

**A TIME FOR
EVERY
PURPOSE
UNDER
HEAVEN**

Ecclesiastes 3

**THE
STEWARDSHIP
OF TIME**

SAINT BARBARA GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

480 Racebrook Road - Orange, Connecticut

“Teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom.” *Psalm 90:12*

In the mid 1980s Archbishop Iakovos sent the first long-term Orthodox Christian missionary priest to East Africa from the United States. As the priest gradually assimilated into his new surroundings, he found the concept of time to be the most difficult adjustment. Upon his return to America, the priest liked to quote the Kenyans who loved to tell him, “Americans have watches. We have time.”

Our brief time on earth is God’s gift. As faithful Christians, we are accountable for our stewardship of this precious gift. Thomas Edison once said, “time is not a commodity that can be stored for future use. It must be invested hour by hour or else it is gone forever.”

“Man is like a breath; his days are like a fleeting shadow.” *Psalm 144:4*

Our lifetime is a small bit of eternity, “a fleeting shadow” (Psalm 144), which we receive as stewards. Time is a precious gift that we dare not waste. Like the three stewards in the Parable of the Talents, one day God will call each one of us to give account of how we have used the time entrusted to us.

“... a time for every purpose under heaven.” *Ecclesiastes 3:1*

There is “a time for every purpose,” as the verse from Ecclesiastes instructs us: “...a time to plant, a time to reap...” the challenge is to appropriately allocate our time to the various purposes that make claims on it. This passage teaches us to make the most of God’s great gift of time.



The Gift of Time

“The greatest gift I ever received,” said a young attorney, “was a gift I got one Christmas from my dad. He gave me a small box with a note inside that said, “Son, this year I will give you 365 hours, one hour every day after dinner. We’ll talk about whatever you want to talk about, go where you want to go, play what you want to play.”

The young attorney continued, “My dad not only kept the promise of his gift, but he renewed it every year – and it’s the greatest gift I ever had in my life. I am the result of his time.”

The most personal, most appreciated and most unique gift that you can give is the gift of time – Your time. That valuable 24 hours a day that only you can spend. Depending on your profession, your time may be worth hundreds of dollars an hour. But the time you give to another person and the Church is priceless.

Our children need our time, as we are called to help shape their lives by our words and our example. The time we give to our children is an investment in their lives that is never wasted.

Spending Time with God

As Christians it is also important to value the time we spend at church, in worship, service and activities. Every member of the Body of Christ plays a role, according to their gifts, in the life of the local church. The church is not a social club, but rather a place where people of faith gather for worship, fellowship and service.

Most importantly, we gather together in worship, praising and thanking God for the blessings in our lives and hearing His Word. Of the 168 hours in every week with which we have been blessed, we offer back the short time we spend in church on Sunday morning and other services, gathered together as the Body of Christ. We are united in prayer and united in Holy Communion. We become His hands and feet carrying out His work in the world. As we offer ourselves and our time as His Church, we are part of something much bigger than we can imagine – much bigger than the project we support, the service we provide, the prayer we offer.

The Great Feast *Luke 14*

In the Gospel of Luke we read of the man who planned a great feast and invited many people. When it was time to serve the dinner, they were all too busy – one with his farm, one with his bride, another with his oxen. We can become so busy making a living that we forget to make a life. God gets crowded out of our lives over the most unimportant things.

At the first Christmas when Jesus was born, there was no room at the inn. And today we still have no room for Jesus. We crowd Him out with so many things.

In his novel 'The Screwtape Letters,' C.S. Lewis shows how the devil captures us, not by preventing encounters with God, but by whispering in our ear that we are "just too busy right now. We'll get to that soon. But just not right now."

Resetting Our Priorities

Just as we budget our financial resources to reflect our priorities, we can reset our allocation of time. We are all busy, but not all of that busy time is well-spent. We may need to say no to certain demands on our time, opening our schedule to God's prompting.

We can live each day anticipating the opportunities he places in our path to offer our gift of time.

Questions we need to ask ourselves

Am I a contributing member of the body of Christ? Am I actively serving God and sharing Him with others? Am I contributing to peace and unity within His body? Do I worship regularly? Take a moment to evaluate your life in light of these principles.

We are all called to apply our gifts, training, abilities, education and skills to the tasks that God places before us. If we do this humbly and prayerfully, the body of Christ will function to its full potential.

The Biblical motivation for giving is grace; giving is an act of worship in response to the generosity of God. You are to give, Paul says, "as God has prospered you." II Corinthians 8 and 9 teach clearly, "He who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully." God blesses those who give with generosity.

Giving is a way to thank God for His grace and generosity. The question is not, "How much do I give to stay in the club?" or "What are the dues?" but "How can I thank God for my many blessings?"



