

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS FREQUENTLY ASKED ABOUT PARISH MEMBERSHIP AND STEWARDSHIP

What is Stewardship?

The Oxford Dictionary defines Stewardship as...the job of supervising or taking care of something, such as an organization or property. e.g., "responsible stewardship of our public lands"

What is that "something" as it relates to our faith?

A biblical view of stewardship can be consciously defined as: "Utilizing and managing all resources God provides for the glory of God and the betterment of His creation." The central essence of biblical world view stewardship is managing everything God brings into our lives in a manner that honors God and impacts eternity.

STEWARDSHIP IS OFFERING BACK TO GOD FROM THE GIFTS HE HAS GIVEN US.

Stewardship begins and ends with the understanding of God's ownership of all:

- "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End." ([Revelation 22:13](#))
- "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it." ([Psalm 24:1](#))
- "To the Lord your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it." ([Deuteronomy 10:14](#))
- "The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants." ([Leviticus 25:23](#))
- "Who has a claim against me that I must pay? Everything under heaven belongs to me." ([Job 41:11](#))

Stewardship is further supported and sustained theologically on the understanding of God's holiness as found in such verse as: [Genesis 1:2^{\[1:2\]}](#), [Psalm 104](#), [Psalm 113](#), [1 Chronicles 29:10-20](#), [Colossians 1:16](#), and [Revelation 1:8](#).

WHAT ELSE DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT STEWARDSHIP?

- **Give with gratitude** - "We thank you, our God, and praise your glorious Name ...for all things come from you and we have only given back what is yours already." (1 Chronicles 29:13-14)
- **Give without show** - "Let not your left hand know what your right hand is doing." (Matt.6:3).
- **Give with regularity in proportion** - "Upon the first day of the week let everyone of you lay by him in store, as God has prospered him." (1 Cor. 16:2)
- **Give liberally** - "He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully." (II Cor. 9:6)
- **Give cheerfully** - "Let everyone give as his heart tells him, neither grudgingly, nor under compulsion, for God loves the man that gives cheerfully." (II Cor. 9:7)

How is Stewardship different from Membership?

Giving to His Church is a way to thank God for His grace and generosity. The question is not, “What are the dues?” but “How can I thank God for my many blessings?”

When the Archdiocese instituted a change from “membership” dues to stewardship, it allowed you to offer and consider what you can give back, rather than be instructed how much is required. Pledge amounts vary from person to person and are a personal decision and commitment between Christ and you.

Your annual Stewardship pledge, regardless of amount pledged and given, makes you a “member” of Holy Transfiguration.

Why become a steward/member of the church?

- When you were baptized, oaths were made for you to serve Christ as your Lord and Savior for your entire life – So if you have not since rejected Him, you are still pledged to serve Him with your life and there is no better way to do so than serve His Church – His parish where His work gets done.
- To show Him that you love Him and thank Him for your abundant blessing, there is no better way to respond than complete the Stewardship Form and then indicate what you will pledge to Him throughout the year.
- It represents an active commitment and participant to be an active member in the life of the church.

How old do I need to be to complete a stewardship form?

- Each person 18 years and older should complete and return a stewardship form (including a joint form with his or her spouse) for the current or ensuing parish fiscal year. (January 1 through December 31).
- Even though a young adult age 18 and over may not be able to give back to God monetarily, we encourage our young adult members to contribute time and talent and participate in the ministries offered to young adults.

How do I become a Parishioner and “a member in good standing?”

The Archdiocese Regulations requires us to fill out an initial pledge form and to recommit our stewardship pledge each year. The Uniform Parish Regulations (UPRs) and bylaws specify the following to be a member in good standing...

Each person who is 18 years of age or older, who was baptized according to the rites of the Church or received into the Church through Chrismation, who lives according to the tenets of the Faith, who abides by the UPRs and these Bylaws, who is active in the Parish, who cooperates in every way toward the wellbeing of the Parish and has completed and returned a stewardship form (including a joint form with his or her spouse) for the current or ensuing parish fiscal year (January 1 through December 31), is considered to be a member in good standing with the Parish.



Why do we complete a Stewardship Form every year rather than just once?

