

O. N. E.

ORTHODOX NEW ENGLAND

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What Are the Characteristics of Effective Parishes?

Right: Clergy and faithful assemble at Holy Transfiguration, New Haven, to celebrate the feast of the Transfiguration.

More details on page 2.



Mka. Jenny Mosher

The Telos Project is an ongoing research and ministry design project exploring how Orthodox parishes and young adults engage with one another. Funded by the Lilly Endowment Inc as part of their wider Young Adult Initiative (YAI), it was originally based at Hellenic College and is now hosted by the CrossRoad Institute in Cambridge, Mass.

The Telos Project is an intentionally pan-Orthodox effort; the original co-

hort was made up of twelve Orthodox parishes of varying jurisdictions and included three OCA parishes.

After the initial five years of the project, the Lilly Endowment published their findings from across YAI: “The Characteristics of Effective Congregations.” This article is the first in a series showcasing those findings and providing an Orthodox lens on them.

“Effective Parishes” continued on page 7

Summer Happenings at Holy Transfiguration, New Haven

John Kruchok

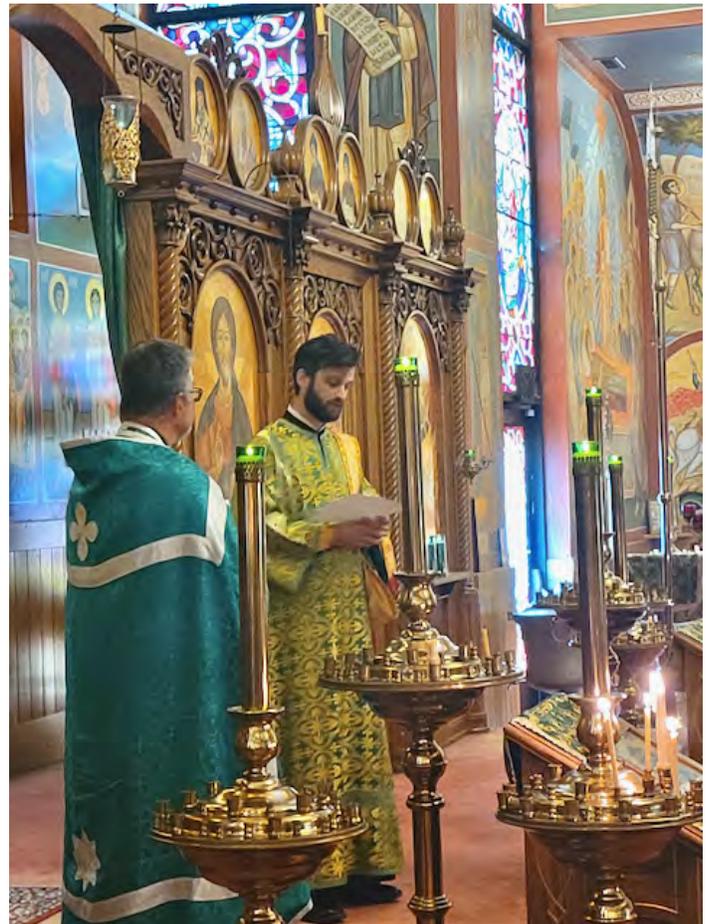
This past summer was a busy and exciting period in the life of Holy Transfiguration parish in New Haven! On July 10, 2022, our parish commemorated the 30th anniversary of Fr. Steven Voytovich's ordination to the Holy Priesthood (7/5/92).

Right: Scenes from the celebration of the 30th anniversary of Fr. Steven Voytovich's ordination to the Holy Priesthood.

Following the Divine Liturgy, Fr. Deacon Mark Roosien read a special congratulatory message from His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon, locum tenens of the Diocese of New England.

The faithful, which included parishioners, friends, family members and guests from area parishes prayed "Many Years" for both Fr. Steven and Mka. Cindy before moving to the parish hall for a commemorative cake and luncheon.

On July 3, the marriage of Marissa and



Justin was joyfully blessed. Marissa was chrismated on Holy Saturday, April 23.

Later in July, our parish was well represented at the 20th All-American Council in Baltimore by Fr. Steven, Mka. Cindy and delegate Judy Ross.

Past National Fellowship of Orthodox Christians in America (FOCA) President John Kruchok attended the 95th FOCA convention held on-site of the Council a few days earlier.