What is a stewardship program?

Stewardship is a system of proportional giving to the Church in which the members examine their conscience and offer their 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 the pensioned widow and the prosperous business owner do not have the same resources at their disposal. One has less, the other has more; to ask them both to support the Church equally as we did under the antiquated "dues" system is terribly unfair. It burdens the pensioner unbearably, 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.

For those who insist in having some guidelines: The average Stewardship pledge in the United States is \$1,200 per married household. As a suggested guide, families should work towards initially pledging 1%-2% of their gross income and eventually working up to 5% over a three to five year period. Some families find it easier to start by pledging \$25/week. Give in proportion to what you have been given.

Is stewardship just about money?

Of course not. We do not support our Church simply by mailing a check. That has never been our message at Saint Barbara Church. 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 and do carpentry; we can sing in the choir; we can work at the festival and various parish functions; we can keep the parking lots spotlessly clean and tidy. 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. Remember: 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 for many years.

What about my children?

We need to teach our children to 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. We need to encourage our children 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.



At what age should we become stewards of the Church?

We should strive to become stewards of the Church on the day of our 18th Birthday.

I am one person. Can I make a difference?

Yes, you can. History is full of individuals who acting alone made all the difference in the world. Your good example, multiplied by hundreds of others acting together, will be the catalyst that will revitalize the parish.

Become a donor, 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. A positive word of encouragement, together with your own personal example of generosity, can perform miracles of change.

Why does the Orthodox Church encourage annual stewardship commitments from its parishioners?

The philosophy of the Orthodox Church is to take as much of the daily focus off finances as possible. By making an annual commitment, you provide the security that operating expenses of the Church will be underwritten through stewardship. This will allow us to move forward with our real work of being disciples of Christ, which includes not only evangelization and community service, but also the education, nurturing, and support of our own parish community.

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. The Saint Barbara Parish has made fulfilling your pledge easy with a variety of payment methods: online through our web site, automatic bank withdrawal, or credit card. Of course, you may always pay by check.

What if my circumstances change?

God asks only that you enter into a good-faith commitment, not a legal contract. You can make changes to your stewardship pledge affected by new circumstances (positive or negative) simply by contacting the church office and speaking with Father Peter.

Is my commitment that important?

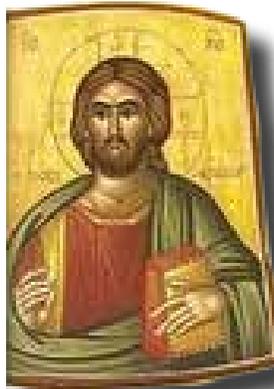
Absolutely. We all want the Church to be there for us. If our Orthodox community is to remain healthy, we each need to contribute our fair share, understanding that the expenses and work of the church go on whether or not we are in attendance. More importantly, demonstrating thanksgiving to God in a 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

The Saint Barbara Parish Council continues to do a remarkable job monitoring the monthly expenses of our parish. Through its various committees they continue to identify cost-saving measures which in the long run have allowed our community to save thousands of dollars in annual expenses. Our parish is also blessed to be supported by a battalion of parishioners who selflessly volunteer their time and talent to assist the Church in its mission to shine the Light of Christ in the world.

