

Saints Peter and Paul Vision 2025
“Reaching Forward to What Lies Ahead”

Report of the 2015 Opinions & Ideas Survey

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Introduction

In January 2015, a Strategic Planning Committee was formed by Fr. Panagiotis Boznos and the Parish Council to formulate the future vision and goals of the parish. Members of the committee met monthly through 2015 to work on the strategic plan. All aspects of the planning engaged parishioners for their ideas and concerns about the future of the parish. In order to gain maximum input from parishioners, an Opinions and Ideas Survey was conducted during the month of October, 2015. This report offers a complete summary of that project.

Survey Goals and Objectives

The Opinions and Ideas Survey was developed around three goals:

- Assess current functioning of parish life
- Provide a baseline for future comparisons
- Engage stewards in the strategic planning process

The focus was specifically on parishioners' current views of the parish because the committee believed that it needed a current state assessment in order to know how to move forward with planning. By focusing on current strengths and weaknesses, a plan could be developed from this point in time, rather than from an historical view. Furthermore, a current state assessment also provided a baseline for future comparisons. It is the parish council's plan to reassess parishioner opinions and ideas by conducting the same survey every 1-2 years and comparing growth and change over time. Last, by offering a survey, the committee sought to engage parishioners in the strategic planning process by giving an opportunity to voice concerns, ideas and hopes for the parish.

Considering the above goals, the survey focused on answering the following questions:

- How satisfied are parishioners with overall parish life?
- Is the parish meeting parishioner needs for spiritual growth, fellowship, & outreach?
- Is the parish offering enough ministries for all age & demographic groups?
- Is the parish being administered effectively?
- What ideas do respondents have for improvements to parish life?
- Are there correlations between demographics and opinions or between engagement & opinions?

Each of these broad questions allowed an assessment of parish life that could be used in further planning for the future.

Background Rationale for Survey Questions

The survey was largely grounded in a model of parish health put forth by the Natural Church Development organization (Schwarz, 1999; Schwarz & Ivanoff, 2008). These researchers conducted a comprehensive study of over 1000 churches in 32 countries in order to discover what makes parishes grow and thrive, regardless of size, denomination, country or culture, leadership style, or ministry model. What these researchers identified is that parishes that have healthy growth all demonstrated eight “quality characteristics.” These “quality characteristics” are: Empowering Leadership, Gift-based Ministry, Fervent Spirituality, Effective (Functional) Structures, Inspiring Worship Services, Holistic Fellowship Groups, Need-Oriented Evangelism, and Loving Relationships. Furthermore, the research noted that it was the adjective in describing each item that was most important. In other words, it’s not good enough to have worship services for growth, but those services need to be inspiring in order for parishioners to further their spiritual growth. Likewise, having administrative structures in place is good, but how effective they are at helping the church thrive is what matters most.

A study of generosity and giving by Orthodox Christians in the United States was released by the Assembly of Bishops in Sept, 2015 (Krindatch, 2015). Results from this study provided additional rationale for some of the survey questions, especially those related to stewardship. For example, the study found that *“three characteristics of an Orthodox parish have the strongest positive influence on greater giving. These three characteristics are: a) being a parish that cares about and supports members in times of difficulties and needs; b) being a parish with a participatory and inclusive process of decision making where all members (not only parish leadership) are engaged in discussion, deliberation and actual decisions; c) being a parish that is successful in engaging its members in various volunteer positions and tasks.”* Thus, questions were included that assessed the parish on the above three characteristics that positively influence giving.

Additional questions were included to assess areas that the strategic planning committee believed to be particularly important to SS Peter and Paul parishioners, such as the amount English vs Greek in the Liturgy. Because ministries are an integral part of parish life, several questions involved ranking the quality of each of the parish ministries, including those ministries specifically related to youth and young adults.

