

- This slide set includes from the welcome introductory presentation from the 2017 Small Parish Forum delivered by Joe Kormos
- It includes some extra slides that were omitted live due to time constraints.

Becoming a Community of Engagement



7/19/2017

Building a Bright Parish Future

Thank You!

3

- Your time this week
- Your past labors
- Your willingness to consider new approaches

*Also to our Supporting
OCA Dioceses*



Archdiocese of Pittsburgh
and Western Pennsylvania



Diocese of Chicago
and the Midwest

Faculty & Staff

4

- Cathy Vrugitz
- John Fedorko
- Joseph Kormos
- Fr. Peter Baktis
- Fr. Marc Vranes

-
- Fr Justin Patterson
 - Fr. Joshua Frigerio
 - Igumen Patrick (Carpenter)
 - Mother Seraphima
 - Janet Damian Lapko
 - Matthew McCroskery

-
- Fr. Jonathan Proctor
 - Fr. Jonathan Bannon

Hosts

Fr. Nikolai Breckenridge &
parishioners of
St. John the Baptist Church

Small \neq Weak, Declining, Tepid, Dead

5

- Small Parish Forum ... NOT...
 - ▣ Declining Parish Forum
 - ▣ Bad/weak Parish Forum
 - ▣ Tepid Parish Forum
 - ▣ Dead Parish Forum

Any Parish Can Become Vibrant

6



“All that is required is that its members, beginning with its leaders, be firmly resolved to have it so.”

Fr. Thomas Hopko

Which is Better?

7

Each is different.
Neither is “better”



Same?

8



Hospital

Clinic



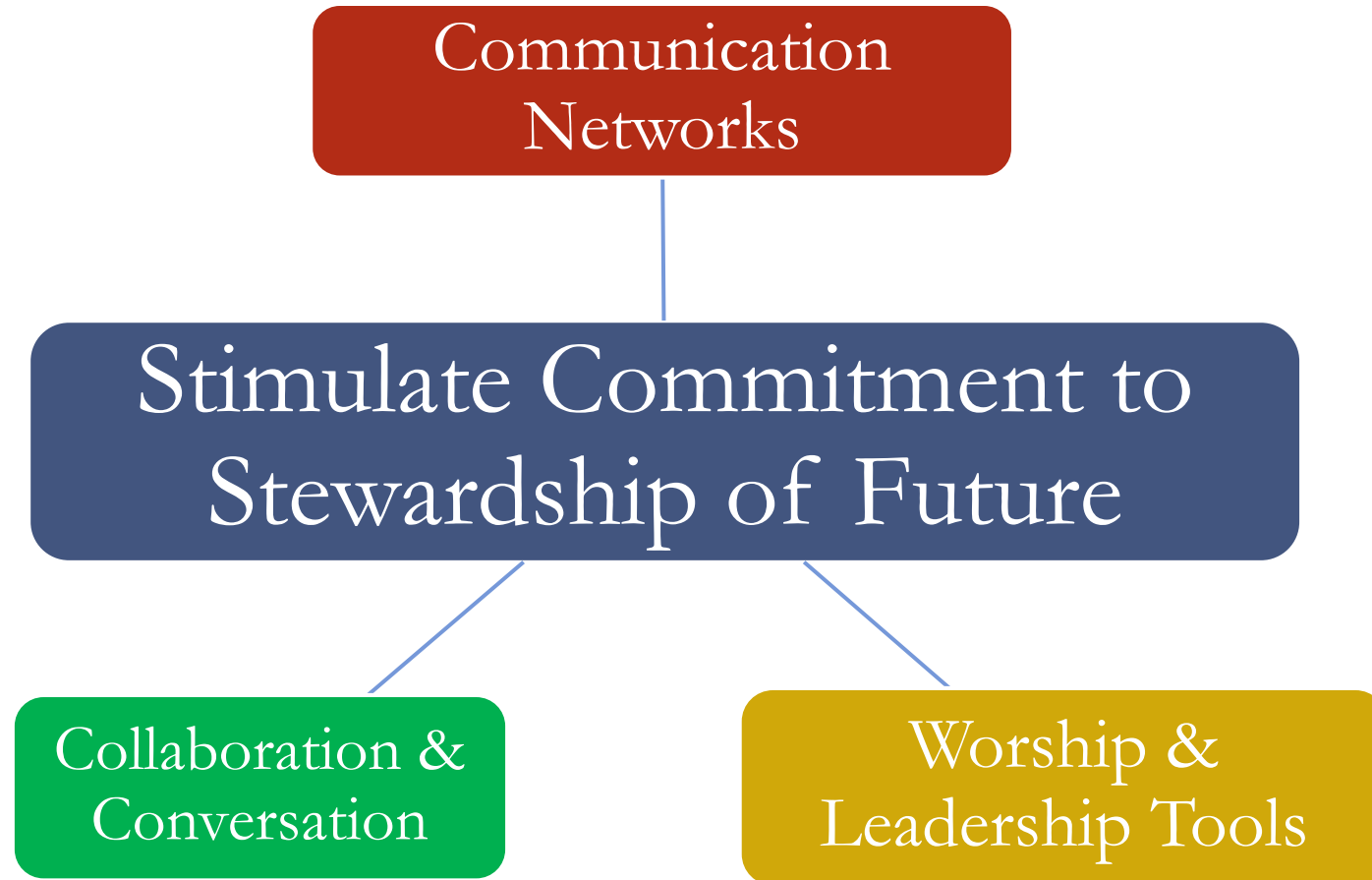
The Premise

Small parishes are not malnourished, immature versions of large parishes.

