Today’s Topic

The Unchurched

Reaching the Lost, the Lapsed and the Letdown

Fr. Jonathan Ivanoff

Joseph Kormos, Moderator

Midwest Diocese Webinar
Registrant Profile
(126 registrants)

Attendee Background
- Laity: 62%
- Priests: 33%
- Deacons: 5%

Attendee Role
- Parish Council: 29%
- Ministry: 37%
- No Defined Role: 34%

Attendee Jurisdiction
- OCA: 69%
- Other: 12%
- Greek: 12%
- Antiochian: 7%

Interest area
- Develop Parish Efforts: 53%
- General Interest: 27%
- Improve Personal Skills: 20%

The Unchurched:
Reaching the Lost, the Lapsed and the Letdown

OCA Diocese Representation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diocese</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Midwest</td>
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<td>NY/NJ</td>
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<td>West</td>
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<td>Bulgarian</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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Orthodox Parish Health Inventory

Eight core areas of importance for building healthy, hopeful Orthodox parishes in America

More info at http://www.midwestdiocese.org/phinventory.html
Our Hope...
...take initial strides...
to equip & encourage more Orthodox to share the good news of the Gospel ... using words when necessary.... with those God sends to us ...or to whom God sends us.

By...
• Increasing understanding
  – of North America’s “religious landscape”
• Introducing
  – a few tools & principles of respectful Orthodox evangelism.
• Stimulating
  – personal and parish conversations about our responsibility to share the Gospel.

Next session: Tentative date August 15 – evening
Next topic(s): TBD -- based on your feedback
Today’s Session Leader

Fr. Jonathan Ivanoff

• Rector ...
  – of St. John the Theologian Orthodox Church in Shirley, New York
• Certified...
  – NCD coach & presenter; Director of Orthodox NCD America
• Presenter...
• Director
  – Dept of Mission and Evangelization Diocese NY/NJ
• Served
  – on board of Orthodox Christian Mission Center
The Unchurched: Reaching the Lost, the Lapsed and the Letdown

Host: Joe Kormos, Parish Health Facilitator
Parish Health Ministry, Diocese of the Midwest

Guest Speaker: Fr. Jonathan Ivanoff
Director, Commission on Missions and Evangelism
Diocese of New York and New Jersey
Tonight’s Goals

• “Who are the “unchurched”
• Are all the unchurched the same?
• What are their important characteristics and how can we reach them
• Three important actions every Orthodox Christian can take to be prepared for interactions with the unchurched
• What your parish can do to be prepared to share our hope in Christ with our neighbor
A Note About Sources

Thomas Rainer:  
*Surprising Insights From the Unchurched*  
*The Unchurched Next Door*

George Barna: collected writings

George Gallup: various surveys, 1999 – 2009

Ken Callahan:  *The Twelve Keys to an Effective Church*  
*The National Catholic Register, 2011*

*Christianity Today, 2005 – 2012*
“Who are These People?”

Unchurched...

Lapsed...

Fallen-away...

Inactive members...

Non-attenders ...

➔ **Bottom Line**: They’re not where they should be, where God wants them to be!
Some Definitions

**Unchurched:**
Not been in church for at least ten years

**Formerly Unchurched:**
- Have recently (w/in past 2 years) become active
- Not just attenders, but active; “rechurched”
- For all or a large portion of their lives they were not in church
23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, 25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.” – St. Paul to the Hebrews, chapter 10
Some Stats

120+ million
– nearly 40+% of the U.S. population – have dropped out of “organized” religion, no longer identifying with a church.
Americans Claiming No Faith

This number has tripled in 20 years

- 1990: 12%
- 2001: 29%
- 2010: 36%
- M+L+E: 20%
A Changing America: Church Attendance

Church attendance is at a 40-year low
That *Ol’ Time Religion* is Dying:

- 28\% - Left the religion of their youth
- 4,000 (Prot) churches close each year; R.C.s #s increasing
- 4 (Prot) churches close / new one started
- 50,000+ people leave their church each week
- 80+\% of all (Protestant) churches and 1/3 of all R.C. churches are losing members
- Episcopal Church, last decade: attendance dropped 23\%; not one diocese saw churchgoing increase
What are They Saying?

Most of what is called 'Christianity' or 'church' today is just organized religion. I don’t believe Jesus wants any part of it, or wants His followers to have any part in it.

~

It's pretty arrogant to label people as "lost" simply because they don't buy into a particular bronze age belief system.

