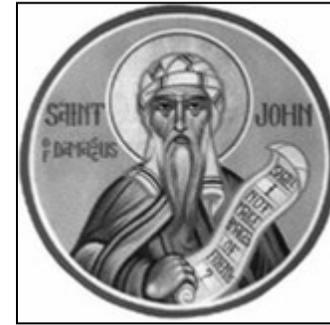


Please consider the following questions and the chart below when prayerfully determining your pledge for next year.

- ♦ *Do I give God the leftovers or do I give God the first fruits?*
- ♦ *Do I give what I think I can afford or do I give in faith, depending upon God to supply?*
- ♦ *Do I give what is acceptable and customary or do I give in love and gratitude for all that God has allowed me to harvest?*

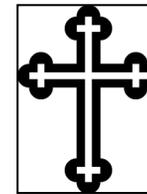


*St. John of Damascus  
Antiochian Orthodox Church*

*Stewardship 2015*

Annual Income	1%	2%	5%	10%
\$10,000	\$ 100	\$ 200	\$ 500	\$ 1000
\$20,000	\$ 200	\$ 400	\$ 1000	\$ 2000
\$30,000	\$ 300	\$ 600	\$ 1500	\$ 3000
\$45,000	\$ 450	\$ 900	\$ 2250	\$ 4500
\$60,000	\$ 600	\$ 1200	\$ 3000	\$ 6000
\$75,000	\$ 750	\$ 1500	\$ 3750	\$ 7500
\$90,000	\$ 900	\$ 1800	\$ 4500	\$ 9000
\$105,000	\$ 1050	\$ 2100	\$ 5250	\$ 10,500
\$120,000	\$ 1200	\$ 2400	\$ 6000	\$ 12,000
\$135,000	\$ 1350	\$ 2700	\$ 6750	\$ 13,500
\$150,000	\$ 1500	\$ 3000	\$ 7500	\$ 15,000
\$165,000	\$ 1650	\$ 3300	\$ 8250	\$ 16,500
\$180,000	\$ 1800	\$ 3600	\$ 9000	\$ 18,000
\$200,000	\$ 2000	\$ 4000	\$ 10,000	\$ 20,000

*When Enough of God's People  
Return Enough of His Money  
to Do His Work  
Good Things Happen!*



*If not you...*

*WHO?*

*If not now...*

*WHEN?*

## ***Setting Our Priorities***

There is a session starter that is used to begin retreats where the participants are asked to form a list of the ten relationships that are most important to them. Each participant reacts differently to this request as they begin to formulate their list. Some worry that they will not be able to produce a list of ten; others insist that it will be difficult for them to limit the list to just ten. So they begin by listing names of family, friends, teachers...Hopefully God has also made the list – although many times He is not in the top four! Think about this, is this you?

<b>Top Ten Relationships</b>	
1. God	6.
2.	7.
3.	8.
4.	9.
5.	10.

Jesus calls our attention to this “list” in the Gospel of Matthew when he says, “whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven. He who loves father or mother

more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.” (Matthew 10:32–33; 37-38)

Through these statements, Jesus is guiding us to take a more in-depth look at our list and to see where we have placed our relationship with God. If we truly believe in Him, then God needs to be first on our list. He is our top priority; today, tomorrow, forever. Still, there are many who will state that it is difficult to put God ahead of our spouse, our parents, or even our children. Why does God need to be first anyway? Why is He making us question our priorities?

The answer to these questions is simple and quite unique: Christ reminds us that if we love Him first, if we place God first in order of priority – then our experience in this world will be intensified. Christ reminds us that our love for God will be overshadowed by God’s love for us and it is through God’s overwhelming love and forgiveness that we have the ability to be His children and follow His example.

## ***Our Personal Call To Action***

Did you ever wonder why some things do not get done around the Church that were supposed to be done? Did you ever hear: “Why isn’t someone doing what they are supposed to do? Why isn’t someone organizing a group or ministry at the Church to take care of this issue or that? Why hasn’t someone set this up properly or taken it down? Why didn’t someone sponsor the coffee hour after Church today?”

