Koinonic Evangelism: A Case Study of the Theology and Practice of Evangelism as Practiced in Three Parishes of the Orthodox Church in America

by

Eric George Tosi

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of Trinity College and Toronto School of Theology
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Ministry awarded by the University of Trinity College and the University of Toronto

© Copyright by Eric George Tosi 2015
Koinonic Evangelism: A Case Study of the Theology and Practice of Evangelism as Practiced in Three Parishes of the Orthodox Church in America

Eric George Tosi

Doctor of Ministry

The University of Trinity College and the University of Toronto

2015

Abstract

The articulation of the theology and the practice of evangelism in the Orthodox Church has only recently begun to be explored in a formal manner. This paper explores the approach to evangelism in the Orthodox Church based on historical models and current practices in North America. It redevelops words and concepts which are contextually unique to the Orthodox Church in America (OCA). The approach to evangelism in the Orthodox Church takes on different methods and goals and develops a new understanding of evangelism according to the concept of *koinonia* (communion). This dissertation validates the proposed theology and practice of evangelism through a case study of three varied parishes of the Orthodox Church in America involving interviews, questionnaires, and observations. The title of *koinonic* evangelism points to the Orthodox understanding of a communal and community life that is instrumental in effective evangelism on a parish level. It redefines evangelism according to certain principles unique to the theology of the Orthodox Church. It reveals that evangelism may involve individual actions but must be a communal activity in order to be effective. The dissertation concludes with outlining specific principles of *koinonic* evangelism which can be applied in a parish setting.
Acknowledgments

This dissertation has been in development for many years and there are many people to acknowledge. My first thanks goes to the many fine examples of priesthood that I have been privileged to encounter in my life. My home parish priest, Archpriest Paul Kucynda who always pushed the love for evangelism and mission. My mentors and teachers Protopresbyter Thomas Hopko (Memory Eternal), Archpriest Paul Lazor, Archpriest John Erickson, and the many seminary professors at both St. Vladimir’s Orthodox Seminary and St. Tikhon’s Orthodox Seminary. I thank the Holy Synod of Bishops for their support and encouragement, especially His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon. I thank my colleagues Protopresbyter Leonid Kishkovsky, Archpriest Alexander Garklavs, Archpriest John Jillions, Archpriest John Matusiak, Archpriest John Pierce, and Priest Timothy Hojnicki. You have all been gracious with your time during the project. I must thank the parishioners of Holy Apostles Church in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania; Holy Resurrection Church in Tacoma, Washington; and St. Joseph Church in Wheaton, Illinois.

I must point to the parishes of which I have had the privilege of being the rector; St. Nicholas of South Canaan Church in Billings, Montana; St. Paul the Apostle Church in Las Vegas, Nevada; and the temporary assignment at Holy Trinity Church in Rahway, New Jersey. As I have often said, you have given me far more than I have ever given you. I am grateful for all that you have done for my family and me. You have made me a better person and a better priest.

I especially am grateful for my family and the incredible role models they have been in my life. My parents, George (Memory Eternal) and Evelyn, who taught me to do things right and with honor. My in-laws, who are a model of all that is good in a priestly couple, Archpriest Joseph and Matushka Shirley Lickwar. My brothers, who always challenge me, and my sister, whom I can never repay for all of her editing acumen, which makes me sound much smarter than I am.

The final and most important acknowledgement goes to my family, my wife Christina and my two incredible children Alexander and Kyra. I am so sorry I missed some important events in your lives through this process but I love you all. Even when I was locked in the room writing, you were always in my heart. To Christina, thank you for letting me follow this passion, for following me where ever God has sent us, for listening to my rants and raves, and most of all for just being there. I promise this really is my last degree!
# Table of Contents

## Chapter 1. Introduction
1. Statement of the Problem  
2. Purpose of the Study  
3. Research Question and the Presented Thesis  
4. Definition of Certain Terms  
4.1. Evangelism  
4.2. Mission  
4.3. Proselytism  
5. Preview of Remaining Chapters  
6. Introduction Summary  

## Chapter 2. Previous Research and Literature Review
1. Where to Begin?  
2. Historical Background and Lessons  
3. Paradigm Shift and Later Patristic Sources  
4. Influences to the Mission in North America  
5. A Brief Review of the Orthodox Church in America  
6. Critical American Missionaries  
7. Cultural Evangelistic Concepts  
8. The Orthodox Church in America Today  
9. Review Summary  

## Chapter 3. Research Methods
1. Introduction  
2. Design/Approach  
3. Triangulation  
4. Setting and Site Selection  
5. Data-Gathering Procedures with Rationale  
6. Data Sources (interviews, questionnaires, direct observations)  
6.1. Interviews  
6.2. Questionnaires  
6.3. Direct Observations  
7. Participants Selection Process with Rationale  
8. Analysis Procedures and Coding Process  
9. Methods Summary  

## Chapter 4. History and Context of the Three Parishes
1. Introduction  
2. Holy Resurrection Orthodox Church, Tacoma, Washington  
3. St. Joseph Orthodox Church, Wheaton, Illinois  
4. Holy Apostles Orthodox Church, Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania  
5. Parishes Summary
### Chapter 5. Results of the Study

1. Introduction 142
2. The Central Question Revealed 143
3. Answers to the Six Research Questions 149

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1. Question 1: Do these parishes have a sufficient understanding of what evangelism,</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mission, and proselytism are and who is responsible for such work?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2. Question 2: Is there a historical methodology and terminology of evangelism that is</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>still applicable in the Orthodox Church?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3. Question 3: What are the current theories and practices of evangelism as applied in a</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>contemporary parish of the Orthodox Church in America?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4. Question 4: What are the effective (and ineffective) methods that OCA parishes have</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>employed? What are the criteria that define effectiveness in evangelism? Why have they</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>succeeded or failed?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5. Question 5: How are the parishes of the Orthodox Church in America engaging the</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>current shifting culture and how are the people responding through evangelism?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6. Question 6: What are the cultural realities in North America which an Orthodox approach</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to evangelism needs to consider?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Results Summary 196

### Chapter 6. Conclusions and Implications for Further Study

1. Introduction 197
2. Discussion of Findings 201
3. Limitations of Conclusion and Alternate Theories 211
4. Possible Implementation of the Study 213
5. Recommendations for Future Work 216
6. Concluding Thoughts 218

### Appendices 220

### Charts 241

### Bibliography 253
List of Appendices

Appendix A: Sample Letter of Informed Consent
Appendix B: Questions for Interview of Parish Clergy
Appendix C: Interview questions for Parish and Parish leadership
Appendix D: Questionnaire for Clergy
Appendix E: Questionnaire for Parish Leadership
Appendix F: Questionnaire for Parishioners
List of Charts

Chart A: Change in Geographical Presence of OCA
Chart B: Density of Parishes of OCA
Chart C: Locations of Parishes of OCA
Chart D: Demographics of Orthodox Churches in North America
Chart E: OCA Cartogram
Chart F: US Religious Landscape Survey Summary
Chart G: Change in Adherents in OCA
Chart H: Population Penetration of OCA
Chart I: OCA Parish Adherents by Category
Chart J: Location of Parishes in OCA by Size
Chapter 1
Introduction

At the end of the 20th century, the evangelistic task is still regarded by many as a kind of sermon addressed to the world. However, evangelism is better understood and served not by placing the Gospel over against the world, but by seeking ways of relating the Gospel to the existential needs of the world. In Orthodox liturgical practice, in which the Eucharist is central, the world is brought to the Church in the forms of the natural elements, the cultural riches of the local community, or the everyday preoccupations of the faithful. Our liturgical and sacramental tradition clearly indicates that the Church’s mission is not literally throwing the Gospel into the face of the world, but rather seeking first to understand what every human being longs for, and then seeing how, through the Word and the Sacrament, the Church can respond to those needs or heal any infirmities.

Georges Lemopoulos in “Come, Our Light, and Illumine our Darkness: Reflections of Evangelism from an Orthodox Perspective”

The journey began with the most unlikely of phone calls. I was completing my third and final year of Seminary and patiently awaiting an assignment. As is sadly typical, the last few months of Seminary were filled with uncertainty. Where would I be assigned? Would it be the correct match? Was I capable of leading a parish? All of these weighed heavily on my family. Each potential assignment that was offered somehow fell through: the priest decided not to move, the parish decided it wanted a more experienced priest, or the salary package was simply unlivable.

Then I received a phone call from the chancellor of the Diocese of the West who inquired whether I would be interested in a mission parish in Billings, Montana. A new national program was giving 3-year grants to selected missions and this particular mission was entering into the second year. For personal reasons, the current priest and his family decided to move back to their hometown, thus leaving the mission in jeopardy of losing the money. He asked my wife and me to visit the mission, without any obligation, before making my decision. One week later we were on our way to meet with the mission.

The mission was small – consisting of twenty-five families – and struggling, renting space at a local Roman Catholic Church. We spent the weekend teaching, preaching, and learning about their history. While there had been an Orthodox Church in Billings on and off for twenty-five years, it

---

was never quite able to become established. The mission was multiethnic and mostly filled with young married couples with children. They were hungry for the Faith and dedicated to making the mission succeed. During our flight back home, my wife and I decided to take the assignment. It was a risk, but one that had a profound effect on my life from that point forward.

I was given a seemingly simple charge: make the mission work. We had two years left on the grant, but there was no guarantee of income after that. It was a matter of grow or die, which is not exactly the best evangelistic strategy. I needed a crash course on evangelism only to discover that one did not really exist in the Orthodox Church. There were some passages from the Church Fathers and some scattered writings by theologians but nothing that explained the mechanics. The best advice came from experienced clergy who had similar experience establishing a parish. There began my journey to discover the Orthodox theology of evangelism – not from a burning desire for knowledge, rather a matter of survival.

Father Alexander Schmemann, a prominent twentieth century Orthodox theologian, posed the question which I needed to answer, “Can a Church whose life is centered almost exclusively on the liturgy and the sacraments, whose spirituality is primarily mystical and ascetical, be truly missionary?”

Would the Orthodox Church be viable in rugged, individualistic Montana or anywhere in the United States for that matter or are we just so different?

As I examined the question, I kept coming back to some basic Orthodox theological principles which were ingrained into me throughout my life and particularly at Seminary. St. Vladimir’s Orthodox Theological Seminary is world-renowned for being the leader in the liturgical revival movement in the Orthodox Church. It was home to some of the most influential modern theologians in the Orthodox Church: Fr. Georges Florovsky, Fr. Alexander Schmemann, Fr. John Meyendorff, and Fr. Thomas Hopko. Their basic theological principles focused on the Liturgy, the Church and the particular Orthodox ethos that formed the foundation. They taught that the Liturgy was the central focal point in which Orthodox Christians live out their Faith in a community, but that also that the Liturgy was the truly transforming and missionary event in parish life. It was not just a matter of what the Church taught, but how a community lived its sacramental life that was

---

truly missionary. Fr. Schmemann reflected, “The Eucharist, transforming ‘the Church into what is’ – transforms it into mission.”

It became clear to me with my first catechumen that the crucial element in evangelism is the worshipping community. While working with individuals to lead them into the Faith and presenting the teachings of the Church in a systematic and coherent manner is the common paradigm found within many faith traditions, many of these traditions have come to believe that this is only part of the equation. It is not enough to merely lead an individual into an understanding of the Church without integrating that person into the worshipping community. My first catechumen left within weeks of being chrismated precisely because he thought he understood he understood the Faith and did not need the worship in the community.

It is obvious that the fellowship, particularly as koinonia is properly understood, is essential. Acts 2:42-47 illustrates koinonia in relation to building a community, “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the communion (koinonia), to the breaking of bread and to prayer.... All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need… They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people.” Without this koinonia, a community is just a group of individuals with the same beliefs, perhaps no different than a local

---

3 Schmemann, Church, 255.
4 There are three accepted methods by which to be received into the Orthodox Church: baptism, chrismation, and confession. Baptism is the most common method, which includes a threefold immersion into water in the name of the Trinity. This is normally immediately followed by chrismation, which is the anointing with the Holy Chrism (a special oil consecrated by the Primate of an Orthodox Church which contains Chrism with a lineage to the early Church). If a baptism is recognized as valid by the Orthodox Church (meets the threefold test of in water, in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and for the remission of sins) then only chrismation alone is conducted (for example members of the Roman Catholic and mainstream Protestant traditions). If the baptism and chrismation are recognized as valid then confession is simply utilized (for example members of the Coptic Church). However, there is an equally strong tradition among certain Orthodox Churches in which only Baptism in the Orthodox Church is valid and all people coming into the Faith must be baptized and chrismated. It is outside the scope of this paper to go into detail about such theology.

It should also be noted that only an Orthodox Christian who has been properly received into the Church, and properly prepared can receive communion. So this thesis assumes that when it speaks about someone being a member of the worshipping community in the Orthodox Church that this person has been properly received and prepared to receive communion. There are many traditions within the Orthodox Christian family as to what that preparation entails but on the basic level it involves having confessed to a priest recently, doing the prayers before communion, and have fasted from midnight to the time of communion.
club. However, when in a Eucharistic fellowship this gathering of individuals becomes the Body of Christ.

Church theologians recognized the fundamental importance of koinonia as a Eucharistic fellowship, especially as the Church spread through the creation of local worshipping communities. Fr. John Meyendorff wrote:

…the local Church gathered around its bishop for the celebration of the Eucharist: this assembly is the Catholic Church…a local Church is not a part of the Body, it is the Body itself, which is symbolized most realistically in the Byzantine rite of the preparation of the elements, when the priest places on the paten parcels of bread commemorating Christ Himself, His Mother, all the saints, all the departed and all the living: in this Bread the whole Church is really present together with the Head.5

In recent reflection, the understanding of the centrality of the worshipping community remains foundational. “Our personal Christian experience,” writes Archbishop Anastasios (Yannoulatos) one the greatest modern Orthodox missionaries, “is made steadfast and strengthened through our incorporation in the mystical Body of Christ [emphasis added].”6

However, what is also evident is that this central element is lacking in many Orthodox parishes. By viewing themselves as a collection of individuals of the same Faith and not as members of the Body of Christ, each his own purpose and function actuated and actualized in the Eucharist, these parishes lack the foundation upon which to build. Evangelism in the parish needs to focus on incorporating the person into the local community which is the Body of Christ, centralized on the corporate and liturgical life of the community. As Fr. Ion Bria wrote, “Prayer, worship, and communion have always formed the context for the witness of faith, including evangelism, mission, and church life. The missionary structures were built on the liturgy of the word and the sacraments; and since the beginning the great variety of liturgies and rites, creeds and confessions has been due to the diversity of missionary contexts.”7

---

5 John Meyendorff, “The Orthodox Concept of Church,” St. Vladimir’s Seminary Quarterly no. 6 (1962): 61.
After refocusing my efforts on building the *koinonia*, the mission flourished and grew. As a parish, we did not view evangelism as simply trying to get people to accept Orthodoxy and grow our numbers, rather to gather together as a worshipping community. People joined the mission from various places and backgrounds, but always the focus was integrating them into the liturgical life. After two years the mission was self-supporting, in three years we began two other missions in Montana and by the fourth year we had purchased our own building and graduated from “mission” to “parish” status. The parish had a full liturgical life, outreach to others, and strong witness to Christ but most importantly, it became a community that was gathered together in love around the Eucharistic table. We had discovered what Archbishop Anastasios wrote,

> Orthodox mission – internal or external – is by nature ‘ecclesiastical.’ It cannot be understood as an individual or a group activity, disconnected from the Body of Christ. For those who work for it; it is the Church that they serve, the Church that they represent; it is the life of the Church that they transplant. No one is saved alone; no one offers Christ’s salvation alone. One is saved within the Church, one acts within the Church, and what one lives and offers to others is done in the name of the Church…mission is the extension of the of the love of the Trinitarian God, for the transformation in love of the whole world.  

At the end of my fifth year in Montana, I was transferred to the parish in Las Vegas, a very large and very diverse parish. In addition, the Orthodox Church in America (OCA) asked that I chair the newly revised Department of Evangelization and assist in establishing other missions throughout North America.

With a heavy heart, we packed up and moved from northern reaches of Montana to the desert of Las Vegas. This assignment provided a new and quite different challenge. Not only was it well-established and had close to 300 families, but the parish was also very multiethnic. In addition to a large community of American-born Orthodox, there were immigrants from Russia, Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Eritrea, and Ethiopia, as well as a sizeable number of converts to the Orthodox Faith. Somehow I had to forge a *koinonia* despite the differing ethnic traditions and varied backgrounds. It was to be quite a test of such an approach to developing a community.

The first challenge was purely pedestrian as the parish had a high amount of debt and expenses due to a recent building program. I spent the first year concentrating on reducing the debt and

---

paying the bills. I had scarce opportunity for evangelism when the focus was on survival. However, it soon became clear to me that as we continued to focus exclusively on finances, other critical aspects of parish life were suffering. Money, not the Eucharist, had become the center of our parish life and I knew that this had to change.

It was during one particular grim parish council meeting, where we were yet again trying to divide the limited “pie” to meet all of our expenses that a radical new idea came to me. Instead of trying to divide the “pie” in different ways, why not grow the “pie” and connect it with evangelism. If we concentrated on strengthening and growing our community, the financial issues would take care of themselves. From now on, everything, even finance, would center on evangelism.

We formed a committee that looked at different programs but kept coming back to the basic principle of evangelism. In its truest form, evangelism is not a marketing program trying to attract new customers, rather what parishioners do as Orthodox Christians: reaching out and serving the surrounding community; strengthening the internal parish life; preaching and teaching the Gospel; and serving the Liturgical cycle. In a certain sense, as we began to explore this understanding and approach to evangelism, there came into focus a more nuanced definition of evangelism that will be discussed later in the chapter. We came to believe there is no separation between the sacred and the profane, all is found in Christ and His Church. Fr. Schmemann writes, “State, society, culture, nature itself are the real objects of mission and not a neutral ‘milieu’ in which the only task of the Church is to preserve its own inner freedom, to maintain its ‘religious life.’”9 Everything must be placed in the light of the Gospel and evangelism. Another writer noted:

The final and most important element in the missionary work of the early Church was the utter conviction, the courage, the hopefulness and the practical concern for community, exhibited by those who professed and followed Christ. Their stance in and toward the Roman world was not an act which they put on in order to win converts, and hence it was not a conscious ‘means’ of spreading the Gospel. But, as an inseparable aspect of the Good News they proclaimed, their stance was incidentally the key to their impact.10

---

9 Schmemann, Church, 216.
In other words, evangelism is not about the numbers, rather it is about looking at all facets of life, practical as well as spiritual, and presenting them all through the lens of the Gospel.

This new focus led directly to the second challenge in the parish: how to forge this parish into a community, or in another words, how to get the people to love one another. It was a diverse community with each group having a different “flavor” of Orthodoxy, including one group which specifically rejected any “ethnic” flavor in a church so that it could be truly “American.” However, these groups barely spoke with one another. They went to church week after week and never even knew each other’s names. At coffee hour, they sat apart and never intermingled. Certainly language and customs are a barrier, but we had the commonality of the Orthodox Church. Fr. John Meyendorff wrote of such a possible phenomenon, “Forced ‘Americanization’ is by no means synonymous with ‘mission,’ and can degenerate into a new form of clannishness. A church community really fulfills the mission of the Church of Christ when it is able to be the home of all, when it can lead all and help all, without imposing upon anyone any burden other than the ‘light burden’ of Christ.”  

The barriers needed to be broken for if they remained there would be no hope for any united Orthodox witness, not to mention a united Orthodox Church in North America.

As such, I decided that we would honor all these traditions and become “all things to all people.” (1 Cor. 19:22) At the center of all of this was the Divine Liturgy, where together we received the Eucharist as the One Body of Christ. Although the order of the Liturgy is relatively rigid, I integrated different acceptable customs into the services. While English was the common language and one of the uniting factors, I did incorporate songs and chants in the various languages, making sure not to give preference to any one group. We would try to incorporate feasts and important customs into the life of the parish and the different groups began to attend each other’s events. Our festival celebrated all of the backgrounds as we reached out to all.

Again, the concept of koinonia as evangelism became the critical focal point in all activities and living the life of the Church was the methodology. As Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) observed:

> The Church is not simply an institution. She is a ‘mode of existence,’ a way of being. The mystery of the Church, even in its institutional dimension, is deeply bound to the being of man, to the being of the world and to the very being of God.…

---

In the first place, ecclesial being is bound to the very being of God. From the fact that a human being is a member of the Church, he becomes an ‘image of God,’ he exists as God Himself exists, he takes on God’s ‘way of being.’ This way of being in not a moral attainment, something that man accomplishes. It is a way of relationship with the world, with other people and with God, an event of communion, and it is why it cannot be realized as the achievement of an individual, but only as an ecclesial fact.\(^\text{12}\)

If a parish community is to grow and really evangelize, then they must be willing to accept and be a part of a community.

For Orthodox ecclesiology, the church is more than a community with a special vocation. It is the sign of the contemporary presence of Christ and active compassion in God’s world. Against all instrumental and operational views of the church, Orthodox theology insists clearly that the communion of the Holy Trinity is the very foundation of ecclesial communion. The Trinitarian divine koinonia generates and shapes communion in the body of Christ. The all-encompassing will of God sustains the catholicity of the church. The church glorifies the three persons of the Trinity as the unity of God. A deficient theology of this divine koinonia will have consequences for the understanding of ecclesial communion.\(^\text{13}\)

Therefore, ecclesiology related directly with Trinitarian theology, which related directly with sacramental theology, which all together formed the basis of Orthodox evangelism. In other words, our unification as a single community was a reflection the unity of the Trinity.

Although it was difficult, I know that this is what the face of Orthodoxy in the twenty-first century needed to look like: a mosaic. Each piece may have a different color and shape but they fit together to form a beautiful icon of the Body of Christ. As Archimandrite Vaseleios observed, “The Holy Church is an icon of God, for it brings about among the faithful a unity the same which is in God.”\(^\text{14}\)

This move towards unity was not without its own challenges. Different groups had to overcome prejudices and presuppositions. For example, Russians had very little to do with Eritreans; “converts” to the Church had very little to do with “ethnic” Orthodox; even transplants from older Orthodox parishes had a difficult time adjusting to a parish of the Diocese of the West. In order to dispel the fear of the “otherness,” I formed a Tigrinya and Russian School on Saturdays. I brought

\(^\text{13}\) Bria, *Liturgy*, 73.
in other clergy who spoke the various languages and made it a point to encourage the parishioners to support each other’s activities.

These two focal points, that evangelism involves all aspects of parish and public life and forging people into one community, took years to enact. Our membership grew slowly, but steadily. The number of catechumens increased, and I celebrated at least one baptism or chrismation per week. People got to know one another and more importantly, learned to love one another. They became proud of their diverse community and saw the diversity as strength rather than weakness. Parishioners filled the education classes and regularly attended services. Soon, we had an average of three hundred observant at Sunday Divine Liturgy. All of this helped the parish climb out of many of the financial problems.

We had become *koinonic* community focused on the gathering and specifically the Eucharist table. As Rodney Stark wrote on the growth of the early Church, “It grew because Christians constituted an intense community, able to generate the ‘invincible obstinacy’...but yielded immense religious rewards.”\(^{15}\) We had an “invincible obstinacy” towards those forces which attempted to drive the community apart. The “immense religious rewards” were an active, loving, worshipping community.

As I witnessed this change, I felt like we had stumbled upon the fundamentals of evangelism in a parish of the Orthodox Church. I began to wonder whether other priests had similar stories or experiences. I was curious whether what we had built was reproducible or a product of a particular place.

1. **Statement of the Problem**

This early experience of unearthing and exploring evangelism exposed some of the major issues in understanding it from an Orthodox perspective, particularly from the perspective of the life of a parish community. Certainly the Orthodox Church is replete with deep and unchanging theology. In fact, the depth and breadth of the theology can be so overwhelming that it makes approaches to such practical questions difficult. How many times would one approach a very specific question

and be confronted with an array of material from the Gospels to the Church Fathers to the Holy
Tradition of the Orthodox Church? Lost among all the incredible material, fascinating and
enlightening as it is, was the practical response. Furthermore, there is a level of exclusivity and
singleness in Orthodoxy which at times can fog the actual question itself (i.e., this is how the
Church sees it and will always see it as passed down to the next generation). While again this is a
solid foundation for the Church and of great comfort that there are well trodden paths before any
seeker, it could also lead to frustration and blockage leading to extreme expressions of the Faith.
As Fr. Stanley Harakis put it, “The very avoidance of the extremes tends to serve Orthodoxy’s old
nemesis of triumphalism and contentment with *theoria* but less concern about *praxis!*”\(^{16}\) Where
was the practical parish life to be discovered in this if it was to be fogged over by dogma? This is
the first challenge that Orthodoxy needed to overcome.

The search for the practical in parish life begins with an agreement on the specific definitions and
relationships of such critical terms as evangelism, evangelization, mission, proselytism, and the
Church. There are many views as to what it is, often derived from non-Orthodox sources. This
may serve as a common factor in discussions with the non-Orthodox but misses the mark among
the Orthodox because there are few direct Orthodox sources that define it outright. As the author
David Bosch reflects, “It remains difficult, however, to determine precisely what authors mean by
evangelism or evangelization. Barrett (1987: 42-45) lists seventy-nine definitions, to which many
more could be added.”\(^{17}\) There is also not an uncommon phenomenon in Orthodoxy’s recent
reencounter with the Christian West, where definitions of various theological nomenclature are
agreed upon simply to ensure a common terminology, only to discover that the words might be
similar but have vastly different meanings in the Orthodox tradition.\(^{18}\) I will develop this theme
throughout the dissertation as terminology needs to be refined by taking into account the Orthodox
nuances.

The next challenge builds upon this lack of an agreed and defined understanding of term
“evangelism.” Is there an actual theory and theology of evangelism and mission? Has the Church


\(^{18}\) See Schmemann, *Church*, 201 for a commentary on such an issue.
actively sought to understand and explain the theology? Historical circumstances, which will be discussed later, certainly had an effect on the development and articulation of the theology of mission and evangelism, particularly in the North American context. The great theological discussions on mission and evangelism that have occurred over the past century in the West have bypassed the Orthodox Church. Thus, it was no surprise that the West overlooked the Orthodox in these discussions because it had little engagement with the Orthodox missions and theology except in a combative mode. “Until quite recently the Eastern Orthodox Church was regarded in the West as a non missionary church. It was an opinion commonly held that the great missionary movement which marked so deeply the Christian West during the last centuries somehow by-passed the ‘static’ Christianity of the East. In fact, the Orthodox Church was hyper missionary.”¹⁹ The Orthodox Church was “hyper missionary,” albeit in very different modes, methods, circumstances, and regions through establishing missions throughout parts of the Russian Empire, including North America. But, most significantly, Orthodox mission theology, despite whatever theological developments or historical or cultural circumstances, “is thoroughly church-centered.”²⁰ And more inclusive definitions of “church” in the West were at odds with an exclusive understanding of “church” by the Orthodox. So if this was the fact, then the Orthodox theology was there, though perhaps hidden under the layers with tantalizing clues scattered among different sources.

This, of course, leads to the most critical of problems: determining the actual application or praxis of evangelism on the local parish level. In order to do this, parishes must have practical and applicable theology about evangelism. However, the literature shows that the existing theology is confusing and obfuscated. Because of this, each parish approaches evangelism differently, with varying degrees of success. By looking across them, it may be possible to discern a common, practical approach to build an evangelistic foundation which may be related directly to the integrity of the parish itself. In doing so, it may also be possible to further develop the theology of Orthodox evangelism – the praxis leading to a greater understanding of the theoria. Bosch reflected on this issue by stating, “praxis needs the critical control of theory – in our case, a critical theology of mission, which is dependent upon the context without, however, elevating operational effectiveness to the highest norm.”²¹ The goal of this study, therefore, is to uncover precisely what

---

¹⁹ Schmemann, Church, 209.
²⁰ Yannoulatos, Mission, 81.
²¹ Bosch, Transforming, 431.
is being done in parishes while not abandoning the very theology which underpins the activity.
Again, Bosch reflects, “The issue, therefore, is less one of primacy of praxis over theory that it is
one of which theoria is sufficiently true and just that praxis ought to be carried out in its service.”

The Orthodox Church has a long tradition in which the theology is embedded into the actual
practice of church life. The celebration of the Divine Liturgy and the performing of the Sacraments
are just a few examples of the deeply embedded theology that is revealed in the life of the parish.
This same theme about what is done in a parish, not exclusive of the theology of the Orthodox
Church will be consistently revisited throughout this study. Fr. Thomas Hopko observed about the
theology with the Church, “It is about what the churches of Christ, Christ’s one holy Church,
believe, teach, pray and do.”

2. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this dissertation is to critically examine these issues from that practical stance and
to investigate what methods of evangelism are evident in the life of contemporary parishes of the
Orthodox Church in America. This study cannot simply be a treatise on the Orthodox theory of
evangelism but must actually explore and examine the methodology of evangelism in the parish
and determine the effectiveness of the various approaches. As such, this dissertation will examine
three parishes of the Orthodox Church in America that are broad representations of effective
Orthodox parishes. By exploring the history and life in these three parishes, the dissertation expects
to uncover practical and pastoral approaches to the questions of evangelism and how these
approaches contribute to the integrity of parish life in the Orthodox Church. Generally, this
dissertation is an offering to the ever growing and debated field of evangelism in which the
Orthodox Church is only now beginning to enter with its own approach. Specifically, this
dissertation will examine the communal life in three OCA parishes and how they have adjusted to
the American context and expression of the Orthodox Church. It will be the contention of this
dissertation that healthy, thriving parishes present a model of koinonic evangelism which is both
faithful to the long standing tradition of the Orthodox Church but also has successfully adjusted
and integrated to the unique context and challenges in present day United States. This study will

---

22 Bosch in quoting Max Stackhouse, Apologia: Contextualization, Globalization, and Mission in Theological
Education (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 433.
23 Thomas Hopko, Speaking the Truth in Love: Education, Mission and Witness in Contemporary Orthodoxy
(Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir Seminary Press, 2004), 139.
present future parishes and missions with a resource which I lacked when I was first began my own journey of exploration into the subject.

This study begins to formulate a response to the critical question Fr. Alexander Schmemann posed, “Can a Church whose life is centered almost exclusively on the liturgy and the sacraments, whose spirituality is primarily mystical and ascetical, be truly missionary?” While there may not be much major material written on this specific subject, the rich history and theology of the Orthodox Church makes this study possible. Indeed, it would be impossible to fully develop the concept of Orthodox evangelism without a deep understanding of Orthodox history and traditions. In addition to the field research, this study draws on both primary and secondary source material which has illuminated the theology of evangelism in the Orthodox Church.

There are three assumptions derived from this source material. The first is that there is clearly an Orthodox ethos waiting to be uncovered. The Orthodox Church has not reflected seriously on evangelism until recently. Many of the developments in missiology and evangelism that were occurring in the West were either hostile to or bypassed the Orthodox Church. There were times of rapprochement such as World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910 at which there was an invitation extended to Bishop (later Saint) Nicholas Kasatkin, an Orthodox bishop in Japan, and later Orthodox involvement in the ecumenical movement in such bodies as the World Council of Churches. It was during such meetings that the Orthodox finally had an opportunity to explore such developments. “It was in the ecumenical encounter with the West, an encounter whose beginnings must be traced back to the early ‘twenties’ (Stockholm, 1925, and Lausanne, 1927), that for the first time the Orthodox were requested not only to state their ecclesiological beliefs, but also to explain them, i.e., to express them in consistent theological terms.” Moreover, the twentieth century was not kind to the worldwide Orthodox Church: the massive immigration from Eastern Europe, the Balkans and the Middle East, the Communist and Islamic repression of the Church, and the Cold War, all contributed to Orthodox isolation. Furthermore, the ethnic nature of Orthodoxy, with its diverse leadership structure, led to the fracturing of the Diaspora in North America, with many churches in America still under foreign Patriarchs and celebrating Liturgy in

24 Schmemann, Church, 210.
26 Schmemann, Church, 210.
their native tongue. This exclusive and confusing environment often made the Orthodox Church seem unapproachable to outsiders. Even with this disengagement, it is possible to discover an Orthodox ethos, method, and theology of evangelism that is applicable in the current state the Church.

The second assumption is that the reference point is the Church itself. The Orthodox Church is clearly the starting point for evangelism, since it remains central in all theological discussions within the Church. As Fr. Alexander Schmemann wrote, “It is impossible to speak about our situation in America unless we refer it to our normal and essential term of reference, the Orthodox Church. The Orthodox Church – whether Greek, Syrian, Serbian, Romanian, or Bulgarian – has always been both the heart and the form of an Orthodox world. Only here in the West, and for the first time in the history of Orthodoxy, do we think of the Church in terms only of a religious institution such as diocese, parish, and so on. No one in organically Orthodox countries has ever thought of the Church as being distinct from the totality of life.”

Not to mention that the Orthodox Church in North America is one of the only places in the Orthodox world that is not controlled or funded by the State. Thus, the reference point must always be the Orthodox Church both in the exploration and subject of evangelization. Be it a Church, a diocese or a parish, they are all connected and in a sense local. Clemens Sedmak in his book Doing Local Theology makes a specific point on understanding theological tradition when one does local theology. “Our community of faith has developed a theological tradition. It is a matter of intellectual honesty to respect this tradition when doing theology. As theologians we are members of a community and accountable to this community.”

Thus, one must relate that larger theological tradition to a much more narrow life in a community: a life that is incarnated as a local Orthodox parish as the Body of Christ.

The third assumption is that the Orthodox Church has a history of evangelism and mission. It is a long history which begins at Pentecost and comes in an unbroken line until today. As such there must be internal developments of mission and evangelism awaiting discovery and application to contemporary times and circumstances. Even discussions of evangelism in the ninth century with

---

27 Alexander Schmemann, The Mission of Orthodoxy from a lecture given in 1968 to the National Conference of Orthodox College Students and reprinted in Conciliar Press pamphlet, Ben Lomand, CA.  
Ss. Cyril and Methodius had established certain paradigms, namely the use of local language, local leaders and establishing a geographically local church. In North America in particular, there is a history of Orthodox evangelization ever since St. Herman and the first Russian missionaries arrived in Alaska in 1794, resulting in the conversion of many of the native population. Fr. Michael Oleksa observed,

Historically mission, has, by definition, meant preaching the Gospel message, baptizing those who convert and request baptism, and receiving them into the communion (the sacramental and liturgical fellowship) of the church through holy Chrismation and the Eucharist. This has been the paradigm followed since apostolic times. Historically, mission has meant the extension and expansion of the church as a visible, Eucharistic society into a geographic region and among a theretofore unbaptized people, the construction of church buildings, and education and ordination of local clergy, and the church increasingly becoming the social, moral, spiritual, and artistic centre of national life.  

It was recognized that even at the earliest times in the history of Orthodoxy in North America, the missionaries and Church fathers were drawing upon something both ancient and tested.

Reading through the history of the Church and examining the 2,000-year history of her expansion from the Middle East, into the Balkans and Eastern Europe, and into North America, it was clearly demonstrated that the Church was active, missionary and had a methodology and a theology. Likewise, in reading the lives of the great missionary saints of the Church also proved that there was a missionary impetus. But it was also clear that their methods and goals were quite different from other Western missionary experiences, often dramatically different. David Bosch, a twentieth century Western mission theologian wrote on Orthodox mission, “In the Orthodox perspective mission is thus centripetal rather than centrifugal, organic rather than organized. It ‘proclaims’ the Gospel through doxology and liturgy. The witnessing community is the community in worship; in fact, the worshipping community is in and of itself and act of witness.” This study confirmed his observation and my own presuppositions. Whatever the terminology – evangelism, mission, the presentation of the Gospel – it all has the same goal in the Orthodox Church, which is to lead people to a deep and genuine communion with God in his Church as the Body of Christ.

---

30 Bosch, *Transforming*, 207-208.
3. **Research Question and the Presented Thesis**

The research question is centered on what methods and witness of evangelism are utilized in three contemporary parishes of the Orthodox Church in America and how effective these methods are in engaging the local community. While evangelism can be affected by a host of external factors such as the demographics, location, and economics of a particular region, this study critically examined the methods and witness each parish utilizes in evangelism and their efficacy. While it may be difficult and limiting to define effectiveness, it is clear that a vibrant parish demonstrates a commitment to evangelism and engagement with the community which permeates parish life. Bosch wrote, “evangelism cannot be defined in terms of its results or effectiveness, as though evangelism has only occurred where there are ‘converts’. Rather, evangelism should be perceived in terms of its nature, as mediating the good news of God’s love in Christ which transforms life, proclaiming, by word and action that Christ has set us free.”

So while it may be difficult to define effectiveness of evangelism in a qualitative terms (parish growth, number of baptisms, number of ‘converts’, etc.), it is understood much more clearly as how a community witnesses to its life in Christ. As Fr. Schmemann wrote, “The Church thus is not a ‘self-centered’ community but precisely a missionary community, whose purpose is salvation not from, but of, the world. In the Orthodox experience and faith it is the Church-sacrament that makes possible the Church-mission.”

After a thorough examination of a variety of material and sources in the research field of the three local parishes, a reflection on the history and theology of the Orthodox Church, specifically in the context of the North America, and the study of a variety of non-Orthodox sources, I have developed a working definition and understanding of the practice of Orthodox evangelism. It is the thesis of this study that evangelism may involve individual actions, but it is a communal (*koinonic*) activity. Evangelism must integrate the liturgical with the practical and can only be successful if the Church is at the center of parish life. Only a properly functioning and worshipping liturgical community – the *koinonia* – can actuate the many dimensions and ministries of evangelism. Healthy, local, worshipping parishes live evangelism because it is simply what they do as a Christian community. In turn, people are attracted to that local parish experience precisely because it is the place that

---

31 Bosch, *Transforming*, 412-413.  
they discover and worship Christ, while the parishioners must be open to receive and integrate them into the Body of Christ.

What I found in investigating the evangelistic life of these three parishes is that evangelism is not necessarily a formal program, nor is it something that can be fully planned. Instead, it is how the parish lives and what it does that forms the heart of evangelism. It is part of the integrity of the parish itself. It is the totality of the life of a Christian in the Body of Christ. As one Orthodox theologian proclaimed,

Evangelism in action involves a number of activities. It sows the seeds of faith by proclaiming the good news of salvation and it invites the world to conversion by engaging people with the truths and values of the Gospel. In addition, it seeks to build-up daily the faith community by nourishing the faith of Christians, explaining to them – and celebrating – the dogmatic statements, the moral principles, the liturgical ethos, and the canonical tradition of the Church. Moreover, evangelism in action relates human life and activities to the mystery of Christ and his Church, elucidating for the faithful and for the world how the Church lives her life of faith by fostering a ministry of generous service to the world.33

People are attracted to such activity and join such communities that honestly live their principles. John Bowen, an Anglican writer on evangelism, correctly ascertained this matter, “No crusades. Not a lot of preaching. No door-to-door visitation. Certainly no aggressive confrontations. Just convinced people doing their thing. Personal stories of the non-preachy variety. People who integrated their faith and their work, people who practiced what they believed.”34

It is for this reason that the title of this dissertation refers to the term “koinonic” because it is that communal experience that is the goal in evangelism. Fellowship, particularly as koinonia as properly understood, is essential.35 The goal of evangelism in the Orthodox perspective is to lead

---

33 Alkiviadis Calivas, “Approaching the 21st Century: Challenges and Opportunities for Evangelism,” Greek Orthodox Theological Review 42, no. 3-4 (Fall 1997): 446.
34 John Bowen, Evangelism for “Normal” People (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2002), 22.
35 Koinonia comes from the Greek word koine which means “common” which implies a common vision and activity. However, in the Orthodox Church it has a deeper meaning in that it implies a relationship that develops from the act of being together; a communion of believers. It is used to denote the Eucharistic act of communion by a body of believers which is the central activity of the Orthodox Church. The term “koinonic” is generally not used but here it defined as the active gathering of Orthodox Christians in Eucharistic fellowship. Sergius Bulgakov in his book The Bride of Lamb (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002) uses the term “koinonic” (pp. 285-287) and is one of the few references that can be found in Orthodox theology. It should be noted that this concept of koinonia is not exclusive to the Orthodox Church but present in many Christian churches that share such creedal similarities. Their liturgical expressions may have a unique flavor and even doctrinal nuances, but nonetheless share many similarities in understanding.
people into a sacramental relationship with God in local liturgical community. The concept of *koinonia* is critical in the reality of daily Church life, not just on the central and national level, rather diocesan and parish level. This is the *anknüpfungspunkt* or “connecting point” between God’s work and the people seeking to be a member of the Body of Christ.\(^\text{36}\) The parish as a *koinonic* experience is the entry point to Christ and His Church. It is clear to that sometimes adherence to the ritual, the language, and customs or financial concerns can cause the parish to lose the emphasis on the *koinonic*. When this happens, parish life suffers and the community breaks down. In order to regain what was lost, the focus must return to the basic component of *koinonic* evangelism, the parish.

Most parish leaders misunderstand the main *anknüpfungspunkt*, which causes parishioners to drift from the Church to seek a different communal relationship in this post-modern society. The Roman Catholic missionary Fr. Vincent J. Donovan wrote in his landmark book *Christianity Rediscovered*, “We used to translate the word *koinonia* in this phrase as communion. Hence, our expression ‘holy communion’, and our lack of wonder at any deep mystery in the phrase or thought. But the word, *koinonia*, is the same word used in the Acts of the Apostles to describe the initial response to the good news, to describe the church community itself. ‘And the churches grew in numbers daily. And they continued in the teaching of the apostles, in the life of the *koinonia*, in the breaking of the bread, in the following of the Way.’”\(^\text{37}\) Thus, being a Christian literally involved communing together with fellow believers with the Body and Blood of Christ. The Body of Christ as the Church receives the Body of Christ as the Eucharist. Likewise the Body of Christ as the Eucharist forms the Body of Christ as the Church. “Therefore, the Orthodox Church’s sense of mission is that it is not aimed only at the transmission of intellectual convictions or moral values, but also at the transmission of the experience of life in communion, the communion which exists in God.”\(^\text{38}\) This is realized through the very central act of the Orthodox Church, communing together around the Eucharistic table. This is *koinonic* evangelism.

\(^{36}\) For more on this concept of *anknüpfungspunkt* and evangelism, see Bowen, *Evangelism*, Chapter 8.


In order to better understand \textit{koinonic} evangelism, I centered my research on six questions which form the heart of the issue of the practical evangelism and the foundation of my conclusion. This dissertation will answer these questions:

1. Do these parishes have a sufficient understanding of what evangelism, mission, and proselytism are and who is responsible for such work?

2. Is there a historical methodology and terminology of evangelism that is still applicable in the Orthodox Church?

3. What are the current theories and practices of evangelism as applied in a contemporary parish of the Orthodox Church in America?

4. What are the effective (and ineffective) methods that OCA parishes have employed? What are the criteria that define effectiveness in evangelism? Why have they succeeded or failed?

5. How are the parishes of the Orthodox Church in America engaging the current shifting culture and how are the people responding through evangelism?

6. What are the cultural realities in North America which an Orthodox approach to evangelism needs to consider?

This study confirmed that there is methodology and terminology on evangelism in the Orthodox Church as part of the life of the worshipping community. There are parishes that effectively and critically practice \textit{koinonic} evangelism often without consciously or even articulately professing them. In fact, the understanding of such evangelism and especially what is being done in these parishes does not come from any real sense of theory, embedded as it may be, rather precisely through the integrity and life of the parish. In other words, they are doing evangelism but did not realize that they were doing evangelism. They simply lived their lives as faithful Orthodox Christians in an American context effectively approaching the many contemporary and historic challenges.
4. Definition of Certain Terms

Perhaps the most difficult feature of this study is to have to define the critical terms that will be utilized through the paper. The Orthodox Church has not explicitly defined some of these terms, either because Church Fathers assumed that everyone had a common understanding or because the Church simply did not use the terms until much later. The latter is more likely as many of did not come into common usage until much later in history and were more common in Western Christianity.

In addition, as the terms took on their modern connotations, the Orthodox often adopted them outright in order to find common ground in ecumenical discussions, without ensuring identical theological definitions. As seen time and again, while the words may be same, the meanings were completely different, with each side assuming that the other had the same nuance. This led to some misunderstandings and it is often as if the Orthodox and the non-Orthodox are sometimes speaking a different theological language. This is critical as many of the terms here are as the Orthodox self-define them and do not necessarily conform to non-Orthodox definitions. This Orthodox self-understanding is critical in this study, and it is by no means meant to be offensive to or critical of

39 There is paradigmatic story recounted by Fr. Alexander Schmemann, one of the preeminent Orthodox theologians of the twentieth century and an initial representatives of the Orthodox Church in America to the first World Council of Churches meeting in Amsterdam in 1948, that illustrate the conundrum that the Orthodox find themselves in when encountering contemporary ecumenical missiology. Fr. Schmemann recounts while he was registering, a very prominent ecumenical dignitary in an extremely outgoing and friendly gesture asked where Fr. Schmemann envisioned the Orthodox to be seated during the assembly. The dignitary postulated that due to his understanding of Orthodox ecclesiology, the Orthodox should be seated with the “high churches” who claim apostolic succession. Fr. Schmemann asked why he would presuppose that was where they should be seated. The dignitary gave a short theological clarification on “horizontal” versus “vertical” ecclesiology and that the Orthodox did not belong to the “horizontal” type churches. Fr. Schmemann replied that in all his theological studies, he had never heard of such a thing. Fr. Schmemann then asked to be seated with the Quakers whose emphasis on the Holy Spirit the Orthodox share. Fr. Schmemann recounted his impression of this experience, “The important fact of Orthodox participation in the ecumenical movement and in the encounter – after so many centuries of almost total separation – between Orthodox and the West is precisely that the Orthodox were not given a choice; that from the very beginning they were assigned, not only seats at a certain place, role and function within the ecumenical movement. These ‘assignments’ were based on Western theological and ecclesiological presuppositions and categories, and they reflected the purely Western origin of the ecumenical idea itself. We joined a movement, entered a debate, took part in a search whose basic terms of reference were already defined and taken for granted. Thus, even before we could realize it, we were caught up in the essentially Western dichotomies – Catholic versus Protestant, horizontal versus vertical, authority versus freedom, hierarchical versus congregational – and we were made into representatives and bearers of attitudes and positions, which we hardly recognized as ours, and which were deeply alien to our tradition. All of this was due not to any Machiavellian conspiracy or ill will, but precisely to the main and all-embracing Western presupposition that the Western experience, theological categories and thought forms are universal and therefore constitute the self-evident framework and terms of reference for the entire ecumenical endeavor.” As recounted in Schmemann, Church, 200-201.
the non-Orthodox. Although such terms may seem harsh to an outsider or those converting to Orthodoxy, for the Orthodox many of these terms are normative and must be taken in that spirit rather than as a criticism of others.

4.1. Evangelism

The most basic of terms for this study is perhaps the most complicated. The word “evangelism” is difficult to define for several reasons. It appears that the actual concept of evangelism is a sixteenth century term and is limited to Western Christianity. In fact, the first reference to it is in the secular writings of Francis Bacon, an inventor of the scientific method.\(^{40}\) By these measures the term is already laden with uncertainty from an Orthodox perspective.

Secondly, the root term is used sparingly in the Bible (some fifty-five times and found mostly in Acts) and almost not at all in the patristic sources. While the Bible refers to the \textit{euaggelion} or “Good News” as the message of Jesus Christ, the verbal form \textit{euaggelizesthai} is rarely used and usually only in terms of the bringing of the Gospel message, although even that usage is open to debate. Other connotative terms are used in the New Testament such as \textit{martyria} meaning “witness” and \textit{kerruso} meaning “to proclaim or herald.” These terms are also not used often but do assist in understanding the concept of evangelism as an active proclamation. The term \textit{martyria} will be discussed later in the dissertation and has an important Orthodox connotation relating to a category of saints. However, by most definitions, evangelism is the “proclaiming the good news” and this act of proclaiming is at the heart of any understanding of evangelism.\(^{41}\) This definition is shared by some Western theologians, “At the center of the act of evangelism is the message announced a verbal, out-loud assertion of something decisive not known until the moment of utterance.”\(^{42}\) In the Christian context, this has come to mean the proclamation of Jesus Christ as the Risen Lord, a view which is shared by some Orthodox theologians, “This good news is that God has spoken and acted fully, finally, and definitively in His Son Jesus Christ, God’s incarnate

\(^{40}\) Bowen, \textit{Evangelism}, 13.
\(^{41}\) The Greek word \textit{εὐαγγέλιον} is translated as \textit{εὐ} which means “good” and \textit{ἀγγέλλω} which means to announce so the full definition is one who announce something good.
Word. The blessed message is that by his crucifixion, resurrection, and glorification Jesus the Messiah has brought God’s kingdom to the world.”

However, despite this common foundational definition, its application becomes more polemical. In practice, evangelism is interpreted according to the particular theologies that underpin the various denominations. Even a cursory reading of anthologies such as *The Study of Evangelism: Exploring a Missional Practice of the Church* highlights the massive number of publications on evangelism from non-Orthodox sources, each filled with its own nuanced definitions and applications across a wide spectrum of theologies. Such a diversity of opinion runs the gamut from traditional Protestant missional practices through hermeneutics through emerging issues of postmodernism, liberation theology, and feminism. Such a diversity of opinions implies that there is not a unified theology in the entire field of evangelism. Given its long history of isolation and separation from Western theology, it is easy for Orthodox Christians to become quickly overwhelmed and wonder if it is even possible to apply any of these theologies.

David Bosch tackled the problem of multiple definitions and connotations of evangelism by outlining a series of parameters of understanding. “Broadly speaking, controversy prevails in two areas: the difference (if any) between ‘evangelism’ and ‘mission’, and the scope or range of evangelism. These issues are, moreover, intimately interrelated.” Bosch outlines eighteen different principles of evangelism that can constructively be applied towards a working definition. While these points cover a wide spectrum and are certainly reflective of his particular analysis, they are quite applicable to the question of defining koinonic evangelism. For example, in point nine Bosch explicitly states, “Evangelism is only possible when the community that evangelizes – the church – is a radiant manifestation of the Christian faith and exhibits an attractive lifestyle.” In other words, the communal aspect of evangelism is a critical factor in drawing people into a relationship with Christ. This relationship also presupposes a growing relationship in a witnessing and worshipping community.

---

43 Hopko, *Speaking*, 80.
45 Bosch, *Transforming*, 409.
46 Bosch outlines the eighteen principles which are used as baseline in developing the working definition. See Bosch, *Transforming*, 411-420.
47 Bosch, *Transforming*, 414.
However, as Bosch quickly points out in point twelve, “Evangelism is not the same as church extension.” He refers to a number of historical examples in which evangelism was equated precisely with winning people over to a particular church or denomination. It was about gaining members and growing churches. However, he correctly ascertains that this is false evangelism “since reasons why people joining the church may vary greatly and may often have little to do with a commitment to what a church is supposed to stand for.” He reflects that this a common mistake when churches are experiencing declining membership and resigns itself to such a definition. However, in point thirteen he does state that growing parishes and membership is an organic byproduct of when a church is true to its calling.

According to Bosch, the authentic evangelism, if not a true definition, relies heavily on a witness, a response, a reorientation, an embracement of Christ as Savior and Lord, and ultimately becoming a “living member of his community, the church” and then living such a life that looks for peace, reconciliation, and justice. As Bosch narrowly defines evangelism as (a) activities involved in spreading the Gospel, or (b) theological reflection on these activities. Evangelization is narrowly defined as (a) the process of spreading the Gospel, or (b) the extent to which it has been spread. If these elements are considered foundational in establishing a working definition, then it allows for a much more focused approach to the research and the analysis.

It must also be stated that the relationship between evangelism and mission is also complicated and also contributes to the definition. The next section examines the term “mission” in more detail but a certain delineation for clarity sake should be established. Bosch clearly believes that mission has a much wider definition and task than evangelism and thus they are not synonymous. Evangelism is integral to mission yet distinctive because mission involves a much wider focus as critical activity of the church. “One must never isolate it and treat it as a completely separate activity of the church.” In the case of a working definition of evangelism, it should be understood

---

48 Bosch, *Transforming*, 415.
49 Bosch, *Transforming*, 415.
50 Bosch, *Transforming*, 416.
51 Bosch, *Transforming*, 420.
52 Bosch, *Transforming*, 409.
53 Bosch, *Transforming*, 412.
that mission and evangelism are interrelated. “Authentic evangelism is imbedded in the total mission of the church.”

This explanation rather elegantly falls in line with modern Orthodox explanations on evangelism. Fr. Bria perceptively wrote, “The Orthodox understanding of the ecclesial character of evangelism means that the Church is the aim, the fulfillment of the Gospel, rather than an instrument or means of mission. Of course, a church without evangelism and without mission is one that has abandoned its fundamental calling to be the original and authentic witness of Pentecost. The Christian community is the community of the Gospel, the sacramental synaxis where Christ mediates the communion of man with God through the Holy Spirit.” This focuses evangelism with a goal of both a calling to and integration into the Church, the Body of Christ, which is manifested concretely and tangibly by a witness and response, an entrance into and a participation in the sacramental life of the Church.

I propose a working definition of evangelism for the purpose of this dissertation is the witness in living out and the verbal proclamation of the Good News of the Risen Christ with an invitation to become a part of the local Orthodox Body of Christ through participation in the Sacramental and Liturgical life. This definition fits with evangelistically effective Orthodox congregations, but is also applicable to churches of other traditions which demonstrate similar strengths. This definition integrates a number of key points that Bosch uses in his parameters in defining evangelism such as the centrality of witness, the need for a verbal proclamation (and preaching) of the Good News, the focus on the Risen Christ, an invitation, a response and involving a local community. Specifically in referencing the contextual nature of evangelism (point fifteen), the definition does reference the Orthodox focus as it is the prevailing worldview for those within the Church. Finally, it integrates Bosch’s eighteenth point, which relates that evangelism is more than just a verbal proclamation; it involves activities and actions. As Bosch relates, “The deed without words is dumb; the word without the deed is empty.” This is realized partially through the sacramental

---

54 Bosch, *Transforming*, 412.
56 Bosch, *Transforming*, 420.
and liturgical life within the Church but also in the activities that is promulgated in the local surrounding community. Evangelism reaches in and out of the koinonia.

