# Small Parish Forum 2017

## Opening Talk: Parish Profile and Intro to Four Dimensions of Engagement

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Saint Athanasius
ORTHODOX CHURCH

Priest Justin Patterson, Nicholasville, Kentucky

# Small Parishes: Lifeblood of our Church in America

ORTHODOX CHURCH in AMERICA

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To tell you that what we speakers are doing in our parishes is absolutely good or ideal

To insist that there “one correct way” to do things in parish life

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To listen carefully to the experiences of others at this forum (to hear and process)

To consider--with open yet honest minds--how some of these ideas might (or might not) be adapted to strengthen our own parishes back home

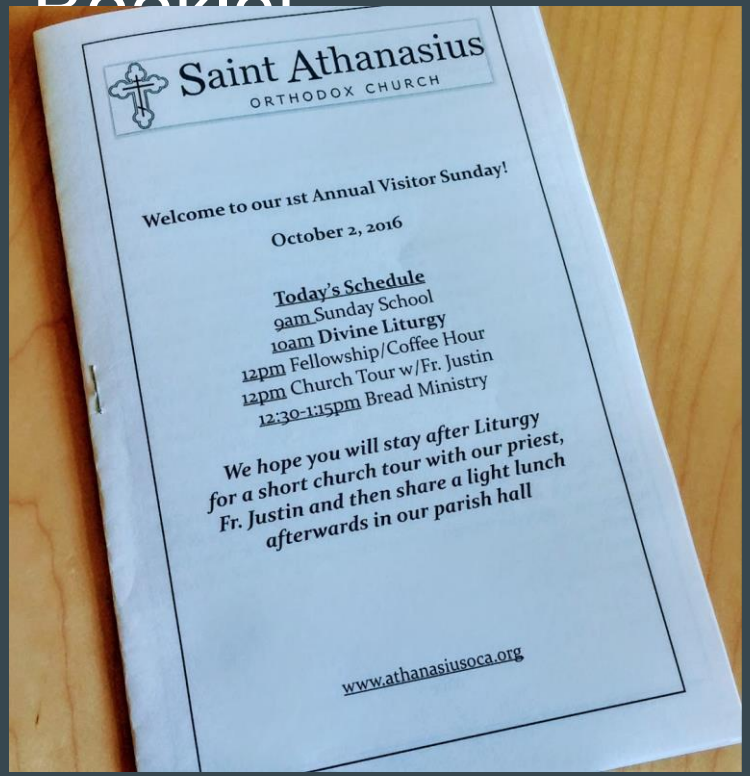
# Brief Glimpse: Four Dimensions of Engagement

