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A steward is one who manages another's property or resources; the Christian, therefore, is a steward of everything he is and has, including his own body and soul, for according to the mystery of salvation, we possess nothing from ourselves, not even our own life and being; all belongs to God and is given to us by the Father through His Son because of the richness of His love and mercy.

from The Theology of Stewardship in Light of Orthodox Tradition by Fr Paul Wesche (Light and Life Publishing)

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, is offering these resources under the theme of the 2014 Clergy-Laity Congress “From God every family in heaven and on earth is named” (Ephesians 3:15).

Effective stewardship ministry is not a single event or project. Rather, it is going out to our people wherever they are in their walk with Christ, listening to their concerns, helping them to realize their importance as branches of the True Vine and encouraging them to offer their gifts in His service. We use various resources to support our efforts, but unless we meet with our people personally, 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 ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN 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

ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP: *An Overview*

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 related institutions.



MAKE YOUR PARISH STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM A YEAR-ROUND EFFORT

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 engage new & existing members into the life of the parish. It is also critical that we strengthen the connection of existing members to the parish. As people begin to feel more connected to the parish, they also want to offer their time, talent and treasure in support of her ministries.

Though many parishes designate one month as stewardship month, the parish Stewardship Committee, in consultation with the parish priest should plan a year-round calendar for stewardship ministry. Awareness and understanding of the importance of stewardship can be increased throughout the year in the Sunday sermon, 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.

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 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 capital improvements and/or the philanthropic work of the Church.

AN INSPIRATIONAL BUDGET

A budget is 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” will 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 budget line-items for Charitable Programs, Missions, Outreach, Youth Worker 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.



AVOID “SINKING SHIP” COMMUNICATION



“Our parish’s financial condition has weakened.... Our annual income has decreased, while our operating expenses continue to increase.” “...the situation has not improved.” “...the parish is in financial decline and we must take drastic corrective action.”

In his book, *Giving and Stewardship in an Effective Church*, Kennon Callahan offers the following advice: “When you describe your church as a sinking ship, you will reach fewer people and raise less money. To be sure, you will raise a little money – just enough money to delude yourself that the sinking-ship approach works. When you focus on God’s mission, you will reach more people; you will raise the money for the mission. God’s mission is a winning cause, not a sinking ship.” In the same book Callahan also writes, “Money follows mission, not the reverse. This is a shorthand way of saying that the stronger the congregation’s relational characteristics, the easier it is to raise money. The stronger the congregation’s mission, visitation, worship, groupings, leadership, and decision-making, the stronger the giving.”

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 and mission activity 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.

CLARIFY YOUR PARISH MISSION AND VISION

In the words of Fr. William Chiganos of Holy Apostles Church in Westchester, Illinois, “...people don’t give to need; they give to vision.... Church people don’t stretch their giving because of need to meet the budget; they give more because they are able to see a vision of people being reached and God’s purposes being accomplished in the life of the church and its ministry.” Ministry evaluation and planning can help leadership to clarify your Parish mission and vision. Contact the Dept of Stewardship, Outreach & Evangelism for assistance.

MAIL ALONE IS NOT EFFECTIVE STEWARDSHIP MINISTRY

Mailed communication should be considered only a small component of a comprehensive and effective parish 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 adequately engage members in the life of the parish.

STEWARDSHIP IS NOT ABOUT PAYING THE BILLS.

In our efforts to inform and inspire members to become generous stewards, we should not reduce our responsibilities as members of the Body of Christ to paying the bills. Stewardship is not a program or an appeal. It is a way of life.

AVOID CONSTANT SPECIAL REQUESTS FOR DONATIONS, FUNDRAISERS, JOURNAL ADS, ETC.

In order for stewardship to reach its full potential in the parish, the members need to trust that they will not be inundated with additional requests for donations to special causes throughout the year.

FOCUS ON CARING FOR MEMBERS, NOT SOLICITING THEM.

People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. Find out how you can pray for your members, 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. Incorporate Planned Giving into your stewardship materials. Contact the Department of Stewardship, Outreach & Evangelism for information and resources on Planned Giving.

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 creative ways to stay in touch with your members with parish council and ministry updates, new plans, other ministry news, etc. Use good-quality photos.

PARISHES MUST ALSO BE GOOD STEWARDS.

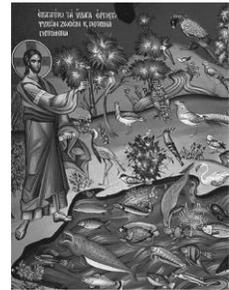
Take a hard look at your expenses and see if any could be cut or delayed. Share this budget tightening with members so that they know that parish leaders are also being good stewards of the funds entrusted to them.

STEWARDSHIP IS ABOUT THE JOY OF GIVING FREELY

Avoid using fear of judgment in the afterlife and emphasize the concept of theosis, which puts the emphasis on experiencing heaven now. Stewardship is a practice that can help shape our world and ourselves in such a way that we can experience God's grace, love and communion in the present. This puts the emphasis more on stewardship being about what is possible for us as humans now rather than later. It also shifts the tone from fear to the potential for experiencing joy. Remind parish members that they are not giving to the parish for any specific purpose. They are giving to God. They are returning to God in thanksgiving for what He has done for them. God is never outdone in generosity. A steward is a manager, someone who looks after someone else's property. That is what we are. We are all managers in God's kingdom, and we have a responsibility to protect and grow God's gifts.

A BROADER PERSPECTIVE: *Stewardship as Creation Care* (Fr. John Chryssavgis)

When we think of the term stewardship, we frequently consider only matters related to financial support. The prevalent rendering of the term *oikonomia* as "stewardship" or "economy" is not very illuminating as it provides both a linguistic as well as conceptual reduction of this critical and originally scriptural word. In so doing, however, we have narrowed the scope of the Bible's teaching and neglected the depth of our Church's tradition about our place and role in the world, indeed at a time when such knowledge is more vital and critical than ever before.



