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Stewardship Ministry: Practical Steps

This booklet and the materials that accompany it are directed to parish leadership throughout the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America as part of an ongoing effort to provide practical and inspirational ministry resources. Stewardship Ministries, in coordination with the other national ministries of the Archdiocese, is offering these resources under the unified theme of *Gather My People to My Home: Come and See*.

Effective stewardship ministry is going out to our people wherever they are in their walk with Christ, helping them to realize their importance as members of the Body of Christ, encouraging them to offer their gifts in His service. We use various resources to support our efforts, but unless we meet with our people face-to-face, sincerely listen to their ideas and concerns, and share a vision for the future of the parish, our efforts will not reach their full potential.



JESUS FEEDS THE MULTITUDES

If we offer what we are able, God will multiply our offering.

DEFINING STEWARDSHIP

In *Oriented Leadership* their book on Orthodox Christian leadership, Williams and McKibben define stewardship as the call of the faithful to share willingly the gifts that God has bestowed on them, including sharing these gifts for God's work. Stewardship is devotion and service to God and His Church as persons, as families, as a Parish, as a Metropolis, as a National Church, and as the Church Universal. Stewardship is our active commitment to use ALL our time, talent and treasure for the benefit of humankind in grateful acknowledgement of Christ's redeeming love.

Stewardship is caring for the needs of others.

Stewardship is offering one's self to God as He offered Himself to us.

Stewardship is what a person does after saying "I believe..." as proof of that belief.

Williams and McKibben in *Oriented Leadership*

STEWARDSHIP WORKS ON MANY LEVELS

Our parishes with successful Orthodox Christian Stewardship Programs have found that incredible support is unleashed from Stewards who willingly, unselfishly and joyfully offer their time, talents and treasures, which in turn enhances the spirituality and ministry of the local parish.

MAILING IS ONLY THE BEGINNING

Mailed communication should be considered only the first step in a comprehensive and effective stewardship ministry. In a parish where stewardship is soundly established and understood, a mail-only stewardship campaign is likely to only maintain current giving levels, and does not do an adequate job of engaging individual members in the life of the parish.

A YEAR-ROUND EFFORT

This packet of resources is the first step in a year-round effort to support parish stewardship ministries and to educate and inspire the faithful. Additional resources will be made available electronically through the Stewardship Web Site (www.Stewardship.goarch.org), E-mail communications and occasionally hard copy sent by regular mail. Please be sure that the Department of Stewardship, Outreach & Evangelism has the email addresses and contact information of your parish Stewardship Team, and your priest(s).

NATIONAL STEWARDSHIP COMMISSION

Stewardship Ministries is supported by the National Stewardship Commission, made up of clergy and laity from each Metropolis and the Archdiocesan District. The Commission meets on a regular basis to share best practices as well as the needs and concerns of the regions they represent. The members of the Commission also encourage and support stewardship ministry at the local level

TRAVEL TEAM OF THE NATIONAL STEWARDSHIP COMMISSION

The National Stewardship Commission includes a Travel Team which offers Stewardship Seminars, and has initiated a program to train stewardship teams in each Metropolis/District which will then train local parish stewardship teams.

PARISH MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE

The Stewardship Commission has established a Committee on Parish Management Software. Committee goals are to evaluate Parish Management Software programs currently available and to make recommendations to the parishes on the most suitable programs for their needs. Additional benefits might include favorable pricing due to number of users, greater ease of reporting to the Metropolis and Archdiocese through compatible formats, and better support through improved communication between parishes and software providers. A most favorable outcome would be the choice of a single package/program, a directive from the Eparchial Synod for installation in the parishes, with funding provided to the parishes for implementation. This effort is being carried out in coordination with Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Departments of Administration, Finance and Information Technologies.

PLANNED GIVING

Resources for planned giving are being developed by the Stewardship Commission in cooperation with the Office of Parish Development. The initial resource is a brochure/handout and poster that encourages people to consider whether they have included the Church in their estate planning, and directs them to their priest for guidance. A network of Orthodox Christian professionals in the field of estate planning will be assembled locally and the parish priest will be able to direct individuals to these

professionals for further guidance. Additional resources will be developed to support the parish priest, Metropolises and New York District in this effort.

PARISH WELCOME FOLDER

To assist and encourage the parishes in reaching out to new members and to inactive members who may be returning to church for a service or sacrament, the department has developed a Welcome Folder which may be personalized by each parish with local information, directories, letters and more.

STEWARDSHIP BANNERS

A full-color, vinyl Stewardship Banner for indoor or outdoor use is available from the Department of Stewardship, Outreach & Evangelism for a nominal cost. This banner incorporates the icon and theme of the current COME AND SEE stewardship program.

UPDATED RESOURCE PACKET

This booklet and accompanying resource packet contain updated guidelines for letters, a sample commitment card and new member card, PowerPoint presentations, various campaign formats and ideas for parish stewardship ministry. These are provided digitally on the enclosed CD and also in hard copy. In addition we have developed a DVD version of the Come and See PowerPoint presentation which may be used during home visits, parish council meetings, stewardship programs and general assemblies. It serves as an excellent opening to discussion on the topic of Orthodox Christian Stewardship. Though we have made every effort to anticipate the needs of the parish stewardship team, the Department of Stewardship, Outreach & Evangelism is available to assist you in customizing these resources. Contact the Department by email (Stewardship@goarch.org), fax (646-519-6166) or by telephone (646-519-6160). We will do our best to accommodate your custom resource request.

May God bless your ministry.

“It (Commitment) thrives on the belief that the judgment and capabilities of each person are valued and respected. Commitment rises spontaneously when people are treated as persons, and it dies a painful death when people are not.”

Williams and McKibben in *Oriented Leadership*

As you organize your efforts, keep in mind...

