

Today's Topic

The Unchurched *Reaching the Lost, the Lapsed and the Letdown*



Fr. Jonathan Ivanoff

Joseph Kormos,
Moderator

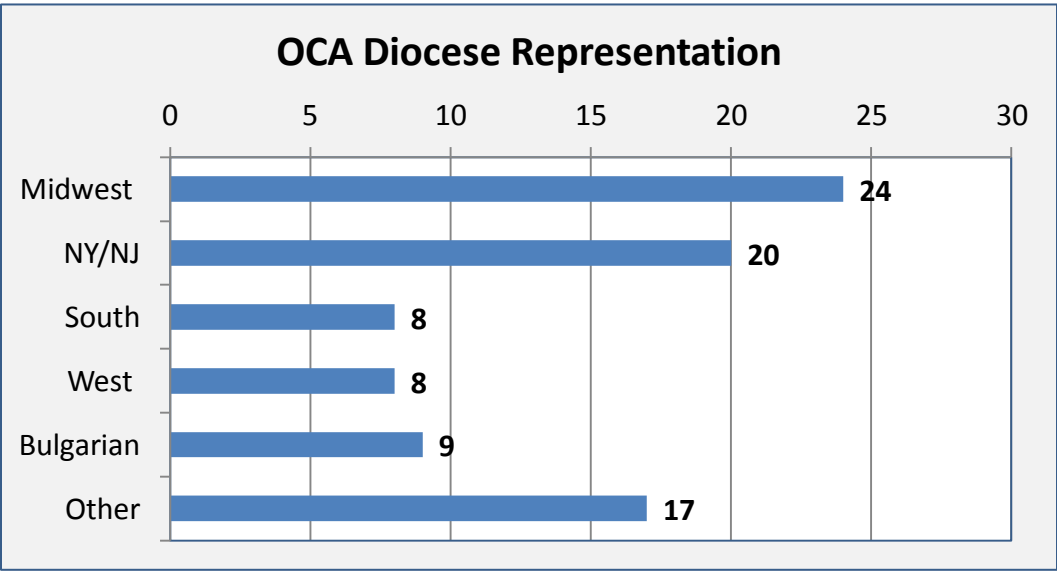
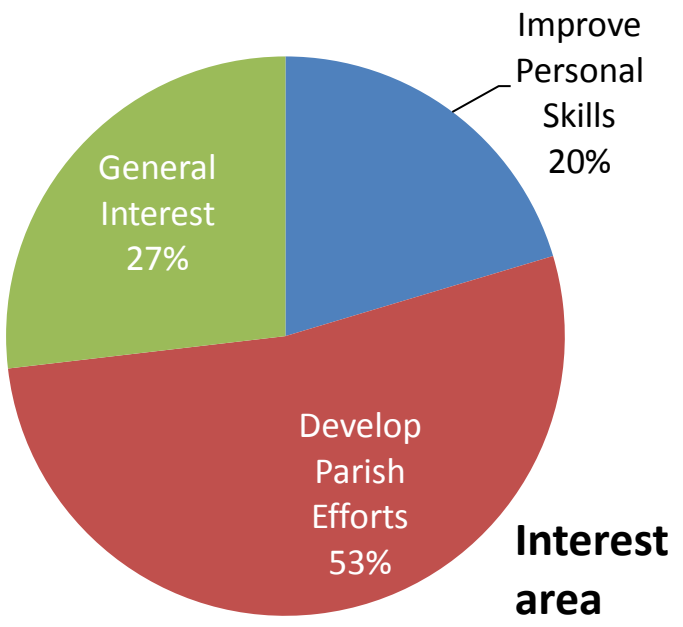
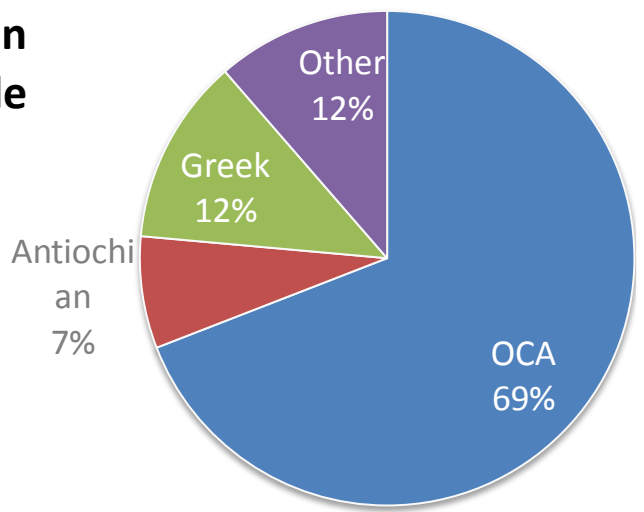
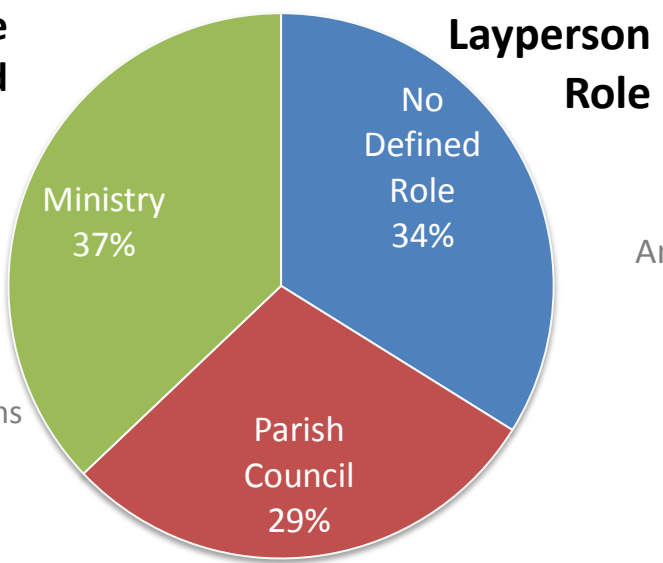
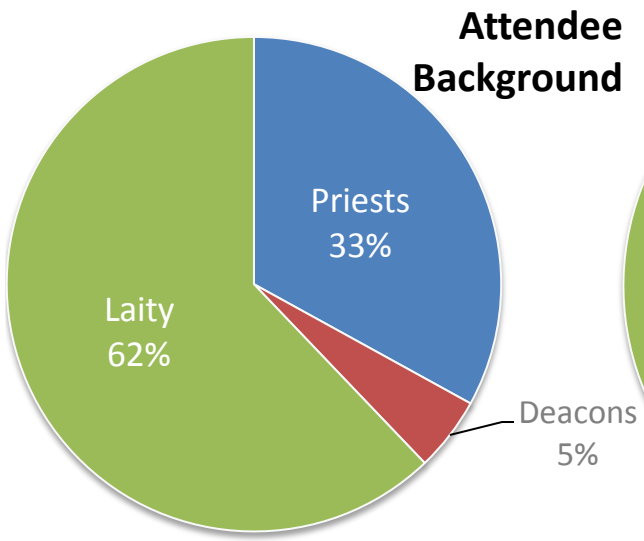
Midwest
Diocese
Webinar



Parish Health Ministry

Registrant Profile

The Unchurched: *Reaching the Lost, the Lapsed and the Letdown*





Parish Health Ministry

Our topic

Orthodox Parish Health Inventory

*Eight core areas of importance for
building healthy, hopeful Orthodox
parishes in America*



More info at
<http://www.midwestdiocese.org/phinventory.html>

Evangelization Series

Our Hope...

...take initial strides...

to equip & encourage more Orthodox to share the good news of the Gospel ... using words when necessary.... with those God sends to us ...or to whom God sends us.

By...

- Increasing understanding
 - of North America's "religious landscape"
- Introducing
 - a few tools & principles of respectful Orthodox evangelism.
- Stimulating
 - personal and parish conversations about our responsibility to share the Gospel.

