

Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Chicago - New Program to Revitalize Church Stewardship and Foster Greater Financial Sustainability at the Parish Level



Metropolis of Chicago unveils new program to revitalize church stewardship and foster greater financial sustainability at the parish level

LOMBARD, IL, August, 25, 2020 – The Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Chicago announced today the implementation of a Metropolis-wide program to help parishes transition to greater stewardship participation as the means of meeting operating expenses and becoming less reliant upon episodic fundraising events.

The “Strengthen Stewardship Now” program is designed to help parishes instill the value of stewardship as a way of life, as a path to greater spiritual growth and as a source for strengthening faith for Orthodox Christians. Stewardship is the natural outgrowth of a parish’s efforts to reach out, welcome and engage its parishioner’s in the life of the Church. The program offers guidance to parishes for inspiring generosity among the faithful.

The program was introduced to clergy, parish council presidents, and parish stewardship chairs on August 24. Beginning on September 1, the Metropolis of Chicago will work closely with parishes to help them enhance their stewardship programs and transition to percentage-of-income giving over time.

“The COVID-19 pandemic laid bare the unspoken reality that our parishes have grown too dependent on transactional activities, including summer festivals, to meet their financial obligations,” said His Eminence Metropolitan Nathanael. “Our

response to this trend must be to encourage the faithful to search within their hearts for God's grace and love. When this occurs, people's commitment to Christ – and to each other – deepens and their support for their parishes multiplies. This is exactly the end goal of the Strengthen Stewardship Now program and we intend to work closely with our parishes to help them make the transition effectively.”

The Strengthen Stewardship Now program has three primary focus areas:

- Focus on welcoming and engaging new and current parishioners
- Seek opportunities to generate generosity from parishioners and enhance goodwill programs from the parish through, among other efforts, incorporating an annual philanthropy budget line item
- Transition to percentage-of-income giving and not rely on festivals or other transactional events for funding ministries and day-to-day operations, and demonstrate accountability and transparency in operations

The Metropolis Strategic Plan for stewardship was expedited in response to the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic upon parish revenue sources. To encourage improved stewardship, the Metropolis of Chicago was awarded a grant by the Renaissance Fund, earlier this summer. The grant encourages the Metropolis and the parishes to use good faith efforts to expand stewardship efforts, percent-of-income giving, gifting programs, as well as developing budgets without reliance on transactional activities such as festival, galas, and rentals.

The Strengthen Stewardship Now Committee consists of 22 individuals from 14 parishes throughout the Metropolis of Chicago who continue to devote substantial time and talent toward the design and implementation of the program.

“From the outset, we felt strongly that a program to revitalize church stewardship should be led by those who embody what stewardship is all about. To them, we are deeply indebted and eternally grateful, especially our co-chairs, Myra Karegianes and Owen Field,” said His Eminence. “Above all, the committee members have demonstrated, through their own examples, how stewardship can be transformative, especially when it becomes a way of life for an Orthodox Christian.”

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