



St. Susanna's Parish Survey 2013

COMMUNITY PRESENTATION
JANUARY 2014

Goals of the 2013 Parish Survey

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- **The 2013 Parish Survey was designed to:**
 - Update the Parish's database with current contact information for parishioners and get a more accurate picture of the size of the parish;
 - Identify parishioners' interests and connect them with parish activities and services;
 - Identify parishioners' needs that may not currently be met;
 - Understand what parishioners value most about the Parish and what they think is in need of improvement;
 - Elicit parishioners' opinions on the Archdiocese of Boston's reconfiguration plans.

Survey Methodology

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- The survey was developed in late winter 2013 with feedback from Parish Council.
- It was announced in the Parish bulletin for several weeks in advance of the launch.
- The survey was made available in paper and electronic formats on March 2.
- The survey link was printed in the Parish bulletin, “hot linked” from the Parish website, and sent by e-mail to those in the Parish database for whom the office had current e-mail addresses.
- Paper surveys were made available at the Parish’s Anointing Mass.
- Volunteers were present on April 6 and 7 after each mass with laptop computers to assist parishioners who had not yet completed the survey.
- The survey closed on May 1st.

Response Rate

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- 262 families responded to the St. Susanna Parish survey.
- It is estimated that there are approximately 900 families in the parish.
- This translates to an approximate response rate of 29%.

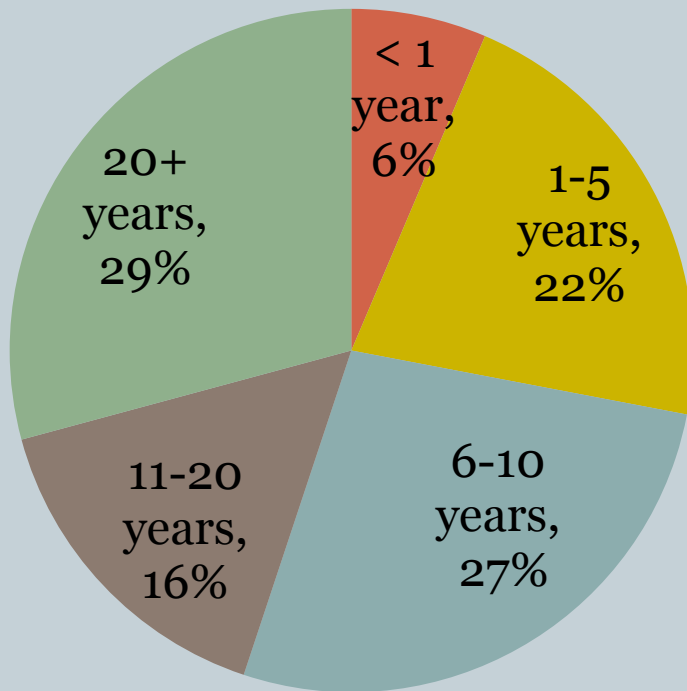
Where are Parishioners From?

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- 61% are from Dedham and 39% from elsewhere:
 - 19% from Needham
 - 6% from West Roxbury
 - 2% from Walpole
 - 2% from Wellesley
 - 2% from Westwood
 - 8% all others (Braintree, Brighton, Brookline, Brunswick, Humarock, Mansfield, Medfield, Millis, Milton, Natick, Newton, North Easton, Plainville, Winthrop)
- Parishioners come from 24 zip codes

Approximately how many years have you and/or your family been in the Parish?

