



HOSPITALITY MINISTRY SURVEY

PREPARED FOR

ST. SERAPHIM ORTHODOX CHURCH

SANTA ROSA, CALIFORNIA

FEBRUARY 2017

Respectfully Submitted by

Anthony Scott

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THE MISSION VISION AND VALUES OF ORTHODOX HOSPITALITY MINISTRY



Mission Statement

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”(Matthew 28:19)

Vision Statement

Composed of clergy and dedicated laity, Hospitality Ministry, within the fullness of Orthodox Christian life, will utilize all available human and material resources to ensure every seeker, inquirer, guest, catechumen, unknowing person and prodigal Orthodox Christian feels unconditionally accepted, loved, welcomed and invited to participate in the Messianic Banquet of the Lord.

Values Statement

Hospitality Ministry embraces the biblical teaching that every person is offered the possibility of being enlightened, some quickly, and some slowly (Romans 1:19-20);

That Jesus Christ is “the Way, the Truth and the Life” (John 14:6);

That the Holy Spirit, like the wind “...blows where He wishes and one hears the sound of Him, but does not know where He comes from and where He is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit” (John 3:8);

That Hospitality Ministry honors the free will of each person, just as God honors our free will (Revelations 3:20);

That Hospitality Ministry does not coerce, manipulate, judge, shame, blame or dispute, but is unafraid of speaking the truth in love from one’s personal experience within the Faith (Ephesians 4: 1-16);

That Hospitality Ministry is foundational to living the Orthodox Christian life and that every Orthodox Christian is called to this ministry, understanding that each person has a unique set of God-given spiritual gifts and acquired skills concerning how Hospitality Ministry may be exercised.

SCOPE AND METHOD OF THE SURVEY



Father Lawrence and Anthony began discussing a formal Hospitality Ministry program in 2016 soon after Anthony and his family became members of the parish. It was clear from the very beginning that the parish was already engaged in this ministry as evidenced by the commitment of past and present clergy helping people to become Orthodox, broad diversity in the parish, the sustained pattern of membership growth, the many social service projects within the parish, the existing catechetical program and the relatively large number of converts to Orthodoxy, as compared to other Orthodox parishes that sometimes elevate cultural values higher on the parish priorities agenda.

Anthony's deep immersion in fundamentalist and evangelical expressions of Christianity (baptized and raised Southern Baptist, Young Life, Campus Crusade, Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, church summer camps and the Christian World Liberation Front at UC Berkeley) acclimated him early on regarding helping others to become Christians. After entry into Orthodoxy in 1971, graduation from St. Vladimir's Seminary in 1974, and 38 years of priestly service, the holy Orthodox Faith, then and now, shapes the appropriate *ways* to help people become Orthodox Christians.

As an Orthodox priest, evangelization was always a high priority. At his first parish, St. George in Portland, Oregon (1975-1977), a church busing program was established transporting 60 children regularly to liturgy because their fairly recent immigrant Middle Eastern parents were not bringing them to church!

After transfer to St. George Antiochian Orthodox Cathedral in Wichita, Kansas (1977-1987), a formal hospitality ministry program was established. Anthony chaired the team. The large number of people becoming Orthodox led to Anthony being invited to lecture at St. Vladimir's Liturgical Institute on Orthodox evangelization by seminary dean, Fr. John Meyendorff. At this time Anthony's own story of becoming Orthodox was published along with many others in "Journeys to Orthodoxy" published by Light and Life Press.

From 1987-1999 Anthony was retained as the Vice-Chancellor for Development at St. Vladimir's Seminary. As the Vice-Chancellor of Development he served as an advocate for St. Vladimir's Seminary, constantly seeking to build constituency support through outreach, visitation, cultivation, encouragement and invitation of Orthodox faithful in all jurisdictions in North America and abroad.

They were asked to embrace the mission and purpose of Orthodox theological education and priestly and lay leadership formation. This task of “development” or what is sometimes described as “advocacy” was remarkably similar to what St. Seraphim is calling “Hospitality Ministry”, though more commonly known as evangelization. From 1999-2016 Anthony worked in over 150 Orthodox parishes and organizations as a consultant for all aspects of development – leadership coaching, strategic planning, fundraising, church growth strategies, and parish council development.

In early 2017 Fr. Lawrence blessed Anthony to coordinate a formal Hospitality Ministry effort at St. Seraphim. Together they recruited an excellent volunteer team, drafted a budget, and defined the scope, goals, objectives and methodology of the ministry. A service manual was created and distributed to the team. The team has met twice and identified several near term objectives, one of which is this survey.

Anthony wrote both the survey and the draft of the report and then submitted these to Fr. Lawrence for review to ensure the anonymity of survey participants, review the conclusions, challenges and recommendations and also to correct any factual misunderstandings Anthony may have inadvertently conveyed concerning the life, activities and history of the parish.

However imperfectly presented, the survey nevertheless brought forth new knowledge by means of the many incisive and sage observations and suggestions candidly offered by survey participants. I thank you very much.

The ever present mission of St. Seraphim Orthodox Church, as with every Orthodox parish, to “go forth baptizing all nations” may now be taken up with increased vigor, new initiatives and common resolve to unconditionally love and accept every soul who staggers into the uncreated light of the Empty Tomb, a light that shines very brightly at 90 Mountain View Avenue, Santa Rosa, California.

Following the distribution of the report to the community, the Hospitality Ministry team welcomes all comments, suggestions, critiques and recommendations. Email these to Anthony at orthodoxconsultant@gmail.com. Anthony is away for the month of March but will respond when he returns. The report itself along with any additional parishioner input will be discussed by the Hospitality Ministry team at the next meeting on April 6.

SURVEY RESPONSES



Fifty-seven survey responses were received with a total of 59 people participating including three priests and one deacon. Seven participants elected to remain anonymous. It's reasonable to assume a number of responders represented the consensus opinion of a family – both a wife and a husband and perhaps also children. Therefore, the survey may have represented the views of as many as 100 people.

The survey report is lengthy because almost all of the comments are included, though none of these are attributed to a specific person. A few edits were made here and there when typographic errors were obvious.

Question Number One: Personal Data

The first question asked for name, address, phone number and email. This information will be passed on to the parish office to update any changes necessary on the parish roster.

Question Number Two: Please estimate month and year you became a member of St. Seraphim

Most survey takers answered this question. The decades in which participants became Orthodox or joined the parish are listed below. It's not absolutely certain that the responses indicate an increasing momentum of people becoming Orthodox or those already Orthodox who join the parish. We only have information from the people who completed the surveys. Yet the prospect that this could be a growing trend is interesting and even inspiring to contemplate. These are the number of people and the decades that people indicated they became members of St. Seraphim:

1960-1969 – 1

1970-1979 – 4

1980-1989 – 10

1990-2000 – 14

2010-2017 – 20

Question Number Three: How did you locate the parish?

Forty-four survey takers responded to this question. If we combine the totals associated with personal contact – “Personally invited by a friend”, “Referred by a friend or relative” or “Heard about it from other people”, we see how important the person-to-person transmission can be – 43.18%! The next highest category – public information such as the “Internet”, “Newspaper article” or “Sign on the street” totaled 42.18%. This is almost as important as personal contacts. Events such as “Choir concert” or “Glendi” totaled 6.82%.

Answer Choices–	Responses–
–	22.73%
2. Internet search.	10
–	20.45%
1. Personally invited by a friend to come to church here.	9
–	18.18%
3. Referred by a friend or relative.	8
–	18.18%
3. Phone book, newspaper article, public information.	8
–	6.82%
4. Parish event such as choir concert, Glendi, etc.	3
–	4.55%
5. I married into it.	2
–	4.55%
5. Heard about it from other people.	2
–	2.27%
6. It's our family church. Been here for a generation or more.	1
–	2.27%
6. Sign on the street, church building.	1
Total	44

Comments on Question Three:

- The Lord guided us there
- Got assigned here
- The family moved to a new house which was close to St. Seraphim Church.
- Glendi

- I was looking for an Orthodox church
- Glendi
- Referred by the priest
- First the Glendi, but soon afterward a member of the church came into my life through homeschooling
- We moved to the area in '82, were already orthodox, attended Pokrov off and on until Fr. Andrew Morbey became rector in spring 1984
- Referred by my spiritual Father Doroteus from St Paisius Monastery
- Hired to be choir director
- I've attended on and off since about 1975. I was at University and a career in the Navy until 1997
- My parents were invited by a friend to this church when I was a child
- Attended in the past while visiting family in the area
- My daughter was baptized in 2006, my husband in 2014
- My father was Russian Orthodox
- We were attending Holy Dormition in Santa Rosa so we knew of St. Seraphim
- I knew I wanted to convert but was not willing to move my family to a parish worshipping in a foreign language. A family member told me about St Seraphim's holding services in English language so we came, felt very welcomed and became catechumens
- 18 years at GLENDI
- Moved to Ukiah and St. Seraphim is closest church

Question Number Four: How would you describe yourself?

Answer Choices–	Responses–
–	22.22%
2. I'm a "cradle" Orthodox Christian.	12
–	66.67%
1. I transitioned to Orthodoxy from another expression of Christianity.	36
–	3.70%
5. I transitioned to Orthodoxy from another faith tradition, not Christianity.	2
–	1.85%
I'm a seeker of truth and wisdom and presently not Orthodox.	1
–	0.00%
I'm agnostic, not sure about who God is or if God even exists.	0
–	5.56%
4. I've actively returned to Orthodox Christianity after a period of inactivity.	3
–	18.52%
3. I'm Orthodox having moved to this area and joined this parish.	10
–	0.00%
I've been raised in the Church and now wondering if it's for me or not for me or if I need to do some searching.	0
–	1.85%
I affiliate with the parish, socialize and financially support it, but I'm not a member.	1
–	1.85%
I'm researching and studying Orthodoxy but have not yet formally entered the Church.	1
–	1.85%
Bitter and painful experiences of life make going to church difficult for me. I stand at arms' length.	1
Total Respondents: 54	

