ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN LAITY

Finding Our Voice: Orthodox Leadership for 21st Century

OCL 30th Annual Conference

Chicago – October 27-29, 2017

J.R.R. Tolkien …

"The world has changed . . .
I see it in the water. I feel it in the Earth. I smell it in the air. Much that once was is lost, none now live who remember it."

"I wish it need not have happened in my time," said Frodo.

"So do I," said Gandalf, "and so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us."

The Fellowship of the Ring

Finding Our Voice ...

"The world has changed greatly . . .
Today Christians from all over the world are facing new challenges.

The most important instrument at the Church's disposal is her own Voice, which should resound and be heard by all those who are capable of hearkening to it.

Of course, the Church's Voice often becomes a voice crying in the wilderness. Nevertheless we keep speaking and will continue bearing witness to the values which, we believe, are of indisputable significance."

"The Voice Of The Church Must Be Prophetic" (2013)

Metropolitan Hilarion
Moscow Patriarchate
Speaking to WCC

ΡΩΜΑΝΟΣ
ὁ Μελωδός
ΜΡ ΘΥ
ΑΓΙΟΣ
Η ΠΑΡΘΕ
ΝΟΣ ΣΗΜΕ
ΤΙΚΤΕ
ΚΑΙ

Akathist Hymn (7th Century) …

- Rejoice, tireless Voice of the chosen Apostles of God.
- Rejoice, Living Temple of the infinite God.
- Rejoice, for through you the earth and the heaven sing as one.

- Rejoice, O Door of the Mystery sublime.
- Rejoice, O powerful foundation for Faith.
- Rejoice, for through you we were clothed in God's glory.

- Rejoice . . . Holy Virgin and Bride!

Saint Ignatius of Antioch (1st Century) …

"Everyone must join in a choir so that being harmonious and in concord and taking the keynote of God in unison, we may sing with one voice through Jesus Christ to the Father, so that He may hear you and through your good deeds recognize that you are parts of His Son."

Saint John Chrysostom …

"For nothing so arouses the soul, gives it wings, sets it free from earth, releases it from the prison of the body, teaches it to love wisdom, and to condemn all the things of this life, as **using the voice** in concordant melody and sacred song composed in rhythm."

Saint John Chrysostom …

"From the spiritual hymns proceeds much value, much utility and sanctity, for the words purify the mind and the Holy Spirit descends swiftly upon the mind of the singer.

For those who use their Voice with understanding invoke the grace of the Spirit."

Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee …

The Holy Church sings in reverent worship:
Christ is my strength, my God, and my Lord!

Raising her Voice in purity of reason,
The Church celebrates in the Lord!

Canticle Four

Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom …

- Remember, Lord, this city in which we live, and every city and land, and the faithful who live in them.

- Remember, Lord, those who travel by land, sea, and air; the sick; the suffering; the captives; and their salvation.

- Remember those who bear fruit and do good works in Your holy churches and those who are mindful of the poor, and upon us all send forth Your mercies.

Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom …

"And grant that with one voice and one heart we may glorify and praise Your most honorable and majestic name, of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages."

Outline …

- Contextual Situation
- Scriptural Paradigm
- Vitalities of a Vigorous Voice
- Three Options

Contextual Situation: National Church Statistics ...

- The US Orthodox Christian Churches are organized into twelve different Orthodox jurisdictions.
- Orthodox parishes are more likely to have internal conflicts and disagreements than other congregations. Only one in four (27%) parishes did NOT experience conflict during last 5 years (43% Protestant and 61% Roman Catholic).
- Attrition of adherents is greater than 60%.
- While Church membership is stagnant - descendants of initial immigrants are in their fourth or fifth generations and are several million in number.

PEW Research Data - 2015

National Church Statistics ...

- Orthodox Christians have the most wealth, on a per capita basis, compared to other Christian denominations.
- 29% of Orthodox Christians have a household income of more than $100,000 per year, as compared to 19% of Catholic households and 14% of Evangelicals.
- Only 53% of adults who were raised in the Orthodox Church still identify themselves as Orthodox Christians.
- Orthodox member stewards nationwide has fallen from 250,000 families in 2009 to 159,000 families in 2014.
- That is a decline of 38% in just five years.

