



ST. INNOCENT ORTHODOX CHURCH

2024

FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

PACKET

*"For all these things we give thanks unto thee, and to
thine only-begotten Son and to thy Holy Spirit; for all
things of which we know and of which we know not,
and for all the benefits bestowed upon us, whether
manifest and unseen."*

Anaphora of St John Chrysostom



Our Mission and Vision

At St. Innocent Orthodox Church, we seek to make Jesus Christ and His Gospel the center of everything we do, glorifying God in the beauty of our worship and carefully preserving the faith practices of the Early Church, which was born at Pentecost. We press toward becoming more like our Lord and Savior, desiring to love and care for one another and those in the wider community. By the grace of the Holy Spirit, we pray that our parish will become a life-giving spring of the Orthodox Christian faith for the people of Middle Georgia.

Dear Members and extended community of St. Innocent Church,

At the elevation of the gifts, during the anaphora (prayers of offering) at the Divine Liturgy, the priest holds up the sacred bread and wine and sings, "Offering unto thee, thine own of thine own, on behalf of all and for all." A divine mystery occurs at this moment of offering and with consecration prayers. As a people, we offer to God all the things He has given us, and in return, God sends the Holy Spirit upon us and the gifts we have offered. When we receive the Body and Blood of Christ, Christ indwells us, and we are given a foretaste of eternal life. This divine exchange is at the core of Christian living, where we offer "ourselves and one another and our whole life to Christ our God," in return, we receive God's divine life.

The Parish Council and I thank you for your faithfulness in offering your time, money, and support over this past year. My God, reward you! We ask that you prayerfully make a financial commitment to the operating expenses of our church. Every gift, large or small, counts because it is a seed sown into God's Kingdom.

Financial giving is a spiritual action. Although offering what God has given us is a practical necessity, we should first and foremost remember that our giving manifests our faith in and love of God. Our earthly giving is an investment that promises Heavenly returns. Supporting the church financially is another opportunity to make a "divine exchange" where, in thanksgiving, we offer God our sustenance; in return, He pours out His divine grace on us. Generosity opens and heals the heart.

Over the years, God has continued to bless our community richly. Join us as we prepare for the many blessings yet to come. Please fill out the Financial Commitment form as soon as possible and either hand it directly to Treasurer David Marble or place it in a sealed envelope labeled Attn: Treasurer and deposit it in the collection box at the church's front entrance by November 12, 2023.

May God bless you for your generosity,
Fr. Theophan

CHRISTIAN FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

WHAT DO THE SCRIPTURES SAY ABOUT GIVING?

- 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 every one of you lay by him in store, as God has prospered him.” (I 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)

TITHING

Tithing is giving ten percent, a tenth, of one's annual increase (Deuteronomy 14:22). The first biblical instance of this is Abraham's tithe to Melchizedek (2000 B.C.; Genesis 14:21). See also Malachi 3:6–12, and our Lord's instruction on “not neglecting” tithing in Matthew 23:23. Tithing predates both Judaism and Christianity and is found in both. It has always been a way to express one's commitment to God. Tithing orders household budgets and our lives. “Tithing” appears 37 times in Scripture, Old, and New Testaments. Tithing is giving directly to the “storehouse” (today, often the parish general operating fund). Tithing is based on a comparatively simple calculation: moving the decimal point one place to the left on our total income – or our increase – and drawing a check.

PLEDGING

A pledge is an estimate of giving; some call it a statement of intent. Pledging is “promising to give tithes and offerings in the future,” dating to the 5th century B.C. (Nehemiah 10:28–39) when the people of God promised in a written document to give tithes and offerings in the future. See also 2 Corinthians 9:1–5, concerning “a pledge” that the Corinthians would make of future offerings to relieve famished Christians in Jerusalem. In ancient times and today, pledging makes planning possible. How much should I pledge? Determining the amount of your annual pledge is between you and God.

PROPORTIONATE GIVING AND OFFERINGS

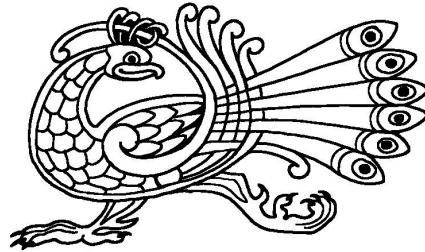
Proportionate giving is basing your financial commitment amount on a percentage of your income. Some feel they cannot afford a whole tithe, but what about giving one or five percent of your income?

An offering is giving, sacrificing, or presenting something to God as a mark of respect and love. See Psalm 96 [95 LXX]:7–8, “Bring an offering and come into his courts” (in a worship setting), and Matthew 5:23–24, where our Lord says that, after reconciliation, we are to “come and present your offering.” “Offering” appears 710 times in Scripture. “Tithes and offerings” also apply to church workers and clergy, not just laity (Numbers 18:26). Offerings are our gifts to God – and godly needs – without necessarily any set reference to the proportion of our increase or income. (For a widow's one hundred percent offering, see Luke 2:1–4.) Choices about giving offerings are matters of individual prayer and determination: what do we believe God wants us to show, in love, from what He has given us, in love?

OTHER FUNDS

Aside from Tithes and Offerings, some have asked us where they could give additional funds beyond their tithes and offerings. Here are some funds and savings accounts that we are building up for future projects

- **Parish Hall Debt:** Our goal is to pay off our parish hall before 2028, and we are more than halfway there! We have gone from 335k to 134k in 6 years!
- **Parish Expansion Fund:** As we continue to grow in attendance, we will need to expand the church or plant a mission at some point in the future.
- **Iconography Savings:** We hope to start the first phase of beautifying our temple with iconographic frescos in 2024. We currently have around 100k saved for this project.
- **Festal Flowers:** We always welcome donations for flowers and decorations to beautify our festal celebrations, especially for Holy Pascha.
- **Church School:** We welcome donations for Church School supplies and curriculum.
- **Coffee Hour Supplies:** Paper supplies are surprisingly expensive, and you are welcome to help defray the cost.
- **Cemetery Savings:** The cemetery is still in its infancy stage of development as we work on plans for landscaping and making it a more beautiful resting place.



Easy Giving

- **Kroger Community Rewards:** Fr. Theophan has Kroger card signup forms. If you already have a Kroger card, you can update your Kroger Community Rewards online by visiting your Account Summary page. After selecting Community Rewards, there is a user info page (address & phone #), which then takes you to a lookup page where you can enter the Org number (SJ072) or simply Innocent and select our church.
- **eBay for Charity:** Have unwanted items in your home? Contact David Marble (dandmelbram1@hotmail.com or 478-972-3618) and learn how to dispose of those items, with all proceeds going to St. Innocent Orthodox Church.
- **Credit Card Points:** Check with the Credit Card company and see if you can apply your points to our Parish Hall charity.

"Take from among you an offering to the Lord. Whoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it as an offering to the Lord: gold, silver, and bronze" Exodus 35:5