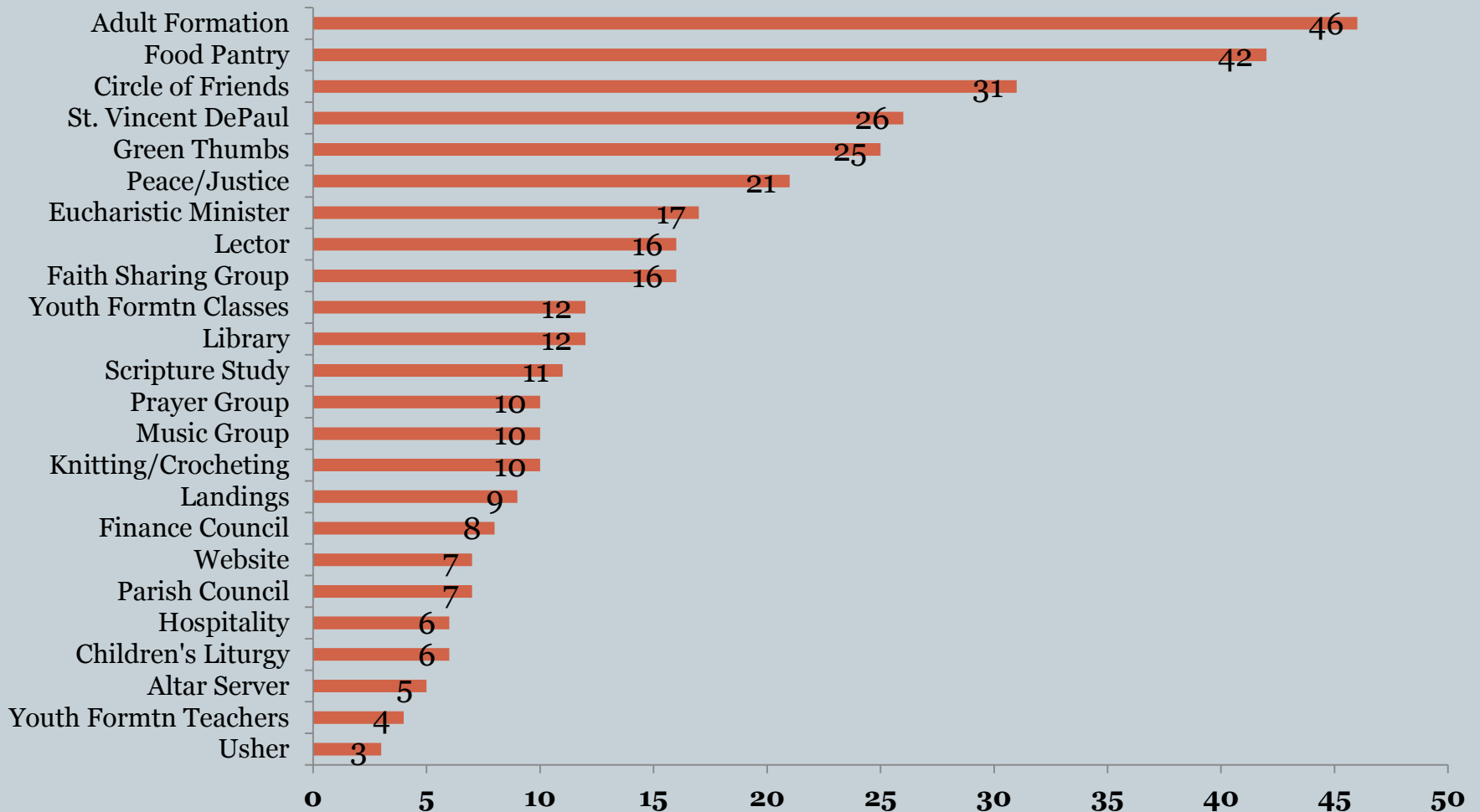
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- About a quarter (28%) of parishioners are relatively new to the Parish, having joined in the last five years.
- About a quarter (27%) have been in the Parish for 6-10 years.
- Just under half (45%) have been in the parish for more than ten years.

Parish Programs Wish to Learn More About

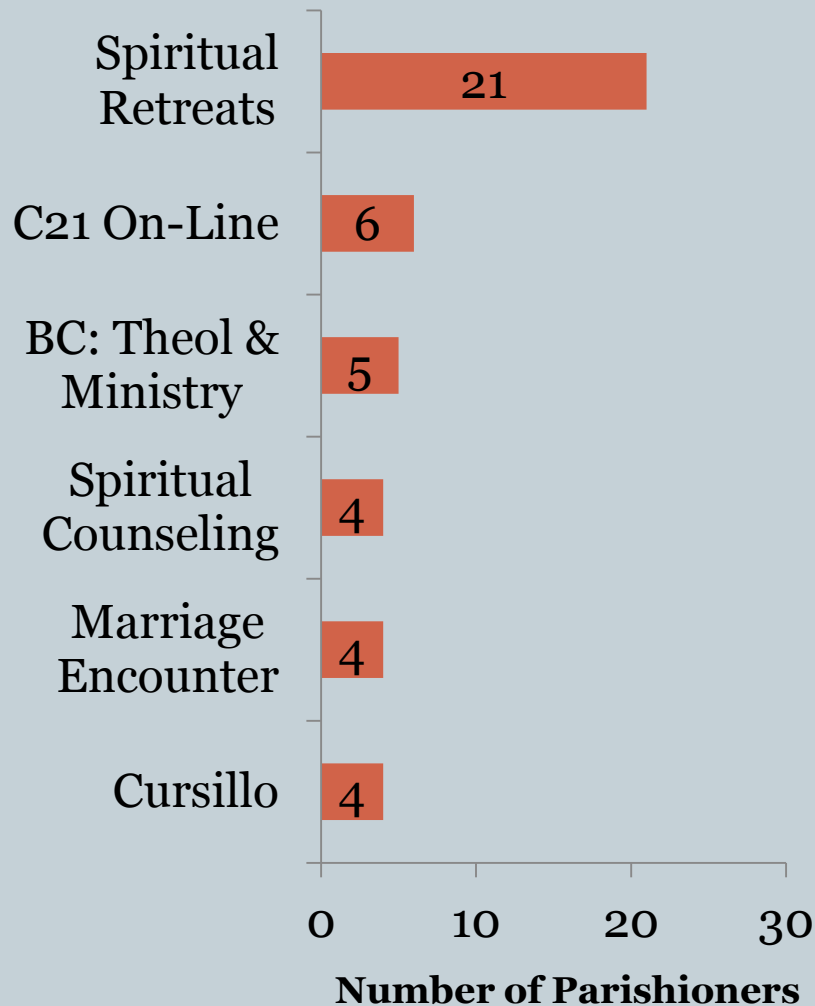
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Number of Parishioners

