

What Kind of Orthodox Parish Do We Envision?

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Parishes need to have a defined concept of their future. What they would like to be like in 3, 5 or 10 or more years. Without that a parish on a plateau or in early decline can feel helpless and without direction. Yet, for a variety of reasons, parish groups rarely have such discussions.

Perhaps this exercise can help begin the conversation. It can work well with a Parish Council.¹

What Do YOU Think?

Each line on the worksheet on the next page has a series of choices about an area of life in a vibrant, hopeful Orthodox parish in 21st century America. It covers ten or twelve areas that truly define the parish character. Many participating in this exercise will have never really considered many of these topics. The worksheet helps you think about new aspects of a healthy parish. Some are “big picture” issues – others are highly practical.

Follow these steps:

1. Which item on each line do you *most* prefer? Some lines have a choice that is a clear difference -- most can agree on a right and wrong. Other lines offer two viable options. Often you will like aspects of both.
2. Once *you've* made a choice on each line, circle 5-10 items that you would strongly support as a vision of your parish future.
3. Then find 3-5 items to which *you* are clearly opposed.

Steps 1-3 should take less than 10 minutes. You could ask people to fill out steps 1-3 at home – beforehand.

What Do WE Think? What does God Want?

4. After all have completed the sheet individually discuss this as a group.
5. Find some areas where you agree
6. Then look hard for areas where there are differences of viewpoint. Do NOT be shy here. *Find the differences. Don't wallpaper over them.*
4. Of the areas where there are differences identify three that are most important or significant.
5. Record these and plan future structured discussions around these items Why do people feel this way? What are examples? What actions would be going on in a parish pursuing view A vs. view B? What is God calling us to be in this parish?

¹ Most parish councils are immersed in the *minutiae* of micro-managing day to day activities of the parish (“bills, budgets and buildings”). This (management) is really not their primary job. An important job of a Parish Council is to, with the guidance and collaboration of the rector, steer and drive the parish to a stronger more hopeful future. Describing a future vision, establishing priorities for gospel centered parish efforts and enabling the conditions for these priorities to be pursued are part of this duty.

1. Parish Size		
<i>(Circle One)</i>	<i>Smaller in Numbers</i>	<i>Same Somewhat Larger Much Larger</i>
The Right Size		
<input type="checkbox"/> 50 Families	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 100 Families	<input type="checkbox"/> 150 Families <input type="checkbox"/> 200 Families <input type="checkbox"/> 250 Families <input type="checkbox"/> 300 Families <input type="checkbox"/> 400 families
2. Parish Mission and Purpose – the community exists to...		
<i>INWARD: We seek to impact the lives of members...for us and our needs in growing in Christ; modest sense of responsibility to others</i>	OR	<i>INWARD & OUTWARD: We seek to serve all in our locale. To proclaim Christ & do His work in the world; we have a sense of mission and outreach; to become something more than ourselves</i>
<i>Get Bigger (as one parish)</i>	OR	<i>Reproduce Ourselves (growth thru multiplication)</i>
2. Parish Atmosphere		
<i>Stillness; tranquility; patience; piety; relaxed; calm; reflective</i>	OR	<i>Active; striving; motion; urgency; intentional; driven; salty, leaven</i>
<i>Complacent & Comfortable</i>	OR	<i>Seeking/ Reaching</i>
<i>A place to “hide”; work done by few</i>	OR	<i>A place to contribute; broad enrollment/engagement</i>
<i>Adaptable; innovative; freshness; running water; intelligent change</i>	OR	<i>Tradition, stability; equilibrium, constancy, continuity</i>
<i>A young, youthful parish</i>	OR	<i>Balance of age groups;</i>
<i>Stern; sober</i>	OR	<i>Cheerful</i>
<i>Excellence (but not perfection)</i>	OR	<i>Good (enough)</i>
<i>PRESERVE: Ethnic/demographic consistency; attract people “like us, heritage</i>	OR	<i>WELCOME: Increased diversity; “eclectic”; melting pot; open, welcome to all; reflect locale</i>
<i>Reproduce Old World Orthodoxy; Foreign</i>	OR	<i>Orthodoxy to America</i>
<i>Ancient</i>	OR	<i>Authentic, Alive, AND Historical</i>
<i>A family; many close relationships; our parish is the social center of most parishioners</i>	OR	<i>Likeminded loving, people... but whose closest friends may be elsewhere; parish is <u>not</u> the social center</i>
3. Worship		
<i>Formal; dignified; peaceful; thankful</i>	OR	<i>Participative; joyous; exuberant; contagious</i>
<i>Children in church</i>	OR	<i>Children in separate cry room</i>
<i>MUSIC: Congregational centric</i>	OR	<i>Choir - centric</i>
<i>Active Weekly/Annual Worship Cycle</i>	OR	<i>Primarily Sunday Liturgy</i>
4. Administration/Governance/Leadership/Decision Making Style		
<i>Structured; organized; efficiency; disciplined;</i>	OR	<i>ad hoc; informal; reactive; unstructured; pitch in</i>
<i>Hierarchical; top down; authoritarian</i>	OR	<i>Coaching/delegating/mentoring</i>
<i>Individual initiative</i>	OR	<i>Ask permission before everything</i>
<i>Planning centric: Plan, do, check, act</i>	OR	<i>Doing centric: Do, fix, do, do, fix...</i>
<i>Hopeful risk taking “rose colored glasses”; “investing”; reaching</i>	OR	<i>Limited risk (“green eye shades”); conserving; protecting; maintaining</i>
<i>A priest</i>	OR	<i>Priest plus other paid staff (ordained or laity)</i>

