

Survey: 40 percent of pastors say church offerings are going up

About 40 percent of Protestant pastors say their churches received more offerings in 2017 than in 2016, according to a new report from LifeWay Research, which found that for the first time since 2009 the majority of pastors say the economy isn't troubling their church.



The survey of 1,000 Protestant senior pastors by the Nashville-based group showed that three-quarters say their church met or exceeded their budget, and only about a third say the economy gave their church trouble.

"Overall, 2017 was a good year for church budgets," Scott McConnell, executive director, said. "Except for isolated local downturns, the financial struggles of churches not meeting budget likely have nothing to do with the overall economy."

McConnell added that the past decade had been difficult for many church budgets, but "things seem to be looking up."

When the Great Recession peaked in 2010, 80 percent of pastors had said the economy had a negative effect on the church budget, but it dropped to 51 percent by March 2016, LifeWay said.

In the latest survey, only 35 percent of pastors — mostly African-American and pastors of churches with 50 to 99 attenders — say the economy is having a negative impact.

The study also showed that mainline pastors see more negative impact than evangelical pastors, and Lutherans see more negative impact than Baptists.

Last year, a Barna study showed that over 80 percent of pastors disagreed strongly or somewhat that "it is OK for a member who volunteers extensively not to give financially." However, only 39 percent of pastors said they or other leaders speak from the pulpit about tithing or giving to the church at least once a month, while 62 percent said they or other leaders speak from the pulpit at least once a month on the topic of volunteering.

Another study by LifeWay, released in January, found that 61 percent of Protestant churches are open to new technology but don't go looking for it. "That's especially true when it comes to online giving," the group said. "Despite the popularity of electronic bill-paying, only about 30 percent of all churches in the study allow online giving through their website." In 2010, only 14 percent allowed online giving.

The study also said 59 percent of Pentecostals are most likely to say their church website offers online giving. "Baptists (32 percent), Lutherans (33 percent), Methodists (38 percent), and Presbyterian/Reformed churches (26 percent) are less likely."

However, bigger churches, those with 250 or more attenders, seem to love online giving, as 74 percent of them offer it on their websites, it said. By contrast, 39 percent of churches with 100 to 249 attenders offer online giving. And only a quarter of smaller churches, those with 100 attenders or fewer, offer online giving.

By Anugrah Kumar, Christian Post, Feb. 2018