

# Strengthening Our Commitment to the Community:

*Growing and Sharing Our Faith;  
Welcoming Others*



# Thank You!

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- Your time this week
- Your past labors
- Your willingness to consider new approaches



## *Hosts*

The parishioners of  
St. John the Baptist Orthodox Church



Bulgarian  
Diocese of  
Toledo



Diocese of Chicago  
and the Midwest



Archdiocese of Pittsburgh  
and Western Pennsylvania

# Planning Team

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- Fr. Stephen Frase co-chair
- Fr. Peter Baktis
- Fr. Andrew Jarmus
- *Fr. Marc Vranes*
- Cathy Vrugitz
- John Fedorko
- Joseph Kormos

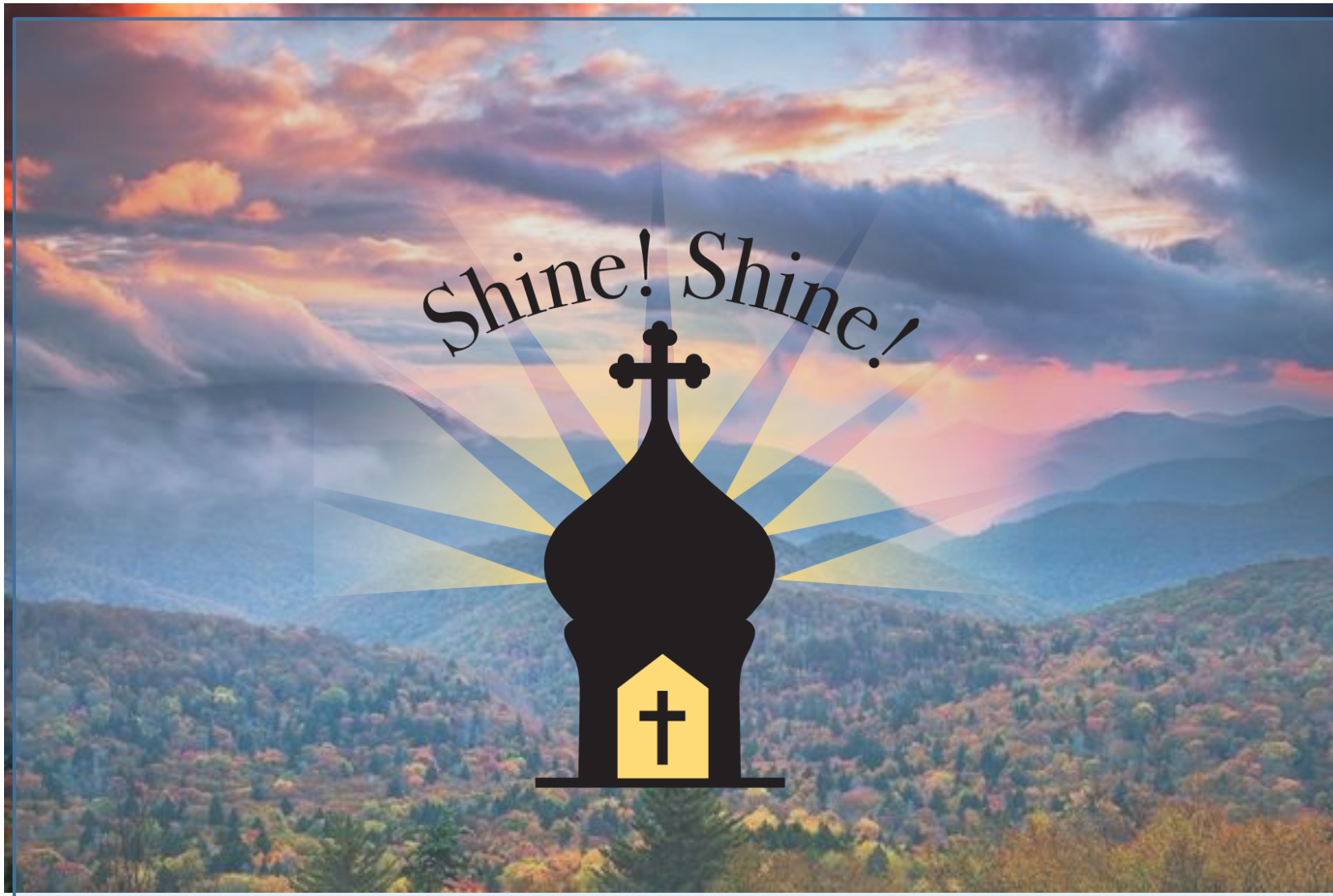
# Objectives

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- **Build an understanding** of what it will take to thrive in today's American environment.
- **Establish confidence** that your parish can thrive. Regardless recent past.
- **Identify contacts** in other parishes
- **Help transfer** your insights to your parish.



Archdiocese of Western Pennsylvania  
Parish Revitalization Initiative



# Agenda Review

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- Presentations
- “Talks”
- Videos
- Remote speakers
- Small Group workshops
- Consensus on lists

2019 Parish Development Forum Agenda

## Strengthening Our Commitment to the Community

*Growing and Sharing Our Faith; Welcoming Others*



| Thursday July 11 |           |   |                                   |
|------------------|-----------|---|-----------------------------------|
| Tab              | Approx.   | Topic   | Session leader                    |
| 1                | 3:00 PM   | <b>Welcome &amp; Introduction</b><br>Remarks from host hierarch; Agenda review; Ground rules. Theme intro; Attendee mixing session; Intro Grants; One+ key attendee goal.   | Archbishop MELCHISEDEK Joe Kormos |
|                  | 3:40 PM   | <b>The Orthodox Century Fishing, Feeding &amp; Following in the Footsteps of the Saints</b><br>Followed by Small Group Discussion: Building on Keynote themes   | Fr. Maximus Urbanowicz            |
|                  | 5:00 PM   | Vespers   | Fr Stephen Frase                  |
|                  | 5:40 PM   | Dinner  | All                               |
|                  | 6:30      | <b>Discuss Video: “Becoming Truly Human”</b>  | Fr. Steven Frase                  |
