

The Blank Calendar

By Joseph Kormos, Parish Development Ministry Leader, Archdiocese of Western Pennsylvania

In a recent Parish Pulse newsletter article we urged parish webmasters to avoid displaying blank calendars on their website. (“Nothing screams “stagnant” like a blank monthly parish calendar”, we noted.)

Coincidentally we recently (re)discovered a presentation offered at the OCA’s 2011 Seattle All American Council by sociologist and demographer Alexei Krindatch. Krindatch has spent considerable time in recent years studying the characteristics of Orthodox people and parishes. His work may provide the obvious explanation to empty calendars: calendars are empty because *we have too many parishes where nothing much goes on!*



Alexei Krindatch

An Uncomfortable Comparison

Krindatch compared “programming” in OCA, Greek and Antiochian Orthodox parishes and found that OCA parishes are much less likely to offer parish programs such as Sunday School, Bible Study, Fellowships, Adult Ed, Youth and Community Service activities.

Assuming Krindatch’s statistics are accurate this data raises important questions for OCA parishes. Questions such as:

Are we satisfied?

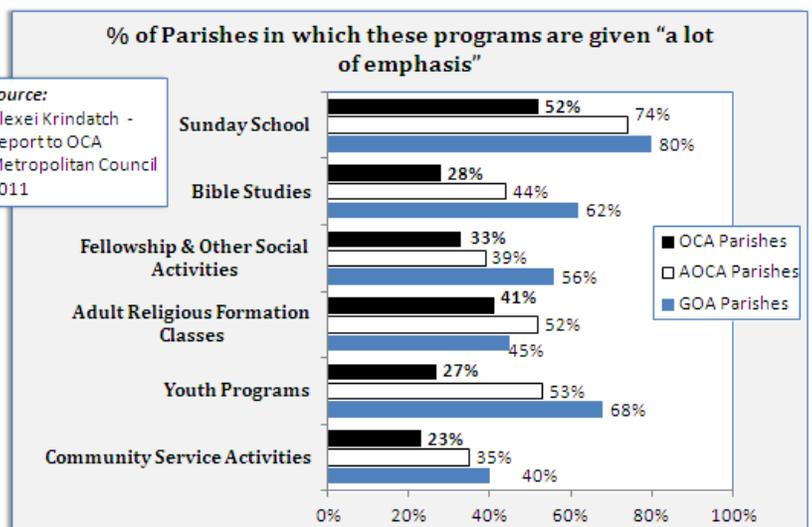
Can we, as Orthodox Christians, be satisfied that less than half our parishes give *important emphasis* to adult education and slightly more than half emphasize Sunday school for children.

Valid Activities?

Do these “programs” help to fulfill the mission of the Church? To transform lives? To help us to know Christ? To bring others to Him? If yes are they not something we must do well? Can we claim to have healthy parishes without these programs as part of the parish agenda?

Why?

Why do OCA parishes exhibit lower effort and participation in every category than the two



According to noted Orthodox statistician and demographer Alexei Krindatch, OCA parishes are less active in developing parish programs than Antiochian or Greek parishes.

other Orthodox jurisdictions? What are the root causes?

Who is Responsible?

The Synod of Bishops? Metropolitan and Diocesan Councils? Parish Priests and Parish Councils? Anyone of us who sits back and passively assumes that *Sunday liturgy only* is the extent of our calling? Any of us who don't participate when these programs are scheduled?

Action?

As a Church we've had this information for three years now. Do we see a need for action? If so what? When?

Healthy Parishes

We're often asked about the qualities of healthy, vibrant parishes. Certainly church school, bible study, adult education, fellowship and community service would be obvious characteristics that any parish looking for a bright future should offer.