Next session: Tentative date August 15 – evening
Next topic(s): TBD -- based on your feedback

Today's Session Leader



Fr. Jonathan Ivanoff

- Rector ...
 - of St. John the Theologian Orthodox Church in Shirley, New York
- Certified...
 - NCD coach & presenter; Director of Orthodox NCD America
- Presenter...
 - for the Church Multiplication Training Center and OCA “Boot Camp” from 1998 to 2002. AF Radio.
- Director
 - Dept of Mission and Evangelization Diocese NY/NJ
- Served
 - on board of Orthodox Christian Mission Center

The Unchurched: Reaching the Lost, the Lapsed and the Letdown

Host: Joe Kormos, Parish Health Facilitator

Parish Health Ministry, Diocese of the Midwest

Guest Speaker: Fr. Jonathan Ivanoff

Director, Commission on Missions and Evangelism

Diocese of New York and New Jersey

Tonight's Goals

- “Who are the “unchurched”
- Are all the unchurched the same?
- What are their important characteristics and how can we reach them
- Three important actions every Orthodox Christian can take to be prepared for interactions with the unchurched
- What your parish can do to be prepared to share our hope in Christ with our neighbor

A Note About Sources

Thomas Rainer:

Surprising Insights From the Unchurched
The Unchurched Next Door

George Barna: collected writings

George Gallup: various surveys, 1999 – 2009

Ken Callahan: *The Twelve Keys to an Effective Church*

The National Catholic Register, 2011

Christianity Today, 2005 – 2012

“Who are These People?”

Unchurched...

Lapsed...

Fallen-away...

Inactive members...

Non-attenders ...

➔ **Bottom Line:** *They're not where they should be, where God wants them to be!*

Some Definitions

Unchurched:

Not been in church for at least ten years

Formerly Unchurched:

- Have recently (w/in past 2 years) become active
- Not just attenders, but active; “**rechurched**”
- For all or a large portion of their lives they were not in church

Nothing New Here

*²³ Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, ²⁵ **not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some**, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”* – St. Paul to the Hebrews, chapter 10

