

**American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese
Stewardship Commission**

**Parish Resource II:
Stewardship: A Way of Life--
Implementing Stewardship in the Parish**

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STEWARDS OF THE MYSTERIES OF GOD

by

Fr. Lawrence Barriger

There has been a great deal written about Orthodox spirituality in the last several decades but very little about Orthodox stewardship as opposed to materialism. Materialism seeks to divide the responsibility of the Church into the real and unreal. This belief posits that the hierarchs, priests, deacons and other members of the clerical order are responsible for the spiritual affairs of the church (i.e. the unreal) but that the lay members of the church are responsible for the material affairs of the Church (i.e. the real).

Although it comes as a shock to many people the Early Apostolic Church did not have church officers in the modern sense. All Church property, not that there was that much of it in those early days, was seen as being entrusted to the Apostles themselves. This is illustrated in the story of Ananias and Sapphira in Chapter Five of the Books of Acts, who laid their money at the feet of the Apostles.

In later centuries Canon Law recognized that church properties were to be entrusted to the Bishop of the diocese as the successors to the Apostles. St. Justin the Martyr, in his "First Apology" (circa 150 A.D.), wrote that the collection from the Sunday Liturgy was given directly to the Bishop, who was able to help those in need. "What is collected is deposited with the president and he takes care of orphans and widows....." (*First Apology* 66.)

St. Justin, writing for a pagan audience, refers here to the bishop as the "president" since he was the one who "presided" over the Eucharistic liturgy. At a very early time however, as the Church grew, it became impossible for the Apostles and later the bishops to administer every detail. Indeed, we read in Chapter Seven of the Book of Acts that the first deacons were elected, not because the Apostles needed them for worship, but because they needed help in administering the resources of the Church because of its growth: "It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables." (Acts 6:2). The deacons of the Church were the first to share in the tasks that are assigned today to the Church Officers, helping in the administration of the church resources on a daily basis.

As the Church became the "official church" of the old Roman Empire, then the Byzantine, then Russian Empires and the state church in many Orthodox countries governments assumed the role of taking care of Church

properties, paying clergy salaries and funding many of the other apostolates of the Church. This was and still is the case in most European countries today.

In America, however, Orthodox Churches found again in their organization and funding a need for laypeople also to serve, as St. Paul referred to himself and his fellow workers, as "stewards of the mysteries of God" (I Cor. 4:1) in co-operation with the Hierarchs of the Church. We must from the outset realize that stewardship is not ownership. In many instances those parishes which loudly in the past touted that they were the "people's church" and claimed a material ownership rather than stewardship have manifested in their loss of membership, their decline of spirituality and general loss of interest in them by their own membership, that indeed they were indeed the people's church and not Christ's Church.

Church Officers are called, along with the pastors and bishops to "stewards" of Christ's Church, realizing that sometime they will be called to give an accounting of their stewardship to Christ. The first question to be asked of any candidate for church office is the question posed at the time of Baptism, "Do you believe in Christ and do you promise to serve Him?"

A Church whose officers and pastor strive to answer "yes" to this question every day will find their service, though it have many difficulties to overcome, a source of spiritual joy and personal satisfaction. They and their parish will grow in the things of the spirit which will lead to growth in funds and resources. Conversely, a church whose parish council members are seeking to answer the question "Who is the most important person in the Church" with any other name than that of Jesus Christ will find that they are torn by divisions and internal strife. Their service will consist of a multitude of confrontational meetings, private conferences, innumerable telephone calls, threats and counter threats. The level of spirituality will drop, funds will become tight and the faithful, especially the young people, will see the Church not as the living icon of the Holy Spirit, but as the "People's Church", another failed human institution from which they will have no trouble excusing themselves.

Stewardship implies temporary custody and then turning the mystery of faith and its vessel, the church, over to another generation. At the Gospel of the Baptism service the newly-baptized is charged with the command, "Go and make disciples of all nations!"

No successful business ever plans to keep the "status quo". A business is constantly seeking new markets, trying new ideas and new forms of advertising. The Church to be successful and to continue must do the same thing in a spiritual sense. A church that is content with the status quo is one that is dying already. Like the Apostles and the deacons of the early Church, we must all become mindful of being stewards of the Gospel message whether we are bishops, priests, deacons, church officers or lay people.

The term "lay person" itself is misleading. A dictionary will usually define "lay person" as "someone who is uninitiated." But the word "lay" comes from the Greek word λαός (laos). This word is used in the New Testament and in the Greek translation of the Old Testament to refer exclusively to the "people of God" and not simply "people" generally for whom the word ethnos is used. In the language of the Church a "lay person" is someone who is initiated in the life of Christ through Baptism, Chrismation and the Eucharist and participates in that life through his or her membership in the Church.

Everyone who is baptized is called to be a steward of the Church and is called to be a steward of the Faith in all of its aspects both material and spiritual. Simply put, we must be concerned with not the growth of the Church's bank account only but with the spiritual growth of our church and the spreading of the message of salvation in Jesus Christ. Doing this is both simple and difficult. Church growth, as the New Testament and Church History reveals, does not come about as the result of any program, or campaign no matter how well-marketed. It is the direct result of the spiritual growth of the members of the church in question. St. Seraphim of Sarov stated this truth very simply: "Acquire the Spirit of Truth and a thousand souls will be saved around you."

The ultimate task of a Church Officer in particular and of all lay members in general centers not just on handling money, but to be along with the pastor, someone who manifests the life in Christ to the membership of the Church community and to the world at large.

Again to return to the Apostle Paul's description of himself and his fellow workers "stewards of the mysteries of God" (I Cor. 4:1). Again we must remind ourselves that stewardship is not the same as ownership. The steward does not own the property - the master does.

This is the falsehood in the statement that “the priest handles the spiritual (i.e. the unreal things) but the people handle the material (i.e. the real things).” In the Church the only real things are the spiritual things. ... “Seek first the Kingdom of Heaven and all other things will be added to you.”

A parish which experiences the wealth of spiritual gifts will never lack for the material gifts.... *For your heavenly Father knows that you need all of these things* (Matthew 6:32).

INTRODUCTION TO PARISH RESOURCE II

Stewardship: A Way of Life -- Implementing Stewardship in the Parish

This Resource is directed to parish leadership throughout the American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese as part of an ongoing effort to provide practical and inspirational ministry resources for the practice of Christian Stewardship within our parishes.

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.

This Resource is a continuing effort to move our parishes to a year-round "Way of Life" stewardship. An earlier Resource (available on CD, in print and on-line at www.ACROD.org) provided educational and inspirational stewardship resources for clergy and faithful. Additional resources will be made available through the efforts of the diocesan Stewardship Commission. These include articles in the *Church Messenger*, periodic stewardship updates on the Diocesan website, workshops, retreats and personal stewardship consultation as requested.

The Diocesan Stewardship Commission was established by our late Bishop, His Eminence +Metropolitan Nicholas in 2009. The Stewardship Mission Statement of the Commission is as follows: *Orthodox Christian Stewardship is a Christ-centered lifestyle, which acknowledges accountability, reverence, and responsibility before God. Orthodox Christian Stewardship is a call to all of the faithful to share willingly and cheerfully the gifts that God has bestowed on them including sharing these gifts for God's work in His Church.*

This Resource contains some tried and successful processes for transition from a dues system to a pledge system, sample letters, pledge cards for time, talent and treasure, and other ideas for parish stewardship ministry. These resources will be made available both in hard copy and through the diocesan website. This is a beginning effort for our Diocese. The Stewardship Commission is available to assist you in customizing these resources. Contact the Commission by email (fr.frederick@comcast.net), or by telephone 770-485-0504. We will do our best to accommodate your custom resource request.

A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE

The Dues System

It was Sunday and the parish council members were counting the Sunday offering in the church office as the trays were being brought in from Divine Liturgy. One faithful parishioner found his way back to the church office and politely inquired, "How much do I owe?"

This parishioner was asking if he was up-to-date on his pledge, but his question reveals something about our thought process in offering our gifts to the Church.

No matter how generously we support the Church, can we ever feel that we have given in proportion to the blessings we have received?

Many of our Diocesan parishes have embraced the process of stewardship, by which we offer our gifts to the church according to our blessings. Many continue to operate in a dues system. And some operate under a hybrid Stewardship-with-a-minimum system.

For many years parishes have set an amount expected from each member (the "dues" system) that seemed fair for all the faithful. Such a payment of each member's "dues" made them members in good standing with rights and privileges. There are several problems with this "dues" system.

Is it fair to think that the elderly widow living on Social Security, the successful real estate developer, the banker, the young tradesman with a growing family, the teacher and the lawyer each have received the same material blessings and have the same ability to give?

To set a specific required dues amount places an undue burden on some, but most often it underestimates the individual's ability to support the church.

The dues system also diminishes the joy of giving and turns it into just another bill to be paid. It's important to give with joy from our heart. As St. Paul writes to the Corinthians, "So let each one *give* as he intends in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7).

Gregory the Theologian writes, "You will never overcome God's generosity, even if you give away all that you have.... And however much you bring to him, always more remains. Nor will you give anything that is your own; for all things flow from God."

We often hear economists talk about the balance of payments. This concept also applies to our offering to the Church. We can never give enough to God for the blessings He has given us. We are always in a deficit position. But when we set a dues amount, whatever it may be, it implies that if we pay this amount, then we have fulfilled our obligation to the Church. "I paid my dues, now I get to vote, receive sacraments, and express my opinion on how the parish should be run."

Some parishes attempt a sort of hybrid system of Stewardship with a minimum. This sends the contradictory message to parishioners that we trust you to give as you have been blessed, but are not willing to take that leap of faith. When we deal with minimums, we also have to realize that there is always a number of faithful who will be excluded when we have minimums and dues.

We need to be reminded that God never gives to us in minimums and our giving should never be guided by a minimum. Orthodox Christianity is not about minimums, it is about maximums. Our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ gave the maximum for us. We now carry on His ministry with maximum giving. And from a practical point of view, minimums have a way of becoming maximums.

Stewardship: A Way of Life

Stewardship is our response to God's grace and moves us from grace to gratitude. Just as we love because God first loved us (I John 4:14), we give because God first gave to us. The question of the Psalmist "What shall I give to the Lord in return for all His benefits towards me?" (Ps 116:2), is answered in every liturgy when the celebrant calls us to "offer ourselves and one another and our whole life to Christ our God."

One January day, nearly 20 years ago, a young parish council president was just getting accustomed to his new duties when someone placed a stack of checks in front of him to be signed. As he quickly signed each check, his pen was suddenly stopped by the sight of a check that had been placed before him for his signature. It was the salary check for his priest – the priest who had baptized him, for whom he served as an altar boy, to whom he had gone for confession and whom he loved and respected as his spiritual father. It was one of the most humbling experiences of his life. And the amount of the check seemed ridiculously small in consideration of the effect that this priest had on the lives his parishioners.

This is the same feeling we should have when we make our stewardship offering to the Lord – humility, appreciation, thanksgiving, joy, respect, and love.

In his book on the Eucharist, Fr Alexander Schmemmann explains that in the early church, the Eucharistic sacrifice was offered by all the members of the church.

Each person coming to the gathering of the Church brought with them everything they could spare for the needs of the Church. This meant for the sustenance of the clergy, widows and orphans, for helping the poor, and for all the good works of the Church. This is the Church that we as Orthodox Christians claim to be.

Stewardship is not about calculations or portions or percentages. It can't be reduced to a number of hours of service or dollars offered. Stewardship is a way of life.

As Orthodox Christians, we are called to a new way of seeing things – a new way of life. Our stewardship is obedience to the greatest commandment to “love the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind and strength.” We are called to bring others to commit their lives to Jesus Christ in such a way that leads to the joy of knowing Him personally and profoundly.

As Orthodox Christians, we see the world as God's gift, as a sacrament of God's presence and a means of communion with Him. And so we are able to offer the world back to God in thanksgiving as we say in every Divine Liturgy “We offer to You, Yours of Your own ...”

AN EXPLORATION OF TITHING IN HOLY SCRIPTURES WITH PRACTICAL COMMENTS

By Father Basil Aden

If stewardship is a way of life, then do we have to talk about money? After all, if we, the faithful, dedicate our whole lives to the service of the Lord, then giving money offerings for the support of His Church and His work would seem natural. No one would need to be instructed or motivated to give offerings.

The Holy Scriptures prove that this assumption is not practical. The scriptures are not silent about the topic of money. Money was an important theme of the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ about stewardship. Someone has counted that of the thirty-eight parables of Jesus, sixteen deal with the matter of money and possessions. In the Gospels, one of ten verses deals with money. Moreover, the Bible contains approximately 500 verses on prayer, and about the same number on faith, but more than 2,000 verses on money and possessions.

The reason is clear if we understand the teachings of scripture. Christian giving must be from the heart, yet the People of God need guidance in how to convert the impulses of the heart into the actions of the hands. Without such guidance--and even correction -- most of the faithful are bound to miss the blessings of monetary giving and fail in this aspect of the use of their money as stewards of the grace of God.

Nevertheless, church leaders must broach the topic wisely and carefully. If the annual stewardship program concentrates on funding the parish budget without teaching the context of stewardship as a way of life, then many will see stewardship as a method of fundraising, much easier than a bazaar or ethnic festival. If the way of promoting generous offerings is coercive, then many will consider it a new form of church tax, no better, perhaps, than dues. If the bulk of the parish members are not ready to meet the challenge of generous giving, then they will resist efforts, either actively or passively.

Thus, the teaching of money offerings requires leadership that is guided by Holy Tradition and inspired by the Holy Spirit. No formula or timetable can apply to all parishes across the diocese. Each parish has its own dynamics and challenges. The priest, parish councils, and stewardship leaders, therefore, must first pray together for wisdom and then work together for a unified and clear-cut goal for each year. Some parishes may not be ready to change from a dues and/or fundraising system to a freewill offering practice. (Some may be making this change by combining free will offerings with a dues minimum.) Some who have changed to a free will offering practice may

not be ready for the teaching of proportional giving. Others may not be ready for the teaching of tithing. Only the local leadership in the parish can access the readiness of the parish year by year.

The following thoughts, therefore, are offered only as a basis for study, conversation, and prayerful consideration. Their focus is tithing, commonly understood as the practice of setting aside ten percent of one's income as offering for the service of the Lord and His Church. This paper concentrates on the question of tithing because it raises most of the issues of money offerings. This paper will discuss the Holy Tradition of Tithing according to the sub-titles in bold print before each section.

