

St. Brendan the Navigator Parish

Avalon, NJ

Pre-Campaign Study Report



RUOTOLO
ASSOCIATES
PHILANTHROPIC COUNSEL SINCE 1979

Purpose of the Pre-Campaign Study

- To engage parishioners of St. Brendan the Navigator Parish (SBN), particularly those most active, supportive, and engaged.
- To determine strengths, weaknesses, and overall image of SBN Parish.
- To gauge receptivity of parishioners toward the Statement of Need.
- To determine philanthropic potential for a Capital Campaign.
- To define an approach for fundraising.
- To define the best approach in structuring and communicating a capital campaign.
- To determine likely strategic issues that may impact the implementation of a capital campaign.
- To identify prospective volunteer leadership.

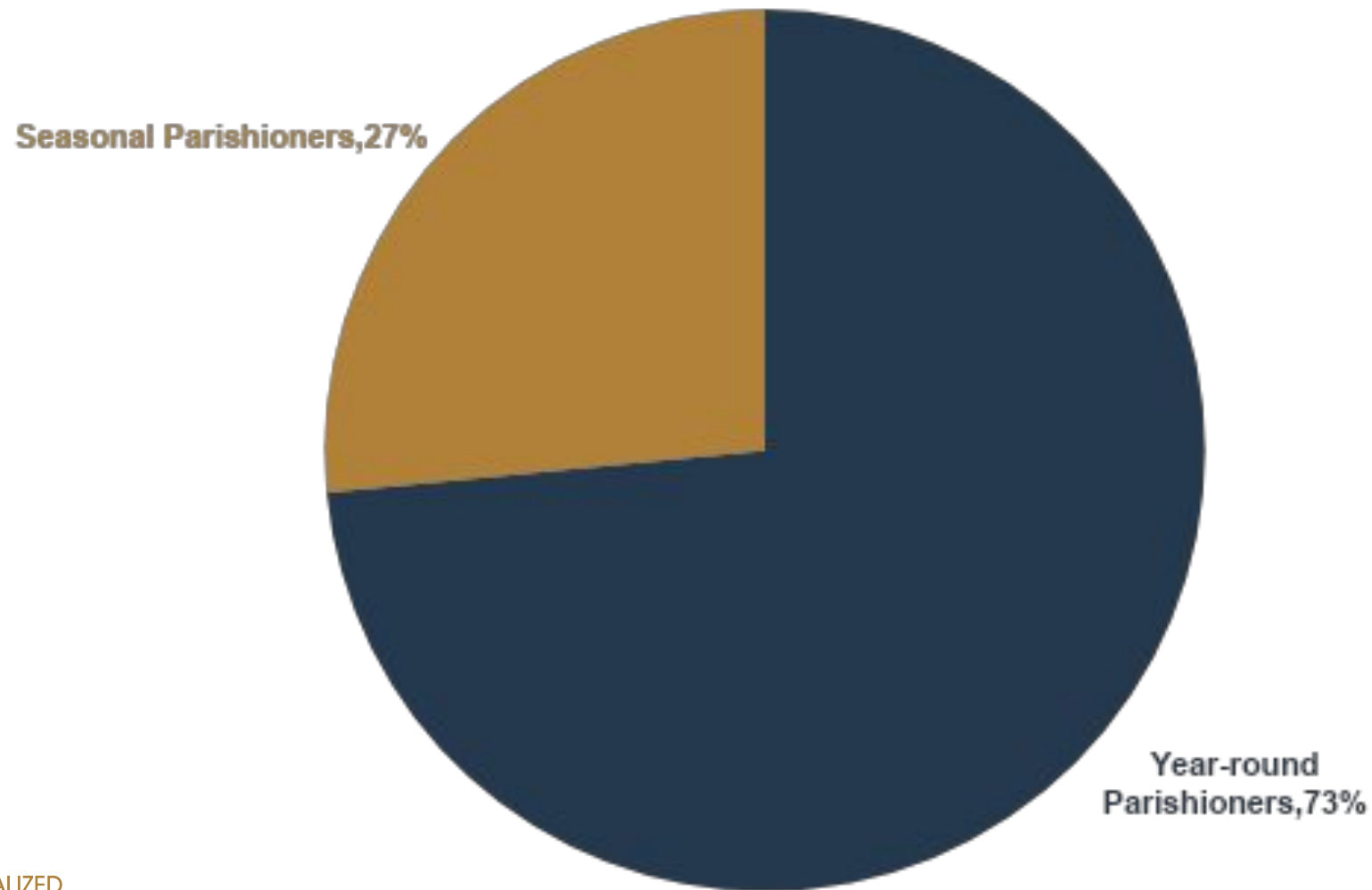
Methodology

- Ruotolo Associates (RA) was retained by (SBN) in late March of 2026 to conduct a Pre-Campaign Study. The study was completed from April to June of 2026.
- 203 families (25% of the 2025 contributing families) received a personal invitation to an interview or focus group.
- A total of **40 families** participated in interviews.
- Three focus groups were held. A total of **23 families** participated, all submitted surveys, 2 anonymously.
- All other parishioners were invited to participate in a survey. The survey was made available both electronically and in-pew. A total of **35 families** completed the survey.
- In total, **98 families** participated in the study.
- According to the database provided, approximately **819 families** contributed toward the regular offertory in 2025.
- Tatiana Ramirez and Adrian Soltys conducted the personal interviews and facilitated the focus groups.

