[Stewardship Article for Monthly Parish Periodical]

WITH ALL MY HEART

There was a young man named Jacob who started off in life with questionable character. Catching his brother Esau in a weak moment, Jacob traded a bowl of soup for Esau's birthright. Later tricking his father, Jacob passed himself off as Esau and stole the family blessing. Is it any wonder the name Jacob means "deceiver"?

Forced to leave home because Esau threatened to kill him, Jacob set off for his Uncle Laban's house. On the way, Jacob had a personal encounter with God one night in a dream. This visitation had such a dramatic impact upon Jacob that when he awoke he vowed to give God a tenth of all God prospered him with from that day forward.

Going back to the beginning of our story, how could God use a man of Jacob's character to accomplish his purposes on earth? Remember that God chose Jacob to father the twelve tribes of Israel and to continue the lineage through which the Messiah would eventually come.

God is an expert at seeing something in people's hearts. He is able to turn their lives around for his glory. What did God see in Jacob's heart that was worth saving despite his weaknesses? A generous heart. God saw that Jacob would honor him with his treasures, that he would be a faithful and regular steward of God's blessings.

Our National Church challenges us "to offer our Orthodox Faith to contemporary America." Stewardship is that spiritual resource through which we proclaim Christ as the giver of "every good and perfect gift." God will honor the generosity of our heart to be faithful in the support of the ministries of our Church.

Jacob didn't have much when he made his promise to the Lord. On the night of his dream, Jacob used stones for pillows. Of equal interest is that when he returned home twenty years later, Jacob was a very wealthy man. God had blessed Jacob's Stewardship because Jacob's stewardship had been a blessing to the Lord.

Oftentimes contemporary America will wait before including gifts to God's work in their finances. They're waiting for that next raise, or a better job, or some other reason that appears legitimate. But Jacob found the key to good stewardship. He knew that it included the Lord's work and begins with what you have today.

Practiced over a period of time, good Stewardship brings forth God's blessing to us. Upon Jacob's return home, he encountered the Lord once again. God changed his name from Jacob, "deceiver," to Israel, "a prince of God." Let your Stewardship Commitment say: "I give thanks to you, O Lord, with all my heart." [Psalm 138:1] When we give "with all our heart," we too become princes and princesses of His Kingdom.

Make your 2003 Stewardship Commitment for the Christ's work at our parish "With All Your Heart."

Stewardship Sunday will be [date]

[NAME OF PARISH] GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH
[ADDRESS, CITY, STATE, ZIP CODE] • TELEPHONE [NUMBER] • FACSIMILE [NUMBER]

2003 CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP COMMITMENT CARD

In gratitude for God's blessings, I/we pledge to contribute for Christ's work at [Name of Parish] Church for 2003:

A total amount of $500_____ $750 _____ $1,000 _____ $2,000 _____More/Other _____.

$_____weekly $_____monthly $_____quarterly $_____semi-annually $_____annually

Please Print

Name _____ Telephone Number [____] _____

Address _____ Please return on Stewardship Sunday, [Date], 2003 at

City _____St_____Zip_____ the Liturgy or mail beforehand.

[NAME OF PARISH] GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH
[ADDRESS, CITY, STATE, ZIP CODE] • TELEPHONE [NUMBER] • FACSIMILE [NUMBER]

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Stewardship Sunday 2003
Proverbs 3: 9-1, Luke 6: 38

The beginning of stewardship and the end of stewardship both occur in one place, in the heart of a Christian.

For this reason we chose "With All My Heart" as the theme of our 2003 Christian Stewardship Program.

Stewardship has a three-fold purpose. When carried out, it accomplishes many benefits for the Kingdom of God and the life of the Christian.

The three-fold purpose of stewardship is as follows:

1. Stewardship should glorify and honor God.
2. Stewardship should advance the kingdom of God.
3. Proper stewardship will result in blessing the life of the steward.

Proverbs, chapter three, verses 9-10 says: "Honor the Lord with your substance with your possessions."

Ask yourself the question, "Does the stewardship of my finances honor God?"

In managing your money, do you consider and plan prayerfully, giving priority to God and the things that are of interest and importance to him?

You honor the Lord with your substance by taking a certain portion of your finances and offering it to God as an act of worship.

We honor God and his work when our Stewardship is a generous portion of our income.

The second purpose of stewardship is to provide the means whereby the kingdom of God; the Church can be advanced on earth.

When you truly value the importance of spreading the Gospel and Orthodoxy, you should be motivated to do all you can to ensure that the work of the kingdom of God continues on the earth.

Our National Church calls us this year to "offer our Orthodox Faith to contemporary America."

Your Stewardship offering has a direct impact on continuing the ministries of our Church on the parish and national level.

The third purpose of our stewardship is, with the help of God, to bring increase and blessing into your life.

Luke 6:38 reads: "Give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For the measure you give will be the measure you get back."

According to the words of Jesus, it is the will of God for you to receive God's blessings by doing his will.

You are giving to honor God with your substance.

You are giving to further his work on earth.

God promises to provide for you in order to fulfill your stewardship giving.

Jesus said God's blessing in this area of your life would be in proportion to the measure you give to him.

Paul said it this way: "If we sow sparingly, we will reap sparingly. If we sow bountifully, we will reap bountifully." (II Corinthians 9:6)

God's blessing will come back to you and your family in many ways.