PEW Research Data - 2015

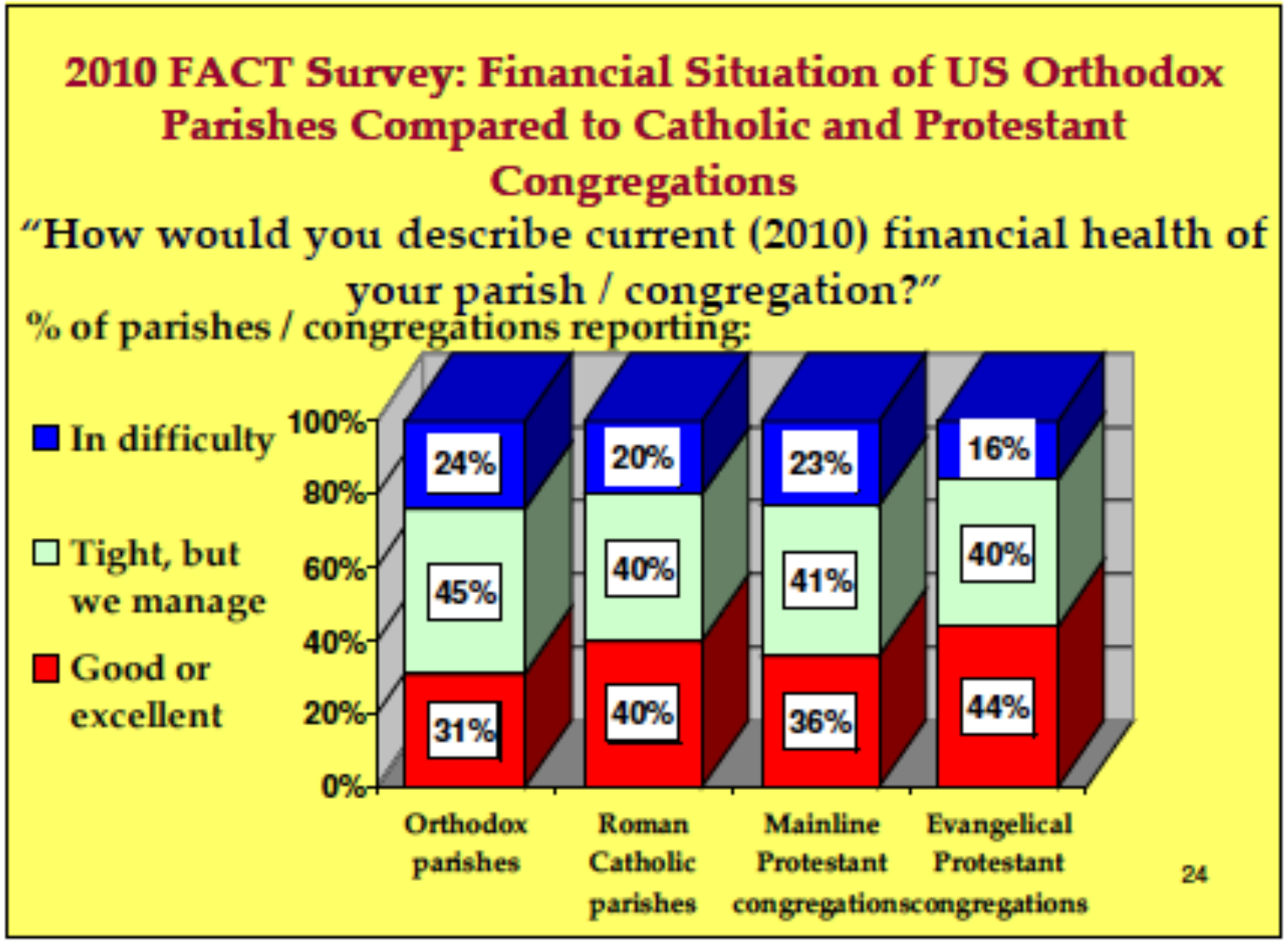
Membership/Attendance ...

Tab.1 Orthodox Christian Churches in the USA (as of 2010): Number of Adherents (1) and Regular Church Attendees (2)

Orthodox Christian Churches in the USA (3)	Total Adherents	Regular Church Attendees	% of regular attendees in the total of adherents
1. Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America	476,900	107,400	23%
2. Orthodox Church in America	84,900	33,800	40%
3. Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese	74,600	27,300	37%
4. Serbian Orthodox Church in North America	68,800	15,400	22%
5. Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia	27,700	9,000	32%
6. Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA	22,400	6,900	31%
7. Patriarchal Parishes of the Moscow Patriarchate	12,400	1,900	15%
8. Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese	11,200	2,200	20%
9. American Carpatho Russian Orthodox Diocese	10,400	4,900	47%

