

Episcopal Diocese of Central Pennsylvania 2014 Bishop Search Listening Group Results



Narrative Data Analysis of
Weighted Questions



What was the purpose of the listening groups? Who was included?

- As part of the process of finding a new bishop, the 2014 Bishop Search Committee of the Diocese of Central Pennsylvania hosted “listening events” across the diocese during February and March 2014, inviting clergy to clericus meetings and members of the apostolate to at-large meetings by convocation, in some cases combining convocations.
- Narrative data was gathered for formal analysis.



Where were the listening groups held? How many people attended?

- 249 individuals attended the at-large listening groups; 63 clergy attended the clericus groups; 4 clergy and 8 members of the apostolate sent in responses by paper.
- Separately, the Search Committee conducted a listening event for the largest and the smallest congregations in the diocese.
- The Chair of the Search Committee also conducted an Exit Interview with Bishop Baxter, and a background interview with retired Bishop Creighton.
- Three members of the Search Committee conducted interviews with members of the Bishop's Staff.
- Together, all these interviews will provide depth of understanding for the Search Committee in its work.



What materials from the Listening Events and interviews will be published?

- The analyzed data from the Clericus and At-Large Listening Events will be published on the Search and Transition website.
- The narrative data from the non-weighted question in the Listening Events will be published once the data has been put into a report format.
- The personal interviews will not be available to general viewing.



What questions were asked during the listening groups?

- Questions at the Listening Events focused on the past, the present and the future of the diocese. This report will only address the “weighted” questions, where respondents in both types of group ranked responses by order of importance.
- Seven questions were weighted by participants. These are:
 - “What is the biggest priority in the diocese?” (clericus groups)
 - “What changes have you seen in the diocese in the past ten years? (at-large groups)
 - “If you could ask for anything at all from the diocese and be assured of receiving it, what would it be?” (at-large groups)
 - “How can you in your parishes or convocations better relate to each other and the diocese?” (at-large groups)
 - “Going forward, what would you say is the highest priority in the diocese?” (at-large groups)
 - “What qualities are you looking for in our next bishop?” (at-large groups)
 - “With an eye to the future, what one thing should be changed now in our diocese?” (at-large groups)



How were questions weighted during the listening groups?

- Facilitators from the search committee recorded all the responses from listening group participants in their own words. Each chart is followed with a selection of remarks made by participants to those questions, representative of all areas in the diocese, as illustration of the responses.
- On the weighted questions, participants ranked their top 3 choices among all the responses to a given question. The facilitator recorded the numbers “1”, “2”, or “3” next to the choices, one being the highest in importance.
- The process of formal analysis assigned more weight to higher-importance items. Each “1” response was assigned three points, each “2” response was assigned two points, and each “3” response was assigned one point.



How were the final results created from the listening groups?

- All ranked answers were then separated into categories by shared topic or shared language. Examples of categories include diocesan administrative concerns, finance, parish and convocational concerns.
- Points were combined by category for each weighted question from all listening groups, with a percentage of the total calculated for each category.
- For example, on the weighted clericus question, “What is the biggest priority for the diocese?”, 105 of the possible 282 points for that question fell on responses in the category “need for ‘healing’ and building community in diocese.” That is, slightly more than 37% of the total possible points for that item fell to the priority of ‘need for healing and building community.’
- The following two slides provide descriptions of the seven categories created from ranked responses from listening groups. The results for each of the seven weighted questions follow, shown by category. Each chart is followed with examples from the group responses to that question.



What categories of concern were revealed from the listening groups?

- **Diocesan administrative concerns** – Responses are focused on the diocesan office and bishop's staff. Primary concerns are communication, response time, accountability, leadership, organizational structure, and support for parish initiatives.
- **Financial concerns** – Responses are focused on diocesan finances, fiscal transparency, decreased resources, and possibly changing the "Fair Share" calculation.
- **Parish and convocation concerns**– Response are focused on challenges related to geography and/or parish size, the desire in parishes for a definition of mission and vision that is shared across the diocese, and the desire to form connections at the parish and convocational level.



What categories of concern were revealed from the listening groups?

Need for “healing” and building community in diocese—

Responses did not focus on specific issues, but instead express concern with ongoing “low-grade conflicts” and the need for renewed meaningful connections and relationships at all levels of the diocese (e.g., within the parish, between parishes, and with the diocesan office).

- **Evangelism and need for growth** – Responses are focused on the need for growth with youth, young adults, and college students, while at the same time maintaining a distinctly Episcopal identity. Responses are also focused on the need to navigate the relationship between the church and an increasingly secular culture and society.