The clearest standard for money giving in scripture is the tithe. The Old Testament sketches out a complex system of tithes as part of mandates for sacrifices and offerings in the worship of God. In America, the fires of controversy continue to blaze whether the practice of tithing that is rooted in the Old Covenant has any bearing on the stewardship practices of those who belong to the New. Advocates of tithing and detractors both pounce on selected verses to prove their argument. Overlooked in the uproar is the question of understanding the historic uses of the tithe beyond simply the support of the church. Understanding what the tithes have funded will give deeper insight into the use of money in Christian stewardship.

TITHING IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Old Testament presents a clear-cut standard for the offering of material blessings. The Book of Leviticus puts it: *"Now all the tithe of the land, whether seed of the land or fruit of the tree is the Lord's. It is holy to the Lord"* (Leviticus 27:30). In the primary sense, tithing was a matter of worship of God the Creator, and it acknowledged that all things belong to the Almighty God who is the source of every blessing. Therefore, at the beginning of the harvest, offerings of "first fruits" were to be taken for the House of God in thanksgiving for His goodness and prayer for His blessing. Then tithes were to be given of the harvest according to the command of God and again in prayer for His blessing (Deuteronomy 26:12-15).

It is easy to stop and hastily grab onto the tithe as the standard measure of God's will for the use of money. However, to gain further understanding of the tithe, we need to probe into the various types in ancient Israel.

Tithing is part of the Law of Moses given at Mt. Sinai as the Israelites made their way back to the Holy Land. It is part of a system of tithes, sacrifices, and offerings for life in the Holy Land that would insure the worship of God, provide for the ministers of worship, and supply the needs of the poor.

ANALYSIS OF A KEY PASSAGE IN DEUTERONOMY: THREE TYPES OF TITHES

Unfortunately, tithing is not presented in a systematic way in the scriptures, and the practice of tithing had a development even past the time of Jesus and the apostles. However, for the sake of clarity, we can sort out the tithes according to types, though these overlap. The traditional types are:¹

1. The tithe to support the Levites [and priests], the ministers of the House of God
2. The tithe to provide food and drink for the feast in the House of God
3. The tithe for the relief of the poor.

We find the ancient practice of these three types if we analyze an important passage from the Law Code of Deuteronomy given to Moses on Mt. Sinai (Deuteronomy 14:22-29).

The *second tithe* is found in Deuteronomy 14:22-23. This was a tithe to provide necessary supplies of food and drink for a feast of worship. It was an annual tithe of grain, wine, olive oil, and the firstborn of oxen and sheep (Deuteronomy 14:22-23). These supplies are to be taken to the House of God. The farmer and his family are to eat these bounties of the earth “before the Lord” in His sanctuary in a celebration that involved much rejoicing (Deuteronomy 14:26).

Further the instructions in Deuteronomy underscore the importance of celebrating the feast in the place of worship. If the worship center is too far, the tithes may be sold for money. In that case, the farmer and family are to travel to the worship center and use the money for the tithes to purchase food for a feast there. (Deuteronomy 14:24-26). Furthermore, what the farmer may buy for the feast is “*whatever your soul desires*” (Deuteronomy 14:26). It is to be a sacred party!

If we ask who was invited to this celebration, we can identify the *first tithe* in this passage. The instructions mandate that the Levites who serve the Lord in His tabernacle or temple are to be invited to the feast (Deuteronomy 14:17). The significance of this detail is that it shows how tithing was a primary way of supporting the ministers of God in worship.

To explain, these Levites were members of the tribe of Levi. Of the twelve tribes of Israel, members of this special tribe were not given a share of the Holy Land when it was divided up among the tribes of Israel. Their inheritance was to be

Three Tithes in the Old Testament

1. Tithe to the Levites (ministers of the Tabernacle or Temple)
2. Festival tithe of provisions for feasts
3. Charity tithe (almsgiving) for the relief of the poor

¹ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* (Book 4: Chapter 8, Sections 8 & 22)

the Lord Himself. Thus, they were dedicated to serving the Lord in His dwelling place. Specifically the role of the Levites was to assist the priests (the descendents of Aaron) in the tabernacle and later, the temple (Numbers 18:1-7). For this service, the Levites were given rights to the tithes of their fellow Israelites and special cities with surrounding pasturelands for places to live.

A more significant tithe to the Levites was later called *the first tithe*, and it was a full ten percent assigned to the Levites for their services in the House of God. Not all these tithes were offered in the Tabernacle or Temple. A system was set up to distribute these tithes to the cities of the Levites according to the Lord's Word: "*Behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation*" Numbers 18:21).

What about the priests of the House of God? These were not descendents of Levi but of Aaron, the High Priest. In the Book of Numbers, God decrees that the priests have the rights to the "first fruits" of the offerings and sacrifices (such as trespass and sin offerings) given by the people (Numbers 18:8-9). However, God also commands the Levites to give the "choice portion" of the tithes (a tenth of a tenth) to the priests (Numbers 8:28). Thus, the priests were tied to tithing system.

These instructions in Deuteronomy and Numbers bind tithing and the ritual worship of God together. Not only that but they tie tithing to the support of those who serve God in His worship place. The instructions stipulate that the Levites who serve the Lord in His house are to be invited to the feast).

Yet analysis discovers *the third tithe*. The Levites were not the only non-family members invited to the feast. Yet another set of people were to share in the feast. The inclusion of these to the feast adds another dimension to the practice of tithing. In Deuteronomy, there are specific instructions to invite the poor to the party. Every third year there was a second tithe that was given to the needy: the strangers in the land, the fatherless, and the widows (Deuteronomy 14:29). This invitation was not a formality. It was one of the ways to meet the needs of the poor.

HOW WELL DID TITHING WORK?

Tithing was an essential part of the Law of Moses because it was meant to be a way of worship, a way of supporting those who served the Lord in worship, and a way of meeting the needs of the poor. How well did this intricate system of providing for the worship of God achieve its purposes?

There is no mention of tithing during the period of Judges and hardly any in the history of the United Kingdom of David and Solomon or the Northern and Southern Kingdoms.

A significant incident that shows the neglect and restoration of tithing is found in the story of King Hezekiah. Sometime before 701 BC under threat of Assyrian invasion, King Hezekiah set out to cleanse the land and the temple of idolatry and to restore the system of sacrifices and tithes. First, the king sponsored a Passover more glorious than any since King Solomon. Then, the pious king re-commissioned the priests and Levites for their service in the Temple in Jerusalem. For their support, he commanded the people to bring in the “first fruits” of grain, wine, olive oil, honey, livestock, and of “all the

produce of the field” (2 Chronicles 31:4-7). This was called a gathering of “tithes,” and it was so successful that in less than five months, the offerings piled up on the ground in heaps (2 Chronicles 31:7-8).

Hezekiah became concerned at the overflowing piles of food. The priests and Levites said that they had more than enough. So Hezekiah ordered storerooms to be built in the temple (2 Chronicles 31:11) for the extra tithes. Moreover, he appointed overseers in the temple and in the cities of the Levites in charge of the distribution of the tithes to the priests and Levites for their temple services (2 Chronicles 31:12-19). No mention is made in this reform of tithes to the poor, however.

Again, after the Exile in Babylon, Nehemiah the governor and Ezra the priest oversaw a program of cleansing the temple. In solemn assembly, the people heard the reading of the Law of Moses and confessed their sins (Nehemiah 9:1ff.). Then after a prayer by Ezra the priest, they swore that they would no longer “*neglect the House of our God*” (Nehemiah 10:39). They bound themselves to offer the “first fruits” of the crops, fruit, new wine, and olive oil, along with the first born of their sons and of their herds and flocks to the priests to be put in the temple storehouses (Nehemiah 10:35-38). Moreover, they vowed to offer the tithes of the land to the Levites in their cities and once again to insure that a tenth of these tithes would be brought to the storehouses of the temple.

Nevertheless, when Nehemiah returned from a trip to Babylon, he found that the priest Eliashib had leased space in the temple storehouse to Tobiah, an Ammonite who did not even belong in the temple (Nehemiah 12:1 & 4). Moreover, Nehemiah found that the Levites had gone home to their

Restorations of Tithing
C. 701 BC: Hezekiah’s Reform: Southern Kingdom (before Babylonian Exile)
444 BC: Covenant Renewal under Ezra the priest and Nehemiah the Governor (after Babylonian Exile)
164 BC: Cleansing of the Temple and restoration of sacrifices by the Maccabees

cities because they had been deprived of their tithes and the priest had been deprived of their firstfruits (Nehemiah 13:5 & 19). Nehemiah took charge and restored the storehouse to its proper function (Nehemiah 13:7-8). Once again, the people brought in an abundance of tithes of grain, new wine, and oil (Nehemiah 13:12). And again, Nehemiah appointed officers in charge of the distribution (Nehemiah 13:13).

Tithing, therefore, has a patchy history in the Old Testament. Tithing was never abolished. Yet the need for the restoration of tithing shows that it was frequently abandoned. It waxed and waned according to the cycle of unfaithfulness and repentance.

But even if tithes were made, the prophecy of Amos suggests that they were not always offered in the right spirit. Amos targets the pampered women of Samaria who oppress the poor and order their husbands to bring them more drink (Amos 4:1) Sarcastically, the prophet says they should go to the worship centers of Bethel and offer sacrifices every morning and tithes every three days (instead of three years) (Amos 4:4-5). These offerings, Amos says, would only increase their sin, because they were only given to show off. Further, as we see in the *festival type of tithe*, the tithes provided the food and drink for feasting. Yet these are the very feasts, sacrifices, and offerings that the Lord hates since they are corrupted with the people's idolatry and injustice (Amos 5:21)

Tithing in the Deutero-Canonical Literature Up to the First Century

The scriptures of the "second canon" leading up to the time of Jesus Christ continue the emphasis on tithing seen in Nehemiah. The Book of Tobit describes the righteousness of the Tobit. While all the tribes fell into idolatry, he alone observed all three types of tithing (Tobit 1:5-9). He said that he

The Deuterocanonical Books of Scripture

Orthodox Bibles contain inspired writings that are not part of the Hebrew Bible. These are called *Deuterocanonical* or the "Second Canon." However the Orthodox Study Bible combines these writings with the books of the Hebrew Bible under the heading, "Old Testament." They were written between c. 400 BC to the first century AD. Along with their inspired wisdom, these books help us understand the background of the first century, the time of Jesus and the apostles. This study includes the book of Tobit, the story of a pious Jew, 1 Maccabees, the history of the Jewish revolt against the Hellenistic persecution, and Wisdom of Sirach, one of the books of profound wisdom of this period.

would go to Jerusalem for the feast days with the offerings of first fruits, tithes, and first-shearings to offer to the priests together with a tenth of all the harvest to the Levites. This was the *second tithe*. Moreover, he would use the money from a second tenth, the *first tithe*, for his religious observance in

Jerusalem. And he would give a third tenth, the *third tithe*, "to those to whom it was fitting," that is, the poor and needy.

When he gave counsel to his son, Tobias, Tobit emphasized the later type of giving. In this discourse, almsgiving (offerings to the poor) is the first example of how to walk in the way of righteousness (Tobit 4:6-7). Tobit should give alms in proportion to his riches. If he has only a little, he should not hesitate to give according to the little he has (Tobit 4:8). Tobit recommends almsgiving “based on the quantity of one’s possessions” because it has eternal benefits. If Tobias does not reject the poor, God will not reject him. Rather almsgiving has the power to save us from the darkness of death. (Tobit 3:11).

We find an echo of these principles in the book of the Wisdom of Sirach (Ecclesiasticus). The preacher counsels his readers to give offerings with cheerfulness and to “*sanctify your tithes with joy*” (Sirach 35:10 New Advent). The Almighty rejects offerings that are funded by wrongdoing and injustice (Sirach 34:18 and 35:15-16). On the other hand, the Almighty accepts the sacrifices of the righteous (Sirach 35:9) and will return seven times as much to the giver (Sirach 35:17).

The Deuterocanonical scriptures stress the offerings to the poor: almsgiving is the equivalent of a “praise offering” (Sirach 35:2). Yet this concern for the poor does not cancel the responsibility for the temple and its ministers. Once again as in the time of Hezekiah, Josiah, and Nehemiah, the Book of First Maccabees records the restoration of the temple offerings, sacrifices, and tithes. Having defeated the enemies of the Jews, Judas and his brothers chose righteous priests who purified the temple in 164 BC. The Gentiles had defiled the altar of whole burnt offerings, so they tore it down. They then constructed a new altar of uncut stone (1 Maccabees 4:44-46). . . Then in an eight-day festival, they consecrated the altar and offered sacrifices. Not only the doors and decorations of the temple were restored, but the living quarters for the priests (1 Maccabees 4:57). Presumably, these were once again to be supported by the sacrifices and offerings of the people.

TITHING IN THE TIME OF JESUS

During the period from the Maccabean Revolt into the first century, tithing and almsgiving in proportion to one’s wealth were in force. For our purposes, the practice of tithing during this period can be divided between three groups: 1) the Sadducees; 2) the Pharisees; 3) the peasants (*am-ha-aret*—“People of the Land”).

The Sadducees were the conservative upper class in Judea who were in charge of the temple. They included many of the priests. They were the ones who received the tithes and offerings. During the time that the Hasmonean (Jewish) kings ruled after the Maccabean Revolt, the *first tithe* (formerly to

the Levites) had to be brought to Jerusalem to the High Priest in the Temple.² The High Priest then distributed the offering to the priests and, perhaps, the Levites.³

The intended recipients of these tithes may have changed because few Levites returned to Holy Land from Babylon. Thus, the Levites lost their right to them.⁴ Definitely, the change was part of the ongoing trend toward centralization of the religious-political-social life in the Jerusalem Temple.⁵ This centralization meant that the only place where the *second tithe* could be taken was the Temple in Jerusalem, and this was where the feast had to be celebrated.

In addition, according to the Mishnah, there were thirteen “charity boxes” in the Temple for offerings of *the third type*.⁶ These were shaped like horns to prevent thief. Coins were dropped into these horn-shaped boxes for relief of the poor as well as for support of the temple.

Gathering all the tithes and offerings in the Temple, of course, increased the power of the High Priest and made corruption of the system more possible. Nevertheless, the system of tithes and offerings was part of a comprehensive way of life that was directed by the Law of God (Torah).

The Pharisees were the party of the pious who applied the Torah to every moment and all aspects of life. Above all, the Pharisees were the ones who conscientiously gave the tithes and offerings prescribed in the Law of Moses.

