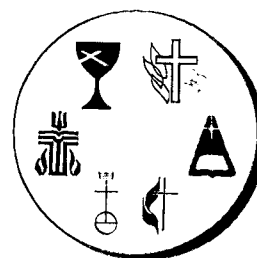


Effective Christian Education:

A National Study of Protestant Congregations



A Six-denomination Report

**EFFECTIVE CHRISTIAN EDUCATION:
A NATIONAL STUDY OF
PROTESTANT CONGREGATIONS**

MARCH, 1990

Prepared by

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This report was prepared for the delegation of Christian educators attending an invitational conference in St. Louis, Missouri on March 24 through 27, 1990. It was prepared by Search Institute staff members Peter L. Benson, Dorothy Williams, and Carolyn Ekin, and Search Institute consultant David Schuller.

This report results from a three-year study funded by the Lilly Endowment, Indianapolis and the six participating denominations:

- Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
- Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
- Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
- Southern Baptist Convention
- United Church of Christ
- United Methodist Church

The project is directed by Search Institute, under the leadership of Peter L. Benson. An advisory committee of members of the participating denominations' staffs provided valuable assistance. A team of seminary scholars also consulted with the project team. Assistance was further provided by a number of research associates representing most of the participating denominations.

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Introduction

In 1987, six Protestant denominations joined hands to launch a three-and-a-half-year research project to evaluate and strengthen congregationally-based Christian education. Unprecedented in size and scope, this project has five major purposes:

- To assess the maturity in faith of adolescents, Christian educators, pastors, and other adults
- To assess adults' and adolescents' loyalty to their congregation and denomination
- To establish the features of congregational life that promote faith maturity and loyalty
- To document the role of Christian education, pinpointing specific programming factors which are associated with growth in mature faith and loyalty
- To implement national strategies enabling congregations to use project results in strengthening their own Christian education programming

The six denominations include five that are often called mainline Protestant denominations: Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), United Church of Christ, and the United Methodist Church. The sixth denomination is the Southern Baptist Convention. The project was conducted by Search Institute, Minneapolis, with the cooperation of the six denominations, and supported by a major grant from the Lilly Endowment, Inc.

The project results constitute both affirmation and challenge for Christian educators. On the one hand, *we learn that effective Christian education is the most powerful single influence congregations have on maturity of faith.* While other congregational dynamics also matter, nothing matters more than effective Christian education. This proves true for both adults and adolescents. Many of the ingredients in an effective program are identifiable, and most of them can be implemented by any congregation, regardless of size or location.

On the other hand, challenge arises from the evidence that *many of the factors needed for effectiveness in Christian education are not currently operating in large numbers of congregations.* Hence, a need for reform in Christian education is clear. If congregations heed the call for strengthening Christian education, many of the problems now plaguing mainline denominations may be arrested, including the highly-publicized loss of members and the equally troubling problem of member inactivity. In revitalizing Christian education, one key task is to achieve a dramatic increase in the percent of members involved in Christian education at all age levels. For mainline denominations these rates are quite low for both adults and high-school-age youth.

How the Project Was Carried Out

In 1988, in-depth surveys were administered in nationally representative samples of congregations. In each of the six denominations, 150 congregations were randomly selected, with sampling stratified by size of congregation (under 200, 201-500, 501-1,000, 1,001 and larger) to ensure representative distribution on this key factor. Within each selected congregation, samples of adults, adolescents (grades 7-12) and teachers were randomly selected for the survey study. In addition, in each of the congregations, the pastor (the senior pastor, when there was more than one) and the head of Christian education were surveyed.

Surveys were administered under the supervision of a project director in each of the 561 participating congregations. Survey sessions were governed by a set of standardized procedures described in a detailed administration manual. Careful procedures were established to guarantee and preserve confidentiality for each respondent. Survey sessions ranged from one-and-one-half to two-and-one-half hours in length.

Congregational participation rates were quite outstanding, exceeding typical response rates for this kind of research. The number and percent of congregations participating from the original random samples of 150 per denomination are as follows:

Denomination	Participating Congregations	Percent of Random Sample
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) [CC]	102	68
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)	110	73
Presbyterian Church in the USA (PC)	101	67
Southern Baptist Convention (SBC)	68	45
United Church of Christ (UCC)	93	62
United Methodist Church (UMC)	87	58

For the five mainline denominations, the combined participation rate was 66 percent (493 of 750). Non-cooperating congregations tended to be those whose leadership was in transition. The participating congregational samples were compared with the known national characteristics of the participating denominations, and found to be proportionately representative on a range of demographic factors. The United Methodist sample tends to overrepresent larger congregations. The Southern Baptist sample, though proportionately small, appears to represent SBC national characteristics. It is not known whether any systematic biases influenced those Southern Baptist congregations that cooperated as compared with those that declined. Since this was an ecumenical study dominated by mainline denominations, it is possible that some strongly independent Southern Baptist congregations chose to decline the invitation.

Overall, 11,122 persons in 561 congregations participated, broken down into participant categories as follows:

Adults (Those adults who are not pastors nor involved in Christian education leadership in any capacity)	3,567
Adolescents	3,121
Christian education teachers	3,466
Coordinators of Christian education	499
Pastors	519
Total	11,122

In each of the denominational samples of congregations, about 65 percent of the randomly chosen adults, adolescents, and teachers participated. About one-half of the non-respondents did not participate because of illness or travel during the survey administration sessions. For

each of the six denominations, adult and adolescent samples slightly overrepresent females and slightly underrepresent inactive members.

Data for adults and youth in each denomination were weighted so that the data maximally represents the national denominational population of adults and youth. When reporting results for all mainline denominations combined, an additional weight was added to ensure that each denomination's contribution to the mainline combined finding was proportionate to its relative size among the five denominations.

The survey study was augmented in 1989 by site visits to 52 individual congregations judged to be particularly effective in helping members grow in maturity of faith. Twenty-nine of these were selected from the surveyed congregations, based on empirical evidence gleaned from the adult and adolescent surveys. The other 23 were racial/ethnic congregations nominated by national and regional denominational staff as being particularly effective in promoting maturity of faith. At least one of the observers of each of these ethnic congregations was from the same cultural background as the congregation. The 23 congregations were distributed as shown below.

	CC	ELCA	PC	SBC	UCC	UMC	Total
African-American, urban		1		1			2
African-American, rural			1		1	1	3
Puerto Rican	1	1			1		3
Mexican-American		1	1	1	1	1	5
American Indian		1			1	1	3
Chinese		1		1	1		3
Korean	1		1			1	3
Japanese						1	1

Teams of trained observers, composed largely of denominational staff on the project advisory committee, research associates who served as consultants for the project, and Search Institute staff, visited the 52 congregations between February and June, 1989. Each team prepared a site visit report identifying those congregational features, including Christian education, associated with effectiveness.

Structure of This Report

This report is divided into three sections:

- I. Maturity of Faith and Loyalty
- II. Signs of a Need for Change
- III. Opportunities for New Directions

By decision of the Advisory Committee, all reports contain findings for all six denominations, as well as the five mainline denominations combined. The highlights found at the beginning of each section by no means exhaust the learnings and

opportunities available through study of the information presented. Rather, they serve as illustrations of what the data offer.

In using this report, it will be helpful to read the companion document, *Project Summary*, first. It is available from Search Institute. In it will be found further information about the major concepts measured--maturity of faith, growth in mature faith, congregational loyalty, and denominational loyalty. Caution should be exercised in making denominational comparisons on individual scales or percentages. Even when statistically significant differences occur, the differences are not particularly meaningful, since denominational affiliation, we find, has much less to do with the faith and loyalty of adults and youth than do the dynamics of congregational life.

NOTE: Except where otherwise indicated, responses attributed to youth are those of young people aged 13 to 18 years of age. Where results for adults are reported, only those adults who are not coordinators or ministers of Christian education, not pastors, and not teachers are included. Parenthetical letters in the Highlights sections identify the chart in that section where related data are found.

Sample Sizes, Congregational Surveys

Denomination	Adults	Adolescents	Teachers	Coord- inators.	Pastors	Total
CC (Disciples)	709	439	583	79	95	1905
ELCA	656	865	752	97	102	2472
PC (U.S.A.)	712	431	610	79	91	1923
UCC	473	710	582	80	86	1931
UMC	594	394	519	69	82	1658
Total, Five Mainline Denominations Combined	3,144	2,839	3,046	404	456	9,889
SBC	423	282	420	45	63	1,233
Total, Six Denominations Combined	3,567	3,121	3,466	449	519	11,122

(In reports prepared for each of the individual denominations a brief overview of the denomination's history and uniqueness is given. The denominational context of the United Methodist Church is given here as illustrative of the content of "Denominational Context" presented in each of the denominational reports.)

Denominational Context: UMC

United Methodists understand themselves to be a pilgrim people under the Lordship of Christ. They have proclaimed and sought to exemplify the vital connection between personal faith and social holiness. They have encouraged response to the gospel through personal growth in faith and through mission and service in the world. This study addresses itself to the question of how well United Methodists are currently carrying out that mandate in the United States.

Situated at the center of mainline Protestantism, the denomination has experienced the crisis facing such churches signaled by decreasing membership, financial pressures, and the erosion of its distinctive influence in American social life. What are the distinctive gifts and perspectives of the people of the United Methodist Church?

- *Doctrine and Christian Life* - The core of United Methodist theology is the primacy of grace, which unites knowledge and vital piety. The gospel as grace (prevenient grace, justifying grace, and sanctifying grace) is to be applied to life. The purpose of theology is to aid people in relating the gospel to individual and corporate life. Doctrine is to address the crisis of modern life as well as to pass on the heritage of Christian tradition.
- *Wrestling with Contemporary Culture* - While affirming its relationship to the historic Christian faith and its formal doctrinal standards, the United Methodist Church has sought to challenge as well as to relate to contemporary culture. Issues related to nuclear weapons, the environment, U. S. political involvement in Central America, racism, sexism, ageism—concerns related to justice, dignity and peace—form much of the agenda of the church and its mission. In addition, United Methodists have also wrestled with concerns that directly impinge on individual personhood, such as substance abuse and human sexuality.
- *Doctrinal Guidelines* - Theological inquiry about issues of personal and corporate life is encouraged. United Methodists acknowledge four important guidelines. 1) *scripture* is understood to be the unique story of God's self revelation to humankind; 2) *tradition* as a critical acceptance of the corporate experiences of earlier Christians; 3) *experience* as the personal appropriation of God's grace; and 4) *reason* as the basis for a critical analysis of doctrines, tradition, and experience. Although Scripture is seen as primary, the four guidelines are interdependent, with each playing an indispensable role.
- *A Connectional Church* - The polity of the United Methodist Church revolves around two poles: the congregation as the local and voluntary fellowship of Christians and the world-wide expression of the church. United Methodists believe the Holy Spirit nurtures the faith of individuals primarily through the life and ministry of the congregation but also through the wider spheres of the mission and outreach of the church. The connectional character of United Methodist ministry emphasizes the interdependence of

congregational and whole church initiatives for Christian education within the theological guidelines and administrative structures of the denomination.

- *Social Principles* - United Methodists see God's grace and human activity working together in the relationship of faith and good works. Central to United Methodist tradition is a concern with social justice. The church historically opposed slavery, child labor, drunkenness, and inhuman prison conditions. The latest statement of Social Principles interprets for this moment the call to a prophetic spirit in addressing issues related to ecology, family and sexuality, racial and ethnic minorities, women, property, work, issues related to political responsibility and the world community.

This report will enable leaders on every level of the United Methodist Church to see how the people called United Methodist are responding to God's call to their distinctive mission. What is the quality of faith found in the pews? How is this being demonstrated in the broader community? How effective are local churches in nurturing a vital faith? How loyal are members to their church? The answers will set the stage for discussion of what this picture means and then raise the question of strategies for more faithfully and effectively responding to God's call to mission and ministry.

Part I

Maturity of Faith and Loyalty

The primary purpose of this section is to report findings from the denominations on:

Maturity of faith - The degree to which congregations' members and leaders exhibit a vibrant, life-transforming faith marked by both a deep, personal relationship to a loving God and a consistent devotion to serving others.

Growth in maturity of faith - The degree to which persons report that their faith has grown in the last two or three years.

Denominational loyalty - The degree to which persons are committed to membership in their denomination.

Congregational loyalty - The degree to which persons are committed to membership in their local congregations.

Findings about these four, to which much of the following report bears reference, are presented on the following pages.

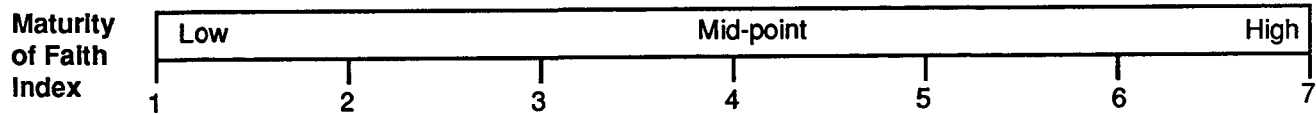
Highlights

- Central questions whose answers were sought in this study are these: how mature is members' faith? How loyal to the denomination are they? or to their congregation? The answers to these important questions begin on the following pages.
- On the Maturity of Faith Index (A3)¹, congregational leaders (pastors, teachers and coordinators of Christian education) tend to have higher scores than adults or adolescents. For all six denominations, scores occur in this order, from higher to lower:
 - * Pastors
 - * Coordinators of Christian Education
 - * Teachers
 - * Adults
 - * Adolescents
- On the Denominational Loyalty Index (Figures C1 and C2), no such clear pattern emerges, with adult members showing averages similar to or higher than those of teachers and coordinators.
- Best use of the rankings in this part of the report is to note patterns in the rankings and to identify the degree of consistency in which a particular denomination ranks toward the top, the middle, or the bottom. One of the striking patterns visible in Figure E is the degree to which all the respondent groups of a given denomination (adults, youth, etc.) appear at the same or nearly the same point in the continuum.
- In this summary and on the pages that follow, we occasionally make comparative statements about denominational differences in faith maturity and loyalty. While these differences have import for understanding the people that make up the denominations, they should not be overinterpreted. The range in denominational averages on maturity of faith and loyalty are relatively small, suggesting that denominations are more similar to each other than different, and that though some of them may reach statistical significance, they are rarely of such magnitude as to have major practical import. When compared with other factors, denomination has less to do with the faith and loyalty of adults and adolescents than many other factors. Age and gender, for instance, are more strongly related to faith and loyalty than is denomination. Ultimately, the factors most predictive of the maturity and loyalty of its members have to do with the quality of congregational life (e.g., climate, worship, quality of Christian education). These are much more powerful than denomination in affecting the development of loyalty and faith.

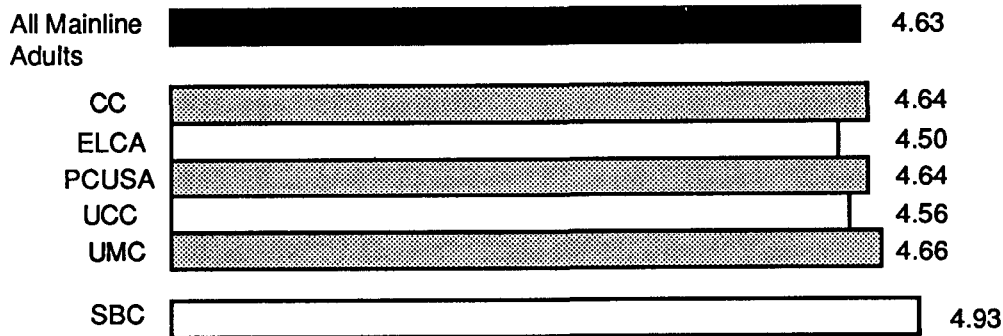
¹ Where parenthetical numbers appear in overviews in this report, they identify individual graphs that illustrate the conclusion being suggested in the paragraph. However, several of the summary statements here apply to most or all of the graphs and hence have no following graph designation.

A1. Maturity of Faith: Adults and Youth

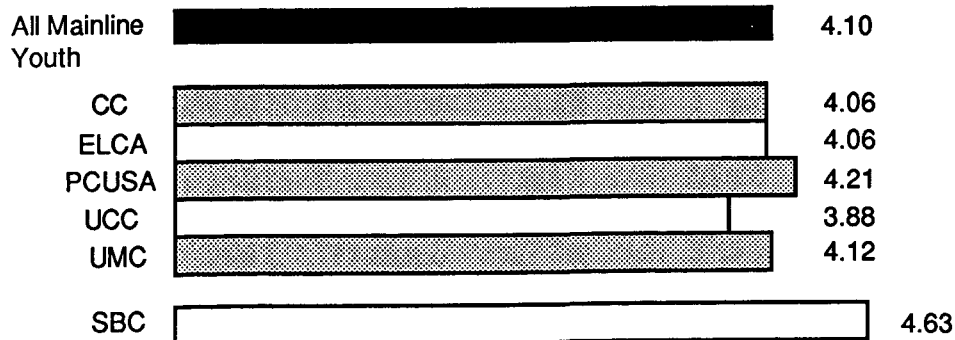
The Maturity of Faith Index measures the degree to which a person embodies 38 indicators of a full, vibrant, and life-changing faith. The 38 indicators are listed in the Appendix. Scores on the index range from 1 (low) to 7 (high). The national average score derived for mainline Protestant adults in this study is 4.63.