They think feel and act different. Yet, they can worship well, care for one another, teach, serve their community and share Christ's love with others. Doing so requires they harness the intimacy and close relationships inherent in their modest size -- *AND avoid using their size as an excuse for inactivity and mediocrity.*

Forum Goals

10



Vibrant = Work

“Most people miss opportunity when they see it because it comes dressed wearing coveralls and looks like work.” Thomas Edison

“Give Us a Growth Method”

12

- “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase” 1 Cor. 3:6



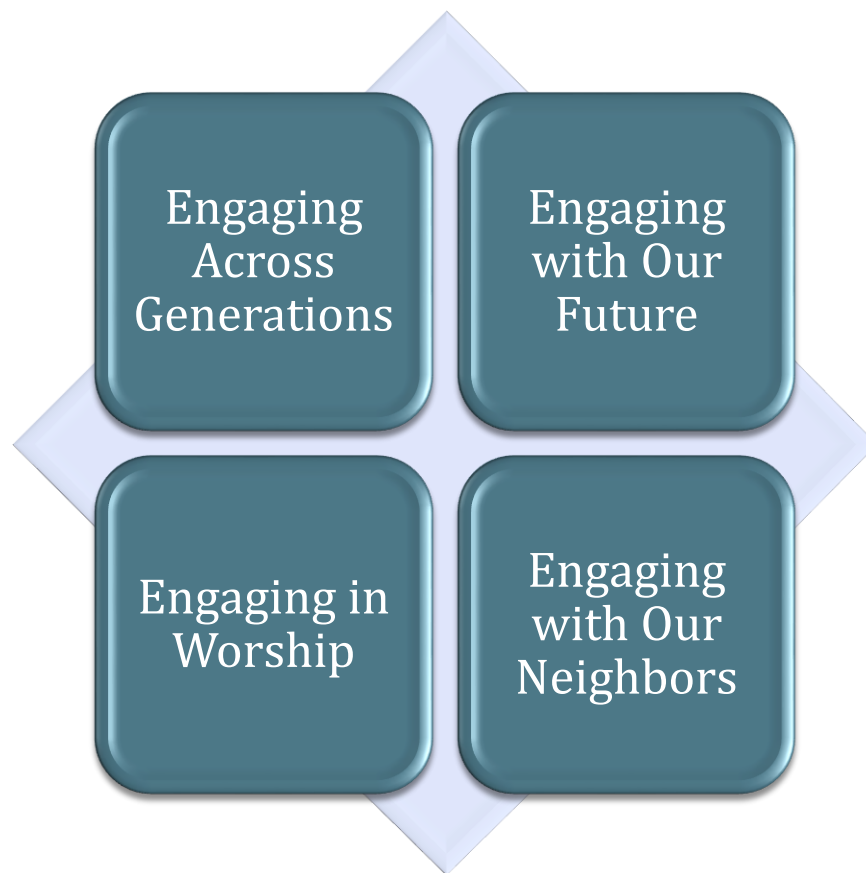
“You can’t make a flower grow by pulling on the petals!”

