By Alexei Krindatch

Standing Conference of the Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas

The data is now available from the 2010 US Orthodox Christian Census which was completed as a part of the national "Religious Congregations and Membership Study 2010" (for more information on "RCMS 2010" study go to www.rcms2010.org).

Below are some highlights from the Census results. For more information, additional data and any questions regarding 2010 US Orthodox Christian Census, contact principal researcher: Alexei Krindatch at **akrindatch@aol.com**

What is the US National Orthodox Census and what it tells us about?

The 2010 US Orthodox Christian Census provides information on:

- parishes and monastic communities in American Orthodox Christian Churches including the so-called Oriental Orthodox Christian Churches (see full list of participating churches in Tab.1);
- Church "adherents" - the most inclusive category of church membership which includes children and anyone participating even occasionally in church life;
- Church "regular attendees" - the persons attending church on the regular basis.

Data on adherents and regular attendees are available for each local Orthodox parish (congregation), each national American Orthodox Christian Church and for each geographic area and each county of the USA.

Why is this National Orthodox Census unique?

The data in the Census was obtained directly from the local Orthodox parishes - not from the national church headquarters or regional judicatories (dioceses). Therefore the 2010 National Orthodox Census provides the most reliable and accurate information on the Orthodox Christian Churches in the United States.

What is the total membership in all American Orthodox Christian Churches combined?

There are roughly 1,044,000 adherents of the various Orthodox Christian Churches in the United States. This figure includes 227,000 members of the Oriental Orthodox Christian Churches such as Coptic, Armenian, Syriac and Malankara Indian Orthodox Churches. The American Orthodox Christians worship in 2,380 local Orthodox parishes which belong to 20 different national Orthodox Church bodies including 6 Oriental Orthodox Churches. Tab.1 provides information on full membership ("adherents") and regular church attendees for each Church.

Are American Orthodox Churches growing?

The answer to this question is "Yes." From 2000-2010, the total number of Orthodox parishes in America increased for 16 percent. The fastest growing groups among national Orthodox Churches in the US are: Bulgarian Orthodox Eastern Diocese (+122% increase in parishes), Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese (+121%), and Malankara Archdiocese of the Syrian Orthodox Church (+89%).

Only three Orthodox Churches declined in number of parishes during 2000-2010: Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA, Patriarchal Parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church and Armenian Apostolic Church of America (Catholicosate Cilicia). Tab. 3 shows changes in number of parishes during 2000-2010 for each Orthodox Christian Church in the US.

Which of American Orthodox Christian Churches are the biggest and which are the smallest ones?

In terms of membership, of all US Orthodox Christian Churches, the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (GOA) is by far the largest one. According to 2010 US Orthodox Census, GOA has nearly 477,000 members. Put differently, 46% of all Orthodox Church members in the USA belong to GOA. In terms of number of parishes, however, Orthodox Church in America has more local congregations than GOA does: 551 and 525 respectively. The smallest of American Orthodox Churches is Albanian Orthodox Diocese of America. Although it is considered as a national Church, it has just 2 parishes with 700 members total.

Are the members of American Orthodox Christian Churches regular and frequent church goers?

There is no one general answer to this question. It depends on particular Church. See Tab.1. Nationwide, for all US Orthodox Christian Churches combined, the proportion of the regular church attendees in the total of church adherents is 28 percent. But there are huge differences in the frequency of church attendance across the various American Orthodox Churches. The regular church attendees constitute as much as 77% of all church members in the Holy Orthodox Church in North America, 53 % in Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church and 51% in Coptic Orthodox Church. Quite differently, no more than 15% of all members attend church regularly in the case of American Diocese of Macedonian Orthodox Church (11%), Vicariate for Palestinian Orthodox Communities (12%), Armenian Church of North America Catholicosate Etchmiadzin (13%) and Patriarchal Parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church (15%).

How large are American Orthodox parishes?

The size of an "average" Orthodox parish in America varies greatly from one Orthodox Church to the other. See Tab.2. The most sizeable parishes are in the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (GOA). An "average" GOA parish has 908 persons. At the same time, the parishes of the Holy Orthodox Church in North America, Bulgarian Eastern Orthodox Diocese and American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese are relatively small: 81, 130 and 133 persons per parish on an average.

Where in America do the members of Orthodox Christian Churches live and worship?