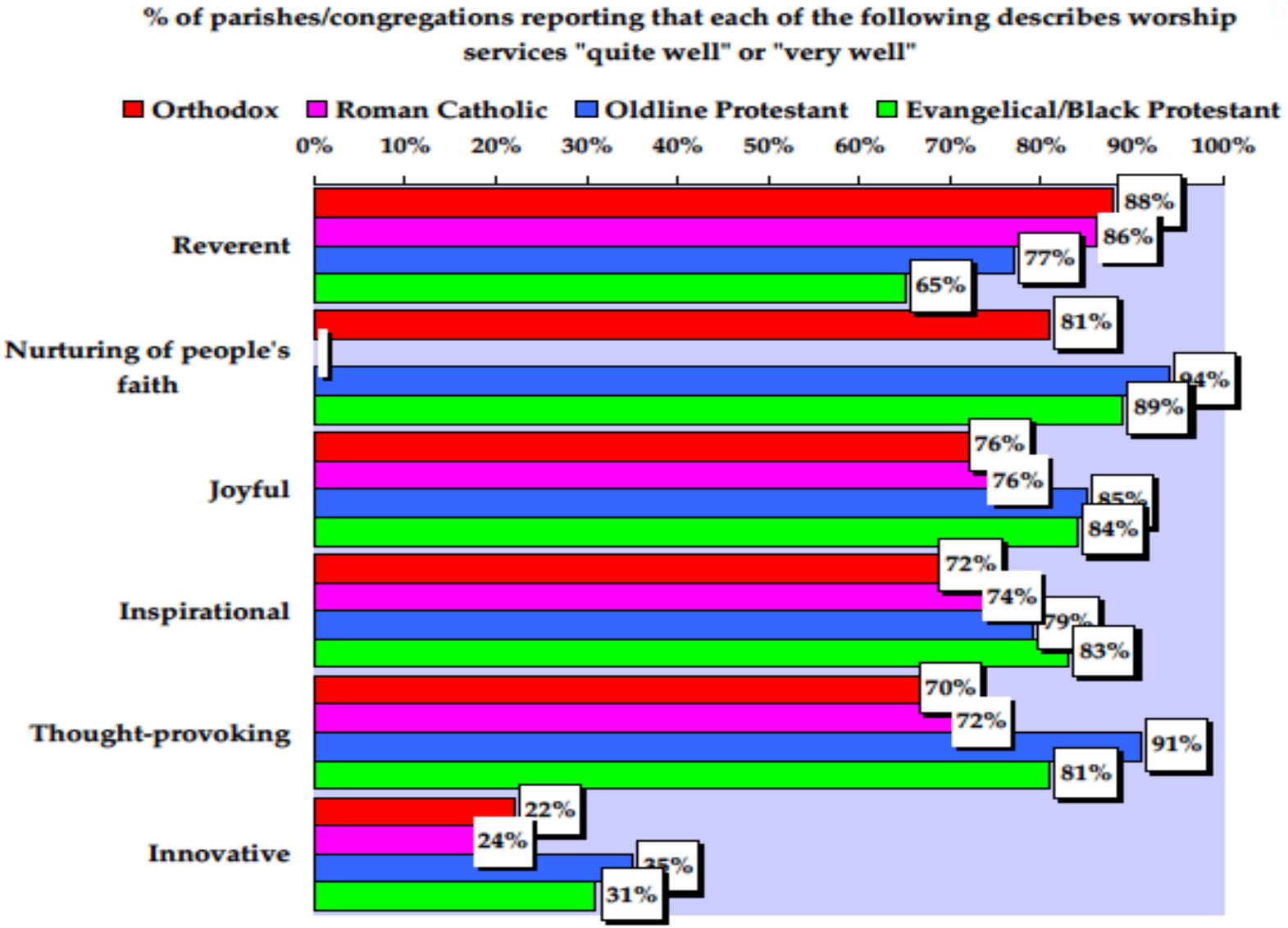
"Adherents" - most inclusive category counting adults and children, regular and occasional attendees, paid stewards and persons who do not contribute financially.

Parish Financial Health ...