ON BEHALF OF ALL

Building a Bright Parish Future

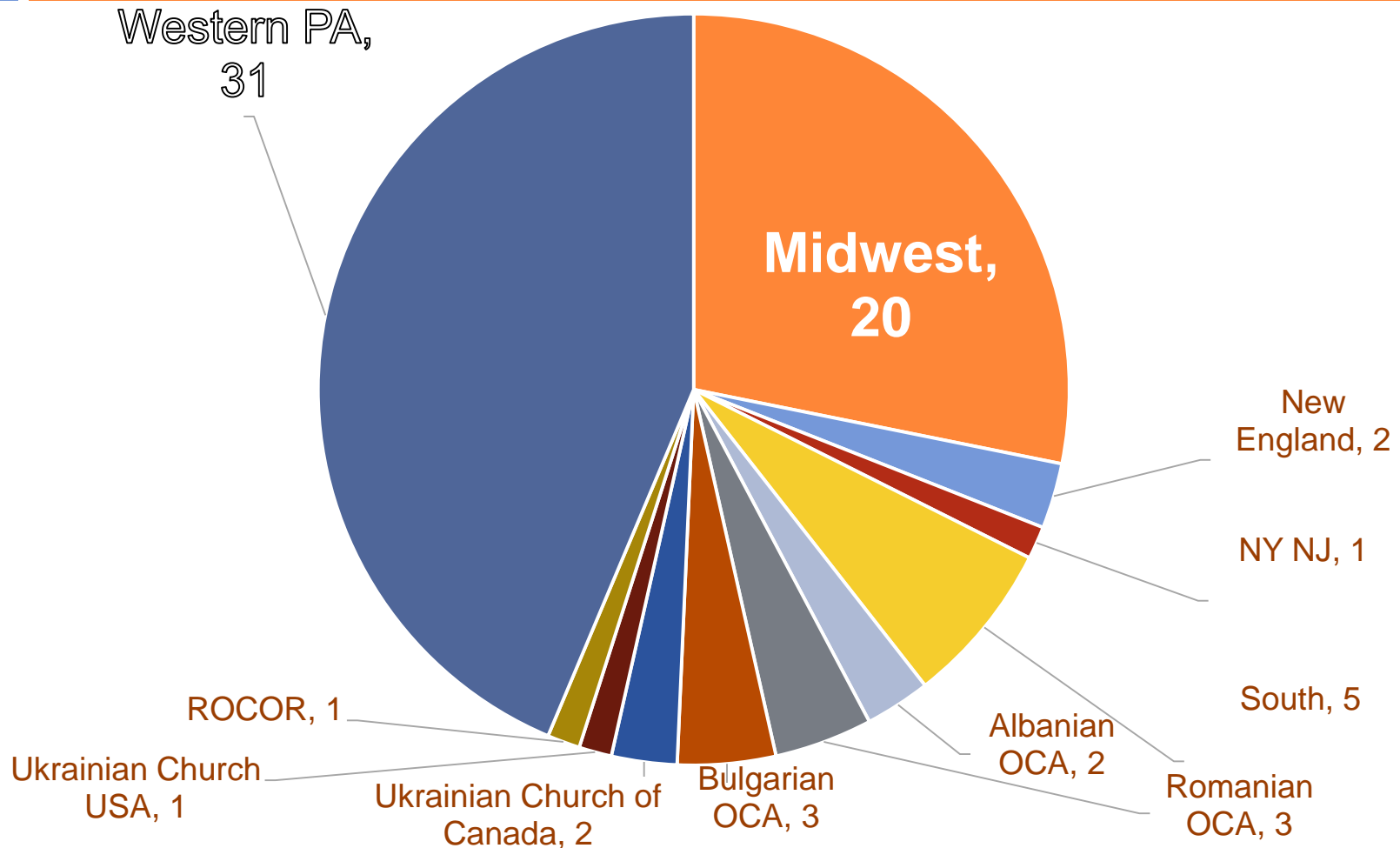
by

Becoming a Community of Engagement



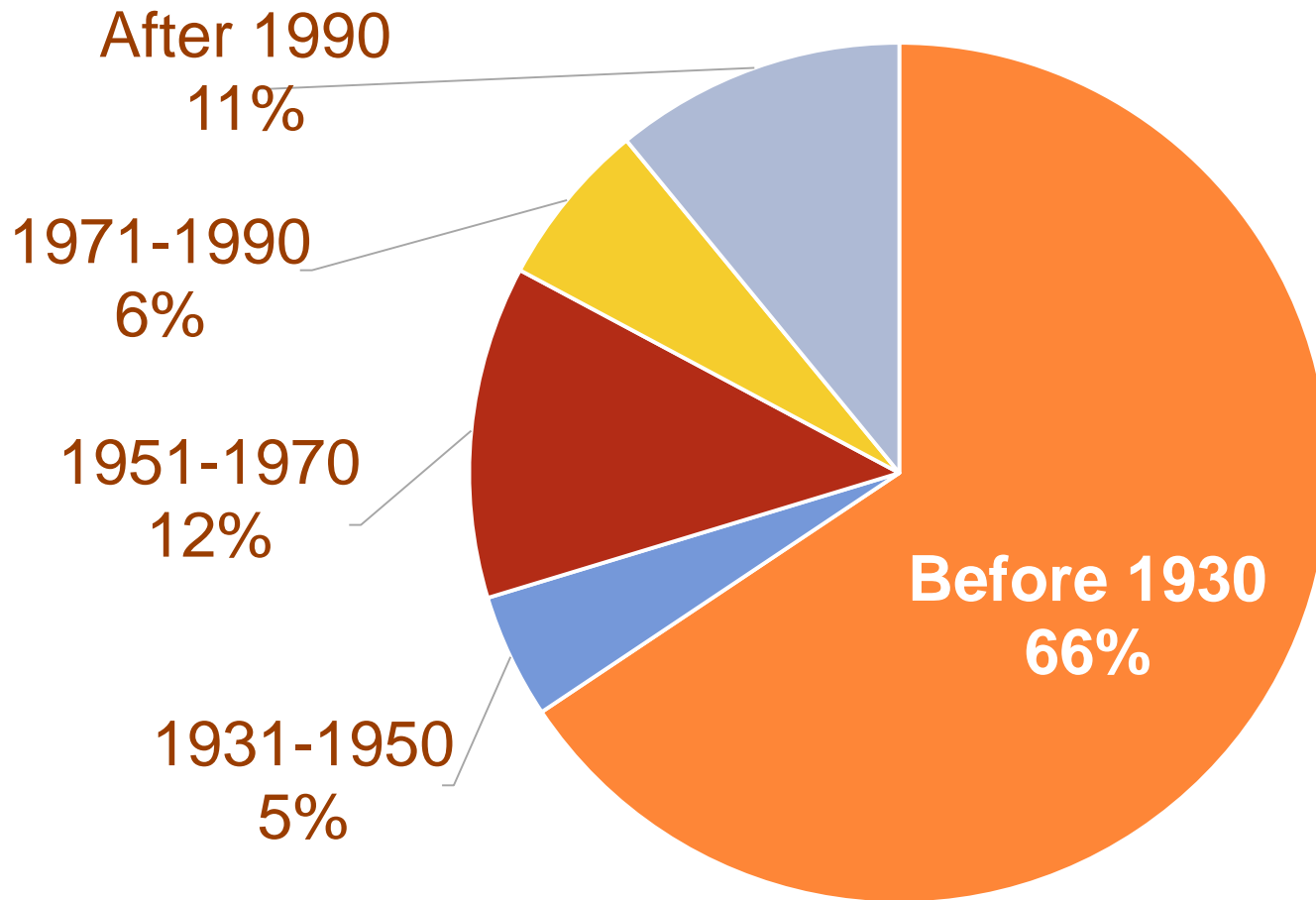
68 Attendees; 38 Parishes

14



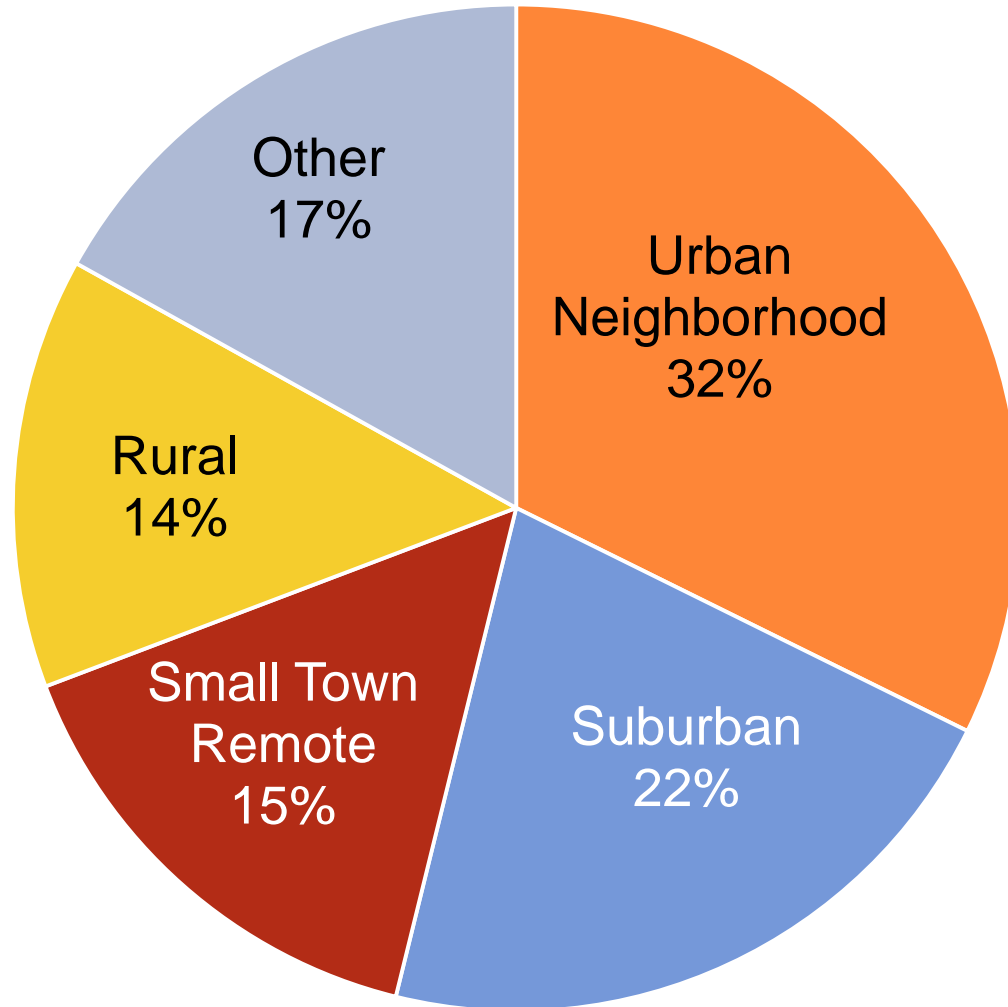
Parish Founding Date

15



Parish Geography of Attendees

16



17

Qualities of Small Parishes

Small Church Defined: Criteria

20

- # of members
- Worship attendance
- Size of building
- Size of budget
- Compared to past –If they were once larger they call themselves small.
- Compared to one another: the smaller is “small”
- Sociological –single caring cell embracing whole congregation
- Limited program = small

Small Church Defined: Qualities

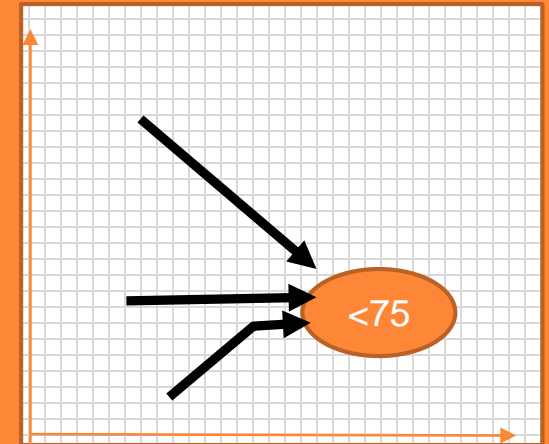
21

- Less formal, intimacy, personal attention.
- One where almost everyone knows everyone.
- Know one another but also a sense of family.
- Everyone feels (and is) important.
- Group functioning is simple rather than complex.
- Identity is in its collective personality & experience rather than its program
- Claims a common history & is committed to a common future.
- Mission is understood and implemented in personal & immediate terms
- Pastor is seen as person, pastor generalist