|                  | ~7:45-ish | Adjourn   |                                   |
| Friday July 12   |           |   |                                   |
|                  | 8:45 AM   | Trisagion Prayers with Epistle and Gospel   | Fr Stephen Frase                  |
|                  | 9:00 AM   | <b>Questions? Review?</b>   | Joe Kormos                        |
|                  | 9:10      | <b>Conversation about Conversion: Panel Discussion with Adult Converts</b><br>A panel of converts to the Orthodox Faith: The Journey; What I found; What I'm finding; The hardest part; How to Find More Like Us! | Panel of Orthodox Converts        |
|                  | 10:30     | Break   |                                   |
|                  | 10:40     | <b>A Modern Day Mars Hill: Social Media and Outreach</b>  | Fr. A. Jarmus                     |
|                  | 11:40     | <b>Catch Up on Previous topics</b>  | Kormos                            |
|                  | 12:00     | Group Photo   | In Church - All                   |
|                  | 12:10     | Lunch   | All                               |
|                  | 1:00 PM   | <b>Growing in Faith:</b><br><i>Resources For Teaching about Evangelization and Service</i>  | Mat. Valerie Zabirky              |

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# Key Points

# 1. Any Parish Can Become Vibrant

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“All that is required is that its members, beginning with its leaders, be firmly resolved to have it so.”

*Fr. Thomas Hopko*

## 2. Every Parish is at a Hinge Point

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**What are you unwilling to do?**

# Attendee Concerns

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## Our parish exhibits:

- ▣ 40% General parish apathy
- ▣ 24% have little idea what it takes to be an Orthodox parish with a future in 2019
- ▣ 16% are insular. Isolated from the world. No sense of outreach.
- ▣ 14% don't know our faith and are not motivated to learn
- ▣ **30% None of above**

3. The greatest danger is the illusion that all is well.”

*C.S. Lewis*

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## 4. “Give Us a Growth Method”

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*“I have planted, Apollos watered;  
but God gave the increase”*

