

# **STRENGTHS**

**59 - WORSHIP** - Keeps the focus on worshipping God in the Trinity; Promotes spiritual growth; A sanctuary from the world's chaos/all earthly cares; the presence of God can be felt; Beauty and truth of the Orthodox faith & liturgy; Gospel centered and Christ focused; Prayerful atmosphere, beautiful icons everywhere; Focus on Christ, our Saviour, to attain our Salvation with God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; Strong Orthodox scriptural focus; homilies are very inspiring, uplifting, and educational; Gospel is preached, not platitudes; Our liturgical services are beautiful, uplifting, and inspiring; highly trained choir; active service schedule; language (English); Sunday Choir; worship In English; beautiful, inspiring, authentic liturgy; good liturgical singing with strong congregational participation; worship roles for women and girls in addition to men and boys; expertise of the choir and its director; value and pay our choir director; Vespers on Wednesday and Saturdays; Full Liturgical calendar; Emphasis on liturgical services; Choir is beautiful, elevating at times; Active choir director and choir; have a full calendar and cycle of liturgical services; choir director who is very knowledgeable and continues to challenge and teach our choir members; dedicated choir members with good voices.

**50 - CLERGY** - Caring, compassionate, capable clergy; the Pastor; strong pastoral support; clergy sufficient and well-rounded; amazing pastor who cares; strong and very engaged clerical group; active and engaged Pastor; excellent service and leadership of priests and deacons; Fr. Stephen, Fr. Dan and Fr. Dan and the Deacons; dynamic, kind, personable, apostolic pastor; Deacons!; clergy are well-versed in the Orthodox faith; a priest who loves and cares for us and desires spiritual growth for our Parish; approachable, caring clergy; Dedicated and devoted spiritual leader; Development of ordained clergy has enriched our parish experience; Our priest is second to none and is the main reason for our growth the past decade; Having two deacons is a big strength as it allows for our priest to have much needed assistance; genuine, passionate & approachable Spiritual Father; The pastor sets the tone for the community; have clergy who are very much "people people" and tend to radiate enthusiasm for the Faith and for our parish; a very smart and talented priest.

**42 - DIVERSITY** - The diversity of our parish fosters harmony; diversity of talents; ethnically diverse; diversity of our congregation; racial and ethnic diversity; wide spectrum of talents and skills; wide age spectrum, lots of young & middle-aged; Culturally diverse members who fulfill traditions of the Orthodox faith; presence of members from Ethiopia/Eritrea and the presence of young and old; Large congregation size which is diverse in: • Age • Ethnicity; Regular recognition in services and fellowship. • Background • Education • Privilege • Life experiences; Good blend of cradle Orthodox (stability) & converts (energy/zeal); Surficial diversity is impressive and culturally enriching; Eritrean/Ethiopian parishioners make our parish seem less intimidating to nonwhites.

**42 - ACTIVE PARISHIONERS** - Parishioners freely give of their time, talent, and treasure; engaged and active parishioners; talented individuals helping with many projects for the improvement of the parish; core group of believers who work as a unit; number of parishioners who may be persuaded to participate; active members performing assistance activities; core group of parishioners who step up; good job at asking people to help in ministries; strong hunger for and participation in educational activities; willing volunteers and hard workers; church members help with whatever work needs to be done; good attendance at Vespers and Sunday Divine Liturgy; High attendance at our Annual Meeting; Very active and supportive St. Tikhon Men's club and St. Mary's Altar Guild; high level of engagement, at least among regularly attending parishioners; genuine desire to serve; strength in involving numbers; Parishioner involvement—regular maintenance days, decorating, Sunday School teachers and multiple adult groups; Some roles for women & girls.

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**36 - LOVING AND UNIFIED COMMUNITY** - Genuine love and concern for each other; annual parish meeting is open to all parishioners; sense of love and family; closeness of Church community; making all feel included; fellowship; kindness of Parishioners; everyone is family; Warm, loving and supportive; patient with the special needs of our “fussier” members; Generous parishioners; Family Feel; we know one another; Parish dinners make friends out of acquaintances; Loving and respectful church community; Engagement within the parish (with coffee hour and other relationship building opportunities); Formal committee and informal check-ins on one another happen often; There are multiple opportunities for fellowship outside of services; We pray well as a community; Great lay people; Friendly Community; The ability of our members to come together at a time of need; Good communications; The people who attend this parish; embracing and encompassing to all who seek to learn more; Great fellowship hour; Smaller size means priest can minister personally to his flock.

**32 - FACILITIES** - Our temple is glorious to behold; maintained and attractive facilities; church assets and properties; Beautiful, authentic temple; lovely campus with trees and plantings; nice fellowship hall and beautiful uplifting icons; Large Fellowship Hall can accommodate all our parishioners comfortably; Lovely spacious parish house; Adequate facilities for church school, fellowship, preparing food, etc.; Gorgeous space, close to the city while still feeling secluded; Physical property and buildings are beautiful and cozy; The beautiful space conveys a theology that a space is holy and that worship is a thing of beauty.