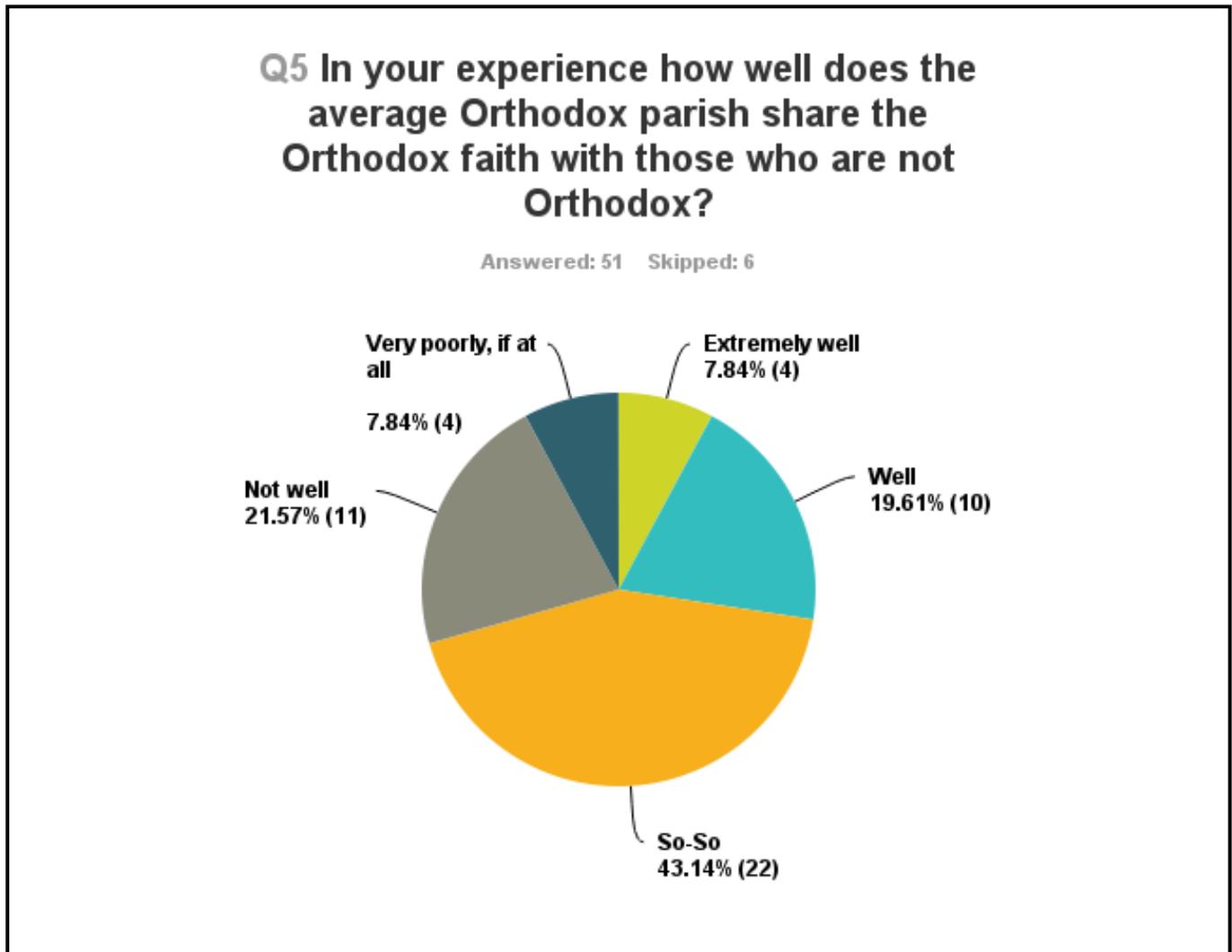
Reading the comments below, one becomes dizzy as regards the many, many paths to God for people at St. Seraphim. Undoubtedly, there are as many unique paths as there are people in the world.

Comments on Question Number Four:

- Convert from Protestant faith
- From the Presbyterian Church of America
- I grew up Roman Catholic
- I was raised Roman Catholic; when I came in contact with the Holy Orthodox Church it was like I'd found the Pearl of great price. About hundreds of Christ the Savior Brotherhood and Christian Community members were received into the Orthodox Church

- My mother's family is all Orthodox. My Father's family is Catholic. I was raised Catholic, then became Orthodox during my university years
- I was searching for a new faith, having grown up Methodist and not attending a church since college days. I tried other faiths, other churches and a Greek friend told me to come to her church - she said it was all about Jesus (which made me wonder as I was trying more new age churches)
- I still occasionally attend St. Seraphim but belong to another parish
- I was raised in the Methodist Church, but did not attend any church after high school. I was a proponent of 'humanistic psychology' for several years
- I'm currently finding it difficult to get to church as I am semi-disabled but I do plan to come back soon
- I converted to the OC 50 years ago, graduated from St. Vlads, and have been a priest for 47+ years. Retired in 2012, we attend St. Seraphim most of the time, and at Holy Trinity Cathedral in SF where our son and his family attend, and occasionally at St. Nicholas in San Anselmo
- I became Orthodox in 1973 (convert from Catholic), after several years I left the Church, but then found St. Seraphim and knew I was finally home
- I had no religious affiliation before becoming Orthodox
- My father was Orthodox and my mother was Baptist. They didn't agree on anything, so there was no religion, etc., in our home. When I was less than 12 years old I announced I wanted to go to church. The only church I knew was the Congregational church, and there I went (1940) until 2000. That was when I realized the emptiness of Protestantism. With help of my counselor (a Buddhist) I decided to enter the Orthodox religion because of its structured learning, yet I found more
- Lutheran Convert
- Cradle Catholic, first 15 years, agnostic/atheist 15 years, fundamentalist Protestant 25 years, now FAR from perfect
- Raised Catholic, and Catholic education, practiced Buddhism for 10 years, golden rule for 30 years
- Had no strong religious beliefs or needs; found this parish and fell in love with it; the religion is the frosting on the cake. We are here because we love the parish and the folks in it. It is unlikely we would attend another Orthodox church on a regular basis

Question Number Five: In your experience how well does the average Orthodox parish share the Orthodox faith with those who are not Orthodox?



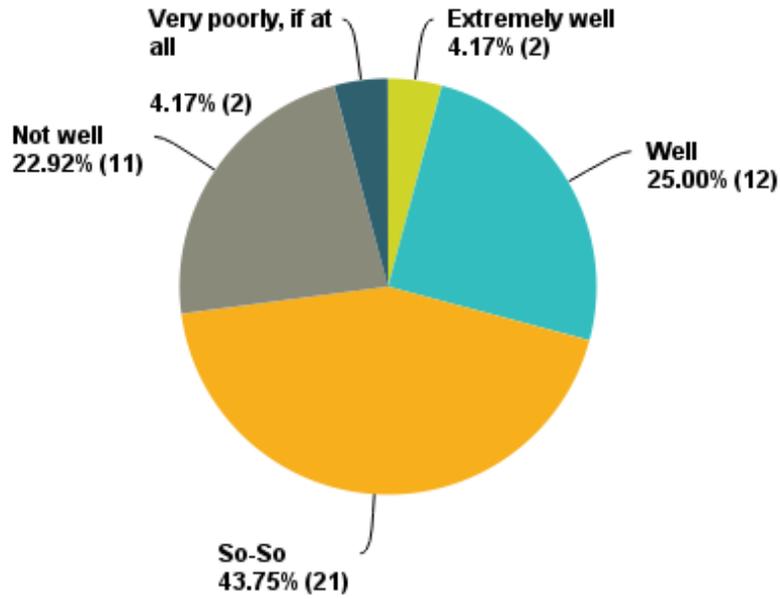
Only 14 survey takers or 27.55% felt that the “average” Orthodox parish shares the Orthodox faith either “Extremely well” or “Well”. Thirty-seven people or 72.55% barely gave “average”parishes a passing grade.

Question Number Six: In your experience how well does the average Orthodox Christian share the Orthodox faith with those who are not Orthodox?

Here, when asked how well Orthodox Christians *personally* share their faith, the assessment was similar. Once again fourteen people or 29.17% felt it was done either “extremely well” or “well”, while 70.83% felt it was “So-So”, “Not well” or “very poorly, if at all.”

Q6 In your experience how well does the average Orthodox Christian share the Orthodox faith with those who are not Orthodox?

Answered: 48 Skipped: 9



Comments on Question Number Six:

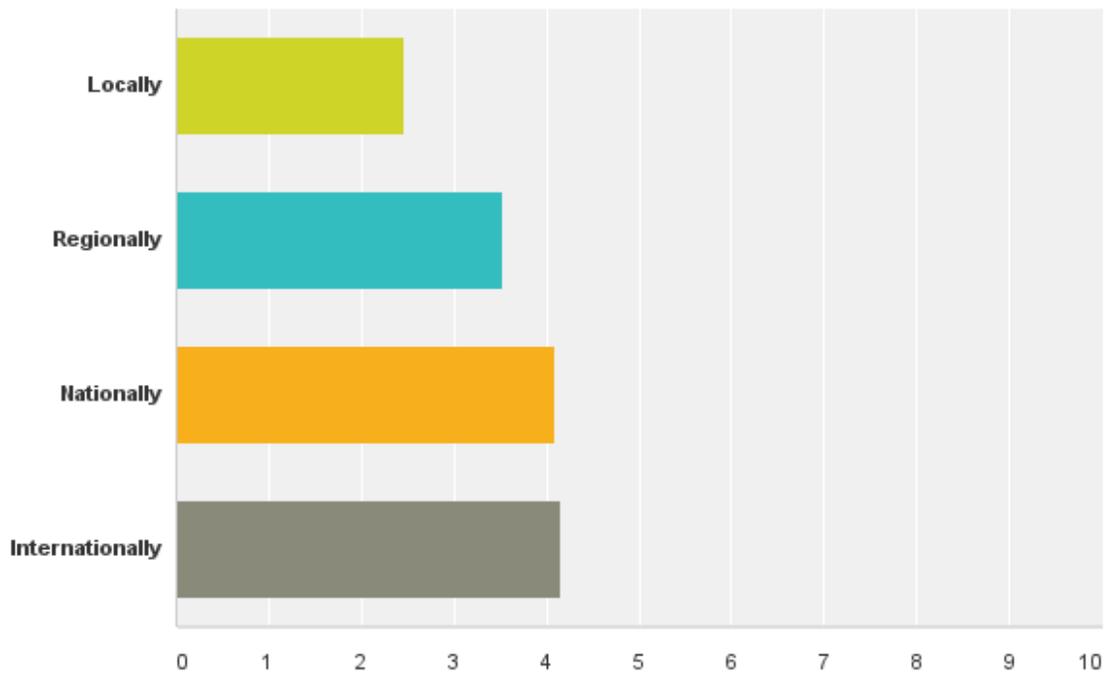
- Not as well as Baptists or Evangelicals
- I can't answer this question. I think that depends on a person
- I do not have significant information to answer this query
- We are not taught how Orthodox should share their faith and the aggressive ways that Protestants do this are frowned upon
- I do not know about other churches
- Unless they are a convert. We don't understand why every Christian wouldn't want to be an Orthodox Christian
- I've known some to share very well and others, myself included, are a bit quiet about it
- I don't know

- Again, "average" is hard for me to define. Sharing the faith is a highly individualized activity. Generally speaking, Orthodox Christians seem to have a more subtle style compared to other Christians known for evangelizing
- I have no idea
- If I say it's all about Jesus, I'm worried they will immediately reject it. Many Americans are turned off by what they see of American churches. So I talk about how it's the original Christian faith and describe the services, music, etc. more
- There are times where I see Orthodoxy shared in a rather forceful, unwelcome manner. And in other cases, I see Orthodox Christians hesitant to share their faith. On average, Orthodox Christians at St. Seraphim's do a good job of sharing Orthodoxy by their actions and willingness to share personal religious affiliation with friends
- Again, I think the average person at St Seraphim would do better than what I hear with regard to other parishes. A big part of that is that quite a few of us have come from the Evangelical world and are not shy about talking about our faith. I try to be sensitive and humble - and it's hard to not be obnoxious in the throes of "convertitis." My experience in interacting with people from other parishes is that a lot of "cradle" Orthodox don't even know enough about the faith to share it, and wonder why anyone else might be interested in the first place
- I thought we weren't supposed to proselytize
- See above comment
- St. Seraphim, on the whole, is a very welcoming parish. Therefore, if visitors inquire, we're good at sharing the faith
- Actually this kind of sharing comes from how we as Orthodox act. Orthodox are different in their assuredness of who they are. They do not need to pontificate
- Including me!
- I'm not sure what an average Orthodox Christian is. Do you mean cradle Orthodox? Then the answer is, not to well. I know many evangelical converts who are willing and capable of sharing the faith. Most of us just don't know how to approach it
- No Bible study for outreach to Protestants; currently we use the beauty of our setting for lure. Also use the "individual" approach when folks enter our Temple
- So-so seems to be the average across all jurisdictions. OCA converts appear more open to sharing
- Proselytizers are not in great favor in liberal America

Question Number Seven: In your experience how well does the parish of St. Seraphim fulfill the commandment to "go forth and baptize all nations"?