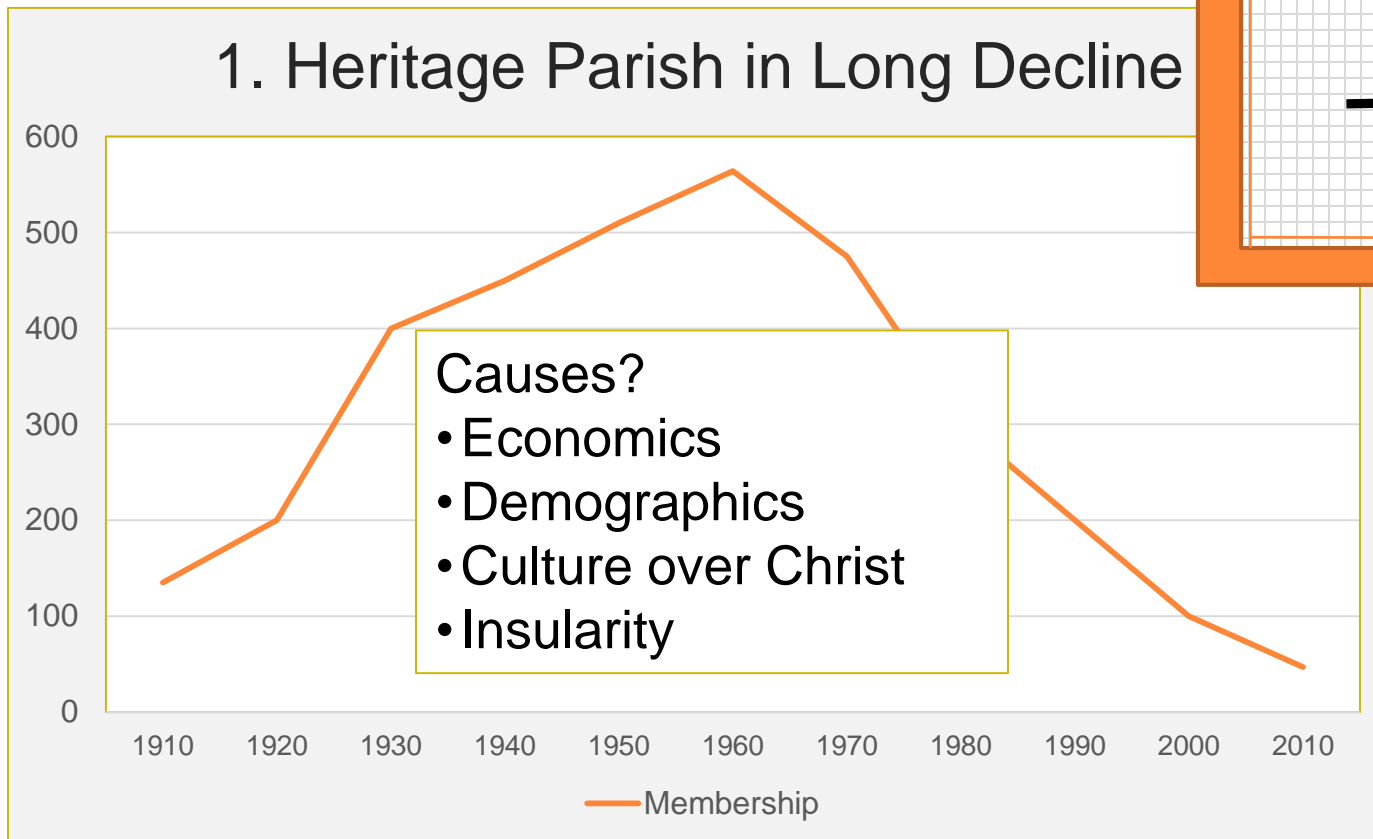
Not All Small Parishes are the Same

22

Three Paths to Small



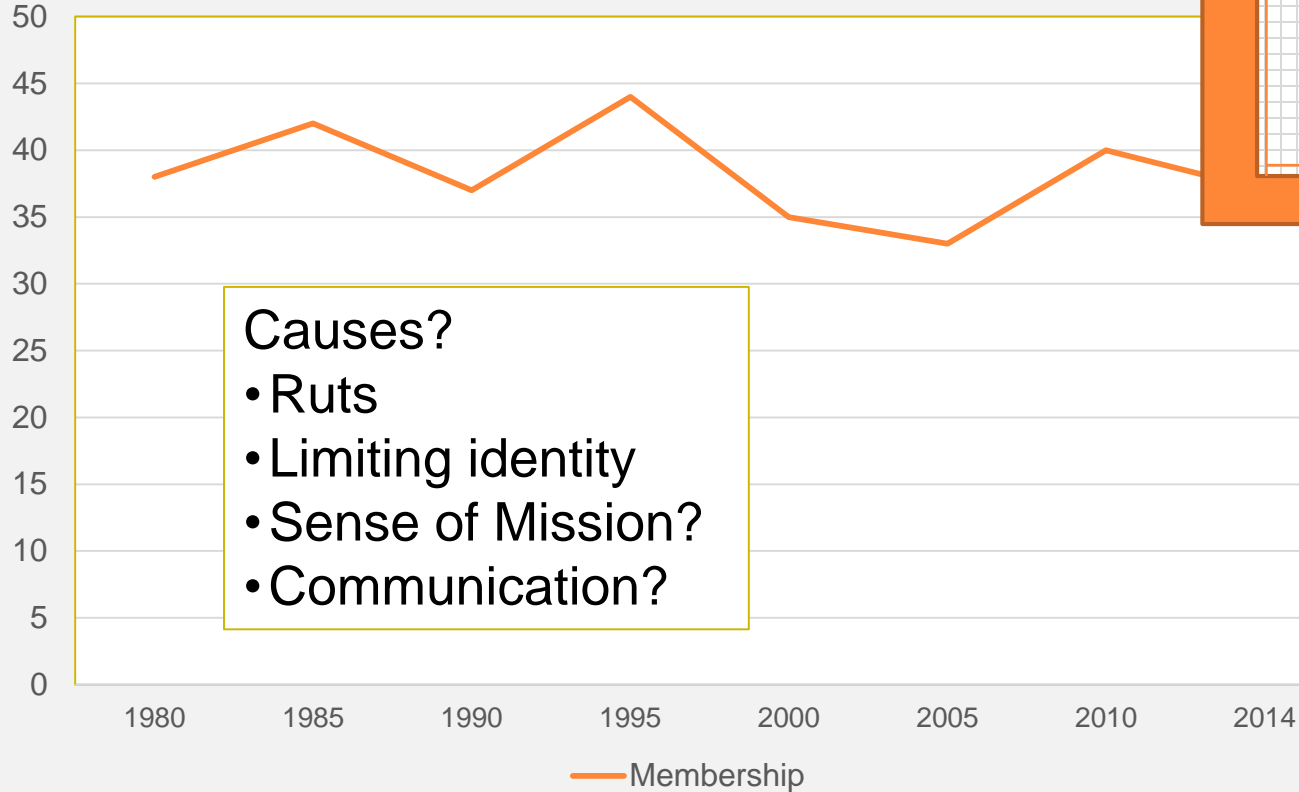
1. Heritage Parish in Long Decline



Not All Small Parishes are the Same

23

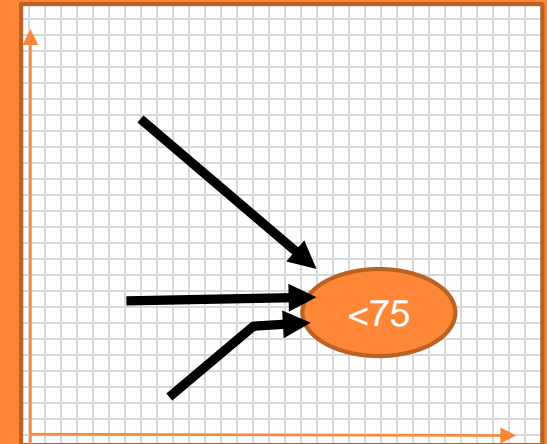
2. Treading Water – Always Small



Causes?

- Ruts
- Limiting identity
- Sense of Mission?
- Communication?