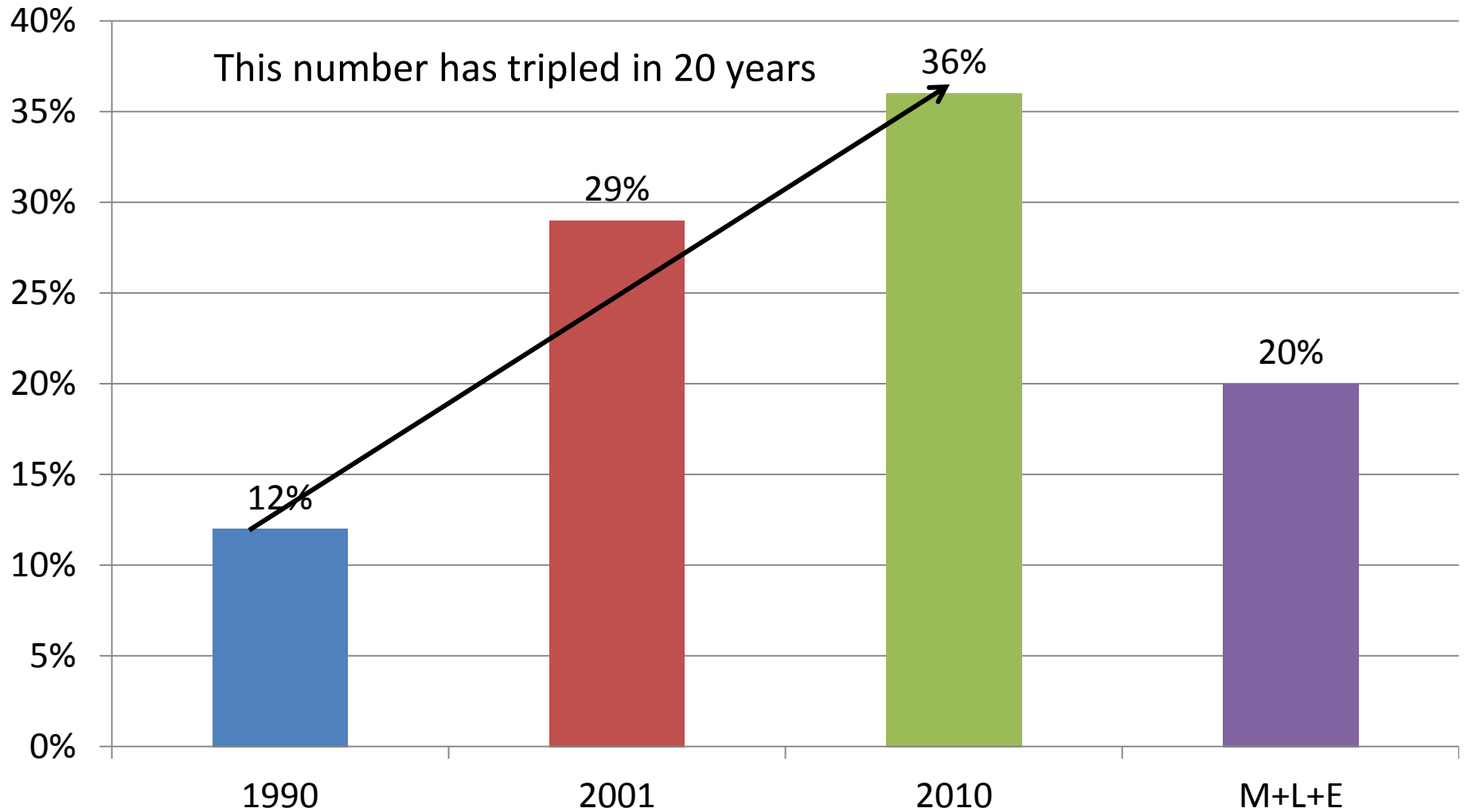
Some Stats



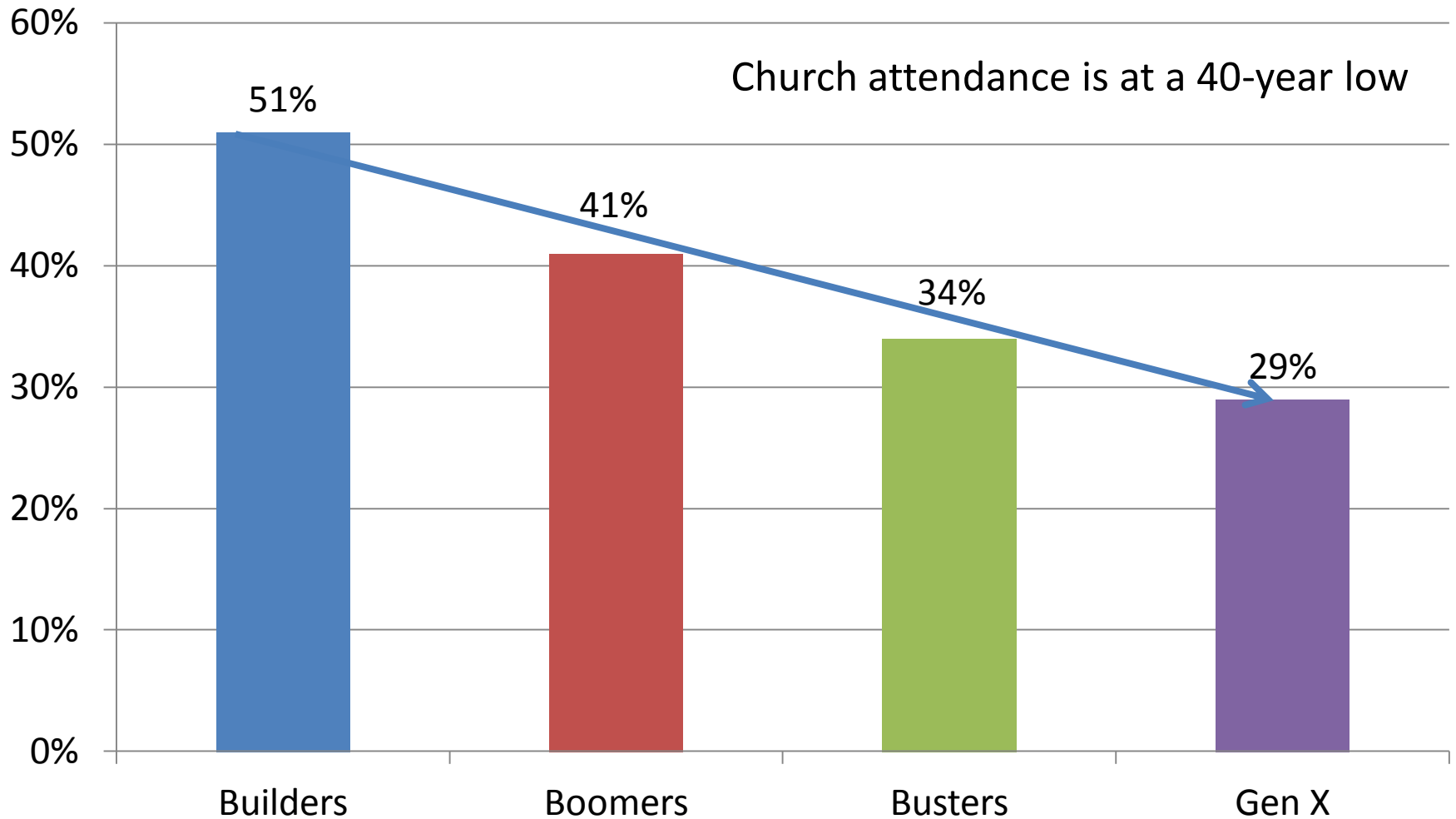
120+ million

– nearly 40+% of the U.S.
population – have dropped out
of “organized” religion,
no longer identifying
with a church

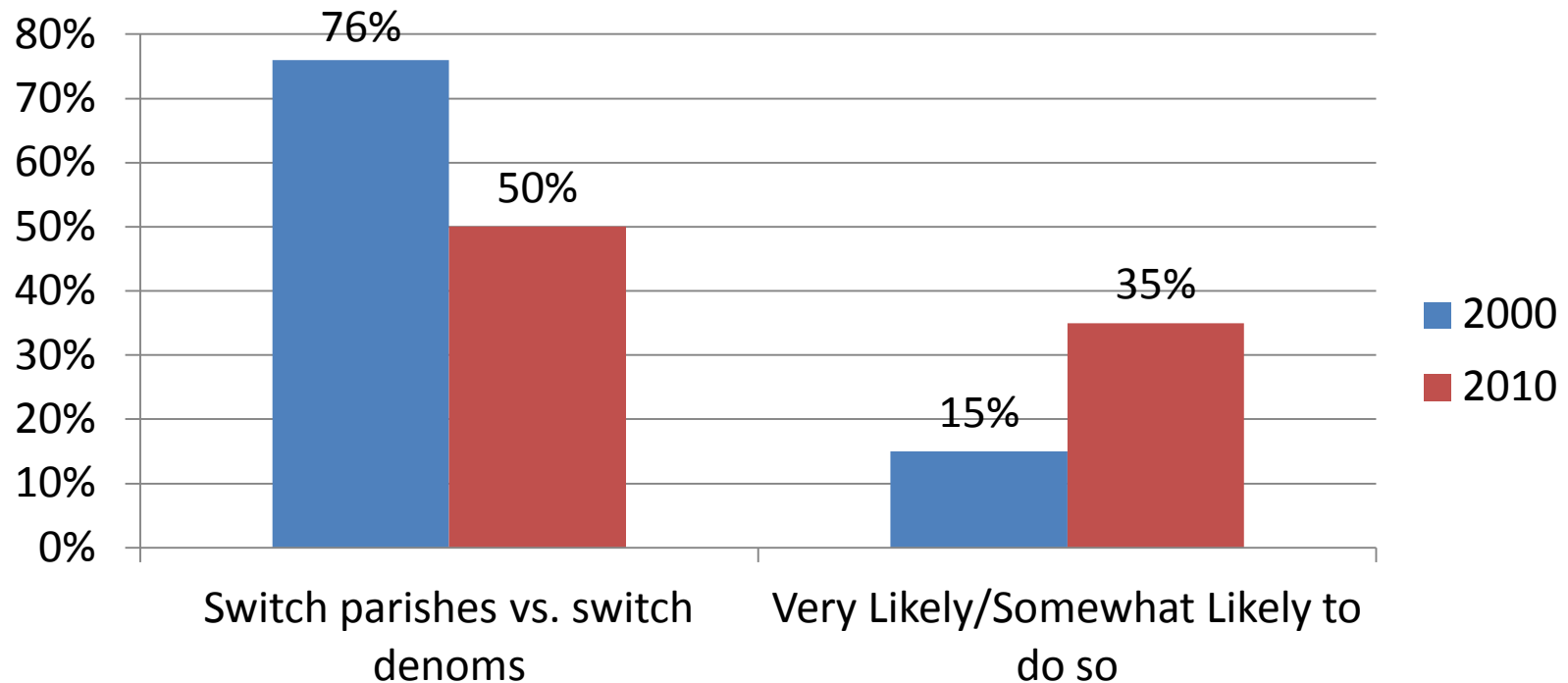
Americans Claiming No Faith



A Changing America: Church Attendance



Where Will the Unchurched Go?



➔ Number of Americans seeking a new church home each week: **4 million (2000) – 5-7 million (2010)**

That *Ol' Time Religion* is Dying:

- 28% - Left the religion of their youth
- 4,000 (Prot) churches close each year; R.C.s #s increasing
- 4 (Prot) churches close / new one started
- 50,000+ people leave their church each week
- 80+% of all (Protestant) churches and 1/3 of all R.C. churches are losing members
- Episcopal Church, last decade: attendance dropped 23%; not one diocese saw churchgoing increase

What are They Saying?

Most of what is called 'Christianity' or 'church' today is just organized religion. I don't believe Jesus wants any part of it, or wants His followers to have any part in it.

