

## WEAKNESSES

**46 - FACILITIES/LOCATION ISSUES-** Size of main fellowship hall – too small to comfortably accommodate all-parish gatherings, youth dramas; Lack of easy bathroom access; Lack of parking; Overcrowded on many Sundays; Serving line during coffee hour is a bottleneck; Accessibility issues: lack of bathroom on main floor of the church; lack of elevator between main floor and basement of the fellowship hall; Inadequate building space; No handicap accessible restroom facilities; Adequate room for significant growth; Downstairs Church bathrooms are not handicap accessible. (Commodos need updating).; Consider better walkway around Church and more lighting when we have processions; Aging buildings needing improvements that are rapidly reaching capacity; Parking; A parish social hall that needs more space; Current temple is a fire trap for those on one side; No restroom on main level of parish; The location of the restroom prevents some special need parishioners from attending. (This is currently being addressed.); Parishioners geographical distance to the church may prohibit more fellowship; Limited seating; Tight space in our temple and hall; Lack of physical space to grow in Parish Social Hall to allow for more activities; Limited space in Parish buildings and expansion space on property overcrowding; Some spaces in Church are not handicap accessible (easily); Growing out of available space in the Main Church, Church Hall, and Parking Spaces; Not easy to bring anyone with disabilities, tho not impossible; Smaller temple can feel crowded; Suburban location not very visible; There are boundaries to the church property, which may in future limit expansion of buildings, facilities or opportunities. The spaces we do have are well used, but may inhibit parish expansion eventually; Hard to reach without a car; Somewhat hidden temple that must be approached via a long driveway, which can be daunting to visitors; Proximity of parishioners to Church; Our parish campus is landlocked – there is very little room for expansion; The parish is set back from Locust Lane and is not immediately visible to passers-by; Proximity of Parishioners' homes to Church some are rather far away and difficult to reach for visiting purposes when sick or need to see Father or Church representative; Facilities and parking: The reality is that, during peak periods of the liturgical year, it can be challenging to find seating in the pews and a parking spot outside; Improve all buildings and ministries to ensure they are accessible to any person with a physical, psychological, or developmental disabilities SPACE! Lack thereof within temple, parking & fellowship \*everyone's participation in allowing for seating; Environmental health of campus in danger of being compromised; Our temple is a decent size, but the parking lot and the parish hall are too small; Distance between buildings on the property – especially during unfavorable weather conditions; Geographic range of parishioners from parish; Church building itself is not very visible; Large geographic area – travel time, house blessings, special services; Ramps too steep & outside; Onerous restrictions on land use; Fellowship hall gets noisy/congested; Building capacity – We are quickly getting to a point where we will not have enough room in our church to accommodate the people attending. Maybe time for a mission church.

**34 - WELCOMING, ENGAGEMENT & INCLUSIVENESS ISSUES (especially minority communities)** – Cliques; Cliques at fellowship; Fellowship hour can be intimidating for someone who is shy or new, as parishioners tend to socialize with familiar groups.; Christ the Saviour can feel alien to an outsider. As I was becoming acquainted with the culture of Christ the Saviour I wasn't comfortable with asking some questions as I wasn't sure what would even be a polite question. I had read a bit about Orthodoxy, but still would have relished a welcoming statement from the church explaining how the liturgy was structured and what I could and should not do.; In general, coffee hour groups can tend towards cliques; little mixing between Eritrean /non-Eritrean communities; Welcoming visitors and follow ups (shepherding program); Need to overcome ethnic identity to be more welcoming to new inquirers; lack creating opportunities to welcome those parishioners besides liturgy; Because of the small social groupings we have within in our church it may be difficult to open ourselves up to welcome visitors; We certainly don't discourage anyone from coming to our church but we need to do more to make people in the community aware of who we are and what we stand for and to let them know they are welcome; Lack of official welcoming committee (I could be wrong there, but I'm not aware of anything official at this time!); Lack of (or too little) intentional training – How to be a welcoming parish? How to engage and fold in newcomers? Etc.; Some ethnic groups are not as fully integrated as others (ex. No whites sitting with Eritreans at coffee hour) increase diversity; Church community so close that it can be difficult for new members or potential new members to get to feel a part of the church community; Sometimes when new people do come to

