

# St. Martin's Digital Congregational Conversation



**May 2020**

# Methodology & Summary

## Methodology

- Input gathered from **parishioners via an online survey**
- The survey was distributed to ~100 parishioners with **40 responses received**
- **Five open-ended questions** were asked as noted below
  1. How are you feeling about the present status of St. Martin's?
  2. What experiences at St. Martin's help you most to grow in following Christ?
  3. Over the next five years how would you like St. Martin's to change?
  4. How might the next priest help lead St. Martin's forward?
  5. Any other comments?
- For each question, members were asked to provide **up to five responses, limited to three to five words each**
- The results for each question are summarized on the following pages
  - On each page a Word Cloud with counts of key words is shown
  - Example comments and a summary of the key sentiments is also provided

## Summary

- **Current Status:** Parishioners **are generally hopeful for the future**, enthusiastic about Father Tim's interim ministry and the St. Martin's community, although there were **some concerns raised** relative to low attendance, the need for growth and better communication
- **Growth in Christ:** Members noted a **number of areas helping them grow in Christ** including the Sunday services and worship, the various Outreach programs, the Adult Forum, Father Tim's sermons, fellowship events, prayer/readings and participation in groups such as Bible study
- **Areas of Change:** Parishioners noted several **key areas of change in the future**, including more new and young families, more outreach activities, more community involvement, more participation across the congregation and additional fellowship and social events
- **The Next Priest:** Members **would like a new Priest** who is engaging, is a strong preacher, can bring new ideas and families, can motivate involvement, is inclusive, can connect the Church to the broader community and the Diocese and is technologically savvy
- **Other Sentiments:** Members expressed a number of other sentiments about the Church that were generally very positive, like the one below
  - *"St. Martin's and its people have been a constant source of love, acceptance and spiritual light in my life for 30 plus years. I trust that God will send us a new rector whose gifts will not only preserve that but enable St. Martin's to share in greater numbers what we have."*

# Q1: How are you feeling about the present status of St. Martin's?

- There was a range of sentiments expressed on this question, **both positive and of concern**
- Positive emotions** included hope for the future, the interim service provided by Father Tim, being thankful for the Church, being encouraged and the strong community
- There were also underlying sentiments of **concern expressed**, including anxiety, worries related to low attendance, the need for growth of the congregation and better communication

## Q1 Key Words

Anxious (3) attendance (5) Blessed (2) Cares (3) challenges (2) church (5) community (8)  
 Concerned (4) congregation (4) connected (2) considering (4) current (2) education (2) Encouraged (4) exist (2) Faith (2)  
 families (5) Father (3) feel (2) Fr (5) future (7) grateful (3) grow (4) Happy (2) help (2)  
 Hopeful (12) interim (2) love (3) meet (2) members (3) ministry (2) miss (4) parish (3) parishioners (3)  
 participation (4) people (6) permanent (2) pleased (2) pretty (2) priest (4) school (3) services (5) strong (4)  
 Sunday (4) Support (2) thankful (4) Tim (7) times (3) worried (5) worship (2)

## Examples of Positive Comments

- "I love it. The parish people seem to like each other..."
- "St. Martin's is a font of God's love"
- "Hopeful for the future"
- "I am so grateful for Father Tim's ministry"
- "Father Tim is the perfect interim"

## Examples of Concern Comments

- "Anxious about low membership"
- "Need to grow the congregation"
- "Worried about lowering attendance"
- "Sorry that we can't meet in reality"
- "Need to communicate what groups exists within the Church community"

# Q2: What experiences at St. Martin's help you most to grow in following Christ?

- There were a **number of areas mentioned as helping parishioners to grow in Christ** including the Sunday services and worship, the various Outreach programs, the Adult Forum, Father Tim's sermons, fellowship events, prayer/readings and participation in groups such as Bible study