Orthodox Christians live and have their churches in all US states. At the same time, 48% - almost half – of all Orthodox Church members live in just five states: California (14.5% of all American Orthodox Church members), New York (13.5%), Illinois (7.2%), New Jersey (6.9%) and Massachusetts (5.9%). Tab. 4 provides information on state-by-state distribution of the members of American Orthodox Churches. In terms of the number of the local Orthodox parishes (rather than church members), five states with the biggest number of Orthodox congregations are: California (254 Orthodox parishes total), Pennsylvania (249), New York (240), Florida (136) and New Jersey (128). Tab. 5 shows state-by-state distribution of the parishes of American Orthodox Churches.

Which US states have the highest proportion of the Orthodox Church members in the state's total population?

Nationwide, the proportion of adherents of the various Orthodox Christian Churches in the total country's population is small: 0.34%. In certain states, however, this proportion is significantly higher. These states are: Alaska (1.93%), Massachusetts (0.93%), New Jersey (0.83%), New York (0.72%) and Rhode Island (0.72%). Tab. 4 shows proportion of the Orthodox Church members in the total population of each state.

Does US Orthodox Census tell us about all Orthodox Christians living in the United States?

The answer to this question is "No." The 2010 US Orthodox Census provided information only on persons who are – at least marginally – involved in the Church life and, therefore, are known to the local Orthodox parishes. Similarly to many other Christian denominations in America, there can be significant number of persons who were once baptized in the Orthodox Church and who still consider themselves as being Orthodox Christians, but who do not participate and attend at all. In other words, the 2010 US Orthodox Census was Census of members of US Orthodox Christian Churches rather than Census of the entire Orthodox Christian population in America.

Tab.1 Orthodox Christian Churches in the USA (as of 2010): Number of Adherents (1) and Regular Church Attendees (2)

Orthodox Christian Churches in the USA (3)	Total Adherents	Regular Church Attendees	% of regular attendees in the total of adherents
1. Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America	476,900	107,400	23%
2. Orthodox Church in America	84,900	33,800	40%
3. Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese	74,600	27,300	37%
4. Serbian Orthodox Church in North America	68,800	15,400	22%
5. Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia	27,700	9,000	32%
6. Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA	22,400	6,900	31%
7. Patriarchal Parishes of the Moscow Patriarchate	12,400	1,900	15%
8. Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese	11,200	2,200	20%
9. American Carpatho Russian Orthodox Diocese	10,400	4,900	47%
10. Vicariate for the Palestinian / Jordanian Orthodox Christian Communities	6,800	815	12%
11. Bulgarian Eastern Orthodox Diocese	2,600	1,200	46%
12. Albanian Orthodox Diocese of America	700	185	26%
13. Macedonian Orthodox Church: American Diocese	15,500	1,700	11%
14. Holy Orthodox Church in North America	2,200	1,700	77%
15. Coptic Orthodox Church	92,100	46,900	51%
16. Armenian Church of North America (Catholicosate Etchmiadzin)	64,800	8,400	13%
17. Armenian Apostolic Church of America (Catholicosate of Cilicia)	30,500	7,700	25%
18. Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church	17,000	9,000	53%
19. Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch	15,700	4,200	27%
20. Malankara Archdiocese of the Syrian Orthodox Church in North America	6,400	3,400	53%
TOTAL	**1,043,600**	**294,000**	**28%**

(1) **"Adherents"** are defined as the most inclusive category of Church membership. Data on adherents were obtained directly from the local Orthodox parishes by asking parish clergy: "Approximately how many individual persons in total are associated in any way with the life of your parish: counting adults and children, regular and occasional attendees, paid stewards and persons who do not contribute financially?"

(2) Data on **"regular attendees"** were obtained directly from the local Orthodox parishes by asking parish clergy: "Approximately, how many persons - including adults and children - attend Liturgy in your parish on a typical Sunday?"

(3) The Churches #15-20 belong to the category of the so-called "Oriental Orthodox Churches" (also known as "pre-Chalcedonian" Churches, because of their rejection of the Christological definitions of the Council of Chalcedon in 451). They are in full communion with one another, but not with the other (# 1 -14) Churches. The Churches # 13-14 are Churches of irregular status: that is, the other Orthodox Churches consider them "uncanonical" (unlawful).