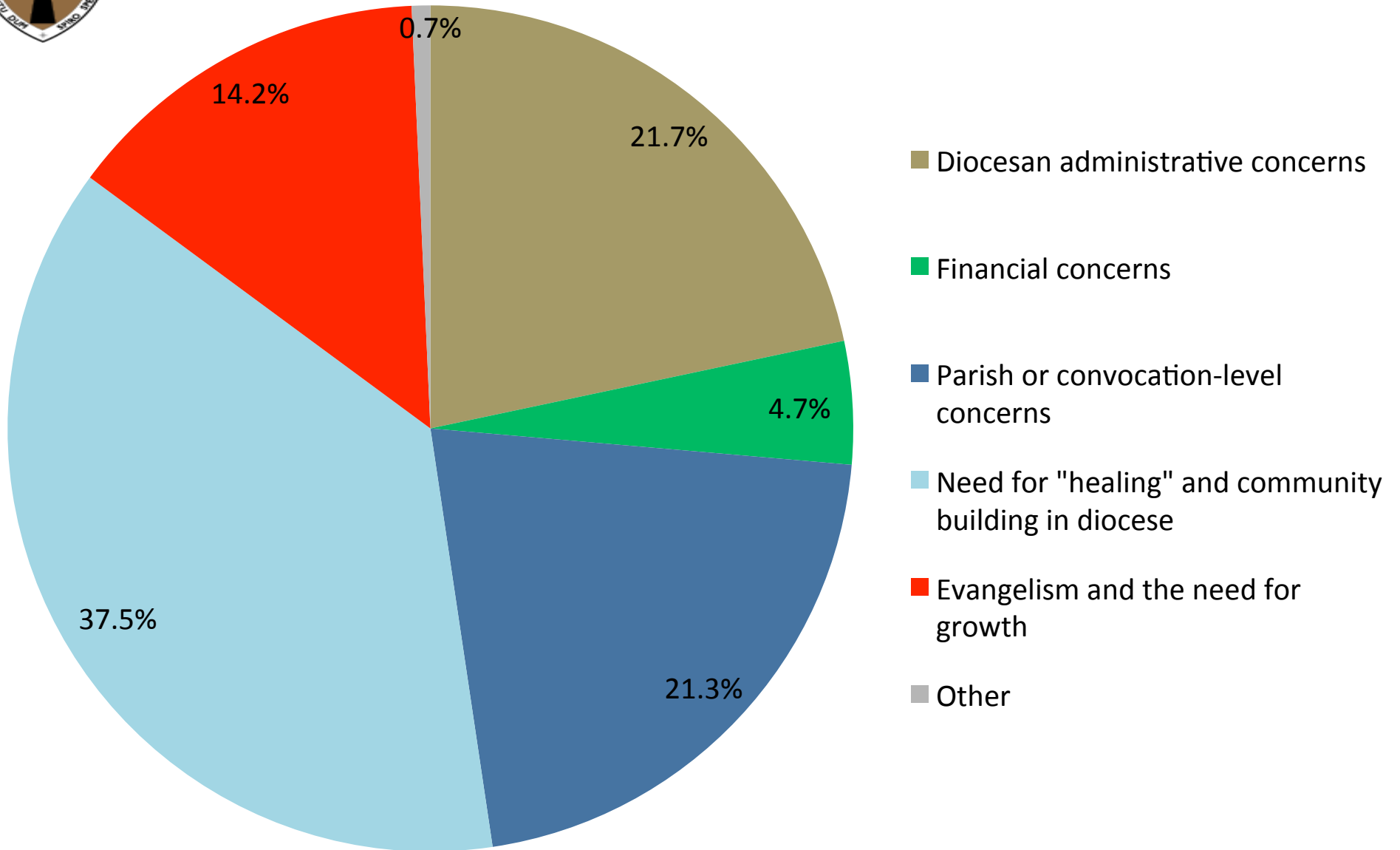


What categories of concern were revealed from the listening groups?

- Inclusion in the church– Responses are focused on the issue of greater participation by women and LGBT individuals in all aspects of parish life, including strong support of same-sex blessings. Also included in this category are desires for greater participation by convocations in the life and work of the diocese.
- Other – This category includes responses not related to other categories (e.g., the need for more Bible studies within parishes, need to look to other denominations for ideas to increase growth, etc.).



What is the biggest priority for the diocese? (clericus groups)





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Diocesan administrative issues:

- "...need someone at the center with good pastoral skills who does not do things precipitously, someone who is anxious to work with committees in a collaborative manner"
- "The changes in staff have been so frequent, the changes in priorities so puzzling, all made without communication."
- "I'd ask that when I make a phone call to the bishop, I get the bishop on the line, and when I leave a message, that I hear back promptly—or even just hear back."
- "We need someone who can let things be in the hands of committees and commission and staff, rather than being a micromanager"

Financial issues:

- "Face the crisis of financial sustainability. It is poorly understood, there's no consensus on addressing it, but this crisis is apparent in financial records and in spiritual and physical well-being and health of parishes and leaders"
- "Change the Fair Share calculation"



What is the biggest priority for the diocese? (clericus groups)

Parish or convocation-level concerns:

- “Need articulated and realized vision, particularly for small congregations”
- “Bishop and bishop’s staff make a primary commitment of time and focus on supporting mission and ministry of parishes and their clergy. Invert the current pyramid”

Need for “healing” and building community in diocese:

