

Stewardship Committee Progress Report on the Pledge System
September 30, 2007

What's happening with the Pledge System of Stewardship?

As we voted at the 2007 Annual Parish Meeting, we are implementing a transitional procedure to move from our current system of stewardship to a pledge system.

For 2007, this means:

October 7-28: bulletin inserts explaining pledging

November 4: pledge packets distributed in church or mailed

November 11-25: pledge cards collected in church

November 25: all collected pledge cards taken before the altar and blessed

December: Treasurer will add up financial pledges to be ready for the Budget Committee meeting in January; she will report *only* the total of all pledges

December: Time/Talents Coordinators will collect information from time/talents pledges in order to begin coordinating volunteer activities in 2008

Do I have to make a pledge in order to vote at the 2008 annual parish meeting?

No. Not in 2008. At some point in the future, however, voting membership will be dependent upon turning in both a financial and time/talents pledge.

What is a financial pledge card? What is a time/talents pledge card?

A *financial pledge card* indicates the amount of money an individual/family plans to give to the church in 2008. The only information on the card will be that amount and the signatures of the person(s) pledging. *Only the Treasurer (Judy Ross) will see these cards.*

A *time/talents pledge card* indicates the ways in which an individual/family plans to volunteer for the work of the church in 2008. The pledge packet will include a numbered list of needs (e.g., making phone calls to shut-ins, giving rides to students), and the pledging person(s) will list on their pledge card the numbers of the activities to which they can commit. Our Time/Talents Coordinators (Barbara Pope and Natalie Kruchok) will collect this information and facilitate volunteer action (e.g., providing a list of shut-ins to be called or of students who need rides).

How will the pledge cards be collected?

Each pledge card will be returned in specially-marked envelopes (included in the pledge packets). All envelopes will go into a sealed box which will remain in the center of the church, near the icon of the Transfiguration, through the month of November. At the Divine Liturgy on November 25 (the Sunday following Thanksgiving), the entire box will be taken into the altar and blessed. Afterwards, the Treasurer and the Time/Talents Coordinators will assume responsibility for their respective kinds of pledges.

Why should I make a financial pledge for 2008?

First, it is helpful for the Budget Committee to know projected income. In addition, we believe that most people are already pledging implicitly: they intend to give about what they gave in 2007, and maybe a little bit more, if they are so blessed as to receive an increase in income. Turning in a pledge card makes that intention explicit.

Bulletin inserts in the weeks to come will assist us all in turning these implicit pledges into pledge cards.

Why should I make a time/talents pledge for 2008?

Again, we believe that most people are already pledging of their volunteer activity implicitly: they intend to do about the same number of things they did in 2007, assuming continued health. A pledge card makes this explicit.

In addition, there may be needs of the church which are not being met simply because the people who are best equipped to meet those needs are unaware of them. Having a list of needs and asking people to volunteer for tasks may solve that problem to some degree.

What will the bulletin inserts explain about pledging?

The bulletin inserts will explain how to thoughtfully and prayerfully go about making a pledge. Ideally, our pledges should be:

First portion (given before we use of our treasure and time/talents for ourselves)

Proportionate (calculated as a percentage of our income and time)

Tithes (ten percent of our income—the scripturally-mandated minimum)

Privileges (we give because we are blessed; we are blessed in order to be a blessing)

The informational inserts will explain these concepts more fully and challenge us to work toward these goals.

Will there be a minimum financial pledge?

Setting a minimum would be contrary to the spirit of a proportionate pledge system, according to which each person gives in accord with his or her financial blessings. The committee is still discussing how best to implement the pledge system in our parish.

To whom can I talk if I have more questions?

The Stewardship Committee has the following members...

A Pledge System of Stewardship—Week 1

This is the first in a series of inserts explaining how to thoughtfully and prayerfully go about making a pledge. Ideally, our pledges should be:

First portion (given before we use of our treasure and time/talents for ourselves)

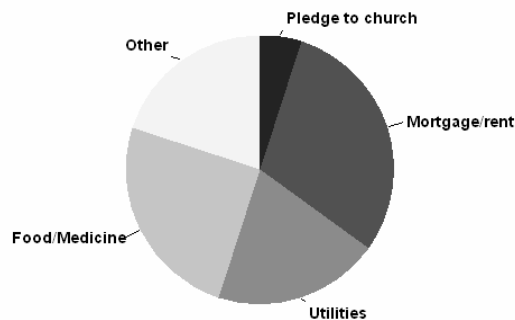
Proportionate (calculated as a percentage of our income and time)

Tithes (ten percent of our income—the scripturally-mandated minimum)

Privileges (we give because we are blessed; we are blessed in order to be a blessing)

What is first portion giving?

