

**Lutheran Partners Survey Report**  
Victoria Flood and Jacqueline Skrypek  
ELCA Department for Research and Evaluation  
March 30, 2005

*Introduction*

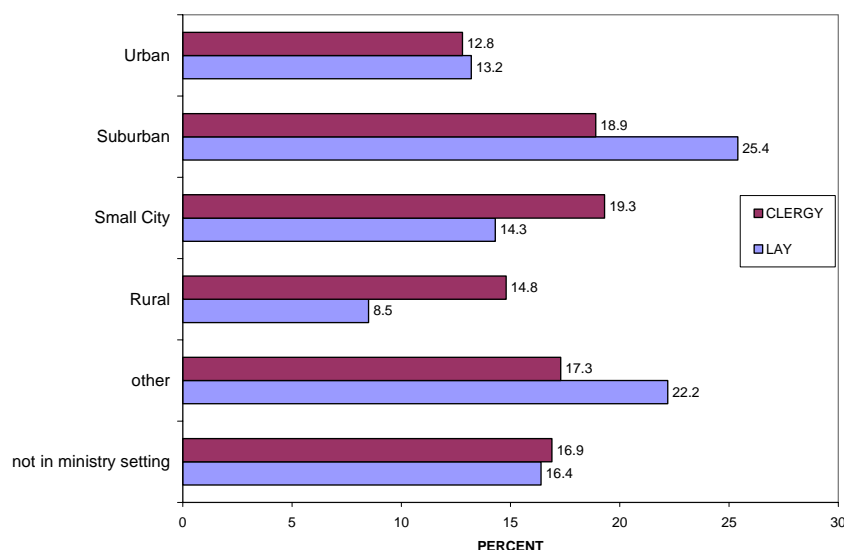
*Lutheran Partners* of the Division for Ministry determined the need for feedback from its readership. In October 2004, The Department for Research and Evaluation conducted a survey of ELCA active and retired, clergy and rostered lay. The questionnaire addressed the layout, content and usage of *Lutheran Partners* magazine and its advertising component. Where applicable, the results of this survey will be compared with the results from a *Lutheran Partners* survey completed in 1993.

The survey was mailed to 931 clergy and 293 rostered lay, active and retired, randomly selected from the leadership roster of the ELCA. After the initial survey was mailed, a reminder postcard followed to non-respondents. A second survey was sent to those who had not responded. A total of 809 surveys were returned. Six hundred eleven or 65.6 percent of the clergy and 198 or 67.6 percent of the rostered lay returned the survey.

Of the clergy respondents, 37 percent are retired and 88 percent are married. Seventeen percent are involved in part-time ministry work and 14 percent serve a volunteer ministry. Figure 1 shows the current ministry settings of clergy and rostered lay. Male clergy are more likely to serve in an urban or suburban setting<sup>1</sup>. Female clergy are more likely to serve in a small city or rural setting. Of the rostered lay respondents, 37 percent are retired and 67 percent are married. Ten percent are involved in part-time ministry work and 25 percent serve a volunteer ministry.

