

81 - STEWARDSHIP & ENGAGEMENT - Not enough stewardship to cover all our operating expenses.; Need stewardship from everyone; Limited resources; Misconceptions of stewardship; Not enough stewards; Planned giving program and Endowment; Not enough financial stewardship to cover operating costs; Overdependency on festival; Our reliance on income from festivals, etc. for normal expenses; Stewardship; Constant “begging” for money – begging shows weakness; Reliance on annual festival to make budget; Stewardship does not cover our operating expenses: causing the reliance on festivals (I LOVE our festivals); Per-family average financial donation amounts.; The Church relies too much on the festival’s income to pay for expenses.; With all these strengths, we should have more than ~ 200 stewards by now. The church is packed out the door at the Anastasi service each year. Why are we not able to expand the number of stewards?; The constant mention of money within liturgy since we have yet to pay off our mortgage; Small parish without maximized stewardship; Reliance on festival proceeds for church expenses; •Multiple registration forms from different ministries ask people what activities they will commit to as part of their stewardship and/or membership, but the information submitted isn’t utilized effectively to engage parishioners; No elder program to help with legal, finance, and technology.; Sustainability of festivals and fundraisers. Festivals are heavily labor-intensive, dependent on an aging generation with the cultural experience to run them. The younger generation may not have the same desire or ability to sustain them at the current scale.; Reliance on fundraisers to meet our budget. A poor festival year can significantly affect the financial standing of the parish.; Financial dependency on fewer than 10 families for Stewardship generating 40% of stewardship. Need greater financial commitment from many more families. Loss of one or two strong contributors may gravely affect the financial standing of the parish.; Not enough stewards and misconception of stewardship.; Pushback on estate planning and strategic planning; Increasing the breadth of financial support of the Church among parishioners is desirable.; Not as fully engaged and knowing everyone; The church can do a better job educating how stewards can donate to the church through legacy giving. The church can encourage legacy giving by providing educational resources.; Engagement; Aging congregation with declining attendance for younger parishioners (EX: Festival Processes are done by a core 3 people and younger generation has not stepped up to learn); Declining membership due to people not prioritizing church/not giving back as much as they want to.Lack of consistent 100% payment of stewardship by all people who consistently attend services; Engagement of our people. Like most organizations, we rely on a small percentage of people to make the parish run and stay afloat financially. Need to get broader participation.; Limited Engagement of Broader Membership. Many parishioners may feel excluded from leadership and ministry roles due to (what appears as cliques), poor communication, or lack of proper invitation.; Volunteer burnout, with a small group carrying many responsibilities.; Reliance on the same leaders, leading to difficulty raising up new volunteers.; Ministries / volunteering seems to involve the same people, who do a lot. We seem to have many other parishioners who are not involved in anything.; Many newcomers attend Liturgy regularly, but are not part of the social or volunteer side of the parish; Volunteer fatigue, with the same small group serving across multiple ministries; No festival shirts for volunteers / Lack of coordinated volunteer identity; Low responsiveness for volunteering; Limited staff (huge burden of running the Parish and the facilities is undertaken by skeletal crew of paid employees and largely depends on volunteers or the Board); Low responsiveness for volunteerism; Overwhelmed and skeletal staff; Volunteerism; Overtaxed PC members and staff; Lack of participation and prioritization of young adults attending church and volunteer work; Same people doing everything and not enough participation in ministries; Our smaller membership also means we are not able to fundraise as much or provide as much for the church.; Not enough fund raisers; Many important parishioners who are the pillars of the community are of advanced age; Do not mentor youth to help them better participate, engagement and volunteerism and step into leadership Lack of succession planning; The lack of engagement and prioritization amongst the majority of Young Adults in attending faith-related activities (services), as well as the lack of eagerness to do Volunteer work (which would show the broader community that we do care). Taking FOCUS, for example, it’s usually the same select few Young Adults volunteering every week.; To be more general, the lack of prioritization of the majority of churchgoers regarding doing volunteer work; To delve deeper, I’m unsure if this is related to what’s happening in the household. However, I see the majority of the Young Adults when there is a Sushi night, for example (basically when it isn’t a faith-based or volunteer activity). I believe the YAL can take great strides going forward if we have a good direction and plan to go about it.; More of a comment, but possibly adding more volunteer options within our community, so our neighbors know we’re here and will care about the good work that we parishioners are doing.; Our 20/80 principle regarding “the work of the parish” (20% doing 80% of the work) [Not uncommon BTW]; Our overtaxed parish leadership (some having served in roles for a very long time); Need for new younger volunteers; Volunteerism; Dependence on the “same” people to get the job done; Food at fellowship hour – why do we have to lay out full buffets? It pressures people to live up to a standard. Thus, preventing from many to volunteer to host and setting an unfair expectation; Festival Volunteer

