

**Lutherans Say. . . No. 6**  
**The Religious Beliefs and Practices of Lutheran Lay Leaders in the ELCA**  
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For a summary of the results, see page 30.

**Background of the Survey**

Lutherans Say. . . No. 6 (LS6) was first mailed in June, 2008, to a sample of 1,563 people from the mailing list of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's (ELCA) *Seeds for the Parish*. *Seeds for the Parish* is a congregational resource newspaper produced by the ELCA's churchwide office and is mailed six times a year to congregational leaders.<sup>1</sup> The initial mailing was followed by a postcard reminder and then, several weeks later, those who had not responded received a second copy of the questionnaire. By October 31, 841 people had completed usable questionnaires for a response rate of 54 percent.

The primary purpose of LS6 was to gather data that will provide Research and Evaluation with baselines by which the work of the ELCA's churchwide organization can be evaluated. The churchwide organization has set two priorities within its plan for mission.<sup>2</sup> The first priority is "to work collaboratively with congregations, synods, agencies and institutions and other partners, to accompany congregations as growing centers for evangelical mission." In support of this priority, the churchwide unit Evangelical Outreach and Congregational Mission will give considerable attention to the collective faith practices of discipleship in congregations over the next few years. To set a baseline for evaluating this work, LS6 included a series of questions on the current faith practices of leaders.

The second priority for the churchwide organization is "to work collaboratively with congregations, synods, agencies and institutions and other partners, to building capacity for evangelical witness and service in the world to alleviate poverty and work for justice and peace." In support of this priority is the ELCA's Peace Not Walls initiative. This initiative calls for "efforts toward a viable, contiguous Palestinian state, a secure Israeli state at peace with its Arab neighbors, and a shared Jerusalem with equal access and rights for Jews, Christians, and Muslims." LS6 included a series of questions designed to help the churchwide organization's Global Mission unit better understand how ELCA leaders currently view the Middle East. Specifically, LS6 was designed to gauge the acceptance among Lutheran congregational leaders of a theological perspective called premillennial dispensationalism. Those who hold this view

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<sup>1</sup> The names of the leaders are submitted by congregations and include members of congregation councils and others responsible for various aspects of congregational life like worship, music, Sunday School, and Vacation Bible School.

<sup>2</sup> LS6 is focused only on a portion of the work anticipated by the churchwide organization in support of these priorities.

typically believe that war in the Middle East is inevitable, and even desirable, because it is a sign of the imminent return or the second coming of Messiah.

LS6 also included a series of questions on the theological beliefs of these congregational leaders along with a question on how they view the Bible. This series of questions, and particularly the question on the Bible, are central to the analysis that follows in this report. This analysis, in turn, provides a fuller context for evaluating the ELCA's Book of Faith initiative which is intended to increase biblical literacy and fluency throughout the ELCA. The ability to interpret Scripture as a Lutheran goes to the very core of what it means to be Lutheran.

Finally, LS6 included a series of questions designed to better understand how congregational leaders view important public figures and how concerned they are about a host of issues facing the ELCA and the country as a whole.<sup>3</sup> Knowing what congregational leaders think about these issues better informs the decision-making of synodical and churchwide leaders.

### **Characteristics of the Respondents**

Sixty-nine percent of the respondents were baptized in a Lutheran church.<sup>4</sup> Sixty-two percent were females, and 61 percent held college degrees. Twenty-seven percent held a master's degree or higher. One percent of the respondents were age 30 or younger while 31 percent were 66 or older. (See Figure 1.) The average age of the respondents was 59. Eighteen percent had household incomes of \$40,000 or less. (See Figure 2.) Thirty-seven percent had household incomes of \$40,000 to \$80,000, and 44 percent had household incomes of \$80,000 or more. Thirty-nine percent said they were Republicans, 34 percent Democrats, and 27 percent Independents.

The respondents are not representative of all those who attend worship in the ELCA. The vast majority of the respondents, for example, were on their congregation's governing council. These church leaders tend to be older, better educated, and more likely to say they are Democrats or Independents than typical attendees.<sup>5</sup>

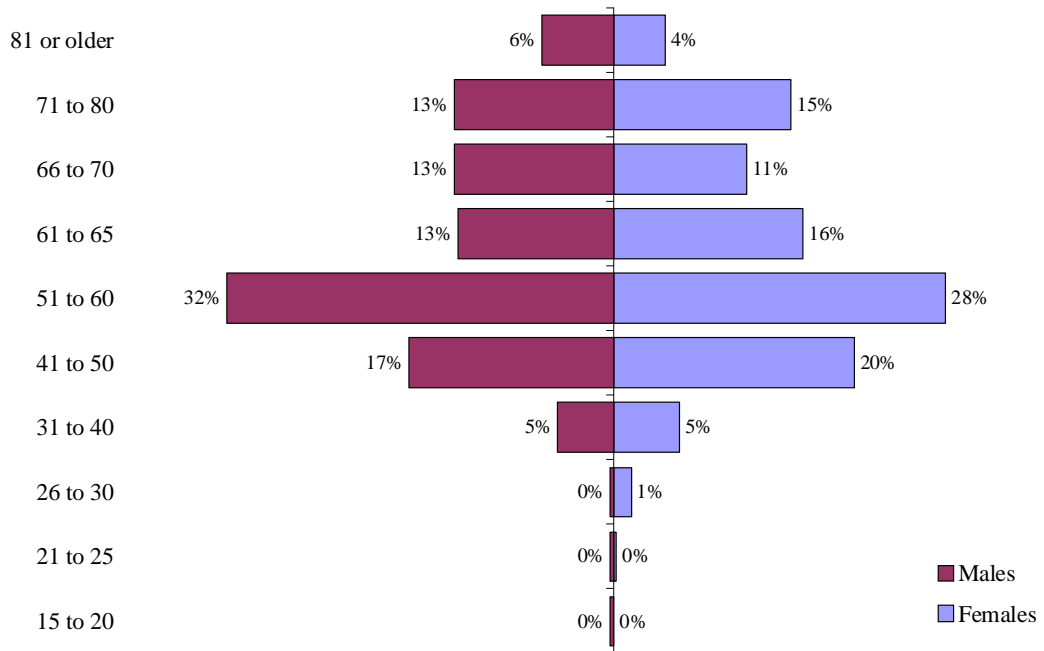
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<sup>3</sup> As with all questionnaires, after the fact, some questions should have been worded differently. A few respondents took issue with the word "worry" used in this set of questions from the point of view that worrying is a sin. Perhaps "concern" would have been a better choice.

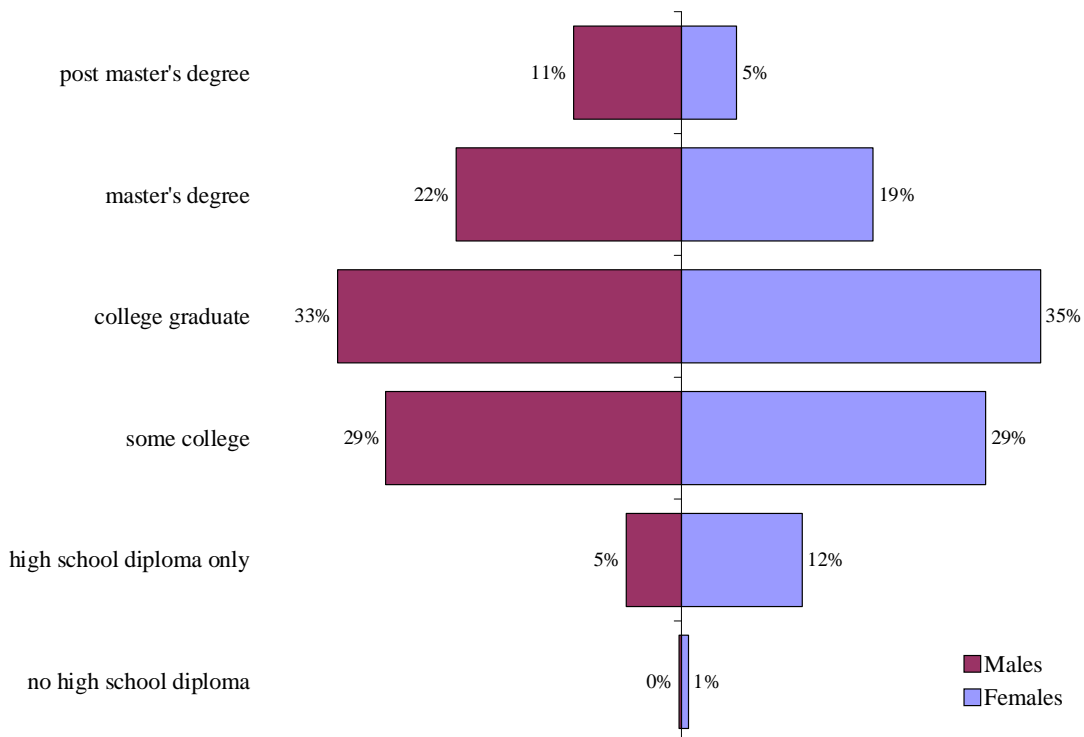
<sup>4</sup> The frequencies for the questionnaire are in Appendix 1.

<sup>5</sup> Data for attendees is from the *U.S. Congregational Life Survey* which included 43,463 attendees from 420 ELCA congregations. The survey was conducted in 2001.

**Figure 1: Age and Gender of Respondents**



**Figure 2: Education and Gender of Respondents**



## The Bible

When asked about their view of the Bible, 15 percent of the respondents said “the Bible is the word of God, to be taken literally word for word.” Fewer leaders took a literalist view of the Bible than did the attendees (24%) who responded to the same question in 2001.<sup>6</sup> The majority of leaders said either “the Bible is the word of God, to be interpreted in light of its historical or cultural context” (38%) or “the Bible is the word of God, to be interpreted in light of its historical context and the Church’s teaching” (38%). Eight percent of the leaders said “the Bible is not the word of God, but contains God’s word” or it does not contain the word of God but is a “valuable book.” One percent of the respondents said they were “not sure.”

A respondent’s view of the Bible is related to education.<sup>7</sup> Thirty-six percent of the respondents who took a literal view of the Bible held a college degree. Among those respondents who believe that the Bible should be interpreted in light of its context, 65 percent held a college degree. Seventy-three percent of those who believe the Bible is not the word of God but contains the word of God or is a valuable book held a college degree.

### Faith Practices: Worship, Prayer, Bible Study, Talking about the Faith

Eighty-one percent of the congregational leaders attend worship services at least once a week and another 16 percent said they attend one or two times a month. Three percent attend less than once a month.

In terms of other faith practices, the respondents are most likely to spend time in prayer or meditation (60% every day, 22% one or two times a week) and to pray before meals (54% every day, 16% one or two times a week). (See Figure 3.) These leaders were less likely to talk with friends or relatives about their faith (12% every day, 32% one or two times a week). Eighteen percent said they read the Bible on their own or with family members every day and 23 percent said they did so one or two times a week. Sixteen percent said they read religious books, newspapers, or magazines every day, while 26 percent said they did so one or two times a week. These leaders were least likely to watch or listen to religious broadcasting (7% every day, 15% one or two times a week) or to attend a Bible study or prayer groups (0% every day and 21% one

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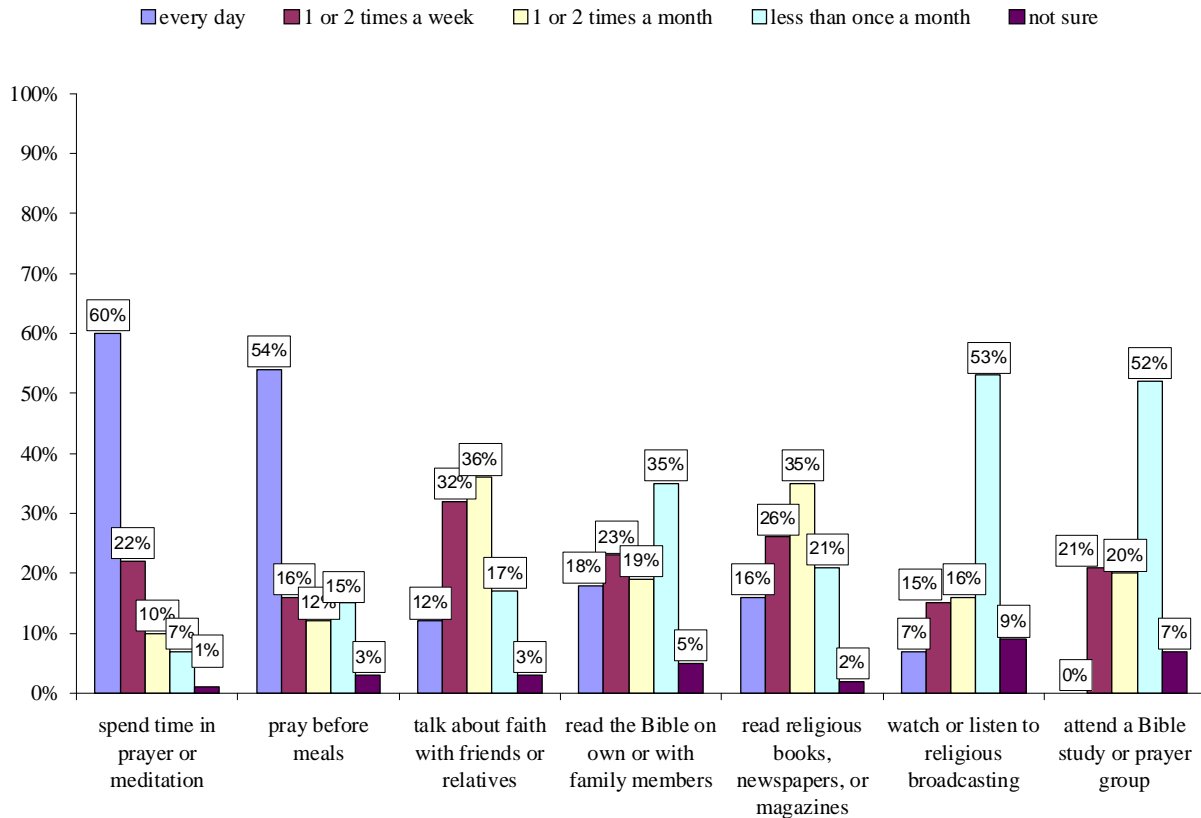
<sup>6</sup> All reported differences are statistically significant at the .05 level. Data for attendees is from the *U.S. Congregational Life Survey* which included 43,463 attendees from 420 ELCA congregations. The survey was conducted in 2001.