Q7 In your experience how well does the parish of St. Seraphim fulfill the commandment to "go forth and baptize all nations"?

Answered: 55 Skipped: 2



	Very well	Well	Not very well	Not at all	Don't know/Not applicable	Total	Weighted Average
Locally	24.07% 13	38.89% 21	18.52% 10	3.70% 2	14.81% 8	54	2.46
Regionally	5.77% 3	25.00% 13	23.08% 12	3.85% 2	42.31% 22	52	3.52
Nationally	0.00% 0	13.46% 7	21.15% 11	7.69% 4	57.69% 30	52	4.10
Internationally	0.00% 0	11.76% 6	21.57% 11	5.88% 3	60.78% 31	51	4.16

Here, look at the “Weighted Average” in the far right column. The lower the number, then the better survey respondents felt St. Seraphim was in fulfilling the commandment to “go forth and baptize all nations.” Locally, they felt the parish was doing a pretty good job. Regionally, nationally and

internationally, many responses were either negative or “don’t know”, as may be read in the many thoughtful and interesting comments below.

Comments for Questions Seven:

- I do not have significant information to answer this accurately
- We have Glendi. (Local and Regional.) 2. Our parish helps send families to seminary, and takes on training priest interns. (National) 3. We support Orthodox missionaries, and support a few of our own who go on Mission trips. (International)
- I'm not sure. We have a lot of converts and I think we are a very friendly church. We do outreach and 'show love. For me, I dislike "pushy" Christians and would rather experience love, which I think we do well
- I think St. Seraphim's does a good job of being involved in the local community serving those in need, opening up the hall to the homeless, and sharing joy through Glendi. In 21st century California, it is more off-putting than productive to aggressively share Orthodoxy. It will be our visible example of service in the community that will be most effective in sharing Orthodoxy and St. Seraphim's does a good job of this
- I think we do well with opportunities that come up for us, especially with supporting parish members who wish to go to seminary, on mission trips, etc. We don't do a lot to create organized opportunities other than Glendi, but that is pretty large on the local front. Again, it's hard to do that without "coercion, manipulation, judgment, shame, blame or disputation" - not so much from being Orthodox, I think, as from being former Evangelicals.... I think in the current cultural climate, the best way to share our faith is the humble Matthew 25 route, and then be prepared to answer if someone asks us why we are serving the least and most outcast. This is the hardest of all, but again, some in our parish are notably doing this: Tom & Denise, Ambrose & those who help with the Nomadic Shelter, those who have served with Catholic Charities and Redwood Gospel Mission at the Homeless Birthday Party and serving Thanksgiving & Christmas meals, others I don't know about because they keep their service quiet
- I really cannot answer this question, BUT the parishioners are friendly and welcoming to strangers, in my experience, at Church Services and at advertised events such as the annual Glendi
- I'd rate St. Seraphim between "Well" and "Not very well"
- An amazing number of people are drawn to Orthodoxy after attending our annual Glendi Festival every September
- Glendi at least introduces local people to Orthodoxy. The several musical events in the church encourage the conversation about icons and their uniqueness to Orthodoxy. Beyond that, I don't know. OCMC work is national/international, but I don't see lots of that happening. My daughter went to South Africa, and Kendra went to Guatemala, but I don't think they spoke much about St Seraphim's
- A healthy parish reaches out. This is a healthy parish

- I am not completely certain about this. I think we have done a good job of drawing people to our church, and are currently active in the community. I don't feel we are super aggressive in our evangelism (or outreach)
- Glendi is the only way I am aware of as a church, making once a year into the "not very well", although it is a HIT but only for "party & foodie" animals. Also eases the "Ethnic/White" conscience of our area....allowing folks who attend to speak of our food-stuffs. Small help
- Our parish, for the most part, is welcoming to inquirers but self-limiting. Other than Fr Lawrence's personal attention, which is attractive, there is no model for others to nurture newcomers. I hear from OCA Orthodox visitors that our Parish is regarded as a good example of contemporary Orthodox life yet I remain challenged to understand that our model of a warm and loving spiritual community is extensible or replicable. I love our Bishop Benjamin. He brings joy to our faithful while behind the scenes appears to "plow the road" so his pastors can do their jobs. My personal vision stops there aside from: I remain challenged by the inter-jurisdictional foolishness that exists and how it limits Orthodox evangelism in the US; as well as the Ecumenical exclusion to which the OCA is subjected by our international jurisdictional hierarchs
- We are friendly and welcoming to visitors and at Glendi; we do our part to support organizations outside of our immediate area

Question Number Eight: What three items below most impede Orthodox Christians from more freely sharing their beliefs and experience of Orthodoxy?

Answer Choices –	Responses –
– 1. The fear of intruding upon another person's private beliefs.	46.43% 26
– 3. The feeling that they don't understand Orthodoxy well enough to share it with others.	41.07% 23
– 6. A desire to allow others the right to their own journey.	25.00% 14
– 2. Most Orthodox Christians never received any encouragement or training on how best to do this.	42.86% 24
– 9. The opinion that each person has their own concept of God and what's right for one person doesn't mean it's going to be right for another person.	10.71% 6
– 6. Orthodoxy is so counter-intuitive to our present culture that most people would have a very difficult time understanding it, much less accepting it.	25.00% 14
– 8. The belief that it is inconsistent with the Orthodox way of life to evangelize others.	12.50% 7
– 8. The belief that a person must first be spiritually fit before they attempt to pass the faith on to others.	12.50% 7
– 5. An Orthodox person may feel that the faith is too complex to communicate it to a person who is not Orthodox, that one must be immersed into liturgical life to begin to understand it.	28.57% 16
– 4. For a couple of generations we've been preoccupied with maintaining our cultural heritage, not growing the Orthodox presence in America.	30.36% 17
– 10. In certain countries for a long period of time it was a crime to openly share the Orthodox faith.	0.00% 0
– 7. With virulent secularism on the march one fears ridicule or scoffing if identified as a practicing Christian.	17.86% 10
Total Respondents: 56	

The three most often cited reasons are 1) the fear of intruding upon another person’s private beliefs; 2) most Orthodox Christians never received any encouragement or training on how best to do this and 3) the feeling that they don’t understand Orthodoxy well enough to share it with others.

Comments on Question Number Eight:

- I cannot recall any conversation with a member to discuss this particular subject
- A quiet humility
- As a convert who shares her faith freely, I can't really answer for "Most" Orthodox Christians
- I can't speak for Orthodox Christians generally, only for myself. My own third reason, which is most common for me personally: When I don't sense that there is an opening in the heart or mind of the hearer
- Religion has become a taboo subject and people just don't talk about it as freely as they used to. We talk if faith is brought up, but that rarely happens
- I don't like to push myself or Faith on others, but rather say "come and see" or answer questions if asked
- Mostly that people have been so offended by Christianity. For example: calling their way of life virulent. That, until recently I wouldn't really want to bring anyone to the church, because there's a good chance that the sermon will straight forward insult them, but making their way of life the butt of a joke or just pointing out how stupid it is. That seems to be not the case as much anymore, but it might also be because my four year old is making it impossible to pay attention. In fact, I have a friend who won't come to the church anymore because every time he tries he is offended in the sermon. And he's not easily offended
- Actually all of the above apply to one degree or another
- The mentality that God will bring those who will convert to us
- My observation is that so much time is spent at services and internal parish activities, that most parishioners have little additional time to evangelize
- I have always been impressed with how Orthodox Christians are so approachable. Before I was Orthodox, I was intrigued by the faith, parishioners, and lack of outright "evangelism". This was one of the things I was drawn to. Perhaps it isn't the way to bring in large masses, but for me - the mystery, the feeling that I was wanted there, but let to come in my own time, it worked for me
- The belief that it is inconsistent with the Orthodox way of life to evangelize others. Most Orthodox Christians never received any encouragement or training on how best to do this
- It doesn't take knowledge or experience. Just let the love show

Question Number Nine: When I hear the words "evangelism" or "evangelization" I feel...(choose any that apply)

Answer Choices	Responses
1. Uncomfortable	52.94% 27
7. Intrigued	7.84% 4
2. Like I'm in a non Orthodox church or hall or watching TV	31.37% 16
7. Relief	7.84% 4
4. As through an aggressive act will soon be perpetuated	17.65% 9
9. Animated	1.96% 1
6. Joyful	11.76% 6
3. Hopeful	25.49% 13
8. It brings forth no feeling in me	3.92% 2
5. Thankful	15.69% 8
Total Respondents: 51	

Comments on Question Nine:

- Double predestination and free will Is difficult. Evangelization is a blessing. The Great Commission is an example and the work of ministry. Although it a mystery how it all works
- Apprehensive. When I hear the word I always wonder what the term implies. I believe there is a good form of evangelization, but I don't want to adopt an awkward and intrusive protestant form of evangelism
- I'm not educated enough in this field to experience these feelings
- I was reared and grew up in an evangelical church, and was trained to be a "missionary". I have no particular attitude toward such a project at this time
- Sounds Protestant. They overdo it
- Having burned a few bridges in my own life as a fiery evangelical (short phase that matched my previous bent toward agnosticism when I first considered Christianity), I tend to be timid when

my faith is addressed by an outsider. I answer questions and will elaborate; I just tend to leave off the "come join us" part

- Wary
- My guard goes up and I prepare myself for a lecture. Kind of like when the J.W's come to our door
- The Orthodox Church maintains the fullness of the faith. We should be confident and humbled by that. We should be able to bring others to our churches knowing they will experience the truth
- ...like we have forgotten that the term means "to announce good news," and like the term "the gospel" we think we know what we all mean when we say it (but maybe we don't). Before I was Orthodox, I didn't have much good news to announce (though what the good news truly is began to take form for me with reading the Anglican theologian N.T. Wright, with his focus on the 1st century Jewish context of Christianity, a couple of years before I was received into the Church). I think most Orthodox, even the former Evangelical ones, would have trouble coherently and succinctly describing what The Good News is.
- Most Orthodox, and I would say RC -- the tradition I grew up in -- are content to go to church and pray, but not to aggressively invite others to join them
- I think of Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, and the SDA. All a little kooky, and weird
- Motivated
- When I hear the word evangelism, it makes me feel the necessity to share the true Gospel with those who don't know. The problem in our culture is that most everyone has been introduced to some idea about The Gospel Jesus Christ. The mistaken ideas are often hard barriers to overcome
- I was raised in a Lutheran household, where we studied evangelism and my parents practiced in a way that I was uncomfortable with (knocking on doors)
- Uncomfortable because I don't know how to do it correctly and I'd want the inquirer to have the "best" experience and I'm not sure they would get it
- The way we evangelize at Glendi and other times when "strangers" visit the parish is the best way: by example with love and participation

Question Number 10: If you are someone who did not grow up in the parish but joined or affiliated at a later date please respond to the following statements regarding your first few visits to the parish.

