

GOA Accelerates Exodus

America's religious landscape indicates people are leaving Church, especially within the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese (GOA). Those who consider themselves "unaffiliated" has risen from 6% in 1991, to 25% as of September 2016. This makes it *the single largest religious group in America*¹. The number amongst young adults (18-29) is 39% reported to be unaffiliated with any religion.

People leave because: 1) they stopped believing in the religion's teachings, 2) family was never religious when they were growing up, 3) scandals & mistreatment of people, 4) a traumatic event in their life, and 5) too much local Church politics. Some maintain their religious affiliation merely because of ancestry/culture, and not necessarily because they believe in the religion's teachings². While this study focused on Catholics, there are supporting studies *within* the GOA which indicate this.

Krindatch Report

In 2008 the Krindatch report found the average age of active parishioners is 54 years old (in the GOA and the Orthodox Church of America (OCA))³. That number suggests membership is unsustainable. Krindatch's report was accessible via the Patriarch Athenagoras Institute. Additionally, the report was removed from "The Association of Religious Data Archives" (The ARDA). The bottom link referenced⁴ for report leads to a blank page. It was also removed from OrthodoxyToday.org⁵ and the *watered-down highlights do not reflect* the sobering findings of Krindatch, who employed sound statistical methodology from a very large sample and is objectively held in high regard.

This report is still accessible through two websites: 1. The Hartford Institute for Religious Research⁶ which has the report on their server⁷. 2. We Are Orthodox – one of many websites founded to bring to light the concerns of the people in America. The full report is at <http://weareorthodox.com/ourblog/ignoring/>.

GOA Website Kehayes Article

Peter Kehayes writes supporting info that corroborates the problem of people leaving the GOA. He wrote "*In a startling find, statistics disclose over 60% of Greek Orthodox families of the last generation and 90% of Americans with Greek roots are no longer in communion with the Church*"⁸. In case it is ever removed from the GOA website, it can be found at <http://weareorthodox.com/ourblog/orthodoxys-sad-decline-in-america/>.

Diamantaris

The 6/5/15 National Herald's editorial by A.H. Diamantaris "**Orthodoxy's Sad Decline in America**" states "*A Pew Research Center on the future of religion has disturbing findings for Orthodoxy, which is in an advanced stage of crisis that should worry the Church.*" He cites Pew that nearly half of all Orthodox Christians leave the religion once adults. Diamantaris states that other sources, from 2010-2015 the GOA paid membership has fallen about 38%⁹.

But wait, there's more.

GOA Accelerants

The GOA helps the exodus of people leaving:

1. Hierarchs not helping:

- a. **Hierarchs remain silent about the heresy of Aerial Tollhouses** - A teaching that demons interrogate the individual's soul upon death in a series of Tollhouses. Ephraimite Monasteries promote this. Numerous Clergy espouse this. Fact is, it's a huge insult to Christ's Grace and sacrifice on the Cross. People have left the GOA because of this. It suggests salvation is in the hands of demons. It's baffling that Hierarchs are silent. Thank God for the Clergy that don't espouse this.
- b. Punishing priests that report indiscretions of other Clergymen. The esteemed Fr. Angelo Artemas is one such example.
- c. A broken and intimidating "Spiritual Court" process.
- d. Some Clergy force Monastic disciplines upon laymen who are not monks.
- e. Hierarchs are supposed to live life as tonsured monks; yet some have villas in Greece and drive luxury cars
- f. Hierarchs state that they do not want to hear anything "negative". This breaks down the efficacy of an executive leader. Not dealing with anything negative means that you allow negativity to grow. A Shepherd that doesn't want to hear about wolves means the sheep are doomed.
- g. Hierarchs lacking understanding about the issues of the modern world – technologically, scientifically, socially, and otherwise. A Hierarchy who *merely* spends too much time on Facebook is considered relevant.

Hierarchs have been quoted as saying that "we should not worry about those that have left the Church because they'll be back". Not all Hierarchs are like this. However one is too much. Fact is, *it's more than just one*.

Accountability

Hierarchs should change their arbitrary style of authoritarian leadership which gives the appearance of malfeasance and lowers the morale and enthusiasm of their spiritual charges. **Accountability** should be top-priority. This will hone leadership to be more effective.

There are objective methodologies that improve leadership. One of these is the "360 Review". It is used to *honestly* assess and establish groundwork for improvement amongst secular and Church leadership. It's successfully being used amongst various Christian denominations.¹⁰

GOA Hierarchs Failing

Most non-profits are transparent. GOA actions do not suggest this. There are zero reports about investigations regarding alleged improprieties of Ephraimite Monasteries. The Monastery Task Force was formed at the Archdiocese. The name was changed to the Monastery Review Committee (MRC). Certain Metropolises have *subsequently* formed their own MRCs and seem to intentionally thwart the Archdiocesan MRC. If our own Metropolitans do not respect our Archbishop, it's no wonder we are in a mess. There are Metropolitans who've been reported to be working to dismantle the Archdiocese and keep the revenues themselves. Instead of creating a culture of building one another, Hierarchs appear to be creating a culture that is toxic and self-aggrandizing.

With each generation of Greek-Americans, cultural bonds dissipate. The glue that *will* sustain us is a Church whose Hierarchs can pro-actively enable and inspire people of any field or background for

modern day issues. Otherwise people will vote with their feet. Do our leaders know what “voting with their feet” means? There are many former GOA parishioners in other Christian denominations. Unconcerned Hierarchs proclaim “they’ll be back”. Hopefully our Lord’s Grace will encourage leaders to address things and make a positive difference. “A little leaven makes the whole loaf rise”. Right now, we are flat and getting moldy.

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(*footnotes available on WeAreOrthodox.com)