Emphasize trust in God, not fundraising techniques:

Raising funds for ministry requires knowledge, skill, and systems in place. But most important is your trust in our faithful God to use you to help connect God's people and His resources to His work around the world.

Connect parish operational needs with mission & ministry-based activities:

Combine requests for operations and ministries/programs, building your administrative and fundraising costs into those requests. Design your campaign and communications to reflect the mission of your parish.

Focus on caring for donors, not soliciting donors:

Find out how you can pray for your donors, and do it—over the phone, in person, and in staff meetings. See your efforts as a ministry to your parishioners, and watch the Holy Spirit work through these relationships.

Encourage active stewards to spread the word:

Launch a deliberate effort to specifically ask people for an ongoing commitment to pray, give, and tell others about your parish ministries. Those who commit are with you, so emphasize appreciation and updates with them instead of the usual appeals that everyone else gets.

Look beyond your current needs:

Don't make the mistake of spending all your time chasing the next gift. Design your stewardship program in such a way that nurtures relationships with your parish members that are strong during and even after their lifetimes.

Step up your personal contact strategy:

Ask your parish leaders to help you thank donors—as many and as often as possible. Make stewardship more visible through one-on-one and group meetings.

Let them see what you are doing:

Highlight your successful ongoing ministries and share a vision for future ministries.

Reenergize your member list:

Make a concerted, intentional effort to encourage inactive members to get involved.

Find reasons to communicate more often:

In addition to the normal thank-you note or letter, receipts, and donor updates, find create ways to stay in touch with your members with parish council and ministry updates, new plans, other ministry news, etc. Use good-quality photos whenever possible.

Parishes must also be good stewards:

Take a hard look at your expenses and see if any could be cut or delayed. Share this budget tightening with members so that they know that parish leaders are also being good stewards of the funds entrusted to them.

FIRST STEPS IN PARISH STEWARDSHIP MINISTRY

Preparation

Under the spiritual guidance of your parish priest...

- Meditate on the National Ministries theme;
- Form your Parish Stewardship Team early;
- Build your team of people blessed with a variety of gifts, training and experience;
- Keep the Parish Council informed and active in promoting Stewardship;
- Coordinate communications focusing on stewardship throughout the year;
- Train and encourage team members in outreach and welcoming ministry; and
- Focus on Stewardship of Time, Talent, and Treasure – know the gifts & talents of your people.



“The most basic task of the Church leader is to discern the spiritual gifts of all those under his authority, and to encourage those gifts to be used to the full for the benefit of all. Only a person who can discern the gifts of others and can humbly rejoice at the flowering of those gifts is fit to lead the Church.” - Saint John Chrysostom

Remember that...

- Active parishioners have a sense of belonging to the Body of Christ;
- Parishioners need to know that their concerns are being heard;
- Parish leaders are called to provide opportunities for the spiritual growth of parishioners; and
- Active and dedicated parishioners will want to support the church financially.

As Paul writes to the Corinthians (1Cor 12), *“For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body....”* Each person is a part of the body of Christ. Without them, we are incomplete.



Organizing and Planning

- An effective Parish Stewardship Chair understands and is passionate about ministry;
- The Priest is the spiritual advisor and primary spokesperson/advocate for stewardship through sermons, bulletins, newsletters and visitations.
- A parish council member should act as liaison to the Stewardship Team.
- Team members must lead by example with 100% participation in stewardship.
- The team plans the annual stewardship event, the distribution of stewardship materials, visitations, focus groups, seminars and the general follow-up effort.
- Regular communication among team members by email, conference call and meetings are more frequent in preparation for the stewardship event.
- Personal contact through which parishioners’ concerns and suggestions are heard and noted by the Stewardship Team is critical to the success of the program.
- In-home visitation by members of the team has been shown to be the most effective way of increasing members’ connection to the parish and awareness of current and proposed ministries.
- Small groups or focus groups may be used to supplement individual home visitations or a substitute if visits are not feasible.

ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Though much of this section deals with the mechanics of implementing a stewardship program and the administration of the financial aspect of stewardship, we should not forget that Stewardship is a holistic concept involving the entire person. It is for this reason that the stewardship commitment card asks for the commitment of time, talent and treasure.

STEWARDSHIP AND THE STEWARD

Orthodox Christian Stewardship is a way of life, which acknowledges accountability, reverence, and responsibility before God. A primary goal of Stewardship is to promote spiritual growth and strengthen faith. Becoming a Steward begins when we believe in God, to whom we give our love, loyalty and trust and act on those beliefs. As Stewards, we affirm that every aspect of our lives comes as a gift from Him. Stewardship calls on the faithful to cheerfully offer back to God a portion of the gifts with which they have been blessed.

An Orthodox Christian Steward is an active participant in the life of the Church. The parish encourages all who accept the Orthodox Faith to become practicing Stewards. Each year the Steward is expected to carefully review his or her personal circumstances and make a commitment of time, talent, and treasure to support the Parish and her Ministries, which in turn support the National Ministries of our Archdiocese, Metropolises, and institutions.



STEWARDSHIP AND BUDGET

A successful Orthodox Christian Stewardship Program should provide for the entire Parish Ministries and Operating Budget as well as the growth of those ministries. The parish, in time, will not find it necessary to depend on festivals and other events to meet its financial responsibilities. When a parish first enters into the Orthodox Christian Stewardship Program, proceeds from such events supplement Stewardship revenue shortfalls in meeting the Parish Ministries and Operating Budget. After a few years of concentrated effort and a positive attitude, Stewardship revenues should completely support and provide total coverage and even allow for growth of the budget. Once this has been achieved, festivals and other events may be seen as community events and outreach opportunities, with proceeds going to the capital improvements and/or the philanthropic work of the Church.

