

## THREATS

**35 - SECULAR & SOCIETAL ISSUES** - Hate in the whole world; No respect for one another; Basic moral principles have been abandoned.; Lack of manners and respect; Societal pressures that continue to deviate from our true faith and conflict that brings to all, especially our youth; Societal Norms: It seems adults and children are bombarded with information that is often contrary or in direct conflict with the Orthodox faith. The perception is being created that everything and anything is okay.; Cancel and woke cultures against-Political influences; This coupled with an increased feeling of disillusionment, with established norms/leaders, that produced many of the problems we face today (political / environmental / spiritual / health....) may cause youth to convert less and pull away from organized religion in years to come.; Rapidly changing societal norms; The indoctrination of our children in/by the secular (non-religious) world.; Societal influences; Changing views on organized religion, marriage and family, gender identity, orientation; Societal change; busy students young adults starting families, work, travel; Loss of respect.; Divisiveness in society; Our ever-increasing secular society; Cancel and woke cultures against-Christian faith, values, and canons; Secularization of society; Changing social mores that do not always line up with Church teachings, along with a perception that those who do not support certain changes are bigots; Rising secular normativity nationwide; Changes to cultural makeup; Increasingly secular society; We live in a secular society that is often intolerant of Christians and Christian ideals. Traditional values are uncool. Traditional values and families are almost never seen in the media.; the destruction of the nuclear family; Social change – negative, social media, perception of if we can impact change positively; "woke" ideology; cancel culture; Fragmented society w/ competing priorities and demands on time; The focus on me/I instead of Christ.; Changes in modern culture/controversial topics/opinions; Idolatry of political and cultural figureheads; Deterioration of nuclear family; Apathy toward religion; Rise of non-binary and transgender acceptance in world, homosexuality; The current culture that has people of all ages questioning if there is a need for organized religion; the political divide; Acceptance of secularism.

**33 - YOUTH ENGAGEMENT CHALLENGES** - Younger generations are less traditionalists; People/youth leaving the parish.; Youth and young adults leaving the faith; Competition from sports/activities that keep youth and families away.; Youth's lifelong involvement; We obviously want our young people to stay engaged or reengage with their faith during the college years and in their adult lives. Can we do more to maintain contact with these youths while they are away at school—and encourage them to grow in their faith as well as their studies? Youth sports often times take precedence over church attendance and religious education; Too many outside activities drawing our youth away from the church. Best example Sport leagues. That have a high demand on our youth's time. That leaves little to no time for their church.; These Leagues play games even on Sunday and if you are on the team you can't miss a game....even for Church; Something is keeping our youth from coming back.; Difficulty in getting youth to stay in church; Parents giving priority to youth sporting events over church attendance/events; Non-church activities and sports that hinder youth attendance.; Youth looking at marriage differently. Waiting longer and many choosing not to have kids and grow families. Marriage to non-Orthodox; Young adults not returning to church after college; Challenge to keep young people engaged with our church when other churches (non-liturgical) are able to have contemporary services tailored to youth.; Demographics – Younger Generation Less Interested/Committed to the Church. (Perhaps an evaluation of what we are teaching our High Schoolers may be due.); Sunday morning games; Sunday Athletic Activities; Because of my profession, various parents have shared with me their concerns about the faith journeys of the college-age children. They know that many college students “put their faith on the shelf” during those years (except when they come home for holidays). Another characteristic of faith in the college years is that young people, being exposed to so many new perspectives and temptations, often feel that they have more questions than certainties.; The trend challenging the growth in organized religion by millennials and generation z'ers threatens the very future of the church—not just Holy Trinity. By all accounts, this is not just the typical trend of 20 to 30-year olds straying from church until they begin to have their own families. This may be a phenomenon that is deeper than that. Holy Trinity has tried to get out in front of this and has a good core group of young adult leaders who are working hard to grow in spite of the data we see.; Sports/Activities on Sundays that coincide

## **THREATS**

with Church; Children's events and sports scheduling conflicts; Sunday Athletic Activities; Culture interfering with practice of religion (sports practice on Sunday); Losing young people from the faith; Parents who seem to "leave" church after their children are out of high school; Diminishing the ideas of the young adults in the parish; Sunday morning organized sports activities taking parents and their children away from church; Constant sports activities that interfere with church; Youth Sports, especially travel teams, many take place on Sundays or out of town for the weekend; Approximately 43% of millennials are not sure God exists and do not see a need to attend church.

**26 - PANDEMIC AND OTHER CRISES** - Possible future COVID situations; COVID may have people watch from home easier; The youth has stayed home with COVID and has fallen out of the habit of going to church and staying involved.; COVID-19 continues to be; The onset of COVID/pandemic has been the most immediate and recent external factor that presented us with a degree of threat. COVID made people lazy and maybe that is why people don't come.; Another pandemic or return of a variant of COVID 19; COVID; COVID safety; Pandemic restrictions; This and possible future pandemics.; Global pandemics; Obviously, the pandemic really made a huge impact on all of us this year coming to church and donations.; Psychological fatigue/stress due to pandemic; Pandemic; Pandemic closures/cancellations, some people won't come back? Have become used to church and church events not being a part of their lives; Use of common spoons with communion: especially with Pandemic, people are fearful, not lacking faith, but fearful; The Pandemic; Unemployment due to pandemic; Who knows that the transition out of the lockdown will look like? It will not be easy.; Loss of connectedness due to quarantine; Physical damage occurred to the facility as a result of unforeseen conditions like weather.; Another global health crisis.

**25 - HOSTILITY TO RELIGION OR ITS PERCEIVED UNIMPORTANCE**- The global attack on Christianity.; Church not a priority; Declining interest in religion nation-wide, especially among young people; Decline in the United States of families belonging to organized religion; Decline of families and young people belonging to organized religion; Resistance to "organized" religion; Reduced participation in organized religion; Diminishing sense of the need for organized religion at best, hostility to organized religion at times; Lack of value of religion; Ultimately, I think that our biggest threat is the attitude in society that church isn't important. You can believe in God and be a good person and that should be enough. I don't know how to change that perception.; Our culture, or more precisely the ruling class of our culture, is increasingly evolving in an explicit and aggressive anti-Christian direction. This will likely result in additional pressure on any Christians group that maintains any type of traditional beliefs. Such pressure might be indirect, e.g., elimination of tax exemptions, or direct.; Philosophies/ideologies that are contrary or hostile to the faith but influencing the faithful; USA macro trend away from organized religion; Push towards no absolutes / what is truth; Organized religion in general is on the slide, especially among younger people;. Church/religion becoming less important in society; Recent trends away from religion. Our faith has sustained our ancestors for thousands of years. Now we see the world changing people's ideas of what is "normal" and acceptable, challenging the traditions and values of Christianity. I believe our youth are vulnerable to societal lure away from religion. .; Many people seem more motivated by instant gratification than salvation.; Declining attendance at traditional denominations; Decline of national membership with a church; The hidden message in social media and television is directly contrary to the beliefs of our faith.; Attack on Christianity.; Diminishing church attendance in general; Theological Liberalism due to current societal or cultural "trends"; Hostile mindsets and motivations against the church; US Population that attend church services continues to decline.

**20 - OTHER CHURCHES** - Mega churches offering; Flashy programs and "come on's" created by mega church's that lure parishioners away; Negative media coverage of failing churches; Other churches have shorter services and are less traditional and less formal; With more Orthodox Churches in the community will people start to go to the church closest to them? Why would people drive farther to come to our Church?; Growth of nondenominational churches; Increased competition amongst churches for

## **THREATS**

parishioners; Other churches/religions recruiting members much more aggressively and in a structured way; Expectation of praise bands and vibrant pastors to sell church; "Mega churches" becoming too attractive to prospective new members; Other religious and non-religious organizations influencing the beliefs/faith walk of Orthodox Christians.; The growth of nondenominational churches; Appeal of informal, non-communal Christian churches; Big Box Churches; Fun programs for kids that attract them to other churches; Competing against the "Fun with Jesus Churches"; Proselytization by other faith groups; The current culture that makes ChurchLite popular ... an upbeat sermon and a song then you're good with God until next Sunday.; Evangelical and protestants.

**17 - CRIME & SAFETY ISSUES** - Protect the church by investigating new methods that would ensure better security and safety.; Active shooters; Gun violence; Active shooter; Gun violence; Hate crimes related to Christianity; Perhaps being targeted by anti-Christian terrorists.; Global terrorist threats; Defunding of police and military; Mob violence; Security threats (ex. Active shooter); Vulnerability to Hate crimes; Violent persons; Physical attack; church shootings; External crime.

**16 - ECONOMY** - Bad economy; The economy.; Poor economy; Sluggish economy; An economic downturn, perhaps an economic crash, is essentially certain in the near future. This may strain Parish finances and will definitely result in needed charity for what could be a large number of members of our community.; Serious economic down turn.; Economic problems due to pandemic; Difficult economy; Economy: Kids are moving to other locations around the country. Perception of having to contribute to belong.; Poor economy.; I am sure that the economy, while improving, will slow or crash at some point. Relying on too few individuals will be bad if the economy changes.; Be better prepared for an economic downturn, or weather-related events (emergencies) such as structural damage from tornadoes, flooding, earthquake.; Economy; Increase in inflation, interest and taxes; Changes in tax rates; Inflation.

**15 - MISPERCEPTIONS ABOUT ORTHODOXY** - These changes, along with the perception that Orthodoxy is a conservative religion sometimes attracts a very specific type of person that is less interested in Orthodoxy and more interested in "being right"; People don't understand the Orthodox religion; Not understanding Orthodoxy; Eastern Orthodoxy does not have good name recognition in the US.; Fundamentalism: people should feel like we offer a "safe-place" to ask difficult questions without being held in suspicion as being "not Orthodox enough."; How do we define the ultimate why of our Orthodox Church in a changing world? Initially the church was founded to provide a priest/religious services and a cultural gathering place for Greek immigrants. Are we still, or do we want to continue to be an ethnic church? Does that hinder outreach to bring others into our church?; Misperception that we are "only for Greeks" or perception of Orthodoxy as part of the Catholic Church. Can prevent people from understanding who we are.; Public and internal perceptions of Orthodoxy - Some may not know that we are a Christian faith.; Public and internal perceptions of Orthodoxy - Some young adults and others may feel our faith is out of touch with modern society and are not as relevant in addressing issues of the day, to help them navigate life on earth, or they expect our faith to take a stand; Nationalism (Do we have to be Greek to be Orthodox?); Existing antipathy against Orthodoxy. To be evaluated as potential danger.; Having our community at large not know who are. Misconception about Orthodoxy - "Outdated" and exclusive (again, not my opinion); Need to establish our continuing identity and communicate it to the wider community.; Animosity toward Orthodoxy by other denominations and faith.

**13 - GOVERNMENTAL INTERFERENCE OR ISSUES** - Church and state being falsely melded together; If the government (becomes socialistic) and removes our non-profit status it will make it hard for us to grow or survive.; Loss of tax-exempt status from the federal government.; Governmental assault on religious freedoms, directly or indirectly by changing the tax code, etc.; Our right to practice our faith; Our "small d" democracy; If a tax rate increase occurs or inflation starts to climb, then people will have less net income and may reduce contributions to the Church and all charities.; Government (Fed, state & local);

## THREATS

Christians and Christian values coming under attack by the government, news media, Hollywood, TV shows, pop culture, etc.; government over reach; Marxism/socialism/Fascism etc.; Politics.

**10 - TECHNOLOGY** - Social media; Too much communication through texting – no human interaction.; Impact of society habituating to virtual technology; Keeping pace with a society that is rapidly becoming more technology and convenience-driven. Challenges in preserving the traditions of the church.; Poor experience at events could lead to social media outcry and brand degradation and loss of future community engagement; Social media has become a huge resource for people and the spiritual community is quite large (Tik Tok and YouTube); The internet is available to all, at a very young age, and it's hard to compete with that unlimited, unfiltered and unregulated flow of information.; A growing comfort in attending church from the couch versus in-person. Negative impact of virtual attendance on faith walks and giving.; Difficult to ascertain lies from truths on TV, internet, written material.

**9 - BUSYNESS** - Families busy with children's activities; Busyness of people's personal lives; Many competing priorities for families and individuals; For some, Sundays are their only days off- don't want to be in church; Too much competition for people's time in general. People work more than ever and find ways to play more than ever.; Family activities have increased; People needing to find time to pray and continue meditating on faith with constant increased demands of time and money; Many organizations competing for time; Many other organizations compete for the time of our parishioners.

**9 - PREJUDICE & INTOLERANCE** - Prejudice; Not accepting of all walks of life, cultures, and people; Bias/prejudice and just plain hate in the world; Racism and anti-Christianity; The Carmel area has a growing reputation for opposing diversity in terms of welcoming other faiths (recent opposition to the building of a mosque) and in terms of promoting diversity, equality, and inclusion education in the schools. Is HT perceived as welcoming to people of color, or as a visitor once expressed it, "Where are the people of color?"; Narrow minded individuals who are unwilling to allow change and growth; Toxic Political Ideologies (Right or Left) that could divide the parish; White supremacists; Systemic racism.

**3 - MOBILITY** - People move away; People physically moving further away from the church to live making it difficult to travel often; People are moving further away.

**2 - APATHY** - Apathy: Faith only seems to be important to some when it is convenient, maybe Christmas and Easter. For others, it's not important at all. How can we continue to spread the Word when so few want to listen? Complacency.

**2 - LOSS OF GREEK CULTURE** - Passing down of Greek language, history and heritage; Dilution of Greek language and culture.

## ONE OFFS

- ~ Bears;
- ~ The UAP (Unidentified Aerial Phenomena) topic, will be something that all faiths will need to address in the years to come. It appears there is something out there. All media outlets are now reporting on it, as well as the pentagon, the military and our congress. Internationally, there is an increased push to disclose on what people are seeing in the sky. I do think churches will be a place to give comfort.... but there will be lots of questions and potential lack of faith due to this topic.
- ~ The algorithms can easily pull followers to types of information that might not always be accurate and/or might also lead people to belief in things that aren't founded.
- ~ Climate control.
- ~ Illness.
- ~ Macro trend attention span less than 30 seconds.
- ~ I wonder if trouble in the middle east would cause some concern.

## THREATS

- ~ The role of women in the Church. We are alienating young girls and women by holding on to traditions about the role of woman that are not church dogma.
- ~ Greek immigrants are decreasing so the church should focus on all people.
- ~ Aging Population.
- ~ Satan's arrows
- ~ For those who are not prepared to dig deeper to research truth from fiction.... it could be very confusing and lead people down paths of disbelief.

## INTERNAL AND NOT EXTERNAL THREATS

- ~ Near a wetland that cannot be made into extra parking.
  - ~ Watch the church bells – due to surrounding neighborhoods.
  - ~ Not “mining” the input from all SWOTS returned and acting on the “best” ones quickly and with a strong communications program..
  - ~ I consider a threat parts of the property that cannot be used for parking or activity because of the marshy area.
  - ~ Unexpected moves by the Archdiocese to replace the head priest and assistant priest..
  - ~ An unsecure building during Cathedral gatherings.
  - ~ Declining participation at Church.
  - ~ Lack of manpower for parish needs.
  - ~ Persistent reduction of in-person attendance.
  - ~ Succession of clergy and volunteers, whether they are men or women.
  - ~ Reduced support of various ministries.
  - ~ Declining stewards.
  - ~ Lack of Parish Council Training for duties.
  - ~ We are our own threat.
  - ~ Not able to separate the better of the cathedral vs looking at the church as a profit center (events).
  - ~ Our community outreach, external to the church grounds.
  - ~ Member retention.
  - ~ Holy Trinity has suffered from not being able to do things in person. Certainly, some parishioners went without in person counsel and support from its clergy for a time. Programs were tailored to fit a zoom format or more likely simply discontinued. The Young Adult program had the benefit of receiving a sizeable grant from the Center for Congregations just prior to COVID quarantining and has had to adjust over and over again to try to fit their goals into a “COVID-friendly” environment. That is just one example.
  - ~ Send emails with helpful links to our youth. Ancient Faith, the Loughs, Steve Christoforou... Help to provide easy learning and support for everyday life.
  - ~ Another potential mitigation is to work on increased interaction with other orthodox parishes, Syrian, Romanian, etc. Find ways to get to know them better (perhaps at first in informal settings) and then find ways to interact with “in a bigger picture” way. (Perhaps this will also provide more opportunities for our young adults to find a prospective husbands or wives from the orthodox faith. (I believe it is important to talk about how marrying in the faith can make life easier.),
  - ~ Being seen by outsiders as a parish that “only rich people attend.
  - ~ Age/Death – an older demographic.
  - ~ Parishioner “burn out”.
  - ~ Financial stability of sister church's that roll up to the Metropolis.
  - ~ Evaluate/upgrade existing security system.
  - ~ Church School/Greek school practice evacuation drills.
  - ~ Future restrictions or requirements from the local municipalities that would limit the use of our facility.
  - ~ Father Bill would invite members of other churches around us to visit and for us to visit them as well. This happened a number of times. I am not sure why we stopped.
  - ~ Security – Sunday services and rest of week. Security away from church for HT groups.
  - ~ Casualties to church-Physical - fire and assure insurance coverage to assure replacement.
- Because we do not have visible security, anyone with a mental problem could harm people in the Church.;
- ~ Casualties to church -Financial misappropriations.
  - ~ The sense I feel that true stewardship is not offered and/or fulfilled, and as such the church's future may be in jeopardy.
  - ~ Increasing financial demands from the Archdiocese.
  - ~ Offering a pre-school program could create liability issues.
  - ~ Single Liturgy on Sunday.
  - ~ Aging Congregation,
  - ~ Changes happening at the Archdiocesan level.
  - ~ Not being prepared or have the right people in place for an event (mismanagement).
  - ~ Women not able to serve on the altar (this is not my opinion, sharing information).
  - ~ Governmental regulation preventing full use of east half of our property (protected wetlands).
  - ~ One potential mitigation is to keep a phone book of all or past members and reach out to them with phone calls and invitations to events to try and entice them back into the faith, or at least to keep them connected in even a small way.
  - ~ Our parish covers a large geographical area making it more difficult to keep people involved.
  - ~ Length of services: Perception of time commitment.
  - ~ Communication with the church/messaging and meeting people where they want to engage.
  - ~ The threat can come from within if we do not support our church and attend services...
  - ~ Aging church population. Without converts, church population is likely to decline over time.
  - ~ Environmental regulations restricting the usage of church property as protected wetlands.
  - ~ Increased costs due to environmental regulations.

## **THREATS**

- ~Becoming political. It is one thing to host a polling place and entirely another to host a candidate.
- ~Distances and transportation issues for some parishioners.
- ~Perceived National Financial and organization issues.