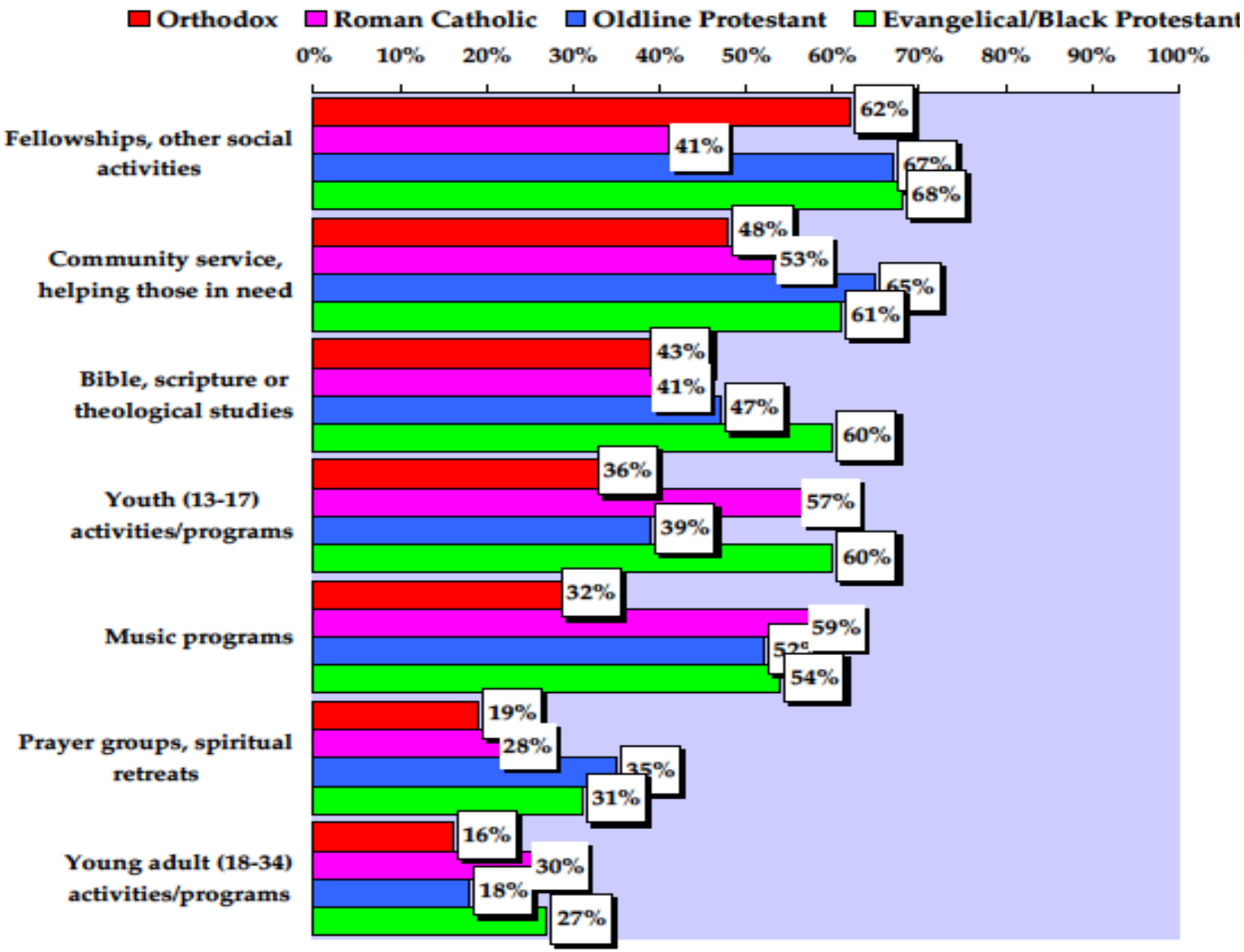


Hartford Study 2010

2015 Faith Communities Today (FACT) Study ...

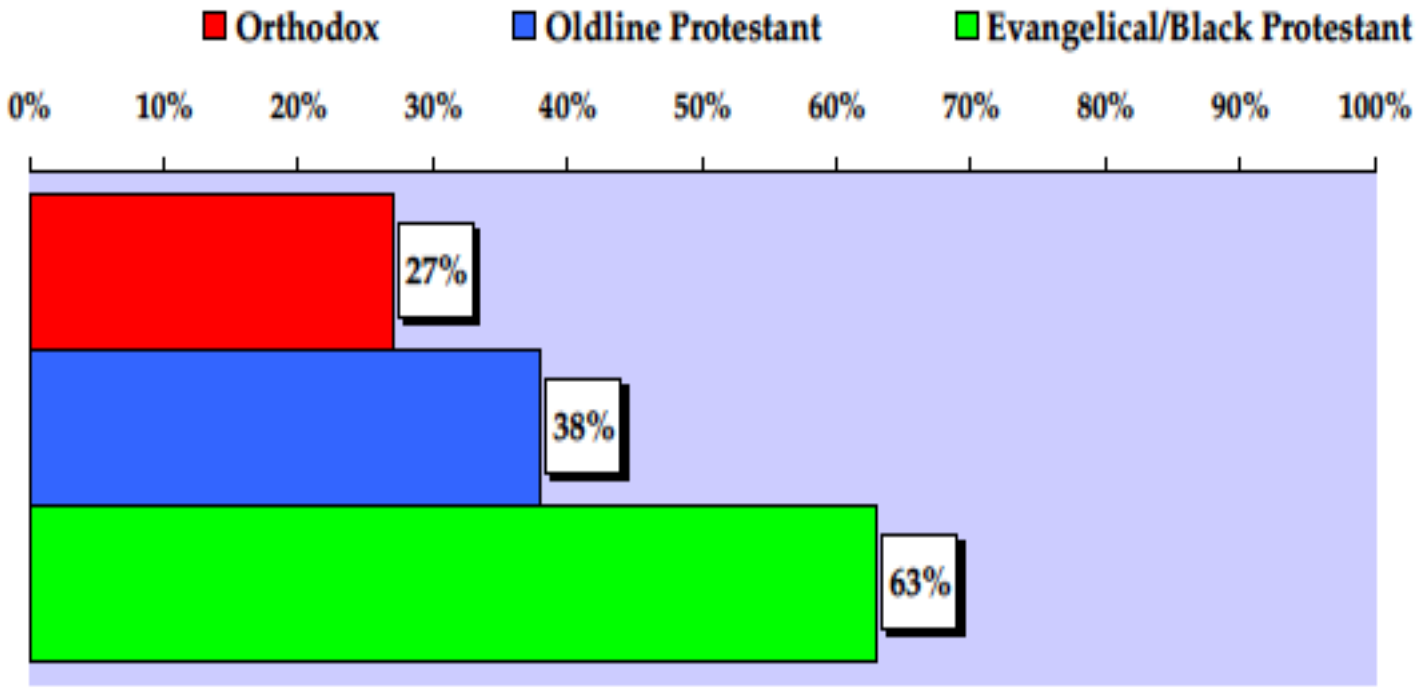


2015 FACT Study ...



2015 FACT Study ...