AN INSPIRATIONAL BUDGET



A budget is can be an expression of the vision of the parish - its priorities, concerns and plans for the future. Members who see a church doing more than "paying the bills" may be more likely to be inspired by the vision of a church that seeks to serve its parishioners, neighbors and people in need throughout the world. The parish might consider line-items for Charitable Programs, Missions, Outreach, Youth Worker screening and training, Adult Education, Educational Outreach Materials and more. Though some may balk at this extra burden on the budget, others will be inspired by the vision of a parish interested in improving and adding to its ministries.

STEWARDSHIP AND THE PARISH PRIEST

The foremost purpose of the Steward's offering of time, talents, and treasures is to support, maintain and grow the spirituality of the parish. This requires that the Stewardship Committee work closely with the Parish Priest.

The success of the Orthodox Christian Stewardship Program may be directly attributed to the spiritual leadership of the Priest working together with the dedicated Stewardship Committee and Parish Council members. It is suggested that the message of Stewardship be woven into the Priest's sermons, pulpit announcements, and the parish print and electronic media. Statistics have shown that if the Priest does not preach convincingly and project regularly the concept of Stewardship of time, talent and treasure, the program will not be successful. The Priest has the spiritual responsibility to teach Stewardship, which is the Christian understanding of all that we possess – time, talent and treasure.

PERSONAL VISITATION AND SMALL GROUP MINISTRY

In-home visitations have proven to be an effective approach to stewardship education and participation. It is suggested that a parish plan be developed for visiting every parishioner in their home over a period of several years. The visit could include prayer, a conversation outlining the vision of the parish and conveying the understanding that every person is an important part of the body of Christ. The *Come and See* DVD could be used as a conversation starter. It is imperative that team members take time to listen to the people being visited, take note of what is important to them and acknowledge their concerns.

Follow-up would include a hand-written note and/or telephone call. Parish ministry information or resources could be sent that pertain to questions or concerns raised in the conversation, as well as actions being taken by the parish to remedy their concerns. The visitation team should also confidentially inform the priest of any need for special ministry to the specific needs of an individual or family.

Small group stewardship ministry is an alternative to individual home visits and is more effective than simply mailing stewardship materials. It is suggested that groups of 10 to 20 individuals be formally invited to meet in a home, the church library or fellowship room. The meeting would include prayer, a conversation outlining the vision of the parish. Team members should take time to listen to the people, discussing what is important to them and acknowledging their concerns. Follow-up would be the same as for in-home visitations.

NO MINIMUM OR MAXIMUM COMMITMENT

All parishioners freely declare their annual commitment by submitting a Stewardship Commitment Card. The fundamental premise of Stewardship is free-will giving, with each individual giving as he or she is able in order to advance the ministries of the Church. In accordance with the principle of free-will giving, there should be no minimum or maximum Stewardship commitment.

NEED FOR COMMUNICATION

The message of Stewardship should be kept at the forefront of the congregation through regular communication throughout the year, especially at the inauguration of the Stewardship Program. Sermons, reflections, announcements, bulletins, newsletters, the Bulletin Builder Program (www.bulletin.goarch.org), the parish e-mail listserver (a free service of the Archdiocese) posters and brochures are important components of a comprehensive, year-round stewardship program. Experience has shown that stewardship

offering envelopes and the mailing of monthly/quarterly Stewardship statements to all Stewards increases the timely fulfillment of Stewardship commitments. Follow-up telephone calls are also a very effective means of connecting with our members.

DONOR TRACKING SOFTWARE

Many parishes utilize church management software programs to assist in compiling and managing Stewardship information. Information provided by church management programs assists parish ministries by providing a dynamic record of member families and their parish involvements. This software is invaluable to a strong Stewardship Program, providing information needed for ministry to specific segments of the parish.

PLEASE NOTE: The Stewardship Commission has established a Committee on Parish Management Software. Committee goals are to evaluate Parish Management Software programs currently available and to make recommendations to the parishes on the most suitable programs for their needs. Additional benefits might include favorable pricing due to number of users, greater ease of reporting to the Metropolis and Archdiocese through compatible formats, and better support through improved communication between parishes and software providers. This effort is being carried out in coordination with Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Departments of Administration, Finance and Information Technologies.

PARISH PRINT AND ELECTRONIC MEDIA

As mentioned above, the message of Stewardship can be reinforced through brochures, posters, the parish newsletter, the Sunday bulletin, E-Bulletins (www.bulletin.goarch.org), the parish web site, the parish e-mail list (a free service of the Archdiocese) and more. The Priest and Stewardship Committee should emphasize that Stewards are expected to assume their proportionate responsibility to support Christ's Church. Stewards should be encouraged to offer their time and talents to the ministries of the Church. The stewardship team may also choose to produce a parish Stewardship Newsletter, depicting active parish life and offering inspirational messages and updates on stewardship commitments year-to-date. A number of useful resources are provided on the CD included in the stewardship packet.

DISTINCTIVE STATIONERY

Custom designed stationery and envelopes serve to differentiate and highlight Stewardship communications from other parish mailings and focus the attention of the parishioners on Stewardship.

PERSONAL FOLLOW-UP LETTERS

Personal follow-up letters will support the stewardship effort.

Consider sending a personalized thank you letter for:

- each stewardship commitment;
- offerings at year's end; and
- providing their time and talent after a parish function or activity.

NEW STEWARDS

Orthodox Christians become Stewards of your Parish as a part of their spiritual growth. Other contributing factors are good Christian Education, a sense of belonging & participation, effective Youth Ministries, and the desire to take part in the Sacraments and Rites of the Church. When individuals indicate an interest in becoming Stewards of your

parish, the church staff should send the prospective Stewards a Welcome Packet which would include Enrollment Information which they are to complete and return. The Priest and the Stewardship Committee Chairman may choose to arrange for an introductory meeting with prospective and new Stewards. This will provide an opportunity to familiarize them with the Parish Ministries and the Stewardship Program. Welcome Folders are available from the Department of Stewardship, Outreach and Evangelism.