If evangelism is an invitation to become a believer, then the invitation must extend to become members of a community. Membership in that community begins with baptism (a response to that invitation) and is fulfilled in being in sacramental communion with the Church. In the Orthodox Church this would be manifested locally in the Orthodox parish. This is the place where believers encounter Christ in His fullness while they gather as the sacramental Body of Christ and are nourished with His Body and Blood. For an Orthodox Christian, this enculturation into the Body of Christ is to be received as a full participant into a local Eucharistic community, which in turn puts them in communion with the Orthodox Church. As such the communal liturgical experience becomes the center of one’s life as Orthodoxy believes that “worship is the center of the life of the Church, but it should also determine the whole life of every Christian.”57 By focusing their spiritual life through the participation in a cycle of services, an Orthodox Christian becomes part of that Body of Christ which is entered through the sacrament of baptism and/or chrismation. It goes beyond a simple gathering of people as a community, rather it is through the active involvement in that life as a parish that differentiates a simple community of people from the Body of Christ. Plainly stated, the context of evangelism in the Orthodox Church is to integrate a person into the Body of Christ through the diverse ways that parish manifests itself. As has been pointed out, “Prayer, worship and communion have always formed the context for the witness of faith, including evangelism, mission and church life.”58 Therefore, the goal of evangelism is not personal conversion to an individual and privatized faith, rather to be a full member of a worshipping community.

Orthodox theologians stress that the communal, worshipping experience. The working definition fits with evangelistically effective Orthodox congregations, but is also applicable to churches of other traditions which demonstrate similar strengths.

The Eucharistic community where the love of Christ prevails…has been a central way by which Orthodox missionaries have taught the gospel to the nations. From the moment our Lord established the Holy Eucharist in the upper room, promising eternal life to those who would commune his body and blood. Christians have

58 Bria, Liturgy, 9.
celebrated this divine service in their gatherings. Thus Christian life has been a process of living in love...under God the Father, with Christ’s teachings, and by the guidance of the Holy Spirit.\(^{59}\)

This illuminates the concept that the goal of evangelism is to lead people into a sacramental relationship with God in the local liturgical community. It is not meant to simply preach the “Good News,” critical as that is, nor is it meant simply to serve others, again critical as that is in the Christian life. It is meant to bring people into a \textit{koinonia} with each other through the sacramental \textit{koinonia} of the Eucharist. This, in turn, leads to the ultimate \textit{koinonia}, a communion with God. This is both highly personal and yet very corporate. It means being a part of a Church in a local parish, living the life of Christian growth and love. It means being part of the Body of Christ, the \textit{koinonia} of the Church. Again, as Archbishop Anastasios relates, “Our personal Christian experience is made steadfast and strengthened through our \textit{incorporation in the mystical Body of Christ}.\(^{60}\) Evangelism is that map for incorporating people, in fact all creation, into the mystical Body of Christ.

4.2. \textit{Mission}

The relationship between evangelism and mission complicates defining the terms. Bosch relates four different ways in which the relationship between the terms can be understood.\(^{61}\) First, for some mission has to do with those not yet Christian and evangelism with those who are no longer Christian. Second, there is a tendency to define evangelism more narrowly than mission, thus mission takes on larger scope of activity that a church does. Third, mission and evangelism have at times been used a synonyms or are spoken as one in the same thing. Finally, evangelism has begun to replace mission due to the colonial overtones of the term. It is easy to see how one basic and foundational word with several diverse interpretations can cause confusion.

The very term “mission” evolved from the Latin word \textit{mittere} or \textit{missionem} which was Latin for “sent.” It was first used by Jesuits in the 1590s when they sent representatives of the Roman Catholic Church to foreign lands during the Counter-Reformation. The term is a Latin translation of the Greek word \textit{apostellos} which also meant “to send.” As time progressed the term took on a


\(^{60}\) Yannoulatos, \textit{Mission}, 113.

\(^{61}\) Bosch, \textit{Transforming}, 409-411 outlines these four points.
distinct Western theological bias which could even be accused of a level of triumphalism. “It was pointed out that the very origin of term ‘mission’, as we still tend to use it today, presupposes the ambience of the West’s colonization of overseas territories and subjection of the their inhabitants. Therefore, since the sixteenth century, if one said ‘mission’, one in a sense also said ‘colonialism’.”62 Theologians in the Orthodox Church uncritically adopted the term in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries since it was in common usage.63 While not critically explored in Orthodox theology, it became a synonymous with establishing churches in new regions, almost replacing the traditional understanding of apostleship. “In the best examples of Orthodox missions, the goal was the establishment of local churches.”64

So the term “mission” became used in a very similar manner as “apostleship,” a far more common term in the Orthodox Church. Apostleship in the Orthodox Church is defined as people who are “sent” to establish the Church in a particular land or among a particular people. These are called “apostles” and there is a category of saints in the Orthodox Church specifically designated as “Equal to the Apostles”.65 So when the term “Apostle” is used, it can often mean people who were sent to establish new local churches.

It is that understanding of apostleship that can assist in understanding the definition of mission from the perspective of the Orthodox Church. There are two manners in which the term apostolic is used. First as associated with the concept of apostolic succession.66 The second is a foundational

---

62 Bosch, Transforming, 302-303.
65 There is a category of saints in the Orthodox Church named “apostles.” They are reserved for those holy men and women who are the first to bring the gospel to a particular region. There are many examples of these sainted apostles to the present day such as the Apostle Paul, Nina, Apostle to the Georgians; Cyril and Methodius, Apostles to the Slavs; and Innocent, Apostle to America, for example. There is one in particular title that is not used in the West, Mary Magdalene, the Apostle to the Apostles (she first brought the good news of the Resurrection to the apostles).
66 Each bishop of the Orthodox Church can trace their episcopacy to a former bishop, who in turn traces it to a former bishop, and so on back to the original Apostles themselves. This is a critical criterion for a canonical bishop in the Orthodox Church. In fact, it is so critical that at least three bishops must lay hands on a new bishop in order to ensure that there is proper succession and no one bishop is acting alone. Likewise, the primate of each Orthodox Church is empowered to bless chrism, special oil consecrated on Holy Thursday before Pascha, and used to anoint all baptized members of the Church. This chrism has as its base, the ancient chrism which dates to the apostles. Therefore, each baptized and chrismated member of the Orthodox Church is anointed with oil that can be traced through the bishops to the original chrism. In addition, each ordained priest has hands laid open him by a bishop so in effect; each priest traces his priesthood through a bishop to the apostles.
element in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed in which the Church is declared to be “One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic,” which has a deep meaning for Orthodox. To be “apostolic” means that the Church is sent into the world to present and proclaim the Good News of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. That “apostolic” work of the Church directly connects with the Church’s understanding of mission, the Church’s task to engage the world.

Fr. Oleksa relates,

> Historically mission, has, by definition, meant preaching the gospel message, baptizing those who convert and request baptism, and receiving them into the communion (the sacramental and liturgical fellowship) of the Church through holy Chrismation and the Eucharist. This has been the paradigm followed since apostolic times. Historically, mission has meant the extension and expansion of the church as a visible, Eucharistic society into a geographic region and among a theretofore unbaptized people, the construction of church buildings, and education and ordination of local clergy, and the church increasingly becoming the social, moral, spiritual, and artistic centre of national life.

From an operational point of view this understanding seems correct. Mission is establishing parishes. The operational view is perhaps perfunctory but from an Orthodox view perfectly correct. Stamoolis observed in his discussion of the goals of mission in Orthodox theology and relating it to the concept of church planting, “The word ‘planting’ is a better word to use than ‘extension.’ In the Orthodox tradition and the best of Orthodox mission practice, the goal is a national church that embodies the particular characteristic of that people.”

The Orthodox understanding of mission is even more nuanced than just church planting as mission has always been tied to Liturgy and the unique perspective the Liturgy has, in Orthodox understanding, in relationship to the world.

> In addition to the preaching of the gospel, the liturgical display of the gospel forms the Orthodox witness to the world. Rather than being a self-centered and self-
satisfied community in worship, the church reaches out in mission to the world…. 
The liturgy is offered on behalf of the world that the world might be reconciled to 
God. Seen in this way, liturgy is service, missionary service to the world.”

Thus it is more than planting churches, rather mission is, in a sense, about renewing the relationship 
between God and man through His Church as witnessed by the Liturgy. Therefore, the Liturgy is 
the source, the method, and the goal of mission. Fr. Georges Florovsky wrote,

The Church is more than a company of preachers, or a teaching society, or a 
missionary board. It has not only to invite people, but also to introduce them into 
this New Life, to which it bears witness. It is a missionary body indeed, and its 
mission field is the whole world. But the aim of its missionary activity is not merely 
to convey to people certain convictions or ideas, not even to impose on them a 
definite discipline or rule of life, but first of all to introduce them into a New 
Reality, to convert them, to bring them through their faith and repentance to Christ 
Himself, that they should be born anew in Him and into Him by water and the Spirit. 
Thus the ministry of the Word is completed in the ministry of the Sacraments.

As Fr. Alexander Schmemann succinctly writes, “The Eucharist is the mission of the Church.”

So in this sense it can connect back to the proposed definition and understanding of evangelism.

In specific reference to the Liturgy, Fr. Alexander wrote, “the prayers for the catechumens are, 
above all, a liturgical expression of the fundamental calling of the Church – precisely the Church 
as mission. The Church came into the world as mission – “Go into all the world and preach the 
Gospel to the whole creation (Mark 16:15) – and cannot, without betraying her nature, cease to be 
mission.” Fr. Alexander firmly believed that the entire Liturgy itself was a missional activity which helps in understanding the Orthodox definition of the term.

Nothing reveals better the relation between the Church as fullness and the Church 
as mission than the Eucharist, the central act of the Church’s leitourgia, the 
sacrament of the Church itself. There are two complementary movements in the 
Eucharistic rite: the movement of ascension and the movement of return. The 
Eucharist begins as an ascension toward the throne of God, toward the Kingdom. 
‘Let us now lay aside all earthly cares,’ says the offertory hymn, and we prepare 
ourselves to ascend into heaven with Christ and in Christ, and offer in Him – His 
Eucharist. This first movement, which finds its fulfillment in the consecration of

---

71 Georges Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox View* (Belmont, MA: Nordland 
72 Schmemann, *Church*, 254.
the elements, the sign of acceptance by God of our Eucharist, is to be sure, already an act of mission…. And then precisely at the moment when this state of fullness has been reached and consummated at the table of the Lord in His Kingdom, when ‘we have seen the true light and partaken of the heavenly Spirit.’ The second movement begins – that of return into the world. ‘Let us depart in peace,’ says the celebrant as he leaves the altar and leads the congregation outside the temple – and this is the last, the ultimate commandment. The Eucharist is always the End, the sacrament of the parousia, and yet it is always the beginning, the starting point: now mission begins.\textsuperscript{74}

So in the final analysis, as Bosch presupposes, mission is a much wider activity than evangelism. Mission is first and foremost, the foundational activity and action of the Church through its very nature as a worshipping community. The Church is mission: “mission is the manifestation of the life and worship of the church…”\textsuperscript{75} Evangelism, while being intimately related to mission as a function of the Church, is rather the activity of bringing people into the Church. Evangelism is the process by which the community (koinonia) witnesses and invites people to be a part of the Body of Christ; a process of coming from unbelief to belief in God and then integrated into the worshipping community through baptism and communion. Mission is the work and existence of the Church, “If ‘the church as such’ is mission’ (V. Spiller, quoted in Stamoolis, 1986: 118), then mission refers to a collective task.”\textsuperscript{76} Part of mission is the apostolic work of the Church which directly means the actual act of establishing churches in certain region or among a certain demographic group. And more properly understood, apostleship is really what is occurring; the sending out as Fr. Bria defines it, “The Liturgy after the Liturgy.”\textsuperscript{77} This concept will be critical in later chapters.

### 4.3. Proselytism

David Bosch states outright in his eighteen points that evangelism “is not proselytism.”\textsuperscript{78} More recently Pope Francis called proselytism “a solemn nonsense. It makes no sense.” and this comment led to a series of articles asking the basic question as to what exactly is proselytism and how does it differ from evangelism?\textsuperscript{79} The term proselyte (from the Greek proselytos) is a biblical

\textsuperscript{74} Schmemann, \textit{Church}, 215.
\textsuperscript{75} Bosch, \textit{Transforming}, 208.
\textsuperscript{76} Bosch, \textit{Transforming}, 207.
\textsuperscript{77} Bria, \textit{Liturgy}, 1.
\textsuperscript{78} Bosch, \textit{Transforming}, 414.
\textsuperscript{79} Jimmy Akin, “Did Pope Francis Just Say that Evangelization is ‘Nonsense’? 8 Things to Know and Share,” \textit{National Catholic Register} (October 2013).
term and originally meant a foreigner who became a member of the Jewish community.\textsuperscript{80} It later evolved in the time of early Christianity to denote someone who has converted to Christianity (Acts 14:33 for example). However, over time proselytism became associated with extremism and divisive methods of conversion to Christianity. It also was associated with the change of one denominational loyalty to another through questionable means.

It is the means, motives and methods that differentiate proselytism from evangelism. The World Council of Churches 1997 document “Toward a Common Witness” examined, in part, this question of the definition of the term.\textsuperscript{81} It outlined a series of parameters which contrasted proselytism with evangelism:

- Unfair criticism or caricaturing of the doctrines, beliefs and practices of another church without attempting to understand or enter into dialogue on those issues. Some who venerate icons are accused of worshipping idols; others are ridiculed for alleged idolatry towards Mary and the saints or denounced for praying for the dead.
- Presenting one’s church or confession as “the true church” and its teachings as “the right faith” and the only way to salvation, rejecting baptism in other churches as invalid and persuading people to be rebaptized.
- Portraying one’s own church as having high moral and spiritual status over against the perceived weaknesses and problems of other churches.
- Taking advantage of and using unfaithfully the problems which may arise in another church for winning new members for one’s own church.
- Offering humanitarian aid or educational opportunities as an inducement to join another church.

\textsuperscript{80} For examples, see 1 Chronicles 22:2, Exodus 12:48.
• Using political, economic, cultural and ethnic pressure or historical arguments to win others to one’s own church.

• Taking advantage of lack of education or Christian instruction which makes people vulnerable to changing their church allegiance.

• Using physical violence or moral and psychological pressure to induce people to change their church affiliation. This includes the use of media techniques profiling a particular church in a way that excludes, disparages or stigmatizes its adherents, harassment through repeated house calls, material and spiritual threats, and insistence on the “superior” way to salvation offered by a particular church.

• Exploiting people’s loneliness, illness, distress or even disillusionment with their own church in order to “convert” them.\textsuperscript{82}

The contrast between evangelism is then evident. Evangelism is constructive and respects the freedom and dignity of the person whereas proselytism is destructive, deceptive, and manipulative. Evangelism is a witness to the truth of Christ and allows a person the freedom to respond to the message whereas proselytism is a corruption of the Christian witness. As the WCC document states about proselytism, “It does not build up but destroys. It brings about tensions, scandal and division, and is thus a destabilizing factor for the witness of the church of Christ in the world. It is always a wounding of \textit{koinonia}, creating not fellowship but antagonistic parties.”\textsuperscript{83} However, the document does concede, “Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that some people may move from one church to another out of true and genuine conviction, without any proselytistic pressure or manipulation, as a free decision in response to their experience of the life and witness of another church.”\textsuperscript{84} It is from these two critical perspectives, the relationship of proselytism to the \textit{koinonia} and the free and voluntary movement out of a genuine conviction, that the term will be relevant to the study.

\textsuperscript{82} WCC, \textit{Towards}, Section II.
\textsuperscript{83} WCC, \textit{Towards}, Section II.
\textsuperscript{84} WCC, \textit{Towards}, Section II.
The working definition of evangelism rests upon the building up and integration of persons into the worshipping community. The phenomenon which has recently been manifested in Orthodox Churches in traditionally non-Orthodox regions is one of conversions to the Church, particularly evident in the Orthodox Church in America and the parishes being studied. The many stories of conversion may be construed as proselytism as people move from other Christian faiths to the Orthodox Church. For some, the movement is because of disillusionment with their former beliefs and a movement towards what they have come to believe is the “true church.” This conviction can be at odds with, for example some of the points in the WCC statement on proselytism. Certainly the language of the Orthodox Church in such matters as ecclesiology which holds the Orthodox Church as the “One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church” often clothed in triumphalistic language can encourage such opinions. But as Fr. Georges Florovsky wrote, “There is no pride and no arrogance in this claim. Indeed, it implies a heavy responsibility. Nor does it mean ‘perfection’. The Church is still in pilgrimage, in travail, in via. She has her historic failures and losses, she has her own unfinished tasks and problems. Nor is it just a claim – it is an expression of deepest convictions, of deepest spiritual self-knowledge, humble and grateful.”

These persons genuine and free desire to be a part of the Orthodox Church and to partake in the liturgical life of Church becomes a deeply held component of their experience.

Conversion into the Orthodox Church, thus, cannot be equated with proselytism. Conversion is the free, voluntary, and conscious decision to enter into the Orthodox Church. For many it was a long journey, often highly studied and even involving pauses as they pondered the implications. The final conversion was done in a formal manner requiring either baptism and chrismation or chrismation alone, if a previous baptism is deemed legitimate. The difference between proselytism and conversion is in how this occurs as a free decision in response to their experience of the life and witness of another church. In Orthodoxy a voluntary change of faith is considered legitimate, but forced or deceptive inducement is not. As one author wrote on this phenomenon in the Church, “Its discussion of proselytism includes both inter-religious and intra-Christian dimensions.

---

85 Georges Florovsky, “A Quest for Christian Unity and the Orthodox Church,” in Ecumenism I: A Doctrinal Approach (Belmont, MA: Nordland Publishing, 1989), 140. For more on this particular issue and to see the many writings of Fr. Georges Florovsky on this topic, which he presented in the inaugural sessions of the World Council of Churches, see his collected works. In addition, Alexis Khomiakov’s famous essay The Church is One (London, UK: Fellowship of St. Alban and St Sergius, 1968) is foundational to the Orthodox understanding of the exclusivity of the Church in relation to ecumenical activities.
Christian witness to those who have not yet received or responded to the announcement of the Gospel or to those who are already Christians, should have certain qualities, in order to avoid being corrupted in its exercise, this becoming proselytism.” These qualities include both the free movement and the integration into the koinonic experience of the Orthodox Church.

Another objection is the use of the word “converts” into the Church. Can a Christian convert from one church to another or is conversion only from a position of non-belief in Christianity to one of belief, hence all conversion is proselytism? First one must recognize that the term “convert” is not meant in the pejorative sense. It is not meant as someone who was of a lower status and has now been raised to a higher status by entering the Church. Rather it is simply a term that is used to state the manner one entered the Orthodox Church; whether through being raised as an Orthodox by the family as opposed to one who consciously chose to enter the Church at some point in their life. For the sake of this study the term is used simply because at this point this is how many people who journeyed into the Orthodox Church self-identify. It is not meant in any other manner.

Second, the Orthodox Church, while objecting to proselytism against members of the Orthodox Church in traditional Orthodox countries, has overtly rejected such methods themselves. Fr. Meyendorff wrote, “As we all know, the Orthodox Church does not have any active program of proselytism; converts are attracted by the simple witness of the Orthodox liturgy, the consistency and continuity of Orthodox doctrinal teaching, and sometimes, by the personality or some Orthodox priest or layman in whom they discover true Christianity.”

This is recognized time and again. Fr. Cosmas, a renowned Greek Orthodox priest and missionary in Zaire noted, “The most important thing that the authorities noticed was that the Orthodox Mission did not put out

---


87 The active proselytism against Orthodox is a very controversial and highly flammable issue that manifested itself after the fall of the communist governments. For many, the opening of the country also was equated with the opening for many foreign missionaries to come and proselytize the region using exactly the methods that the WCC document deplored. This, in turn, lead to a response by, for example, Russia to enact stringent laws against foreign missionaries. There is a very sober account of this issue by J. Robert Wright “The Implications of Ecclesiology for Proselytism and Evangelism” prepared in 1995 for the Joint Coordinating Committee of the Episcopal Church and the Russian Orthodox Church found at http://anglicanhistory.org/essays/wright/delray.pdf. Other attempts at resolving the tenuous relationship between the Orthodox Church and the Eastern Rite Catholic Church was put forth in the Balamand Declaration in 1993. This document intended to resolve the accusations of proselytism against both parties but was ultimately rejected by most of the Orthodox Churches and allowed to just fade. The statement may be found at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/ch_orthodox_docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_19930624_lebanon_en.html.

propaganda, but worked guilelessly and charitably for the people’s salvation and the improvement of their living conditions.”  

Another Protestant author noted when looking at the phenomenon of conversion to Orthodoxy, “First the people involved perceived their move to be toward an original form of Christianity. This is of course in accordance with Orthodoxy’s claim to be the one true Church...these conversions occurred without overt missionary work on the part of the Orthodox. 

The missionary activity was confined to a dissemination of information to inquirers.”

There are whole books which speak of these conversion experiences, and none demonstrate any hint of proselytism as identified by the WCC statement, rather that the conversion is a voluntary and conscious journey from one form of Christianity to Orthodoxy. The WCC statement reconfirmed a foundational statement on religious freedom that was made in 1948 between the International Missionary Council and the World Council of Churches. It became incorporated into the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and stated, “Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right includes the freedom to change his/her religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others, in public or in private, to manifest his/her religion or belief, in teaching, practice, worship and observance.”

As this study will examine such delicate issues of evangelism and conversion, it must again be noted that the freedom to change one’s religious belief must be contrasted with the sin of proselytism. Koinonic evangelism opens the doors for person to freely, consciously and without any coercion by any means, enter into communion with the Church of their own choosing, not as an act of derision, rather as an action of belief.

---

90 Stamoolis, Mission, 80.
5. **Preview of Remaining Chapters**

Chapter Two is dedicated to a review of literature and some basic concepts around mission, evangelism and most importantly, a church community. It will review the literature that establishes certain principles in both the early Church and throughout the history of the Orthodox Church until its coming to North America. Through this examination a particular paradigm is developed on parish evangelism. It will also review some critical historical and cultural concepts which have affected the Church in North America.

Chapter Three establishes the research methods utilized in this study. It explores the case study methodology with a particular emphasis on triangulation for data verification. The chapter then outlines the criteria for the selection of the three case study parishes used for the research. Finally, the chapter looks at the design of the questionnaires and interviews which formed the foundation of the research.

Chapter Four continues the work of the previous chapter by looking in detail at the three parishes. It begins with an explanation of the Orthodox understanding of parish and parish life. It examines the parishes’ history, background, demographic composition and their relationship with their surrounding community. The chapter concludes with some demographic information on the questionnaires and analysis of that information.

Chapter Five presents and analyzes the results of the three sources of data in the research: the questionnaires, the interviews and the direct observations. The data is triangulated and used to answer the six major research questions that were posed in Chapter One. The results of this analysis are used to confirm not only the presented concepts and definitions but also the thesis statement on the Orthodox Church’s approach to evangelism as uncovered in the three parishes.

Chapter Six is the concluding chapter, which reports on the conclusions of the research and analysis. It will examine some alternate theories on the conclusions. It discuss the effect such conclusions have on future work in evangelism in the Orthodox Church and its general impact.
6. Introduction Summary

The dissertation is about the theory and practice of evangelism in contemporary parishes of the Orthodox Church in America. It will answer several critical issues relating to evangelism, namely a working definition of evangelism from an Orthodox perspective, the theology and history that is the foundation of that definition, and the practical application of evangelism as uncovered in the research. The thesis of the study is that evangelism in the Orthodox Church is a *koinonic* activity whose ultimate goal is to lead people into a sacramental relationship with the Christ and integration into the local Body of Christ. Succinctly put, it may involve individual actions but it is a communal activity. An effective evangelistic parish is open to all who seek Christ and welcomes those of many different backgrounds, while not forgetting its own roots. Likewise, it will be shown that evangelism is not necessarily a plan or a strategy, rather what healthy communities live out and do. A healthy parish must be living the faith as a community and be open to receive people into that community. Ultimately it is actualized in the community in *koinonia*, a Eucharistic union with the Christ, the Church and each other.

This chapter has examined some critical terms such as *koinonia*, church, evangelism, mission, proselytism, and conversion. A working definition of evangelism was introduced which is: *the witness in living out and the verbal proclamation of the Good News of the Risen Christ with an invitation to become a part of the local Orthodox Body of Christ through participation in the Sacramental and Liturgical life*. This definition will be developed through the following chapters and tested in the case studies of the three parishes. A methodology to test the thesis was developed and followed which confirmed the initial theories but most importantly was actually put into practice. The next chapter will review the sources that were utilized in forming the theory and practice with a special emphasis on the Orthodox interpretation.
Chapter 2

Previous Research and Literature Review

We are a body knit together as such by a common religious profession, by unity of discipline, and by the bond of a common hope. We meet together as an assembly and congregation, that, offering up prayer to God as with united force, we may wrestle with Him in our supplications. This violence God delights in. We pray, too, for the emperors, for their ministers and for all in authority, for the welfare of the world, for the prevalence of peace, for the delay of the final consummation. We assemble to read our sacred writings, if any peculiarity of the times makes either forewarning or reminiscence needful. However it be in that respect, with the sacred words we nourish our faith, we animate our hope, we make our confidence more steadfast; and no less by inculcations of God’s precepts we confirm good habits.... The tried men of our elders preside over us, obtaining that honor not by purchase, but by established character.... But it is mainly the deeds of a love so noble that lead many to put a brand upon us. See, they say, how they love one another....

Tertullian, Apology, Chapter 39

As discussed in the previous chapter, because there are few direct Orthodox resources on evangelism, I initially had to glean useable material from a variety of non-Orthodox sources. The sheer number of these sources available is overwhelming, so it was important that I set some parameters in order to determine the most valuable of these. The first parameter was to utilize material that cited Orthodox theology or theologians. This enabled the research, at the very minimum, to point to other sources in the Orthodox world that the non-Orthodox found significant. There were a number of foundational books which, in fact, did have this material. The second parameter was to use sources that referred to periods of Church history both before and after there was a generally a unified church (the Great Schism of 1054). These sources normally would have references to primary source material such as the writings of the Church Fathers as well as historical sources on the development of the concepts. The third parameter was to utilize sources which referenced general theological principles of evangelism. This was done as an effort to steer clear of polemical evangelism theology such as Frank Schaeffer’s Dancing Alone: The Quest for Orthodox Faith in Age of False Religions or Fr. Seraphim Rose’s Orthodoxy and the Religion of the Future, though being widely read have the potential of being at odds with mainstream Orthodox

---

theology. By using these three guiding parameters, the material begins to reveal itself, each pointing in a new direction for research.

However, as the research proceeded, it was discovered that there was significant material from Orthodox sources. Some of the material was fairly obscure while other was found embedded among other writings. Some of the material simply took on many of the Western Christian concepts of evangelism and simply adjusted them for Orthodox theology. Others were part of process of the ecumenical engagement begun in the 1970s to the present time, which began to unpack the Orthodox theology of mission and evangelism. At first, Orthodox theologians found themselves simply responding to Western mission theology rather than concentrating on affirming their own beliefs. Up until this point, little thought had been given to a specific, conscious Orthodox missiology, and, as the engagement continued, the Church leaders recognized the danger of such a void. Archbishop Anastasios points the way through this dilemma:

Orthodox thinking about mission has not yet been systematically developed. Consequently when anyone is invited to speak from the Orthodox point of view about the purpose and motive of mission (a subject with which the Western thought has been concerned for many years), there is a two-fold danger: Either he will limit himself to a repetition of the ideas of others or that, after studying the Catholic or Protestant conceptions, he will attempt to construct an Orthodox one distinct from the other two, merely in order to complete the familiar trilogy. There is a third way, more serious, more modest, and consequently more Orthodox. That is to avoid this controversial tactic – to begin with the general presuppositions and principles of Orthodox theology; to meditate upon Orthodox soteriology, ecclesiology and eschatology from the perspective of mission.  

As the most succinct expression of Orthodox missiology, this is the lens through which I reviewed the available literature in order to determine which are applicable to general Orthodox presuppositions and principles.

1. Where to Begin?

As discussed, the logical place to begin the examination into the source material was to look at the established and accepted contemporary readings on missions and evangelism from a wide variety of ecclesiastical thinkers. This naturally must start with one of the most influential books on

mission and evangelism in the twentieth century, David J. Bosch’s *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. Although a Reformed theologian, no other modern book had as much influence across the broad spectrum of denominations, not only on the theology of mission, but also in comprehensively reviewing the varied facets of application. As it is deeply rooted in Biblical exegesis as well as major theological developments on evangelism and mission in the twentieth century, the book is an invaluable resource.

Bosch proposed that understanding various paradigm shifts in Christian history would inform an understanding of the changing concepts of missions. This shift reflects Hans Kung’s division of Christian history into six major epochs: primitive Christianity, Hellenistic/Eastern Church (patristic), Medieval Roman Catholic, Protestant Reformation, Modern Enlightenment, and the emerging Ecumenical paradigm. Kung believed that each of these six epochs revealed a unique understanding of the Christian Faith. Critics such as Alan Kreider point out that this approach reduces theology to societal relativism rather than to absolute truths. However, it is an inescapable fact that such changes clearly occur and affect the theology of evangelism. Bosch understood this truth and its effect on evangelism, writing, “In each of these eras Christians, from within their own contexts, wrestled with the question of what the Christian faith and, by implication, the Christian mission meant for them.”

Of particular importance to Orthodoxy is Bosch’s “Eastern Church” paradigm which he positioned after the recognition of the Church by Emperor Constantine around 312 but is then succeeded in the West by yet another shift in the eleventh century to what he phrases “the medieval period.” He posits that the clear shift in theology and by extension the understanding of evangelism, from the early Church to the Post-Constantinian period continues today in the Orthodox Church, while the rest of Christianity shifted to the Western paradigm.

Being heirs of this particular paradigm, the Orthodox Church formulated certain assumptions about, if not a formal theology of, mission. While Bosch disagrees with those who regard the Orthodox Church as being non-missionary, the inescapable fact is that the Orthodox Church was

---

95 For a more detailed examination of the Bosch’s theory, see Bosch, *Transforming*, 181-189.
97 Bosch, *Transforming*, 182.
98 Bosch, *Transforming*, 186.
historically missionary, albeit with a differing paradigm from the Western churches. It is only with the recent reopening of the Orthodox Church in Eastern Europe and the consequent ecumenical dialogues that the Western churches have come to recognize the missionary nature of the Orthodox Church. Critical to the Eastern paradigm is that missionary endeavors are not necessarily centered on individual efforts or institutional initiatives (though there is clearly evidence of both) but are Church-centered. To repeat Bosch's observation, “In Orthodox thinking mission is thoroughly church-centered.... This too has its roots in early Eastern Christian theology, where an ever stronger accent was placed on ecclesiology. The conviction gradually grew that the Church was the kingdom of God on earth and that to be in the church was the same as being in the kingdom.”

This concept had great effects on how mission would be perceived and evangelism was conducted, since the goal was to bring people into the “Body of Christ.” In addition, the missionary efforts of the Orthodox Church spread by bringing the Church to different lands and cultures and by integrating them into the larger Church. Bosch’s key analysis of the Orthodox Church rested on this concept: “In the Orthodox perspective, mission is thus centripetal rather than centrifugal, organic rather than organized. It ‘proclaims’ the Gospel through doxology and liturgy. The witnessing community is the community in worship; in fact, the worshipping community is in and of itself and act of witness.” How that concept of the worshipping community developed and incarnated is critical in understanding evangelism in the Orthodox Church.

Bosch arrived at his conclusions through the writings of Archbishop Anastasios (Yannoulatos), Fr. Alexander Schmemann, Fr. Ion Bria, and James Stamoolis. The first three are, in fact, the most significant theologians in either the area of missiology or in understanding the application of liturgy to evangelism, while Stamoolis is a Protestant of Greek background with an interest in the Orthodox Church. However, Archbishop Anastasios is the only distinguished Orthodox theologian currently doing serious writing on the subject of Orthodox evangelism and mission. As a long time missionary bishop in Africa and the Primate of the newly resurrected Orthodox Church in Albania, his work in Albania is legendary and his writings are among the most cited Orthodox sources in missiology. His book, *Mission in Christ’s Way*, is a collection of his writings and lectures from throughout his life and his reflections on mission, evangelism and culture. He has additionally

---

99 Bosch, *Transforming*, 207.
100 Bosch, *Transforming*, 207-208.
taken on the task of interpreting the missionary and evangelistic history of the Orthodox Church to the West.

Among the critical notions Archbishop Anastasios advances is the understanding that mission and evangelism is witness; a witness to the truth of Christ and His way. For example, he speaks of the missionary dimension of the Lord’s Prayer in “Thy Will be done on earth as it is in heaven” as the necessary paradigm. He writes, “Understanding the missionary dimension of this prayer will strengthen in the Christian world the conviction that mission is the sharing of in carrying out God’s will on earth.”\(^{101}\) But more than just sharing and doing God’s will is to witness to God’s love. He reminds his readers constantly that it is God’s love for the world and the witness to the same which is the truly evangelistic model, “reminding one that in exercising our obligation for sacred mission we are not ‘judges’ or public prosecutors in the world but witnesses of truth and love.”\(^{102}\) This understanding of evangelism as extending God’s love will be appreciated time and again throughout this study.

Therefore, what truly begins to make the Orthodox Church distinctive in its application of evangelism is precisely how it is expressed through its unique understanding and practice of the sacramental life. “The witnessing community is the community in worship; in fact the worshipping community is in and of itself an act of witness.... This is so, since the Eucharistic liturgy as the basic missionary structure and purpose and is celebrated as a ‘missionary event’.”\(^{103}\) Therefore, Archbishop Anastasios concentrates his missionary theology not just on the individual act of witnessing, rather on how that act is part of the communal act of doxology, which recapitulates the fallen world back to God and restores a broken humanity. Archbishop Anastasios reflects,

The doxological attitude and stance created a centripetal missionary power of attraction for millions of people, even in the most difficult times of persecutions and martyrdom. It is in the worshipping assembly that the profound changes takes place, repentance, the existential gazing at the humility in glory and the glory in the humility of Christ, who accepts to have His Body and Blood offered in our humble gifts and in the most humble and unworthy invocations.\(^{104}\)

\(^{101}\) Yannoulatos, *Mission*, 22.
\(^{102}\) Yannoulatos, *Mission*, xvi.
\(^{103}\) Bosch, *Transforming*, 208.
Clearly the community in prayer is the critical center of evangelism, which leads to the next important concept, the role of the liturgical and sacramental life. Fr. Alexander Schmemann was the leading theologian of the liturgical renewal movement in the Orthodox Church in the twentieth century. His theology of liturgy influenced the communities in North America through the recovery of the essential meaning of the Church’s most important activity: worship. The very word “liturgy” comes from the Greek leitourgia, meaning the “common work.” Therefore, it is this common work of the worshipping community which transforms it into the Body of Christ. Fr. Schmemann wrote in *For the Life of the World* that the liturgy is “an action by which a group of people become something corporately which they had not been as a mere collection of individuals – a whole greater than the sum of its parts.”\(^\text{105}\) Thus evangelism is an act of witness that invites people into a local worshipping community.

Fr. Schmemann wrote extensively on this meaning of Liturgy and its transformative effect on not just the individual and community but on the world. It was the act *par excellence* of humanity, by offering praise, thanksgiving and worship. And in such doxology, the community grows more Christ-like through theosis, or movement toward God. On an even grander scale, the local community’s Liturgy reconciles the world with God (2 Cor. 5:19) and through this reconciliation restores humanity through the Church. As Fr. Schmemann wrote, “The Eucharist is always the End, the sacrament of the parousia (presence or arrival), and yet, it is always the beginning, the starting point: now mission begins.”\(^\text{106}\) So through the Eucharist and through the Church and through community as the Body of Christ, true mission and true evangelism begins and a new movement happens, which brings the Church into the world and the world into the Church. This co-mingling of the Church and the world has been popularly phrased as “The Liturgy after the Liturgy.”

The *Liturgy after the Liturgy* is also the title of a collection of essays by Fr. Ion Bria, a Romanian Orthodox priest and long-time staff member of the World Council of Churches. This slim volume has essays on evangelism, mission, and Liturgy. Fr. Bria also wrote extensively on various aspects of Orthodox liturgical life and its relationship to society, such as the ecumenical movement and


\(^{106}\) Schmemann, *Church*, 215.
life in Eastern Europe after the fall of Communism. He considers the missionary dimension of the
Liturgy after the community leaves the building as an extension of the Liturgy itself.

The evangelizing and witnessing potentialities of the Eucharistic liturgy extend to other kinds of liturgies and forms of diakonia (service to the poor and oppressed) outside the walls of the church. What is at stake here is the continuous building up of the church, the body of Christ, the sacrament of the kingdom of God in history. To strengthen the diaconal role of the worshipping community scattered for daily life, this second movement of the liturgy, the Eucharist has to become “pilgrim bread,” food for missionaries, nourishment for Christians involved in social and moral struggles.\footnote{Bria, Liturgy, 27-28.}

The Liturgy feeds and strengthens the community, inspires it to go out into the world to witness to Christ and activates it to be a force of good deeds to those surrounding the community. The “Liturgy after the Liturgy” is nothing short of realizing God’s actions in the world through His Church.

Fr. Bria consistently points to the local parish as both the entry and departures point of evangelism and witnessing of the Gospel of Christ. “As a place of gathering for praying and sharing the body and blood of Christ, every local parish is also a point of departure into the world to share the joy of resurrection. The worshipping community is prepared and sent as an evangelizing community.”\footnote{Bria, Liturgy, 31.} For Fr. Bria, the local parish is essentially the evangelizing community, while the liturgy is the evangelizing event. All are realized and formed, not around an individual action, rather around a worshipping community gathered together “to do this in memory of me [Christ].” (Luke 22:19, 1 Cor. 11:24) “Therefore,” Fr. Bria concludes, “for the Orthodox, the missionary life and structure of every parish is key to practicing the proclamation of Christ today. For the responsibility of every believer does not end at the geographical and cultural borders of the community in which he or she lives, but extends to other communities, including people who do not know the Gospel.”\footnote{Bria, Liturgy, 31.}

All three authors build upon a critical term, “\textit{lex orandi, lex credendi}” (what is prayed is what is believed), that has a centrality among many Christian faiths.\footnote{Prosper of Acquitaine, “Capitula Coelestini,” Chapter 8 translated by Thomas M. Winger in Studia Liturgica, Volume 24 (1994).} Theology, whatever form or focus
it may have, is inseparable from the actual liturgical practice within the Orthodox Church. Fr. Bria wrote, “In the liturgy, the verbal proclamation of the gospel is inseparable from the doxological way of praying and symbolic ritual of the sacraments. This prevents the Orthodox from separating doctrine and prayer, biblical texts from hymnology, biblical stories from the life of saints. It overcomes the contradiction between doctrinal teachings and personal experiences. Lex credendi goes together with lex orandi.”\footnote{111} One does not simply think or profess theology; one lives theology through a life in the Church.\footnote{112} Therefore, the partaking in the liturgical life of the community as well as the Christian service to the community is precisely the points where theology is recognized and enacted. The theology of the Church is made real through the worship and, in turn, the worship makes the theology understandable, which “sends” the community into the world. It is precisely this intertwining of correct worship and correct theology (the literal translation of Orthodox) that draws many people to the Orthodox Church.

For gathering an outside perspective, James Stamoolis’ book \textit{Eastern Orthodox Mission Theology Today} is one of the few general reviews of Orthodox history and its theology of mission. It is clear that he has an extensive knowledge and appreciation of the Orthodox Church (he is a convert from Orthodoxy to Evangelicalism) and recounts in great detail the many facets of Bosch’s “Eastern Christian” paradigm. In fact, Stamoolis goes much deeper into some of the critical concepts of Liturgy, community and theology in relation to Orthodox mission, particularly in his appreciation of the centrality of the local worshipping community in evangelization. “Mission is not something ‘out there’; rather, it is something that the individual takes part in and contributes to.”\footnote{113} It is through this that these same individuals realize they are part of something larger than and beyond their own selves. While acknowledging this principle, Stamoolis questions if this is actually practiced in modern Orthodox parishes. It is this precise question that is the heart of this study.

A similar note should be made about Bryan Stone’s \textit{Evangelism after Christendom: The Theology and Practice of Christian Witness}. He is Protestant minister and professor at Boston University School of Theology. His major thesis is that “the most evangelistic thing the church can do today

\footnote{111}{Bria, \textit{Liturgy}, 31.}
\footnote{112}{Actually the original quote of St Prosper states, “lex orandi, lex credendi, lex vivendi,” which adds to the statement the dimension of “what is prayed, is what is believed, is what is lived.” In other words, the life that one manifests as a Christian is directly related to the participation in the prayer life which reflects the theology of the Church.}
\footnote{113}{Stamoolis, \textit{Mission}, 124.}
is to be the church,”¹¹⁴ a phrase often used by participants in this study. In other words, a parish is at its most evangelistic when it is simply being the parish. Stone posits that “to be formed imaginatively by the Holy Spirit through core practices such as worship, forgiveness, hospitality and economic sharing into a distinctive people in the world, a new social option, the body of Christ.”¹¹⁵ In Part Four of his book, entitled “The Evangelizing Community,” Stone goes into great detail about how the community is to live this out with extensive references to Archbishop Anastasios, Fr. Schmemann, Fr. Bria, and Orthodox Eucharistic theology.

Stone’s writings confirmed the direction of research and the centrality of the community as the evangelist. There are several seminal books that address this topic, most notably Metropolitan John Zizioulas’ Being as Communion and Eucharist, Bishop and Church and Fr. Thomas Hopko’s Speaking the Truth in Love. All have extensive reflections on Liturgy, the local parish and evangelism. Bosch concluded, “The church as a sign, symbol, and sacrament of the divine in human life helped lift people’s hearts to God in a world resigned to fatalism and capriciousness of the gods. The Eucharistic liturgy was the place where the faithful were given nourishment which helped the cope with the vicissitudes of life and also equipped them for the ‘liturgy after the Liturgy.’”¹¹⁶ So the next area of examination involved the very roots and establishment of the Church itself.

2. Historical Background and Lessons

Before examining the modern theology, it is important to also have a deep understanding of the historical methodology and terminology of evangelism that is still applicable in the Orthodox Church. It is daunting to consider 2,000 years of literature, but the obvious starting point is the Biblical and early Patristic record in order to chart the growth of the Christian movement from a small localized cult to a universal Church. From these writings, it may be possible to determine if a theology of evangelism existed and, if so, to discern the models and methods used.

Various texts in the New Testament, some of which are cited throughout this study, outline some important principles on evangelism. Most of these are straight-forward directions on the necessity

¹¹⁴ Bryan Stone, Evangelism after Christendom (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2007), 15.
¹¹⁵ Stone, Evangelism, 15.
¹¹⁶ Bosch, Transforming, 208.
of evangelism such as the passages on so-called “Great Commission” (Matt. 28:18-20), the work of the early apostles as recorded in the Book of Acts (Acts 1:8), and in the Epistles of the Apostle Paul (1 Cor. 3:6 and Phil. 1:6-7), which record the purpose and direction of evangelism. Taken as a whole, they provide a fairly consistent picture of the work in the early Church and have been greatly analyzed by many.

By contrast, the early Church patristic record is less extensive. The patristic sources give commentary on the life of the early Church and chronicle its theological development. Despite this, even the patristic record contains few passages devoted to evangelism. There were certainly examples of missionary zeal but also of demographic growth that accompanied the spread of the early Church. It seems that the early Church fathers did not articulate a theology of evangelism though engaged in such activities. There are some tantalizing clues addressing the role of the local worshipping community in this growth.

There have been a number of modern scholars who have attempted to unpack the answers to these questions. They thoroughly cite the Biblical and patristic sources in their works. The Lutheran theologian Adolph von Harnack, is one of the first modern scholars to address the question of growth in his 1902 book, The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries, which set the standard for modern scholarship on the subject. In the book, von Harnack poses these same questions as he attempted to discover the reasons for such an explosive growth. He finally concludes that the growth occurred because Christianity involved people of all strata of society (most notably the common people) and forged them into a loving and active community, which addressed the needs of a communal existence. Furthermore, Christianity provided theological answers to the deep questions of existence, supplied an outlet to express those questions of life (and afterlife) through liturgical activities and through membership in a community that bonded the believers together against a hostile world. Von Harnack postulates that these were powerful forces that swept across the Empire and filled a void in a hostile and syncretic society writing, “From the very outset Christianity came forward with a spirit of universalism, by dint of which it laid hold of the entire life of man all its functions, throughout its heights and depths, in all its feelings, thoughts and actions. This guaranteed its triumph.”117 This universalism and depth

enabled the Church to flourish in a hostile world because it was able to fill a need – a need to explain humanity’s existence. And as the message of the Gospel was changed from its Jewish roots toward a more “Hellenized” version, it was made more palatable, appealing, acceptable, and explainable. It should be noted that following the trauma of the Second World War, the approach by theologians such as von Harnack was questioned due to the stark divisions he posed between the Christian and non-Christian world, not to mention the new archeological and textual evidence that expanded the knowledge of the early Church.  

Almost seventy years later, an Anglican priest and evangelist, Michael Green, reexamined these same questions in his 1970 book *Evangelism in the Early Church*. While he initially built upon von Harnack’s theories, he came to a vastly different conclusion, deciding that the Church grew because of the clear Christo-centric nature of the message. Rather than just the community, it was the person of Jesus Christ as embodied in his teachings and revolutionary worldview that drew people to the message of salvation. It was zealous and public presentation by early Christians of this salvation found through Jesus that attracted followers. As such, there was no grand plan or strategy, simply ordinary Christians presenting themselves and their Faith to the world. These ordinary Christians were living and dying for the sake of the Gospel out of a sense of gratitude for what they had been given, a sense of responsibility to share that gift, and a sense of concern for the implications of that gift. Whole communities witnessed Christians willing to die in order to spread the message of the Risen Christ and this passionate commitment, which was often combined with a radical change in lifestyle, was a powerful witness to the Faith. Thus, evangelism was simply the lifeblood of the early Christians because they lived and died for their beliefs. As Green concluded, “In the first two centuries or so of the Church’s existence we find many faults, much which dishonors the name they professed. But we also find an evangelistic zeal and effort, exerted by the whole broad spectrum of the Christian community to bring other people to the feet of their ascended Lord and into the fellowship of his willing servants.” With Green, it was simply Christians being Christians, and there really was no measure of success or failure in evangelistic

---

120 Green, *Evangelism*, 280.
methods other than the Church growing. There was simply the life of Christians in a community which nurtured the growth and spread the Faith.¹²¹

Recently, some scholars have taken up that particular point, growth through a community actualizing itself, as to the reason for the success of the early Church. They conclude that, despite hints of conscious evangelistic strategies and methods such as the Apostle Paul following the routes of the Jewish Diaspora into western regions or the early Apostles following established trade routes which would put them in contact with fledgling Christian communities, early Church growth was effectuated by the exploitation of sociological and demographic shifts within the community.

Foremost among this is Rodney Stark’s 1997 book, *The Rise of Christianity*, which looked at the growth of the Church from a sociological point of view, and postulated that growth was due to social networking. Therefore, he claims that the Church grew throughout the known world due to simple demographic factors such as higher birth rates, higher survival rates during epidemics (Christians serving the sick made the survivors immune to the disease), and the acceptance of marginalized castes such as women and slaves. He used demographic modeling with modern theories on new church movements. He concludes that the early Church grew in a similar manner to modern new church movements. “People are more willing to adopt a new religion to the extent that it retains cultural continuity with conventional religion(s) with which they are familiar.”¹²² However, he acknowledges, as does Green, that the growth was not from the top down, rather among peers due to “an intense community, able to generate ‘invincible obstinacy’…yielding immense religious rewards.”¹²³ These rewards were incarnated in the growth of the Church despite the many factors that sought to limit or destroy it in the early years.

While all three major authors, von Harnack, Green, and Stark, may differ on the various nuances of evangelism in the early Church, they all affirmed there are some commonalities that the New Testament and patristic record that can be applied to *koinonic* evangelism. Evangelism was part of a communal experience of the Church. Although believers may have acted individually, they were

---

¹²¹ Critics of Green often mention his reliance on different hagiographic material which may be outdated. Nonetheless, much of the lives were written in order to illustrate important points to the Church at large.


all a part of a Church community as members of the Body of Christ. Evangelism drew new people into full membership into the Body of Christ no matter what their background, ethnicity, or social standing.\textsuperscript{124} That communal experience was both social and sacramental through the participation in the Eucharistic fellowship. By being part of that \textit{koinonia}, members gathered together as a body to worship, partake of the Eucharist and serve one another in keeping with the command of Christ Himself to gather and commune. It is not by accident that the only time the Apostle Paul directly quotes the words of Christ is in 1 Corinthians where he reiterates Christ’s instructions to the faithful on the Eucharist (1 Cor. 11:17ff).

Despite the efforts by non-Christians to discredit or destroy this community, the early Christians persevered and grew. Rather than being weakened by such obstacles, they served to strengthen their Faith and continued to draw new people into the Body of Christ. As Justin Martyr wrote in his letter to the Jew Trypho,

> For it is plain that, though beheaded, and crucified, and thrown to wild beasts, and chains, and fire, and all other kinds of torture, we do not give up our confession; but the more such things happen, the more do others and in larger numbers become faithful, and worshippers of God through the name of Jesus. For just as if one should cut away the fruit-bearing parts of a vine, it grows up again, and yields other branches flourishing and fruitful; even so the same thing happens with us. For the vine planted by God and Christ the Savior is His people.\textsuperscript{125}

In other words, the early Church, until the legalization of the Church at the time of Emperor Constantine, grew because the Body of Christ served to be that repository for faithful witness and a safe haven against a hostile world. People were willing to risk everything to be part of that Body and they became brothers and sisters in Christ. This communal experience remains foundational in this study.\textsuperscript{126}

\textsuperscript{124} Corinthians 12:1-30.
\textsuperscript{126} There is, of course, much to be explored on the topic of leadership in the early Church, which is outside the scope of this paper, but it is commonly accepted that the rise of the episcopacy in the early Church had much to do with ensuring the Orthodoxy of the Faith as it did to leading the community. This is due to the explosion of heresies which ranged from differing understanding of who and what Jesus Christ was (arianism for example) to the nature of sin (pelagianism) to an understanding of creation (manchaeism) and so on. For a better understanding of the development of leadership in the Church see Peter Brown, \textit{Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity} (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992); Raymond Brown and John P. Meir, \textit{Antioch and Rome} (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1982); Raymond Brown, \textit{The Church the Apostles Left Behind} (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1984);
Another common point is that evangelism was not necessarily a strategy, rather it is a way of living. It was a Christian’s vocation to witness the Gospel but it was also to become the Gospel incarnate through their faithful lifestyle. A Christian threw off pagan views, lifestyles and even a certain morality when they took on the yoke of Christ and lived an honorable life of purity, compassion and service to others. Saint Justin, a second century martyr, wrote,

“And let your good works shine before men, that they, seeing them, may glorify your Father which is in heaven.” For we ought not to strive; neither has He desired us to be imitators of wicked men, but He has exhorted us to lead all men, by patience and gentleness, from shame and the love of evil. And this indeed is proved in the case of many who once were of your way of thinking, but have changed their violent and tyrannical disposition, being overcome either by the constancy which they have witnessed in their neighbors’ lives, or by the extraordinary forbearance they have observed in their fellow-travelers when defrauded, or by the honesty of those with whom they have transacted business.  

In a world beset with deep societal problems, a moral and ethical Christian was incredibly attractive to outsiders. Even when confronted with injustice and cruelty, a Christian “turned the other cheek.” They took seriously the commands of Christ and lived accordingly. Naturally, not all Christians perfectly met this standard, necessitating the development of such rites as Confession, but overall Christians were different creatures from pagans. As Ignatius of Antioch wrote to the Ephesians:

And pray without ceasing in behalf of other men. For there is in them hope of repentance that they may attain to God. See, then, that they be instructed by your works, if in no other way. Be meek in response to their wrath, humble in opposition to their boasting: to their blasphemies return your prayers; in contrast to their error, be steadfast in the faith; and for their cruelty, manifest your gentleness. While we take care not to imitate their conduct, let us be found their brethren in all true kindness; and let us seek to be followers of the Lord (who ever more unjustly treated, more destitute, more condemned?), that so no plant of the devil may be found in you, but you may remain in all holiness and sobriety in Jesus Christ, both with respect to the flesh and spirit.

---


Thus, Christians evangelized because that is what Christians did by their witnessing to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in their life. They evangelized because they felt a pride and love in the Gospel message and they wanted to share the good news through their joy in being a Christian. “The rapid expansion of the Christian faith is itself a testimony to the fact that evangelism was the task of every Christian…. Witnessing the Gospel was not the work just of professional, full-time missionaries. Because all Christians were baptized into Christ, all Christians were taken up in the missionary endeavor.”¹²⁹ This lifestyle of being a Christian and witnessing to that lifestyle will be shown time and again in the study. One of the early patristic sources, *The Epistle to Diognetus*, the author Mathetes wrote,

> For the Christians are distinguished from other men neither by country, nor language, nor the customs which they observe. For they neither inhabit cities of their own, nor employ a peculiar form of speech, nor lead a life which is marked out by any singularity. The course of conduct which they follow has not been devised by any speculation or deliberation of inquisitive men; nor do they, like some, proclaim themselves the advocates of any merely human doctrines. But, inhabiting Greek as well as barbarian cities, according as the lot of each of them has determined, and following the customs of the natives in respect to clothing, food, and the rest of their ordinary conduct, they display to us their wonderful and confessedly striking method of life. They dwell in their own countries, but simply as sojourners. As citizens, they share in all things with others, and yet endure all things as if foreigners. Every foreign land is to them as their native country, and every land of their birth as a land of strangers. They marry, as do all [others]; they beget children; but they do not destroy their offspring. They have a common table, but not a common bed. They are in the flesh, but they do not live after the flesh. They pass their days on earth, but they are citizens of heaven. They obey the prescribed laws, and at the same time surpass the laws by their lives. They love all men, and are persecuted by all. They are unknown and condemned; they are put to death, and restored to life. They are poor, yet make many rich; they are in lack of all things, and yet abound in all; they are dishonored, and yet in their very dishonor are glorified. They are evil spoken of, and yet are justified; they are reviled, and bless; they are insulted, and repay the insult with honor; they do good, yet are punished as evil-doers. When punished, they rejoice as if quickened into life; they are assailed by the Jews as foreigners, and are persecuted by the Greeks; yet those who hate them are unable to assign any reason for their hatred.¹³⁰

A final common point that was revealed in studying the early church was that there was required a radical change in worldview. They saw and experienced society differently by virtue of their conversion. In some cases there was a total rejection of their previous life, especially among those who converted from paganism; this rejection could lead to their actual martyrdom. However, the conversion was sometimes understood as a fulfillment of their previous beliefs, particularly for those who came from Judaism. All of this was in pursuit of the “correct” belief which they discovered in becoming Christian and being a Christian meant they saw the world in a different manner, reacted in a different way and lived a different life.