If we turn to the Church Fathers, we see that they attribute the highest importance to *oikonomia* (stewardship or economy), which in their eyes implied a broader and more inclusive concept of revelation and salvation, identified with God's vision and desire to save the whole world. For our great theological teachers and spiritual masters, economy in fact refers to our very salvation by the all-embracing love of God for all humankind and to the universal compassion of the Creator for all creation. Somewhere along the line, we unfortunately shrunk the theme of "stewardship" to purely monetary terms that primarily include making contributions to philanthropic organizations – probably as a result of a narrow interpretation of scripture, and possibly as a result of the rigid focus of modern society.

All of this invariably affects not just our understanding of the moral obligation that we have toward one another as human beings, but also inevitably distorts the worldview that shapes our moral responsibility toward creation. By limiting our attention to divine commandments for human compassion, we have invariably excised from scripture the clear mandate to creation care. Yet, these two dimensions of Christian life are integrally interrelated; one cannot envisage human progress without ecological preservation. The way we treat God's creation in nature essentially reflects the way we respect human beings created "in the image and likeness of God." The reality is that we should respond to nature with the same tenderness that we are called to respond to people. All of our spiritual activities are ultimately measured by their impact on the natural creation; just as all of our ecological choices are finally evaluated by their effect on the poor.

FORMING & PREPARING YOUR PARISH STEWARDSHIP MINISTRY TEAM

Just as the vine bears fruit only through its branches, so Jesus has chosen to work in the world through us. We are the members of His body – the branches through which the Vine must bear fruit. We bear fruit when we serve and support God and His Church.



Choose the Right People

When forming your team that will share the message of stewardship ministry in the parish, it is of utmost importance to choose the right people. Your stewardship team should be made up of Christ-centered, prayerful, positive, forward-thinking people that participate in Divine Liturgy and sacraments of the Church. You can find them on any Sunday in Church. Do not feel that you need finance people on the Stewardship Team. This will only send the message that all you are trying to do is to get people's money.

Choose People that Care about People

The stewardship team must see their calling as a ministry of love for the Church and her members, seeing all members as branches of the True Vine. John C. Maxwell writes, "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care." Stewardship is a ministry that requires us to listen to our people, to know them and to love them.

COMMITMENT

"It 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 & McKibben in Oriented Leadership*

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 stewardship year, the distribution of stewardship materials, events, visitations, focus groups, seminars and the general follow-up effort.
- 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, focus groups and town hall meetings may be used to supplement individual home visitations or they may be a substitute if visits are not feasible.

IDEAS & RESOURCES TO SUPPORT PARISH MINISTRY

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.

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 connection to the Church as 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.

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 list (a free service of the Archdiocese) posters and brochures are important components of a year-round stewardship program. 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.

ENGAGING OUR MEMBERS: PERSONAL VISITATION AND SMALL GROUP MINISTRY

The focus of our efforts is engaging the individual member in the life of the parish. In-home visitations have proven to be a most 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 feasible period of time. 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 Commitment Card should

be reviewed with the individual, gathering information and encouraging them to offer their time & talents in service to the church. A financial commitment should also be encouraged. A good conversation starter is the *Come and See* DVD (7 minutes in length). This may be viewed on the stewardship web site at www.stewardship.goarch.org and is available in DVD format from the Department of Stewardship, Outreach & Evangelism. During visits with parishioners, it is imperative that team members take time to listen to the people being visited, making note of what is important to them and acknowledging 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 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.

IT IS FAR MORE IMPORTANT TO BE INTERESTED THAN INTERESTING

In all of our meetings and conversations with members, it is far more important to be **interested** than **interesting**. Listening is more important than talking. There is no one-size-fits-all approach. The focus should be on the individual's needs, concerns, questions, ideas and suggestions. Ideas and suggestions must be heard and referred to the appropriate individual or organization with a thoughtful response indicating that they have been heard and that they will be: 1. implemented, 2. implemented at a later date, or 3 not implemented with specific reasons. Many people disengage from active participation in church life because they feel that the parish leadership is a closed group that does not respond to their ideas.

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.

RESOURCES FOR A YEAR-ROUND EFFORT

The annual packet of resources is directed to parish leadership throughout the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. Every effort is made to support the parish throughout the year in utilizing these resources to personally engage parishioners in the life of the parish. Brochures, posters, sample commitment card, bulletin inserts and more are provided for parish campaigns, with text and graphics included for those

parishes designing their own materials based on the Archdiocesan theme. Greek language materials are available to parishes as needed. Most items are posted to the www.Stewardship.goarch.org site and are on the resources CD included in the resource packet. Please be sure that the Department of Stewardship, Outreach & Evangelism has the email addresses and contact information of your Stewardship Team and priest(s).

STEWARDSHIP MINISTRIES OF THE GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE

Stewardship Ministries is led by the Director of Stewardship, Outreach & Evangelism in cooperation with the Archdiocesan Council Stewardship Committee and includes representatives from each Metropolis and the Archdiocesan District with the goal of sharing best practices from parishes throughout the country and supporting Archdiocesan efforts to provide guidance and practical resources to the parishes. Please share (stewardship@goarch.org) what is working in your parish so that it may be incorporated into future stewardship resources.

NATIONAL STEWARDSHIP TRAINING

The National Stewardship Ministries Subcommittee on Leadership Training has created an interactive, educational program to offer parish leadership a new vision for stewardship. The program includes training of parish leadership in the principles and procedures for implementing effective parish ministries. Key components of this training include an off-site, interactive seminar, outlining a vision for the future of the parish and developing skills for consensus-building, engagement of volunteers, and development of a council of ministries.