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Reliance: The festival depends heavily on long-serving volunteers with no clear succession plan, creating sustainability concerns.; Same parishioners volunteering; Not enough consistent volunteerism; The GOYA does very little, including volunteering, faith, and socializing.; We have a core group of parishioners who participate in all manner of activities; Some people tend to be in charge of events for the church for years (and don't complain) but are probably approaching burnout; I believe communication is at the core of most of our weaknesses (low volunteerism, etc). It is not the only factor, but is one within our control and would help us to move the needle in the right direction. •Leadership transitions and the goal to inspire volunteerism are challenged by limited knowledge-sharing at the time of transition or reluctance to delegate responsibilities and empower the next line of leaders; Lack of depth of help during programs offered.; We are a small membership church and makes it challenging to get enough volunteers.; Even though we are in a good easy to get to location, because our members live farther away, it makes it harder to do volunteer and service ministries and schedule them for larger participation.; We don't encourage or offer more volunteer opportunities related to peoples specialties and talents.; Over-Reliance on a small group of leaders. The same people carry the bulk of parish life. (ministries, festivals, council work).; Engagement of AIPIS; Limited resources (financial, volunteer base, leaders, etc); however, they are growing older, and some are becoming tired and disgruntled due to lack of other members not participating in the daily life of the church. There seems to be an entitlement mentality of some who seem to believe (based on their actions) that things organically happen at church and that their involvement isn't required.; Philanthropy – as a parishioner, can be challenging to have a clear undersatnding of our philanthropic goals and how we are measuring up against those goals.; Engagement outside the boundaries of specific groups (i.e. would be great for Young Adults to engage with GOYAN's and/or Joy/Hope, Senior Parea and vice versa); Need to share our gifts and talents; Festivals overwhelming, need more people in community to take complete control of sections.

27 - COMMUNICATIONS. This is one I personally have and sadly continue to experience. Weak internal communication and misunderstandings, frustration that can create friction amongst parishioners and deflate ones desire to help/participate.; Lack of communication on the pulse of the parish, if not involved directly in the various ministries. Need to wait to attend a general meeting or when written in the bulletin (mainly upcoming events); The Church doesn't communicate important details regarding events in a timely manner. For example, the Metropolis Music and Dance Festival and Honorees for the Ambassador Awards.; Advertising our events and offerings better to the local communities.; Information is not consistently shared in a transparent way which can hinder alignment; Communication styles sometimes come across as condescending or confrontational, which negatively impacts collaboration, alignment and trust (and, ultimately, participation in church ministries); Sound system; Festival underutilization of technology; Underutilization of digital platforms and technology; Communications general across all ministries; Transparency – sometimes people just do themselves and do not share decisions and reasons; Lack of marketing for our church. We don't really have a social media presence, which is vital amongst this generation. Especially with the data showing that Orthodoxy is on the rise in the US, we should have a consistent marketing plan so our fellow brothers and sisters who are interested in Orthodoxy know that we are the best option to come and visit, and possibly even see us as their home.; Rumormongering – and not quashing those rumors letting them fester & grow; Cross-Ministry Silos: Ministries often operate in isolation without collaboration or shared planning.; Limited Communication Channels: Reliance on Facebook restricts outreach to younger demographics; little use of texting, QR codes, or Instagram.; Bulletin Limitations: The parish bulletin is being rebuilt but does not yet integrate ministry information or highlight tools like Chant Stand.; Not leveraging Digital Chant Stand for hymns (for example, using the 8 Resurrectional Apolytikia). This would help with congregational singing and when Orthodox visitors visit.; Communication – There's some room for improvement here for a more cohesive, consistent communication plan across all our channels; Communication still needs work; Underutilization of technology/digital platforms (Social media, Creating artwork/marketing ideas, Technology in the Hall must be updated); Conflict within the dance groups or poor communication.; •Innovative digital tools are not being fully leveraged, limiting outreach and internal coordination; Communication between ministries; Website focus on Google search; Quality of online broadcasting of services needs to be improved.; I focused mainly on communication here:•Communication practices across ministries and activities require improvement to ensure an effective, efficient and respectful church culture and improved volunteer response.; •The absence of a full church calendar limits potential for volunteerism and attendance, resulting in lack of coordination across ministries, last minute volunteer requests and unforeseen conflicts with work/travel/personal schedules.