Survey Outline and Question Development

The following table provides an outline of the structure of the survey:

Part 1	General Satisfaction
Part 2	Membership and Outreach
Part 3	Worship
Part 4	Adult Ministries
Part 5	Finances and Administration
Part 6	Youth Ministries
Part 7	General Satisfaction
Part 8	Demographic Information
Part 9 (optional section)	Future Focus Questions

Parts 1 and 7 included general satisfaction questions. Parts 2-6 included questions related to membership and outreach (need-oriented evangelism and outreach and loving relationships per NCD), worship (inspiring worship and fervent spirituality), ministries (gift-based ministries and holistic fellowship groups), and finances and administration (effective structures and empowering leadership. Demographic questions were included in part 8. Part 9 was an optional section of the survey that included questions that the committee thought would be helpful, but were not necessarily related to NCD or the Assembly of Bishops report. Many of these were questions that ministry leaders wanted answered in order to clarify aspects of their committee work.

Within each section of survey questions, an open ended box was included to give respondents an opportunity to share comments and specific ideas about that area of inquiry. While a quantitative analysis could not be done on these responses, every response was shared with the strategic planning committee members, who then used the comments to develop aspects of the final strategic plan.

Once questions were written, they were reviewed by the entire strategic planning committee and edits were made with some questions added and others deleted. In addition, questions that were particularly relevant to the Stewardship committee, the Outreach committee, and the Parish Council were closely reviewed and edited by the leaders of those groups. Father Panagiotis carefully reviewed questions regarding worship and spiritual life.

After a final review by the committee, five parishioners completed a pilot test of the survey. These parishioners each gave insightful input regarding the on-line process of taking the survey and the survey length, as well as made comments about particular survey items that seemed confusing or unclear. The survey was then edited one last time, integrating the pilot test reviewers comments and suggestions.

Distribution Methods

The survey was posted on Survey Monkey, and an e-mail with the survey link was sent to all parishioners who had provided an e-mail to the church office, either through the listserv or through a ministry, such as Church School and Coffee Connection. Included on the distribution list were stewards from 2014 and 2015. Although the goal was to assess views of current stewards, 2014 stewards were also included because many stewards do not contribute until the end of the calendar year, and so some 2015 stewards may not have given prior to October and would otherwise not have been included. Every effort was made to e-mail the Survey Monkey link to all stewards. Announcements were placed in the bulletin, newsletter and listserv asking parishioners to contact the committee if they did not receive the link. In addition, parishioners were invited to call the church office or visit the strategic planning table at coffee hour to be added to the e-mail list if they had not received a link. Anyone who was added to the e-mail list was checked to ensure stewardship status was current. There were no cases of individuals requesting a survey who were not current stewards.

In addition to Survey Monkey, paper copies were made available during coffee hour each Sunday in October. Parishioners could also call the church office and request a paper copy be sent to their home. Paper copies were then collected either at coffee hour or sent to the church office.

Response Rates

Of the 754 stewards who were sent the e-mail link, 43% completed the survey. This amounts to 32% of all stewards (both those who were and were not sent the link).

Demographics of Survey Respondents: Age

There was a fairly even spread of age beyond 40. Only about 13% of respondents were between the ages of 20-39.

Age	Response Percent
20-29	3.9
30-39	9.3
40-49	22.4
50-59	25.1
60-69	18.5
70+	20.8

Demographics of Survey Respondents: Marital Status

A large majority of the respondents were married:

Answer Options	Response Percent
Single	3.5%
Married	84.2%
Divorced	3.5%
Widowed	8.9%

Demographics of Survey Respondents: Gender

A majority of respondents were female:

Answer Options	Response Percent
Female	60.6%
Male	39.4%

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Demographics of Survey Respondents: Annual Stewardship Contribution

A majority of respondents give between \$500 and \$1999 in stewardship. Less than 21% of stewards give over \$2,000 annually.

Answer Options	Response Percent
\$0 - \$499	17.0%
\$500 - \$999	27.9%
\$1000 - \$1999	34.4%
\$2000 - \$2999	10.9%
\$3000 - \$3999	3.2%
\$4000 - \$9999	6.1%
\$10,000+	0.4%

Demographics of Survey Respondents: Frequency of Sunday Church Attendance

A majority of respondents attend Sunday Divine Liturgy regularly at the rate of 2-4 times per month. This is important to note because it indicates that most of those answering the survey are there often enough to make an informed evaluation.

Answer Options	Response Percent
Weekly	39.0%
Two to three times per month	35.1%
Once per month	13.9%
Several times a year	12.0%

Demographics of Survey Respondents: Participate in Ministries (Leader or Member)

A majority of respondents indicated that they are not leaders or committee members within the various parish ministries. The survey question: Do you participate in any ministries as a Leader or Committee Chair or Committee member?

