



Volume 29, Number 11
November 2020

The Cathedral Messenger

A Publication of St. George Antiochian Orthodox Christian Cathedral

COPING WITH COVID-19

Parish Stewardship during the Pandemic

By Fr. Paul O'Callaghan

As 2020 winds down, and we prepare for 2021, it is worth considering the financial impact that COVID-19 has had on our parish and what the future may portend.

As your pastor, I stood aghast as nearly all of our programs shut down early this year – all the more so, as we were reduced to one priest serving Liturgy with only a handful attending. Although I was initially reluctant, we adopted live-streaming as a way to keep our congregation connected to parish life. Nevertheless, suspension of coffee hour, study groups, and organizational meetings, significantly loosened the bonds of fellowship among us. Would parishioners maintain their loyalty and commitment to the parish in such circumstances over time? As the consequences of the pandemic took hold, this remained an open question.

Stewardship and parish finance was one arena in which we would behold this play out. Early on, it could easily have been assumed that giving might significantly drop off in these circumstances. After all, one of the earliest decisions under the pandemic was to stop passing the tray – with only ten people in attendance it was obviously an exercise in futility! I am happy to report, however, that for most of the present year, we have remained very close to budgeted income and expenses.

Because of reduced work load, it might have seemed advisable to cut back on staffing. This could have become necessary if a parish financial crisis had mate-

rialized. Rather, we decided to stay the course and maintain full staffing in hopes that the situation would improve within several months. Unfortunately, the improvement didn't happen as quickly as one might have hoped. Yet after an initial period of adjustment, our clergy and staff found themselves quite busy again, albeit in different ways. And thankfully, parish revenue remained close to budget, so that staffing reduction did not become necessary.

As of this writing, we have completed the third quarter of the year. I mentioned above that parish revenues have remained stable; that is, until the month of September, during which they took a sudden dip. This is not unusual. For whatever reasons, occasionally revenue for a certain month or two will come in considerably under budget. If this pattern continues through the fourth quarter, however, it could result in a substantial operating deficit for the year.

In my 28 years of ministry at St. George Cathedral, we have only sustained an operating deficit once – during the “Great Recession” year of 2009. What happened that year? The “December Miracle” did not materialize. Every year, we run an operating deficit throughout the first 11 months, and then depend on a huge influx of giving in December to tide us over. Will it happen during this pandemic year? One hopes so!

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Dean, V. Rev. Paul O'Callaghan • St. George Orthodox Christian Cathedral

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MEMORY ETERNAL

Sheena Gordon, 10/28

Billie Shadid, 10/8
of Austin, TX
sister of Phyllis Kamas

MANY YEARS!

MABROOK! BLESSINGS!

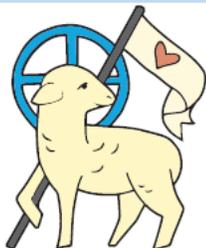
baptism

Camille Marie Christian
daughter of Spencer and Jennifer

marriage

John Senseman and Brooke Leatherman, 10/17

Little LAMBS



A monthly gathering for mamas + tots
(Ages 0-5, older siblings welcome too!)

Will be held the 3rd Tuesday of each month from 10:00a-11:00a. We'll meet at St George in the Chapel and begin with a prayer and a word from Fr. Calinic. We'll move to the hall with snacktime for the kids, followed by storytime about the Saints and coloring. Then wrap it up with fellowship time together. More details are available on our Facebook group or sign up to be notified via email.

For more information email:
Tawny at design.tawny@gmail.com



A Note from Fr. Paul

Please use church email rev@stgeorgecathedral.net rather than text messages for requests for appointments and other church business, except in cases of urgency when the office is closed. Thank you.

Bishop Basil Endowment

Honor Bishop BASIL on his name day, the Feast of St. Basil the Great, January 1, with a gift to the Endowment Fund that bears his name for establishing and maintaining missions within the Diocese of Wichita and Mid-America. Make mail your check to St. George Cathedral - Wichita - payable to "St George Cathedral and earmark "Bishop Basil Endowment", and take this opportunity to honor Bishop BASIL.

2020 STEWARDSHIP SUNDAYS

Please remember to complete your pledge card for 2021 & either return it to the Cathedral office or bring it to Divine Liturgy on **Sunday, November 29th**

NOVEMBER FASTING



On Wednesdays and Fridays prior to November 15, the normal fasting traditions are observed: abstinence from meat, poultry, and dairy products. The Nativity Fast begins Thursday, November 15th. The usual fasting regime is kept everyday during the Fast in November, except we are dispensed from fasting on Thanksgiving Day, and wine and in some traditions, fish, is permitted on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and weekends.