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23 - YOUTH & YOUNG ADULTS - Not many GOYA aged children; we don't have a large population of youth or young adults in order to carry on the Faith into the Future. We have our Faithful older members, that are our steady constants that show up and attend each and every service but we are lacking in our youth. There is a big gap in our age groups and without our youth, the future would not look at all bright.; Extra-curricular activities (outside St. Sophia) often take precedence with young families; YAL is still not formalized/structured; younger generation and young adults have not stepped up to leadership; GOYA is small and need more youth involved; Young Family Ministry Gap: Infrastructure (e.g., childcare, parenting groups, children's liturgy) is limited, creating risks in retaining young families.; Youth Retention Gap: GOYA is active but small, and without YAL structure, many disengage after high school.; Need more mentoring of youth to Greek traditions/religious practices; The Young Adult League has received more priority over GOYA.; Need to fill Maria Tsipras shoes and a need to bolster nursery/pre-school age children Program; Are there enough cooperative programs to increase bonding of children and families, teens and young adults; Lack of young families with children that remain with the church and become engaged.; Lack of commitment to the Youth and Philoptochos Ministries.; As the elders leave us one by one, Greek traditions may become lost, unless the youth learn and continue the various traditions. For example, the Greek festival: making the Greek food, learning the Greek folk dancing, spending the philoxania to our community + other communities.; Our smaller membership also makes it harder to have a larger youth group and activities.; No sports offerings. We don't have a separate gymnasium area, makes it harder to offer sports youth groups, which then makes families want to go elsewhere that offers more community for their kids. Church basketball teams, maybe soccer would be good.; Lack of prioritization of youngest members of the parish; Loss of many of youth once they leave for college (similar situation nationally where parishes lose up to 60% of youth).; Small GOYA; Youth education, although on the upswing at Saint Sophia Church, needs to prepare our youth for faithfulness to Christ and the Church in an increasingly secular and irreligious culture.; Need to reach out to parents not sending their children to Sunday school each week. It's a common problem in many parishes.; Limited engagement from the younger generation to learn and execute parish traditions.

23 - CHURCH ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION - Church attendance is not consistent throughout the year; Many parishioners do not attend services during the summer; Inconsistent example from some Sunday School teachers arriving late to Liturgy, which may send the wrong message to children; Spirituality (low participation with respect to services, prayer and participation in sacraments); Low level participation in spirituality and services and sacraments; Declining attendance of younger parishioners; Engagement – personal liturgically, sacramentally - most people not taking communion; Engagement of Absent PIPs Christmas and Easter folks; Some parishioners will access Sunday bulletin and decides not to attend if there will be extra services; Loss of members; Live streaming is an excuse for not coming to church; It appears, at least in my lens (who is a fairly new convert), that lots of the cradles aren't attending or getting involved. This is an issue because if it continues, the fate of the church would rely on converts and other parishioners from other churches needing to start coming to St. Sophia and call it home, since we lack the Youth currently in our YAL.; Streaming Sunday services – provides excuse to not come to church on Sunday.; Attendance at Non-Sunday Services: Vespers, feast days, and other services often draw low attendance, limiting the spiritual rhythm of the parish.; Many parishioners do not regularly attend church services; Many parishioners are away for the summer; Parishioners arriving LATE after the start of Divine Liturgy; Bulletin seems stale: re-arrange and prioritize so newer content stands out Announcing services 1 month or less before the service will occur. Suggest announcing 3 months in advance so parishioners can plan to attend/; Too many people regularly arrive after “Blessed is the Kingdom.” This first exclamation of the Divine Liturgy reveals the key to the entire celebration! We're all temporarily going into the Kingdom with God, the archangels, and angels! How can SO MANY people regularly miss that?! What an embarrassing example for our guests and a shameful representation of our faith.; Very few members of the Parish Council are present each Sunday.; Families, especially those with younger children, don't come to Church during the Summer.; Timely attendance of religious services can be improved, especially during Summer months.; Work needs to be done to improve attendance during Orthros and non-Sunday services.; Attendance isn't the best at late night services.