Spiritual Development Programs (participation last three years)

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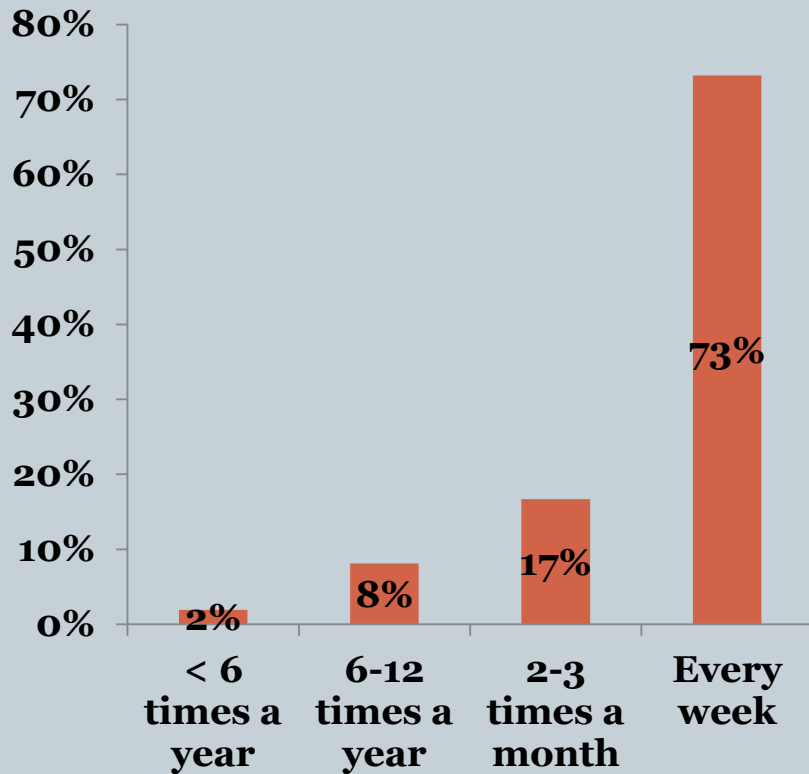
- **Other programs (17)**

- Bible Study
- Book Club
- Campion Center
- CCD
- Confirmation
- K of C
- Lenten church retreats
- LifeTeen at St. Mary's
- Monday evening adult formation
- Pax Christi
- St. Ignatius Spiritual Exercises
- WINGS