<sup>7</sup> For the purpose of analysis, the respondents to the question on the Bible were grouped into three categories. The first category includes those who responded that “The Bible is the word of God, to be taken literally word for word (N=124). The second category groups together those who took the view that “The Bible is the word of God, to be interpreted in light of its historical and cultural context” or “The Bible is the word of God to be interpreted in light of its historical and cultural context and the Church’s teaching” (N=608). The third category groups together those who took the view that “The Bible is not the word of God, but contains God’s word to us” or “The Bible is not the word of God, but is a valuable Book” (N=60).

or two times a week). A majority of these congregational leaders (52%) said they attend a Bible study or prayer group less than once a month.

Age and, in this case, a respondent's view of the Bible were not strongly related to participating in these faith practices, with two exceptions. In terms of attending worship services, age was a significant factor. Among those 40 or younger, 69 percent attend worship services at least once a week, but among those 71 or older, 89 percent attend at least once a week.

**Figure 3: Frequency of Prayer, Talking about Faith, Reading the Bible or Other Religious Books, Watching Religious Broadcasting, or Attending a Bible Study or Prayer Group**



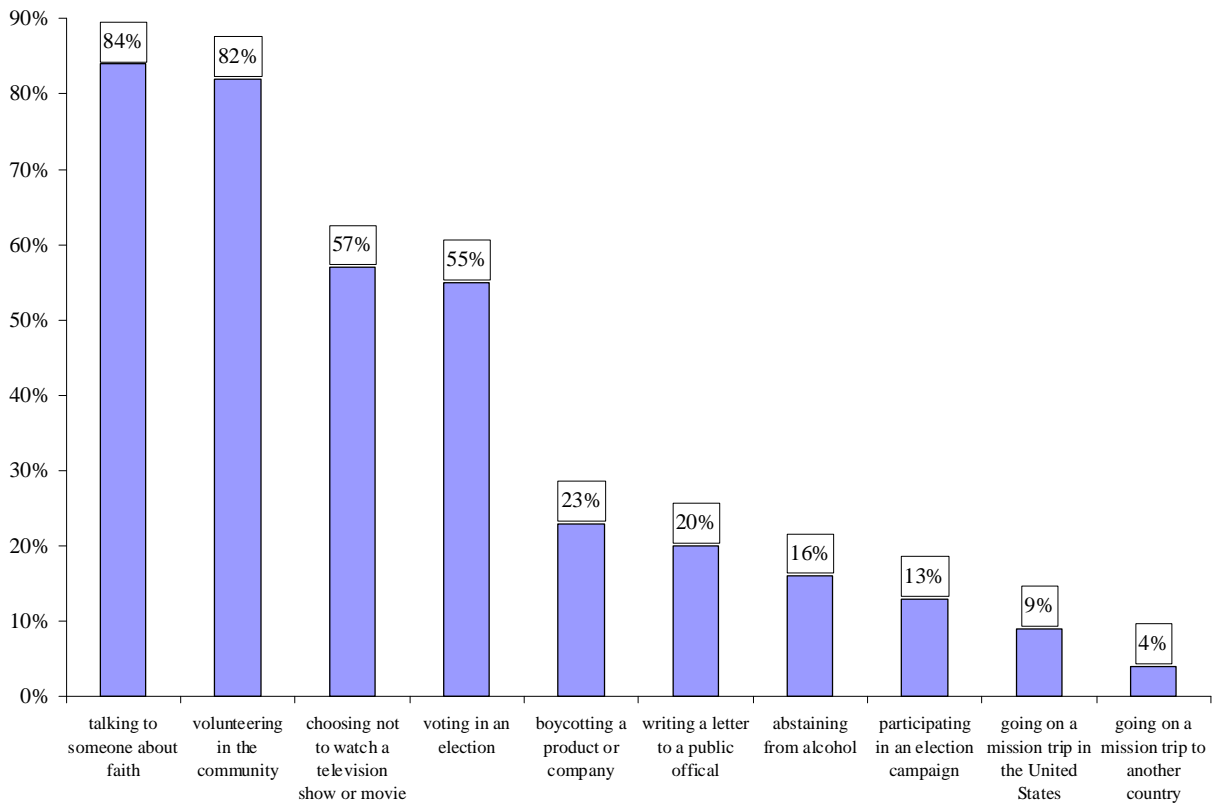
In terms of how often a respondent watches or listens to religious broadcasting, a respondent's view of the Bible was important. Thirty-nine percent of those who said the Bible should be taken literally also said they watch or listen to religious broadcasting everyday or one or two times a week. Thirteen percent of those who said the Bible is not the word of God, but contains the word of God or is a valuable book watch or listen to religious broadcasting every day or one or two times a week.

## The Impact of Faith

We asked these leaders if their faith had a “direct or primary impact” on their involvement in a variety of activities from volunteering in the community to talking to someone about their faith. The focus is on the “impact” of faith, not the level of activity in the practice itself.

The respondents were most likely to say that their faith had a direct or primary impact on talking about their faith (84%) and volunteering in the community (82%). (See Figure 4.) Fifty-seven percent said their faith had a direct or primary impact on choosing not to watch a television program or a movie and 55 percent said their faith had a direct or primary impact on their decision to vote in an election. It appears that these leaders see these activities as most directly tied to their faith.

**Figure 4: Percent Saying Faith Had a Direct Impact on These Practices in the Last Year**



Many fewer of the respondents said their faith had a direct or primary impact on their boycotting a product or company (23%), writing a letter to a public official (20%), abstaining from alcohol (16%), participating in an election campaign (13%), or going on a mission trip in the United States (9%) or to another country (4%). It may well be that the respondents simply did not do these things but clearly, their faith did not prompt them to do them.

The impact of a respondent’s view of the Bible is important. Those who take a literal view of the Bible were more likely to say their faith had a direct or primary impact on their decision to talk about faith, to not watch a television program or a movie, to vote in an election, or to abstain from alcohol. (See Table 1.) At the same time, the literalists were no more likely than those who took another view of the Bible to say their faith had a direct or primary impact on leading them to volunteer in the community, write a letter to a public official, boycott a product or company, or go on a mission trip.

<b>Table 1: Faith Has Had a Direct or Primary Impact on These Practices by View of the Bible</b>			
	<b>Bible is to be taken literally (N=124)</b>	<b>Bible to be interpreted in light of its context (N=608)</b>	<b>Bible is not the word of God, but contains God’s word or is valuable (N=60)</b>
talking about faith	93%	87%	76%
choosing not to watch a television program or a movie	77%	60%	32%
voting in an election	73%	55%	40%
abstaining from alcohol	35%	14%	5%

Age was a factor on voting in an election and going on mission trips. Seventy-one percent of respondents 71 or older said their faith had led them to vote in an election compared to 36 percent of those 40 or younger. On the other hand, 22 percent of those 40 or younger said their faith had led them to go on a mission trip in the United States, compared to 5 percent of those who were 71 or older.

## **Theology**

### Baptism

There is nearly universal agreement among the respondents that baptism is important. Forty-eight percent of the respondents “strongly agreed” and 45 percent “agreed” with the statement “It is important for a person to be baptized.” While those who took a literal view of the Bible (94%) and those who believe the Bible should be interpreted in context (94%) “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with this statement, so did the vast majority (78%) of those who do not believe the Bible is the word of God but contains the word of God or is a valuable book.

### Exclusivism

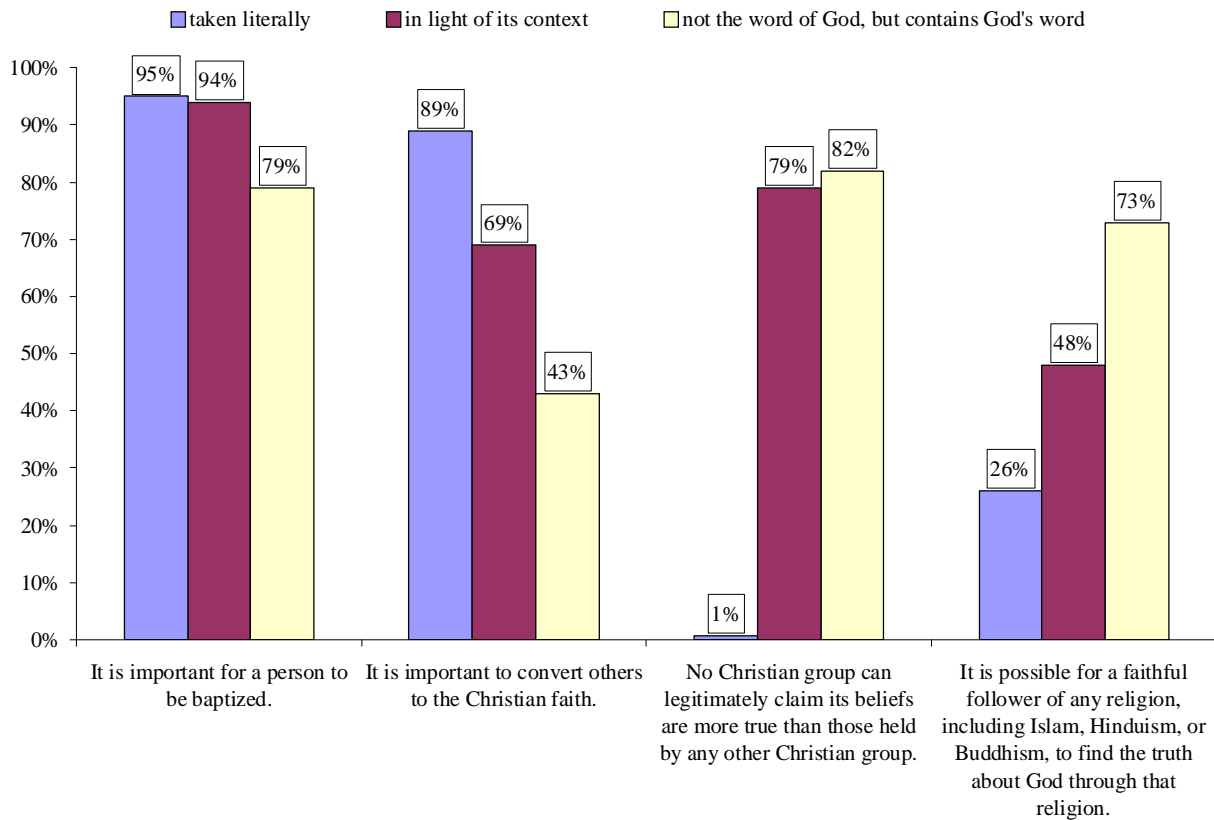
More of these Lutheran leaders believe it is important for a person to be baptized (93%, “agreed” or “strongly agreed”) than believe it is important to convert others to the Christian faith (71%, “agreed” or “strongly agreed”).

Seventy-six percent “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that no Christian group can legitimately claim its beliefs are more true than those held by any other Christian group.

Forty-six percent “agreed” or “strongly agreed” and 22 percent were “not sure” that “it is possible for a faithful follower of any religion, including Islam, Hinduism, or Buddhism, to find the truth about God through that religion. In short, there is little evidence to suggest that the vast majority of these leaders believe strongly that Lutheranism is more true than any other Christian expression of the faith or, to a somewhat lesser extent, even non-Christian religions.

Those who take a literal view of the Bible are more likely to be exclusive. (See Figure 5.) Ninety-five percent of the literalists believe it is important for a person to be baptized and 89 percent believe it is important to convert others to the Christian faith. On the other hand, 82 percent of those who do not believe the Bible is the word of God but contains the word of God are convinced that no Christian group can legitimately claim its beliefs are more true than those held by any other Christian group. Seventy-three percent of this group are also convinced that it is possible for a faithful follower of any religion to find the truth about God through that religion.

**Figure 5: Percent Agreeing or Strongly Agreeing on Questions of Baptism, Conversion, and the Exclusiveness of Christian Beliefs by View of the Bible**





In between the literalist and those who believe the Bible is not the word of God are those who believe the Bible should be interpreted in context. On the question of baptism, they are closer to the literalists with 94 percent “agreeing” or “strongly agreeing” that it is important for a person to be baptized. However, on the question of truth claims by different Christian groups, those who believe the Bible should be interpreted in context, are closer to those who say the Bible is not the word of God but contains the word of God or is a valuable book. Seventy-nine percent “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that no Christian group can legitimately claim its beliefs are more true than those of any other Christian group.

We also asked these congregational leaders to agree or disagree with the statement “It is best that the laws of the United States reflect the will of the electorate even if they are in conflict with the teachings of the Bible.” Most of the leaders “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” (59%). Fourteen percent were “not sure.” Once again, however, a respondent’s view of the Bible was significant. Seventy-six percent of the literalists “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” compared to 36 percent of those who believe the Bible is not the word of God but contains the word of God or is a valuable book. Fifty-eight percent of those who believe the Bible should be interpreted in context “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed.”

### Religious Individualism in American Culture and a Lutheran Theological Identity

The lay members of the ELCA and its predecessor church bodies have tended to hold diverse theological perspectives, some of which reflect the dominant religious culture of America.<sup>8</sup> This culture, shaped in the early nineteenth century, is characterized by a high view of the capacity of the individual, as an individual, to respond positively to God. In fact, as the historian Mark Noll (2002:231) put it:

[American religious thinkers in the early nineteenth century] were much more likely than before to hold that the human will was an active, necessary, and determinative participant in the reception of divine grace, that the human mind played a decisive role in determining the reality of both natural and supernatural phenomena, and that personal apprehension and action were more important than traditional, mediated, or historic authorities in determining the nature of Christian truth.

With regard to the Bible, Noll (2002:231) writes: American religious thinkers in the early nineteenth century “held that the Bible was the only reliable source of religious authority and that personally appropriated understanding of Scripture was the only reliable means of interpretation.” Noll (2002:231) notes: “American theologians continued to describe the church as the people of God, but they tended to speak instinctively of the church as constructed by those who constituted it rather than as an inheritance from saints of former generations.”

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<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Robert Wuthnow, “Sources of Doctrinal Unity and Diversity,” in *Views from the Pews*, ed. Roger A. Johnson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 33-56.