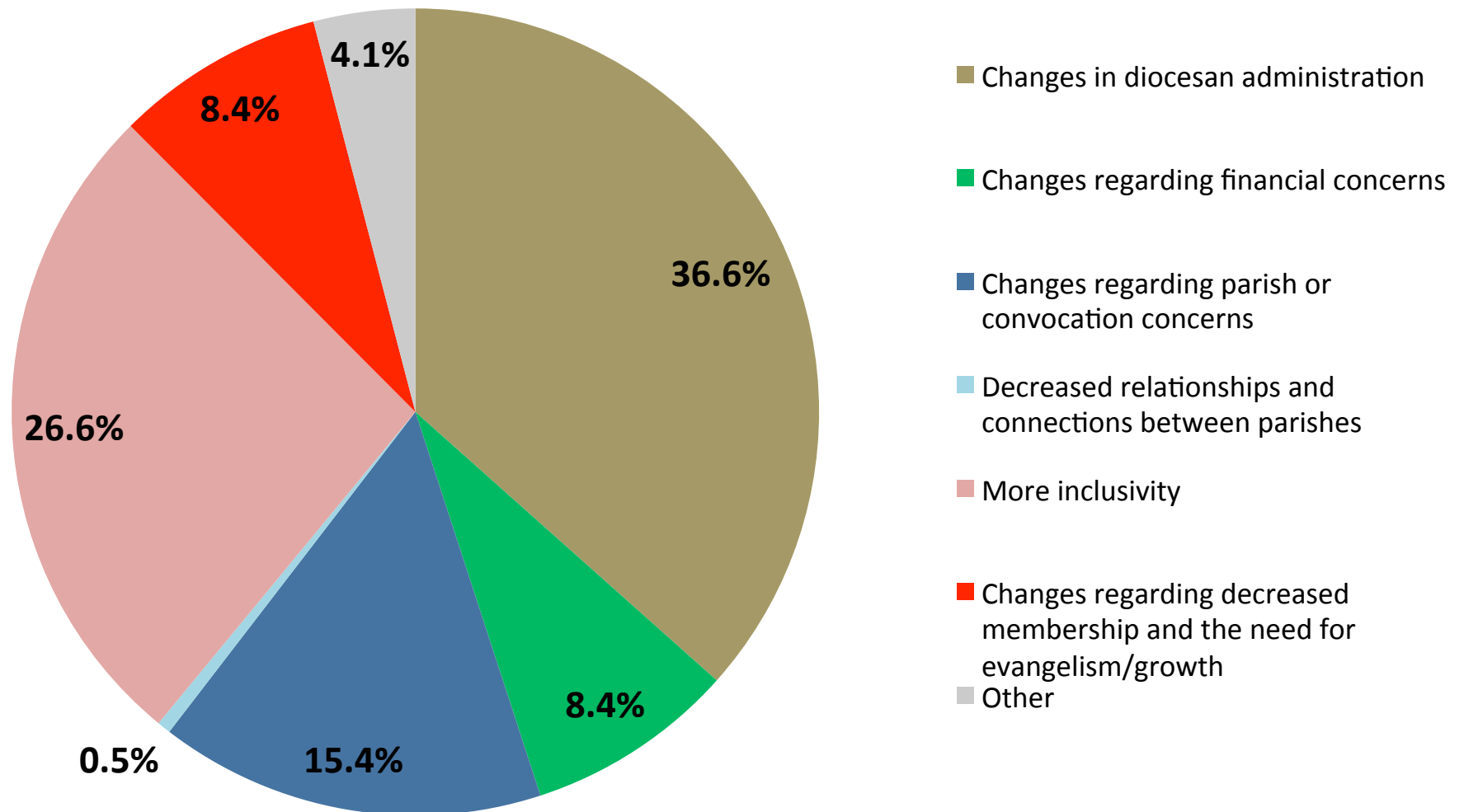
- “Building the morale of the diocese: Creating a positive, mutually encouraging working atmosphere”
- “Leave survival behind, get to gratitude. Get a different attitude.”

Issues related to evangelism and need for growth:

- “Diocesan support of youth ministry”
- “Unchurched – how to address”
- “Help us think about how to evangelize while remaining true to our tradition”



What changes have you seen in the diocese in the past ten years?





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Changes in diocesan administration:

- “There’s more bureaucracy, and less communication among the laity.”
- “An increase in the sense of dissatisfaction and conflict. It’s an unsettling feeling. You don’t really know what the conflicts are or what the dissatisfaction means, but the feeling is just there and starts to feel like that’s the normal thing.”

Changes regarding financial concerns:

- “Decrease in financial resources has caused a real drop in personnel and resources in general”

Changes regarding parish or convocational concerns:

- “Lack of responsibility, cohesiveness, camaraderie. The further away you are from Harrisburg the less involvement you get if you’re a rural or a small parish. Needs to change. Sometime ago convocations were active with laity and people remembered that they were part of something larger than their own parishes. It only lasted 3 or 4 years, but it was a hopeful time.”
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More inclusivity:

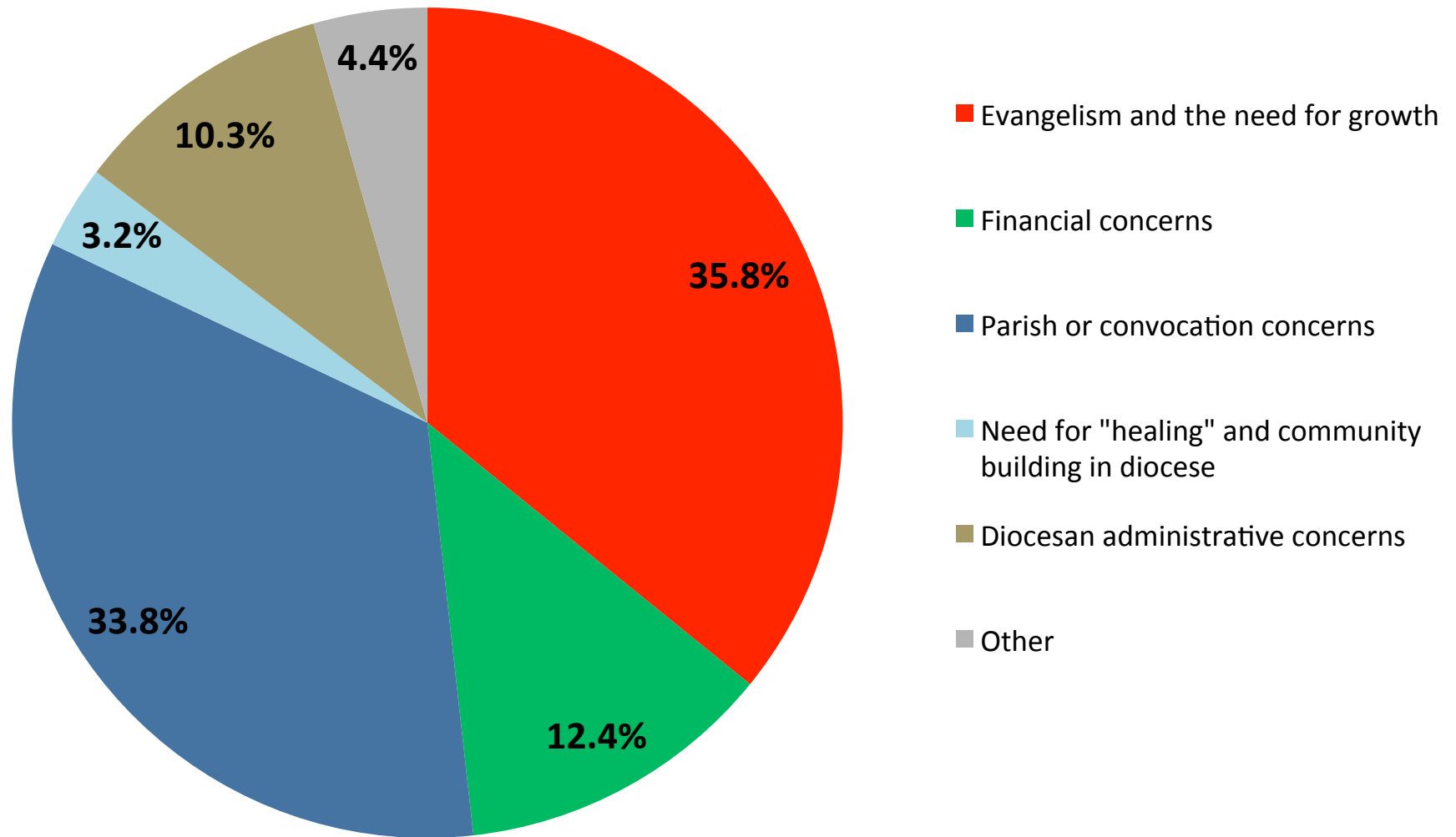
- “A positive, hopeful change: we have moved to be an inclusive church. Not so in the 1970s. Then, women were not widely accepted in leadership or priesthood - nor were gays and lesbians, by lay leadership or the clergy.”
- “A good change has been parish priests at their discretion may bless same-sex unions.”

Changes regarding decreased membership and the need for evangelism/growth:

- “We need something for the college students. The last 8 years that emphasis has been completely dropped.”



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Evangelism and the need for growth:

- “To radically reconsider diocesan assumptions and mission in light of where we’re likely to be in ten years.”
- “I’d ask for more to be done for people of color, Latino members – I’d ask for a program giving language skills to members of our parishes.”

Financial concerns:

- “Provide TRANSPARENT and OPEN financial information. Make up for the VERY difficult past 2 years of trying to understand and even get financial information that makes sense.”

Parish or convocational concerns:

- “A clear sense of investment in the parish. A diocese committed to supporting parish ministry.”
- “A convocation is a local expression of the diocese. The convener is the local experience of the bishop. If we learned how to make this work, parishes would be helped to feel less isolated. Take the step of getting a better understanding of what convocations are, before planning social gatherings and service projects.”



If you could ask for anything at all from the diocese and be assured of receiving it, what would it be?

Need for “healing” and building community in diocese:

- “Commitment from the diocese and the laity to make things work. Encourage reasons for individual responsibility in church life. It’s one thing to say nobody comes, but it takes commitment to attend. Make the commitment worthwhile.”

