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42 - SECULARISM - Young adults challenged with the teachings of the Church and be pushed to accept social norms; Aversion to tradition for young people; Negative influences on youth from secular society; Secular 3 culture- anything goes, define your own truth – draws people, especially youth, away from the church; Social/cultural leanings that are not in line with what the Orthodox church believes; The only threats I see with the future is the retention and possibly growth in the parish and in religion in general; Young minds believe their peer and stray away from church; Schools and Universities are brainwashing that Faith isn't important; Secularism, materialism, worldly cares; Young people struggling to reconcile the school and outside world's perception of "good" and "nice" with the teachings of the church; peer pressure; Secularism; Always the hope is in the new generation. The new generation combines education, culture, their personal views and ideas and this is how progress is made. Parents help and guide their children by passing on their knowledge and experiences. The young generations from our times grew up without much guidance. They are left to explore on their own, make up their own decisions and build up their future. Without guidance and nurturing, every human being is growing like weeds, unattended, instead of blooming and multiplying in something better, stronger, and more advanced. This leads to much division, strong headed, opinionated, tyranny and despotic personalities. If there is no consensus somehow, the gap is getting bigger and bigger. Parents need to start guiding their children and actually, teach themselves that without God, there is nothing; Our youth and early young adults could be in a crisis of church vs society/secular; Young people leaving the church; Temptation for young people to leave the church; Secularism; Young adults drift away and it's not easy for them to come back; Unwillingness to accept LGBT in many Church communities; Lack of interest in the Church; Lack of desire for Christ; The sense from individuals under the age of 21 that the church is a major source of hate, bigotry, and exclusion in our society; Secularization of culture; A general movement of culture, society, and individuals away from the traditional forms of Christian Worship; Shifting culture; "Nones" apathy; Consumerism; Secularism in our culture slipping into our church; The world we live in; Acceptance of worldly norms; Decrease in religious affiliation in the culture; Lack of Spirituality in our secular world; Post-Christian culture; Members of the orthodox faith losing interest in the church's teachings/upset that the church doesn't meet their personal beliefs – i.e.; abortion/LGBT community/etc.; Extreme individuality; The battle of tradition in a world that rejects and frowns on anything not growth-oriented; The US is becoming/maybe already is, post-Christian ad post-Church at large; View that church is limiting to a person's life and self-expression; The drug and entertainment culture is capturing people's hearts and minds and following hard after God is not always the popular road to take; Sexuality, and what it means in our country today, conflicts with many of our Orthodox beliefs and confuses our young people; Worldly temptations are strong and draw us away from religion; Modern life is NOT church centered, but rather pulled in a secular direction.

32 - CANCEL CULTURE & POLITICAL INTRUSION - Losing our tax exempt status due to changing public policies; Us vs Them Attitude; Current society tries to pin social trend barriers unfairly on Christians; Like LGBT, facts(science) vs; faith(belief); Christians now viewed as far right and out of touch (anti-science) following polarization during prior administration decreasing attraction to Christian faith; Outside Politics; Politics becoming too important in religious conversations and people feeling overly "tied" to one political party; Political issues as the country becomes more divided; Political-religious threats - Laws made by man; The very uncertain political climate and very secular influences in our society that are increasingly becoming more anti-God; Pressure from special interests groups to change our stance on certain issues; Government, or outside groups, may begin to force/pressure churches to compromise our traditional values; Our very decisive climate we've lived in for the past five years has the potential to divide our community; Our society identifies us by color, gender, political view. Our younger parishioners often find comfort in becoming a social justice warrior, but even with good intentions, they often become unaware of how they go against our Orthodox beliefs and values; We live in a "softer" society where saying offensive things covers a

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much wider scope; We need to choose our words and actions more wisely because of how people interpret them more differently than ever before; Cancel culture and the elimination of free thinking and free expression; Social issues; Our country is moving in the wrong direction; divisive nation; Government intrusion; Cancel culture and identity politics are so ubiquitous that even our own members are self-censoring or downplaying very foundational Christian values; Our culture doesn't know how to disagree in a healthy manner anymore; Changing social attitudes focusing on individual needs rather than community needs; Politics getting more and more tribal and affecting all aspects of life, including church; The mix of politics with religion influencing the direction the country, smaller separation of church and state; Government intervention in religion; The sense that the Church is often on "the wrong side of history" and the general sense of the Christian church taking sides in the political realm such as enthusiastically supporting Donald Trump; Political polarization; Divisive atmosphere; Political influence; The division in this world could create more division in our Church; Political views and conflicts are becoming a part of our everyday lives, and are influencing our youth, which often contradict the Orthodox beliefs.