Besides the Sadducees, the Pharisees distinguished themselves from the third group of Jews, the peasants. The Pharisees despised these *am-ha-aret* (“People of the Land”) because they either neglected the laws of tithes and offerings or were totally ignorant of them. The taxes that the Romans imposed were already a heavy burden on the people. Moreover, the original purpose of supporting the Levites who had no land of their own had been lost.⁷ Many of the priests and Levites were wealthy landowners, and most only served in the Temple two weeks out of the year.⁸ Many of them were paid as government workers. Thus to many in the Holy Land, the tithes seemed like an extra burden.⁹ This did not mean that they gave no offerings at

² **M. STERN. THE JEWISH PEOPLE IN THE FIRST CENTURY: HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY, POLITICAL HISTORY, SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS LIFE AND INSTITUTIONS. (FORTRESS: 1974) 822.**

³ Stern 822-23

⁴ Stern 821-22

⁵ Stern 822

⁶ **“ZEDAKAH BOX.” JEWISH ENCYCLOPEDIA. (1907) < [HTTP://WWW.JEWISHENCYCLOPEDIA.COM/ARTICLES/15207-ZEDAKAH-BOX](http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/15207-zedakah-box)>**

⁷ Stern 824

⁸ Stern 824

⁹ Stern 824

all: the wave offering of first fruits and dough offering, (a portion of the baked bread) were widely observed.

Having listed those who received the tithes, those who gave them, and those who largely neglected them, we must return to the Pharisees who were careful to keep them. The Pharisees dedicated themselves to keeping the Law of God in all aspects of life. However, for the Pharisees, the Law of the written Torah (First Five Books of Moses) was an insufficient guide. In addition to the written Torah, another source of instruction in the Law of God developed, the "oral Torah." To explain, during the period leading up to the first century AD, the role of Rabbi (Teacher of the Law) developed. The Rabbi's job was to guide the application of the Law to life.

Some of the Rabbinical rulings on the application of the Law were passed down to the next generations by "oral tradition." Eventually, well after the fall of the Temple in 70 AD, these rulings were codified in the writing of the *Mishnah*.

Thus, the Mishnah developed between the first century B.C and second century A.D on the basis of the "oral Torah" or oral tradition. Significantly, the Mishnah, therefore, records rulings of the Rabbis during the timeframe that includes the ministry of Jesus. Finally written down after 200 A.D., it is the core of the larger collection of rabbinical teachings of the Jewish canon called the Talmud.

Why should we mention a Jewish source as we study the matter of tithing in scriptures? The Pharisees of Jesus' day were followers of developing "oral Torah." Because the Mishnah wrote the rulings of the "oral Torah" down, it became the written record of the way of thinking of the Pharisees. It is necessary to understand this mindset expressed in the Mishnah because the Pharisees were the chief opponents of Jesus.

For example, the Mishnah helps us understand the saying of Jesus: "*Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you pay tithes of mint and dill, and cumin but have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy, and faith*" (Matthew 23:23). In the Law of Moses, the items of the *first tithe* are

A Source of Understanding the Pharisees

The *Mishnah* is a written collection of the rulings of the early Teachers of the Law (Rabbis). These rulings sought to answer questions of how the Law of Moses (Torah) should be applied to all aspects of life. The rulings first were passed along by oral tradition until they were collected and written down in the Mishnah around 200 AD.

The Mishnah developed between the first century B.C. and second century AD. The disputes between Jesus and the Pharisees fall in the center of this time period. The Pharisees followed the teaching of the Rabbis of their time, teachings that were later written down in the Mishnah. Thus, the Mishnah is an important source for understanding the mindset of the Pharisees and the teaching of Jesus that opposed them.

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grain, wine, olive oil, and livestock. The Mishnah expands the list of the items that must be tithed by ruling that grain represents all seed from the ground; wine refers to all fruit grown on vines; and olive oil represents all the fruit of trees. Further, the Mishnah adds vegetables and dill, cumin, and fennel, and many other items,

Moreover, the practice of tithing was so important that the emerging Rabbis (Teachers of the Law) began to expand on the fine points of the law in minute detail. The Mishnah deals with the complications of when these items must be tithed. The general rule of the Mishnah is that one must tithe everything used for food. For example, if a farmer cuts off the green tops of vegetables while he is taking them to market to lighten the load, he must offer a tithe of those greens. However, food that is set aside to ripen is not liable to tithe until it is ripe and ready to eat. For instance, mulberries are not subject to the tithe until they turn red, a sign that they are ripe.

But what about harvesting fruit and vegetables? Those who gather figs may eat of them one by one in the vineyard without tithing them. But if they take the the figs home or give them to their children, the figs are subject to tithes. It gets rather complicated.

“... meticulous tithing, in fact, was one of two criteria for belonging to the party of the Pharisees.”

This investigation explains the lengths to which the Pharisees would go in their scrupulous obsession to keep the laws of tithing. In the Gospels, Jesus does not criticize the practice of tithing. In fact, He says, *“This they ought to have done”* (Matthew 23:23). However, the obsession with intricate details led to the neglect of the more important matters of the Law: justice, mercy, and faith (Matthew 23:23). This the Pharisees ought to have known from their own developing tradition. In another division of the Mishnah, the Tractate *“Ethics of the Fathers”* includes the saying of Simon the Just who said, *“The world rests of three foundations: the Law of God (Torah), services to God (in prayer and offerings), and loving-kindness.”*

The case of the tithes of *“mint, dill, and cumin”* reveals the rigorous practice of the Pharisees. A candidate would first pledge to keep the tithing laws. After a prescribed amount of time, the new member would graduate to vows of keeping the purity laws, such as stricter laws of contact with those who are ignorant or neglectful of the Law.

The Gospels do not record whether Jesus paid tithes. From Luke we know that his parents were careful to follow the Law in all respects (Luke 2:39). On February 2, the Orthodox calendar recalls the Presentation of the Lord in the Temple when his parents went to the Temple and offered the required sacrifice of *“a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons”* (Luke 2:24) as they presented the firstborn to the Lord (Luke 2:22-24). Furthermore, Saint

Matthew records that Jesus paid a tax for the support of the temple (Matthew 17:24-27). And at His baptism, Jesus told John, *"It is fitting for us to fulfill all righteous"* (Luke 3:15). Though Jesus was renowned for eating with "publicans and sinners," He was also considered worthy to eat at the home of Pharisees (Luke 7:36-50 and Luke 11:37-38) who shunned the unrighteous.

The issue of tithing for Jesus was not whether they should be paid. Instead, like the prophet Amos, He questioned the spirit in which they were given. The Pharisees in the Parable of the Pharisee and Publican exemplifies this attitude. He boasts, *"I give tithes of all I have"* (Luke 18:12). In contrast, Jesus said, *"When you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right is doing. So that your Father who sees in secret will reward you"* (Matthew 6:4). Note here that Jesus was speaking of the **third tithe**, the giving to charity.

In summary, the Gospels indicate that Jesus assumed the practice of tithing and related almsgiving. He did not abolish them, just as He said, *"Do not think that I came to abolish the Law and the Prophets but to fulfill them"* (Matthew 5:17). But Jesus taught a far different spirit of giving offerings than the Pharisees. He said that if one has something against his neighbor, he should first be reconciled to him, and then offer his gift at the altar (Matthew 5:24). He said that the poor widow who gave two mites had given more to the Temple treasury than any of the rich who put in large sums (Mark 12:41-44). He demanded total commitment even to one's very life of those who wanted to follow Him as His disciples (Mark 10:21; Mark 8:34-37).

TITHING IN THE NEW TESTAMENT AFTER THE RESURRECTION

After the resurrection, the New Testament gives no indication that the apostles and early church tithed. Instead of tithing, the book of Acts records that the believers in Jerusalem sold their property and possessions and held the proceeds in common (Acts 2:44). Then they distributed the resources from the common fund according to need (Acts 2:44).

This system led to the first two issues that the early church faced. The first was the temptation to hold back property from the common fund. This issue came up in the case of Ananias and Sapphira both of whom paid for their subterfuge with their lives (Acts 5:5 and 5:10). The second was the complaint that the widows of the Greek-speaking converts were not getting their share of the daily distribution of food (Acts 6:1). The resolution of this issue was the ordination of the new order of deacons who would take care of the distribution of resources (Acts 6:3-6).

In a sense, the communal collection and distribution of goods was a new way to do what had been done by the **third tithe**. But instead of an offering ten percent for the poor, the Church demanded all of one's resources. By the

time of St. Paul (or in his circles), this practice of communal property had been abandoned. But not the importance of offerings of charity. Much of the guidance for Christian giving comes from the Apostle Paul's promotion of the collection for the "saints in Jerusalem." This collection was on the forefront of St. Paul's mind, and it appears in his letters to the Romans, the Corinthians, and probably the Galatians. Moreover, it is recorded in the book of Acts.

For this cause, St. Paul outlined an impressive list of the basic principle of Christian giving:

- Giving regularly (on the first day of the week) (1 Corinthians 16:2)
- Giving proportionately (1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 8:11-15)
- Giving to meet material needs of others (in response to spiritual blessings) (Romans 15:27; 2 Corinthians 9:12)
- Giving generously (2 Corinthians 8:2; 2 Corinthians 9:6)
- Giving willingly (2 Corinthians 8:3; 8:12)
- Giving cheerfully (2 Corinthians 9:6)
- Giving in faith that God provides (2 Corinthians 9:8-9)
- Giving in trust that God will use it to produce fruit (2 Corinthians 9:10)
- Giving to glorify God and increase thanksgiving (2 Corinthians 9:12-13)

The Apostle Paul outlines an impressive list of principles of Christian giving. But he does so to promote the relief of the poor in Jerusalem, that is, to appeal for almsgiving..

We see that St. Paul here spoke of everything but the tithe, though he was trained as a Rabbi and knew the laws of tithing perfectly well. Perhaps this omission is consistent with his theme of that those who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ are "*not under the Law but under grace*" (Romans 6: 14). To insist on the *third tithe* as an external obligation of the Law of Moses would put his hearers "under the Law." Rather, St. Paul expected that believers who are joined to Christ and share in the "New Adam" will live and give according to the Spirit (Romans 8:1). His approach, therefore, was different than the teachers of the Law: He did not insist that his spiritual children follow the rules of the external Law. He appealed to their hearts trusting that "*each one will give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity...*" (2 Corinthians 9:7).

THE THREE TYPES OF TITHE **and the New Testament: The Counterpart to the Third Tithe**

Nevertheless, a point may be overlooked. The collection is for the relief of the "saints in Jerusalem" many of whom are in need¹⁰ (Romans 15:26). St. Paul

¹⁰ "The poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem" (Romans 15:26)

said that those who have in abundance should now supply the needs of those who have little – so that there may be equality (2 Corinthians 8:14-15). Again he said that since the Gentiles have been blessed spiritually through the Jewish believers in Jerusalem, now it is their turn to bless the poor in Jerusalem with material things (Romans 15:27).

The Apostle Paul was eager to bring a generous offering from the Gentile churches of the empire in part because he wanted to strengthen the ties of love (*agape*) and fellowship (*koinonia*) between the Gentile churches and Jewish church in Jerusalem. In a sense, the offering for the support of the mother church in Jerusalem would bring legitimacy to the Gentile churches as the offering would be a sign of mutual sharing between them.

However, whatever else the collection was, it was an ingathering of charity. It therefore served the purpose of *the third tithe* even though it was not

Alms consist of money and/or material goods given to the poor. The Law of Moses commands almsgiving: “*If there is among you a poor man, one of your brethren, in any of your towns within your land which the Lord your God gives you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother, but you shall open your hand to him, and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be*” (Deuteronomy 15:7) Giving alms is consistently advocated in the Old and New Testaments and the church fathers.

structured as a tithe. The early church may not have practiced tithing, but it did practice almsgiving according to the Word of the Lord Jesus Christ:

“*Do not fear little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give alms, provide for yourselves purses that do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches or moth destroys. For where your treasure is there will your heart be also*” (Luke 12:32-34).

It is the giving of alms (offerings to the poor) that puts one’s heart in the right place. Giving alms is a sign of faith in the providence of the Heavenly Father and an investment in the spiritual riches of the Kingdom of Heaven.

In the same vein, the Apostle James teaches that faith is nothing if it is not expressed in works. Moreover, chief among these works is the feeding and clothing the brother or sister in need (James 2:14-18). Like the prophets of the Old Testament, the Apostle James derides the rich for their debauchery and callousness. They have stored up treasures of material things. But their riches are already corrupted, and the corrosion of their gold and silver will testify against them at the Judgment. In so far as the rich have cheated the poor out of fair wages, they are condemned as if they had murdered the righteous (James 5:4-6). The remedy, of course, is humility. Yet it also involves something more: the pure religion is to “*visit orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself unstained from the world*” (James 1:27).

Likewise, in 1 Timothy, the Apostle Paul observe that “*The love of money is the root of all [kinds of] evil*” (1 Timothy 6:10). Rather, we should be content with the basics of food and clothing (1 Timothy 6:8). But what about those who have more, even to the point of being rich?

Timothy is to warn the rich against pride and trust in material things. Timothy is to command almsgiving:

“Let them do good, that they may be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay ahold of eternal life” (1 Timothy 18-19).

Certainly, though the tithe is not mentioned, the relief of the poor that was the purpose of *the third tithe* appears repeatedly.

THE CONCERN THAT CORRESPONDS TO THE FIRST TITHE

But what about the *first tithe*, the support of the Levites? Christianity includes no Levites and/or priests of the Temple in Jerusalem. However, the equivalent of these Old Testament “holy orders” are the hierarchs, priests, and deacons who serve before the Altar of God, along with the teachers, musicians, and workers necessary for the administration and nurture of the Church. The central importance of the tithe for the support of Levites and priests raises the question of how these are to be supported.

A single principle runs through the New Testament about the support of servants of the Church: “*a laborer is worthy of his hire.*” The Lord Jesus taught this principle in the Gospels; St. Paul appealed to it in his letters; and St. Paul also referred to it in his letter to Timothy.

The principle first appears when the Lord Jesus sent out the twelve to announce the coming of the Kingdom of God. They were not to bring along

money, extra clothes, or sandals, or staffs, because of this principle (Matthew 10:9-10). That is, they were to be supported by those with whom they bring the Good News of the Kingdom.

The intention of the first tithe of support for God’s servants is found in the repeated New Testament principle that “a laborer is worthy of his hire” (Matthew 10:9; Luke 10:7; 1 Timothy 5:18). Alternatively this principle is put, “You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain” (Deuteronomy 25:4; 1 Corinthians 9:9; 1 Timothy 5:18. St. Paul summarizes that those who preach the Gospel should earn their living by the Gospel (1 Corinthians 9:14).

Then too, when the Lord Jesus sent out the Seventy in Luke to gather the harvest of the Kingdom, they too were told to depend on those to whom they are sent. Indeed, they must not go from house to house but must stay in one place and eat and drink whatever is set before them (Luke 10: 7). Again the

reason is the same. Those who receive the benefits of the Lord's servants are to support them.