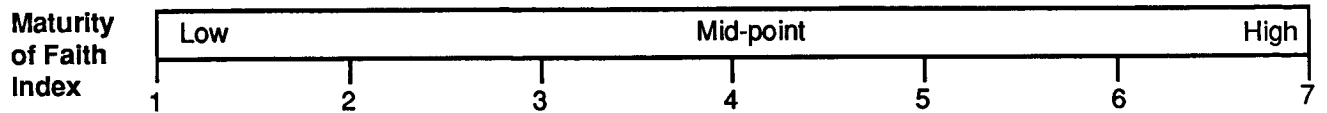
AVERAGE SCORES: ADULTS



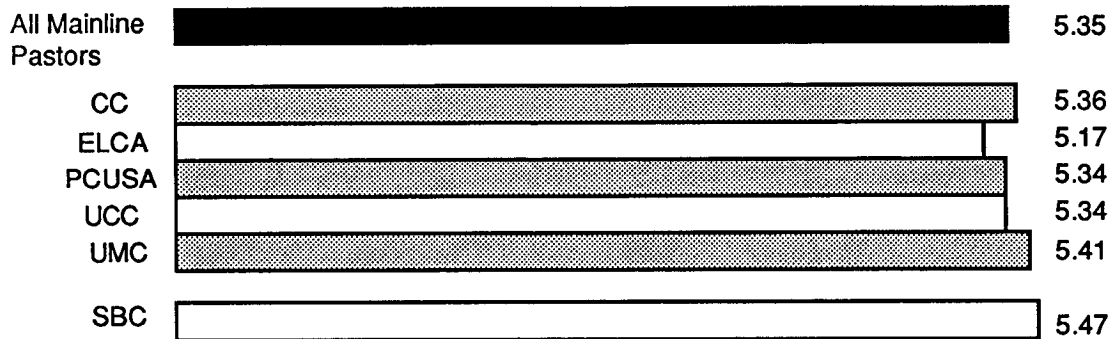
AVERAGE SCORES: YOUTH



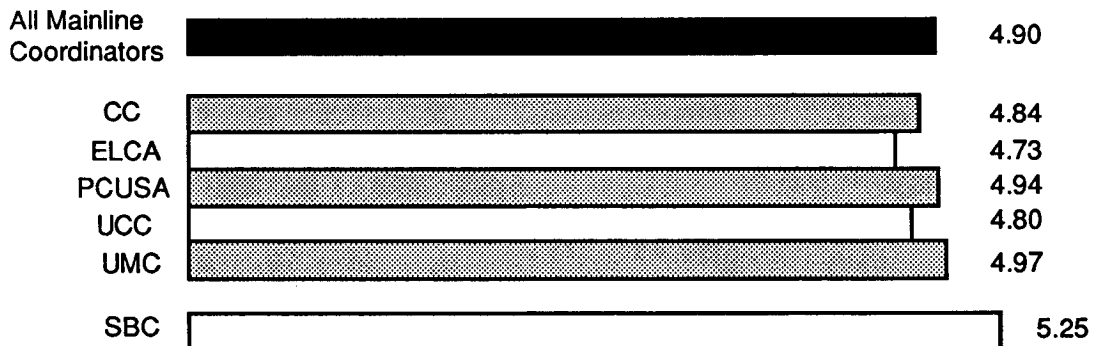
A2. Maturity of Faith: Congregational Leaders



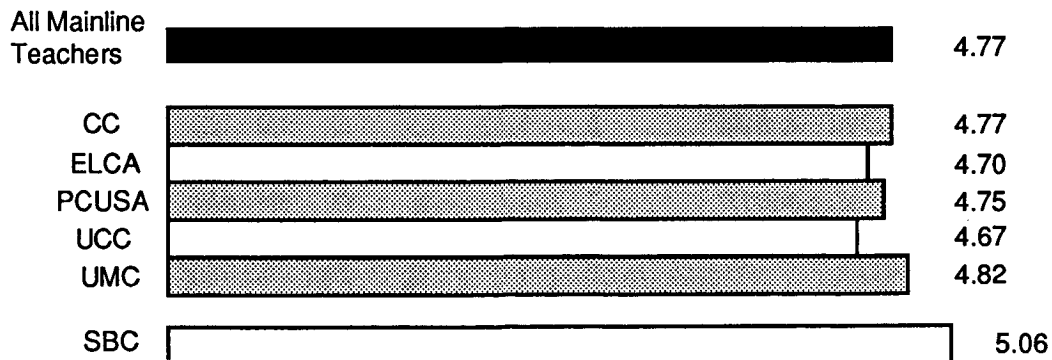
AVERAGE SCORES: PASTORS



AVERAGE SCORES: COORDINATORS

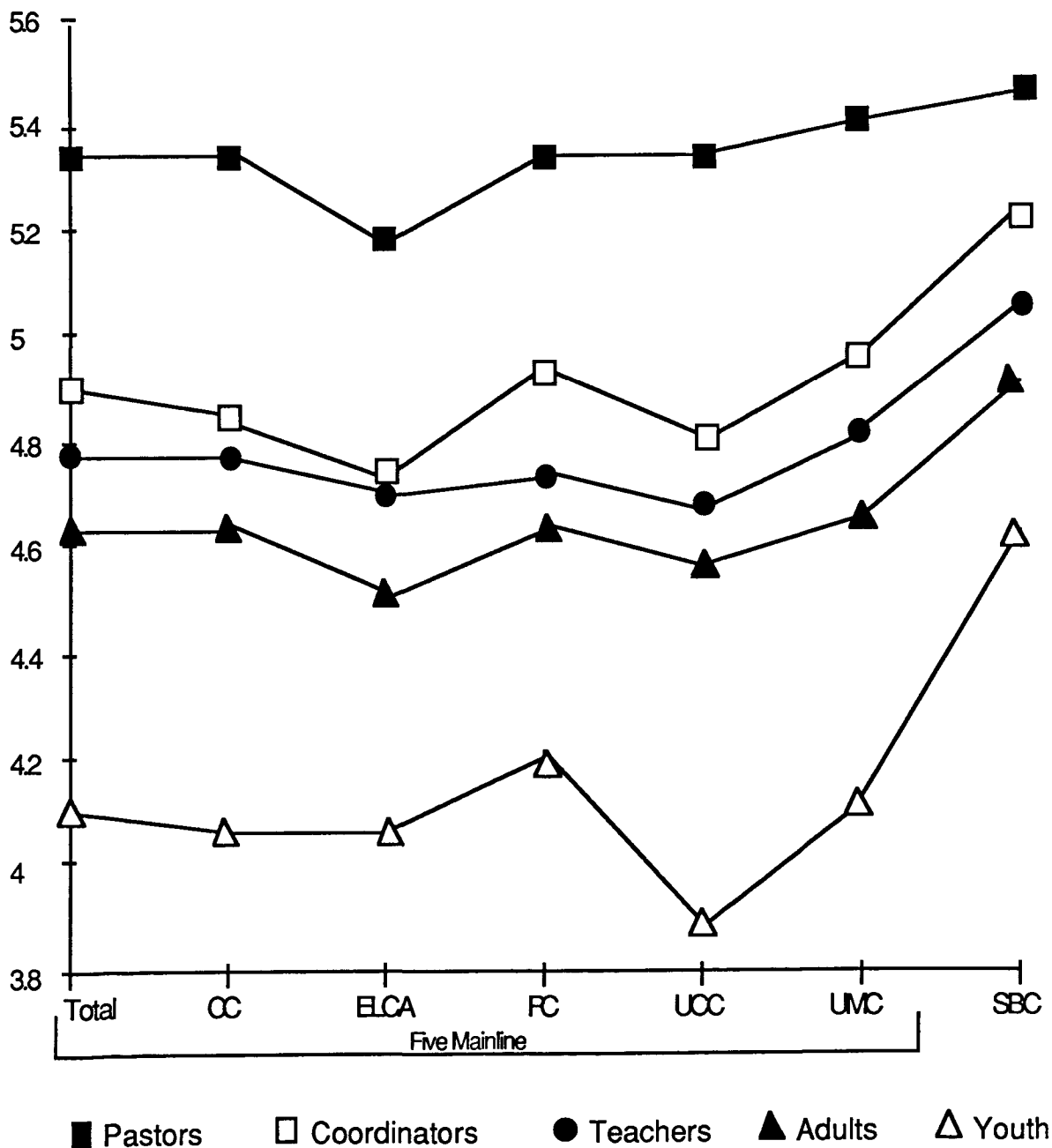


AVERAGE SCORES: TEACHERS



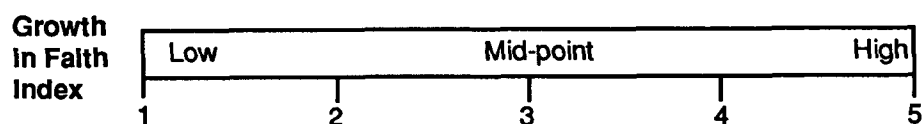
A3. Maturity of Faith

On the two preceding pages, Maturity of Faith scores for the six denominations tend to make the differences between members of the denominations seem very slight. However, differences are readily visible when we enlarge the middle of the range. The theoretical range on the Maturity of Faith Index is from 1 to 7, but this graph includes only from 3.8 to 5.6. This expanded view makes it possible to see that scores of the five participant groups in all denominations appear in the following order: pastors, Christian education coordinators, teachers, adults and youth.

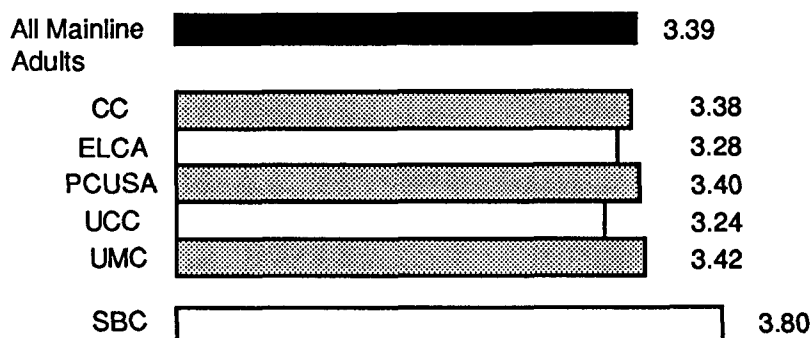


B1. Growth in Faith: Adults and Youth

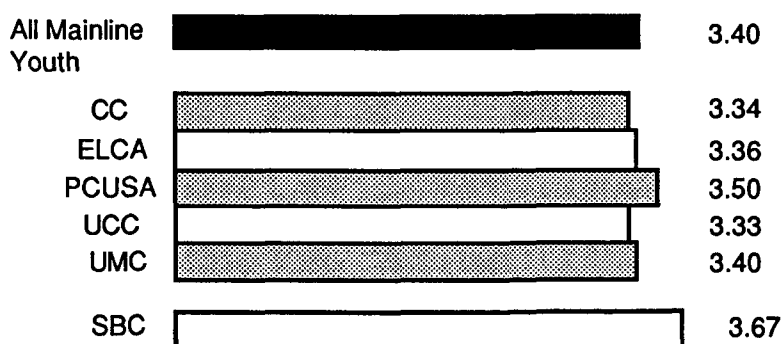
The Growth in Faith Index measures the degree to which a person has moved closer to a full, vibrant, and life-changing faith during the last two to three years. This 18-item index is presented in the Appendix. The index is scored from 1 (low) to 5 (high). The national average score for mainline Protestant adults is 3.39.



AVERAGE SCORES: ADULTS



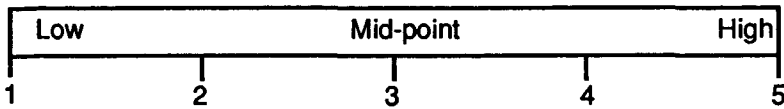
AVERAGE SCORES: YOUTH



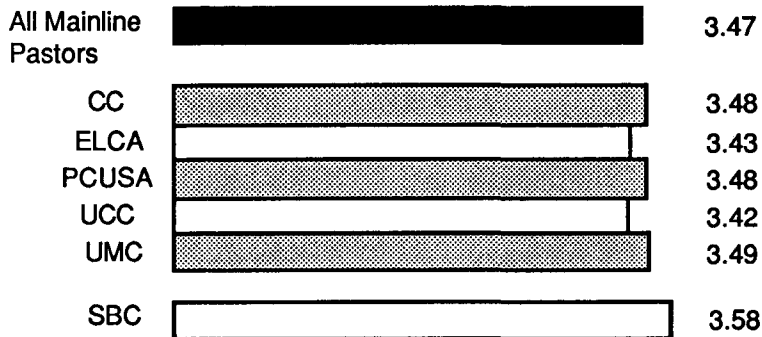
Note: While the Maturity of Faith Index is based on a seven-point scale, this and the two loyalty indexes that follow are based on a five-point scale.

B2. Growth in Faith: Congregational Leaders

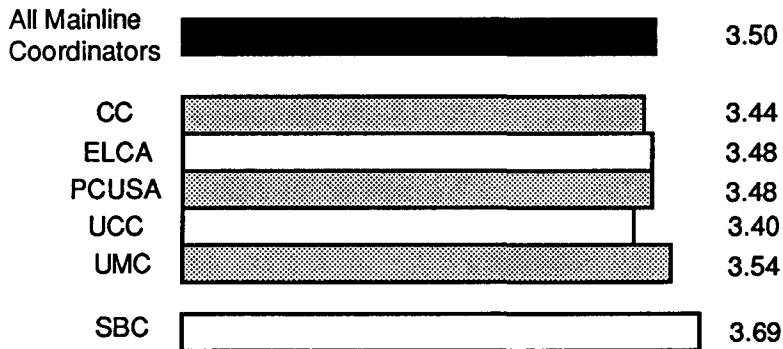
Growth
In Faith
Index



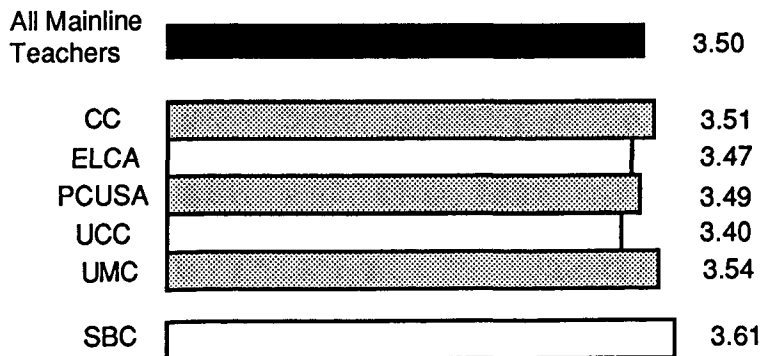
AVERAGE SCORES: PASTORS



AVERAGE SCORES: COORDINATORS

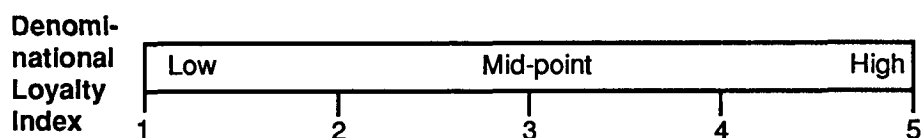


AVERAGE SCORES: TEACHERS

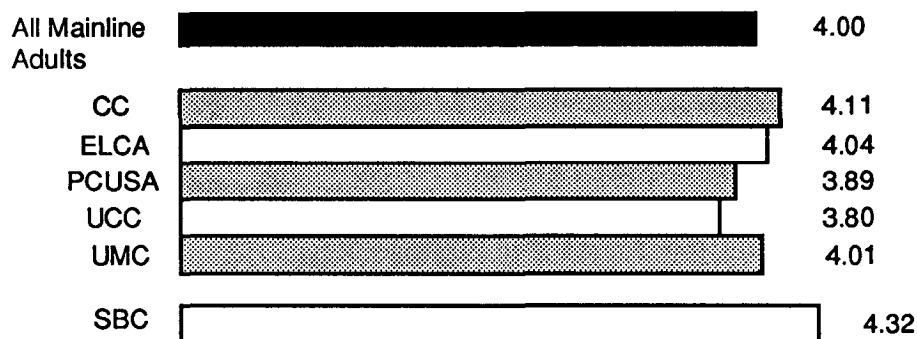


C1. Denominational Loyalty: Adults and Youth

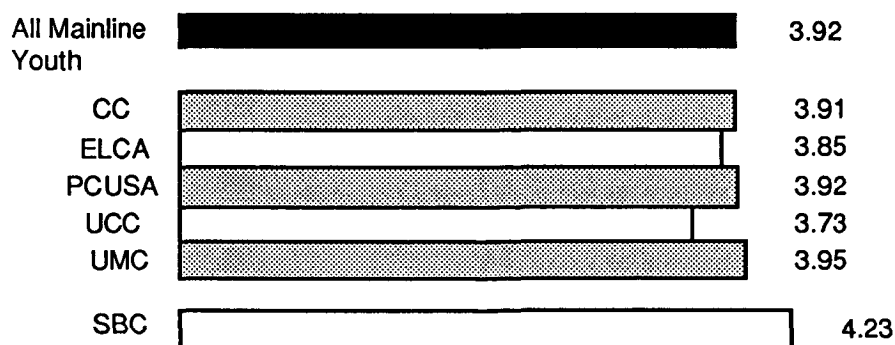
Denominational loyalty is an index of commitment to one's denomination. It includes items such as this: "If you moved to another city that had many churches from which to choose, would you attend a church of the same denomination you now attend?" The index ranges from 1 (low) to 5 (high). The national average for mainline adults is 4.00. Listed here are averages for adults, adolescents, and church leaders.