Fig. 7a Percentage (%) of Active Church Members Who Participate Regularly in Various Forms of Religious Education Offered in Local Parishes/Congregations



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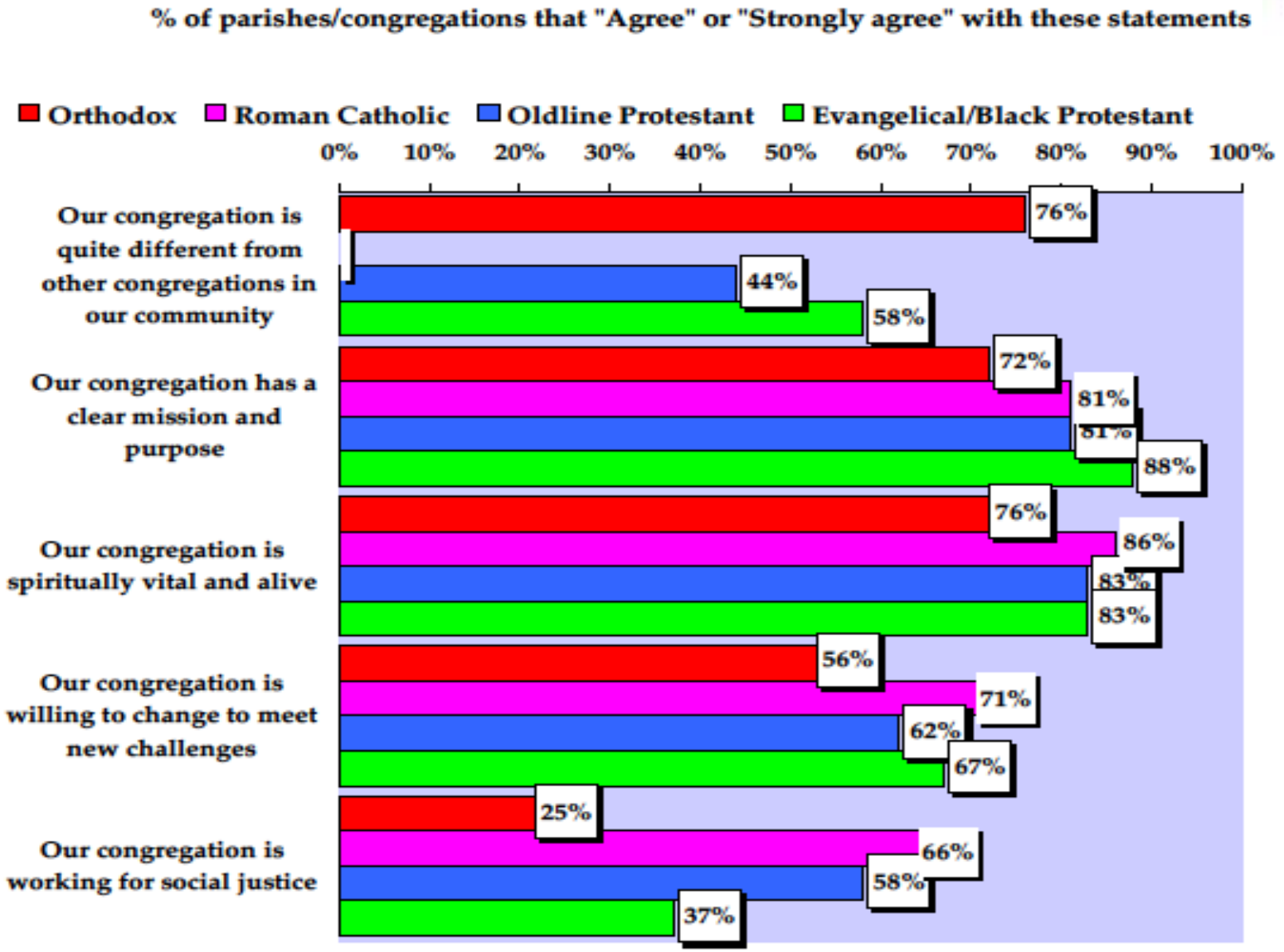

