

35 - ANTI-CHRISTIAN SENTIMENT / SECULARISM / NONE MOVEMENT- Developing anti-Christian and anti-religious feeling in government; We are living in a time of rapid secularization; Secularization is accompanied in many quarters of the culture – and government – by a growing hostility to Christian belief: Secularism Our culture is against Christianity. Our children are told that in order to love people they must accept their immoral behavior. This can pose a crisis of faith to young adults; Secular culture continues to increase in the nation; This can pose a crisis of faith to young adults; Fanatic Christians who practice messages of hate over love; A general societal withdrawal from religion; Anti-Christian sentiment and rising hostilities; Hostility in the culture to Christianity and misrepresentations of Christianity; Increasing distrust of Christianity today.; The attack of the traditional family, gender identity in society, instructing our children at a young age in public school thus devaluing the priority of Christian values & the parents the right to control these influences.; Anti-organized religion sentiments; We can't do very much under our current government. I believe it is an invisible persecution that is even difficult to explain.; Social trends reducing importance of religion in the US; Strong antireligious feeling; Christians have a bad rap- (why should they have tax breaks); Persecution of Christians; Increasingly hostile environment of societal changes and; Higher education and popular culture promoting anti-Christian sentiments and a general disdain for most organized religion; distorted views of religion / Christianity; Lack of people willingness to join a particular church as opposed to comfortable with being just a "spiritual person.".; Public loss of trust in Churches; Religions extremism; Promotion of heresy and schism; Proliferation of heretical/erroneous online teachings/information, presented as Orthodox teaching; <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2019/10/17/in-u-s-decline-of-christianity-continues-at-rapid-pace>; Rising illiteracy and lack of knowledge of history of and the impact of Christianity has had on modern civilization.; News and editorials that push agendas not in line with Orthodox Christian values; Constant barrage of news and editorials that push agendas that are not inline with Christian Orthodox values; Greater societal acceptance of all spiritual endeavors as valid, even paganism, ancestral or philosophical types of belief systems; Anti-institutionalism and moral relativism make outreach more difficult and could lead to persecution. Also could lead to loss of tax breaks for churches;lack of commitment and NONES; Rise of NONES & DONES; Rise of the NONES; NONES who have left the faith and are withdrawing; ; A generation of people who do not participate in day-to-day life of Orthodoxy.

25 - ISSUES WITH THE ORTHODOX CHURCH Lack of community understanding of the Holy Orthodox Church; not willing to adapt or change current day trends; Institutional Momentum (We've always done things this way); Orthodox Metropolis or National not recognizing the loss of younger generations and helping parishes make the changes necessary to inspire future generations; Leadership (above parish level) out of touch; Clergy burnout; Corruption within Ecumenical Patriarchate and Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America; Greek Language; Eliminating Greek language and traditions; We have our holy church leaders under huge stress.; Activist clergy; Shortage of clergy; Hesitancy of change to Orthodoxy; Orthodoxy does not do a good job talking about moral issues of the day; Absence of monastery; we could be viewed as an ethnic / cradle church with a few novel converts, not an evangelistic church desirous of and open to all people; We don't have house churches, bible studies, activities for most ages, or much in the way of daily activities. There is nothing in Saugatuck, Zeeland, West Olive, Allegan, etc.; And, at the same time, American Orthodoxy is in steep decline; easier ways to partake in services; Stagnation; Sustain church community; People wanting to change and implement parts of reformed teachings; To underestimate the need to emphasize the English language in everything we do.; People joining the church desiring to change it to their beliefs; Laws that wrap up medicine with the fundamental teachings of the church. For example, Fr Pappas' shared the opinion

piece from the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops after Roe v Wade was overturned. This piece was written with a pompous tone with no real respect for women and no comprehension of the reality of maternal physiology in pregnancy. If you believe that the majority of abortions for “non desirable human qualities” are the problem or that circumstances in which pregnancy threatens the life of the mother are “unique” you are sadly mistaken. THAT IS MY JOB EVERY SINGLE DAY.; Orthodoxy is considered very “boring” compared to the flashy and enticing new churches and technologies.