**27 - ADULT / CATECHUMEN EDUCATION** - Many adult education opportunities are available; active education programs; discipleship; educational programs; good and well-attended adult education programs; qualified people to teach in our adult education classes; feeds inquirers, catechumens and converts; adult education curriculum is fantastic; Pastoral & parishioner support for converts; Orthodoxy 101 classes and Lenten adult education have been very helpful; Adult Education offerings: Nativity / Lent + fall guest speaker; St. Jerome Book Club discussions; Formal and robust program for inquirers and catechumens; Good preaching and teaching available.

**27 - GENEROUS STEWARDSHIP & FISCAL STABILITY** - financially solvent; Financial self-sustainability; Our parish’s finances are in good shape; Financial stability; Strong financial status with focus on benefits and future expenditures; Financially sound parish; very fiscally responsible church; Financially solvent; Financially prosperous; appears to work within its budget but is also able to get financial support for special projects or causes; Stewardship is terrific; generous financial support from within; parishioners are generous with their time, talent and resources; continuous year-over-year growth in tithing funds; Proper emphasis on fiscal giving; Generosity of the parishioners; financially supportive congregation; Generous financial giving; offers time, talents, skills, tithing and services to help sustain our church and promote growth in membership; Annual increase in stewardship for the past 12 years; Healthy income through regular tithes and giving; Parish is generous with time, talent, financial support.

**26 - WELCOMING PARISH** - greeters before services; welcoming congregation; welcoming to all; welcoming and friendly community; welcoming parish encouraging visitors and inquirers to be a part of our services; Welcoming and friendly; Our street sign on Locust Ln says it all – All are welcome, “Come and See”; As a catechumen, valued by the church and accepted as important to the congregation; Welcoming to visitors and inquirers, regardless of background; new members are easily integrated within our church family; friendly greeting team; have found CTS to be quite welcoming when

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I began visiting. I knew a couple people, but even some I didn't, went out of their way to introduce themselves.

**25 - SUNDAY SCHOOL / YOUTH PROGRAMS** - vital and active youth group; Sunday School program is staffed by dedicated teachers; youth ministries and participation in Liturgy; Sunday School; Youth Group; Sunday School ministry is staffed with dedicated volunteers; Sunday school director; Youth Choir and Youth Vestry duty; vibrant youth programming; Children's/Youth Choir being developed, sing regularly + monthly choral training for this choir; Encouraging children and youth to participate in the services and ministries; Connecting older members with younger members w/ tasks during service; The Sunday School program is run efficiently and makes a difference in the young lives of our parish. The dedicated, hardworking Sunday School Teachers put in hours to prepare a good lesson. The fact that we now have good Sunday School rooms for each age group makes a big difference in the learning process; very capable church school director and dedicated church school teachers.

**19 - NUMEROUS MINISTRIES / OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE** - Altar Guild; Men's Club; Offers many opportunities to serve, ministries and fellowship; Numerous ministries; Multiple organizations within the church which support the church such as Altar Guild, Men's Club, O Club, Jr. O Club, Teen group, College group, VIP Ministry, book club; Healthy parish ministries; Many opportunities to serve and be involved in parish life; Variety of activities for different talents and personalities; There are many options to keep people engaged; different avenues to get involved; activities and programs for all ages ( young, teens, adults and older adults).

**18 - OUTREACH** - Many parishioners are engaged in community outreach; Parish open houses allow us to share our faith with the community; charitable ministries; charity work and community work; ministries within the community are excellent; Fellowship view toward fundraising to get to raise money for the needy; Focus on outreach by every group in the Parish; provides aide and support to multiple charities; Community outreach is increasing; Relationship with most neighbors & neighboring church; Many outreach opportunities; Connected with Bethesda Mission; The parish has made several outreach efforts over the past years, to other churches, to the disadvantaged, to those in need; Concerts, trivia, food fest, outside speakers welcome the public and expose them to Orthodoxy.

**17 - EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP/PARISH COUNCIL** - fiscal transparency; competent parish council; strong support and interventions from parish council; active group of members on council; Parish Council is transparent, diligent in execution of their responsibilities; parish council has operated under a balanced budget; Dedicated leadership; Parish-wide questions/debates/concerns addressed mostly respectfully and peacefully; Lay leadership is diverse and engaged; Parish Council that leads by example and as a team; very transparent money wise; History of strong leadership by current and past presidents and boards; Abundance of leadership; Strong Parish Council; The parish council acts responsibly and with clear judgement.