Sorry We're
CLOSED

How Could this Happen?

"This would be the result of poor vision and misguided policy. Preach and teach the Gospel of Christ or you fade into obscurity and irrelevance. Some are now predicting the GOA will soon be nearly extinct unless something changes."

No old world embassies will be tolerated for much longer – they will go the way of the dodo. No one will have to work against them; they will simply die from atrophy and neglect. The passing away of the Orthodox Church as ethnic club is already taking place. It will come to fruition in a short 10 years, 15 years in larger parishes.

This is a well known problem. Statistical studies taken a mere seven years ago predicted that within 10 years the Orthodox Church in the United States would for all practical purposes, no longer be viable.

If nothing is done within five years the decline will be irreversible."

Quote of an Ordained Orthodox Leader - 2008

St. John Chrysostom ...

- “Peter uttered a voice, like great light shining in the dark, a voice which scattered the mist and darkness of the whole world.”
- “The voices of fishermen and tent-makers availed for this. They were more powerful and strong than all others.”
- “Our mouth is the mouth of our soul. It is the fountain of God’s Word. By our mouth and tongue let us be known. ”
- “A mouth of fire does that man get who knows Paul well: like as if one should have a sharp sword . . . such a one become invincible.”
- “The Voice of the Gospel, that Trumpet of heaven, should not be shut up!”

Scriptural Paradigm

Vitalities of a Vigorous Voice		
Jewish Nation (2 Chronicles 29-31)	Apostolic Church (Acts 2)	Contemporary Church
• Opened and Repaired Doors	• Spirit of Repentance	• Situational Veracity
• Purged Temple	• Spirit of Renewal	• Transformative Intensity
• Obedience to Word of God	• Spirit of Holiness	• Scriptural Fidelity
• Service to God and Man	• Spirit of Hospitality	• Philanthropic Zeal
• Faithful Celebration/Worship	• Spirit of Praise	• Liturgical Conformity
• Generosity	• Spirit of Charity	• Altruistic Fervor
• Unanimity	• Spirit of Concord	• Conciliar Disposition

Vitalities of a Vigorous Voice

Jewish Nation (2 Chronicles 29-31)

1. Opened and Repaired Doors

- Hezekiah was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem twenty-nine years. His mother's name was Abijah daughter of Zechariah. He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, just as his father David had done.
- In the first month of the first year of his reign, he opened the doors of the temple of the Lord and repaired them.

Vitalities of a Vigorous Voice

Jewish Nation **(2 Chronicles 29-31)**

2. Purged Temple	• Consecrate yourselves now and consecrate the temple of the Lord, the God of your ancestors. Remove all defilement from the sanctuary • The priests went into the sanctuary of the Lord to purify it. They brought out to the courtyard of the Lord's temple everything unclean that they found in the temple of the Lord. • The Levites took it and carried it out to the Kidron Valley.

Vitalities of a Vigorous Voice

Jewish Nation (2 Chronicles 29-31)

3. Obedience to Word of God

- When they had assembled their fellow Levites and consecrated themselves, they went in to purify the temple of the Lord, as the king had ordered,
- . . . following the word of the Lord.
- "My sons, do not be negligent now, for the Lord has chosen you to stand before him and serve him, to minister before him and to burn incense."

Vitalities of a Vigorous Voice

Jewish Nation (2 Chronicles 29-31)

4. Service to God and Man	• Serve the Lord your God ! • And the Lord listened to Hezekiah and healed the people. So the children of Israel kept the Feast seven days with great gladness (2 Chronicles 30:18-21). • Hezekiah humbled himself, he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the Lord did not come upon them in the days of Hezekiah (2 Chronicles 32:25-26).

Jewish Nation ...