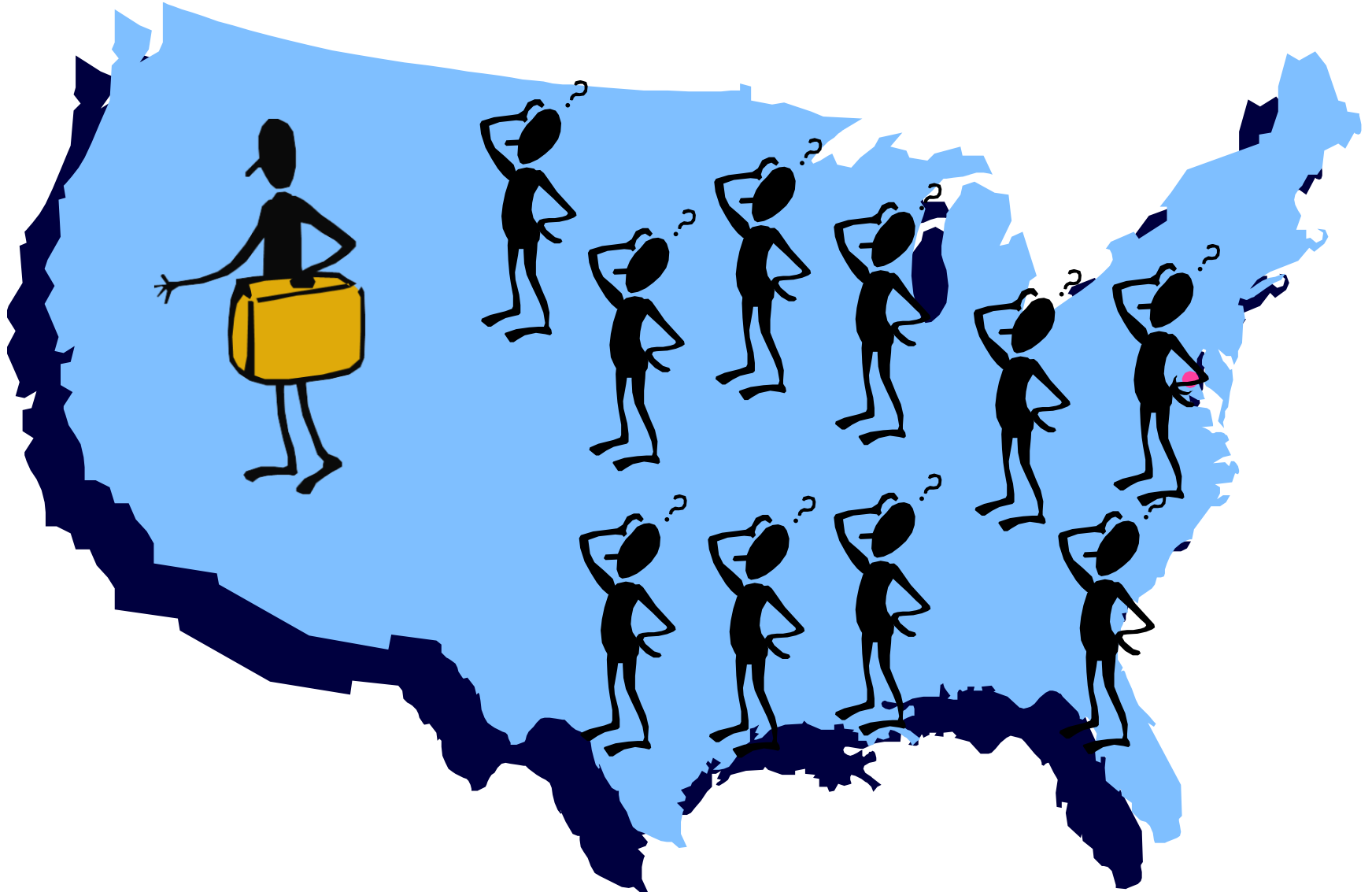
~

It's pretty arrogant to label people as "lost" simply because they don't buy into a particular bronze age belief system.

~

Well I'm an atheist so I guess I would be unchurched. There are some fundies who honestly think that atheism is a religion so in their eyes I would be mischurched. I don't think either one of those is really fitting for me anymore than anyone who can't speak Spanish should be considered Un-Spanished.

What About the RCs?

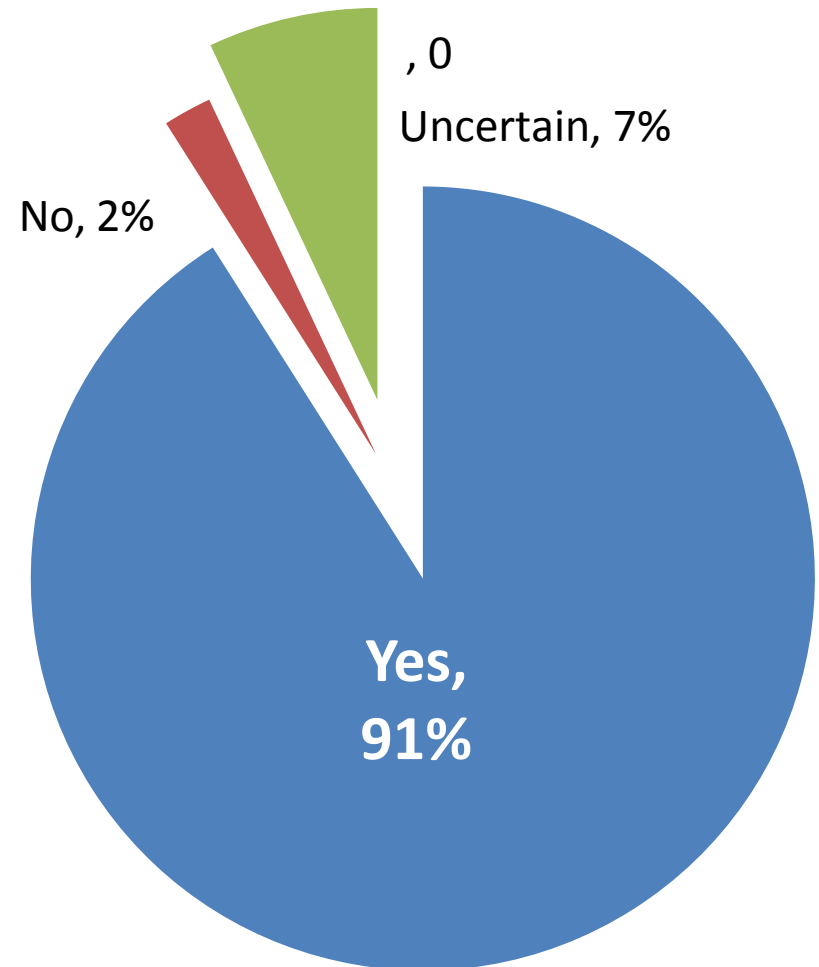


Myths About the Unchurched

#1: Don't talk about deep, complex biblical truths!



They don't care, don't wanna know, and it'll only confuse them!



Does Doctrine Matter?

Doctrine and Teaching

Most of the preaching was so watered-down that it was insulting to my intelligence.

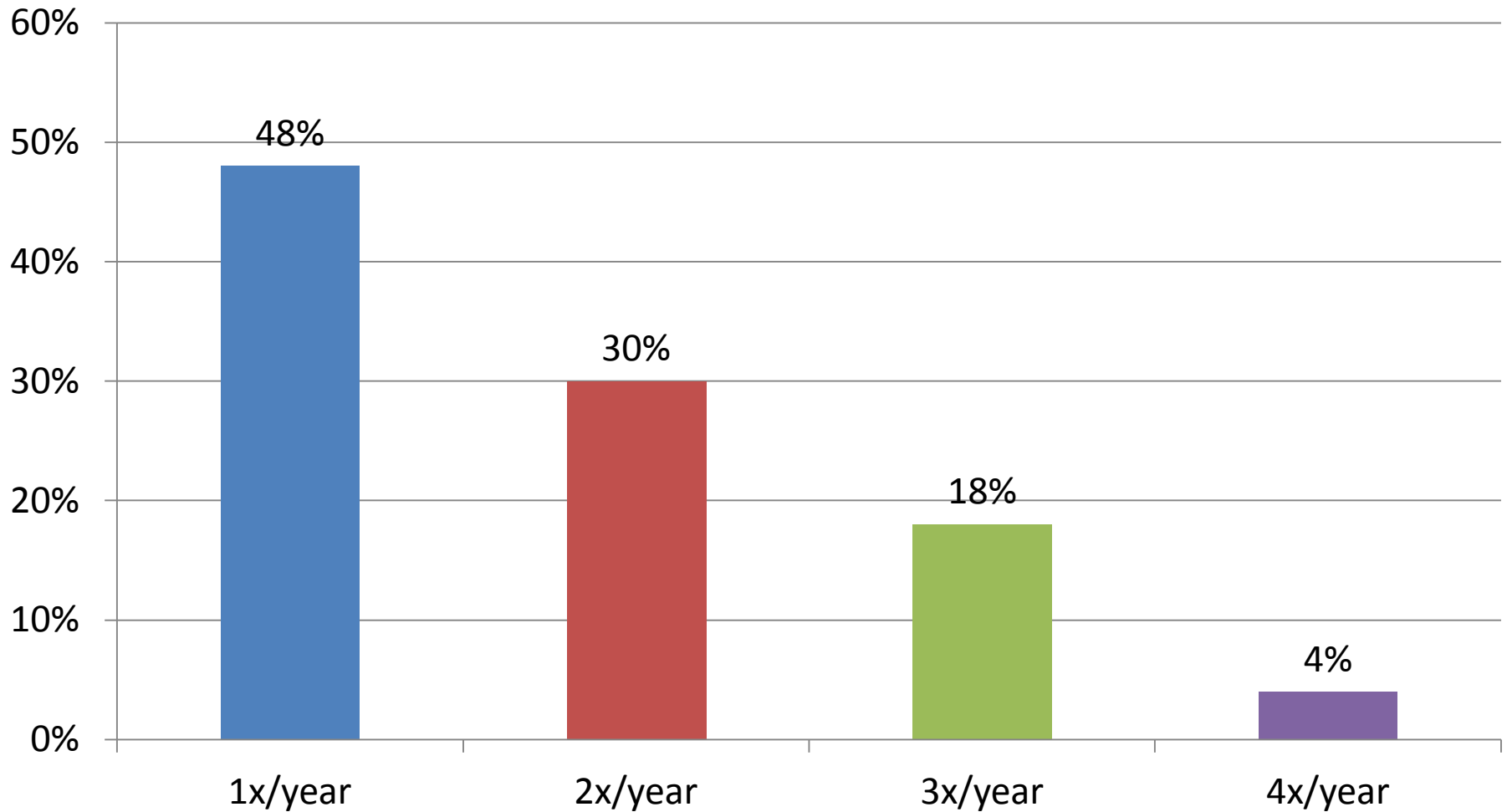
~

I went to one church where the message was on fear. I was eager to hear what the Bible had to say about [this]...It was more of a pop-psychology message. The biblical view was never explained.