Once again, in the chart below, look to the far right column; the lower the number, the higher the level of positivity. There are many 1+ choices regarding friendliness, openness, thoughtful consideration, etc.

Some of the high numbers in the 3+ category are actually positive responses because the question is posed in a negative form. Still, there is always room for improvement

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't Know/Does not apply	Total	Weighted Average
I was personally greeted when I arrived.	50.00% 27	35.19% 19	5.56% 3	5.56% 3	3.70% 2	54	1.78
Information about the parish and /or Orthodoxy was made freely available to me.	35.85% 19	35.85% 19	11.32% 6	7.55% 4	9.43% 5	53	2.19
I was invited to the coffee hour/luncheon.	53.70% 29	31.48% 17	7.41% 4	5.56% 3	1.85% 1	54	1.70
People were generally friendly.	48.15% 26	44.44% 24	3.70% 2	3.70% 2	0.00% 0	54	1.63
I was able to participate in the service in a way that was meaningful to me.	46.30% 25	35.19% 19	11.11% 6	1.85% 1	5.56% 3	54	1.85
The sermons were informative and inspiring.	50.94% 27	37.74% 20	9.43% 5	1.89% 1	0.00% 0	53	1.62
The liturgy was very different from anything I had ever experienced in church.	20.75% 11	24.53% 13	22.64% 12	7.55% 4	24.53% 13	53	2.91
Greeters and ushers were easily identified.	18.87% 10	16.98% 9	37.74% 20	15.09% 8	11.32% 6	53	2.83
I felt very much at home	36.36% 20	36.36% 20	20.00% 11	5.45% 3	1.82% 1	55	2.00

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't Know/Does not apply	Total	Weighted Average
early on.							
I was startled by the interior of the church - architecture, iconostasis, no pews and iconography.	13.46% 7	21.15% 11	25.00% 13	21.15% 11	19.23% 10	52	3.12

Comments on Question Number 10:

- I felt peaceful
- Older men in suits and women in skirts shouldn't be required to sit on the floor. I think this keeps some away. Greek and Antiochian parishes usually have pews
- Services were in Slavonic; it was easy for me to understand, felt at home
- My dad became Orthodox first, so we had gone to church with him a few times in Ben Lomond before finding St. Seraphim. Also, we had looked into the Orthodox Church while my husband was still finishing his Master's at a Protestant Seminary
- Met a friend whom I had not seen for 60 yrs. She herded me through introductions
- A few parishioners immediately reached out—(names omitted) I felt comfortable, but our previous parish is different (not better or worse), so there was a period of acclimation
- I felt very welcomed
- I had experience as an "unofficial catechumen" for several years in other Orthodox parishes before I attended services at St. Seraphim, and I knew some people in the parish. Also, I don't think we had official greeters when I first attended in 2006
- The physical beauty of the church and the incense and choir were mesmerizing and the grace that was present in everything was palpable. I never wanted to leave
- I was looking for the truth. At some point in the journey I became convinced the Orthodox Church had maintained the Christian faith unchanged from the beginning and wanted to be Orthodox. This conviction sustained me through some parish experiences that were difficult and discouraging
- Amazed or awed is a better description
- When I first came in the 70s, my Russian was not so good and the people I met weren't interested in speaking English. Not a good initial experience. Totally different now

- I loved the service, felt drawn to it, wanted to know more and at the same time felt very uncomfortable - worried that I would make a mistake, do something wrong
- I have always had a hard time with the music at St. Seraphim's. I came from a smallish church and was used to a very approachable kind of music, where people not in the choir could sing to a good amount of it. This is not to say I love it, but I've heard from other people that also come from smaller churches that they feel like St. Seraphim's is cold and unapproachable
- I came for Glendi in 2008, and was impressed by "the spirit of the place." Fr Michael was the first person who spoke to me :) I then became a regular visitor beginning in October of that year. The first time I came to Liturgy, Nilus was the only one who greeted me, and since I was used to the Protestant habit of several people descending upon newcomers to greet them, Even though I was glad I was not "swooped down upon," I felt somewhat dejected and wondered if this was the parish for me. However, I determined to "break into the parish" no matter what, because I knew Orthodoxy was where God was leading me, I didn't know about the other Orthodox parishes in Santa Rosa, and I knew the Liturgy here was going to be mainly in English. I prayed to St Seraphim to help me :) After that, things were better in succeeding visits; people noticed I was new and were friendlier. I was tired of the sermon being the center of worship, so I appreciated the shorter homilies on the Scripture readings of the day. The fact is, even though our priests do much better than most with the homilies, most sermons are not memorable over the long term. I think the homily needs to be a continual reminder of what the Good News is, in a way that connects it to the Scripture reading of the day and/or the Feast. We don't need an exhortation to "just try harder"; we need to be reminded "Pascha is, and therefore these ramifications...."
- I attended the very first liturgy service with as I joined because of my affiliation with whom I was dating but who lived out of state. I have rarely felt so welcomed anywhere in my whole life
- Though my husband and I are cradle Orthodox and were raised in a strict Russian Orthodox Church, we would really welcome pews in church. We find it difficult to concentrate on lengthy services when we stand for too long. I get fidgety and uncomfortable. I would not want to sit for the entire service, just for small increments of time when able
- Some people were generally friendly but majority does not relate or greet strangers. Also some seating is marked territory by some people
- The feeling of being at "home" didn't start to take shape until I became a catechumen and then ultimately baptized. This is where work could be done in helping those to somehow feel more at home in their initial visits, or guiding them that Orthodoxy could be home
- When I first attended, services were in The Protection of the Holy Virgin Church. I was very uncomfortable with because of the Russian influence in the look and sounds of the church
- I grew up in the Episcopal Church, so I was familiar with a structured liturgy. But I spent the last almost 30 years in a local non-denominational church, so it was a bit startling. Because my daughter and husband were already Orthodox when I started attending regularly, everyone was very friendly! I was not looking for inspiring sermons - I was searching for inspiring worship! Very early on I could begin to do that at St Seraphim's

- When I first visited Pokrov Parish in 1985 as an inquirer, Fr. Andrew (the mission priest at the time) gave me a stack of books - a few to keep and many to return. Five years later, Fr Michael Margitich arrived in Santa Rosa to "retire" and care take a little mission parish. I was baptized two months after the parish feast that year
- My "Disagree Answers" are based on my own mistrust of joining a church, lack of knowledge of Orthodoxy and had nothing to do with the Clergy or Parish
- I would have to write a book!
- I was born and raised in a Liturgical Missouri Synod Lutheran Church. There were lots of stained glass images depicting biblical events in our church. The iconostasis and general altar setup was definitely different but not at all startling. It seemed reverent to me. It seemed right to not have pews. Standing before God seemed more proper to me. A cappella choir was amazing for me. So beautiful and simple
- Since I was Orthodox already, I was familiar with the service and what to expect. I had visited at Christmas and Lenten pre-sanctified Liturgies in the years prior to joining the Parish
- I was invited by my sister and brother-in-law who are well regarded in the parish and looked after my initial needs
- St. Seraphim did not exist when we first visited the parish

Question Number Eleven: I began to become more active by...

Answer Choices	Responses
– 2. Meetings with the priest.	25.00% 12
– 5. Taking a class.	6.25% 3
– 4. Reading books about Orthodoxy.	8.33% 4
– 6. Talking with members of the parish.	4.17% 2
– 3. Volunteering.	14.58% 7
– 7. I was mentored by a member of the parish who became a friend.	0.00% 0
– 1. Coming regularly to church.	27.08% 13
– 7. Getting our children involved in parish programs.	0.00% 0
– 7. Joining a parish organization.	0.00% 0
– 3. Attending and participating in parish events.	14.58% 7
Total	48

Comments on Question Number Eleven:

- I'm a priest here
- Almost all of the events mentioned above were part of my early experience
- Reading books; I was mentored by a friend; coming to church regularly; attending and participating in events
- All of the above. It's who we are as a couple. Throwing ourselves into church wholeheartedly
- We were still Catechumens, so we were taking the class and getting to know others who were also in the process of converting
- All the above
- Also meetings with the priest, attending the catechumens class, reading books assigned to catechumens, talking to members of the parish, coming to services

- Taking a class, reading, visiting with others, volunteering, regular attendance, participating in parish events
- Being quite shy I forced myself to volunteer in various projects so that I could get to know other members better and feel like I fit in somehow. Also, having respect and love for Father Lawrence through comfortable and safe confessions/meetings let me know that this church was a good fit for me
- All of the above
- I had evangelized myself in a way by reading quite a few books before ever walking into the Church
- Attended church regularly
- I also took a class, talked with the priests, read many books, talked with members of the parish, my friend mentored me and became my god mother and attended parish events. I was pro-active because I wanted to know more and I was lucky my friend went to the church
- Coming regularly to church and attending parish events
- It's difficult for me to be active on a more routine basis due to living 65 minutes away, and with my husband not being Orthodox. I participate as much as I can on Sundays, working the Bookstore for the past 6 years and teaching the High School church school class for 4 years. I stay with my godmother in Petaluma for Holy Week and Glendi weekend. Early on I told Fr Lawrence that if I lived closer I'd be there so often that he would probably roll his eyes when he saw me coming :)
- All of the above!
- St. Seraphim was our parish of choice upon retirement, because it was the closest and we felt very much that we found a new home, with the clergy, the people, and the liturgical services
- Try to be involved as time permits, but enjoying retirement after parish life in Michigan
- All of the above
- All of the above. Seriously
- To find out what's going on, one has to participate. I started volunteering, coming regularly to services, attending and participating in parish events. And I was given a special blessing to join the choir (while not even yet a catechumen.) It's been an incredible education! The heart of Orthodoxy!
- Catechism classes, meeting with Fr. Lawrence, volunteering, coming regularly to church, mentorships, attending and participating in parish events
- All of the above!!!