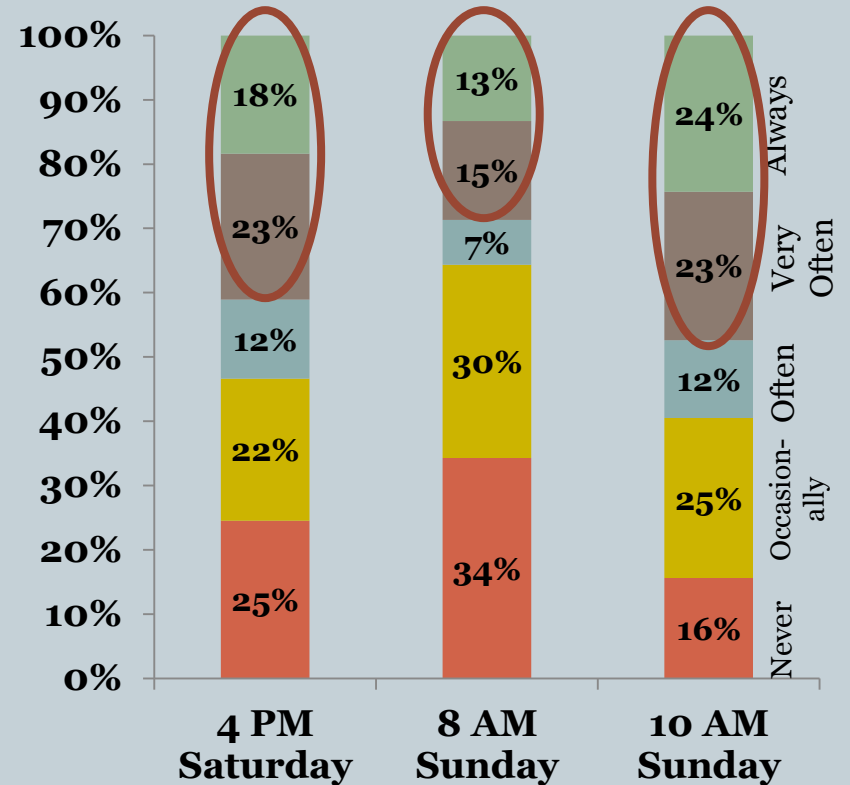
Mass Attendance

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Frequency



Preferred Mass Time



Mass Non-Attendance & Financial Support

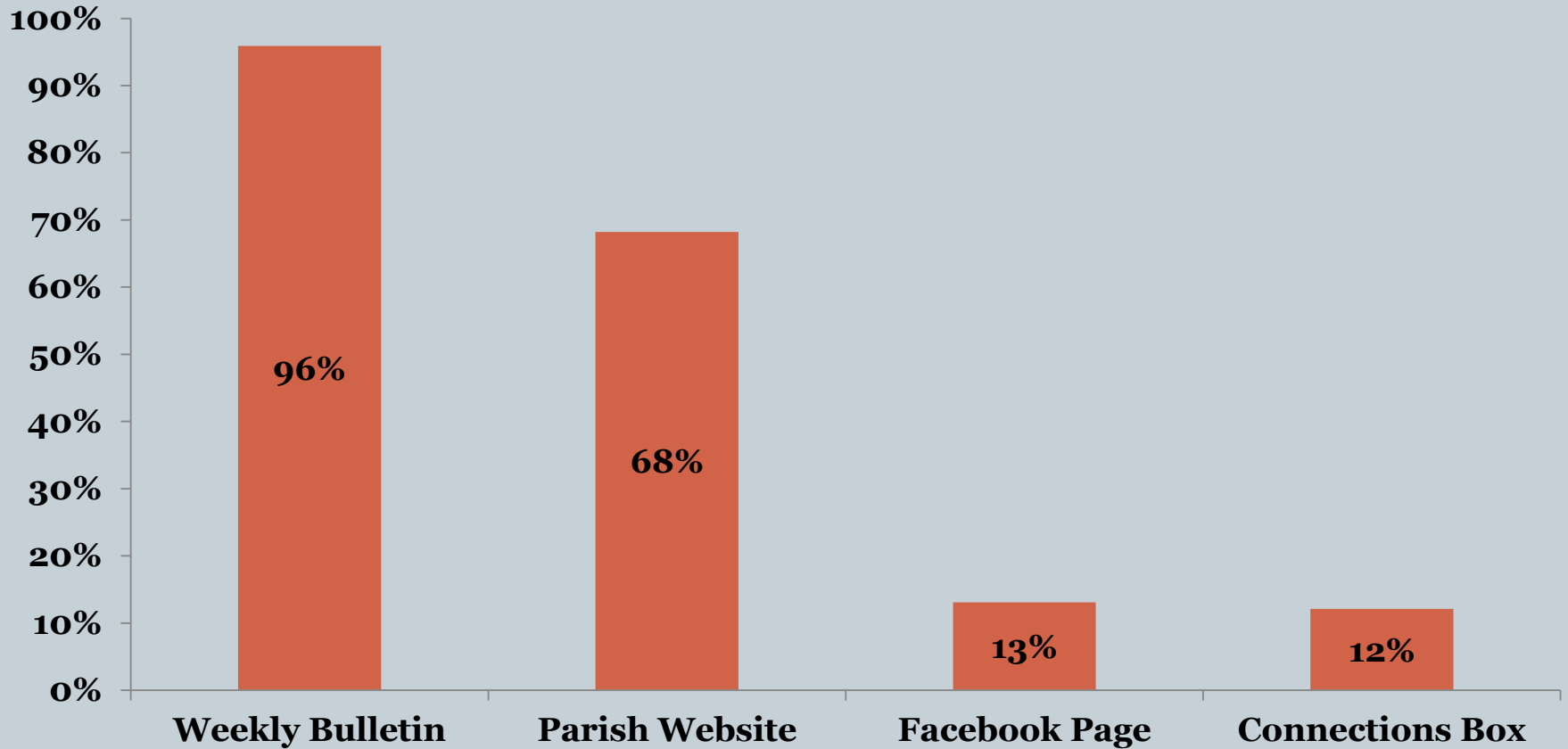
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- 43% of respondents (93 families) said that they have household members who do not regularly attend Mass. Reasons include:
 - Disillusionment after the clergy sexual abuse scandal, disagreement with Vatican position on social issues
 - Schedule conflicts and time starvation
 - Lack of interest in any organized religion
 - Of a different faith or are non-believers
 - Length of mass including challenge of bringing small children
 - Physical limitations
- 69 families indicated that they do not already receive envelopes and would like to receive them.