**Figure 1**

**Current Ministry Settings**

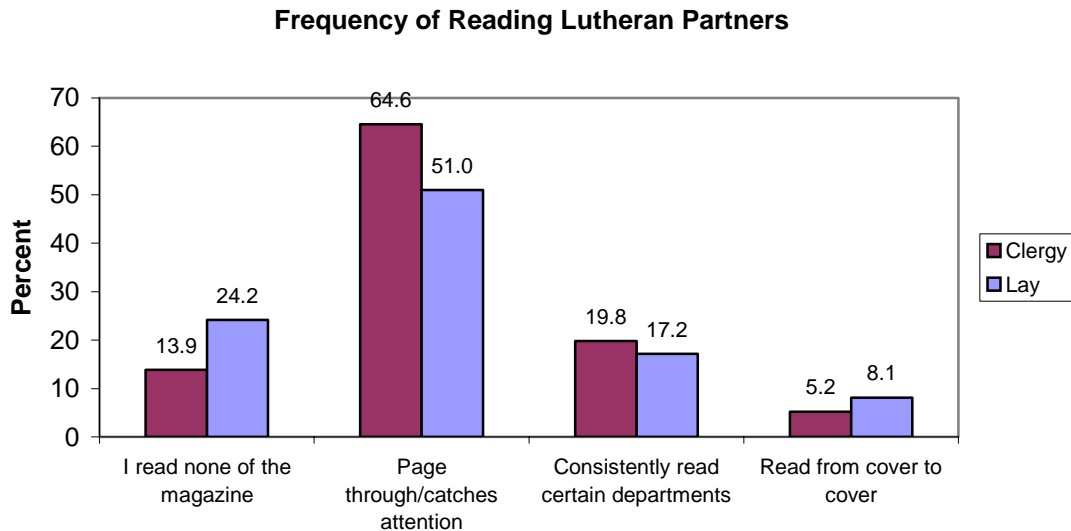


<sup>1</sup> The gender of the respondent was acquired from the leadership roster. All reported differences are significant at the .05 level.

## Readability

Sixty-five percent of the clergy and 51 percent of the rostered lay page through *Lutheran Partners* and read whatever catches their attention. (Figure 2.) Female clergy and single clergy are most likely to read none of the magazine. In the 1993 *Lutheran Partners* survey, approximately 60 percent of the respondents also reported paging through and reading whatever catches their attention. Eleven percent reported reading the magazine from cover to cover.

**Figure 2**



Respondents were asked to indicate whether the items in Table 1 enhance or detract from the magazine's readability. Most clergy and rostered lay indicated that the general layout, size of type, length of articles, size of magazine and length of magazine enhances *Lutheran Partners* readability.

**Table 1**

	Enhances Readability		Detracts from Readability		No Opinion	
	Clergy	Rostered Lay	Clergy	Rostered Lay	Clergy	Rostered Lay
General layout	58.1	61.6	7.4	6.4	34.4	32.0
Size of type	63.6	63.4	1.9	3.3	34.5	33.3
Placement of advertising	24.2	31.1	14.4	16.4	61.4	52.5
Number of columns	46.3	50.8	4.2	1.6	49.5	47.5
Length of articles	57.8	63.2	6.2	5.6	36.0	31.2
Size of magazine	63.8	62.3	1.2	0.8	34.9	36.9
Length of magazine	58.5	59.7	2.1	4.0	39.4	36.3

*Departments of Lutheran Partners*

Respondents were asked to indicate whether *Lutheran Partners* carries too few, too many or an adequate number of articles. (Table 2.) Most of the clergy and rostered lay respondents indicated that Pastor Loci, Handiwork/Faith-Science, Book Reviews, Video Reviews, Some Words About, Comment and Letters carries an adequate number of articles. Under half of the rostered lay indicated that Facets carries an adequate number of articles.