First portion giving financially is when we take any income we receive and immediately set aside a portion (usually a percentage we have decided upon) for God's work. It is a joyful, grateful, voluntary response to what God has given to us.



First portion giving of time and talents is when we make a commitment at the *beginning* of a week, month, or year to set aside a certain number of hours to use in the service of God and then make sure that nothing interferes with that prior commitment.

Both of these are in contrast to haphazard giving of money, time and talents: when someone first spends money and time meeting his or her own needs and interests and then gives to God from whatever is left over.

Most of us probably already plan our financial giving to the church in some way or other: when a monthly or weekly check arrives, we know more or less what we are going to do with it. To make a first-portion pledge is simply to *consciously* consider our gift to the church as the first amount we set aside from our income.

Perhaps fewer of us plan our time dedicated to God's service in the same way. Making a pledge of time and talents for the year is one way of being more intentional about this sort of planning.

What do Scripture and the Fathers say about first portion giving?

The first example of giving to God of the first-fruits is very early in the Bible, in the story of Cain and Abel. Both bring sacrifices to God, but Abel's is from "the choicest of the firstborn of his flock." God accepts Abel's sacrifice but not Cain's, after which Cain kills his brother. The letter to Hebrews sums it up thus: "By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks." (Hebrews 11:4).

Later, God gives instructions to the Israelites to make gifts and sacrifices of their first-fruits; this is how temple worship and the work of the priests is supported. This is echoed in the *Didache*, a collection of teachings attributed to the Twelve Apostles. In Chapter 12, instructions are given for the support of the "prophets"—the clergy of the time.

3. Every first-fruit, therefore, of the products of wine-press and threshing-floor, of oxen and of sheep, you shall take and give to the prophets, for they are your high priests. 4. But if you have not a prophet, give it to the poor. 5. If you make a batch of dough, take the first-fruit and give according to the commandment. 6. So also when you open a jar of wine or of oil, take the first-fruit and give it to the prophets; 7. and of money (silver) and clothing and every possession, take the first-fruit, as it may seem good to you, and give according to the commandment.

Activity:

List some of God's gifts to you:

Point to ponder:

St. Augustine is quoted as saying: "Without God we cannot; without us God cannot."

Naturally, we understand the first part: God is the one who gives us the strength and ability to do anything. But what about the second? Perhaps we think less about the notion that it is *through us* that God acts in the world. This is particularly true in our acts of service: it is our hands and our feet that must do God's work in the world.

Given this, why is it important to devote the *first* portion of our time and talents to the service of God and His Church?

A Pledge System of Stewardship—Week 2

This is the second in a series of inserts explaining how to thoughtfully and prayerfully go about making a pledge. Ideally, our pledges should be:

First portion (given before we use of our treasure and time/talents for ourselves)

Proportionate (calculated as a percentage of our income and time)

Tithes (ten percent of our income—the scripturally-mandated minimum)

Privileges (we give because we are blessed; we are blessed in order to be a blessing)

What is proportionate giving?

Proportionate financial giving is when each person/household sets aside a *percentage* of income for the work of the church. There is no amount specified, since each one is blessed differently financially.

Isn't it a relief that our giving to God isn't measured in absolute numbers? We are not being compared with the shipping magnate who can build a cathedral or endow a seminary. On the other hand, what a challenge! We *are* being compared with the widow who, although she gave a very small amount, gave all she had.

Along the same lines, each person/household gives of time and talents according to their schedules and abilities—those who are physically able can contribute physical labor, those who are skilled at communication or organization contribute to the work of the church in those ways. Those who work at one or more full-time jobs will volunteer less often than those who are at home more or are retired. Those who are home-bound for whatever reason can spend time in prayer.

What does Scripture say about proportionate giving?