Plans are being formulated and funds allocated to seek out, train and support additional individuals throughout the Archdiocese to carry this message. The program will provide for a uniform message that is coordinated with the various subcommittees and initiatives of Stewardship Ministries, as well as the other departments and ministries of the Archdiocese. This will include a coordinated effort to create or enhance existing parish infrastructure for carrying out effective stewardship ministry, implementing the principles and ideas presented in the training sessions.

Standardized Stewardship Training PowerPoint Presentations have been prepared by clergy and lay leadership of both the Metropolis of Detroit and the Metropolis of Boston and have been adopted as official resources of the Department.

PLANNED GIVING

The National Stewardship Ministries Subcommittee on Planned Giving provides a complete set of resources to the parishes of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America with the goal of assisting parish members in their estate planning while encouraging them to remember the Church in their plans. An by the parish in this program could yield exponential results for the parishes while providing our members with much-needed guidance and materials for end-of-life planning from an Orthodox Christian perspective.

Planned Giving resources have been developed outlining the practical importance of including the Church in one's financial and estate planning, as well as the Orthodox Christian perspective on general end-of-life considerations. Resources include:

1. A General Outline of the Various Ways to Make a Planned Gift;
2. A Tri-Fold Brochure for general distribution in the parish;
3. A Parish Implementation Plan for a Planned Giving Program;
4. A Planned Giving Poster for Display in the Parishes;
5. Sample Documents for Making the desired Planned Gift(s);
6. An Article co-authored by parish priests of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese titled "Practical Considerations" offering guidance from an Orthodox Christian perspective; and
7. A Living Will/End-of-Life Planning Document that is legally binding in most states (in final stages of preparation).

In addition, the department encourages parishes to establish a parish **Eternal Light Society** which would include all those who have made arrangements for a planned gift to the parish. The various programs and benefits of the Eternal Light Society would include regular meetings, luncheons, dinners, newsletters, financial planning seminars, annual artoclasia, annual memorial service and more.

An initial supply of the Planned Giving materials was been distributed to the parishes in 2012. This continues to be supported by ongoing efforts -- articles, ads, etc. -- to encourage and educate the faithful on the importance of planning and the need to remember the Church in their estate plans.

Long-term plans in the area of Planned Giving will include ongoing updates and enhancement to existing resources, promotional materials such as articles by experts in the field and ads to appear in the Orthodox Observer and metropolis and parish newsletters, endorsements from legal and financial professionals, and success stories from individual parishes.

The initial printing of all Planned Giving resources was underwritten by a generous grant from Leadership 100.

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 offers a Welcome Folder to be personalized by each parish with local information, directories, letters and more.



ENGAGING THE PARISHIONERS: ORTHODOX NATURAL CHURCH DEVELOPMENT

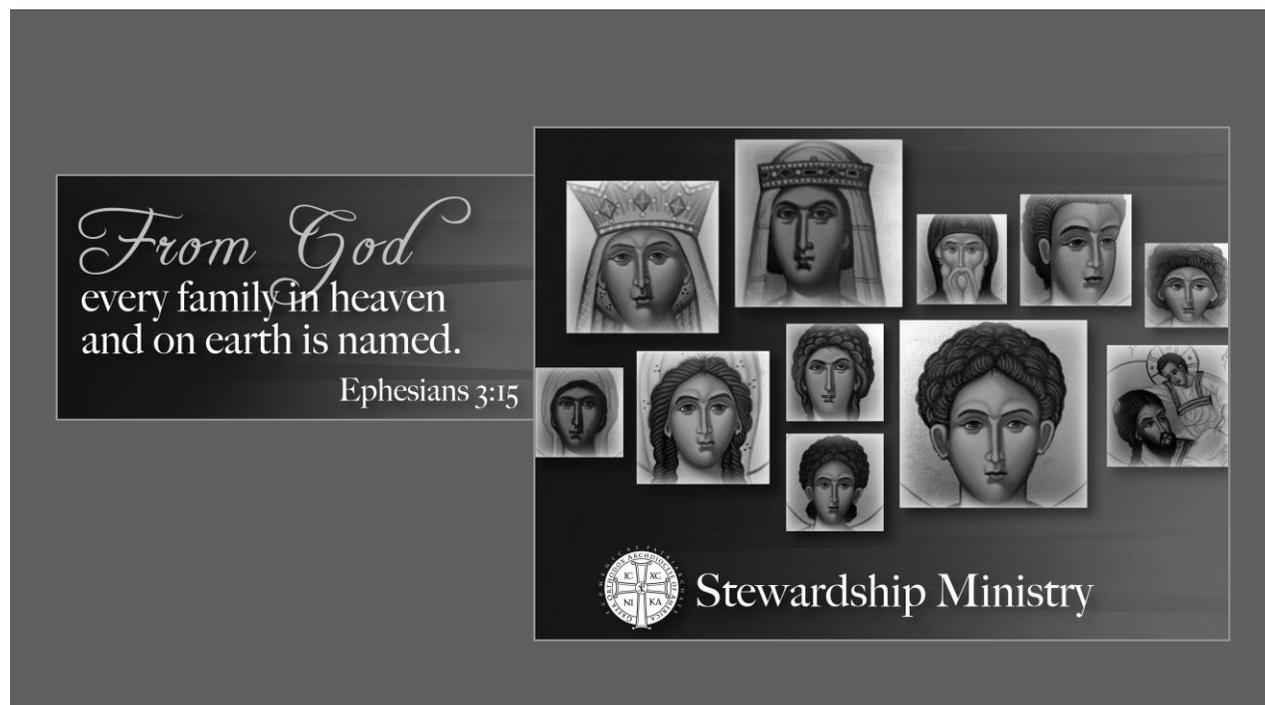
Orthodox Natural Church Development (ONCD) is a useful tool for engaging parishioners in a process of quantifiably evaluating and improving church ministry. The process begins with a survey completed by ministry leaders of the parish that evaluates church health in eight areas of ministry. The parish then works through the results, strategically addressing areas most in need of improvement. ONCD engages the entire congregation in analysis, evaluation, planning and prayerful support. Visit oncd.us or contact the Department of Stewardship, Outreach & Evangelism.