**Table 2**

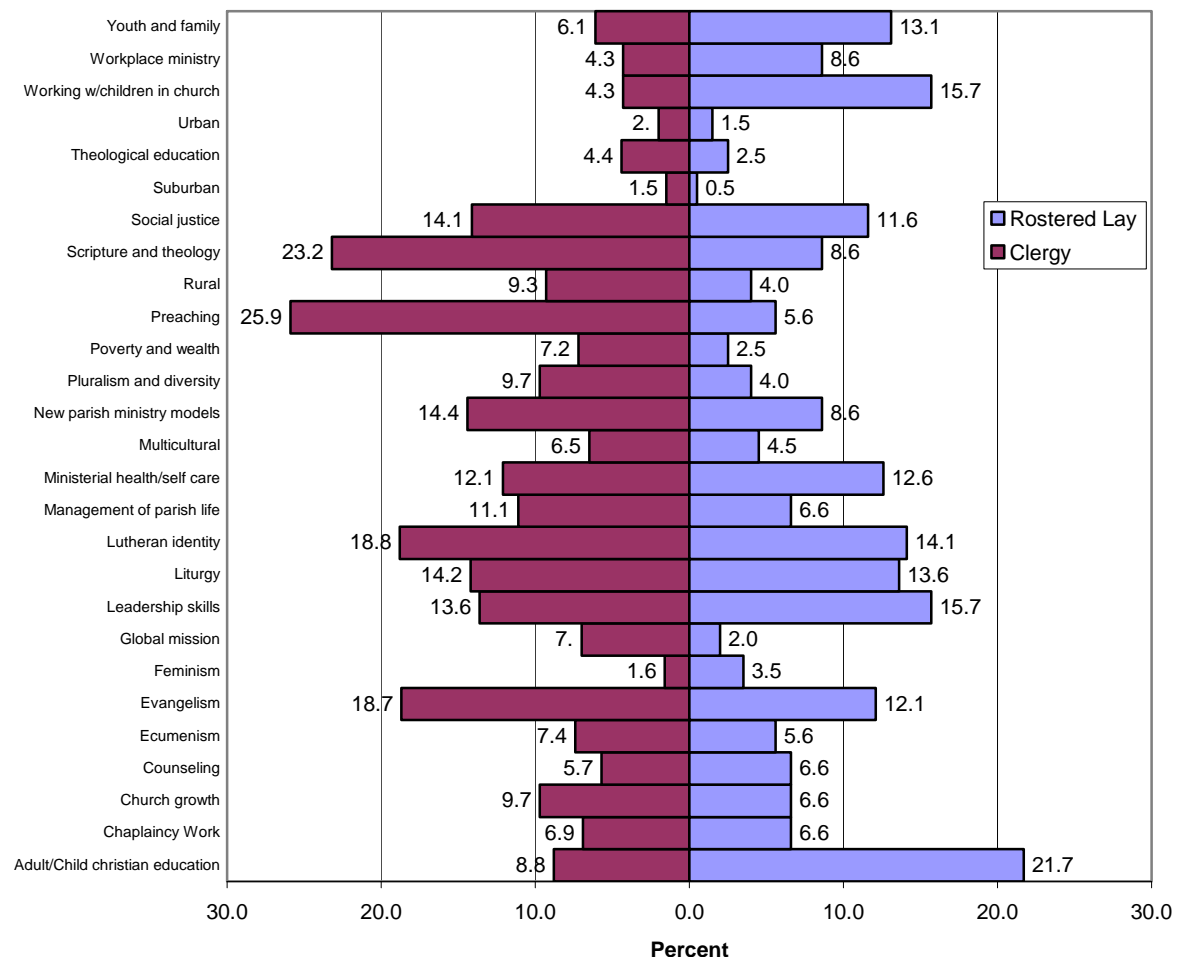
	Too Few		Too Many		Adequate Number		No Opinion	
	Clergy	Rostered Lay	Clergy	Rostered Lay	Clergy	Rostered Lay	Clergy	Rostered Lay
Pastor Loci	12.7	6.8	2.2	2.3	68.7	62.4	16.4	28.6
Handiwork/Faith-Science	8.1	4.8	5.1	1.6	51.3	49.2	35.5	44.4
Church Computer	5.4	7.3	8.2	5.6	41.8	37.9	44.6	49.2
Book Reviews	14.1	10.9	5.0	2.3	55.7	64.1	25.2	22.7
Video Reviews	9.5	11.9	7.3	3.2	43.4	50.0	39.8	34.9
Some Words About	4.7	2.4	8.7	4.0	53.9	55.6	32.6	38.1
Comment	6.0	2.4	3.9	2.4	58.3	62.4	31.8	32.8
Letters	10.9	3.2	8.8	9.6	57.6	60.8	22.6	26.4
Facets	2.0	33.8	4.2	0.0	38.3	43.8	55.6	22.3

## Ministry Issues

As shown in Figure 3, clergy indicated that preaching, scripture and theology, Lutheran identity and evangelism were ministry issues *Lutheran Partners* could address. More female clergy are likely to indicate *Lutheran Partners* could address Christian education of children/adults and leadership skills. More male clergy are likely to choose ecumenism, global mission and Lutheran identity as ministry issues *Lutheran Partners* could address. Christian education of children/adults and leadership skills are ministry issues *Lutheran Partners* could address for rostered lay over age 50.<sup>2</sup> In the 1993 *Lutheran Partners* survey, scripture and theology, preaching and counseling were the three most important ministry issues respondents indicated *Lutheran Partners* could address.