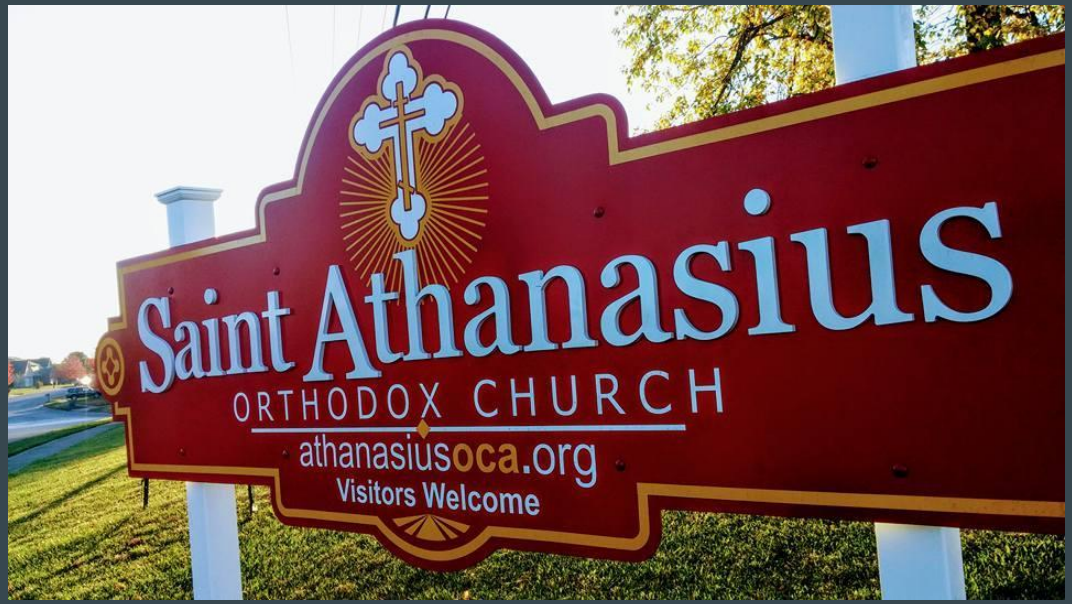
*But more on this later!*

# St. Athanasius Orthodox Church 15th An

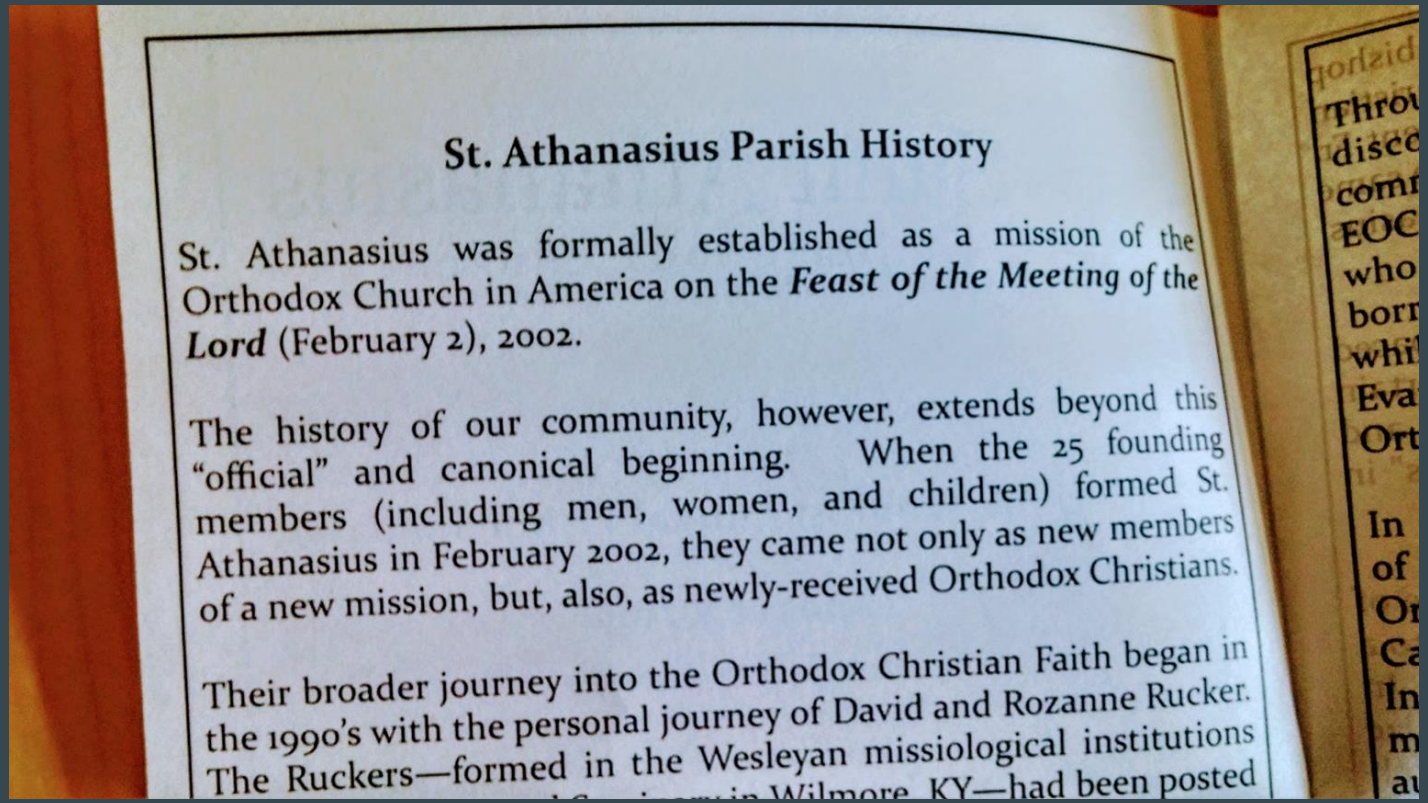
# St. Athanasius Mission: Officially Formed Feb. 1, 2002

