

Mother's Day Church Attendance Third Among Holidays, Father's Day Last

Between Easter and Christmas, Mother's Day may be the most likely day people will attend church, according to a study by LifeWay Research.

In a national poll of 1,000 Protestant pastors, LifeWay Research asked what the three highest attendance Sundays were throughout the year. Mother's Day (59 percent) ranked third behind the standard religious powerhouse holidays of Easter (93 percent) and Christmas (84 percent).

Scott McConnell, director of LifeWay Research, said, "Clearly, mothers want to be present for the affirmation that is typically offered in most churches, but families also are present knowing their attendance will honor their mother. Many families make church attendance on Mother's Day nearly obligatory."

Among the seven specific days tested, Father's Day was mentioned the least, falling behind even Homecoming celebrations.

"The attendance difference between Mother's Day and Father's Day is telling," said McConnell. "Either churches are less effective in affirming fathers, or families believe Christian fathers don't value their participation in worship services."

The study asked the question: "At your church, which day typically has the highest attendance for worship services?" In addition to Easter, Christmas, Mother's Day and Father's Day, three other days were listed: Homecoming or anniversary of the church (16 percent), a special day to invite friends (14 percent), Fourth of July (4 percent), and 26 percent indicated

another day. There was significant variation in responses when filtered by geographic regions and by educational level:

- Churches with less than 50 in attendance are least likely to select Easter (41 percent) and most likely to select Mother's Day (9 percent).
- Protestant pastors with a graduate degree are less likely to select Mother's day (3 percent to 8 percent) than pastors with at most a bachelor's degree.
- Protestant pastors of churches in the South are most likely to select Homecoming (9 percent). No other region has more than one percent of pastors making this selection.
- Churches with attendance up to 49 people (8 percent) and between 50 and 99 people (7 percent), are more likely to select Homecoming.

"Holidays and special days, regardless of which ones, offer an opportunity for churches to host guests who might not otherwise attend church," McConnell said. "Encouraging attendees to invite family and friends for services on these special days is a natural time to ask since many people will be considering attending."