~

Well I'm an atheist so I guess I would be unchurched. There are some fundies who honestly think that atheism is a religion so in their eyes I would be mischurched. I don't think either one of those is really fitting for me anymore than anyone who can't speak Spanish should be considered Un-Spanished.
What About the RCs?
Myths About the Unchurched

#1: Don’t talk about deep, complex biblical truths!

They don’t care, don’t wanna know, and it’ll only confuse them!

Does Doctrine Matter?

Yes, 91%

No, 2%

Uncertain, 7%
Doctrine and Teaching

Most of the preaching was so watered-down that it was insulting to my intelligence.

I went to one church where the message was on fear. I was eager to hear what the Bible had to say about [this]...It was more of a pop-psychology message. The biblical view was never explained.

Meaty teaching and preaching attracts the unchurched. I think they’re listening.
#2: The Unchurched Never Attend Church

- 48% attend 1x/year
- 30% attend 2x/year
- 18% attend 3x/year
- 4% attend 4x/year
First Impressions Count

Facilities:
• Adequate parking
• Clean facilities
• Modern facilities
• Clean bathrooms
• Good signage

Programs:
• Quality pre-school / nursery
• Variety of quality programs
• Good preaching
• Relevant and quality music
• Friendly people
• Outgoing/welcoming greeters
A Word About Facilities

I never would have heard the message if I had not been thoroughly impressed with the quality of their facilities.

~

One of the reasons I came back on my own was a sense that the church did everything with excellence, and it showed from the parking lot to the restrooms.
#3: They’re turned off by denominational names (or) Our name won’t attract non-ethnics

➡️ The “one” we’re perhaps most sensitive to:

- **Holy Trinity Orthodox Church**
- **Ss. Paphnutios and Barsenuphios Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Church**
- **Stockholm Swedish Lutheran Church**
- **Dutch Reformed Church**

American names are ethnic, too
American religion is in decline and this is what they’re leaving
#4: Priest must be a dynamic and charismatic leader for the church to reach the unchurched

- Good preacher
- Good pastor
- Sense of humor

• Lay-led effort
• Relationships and friendliness are lay-driven
#5: Personal relationships do not matter

Who Was the Greatest Influence in Coming to Church?

- No One: 25%
- Other: 17%
- Family: 43%
- Merchant: 2%
- Neighbor: 6%
- Coworker: 8%
Family Relationships Matter Most

The Family Influence in Coming to Church:

- Wives: 35%
- Children: 18%
- Parents: 43%
- Siblings: 5%
- In-Laws: 2%
- Other: 9%

Other
#6: Sunday School and other small groups are ineffective in attracting the unchurched.
What Prompts Them to Join

- Pastor/preaching: 90%
- Strong/firm doctrine/teaching: 80%
- Friendliness: 49%
- Life Crisis: 42%
- Personal evangelism: 41%
- Family/parish relationships: 38%
Some Surprises!

• Women are likely to be either most antagonistic/...or most receptive
• Feel guilty about not attending church
• Far more concerned with the spiritual well-being of their children than of themselves
• Nobody shares/ed faith with them, but...
• Want to develop relationships with Christians
• Christians have not been influential in their lives, but...
• They have a positive view of clergy and the church
• Attitudes are not correlated to where they live, ethnic or racial background, or gender
Myths About the Unchurched

• #7: “The unchurched are all alike”

U5
Highly antagonistic/hostile to the Gospel

U4
Resistant, but no antagonistic attitude

U3
Neutral, no clear signs of interest but perhaps open to discussion

U2
Receptive to Gospel and church

U1
*Highly receptive* to hearing and believing in Christ, joining church
Five Faith Stages (Rainer)

How many we’re dealing with in each stage:

- U5: Highly antagonistic: 5%
- U4: Resistant: 21%
- U3: Open to discussion: 36%
- U2: Receptive: 27%
- U1: *Highly* receptive: 11%

82% - 8+ out of 10 – will attend if simply asked
U5 Faith Stage:

5% Highly antagonistic and hostile to the Gospel

More than 1/3 live in small towns or rural areas
Wealthiest and most educated of unchurched
Teachers/professor most influential
Likely to be over 50 y.o.
African- and Asian-Americans
U5 Faith Stage:

5% Highly antagonistic and hostile to the Gospel

Some church as a child; residual anger from life’s events. Not likely...ever...to attend church. Extremely skeptical of anything supernatural. Immortality is unthinkable to them. No room for God or anything that can be explained rationally.
U4 Faith Stage:

21% Antagonistic but not hostile to the Gospel

Encounters have an empty feeling: will seem unmoved, indifferent, apathetic.
HOWEVER...likely to accept invitations to attend special presentations such as Christmas or Easter, just not the first time.
Dominated by males (and Hispanics); females less likely than any other group.
21% Antagonistic but not hostile to the Gospel

Ambiguous pluralism: Willingness to affirm beliefs of nearly everyone

- They do think about heaven and hell, 3x and 2x more than U5s.

