

**St. Athanasius Orthodox Church
Summary of Online Parish Survey
Conducted November, 2018**

1. There were 70 participants in the online parish survey, conducted to gather input from parish members about all areas of church life, and to be utilized in the strategic planning process that will set goals for the next 3 to 5 years.

- 42% of participants were 60 years of age or older.
- 33% were between the ages of 40-59.
- 25% were 18-39 years old.

In that sense, it was a pretty fair representation of the parish demographics.

- The majority of participants were married (57%) and 38% still have children living at home.
- 43% of participants said they had been members of the parish for over 30 years.
- 27% have been members for 10 years or less, and 30% have been members for 11-29 years.

If these demographics are an accurate representation of the overall membership, we currently have an almost equal split with 3 groups of people: those who were founders, those who came sometime in the first 20 years of the life of the parish, and those who have joined the parish within the last decade.

2. In question 7, which asked participants to rate many of the ministries and organizational aspects of the parish, the following stood out clearly as being considered the strongest:

- Worship
- Pastoral Care
- Administration
- Music
- Communications
- Preaching
- Religious Education for the children
- Facilities Upkeep

Areas that stood out as needing improvement and growth were the following:

- College/Young Adult Program
- Evangelism
- Relationship Building/Sense of Community & Family
- Religious Education for all Adults

3. When asked what is most fulfilling about the participant's experience at SAOC, the most common responses were related to:

- **Worship**
("peaceful," "transformational," "deep," "solid," beautiful," "I feel a deep relationship with Christ when in church, more so than any other time." "Many services accessible to all." "The people all directed at worshipping and serving God make SAOC fulfilling.")
- **Sense of family, community, relationships**
"The community is loving and supportive." "The community is like a real family." "Being part of a loving/caring, God-centered community." "The fact that it's a healthy Orthodox church."

4. When asked what is most challenging or frustrating about their experience at SAOC, responses varied pretty widely but the most common response, by far, was related to:

- **Going deeper with personal relationships, moving past the initial welcoming embrace into deep friendships that build a true sense of family.**
"Trying to find my place, my role, my fulfillment." "I would like to spend more time with people after church and get to know them better." "Families seem to only hang out with their own families." "I know there are lonely people at our parish who feel completely left out and invisible." "I think sometimes we get into a socializing comfort zone. I have been a member for a long time, and I rarely get invites. I usually have to take the initiative."

Some other responses to this question included:

- Lack of participation in services and ministries. "20% of the people doing 80% of the work." "Wish more people would exercise their gifts/talents in the Church and stretch themselves to participate more."
- Lack of training in how to talk to non-Orthodox about our Faith.
- How to better serve our young families, help them be more present, encourage them to take on leadership roles.

5. Participants were asked to envision the parish 3-5 years down the road, and to articulate what they hope would be the parish's top 3 accomplishments.

- The vast majority of respondents said that they would like to see the fellowship hall finished (patio and warming kitchen) and the **temple built**. "Re-visioned and reorganized fundraising effort and/or building program such that we might more realistically secure permanent and proper worship space." "Have a clear and concise action plan, showing a time line and goals."
- Other themes included:
Solid Youth and Young Adult programs;
A succession plan for who will follow Fr. Nicholas as the Senior Priest;
Fruitful ministry and outreach programs;
A parish that is supportive of young families and has created ways to engage them;

More small group activities;

A community where people get emotional support and can grow spiritually.

A system/program/ministry that helps new members to assimilate within the parish. (A parish that makes a deliberate effort to retain members once they have joined the parish family.)

6. Participants were asked to envision how the parish will be successfully involved in the greater community of Goleta and Santa Barbara in the next 3-5 years.

Responses included the following:

- **Proactive evangelism program.** "Non-members will want to know the reason for the hope that is within us, and will come and see." Strong presence on all college campuses.
- We have a reputation for being a religious community that sincerely **welcomes and embraces all peoples as equals**, but without compromising our beliefs and integrity as a spiritual body. "A safe haven." "Liturgy is accessible." "A refuge from the judgment that so many Christian faiths bring."
- **A vibrant, visible presence** within the community through participation by individual members and as a parish in community activities, events, projects and initiatives. "We will have earned the reputation for sincerely caring about and addressing the spiritual, material, and emotional needs of our neighbors, regardless of who they are or what they believe."
- **Growing ministry to the poor and needy** through a re-invigorated and expanded St. Brigid Ministry>Showers of Blessing.
- **Use of music and the arts** as a vehicle for getting involved in the community and inviting the community into our building.
- **Use of our building to assist the local community.**
- **Collaborations with and outreach** to other local churches, local colleges and organizations.

7. Other miscellaneous ideas and suggestions:

- Affordable senior living facility close to the church.
- Make more effort to search beyond our own parish for candidates for paid ministerial positions, even if only part-time.
- More involvement for young children during the services.
- More involvement by women in liturgical functions. (tithe box, Epistle readers)
- Family night once every few months. We need more time together. Let the younger generations create their own memories and shared nostalgia.
- Get more adults involved in leading the youth program.
- Systematic fund raising effort to secure "angels," sponsors, major donors for the building project, from both within and outside of our parish.