Top 7 Research Findings on Pastor Finances

With the help of NAE denominations, a national financial research study was conducted among 4,249 senior pastors and 19 denominational leaders and who shared the following data.

1 - Many dedicated pastors serve in small churches with financial challenges.
   • 60 percent of pastors have been serving at their current church 6+ years.
   • 82 percent serve in rural areas and small towns/cities.
   • 80 percent serve churches under 200 people (55 percent under 100).
   • Median budget for over 4,000 churches surveyed was only $125,000.
   • Nearly half of the pastors said only a “small number of people” provide most of the budget, implying that the majority of the people in congregation are not faithful or generous givers.

2 - There is a large need that the Lilly Grant matching funds and project can help fill.
   • 8 percent said they could turn to their denomination for help with their financial concerns.
   • 5 percent said their denomination has “many resources” to help them with personal finances.
   • 9 percent said their denomination has “many resources” to help them with church finances.
   • 17 percent of denominational leaders said they had “many resources” to help their pastors and churches in financial matters.

3- Pastors realize they need help.
   • 18 percent of pastors have a strong confidence they will be financially okay in 10 years.
   • 23 percent of pastors are completely confident in managing the church’s finances.
   • 22 percent of pastors felt their church finances were on very solid ground.
   • 29 percent of pastors felt their personal finances were on very solid ground.
   • 14 percent of pastors received personal or church financial training from their seminary.

4 - Pastors have two very strong allies that can help address financial concerns.
   • 82 percent have a positive working relationship with the leaders who decide their compensation.
   • 93 percent indicated they and their spouse are in agreement when it comes to finances.

5- Pastors have genuine financial challenges.
   • 90 percent of pastors feel some financial stress.
   • 50 percent have salary/housing packages under $50,000.
   • 59 percent do not receive family health insurance from their church.
   • 62 percent do not receive pension/retirement funds from their church.
   • 66 percent of bi-vocational pastors received no benefits beyond salary/housing.
   • 63 percent of spouses work outside the home, and 31 percent of pastors work a second job.
   • 30 percent have student loan debt averaging $36,039.
   • 21 percent have $0 retirement savings. 12 percent under $10K. 25 percent $10K-$50K.
   • 20 percent opted out of social security.
   • 29 percent have $0 in personal savings. 22 percent have under $5K.
   • 25 percent have medical debt averaging $7,253.
   • 74 percent have non-mortgage debt averaging $31,593, median of $14,000.

6 - Pastors understand that financial challenges can cause them to leave the ministry.
   • 36 percent have considered leaving the ministry due to financial pressures.
   • 76 percent know other pastors who left the ministry due to financial pressures.

7- Pastors understand their biggest financial stress factors.
   • 92 percent Retirement savings; 84 percent Emergencies/larger purchases; 60 percent Medical bills/insurance; 59 percent Low salary; 54 percent College savings for children; 35 percent Student loan payments.

Source: National Association of Evangelicals/Grey Matter Research