Read/Use Parish Communications

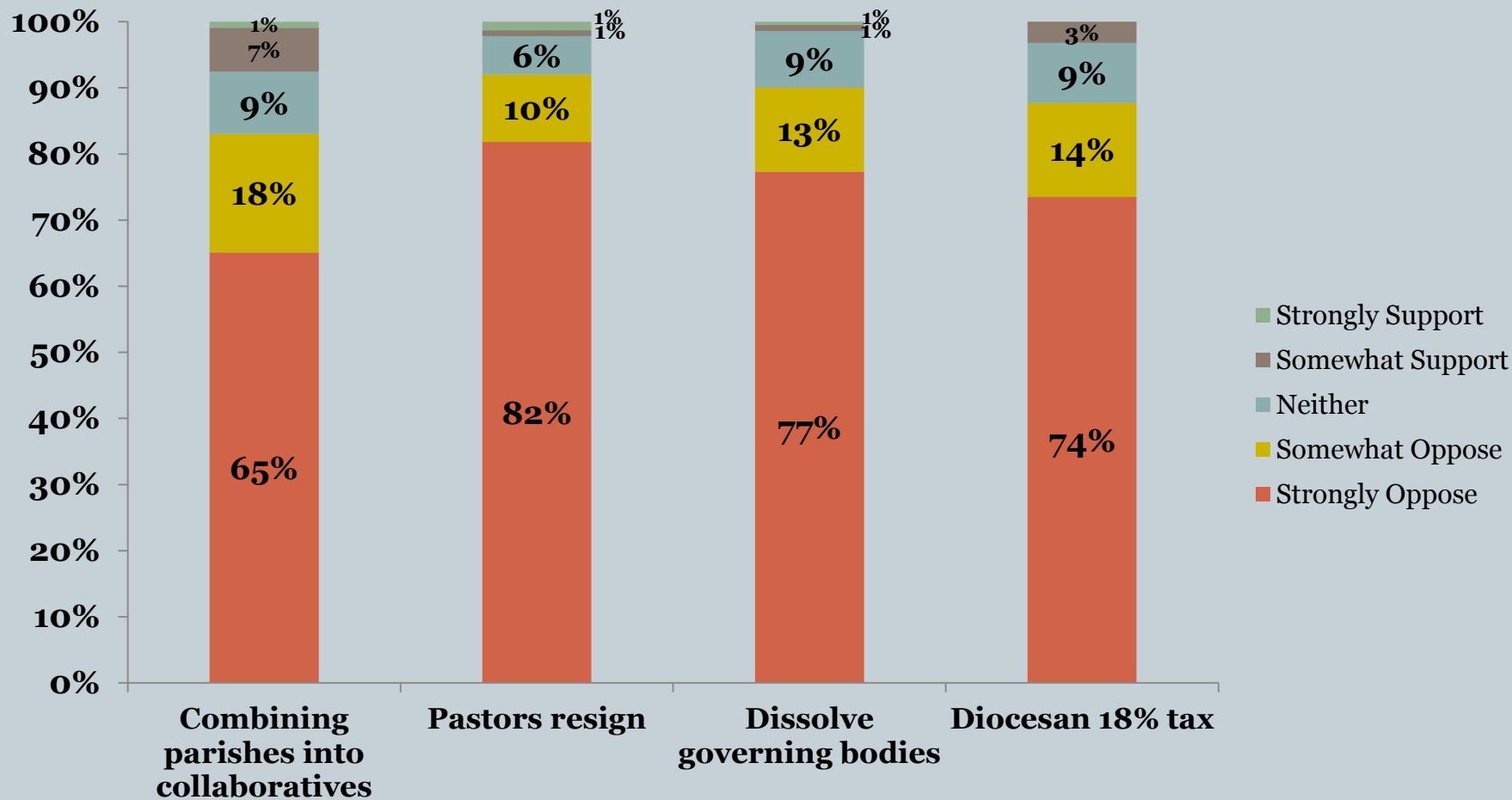
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Percent "Yes"



