finally, length of event.

More respondents preferred spring (40.7%) over any other season, but it was a close rivalry. 58% want to avoid Advent and Lent. 21% would attend weekends excluding Sundays while 7.4% would come on a weekend including Sunday. Mid-week events was the big winner at 70.4%.

76.2% would consider traveling within half a day's drive and 52.4% would come if accommodation options were provided. 35.7% would come if it was in a major city and easily accessible by car/public transit.

74.7% would consider a full day event and 62.7% a two full days event. Next preference was a day and a half (48.2%), followed by a morning or afternoon workshop (47%) and a 3 or 4 day event (41%), with a full week coming in last at 26.5%.

There was not a great preference about the type of site unless it greatly affected cost (57.1%), although 38.1% did prefer a retreat/conference centre.

Participants said they could afford up to \$100/day if breaks/meals/accommodation were included (57.3%). 48.8% said \$50/day with breaks/lunch was workable. Exactly half said for a high quality speaker they would consider more. Of course, comment was made that all of these factors depend on the event.

### **Centre Event Content:**

You ranked these areas by importance to you as follows:

1. a topic of strong interest
2. a solid speaker
3. excellent resources available
4. community and dialogue with peers
5. an emphasis on content for optimum learning
6. balance of learning and personal goals
7. networking with others
8. a variety of learning opportunities and styles
9. an emphasis on worship
10. a variety of workshop leaders and topics
11. quiet and solitude
12. a spiritual director
13. a chaplain

Respondents said they would enjoy attending with a mix of ages (66.7%), a mix of areas of ministry (61%), those from any Protestant denomination and those doing the same role in ministry as me (both at 60%). Both laypeople and clergy (56.4%), those from my “family” of denominations (55.1%) and leadership from outside my tradition (51.3%) filled out the top 6.

You predominantly like to come alone as your time away (70.1%). Only 28.6% said they would like other leaders from their church to come along, and 24.7% would welcome the chance to bring their spouse.

Topics of interest to you:

Encouraging change in congregations – 74.47%  
Signs of healthy congregations – 67.5%  
Nurturing congregational leaders – 63.9%  
Exploring spiritual disciplines – 60.5%  
Finding balance in areas of my life – 54.2%  
Dealing with conflict – 51.8%  
Clergy role and identity – 50.6%  
Tools for mediation – 44.7%  
Crisis management – 37.3%  
Finding time to care for myself – 36.1%  
Coping with grief and broken relationships – 31.6%  
Training in how to set up clergy support groups – 31.6%  
An opportunity to dialogue with other denominations’ leaders – 31.6%  
A marriage enrichment event for clergy and spouses – 26.3%  
Caring for my family as a minister – 22.9%  
An event focusing on the needs of clergy spouses – 21.1%  
Beginning in ministry – 12%  
Transitioning out of ministry – 12%  
A family camp for clergy families – 10.5%

Current needs of leaders in the church (61 responses):

- tools for being an effective leader (10)
- self-care and well-being (9)
- support (8)
- managing change and transition (6)
- boundaries and balance (4)
- empowering laity (4)
- dealing with isolation (4)
- help for presbyteries (4)
- Spirituality (4)
- bridging generations and centuries (3)
- getting churches beyond survival (2)
- clergy shortage (2)
- conflict resolution (2)
- continuing education (2)

- developing creativity (2)
- clergy and congregational awareness of each other's needs
- current resources
- reflection
- more practical and crisis-oriented seminary training

The Canadian context of ministry needs research on (52 responses):

- the need to share the relevance of church and community (9)
- rural and small churches (7), particularly on the prairies
- to help people realize the need of God/religion in their lives (5)
- cross-cultural ministry and regional and cultural differences (3)
- distinctives of our Canadian context (3)
- new ways of being faithful to our current context (2)
- health of clergy (2)
- equipping of the laity (2)
- congregations' views of clergy and their treatment (2), abusive laity
- inter-faith dialogue (2)
- best practices in worship (2)
- inter-denominational dialogue and ministry (2)
- building community in congregations
- contemporary spirituality, spiritual disciplines in Canada
- secondary trauma – training of our own people in not causing
- women in ministry today
- mission/social justice focus
- back to basics
- models of ordained ministry - cooperative ministry, team ministry, bi-vocational ministry
- amalgamation
- grief ministry, youth and family ministry, intergenerational dialogue
- evangelization in Canada
- aging congregations
- same gender relationships
- identifying real needs in the general population
- administrator vs spiritual nurturer
- reasons clergy are inactive and leaving ministry in the PCC

My biggest concerns about the future of the church are (61 responses):