Yet it was in the ministry of the Apostle Paul that the issue became acute. St. Paul took a rather complex stance toward his support. On the one hand, he made his living as a tentmaker and refused to be paid for his missionary work. His self-support was in keeping with the Rabbis of his day. Many of these Rabbis had different occupations: for example, the famous Rabbi Hillel was a woodcutter, and his opponent Rabbi Shammai was an engineer.

On the other hand, St. Paul insisted on his right to be paid (1 Corinthians 9:3-12), though he also reserves the right not to accept payment. Central to his defense was an Old Testament passage: "*You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain*" (1 Corinthians 9:9 from Deuteronomy 25:4). St. Paul explained that this passage should be applied to the servants of the Gospel. He even said bluntly, "*The Lord has commanded that those who preach the Gospel should live from the Gospel*" (1 Corinthians 9:14).

The issue of St. Paul's financial support, though, had larger implications. It was tied to his apostleship. St. Paul's opponents said that he could not be a true apostle like Peter and the others because he was not paid. He was an imposter who was not worth wages – and he knew it. That is why he refused payment for his services.

St. Paul's defense of his apostleship, therefore, was mixed with his defense of his self-support. He said that he did get some money for support

St. Paul insisted that he had a right to be paid for preaching the Gospel. He also recommended the same to the Apostle Timothy. On the other hand, he refused to exercise this right for himself.

from other churches in Macedonia (2 Corinthians 11:8). But he did not ask for money from the Corinthians lest he be a

burden to them (2 Corinthians 12:13). Finally after St. Paul was forced to boast of his background, his labors in the Gospel, his visions, and the signs of God's power in his ministry, the issue seems to have been resolved in Corinth. St. Paul never received payment in Corinth, though he did receive monetary gifts from Macedonia and Philippi (Philippians 4:15-18).

With this in mind, we are surprised to find that St. Paul advised Timothy that the elders who teach the Word should receive a double honor, a payment given with reverence (1 Timothy 5:17). Once again, St. Paul evoked the principle that the laborer is worthy of his hire. He did so in terms of the command not to muzzle the ox while it treads out grain. Thus, we have found that even though it does not specifically recommend tithing, the New Testament clearly and repeatedly advocates the financial support of the servants of God.

THE QUESTION OF WHAT REPLACED THE SECOND TITHE

But what about the *second festival tithe*? The New Testament Gospels mention the major feasts of Judaism. According to the Gospel of John, Jesus cleansed the Temple during the Passover (John 2:13-17). He also taught in the temple

The provisions for the Eucharistic “breaking of bread” in the early Church (Acts 2:46) and later “love feasts” (Jude 12 and 2 Peter 2:13) must have come from the believers who shared them with the assembly.

during the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:14-39). And He also instituted the Eucharist during the Passover (Matthew 26:17-30). Before the fall of the Temple in 70 AD, there was a transition time when the Christians

seemed to worship both in the temple and in their own gatherings. Thus, St. Luke records “So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart” (Acts 2:46). Later the books of Jude and 2 Peter mention “love feasts” that included interlopers only interested in their pursuing own sinfulness (Jude 12; 2 Peter 2:13). We can presume that the participants in these rituals offered the necessary provisions for them.

Certainly, the common fund was the source of support for the believers as well as the Eucharistic “breaking of bread.” However, we would have to investigate the development of the Holy Mysteries and feasts of the Church in the church fathers to make further comments. Regrettably, that is beyond the scope this paper.

CONCLUSIONS

Promotions of tithing often extract the ten percent rule from its context in the scriptures. Consequently, they beg the question of the function of the tithe in the scriptures. Granted, tithing acknowledges that the Almighty God is the Creator who is the rightful owner and ruler of all that exists. Moreover, the Almighty is the source and benefactor of life and every blessing. Therefore, He has every right to expect that His creation should return to Him a portion of what He so freely bestows. Beyond that, however, tithing has its sacred uses. The Lord our God is not arbitrary in His ways, asking us to wantonly waste His good things. Rather, the Lord requires the stewardship of our offerings as well as our lives and resources.

This study of tithing is meant to help priests and church leaders think about the teaching of the offering and use of money in their parishes. Invariably in today’s society, the question of tithing will come up when offerings of money are mentioned. A study of the church fathers would show that it should not be hastily dismissed as a “Protestant” practice but that, to

this day, it is recommended as a standard of monetary giving in Orthodox circles.

The study shows that the matter of tithing goes much deeper than the simplistic appeal that the parishioners should give ten percent of their income “to the church.” Without careful instruction, promotions of tithing can readily evoke controversies that are confusing and counterproductive. For example, charts that show percentages of income up to the tithe are easily misunderstood unless explained. They can become measures of pride or guilt. Alternatively, they can simply be dismissed as the wishes of church leaders

The teaching of offering money gifts, much less tithing, must be set within the larger context of stewardship as a way of life.

for their fellow members to “give more.”

When the matter of money arises, above all, the emphasis should be on the spirit of giving – and that within the context of the teaching of stewardship as a way of life. The study of tithing shows many negative as well as positive examples of the spirit of giving. The teaching of Jesus on humility in giving together with the principles of St. Paul listed above and the teaching of the Church Fathers (not reviewed in this article) provide a firm foundation for the teaching of money offerings. Nevertheless, any such teaching must be carefully done because it is so susceptible to misunderstanding, especially the mistake of legalism.

Over all, this study of tithing shows that tithing was first and foremost a matter of worship. This understanding was so strong that tithes had to be physically taken to the tabernacle, temple, or worship center. If the distance was too far, the tithes could be sold for money, but then provisions would have to be purchased from that money upon arrival at the house of worship.

If tithes were sacred to the Lord, so the offerings of the faithful are also holy and should be treated that way. In this regard, the study suggests that dues and funds raised in bazaars and sales are not stewardship. Dues are contracts for the privilege of membership. Money exchanged in bazaars and sales are payments for goods. None of these are worthy to be called offerings to God.

This study also shows that tithing was a viable means of supporting the servants of God, providing supplies for worship

Whatever is given to the church should be given as offerings and offerings are worship, not contracts, bargains, or payments due.

feasts, and giving aid to the poor. But it only functioned well as long as it was a way of worshipping the true God within the covenant relationship of the Law of Moses. In times when the kings and people strayed from the Law through of idolatry and injustice, tithing was either neglected or abused.

Note that the renewal of the covenant relationship with God in worship was the way that tithing was restored. These blessed times of renewal required the strong and godly leadership of men like King Hezekiah, King Josiah, the priest Ezra and governor Nehemiah, and the Maccabees. As the priest Ezra did, these set out the Law of God in the Moses covenant before the people. The clear proclamation of the Law that defined the people's relationship with their God was the motivating factor.

These findings suggest that the renewal of stewardship in the diocese and parish requires strong and inspired leadership. Its basis must be the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, not desperation over meeting the church budget. Appeals for money, especially the promotion of tithing, will not turn the hearts of the people toward fruitful stewardship. What will turn their hearts is the clear, Spirit-inspired, and forceful preaching of the Gospel.

The intentions of the three tithes, not merely ten percent rule, have implications for the stewardship of our parishes and diocese.

An understanding of the intentions of three tithes also suggests some considerations that might be useful. For

example, the intention of the *first tithe* was to support the servants of God in their ministry. The question for the diocese and parish is whether the Word that "*the laborer is worthy of his hire*" is taken seriously. Insufficient support of parish priests cannot help but cripple their ministry. To the extent that priests have worries about providing for their families, they can no longer concentrate on their calling. Special concern must be given to the mission priests who carry the critical burden for all in the diocese of establishing new communities of faith throughout America. Their work of outreach is greatly advanced when they are given ample resources.

Perhaps this study of tithing will bring the issue of the sufficient support of priests in this economy out in the open. The priests cannot take the leadership here, but depend on the guidelines of the diocese and informed and caring lay leaders to make sure that they have a level of support that is critical to their full effectiveness.

A second consideration follows from the *third tithe* of charity. What about almsgiving in our parishes? Of yes, we have the International Orthodox Christian Charities and the Orthodox Christian Mission Center, as well as local charities – food banks, homeless shelters, orphanages, etc. Yet these are often funded by special offerings and not considered central to the funding of the life of the parish. In the system of tithing in the Old Testament, the third tithe was much more important. In the prophets, care for the needy and justice for the oppressed was even more so.

On the model of the tithing system, all parishes should make charity central to their mission. Fundraising and dues systems fund the church

budget. The church budget invariably is limited to what is needed for parish “operating expenses.” The study of the tithe suggests that parishes should consider putting significant funds for charity, as well as funds for the diocese, in their church budgets. Offerings for special causes would be extra.

A final consideration concerns the intentions of the *second (festival) tithe*. This study has not found enough material from the New Testament to make extensive comments. However, the practice of bringing gifts from the home in the form of *prosphora*, perishable items for food banks, and items for coffee hours is a start in connecting the home with the church. Making these offerings visible would be a powerful way of demonstrating that offerings should come from the practice of stewardship as a way of life.

This study has tried to show that the teaching of tithing, when chosen, must be more than a well-oiled way of collecting money for paying church bills. Tithing must be set in the context of stewardship as a way of life and practiced in the right spirit. Whether it is a tithe or not, an offering of money is holy. It requires church leaders to manage the funds with faithful stewardship. In today’s society, the more the faithful can be engaged in this parish stewardship, not merely the giving and collecting of funds, the more they will be motivated to grow in their giving.

The matter of tithing and its uses is more important and more thought-provoking than one might think. Most often, discussions of tithing reveal the attitudes of the participants toward money and its role in stewardship. This study is incomplete and should be followed by a study of tithing and the church fathers. However, already it suggests a deeper approach and more reflective attitude toward the subject of tithing and the surrounding issues of the use of money in the diocese and its parishes.

FIRST STEPS IN PARISH STEWARDSHIP

Preparation

Under the spiritual guidance of your parish priest...

- Form your Parish Stewardship Committee before parish programs begin in the fall;
- Keep the Parish Council informed and active in promoting Stewardship;
- Coordinate communications focusing on stewardship throughout the year;
- Focus on Stewardship of Time, Talent, and Treasure – know the gifts & talents of your people.
- Consider a possible theme for stewardship for the year.

“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;
- 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 chairperson understands and is passionate about stewardship 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 Committee.
- Team members must lead by example with 100% participation in stewardship.

- The Committee plans the annual stewardship event, the distribution of stewardship materials, and the follow-up effort.
- Regular communication among Committee members by email, conference call and meetings are more frequent in preparation for the stewardship event.
- Personal contact by the Stewardship Committee with parishioners is critical to the success of the program.
- In-home visitation by members of the team can be effective in increasing members' connection to the parish and understanding of stewardship.
- Small groups may be a supplement to visitations or a substitute if visits are not feasible.

A SUGGESTED ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN PARISH STEWARDSHP PROGRAM

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 Diocesan ministries, apostolates and institutions.

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, profits 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 philanthropic work of the Church.

The foremost purpose of the Steward's offering of time, talents, and treasures is to support and maintain the spirituality of the Sunday liturgical experience. 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 Stewardship giving

regularly, the program will not be successful. The Priest has the spiritual responsibility to teach Stewardship, which is the Christian understanding of worldly possessions.

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. It is imperative that visitors take time to listen to the people being visited, taking 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 visitors 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.

All parishioners declare their annual commitment, freely, by submitting an Orthodox Christian 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.

The message of Stewardship should be kept at the forefront of the congregation through regular communication throughout the year, especially at the very beginning of the Stewardship Program. Sermons, reflections, announcements, bulletins, newsletters, 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.

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.

As mentioned above, the message of Stewardship can be reinforced through brochures, posters, the parish newsletter, the Sunday bulletin, the parish web site, 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.

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 will reinforce support of 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.

How do Stewards make their offerings?

- **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.

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.

**MOVING FROM A DUES SYSTEM TO ORTHODOX
CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP:
A Case Study - Holy Ghost, Phoenixville, PA**

Holy Ghost Orthodox Church of our diocese had been functioning from its inception as a “dues” based membership, with many fundraisers in the course of the year to supplement offerings that may (or may not) have exceeded the “dues.” Other funds were received through numerous envelopes provided to each family, containing special offerings for many occasions throughout the year.

On August 31, 2006, the following letter was sent to all parishioners of Holy Ghost by the Holy Ghost Parish Board:

. . .This letter contains information about a new program that the Parish Board has studied over the past several years, (looking) at other Orthodox churches and (has) unanimously approved for our implementation for the 2007 year – STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM. We ask that you take a few minutes to read this letter and the enclosed information.

Stewardship is Christian, biblical and equitable, for each is asked to give according to his or her love for God, conscience and means. By Stewardship, we support Christ’s work not as a duty, but as a privilege. The Christian way to give is to give because we desire to give: we give because we love the Lord.

We can all be good stewards of our Church by giving freely of our Time, Talents, and Treasure. Our Time to the Church means volunteering to work around the Church, serving on the parish council/board, committees, and sub-committees, and so forth. Giving of one’s Talents means giving to the Church our Natural Talents. These include things as: cooking, carpentry, plumbing, electrical, child care, Sunday school teacher, and others. Giving of our Treasures simply means giving money freely, generously, and cheerfully to the Church.

The Board has unanimously endorsed a Stewardship Program. We trust that you, the faithful Christians of Holy Ghost Church in your love will accept Stewardship as the means to support the Lord’s work at the Church.

(Enclosed) is a typical list of questions and answers regarding the Stewardship Program. This list by no means covers all of the questions/answers relating to this program. We will be sending more specific information on the Stewardship Program to you during the upcoming months. Also, the Board designated

November 12th as Stewardship Sunday. On November 12th, immediately following Divine Liturgy, all will be invited to our Social Center for refreshments where you will have the opportunity to ask any questions you may have regarding the Program. In the meantime, if you have any questions about any of this information, please contact one of the ... church officers...

The enclosed typical question and answers were these:

Q: What is "stewardship" and how does it involve me?

A: According to the Webster Dictionary, "stewardship" means the conducting, supervising, or managing of something; especially, the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care. Our church does not belong to us, but to our Saviour Jesus Christ. We are all 'stewards' of the church and we are all responsible for the care and management of the church.

Q: Why the change?

A: Over the years many parishioners have commented on the large number of envelopes (162 for 2006); and what envelopes were included toward the "dues" of the church. A Stewardship program will eliminate these concerns: the number of envelopes will be greatly reduced; and the dues envelope will be eliminated and replaced with a minimum pledge of \$240 for the first year (of the Stewardship Program). Also, initially, we will have to continue our various fundraisers. However, as Stewardship is gradually accepted by all of you, we may be able to start to eliminate some of our fundraisers. The ultimate goal of the stewardship program is to provide the means to spread the burden of supporting the Lord's work of our church across all members.