## Q2 Key Words



## Example Comments

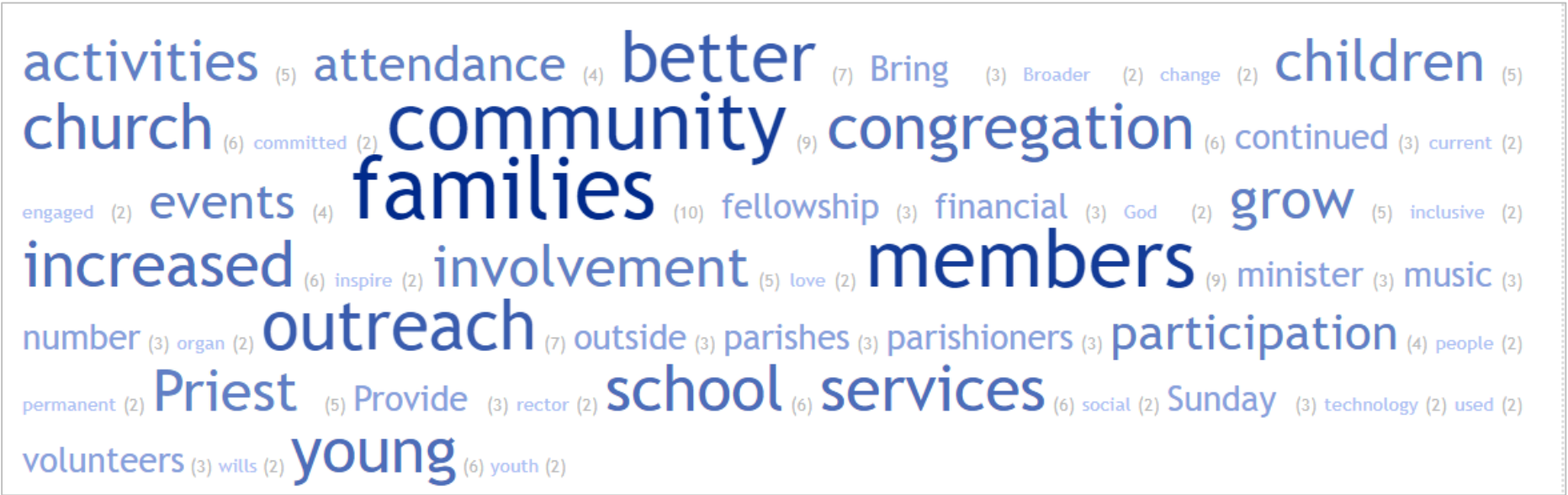
- "Attending Sunday service"
- "Coffee hour and other events"
- "Community and fellowship"
- "Fellowship events"
- "Adult forum"
- "Lenten bible study"
- "Outreach activities"

- "Participation in the liturgy"
- "Participation in various committees"
- "Prayer"
- "Readings"
- "Sermons"
- "Sermons relating to everyday life"
- "Worship"

# Q3: Over the next five years how would you like St. Martin's to change?

- Parishioners noted several **key areas of change in the future**, including more new and young families, more outreach activities, more community involvement, more participation across the congregation and additional fellowship and social events

## Q3 Key Words



## Example Comments

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"Better communication"</li> <li>"Bring in more young families"</li> <li>"Development of younger families"</li> <li>"Expand the core of volunteers"</li> <li>"Find ways to add new congregants"</li> <li>"Inclusive leader"</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"More community engagement"</li> <li>"More fellowship"</li> <li>"More love and less judgement"</li> <li>"More neighborhood outreach"</li> <li>"Obviously more membership"</li> <li>"Priest who provides good spiritual support"</li> </ul> |
|--|---|

# Q4: How might the next priest help lead St. Martin's forward?

- Parishioners **would like a new Priest** who is engaging, is a strong preacher, can bring new ideas and families, can motivate involvement, is inclusive, can connect the Church to the broader community and the Diocese and is technologically savvy

## Q4 Key Words

Bringing (5) challenge (2) church (4) community (8) congregation (3)  
 connect (5) Continue (4) current (2) diocese (3) Embrace (2) energy (2) engaging (7) families (3)  
 financial (2) groups (2) grow (2) help (3) ideas (5) inclusive (3) Increase (3) Innovative (2) inspire (2) involved (4)  
 leadership (4) live (2) manage (2) media (3) members (3) needs (3) open (5) outreach (2) outside (2) parishioners (2)  
 pastoral (3) people (5) personal (4) priest (4) programs (2) Provide (4) relate (3) sense (2)  
 sermons (7) sharing (3) skills (2) social (3) strong (6) technology (5) worship (3)  
 young (3) younger (2)

## Example Comments

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"Bringing in new families"</li> <li>"Bring fresh ideas"</li> <li>"Challenge us to grow"</li> <li>"Digitally competent"</li> <li>"Engaging sermons"</li> <li>"Good listening skills"</li> <li>"Have empathy for all"</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"Have pulse on needs of the community"</li> <li>"He/she will inspire us all to believe and hope"</li> <li>"Help recruit more diverse congregation"</li> <li>"Market St. Martin's to the public"</li> <li>"Motivate involvement"</li> <li>"Provide a new energy"</li> <li>"Technically capable"</li> </ul> |
|---|--|