1 Cor. 3:6

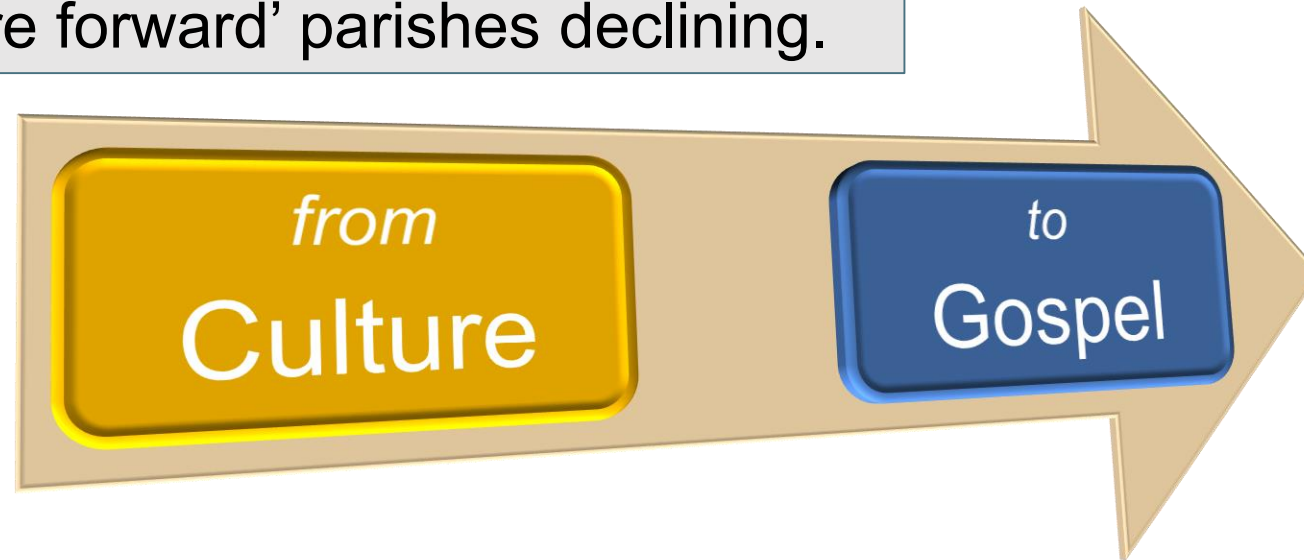
“You can’t make a flower grow by  
pulling on the petals!”



# The Transition

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- Culture lasts 1-3 generations
- ‘Culture first’/ “culture forward” parishes declining.



“Acquiring a vision of life as a vibrant parish rather than a recycle of previous experiences. Overcoming old attitudes about why they exist.”

*A priest’s description of key parish challenge*

# Acts 2:42-47

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- 42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' **teaching** and to **fellowship**, to the **breaking of bread** and to the **prayers**.
- 43 Everyone was filled with awe at the many **wonders and signs** performed by the apostles.
- 44 All the believers were together and had **everything in common**.
- 45 They sold property and possessions to **give to anyone who had need**.
- 46 Every day they continued to **meet together** in the temple courts. They broke bread in their **homes** and ate together with **glad and sincere hearts**,
- 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

# 5. Evangelism is Not...

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- ❑ Something Protestants do
- ❑ Formulaic, manipulative, high pressure, gimmickry
- ❑ Coercion of unsuspecting persons into commitments for which they are unprepared
- ❑ Optional – a “facet” of Christian life.

“Ding-Dong! Orthodoxy Calling!”



# Evangelism Is...

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- Sharing
  - of “Good, (important) News” of Christ with others.
- Utilization & application
  - of our faith in our day to day activities, behavior, & relationships
- Being open
  - to any encounter. Prepared if God gives the opportunity.

using words when necessary –  
to those sent to us and to whom we are sent.