For this reason, they developed catechisms and models in order to instruct those already in the Faith as well as those just coming into it. Some were simple and practical, such as those outlined in the first and second century *Didache* or the *Shepherd of Hermes*. Other reached a level of intense theological sophistication such as the fourth century *Catechetical Lectures of Cyril of Jerusalem*. Even the vita of the saints, the accounts of the martyrdoms and the histories of the Church served to educate and enlighten. As the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* states in its introduction,

> We have written unto you, brethren, the things respecting those who were martyred, and concerning the blessed Polycarp, who made the persecution to cease, having as it were set his seal to it by his testimony. For almost all the things that went before happened in order that the Lord might show us from above the testimony that is according to the gospel; for he endured to be betrayed, even as did the Lord, that we might become imitators of him, not as considering the things that concern ourselves only, but also the things that concern our neighbors; for it belongs to true and firm love not only to desire to be saved itself, but also that all the brethren should be saved.\(^{131}\)

It was also evident in this study that those who came into the Church changed their world view; they saw the world through the lenses of their Faith, their Church, and their love for those in their community. Some of those changes were shown to be radical but there was very little bitterness or anger about their previous life. Rather there was a sense of fulfillment in the Orthodox Church much like those in the early Church who came to be a part of the Church.

Finally, evangelism in the early Church saw itself as the heir to centuries of Jewish thought and rituals which were now contextualized as Christian. They used the Old Testament scriptures and

---

redefined the rituals of Judaism in a Christian framework. This was highly controversial and it would be centuries for full acceptance and understanding of this, but early Christians remained very tied to their Jewish roots. This had some practical applications such as utilizing established networks of Jewish communities, which provided money, shelter, and an audience for the growing church. Eusebius records in his *Ecclesiastical History* that the early apostles and disciples dispersed throughout the world to preach the Gospel.

The holy apostles and disciples of our Savior were dispersed throughout the world. Parthia, according to tradition, was allotted to Thomas as his field of labor, Scythia to Andrew, and Asia to John, who, after he had lived some time there, died at Ephesus. Peter appears to have preached in Pontus, Galatia, Bithynia, Cappadocia, and Asia to the Jews of the dispersion. And at last, having come to Rome, he was crucified head-downwards; for he had requested that he might suffer in this way. What do we need to say concerning Paul, who preached the Gospel of Christ from Jerusalem to Illyricum, and afterwards suffered martyrdom in Rome under Nero?  

All of the early apostles and disciples were sent outward throughout the world. This would continue as the Church grew, outstripping its Jerusalem roots and becoming a universal religion. The early Church spread outward. As the early Church expanded, it was natural to assume that the pool of potential converts also had to expand outward. There were only so many dispersed Jews to draw from and with the opening to the Gentile world, more of the converts were from other *ethnoi*. In addition, as local communities were established, the local leaders were raised from within these communities and they had ties to the local people. This expansion was all the difference in the growth of the Church. When the Church was able to finally emerge from the shadows and persecution, it already had an established record of planting communities, drawing people into those communities and growing people in the Faith.

The review of the sources on the early Church until the time of Constantine pointed to the importance of the local witnessing community, which invited and integrated people into *koinonia*. The study of the three parishes will demonstrate that a similar outreach and witness to those around the local community was central to their own evangelistic efforts, even if it was not consciously applied. The lessons from the early Church are remarkably applicable for the modern parish,

---

particularly the emphasis on community, witness, perseverance, right belief, worship, and outreach to non-believers.

3. **Paradigm Shift and Later Patristic Sources**

The next major shift in theory and practice of evangelism in the Orthodox Church occurred following the legalization of Christianity under Constantine and the subsequent Christianization of the Eastern regions of the Roman Empire, all of which would eventually embrace the Byzantine model of theology and ecclesiology. The Eastern Churches continued to follow this model through the Great Schism of 1054 and to the present time.\(^{133}\) It was this model of the Orthodox Church that spread throughout the Middle East, Eastern Europe, across Russia and would eventually be planted in North America through what would become the Orthodox Church in America, so there is a very important connection to be understood.

As a result, the paradigm that accompanied the spread of the Church to the Slavic lands and beyond was similar to the paradigm that was established by the early evangelists, Ss. Cyril and Methodius, and instituted a pattern that would be adopted as the Church spread north into Russia and eventually across Siberia and into Alaska and North America.\(^{134}\) But the paradigm established by Ss. Cyril and Methodius (which will be detailed later in the chapter) profoundly affected the manner in which the Orthodox Church evangelized in those directions, based on certain biblical and apostolic principles as interpreted and implemented by the Church. Furthermore, the liturgical and sacramental development in the Orthodox Church differed in some critical areas from the West, which also affected the method of evangelism. Even a thousand years after Ss. Cyril and Methodius, these principles remained firmly ensconced in the Orthodox Church, no matter the nationality or culture that is encountered.

The sources for this part of the study were major studies by important twentieth century historians and theologians such as Fr. John Meyendorff, Fr. Alexander Schmemann, Steven Runciman, Aristeides Papadakis, and Dimtri Obolensky, who examined in depth the development of the

---

\(^{133}\) The Edict of Milan in 313 AD ended the persecution, and the conversion of Constantine brought Christianity into the forefront of the Empire. Some sources claim that the edict was not formal, rather a letter from Licinius encouraging tolerance. Regardless of the fact, the persecution ceased over time.

\(^{134}\) The Orthodox Church was forced to spread in those directions because it became hemmed in with Islam to its south and east and the barbarians and eventually Roman Church to the West. The only way to spread was north and then east.
Orthodox Church from the time of Constantine to the present. Complementing these sources are the detailed lives of some of the great missionary saints of the Church. All of these sources, whether of grand scope or strictly focused, bring to life the development of local communities and insight into individual parishes. As Fr. Meyendorff relates, “In Orthodox ecclesiology, the fundamental importance of the local community, centered around the Eucharist and manifesting the reality of the Kingdom of God in its totality, in its universality, in its catholicity, has remained consistent with the tradition found in Ignatius, Irenaeus and Cyprian.” In other words, despite the major changes in the Church’s polity and even governance, the activities of the local community remained similar. As Fr. Meyendorff continued, “Consequently, any historical change would be evaluated in terms of its consistency with the apostolic witness and with tradition, and only secondarily in terms of its relevance to the needs of the historical moment when it occurs.”

Nonetheless, it is the conversion to Christianity of Emperor Constantine that presented the greatest change that Church had ever undergone and fundamentally altered the relationship between the Church and the Empire. In turn, this external change forced Church leaders to re-examine the foundations and fundamentals of the Faith,

It was a transformation not only in the liturgical, sacramental life of the church and in the structures of its organization and legislation, but also in its doctrine – that is, in the understanding of the revelation that had given birth to it. The early Christians did not simply express in Greek thought what they already knew; rather they discovered, through Greek religious and philosophical insights; what had been revealed to them. The doctrines of the Trinity and of the divinity of Christ…for example, would not be what they are today if the church had not reassessed itself and its doctrines in the light of the new historical, cultural situations during the third through the sixth centuries.

---

135 The number of books is staggering but it is worth noting a few titles. Fr. John Meyendorff’s much quoted and much used The Byzantine Legacy in the Orthodox Church (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1981) and Byzantium and the Rise of Russia: A Study of Byzantino-Russian Relations in the Fourteenth Century (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1989); Fr. Alexander Schmemann, The Historical Road of Eastern Orthodoxy (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1992); Steven Runciman, The Great Church in Captivity (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University, 1969); Aristeides Papadakis, The Christian East and the Rise of the Papacy (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1994); and Dimitri Obolensky, Byzantium and the Slavs (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1994) to name just a few of the books which cover the period from Constantine to the Russian Revolution.

136 Meyendorff, Legacy, 237.

137 Meyendorff, Legacy, 231.

138 Paul Knitter as quoted in Bosch, Transforming, 190.
These doctrinal changes triggered a profound, though gradual, internal transformation within the Church community. This new synergy between the Church and State meant that theology was no longer solely expressed through local Church communities. Instead, the Church was now part of the Empire, and Church Councils now had political power and were an extension of the State. And how the Church did mission and evangelism was similarly affected. As the Empire expanded, so did the wave of missionaries bringing these outsiders into the Faith. This caused its own set of challenges, as the missionaries had to learn how to balance the needs of culturally-diverse communities with a central and all-powerful State. There were numerous times in which the missionaries, who viewed their paramount obligation to the needs of their parishioners, were at odds with the priorities of the State.

During this time of rapid expansion, the separation between the Eastern and Western Church grew ever larger. Among the other doctrinal issues, there also existed a marked difference between the Western versus Eastern theology of mission. Western theology centered on the primacy of Rome and the language (Latin), ritual, and clergy were all subject to the same. In the ninth century, Ss. Cyril and Methodius promoted a new missiology by establishing local missions with local clergy and with Liturgy conducted in the local language. In 863, the Patriarch of Constantinople sent the brothers to Moravia, where they came into conflict with Frankish (Western) missionaries in the region who wanted a Roman-centered mission. The dispute became so acute that the brothers were removed from the region at one point and had to appeal to Pope Nicholas I to restrain the Frankish missionaries and reinstitute their mission.

While outside the scope of this paper, the example of Cyril and Methodius are critical in understanding the principles in later Orthodox missions. The three principles that they established were followed by all subsequent Orthodox missionaries. First was local language, in that the Scriptures and liturgical services would be translated into the language of the people being missionized so that the services could be conducted in that local language. Second was that local leaders would be raised up to govern the Church. Rather than relying on foreign missionaries for the continuation of the Church, these missionaries would train and ordain local leaders who would lead the Church after they left or died. Third was the concept of a geographically local church, so that each Church that was established would eventually become its own local church with its own governance and hierarchy, independent from foreign oversight when it reached a level of maturity,
but then being offered a place at the table of other Orthodox Churches. For this reason there are
now fourteen independent Orthodox Churches in the world, each responsible for their own
geographical region, with its own internal governance and liturgical particularities, but bound
together by a common faith, liturgical practice and, most importantly, communion with each other.
These three concepts of local leaders, local language, and even that of a local Church will have a
prominent place in the three parishes being studied.

Orthodox missionaries in Bulgaria, Balkans, Russia, and through the east towards the Pacific and
into Alaska and North America followed the brothers’ theological direction for mission with great
success. Since the mission was intimately tied not only to the expansion of the various Empires,
following in the wake of Imperial expansion, but also to the growth of various local Orthodox
Churches who would receive an autocephalous or self-governing status with the worldwide
Orthodox family as the Church spread North and then East.

A further collateral result of the shift was the formalization of worship, starting at the instigation
of Constantine during the First Ecumenical Council in 325. The Orthodox Church honors
Constantine as an “Equal to the Apostles” recognizing his evangelistic importance to the universal
Church. In the Orthodox view, the emphasis on such formality was not seen as denying the basic
elements of Christianity, rather as protecting that which was truly essential in the Christian Faith:
namely “right belief” and “right worship.” The Church now maintained order through Councils
and Canons, hierarchy and administration, and its members were no longer subject to regional
idiosyncrasies or even individual charisma. Thus, the Eastern paradigm that developed rested on
two important foundations. The first was that the Church became an institution and was no longer
a loose conglomeration of various communities linked by an informal organization of leaders. It
was now a formal institution with rules and regulations developed through the Councils of the
Church. There arose a clergy caste that ensured the unity and organization of the Church and who
not only defined the Faith, but enforced the canons

The second foundation that came from this was the standardization of the liturgical expression.
While this took centuries to perfect, the Orthodox Church eventually developed a common liturgy
and cycle of services and readings. The services celebrated in the far flung parts of the Empire

139 See Meyendorff, Legacy, 19 on an examination of these two perceptions.
were essentially the same, no matter what language is used. All parishes listened to the same readings and sang the same hymns on the same day. Despite small local difference and cultural adaptations, in the end, when the members of the Church celebrated the Liturgy, all Orthodox celebrated it together. This unity of liturgics ensured a unity of theology as the Liturgy became the ultimate expression of Orthodox theology as the Church Fathers believed that how one prays is as important as what one believes.

These developments would have a major impact on the developing paradigms of evangelism. The Church became responsible for spreading the Gospel message. Individuals would be the missionaries but as part of the Church, with the goal to bring people into the fold of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. Catechism became according to a formula and baptism was performed according to an accepted rite as an entrance into the Church. To effect such change, the Church sent out emissaries who followed a particular pattern, belief, and structure, and brought converts into the fold. All of this contributed to developing a universal notion of the Church.

As part of this outreach, the Church leaders understood that they would, financially and spiritually, have to support the missionaries. This meant that they had to consider the missionaries as part of the larger Church plans. In short, the paradigm of evangelism that developed meant that the Church was the center of worship and that those missionaries were part of the Church system. This would affect how the Orthodox Church would evangelize and integrate new members according to an established pattern and method. Furthermore, as the Church standardized services so that they were universal and recognizable across the Orthodox world and allowed the missionaries to assimilate their converts into any local parish.

4. **Influences to the Mission in North America**

The foundation of the later mission to North America was laid by some important European missionaries who established many of the precedents that would later characterize the mission to North America and affect evangelism in the Orthodox Church in America. The sources for information on these missionaries are found in various vita and collections of the lives of the saints. In some cases, these saints are revered in their local country and have vast amounts of material written on them. Sadly, very little of the material on these saints has been translated into English.

As discussed earlier, Ss. Cyril and Methodius’ paradigm set the standard for further missionary activity through the use of local clergy serving in the local language and establishing communities. The greatest validation of their method was King Vladimir of Rus’ adoption of Orthodox Christianity in 988. Byzantine emissaries had already planted the seed through their missionary work in the region, so it was no surprise that St. Vladimir adopted the Orthodox Christian faith as well as the Byzantine methodology. His grandmother, Princess Olga of Kiev, had traveled to Constantinople to receive instruction and baptism some forty years earlier.

The story of the conversion of Vladimir to Orthodox Christianity is one that would have later ramifications for mission. He sent emissaries to various regions including to the Jews, Muslims, and Rome. While in Constantinople, they were enamored by the services at St. Sophia. Upon returning, they reported that “they did not know whether they were in heaven or earth. Truly God must be with these people.” However apocryphal the story, St. Vladimir did adopt Orthodox Christianity (and subsequently also been given the title “Equal to the Apostles” by the Church) and then insisted that his subjects be baptized into the faith. After that, the Russian people adopted all of the methods that Ss. Cyril and Methodius taught as well as the now-named Cyrillic alphabet. Other great missionaries such as St. Stephen of Perm continued the paradigm in his mission among the Zyrians in Siberia in the fourteenth century. He was deeply influenced by the lives of Ss. Cyril and Methodius and implemented many of their ideas when preparing to minister to the Zyrian people by translating the liturgical services and parts of the Scriptures into their native tongue.\(^{140}\) St. Stephen introduced intensive catechism and pushed for the ordination of local leaders. He also created an alphabet that was not based on Slavic or Greek, but on local runes. He firmly opposed making the Zyrians adopt a Russian culture and resisted being an agent of the Russian state. He believed that the beauty of the Liturgy and the Church architecture was the critical element in converting the local people, much in the same way that these had impressed the emissaries of St.

Vladimir. By the time of his death, there was a firmly established Zyrian Church, which would eventually be subsumed by the Russian Church.

By the eighteenth century the evangelistic strategy for mission for the Russian Church was well established and taught, but often in conjunction with the Russian government’s efforts at expansion of the Empire. “Orthodox missionary activity in Asia from the fifteenth to nineteenth centuries, on the whole – though with notable exceptions, especially in Japan – followed the colonial expansion of the Russian Empire. But this was equally true of Western missionary efforts, Catholic and Protestant, in Africa and Asia, which, in general, coincided with the colonial occupation of those areas by European Countries.”

The expansion of the Empire brought new territory for the Church to expand into, and how they did it made all of the difference.

In the nineteenth century, St. Macarius (Gloukharev) continued the paradigm among the Atlai nomads on the Asian steppes. He was among the first to attempt to formulate a missionary theology and even tried to create a center for training of future missionaries. While the work remained uncompleted by the time of his death, it would greatly influence future missionaries to North America, particularly St. Innocent of Alaska and St Nicholas of Japan.

St. Nicholas of Japan (1836-1912) remains one of the most enigmatic of the Russian missionaries. A brilliant student who had more interest in the academic world than in pastoral work, he was assigned by the Russian Imperial government to the Russian embassy in Japan. As he traveled there, he was met by the great missionary St. Innocent of Alaska, who encouraged him to put away the academic books, study Japanese and become a missionary to Japan. He brought the Orthodox Church into a Japan that was highly resistant to outsiders and yet honored this foreign missionary as great pastor. The cathedral he built in Tokyo is still referred to today as Nikolai-do, or “The House of Nicholas.”

His work on cross-cultural evangelism was critical in understanding such work in the local parish.

Other than the methods of Ss. Cyril and Methodius, another important missionary development was the rise of monasticism in the early Church, and specifically the Russian adaptation of it as a

---

141 Meyendorff, *Legacy*, 120.
model of evangelism. The best example is the fourteenth century St. Sergius of Radonezh, a great ascetic and monk, who established monasteries throughout northern and eastern Russia and, as he grew in the monastic discipline, his personal spirituality drew followers to him, and many joined the monastery. After a period of study, these men then traveled to more remote regions to establish other monastic institutions. Again, more people gathered around these centers, drawn to the spirituality of the monks. In the end, he established about forty monasteries and greatly extended the reach of the Church. His methodology was not based on outreach, rather by living the example of the monastic life. This could be termed “passive evangelism” in which people are attracted to the Church through the personal spirituality of a particular person or place. “Normally, passive mission means these apostles remained in one place. [They were] trying through prayer and a simple, holy life-style to achieve advanced dimensions of discipleship and spirituality. The holy, Christ-centered, Spirit-filled life which results not only attracts the attention of many, but brings observers into an acceptance of the Christian Gospel which they credit for producing such holy people. This is a common phenomenon in Orthodoxy.”¹⁴³ This variation would be later applied by St. Herman and St. Innocent in Alaska and is applied as a method of evangelism in the Orthodox Church today through personal witness and the monastic institutions.

This small sampling of saints is significant in that all of them had the same evangelistic model and goal, which was to establish worshipping, witnessing Orthodox communities. None of them accomplished the evangelistic task alone, though they were clearly the leaders, but also relied on “Bishops, priests, monks, emperors, princesses, diplomats, officers, soldiers, merchants, mariner, emigrants, travelers, captives.”¹⁴⁴ In addition, they all loved the people that were around them, lived among them and served them. They became a part of the local communities and served the local people in their own language, a lesson well understood by effective modern parishes and the topic of the next section.

5. **A Brief Review of the Orthodox Church in America**

While it is outside the scope of this dissertation to examine the full history of the Orthodox Church in North America, it is critical to understand that there were different historical periods that not

---

only had significant effects on the development of its theology of evangelization, but actually
influenced the founding and outlook of the parishes in this case study. Therefore, it is fundamental
for a brief review of particular periods in the history of the Orthodox Church in America in order
to understand the context which formed the selected parishes. In turn, these same parishes embody
and integrate the lessons of evangelism that formed the Church in North America, particularly the
United States. While a complete history is difficult to impart in this study, the use of three major
religious figures will help exemplify not only the historical development of the Church but also
the major evangelical principles that influenced the three parishes in this study. St. Herman of
Alaska represents the early missionary period of the Orthodox Church in North America. St.
Innocent of Alaska immediately followed St. Herman and established the vision for the Church in
North America. St. Tikhon of Moscow was the leader of the Orthodox Church in North America
at the turn of twentieth century during a time of massive immigration of many ethnic groups and
represents the last stable period before the Russian Revolution and the immeasurable effect it
would have on the Orthodox Church in North America. They are not the only major figures in
Church history, but they are critical ones in understanding the Orthodox Church in America.

Three books provide that background, and contribute to the examination of this particular issue:
Mark Stokoe and Fr. Leonid Kishkovsky’s *Orthodox Christians in North America: 1794-1994*, Fr.
John Erickson’s *Orthodox Christians in America*, and Connie Tarasar’s *Orthodox America: 1794-
1976*. Together these three books outlines what Fr. Kishkovsky describes as “two hundred years
of uninterrupted existence, [during which] the OCA carries all the challenges of the Orthodox
experience in North America: life on the Alaskan frontier, immigration, revolutionary upheaval,
 schism, struggles over cultural and linguistic identity, theological renewal, missionary outreach,
ecumenical concern, and charitable endeavor.”\(^{145}\) Clearly the experience of the Orthodox Church
in America was exceptional in the Orthodox world.

Within the history of the Orthodox Church in America, there are three distinct periods of
development. The first period began with the early missionary wave from Russia to Alaska and its
subsequent spread across the Continental United States at the turn of the twentieth century. The
second period was the shift to a multi-ethnic Church serving immigrant communities from Eastern

\(^{145}\) Mark Stokoe and Leonid Kishkovsky, *Orthodox Christians in North America* (Syosset, NY: The Orthodox
Europe, the Balkans, and the Middle East. Finally, the current period began with the granting of autocephaly to the Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Church of America (commonly known at the time as the “Metropolia”) and the creation of the OCA, which restored a missionary and evangelistic focus as an indigenous Church.

The Orthodox Church in America is inherently a missionary Church. Its traces its roots to the Russian missionaries from Valaam Monastery (near Finland) who traveled across Siberia in 1793 to minister to members of the Russian-American Company in Alaska, which was then part of the Russian Empire. Instead of solely focusing their work within the Russian expatriate community, the missionaries engaged the native Alaskan people and culture in order to plant the Orthodox Church in North America. This established an unusual and positive symbiotic relationship between the Orthodox Church and the native culture that continues to this day. Therefore, these missionaries created the foundation for the evangelical worldview of the Orthodox Church in North America, which they bequeathed to successive generations.

Later missionaries continued this work after Alaska became part of the United States in 1867, and eventually moved the Church headquarters to San Francisco in 1872, and then to New York in 1905. While the Church continued spreading throughout North America in the subsequent years, its growth came mainly from Eastern European immigrants and the demographic relocation of existing Orthodox communities rather than through any conscious or planned evangelistic outreach. Thus the Church grew around ethnic enclaves rather than constructing a genuine North American expression of the Orthodox Church. Although many of the Church fathers realized that the real vocation of the Church was to fashion an indigenous “Orthodox Church in North America” rather than a “Diaspora” Church, the parish focus slowly shifted from service to the immigrant community to the preservation of the cultural heritage of these ethnic enclaves. To this day, the Church leaders struggle to reconcile the two competing views of Orthodox identity: an authentic North American Church dedicated to evangelism, mission and the unique North American culture versus serving an ethnic Diaspora and community.

The Metropolia was the direct heir of the original mission in Alaska. It remained under the Russian Orthodox Church in Moscow until the twentieth century when it cut ties with the Mother Church due to various issues, most notably the Russian Revolution. This, along with the growing maturity
of the Metropolia, gave new life to the concept of an indigenous Orthodox Church. Church leaders embraced the evangelistic visions of St. Innocent of Alaska (1797-1879) and St. Tikhon of Moscow (1865-1925), both of whom served as ruling hierarchs in North America before returning to Russia to lead the Russian Orthodox Church. However, it was not until 1970, after decades of work, that the Russian Orthodox Church finally granted autocephaly (self-governance) to the Metropolia. This granting of autocephaly was a watershed moment for the newly-christened Orthodox Church in America and the critical turning point in reengaging the North American culture and restoring the concept of an indigenous evangelistic Church.

The primary motive for the granting of autocephaly was to ensure canonical regularity with worldwide Orthodoxy and to attempt to unify the various, occasionally competing, jurisdictions. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, various Mother Churches established parishes throughout North America as part of their missionary effort to service the massive surge of immigrants. These parishes are based around ethnic identities (e.g., Greek, Ukrainian, Serbian, etc.) in an uncanonical situation known as *phyletism*.\(^\text{146}\) Thus, there arose competing parishes in the same region, each under a different bishop aligned with the Mother Churches in Eastern Europe and the Middle East. Some jurisdictions, such as the Albanians, Bulgarians, and Romanians as well as a majority of the Russian parishes, elected to come under the umbrella of the OCA. However, others remained tied to the Mother Churches (e.g., Greek Orthodox Church) and actively refused to recognize the autocephaly while accepting the canonicity of the OCA.

The OCA has gone through monumental transformations in the forty years since autocephaly. First there was a concerted and directed effort to change all services to English, followed by a move to establish multi- and non-ethnic parishes throughout North America. Supporting this growth required a rapid proliferation of Orthodox material in English and a concerted effort to engage the North American culture through missions. Additionally, the late twentieth century brought unforeseen changes such as the rapid increase in conversions of non-Orthodox to Orthodoxy, the

\(^{146}\) In 1872, the Great and Holy Council of the Orthodox Churches condemned *Phyletism* as a heresy. The Council decided that the division of local parishes and dioceses along ethnic lines in any country is contrary to the principle of a local regional Church. In other words, basing an ethnic parish under the control of a foreign Mother Church is improper and all Orthodox in a given country should be united under a single regional Mother Church. The various Mother Churches have broken this principle repeatedly in the United States due to the Orthodox Diaspora as well as differing interpretations of the Canons. For this reason, the United States has multiple jurisdictions established based on ethnicity, culture and language, which has greatly hindered missionary work.
collapse of the Communist governments in traditional Orthodox countries in Eastern Europe, as well as the continued persecution of Christians in the Middle East and the subsequent immigration surge to North America. Furthermore, the OCA has seen demographic shifts in populations as the faithful migrate from areas with older, established urban parishes into sections of the country that do not have a significant Orthodox presence. Over all of this lie the miasma of ecclesiastical politics and jurisdictional disputes, and the challenge of evangelism in a post-modern, fragmented, and increasingly secular society. All of these changes forced the OCA to compare itself to the original evangelistic intent of the early missionaries to engage the North American community and to be the local indigenous Orthodox Church. These perspectives deeply affect the OCA’s understanding of evangelism.

6. Critical American Missionaries

As mentioned earlier, there were waves of mission work that greatly affected the development of evangelistic ethos of the Orthodox Church in America. It would be remiss to not mention three of these early missionaries, one of whom actually influenced one of the studied parishes. Thus, to understand them is to understand the development of the Orthodox in North America. Many of their writings and accounts have been translated and preserved in Fr. Michael Oleksa’s *Alaskan Missionary Spirituality*.

The first wave of missionary efforts arrived in 1794 at the initiative of Empress Catherine II (the Great) acting on the request of the Russian-American Company. The ten missionaries, including Fr. Herman, came from Valaam Monastery near Finland to the island of Kodiak.\footnote{It would remain the longest mission trip by any Christian Church to date, over 7,300 hundred miles.} They landed on September 25, 1794, on the ship *Three Saints*, and the harbor remains named after the ship even today. They discovered that the director of the company, Gregory Shelikov, had already baptized hundreds of natives and instructed them in the rudiments of the Orthodox faith. However, they also discovered that life on the island was far from ideal. Conditions were harsh, food scarce, and there was no church or supplies for the missionaries as promised. Before long, the missionaries and the company people were at cross purposes as the missionaries found that the company’s abusive treatment of the natives intolerable. Furthermore, while the missionaries intended to establish the Church and minister to the indigenous as well as the Russian people, the company
wanted them to focus solely on the Russian traders. One of the monks, Fr. Joasaph, wrote to Shelikov,

Since my arrival at this harbor I have seen nothing done to carry out your good intentions. My own pleasure is that so many Americans are coming from everywhere to be baptized, but the Russians not only make no effort to encourage them, but use every means to discourage them. The reason for this is that their depraved lives become evident if compared to the good conduct of the Americans. (Native Alaskans)\textsuperscript{148}

He soon returned to Russia to report firsthand about the conditions in the colony and to raise support for their missionary work. He was consecrated the first Bishop for the Alaska region, only to perish in a shipwreck just outside of Kodiak upon his return in 1798. He never had the opportunity to take up his See but he had the foresight to leave Fr. Herman in charge of the Kodiak mission during his absence.

It is clear that the first monks were aware of the importance of their mission. They wrote of their service to and protection of the people entrusted into their care, noting that they had baptized over 7,000 converts and performed over 2,000 weddings within a few years of their arrival.\textsuperscript{149} As time passed, many of the original missionaries returned to Russia, while others were martyred or died, so that by 1807, only Fr. Herman remained.\textsuperscript{150} After decades running a school for the Americans, sometime after 1811 Fr. Herman went into self-exile on Spruce Island, a small island off the coast of Kodiak, where he dedicated the remainder of his life to solitary prayer and service to natives on the small island. He cared for the sick, even during epidemics, established an orphanage and school for native children, and reportedly, even halted a flood through his prayers. All the time he labored in a small garden wearing threadbare clothes and sleeping in a cave he had fashioned as his monastic cell. Many administrators and ships’ crews deliberately detoured to the island to seek his spiritual counsel. On his death in 1836, he left behind a legacy of love and dedication to the native people, who immediately venerated him as a saint. He was not quite as popular among the Russian administrators and traders who consistently complained about his evangelical zeal. The natives buried him in the cave on Spruce Island. Generations of subsequent monastics cared for his tomb

\textsuperscript{148} As quoted in Oleksa, \textit{Alaska}, 109-110.
\textsuperscript{149} Oleksa, \textit{Alaska}, 113.
\textsuperscript{150} The original mission was headed by Archimandrite Joasaph and included eight monks and two novices along with ten Aleuts who were returned from Russia. Fr. Juvenaly would later be martyred at Lake Iliamna by the Tlingit natives and the others either died at sea or returned.
until 1970 when the Church elevated him to the sainthood and transferred his relics to the Kodiak. His humility, asceticism and love serve as a model for evangelism much in the same way as his contemporary in Russia, St. Seraphim of Sarov, with whom he had studied under Abbot Igumen Nazarius (later St. Nazarius). “In this way, Herman embodies the non-confrontational model of Orthodox missionary activity where the quiet fruits of holiness, such as humility and gentleness, themselves attest to the potency and veracity of the Orthodox faith.”151 Thus, Fr. Herman, in the tradition of the great monastic missionaries, established the foundation for the mission in North America and is now celebrated as the first Orthodox saint in North America and the founder of the North American Church.

The second wave of Orthodox missionaries arrived not long after the death of St. Herman. Around the same time, the Russian government began stressing the multiethnic character of the Empire and when the Russian-American Company charter came for renewal, Church officials insisted that it include a clause that would provide for and support the religious needs in the colonies which included the indigenous people. The Russian-American Company agreed and provided monetary support for the new mission. Among these new missionaries was a young, married priest, Fr. John Veniaminov.

Raised and educated in Irkutsk, Siberia, he was the son of a minor church official, who died when he was six years old. At the age of ten, he entered Irkutsk Theological Seminary, where he showed signs of brilliance. After his graduation in 1818 and ordination in 1821, the Church slated Fr. John to attend the famous Moscow Theological Academy. However, he had married while in Seminary and chose to remain in a parish in Irkutsk. When he had heard the announcement for volunteers to serve in Alaska, he quickly volunteered. He would later write, “To leave one’s native country and seek places remote, wild, devoid of many of the comforts of life, for the sake of turning to the path of truth men who are still wandering in the darkness of ignorance, and of illumining with the light of the Gospel them that have not yet beheld this saving light – this is an act truly holy and apostolic.”152 Fr. John departed in May 1823, taking with him his wife, his new-born son, his widowed mother and his nineteen-year-old brother. The journey to Alaska took over a year and

they arrived in July 1824 at the island of Unalaska, a remote, foggy, treeless island in the middle of the Aleut chain.

This region had seen a bloody war between the natives and the Russian traders in the 1760s and the situation between the natives and Russians remained tense. Fr. John immediately began training the natives in building skill, and in 1925 they began building a church to replace the dilapidated chapel.\footnote{Fr. John (later St. Innocent) was a true enlightened man. He spoke several languages, was a carpenter, metalworker, and even a brick maker and built many of the churches and furnishings by himself. He even designed a clock, which still is operating, was an avid recorder of native plants and animals, and conducted many scientific tests that were sent back to the Moscow scientific community. He also was a keen ethnographic observer and it was his observations and records which are used today to rediscover many of the lost languages and customs of the native people. He was very generous in his talents and taught many of the native people the skills they would later need to survive without him.} He also established a school and an orphanage and insisted on the proper and respectful treatment of the natives. His actions stood in stark contrast to the abusive and dismissive manner of the Russians, and he soon won the native population’s respect. He traveled throughout the islands in the region, usually by kayak, a habit that caused him great pain in later life as the exposure to the cold water crippled his legs. In contrast to other clergy in the region, he refused to accept any gifts or donations from the parishioners, instead supporting his family on his meager salary.

Fr. John soon realized that, in order to best serve his parishioners and witness to the native population, he needed to learn the local languages. By 1830, he was fluent in at least six dialects and was able to preach without an interpreter. During this time, he also devised a writing system, based on the Cyrillic alphabet, for the most prevalent dialects. Using this, he translated sections of the Gospel of St. Matthew, parts of the Divine Liturgy, the Catechism of the Church, as well as numerous prayers into the local languages. In 1833, Fr. John completed his classic book for the Aleut people entitled, *Indications of the Way into the Kingdom of Heaven*, a simple book that presented basic Orthodox tenets on salvation. It would go through forty-seven reprints in his lifetime alone.

After ten years in Unalaska, The Church reassigned him to the new administrative center of Russian Alaska on the island of Sitka in the southeast part of Alaska. The Russian government had moved the center from Kodiak Island a few years before in order to take advantage of the better climate and its access to the European trade routes. Sitka was the site of an 1804 battle between
the Russians and the native Tlingits, which had resulted in the serious injury of Baranov and the death of many of the sons of the clan leaders. Those Tlingit allowed to return lived in a virtual ghetto in the shadow of armed Russian watchtowers. When Fr. John arrived in Sitka he found an atmosphere of simmering disdain and resentment between the Russians and the Tlingits.

As in Unalaska, he immediately began work on rebuilding the church, opening a school and learning the local language. His simple good works and obvious care for their language, culture and mores, slowly won over the Tlingit, who, up until this point, had resisted all efforts at conversion. Fr. John also traveled to Fort Ross, a trading post north of the Catholic Mission of San Francisco, in order to minister to the Russians who had settled there. While there, he contacted the local Roman Catholic authorities, communicating with them in rudimentary Latin, and even built an organ for their local church, which is still in use today. By 1838, he realized that he could not continue the missionary work for over 10,000 native Orthodox and 1,000 Russians that he was responsible for without major support.

The Church leaders gave him permission to travel back to Russia to seek further support, and he sent his family back to Irkutsk while he traveled to St. Petersburg to plead his case. While in St. Petersburg, he received word that his wife had passed away. In November 1840, Fr. John took monastic vows and changed his name to Archimandrite Innocent in honor of the Siberian missionary of the same name. On December 15, 1840, The Church consecrated Innocent the Bishop of Kamchatka, Kurile and Aleutian Islands and sent him back to Sitka. There, he ordained the first local clergy, including Fr. Jacob Netsvetov (later canonized as a saint), and sent them to the new missionary outposts with detailed instructions as to how they were to conduct themselves.

These “Instructions to Missionaries” are a classic example of Innocent’s approach to evangelism. He first wrote them in 1853 in a letter to Hieromonk Theophan, a local missionary. It distilled all of his experience as a missionary among the native Alaskans into fifty-two sets of instructions divided into three parts: Preparation for Missionary Work (Instructions 1-9); Order of Preaching (Instructions 10-16); and Special Instructions Concerning Instruction, Public Worship, Treatment of Natives, etc. (Instruction 17-52). It is a remarkable document for its time since it approaches evangelism with a cultural sensitivity.
Bishop Innocent did not want to coerce anyone into the Orthodox Faith, rather he believed that the most powerful missionary tools were good solid instruction in the Bible and the example of living a Godly life. He exhorted the missionaries to begin everything with prayer (Instruction 1), and to make sure that one is properly prepared and to do all work in good order (Instructions 2-8). In Instruction 9, he specifically exhorts the missionary to learn the language so as to ensure that the local people voluntarily embraced Orthodoxy through an understanding of the teachings. However, until they were fluent, he encouraged the missionaries to “employ an interpreter, to translate your words for them. Take care to select for the post a man among the most pious and well-intentioned, and instruct him in good time in the Catechism. It will be best to employ always the same interpreter.” He also specifically instructs them to live among the people, take no gifts, not coerce anyone to baptism, and to conduct themselves with dignity and humility, while not putting themselves above the people they serve.

Bishop Innocent was diligent on the content of the lessons and encouraged the missionaries to begin with the story of Creation, followed by the Fall, and the need for redemption as embodied in Jesus Christ. This is the extent of theology he wanted them to impart to catechumens, preferring that the missionary focus on teaching people how to live a Christian life. In fact, he specifically forbids the instruction of dogma (Instruction 14). It was not an easy task to shift their lifestyle as many Native Alaskans practiced polygamy and engaged in other practices considered against the Gospel. However, Bishop Innocent stressed that a true believer must have a basic Christian foundation and an example of how to conduct oneself before truly understanding the Faith. As he writes in Instruction 17, “The dogmas of the faith and the substance of actual doctrine should be kept strictly as not to allow anything contrary to them in word or deed, though in the face of death itself. But some allowances should be made for new converts, as regards certain imperfections in the rites, partly in consideration of local conditions, partly in expectation of their growing firmer in the faith and the new mode of life.” In particular, he encouraged the missionaries to suspend the fasts and other liturgical services which he considers too lengthy and strict for a local population that relies on seasonal sustenance fishing and hunting to maintain the entire village.

154 The entire set of instructions can be found translated in English in Oleksa, Alaska, 238-250.
155 Oleksa, Alaska, 245.
However, it is his next set of instructions that are truly revolutionary, especially for the time and place. In Instruction 21, he writes, “Ancient customs, so long as they are not contrary to Christianity, need not be too abruptly broken up; but it should be explained to converts that they are merely tolerated.”\textsuperscript{156} In Instruction 33 he exhorts, “On no account show open contempt for their manner of living, customs, etc., however these may appear deserving of it, for nothing insults and irritates the natives so much as showing them open contempt and making fun of them and anything that belongs to them.”\textsuperscript{157} In other words, respect the natives and they will listen since, “Good opinion breeds respect, and one who is not respected will not be listened to.”\textsuperscript{158}

Bishop Innocent also instructs the missionaries to not be involved in secular, political matters and to never present themselves as an official of the government. In his eyes, the Church is responsible for ensuring proper treatment of the natives, possibly against the government. “Do not meddle with any temporal affairs, and do not, either openly or in secret insinuation, discredit in their eyes any of the authorities placed over them either by the government or by their own choice; for Jesus Christ Himself, while he dwelt on earth, insulted no existing powers and touched nobody’s right of property. But should the actions of an official and his treatment of the natives be cruel and unbearable, exhort him at first in all gentleness and friendliness; then, should this prove inefficient, report the matter confidentially to us, with every detail and in all fairness or, in our absence, to the dean of the district, who will bring it before the higher authorities.”\textsuperscript{159} Therefore, the missionaries must protect the natives, not by inciting an uprising against the authorities, but by addressing any mistreatment in a proper and orderly manner.

His “Instructions” had a great effect as the missionaries did, in fact, gain the respect of the natives. The Church continued to spread throughout the region. Bishop Innocent, ever conscious of language and customs, constantly worked with the native leaders. For example, since bread was not a common staple among the natives, he translated the Lord’s Prayer not as “give us this day our daily bread” but “fish” which would have a greater meaning to them.\textsuperscript{160}

\textsuperscript{156} Oleksa, \textit{Alaska}, 246.
\textsuperscript{157} Oleksa, \textit{Alaska}, 247.
\textsuperscript{158} Oleksa, \textit{Alaska}, 247.
\textsuperscript{159} Oleksa, \textit{Alaska}, 249.
\textsuperscript{160} As referred to in Sophia Senyk. “Search for Holiness and Pastoral Care: Metropolitan Innocent of Moscow (1797-1879),” \textit{Greek Orthodox Theological Review} 45, no 3 (2001): 270. An interesting parallel is that 100 years later Fr. Vincent Donovan experienced similar issues with the Masai. In one example he had to change words such
In 1867, now an Archbishop, the Church recalled Innocent to Russia and elected him to the highest position in the Russian Church, Metropolitan of Moscow. That same year, with the natural resources depleted and its attention elsewhere, the Russian government decided to sell Alaska to the United States. Still mindful of the Church’s obligations to the native converts in 1868, Metropolitan Innocent wrote a detailed plan of the care for the Church in North America to the Oberprocurator of the Russian Church.161 He introduced his plan for the continuation of the Church in Alaska with the preamble, “I see in this event one of the ways of Providence by which Orthodoxy will penetrate the United States.”162 He outlined six points for consideration: 1) Do not close the Diocese, despite its reduction; 2) Move the headquarters from Sitka to San Francisco in order to facilitate communication with the United States government; 3) Change the Church reporting authority from Siberia to St. Petersburg, so that the focus will be to West rather than to the East; 4) Remove of all Russian clergy (including the bishop) and appoint only those who speak English; 5) Allow the bishop to augment his staff with American converts in order to better embrace the American worldview; 6) Use English in the Liturgy and in the instruction of the Faith. These recommendations represented a major ecclesiastical shift, but Metropolitan Innocent believed the purpose of the Church in North America was not to maintain an ethnic outpost of Russia but to bring the Gospel to all people in their native languages. Unfortunately, by the time of his death in 1879, the United States Government had crushed his vision for the Alaskan church.

As a side note, in 1877, the United States government sent the Rev. Sheldon Jackson to Alaska as a government official in charge of educating the native Alaskans. He was also a Presbyterian missionary and took it on himself to rid the territory of any Russian influence and by extension the Orthodox Church. Rev. Jackson closed churches, forbade the use of native languages and customs (in fact many of the languages only survived due to the diligent work of St. Innocent in recording them), removed native children from their families and sent them to the United States to be educated and converted to Protestantism. He refused to allow Orthodox services for anyone except as “fish” and “sea” since the Masai have no experience of either. See Vincent J. Donovan, Christianity Rediscovered: An Epistle from the Masai (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1978), 60. These are powerful examples of contextual theology.

161 The Russian Patriarchate had been abolished under Czar Peter the Great, and the Church placed under the control of a civilian bureaucrat titled Oberprocurator. The highest position was the Metropolitan of Moscow until the Patriarchate was restored in 1917 and Archbishop Tikhon elected as the new Patriarch.

162 Oleksa, Alaska, 251.
for the old and infirm. He claimed that the days of the Orthodox Church in Alaska were numbered
and that “twenty-five years from now there would not be one Orthodox Christian left there.”

The Russian Church initially did little to stand in his way. When Bishop Nestor (Zakkis) drowned
in June 1882, the Patriarch in Moscow did not replace him for almost six years. During that time,
Rev. Jackson received an appointment as the General Agent of Education, which gave him broad
control over the native population. He used government money to pay the salaries of the
Presbyterian missionaries and divided the rest of the territory among other Protestant groups,
leaving the Orthodox without any authority or influence. Much of the good work of the Orthodox
missionaries disappeared, and the number of natives in the Orthodox Church dissipated, with only
a handful remaining in the Church. Bishop Vladimir (Sokolovsky-Avtonomov) finally arrived in
San Francisco in March 1888. His short tenure was marked with strife, scandal, and the burning
of the Cathedral in 1889. His replacement, Bishop Nicholas (Ziorov), pleaded with President
McKinley to intercede and halt Rev. Jackson’s wholesale destruction of the native culture and the
Orthodox Church, but McKinley rebuffed him. The harsh assimilationist policies continued into
the twentieth century and marked a decline in native Alaskan culture, language, religion, and
morals so that the villages remain today a source of sadness lifted only by the enduring face of the
Orthodox Church.

In the late nineteenth century the United States experienced a major demographic shift that
coincided with the transfer of the center of the Orthodox Church in America from Sitka to San
Francisco. Waves of Orthodox and Byzantine Catholic immigrants from Eastern Europe and the
Middle East began to flood into America, particularly into the Northeast region. “In the half-
century between 1870 and 1920, around twenty-seven million immigrants entered the United
States….many of these ‘new immigrants,’ as they have been called, were Eastern
Christians….nearly half were illiterate. Virtually none was trained in a profession or craft."


\[164\] The Diocese of Alaska remains today, as part of the Orthodox Church in America, a name coined by St.
Innocent when he foresaw the move to the United States. There are presently about 90 parishes, many in remote
villages, served by local clergy of many of the native tribes, and the local language is still used. There is a seminary
on Kodiak, St. Herman’s Orthodox Theological Seminary, which is dedicated to training local clergy. Many
enduring features of Alaska are the sight of the Orthodox churches which have been lovingly cared for in the harsh
environment. The Alaskan Diocese also recently received the legal right to much of the land that had been taken
away from them many years ago and is slowly recovering.

few transferable skills, these impoverished immigrants soon scattered throughout the United States seeking low paying unskilled jobs such as mining, meatpacking, and laborers in steel mills and lumber camps. They also gathered together in ethnic “ghettos,” forming social clubs and quasi-religious fraternities for mutual support. Various denominations, most notably the Roman Catholic Church, attempted to force assimilation. In desperation, Slovakian immigrants appealed to the Russian consulate for an Orthodox Bishop. It is into this landscape that the new Orthodox bishop in America arrived in 1898, and ushered the next historical period of the Orthodox Church in America.

Bishop Tikhon (Belavin), was only thirty-three years old, and of limited pastoral experience. Born in 1865, in Russia and the son of a priest, he studied at the Pskov Theological Seminary. He became a tonsured monk at twenty-three, and by 1897, was the youngest bishop in the Russian Church. He served the American Diocese from 1898 until recalled to Russia in 1907.

He found himself in a very different Diocese than his predecessors. In 1901, he moved the headquarters from San Francisco to New York to better serve the waves of immigrants arriving there. He also changed the name to the Diocese of the Aleutians and North America, in order to emphasize that Alaska was no longer the lone outpost and center of Orthodoxy and the church now had parishes filled with Russians, Serbs, Carpatho-Russians, Galicians, Greeks, Syrians, Romanians, Albanians, Arabs, Ukrainians, as well as native Alaskans. In all this, Tikhon managed this rapid and confusing expansion and worked to forge a single, unified Orthodox Church in America. “The bishop of such a diverse flock clearly required generosity and tolerance, flexibility and imagination. Precisely these qualities characterized the Episcopal service of Bishop Tikhon in North America and enabled him to see his diverse flock as one flock.”

His immediate task, as Bishop Tikhon saw it, was to visit his wide-flung flock. He initiated a series of trips which would take him across the United States, even visiting remote communities in Calhan, Colorado; Butte, Montana; and Wilkinson, Washington, ministering to them in their own languages and establishing church communities wherever he went. Since these parishes were usually organized according to ethnic lines, Bishop Tikhon often served the liturgy in a different language.

---

language each day. For example, on his first weekend in New York City, he celebrated the Vigil in Russian and the next day, the Divine Liturgy in Arabic. In Chicago, he celebrated the Liturgy in Greek on day and Serbian the next. Wherever he traveled, he reached out to the local Orthodox people and formed them together into a single community when possible. While he understood the diversity of his diocese, he also saw unifying elements in the English language and American culture.

In his annual reports to the Russian Synod, he emphasized the need for more English liturgical and educational material. In 1905, he established the first Orthodox seminary in North America in Tenafly, New Jersey, (which is presently St. Vladimir’s Orthodox Seminary in Crestwood, New York). That same year he established the first Orthodox monastery in South Canaan, Pennsylvania, naming it after his patron, St. Tikhon of Zadonsk. In 1906, he commissioned Isabel Hapgood, an Episcopalian layperson, to translate and publish the first English liturgical service book. He even went so far as to compose a Western Rite Liturgy for use by those Western Christians, particularly Episcopalians, desiring to enter into communion with the Orthodox Church.167

However, it was Bishop Tikhon’s innovative approach to Church management that brought lasting effects. He consecrated two auxiliary bishops, Bishop (now St.) Raphael (Hawaweeny) in Brooklyn, New York, to minister to the Arab-speaking parishes and Bishop Innocent (Pustynsky) in Alaska for the Russian-speaking parishes. He put Fr. Sebastian Dabovich in charge of the fledgling Serbian communities and began lengthy discussions with the heads of the Greek community. He even had Fr. Alexis Toth (now St. Alexis), a former Byzantine Catholic priest who converted to Orthodoxy after his poor treatment by a local Roman Catholic bishop, to minister to the 30,000 Greek Catholic immigrants who converted with him. By the time of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia in 1917, there were five bishops and 461 parishes served by 209 priests and consisting of over 600,000 members.168 The United States Congress even passed an act that made Tikhon an honorary U.S. citizen as thanks for his incredible work with the immigrant community.

Now an Archbishop of the Church, Tikhon outlined his vision for the structure of the Orthodox Church in North America. He envisioned the Metropolia would be an autonomous exarchate of

---

167 The Liturgy was presented to the Holy Synod of Russia and conditionally approved for local use but never applied.
168 Oleksa, Alaska, 168.
the Russian Church that would eventually blossom into autocephaly. He proposed that each ethnic group have a vicar bishop, such as the Arab communities had in Bishop Raphael, and that these bishops form an “Episcopal College” to guide the life of the local Church. He gathered the Church leaders together in 1905 in what is now known as the 1st All-American Sobor, which set forth a vision of expanding the mission to the United States. He believed strongly that the American situation called for conciliarity in Church governance, a return to the ancient roots of Church administration where clergy and lay people together had responsibility for the management of the Church.\footnote{This approach would eventually be adopted by the Russian Council on the eve of the Revolution, spearheaded by Archbishop Tikhon who would be elected Patriarch. However, events of the Russian Revolution eventually tossed many of the reforms from the 1917 All-Russian Council aside.} Not only would parishes have councils of lay persons to assist the priest in managing internal affairs, but there would also be a periodic gatherings of clergy and lay people to plan the future of the parish and make decisions affecting Church life.

By the time Archbishop Tikhon left for Russia in 1907, he had forged a solid and dynamic Church, built upon the legacy of St. Herman and St. Innocent. He recovered the vitality of the Church from the ashes of the Alaskan tragedy, and engaged the shifting political situation in North America brought about with the waves of immigrants. Above all, he believed strongly in building up the local church in the local language with local clergy. The archbishop made this point very clear in two addresses. In the first, when the See moved from San Francisco to New York, he preached,

Together with the Holy Apostle, I beseech you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to be united in the same mind and the same judgment (1 Cor. 1:10). In the time of the Apostle, Christians in Corinth were divided into parties named after various teachers, and were saying “I belong to Paul” or “I belong to Apollos” or “I belong to Cephas,” while we sometimes are divided into parties by nationality – “I am Russian, I am Serbian, I am Greek, I am Syrian” – and there is a desire to bring this party-split where it does not belong – into the Church of Christ. The Holy Apostle Paul asks: “Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?” Thus, brothers, you must remember that in Christ there is neither Greek nor Jew, neither slave nor free, but Christ is all, and in all. We all have one faith, one baptism, and one God, and therefore there should be no dissension or quarrelling, no maneuvering to achieve domination, influence of leadership over others; instead, unanimity, and love, humility and readiness to serve others are the true embellishments of a church community.\footnote{As quoted in John Meyendorff, \textit{Living Tradition} (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1978), 217-218.}
Then, in his farewell speech before he left his See for Russia, he revisited the theme of evangelism.

Orthodox people must care for the dissemination of the Orthodox faith among the heterodox. Christ the Savior said that men lighting a lamp do not put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house (Matt. 5:15). The light of Orthodoxy also is not lit for a small circle of people. No, the Orthodox faith is catholic; it remembers the commandment of its founder: “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. Make disciples of all nations” (Mark 16:15, Matt. 28:19). It is our obligation to share our spiritual treasures, our truth, our light and our joy with those who do not have these gifts. And this duty lies not only on pastors and missionaries, but also on lay people, for the Church of Christ, in the wise comparison of St. Paul is a body, and in the life of the body every member must take part.

For each of us the dissemination of the Christian faith must be a favorite task, close to our hearts and precious to us; in this task each member of the Church must take an active part – some by personal missionary effort, some by monetary support and service to the “needs of the saints,” and some by prayer to the Lord that He might “establish and increase His Church” and that He might “teach the word of truth” to those who do not know Christ, might “reveal to them the gospel of righteousness, unite them to His Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.”

Archbishop Tikhon was clear that the goal of the Orthodox mission in North America was not merely ministering to the immigrant ethnic groups, but bringing the Gospel to all people. Just as St. Herman and the original Alaskan mission did not come to serve only the Russian traders but also for the natives, and as St. Innocent clearly went out of his way to embrace the native populations, so St. Tikhon envisioned a Church that embraced all and served all.