NEW STEWARD ENROLLMENT INFORMATION MAILING

The Stewardship Enrollment Information Packet consists of:

- **Invitation Letter**, personally inviting the individuals to become Stewards, with a short description of their responsibilities;
- **Family Information Card**;
- **Stewardship Commitment Card** and return envelope;
- **Additional parish information** – current bulletin, newsletter, etc.;
- **A relevant brochure** from Stewardship, Outreach & Evangelism; and
- **A planned giving brochure** to encourage larger gifts and bequests.

NEW STEWARD ENROLLMENT PROCEDURE

The Family Information Card and Stewardship Commitment Card should be completed and returned to the Church Office and be entered into the parish database. The new Stewards will then receive all parish communications and offering envelopes and be entered as subscribers to the *Orthodox Observer*.

Some parishes offer online enrollment and pledging through the parish website.

COLLECTION/METHODS OF PAYMENT

- **Offering Basket:** During the Sunday Divine Liturgy, weekly stewardship envelopes may be placed in the offering tray passed during Divine Liturgy or placed in an appropriate location in the narthex.
- **By Mail:** Regular weekly or monthly stewardship contributions may be mailed to the church office. Stewards should use offering envelopes or clearly indicate their membership number so that the purpose of their contribution is clear to those who process the payment.
- **Online Bill Payment:** More and more people handle their financial commitments electronically. This is a very suitable method for offering our “first fruits” to the Lord rather than offering only that which remains. Stewards may very easily set up automatic periodic payments from their bank to the church in fulfillment of their stewardship obligation.
- **Parish Pay / PayPal:** There are a number of companies facilitating payment by debit or credit card. Many parishes have set up links on their parish web site permitting individuals to submit their financial support through an online credit or debit payment. See an example of this at: www.holytrinity.oh.goarch.org/34/Donation-Options.html

WEEKLY OFFERING ENVELOPES

A weekly envelope system works well as a collection vehicle for some parishioners, a reminder for others, and a way to send offerings when attending Church is not possible. A significant percentage of the offerings may be received through the mail.

Consider offering envelopes for Sunday School students and encourage teachers to instill in their students the Orthodox Christian principles of Stewardship.

MAKE YOUR PARISH STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM A COMMUNITY EVENT

Through creative understanding of the specific make-up of your parish, the Parish Stewardship Team should tailor the Parish Stewardship Program to have the greatest impact on as many parishioners as possible. Stewardship goes hand-in-hand with outreach as we welcome new members into our parish each week. As people begin to feel connected to the parish, they also want to offer their time, talent and treasure in support of her ministries.

Multi-Week Stewardship Event

Though many parishes designate November as their stewardship month, the parish Stewardship Committee, in consultation with the parish priest should plan a suitable period of time for the parish stewardship event. Awareness and understanding of the importance of stewardship can be increased through the Sunday sermon (sample sermons will be forthcoming - sent directly to parish clergy), Speakers of all ages sharing the importance of the Church in their lives, Sunday bulletins, newsletters, Stewardship literature, Stewardship PowerPoint presentations, slide shows or videos of parish life, community luncheons, and much more. This year the Stewardship resources include a professionally produced DVD on the theme of Come and See. Keep in mind that IOCC (International Orthodox Christian Charities) Sunday is scheduled each year by SCOBA on the Sunday before Thanksgiving.

PREPARATION FOR THE ANNUAL STEWARDSHIP EVENT

The **Stewardship Commitment Event** is the inauguration of the annual Stewardship Program, taking the form of a series of Sundays leading up to Stewardship Sunday.

Prior to the event, prospective Stewards receive a Stewardship Mailing explaining the program and its importance to their spiritual life and the growth of Parish Ministries. The mailing is an invitation to become a Steward (a Commitment Card is enclosed in the mailing), as well as to participate in the Stewardship Event. These activities may include some or all of the following:

- Stewardship sermon or series of sermons given by the Priest;
- Testimonial by Stewards of various ages and parish involvements;
- Special collection of commitment cards;
- Offertory Prayer;
- Reception, luncheon, or other special fellowship activities; and
- A multi-week Stewardship campaign culminating in Stewardship Sunday.

CHOOSING THE DATES

A Sunday or a series of Sundays in November prior to Thanksgiving Day or dates more suitable for your parish calendar should be designated for the Stewardship Event. It is best to inaugurate the Stewardship Program at the same time each year. The dates should be chosen early to allow for proper preparation. Scheduling conflicts will arise, so have your date approved by your parish priest and parish administrator. Be aware that the Sunday prior to Thanksgiving is traditionally IOCC Sunday (designated by SCOBA).

STEWARDSHIP EVENT INVITATION MAILING

The Stewardship Committee, with oversight from the parish Priest, prepares the Stewardship Event Invitation Mailing. The mailing deadline should be at least 10 days before the first Sunday of the Stewardship Event or 21 days before Stewardship Commitment Sunday. The Invitation Mailing should contain the following five items:

- **Invitation Letter** from the Priest;
- **Stewardship Commitment Card;**
- **Tri-Fold brochures;**
- **A #9 return envelope** addressed to the Stewardship Program at your parish; and
- **A #10 envelope** in which to mail the above items, printed with the Steward's name and address.

The Invitation Letter prepared by the parish Priest is addressed to the Stewards of the parish. The letter informs the stewards of the designated Sundays and requests that Stewards bring their Commitment Cards on Stewardship Sunday or mail them to the church office. The letter should be personalized by computer merge with the Steward's name, address and greeting, producing a personalized letter for each Steward.

