

SPOTLIGHT: Pastors' Fight and Flight

➔ More than one out of four pastors say they have been forced out of a church due to personal attacks and criticism from small congregational factions, according to new research from Texas Tech University's Marcus Tanner. Pastors forced out score high on tests for post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and health problems, he found. Meanwhile, Duke's National Congregations Study says 9 percent of churches have had a conflict in the past two years that prompted a pastor or leader to leave—a number that seems to have held steady over time.

WARNING SIGNS

Two main predictors of future church conflict are recent church fights and shrinking congregations. Six others to watch for:

1. YOUR SERMONS LAST BETWEEN 11 AND 20 MINUTES.

Churches with that homiletic length were about twice as likely as others to have a conflict leading to a leader leaving. Also, conflict leading to a church meeting is less likely with longer sermons.

2. YOUR CHURCH HAS ALMOST NO MEN.

If 90 percent or more of your regular attendees are women (remarkably, 7 percent of churches fit this description), there's a 1 in 5 chance you had a fight that led to a leader leaving.

3. YOUR PASTOR IS A WOMAN.

Female-led churches are nearly twice as likely to have conflict in which a leader leaves. But male- and female-led congregations had about equal chances of congregants leaving over conflict.

4. YOUR PASTOR IS YOUNG.

If the church's pastor is under 30, there's a 29 percent chance it lost a pastor to conflict in the last two years—three and a half times the average.

5. YOUR CONGREGANTS ARE OLD.

If 75–89 percent of your church is over 60, you're three times more likely than average to have had conflict with a leader leaving. No adults under 35? You're even more likely.

6. A SLIGHT MAJORITY ARE POOR.

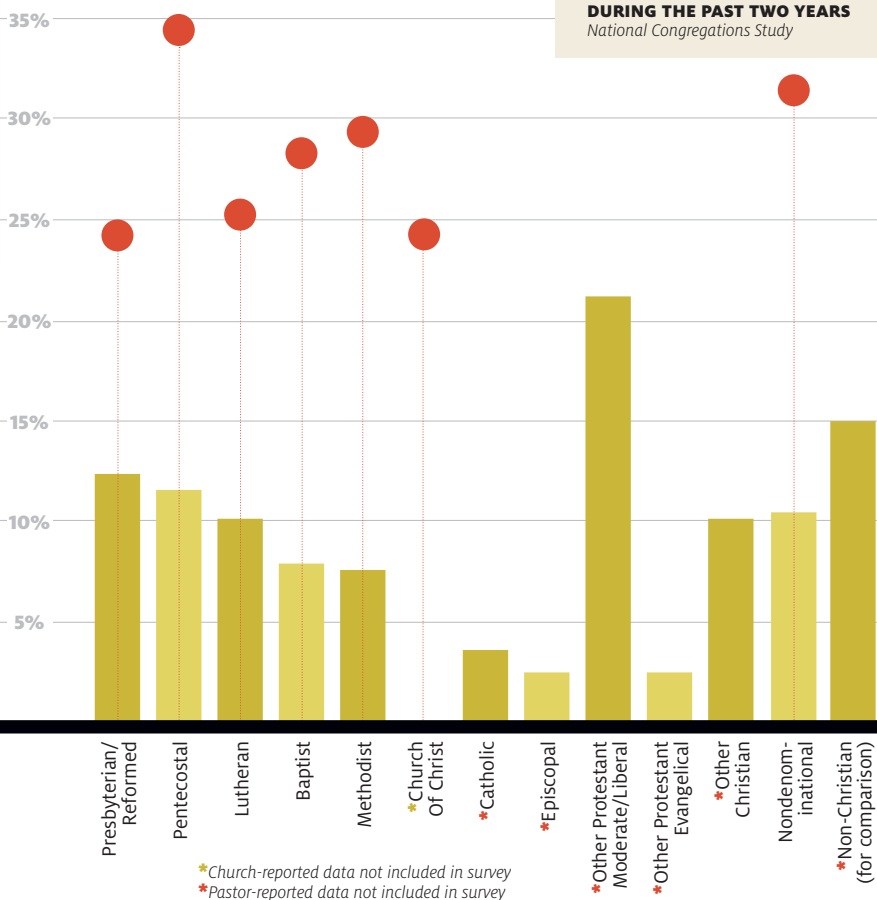
If 56–74 percent of your church earns less than \$25K, update your résumé. Half of such churches lost leaders and members to conflict. But breathe easy if everyone is poor. Over 75 percent fights are less likely and pastors almost always stay.

Dwelling Together in Disunity

Both a survey of churches and a study of pastors found that denomination doesn't really matter. All have fights.

● PASTORS REPORTING A FORCED EXIT DURING THEIR CAREER
Review of Religious Research

■ CHURCHES REPORTING CONFLICT RESULTING IN PASTOR LEAVING DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS
National Congregations Study



PASTORS WHO SAY CHURCHES HAVE FORCED THEM OUT