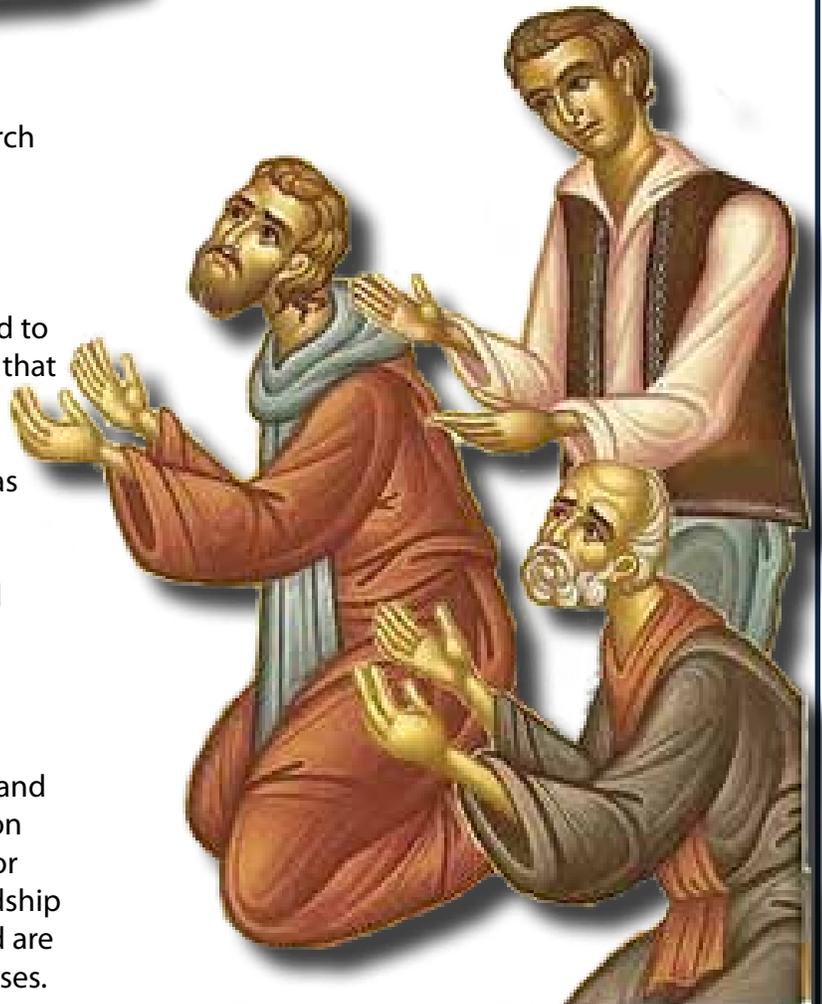
Even so, just as in our homes - annual expenses continue to rise. As parishioners, we are all called to offer financial assistance to the Church to insure that our parish doors remain open and that the community of Saint Barbara can continue to minister to her parishioner families as well as to the surrounding community.

Including our General Fund (daily expenses) and Mortgage Expenses it currently costs \$76,993 per month or \$2,532 per day to keep our parish operating. While we are preparing to begin our next Building Fund Campaign to complete the construction of the Fitness and Wellness Center and eliminate the existing mortgage on the education and community centers, the Stewardship Goal for 2020 is \$390,000. The monies from your stewardship contribution go directly to the General Fund and are necessary for our parish to meet our daily expenses.



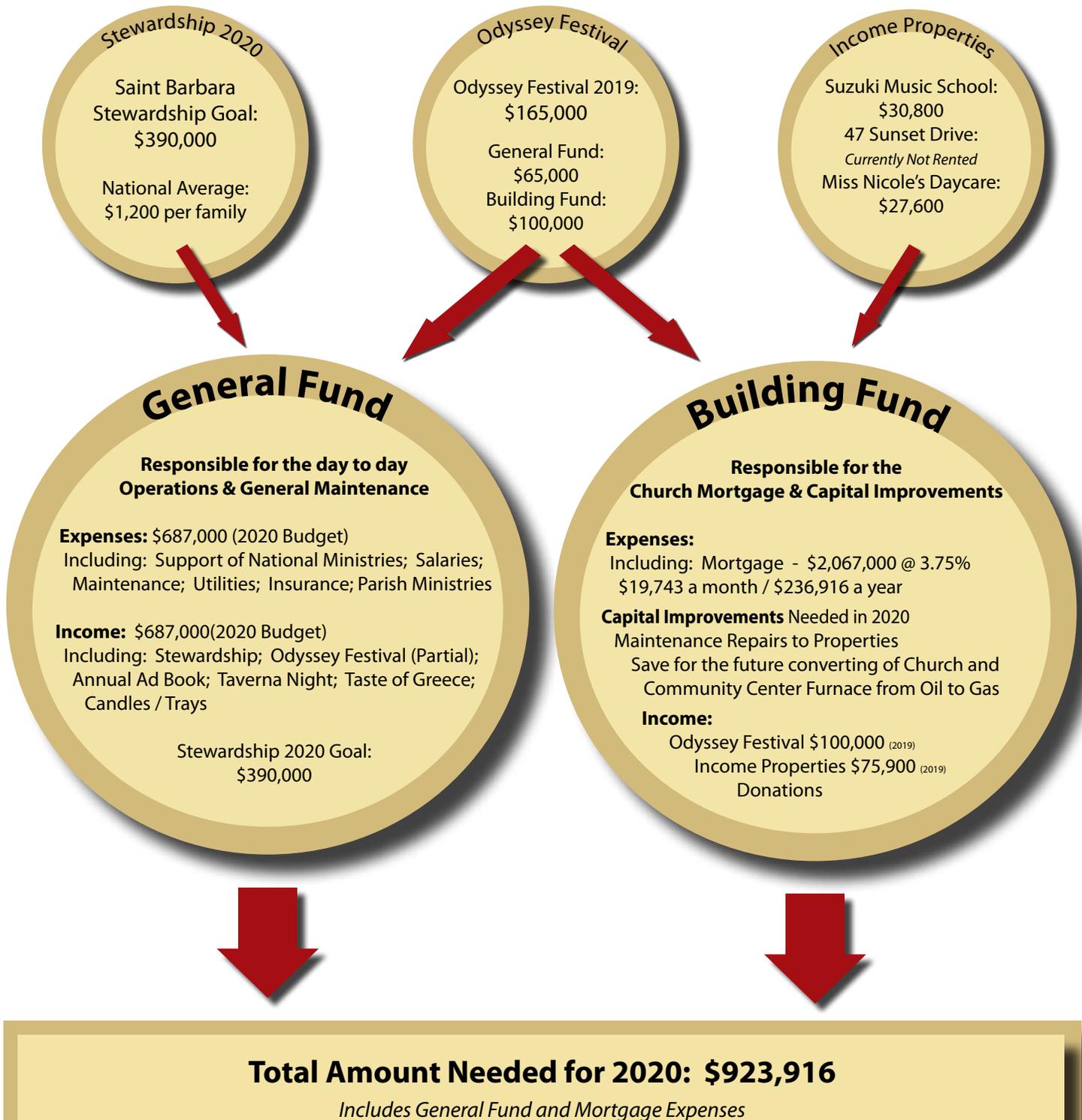
Having just completed the Centennial celebration of our parish we ask that you please take the time and make a prayerful commitment to support the continuing mission and ministry of our parish. Thank you.