21 - LANGUAGE & CULTURE - Past parish history is not properly recognized and celebrated; Our multicultural and welcoming approach strengthens inclusivity, but can create tension with parishioners who prefer a more traditionally Greek-centered identity; Afraid of changes; Balance and diversity is a weakness for older parishioners who do not understand English; The balance of which language to use (Greek vs English); Liturgy book not in Greek, phonetic and English; Diversity; Need to better job serving Greek people needs; Adversity to change and being wed to the past practices and

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the ways things have always been done; Older parishioners want more Greek than newer ones; Same Voices – same message; Identity Ambiguity: Parish is not perceived as “Greek-first,” which helps inclusivity, but the concept of “witness” is under-communicated and mission is unclear.; Identity Ambiguity: Parish is not perceived as “Greek-first,” which helps inclusivity, but the concept of “witness” is under-communicated and mission is unclear.; Need to strike the balance between Greek and English: parishioners not unified in what they want (some want more or less); Organ... Here’s what the Internet says about the organ: “In 1895, a melodeon (a type of organ) was being used at Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in New Orleans, marking one of the earliest instances of organ usage in American Orthodoxy. This was a significant early adoption, as the Orthodox tradition generally does not use musical instruments during services, and organs were not widely used in Greek Orthodox parishes in the US until the 20th century.”; Multiple languages/ Orthodox backgrounds (Russian, Coptic, etc) - difficult to find a middle ground to please everyone.; The Greek language is not the primary liturgical language.; Lack of clarity on how to balance: 1. the need to value cultural diversity and draw people of all backgrounds to Orthodoxy and grow our church with 2. maintaining the beauty of the Greek culture and traditions that are often what initially draws people in; Not sure because of the diversity of people, are we developing clique groups? This may cause future disagreements + division. To thrive and excel we need love + unity!; Concern by many with losing focus on Hellenic heritage.; A potential problem is the divide in the parish over English vs. Greek language. Must reach a balance but the future is our young people and converts. Older adults must take that into consideration. Even people who were born in Greece understand English.

14 - CHURCH SERVICES & MUSIC MINISTRY - Chant Inconsistency: While chanters are passionate, their inconsistency makes services difficult to follow for parishioners.; Choir sing a cappella without the organ to allow their voices to stand out in a very special and prayerful way.; Passing down of tradition; Small Choir; Reliance on the organ for the choir; The music that the choir sings is not easy to sing along to.; Not having a backup choir director. I don’t think it has to be someone who knows how to play piano (we don’t have to have piano playing for services).; Lack of a head chanter (awaiting arrival of Panos); Only one organist and limited choir participation, creating reliance on a few individuals; Parishioners join with choir / chanters to sing from the pews; The organ. One Orthodox visitor said they did not like that we were an Orthodox parish yet had an organ ... and I haven’t seen them since. Orthodox music has always been a capella and instruments are not part of Orthodox music. Can the choir director just give a pitch before a hymn? Also, I think the organ competes with everyone being able to sing along.; We have too much Greek language. Most immigrants from Greece came to the U.S. between 1890 and 1924 and again between 1965 and 1980. I don’t anticipate another huge wave of Greek immigrants, which means as we are “Future Planning,” we should honor our Hellenic culture/heritage and INTENTIONALLY TRANSITION the language of our services to significantly more English. The Great Commission was not to preserve a language. Are we a church or a nationality club? Aren’t the words/text of our services more important than adhering to a language that pacifies some parishioners’ nostalgia and sticking to a language that other parishioners and guests don’t even understand? Countless numbers of Saints spoke in the language of the land into which they wanted to spread Orthodoxy – why wouldn’t we follow their examples?; One of our current chanters who has been with us for many years is distracting to my ability to pray. He sings very flat, seems rushed, and is not in timing with the priest.; Lack of byzantine chanting leadership.

13 - LEADERSHIP & SUCCESSION - Overwhelmed board; Succession is weak; Fear of failure or criticism; Some decision-making processes can lack inclusivity of relevant perspectives, with limited engagement or consideration of other viewpoints; Lack of organized missions. One person is doing it all. More people need to step up to the plate.; Less than effective communication and transparency from our leadership; No Apprenticeship Program: There is no structured process to mentor or train new leaders for long-standing ministries or administrative positions.; Ministry Information Gaps: Parishioners are often unclear on who leads ministries or how to get involved.; Parishioners are not always kept up-to-date on the major plans and projects discussed/undertaken by the parish council (i.e. are we building something new or planning a major purchase); Lots of responsibilities placed on Parish Council members, more individuals from the parish should be encouraged to step up and help with certain tasks or events, does not always have to be parish council members only; Getting people to do things in a different/new way I sometimes met with resistance.; Politics becomes the norm within the parish which can rub people the wrong way.; We have a “shoulder tap” culture of selection for roles in some ministries that may result in a lost opportunity to identify unexpected champions (with energy and expertise to contribute in a specific area). Good succession planning encourages the continuous and transparent mentoring of multiple people with an interest in a particular area, resulting in a talent pipeline, overall continuity and an engaged community.; Slow turn around on embracing change.