Answer Options	Response Percent
Yes	29.7%
No	70.3%

Results & Discussion

General Satisfaction

Questions 1 & 22 assessed overall satisfaction with the parish, while question 23 gauged parishioner opinion about the direction in which the parish is moving. Results from these general questions indicated that the survey respondents are generally pleased with the parish. 75% are either satisfied or very satisfied with the parish at this time. 93.7% feel that the parish is meeting their needs well or somewhat well. 71% of the parish believe it is moving in a positive direction.

1—Overall, how satisfied are you with the parish of SS Peter and Paul at this time?

Answer Options	Response Percent
Very satisfied	32.8%
Satisfied	42.2%
Neutral	18.8%
Dissatisfied	5.3%
Very dissatisfied	0.9%

22—How well is the parish of SS Peter and Paul meeting your and your family's needs in terms of ministries, worship, administration, and outreach?

Answer Options	Response Percent
Very well	46.5%
Somewhat well	47.2%
Not very well	6.3%

23—Based on the current state of parish life at SS Peter and Paul, in which direction is the parish moving?

Answer Options	Response Percent
Very positive	29.0%
Mostly positive	42.0%
Some positive, some not	22.3%
Mostly negative	3.7%
Stagnant	3.0%

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Regarding Membership and Outreach

Question 2 asked respondents to rate the parish on various aspects of outreach both within the parish and the local community. Average ratings lower than 3 are considered areas in need of improvement. In particular, respondents gave the parish the lowest ratings on outreach to non-Orthodox, both within and outside of the parish community.

2—Using the scale below, please rate the parish on the following:

Answer Options	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Fair (2)	Poor (1)	Don't know	Rating Average
The parish is generally welcoming to all.	90	135	48	10	4	3.08
The parish readily engages new members on ministries and worship.	54	110	46	16	60	2.89
The parish reaches out to non-Orthodox members and shares the faith.	34	66	54	43	90	2.46
The parish reaches out within the local community to share the faith.	29	68	49	52	89	2.37
The parish reaches out to the local community to offer help to those less fortunate.	60	92	45	25	64	2.84
The parish offers joint programs and events with other Orthodox parishes in the area.	37	81	67	37	64	2.53

Regarding Worship

Regarding language used in the Liturgy, 42.9% would prefer more English and 14.9% would prefer more Greek to be spoken by the clergy. Similarly, 33.9% prefer more English and 18% would prefer more Greek to be used by the choir. Regarding worship being inspirational, 62.9% often or always feel inspired by the Liturgy and 56.4% feel the sermons always or often help improve their spiritual life and/or make changes in daily life.

In thinking about the use of language in the Liturgy by the clergy, how satisfied are you with the balance of English and Greek?

Answer Options	Response Percent
Prefer a lot more English	27.3%
Prefer a little more English	15.6%
Satisfied with balance	42.2%
Prefer a little more Greek	11.4%
Prefer a lot more Greek	3.5%

In thinking about the use of language in the Liturgy by the choir, how satisfied are you with the balance of English and Greek?

Answer Options	Response Percent
Prefer a lot more English	19.4%
Prefer a little more English	14.5%
Satisfied with balance	48.1%
Prefer a little more Greek	13.5%
Prefer a lot more Greek	4.5%

7—How often do you feel inspired and rejuvenated after the Sunday Liturgy?

Answer Options	Response Percent
Always	23.5%
Often	39.4%
Occasionally	28.0%
Rarely	8.3%
Never	0.7%

8—How often do the Sunday sermons help you improve your spiritual life and/or inspire you to make a practical change in your daily life?

Answer Options	Response Percent
Always	16.8%
Often	39.6%
Occasionally	33.0%
Rarely	9.1%
Never	1.4%

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Regarding Adult Ministries:

Parishioners were asked to rate all of the parish ministries. Average ratings below 3 indicate need for improvement. Only Parish Council and Garden Club rated below 3. Cancer Support and Men's bible study had the highest overall ratings.