AVERAGE SCORES: ADULTS

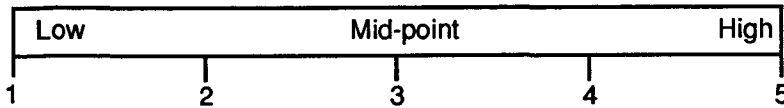


AVERAGE SCORES: YOUTH

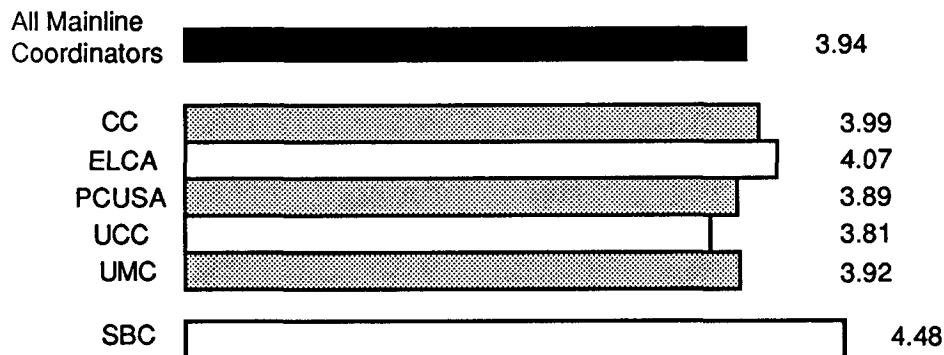


C2. Denominational Loyalty: Congregational Leaders

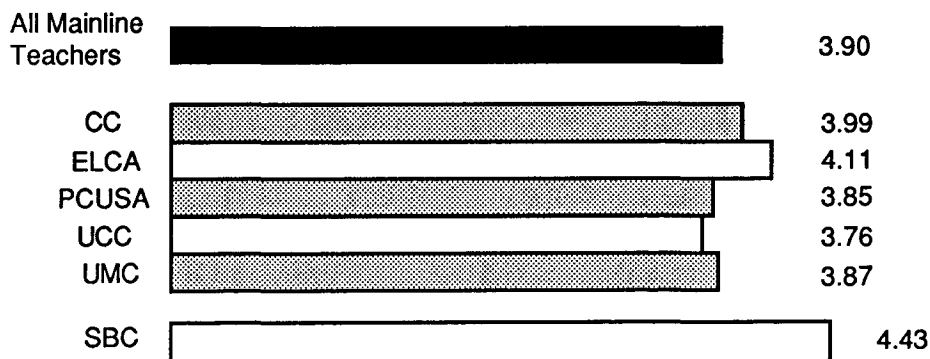
Denomi-
national
Loyalty
Index



AVERAGE SCORES: COORDINATORS



AVERAGE SCORES: TEACHERS

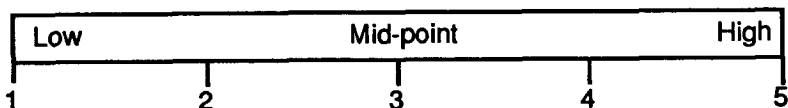


Note: Because the issue of loyalty to the denomination is quite different for pastors than for others they were not asked to respond to the questions for this scale

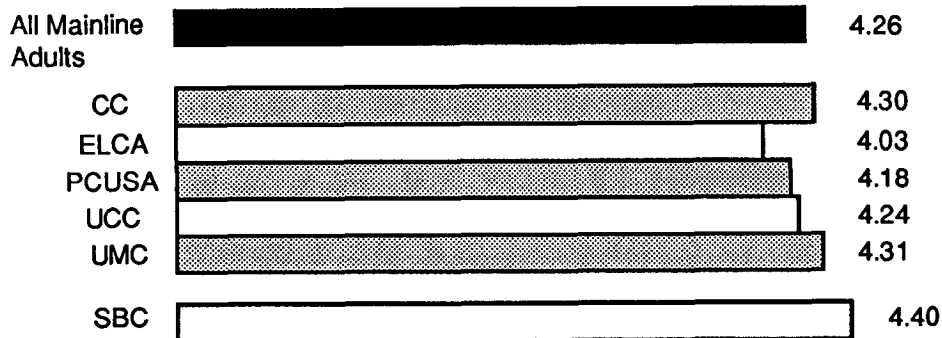
D1. Congregational Loyalty: Adults and Youth

Congregational loyalty is an index of commitment to one's congregation. It includes items such as: "The congregation I attend means a great deal to me." The index ranges from 1 (low) to 5 (high). The national average for mainline adults is 4.26.

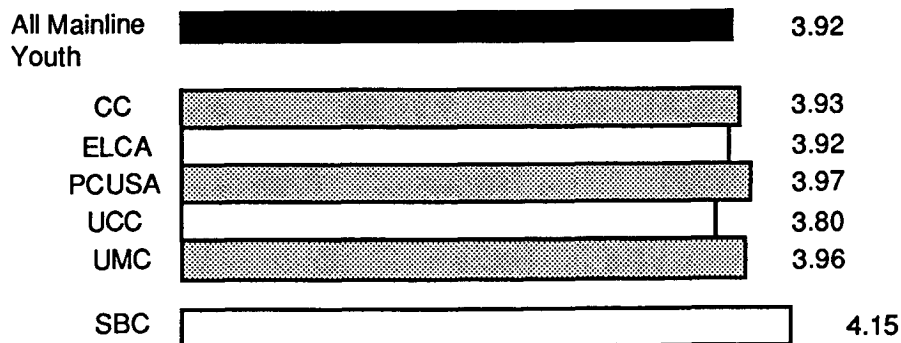
Congre-
gational
Loyalty
Index



AVERAGE SCORES: ADULTS

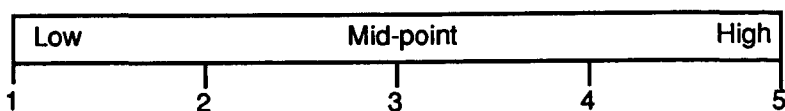


AVERAGE SCORES: YOUTH

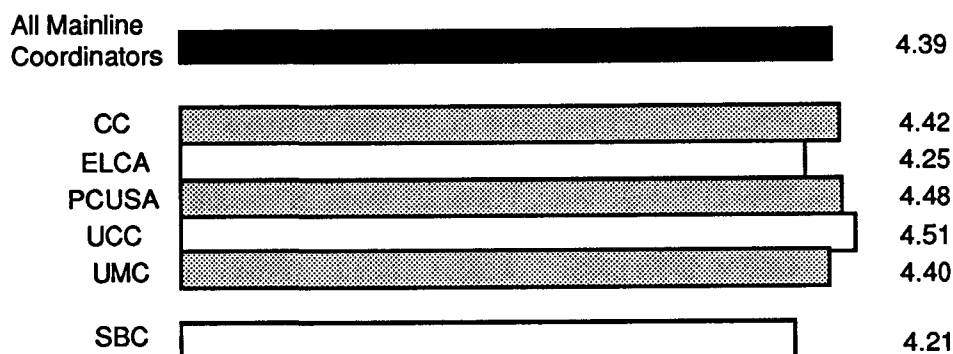


D2. Congregational Loyalty: Congregational Leaders

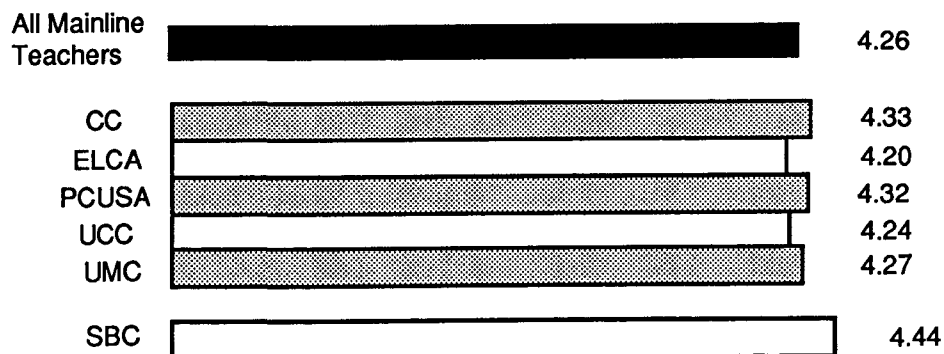
Congre-
gational
Loyalty
Index



AVERAGE SCORES: COORDINATORS



AVERAGE SCORES: TEACHERS



Note: Because the issue of loyalty to the congregation is quite different for pastors than for others they were not asked to respond to the questions for this scale

E. Summary of Denominational Findings

The six denominations are listed in rank order below, from high to low. The asterisk (*) indicates places where statistically significant differences occur. See footnote below. The differences should be treated with caution. The differences across on any one measure (e.g., maturity of faith among adults) are of very little practical significance. Greater significance can be attached to such patterns as the consistency with which a denomination tends to find itself at the upper, middle, or lower portion of the range.

S = Southern Baptist Convention
 C = Christian Church, Disciples of Christ
 E = Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
 P = Presbyterian Church of U.S.A.
 U = United Church of Christ
 M = United Methodist Church

Higher
←
→
 Lower

MATURITY OF FAITH

Adults	S	*	M	C	P	*	U	E	
Adolescents	S	*	P	*	M	C	E	*	U
Pastors	S		M	C	P		U	*	E
Teachers	S	*	M	C	P		E		U
Coordinators	S	*	M	P	C		U		E

GROWTH IN FAITH MATURITY, Last 2-3 years

Adults	S	*	M	P	C	*	E		U
Adolescents	S	*	P	*	M	E		C	U
Pastors	S		M	C	P		E		U
Teachers	S	*	M	C	P		E	*	U
Coordinators	S	*	M	E	P		C		U

DENOMINATIONAL LOYALTY

Adults	S	*	C	E	M	*	P	U
Adolescents	S	*	M	P	C		E	* U
Teachers	S	*	E	*	C	*	M	P * U
Coordinators	S	*	E	C	M		P	U

CONGREGATIONAL LOYALTY

Adults	S	*	M	C	U		P	*	E
Adolescents	S	*	P	M	C	*	U		E
Teachers	S	*	C	P	M		U		E
Coordinators	U		P	C	M		E		S

Note: Denominations to the left of the asterisk (*) have significantly higher scores than denominations to the right. The difference among denominations between two asterisks are not statistically significant. In maturity of faith for adults, for example, S is significantly higher than all other denominations; U and E are significantly lower than S, M, C, and P, and the differences among M, C, and P are not statistically significant.

Part II

Signs of a Need for Change

This study reveals a number of signals indicating that belief, behavior, and participation in a life of commitment fall below the threshold of reasonable expectations, as they might be defined by those who are committed to the long-term health and vitality of Protestant denominations and congregations.

This section points out those signals. It does not make for encouraging reading. But when we seek redirection and renewal within the church, we need a clear view of the nature and dimensions of the task ahead.

Part III of this report concentrates on research results that illustrate ways in which the church can nurture among its members both greater maturity of faith and deeper commitment to the body of Christ, the church.

Part II: Highlights UMC

(In reports prepared for each of the individual denominations, the highlights section focuses on findings of particular interest to that group. These three pages present highlights from Part II of the report to the United Methodist Church, most populous of the mainline denominations. It is illustrative of the sections prepared for the other denominations' reports.)

- **Patterns of response.** The responses of United Methodists tend to fall into certain persistent patterns. Percentage figures that, standing alone, might otherwise be called into question are repeated or corroborated in numerous parts of the data, supporting their validity. The reader's task, then, is to begin by permitting an overall picture of the United Methodist Church to emerge from the data. Then, with that overall perspective, the reader is ready to think about what the report means, and what is ahead by way of celebration or of work toward constructive change and growth in the church.
- **Types of faith.** While United Methodist adults evidence a pattern of faith type similar to that of other mainline Protestants, an examination of the percentages on this page suggests an extra edge of strength. Among adults, adolescents, pastors, Christian education coordinators and teachers, slightly more of the United Methodists than other denominations demonstrate a mature, integrated faith. Nevertheless, the challenge remains in that one-third of adults and two-thirds of adolescents still show an undeveloped faith. (A)
- **Adult beliefs and behaviors.** Patterns of faith are often reflected in belief and behavior. While most of the problems indicated in table B1 show United Methodists to manage, sometimes by a perceptible margin (as in "never or rarely talk about the work of God in your life"), to be less inactive in Christian behavior than the mainline mean, there is yet education to be done. A substantial percentage of United Methodist adults (68%) have some difficulty in accepting salvation as God's gift. Other challenges appear in three areas:
 - a) **Witness and devotional practice** — While United Methodist adults report more frequent witness than their peers, two-thirds rarely encourage anyone else to believe in Jesus Christ. About the same number do not read the Bible.
 - b) **Personal service** — About half report helping families, the poor, or by serving on task forces.
 - c) **Social justice** — Three-quarters are rarely or never involved in working toward social justice. (B1)
- **Adolescents' beliefs and behaviors.** As is true of youth in other mainline denominations, United Methodist young people reflect a different picture from the adults. They witness even less; fewer than 40 percent ever talk about God in their lives. Only 15 percent read the Bible. But larger numbers are involved in direct service to people in need. However, about one-third show some interest in learning how to talk about their faith with others, and more than a quarter would like to learn how to pray. (B2)
- **Loyalty to the congregation.** United Methodist adults show a slightly higher loyalty to their congregation than their mainline peers in every age category. That loyalty increases with age, to the point where a substantial 87 percent of the oldest group indicates high loyalty to their congregations. (C2)
- **Loyalty to the denomination.** Connectional polity and heritage notwithstanding, in common with other mainline groups, United Methodists show higher loyalty to their congregation

than to their denomination. Loyalty to the denomination also increases with age, though that loyalty never grows quite as strong as that shown to the congregation. (C2)

- *Loyalty of youth.* The tendency toward slightly greater loyalty appears also with the youth, whose anticipated participation in church life is, by one percentage point, higher than that of the youth of any other mainline denomination. (C3)
- *Congregational life - adults' view.* In evaluating congregational life, United Methodist adults give high marks to five areas of work, including strong Christian education programs for children, teenagers, and adults. They find the worship services uplifting. In fact, in virtually every area rated, United Methodist adults rated their congregational life more highly than did adults in other mainline churches. (D)
- *Congregational life - adolescents' view.* When young United Methodists evaluate congregational life, like the adults, they too tend to rank nearly all areas quite highly. At the top of their joint rating list come a number of essentials--learning who God is, finding out what the church has to teach about God, Jesus, and the Bible, and knowing and loving Jesus Christ. Learning to love life comes somewhat higher in their evaluation than it does for youth of several other denominations. Identification of the worrisome ratings lower in the list will occur according to the reader's priorities (D)
- *Youth at risk.* Youths report of "At-risk Behaviors" indicates how well they are coping with pressures to become involved in negative behaviors. Cultural pressures to drink appear to be winning over the customary stand of United Methodists against the use of alcohol. Fewer use marijuana in the lower grades but this number increases sharply in the last years of high school. Sexual intercourse similarly increases with grade level. Four of every ten young United Methodists report participating in three or more at-risk indicators, a problem worth attention. (E)
- *Special topics in education.* United Methodist churches apparently make some effort to address such issues, though over half of the youth report fewer than 5 hours of instruction or discussion at church at any time in their lives in such areas as sex or drugs and alcohol. More of the educational energy of the church appears to be invested in teaching youth how to help others, whether in their church or outside it. (F)
- *A thinking climate.* In evaluating the "thinking climate" of their churches, United Methodist adults roughly parallel their peers in other mainline denominations. Over 60 percent find their church interesting and report they "learn a lot." Young people are less enthusiastic about the climate of thought than the adults, with positive reports coming from an average of about 45 percent of the youth. Almost half admit that they learn a lot, and that the church expects them to think. (G)
- *Adult participation in Christian education.* More United Methodist adults report being active in programs of Christian education than do members of most of the other mainline churches, with 45 percent reporting their involvement of 40 hours or more per year. But fully one-third spend ten hours or less per year in any Christian education activity. (H)
- *Problems in Christian education.* According to United Methodist coordinators of Christian education, the problems that most severely hinder effective Christian education center on a failure among many members to set a high priority on Christian education. "Busy schedules of adults and teenagers" implies that other things seem more important to potential learners of all ages. Lack of parent interest in their children's learning and a corresponding lack of interest in their own learning reinforce the message that adults tend to let learning about their faith fall to the bottom of the list. Difficulty in recruiting teachers and leaders suggests that Christian education is not a high priority with many United Methodists.

There is a piece of good news in that only 4 percent of coordinators list the quality of resources to be a hindrance to effective Christian education. (I)

A careful study of the data in the next section of this report, "Opportunities for New Directions," will present possible ways in which the realities behind the data summarized above can be approached within the denomination and in individual congregations.