Lutherans in America, at least those in positions of power and authority, found themselves confronted by this American theology and they largely rejected it in favor of European, reformation theology as it was expressed in the Lutheran Confessions.<sup>9</sup> The Confessions took a considerably dimmer view of the capacity of humans to respond positively to God. As Gassmann and Hendrix (1999:78) put it, from the perspective of the Confessions, “humanity was completely captive to sin and therefore unable to cooperate with God for its salvation and was consequently utterly dependent on God’s saving grace in the person of Jesus Christ.” Grassmann and Hendrix (1999:162) continue:

The Lutheran picture of Christian existence depends on denying that human beings ever find themselves in a state of neutrality toward God. The confessions therefore disallow the claim that anyone can choose God by themselves. This view contradicts the value placed on decision in contemporary Christianity. What feels like a human decision for God, the confessions would say, is actually the Holy Spirit turning the will from sin to God. The confessions do acknowledge conversion, but for them it is not a human decision but a feat of the Holy Spirit working through the Word of God and the sacraments. Because of this, the church must attempt to reach everyone with the Word.

This low view of the capacity of humans also ran up against the dominant American view that individuals could overcome sin and live a holy life. Noll (2002:267) notes that “since redemption was God’s loving response accomplished through the Holy Spirit prompting the sinner’s choice, redeemed sinners could and should go on to seek the Christian perfection that God in Scripture promised to believers who sought him with their whole heart.” Lutheran theology is, at best, uncomfortable with the idea of Christian perfection, maintaining instead that individuals, even very faithful individuals, cannot, in this earthly life, escape the power of sin. A holy life is a noble, but unachievable goal. Again, as Gassmann and Hendrix (1999:172-173) put it:

According to the confessions, the Christian life is a delicate balance of faith and good works and of justification and sanctification. It is a fertile garden in which good works sprout from faith at the same time that sin keeps pushing its head above ground. Repentance is constantly needed in order to check cockiness and prompt the faithful to rely on God’s promise alone.

Finally, this low view of the capacity of humans was, at best, cool to the idea that individuals, on their own, could come to a correct interpretation of Scripture. Luther, who devoted much energy to translating the Bible into German, also believed it was critically important to guide people as they read Scripture and, it was toward this end that he devoted much of his writing. One clear example is Luther’s “A Brief Instruction on What to Look for and Expect in the Gospels”

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<sup>9</sup> E. Clifford Nelson, *Lutheranism in North America: 1914-1970*. (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg, 1972), 10-12.

(1521). Luther begins the instruction by citing two common errors among “the people.” First, he (Lull, 1989:104) argues that few look to the epistles of St. Paul and St. Peter to learn about the gospel because common practice is to identify the first four books of the New Testament as the gospels and second, “there is, besides, the still worse practice of regarding the gospels and epistles as law books . . .”. Luther (Lull, 1989:104) continues: “now where these two erroneous notions remain in the heart, there neither the gospels nor the epistles may be read in a profitable or Christian manner, and [the people] remain as pagan as ever.”

Because Scripture can be misread by individuals, the church becomes critically important in proclaiming the gospel through public preaching. Preaching is the primary means of “handing on the central message of Scripture from generation to generation” (Gassmann and Hendrix, 1999:54).

Hearing the gospel preached is to encounter God’s Word just as truly as reading the Bible is to encounter God’s Word. Although the Reformation helped to make the Bible available to everyone, its message spread mainly through preaching, and it intended for the Bible to be read and interpreted in the context of Christian community (Gassmann and Hendrix, 1999:55).

### Religious Individualism in the ELCA

While the Confessions reject a high view of the capacity of individuals, there are a significant number of congregational leaders in the ELCA who do not. This claim is made modestly with the full realization that sorting out nuances among different theological points of view is a challenge and perhaps even more inadvisable when based on a few, less than optimally worded questions. At the same time, these findings raise questions about the existence of a distinctively Lutheran theological identity among the congregational leaders.

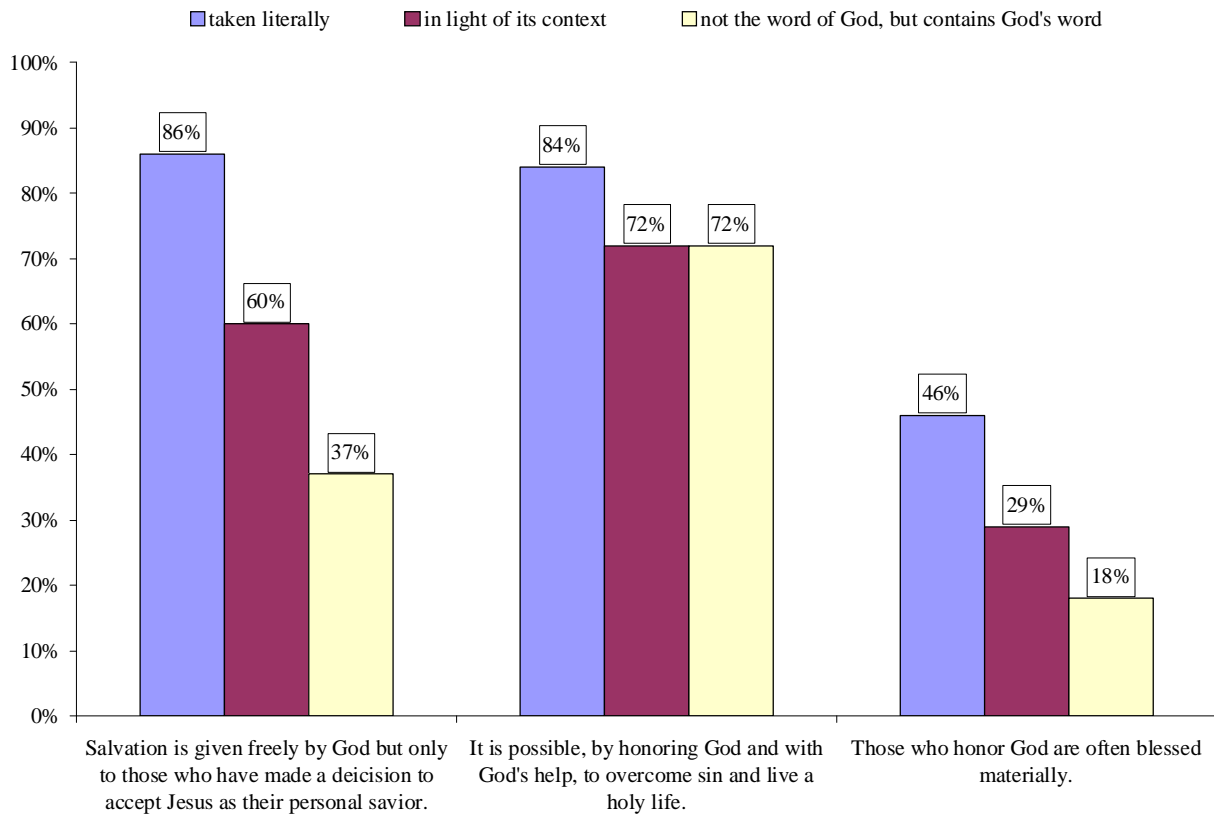
1. Salvation is freely given by God but only to those who have made a decision to accept Jesus as their personal savior.

The leaders were asked to agree or disagree with this statement. The question was intended to emphasize “a decision to accept Jesus as personal savior.” As noted above, “decisional theology” is not generally considered an aspect of confessional Lutheranism. At the same time, disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the statement may have implied to many a nod to universalism suggesting that all are saved. For whatever reason, the statement was endorsed by 30 percent of the respondents who “strongly agreed” and 32 percent who “agreed.” Nine percent of the respondents said they were “not sure” while another 22 percent “disagreed” and 7 percent “strongly disagreed.”

While it is difficult to know exactly how people made sense of this question, there were characteristic patterns. One of those patterns is how a respondent viewed the Bible. (See Figure 6.) The idea that the Bible can be interpreted literally is tied directly to confidence in the

individual as the one who has the power to choose salvation.<sup>10</sup> As a result, a strong relationship between a literal view of the Bible and a decisional view of salvation should be evident and this is the case. Eighty-six percent of the respondents who said the Bible should be taken literally “agreed” or “strongly agree” that “salvation is given freely by God but only to those who have made a decision to accept Jesus as their personal savior.”

**Figure 6: Percent Agreeing or Strongly Agreeing on Questions of Jesus as Personal Savior, Living a Holy Life, and Being Blessed Materially by View of the Bible**



2. It is possible by honoring God and with God’s help to overcome sin and live a holy life.

A second reason to claim a level of American religious individualism among these leaders is their response to the statement “it is possible by honoring God and with God’s help to overcome sin and live a holy life.” Twenty-nine percent of the respondents “strongly agreed” and 44 percent “agreed.” In this case, a respondent’s view of the Bible was not a factor. Seventy percent of the respondents or more agreed with this statement no matter what their view of the Bible.

<sup>10</sup> Mark Noll, *America’s God*. (New York: Oxford, 2002), 379-382.

### 3. Those who honor God are often blessed materially.

American religious individualism has engaged in an on-going debate about wealth and its relationship to salvation, traceable to Calvin's doctrine of predestination and the question of wealth as evidence of God's election. More recently, wealth as a sign of God's blessing has appeared as an important component in the theology of preachers like Joel Osteen.<sup>11</sup> This idea, however, appears foreign to Luther and there is no evidence that Lutherans have ever debated, much less embraced, any semblance of this idea. At the same time, 4 percent of the respondents "strongly agreed" and 26 "agreed" with the statement "those who honor God are often blessed materially."

Once again, a respondent's view of the Bible played a role. Those who take a literal view of the Bible (47%) were much more likely to "strongly agree" or "agree" than were those who believe the Bible should be interpreted in context (29%) and those who do not believe the Bible is the word of God but contains the word of God or is a valuable book (16%).

### The End Times

The premillennial dispensationalism of John Nelson Darby, which was distinguished by his view of the "Rapture," also dates to the early nineteenth century. Darby taught that God deals with humanity in a series of dispensations and within each the means of salvation changes.<sup>12</sup> According to Darby, the next dispensation will begin with the Rapture which is the time when all those who have accepted Jesus as their personal savior will ascend into the heavens to meet Christ. Once the Rapture occurs, the Antichrist will begin a seven-year reign of terror called the "Tribulation," which, in turn, will end with the "Battle of Armageddon." At the Battle of Armageddon Christ, the saints, and the heavenly hosts will return to earth and defeat the Antichrist and his army (Boyer, 1992:88). These premillennial dispensationalist views provide the foundation for the contemporary book series called *Left Behind* by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins.<sup>13</sup> The first book in the *Left Behind* series was published in 1995 and since then over 60 million books in the series have been sold.<sup>14</sup> Premillennial dispensationalism has no precedent in Lutheranism. According to Gassmann and Hendrix (1999:175), the reformers believed that:

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<sup>11</sup> One of the belief statements on Joel Osteen's Lakewood Church, Houston, Texas, website reads "we believe as children of God, we are overcomers and more than conquerors and God intends for each of us to experience the abundant life He has in store for us. See, <http://www.lakewood.cc/AboutUs/OurBeliefs/Pages/LCBeliefs.aspx>.

<sup>12</sup> Paul Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard, 1992).

<sup>13</sup> Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins, *Left Behind: A Novel of the Earth's Last Days*. (Carol Stream, Illinois: Tyndale, 1995).

<sup>14</sup> [http://www.leftbehind.com/05\\_news/viewNews.asp?pageid=929&channelID=17](http://www.leftbehind.com/05_news/viewNews.asp?pageid=929&channelID=17)

Christ might return at any time to judge the living and the dead. For them, however, those who had placed their trust in Christ alone for salvation had nothing to fear. The focus of the Lutheran confessions, therefore, is not on the future but on the present life of the Christian. They are not interested in the details of the end of the world or the afterlife. They try to teach Christians to live in joy and confidence here and now.

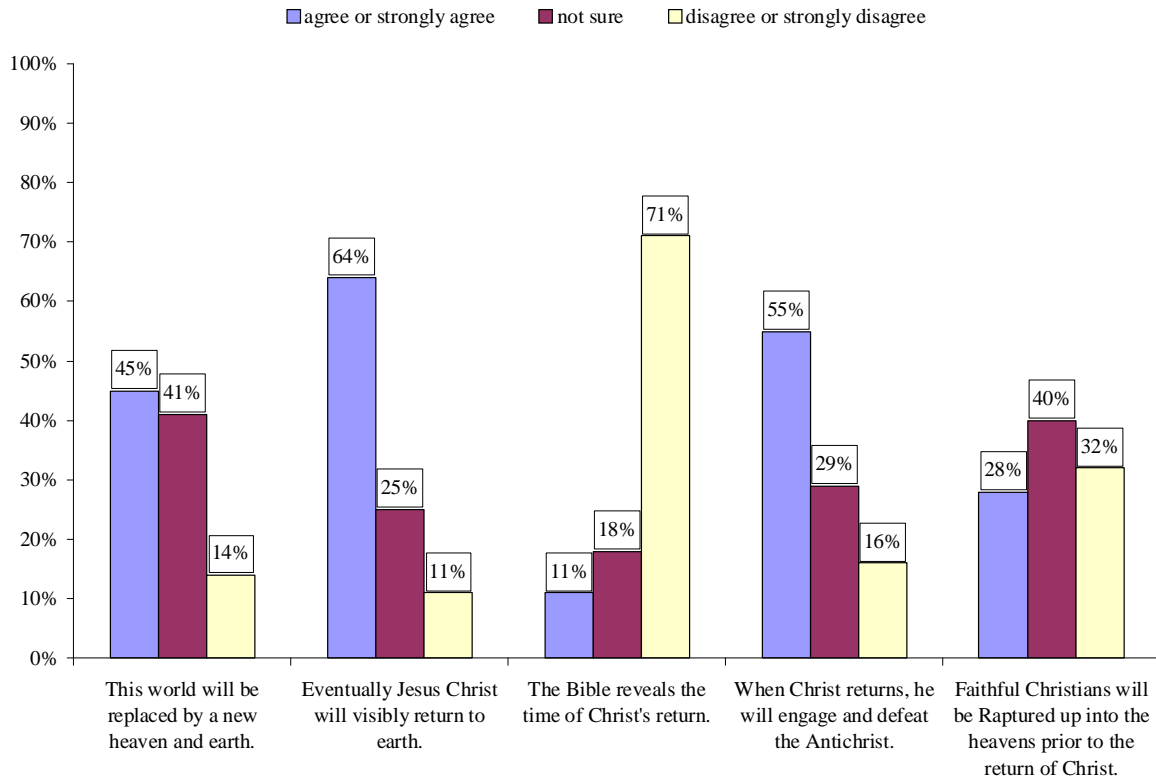
*A New Heaven and Earth and The Return of Christ*

There is contradictory evidence among these leaders on the extent to which they have been influenced by premillennial dispensationalism. It would be expected that Lutherans would believe in an afterlife while claiming to know little about it since the point of the Christian life is here and now.