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 graphic and current theme of the stewardship materials.

KEEP THE IDEAS OF STEWARDSHIP IN FRONT OF THE PEOPLE

Stewardship brochures from past years going back to 2010 are available upon request from the Department. This is an excellent way to continue to educate and inspire parish members in the principles of stewardship.



STEWARDSHIP BANNER

PARISH MANAGEMENT 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.

For several years, the Archdiocese had a standing joint Committee on Parish Management Software that works in cooperation with National Stewardship Ministries, and the Archdiocese Departments of Administration, Finance and Information Technologies. The Committee was made up of individuals with expertise and experience in project management, software engineering, accounting, tax law, parish management and more. This committee met with the management teams of the top parish software providers, evaluated parish management software programs available and chose Parish Data Systems (PDS), a subsidiary of ACS, as the most suitable program for the needs of our parishes. Benefits include favorable pricing due to number

of parishes, greater ease of reporting to the Metropolis and Archdiocese through compatible formats, and better support through improved communication between parishes and the software provider. The rollout for implementation in the parishes is currently underway. Parishes that adopt in the initial phase of the program will receive the software, training and migration of data with funding provided by the Archdiocese. The Archdiocese recently created a full-time position to manage the implementation and ongoing operation of the Parish Software Initiative.

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 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. Visit www.Stewardship.goarch.org for stewardship articles & reflections which may be included in your various parish media.

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-end; and
- offering of 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. Stewardship is sign of spiritual maturity through which we understand the need to serve and to give. Other factors leading others us to be good stewards are a 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, church leaders should personally give the prospective Stewards a Welcome Packet which would include Enrollment Information which they are to complete and return. The Priest and the Stewardship Committee Chair 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 WELCOME FOLDER

The Stewardship Enrollment Information Packet might include:

- **An Invitation Letter**, personally inviting the individuals to become Stewards, with a short description of their responsibilities;
- **A Family Information Card**;
- **A 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 through the Members' Bank: 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. A payment module may also be added to the parish web site.

Electronic Payment through the Parish Website: 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. We suggest Vanco Services (www.vancoservices.com) for electronic payment of stewardship donations through the parish website. Vanco's fees are reasonable and their programs are compatible with Parish Data Systems, the provider of parish management software adopted by the Archdiocese. They can also accommodate the use of credit cards for purchases in the parish bookstore and more.

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.

ASSISTANCE AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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 your efforts. Contact the Department by email (Stewardship@goarch.org), fax (646-519-6166) or by telephone (646-519-6160).

"If I do not feel a sense of joy in God's creation, if I forget to offer the world back to God with thankfulness, I have advanced very little upon the Way."

Metropolitan Kallistos Ware

HOME VISITATIONS & SMALL GROUPS

When Jesus visited Zacchaeus in his home, he was converted by Christ's visit and acceptance of him. We are called to emulate the ministry of Jesus, visiting our parishioners, listening to them and seeking to re-engage them in the life of the Church. Personal, in-home visits are absolutely the most effective method of stewardship ministry. It's PERSONAL!



Establish a Stewardship Ambassador Committee made up of dedicated stewards. It is critical that a large enough number of ambassadors is recruited so that no one has to visit more than 10 homes.

Conduct training programs for the ambassadors regarding vision of the parish, the Orthodox Christian understanding of stewardship, the importance of listening attentively, validating concerns, reflective listening and more. Practice answering objections / concerns / complaints in a positive manner. Encourage ambassadors to make a mental note of potential areas of involvement for the person(s) being visited, as well as special needs for which various ministries of the parish might be of assistance. Also, any pastoral issues should be referred confidentially to the priest.

Ambassadors should be given a list of stewards for visitation that is made up of people with similar interests, activities, circumstances and involvements. Geography should also be taken into consideration.

Optimally, all stewards could be visited over the span of a year. If there are not enough volunteers to do so, the process could be spread over 2 or 3 years.

Small Group Gatherings or Focus Groups are more effective than mail-only, but not as effective as individual visitations. To set up a small group or focus group, a formal invitation is sent to participate in a group meeting at a home or fellowship area of the church. This program should include testimonials and allow for each individual to share their experiences and ideas for the church. These meetings must be moderated carefully to keep the tone positive and constructive.

Moderators should also be making mental notes as in the home visit for ministry needs and potential parish involvements of the participants.

The goal of personal contact is to engage the individual in the life of the parish. It is more important for the ambassador to be interested rather than interesting. People want to be heard and for their opinions and ideas to be considered. This will require effective and personal follow-up.

Contact the Department of Stewardship, Outreach & Evangelism to arrange for training.

PLAN OF ACTION

PREPARATION FOR THE STEWARDSHIP YEAR

Prior to launching the parish stewardship year, a number of initial steps may be taken to inform and inspire parish members regarding the vision and mission of the parish. These activities may include some or all of the following:

- Stewardship sermon or series of sermons given by the Priest;
- Mailing of the stewardship brochure and a cover letter encouraging members to consider their blessings and to welcome the visit by a member of the stewardship/outreach team (the letter should be personalized by computer merge with the Steward's name, address and greeting, producing a personalized letter for each Steward); and
- A reception, luncheon, or other special fellowship activity highlighting the ministry and mission of the parish – both past and present.

