



Podcast Transcript – Holy Cross Church - Financial Transparency Analysis

[Speaker 1]

We're glad you're joining us for this custom deep dive, because, you know, usually when an organization launches a transparency initiative, you expect, well, polished PR.

[Speaker 2]

Right. Like an annual report that highlights all the big wins and quietly buries the struggles in the footnotes.

[Speaker 1]

Exactly. But today we're looking at a group doing the exact opposite. We are examining a draft presentation from Khachkar Studios.

It outlines the 2025 financial transparency analysis for the Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church in Belmont, Massachusetts.

[Speaker 2]

And our mission today is to figure out how radical, unvarnished financial transparency is being used to drive real community growth. We want to unpack why these exact principles matter for, well, really any organization you might be a part of.

[Speaker 1]

Yeah. To understand the solution, we have to look at the core problem Holy Cross is addressing, which is an attendance crisis that's basically masked by heavy misconceptions.

[Speaker 2]

The contrast in the source material is stark. I mean, if you look at the widely cited sampling surveys, they claim that about 35 percent of U.S. Armenians attend church weekly.

[Speaker 1]

Which sounds like a pretty solid number.

[Speaker 2]

It does. But Khachkar Studios went out and did verified field research. They literally went on site and did photo verified counts across 164 active churches.

[Speaker 1]

Wait, really?

[Speaker 2]

Yeah. And the actual faithful attendance, it sits somewhere between just 1.3 percent and 2.8 percent of the population. Wow.

[Speaker 1]

OK, let's unpack this because that is a staggering discrepancy.

[Speaker 2]
Yeah.

[Speaker 1]
It's like a startup thinking they have huge market share based on brand awareness. But.

[Speaker 2]
But their actual daily active users are tiny.

[Speaker 1]
Right. You can't fix a growth problem if your dashboard is lying to you.

[Speaker 2]
Exactly. Which is why Khachkar Studios introduced a new solution being tested on the ground, which they call the TAP framework.

[Speaker 1]
TAP. So that stands for Biblically Inspired Transparency, Accountability and Performance. Yes.

Wait, I get the accountability and performance part, but what does biblically inspired actually mean when we are talking about an accounting spreadsheet? Are we just slapping a religious label on standard corporate practices?

[Speaker 2]
No, it's actually a total shift away from the corporate mindset. In a standard nonprofit, you often treat the congregation kind of like donors.

[Speaker 1]
Right. You give them a neat summary to keep the funds flowing.

[Speaker 2]
Exactly. But biblically inspired transparency treats them like co-owners, like stewards of the community. It means sharing the raw numbers, the struggles and the exact performance metrics because the community deserves the absolute truth about the resources they provide.

[Speaker 1]
Now we get to the ROI, the data that honestly stopped me in my tracks.

[Speaker 2]
Yeah. The Catholic Leadership Institute data.

[Speaker 1]
Right. It's a database involving thirty five thousand parishioners and they found a massive point nine four positive correlation between a parish providing financial transparency and parishioners strongly recommending that church.

[Speaker 2]

It's incredibly high. I mean, those who strongly agree their parish is financially transparent. An amazing eighty seven percent will strongly recommend it to others.

[Speaker 1]

That is wild.

[Speaker 2]

Yeah. Regardless of age, income or giving habits.

[Speaker 1]

Here's where it gets really interesting, though. I have to push back a little. Does just seeing a church's balance sheet actually make someone invite a friend or is financial transparency simply a proxy for trusting the leadership?

Like if they trust me with the ugly financial reality.

[Speaker 2]

Then you trust them enough to bring your family. You hit the nail on the head. Human psychology actually wires us to reward vulnerability.

It isn't the spreadsheet itself that gets people to invite their friends.

[Speaker 1]

It's the signal the spreadsheet sends.

[Speaker 2]

Right. It says we aren't hiding anything from you. That vulnerability builds profound grassroots trust.

[Speaker 1]

So let's look at how Holy Cross in Belmont is actually executing this because they don't just write a vague mission statement. In an April 2026 commitment letter, they pledged to post all monthly financial income and expenses publicly on their website.

[Speaker 2]

Yes. And they were sharing five year historical and projected statements, plus independently audited findings. They're really laying all their cards on the table.

[Speaker 1]

And they aren't hiding the attendance either. They use a counter app to track precise weekly numbers. The sources show they hit 150 attendees in early April 2026.

[Speaker 2]

Which is a huge milestone for them.

[Speaker 1]

Yeah. And they're coupling this hard data with grassroots action, posting YouTube invite videos and even printing bring a friend T-shirts for their 85th anniversary.



[Speaker 2]

If we connect this to the bigger picture for you listening, whether you run a nonprofit, a business team or a local club, sharing the unpolished raw numbers is what builds the ultimate grassroots trust.

[Speaker 1]

Because when an 85 year old traditional church posts a weekly attendance of 50 or 70 people, they aren't hiding behind that fake 35 percent survey stat.

[Speaker 2]

No, they are dealing with reality and inviting the community to help build the future.

[Speaker 1]

Right. Sharing the hard numbers isn't just an accounting chore. It is a proven, highly correlated strategy for organizational growth and word of mouth recommendations.

[Speaker 2]

Absolutely.

[Speaker 1]

So what does this all mean for you? If an 85 year old traditional church can completely open its financial books to spark a community revival, what previously hidden metrics in your own workplace or personal projects could you make transparent today to build unbreakable trust?