

Paid directors (salary or stipend).

Leaders are trained internally and using outside resources, paid for by parish.

Organized, staffed, regular and dynamic.

Diversity of leadership and turnover.

Understand that collaboration improves the final outcome.

Personal involvement and leadership are encouraged.

#### 9. Website, social and print media

Up-to-date, professional, and loaded with resources for parishioners and visitors.

#### 10. Visitors and newcomers

Develop an integrated outreach to visitors.

Recognize all visitors and returning visitors by name in liturgy and escort them to fellowship.

Collect visitors' cards and store their information on a spreadsheet.

Follow up with visitors weekly.

Give information to each visitor about the parish and the Orthodox Faith, and make sure their names are memorized by specific greeters and priest.

Ushers and parish are trained to welcome and engage with visitors.

#### 11. Fellowship

Fellowship is an important and vital ministry and it is an extension of the liturgy and part of the priestly office of service and sacrifice.

Greet as many people as possible and engage with them socially during Fellowship.

Have and encourage key people to reach out and speak with visitors.

Special instances for fellowship are incredibly important and necessary.

Prosforo and coffee hour are rotated among every steward.

#### 12. Strategic

Create a dynamic strategic plan for the parish that incorporates all aspects of parish life.

Establish clear administrative rules, sound financial principles and management guidelines.

#### 13. Church, facilities and grounds

Beautiful, clean and orderly.

#### 14. Review

Regularly review the life of the parish in all its aspects.

Have Parish Town Halls and use Parish Assemblies to speak about the State of the Parish and encourage dialogue about this issue.



## SAINT SPYRIDON GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

# ON GROWTH: THINGS LEARNED FROM A MISSION PARISH



Father Evan Armatas

### *Preliminary considerations...*

THE QUESTIONS BELOW must be considered and answered before moving on to the steps listed inside. These questions require personal reflection. One should also initiate dialogue and reflection with parish leadership and the Parish Assembly.

#### **Step 1: Positive change brings growth**

Am I committed to encouraging and enacting positive changes that bring about growth and a new parish paradigm?

Are the parish and parish leadership committed to encouraging and enacting positive changes that bring about growth?

Do I view this as necessary?

Do I think this is a priority?

Does the parish see the necessity and importance of this perspective?

Have I reflected upon this concept personally and initiated conversations with the parish leadership, ministries and Parish Assembly about this concept?

Examine your attitudes towards growth and positive change.

Challenge yourself to have a fresh perspective and determine that the status quo should be examined and perhaps modified.

Do you view positive change favorably?

#### **Step 2: Improvements precede growth**

Do I realize, and does the parish agree that in order for growth to occur, we must make improvements to all aspects of our parish?

Are improvements viewed positively?

Are we ready to challenge ourselves and move in new directions?

#### **Step 3: Growing begets growing**

Am I prepared to grow, and am I comfortable with the new and challenging opportunities growth will present?

Do I understand that growth will provide me with additional opportunities to grow as well?

Does the community understand the changes that growth will bring to community life and to them personally?

## *Practical steps and things that work. . .*

THE CATEGORIES BELOW, and the suggestions within them, are placed in order of priority. Please note that not all ideas can be put into place immediately; however, each parish and its ministries need a plan to organize and implement the steps they wish to take. Additionally, we must recognize that resources follow vision/growth; we may need to spend a dime to take in a dollar! Finally, it has been our experience that visitors and our parishioners want, and are encouraged by, the following ideas and methods.

### **1. Spiritual development**

All people are hungry for spiritual transformation and authenticity. Emphasize and encourage spiritual development and transformation for yourself, as well as for parishioners.

- Imitate Christ, personally and corporately.
- Read the Bible and promote biblical literacy.
- Pray regularly and seek to grow spiritually.
- Explain, utilize and live Orthodox spirituality and tradition.
- Have a positive relationship with a monastery and Spiritual Father.
- Participate in regular outreach to the poor. Retreats, pilgrimages and mission trips.
- Resolve to participate regularly in confession and spiritual renewal.
- Attend classes and seminars.
- Give away books, articles, prayer books, etc.

### **2. Interpersonal and corporate inventory**

Develop a list of personal strengths and weaknesses for yourself and a list for the

parish as well. Ask others to do the same.

Incorporate the talents and resources of the community as soon as possible by seeking talented and motivated individuals and teams to establish ministries and develop them.

Review your pastoral profile, likes and desires, and the profile of the community.

### **3. Parish culture**

Review and understand your parish's culture and determine strengths, weaknesses and what boundaries exist.

### **4. Catechism**

Have a relentless focus on catechism and teaching.

Encourage teaching in the home and spiritual work and learning at home.

Use outside resources, such as retreats, pilgrimages and books.

Create balance between converts and cradle-born Orthodox by emphasizing life-long learning and a common focus on salvation and faith.

Give all parishioners an opportunity to learn and explain their faith.

Provide resources for home and personal use.

Provide funds and scholarships for learning.

Encourage dialogue and interaction over questions of belief and dogma in every encounter.

Develop religious education opportunities through web, podcasts, articles, pamphlets, lending library, Bible study, evening classes, articles and handouts, etc.

### **5. Liturgical/Worship**

*Liturgical space*

Organize liturgical space so that it is beautiful, clean and orderly.

Provide the following resources:

- Pew hymnals, tabbed/organized.
- Service books for every service.
- Service guide for liturgy and other services.
- Pew Bibles.

*Choir and chanters*

Chanters and choirs lead, not replace, parishioners.

Have books with music and complete text of services available.

Work towards hymns being sung corporately in liturgy and special services, and all music being made available to the entire parish.

Make sure that music sounds beautiful.

Provide training and pay for voice coaches.

Select new and young members and train them to chant and sing in the parish choirs.

Assign and rotate chanters to services in teams (have multiple teams).

When a service cannot be sung/chanted properly, it is read.

Provide CDs and take-home hymnals for members to learn music.

*Preaching*

Biblically based, using Biblical themes the majority of the time, have people use Bibles in church during sermons.

Organize, prepare and at times, use a theme for a period of time (i.e. sermon series).

Catechetical.

6-10 minutes in duration.

*Overall*

Worship is interactive, vibrant and participatory.

Find ways to honor and include visitors in worship.

Worship is explained both during services and outside of services.

English-based.

Records of attendance are kept for every service.

### **6. Create a welcoming environment**

Visitors and parishioners feel welcomed and encouraged.

Demonstrate a welcoming attitude.

Educate parishioners to see outreach as their responsibility.

Visitors and parishioners are spiritually motivated and engaged.

Strike the correct balance of culture and ethnic traditions.

Connect newcomers with established members of the parish.

### **7. Outreach and evangelism**

Service to the poor and needy is emphasized constantly and organized parish-wide on a regular basis (all members participate in monthly service projects before fellowship).

Have a vibrant outreach and pastoral care system for your parish providing visits, prayers, meals and assistance, incorporating members of community.

Mission work is organized by teams and individuals and is encouraged and emphasized constantly.

Local charities are supported financially and with resources from talents in the community constantly.

Advertisements in local papers and radio.

### **8. Ministries**

Directed approach: Ministries are led by ministry leaders, not parish priest.

Step aside and allow new ideas, new people, and new traditions, empowering leaders and team members.

Let ministries proliferate and create.

Well-funded.