Diocesan administrative concerns:

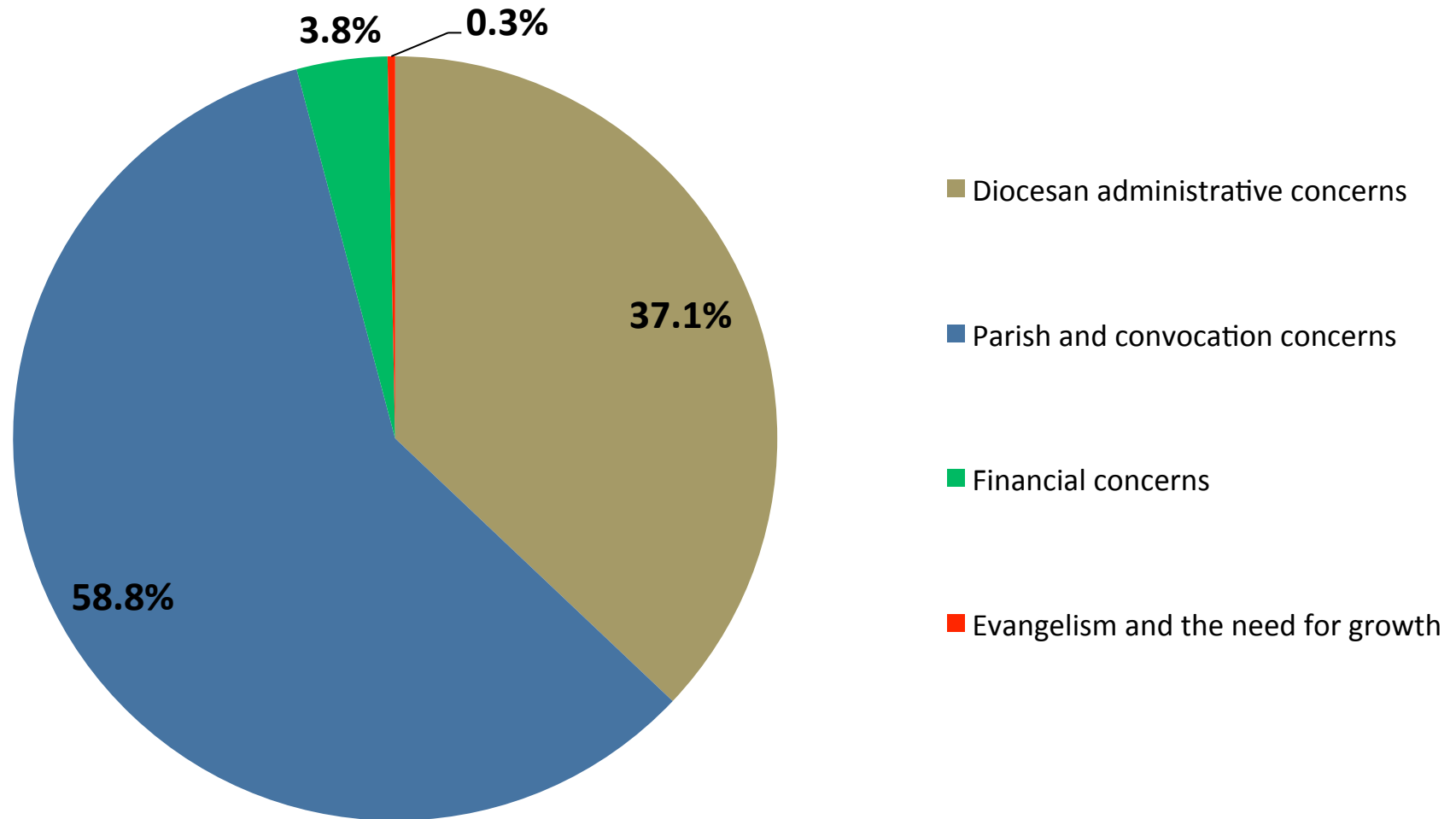
- “Efficient leadership. Now, no responses or voluntary information from the diocese.”
- “Clarity in diocesan administration on who is the go-to person for each geographic area, north and south. Suggest this as an improvement to communications.”

Other:

- “An interfaith dialogue on living out the beatitudes, and on peace keeping.”



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Diocesan administrative concerns:

- “Change from the current tone of condescension in diocesan staff communication.” “In our convocation we have shared vestry meetings, but diocesan communication with us is near nonexistent.”
- “Diocese to better communicate events going on at parish level, and for convocation events, better publicity from diocese.” “Have one or two places on website to get information.”