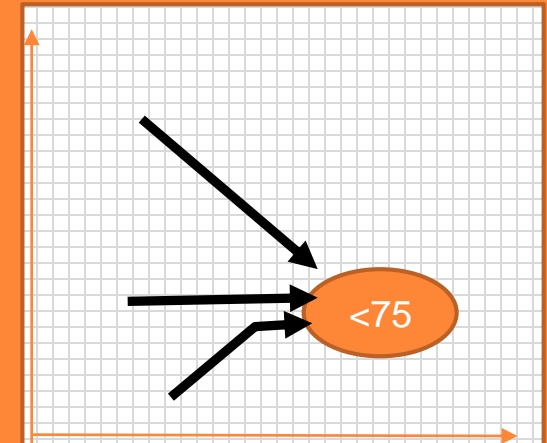
Three Paths to Small



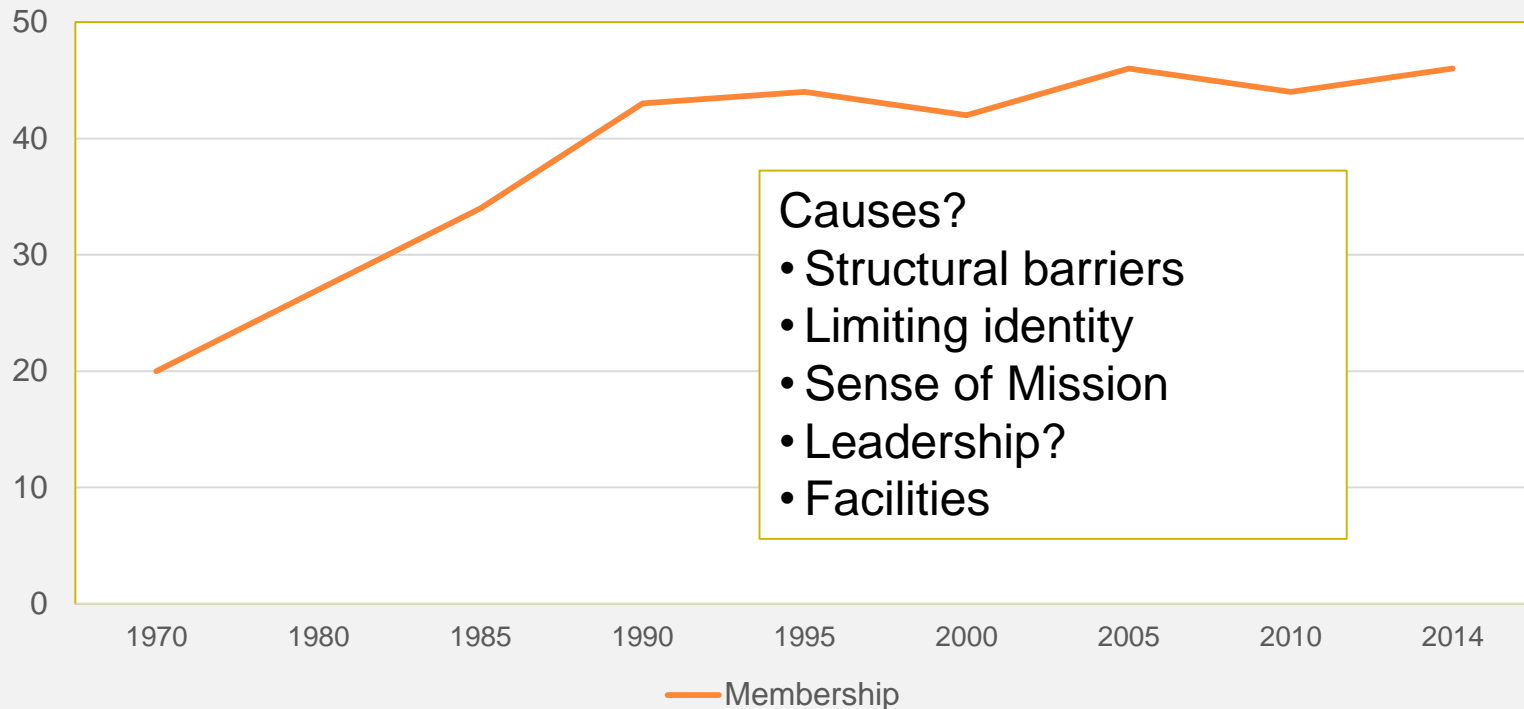
Not All Small Parishes are the Same

24

Three Paths to Small



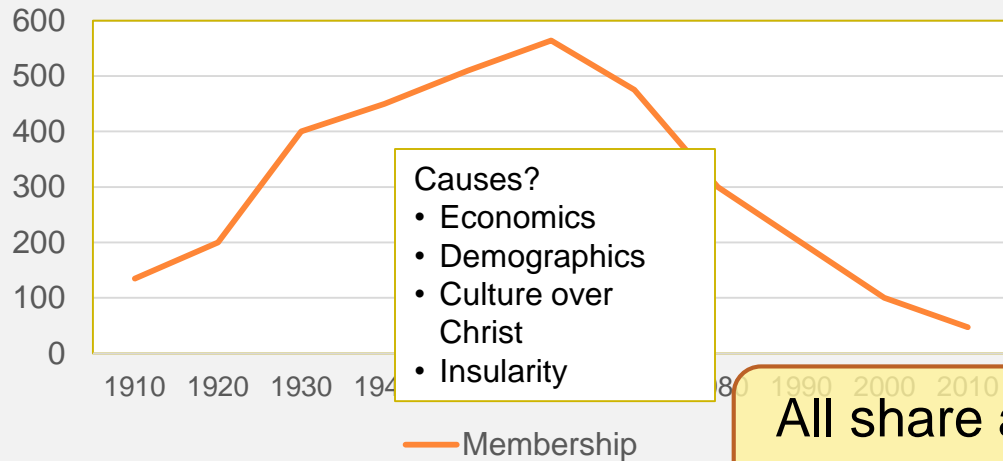
3. Plateau



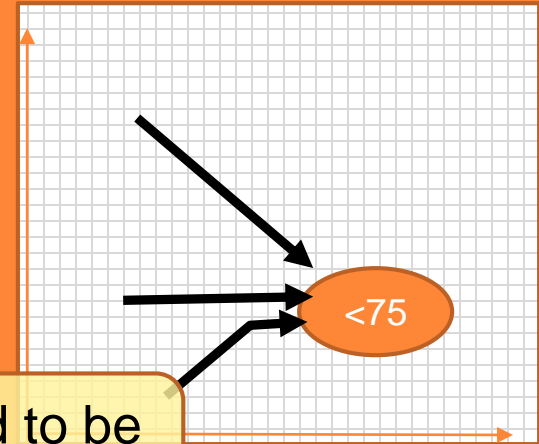