Q: We have heard the word "pledge" used with Stewardship. What is church pledging?

A: Pledging is a method of contributing to the church. This method is used now by many congregations, including Orthodox.

Q: How does pledging work?

A: A pledge is simply a promise or agreement to do something. In the case of pledging to our church, we will all be asked, in advance, how much we intend to give to the church in terms of time, talent, and money. In late November or early December, all of us will be receiving a pledge card in the mail. This pledge card will ask us what we intend to give to the church in terms of time, talent and money in 2007. Also, at that time, we will tell you how much you have contributed in the past twelve month period through all of your envelopes.

Q: What other changes will there be under the Stewardship Program?

A: Under stewardship and pledging we will be making it simpler to complete your pledge. You will find that there will be fewer offering envelopes for the new year. Currently, monies from the envelope system are used to support the daily operation of the church. Under (stewardship, pledged offerings will do that duty).

Q: What if I do not want to pledge?

A: If you do not want to pledge, you will be considered a non-pledging member in good standing as long as you meet the minimum contribution. However, we will need everyone's cooperation to make the program work.

Q: What other advantages are there under the pledge system?

A: Under the current system, the (Parish) Treasurer must use the prior year income and expenses to set the new year's budget. Under the new system, the Treasurer can more accurately estimate income based on the amounts pledged to the church. In addition, under the new system, the counting and recording of the Sunday giving will be much simpler since fewer envelopes will be used. Of course, the last advantage is making it simpler for you to set your own budgets and to give freely. With fewer envelopes being used, fewer checks will also need to be written.

Q: What will happen to "vigil" envelopes?

A: Vigil envelopes for candles will remain the same with no changes.

Q: Will my stewardship pledge be confidential?

A: Yes! Other than you and God, two people will know the amount of your pledge: the Stewardship Committee manager and the Financial Secretary. The pledge manager will collect all pledge cards and provide the cards to the Financial Secretary. The Financial Secretary will enter your pledge into the church financial records and record your pledge payments. Your pledge is confidential and will not be made available to anyone else. Although aggregate pledge figures may be published, to chart the annual progress of the Stewardship Program, the amount of individual pledges will not be published.

This letter and Q/A was followed up by this letter in the initial year of Holy Ghost's Stewardship Program. The letter comes from the Parish Board:

Greetings Fellow Parishioners of Holy Ghost: We hope that you are all doing well and getting ready for the new church year. Included in this letter is a pledge card for the 2007 calendar year. In our last letter to you, we explained how pledging works and how important it is for all parishioners to participate in this program. The pledge card is very simple and should only take a few moments to complete.

In essence, you will be estimating what you intend to give financially to the church in the coming year. Remember, when you are filling out the pledge, you will be estimating your giving on either a weekly, monthly, quarterly, semi-annual or annual basis. You can choose one of these time periods. Prior to the new year, you will receive the proper number of envelopes based on how you determine how you want to give. For instance, if you determined that you would like to give on a weekly basis, you will receive 52 dated envelopes. If you want to give on a monthly basis, you will receive just 12 dated envelopes, etc. You will also receive special envelopes for Christmas, Easter, Patriarchal giving, and the Altar Society dues for those who wish to give extra for those purposes.

Please remember that you will no longer be receiving envelopes for maintenance, energy costs, holy days or monthly dues. When calculating how much you estimate you are going to contribute to the church for the coming year, please remember to add the amount you have given in the past for these worthy purposes.

As in the past year, the minimum annual giving is set at \$240 per year. Remember that this amount is set only to establish membership, and should not be used as a guide to giving. Please give from the heart. Our budget demands that individual giving be far in excess of the minimum.

If anyone would like to know how much you gave in the current year, including all envelopes that are being discontinued, please contact the financial secretary. All pledges are confidential and can be adjusted up or down during the year if one's financial circumstances change. We ask that each consider giving an increase of at least 5% to cover inflation and higher fuel costs experienced in the past year.

Thank you in advance. Your pledge to the church is an important event in the life of the parish. All pledge cards are due back to the church by Loyalty Sunday, December 10th. If anyone needs help or has any questions concerning the pledge card, please contact (any member of the Stewardship Committee). Again, please pledge from the heart, and give cheerfully. With love in Christ, Holy Ghost Parish Board.

To those who became Stewards of Holy Ghost Church in its initial year of the Stewardship Program, the Stewardship Committee sent this letter:

Dear Steward: We welcome you to Holy Ghost Christian Stewardship Program. We hope you will find this Program to be one of spiritual uplifting and we look forward to a most successful first year for our Christian Stewardship Program.

We have taken your 2007 box of church envelopes and purged those envelopes that you will not need under the Stewardship Program. We have left the following envelopes in your 2007 box:

--A sufficient number of envelopes to be used for payment of your pledge (based on how you decided to pay your pledge – weekly, monthly, etc. These envelopes have been marked “pledge.”

--A Christmas and Easter Flower offering envelope that you may use at your option.

--A Christmas, Easter and Pentecost offering envelope. Again, these may be used at your option if you wish to make a special offering on these major Holy Days.

--A Cemetery maintenance envelope. You may use this envelope if you have a cemetery plot in the Church’s cemetery and wish to make a donation towards the upkeep of the cemetery.

--Altar Society dues envelopes. If you are a member of the Altar Society you can use these envelopes to pay your Altar Society dues – these envelopes are turned over to the Altar Society Treasurer – the Church officers do not count or account for these envelopes.

--The Patriarchal offering envelope. This is a Diocesan collection and all funds collected are sent to the Diocese for transfer to the Patriarchate.

--We have also included a 2007 Stewardship Program pocket calendar.

The Stewardship Program is a new program. We will have growing pains this first year. Please be patient as we implement this program. If you have any questions regarding the Program, please do not hesitate to ask (any member of the Stewardship Committee)

Thank you for joining the Stewardship Program and becoming a Steward of our Church. Yours in Orthodoxy, Holy Ghost Stewardship Committee

The following letter was sent to all parishioners at the beginning of the second year of stewardship in the parish:

In 2007, the church implemented the Holy Ghost Christian Stewardship Program. In our first year, the church was blessed when 122 members became Stewards of the church for the first time. We now enter our second year of the Stewardship program. You are invited to join the 2008 Stewardship Program and become a Steward of Holy Ghost Orthodox Church.

Your free will Christian Stewardship support of Holy Ghost Orthodox Church is a vital part in operating and maintaining our Church and and advancing the work of Christ and our Orthodox Faith in our Parish, Diocese and local community. We ask that you prayerfully consider joining the 2008 Christian Stewardship

Program and thank our Lord for the bounties and blessings that He has bestowed on you.

...However, whether you join the Stewardship Program or elect to remain as a dues paying member, we ask that you remember that the Church's normal operating expenses (fuel oil, electric, and so forth) continue to increase every year. Therefore, we ask that if you are financially able to do so, please consider increasing your commitment to the church in 2008. Any increase, no matter how small, would be most appreciated. Also, the Church requires a minimum contribution of \$240 for a member to be considered in good standing financially.

If you wish to become a Steward of the Church, complete the enclosed 2008 Pledge card and return it to the Church by Sunday, December 9, 2007. You may use the enclosed envelope and mail the card to the Church or place the card in the basket provided in the vestibule of the Church.

To those who expressed interest in becoming Stewards at Holy Ghost Church, the Stewardship Committee sent this letter:

(The) Holy Ghost Financial Secretary has informed the Stewardship committee of your interest in becoming a Steward of Holy Ghost Orthodox Church. The committee is happy that you have shown an interest in our Stewardship Program. Along with the initial letter,, we are enclosing a list of questions and answers relating to the stewardship program. After reading the letter and the questions and answers, if you have any other questions please call (a member of the Stewardship Committee).

If you decide on becoming a steward of Holy Ghost Orthodox Church, complete the enclosed 2008 pledge card and return it to the Church in the enclosed envelope. A set of pledge envelopes will be provided to you for use during 2008.

Thanking you for your expressed interest in Holy Ghost Orthodox Stewardship program, we remain, With Love in Christ, Holy Ghost Stewardship Committee.

Not all the members of Holy Ghost became or remained Stewards even into the second year of the Program. In March of 2008, the Stewardship Committee Chairperson sent this letter to those who had been Stewards in 2007, but not in 2008:

Dear Steward: WE MISS YOU! In 2007, the Church implemented its Christian Stewardship Program. The Church was blessed when you and 121 other members

of the Church joined the program and became the first Stewards of Holy Ghost Orthodox Church.

We are now in our 2nd year of the Christian Stewardship Program. As of March, 100 Stewards from 2007 have recommitted and joined the 2008 Stewardship Program and five members have joined the program for the first time – a total of 105 Stewards in 2008.

It is not too late to join the 2008 Stewardship Program. You may continue your Stewardship in the Church by completing the enclosed 2008 Pledge card and returning it to the Church in the enclosed envelope or placing the card in the basket in the vestibule of the Church. We sincerely hope that you will consider committing to the 2008 Stewardship Program.

If you have any questions, please call or email me (number/address provided). In His Service, Holy Ghost Stewardship Committee Chairperson

In order to assist individual persons in their stewardship decisions, the following letter was sent to individuals considering becoming Stewards at Holy Ghost for the first time:

Each year we are called to contribute a portion of our time, talent and treasure toward the work of the church. At this time, each of us has an opportunity to experience a generous heart as we make a financial pledge for 2009 to this religious community which enriches our lives.

To provide ongoing programs, we need to have predicable revenue. Our expenses for salaries, health benefits, utilities and maintenance continue to increase regardless of attendance at the Divine Liturgy. We cannot budget adequately based on fluctuating collection basket contributions. Therefore, an annual pledge from you is critical, and as a participant, we ask you give your fair share to support our Holy Ghost Parish.

The amount you pledge is your decision, based upon your situation. We ask that you first reflect on the importance of Holy Ghost in your life. Then make your pledge accordingly, so that it's part of your annual budget just like other items in your life. Simply fill out the enclosed annual pledge card indicating what you intend to give to the parish, then return it in the basket in the rear of the church or return it through the mail. Please remember, to be considered a member in good standing you must pledge a minimum of \$240. The Bible states a specific obligation to "tithes" – that is, to give back to God one-tenth of what we have received from God. One-tenth! The average giving nationally is 2.6% of income

and that seems to be a good place to start. You can pledge on an annual, monthly, or weekly basis.

Included with this letter was a "Guide to Generous Giving":

<i>Annual Household Income</i>	<i>Pledge Range</i>	<i>Annual Pledge</i>
\$ 25,000	2 – 5 %	\$ 500 - \$1250
50,000	2 – 5 %	\$1000 - 2500
75,000	2 – 5 %	\$1500 – 3750
100,000	2 – 5 %	\$2000 – 5000
125,000	2 – 5 %	\$2500 – 6250

The third year of the Stewardship Program at Holy Ghost began with this letter from the Stewardship Committee chairperson on June 22, 2009:

We hope that you had a most spiritual Pascha and that all is going well with you. Please take a few moments to read this letter in its entirety as it contains important information about your membership in Holy Ghost Orthodox Church.

The Holy Ghost Stewardship program is currently in its 3rd year and as Father commented at the February 2008 congregational meeting, the Church should be very proud that over 50% of the membership had joined the Stewardship Program in such a short period of time. The question now becomes, where do we go with the Stewardship program in 2010?

*At the recommendation of the Stewardship Committee and the Board, the attendees at the 2008 congregational meeting, **overwhelmingly passed a resolution that Holy Ghost Orthodox Church become a full stewardship program parish in 2010.***

What does that mean for you and me? Starting in 2010, the Church will no longer have two classes of membership – Stewards and dues-paying members – all members shall be Stewards of Holy Ghost Orthodox Church. Although some members may feel that this is a major change, there is really only a minor difference between the stewardship method of giving and the dues paying method. In October/November of each year, as stewards, you will be required to fill out a Stewardship Pledge card indicating your free will Christian Stewardship financial support to the parish for the ensuing year. Nothing else changes, your Steward Pledge must be at least \$240 to meet the current minimum financial contribution requirement.

Stewardship has been the Christian or Biblical method of Church support throughout the centuries. Stewardship is putting our faith into action bringing

Christ into our entire life, including our finances. Through your Stewardship pledge, you will support the work of our parish and aid in the work of our Diocese.

We realize that some of you may have questions or even apprehension regarding stewardship. Before you pass judgment on stewardship, please take a moment and talk with Father John or (any member of the Stewardship Committee), so that we can answer any pressing questions or concerns you may have. In this manner, the Church should have a smooth transition to full Stewardship in 2010.

As the final phase of introducing a Stewardship pledging process in place of a dues system, Holy Ghost sent this letter out at the beginning of the parish's 2010 Stewardship program under the signatures of the Priest and the Stewardship Chairperson:

Dear Members of Holy Ghost Orthodox Church: The Lord's work at Holy Ghost Orthodox Church has been supported by your generous giving over the years. It is indeed a blessing and a privilege to be part of sharing the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ with you.

As the priest at the Divine Liturgy offers the gifts on our behalf to God, he says: "Your own gifts, from Your own gifts we offer to You." As part of God's creation, mankind returns a portion of the gifts they have received from God to Him in thanksgiving and appreciation.

The Bible says: "the Lord loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7). Until this time, we supported our Church by submitting our parish obligation of dues. We gave as a duty, as if to pay an account or send a remittance to a tax-collector. Our parish's needs cannot be adequately supported by this system.

At the recommendation of the Stewardship Committee and the Board, the attendees at the 2008 Congregational Meeting, overwhelmingly passed a resolution that the Holy Ghost Orthodox Church become a full stewardship parish in 2010. Stewardship is Christian, Biblical and equitable, for each is asked to give according to his or her love for God, conscience and means. By Stewardship we support Christ's work not as a duty, but as a privilege. The Christian way to give is to give because we desire to give; we give because we love God.

"A New Beginning" Starting in 2010 the Church will no longer have two classes of membership – Stewards and dues-paying members – all members shall be Stewards of Holy Ghost Orthodox Church. We trust that you, the faithful Christians of Holy Ghost Orthodox Church in your love, will embrace the Stewardship program and provide most generously in supporting the Lord's work

at the Church. Imagine, for a moment, that the effectiveness of God's work is in our hands? What a privilege to provide generously to the Giver of All? As Christian Stewards, we are asked to manage what God has given to us, without forgetting the Provider of all that we are and have.