On August 6, our parish was especially enriched in the celebration of our patronal feast of the Transfiguration with area clergy and faithful partic-

Above: Fr. Steven Voytovich blesses fruit at the feast of the Transfiguration, with concelebrating clergy.



Below: Fr. John and Mka. Brenda, with son John, are recognized as they move to Virginia. Fr. Steven Voytovich stands with them.



icipating, including Father John Hopko, Connecticut Dean, Fr. Steven Hosking and Fr. Patrick Burns, along with Protodeacon Paul Nimchek and others.

On August 21, the Cowan family again hosted their third annual parish picnic at their home following liturgy. The pool was enjoyed on a beautiful summer day along with games, good food and fellowship late into the afternoon.

Two significant announcements affecting both our parish attached clergy and the Orthodox Church in America involve Fr. John Mikitish and Fr. Deacon Mark Roosien and their families.

On August 15, on the feast of the Dormition, our parish offered

prayers, an icon and a farewell “pancake and sausage” brunch for Fr. John, Mka. Brenda and their son John Anastasius who relocated to Virginia to join the OCA Chancery staff. Fr. John will be the Corresponding Secretary to His Beatitude. We heartfully thank both Fr. John and Mka. Brenda for their innumerable contributions to our parish for many years!

Finally we note the joyous announcement that our Deacon Mark has enrolled at St. Vladimir’s Seminary with the desire to be ordained to the Holy Priesthood. We extend our prayers and best wishes for the Roosien family as they also continue to serve our parish in so many ways!

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Right: Fr. Deacon Mark and family stand with Fr. Steven Voytovich (far left) and Mka. Cindy Voytovich (far right).



Parenting in the Orthodox Church

Mka. Lydia Westerberg

In response to parents' request for guidance on raising children to be Orthodox Christians in an ever-changing society, the Fellowship of Orthodox Churches in Connecticut (FORCC) recently sponsored a Zoom presentation by Dr. Philip Mamalakis. Dr. Mamalakis is Assistant Professor of Pastoral Care at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology. He is the author of *Parenting Toward the Kingdom: Orthodox Christian Principles of Child-Rearing* (Ancient Faith Publishing, 2016).

In this interactive presentation, the participants expressed particular interest in learning how to raise children who love the Orthodox Church, who identify themselves as Orthodox Christians, who live the teachings of the Orthodox Church, and who are equipped with the skills to evaluate competing ideas or beliefs in terms of the truth of the Gospel, as it is revealed in Orthodoxy. Parents want to raise children to know that God loves them, and that, as children grow into adulthood, they can return that love to God.

It is necessary for parents to implement what Dr. Mamalakis calls the legs of a three-legged stool:

Modeling: Our children do not listen to what we say. They watch what we do. We don't just "go" to church. How we behave and how we make decisions based on the teachings of the Church is critical to our children's understanding the relevance of the Church.

Connecting: Our children need to know that there is a direct connection of the home to the Church and the Church to the home. God does not come down to us. We are raised up to worship God. Through our connecting, the children can see and believe and trust that the Church is directly relevant to our daily lives, to our inner lives, to our lives in the home. When our children bring home a friend who has different values, our children can say with confidence, "That is who you are, but that is not who I am." Or "I don't do the same things you do. That is not who I am."

Building our Relationship with our children in a concrete and consistent way: Our children need to know that we are listening to them, that we know their struggles as they face the challenges of growing up. If we do not listen to our children, or spend time with our children, the message is that we do not care for our children. We might not pay attention to our children until the children misbehave. Without checking in – without knowing our children's struggles, without listening, we are teaching our children that God Himself may not be listening.

The presentation was deeply appreciated by the participants. Some asked for a follow-up presentation.

Thank you to Father Patrick Burns and to Three Saints Orthodox Church in Ansonia for providing the Zoom technology. **ONE** †

Tongues of Fire

Joyous Patronal Feast of Pentecost

Barbara J Dulin

Holy Ghost Orthodox Church in Bridgeport, Conn., historic in our diocese, is a small parish but one with a lot of faith and love.

Together with direction from our Administrator, Archpriest Steven Voytovich and Archpriest David Koles as celebrant, Divine Liturgy was celebrated in a beautifully decorated church, thanks to some of our dedicated parishioners. A festal procession also highlighted this celebration of our patronal feast day.