**Figure 3**

**Ministry Issues Lutheran Partners Could Address**

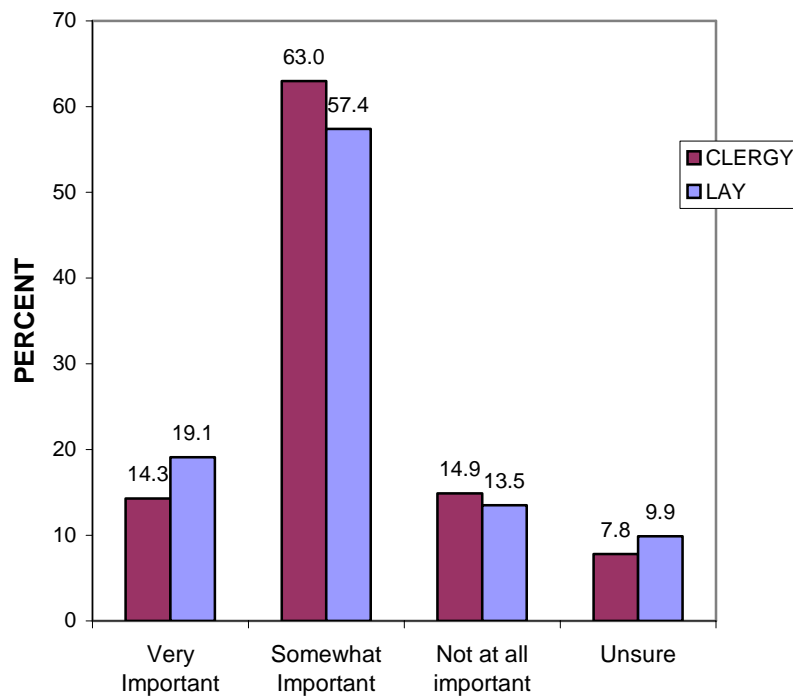


<sup>2</sup> The age of the respondent was acquired from the leadership roster.

Respondents were asked how important *Lutheran Partners* was in keeping them informed about current issues of ministry in the church. As shown in Figure 4, 77.3 percent of clergy and 76.5 percent of rostered lay indicated that *Lutheran Partners* is somewhat important to very important regarding current ministry issues. Male clergy were more likely to indicate that *Lutheran Partners* was very important or somewhat important to them regarding current ministry issues than female clergy. Female clergy were more likely to indicate that *Lutheran Partners* was not at all important as to informing them about current ministry issues.

**Figure 4**

**Informing About Current Issues**



*Internet usage*

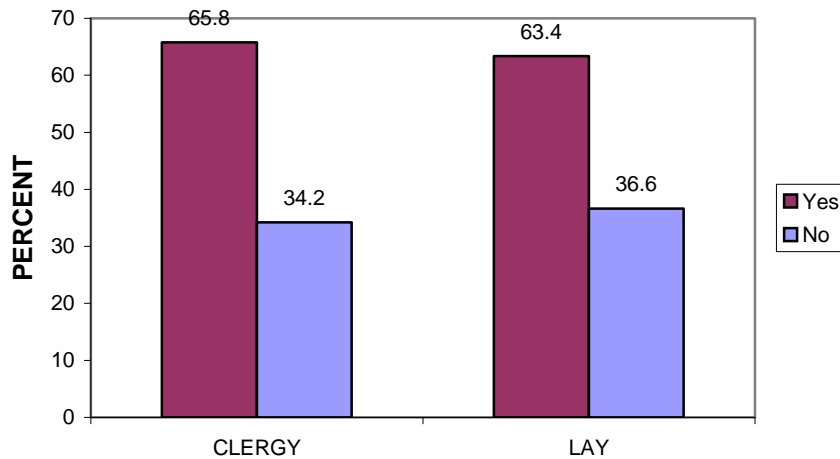
About 91 percent of the clergy and 87 percent of rostered lay leaders have Internet access. Sixty-six percent of the clergy and 63 percent of the rostered lay used the Internet to read articles from any source related to their ministry (Figure 5). Female clergy and married rostered lay over age 50 are more likely to read ministry related articles on the Internet.