Parish and convocation concerns:

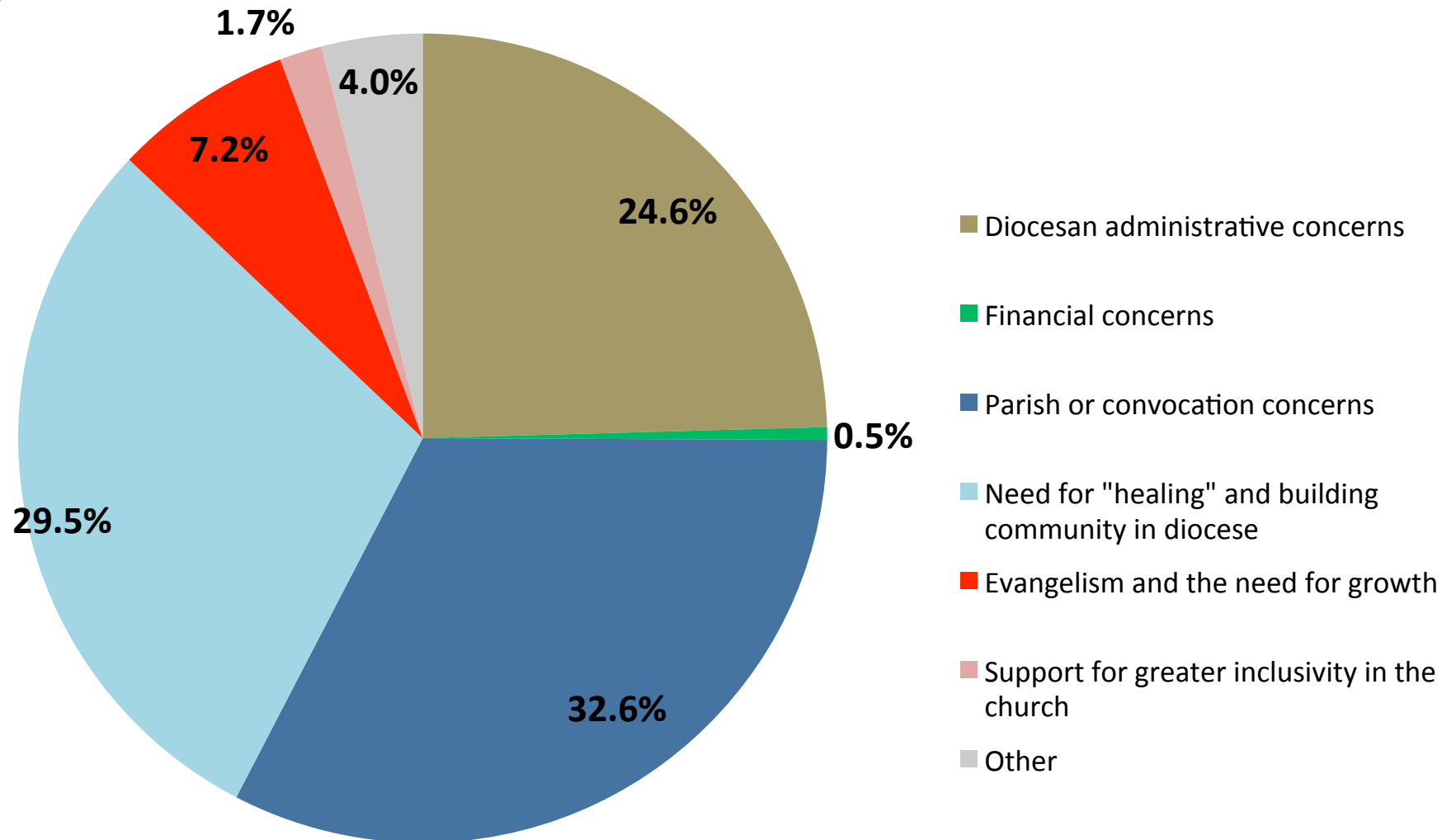
- “Share mission”
- “We should get together more often; get-togethers should rotate geographically.”
- “Equip mission-ready parishes grounded in Scripture prayer and sacraments, help parishes get resources needed, financial education, and sharing those resources.”

Financial concerns:

- “Customer service model. Parishes are customers.”



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Parish and convocation concerns:

- “Support for shared community ministries. Can do more with 3 parishes working together than can 1 by 1.”
- “Establish a renewed and sustained effort to support parishes in their ministries”

Diocesan administrative concerns:

- “Top down management leads to the apostolate feeling *'I'm not part of, I'm governed by'* the diocese.”
- “We need: organization; direction; leadership; responsiveness.”
“Find out what is at the root of all the dysfunction and deal with it.”
- “Leadership seeing primary responsibility as empowering others to lead”

Financial concerns:

- “Fiscal responsibility, fiscal transparency – MUST HAVE.”



Going forward, what would you say is the highest priority for the diocese?

Need for “healing” and community building in diocese:

- “We all need self-awareness and truth-telling”
- “A healing presence at the center of the diocese...”
- “It is our responsibility to change the discouragement mode. It is our responsibility to recognize the spiritually destructive power of being discouraged all the time. At the diocesan level we all need to change to a culture of encouragement.”