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help, it is difficult for them to find where they can fit in to help; Difficulty recruiting volunteers for food festival/nut roll prep; Still some reticence, hesitance to embrace newcomers; Weak interaction at fellowship with visitors; I don't know what a solution would be for helping a newcomer or visitor be able to feel more engaged, but for someone who is shy or unsure, it might be quite a hurdle. Undoubtedly, making sure new people are connected with quickly can help because they won't feel so much like a fish out of water; Distractions (i.e. clubs, organizations, events, traditions, customs, ethnic, and religious-Orthodoxy focus); People tend to talk to the same people during fellowship hour after church; Inclusion of our Eritrean and Ethiopian parishioners into areas beyond services (council, ministries etc.). Not that we haven't tried, but seem to be unsuccessful; Perhaps due to language differences or insecurity, some parishioners may feel timid about more broadly embracing others; Most of us may be guilty of it, but during fellowship hour we may cluster in familiar groups and always talk with the same people week after week; • Limited integration of Eritrean community (a quarter of our parish?) into the larger parish community; Minorities: we need more minorities represented in other areas, not just as altar servers, we need to attract more minorities from our greater Harrisburg community; Parish large enough that it can be difficult to know everyone well; Parish members can get forgotten in event planning/activity or just not included; Eritrean community is not assimilated and could leave; that would erase our "diversity" and we would lose that cultural enrichment; Some of the East African Parishioners are less involved and seem to stay to themselves unless they are actively sought; Different ethnic backgrounds (cultures) seem to not mix very much during fellowship hours or join Church organizations; More organized community engagement; Lack of inclusiveness of the Eritrean /Ethiopian community (improving); Sitting with the same groups of people at coffee hour.

**30 - STEWARDSHIP / ENGAGEMENT (Time, Talents and Treasures)** - Lack of formal financial commitment plan (tithing system); Will financial support continue in the next generation?; We have a relatively small percentage of the parish (roughly 10% or less, I think) providing a relatively large percentage of the money donated via Sunday offerings (roughly 30%, I think) and thence to our operating budget; Much of the volunteer work that is an additional source of income for the parish depends on a relatively few people, many of whom are advanced and advancing in years; Risk of Parishioner fatigue/complacency; Low parishioner participation (80-20 rule applies); Donor concentration – need to engage those who could, but are not more supportive of our mission; Telling people how much they need to spend; Encourage tithing; Succession planning needs to be more explicit; Depending on the core group of parishioners; Need greater pathway for Parishioners to find their strengths and be plugged-in to serve; Reliance on fund-raising to balance budget; Additional people, needed for activities such as helping in the kitchen, food prep, etc.; It is easy to let Parish Council become the only ones giving input about decisions as there is not a sense that Parishioners are needed to participate in the workings of the Church and thereby may not be interested participating in being the Body of the Church. It's easy to make excuses to not get involved. But easier when there is a sense there is no need to be involved; Lack of significant endowment investments: Our parish council has been prudent with CTS' operating budget and day-to-day finances. However, room for improvement exists in cultivating long-term investment assets that will generate income and strengthen the impact of our ministry in future generations; Bishop decrees regarding finance confuse leadership. There is the spiritual side of the Church and the Business side of the Church; While parish is supportive of various goals, it sometimes feels like it is the same people that always come to help for church events; Strengths/ Talents of all parish members not always recognized/developed; Lack of widespread participation in Church activities and on committees; Some members not engaged in church activities; Leadership persons the same every year (though this is changing); Same core group of people participating in service ministries; Some of the leadership becoming burnt out; Lack of informal and formal people connections program (who are you? What are you interested in? what are your professional experiences?) – develop surveys; Leadership and involvement – too few people still carry the majority of the workload when it comes to keeping the parish operating properly and heading up ministries and committees. The old "I'll just take care of it cause no one else will" syndrome; There are parishioners who attend services infrequently and are disconnected from the church; Diversity in terms of parish involvement - our demographic numbers are diverse, but does that translate to actual parish involvement? Where are the people of color in the clergy (even minor orders), on committees, in the choir, teaching adult ed

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classes, etc.; Diversity in leadership positions seem disproportionate to parish demographics; Individuals becoming lazy and ungrateful for all that the church and a relationship with God has to offer.; Our charitable giving is good, but we need a focus for it - a new "coffee shop."