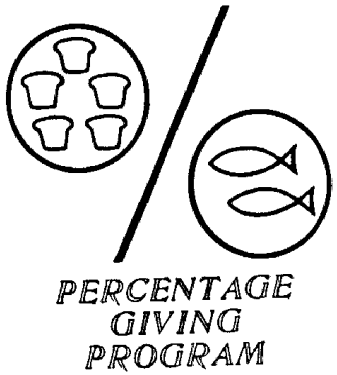
For stewardship to be successful and acceptable, it must be done with all your heart.

Consider God's love for you, the blessings he bestows on you and make your 2003 Stewardship Commitment comparable.

"For the measure you give is the measure you get."

Please increase your giving over last year, as God has blessed you.

May the Lord help us to understand His great love for us and guide us in responding to His love by our Stewardship giving "with all our heart."



WHAT IS STEWARDSHIP?

As Christians, we believe that God is the Giver of all good things. As stewards of God's gifts, we return to him a portion of our time, service and money for Christ's work on earth through his Church.

The Christian Stewardship program of Church support is an opportunity to respond to Christ's love by perpetuating our Church's mission. Stewardship places the responsibility to support the Church exactly where it belongs, on us.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

A Steward, according to the Bible, is one who manages the gifts entrusted to him by God for his welfare and for the perpetuation of the Lord's work.

Our money and possessions are not ours, but on loan. When we give to the Church, we return to God, the Owner, his rightful portion. The more we are given, the more will be expected of us. "Those to whom much is given, much is expected."

WHY IS MONEY NEEDED?

To fulfill the Church's mission, we must commit ourselves to bear our fair share in the financial support of our Church's expenses on a parish, Diocesan and Archdiocesan level. Money is a necessary tool for ministry.

HOW MUCH DOES THE PARISH NEED TO OPERATE?

[Name of Parish] operating budget for the calendar year 2003 will be about $[amount]. The Stewardship Committee has set a goal of $[amount] for Stewardship giving.

2003 BUDGET

OPERATING BUDGET $[AMOUNT]

STEWARDSHIP BUDGET $[AMOUNT]

Our ultimate goal is to raise all our operating budget from Stewardship. We have learned from the past that we cannot depend on special affairs to meet our budget. This will enable us to spend our time in doing the work of the Church and using fund-raisers for special projects and our Building Relocation Program and Development Fund.

The expenses of our Church are categorized as follows: For Keeping in Touch With You (8%), For Maintaining our Buildings (28%), For Those Who Serve Us (38%), For Worship and Education (14%) and For Commitment to the National Church (11%). The quality of our service as a parish depends upon the level of our giving.

WHAT GUIDE CAN I USE TO DETERMINE MY GIVING?

Proportionate giving involves two things. Firstly, that our level of giving rises out of our level of income. Secondly, that giving out of thanks will involve sharing a portion of that income for God's work.

Most of us require guidance as to our level of giving. What we are searching for is "what is a worthy level?" Would a bar of chocolate be a worthy gift to one's wife for her birthday?

The Bible gives much guidance by teaching us that direct giving to God and his work should be proportionate to our income, wealth and possessions. Each person is to give according to his or her own ability.

The Old Testament laid down the standard of the tithe or 10% of one's income. This provides us with the principle that giving should be a proportion of our income. Each Steward should determine what percentage of his or her income will be committed to the Church for 2003.

We should consider what we spend on television, holidays, pets, dining out, sports events, vacations and so on. How do these compare with our giving for God's work?

giving is
GROWING

AM I EXPECTED TO INCREASE MY STEWARDSHIP COMMITMENT FOR 2003?

Yes! In making a decision, one should keep in mind that the expenses of the Church increase every year. In order to meet our 2003 expenses, each Steward should increase his or her commitment.

AM I BOUND TO MY STEWARDSHIP COMMITMENT?

Your Stewardship Commitment is kept in confidence. Jesus taught us that giving should be done quietly, generously and out of sight of others. If you wish to revise your commitment during the year for any reason, you may send a note to the Church Office indicating your intention.

HOW SHALL I PAY MY STEWARDSHIP COMMITMENT?

You may pay your commitment in the manner that suits you best. Since small regular contributions are easier to manage, it is suggested that your contribution be made on a weekly or monthly basis. You may however also contribute, quarterly, semi-annually or annually.

WHO WILL MY STEWARDSHIP COMMITMENT INCLUDE?

The Stewardship Commitment includes husband and wife for married couples and single adults as Stewards. Our Sunday School students will continue to make their own Stewardship Offering each Sunday. Family members over 18 years of age, who are employed, should make their own Stewardship Commitment.

Participation in the Stewardship Program allows each Greek Orthodox Steward to vote and seek elective office in the administration of the parish as provided in the Archdiocesan and Parish by-laws.

HOW WILL MY STEWARDSHIP CARD BE COLLECTED?

The Stewardship Commitment Cards will be collected on...

STEWARDSHIP SUNDAY

[DATE], 2003

after the Divine Liturgy or they can be mailed to the Church Office before [Date], 2003.

HOW CAN A NEW MEMBER JOIN OUR CHURCH?

Orthodox Christians who wish to be served by our parish, may become Stewards of [Name of Parish] by making a Stewardship Commitment for the current year.

"With All My Heart"

CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM 2003

With All My Heart

[PARISH NAME]
GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH
[PARISH ADDRESS]
[CITY STATE, ZIP]

Telephone [Number]
Facsimile [Number]