

# Fix This Urban Parish – Case 3

## Stay or Go – Parish Founded 1950

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### Location Info

- Rustlington - a modest Midwestern industrial city of 100k people. City population is 80% of what it was 35 years ago.
- Orthodox alternatives exist -- though all are affiliated with an ethnic label.
- Neighborhood –this parish is in a serious inner city neighborhood. Drugs Poverty. The only thing lacking is charm. It ain't pretty.

### Building

- The church building is a modest converted protestant church. Not distinctive on outside but looks like “a church”. The interior is very nicely done. Iconostasis. Clean neat. Pewless. This has been their worship home for 30 years.
- Parking is available. Modest parish hall is not lavish but good enough.

### Parish Membership

- Founded in the mid fifties the parish has fluctuated between 65 and 80 adults. There are 17 in the church school. Parish has recently dropped below 60 adults.
- Median parishioner age is 53. Burials = baptisms.
- Ten new households have been added to the parish in ten years. Twelve have left due to death, job or parish transfer and fading away.
- Most parishioners are white collar. Some professionals. Nobody lives in the church neighborhood.
- *There are converts in this parish.* In some families both spouses are converts. Some single converts are present on the parish rolls. It's a multi-ethnic parish with a Slavic plurality.
- Parishioners have been well formed. Some serious teaching has been going on here. They have an above average understanding of the Orthodox faith.

### Parish Atmosphere and Ministry

- Attendance: Divine Liturgy - 60. Vespers 6-8+ persons. A full liturgical schedule is offered. Gospel is preached well.
- Parish seems capable of change.
- Those that are here are committed to the parish.
- Stewardship is better than in many parishes. Typical donation per household is \$1250/yr. 20% of households donate more than \$3000/yr to the parish.
- Laughter is present on Sunday AM. People are happy to see one another.
- People meet at one another's homes for fellowship and study.
- For a variety of reasons the parish has had a number of pastoral transitions in the past 15 years. A new priest is arriving soon.

- Some have talked about a ministry to the neighborhood of some sort but nothing has ever taken root.
- Modest charitable activity collecting canned goods has recently begun.
- Recently as parish life has felt frayed around the edges the topic of moving to a suburban neighborhood has entered the parish conversation.

## Your Assignment

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Explore the question of fleeing to the suburbs for this parish?

1. Break the group in half. Work in parallel.
  - a. Ask group A to be the “Pro stay” group. Write 5+ reasons to stay in this location. Write down any assumptions you make.
  - b. Ask Group B to be the Pro Go group. Write down five reasons to move to the ‘burbs. Write 5+ reasons to leave. Write down any assumptions are you make.
2. Switch hats Group B adopt stay. Group A Pro go.
3. Share results. Which prevails? Can you define a set of circumstances in which the opposite opinion would prevail?
4. What did you learn?