# St. Athanasius Orthodox Church: Check out this Booklet



# St. Athanasius: a little about our parish history...



## St. Athanasius Parish History

St. Athanasius was formally established as a mission of the Orthodox Church in America on the ***Feast of the Meeting*** of the ***Lord*** (February 2), 2002.

The history of our community, however, extends beyond this "official" and canonical beginning. When the 25 founding members (including men, women, and children) formed St. Athanasius in February 2002, they came not only as new members of a new mission, but, also, as newly-received Orthodox Christians.

Their broader journey into the Orthodox Christian Faith began in the 1990's with the personal journey of David and Rozanne Rucker. The Ruckers—formed in the Wesleyan missiological institutions

# St. Athanasius Today...

# St. Athanasius Today: ~200 directly souls in our orbit

Paschal Attendance:

~190 in 2017

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Outlier or "crowd" who come

# St. Athanasius Today: ~200 souls directly in our orbit

Many more who are part of the outlying local “community” with whom we engage: through our Sunday Bread Ministry, Jail Ministry, Refugee Ministry, and other outreach and service ministries who do not necessarily attend our services

# Storefront Mission Life! i.e., “Processions in the Parking Lot”

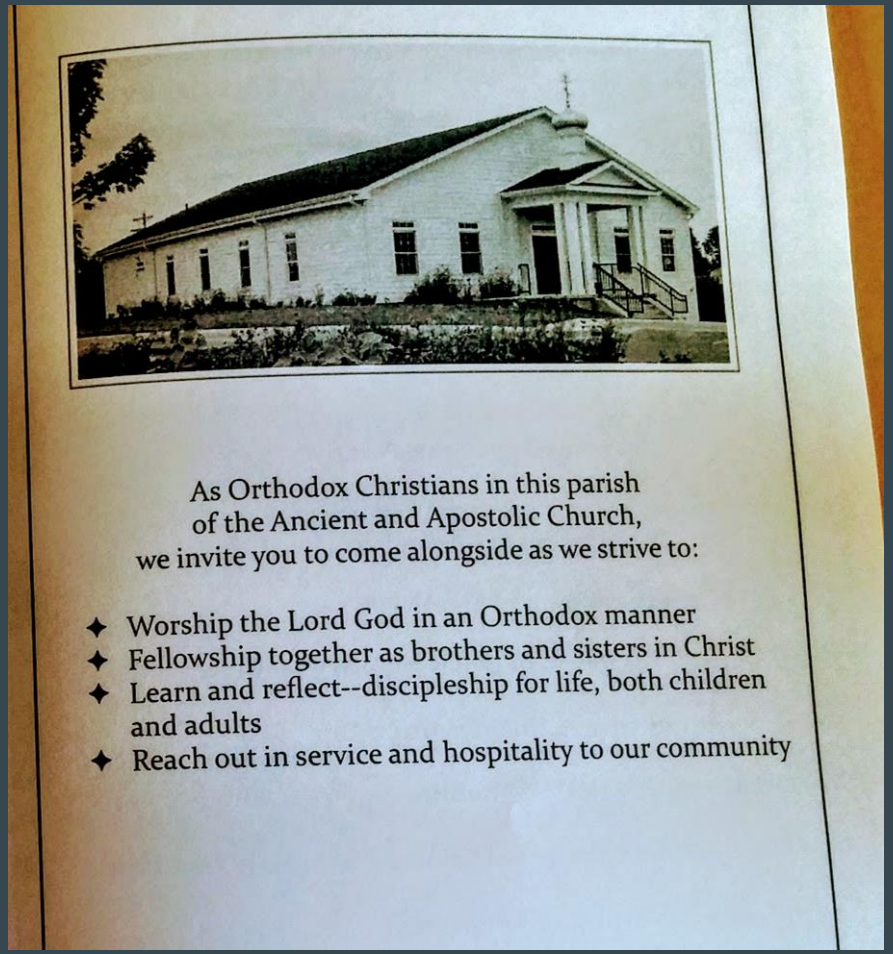
# 4 Essential Aspects of Parish Life at St. Athanasius