A. Types of Faith

The 38-item Maturity of Faith Index has two major themes running through it: a **Vertical** theme, defined as the degree to which one has developed a deep, life-transforming relationship to a loving God, and a **Horizontal** theme, defined as the actions designed to promote the welfare of others. A person with a mature faith embodies both of these dimensions into an integrated whole. This page shows the percentages of members of the six denominations who fall into these faith categories:

<u>Faith type</u>	<u>Vertical Theme</u>	<u>Horizontal Theme</u>
Undeveloped faith	Low	Low
Vertical faith	High	Low
Horizontal faith	Low	High
Integrated faith	High	High

	Total	Five Mainline (Percentages)					
		CC	ELCA	PC	UCC	UMC	SBC
Adults							
Undeveloped faith	36	38	47	37	38	33	23
Vertical faith	10	13	13	9	11	10	25
Horizontal faith	22	19	17	20	22	23	3
Integrated faith	32	31	24	34	29	34	49
Adolescents							
Undeveloped faith	63	68	65	56	67	63	40
Vertical faith	7	4	3	5	2	9	19
Horizontal faith	19	19	23	27	25	17	12
Integrated Faith	11	9	9	13	6	11	30
Pastors							
Undeveloped faith	4	3	11	3	4	2	0
Vertical faith	5	6	6	6	2	5	30
Horizontal faith	11	8	16	17	25	6	3
Integrated faith	80	82	67	75	69	87	67
C.E.Coordinators							
Undeveloped faith	22	27	35	19	29	17	7
Vertical faith	16	23	19	15	13	15	34
Horizontal faith	15	13	11	15	18	16	2
Integrated faith	47	38	35	51	41	52	57
Teachers							
Undeveloped faith	29	30	35	31	36	25	13
Vertical faith	16	17	18	14	11	16	35
Horizontal faith	16	11	15	17	21	16	4
Integrated faith	39	42	32	39	33	42	49

B1. Problems of Belief and Behavior: Adults
--

	Total	Five OC	Mainline ELCA PC UCC UMC (Percentages)	SBC			
Behavior							
28. Never or rarely encouraged someone to believe in Jesus Christ	66	67	68	70	72	65	38
29. Never or rarely talk about the work of God in your life	42	40	50	45	53	39	15
30. Never marched, met or gathered with others to promote social change	72	75	79	69	71	71	80
38. Do not engage in daily prayer	57	62	62	64	66	55	43
41. Do not read the Bible when alone	66	62	75	77	68	65	26
42. Read other religious materials (magazines, books, etc) once a month or less	51	57	63	62	65	48	41
32. Never donated time to helping the poor, hungry, sick, or those unable to help themselves	52	41	56	47	51	52	45
36. Never spent time improving home town by serving on task force, promoting arts, etc	52	62	59	53	54	50	71
33. Never gave time to helping children, youth, or families	47	50	59	49	54	44	51
35. Never spent time promoting social justice	78	82	88	78	80	75	83
Belief							
72. Believe individuals should arrive at their own religious beliefs independent of any church	29	31	31	28	35	28	24
110. Have difficulty accepting salvation as a gift rather than something earned (Question reads "I believe I must obey God's rules and commandments in order to be saved")	67	70	61	61	58	68	42
Low Interest In							
		(Percentage "no interest" or "slight interest")					
337. Learning about people of other racial & ethnic groups	37	43	45	40	37	34	36
345. Having my talents & abilities used by my church	43	40	46	43	49	42	29
343. Spending time with children & teenagers at church	53	47	54	55	55	52	33
342. Helping to conduct worship services	51	39	54	56	53	51	34
344. Opportunity to be a leader in my church	54	51	62	59	58	52	39
336. Peacemaking & social justice activities	49	54	57	55	56	46	51

Note: A longer list of interests, all of which rank higher than these listed here, is given in Part III C.

B2. Problems of Belief and Behavior: Youth

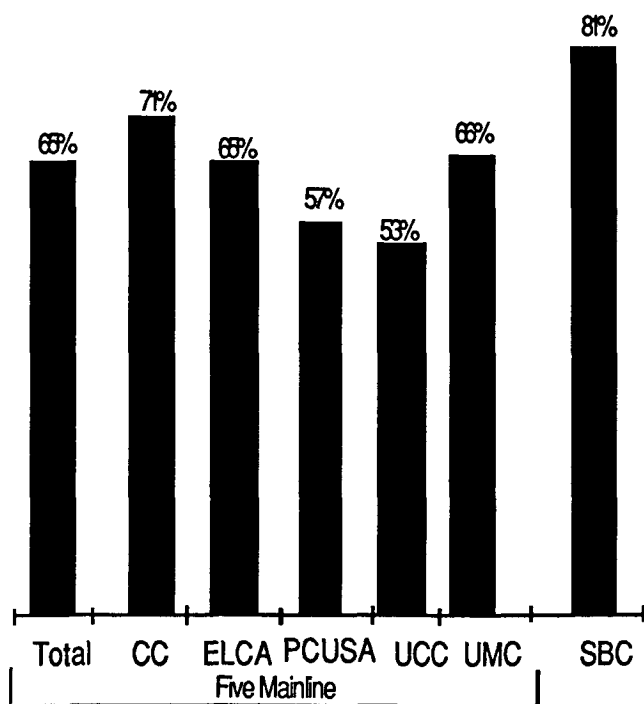
	Total	Five CC	Mainline ELCA PC UCC UMC (Percentages)	SBC
Behavior				
28. Never or rarely encouraged someone to believe in Jesus Christ	73	73	80 75 83 70	52
29. Never or rarely talk about the work of God in your life	64	71	70 63 79 62	43
30. Never marched, met or gathered with others to promote social change	51	49	42 48 51 54	55
38. Do not engage in daily prayer	72	71	71 67 82 72	53
41. Do not read the Bible when alone	86	91	91 82 92 86	52
32. Never donated time to helping the poor, hungry, sick, or those unable to help themselves	58	55	60 59 57 57	53
36. Never spent time improving home town by serving on task force, promoting arts, etc	47	60	51 50 46 45	58
35. Never spent time promoting social justice	71	75	67 66 77 72	82
Belief				
72. Believe individuals should arrive at their own religious beliefs independent of any church	45	41	45 38 45 46	29
110. Have difficulty accepting salvation as a gift rather than something earned (Question reads "I believe I must obey God's rules and commandments in order to be saved")	46	56	47 46 37 45	54
Low Interest in				
	(Percentage "no interest" or "slight interest")			
330. Learning about other racial and ethnic groups	21	25	20 18 28 22	22
331. Getting to know adults in my church	23	20	22 17 21 24	8
359. Learning how to talk about my faith with other people	32	31	32 25 43 32	8
335. Learning how to pray and meditate	26	30	24 21 36 28	6
354. Learning to be a peacemaker	29	27	26 19 35 31	17

Note: A longer list of interests, all of which rank higher than these listed here, is given in Part III C.

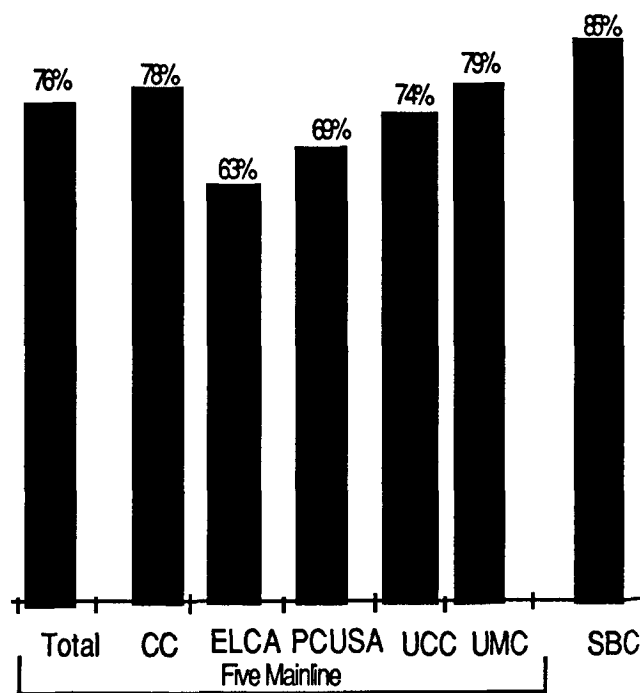
C1. Loyalty to Denomination and Congregation: Adults

A majority of adults in the six denominations are solidly committed to both their congregation and denomination. Below are displayed the percentages who are highly committed (determined by counting the percentage of respondents scoring 4.0 or higher on each 5-point scale). There are, however, important generational differences in loyalty, as shown on the following page.

Denominational Loyalty
(% with high loyalty)



Congregational Loyalty
(% with high loyalty)



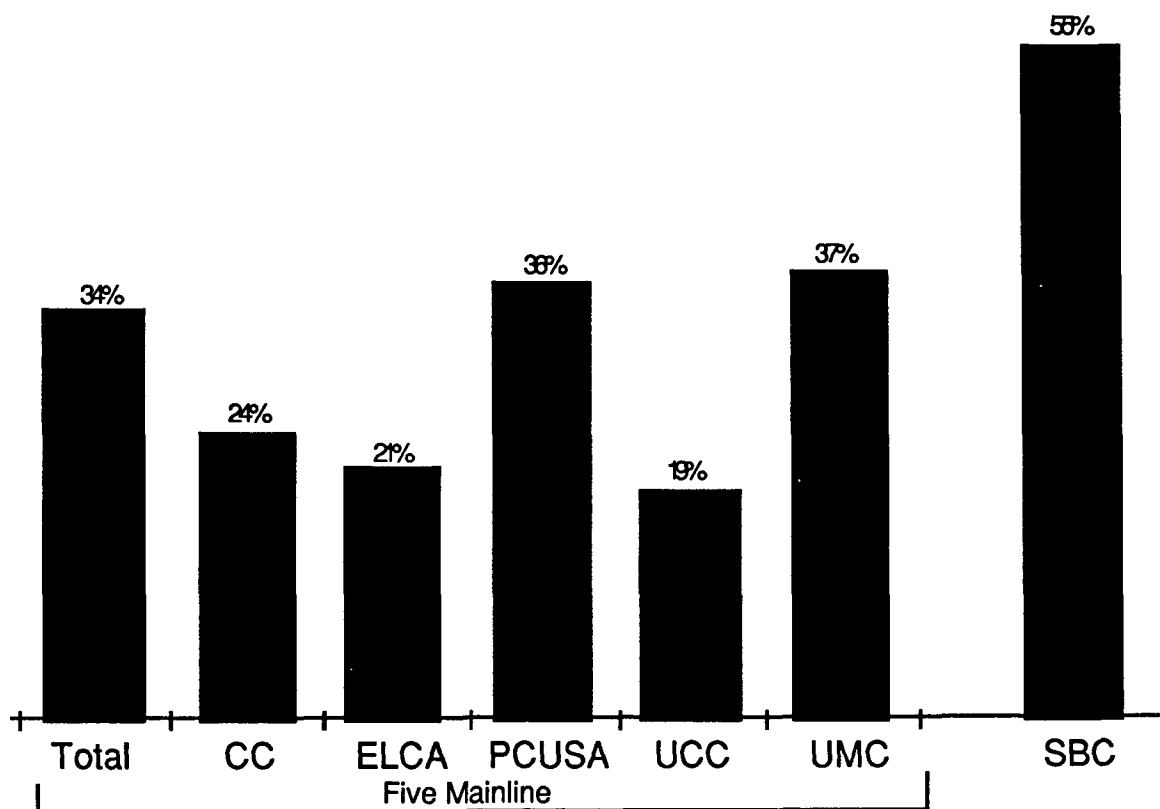
C2. Loyalty by Age Group

Loyalty to congregation and denomination is "softest" among adults in the 20-39 and 40-59 age groups and strongest among adults 60 or older. Though loyalty may actually grow with age, there is a real possibility that loyalty is less now among those under 60 than it was when the 60+ adults were younger. (High denominational loyalty was determined by counting the percentage of adults scoring 4.0 or higher on each 5-point scale.)

		Five Mainline						
		Total	CC	ELCA	PC	UCC	UMC	SBC
		(Percentages)						
High Denominational Loyalty								
20 - 39		59	63	64	44	40	60	76
40 - 59		58	65	59	60	49	58	75
60 or older		78	79	79	65	66	81	96
All adults		65	71	65	57	53	66	81
High Congregational Loyalty								
20 - 39		69	73	60	62	59	73	85
40 - 59		73	78	60	69	72	76	80
60 or older		85	82	73	81	86	87	91
All adults		76	78	63	69	74	79	85

C3. Youth's Anticipated Church Activity at Age 40

One way to tap the loyalty of adolescents to the church is to ask them what they expect to do at age 40. Listed below are the percentages of youth who say "There is an excellent chance I will be active in a church when I am 40."



D1. Evaluations of Congregational Life: Adults

Adults' evaluation of their congregational life is given here. Some readers, especially those whose priorities are located toward the top of the list, will take this as evidence that things are going relatively well. However, if one's priorities tend to appear lower down the list, there is some cause for concern. Percentages given are of those rating the congregation's achievements as "good" or "excellent." Evaluations are listed in descending order according to the ratings given by the five mainline denominations.

	<i>Total</i>	Five	Mainline				
		CC	ELCA	PC	UCC	UMC	SBC
		<i>(Percentages)</i>					
<u>How well our congregation provides, teaches, or helps develop</u>							
324. Strong Christian education program for children	7 6	65	68	68	68	79	72
314. Support and love to members having hard times	7 5	80	64	75	76	77	84
322. Providing spiritually-uplifting worship experiences	7 0	72	62	64	66	73	76
315. Members making friends at church	6 8	69	55	68	72	70	74
326. Strong Christian education program for adults	6 8	63	58	68	50	71	75
304. The Bible	6 6	64	66	65	56	67	89
307. A strong Christian faith	6 6	62	62	65	62	67	81
325. Strong Christian education program for teenagers	6 5	51	55	60	47	69	73
327. Promoting members' spiritual growth	6 5	64	55	59	57	68	77
303. Applying faith to daily living	6 3	59	55	61	58	66	78
316. Opportunity for members to help conduct worship	6 3	71	67	57	66	63	48
318. Using each members' talents and abilities	5 8	63	53	55	64	58	63
312. Help in becoming more loving and compassionate	5 7	60	42	58	51	59	68
305. Christian perspective on moral questions	5 6	51	51	54	53	57	77
317. Opportunity for adults to be with children at church	5 6	54	47	47	51	58	58
321. Helping members to know Jesus personally	5 5	59	52	50	38	57	83
302. Denominational traditions and theology	5 3	45	48	48	40	55	54
319. Help in appreciating importance of religious rituals	5 1	43	46	40	44	54	43
309. Members' involvement in community service	4 3	42	32	44	46	44	30
313. Members' ability to talk about their faith to others	3 8	38	30	34	24	40	62
306. Christian perspective on social-political questions	3 4	24	24	37	35	36	35
308. Learnings about other racial & ethnic groups	3 0	26	20	27	26	33	28
320. Examining lifestyles in light of the world's poor	3 0	28	25	28	26	31	31
323. Members' ability to care about international issues	2 3	17	14	27	25	24	19
310. Information about other faiths	2 2	19	19	21	22	23	20
311. Involvement in peacemaking & social justice action	1 4	11	9	21	15	13	11

D2 Evaluations of Congregational Life: Youth

Adolescents' evaluations of their congregational life are given on this page. Interpretation of your own denomination's mean ratings will depend on the perception of your denomination's intended ministry to youth. Percentages are of those who rated the congregation's achievements as "good" or "excellent." Statements are listed in descending order according to the ratings given by youth of the five mainline denominations.

	<i>Total</i>	Five Mainline (Percentages)					<i>SBC</i>
		<i>CC</i>	<i>ELCA</i>	<i>PC</i>	<i>UCC</i>	<i>UMC</i>	
<u>How well our congregation provides, teaches, or helps develop</u>							
299. Learning who God is	79	74	82	77	73	79	88
308. Knowing and loving Jesus Christ	75	80	74	77	63	75	88
325. What church believes about God, Jesus and the Bible	74	72	79	70	60	75	81
315. Experiencing God's love and forgiveness	68	73	74	68	56	67	78
316. Learning to love life	66	65	57	63	54	69	69
313. Concern for other people	66	64	60	66	63	67	66
300. Learning about the Bible and its meaning for your life	66	61	65	64	60	67	83
309. Ability to make friends and be a good friend	65	60	61	63	61	67	71
307. Feeling good about yourself	62	58	56	65	59	64	65
310. Knowing right and wrong and making decisions	59	56	57	62	55	59	71
317. Resisting pressure from others to do wrong things	56	46	44	53	48	61	64
302. Opportunities for advice and help when you need it	53	52	50	57	50	53	57
322. Gaining a sense of purpose in your life	51	43	47	51	47	52	63
314. Applying faith to everyday decisions	49	52	48	53	42	48	73
298. Ways to discover what is special about you	46	44	47	44	38	47	49
320. Avoiding alcohol or drug abuse	43	44	32	40	38	47	66
303. Developing leadership skills	43	41	38	40	37	46	57
311. Involvement with helping people in your town	41	32	35	39	41	42	39
301. Getting to know adults in your church	39	50	38	44	50	38	57
312. Responsible values and behaviors about sexuality	37	34	32	34	22	40	62
323. Involvement in improving life for the poor and hungry	36	34	41	43	51	38	36
304. A place to relax after school and on weekends	36	28	23	31	30	41	47
305. Learning how to pray and meditate	33	32	34	30	26	33	63
324. Learning to be a peacemaker	32	35	29	38	30	31	37
321. Talking better with your parents	31	30	26	31	25	33	45
297. Learning how your church is different from others	31	28	35	28	29	31	41
319. Understanding what is going on around the world	27	35	34	33	34	24	37
306. Spending time with other races and ethnic groups	21	11	18	16	20	23	21
318. Doing better in school	19	22	16	18	19	20	32

E1. At-risk Behaviors of Adolescents

Certain behaviors during the adolescent years risk healthy physical, psychological and spiritual development. Listed below are the percentages of adolescents grouped in three grade combinations (7th and 8th, 9th and 10th, 11th and 12th) who report engaging in five of these negative behaviors. No denomination is immune to these issues, and each issue brings a need for earnest, effective programming.