The Church is aware that many of us have seen hard times during the past year. The U.S. economy has been struggling and many have been laid off or have lost their jobs. It is anyone's guess as to when things will get any better – probably not for some time. The Church can only ask you to do your best in supporting the Church financially during 2010. Remember the Church will always be here for us.

Enclosed is a 2010 Stewardship Pledge Card. Please complete the card and return it to the Church in the enclosed envelope or drop it in the basket in the vestibule of the Church on Stewardship Sunday, November 15, 2009. Please remember two things: (1) all members of the Parish must be Stewards; and (2) to be considered a member in good standing financially, a minimum pledge of \$240 is required.

In addition to these letters sent to the membership of the parish, periodic reports and announcements about the Stewardship program appeared in the Sunday bulletin, the main source of written information circulated in the parish. Here are several examples:

OUR STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM IS OFF TO A GREAT START. WHEN DISCUSSING THE STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM EARLY ON, THE COMMITTEE HAD HOPED THAT AT LEAST 50 MEMBERS WOULD JOIN THE PROGRAM IN ITS FIRST YEAR. TO OUR GREAT SURPRISE, A TOTAL OF 116 MEMBERS HAVE JOINED THE PROGRAM AS OF JANUARY 31, 2007. THE COMMITTEE EXTENDS ITS THANKS TO ALL OF YOU WHO HELPED MAKE OUR STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM A SUCCESS IN ITS FIRST YEAR AND WE WELCOME ALL TO THE STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM... MEMBERS THAT HAVE JOINED THE PROGRAM DURING JANUARY 2007 ARE: (MEMBERS ARE NAMED)...THIS COLUMN WILL BECOME A WEEKLY SECTION IN THE CHURCH BULLETIN. WE WILL USE THIS COLUMN TO KEEP YOU UPDATED REGARDING THE STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM AND LIST MEMBERS AS THEY JOIN. WE WILL ALSO USE THIS COLUMN TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE REGARDING THE PROGRAM...

THE 2009 STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM IS OFF TO A GREAT START. AS OF LAST SUNDAY, 69 STEWARDS HAVE RECOMMITTED TO THE 2009 PROGRAM AND ONE NEW STEWARD HAS JOINED ... AS YOU THINK ABOUT JOINING THE PROGRAM CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING: 1.

STEWARDSHIP IS TRULY THE BEST AND PROPER WAY TO GIVE TO THE CHURCH. 2. THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY'S WORKLOAD WILL BE LESS – THERE SHOULD BE FEWER ENVELOPES TO POST TO INDIVIDUAL ACCOUNTS. 3. OUR FINANCIAL REPORTS (INCOME) WILL BECOME EASIER TO READ AND UNDERSTAND, AND PREPARING BUDGETS FOR THE CHURCH SHOULD BE EASIER – THE STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM SHOULD PROVIDE MORE PREDICTABLE INCOME. WE HAVE A NEW BOX OF ENVELOPES FOR THE STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM. WE URGE ALL MEMBERS TO RETURN THEIR STEWARDSHIP PLEDGE CARD TO THE CHURCH AS SOON AS POSSIBLE SO THAT WE CAN ASSIGN THE NEW STEWARDSHIP ENVELOPES....

IN 2007 THE CHURCH IMPLEMENTED ITS STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM. AS WE ENTER THE THIRD YEAR OF THE PROGRAM (2009), WE NEED TO TAKE A FEW MINUTES AND EVALUATE THE SUCCESS OF THE PROGRAM AND THE DIRECTION OF THE PROGRAM. . . WE BELIEVE THAT THE STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM HAS BEEN A SUCCESS – IN ITS FIRST TWO YEARS, OVER 50% OF THE PARISH MEMBERSHIP HAVE BECOME STEWARDS OF THE PARISH. AND, IT LOOKS LIKE THAT TREND WILL CONTINUE IN 2009.

2007: 122 STEWARDS, AVERAGE PLEDGE \$753

2008: 115 STEWARDS, AVERAGE PLEDGE \$787

2009: 91 STEWARDS, AVERAGE PLEDGE \$844...

AS WE PREPARE OURSELVES FOR THE 2010 STEWARDSHIP YEAR, THE FOLLOWING PRAYER IS OFFERED: LORD JESUS CHRIST, OUR GOD, ACCEPT OUR OFFERINGS AS YOU ACCEPTED THE GIFTS OF YOUR PEOPLE THROUGHOUT THE AGES. WE OFFER THESE GIFTS TO YOUR GLORY, FOR THE SUPPORT OF THE MINISTRIES OF YOUR HOLY CHURCH, FOR THE ALLEVIATION OF SUFFERING AND HUNGER, AND FOR THE PROCLAMATION OF YOUR GOSPEL, TO THE WHOLE WORLD. GRANT US YOUR BLESSINGS, LORD OUR SAVIOR, THAT WE MAY ALWAYS BE FAITHFUL STEWARDS, CONTINUING TO SHARE THE GIFTS YOU HAVE GIVEN US, BY THE POWER OF YOUR GRACE, MERCY AND LOVE. MAY YOUR NAME BE GLORIFIED FOREVER. AMEN. (Source: St. Mark's Greek Orthodox Church, Boca Raton, FL)...

STEWARDSHIP INFORMATION FOR 2010 HAS BEEN HANDED OUT OR MAILED TO ALL MEMBERS. IF YOU HAVE NOT RECEIVED YOUR 2010 STEWARDSHIP INFORMATION BY THE END OF OCTOBER,

PLEASE NOTIFY (A MEMBER OF THE STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE). AS OF NOVEMBER 14TH, 64 STEWARDSHIP PLEDGES HAVE BEEN RETURNED. PLEASE RETURN YOUR STEWARDSHIP PLEDGES AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK – MY CHURCH DUES: I HAVE NEVER LIKED THE TERM “MY CHURCH DUES.” YOU SEE, THERE REALLY ARE NOT CHURCH DUES. A PERSON CAN BE A MEMBER OF THE CONGREGATION IN GOOD STANDING AND STILL NOT BE ABLE TO CONTRIBUTE ANYTHING TOWARD THE WORK OF THE CHURCH. GOD HAS NEVER EXPECTED ANYTHING FROM INDIVIDUALS WHO DO NOT HAVE THE FINANCIAL ABILITY TO GIVE. THEREFORE, I LIKE TERMS AS “MY CHURCH PLEDGE,” “MY CHURCH GIFT” OR “MY CHURCH COMMITMENT.” EACH OF THESE WORDS HAS THE CONNOTATION OF A VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTION. WHEN THE APOSTLE PAUL SPOKE TO THE CONGREGATION AT CORINTH, HE SAID, “UPON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK, LAY THEE IN STORE AS YOU HAVE BEEN PROSPERED.” THIS I BELIEVE IS THE GOD- PLEASING WAY OF GIVING TOWARD THE WORK OF ONE’S CHURCH. EACH WEEK WE GIVE AS WE HAVE BEEN PROSPERED. IF ALL PEOPLE DID THIS, THE CHURCH WOULD HAVE FEW FINANCIAL PROBLEMS. (Source: Author unknown)

Analysis

The parish church of Holy Ghost Orthodox did a fine job in moving from a dues-paying system to one they called a “Stewardship” system. The results were very good both in participation and in the increase in financial giving. What was really meant at Holy Ghost by a “Stewardship” system is what is known as a “Proportional giving” system of financial support. Please refer to Fr. Aden’s study on proportional giving in the Diocesan Stewardship Resource I.

Of course, not all of the information from the development of the program at Holy Ghost was either available or printed here. However, parallel to the financial giving, a good all-around stewardship approach will include several other items: a) education at all levels (from the Sunday sermon to Sunday School and other educational efforts), b) invitation to and commitment to stewardship of time and talents to the parish’s ministry, and 3) a year-round commitment to keeping the stewardship ministry before the eyes of the membership.

Orthodox Christians become Stewards in a parish as a part of their spiritual growth. Other contributing factors are good Christian Education, a sense of belonging and participation, effective ministries among youth, outreach, and the desire to take part in the liturgical life of the Church. As Holy Ghost has well done, when individuals indicate an interest in becoming Stewards of the parish, the Stewardship Committee needs to respond immediately. The Priest and the Stewardship Committee Chairman may also choose to arrange for an introductory meeting with prospective and new Stewards. This will provide them with an opportunity to familiarize them with the parish ministries and the Stewardship Program.

The Holy Ghost approach included a regular invitation that personally invited the individuals to become Stewards, with a description of their responsibilities; a Stewardship Commitment Card; and a relevant brochure with information and education on Stewardship. As well, for those who became Stewards, a thank-you letter along with a small token of thanks (e.g., a pocket calendar for the new year) was mailed.

STEWARDSHIP OF TIME AND TALENT

Introduction

A steward: One who manages another's property, finances, or other affairs. In examining the idea of stewardship it is helpful to first develop a mental picture of just exactly what a "steward" is supposed to do. You may be familiar with a wine steward from your visits to restaurants. He is the gentleman often seen with a small cup hanging around his neck. The job of a wine steward is to store, maintain, and to pour wine. His job is to know where each bottle of wine is, make it available for the patrons of the restaurant, and assist in serving it.

How does this relate to our Christian life and specifically what does it mean to be a steward of time and talent? Like the wine steward we are responsible to store, maintain, and "pour out" the talents and time that God has provided for us.

This in fact, brings up a very basic but very fundamental misconception in our modern world. If your child began talking to you about HIS house, or HIS car, or HIS pool, or HIS refrigerator, you might just be motivated to have a short talk with him. You might point out that he has never made a house or car payment, nor has he himself purchased any of the food in the refrigerator.

Yet we, as God's children, make the same mistake. We refer to spending or wasting "OUR" time or "OUR" efforts. But is it really "OURS" in the first place? Reach up for a moment, and place your hands over your heart. Can you feel your heart beating? Do you realize that even though you weren't aware of it your heart beat almost five thousand times in the past hour? Do you have ANY control over that heartbeat? How then, can we proudly refer to "OUR" time when only God has absolute control over it?

As stewards of God's time and the talents He has provided we are responsible to use the unique gifts He has given us for His ultimate glory. But how? How are we to know how we can best use our talents?

How many people have, at one time or another during the course of their life received, a "perfect" gift from their spouse or a loved one? How did they know what to get? What is the chance that anyone without a deep personal knowledge of you would have gotten you the same gift? Even someone with a great deal more money would not have been able to do it.

Why? Because your loved one knows you and your needs better than anybody else.

In order to best develop our stewardship of our talents we need to employ our time to develop this kind of intimate relationship with God. In order to get to know God we must pray. We have to give Him time to reveal Himself to us and to reveal His plan for each one of us as individuals.

"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:2). The "other gods" referred to in this, the first commandment, include money, social standing, success, or even individuals that come between us and God. God must come first in our lives and our commitment to daily prayer demonstrates the extent of our devotion to Him.

Saint Paul tells us: "And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints" (Eph 6:18). And to the Thessalonians, he encourages them to "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

But, you might ask, with all the demands on our time in modern society where do we find time to pray? A very successful executive was once heard to give this response to that exact question: "I don't have time NOT to pray." Without prayer, he had found that he simply didn't have enough hours in the day to accomplish all that he needed to do. When he began to pray regularly, he was amazed that the demands of time actually diminished! Somehow phone calls were answered more promptly, appointments went more smoothly and his prayerful recollection of God throughout his daily activities kept him at peace even when things did go wrong.

Once we have developed a more intimate relationship with God through prayer we will be led to an understanding of how He wants us to use our particular talents for His kingdom. The prophets Jeremiah and Isaiah in the Bible compare God to a potter and man to clay. And make no mistake, each of us has a carefully crafted collection of special talents. These talents were given to us by God for this specific time. Your talents would not have served God as well had you been born two hundred or two thousand years ago. No, you were born in this era because this is the time when your unique mixture of talents will be of greatest good for God's eternal kingdom. And nobody can provide exactly what you provide. God did not make two John Chrysostoms, or two St. Pauls or two of you. And this, as an aside, is why abortion is the great tragedy of our day: millions of individuals with unique

talents have been refused their right to be born and exercise their own special talents for God's kingdom.

God will not force you to use your talents on His behalf. You were not created to be a robot without freedom of choice. It is up to you to decide whether you will use or misuse the talents you were graciously given. A quick look at the newspaper would be enough to provide many examples of prominent individuals misusing their God-given talents. Perhaps another analogy would be helpful here. We can all remember the little boy who brought his basketball to the park but left and took his ball with him when all was not to his liking. Similarly, we all bring our unique mixture of talents into God's ballgame. We can elect to stay and play or we can take our ball and go home. If we leave, God will raise someone else to take our place. Perhaps that person's basketball won't have the perfect bounce, or the perfect feel but the game would go on. The difference would be that you simply wouldn't play. And even worse, you might miss the post-game celebration. And it promises to be quite a party!

In conclusion, a story is told about four men on a small fishing boat in the middle of a large lake. Suddenly, towards the front of the boat a large hole appears in the hull. The two men in the front of the boat each grab a bucket and feverishly start bailing out water. In the hot sun they become increasingly more exhausted as they try to keep the boat afloat. Meanwhile, in the back of the boat, the other two men are simply watching. One of them leans over to the other and says: "Sure am glad the hole is on the other end of the boat!"

Each of us needs to re-examine our lives and decide whether we are acting like the two men in the front of the boat or more like the two in the back of the boat. The right thing for each of us to do, the thing we are each called by God to do, is to grab a bucket.

Adapted from Stewardship of Time and Talent by Dr. Zambrano

A Parish "Time and Talents" Handbook

Have you ever considered all of the opportunities within your Orthodox parish for the exercise of the time and talents of your members? Have you ever stopped and written them all down. Doing so will provide a listing of all the ministries that the parish carries out, and what may be missing. As well, the list can be made available to parishioners as a way of their self-identification of their own talents and what time they might be able to give to the parish. This is an exercise in the stewardship of time and talents. *(Remember: this is a listing of the ministries of a Lutheran Church and is not necessarily adaptable directly to an Orthodox parish.)*

Stewardship of Time and Talents Handbook

(from the website of Immanuel Lutheran Church, Eden Prairie, MN)

As the body of Christ we work together in accomplishing the ministry of Immanuel. Your gifts and abilities are an important ingredient. This booklet will tell you more about the many service opportunities of Immanuel. What is more, it includes a short description of each service opportunity so that you have an idea of what is required in the way of responsibilities and time commitments. May we continue to grow in faith and serve as the Holy Spirit loves others through us, and may God be glorified in our lives.

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES ADULT EDUCATION

Circles

There are several women's circles available, which meet monthly in each others homes. These are Bible study based groups with fellowship.