As alluded to above, Jesus' observation of a widow who makes a contribution of two mites (the smallest coins of the time) produces strong praise, and a clear indication that God cares about the proportion and not the amount of our giving. Jesus says, "*this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood.*" (Mark 12:42-44)

Similarly, in his letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul gives instructions for the donations he will collect when he next visits Corinth and will take to the needy church in Jerusalem:

"On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come." (1 Corinthians 16:2)

St. Paul says "as he may prosper"—that is, each according to his or her financial blessings. He does not stipulate an amount, since, as we all know, that amount will vary from person to person as they have been financially blessed by God.

Activity:

Determine your financial giving to the church as a percentage of your income:

Write your 2006 annual income (gross, or net if you are self-employed), or monthly income x 12 [e.g., \$50,000] 1. \$ _____

Write your giving to the church in 2006 [e.g., \$1,000] 2. \$ _____

Divide line 2 by line 1 [e.g., 1,000 ÷ 50,000] 3. _____

Convert to % by moving the decimal point [e.g., .02 = 2%] _____ %

This was your percentage giving to the church in 2006. (Since 2007 is not yet over, it would be more difficult to calculate based on 2007 income and giving.)

Activity:

Think about your abilities. Which of the following skills do you have? What do you enjoy doing?

Physical labor (e.g., handyman, gardening, cooking, cleaning)

Communication (writing, speaking, talking to people)

Transportation (do you drive? can you offer rides?)

Organization (directing activities, attending meetings)

Intercession (prayer)

Save this page; you will need it when completing the activities in the weeks to come.

A Pledge System of Stewardship—Week 3

This is the third in a series of inserts explaining how to thoughtfully and prayerfully go about making a pledge. Ideally, our pledges should be:

First portion (given before we use of our treasure and time/talents for ourselves)

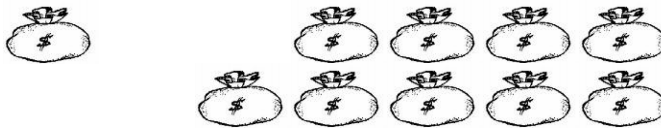
Proportionate (calculated as a percentage of our income and time)

Tithes (ten percent of our income—the scripturally-mandated minimum)

Privileges (we give because we are blessed; we are blessed in order to be a blessing)

What are tithes? What are offerings?

Tithing is giving 10% of one's income to the local church. The hope is that we recognize it, not as a high goal to be met, but the minimum that we should do before we begin to do other giving (offerings). Tithing is usually spoken of with respect to financial giving, but it can also be applied to our giving of time and talents.



We might also look at tithing from God's perspective: all that we have is a gift from Him, and of his blessings, he asks that ten percent be returned to him to further the work of His Kingdom, while the remaining 90% is entrusted to us to use, save, and give as we see fit.

What do Scripture and the Fathers say about tithing?

Tithing appears very early in the Bible: in Genesis 14, Abraham gives “a tenth of everything” to Melchizedek, King of Salem (an image of Christ) after a successful battle. Much later, when Moses delivers the Law for the Israelites, one-tenth of the people (the Levites) become priests, and ten percent of everyone else's income goes to support the Levites and temple worship.

One might suggest that tithing is simply an Old Testament decree which (like stoning, for instance) we no longer follow. In a sense, this is true: the standard of the New Testament is rather that we ought to return to God not a mere tenth, but instead 100% of what we are given. St. Irenaeus says, “The Jews were constrained to a regular payment of tithes; Christians, who have liberty, assign all their possessions to the Lord, bestowing freely not the lesser portions of their property, since they have the hope of greater things.”

So the tithe is, for us as New Testament Christians, supposed to be a minimum starting point for giving. Jesus speaks of this, too, when he reprimands the scribes and Pharisees (a message we hear in the first of the Twelve Gospels read on Great and Holy Thursday): “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and

cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.” (Matthew 23:23)

But 10% is an awful lot!!

Some people in our parish were blessed to be raised in homes where tithing was done as a matter of course. For them, often, financial tithing continues to be a habit and thus is done without much worry—if you are accustomed to budget your own expenditures based on 90% of your income, this comes more or less automatically.

For others, however, 10% may seem like a rather high mark. If this is the case for you, perhaps some other guidelines might be helpful as starting points:

- ❖ If you give the income from the first working hour of your workweek, or the first day of your working month, that would be approximately 3%.
- ❖ If you give \$1 per week for every \$1,000 in annual income (e.g., with an annual income of \$75,000, give \$75 per week), that would be about 5%.
- ❖ If you spent one Saturday every other month doing work for the church (e.g., calling shut-ins, weeding the flower beds, working for Habitat) that might be about 10% of your free time

Activity:

What portion of your income are you currently giving to the church, based on your giving in 2006? (refer to the bulletin insert from October 14) _____%

Decide what percentage of your annual income you will be giving in the coming year. This is a serious decision, requiring reflection, prayer, and, perhaps, consultation with fellow Christians, including one’s pastor.