	Total	Five Mainline CC ELCA PC UCC UMC (Percentages)					SBC
232. Alcohol use: six or more times, last 12 months							
7th & 8th grades	8	14	17	9	6	5	5
9th & 10th grades	23	22	24	16	12	23	11
11th & 12th grades	42	33	54	42	40	41	12
237. Binge drinking: Had five or more drinks in a row three or more times in the last 12 months							
7th & 8th grades	5	3	9	4	5	4	7
9th & 10th grades	12	8	13	16	7	11	5
11th & 12th grades	34	32	41	37	25	33	10
233. Marijuana: Used marijuana once or more in the last 12 months							
7th & 8th grades	5	2	8	4	4	4	5
9th & 10th grades	5	14	8	4	8	4	9
11th & 12th grades	20	15	20	18	13	21	7
230. Suicide: Thought about committing suicide once or more in the last 12 months							
7th & 8th grades	28	27	38	42	36	23	29
9th & 10th grades	47	38	57	42	47	44	51
11th & 12th grades	44	48	51	31	26	45	27
249. Sexual Intercourse: Have had sexual intercourse, once or more, during lifetime							
7th & 8th grades	5	4	8	6	4	5	2
9th & 10th grades	15	20	17	9	15	15	24
11th & 12th grades	31	35	40	33	19	29	20

E2. Adolescents' At-risk Index

Listed below are ten at-risk indicators, each of which can potentially compromise a young person's well-being. While many adolescents survive these departures from desirable behavior, a significant and growing percentage of American youth do not fully escape the long-term scars these behaviors can inflict. The ten **at-risk indicators** are:

Depression: Felt sad or depressed, 20 or more times in last 12 months

Suicide: Thought about suicide, once or more, last 12 months

Alcohol use: Drank alcohol, six or more times in last 12 months

Binge drinking: Got drunk (5 or more drinks in a row), three or more times in the last 12 months

Marijuana use: Used marijuana, three or more times, last 12 months

Cocaine use: Used cocaine, once or more, last 12 months

Aggression: Hit or beat up someone, six or more times, last 12 months

Theft: Shoplifted three or more times, last 12 months

School: Got into trouble at school three or more times, last 12 months

Sexual intercourse: Have had sexual intercourse, once or more

	Total	Five Mainline					SBC
		CC	ELCA	PC	UCC	UMC	
Reporting one or more of the At-risk Indicators							
7th & 8th grade	66	62	70	74	68	64	64
9th & 10th grade	76	70	82	74	80	74	73
11th & 12th grade	80	81	80	77	71	80	70
Reporting three or more of the At-risk Indicators							
7th & 8th grade	15	17	25	25	28	9	11
9th & 10th grade	36	25	29	29	24	40	26
11th & 12th grade	40	38	54	39	27	39	19

F. Youth's Exposure to Specific Christian Education Experiences

Our society offers to Christian youth many invitations to involvement with drugs and alcohol and many encouragements of self-centered, self-gratifying behavior. For that reason, the questions whose answers are summarized here are important ones. They ask the number of hours youth can remember ever spending at church in each of the following activities. The answers provide a rough index of their congregation's demonstrated seriousness about preparing young people for the real world issues about which they must make life-changing choices.

	Total	Five Mainline					
		CC	ELCA	PC	UCC	UMC	SBC
		<i>(Percentages)</i>					
371. Learning about or discussing drugs and alcohol							
5 hours or less	57	64	74	59	71	51	47
40 hours or more	4	4	3	5	1	4	8
372. Helping other people in my church							
5 hours or less	42	51	50	43	45	39	33
40 hours or more	9	9	5	7	9	11	19
373. Doing projects to help people in my town or city							
5 hours or less	54	58	62	55	52	52	52
40 hours or more	6	7	2	7	7	6	6
374. Learning about or discussing peacemaking							
5 hours or less	66	69	73	56	66	65	59
40 hours or more	2	2	1	3	1	2	5
375. Learning about or helping the poor and hungry							
5 hours or less	49	63	59	38	50	48	53
40 hours or more	9	4	5	7	10	10	7
376. Learning about or discussing sex							
5 hours or less	59	63	78	58	71	54	49
40 hours or more	8	3	3	5	2	10	8

G. Church Expectation: A Thinking Climate

One of the factors with the greatest influence on maturity of faith is a church climate that includes a clear expectation that members will devote serious study and thought to their faith and that encourages thinking for oneself. The following questions show the degree to which adults and adolescents perceive this expectation in their own church. Percentages are of those answering that the statement is "quite true" or "very true" of their congregation.

	Total	Five Mainline CC ELCA PC UCC UMC SBC (Percentages)					
ADULTS							
125. I learn a lot	61	60	51	60	58	62	76
127. Most members want to be challenged to think about religious issues and ideas	36	35	24	39	33	38	45
129. The church challenges my thinking	46	49	36	48	50	48	61
130. The church encourages me to ask questions	40	45	32	45	41	40	62
131. The church is interesting (<i>"Not True" responses to "The church is boring"</i>)	61	65	52	65	67	62	72
134. The church expects people to learn and think	58	51	45	63	58	60	73
YOUTH							
125. I learn a lot	49	47	54	55	48	47	70
127. Most members want to be challenged to think about religious issues and ideas	40	31	31	41	31	42	56
129. The church challenges my thinking	42	38	40	45	34	42	58
130. The church encourages me to ask questions	45	44	39	43	34	47	58
131. The church is interesting (<i>"Not True" responses to "The church is boring"</i>)	31	32	25	28	24	33	46
134. The church expects people to learn and think	47	49	47	49	38	48	57

H. Adults' Involvement in Christian Education

Adults who are active in Christian education at their church show greater maturity in faith than less-active adults. Included in the survey's definition of Christian education are the following: adult classes, Bible study courses, retreats, workshops, support groups, plays, and musical programs. Even when the definition is as broad as that, a majority of adults in the mainline churches are either minimally involved or not at all involved in church-based Christian education. (*Question A 367*)

	Total	Five Mainline CC ELCA PC UCC UMC SBC (Percentages)					
Adults Inactive							
(10 hours or less per year in Christian education)	39	38	60	52	48	34	17
Adults moderately active							
(11-40 hours per year in Christian education)	21	27	20	18	27	21	22
Adults active							
(40 hours or more per year in Christian education)	40	35	20	30	25	45	60

(NOTE: There are differences between the percentages of activity reported here and those reported in Part III F. The figures above are derived from the adult participants in the study, who tend to be slightly more active in congregational life than the average member. Therefore, these percentages are somewhat higher than those in IIIF, whose figures are derived from combined estimates of the pastor and coordinator of the percentage of the congregation's total membership involved in Christian education.)

I. Common Problems in Christian Education

The problems are listed here in order from the greatest to the smallest problems as the **coordinators** of Christian education in the **five mainline denominations** report them. Percentages represent the sum of coordinators saying that the problems are "major" or "somewhat major."

		Five Mainline (Percentages)					
	<i>Total</i>	CC	ELCA	PC	UCC	UMC	SBC
318. <i>Adults'</i> busy schedules	72	62	78	71	74	72	55
317. <i>Teenagers'</i> busy schedules	66	61	71	66	70	64	55
312. Recruitment of volunteer teachers & leaders	58	73	55	59	61	59	59
310. Parent disinterest	53	56	66	49	47	50	55
311. Adult disinterest in adult education	49	46	65	48	56	43	51
314. Lack of <i>teenagers'</i> motivation to learn	44	33	54	45	38	43	33
327. Irregular attendance of children and youth	42	51	36	47	55	39	48
316. <i>Children's</i> busy schedules	42	39	40	37	40	44	36
315. Lack of <i>adults'</i> motivation to learn	34	27	43	30	42	32	33
309. Trouble getting attention of children, youth	25	28	26	18	40	28	40
326. Congregational support for Christian education	20	30	18	19	23	20	30
325. Small church - too few formal programs	19	25	23	39	29	9	20
313. Lack of <i>children's</i> motivation to learn	15	13	17	21	11	13	14
319. The Christian education budget	14	21	12	13	17	14	21
321. Rapid turnover of teachers	12	18	11	9	23	11	10
322. Teacher preparation for classes	11	18	12	11	9	9	16
323. Support of senior pastor for Christian ed	8	13	14	9	15	8	16
320. Quality of C.E. resources	7	10	6	15	5	4	13
324. Teacher competence	7	6	10	8	8	6	7

Part III

Opportunities for New Directions

This section outlines further study findings, most of which contain in them the seeds of opportunity for designing more effective Christian education. Sophisticated analysis applied to the survey findings has revealed information that highlights those traditional practices in Christian education that actually do the work of education most effectively. It becomes clear that, as has long been believed, there are influences not usually thought of in connection with Christian education that have, nevertheless, powerful educational effect. Among them are biographical factors, elements of congregational life, and, of course, the style and content of Christian education.

Highlights

- *A core of belief.* Protestant Christians in this study share a core of belief. Almost universally they believe in a God who is loving and forgiving. More than 80 percent affirm that the Holy Spirit is at work in their lives. Well over half (58%) of Protestant adults have experienced the growing importance to them of their own spiritual life in the past two or three years. (A)
- *Church as primary influence.* About two thirds name the church as the greatest influence on their discovery of meaning in life and spiritual growth, and an only slightly smaller percentage name it as the chief influence on their moral decisions. However, less than half say that their lives are full of meaning and purpose. (A)
- *Questions and answers.* Three quarters do not expect their faith to supply easy answers to life's problems, believing, instead, that Christians encounter as many questions in life as answers. (A)
- *Conversion.* Conversion to Christianity at a specific moment is a relatively rare phenomenon, claimed by only 7 percent of mainline Protestant Christians. About half have experienced commitment to faith as a gradual process, and about one-third have grown up in the faith since childhood. (B)
- *Life crises.* Their Christian faith has not shielded substantial numbers from such human problems as loss of a job or financial hardship. Forty percent have suffered job stress or job loss over the past two or three years, and about a quarter have suffered financial hardship. At the other end of the scale, about forty percent have experienced financial success. This is particularly true for United Methodists and least true for members of ELCA. (B)
- *Born again.* Except for Southern Baptists, most Protestants in this study do not claim the designation "born-again Christian." (B)
- *Origin of the Scriptures.* Another distinction between Southern Baptists and other Protestants studied is on the question of the origin of the Scriptures. Among Southern Baptists, 51 percent believe God dictated the Bible word for word, making its content not dependent on the times in which it was written nor on the human qualities of its writers. Among the five mainline denominations, only 9 percent hold that view. (B)
- *Moral questions.* While they are almost unanimously in favor of men and women being paid equally for equal work, they are divided almost 50-50 on the question of abortion in case a child is likely to be born seriously handicapped. (B)
- *Changes in life experience.* Members of most denominations, as they grow through the decades of adult life, find the strength of their faith increasing, along with their church involvement and their personal happiness. Stress, for most, peaks during the decade of age 40-49, and then subsides, although Lutherans and Southern Baptists say they do not experience the lessening of stress after 50. For them it continues to increase. (B)
- *Bible study and spiritual life.* The topmost interests of adults of most of the denominations center on the spiritual life and on learning more about the Bible. (C)

- *Personal relationships.* Also high on most adult lists is interpersonal relationship--learning how to be a good spouse or parent, and improving proficiency at showing love and concern. For some, making more friends at church comes high on the list, too. (C)
- *Interest in doctrine.* Some of the issues most obviously connected with education--understanding the doctrine and theology of the church, or church history--rise no higher than the middle of adults' interest list. (C)
- *Low interest in social concern.* Occupying the bottom of the list are study and action related to improving the lot of the poor and the disenfranchised. Direct help to those who are poor comes ahead, however, of social-political activism designed to give a real chance, rather than temporary assistance, to the disenfranchised of the community. (C)
- *Top youth interests.* The interests of youth bear some similarity to those of their elders. They also give high rank to both learning about the spiritual life and improving their relationship skills. (C)
- *Talk with mother.* Analyses of the results of this study reveal that certain personal experiences have a measurable positive impact on the maturity of faith of the believer. The most powerful of these experiences is conversation about God with one's mother during the ages of 5 through 12. Among the five mainline denominations' 16- to 18-year-olds, almost forty percent say that that event rarely or never occurred for them. Among adults, 26 percent did not have that experience in childhood. (D)
- *Talk with father, relatives, friends.* Talking with one's father about faith or about God at the ages of 13 to 15 is another powerful correlate with maturity of faith, but 56 percent say this has occurred rarely or never for them. Other powerful experiences as a child or youth are such things as talking with other relatives about faith, the experience of having family devotions, engaging in family projects to help others, and, at the current moment, the number of friends who have strong religious interests. (D)
- *Power of formal Christian education.* Of all the various influences of congregational life on effectiveness in Christian education, the quality and effectiveness of formal Christian education programs are found to be very strongly linked to individuals' loyalty to denomination and congregation as well as to maturity of faith. (E)
- *Climates of thought and warmth.* Among both adults and youth, a considerably higher percentage report a warm and friendly atmosphere in their church than report a challenging climate that encourages intelligent thought and discussion. (E)
- *Contribution of worship.* The quality of the worship experience is also shown to have an important educational effect on members, even though the study was not designed to make as thorough and detailed a study of worship as of the formal Christian education programs.
- *Participation in formal Christian education declines with age.* For most of the denominations, percentages of participation decline from the elementary grades up into adulthood. The two denominations (ELCA and UCC) with strong emphasis on thorough study in preparation for confirmation retain their levels of participation of youth in grades 7 through 9. In fact, in ELCA, they increase them. However, for both of those denominations, percentages of participation for youth

in grades 10 through 12, as well as those for adults, drop well below the participation rates of all other denominations. (F)

- *Teachers are influential.* One outcome is a finding that educators have long suspected: the teacher is a very important influencer. The influence of the pastor is also significant. The educational processes employed, and their content, constitute a third major influence. (G)
- *Education for social action.* One of the effectiveness factors involves teaching people an understanding of their faith *as it applies to political and social issues and the meaning of oppression and injustice*. Creative thought will be required if congregations are to revise their educational programs on the strength of that finding. It is no easy task to get people excited about study of those issues, when, as a denomination, they have placed social issues toward the bottom of their priority lists, (G)
- *Friends and goals.* The findings about adults and youth alike indicate that one of the factors for effectiveness is a high percentage of one's peers involved in Christian education. Another similarity is that, for both, effectiveness is enhanced when those administering the education program have clear goals and clear objectives for the teaching and learning. (G)
- *Taking Christian education seriously.* A simple summary of the foundations essential for effective Christian education might be worded "Taking Christian education seriously." "Taking seriously," according to the findings, implies that teacher training is held on a regular basis, and that teachers are given instruction in such things as denominational theology and tradition. Professionalism in Christian education also includes such things as an opportunity for teachers to gather occasionally for their own spiritual renewal and growth. (H)
- *Influence of church leaders.* More examples of "taking education seriously" are a church governing body that can and does periodically hold a thoughtful discussion of educational policy, and a pastor who is not only professionally prepared in the area of Christian education, but includes courses in the field of Christian education as part of her/his continuing education. (H)
- *Influence of thinking climate* A number of the congregational factors that promote maturity of faith also influence loyalty to the congregation and the denomination. Topping the list is the effectiveness of Christian education. There is an interesting difference in the effects of two kinds of congregational climate. While a climate that encourages serious thought is more influential on maturity of faith and on denominational loyalty, a climate of warmth has a slightly higher influence on loyalty to a particular congregation. Both, however, have influence on all three. (I)

A. Building on the Strengths of the Church

	Total	Five Mainline (Percentages)					SBC
		CC	ELCA	PC	UCC	UMC	
Affirmations of faith							
157. I am certain that God exists	80	85	83	81	74	79	98
24A. God is loving	96	98	94	97	96	97	99
24J. God is forgiving	97	96	96	97	95	97	98
86. I know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who died on a cross and rose again	90	93	92	87	83	91	98
64. I believe that the Holy Spirit is at work in my life	85	83	85	88	82	85	95
26. My Christian faith is							
- the most important influence in my life	27	24	21	26	17	28	51
- a very important influence in my life	37	42	37	38	40	36	35
- an important influence in my life	31	30	33	32	37	30	13
108. My life is filled with meaning and purpose	46	40	41	41	42	47	50
Personal growth in the past 2 or 3 years (Percent saying "somewhat greater" or "much greater" now)							
174. Degree to which my faith shapes my thinking & acting	53	53	47	51	41	55	69
189. Degree to which I let God into my life	56	54	53	54	45	58	74
190. The importance of my spiritual life	58	57	56	59	48	59	78
Importance of the church (The following three questions invited members to choose the greatest influence in each situation. Other possibilities were media, private experience, and events outside the church. Percentages are of those who chose the church as most influential.)							
196. Helps me finding meaning in life	62	67	61	63	61	62	66
197. Helps me answer moral questions	59	56	54	59	55	61	66
198. Helps me grow spiritually	76	76	71	72	75	77	75
120. I like to worship and pray with others	80	81	76	80	76	81	94
192. If I had to change churches, I would feel a great loss	75	76	63	71	73	77	79
199. Belonging to a church is very important to me	69	64	61	65	60	72	83
Beliefs about the church							
121. I think Christians must be about the business of creating international understanding and harmony	79	78	74	78	74	80	73
370. Want the church to do more to include the experience, wisdom, and insight of women in its theology, doctrine, and understanding of the Bible	49	52	45	50	44	50	38
372. Believe that if one is a good Christian one has as many questions as answers	74	76	74	75	79	73	63

B. Knowing the Adults We Serve

The individual items on this page contain selected information about the beliefs, life experiences, moral position and identity of adults in the six denominations studied.