1. This world will be replaced by a new heaven and earth.

Forty-five percent of the leaders “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with this statement. Forty-one percent said they were “not sure” and 14 percent “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” with the statement. (See Figure 7.)

**Figure 7: Agreement and Disagreement on Questions of a New Heaven and Earth, Christ’s Return to Earth, The Time of Christ’s Return, the Antichrist and the Rapture**



2. Jesus Christ will eventually visibly return to Earth.

A majority of these Lutheran leaders (64%) “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement.

3. The Bible reveals the time of Christ’s return.

Eleven percent “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement.

4. When Jesus Christ returns, he will engage and defeat the Antichrist.

A majority (55%) “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement. Twenty-nine percent said they were “not sure.” Sixteen percent “disagreed or “strongly disagreed” with the statement.

5. Faithful Christians will be Raptured up into the heavens prior to the return of Jesus Christ to Earth.

Twenty-eight percent of these Lutheran leaders “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with this statement. Forty percent of the leaders indicated they were “not sure” about the Rapture and 32 percent “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” with the statement.

Those who take a literal view of Bible are significantly more likely to “agree” or “strongly agree” with these statements about the end times.<sup>15</sup> (See Table 2.) At the same time, a majority of these leaders who interpret the Bible in light of its context “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that Christ will visibly return to Earth and, when he returns he will engage and defeat the Antichrist.

<b>Table 2: Agreement with the Following Statements by View of the Bible</b>			
	<b>Bible is to be taken literally (N=124)</b>	<b>Bible to be interpreted in light of its context (N=608)</b>	<b>Bible is not the word of God, but contains God’s word or is valuable (N=60)</b>
This world will be replaced by a new heaven and earth	59%	45%	10%
Eventually Christ will visibly return to earth	78%	65%	32%
The Bible reveals the time of Christ’s return	21%	8%	7%
When Jesus Christ returns, he will engage and defeat the Antichrist	74%	54%	25%
Faithful Christians will be Raptured up into the heavens prior to the return of Jesus Christ	48%	24%	12%

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<sup>15</sup> It is possible that a higher proportion of those who attend worship in the ELCA accept premillennial dispensationalists views given the fact that a higher proportion of those who attend worship also say they interpret the Bible literally.

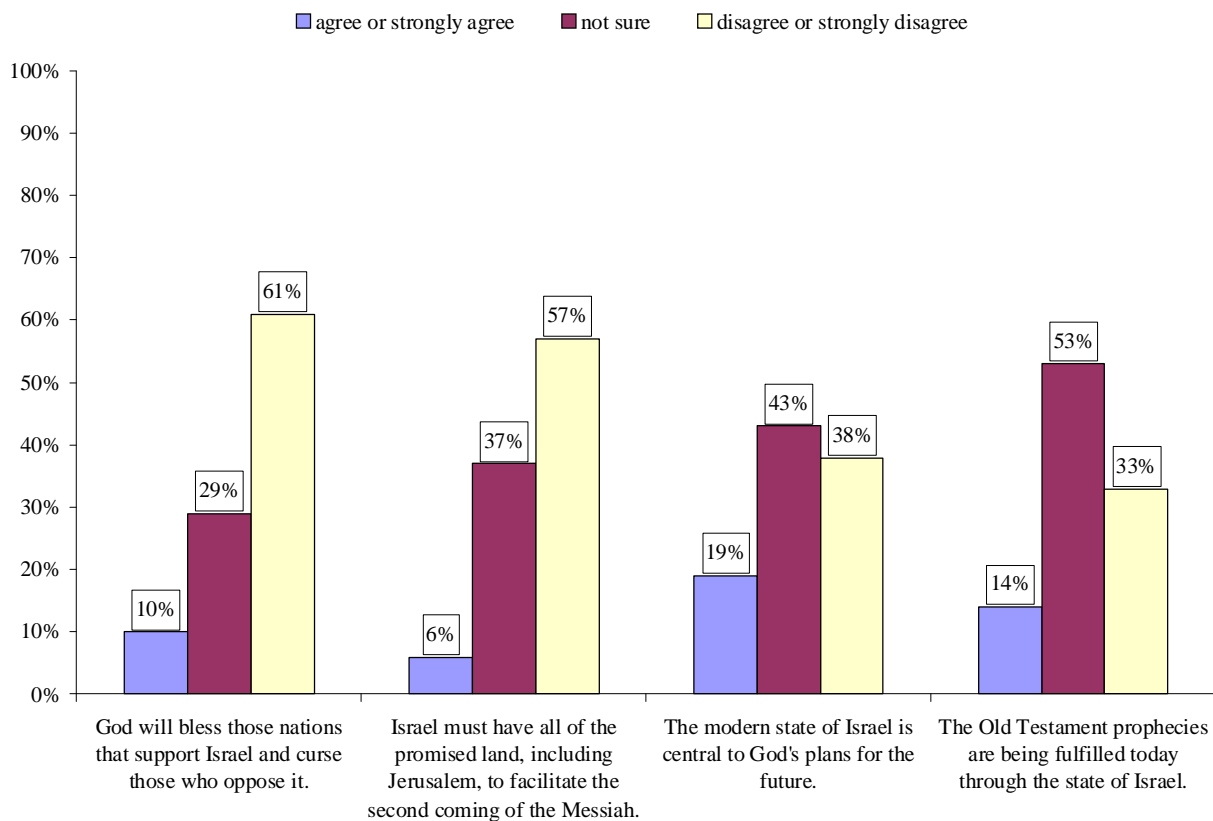
## Christian Zionism

While a significant number of these leaders agree that Christ will visibly return to earth and engage and defeat the Antichrist, these leaders are less convinced modern Israel will play a special role in the end times. When asked directly if the modern state of Israel is central to God’s plans for the future, 43 percent said they were “not sure,” 19 percent “agreed” or “strongly agreed,” and 38 percent “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed.” (See Figure 8.) When asked if the Old Testament prophecies are being fulfilled today through the state of Israel, 53 percent said they were “not sure,” 33 percent “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” and 14 percent “agreed” or “strongly agreed.”

Sixty-one percent of the leaders “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” that God will bless those nations that support Israel and curse those who oppose it.

A majority (57%) of these leaders “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” that Israel must have all of the promised land, including Jerusalem, to facilitate the second coming of the Messiah.

**Figure 8: Agreement and Disagreement on Questions of on the Role of Israel in the End Times**



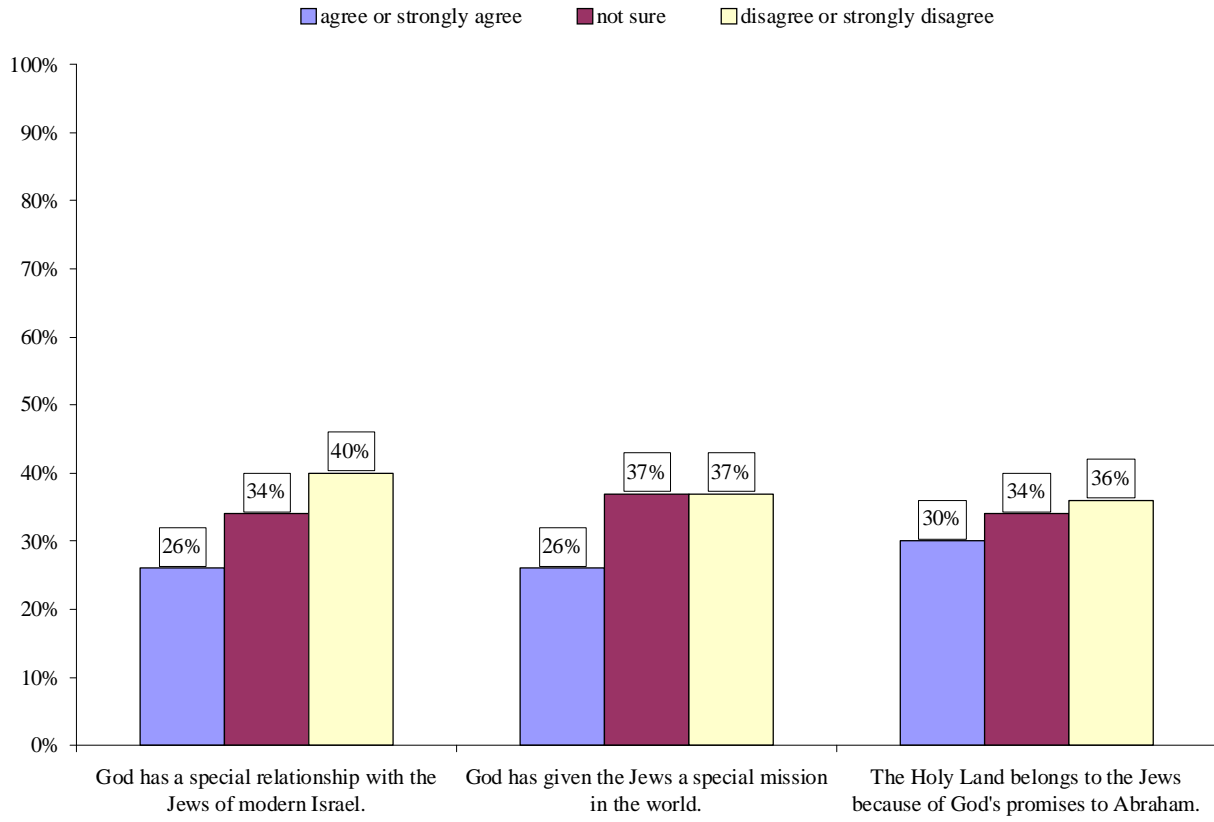


Those leaders who take a literal view of the Bible are much more likely to “agree” or “strongly agree” with these statements. (See Table 3.) Still, a majority of the literalists “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed.”

<b>Table 3: Agreement with the Questions on the Modern State of Israel by View of the Bible</b>			
	<b>Bible is to be taken literally (N=124)</b>	<b>Bible to be interpreted in light of its context (N608)</b>	<b>Bible is not the word of God, but contains God’s word or is valuable (N=60)</b>
The modern state of Israel is central to God’s plans for the future.	37%	15%	8%
The Old Testament prophecies are being fulfilled today through the state of Israel	33%	12%	3%
God will bless those nations that support Israel and curse those who oppose it.	21%	8%	5%
Israel must have all of the promised land, including Jerusalem, to facilitate the second coming of the Messiah.	19%	5%	0%

The proportion of leaders who believe there is a special relationship between God and the Jews of modern Israel is higher than the proportion who voice support for Israel without a specific reference to the Jews. (See Figure 9.) Thirty percent of the respondents “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that the Holy Land belongs to the Jews because of God’s promises to Abraham while 36 percent “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” and 34 percent said they were “not sure.” Twenty-six percent “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that God has a special relationship with the Jews of modern Israel, while 40 percent “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” and 34 percent said they were “not sure.” Finally, 26 percent also said that God has given the Jews a special mission in the world, with 37 percent “disagreeing” or “strongly disagreeing” and 37 percent indicating they were “not sure.”

**Figure 9: Agreement and Disagreement on Questions on the Jews of Modern Israel in the End Times**



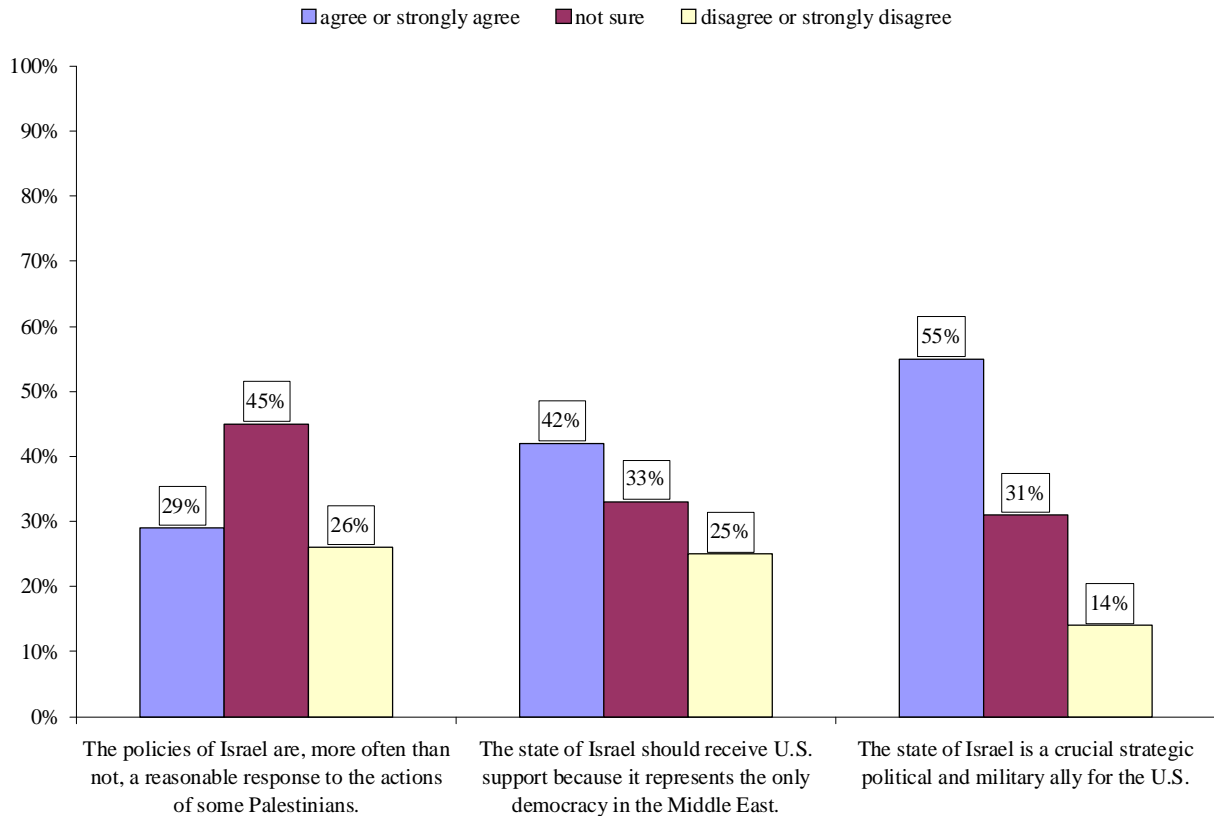
Once again, those leaders who interpret the Bible literally are more likely to “agree” or “strongly agree” with these statements but only on the Holy Land belonging to the Jews because of God’s promises to Abraham does that agreement come close to a majority. (See Table 4.)