Vitalities of a Vigorous Voice

Jewish Nation (2 Chronicles 29-31)

5. Faithful Celebration/Worship	• When the offerings were finished, the king and everyone present with him knelt down and worshiped. • So they sang praises with gladness and bowed down and worshiped. • So there was great joy in Jerusalem, for since the time of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel, there had been nothing like this in Jerusalem.

Vitalities of a Vigorous Voice

Jewish Nation (2 Chronicles 29-31)

	• Then Hezekiah said, "You have now dedicated yourselves to the Lord. Come and bring sacrifices and thank offerings to the temple of the Lord."
	• So the assembly brought sacrifices and thank offerings, and all whose hearts were willing brought burnt offerings.
6. Generosity	• There were burnt offerings in abundance, together with the fat of the fellowship offerings.

Vitalities of a Vigorous Voice

Jewish Nation **(2 Chronicles 29-31)**

7. Unanimity

- Hezekiah sent messengers to all the people of Israel and Judah, and he wrote letters inviting all to come to the Temple of the Lord.
- And God united all the people.
- Then the priests, the Levites, arose and blessed the people, and their voice was heard - and their prayer came up to God's holy dwelling place, in heaven (2 Chron. 30:27).

Hezekiah (721-691 B.C.) ...

"Hezekiah trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel.

There was no one like him among all the kings of Judah, either before him or after him.

He held fast to the Lord and did not stop following him.

He kept the commands the Lord had given Moses. And the Lord was with him; he was successful in whatever he undertook."

2 Kings 18:5-7

The Righteous Hezekiah

1. August 29th
2. Cheesefare Saturday
3. ?

"Then the priests arose and blessed the people - and their voice was heard - and their prayer came up to the Lord's holy dwelling place in heaven.

And the Lord listened to Hezekiah's prayer, and he healed the people."

2 Chron. 30:27

6th Prayer of Holy Unction Service …

"That this oil may be blessed with the visitation, majesty and power of the Holy Spirit, let us pray to the Lord. O Lord, hear me, a sinner, in this hour on behalf of thy servants: overlook, as a forgiving God, all their sins. Set them free from the eternal punishment.

- Fill their mouths with thy praise; open their lips that they may glorify thy name,
- Stretch forth their hands to do thy commandments,
- Direct their feet in the way of thy Gospel, and
- Strengthening all their members and their minds by thy grace.

And as thou didst listen to Hezekiah in the sorrow of his soul at the hour of his death and did not despise his supplications, so also, in like manner, hear me, thine humble and unworthy servant at this hour."

"And grant that with one voice and one heart we may glorify and praise Your most honorable and majestic name, of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages."

Apostolic Church ...

Vitalities of a Vigorous Voice		
Jewish Nation (2 Chronicles 29-31)	**Apostolic Church (Acts 2)**	Contemporary Church
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Acts 2 ...

- When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.
- Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: “Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, listen carefully to what I say.
- Those who accepted his message were baptized, about three thousand were added.
- They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer.
- All the believers were together and had everything in common.
- Every day they continued to meet broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people.
- And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Contemporary Orthodox Church ...

Vitalities of a Vigorous Voice		
Jewish Nation (2 Chronicles 29-31)	Apostolic Church (Acts 2)	**Contemporary Church**
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Vitalities of a Vigorous Voice

Contemporary Church

"Paul said unto Barnabas, "Let us visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the Word of the Lord, and see how they are doing." (Acts 15:36)

Cognitive Dissonance is the *feelings of discomfort* when faced with conflicting information. Five primary expressions of bias:

1. Confirmation
2. Commitment Consistency
3. Survivorship
4. Framing
5. Cultural Cognition

- Situational Veracity

"Pay careful attention, then, to how you walk—not as unwise people, but as wise."

Ephesians 5:15

Vitalities of a Vigorous Voice

Contemporary Church

- Situational Veracity

"For us there is something more than transparency and accountability. For us the ultimate criterion is a divine criterion, a criterion in the Gospel and from the Gospel and that is the truth.

We have to be truthful to ourselves individually and we have to be truthful among ourselves as a community and we have to make truth a central issue in a world of falsehoods, distortion, a world of the post-truth era.

The truth is not negotiable."

His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of America

2017

Vitalities of a Vigorous Voice

Contemporary Church

"If Orthodoxy does not apply to the totality of life, does not judge, challenge, enlighten and help to change and transform all of its aspects, then "life" is inevitably governed by another "philosophy of life," another set of moral and social principles. And this is what has happened to our Church in America.

As long as we will not face and make an effort to deal with what is the real source of all our problems and difficulties, all our attempts to preserve Orthodoxy will suffer from an internal handicap.

The real question, therefore, is: can this spiritual problem be solved, and what are the possible ways to its solution?"

