

Religious donors don't figure to cut back: Despite the economic downturn

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Despite the economic downturn, more than half of actively religious donors plan to give the same or more to charitable causes in 2009 as they did last year, a new survey shows.

Cygnus Applied Research, a Chicago-based international research firm, completed a survey of more than 17,000 U.S. donors to charitable causes in February. It found that 57 percent of actively religious donors said they expected to give more or the same amount to charitable causes as they did in 2008.

Researchers found that more than a third (37 percent) of donors described themselves as “actively religious.” About a quarter (24 percent) said they were “not at all religious,” and 38 percent said they were “somewhere in between.”

More than a quarter (28 percent) of the most religious donors who planned to increase or maintain their level of giving cited a sense of obligation. They said they would do so because they made commitments before the economy worsened and intended to stick with them.

The study found that 43 percent of actively religious respondents remained seriously committed to giving in the face of economic uncertainty, compared to 23 percent of those who were not religious at all.

“Religious conviction is the only relevant characteristic that statistically differentiates these highly committed donors from other respondents,” the study concluded.

About a quarter of actively religious donors said “it was too soon to tell” how much they would give in 2009; 17 percent said they expected to give less.

Last year, on average, actively religious donors gave considerably more to charitable causes than other donors surveyed. The average total donation by actively religious respondents totaled \$13,356, which was 16 percent more than the

average total contribution of all donors. -*Religion News Service*