# Q5: Any other comments?

- A few parishioners also **expressed additional sentiments as provided below**, most of which are very positive
  - "God Bless our Leaders through this difficult time"
  - "Hope our Finances improve"
  - "Hope we remember all the new ways, liturgies, hymns, learnings... we have been introduced to by Father Tim"
  - "I am new and feel very much at home at St. Martins"
  - "I liked Father Bruce and very much like Father Tim. Father Tim seems to have a sense of time in and when to cut lessons short, as if he senses he is losing the congregation. I think that this ability is important. The new rector should be able to relate to today's life and share stories that relate to everyone."
  - "I would like biweekly updates on what is happening in the Church, parishioners who may need help, and our search for a new priest. We are very fortunate to have Father Tim, wish he would stay!"
  - "Keep up the good work"
  - "Our faith (and attitude towards each other) help us to achieve these things that have just been surveyed - not just the new Rector. He/she should support these ideas full-time and may have more to offer or ways to steer us closer to God that we have not yet realized ourselves. Have faith in the Holy Spirit & thank you, Discernment Committee for your hard work."
  - "Short and concise"
  - "So thankful for St. Martin's! A very special place"
  - "St. Martin's and its people have been a constant source of love, acceptance and spiritual light in my life for 30 plus years. I trust that God will send us a new rector whose gifts will not only preserve that but enable St. Martin's to share in greater numbers what we have."
  - "Thank you for asking these important questions"
  - "Thanks to the vestry for your help"
  - "There is a lot of hope at this time during our interim pastor father Tim which tells us that we need not be afraid to go forward and experience new direction and this is where our next pastor should take us and how the church should head"
  - "This is a most wonderful church and church community and want to keep it going...I think the answer is music, it attracts all of us in a good way....it needs to be uplifting and not like a funeral....Jesus was a happy person and wants us to be happy...."
  - "We are very happy at St. Martin's. We appreciate the congregational warm welcome that we have received. We look forward to welcoming the new future of St. Martin's Church."

# Appendix

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# Q1 Detailed Responses

*A little strong on wanting more money*  
*A little disconnected*  
*A special place of worship*  
*Anxious*  
*Anxious about low membership*  
*Anxious about our size*  
*Appreciate Sunday worship over Zoom*  
*Attendance and volunteerism is very low*  
*Believe we fill a need*  
*Better communication to Parish*  
*Blessed*  
*Blessed with potential*  
*Cares about kids*  
*Caring people*  
*Church doing well considering*  
*Comfortable*  
*Communication is pretty good considering*  
*Concerned*  
*Concerned - clean enough for preschoolers?*  
*Concerned with lack of income for church*  
*Confident in the future*  
*Congregation committed to each other*  
*Content*  
*Definitely an adjustment*  
*Disgusted - cutting ties with non-pledgers*  
*Doing well considering the restrictions*  
*Ecstatic with Father Tim's ability to help us navigate throughout this*  
*Encouraged*  
*Encouraged - virtual services*  
*Encouraged by the way people are participating online*  
*Encouraged to see connections made with local community*  
*Enjoy the adult educational opportunities*  
*Excellent people*  
*Excellent service and adult education*  
*Exciting times for the parish*  
*Expectations met for now*  
*Faith centered*  
*Father Tim is a good leader*  
*Father Tim is perfect interim*  
*Feeling cared for by ministry*  
*Financial trouble*  
*Fr. Mulder very helpful*  
*Good*  
*Good*  
*Good leadership during void*  
*Good to stay in touch*  
*Grateful for each other*  
*Grateful for our congregation*  
*Great to see the evolution*  
*Greater liturgical participation*  
*Good leadership during void*