An ideal approach would have a letter that is focused on the individual member's demographics and level of parish involvement. The vision of the parish should be outlined and include the parish mission statement (if one has been formulated) or aspects of the mission statement of the Archdiocese:

The mission of the Archdiocese is to proclaim the Gospel of Christ, to teach and spread the Orthodox Christian faith, to energize, cultivate and guide the life of the Church in the United States of America according to the Orthodox Christian faith and Sacred Tradition.

The Archdiocese sanctifies the faithful through the Divine Worship, especially the Holy Eucharist and other Sacraments, building the spiritual and ethical life of the faithful in accordance with the Holy Scriptures, Sacred Tradition, the doctrines and canons of the Ecumenical and local Synods, the canons of the Holy Apostles and Fathers of the Church and of all other Synods recognized by the Orthodox Church, as interpreted by the Great Church of Christ in Constantinople.

The Archdiocese serves as a beacon, carrier and witness of the message of Christ to all persons who live in the United States of America, through Divine Worship, preaching, teaching and living the Orthodox Christian faith. As to its intra-Orthodox, intra-Christian and inter-religious activities, the Archdiocese follows the positions and guidelines established by the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

The letter should illustrate to the parishioner three major accomplishments in ministry of the past year and three ministry goals for the coming year. People are more likely to respond positively to vision that produces results. It is suggested that those ministry goals and accomplishments include youth ministry and ministry to seniors, as well as some form of outreach or service to the community.

The Stewardship Commitment Card is preprinted with the Steward's name, address, and a place for the amount to be offered. The name and address should be merged onto the card or labels may be prepared and placed in the designated area. A sample Commitment Card is provided for your convenience. See the Stewardship CD for electronic versions of Commitment Cards. Prepare additional blank Commitment Cards to be available on Stewardship Sunday to those who do not bring their completed Cards.

A Stewardship Brochure should be enclosed with the Commitment Card presenting Stewardship in light of the National Ministries theme. The Department of Stewardship, Outreach & Evangelism has suitable brochures which are included in the Stewardship Resource packet. The text and graphics are available on the Resource Disk and the Stewardship website for those parishes that choose to customize the brochure to better serve their needs.

STEWARDSHIP SUNDAY

STEWARDSHIP SUNDAY PROGRAM

The priest coordinates and leads the Stewardship Sunday Program, assisted by the Stewardship Committee and the Parish Council. The program would do well to include a personal testimony by a steward of the parish who speaks on the spiritual rewards of Stewardship giving. This type of message can prove to be very moving and inspirational. A podium is set on the solea for this purpose. The resource packet includes a COME AND SEE DVD (6:47) which may be played as an introduction to the program.

COLLECTION OF STEWARDSHIP CARDS

After the Divine Liturgy is completed and the Stewardship speaker has completed his or her talk, the Stewardship Committee Chairman and the Parish Council President, each bearing an offering tray, lead the Parish Council to the solea.

The Priest is the first to place his Stewardship Commitment Card in the offering tray. Then the Priest will take the tray and hold it as each Parish Council member places his or her Stewardship Commitment Card in the tray. The Parish Council President and Stewardship Committee Chairman receive the trays from the Priest and proceed to pass the trays among the congregation assisted by other Council Members.

After the Stewardship Cards are collected, the Parish Council President and the Stewardship Committee Chairman return the trays to the Priest. They both remain on the Solea in front of the Altar.

The Priest faces the Altar Table and either reads alone or invites the congregation to read the Stewardship Offertory Prayer. (If the Priest wishes, he can print the prayer in the Sunday Bulletin so that the congregation can read it with him.)

The Priest returns the trays to the Parish Council President and Stewardship Committee Chairman, who place them in the church offering for processing.

SUGGESTED OFFERTORY PRAYER

Adapted from the Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great

Priest: Let us pray to the Lord.

People: Lord, have mercy.

Priest [or People Together]: O Lord our God, You created us and brought us into this life. You showed us the way to salvation and have granted us the revelation of the heavenly mysteries. Accept our Stewardship Offering as an acceptable sacrifice and in return send down upon us the grace of your Holy Spirit. Look down on us, O Lord, and accept our Stewardship Commitment as You accepted the gifts of Abel, the offerings of Noah, the burnt offerings of Abraham, the priestly sacrifices of Moses and Aaron and the peace offerings of Samuel. Accept also now, in your goodness, O Lord, these gifts from the hands of us sinners, making us worthy of the reward of the faithful and wise stewards on the fearful day of Your just judgment.

For You are the God of mercy, love and salvation and we glorify You, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages.

People: Amen.

FOLLOW-UP PROGRAM

ONGOING REMINDERS

Stewardship Commitment Cards provide confirmation of a commitment to support the Parish Ministries. A dedicated effort to encourage 100 percent support from the Stewards is essential. Parish Bylaws may be revised to stipulate that participation in Parish Elections or Assemblies requires a Stewardship commitment by March 1 of the current year.

Sample letters to support the follow-up program are included in this booklet and on the Stewardship CD for easy reproduction. The Stewardship team should plan to send quarterly follow-up letters through September, followed by a special letter in early December and, if needed, an end-of-year letter.

QUARTERLY STEWARDSHIP OFFERING STATEMENTS

The Quarterly Stewardship Offering Statements are an important means of communication, allowing the Stewardship Committee to regularly and formally communicate with, update the status of, and thank the stewards for their support. It is best if the accompanying letter and statement are personalized for each Steward. Included in the statements could be progress reports on parish programs or information on new initiatives taken in response to their concerns. Including a brief update letter on the parish and its ministries will keep the statement from looking and feeling like just another bill.

CONFIDENTIAL CATEGORIZATION OF STEWARDS

For better management and organization, the committee may find it useful to segment the Stewards into several groups—confidentially and strictly for office and committee use only. Each group will receive a slightly different cover letter with their statement, reflecting the progress of their commitment payment for the current year.