1). **Worship** in an Orthodox Manner

2). Christian **Fellowship**

3). Life-long Christian **Learning**

4) **Outreach** including hospitality, service, and mission



As Orthodox Christians in this parish
of the Ancient and Apostolic Church,
we invite you to come alongside as we strive to:

- Worship the Lord God in an Orthodox manner
- Fellowship together as brothers and sisters in Christ
- Learn and reflect--discipleship for life, both children and adults
- Reach out in service and hospitality to our community

# Worship in an Orthodox Manne

*"Oh Lord, how I love the beauty of Your House and the Place where Your glory dwells!"*

-Psalm 25

Orthodox Worship calls to mind the Kingdom of God:

**Beauty, Glory, & Transcendence**

# Worship in an Orthodox Manner

## Active Service Schedule

- Wednesday Night Vespers
- Festal services (Vigil & Liturgy)
- Frequent Molebens
- Extra services in fasting seasons
- Vigil or Great Vespers every Saturday

# Worship in an Orthodox Manner

Choir

- Leads the Worship Responses
- A Sacrifice of Praise
- Can be a great source of comradery & fun
- *related to Learning & Fellowship!*

# Worship in an Orthodox Manner

## Altar-Servers

- Cultivated cadre of boys and men to assist the priest in leading worship
- Occasional workshops to develop skills
- Informal mentoring
- Annual Altar-server pool get-together (*Fellowship!*)