	<b>Bible is to be taken literally (N=124)</b>	<b>Bible to be interpreted in light of its context (N=608)</b>	<b>Bible is not the word of God, but contains God’s word or is valuable (N=60)</b>
The Holy Land belongs to the Jews because of God’s promises to Abraham.	48%	28%	10%
God has a special relationship with the Jews of modern Israel.	42%	24%	15%
God has given the Jews a special mission in the world.	39%	24%	16%

*Israel as a Secular State*

LS6 included several questions about Israel that did not make reference to the end times. These questions were designed as alternatives to a religious view of Israel and a majority (55%) “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that the state of Israel is a crucial strategic political and military ally for the United States, with 14 percent “disagreeing” or “strongly disagreeing” and 31 percent “not sure.” (See Figure 10.) Forty-two percent “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that the state of Israel should receive support from the United States because it represents the only democracy in the Middle East, with 25 percent “disagreeing” or “strongly disagreeing” and 33 percent saying they were “not sure.” Finally, 29 percent “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that the policies of Israel are, more often than not, a reasonable response to the actions of some Palestinians. Twenty-six percent “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” with this statement and 45 percent said they were “not sure.”

**Figure 10: Agreement and Disagreement on Questions of the Secular State of Israel**



A respondent’s view of the Bible was not related to their view of the state of Israel as a crucial strategic political and military ally for the United States. No matter what their view of the Bible, a majority believe Israel is a crucial ally. (See Table 5.) On the other hand, a respondent’s view of the Bible was related to support for Israel because it is the only democracy in the Middle East. Forty-seven percent of those who take a literal view of the Bible “agreed” or “strongly agreed”

the state of Israel should receive support from the United States compared to 41 percent of those who believe the Bible should be interpreted in terms of its context and 33 percent of those who do not believe the Bible is the word of God but contains the word of God or is a valuable book.

	<b>Bible is to be taken literally (N=124)</b>	<b>Bible to be interpreted in light of its context (N=608)</b>	<b>Bible is not the word of God, but contains God's word or is valuable (N=60)</b>
The state of Israel is a crucial strategic political and military ally for the U.S.	58%	57%	55%
The state of Israel should receive U.S. support because it represents the only democracy in the Middle East	47%	41%	33%
The policies of Israel are, more often than not, a reasonable response to the actions of some Palestinians	41%	27%	22%

A respondent's view of the Bible was also related to agreement with the view that Israel's policies are a responsible response to the actions of some Palestinians. Forty-one percent of those who take a literal view of the Bible "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with this statement, compared to 27 percent who believe the Bible should be interpreted in context, and 22 percent who believe the Bible is not the word of God but contains the word of God or is a valuable book. At the same time, no matter what position a respondent took on the Bible, less than a majority "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with this statement.

### **Views of Contemporary Figures**

The congregational leaders were asked their opinion of a variety of contemporary figures including religious leaders, political leaders, and personalities from the wider culture. (For a brief description of these figures, see Appendix 2.) Not all of the figures included on the questionnaire were well known to these leaders. (See Figure 11.) Over 90 percent of the leaders knew of Jimmy Carter (99%), Pope Benedict XVI (98%) and Pat Robertson (91%). A majority of the leaders also knew James Dobson (65%), Bono (62%), the Presiding Bishop of the ELCA, Mark Hanson (54%), and Ann Coulter (50%).<sup>16</sup> Less than a majority said they knew of Tim LaHaye (34%) or John Hagee (33%).

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<sup>16</sup> Unlike Pope Benedict XVI, the questionnaire did not include the full title of the Presiding Bishop in describing Mark Hanson. The full title was not included because it may have unduly increased the number of people who said they knew of Mark Hanson. On the other hand, it is possible that not using the full title of the Presiding Bishop, but instead using his name alone, may have led some who know something of the Presiding Bishop, not to associate that awareness with the name Mark Hanson.

**Figure 11: Percent of Respondents Who Know These Contemporary Figures**

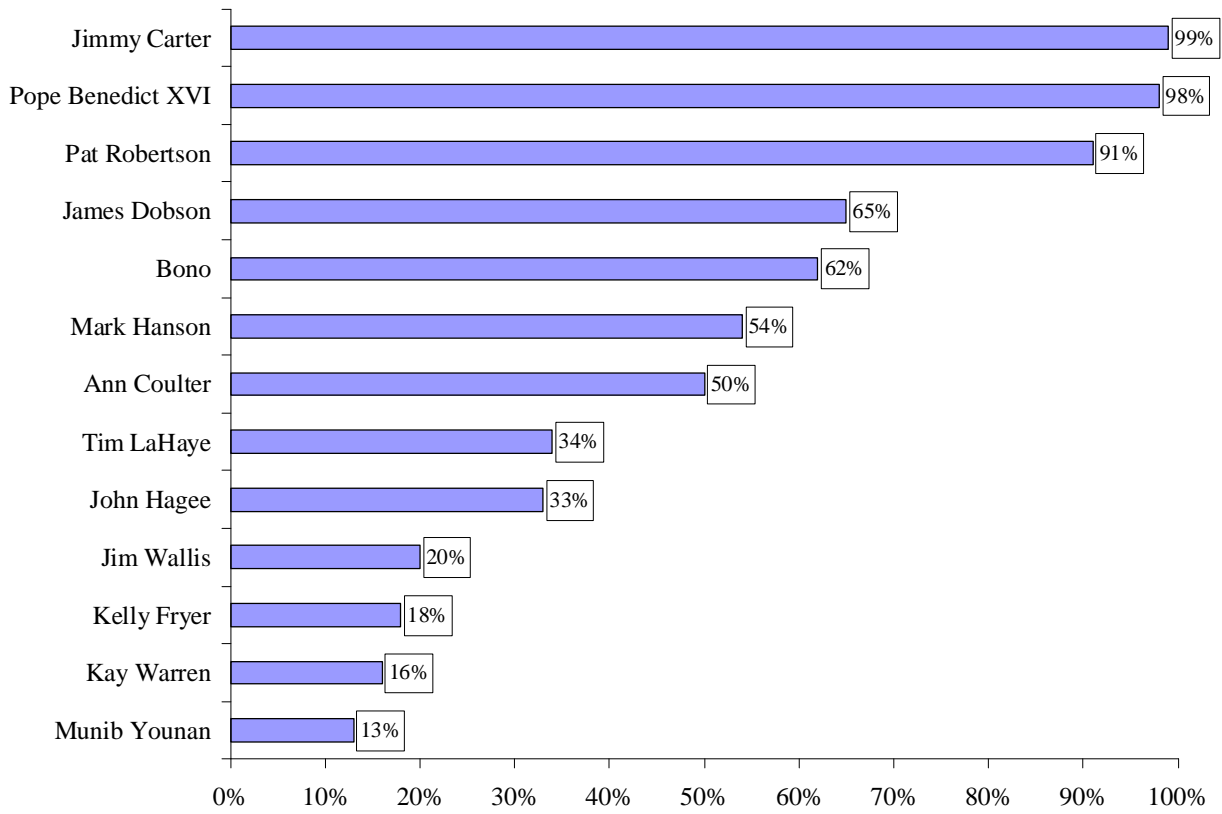


Table 6 and Table 7 are based only on the responses of those who said they knew these figures. For example, among the respondents who said they knew the Presiding Bishop, 73 percent said they viewed him “positively” or “very positively,” 23 percent “neutrally,” and 4 percent “negatively” or “very negatively.” Among those who said they knew Jimmy Carter, 68 percent said they viewed him “positively” or “very positively.” At the other end of the spectrum were Ann Coulter and Pat Robertson. Among those who said they knew Ann Coulter, 24 percent said they viewed her “positively” or “very positively” and among those who said they knew Pat Robertson, 18 percent viewed him “positively” or “very positively.”

	<b>positively or very positively</b>	<b>neutral/not positively or negatively</b>	<b>negatively or very negatively</b>
Mark Hanson	73%	23%	4%
Jimmy Carter	68%	18%	14%
Pope Benedict XVI	60%	33%	7%
James Dobson	54%	25%	21%
Bono	52%	40%	8%
Ann Coulter	24%	33%	43%
Pat Robertson	18%	39%	43%

A respondent's view of the Bible is related to positive views of these contemporary figures. (See Table 7.) Among those who said they take the Bible literally and they knew James Dobson, 81 percent said they viewed him "positively" or "very positively." Among the literalist and for those who knew these figures, a majority also had positive views of Pope Benedict XVI (67%), Presiding Bishop Hanson (57%), and Jimmy Carter (53%).

Among those who interpret the Bible in light of its context and who knew these figures, Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson was viewed most positively (76%), followed by Jimmy Carter (71%), Pope Benedict XVI (61%), Bono (54%), and James Dobson (53%).

Among those who said the Bible is not the word of God, but it contains the word of God or is a valuable book, and who also knew these figures, Jimmy Carter was viewed most positively (90%), followed by Presiding Bishop Hanson (79%), and Bono (68%).

	<b>Bible is to be taken literally (N=124)</b>	<b>Bible to be interpreted in light of its context (N=608)</b>	<b>Bible is not the word of God, but contains God's word or is valuable (N=60)</b>
James Dobson	81%	53%	22%
Pope Benedict XVI	67%	61%	44%
Mark Hanson	57%	76%	79%
Jimmy Carter	53%	71%	90%
Ann Coulter	38%	24%	9%
Pat Robertson	33%	16%	7%
Bono	25%	54%	68%

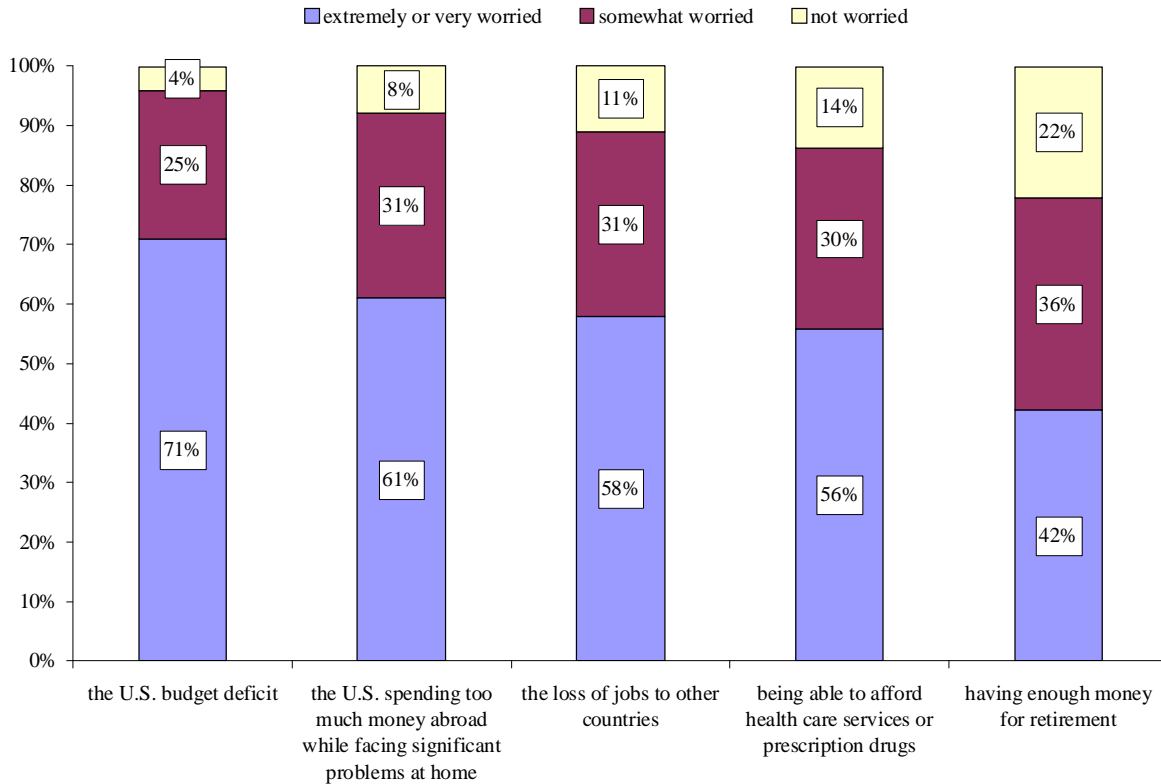
## Concerns for the Future

LS6 asked the leaders how worried they were about a host of issues. A majority were “extremely” or “very worried” about a combination of economic issues and family value issues including the United States budget deficit, loss of jobs to other countries, being able to afford health care, the amount of sex and violence on television, children learning traditional values and the strength of the institution of marriage.

### Issues Related to the Economy

Most of these leaders (71%) were “extremely” or “very worried” about the United States budget deficit.<sup>17</sup> (See Figure 12.) In fact, economic issues were the most worrisome for these leaders. A majority of the leaders were “extremely” or “very worried” about the United States spending too much money abroad while facing significant problems at home (61%), the loss of jobs to other countries (58%), and being able to afford health care services or prescription drugs (56%). Among these economic issues, only having enough money for retirement had less than a majority (42%) being “extremely” or “very worried.”