<i>Parish Council: "Advisors"</i>	<i>OR</i>	<i>PC: Shared Responsibility; Leaven; Energizers</i>
<i>Control & Power</i>	<i>OR</i>	<i>Teamwork & Collaboration</i>
<i>Discernment & Dialogue</i>	<i>OR</i>	<i>Rules & Battles</i>
<i>"Ownership"</i>	<i>OR</i>	<i>"Stewardship"</i>
<i>Voting; majority; "Robert's Rules"</i>	<i>OR</i>	<i>Consensus; conciliarity</i>
5. External Ministry and Charitable Practice		
<i>CORPORATE: Group effort on parish sponsored projects</i>	<i>OR</i>	<i>PERSONAL: Individual effort -- parishioners active in charitable effort NOT sponsored by parish</i>
<i>Parish budget includes serious meaningful \$ for charity</i>	<i>OR</i>	<i>Charitable giving is handled on a personal basis; No parish charity budget</i>
<i>Charitable response = \$</i>	<i>OR</i>	<i>Charitable response = \$ + Time/ personal commitment; (helping aiding, feeding, building)</i>
<i>Local Charities</i>	<i>OR</i>	<i>Portfolio Local/USA/International Charities</i>
<i>Emphasis on Orthodox Charities</i>	<i>OR</i>	<i>Portfolio of Orth. & Non Orthodox Charities</i>
6. Evangelization Style		
<i>Active -- Growth through direct invitation to those interested; through awareness building; active hospitality</i>	<i>OR</i>	<i>Passive - Growth by attraction; through exemplary behavior & reputation</i>
7. Role in Our Local Community		
<i>Active contribution of time, talent and treasure to build up the fabric of the place where we are.</i>	<i>OR</i>	<i>Keep church grounds well tended, set a good example; be pleasant to all, but then keep to ourselves</i>
8. Internal ministry focus/agenda		
<i>Fellowship/friendship/love</i>	<i>OR</i>	<i>Formation/study/understanding the faith</i>
<i>Parishioner effort level: 2-3 times per week</i>	<i>OR</i>	<i>Basically Sunday</i>
<i>Many/more things going on; choice; variety</i>	<i>OR</i>	<i>Fewer things; done better</i>
9. Funding Christ's Work in/through The Parish		
<i>Dues, minimum equal share, compulsory, fund raising, bake sales, raffles, special appeals</i>	<i>OR</i>	<i>Proportional, personal generosity, meaningful amounts, from the heart; Eucharistic</i>
10. Relationship to Larger Church		
<i>On our own, for our own; free agents; sovereign; autonomy; independence</i>	<i>OR</i>	<i>We receive our mandate & prerogative to exist from our Bishop; constitutive element of our Diocese</i>
<i>Optional/limited participation & responsibility</i>	<i>OR</i>	<i>Integral part of Diocese/OCA/ Shared responsibility</i>
11. Facilities		
<i>A little mess is a virtue</i>	<i>OR</i>	<i>Attractive immaculate facilities</i>
<i>Same as today</i>	<i>OR</i>	<i>Different or added</i>
12. Distinctive Parish Traits or Qualities (List three)		

Need help? Contact Joseph Kormos. 513-683-1911. Joekormos1@gmail.com