Profile# 2

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Small Town; Young Parishioners

Fix This Small Parish: What Would You Do?

The following are characteristics of a small Orthodox parish. Some are clear limitations. Others are strengths. If you were the priest or lay leader what would you do?

**Quick Summary**

A parish with reasonable assets & strengths is limited by its small town, the availability and competencies of the priest, its finances and the availability of lay leader time & strengths. They are also stuck in the rut of keepin’ on keepin’ on. They need a spark–but from where – and a direction – to where?

# Founded

1980

# Location

Small town with population 11,000. 90 min from major city.

Only Orthodox Church within 45 minute radius. Population in 15 mile radius ~ 69,000

Local economy decent; population stable

# Membership

Today: Reported 25 + 10 children

Same approximate size soon after founding. *Membership had been 10-15 people higher at one time.*

Median age 50

Previous year: 1 reception, 3 xferred in; 3 xferred out

# Church Building

Former Protestant church purchased for very little.

Old building’ larger than needed.

Roof needs constant maintenance

Limited parking.

Exterior is drab. Small sign. No curb appeal

# Worship

Sunday Liturgy; typical attendance 30+

Vespers 5-6 people

Choir has some young voices; struggles with leadership

3-4 visitor inquirers/yr.

# Education

6 kids in church school; tough recruiting teachers.

Adult ed. etc. none—tried but dropped due to poor attendance.

# Parish Life Practices

Life dominated by status quo & short term needs.

Claim to have strong desire to grow both spiritually and numerically.

Some charitable effort; modest socializing/ social events.

# Communication Practices

Facebook page; no web site; no clear online story told.

Limited internal use of email etc.

# Financial/Admin

Budget – $38K/yr; short by $3K/yr.

20% of income from fund raising

Donations= $30k from probably 10-15 households.

$35K in bank accounts.

# Priest

Shared with another parish 45 minutes away. 2 Sundays each.

Committed yet tired --*unclear what to do? Possibly not equipped to know what to do.*

Limited computer skills

Decent sermons

Parish rectory plus limited salary and rectory expenses

Priest needs secular employment

# The People

Financial status of parishioners is better than the general population in their area.

Some new families in last few years, but most parishioners have been here > 10 years. Not a large flow of new faces.

Getting tired. Not seeing fruit. Reasonable amount of apathy among many members. (Sunday only; “user/consumers”)

Multiple ethnic groups; Mix of cradles and converts.

Leadership core (4-5) willing to work; reasonably creative; “get it” but “don’t know what to do”

<10% participate in an active ministry –apathy- or lack of organized effort?

# Questions

1. What other info would you like to have?
2. What aspects of this case, if any, remind you of your parish?
3. What does this parish need to become “good at” to make it?
4. What externally focused actions would you take? What internally focused actions would you

take?

1. The Hierarch has told you to let him know what you need. Take him up on the offer. *Let him know what you need.*
2. What tactics that you’ve heard at this Forum would you deploy to make change happen?

# What are The Alternatives?

* Continue as in past. Do essentially little different – simply try to fight the good fight –getting slowly “better” as able; expect similar results as in the past –slow decline.
* Agree on 1 area of parish life to work on together. Commit as a community & individually – & get started.
* Commit to full time priest. ($)
* Other? Combo?