In all of these steps, care must be taken to maintain a positive approach. People are not motivated to respond to Jesus Christ and to seek deeper levels of devotion through fear or pressure. The focus should be the individual's engagement with Jesus Christ. Connect the individual to Jesus Christ and encourage devotion, love and commitment to follow His will.

The Stewardship Commitment Form should be 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 form or labels may be prepared and placed in the designated area. A sample Commitment Form is provided in this booklet. Visit www.Stewardship.goarch.org for an editable version. Prepare additional blank Commitment Forms to be made available in the church office and in the welcome packets for new members.

Sharing the Vision

It is critical that we share the vision of the parish and include all or part of 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.

In all communication, an effort should be made to highlight at least 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 a 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 as well as mission work.

“...every tree is known by its own fruit. So also is love known by its own fruit and the love of which Christianity speaks is known by its own fruit
- revealing that it has in itself the truth of the eternal.”

Soren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, (19th century)

IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

- Teach that Stewardship is a spiritual expression of faith.
- Develop a culture of a Parish that emulates the kingdom of God overflowing with joy, peace and love and a welcoming environment.
- Complete strategic planning and clarify your Parish’s mission & vision
- Form a common vision for Stewardship among your Priest, Parish Council, Stewardship Committee and Ministry Leaders.
- Expand your list of parish ministries under the guidance of your priest.
- Work with your priest to organize your ministries leaders into a Council of Ministries (see article in this booklet).
- Assign areas of responsibility by ministry to each Parish Council member.
- Focus your Stewardship program to engage stewards in parish ministries.
- Recruit stewardship ambassadors from your community to reach out to other parishioners.
- Focus Stewardship materials and communications to:
 - Share the dream and vision;
 - Reach segments and subgroups of your parish membership.
- Create a program to engage each steward in the ministries of the Parish through personal contact or small groups.
- Visit with each parishioner and encourage their involvement and support.
- Share testimonials of those whose lives have been changed by the ministries of your parish.
- Avoid constant requests for financial support for a variety of causes.
- Keep a rolling 12-month calendar for parish stewardship ministry.

THE PERSONAL VISITATION PROGRAM ☑

- Make sure your priest, parish council and stewardship committee reach consensus about your stewardship strategy.
- Reach consensus on parish mission, vision and strategic objectives.
- Organize your council of ministries (see page 27).
- Prepare your stewardship materials and revised stewardship commitment form.
- Train stewardship ambassadors, teaching your mission, vision and ministries.
- Ambassadors select the stewards they will visit based on commonality.
- Ambassadors call and schedule 15-30 minute in-home visitations focusing on engaging the individual in parish ministry.
- Ambassadors follow up on topics discussed with the stewards, encouraging the steward to return a stewardship commitment form to the parish. Additional follow-up with the steward in areas discussed during the visit is recommended.

THE GROUP VISITATION PROGRAM ☑

- Make sure your Priest, Parish Council and Stewardship Committee reach consensus about your stewardship strategy.
- Reach consensus on the Parish mission, vision and strategic objectives.
- Organize your Council of Ministries (see page 27).
- Prepare your Ministries Handbook and Stewardship materials and Stewardship Commitment Form.
- Recruit your Stewardship Ambassador Host Teams
- Train your Stewardship Ambassador Teams in the parish mission, vision and ministry.
- Ambassador Teams pick Stewards to invite to their meeting based on commonality.
- Ambassador Teams select strategic “testimonial” presenters and invite Steward couples for a group dinner focusing on engagement in parish ministries.
- Ambassadors Teams follow up with efforts to engage individuals in the life of the parish.

FOLLOW-UP PROGRAM

ONGOING REMINDERS

Stewardship Commitment Forms provide confirmation of a commitment to support Parish Ministries. An effort to encourage 100 percent support from the Stewards is essential. Consult your bylaws so that you are consistent with existing parish policy regarding participation in parish assemblies and elections.

Sample letters to support the follow-up program are included in this booklet. 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. Including progress reports on parish programs or information on new initiatives taken in response to their concerns will keep the statement from looking like 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 Form 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 Form 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 Form 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 Form 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 Form 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*. 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.

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 Form 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 by the Parish Priest 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.

THE ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN FAMILY: *A Dwelling of Christ and a Witness of His Gospel*
"From God every family in heaven and on earth is named." (Eph. 3:15)

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

When we speak of stewardship *and* family we must also consider stewardship *of* family. Most often, we stress the importance of stewardship of the great gifts of God's material world, but which of God's gifts is greater than family? Family is a beautiful and meaningful opportunity to practice stewardship of our greatest gift, and to grow in our understanding of the blessing of properly using and sharing God's gifts.

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 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 and an expression of thanks for the many blessings in your life.

Yours in Christ,

[Signature]

Rev. Fr. [Name of Priest]

THE ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN FAMILY: *A Dwelling of Christ and a Witness of His Gospel*

“From God every family in heaven and on earth is named.” (Eph. 3:15)

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

When we speak of stewardship *and* family we must also consider stewardship *of* family. Most often, we stress the importance of stewardship of the great gifts of God’s material world, but which of God’s gifts is greater than family? Family is a beautiful and meaningful opportunity to practice stewardship of our greatest gift, and to grow in our understanding of the blessing of properly using and sharing God’s gifts.

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

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, our leadership and our ministries.

At the conclusion of these three weeks, we will initiate our plan to visit/meet with all of our parishioners to share the current vision of our parish leadership and seek your participation in realizing this vision. Just like the boy who offered his five loaves and two fish, we offer what we have – however great or small our gift. If we do this prayerfully and in humility, God will take our gifts and multiply them in order to feed His people.