Library Volunteers

This is an as needed volunteer position. It includes computer data entry, filing books, straightening the library, processing books, etc. There is also a Library committee that meets a couple times a year to check in to see what books are needed, how to improve the library etc.

Men's Bible Study Opportunities

Men's Breakfast & Bible Study (Men's B&B)

These men meet monthly on the second Saturday of the month, from September through May. This is a spiritual growth and fellowship time for the men of our congregation.

Men's Retreat

This is one weekend a year held typically during the last weekend in May or the first weekend in June. This is an opportunity for the men of Immanuel to join together in fun, fellowship, and spiritual growth while communing with nature at Camp Onamia.

Men's Retreat Planning Committee

This is a short term commitment for planning the annual men's retreat. Assist with promotion, agenda, curriculum, set-up and clean up.

Women's Bible Study Opportunities

Prayer and Praise: Meets weekly on Monday mornings, from September through May. This is a book based Bible study.

Wednesday Morning Women's Bible Study: This group meets on the first Wednesday of every month from September through May. This is a Bible based study.

Women's Brunch & Bible Study (Women's B&B)

They meet the first Saturday of every month, from September through May. This is a faith based study that includes the Bible, books and personal faith building experiences.

Women's Retreat

This is one weekend a year held typically in January. This is an opportunity for the women of Immanuel to join together in fun, fellowship, and spiritual growth while relaxing and enjoying each other's company

Women's Retreat Planning Committee

This is a short term commitment for planning the annual women's retreat. Assist with promotion, agenda, curriculum, set-up and clean up.

Bible or Book Study Facilitator

These are opportunities for you to lead a bible study or a chapter of a book study on an occasional basis. No experience is necessary just a passion for learning with others.

ALPHA OPPORTUNITIES

Small group leader

Facilitate discussion in the small group and create a welcoming nonjudgmental atmosphere. You do not have to teach or "know it all." We hope to have 2 leaders for each group.

Greeters

Great guests and make them feel welcome, direct them to the right room, and hand out name tags.

Dinner task force member

Assist with shopping, preparation, serving and clean-up of weekly Alpha dinner and the Celebration Dinner. Tasks are divided and not overwhelming for anyone.

Children's Ministries

Sunday School

Preschool/Kindergarten Teachers

Plan and teach Sunday School lesson each Sunday, Sept-May (except 3rd Sunday of month). Build relationships with young children and their families. Training and materials are provided.

Gardeners (Small Group Leader, 1st-6th gr)

Shepherd a group of children during Sunday School hour each Sunday, Sept-May (except 3rd Sunday of month). Build relationships and help kids make personal connections to the Bible story. Monthly meetings and support provided.

Workshop Leaders

Teach one lesson in an area of your interest for 3 or 4 weeks. Training and supplies provided.

Substitute Teachers

Fill in for regular teacher or Gardener as needed

Supply Shopper

On call position to shop for Children's Ministry Supplies.

Curriculum Writer

Work with a team to write lesson plans for SS Workshops. Team meets once a month. Writing done on your own time.

Preschool/Kindergarten Worship Leader

Plan and lead worship time for preschool and Kindergarten classes. 15 minutes each Sunday when SS is in session. Music skills helpful.

Opening Leader

Plan and lead the 15 minute gathering time for God's Garden each Sunday when SS is in session. Music skills are helpful. Monthly planning meeting.

Hall Host/Greeter

Greet and direct children to classrooms, greet visitors, register new students, and a variety of other tasks as needed on Sunday mornings. Scheduled once every 6-8 weeks.

Sunday School Preparation

Once in fall and once in spring-large group needed to prepare Classrooms and supplies for Sunday School.

Vacation Bible School**Small Group Leaders**

Shepherd a small group of 4-7 children to their workshops during Bible School. No classroom prep necessary -training meeting prior to VBS.

Small Group Helpers

Junior High and High school students who assist Small Group Leaders.

Area Leader

Coordinate and lead workshop areas (Crafts, games, snacks, Bible story, video) for VBS. Work with Team of other leaders to plan VBS. Curriculum provided.

Area Helper

Help Area Leaders with assigned tasks during the week of Bible School.

Set-Up/Clean Up Crew

Assist in setting up before Bible School and/or cleaning up after the week is finished. Set up includes decorating!

Kids for Christ**Leadership**

Teams of people who work together to provide programming for Pre/Kind group, 1st-3rd grade group, or 4th-6th grade group. Sept-May commitment. Support and materials provided by Director of Children's Ministry.

Special Event Planning

These large events require a team of volunteers to work together to plan, implement, and celebrate the event. Choose from Eggstravaganza (March/April), Summer Events, Advent Event (Nov/Dec? or the Sunday School Christmas Program (Dec)

Youth Ministries

Middle School Ministries

Confirmation Guide

You need to have the commitment to mentor your students through their entire three-year program. The trust and relationships you will build with these youth are essential to their growth in faith. Curriculum is provided.

Drivers/Chaperones

This is an as needed volunteer position. You must be 21 to drive youth to off-site activities. You must be confirmed to be a chaperone.

Behind the Scene Supporters

This is a volunteer opportunity for someone who does not want to be directly involved with the planning or committee activity, but who is willing to participate on an as needed/on call basis for our youth. This would include simply overseeing that youth are supervised, and that a safe environment is maintained.

Senior High Ministries

Youth Leader/Facilitator

Confirmed member who would be willing to lead or facilitate a faith based discussion on an occasional basis. People with good relational skills and good rapport with high school students will enjoy caring for our high school youth.

Small Group Bible Study Leaders

Confirmed members who would be willing to lead or facilitate an evening Bible or book study on an occasional basis.

Drivers/Chaperones

This is an as needed volunteer position. You must be 21 and have a good driving record to drive youth to off-site activities.

Behind the Scene Supporters

This is a volunteer opportunity for someone who does not want to be directly involved with the planning or committee activity, but who is willing to participate on an as needed/on call basis for our youth. This would include simply overseeing that youth are supervised, and a safe environment is maintained.

Sat./Sun. Worship Ministries

These volunteer opportunities generally are 1-2 times per quarter depending on how many volunteers we receive. Training is offered 2 times per year. You will receive step-by-step instructions along with the schedule. So, if you are inexperienced, do not be apprehensive about making this commitment to serve our Lord. The ways you can serve your church community include:

- Communion Assistant
- Nursery Assistants
- Usher
- Greeter
- Welcome Center
- Lector
- Altar Guild members serve on a monthly rotation and prepare the Sanctuary for communion and special worship. (i.e. changing the paraments, filling the oil candles, preparing the altar, etc.)

Worship, Music & Arts

Choirs

Choirs meet weekly September-May on Wednesday evenings.

- Substitute Choir Director
- Alleluia Singers (4 yr. Olds - Kindergarten)
- SonShine Singers (grades 1-3)
- Ambassadors (gr. 4-8)
- Senior Choir (9th gr. Through Adult)
- Praise Ringers (Adult Handbell Choir, Experienced Players Only)
- Servant Song (An Audition is Required for Participation)

Other Music Opportunities

Most of these opportunities are occasional/seasonal with 3-4 rehearsals prior to the performance.

- Joyful Noise Band (multi generational)
- Special Vocal/Solos, Ensembles
- Special Instrumental/Solos, Ensembles
- Keyboard, Piano, Organist
- Family Choir
- Men's Choir

Evangelism

Faith Group Representative

Your commitment would be a monthly gathering with your faith group as well as meeting with all the other representatives/leaders three times a year.

Faith Group Participant

You would be partnered with people who have similar backgrounds, life experiences, etc. You meet with your group monthly to join in fellowship, devotions and caring conversation.

New Church Member Orientation Hosts

This occurs four times a year. You are asked to host the new member orientation class by preparing a simple meal or a dessert and beverages.

New Church Member Sponsor

Consider sponsoring 1-2 new households per year. You are asked to stay connected with these new members and help make them feel at home in their church environment.

New Member Orientation Child Care

This would be 1-4 times per year. Youth must be Red Cross Certified. This is either two Thursday evenings or an all afternoon Sunday commitment.

Couples Garden Child Care

About 4 times per year adults are needed to assist our youth in the newly formed activity "Couple's Garden". This is a child care event in which Immanuel opens their doors to members who want to go out on a "date" with their spouse and/or significant other to work on their interpersonal relationship and know that their children are in a safe and caring place.

Community Outreach

This outreach subcommittee will be working on ways to incorporate Immanuel participation in public events held in our community (Schooner Days, 4th of July, etc) Be willing to creatively share with the community how wonderful it is to belong to Immanuel!

Multicultural Outreach

As our community becomes more diverse we want our congregation to reflect that diversity. The Synod has outlined a program called the "Agora Ministry" to show us successful approaches that have worked in other parishes. Our goal is to reach out to specific groups in the community and help them with any aspect of living in this area. This will be an organized campaign with effort focused on a particular time frame, after which the time commitment will be flexible.

Social Concerns

Loaves & Fishes

You would prepare and serve the food as well as clean-up after the meal at St. Stevens Church in Minneapolis. We serve the second Tuesday of the odd months during the year.

Habitat for Humanity

This group builds new housing throughout the metro area. Immanuel is assigned a 4-week project once a year. You could serve as little or as much time as you are willing to.

Piecemakers (Quilting Group)

This group meets the first and third Thursday morning September through May. You do not need to be an experienced quilter to participate in this group. You simply need to have the desire to help others in need around the world.

Mitten Tree

You would be asked to help set up the tree in the Narthex, collect the mittens, hats, gloves, etc. that are donated and prepare them for delivery.

Stewardship

Telephone Caller for Fall Pledge Campaign

This group divides the congregation into groups and telephones each member to remind them to complete and return their pledge cards to the church.

Sunday Morning Offering Counter

Teams are formed to count the offering on Sundays after the 11:00 a.m. service.

Fellowship

Bread Bringer Coordinator

You would be responsible for making the schedule of bread bringers and sending the letters to notify them of this commitment. This can be done at home twice a year.

Bread Bringer

You would bring 4 loaves of bread or 4 dozen muffins to serve at Sunday morning fellowship 3 to 4 times per year.

Coffee/Lemonade Server

You would serve coffee and juice (or lemonade in the summer) between worship and then clean up.

Coffee/Lemonade Coordinator

You would be responsible for making the schedule of coffee and lemonade servers and sending the letters to notify them of this commitment. This can be done at home twice a year.

Event Team

You would be on a team that meets 4 times a year to plan the fellowship events through the year. You would help specifically plan and execute 2 or 3 of these events.

Kitchen Coordinator

You would take charge of buying, cleaning and keeping the kitchen organized. This is a year long commitment

Kitchen Team Member

Assist the kitchen coordinator during the year as needed.

Funeral Coordinator

You would be one of three coordinators with a team under you that would handle the food preparation, service and cleanup for funerals.

Funeral/Special Occasion team member

You would be asked on an as needed basis to serve food and clean up after an event.

Funeral /Special Occasion Food Provider

You would be asked to provide food on an as needed basis. You would prepare your dish and drop it off at church prior to the event.

Caring Ministries

Card Ministry

Commitment to this ministry is one month per year. It is a volunteer activity that can be done in your own home. This entails writing cards and sending them to new members, new births, deaths etc.

E-Mail Prayer Chain

This is an on-call based ministry where you would call the church office and listen to the voicemail message and pray for the requester(s) that have come into the church office.

Meal Ministry

This ministry is on an as needed basis. You would provide a meal occasionally to members in a transitional period in life (i.e. after a death, birth, hospitalization, etc.)

Respite Care

This ministry is on an as needed basis. You would provide relief care for family members who are full-time caregivers for homebound or care-bound family members. This could be either day or evening relief care.

Service of Remembrance

This service takes place in January. Volunteers are needed to assist in planning and/or participating in the service.

Tape Ministry

This ministry provides tapes of the 9:30 a.m. worship service on a monthly basis. Volunteers are needed to deliver the tapes to shut-ins, and also are needed to assist with the taping of the services.

Telephone Prayer Chain

This is an on-call ministry where the lead prayer chain guide is notified by telephone and that individual begins the chain of calls for the requested prayers.

Transportation Ministry

This ministry provides transportation to members for the 9:30 a.m. service once a month, although your commitment could be less depending on demand. Also for Special services on an as needed basis. (Maundy Thursday, Good Friday etc)

Properties and Facility Maintenance

These opportunities are typically seasonal or on an as needed basis.

Adopt A Garden

You are responsible for planting, weeding and maintaining your assigned garden throughout the growing season.

Watering

You will be assigned one week during the summer to water all the gardens dependent on the weather.

Spring/Fall Clean-up

You would help clean and do minor repairs of both the inside and outside of the building. This is a one day commitment.

Winter Walkway Maintenance

You are assigned one week during the winter months when you would be responsible to make sure the walkways into the building are cleared of snow and ice.

Maintenance, Improvements & Special Project Ministries

For those who have any type of building/construction skills. Occasionally you would be called upon to either do or assist with projects for the church.

Office Support

Frequently volunteers are needed in the church office to help with answering telephones, mailings, light computer work and other simple tasks. This is a daytime commitment. If you have specific months you can or cannot assist, just let us know and we will accommodate your schedule.

Stewardship of Time and Talent: A Children's Activity

Written by Carolle Green, Childhood Consultant, Louisiana Baptist Convention, adapted for Orthodox use

Bible Passage: Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 Romans 12:6-13

Memory Verse: Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given us, *let us use them.* Romans 12:6 (*Orthodox Study Bible*)

BEFORE THE SESSION

Teachers Preparation

1. Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 and Romans 12:6-13 in the Orthodox Study Bible
2. Memorize the memory verse yourself.

DURING THE SESSION

Beginning Activities (10-15 minutes)

Choose activities that are appropriate for the children you teach. Have these activities ready and begin teaching when the first child arrives.

1. Make a Bible bookmark. Write today's Memory Verse on a piece of fabric or felt using fabric pens. For added decoration, cut two small holes in the top of the bookmark and thread a narrow ribbon through them. The ribbon goes along with the "gift" ideas in the verse.

Supplies: Bibles, fabric or felt cut in pieces 4 inches by 6 inches, fabric pens or other pens that will write without blurring on the fabric, narrow ribbon

2. Ask 2 or 3 children to work together to write a list of the gifts that are mentioned in Romans 12:6-8. These should be included: prophesying, serving, teaching, encouraging, giving, leading, governing, showing mercy.

Supplies: Bibles, chalkboard & chalk (if available), or marker board and markers (if available), or poster board and markers

3. Let children talk about the following words: prophesying, governing, and mercy.

Supplies: Bibles, Bible Dictionary, dictionary, poster board or large pieces of paper, markers

Large Group Time (15-20 minutes)

Pray aloud for the presence of the Holy Spirit: "O Heavenly King, the Comforter..."