- I was very involved in The Lutheran Parish that we left. I knew I needed to serve God in our new church home. I immediately became involved
- I moved from the Greek church in Vallejo when my daughter and her family moved to Santa Rosa and my priest in Vallejo agreed with me that I should be in the same parish with them as long as they were living in the same area as I was (I was commuting to Vallejo from Petaluma). I immediately joined the choir after I met with Fr. Lawrence. I have always attended services on a regular basis
- I jumped in with catechism class
- Reading books about Orthodoxy. Volunteering. Coming regularly to church
- I was inspired by Fr Lawrence who saw to it that I enjoyed my experience with everything on the above list. My kids are adults but they came around to see what was changing Dad
- Our family and circle of friends were shrinking, and we wanted new ones
- Becoming a member of the choir

Question Number Twelve: Concerning our facilities, please choose all that apply regarding your early visits.

Once again, look at the far right column for degrees of agreement/disagreement; the lower the number the higher the positive assessment. Remember also that some survey takers are looking back 5-10 years or more. There may have been major changes since then. Generally, there is strong consensus that the grounds are beautiful, welcoming and well kept.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Does not apply	Total	Weighted Average
There was signage directing me to the church and other buildings.	24.53% 13	41.51% 22	18.87% 10	7.55% 4	7.55% 4	53	2.32
Parking was difficult.	3.70% 2	0.00% 0	53.70% 29	37.04% 20	5.56% 3	54	3.41
The grounds were well kept.	55.56% 30	42.59% 23	0.00% 0	1.85% 1	0.00% 0	54	1.48
I had no difficulty locating the restrooms.	20.37% 11	46.30% 25	24.07% 13	7.41% 4	1.85% 1	54	2.24
The restrooms were clean and fresh.	41.51% 22	50.94% 27	1.89% 1	3.77% 2	1.89% 1	53	1.74
The other buildings were clean and presentable.	50.94% 27	43.40% 23	0.00% 0	3.77% 2	1.89% 1	53	1.62

- All accommodations were well operated by American middle class standards
- When we first came, the new parish hall had not been built--it is a big improvement! If I were just now first attending, I would answer strongly agree to everything
- My memories of facilities ten years ago are vague, I assume because nothing negative stood out to me at the time
- Are there signs for each church and the hall? I never noticed. The sign out front is good before you turn into the driveway
- We came to the parish in the early '80's. The majority of the people were Russians of my grandparent's generation. The main issue for us at that time was liturgical language. We had young children and they didn't know what was going on. For a couple of years we attended

liturgy in Calistoga where Fr. George Benigsen served in English. We came back to Pokrov when Fr. Andrew Morbey was assigned in spring of 1984.

- From the beginning I have loved simply being on the grounds of St Seraphim/Protection, especially with the beautiful landscaping.
- In the congested SF area (e.g, HTC and to a less extent, at St. Nicholas in San Anselmo) parking is a nuisance, BUT not at St. S. Maybe the parking lot could be paved, but with the normally dry weather it would be an unnecessary expense.
- Again, when I first attended, it was in the Protection. Everything was funkier then. Everything has been upgraded since then. The only problem now is that you have to ask someone where the bathrooms are, and even then they are tough to find.
- I didn't notice any of the above
- The bathrooms are much better now in our new hall
- The old wooden Pokrov was/is comfortable and charming. St Seraphim, when first built, was vast and cave-like. We learned to love it that way, and the beautification has led us to love it more

Question Number Thirteen: What would have made you feel more welcomed?

Answer Choices	Responses
– I could more easily identify official greeters who were also sources of information.	14.71% 5
– A friendly person sitting with me after liturgy asking interesting questions and genuinely listening to me.	38.24% 13
– A friendly person asking if they could show me the buildings and the grounds and tell me a little history about the parish.	26.47% 9
– A personal invitation to an upcoming event.	11.76% 4
– A phone call from the priest soon after appearing on Sundays asking about a coffee get together.	8.82% 3
Total	34

Comments on Question Thirteen:

- Younger greeters that are more extroverted to new folks
- Well I haven't had a problem with this, but I think it is really important that everyone (especially "lay" people) greets and make everyone welcome

- I was not looking for anything that would make feel more welcomed. I was in the church - that's the most important thing
- My godmother, after a year, said, "How long are you going to stay on the outside?"
- N/A We were practically ready to jump into the baptismal font by the time we got here, and were fully immersed into parish life quite quickly
- All of that happened. So, we did feel welcome
- Again, being shy going into the Agape meal was intimidating. Everyone knew each other already and it was uncomfortable. I liked at the end of liturgy being welcomed to the Agape meal as that felt very friendly, but once there everyone was in their own little group and I just wanted to leave
- We knew the parish was evolving. When it made commitment to reach out to the English speaking community we were very willing to commit
- I felt totally welcomed
- I grew up around the Orthodox Church even though I was attending a Catholic parish in my youth. I went to Liturgy when we visited my grandparents and cousins
- If any parish member had spoken to me or greeted me. I was not greeted by a single person. This is not a friendly parish. I am hoping to change that. I make a point to greet visitors, and get to know each catechumen
- Contact with people who could answer my questions and help me learn more... but also giving me space to absorb all that was new. I'm not anti-social, but I also like to observe and listen, and think about what I've observed and heard
- Nothing. It was instant family!
- The clergy were welcoming, and many parishioners told us how happy they were to have us attend and be part of their parish family!
- Having someone to talk with not so much about "Orthodoxy" (i.e. the exterior rules and structures), rather being able to relate the interior life of Christ within the Church to me personally. One being able to bridge my previous Christian experiences and lead me to the fulfillment of my desired life in Christ as found within Orthodoxy. Initially, I did feel that it was difficult to make the faith personal for me vs. observing simply the outward forms of the faith. What drew me to the faith was the interior life, a life rooted in the heart, and that was difficult, at the beginning, to see this vision through all of the outward "rules and regulations" that I perceived from the parish at the time. I think what people are seeking, who are outside of the Church looking in, is a genuine life in Christ - not just intellectually, but within one's entire being
- A visitor should ALWAYS be invited to coffee hour. Even if they refuse, they should feel welcomed and acknowledged. And a visitor should be asked if s/he would like to meet the priest
- None of the above

- I feel very welcomed! In fact, when folks ask my husband when I'm getting baptized, he responds "the more people ask, the longer it will take!" I generally just need to be left alone, to take everything in, ask when I don't understand. If the priest had called, I would have felt pressured
- I can't remember ever feeling ignored
- Most of the other entries happened for me at St. Seraphim
- The parish priest in those days was not very friendly
- I was given a tour by my friend
- Follow up from priest. Took a while
- Fr. Lawrence did that often... an excellent way to go
- I was well cared for by my family, however, I don't feel others get the same treatment unless Fr. Lawrence gets involved right away
- I was actually greeted by the priest and his Matushka my first day and made to feel very welcome right from the beginning
- Every visitor has different "needs." Options must be suited to each one, case by case. And that happened

Question Number Fourteen: In the coffee hour in my early visits...

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Does not apply	Total	Weighted Average
I felt largely ignored.	5.88% 3	15.69% 8	47.06% 24	23.53% 12	7.84% 4	51	3.12
I was warmly welcomed.	35.29% 18	45.10% 23	11.76% 6	1.96% 1	5.88% 3	51	1.98
I was welcomed by the priest or introduced to him.	57.69% 30	21.15% 11	9.62% 5	1.92% 1	9.62% 5	52	1.85
People took me around and introduced me to others.	25.49% 13	41.18% 21	19.61% 10	7.84% 4	5.88% 3	51	2.27
I sat with people who were genuinely interested in learning about me.	37.74% 20	35.85% 19	15.09% 8	7.55% 4	3.77% 2	53	2.04
I was offered a packet of information.	6.00% 3	8.00% 4	40.00% 20	20.00% 10	26.00% 13	50	3.52
Someone gave me a card with their phone number offering to be of help in any way.	6.12% 3	8.16% 4	40.82% 20	20.41% 10	24.49% 12	49	3.49
I was politely asked if I wanted to be on the parish mailing list.	12.00% 6	16.00% 8	36.00% 18	18.00% 9	18.00% 9	50	3.14

Comments on Question Fourteen:

- It was so long ago, I don't rightly remember
- Father Lawrence was very kind--introduced us to Justin and Amy and other young families/couples. We attended one of his BBQs early on, which helped us become better acquainted with others, like the Anderson family
- I felt very welcome and was invited to join in parish activities from a fairly early stage
- I know Father Lawrence has encouraged us to look out for newcomers and make them feel welcomed, but sometimes you just don't know who they are. I felt very supported at the Senior Luncheon when I first went and tried to get the shoebox project going
- Again, we knew the parish was in transition. We were very willing to be involved when the liturgical language changed to English
- Things have changed since then, it's much better now!
- As I wrote above, the first time I came to Liturgy I was largely ignored, but after that people interacted with me, and I felt warmly welcomed. I met with Fr Lawrence near the end of that first October, and I felt from the start that I could talk to him, which was important to me. Once I began attending regularly, I was generally happy with the level of people's interaction with me, and I didn't mind initiating conversation with someone who seemed to have a welcoming attitude. I didn't know there was a parish mailing list until a few months later, but at the beginning that didn't make any difference to me. Since I had done a lot of investigating the Orthodox Church before showing up on the doorstep, I'm not sure a packet of information would have been useful to me, but I'm sure a well-developed info packet would be helpful for some people
- Again, my reception was perfect
- St. Seraphim is a very warm and welcoming community
- Generally some people are extremely friendly, but there are many cliques. The clergy, sub-deacons, deacons are very friendly. As people get to see me more, they greet me and are becoming very pleasant and friendly, less bashful
- I was invited by a couple who were long-time friends who hosted me and my family and knew how to stay in touch with us
- No one invited me to sit with them but if I asked to join a table I was never refused. This of course changed with time as I got to know members
- I experienced none of the above from the parishioners. My contact was solely with the priest, Fr. Lawrence
- I had been in email contact with Fr. Lawrence for months before I came to St. Seraphim, so some of these options don't really apply to my situation

- I came with a friend, so the last three don't really apply
- People were used to seeing us. Long before baptism, we felt like we were at home here

Question Number Fifteen: About how long did it take for you to feel like you belonged in the community - that you pretty much understood what was going on and knew a reasonable number of people?