- Transformative Intensity

Fr. Alexander Schmemann

(1965)

Vitalities of a Vigorous Voice

Contemporary Church

"The contemporary church is so often a weak, ineffectual voice with an uncertain sound. It is so often the arch supporter of the status quo. Far from being disturbed by the presence of the church, the power structure of the average community is consoled by the church's often vocal sanction of things as they are."

Letter from the Birmingham Jail

- Transformative Intensity

Martin Luther King Jr

1963

Vitalities of a Vigorous Voice

Contemporary Church

"The Church must find its own special voice that is understandable to modern-day societies and yet which proclaims the permanent truths of the Christian faith. Today, as always, we are called upon to be messengers of the Word of God."

The Voice Of The Church Must Be Prophetic

- Scriptural Fidelity

Metropolitan Hilarion

2013

Contemporary Orthodox Church ...

Vitalities of a Vigorous Voice

Contemporary Church

"A Church that has lost its voice for justice is a Church that has lost its relevance in the world."

"The judgment of God is upon the church as never before. If today's church does not recapture the sacrificial spirit of the early church, it will lose its authenticity, forfeit the loyalty of millions, and be dismissed as an irrelevant social club with no meaning for the twentieth century. Every day I meet young people whose disappointment with the church has turned into outright disgust."

- Philanthropic Zeal

Martin Luther King Jr

Contemporary Orthodox Church ...

Vitalities of a Vigorous Voice

Contemporary Church

"A tendency exists among Orthodox Christians to limit their their religious participation to occasional church attendance . . . this leads to a movement away from the Church – not so much a renunciation or of joining of another – but in the sense that Orthodox Christianity no longer is a prime definer of one's identity."

Commission: Archdiocesan Theological Agenda
Report to His Eminence Archbishop Iakovos
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese (1989)

- Liturgical Conformity

Vitalities of a Vigorous Voice

Contemporary Church

Macarios: "Who are you skull?"

Skull: "I was a priest of the pagan religion. When you pray for us in hell . . . we experience relief."

Macarios: "What is hell like and what relief do you experience?"

Skull: "We are standing in the midst of flames reaching up to heaven. Our actual torment is the fact that we are chained back to back and cannot see each other's faces. This is hell. But when you pray for us, the chains are loosened and we can see one another. This is the relief!"

Saint Macarios of Egypt

4th Century

- Altruistic Fervor

Vitalities of a Vigorous Voice

Contemporary Church

"The Orthodox Church cannot claim to be the true, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church if she is actually divided into a plurality of mutually independent, competing, and overlapping jurisdictions.

This division has long ago ceased to be justified by the peculiarities of Orthodox immigration in America, and has become an open scandal to the faithful, a source of demoralization and dissatisfaction in the laity, and an obstacle to any effort or progress."

Ad Hoc Commission on Unity
Minutes SCOBA Meeting

1970

- Conciliar Disposition

Vitalities of a Vigorous Voice

Contemporary Church

"Clericalism suffocates; it makes part of itself into the whole sacred character of the Church; it makes its power a sacred power to control, to lead, to administer, a power to perform sacraments . . . a "power given to me."

Clericalism creates an ideological and theological separation among the people of God, into two separate and seemingly unequal classes or castes: clergy and the laity, two groups that are seemingly pitted against one another."

Fr. Alexander Schmemann

1982

- Conciliar Disposition

- "What are these two olive trees of the Holy Lampstand that pour out golden oil?" . . .
- "These are the two who are anointed to serve the Lord of all the earth." (Zech. 4:11-14)
- Joshua (priest) and Zerubbabel (lay leader) = "Sons of Oil"

J.R.R. Tolkien, The Fellowship of the Ring …

"The world has changed . . .
I see it in the water. I feel it in the Earth. I smell it in the air. Much that once was is lost, none now live who remember it."

"I wish it need not have happened in my time," said Frodo.

"So do I," said Gandalf, "and so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide.

All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us."

Three Options …

1. The Boromir Option – Authority, Influence, and Strength
2. The Bombadil Option – Retreat, Avoidance, and Isolationism
3. The Gandalf Option – Humility, Love, and Faithful Courage

"Some believe it is only great power that can hold evil in check, but that is not what I have found. It is the small everyday deeds of ordinary folk that keep the darkness at bay. Small acts of kindness and love. Why Bilbo Baggins? Perhaps it is because I am afraid, and he gives me courage

The Hobbit

"I looked up and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders."
Revelation 5:11

"And grant that with one Voice and one Heart we may glorify and praise Your most honorable and majestic name, of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages."

ORTHODOX
CHRISTIAN
LAITY

Thank You!

Rev. Dr. Frank Marangos

Chicago – October 27-29, 2017