**Figure 12: Level of Concern on Economic Issues**

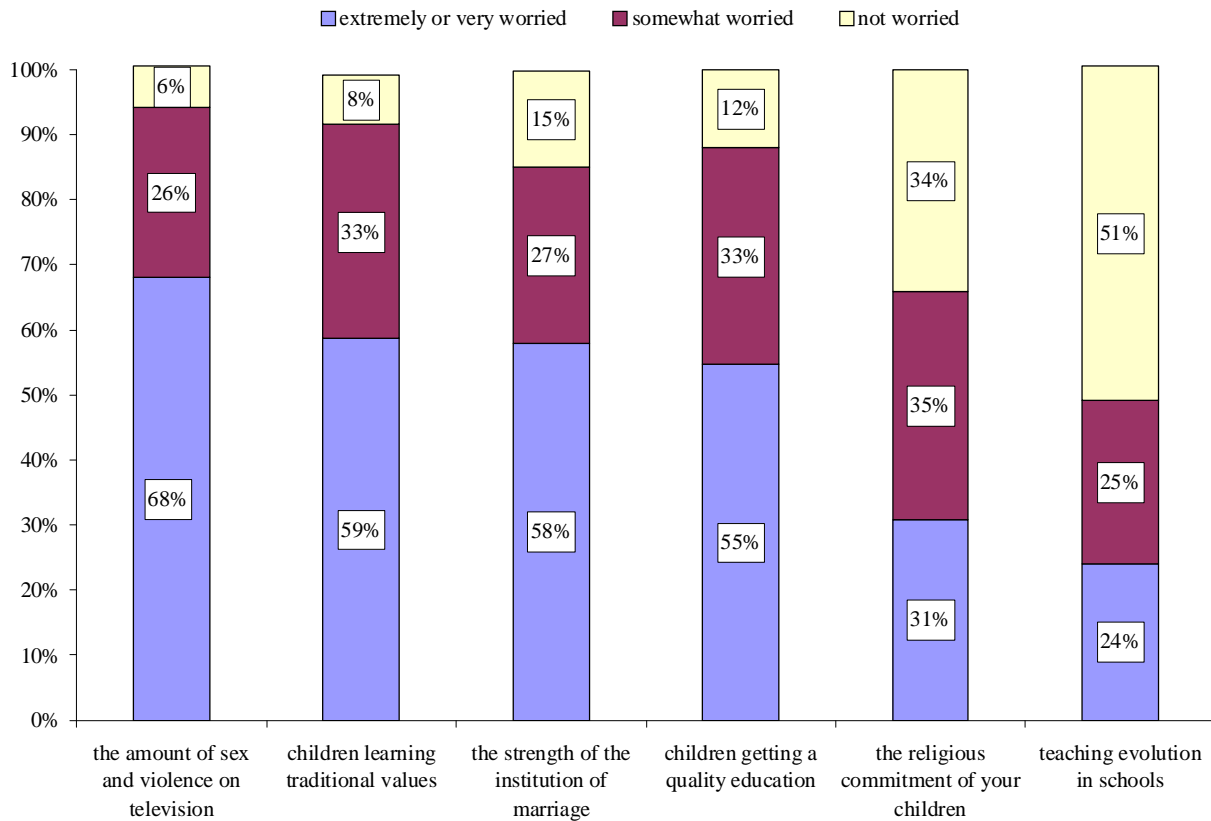


<sup>17</sup> Figure 12 through Figure 17 do not include those who responded “don’t know.”

## Issues Related to Families and Children

Sixty-eight percent of the leaders said they were “extremely” or “very worried” about the amount of sex and violence on television. (See Figure 13.) A majority also said they were “extremely” or “very worried” about children learning traditional values (59%), the strength of the institution of marriage (58%), and children getting a quality education (56%).

**Figure 13: Level of Concern on Issues Related to Families and Children**



Thirty-one percent of the leaders said they were “extremely” or “very worried” about the religious commitment of their children and 24 percent were “extremely” or “very worried” about the teaching of evolution in schools.

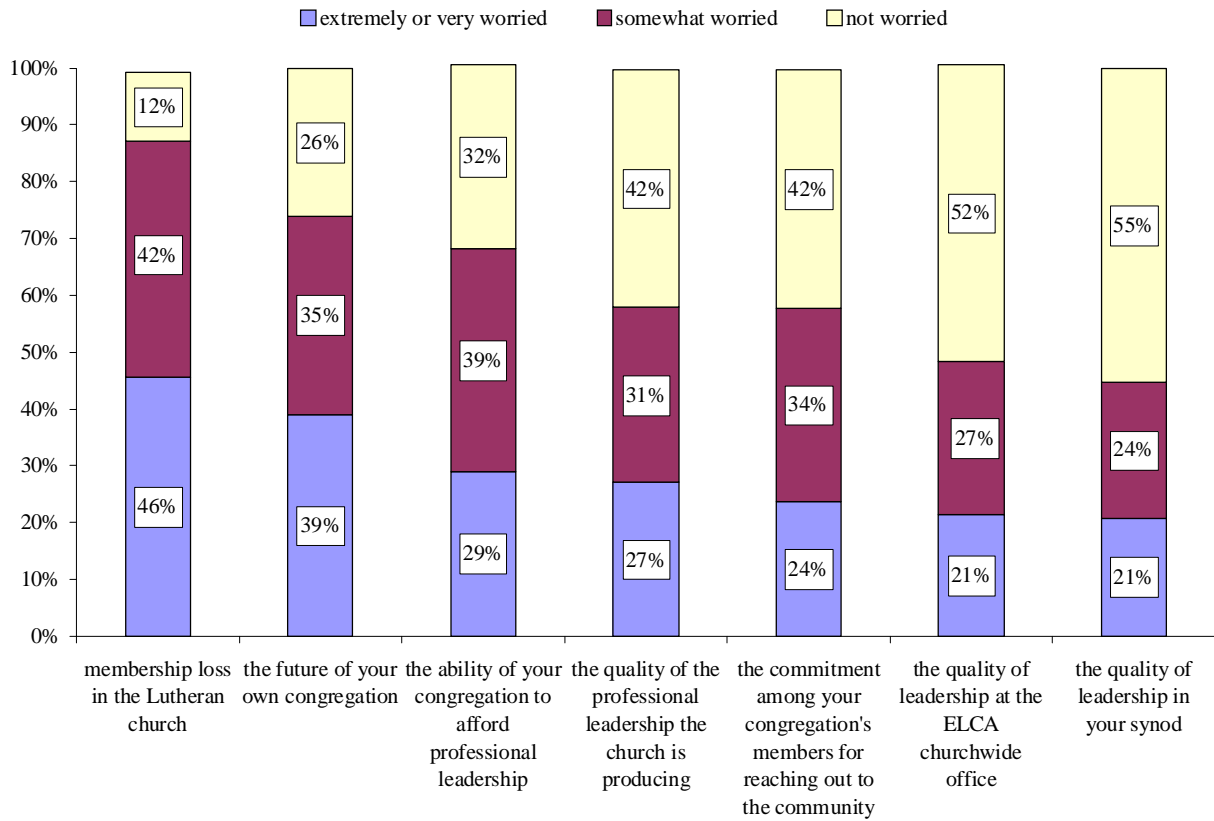
## Issues Related to the ELCA

Less than a majority of the leaders were “extremely” or “very worried” about any of the issues related to the ELCA. (See Figure 14.) At the same time, a significant proportion of these leaders, were “extremely” or “very worried” about many of these issues. Forty-six percent were “extremely” or “very worried” about membership loss in the Lutheran church and 39 percent said they were “extremely” or “very worried” about the future of their own congregations. Only



24 percent, however, were “extremely” or “very worried” about the commitment among their congregation’s members for reaching out to the community.

**Figure 14: Level of Concern on Issues Related to the ELCA**



Twenty-nine percent of these leaders said they were “extremely” or “very worried” about the ability of their congregation to afford professional leadership and 27 percent were concerned about the quality of the professional leadership the church is producing.

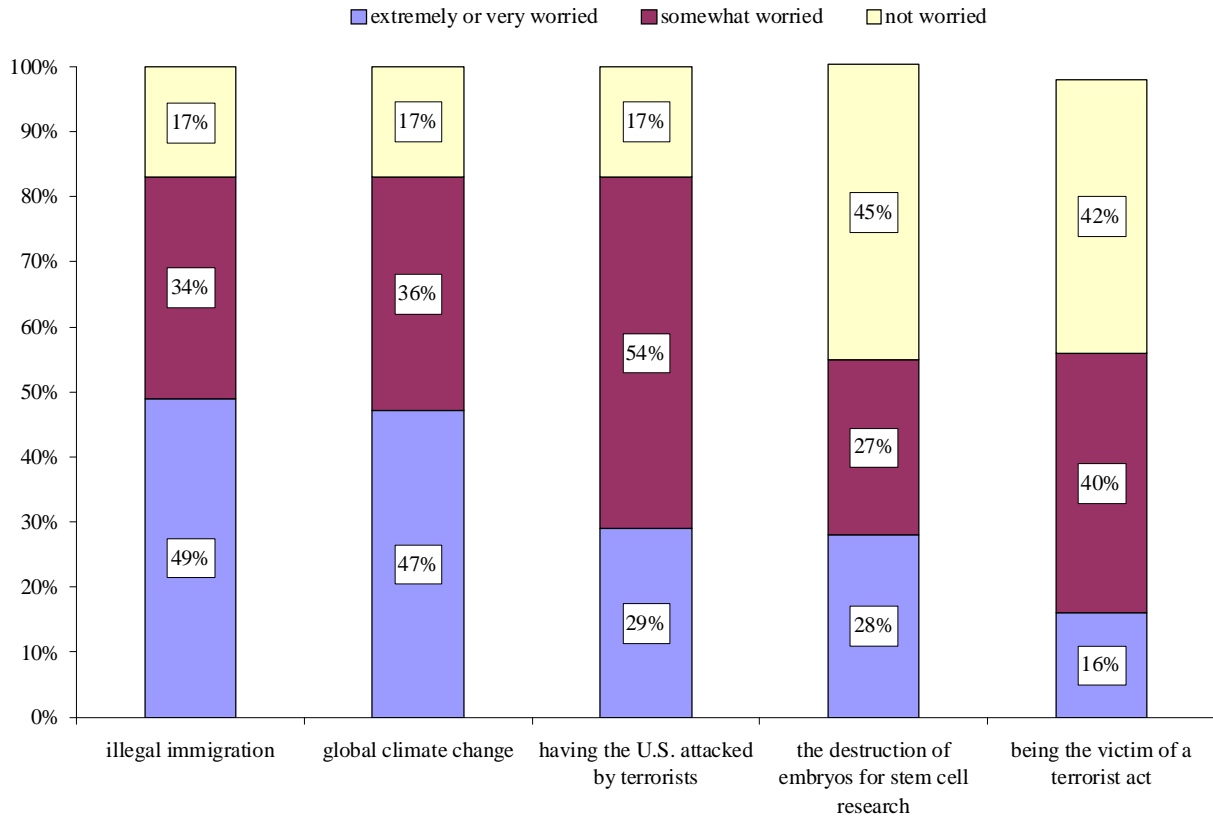
Twenty-one percent were “extremely” or “very worried” about the quality of leadership in their synod and 21 percent were “extremely” or “very worried” about the quality of leadership at the ELCA churchwide offices.

**Terrorism and Other Issues**

Finally, LS6 asked these leaders how concerned they were about having the United States attacked by terrorist or being a victim of a terrorist act. Questions were also included about illegal immigration, global climate change, and the destruction of embryos for stem cell research. (See Figure 15.) Twenty-nine percent were “extremely” or “very worried” about having the United States attacked by terrorists and 16 percent were “extremely” or “very worried” about being a victim of a terrorist act. Forty-nine percent were “extremely” or “very worried” about

illegal immigration and 47 percent were “extremely” or “very worried” about global climate change. Twenty-eight percent were “extremely” or “very worried” about the destruction of embryos for stem cell research.

**Figure 15: Level of Concern on Other Issues**



A respondent’s view of the Bible had an impact on 9 of these 23 issues. Those who take a literal view of the Bible were “extremely” or “very worried” about the strength of the institution of marriage (82%), children learning traditional values (81%), and the amount of sex and violence on television (80%). (See Table 8.) While a higher percentage of those who take the Bible literally were “extremely” or “very worried” about these issues, 54 percent of those who said the Bible should be interpreted in context and 57 percent of those who said the Bible is not the word of God but contains the word of God or is a valuable book were “extremely” or “very worried” about the strength of the institution of marriage, and the amount of sex and violence on television. Also, a majority of those who said the Bible should be interpreted in context were worried about children learning traditional values (56%). These three “value” issues are of much greater concern to the literalist, but they are also at the top of the concern list for all these leaders.

<b>Table 8: Percent Extremely of Very Worried about Selected Issues by View of the Bible</b>			
	<b>Bible is to be taken literally (N=124)</b>	<b>Bible to be interpreted in light of its context (N=608)</b>	<b>Bible is not the word of God, but contains God's word or is valuable (N=60)</b>
the strength of the institution of marriage	82%	54%	57%
children learning traditional values	81%	56%	43%
the amount of sex and violence on television	80%	66%	53%
illegal immigration	70%	44%	43%
destruction of embryos for stem cell research	57%	23%	10%
the teaching of evolution in schools	54%	19%	7%
having the U.S. attacked by terrorists	45%	26%	23%
the quality of the leadership at the ELCA churchwide offices	38%	18%	21%
being a victim of a terrorist act	30%	14%	7%

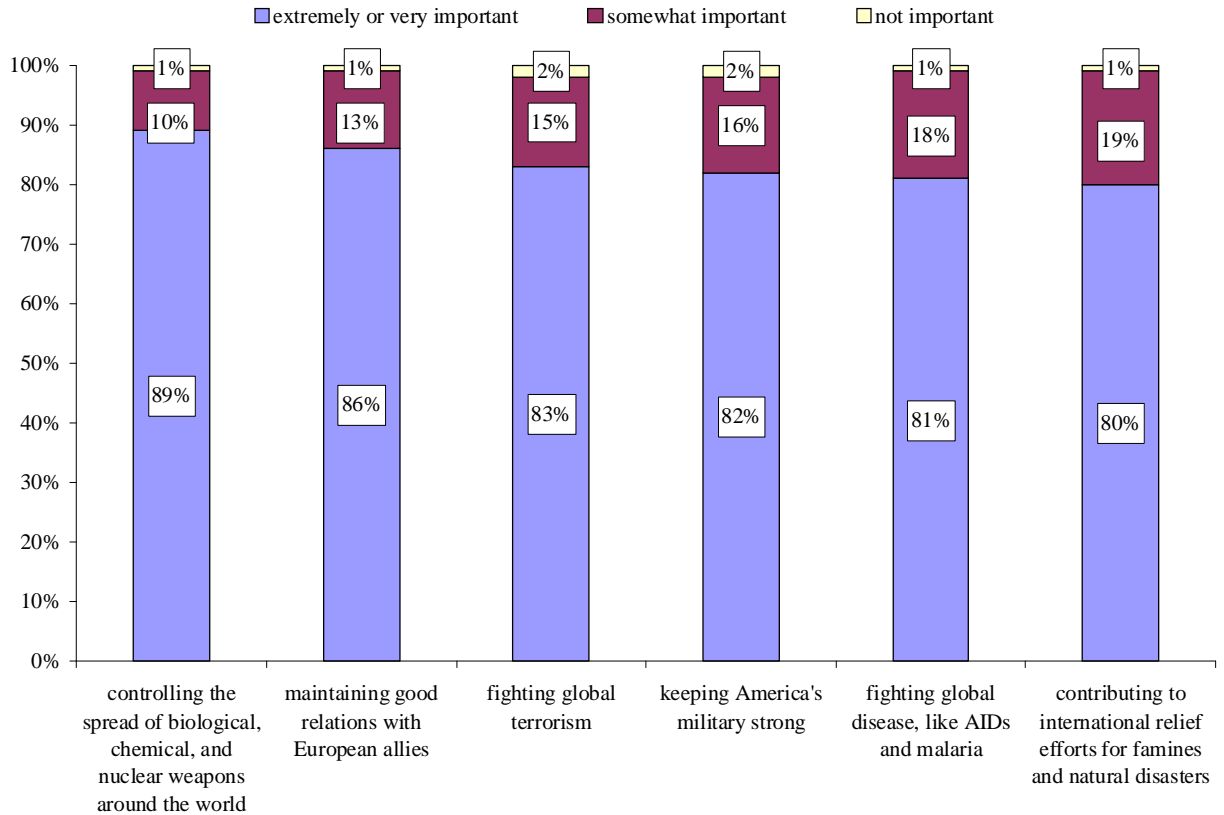
Age impacted only 2 of these 23 issues. Leaders who were 71 or older were much more likely to be “extremely” or “very worried” about the amount of violence on television and illegal immigration. (See Table 9.) Once again, however, a majority of these leaders, no matter what their age, were “extremely” or “very worried” about the amount of sex and violence on television.