Most of the clergy (95%) and rostered lay (88%) had not visited the *Lutheran Partners* web site. As shown in Figure 6, 26 percent of clergy and 17 percent of rostered lay would like the same content of the print version of *Lutheran Partners* on the web. Rostered lay males are more likely to prefer the same content of the print version on the web. Those who commented would prefer to have principle articles only from the print version on the web. About 15 percent of the clergy and 17 percent of the rostered lay indicated they would like more content for certain subjects that adds to the content in the print version.

Some respondents commented that the *Lutheran Partners* web site should include the following: links (to related articles/readings, photos, video clips, bibliographies, outside references), dialogue among rostered leaders or authors (through on-line forums, chat rooms or bulletin boards), content specific information about different ministry areas (developing lay leadership skills, improving community outreach) and more scholarly and practical insight on how to grow professionally and personally (how to improve compassion, bring a renewed sense to worship, when to move, when to retire).

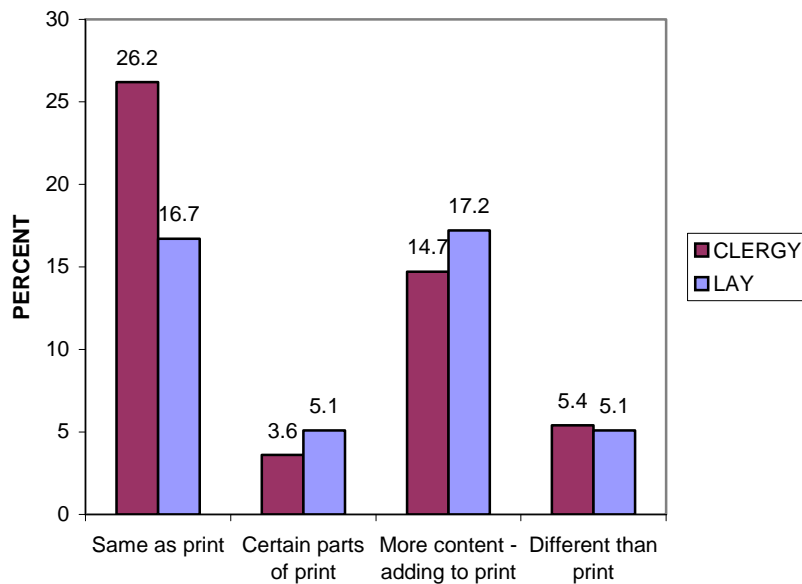
**Figure 5**

**Used Internet for Ministry Related Articles**



**Figure 6**

**Lutheran Partners Web Site**

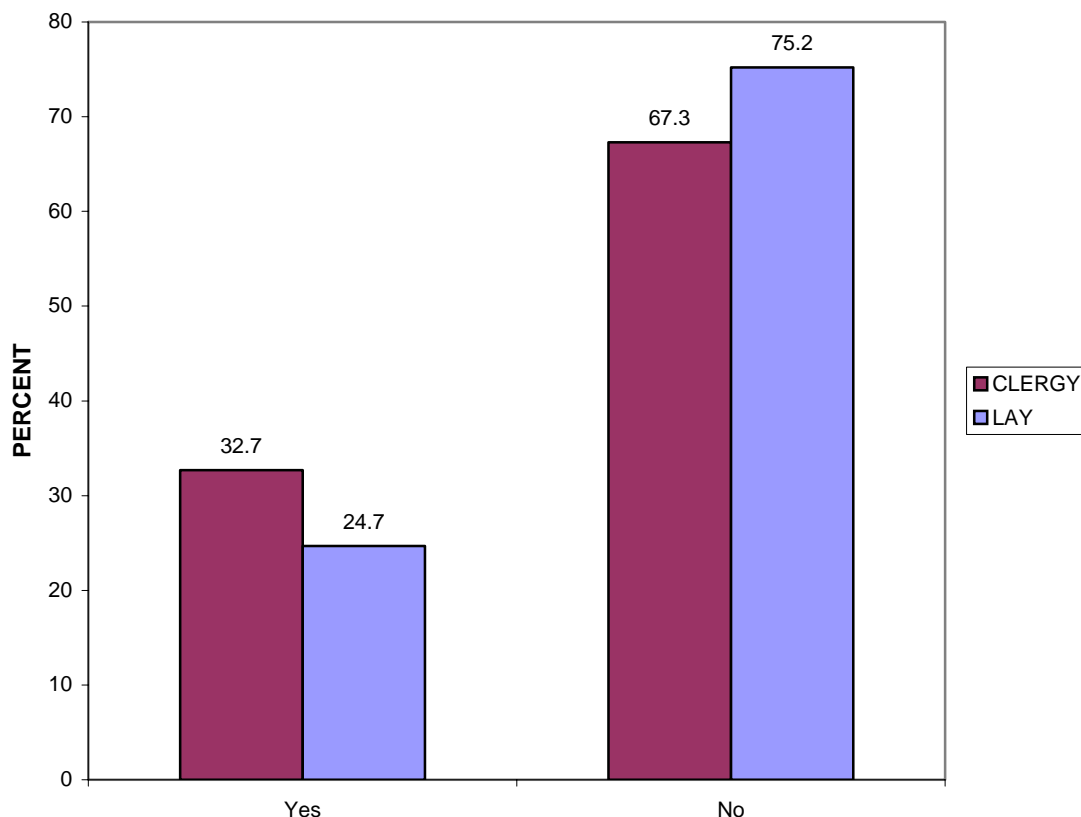


