

Funding Resolution Passes!

BY ARCHPRIEST GARY BRETON

The 18th All-American Council of the Orthodox Church in America (OCA) was held in Atlanta, Georgia from July 20–24, 2015. One of the major points of business brought before the council was the proposed Funding Resolution of the Central Church Administration. The resolution was crafted by the Financial Committee of the OCA and blessed by the Holy Synod of Bishops. During the third plenary session of the council, the resolution was presented, discussed, and passed by a large margin of delegates' votes.

The adoption of the resolution radically shifts the way in which the Central Church Administration will be funded in the future. The shift is away from the "head tax" based on the aggregate total of parishioners populating a diocese's parishes and institutions, and toward a percentage of a diocese's unrestricted income.

This new method of funding will impact our diocese and her faithful in the following ways:

1. It will initially reduce the amount of money currently being sent from the diocese to the Central Church Administration of the OCA. The current assessment

system has our diocese remitting \$288,720 to the OCA in 2015. This represents 62% of the diocese's projected Unrestricted Income (excluding DDB and other restricted monies). Under the new system, the diocese will remit \$232,000 to the OCA in 2016. This represents 50% of the 2015 Unrestricted Income.

2. It will encourage diocesan parishioners to free themselves of the concept of dues and assessments, and focus on offering a percentage of their annual income to their parish.

3. It will encourage diocesan parishes to consider remitting to the diocese a percentage of their annual income instead of an assessed amount based on their census.

4. Assuming that parish remittances to the diocese based on percentage giving match or exceed those based on the per-capita assessment system, there will be more money that will stay in the diocese to support diocesan ministries and activities.

Certainly more benefits will present themselves as the new system is implemented, and we hope to explore these in coming issues of this newsletter.

About This Publication

His Eminence, Archbishop Michael, has initiated a goal of presenting bulletin inserts to diocesan parishes for distribution to the faithful. Each month will feature two inserts that will be in the form of newsletters; one will be on the topic of Stewardship, the other on the subject of Parish Growth and Evangelism. These printable and downloadable documents will be electronically distributed to each parish, and will be available at our diocesan website.

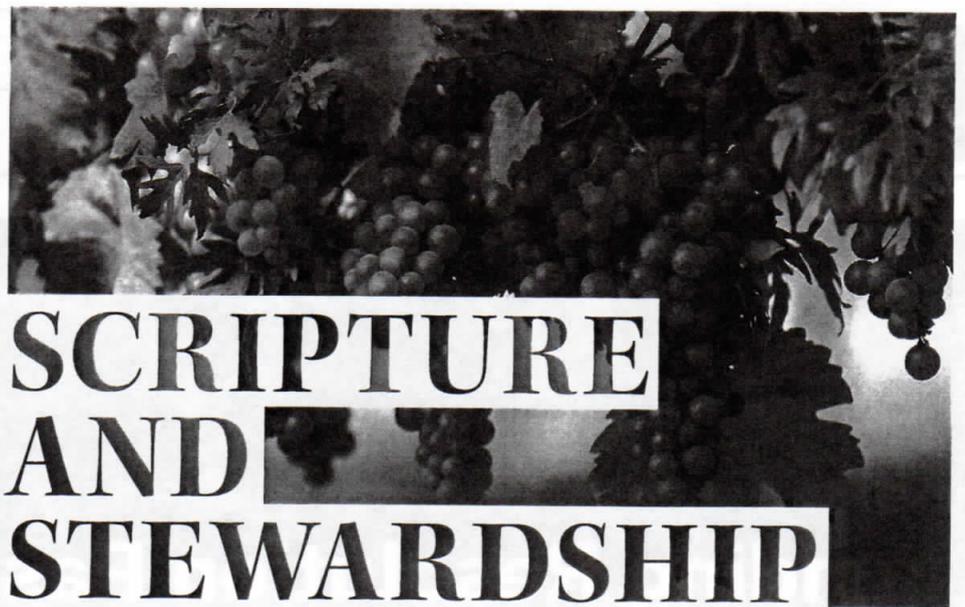
This publication is the first of the bulletin inserts on the subject of Stewardship. Please feel free to send comments and suggestions for future articles to Archpriest Gary Breton at gjbretton@gmail.com.

Mission Statement

First Fruits is written to encourage everyone in our Diocese to be good stewards of all that God has given them.

Watershed Moment

Above: Delegates at the 18th All-American Council in Atlanta, GA approve a historic resolution to fund the central administration via proportional giving. (Photo by Archpriest Gregory Safchuk)



SCRIPTURE AND STEWARDSHIP

Defining Stewardship

Can we formulate a definition for stewardship? How might we describe "stewardship in action?" The following list, adapted from Ron Nicola's article in The Word, suggests that we understand stewardship as:



OUR ACTIVE COMMITMENT to use all our time, talent and treasure for the benefit of humankind in grateful acknowledgment of Christ's redeeming love.

CARING for the needs of others.

OFFERING ONE'S SELF TO GOD as He offered Himself to us.

WHAT A PERSON DOES after saying "I Believe...", as proof of that belief.

LEARNING how to be a responsible and concerned caretaker of Christ's Church; it is learning how to enjoy Church life and be happy in Church work, for in Her dwells the fullness of the Spirit of God.

DEVOTION AND SERVICE TO GOD and His Church as persons, as families, as deaneries, as a diocese, as a national Church, and as the Church universal.



[Ron Nicola, "Stewardship – A Set of Basic Principles," *The Word*, Nov. 1982, p. 4]

Proverbs

Honor the Lord with your substance and with the first fruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine. (3:9-10)

I Corinthians

For who regards you as superior? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it? (4:7)

II Corinthians

The point is this: he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that you may always have enough of everything and may provide in abundance for every good work. (9:6-8)

FREEDOM AND GIVING

NO GIFT IS TRULY A GIFT unless it is given freely without reservation or condition. The gifts of God are given to us in just such an unconditional manner and we are called to model our giving after God's.

Stewardship Giving doesn't buy anything. It doesn't buy happiness or love or a tenfold return on our investment. The motive for giving the gift to God is not the expectation of getting something back.

We are able to give what we give because God has already given to us. Stewardship Giving is really a response, then, to the generosity of God. We acknowledge that we are not the starting point for the giving, but we are simply passing on a portion of what we have received.

The way in which we give our gift is as important as the gift itself. A sacrificial gift has no strings. It is given as freely as God has given to us, because the motive for the giving is grateful response rather than expected return.

This does not mean that the parish to which we give is not to be accountable for the gifts given. It does mean that our decision to give is not contingent on the particular use of the gift.