# Who Has Been Attracted to Orthodoxy?

## *Characteristics of Orthodox Converts*

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### Survey of 194 Orthodox Converts

60% Male

88% - some college

29% -switched more than once

Previous reading about Orthodoxy (web)

Faith background

29% "multiple"

20% Roman Catholic

9% Episcopal

34% Other Protestant

8% Non Christian

Almost entirely  
Caucasian

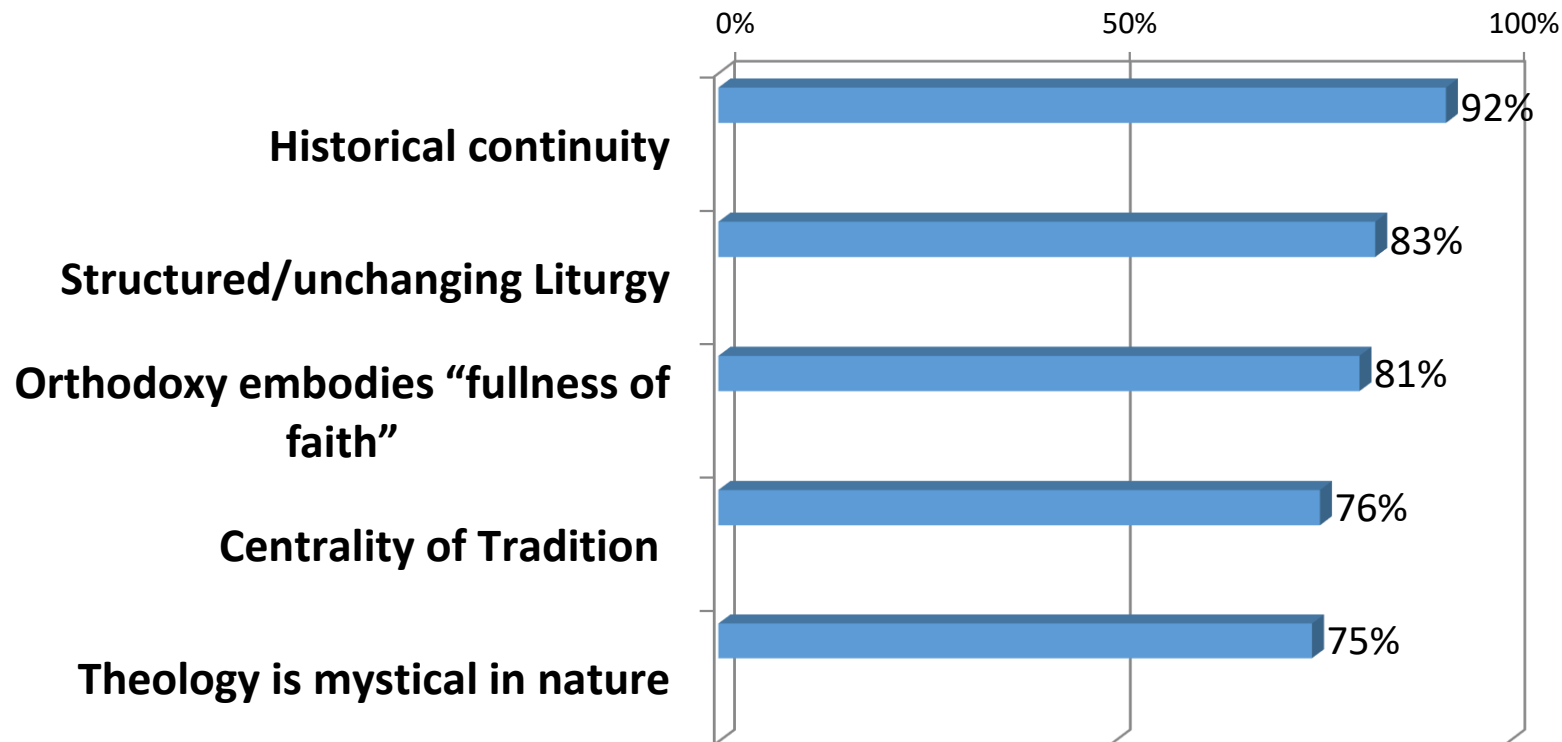
Most found Orthodoxy  
– not invited.