### **29 - YOUTH & EMERGING ADULT MINISTRY ISSUES** - Investment with youth group activities;

Paid choir director, but no paid youth pastor; We lack a formal place for youth sports. For example a better basketball court; We are fairly good at bringing in converts to the faith but we need to find out what can be done to retain our youth that stay in the area after graduation as well as reaching out to people who have drifted away and stop coming to church; Lack of active involvement of youth/young adults; Youth group should be doing more to help community. Working as a team with Church organizations; Encourage regular attendance and participation of the youth and adults in religious services i.e. feast days, advent and lent; Young adults/young professionals group started with a great deal of promise, but I got the sense that differences in location, overarching goals, and tech communication style made for a lack of efficacy; Engage the involvement of the youth during church services and community events; Some college students/young adults leave the Church; Lack of programs directed specifically toward young, single (or just single) people; This is a very difficult weakness to overcome in my opinion b/c we cannot change Orthodoxy or change the direction the youth are headed in when it comes to church participation; Maintaining youth participation after graduation; Improving the Summer Camp for the youth and encouraging the children to attend and spend a week in "Orthodoxy"; College age to marriage age programs are sporadic at best; Youth not integrated into the undertakings of parish. (Think of having a student board member); Our high school and college graduates migrate away from church and we need to get them back; Some ministries lack participation from older teens/young adults; Some ministries lack participation from older teens/young adults; Young adult engagement; Need to track "what happened to the kids in past year's Sunday school- where are they now?; Again, if we could get younger people involved, this would be great! Hard to get teens because they are so involved in school and other things they are involved in (sports, etc.). Yet, some might join; Not enough of the next generation (20-40 year age range) attending or actively participating in parish ministries; No "young adult" activities suitable for young parents; Lacking new and younger individuals getting involved; Need more young people to attend work parties; Consider more social activities for younger element (such as fold dancing, etc.); Retention of college/post college parishioners; No "young adult" activities suitable for young parents.

### **26 - OUTREACH & EVANGELISM and COMMUNITY IMPACT-** Need to focus more on the

outside community at large; Need more exposure to no longer be seen as Eastern European community; Most visitors come of their own initiative, not specifically invited, therefore, parishioners need a better skill set; to develop talking points, training, role playing, encouragement to bring friends, family, acquaintances, the world to Orthodoxy. Still uncomfortable; Evangelism/Outreach insufficient; No "young adult" activities suitable for young parents; Outreach to the local community; We could do more community outreach. It is still a problem that most Americans are simply not aware of Holy Orthodoxy; Train and equip parishioners for faith-sharing and outreach; Need outreach opportunities to increase to serve "the least of these" ... more connections outside of suburbia; More visible and greater outreach and volunteer opportunities; Need to consider outreach programs to the community; Lack of community outreach to address needs of community and have a presence in the community; Outreach needs to be better defined, local to global. What is scope? Info should be readily available to parishioners; CTS Ministries are not external, outreaching or evangelizing. It may be going on; however, many parishioners are not aware of it, especially newer parishioners; Is there more community outreach we can do in Harrisburg or Lower Paxton Township (building on volunteering at the Bethesda women's shelter, for example)?; Gaps in types of outreach and committees/ministries within the parish (There are opportunities for more/other types of ministries). While established in the community, there is potential for the church to become even

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more well-known in the greater Harrisburg area; How can we better love/serve those around us in meaningful, lifechanging ways? How can we draw people TO us, not just GO TO them? e.g., Increased use of our facilities throughout the week to intentionally offer care/service/hospitality; Limited local community impact: Beyond our annual Slavic Food Fest, the scope of our involvement with our surrounding community seems quite narrow, particularly when it comes to ministering to the needy. Harrisburg is a community with great socioeconomic hardship, and it is incumbent upon us as the body of Christ to extend our ministry to the local community; Establish a better rapport with the public and churches in our local communities; Limited regular opportunities to go out and meet the people of our community where they are at and lend a helping hand; Not enough impact on our local community. If CTS was to leave Locust Lane would anyone notice; Can always increase community engagement (food drives, clothing drives, etc.); Community awareness – how we can educate people who are not Orthodox or come to our church about what Orthodoxy is; Rounding up the cradle born people who have fallen away from coming to church; Direct relationship-building congregational service to the poor, sick, and imprisoned.