Tab.2 Orthodox Christian Churches in the USA: Parishes and Monastic Communities (2010)

Orthodox Christian Churches in the USA	Number of parishes	Number of Monastic Communities (4): Male / Female	Average size of a parish: persons (5)
1. Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America	525	10 / 10	908
2. Orthodox Church in America	551	8 / 11	154
3. Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese	248	0 / 1	300
4. Serbian Orthodox Church in North America	122	6 / 7	564
5. Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia	138	5 / 3	201
6. Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA	100	1 / 0	224
7. Patriarchal Parishes of the Moscow Patriarchate	30	1 / 0	413
8. Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese	31	0 / 0	361
9. American Carpatho Russian Orthodox Diocese	78	0 / 0	133
10. Vicariate for the Palestinian / Jordanian Orthodox Christian Communities	9	0 / 0	756
11. Bulgarian Eastern Orthodox Diocese	20	2 / 0	130
12. Albanian Orthodox Diocese of America	2	0 / 0	350
13. Macedonian Orthodox Church: American Diocese	20	1 / 0	775
14. Holy Orthodox Church in North America	27	4 / 3	81
15. Coptic Orthodox Church	170	3 / 1	542
16. Armenian Church of North America (Catholicosate Etchmiadzin)	96	0 / 0	675
17. Armenian Apostolic Church of America (Catholicosate of Cilicia)	37	0 / 0	824
18. Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church	92	0 / 0	185
19. Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch	32	0 / 0	491
20. Malankara Archdiocese of the Syrian Orthodox Church in North America	41	0 / 0	156
TOTAL	**2369**	**41 / 36**	**438**

(4) Male monasteries, female convents, sketes.

(5) **"Average size of a parish"** was calculated as total number of adherents (Tab.1) divided by the number of parishes. In reality, within each Orthodox Church, the parishes vary significantly in number of adherents and regular attendees.

Tab.3 Orthodox Christian Churches in the USA: Change in Number of Parishes in 2000-2010 (6)

Orthodox Christian Churches in the USA	Number of parishes in 2000	Number of parishes in 2010	Changes in number of parishes: %
1. Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America	501	525	**+ 5%**
2. Orthodox Church in America	456	551	**+ 21%**
3. Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese	206	248	**+20%**
4. Serbian Orthodox Church in North America	118	122	**+ 3%**
5. Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia	128	138	**+ 8%**
6. Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA	106	100	**- 9%**
7. Patriarchal Parishes of the Moscow Patriarchate	32	30	**- 6%**
8. Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese	14	31	**+ 121%**
9. American Carpatho Russian Orthodox Diocese	76	78	**+ 3%**
10. Vicariate for the Palestinian / Jordanian Orthodox Christian Communities	N / A	9	**N / A**
11. Bulgarian Eastern Orthodox Diocese	9	20	**+ 122%**
12. Albanian Orthodox Diocese of America	2	2	**0%**
13. Macedonian Orthodox Church: American Diocese	16	20	**+ 25%**
14. Holy Orthodox Church in North America	25	27	**+ 8%**
15. Coptic Orthodox Church	116	172	**+ 48%**
16. Armenian Church of North America (Catholicosate Etchmiadzin)	89	96	**+ 8%**
17. Armenian Apostolic Church of America (Catholicosate of Cilicia)	38	37	**- 3%**
18. Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church	59	94	**+ 59%**
19. Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch	23	32	**+ 39%**
20. Malankara Archdiocese of the Syrian Orthodox Church in North America	22	41	**+ 86%**
TOTAL (7)	**2036**	**2369**	**+ 16%**

(6) The 2000 data were obtained in the study *Religious Congregations and Membership in the United States. 2000. Glenmary Research Center: Nashville, Tennessee* (published in 2002). Both 2000 and 2010 data were gathered by the same person – Alexei Krindatch. Both 2000 and 2010 studies gathered data on church adherents and the number of parishes. It should be noted, however, that data on adherents in 2000 study were in many cases based on estimates and various statistical calculations, while 2010 figures are more accurate and precise, because they were obtained directly from the local parishes. In addition, in 2000 study, we were unable to get data on adherents for #4, 5 and 15. Therefore, changes in number of parishes (rather than in number of adherents) during 2000-2010 serves as a more reliable indicator for evaluating of growth/decline for each Church.

N / A – not applies, because "Vicariate for the Palestinian / Jordanian Orthodox Christian Communities" did not exist in 2000.

(7) Not counting # 10, because "Vicariate for the Palestinian / Jordanian Orthodox Christian Communities" did not exist in 2000.