PARTICIPANTS

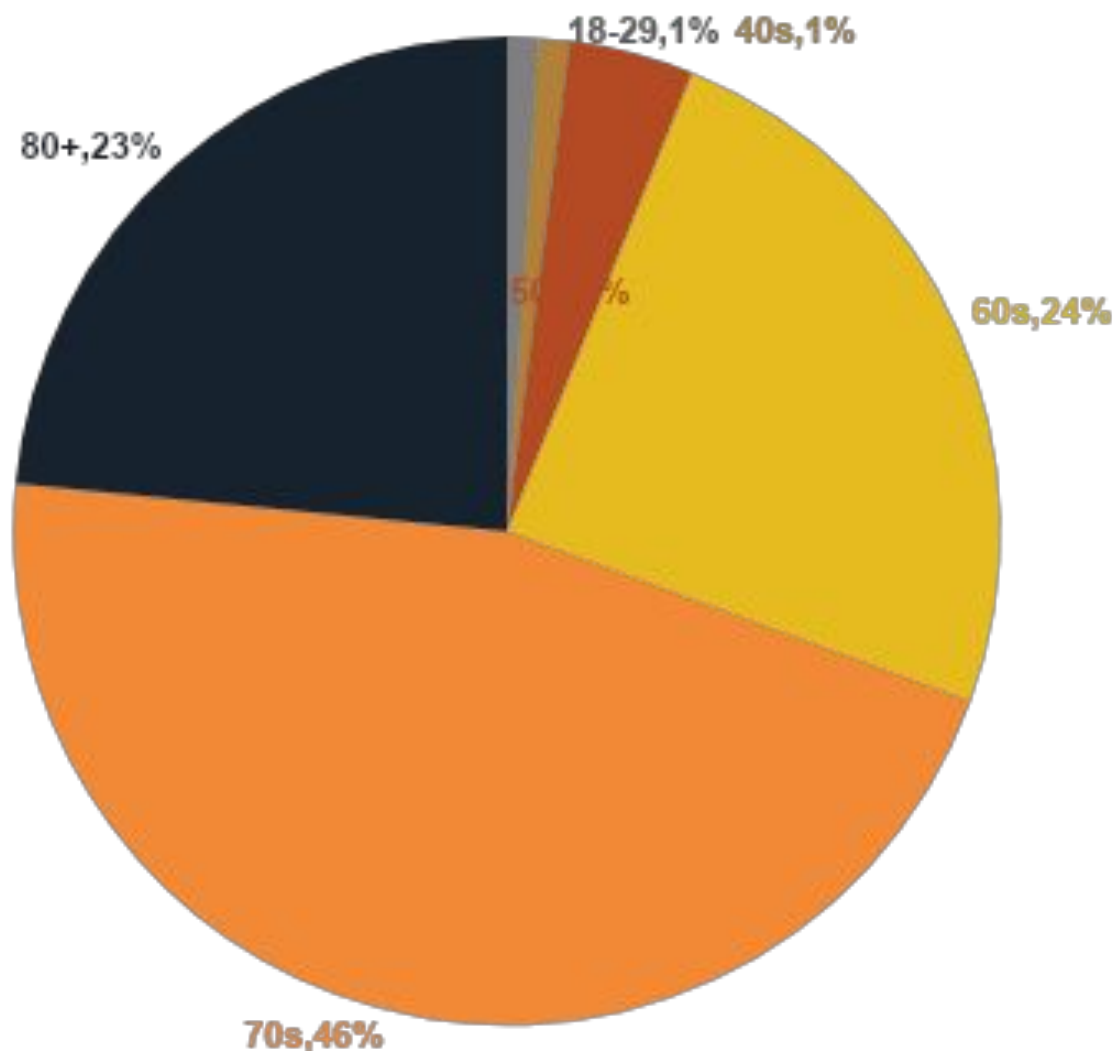
Affinity

Participants were asked to indicate their relationship with the parish.



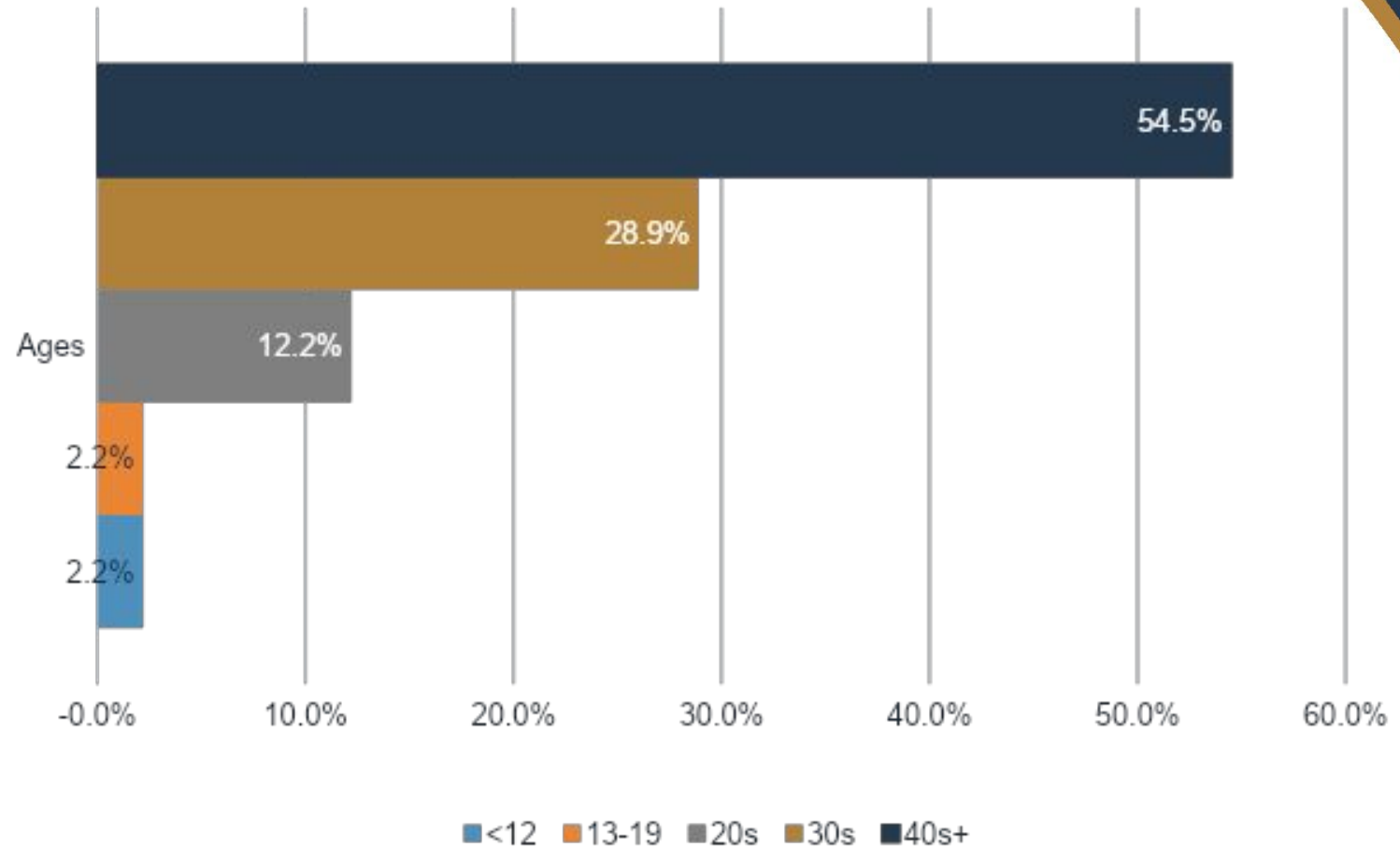
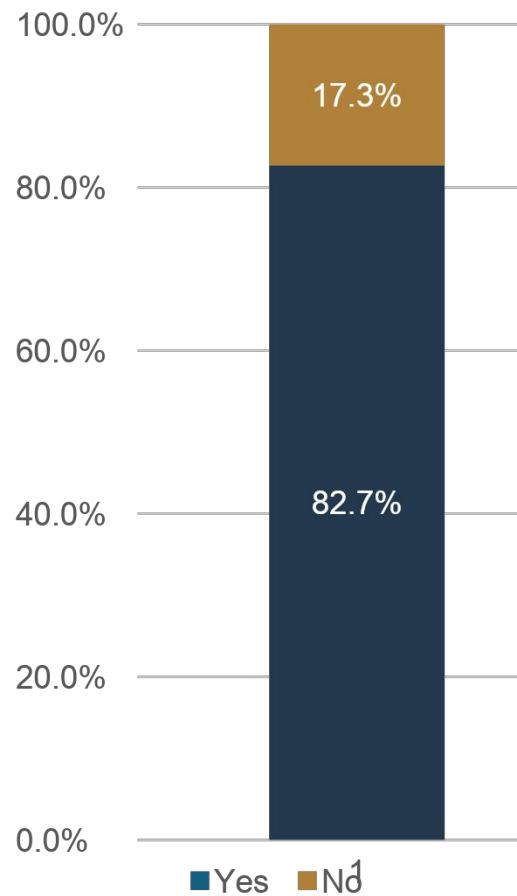
Age Group

Participants were asked to indicate their age group.