Answer Options	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Fair (2)	Poor (1)	Don't know	Rating Average
Cancer Support	30	19	1	0	200	3.58
Choir / Chanters	70	66	11	3	98	3.35
Coffee Connection	68	65	5	3	109	3.40
Coffee Fellowship Hosting	79	75	11	4	83	3.36
Divorce Rebuilder's Group	10	11	2	0	221	3.35
Dynamis	11	31	4	0	200	3.15
Garden Club	2	7	8	3	219	2.40
Greek Festival	93	74	28	3	57	3.30
Habitat for Humanity	33	33	6	1	168	3.34
Lenten Lecture Series	49	43	6	1	149	3.41
Men's Basketball	17	15	4	2	204	3.24
Men's Bible Study	23	8	2	1	205	3.56
Outreach Committee Activities	22	32	10	4	173	3.06
Parish Council	31	45	20	7	140	2.97
Philoptochos	89	49	14	3	96	3.45
Prospora Baking	54	37	5	3	147	3.43
Summer Book Club	15	13	3	4	208	3.11
Ushers	51	52	15	3	127	3.25
Wednesday Bible Study	19	7	4	4	212	3.21
Young Adults (YAL)	11	17	4	2	205	3.09

Respondents were also asked to rate ministries on aspects that contribute to a healthy parish and increased stewardship (per NCD and the Assembly of Bishops stewardship report). Average ratings lower than 3 are considered areas in need of improvement.

Considering the ministries above and using the scale below, please rate the ministries of SS Peter and Paul on the following. SS Peter and Paul ministries...

Answer Options	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Fair (2)	Poor (1)	Don't know	Rating Average
... meet my needs for caring relationships	46	107	33	20	53	2.87
... offer opportunities for me to help others less fortunate in the local and international communities.	48	89	54	18	51	2.80
... meet my needs to learn more about the Orthodox faith.	55	102	50	10	43	2.93
... offer help to parishioners in their times of difficulties and needs.	37	76	33	21	93	2.77
... offer adequate opportunities for me to share my talents in various volunteer positions and tasks.	60	98	43	11	49	2.98

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Regarding Youth Ministries:

Parishioners were asked to rate the various youth ministries within the last year. An average rating lower than 3 indicates need for improvement. All youth ministries rated above 3, with Faith, Love, Joy and Junior Olympics receiving the highest ratings.

Answer Options	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Fair (2)	Poor (1)	Don't know	Rating Average
Altar Boys	23	22	5	0	88	3.36
Agape Preschool	24	14	2	1	97	3.49
Basketball	21	16	2	1	98	3.43
Church School	44	39	11	3	44	3.28
Faith, Love, Joy (for K-5th grade)	24	10	1	1	99	3.58
Greek School	18	10	3	3	102	3.26
Hope Group (for 0-5 years)	17	10	4	2	102	3.27
Junior GOYA (for grades 6-8)	16	13	3	0	106	3.41
Junior Olympics	28	12	0	1	95	3.63
Senior GOYA (for grades 9-12)	17	16	1	1	100	3.40

Respondents rated youth ministries on aspects that contribute to overall health of the program. Parishioners would like to see more opportunities for their youth to help others in need.

Please use the scale below to rate the youth ministries of SS Peter and Paul on the following. SS Peter and Paul ministries...

Answer Options	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Fair (2)	Poor (1)	Don't know	Rating Average
... meet my child(ren)'s needs for caring fellowship groups.	40	43	14	5	42	3.16
... offers opportunities for my child(ren) to help others in need.	31	33	22	9	48	2.91
... meet my child(ren)'s needs to learn more about the Orthodox faith.	37	47	14	6	40	3.11

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Regarding Effective Structures and Empowering Leadership:

Respondents rated the parish council and lay leadership on aspects of administration. Average ratings below 3 are in need of improvement, and these areas include communicating with and involving parishioners on parish affairs, as well as cultivating new leaders and volunteers. Of note is that the respondents are satisfied with the management of parish finances and communications about parish events.