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Tab.4 Orthodox Christian Churches in the USA: State-by-State Number of Adherents (7) and as % in the Total Population (2010)

State	Total Number of Adherents (1000)	% of Adherents in the Total Population	State	Total Number of Adherents (1000)	% of Adherents in the Total Population
Alabama	3.0	0.06%	Montana	0.6	0.06%
Alaska	13.5	1.93%	Nebraska	1.5	0.06%
Arizona	16.1	0.24%	Nevada	8.9	0.34%
Arkansas	1.2	0.04%	New Hampshire	4.9	0.37%
California	151.6	0.38%	New Jersey	72.3	0.83%
Colorado	10.7	0.21%	New Mexico	2.0	0.1%
Connecticut	19.6	0.56%	New York	140.4	0.72%
Delaware	1.5	0.16%	North Carolina	15.3	0.16%
District Columbia	12.9	2.15% (8)	North Dakota	0.1	0.02%
Florida	60.0	0.32%	Ohio	51.4	0.45%
Georgia	14.3	0.15%	Oklahoma	2.7	0.07%
Hawaii	0.3	0.03%	Oregon	7.1	0.19%
Idaho	0.8	0.05%	Pennsylvania	60.5	0.48%
Illinois	75.5	0.58%	Rhode Island	7.6	0.72%
Indiana	22.5	0.35%	South Carolina	5.6	0.12%
Iowa	2.2	0.07%	South Dakota	0.3	0.04%
Kansas	3.4	0.12%	Tennessee	10.4	0.17%
Kentucky	2.1	0.05%	Texas	31.5	0.13%
Louisiana	2.5	0.06%	Utah	6.0	0.22%
Maine	1.7	0.13%	Vermont	0.3	0.05%
Maryland	24.3	0.43%	Virginia	18.3	0.23%
Massachusetts	61.1	0.93%	Washington	15.6	0.23%
Michigan	47.5	0.48%	West Virginia	2.8	0.15%
Minnesota	7.6	0.14%	Wisconsin	13.2	0.23%
Mississipi	1.0	0.03%	Wyoming	0.8	0.14%
Missouri	6.7	0.11%	**USA total**	1043.6	0.34%

(7) **"Adherents"** are defined as the most inclusive category of Church membership. Data on adherents were obtained directly from the local Orthodox parishes by asking parish clergy: "Approximately how many individual persons in total are associated in any way with the life of your parish: counting adults and children, regular and occasional attendees, paid stewards and persons who do not contribute financially?"

(8) The fact that adherents of the Orthodox Churches constitute 2.15% of the population of District Columbia does not mean that all of them actually physically live in District Columbia. Rather, the figure of 12.9 thousands of Orthodox adherents in Washington DC indicates that they are affiliated with and participate in the life of the Orthodox parishes situated within administrative borders of Washington, DC.

Tab.5 Orthodox Christian Churches in the USA:
State-by-State Number of Parishes and Monastic Communities (2010)

State	Number of Orthodox Parishes	Number of Monastic Communities	State	Number of Orthodox Parishes	Number of Monastic Communities
Alabama	14		Montana	6	
Alaska	92	2	Nebraska	11	
Arizona	32	2	Nevada	12	
Arkansas	10		New Hampshire	17	
California	254	12	New Jersey	128	1
Colorado	30	2	New Mexico	8	1
Connecticut	55		New York	240	12
Delaware	8		North Carolina	34	3
District Columbia	7		North Dakota	3	
Florida	136	3	Ohio	114	7
Georgia	40		Oklahoma	17	
Hawaii	6		Oregon	22	
Idaho	8		Pennsylvania	249	5
Illinois	111	3	Rhode Island	11	
Indiana	45	2	South Carolina	20	2
Iowa	15		South Dakota	3	
Kansas	18		Tennessee	27	
Kentucky	8		Texas	103	4
Louisiana	15		Utah	9	
Maine	8		Vermont	4	
Maryland	41		Virginia	49	1
Massachusetts	99	2	Washington	37	3
Michigan	84	4	West Virginia	12	2
Minnesota	31		Wisconsin	33	1
Mississipi	6		Wyoming	7	
Missouri	22	2	**USA total**	**2369**	**77**

(7) **"Adherents"** are defined as the most inclusive category of Church membership. Data on adherents were obtained directly from the local Orthodox parishes by asking parish clergy: "Approximately how many individual persons in total are associated in any way with the life of your parish: counting adults and children, regular and occasional attendees, paid stewards and persons who do not contribute financially?"

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More data and studies on the Orthodox Church life in America is available at:

www.orthodoxreality.org