Great respect for Bible: 6 out of 10: “truthful”

Very confused and searching; more like to come to your home than to church
What is Ambiguous Pluralism?

• Christians and Muslims worship same god  
  59%

• Bible, Koran and Book of Mormon are all different expressions of the same truths  
  43%

• All people are eventually saved by God  
  25%

• All religions teach the same lessons  
  26%
What is Ambiguous Pluralism?

• Believe in “god” or “higher being”
  \[80\%+\]
• “I Pray”
  \[80\%+ (9/11: 90\%)]
• Believe *God* cares about them personally, but the *church* doesn’t
  \[70\%+\]
• Have not experienced the presence of God in their lives or in their church
  \[70\%+\]
U3 Faith Stage:

36% No signs of interest but open to discussion

U3

U3s are the largest segment of the unchurched population.
Hard to define their spiritual state
No one clear racial/ethnic group
U3 Faith Stage:

36% No signs of interest but open to discussion

Common mark: Waiting to be invited:
9 out of 10 U3s are at least somewhat likely to attend church if invited

Church is “relevant” (86%) vs. not relevant

They pray (51% daily), and want to be heard

Believe in heaven and hell, clergy are cool
U2 Faith Stage:

27% Receptive to the Gospel and Church

Many are fully aware of/may be seeking God.
Youngest: 6 out of 10 under 36 years old
Most females: 62% of total
Most are Anglo
Lowest family incomes (along with U1s)
Welcome faith discussions
U2 Faith Stage:

27% Receptive to the Gospel and Church

Pretty strong theological/doctrinal beliefs, if somewhat convoluted at times
Don’t go often, but “life crises” bring them back and open receptivity
Greatly appreciate common sense and courtesy

**WANT** to be invited!!!
U1 Faith Stage:

11% **Highly** receptive to the Gospel and Church

Tend to be younger to middle-aged adults; 80+% below the age of 50

“Busy-ness” the most cited reasons for not attending

➔ **REALLY** want to be invited; know they’re seeking, know they need God
U1 Faith Stage:

11% **Highly** receptive to the Gospel and Church

Common background: Baptists (4 out of 10)
Few stopped attending because of negative life events; very positive memories of church
Observe a prayer life and do read the Bible
Conversion is *Not* a Program

“Remember always that the conversion of a sinner or a heathen to the right path comes not from us or from our skill, but directly and solely from God.”

- St. Innocent (Veniaminov)
Three Things You Can Do...

...to be prepared for interactions with the unchurched

Outside of Church:

1. **Share** the Faith: Dialogue, and don’t be afraid! Ask them what they think/feel/believe. **Listen to them**!

2. **→ Invite** friends/family to church on “festal days”

3. **Answer** their questions, but remember: you’ll **never** (ever!) argue someone in the Kingdom!

Key verse: “I have become all things to all men, so that by all means I might win some.” - St. Paul, 1 Corinthians 9:22
Three Things You Can Do...

...to be prepared for interactions with the unchurched

Inside Church (it’s a welcoming process):
1. Before Liturgy: **Invite** them to church, **pick them up**, arrive early
2. During Liturgy: **Stay** and **sit** with them: Go up with them to light candles, offer them a liturgy book, bulletin, etc.
3. After Liturgy: **Invite** them to Coffee Hour; **Follow-up** with a suggested visit to answer questions and explain parish life
What Your Parish Can Do...

...to be prepared to share our hope in Christ with our neighbor

1. **Greet** them! (but don’t announce/introduce)
2. **Ask** and **invite** them to sign a guest book (“Would you like to be on our e- or mailing list?”) and show them where the literature racks are (“Please feel free to take anything...”)
3. **Follow-up** with a suggested visit to answer questions and explain parish life and, especially, small/fellowship groups (priest or lay team)
Norms for “Conversion Ratio”

- National norm for “conversion ratio” – 85:1
- Effective evangelistic churches – 20:1

Less than 1% of churches in America meet that criteria
Questions?