Committed (Fulfilled) Stewards are those who have submitted a Commitment Card and made offerings in an amount sufficient to fulfill their commitment for the year. They receive the standard cover letter of appreciation and Quarterly Statements.

Committed (Ongoing) Stewards have submitted a Commitment Card and have made offerings, but the total offered amount does not yet fulfill the committed amount. They receive the standard cover letter of appreciation with each Quarterly Statement. If their Commitment is not fulfilled by early December, a special solicitation letter is sent.

Non-Committed Parishioners have been Stewards of the parish but have neither signed a Commitment Card nor made an offering in the current year. They receive a special cover letter each quarter as a gentle urging to take on their responsibilities as a Steward. The Priest and Stewardship Committee should make every effort to stay connected with these individuals and to discover why a Commitment was not made or fulfilled. Refer to the Uniform Parish Regulations (Article 18) regarding the obligations of a parishioner in good standing.

It is important to listen respectfully to the individual's concerns about their commitment and/or the church. Any concern about church operations or ministries should be noted. Follow-up would include an update on what is being done in the area of concern, or if nothing is being done, a reason (i.e. lack of funding, staffing, etc.) should be offered. If the possibility of hardship is perceived, the conversation should be respectfully brought to a close and the situation referred immediately to the presiding priest of the parish.

Please note: Some parishioners may choose to make offerings of time, talent, and treasure but do not submit a formal commitment. These parishioners may be treated as Stewards of the church. The church office or Stewardship Committee will need to tailor stewardship mailings specifically for this group. Every effort should be made to encourage these parishioners to make a formal commitment.

END-OF-YEAR PROCEDURE

THE IMPORTANCE OF AN END-OF-YEAR PROCEDURE

Ideally, every Steward is an active supporter of the ministries of the parish by offering their time, talents and treasure. Unfortunately, this is not always the case. People move in and out of the church's area of service, change residence, or may lose interest in pursuing active participation as a Steward. Identifying those who have not fulfilled their commitments as well as those who have not committed at all during the year requires special focus and effort.

During the last three months of the year, special appeals should be made to those who are categorized as **Committed (Ongoing)** or **Non-Committed**. These are listed below for your convenience with a brief description of each:

- **Committed (Ongoing) Stewards** have submitted a Stewardship Commitment Card but have not yet fulfilled their commitment. Some in this group may not have made any offerings toward their commitment.
- **Non-Committed Parishioners** are those who neither signed a Stewardship Commitment Card nor made any offering during the year.

PROCEDURE FOR COMMITTED (ONGOING) STEWARDS

In early December, a special letter is sent informing Committed (Ongoing) Stewards of the amount necessary to fulfill their commitment. If no response is received by December 31, a special letter is sent with the Final Stewardship Offering Statement asking for fulfillment of the committed amount. If no offerings have been made toward a Steward's Commitment, you may use the *Letter to Ongoing Stewards who have not yet made Offerings* asking for fulfillment of the pledged amount.

No other action need be taken for those whose pledge remains partially unfulfilled. These partially unfulfilled stewards will be entered into the active rolls for the coming year with a clean slate.

The presiding priest should be provided with a *confidential* list of those individuals from whom no offerings have been received toward their Stewardship Commitment. He will then make a decision as to which of these should remain on the active rolls of the parish.

PROCEDURE FOR NON-COMMITTED PARISHIONER

With each Monthly/Quarterly Stewardship Offering Statement, a special cover letter is sent, reminding the Non-Committed Parishioner to make a commitment for the current year. The letter is sent together with pro forma offering statement showing a blank commitment line and a zero offering to date. In addition, a new Stewardship Commitment Card and return envelope is included.

Early in the New Year, the presiding priest of the parish or an individual that he designates, should contact Non-Committed Parishioners to ascertain why they have not committed and personally invite them back into the life of the church. As noted above, it is imperative that the caller listen carefully to the concerns of the Non-Committed Parishioner. Confidential notes on the conversation should be forwarded to the presiding priest for follow-up. It is important to note that people become disenfranchised when they feel that they are not being heard. A thoughtful and considered follow-up to their stated concerns may bring them back into the fold.

At some point, Non-Committed Parishioners are reviewed with the Parish Priest and decisions are made with respect to removal from the active rolls. This should be seen only as a last step, after multiple attempts have been made to bring them back into the active life of the church, or when it has been determined that they have become stewards of a different parish.

“Come and See”

ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM
[Parish Name] Greek Orthodox Church
Address, City, State, Zip and Telephone

[Date]

Mr. & Mrs. John Member
1 Yourstreet Place
Yourtown, ST 33740

← Letter should be personalized

Dear John and Mary,

← Use first names

To be a member of the Church is not the same as being a member of a club or civic group. The Church is the “Body of Christ” (1 Corinthians 12). Just as every member has a different function in the human body, so do we each have a specific function or calling in His Church. God did not create each of us to do the same thing.

When Jesus called His disciples, we read that Philip brought Nathaniel to Jesus, telling him to “Come and See.” We extend this same invitation to you to Come and See what the Church can become with your time, talent and treasure dedicated to the Lord’s ministries.

This past year we initiated ministry programs in the areas of Youth, Seniors and Outreach [briefly describe programs]. In the coming year we expect to launch the following ministry initiatives [briefly describe ministry initiatives].

We ask you to support these worthy ministries. Giving to His Church is a way to thank God for His grace and generosity. The question is not, “How much do I give to stay in the club?” or “What are the dues?” but “How can I thank God for my many blessings?”

Before completing and mailing the enclosed Commitment Card and Information Form, please give prayerful consideration to the commitment you are making. A check mailed to the church is most meaningful when accompanied by your presence, by your willingness to serve, by your prayers, and by your commitment. Giving is not a substitute for commitment – it is an expression of your commitment. **“Now you are the body of Christ, and individually members of it”** (1 Corinthians 12:27).