## Use of Lutheran Partners

Respondents were asked to indicate if there was a recent article in *Lutheran Partners* that they found particularly helpful. Thirty-three percent of clergy and 25 percent of rostered lay found an article in a recent *Lutheran Partners* helpful. (Figure 7.) The articles mentioned as most helpful include: "Witnessing and Weddings", "Leave Taking: A Rite for the Home," "Reflections on the Renewal of Worship," "Transforming for Mission: Guiding Congregations into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," "Thoughts on a Pastor's Retirement," and "Growth or Decline in a Congregation: Single Greatest Key." Overall, authors Steve McKinley and Terrence Mullins were cited for their columns.

**Figure 7**

**Recent Lutheran Partners Article Helpful**

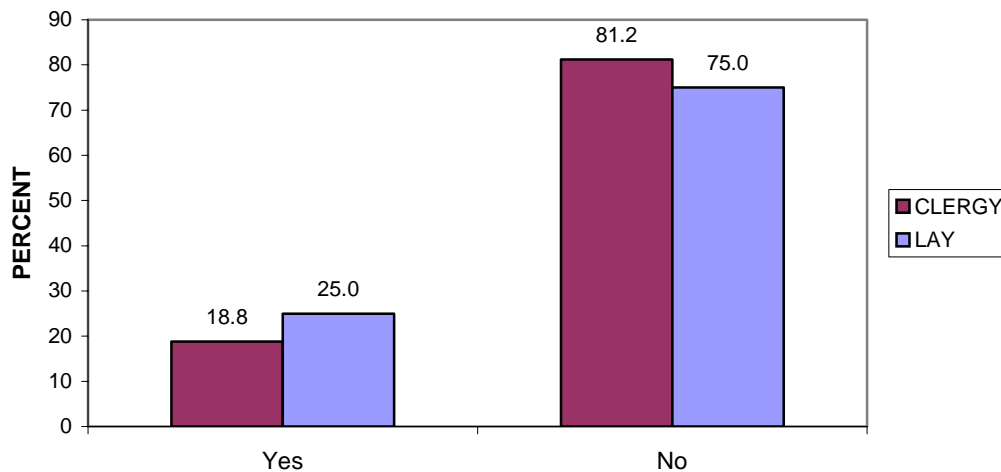


Over 95 percent of the clergy and the rostered lay did not participate in a group that used *Lutheran Partners* for discussion material. Similarly, in the 1993 *Lutheran Partners* survey, over 90 percent of the respondents did not participate in a discussion group using *Lutheran Partners*. About 19 percent of clergy and 25 percent of rostered lay discussed/shared a *Lutheran Partners* article with a non-ELCA rostered person. (Figure 8.) Approximately three percent of the clergy and four percent of rostered lay encouraged a non-ELCA-rostered person to subscribe to *Lutheran Partners*. Of those that encouraged a subscription, clergy generally recommended to non-ELCA clergy and lay ELCA