26 - ANTAGONISM TOWARDS CHRISTIANITY - Hostility to traditional Christians; Public shaming of young people who grow up in the church; We are now living in a culture that is actively hostile towards Christians and Christian values; Distrust of Christians; Our society is becoming actively hostile to Christianity, and in particular to those who insist on sticking with traditional family and gender roles. In Canada in recent months, there has been a rash of acts of vandalism and arson at churches, and the government has made statements hostile to Christianity. We still have the First Amendment, and West Michigan feels like a refuge from this, but we should not be complacent; Negative attitudes toward Christianity in general; General societal view of religion and, specifically, Christianity as an obsolete and "dumb" belief; This is expressed in the adversity of the relationship of the government to the religious institutions, attacks by word and by action of specific minorities on Christianity; Negative stereotypes about religion/ Church in general - regardless of denomination; Western culture is becoming increasingly hostile to Christian belief; It is very difficult to raise Christian children when the prevailing culture thinks them to be odd or even evil for their Christianity; Cultural rejection of objective truth; Less people are giving to churches; Decreasing attendance in Christian churches across US; Public perception of Christianity and the negative traits many people have come to associate with Christians; Perception of Christianity as unenlightened, oppressive and bigoted; Less people are going to churches; General decline of people embracing religion; Christian disunity and disorganization; Heresy/Scandal in other Christian Denominations; Our society looks down on Christians as "repressive" and uses examples of flawed humans to represent the entire group; Biased media failing to accept / acknowledge Faith based solutions; The media (Christians are being mocked); inclusion and acceptance of all sexes and gay pride is what the world is working toward...IT'S NOT WHAT GOD TEACHES US; In general, I believe that our society has lost touch with many real things and this is a threat both to our Parish and to faith more broadly; The lack of balance in our country between secularism and religious beliefs; Religion, in general, has a negative connotation in our society as a whole.

15 - TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIAL MEDIA - Technology; Media; Social media; Impact of technology and social apps; social media; Technology; social media - blessings and curses; Constant access to information and stimulation through digital technology can confuse people about what matters; Social media (local newspaper) no longer carrying Religion column where our religion was presented; Social media dominating our youth; Internet; Social media; We are so vulnerable to all the threats from media and the internet hype changing the minds of our young people; Social media and the ramifications it involves, since that is the way the majority of people communicate, express their feelings, etc.; The power of social media to pull people away from church.

