

OCA Parish Practices Survey --2002

The last survey of Parish Practices conducted by the OCA was done in advance of the 13th All American Council in Orlando -- over *ten years ago*. Yet the results still provide a useful tool for assessing your parish.

The data, collected from a representative sample of 161 OCA parishes showed a consistent relationship between the following generally accepted good parish practices and self reported parish growth:

- Adult education attendance
- Infrequent change of pastors
- Presence of converts
- Frequency of weekly worship, attendance at services, frequency of communion, frequent confession,
- Focus of parish council time on growth and ministry
- Pledge forms, stewardship committees and all member canvas,
- Offering a variety of program options

Write in comments from survey respondents were also revealing.

Strengths of Growing Parishes

When asked to describe their key parish attributes growing parishes responded with phrases like: "Worship"; "Welcoming" "We bond well by including all generations"; "Stewardship"; "Well catechized" and "our greatest asset is love".

Strengths of Declining Parishes

Declining parishes tended to describe themselves with words like: "Surviving"; "Fundraising"; "Pirogies and Easter rolls" "Dinners: Cabbage Roll; Chicken Dinner etc."; "Ladies Altar Society"; "Keep the Church open and running" and "Starring in Slavonic".

Weaknesses of Declining Parishes

"Education"; "No concept of reaching out"; "Apathy"; "Being labeled 'Russian'" "Clicky"; "Accepting new members from different backgrounds"; "Parochialism & congregationalism" "Vision - looking in same direction": "Family feuds".

Greatest Challenge

One parish described its greatest challenge as:

"Acquiring a vision of life as a vibrant Orthodox Parish rather than a recycle of previous experiences or an amalgamation of the various backgrounds represented; Getting out of the old paradigm. Overcoming old attitudes about why we exist. Getting into forward thinking vision."

See the entire survey summary [here](#).

