



Department of Stewardship

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The overall mission of the Department of Stewardship is to support the efforts of our clergy to teach the meaning of stewardship in the context of our Orthodox Christian faith. Through these efforts, the laity becomes a network of stewards who work with their spiritual fathers to ensure that all parishes and missions, and the individuals in those congregations, know, appreciate, and enact their responsibilities as stewards of the Church.

When we as individuals and as parish communities profess to be Orthodox Christians, we must first know the teachings of the faith and then we must demonstrate our commitment to those teachings by living lives consistent with the faith. In other words, we must be good stewards of the faith, which means we strive to preserve, protect, support, and grow in and for our faith. And in keeping with Orthodox teaching and practice, we teach about stewardship and giving as part of the holistic experience in the worship life of the Church. All that we have in life; our time, talents, and treasure, are gifts from God. In thanksgiving for those gifts, we generously, willingly, and sacrificially use those gifts to glorify His name.

The Department has evolved workshop programs and written materials that are flexible in nature. This allows for tailored responses when requests for assistance are received from parishes, missions, organizations, deaneries, diocesan level groups, or individuals.

The Department has no paid staff. The Department has never requested funding from the Archdiocese. When a parish requests a workshop, they are asked to cover travel and lodging expenses for the workshop presenter. No honorarium has ever been accepted by a workshop presenter and no reimbursement has ever been requested for the cost of materials used in the presentation of a workshop. The only reimbursement ever requested from the Archdiocese has been for travel and lodging expenses for those invited to present at the biennial Parish Council Symposium. In keeping with the mandate of this Department, no changes in funding are expected.

From 1992 and until 2012, a biennial Parish Council Symposium at Antiochian Village was sponsored by the Department. An outcome of these gatherings has been the development of The Parish Council Guidebook and The Fifty-Two Week Member Giving Guide. We have recently developed a paper on stewardship titled "Almsgiving, The Third Pillar of Orthodox Spirituality," which was published in *The Word Magazine* in 2021. We now have three members, who are Dr. Andrew Geleris, Ryan Kaufman, and I.

From the beginning of the pandemic through the end of May, 2023, the Department has held four online presentations to various dioceses and jurisdictions, including in March 2021 with a Zoom presentation to the parish council of St. George Orthodox Church, Toronto Canada; July

2021 with a Zoom presentation during the Antiochian Archdiocese 2021 Virtual Convention; August 2021 with a MS Teams presentation to the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Pittsburgh; and in November 2021 with a MS Teams presentation to the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Chicago. Also, in the same timeframe, we have held four in-person presentations, including in March '22 to Holy Transfiguration Orthodox Church, Warrenville IL; January '23 to St. George Orthodox Church, Spring Valley IL; April '23 to Holy Transfiguration Orthodox Church, Warrenville IL; and in April, '23, to St. Paul Orthodox Church, Western Rite, Katy TX.

The Department strives to transform the minds of parish councils, and out from them to the parish laity. We teach that almsgiving, as well as prayer and fasting, are the three pillars of the Orthodox Faith and through them, we as Orthodox Christians, grow in Christ. We teach that almsgiving begins with tithing to our one local parish, and only after that, then to outside charities.

Vision: to provide an Orthodox Christian experience platform for lay people that can help to grow parish participation, membership, and as such, the whole Archdiocese.

Goals: to recruit between one and two motivated stewards for each diocese that will travel within their diocese at their own expense, and teach the platform to all who are interested.