Following the Kneeling Vespers service, the children attended Church School with their teacher, Deborah Rapa- port. To reiterate and explain the Epistle reading, Acts 2:1-11, she helped them to create “Tongues of Fire” headbands, which they shared with us during coffee fellowship!

When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from

Top: Holy Ghost Church decorated for Pentecost.



Middle: Procession led by Subdeacon Mark Curran



Bottom: Archpriest David Koles presiding



heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. (Acts 2:1-11)

sary of our patronal feast, celebrating the Descent of the Holy Spirit on the Holy Apostles! **ONE +**

Right: McCormick and Quill grandchildren of the recently reposed servant of God, Andrew Durden. May his memory be eternal!

Thanks be to God for this wonderful opportunity to celebrate this 128th anniversary



Characteristics of Effective Parishes

continued from page 1

Characteristic 1: Congregational Leadership

Senior Leadership Commitment: The pastors of effective congregations are involved in the lives of young adults significantly and consistently.

Young adults have described these relationships as “tremendous support from the senior pastor” and as “a pastor who really knows me.”

Alternative Forms of Leadership: The most effective pastoral leaders are those who relate rather than direct and who provide agency that mobilizes the interests, gifts and energies of young adults rather than offer them programs. These pastors work to foster relationships among young adults and congregational members rather than direct programs

with the congregation operating as the programmatic hub of all activities. They also are perceived by young adults as leading authentic and integrated lives.

They are skilled with online platforms and apps that facilitate connection and community, and they are constantly adapting their leadership to the needs and dynamics of their young adult constituency. Conversely, pastors who tend to operate as orga-

The most effective pastoral leaders are those who relate rather than direct and who provide agency that mobilizes the interests, gifts and energies of young adults rather than offer them programs.

nizational managers or who emphasize their titles and formal roles are not effective.

What has Telos learned are the characteristics of congregational leadership in effective Orthodox parishes?

Priests “go to bat” for young adults and their ideas. Clergy who protect young adult agency and ministry experimentation see good results in the kind of enthusiasm and contribution young adults feel energized to bring.

Priests are involved in the way that suits their particular parish context. There is great variety in the ways priests lead their young adults to be engaged and make a difference. Some clergy are extremely involved while others only peripherally so—both ways can work well!

Young adults feel actively invested in by the priest. However clergy are involved, when young adults feel loved by priests, they in turn build healthy community amongst themselves, with the rest of the parish, and become leaders in their own right. Young adults who transition to other parish leadership often contribute substantially, their work redounding to the priest and the rest of the community in extremely encouraging ways.

Priests and lay leaders energize young adults without micromanaging. They respect young adult agency and capacities, giving them real responsibility. Micromanagement tends to backfire, discouraging the team. Lay leaders are gracious and encouraging. They freely offer hospitality, a sounding board, and encourage resilience in hard moments or frustrating seasons, “ministering to the ministers.”

Below: Members of St. Mary's, Cambridge, Mass. (Antiochian) and St. Athanasius, Nicholasville, Ky., (OCA) at a Telos Project consultation



Parish relationships can be difficult and young adults lives are already full of significant challenges and transitions. When older adults are attuned to these dynamics and offer real, concrete support, a team's energy and attentiveness to the project and to one another increases.

Parish leaders adopt a stance of learning alongside their young adults.

It's not about engaging young adults instead of older adults; it's about how the whole community learns how to be more welcoming and then puts that learning into practice.

Priestly Personality?

In focus groups conducted amongst lay people at non-Telos parishes, many people stated they believe a parish's ability to engage young adults is largely dependent on the personality of the priest. Telos work has shown us this belief needs to be seriously nuanced. Young adults can feel at home in parishes led by priests with a wide range of personalities.

Further, young adults in Telos are most likely to highlight that they are deeply impressed and even moved by the diligence and dedication of their priest, now that Telos work has given them the chance to engage with him up close. Whether a priest is extroverted and gregarious or introverted and

quiet is beside the point; it is his commitment—his presence with and service to his flock—that young adults name as an inspiring example.

At the same time, vibrant young adult ministry requires the blessing and support of a priest, but not his constant attendance at meetings or events. Trusting young adults to plan and execute ministry in the absence of the priest—while still checking in for his guidance as needed—makes more excellent ministry possible!

**Characteristic 2:
Parish Culture**

Congregational or parish culture is a complex reality; it has shown itself to be, by far, one of the greatest challenges of Telos work. Whereas parish leadership can be clearly identified and engaged, parish culture is more amorphous. What is absolutely crystal clear: a difficult parish culture can

bog down all sorts of excellent ministry.