Answer Choices	Responses
– Right away	36.36% 20
– A couple of months	36.36% 20
– A year	10.91% 6
– A couple of years	5.45% 3
– I'm still trying to figure it out	10.91% 6
Total	55

Comments on Question Number Fifteen:

- I'm still learning new things about the church and its practices. It's different from the Greek church, yet very familiar. Had I not volunteered it would have taken longer to fit in, I think
- When Fr. Andrew Morbey was assigned in 1984 we knew the parish had decided to live
- Living in Novato has greatly impacted my ability to be more involved in the community. There doesn't appear to be fellowship programs for women
- A few months I was getting comfortable, after a year and my baptism I was more comfortable - felt like I belonged
- For me it was more like 6 months, mostly because I could only participate on Sundays
- May be me personally for trying to fit in after being extremely active in our own parish
- Initially, I got fairly acclimated and shortly after baptism I felt a part of the community - it did take several years to not feel as though Orthodoxy was something still foreign, rather making it personal. I didn't have to be Russian or Greek, rather, what I grew up with (primarily the Holy Scriptures) and now their proper revelation in the life of the Church, showed to me that Orthodoxy is home now and has always been home, I just didn't know it earlier in my life
- I was baking cookies for Glendi that first summer, felt very comfortable with all the people. Singing in the choir really cemented what was going on in services

- I did know a few of the parishioners from past associations in other parishes
- Slow learner
- We're friendly, too

Question Number Sixteen: What did you like best about your early visits?

- The true presence of Christ. The real and relevant Church
- It was very warm and welcoming
- Warmth and Christian love expressed consistently
- Being greeted warmly by Father Lawrence
- The social hour after liturgy
- Knowing that we had finally made it to where we are supposed to be
- Priest genuinely loved and understood people
- Beauty of the church and liturgy, warmth of many of the parishioners
- I appreciated the services
- Being able to worship God in a reverent setting, with ancient forms, without the distractions of the Protestant evangelical services I had recently escaped
- I LOVED the holiness of the church, the feel of ancient traditions coming forth through time and the blending of all the different cultures. I have always said that Saint Seraphim makes me feel like I am in one of the early churches of the new faith
- Ethnic diversity with an emphasis on Russian liturgical roots
- It felt like home
- Worship together as an Orthodox community
- The God loving Priest
- Since 1997, I was warmly welcomed
- The Grounds
- I felt the presence of God during the liturgy
- I felt the love
- Beauty to all the senses - smell, vision, hearing; and spiritually uplifting message

- I felt like I found where God lives
- Icons, byzantine chant
- Being in the House of God
- Fr. Lawrence being Fr. Lawrence
- First of all, finally feeling "at home" with regard to worship and theology. Second, the parish seemed to be at peace - not without problems, but not with any weird-feeling undercurrents, either. I've been churched all my life and have been around the block, so to speak
- Fellow parishioners and tone and content of liturgy
- Services, clergy, and people
- Services, clergy, altar servers, choir, greeters
- The choir, the theological discussion, the priests, the catechumen classes
- Orthodox discussions by the priest, after Liturgy, and having families with children my children's ages
- I was finally home
- Worship. Praising God in a place that felt and looked holy
- Heaven on Earth = Orthodox Worship
- The Liturgy and Homilies and new friends
- Within six months I was working in the garden and helping Fr. Lawrence in the so-called office
- The liturgy. The joy. Feeling like I was "home"
- There were other children in the church parish for my children to connect with
- Beautiful music and icons
- The Liturgy
- The reverence, the music
- Getting to know some of the parishioners
- The beautiful building and amazing choir
- Visual sacred environment
- The beauty of the service; Temple, music, Liturgy itself

- How well these accomplished people were leading a joyful, hopeful loving Christian life in contemporary society
- The warm and friendly priest and wife
- The communal warmth
- The enthusiasm of the parishioners

Question Number Seventeen: Rate the following points of contact in terms of their effectiveness in sharing the Orthodox faith with another person.

	Very important	Important	So-So	Not important at all	Not sure/Not applicable	Total	Weighted Average
1. Unconditionally love and accept the person.	82.46% 47	14.04% 8	1.75% 1	0.00% 0	1.75% 1	57	1.25
8. Personally invite a person to come to a church service.	48.21% 27	39.29% 22	10.71% 6	0.00% 0	1.79% 1	56	1.68
5. Speaking from one's own experience describe one's journey into Orthodoxy.	56.14% 32	33.33% 19	5.26% 3	0.00% 0	5.26% 3	57	1.65
6. Ask open-ended polite questions of a person to better understand and appreciate their own spiritual journey in life.	52.73% 29	29.09% 16	14.55% 8	0.00% 0	3.64% 2	55	1.73
3. Inform oneself of the basic teachings of Orthodoxy to better explain it to others.	67.86% 38	30.36% 17	1.79% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	56	1.34
7. Personally invite a person to a church social or cultural event.	50.00% 28	37.50% 21	12.50% 7	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	56	1.63

	Very important	Important	So-So	Not important at all	Not sure/Not applicable	Total	Weighted Average
8. Give literature or a book to another person when it feels acceptable to do so, following it up with a polite discussion, mostly in listening mode.	36.36% 20	36.36% 20	21.82% 12	1.82% 1	3.64% 2	55	2.00
2. Authentically and honestly do one's best to model the Orthodox Christian life.	82.14% 46	17.86% 10	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	56	1.18
9. Ask the person if they would like to have coffee or lunch together with you and one of our clergy.	31.48% 17	33.33% 18	31.48% 17	0.00% 0	3.70% 2	54	2.11
10. In house blessing season, host a gathering of friends and relatives for the event and invite this person.	29.09% 16	29.09% 16	34.55% 19	1.82% 1	5.45% 3	55	2.25
6. Before trying to help anyone become Orthodox, become spiritually fit oneself.	38.18% 21	41.82% 23	18.18% 10	1.82% 1	0.00% 0	55	1.84
2. Pray for them.	82.46% 47	14.04% 8	3.51% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	57	1.21
4. Sincerely, honestly and authentically "befriend" them.	62.50% 35	30.36% 17	5.36% 3	1.79% 1	0.00% 0	56	1.46
3. In the spirit of the sermon on the mount, quietly find humble ways to be of helpful service to them,	66.07% 37	23.21% 13	7.14% 4	0.00% 0	3.57% 2	56	1.52

Comments on Question Number Seventeen:

- All wonderful and sincere ways show love for our neighbors and walk in the way of Christ
- Hard to disagree with these points
- I feel "effectiveness" is guided by God with each individual person's needs and can look very different from person to person
- Many visitors don't understand long services and standing
- You don't have to be "spiritually fit". If you wait to do that, you won't evangelize anyone. We are always working out our own salvation. Be who you are
- While I believe all of these things are important/very important, I'm not very good at making them happen!
- Some of the ways I marked "so-so" might be very helpful for *some* people. But each one is unique. Some people don't read at all, for example
- Never thought about house blessing or lunch with our priest. both nice ideas
- Becoming spiritually fit is a constant process. If we wait until we're completely fit we'll never do anything
- Try one's best to live a Christ-like life and invite others to Services so they can "come and see"
- Generally, the best way to share Orthodoxy with someone is through living the faith in one's own life and sharing its power in your life with those you are close with. On a side note, it seems a little insincere to befriend someone with the express purpose of sharing Orthodoxy
- Who among us is entirely "spiritually fit"? Nonetheless, if we can at least try to pray for people and be humble and of service, God might just do something (in us as well as in the person about whom we are concerned)
- None
- I think expectation also plays into this. I had heard one time from a growing parish that they truly believed that everyone that came into the church simply to visit would one day become Orthodox. Having this hope and expectation (rooted within the parish) of what God can do then helps to frame the entire culture of the parish - how we greet, how we engage with visitors, how we follow up, etc...
- I feel like the kid in Sunday School, who answers "Jesus" to every question. I think I know the right answers. But I don't do them! To honestly "befriend" someone takes a lot of time and work. I don't do it enough. Almost all of my friends are Christian. I talk with them about Orthodoxy all the time
- Listen to the Holy Spirit
- Second-to-last question: how can something in "quotes" be sincere, honest and authentic?
- Personal, sincere, authentic love is everything!
- We don't have control over how people will react to us. All we can do is plant the seed and have faith in God's will

- The dynamic of being Orthodox, sharing, befriending is so fluid as not to be captured. Good luck on attempting to find meaning in the above after quantifying the data
- It's the "good struggle" for which I need the grace of God to accomplish
- Again, it's case by case. Some would welcome a lot of personal interest; others would be repulsed by it

Question Number Eighteen: My greatest challenge in feeling a part of the community right now is...

- My own weakness and shortcomings
- Find time and energy to give more help
- Energy to participate. I am ninety years old
- I don't have any really close intimate friends. I have stronger Protestant friends
- I have always felt that I belong in this parish
- I'm good
- superficial explanations of Orthodoxy and its history
- Taxed by the challenge of training young children to be attentive and quiet and observant during the liturgy
- I feel part of the community
- My own time and energy limitations
- Time constraints
- Finding the "perfect" balance between what we used to call "upstairs church", the divine and "downstairs" the social
- I am a part of the community
- Just my own health limitations
- I am my own barrier. A full busy life and the distance are my greatest challenges
- The parish is getting pretty big. We each tend to have a circle of friends
- This parish has many members that have been in the parish for many years. They are very reluctant to make changes to programs, ministries, fund raising, church maintenance, etc. In fact, the organization and cleanliness of the church office is an eye sore, yet no changes can be made. This is unfortunate as it is a reflection on Father Lawrence, Father Theodor, and the parish as a whole. There are a couple of key long term members that are extremely reluctant to change and make working with them very difficult for MANY others in the parish. I would be more active if it wasn't this way. I am retired and have the time to serve, but these individuals make it difficult to do so
- I am not able to be of service as often as I would like due to work
- I have no personal time due to family life and work

- I was never truly accepted or liked by the "inner circle"
- I attend another parish regularly
- None
- An inability to give more time
- Not being able to participate more, mostly because of the distance, and also because my husband is not Orthodox and I don't want to leave him sitting at home alone (children grown and gone). He is not interested in doing anything more than attending an occasional social event here. He is not interested in Orthodoxy but is active in his church
- Physical health but my priest has visited often and continues to be willing to do so
- None
- Being retired but trying to fit in personally after a very active parish life in our own former parish
- Absolutely no challenges, not now, nor in the last 22 years!
- Baptism - am I ready or not!
- I am geographically isolated and have been blessed with the podvig of assisting to organize a Mission parish with current Mission Station status. With the closest local Orthodox parish an hour away and my home parish five hours away, loneliness and discouragement are my greatest foes
- My mileage from church and cost of gas prevents me from attending non-liturgy events
- Just aging which eliminates many possibilities, leaving a person feeling isolated
- Not being part of the "in crowd". Not able to communicate or be accepted by the priest
- My health
- I don't feel challenged at all. I am an accepted part of the community
- I am a naturally quiet, private and shy person. Church is sometimes hard for me, because it is also very social
- Having love and patience for everyone in our parish not just the people that are likable
- Time -- working two jobs; active in choir, bookstore; parish council
- Because of my introversion (autism), I cannot help as much with the majority of extroverted events
- My own issues about being part of any community
- How the hell do I know?
- Time conflicts
- Not a challenge - feel very much a part of this community
- Keeping my mouth closed
- Trying to remember everyone's names

Question Number Nineteen: Regarding helping others to become Orthodox I feel we should...