## ***I Am One Person. Can I Make A Difference?***

Yes, you can! Your good example, multiplied by hundreds of others acting together, will be the catalyst that will revitalize the parish. Become a dedicated “pledger”, but more important, become a disciple and apostle of God’s truth by encouraging others, friends, children, brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews, and godchildren to also become **Stewards of God’s Church.**

## ***What Is The Best Way To Fulfill My Stewardship Pledge?***

Stewardship is most appropriately understood as an obligation not unlike utilities and rent. So we encourage you to make regular, weekly or monthly payments at the same time you sit down to pay your other bills. St. John’s has made fulfilling your pledge easy. You may make your financial pledge and “time and talents” pledge on-line at <http://stjohnd.org/stewardship> or on the enclosed pledge form. Please indicate your annual pledge and how you would like to make payment or how often you would like your statements sent to you. Please list your time and talents as well.

## ***What if I Make A Commitment & Circumstances Change?***

God asks only that you enter into a good-faith commitment, not a legal contract. You can make changes brought about by new circumstances (positive or negative) simply by contacting the church office and speaking with Fr. John.

## ***Is My Commitment That Important?***

Absolutely. We all want the Church to be there for us. If our Orthodox community is to remain healthy, we each need to contribute our fair share, understanding that the expenses and work of the church go on whether or not we are in attendance. More importantly, demonstrating thanksgiving to God in a concrete way is the best way of going through life with an “attitude of gratitude” for all that He has given us.

## ***A Final Reflection***

History shows that the parishioners of St. John of Damascus Orthodox Church are a generous people. Our mutual support of our community is worthy and noble; and our need is truly and honestly great. We ask that you respond to the Church office as soon as possible. As you do so, please prayerfully consider what increased pledge amount most honestly represents what you can offer. **Thank you for your continued support and your heartfelt effort in listening to the Lord’s message.**

the Church in other ways that will affect your ability to pledge, then you may take that into consideration in the amount you pledge, if you wish. No pledge amount is too little, but your pledge is important. Listen to your heart and faith, search your conscience and *pray for guidance as you make your stewardship pledge.*

### ***All Parishioners 19 and Over Should Pledge Annually***

Always bear in mind that if circumstances prevent you from making a financial pledge, please indicate that on the form and contact Fr. John for further guidance. Our goal is to have 100% of parishioners submitting a pledge regardless of the amount.

### ***Is Stewardship Just About the Money?***

Of course not - We do not support our Church simply by mailing a check. That has never been our message at St. John of Damascus Orthodox Church and that is not who we are as a community. In addition to our material resources, we also have been given time and talents. The Church prospers with people who also **donate their time and skills to the service of the parish.** We can serve on boards and committees; we can volunteer to help with the bulletin mailings; we can paint, do carpentry, and help landscape; we can sing in the choir; we can work at the Bazaar; join the Parent Guild; volunteer to do charitable outreach. The opportunities are as endless as the talents of our people and their willingness to be involved and engaged in the life and ministries of our Church. **Building our parish's volunteerism in time and talent and enhancing our parish ministries** has been the explicit and publicly stated strategic goal of our community this entire year. We will continue to enhance and facilitate this aspect of Stewardship throughout the year.

### ***What About My Children?***

We need to teach our children to also be good stewards of the Church, so that they understand that our offerings of time, talent and treasure help the Church with her mission in this world. We need to begin encouraging our children to become stewards at a young age so that they **understand the Christian concept of giving.** Encourage them to give a portion of their allowance or a percentage of their birthday or Christmas gifts to the Church so that they can develop the understanding that it is 'not all about us.' Paying a child's stewardship for them doesn't help them to understand the basic Christian concept of giving; of offering a portion of what we have freely received from God back to Him and His ministry through the Church. Children under nineteen are not expected to make an official pledge; however, your son or daughter between the ages of 19-23 should start the transition from children to adults by assessing their own situation and making a good faith commitment.

By now, we should all realize there's never been anyone named "someone". In fact, the generalized "someone" is actually the individualized "everyone" of us! And if we want something to get done



**Love. Grow. Serve.**

then we can't leave it for "someone" to do, because there's no such person. So any change, any difference, any ministry or any future in this community begins with each and every one of us, young and old, doing our part and working together!