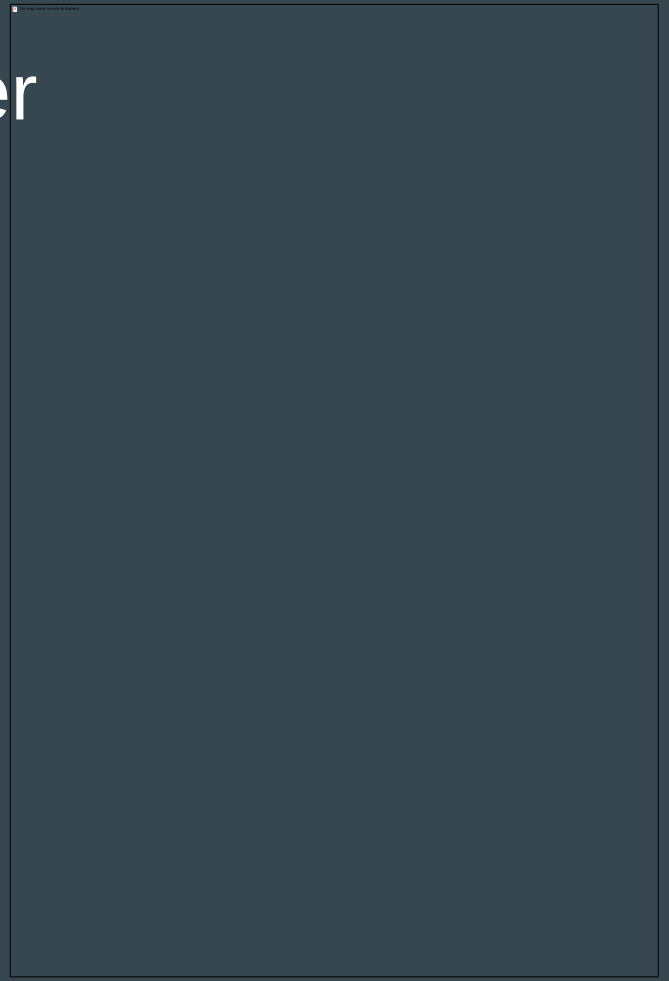
# Worship in an Orthodox Manner

## Handmaidens

Girls help serve the *antidoron* and *zapivka* after Communion

Plans are underway to begin an annual social event

*related to Fellowship*



# Worship in an Orthodox Manne

Prosphora Bakers

- Making the Eucharistic Bread (Bozhebread!)
- Idea of offering one's best for the Lord

# Worship in an Orthodox Manner

## Flowers & Beautification

Preparing the nave for various feasts and church celebrations (as part of Worship)

Women (and men and children!) who help with this enjoy the *Fellowship* aspect of this as well!

# Worship in an Orthodox Mann

## Proportional Giving (Tithing) as Worship of the Lord

Helping people see their tithes and offerings (of whatever amount) as part of their worship of God--their giving of thanks (Eucharist) to him.

# Fellowship

*"How good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity..."* - Psalm 132

Fellowship brings the parish community together and makes it truly a family.

*Paschal Picnic 2017 at High Bridge Park*

# Fellowship

Weekly Fellowship Meal after the Divine Liturgy

Potluck-style light meal with teams coordinating menu

# Fellowship

## Youth Group

- Twice a month on Sunday evenings
- Connects to other Orthodox youth and monasteries
- Some service and education
- Includes a Girls' Group that meets twice a

# Fellowship

- St. Elizabeth the New Martyr Sisterhood
  - Service, cultural, and spiritual events for parish women
  - Provides additional organizational help for key parish events

# Fellowship

## Quarterly Men's Fellowship Nights

Totally informal nights hosted by various parish men--usually with cookout and adult refreshments

# Fellowship

- Semi-Regular Parish Dance Nights
  - Sometimes purely as a social activity
  - Sometimes for a particular charity fundraising goal (e.g., helping to renovate the county food pantry)

# Fellowship

Helping people “delight” in the Church and the Gospel

- E.g., St. Nicholas Day Celebrations
- Special traditions around various feasts

# Lifelong Learning

*“Blessed are You, O Lord, teach me Your statutes!”* -Psalm 118

Lifelong learning hopefully would involve all members -- young and old alike

# Lifelong Learning

- Adult Christian Education Every Wednesday Night
  - Vital for newcomers
  - Rotating themes and classes offered in the Wed. slot
  - We are attempting to involve teens

# Lifelong Learning

Sunday School

- Complicated
- Factors?
- What model works?
- Help!
- Note: the importance of a “Child Safety Program”

# Lifelong Learning

## Vacation Church School (VCS)

- Lexington Pan-Orthodox effort each year
- Extremely popular with parents and kids
- Held early summer over one week

# Lifelong Learning

## Orthodox Summer Camp Programs

Almost all our pre-teens and teens participate

Great total immersion for our young people: Orthodox services, education, friendships, fasting, feasting

# Lifelong Learning

Big question I have: What are some additional ways our parish could help young and old alike continue in lifelong learning?

# Outreach: Christian Service, Hospitality, & Mission

*"The Lord preserves the strangers; he relieves the widow and the fatherless... "* -
Psalm 146

All Orthodox Christians are called to do some kind of *reaching out* to others

# Outreach: Christian Service, Hospitality, & Mission

## Fellowship Hour (again!)

Why list it twice? Because it is the fulcrum of our outreach: it is hospitality and service to those who come through our church doors

# Outreach: Christian Service, Hospitality, & Mission

Choir (again!)

The choir is both our best and worst evangelism!

# Outreach: Christian Service, Hospitality, & Mission

## Sunday Greeters

Helpful to have parishioners greet visitors as they enter the church--to welcome and orient them.

The children often love to help!

