

NHRC 2025 Congregational Feedback Survey

Executive Summary

done by OpenAI's Chat GPT 5.1

This summary draws from both short-answer analysis and the quantitative survey data. A combined analysis of short-answer themes, survey trends, and major takeaways

Introduction

NHRC has gathered a significant amount of helpful, honest, and thoughtful feedback from the congregation about what matters most as the church looks for its next pastor. Across all the survey responses — both numerical and written — a very consistent picture emerges. In simple terms, the congregation is ready for strong leadership, open to new ideas, and deeply concerned about reconnecting generations, especially youth and young families.

People clearly care about this church, want it to grow, and want the next pastor to be a person who genuinely loves, listens to, and leads this community.

What follows is a straightforward, executive summary designed to highlight the big themes, the most important trends, and key recommendations for the Search Committee.

What People Want Most in Their Next Pastor

Across hundreds of written comments and all the rating data, the same themes appear again and again:

1. A pastor who is spiritually grounded AND relationally warm

Members want someone who:

- Has deep personal faith
- Preaches Scripture confidently
- Lives out Christian values
- Is approachable, kind, and available
- Listens well and offers emotional & spiritual support

This balance — faithfulness + genuine warmth — is the single strongest theme across all responses.

2. A strong preacher who connects the Bible to real life

Survey data shows Preaching was chosen as one of the most important ministries (50 votes), and comments everywhere focus on:

Practical, everyday applications
Clear, structured sermons with a memorable takeaway
Sermons that feel alive, not academic
Humor and storytelling used naturally
Strong biblical grounding — not “fluff”

Members want sermons that help them understand Scripture AND navigate real life.

3. Energy, enthusiasm, and motivation

Words used repeatedly include:

Energetic
Charismatic
Inspirational
Modern
Passionate
Engaging

People are looking for a pastor who brings excitement and momentum — someone who can get people involved and help the church grow.

4. Someone who embraces change but respects tradition

Members consistently mention:

Openness to new ideas
Blending old and new styles
Avoiding “we’ve always done it this way”
Finding ways to engage younger generations without abandoning core values

There is a clear desire for a pastor who leads the church confidently into the future while honoring the church’s heritage .

5. A pastor who can connect across generations

This appears throughout the survey:

Youth
Young families
Nursery school families
Older members
Shut-ins

People want someone comfortable talking with kids, teens, young adults, working parents, and longtime seniors. Generational connection is seen as essential for NHRC’s future.

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What the Congregation Values in Worship, Ministry, and Church Life

1. Sermons that are meaningful, practical, and memorable

Members overwhelmingly want:

- A clear theme
- Scripture explained, not just quoted
- Real-life stories and illustrations
- A “nugget” to remember during the week
- Hope, encouragement, and clarity

Many explicitly mention avoiding long, wandering sermons or political messaging.

2. Strong pastoral care

Pastoral care received some of the highest ratings in the entire survey:

- Availability: 4.84
- Involvement: 4.60
- Visitation: 4.57
- Pastoral counseling: 4.41

This confirms that a pastor who shows up when it matters is deeply valued.

3. Ministries people want to rebuild

Short-answer responses highlight several areas:

Top ministry people want back:

Stephen Ministry
(no other ministry was mentioned anywhere near as often)

Other areas of high interest:

- Youth Group
- Sunday School
- Vacation Bible School
- Community outreach
- Fellowship events (potlucks, Birthday Dessert, JOY Group, Veterans Dinner)
- Adult Bible study and spiritual formation

People want ministries that build relationships, build faith, and build community.

4. Youth and young families are major priorities

Members express real concern about:

Generational gaps

Low participation among children and teens

Weak connection between the church and nursery school families

The need for more modern music and updated worship styles

Scheduling challenges for busy families

The future of NHRC depends heavily on engaging the next generations.

5. Music matters — and people are open to blended styles

Survey results show:

Choral music, vocalists, and instrumental music score highly

Traditional hymns are loved by many

But several comments ask for more modern/contemporary praise music

The conversation isn't about eliminating tradition — it's about adding balance to welcome younger families.

Final Themes and Recommendations for the Search Committee

BIG PICTURE THEMES FROM THE FULL DATASET

1. The congregation is very supportive of the Search Committee

Dozens of responses offer:

- Prayers
- Encouragement
- Blessings
- Patience
- Gratitude

People believe in the committee and trust the process.

2. The church wants a pastor who can grow the congregation

This is not about numbers — it's about energy, vision, and leadership:

- Ability to motivate people
- Vision for the future
- Outreach to the community
- Creativity and innovation
- Confidence navigating change

People want a leader who will help NHRC move forward with hope.

3. The congregation values transparency and communication

Members want:

- Updates during worship
- Emails
- Newsletter notes
- A sense of “being in the loop”

Clear communication will reduce anxiety and increase trust.

4. People want a pastor who avoids political division

Several comments specifically:

- Ask to keep politics out of the pulpit
- Describe church as a refuge from the noise of the world

This matters deeply to many members.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE SEARCH COMMITTEE

1. Prioritize candidates who balance spiritual depth with relational warmth

Look for someone who is:

Strong in Scripture
Approachable
Compassionate
A good listener
Present and available

This combination is clearly what the congregation values most.

2. Make strong preaching a core requirement

Based on the survey:

Pastors should preach clearly, practically, and biblically
Sermons should have a relatable takeaway
Delivery should feel authentic, engaging, and hopeful

This is non-negotiable for NHRC.

3. Give special focus to candidates who can connect with young families

The future of the church depends on it. Look for pastors who:

Have experience with youth and children
Understand the schedules and pressures of modern families
Are comfortable with change and innovation
Can connect with nursery school families

4. Seek a leader who respects tradition but is excited to try new things

The church does not want a “radical overhaul,” but it does want:

Modern ideas
Updated music options
A balance of old and new
Engaging, fresh approaches

Look for a pastor who can gently guide the church into its next chapter.

5. Look for someone collaborative, not authoritarian

Members are clear that they want a pastor who:

- Works well with consistory
- Respects existing committees
- Involves lay leaders
- Builds unity, not division

6. Consider communication and transparency as essential pastoral skills

A good pastor for NHRC must be:

- Clear
- Consistent
- Honest
- Comfortable sharing updates and explaining decisions

7. Choose someone who can grow community inside AND outside the walls

Based on the ministry feedback, ideal candidates will:

- Encourage Stephen Ministry
- Rebuild youth programming
- Support fellowship events
- Lead outreach efforts
- Strengthen ties with the nursery school

8. Make sure candidates are evaluated through multiple touchpoints

Members request:

- Multiple interviews
- At least one sermon observation (in person or recorded)
- Thorough reference checks

This helps ensure long-term fit.

Final Word

The feedback is remarkably unified:
NHRC is hungry for growth, connection, energy, and renewed community.

The next pastor should be someone who:

- Loves people
- Loves Scripture
- Preaches well
- Welcomes new ideas
- Connects with all ages
- Respects tradition

Leads with warmth, humility, and purpose

If you choose a pastor with these qualities, the congregation will feel hopeful, supported, and ready to move into a new and healthy chapter of NHRC's story.