members, and rostered lay recommended a subscription to non-ELCA clergy, lay ELCA members and non-ELCA lay person. (Table 3.) In the 1993 survey, about 40 percent of the respondents discussed or shared a *Lutheran Partners* article with a non-ELCA rostered person. About five percent encouraged a non-rostered person to subscribe.

**Figure 8**

**Sharing a Lutheran Partners Article**



**Table 3**

**Encouraged a Non-ELCA Rostered Person to Subscribe**

	Clergy	Rostered Lay
Spouse	15.4	0.0
Non-ELCA Clergy	38.5	20.0
Lay ELCA member(s)	38.5	60.0
Non-ELCA lay person	15.4	20.0

*Advertisements in Lutheran Partners*

Approximately nine percent of the clergy and 14 percent of the rostered lay have purchased or inquired about products or services because of an advertisement they saw in *Lutheran Partners*. Products or services purchased or inquired about include: books, videos/DVDs, moving companies, columbarium and ads related to continuing education. Continuing education opportunities and church-related conferences were the two advertising areas that both clergy and rostered lay indicated were relevant to their ministry (Table 4). Sermon preparation, religious book publishers and education curriculum were next. Education curriculum, music and religious book publishers were also relevant to rostered lay leaders.

Male clergy are more likely to think computer ads are relevant to their ministry. Female clergy are more likely to think education curriculum, church-related conferences, continuing education opportunities and ELCA churchwide units are relevant ads to their ministry.

**Table 4**

**Ads Relevant to Ministry**

	<b>Clergy</b> (percent)	<b>Rostered Lay</b> (percent)	
<b>continuing education opportunities</b>	32.2	36.4	<b>continuing education opportunities</b>
<b>church-related conferences</b>	29.8	28.3	<b>church-related conferences</b>
<b>sermon preparation</b>	28.5	24.2	<b>educational curriculum</b>
<b>religious book publishers</b>	21.4	21.2	<b>music</b>
<b>educational curriculum</b>	20.0	20.7	<b>religious book publishers</b>
<b>travel, guided tours</b>	12.4	16.7	<b>ELCA churchwide units</b>
<b>ELCA churchwide units</b>	12.3	15.2	<b>youth ministry</b>
<b>Bibles</b>	12.3	13.1	<b>choir</b>
<b>music</b>	12.1	12.6	<b>sermon preparation</b>
<b>vestments, altar ware</b>	11.5	12.6	<b>Thrivent Financial for Lutherans</b>
<b>youth ministry</b>	10.3	11.6	<b>Bibles</b>
<b>computers</b>	10.3	8.6	<b>counseling</b>
<b>Thrivent Financial for Lutherans</b>	9.3	8.1	<b>health related services</b>
<b>counseling</b>	8.2	7.6	<b>vestments, altar ware</b>
<b>health related services</b>	7.9	6.1	<b>computers</b>
<b>moving van companies</b>	5.6	3.0	<b>moving van companies</b>
<b>sound systems</b>	4.9	2.0	<b>sound systems</b>
<b>columbaria</b>	3.9	1.5	<b>other</b>
<b>church furniture</b>	3.3	1.0	<b>insurance companies</b>
<b>choir</b>	3.3	0.5	<b>columbaria</b>
<b>other</b>	2.6	0.0	<b>church furniture</b>
<b>electronic/pipe organ</b>	1.8	0.0	<b>electronic/pipe organ</b>
<b>insurance companies</b>	1.1	0.0	<b>travel, guided tours</b>

*Internet purchases*

Forty-seven percent of clergy and 50 percent of rostered lay leaders have used the Internet to purchase items for the congregation. Female clergy and married rostered lay leaders are more likely to purchase items for the congregation from the Internet. About 70 percent of clergy and 71 percent of rostered lay leaders have used the Internet to purchase items for their own use. Female clergy and married rostered lay leaders are more likely to purchase items for themselves from the Internet.