Open your Bible to today's Bible passages (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 and Romans 12:6-13).

Bible Lesson

How much time do you have? How many months are in a year? How many days are in each week? Hours in a day? Minutes in an hour? Seconds in a minute? What about our priest? How much time does he have? Does he have the same number of months, days, hours, minutes, seconds that you do? What about the president of the United States, or any other person you can think of – how much time do they have? Can you save time? Can you take it to the bank, or put it in a box to use later? Time is one of the things that God has given to us. When He created the world He also created time. In Genesis 1:5 we read that God created the first day, which had both an evening and a morning. The only thing you can really do with time is to use it wisely. The Bible talks about time. [Read Ecclesiastes 3:1. (Suggestion: for younger children read only the first verse; for older children read verses 1-8; don't get bogged down in the details of this passage; a “time to kill” might be very difficult for children to understand.)] Has anyone ever told you not to waste time? The reason for that is because God gave it to us as a gift, and it's never right to waste a gift especially from God.

In Paul's letter to the church in Rome, which we looked at last week, we read about other gifts that God gives to us. (Read, or ask a child to read, the first part of Romans 12:6). To whom does the Bible say God has given gifts or abilities? To everyone; But not everyone has the same gift. Let's read verses 7-8. Look at the list of gifts that Paul mentions here. (If a list was written as one of the “Beginning Activities,” use it here. If not, then make a list that all the children can see.) Notice an important thing about each one of these gifts. They are all to be used to help others. God does not give us gifts for us to keep them to ourselves. Last week we talked about our bodies being a living sacrifice to God (Romans 12:1). We said that means that God wants us to give our whole selves to Him. Now let's read verses 9 -13 to learn specific ways that we can do this. (Call on a different child to read each sentence, or each verse. Give brief explanations, if the children do not understand what these verses mean.)

Lead the children in saying the Memory Verse.

Give instructions for the Bible Application Activities. Let each teacher briefly explain the activity he/she has selected. Give each child the opportunity to choose an activity.

Bible Application Activities (15-20 minutes)

Choose the activities that are appropriate for your students. Plan for at least two of the activities, and allow the children to make a choice.

1. **Banner** – let each child choose one of the gifts listed in Romans 12:6-8. Some children will understand this concept well enough to choose a gift that they feel God has given them. Let each child make a banner that illustrates his or her gift. These banners can be very simple (construction paper taped to a pencil, draw with markers) or elaborate (fabric or felt for the banner, glued to a dowel rod or draped and pinned over a dowel rod, words made out of ribbon or cut out of contrasting fabric and glued on).

Supplies: construction paper, markers, pencils, tape; OR fabric, felt, dowel rods, hot glue gun, ribbons, decorative trim.

2. **A Game** – using the list of gifts in Romans 12:6-8 let a small group of children make or develop a game. It could be like charades (list each gift on a separate card; each player would draw a card and try to act out the gift). Or it could be a board game with players having to answer questions about these gifts.

Supplies: 3 x 5 cards, pencils; or poster board, markers or paints.

3. **A basket of gifts** – let each child fill a small basket with brightly wrapped small boxes. Label the basket “God's Gifts to Me”, and label each one of the small boxes with one of the gifts God has given (refer to the list from Romans 12:6-8). The children are to take them home and put in a place in their room to remind them of God's gifts. As they are doing this project, talk with them about how God wants us to use the gifts and talents He has given us.

Supplies: Bibles, small produce basket (such as used for strawberries), empty matchboxes or small cardboard jewelry boxes, wrapping paper, tape, small ribbon, labels.

4. **A 12-hour clock** – each child will draw a large clock face with the numbers. This can be either an AM or a PM clock. This will work best if the child will draw lines (like pie wedges) on the clock to separate each of the hours. In between each hour, for example between noon and 1 pm (if this is a PM clock), the child writes what he or she typically does during that time. Do the same for each of the hours. This activity will help children see that each hour needs to be spent wisely, because it is a gift from God.

Supplies: poster board, markers, yardsticks or other straight edge.

CLEANUP AND DISMISSAL

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE ANNUAL STEWARDSHIP EVENT

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

Prior to the event, prospective participants in stewardship giving (we will call them 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
- Special collection of commitment cards
- Words of encouragement by Stewards of various ages and parish involvements
- Offertory Prayer
- Reception, luncheon, or other special fellowship activities
- Your Stewardship Committee may want to consider a month-long Stewardship Campaign culminating in a Stewardship Sunday

A Sunday in November prior to Thanksgiving Day or a date more suitable for your parish calendar of events should be designated as Stewardship Commitment Sunday. It is best to inaugurate the Stewardship Program on the same Sunday of each year. The date 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 (SCOBA).

The Stewardship Committee, with oversight from the parish Priest, prepares the Stewardship Sunday Invitation Mailing. The mailing deadline should be at least 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

The parish Priest prepares the Stewardship Sunday Invitation Letter addressed to the Stewards of the parish. The letter requests that Stewards bring their Commitment Cards on Stewardship Sunday or mail them to the church office. The letter should be merged with the Steward's name, address and greeting, producing a personalized letter for each Steward.

Stewardship Commitment Card

The Stewardship Commitment Card/Family Information Form is preprinted with the Steward's name, address, and a place for the amount to be offered. The name and address may 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. Prepare additional blank Commitment Cards to be available on Stewardship Sunday to those who do not bring their completed Cards.

Stewardship Brochures

A Stewardship Brochure could be enclosed with the Commitment Card presenting Stewardship in light of a theme that might be chosen for the annual event and program. Such themes might be:

Stewardship: A Way of Life

The Widow's Mite

Christ, the Light of the World

The Christian Tithe

Time, Talent and Treasure

Sacrificial Giving: In the Image of God

As God Has Blessed You...

My Offering of Thanks

Love God, Love Your Neighbor

SUGGESTIONS FOR A STEWARDSHIP SUNDAY

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.

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 ever and forever.

People: Amen.

FOLLOW-UP TO STEWARDSHIP SUNDAY

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 might be revised to stipulate that participation in Parish Elections or Assemblies requires a Stewardship commitment by March 1 of the current year. To reach full participation requires a persistent and continued effort throughout the year.

Sample letters to support the follow-up program are included in this resource for easy reproduction. The Stewardship Committee 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.

The Monthly/Quarterly Stewardship Offering Statements are a critically important means of communication. They allow the Stewardship Committee to regularly and formally communicate with, update the status of, and thank the parish 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 concerns expressed by parishioners.

For better management and organization, you may 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 Monthly/Quarterly Statement, depending on 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 or complete their commitment for the year. They receive the standard cover letter of appreciation and the Monthly/Quarterly Statement generated by computer or other means.

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

Non-Committed Parishioners have been Stewards of the parish in past years 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 of the parish. The Priest and Stewardship Committee should make every effort to stay connected with these individuals and families and to discover why a Commitment was not made or fulfilled in the current year.

It is important to listen respectfully to the individual's concerns about their commitment and/or the church. If the individual has a concern about some aspect of the church operations or ministries, it 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 parishes may have parishioners who 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 SUGGESTED PROCEDURES

In the best of worlds, every Steward is an active supporter of the ministries of the parish by offering their time, talents and treasures. 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** are those who have submitted a Stewardship Commitment Card but have not yet fulfilled their commitment. There may be some in this group who have not 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.

On or about December 1, a special letter is sent informing the Committed (Ongoing) Stewards of the amount necessary to fulfill their commitment. If no response is received by December 31, a special cover 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.

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 final decisions are made with respect to removal from the active rolls and as subscribers to the *The Church Messenger*. 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.

APPENDIX: LETTERS AND PLEDGE CARDS

Letter No. 1: New Steward Letter [Enclose a Stewardship Card & Information Card]

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

[Date]

[Saint of the day]

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

Dear Mr. & Mrs. Economos,

When Jesus called His disciples, we read that Philip brought Nathaniel to Jesus, telling him to "Come and See." We also read in the New Testament of the Samaritan Woman at the well who left her bucket and went to tell the people to "Come and See...."

We extend this same invitation to you to Come and See the world as God's gift to you. We are not owners but only stewards of God's many blessings. In the words of Gregory the Theologian, "...however much you bring to him, always more remains. Nor will you give anything that is your own; for all things flow from God (Or 14.22)."

Come and See what the Church can become with your time, talent and treasure dedicated to the Lord's ministries. Our parish will become more than we ever imagined -- not maintaining ministries, but growing ministries made possible by your support.

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.

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.

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 meaningless unless it is 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. "Come and see the works of God, Who is awesome" (Psalm 66:5).

Yours in Christ,

[Signature]

Rev. Fr. [Name of Priest]

[Title]

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

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

[Date]
[Saint of the day]

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

Dear Mr. & Mrs. Economos,

When Jesus called His disciples, we read that Philip brought Nathaniel to Jesus, telling him to "Come and See." We also read in the New Testament of the Samaritan Woman at the well who left her bucket and went to tell the people to "Come and See...."

I invite you also to Come and See. Please be with us at *(name of parish)* Church for three special Sundays beginning on *(date)* and concluding on *(date)*. Over these weeks we will worship together as we do every Sunday. In addition, we will learn more about our parish of *(name of parish)* leadership, our ministries, and our vision for the future. We will hear personal accounts from those who serve and from those who have been served by our ministries.

Come and See this beloved parish, be inspired by the work of the Holy Spirit among us, and prayerfully consider your personal offering of time, talent and treasure to help us to grow our ministries. At the conclusion of these three weeks, on Sunday, *(date)*, 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.

Before completing your commitment card, please join us on these three Sundays. Give prayerful consideration to the commitment you are making. 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 what we can do together with your support.

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

Yours in Christ,

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

Letter No. 3: Monthly/Quarterly Statement Letter to Fulfilled and Ongoing Stewards

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

[Date]
[Saint of the Day]

Mr. & Mrs. George Steward
33 Unidentified Road
Anywhere NY 10045

Dear Mr. & Mrs. Steward:

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

You are encouraged to offer your prayerful thanks and commit yourself to the fulfillment of your personal assistance by giving back a portion of the fruits of your labor to Christ's Church in thanksgiving for His many blessings to you.

Your Stewardship Commitment is a testimony of your dedication to enhancing your personal spiritual life and spreading our beloved Orthodox Faith. I thank you on behalf of (*Parish Name*).

Yours in Christ,

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

[Enclose a Stewardship Statement]

Letter No. 4: Letter to Ongoing Stewards who have not yet made offerings toward their commitment)

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

[Date]

[Saint of the Day]

Mr. & Mrs. George Steward
33 Unidentified Road
Anywhere NY 10045

Dear Mr. & Mrs. Steward:

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 and has a direct effect on encountering the challenges of the future.

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.

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 your endeavors.

Yours in Christ,

[Signature]

Rev. Fr. [Name of Priest]

[Title]

[Enclose a Stewardship Statement]

Letter No. 5: Non-Committed Parishioner monthly/quarterly statement letter

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

[Date]
[Saint of the Day]

Mr. & Mrs. George Steward
33 Unidentified Road
Anywhere NY 10045

Dear Mr. & Mrs. Steward:

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 formidable challenges of spreading Christ's Word and our Orthodox Faith.

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 an Orthodox Christian Stewardship Commitment Card and return envelope.

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

Yours in Christ,

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

[Enclose a Stewardship Statement, a new Stewardship Commitment Card and a return envelope]

Letter No. 6: Ongoing Stewards December solicitation letter

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

[Date]

[Saint of the Day]

Mr. & Mrs. George Steward
33 Unidentified Road
Anywhere NY 10045

Dear Mr. & Mrs. Steward:

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)* Orthodox Christian Stewardship Commitment of *[\$1,000]*, which you committed in support of our *(Parish Name)* Ministries. To date you have sent *[\$350]* in offerings toward fulfillment of that Orthodox Christian Stewardship Commitment.

Kindly consider our 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.

May the grace of our Lord bless you and your loved ones to experience the joy of Christmas through the joy of giving.

Yours in Christ,

[Signature]

Rev. Fr. [Name of Priest]

[Title]

[Enclose a Stewardship Offering Statement]

Sample

[PARISH NAME] STEWARDSHIP COMMITMENT CARD

PERSONAL INFORMATION

BAPTIZED OR CHRISMATED ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN? _____

NAME (First/Last) _____ YES ___ NO ___

NAME DAY (or Baptismal Name) _____

SPOUSE (First/Last) _____ YES ___ NO ___

NAME DAY (or Baptismal Name) _____

RESIDENCE ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP CODE _____

HOME PHONE NUMBER: _____ (_____) _____

SELF

SPOUSE

BUSINESS PHONE: _____

OCCUPATION: _____

BIRTHDATE: _____

EMAIL _____

Names, Birthdates, and Name Days of Dependent Children:

COMMITMENT OF RESOURCES

I/We commit to Christ and His Church through this offering:

I/We expect to offer the following amount:

Weekly: \$ _____

"Every Sunday let each of you put aside your offering for the work of the Lord." (See: I Cor 16:2)

COMMITMENT OF TIME AND TALENT

NAME(S):

(For married couples: please indicate "H" for husband and "W" for wife.)

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adult Assistant for Altar Boys | <input type="checkbox"/> Help Sick/Shut-ins |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Annual Festival | <input type="checkbox"/> Host Coffee Hour |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Assist in Bookstore | <input type="checkbox"/> Host Neighborhood Gatherings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Assist in Library | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape/Maintenance of Grounds |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Assist in Office | <input type="checkbox"/> Outreach |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Assist w/ Parish Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Parish Luncheons |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Assist with Stewardship Programs | <input type="checkbox"/> Phone Committee |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Assist with Web Site | <input type="checkbox"/> Planning/Organizing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bake for Events | <input type="checkbox"/> Play Organ/Piano |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Budget and Planning | <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare Food |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Building Maintenance | <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare Prosfora |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Building New Facilities | <input type="checkbox"/> Promote Church Activities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Church Events | <input type="checkbox"/> Serve Food |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Catechism School Teacher | <input type="checkbox"/> Set Up for Events |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Catechism School Assist/Substitute | <input type="checkbox"/> Soup Kitchen |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chanter | <input type="checkbox"/> Transport Sick/Aged |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Choir | <input type="checkbox"/> Visit Others |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clean Up After Events | <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer Time if Called |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Contact/Entertain Newcomers | <input type="checkbox"/> Youth Leader/Assistant |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cook for Events | <input type="checkbox"/> Summer Camp Staff |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Coordinate Church Activities | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Decorate for Events | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Drive others | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family Night | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fund Raising | |

Other Talents: