

## OPPORTUNITIES

- 39 - PEOPLE SEEKING ORTHODOXY** - People are hungry for joy and truth in their lives – hungry for what we offer; Orthodoxy provides a stability that families and other institutions in 2021 cannot; People confused by and sick of all the different denominations, searching for the “true faith,” searching for answers to tough questions on social issues; The world is hungry for “something” which we know is true faith; There is dissatisfaction with pastors or leaders who “go off the rails” and alter key beliefs, leaving members confused, lost and frustrated; Orthodox faith practice being significantly different from Protestant faith practice may raise interest in Orthodoxy for spiritual seekers; There are many people in our community who are spiritual but not religious and may find a depth and opportunity to reconnect with Jesus since we do not present the faith in the traditional evangelical sense that often contributes to their distance from the Church; A stable unwavering practice of worship, unaffected by the politics of the day is refreshing and confidence inducing; People are seeking “more” in their lives, and searching for meaning. To be purely secular is not enough; There is a lack of forgiveness in the world which cannot be sustained. There will come a need for God and the Church. We must be visible and available; God is on our side; Decrease in attendance at Protestant churches may provide those looking for a more Orthodox expression of the faith; We live in a world where people deeply need meaning and timeless truth. I believe that Orthodoxy, especially reveals its depth in a society where there is division and a lack of clarity about what’s true in other parts of life. The message of Orthodoxy is clear and strong. It reconciles seeming conflicts. For example, it is not judgmental, but it also is not ambivalent about the importance of a Christian life. It appeals to young and old, people of all political views, and people of all backgrounds; There are a lot of disillusioned people out there who are open to Orthodoxy, ex; Catholics who have seen their liturgy erode over generations, Evangelical who have been emotionally manipulated in church shop and looking for a tradition to commit to, reasonable secular people who listen to someone like Jordan Peterson and see that a religion with ritual, symbolism, and morality is essential to healthy psychology, etc.; People are looking for Orthodoxy; People are looking for a religion that does not change from day to day; When things get bad, people turn to God and His church; The secular culture is eroding our moral fabric and people want/need help; Orthodox faith practice begin significantly different from Protestant faith practice may rise interest in Orthodoxy for spiritual seekers; Our culture is rife with addictions of all kinds (phone, television, politics, diet fads, etc.), and our therapeutic theology and practical asceticism could help people weed those out of their lives; Our world is truly insane, and there so many logical absurdities that basic conversations are becoming even more impossible to be had—people can’t do this forever, they’ll have to turn around to a place where Life and Truth is present; Many devoted Christians of other denominations are concerned/unhappy about the direction their churches are heading and are looking for a new church that maintains Christian morals/beliefs/practices; Growing awareness of our Orthodox Faith in our communities; The demise of “Western” Christianity poses an unprecedented opportunity for the Orthodox message and worldview to be heard as an alternative; People outside the church know something is not quite right; The religious impulse in people is inevitable; People seek beauty; People seek truth; Explain Orthodoxy to those who are looking for a Church to become part of; Many protestant Christians are burnt out on post-modernity church and are looking for tradition and depth in a church experience/community; Perfection of Christian faith in an era of dilution of true Christianity; Recent Covid and economic threats to a significant portion of the US population may raise interest in spiritual seekers; Take advantage of visitors who are seeking Truth and Beauty in their lives and in their Sunday worship; Desire for Liturgical worship; Pope restricting TLM; Liberalization of mainline Christianity; Secular 3 age of authenticity/seeking authentic self; With the hard times we’ve been through, some people turning to the faith to help them cope; Needs in the community that are best met by Orthodox Christian spiritual practices.
- 36 - GRAND RAPIDS / WEST MICHIGAN** - Grand Rapids has a rich history of philanthropy; West Michigan is a relatively religious area overall (mostly Christian); Lots to do in GR Area; GR area largely sympathetic toward religion; Location; Grand Rapids and the surrounding area is huge lots of opportunities for charity, fellowship, etc.; Grand Rapids; Camelot Neighborhood; Nearby Recreational Amenities (MVP, Parks, Bowling, Dave and Busters, Trampoline, etc.); Other

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Orthodox Parishes; Other Christian Churches/Groups; School Districts; Local area is still full of serious Christians (we have a 5 to 10 year window here but that's about it); Utilizing staff from local colleges and universities for trainings; We are in an area of many college campuses; Nearby Universities; Surrounded by Christian college and seminaries to engage conversation with about orthodoxy; We have so much Christian study and Christian culture around us (colleges, publishing houses, etc.) and it takes years for some of the people in those areas to even visit an Orthodox church; College town, young people searching, chances to evangelize without pressure; Growing, economically stable larger community (Grand Rapids), strong 'church' community, all present chances for interfaith works of mercy; Openness to quality, private education; Emphasis on Spiritual growth in public schools; We exist in an economically vibrant community; Camelot community & alliance of churches; The area has many faith-based organizations to partner with; Charities; Partnering with non-Orthodox religious charitable organizations and secular charitable organizations which would help the spread of Orthodoxy in the community; There are many groups and agencies with whom to participate that are doing great work in the community such as Diatribe, bring poetry to low income students, Bethany Christian Services, working with foster children and those separated from their parents as immigrants, and other similar organizations; Cooperation among Camelot pastors/churches; Ability to tap in to existing charitable organizations (Catholic Charities, ICCF, etc.); no need to create infrastructure; Grand Rapids still experiencing growth in population; Grand Rapids is a growing community - more people moving to GR means more people looking for a church; Our population is growing; More younger people are living and moving to the area; Grand Rapids still experiencing growth in population; Opportunity to grow our membership as more people move to GR and seek out a community to be a part of; Grand Rapids has a growing small city which is growing and attracting many young families who are looking for community and a place to worship.

**33 - COMMUNITY SERVICE / EXTERNAL PROGRAMS** - Show our values by actively working to help the underserved people of our community; Be a disciple of Christ and do good deeds in the community through charitable events; Provide food, clothing, shelter for those in need; hands on activity...not just monetary donations; Serve the Community; Increasing financial contributions and service projects to help the needy within the greater Grand Rapids community; Our community has many homeless and poor; Our neighbors need our love; Find/maintain ways to engage the communities we serve in a way that would be inviting to our parish; Regular participation in the community in our "backyard" beyond 1-2 days a year events; Building a school in GR would be a great opportunity; Getting involved more and more in our community; Addressing some of the big tough issues that GR is facing: Homelessness, Hunger, Access to mental health resources, Kids in foster care, Discrimination; Great numbers of people to serve (seekers, youth, immigrants, poor living in Grand Rapids; Works of mercy; Needy community surrounding our church presenting opportunities to serve; Publicizing and opening up educational programs to the Grand Rapids community (including programming for children, e.g., VCS, or classes/Q & A for people to learn more about orthodoxy, or educational materials/videos on website/social media); Education; Expand our public presence with Christian learning programs; Open and publicize church programs, e.g.; Vacation Bible School, Bible Study, to non-parishioners; There are many Orthodox intellectual leaders who are available to speak to our parish. Some are well-known outside the Orthodox community and could help with evangelization if we could bring them here for advertised events. We were going to do that last year with Hank Hanegraaf, but it fell through due to COVID. There are others we could ask as well, such as Father Stephen Freeman, Jeannie Constantinou and Jonathan Pageau. Some kind of speaker series seems like a great opportunity if we have the funds to do it; Preschool program; Parenting programs; Young Adult programs; Internships for seminary students; Youth/Community programs; Senior programs; Christian youth education; I really enjoyed the seminars on the Reformation and the National Prayer Day that we hosted. I would like to see more of these opportunities; There is an opportunity to use this space for public events—speakers, musical performances, etc.; Cultural Center has recognition in the GR area and as we hopefully get past COVID, we can attract more events; Large existing church campus and building allow for opening our doors to the needy in the community in many

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ways; Provide use of the Cultural Center to community non-profits at no cost for events, meetings, etc.

**27 - SEEKERS / OUTREACH & EVANGELIZATION** - Festivals for outreach; More visibility to offer church services to external people; More opportunities for cultural events to external people; As a Church, we could work to break the stereotype that Christians just show up on Sunday don't actually help the poor/sick/etc.; We can re-establish the Church as a place for good and inclusiveness; Continue to provide outreach in the community; When it is more feasible, have a takeout dinner or cheese bread sale which raises our awareness in the community; Could we begin an International Ministry to gain new understanding of people from different countries who go to school next door? Maybe to get to know them we could encourage them to participate by submitting artwork that demonstrates their culture in some way and to attend a reception in their honor; Reaching out to people living in the apartments next door to the Church with a Neighborhood Party; Increase our dialog with other Christian denominations. A good example could be the evening we hosted with Bp. Anthony and the representatives of the Reformed and Catholic churches; outreach outside of parish; Evangelism-increase outreach, improve perception and awareness of our theology, traditions; More visibility to our church through outreach ministry; outreach in the community; We need to use our ministries to reach out to our community; Any opportunity that we can express a warm and welcoming spirit to each other; Reach out to community to educate about Orthodoxy and invite them to services; Spread the Orthodox faith to friends, and those who are seeking Christ. Bring people to our services; The fact that the church is not ethnic anymore and opens the doors to any Orthodox person is a big plus. We have an opportunity to demonstrate togetherness and love for each other in our community, to teach love and respect by example; Participate in community events; Evangelize Orthodox faith; Outward focus; Outbound ministries-Evangelism and Works of Mercy; Connecting with Camelot students next door in order to reach out to people groups with multiple languages from several different countries; There are many college students in our area; Could we intentionally invite them to Vespers on a regular basis and encourage people to befriend them by inviting them to stay for a simple meal or a dessert after the service?; The Millennials are a far larger generation than the Boomers. The potential in that bunch for Christ is immense! There could possibly be many patriarchs, metropolitans, archbishops, bishops, priests, deacons, monks, nuns and laypeople just waiting to be connected to Christ and His Church in that gigantic group, and I believe there are. They are one of the biggest opportunities we have right now as a church, locally and universally; This would be a great way to evangelize as well as to strengthen our community.

**17 - TECHNOLOGY / SOCIAL MEDIA** - Further develop and advertise live streams; Technology; Streaming accessibility caused by Covid era may increase outreach for churches; More people looking for live stream options; More aggressive social media marketing; Communications; Use social media to reach new members; Media to share the faith: social media, website, livestream, YouTube; Utilize existing technology and advance our digital presence and participation in purpose-centric groups/forums. This could be something similar to the Bible Reading club on Facebook; social media/technology; Get a new church sign that is more visible and that allows for messages/announcements; Look for ways St Nicholas can get more local media attention; Ability with social media and YouTube to have a larger outreach to individuals virtually; Front sign could have welcoming message; Invest in a Bell Tower to place at the front of the Church property to toll the bells at the beginning of the services; Streaming accessibility caused by Covid era may increase outreach for churches; Using media and the internet to give positive ideas to our youth.

## **OPPORTUNITIES**

### **ONE-OFFS**

- ~ Do more for Palestine, Jordan, Syria, and Project Mexico and less in Grand Rapids. The refugees and people in Grand Rapids have plenty of opportunities for charity and help with the US government and local charities. We should do more overseas where the devastation is massive.
- ~ Things opening up again after the COVID-19 year-long lock-down.
- ~ Due to the aforementioned lock-down, people being eager to get out and reconnect or connect for the first time with God after going through all that.
- ~ Finding out what's needed, missing, and wanted; Stand up for your beliefs when necessary.

### **INTERNAL - NOT EXTERNAL -**

- ~ We have a beautiful church and large and well-appointed meeting space.
- ~ The COVID social groups organized by geographic area were a great idea and I found them very helpful as I tried to get to know people. However, we struggled to keep them going. I think we should try to build on this idea. We could also add subject-based social groups, like book groups
- ~ Church bus for the kids and parents to church activities.
- ~ Room for more icons.
- ~ All coffee hours to be put on by the church with simply coffee and cookies.
- ~ Ask out of the box questions, find out what's going on in the lives of the parish family so those needs can be met.
- ~ Some members not in GR area; Better communication approaches within the PC.
- ~ In our parish there are a lot of younger kids with a few older ones/young adults.
- ~ Honestly, it could present an opportunity for a mentorship "program" // room for relationships there that could be beneficial.
- ~ Safe and healthy atmosphere.
- ~ Our church can be a safe haven for our youth-providing an assortment of available and open options for connection.
- ~ More focused groups to encourage participation instead of spreading people thin; focus on retention of youth so they don't leave the faith.
- ~ prepare our youth for what they will see and experience when they leave home.
- ~ Anyone who has an idea – of course with the Priest's blessing and Parish Council approval – is free to start a ministry. There are never "too many ministries" as long as they help the parish grow in faith, understand better our faith, our traditions and are in consensus with our mission statement.
- ~ "Ask Abouna", Lectures, library, book club, movie with Abouna, family night, fun activities, are just a few examples of so many wonderful opportunities to explore and understand how important is our Orthodox Faith and church in our lives and how wonderfully we can intertwine them.
- ~ New Youth minister
- ~ Continuing to add and implement more ways for the youth to stay involved in the church.
- ~ We live in an artistic city, some of our kids are really artsy and exploring how to relate to God in that way could be interesting; Getting the young generation more involved in different activities to create more lasting friendships; Strong economy may allow giving to increase.
- ~ We have available resources, people and financial, to share the message of Christ.
- ~ Additional resources available with mortgage paid off; Ways to experience the faith through retreats/camps/ PLC/outreach programs in ways that we didn't have available to us/access to years back.