## Other Publications

Respondents were given a list of publications and were asked to indicate whether they typically read a portion and whether they like the layout, article content, advertising and Internet options. They were also asked to indicate whether they subscribe to the publication. Thirty-two percent of clergy and 18 percent of rostered lay typically read a portion of the Christian Century. (Table 5.) The Christian Century received high marks from both clergy and rostered lay for its layout and article content. Twenty-two percent of clergy subscribe to the Christian Century. Other top publications that clergy typically read include: Word & World, Lutheran Forum/Forum Letter and Currents in Theology and Mission. Female clergy are more likely to read a portion of and subscribe to Currents in Theology and Mission. Male clergy are more likely to read a portion of Lutheran Forum/Forum Letter. Rostered lay leaders are more likely to read a portion of Word & World or Christianity Today.

**Table 5**

I like the following items . . .

	I typically read a portion		Layout		Article Content		Advertising		Internet Options		I Subscribe	
	Clergy	Lay	Clergy	Lay	Clergy	Lay	Clergy	Lay	Clergy	Lay	Clergy	Lay
Christian Century	32.4	18.2	12.3	6.1	25.2	12.1	4.3	3.0	2.5	1.0	21.9	5.1
Christian Computing	1.6	1.0	0.2	0.0	0.8	0.5	0.2	0.0	0.7	1.0	0.7	0.0
Christianity Today	10.5	9.1	1.5	1.5	5.6	4.5	0.3	0.5	0.7	0.5	4.3	0.5
Clergy Journal	13.7	4.0	3.9	1.5	8.0	3.0	0.8	0.0	0.8	0.0	7	1.5
Context	6.1	2.5	2.6	1.0	4.4	1.5	0.0	0.0	1.3	0.0	3.4	1.0
Currents in Theology and Mission	12.3	6.6	2.8	0.0	7.4	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.0	8.2	0.0
Dialog	7.2	4.5	2.0	0.0	4.4	1.5	0.3	0.0	0.7	0.0	2.9	0.5
Interpretation	6.7	1.5	2.1	0.0	4.6	1.0	0.7	0.0	0.3	0.0	3.3	0.5
Leadership	7.5	4.0	2.1	2.0	3.9	4.5	0.2	0.5	0.7	0.5	3.4	1.5
Lutheran Forum/Forum Letter	14.1	3.0	2.9	1.5	6.4	4.0	0.5	0.5	0.3	0.0	6.7	1.0
Lutheran Quarterly	6.4	3.5	0.7	1.5	3.3	3.0	0.2	0.0	0.2	0.0	2.1	0.5
Preaching	3.9	1.0	0.5	0.5	1.1	1.0	0.3	0.0	0.2	0.0	1.1	0.0
Pulpit Resources	11.0	1.5	2.9	0.5	4.7	1.5	0.5	0.0	0.7	0.0	6.5	0.0
Rev. Magazine	2.9	0.5	1.6	0.0	1.5	0.5	0.5	0.0	0.5	0.0	1.6	0.5
Word & World	14.6	10.6	4.6	2.0	9.2	6.6	0.8	0.0	0.2	0.0	9.3	3.0
Your Church	5.1	3.0	1.1	0.0	1.5	1.5	1.1	0.5	0.2	0.5	1.3	0.0

## Additional Comments

Respondents expressed both negativity and praise for the *Lutheran Partners* magazine. Some respondents do not read the magazine or do not find it helpful. Others thought it was useful particularly because it “deals with real issues” and “helps shape ministry/theological identity.” Retired pastors were split on the pertinence of the magazine when they were active pastors. Still others offered advice on format changes such as the need for color pictures, and the front cover should state the contents.