~

Meaty teaching and preaching attracts the unchurched. I think they're listening.

#2: The Unchurched Never Attend Church



First Impressions Count

Facilities:

- Adequate parking
- Clean facilities
- Modern facilities
- Clean bathrooms
- Good signage

Programs:

- Quality pre-school / nursery
- Variety of quality programs
- Good preaching
- Relevant and quality music
- Friendly people
- Outgoing/welcoming greeters

A Word About Facilities

I never would have heard the message if I had not been thoroughly impressed with the quality of their facilities.

~

One of the reasons I came back on my own was a sense that the church did everything with excellence, and it showed from the parking lot to the restrooms.

#3: They're turned off by denominational names
(or) Our name won't attract non-ethnics

➔ The "one" we're perhaps most sensitive to:

Holy Trinity Orthodox Church

Ss. Paphnutios and Barsenuphios Russian Orthodox

Greek Catholic Church

~

Stockholm Swedish Lutheran Church

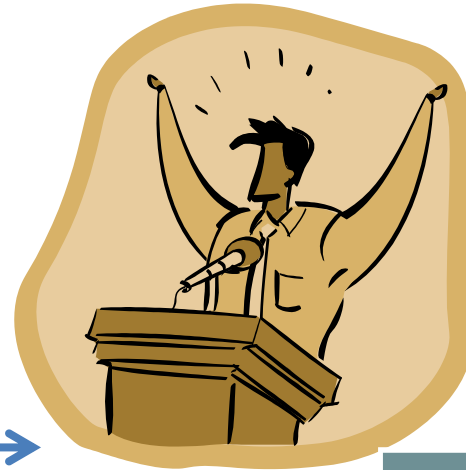
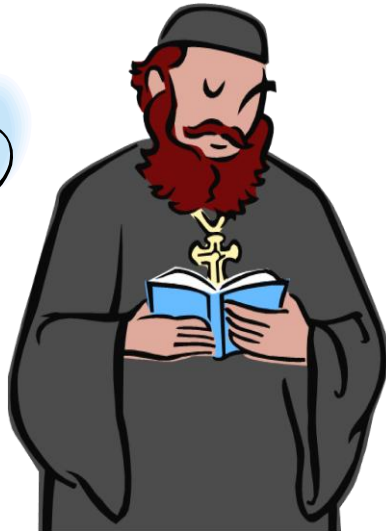
Dutch Reformed Church

American names are ethnic, too
American religion is in decline and this is what they're
leaving

#4: Priest must be a dynamic and charismatic leader for the church to reach the unchurched