Sadly, the vision that St. Tikhon embraced was soon lost. His return to Russia and election as Patriarch in 1917, in conjunction with the All-Russian Council, had the potential for great changes both there and in North America. However, the communist suppression of religion, which included the jailing of Tikhon and other clergy as well as the murder of thousands of believers, buried those reforms as the Church struggled to survive. In America, the effects of the Russian Revolution were far reaching, as the communist government attempted to gain control of the property of the Church in America, causing chaos and myriad of lawsuits. Many of the parishes retreated into ethnic ghettos and sought refuge under their “Mother” Patriarchs causing the jumble of jurisdictions that

---

171 Breck, Meyendorff, and Silk, eds., Legacy, 273.
exist today. When St. Tikhon was murdered by the communists in April 1925, his vision of a unified Orthodox partially died with him.

What these three missionary saints exhibited is critical in understanding evangelism in the Orthodox Church in America. First and most importantly, they focused on building and serving Eucharistic community. Whether they were placed in a particular location (St. Herman) or established communities either native (St. Innocent) or immigrant (St. Tikhon), they gathered he faithful and served them. Second, they exhibited a personal holiness which witnessed to the Faith and the Church. Third, they consistently reached out and served those around them. They had a cultural sensitivity and awareness that did not denigrate differences but embraced and directed them into the Church. Fourth, they were incredibly diligent in educating the people in the Faith, not just the rules of the Faith, rather, focusing on what it meant to be a Christian. Finally, they served the people in their language, learning, translating, contextualizing, and ultimately serving so that the liturgical life of the Church was understood by the community. All of these elements would be exhibited in the studied parishes because the evangelistic ethos of these saints has become embedded in how the OCA evangelizes. It has become a part of the very DNA of the Church.

7. Cultural Evangelistic Concepts

As was discussed earlier, the cultural situation in the Orthodox Church in America is unique in Orthodox history and faces complications not found in the ethnically homogeneous Churches found elsewhere. On an average Sunday, fifteen languages are used throughout the OCA.¹⁷² Unlike every other Orthodox denomination, the OCA is not dependent politically, economically, and or canonically on any outside entity, political authority, or foreign Patriarchate and, as such, neither gives nor receives money from any government. It is free to make its own mistakes and discover its own solutions. Therefore, it is a minority Church even among minority Orthodox Churches, as the majority of Orthodox denominations in the United States still fall under their ethnic Patriarch. In fact, while all Orthodox Churches recognize its canonicity, not all recognize its autocephaly. Within it, there are immigrants and converts, people who have been in the OCA for many

¹⁷² Those languages reflect the diversity of the OCA. They are English, Russian, French, Spanish, Romanian, Bulgarian, Albanian, Ukrainian, Polish, Slavonic, and five different native Alaskan languages.
generations and those who are new to the OCA. As such, there is something uniquely “American” about evangelism in the Orthodox Church. Despite the deep historic and theological connections with the “old country,” something different is happening here, despite the strong connection and adherence to the established Orthodox Church. Parishes here developed with a different context and faced differing challenges.

The final part of the source review needs to examine sources that addressed the uniquely North American context of the Church. Fr. Michael Oleksa is the important author on this context with his two vitally important books on Alaskan mission and spirituality: *Alaskan Mission Spirituality* and *Orthodox Alaska*. Alaska is the spiritual home of the OCA and as demonstrated in the last section, remains a powerful witness within the Church.

First published in 1987, *Alaskan Mission Spirituality* is one of the most important primary resources on the Alaskan mission. It contains translated texts of letters, reports, instructions and articles written by many of the most important missionaries to Alaska beginning in 1793, and through the establishment of the Diocese in 1840 and the sale of Alaska to the United States in 1867. The documents end with the transfer of the See of Alaska from Sitka to San Francisco in the 1872. There are letters describing the evangelistic challenges, stories of encounters with native villages, and even missives to American officials recounting the issues of the native Alaskans. The book also contains a translation, one of the most important missionary documents in the Orthodox Church, St. Innocent’s *Instructions to Missionaries*, written in 1853.

The second book, *Orthodox Alaska*, is a theological examination of mission and evangelism as seen through the lens of Alaska. It recounts some basic theology of mission, equating, for example, the mission of St. Herman to Alaska to that of Ss. Cyril and Methodius to Moravia. The book also recounts the various missionary efforts in Alaska, its successes and failures as well as the current state of the Church. Fr. Oleksa has a deep appreciation not only of the native Alaskan cultural heritage but also of the connection of the village parish life with the larger Orthodox Church. For Fr. Oleksa, the village and its people are the Church and focus must always be upon them. “In Orthodox villages, the people are the Church. The Church is not essentially a state-wide or national institution, important as the canonical structures of the Church may be. The Church is the community of believers assembled to praise, thank and worship God who has called them from
non-existence into being and eternal communion and life in Him.”\textsuperscript{173} It is the village which is the koinonia and the Church.

Finally, it should be noted that, as so eloquently stated by Fr. Oleksa, the Church in North America is here for North Americans. It is a home for all who may come to these lands and seek the Church, no matter their background, but it is here to be a Church in this land where it was planted. While this vision is not necessarily shared by all of the Orthodox jurisdictions in North America, it certainly remains the vision and purpose of the OCA. Fr. Oleksa writes, “In 1794, the first Orthodox missionary monks arrived at Kodiak to found what they believed would be an indigenous Orthodox Church in the New World, not an overseas ecclesiastical colony of the Russian, Greek, Syrian Churches, not a church ‘in exile’ from some other place.”\textsuperscript{174} It was a church for North America.

Because of this, it is critical to understand exactly how the OCA developed in the unique North America culture in order to understand the development of its evangelistic theology and parish life. The local community is part of that larger church. Part of this uniqueness is the controversial topic of the so-called “convert experience” in the Church. This is detailed in the last chapter, but there are a considerable number of resources that explore the topic from a variety of positions. While not unique on recounting the conversion experience into the Orthodox Church, there are certainly similar sources recounting the conversion experience in other church traditions. These books contain the personal stories of the conversion experience such as Frank Schaeffer’s \textit{Dancing Alone: The Quest for Orthodox Faith in the Age of False Religions}, Fr. Peter Gillquist’s \textit{Becoming Orthodox: A Journey to the Ancient Faith}, Michael Harper’s \textit{A Faith Fulfilled: Why are Christians Across Great Britain Embracing Orthodoxy} (not immediately relevant to North America but in line with stories found in the other books), Fredrica Mathewes-Green’s \textit{Facing East: A Pilgrim’s Journey into the Mysteries of the East}, and Fr. Joseph Huneycutt’s \textit{One Flew Over the Onion Dome: American Orthodox Converts, Retreads and Reverts}.

These books provide the invaluable insights of a person exploring Orthodoxy from the outside, and their individual journey towards the Orthodox Church, with all of its twists and turns. They

\textsuperscript{173} Oleksa, \textit{Alaska}, 212.

\textsuperscript{174} Oleksa, \textit{Alaska}, 221.
also explain what prompted the journey and its ultimate goal: to discover what they deem to be the authentic Church. As such they have examined the Church from many angles and provide invaluable insight and many of these stories parallel the stories recounted by people involved in this study. As Fr. Huneycutt writes, “For Americans, the study of Christianity can become one’s religion. The Convert’s path is often navigated by this ‘science’ of faith”\textsuperscript{175} In such light there were two additional books, Fr. Peter Gillquist’s \textit{Coming Home: Why Protestant Clergy are Becoming Orthodox} and Tom Doulis’ \textit{Journeys to Orthodoxy}, which contained numerous testimonies on people’s journey to the Orthodox Faith.

In addition, there is a plethora of books being published that examine Orthodox theology from various outside perspectives, addressed to potential seekers. Among the most widely read right now is the series by Clark Carleton, \textit{The Faith: Understanding Orthodox Christianity}, \textit{The Truth: What Every Roman Catholic Should Know About the Orthodox Church}, and \textit{The Way: What Every Protestant Should Know About the Orthodox Church}. These books seek to impart knowledge to non-Orthodox without getting too deeply into polemics or proselytism. What they do provide is an insight into the questions that various other Christians ask when they are looking into the Orthodox Church and answers them from a solid theological base. Many of the subjects of the present read and referred to these books.

Part of the mission and evangelistic paradigm of the OCA was challenged in the twentieth century; the mission in North America vacillated between times of bright hope and sad division. The parishes lost any understanding of evangelistic outreach to America and became a series of ethnic ghettos, each trying to preserve some idealized vision of the past. “Orthodoxy all but abandoned its missionary vocation \textit{in} America, and more pointedly, its missionary vocation \textit{to} America. As parishes struggled they did not attempt to evangelize, but to preserve.”\textsuperscript{176} Church leadership stressed ethnicity and language over the Canons of Orthodoxy. Much of the earlier glorious history of mission to Alaska and North America disappeared from the consciousness.

The shift began slowly and subtly. Immigrants who served in military in World War II now saw themselves as both Orthodox and American. As they embraced the American identity, subsequent

\textsuperscript{175} Joseph David Huneycutt, \textit{One Flew Over the Onion: Orthodox Converts, Retreads and Reverts} (Salisbury, MA: Regina Orthodox Press, 2007), 4.

\textsuperscript{176} Stokoe and Kishkovsky, \textit{Orthodox}, 70.
generations began challenging the ethnic jurisdictionalism. Intraethnic and intrareligious marriages increased the demand for English-language services and less focus on ethnicity. Furthermore, cross-regional moves broke ties to old neighborhoods. Therefore the Church experienced internal schizophrenia as the number of ethnic jurisdictions multiplied, the American descendants of the immigrants, as well as the many American converts, were not particularly interested in European cultural differences and politics. Furthermore, these later generations did not regard religious faith and ethnic identity as inseparable. From the 1960s onward, these factors impelled the movement towards Orthodox unity in America.\footnote{Erickson, Orthodoxy, 103.} However despite the restoration of a certain missionary ethos, the Church, has, in part, continued to struggle with issues of ethnic and cultural ghettos. This struggle is still evident in the studied parishes.

8. **The Orthodox Church in America Today**

The immediate years following autocephaly was marked by rapid growth as the leadership established new parishes in geographical regions with no historical Orthodox presence. Chart A indicates the change in geographical presence in the United States from 2000 to 2010.\footnote{From Alexei Krindatch’s 2010 US Orthodox Christian Census which was compiled as part of the “Religious Congregations and Membership Study 2010”. See www.RCMS2010.org. All charts used in this study are from that source unless otherwise indicated.} In context, 1793 to 1970 the Metropolia established 253 parishes. Due to demographic relocations and clustered parishes in a region, the OCA closed 46 parishes between 1970 and 2000, but established 203 during the same timeframe. This net gain of 157 parishes in just thirty years represented a rate of growth not experienced since the immigration waves of the early twentieth century.

However, the Church created preponderance of the new missions during the 1970s, with the number decreasing each following decade. While this could indicate the fulfillment of demographic needs, a new Church Planting Grant Program enabled the founding of forty additional missions in just four years, 2000-2004, (one of which is a parish in this study) indicating a renewed missionary zeal in the OCA.\footnote{These numbers are based on the statistical information located on the OCA website which lists each parish and the date of the founding. Likewise, the closing of parishes is found in archival data at the OCA headquarters.} The following chart shows the number of parishes since 1866 when records for parish establishment were kept.
There are three clear rises in the number of Metropolia/OCA parishes in North America. The first occurred during the immigration waves in the early twentieth century. The second clear rise followed autocephaly. The final transpired in the 2000s when the OCA gave more attention and funding to missions. The three parishes in this study precisely mirror the history of the OCA outlined in this chapter: one was founded during the first wave of immigration, the second in the immediate aftermath of autocephaly, and the third during the recent increase.

The three parishes also have a connection to those closed after autocephaly, many of which were located in urban centers. All three of these are located outside of metropolitan/micropolitan urban centers and benefited from the late century suburban flight. Chart B indicates the demographic change by geography of parishes in the OCA.\(^{180}\)

Currently, the Orthodox Church in America has fourteen dioceses located in Canada, the United States, and Mexico. The locations of the parishes are indicated in Chart C. Of the fourteen Dioceses, three are ethnic and thus cover all of their ethnic parishes in North America: Albanian, Bulgarian and Romanian. For the purposes of this study, concentration will only concentrate on OCA dioceses and parishes in the United States. Chart D has the demographic breakdown of all

---

\(^{180}\) See pages 246ff for charts.
Orthodox jurisdictions as a comparison of the size of the OCA compared to other Orthodox Churches in North America. The current concentration of parishes in the OCA is located mainly in the Northeast, Midwest, and the West (see Chart E cartogram). This is fairly consistent with the other Orthodox jurisdictions as is the general demographic breakdown as seen in this survey from the Pew Forum (Chart F) and aligns closely to the results of the parish surveys in Chapter Five.

There are currently 551 parishes in the United States with approximately 84,900 adherents for an average of 154 parishioners per church. In contrast, the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, the largest Orthodox body in the United States, has 525 parishes with 476,900 adherents for approximately 908 parishioners each. Interestingly, from 2000 to 2010 the Greek Archdiocese increased by 5% from 501 to 525 parishes whereas the OCA increased by 21% from 456 to 551. During this time, the character of the Dioceses changed. The Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania used to be one of the largest since many immigrants worked in the mining and manufacturing centers there. As these two industries declined the population dispersed and it is now one of the smaller dioceses, struggling to survive with an aging and ever decreasing population. The Mechanicsburg parish is located in this Diocese. The Diocese of the West, the location of the Tacoma parish, covers a vast territory, contains some of the oldest parishes and newest missions in the OCA. There had been a conscious decision to grow the diocese by planting missions across the vast territory that it covers from Hawaii to Washington to California to Colorado. The third parish, Wheaton, is in the Diocese of the Midwest, the largest OCA diocese in the United States. It has a mixture of regions of serious decline (the “rust belt” in Detroit and Cleveland), regions of positive growth (many suburban), as well as regions in stasis (the rural areas), Charts G through J demonstrates the location of these parishes in relation to regions, size of populations, and community size. As demonstrated by these charts, the OCA is small, clustered around certain regions and mostly near larger urban areas.

The granting of autocephaly completely changed the focus of the OCA as the leadership made a conscious effort to regain the evangelical ethos as demonstrated by St. Herman, St. Innocent and St. Tikhon. Of the eighteen All-American Councils held since 1970, a vast majority of them

---

embraced the theme of missions, evangelism, and engaging the North American culture and produced volumes of material on the topic. What is also critical to understand from a historical point is that the three parishes in the study were consistently affected by the events of the Church. One parish (Tacoma) was adversely affected by the Living Church controversy and almost closed due it. Another parish (Wheaton) was specifically part of the new mission movement in the late 1980s and another (Mechanicsburg) was part of the Planting Grant Program of the 2000s.

Despite this legacy there are a continuing host of challenges, from the financial and leadership scandals to a certain level of stagnation, despondency, and even skepticism about the OCA. This is exacerbated by continuing outside pressure from certain “Mother” Churches seeking to expand their geographical reach and looking to maintain a connection with the new migration. “Where political and cultural differences between the above groups have remained sharp and jurisdictional fractiousness continues to remain the sad state of affairs within the Orthodox churches in North America, the saintly spun ideal of the erasure of fixed boundaries between groups and peoples retains its potency and allure.” Despite these challenges, the OCA is honestly seeking to discover its place in world Orthodoxy, grow new parishes, and answer the same basic questions that the early missionaries sought to understand. In short, the OCA still seeks to understand if this Orthodox Church can truly engage and be a part of the North American religious landscape in a meaningful manner.

9. Review Summary

Despite the initial misgivings about the lack of supporting resources, I discovered a plethora of available material waiting for me to uncover and sift through. This material began with foundational books by Bosch, Yannoulatos, Schmemann, and others that explored various aspects of evangelism by concentrating on such areas as community, Liturgy, missional theology. The chapter proceeded by exploring mission and evangelism in early Church history and how it formed around basic principles still applicable today. The shift from the early Church to established Church is a significant part of the study as it demonstrates how the current model and foundations

---

182 For a summary of all of the All-American Councils, see http://oca.org/history-archives/aacs.
183 The Living Church controversy was an attempt by the Communist government in Russia following the Revolution to impose a controlled “Church” on the Russian Orthodox Church. The Living Church claimed ownership over all Russian Orthodox church property in the United States and led to many court cases.
184 Slagle, “All-American Saints,” 183.
(Liturgy and parish life) were established. I then recounted some important historical issues and missionary saints that would affect the development of the evangelistic methods of the Orthodox Church in America. This shift accounts for part of the distinctive characteristics of Orthodox evangelism. Finally, I reviewed some important cultural contextual evangelism books that point to a deeper background for the study. In the next chapter I will outline the research methods and reasoning employed in this study.
Chapter 3  
Research Methods

...the fact of the matter is that there is no praxis without theory, even where the theory is not spelled out.... For this reason, praxis needs the critical control of theory – in our case, a critical theology of mission, which is dependent upon the context without, however, elevating operational effectiveness to the highest norm.

David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*\(^{185}\)

1. Introduction

As recounted in previous chapters, research into the theory and practice of evangelism in the Orthodox Church is more complex than originally envisioned. Bosch reflects, “In the best of contextual theology, it is no longer possible to juxtapose theory and praxis; orthodoxy and orthopraxis.”\(^{186}\) It involves an array of subjects that cover such diverse areas as theology, ecclesiology, history, patristics, and even sociology. As such it would be nearly impossible to cover such a wide-ranging set of topics sufficiently and in ample detail. But these subjects do form the backdrop to the rest of the study and must be implicit in the Action Research portion.

David Bosch particularly recognized the need for such outlining of theory in order to better understand the praxis. This chapter will now turn its attention to how to describe and understand the practice through the Action Research component or, how is evangelism actually being done in the parishes and does it test the theories outlined in previous chapters. This appreciation for the praxis has been my research interest from the earliest period of my ministry, as discussed in Chapter One. But it also involved my time as the Chair of the Department of Evangelization for the OCA and developing many of the OCA’s policies and procedures on new church planting. Many of the concepts that are explored in this dissertation are based on those years of meeting and talking to mission communities as well as being a rector in both established and mission parishes.

The question of praxis is also part of my current position as Secretary of the Orthodox Church in America. My current position has given me a holistic view of the Orthodox Church in North America and its evangelistic efforts by the different jurisdictions. But I have discovered that while the theory is critical, most parishes desire to have a better understanding and modeling of effective

---

\(^{185}\) Bosch, *Transforming*, 431.

\(^{186}\) Bosch, *Transforming*, 424.
evangelism on the parish level. With this in mind, the Action Research portion was designed to address this need.

2. **Design/Approach**

The major research portion of this dissertation is the Action Research component, which is a qualitative analysis of data that was gathered through multiple sources in a field setting. It is this qualitative approach to the subject of evangelism that lay at the foundation of this project: seeking an understanding of the lived experience of evangelism in multiple parish settings. Tim Sensing succinctly summarizes such an approach, “Qualitative research is grounded in the social world of experience and seeks to make sense of lived experience.”\(^{187}\) It is through the lived experience of evangelism in parishes that this study seeks to comprehend what are effective methods and approaches to evangelism in the Orthodox Church in America.

The chosen research methodology for this project is the case study method, which allows for the integration of various facets of addressing individual parish’s implementation of evangelism. Integrating these components allows for a complete and realistic view of events in the parish setting in order to derive meaning from them. As the well-known proponent of the case study method Robert Yin writes, “In brief, the case study method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events…”\(^{188}\) Sensing concurs that this method is particularly useful when studying parishes writing, “The case study method is a tool often used by D.Min. students to enable participants in their projects to access lived experiences of others. Case studies are particularly useful in congregational and para-church settings because they can help a diverse group of participants become more creative in addressing community issues.”\(^{189}\) Therefore, the case study methodology lends itself to such a project by examining each parish, with related quantitative and qualitative research, in order to form a narrative of the phenomenon, which is deep and rich in detail, and allows for an analysis of the topic. In short, case study methodology allows for an in-depth examination of the “what” and the “how.”\(^{190}\)

\(^{189}\) Sensing, *Qualitative*, 141.
\(^{190}\) Yin. *Case*, 8.
As John W. Creswell writes, “Case study research is a qualitative approach in which an investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through a detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case based-themes.”¹⁹¹ As such, this study utilized multiple bounded systems, in this case a group of parishes, collected multiple sources of data from these systems, in order write a narrative on what methods and theories parishes in the Orthodox Church in America utilize in evangelism. As Yin specifically recommends, my sources included interviews, questionnaires, direct observations, and documentary evidences, all of which I integrated into this study.¹⁹² As such, this study met all of the requirements for such methodology.

Case study methodology can be a single case or a multiple case study, depending on the breadth needed for collecting the data. As implied, the multiple case study methodology requires the selection and study of several representative examples in order to form the narrative of the research.¹⁹³ I determined that a single parish study would be too narrow and perhaps present what Yin calls “a particularizing analysis”, that is, a conclusion that relates only to that particular situation or context.¹⁹⁴ Therefore, in this study, I chose three diverse parishes that could provide the broader perspective necessary to understand the theory and practice of evangelism in the US context. This approach allowed more “generalization” in which facts, circumstances and contexts overlap to provide a richer understanding.

Another further advantage of the case study is that it works through a bounded system in which the event of interest is confined to a particular time and space. The parish is naturally a bounded system, as it is limited to a particular group of people with similar experiences during a specific time period. Furthermore, I did not choose these parishes randomly, rather I used “purposeful sampling” in order to allow a more extensive analysis of information.¹⁹⁵ Consciously choosing each case (parish) ensured that the three parishes were interconnected yet distinctive enough to provide a broad range of data. While they are interconnected as active and effective parishes of the

¹⁹² As related in Creswell, *Qualitative*, 75.
¹⁹³ Creswell, *Qualitative*, 74.
¹⁹⁴ Yin, *Case*, 15.
¹⁹⁵ Creswell, *Qualitative*, 75.
Orthodox Church in America, they each have their own context and history. This allows for an understanding of the relation and interconnection between all the study components while still remaining unique bounded systems.\footnote{William R. Myers, \textit{Research in Ministry: A Primer for the Doctor of Ministry Program} (Memphis, TN: Exploration Press, 2000), 3.}

A further recommendation of the case study method is that it is critical in integrating a formed theory that, in turn, can be tested and studied in order to confirm or reject the theory. In fact, it is explicitly suggested by proponents of such a methodology that the researcher should already have a general “hunch” before commencing research in order properly to select the case studies and to guide data collection and analysis. However, the working theory should not limit the researcher, as emphasized by Myers who wrote, “While the student’s initial theory about a specific problem in the practice of ministry is, therefore, often at best tentative and is certainly open to reformulation, struggling to name it at the earliest possible moment in the D.Min. process both accents and complements whatever theory will emerge as the student engages in evaluating the data gathered throughout the case study.”\footnote{Myers, \textit{Research}, 15.}

Finally, the case study allows the researcher to build a story around the theoretical framework. As Myers emphasizes, “Case studies are always narrative descriptions about specific practices of ministry and problems that such ministerial practice is trying to address. This means that ‘story’ with plot, characters, crisis, reversal and resolution – can and should occur in D.Min. papers. Data therefore gets organized with a framework of themes/major ideas that work towards presenting a story.”\footnote{Myers, \textit{Research}, 71.} This allows the study to become more than a dry recitation of facts about evangelism in the Orthodox Church; instead, the personal stories allow the narrative to take on flesh and personality.

\section*{3. Triangulation}

One of the most critical concepts in the gathering and analysis of qualitative data in case study methodology is triangulation, which is defined as using a variety of overlapping data sources in order to confirm conclusions discovered through the research. This is especially significant since samples from smaller data sources may be limiting or even too general for conclusive analysis. By
taking various methods of data analysis, as small as they might be, a more reliable conclusion can be confirmed, comparing different source material. As Sensing acknowledges, “Any single approach will have limitations. Subsequently, triangulation (multiple data-collection technologies designed to measure a single concept or construct) provides a complex view of the intervention enabling a ‘thicker’ interpretation.” Sensing argues that triangulation provides for a way to cross check the data, to provide breadth and depth to the data, and to validate and increase the trustworthiness of the data. In other words, triangulation allows for a more reliable source of corroborative evidence. Sensing outlines numerous ways in which triangulation can be achieved but for the purposes of this study two are relevant: data triangulation and investigator triangulation.

The first type of triangulation is data triangulation, which provides for the gathering and analysis of various sources of information. Yin recommends multiple sources in order to achieve this concept of triangulation, including: documents, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observation, and physical artifacts. While this list is not by any means exhaustive, it does provide for a more complete source of evidence. Other elements may be integrated that include documents, photos, demographics, etc. The researcher is encouraged to be creative in gathering different sources of data in order to achieve a “converging line of inquiry,” which allows for validation of concepts. “However, the most important advantage presented by multiple sources of evidence is the development of converging line of inquiry, a process of triangulation and corroboration.”

In this study, there were numerous sources of information gathered. This included a general questionnaire to clergy, leaders and parishioners, individual interviews with clergy, general interviews with parishioners, direct observation, collection of demographic material, and other

---

199 Sensing, *Qualitative*, 72.
200 Sensing, *Qualitative*, 72.
201 Sensing, *Qualitative*, 73. Yin also lists 4 types of triangulation. The first is data triangulation which uses a variety of data sources in a study. This will be discussed in detail in this chapter. The second is investigator triangulation which utilizes different various investigators to research the problem. This also will be discussed in the chapter. Another type is theory triangulation which uses multiple perspectives to interpret the data. This is not used in examining the data but was utilized in forming an initial thesis. The final type is methodological triangulation which may utilize different methodologies such as ethnography and phenomenology in conjunction with case study in order to correlate the data. This was not utilized. For more information see Sensing, *Qualitative*, 73-81.
relevant archival material. This met the criteria for triangulation as outlined by both Yin and Sensing and provided for a deep and rich analysis of each parish in the study. A more detailed explanation of the sources for triangulation will be discussed later in the chapter.

Another approach to triangulation, according to Sensing, is to use investigator triangulation. Investigator triangulation uses different evaluators, who are also sources of the information, to conduct the research. While it is often not possible to have multiple people available to assist in the research, there is a manner to achieve this that is already embedded in the process. This is the use of the concept of outsider, insider and researcher.\textsuperscript{204} The outsider is defined as the quantitative material gathered about each parish such as demographics. The insider is those who are being interviewed and/or completing the questionnaires. The researcher is defined as the person doing the actual research. The graph illustrates the convergences and triangulation of data by such a method:

In the case of this research, the outside data included the demographic and other quantitative data that will be explored in Chapter Four.\textsuperscript{205} The inside data included numerous sources. The first was a questionnaire to parish clergy, parish leadership, and the parishioners.\textsuperscript{206} It also included

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{204} Sensing, \textit{Qualitative}, 75.
\item\textsuperscript{205} Such quantitative material was drawn from surveys done by the Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies (http://www.rcms2010.org), the Hartford Institute for Religion Research (http://www.hartfordinstitute.org), and the Pew Research Center (http://www.pewresearch.org). They are the major locations on quantitative statistical research on religion, demographics and statistics and each have dedicated sections to the geographical locations of the parishes as well as surveys on the Orthodox Church in North America.
\item\textsuperscript{206} For the purposes of this study, clergy are defined as the assigned priests and deacons of the individual parish. Priests and deacons are assigned by the bishop of the diocese and report directly to the bishop. They are properly and duly ordained by an Orthodox bishop and are enrolled on the list of clergy of the Orthodox Church in America and compensated by the assigned parish. The clergy are the main celebrants at the Divine services and are responsible for the overall life of the parish. The parish leadership is defined as lay members of the parish council. While the structure of a parish council may vary in each parish, the main duty is assist the parish priest in the operation of the parish and to execute the approved parish by-laws. Upon election (or selection depending on the parish and diocesan by-laws) they must be confirmed by the diocesan bishop. They are responsible for the material needs of the parish so such duties as finances and maintenance. They are volunteers and meet regularly with the
\end{itemize}
individual interviews with the parish clergy and group interviews with the parish leaders and laity. Finally the researcher is defined as myself, who visited each site, presented the questionnaires, conducted the interviews, and participated in direct observation of the parish.\textsuperscript{207} The use of this investigator triangulation, while not solely forming the picture, did allow for a more complete gathering of data. “For qualitative research, three angles of vision are considered the saturation point to support the criteria of trustworthiness.”\textsuperscript{208} Thus this research with both data and investigator triangulation has brought a serious level of reliability and trustworthiness to the data. \textsuperscript{209}

4. Setting and Site Selection

As stated, for the Action Research component, I analyzed a select group of parishes in the Orthodox Church in America. With the consent of the diocesan bishops and clergy, I chose each of these for their perceived dedication to evangelism, the vibrancy of their outreach, and my intimate knowledge of their communities. For these reasons, I knew that my selections would likely be “information rich”.\textsuperscript{210} The three parishes are representative of the general demographics of parishes in the Orthodox Church in America, in that they are a mixture of large, medium, and small parishes; they are relatively older, medium, and younger parishes; they each have a mixture of ethnic Orthodox, “cradle” American Orthodox, and converts; and the clergy are of varying ages.

I based my site selection on five criteria. First, the parish had to have had a history of engaging evangelism within the parish and discussing this perspective with others. This established that the parishes had actively been discussing the theology and practice of evangelism. Second, the parish

\footnotesize{clergy. The laity is defined as the members of the parish as defined by the Statute of the Orthodox Church in America (http://oca.org/statute), which is someone who is baptized and chrismated in the Orthodox Church, an adult over 18 years of age, partakes of the sacrament of confession and communion at least once a year and has fulfilled all financial obligations as established by the Orthodox Church in America. All formal requirements and definition can be found in the Statute of the Orthodox Church in America (http://oca.org/statute).}

\footnotesize{Data collection was conducted over 5 days of visitations to each of the three parishes. Mechanicsburg, April 4-9; Wheaton, May 16-21; and Tacoma, June 14-18, 2013.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{208} Sensing, \textit{Qualitative}, 76.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{209} A short footnote on what is called the Hawthorne Effect (Sensing, \textit{Qualitative}, 82), which basically states that research can be less dependable when subjects know they are being researched. In some cases, there were answers given that were expected to be the answers that the researched thought the researcher wanted to hear rather than what the really thought. While not being able to completely mitigate this problem, a discovery of having two sources of information for a single person (questionnaire and interview) as well as adjusting the order of questions (which will be discussed later) greatly assisted at addressing this problem.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{210} Sensing, \textit{Qualitative}, 83.}
had to have had a proven history that this evangelism had some sort of effect on the stability of the parish. Third, the parish needed to be a stable or growing parish that demonstrated that whatever methodology it employed was effective on some level. Fourth, the parish had to have leadership (particularly a priest) who believed strongly in having the parish engage evangelism on all levels of parish life. Finally, I needed to have a knowledge of the parish and the work they were doing in order to be able to discern their activity. Likewise, they needed to be willing to be researched and to trust me as a researcher.

These initial criteria narrowed the list of potential candidates to over twenty parishes, which led to the second level of selection. The second level of selection was based on the general demographics of parishes of the Orthodox Church in America. The selected parishes could not all be located in one growing region nor could it be a parish based solely on one ethnographic or demographic model. Instead, the parishes needed to be representative of the Orthodox Church in America. The remaining parishes were then divided between large, medium and small parishes; urban, suburban, and rural; older, medium, and younger parishes; and a mixture of ethnic, “cradle” Orthodox, and converts into the Church. Finally, clergy should be of varying ages and experience. This selection process whittled down the group to six parishes who met the criteria.

The final selection was to be three parishes which allowed for a workable collection and evaluation of data. The final selection of three parishes was based on geographical location so that differing locations of the Orthodox Church in America were highlighted. In the final analysis, the three parishes met the outlined criteria and could confidently be put forward as representative of effective evangelizing parishes. Sensing describes such a selection process as “purposive,” in that the samples were specifically selected due to their being considered “information rich.”211 That is, through an intimate knowledge of the proposed parishes they would be most likely able to provide data that would be useful in the research.

The following brief review provides the rationale for my selection. I will examine each parish in greater depth in Chapter Five:

---

211 Sensing, *Qualitative*, 83.
Holy Resurrection Orthodox Church, Tacoma, Washington. This parish is one of the oldest parishes in North America. Russian immigrants originally founded the parish in Wilkinson, Washington, a remote coal mining region on the slopes of Mount Rainer, and St. Tikhon of Moscow consecrated the church in 1902. From 1929 to 1985, the parish did not have a full time priest, rather they relied on traveling priests. In 1985, the local bishop assigned a full-time priest and instructed him to determine the viability of the parish. The priest decided to remain with the parish, and embarked on a program that included relocating it from the historic, but remote, church building in Wilkinson to Tacoma, a thriving suburb of Seattle. It is now a medium sized, dynamic parish in the region and it continues to grow. Furthermore, during the past several years, an impressive number of seminary students have come from this parish. There is a dynamic spiritual life and the parish attracts many people from the area. I chose this parish as a representative older parish, which initially ministered to a specific ethnic group, as was common in early OCA churches, but transformed itself through evangelism.

St. Joseph Orthodox Church, Wheaton, Illinois. This parish, which was established in 1988 in the heart of evangelical Protestant territory, sits across the street from Wheaton College and the Billy Graham Center, with which it has good relations. For many years it has led the way in evangelism as the priest was the former Director of Missions and is the Communications Manager for the OCA. The parish was specifically founded in order to explore new evangelistic and outreach techniques that reached out to both ethnic Orthodox and new converts. As a result, this multi-ethnic and multi-cultural community attracts a large number of new parishioners and the clergy conduct numerous services in different languages. It is now one of the largest and liveliest parishes in the OCA with many programs and a ministry team to assist in pastoring the large community. It has excellent facilities and is constantly adding new space to accommodate its growth. The parish is representative of the movement in the OCA after autocephaly, which explored a way to specifically bridge the gap between and ethnic and American society.

Holy Apostles Orthodox Church, Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania. This is one of the newer parishes and a directed plant from a Church Planting Program, which was established by the OCA. The mission was established in 2004 after a lengthy preparation program in which a specific need and location for a parish was identified. A newly graduated priest was assigned to the mission. The mission is in a diocese which has not seen a new mission in many years (Eastern Pennsylvania)
and the diocese itself is in critical decline. This mission has demonstrated that there are still opportunities for growth for Orthodox parishes in the region. The parish is a mixture of people from many backgrounds. The parish demographic is young and lively as well as very traditional. They have established many new programs that are actively attended. They currently own a large space in a strip mall that has been converted into an Orthodox temple, an approach that has increasingly become a standard method in Orthodox missions. They have just purchased a sizeable lot to build a traditional Orthodox temple. I chose this parish as representative of the recent movement to plan and plant parishes in identified regions of potential growth.

As noted above, I determined that these three parishes provided the proper venue for research, data collection, and analysis. While there may be other parishes that could similarly provide data, these three form a representative sample of parishes dedicated to evangelism in the Orthodox Church in America. Despite their differing ages, locations, and community focus, all have a common devotion to, and success in, evangelistic outreach. As the most critical aspect of research is verifiable data from various sources, which lend itself to analysis, these parishes each proved a wellspring of data. As such, the qualitative data collected from these parishes provided such data which could be analyzed in a particular supportable manner through triangulation.

5. **Data-Gathering Procedures with Rationale**

The Action Research component had two distinct phases. The preparatory work exploring both the theology and theory of evangelism laid the foundation for the interviews, questionnaires, and direct observation that formed the first phase. I scheduled a five day on-site visit to each parish, during which I conducted a three part interview process. First I met with the parish clergy. After they answered a specific questionnaire tailored to their position, I conducted a lengthy recorded interview that covered parish history, operations, and theology. I followed this by meeting with the parish council, which is customarily the formal leadership that assists the priest in parish operations. The parish leadership also answered a targeted questionnaire as well as participated in a group interview session. However, this interview session was not as lengthy as the one with the clergy, and it soon became clear that many interviewees simply did not have significantly different knowledge or the expertise in parish operations. Finally, I submitted a questionnaire, which was similar to that given to the parish leadership, to the parish as a whole and then conducted a group interview with interested individuals. This, along with actual observance and notes, formed a fully-
dimensional picture of each parish and the related programs. I also examined other material on outreach programs in the parishes such as bulletins and other program material for integration into the study as part of the investigator triangulation.

Thus, I utilized both data triangulation and investigator triangulation in phase one. By learning details of each parish, including their struggles and successes, the practical steps they took to reach out to the community, the current programs and relevant activities, I was able to build a “thicker” narrative of their particular practice and application of evangelism. By employing different sources of data and even different methods of gathering the data, I was able to follow the narrative more deeply, which enabled me to initially identify the common and unique elements of evangelism in each parish, which formed the baseline for further analysis. This analysis, in turn, characterized and focused in on the different methodologies each parish employed.

The second phase of the Action Research component is the analysis phase. There I examined any relevant quantitative and historical documents such as demographics, histories, and other relevant public documents, to formulate an objective description of the evangelistic efforts in the parishes. Then I coded the collected interviews and surveys and organized them into a narrative on evangelism in the parish communities. Then I combined the results for each of the parishes as one narrative to answer each of the six major research questions as listed in Chapter One. I could then compare and contrast these case studies in order to tease out the major evangelistic principles that will be examined in more detail later in the concluding chapter. Finally, I examined the analysis in light of the proposed theology of koinonic evangelism. These two phases ensured an accurate narrative of the evangelistic efforts in all three parishes.

6. **Data Sources (interviews, questionnaires, direct observations)**

The Action Research portion of the study relied on three major data sources: interviews (both individual and group), questionnaires, and observation. The major research question itself along with the six ancillary questions and the need for triangulation drove the need for three data sources. These data sources were both interactive and observant so that I could compare the parish actions with the clergies’, leaders’ and parishioners’ impressions in order to form an objective picture from the various subjective perspectives.
Since a single parish would be too narrow in focus and would not provide enough data, I decided to broaden the perspective to three parishes in order to collect deeper and broader qualitative data on the evangelistic approaches, theories, and techniques in effective parishes. Through this, the study was able to examine a broad spectrum of clergy, parish leaders and parishioners. It is the breadth and depth of data which validates the results in this research.

6.1. Interviews

There are three distinct interview groups within each parish: clergy, parish leadership, and parishioners. The clergy encompasses all assigned priests and deacons in the parish. The parish leadership is the lay members of the parish council. The parishioners are any other members of the parish who voluntarily chose to participate. These categories conform with normal parish organization and leadership structures as defined by the Statute of the Orthodox Church in America.212

I recorded and transcribed all interviews with the permission of the interviewees. All participants signed a University of Toronto Ethics Review Board approved consent form.213 The interviewees had no prior knowledge of the questions, which allowed for spontaneous and truthful answers. I left the discussion open-ended in order to have a free flowing discussion of the parish, personal reflections, and observations. This personal interaction “allow[s] people to describe their situation and put words in their interior lives, personal feelings, opinions and experiences that otherwise are not available to the researcher by observation.”214 The questions are located in Appendices B and C.

Due to the unique and involved perspective of the clergy, I conducted the clergy interviews first. Due to the hierarchical nature of the Orthodox Church, the clergy sets the parish vision and leads the operational aspects of parish life. Although the lay leadership contributes to this, it is the clergy that is ultimately responsible for all decisions and programs within the church. Therefore, the priest is in the best position to understand the posture of the parish. For this reason, I began with a one to two-hour interview with the main priest. Each interview had five major sections: history,

---

212 See www.oca.org.
213 See Appendix A.
214 Sensing, Qualitative, 103.
demographics, general parish information, evangelism, and catechism.\textsuperscript{215} Not only did these categories give me a close understanding of the parish and its evangelization efforts, but also exposed any unique internal and external forces at work. For example, under the category of history, the initial questions focused on notable events in the parish’s history, and the priest’s answers provided the direction for further questions. In general, parish information, and questions about finances provided understanding of parish priorities and where evangelism stood on that list. These questions created a comprehensive picture of the parish and formed the foundation of the case study narrative found in Chapter Four.

I used an identical set of questions for both the parish leadership and the parishioners at large. Since I wanted to determine if the parish leadership and the parishioners held the same understanding of parish programs, these questions focused on the topic of evangelism.\textsuperscript{216} I followed up with group interviews, as there was not enough time to do an in-depth interview with each participant. These group interviews had a different dynamic than the individual clergy interviews. The interaction among the interviewees created a multi-faceted pool of data as the discussion ranged between topics, with the interviewees prompting and correcting one another. This is in line with theories of research which finds that “synergy of the group will often provide richer data than if each person in the group had been interviewed separately.”\textsuperscript{217}

I chose to structure the questions in a specific order that would take the participants from the general to the personal. The questions begin with a general question of parish history and how the person came to that particular parish. This was followed by questions on the uniqueness of the parish and reasons for choosing a particular parish. The following set of questions are “opinion based” questions on how the parish can do things right, better, or differently. This order of questions enables the interviewees to increase their comfort level by encouraging them to talk about themselves and their experience in the parish, which increases their comfort level. After these personal questions come the questions on evangelism, which include definitions of evangelism, examples of evangelism and the centrality of the parish’s liturgical life. These

\textsuperscript{215} See Appendix B.  
\textsuperscript{216} See Appendix C.  
\textsuperscript{217} Sensing, \textit{Qualitative}, 120.
questions encourage more personal and reflective answers from the parishioners than those of the clergy.

A major problem with such interviews conducted by an outsider is that the interviewees may give the answer that they think the interviewer desires. This is known as the “Hawthorne Effect,” and can distract from the research and affect the validity of the data. This phenomenon is especially prevalent in research in parishes as, “on the one hand, congregants want their ministers to do well. When they know the minister is doing a project for a grade, they want their minister to make an A. On the other hand, most participants are chosen because they believe in the project, want the project to succeed, and subsequently forget about the research side of the equation.”

In order to mitigate such an effect, it is essential to order the questions so that the respondents are led through questions that establish their experiences, without them realizing that they are actually discussing evangelism. It was only later in the interview that the subject of evangelism is explicitly brought out and the conversation flows more easily, since it is now equated with the personal story. Following up the questionnaire with a group interview mitigates the Hawthorne Effect as people are less likely to embellish in a group.

The first parish interviewed was Holy Apostles Orthodox Church in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania. I began with the parish priest and interviewed him for one hour and eighteen minutes. The second set of interviews was with the parish leadership, which consisted of eight individuals including the priest and deacon. This interview was one hour and three minutes. The parish interviews were divided into two periods due to scheduling. These lasted one hour and six minutes and thirty-eight minutes respectively. There were twenty to twenty-five in the first interview and thirty to thirty-five in the second interview.

Holy Resurrection Orthodox Church in Tacoma, Washington, interviews followed the same pattern. The first interview was with the parish priest and lasted one hour and fifty-one minutes. The second interview was with the parish leadership, approximately fifteen including clergy, and lasted one hour and three minutes. There were again two interview sessions with parishioners

---

218 Sensing, *Qualitative*, 82.
consisting of thirty to thirty-five at each session. The session lasted fifty-two minutes and thirty-eight minutes respectively.

Once again, St. Joseph Orthodox Church in Wheaton, Illinois, also followed the same pattern although with much larger in numbers, as it is the largest of the three parishes. The first session was with the parish priest and lasted two hours and six minutes. There were approximately twenty individuals at the leadership interview, which included four clergy. This interview lasted forty-nine minutes. There were again two interview sessions since there are two separate services on Sunday (one in English and one in Slavonic). There were between forty and forty-five individuals at each session, and they lasted fifty-eight minutes and thirty-minutes.

6.2. Questionnaires

The second set of data needed for the triangulation is a formal set of questionnaires. I targeted the surveys to the same three levels of parish organization: clergy, leadership, and parishioners. Although all three share some general questions, the clergy and leadership surveys have specific questions on topics such as leadership in parish council meetings and the parishioner surveys have questions about personal experiences.\(^{219}\) The clergy and leadership questionnaire have twenty-two questions and the parish questionnaire have thirty-two questions. The respondent did not need to answer all of the questions as some did not apply (e.g., questions about conversion to the Orthodox faith do not apply to a “cradle” Orthodox, while the reverse is true of questions concerning ethnicity). The original research question and the six sub-questions posed in Chapter One provide the framework for these questions and are not dissimilar to the interview questions posed earlier. The questions are a mixture of written free response, ranking of answers and check “all that apply.”\(^{220}\) Afterwards, I fed the data into the Survey Gold software program, which organized and analyzed the responses.\(^{221}\)

A total of eight clergy answered the questionnaires (one from Mechanicsburg, five from Tacoma, and three from Wheaton). All respondents are white males, married, with children. They represent

\(^{219}\) See Appendices D, E, and F for questionnaires.

\(^{220}\) For an examination of the different type of questions, see the table in Sensing, \textit{Qualitative}, 114.

\(^{221}\) Survey Gold is a recognized secure software program for quantitative and qualitative surveys. It collects and tabulates results and can manipulate data as per the user’s needs. See www.surveygoldsolutions.com for more information. A license was purchased at the student rate.
a wide variety of experience and have between ten and forty years of service to the Church. Their ages vary, with one in the thirty-thirty-nine year range, one in the forty-forty-nine year range and seven over fifty-years-old. The age does range towards a higher age group which is fairly consistent with other respondent groups.

A total of eleven parishioners answered the parish leadership questionnaire (seven from Mechanicsburg, three from Tacoma and one from Wheaton). Not every person in the parish leadership in the different parishes chose to answer the questionnaire. The respondents consist of nine males and two females; eight are married, one single, one widowed and one divorced. Nine have children and two are childless. The age does range towards a higher age group, which is fairly consistent with other respondent groups.

Parishioners answered the largest set. Sixty-nine people responded, with thirty-three coming from Mechanicsburg, twenty-four from Tacoma, and twelve from Wheaton. The age also does range towards a higher age group, which is fairly consistent with other respondent groups.

![Age of Respondents (All Parishes)](image)
Age of Respondents (Mechanicsburg)

- Less than 18: 8%
- 18-29: 17%
- 40-49: 8%
- 50 or older: 67%

Age of Respondents (Tacoma)

- Less than 18: 4%
- 30-39: 4%
- 40-49: 13%
- 50 or older: 79%
Likewise, overall the respondents are evenly split between male and female with thirty-six male (52.17%) and thirty-three female (47.83%) respondents. Across all three parishes, an overwhelming number are married (82%), white (98%), and with children (78%).

The respondents divert sharply when comparing the number of converts versus the “cradle” Orthodox. Overall 67% of the respondents are converts and 33% are born into the Faith. This is uneven as broken down by parish as in Mechanicsburg it is a 50% split, in Tacoma it is only 8% converts and 92% were born into the Faith. In Wheaton there is much more of a balance of 55% convert and 45% born into the Faith. While the results leaned toward more convert respondents, the final total of three parishes was fairly even. See the chart below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did you grow up in the Orthodox Faith?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mechanicsburg</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tacoma</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheaton</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Among those “born into the Faith”, the makeup is consistent with other OCA parishes, with the majority being from Russian, Slavic, and Eastern European backgrounds, as detailed above.

A controversial part of the questionnaire was the issue of converts coming into the Orthodox Church from other Christian backgrounds. This issue will be explored in greater detail in the later chapters. It is clear that many were seekers from different faith traditions before settling on the Orthodox Church. Among those converts into the Faith, 96% have a church background prior to becoming Orthodox and only 4% do not. Many have gone through a period of church seeking before becoming Orthodox, with a sizeable number going through two to five different Faith traditions. Most numerous among the Faith traditions explored are Roman Catholic, Evangelical, Episcopalian/Anglican, Non-Denominational, Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist, and Presbyterian.
The following table depicts the various Faith Traditions that were explored and listed as part of the respondents’ journey to the Orthodox Church. Note that the categories are those described by the respondents themselves. Of these journeys, close to 25% were due to marriage to an Orthodox believer.

### Faith Traditions Explored

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faith Tradition</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelical</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Byzantine Catholic</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episcopalian/Anglican</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelical</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Denomination</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglican</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agnostic</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congregational</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundamental</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Christian</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodist</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterian</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charismatic</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table below represents how many different Faith Traditions the individual respondents explored in their journey before deciding on the Orthodox Church.

### Number of Faiths Explored by Individual

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Faiths</th>
<th>One</th>
<th>Two</th>
<th>Three</th>
<th>Four</th>
<th>Five</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Num</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 6.3 Direct Observations

In exploring the initial theoretical and theological aspect of evangelism, I soon realized that I needed to collect data through my own observations of the different parishes at work. This would
allow me to get the “feel” for each parish and the parishioners in their natural setting. This opportunity to interact and observe allows for a deeper comprehension of the data that is collected and the data moves from words on paper to real people in real settings. Furthermore, once the participants were familiar with me, they would not view my presence as threatening and would be more open. However, such closeness can also lead to a different set of issues such as “the potential to manipulate or influence observations or by getting too close to the subjects or the participants acting differently when they know that they are being observed.” As stated before, investigator triangulation mitigates these problems, as observation does not become a singular source of data, but is used to validate the data discovered through a variety of other sources.

Since all the interviews required a site visit, I decided to combine these and direct observation in one trip. This allowed me to get to know the parish culture, observe the interaction of the parishioners and leaders, and understand the neighborhood. This is especially critical when studying evangelism, as the interactions between the clergy and parishioners will inform how outsiders are received in the parish. Since the Liturgy is the fundamental and essential aspect of the life in a parish, and thus central to evangelism in the Orthodox Church, I needed to directly observe the parishes’ liturgical life. I had to determine if the parish forms a community and if that community (koinonia) participates in the liturgical life.

I visited each parish for a five-day period, which is sufficient time enough to understand the parish dynamics and confirm the data that was collected from the interviews and questionnaires. I could observe and record events in the parish and participate, albeit in a minor manner, in the life of the parish. I was able to scrutinize body language during the interviews and monitor interactions among people in the group interviews. As Sensing advises, “It is not just the structured times that need careful observation. Sometimes great insights can emerge during hallway conversations, waiting in line for coffee, or afterwards in the parking lot. People may express opinions during

---

222 Yin advises for such methods in case studies. “Because case study should take place in the natural setting of the ‘case,’ you are creating the opportunity for direct observation.” Yin, Case, 108.

223 Yin, Case, 112.

224 Yin again recommends such methods. “Less formally, direct observation might be made throughout a field visit, including those occasions during which other evidence, such as from interviews, is being collected.” Yin, Case, 109.
unstructured times that they would not during a program even if asked directly.” It was during these times in the visits that I garnered some real insights for each parish.

The observation protocol is quite simple and is based on Sensing’s recommendations of observation of demographics, physical setting, events, interactions, verbal and written consent, and meaning. This simple protocol enables the researcher to get a true feel for the parish and its dynamics while maintaining a level of distance. For example, regarding demographics, I observed the parishioners and noted their ages and ethnic makeup, identified any possible subgroups and their interactions (e.g., did different cliques sit together and confirm each other’s responses or, conversely, did people disagree or shake their heads when someone from another group made comments?). I also looked for other elements, such as noticeable differences in income through dress, and other actions that either united or separated parishioners from one another. I also observed how the parish treated outsiders and determined whether they were welcomed into the services and parish community.

Finally, I needed to actually walk around the physical locations and neighborhoods of the parishes. I studied maintenance of the church buildings and grounds, which is especially important in the light of the Orthodox emphasis on the beauty and importance of the worship space. Taken together, these observations provide an insight into the parish priorities as it states in Luke 12:34, “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Finally, the observation protocol involves contrasting what I was told and what I had observed. This allows for a discovery of a deeper meaning to the answers. Did their work as a community have a deeper meaning than that which was expressed? It is one thing to state, for example, that the parish loves one another, and quite another to see a collection for someone in the parish that was in need. This demonstrated meaning to their actions and words.

All these direct observations connected deeply with the other data to complete the triangulation of data that was critical to the research. It is from this database that the conclusions of the research were drawn. The use of the various points of data enabled the case study to truly be an examination

225 Sensing, *Qualitative*, 98.
into the life of the parish. Through the selection of the participants the flesh was added to the bones.

7. Participants Selection Process with Rationale

Since the data is only as good as the selected subjects, I had to be careful to ensure that I did not influence that in any way. Therefore, I allowed the participants to self-select, and each individual in the parishes had the opportunity to participate or not participate based on his or her personal interest in the subject. This provided a research base of people with diverse opinions and views on evangelism and who were allowed to express those views in a safe forum. In the end, eighty-nine individuals chose to answer the questionnaires. This included nine clergy, eleven leaders, and sixty-nine parishioners, which completed this small but representative sample. The interviews included around 273 individuals of all levels that included thirteen clergy, forty-three in leadership positions, and 217 parishioners. Although nine of the clergy and some of the church leadership completed both sets of questions, only about one-third of the parishioners who participated in the interviews completed the questionnaires. Since the respondents were self-selecting, some chose to participate in both or either form depending on their interest or level of comfort with the different forums. I believe that this did not adversely affect the results. When determining the correct size and demographics of a data pool, studies show that “small samples from a heterogeneous group might seem like a problem because no one will be alike, but when a common pattern emerges from great variation, then the value of the information increases. If divergent people share core experiences, then the discovery is of greater significance in answering your question.”

As I found during the parish visitations, the common themes emerging from the three parishes validated the research.

After examining the totality of the data, I concluded that the samples in all three areas were representative of each parish, and provided enough data to generate conclusions that are both valid and defensible. It was confirmed as there emerged convergent lines of inquiry, or, in other words, the data began to come together within certain bounds. It became clear that answers began to repeat themselves, that lines of discussion became similar in different parishes, and that conclusions were being drawn that confirmed each other through the different sources of data. “Thus, any case study

---

227 Sensing, *Qualitative*, 84.
finding or conclusion is likely to be more accurate if it is based on several different sources of information, following a corroboratory mode.” \( ^{228} \) The corroboration of the data through triangulation allowed for themes to emerge as the coding and analysis took shape.

8. Analysis Procedures and Coding Process

Following the collection of the data, the most important aspect of research is the coding and analysis of the results. Simply put, coding is the classification of data from all the sources into key phrases and words, which then assist in analyzing the results. The process of coding actually begins with the general theory under exploration. Utilizing the general theory as basis for initial coding is quite common in qualitative research and particularly in case study methodology. Coding is “done throughout the process of data gathering as theories and hunches that begin to emerge in early notes need to be ongoingly pursued, eliminated, or confirmed. Eventually the researcher will become familiar enough with the data to recognize how it is beginning to coalesce into separate sets of metaphors, ideas, phrases, or themes.” \( ^{229} \) Thus, from the very beginning and throughout the process, general themes emerged that provided a natural internal homogeneity to the research.