- Typically, the forms for the upcoming calendar year are distributed each December. They can be completed all year long in the case of new parishioners joining our church mid-year.
- What the Parish needs from its members changes from one year to the next, so it is good for us to re-examine our commitment to the Church (Christ's Living Body on earth) each year.
- The parish receives accurate information about us and our families each year.
- Our circumstances may change year to year. Your ability to change your financial commitment and time and talent should keep up with your current ability and needs.

Is there an option to pledge online?

- **YES!** The Stewardship form is available on our church's website.
- Visit <http://www.holytransfiguration.info/join-our-parish/>

Why do we pledge our Time and Talent to the church?

- No parish can flourish without the unselfish donations of its members' time and God-given talents.
- We all have talents that the parish can use, but those of us who are so fortunate to have been blessed with special talents need to share them with the parish to show Christ our gratitude for these blessings.
- Even if we live far from the church, there are several ministries for which we can join, lead and/or assist.

How is the Time and Talent Stewardship process changing during the COVID Pandemic?



- These are difficult days. We are not able to fully gather in our spiritual home for prayer and fellowship. Yet we remain united as a family of faith, always present for one another in love and support. We look forward to the time when we can all safely gather together in our beloved Holy Transfiguration.

- It is important to remember that, in the words of Archbishop Elpidophoros, ***“The Ekklesia extends far beyond the four walls of any church building.”*** The Church is not the building, but rather, it is people of faith that remain connected, drawing spiritual nourishment from God and strength from one another.

- As leaders of our parish, we are working to build upon existing ministries and to initiate new ministries that will keep us connected as the Holy Transfiguration family. We have been streaming our services since early this year to keep you connected when you cannot attend.

- We are methodically reaching out to our members to be sure they are able to meet their basic needs in this crisis. If you or someone you know requires assistance, please contact the church office and we will help in any way we can.

- These initiatives and ministries will continue to support the long-term mission of our parish when the current crisis has passed. Please continue

to support our church so that together we may serve our members and our community during this difficult time.

What is the difference between the General Fund and the Capital Campaign (i.e., the Building Fund)?

- The annual Stewardship pledge is geared towards the General Fund, which pays the ongoing operational expenses such as Archdiocese fair share contributions, payroll, utilities, insurance, supplies, ministry, and other expenses. Your general fund pledge needs to be submitted annually to assist the Parish Council in developing a budget as well as to establish your interests in participating in or assisting in our various ministries.
- The Capital Campaign, (i.e., the Building Fund), was specifically designed to pay off the mortgages to finance our new multi-purpose building for the administrative, educational and recreational components of our Parish Life Center. This is a 5-year pledge drive beginning January 1, 2020 through December 31, 2024. Our goal is to pay off the \$3.5 million in mortgages originally secured by then end of the campaign drive.
- You will notice in the Treasure Section of the pledge form two categories – one for the General Fund and another for the Capital Campaign, which was added as a convenience and courtesy to you. If you had previously submitted a Capital Campaign pledge, you do not need to complete this section again. You will need to submit your general fund pledge again this and each calendar year.
- If you are able to pledge towards the Capital Campaign, you can complete this section, but you are urged not to split your pledge between the General Fund and Capital Campaign. Only consider a pledge to the Capital Campaign if you are financially able to give in addition to your general fund pledge.

How should I submit my financial contributions toward my pledge?

We recommend that you commit to a regular weekly or monthly schedule as this greatly improves our cash flow expectations to meet the church's ongoing financial obligations, such as payroll, utilities, insurance, ministries' activities and facility expenditures.

Please offer your 2021 stewardship contributions using any of the recommended methods below. By using these methods, you will be able to see how much has been given at any time versus how much has been pledged.

- 1) **Vanco Online Giving** – This is the preferred method so as to limit the physical handling of checks and currency. Visit our website at www.holytrans.org and click on the **Online Giving** tab in the Home Page. You can then create your Vanco account.
 - a. Vanco gives you the ability to set up auto-pay with your frequency and amounts.
 - b. There is an option to choose to offset the Vanco fees for processing your payments.
 - c. Vanco also allows you to contribute towards many categories such as candles, Capital Campaign (ie., the Building Fund), cemetery plots, Philoptochos and other ministry donations.
- 2) **Set up regular bill pay** with your bank. Your bank will mail the checks for you at no extra charge.
- 3) Mail in your contribution or **drop off in the offering basket** in the church narthex.

- If submitting checks, please write separate checks for the General Fund and Capital Campaign (i.e., the Building Fund).