- Good preacher
- Good pastor
- Sense of humor

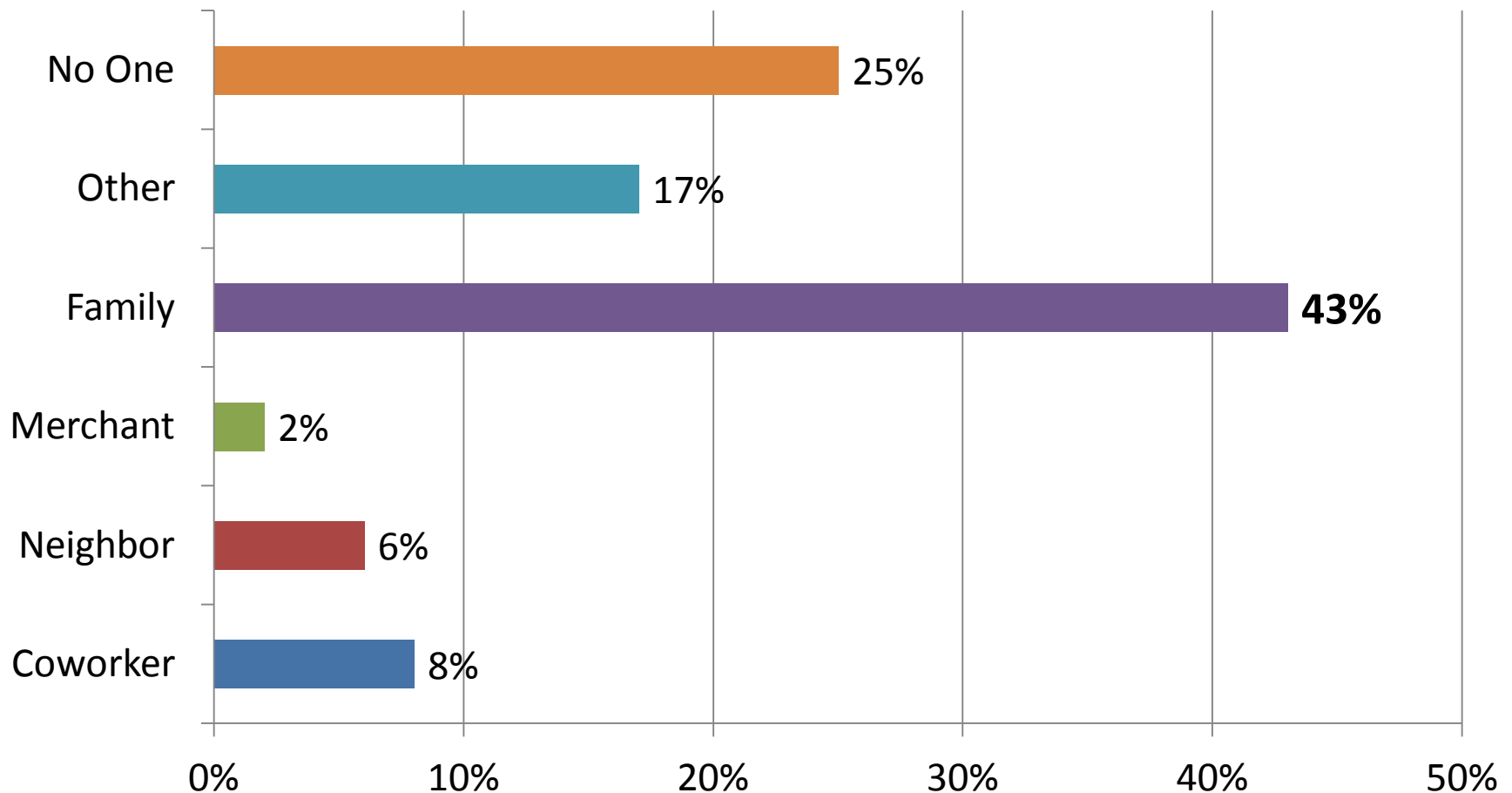


- Lay-led effort
- Relationships and friendliness are lay-driven



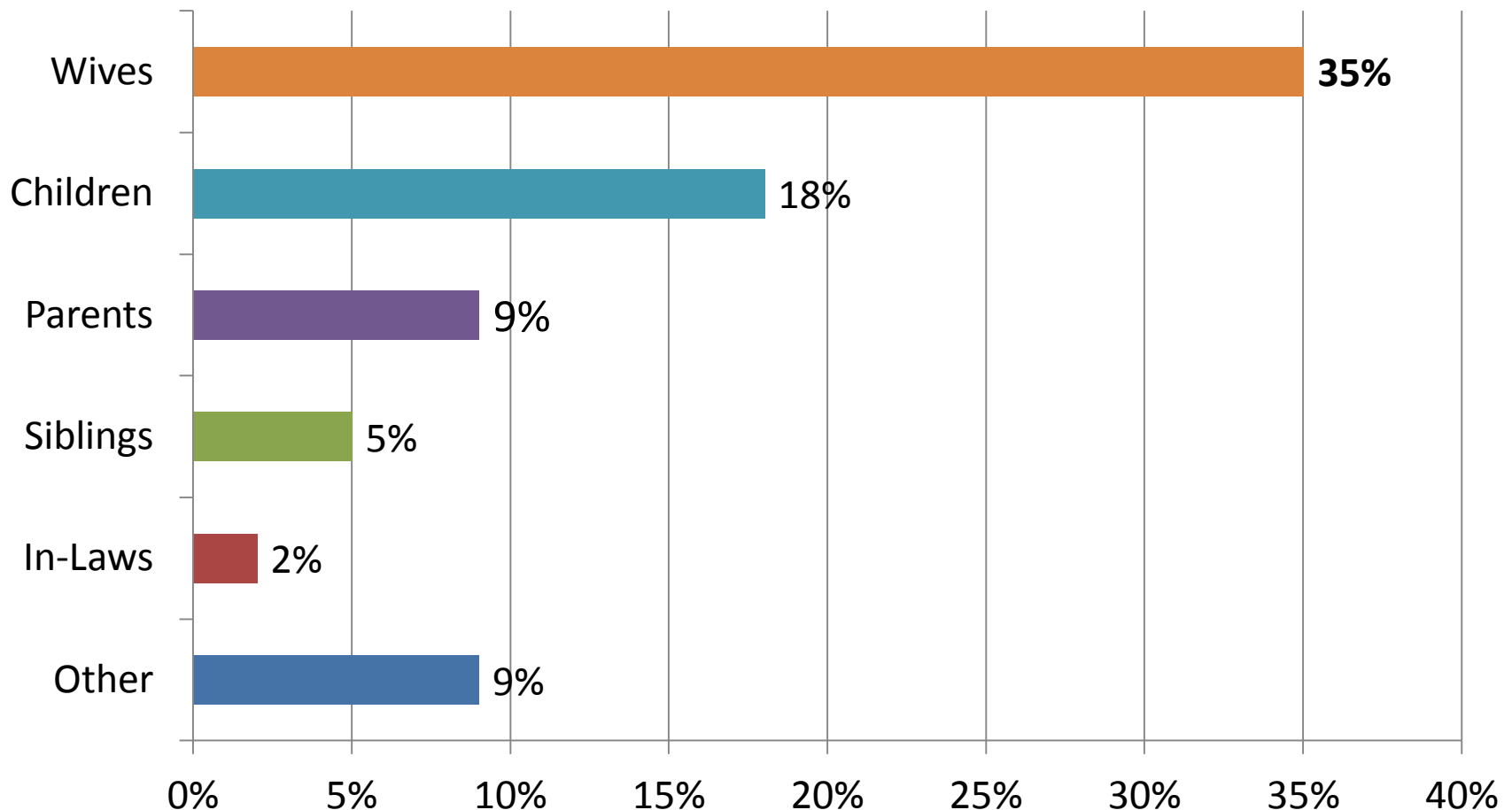
#5: Personal relationships do not matter

Who Was the Greatest Influence in Coming to Church?

