

Christian Stewardship – *What We Believe*

Effective stewardship efforts help parishioners to... *increase the level of meaning that the Church (Christ) has to them and their lives and to foster positive attitudes toward generosity.*



Stewardship Definition

- Careful, responsible management of something entrusted to one's care... for greatest output/return... for a purpose.
- Delegated authority to be practiced on behalf of the interests of another.

Christian Stewardship

- Responsibly working with God to manage all of our God-given resources for the purpose of turning our life toward God – and not ourselves.

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A Few Key Points

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More than Money -- Three Dimensions of Total Stewardship

Time, Talent & Treasure

Blessings Flow from God.

Psalm 24.1. The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.

- God is creator and owner of all. We are only giving to God what already belongs to Him. None of what we have --our words, actions, powers or properties, resources -- are our own, to do with as we please.
- We're not the owners — we're the borrowers.

Accountable

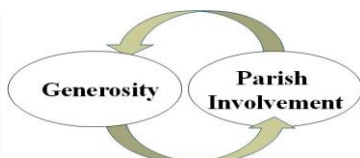
- As with the "one talent steward" we will be called to account for the use of our gifts & talents given to us to be used for His Glory and our own.
- We need to make a return to God for His investment in each of us. Not fearful & burying our talents & gifts.
- Parish has been entrusted to us—not to keep—but to care for, to minister from, to strengthen, and to preserve for future generations. We are responsible. We need to return it to the rightful owner in better condition than we received it.

Eucharistic/Liturgical

- "Thine own of Thine own -- we offer unto thee..."
- "Let us commend ourselves and each other and all our life..."
- "Fill the house with wine, wheat and oil so that they give in turn to those in need." *Orthodox Wedding Service*

People who give little of anything freely, especially money, give very little freely of anything else they might offer to the parish. People committed to the transcendent goals of the parish –are generous donors of their resources.

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A steward in the ancient world was a master slave who acted in the master's name and managed the master's affairs. But he wasn't the master."

Fr Thomas Hopko

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What we Give Back should be:

- Responsible
- Joyful
- Willing
- First portion
- Proportional
- Meaningful
- Sacrificial
- Personal
- Private
- Humble
- Confident
- Trusting
- Thoughtful
- Motivated by... Excellence

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Proper Christian Stewardship Motivators

- Gratitude
- Responsibility
- Concern for spreading the gospel

People Give NOT for...

- Tax deductions
- Personal recognition
- Guilt
- Financial Crisis

People Give BECAUSE...

- Believe in the result
- Joy of the result
- They are asked
- Fiscal stability & good management

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"Pledging" - Putting Stewardship into Practice



Common Questions

1. "What is a pledge?"
2. Is this a gimmick? How does it work?
3. "What if something changes? I don't want to let the parish down."
4. "What's wrong with the old way?" Why is this better?
5. How much should I give?

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"Pledging" Definition

A spiritual and practical tool to help us:

8 (Q1)

- Regularly review our relationship between ourselves as persons, God as Master of our life and our worldly possessions given to us by God to be managed on His behalf.
- Express gratitude for all that God has given to us.
- Joyously offer a meaningful investment in the work of our parish -- sharing in the work of God through this church.
- Reveal what we value

IS NOT...

- A "ploy" to generate more income...
- Or... to create a sense of guilt
- An obligation

Evaluating Our Personal Stewardship Mindset

- Disposable Giving -- The church is last in line.
- Legal/minimal Giving - Dues mentality
- Averaged Budget Giving -- (Necessary \$) ÷ (# families)
- Project Giving - Not giving --but buying; transactional
- Comparative Giving -- Smug superiority vs. others
- Herd Giving --Downward adjustments when moving to a different parish.
- First Portion/Sacrificial Giving --Joyful, meaningful proportional; no strings; invest in our purpose.

11 (Q5)

Common Objections & Issues

1. "Orthodox don't (pledge/tithe)... do they?"
2. "I don't want to be involved"
3. "I give in other ways." "I give to other causes"
4. "We don't need more money. We spend too much already."
5. "We're not rich people in this parish!" "I don't have it"

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Generosity can be statistically correlated with happiness!

Purpose ♦ Freedom ♦ Community ♦ Control

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"Pledge Basics"

1. Key question - 'What of God's am I going to give back this year?'
2. Method used by most OCA churches.
3. "Fair, meaningful share" not "Equal share"
4. Integrated appeal -- reduce special collections
5. Planning/"stretching" tool for parish
6. Annual review -- check up
7. Brief "estimate of giving" form -- write it down; forces thought
8. Not binding -- "keep us informed if things change"; It's an estimate --not a mortgage!
9. Private -- not a public pledge

9 (Q2 & 3)

Why Change? --Ten Advantages of Pledging

10 (Q4)

1. Properly, actively remind ourselves of our relationship with God.
2. Properly remind ourselves of the source of our possessions.
3. Move away from an equal share/obligation mentality to a gratitude mentality -- investing in the future of this parish.
4. Forces reiteration of parish mission each year -- our key priorities.
5. Align parish priorities and activities more closely with the New Testament.
6. Compels parish to account for use of \$.
7. Frees up precious volunteer time; less need for fund raising; more time for Christ
8. Creates resources: new programs of service; outreach.
9. Offers compelling testimony to visitors.
10. Rite of entrance for youth and new members.

Prayer of Stewardship "Lord, what do You want me to do with all of the gifts you have given me?"