

Presbyterians differ on divestment: Survey reveals disagreement

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Some five months after its General Assembly decided to “begin a process of phased, selective divestment” of companies profiting from the Israeli occupation of Palestinian areas, a recently released survey found that Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) laity and clergy differed on whether the economic-political strategy is a good idea.

Though more than half of the members said they were not aware in November of the action, among those who were aware 42 percent of members and 48 percent of elders opposed the divestment process, while 28 percent of members and 30 percent of elders were in favor.

Pastors favored the assembly’s action by a 48-to-43 percent margin, and specialized clergy favored it by a 64-to-24 percent ratio. Three of every four self-identified as “liberal,” whether clergy or laity, approved of the action by assembly delegates.

The divestment process and other PCUSA delegate actions relating to Christian-Jewish issues had been frequently in the news when the poll of 3,000 Presbyterians was taken. The controversy has continued (see the February 8 Century). The poll findings were released February 10.