	Total	Five Mainline (Percentages)					SBC
		CC	ELCA	PC	UCC	UMC	
Experiences							
23. Committed his/her life to Christ							
- at a specific moment	7	12	7	10	4	6	29
- gradually, over a period of time	47	50	42	48	44	48	38
- as a young child	37	34	42	33	41	37	31
31. Has clearly felt the presence of God in own life	92	93	91	93	90	93	98
282. During the past 2 - 3 years has experienced							
- job stress or loss of a job	40	39	46	36	38	40	38
- trouble with raising a child	17	17	18	14	13	17	15
- financial hardship	24	23	27	22	21	24	25
- financial success	44	38	34	36	39	47	41
Identity and beliefs							
368. Refers to self as a born-again Christian	19	23	14	18	12	21	84
- unsure about being a born-again Christian	9	18	13	17	10	7	6
212. Self-identified political orientation:							
- Liberal	21	20	18	20	23	22	7
- Moderate	30	40	46	33	34	27	31
- Conservative	49	41	36	47	43	52	63
92. Does things to help protect the environment	69	63	70	66	68	69	55
51. Would like to see more women pastors	40	39	37	39	43	40	11
123. The Bible was -							
- written by persons motivated by faith in God who tried to describe and interpret their understanding of God's activity in the world	31	32	26	28	32	33	16
- dictated by God word for word and recorded by writers not influenced by their times	9	13	15	9	11	7	51
- inspired by God and recorded by writers who interpreted God's message in the context of their times	54	50	55	58	48	54	33
159. The Bible is about how God saves believers	48	54	54	49	40	47	87
160. The Bible is about the kind of world God wants us to create	54	56	52	55	53	54	53

	Total	Five Mainline					SBC
		CC	ELCA	PC	UCC	UMC	
73. It is wrong for members of one race to keep those of another race from moving into their neighborhood	80	77	79	83	78	80	71
75. Abortion, when a doctor says the baby is likely to be born with a serious handicap, is right	50	50	46	49	53	51	24
77. It is wrong for a company to pay women less than men for similar work	90	92	92	93	90	90	90

Changes in Life Experience

Adults responding to the survey found four life experiences identified--strength of Christian faith, involvement in a church, life stress or problems, and personal happiness. They were asked about the degree (high, medium or low) to which they had experienced these in four decades of their life. The figures below represent the percentages of those who said each circumstance was high at that period of life.

	Total	Five Mainline					SBC
		CC	ELCA	PC	UCC	UMC	
264. Strength of faith at the age of							
20-29	31	30	33	24	26	32	35
30-39	47	45	51	44	38	47	55
40-49	64	63	65	64	60	64	72
50-64	78	78	80	72	73	79	87
265. Church involvement at the age of							
20-29	30	27	25	24	24	31	38
30-39	47	51	42	45	52	48	54
40-49	57	65	49	57	63	58	61
50-64	69	77	53	58	69	73	75
266. Stress or problems at the age of							
20-29	26	20	21	23	22	28	25
30-39	32	31	31	31	29	32	29
40-49	37	35	35	33	35	38	34
50-64	31	31	40	32	29	30	39
267. Personal happiness at the age of							
20-29	51	50	52	56	56	50	49
30-39	58	55	56	61	56	59	59
40-49	61	64	57	59	60	62	62
50-64	68	72	59	64	73	70	68

C1. Building on the Interests of Adults

One way to capture people's attention and enthusiasm, is to meet them through their interests. Given below is a list of those interests as expressed by adult survey participants. Interests are arranged in descending order according to the percentages of adults of the **five mainline denominations** who said they would be "interested" or "very interested" in each topic.

	Total	Five CC	Mainline ELCA PC UCC UMC SBC (Percentages)				
<u>To study, learn more about, or be involved in</u>							
330. The Bible	77	77	68	76	71	78	96
350. Developing a personal relationship with Jesus	75	78	71	73	63	76	95
338. Improving my skills at showing love & concern	74	72	67	73	69	76	86
333. How to be a good spouse or parent	74	73	73	70	67	75	79
329. Applying my faith to daily living	73	76	67	76	69	74	92
341. Making more friends at church	69	70	60	68	65	70	85
331. How Christians make moral decisions	68	71	61	69	64	69	88
352. Getting help with my spiritual journey	62	64	52	62	54	65	81
353. Greater sense of community at church	62	63	55	65	58	63	82
339. Helping members who are experiencing hardship	59	57	54	62	56	60	79
340. Improving my skills at talking about my faith	52	57	48	48	43	54	84
328. My denomination's traditions & emphases	49	52	43	48	41	51	62
348. Knowing my pastor(s) better	57	57	55	59	55	57	70
346. The doctrine and theology of my church	48	47	43	46	40	50	65
347. History of the Christian church	48	51	43	42	41	50	54
332. Christian perspectives on social & political issues	41	36	34	41	40	43	52
335. Other faiths	39	32	32	34	37	41	40
334. Community service projects	36	32	32	39	35	36	45
351. Examining my lifestyle in light of the world's poor	36	33	32	41	32	37	47
349. International issues	33	26	25	30	28	35	31
337. People of other racial and ethnic groups	31	23	25	27	30	32	31
345. Having my talents & abilities used by my church	31	33	27	31	28	32	51
343. Spending time with children & teenagers at church	23	23	21	23	21	23	40
342. Helping to conduct worship services	23	35	23	21	22	23	37
344. Opportunity to be a leader in my church	21	24	17	18	18	22	37
336. Peacemaking and social justice activities	20	19	13	20	19	21	23

C2. Building on the Interests of Youth

Sound educational practice suggests that one begin where the learners are. While educational programs for youth should not be based solely on what they think they want to know, it is useful to know where their highest interests lie. Numbers below represent the percentages of those who said they would be "interested" or "very interested" in the topic, listed in descending order according to the preferences of the youth in the **five mainline denominations**.

	Total	Five Mainline					
		OC	ELCA	PC	UCC	UMC	SBC
		<i>(Percentages)</i>					
<u>To study, or learn more about, or do</u>							
339. Knowing how to make friends & be a friend	75	74	67	76	71	76	86
338. Learning to know and love Jesus Christ	71	73	65	78	55	72	91
328. Learning more about who God is	70	79	68	78	55	70	85
343. Learning to love life more	69	71	66	77	56	69	79
340. Recognizing right and wrong, making decisions	68	72	65	70	62	68	90
352. Gaining a sense of purpose in my life	65	67	61	66	55	66	80
337. Learning to like myself more	65	69	62	70	54	65	73
329. The Bible and its meaning for my life	64	66	59	67	46	65	87
346. Experiencing God's love and forgiveness	64	67	61	76	47	63	85
344. Developing more compassion for other people	61	63	61	74	57	60	77
327. What is special about me	61	59	59	69	48	61	72
355. Learning how to make choices and decisions	59	56	59	64	56	58	74
332. Getting advice or help when I need it	59	55	55	65	55	60	79
356. Learning how I can make a difference in the world	55	54	56	64	45	55	67
351. Learning how to talk better with my parents	55	51	50	63	51	56	71
333. Developing leadership skills	55	59	50	63	52	54	70
347. Resisting pressure from kids to do wrong things	54	52	55	60	48	53	74
345. Applying my faith to everyday decisions	53	56	54	63	44	52	77
334. Having a place to relax after school & weekends	52	50	47	52	49	53	68
348. Doing better in school	52	60	57	48	50	51	72
353. A chance to improve life for the poor & hungry	51	50	50	64	50	50	62
349. Learning what is going on around the world	50	59	49	62	49	48	52
350. Learning how to avoid alcohol and drug abuse	50	46	46	51	42	51	72
341. Having opportunities to help people in my town	49	48	48	55	45	49	63
357. Helping members who are sick or handicapped	49	48	46	61	45	48	68

	Total	Five CC	Mainline ELCA PC	UCC	UMC	SBC
342. Help to develop responsible values on sexuality	48	40	51 52	37	48	72
330. People of racial or ethnic groups other than mine	43	48	40 48	39	43	47
336. Knowing people of other racial & ethnic groups	43	51	43 50	44	41	47
331. Getting to know adults in my church	42	47	35 49	45	42	66
359. Talking about my faith with other people	41	35	39 46	22	42	76
335. How to pray and meditate	40	40	38 46	28	41	76
354. Learning to be a peacemaker	39	37	41 51	34	37	53
326. How my church is different from other churches	36	33	29 34	26	38	51
358. Jobs and careers that help express my faith	32	28	30 42	25	31	67

D1. Family and Friends: The Ideal

This study clearly demonstrates that life experiences are strongly associated with maturity of faith. Having family and friends are two near-universal experiences that have impact on one's growth in faith maturity. As each of the specific experiences listed below increases, so also does faith maturity. Many of these factors are within the scope of congregational programming. By incorporating into Christian education an emphasis on parent education as well as by offering opportunities for young people to discuss their faith with their best friends, churches can encourage some of these experiences for their young people. Specific experiences with family and friends that are significantly associated with maturity of faith include:

Family

- Frequency of talking with one's mother about faith and about God, teenage years
- Frequency of talking with one's mother about faith and God, ages 5 - 12
- Frequency of talking with one's father about faith and about God, teenage years
- Frequency of talking to other relatives about faith and God, teenage years
- Frequency of family devotions, ages 3 - 5
- Frequency of family devotions, teenage years
- Frequency with which one's family does things together to help other people, ages 5 - 12
- Frequency with which one's family does things together to help other people, teenage years

Friends

- Frequency with which one talked to one's best friends about faith and God, teenage years
- The degree to which one's current three or four best friends are religious

D2. Family and Friends: The Reality

On many of the family and friend factors listed on the previous page, large percentages of adolescents and adults report little or no involvement. Congregations that promote these experiences with family and friends will likely experience a growth in mature faith among their members.

	Total	Five Mainline					
		CC	ELCA	PC	UCC	UMC	SBC
		<i>(Percentages)</i>					
Teenagers (16-18) who say that the activity occurred <i>rarely or never</i> for them at these ages							
259A. Talked to mother about faith or God 5-12	38	40	35	40	42	38	31
259B. Talked to mother about faith or God 13-15	35	35	28	29	33	38	25
260B. Talked to father about faith or God 13-15	56	66	57	56	63	56	44
261B. Talked to other relatives about faith 13-15	63	59	69	58	73	63	45
290. Family devotions, 3-5	54	62	53	50	68	54	53
264B. Family devotions, 13-15	64	70	70	69	78	60	52
265A. Family projects to help others, 5-12	66	61	70	54	71	67	65
265B. Family projects to help others, 13-15	63	59	68	53	67	64	59
276B. Talked to best friends about faith or God, 13-15	47	47	44	41	58	47	19
Adults who say the activity occurred <i>rarely or never</i> for them at these ages							
218A. Talked to mother about faith or God, 5-12	26	30	27	28	29	25	27
218B. Talked to mother about faith or God, 13-18	29	30	28	30	32	29	27
219B. Talked to father about faith or God, 13-18	58	60	59	58	60	57	50
220B. Talked to other relatives about faith or God, 13-18	51	54	49	53	54	51	47
223B. Family devotions, 13-18	60	65	65	63	67	58	59
224A. Family helping projects, 5 - 12	44	50	51	52	49	41	52
224B. Family helping projects, 13-18	45	48	50	50	47	43	49
235B. Talked to best friends about faith or God, 13-18	35	40	38	40	43	32	27
Those who report that current 3 to 5 best friends <i>are very religious</i>							
294. Adolescents aged 16-18	13	12	14	16	8	13	22
280. Adults	36	36	31	33	28	37	53

E1. Congregational life: The power of Christian education

Faith maturity and the two forms of loyalty (congregational and denominational) are strongly tied to the characteristics of the congregation one belongs to. Pictured below are six aspects of congregational life. The research shows that the more each is present in a congregation, the greater the maturity of faith and the stronger the loyalty of both youth and adults. Of the six, the factor with the greatest potential to increase loyalty and maturity of faith is the effectiveness of Christian education, a fact demonstrated by the size of its circle.

CLIMATE: THINKING
The degree to which members perceive their congregation to encourage questions, challenge thinking and expect learning

WORSHIP:
Quality of Sunday worship

**EFFECTIVENESS OF
FORMAL CHRISTIAN
EDUCATION FOR
ADULTS AND
TEENAGERS**

(includes Sunday School classes for adults and youth, Bible studies, adult forums, family events, music and drama programs, new member classes, youth groups, etc.)

CLIMATE: WARM
The degree to which members perceive their congregation to be warm and friendly

**SERVICE TO
OTHERS:**
The success a congregation has in getting members to provide volunteer service to people in need

**RECEIVING CARE
(SENSE OF FAMILY)**
The frequency with which members personally experience the care and concern of other members

E2. Congregational life: The reality

These percentages will help evaluate how well the congregational factors listed on the previous page are achieved in the areas of climate, worship, receiving care, and involving its people in service (represented in the five smaller circles on the preceding page). Information on the influence of *formal* programs in Christian education, not included here, is given later in this section.

	<i>Total</i>	Five Mainline CC ELCA PC UCC UMC SBC <i>(Percentages)</i>					
Climate: Thinking (Percent "true" & "very true")							
129Y. My church challenges my thinking (youth)	42	38	40	45	34	42	58
129A. My church challenges my thinking (adults)	46	49	36	48	50	48	61
130Y. My church encourages questions (youth)	45	44	39	43	34	48	58
130A. My church encourages questions (adults)	40	45	32	45	41	40	62
Climate: Warmth (Percent "true" & "very true")							
124Y. My church feels warm (youth)	63	68	58	69	63	63	74
124A. My church feels warm (adults)	73	77	66	75	75	73	76
128Y. My church is friendly (youth)	85	86	82	85	87	85	84
128A. My church is friendly (adults)	74	79	69	75	81	73	83
Receiving care (Percent "often" or "very often")							
Y279B. Feel that other youth at your church care about you (youth)	38	37	31	41	26	41	52
Y271B. Feel that adults at your church care about you (youth)	32	30	29	38	27	32	61
289A. Experience the love, care, and support of other people in a church (adults)	57	61	38	55	55	61	72
Giving help to others (Percent "good" & "excellent")							
Y311. Church involves you in helping people in your city (youth)	41	32	35	39	41	42	39
299A. Provide help, care and support to other people in your church (adults)	34	34	21	29	32	37	45
Worship experiences							
322A. Adults who rate worship as "excellent"	29	31	17	26	25	31	37
322A. Adults who rate worship as "good" or "excellent"	70	72	62	64	66	73	76

<p>F. Participation in Christian Education: by Age Group</p>

Exposure to effective Christian Education is strongly associated with both faith maturity and loyalty. The more effective the Christian education program, the greater is faith maturity and loyalty. Having effective Christian education is irrelevant, however, if people do not participate. Most denominations have much greater success in including children than high school students and adults. Because of the potential power of Christian education to promote faith maturity and loyalty, a major task facing denominations is to increase the involvement of high school students and adults in formal Christian education. Contrary to common thinking, Christian education is as important to the faith development of adults as it is to children.

The percentages below refer to the average rates of involvement, at the named age levels, as estimated for their congregations by pastors and coordinators or ministers of Christian education.

	Five Mainline (Percentages)						SBC
	Total	CC	ELCA	PC	UCC	UMC	
Children in grades K through 6	60	61	67	69	66	56	48
Youth in grades 7 through 9	52	55	70	48	54	45	52
Youth in grades 10 through 12	35	47	32	40	33	35	49
Adults	28	35	23	31	22	29	49

**G1. Effectiveness in Christian Education
for Adults: The Ideal**

Research findings based on both the survey and site visit methods show that the *way Christian education is done* matters as much as, if not more than, any other area of congregational life. Listed below are a number of characteristics of Christian education programming for adults, each of which is positively associated with growth in mature faith for those who participate in Christian education activities.