Your planned percentage giving for 2008: _____%

Activity:

There are 960 waking minutes in one day, 6,720 in one week. What portion of those are you currently using to further God’s Kingdom? _____%

What are some ways in which this percentage could be increased? _____

Save this page; you will need it when completing your pledge cards.

A Pledge System of Stewardship—Week 4

This is the fourth in a series of inserts explaining how to thoughtfully and prayerfully go about making a pledge. Ideally, our pledges should be:

First portion (given before we use of our treasure and time/talents for ourselves)

Proportionate (calculated as a percentage of our income and time)

Tithes (ten percent of our income—the scripturally-mandated minimum)

***Privileges* (we give because we are blessed; we are blessed in order to be a blessing)**

What does it mean to be “blessed to be a blessing”?

Put simply, when God blesses us with money, health, family, and other riches, He expects that we will use what we are given to bless others. As one example, in the Sacrament of Marriage, we pray the following: “Fill their houses with wheat, wine and oil and with every good thing, so that they may give in turn to those in need.”



Many of us have seen children who, upon receiving something—however small—which they count as wonderful, immediately begin making plans to share it in some way with their friends and playmates. We, too, need to cultivate this childlike attitude of wonderment in our blessings and a desire to share what we have been given with those around us.

What do Scripture and the Fathers say about our privileged position as recipients of God’s blessings?

What would have happened if the boy (or someone like him) had not shared his five loaves and two fish with Jesus? 5,000 people would have gone hungry. St. Paul affirms that we are blessed with abundance in order to do good: “But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.” (2 Corinthians 9:6-12)

St. Irenaeus, writing between 175-185 A.D., points out that God has need of nothing—we do not give in order to ‘do God a favor’ but rather out of thankfulness: “Now we make offering to Him, not as though He stood in need of it, but rendering thanks for His gift, and thus sanctifying what has been created. For even as God does not need our possessions, so do we need to offer something to God; as Solomon says: “He that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto the Lord.” For God, who stands in need of nothing, takes our good works to Himself for this purpose, that He may grant us a recompense of His own good things,” (St. Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies*, Book IV, Ch. XVIII §6) Elsewhere, he describes the celebration of the Eucharist as the ultimate way in which we can demonstrate both fruitfulness and gratitude.

Reflection:

Read and reflect on the following prayer of Thanksgiving, adapted from the last sermon of Fr. Alexander Schmemmann, given on Thanksgiving Day, November 24, 1983:

Thank You, Lord, for the gift of the Eucharist which is offered to the holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and which fills our hearts with the joy, peace and righteousness of the Holy Spirit.

Thank You, Lord, for having revealed Yourself to us and for giving us the foretaste of Your Kingdom.

Thank You, Lord, for having united us to one another in serving You and Your holy Church.

Thank You, Lord, for helping us to overcome all difficulties, tensions, passions and temptations, and for the restoration of peace, mutual love and joy through sharing the communion of the Holy Spirit.

Thank You, Lord, for the sufferings You have bestowed upon us, for they are purifying us from selfishness and remind us of the one thing needful: Your eternal Kingdom.

Thank You, Lord, for having given us this country where we are free to worship You.

Thank You, Lord, for all places where the name of God is proclaimed.

Thank You, Lord, for our families: parents, husbands, wives, brothers, sisters and especially children who teach us how to celebrate Your holy name in joy, movement and holy noise.

Thank You, Lord, for everyone and everything. Great are You, Lord, and marvelous are Your deeds and no word is sufficient to celebrate Your miracles.

Lord, it is good to be here!

It is in this spirit of gratitude that we give back to God, who, in turn, blesses us anew, in order that we may continue to bless those around us.

On Monday, November 5, pledge packets will be mailed to all parishioners. They may be returned via mail or brought to church to be placed in the sealed pledge box. All returned pledges will be brought to the altar and blessed on Sunday, November 25.