I offer you my thanks for your dedication to our parish and your participation 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

THE ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN FAMILY: *A Dwelling of Christ and a Witness of His Gospel*

“From God every family in heaven and on earth is named.” (Eph. 3:15)

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. Bearing fruit in the world is the visible result of our abiding in Christ, the True Vine.

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]

Letter No. 4: Letter to Ongoing Stewards who have not made Offerings Toward their Commitment
Enclose a Stewardship Statement

THE ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN FAMILY: *A Dwelling of Christ and a Witness of His Gospel*

“From God every family in heaven and on earth is named.” (Eph. 3:15)

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 Form 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. Just like the boy who offered his five loaves and two fish, we each offer what we have – however great or small our gift. If we do this prayerfully and in humility, God will take our gifts and multiply them in order to feed His people.

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.

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

THE ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN FAMILY: *A Dwelling of Christ and a Witness of His Gospel*

“From God every family in heaven and on earth is named.” (Eph. 3:15)

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 Form 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. Giving is not a substitute for commitment – it is an expression of your commitment. As St. John Chrysostom said, “A Rich Man is not one who has much but one who gives much. For what he gives away remains his forever.”

Please take time to make your Stewardship Commitment today and enable our Church to grow her ministries and carry on her mission. For your convenience, we have enclosed are a Stewardship Commitment Form 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

THE ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN FAMILY: *A Dwelling of Christ and a Witness of His Gospel*

“From God every family in heaven and on earth is named.” (Eph. 3:15)

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. Giving is not a substitute for commitment – it is an expression of our commitment.

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)

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: _____

	Member	Spouse	Children / Age
Name:	_____	_____	_____/_____ /
Mobile Tel:	_____	_____	_____/_____ /
E-mail:	_____	_____	_____/_____ /
Occupation:	_____	_____	_____/_____ /
Work Tel:	_____	_____	_____/_____ /

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.
 Place name or initials of the specific family member after each item checked.

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <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.

information

Sample STEWARDSHIP COMMITMENT FORM

NAME _____

NAME OF SPOUSE (IF MARRIED) _____

STREET ADDRESS _____

CITY / STATE / ZIP CODE _____

HOME PHONE _____

MOBILE PHONE _____

EMAIL ADDRESS _____

EMAIL ADDRESS OF SPOUSE (IF MARRIED) _____

Dependent Children's names and birthdates:

May we include your contact information in the parish directory?
 yes no *If yes, please indicate any information you would like excluded:*

May we add you to our parish email list?
 yes no

Christian Stewardship Is...

...learning how to be a responsible and concerned caretaker of Christ's Church; it is learning how to enjoy Church life and be happy in Church work, for in Her dwells the fullness of the Spirit of God.

...our active commitment to use all our time, talent and treasure for the benefit of humankind in grateful acknowledgment of Christ's redeeming love.

...caring for the needs of others.

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

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

...devotion and service to God and His Church as persons, as families, as parish, as diocese/metropolis, as national Church and as Church universal.

From Oriental Leadership by Williams & McKibben

treasure

In gratitude for God's blessings, I/We commit to Christ and His Church the following amount:

\$ _____ each week

planned giving

Please send me information on making a planned gift to the Church

time & talent

Individual stewards should indicate areas of interest with a check (✓). Families should mark "H" for husband, "W" for wife or "C" for children.

EDUCATION	LITURGICAL
<input type="checkbox"/> Bible Study	<input type="checkbox"/> Sanctuary & Altar Care
<input type="checkbox"/> Adult Religious Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Altar boys / Acolytes
<input type="checkbox"/> Intro to Orthodoxy	<input type="checkbox"/> Baking Prostron
<input type="checkbox"/> Publications	<input type="checkbox"/> Choir
<input type="checkbox"/> Speakers	<input type="checkbox"/> Reader
<input type="checkbox"/> Bookstore	<input type="checkbox"/> Greeter/Usher
<input type="checkbox"/> Library	
YOUTH	MINISTRIES & PROGRAMS
<input type="checkbox"/> Church School Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/> Campus Ministry
<input type="checkbox"/> Church School Administration	<input type="checkbox"/> Welcome Team
<input type="checkbox"/> Youth Leader	<input type="checkbox"/> New Member Events
<input type="checkbox"/> Vacation Church School	<input type="checkbox"/> Outreach
<input type="checkbox"/> Camp Counselor	<input type="checkbox"/> Stewardship
	<input type="checkbox"/> Sunday Fellowship / Coffee
BUILDING & GROUNDS	<input type="checkbox"/> Visitation - Hospital
<input type="checkbox"/> Garden & Landscape	<input type="checkbox"/> Visitation - Shut-ins
<input type="checkbox"/> Plumbing	<input type="checkbox"/> Feed the Hungry
<input type="checkbox"/> Electrical	<input type="checkbox"/> Prison Ministry
<input type="checkbox"/> Clean-up	<input type="checkbox"/> Grief Bereavement Group
<input type="checkbox"/> Interior Repairs	<input type="checkbox"/> Disaster Relief/Projects
<input type="checkbox"/> Exterior Repairs	<input type="checkbox"/> Blood Drives
<input type="checkbox"/> Roofing	<input type="checkbox"/> Project Mexico
<input type="checkbox"/> Hall Rentals	<input type="checkbox"/> Int'l Orth Christian Charities
	<input type="checkbox"/> OCMC Mission Center
ADMINISTRATION	<input type="checkbox"/> Seniors Ministry
<input type="checkbox"/> Fiscal Mgt / Review	<input type="checkbox"/> Couples Ministry
<input type="checkbox"/> By-Laws	<input type="checkbox"/> Singles Ministry
<input type="checkbox"/> Development / Fundraising	<input type="checkbox"/> Military Ministry
<input type="checkbox"/> Office help	
<input type="checkbox"/> Computer / Technical	COMMUNICATIONS
<input type="checkbox"/> Data Entry	<input type="checkbox"/> Web site & E-mail
	<input type="checkbox"/> Bulletin & Newsletter
	<input type="checkbox"/> Public Relations

Any other talents or information on items listed above:

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I become a member of the parish?