Evangelism and the need for growth:

- “Find people”
- “Think about how to sustain and market a liturgical church in a society that is becoming more and more secular”

Support for greater inclusivity in the church:

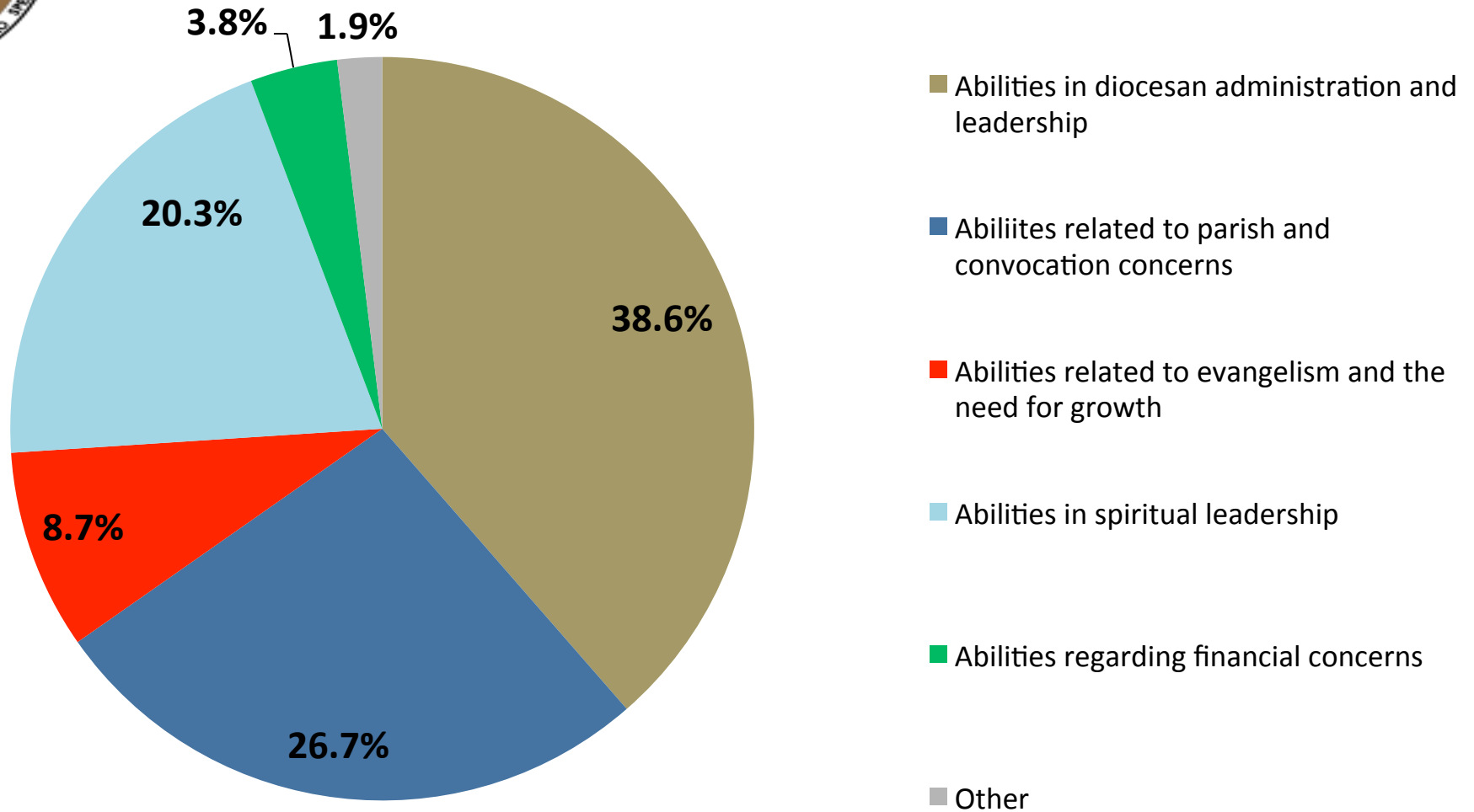
- “Make more support of blessing of same-sex unions public and normal, not the exception. Stop being so timid about it.”
- “That policies of inclusivity have congruence in our actions.”

Other

- “In-house preparation and education of clergy and laity, a good current change to keep as a priority.”



What qualities are you looking for in our next bishop?





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Abilities in diocesan administration and leadership:

- “Badly need collaborative leadership style in diocese.”
- “Whose leadership sees primary responsibility as empowering others to lead”
- “A gentle but effective administrator who will bring order to the sometimes unruly flock”
- “One who has demonstrated experience with small to medium sized parishes—that is, who *has been in* a small to medium, preferably rural, parish at some time in his or her career.”

Abilities related to parish and convocation concerns:

- “Passion for small congregations”
- “We need a clearly articulated vision, and someone at center who believes that vision, is able to express that vision and can live that vision within the diocese.”
- “Who really understands congregational development and knows it as a *life cycle* with preparation for possible steps ahead.”