Answer Choices	Responses
— 1. Educate our parishioners in how to do this gently but effectively.	48.08% 25
— 5. Allow each person their own path and not try to influence them one way or another.	3.85% 2
— 4. Leave this up to the clergy and perhaps other very highly educated parishioners who can explain the faith to others.	7.69% 4
— 2. Regarding increasing membership, we should practice a program of attraction to Orthodoxy rather than promotion about Orthodoxy.	17.31% 9
— 3. Be more serious about this; get organized, gather funding, learn from others how to do this and frankly, get to work. It's way past due.	11.54% 6
— 3. No change is required, St. Seraphim is doing just fine. We're growing every year.	11.54% 6
Total	52

Comments on Question Nineteen:

- Better signage larger social media foot print. Possibly bringing in young Orthodox speakers
- Be friendly and help do not push people to join!
- We are growing from the inside with so many children
- Have a compassionate and well educated clergy
- Guidance would be helpful, but probably being more prayerful would help just as much
- Practice a program of attraction...rather than promotion
- Perhaps a quick (ten minute or less) question and answer period either after liturgy or at the agape meal. Could pull from a "hat" one question a person has that the priest could answer according to church doctrine. We could learn a lot and the questions add up. That way we educate ourselves better so that we give good/true information when asked
- Need to determine how we do this without the "hard sell" that some Protestants do
- I think we should learn more about how others do this and get organized and try to do more
- Caveat: an important part of gently but effectively educating parishioners would be to tell them the value of their own path but also to share... which would involve helping us think more

comprehensively about what it means to be an Orthodox Christian, to the best of our capabilities; I realize that most people aren't as "theologically minded" as I, but we all need to be reminded of what that Good News entails, and we can be helped to learn how to better share our experience, strength and hope regarding our Christian life when there's an opening for that in our relations with people. Shortly after I was received into the Church, a very faithful retired-age "cradle" who serves and participates quite a bit in parish life told me that I "knew more about the Orthodox Church" than he did growing up in it his whole life. For those of us who have come in from Evangelicalism particularly, "gently" is the key word here; again, it's too easy to be triumphalist and/or arrogant about being right, or needing to win the argument/close the deal. Even for someone like me who was very tired of that kind of scenario, the temptation is still pretty strong...

- No parish is "doing just fine," St. Seraphim is doing very well, but there is always room for greater effort
- A confessing of the inner life of the Church and how to enter in, even in the midst of all of the apparent outward "rituals"
- Educate our parishioners in how to do this gently but effectively
- The last thing I want to do is walk into a new setting and start telling people how to do things better! As a catechumen, I do think St Seraphim is doing just fine! So I don't think I'm the right person to answer this question
- We underestimate the value of beauty in attracting others to Orthodoxy. Most of my non-Orthodox friends have no use for dogma, or indeed (in many cases) for Christianity, but they love our music, art and architecture. Remember the experience of Prince Vladimir's emissaries, who were sent out to learn about the great faiths of the world, and came back to say that only in Hagia Sophia did they feel as if they were in heaven. An entire people was converted to Orthodoxy not by persuasion or force, but by beauty
- I have mixed emotions about this. I feel our church is growing and it often feels busy and crowded to me. On the other hand, I also feel we should not be the best kept secret; I do want to share my faith. I also think we should practice attraction to Orthodoxy, rather than outright promotion
- Acquire a peaceful spirit and thousands around you will be saved
- Have a program to teach US how to evangelize Orthodoxy. I know I am repeating but the complexity of Orthodoxy is greater than the average bear may handle. The majority of seekers outside The Church is huge so the challenge is there, but I find myself poorly equipped to deal. When talking with others, my overblown judgment is they are in the same boat. Most of the long-term or cradles tell me, "Go ask Father" on so many issues. One knock down for Orthodoxy is the hierarchy as well as the ethnic issues. I did not join this church to become Russian. That plus we are dealing with Americans that have a "congregational" or "egalitarian" point of view. Good luck on overcoming both of those seemingly contrary issues
- I'm not sure - there is always room for improvement - but I personally am not a "good salesman" and fear "turning people off" with my beliefs. I'm lean more towards a "Come and See" attitude

- Gentle and effective are the key words. We do well at attracting others to the church and its activities

Question Number Twenty: How might you feel concerning the items below if the parish began to experience consistent and dynamic membership growth?

	Very good	Good	Neutral	Concerned	Very concerned	Total	Weighted Average
– A more crowded church.	27.27% 15	29.09% 16	21.82% 12	18.18% 10	3.64% 2	55	2.42
– Many more noisy and wandering children at liturgy.	14.55% 8	25.45% 14	23.64% 13	29.09% 16	7.27% 4	55	2.89
– A necessary growth in staffing.	12.96% 7	48.15% 26	29.63% 16	9.26% 5	0.00% 0	54	2.35
– Increased operational costs.	5.88% 3	33.33% 17	43.14% 22	15.69% 8	1.96% 1	51	2.75
– The possibility of feeling less intimately connected to others due to the arrival of many unfamiliar people.	5.45% 3	10.91% 6	56.36% 31	25.45% 14	1.82% 1	55	3.07
– The growing possibility that two liturgies on Sunday might be necessary.	13.21% 7	20.75% 11	30.19% 16	18.87% 10	16.98% 9	53	3.06
– Becoming even more diverse than we presently are.	41.51% 22	33.96% 18	18.87% 10	3.77% 2	1.89% 1	53	1.91

	Very good	Good	Neutral	Concerned	Very concerned	Total	Weighted Average
– Many more converts, fewer cradle Orthodox.	20.00% 11	27.27% 15	43.64% 24	5.45% 3	3.64% 2	55	2.45
– Reduced availability of Fr. Lawrence.	1.96% 1	0.00% 0	39.22% 20	47.06% 24	11.76% 6	51	3.67
– Increased capital expenses in terms of larger facilities - restrooms, parking, the size of the hall, classrooms, etc.	9.26% 5	20.37% 11	44.44% 24	22.22% 12	3.70% 2	54	2.91
– The possibility of starting a mission parish in a promising area to serve a section of the growing parish.	47.27% 26	27.27% 15	18.18% 10	7.27% 4	0.00% 0	55	1.85

Comments on Question Number Twenty:

- All good bigger better more reaching out. People are generally dissatisfied with the void in weak Churches with no Tradition
- I don't have the energy to start another parish. I'm staying here
- I would be sorry to "lose" connection with Fr. Lawrence and other parishioners, but these "problems/concerns" are welcome
- Two liturgies on Sunday? This is an Orthodox Church! Fr. Lawrence has already explained to us that if we get too big for our building a mission parish would be founded
- I think if the church grew and grew you would want to meet those needs in whatever way you could as long as the church doesn't become a "slave" to debt

- I answered mostly neutral because those things come with the territory. I don't like the idea of 2 Liturgies - much better to start another parish and it is in not seeing people because of their potential involvement in a different (mission) parish that would make me sad about being less intimately connected. But that's a cross we need to bear, and God will help us
- Fr. Lawrence, the clergy, and the people are welcoming. Maybe because I am a priest I stand out as a "person of interest"!
- The main concern would be (in the context of growth) to continue and even increase the quality of the life in the Church as opposed to making the faith more "seeker friendly" - if I could use that phrase
- I wrote "Neutral" for most of the issues, because they are the consequences of parish growth. I personally find it important to have the whole parish able to worship together, so having a second Liturgy, or starting a mission would cause a separation
- I would love a mission in more northern California. I may be moving north, and I don't relish the idea of a long drive to church. I think it's time
- Above question is odd: "The possibility of feeling less intimately connected to others due to the arrival of many unfamiliar people." So I would feel "Very Good" if I felt alienation? Or Very Concerned if I felt alienation!
- More "new" parishioners would make me feel more connected to more people, not less!

Question Number Twenty-One: If you have names of people you would like us to gently, humbly and courteously contact offering to them a caring heart and a listening ear, please list these names below. If you entered your name at the beginning of the survey, then we know whom to contact for further information before we reach out to your suggested person.

Seven names were offered in the survey, these have been passed confidentially to Fr. Lawrence who will respond as is appropriate.

CONCLUSIONS BASED ON SURVEY RESPONSES



For the overwhelming majority of survey participants, St. Seraphim Orthodox Church is a thriving, diverse, active, emotionally stable, loving and sociable parish. This is not to say there are not occasional challenges, misunderstandings between people and some parishioners or affiliated souls who have a tough time feeling that they truly belong.

A whopping 66.67% or 36 of the 54 people who responded described themselves as converts from “another expression of Christianity.” Twenty-two percent were “cradle” Orthodox and 18% were already Orthodox who moved to the area. (Some fell in more than one category.)

Some described unfortunate methods of evangelization (to announce the good news) suggesting that when evangelization becomes aggressive, it becomes proselytization (to aggressively recruit someone to one’s cause or organization). In the survey terms and phrases such as “pontificating”, “convertitus”, “intrusive”, “aggressive”, “awkward”, and “inconsistent with Orthodoxy”, were employed to define abuses of evangelization.

In the survey, when asked what feelings were evoked upon hearing the word “evangelization” or “evangelism”, 27 chose “uncomfortable”; 16 selected “like I’m not in an Orthodox Church”; and 9 chose “like an aggressive act will soon be perpetrated”.

It’s clear that we know what evangelization is not, but do we then know what it is? Unfortunately defining evangelization theologically, scripturally, dogmatically, patristically and liturgically is not within the scope of this survey, nor the theological acumen of the author!

Jesus, the most emphatic announcement of the gospel from the Father, sometimes spoke very tough truth to people, calling Simon Peter Satan, for example. At other times he was astoundingly compassionate and accepting, telling the good thief that he would be in God’s Kingdom or asking His Father to forgive those who were crucifying Him. Since we are merely human, though participating in the Uncreated Energies of God, and not the God-Man of Jesus, perhaps we should stick with unconditionally loving and accepting every person as best as we are able. This seems to be the safe, sweet spot of evangelization for humans (even if sometimes we too must speak the tough truth in love). As one mother

said to her child when speaking tough truth, “I love you more than I love your opinion of me.” But let us be reserved and judicious when speaking tough truth. It’s hard to hear the truth in this messenger.