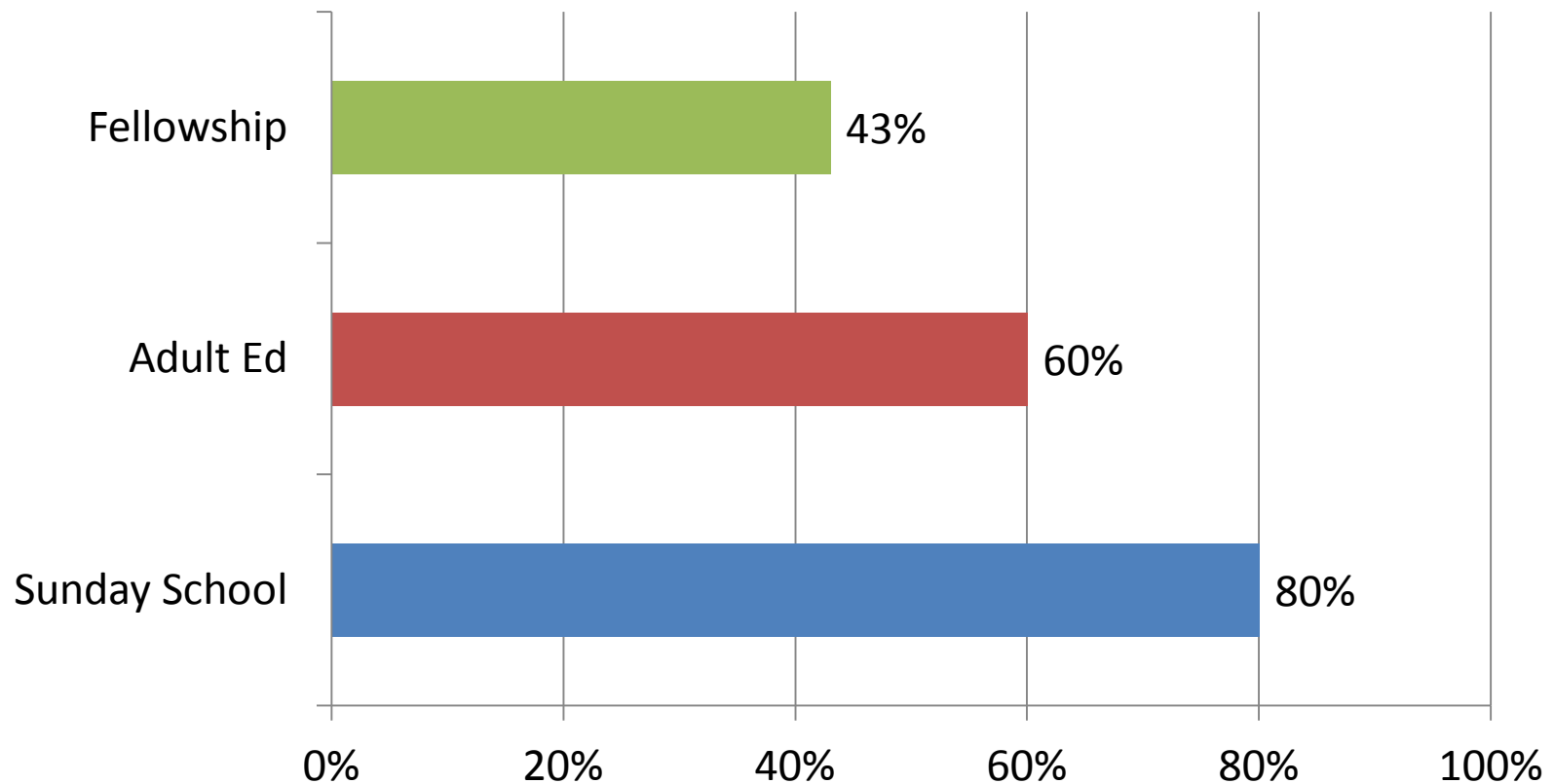


Family Relationships Matter Most

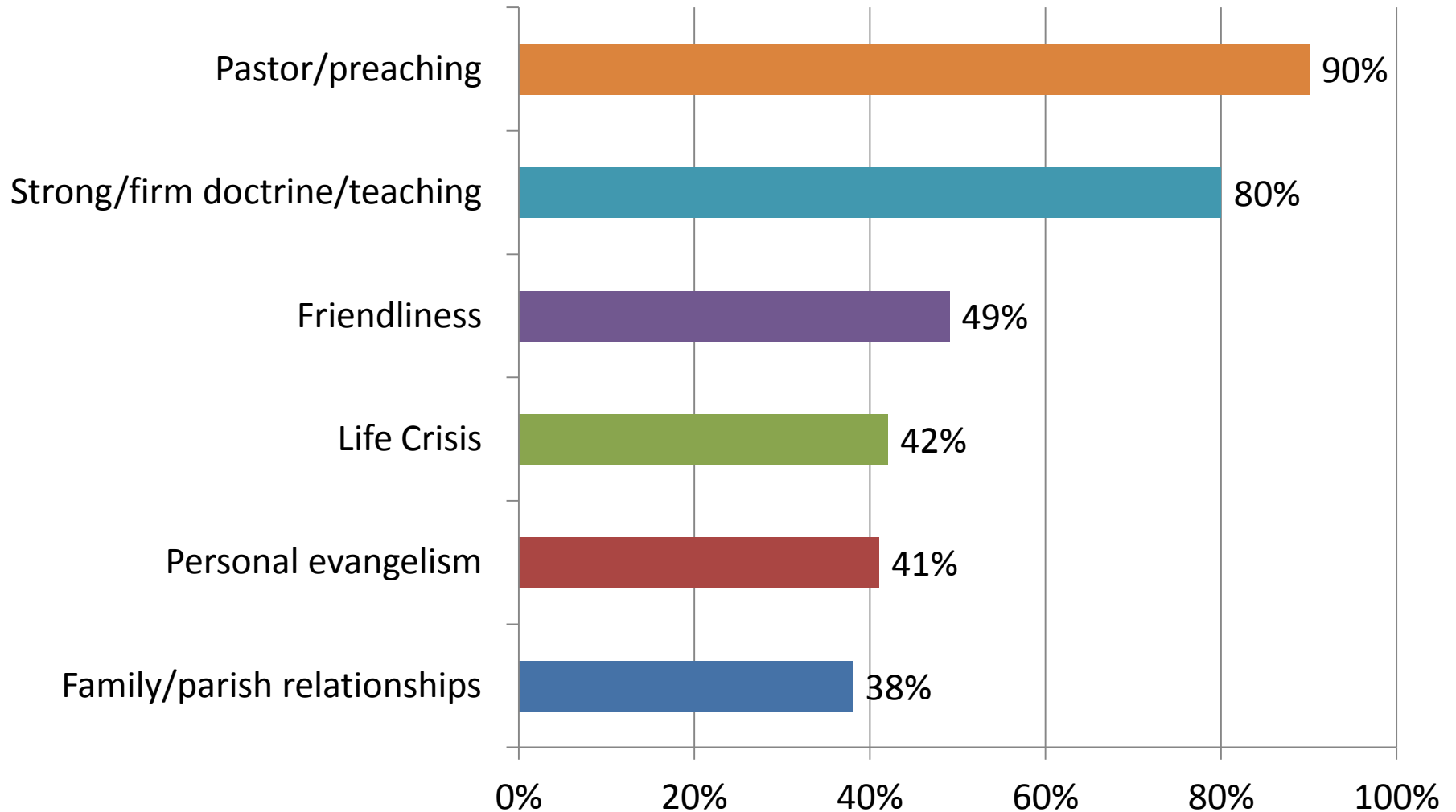
The Family Influence in Coming to Church:



#6: Sunday School and other small groups are ineffective in attracting the unchurched



What Prompts Them to Join

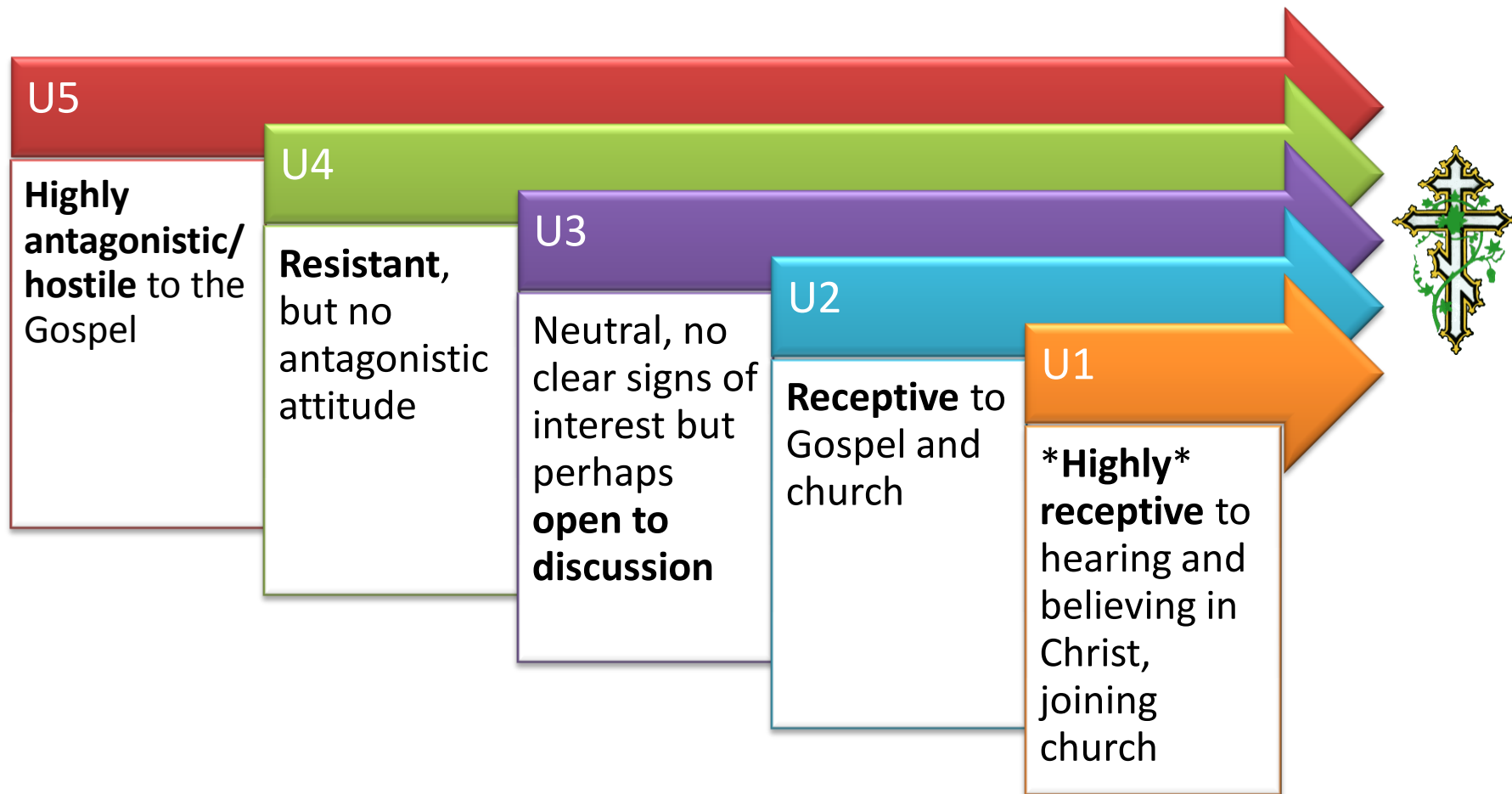


Some Surprises!

- Women are likely to be either most antagonistic/...or most receptive
- Feel guilty about not attending church
- Far more concerned with the spiritual well-being of their children than of themselves
- Nobody shares/ed faith with them, but...
- Want to develop relationships with Christians
- Christians have not been influential in their lives, but...
- They have a positive view of clergy and the church
- Attitudes are not correlated to where they live, ethnic or racial background, or gender