7/19/2017

Not All Small Parishes are the Same

1. Heritage Parish in Long Decline

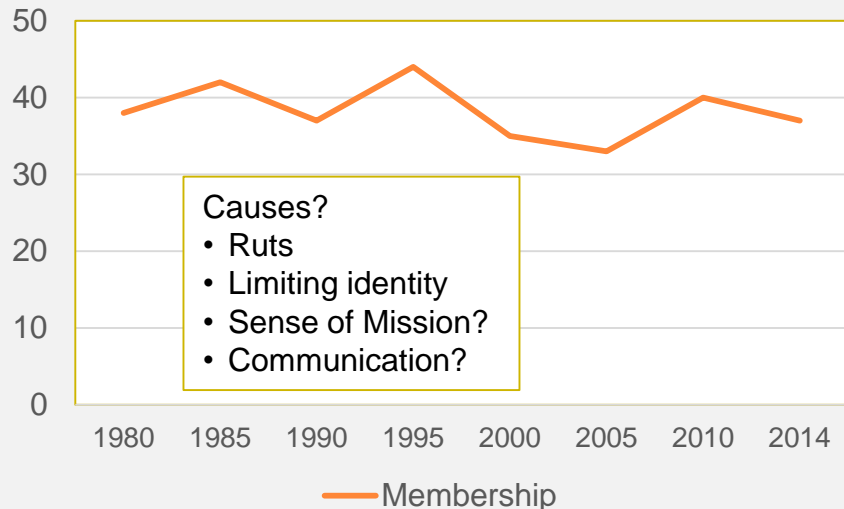


Three Paths to Small

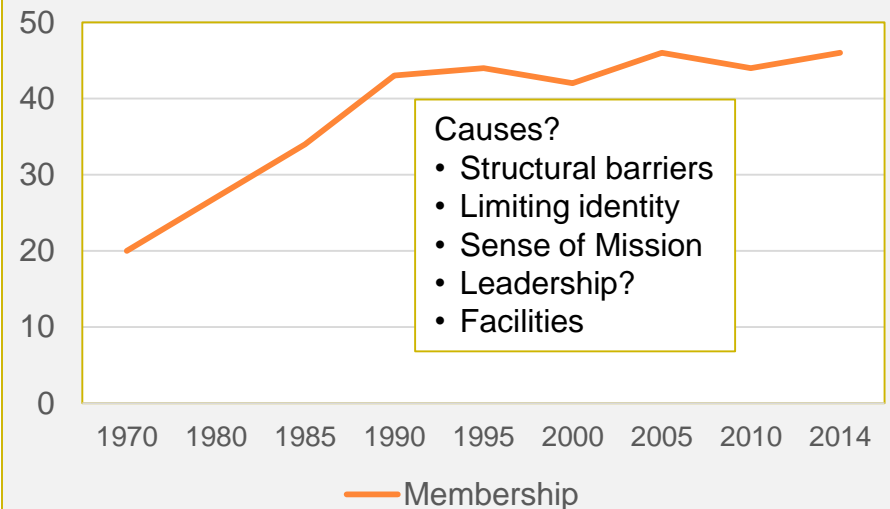


All share a need to be able to change.