Membership in the Orthodox Church begins at baptism (Chrismation for some) and continues throughout our life. We are united with Christ through the sacraments, or mysteries, of the Church and through our faithful offering of our entire selves to Jesus Christ. Our Archdiocese requires each parish to distinguish between voting members and non-voting members. A voting member is over 18 years of age and turns in a signed stewardship commitment card, committing a portion of time, talent and treasure to the Church. The Archdiocese also requires the voting member to remain current through the year on their commitments. Keep in mind that true membership in the Body of Christ involves living according to His word and within His Church.

Sample STEWARDSHIP COMMITMENT FORM

Why must I commit to give a specific amount?

Please keep in mind that your stewardship of money is kept in the strictest of confidence. However, we do compile the amounts anticipated to better plan our budget.

What if I cannot fulfill my stewardship commitment?

During the course of a year, people's circumstances change. Your stewardship is valued because it is made out of your love for God and His Church. Please do not be concerned if you are unable to meet your stewardship commitment – we are glad you are a part of this parish.

Place a brief message from the parish in this space or leave blank.



STEWARDSHIP MINISTRIES

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*From God
every family in heaven
and on earth is named.*

Ephesians 3:15



Stewardship Commitment Card

2015

COUNCIL OF MINISTRIES AND ITS ROLE IN STEWARDSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Fr. Steve Dalber • Saint Nektarios Church • Charlotte, NC

Introduction

The concept of a “Council of Ministries” is not only a structuring of ministries but also a leadership structure for the entire community. This not something that was invented, but rather something that evolved in our community and is serving us well. It is my hope that this concept might benefit other communities.

Most Orthodox communities in America use a leadership structure which involves the priest and a parish council as leaders



of administration and ministry. Some communities use this system effectively, while others find themselves in a seemingly constant struggle. While the priest has the backing of the Archdiocese Regulations and is the spiritual and ministerial leader of the parish; the parish council, never the less, controls the “purse strings.” The debate then becomes: How do we get money, how do we spend it and who makes this determination? The priest’s job is to develop ministries, while the parish council sees the need to pay the bills and there never seems to be enough money to go around. Meanwhile the parish in general doesn’t have a clue as to what’s going on while developing an attitude of, “I really don’t care.” In these parishes true stewardship cannot take hold. This creates even greater desperation to raise funds, usually resulting in an ever increasing dependence on festivals and an endless stream of other fundraisers in an effort to keep the parish financially afloat. Survival becomes a priority while ministries take a back seat and the arguing seems endless.

This negative dynamic between money and ministry creates an atmosphere of dysfunction in the community which can become intergenerational creating many factions within a community and often times a revolving door policy for priests.

It is my belief that the dysfunction within which some of our parishes have fallen is not the fault of the priest, the parish or the parish council, but rather the fundamental leadership/ministry structure in our communities. The council of ministries model described below works. I truly believe communities that choose to adopt it can “fix” what’s broken and enhance the effectiveness of what they are already “doing well.”

How It Happened

The community that eventually would become St Nektarios was formed during the summer of 1998 under the leadership of Fr. Nick Triantafyllou, who was at that time the dean of Holy Trinity Cathedral in Charlotte. Fr. Nick divided the small group into taskforces with different assignments designed to help create a community. With the approval of Bishop Alexios the community was chartered in September 1998. The taskforce leaders were then appointed as the first “board of directors.” The taskforce groups became the original ministry groups with their respective leaders as their head. I arrived a month later to find a small, well-organized group. Each “ministry/committee” was headed by a board member. This was for the most part the standard leadership/ministry structure of all Orthodox churches. Within six months this same structure was threatening to destroy our community. A strong division had arisen among the board having to do with the property we had purchased. This division created an atmosphere of distrust. Because of the leadership/ministry structure, these issues were not contained within the boardroom. They overflowed into the ministry committees with board members trying to influence the members of their respective committees to support their point of view. The work of the ministry was disrupted. It became increasingly evident that if we were going to survive as a community something radical had to be done.

The Model

Realizing that the ministry groups had become a political platform for those trying to get their own way, the board members had to be separated from them. This was the beginning of the current “Council of Ministries” structure. A flow chart was constructed showing the priest and the board on top, an administrator (office person) between the two, with each ministry headed by a volunteer. This new structure gave ownership to the ministry heads. The priest became a resource and spiritual father to the ministries with the board and administrator providing material support. The ministries began to flourish giving birth to sub-ministries and new ministries.

The Mission

By decentralizing the authority structure, the artificial restrictions to ministry, growth and development are shattered leaving behind fertile fields for innovation and growth. With each new ministry or sub-ministry, a new leadership position is created. This allows even more people to become intimately involved and feel ownership in the community, which in turn creates an excitement and a desire to truly be a ministry centered church.



The sharing of authority and leadership with so many people and ministries can be a frightening process. After all how do all these leaders stay focused and oriented in the same direction? What keeps them from going astray, wanting to do their own thing? It is critical that a strong, non-negotiable mission statement is in place to which everyone agrees and adheres. In order for the mission to be non-negotiable, it must come from the very authority who established the church and its ministry as reflected in His own worldly ministry; that is to say, Jesus Christ Himself. The mission statement is non-negotiable. The vision statement is how we see ourselves accomplishing the mission statement.



OUR MISSION:

St. Nektarios Greek Orthodox Church is dedicated to the continuation of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ's ministry of salvation through the proclamation and teaching of the Gospel; through Baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and through loving service to God and to mankind.