Yours in Christ,

[Signature]

Rev. Fr. [Name of Priest]

Letter No. 2: Stewardship Event / Stewardship Sunday Invitation Letter
Enclose a Stewardship Commitment Card, Tri-Fold Brochure and Return Envelope

“Come and See”

ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

[Parish Name] Greek Orthodox Church

Address, City, State, Zip and Telephone

[Date]

Mr. & Mrs. John Member
1 Yourstreet Place
Yourtown, ST 33740

← Letter should be personalized

Dear John & Mary,

← Use first names

To be a member of the Church is not the same as being a member of a club or civic group. The Church is the “Body of Christ” (1 Corinthians 12), and every member of His body has a specific function or calling in His Church.

This past year, with the support of our members, we initiated ministry programs in the areas of Youth, Seniors and Outreach [briefly describe programs]. In the coming year we expect to launch the following ministry initiatives [briefly describe ministry initiatives].

I invite you to be with us at Saint George Church for three special Sundays beginning on _____ and concluding on _____. Over these three weeks we will worship together as we do every Sunday. In addition, we will learn more about our parish of Saint George, our leadership, our ministries, and our vision for the future. At the conclusion of these three weeks, on Sunday, _____, we encourage you to bring the enclosed commitment card indicating the time, talent and treasure that you will offer as a member of the Church, the Body of Christ on earth.

When Jesus called His disciples, we read that Philip brought Nathaniel to Jesus, telling him to “Come and See.” I invite you to Come and See the work of the Holy Spirit among us. Prayerfully consider your offering of time, talent and treasure to help us to grow our ministries.

Before completing your Commitment Card, please give prayerful consideration to the commitment you are making. A check mailed to the church is most meaningful when accompanied by your presence, willingness to serve, prayers, and commitment. Giving is not a substitute for commitment – it is an expression of your commitment. **“Now you are the body of Christ, and individually members of it”** (1 Corinthians 12:27).

I offer you my thanks for your generosity and partnership in Christ’s work of salvation.

Yours in Christ,

[Signature]

Rev. Fr. [Name of Priest]

Letter No. 3: Quarterly Statement Letter To Fulfilled And Ongoing Stewards
Enclose a Stewardship Statement

“Come and See”

ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM
[Parish Name] Greek Orthodox Church
Address, City, State, Zip and Telephone

[Date]

Mr. & Mrs. John Member
1 Yourstreet Place
Yourtown, ST 33740

← Letter should be personalized

Dear John & Mary,

← Use first names

Enclosed is your Stewardship Commitment Statement as of [date]. Thank you for your support of the [Parish Name] Orthodox Christian Stewardship and Ministries Program.

Stewardship is an opportunity to examine our priorities and values, to express our thankfulness, to give of ourselves and to grow in grace. It allows us to participate in the work of God. Come and see what we can do together with your support.

You are encouraged to offer your prayerful thanks and continue in the fulfillment of your commitment to Christ’s Church in thanksgiving for His many blessings to you.

Your Stewardship Commitment is a testimony of your dedication to your own spiritual growth and the spreading our beloved Orthodox Faith. I thank you on behalf of [Parish Name].

Yours in Christ,

[Signature]
Rev. Fr. [Name of Priest]
[Title]

“Come and See”

ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM
[Parish Name] Greek Orthodox Church
Address, City, State, Zip and Telephone

[Date]

Mr. & Mrs. John Member
1 Yourstreet Place
Yourtown, ST 33740

← Letter should be personalized

Dear John & Mary,

← Use first names

Enclosed is your Stewardship Commitment Statement as of [date]. Thank you for signing a [year] Orthodox Christian Stewardship Commitment Card to support the Ministries of [Parish Name]. Your Stewardship provides the foundation for our service in the Lord.

As a valued Steward and supporter of our Parish, we lovingly remind you that as of this writing we have not received any offering toward your annual Stewardship Commitment.

Stewardship is an opportunity to examine our priorities and values, to express our thankfulness, to give of ourselves and to grow in grace. It allows us to participate in the work of God. Come and see what we can do together with your support.

Please take the time to make your offering today and enable our Church to continue to enhance the spiritual growth of the Orthodox Christians entrusted to our care.

May our Lord richly bless you in all things.

Yours in Christ,

[Signature]
Rev. Fr. [Name of Priest]
[Title]

Letter No. 5: Non-Committed Parishioner Quarterly Statement Letter
Enclose: Stewardship Statement, New Stewardship Commitment Card and a Return Envelope

“Come and See”

ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM
[Parish Name] Greek Orthodox Church
Address, City, State, Zip and Telephone

[Date]

Mr. & Mrs. John Member
1 Yourstreet Place
Yourtown, ST 33740

← Letter should be personalized

Dear John & Mary,

← Use first names

As a valued Steward and supporter of [Parish Name], we lovingly remind you that as of this writing we have not received a Stewardship Commitment Card or an offering to the Church for [year].

Your Stewardship provides the foundation for our Parish Ministries and our efforts in meeting the challenge of spreading Christ’s Word and our Orthodox Faith.

Stewardship is an opportunity to examine our priorities and values, to express our thankfulness, to give of ourselves and to grow in grace. It allows us to participate in the work of God. Come and see what we can do together with your support.

Please take time to make your Stewardship Commitment today and enable our Church to meet the many pressing needs of ministry we face. For your convenience, we have enclosed are a Stewardship Commitment Card and return envelope.

May our Lord richly bless you and your family in all things.