Using the scale below, please rate how well the parish council and lay leadership of SS Peter and Paul do the following:

Answer Options	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Fair (2)	Poor (1)	Don't know	Rating Average
Manage the parish finances	54	97	19	2	88	3.18
Communicate with parishioners about parish business	48	102	60	28	22	2.71
Communicate with parishioners about parish events	82	119	44	5	14	3.11
Involve and develop new leaders and volunteers	25	75	68	45	50	2.38
Involve parishioners in deliberation and decision making regarding parish business	27	72	68	45	51	2.38
Explain how stewardship funds are used	36	91	65	31	39	2.59

Regarding staffing needs, a majority of respondents believe the parish has enough clergy and paid office/janitorial staff.

How well staffed is the parish with paid clergy and youth minister staff to meet parish needs?

Answer Options	Response Percent
Need a lot more	5.8%
Need a little more	29.6%
Well balanced now	64.2%
Need a little less	0.0%
Need a lot less	0.4%

How well staffed is the parish with paid office and janitorial staff to meet parish needs?

Answer Options	Response Percent
Need a lot more	2.8%
Need a little more	14.8%
Well balanced now	80.4%
Need a little less	1.6%
Need a lot less	0.4%

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Parishioners were asked what form of communication they prefer for parish news. E-mails from the parish office, the Sunday bulletin and the monthly newsletter were the top preferences by large margins. It appears that parishioners prefer to be given the information directly, rather than have to seek it out as they would by going to the website or looking at a bulletin board.

What forms of communication do you prefer most for information about parish news and events? Check the top three:

Answer Options	Response Percent
E-mail from parish office (listserv)	80.7%
Sunday bulletin	63.7%
Monthly newsletter	58.3%
E-mail from organizations to which you belong	24.7%
Parish website	14.7%
Parish Facebook page	9.3%
Word of mouth	3.9%
Text messaging	3.9%
Outreach table	3.5%
Bulletin boards	0.0%

Part 9: Optional Section

When asked what demographic groups are the most underserved, young adults and non-Orthodox spouses are considered as having the least ministry offerings.

Which, if any, of the following age and demographic groups do you believe are underserved at SS Peter and Paul? Please put a check mark by all groups you believe do not have adequate ministry offerings.

Answer Options	Response Percent
Ages 0-5	3.0%
Ages 6-12	4.2%
Ages 13-18	8.5%
Ages 19-22	13.9%
Ages 23-35	24.8%
Ages 36-50	10.3%
Ages 51-65	6.7%
Ages 65+	12.1%
Married Couples	14.5%
Married Couples with Children	17.0%
New Parents	13.9%
Recent College Graduates / Young Professionals	39.4%
Divorced Individuals	4.2%
Retired Adults	10.3%
Non-Orthodox Spouses	35.2%

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Interfaith Married Couples	29.7%
Special Needs children	18.2%
Men	1.2%
Women	4.2%
"Empty Nesters"	13.9%
Homebound	13.3%
Singles	20.0%
Widows / Widowers	15.8%

A large majority of parishioners feel they understand the Liturgy's meaning and symbolism.

How well do you understand the Liturgy in terms of its meaning and symbolism?

Answer Options	Response Percent
Extremely well	18.4%
Very well	38.9%
Somewhat well	33.6%
Not so well	9.0%
Not at all well	0.0%

With regard to congregational participation in the hymns and responses in the Liturgy, 43.8% would like more participation, while 48.8 are satisfied with the amount currently.

To what degree would you like congregational participation in the hymns and responses of the Liturgy to be encouraged?

Answer Options	Response Percent
More than currently	43.8%
Same as currently	48.8%
Less than currently	3.3%
Don't know	4.2%

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Parishioners were asked about how likely they would be to attend additional services that are currently offered, as well as those proposed to be added:

How likely are you to attend the following additional services throughout the year?

Answer Options	Extremely likely	Somewhat likely	Uncertain / Unsure	Not very likely	Would not attend
Holy Week Services	164	54	8	4	3
Presanctified Liturgy (Wednesdays during Great Lent)	70	68	35	48	16
Salutations / Akathist to the Theotokos (Friday evenings during Great Lent)	56	65	44	48	21
SS Peter and Paul Feast Day Vespers and Liturgy (June 28 & 29)	52	60	52	50	20
Vespers for the Protection of the Environment (Aug. 31)	33	32	62	69	35
Weekday Liturgies (for saints and feast days)	26	49	43	89	26
Paraklesis (during the 15 days prior to the Dormission of the Theotokos)	24	51	54	78	26
Compline (Monday evenings during Great Lent)	20	43	55	83	27

How likely would you be to attend the following proposed additional services throughout the year?