Teachers

- Are high in mature faith
- Know educational theory and methods for adults

Pastor

- Has high commitment to educational program for adults
- Devotes significant hours to adult Christian education program
- Knows educational theory and practice of Christian education for adults

Educational process

- Emphasizes building understanding of faith applied to political and social issues and understanding of oppression and injustice
- Emphasizes life experiences as occasion for spiritual insight
- Creates sense of community in which people help each other develop faith and values.
- Emphasizes the natural unfolding of faith and recognizes each person's faith journey as unique
- Strongly encourages independent thinking and questioning

Educational content

- Emphasizes biblical knowledge and understanding
- Emphasizes multicultural awareness
- Emphasizes global awareness and understanding
- Emphasizes moral decision making

Peers show interest in learning

- Church has high percentage of adults active in Christian education

Goals

- There is a clear mission statement for adult education
- There are clear learning objectives

G2. Effectiveness in Christian Education for Adults: The Reality

Given below are the percentages of congregations in each denomination whose educational programs for adults incorporate the essentials of effectiveness listed on the previous page.

	Total	Five Mainline (Percentages)					SBC
		CC	ELCA	PC	UCC	UMC	
Teachers							
Teachers are high in mature faith (<i>Percentage of teachers who demonstrate Integrated Faith -see Pt.II-A</i>)	55	50	49	60	49	65	55
C240C/VT. Teachers/leaders know educational theory and practice	44	35	45	36	33	49	29
Pastor							
C233C/VT. Pastor shows a deep commitment to Christian education for adults	75	69	79	81	72	73	69
C234C/VT. Pastor is involved in doing Christian education	62	61	69	69	65	57	64
C235C/VT. Pastor knows theory and practice of Christian education	83	77	83	75	83	85	68
Educational process							
C336C/4+5. Program emphasizes understanding social, political & cultural contexts of human life	17	12	7	25	20	17	12
C255C/SE. Program encourages theological reflection on human experience	61	51	60	61	66	62	35
C334C/SE. Program works toward developing a community of faith where people create shared values and rituals	16	12	12	12	14	18	27
C335C/SE. Emphasis is placed on the individual's faith journey, respecting uniquenesses	25	25	16	29	16	28	36
C230C/VT. Teachers encourage participants to raise doctrinal and theological questions	71	78	71	67	65	73	67
Educational content							
C252C. Emphasizes Bible knowledge and understanding	74	75	75	64	62	77	72
C263C. Emphasizes multi-cultural awareness and understanding	24	26	15	25	20	26	18
C262C. Emphasizes global awareness & understanding	31	25	26	35	35	32	23
C261C. Emphasizes moral decision making	44	54	45	43	39	44	64
Peer Involvement							
C357. Adult Christian education program involves 60 percent or more of adults in congregation	13	24	8	11	13	13	26
Goals							
C305/1. Church has a clear mission statement for adults' in Christian education	53	47	45	28	37	66	46
C307/1. Church has a set of clear learning objectives for adults in Christian education	38	32	40	25	43	32	49

G3. Effectiveness in Christian Education for Youth: The Ideal

Research findings based on both the survey and site visit methods show that the *way Christian education is done* matters as much as, if not more than, any other area of congregational life. Listed below are a number of characteristics of Christian education programming for adolescents, each of which is associated with growth in mature faith for those who participate in Christian education activities.

Teachers

- High in maturity of faith
- Care about students
- Know educational theory and methods related to adolescents

Pastor

- Is highly committed to the education program for youth
- Devotes significant hours to youth program
- Knows educational theory and practice related to Christian education of youth

Educational process

- Emphasizes intergenerational contact
- Emphasizes life experiences as occasion for spiritual insight
- Creates sense of community in which people help each other develop their faith and values
- Emphasizes the natural unfolding of faith and recognizes that each journey is unique
- Strongly encourages independent thinking and questioning
- Effectively helps youth to apply faith to daily decisions

Educational content

- Emphasizes education about human sexuality
- Emphasizes education about chemicals (drugs and alcohol)
- Emphasizes involving youth in service projects
- Emphasizes moral values and moral decision-making
- Emphasizes responsibility for poverty and hunger
- Effectively teaches the Bible
- Effectively teaches core theological concepts
- Effectively teaches youth about how to make friends or be a good friend
- Effectively helps youth develop concern for other people

Peers show Interest In learning

- Has high percentage of 10th to 12th graders active in Christian education

Parent Involvement

- Involves parents in program decisions and planning

Goals

- Has clear mission statement
- Has clear learning objectives

G4. Effectiveness in Christian Education for Youth: The Reality

Given below are the percentages of churches in each denomination in which the essentials of effectiveness in Christian education are incorporated into the Christian education program for youth.

	<i>Total</i>	Five Mainline CC ELCA PC UCC UMC					SBC
		<i>(Percentages)</i>					
Teachers							
Teachers are high in maturity of faith ¹	40	34	36	38	47	52	36
Y365/T,VT. My teachers and adult leaders care about me	79	80	67	84	67	82	84
C240B/VT. Teacher/leaders know educational theory and practice	34	23	35	35	19	37	27
Pastor							
C233B/VT. Pastor shows deep commitment to Christian education for youth	73	68	71	79	73	72	69
C234B/VT. Pastor involved in doing Christian ed for youth	51	52	68	48	54	46	56
C235B/VT. Pastor knows Christian ed theory & practice	80	75	79	66	77	85	61
Educational process							
C259B/SE. Church promotes intergenerational contact	20	31	20	20	29	17	28
C255B/SE. Program encourages theological reflection on human experience	36	33	36	43	32	34	21
C334B/4+5. Strong emphasis on community of faith	31	28	34	34	28	29	38
C335B/4+5. Strong emphasis on spiritual development	47	47	39	48	32	52	58
C230B/VT Leaders encourage raising questions about doctrine and theological ideas	62	59	56	59	59	66	55
Y314/G+E. Helps apply faith to everyday decisions	49	52	48	53	42	48	73
Educational Content							
Y376. Emphasis on sexuality education ²	27	22	12	24	21	31	34
Y371. Emphasis on drug and alcohol education ³	20	19	11	17	12	23	36
Y373. Emphasis on service projects ⁴	29	25	22	27	25	31	29
C261B/SE. Emphasis on moral values & decision-making	60	70	56	56	62	60	73

¹ Percent of teachers or leaders of youth who demonstrate Integrated Faith

² Based on percentage of youth reporting 11 hours or more study of sexuality through the church, lifetime

³ Based on percentage of youth reporting 11 hours or more study of drugs and alcohol through the church, lifetime

⁴ Based on percentage of youth reporting 11 hours or more involvement in service projects through the church, lifetime

Y375. Emphasis on poverty and hunger ¹	30	25	21	26	29	33	26
Y300/G+E. Helps learn about Bible and its meaning for life	66	61	65	64	60	67	83
Y325/G+E. Teaches church belief about God, Jesus, Bible	74	72	79	70	60	75	81
Y309/G+E. Help make friends and be a good friend	65	60	61	63	61	67	71
Y313/G+E. Help develop concern for other people	66	64	60	66	63	67	66
Peer models							
C356. Of 10th-12th grades, 60% or more active in youth program	21	33	16	28	24	19	33
Parent Involvement							
C270B/SE. Involves parents in program decisions and plans	26	19	12	22	23	32	39
Goals							
C304/1. Has clear mission statement for Christian education of teenagers	55	37	49	32	32	68	49
C307/1. Has clear learning objectives for teenagers	38	32	40	25	32	43	49

¹ Based on percentage of youth reporting 11 hours or more of study of poverty and hunger through the church, lifetime

H. Foundations Needed for Effective Christian Education

This research shows that the effective Christian education program requires strong, committed, competent leadership by teachers and pastors. Such leadership requires training, skill, and knowledge. Also, the effective program builds on a knowledge of the needs and interests of the people. Effectiveness in Christian education, then, requires planning, training, and significant congregational support. Listed below are important foundations for the building and maintaining of strong educational programs.

	Total	Five Mainline (Percentages)					SBC
Teacher Training							
C275. Teachers given in-service training at least annually	78	58	57	80	65	88	75
C288. Teachers given instruction in effective teaching methods at least annually	53	53	42	51	42	59	75
C280. Teachers given instruction in denominational theology and tradition at least annually	21	18	19	20	8	24	46
Teacher Faith Formation							
C279. Teachers gather for spiritual renewal and growth 3 or more times annually	8	11	7	7	5	8	26
Planning							
C277. Teachers meet to discuss goals and objectives at least annually	79	76	77	78	83	79	79
C281. Teachers meet to coordinate and plan, one full day, annually	18	11	8	13	13	24	33
Governing Body Support							
C274. Governing body has thoughtful discussions about Christian education 3 or more times annually	49	48	43	54	41	51	44
Pastor's Training							
P346. Pastor took four or more seminary courses in Christian education	28	34	25	19	35	29	56
P347. Pastor took three or more days of continuing education over last three years	40	48	41	34	37	40	77
Evaluation							
C292. Teachers evaluated annually	21	23	15	25	16	22	62
C284. Children's program evaluated annually	80	72	82	72	86	81	79
C285. Youth program evaluated annually	81	67	78	76	79	85	85

	Five Mainline						
	Total	CC	ELCA	PC	UCC	UMC	SBC
C286. Adult program evaluated annually	76	66	67	71	61	84	77
C289. Children's needs and interests studied annually	42	46	19	38	33	51	55
C290. Youth needs and interests studied annually	59	48	37	57	49	69	63
C291. Adults' needs and interests studied annually	57	45	47	46	44	67	54
Teacher Recognition							
C276. Teachers are named and given recognition in worship service	87	78	92	85	90	88	85
Coordination of study							
P328. Christian education is coordinated so that all ages study the same issues or Bible passages at the same time (responses include "quite a bit" and "great deal")	16	12	4	10	13	22	40

I. Congregational Factors Associated with Loyalty

Much of Part III has centered on the congregational factors associated with maturity of faith. We turn now to looking at congregational factors that promote loyalty to one's congregation and one's denomination. Four important conclusions about loyalty that grow from our analysis of these data are as follows:

- As in the case of faith maturity, we find that the strength of certain characteristics of congregational life is associated with the degree of loyalty members show to congregation and denomination. These are the crucial characteristics:
 - the effectiveness of Christian education
 - the degree to which the congregational climate promotes thinking
 - the degree to which the congregational climate is warm
 - the quality of worship
 - the frequency with which members experience the care and concern of other members.
- This connection holds for both adolescents and adults.
- Of the five areas of congregational life listed above, the effectiveness of Christian education has the greatest impact on loyalty, just as it has the greatest impact on faith maturity. Accordingly, congregations that pursue excellence in Christian education, as defined by the effectiveness factors enumerated earlier for promoting faith maturity, will likely see positive advance not only in members' faith but also in their congregational and denominational loyalty.
- The role of congregational climate in promoting loyalty and maturity of faith forms an interesting pattern. For both faith maturity and denominational loyalty, *climate of thinking* is more influential than *climate of warmth*. Only with congregational loyalty is *climate of warmth* more influential than *climate of thinking*. Note that both forms of climate matter. It is only the relative influence that varies.
- Of the Christian education effectiveness factors for adolescents listed earlier, both forms of loyalty are particularly associated with the degree to which the Christian education program succeeds in addressing common developmental issues faced by adolescents. These include self-concept, friendship, and finding purpose in life.

- For both adults and adolescents, the degree to which the Christian education program emphasizes teaching about denominational theology, tradition, and history has a small but significant connection to denominational loyalty. The stronger the emphasis, the greater the loyalty. Denominational findings on this factor are as follows:

<i>Total</i>	Five Mainline					<i>SBC</i>
	<i>CC</i>	<i>ELCA</i>	<i>PC</i>	<i>UCC</i>	<i>UMC</i>	
	<i>(Percentages)</i>					

256 B&C Christian education program emphasizes denominational theology, tradition, and history:

Congregations with strong emphasis, youth program	21	13	25	14	19	22	26
Congregations with strong emphasis, adult program	32	27	32	30	18	35	32

J. Celebrating Possibility: A View from the Site Visits

In the Effective Christian Education study, site visits to congregations with strengths in Christian education were conducted to augment the data collection by survey. These site visits made an important contribution to the project--enlarging understandings of effectiveness factors, broadening perspectives on the diversity and richness of effective Christian education formulas, and providing illustrations to enhance survey data. In addition they were, for the site visitors, exceptional experiences, ones described as "inspirational," "a continuing education experience for me," "moving."

Site visits were made to 52 congregations of the six participating congregations. Some were chosen from the study's random sample congregations for the apparent effectiveness of their educational systems, some nominated by Project Advisory Committee members and their networks. Site visit training and a detailed site visit manual provided visitors with protocol and a standardized procedure. Teams of two spent Friday afternoon through Sunday in these congregations, interviewing the pastor, congregational leaders, teachers, parents, and youth; observing the community, church facilities, programs, and interrelationships; and experiencing the worship service and the pervading tone and spirit among the people of the congregation. Their goal was to identify the positive things the congregation was doing to help its adults and adolescents develop a mature Christian faith.

The 52 congregations visited ranged in size from 100 members to more than 5,000 members who represented a wide variety of demographic and racial characteristics.

The following brief descriptions include some of the observations most commonly represented in the site visit reports.

- **Education is given a high priority**

The Sunday schools are well organized, with a special commitment to educating young people. A variety of youth and adult education activities include a catechetical program youth groups, Bible study, ministry to shut-ins, a prayer chain, social ministry, and hospital ministry. Classes challenge members to look at themselves and beyond, to the struggles of people everywhere.

- **The pastor inspires and supports**

Christian education is centered in and emanates from the worship life of the congregation. The pastor nurtures members in their growth in faith and has a strong commitment to and involvement in Christian education.

- **Music is understood as ministry**

In both formal and informal ways, music plays a special and faith-enhancing role in the life of the congregation. For example, director of the children's choir stops in rehearsal to discuss the meaning of the words being sung.

- **There is a focus on people and the importance of relationships**
A "family" atmosphere pervades these communities of faith. Tolerance for differences is based on mutual respect, and much energy is spent in affirming one another. Children and youth feel valued and included.
- **Leaders are well trained**
Emphasis is given to the training of and continuing support for teachers, youth leaders, and other educators. A spirit of learning, cooperation, and commitment exists. Good resources are available.
- **A 'thinking' approach is evident in Christian education classes**
Adults place high value on being encouraged to think about what is taught and discover their own answers, and they want the same encouragement for their children. They value opportunities to discuss important issues together, and they are comfortable talking about their faith.
- **Worship is important**
Worship is designed to include children, youth, and adults in meaningful ways. It is an instructional and celebrative time for the church family.
- **There is commitment to outreach**
There is a serious commitment to minister to neighbors who are in need. The congregation sees itself as Christ's servant in the community and the world. Its outreach activities include the denomination's global mission programs.

Reflections

Research is capable of several things, one of which is confirming with numbers and percentages some things we had always supposed. Often, in fact, it heightens our perceptions of what distresses or pleases us, indicating that things are even worse, or better, than we had thought. A second and equally powerful function of research is to forsake the pattern of confirming our hunches and to present things we might never have guessed. This report does a good deal of both. Further, it points, by implication, to some of the work that must be done if the trends which the report makes all too visible are to be reversed.

This report comes at a time when, for most mainstream denominations, resources of time, money, and energy are increasingly limited. One of the advantages of doing a study such as this is that it identifies the problems that are most pressing and thus opens the way for the priority-setting that must be done. But an even greater advantage is its capacity to point to those influences of family, worshipping community, and Christian education that exert the greatest influence on the development of faith and loyalty in Christians of all ages.

The comments that follow are offered as a way of opening the discussions that will lead to the many decisions that must be made at denominational, judicatory, and individual congregational levels.

Familiar Tensions

Some of this report covers known territory in that it highlights a number of tensions familiar in the Christian community and gives them added clarity.

1. Loving God wholeheartedly and loving one's neighbor as oneself is a basic biblical mandate, yet two-thirds of adults and almost ninety percent of adolescents in the mainline churches give evidence of a faith that is deficient in one or the other or both. One of the overall goals of education in the Christian church must of necessity be to find new ways to nurture balanced, integrated faith in adults and youth.
2. Are there ways to offer an inviting, accepting face to members and to the world while also offering the challenge to accept the disciplines of discipleship? This report affirms that a climate of warmth is a contributing factor in maturity of faith, but it also shows that the challenge of being stimulated to think and learn is also an important factor in developing both mature faith and loyalty.
3. Given that many churches have thought it essential first to nurture the faith in the protected environment of the Christian community and only later to begin outreach, can we re-examine and revise that sequence, given the knowledge that both giving and receiving care are part of the forces that nurture faith maturity and loyalty to the church?

4. An assessment of things that both adults and youth are interested in learning shows that matters touching the social conscience drop to the bottom of the list. Yet these are some of the very things--political action, international issues, peacemaking and social justice--that are essential to the development of the horizontal expression of faith. Inventing ways in which these topics can be brought before members without alienating them in the process is a significant challenge for Christian educators.
5. How shall we nurture youth who, like their contemporaries, are continually invited by the culture to engage in behaviors that place them at risk? Can we simultaneously accept them as they are and provide them with the firmness of will that enables them to make the kinds of decisions that face them daily?
6. Some of the philosophies of the secular culture--views of God more in keeping with Eastern than Christian religious thought, belief in reincarnation, flirtations with astrology, and difficulty in comprehending grace--are being adopted by significant numbers of adult church members. Are these philosophies threatening to so alter the historic Christian faith as to weaken the perspectives and mission of the present-day church?
7. To what extent are we able to combat the effects of the secular culture, which constantly "scripts" us to adopt an individualist, consumerist, militarist set of values? How can we effectively inspire in members a desire to formulate a Christian world view and adopt an accompanying set of values and behaviors?