- attitude of survival and mediocrity rather than vision and thriving (10)
- demographic shifts/aging population/meeting the needs of/engaging aging population (7)
- managing change and the unwillingness to change (7)
- relevance in society where other options compete/people don't feel a need for God (6)
- materialism and numeric growth vs. spiritual growth and Jesus' message (6)
- generational disconnect (4)
- serving smaller congregations/multiple charges without clergy overload (3)

- biblical illiteracy (2)
- lack of spiritual direction (2)
- engaging people in their 30s (2)
- unrealistic expectations of clergy/staff (2), aging clergy (1)
- clergy are not equipped (2)
- letting go of buildings (2)
- evangelism (2)
- meeting pastoral care needs as churches close and amalgamate (2)
- decline in authority of the church/Bible (1), acceptance of general church decline (1)
- church politics/structure (2) who will clean up the mess? (1), not naming problems (1), will the denomination be healthy enough to minister to clergy? (1)
- new models/ways to be church (1)
- integrating cultures/ethnicity (1)
- building community (1), training elders (1)
- passing power/leadership to younger generations (1), lack of laity stepping up to serve (1)
- worship is about my needs being met and not worshipping God (1)
- petty fights and gossip in congregations (1)
- working together across denominations
- the rise of evangelical conservatism
- the importance of Christian Education for all ages

Current success stories around me in the church in Canada (46 responses):

- faithful people doing the day in and day out work of ministry and pastoral care (8)
- finding a relevant mission and being faithful to it (5)
- don't know any (4)
- churches who are inclusive, lively, multi-generational, transcend age (3)
- empowerment of laity and church leadership (3), of women (1)
- active evangelism and outreach (2)
- being relevant, flexibility and adaptability (2)
- growing ethnic churches
- thriving city churches – what are the health factors?
- transitioning into eco-friendly and economical buildings
- the church in an advocacy role
- exceptional music ministry/churches using audiovisual components
- ecumenical programs
- mega churches – everyone wants to become one
- thinking outside the box and denominational norms
- often seen as having worship bands/teams – little appreciation for blended Christian practices as a way of 'growing'
- compassionate, caring communities open to the spirit
- Mennonites and Quakers
- 1988 report – leaders who loved their churches thrived, clergy egos did not
- in Nova Scotia, success is mostly outside of church communities

- Innerkip Presbyterian Church, Corner Stone Community Church Klineburg, St. John's Presbyterian Church Bradford, St. Paul's Presbyterian Ingersoll, Connexus Community
- Westminster United Church Whitby ON, Glen Ayr UC in Scarborough ON, North Bramalea United Church, Islington United Church

The Centre for Clergy Care and Congregational Health currently fills the role of (46 responses):

- not too sure or still finding out (16)
- resource for support (7)
- forum for dialogue and research about the church/clergy (5), focus on Canadian context
- resource for skills and con ed events (5)
- nurturing and encouragement, affirmation and hope (4)
- self-care (3)
- exploring possibilities/new areas of learning/education (2)
- resource for clergy and laity and contact when in need (2)
- bringing clergy together for support and reflection (2)
- transition to retirement (2)
- yet to be seen/lots of potential (2)
- development of beginning clergy identity and relations (2)
- reminder of the importance of these topics (1)
- offer a different perspective (1)
- address needs of clergy
- energizing churches

The Centre needs to fill the role of (39 responses):

- place to connect clergy for mutual support/networking (4)
- source of current research in our Canadian context (3), need to act on research (1)
- don't know (3)
- teacher (3), resource person (1), training (1), push use of study leave time (1)
- source of vital resources/information (2)/central clearing house for con ed (1)
- pastor to pastors (2)
- encourage health and self-care (2)
- leadership (2) and visioning (1)
- provide resources to congregations – awareness of clergy needs (2), lay empowerment (2)
- support and motivate passionate ministry (1), support in times of transition (1)
- define professional ministry and rights of clergy (1), advocacy (1)
- as is
- prophetic voice coming out of collective discernment
- giving clergy permission to be vulnerable
- being there to listen, encourage, lift up, be silent, confront and have compassion
- making counseling available
- getting us to think about these things more often and gather together to do so

- helping us think creatively and outside the box to sustain ourselves and our ministries
- reality therapist to the clergy
- longer term pastorates and 're-inventing' yourself
- providing interdenominational dialogue opportunities

Other general comments (21 responses):

- thanks for the opportunity to share my thoughts/give input (5)
- thanks for the work the Centre is doing/being there (3)
- best of luck (2)
- loved the Centre event I attended (2)
- ministry is lonely, e-mail contact reminds new clergy they are not alone
- please be more specific with the real issues and name them
- I refuse to hang out long with people of woe!
- seminaries need to communicate the stress and pressure clergy will encounter when they take on congregational ministry; there is not enough taught on how to balance your life
- need for access to and support of spiritual direction for clergy in UCC
- I have attended one event – I will see if the Centre can provide what I might need
- we need to encourage each other – see each other as colleagues in Christ