# Outreach: Christian Service, Hospitality, & Mission

## The Bread Ministry

Weekly distribution of Panera and Kroger Bread products from either the nave or the church porch

Over a dozen families helped each week with extra food going to a local residence home

# Outreach: Christian Service, Hospitality, & Mission

- OCF (Orthodox Campus Ministry)
  - Regular participation in Pan-Orthodox OCF at University of KY
  - Seasonal work at three other college campuses, connecting to students (Orthodox or interested)

# Outreach: Christian Service, Hospitality, & Mission

## Parish Bookstore

- Items for purchase in the parish hall
- Managed to both help Orthodox faithful, but also to provide useful books for inquirers

# Outreach: Christian Service, Hospitality, & Mission

## Parish Lending Library

Useful for folks who are not able to purchase large numbers of books

A collection of biblical commentaries, church fathers, spirituality, and church history

# Outreach: Christian Service, Hospitality, & Mission

## Mercy Meals

"Meal-trains" for the sick, the newly -delivered, families coming and going, or mourning the loss of loved ones.

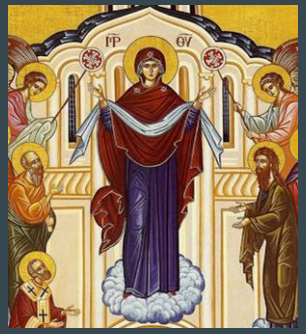
# Outreach: Christian Service, Hospitality, & Mission

## Fellowship of the Protection of the Theotokos

Parish fellowship committed to raise awareness for “life” issues.

Organizing:

- Liturgical prayer for life
- Support for local pro-life clinic



# Outreach: Christian Service, Hospitality, & Mission

Kentucky Refugee Ministry

County Jail Ministry

“Resilience Program”

# Outreach: Christian Service, Hospitality, & Mission

"Visitors' Sunday" in
October

New Members "Welcome
Dinner" after Pascha

# Outreach: Christian Service, Hospitality, & Mission

- Gardening/Outside Beautification
- Physical Plant
  - Does Parish Council fit here? It **enables** the other ministries...

# Outreach: Christian Service, Hospitality, & Mission

Partnering with solid Orthodox organizations

IOCC

OCMC

# Outreach: Christian Service, Hospitality, & Mission

Opening our church physical plant up to community events

- Voting station
- Appropriate concerts
- Special talks of broader interest
- Recovery groups

# Outreach: Christian Service, Hospitality, & Mission

- Partnering with solid local organizations
  - We did not want to reinvent the wheel
  - County Food Pantry
  - Leadership Jessamine
  - Inter-denominational jail initiatives

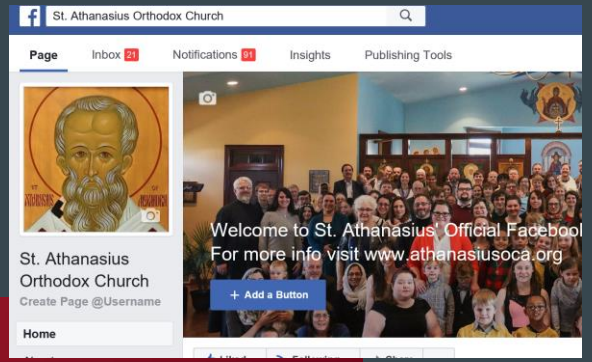
# Outreach: Christian Service, Hospitality, & Mission