Father Peter



Saint Barbara Parish Finances

The chart below depicts the cash flow of the two main accounts of the Saint Barbara Greek Orthodox Church. These two funds are responsible for the day to day operations; general maintenance; mortgage and capital improvements of our parish property. Our individual stewardship contributions account for the largest portion of the monies necessary to support the ongoing Mission and ministries of our Church.

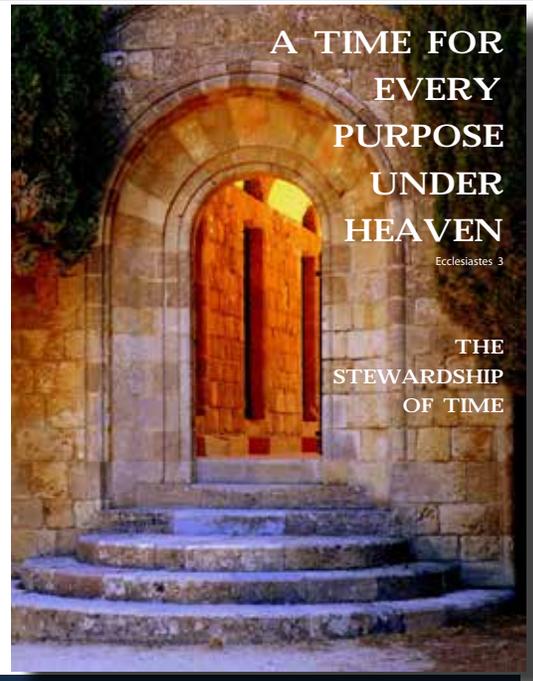


A Time For Every Purpose Under Heaven

Ecclesiastes 3

Saint Barbara Greek Orthodox Church

480 Racebrook Road Orange, Connecticut 06477



My Commitment of Treasures - For Christ and the Ministries of His Church

Yes! I want to support God's work through my Church of Saint Barbara. Here is my Commitment of Faith for 2020 representing my best efforts to return to God a portion of that which belongs to Him.

Name: (please print) _____

This represents my individual stewardship commitment for 2020

I pledge to give: \$250/month \$200/month \$150/month \$100/month
 \$75/month \$50/month \$25/week \$20/week
 \$1,200/year (The National Average per couple) \$ more/other

I will make my donations:

weekly monthly quarterly yearly

Υπόσχομαι να προσφέρω:

\$250/μήνα \$200/μήνα \$150/μήνα \$100/μήνα
 \$75/μήνα \$50/μήνα \$25/βδομάδα \$20/βδομάδα
 \$1,200/χρόνο (Ο Μέσος Όρος) \$ περισσότερο/άλλο

Θα εκπληρώσω τη δωρεά μου:

εβδομαδιαίως μηνιαία τριμηνιαία ετήσια

Cut here and return 

Name: (please print) _____

Home Phone: () _____

Mobile Phone: () _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

E-Mail Address: _____

Work Phone: () _____

Payment Options:

- I will mail or bring my monthly stewardship contribution directly to the Church Office.
- I will pay my stewardship contribution by credit card online through the Church's web site at **<http://www.saintbarbara.org/stewardship>**.

Note: This is a promise of intentions. It can be changed at any time by contacting the Priest or Stewardship Chairperson.

Please complete this form and return it in the enclosed confidential envelope within 30 days



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