

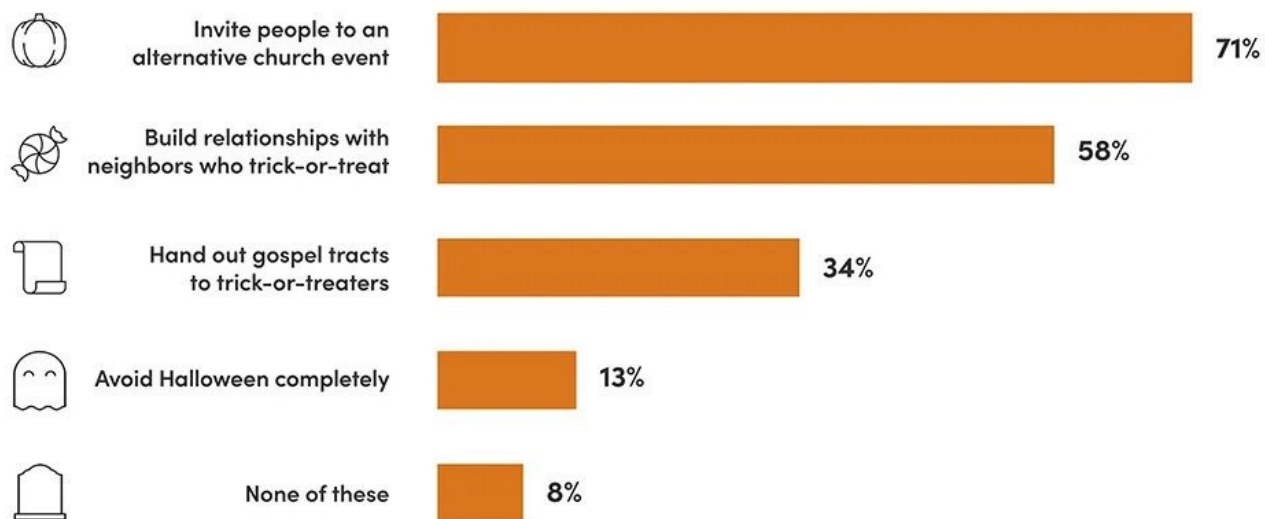
New poll examines pastors' opinions of Halloween

by [Emily McFarlan Miller](#)

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What do pastors encourage their church members to do at Halloween?

Among U.S. Protestant pastors



Lifewayresearch

LifewayResearch.com

How do Christians celebrate Halloween?

It might depend on their pastor, according to a survey, released October 18, by Lifeway Research.

More than 90 percent of pastors across the United States encourage their congregations to observe October 31 in a particular way, but that ranges from avoiding Halloween completely to inviting people to Halloween-adjacent events at their churches, the survey found.

“Few pastors simply ignore the fact that so many Americans participate in Halloween celebrations,” Lifeway Research executive director Scott McConnell said [in a written statement](#). “Most pastors focus on the social nature of these

celebrations, encouraging their congregations to engage with others outside their church.”

Some pastors (13 percent) discourage their congregations from participating in the holiday in any way, according to the survey. This could be because [some Christians](#) consider the day’s festivities to be evil—or, at least, to glorify evil.

But a growing number of pastors are encouraging their congregations to engage with the celebration, mostly by inviting their friends and neighbors to church events on and around Halloween. Those events can include fall festivals; “trunk or treat” gatherings that allow kids to collect candy from cars parked in the church parking lot; or judgment houses, also known as hell houses, that aim to scare the hell out of visitors by depicting its horrors.

“Whether it comes from a desire to reconnect with their community after the pandemic prevented much of this or from deepened convictions about the holiday itself, pastors appear more resolute in their convictions around Halloween,” McConnell said.

The number of Protestant pastors encouraging congregants to invite others to church events has risen from 67 percent of pastors in 2016 to 71 percent in 2022, according to Lifeway.

Many pastors (58 percent, compared to 52 percent in 2016) also are talking with members of their churches about building relationships with neighbors who trick or treat, the survey shows. Those numbers are highest among the youngest pastors, ages 18 to 44 (66 percent), and among Methodists (68 percent) as opposed to Pentecostals (42 percent).

Some—mostly Baptist (58 percent)—tell congregants they should hand out gospel tracts to children who ring their doorbells on Halloween night. Pastors of churches in evangelical denominations (42 percent) were more likely to make this suggestion than those in mainline denominations (28 percent).

That number has had the biggest jump, from 26 percent to 34 percent of all Protestant pastors.

Lifeway is the publishing and research arm of the Southern Baptist Convention. It surveyed 1,000 Protestant pastors by phone between September 6 and September 29. Responses were weighted by region and church size, with 95 percent confidence

that the sampling error does not exceed +3.2 percent. —Religion News Service