

Rekindle

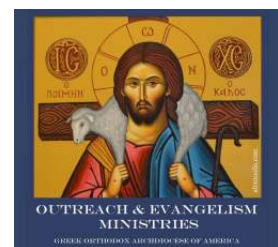
BRINGING FAMILIES BACK TO THE FULLNESS OF WORSHIP



Resource Packet

Compiled by Steve and Eve Tibbs

1. Challenges parishes are facing today
2. Why we have an obligation to help bring families back
3. Why gathering for worship is essential
4. Practical ideas to help rekindle the faith of absent families



1. Challenges our parishes are facing today



The Challenge



Family Impacts

As a result of the Pandemic, research shows **that households with children...**



- 74% of households with incomes below \$100,000 report **serious financial problems** during the coronavirus outbreak.
- 59% of households report **serious problems caring for their children.**
- 36% report **serious problems keeping their children's education going.**



Impact On Our Churches

Things people miss about attending in-person worship services:
1. Taking Communion — 2. Socializing before & after services

Live Streaming of Services cannot replace True Worship

Largest Groups who have not returned to In-Person Worship:
Families with Children & Marginal Orthodox (& Ministry Volunteers)

1/3 of Americans said their faith grew stronger during the pandemic

2. Why we have an obligation to help bring families back



*The Church is constituted by the
Gathering of the Faithful for the
Liturgy.*

It is through the assembling for the Eucharist, (συνέρχεσθε) that the Church, the Body of Christ, is being formed.

The Church is not a physical place, but rather the assembly of those who are being gathered by the Holy Spirit in a particular place. Consider also Matthew 18:20 "Where two or three are gathered in my Name, there I am among them."

Ekklesia...

"is not a house made of stones and earth... It is the holy assembly of those who live in righteousness."

Hippolytus, 215 AD

*The gathering of the people
gives definition to the
people of the gathering.*



Ministry is for every Baptized Orthodox Christian

"As in the Holy Trinity, where each divine person has a specific role in the divine communion of the One God,

each human person's role in the church is unique and irreplaceable.

Each human person is to minister "in light of Love and in the context of Communion."

Metropolitan John Zizioulas



Each member of the Holy Trinity has a specific role in the divine communion of God. Similarly, each Baptized and Chrismated member of the Body of Christ, has a specific role—a unique calling to minister "in light of love and in the context of Communion."

Encourage parishioners to pursue their own “Ministry of Encouragement” to absent families

Saint Paul wants the faithful to “stir up” one another. How? By encouraging them to meet together in the Divine Liturgy. He is saying that for Christian believers to gather physically is not optional. Worshipping together is essential for our spiritual well-being.

A Ministry of Encouragement

“Let us consider how to **stir up one another** to love and good works, **not neglecting to meet together**, as is the habit of some, but **encouraging one another**, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”

Hebrews 10:24-25



REKINDLE SPECIAL FORCES



We need to find ways to connect with absent families in our parish where they are, since they are not presently attending the Divine Liturgy. This requires creativity, energy, and “out-of-the-box” thinking.

Many of our absent families may not realize why it is so important for them to participate in the Divine Liturgy and share in the Holy Eucharist. Therefore, we can ask the Holy Spirit to guide and inspire us to find ways to lovingly convey this message.

Why be an encourager of families to return to worship?



3. Why gathering for worship is essential

1 We were created to be liturgical beings.

We were created to be liturgical beings. Of all the living things God created, human beings are the only creation designed to recognize and thank our Creator.. Thus, worship is an “essential act” of humanity.. When we fail to live as we were designed—to worship God—the result can lead to fear, anxiety, anger, frustration, uncertainty — many of the problems so many are experiencing today..

2 They are essential members of the Body of Christ

As Baptized and Chrismated members of the Royal Priesthood, our absent families are essential members of the Body of Christ. In a way, their absence means the gathered Church is missing something important and unique. Thinking of the analogy of the body— each Christian is unique and indispensable to the Church, just as each body part is unique and indispensable.

3 The only source of real joy is the Eucharist.

“Enter into the joy of the Lord” (Matthew 25:21). There is no true or lasting joy in the activities many families have chosen to fill the void created by the isolation of COVID. Fr. Alexander Schmemmann writes that the one action which has always been both the source and the fulfillment of true joy is “the very sacrament of joy, the Eucharist.”