<b>Table 9: Percent Extremely of Very Worried about Selected Issues by Age</b>				
	<b>40 or younger</b>	<b>41 to 60</b>	<b>61 to 70</b>	<b>71 or older</b>
the amount of sex and violence on television	58%	59%	75%	80%
illegal immigration	29%	41%	49%	64%

### **United States Foreign Policy**

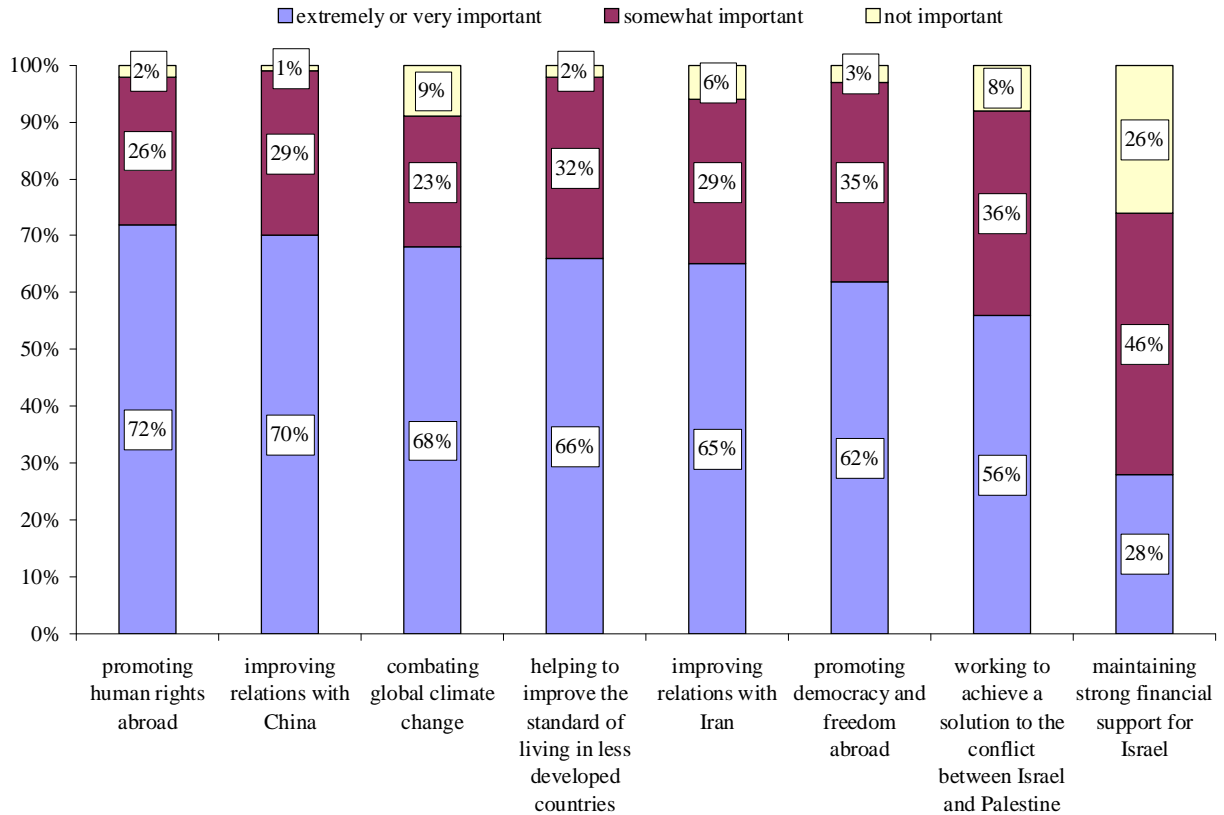
The leaders were asked how important they believe it is for United States foreign policy to focus on a variety of different issues. At the top of the list of importance (“extremely” or “very important”) was controlling the spread of biological, chemical, and nuclear weapons around the world (89%), followed by maintaining good relations with European allies (86%), fighting global terrorism (83%), keeping America’s military strong (82%), fighting global disease, like AIDS and malaria (81%), and contributing to international relief efforts for famines and natural disasters (80%). (See Figures 16 and 17.)

**Figure 16: Importance of Selected Issue as United States Foreign Policy**



Two issues were of particular importance with regard to the Middle East, including working to achieve a solution to the conflict between Israel and Palestine and maintaining strong financial support for Israel. Fifty-six percent of the leaders said working to achieve a solution to the conflict between Israel and Palestine was “extremely” or “very important.” Twenty-eight percent said it was “extremely” or “very important” to maintaining strong financial support for Israel. Both these issues ranked lowest among the 14 included on the questionnaire in terms of importance, and maintaining strong financial support ranked last with 28 percent believing it was “extremely” or “very important.”

**Figure 17: Importance of Selected Issue as United States Foreign Policy**



A respondent’s view of the Bible had an impact on two issues. In both cases, fighting global terrorism and keeping America’s military strong, those who take a literal view were much more likely to say the issue was “extremely” or “very important” (94% for both) than were those who believe the Bible is not the word of God but contains the word of God (71% and 67% respectively). (See Table 10.) Those who take a literal view of the Bible were not more or less likely to say working to achieve a solution to the conflict between Israel and Palestine or maintaining strong financial support for Israel was “extremely” or “very important.”

	<b>Bible is to be taken literally (N=124)</b>	<b>Bible to be interpreted in light of its context (N=608)</b>	<b>Bible is not the word of God, but contains God’s word or is valuable (N=60)</b>
fighting global terrorism	94%	81%	71%
keeping America’s military strong	94%	81%	67%

## Summary

### General Overview

This survey was of congregational leaders and these findings are not representative of all those who attend worship in the congregations of the ELCA. The respondents to LS6 were older (average age of 59), better educated (27% held a master's degree or higher), and more likely to say they were Democrats or Independents. A majority of the respondents also serve on their congregation's governing council.

Eighty-one percent of these congregational leaders attend worship services at least once a week. Sixty percent spend time in prayer or meditation every day and 54 percent pray before meals every day. Eighteen percent said they read the Bible on their own or with family members everyday and 23 percent said they do so one or two times a week. Twenty-one percent said they attend a Bible study or prayer group one or two times a week.

Fifty-four percent of these congregational leaders indicated that they knew of Mark Hanson. More respondents said they knew of Jimmy Carter (99%) and Pope Benedict XVI (98%). But unlike Pope Benedict XVI, the questionnaire did not include the full title of the Presiding Bishop of the ELCA in describing Mark Hanson. The full title was not included because it may have unduly increased the number of people who said they knew of Mark Hanson. On the other hand, not using the title of the Presiding Bishop, but instead using Mark Hanson's name alone may have led some who know of the Presiding Bishop not to associated that awareness with his name. Of those who said they knew of Mark Hanson, 73 percent said they viewed him "positively" or "very positively."

Among the concerns of these leaders for the future, economic and issues related to families and children were most worrisome. Seventy-one percent were "extremely" or "very worried" about the government's budget deficit. A majority were "extremely" or "very worried" about the United States spending too much abroad while facing significant problems at home (60%), the loss of jobs to other countries (58%), and being able to afford health care services or prescription drugs (56%).

On issues related to families and children, a majority were "extremely" or "very worried" about the amount of sex and violence on television (67%), children learning traditional values (59%), the strength of the institution of marriage (57%), and children receiving a quality education (55%). Thirty-one percent of the leaders said they were "extremely" or "very worried" about the religious commitment of their children.

Less than a majority of the leaders were "extremely" or "very worried" about any of the issues related to the ELCA. At the same time, a significant proportion of these leaders, were "extremely" or "very worried" about many issues facing the ELCA. Forty-six percent were "extremely" or "very worried" about membership loss in the Lutheran church as a whole and 38 percent were "extremely" or "very worried" about the future of their own congregation. Only 24

percent, however, were “extremely” or “very worried” about the commitment of their congregation’s members in reaching out to the community.

Twenty-eight percent of these leaders said they were “extremely” or “very worried” about the ability of their congregation to afford professional leadership and 26 percent were “extremely” or “very worried” about the quality of the clergy produced by the church. Twenty-one percent were “extremely” or “very worried” about the quality of leadership in their synod and 21 percent were “extremely” or “very worried” about the quality of leadership at the ELCA churchwide offices.

LS6 asked these leaders how concerned they were about having the United States attacked by terrorist or being a victim of a terrorist act. Questions were also included about illegal immigration, global climate change, and the destruction of embryos for stem cell research. Twenty-nine percent were “extremely” or “very worried” about having the United States attacked by terrorists and 16 percent were “extremely” or “very worried” about being a victim of a terrorist act. Forty-nine percent were “extremely” or “very worried” about illegal immigration and 47 percent were “extremely” or “very worried” about global climate change. Twenty-eight percent were “extremely” or “very worried” about the destruction of embryos for stem cell research

With regard to United States foreign policy, a majority of these leaders said it was “extremely” or “very important” to control the spread of biological, chemical, and nuclear weapons around the world (89%), to maintain good relations with European allies (86%), to fight global terrorism (83%), to keep America’s military strong (82%), to fight global disease, like AIDS and malaria (81%), and to contribute to international relief efforts for famines and natural disasters (80%).

With regard to the Middle East, 56 percent of the leaders said working to achieve a solution to the conflict between Israel and Palestine was “extremely” or “very important.” Twenty-eight percent said it was “extremely” or “very important” to maintain strong financial support for Israel.

### Biblical Literalism

Over and over again, a respondent’s view of the Bible had an impact on their responses to other questions included on LS6. At the same time, a relatively few number of these leaders (15%) took a literalist view of the Bible.<sup>18</sup> The vast majority of leaders (76%) said either “the Bible is the word of God, to be interpreted in light of its historical or cultural context” (38%) or “the Bible is the word of God, to be interpreted in light of its historical context and the Church’s teaching” (38%). Eight percent of the leaders said “the Bible is not the word of God, but

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<sup>18</sup> About 24 percent of those who attend worship in ELCA congregations take a literalist view of the Bible (*U.S. Congregational Life Survey*) while 34 percent of the general public take such a view (*2004 General Social Survey*, National Opinion Research Center).

contains God's word" or it does not contain the word of God but is a "valuable book." One percent of the respondents said they were "not sure."

### A Lutheran Theological Identity

While these Lutheran leaders are typically not literalists, they also hold beliefs that are not clearly identifiable as Lutheran. With the Lutheran Confession as a baseline, these Lutheran leaders are, at best, ambiguous in terms of a Lutheran theological identity. They are not, for example, convinced Lutheranism as a theological system is better than any other theological system. Seventy-six percent "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that no Christian group can legitimately claim its beliefs are more true than those held by any other Christian group. Forty-six percent "agreed" or "strongly agreed" and 22 percent were "not sure" that "it is possible for a faithful follower of any religion, including Islam, Hinduism, or Buddhism, to find the truth about God through that religion. On the other hand, among these leaders, the literalists are more likely to be exclusive even though they typically are not confessionally Lutheran. Ninety-nine percent, for example, of those who take a literal view of the Bible "disagreed" or "strongly disagreed" that no Christian group can legitimately claim its beliefs are more true than those of any other Christian group while 79 percent of those who believe the Bible should be interpreted in context "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with this statement.

Perhaps most significant is the proportion of these leaders who accept a high view of the capacity of individuals, as individuals, to respond positively to God. Again, it is very difficult to sort out nuances among different theological points of view using a questionnaire, but when these leaders were asked to agree or disagree with the statement "Salvation is freely given by God but only to those who have made a decision to accept Jesus as their personal savior," 62 percent of the respondents "agreed" or "strongly agreed." Nine percent said they were "not sure" while 22 percent "disagreed" and 7 percent "strongly disagreed." When asked to respond to the statement "It is possible by honoring God and with God's help to overcome sin and live a holy life," 73 percent of the respondents "agreed" or "strongly agreed." When asked to respond to the statement "Those who honor God are often blessed materially," 31 percent of the respondents "agreed" or "strongly agreed."

### The End Times

When it comes to the influence of premillennial dispensationalism on these Lutheran leaders, the evidence suggest only a modest, but notable impact. Typically, a high percentage of the leaders said they were "not sure" what they believed with regard to the end times which may well reflect the fact that there is no Lutheran precedent for end times theology. Forty-five percent of the leaders "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with the statement "This world will be replaced by a new heaven and earth." Forty-one percent said they were "not sure" and 14 percent "disagreed" or "strongly disagreed" with the statement.