Yours in Christ,

[Signature]
Rev. Fr. [Name of Priest]
[Title]

Letter No. 6: Ongoing Stewards December Solicitation Letter
Enclose a Stewardship Offering Statement

“Come and See”

ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM
[Parish Name] Greek Orthodox Church
Address, City, State, Zip and Telephone

[Date]

Mr. & Mrs. John Member
1 Yourstreet Place
Yourtown, ST 33740

Dear John & Mary,

With Christmas almost upon us, we at [Parish Name] are truly thankful for you and your family here in our Church. You are a vital part of our Church Community.

Please take a few minutes to review your [year] Stewardship Commitment of [\$?.00] in support of our Parish Ministries. To date you have sent [\$?00] in offerings toward fulfillment of that commitment.

Kindly consider this reminder during this season of joy and good will. Please complete your Stewardship Commitment for [year] and ensure the success of the programs undertaken for the spiritual needs of the families entrusted to our care. Remember that your Stewardship provides the foundation for our Parish Ministries and our efforts in meeting the challenge of spreading Christ’s Word and our Orthodox Faith.

Stewardship is an opportunity to examine our priorities and values, to express our thankfulness, to give of ourselves and to grow in grace. It allows us to participate in the work of God. Come and see what we can do together with your support.

May the grace of our Lord bless you and your loved ones to experience the joy of Christ’s Birth through the joy of giving.

Yours in Christ,

[Signature]
Rev. Fr. [Name of Priest]
[Title]

Sample STEWARDSHIP FAMILY INFORMATION CARD
 SIZE: 1/3 of an 8½ X 11 Sheet (Fits in a #9 or #10 Envelope)

SIDE A

SAINT GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH CONFIDENTIAL FAMILY INFORMATION FORM – SIDE A
Please complete both sides and return this form to the Church Office

Family Name: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State ____ Zip _____

Home Telephone: _____

	Husband	Wife	Children / Age
Name:	_____	_____	_____ / _____
Mobile Tel:	_____	_____	_____ / _____
E-mail:	_____	_____	_____ / _____
Occupation:	_____	_____	_____ / _____
Work Tel:	_____	_____	_____ / _____

SIDE B

SAINT GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH CONFIDENTIAL FAMILY INFORMATION FORM – SIDE B
Please complete and return this form to the Church Office

Family Name: _____

Please check ✓ those items in which you or a member of your family has some expertise or interest.

If not listed, please add on the line labeled “Other”

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bible Study | <input type="checkbox"/> Youth Work | <input type="checkbox"/> Real Estate Management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching | <input type="checkbox"/> Sunday School | <input type="checkbox"/> Medical |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Greek Language School | <input type="checkbox"/> Church Choir | <input type="checkbox"/> Church Camp |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Visitation of Elderly/Infirm | <input type="checkbox"/> Cooking-Events or Outreach | <input type="checkbox"/> Youth Ministry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Scouting | <input type="checkbox"/> Finance | <input type="checkbox"/> Nursery |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Computer - general | <input type="checkbox"/> Legal | <input type="checkbox"/> Ushering / Welcome |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Computer – Web Site Mgt | <input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical / Plumbing | <input type="checkbox"/> Reader (in liturgy) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parish Newsletter | <input type="checkbox"/> Construction | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gardening | <input type="checkbox"/> Office Work | _____ |

Note to Parish Stewardship Team:

If an individual indicates an interest, it must be acknowledged. To solicit volunteers and ignore their offer of assistance will likely have a negative effect on their parish participation in general and on stewardship specifically.

Sample STEWARDSHIP COMMITMENT CARD
SIZE: 1/3 of an 8½ X 11 Sheet (Fits in a #9 or #10 Envelope)

“Come and See”

2010 SAINT GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH CONFIDENTIAL STEWARDSHIP COMMITMENT CARD – SIDE A

Please bring this card to church on Stewardship Sunday, _____

Family Name: _____

Existing stewards need only indicate changes to the following information:

Address: _____ City: _____ State ____ Zip _____

Home Telephone: _____

In gratitude for God’s blessings I/we make the following commitment to the ministries of St George Church:

\$_____ Weekly

OR You may choose to offer guidelines as follows:

\$10 weekly (\$520) \$15 weekly (\$780) \$20 weekly (\$1040) \$50 weekly (\$2600) Other _____

Come and See God work through your talents, skills and experience, as well as your financial support.

Your offering to Christ and His Church can do as much as you empower it to do.

We give to Christ and His Church not according to our means but according to our love for Him.

“Come and See”

2010 SAINT GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH CONFIDENTIAL STEWARDSHIP COMMITMENT CARD – SIDE B

Please bring this card to church on Stewardship Sunday, November 15, 2009

Family Name: _____

I/We would like to offer my/our time & talents to the ministries of St George Church in the following areas:

Please check ✓

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bible Study | <input type="checkbox"/> Youth Work | <input type="checkbox"/> Real Estate Management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching | <input type="checkbox"/> Sunday School | <input type="checkbox"/> Medical |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Greek Language School | <input type="checkbox"/> Church Choir | <input type="checkbox"/> Church Camp |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Visitation of Elderly/Infirm | <input type="checkbox"/> Cooking-Events or Outreach | <input type="checkbox"/> Youth Ministry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Scouting | <input type="checkbox"/> Finance | <input type="checkbox"/> Nursery |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Computer - general | <input type="checkbox"/> Legal | <input type="checkbox"/> Ushering / Welcome |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Computer – Web Site Mgt | <input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical / Plumbing | <input type="checkbox"/> Reader (in liturgy) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parish Newsletter | <input type="checkbox"/> Construction | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gardening | <input type="checkbox"/> Office Work | _____ |

Come and See God work through your talents, skills and experience, as well as your financial support.

Note to Parish Stewardship Team:

If an individual indicates an interest, it must be acknowledged. To solicit volunteers and ignore their offer of assistance will likely have a negative effect on their parish participation in general and on stewardship specifically.