25 - LOSS OF MORALITY / LIBERALISM / WOKEISM / INDIVIDUALISM -

Fractionalization of beliefs within Christianity; Woke culture destroying true values, morality; “Truth” cannot be relative!; Loss of morality and sense of community in our world- perpetuates a lack of care and love for our shared humanity and responsibility for others; Erosion of moral principles; Increased pressure to be permissive/compliant in the name of inclusivity/acceptance; Devisive social issues Moral compass of society at large is increasingly Secular Humanist vs Christian, creating disharmony and furthering spiritual struggle; Pornography, digital distractions, negativity on social media, conspiracy theories, nihilism, radical individualism, anti-intellectualism, anger and defensiveness, intolerance, the right to die; The uprise of polygamy; Influence of materialism and sexuality; World is changing rapidly, we are still trying to change with it and adjust to the chaos and sin more than helping each other get closer to God and working on self. One solution is forming pockets of communities outside of Grand Rapids where we can help each other — perhaps even seeing each other every day for those interested, or whatever needed, like many other parishes are doing and have continually since bible times. Things are bad, and like technology, I believe getting exponentially worse.; Public actions are not consistent with the Gospels, Holy Traditions, Holy Canons, and the agreement of the saints; Breakdown of the family; The movement towards dependency on the large economic and socio-political structures put in place to advance the destruction of humanity. I.E. the corruption of morality; mass deception that is taking place through false ideology and is being accelerated through so called liberal education and the internet; Agenda of inclusion at all costs; “mainstream” ways of thinking; Popularity of liberal perspective;; Wokeism; Political zeitgeist that permeates so much; The proliferation of a progressive ideology that is contrary to our beliefs (i.e., on issues like abortion, transgenderism, etc.); <https://www.americamagazine.org/politics-society/2022/04/05/transgender-abortion-hhs-242759>; secularism; Each individual’s own comfort level with there knowledge or lack of knowledge about our church in general; Nihilism; Individualism; Individualism; False ideas and understandings becoming more and more popular and mainstream as to corrupt people’s ability to truly understand reality.

21 - SOCIAL MEDIA / TECHNOLOGY - Social media is a troubling medium; Social media – we

have no idea what our children are seeing or being taught; Media and messages that deliver a perception that religion is a negative. Minimize public displays. Criticize individuals who show their love for god openly because it doesn’t follow their narrative. Criticizing religion, but yet it’s ok to kneel for certain causes; Social Media / Social Influences / Anxiety; Social Media and obsession or addiction to technology/phones; Distractions, inclusive of social media and technology; Social media; Media (music movies games); Social Media consuming time; Distractions of media threaten to supplant our private prayer life, meditation and corporate worship.; Social media/public education/ TV/etc... Everything is showing and tell about self pleasure and selfish habits and not Godly.; Smart phones/electronics (opportunity and threat); cell phones; Youth (and adults) bombarded with negative social media; cell phones; the enticements of the world, which attract and stimulate us and which are now (due to technology) always before our faces and at our fingertips; Schools and education whose values don’t align with ours and that aren’t open to different views.; Virtual communities are a threat to inter-personal communities; Technology can

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provide alternative to in person community; Technological challenges; Careless use of technology (e.g. recordings, participation tracking software, etc).

21 - BUSYNESS - OTHER TIME DEMANDS - Time Challenges - more working families - more external activities; Sports commitments become a priority; Many pressures from outside the community that pull our people from regular Sunday worship or events that our church tries to hold. Things such as kids sports events that happen on Sunday, dance recitals, theater, etc.; The busyness of life outside the church draws more and more people away from the church; Day-to day demands, especially those with younger families. Balancing it all while being an active member of the church; Demands on everyone's time from other sources, eg. Jobs, school activities (sports); Distraction of everyday life, apathy, and losing existing parishioners to multiple activities and other churches; Daily Grind / Time for Relaxation; Greater demands outside of church (many of which may be positive): work, school, charity, athletic and social activities; busyness; Competing community involvement/activities; Competition with other youth and adult engagement, like sports, recreational activities and entertainment; Busyness; People are overwhelmed and busy all the time; busyness of life and society; General sense of burn out felt by many; All other demands of time; People's lives have become so busy they choose to relax in their homes on Sundays before getting ready for the week ahead; Certain folks become disengaged; Activities other than Divine Liturgy on Sundays (esp. youth sports).; Activities other than church.; People not interested in serving church.

20 - OTHER FAITHS/CHURCHES DO A BETTER JOB - Other Faiths - recruit better and identify needs better; Competition from other or new religions; We might consider Holy Trinity to be in competition with the other Orthodox churches in town. Are they friendlier to new-comers? Do they offer services that are 100% in English?; Growing Orthodox Parishes nearby – why?; Other engaging communities (Ada Bible, Keystone); Many competing offerings; other church options; more entertaining formats; Comparison to other Orthodox churches, that may have a different mission or focus; Other Orthodox Churches; Rise of “other” religions such as paganism or the occult.; Other Grand Rapids Orthodox churches that provide a place for our parishioners to retreat to when we turn someone off.; The Episcopal Church (and any others like it); Outreach of other faiths; Many orthodox churches in area – dispersing orthodox members; Other faiths/communities/churches that may be more “accessible.”; Non-denominational growth; Paganism is increasing and is an acceptable alternative; Insecurity in comparison to other churches and ministries; People are finding satisfaction from simplistic answers and faiths.