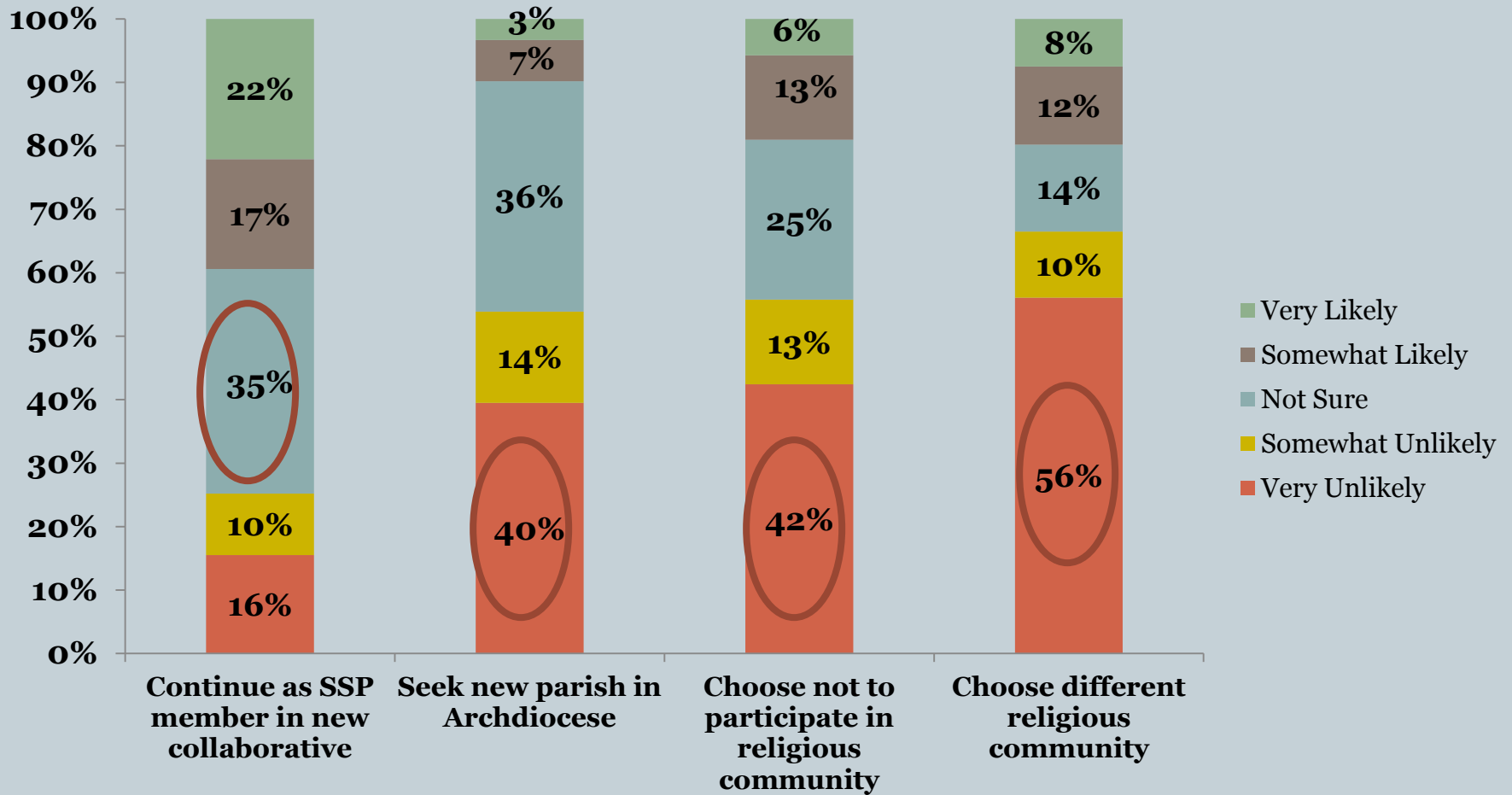
Support for Diocesan Changes

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Likely Actions if Parishes are Combined

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Parish Survey

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RESPONSES TO OPEN- ENDED QUESTIONS

What brought you and/or your family to the parish?