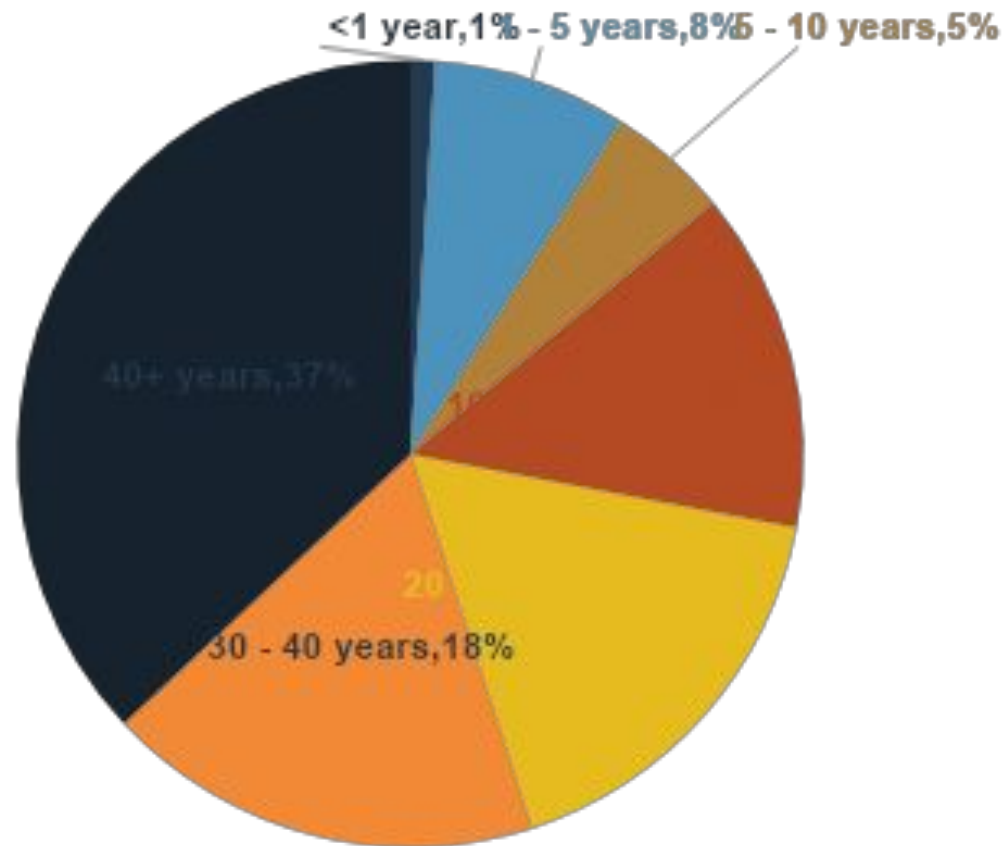
Children

Participants were asked if they have children and if so, their ages.



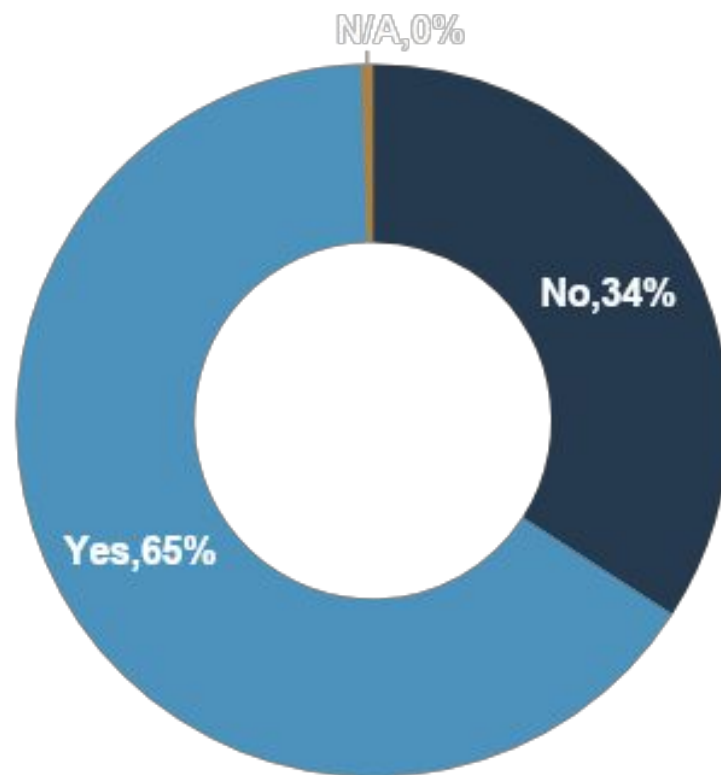
Longevity

Participants were asked how long they have been parishioners at SBN.



Participation

Participants were asked if they participate in any group, ministry, committee, or organization at the parish.



PERCEPTION OF THE PARISH

Perception

Participants were asked to use one word to describe St. Brendan Parish.



Overall, St. Brendan Parish is perceived as a welcoming, vibrant and prayerful community. The dedicated clergy and leadership are essential to parishioners. Participants, whether year-round or seasonal, perceive the parish as a “community” where all are active and welcomed even during the Winter months.

Perception – Strengths

Participants were asked to identify the strengths of St. Brendan.

Strong Sacramental Life

- Liturgies, worship, and engaging homilies

Dedicated Clergy & Pastoral Leadership

- Fr. Gormley and the clergy are the greatest strength and valued lay leadership

Welcoming & Caring Community

- Friendly, welcoming atmosphere

Active Volunteers & Parish Life

- Dedicated core of volunteers keeps the parish thriving

Healthy & Well-Positioned Parish

- Strong Mass attendance and financial stability

Accessibility & Convenience

- Multiple Masses, ADA accessibility, and ample parking

Perception – Challenges

Participants were asked to identify the challenges or difficulties SBN is currently facing.

Seasonal & Demographic Realities

- Aging population and seasonal fluctuations create inconsistent participation

Merger & Parish Unity

- Some residual tension from the parish merger remains

Volunteers & Leadership Capacity

- Core volunteers carry much of the parish workload

Facilities & Stewardship

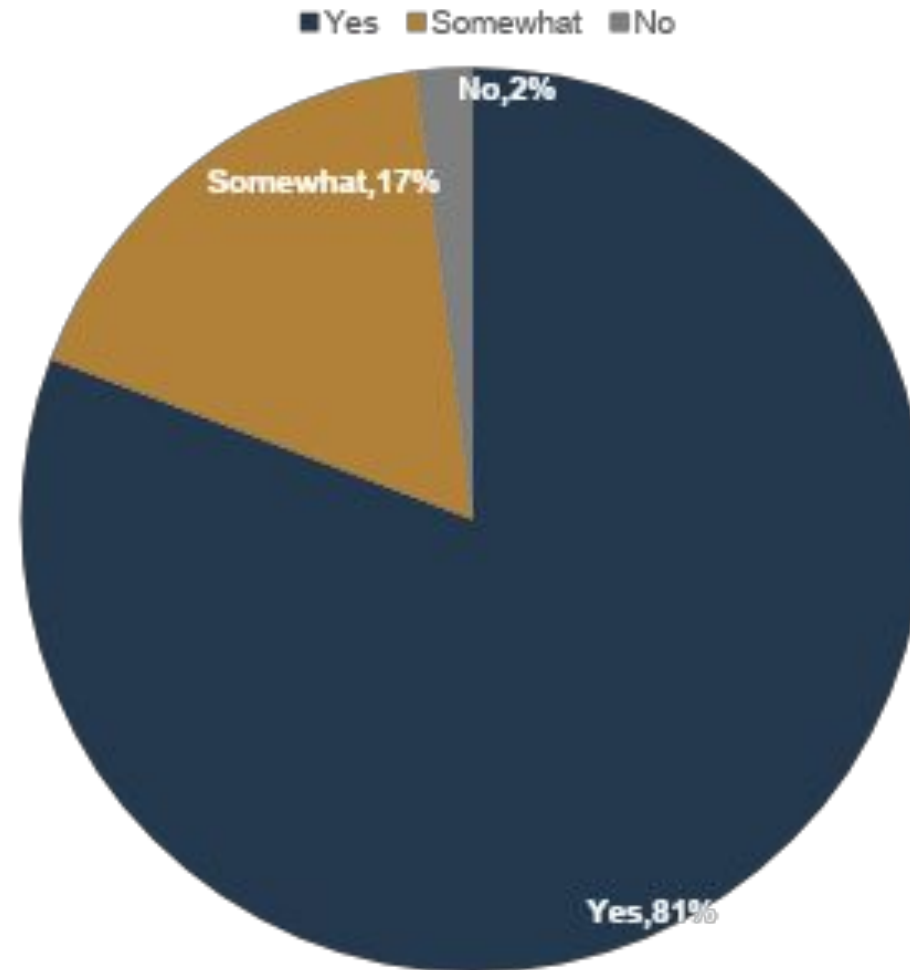
- Aging facilities require ongoing maintenance and modernization

Parish Life and Liturgy

- Need for more ministries for men, youth, children, and young families

Perception – Satisfaction

Participants were asked if they feel their needs (spiritual, ministerial, pastoral, fellowship) are met at SBN.



Satisfaction – Comments

The feedback overwhelmingly reflects a parish community that feels spiritually nourished, pastorally supported, and deeply appreciative of the clergy.

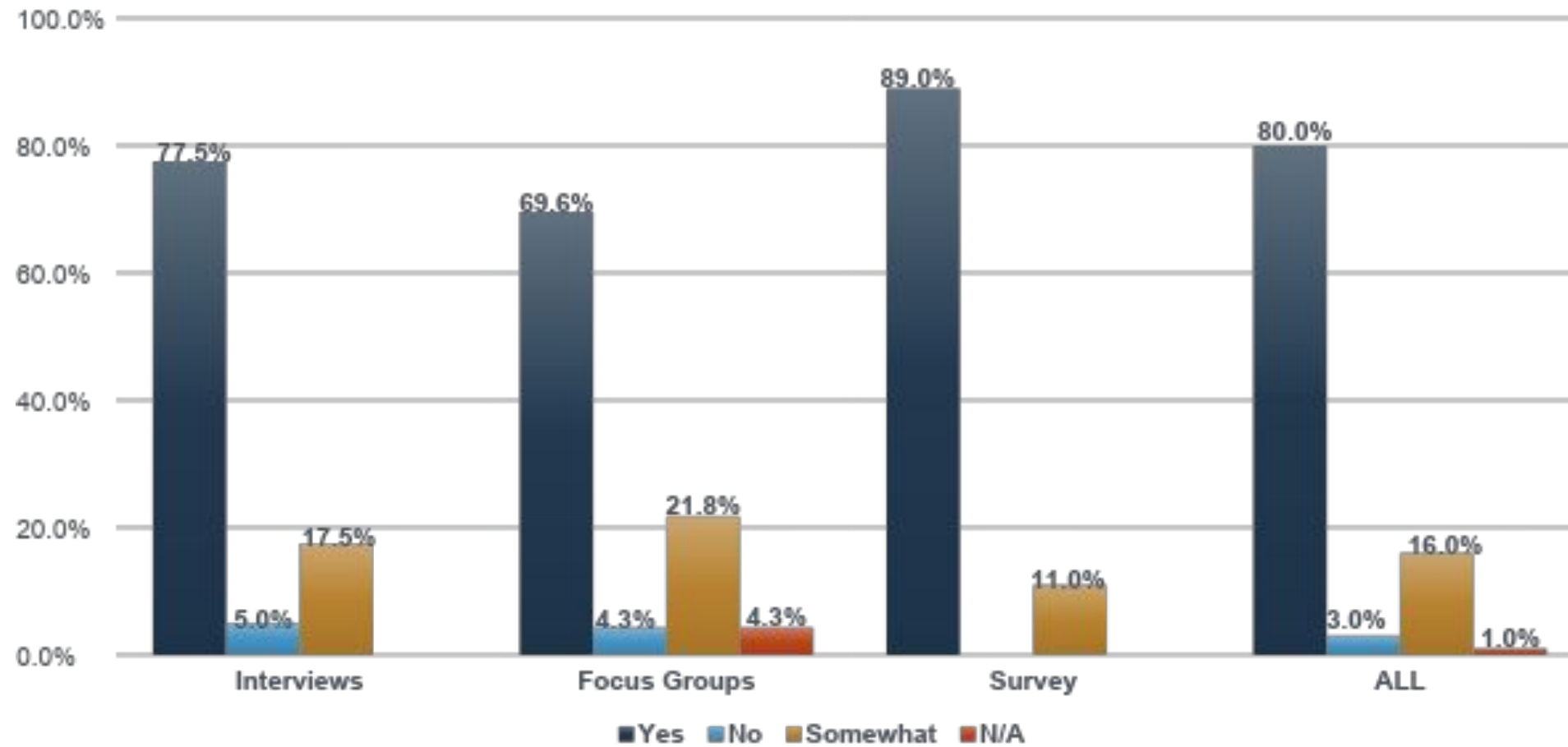
Respondents consistently praised the availability of the priests, meaningful homilies, and the welcoming community, with many indicating that St. Brendan meets or exceeds their spiritual needs.

Suggestions for improvement were generally focused on expanding opportunities rather than addressing significant concerns. **Areas where parishioners would like to see improvements are:**

- Parish Life & Community
- Liturgy & Worship
- Pastoral Care & Administration
- Facilities & Operations

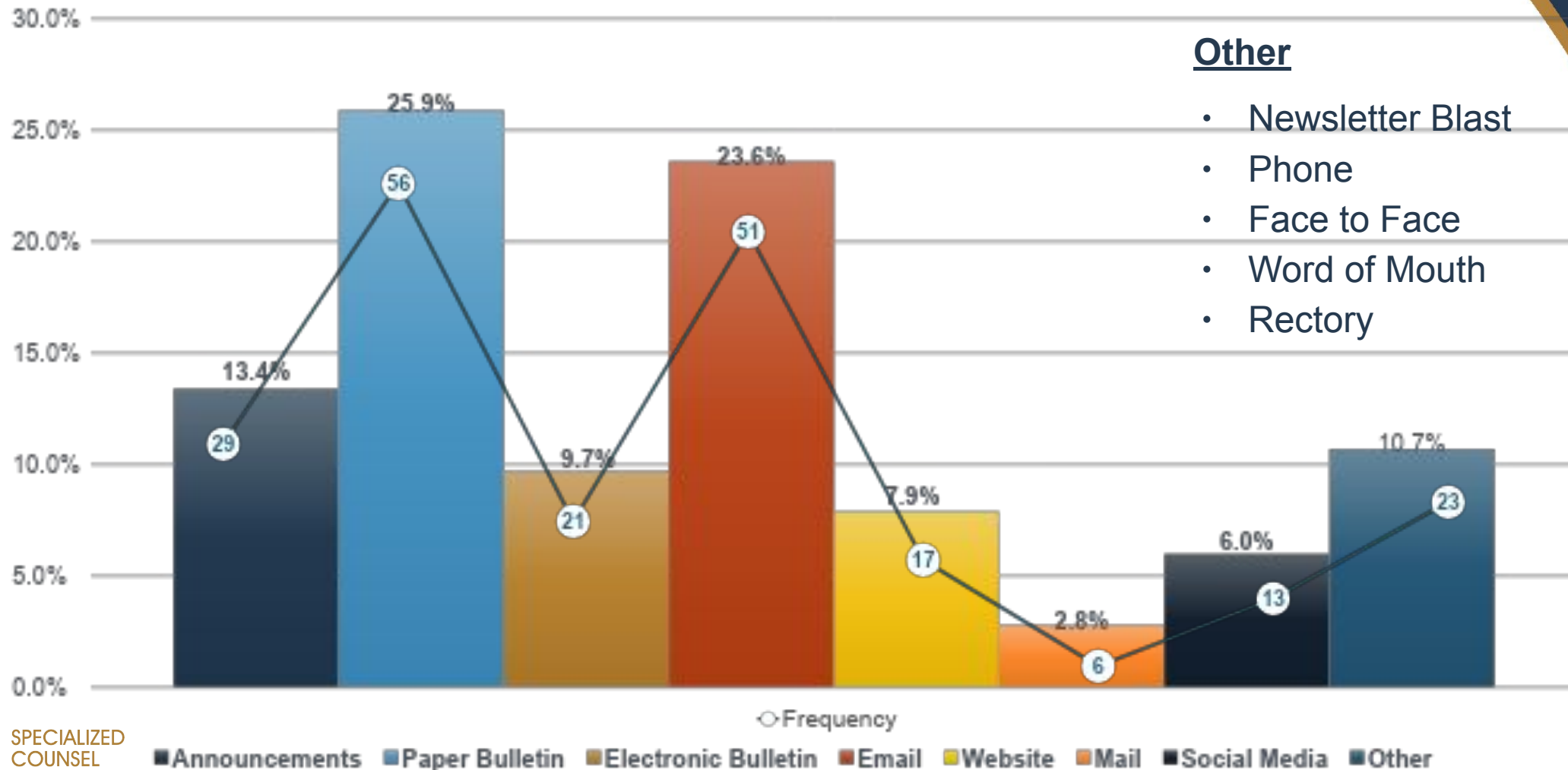
Perception – Communication

Participants were asked if they believe SBN communicates effectively.



Perception – Communication *(continued)*

Participants were also asked to identify their preferred methods of communication with the parish.



Communication – Comments

Strengths

- Weekly email blast
- Bulletin
- Multiple communication channels
- Parish office staff

Areas for Improvement

- Communication with seasonal parishioners
- Improve bulletin
- Increase transparency on decisions and changes
- More details on parish finances and capital projects

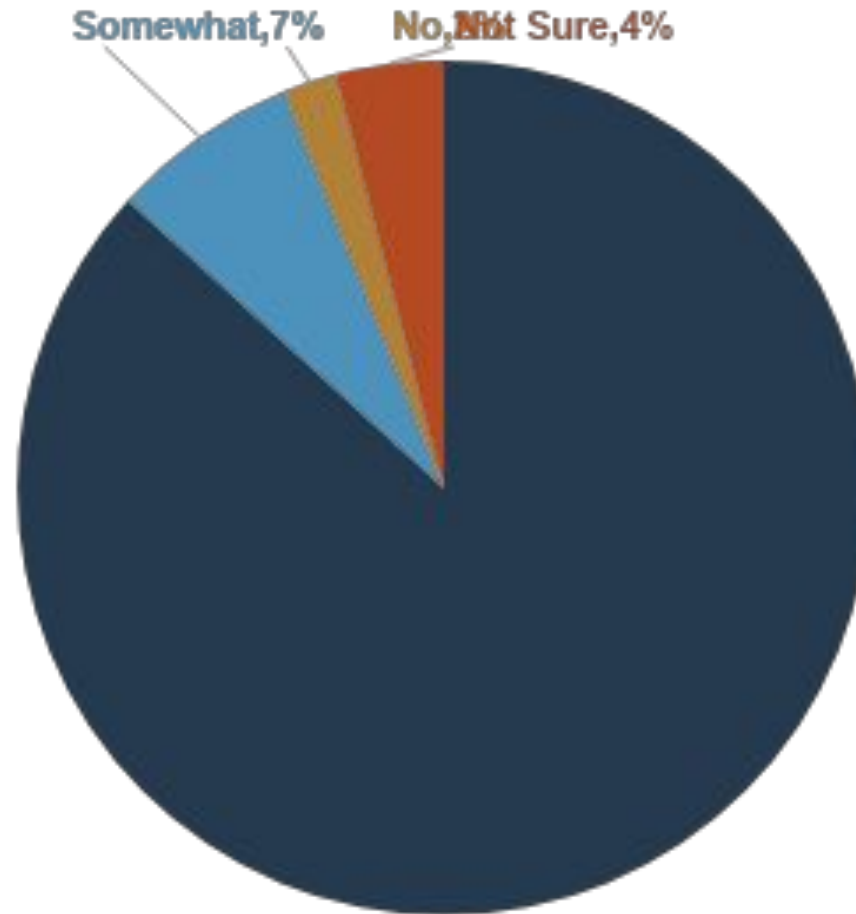
Communication – Comments *(continued)*

Suggested Enhancements

- Expand social media and digital communication efforts
- More announcements from the pulpit
- Funeral and schedule change notifications
- Utilize screens more effectively

Perception – Management

Participants were asked if they believe SBN is currently well managed.



Management – Comments

Most parishioners believe St. Brendan is well-managed overall, with particular praise for **Fr. Gormley**, who is frequently described as approachable, experienced, and an effective leader. Respondents also repeatedly recognized **Maria and Michelle** for their professionalism, responsiveness, and commitment to the parish.

- Parishioners believe the parish is financially responsible, well-organized, and operates smoothly despite the complexity of serving multiple worship sites and a highly seasonal community.

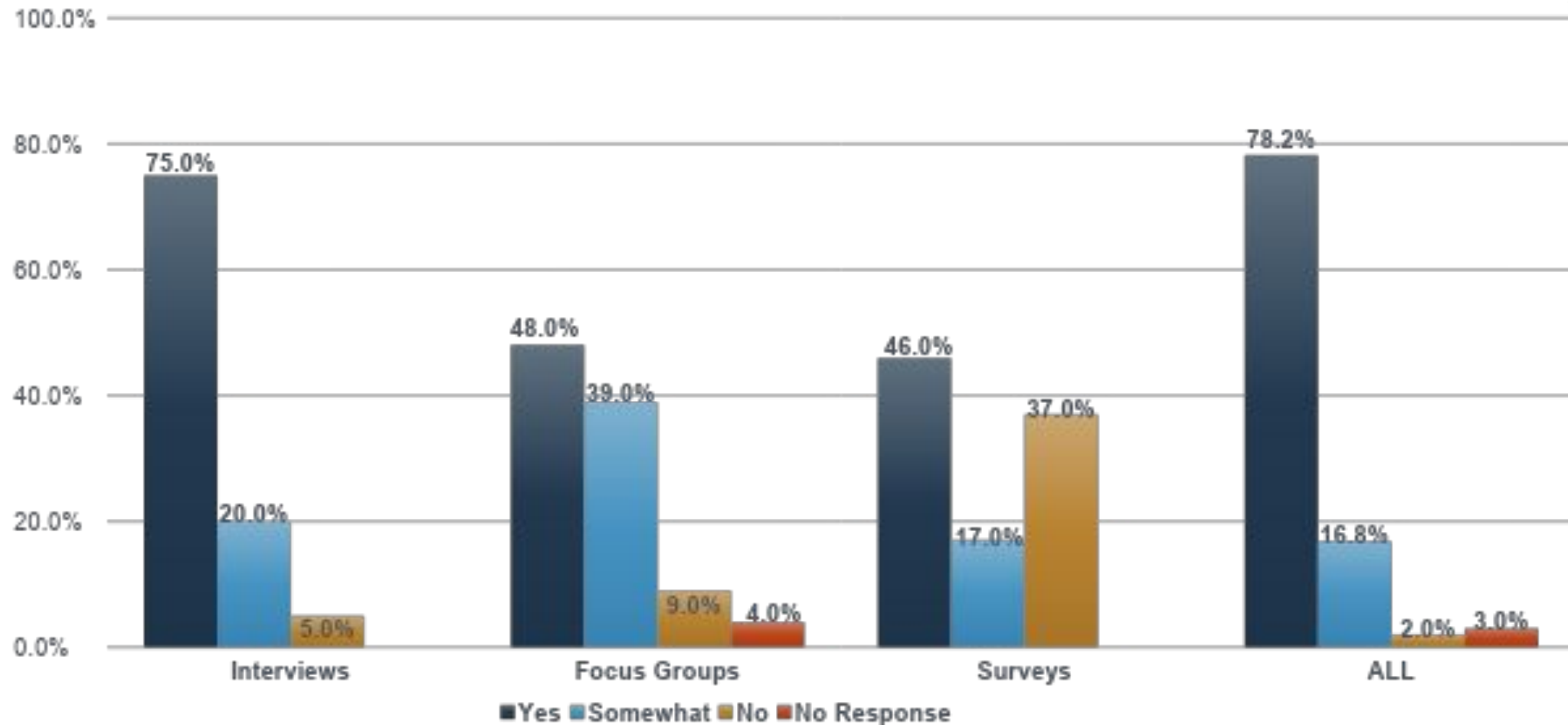
Some areas where participants indicated opportunities for improvement:

- Financial Transparency
- Vision & Strategic Planning
- Communication
- Property Stewardship

STATEMENT OF NEED

Statement of Need – Perceived Need

Participants were asked to determine if they believe the Statement of Need reflects the needs of SBN.



Statement of Need – Support

Participants were asked to rank their support of the Statement of Need on a scale from 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest.

	Not Supportive				↔	Very Supportive					
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	7+
Interviews	0.0%	2.5%	2.5%	0.0%	20.0%	10.0%	12.5%	12.5%	12.5%	27.5%	65.0%
Focus Group	0.0%	5.0%	0.0%	0.0%	10.0%	10.0%	20.0%	35.0%	5.0%	15.0%	75.0%
Survey	11.4%	5.7%	8.6%	14.3%	17.1%	2.9%	2.9%	8.6%	8.6%	19.9%	40.0%
All	4.6%	0.0%	0.5%	1.0%	3.1%	1.5%	7.1%	16.9%	19.9%	45.4%	89.3%

Statement of Need – Prioritization

Participants were asked to individually rank the projects based on priority, 1 being the highest priority for them.

RANKING	ITEM	RANKING	ITEM
1	Roof	11	Cry Room
2	Electrical System	12	Confessionals
3	HVAC	13	Stained-Glass Windows
4	Flooring	14	Organ
5	Pews and Kneelers	15	Reliquaries
6	Restrooms	16	Stations of the Cross
7	Security System		
8	Sanctuary Upgrades		
9	Bell System		
10	Gathering Space		

Statement of Need – Participant Feedback

Overall, parishioners recognize that significant investments in the parish facilities are necessary and generally support addressing deferred maintenance. Respondents consistently emphasized prioritizing essential infrastructure and safety projects while requesting greater clarity regarding project priorities, costs, and the long-term vision for the parish.

Overall Reaction *(consistently mentioned)*

- Broad support for addressing deferred maintenance and facility improvements
- Structural, safety, and infrastructure projects viewed as the highest priorities
- Many support the campaign but believe projects should be phased and prioritized
- Several requested additional information before fully evaluating the proposal
- Concerns expressed about affordability, particularly for parishioners on fixed incomes

Statement of Need – Participant Feedback *(continued)*

Highest Priority Projects

- Roofs & Structural Repairs
- HVAC & Electrical Systems
- Safety & Accessibility
- Deferred Maintenance

Projects with Mixed Feedback

- Sanctuary Renovations
- Pews & Kneeelers
- Organ
- Flooring

Statement of Need – Participant Feedback *(continued)*

Common Themes

- Prioritize essential "needs" before aesthetic improvements
- Clearly distinguish deferred maintenance
- Explain why projects are necessary and the risks of delaying them
- Increase transparency regarding project costs, funding, and long-term planning

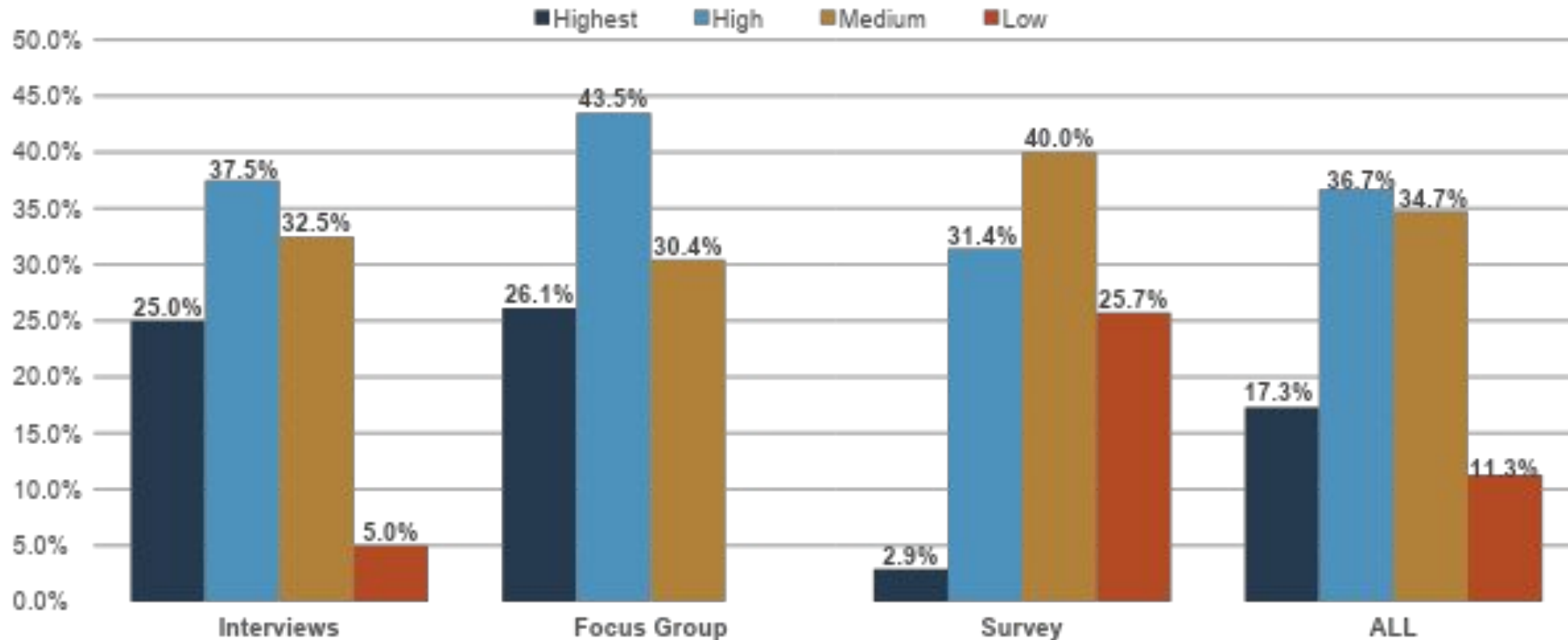
Questions Raised

- Which projects are truly mission-critical and which can wait?
- How were project priorities determined, and what is the timing?
- More information on structural problems
- Fund allocation for locations
- Can some projects be completed through routine maintenance?