The Lilly Endowment identified five characteristics of effective Congregational Culture:

Outward Facing:

Effective congregations have a clear sense of purpose and are engaged with their communities outside the church building. Young adults are not drawn to congregations that are concerned primarily with their own survival.

It's not about engaging young adults instead of older adults; it's about how the whole community learns how to be more welcoming and then puts that learning into practice.

Young adults can feel at home in parishes led by priests with a wide range of personalities.

Right: Young adults meeting with their priest at a Telos parish. The Telos Project is an ongoing research and ministry design project exploring how Orthodox parishes and young adults engage with one another.



Willingness to Risk: Effective congregations embrace experimentation and are willing to risk significant energy and resources to reach young adults who may not respond immediately. Moreover, effective congregations are not afraid of engaging in controversial social issues and see risk-taking as part of their vision and mission.

Not Focused on Membership: Effective congregations know that

many young adults' lives are frequently in transition, and they may not become members or contribute financially. These congregations imagine new ways of measuring the commitment and interest of young adults.

Capacity: Effective congregations have the capacity to implement significant initiatives and commit to

multi-year efforts. They also are able to mobilize resources easily and provide young adults with agency.

Teachable: Effective congregation are ready to learn from and about young adults and to empathize with their life experiences. They also value peer learning and seek the insights of other congregations and organizations. They are tenacious, embrace challenges and know how to focus frustration for

constructive ends.

How do we shape parish culture?

Much depends on how we understand what we do and why we do it. Here is how Telos parishes have come to understand these character-

Effective congregations embrace experimentation and are willing to risk significant energy and resources to reach young adults who may not respond immediately

istics as critical to supporting Orthodox young adults.

Outward Facing: The entire orientation of young adults is to discern their purpose and place—their *telos*—in the wider world; that’s exactly what they are supposed to be doing at this point in their lives. Since young adults are naturally outward facing, it makes sense they would feel more at home in a parish that is also.

Willingness to Risk: Trying new things is a huge part of young adulthood; it is what young adults are primed and ready to do. A parish willing to risk and try new things is a parish where young adults feel energized and challenged to live into their full potential.

Not Focused on Membership: We live in a mobile society, with young adults one of the most transient groups. Young adults can be made to feel like second-class parishioners if they’ll be leaving for school, marriage, or a new job soon. Parishes who learn to “love young adults who will leave them” not only support those particular young adults, but also offer a huge gift to the body of Christ—because His body isn’t one single parish.

Capacity: When parishes allow young adults agency in designing their own ministry and access to a budget, they send a powerful message: “we value young adults, trust

them as capable of good decisions, respect their gifts and strengths, and are eager to see those gifts and strengths expressed freely in our parish community.”

Teachable: Parish life can sometimes contain perennial problems or difficult personality dynamics. Looking for inspiration—in the work of other parish-

es and organizations—is refreshing and reorienting.

Further, openly acknowledging and accepting that new efforts take more

than one iteration to hit their stride builds our patience and resilience and gives others the courage to try new things (because they are no longer afraid to fail).



The last section of “Characteristics of Effective Parishes” will be shared in the next issue of Orthodox New England.

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Acknowledging and accepting that new efforts take more than one iteration to hit their stride builds our patience ... and gives others the courage to try new things, because they are no longer afraid to fail.

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His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon
V. Rev. John Kreta, Chancellor
V. Rev. Joshua Mosher, Editor
Phone: 203-237-4539
frjmosher@sspeterpaul.org



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For subscription requests:

frjmosher@sspeterpaul.org
203-237-4539
PO Box 186
Durham CT 06422

Holy Trinity Russian Orthodox Church
PO Box 2876
305 Washington Avenue
New Britain Conn. 06050-2876
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Upcoming

- Nov. 18** **Deadline for next issue of the ONE**
- Oct. 28-29** **Diocesan Assembly hosted by Holy Trinity, Springfield, VT, and Holy Resurrection, NH**
- Oct. 30** **Ordination of Rev. Dn. Justin Griffing to the Holy Priesthood at St. Nicholas, Pittsfield, Mass.**
- Nov. 13** **St. Nektarios Celebration at Christ the Savior, Southbury, Conn.**
- Dec. 14** **Diocesan Council Meeting (via Zoom)**