4 The Eucharist adds the dimension of true reality.

“Our entrance into the presence of Christ is an entrance into a fourth dimension which allows us to see the ultimate reality of life. It is not an escape from the world, rather it is the arrival at a vantage point from which we can see more deeply into the reality of the world.” (Fr. Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World.*)

4. Practical ideas to help rekindle the faith of absent families



1. FORM REKINDLE MINISTRY

1. Select Ministry Team Lead
2. Build a Ministry Team of about 8 – 12 “Engaged” Parishioners / Parents
 - ✓ Proistamenos
 - ✓ Parish Council President
 - ✓ Youth Leader (s)
 - ✓ Married Couples (1 to be chair)
 - ✓ Parents with Various Aged Children
3. Confirm Purpose and Focus
4. Focus: Build and Implement the Reconnection Plan



2. DEVELOP PLANS

CONNECTION



WELCOMING



CELEBRATION

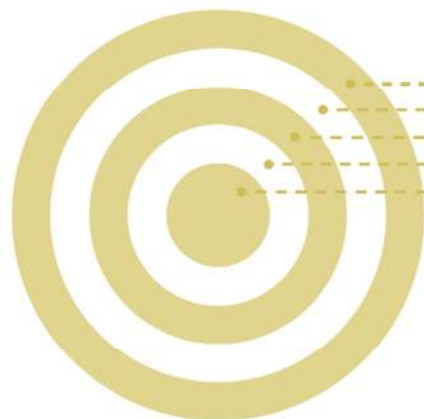


WELLNESS



3. IMPLEMENT

IMPLEMENT WITH INTENTIONALITY – WHO ARE YOUR TARGETING?



- COMMUNITY Non-Orthodox Inquirers
- CROWD Unchurched Families
- CONGREGATION Liturgy once/twice month
- COMMITTED “Regulars” – some ministry involvement
- CORE Fully engaged within all areas of parish life

Each Target Audience May Require a Unique Approach

1. Assign Tasks/Areas
2. Set Goals (such as)
 - Worship attendance
 - Stewardship participation
3. Track & Report
4. Modify Plan
5. Keep the Faith!



(RE) CONNECTION

CONNECTION



"We're having a fun, small gathering at my home, please come!"

"We miss you and your family!"

"Please join me and my family for Divine Liturgy this Sunday"

- ❖ Form Small Connection Team
- ❖ Create Contact List
 - Speak with Priest / Stewardship List / Parish Directory / Sunday School / GOYA, JOY & HOPE/ Greek School / Hellenic Groups / Bible Studies / Men's Fellowship / Philoptochos
- ❖ Engage - Call, Email, Text, Letters & Handwritten Notes
- ❖ Use Parish Social Media Platforms
- ❖ Use Post Announcements on Parish Website
- ❖ Contact Multiple Times Using Multiple Methods

"Can we help?"



WELCOMING EXPERIENCE

WELCOMING



- ❖ Prepare Welcome Team to Greet Returning Families
- ❖ Develop Special Family Welcome Packet (includes Family Ministry & Activity Calendar)
- ❖ Consider Having Priest Welcome Them In Church (low key; only if that is typically done for visitors!)
- ❖ Make Them Feel Special, Not Uncomfortable
- ❖ Create "Orthodoxy 101 for Families" Course



CELEBRATE TOGETHER

CELEBRATION



- ❖ Parish Luncheon
- ❖ Pancake Breakfast (recruit moms & dads to cook and serve)
- ❖ Youth and Family Picnics & Fairs
- ❖ Crazy Fun Events (pinewood derby)
- ❖ Sporting Event Outing
- ❖ Outreach Events (Biking For a Cause)
- ❖ Family Night



ENCOURAGING FAMILY WELLNESS

WELLNESS



- ❖ Family Night + Parent Date Night
- ❖ Family Wellness Seminars
- ❖ Parenting Workshops
- ❖ Bible Studies & Prayer Groups
- ❖ Local Meetings (homes)
 - Couples
 - Dad's Group
 - Mom's Group