It’s good to remember that every single saint was an evangelizer giving testimony to the truth by their words and their actions. “Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel”, wrote St. Paul (I Corinthians 9:16). In our culture in the 21st century, just as with first century Palestine Christians, there are ways to evangelize and ways not to evangelize but all must be done in love.

Obviously, the engaged presence and friendly acceptance of clergy is essential to an active and effective evangelization effort. St. Seraphim is blessed with this. However, it is incorrect to delegate this foundational element of the Orthodox Christian life just to the priest. Evangelization is the calling of every Orthodox Christian, according to the gifts of the Holy Spirit granted to the person and their unique set of skills and experience acquired along the journey of life. We all have a role to play.

As regards the sacrament of evangelization or Hospitality Ministry, elements of it have always been powerfully present – warmth, friendliness, acceptance and joy – if not in us personally, then in the fullness of the Holy Spirit offered in the sacramental and liturgical realism of the Church. Other elements, missing or rarely observed, would be very beneficial in helping others to find “the pearl of great price” – communion with God the Father in the perfect offering of His Son Jesus Christ in the fullness of the Holy Spirit, otherwise known as the Holy Orthodox Church.

Twenty-six respondents to the survey identified “Fear of intruding upon another person’s private beliefs” as the reason that Orthodox Christians are shy about evangelization. Undoubtedly, accepting another person irrespective of their beliefs is of the gospel, yet this doesn’t mean we necessarily agree with them. It may be useful to keep in mind that “privacy” and “secrecy” are not features of the Kingdom of God. That’s why we practice thorough, open and honest confessions.

RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON SURVEY RESPONSES



1. Tattoo on every person's forehead so that we see it every morning when we look in the mirror: "St. Seraphim is not our church; St. Seraphim is God's Church."

This humble little reminder conveys to us the important truth that our opinions, judgments, feelings, politics, prejudices and personal desires all need to be brought into line with God's will as it pertains to our life in the community of the parish (and from there, because we sing at the end of the Liturgy, "We have seen the true light! We have received the heavenly Spirit! We have found the true Faith! Worshipping the undivided Trinity,) we must carry this out into our families, our work and our life. We can only keep it by giving it away.

2. Respectfully and humbly ask and invite others to church, to events, to read a book, to have lunch with you and a priest, to come to the little feast of the blessing of your home, for coffee to talk about "the purposeful life", to become Orthodox, and to enter into joy and freedom.

For all the laudable parochial and communal welcoming values present in the parish the active side of Hospitality Ministry in terms of person to person interaction is largely undeveloped. Studies reveal that the number one reason that a person goes to a new church or joins a new church is that "They are ASKED or INVITED to do so." In our fear of giving offence or intruding on someone's "private" beliefs we keep the bushel basket firmly atop the light of salvation. Invite a person to share their beliefs, and then work on unconditional love and acceptance of the person as they disclose these. C.S. Lewis wrote that "after the Eucharist, another person is the most holy thing you will ever encounter in life." How wonderful life is, surrounded by people created in the image and likeness of God, endowed with free will, an immortal soul and "nous", the Greek word for that faculty within a person that allows them to experience God. "Ask and you shall receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you." (Matthew 7:7)

3. Embrace the ongoing transformation of the parish and the ongoing transformation of oneself.

Fr. Alexander Schmemmann wrote, “The sacraments do not change what things are; rather, they reveal the true purpose and nature of things.” Embracing the sacrament of evangelization or Hospitality Ministry reveals the true purpose and destiny of the human community.” God is the ultimate evangelizer; the One, who in giving His Son proclaims the good news of salvation – of joy, freedom, victory over death, unending and limitless love and communion. “He so loved the world...” When we learn to lovingly, humbly evangelize, then we have an opportunity to enter into the life of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God.

The twentieth question of the survey asked how people would feel if Hospitality Ministry resulted in consistent and dynamic membership growth. People were accorded the possibility of rating their responses to ten possibilities. There were 112 concerned or very concerned selections, indicating what most people have already learned in life, that change is difficult and that radical change can feel very threatening. When this happens people can react irrationally or viscerally. We really do like our very normal and predictable place where we sit or stand in Liturgy. We really do like or at least accept various policies within the parish. So perhaps it is wise to accept that change can be beneficial, even if uncomfortable, and that radical change, even if terrifying, can be salvific. Late in life it seems we learn that our greatest defeats were simultaneously our greatest victories in God.

On the positive side 230 selections were made that consistent and dynamic membership growth would be good or very good – even with discomfort and threat to our comfortable place in the church. There were 134 selections of “neutral” on the question. These may be the wisest of all, perhaps feeling that “I’ll trust in God and deal with it if and when it happens.” In *The Orthodox Way*, Metropolitan Kallistos Ware writes, “He who takes no risks does not love.”

4. Pray and support the following tasks and objectives presently under construction or consideration by the Hospitality Ministry team:

- Complete a “persona audit” of St. Seraphim by comprehensively examining how the parish may look to the larger Santa Rosa community, visitors, seekers, etc. from the street, on the Internet, entering the church, attending coffee hour, etc.
- Review and acquire pamphlets, books, podcasts, videos, websites, etc. suitable for free distribution to visitors, guests, inquirers, new members, etc.
- Schedule a half-day training session for the team and any other parishioners wishing to learn effective ways to share Orthodoxy
- On the website create a bio and brief video of Fr. Lawrence welcoming visitors and inquirers to St. Seraphim
- Compose a parish orientation document to supplement the warm and welcoming atmosphere within the parish offering information that might otherwise take months to acquire
- Provide welcome baskets for new members
- Host a “Weekend with C.S. Lewis” on the grounds of St. Seraphim for the general Santa Rosa community and other nearby communities (registration limited)
- Produce a brochure about the parish of St. Seraphim
- Translate into Spanish some of the basic pamphlets on Orthodoxy and the parish of St. Seraphim
- Write and publish a brief but informative document on the theology of icons and the frescoes beautifully adorning and proclaiming the gospel in the interior of the church
- Develop a “media kit” to inform and invite residents of surrounding communities as regards relevant events and activities of St. Seraphim

These are ambitious projects, which need to be done carefully and thoughtfully in partnership with the parish community and under the pastoral guidance of the clergy. This must occur in all phases – conception, preparation, execution, evaluation and any necessary adjustment.

All volunteer communities, especially churches, and perhaps also especially Orthodox churches, which tend to be “conservative” and “traditional” in the best theological sense of the terms, do not respond well to sudden, radical change. As a former parishioner of mine during a return visit to St. George Antiochian Orthodox Cathedral lamented, “I used to know and even be related to almost everyone in our Lebanese church. Now the Lebanese are barely 40% of the parish. I responded, “I understand your sense of loss, but if we had continued to prioritize or emphasize Lebanese community membership, the Cathedral membership would also be 60% smaller.”

5. Cultivate the naturally occurring compassion God mercifully gives to human beings and find the willingness and the capacity to extend this to people very different (and yet not so different) from ourselves – both in the parish and in the greater community.

We have relatively little difficulty observing physical or emotional suffering – homelessness, hunger, poverty, paranoia, loneliness, inordinate levels of guilt or depression. Develop the ability to discern spiritual loneliness, spiritual hunger, spiritual poverty, spiritual depression or spiritual addiction. This tragic aspect of life belongs as much in the context of the Church as it does in a hospital or psychologist’s office.

City-data.com reports that 65% of the people in Sonoma County do not identify with any “religious” confession of faith and 35% of people do. The 35% are overwhelmingly Christians. How are we speaking to the non-affiliated? The agnostics? The atheists? The secular humanists? The 65%?

6. When engaged in Hospitality Ministry, be mindful of the entire journey of a new member. Often times the real work in terms of integration into the community begins after they have been sacramentally received into Orthodoxy.

When survey takers were asked how long it took them to feel they belonged as a member of the community, approximately 73% selected either “right away” or “a couple of months”. We must not forget that 27% said “a year or more” or “I’m still trying to figure this out.” If we fail to

assist people to acquire a feeling of belonging, then they are possibly at risk of a premature tragic departure.

7. Throughout the survey many interesting observations were offered including ways to improve upon the already existing Hospitality Ministry. The two questions that seemed to elicit the most suggestions were number 17 (Select the ways you feel Hospitality Ministry would be most effective) and number 19 (How can we best help others to enter into Orthodoxy?). The most often mentioned are listed below together with others chosen as most effective based on decades of personal experience working in this vineyard.

- a. Unconditionally love and accept the person
- b. Pray for the person
- c. Authentically model the Orthodox Christian life
- d. Personally invite the person to come to liturgy or to a parish event
- e. Sit quietly with the person asking open-ended questions about who they are, how it happened that they came to visit and inviting them to share about their own spiritual journey in life, all the while listening carefully, resisting any impulse to jump in and do all the talking
- f. Find humble ways to be of service to them
- g. Introduce one self and ask if the person would care for a tour of the facilities and a little history on the parish or if they would like to meet the priest
- h. Educate and train our parishioners in the best ways to do this

THE PARABLE OF THE MESSIANIC BANQUET



One of those at the table with him said to Jesus, “Blessed is the one who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God.” Jesus replied, "A man once gave a great banquet, and invited many; and at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, 'Come; for all is now ready.' But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it; I pray you, have me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them; I pray you, have me excused.' And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' So the servant came and reported this to his master. Then the householder in anger said to his servant, 'Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and maimed and blind and lame.' And the servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.' And the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges, and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled.’” (Luke 14:15-23)

PARTICIPANTS IN THE SURVEY



Anonymous	Carol Elizabeth Thong
Anonymous	Brigid Sturgeon
Anonymous	Michael Dovey
Anonymous	Alicia Krueger
Anonymous	Dana Ames
Anonymous	Karen Roselle
Anonymous	Fr. James Jorgenson
Alex and Keri de Maar	Matushka Patricia Jorgenson
Theodor Svane	Ambrose Inlow
Elena Alexei	John Burns
Ronald M.Davis	Eleni Rose
Kendra Meshnik	Jeanie Carl
Photini Bohnker	Patrick Wilkes
Petar Griovski	Geoffrey Lake
Esther Carr	Alexandra (Alla) W.Keyes
Lana Koloboff	Lahana Tamara Singer
Sarah Hamner	Amanda
Deanna Panages	Catherine Lynn Ostling
Gretchen McPherson	Tom Pellizzer
Lisa Wespiser	Lorna Booker
Daphne Russell	Shannon Winterton
Dn. Jeremiah Crawford	Denise Pellizzer
Esmée La Fleur	Bonnie Alexander
Renee Scott	Tracey Rolandelli
Herman T. Vasquez	George D. Barsi
Father Lawrence Margitich	Barbara Owens
Raymond Michael Basch	Lew /Vladimir Baer
Kathie Dadjou	George Artemoff
Catherine Carpenter	George Pellizzer Catherine Michael Jorgenson