If my pledge of Treasure (monetary contributions) is only between Christ and me, why then should I write down a pledge amount on the Stewardship Form?

- The reason for stating the pledge amount on the Stewardship Form is to collectively enable the Parish Council to manage the parish's expenditures more effectively during the year for which these pledges had been made.
- If parishioners make pledges that are lower than they know they will donate, these members are making the parish's expenditures more difficult for the Parish Council to manage. Conversely, if parishioners make pledges higher than they will donate, they are also making the Parish Council's forecasting of cashflow difficult.
- **The best way to help the Parish Council to manage the parish's operational costs** is for parishioner to make pledges very close to what they will donate to the General Fund. If they realize later in the year that they will not be able to donate the amount they pledged or that their donations can exceed what they had pledged, they should call the office and tell the secretary to change their pledge for the year.
- No one from the parish ever sees a member's pledge. Your information is kept in strictest confidence in our church office.

How much should I pledge?

- The best approach is for the parishioner to pray to Christ for His guidance, and then pledge sacrificially for the work of His parish. However, the Stewardship Committee offers the following guidance and data:
 - Generally, the amount needed to pay for general operation expenses increases each year, largely due to payroll and inflationary increases and to common budget items such as Archdiocese fair share contribution, utilities costs and facility maintenance. Our stewardship budget is increasing from \$717,000 in 2020 to \$725,000 for 2021 to help meet the increased spending needs.
 - The average family pledge during 2020 was \$1669 per year; roughly \$32 per week. This incorporates all pledges from the smallest to largest (minimum pledge amount \$1 per month).
 - The median family pledge is \$960; roughly \$19 per week. The median is the midpoint of the pledge amounts with 50% below the median and 50% above the median.
 - Most families pledge between \$500 -\$2000 per year (67% of all pledged members).
 - Individuals or couples living with just enough income to get by (living on social security only, the families lost one of their major incomes, etc.) may not have enough income to make monetary pledges and that's OK. It is still important to turn in Stewardship Forms as the parish's computer software will not count a pledge of zero as a parish member. These individuals and couples need to list a pledge of at least \$1.
 - *Food for Thought*...If you can afford such luxuries as cell phones, cable TV, dining out, then you should be able to pledge at least five dollars a week as your donation to the parish for Christ's work. This amount will be less than any of these other expenditures each month.

Much is required from the person to whom much is given; much more is required from the person to whom much more is given. (Luke 12:48)

This verse, along with several other similar verses, serve as the basis for the Orthodox belief that persons who are more blessed by Christ are expected by Him to donate more for His continued work here on earth.

What if my financial circumstances change during the year and I want to change my pledge amount?

We understand that your financial situation can change and it may be difficult to continue to contribute according to your pledge amount. Or, you may be fortunate to be able to contribute more than you originally planned. In either situation, simply contact the church office and let the church administrator know what your new pledge amount should be for the remainder of the year.

How can I see how much I have contributed versus how much I have pledged?

- Our church office will distribute monthly donation statements.
 - Once you complete a Stewardship Form for the first time you will have access to your pledge information online through our pledge tracking system, Icon CMO. The church office will send you an email with the login information and a link to establish your password.
 - You will then be able to check your Holy Transfiguration donations at any time as well as access our Parish Directory.
1. Go to internet site of [ICONCMO LOGIN SYSTEM](#)
 2. Enter Holy Transfiguration's phone number: 7709248080
 3. Enter the login name provided by the church office and enter your password. (If you do not have these items, contact the church office for this information or if you need a password reset.)
 4. Click on "Show Contributions" to see your donations so far for this year
 5. Click on "show graph of giving" and "by fund" to see the amount given to each fund
 6. Click on "Email yourself a statement" if you don't remember the estimates for what you indicated that you expected to give this year.
 7. When done, click on "Logout"

Do you have any other questions about parish membership or stewardship that have not been answered here?

- Feel free to contact either of the following members of the Stewardship Committee:
 - ◇ Maria Alberts, maria.alberts29@gmail.com; 404-966-6694
 - ◇ Larry Gess, l.gess@comcast.net, 678-910-9831
- You may also ask to speak with any of our priests for confidential guidance. Contact the church office at 770-924-8080 or holytrans@comcast.net to schedule an appointment.