Abilities related to evangelism and the need for growth:

- “Able to lead 20 or 30 year olds into the church”
- “Someone aware of and willing to respond to the changing times without fear or blaming.”
- “Someone with imagination and an intelligent take on having heart for people not in the church”



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Abilities in spiritual leadership:

- “A strong and humble priest. Pope Francis-like.”
- “Someone of prayer; who understands and appreciates liturgy”
- “Servant leader”

Abilities related to financial concerns:

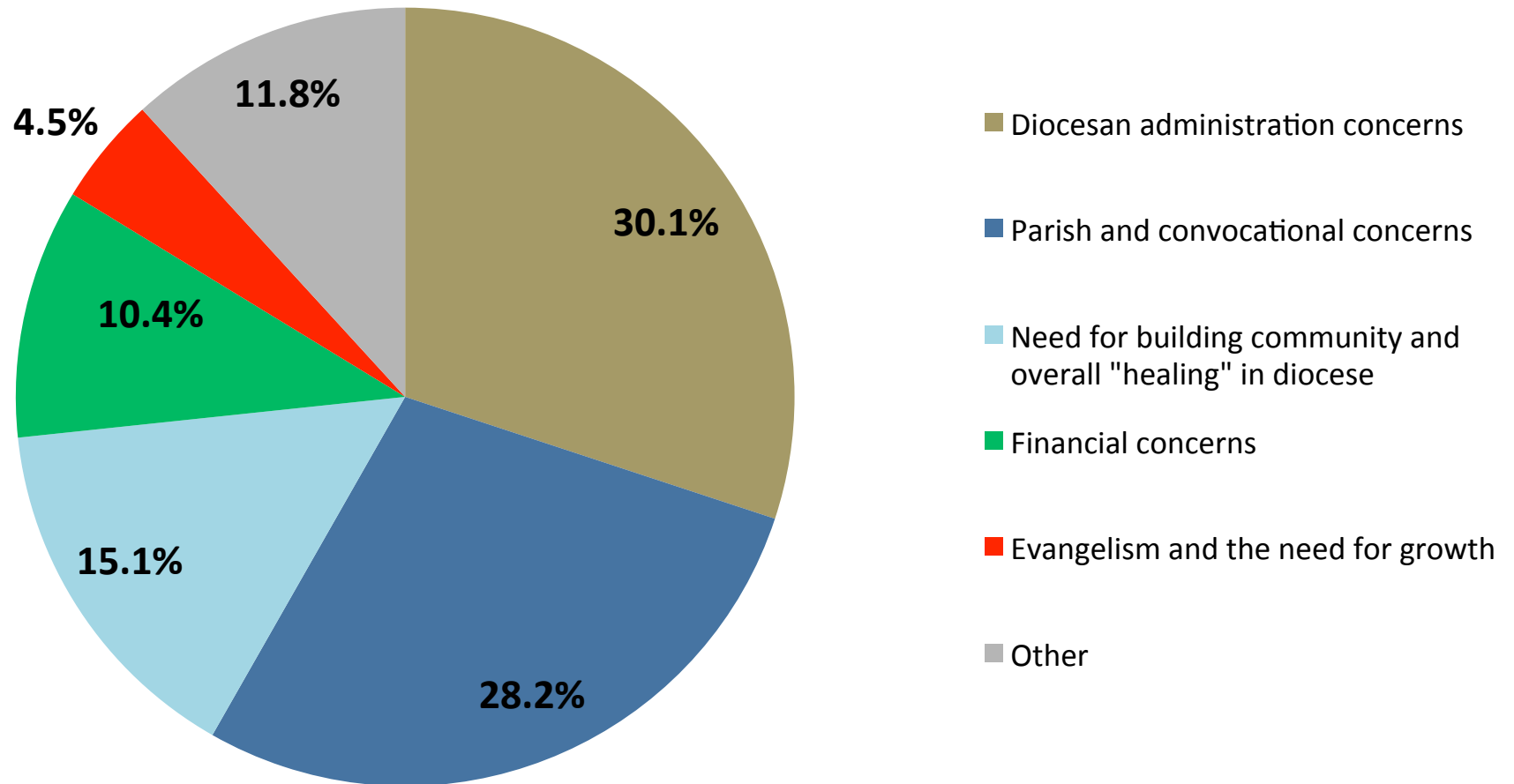
- “Can create and enhance atmosphere of honesty, transparency, humility, competence, discipleship.”

Other:

- “A leader with extraordinary energy and real stamina”
- “Is the same all the time, not changing according to who is being talked with”



With an eye to the future, what one thing should be changed now in our diocese?





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Parish and convocational concerns:

- “Ministry to imperiled parishes is paramount”
- “Encourage with practical help every parish designing a strategic plan that works for them; look for facilitators to help parishes succeed with their plans...”
- “Don’t call a messiah who will fix things FOR us. Call out shepherds who will work with us.”

Diocesan administrative concerns:

- “Strong consistent leadership: staff management, providing spiritual guidance and insight”
- “Our diocese well-organized and well-managed; our diocese with clergy and laity working together collaboratively”

Need for “healing” and building community in church:

- “Health. Health. Recognize we’ve got a significant sense of disconnect, significant dysfunction. Health: spiritual, thinking of others in the diocese as family, financially interrelated, in membership.”
- “The understanding that the diocesan staff is not the diocese. We are.”



With an eye to the future, what one thing should be changed now in our diocese?

Financial concerns:

- “Fix the financial opacity. We need plain complete facts in plain, complete presentation: financial transparency”

Evangelism and the need for growth:

- “Address the decline of the Episcopal Church in the diocese”
- “Our standing in the community – to be known for mission rather than issues”

Other:

- “We need the interim bishop and staff to be realistic.”
- “Stabilize the School of Christian Studies and the ordination process.”