The first principle in the analysis is to generate those theories and patterns based on Yin’s recommendation to begin “by following the theoretical propositions that led to the case study.” \( ^{230} \) These theoretical propositions are outlined in Chapter Two and are based on the emerging theory of koinonic evangelism; namely that evangelism may be an individual action, but it is a community activity. Therefore the initial set of research questions, the focus of the interviews, questionnaires and observation, and the subsequent analysis are built around this theory.

As I collected and analyzed the data, I noticed the formation of major categories. This is the logical first step “where you impose meaning and generate an emerging theory. Data theme analysis involves a sorting, organizing, and indexing of the material that enables you to locate internally consistent patterns that often fit within existing knowledge.” \( ^{231} \) As I examined and organized the data, I formed emerging theories and assumptions on evangelism, and a cursory glance of the material revealed fifty-five different themes. These were very specific statements and phrases that

\( ^{228} \) Yin, Case, 116.
\( ^{229} \) Myers, Research, 68.
\( ^{230} \) Yin, Case, 130.
\( ^{231} \) Sensing, Qualitative, 198.
consistently appeared in each parish and could not possibly be random occurrences. These patterns formed the baseline for the next stage of coding.

After the initial analysis, it is necessary to input the data from the interviews and the questionnaires into a data analysis program. There are many such programs available and after research it was decided to code the material by using NVivo 10, a powerful and widely used coding program that allowed for the categorizing and analysis of all of the material from the three sources. A table of themes was established and each theme assigned a color in the texts. Once the texts were color-coded, they were grouped together and analyzed for specific language and context.232 I fed the text from the interviews, the questionnaires and observations into the program. I then input a set of keywords derived from the baseline noted above and the program categorized the results for further analysis. This is following Sensing’s guidance, which affirms; “Words, phrases, or events that appear to be similar can be grouped into the same category. These categories may be modified or replaced during subsequent stages of analysis.”233

The next stage is to establish sub-categories of data which, in turn, establish sub-themes. This reduces and focuses the amount of data and lays the groundwork for cross-case analysis.234 Cross-case analysis creates a word table generates relationships between data from different case studies.235 This allowed me to identify specific connections and differences across the three parishes on which to base the final analysis of the data.236 This also allowed me to identify any missing information that needed to be a part of the analysis. This also integrated any historic evidence that supported the theory of koinonic evangelism.

The following chart outlines the model that was followed in the organization and analysis of the data.237

---

232 NVivo is an analysis program from QSR International and one in a long line of popular software programs dedicated to such work. It integrates interviews, surveys, questionnaires, audio, etc., into a manageable and searchable database.
233 Sensing Qualitative, 203.
234 Sensing Qualitative, 204.
235 See Yin, Case, 156 to 160 for a more detailed explanation.
236 Yin, Case, 160.
237 The chart is based on Creswell, Qualitative, 172 as a template for coding a case study (using a Multiple or Collective Case Approach).
Thus, through coding and analysis I identified four major categories: Case Context, which describes the parish in-depth; Case Theme Analysis, which examines the major themes uncovered in the research; Cross-Case Theme Analysis, which answers the six major research questions posed in Chapter One; and Assertions and Generalization, which form the conclusion of the study.

Taken together, these categories form an accurate and verifiable analysis of *koinonic* evangelism in these three parishes, which is the final step in answering the questions posed at the beginning of the study. As recommended by Yin, the final analysis of project is expressed through posing the research questions and the corresponding answers\textsuperscript{238}

9. **Methods Summary**

This chapter examined the background, research design, collection, and analysis of data for this dissertation. The study is based on the major research question of which methods of evangelism are evident in parishes of the Orthodox Church in America. In order to discover this, I used a multiple case study methodology, which examined three parishes with vibrant evangelism programs representing a cross section of parishes in the Orthodox Church in America. The approach, methodology, and analysis are based on the work of John Creswell, Tim Sensing, and Robert Yin. I collected the data through interviews, questionnaires, and direct observation. I then triangulated this data to ensure reliability and trustworthiness. I conducted initial analysis and established general categories to assist in coding before analyzing the data using the computer

\textsuperscript{238} Yin, *Case*, 171.
program, NVivo. This, in turn, established sub-themes used to discover similarities and differences in the three parishes. Finally, I answered the general and sub-questions through the assertions and generalizations of the study.
Chapter 4

History and Context of the Three Parishes

A Christian Community can only proclaim the Gospel – and be heard – if it is a living icon of Christ.

Fr. Ion Bria, *Liturgy after the Liturgy*<sup>239</sup>

1. Introduction

One of the most remarkable discoveries in this study was that while each parish is a unique entity with its own history, traditions, and distinct local flavor, there is also a remarkable commonality. This commonality is truly notable given that the three parishes are separated by vast distance (Pennsylvania, Illinois, and Washington) and history (ten years to over a hundred years old). The Church established each parish for differing reasons, in a different time period, and even with a differing vision. In part, these similarities are due to the shared history of the OCA and the fact that, despite our increasingly mobile society, the Orthodox community is relatively small and everyone is linked either directly or through common acquaintances. However, the commonalities go deeper than that. Despite the different paths the parishes had traveled, over the years their constituency, vision, and approach to parish life and evangelism arrived at the same endpoint.<sup>240</sup>

When comparing results, I found that the many responses from one parish were equally valid in another. There was a profound and deeper connection that led these parishes to the same conclusions.

This connection becomes more understandable in light of the Orthodox approach to communal life centered on the most basic ecclesial unit, the parish. While the situation in North America is unique in the greater Orthodox world (as outlined in Chapter Two), the foundational concept of the parish itself is ubiquitous as the focal point of all local activity of Orthodox Christians. This is more than just a place for worship; it is the place where parishioners build a community. As Fr. Hopko wrote, “An Orthodox parish, that is, a local community of Orthodox Christians with one or more priests, has only one God-given reason for being. It exists to be the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic

---

<sup>239</sup> Bria, *Liturgy*, 89.

<sup>240</sup> It should be noted that all Orthodox parishes, regardless of their jurisdiction or affiliation, serve basically the same cycle of services, use the same liturgical texts and generally are quite similar in how the worship space is laid out. One can walk into any Orthodox Church in the world during the services and while no understanding the language, generally know the service.
Church of Christ. Whatever the original reasons and conditions for its founding, whatever other services and activities it may provide, whatever other desires and needs it may fulfill for its members, the parish must be Christ’s one holy Church. If it is not, then it is neither Christian nor Orthodox whatever else it may be or do.”

So despite age and distance, a truly living Orthodox parish converges around the same basic principles. These same principles also lay at the heart of koinonic evangelism: to be a part of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. As Fr. John Meyendorff wrote, “Whenever our parishes – these cells of the Church – really shine with the virtues, the dynamism, the faith of true Christianity, they also perform the mission. This mission – because it is the mission of the Church, and not of an individual, or of a human agency – can take many forms and be performed by a variety of ministries, all equally legitimate.”

This concept is especially critical in light of both the fractured history of the Orthodox Church in America and in understanding the three parishes and their approach to evangelism. The true focus of evangelism is not solely between individuals, rather it is on the community activity that draws those individuals into communion. Therefore community activity in the Orthodox Church cannot ever be separated from the local worshiping, liturgical, sacramental church. As Fr. Hopko details, “A parish must be the Church of Christ and not simply a church, because, according to the Orthodox faith, every local community actually is the one Church of Christ.”

This understanding of the importance of the local parish as the Body of Christ is foundational to this study. “Thus every local Christian community, every ‘parish,’ theologically, mystically, and sacramentally, is to be ‘Christ’s Body, the fullness of him who fills all in all’ (Eph. 1:23). It is to be ‘the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth’ (1 Tim. 3:15). Everything in the parish is to participate in God’s fullness and wholeness. Everything is to express it. Everything is to testify to it.”

In examining the three parishes, it is evident that this embrace of community is precisely why they are effective as parishes and why they are effective in evangelism. They are an expression of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. They define and center their existence and activity on

---

241 Hopko, Speaking, 86.
243 Hopko, Speaking, 86.
244 Hopko, Speaking, 87.
being the local manifestation of Orthodoxy, which is reflected in how they treat one another and interact with the wider community. By focusing their attentions on even the smallest details, these parishes strive to be the Body of Christ. In the end, this is the common denominator among the three. As Fr. Hopko further elaborated, “Obviously a parish will be particular and limited in empirical, cultural, and sociological forms; it has to be, since it is made up of human beings. But all of a parish’s particular aspects, with all of its teachings, services, and activities, if they are Orthodox and Christian, will be open to the boundless fullness of God and will thereby be inclusive of everyone and everything that is good and holy and true, to the measure that this is possible given the actual people who comprise the community.”

2. Holy Resurrection Orthodox Church, Tacoma, Washington

“Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.” (Matt. 25:21)

The story of Holy Resurrection Orthodox Church actually begins in the 1870s in the small, rural coal-mining town of Wilkinson, Washington, located at the foot of Mount Rainier. Here, a group of Eastern Europeans migrated across the United States to work in the local coal mines. They formed a small worshipping community and relied on occasional visits from the clergy from a larger parish in Seattle. Since Wilkinson is almost fifty miles from Seattle and serviced by relatively unimproved roads, visitations were infrequent. One of the earliest visitors was the noted Orthodox evangelist, Archimandrite Sebastian Dabovich. Born and raised in San Francisco and of Serbian descent, Fr. Sebastian was the first Orthodox priest born and ordained in the United States. He visited Wilkinson at least twice, first in 1892, when he met with the local faithful, and again in 1895 when he returned to assess the need for a permanent mission. He eventually recommended the

\[\text{Footnote: Hopko, \textit{Speaking}, 87.}\]
establishment of a permanent parish community to Bishop Nicholas (Ziorov), the bishop of Alaska and the Aleutian Islands.

It would be a number of years before the Church assigned a permanent priest to this remote location, the members continuing to remain faithful to the Church and conducting limited services. Bishop (St.) Tikhon ordered first the building of a small prayer house, and then, by 1900, the construction of a small church, for the approximately fifty Orthodox families in the region. He visited the church in July 1900 and dedicated it to the Holy Trinity. That same year, Bishop Tikhon ordained the first priest assigned to the parish, Fr. Alexander Alexandrov. It was during Fr. Alexander’s ordination at the Cathedral in San Francisco that Bishop Tikhon gave one of his most widely read admonitions on evangelism in North America and related it directly to that small community in Wilkinson. Bishop Tikhon preached,

Your flock is composed of Arabs, Greeks and Slavs. For many years they have managed without a priest. Having come here in search of a living, of their daily bread, perhaps they ponder little over the Bread of Heaven, the one thing needful (Luke 10:42)…the other parts of your flock consists of Uniates who have reunited and are living in Wilkinson. They have manifested their love for the Orthodox Faith with good deed, as you well know. See that they do not cool in their first love, but abound in it. Make this community, which is still small, grow like a mustard seed in the Gospel, into a shady tree (Matt. 13:31-32) under which those who are still outside our pasture might find shelter too. The community will draw people most if divine services are performed there reverently and devoutly; if church life is distinguished by its piety; if members of the community live in peace, love and brotherhood.  

This remarkable statement set the community on its present course and is still its guiding force to this day. Bishop Tikhon formally consecrated the church on September 22, 1902, and it had a full-time resident priest until 1929.  

The ascendance of diesel, gas, and electricity in the 1930s caused

---

246 From “Exhortation to a new Priest by His Grace Tikhon, Bishop of Aleutian Islands and North America (future saint and Patriarch of Russia) as given at Holy Trinity Cathedral on April 9, 1900 to Fr. Vladimir Alexandrov’s ordination to be the first priest in Wilkinson, Washington.” Translated from Russian and first published in the Holy Trinity Cathedral Life, Vol. 1, No. 8 (April 1994), found at www.holy-trinity.org/history/1900/04.09.Tikhon-Alexandrof.html.

247 In Orthodox practice, a church is consecrated by a bishop when it is considered to be in a permanent place. The walls are anointed with Holy Oil and relics of martyrs are placed inside the altar, which is sealed. It is at this time that the Church formalizes the name and presents the antimession, which is a small cloth of an icon of the burial of Christ with a pouch containing the relic of a martyr and signed by the bishop to the church community. The priest serves all divine services on this antimession which is kept on the consecrated altar under the Gospel and opened at specific times during the Divine Liturgy.
coal production in western Washington to decline. The town of Wilkinson, which had boasted a population of almost 6,000 residents, began waning to its current level of fewer than 400. The parish barely survived and its members relied on irregular service from regional clergy based in Seattle.

However, the situation in Seattle was not peaceful during this time. While there was a parish founded there at about the same time as Holy Resurrection, the church building was one of the few properties that the “Living Church” won in court, thus forcing the Metropolia to relocate the parish.\(^2\) As a result, the Wilkinson parish stopped getting any regular visitation by clergy. There also arose a small rivalry between the parishes as Wilkinson was not involved in the controversy and had remained loyal to the Metropolia.

Thus the small parish remained in stasis, maintained by a group of dedicated lay people in the area and serviced by local clergy on occasion. It followed the rest of the Metropolia parishes and transitioned into the Orthodox Church in America in 1970. However, the region began growing again as the suburbs of Seattle sprawled further outward. By 1985, it became the first parish in Washington State to conduct its services entirely in English. That same year, for the first time since 1929, the Diocese finally assigned a full-time priest, Fr. John Pierce, a convert to the Faith and a new seminary graduate. This marked a turning point for the parish.

At this point, the parish was still tiny, but, under Fr. John’s tutelage, they began reaching out to Orthodox throughout Pierce County. This outreach coincided with a shift in the demographics in the Seattle area. Throughout 1970s until the mid-1980s, the population declined as the local economy collapsed due to the oil crisis, decreased demand for timber products, and the loss of major contracts by Boeing, one of the largest employers in the region.\(^2\) That turned around in the 1990s as new technology companies and other industry moved into the region Suddenly the Seattle-Tacoma area became one of the most desirable and livable areas in the country.\(^2\) The parish realized that, if they wanted to thrive and grow, that they would have to relocate to this booming suburb.

\(^2\) See footnote 183.
When Fr. John arrived, the parish had approximately twenty-five people, in a dozen families, who had saved enough money to pay for a full-time resident priest for one year. They operated on a tight budget, but the presence of the priest helped draw more parishioners and by 1989 it had grown to over 120 people. Not only had the parish outgrown its building, but the parish leadership recognized that in order to better serve the people, it would have to move closer to the population center of Tacoma. They moved to a quiet country center just off of the city centers of Tacoma and Puyallup in 1996.

Despite the parish acceptance of the need for a new church, there is a deep historical reverence for the small church in Wilkinson. The leadership took a long time – over ten years – to educate and prepare the parish for the move and to build consensus. This small church building was deeply embedded in the psyche of this parish as, against all odds, a small group of faithful had kept the church going with no priest for over fifty-five years. It is literally a place where saints walked and, in fact, parish records revealed that St. Tikhon himself wrote the last check to pay off the mortgage. The parish understood that it needed to consciously and deliberately honor the historic building and not simply abandon it. In a move to preserve the historic church, they got the church listed on the national historic register in 1989 and hosted visits of high profile people, including the future Patriarch Alexei of Moscow. They decided to continue services there on a monthly basis, something that they still do. In such a way, the renewed parish honored and incorporated the old parish into its new life.

Tacoma is in Pierce County and part of the greater Seattle region. The parish itself now resides outside of Tacoma not far from Puyallup. Interestingly, the town of Puyallup is quite politically conservative compared to the liberal city of Tacoma. However, it is an unchurched region of the United States with only 29% of the population affiliated with a religious congregation. Of those, 44% are Protestant and 30% Roman Catholic. There are a few “mega-churches” in the area. The Orthodox represents only 4% of the population. The major employers of the region are Boeing, Microsoft and related tech companies, as well as the growing Port of
Tacoma. The population is predominately white (80%) and middle class (average income is $57,000, which is average for Washington state).  

The parish looked at a number of properties, even making an offer on one, before deciding on the present site. They raised the funds to purchase the property but were quite conscious of not overextending the finances of the parish. As membership has grown, the parish has slowly developed the property and even purchased an adjacent nine acre lot in order to ensure that it could meet any future needs.

When the parish first purchased the property, they were quite stretched for the money and had to take out a mortgage with balloon payments due every five years. Some parishioners had come forward to assist with additional funds, but they were still short $100,000. One day, Fr. John was wearing blue jeans and doing yard work on the church property. A car came into the parking lot and sat rumbling for some time as the driver watched him. Finally, the person got out of the car and, as he got closer, recognized him as the priest. He stated that he had come to services a few months ago and was treated with such love and respect by the community that he wanted to give something in return. He pulled out a folded check and said, “This is just a gift that we want to give anonymously.” The priest put it in his pocket and later opened a check for the hundred thousand dollars which paid off the balloon payment. Fr. John never saw this person again.

As the parish grew, it attracted people of different backgrounds as they made a concerted effort to get involved with the local community. The Seattle-Tacoma area has a large number of transplants. There is a considerable military presence at the parish due to the proximity of a joint Army-Air Force Base, Fort Lewis-McChord, which has over 25,000 soldiers, airmen, and civilian workers. There is also an influx of new people drawn by the booming Seattle economy. The parish established two missions: one in Olympia and another one the revitalized Wilkinson area. In addition, they also developed young men for the seminary and in the years since move, have sent five men to seminary, some who returned to assist in the parish. As one person in the parish shared, “Other parishes may build buildings, we seem to build people.”

---

In the early years after the move, the parish as a whole met often to discuss various goals for the future, an activity they continue today. Together the parishioners prioritize goals and concentrate on just a few manageable ones. These goals run the gamut from increasing the number of liturgical services to working on charity collections and always rely on the consensus of the parish in establishing and meeting these goals. One of their first major goals was to ensure that the worship is beautiful. To this end, they spent considerable time developing a choir, designing and building a beautiful building and serving in a pious manner. Many people experienced Orthodox worship in English for the first time as it was something not readily available in the surrounding region at the time. There were no innovations or radical changes to the services, just solid OCA-style liturgical worship coupled with strong sermons and catechetical teaching. Several parishioners shared a powerful story about a visitor to the church. She sat in the back of the church crying and left the building, later she came in again and again left crying. The third time she came in, people approached her thinking that she needed assistance. In response to their inquiries she said, “When I go inside, it’s so beautiful, it is so overwhelmingly beautiful that I just start crying and I have to leave.” It was her first time in an Orthodox Church, and later, she became a member.

The growth in the early years was steady, with ten to fifteen new families joining each year, with another dozen or so baptized or chrismated. The parish also attracted enough new immigrants from Eastern Europe that they now have a Slavonic Liturgy once a month to serve this new community, quite a change for the first parish in Washington to serve in English. While the area does have a highly mobile population, the parish size remains steady and stable at approximately 120 members. The parish currently has approximately 120 adults and 30 youth. The breakdown of the faithful is: 75% converts, mostly from evangelical backgrounds; 15% from traditional Orthodox backgrounds; and 10% new immigrants from Eastern Europe. This is a considerable change from the early days of the parish when membership was almost exclusively Russian and Eastern European. This reversal in demographics occurred during the twenty years since the move from Wilkinson to the Tacoma area.
One of the unique aspects of Orthodoxy in the Seattle area is the unprecedented level of cooperation among all Orthodox jurisdictions. The twenty-five clergy meet on a monthly basis as part of the Washington Orthodox Clergy Association (WOCA) and cooperate in ministry, planning, and other activities. It is one of the strongest pan-Orthodox clergy associations in the country and they are supportive of each other’s ministries. For this reason, there is little competition among the various Orthodox parishes, rather a solid cooperation and support among the clergy and people.

Holy Resurrection currently has six priests and two deacons, an unheard of number for a middle-sized OCA parish. Only two of the clergy are not full time and work secular jobs. Four of the six are converts to the Faith from the area who remained with the parish after their ordination. This large number of clergy enables the parish to institute a rotating schedule of services where each take turns preaching and serving. It also enables the parish to have a full liturgical cycle including Matins and Divine Liturgy on Sundays and Feast Days, as well as weekly Vespers and Liturgy and a full Lenten cycle of services. These services are well attended.

The parish has the typical organizations such as a sisterhood that assists the clergy in caring for the church, altar servers, a choir, and greeters. There is no Sunday school, but a paid youth minister provides two youth events each month as well as a summer camp. Other activities include a weekly “Orthodoxy 101” cycle of classes in which each class is independent of the previous one, allowing the parishioners to attend at their convenience. It answers specific questions about the Faith and introduces people to the Orthodox Church, something that is necessary with a large population of converts. There is also a large parish bookstore that attracts people from outside the church.

On the first Sunday of month, the parish has a collection for needy families in the larger community that is distributed by the priests. There is a monthly collection for the local food bank as well as regular special collections for an orphanage in Bucovina and for Palestinian Orthodox families in the Bethlehem. The parish also supports a mission priest in Africa through the Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC).

The parish does have a website, but is not otherwise involved in social media. There are regular gatherings and dinners that pull the parish together in an informal atmosphere. For many, this is the highlight of their involvement as there is a warm and friendly atmosphere. Furthermore, there
is a prayer ministry in which people email prayer requests and members of the parish dedicate themselves to intercessory prayer on each other’s behalf.

The parish has a modest budget of approximately $130,000 a year, with an additional $24,000 for a recent mortgage repayment for new facilities, which is completely funded by the annual January stewardship drive. The clergy are compensated out of these funds. Some of the clergy work secular jobs to support themselves. The parish dedicates all fund-raising efforts towards outside charities. The parish meets every six months to discuss the budget, taking a considered and very conservative approach. They only plan for what they can afford in order to avoid a large debt. The major expense is clergy and basic operating expenses with no budget for formal evangelism.

The parish is stable and friendly, and as one parishioner described it, “just normal.” Another parishioner proclaimed, “It is an integrated, whole and complete life as God has given us.” The long and rich history of the parish is a remarkable story that weaves the history of the region with that of the Orthodox Church in North America. It has benefited from long-serving clergy who were able to transition the parish to meet each challenge. While there were many opportunities for this parish to die, it has maintained a steady and even keel. As one priest noted, “We are the parish that survived”.

3. **St. Joseph Orthodox Church, Wheaton, Illinois**

“I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own.” (John 10:14)

St. Joseph Orthodox Church is located in an unlikely city for an Orthodox parish in an unlikely part of that city and contains the most unlikely parishioners. The local population is predominately white (90%), wealthy (median income around $81,000), and the parish is located across the street from Wheaton College, one of the largest evangelical colleges in the country. The parish occupies a former African Methodist Episcopalian (AME) building in the section of Wheaton known as “Black Town,” which was a stop on the Underground Railroad and has traditionally African-American population. It is a purposefully multiethnic church whose main ethnic groups

---

are Polish and Western Ukrainian Orthodox, but also contains converts from Wheaton College, Greeks from Chicago, and recent Russian immigrants.

The history of this parish began in 1983 with a group of disgruntled Greek and Antiochians from Oak Lawn, Illinois. They were tired of the local churches, which focused less on Orthodoxy and more on preserving ethnic customs. They eventually left and founded a new parish in the OCA in Palos Hills, a suburb of Chicago. Providentially, it was their first priest, Fr. John Matusiak, who was sent there to minister to this group. He was also the director of missions for the OCA and he traveled extensively, teaching mission and evangelism and the parish was meant to provide a supplemental income. The plan was to establish a new parish in the growing area of Naperville. There was a group of parishioners that were determined to establish a parish in this area with whatever families were along the I-88 corridor going west from Chicago. Fr. John committed to establishing the new mission, leaving the Palos Hills parish.

In 1989, the mission began with twenty-five families in Naperville and initially used a local Roman Catholic convent for worship before moving to a public school auditorium. The mission continued to attract local people but decidedly stayed south of Route 88 because a former Evangelical Orthodox parish had joined the Antiochian Church and established a mission in Wheaton with the direct intent to “convert” Wheaton College. Over time, many parishioners in the Antiochian Church grew uncomfortable with the targeted proselytism, as this is not a tradition in Orthodox evangelism and diverts focus from the essence of Orthodoxy, which is the worship community. St. Joseph’s attracted many of these disaffected parishioners who sought this simple focus on the Church. As one clergyman remembered, “I said to the Antiochian priest, ‘Fine, you take all the former Protestants and we’ll take anybody and everybody else.’ So our mission was well aware of that attitude. So there was always openness to who we ministered to… Because you are saying to the community, ‘What does God want me to do, right here, right now with the people with whom I’m currently surrounded?’ Okay, I got a new kind of people that I’m surrounded by; we have to minister to them.” This attitude opened the doors for other local people seeking the Church.
Marginalized groups such as new immigrants discovered they were welcomed in the mission and smaller minority Orthodox ethnic groups such as the Polish and Western Ukrainians also found a home. The mission grew in numbers and diversity, and by 1993 graduated to parish status had to make a critical decision on establishing a permanent home.

The parish had to make a decision whether to take on an enormous debt to buy land and construct a building, which could take years, or find a suitable existing structure. The AME church in Wheaton had outgrown their church and offered the property, which included a rectory, for $200,000.\textsuperscript{253} Since the property was in a declining neighborhood, the city of Wheaton offered financial incentives and legal waivers to assist in the purchase the property. The parish, now named St. Joseph Orthodox Church, decided to purchase the property and develop the neighborhood through its presence. This was highly unusual for a predominately “white” church to buy out a “black” church.

Wheaton itself is an unusual city in many ways. While it is the site of Wheaton College and the Billy Graham Center, its population is predominately Roman Catholic. Wheaton is also the headquarters of the Theosophical Society, a Gnostic organization established in 1875 by a former Russian Orthodox, Helene Blavatsky, which seeks to transcend all religions by seeking the philosophical truth inherent in all, and the headquarters of World Relief Corporation, a Protestant evangelical society that provides humanitarian aid and assists in refugee resettlement. It is a city that is predominately white with a noticeably separated minority. While the city of Wheaton is predominately conservative Republican, the next city of Glen Ellyn is quite liberal and Democratic. Although the area saw growth beginning in the 1930s, its most significant expansion

\textsuperscript{253} The building was originally the 2nd Baptist Church, so named to distinguish it as an African-American Church as opposed to the 1st Baptist Church which was for whites only. The property was later sold to the AME.
came in the 1960-80s during suburban flight from Chicago.\textsuperscript{254} It is now ranked by \textit{Money} magazine as one of the top twenty-five places to live.\textsuperscript{255} In the time since the parish left, the town of Naperville has declined into a more low-income area. Furthermore, while nearby Chicago is dominated by distinct ethnic communities, this area has remained fairly homogenous until the last few years. So it is a city of contrasts much as the parish is a parish of contrasts. All of this has helped make St. Joseph’s Orthodox Church the most diverse parish in Wheaton.

Since the parish did not have to focus on servicing a huge mortgage, it was able to focus on growth and providing pastoral care for the diverse community. The parish provided assistance, with no agenda or strings attached, to the local neighborhood and soon gained the reputation of a caring and loving community. However, this growth also necessitated larger facilities and the city granted a waiver to allow the construction of a new church on the foundations of the old building. One wall from the original church remains in this new larger space.

The ethnic diversity of St. Joseph’s occurred gradually and naturally through the assimilation of various immigrant groups. The first wave of immigrants arrived in the early 1990s as refugees from the violence in Bosnia. World Relief assisted in settling these refugees and referred them to St. Joseph’s. Likewise a second wave of immigration came as refugees from the civil war in Ethiopia settled in the area and started attending the parish. The small Polish Orthodox community from Chicago also felt welcomed in the parish. In addition, a split among Eastern and Western Ukrainians led to some clergy and faithful from the Western Ukrainian community to join the parish. Thus, it began to gel as a multiethnic parish that served the local community and opened its doors to outsiders. Even students from Wheaton College began to make their way across the railroad tracks that divided the parish from the college, encouraged by their professors of ancient Christianity to attend services. A noticeable number of the students continued their exploration of Orthodoxy and eventually joined. Interestingly, the earlier Antiochian parish dedicated to proselytizing did not receive many visitors due to their aggressive

stance, but St. Joseph’s simple acceptance and welcoming atmosphere attracted outsiders. As the waves of different immigrants arrived, the mission of the parish evolved. As one clergyman stated, “The ministry is all constantly changing because the clientele is constantly changing. But we are here to be the church simply. There is no vision because the vision is the church. A shoe store doesn’t tell people that the vision and mission is to sell shoes, you already know that. So it is with the church. They know what we do.”

St. Joseph’s currently has approximately 450 adults and 150 youth. The parish is 45% converts to the Orthodox Church and the other 55% is comprised of almost every traditional Orthodox ethnic group. The parish decided to add another full-time priest for every 150 adults rather than dividing and starting another mission and now have three full-time priests and three deacons. This allowed for stable growth and ensured that the clergy could meet the pastoral needs of the community. They have had approximately 250 baptisms and 150 chrismations over the twenty-five years, but a surprisingly small number of weddings and funerals, most likely due to the young age of the parish.

This diversity also shaped the liturgical life of the parish. There are now three Divine Liturgies each Sunday: one in English, which has the largest attendance; one in Slavonic; and one in Ukrainian. While this has the potential to divide the community along these ethnic lines, it has had the opposite effect and encouraged the parishioners to attend the different services. Each priest has the ability to serve in the three languages and they rotate services so that no one group regards a priest as “theirs.” However, because of the rotation of the clergy and the involvement by the three communities in the general life of the parish, there has not evolved three separate parishes, rather one parish manifested through three expressions.

Another unusual aspect of the liturgical life is the use of congregational singing. Most Orthodox parishes have a choir that sings all the responses and major hymns during the services. The clergy believed that having a standard choir would be a further separation of the community at large and developed a congregational singing method in which the entire parish sings the responses with various trained choir leaders leading from the front of the congregation. In Orthodox liturgics,

---

256 This is quite unusual for an Orthodox parish since the rule is that one priest can serve one liturgy on one altar on one day. So in order to provide this service there are three priests and three altars (two side altars).
there is an eight week cycle of musical tones (known as the Octoechos) that is combined with daily and festal additions (known as the Menaion and Festal Menaion respectively) that affect the hymnography. The parish simplified this system by concentrating on a weekly tonal system combined with three versions of the music for the Liturgy using standard OCA music. This is quite unusual for parish liturgics and controversial since it eliminates most of the rotating music. However, the people are passionate about this being an important factor in uniting their unique parish. As one person stated, “It is the most important thing we do here and the only formal activity we do…we worship together.” There is a full and complete cycle of services including vigils on Saturday and eves of feasts. There is a full Lenten cycle, all set to congregational singing. The services are done correctly, joyfully, and in a unified manner. It is the heart of the parish.

However, the dominant factor in the development of the parish is the amalgamation of the community. The parish leadership specifically did not create separate organizations such as a sisterhood in the belief that this simply divided people into cliques. Instead, if there is a project, they simply encourage people to participate. If they need to take a collection, people collect. If an individual has an idea on a service project, they are encouraged to move forward without any formal appointment. Even with such loose rules, the parish has not had a problem finding volunteers to take care of all of the tasks.

There is a formal parish council that meets monthly to conduct and review the business of the parish. The meetings are informal and open with frank discussions on the needs of the parish. Subjects that need specific coordination, such as a contract for a specific repair or a special community meal, dominate the meeting agenda. Members of the Council each take responsibility for a specific facet of parish operations and report back to the Council at large with updates. There is a great deal of trust between the parish and the clergy so there are rarely disagreements. This is aided by the fact that the clergy do not try to control the agenda, rather they lead through example and love. This is the level of conciliarity that the founding fathers envisioned as the model for the OCA.

One of these leadership initiatives is the immense and constant outreach to the local community. They encourage parishioners to be involved in different, self-selecting community projects ranging from working at local homeless shelter to bringing food for the homebound parishioners. The latter
project is the result of a massive informal effort by the parish, which collects over 150 meals a month by encouraging people to deposit precooked meals in a designated freezer. The only formal request is that it be labeled with the name of the meal and the instructions for reheating. As the participants deposit the meals anonymously, no one knows who cooked which meal. The clergy, knowing the needs of the local homebound, simply take whatever meals they need and distribute them; the parishioners ensure that the freezer remains stocked.

Another initiative is the weekly clothing collection. There is a designated collection point in the parish hall and when the box is full, the clergy takes the clothing to local spots where the homeless congregate with a note for people to take what they need. There is no notice as to the source of the clothing as the point is for it to be anonymous. Some local parishioners also purchase and distribute vouchers for needy parishioners or homeless that can be redeemed at local shops. All of this charitable work by the parish is done quietly and personally. As one clergy stated, “Christ took care of people personally, so we should do the same…person to person.”

The parishioners of St. Joseph’s are encouraged to provide the example of a Godly life through their daily routines and involvement in the local community and government. Since the neighborhood around the parish is economically distressed, the clergy encourages them to patronize local business, and as a result, they have helped invigorate the area. The parish attends to the neighborhood through such simple acts such as mowing the lawn of an elderly neighbor or bringing a meal to someone who needs a meal, even if they are not Orthodox. It is for no other purpose than to incarnate Christian love towards those that God has placed them among. These acts do not go unnoticed and St. Joseph’s Orthodox Church is known as a place of love.

Despite the size and reach of the parish, the clergy and parish are conscientious about always visiting the elderly and shut-ins. It is a community effort where no one feels left out due to their own personal circumstances; there is always someone to visit or to assist those who are in need. It is a remarkable effort that in many ways defines koinonia, as St. John Chrysostom in the late fourth century exhorted, “Would you see his altar?... This altar is composed of the very members of Christ, and the body of the Lord becomes an altar... When then you see a poor believer, believe
that you are beholding an altar....”257 The parishioners identify a local need and the parish finds a way to address that local need. It is elegant in its simplicity.

This is a young parish that is constantly growing and adding space. As would be expected, as the parish grew, so did its income. The annual budget is now around $360,000, all collected directly through stewardship. They also collect an additional $24,000 to $30,000 a year for charity, outreach programs and specific purposes such as the seminaries or disaster relief. Each family in the parish is given a box of addressed envelopes that they can either mail in or place in the collection box. If there is a need for money for a particular charity or event, the leadership announces it and has a special collection. This places the responsibility on the parish as they are all informed of the needs and are simply asked to meet those needs. The incredibly high level of giving enables the parish to meet all of its own expenses and assist those around them. As one parishioner stated, “Well, what we’re mystified by is, as the membership has gone up, and a larger percentage of the membership is dirt poor or refugees, yet, the income and collected is disproportionately high. And we don’t know why.” This speaks volumes about where the heart of the parish is located.

Just as there was a conscious decision not to spend too much on a building, so was there a conscious decision on how they would decorate the building through local people volunteering their skills. To this end, the rector, who is a noted iconographer, offers a weekly iconography class. While he has done all of the major iconography within the church, the parishioners donate their time and talent have decorated and beautified the church. As such, the parishioners have a personal connection to their own worship space and that space that reflects who the diversity of the community in an Orthodox manner.

It is that personal connection that defines the parish as the people are connected with each other, the church, and the community. As a result, there is openness to outsiders in the parish not found in the many other Orthodox parishes. This focus on relationships and community ensures that newcomers are quickly integrated into the community.

---

As a result of their quiet, non-judgmental work with the local community, the church does no conscious outreach. There are no open houses or lecture series to attract people. There is no website and no social media. In fact the only sign for the parish is a small green road sign which says “Orthodox Church”. People find the parish through relationships with others in the community and through word of mouth.

Catechism consists of simple personal relations between the clergy and the inquirers. When someone approaches the clergy about conversion, the priests give them reading material and hold informal classes. There is no pressure and when the person feels ready to join, they join the Church through the formal manner of baptism and/or chrismation. There is no pressure to become Orthodox or to evangelize the neighborhood. It is all relational. In fact, because of Wheaton College and the high pressure Evangelical presence in the area, many local people react negatively to such methods. Most outsiders who come to the parish are simply searching for an authentic expression of Christianity and stable place of worship. Through their search they discover St. Joseph’s and join the parish. It is the place where they discover Christ and Christ’s love incarnate. The community becomes their home.

4. **Holy Apostles Orthodox Church, Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania**

“I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. Now this I do for the gospel’s sake, that I may be partaker of it with you.” (1 Cor. 9:22-23)

Holy Apostles Orthodox Church defies every rule about mission planting and evangelism. It is a parish of the Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania, which has experienced double-digit decline in membership over that past decade and has not started a mission in over twenty-five years. A small group of people of limited means founded the mission with the funds for one year salary of a priest; after that they had no plan. The assigned priest was a recent seminary graduate, but had had experience on a diocesan level prior to his ordination. The church is in the very back of an office park with no indication that there is an Orthodox church in the building, just a small sign listing the church along with the rest of the offices in the park. No one should know it is there and no one should be able to find it, and yet the parish is thriving and growing and has just begun it first building program.
Holy Apostles is a young parish, established in 2004. The foundational local parish, Christ the Savior Orthodox Church in Harrisburg, began in 1963, and has been quite successful in establishing an Orthodox presence in the region. However, a small Orthodox community developed on the western side of the Susquehanna River in the small town of Mechanicsburg and the members often had to drive over an hour to get to the Harrisburg church. The local deanery decided to explore the possibility of planting a new church in the region. Members of Christ the Savior Church initially resisted the idea as they worried that a mission plant would draw membership away from their established parish. However, through excellent leadership and parish discussions led by the local clergy, the resistance dissipated and the new mission created.

Initially the mission had approximately twenty-five families, mostly drawn from existing parishioners of Christ the Savior and other local Orthodox churches. Local clergy took turns in servicing the mission and the congregation first met at a local hotel and later transitioned to Mission Central, a local United Methodist Church warehouse that collected supplies for disaster relief. Obviously, the space was less than ideal as the parishioners had to set up and take down the church furniture for each service. Furthermore, since they had little control over the schedule, they could not have a consistent schedule of services. The members knew that they needed to relocate and find a full-time priest.

Mechanicsburg itself is part of the greater Harrisburg area, the capital of Pennsylvania. After major declines in the local industry in the 1970s, in 1981, various agencies declared Harrisburg the second most distressed city in the United States.\footnote{Case Number 23, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies. Accessed January 29, 2010.} People and businesses fled the city for the
suburbs. However, wise investments and tax incentives by the government and businesses in the region, the city experienced an economic resurgence. People and businesses came back to the region to the point where *Forbes* now lists it as one of the best places to raise a family.\(^{259}\) The regions around Harrisburg such as Mechanicsburg benefited from the renaissance.

Mechanicsburg lies on the west side of the Susquehanna River and is historically known as a transportation hub. It is a small city of only around 9,000, but the parish draws from the county to the west and south. It is a fairly conservative region with mostly middle-income families. There are a number of colleges and universities in the region including the United States Army War College in Carlisle, Dickenson College, and Messiah College. The Methodist Church played a prominent role in its history and is still one of the largest faiths, along with Roman Catholic. The area is 89% white and above the median income of Pennsylvania at $58,000.\(^{260}\) One of the most important events in Mechanicsburg is the annual Jubilee Day, which is the longest running and largest street fair on the east coast. It is a city that is quaint, pious, and stable.

The first question facing the mission was priest versus property. In other words, should the community invest in a piece of property and develop it before petitioning the bishop for a priest. This is the model that had developed in the old Metropolia, examined in the previous chapter, and it often developed a certain level of parochialism that often impeded the clergy’s leadership in a parish. On the other hand, funding a full-time resident priest first meant putting off acquiring a building, even though that the priest would be integrated into development of the mission from the beginning and set the tone and direction of the parish. The parish leaders turned to the senior priests in the area for guidance and decided to invest in a resident full-time priest and focus on the spiritual life of the mission first. It was the correct decision as the presence of the priest enabled the mission’s rapid growth.

The mission had limited funds and dedicated the building program money to the priest’s salary, deciding that they would match the equivalent of average salary of a teacher in the area. As clergy in the diocese were often paid poorly and below median levels due to the waning circumstances in the region, the promise of a competitive salary drew many interested priests. The local bishop

---


approached a young seminary graduate, Fr. Timothy Hojnicki, who had been working at an older parish in the diocese, to consider taking the mission. Fr. Timothy accepted, with the understanding that the long range prospects would be difficult. As stated earlier, the parish had enough for one year of salary, they had essentially bet the entire future of the mission on this.

The first challenge was for Fr. Timothy was to regularize the liturgical life that needed to be at the heart of the mission. The mission found an office space that they could adapt for Orthodox worship. Local parishioners transformed the space into a functioning Orthodox chapel. The mission grew and added new families as the community invested their efforts on building a solid worshipping community. People discovered the church through personal connections, talks and lectures at local events by the priest, and through a growing sense of community, which would become a defining element of the parish. The parish grew enough that they were able to purchase the office space and pay off the mortgage, and is now using it as leverage for their new building program.

This growth also came with some major challenges. As is too often experienced in parishes, people that have differing visions often create factions that threaten the church community. This happened during the search for a new priest, the purchase of property, and even when Fr. Timothy set the liturgical direction. While the divisions did not threaten to destroy the mission, a small number of founding members eventually left. While this caused some short-term pain, in the long-term, it freed the mission to develop according to a consensual vision. As one parishioner stated, “It was in the end, the best thing that happened to the mission. It no longer became a question of one person’s vision versus the other person’s. It was all about Christ’s vision and what he wants us to do with this mission.” Since that time there has not been a major conflict in the parish.

Due to its early growth and success, in 2008, Holy Apostles was eligible for the Church Planting Grant (CPG) program established by the OCA in 1995. The program involves a yearly monetary grant from the OCA exclusively for the salary of a full-time resident priest. The mission has to
demonstrate a certain level of stability and the ability to pay the clergy at least half of the designated salary and the application process includes an on-site visitation and a full review of the mission’s status. If approved, the mission can reapply for up to three years before having to transition to self-sufficiency. The intent the CPG is to provide the initial investment that will allow a mission to move to self-sufficiency at the earliest opportunity, not to assist them in paying bills. To date, approximately thirty missions have participated in the program. The grant to Mechanicsburg was a success and the mission moved the level of self-sufficiency within the allotted time period of three years. Furthermore, additional income from donors allowed for the mission to invest in future projects, including a new building fund.

By the time the mission graduated from the CPG, they had grown to the present size of eighty-six adults and forty-five youths. The mission received an upgrade to parish status and is now one of the larger parishes in the diocese. It now has an annual budget of $100,000, which is raised through stewardship. There is no formal stewardship program, rather the church leadership emphasizes responsibility and giving to the needs of the community. As one parishioner explains, “We did not want to see ourselves as some kind of corporation that is financially solvent, supports itself and is like a club of some sort that has to be maintained. It is the Body of Christ that, in necessity you have to pay your electric bills and whatnot, but that’s not our primary focus. Our focus is not to be an organization, our focus and purpose is to be the Body of Christ. And, if that’s the case, then our whole look at things has to be different.” Therefore the parish teaches and puts into action their intent to be the Body of Christ.

The parish is deeply involved in consistently giving to charity. It is the first and primary topic at every monthly parish council meeting where parishioners suggest charitable causes or needs in the community. The Council discusses and decides where to send the money. They try to rotate it through different causes, but consistently collect to support Orthodox organizations. The parish tithes 10% on all church income to charity, regardless of the source. This sets a powerful example that everything they have receive as a parish is a gift from God and should be returned. The parish phrases it “First Fruits” and expects all of its members to also contribute their own first fruits in whatever manner they can. For example, the church recently received a $90,000 bequest from a

---

261 See http://oca.org/cdn/PDFs/evangelization/2013-0808-OCAPlantingGrantDocumentation.pdf for complete information on the Church Planting Grant program.
deceased parishioner and immediately gave $9,000 to the seminary to support seminarians and to assist the local coffee house in Harrisburg (which will be discussed more later). While this program took some time to implement, it has had remarkable dividends. During the current fundraising for the new property, the parish raised over $200,000 in record time.

The parish council itself is elected but with a bit of a twist. The understanding is that every parishioner should serve on the council at some point. Interested candidates submit their names to the parish council and the election is just the approval of the slate. The congregation expects all people in leadership positions to be fully involved in the liturgical life of the parish. There are no formal organizations, instead there is a conscious effort to involve people at all levels of the parish and parishioners volunteer to organize and run the many different activities and events. There is also a strong education program for all ages including Sunday school, adult education, Orthodoxy 101 classes and catechism, plus an outreach ministry to a local college.

Holy Apostles has a strong choir and full liturgical life with services throughout the week. The development of the choir was a conscious decision from the beginning of the mission when they embraced the idea that a beautiful and proper worship service is the heart of all the activity in the parish. They now have a trained choir and conduct services in manner that reflects the liturgical traditions of the OCA. There are a number of weekly services outside of the weekend, including a number of special intercessory services for the needs of the parish. The parish leadership also makes a conscious effort to reach outside of their community to invite speakers and Orthodox exhibits.

One of the hallmarks of the parish is the fellowship hour. The parish makes a concerted effort to have a full meal after every Sunday Liturgy. The parishioners rotate responsibility for the meal and feed close to 100 people every Sunday. It is a time for the community to gather after worship in fellowship and has become well known in the area. As one parishioner reflected, “I think the food and the fellowship is part of the natural output the people wanting to be together. And, so, therefore, we have events that involve food and fellowship. People come to our parish that and are not expecting the kind of
coffee hour that we put on. It’s a full meal. We sit around and talk for hours.” This fellowship is the Body of Christ incarnate.

The parish also reaches out to the local community through their booth at the annual Jubilee Day and by volunteering for food drives, clothing drives, and assisting in shelters. However, there are two outreach activities which are quite unusual for Orthodox parishes: the Agia Sophia Coffee House and weekly pan-Orthodox Bible Study in Harrisburg.²⁶²

The Agia Sophia Coffee House is a non-profit coffee shop in downtown Harrisburg. Local Orthodox parishes established it in 2009 and it opened in 2011 as a pan-Orthodox outreach program for the greater Harrisburg area. The original idea came from an Agia Sophia Coffee House established in 2006 by the Holy Theophany Orthodox Mission in Colorado Springs, Colorado, with the motto “Fresh Coffee, Ancient Wisdom.” It is a successful outreach activity in the area and the local Orthodox clergy decided to bring the same concept to the Harrisburg area. The Coffee House received sizeable grants from different organizations and churches to begin the program, as it was to be a truly inter-Orthodox project involving the different jurisdictions in the region. The coffee shop currently operates on donations and volunteers, including a large number from Holy Apostles’ parish.

The concept is to create a comfortable, coffee shop environment where people could come, relax and read about issues of Faith without any pressure. The shop serves high quality coffee, tea, and café items and is located in a space across the street from the capital complex. Its decor combines a sleek modernism with traditional Orthodox icons and art. There are numerous books on the Orthodox Faith and spirituality, as well as Christian and secular literature in the adjacent reading room that has comfortable chair and couches. Orthodox Church music is always playing in the background. It is staffed by knowledgeable volunteers, who can answer questions on the Faith. The local clergy take turns serving at the shop and are available to discuss issues. It is very relaxed and very non-threatening environment for people to explore Christianity in general and Orthodoxy in particular. The shop also sponsors monthly evening events with lecture series, book reviews, and

²⁶² For more information about the Agia Sophia Coffee House, see http://agiasophiaharrisburg.com.
and events called “Third in the Burg” (referring to the third Friday of each month). The place has become the local gathering place in the neighborhood.

Among its attractions is that all of the profits from the coffee shop go directly to local charities. This is prominently advertised and they are the only shop in Harrisburg that does this. The charities include a wide spectrum such as “Meals on Wheels” to the local veterans’ home. The board of the coffee shop chooses a new charity each month and local parishioners are encouraged to submit different organizations. The shop is just becoming self-supporting and has donated a substantial amount of money this year to charity. It is truly one of the original outreach programs in the Church today and a number of people have discovered Christ through this ministry.

In connection with the Agia Sophia Coffee Shop is the weekly Bible Study held in downtown Harrisburg. A local Greek businessman donates a conference room in his building and each Wednesday, from noon to one o’clock, the local clergy rotate in leading a bible study open to all. There is no polemics, just reading and teaching of the Bible open for all seekers. It has a widespread and eclectic group of people from the neighborhood, ranging from homeless people to a young businesspeople and government employees to local housewives. It is a safe environment for spiritual searching and reflection. Again, there is no emphasis on Orthodox teachings, just the sharing of the Faith through the Scriptures.

Perhaps the greatest tangible effort in Mechanicsburg is now coming to fruition. After many years of searching and planning, the parish has purchased fourteen acres of land on the edge of the city. They have planted the Cross on the grounds and will soon begin construction of the new church complex. Over time, the campus will include a traditional Orthodox church, a hall, a school, and a cemetery. Construction of the first structure is slated to begin in 2015 on the hall, which will serve the dual purpose of church and fellowship center until the traditional temple is built. Once the multi-purpose building is constructed, the parish will sell the office space they currently occupy and apply those proceeds to the project. The purchase of that office has turned out to be a wise

---

263 In the Orthodox tradition, when a piece of property is being blessed to construct a church building, the bishop plants a cross on the spot where the altar will eventually sit as a sign of the future use. It is considered the first step in any building program.
investment, a reflection of the many wise choices made over the years that have brought them to this point.

5. Parishes Summary

The three parishes have dynamic and varied histories. Their experiences are as divergent as their geographical distance and chronological experiences. Yet, there is something familiar in all three that connect them: they have a commitment to actualizing their life as the Body of Christ as a parish of the Orthodox Church in America. They each present themselves and operate as a parish with that vision, not pretending to be anything else. In addition, they are all outward looking, not concentrating and living for their own self-existence, rather consciously and deliberately reaching out and being involved in the surrounding community. However, this does not exclude being deeply commitment to their internal parish needs. The clergy know their own flock’s needs and serve to meet those needs. In a sense, these parishes reach out to draw in and they reach inward to send outward. So, despite the variety in the parishes, they really are all vibrant evangelistic parishes applying their own method. As one clergyman put it, “The seed is the same but the soil may be different.” How this seed is spread and the soil tilled is the subject of the next chapter, which will look at the results of the research into the three parishes and uncover the definition and applications of evangelism.
Chapter 5
Results of the Study

Jesus Christ is the foundation of the Church. This is what this is all about. This is about Jesus Christ. And, if Christ were not part of what we’re doing, then what we’re doing out here in the liturgics is bad theater. And it would be true, because Christ is the fullness and that is what is beautiful about Orthodoxy; what Orthodoxy shows is the fullness of Jesus Christ. And, you have to love Him passionately. You have to care about Jesus Christ. You have to live for Him and to love Him, and, when your life is like that, I think these things happen because this is what makes us one. Christ comes out and offers His very self to us and we all participate in it and He lives inside of us. And, this is overt in Orthodoxy. And, so we’re united to each other by the very body and blood of Christ. He considers us members of Himself. And, unless that is overt unless the priest knows that and the people know that, it’s bad theater and it’s not about Jesus Christ.

Parishioner of Holy Apostles Orthodox Church in Mechanicsburg

1. Introduction

The research in the three parishes produced a significant amount of material that required systematic analysis. The questionnaire alone had eighty-eight responses in three categories: clergy (eight), parish leaders (eleven), and parishioners (sixty-nine). There are also eighteen interviews (six for each parish). The Mechanicsburg interviews filled five hours of tape (103 pages of transcripts); Tacoma had almost six hours (110 pages); and Wheaton had five and half hours (112 pages). In addition, I took twenty-five pages of observation notes for all parishes, which formed the backbone of the previous chapter’s analysis of the individual parish. This represented the material that was used to triangulate the results as discussed in Chapter Three.

I organized this material in NVivo 10 using more than twenty different nodes to address the major questions and issues. In addition, I organized the results into a table, which assisted in categorizing the results. In order to focus my analysis, I decided to present the results based on the six research questions outlined in Chapter One as this is the recommended method for presenting results of cross-case study analysis as recommended by Yin. “Instead, the composition for each case follows a series of questions and answers, based on the questions and answers in the case study database... For reporting purposes, the content of the database is shortened and
2. The Central Question Revealed

The primary question in the study was Orthodox parishes’ understanding of evangelism. As discussed in Chapter One, many different theories of evangelism fed into the working definition. While I will discuss this in detail later in this chapter, I needed to determine how the clergy, leadership, and parishioners defined evangelism in order to introduce the six questions at the heart of the study. I used the same foundational questions for all three parishes.

The first foundational question is whether the topic of evangelism is actually discussed in the parish and if so, where those discussions occur. Among the clergy the clear result was that evangelism is mainly discussed in casual conversations. The result labeled “other” specifically referred to evangelism being discussed during public events (e.g., at the coffee house or a church booth at a community festival.)

![Bar chart showing where evangelism is discussed among clergy.]

The same question posed to the parish leadership found, again, that casual conversation is the most common. However, the leadership also indicated that parish council meetings are a forum, something that was not as highly ranked among the clergy. In addition, sermons were of equal in importance to the “other” result.

---

264 Yin, *Case*, 171.
Where is Evangelism Discussed (Leadership)

The results from the parishioners clearly indicate that they are discussing evangelism both informally among themselves and within the leadership structure of the local parish.

Where is Evangelism Discussed (Parishioners)

The results, if broken down among the three parishes, are fairly similar to each other and show that casual conversation, parish council meetings, and sermons are the most used vehicles for discussing evangelism in each parish.
What is revealing about these results is that evangelism seems to be a topic in parish life. The parish speaks about evangelism in many forums, often spontaneously, because they believe that part of their focus as a healthy parish is to evangelize. However, in most cases, evangelism is not
necessarily a model, rather a way of life within the parish. The conversations are more along the lines of ensuring there is an openness to newcomers or that there is a specific need of a parishioner that needs to be filled. Whether there is a model is, in a sense, irrelevant as they are living their life as a parish in integrity to what they understand a parish to be and do.

The next question asked what challenges or issues the parish faces in the area of evangelism. This is a significant question because it assists the researcher determining whether the parish understands the issues in evangelism. The overwhelming majority of the clergy, leadership, and parishioners ranked “not knowing how to approach it” as the greatest challenge. This is an interesting result since these parishes and leaders were selected because of their successful evangelism efforts, yet all are saying that they are not sure what models to follow. Likewise, they are discussing evangelism, yet are searching to understand the subject. These results are consistent among all classes of respondents and parishes.