**15 - STRONG/COMMITTED ORTHODOX MEMBERSHIP** - High percentage of people who are serious about their Faith, intentionally Orthodox, alive in Christ; most people in the parish are very committed to Jesus Christ and His Church; people are very well educated in the Orthodox faith; faithful Orthodox Christians; A family of believers; Active participation in the Sacraments; The parish leadership takes its work seriously: its clergy, its council, and its ministry committees; Body of Christ embracing parishioners; people who are striving to be more Christ-like and draw closer to one another; Consistent and sustained investment in the liturgical life; It is not just about showing up Sunday for services; We do not take short cuts!; passionate about its faith, church & ministry; Wonderful group of Christians

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who are kind, friendly, encouraging, outgoing, helpful, faithful, reverent worshipers, generous, mature, wise, etc.

**12 - FOOD FEST/ETHNIC FOODS** - Slavic+ Food Festival allows us to invite the surrounding community; food festival is a good way to introduce people to our congregation; good ethnic foods and baked goods; annual food festival is intended for outreach and fundraising; Food Fest; Copious opportunities for parish members to learn how to make foods central to our church culture (rolls, breads, pierogi); Ethnic food festivals are exceptional; Well known in the community for the successful ethnic food festival; Successful festivals.

**11 - PAN-ORTHODOX MINDSET** - Focus on Pan-Orthodoxy in support of our Brothers and Sisters in Christ; Cooperation with other area Orthodox churches; Regular engagement with other Orthodox parishes; OCCGH as a resource for supporting new ministries; Pan-Orthodox cooperation; Regular partnership with other Orthodox Churches in the area, regardless of “affiliation”; Cooperation with local Orthodox community; support local orthodox community; Positive relations with other area Orthodox; Enriching Pan-Orthodox activities.

**10 - FAMILY FRIENDLY**; Family friendly; healthy place to raise our children in the faith of the church; parishioners are supportive of families; Many young families attend Liturgy and Sunday School; Family oriented; Many children and teens; Multi-generational familial environment; Married priest = pastor who understands daily family life; Annual parish “family meeting” is AWESOME. Good dynamics.

**10 - PRESERVING TRADITION** - History – 57 years of existence and experience; church has a good reputation; Parishioners with connections to and memories of the early days of the parish; Continuity and longevity of the Clergy keeps the feeling of stability; Continuity of Orthodoxy and the Traditions; Parish’s history and traditions; Grounded in a faith full of tradition, depth, meaning, and purpose; The church continues to stay on mission, celebrating the traditions without being bogged down or held back by past practices or attitudes; CTS and Orthodoxy uphold the reality of the divine mysteries (sacraments) as being real things and not merely symbols.

**9 - GOOD USE OF TECHNOLOGY** - Technology is being implemented to reach Parishioners; Live streaming, zoom meetings, etc.; On Line Services/On Line Education; Social media presence, online service streaming; Digital presence – website, FB, YouTube, email; Online giving, tithing, special donations; how we now have online services once COVID issue started; Parish provides online opportunities to learn & to participate in services (audio, video, & texts/pdf’s).

**7 - GROWING IN NUMBERS** - starting to move to a broader age demographic; increase in new membership; steady stream of inquirers and catechumens; Attracts inquirers, catechumens and converts; Frequent catechumens and enquirers; Regular membership growth; Parish membership growing.

**6 - FORWARD THINKING** - Our Priest is forward thinking; the fact that the parish is undergoing a strategic planning process points to this; Willingness to shake up the status quo with this Strategic Planning project; how we now have online services once COVID issue started; Willingness to try new things; Forward-looking leadership.

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**6 - BOOKSTORE/LIBRARY/LITERATURE AVAILABLE** - Educational literature is available for visitors and inquirers; Many resources available to follow services and Orthodox education; Bookstore; Library (a work in progress!); Communication—emails and bulletins; Pew books show what the priest is praying; many of those prayers are instructive to the faith.

**4 - NON-POLITICAL** - general avoidance of political viewpoints expressed in church or at church activities; Clergy within parish displays an impressive level of political neutrality compared to that displayed in certain other traditions/areas; variety of political opinions, but those opinions have not alienated others; Politically neutral and non-judgmental.

**3 - EFFECTIVE COVID RESPONSE** - Still keeping up with church school is outstanding during these months; during these hard months letting people know there was help for them; Response to COVID has been exceptional.

**3 - SEMINARY/SEMINARIAN SUPPORT** - Seminary and clergy programs; Seminary/Seminarian support.

**2 - SECURITY ORIENTED** - ALICE program provides us with a safe, secure environment; Excellent Parish and Child safety measures.

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## **ONE OFFS**

- The updated phone list
- Contra the stereotype of Orthodox churches, its Slavic roots are present but not so prominent that they make non-Slavic visitors and members feel unwelcome
- Being part of OCA (one Holy Synod)
- Minimally ethnic for Orthodox - proximity to St. Tikhon's Monastery
- Large Parish
- We have Johnny who has been faithfully serving our church for many, many years as different officers, especially treasurer