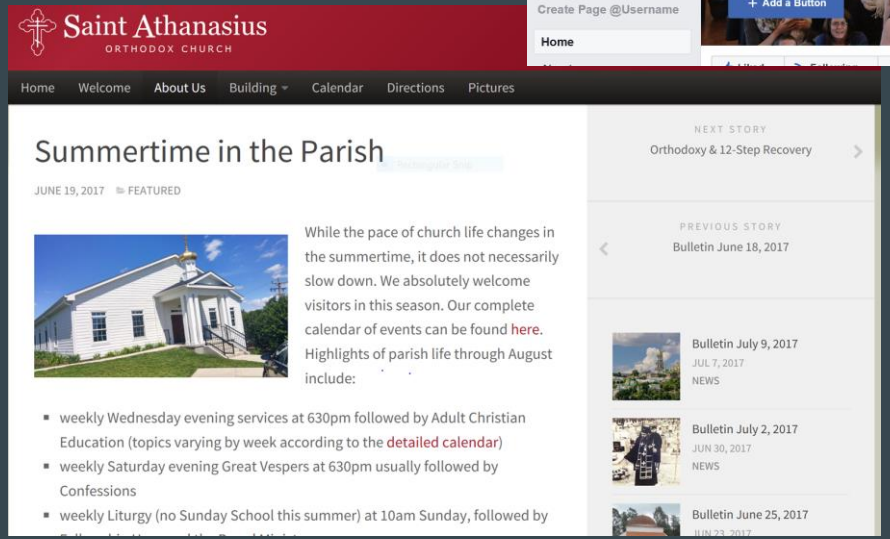
## Online Web Presence

Beautiful and user-friendly website

Some social media presence and development

Parish photographer with an eye for beauty!



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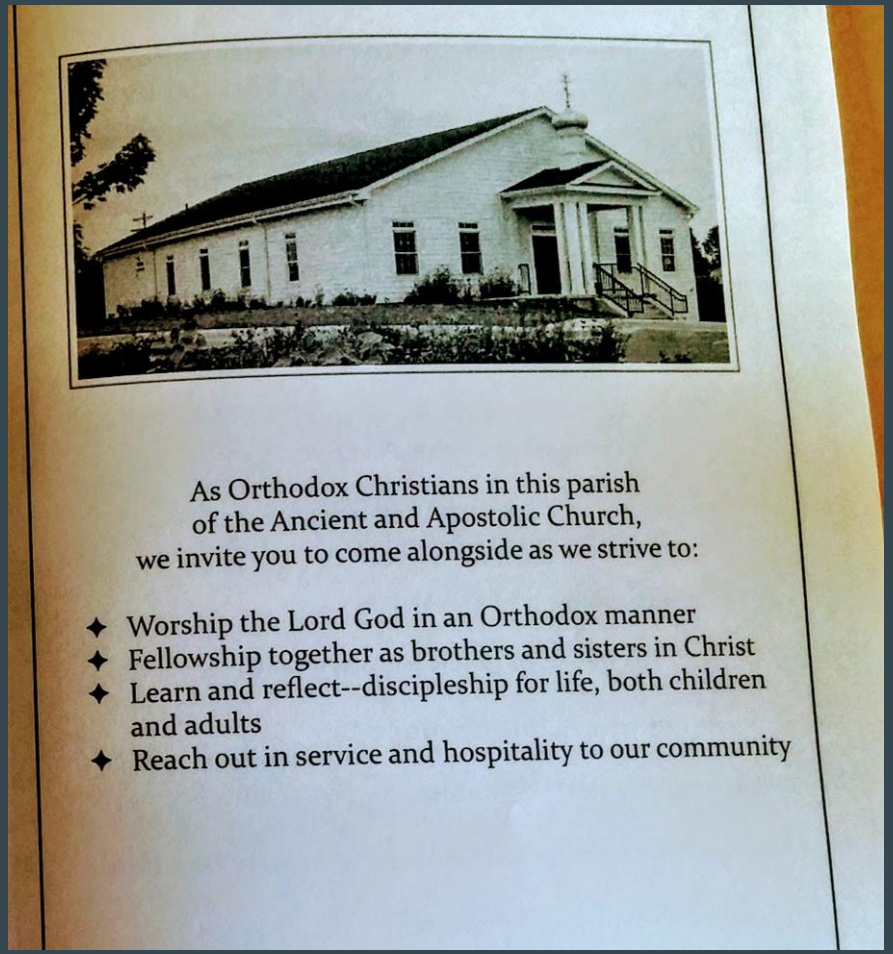

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# Four Dimensions of Engagement: Conclusion & Introduction