15 - ECONOMIC ISSUES - Macro-economic climate over upcoming 24 months will fundamentally impact finances of the Parish members and community; Hard times due to world conditions could negatively impact fundraising and donations; Failing economy which will create financial hardships for individuals with a direct consequence for parish stewardship; Inflation; Personal Financial Strains; Economics and pressure of limited income in a poor economy means less ability to give; Imminent economic collapse; Social and economic upheaval; Rising costs; Declining economy in general; Economy; The great reset; Popular belief amongst the youth that 501c3s, in particular churches and hospitals, should pay taxes similar to for-profit entities; Possible negative effect of inflation on future stewardship; Lots of people in need.

15 - SOCIETAL DIVISION Societal division Political Divide; The current climate of divisiveness among community, national and international leaders, which includes local, regional, state and national persons and organizations. Is also potentially within the church community.; Increasingly volatile political climate; Polarizing issues threatening the unity of the parish (ex. political ideologies, church response to Covid, etc.); Politics/social activism replacing religion in society; Evangelical Christians'

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support for former president Trump and antiprogressive stances on issues have given all Christians a bad reputation that hampers our witness and could lead to persecution, however mild; Divisiveness and triggers which hinder genuine communication.; Political division and misinformation; Factionalism; National political issues and bringing those into the church; Political division and misinformation; Lack of kindness and civility as norm.; Government mandates; Fear-based leadership (political, corporate, ecclesiastical). Promotion of fear of any kind is not of God.

10 - CHANGE IN DEMOGRAPHICS - At the same time, the United States is experiencing an acute demographic decline; National aging population New Generational engagement; <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/12/us-population-grew-in-2021-slowest-rate-since-founding-of-the-nation.html>; Less immigration; Change in Demographics - parishioners have changed; Generational shift as baby boomers finish aging out of the workforce. The generations that follow are smaller and the workforce will contract, affecting the economy and reducing financial support for the church; Diminishing level of immigration; generational shift with fewer people in work force.

7 - PANDEMIC / COVID - Pandemic and Global Health Issues; COVID/future surge concerns. Perceived health threat of being in a public place with several others; Current Covid regulatory uncertainty; Pandemic Excuses; COVID made it easy to stay at home; Pandemic/Health Crisis; Church participation overall is in a steady decline. The Pandemic pushed it farther – faster.

5 - RETENTION OF YOUTH/YOUNG FAMILIES - Not maintaining young members due to relocation after college; Ignoring generational changes from the outside world that have influence on younger generations; Loss of college-age parishioners; Retaining the young families; Loss of youth.

5 - CRIME / GLOBAL CONFLICT - Increased gun violence and crime in our community and surrounding area; Global war; Terrorists; Global conflict; The role of the Orthodox Church in Russian aggression.

2 - MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES - Mental Health Issues: The mental health crisis which all age groups are experiencing (may also be an internal.

INTERNAL HOLY TRINITY ISSUES AND NOT TO BE CONSIDERED AS EXTERNAL THREATS

- ~ Aging population of church members;
- ~ The possibility of losing Fr. Joshua to another parish/assignment;
- ~ Staff/volunteer base burnout;
- ~ Donor burnout;
- ~ Older generations passing;
- ~ Our parishioners with closed/narrow mindedness;
- ~ Members not satisfied and leave community;
- ~ Aging membership;
- ~ Declining regular attendance;
- ~ Loss of our Greek culture: the challenge of balancing Greek culture while remaining open and welcoming to all;
- ~ General decline in church attendance;
- ~ We fight over nothing.;
- ~ We don't work together.;
- ~ We favor some people over others.;
- ~ We don't do enough services, and we focus everything in a city church.;
- ~ We don't do enough services, and we focus everything in a city church.;
- ~ Criticizing those who actually step up to lead;
- ~ People who do not participate and just show up;
- ~ Lack of Sunday school participation from parents and children;
- ~ Moving away from our Greek heritage. I know we have a lot of different ethnic groups which I love. I have made friends and learned about different backgrounds. But we should still have some Greek in our liturgy. And also go back to the old music. The Orthodox church has stayed the same forever. Why change now? So we can sound like a catholic church? If we take the Greek out, then nothing sets us apart from the Antiochian church.;
- ~ Do many may think you have to be Greek or even speak the Greek language to attend HTGOC? This could discourage or impact future growth;

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- ~ Visitors (even long-time attending worshippers) who are not familiar with the Liturgy have trouble following along with the Liturgy Books (Understanding and learning the Liturgy is a key part of worship)
- ~ We have an Orthodox school in the area, but don't network with them at all.;
- ~ To consider Greek cultural and fundraising activities equal to Orthodoxy in importance.;
- ~ To underestimate the need to be welcoming to converts.;
- ~ There is some good work with a few children, but not many and not often. We don't encourage others to help with the few programs we have.;
- ~ We don't reach out to others except some amazing work by Athy and Manny, which is a good start and can be magnified.;
- ~ Activities other than church.;
- ~ Ambiguous distinctions on why individuals/families would attend this parish vs other;