New Directions

Part III of the report documents three important sources of the desired loyalty to the church and maturity of faith. These three sources offer a framework for the agenda of Christian education in the Protestant church. This framework underlines the importance of certain elements of *biographical experience* (Part III, table D1, p. 49), *congregational life* (Part III, table E1, p. 51), and *quality of Christian education* (Part III, G1 and G3, pp 54 and 56).

The research findings make it clear that these elements represent the most powerful influences on both loyalty to the church and maturity in faith. Despite their uniqueness of polity and heritage, the churches involved in this study all seek much the same goals, and the positive effects of the biographical, congregational, and educational influences here described are operative in all of them.

A beginning agenda, modified by each to suit its own polity, potential, and preferences, might look like this:

Biography

Equip mothers and fathers to play a more active role in the religious education of their children, by means of conversation, family devotions, and family helping projects. This will probably require special efforts to strengthen the spiritual life of parents as well as efforts to devise practical strategies for promoting the faith development of children.

It begins, then, to come clear how interconnected are some of the factors that make for effective nurturing of mature faith. Adult education is important because it nurtures in fathers and mothers a faith that is continually being examined, challenged, questioned, thought and talked over with other adults who are also examining and questioning. The talking they do with their children comes naturally, growing out of who the mother and father are, and what occupies their minds and interests.

Congregational life

It is clear that congregations where thinking is encouraged, where people of all ages are welcomed and valued, and where opportunities both to give and to receive help are offered are engaged in Christian education, whether they think of it in that fashion or not. A congregation in which it is a routine part of congregational life to reach out to their community and to the larger world is also engaged in effective education.

Interest in knowing how to make and maintain friendships is high on the list for both adults and youth. The skills of extending care to others can be practiced within the church family. Congregational life provides an excellent laboratory for trying out relationship skills that might be included in a formal Christian education program.

Christian education programs

Probably the greatest challenge facing Christian educators is the necessity of increasing the rates of involvement in formal Christian education programs at all age levels, but most particularly at the senior high school and adult levels. Creativity must be applied to this task, which surely nags at the back of the mind of every Christian educator alive. But this report gives the task even greater urgency.

Given the research finding that Christian education effectiveness is the central factor in increase in both loyalty and maturity of faith, taking education seriously becomes a priority for the entire church. Tables G2 and G2 of Part III make it clear that all of the essential elements of an effective program are not operative in many congregations. Thus there is need for a renewed determination to make the membership aware of the importance of enthusiasm for and financial support of well-thought-out Christian education programming.

Education programs that constantly test and expand an individual's concept of what Christian life really means are crucial components of any church that expects to fulfill its purpose for its members and for the world they profess to serve.

It may be a surprise to readers to see how few people in the mainline denominations say they had been converted at a single identifiable moment (Table IIIB, p. 44), and how very many of them said that their commitment to the faith had occurred gradually, over a period of time, or had been occurring since early childhood. The implication of that piece of information is that the atmosphere of a congregation, the nurturing climate of the home, and the constant involvement with Christian education are all of extreme importance and that they must exert a continued influence. Commitment to and growth of a mature faith is most likely to happen over a long period of time; we cannot expect to do great things by any single program, series of meetings, or demonstration of service. We will have to be unwearied in well-doing.

APPENDIX

Measurement Issues

Data presented here includes a listing of the items included in the six key measures of this study, as well as information on the reliability of those measures and a discussion of their validity. The six key measures are as follows:

- **Maturity of faith.** This contains 38 items, with one item representing each of the 38 indicators conceptualized to be an element of faith maturity. Each of the 38 items is scored from 1 (never true) to 7 (always true). The scale score is the mean of completed items. Hence, the scale ranges from 1 (low) to 7 (high). The conceptual framework is listed in Table 1. The 38 items are listed in Table 2.
- **Maturity of faith: The vertical dimension.** These 12 items are a part of the 38-item mature faith index. The scale score is the mean of those 12 items. The scale ranges from 1 (low) to 7 (high). The items are listed in Table 3.
- **Maturity of faith: The horizontal dimension.** These a 12-item subset from the 38-item mature faith index. The scale score is the mean of completed items. The scale ranges from 1 (low) to 7 (high). The items are listed in Table 4.
- **Growth in faith maturity (During the last 2-3 years).** Containing 18 items, this index covers the same dimensions as the faith maturity scale. The response options are rephrased to refer to the change in each faith element occurring "in the last 2-3 years." The scale score is the mean of completed items, and ranges from 1 (low) to 5 (high). The items are listed in Table 5.
- **Denominational loyalty.** This 3 item index ranges from 1 (low) to 5 (high) with the scale score constructed as the mean of the three items. The items are listed in Table 6.
- **Congregational loyalty.** This three item index ranges from 1 (low) to 5 (high) with the scale score constructed on the mean of the three items. The items are listed in Table 7.

Table 1: Indicators of Mature Christian Faith
--

The person with mature Christian faith:

A. Trusts and believes

1. Sees God as both transcendent and immanent
2. Accepts both the divinity and humanity of Jesus
3. Reconciles God's love and human suffering
4. Accepts God's love as unconditional
5. Experiences God's guidance in daily life

B. Experiences the fruits of faith

6. Feels liberated, set free
7. Experiences meaning and purpose in life
8. Experiences a sense of peace
9. Has a deep sense of personal security
10. Experiences self-acceptance

C. Integrates faith and life

11. Faith informs daily decisions and actions
12. Faith dictates moral principles and guidelines
13. Feels obligation to share personal resources with others
14. Commits life to Jesus
15. Applies faith to political and social issues

D. Seeks spiritual growth

16. Affirms that faith is a journey that necessitates continuing change in belief and meaning
17. Seeks to increase biblical knowledge and understanding
18. Frequently engages in private prayer or meditation
19. Seeks opportunities for spiritual growth

E. Experiences and nurtures faith in community

20. Seeks to nurture the faith of others
21. Shares his/her own faith story
22. Experiences God in interpersonal and social encounters
23. Seeks opportunities for communal prayer and reflection

F. Hold life-affirming values

24. Pursues a healthy lifestyle
25. Feels responsible for promoting human welfare
26. Affirms religious diversity
27. Embraces gender and racial equality
28. Is accepting of other people
29. Affirms the sanctity of creation

G. Advocates social change

30. Is committed to reducing poverty
31. Advocates social and political change to improve human welfare
32. Believes faith demands global concern
33. Believes the church belongs in the public sphere

H. Acts and serves

34. Responds to others with compassion and sensitivity
35. Engages in actions to protect the ecology
36. Devotes time and energy to acts of social service
37. Devotes time and energy to promoting social justice
38. Devotes time and energy to promoting world peace

Table 2: The Mature Faith Index
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How true are each of these statements for you? Mark one answer for each. Be as honest as possible, describing how true it really is and not how true you would like it to be.

Choose from these responses:

- 1 = Never true
- 2 = Rarely true
- 3 = True once in a while
- 4. = Sometimes true
- 5 = Often true
- 6 = Almost always true
- 7 = Always true

- 85. I am concerned that our country is not doing enough to help the poor
- 86. I know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who died on a cross and rose again
- 87. My faith shapes how I think and act each and every day
- 88. I help others with their religious questions and struggles
- 89R. I tend to be critical of other people
- 90. In my free time, I help people who have problems or needs
- 91. My faith helps me know right from wrong
- 92. I do things to help protect the environment
- 93. I devote time to reading and studying the Bible
- 94R. I have a hard time accepting myself
- 95. Every day I see evidence that God is active in the world
- 96. I take excellent care of my physical health
- 97. I am active in efforts to promote social justice
- 98. I seek out opportunities to help me grow spiritually
- 99. I take time for periods of prayer or meditation
- 100. I am active in efforts to promote world peace
- 101. I accept people whose religious beliefs are different from mine
- 102. I feel a deep sense of responsibility for reducing pain and suffering in the world
- 103. As I grow older, my understanding of God changes
- 104R. I feel overwhelmed by all the responsibilities and obligations I have
- 105. I give significant portions of time and money to help other people
- 106. I speak out for equality for women and minorities
- 107. I feel God's presence in my relationships with other people
- 108. My life is filled with meaning and purpose
- 109R. I do not understand how a loving God can allow so much pain and suffering in the world
- 110R. I believe that I must obey God's rules and commandments in order to be saved
- 111. I am confident that I can overcome any problem or crisis no matter how serious
- 112. I care a great deal about reducing poverty in the United States and throughout the world
- 113. I try to apply my faith to political and social issues
- 114. My life is committed to Jesus Christ
- 115. I talk with other people about my faith
- 116R. My life is filled with stress and anxiety
- 117. I go out of my way to show love to people I meet
- 118. I have a real sense that God is guiding me
- 119R. I do not want the churches of this nation getting involved in political issues
- 120. I like to worship and pray with others.
- 121. I think Christians must be about the business of creating international understanding and harmony
- 122. I am spiritually moved by the beauty of God's creation

Note: R refers to reversed scoring.

Table 3: Mature Faith–Vertical Dimension

- 87. My faith shapes how I think and act each and every day
- 91. My faith helps me know right from wrong
- 93. I devote time to reading and studying the Bible
- 95. Every day I see evidence that God is active in the world
- 98. I seek out opportunities to help me grow spiritually
- 99. I take time for periods of prayer and meditation
- 103. As I grow older, my understanding of God changes
- 108. My life is filled with meaning and purpose
- 115. I talk with other people about my faith
- 118. I have a real sense that God is guiding me
- 120. I like to worship and pray with others
- 122. I am spiritually moved by the beauty of God's creation

Table 4: Mature Faith–Horizontal Dimension

- 85. I am concerned that our country is not doing enough to help the poor
- 90. In my free time, I help people who have problems or needs
- 92. I do things to help protect the environment
- 97. I am active in efforts to promote social justice
- 100. I am active in efforts to promote world peace
- 102. I feel a deep sense of responsibility for reducing pain and suffering in the world
- 105. I give significant portions of time and money to help other people
- 106. I speak out for equality of women and minorities
- 112. I care a great deal about reducing poverty in the U.S. and throughout the world
- 113. I try to apply my faith to political and social issues
- 117. I go out of my way to show love to people I meet
- 121. I think Christians must be about the business of creating international understanding and harmony

Table 5: Growth in Mature Faith Index
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Have you changed in the last 2 or 3 years? For each of the following, tell whether it is true to a greater or lesser degree for you than it was 2 or 3 years ago. Give your best answer for each.

Choose from these responses:

- 1 = Much less now
- 2 = Somewhat less now
- 3 = About the same as 2 or 3 years ago
- 4 = Somewhat greater now
- 5 = Much greater now

- 174. The degree to which my faith shapes how I think and act
- 175. The effort I make to get involved in activities that help me grow spiritually
- 176. The time I spend talking to others about my faith
- 177. The amount of time I spend working for peace and social justice
- 178. The degree to which I accept people who believe differently than I do
- 179. The degree to which my life has meaning and purpose
- 180. The degree to which I apply my faith to political or social issues
- 181. The amount of time I spend reading and studying the Bible
- 182. The time I spend worshiping and praying with others
- 183. The degree to which I show love to people I meet
- 184. The sense of personal responsibility I feel for reducing pain and suffering in the world
- 185. The degree to which I feel that God is guiding me
- 186. The degree to which I care about hunger and poverty in the world
- 187. The amount of time and money I give to help other people
- 188. The degree to which I am convinced that God is active in the world
- 189. The degree to which I let God into my life
- 190. The importance of my spiritual life
- 191R. The amount of stress and anxiety in my life

Note: R refers to reversed scoring.

Table 6: Denominational Loyalty Index
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205. How important is it to you to attend a church of the denomination you marked above?
- It is extremely important to me.
 - It is important to me.
 - It is somewhat important to me.
 - It is not too important to me.
 - It is not important at all. I could just as well attend a church of another denomination.
206. How satisfied are you with the denomination you marked in question 204?
- Very satisfied
 - Satisfied
 - Somewhat satisfied
 - Dissatisfied
 - Very dissatisfied
207. If you moved to another city that had many churches from which to choose, would you attend a church of the same denomination you now attend?
- Yes, absolutely
 - Yes, probably
 - Maybe
 - Probably not
 - No

Table 7: Congregational Loyalty Index
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For each of the following, indicate how much you agree or disagree.

Choose from these responses:

- 1 = Strongly disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Not sure
- 4 = Agree
- 5 = Strongly agree

192. If I had to change churches, I would feel a great sense of loss
193. I feel at home in this church
- 194R. I would change churches if my church developed major leadership or financial problems
195. The church I attend matters a great deal to me

Note: Refers to reversed scoring.

Table 8: Scale Reliabilities

	Respondent Type				
	Adults	Adolescents	Pastors	Teachers	Coordinators
Faith Maturity	.88	.87	.85	.88	.89
Faith Maturity: Vertical Dimension	.87	.88	.86	.87	.87
Faith Maturity: Horizontal Dimension	.83	.82	.84	.83	.85
Growth in Faith Maturity	.88	.86	.85	.88	.86
Denominational Loyalty	.75	.74	—	.77	.75
Congregational Loyalty	.81	.80	—	.80	.73
N	3744	2613	513	3382	444

Note: Pastors did not respond to the two loyalty scales. Reliability estimates based on Cronbach coefficient alpha. Reliabilities for all six denominations combined (unweighted).

Validity

Considerable evidence supports the validity of the faith maturity, growth in faith maturity, denominational loyalty, and congregational loyalty scales. A summary of this evidence is as follows:

Known Groups

It was predicted that mature faith mean scores should occur in this order, from high to low: pastors, coordinators of Christian education, teachers, adults, and youth. This prediction is confirmed, with mean scores as follow:

	<u>N</u>	<u>X</u>
Pastor	519	5.35
Coordinator	499	4.90
Teacher	3466	4.77
Adult	3567	4.63
Youth	3121	4.10

It was predicted that congregational loyalty and denominational loyalty should occur in this order: coordinators, teachers, adults, youth. These predictions are confirmed.

It was predicted that national denominational executives should score higher on denominational loyalty than coordinators or teachers. In a national survey of 62 mainline Protestant executives conducted in May, 1988, this prediction was confirmed.

Expert Raters

In May, 1988, 10 mainline pastors and 10 denominational executives rated a total of 123 persons on the four outcome variables. For each variable, raters provided ratings on a 1-10 scale based on their previous knowledge of a person's level of mature faith, growth in mature faith, denominational loyalty, and congregational loyalty. These ratings were then correlated with subjects' scores on the outcome measures. In all four cases, the level of prediction is substantial. The ratings to survey score correlations were .61 for mature faith, .40 for growth in mature faith, .54 for congregational loyalty, and .55 for denominational loyalty. This pattern of high correlations held also when splitting the total group into youth and adult subgroups.

In May, 1988, 48 married adult couples also completed the survey instrument. Each spouse also completed the survey a second time, according to "how you think your spouse will respond." The correlations of self-report with spouses' predicted responses were extremely high on all four scales (.50 or higher).

Relationship with Age

It was predicted that mature faith, congregational loyalty, and denominational loyalty will increase linearly with age. The first of these predictions is based on developmental theory (Erickson, Selman, Fowler) suggesting that both taking the perspective of others and sacrificing for the common good are cognitively advanced psychosocial perspectives requiring both cognitive readiness and experience. Predictions were confirmed, particularly for mature faith and congregational loyalty.

Other Correlations

The case for validity of the four measures is strengthened by these relationships among adults (with all correlations significant, $p < .001$):

- *Mature faith* correlates .58 with intrinsic religion and is unrelated to extrinsic (based on a field study with 102 adults in the fall of 1987, using Feagin's eleven-item index of intrinsic and extrinsic); .57 with self-reported importance of religion; .47 with frequency of prayer; .47 with frequency of reading religious literature other than the Bible; .65 with a four-item Good Samaritan index; .48 with a measure of support for racial equality; and .34 with frequency of social justice behaviors.
- *Growth in mature faith* correlates .45 with the degree to which "I have let God into my life during the last 2-3 years"; .44 with the degree to which "I have grown in the importance of my faith during the last 2-3 years"; .40 with the frequency of reading about and studying the Bible during the last 2-3 years, and .47 with the frequency of "talking with my best friend about faith" during the last 2-3 years.
- *Congregational loyalty* correlates .51 with a pro-church orientation, .38 with congregational participation, .45 with "my congregation feels warm," and .40 with "I learn a lot at my church."
- *Denominational loyalty* correlates .32 with expressed interest in learning about one's denomination and .26 with "how well does your church now teach about your denomination's traditions?"

There is also strong evidence of validity in the overall empirical patterns within the data set. For example, the same denominational differences in scale scores tend to be found across all respondent types. Predictions about determinants of scale scores (e.g., family religiousness, congregational warmth) are strongly supported and patterns of relationships among predictors and the four outcome measures are consistently demonstrated in this subgroup (e.g., denomination, region categories, congregation size categories).