**21 (32)<sup>1</sup> - CHURCH SERVICES ENGAGEMENT & ACCESSIBILITY ISSUES** - Hard-to-understand language in stichera and sometimes troparia, and no text for the people; Liturgical weak points: “secret” prayers originally meant to be public; singing to cover St. Basil’s anaphora; dismissal of catechumens where nothing happens, etc.; Vespers is understood to be a learning service, but still very little time is given to teaching though a too brief homily. These could be longer and Sunday homilies could be longer too. I am not looking at my watch in Church; This is likely not confined to CTS, but for a new-comer (especially, one from a “low-church” Protestant or unchurched background), the services are very daunting and difficult to enter into. It’s very hard to follow the liturgy even with a service book (since it will often not follow it exactly). Certainly, part of the attraction is that it is NOT like what I’m used to; Length of Liturgy / Liturgical Music (not meaning church should be drastically shorter) Keeping everyone (especially newcomers, children & visitors) engaged, as well as keeping the health/well-being in mind for all (especially parishioners fasting) can be difficult with 2+ hour services. I firmly believe that we are in church to serve the Lord our God, and not cater to the needs of anyone else; Navigating the divine liturgy can be difficult for newcomers (not necessarily the content, but the logistics); Attendance at weekday services in Church is light; We only have non-liturgical services on Wednesday and Saturday, when the Church prescribes “Daily” services. Some Parishioners only attend on Sunday and do not attend major Feasts and Vespers; Long services may be a deterrent to older parishioners who have special needs or simply age-related restrictions. The length and complexity of the services may puzzle and frustrate newcomers; A lot of different languages to understand. English should be used at all times; Longer church services than non-Orthodox churches; Weekday Liturgy attendance and lay participation (perhaps a weekday choir led by Reader Christopher using OCA music that is simple for all to learn and sing by those interested and choir members as well); Uncritical approaches to non-dogmatic parts of the Tradition, such as mythologized hagiography, Protoevangelion of James, etc., which can be unnecessary obstacles for reasonable inquirers; Attendance at services (other than Sunday); For non-Orthodox visitors/inquirers/Catechumens, many hurdles to overcome in unexplained terminology, customs, how to follow along during a service, candles – what is reasonable donation, when can light/not light candles, is it required to pay to eat at coffee hour (donation basket gives that impression), etc.; It would have been helpful to me early on to have had access to the full text during Vespers. The troparia during Vespers have been difficult to hear, so I missed much of the hymnology of the featured saints. The printed text during the internet Vespers has been most helpful; Variable hymns/prayers not provided to parishioners for every service (makes it difficult to understand and/or grasp the words being sung so much rich teaching is missed; Low attendance at many weekday

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<sup>1</sup> The number of mentions for this item would rise to 32 if we included the 11 mentions of choir issues (see below) that could legitimately be included in Church Services Engagement and Accessibility Issues

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services and activities (AM services difficult for those who work full-time) – how get more people involved; Matins not regularly served.

