

St. Stephen's Parish Survey — Summary of Results

"Your Voice Matters" · May 2026

Prepared for the Horizons Team · 38 responses (29 online, 9 paper)

At a glance

Thirty-eight parishioners responded — remarkably consistent with the 37 received in December 2025. Three findings stand out, and one caution frames all of them.

- **Liturgy and Worship is the clear center of gravity.** It leads every way of scoring the ranking question — by a wide margin.
- **The building is consistently last.** It ranks sixth of six here, echoing December 2025, where it scored lowest of the scaled questions and drew almost no mention in open answers.
- **Finances are the question people most want answered.** When invited to ask anything, more respondents asked about money — the deficit, the budget, regular updates — than anything else.
- **Caution: this is the committed core.** Only 2 of 38 respondents are under 50. These results reflect engaged, mostly older, mostly weekly members — not the wider community or the disengaged.

A note on reading what follows: several results below are best treated as *questions to investigate, not directives to act on*. Where the data points somewhere surprising, that is a prompt for a conversation, not a conclusion.

Who responded

The respondent profile is, if anything, older than December 2025. Roughly 89% are over 50 and 55% are over 70; 63% attend weekly and 84% at least twice a month.

	Age	Attendance	Confidence
Largest group	Over 70 — 21 (55%)	Weekly — 24 (63%)	Confident+ — 23 (61%)
Next	51–70 — 13 (34%)	2–3×/month — 8 (21%)	Unsure — 9 (24%)
Smallest	Under 50 — 2 (5%)	Less often — 2 (5%)	Less/Not — 6 (16%)

This matters for interpretation: the survey captured the people most invested in the parish's future. Younger adults and less-frequent attenders are almost absent, so the results say little about why those voices are missing.

What is most meaningful (Q1)

Respondents ranked six aspects of parish life from most meaningful (1) to least (6). The headline number is mean Borda points — rank 1 scores 6 down to rank 6 scoring 1, averaged across the 34 complete rankings. First-choice and top-3 columns use all usable rankings (36) and show where passion versus breadth lives.

Aspect	Mean Borda	First-choice	Top-3	Mean rank
Liturgy & Worship	5.18	21	88%	1.82
Music	3.65	7	50%	3.35
Outreach Ministries	3.65	3	56%	3.35
Relationships & Community	3.32	3	49%	3.68
Formation & Learning	2.79	1	29%	4.21
Building as Sacred Space	2.41	1	31%	4.59

Liturgy and Worship dominates. It is the first choice of roughly six in ten and sits in the top three of nearly nine in ten. Nothing else is close.

Music and Outreach tie on the headline score but have opposite shapes. Music has passionate champions — seven first-choice votes, the most after Liturgy — but a narrower base. Outreach is rarely anyone’s single favorite (three first-choice) yet reaches the top three most often after Liturgy (56%). One is loved intensely by some; the other is valued broadly by many. The tie hides that difference.

Relationships & Community ranks fourth — and that deserves a second look. In December 2025, community was the runaway answer to “what do you value most” (91%). Here, forced to rank it against worship, music, and outreach, respondents place it fourth. This is most likely an instrument effect rather than a real shift: community may be the assumed ground people stand on, so when asked what is most *meaningful*, the distinctive worship life rises above the relational fabric that is simply taken for granted. The open answers reinforce this — community language saturates Q3. Worth probing, not acting on.

Confidence (Q2)

A majority express confidence — 61% confident or very confident — but the picture underneath the headline is uneven.

- **The 51–70 cohort is the most polarized.** Of 13, nine are confident and four are less or not confident — with no one choosing “Unsure.” This group either feels confident or does not, and says so plainly.
- **The over-70 cohort hedges.** Of 21, twelve are confident, but seven chose “Unsure” and two are not confident. The largest group carries the most ambivalence.
- **Weekly attenders are the most confident** (17 of 24 positive); confidence thins among those who attend less often.

What would be lost (Q3)

Thirty-four of 38 answered. The themes, in rough order of frequency:

- **St. Stephen’s Table and the feeding ministry** — named more than anything else; for many respondents it is the first thing that would be missed, and several note it serves people no other downtown space does.
- **A welcoming, inclusive, safe space** — open to all regardless of identity, with the downtown banners and visible witness (racial justice, LGBTQIA+ affirmation, climate) cited as a public statement Pittsfield would lose.

- **Community and relationships** — the relational fabric, a spiritual home, a place of belonging.
- **The building and its downtown location** — valued here mainly as visible presence and gathering space rather than as sacred architecture.

A quieter thread worth noting: **several respondents paired deep attachment with genuine uncertainty about whether the loss would be widely noticed** — “I’m not sure most people would notice,” alongside “it would be deeply missed.” Those two feelings coexist in the same answers. That is texture to sit with, not a contradiction to resolve.

Questions people have (Q4)

Twenty of 38 asked a question. One theme dominates:

- **Finances, by a wide margin.** “Show me the finances,” more frequent and higher-profile financial updates, how leadership is addressing the deficit, whether the budget can be balanced, and whether money is what is driving these questions in the first place.
- **Outreach expansion** — overnight warming space, public restrooms, after-school programs, community gathering space.
- **Formation gaps** — the absence of confirmation and teen faith formation drew specific concern.
- **Growth and the sabbatical** — how to attract new members, and what the parish will do during the rector’s sabbatical.

The financial questions are notable for their form: they ask to *see the numbers*, not to be told what to do. This is an information request preceding any decision — and it lines up exactly with December 2025, where understanding of parish finances scored a middling 3.7 and was flagged as “room to grow.” The latent gap has become an explicit ask.

How this compares to December 2025

Theme	December 2025	May 2026
The building	Lowest scaled rating (3.3/5); 1 open-ended mention	Last of six in the ranking; 3% first-choice
St. Stephen’s Table	Most-cited “doing well” (32%)	Ties 2nd; tops Q3 “what would be lost”
Community	Paramount — 91% “value most”	4th in forced ranking; saturates Q3 prose
Finances	Understanding 3.7 — “room to grow”	The dominant open-ended question
Who answered	37 total; older, mostly-weekly core	38 total; 89% over 50, 63% weekly

The two surveys agree where it counts. The building is consistently de-centered; the Table is consistently the mission anchor; financial transparency is consistently the unmet need. The only apparent divergence — community — is most likely a difference in how the question was asked, not a change of heart.