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- **It belongs to us.**
- **Proximity.**
- **Word on the street.**
- **In line with my belief and principals.**

What do you like most about the parish?

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- **What's not to like.**
- **Dialogue, not monologue.**
- **Personalities.**
- **It's warm in here.**

Is there anything you need that the parish doesn't offer?

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Faith-based

- **More active youth group** – i.e. St. Mary's Edge
- Sacrament of Reconciliation and Confession
- Mediation group
- Support group for divorced Catholics
- Mission trips for adults and teens
- Children's choir
- End-of-life/Comfort Care
- After school religious program for kids
- Add evening mass on Ash Wednesday
- Conventional Confessions
- Open-mass with other churches or religious communities

Operational

- Name tags
- Teen drop-in center
- Local day of service
- Funeral Masses at 10AM
- Pasta Dinners/Community Dinners
- Non-religious social times – adults/teens
- Day-trips for seniors
- Faith-based daycare
- St. Susanna's Community Picnic
- Electronic distribution (podcasts) of Adult Formation, Bible Study, Peace and Justice speakers, meeting etc.
- Monthly Seder dinner
- Baby changing table and kids height toilet in bathrooms
- Young families programs
- Widow and widowers groups

Improvements to communications...

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Technology-based

- Desire for interactivity on the website for Baptisms and other frequently used parish services
- Online credit card options for donations
- Weekly blog/podcast
- Use Facebook/Twitter/Pinterest for younger parishioners
- Spiritual readings, reflections, homilies, prayers on the website
- Homilies on Podcast
- Push social media
- Father Steve should have a blog

Ink-based

- Parish bulletin is well-read and understood
- Send random post cards of upcoming events
- Parish Council name tags
- Parish members write and talk about upcoming events, not Father Steve

Parish Survey

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ADDITIONAL THEMES FROM SURVEY COMMENTS

Best Friends: In the Parishioners words

1. “Changes at our previous parish made it hard for us to find in it a ground for our spiritual growth and lives. St. Susanna’s reputation for serious efforts to live and grow in the Gospel challenges and encouraged us to investigate whether this would be a good fit for us. It was like coming up for air.”
2. “I was interested in finding a parish that was in sync with my values and more welcoming than the Needham parishes.’
3. “St. Susanna’s is a place where one can feel good about being a Catholic.”
4. “A friend recommended it.” “Recommended by a friend.” “Recommended by a family member.”
5. “Jesus choose me to believe in him and follow him. He then directed my to Father Steve. The rest is history and love story.”
6. “The very notion of offering a survey says a lot about this parish...There is a living combination of welcoming and acceptance with opportunities to learn and grow, as to what it means to be a Christian.”

Spiritual Transformation: In the Parishioner's Words

1. “I searched for a faith based community that welcomed all and stimulated thought toward defining my Catholicism. Also, I looked for a place that saw themselves as helping each other in this identity search.”
2. “I was a non-practicing Catholic for many years, due to frustration over sexual abuse crisis and cover-up, anti-gay, anti-woman practices. But I missed having a church and wanted to find a place to raise my son in faith. I looked for a Church that was inclusive and encourage people to think for themselves.”
3. “I wanted to get something out of the mass.”
4. “Recently, I had the opportunity to return to my former parish for a funeral. While it was wonderful to see folks and parish staff I hadn’t seen in a while, I realized that ‘home is where the heart is’ and for me, that place is St. Susanna’s.”
5. “Sometimes I wish I felt welcomed at St. Susanna’s as a Roman Catholic.”
6. “Language choice has a profound impact on the social-cultural evolution of our faith journey, in particular, and, more generally, on society at large. We simply perpetuate sexist imagery, which continues to protect/support male-dominate authority structures – that Lord knows, literally, have consistently led to abuse, mis-management and scandal over the centuries. I believe that it will be women who will lead us to a more enlightened way of community, communion, compassion, communication and collaboration...but we need help to lead the way.”
7. “We’re pleased we changed over to St. Susanna’s...It has been a pleasure coming to mass and the kids don’t oppose too much about going every weekend. It helps us start the week and reminds us that we are a family, within ourselves, but also part of a larger picture, a family of parishioners who are all there to worship in different ways.”