While the clergy results are split on not knowing how to approach it and not having good models, a significant number have worries about “sheep stealing.” This is a reasonable clergy concern as they have to deal with other clergy who may view evangelism as “poaching.”

![Pie Chart: What are the Issues in the Parish Relating to Evangelism (Clergy)]

The results from the leadership overwhelmingly show that they are not sure how to approach evangelism. This result is replicated in the results from the parishioners.
What are the Issues in the Parish Relating to Evangelism (Leadership)

- not knowing how to approach it: 59%
- we would be perceived as “sheep stealing”: 17%
- not sure what we have to offer to people: 8%
- we have no good models of how to do it: 8%
- Other: 8%

What are the Issues in the Parish Relating to Evangelism (Parishioners)

- not knowing how to approach it: 54%
- we would be perceived as “sheep stealing”: 26%
- the people would not be supportive of it: 12%
- not sure what we have to offer to people: 5%
- we have no good models of how to do it: 1%
- Other: 2%

When broken down among the three parishes, the results clearly showed that not knowing how to approach evangelism is again the single largest response. Other responses, such as not having models or concerns about “sheep stealing,” are also emphasized to greater or lesser degree depending on the individual parish circumstances addressed in Chapter Four.
Clearly the overwhelming majority of the parishioners in these effective churches feel that they either need a model to follow or profess to not knowing how to approach evangelism. The respondents discuss evangelism and all have strong views on the topic but profess to not
understanding it. In general, they expect an evangelistic strategy based on marketing and proselytism rather than communal parish activities. What began to emerge from this data and continued to be confirmed throughout the study was an integrity in a healthy parish. Part of this integrity was the community enabling, even discussing, evangelism. As the working definition affirms, the living out of the life of the parish is the witness of a healthy community. While they may be unsure as to what evangelism actually is supposed to look like, they are sure that it is central to the integrity of the life of the parish. It should be noted that during the interviews, I deliberately placed the questions on defining evangelism after the questions about the parish and the parish life in order to segue the conversation between the two. This allowed the subjects to make the connection between them and they soon realized that in fact they do have models to follow – their own parochial activities. With these preliminary questions framing the issue of evangelism, the study turned to the actual research questions themselves.

3. Answers to the Six Research Questions

3.1. Question 1: Do these parishes have a sufficient understanding of what evangelism, mission, and proselytism are and who is responsible for such work?

It is with this question that I found major differences in the answers between the questionnaire and the interviews. The parishioners have certainly thought about the definitions for evangelism, mission, and proselytism, but they answered differently on the questionnaire than when interviewed. Much of this could be attributed to the “Hawthorne Effect” discussed in Chapter Three, when the subjects give the answer they think the researcher wants to hear. On the questionnaire, they answered with traditional definitions of evangelism, which is what they believed the researcher wanted to hear. The open-ended answers from the questionnaire on defining evangelism roughly divided equally into three major areas: preaching or proclaiming the Gospel, living as an example, and actions or activities drawing people to Christ. Many equate evangelism with marketing and sales versus the presentation of the Gospel of Christ.

By specifically placing the question about definitions after questions about parish life and history during the interview, the answers shifted. A surprising number of people rejected the word or resisted defining evangelism outright because of the negative connotation. As one convert stated forthrightly, “Frankly, the word has baggage with me. I remember with a shudder the door to door salesman approach of my upbringing.” Others believed that coming into the Orthodox Church had
freed them from their perceived notions of evangelism. “My first response to hearing the word ‘evangelism’ is negative from what’s been so prominent with evangelists over many years. The biggest impact to me coming to Orthodoxy has been the love, holiness and peace in the first priest I encountered and present priest and Christ-like love of our parish.”

The first and most frequent set of responses on the definition of evangelism in the questionnaire equate evangelism with preaching and proclaiming the Gospel using such phrases as, “Sharing the Faith,” or “Spreading the Gospel,” or some combination thereof. In some cases the phrases are completed with “in word and deed.” Another common set of terms is “Proclaiming the Faith,” or “Presenting the Church,” or “Communicating our beliefs.” Therefore, those respondents have a clear and consistent understanding of sharing the Faith verbally. This response accounted for forty-three out of eighty-nine responses. The most eloquent response combines many of the elements in a traditional definition.

Evangelism is the “good news.” Evangelism is spreading the good news. What news? Christ’s life and teachings and his power to transform lives and transform the world. Recall Christ’s answer to John’s disciples when they asked if he was the Messiah. The blind received sight, the poor are cared for and the Gospel is preached. Evangelism is then the act of furthering that mission but also its social and doctrinal elements.

Interestingly, a few do equate evangelism with sharing God. “Evangelism is anything God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit use in and through those who are in Christ to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ,” or “Explaining the death, burial, resurrection of Christ in a Christ-like manner,” or even, “I would call it sharing with others what has helped me appreciate spiritual things.” In one pithy response the person defined evangelism as, “one beggar telling another beggar where there is bread.”

The second largest response to the question on the questionnaire defined evangelism as living as an example of the truth of the Gospel (twenty-three out of eighty-nine responses). “I believe that living your life that reflects Christ’s love is evangelism, whether it’s to strangers, co-workers or my family. It’s not always easy, but I truly believe that’s what it comes down to – through actions

---

and words.” Another example of such a sentiment is, “Developing and displaying a life of holiness and love that attracts people to God. This also requires a perception and willingness to share the Good News of reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ. Essentially, we must live honestly with ourselves and our neighbors willing to serve anyone in Christ’s name.” Some converts changed their understanding of evangelism to this definition when they became Orthodox. “It used to be spelling out the Gospel Good News of Jesus’ death and resurrection. Now it is more living a sacramental life and loving and serving people. It used to mean ‘getting people saved’ (as if I could do that) but now it is more about my obedience to the Faith, prayer and love.” By this definition, evangelism is much more about personal growth in Christ that is witnessed by others and draws them to Christ, which Veronis refers to in his book as “passive evangelism.”

But the personal witness or “passive evangelism” is also deeper. One person related, “Having experienced when young on a number of occasions ‘evangelical Christians,’ I have a fear and horror of that type of evangelism. I believe evangelism is on an individual level and is begun by the Holy Spirit preparing the heart, rather than a ‘program’ designed to bring masses of people on a superficial level. Our task then is to meet all people in love, praying to be given the right words to meet a person’s need at that time.” As another parishioner shared, “I believe that living your life that reflects Christ’s love is evangelism…whether it’s to strangers, co-workers or my family. It’s not always easy, but I truly believe that’s what it comes down to – through actions and words” or simply put, “Evangelism means living out your daily life.” It should be noted that one comment was interesting in that it accepted the method of “passive evangelism” but rejected the term. “America is already evangelized. I believe witness and example.”

The third response category to the question in the questionnaires addressed actions or activities that draw people to Christ, the complete opposite of “passive” evangelism. This accounted for eighteen out of eighty-nine responses. In this case, the respondents believed that actions in the community defined evangelism. “Evangelism is the active endeavor to bring people to a life in Christ. This may include those who never believed, those that lost their belief or those that have become ‘lukewarm’ in their faith. It also includes people who have become dissatisfied with their current religion and are searching for something else.” But more important than that, according to

---

266 Veronis, Missionaries, 11.
this group, is to find those people who are in need. As one person defined evangelism, “Proactively reaching out to others to bring them to the knowledge of God or otherwise doing so as the opportunity presents itself.” Another responded, “Love Thy neighbor, feed hungry, give to the poor, visit the sick, be open in heart and mind, don’t work too hard, let the Holy Spirit work in you.” So clearly this group is looking to draw people to Christ by serving and witnessing to them through that service.

As a whole, the group believed that the activity could be individual or communal. For example, one stated simply, evangelism is, “Any individual or corporate act that expresses the Gospel of Christ to the world.” Likewise others believed that, “Spreading the Gospel through all means, whether through witnessing, services or using chance encounters as opportunities. And I consider it most important to give the message about Christ, ahead of Orthodoxy.” But nonetheless many agreed that evangelism was about bringing people into the Church. “Showing people Christ though practical love. Or sometimes just giving people information about the Church so they can ‘come and see’.” That “come and see” perspective is one that permeates Orthodox thinking on evangelism; meaning basically that if someone enters into the Orthodox Church, sees the services and the icons, then they will be attracted to God through his Church. Another example of this is, “Making others aware of Christianity and inviting them to ‘come and see’ how its precepts are taught and lived in the Orthodox Church.” It should be noted that in all of the responses in the three areas, the respondents consider evangelism to be the task of all Christians. “Perpetuating the Gospel of Christ. Living a Christ-like life, stepping up when a situation calls for defending the Faith. Explaining, teaching, offering love, help, support. It is our ultimate calling,” stated one response.

While all of these categories are legitimate and defensible, when compared to the answers given in the interviews, there is a subtle but powerful shift from individual words or actions to community and liturgical activities. This shift may be the result of the group dynamic in the interviews, with participants reinforcing one another, but the shift is so consistent across the three parishes, that it indicates something foundational and embedded in the Orthodox approach to evangelism. For example, one clergyman observed, “You know, we were talking about the Orthodox evangelism, that it’s not about sitting on a corner passing out pamphlets. You sanctify the place that you’re at, people come organically. And, even serving coffee, you can sanctify this
place and people can come. And, that’s what’s happening.” Another clergyman related, “I don’t talk about here’s what we need to do. But in preaching the Gospel and stating that this is our mission, this is what a Christian should be, a walking billboard for Christ. It’s not about do this gimmick or this program that’s evangelism. Just be the Church. If you are being the Church wherever you are, it’ll happen.” So the definition of evangelism moves away from a strategy to bring in new worshippers and moves towards adapting the congregation’s actions to their particular circumstances. As another clergyman declared, “What does God want me to do, right here, right now with the people with whom I’m currently surrounded?”

In addition, the koinonic element takes more of a center stage in the interviews. As one parishioner defines evangelism, “So, I felt if these people don’t know what we have and they’re looking for it and they’re thirsty for it, we, the Orthodox, who are in the Church, need to do something to make them aware of it.” This is a critical element for seekers who want to feel a part of the community. Another person explained, “And, this may sound kind of corny, but actually feeling the presence of God by gathering as the community.” The answers emphasize that all members of the community must participate in this, in imitation of St. Tikhon’s admonition that is all the faithful’s task to evangelize. A priest explained, “You go to the front people (in the parish) and say it’s not just our (the priests’) job to evangelize... That’s one thing I taught from the beginning, where I said that’s not just the priests’ job. It’s everybody. You bring your friends to church, you invite. We’ve never done the gimmicky thing like Visitor Sunday. Because, we say, ‘why don’t you visit our church?’” Another leader stated, “We have one mission in the Church, to serve the community.” The best summary of such an approach is simply stated, “Evangelism is anything, God the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, used in and through those who are in Christ or who proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Because I feel sometimes we are not always conscious we’re evangelizing. But, it’s not about us; it’s about what God can do in and through us.”

What is acutely obvious in the interviews is the devotion to the Orthodox Church. Every single respondent, with rare exceptions, believes that evangelism is not just about bringing people to Christ, but specifically bringing them into the Orthodox Church. As members who found a home in that particular parish, it is logical for them to push this perspective. This may seem at first glance

\[267\] See Chapter 2.
to be close to proselytism since there is much talk of the superiority of one church experience over their previous one. However, it should be noted there is an affirmation of freedom of choice and respect for his or her own dignity from among those who did convert into the Church. As such, they do believe that while someone who studies the Church and truly seeking will come into the Orthodox faith, it is solely on their own choice and not through any nefarious means. Many simply stated that they no longer believed in some of those other teachings. As a manner of ascertaining the parishes’ understanding, a question was then asked to all if they could define proselytism. One person reflected on proselytism and the Orthodox Church, “I think Orthodoxy is a vehicle to learning about God and communing with God, so becoming Orthodox can be important as a starting point. But, I don’t think it’s right to be self-righteous because you’re Orthodox. It’s not the end point. Well, I’m Orthodox, so I’m better than you. Orthodoxy is an effective way to get to God. We think, perhaps, more effective way than other ways. So, in that sense, it could be important, but I don’t think God judges you because you’re not Orthodox.”

In addition, most respondents clearly view proselytism as coercive and negative and as forcing people to believe. They see proselytism as forcible marketing. Many of those who came from Wheaton College context came to Orthodoxy precisely because they were fleeing from such approaches. “Proselytism is a general word which is to try to get somebody else converted to your religion, cause, purpose, whatever it is. Evangelism is specifically Christian. It’s to preach the Gospel.” In fact, many of the interviewees have visceral reaction to that word. “I hate that word. I hate that word. I loathe that. Please. It’s those people that ring my doorbell and don’t see the fish on my door and want to give me a pamphlet. I would like to say ‘I’m sorry. Didn’t you see that?’ I don’t want to hear about it. I don’t want somebody proselytizing to me.” Another parishioner explained, “Well, I guess trying to sell me on something. And, that’s how I see it in the same way. I look at how people live their life and if you can’t tell I’m a Christian by how I live my life then I’m not doing a very good job. And so why do I have to and when there’s an opportunity, yes, bring a friend. Yes, do that. I don’t like that word at all. It’s not me. Will never be.” The parishioners generally understand that there is a difference between evangelism, which is to witness to and introduce people into the Faith, and proselytism, which is to use methods which run counter to their own understanding of how a Christian behaves. As summed up by one respondent, “It’s not like we’re out there saying, ‘Come on. We’re going convert you.’ That’s not how it works.
They come to see it. They like it. They decide.” This emphasizes the freedom of choice that is a critical differentiation between authentic evangelism and proselytism.

From the replies, it is clear that active and growing Orthodox parishes have some very specific views on evangelism, its definition and its implementation. They understand evangelism as corporate, interactive and centered on both active and passive activities. They come to view their community as built around a liturgical life that spreads outward. This directly echoes the working definition of evangelism, which incorporates the witness and actions of the individual and corporate into the life of the *koinonia*. Clearly the parish communities are involved in different areas of evangelism, and focus their life as Christians and in the Church, which illustrates the thesis of this study, that evangelism may involve individual actions but it is a communal activity. One participant summarized this point by saying,

> I think what we do here is, in fact, evangelism, because it is all centered around the Gospel, and you can preach the Gospel in more ways than from the pulpit. And, the biggest way you do it is through your life. And, regardless if that’s to other Christians, or to non-Christians, or to non-religious people at all, that’s evangelism and it’s true evangelism. It’s not done with the goal of getting people to church, although often that can be the result. The goal is to live your Christian life in such a way that the light of Heaven reflects off of you and into the world. And, that is exactly what happens here.

### 3.2. Question 2: Is there a historical methodology and terminology of evangelism that is still applicable in the Orthodox Church?

This question was more difficult to explore as the patristic sources rarely covered the subject of evangelism and mission overtly. Instead, much is inferred from the writings of the Church life and the lives of the saints. This does not suggest that the historic Church was not involved in mission and evangelism, it was simply what was done in the Church. Likewise, it is significant that the terms are rarely, if at all, used in the Scriptures though words such as witness and proclamation can also be cited (see Chapter One). Missions and evangelism are at the very core of the Church’s life, so theologians felt little need to analyze it. It is only as the Church grew throughout the world and into North America that they examined the subject, albeit in eminently practical ways. When Church leaders discussed the subject, it was not about the theology of evangelism, rather it was part of a larger discussion of situations in particular regions. In fact, the terms “evangelism” and “mission” are quite alien to the Orthodox world as they developed in the Western Church and even
then they did not come into common usage in the Western Churches until the nineteenth century. The Orthodox never used the terms until the twentieth century, and then specifically so as to be able to relate to the West in discussions.²⁶⁸ So such terms were quite alien.

However, as explored in Chapter Two, a clear paradigm emerged in the earliest Church and evolved as the Church spread outward into different cultures. This paradigm began with the development of the worshipping community in the early Church. As this community spread, it attracted followers to the Faith by its focus on the person of Jesus Christ and the incarnated love among the members of the Church both towards one another and those in the larger community. It is this exact ethos of the early Church that appears to permeate the three studied parishes. There is a focus on Christ and the Church, the parishioners genuinely love one another and desire to worship together, and are involved in their local communities. In all three parishes this is evident not only in the interviews and questionnaires, but in observing their interactions. In this one way, they really did imitate the early Church, as Tertullian had written in his *Apology* in the third century about how the pagans would marvel at the love the Christians showed. “Look, see how these Christians love one another.”²⁶⁹ This was precisely what drew people into the Church then and this is evident in these parishes now. As one parishioner responded in the questionnaire on the subject of evangelism in the community, “The church is like a family, a family headed by God.”

Another clear point of reference to the early Church is that there is no real strategy of evangelism in the parishes; it is just the Church being the Church. There are shelves of books dedicated to evangelistic and missional strategy; some of it works and some of it does not. On the whole, the three parishes do not read and follow a particular tactic or strategy. As demonstrated in the last section, most do not believe they even have a model to emulate. In fact, in many conversations with the clergy and leaders, specifically those who came from a former evangelical background, they are completely against even trying to employ some strategy. They feel they had been inundated with such approaches, and were freed from it by becoming Orthodox. They are free to be Christians and to worship, and not be told that they have to go and win converts for their salvation. As one person described,

---

²⁶⁸ See the discussion of the terms in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2.
In Protestantism there was always a big push to evangelize, and now I’m older and so I remember the whole Campus Crusade for Christ and Bill Bright’s Four Spiritual Laws pamphlets. I don’t know if you’re familiar with these things or not. But, it states that God has a plan for your life and, I think that’s spiritual law number one. And, it just goes on. And, they are all canned approaches to evangelism that they would then somehow be packaged because it’s technique and so you do these three things, you have this package and you go out and assault people with it. And, I personally had trouble with that because, if you read the Gospels, Jesus did not have a Bill Bright’s Four Spiritual Laws pamphlet whenever he talked to people. And he approached people on the basis of their need. So, the woman at the well, what does he do? He begins talking about water he can provide for her. But, he’s speaking spiritually. And, as he interacts with people, he’s matching the Gospel of the Kingdom, because he’s the Kingdom incarnate, offering it to meet the needs as he’s perceiving them, as he’s interacting with people. What I find refreshing in Orthodoxy is that the people are not running around matching the inside of their Bibles with each new convert and the moving on to the next person, as if that is enough. That you just get someone to pray a pretty little prayer and then you move onto the next person. That we’re all about counting numbers. Because in Orthodoxy, salvation is a process. It’s not a one-time thing. So, to me it just seems like evangelism is part of the heart and soul of the Orthodox faith and that I’m trying to save myself by confession, by repentance, by attending services, by trying to be the best Christian or Orthodox Christian that I can be while also trying to be that way all the time outside of here. ... I just think that Orthodoxy takes the pressure off. It’s not my job to bring the whole world to conversion. It is my job to live out my Orthodox faith and it’s God who converts people.

However it would be disingenuous to state that despite this there is no missionary strategy or technique in the historical Orthodox Church. Certainly, St. Innocent’s Instructions to Missionaries (see Chapter Two) is filled with practical advice on approaching the native Alaskans. Likewise, St. Tikhon wrote extensively on the need for all Orthodox to engage the North American society. There have been serious discussions on evangelism throughout the formation of the Orthodox Church in America; in fact, many of the themes of the All-American Councils are dedicated to that topic. Despite this, Orthodox faithful generally recoil from discussions of strategy, mainly because they believe that the people in the parish actualize what has already been spoken or written by the Church Fathers. They live their Christian life in the parish and the community and so do not feel the need, as the historical Church did not feel the need, to discuss it. They simply do it. One parishioner confirmed,

What I think that the strength of the Orthodox Church in general is the fact that they have a corner on theology and history. ... And that I think that offers people that are coming from all these different backgrounds, all these different up, down, all
around, that they finally feel like they’ve got a place where it doesn’t matter what an individual thinks or individual wants, this is the way it’s been and this is the theology. And maybe you’re not ready to accept it or maybe you don’t agree with everything, but that’s okay too. Because, we’re all on a spiritual path, and we’re all growing and the Lord is helping us through all of this. And, I just find that this freedom, just total freedom that we have in this foundation of history and spirituality that is so incredibly solid that there’s no questions that need to be asked such as “Where did this theology come from?” or “Well, who came up with that?”

Another point that relates indirectly to the strategy of missionary work that began with Ss. Cyril and Methodius and was then carried on by all of the great missionary saints in North America: the need for local leaders, local language, and a local church. Throughout this study, participants consistently and frequently addressed the language issue, which will be discussed later, but also the whole concept of a local church with local leaders. Each of the parishes is conscious of the need to raise local leaders and to be the local church, not only in North America but also in the local community. The parishes believe strongly evangelism is most effective on this local level when the parish reaches out to the surrounding community. People in the community know the parish and know the clergy, some of whom were raised there. There is active engagement with each other and those around them. One clergy described, “We shop at local stores, we use the local banks, and we do the prayers at the town council. People know us and if anyone asks about us they can point and say... ‘Oh you want the Orthodox Church down the road.’” This is not dissimilar to the many examples found, not only in the lives of the great missionary saints, but also in almost every historical example of Church growth in a local region. The Church in intertwined into the community, sometimes to the point of defending the community unto death. An illustrative example of this is the authorities exiling St. Herman from Kodiak to Spruce Island because he cared too much for his people. These parishes all have the same fierce connection to their local communities.

But there is also a negative side to the history of the Orthodox, particularly in North America, particularly as the ethnic churches can be unwelcoming, if not outright hostile, to outsiders. As a result, those outside the Faith can view Orthodoxy as intimidating and xenophobic. This ethnic enclave mentality has entered the consciousness of these parishes to the point that they specifically and forthrightly react against it. Time and again, “cradle” Orthodox relate how they left other parishes because of the lack of English services or the ethnic exclusivity. Most considered this as the single most harmful issue in evangelism. As will be seen later, respondents view the Church
as a repository of the ethnic culture as the least important reason to join the Church. One parishioner, responding to a question about why people leave the Church, answered, “Ethnocentricity, for example: I know Greeks who are Lutheran. Why? I think growing up; going to church is as much an expression of Greek culture as of faith. The kids grow up and lose interest. Later in life, they search for faith and disqualify Orthodoxy because their parents forced it on them without instilling faith. They search for something more ‘evangelical’. Ethnocentricity also affects those who do not belong to the ethnic group of the church they join. Eventually they feel the church values its cultural identity more than its flock, and they leave.”

While I will later address this critical issue in greater detail, such an issue still exists with the new wave of Orthodox immigrants arriving. Chapter Two mentioned the shift in paradigms in the North American church from serving an immigrant community in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to becoming ethnic enclaves trying to preserve their culture through the Church. The shift seems subtle, but the effect is very powerful, as there is a vast difference between caring for different ethnic immigrants and being a repository of perceived single ethnic culture. All three parishes deal with immigrants and do so successfully by serving the communities, sometimes in their own language, and by integrating them into the parish itself. They do not form separate communities, rather they create a mosaic of all backgrounds. As one clergyman observes, “Ethiopian, Indians, Pakistani or Iraqis, you know we don’t, at least, I can say freely, we don’t look at people from these countries, ‘Oh, you have to have this costume. You can’t associate with us because we’re so and so.’ You know, we have Russian, we have Polish, we have Eastern European, and basically it’s just a big melting pot that co-exists.” The same can be said for all three parishes, they are a mosaic of cultures.\footnote{In one particular conversation, there was an intense discussion on ethnic Orthodox when there was an observation that even those Americans who convert to Orthodoxy are ethnic, they come from a white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant background which is just as ethnic as a new immigrant from Russia. Just a different ethnicity from a different angle.}

The consistent and potentially controversial issue that came out during the interviews is the question of the “True Church.” While I will examine this issue in greater detail later, it is important to note that all three parishes are absolutely convinced that they are directly connected to the historic Church. This is not expressed in any exclusive or even triumphalistic manner, but as an acknowledgement that they define themselves as the legacy of that historic Church. Furthermore,
it is this belief in an unchanging Church connected directly to the apostles that made Orthodoxy attractive to many in the first place.

The participants never presented this belief in an obnoxious, exclusive manner, rather they seem to simply acknowledge it as a fact that they believe with humility and gratitude. They perceive the Church as a safe haven. While they are also quite sensitive about respecting those who were not in the Orthodox Faith, these parishioners are absolutely convinced to a person that this is the true Church, apparently not a unique perspective of converts to any faith. One leader confirmed, “I think Orthodoxy is a vehicle to learning about God and communing with God, so becoming Orthodox can be important as a starting point. But, I don’t think it’s right to be self-righteous because you’re Orthodox. It’s not the end point. ‘Well, I’m Orthodox, so I’m better than you.’ Orthodoxy is an effective way to get to God. We think, perhaps, a more effective way than other ways. So, in that sense, it could be important, but I don’t think God judges you because you’re not Orthodox.” However, there is no doubt where the people stand in this regard. “Speaking from experience as a convert, Thirsting for God in a Land of Shallow Wells was a book that made a great impact. Many are grieved by the seemingly endless number of denominations and long for a Christianity that unites us while leaving room for different expressions. You don’t have to leave who you are behind to become Orthodox. There is tremendous joy in living an Orthodox life.”

It is this connection to the historic Church and the liturgical experience which actuates so many of the people in the parish and must be taken into consideration when examining evangelism in the Orthodox Church.

One priest relates that he often explains to seekers,

You’re a brick wall. Okay? We’re a brick wall. There are ten thousand bricks in our wall. None of them are missing. There are nine thousand bricks in your wall, because a thousand of them fell out, or were removed. We’ll fill in those because you can’t say that they haven’t heard the Gospel. They haven’t the heard the fullness of it. But rather than saying, “You’re heretics. You’re wrong. You’re going to go to Hell.” Let us complete...let’s fill in those holes on your wall. They’re both walls. An example I always use with paper. You take two pieces of paper. “What’s this?” “Pieces of paper.” “What’s this?” “A piece of paper.” “Okay. Can you write a letter on this?” “Yes.” “Can you write a letter on this?” “Yes.” Okay, now I tear off a piece. “Okay what’s this?” “A piece of paper.” “What’s this?” “A piece of paper.” “Which one would you rather write the letter on?” “This one, because it’s

---

whole and complete and lacking in nothing.” “Okay, this is incomplete. So, because this isn’t complete and whole, can you still write a letter on it?” “Yeah, you can.” “Is it whole and complete?” “No, it has something lacking.” “Which would you rather have to write the letter?” “Well, the whole and complete....”

This idea of wholeness and completeness is a consistent teaching of the historic Church and very attractive to those who seek out the Orthodox Church.

In conclusion, there is strong evidence that the models employed by the local parish are deeply connected in theory and practice to the historic Orthodox Church and manifested in a number of ways including language and leadership. This history is not dead history, rather it is alive, operative, and a critical foundation to all that the parish does. As Jaroslav Pelikan, a renowned patristic scholar, once wrote, “Tradition is the living faith of the dead, traditionalism is the dead faith of the living. And I suppose I should add, it is traditionalism that gives tradition such a bad name.”

3.3. Question 3: What are the current theories and practices of evangelism as applied in a contemporary parish of the Orthodox Church in America?

This next question gets at the heart of understanding the Orthodox approach to evangelism, not in a theoretical or historical sense but in actual parish practices. As with other questions, there is clearly a similar approach in both understanding and practicing evangelism among the three parishes. The first question on the topic states, “Some believe that elements in the regular life of a parish are themselves inherently evangelistic,” and listed elements of evangelism that the respondent ranked in order of importance in parish life from one to ten (one being most important). This question helps me determine how clergy, leaders and parishioners understand the practice of evangelism in the parish and they consider most important.

The categories chosen for this question are significant as they encompass a variety of elements that had been suggested in earlier research. Chapter One significantly explored all of the categories in the formation of the working definition of evangelism. For example, two of the categories, preaching and teaching, are commonly used terms and methods from many sources when explaining evangelism. Witnessing is also a commonly used word in defining evangelism.

---

Serving those in the parish, service to the community and the liturgical life are both foundational elements in exploring parish life as came through consistently in research. The final area, confessing or speaking about Christian values is also a category that is referred to often during the research. It should be noted that all of them have some Biblical and patristic base as explored in Chapter Two. As such, it was reasonable to put these categories in the survey for ranking what was considered the most important element in evangelism and thus contributing to the working definition as well as the understanding of the methodology of evangelism utilized in the parish. The results are remarkably similar among all groups.

What are the Important Elements of Evangelism (Clergy)

The results from the clergy clearly (by adding the two highest ranked responses – preaching and liturgy) demonstrated that they believe that the liturgical life of the parish is the most important evangelistic tool in the parish. This is followed by preaching and witnessing (living a Christian life in public) and teaching. The results from the leaders are slightly different.

What are the Important Elements of Evangelism (Leadership)
Again, clearly the liturgical life is considered the most important evangelistic tool according to the leadership. However witnessing and serving (caring for those in the parish) and service to the community are ranked next in importance. This is a fairly obvious result given their different roles in the parish: the clergy concentrates on preaching and the leaders on serving needs of the parishioners, although these are not exclusive domains. However, both groups believe that the liturgical life of the parish is the most important tool. The results from the parishioners are just as revealing.

![Image: What are the Important Elements of Evangelism (Parishioners)]

The results again clearly demonstrate the centrality of the liturgical life in the parish in evangelism. This is followed by witnessing and service to the community. Interestingly, preaching, teaching, and confessing (speaking about Christian values in public) are the lowest on the list when these three elements are commonly accepted methods of evangelism that most people associate with evangelism. In fact, preaching and teaching are at the heart of almost every evangelistic definition and technique. Yet within these three parishes these are not ranked as important. Given the large number of converts among the respondents, this could be a result of a rejection of such methods. However, more likely the results point towards the evangelistic principles embedded in Orthodoxy concerning community: the Liturgy, living a Christian life, and caring for those inside and outside the community. This is precisely what all three parishes verified as their focus in parish life and what is critical in koinonia. These elements are also embedded in the proposed working definition.

This is verified by the analysis of each individual parish, which proved remarkably consistent.
In Mechanicsburg, the parish considers the liturgical life and witnessing the most important element, followed by service to the community. Preaching, while important is followed by confessing, teaching are less important.

In Tacoma, the liturgical life is the most important element followed by witnessing and service to the community. Less important is confessing and teaching.

In Wheaton, the element of witnessing is paramount followed by the liturgical life and service to the community. Less important by a wide margin is confessing.
The variations among the parishes were fairly consistent and concentrated in the three categories: liturgical life, witnessing, and service to the community as each parish has a different emphasis based on its unique context. For example, Wheaton has a stronger charitable program to the local community, through such activities as the meal delivery and clothing collection, whereas Tacoma has a lesser emphasis on community service due to their location geographically distant from the city center. Mechanicsburg, through its participation in the Agia Sophia Coffee House and other public activities, is more involved in public witness.

However all three agree on the centrality and unifying factor of the liturgical life, which is emphasized in the interviews. For example, a parishioner from Mechanicsburg related, “I remember thinking many times that everyone here loved the services. And, even people who have since left, we’ve felt a unity there. Just because we came to pray together. And, I really think that is what kept pulling it together, the fact that people loved the services, and, wanted to be there, and, church...that was the focal point of it.” A similar sentiment came from a parishioner from Tacoma who stated, “Our focus is not to be an organization, our focus and purpose is to be the body of Christ. And, if that’s the case, our whole look at things has to be different.” This way of existing differently as the Body of Christ was expressed by a parishioner from Wheaton who confirmed, “We come here to be Christians and we do so very organically, as Orthodox Christians by gathering in prayer.”

So the focus of evangelism in the parishes is clearly based on the community gathering in worship, caring for one another, integrating new people into that community and reaching outward to those around them. This confirms the elements in the proposed working definition.
The following graphs are based on the question to “cradle” Orthodox Christians as to how they discovered that particular parish. Converts had a slightly different line of questioning that will be addressed later. This is important in understanding what attracts people to a parish and also reveals something about that parish’s evangelism. Over half of the people found their parish by specifically seeking out a parish after moving to the area or by being referred to the parish by a friend. Many had visited various Orthodox parishes in the area until they found the one which incarnated a community. Very few of the respondents have been members of the parish all of their life, which is a result of the parishes not having established generational membership.

Why Parishioners Attend their Current Parish

The reason that members remain in a particular parish is just as enlightening. The highest number responded that they found the parish a good place to grow spiritually as well as a good community for their family. Being a friendly community also ranks highly.

Why Parishioners Remain in their Current Parish
The results of these graphs are fairly similar across all three communities. But what is clear about the “cradle” Orthodox in these churches is that a strong loving community that is liturgically active, spiritually nurturing, and welcoming are the most critical elements in them being evangelized into the community. As one church leader explained, “The church speaks for itself and the people that come to the church for the church, and get everything they need.” In other words, the Church being the Church is the cornerstone of koinonick evangelism. As another parishioner explained, “We come here to be Christians and we do so very organically, as Orthodox Christians.” A written response in the questionnaire stated, “Orthodoxy’s heart is love of people, living the ‘Great Commandment’ in the context of daily life, doing what God has called us to here and now.”

The interviews are able to better expound on the practice of evangelism in the parish and more importantly on how that is perceived within the communities. I narrowed down the evangelistic practices in the communities to five specific categories: clergy leadership, fiscal awareness, quality of worship, ministry in the community, and relationship with each other. At first glance, these may seem like simple qualities of a healthy community, which is true, but in unpacking them it is obvious that they are, in fact, evangelistic tools that are important in the integrity of the community. A healthy parish community is a healthy evangelizing community. This is fairly obvious, as people are attracted to a parish that is healthy. As one clergyman opined, “God will not send someone to a place to be set up for failure. He will lead them to a place where they can grow closer to Him.”

3.3.1 Clergy Leadership. All of the parishes stress the importance of having a stable and long serving parish priest. As each new priest arrived, he committed to serve the parish for the long term. Just as important, in the parishes with multiple clergy, they clearly work cooperatively, without jealousy but with genuine love and respect. As one clergyman stated, “It all boils down to leading by example.” Members of a parish look for a clear and loving leader who they can respect, who does not set himself over the people, but works alongside them. The clergy serves reverently and preaches relevantly in order to direct and lead the parish.

The evangelistic nature of this point is that people sense stability and leadership in a parish and want to be a part of it. One parishioner observed, “People are buying into it. They say, ‘I want to be a part of this. This is a place of belonging and this Jesus thing isn’t just about me and Him, it’s
about me, Him and this whole body that we’re participating in’. They observe the leadership and consciously choose to be a part of that community. The priest sets the tone and is often the first person that outsiders contact. All of the clergy are very aware of this fact and make it a point to welcome newcomers and assist in integrating them into the community. It is relational. “It’s a universal language,” states one priest, “Because, the Church Fathers say that inside of every human heart is the longing for paradise, because we remember it somehow. And, so, I don’t care what you are, you’ll remember that somehow and you’ll connect, and that’s what speaks to people.” When that speaks to the people and they come to the community, the community itself welcomes them no matter who they are. Time and again the clergy emphasize how welcoming their parish is and this example is set by the clergy and leadership.

3.3.2 Fiscal Awareness. What is also immediately evident is that there is a healthy approach to money in all three parishes and little dissension in this matter. All make a conscious effort to keep the church budget within their means and not take on too much debt. All three of the parishes are involved in building programs to either expand their space or to build their permanent church. To pay the bills, most rely on “percentage giving” and teach giving of the “first fruits.” Money issues are addressed openly and giving is never a problem in the parish. If there is a program or a charity put forth, they support it. In one parish (Mechanicsburg), ten percent of all income that comes to the parish is immediately given to an outside charity approved by the parish. In Wheaton, there is a tremendous amount of money that comes into the parish and equally tremendous amount that flows outside the parish. Likewise, Tacoma supports many organizations and appeals. One clergyman explains, “We ask for it and we get what we need.” Another leader from a different parish states, “We budget as such, but there is never a time when we need something and the money is not there.” And in the third parish, “A hundred percent of our budget comes from what the people give. All other fundraising goes for outside charities or extra projects.”

So in all cases, the money is not a point of dissension but one of unity. The actual budgets range from high to middle, but the clergy are well compensated, the life of the parish is financed and money is used to reach out of the parish. People are generous and support the parish because they trust the clergy and the leadership to spend it responsibly. The evangelistic nature is twofold. First, the parishes exhibit a koinonic approach to money as referred to in Acts 2:42-47 where the early church used their possessions and goods for the common need and for those in need. Second, the
healthy approach towards money ensured a harmony within the parish in which the parishioners freely contributed to the needs and were involved in deciding how to spend the money responsibly. A parishioner stated succinctly, “We shared the wealth and the parish just organically grew from there.”

3.3.3 *Quality of Worship.* A clergyman relates, “The biggest thing you do for the people is the services.” This set the tone for all of the parishes. They all consciously and intentionally concentrate on doing good, solid liturgical services. They all have spent a considerable time decorating the worship space and even more time on the quality of the choir. One clergyman states, “The choir is an outreach ministry in itself.” In Wheaton, they do not have a choir but do congregational singing, which requires great effort but draws the community together during the services. This is an unusual for an Orthodox parish, especially a large parish, but it has yielded great fruits by melding a very eclectic parish together. Because of this effort put into all aspects of worship, the people are deeply connected to the services.

The Liturgy is the single most powerful evangelistic tool in the Orthodox Church and clearly one the main elements that attracts people to the Orthodox Church as demonstrated by the graph on ranking elements of evangelism inherent in the parish, of which it consistently ranked first across all parishes. When asked about the services, almost all of the people from the three parishes agree on the beauty and power of the liturgical life. They consciously searched for this and discovered it in the parish. Those who converted found themselves drawn to the faith through the services and the connection to the ancient Liturgy. When people visited the church and saw this, they saw Christian love and worship and wanted to be a part of it. Without the Liturgy, the parish ceases to be a Church and is just another gathering, but through the Liturgy, the people discover the timeless theology of the Church and the connection to one another as the Body of Christ. Interestingly, not one person expressed that the services need to be shortened or modernized. As all three parishes spend a considerable time on the liturgical life, it shows, since the services, on the whole, are all well attended, even the mid-week daytime services that occur during working hours. The services are joyful and the leadership in all three of the parishes stress that the services are simply in the style of the Orthodox Church in America, and do not try to be something they are not.
The parishioners view their worship as a direct reflection of their cohesive and loving community. “I think it’s because we genuinely care about each other beyond just knowing each other. Maybe it’s the fact that we worship together so intently and so purposefully that that makes us care a lot about each other.” There is a connection between those who worship together, spend time together, eat together; they really become a community and more than that, they are the Body of Christ. As one parishioner succinctly phrased it, “We love each other and worship God.” And another continues the same thought, “That everyone here loved the services. And, even people who have since left, we’ve felt a unity there. Just because we came to pray together. And, I really think that is what kept pulling it together, is the fact that people loved the services, and, wanted to be there, and church was the focal point.” The evangelistic witness and the forging of the common bond among those in the parishes are embedded in the liturgical life.

3.3.4 Ministry in the Community. Another recognizable evangelistic element in parish life is the outreach to the local community. The people know their community and make a concerted effort to integrate the church into it. They give freely to local charities and are involved in food drives, shelters, local events, and fundraising efforts in the community. The parishioners participate in local government and civic organizations and, in some cases, specifically patronize local businesses. A parishioner points out that the parish looks at the community and participates “based on the need that was grass root.” In other words, focus on the current needs outside the church door. This is shown in Wheaton, where clothing is dropped off at a local train station where the homeless gather; in Tacoma, where they participate in the local food bank; and in Mechanicsburg, where they volunteer at the Agia Sophia Coffeehouse. The parishes are a part of the local community.

The parishes are open and engaged. There is often some sort of activity, open to the public, happening most days and evenings in all of the parishes as they also offer services such as English as a Second Language (ESL) courses, Bible studies, and work assistance, all of which are open to outsiders without obligation. A parish leader eloquently explained how this relates to evangelism: “We evangelize by continuing to grow our outreach programs within the community. Nothing shows Christian spirit more than helping those in need. Partnering with other non-Orthodox groups also proved effective as there are many people who are not themselves in need, but who are searching for a more fulfilling life in Christ. We get the word out about any classes, study groups,
etc. that may be of interest to local college students or local citizens.” This draws people to the parish, and they get to experience the welcoming and generous spirit. As shown by their responses, the parishioners clearly believe that this outreach is an active crucial component of the parish life.

### 3.3.5 Relationships with Each Other

Food plays a prominent part in all three parishes. A clergyman shares why this is so integral to their parish life and outreach as people, “‘come here to eat.’ And then if you find out what you know about them, that’s where you hook them up with other people in the parish, you get them talking. And, then next thing you know, they’re coming back because they feel bonds. It’s all about personal connection.” In all three parishes, they have meals after services and everyone is invited. It is almost a sacramental activity since after they have gathered around the Eucharistic table, they gather around the common table. “We feed the people and we feed the soul,” relates one parishioner. But this leads into the close relationships that the community has with one another. They genuinely want to be together and care about one another. So much so that I observed that in all three parishes, well after the services, the people sat in the church hall talking, laughing, and enjoying each other’s company. In Wheaton, where there are multiple services on a Sunday, one communal meal blends into the next as people from the other services come in and join those still in the hall. As one parishioner relates, “It’s the love and companionship and friendship that this parish has. And nothing I’ve ever experienced in my entire life.”

Furthermore, the parish knows its own people and cares for them. Time and again they assist those in need. A story from one parish relates how when a family lost all of their possessions in a fire, the rest of the parish came together and donated a whole new apartment to them. In Wheaton, the freezer is filled anonymously throughout the week so that the clergy always has meals to bring to the shut-in and needy. Not once have they had to announce to the parish that they needed more food as it is always full. In another parish, people have donated money to assist in medical costs or even the burial of marginal members of the parish, without requiring committees or long meetings. This sense of charity is organic as shared by one clergyman, “There’s going to be needs for socialization or whatever the case may be. And once the parish can galvanize on its own, then you’ve created that. And, I’m not creating something, it becomes organic. The parish creates it.”
The results on this question are quite remarkable, and exactly in line with the thesis and the proposed working definition of evangelism. Liturgy, witness, reaching out in the community, and being a loving and open parish are at the heart of their success as parishes and in their growth through evangelism. These two focal points cannot be separated. Bosch explains,

One may, therefore, perceive the church as an ellipse with two foci… In and around the first it acknowledges and enjoys the sources of its life; this is where worship and prayer are emphasized. From and through the second focus the church engages and challenges the world. This is a forth-going and self-spending focus; where service, mission, and evangelism are stressed…. Neither are at the expense of the other; rather they stand in each other’s service.\textsuperscript{273}

This is even more remarkable considering that a majority of the parishioners believe that there are no evangelistic models and they did not know how to approach evangelism. This is because most people define evangelism according to their own perception of what evangelism is on a personal basis as opposed to what they as a parish are actually doing. In fact, they are providing their own model of evangelism without realizing it. What was most remarkable was that all three parishes have a similar approach, as demonstrated by the questionnaire, explained in the interviews and observed in their actions in a perfect triangulation of data. Clearly \textit{koinonic} evangelism is the model both historically and in modern day practice. Fr. Hopko reflected, “This Christian evangelism is always accompanied by teaching (\textit{didaskalia}), and confession (\textit{homologia}) and defense (\textit{apologia}) and witness (\textit{martyria}). And it is accomplished in works of love for human beings performed in concrete acts of mercy and compassion without condition or discrimination.”\textsuperscript{274} It is the Church being the Church.

3.4. \textbf{Question 4: What are the effective (and ineffective) methods that OCA parishes have employed? What are the criteria that define effectiveness in evangelism? Why have they succeeded or failed?}

It is important to take this evidence and look at the effectiveness of this approach to evangelism on both an objective and subjective basis. Defining and identifying effectiveness is quite difficult without objective measures, such as increased membership. However, it is too limiting to judge a parish’s evangelistic effectiveness solely through external factors. Bosch specifically warns

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{273} Bosch, \textit{Transforming}, 385.
  \item \textsuperscript{274} Hopko, \textit{Speaking}, 70. As a note those areas recounted by Hopko were all included in the survey on the important elements in evangelism in Chapter 3.3.1.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
against such a criteria (see Chapter One). In truth, evangelistic success is affected by a host of external factors such as demographics, location, and local economics, which can influence the success or failure of parish efforts, and so the research steered away from such criteria and instead focused on perceptions. While this might limit the ability to define effectiveness, it is clear that when a parish demonstrates a commitment to evangelism as defined here, it permeates all aspects of parish life. The intangibles, such as cohesion and commitment of the congregation, are expressed through tangibles such as attendance at service, tithing, and support of and participation in church-sponsored events. Again, all three parishes clearly demonstrated this: rarely did any clergy, leader, or parishioner equate effectiveness with the number of people in the parish. In fact, they emphatically rejected that approach, instead considering stronger and deeper spiritual life among themselves as a sign of effectiveness. One parishioner states, “Well, first of all, I don’t think it’s effective until those who encounter Orthodoxy come to encounter Christ in his fullness, and continue in that as a lifelong disciple seeking to repent and to change their lives and be transfigured in Jesus Christ. I don’t think that’s effective until the day you die, that having repented as best you can....” Bosch specifically defined this as faithfulness.\footnote{Bosch, Transforming, 415.} Fr. Hopko reflects, “Scriptures attest to this obedience, servitude, and singular human choice: to return love to God, who creates, redeems, sanctifies, and glorifies (and we Orthodox always add deifies) all human beings and all of creation.”\footnote{Hopko, Speaking, 69.}

In addition, it is the considered opinion of some of the clergy that effectiveness cannot be measured nor should it be measured. Effectiveness implies that there is a criterion for success in a spiritual life, something that cannot be measured but simply lived out. Further, each community’s situation is so different there is no accurate way to compare them. When asked about defining effectiveness, a clergy states, “I don’t know, every parish is different, what works in one place doesn’t in another. I can give you the basic fundamental things here in this parish. I can throw seeds out to you, and take those seeds and you want to plant them, but you got to plant them.” In other words effective evangelism is throwing out the seeds (see Parable of the Sower in Matt. 13: 1-23) and then allowing God to give the growth (see again 1 Cor. 3:6 and the question of growth as related by the Apostle Paul). Another parishioner expresses the opinion that, “Even our Lord did not have a hundred
percent effective rate in his ministry. But he made people think. A lot of people went so far that they gave their lives for it, but other people said ‘the Word’s too hard, we can’t stand it’.” So defining effectiveness is tricky, to say the least, in this context.

The starting point for understanding effectiveness is to ask converts why they chose the Orthodox Church. Discovering what led them there will, in an oblique manner, demonstrate the effectiveness of the evangelism in the parish. This is a companion to the earlier question to the “cradle” Orthodox about choosing a parish.

The question asked the converts to rank their reasons for joining the Orthodox Church from one-eleven (with one being the top). I further split the respondents into two groups: those who have a Christian background and those who do not have a Christian background. It should be noted that the size of the groups are very uneven with 96% claiming they came to the Orthodox Church with a church background and only 4% claiming to have no background. The results are surprisingly similar.

**Why Those with a Christian Background Became Orthodox?**

![Graph showing reasons for conversion](image)

The overwhelming majority of people came to the Orthodox Church because they believe that they have found the “True Church” (about 58%). This is followed closely by the witness of a friend (about 42%). Of considerable note is that attending Orthodox Liturgies is highly ranked (about 40%) followed by reading Orthodox literature (28%) and dissatisfaction with their previous church (about 20%). Clearly most converts are not necessarily running away from something but coming towards what they believe is the truth as discovered through the Liturgy and the witness of their
friends. This is a powerful confirmation of the liturgical and relational aspect of Orthodox evangelism.

This graph shows the same question for those who came into the Church with no Christian or Church background. The results are not so different.

**Why Those of a Non-Christian or Religiously Disengaged Background Became Orthodox?**

![Graph showing reasons for becoming Orthodox](image)

The results show that they believe that they have found the “True Church” again ranks the highest (87%), even higher than those who had a Christian background. This result is followed in rank by attending services (about 80%) and, interestingly, finding a warm community (about 50%). The other categories compare similarly with the other graph. The major difference is the search for a warm community. This again points to the importance of both the liturgical life and the communal life found in the parishes: the *koinonic* evangelistic experience. Statistically this is problematic as there are a few people surveyed who self-identified as this category. In addition, the answers do provide a question as to whether they truly had a non-religious background. I believe after exploring some of the interviews that those who identified as such were actually nominally Christian and had left Christianity or that they were raised in a nominally Christian household with a little connection to any Church. Joseph Huneycutt in his book, *One Flew Over the Onion Dome: American Converts, Retreads and Reverts*, speaks of this phenomenon, “recognizing that this exposure [to Christianity] may be nominal to some and extreme in others.”

So these questions reveal that effectiveness, in a sense, is measured by discovering the Church and participating in the liturgical and community life. These results from both those who self-identified

---

as Christian and non-Christian (nominal Christian) were fairly similar. Coming to understand that they had discovered what they believed was the “True Church” ranked the highest. This was followed by attending the Liturgy and finding a warm community. Brad Kallenberg, a postmodern Protestant evangelical, comments, “If we understand a paradigm as the defining set of beliefs embodied in the life of a community, then a paradigm shift involves for the individual an exchange of allegiance from an old community to a new one.”

Kallenberg believes that this transition is a part of the conversion process. “First, conversion involves a change in social identity. Second, in large measure, this new social identity is accomplished by the acquisition of new language skills. Finally, conversion is constituted by a paradigm shift that results in bringing the world into focus in a whole new way. Notice that all three cases, [as referred to in his examples] conversion involve an enculturation into community and into a community of a particular sort.”

The change of allegiance and the new language that results from that change leading to seeing the world in a new way is a paradigm that is certainly demonstrated by the graph. Note that the centrality of the Church, the Liturgy life, and the community remained paramount as effective evangelism.

While interviewing people in the parish, I asked how the Church could be more effective in evangelism. The answers are fairly consistent across the three parishes and among the different groups. They basically break down into five major areas: have a greater exposure of Orthodoxy to the community, live a more Christian life, lose the ethnic identifiers, serve the community better, and simply be the Church. Most of these answers, such as living a more Christian life, serving the community, and being the Church, mirror the answers on the questionnaires. However, the surprise is the emphasis on greater exposure and losing ethnic identifiers in this format. In effect, these five categories provide a roadmap of not only what evangelism is but what effective Orthodox parishes can do.

3.4.1. Greater Exposure of Orthodoxy to the Community. There were many people who believed that letting people know about the parish and Orthodoxy is the most important part of effective evangelism. As some have termed it, Orthodoxy is the “best kept secret in America.” Perhaps small numbers, compounded by the fractured history of the Church that led to the ethnic divisions of the

---

278 Brad J. Kallenberg, *Live to Tell: Evangelism for a Postmodern Age* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2002), 42.

Orthodox, contributed to this perception that the Faith is a secret. Although the family of Orthodox Churches is the second largest Christian Faith in the world, it represents only 1% of Christians in America. While there are many more parishes in the United States today than in any other time in the history, it still appears few know about the Church. Identity is a major issue, as Orthodox are frequently asked, “Are you like the Russian Orthodox or like the Greek Orthodox?” In the recent past the Orthodox Church was categorized as the third Christian Faith that is neither Roman Catholic nor Protestant, but this designation has fallen away. As one person laments, “Informing people of what Orthodoxy really is; there are many misconceptions of our Faith. Most important is to love God and our neighbors and through that love we can reach others. Programs are not the main answer but some may still help.” Another person believes, “I think it would be more effective if more people knew about the Orthodox Church and especially church history.” So the belief is that people just do not know enough about the Orthodox Church.

Many of the responses revolved around that concept. People believe, on wider scale, that representatives of the Faith need to be seen on media programs, in booths at local events, and being publicly responsive to questions on Christianity. A particular person exhorts that to be effective; we need “more Orthodox living a truly Orthodox life. We have good books in English now; we need to make them more easily accessible to the public. On public radio, it bothers me that no Orthodox theologian responds to misguided beliefs and statements of ‘evangelical’ Christians who make Christianity look so ridiculous. There should be greater exposure of Orthodox liturgical services on TV, radio, and serious discussions. There could even be a program about some of the actors being actively Orthodox!” Others believe that, “Increased awareness of Orthodoxy in America, with news of happenings in Church (election of new Metropolitan), churches locally make their presence visible,” which relates to someone stating, “Education of media about the Orthodox – their history and Feast Days different from Western Churches.” Other ideas include outreach to colleges and universities, which the Mechanicsburg and Wheaton Parishes actively do already.

---

280 See: http://religions.pewforum.org/affiliations.
281 This is tricky to explain. Clearly the Orthodox are not Roman Catholic nor Protestant. Some try to categorize them as Ecumenical Christian but again this does not work. They are completely separate from the categories of Western Christianity with a totally different development and history. So really the Orthodox should be their own category as they did not came from any Western Christian experience. But there needs to be widespread acceptance on this matter by many different groups.
For those in the Church, many believe that having material available in the parish for people to read about Orthodoxy is more crucial. Wheaton takes this to the extreme by having a large scale desktop publishing effort with weekly handouts on a wide variety of topics, material for the youth to bring home and all the services printed for the congregational singing. The other parishes also have pamphlets, public classes, and open houses. The efforts of the Agia Sophia Coffee House are the best example of exposing Orthodoxy to a larger community in a non-traditional manner. Some are looking at and utilizing the new technology more efficiently, “by presenting seminars or workshops or a self-study guide, or a self-based computer program or webinar on what evangelism is in the OCA and the basic dos and don’ts.” In all cases, it is clear that the Church needs to do a better job of presenting itself and, as many people state succinctly, “be present in the community” or in the words of the working definition “witness.”

3.4.2. Living a better Christian Life. Throughout this study, one consistent theme is that evangelism, especially effective evangelism, is through one’s own personal spiritual growth. In answer to defining effective evangelism, one person responds, “by continuing to do it the Orthodox way, quiet, powerful, thorough modeling, never adopt the commonly used way of going to people’s doors with a Bible. ‘If you build it they will come.’ It’s the best way to attract truly good people.” In other words, live a life of sanctity and people will find the church and become a part of it. This way is certainly hard to measure effective spirituality but the history of the Orthodox Church is replete with examples, even in North America, of saints and martyrs. There is a general belief that, as one person states, “Orthodox Christians need to know and love the Faith in order to show Christianity to the world. Invite people to come and see in addition to just speaking.”