### ***Have You Noticed?***

- ◆ The success of our Greeters Ministry that encourages a welcoming atmosphere
- ◆ The activities offered that encourage our **spiritual growth** along with Archdiocese
- ◆ The increasing number of new faithful attending our **liturgical services**
- ◆ The children in our church school and the many talented parishioners who volunteer to teach them
- ◆ The impressive growth and expansion of our **parish ministries** including our new Outreach and Dedham Food Pantry Ministries.
- ◆ The activities and events of our Teen SOYO
- ◆ The events for all ages that seek to advance **community fellowship**
- ◆ The number of altar servers assisting the clergy in the altar
- ◆ The incredible talent of our volunteer choir members and chanters
- ◆ The cohesiveness of our stewards as we work together for such events as our Annual Bazaar and Feast of St. John of Damascus
- ◆ The expansiveness of our Virgin Mary Society's outreach celebrating its 100th year
- ◆ How our parish continues to be involved in local and global philanthropic initiatives
- ◆ The growth and development of our website
- ◆ How full our monthly calendar has become
- ◆ **Your own personal growth in faith**

### ***But Have You Also Noticed?***

- ◆ That you get less for a dollar than in the past
- ◆ That our operating expenses keep increasing each year
- ◆ That it costs approximately \$30,000 each month just to put the “key in the door.”
- ◆ That financial commitment is required to maintain and expand our parish ministries
- ◆ The waterproofing and painting done on the “dome” area windows
- ◆ The major landscaping improvements at the Church
- ◆ Ongoing repairs and maintenance of the Rectory; an important asset of the Church that requires regular maintenance.

### ***Do You Know That These Capital Improvements Are Needed Now or in the Near Future?***

- ◆ Clean and waterproof the entire exterior of the Church Complex
- ◆ The driveway and parking lot require full re-construction
- ◆ The pews require re-finishing
- ◆ The storage shed requires structural repairs
- ◆ Additional storage area must be provided
- ◆ Exterior lighting and security issues must be addressed
- ◆ Clearing of land for additional parking and outdoor events
- ◆ Clean carpets

### ***To Balance the Budget, Church Maintenance and Capital Improvements Have Been Underfunded***

Due to rising operating costs, the Church budget line items relating to Maintenance and Capital Improvements have been under-funded for the last several years. Funds had to be borrowed for the new HVAC installation because that project could no longer be delayed. Some maintenance work has been put on hold. We cannot wait until each situation becomes an emergency. We must proactively take care of our Parish facilities and grounds. We are the caretakers – each and every one of us. We are **STEWARDS** of St. John of Damascus Orthodox Church.

## ***Any Change, Any Difference, Begins with us!***



### ***What is Stewardship?***

Stewardship is a system of **proportional giving** to the Church in which each member examines their conscience and offers his/her support in accordance with their individual means and circumstances. This often confuses people because a specific amount is never solicited. This system is fair because it acknowledges the reality that not all people have the same financial resources. Seniors on a fixed income, students on a limited income, and the pensioned widow all have less than the prosperous business owner; and to ask them to support the Church equally as we did under the old “dues” system, is terribly unfair. It burdens those with less unfairly and discounts the generosity of those who are more prosperous. With Stewardship, therefore, we do not give in accordance with an artificially set amount, but rather **in accordance with our true ability to share.**

### ***How Much Should I Give?***

Our ultimate goal is that parishioners embrace the **proportional giving concept of tithing**, per the chart at the end of this booklet. Sometimes though, we need facts and figures to guide decisions about how much to pledge and give to the church on an annual basis. At a minimum we must be able to cover our annual parish budget of projected expenses of \$360,000, with pledge receipts. This would allow the parish to use receipts from fundraisers and other non-pledge receipts for special projects, parish charities and the long term security of our Parish. With 590 eligible pledging members at St. John of Damascus Church, an average pledge of \$610 per member would enable our parish to cover our parish budget. Statistics show the average pledge is \$396 with about 20% of eligible members not pledging. The result is that we have had a deficit budget these past few years, which means we are putting the long term security of our parish at risk.

### ***Why Should I Pledge if I Already Donate in Other Ways?***

Financial pledges to the Church are not considered donations. The philosophy of the Orthodox Church is to take as much of the daily focus off finances as possible. By making an annual pledge commitment, you provide the security that operating expenses of the Church will be underwritten through stewardship. If you make financial donations to