OUR VISION:

The community will provide a loving, caring and welcoming environment where all belong and grow in the faith through worship, service, witness, and fellowship.

The Role of the Priest

The priest in this model is free to be priest; to oversee the work of the parish council and all of the ministries without having to try to micromanage every detail of every aspect of parish life. Above and beyond his liturgical duties, he is also freed to be a teacher, a spiritual guide, and a counselor to the community entrusted to him. By having regular Council of Ministries meetings where the priest encourages the efforts of all and reiterates the mission and vision, this system becomes self-policing. The entire ministry structure then has a natural tendency to evaluate itself against the mission and the vision which has been unanimously accepted by all.

The Role of the Parish Council

The parish council in this system is no longer one of a “bean counter” but rather one of ministry. The mission and vision of the community is what drives their ministry as well. Their decisions

are no longer based on a matter of personal opinions, which cause egos to clash, but rather on the criteria of how well does it fit against the mission statement. Once again the acceptance of the mission statement is critical. The members of the parish council may serve in one or more of our 14 ministry teams. They do not lead a team. The vice president is responsible for the ministry team process and serves as the liaison to the board for the ministries lead by volunteers. Four of our ministries are lead by staff. *(Since we adopted this system, we have never had a serious disagreement in a parish council meeting. There is healthy dialog and debating of issues to come to a consensus. There has never been a raising of voices except in laughter and a 100% consensus on just about every issue, because the emphasis is no longer about my opinion or your opinion, it now is upon; What is the best way to fulfill the mission of the Church. Also, the budget process now is driven by the ministry rather than the ministries being restricted by the budget.)*



The Role of the Administrator

As ministries grow and multiply there is an increasing need for office support. The administrator, ideally a paid staff person, handles the financial record keeping and coordinates all of the logistical support for everyone, priest, parish council as well as the rest of the ministries. Processes are defined. Church operational policies become politically neutral. Communication among ministries is improved. Financial records are open and transparency is achieved. Again as the parish grows more paid staff will be needed to assist the administrator's ministry. Volunteer staff is also instrumental in supporting the paid staff with "non-critical" work. Regular office hours are maintained to respond to the needs of our congregants.

The Role of the Community in General

The community's role is to support the Church's mission of time, talent (involvement in ministries) and treasure. It is the priest's role to do his utmost to educate every parishioner as to the non-negotiable mission of the Church, and that by accepting salvation; we have also accepted the mission with which Jesus Christ has entrusted us. Once again making the mission clear is critical. In this system the task of teaching the mission is made much easier in that a significant number of those in the community are already members of the Council of Ministries and have already bought into the mission and are excited about making it successful.

A Note on Stewardship

Our community serves approximately 530 families. There are approximately 200+ people actively involved in the ministry process. When there are 200+ people in the community with a clear picture of what the church is here for and a vested interest in its' success stewardship starts becoming a no-brainer. The community becomes its own teacher. The need is recognized, accepted and supported.

A Note on Festivals

While arguments can be made as to the good things a festival bring to a community; it is my humble and personal opinion (and experience) that they are counterproductive to the true ministry of the Church and for that reason counterproductive to stewardship. Furthermore I believe that it is an inefficient use time and talent (manpower) and has a tendency of making our community's operations/ministries dependent upon "outside sources."

Conclusion

For reasons mentioned above, the ministry structure is a continuous work in progress, constantly changing as our ministry and community involvement grows. This system has worked and continues to work for us. I hope that you will find something useful for your community in this information, and may God continue to bless His Church and His ministry always.

STEWARDSHIP PASSAGES FOR PARISH BULLETINS & NEWSLETTERS

A rich man is not one who has much, but one who gives much. For what he gives away remains his forever. -St John Chrysostom

A little girl noticed that after the collection was taken in a certain church, the ushers brought it up to the altar. She whispered to her mother, "Mommy, how do they get the money up to heaven?" The mother replied, "The church doesn't send the money to heaven, but uses it to bring heaven down to us." That mother could not have given a better answer. For the purpose of the Church is to get God's heaven into each one of us. Jesus said, "The Kingdom of God is within you."

When death comes, our giving will be over. For all eternity, God will be doing the giving to us. So, the time for us to give is now. The time for us to love is now. The time for us to share what God has given us is now.

Give as you would if an angel awaited your gift at the door.
Give as you would if tomorrow found you where the giving was over.
Give as you would to the Master if you met His loving look.
Give as you would of your substance as if His hand your offering took.

I am the manager of God's property: my time, my talents, my possessions, my body, my soul – everything is God's. Saint Paul asks, "What have you that you have not received?"

Money becomes a sacrament when it is offered to God. It becomes a visible expression of our commitment, faith and love for Jesus. Once given to God, our gifts are consecrated by the Holy Spirit, who translates them into works of mercy that bring glory to God.

A rich farmer said to a bishop one day as he pointed to his vast acreage he owned in Texas, "You mean all that land is not mine?" The bishop replied gently, "Ask me that question in 100 years."

Jesus Christ is God's great gift to us. Through Him continues the healing, liberating, forgiving, empowering, loving ministry of His Church. God, infinite though He is, has chosen to work through us, through our gifts, to continue His work in the world today.

"It does not matter how much we give, but how much love we put into our giving."
Mother Theresa

A father once took his little daughter to see the Statue of Liberty. She was awed by the sight and size of it. She gazed in wonder at the great arm holding up the torch. That night she was restless and couldn't sleep. Her mother asked her, "What's wrong, sweetheart?"

"I keep thinking of the lady with the torch," she said. "Don't you think someone should help her hold it up?"

Today, the Lord Jesus holds the only light that can dispel the world's darkness. The call of Stewardship is for us to help Him keep holding up that light.

You cannot serve God and mammon, but you will serve either God or mammon.