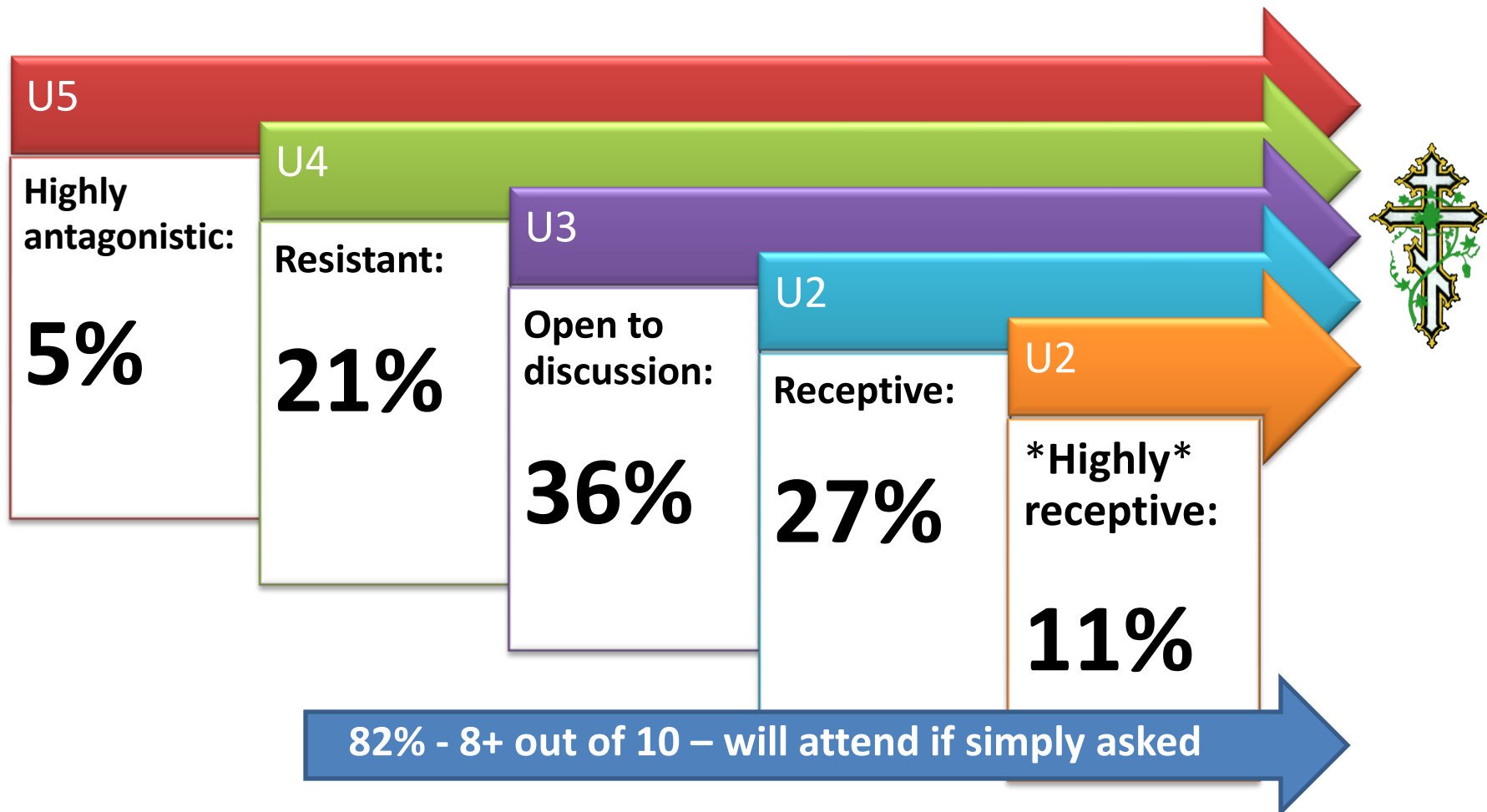
Myths About the Unchurched

#7: “The unchurched are all alike”



Five *Faith Stages* (Rainer)

How many we're dealing with in each stage:



U5 Faith Stage:

5% Highly antagonistic and hostile to the Gospel

U5

More than 1/3 live in small towns or rural areas
Wealthiest and most educated of unchurched
Teachers/professor most influential
Likely to be over 50 y.o.
African- and Asian-Americans

U5 Faith Stage:

5% Highly antagonistic and hostile to the Gospel

U5

- ➔ Some church as a child; ***residual anger*** from life's events. Not likely...***ever***...to attend church
- Extremely skeptical of anything supernatural
- Immortality is unthinkable to them
- ➔ No room for God or anything that can be explained rationally.

U5 Faith Stage:

How to Reach Them

U5

Seek move them to higher levels of receptivity

Apologetics

Ignorant about Christianity

Extreme hurt and/or anger

Develop a long-term relationship

U4 Faith Stage:

21% Antagonistic but not hostile to the Gospel

U4

Encounters have an empty feeling: will seem unmoved, indifferent, apathetic.

HOWEVER...likely to accept invitations to attend special presentations such as Christmas or Easter, just not the first time.

Dominated by males (and Hispanics); females less likely than any other group.

U4 Faith Stage:

21% Antagonistic but not hostile to the Gospel

U4

Ambiguous pluralism: Willingness to affirm beliefs of nearly everyone

➔ They **do** think about heaven and hell, 3x and 2x more than U5s.

Great respect for Bible: 6 out of 10: “truthful”

Very confused and searching; more like to come to your home than to church

U4 Faith Stage:

How to Reach Them

U4

Talk with them, but get their side first
Discuss the Bible with them
Receptive to small groups
Invite them!

What is Ambiguous Pluralism?

- Christians and Muslims worship same god
59%
- Bible, Koran and Book of Mormon are all different expressions of the same truths
43%
- All people are eventually saved by God
25%
- All religions teach the same lessons
26%

What is Ambiguous Pluralism?

- Believe in “god” or “higher being”

80%+

- “I Pray”

80%+ (9/11: 90%)

- Believe *God* cares about them personally, but the *church* doesn't

70%+

- Have not experienced the presence of God in their lives or in their church

70%+

U3 Faith Stage:

36% No signs of interest but open to discussion

U3

U3s are the largest segment of the unchurched population.

Hard to define their spiritual state

No one clear racial/ethnic group

U3 Faith Stage:

36% No signs of interest but open to discussion

U3

➔ Common mark: Waiting to be invited:
9 out of 10 U3s are at least somewhat likely to
attend church if invited

Church is “relevant” (86%) vs. not relevant

They pray (51% daily), and want to be heard

Believe in heaven and hell, clergy are cool

U3 Faith Stage:

How to Reach Them

U3

Uninformed, not dumb; don't water down/condescend

Some interest in Spirituality

Prayer services: Panikhida, Paraklesis, Akathists

Small groups

Invite them!

U2 Faith Stage:

27% Receptive to the Gospel and Church

U2

Many are fully aware of/may be seeking God.

Youngest: 6 out of 10 under 36 years old

Most females: 62% of total

Most are Anglo

Lowest family incomes (along with U1s)

Welcome faith discussions

U2 Faith Stage:

27% Receptive to the Gospel and Church

U2

Pretty strong theological/doctrinal beliefs, if somewhat convoluted at times

Don't go often, but "life crises" bring them back and open receptivity

Greatly appreciate common sense and courtesy

****WANT**** to be invited!!!

U2 Faith Stage:

How to Reach Them

U2

Eager to study the Bible

Desire to talk about eternal issues (Jesus, heaven, hell, etc.)

“Works” salvation

Parents and the past; Willingness to talk about negative issues

Invite them!!!

U1 Faith Stage:

11% ***Highly*** receptive to the Gospel and Church

U1

Tend to be younger to middle-aged adults;
80+% below the age of 50

“Busy-ness” the most cited reasons for not attending

➔ *****REALLY***** want to be invited; know they’re seeking, know they need God

U1 Faith Stage:

11% ***Highly*** receptive to the Gospel and Church

U1

Common background: Baptists (4 out of 10)

Few stopped attending because of negative life events; very positive memories of church

Observe a prayer life and do read the Bible

U1 Faith Stage:

How to Reach Them

U1

Pray for them – and let them know it

Persistence

Invite them...and take them!!!

Offer services/teaching/small groups around the Bible

Do something!!!

Three Things You Can Do...

...to be prepared for interactions
with the unchurched

Outside of Church:

1. **Share** the Faith: Dialogue, and don't be afraid! Ask them what they think/feel/believe. **Listen to them!**
2. ➔ **Invite** friends/family to church on “festal days”
3. **Answer** their questions, but remember: you'll **never (ever!)** argue someone in the Kingdom!

Key verse: *“I have become all things to all men, so that by all means I might win some.”* - St. Paul, 1 Corinthians 9:22

Three Things You Can Do...

...to be prepared for interactions
with the unchurched

Inside Church (it's a welcoming process):

1. Before Liturgy: **Invite** them to church, ***pick them up***, arrive early
2. During Liturgy: **Stay** and ***sit*** with them: Go up with them to light candles, offer them a liturgy book, bulletin, etc.
3. After Liturgy: **Invite** them to Coffee Hour; ***Follow-up*** with a suggested visit to answer questions and explain parish life

What Your Parish Can Do...

...to be prepared to share our hope in Christ
with our neighbor

1. **Greet** them! (but don't announce/introduce)
2. **Ask** and **invite** them to sign a guest book ("*Would you like to be on our e- or mailing list?*") and show them where the literature racks are ("*Please feel free to take anything...*")
3. **Follow-up** with a suggested visit to answer questions and explain parish life and, especially, small/fellowship groups (priest or lay team)

Conversion is *Not* a Program

*“Remember always that
the conversion of a sinner or
a heathen to the right path
comes not from us or from our skill, but
directly and **solely** from **God**.”*

- St. Innocent (Veniaminov)

Norms for “Conversion Ratio”

- National norm for “conversion ratio” – 85:1
- **Effective evangelistic churches – 20:1**

Less than 1% of churches in America
meet that criteria

Questions?