*Good to stay in touch*  
*Grateful for each other*  
*Grateful for our congregation*  
*Great to see the evolution*  
*Greater liturgical participation from youths*  
*Happy with Fr. Tim*  
*Happy with Sunday services*  
*Have future challenges due to declining attendance which seems unavoidable given societal changes*  
*Hope we get a permanent minister soon*  
*Hopeful*  
*Hopeful*  
*Hopeful*  
*Hopeful for our future*  
*Hopeful for that a new priest will help us to grow*  
*Hopeful for the future*  
*Hopeful for the future*  
*Hopeful for the future*  
*Hopeful for the future*  
*Hopeful money will continue*  
*Hopeful with Fr. Tim*  
*I am so grateful for Fr. Tim's ministry*  
*I am thankful for the faithfulness of St. Martin's people*  
*I am worried about how to keep it solvent*  
*I have been a member since about 1975*  
*I like the interim priest*  
*I love it. The parish people seem to like each other...*  
*I miss the services*  
*I would like to have a permanent minister*  
*Impressed by the embracing of technology during these difficult times*  
*In flux*  
*In good hands with Fr. Tim*  
*Included*  
*Insecure*  
*Intimate relationships with congregation*  
*Lenten study was great*  
*Looking to experience Sunday service*  
*Lost some dedicated families*  
*Love the current priest*  
*Many steadfast parishioners*  
*Miss some of the regular announcements on Sundays*  
*Missing in person interaction*  
*Missing many formerly active members*  
*More traditional music - "Old Chestnuts"*  
*Need definition of what committees exist and do within Saint Martins*  
*Need more families*  
*Need more feedback on happenings*  
*Need more people to participate*  
*Need to communicate what groups exist within the church community*

*Need to consider part-time rector*  
*Missing many formerly active members*  
*More traditional music - "Old Chestnuts"*  
*Need definition of what committees exist and do within Saint Martins*  
*Need more families*  
*Need more feedback on happenings*  
*Need more people to participate*  
*Need to communicate what groups exist within the church community*  
*Need to consider part-time rector*  
*Need to cooperate more with other churches*  
*Need to grow*  
*Need to grow the congregation*  
*Need to have more collaboration with school community that is mutually enjoyable and beneficial to both*  
*Need to recruit new members*  
*Need to restructure programs to be easier to execute, more relatable to everyday life*  
*Need young families*  
*Not enough parishioners*  
*Overall feel pretty good*  
*Pleasantly surprised by positivity*  
*Pleased that the Church family is still strong*  
*Sad*  
*Satisfied*  
*Social media is progressing*  
*Some volunteers*  
*Sorry that we can't meet in reality*  
*Spiritually eager to grow*  
*St. Martin's is a font of God's love*  
*St. Martin's is welcoming*  
*St. Martin's Outreach to Community is wonderful*  
*Strong Community*  
*Strong participation from a few*  
*Support for school is wavering*  
*Support of parishioners*  
*Surprisingly connected during these challenging times*  
*Thankful for St. Martin's Family*  
*Thankful for St. Martin's School*  
*Thankful for Zoom Meetings*  
*This process for priest has taken too long*  
*Total attendance a concern*  
*Uncertain*  
*Unhappy about reduced e-mail list*  
*Unstable*  
*Very pleased with current status*  
*We are holding steady*  
*Worried*  
*Worried about attendance*  
*Worried about falling numbers*  
*Worried about lowering attendance*

# Q2 Detailed Responses

Acceptance  
Adult discussion groups  
Adult education  
Adult education opportunities  
Adult Forum  
Adult Forum  
Advent and Christmas Services  
Amazing solutions that appear to impossible challenges  
Attending Sunday service  
Beautiful and thoughtful worship  
Beautiful liturgy with music  
Beautiful music  
Being a lector  
Bible study and other sessions, even offline  
Child education  
Choir singing  
Church events and conversations interacting  
Church music  
Clergy, either past or current interim  
Coffee hour  
Coffee hour and other events  
Coffee hour connecting with everyone  
Communion and ritual  
Community  
Community  
Community  
Community and fellowship  
Community on Sundays  
Community Outreach/charitable giving and doing  
Connecting with others in faith  
Early Sunday service has some great people  
Eucharist  
Examples of other parishioners  
Father Tim recognizes me weekly  
Father Tim's sermons  
Fellow Parishioners  
Fellowship  
Fellowship Events  
Fellowship Events  
Fellowship with other parishioners  
Following gospel of the day  
Food and clothes drives for Outreach  
Forum  
Forum  
Forum