Many believe that growth is irrelevant (see Bosch’s point in Chapter One). “By truly trying to Live the Truth. For the Church at every level to deepen its faith and trust that God will guide us towards the Church as He wills it, and be ready to do what is necessary to accomplish it. Without this depth of faith, I feel we are in danger of succumbing to the spirit of this age, where ‘bigger’ is always seen as better. More and more and more prayer for the world and a longing to share what we have found.” Finally, people seem to look at their own spiritual growth, which they consider more important than looking to others. Two such powerful responses to effectiveness are simply put, “Proclaim the Good News and live it. Don’t be afraid to practice your faith,” and, “For each priest, parish and member to live and do what the Good Book says – love one another as I love you. Just
do it!” This is the essence of effective evangelism as proposed in the working definition and the “living out” of the faith.

3.4.3. **Lose the ethnic identifiers.** No subject gets more negative reaction in the parishes then the Orthodox Church being seen as the repository of ethnicity. There is a visceral and palpably emotional response to this subject. There is a consistent refrain of, “Lose all the ethnic qualifiers,” or “Less connected to ethnic ties and more focus on Orthodoxy,” or even, “Be less ethnically focused and more Gospel focused.” All three parishes have ethnic roots and blocks of various ethnic groups, so this issue is a struggle they all face. However, all three chose to integrate the groups into the community and serve them as Orthodox rather than making them hyphenated Orthodox. Even in Wheaton, where liturgy is served in three different languages every Sunday, the ethnic component does not override the parish’s identity.

The other aspect of ethnicity in the parish is the use of English. Without a doubt, every clergy, leader, and parishioner agrees on the importance of English in the services, not only for understandability of the services but for retention of the youth and the attraction of new members. This is not unusual among other Christian faiths. However, like so many issues, this one is situationally dependent, and a parish may find that they have the need for other languages, such as in Tacoma. They were one of the first parishes in the Diocese of the West to abandon Slavonic for English, but now have a Slavonic Liturgy once a month to serve the new immigrants, though on a Saturday apart from when the regular Sunday Liturgy is held. Some see the need for other languages as the community’s ethnicity shifts. One person observed, “You must figure out how to relate to a post modern culture awash in moral relativism whilst presenting our Orthodox message consistent with American culture. Walking around with beards and ponytails looking like you came out of a Russian forest will not do it. Putting a sign outside that says ‘Hristros Ainviat’ in a Mexican neighborhood won’t cut it!”

In other words, be a part of the local community not apart from it. The ethnic issue relates clearly to the Liturgical life and the working definition. If the language of the Liturgy cannot be understood then the witness of the Liturgy cannot be effective. However, it should be noted that often the living witness or “holiness” of such saints as St. Sergius of Radonezh or St. Herman of Alaska attracted people to the Church despite the language barriers.

---

282 Romanian for “Christ is Risen”, a very widespread greeting used in many languages during the Paschal season. The response is “Indeed He is Risen.”
Though it should be noted that they did take the effort to learn the local language such as the example of St. Innocent of Alaska (see Chapter Two). The difference is that ethnicity was not a barrier to the faith but perhaps an entrance point followed by an integration, which fits in with the understanding of this concept as discussed in Chapter One.

3.4.4 Serve the Community Better. While this relates to higher visibility in the community, there are specific activities and actions that the parishes can and should do which allow for a greater interaction with the local community. “By continuing to grow their outreach programs within the community. Nothing shows Christian spirit more than helping those in need. Partnering with other non-Orthodox groups could also prove effective as there are many people who are not themselves in need, but who are searching for a more fulfilling life in Christ. Get the word out about any classes, study groups, etc. that may be of interest to local college students or local citizens,” relates one parishioner. Serving the community is an indicator of how outward looking a parish is, “Take part in community affairs – reaching out to poor – clothing and food – church festivities.” All of these activities give visibility to the local parish. In addition, on a larger scope, there is a sense that, “Although the Orthodox Church is largely unknown in America, parishioners and clergy can participate in certain events (e.g., Right to Life rally) to develop community relationships. All Orthodox can help those in need (Orthodox Christians and non Christian) too. This will have the greatest impact – love in action – since I don’t think most people are drawn to Christianity by doctrinal and philosophical discussions.” This is an expression of the belief that effective evangelism is not about theological debates, but Christian love in action. This is confirmed by another response which states, “The trick is to ‘reach’ out to people rather than ‘press upon’ people as many churches seem to do. The Orthodox Church presents itself with a certain quiet humility which I believe is Christ-like and should be maintained. This can make it tricky to establish a more visible presence and a more aggressive outreach to people without seeming pushy.” So effectiveness is reaching out to others without being aggressive and pushy. Hopko reflects, “Evangelists employ skills blessed and graced by God – knowledge, wisdom, discretion, insight, relevance, sensitivity, communication, and timing. They despise dissimulation, manipulation, gimmickry, and trickery. They do not force, coerce, terrify, or threaten their hearers. They do not view their efforts as a crusade, competition, or contest.”283

---

283 Hopko, Speaking, 81.
3.4.5 Being the Church. This is by far the most discussed item on effective evangelism. That is that it is best expressed by simply being the Church and doing what the Church does whether through a liturgical life, a communal life, or service to the world. People are drawn to the parishes because of this and believe that effectiveness is measured by drawing others into that same sphere. “If we let go of our Orthodox identity enough to see people not as Orthodox and not Orthodox but simply as people made in the image of God, then we will be able to spread our faith and values by treating all people with the love and respect that the Church tells us to.” This is an interesting view as the vast majority of the respondents see the Orthodox Church as the one True Church, yet responses such as this also demonstrate that it is not a closed exclusivity, rather it is an outreach to others. As one person opines on this,

By our hearts becoming kindled with the fire of zealous love for Christ (from “A Prayers for the Priesthood,” in the Pocket Prayer Book for Orthodox Christians). Openness to those around us – to love others. Understanding Orthodoxy is the true Faith, the Church that Jesus Christ founded, and is not the exclusive property of any one ethnic group – all other forms of Christianity may fall short of the fullness, beauty, truth, and goodness of the Trinity. Therefore, Protestantism or Roman Catholicism are not “for certain people.” The Orthodox Church is Christianity for everyone (and in the languages of each people, group/nation). Pray!

It is a challenging perception but a widely held one within the Orthodox Church in that evangelism is deeply connected to the Church life, which should be open to all.

The other perspective to this is that many believe that the Church needs to lighten what many see as outdated or unrealistic expectations. This is a tricky balance as many come into the Church precisely because they want the traditional expression of Christianity and love the adherence to many of the parameters of being an Orthodox Christian. However, it seems that their focus is more on the freedom they have by living a spiritual life within these parameters rather than just a set of rules to blindly follow. One person states, “Ease up on the old traditions,” or another expressed, “Simplify the Faith. Don’t get bogged down in rules and procedures. Remember what and why the Church is – it is not a social hour.” But others believe that we need to adhere to what they term “the basics” such as “serve the Liturgy and the Community.” Certainly all agreed in better leadership. “Pick better bishops,” or “Remove the plank from our own eye,” or “Stop the negative publicity,” which is a response to the recent issues in the OCA hierarchy. But as one person reflects, “I will say that I’m excited about the younger generation of priests in the OCA. Many of
them are more culturally savvy than their elders and will, I think, over time improve the Church’s public face.” But the bottom line remains, “Encourage acceptance, learning, and welcoming atmosphere of the parishioners.” This was, to many, the heart of being the Church. Hopko again reflected on this issue, “Effective evangelism requires not only dialogue but also tolerance, the willingness and ability to endure the presence and practices of disagreeing and disagreeable others with patience and peace.”

So there are some logical conclusions about effective and ineffective evangelism to be drawn from these response and they involve personal relationships that bring people to Christ. “If you can have one meaningful interaction with one person on a given day when you’re down here, it’s effective.” Effectiveness of evangelism is relational as demonstrated by the following statements:

- It is communal, “This kind of goes back to initially, the first question about this parish. That it is a family, so we’re coming together as a community, a family, to do that. I mean, we really feel that way. I think everyone comes in...always, at least...mentioning that and saying about how welcoming we were....you know, to be a part of this....”

- It is liturgical, “One thing that I’ve heard as a theme for evangelism, when we started this Orthodox church was this idea of ‘come and see.’ And, that really wasn’t part of what I had seen as a sort of ecumenical Protestant who was trying to experience everything. The big problem with that is there has to be something to actually see. So, effectiveness is if someone comes to see something and they see something.”

- It is active, “I don’t know your parishes, every parish is different, but I give you the basic fundamental thing here. I can throw seeds out to you, and, take those seeds and you want to plant them, but you got to plant them.”

- It is personal, “I think the best way to evangelize would be to live the Word, instead of preaching to others and saying this is what you have to do. I think the best way is that we prove by our Christian lifestyle....”

---

284 Hopko, Speaking, 83.
And it is patient, “Think if we presented the Gospel in some way and someone could take something from that out of this place, it’s been effective. Even if the seed doesn’t bear fruit for years, or ever.”

Koinonic evangelism must reach outward but remain intimately connected to the inner life of the person and the parish. It is not effective when it is judgmental, does not connect, is lost among the myriad of rules and regulations, lacks love and welcoming, or is forced and coercive. It must relate to what one says and what one does as a person and a parish. Evangelism must engage people on a personal and communal level to be effective. The proposed working definition took this into account and the results of the research confirmed the assertion.

3.5. **Question 5: How are the parishes of the Orthodox Church in America engaging the current shifting culture and how are the people responding through evangelism?**

This is an important question that has its answer rooted in the shifting Church culture in North America. Since the 1960s, various denominations began to change their liturgies and even their theological and moral positions. The Orthodox response to the shifting culture has been to maintain a level of theological, moral, and liturgical stability amidst the perceived swirling chaos. Therefore, it is no coincidence that at about this time, the OCA began receiving larger numbers of converts, which also coincided with OCA shift to the use of English, the liturgical revival, and the rediscovery of the evangelistic ethos. This trickle became a flood throughout the next forty years to the point where those who converted to the Orthodox Church are now the majority on the Holy Synod, the clergy, the seminaries, and, in some cases, in the parishes. What is clear in the study is that those who convert to the Faith focus on two core elements: the belief that the Orthodox Church is the One, Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, and the unchanging nature of the Church, particularly in the liturgical life. So many of the accounts in books cited in Chapter Two that described the conversion experience are found in all of the parishes examined.

With that understanding, in order to comprehend this phenomenon, I decided to focus on two major questions as indicative of how the Church is responding to the culture and how people are responding through evangelism. The first question is basically to ask why people join the Orthodox Church. The corresponding question is why people leave the Orthodox Church. These two
questions provide a barometer of evangelism because, as will be demonstrated, clergy, leaders, and parishioners have very strong opinions on these two points. Once again, the answers are fairly similar across all parishes and all categories.

It is clear that two major paths lead people to the Orthodox Church. It should be acknowledged that as is common with many who convert to another faith tradition, they are very well read as demonstrated by the interviews and questionnaires where a varied list of books and material are cited by the respondents. The plethora of books and material online lead many people to discover the Church before they have even physically entered an Orthodox parish but it is the draw of the experienced Liturgy and the welcoming community that evangelizes them. They see in action what they have come to believe. One clergyman, who is a convert, recounts his own experience, “I joined because of a serious study of Church history. The form of Roman Catholicism I was raised in led me to Orthodoxy. Seriousness about the Sacraments and the Saints, about apostolic heritage, the conciliarity that was there until the Schism. That continuity matters to some of us.” From the other side of the denominational spectrum, a parishioner writes, “I can only speak as an interested former Protestant. My answer is fourfold: 1. I was annoyed at our church’s continued use of the Filioque in our monthly recitation of the Creed. Why? I asked repeatedly: no good answer was supplied. Inertia rules; don’t rock the boat! 2. The thirteenth century “poisoning” of the Western intellectual life via Scholasticism (and isolation from a post 1054 Eastern Church) encouraged many speculative theological theories to evolve with a tenuous basis in Scripture. 3. I want more worship of our Lord Jesus Christ and less of man’s suppositions. 4. Pascha celebrations in both Greek Orthodox and OCA parishes.” Therefore from both a Roman Catholic and Protestant convert perspective, both sides sought a more historic continuity in theology and in liturgics.

Comments such as those are fairly consistent with those who were not Christian but came to Christianity through Orthodoxy. When asked why people with no religious background would come into the Orthodox Church, one person explains, “I found ancient Christianity here resulting from my search of a Christianity not impacted too much from confusion, division and internal problems.” In other words, they had given up on Christianity and the confusion in other Western forms until they had discovered the historic continuity of Orthodoxy. Again, there is the perception that these people have tapped into something ancient and unchanging, not to mention genuine. But it should be noted that many of the people trying to look at this question from a non-Christian
perspective sometimes confess that they did not know many people who fell into this category, or in some cases, honestly stated that they had no idea why people would not be Christian, as it is an alien experience. So in this matter of evangelizing non-Christians or the lapsed Christians, the Orthodox Church has not yet really engaged. It is a matter that all clergy in the parishes readily agree needs to be explored.

There is one major exclusion in the interviews and questionnaires that no one parishioner overtly mentioned, though several clergy and leaders did mention, and that was the conversion to Christianity of those who grew up in Eastern Europe and Russia under the Communist governments. All three parishes have people of this background but many did not consider their experience as a non-Christian discovering Christianity through the Church. The major reason is most likely that since they are “ethnically” from Orthodox countries, it is simply assumed that they would join the Orthodox Church when they were able to do so. Russians became Christian through the Russian Orthodox Church, Romanians through the Romanian Orthodox Church, and so on. Yet remarkably some did not join the Church in their home country for political and other reasons, but only discovered the Church in America where, from their perspective, it is more open and free. This particular phenomenon is one that many of the parishes have not yet integrated into their experience. As one immigrant states, “I was not allowed to be a Christian in Russia, it was all hidden and I did not even know anyone who was a Christian openly. It was not until I came to America that I discovered the Church and rediscovered my own Church history.”

The main attraction that draws people to the Church is the liturgical experience. While it is possible to learn about Orthodoxy from reading, but quite another to experience it through the Liturgy. Time and again, people recount the powerful emotions they had when they first observed an Orthodox Liturgy. It remains for them the seminal experience of their search. One parishioner responds, “I was attracted by the beauty and transcendence of the Divine Liturgy and the richness of the Tradition. We are attracted by the depth, breadth and comprehensiveness of the Church’s systematic theology.” Another recounts, “Orthodoxy preaches a simple and easy to understand philosophy on faith, worship and knowledge of how we are to live our lives. In these times

---

285 People of this category did not self-identify as having a non-Christian background in the questionnaires so they did not make up that 4%. Instead, when asked about this, they replied that they had come from a Christian background that was suppressed until they had the freedom to be openly Christian. So from their own perspective they were Christians.
everything has become so complicated, fast-paced and basically a ‘what can you do for me.’ The Orthodox Church turns that around and wakes ‘you.’ Say, ‘What I can do to help people.’ We also have a beautiful but simple liturgical worship.”

Clearly the richness of the Liturgical worship, combined with the deep theology as expressed through that worship, are the critical elements. Since the Church does not react to every shift in society or new fad in liturgics, it taps into what many have come to believe was the deep and fulfilling worship experience. But what is also obvious is that the worshipping experience is not disconnected from their own quest for living a more holy and spiritual life. “Like myself, many are looking for something that was missing in Protestant expressions of Christianity. For me personally, I was also seeking (1) a way (tools, a framework) to live a Christian life and (2) a God-centered (not man-centered) attitude of worship. I wanted a faith that wasn’t just a mental construct but one that could be lived and that took one’s whole life.” This answer seems to permeate all of the parishes. People who are searching for something different and deep discover it in the Orthodox Church.

Another question addressed why people stay in the Church as a contrary manner of exploring the topic, often romanticized through a convert’s perspective. This is a necessary question since membership retention is often a sign of parish’s integrity as people find a spiritual home and raise their families in that environment. The answers to this question are threefold. First, they feel an absolute connection to the community; it is their home. A standard answer is “Feeling of belonging with other church members, have good relationship with them. Experience spiritual growth and learning. Enjoy being part of this community.” Or as another person states simply, “It’s such a part of their lives they can’t imagine leaving!” However, while that sense of community is the key to retention, stability can lead to immobility. One clergy opines that people stay in the Church, “Too often because of a sense of nostalgia. Those who know their faith stay because of stability and faith in what our Lord has promised. They see their place as part of His Body and their connection to the greater community of believers.” For this reason, there needs to be a careful distinction between nostalgia and familiarity.

The second element is the familial connection. As people become a part of the community, they also raise their family in that community. As one person declares, “Where else would I go? This
is where my family is.” Some express the comfort they have in a familiar place and will not go anywhere else. Others come into or remain in the Church because they married into the faith. Some even feel that they remain in the Church by “default” as this is all they know. But in all of this it is obvious that the family and familiar connection are critical in retention.

The final element in retention is once again the liturgical and theological element. Parishioners have spiritually grown with the stability and consistency of the Liturgy and it is a part of them. They find other expressions of worship strange, unfamiliar, and even cold. “Once people are accustomed to the unmodified, ancient Church, it becomes apparent that all others are derivative, and it is hard to see converting from Orthodox to any other as an improvement.” It is the place where they connect with God. They know that the Church will be the same today, tomorrow, and at any time in the future. “There is no ambiguity, no inconsistency. The Church provides a very firm anchor in a world that has become very turbulent.” So they find comfort and stability, they find connections with the clergy and the community, they find spiritual growth through the life in the Church and they are at home with what occurs in the parish.

The difficult, but necessary, question addresses why people leave the Church. Membership in the various Orthodox Churches in North America has declined in certain regions. Many of those who were brought up in the Church left in the 1960s to 1970s, precisely when the OCA was shifting and engaging the North America culture. Many people may ask that if this is the true historic Church that others have discovered, why they cannot retain their own. I posed this question to all three churches, but it should be noted that these are second hand answers from which people either know of or have heard from people who have left. It would take another survey with people who have left the Church, which is beyond the scope of this research. The points raised here are relevant but are unsubstantiated. Some believe that people leave simply because they marry a non-Orthodox spouse and the person with the stronger faith wins out. Others believe that they simply grow lazy or disconnected with the spiritual life, and focus instead on work and success. This is a familiar refrain among many church groups. One clergy believed that people leave because, “they are attracted to ideals that drive the ‘machine’ of much of contemporary secular society and Western Christian experience: Enlightenment, Humanism, freedom of individual, Jeffersonian ideals.” This, some believe, drives people away from God.
Poor leadership is a large reason for people leaving the Church (twenty-six out of eighty-nine respondents). There are examples of clergy not connecting with their flock or of parishes in perpetual conflict. Many of the people who grew up in the Church outline conflicts within their own home parishes that drove people away. It causes great pain in the parish and takes years to undo. Many of the people never come back. One person laments, “We left our old parish because of coldness of newly assigned priest – stayed for three years – changed to this parish.” Another states, “They are turned off by the behavior of some of the domineering, controlling people.” Yet another clergy believes, “Because what we say and what we do don’t jive. Bishops fighting over jurisdictions and saying ‘who is in charge?’ When they see a community more concerned with money than their souls. In a sense it is almost to their credit that they reject that as it has NOTHING to do with Christ and His Church.” So conflict and poor leadership has led people away from the Church precisely where people were looking for stability and loving leadership.

Close to the same amount (twenty-three out of eighty-nine) believe that the ethnic element forced many away from the Church. The use of a language other than English meant that the services were not understandable, especially to a non-Orthodox spouse, and that people left to find a Church that spoke to them in their own language. Since the people were not formed theologically, they simply drifted to other Faiths while the local parish remained a repository of ethnicity, and not relevant to their own life. One parishioner laments, “People just get driven away by all of ethnic junk. The never learn their faith, just the customs.” One clergy states, “Those who grew up in the faith, but were never really taught the faith, don’t understand or appreciate what has been given to them, and therefore drift away – especially in strongly ethnic groups where the church is more like a fraternal organization or club.” So the ethnic element estranges them from the Church.

So in the end, effective and evangelizing communities embrace parts of the American culture without becoming prey to their negative aspects. They remain connected to the ancient and undivided Church, clearly what people are looking for when they seek the Orthodox Church, but they are not willing to become enclaves of ethnicity or isolated communities of exclusivist nature. The parishes attracted people and retain people because they have threaded that needle carefully, being fully Orthodox, but also being fully engaged with larger society and its concerns. This is not a contradiction, rather a fullness. One person reflects, “I think this is a good example of a parish that really seeks to be a church in America where it embraces all traditions. Liturgically and in the
singing and this is the life of the parish itself... The cultural barriers have been brought down. So it really seeks to be a church here in America, and not a base for a specific corner of Orthodoxy.” That consistency is the key as a shifting society that is changing at a pace beyond the comprehension of many. The solid consistent aspect of the Orthodox Church remains among the most attractive part in engaging that changing society. One leader reflects, “And things do change (in the Church) but they change very slowly and with a great deal of work on the part of all the people, the clergy and prayers and the Holy Spirit, because we all come to a consensus. Times change, things change, and, so that’s what we have is a consensus about what language we should worship…or whatever, that’s what we do and it works. And we build a consensus without it being faddish and usually without saying to anybody who disagrees with us just, ‘Go to hell’ but rather so we all come along together”

3.6. Question 6: What are the cultural realities in North America which an Orthodox approach to evangelism needs to consider?

The final question builds upon the previous question and asks what the parishes need to consider when it approaches evangelism. The question integrates *theoria* and *praxis*. A clear pattern emerges and the next series of graphs confirms many of the previous considerations. If people understand what the Church has to offer then it can understand what it needs to take into consideration in evangelism. The question posed was, “What does the Orthodox Church in America have to offer people coming into the Church?” and respondents could choose as many answers as they felt appropriate. As was the pattern, the results are fairly consistent.

Among the responses from the clergy, four common responses clearly stand out: an unbroken lineage from the early Church, an unchanging dogma and morality, the use of English in services, and the willingness to embrace all cultures. As related to the proposed working definition, there is a relationship that builds upon the earlier concepts but there is also a historical reality. For example, the term “Orthodox” engages the first two common responses; the unbroken lineage from the early Church and the unchanging dogma and morality. The second two common responses, the use of English and the willingness to embrace all cultures, are two historical realities that relate to the developed theology of mission within the historical Church as proposed by Ss. Cyril and Methodius and carried through the North American experience, notably local language and local church (local leader being the third) as recounted in Chapter Two. Archbishop Anastasios writes,
“The Orthodox Tradition...has been very clear: Sincere respect for the identity of the individuals and the peoples, and sanctification of their characteristics in order that they may become truly themselves.”

The results demonstrate this connection.

What Does the Orthodox Church in America Have to Offer People Coming into the Church? (Clergy)

The results from the leadership of the parishes are fairly similar. An unbroken lineage from the early Church, an unchanging dogma, and the willingness to embrace all cultures ranks high. But while the use of English is important, the openness to the reception of non-Orthodox ranks higher.

This is a logical concern in parish leadership who seek to bring all people into the parish.

What Does the Orthodox Church in America Have to Offer People Coming into the Church? (Leadership)

The result of the questionnaire to the parishioners was again similar to both the clergy and the leaders. There is still the high response of the unbroken lineage, unchanging dogma, and morality. Openness to the reception of non-Orthodox, willingness to embrace all cultures, and the use of

---

English is also ranked high. A strong connection to the patristic witness is also deemed important enough for consideration.

**What Does the Orthodox Church in America Have to Offer People Coming into the Church? (Parishioners)**

These answers confirm much of what has been reflected and commented upon throughout this chapter. The consistency of the answers throughout the questions demonstrates that of paramount importance is the stability of the community and the Church, combined with interaction with the people in that community. These are the critical elements in *koinonic* evangelism. In addition, it is also revealing answers such as the repository of ethnicity, autocephaly, heir to the Russian Church, and a unique expression of the liturgics consistently rank low with all respondents. People simply are not as interested in those issues as they are in having a stable, connected community and must be a consideration in evangelism. When the graphs are broken down into the three parishes, the results are fairly consistent throughout, with slight changes reflecting the local situation.

**What Does the Orthodox Church in America Have to Offer People Coming into the Church? (Mechanicsburg)**
The interviews confirm these results and create five major categories of consideration.

The first consideration into cultural realities is that there is a desire by people for deep relationships; a relationship with Christ and a relationship with the Church. As one person states, “We’re trying to develop a deep, meaningful relationship with Jesus Christ through the Sacraments of the church.” So evangelism in the Orthodox Church must continue to point to a deep and abiding spirituality that has consistent roots to the very earliest time of the Church as referenced in the working definition.

The next consideration is the need to develop real relationships. One person reflects on this, “There are a lot of people that were just tired of religion. They were abused by the Church or a church. This concept of an angry, vengeful deity that we (Orthodox) really have no reference to, not hearing that when they came here and seeing the church not as a hostile, a place to be scrutinized and that kind of thing, appealed to people because the experienced real love here.” Now it should be acknowledged that there is a certain bias and perspective in the statement but it does reflect the
common appeal each of the three communities has. A sense of love and comfort that was discovered there by those who joined the community. People are searching for a real experience of a community and a real experience of joy. These parishes have these in abundance and those who become a part of it are relieved to be able to finally be able to express that and worship in that manner.

Another consideration is precisely about the view of the community as the Body of Christ. Theologians often speak of this concept, but it is rarely experienced within a church. As the Apostle Paul relates in 1 Corinthians 12, to be the Body of Christ, a church must have many different members with varied functions, each contributing to the One Body. Everyone works with each other and is led by the clergy, who is a leader who also is the servant as outlined in Mark 10:42 and 1 Timothy 3. Archbishop Anastasios writes, “The foundation of a local church is a prelude of the kingdom of God; the creation of a Eucharistic community, which will, through the sacraments and whole of her life, participate in the praise and life of the entire Church.”287 It is that centrality of the Eucharist that transcends the mere gathering of individuals and forges a Body. Time and again, the clergy, leaders and the parishioners would relate that “our focus and purpose is to be the Body of Christ.” This is the most important function of the parish.

The fourth consideration is an unvarying theme: the unchangeable nature of the Church. Some people indicated that they found their way into the Orthodox Church because they were reacting to changes in liturgy, doctrine, or morals in their former churches. Some have had their foundations shaken to the core, often coming close to losing their faith in God, and believe that their discovery of the Orthodox Church saved them. “I said, well, where can I plant my feet where I know the ground won’t move, where the theology will stay the same? I might not agree with all of it at first but I knew it won’t change.” As another person sadly relates, “I’m still Christian, my Church ceased to be.” This is a powerful concept in a constantly shifting culture. Many people are perplexed not just at the changes, but the rapidity of these changes. “I think a lot of Churches or some Churches coalesce around a social idea. And, our Church, basically I see it as a straight line. We don’t veer off and look at, for example, whether women should be in the clergy, we don’t veer off and look at other types of things. And for me, that’s very comforting. I don’t want to be buffeted

287 Yannoulatos, Mission, 120.
back and forth about a social issue that happens to be on the plate today. And I think we know
what we need to do, which is, you know, be the apostolic lineage, et cetera, and, to me, that is
comforting.” So what people are looking for and what the Orthodox Church, and these three
parishes offer, is a perceived haven amidst a seemingly storm tossed world.

The final and perhaps most the important consideration is the Liturgy. This topic continually comes
to the front of any discussion and is the most important anknüpfungspunkt or entry point. People
find refuge in the Liturgy and experience God through the Liturgy and find that the expression of
worship becomes the most critical impetus for them to become or remain Orthodox. Many people
express a similar sentiment, “I was sort of immediately blown away by the beauty and the
reverence and the holiness of the worship. And reading the Scriptures, there were things that I had
run up against in the Scriptures that my evangelical theology didn’t jive with and that made me
scratch my head. And, Orthodoxy seemed to provide the answers.” Many discover what they
perceive is truth through the liturgical life.

All of the parishes serve beautifully and took much time in developing a full liturgical life. There
is nothing radical in their services, just solid OCA style Liturgies that are primarily in English and
accessible to all. These all seem to fit together seamlessly for the people and continues to be the
major attraction. As one person emotionally shares,

And, the more I see that beauty and then the more I experience services here and
the longer I’m Orthodox,… the more it seems like the theology, the lives of the
Saints, the Church calendar, that my own personal experience, everything keeps
going and everything is this beautifully smooth road, there’s no bump, there’s no
valley, it’s just perfection, and, it’s so beautiful, and, to me, that, over and over
again, verifies the truth of it because I think there’s something about beauty and
how if you can see it being beautiful and all hold it together, I think that points to
God.

So with these five areas of consideration, the Orthodox engage the current culture through
evangelism, not as a Church separated from society, but as one the reflects back on the society
with the eternal truths and goodness of God and the Church. It reflects back on the culture as a
way for the culture to reflect on itself so that those within can find peace, love, joy, and hope. An
elderly parishioner, one of the founders the parish reflects on this, “To use an analogy of illness is
that we have illness, it’s like illness in the world and if I knew someone was sick, I would want
them to go to a physician or to a hospital that has the best means of finding them a pathway of healing. And so, it’s like with the Orthodox Church, and what it has to offer the world, I see that. I see the fullness of a pathway of healing for people that is not offered elsewhere.”

4. Results Summary

This chapter connects the theories and theologies previously outlined, and demonstrates that the understanding and practice of evangelism in the local parishes significantly reflect the proposed working definition of evangelism and the basic principles of koinonic evangelism as outlined in previous chapters. The praxis can be connected with the theoria. What is remarkable is the consistency in the responses across all three parishes and all three groups. Despite the difference of geography, age, leadership styles, and demographics, there is clearly an unswerving series of responses. Triangulation of the questionnaires, interviews, and observation, which allowed for some variations, produced clear results and analysis. The model of koinonic evangelism involves an active, loving, worshipping community led by inspired and loving clergy that nurtures the interior parish life and growth but also reaches out to those in the surrounding community. That reaching out is through various means and methods, both individual and corporate, but all point and lead people to God and the Church. A true model of evangelism, even if not articulated as such, is demonstrated in all three of these parishes as a model of love and humility but one of strength and surety of faith.
Chapter 6
Conclusions and Implications for Further Study

I ask for assistance and cooperation not only from the pastors, but also from my entire beloved flock. The Church of Christ is likened by the Holy Apostle Paul to a body, while a body has not one member, but many (1 Cor. 12:14). These have not one and the same function (Rom 12:4), but each its own: the eye its own, and the arm its own. Each member is necessary and cannot be without the other, they all have concerns for each other, and there is no division in the body (1 Cor. 12:25-26). So you also, my brethren, are the body of Christ, and members in particular (v. 27). And unto every one of you is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ (Eph. 4:7), unto the perfecting of the saints, for a work of ministration, for the building up of the body of Christ (v. 12). And for this purpose continue with true love to grow into Him Whom belongs the whole body, which is built up of and joined through the supply of every joint, according to the working in the measure of each single part, receiving increase for the building up of itself in love (v. 15-16).

Saint Tikhon of Moscow’s First Sermon to his North American Flock
Given in San Francisco on December 23, 1898

1. Introduction

I began this thesis with a story about my first catechumen and how that experience ignited my study of evangelism. It was a transformative event in my ministry. A number of years later, I had a providential encounter with another person. The parish was playing a softball game against another church, a sort of ecumenically friendly game. By chance, one of the other players got hit by a ball and my wife, being a nurse, ran onto the field to assist her. She was taken to the hospital where our parish sent her flowers. She and her husband asked to meet me and we had a wonderful talk. It seems that they were not happy with their current church and were much taken by our kindness. Our meeting became a weekly event and we began discussing many aspects of the Christian Faith. Soon thereafter, she had a difficult pregnancy, which confined her to bed rest for the last trimester. During that time, I catechized her and her husband. A year after that initial meeting, she and her family were received into the Orthodox Church. I asked her what had prompted their journey to the Orthodox Church and she stated, “It was the Christian love that was

---

shown us, the joy of being a part of loving community and the desire to be sacramental part of the Church.”

It is precisely that witness that is so critical in evangelism. It is not a strategy or a methodology per se, rather the activity of Christian witness that demonstrates both the truth and the power of Christianity. In every one of the parishes that I studied, that witness of Christ is powerfully demonstrated, and, more importantly, lived out. Fr. Bria writes,

> The Orthodox realize that the transmission of the faith cannot be taken for granted as an automatic consequence of an uninterrupted historical apostolic succession. Both militant atheism and secularism have pointed to the breaking of the tradition. They also understand that without a personal confession of faith there is no living church. Faith is always personal and relational. There is no baptism, no liturgy, no Eucharistic communion unless the faithful personally repeat the baptismal confession of faith: “I believe.”

Therefore, with this “Holy” witness must also be personal belief, since one cannot truly live a Christian life unless one truly believes in Christ. That belief comes through and that witness will inspire others to come to Christ. This is the personal facet of evangelism.

However, as the initial thesis postulated, evangelism may involve personal actions, but it is a communal activity. This activity takes on many forms, but is most powerfully realized in the worshipping parish community. Without this community, the context of evangelism, which draws people to worship, is lost. Likewise without this community, the goal of evangelism, which is the integration into the Body of Christ, is also lost. Archbishop Anastasios reflects, “The local Church, the diocese, the parish, but also every other form of expression of ecclesial life, such as monasteries, religious organizations, missionary societies, various small informal missionary groups and communities constantly remain open and fulfill their duty within society to radiate the love and glory of Christ to the whole of humanity for the sake of the entire human race (oikoumene), always receiving and offering the Gospel.”

Fr. John Reeves, a longtime leader in evangelism in the Orthodox Church in America, observes,

> Thus the life of one truly evangelized is life lived in communion with God, walking in obedience in his commandments all the days of one’s life. For the Orthodox

---

Christian, evangelism is one by nature not of quick and easy decisions, devoid of moral change, nor one which allows avoidance of life in the Christian community or obedience to spiritual authority. In very fact, the life in Christ which is the goal of evangelism can only be lived out in the Church, Christ’s own body.  

The three parishes demonstrate this very fact time and again. They do not live out their Christian faith in a void, as, “Neither do men light a lamp, and put it under a bushel, but on a lamp stand; and it gives light unto all that are in the house” (Matt. 5:15). Instead they live “to bear witness to the truth” (John 18:37). Fr. Bria is absolutely correct when he writes, “As a place of gathering for praying and sharing the body and blood of Christ, every local parish is also a point of departure into the world to share the joy of resurrection. The worshipping community is prepared and sent as an evangelizing community.”

This approach requires a paradigm shift in evangelism among parishes in the Orthodox Church. As applied, the Great Commission (Matt. 28) exhorts followers to begin with worship, and then they are sent out into the world to make disciples, teaching them and baptizing them into the Faith. Another powerful application is to be witness to the world, “and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Archbishop Anastasios writes, “It is definitive that during the first centuries the Christians spoke about ‘witness’ (martyria) and ‘martyrdom’ (martyrion), which meant the testimony of an eye-and ear-witness, which was often made at the cost of life itself, with martyrdom. The most profound spiritual stirrings that kindle within the human being cannot be ignored.” Therefore, by necessity, evangelism must relate back to the koinonic aspects as outlined throughout this dissertation; it is a witness, it is a community, it is worship and it is the living out of the life in Christ. Fr. Calivas reflects:

Evangelism in action involves a number of activities. It sows the seeds of faith by proclaiming the good news of salvation and it invites the world to conversion by engaging people with the truths and values of the Gospel. In addition, it seeks to build-up daily the faith community by nourishing the faith of Christians, explaining to them – and celebrating – the dogmatic statements, the moral principles, the liturgical ethos, and the canonical tradition of the Church. Moreover, evangelism in action relates human life and activities to the mystery of Christ and his Church.

---

elucidating for the faithful and for the world how the Church lives her life of faith by fostering a ministry of generous service to the world.\textsuperscript{294}

In short, this is what Orthodox \textit{koinonic} evangelism is about. It is the nurturing and practicing of a faith through the most elemental of Church organizations, the parish, which in turn reaches out into the surrounding community. Time and again the research revealed that the critical center of evangelism was the local parish. And the local parish was centered as a worshipping community. It is worth repeating the observation of Archbishop Anastasios:

> Our personal Christian experience is made steadfast and strengthened through our \textit{incorporation into the mystical Body of Christ}. Our confession draws strength from the experience of the Church. Therefore, in the final analysis, the individual, personal witness for Christ is \textit{ecclesiastical}. When we confess the Lord, we do so mainly as members of a community, the Church which carries on His work. “Because it is only in the Church that the kingdom of heaven is preached, and every goal of the Gospel of salvation looks thereto. [Eusebius, \textit{On the Inscription of the Psalms}]”\textsuperscript{295}

Ultimately, a study of evangelism in the Orthodox Church cannot be divorced from an examination into parish life as they are completely interconnected. To repeat Bosch’s evaluation of Orthodox evangelism, “The witnessing community is the community in worship; in fact the worshipping community is in and of itself an act of witness... This is so, since the Eucharistic liturgy as the basic missionary structure and purpose and is celebrated as a ‘missionary event’.”\textsuperscript{296} I discovered this time and again in the research.

The guiding hypothesis of this research is that evangelism may involve individual actions, but it is a communal (\textit{koinonic}) activity. Much of the background material that I explored informed this hypothesis but the Action Research component confirmed the hypothesis. Time and again, the questionnaires, interviews, and observations across the parishes yielded similar results. Effective evangelism in the Orthodox Church is through a parish that is involved in the community and that it is centered on a life in the Church. It integrates the liturgical with the practical and involves many dimensions and ministries which can only be actuated through a properly functioning and worshipping liturgical community – the local parish. Healthy, local, worshipping parishes live out

\textsuperscript{294} Calivas, “Approaching the 21st Century.”
\textsuperscript{295} Yannoulatos, \textit{Mission}, 113.
\textsuperscript{296} Bosch, \textit{Transforming}, 208.
evangelism because it is simply what they do as a Christian community. This, in turn, attracts people to that local parish experience as the place to discover and worship Christ, while the parish is open to receive them into their midst and integrate them into the Body of Christ.

2. Discussion of Findings

Chapter Two covered only a small section of the historical background of the Orthodox Church in America, and how that history shapes its unique definition and methodology of evangelism. Chapter Three examined and justified the methodology used in the research, and Chapter Four contained the background and demographics of the parishes. Chapter Five presented the results of the questionnaires, interviews, and observations on the parishes and provided the data for the cross-case analysis of the multiple case study and answered the six research questions. As reported in Chapter Five, from the triangulation of the data emerged specific validated conclusions. These validated conclusions guided analysis of the material to produce a robust description of the practice of effective evangelism in three effective parishes of the Orthodox Church in America. As the stated goal of this work is not to simply explore the theory and theology of evangelism in the parishes, but to discover practical applications, this analysis provided that information on effective evangelistic practices.

The praxis of koinonic evangelism in the parish as discovered through the research comes down to seven critical areas that form the heart of a theology of evangelism. These basic principles are applicable in a host of situations and contexts. However, it is important to remember that these principles are uniquely manifested in the Orthodox Church through its liturgical tradition and theological context. The views expressed by the clergy, leaders, and parishioners reference the parochial, liturgical, and spiritual life that is distinctively and inseparably Orthodox in nature. Not only does Orthodox culture inform the results, but it is this same Orthodox liturgical and spiritual life that draws people into these parishes.

The historical and Action Research components revealed seven major principles of koinonic evangelism practiced in these parishes. The first is that in order to be effective, koinonic evangelism must first be centered on and strongly rooted in the liturgical life of the parish, most specifically in the Eucharistic participation that unites the members to one another. Fr. Bria is correct in assessing, “Prayer, worship and communion have always formed the context for the
witness of faith, including evangelism, mission and church life. The missionary structures were built on the liturgy of the word and the sacraments; and since the beginning the great variety of liturgies and rites, creeds and confessions has been due to the diversity of missionary contexts.”

This is palpably obvious in all three parishes, so much so that the parishioners take that foundation for granted. When Fr. Schmemann poses the question as to whether a Church whose, “life is centered almost exclusively on the liturgy and the sacraments, whose spirituality is primarily mystical and ascetical, be truly missionary?” the answer is firmly affirmative. In fact it is so critical that it can be no other way, since truly liturgical Church MUST be missionary as that is the very purpose of the Liturgy. One parishioner relates, “every service is a form of evangelism.” Metropolitan John observes:

Historical research views the Eucharist not simply as a vertical communion of each of the faithful with God in Christ, but also as a horizontal union of the members of the Church with each other through which each person’s communion with God necessarily has to pass being, thus, made into an ecclesial expression instead of an individual one. For this reason, the Eucharist is examined by the historian not so much as a thing, but rather as an action: not so much as a communion in “holy things,” but rather as a “communion of saints” (i.e., of “holy people”), expressed as such through the eucharistic synaxis…

A parishioner response on one questionnaire eloquently summarizes this point. “For me,” writes the respondent, “evangelism is, firstly, a thing of beauty. Therefore, the very existence of a proper Orthodox Church is a witness in and of itself. Secondly, the beauty of the call and response worship that involves everyone (not just the choir) is also a witness. Thirdly, the community of the parish is a witness. People know me and talk to me. They notice if I am not around for a while. This is important. This is evangelism.”

So, evangelism as a liturgical act and activity is what forms the Body of Christ, unites one to another, and is the pivot point. It is the Church and despite whatever theology of mission and evangelism may be espoused, it does all come down to the Church. The Church is, by its very nature and calling, evangelistic. Metropolitan John again observes, “The identification of the eucharistic assembly with the Church of God herself in the use of the term church would make no

\begin{footnotes}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Bria, Liturgy, 9.
\item Schmemann, Church, 210.
\item John D. Zizioulas, Eucharist, Bishop, Church (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Seminary Press, 2001), 18.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotes}
sense if there did not exist a parallel a very profound connection between the Divine Eucharist and the primitive Church’s consciousness regarding unity...addressing the Corinthians, the Apostle writes: ‘Judge for yourselves what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion (koinonia) in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a communion in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.'

The second principle is that koinonic evangelism is deeply relational. What draws people into the Church and keeps them in the parish are relationships. A strong congregation has a deep relationship with the clergy, a communal relationship among the parishioners, and a strong relationship with the surrounding community, all of which is reflective of their relationship with God. There is very little disconnect and all relationships are genuine, organic, and embedded. The parish intentionally, though naturally, draws in and welcomes outsiders into these relationships. A refrain heard in all three parishes is, “We love each other and we welcome anyone who comes through the door.” Fr. Ion Bria writes, “As a place of gathering for praying and sharing the body and blood of Christ, every local parish is also a point of departure into the world to share the joy of the resurrection. The worshipping community is sent as the evangelizing community.”

These are not just words, as they are repeatedly validated by the questionnaires, interviews, and direct observation. The people really are friendly and really do welcome people. They are conscious of this and make the concerted effort to point this out. One leader shares, “I have seen many people come to our parish and to be affected by the loving spiritual atmosphere. The members of our parish preach the Gospel message by their actions rather than by ‘preaching the Gospel’.” Likewise, those who join the parishes, whether as Orthodox or those seeking to come into the Faith, note that this was a major reason for them joining that particular community. They felt welcome and that this was the right place to grow spiritually and raise their family.

Relationships begin at the head, and the importance of the priest cannot be overemphasized. The priest sets the tone in the parish, ensures the atmosphere is welcoming, that the services and the sermons are relevant, prayerful, and reverent. The priest teaches and practices evangelism in every

---

300 Zizioulas, Eucharist, 53.
301 Bria, Liturgy, 31.
available forum. Time and again, the parishioners stressed that they love and respect their clergy and, just as crucial, the clergy loves and respects the parish. They are always available and involved and the parish takes care of them because they knew the priest cares for them. The priest leads in love and service and the people follow. John 10:14 states, “I am the good shepherd; and I know my sheep, and am known by My own.”

There is a common maxim in the Orthodox Church that one should be able to replace the priest and the parish should continue; this is not true. The priest matters and the priest must have the particular charisma to draw people together, to love them, to lead them, and not to burden them. He must lead in love and service. Kozhuharov observes, “A Eucharistic parish represents the meeting point of God and His people; God in Three Persons and the people in communion with Them; the priesthood and the lay people gathered around the Eucharistic table. The one – the people: priesthood and lay people cannot be separated from the other – the Eucharistic table and the most Holy Gift of life: Christ’s Body and Christ’s Blood. This inseparable unity makes a parish an Eucharistic parish.”

Metropolitan John reflects in a similar vein, “The ministry is what makes the ecclesial community and the ordained person relational not only to each other and the world but also in regard to the other communities that exists or have existed in the world. The sin of individualism which is overcome in the koinonia of the Spirit is not less serious if applied to a community than it is when applied to individual Christians. Just as unus christianus nullus christianus, to remember an old Latin saying, in the same way a Eucharistic community which deliberately lives in isolation from the rest of the communities is not an ecclesial community. This is what renders the Church ‘catholic’ not only on the level of the ‘here and now’ but also on that of ‘everywhere and always.’”

So a koinonic evangelistic parish develops deep and real relationships, which draw people in and keep people in the parish. The leadership is clear and healthy; there is no juggling for power in the parish, rather there is active and conciliar cooperation between the clergy and the people. It is koinonia of which is referred to in that critical Acts periscope (Acts 2:42-47), “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the communion (koinonia), to the breaking of bread

---

303 Zizioulas, Being, 236.
and to prayer… All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need… They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people.”

The third principle is the witness of the parish as well as the witness of the individuals in that parish. Time and again, the simple witness of being a Christian, living a Christian life, forming and belonging to a Christian community, proves to be one of the critical attractions to the Faith and to the parish. People realize when something is genuine and desire to be a part of that. It is this simple Christian witness that first attracted the first converts to the Church; it is this same simple witness which allowed the Church to grow, attracting followers from all walks of life. It was this same Christian witness that formed the foundation of the Orthodox Church as it spread throughout Europe, the Middle East, and across Russia, bringing the witness of the faith to North America through the great missionaries as St Herman of Alaska, St. Innocent of Moscow, and St. Tikhon of Moscow. There are too many connections with this word “witness” for it to be a coincidence.

But is should never be forgotten that “witness” in Greek is “martyr.” The Church is founded on the bones of the martyrs, even in North America through St. Peter the Aleut, St. Juvenaly of Alaska, St. Alexander of Wilkes-Barre, St. John of Chicago, and St. Tikhon of Moscow. The Orthodox parish is replete with the visual images of the martyrs in the iconography. The relic of a martyr is embedded in each altar in the Orthodox Church. The martyrs are the foundation and the personal martyrdom, even if it is not in death but in how one lives one’s life, that must remain the foundation. Fr. Cosmas of Gergoriou, a modern missionary to Zaire who died in a tragic road accident, wrote of this, “The missionary’s beginning is significant, however it is not the sum of the matter... The outset might be blessed or become blessed at the end. What’s important is that the giving be true and total, without holding back, with a disposition to self-sacrifice and self-denial, and with the aim of leaving our bones among the natives...”304 This is witness that is evident in the parishes. Archbishop Anastasios is quoted by Fr. Ion Bria:

> Each of the faithful is called upon to continue a personal “liturgy” on the secret altar of his own heart, to realize a living proclamation of the good news “for the sake of the whole world.” Without this continuation the liturgy remains

---

incomplete…. The sacrifice of the Eucharist must be extended in personal sacrifices for the people in need, the brothers whom Christ died…. The continuation of the liturgy in life means a continuous liberation from the powers of the evil that is working inside us, a continuing reorientation and openness to insights and efforts aimed at liberating human persons from all demonic structures, exploitation, agony, loneliness, and at creating real communion of persons in love.\textsuperscript{305}

This witness extends to all aspects of parish life. The goal of evangelism in the three parishes is not about numbers and proselytizing people into the Orthodox Church, rather it is about witnessing to the truth that they believe and live. Bryan Stone writes on post-modern evangelism:

Is evangelism a \textit{productive} activity, governed by the aims of reaching, conversion, or initiation, and thus the \textit{making} of converts? If so, the skilled evangelist might employ whatever creative means will work to achieve that end. The practice of evangelism is then evaluated by an instrumental logic whereby the means and the end of the practice are \textit{external} to one another. If, however, the logic of evangelism is not primarily the logic of production but instead the logic of bearing witness, we find ourselves talking about evangelism differently. Now the “end” of evangelism is internal to the practice (as a quality of character and performance) rather than externalized in its “product.” Martyrs rather than the pastors of mega churches might now become our evangelistic exemplars….\textsuperscript{305}

The fourth and fifth principles are closely related, although with different perspectives. The fourth principle focuses on the activities within and without the community. A parish must be active within itself, knowing and serving its membership, but also taking care of those with whom they come in contact. Some examples of this care are visiting those in homes and hospitals, assisting a member that has fallen on difficult times, ensuring that parishioners can get to services, and so on. However, true caring extends beyond physical or material requirements, and must include spiritual needs. Therefore, the parish must nurture spiritual growth through Bible studies, Orthodox education, speaker programs, spiritual retreats, and a host of other activities. While there is a danger that the parish may become fixated on such activities, the guiding principle is that the priest knows his parish and their needs and then fills those needs.

A \textit{koinonic} evangelistic parish is one that takes care of its own people spiritually, physically, and emotionally, and activates the community when there is someone in need. There are a number of stories from each parish about how the parish banded together to assist a particular person or family. There are stories about people coming to the leadership about the plight of someone outside

\textsuperscript{305} As quoted in Bria, \textit{Liturgy}, 20.
of the church, and the leadership offers help to this stranger. That is because the leadership and the parish do not see others as objects but as subjects, persons, children of God, and all in need of God’s love and mercy. It is reminiscent of the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), in that they do not pass by on the other side but care for those before them.

But filling the needs is more than just charity; it is also looking to the community and growing the community spiritually. There are a myriad of activities such as the liturgical services, adult and youth education programs, or the choir, each of which is unique to the parish. If the parish has an influx of immigrants and has to conduct a non-English service, they conduct them. If parishioners have an interest in iconography, they have classes. If the parish has many young mothers looking to meet, they have a playgroup. There is always something to bring people together in community. As Styanopolis reflects about a community, “They love Christ, love the Scriptures, love the congregation, love to proclaim the good news, and seek to connect it with every aspect of the parish.”

Koinonic evangelism does just that, it loves all and connects it all with God.

The fifth evangelistic principle is similar to the fourth but the focus is outward. An evangelizing parish reaches out to the local community and beyond. Every single parish is involved in a variety of community activities and events. Some are as simple as having a booth at a festival, while others are as complicated as the operation of a coffee shop. The people in the parish are involved in food banks, clothing drives, delivering meals, assisting veterans, and the list goes on. They give a percentage of their parish’s income to charities, missions, international relief efforts, as well as to OCA, and diocesan fund raising events. They are supportive of seminarian education, and in many cases send people to be trained at the seminaries. They sponsor foreign missionaries, orphanages, and homes. In other words, they give freely of their time, their talent and their treasure, even when it will not directly benefit their parish.

This involvement forces them to look outward and have a different perspective, one that connects them to the place where they are planted. They are known in the community, patronize the community, and are respected in the community. They create cooperative effort with other parishes, regardless of denomination.

---

The other noticeable aspect is that they are involved in the Church beyond their parish. Their clergy are leaders in deaneries, dioceses, and even on the level of the OCA. They also have parishioners who have taken up leadership positions throughout the region and the Church and they are encouraged to do so by the clergy and the parish. They all have a healthy relationship with the hierarchy, are respected by their bishops and other clergy, work hard for the Church, and are honest in their assessments and respectful in their tone. They are not a negative group but are really a joyful parish and community. All three are involved in planting new missions, with varying degrees of success. The parishes are even willing to transfer membership from their parish in order to seed a new mission. They are always looking for the next parish plant and are not jealous of what they have created. They take to heart the admonition from Matthew 25:31-46 and the Parable of the Sheep and Goats, “Then the righteous will answer Him, saying ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, or come to You?’ And the King will answer them and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’” So koinonic evangelism is not something that looks inward. Instead, it reaches out, involves itself wherever the need may be, and is selfless in its application.

The sixth principle is the issue of money. This principle may seem slightly mundane, but it is of incredible importance. Many good parishes fail over poor financial decisions or lack of support. There are more arguments and divisions in parishes over financial matters than any other topic. Large donors can often try to dominate the parish by virtue of their largesse and parishes can divide over “us versus them.” Poorly managed finances can destroy a parish more quickly than a bad priest. None of these negative financial issues are evident in any of the parishes. This does not mean they don’t struggle with financial matters, especially since all of them have some sort of expansion program in the works, but they all talk honestly about money. They are generous and support many different projects joyfully. They compensate their clergy fairly, in the understanding that long-term clergy commitment benefits the community. Some parishes have a more sophisticated stewardship program than others, but all of the parishes have funds available when required. The financial reports are transparent and accessible, and so they trust the leadership to use their money
wisely. No one person or group controls the money and all financial decisions are done responsibly by the group. They never outspend what they have and plan for the future. They all have balanced budgets.

People simply give, and they give as a spiritual discipline. Children are taught to give as well so they grow up with a healthy approach to finances. The parishes support themselves on stewardship and not with a host of fundraising events, relying on others to pay their bills. They consciously decided to give money outside of the parish and any money they do raise outside of stewardship is for some outside charity, never for the operation of the Church. Hence, one does not see the endless rounds of dinners, raffles, festivals all to raise money for operating costs. The principle is basic as the passage in Matthew 6:21, “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” A koinonic evangelistic parish’s heart is obvious because it where they put their treasure.

The seventh principle relates to the question of ethnicity. The historical record of the Church has demonstrated its struggle with the question of ethnicity. The Church seemed to always incorporate into the culture in which it found itself or the culture that arose out of the Church. However, sometimes the culture or the ethnicity became so powerful that the Church became more of an ethnic ghetto. “Much criticism,” reflected Archbishop Anastasios, “some of it justified, has arisen in the past of the tendency of many missions to establish spiritual colonies or annexes to their own Church rather than create new, living churches, rooted in the soul and life of the people.”307 These ethnic colonies took root in North America as a response to a shifting demographic and political situation and have remained in force in many locations to this day. Part of the weakness of the witness of the Orthodox Church in North America is that the Orthodox Churches are rarely denoted without their ethnic qualifier: Russian Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, Serbian Orthodox, etc. Those who seek the Orthodox Church have had to crash through such ethnic and linguistic barriers. The political divisions between the Orthodox jurisdictions, dividing the potential witness of the Church, only adds to the confusion.