2. Treading Water – Always Small



3. Plateau



Opening Exercise

26

- What are the important positive qualities of small parishes?
 - ▣ What can small parishes do/deliver that larger, seemingly more 'valuable', parishes cannot
- What are important negative qualities/obstacles/limitations?
- Identify one or more experiences in a small parish that were particularly positive and likely not duplicated in a larger church.

Positive Qualities of Small Churches

27

- Know everyone by name (intimate)
- Care about everyone
- Provide assistance spontaneously w/o need for elaborate structure
- Accept and affirm people who may be rejected elsewhere.
- Strong adult male image to children.
- Really love each other
- Can celebrate everyone's victories; bear burdens
- Respond when faced with a crisis
- Intergenerational connections
- Opportunity to be innovative; try new things -- a safe harbor to try things. Training ground.
- Very loyal
- Have better attendance
- Often avid in sharing time talent treasure.
- Sense of innate authenticity
- Nimble
- Everyone has an opportunity to contribute

Negative Qualities

28

- Coolness to those outside the family, can be exclusionary hard to break in.
- Low self-esteem
- Defensiveness
- Acceptance of shoddy programming
- Parochialism
- Desire to merely survive.
- Potential for conflict
- Aimlessness
- Self-satisfaction
- Self-absorption
- Short tenure of priests
- Lack resources – financial, human (volunteer & staff) physical
- Due to lack of resources or a tightwad mentality there is an aversion to spending – particularly on priest' salary
- Parish Council often has less than complete leadership skills, “majors in the minors” and operates as a committee of the whole on all matters.

- Small churches provide a safe harbor for people to try things. Training ground.
 - ▣ What mistakes have you made in the past year? What have you tried?
 - ▣ What risks have you taken in the past year? (a decent workshop question)

Small vs. Large

30

The small church places a higher priority on:

- relationships
- the importance of everyone's being able to call all other members by name.
- the rights and privileges of each individual.
- making sure the bills are paid.

The larger church places higher priority on:

- functional aspects of ministry.
- a carefully administered organizational structure.
- the smooth operation of the institution.
- systematic approach to fund raising & stewardship.

- The greatest asset in the church is that we love one another. However, I have likewise seen that the greatest weakness in the church, with regard to growth, is that **we love one another, but *only* one another. It is next to impossible to grow the church without loving those outside the church.** Without love, the virtues of prudence, temperance, courage, justice, even, faith and hope become no more than the laws of man, godless rules by which we attempt and fail to live. Therefore, remember: *“The greatest of these is love”* (1 Cor. 13:13).

What is the Limiting Factor (Constraint) for Your Parish?

32

- ❑ Money?
- ❑ People? People committed to parish life? Sense of duty/responsibility?
- ❑ Passivity? People committed to Jesus Christ?
- ❑ Travel distance/geography?
- ❑ Demographics - Population in our town/area? Economy?
- ❑ Time? Burnout?
- ❑ Morale? Organization?
- ❑ A sense of purpose?
- ❑ An understanding of the unchurched and how to reach them?
- ❑ Parking? Facilities?
- ❑ Creativity/ Imagination?
- ❑ Other?

Attendee Intros

33

- Why are you here?
- What is important to you and your parish?



7/19/2017

Renewal Experience

Orthodox Church in America

J. Kormos' opinion based on visits 90 Orthodox Churches in recent years.

34

Not Growing	Growing
Pre- 1940	Post 1970
Social Club	Holy place; Gospel Centric; Orthodox before culture
Dominant Ethnic group	Diverse
Few converts	> 50% converts
Sunday Only	Vespers; Feasts; Fasting; Sacraments
“Heritage”; For us & <u>our</u> needs	Mission to N. America
Events: Festivals; dances	Ministry...and events
Look Back: Preserve/Survive	Look Ahead: Thirsty; Discovery; Learning; Growth
Worship: Dead; Austere; Foreign	Energy, Participative, Joyous, English
“Dues”, equal, fund raising	Proportional, generosity, meaningful

Discussion Topics

*Article by David Ray**

35

1. **Prioritize worship.** *What can you do to strengthen worship in your small parish*
2. **Take advantage of your size.** None were embarrassed by their smaller size. *How could you take advantage of your size?*
3. **Kindle a family spirit.** *How can your church take better care of one another and deepen the relationship among everyone?*
4. **Have fun.** *How can members be helped to enjoy one another even more and have more fun together?*
5. **Commit to mission.** *What could you do to develop or expand a deeper commitment to mission and service where you are? To address serious needs and issues beyond their church doors.*
6. **Find your distinctive niche.** These congregations knew they couldn't be all things to all people, but they had found and defined their particular niche and were filling it. *What is your distinctive niche, and how can you better fulfill it?*
7. **Strengthen your pastor's leadership.** All these places had effective, trusted pastoral leaders (young and old, part-time and full-time), and most had been in place for several years. *What can you do to maximize the relationship with your pastor and even extend it?*
8. **Deepen the effectiveness of laity.** Every parish is dependent on its membership. *What can be done to take laity to a deeper level of faithfulness, purpose, and effectiveness?*
9. **Deploy resources wisely.** None were wealthy, but they knew how to generate enough money to do what they wanted and needed to do. *How might your parish do more with what it has and generate more resources?*
10. **Thrive! Don't just survive.** Be more concerned with being a living church than "surviving". *What would move your congregation beyond merely a survival mentality to becoming a contagious, vibrant faith community?*
11. **Nurture a passionate faith.** Each place exhibited a real commitment to spiritual nurturing and faith development. *What steps could your church take to help people, young and old, become more passionate about their faith?*

Based upon on a short article by David Ray, author of numerous books about small churches. The article was based on visits to 21 small churches known for the quality of their community life.