*Fr. Bruce being so down to earth*  
*Friendships*  
*Gatherings*  
*Good adult forums on Sunday morning*  
*Having served many different roles*  
*High level of outreach*  
*Insight from ministries*  
*Inspirational worship*  
*Inspiring young people to participate*  
*Intelligent conversation*  
*Involvement*  
*Journey*  
*Keeping up with parish friends*  
*Learning about our faith traditions*  
*Lent and Easter Services*  
*Lenten film study*  
*Less bureaucracy*  
*Lessons of life from people we meet*  
*Meaningful Homilies*  
*Meetings following service*  
*More small group study*  
*More transparent decision making*  
*More welcoming*  
*My single greatest experience was doing ASP*  
*Opportunity to embrace new experiences*  
*Opportunities to get involved*  
*Our church community*  
*Outreach*  
*Outreach*  
*Outreach activities*  
*Outreach programs*  
*Outreach programs*  
*Overly friendly and helpful people*  
*Parishioner's shared God-moments the pulpit*  
*Participating in the liturgy*  
*Participation on various committees*  
*Prayer*  
*Priest*  
*Quite times of prayer anywhere on the property (Maundy Thursday)*  
*Reaching out to others*  
*Reaching out to those outside of the community*  
*Readings*  
*Readings*  
*Rectors sermons*

*Regular church service*  
*Sermon*  
*Sermons*  
*Sermons*  
*Sermons*  
*Sermons relating to everyday life*  
*Sermons with personal tidbits*  
*Service*  
*Services*  
*Stimulating new people to long-term commitment*  
*Sunday Morning Zoom*  
*Sunday service*  
*Sunday Services*  
*The adult forum*  
*The beauty of the surroundings and building itself*  
  
*The inclusive love that pervades the liturgy*  
*The sermons are always inspiring*  
*The wonderful sense of community*  
*Thursday bible study*  
*Tranquil interior and exterior grounds*  
*Visiting shut ins*  
*Volunteer Opportunities*  
*Volunteer work outside Church confines*  
*Weekday Healing and Eucharist Services*  
*Weekday Healing and Eucharist Services*  
*Welcoming community*  
*Witnessing the Appalachian Project stories*  
*Worship*  
*Worship*  
*Worship*  
*Youth getting involved in church*  
*Youth group*  
*Youth groups*

# Q3 Detailed Responses

100% financial participation  
A minister who knows the congregation individually  
A permanent minister will inspire others to join  
Addition of contemporary music  
An amazing, young, inspirational pastor  
Attract more younger families  
Attract new families  
Be better prepared digitally  
Beautiful space that can be better used with minor upgrades  
Believe children can love God  
Better communication  
Better marketing  
Better outreach  
Better participation overall  
Bridge services  
Bring in more people  
Bring in young families  
Bring parish members new members  
Broader inclusive community  
Broader outreach  
Children's choir  
Church members accepting school  
Communication continued technology used  
Community involvement  
Continued outreach opportunities  
Continued youth involvement wherever possible  
Development of younger families  
Diverse leadership  
Do more collectively with neighboring parishes  
Do more to help those outside the church  
Do more with outside churches  
Don't want it to change  
Enhance stained glass added donations  
Enlarge size of Congregation  
Establish an endowment  
Evolution of programs to current needs and topics  
Expand fellowship  
Expand the core of volunteers  
Family oriented new Rector

Financially stable  
Find a rector with a good personality  
Find ways to add new congregants  
Find new Minister for our Church  
Get a better organ  
Get more active parishioners  
Gradual change vs. radical genre  
Grow  
Grow attendance for financial stability  
Grow community of all age groups  
Grow in Numbers  
Growth of congregation  
Have new members join our Congregation  
I am happy to let the parish evolve as God wills  
I'm new so I don't have any suggestions  
Inclusive leader  
Increase in Discipleship (& attendance)  
Increase attendance  
Increase in parishioners  
Increased number of members  
Increased number of members willing to serve  
increased presence of young families  
Increased Sunday school enrollment  
Large choir  
Larger congregation  
Limit spending  
Members involved more not 20/80%  
Mend ties with school  
Modernization  
More adult learning opportunities  
More children in Sunday school and attendance in general  
More church activities  
More commitment to stewardship  
More community engagement  
More connection to other episcopal and non-episcopal parishes  
More current members getting involved  
More family functions  
More fellowship  
More fellowship events  
More inter-convocation activities  
More involvement in community outreach  
More love and less judgment  
More members committed to serving  
More music  
More neighborhood outreach