Answer Options	Extremely likely	Somewhat likely	Uncertain / Unsure	Not very likely	Would not attend
Paraklesis (on occasional Wednesday evenings throughout the year)	19	38	66	73	41
Saturday Vespers (weekly evening prayers in preparation for Sunday Liturgy)	13	29	59	80	52

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Most parishioners feel parish assemblies are at least somewhat effective for involving stewards in parish administration.

How effective are parish assemblies for involving parishioners in parish administration?

Answer Options	Response Percent
Extremely effective	5.4%
Very effective	18.3%
Somewhat effective	40.4%
Not very effective	15.0%
Don't know	20.8%

Most stewards understand how their donations are used at least somewhat well, but 28.6% do not understand how funds are use.

How well do you understand how stewardship funds are used?

Answer Options	Response Percent
Extremely well	9.5%
Very well	18.3%
Somewhat well	43.6%
Not so well	19.1%
Not at all well	9.5%

A majority of parishioners feel their stewardship at least adequately supports ministries of the parish, but 25.6 percent either are uncertain or do not think they adequately support the parish.

How well do you feel your stewardship contribution supports the ministries of the parish?

Answer Options	Response Percent
Extremely well	10.4%
Very well	29.5%
Adequately	33.6%
Not so well	7.1%
Don't know	19.5%

If our parish more clearly communicated our mission and goals, benefits to parishioners, and impact each dollar creates, how likely would you be to increase your stewardship contribution to achieve that vision?

Answer Options	Response Percent
Very likely	5.8%
Likely	36.5%
Neutral / Not sure	46.5%
Not very likely	9.1%
Not at all likely	2.1%

Conclusions

Returning to the original questions the survey sought to answer, we can conclude the following from the data:

- Parishioners are generally satisfied with the parish at this time and encouraged that the parish is moving in a positive direction. Our fundamental priority is on the spiritual development and fulfillment of our parishioners. Results reveal we believe it is important to develop a stronger parish with thriving ministries and outreach programs. Improving in these areas will generate more engaged stewardship of time, talent and treasure.
- Parishioners' needs are generally being met for inspiring worship and fervent spirituality, but there is room for improvement. Our parishioners reveal a strong desire inspirational worship and intellectual faith engagement. As the parish evolves, it is important to identify innovative ways to engage parishioners on Sunday and beyond, balancing aspects of parish life outside of Sunday liturgy that resonate with parishioners and involve them, with the necessity of active participation in liturgy.
- The demographics of our parish and the communities that we serve suggest that we need to embody an approach to the Orthodox Faith and parish life that is responsive to current and future concerns and needs while preserving fundamental Orthodox beliefs.
- Parishioners are generally satisfied with the *quality* of the ministries offered at the parish for both adults and youth. However, several parishioner groups, which represent important segments of our parish and the needs of our community, are underserved and need deliberate attention as we consider future ministries and programming.
- Young adults and non-Orthodox are identified as the most underserved demographic groups.
- Parishioners report in various ways the need to improve outreach efforts to Non-Orthodox members of parish, new members, as well as non-Orthodox in the local community.
- There is a need for increasing the involvement of new leaders to help support our existing and new parish efforts.
- While the parish believes finances are well managed, they would like more involvement in decision-making and better communication about parish business, including how stewardship funds are used.
- Parishioners would like to strengthen the supports and overall infrastructure of our church in order to sustain as well as continue the growth of our programs and ministries.
- Data reveal that our community members are increasingly relying on technology for communication about our parish. Modern techniques must be developed to enable effective engagement with our youth, young adults, millennials and even older generations that have adapted to new communication methods.
- There were no correlations between demographics and opinions or between engagement and opinions.

Summary

The 2015 Opinions and Ideas survey revealed that while parishioners are generally satisfied with the parish at this time, they identified key areas for improvement. Outreach to young adults, non-Orthodox spouses and new members could become immediate areas of focus. Furthermore, creating more opportunities for education and learning about the faith are also areas for future growth. Maintaining open communication and involving parishioners in decision making will also create the environment of transparency that parishioners desire.

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