# To What Are They Attracted?

## *Characteristics of Orthodox Converts*

### **Attractive Attributes of Orthodox Christianity**

as Cited by 194 Orthodox Converts ~ 2008

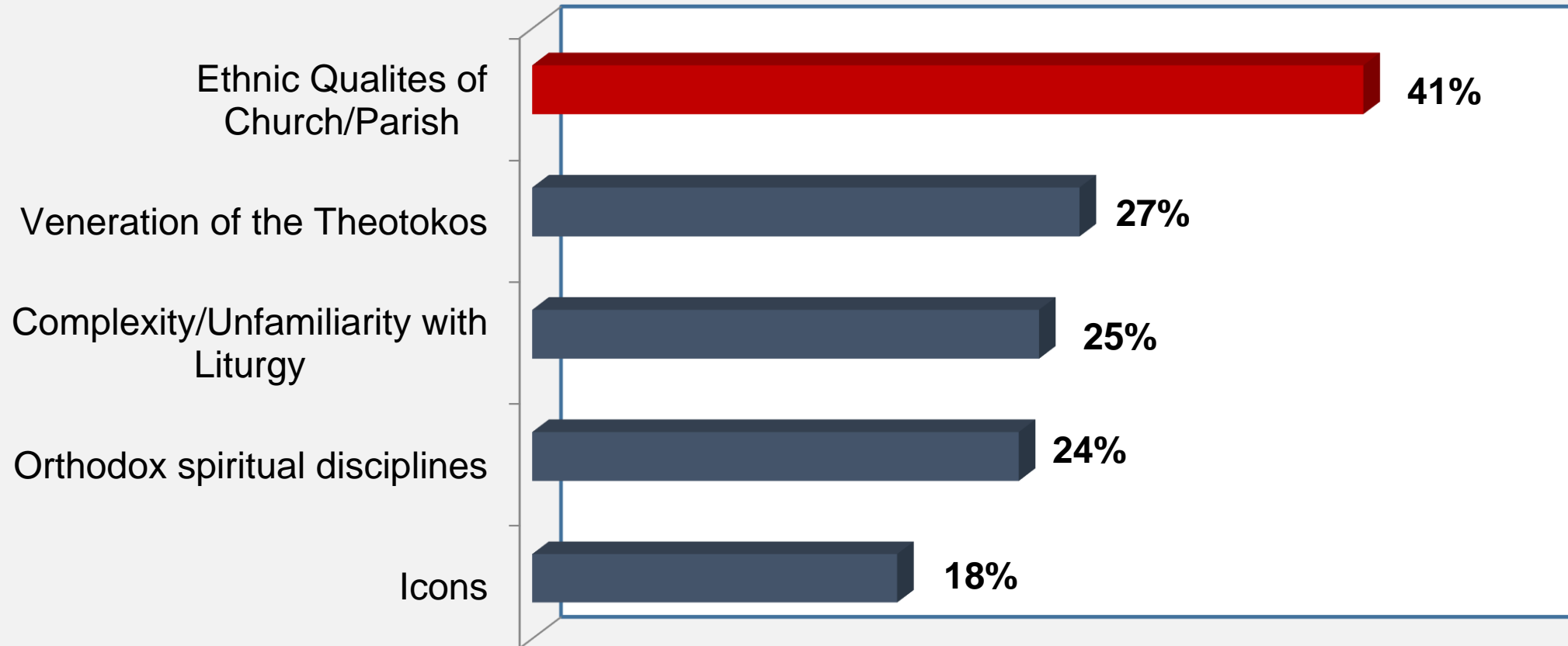


# Words Used By Orthodox Converts to Describe Orthodoxy



# Difficulties & Differences Experienced By Orthodox Converts

Difficulties and Differences Experienced by Orthodox Converts in America



# 6. Drivers of Growth are Under Your Control

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1. **Come to church**
2. Do something for others
3. Make people aware of your parish.
4. Engage newcomers/visitors with care & warmth.
5. Give them a reason to return – expressed and experienced.



## **Parish Development Forum**

Orthodox Church in  
America

2019 Parish Development Grant  
Application

## **Grant Application**

**Archdiocese of Western Pennsylvania  
Diocese of the Midwest  
Bulgarian Diocese**

# Three Things I (We) Will Do After I Return...

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1.

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2.

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3.

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- Stop
- Start
- Expand

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Thank You