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13 - FACILITIES & INFRASTRUCTURE - Loss of usable festival space due to stormwater deposits; Not green and ecofriendly; No gym (sports programs); Our getting older quickly church hall (and the associated costs of maintaining it); for those that do... other churches keep it simple, coffee, a half donut or kaloudi; No basketball court or gym... sports is a way to attract families and to get involved in competition with other local parishes.; Inconsistent quantity of food during Fellowship Tim (Coffee Hour); Inconsistent quantity of food in coffee hour.; No Long term care facility with Orthodox religious mind set.; Optimizing hall rental; Need for a connector building between church and hall; Somehow have the shop open for more hours; Lack of classroom space can make our Sunday School less attractive to some visitors.

12 - CATECHESIS & EDUCATION - No regular/consistent schedule for catechism classes; Education (catechism gap of the Orthodox faith among parishioners of all ages); Educational gap in catechism; not enough music and hymn teaching; Educational Gaps: Catechism is well-received but currently the only consistent adult education pathway, limiting opportunities for broader faith formation.; Inconsistent Scheduling: Catechism and other learning opportunities occur irregularly, making it hard for parishioners to commit or invite others.; Few Deeper Learning Tracks: Topics like Orthodox history, scripture study, and the lives of the saints are not offered regularly.; Iconography Resources: While the church is fully adorned, there is little documentation or signage explaining the meaning of the icons for parishioners or visitors.; Converts not learning the Greek language, traditions and customs.; Outreach needs to be prepared to address people who have no religious upbringing.; Teaching or formal recording of traditions and practices central to our orthodox faith (i.e. kollyva, artoklasia, etc) is sporadic but critical for our continuity; Wish there were more classes throughout the years.

8 - SACRAMENTS - Fr. Symeon has not yet received the blessing to hear confessions, making it difficult for St. Sophia parishioners to participate in this important sacrament; Fear of cradle/ long-time prisoner to engage in the faith and prayer and liturgical and more passive; Priest Not a Confessor: Without faculties to hear confessions, parishioners must rely on outside clergy, limiting full sacramental participation at the parish.; Priest Not a Confessor: Without faculties to hear confessions, parishioners must rely on outside clergy, limiting full sacramental participation at the parish.; Priest not yet able to hear confessions; Fr. Symeon can't hear Confessions.; Keeping the fasts seems to often be a low or misunderstood priority; Special services need to be explained each time and need material to read along. Most of us don't understand the special service.

4 - SOCIAL EVENTS - Not enough social events; Need to have more fun in our ministries and work; Internal division; Lack of consistent family activities, dance for example, how many instructors has our parish had?; The Church doesn't hold enough events in order to expand the population.; Can be cliques.

4 - GEOGRAPHY & DISTANCE - Difficulty including everyone in activities due to distance where they live.; The parishioners are very widespread compared to other church's in the area. Makes it difficult for some to make it to many of the activities.; Church of destination – "it's not on the way"; We are a commuter parish. Parishioners are spread out geographically and it can keep folks from regularly participating in some services, ministries, etc. It also may take away from opportunities to grow relationships since our lives are busy.

4 - AGING & DEMOGRAPHICS - Older parishioners; A lot of the people who do the "heavy lifting" for the Church are older.; Ensure our older/senior parish members are not left out or made to feel that they cannot contribute in some way to our parish; Older parishioners are stuck in old ways, and scared for change.

2 - DIRECTORY - Need a directory with faces and names; Lack of a directory; There is a need for a church directory to facilitate real connections within the church community.

ONEOFFS

~ Grieving families spend too much time focusing on the fellowship, rather than their families and memorial. We could implement a "Buddy System" where a family helps the grieving family prepare for the coffee hour.;

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- ~ Priest. Both strength and weakness. While very effective in connecting with some, especially young adults, there is need for much greater level of connection and engagement with both senior parea and younger children.;
- ~ Inconsistent coffee hours resulting in limited opportunity to build relationships;
- ~ Pre-cooked gyro at Festival;
- ~ Intimidating to coverts;