November 4, 2007

Dear Parishioner of Holy Transfiguration Orthodox Church,

At the Annual Parish Meeting held in February 2007, the parish voted to begin the process of instituting a pledge system of stewardship. During the transitional phase of the next two years, pledging will be encouraged but not required for voting membership. It was the hope of the parish that by the end of 2009, the pledge system would be our only system of stewardship, and we are working toward that goal.

Enclosed you will find pledge forms for 2008. We request that you give them careful, prayerful consideration and return them to the church, either in person or by mail, so that they can be gathered with the pledges of the rest of the parish and be brought to the altar for a special blessing on the Sunday following Thanksgiving Day (November 25, 2007). *We ask that you return your pledge in the enclosed, marked envelope so that it can be kept confidential.*

If you have been able to attend church or receive bulletins over the last month, you have probably already given these matters some thought, after going over the inserts provided. If not, we are providing here a brief summary of the material covered in those inserts and further instructions for completing the pledge forms.

If you have questions that are not answered here, please contact Fr. M or a member of the Stewardship Committee.

We thank you in advance for your careful attention to this important task.

In Christian love,

The Stewardship Committee

Holy Transfiguration 2008 Time and Talents Pledge Worksheet

In bulletin inserts over the past month, the key ideas of pledging have been described:

First portion (given before we use of our treasure and time/talents for ourselves)

Proportionate (calculated as a percentage of our income and time)

Tithes (ten percent of our income—the scripturally-mandated minimum)

Privileges (we give because we are blessed; we are blessed in order to be a blessing)

In addition to our financial blessings, we are gifted by God with talents and abilities. Each one of us has a unique combination of these abilities and each one is expected to use them to further God's Kingdom in keeping with those gifts.

The list on the back of this page enumerates the many ways in which different skills are required for the upbuilding of our parish and community. In previous weeks, activities in bulletin inserts have challenged us to identify our gifts and consider how we could do more to use them in service to God and to our neighbors.

Please take some time to carefully and prayerfully consider the ways in which you could contribute to the work of God and His church in 2008.

Circle the numbers of those activities you can commit to in 2008; **copy** those numbers onto your time & talents pledge form. **Keep** this page for your own records. The Time & Talents Coordinators will contact you with more information, if that is necessary.

Note to parents: we encourage children to make their own commitments to serving the church. Additional pledge forms and envelopes can be obtained from the candle desk.

Giving of Time and Talents 2009

Physical Labor

1. Wash tables after coffee hour.
2. Sweep the church hall floor after coffee hour.
3. Empty coffee pots; carry out trash.
4. Sweep the steps leading to the basement as needed.
5. Join the Altar Guild to serve coffee and rolls.
6. Be a “stand-by” coffee server for last-minute emergencies.
7. Provide refreshments for church activities, as needed.
8. Set up before/clean up after church activities.
9. Join the Ladies’ Auxiliary to provide meals after Presanctified Liturgies.
10. Wrap Christmas gifts for VA hospital patients.
11. Help with landscaping (planting, weeding) in the spring – fall.
12. Come early (by 8:30) on snowy Sunday mornings to thoroughly clean the steps and spread sand.
13. Help with baking prosfora.
14. Work during the annual parish clean-up before Pascha.
15. Help prepare palms and pussy willow branches for Palm Sunday.
16. Help arrange flowers on Great and Holy Friday evening.
17. Contribute food to the Pascha breakfast.
18. Help set up or clean up for the Pascha breakfast.
19. Help adorn the church for Pentecost.

20. Work at a Habitat House.
21. Knit/crochet items for cancer or neonatal hospital patients.
22. Help prepare packets for the annual parish meeting.
23. Change liturgical cloths; clean votive glasses seasonally.
24. Make meals for those recently returned from the hospital.
25. Clean the loft monthly.
26. Do “fix-it” jobs around the church.
27. Work at a soup kitchen with other members of the parish.
28. Arrive early occasionally to Daily Vespers to help light candles.
29. Be willing to house-sit an ailing relative so that a full-time caregiver can attend services.
30. Make minor repairs to altar servers’ vestments when needed.
31. Come early (by 8:30) once a month to assist the person opening the church (lighting candles, etc.).
32. Assist the Treasurer in large mailings by addressing/stamping envelopes.