**17 - EDUCATION ISSUES (ADULT and YOUTH) SUNDAY SCHOOL** - Lack of coordination between adult education and youth learning; Lack of participation of younger adults in adult education; Not enough Sunday School teachers; Sunday school facilities are small; We have made progress with adult education. Are there ways we can expand it, such as regular Sunday school classes for adults? Or small groups that meet during the week; A Vacation Bible School Program (Pan Orthodox) would help to teach children about the faith. When you see the children daily for a week, the teacher can review the topic and do some fun things. Also, singing fun kid's songs about being Orthodox lets that song stay in their heads forever; Adult Education program is very limited and does not reach parents who need to be educated in order to pass their Faith along to their children; Lacking opportunities for live or recorded remote participation in Orthodoxy 101, Bible studies, ministry meetings, and other nonservice activities. This is helpful for parents of young children, people home bound, or those who have other commitments but still want to participate; Increase budget to improve the Sunday school educational curriculum for the youth and adult education programming for adults; No Bible Study; Childcare needed for parents attend adult ed opportunities; Parents are not passing their faith on to their children as they used to do, it is expected to be done by the Church. I am curious if this is a result of a language issue of generations in America who did not learn their faith due to not understanding what was going on in Church. Thinking that parents should be the ones teaching their children their faith is not unreasonable; however, they cannot give what they do not have. We cannot feed people if we are starving; We could invest more energy in education in the ways of the Church. (Like during Lent); Parents need help in learning how to make a little church in their own homes, sometimes with life so busy outside of church the only time Christ is mentioned is on Sunday; Lack of Understanding of Hierarchical Structure of the Orthodox Church – people believe that the parish operates as an independent entity.

**13 - COMMUNICATIONS & TECHNOLOGY** - We depend a lot on internet which not everyone has or uses. Perhaps could have phone calls for those; Communication (Internet); Some people do not have computers. How can we reach them?; Lack of up-to-date digital / online media and resources to introduce seekers to our church and the Orthodox faith, before coming to a service; More formalized communication system; Difficult to communicate with some school students and families, wrong information provided; Communication breakdown between clubs/organizations within the Church. They assume we should know how things are always done; Inter-ministry communications are not as strong as they could be; Communication barriers resulting from a culturally diverse parish community; Opportunities to provide education about Orthodoxy to the community through media sources, public advertising, etc.; Lack of Historical Knowledge of the Orthodox Church – few people realize the Orthodox Church is the 2nd largest Christian denomination in the world; At times, I think people do not realize how much work our church does, except at annual meetings; Perhaps not as bold as we could be in speaking difficult truths within the parish and to others outside (such as the exclusive claims of Orthodoxy).

**11 - CHOIR / MUSIC** - Choir does not encourage Congregational singing; Few youth and young adults in parish choir; Aging choir; Often there are liturgies with challenging choir selections, which can cause tension and delays. (no offense to our very talented and passionate choir); Apparently, it is hard to hear and understand the stichera and aposticha. The choir is planning to work on pronunciation, but even still, the words are unfamiliar to people. The words are printed on the OCA website for some Vespers. People could read them. What else could we do? The words are rich in meaning and poetic loveliness. And the Tones are musically very pleasant to hear. I could type out the words and make some copies. Or print them off of the OCA website; We have a great choir, but I think we need to do more to encourage anyone who likes to sing and is a good singer to join. I don't see that kind of encouragement going on often enough; Youth choir is great also, but we need to have more boys participating in it. We need to find ways to encourage them to do so; Choir:

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difficulty with attracting new members, challenged transition of youth choir members into adult choir, this is a local Church, not a professional choir that being said, we will continue to make stupid mistakes and so please forgive us; We need to do more to encourage the people in the pews to sing the services. I come from an Orthodox tradition (Carpatho-Rusyn) that used congregational singing at all services, led by a cantor. The people need to participate more in the singing and be encouraged to do so. We don't want the divine services to be a "spectator sport"; Musical repertoire is not pan Orthodox, so style seems ethnic.

**7 - STAFFING ISSUES - NEED MORE CLERGY HELP** - This is a good problem, but congregation may be on the larger side for one pastor to serve; Risk of clergy burnout: We are blessed with a superstar rector in Fr. Stephen. However, he bears the brunt of much of the routine administrative work (parish website updates, calendar maintenance, etc.) that could be delegated to office staff/lay leadership, thereby freeing his time to focus on core ministry; Need more parent involvement in Sunday School such as follow-up with lessons and bringing to church on holydays; Too much depends directly on the pastor; Our priest could grow in delegation and letting others take things off his plate; Lack of support staff- ministries coordinator; Size of parish for 1 priest (challenge); Fr. Stephen's workload - could more be passed on to lay leadership? More secretarial /administrative support.