More outreach activities  
More parishioners  
More participation  
More participation in leadership positions  
More services during the week  
More social events  
More technology to deliver services  
More volunteers  
More young families  
More young families with children  
Move ahead upgrade of kitchen  
Need new young people very much  
New families  
New organ  
No answer for this  
Now grow a lot - too impersonal  
Obviously more membership  
Offer youth more service activities  
Priest engaged in the congregation  
Priest who can manage Church and Diocese  
Priest who gets control of school  
Priest who provides good spiritual support  
Priest/lay visitation of homebound  
Provide direct outreach to our local community  
Provide even more volunteer opportunities  
Regular cadence of events  
Sell the rectory  
Senior services  
Social events outside of Sunday Services  
They should find a permanent minister  
They should keep the Montessori school  
Transparent decision making  
Uplifting music  
Welcome children into community

# Q4 Detailed Responses

*Appreciative of current programs*  
*Attract new families*  
*Be able to communicate using new methods*  
*Be active in the Diocese and outside causes*  
*Be apolitical*  
*Be aware of financial endeavors*  
*Be open to all different types of people*  
*Be open to innovations in worship*  
*Be open to new ideas*  
*Be open to new thought*  
*Be personable, not saintly*  
*Become bigger part of community*  
*Being approachable*  
*Bible study*  
*Bring fresh ideas*  
*Bringing a following*  
*Bringing in new families*  
*Bringing new Evangelism ideas*  
*Broad connectivity with episcopal community*  
*By "hands on" with all age groups*  
*By technology fluent for outreach*  
*Challenging us to grow*  
*Connect to younger parishioners community*  
*Connections with members*  
*Continue outreach programs*  
*Continue vibrant worship and adult education*  
*Continued adult education*  
*Developing an inclusive community*  
*Deepen understanding of Christ*  
*Develop more of a shared ministry*  
*Digitally competent*  
*Don't be afraid to challenge the parish*  
*Dynamic new ideas*  
*Embrace technology and social media*  
*Embrace technology on social media*  
*Encouraging sharing with other churches*  
*Energetic and Open to input*  
*Energy in sermons*  
*Engage with congregation more*  
*Engaging sermons*  
*Engaging sermons like Father Tim*  
*Focus on practical Church needs - less on birthdays, etc.*  
*Full-time support of "big wish" items*

*Get more involved with the school*  
*Get more involved with the town*  
*Get rid of concept of heretic*  
*Give inspirational sermons*  
*Good leadership qualities*  
*Good listening skills*  
*Good with or able to learn new technology*  
*Greater role for young people*  
*Grow the congregation and pledges*  
*Have connection with outside world*  
*Have empathy for all*  
*Have pulse on needs of community*  
*He/She will give a sense of permanence*  
*He/She will help the sick and reach out to new people*  
*He/She will inspire us all to believe and hope*  
*Help "recruit" young families*  
*Help recruit more diverse congregation*  
*Hold some digital Information Sessions*  
*I don't know*  
*Improve relationship with school*  
*Inclusiveness*  
*Increase community engagement*  
*Increase financial stability*  
*Increased ministry to youth*  
*Information pivotal from diocese to congregation*  
*Innovative ideas on worship services*  
*Insightful engaging speaker*  
*Keep continuity of services*  
*Keep politics out of church*  
*Know all of us*  
*Market St. Martins to the public*  
*More and better advertising about us*  
*Motivate involvement*  
*Needs to be engaging*  
*New priest new members*  
*Not do everything him/herself*  
*People should want to be around them*  
*Personable and warm*  
*Personal pastoral care*  
*Prayer groups*  
*Prefer Rector who is married with children*  
*Priest who can manage and push back on Diocese*  
*Priest who engages with all members*  
*Priest who understand social media and can connect with youth*

*Provide a new energy*  
*Provide strong leadership for spiritual growth*  
*Provide strong leadership over the management of church*  
*Provide strong pastoral skills*  
*Reach out to new couples*  
*Relate the Gospel to a sermon to our lives*  
*Sense of humor*  
*Should know each of us individually*  
*Someone that relates to our young people*  
*Stress Christianity while making it enjoyable and not too pious*  
*Strengthen relationships among parishioners*  
*Strong administrator*  
*Strong pastoral role*  
*Strong preacher sharing personal tidbits*  
*Support leadership*  
*Tech savvy*  
*Technically capable*  
*Technologically savvy*  
*Tie sermons to all everyday life experiences*  
*To answer the question why there is a God?*  
*Topical sermons that relate to current situations*  
*Try some new things*  
*Views that reflect community/demographics*  
*Vision to bring St. M into the future*  
*We live in a secular country and would like to reinforce belief*  
*Welcome, inclusive*  
*Willing to be involved*  
*Willingness to make tough decisions*  
*Younger*