Organization

33. Coordinate refreshments for church activities/lecture series.
34. Attend FORCC meetings.
35. Help keep the library in order.
36. Serve on the Parish Council.
37. Recruit Habitat workers.
38. Coordinate greeters.
39. Coordinate visitation/calling/ errand running for the sick and shut-ins.
40. Organize a fellowship potluck.
41. Host a parish breakfast fundraiser to benefit the Panko scholarships.

42. Organize a bake sale to raise funds to purchase Christmas gifts for parish shut-ins.
43. Coordinate activities for the visit of the Stremsky family.

Communication

44. Read prayers during confessions on Saturdays after Great Vespers.
45. Read at the Tomb of Our Lord on Holy Friday night/Holy Saturday morning.
46. Record and post birthdays and other announcements for the benefit of those who must miss coffee hour.
47. Visit the sick or shut-ins.
48. Call the sick or shut-ins.
49. Welcome visitors. Guide them through the service. Invite them to coffee hour. Sit with them and chat. Introduce them to others.
50. Serve as a greeter.
51. Send cards to the sick or shut-ins.
52. Be a “book buddy” for a child during the Lenten Read-A-Thon.
53. Serve as a Teachers’ Aide for Church School.

Transportation

54. Offer rides to students or other non-drivers.
55. Run errands for shut-ins or those recently returned from the hospital.
56. Transport non-perishable food items to the local food bank or to needy parishioners.

Intercession

57. Pray regularly for our parish family; pray for our national church.
58. Pray for the sick and shut-ins.

Other Acts of Service

59. Serve in the altar.
60. Sing in the choir.
61. Teach Church School.
62. Coordinate Church School.
63. Coordinate youth activities.
64. Serve on the Safety Committee.
65. Serve as a Parish Council Officer or financial auditor.
66. Work at the candle desk.
67. Open the church before Sunday Divine Liturgy.
68. Arrange flowers for feasts.
69. Read the Epistle.
70. Count collection income.
71. Manage and sell retail items.
72. Serve as an officer in a parish organization.

These needed acts of service require certain skills and abilities, or are positions of particular trust and confidence. If you are currently serving in one of these capacities, please include it on your pledge form. If you think you might like to serve in one of these ways in the future, please speak to one of the Time & Talents Coordinators to learn what you can do now in order to acquire the requisite training and experience.

Being Part of God's Family

How I will help in church this year

God gives each of us different abilities, and each one of us can use those skills to help each other in the church, God's family. Here are some ways that you could use your skills in church next year. Which ones can you promise to do?

1. Wash tables after coffee hour.
2. Sweep the church hall floor after coffee hour.
3. Wrap Christmas gifts for VA hospital patients.
4. Help with landscaping (planting, weeding) in the spring – fall.
5. Work during the annual parish clean-up before Pascha.
6. Help prepare palms and pussy willow branches for Palm Sunday.
7. Contribute food to the Pascha breakfast.
8. Help set up or clean up for the Pascha breakfast.
9. Help clean the loft monthly.
10. Help keep the library in order.
11. Read prayers during confessions on Saturdays after Great Vespers.
12. Read at the Tomb of Our Lord on Holy Friday night/Holy Saturday morning.
13. Send cards to the sick or shut-ins.
14. Pray regularly for our parish family; pray for our national church.
15. Pray for the sick and shut-ins.
16. Greet parish family members cheerfully in church.

17. Be a good example for younger children in my actions at church.

Holy Transfiguration 2009 Financial Pledge Worksheet

As the pledge system was introduced last year, four necessary qualities of pledges were identified and described:

First portion (given before we use of our treasure and time/talents for ourselves)

Proportionate (calculated as a percentage of our income and time)

Tithes (ten percent of our income—the scripturally-mandated minimum)

Privileges (we give because we are blessed; we are blessed in order to be a blessing)

As stated earlier, most people are already pledging to the church in an informal way: giving about the same amount every week or month, perhaps increasing that amount at the beginning of January or when one receives a raise. Nor is the pledge system intended to correct a deficit in the parish budget—regular giving by our parish faithful is currently sufficient to meet our expenses.

This being so, the point of requesting pledges is to encourage *spiritual growth*. Under a pledge system, one's giving to the church is a serious matter between the giver and God. We will emphasize this by carrying the pledges to the altar and having them blessed on November 30, the Sunday following Thanksgiving Day.