LOOKING AHEAD

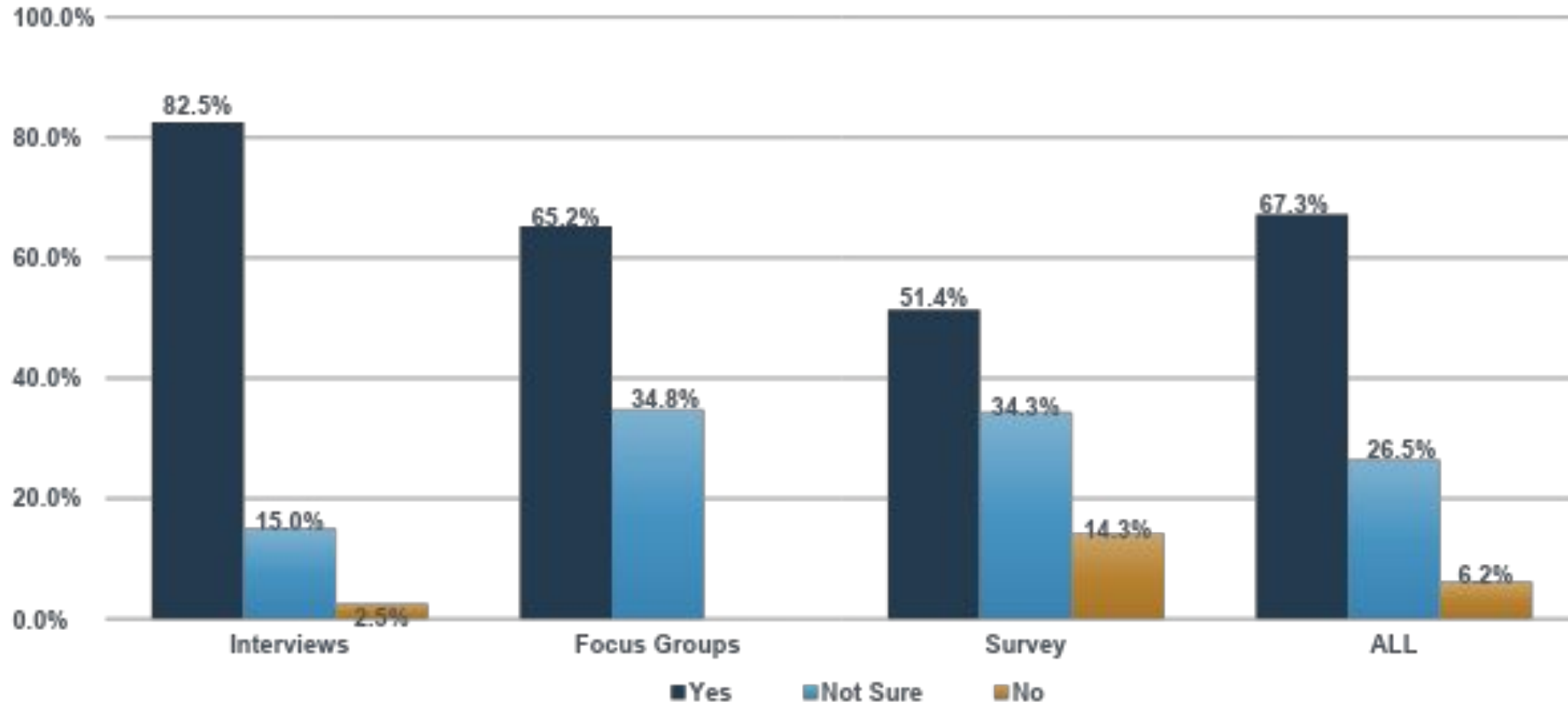
Philanthropic Priorities

Participants were asked to rank SBN among their philanthropic priorities (Highest, High, Medium, Low). Some families did not provide an answer. **Overall, 54% ranked it “Highest” or “High”.**



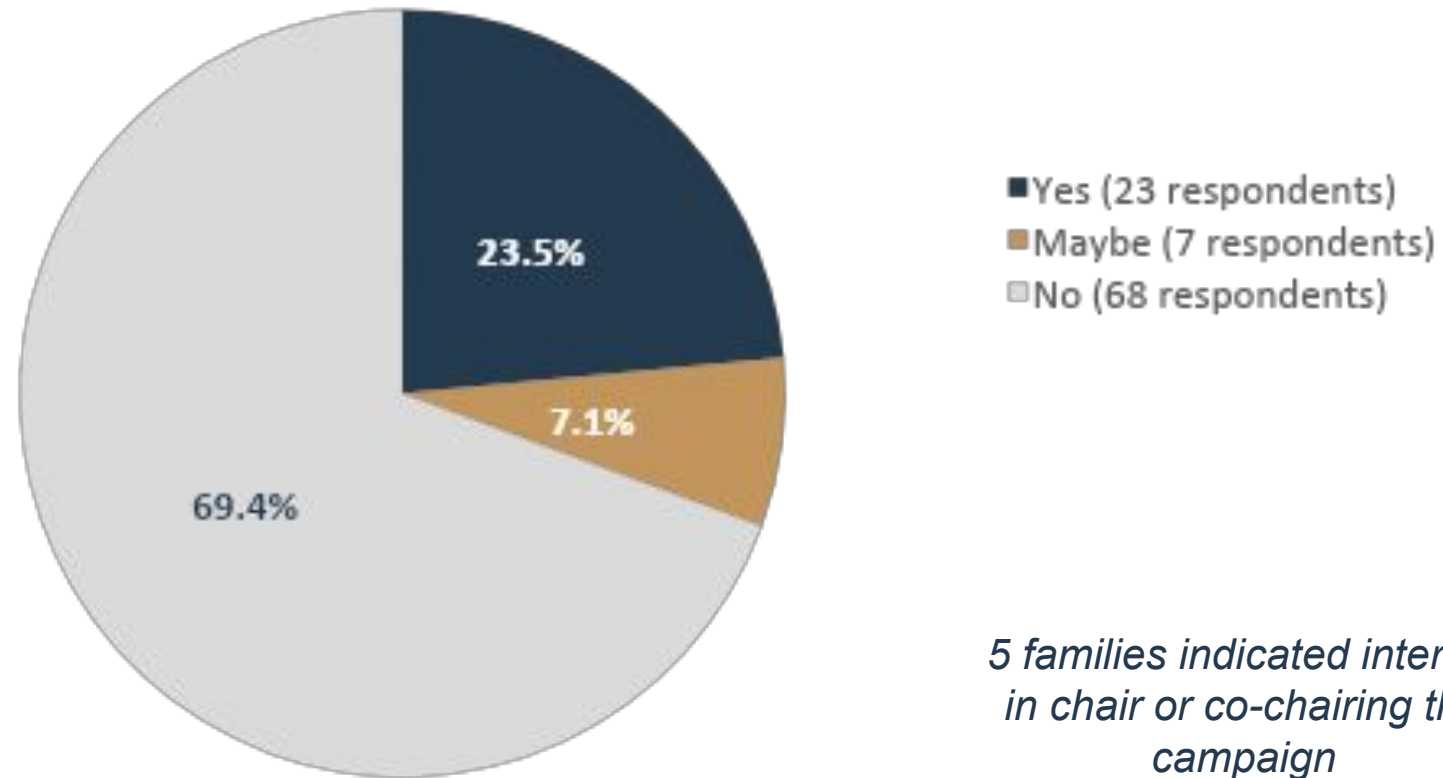
Financial Support – Willingness

Participants were asked if they would be willing to support a capital campaign for this project, in addition to their regular offertory and extraordinary gifts.



