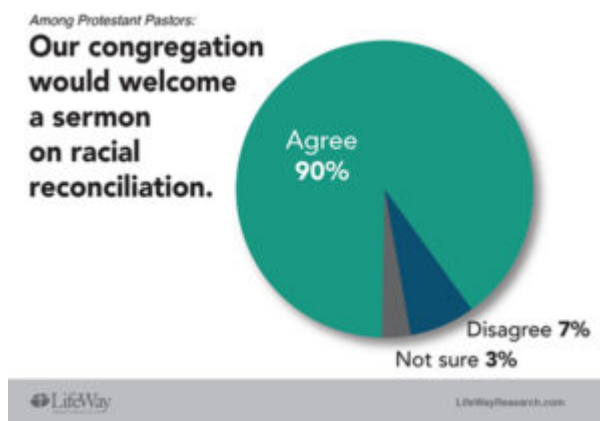


# Most churches would welcome sermons on racial reconciliation, pastors say

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NASHVILLE—Nine out of 10 Protestant pastors in the United States believe their congregations would welcome sermons on racial reconciliation, according to a new study by [LifeWay Research](#).

When researchers conducted a phone survey of 1,000 Protestant pastors last year, only 5 percent of pastors reported receiving negative feedback when they addressed racial reconciliation.



However, only one-fourth of the pastors said church leaders encouraged them to preach on the subject, and 10 percent acknowledged they had not addressed the issue from the pulpit in two years.

## In the three months prior to the survey:

- 57 percent of pastors said they spent time socializing with neighbors of other ethnicities.
- 53 percent led times of corporate prayer for racial reconciliation.
- 51 percent discussed the issue with church leaders.

- 45 percent preached on racial reconciliation.
- 40 percent met regularly with pastors of other ethnicities.
- 31 percent invested church funds in changing local economic inequalities.

The survey also revealed 44 percent of pastors said they shared a meal with fewer than 10 people that included someone of another race in the previous week, and 29 percent said they had done so in the previous month.

Almost two-thirds (63 percent) of the Protestant pastors surveyed said they speak in a large-group setting about racial reconciliation several times a year, and 9 percent reported they speak on the subject several times a month. Pastors in the Midwest (21 percent) are more likely to speak on the subject than pastors in the South (14 percent).

## **What about white evangelicals?**

“These poll results are encouraging, but ‘Protestant’ is a broad category, including black, white, Hispanics, mainline and evangelical Christians. I fear the numbers would not be as encouraging among people like me—white evangelicals,” said Ferrell Foster, director of ethics and justice with the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission. “My impression is that white evangelicals would not rate so well on these aspects of racial reconciliation.”

Indeed, the survey revealed African-Americans were more likely than white pastors (20 percent compared to 8 percent) to say they preached or taught about racial reconciliation several times a month.

“Racial reconciliation language is a little tricky. It’s easier to say we support racial reconciliation than to support specific social and policy changes to promote equal opportunity among people of all races,” Foster observed.

“The good news of Christ is that we may, through faith, be reconciled with God and others. I think God makes reconciliation possible between people when we learn to respect every person as being created in the image of God.

“Jesus said we are to have a self-sacrificing love for our neighbors. In the United States, we are now doing this across racial lines better than we did in the past, but I think we still have a long way to go.”

Researchers conducted the phone survey of 1,000 Protestant pastors was Aug. 30 to Sept. 18, 2017.

The calling list was a stratified random sample, drawn from a list of all Protestant churches, using quotas for church size. Each interview was conducted with the senior pastor, minister or priest of the church called. Analysts weighted responses by region to reflect the population more accurately. The completed sample is 1,000 surveys, providing 95 percent confidence the sampling error does not exceed plus or minus 3.2 percent. Margins of error are higher in sub-groups.