A majority of Lutheran leaders (63%) “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement “Eventually Jesus Christ will visibly return to Earth,” but 11 percent “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement “The Bible reveals the time of Christ’s return.”

On the other hand, a majority (55%) “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement “When Jesus Christ returns, he will engage and defeat the Antichrist” and, 28 percent of the leaders “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement “Faithful Christians will be Raptured up into the heavens prior to the return of Jesus Christ to Earth.” Forty percent indicated they were “not sure” about the Rapture while 32 percent “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” with the statement.

### Christian Zionism

While a significant number of these leaders agree that Christ will visibly return to earth and engage and defeat the Antichrist, they are less convinced modern Israel will play a special role in the end times. When asked if the modern state of Israel is central to God’s plans for the future, 43 percent said they were “not sure,” 19 percent “agreed” or “strongly agreed,” and 38 percent “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed.” When asked if the Old Testament prophecies are being fulfilled today through the state of Israel, 53 percent said they were “not sure,” 33 percent “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” and 14 percent “agreed” or “strongly agreed.”

Sixty-one percent of the leaders “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” that God will bless those nations that support Israel and curse those who oppose it.

Fifty-seven percent of these leaders “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” that Israel must have all of the promised land, including Jerusalem, to facilitate the second coming of the Messiah.

The proportion of leaders who believe there is a special relationship between God and the Jews of modern Israel is higher than the proportion who voice support for Israel without specific reference to the Jews. Thirty percent of the respondents “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that the Holy Land belongs to the Jews because of God’s promises to Abraham while 36 percent “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” and 34 percent said they were “not sure.” Twenty-six percent “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that God has a special relationship with the Jews of modern Israel, while 40 percent “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” and 34 percent said they were “not sure.” Finally, 26 percent also said that God has given the Jews a special mission in the world, with 37 percent “disagreeing” or “strongly disagreeing” and 37 percent indicating they were “not sure.”

### Israel as a Secular State

Fifty-five percent “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that the state of Israel is a crucial strategic political and military ally for the United States, with 14 percent “disagreeing” or “strongly disagreeing” and 31 percent “not sure.” Forty-one percent “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that the state of Israel should receive U.S. support because it represents the only democracy in the Middle East, with 25 percent “disagreeing” or “strongly disagreeing” and 33 percent saying they

were “not sure.” Finally, 29 percent “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that the policies of Israel are, more often than not, a reasonable response to the actions of some Palestinians. Twenty-six percent “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” with this statement and 45 percent said they were “not sure.”

**Appendix 1**  
**Lutherans Say . . . No. 6**  
 Revised November 4, 2008  
 ELCA Percentages (N=841)

Please respond to each of the following questions by filling in the circle that best represents what you do or what you believe.

1. How often do you do each of the following?

	every <u>day</u>	1 or 2 times <u>a week</u>	1 or 2 times <u>a month</u>	less than once <u>a month</u>	not <u>sure</u>
a. attend worship services . . . . .	1	80	16	3	0
b. attend a Bible study or prayer group . . . . .	0	21	20	52	7
c. talk about your faith with friends or relatives . . . . .	12	32	36	17	3
d. pray before meals . . . . .	54	16	12	15	3
e. read religious books, newspapers, or magazines . . . . .	16	26	35	21	2
f. spend time in prayer or meditation . . . . .	60	22	10	7	1
g. read the Bible on your own or with family members . . . . .	18	23	19	35	5
h. watch or listen to religious broadcasting . . . . .	7	15	16	53	9

2. Which of the following statements best describes your view of the Bible?

- 15 The Bible is the word of God, to be taken literally word for word.
- 38 The Bible is the word of God, to be interpreted in light of its historical and cultural context.
- 38 The Bible is the word of God, to be interpreted in light of its historical context and the Church's teaching.
- 7 The Bible is not the word of God, but contains God's word to us.
- 1 The Bible is not the word of God, but is a valuable book.
- 0 The Bible is an ancient book with little value today.
- 1 not sure

3. Has your faith had a direct or primary impact on leading you to do any of the following in the last year?

	<u>yes</u>	<u>no</u>	<u>not sure</u>
a. volunteer in the community . . . . .	82	15	3
b. write a letter to a public official . . . . .	20	76	4
c. vote in an election . . . . .	55	41	4
d. participate in an election campaign . . . . .	13	84	3

4. Has your faith had a direct impact on leading you to do any of the following in the last year?

	<u>yes</u>	<u>no</u>	<u>not sure</u>
a. boycott a product or company . . . . .	23	73	4
b. abstain from alcohol . . . . .	16	82	2
c. choose not to watch a television show or movie . . . . .	57	39	4
d. go on a mission trip in the United States . . . . .	9	89	2
e. go on a mission trip to another country . . . . .	4	94	2
f. talk to someone about your faith . . . . .	84	13	3

5. Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements.

	<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>	<u>Not Sure</u>
a. It is important to convert others to the Christian faith . . .	21	50	18	3	8
b. It is important for a person to be baptized . . . . .	48	45	4	0	3
c. Salvation is given freely by God but only to those who have made a decision to accept Jesus as their personal savior . . . . .	30	32	22	7	9
d. It is possible, by honoring God and with God's help, to overcome sin and live a holy life . . . . .	29	44	16	6	5
e. It is possible for a faithful follower of any religion, including Islam, Hinduism, or Buddhism, to find the truth about God through that religion . . . . .	11	35	19	11	22
f. No Christian group can legitimately claim its beliefs are more true than those held by any other Christian group . . . . .	30	46	12	4	8
	<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>	<u>Not Sure</u>
g. Those who honor God are often blessed materially . . . . .	5	26	44	12	13
h. It is best that the laws of the United States reflect the will of the electorate even if they are in conflict with the teachings of the Bible . . . . .	4	23	43	16	14
i. God has a special relationship with the Jews of modern Israel . . . . .	4	22	34	6	34
j. The Holy Land belongs to the Jews because of God's promises to Abraham . . . . .	4	26	28	8	34
k. God will bless those nations that support Israel and curse those who oppose it . . . . .	2	8	41	20	29

6. Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements.

	<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>	<u>Not Sure</u>
a. The modern state of Israel is central to God's plans for the future . . . . .	4	15	31	7	43
b. The Bible reveals the time of Christ's return . . . . .	1	10	50	21	18
c. Eventually Jesus Christ will visibly return to Earth . . . . .	21	43	9	2	25
d. When Jesus Christ returns, he will engage and defeat the anti-Christ . . . . .	19	36	13	3	29
e. Faithful Christians will be Raptured up into the heavens prior to the return of Jesus Christ to Earth . . . . .	7	21	22	10	40
f. This world will be replaced by a new heaven and earth . . . . .	13	32	11	3	41
g. God has given the Jews a special mission in the world . . . . .	3	23	32	5	37

	<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>	<u>Not Sure</u>
h. The state of Israel is a crucial strategic political and military ally for the United States . . . . .	8	47	12	2	31
i. The state of Israel should receive U.S. support because it represents the only democracy in the Middle East . . .	5	36	22	3	33
j. The policies of Israel are, more often than not, a reasonable response to the actions of some Palestinians . . . . .	3	26	22	4	45
k. Israel must have all of the promised land, including Jerusalem, to facilitate the second coming of the Messiah . . . . .	1	5	39	18	37
l. The Old Testament prophecies are being fulfilled today through the state of Israel . . . . .	1	13	25	8	53

7. Please tell us how you view the following people.

	<u>Not Sure/ Don't Know of this Person</u>	<u>Very Positively</u>	<u>Positively</u>	<u>Neutral / Not Positively or Negatively</u>	<u>Negatively</u>	<u>Very Negatively</u>
a. Mark Hanson . . . . .	46	18	22	12	2	0
b. Pat Robertson . . . . .	9	1	15	36	30	9
c. Pope Benedict XVI . . . . .	2	15	44	32	6	0
d. Jimmy Carter . . . . .	1	26	42	17	9	5
e. Jim Wallis . . . . .	80	3	4	10	2	1
f. John Hagee . . . . .	67	2	3	11	8	7
g. Tim LaHaye . . . . .	66	2	8	14	9	2
h. Kay Warren . . . . .	84	1	5	9	1	0
i. Ann Coulter . . . . .	50	2	10	17	9	12
j. Munib Younan . . . . .	87	2	3	7	1	0
k. Bono . . . . .	38	7	25	26	5	0
l. Kelly Fryer . . . . .	82	3	5	8	1	1
m. James Dobson . . . . .	35	13	22	16	9	5

8. How important do you believe each of the following should be in the United States' foreign policy?

	<u>Extremely Important</u>	<u>Very Important</u>	<u>Somewhat Important</u>	<u>Not Important</u>	<u>Not Sure</u>
a. fighting global disease, like AIDS and malaria . . . . .	32	48	18	1	1
b. maintaining good relations with European allies . . . . .	28	57	13	1	1
c. improving relations with China . . . . .	16	51	28	2	3
d. improving relations with Iran . . . . .	16	45	27	6	6
e. controlling the spread of biological, chemical, and nuclear weapons around the world . . . . .	51	38	10	1	1
f. keeping America's military strong . . . . .	44	38	16	2	0
g. fighting global terrorism . . . . .	46	36	15	2	1

	<u>Extremely Important</u>	<u>Very Important</u>	<u>Somewhat Important</u>	<u>Not Important</u>	<u>Not Sure</u>
h. combating global climate change . . . . .	31	35	22	9	3
i. contributing to international relief efforts for famines and natural disasters . . . . .	32	48	19	1	0
j. promoting human rights abroad . . . . .	27	45	25	2	1
k. promoting democracy and freedom abroad . . .	19	41	35	3	2
l. helping to improve the standard of living in less developed countries . . . . .	21	44	32	2	1
m. working to achieve a solution to the conflict between Israel and Palestine . . . . .	18	35	34	7	6
n. maintaining strong financial support for Israel .	5	19	39	23	14

9. How worried are you about the following?

	Don't know /				
	<u>Doesn't Apply</u>	<u>Extremely Worried</u>	<u>Very Worried</u>	<u>Somewhat Worried</u>	<u>Not Worried</u>
a. membership loss in the Lutheran church . . . . .	1	14	32	41	12
b. the future of your own congregation . . . . .	1	21	17	35	26
c. the commitment among your congregation's members for reaching out to the community . . . . .	1	10	14	33	42
d. the religious commitment of your children . . . . .	6	14	16	32	32
e. the ability of your congregation to afford professional leadership . . . . .	1	12	17	39	31
f. the quality of the professional leadership the church is producing . . . . .	3	12	14	30	41
g. the quality of leadership in your synod . . . . .	4	10	10	23	53
h. the quality of the leadership at the ELCA churchwide offices . . . . .	10	9	11	24	47
i. the loss of jobs to other countries . . . . .	2	30	27	32	11

	Don't know /				
	<u>Doesn't Apply</u>	<u>Extremely Worried</u>	<u>Very Worried</u>	<u>Somewhat Worried</u>	<u>Not Worried</u>
j. being able to afford health care services or prescription drugs . . . . .	1	31	24	30	14
k. having enough money for retirement . . . . .	1	20	22	35	22
l. children learning traditional values . . . . .	1	26	33	33	7
m. children getting a quality education . . . . .	2	23	31	32	12
n. being a victim of a terrorist act . . . . .	1	7	10	41	41
o. having the U.S. attacked by terrorists . . . . .	1	11	18	54	16
p. the amount of sex and violence on television . . . . .	0	38	30	26	6
q. illegal immigration . . . . .	1	25	23	34	17
r. the U.S. budget deficit . . . . .	1	39	31	25	4
s. the strength of the institution of marriage . . . . .	1	28	30	27	14
t. destruction of embryos for stem cell research . . . . .	5	12	15	26	42
u. global climate change . . . . .	2	23	23	35	17
v. the teaching of evolution in schools . . . . .	3	10	13	24	50
w. the U.S. spending too much money abroad while facing significant problems at home . . . . .	1	33	27	31	8

10. Were you baptized in a Lutheran church? 69 yes 31 no 0 not sure

11. Are you . . .? female male  
62 38

12. Do you consider yourself a . . .? Democrat Republican Independent  
34 39 27

13. How old are you?

<u>15 to 20</u>	<u>21 to 25</u>	<u>26 to 30</u>	<u>31 to 40</u>	<u>41 to 50</u>	<u>51 to 60</u>	<u>61 to 65</u>	<u>66 to 70</u>	<u>71 to 80</u>	<u>81 or older</u>
0	0	1	5	19	29	15	12	14	5

14. Do you have a high school diploma or GED?

<u>no high school diploma</u>	<u>high school diploma</u>	<u>some college or technical</u>	<u>college degree</u>	<u>master's degree</u>	<u>an advanced graduate degree</u>
1	9	29	34	20	7

<u>no high school diploma</u>	<u>high school graduate</u>	<u>non-college post H.S.</u>	<u>some college</u>	<u>college graduate</u>	<u>post-graduate schoole</u>	<u>no response</u>
9	28	2	24	26	10	1

15. Which of the following best describes your total gross household income last year?

<u>\$20,000 or less</u>	<u>\$20,001 to \$40,000</u>	<u>\$40,001 to \$60,000</u>	<u>\$60,001 to \$80,000</u>	<u>\$80,000 to \$100,000</u>	<u>\$100,001 to \$150,000</u>	<u>\$150,001 to \$200,000</u>	<u>\$200,001 or more</u>
4	15	18	19	14	18	7	5

Thanks for completing the questionnaire!

Please return it to Research and Evaluation, ELCA, 8765 W Higgins Rd, Chicago IL 60631.

## Appendix 2

Bono - singer of the Irish rock band U2.

Jimmy Carter - thirty-ninth President of the United States.

Ann Coulter - conservative political commentator, syndicated columnist, and author.

James Dobson - evangelical Christian and producer of the daily radio program *Focus on the Family*.

Kelly Fryer - Lutheran author and founder of *A Renewal Enterprise*.

John Hagee - evangelical Christian and founder of Christians United for Israel.

Mark Hanson - Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Tim LaHaye - evangelical Christian and primary author of the *Left Behind* series of books.

Pope Benedict XVI - Pope.

Pat Robertson - evangelical Christian, televangelist and host of the *700 Club* television program.

Jim Wallis - evangelical Christian author and political activist and editor of *Sojourners Magazine*.

Kay Warren - evangelical Christian author.

Munib Younan - Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land.



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