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- 14 - “BUSYNESS”** - Busy Work Schedules; Homework/Youth Activities; Sports and school events are becoming more commonly held on Sundays-competition for kids’ social and spiritual needs; Modern demands on the time and resources of our parishioners; Sporting practices and events on Sunday’s compete with going to church; Too, many obstacles that give excuses for not attending church; Not only that the Church teachings were removed from school, but now the new trend is to remove youth from Church. More and more activities are scheduled on Sunday or evenings when worship is supposed to take place. Maybe church should work with politicians and Government to prove mental health and many other problems can be solved and can be restored by directing people to God and Faith; Individual’s priorities are changing; Less time/commitment to church; Moving / school / work; broken families; More kids extracurriculars and sports are occurring on Sunday; The school/colleges are teaching our young people values that should be taught at home; Youth/parents choosing to attend outside activities over church activities (i.e.; sports, parties, etc.;).
- 13 - OTHER CHURCHES** - Evangelical or non-denominational churches attracting young adults; Other Christian Churches/Groups Seeming More “Fresh” or “Modern”;_Other churches just make Christianity look “easier”;_Orthodoxy is not welcoming in comparison to others; It takes a while to learn what to do and how to do it; There are “rules” not found in non-denominational churches, making it seem less welcoming and more rigid (as if “I may not belong here”); Mega churches have strong appeal to many people; Other religions; Cults; More people are stating they’re non-denominational and do not belong to a Church; Too, many jurisdictions that thwart a unified Orthodox vision; The overwhelming number of other churches in the community; Non-Christian beliefs; Due to the unprecedented amount of information available today, there is an ever increasing sense that no one group or religion is the “true religion” and there is an openness to borrow from many religious expressions freely; Orthodoxy is hard to understand – it takes effort to learn about our faith.
- 13 - COVID & PANDEMICS** - Pandemic; Covid-19 isn't over yet, There are the risk associated will process until the beginning of 2023; Negative things that happened as a result of Covid- people lost their jobs, had to move, got sick, etc.; Covid Pandemic; If COVID cases should increase in Michigan; Unemployment and general economic situation worsened by the pandemic; External personal disruptions and crisis (Covid 19, illnesses, family emergencies); Mutated strains of COVID-19 that could lead to future lock-downs again; Persistence of Coronavirus; Pandemic issues; COVID – parishioners being afraid to be in person/gather in groups/ partake in communion – used to virtual and obstinate about coming back to the physical church; Pandemic changed in person church attendance, it appears less people are coming in person now; Covid – and the way it has been handled by our leaders, Confusion, Fear.
- 9 - GRAND RAPIDS CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS** - Lack of Diversity in GR; Socioeconomic gap in GR; Young people moving out of the West Michigan area; socioeconomic differences; Economic stress; Diversity of community, those who do not look, act, or believe like ‘us’; Changing socio-cultural landscape of the community and how to incorporate / welcome and build all into the community; Diversity in the community; Small town and aging population.
- 8 - ECONOMIC ISSUES** - Financial Market crash; Affordable living for young families; Unstable economy; If any economic hardship should occur; Another thread is money – inflation goes up faster than the salaries increase. Less and less people are willing to pay the tithe and as a consequence, they prefer to give up church in the entirety; College is so expensive and getting a career started is so hard that young people are too distracted to think about church or even marriage; The unknown (another pandemic, social unrest, economic downturn); Economic change / inflation.

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- 5 - **AGING POPULATION** - Delayed or non-existent family formation; Low Birth Rate (Nationally); Decreasing number of young adults choosing to follow their parents in living a Christian faith/attending church; Large size of facility v; current size of community; Aging out "Christian population".
- 4 - **INTRA-ORTHODOX CHALLENGES** - Hierarchical leadership changes; Competition from other Orthodox parishes; More apparent that a ministry-based church is replacing an ethnic/religious identity based church; Disunity of various Orthodox dioceses, e.g.; Antiochian vs Greek vs OCA, etc.
- 4 - **LOW VISIBILITY OF ORTHODOXY** - Public ignorance of who we are and what we believe and why; Widespread ignorance of Orthodoxy "America's best kept secret" is not a compliment; We must continue to make our presence known in our community and beyond. Non-orthodox education institutions tend to not teach about the Orthodox Church or speak badly of it; Donations going elsewhere to other agencies with higher visibility.
- 3 - **SATAN/TEMPTATION** - Our enemy does not sleep; Temptation; Satan.
- 2 - **VIOLENCE** - Active Shooter; One of the biggest threats I feel is the safety of our members. With the rise of radical Islamic extremists in the world, no house of worship is immune to threats or acts of violence. I may be a little paranoid about it, but I feel being an Antiochian Orthodox church puts us at a greater risk as there is never ending tension in the middle east.

ONE-OFFS

- On demand abortion.

INTERNAL AND NOT EXTERNAL

- ~Traffic/Distance to Church.
- ~Maintenance breakdown.
- ~The outsider's perspective sees only how each parishioner interacts with others; So, there can be a negative feeling about our parish based on perceptions of how people love(or don't love) their neighbor/family.
- ~ Some members not in GR area.
- ~ Decrease in membership.
- ~ Decrease in financial support.
- ~ Too few members doing the majority of the work and projects.
- ~ Maintaining our beautiful church, financial impacts, maintenance of the building and grounds.
- ~ Lack of creative participation (getting ideas of parishioners as to what they would like to see).
- ~ We should grow together. I would like to see more parish wide programs where we are not separated by group or age. If we are truly a Parish Family we should celebrate together, learn together, be together, as members of one Family, God's Family.
- ~ Relationship building activities tends toward embracing age-related similarities instead of multi-generational ages.
- ~ We need to inform others of Saint Nicholas and our precious Orthodox Faith.
- ~ High expectations from Hierarch because St. Nicholas always delivers.