**7 - RESISTANCE TO CHANGE** - "We've already tried that" or "We're doing this the way we always have" or other versions of "new is bad, change is bad, we're done brainstorming."; Entrenched ways of doing things, done by the same people, and not open to new possibilities; Vocal opposition to change and spending from some; Stressful to have any change, especially with the elder members; Lack of a "dashboard" with leading and lagging measurable indicators of where we are and where we want to be; We still have some folks that believe we should do things how they have "always been done" which can hold a church back from growth and prosperity. However even though this is a weakness, it is much improved over the past 6-8 years so trending in the right direction; Occasional manifestations of a "we're small" mindset that opposes growth.

**6 - AGING PARISH DEMOGRAPHIC** - A lot of the institutional knowledge and hard work done for the church is done by the elder members of the church. There are not enough of the next generation stepping up to learn and serve; Aging of a portion of parishioners; Age Demographics – weighted toward middle/upper age individuals; Age of parishioners; Aging membership in some ministries; Aging demographics: where will we be in 15 years?

**4 - LACK OF PAN-ORTHODOX EMPHASIS /WORK** - Unwillingness to understand and correct historical inaccuracies that perpetuate divisions among Orthodox; Lack of public knowledge of our existence, why we are here, and what the Orthodox Church is as a whole. How does Orthodoxy compare and differ from other Christian churches; We need more Pan Orthodox gatherings to meet new people that are Orthodox in our area (especially for the teens ); Lack of motivation to encourage unity among all Orthodox and challenge hierarchs to strive toward unity.

**4 - FEMALE ISSUES** - Few opportunities for women to read (specifically the Epistle); choir members such as Lydia, Sophia, Martha, and Mary have shown themselves to be thoughtful, focused individuals who read prayerfully and beautifully, and we lose out as a parish by restricting their gifts to a smaller sphere than we do the male choir members; The lady's group has a monthly meeting and when I first attended was amazed at how much work they do. We had talked about getting more women involved, like speaking to people to come to meeting and find a project to work on; Few roles for women and girls in church; No counterpart to altar server program for girls; If we aren't allowing girls to be altar servers, we should offer a comparable service training to keep them engaged and teach responsibility/leadership at an early age, or risk breeding disengagement.

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**3 - FAMILY CHALLENGES** - Age diversity – we need to do more to attract and keep younger families which is difficult to do currently. Many young families consider themselves “too busy” for long or multiple services or to do extra activities outside of liturgy; A small percentage of the church population is young families; Few resources or support for parents social/support groups for parents. Some folks still judgmental of kids' noises, etc.;

**3 - SENIORS ISSUES** - No Seniors Group; No senior group; Transportation for Seniors.

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### **ONE OFFS**

- Overuse of King James old English in hymns, readings, etc.
  - Be sure to include and look at (occasionally) the online participants of services. It helps them to feel part of the action.
  - There may be ways to involve Parishioners more at the annual meeting to engage people rather than have them passively attending and listening
  - National Church lacks focus as it deals with its own organizational problems. Foremost should be the recognition or election of a Patriarch
  - Variables/verses often not clearly audible or do not jive with text
  - Much of friendly tone is inspired by pastor, and so could change
  - Long term parish council members
  - Adherence to church etiquette
  - There may be a perception that churches are political or advocate for particular causes. While this may not be true of CTS, it may be a perception amongst those who do not attend church and see for themselves
  - Need for more visible access to counseling for parishioners in crisis, for healing and to keep parish safe
  - Not knowing how to speak out or stand up, against injustices, as Christians in our society
  - We do not have a mission/vision statement which we can share
  - Too many ministries
  - Parishioners staying in the lobby of the church (although this is getting better...or at least was before COVID)
  - Having social or cultural events outside of the physical church/other locations
  - No resources or support for differently-abled and/or caregivers (including adults caring for elderly parents)
  - Small membership size relative to other local denominations
  - Difficulty in Achieving Consensus – due to the size of the parish community
  - The men's club is the same! When there are projects there are many people who come to help
  - Too much time and manpower put toward making and selling ethnic food. Could probably accomplish several important tasks for the same time and effort.
  - Paradoxically, we can become too focused on non-essential events/activities
  - Our growth has created some competing priorities, we need more clarity
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