With this confusion has come the weakness of the Orthodox witness in North America. Parishes have tendencies to retreat into themselves in the face of challenges. Some continue to advance the notion of the local parish as the repository of ethnicity. While some of these parishes will continue

---

307 Yannoulatos, Mission, 32.
to exist in this atmosphere, others have clearly declined and faded. Despite the beauty of the Liturgy, the perceived strength of the theology, and even the tightness of a community, the Orthodox Church in many regions continues to decline and be closed to outsiders. Stamoolis writes, “The theologians write beautifully of the witness of the liturgy and the missionary structures of the congregation. But, if this is the case, why, especially in the Diaspora, are some of the churches centers of social activity that exclude outsiders? Can Orthodoxy break out of its cultural mentality so that it can witness?”

What these three parishes have clearly done was to transcend such barriers. They refused to become slaves to such paradigms while carefully acknowledging and even honoring such connections. Even in the case of Wheaton, where some liturgical services are done in a language other than English, there is still a sense that the ethnic barrier is not present. They are, “become all things to all people...” (1 Cor. 9:22). This is a difficult thing to do when so much pressure around them is to conform to the common paradigm of a “hyphenated” Orthodoxy. Yet one of the reasons they are attractive to seekers is that they continue to present Orthodoxy in an expression that is not excluding. This is not just the use of English (or whatever language maybe required to serve the people), but because the ethnic qualifiers are not the *raison d’être* for its existence. They are not ethnic ghettos, they are a mosaic of cultures and people that have evolved into a koinonia. Fr. Hopko prophetically envisions such a parish:

> These parishes, certainly in the United States and Canada, will be of a great variety of sizes, shapes, and styles, though each one, theologically and mystically, will be the very same Church of Christ. The parishes will be composed of different kinds of people. They will be of different cultures and traditions. They will have different emphases and possibilities in worship, education, pastoral care, and philanthropic and evangelical activity. None of them will claim they can do everything by themselves. All of them will admit that they need each other, being constrained by truth and love, to cooperate for God’s glory and the good of God’s people. They will all confess that to do God’s work they cannot compete with each other, but must complete each other in Christian service and ministry. They will know that the only way in which they should strive to outdo each other is in expressing godly zeal, brotherly affection, honor, and mutual respect (cf. Rom. 12:9-13).

---

What these parishes have been able to do is in their own way reflect this optimistic vision of Fr. Hopko. They are diverse in the best sense of the word and they respect the many diverse traditions while fully understanding that these traditions, as important as they may be to some in the parishes, are subordinate to the Tradition of the Orthodox Church. They engage the surrounding community and are open to that community. They engage in all sorts of activity not because they are simply caring for their own, rather they care for all that God brings to them. They are a koinonia.

3. Limitations of Conclusion and Alternate Theories

When objectively examining the conclusions of this study, a few issues do come to the forefront. The first issue is acknowledged in Chapter One, which is that the study is limited to parishes of the Orthodox Church, specifically parishes of the Orthodox Church in America. This skews the results, since OCA churches have a specific perspective and context. Furthermore, I specifically chose vibrant parishes in order to determine specific results. However, as the study proceeded, it was soon obvious that while the background and perspective are critical in understanding the parishes and shaping their responses (e.g., the emphasis on English and the “non-ethnic” aspects of Orthodoxy), the final analysis demonstrates that the evangelism principles are, in fact, cross jurisdictional, as the embedded theology and liturgics are the same. In addition, it is reasonable to argue that some, but not all, of the principles may be utilized in any Faith tradition, in the context of their own theology and worship.

Because all three parishes are thriving, there is a legitimate concern about whether they are representative of the Orthodox Church in America as a whole. This bias is especially concerning, as these three parishes are growing and active parishes whereas there are a large number of shrinking parishes in the OCA. However, the precise reason for studying them is that they are thriving, and conclusions gleaned from studying them create a model for other Orthodox parishes. In short, their uniqueness is actually a strength of the study and not a distraction. Given that, certain aspects, such as the clergy, are difficult to reproduce, as certain clergy just have a gift for this type of ministry. Therefore, the Church, to the best of its ability, must ensure that this kind of clergy are trained and assigned to parishes. Again, this uniqueness is not a disqualifier, rather an indicator of effective evangelism. One parishioner responds to this question of uniqueness by stating, “This is not an aberration, this is the norm. That we have to understand, if we really believe in the God
of the Bible, the God of the Church, then this (parish) is the norm, this is not the aberration. Until the OCA or any other Orthodox church starts really believing that, they’re going have a defeatist mentality from the starting gate.” In other words, what is observed in these parishes needs to become the norm or koinonic evangelism will simply not work.

Another critical point is that while there was generally clear convergence of data and experiences across the three parishes, there was also some divergence. The parishes are not clones of one another despite their similar attributes. However, each parish has a different context and often the responses by the clergy or the parishioners are a reflection of those contexts. For example, while one parish has an excellent parish school program, another has tried and failed to put together a program. One parish has a strong outreach program while another is still developing its place in the community. There is no logical explanation why a program works in one place and not in another, other than the unique personality of that particular parish. This is expected and does not skew the results or dispute the larger conclusions. It just is different application to different purposes. A clergy responds in this manner, “Ultimately, Jesus preached the Kingdom in a thousand different ways; fifty different parables and you have to be able to see that kingdom somewhere... Because in the parish, it shows that for us, God can reach you anywhere....”

Finally, there is a question about whether these are examples of evangelism or just good parish management. It is, perhaps, disingenuous to separate the two. Good parish management leads to healthy parishes that attract people and thus grow. Likewise, a healthy influx of new members positively affects parish life as no one group ever really gains control. Most importantly, good leaders understand their parish and adapt as their parish changes. It is clear that all three parishes are well led, and have a healthy approach to all of the principles outlined in the conclusion. Good parish management is not an alternate to evangelism, it is a contributing factor to and a consequence of it.

Some may argue that this shows that the Church needs to teach good management rather than evangelism. However, management is just one inward-looking facet of a successful parish. Archbishop Anastasios references the difference in an interview he did in 2002. He was asked, “Is there any difference between internal and external mission (home and foreign mission)?” His answers revealed a great deal.
As you know, the terminology “internal mission” is an influence of the German “inneremission,” and in it we have found a very easy excuse to persuade ourselves that we are missionaries by doing internal mission. And yet the commandment says clearly: “and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.” The biblical understanding of mission (apostole) means to leave, to accept to be in another cultural environment, to be a stranger. We must distinguish between apostolic mission and the pastoral efforts that we undertake in our local churches. The pastoral efforts and the renewal of Christian life are indeed very important. In many societies now where an atheistic influence prevails, we have to be a witness (in Greek, martyria), to invite to the Church people who do not have faith. However, spiritual edification within the Church is not exactly missionary effort. Missionary effort is about having the vocation to bring into the Church that which is outside of the Church. In the beginning, we had a youthful enthusiasm for the meaning of the word mission. Later, we discovered that these words were widely used. Then we decided to use rather the word martyria, witness, not mission.\footnote{Archbishop Anastasios (Yannoulatos) from an interview in “Understanding Orthodoxy: How to Distinguish True Mission from Proselytism,” www.orthodoxytoday.org (May 8, 2014), originally published in Syndesmos News, Vol. XV No. 2 (Winter 2001/Spring 2002): 11-13.}

Thus, the difference between good parish management and evangelism (or mission) is the concept of reaching to the outside and drawing others into the Church. It is about “witnessing,” which is also one of the key principles uncovered in the study. Therefore, while the study did uncover some critical parish management aspects, it is truly about evangelism in the parish.

4. Possible Implementation of the Study

While it is easy to lay out the principles of effective koinonic evangelism, the implementation is quite a different matter. In order to make an Orthodox parish truly effective in evangelism requires some major shifts in not only action, but in thinking about evangelism itself. For example, as seen in the interviews and questionnaires, people often associate evangelism with marketing techniques. Such common perceptions involve actions such as putting up a billboard, going door to door to proselytize, preaching in the public sphere, and so on. Therefore, it is easy for parishes to think that all they need is a good advertising campaign and people will flock to their doors. The ones who follow this model have NOT been effective in evangelism, as this study reveals that effective evangelism is not about marketing and certainly not about numbers. Growing parishes are an indicator of effective evangelism, but not a goal. Bosch cites, “Numerical growth is, therefore, in a sense nothing more than a byproduct when a church is true to its deepest calling. Of greater
importance is organic and incarnational growth.”\textsuperscript{311} Evangelism is about a communal activity that draws people into a community. All the marketing campaigns and money will not attract anyone if they experience a cold, unwelcoming, and unhealthy parish. When someone visits an Orthodox parish and does not sense the community, the relationships, the witness of the community, and most importantly the power of the spiritual life and liturgical worship in the parish, then all the efforts are for naught.

So perhaps the first step in to make healthy parishes is to assign priests that can lead, build a strong community, and be a stronger witness to the community. That cannot happen quickly but requires change in the parishes, changes in leadership, and a change in the mentality of the Church as a whole. Unless that is done, then all the work of introducing people to the Orthodox Church is worthless and a waste. Healthy witnessing communities led by healthy witnessing clergy are the key for effective \textit{koinonic} evangelism.

It is the contention of this thesis that while evangelism may involve individual actions, it really is a community activity, so the Church’s leadership must encourage such an approach, involving not just leadership, but the whole community. In addition, the Church leaders must find those parishes where this exists and present them as a model, with the understanding that each congregation has its own context and condition. Despite this, when the key lessons are applied, the results will eventually come. Fr. Cosmas writes, “With the passing of time, the work takes on the complexion of all those who labor therein. In this respect, the work is a linkage of one’s own temperament, knowledge, possibilities, and local condition.”\textsuperscript{312}

Another possible implementation comes directly from the respondents. The last question asked of the clergy and leaders was how the Orthodox Church in America, Diocese, and local deaneries can assist the parish in evangelism. The results are interesting and relevant to this section.

\textsuperscript{311} Bosch, \textit{Transforming}, 416.
\textsuperscript{312} Aslanidis and Damascene, \textit{Cosmas}, 152.
The clergy in the parishes are looking, firstly, for training for clergy, lay leaders, and parishioners. Secondly, they are looking for both programs and funding for programs. Third, training in seminaries (the response “other” included issues of jurisdictional separatism that are beyond the scope of this study). It is clear that the clergy are seeking assistance in training and program development.

The next graph is the same question that was posed to the leaders in the parish. The results are slightly different with the more people asking for programs than the clergy. But still training of clergy, leaders and parishes ranks high.

What these two graphs reveal is that parish leadership is looking for assistance learning how to evangelize and programs on evangelism that can be implemented on the local (parish) level. This study can be the first step in developing those programs and assisting parishes in learning about the history, methodology, and principles of effective evangelism in the Orthodox Church. Koinonic evangelism is precisely suited for parishes because it takes what already exists and develops a
stronger communal and community bond. It allows for individuals to grasp a better understanding of evangelism in the Church, although it does take parish commitment to implement, involving all levels of leadership and participation. The biggest challenge is the willingness of parishes to change as needed and to implement basic principles into the life of the parish. It must be a communal effort. As St. Tikhon wrote, “For each of us the dissemination of the Christian faith must be a favorite task, close to our hearts and precious to us; in this task each member of the Church must take an active part – some by personal missionary effort, some by monetary support and service to the ‘needs of the saints,’ and some by prayer to the Lord that He might ‘establish and increase His Church’ and that He might ‘teach the word of truth’ to those who do not know Christ, might ‘reveal to them the gospel of righteousness, unite them to His Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church’.”313

5. **Recommendations for Future Work**

One of the parishioners reflects on what the future of such a study would hold and the effect that it could have by stating,

> Any parish that starts the holy experiment, as Father (priest) has taught, everything’s synergistic with the Godhead, the Holy Spirit. If you truly have a group of people who are Christian and they love God, and I think that it’s a mutual thing, they love the priest and the priest loves them. But their priest also loves God and is able to articulate the doctrines and the teachings of the church. You’re going to have fertile ground where the holy experiment will blossom. And, that’s what’s happened here. And I think it’s relevant to any group, any ethnic group, age group, or people group, within the United States. It’s got to plant the seeds in the ground where it’s going to grow.

So this study is really the first step in the planting of seeds. The principles revealed are just the initial steps in rediscovering and reapplying an Orthodox ethos of evangelism. Ultimately, there needs to be a rededication of the evangelistic spirit in the Church as a whole. This spirit is an integral part of the early Orthodox Church in North America and, while rediscovered with the granting of autocephaly in 1970, needs a new embrace. Rather than relying on modes of evangelism that are alien to the Orthodox Church, the Church needs to emphasize those models that were successful throughout the history of the Orthodox Church and this will allow for a

---

stronger reflection on methodology. In other words, the Church needs to continue to systematically work on the implementation of the principles discovered in this study.

In addition, there are areas that this study only has begun to explore. For instance, the liturgical life is the center of the Church’s life. There is a vast amount of liturgical hymnology that is often combined with the lives of the saints. These need to be combed through to discover more evangelistic models from the Church’s liturgical life. Many of the words of the hymns dedicated to those great missionary saints are replete with lessons and examples of evangelism. Scholars have barely touched these texts and explored them in the context of evangelism and mission. Only small sections of these texts have been referenced in relation to evangelism and mission, and they are can reveal much on the background and understanding of the theology of koinonic evangelism.

There is also much work to be done gleaning through the written lives and writings of the Saints of the Orthodox Church, specifically the great missionary and apostolic saints, in order to draw lessons from their lives and apply them to the principles of koinonic evangelism. This study examines a few foundational saints, but there is a massive list of the great missionary saints from throughout history and regions. Much of the material has not been translated into English, so there needs to be an effort to have those translations done. For example, the missionary writings of the foundational Russian missionary, St. Macarius Gloukharev, have not been translated into English. His writings had a huge effect on many of the early North American missionary saints and the work of his mission school in Russia has not been systematically researched. In the meantime, there are volumes of letters and other material from the American saints that still need exploration, translation, and presentation to the world, including the work of St. Innocent and the Mission Society he established in Russia while Metropolitan of Moscow. The Church in America was the direct beneficiary of their work. Many Western Christian academic mission societies and publications rarely focus on the great Orthodox missionary and evangelists, and so most of them are virtually unknown in the Western churches. This is an entire field that is open for study.

The final area of exploration came to light during a discussion among some clergy. Too often the study of missions and evangelism focuses on methodology and principles that are deemed effective or successful. However, there is much to learn from evangelistic efforts that have failed, a sort of apophatic exercise by examining what evangelism is not. Very often the misunderstanding of what
is evangelism is conflated with principles that are either not applicable to Orthodoxy or not even evangelism. Likewise, there are examples of evangelism that absolutely failed due to a wrong approach, poor leadership, or context. Missions that seem to have everything going for them inexplicably close, and parishes with well-intentioned programs fail. Therefore, there is value in studying parish situations that should have worked and did not. It would be most enlightening and this perspective has probably never been explored.

In any cases, the study of evangelism in the Orthodox Church, particularly in North America, is wide open field. There is some foundational material, but it is now up to a new generation to look into the many areas and present them to the larger audience within the Orthodox Church and also in the wider ecumenical and academic field. The interest is growing as more people discover the rich history and theology of the Orthodox Church.

6. **Concluding Thoughts**

The roots of this study began many years ago as I sought to identify certain principles of evangelism from an Orthodox perspective. It evolved over time from identifying principles to trying to enact a methodology that would work in a parish situation. There are certainly as many opinions about what evangelism is and how to do it as there are people who explore the topic. But the goal of this study was to look at what was happening on the ground, how people are actually doing evangelism in the parish, and how this related to and applied to the perspective of the Orthodox Church in North America. What I uncovered, in the end, is that principles and methodology of evangelism are not just individual actions, but really evangelism is a communal (koinonic) activity. It is an activity that is relevant to the theology of the Church, applicable to life in the parish and, in most situations, transferable to other communities. The *theoria* and *praxis* of evangelism relied on very specific Orthodox contexts that did not separate the parish from the people, rather it engaged the community through the lenses of the Orthodox Church. These foundational principles are universal and incarnated in the parish: liturgy, witness, leadership, community service, communal gathering, movement away from ethnocentric communities to those that embrace all, responsible parish management, timeless Orthodox doctrine, and morality. Stone wrote in *Evangelism after Christendom*, “Here again Christian ethics and evangelism are inseparable – and to some extent indistinguishable. Both are rooted in concrete practices of thanksgiving, sharing, and hospitality that keep alive the memory of Jesus while forming us into
his story and into his body.” This study uncovered these concrete practices and an integrity in each of the parish’s life.

The context of this study remains rooted in the Orthodox Church, which is what makes it unique. It cannot be separated away because it is so embedded in the parishes, the leaders, and the parishioners. The Orthodox Church, her liturgical life, her theological perspective, her dogma, and kerygma are a powerful part of these parishes. Fr. Schmemann wrote in his seminal book, *For the Life of the World*, “The liturgy begins then as a real separation from the world. In our attempt to make Christianity appeal to the [person] on the street, we have often minimized, or even completely forgotten, the necessary separation. We always want to make Christianity ‘understandable’ and ‘acceptable’ to this mythical ‘modern’ [person] on the street. And we forget that the Christ of whom we speak is ‘not of this world,’ and after his resurrection He was not recognized even by His own disciples.” If this study can make Christ recognizable among the Orthodox, then it has accomplished much.

In conclusion, the study is about groups of people dedicated to the Orthodox Church, consciously choosing to be a part of the Church and living out a life in the Church. That is Christianity as it is meant to be, a life dedicated to a life in Christ; a communion of people seeking their salvation within a worshipping, liturgical community. It is through this *koinonia* that they discover Christ in such a powerful way that they simply desire to witness that to the world and to share that joy. This witness transforms them from a community to a church, from a parish to the Body of Christ. Fr. Schmemann also wrote about leitourgia (liturgy or action) as “an action by which a group of people become something corporately which they had not been as a mere collection of individuals – a whole greater than the sum of its parts.” In effect *koinonic* evangelism is just that, a whole becoming greater than the sum of its parts.

---

Appendix A
Sample Letter of Informed Consent

Koinonic Evangelism: A Case Study of the Theology and Practice of Evangelism as Practiced in Three Parishes in the Orthodox Church in America

As part of a Doctor of Ministry Thesis Submitted in partial fulfillment of the Doctor of Ministry Program, Toronto School of Theology, University of Trinity College, University of Toronto

Letter of Informed Consent

1. **Introduction:** I, Eric G. Tosi, am conducting doctoral level qualitative research into the theology and practice of evangelism in parishes of the Orthodox Church in America. Part of the research that you have been asked to participate involves questions and surveys on current practices and thoughts on evangelism in your particular parish. This portion will be integrated with research on the theology of evangelism as expressed in the Orthodox Church. Your participation will allow for a deeper examination of that theology in a parish setting.

2. **Your Participation:** Your participation with this project is entirely voluntary. You may withdraw at any time without any adverse action. You will be asked a series of questions on evangelism. You may answer any of the questions. You may also decline to answer any of the questions without any prejudice. All answers will be entirely confidential and anonymous. They will be presented in the final thesis as anonymous. Any information on your parish will also be presented in a neutral manner as to not identify the parish, the leadership or the parishioners. You may also withdraw from the interview at any time without any penalty and ask the information not be used in the final report.

3. **Benefits and Risks:** Your answers will become part of a larger database on the practice of evangelism in the Orthodox Church in America. It will greatly benefit the understanding of what practices are being utilized and what is the theology of those practices. It will greatly enhance the understanding of evangelism and may be utilized in the larger Church.

There are no risks associated with this study. My position as the Secretary of the Orthodox Church in America will not be used in any way for or against the participants. Declining to answer questions, withdrawing from the process as well as any controversial answers will not be held against anyone participating in the study. The bishop of the parish as well as the parish leadership have been informed as well.

4. **Confidentiality:** The interview will be tape recorded but your name will not be recorded. Your name and identifying information will not be associated with any part of the written report of the research. All of your information and interview responses will be kept confidential.

5. **Conflict:** Any perceived conflict or questions may be addressed to the Chancellor of your diocese who will act as an immediate mediator. If there are further questions, you can contact the **Office of Research Ethics at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946-3273.**
6. **Consent:** By signing this consent form, you are agreeing to participate in this research with the above parameters. You will be given a copy of this form for your reference.

**Subject’s Understanding**

- I agree to participate in this study that I understand will be submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Ministry at the University of Toronto.

- I understand that my participation is voluntary.

- I understand that all data collected will be limited to this use or other research-related usage as authorized by the University of Toronto.

- I understand that I will not be identified by name in the final product.

- I am aware that all records will be kept confidential in the secure possession of the researcher.

- I acknowledge that the contact information of the researcher and his advisor have been made available to me along with a duplicate copy of this consent form.

- I understand that the data I will provide are not be used to prejudice my position as a leader or parishioner in the parish, the diocese or the Orthodox Church in America in any way.

- I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time with no adverse repercussions.

_________________________________________
Subject’s Full Name

_________________________________________  ________________________
Signed        Date
Letter of Informed Consent from Diocesan Bishop

Koinonic Evangelism: A Case Study of the Theology and Practice of Evangelism as Practiced in Three Parishes in the Orthodox Church in America

As part of a Doctor of Ministry Thesis Submitted in partial fulfillment of the Doctor of Ministry Program, Toronto School of Theology, University of Trinity College, University of Toronto

Letter of Consent for Diocesan Bishop

1. **Introduction:** I, Eric G. Tosi, am conducting doctoral level qualitative research into the theology and practice of evangelism in parishes of the Orthodox Church in America. Part of the research is to conduct interviews in a parish of your diocese. These parishes have been selected due to my familiarity with them as well as their current practice of evangelism. The leadership and parishioners will be asked questions and surveys on current practices and thoughts on evangelism in the particular parish. This portion will be integrated with research on the theology of evangelism as expressed in the Orthodox Church. Their participation will allow for a deeper examination of that theology in a parish setting.

2. **Your Participation:** I am asking for your permission to conduct the research in the parish. The participation with this project is entirely voluntary and they may withdraw at any time without any adverse action. All answers will be entirely confidential and anonymous. They will be presented in the final thesis as anonymous. Any information on the parish will also be presented in a neutral manner as to not identify the parish, the leadership or the parishioners.

3. **Benefits and Risks:** The answers will become part of a larger database on the practice of evangelism in the Orthodox Church in America. It will greatly benefit the understanding of what practices are being utilized and what is the theology of those practices. It will greatly enhance the understanding of evangelism and may be utilized in the larger Church.

I ask that no adverse action be taken against any leader or member of the parish by their association with this study. My position as the Secretary of the Orthodox Church in America will not be used in any way for or against the participants. Declining to answer questions, withdrawing from the process as well as any controversial answers will not be held against anyone participating in the study.

4. **Confidentiality:** The interview will be tape recorded but the names will not be recorded. The name and identifying information will not be associated with any part of the written report of the research. All information and interview responses will be kept confidential.

5. **Conflict:** Any perceived conflict or questions may be addressed to the Chancellor of your diocese who will act as an immediate mediator. If there are further questions, you can contact the Office of Research Ethics at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946-3273.
6. **Consent:** By signing this consent form, you are agreeing to allow the parish and individuals in this research with the above parameters. You will be given a copy of this form for your reference.

**Bishop’s Understanding**

- I agree to allow participation of the parish in this study that I understand will be submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Ministry at the University of Toronto.

- I understand that their participation is voluntary.

- I understand that all data collected will be limited to this use or other research-related usage as authorized by the University of Toronto.

- I understand that they will not be identified by name in the final product.

- I am aware that all records will be kept confidential in the secure possession of the researcher.

- I acknowledge that the contact information of the researcher and his advisor have been made available to me along with a duplicate copy of this consent form.

- I understand that the data I will provide are not be used to prejudice any position as a leader or parishioner in the parish, the diocese or the Orthodox Church in America in any way.

- I understand that they may withdraw from the study at any time with no adverse repercussions.

__________________________  ________________________
Bishop’s Full Name      Parish

__________________________  ________________________
Signed        Date
Appendix B
Questions for Interview of Parish Clergy

A. History
1. Can you tell me the history of the parish?
2. Are there any major events in the life of the parish?
3. Were there events that positively affected the parish?
4. Were there events that negatively affected the parish?
5. Were their notable people who were involved in the life of the parish?
6. Were there notable people who visited the parish?
7. What were any major milestones in the life of the parish?
8. Are there future plans for the church?
9. Any future events?
10. How many clergy has this parish had?
11. Why was the parish put here?
12. Who decided that?
13. Has the parish moved or is it in the same spot?
14. Have facilities been renovated or built?

B. Demographics
1. How old is the parish?
2. How many adults?
3. How many youths?
4. How many baptisms/chrismations/marriages and funerals have you done?
5. How many average per year?
6. Background of the parishioners?
7. Notable ethnic backgrounds?
8. What percentage are converts to Orthodoxy?
9. What is the average age of the parish?
10. What areas do you draw the parishioners?
11. Is the region growing or declining or remaining the same?
12. What are the major areas/sites/draw for the region?
13. Has your church grown/shrunk?
14. Do you have statistical information on membership?
15. What ministries do you have in the parish?
16. What makes your parish unique?
17. What sort of relationships are in the parish?

C. Parish Information
1. What is the average income/expenses?
2. Any major building programs or capital outlay?
3. How is your income earned?
4. What are your major expenses?
5. How is the parish organized?
6. How often does the leadership meet?
7. How does the leadership operate?
8. How involved are they with deanery/diocese/national operations?
9. How often does other leadership visit?
10. How informed is your bishop on the work?
11. Is the priest full time? Are there other full time employees?
12. Are there regular parish events?
13. Is there other work that draws away your priest or parish leadership?
14. What leadership positions are there in the parish?
15. How are these determined?
16. Is evangelism budgeted?
17. How much do you spend in different programs?
18. Was this consciously thought about?
19. What is the liturgical life of the parish?
20. How often are there services?
21. Do you do anything outside the normal cycle of services?
22. How well attended are they?
23. Do you do something special liturgically?

D. Evangelism
1. Is evangelism talked about/ planned?
2. Are there specific programs or events?
3. Who funds these?
4. Does the parish speak about evangelism?
5. How would you rate the openness of the parish to outsiders?
6. What is your approach?
7. What is your definition?
8. How do people find your church?
9. How do you make your church available?
10. Do you have outside events at your church?
11. How do you advertise?
12. Are you involved in community activities/associations/events?
13. What do you think is the perception of your church to outsiders and to the community?
14. Are there many other churches in the area both Orthodox and non-Orthodox?
15. Are you a plant from an established parish?
16. Have you planted any other parishes?
17. Are there plans for outreach?
18. Are there some outreach specifics that you are part of?
19. Any future plans?
20. Do people support this?
21. Do you have greeters or people specifically assigned to welcome?

E. Catechism
1. Do you do enquirers’ classes?
2. How often and how attended?
3. Do you do catechism?
4. How often?
5. How long?
6. How is it attended?
7. What do you teach?
8. How do you bring people from enquirer to catechumen to reception?
9. Is there something special you do for each person?
11. Where do the people come from?
12. Are you a cycle?
13. How did you develop the program?
14. Do you reach out to other languages? Do you reach out to minorities?
15. Is there something that makes your program different than other orthodox programs?
16. Are other churches involved
17. How do you integrate it all liturgically?
18. Where do the people come from and why?
19. Why this church and not others?
20. Have people been turned off by what they found here?
Appendix C

Interview questions for Parish and Parish leadership

1. What is your understanding of how this parish came to exist?
2. How did you come to this parish?
3. What makes this parish unique?
4. Can this be replicated?
5. What has this parish done right?
6. What could this parish have done better?
7. What is your definition of evangelism?
8. How does this parish evangelize?
9. How important is the liturgical life?
10. Is there other information about the parish that is important to understand that has not been covered?
Appendix D  
Questionnaire for Clergy

**Project:** Koinonic Evangelism: A Case Study of the Theology and Practice of Evangelism as Practiced in Three Parishes in the Orthodox Church in America

Time of Interview:  
Date:  
Place:  
Interviewer: Archpriest Eric G. Tosi  
Interviewee:  
Position of Interviewee:  

The project is a doctoral level research study on the theology and practice of evangelism in parishes of the Orthodox Church in America. I am studying how parishes of the Orthodox Church in America perceive and actually do evangelism on a local level. In addition, I am exploring how individuals in those parishes came to be part of the parish and how they understand evangelism. Finally part of this project is to discover what methods of evangelism were successful or not successful in a parish or individual. This portion of the study is dedicated to interviewing parishes and individuals who have an interest and knowledge of evangelism in a parish setting.

This particular part of the interview process is directed to the parish clergy as part of gaining an understanding on how the parish clergy understand and implement evangelism in the parish. You are free to use additional paper if needed.

**Question 1:** Can you tell me how you understand evangelism?

**Question 2:** In your opinion, what does evangelism mean in the Orthodox Church?

**Question 3:** Is evangelism ever discussed at any level in your parish? *Please indicate as many of those that apply?*

- ( ) parish council  
- ( ) leadership meetings  
- ( ) casual conversation  
- ( ) other (please specify) ……………..  
- ( ) not at all
Question 4: Can you say what the view of the parish as a whole is towards evangelism?

( ) enthusiastic
( ) negative
( ) cautious but open
( ) other (please specify) …………….. 

Question 5: What are some examples of how you see evangelism as happening in this parish?

Question 6: Are there particular writers or theologians who have influenced your own understanding of evangelism?

Question 7: What are the challenges or issues that you face in this parish in the area of evangelism? Please indicate as many of those that apply?

( ) not knowing how to approach it
( ) we would be perceived as “sheep stealing” from other churches
( ) the people would not be supportive of it
( ) the leadership would not be supportive of it
( ) not sure what we have to offer to people
( ) we have no good models of how to do it
( ) other (please specify) ……………..

Question 8: Are there particular incidents or events or programs that you have considered “evangelism” in this parish? Can you describe them, please?

Question 9: What in your opinion made them successful or unsuccessful?

Question 10: Some believe that elements in the regular life of a parish are themselves inherently evangelistic. If you agree, could you please indicate (in order of importance, 1 being most important) how you would rank them?

( ) Preaching
( ) Teaching
( ) Witnessing (as defined by living a Christian life in public)
( ) Serving (as defined by caring for those in the parish community)
( ) Confessing (as defined by speaking in public about Christian values)
( ) Service to the community
( ) The Liturgical life of the parish including the cycle of services
Question 11: Is there something that the Orthodox Church in America as a Church can be doing better in evangelism – at national or diocesan or deanery level – to assist in evangelism at the parish level? Please indicate as many of those that apply?

( ) offering programs a parish can adopt
( ) offering staff support for evangelistic ventures
( ) offering training for parishioners
( ) offering training for clergy and lay leaders
( ) offering grants to parishes to support local evangelism programs
( ) other (please specify) ……………..

Question 12: What does the Orthodox Church in America have to offer to people coming to the Faith through evangelism? Please indicate as many of those that apply?

( ) A particularly North American expression of the Orthodox Church
( ) An unbroken lineage from the early Church
( ) An unchanging dogma and morality
( ) A strong connection with the patristic witness of the Faith
( ) A repository of an ethnic expression of Faith (i.e., Greek, Russian, Serbian, etc.)
( ) An autocephalous Church that is responsible for its own internal life
( ) A direct heir to the Russian mission to Alaska and continued through the centuries
( ) A unique liturgical expression in the Orthodox world
( ) An openness to the reception of North Americans from non-Orthodox backgrounds
( ) The primary use of English in the Church’s liturgical and administrative life
( ) The willingness to embrace all cultures and languages throughout North America
( ) A strong adherence to unchanging morality
( ) A strong commitment to a conciliar approach to Church ministry that involves hierarchs, clergy and lay people

Question 13: Why do you think non-Orthodox Christians join the Orthodox Church?

Question 14: Why do you think non-Orthodox with no religious background join the Orthodox Church?

Question 15: Why do you think Orthodox people remain in the Church?

Question 16: Why do you think Orthodox people leave the Church?
Question 17: What is your age?

( ) Less than 18  
( ) 18-29  
( ) 30-39  
( ) 40-49  
( ) 50 or older

Question 18: What is your gender?

( ) Male  
( ) Female

Question 19: What is your marital status?

( ) Single  
( ) Married  
( ) Divorced  
( ) Separated  
( ) Widowed

Question 20: Do you have children?

( ) Yes  
( ) No

Question 21: What is your ethnicity?

( ) American Indian or Native Alaskan  
( ) Asian  
( ) Black or African American  
( ) Hispanic or Latino  
( ) Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander  
( ) White  
( ) Other (Please Specify)...........

If you would be interested in discussing your answers with me, please check this box and give me your contact information. ( )

Name:

Address:

Phone/Email:
Appendix E
Questionnaire for Parish Leadership

Project: Koinonic Evangelism: A Case Study of the Theology and Practice of Evangelism as Practiced in Three Parishes in the Orthodox Church in America

Time of Interview: 
Date: 
Place: 
Interviewer: Archpriest Eric G. Tosi 
Interviewee: 
Position of Interviewee: 

The project is a doctoral level research study on the theology and practice of evangelism in parishes of the Orthodox Church in America. I am studying how parishes of the Orthodox Church in America perceive and actually do evangelism on a local level. In addition, I am exploring how individuals in those parishes came to be part of the parish and how they understand evangelism. Finally part of this project is to discover what methods of evangelism were successful or not successful in a parish or individual. This portion of the study is dedicated to interviewing parishes and individuals who have an interest and knowledge of evangelism in a parish setting.

This particular part of the interview process is directed to the parish leadership as part of gaining an understanding on how the parish leadership understand and implement evangelism in the parish. You are free to use additional paper if needed.

Question 1: Can you tell me how you understand evangelism?

Question 2: In your opinion, what does evangelism mean in the Orthodox Church?

Question 3: Is evangelism ever discussed at any level in your parish? Please indicate as many of those that apply?

( ) parish council 
( ) leadership meetings 
( ) casual conversation 
( ) other (please specify) ……………..
( ) not at all
Question 4: Can you say what the view of the parish as a whole is towards evangelism?

( ) enthusiastic
( ) negative
( ) cautious but open
( ) other (please specify) ……………..

Question 5: What are some examples of how you see evangelism as happening in this parish?

Question 6: Are there particular writers or theologians who have influenced your own understanding of evangelism?

Question 7: What are the challenges or issues that you face in this parish in the area of evangelism? Please indicate as many of those that apply?

( ) not knowing how to approach it
( ) we would be perceived as “sheep stealing” from other churches
( ) the people would not be supportive of it
( ) the leadership would not be supportive of it
( ) not sure what we have to offer to people
( ) we have no good models of how to do it
( ) other (please specify) ……………..

Question 8: Are there particular incidents or events or programs that you have considered “evangelism” in this parish? Can you describe them, please?

Question 9: What in your opinion made them successful or unsuccessful?

Question 10: Some believe that elements in the regular life of a parish are themselves inherently evangelistic. If you agree, could you please indicate (in order of importance, 1 being most important) how you would rank them?

( ) Preaching
( ) Teaching
( ) Witnessing (as defined by living a Christian life in public)
( ) Serving (as defined by caring for those in the parish community)
( ) Confessing (as defined by speaking in public about Christian values)
( ) Service to the community
( ) The Liturgical life of the parish including the cycle of services
Question 11: Is there something that the Orthodox Church in America as a Church can be doing better in evangelism – at national or diocesan or deanery level – to assist in evangelism at the parish level? Please indicate as many of those that apply?

( ) offering programs a parish can adopt
( ) offering staff support for evangelistic ventures
( ) offering training for parishioners
( ) offering training for clergy and lay leaders
( ) offering grants to parishes to support local evangelism programs
( ) other (please specify) ……………..

Question 12: What does the Orthodox Church in America have to offer to people coming to the Faith through evangelism? Please indicate as many of those that apply?

( ) A particularly North American expression of the Orthodox Church
( ) An unbroken lineage from the early Church
( ) An unchanging dogma and morality
( ) A strong connection with the patristic witness of the Faith
( ) A repository of an ethnic expression of Faith (i.e., Greek, Russian, Serbian, etc.)
( ) An autocephalous Church that is responsible for its own internal life
( ) A direct heir to the Russian mission to Alaska and continued through the centuries
( ) A unique liturgical expression in the Orthodox world
( ) A openness to the reception of North Americans from non-Orthodox backgrounds
( ) The primary use of English in the Church’s liturgical and administrative life
( ) The willingness to embrace all cultures and languages throughout North America
( ) A strong adherence to unchanging morality
( ) A strong commitment to a conciliar approach to Church ministry that involves hierarchs, clergy and lay people

Question 13: Why do you think non-Orthodox Christians join the Orthodox Church?

Question 14: Why do you think non-Orthodox with no religious background join the Orthodox Church?

Question 15: Why do you think Orthodox people remain in the Church?

Question 16: Why do you think Orthodox people leave the Church?
Question 17: What is your age?

( ) Less than 18
( ) 18-29
( ) 30-39
( ) 40-49
( ) 50 or older

Question 18: What is your gender?

( ) Male
( ) Female

Question 19: What is your marital status?

( ) Single
( ) Married
( ) Divorced
( ) Separated
( ) Widowed

Question 20: Do you have children?

( ) Yes
( ) No

Question 21: What is your ethnicity?

( ) American Indian or Native Alaskan
( ) Asian
( ) Black or African American
( ) Hispanic or Latino
( ) Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
( ) White
( ) Other (Please Specify)...........

If you would be interested in discussing your answers with me, please check this box and give me your contact information. ( )

Name:

Address:

Phone/Email:
Appendix F
Questionnaire for Parishioners

**Project:** Koinonic Evangelism: A Case Study of the Theology and Practice of Evangelism as Practiced in Three Parishes in the Orthodox Church in America

Time of Interview: 
Date: 
Place: 
Interviewer: Archpriest Eric G. Tosi
Interviewee: 
Position of Interviewee: 

The project is a doctoral level research study on the theology and practice of evangelism in parishes of the Orthodox Church in America. I am studying how parishes of the Orthodox Church in America perceive and actually do evangelism on a local level. In addition, I am exploring how individuals in those parishes came to be part of the parish and how they understand evangelism. Finally part of this project is to discover what methods of evangelism were successful or not successful in a parish or individual. This portion of the study is dedicated to interviewing parishes and individuals who have an interest and knowledge of evangelism in a parish setting.

This particular part of the interview process is directed to parishioners as part of gaining an understanding on how the parish membership understands and implements evangelism in the parish. You are free to use additional paper if needed.

**Question 1:** Is evangelism ever discussed at any level in your parish? *Please indicate as many of those that apply?*

- ( ) parish council
- ( ) leadership meetings
- ( ) casual conversation
- ( ) other (please specify) ……………..
- ( ) not at all

**Question 2:** What are the challenges or issues that you face in this parish in the area of evangelism? *Please indicate as many of those that apply?*

- ( ) not knowing how to approach it
- ( ) we would be perceived as “sheep stealing” from other churches
- ( ) the people would not be supportive of it
- ( ) the leadership would not be supportive of it
- ( ) not sure what we have to offer to people
- ( ) we have no good models of how to do it
- ( ) other (please specify) ……………..
Question 3: Some believe that elements in the regular life of a parish are themselves inherently evangelistic. If you agree, could you please indicate (in order of importance, 1 being most important) how you would rank them?

- Preaching
- Teaching
- Witnessing (as defined by living a Christian life in public)
- Serving (as defined by caring for those in the parish community)
- Confessing (as defined by speaking in public about Christian values)
- Service to the community
- The Liturgical life of the parish including the cycle of services

Question 4: What does the Orthodox Church in America have to offer to people coming to the Faith through evangelism? Please indicate as many of those that apply?

- A particularly North American expression of the Orthodox Church
- An unbroken lineage from the early Church
- An unchanging dogma and morality
- A strong connection with the patristic witness of the Faith
- A repository of an ethnic expression of Faith (i.e., Greek, Russian, Serbian, etc.)
- An autocephalous Church that is responsible for its own internal life
- A direct heir to the Russian mission to Alaska and continued through the centuries
- A unique liturgical expression in the Orthodox world
- A openness to the reception of North Americans from non-Orthodox backgrounds
- The primary use of English in the Church’s liturgical and administrative life
- The willingness to embrace all cultures and languages throughout North America
- A strong adherence to unchanging morality
- A strong commitment to a conciliar approach to Church ministry that involves hierarchs, clergy and lay people

Question 5: Did you grow up in the Orthodox Church? If yes, go to question 6. If no, go to question 9.

- Yes
- No
Question 6: Do you have a particular ethnic background in the Church?

( ) Albanian
( ) Bulgarian
( ) Carpatho-Russian
( ) Eastern European
( ) Georgian
( ) Greek
( ) Middle Eastern
( ) Native American
( ) Romanian
( ) Russian
( ) Serbian
( ) Ukrainian
( ) Other (please specify) ..................

Question 7: How did you come to be a member of this particular parish?

( ) I have been a member of this parish most or all of my life
( ) I moved to the area, and found this church
( ) I had a friend or family member who attended, and they invited me
( ) I met the priest
( ) Other (please specify) ..................

Question 8: What has kept you a part of this parish? Please indicate (in order of importance, 1 being most important) how you would rank them?

( ) I have responsibilities in the parish
( ) I find this a very friendly community
( ) I find this a good place to grow spiritually
( ) I relate well to the priest
( ) This is a good community for my family
( ) Other (please specify) ..................

(Go to Question 20)

Question 9: Did you have a church background before joining the Orthodox Church? Yes/No. If yes, please go to question 10; if no, please go to question 12.

Question 10: What was your church background before joining the Orthodox Church?
Question 11: What drew you to the Orthodox Church? Please indicate (in order of importance, 1 being most important) how you would rank them?

( ) coming to believe that this was the true church
( ) the witness of a friend
( ) reading Orthodox authors (please specify who....)
( ) attending Orthodox liturgies
( ) attending catechism classes
( ) finding a warm community
( ) experiencing God here
( ) dissatisfaction with the church I belonged to previously
( ) I feel I had never really understood the Gospel before
( ) I believe that the Orthodox Church has a strong stance on moral issues
( ) Other (Please specify) ........................

(Go to Question 14)

Question 12: What were the steps by which you came to Christian faith?

Question 13: What drew you to the Orthodox Church? Please indicate (in order of importance, 1 being most important) how you would rank them?

( ) coming to believe that this was the true church
( ) the witness of a friend
( ) reading Orthodox authors (please specify who......)
( ) attending Orthodox liturgies
( ) attending catechism classes
( ) finding a warm community
( ) experiencing God here
( ) dissatisfaction with the church I belonged to previously
( ) I feel I had never really understood the Gospel before
( ) I believe that the Orthodox Church has a strong stance on moral issues
( ) Other (Please specify) ........................

(Go to Question 14)

Question 14: What was your catechetical instruction process?

Question 15: How long was it?

Question 16: What did it entail?
Question 17: What do you consider the most important thing you learned in your catechism?

Question 18: When was it considered complete?

Question 19: How were you received into the Church?

( ) Baptism  
( ) Chrismation  
( ) Confession

(Go to Question 20)

Question 20: Can you tell me briefly what your definition of evangelism is?

Question 21: How have you experienced evangelism taking place in or through the Orthodox Church?

Question 22: How do you think the Orthodox Church might become more effective in evangelism?

Question 23: Why do you think non-Orthodox Christians join the Orthodox Church?

Question 24: Why do you think non-Orthodox with no religious background join the Orthodox Church?

Question 25: Why do you think Orthodox people remain in the Church?

Question 26: Why do you think Orthodox people leave the Church?

Question 27: What is your age?

( ) Less than 18  
( ) 18-29  
( ) 30-39  
( ) 40-49  
( ) 50 or older
Question 28: What is your gender?

( ) Male
( ) Female

Question 29: What is your marital status?

( ) Single
( ) Married
( ) Divorced
( ) Separated
( ) Widowed

Question 30: Do you have children?

( ) Yes
( ) No

Question 31: What is your ethnicity?

( ) American Indian or Native Alaskan
( ) Asian
( ) Black or African American
( ) Hispanic or Latino
( ) Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
( ) White
( ) Other (Please Specify)...........

If you would be interested in discussing your answers with me, please check this box and give me your contact information. ( )

Name:

Address:

Phone/Email:
571 congregations and 84,928 adherents were reported in 308 counties.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orthodox jurisdictions</th>
<th>Headquarters in USA</th>
<th>Administrative (diocesan) structure on territory of USA</th>
<th>3 Parishes</th>
<th>4 Monastic communities</th>
<th>5 Membership</th>
<th>Full members</th>
<th>Adherents (estimate)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 OCA</td>
<td>Syosset, NY</td>
<td>3 autonomous &quot;ethnic&quot; dioceses &amp; 9 regular territorial dioceses</td>
<td>456</td>
<td>9/6</td>
<td>39,400</td>
<td>115,100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1a Td-OCA</td>
<td></td>
<td>Diocesan centers: Anchorage, AK; Chicago, IL; South Canaan, PA; New Haven, CT; Dallas, TX; Bronxville, NY; Washington, DC; Los Angeles, CA; Cranberry Township, PA.</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>7/3</td>
<td>29,500</td>
<td>76,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b Alb-OCA</td>
<td>Boston, MA</td>
<td>Autonomous diocese of OCA (it covers whole USA territory)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>6,500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1c Big-OCA</td>
<td>Cranberry Township, PA</td>
<td>Autonomous diocese of OCA (it covers whole USA territory)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>8,800</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1d Rom-OCA</td>
<td>Jackson, MI</td>
<td>Autonomous diocese of OCA (it covers whole USA territory)</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>2/0</td>
<td>6,300</td>
<td>23,600</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 GrkArch</td>
<td>New York, NY (Chancery of archdiocese)</td>
<td>7 dioceses. Centers: Chicago, IL; San Francisco, CA; Westfield, NJ; Pittsburgh, PA; Atlanta, GA; Boston, MA; Denver, CO; Detroit, MI;</td>
<td>625</td>
<td>14/4</td>
<td>41,840</td>
<td>83,700</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 AntArch</td>
<td>Englewood, NJ (Chancery of archdiocese)</td>
<td>7 regions &amp; &quot;Western Rite Vicariate&quot; (former Protestant congregations converted to Orthodox) Administered by 4 chanceries: Englewood, NJ; Toledo, OH; Wichita, KS; Los Angeles, CA</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>41,840</td>
<td>83,700</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 SOK-USA</td>
<td>Allhambra, CA; Libertyville, IL; Edgeworth, PA</td>
<td>4 Serbian Orthodox dioceses which are subordinated directly to Belgrade, Serbia.</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>N/d</td>
<td>57,500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 SOK-NGM</td>
<td>Grayslake, IL</td>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>N/d</td>
<td>N/d</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 SOC</td>
<td>Bound Brook, NJ; consistory</td>
<td>3 dioceses. Centers: Chicago, IL; Bound Brook, NJ; Pittsburgh, PA</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9,200</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 CrtpRus</td>
<td>Johnstown, PA</td>
<td>1 autonomous diocese</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11,753</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 RomArch</td>
<td>Detroit, MI</td>
<td>1 archdiocese</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/d</td>
<td>6,200</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Big-USA</td>
<td>New York, NY</td>
<td>1 diocese</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/d</td>
<td>4,340</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 AlbAm</td>
<td>Las Vegas, NV</td>
<td>1 diocese affiliated with GrkArch</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 ParROC</td>
<td>New York, NY; Bishop office</td>
<td>A group of parishes (no diocese) administered by bishop</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/d</td>
<td>N/d</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 ROCOR</td>
<td>New York, NY</td>
<td>4 dioceses. Centers: Chicago, IL; New York, NY; Jordanville, NY; San Francisco, CA.</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>4/1</td>
<td>N/d</td>
<td>N/d</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 MaccPar</td>
<td>Parishes in USA, Canada and Australia form one diocese ruled by bishop in Scopje (Macedonia)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>N/a</td>
<td>14,500</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 HOCNA</td>
<td>Rosindale, MA</td>
<td>1 diocese</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2/4</td>
<td>N/a</td>
<td>1,900</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 VasArch</td>
<td>Woodside, NY</td>
<td>1 archdiocese</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>3/3</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>28,500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 AssyCh</td>
<td>Chicago, IL</td>
<td>3 dioceses. Centers: Chicago, IL; San Jose, CA; Phoenix, AZ</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/a</td>
<td>36,016</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Arm-Echm</td>
<td>New York, NY; Los Angeles, CA</td>
<td>2 dioceses subordinated to Etchmiadzin, Armenia</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11,400</td>
<td>45,800</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Arm-Cie</td>
<td>New York, NY; Los Angeles, CA</td>
<td>2 prelacies subordinated to Antelias, Lebanon</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11,100</td>
<td>23,200</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Copt</td>
<td>Cedar Grove, NJ</td>
<td>2 dioceses (centers: Colleville, TX; Los Angeles, CA) &amp; parishes subordinated directly to Cedar Grove, NJ</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>N/a</td>
<td>N/d</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 SyrAnt</td>
<td>Teaneck, NJ; Burbank, CA</td>
<td>2 archdioceses subordinated to Damascus, Syria</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/a</td>
<td>15,100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Mlnk-Syr</td>
<td>Nanuet, NJ</td>
<td>1 archdiocese</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/a</td>
<td>4,340</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 Mlnk-Ind</td>
<td>Bellrose, NY</td>
<td>1 diocese</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/a</td>
<td>13,300</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chart D

“N/a” - not applicable; “N/d” - no data available.

1 and 2. Basically there are 3 types of administrative structures of the Orthodox jurisdictions in USA: a) The Orthodox jurisdictions that consist of several dioceses each of which is subordinated directly to headquarter of Mother Church abroad and which don’t have one single coordinating center in USA; b) The Orthodox jurisdictions that consist of several dioceses which (in addition to the diocesan centers) have one American coordinating headquarter that in turn is subordinated to the major headquarter of Mother Church abroad; c) The Orthodox jurisdictions that consist only of individual parishes whose coordinating (diocesan) center is located out of USA territory.

3. Parishes are defined as all places of regular worship of a group of faithful permanently living in the area. These figures include also the so-called missionary parishes - i.e. those recently established and without permanent priest assigned to them.

4. Monasteries / monastic communities (incl. sketes).

5. “Full members” - are generally defined as the persons older than 18, paying regularly annual Church membership fees and officially recorded as the members by the Church. These data were obtained from the headquarters of various Orthodox jurisdictions in USA.

“Adherents” - are generally defined as all those baptized Orthodox, who are well known to the local parish and attend church services several times a year (at least by major celebrations such as Easter, etc.) and their children. These data present result of our research work and were obtained as a result of analysis by comparing of various sources of information (number of full members, average attendance on regular Sunday versus major Church feasts, number of persons on mailing lists of each jurisdiction, the size of the circulation of the major Church' newspaper, etc.).
Orthodox Church in America: Adherents Cartogram (2010)

Adherent Cartograms resize each state proportionally to the number of church adherents reported in that state.
Chart F

U.S. RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE SURVEY

PORTRAIT OF ORTHODOX - DEMOGRAPHICS

Regional Distribution of Members of Orthodox Churches:
- 31% Northeast
- 19% Midwest
- 24% South
- 26% West

Age Distribution of Members of Orthodox Churches:
- 38% 18-29
- 37% 30-49
- 17% 50-64
- 18% 65+

Gender Composition of Members of Orthodox Churches:
- 96% Male
- 4% Female

Racial and Ethnic Composition of Members of Orthodox Churches:
- 81% White (non-Hispanic)
- 13% Black (non-Hispanic)
- 2% Asian (non-Hispanic)
- 1% Hispanic

Income Distribution of Members of Orthodox Churches:
- 20% Less than $30,000
- 24% $30,000-$49,999
- 16% $50,000-$74,999
- 15% $75,000-$99,999
- 26% $100,000 or more
Chart F

U.S. RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE SURVEY

PORTRAIT OF ORTHODOX - DEMOGRAPHICS CONT.

Educational Distribution of Members of Orthodox Churches
- 38% Less than high school
- 25% High school graduate
- 22% Some college
- 18% College graduate
- 8% Post-graduate

Marital Status Among Members of Orthodox Churches
- 20% Married
- 17% Living with partner
- 9% Divorced or separated
- 7% Widowed
- 25% Never married

Distribution of Children at Home for Members of Orthodox Churches
- 19% No children
- 14% One child
- 14% Two children
- 13% Three children
- 11% Four or more children
Chart G

Change in Adherents, Orthodox Church in America, 2000 to 2010

90 counties reported in 2010 but not in 2000.
22 counties reported in 2000 but not in 2010.

Decadal Change

- Newly Entered
- Major Gains (60% or more)
- Minor Gains (30% to 59%)
- Major Losses (50% or more)
- Minor Losses (30% to 49%)
- Lost
- Drop

Legend

Data Source: The Orthodox Church in America 2000, 2010 Census datasets.
Mcropolitan areas: areas not associated with either metropolitan or micropolitan areas. Many counties are
not associated with either. The U.S. Census Bureau identifies a metropolitan area as an urban area of at least 50,000 people. A micropolitan area is defined as an urban area of 10,000 to 50,000 people. Metropolitan areas and micropolitan areas are statistical constructs used by the U.S. Census Bureau for various purposes.
Bibliography

Primary Sources


Tikhon, Bellavin. *Exhortation to a new Priest by His Grace Tikhon, Bishop of Aleutian Islands and North America (future saint and Patriarch of Russia) as given at Holy Trinity Cathedral on April 9, 1900 to Fr. Vladimir Alexandrov’s ordination to be the first priest in Wilkinson, Washington*. Translated by Victor Sokolov. *Life* 1, No. 8 (April 1994).


**Secondary Sources**

**Ecumenical**


**Evangelism**


**General**


**History**


Patristics


**Theology**


**Non-Orthodox Sources**

**Evangelism**


**General**


**History**