Volunteer Potential

Participants were asked if they would consider volunteering to support the Parish Leadership with a Capital Campaign.



5 families indicated interest in chair or co-chairing the campaign

APPENDIX

Study Materials – Statement of Need

After prayer and reflection, Fr. Gormley and the lay leadership of the parish have identified several projects to restore our facilities. While physical buildings do not make a parish, they are essential to fulfilling the mission entrusted to us by Jesus Christ through worship, prayer, religious education, and fellowship.

To better serve our parishioners and visitors, we are looking to address some repairs and upgrades across our properties. The following is a description of the proposed projects, in alphabetical order.

- Bell System:** Update the current Bell System (Carillon) at St. Paul's and Maris Stella, which are outdated.
- Confessionals:** Renovate to increase transparency and soundproofing.
- Cry Room:** upgrade to make it function at St. Paul.
- Electric System:** Upgrade the electric system to make it more efficient, convenient, and cost-effective at both St. Paul and Maris Stella.
- Flooring:**
 - St. Paul: refurbish and polish.
 - Maris Stella: remove the carpeting and replace with ceramic tile.
 - Address the asbestos at Tierney Hall.
- Gathering Space:** it needs to be upgraded at Maris Stella.
- HVAC:**
 - The air conditioning and heating systems at both St. Paul and Maris Stella need to be replaced.
 - Upgrade it at Tierney Hall.
- Organ:**
 - Relocate the organ to the choir loft at St. Paul.
 - Update the organ at Sacred Heart.

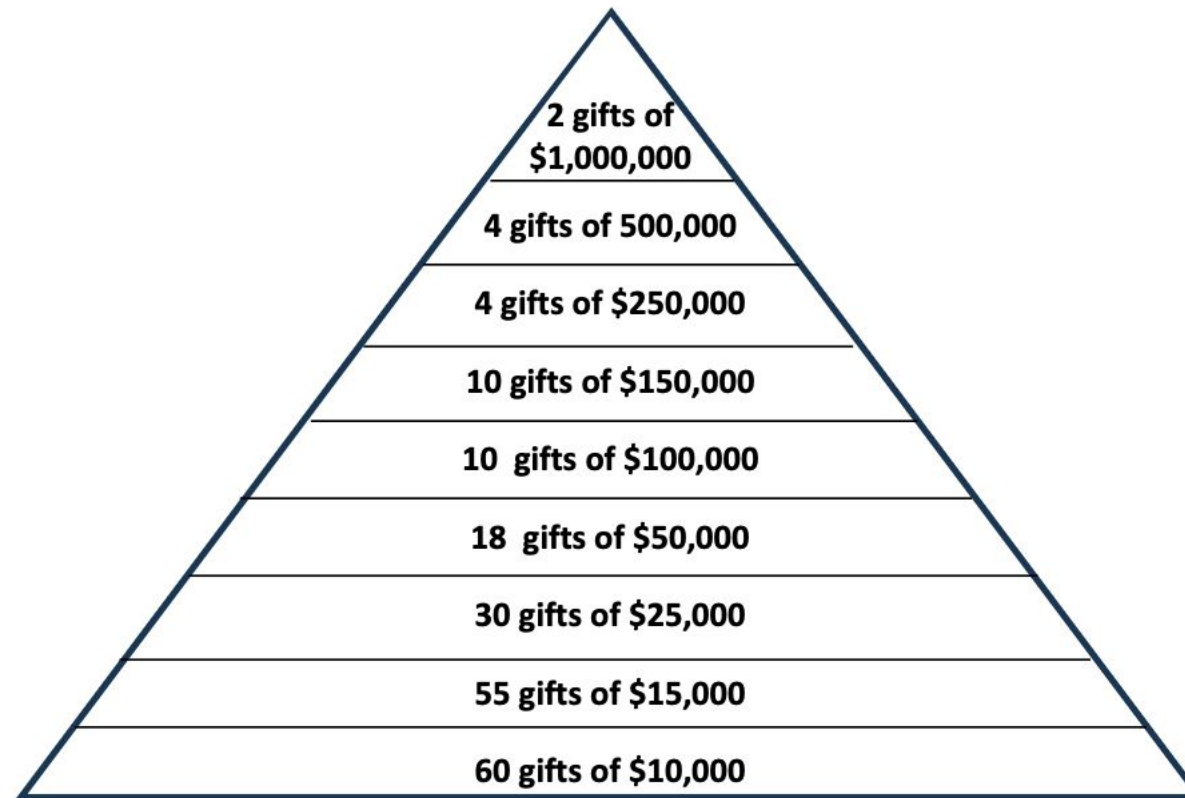
- Pews & Kneelers:**
 - All pews and kneelers at St. Paul need to be refurbished.
 - All pews at Maris Stella need to be replaced.
- Reliquaries:** Establish a designated space at both St. Paul and Maris Stella, where we can preserve relics for veneration (the parish already has the relics).
- Restrooms:** Need to be fully upgraded at Maris Stella and Sacred Heart.
- Roof:** The roof at Maris Stella needs to be replaced, as it is close to 40 years old.
- Sanctuary Upgrades:**
 - Restore the Tabernacle, Altar, and Ambo, and the Monstrance at St. Paul to match the reredos.
 - Install a new altar, Ambo, Tabernacle, and sanctuary furniture at Maris Stella.
 - Update the sanctuary at Sacred Heart.
- Security System:** Install a new security system with cameras and an electronic lock system at St. Paul, Maris Stella, and Sacred Heart.
- Stained-Glass Windows:**
 - Restore all the stained-glass windows at St. Paul.
 - Install a new stained-glass window behind the altar at Maris Stella.
- Stations of the Cross:** replace these at Maris Stella.

Estimated Overall Costs: \$8 – 10 Million

Now, more than ever, as Catholics, we are charged with looking toward the future. Fr. Gormley and the parish leadership look forward to our parishioners' responses in this pre-campaign study so that they can continue to build a plan that meets the needs of St. Brendan the Navigator's community.

Study Materials – Gift Pyramid

Campaign Gift Pyramid – Need: \$10 Million



- Additional Gifts below \$10,000

Study Materials – Pledge Chart

3 YEAR PLEDGE CHART					
Total Pledge	10 % Down	Annually (3)	Semi-Annually (6)	Quarterly (12)	Monthly (36)
\$250,000	\$25,000	\$75,000	\$37,500	\$18,750	\$6,250
\$150,000	\$15,000	\$45,000	\$22,500	\$11,250	\$3,750
\$100,000	\$10,000	\$30,000	\$15,000	\$7,500	\$2,500
\$75,000	\$7,500	\$22,500	\$11,250	\$5,625	\$1,875
\$60,000	\$6,000	\$18,000	\$9,000	\$4,500	\$1,500
\$50,000	\$5,000	\$15,000	\$7,500	\$3,750	\$1,250
\$25,000	\$2,500	\$7,500	\$3,750	\$1,875	\$625
\$15,000	\$1,500	\$4,500	\$2,250	\$1,125	\$375
\$10,000	\$1,000	\$3,000	\$1,500	\$750	\$250
\$7,500	\$750	\$2,250	\$1,125	\$563	\$188
\$5,000	\$500	\$1,500	\$750	\$375	\$125
\$3,000	\$300	\$900	\$450	\$225	\$75
\$1,000	\$100	\$300	\$150	\$75	\$25

Thank you!

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