To assist you in calculating a first portion, proportionate pledge, please make use of the following worksheet:

Write your 2009 estimated annual income (gross, or net if you are self-employed), or monthly income x 12 [e.g., \$50,000] 1. \$ _____

Write the percent of your income you have determined to pledge to the church in decimal form [e.g., 5% = .05] 2. _____

Multiply line 1 by line 2. **This is your pledge for 2009.** \$ _____

[e.g. 50,000 x .05 = 2,500]

If you wish, determine a *monthly amount* by dividing this figure by 12, or a *weekly amount* by dividing this figure by 52.

For your own records:

I/we pledged the following amount for 2009: \$ _____

I/we intend to fulfill this pledge by giving \$ _____ weekly/monthly (circle one).

Note to parents: we encourage children to make their own commitments to giving to the church. Additional pledge forms and envelopes can be obtained from the candle desk.

Some further questions and answers:

What if I fail to meet my pledge?

If you discover during 2009 that you will be unable to meet your pledge due to circumstances beyond your control, please speak to the rector or the parish council president. Generally, a pledge made in good faith is sufficient to remain a voting member of the parish in good standing. Participation in the sacraments continues to have no relation whatsoever to financial contributions.

Is there a minimum pledge I need to make?

A pledge system is based on trust. The parish trusts that everyone will make a good faith effort to contribute a meaningful portion of his or her income, just as our faithful parishioners have been doing for years. For the time being, there is no minimum pledge in order to maintain voting membership, although we do hope that both responsible Christian stewardship considerations and your love and support for the church will guide your decision into pledging at least as much as you have given in the past. It is our belief that someone who has participated in the sacraments of Confession and Communion in the past year, and who makes a financial pledge to the church in November, is thus displaying sufficient commitment to the parish to be allowed to vote at the parish meeting in February, and that this will ultimately be reflected in the policy the parish adopts regarding the pledge system of stewardship.

How much do I need to give so that I can be buried from the church?

There continues to be no connection between sacraments and financial contributions. To be buried from the church, one must participate in the sacraments of Confession and Communion at least once (and we hope many more times) per year.

Am I legally bound by this pledge?

No. Nonetheless, we hope that you will not enter into this pledging relationship with the parish unless you are also prepared to be *morally* bound by your pledge, made before God.

What about the envelopes?

The envelopes serve two purposes: first, as reminders that the church (like the utility company, for instance) needs regular income from its parishioners. Second, the numbering system assists the Treasurer in her work. You will continue to receive envelopes, which you may use in any way you see fit. If your pledge to the church is calculated based on a monthly salary and you are paid once per month, you may choose to use a single envelope, returning your pledge monthly as you are paid. Alternatively, it may work better for your budgeting system to use envelopes weekly. Because we are in a transitional phase, envelopes reading "Basic Commitment" will still be included. You may use them for your pledge if you like.

2009 Time and Talents Pledge For Holy Transfiguration Orthodox Church

In thanksgiving and acknowledgment that all my time and talents are a gift from God,

I, _____, promise to return to Him, in the form of a contribution to Holy Transfiguration Orthodox Church, a portion of my time and talents in 2009. I commit to the following activities (use numbers), _____

_____ and provide contact information below so that I can best be informed on how to follow through on my commitment.

Signature _____

Primary phone number: _____

Best contact times: _____

Secondary phone number: _____

Best contact times: _____

E-mail address: _____

Home address: _____

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Signature _____

Primary phone number: _____

Best contact times: _____

Secondary phone number: _____

Best contact times: _____

E-mail address: _____

Home address: _____

2009 Financial Pledge For Holy Transfiguration Orthodox Church

In thanksgiving and acknowledgment that all my/our possessions are a gift from God,
I/we, _____, promise to return to Him, in the
form of a contribution to Holy Transfiguration Orthodox Church, a portion of my/our income, amounting
to \$_____ for 2009.

Signature(s) _____

OR

I _____ am making a financial pledge jointly with my spouse.
Our combined pledge will be indicated on a single pledge form.

THIS PLEDGE WILL BE SEEN ONLY BY THE PARISH TREASURER.

2009 Financial Pledge For Holy Transfiguration Orthodox Church

In thanksgiving and acknowledgment that all my/our possessions are a gift from God,
I/we, _____, promise to return to Him, in the
form of a contribution to Holy Transfiguration Orthodox Church, a portion of my/our income, amounting
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Signature(s) _____

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I _____ am making a financial pledge jointly with my spouse.
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