Attachment: In the Parishioner's Words

1. “...when the Church has been advertising for “Catholics (to) come home” when they do all the responses they grew up with have changed. This has made people feel more alienated than ever.”
2. “I’m caught between being grateful for my search ending here (St. Susanna’s) and resigned that it may be a temporary respite. The best I can suggest is that we be left to do what we are doing with the leadership we have...the rest of the plan is a desperate attempt by a desperate Church to hang onto a lifeline.’
3. “I enjoy going to mass and hearing Father Steve. My fear is that someday he will not be here and I will no longer enjoy the mass as I now do. Will it be here for my kids?”
4. “This is a very strange parish and we feel that parishioners are receiving mixed messages about the faith.”
5. “The current structure works for most. Most indicate that they will leave the parish and Church in general if we’re forced into a collaborative. The obvious response for St. Susanna’s is to avoid the collaborative.”
6. “I have this feeling that the Parish could be a place where people share knowledge and in so doing, feel more attached to the place and the people. We have so many talented people in the pews who aren’t volunteering...and only feel connected obliquely. What if we had a group with a goal of just sharing information or specialties that therefore build community. Sacred Outreach: Sharing what we know and building the St. Susanna’s community.”
7. “To be honest, sometimes I go to St. Anne’s in Readville, for their shorter masses.”

Purpose & Mission: In the Parishioner's Words

1. “Changes at our previous parish made it hard for us to find in it a ground for our spiritual lives...(what was missing) was a lack of spiritual nourishment...exactly what one expects and needs from a parish.”
2. “Our faith is a faith that extends to humanity in general and not confined to the prescribed faith of Rome.”
3. “Father Steve gives us a sense of purpose and mission. He helps us try and live the Gospel by clarifying what Christ was modeling for us to do, and by separating church mandates and rules from Christ’s teachings”
4. “We’re a neighborhood church...a true participative religious, spiritual community (with the) opportunity to use one’s gifts...welcoming, innovating (with a) loving spirit.”
5. “The sane response to the clergy sexual abuse crisis came from Father Steve and Deacon Larry.”
6. “Father Steve has a contemporary approach as compared to other parishes which have homilies that are very theology based...we tried these other churches and found them to be staid and stuffy.”
7. “If we agree to be paired with another parish, we should ourselves be able to choose a compatible parish and approach and join forces together.”
8. “The parish that we had been a part of started “advising” parishioners on who to vote for in political elections...I can make up my own mind, thank you.”

Community: In the Parishioner's Words

1. “St. Susanna’s is a very active community. Although we ourselves are not very active in any of the programs, we do feel that activity brings the parish closer together.”
2. “The parish is a people parish. It tries to reach out to people.”
3. “We are parents. We like to listen to Father Steve’s sermons. We like how he relates his sermons to everyday life, even down to “borrowing” his father’s car and crashing it. Our kids, not so much. They think his sermons are pretty long.”
4. “...I would describe our own (couple) disposition, both politically and ecclesiastically, as decidedly centrist. We find the right wing Tea Party and the left wing Social Progressives equally distasteful. Both pretend to be motivated by virtuous aspirations. As a couple who admired Dorothy Day and Ronald Reagan, we would be stunned if some less than “politically correct” guest lecturer – possibly someone notably from the far right – was included in one of the annual lecture series. We would not be favorably disposed.”
5. “Once in a while there ought to be some presentation from a perspective that is not already a shared view among ourselves.”

Community: In the Parishioner's Words (continued)

6. “We don’t feel this is a vibrant and welcoming place for young families.”
7. “I’d like to see a bit more objective attitude towards the Archdiocese.”
8. “I’m glad the parish stayed open. I have seen a lot of growth and progress as you re-establish yourself. “
9. “I don’t mind contributing to the diocese as long as the money is well spent, such as the retirement of priests and nuns, or charitable purposes. I don’t want it spent on politics like homophobia, misogyny, and pro-wealthy aggrandizement.”
10. “St. Susanna’s parish is a “voice in the wilderness” to many of the Catholic Churches in the Archdiocese. If it weren’t for St. Susanna’s I would have left the church or attended an Episcopal church.”
11. “We hope you continue to resist being engulfed in the Diocese “craziness.”
12. “This is the first Catholic Church that we have ever experienced a sense of community. We hope and pray that the Archdiocese will not be allowed to destroy what we have.”