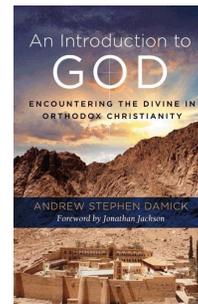
Women's Faith & Growth

Join us Thursday
November 19, 7:15p
in the Youth Center

for an evening of fellowship & faith

Studying book by
Fr Andrew Stephen Damick

"An Introduction to God"
Leader, Martha Sturgill



The Prayer of Washing Dishes

Like many Americans, I grew up in a home and a Church that was broken. My meals were mostly canned, boxed, or take-out. So was my worship of God. The packages, labels, and menus were always colorful and enticing; but after the microwaving and eating it by myself on a couch in front of a TV—it never tasted that good and certainly never satisfied as a meal. But there was always the magical idea of the weekend, of eating out at a “fine dining” establishment that did everything for you. But broken families like broken churches live a lot in the “imagination of a vacation” to avoid the daily disappointment around the table.

Coming to Orthodoxy thirty years ago introduced me to a Church with an unbroken experience. My greatest surprise was what Orthodoxy taught me about meals. It does make sense that a worship that has a communal meal with God in its center might have something to say about having a meal with each other. But I did not learn this first in the Liturgy. Not even at our annual Big Dinner. I learned it first in the kitchen of my wife’s sitti. And then years later, in the kitchen of my wife’s mother. And now with the passing of her sitti and her mom, in the kitchen of my wife. The Lebanese kitchen is the Holy of Holies for food which like the Holy Spirit is “Giver of life” “in all places and fillest all things.” And in this place, all the women are priests. I always felt guilty and a little ashamed as I took dishes from the table and attempted to enter into this ethnic liturgy of the table, the cleansing of the Temple of Lebneh. As I proceeded toward the still warm oven and the stainless steel sinks of hot water, an older woman with furrowed eyebrows and a gentle smile would shoo me away, telling me to go sit with the men and rest. I had no idea what I had entered into—and it was rather obvious.

I know to some, they may bristle at the male chauvinism of it all. I did too. But whatever that is socially, or however long it may not last, it was for me the clear-

est and most beautiful pictures of the unbroken Christian life, of the unbroken Christian community.

From a Protestant background, studying the Bible was not hard for me. Get-ting excited about Jesus in my life was not difficult. Sharing the gospel and helping the poor, and even going to Church were not struggles. I enjoyed it. It was

a celebration that soothed the brokenness of my home life. But one thing that had been missing all my life was prayer. My prayers, like my worship experiences, were never “routine”—they were emotive self-creations—events with emergent passion. “Routine” was akin to “dry” and phari-



saical. The heart without an adrenal gland was just a dead muscle. My Church life, my “Jesus life” was always hi-tempo and “up” like a weekend “fine dining” experience. And this was an “awesome” place to be...until you move into an older and truer world where you begin to see and feel all of the “down” around you. When you begin to experience the futility and suffering that other people are experiencing. My broken home and broken church had not prepared me to endure “the down.” Tragedy, injustice, pain, suffering, disappointment, betrayal, depression, divorce, disease, and death—these were life events that needed to be escaped. And when they could not be escaped—you left. You started over with new memories, a new job, a new church, a new marriage

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The Prayer of Washing Dishes . . . continued

and something new the Holy Spirit was telling you. Suffering was an event you kept mostly to yourself. So you just got in your car; zeroed all your mileage, and began a different journey.

But “the kitchen of the sitti” is an icon of the unbroken home and an old enduring unbroken Church. The Lebanese kitchen was for me a recapitulation of the Orthodox altar. For the first time in my life, I was taught how to pray by watching Lebanese women wash dishes.

There is nothing glamorous about doing the dishes. In the abstract, no one would want to do dishes. A dirty dish has no “wow factor”, no story, no point, no pizzazz. You are not even certain who the dish belonged to. They are just surrounded by endless quantities of dirty dishes that keep stacking, hours upon hours, days on days, for years and years—running the same plates, glasses, and silverware through running water. Hundreds upon hundreds of thousands of times pulled from the shelf, filled with food and drink, then emptied, washed in hot sudsy water, turned upside down, dried with time, and put back in perfect place. Countless unmemorable repetition.

Some are already saying, “I don’t do all of that; I just put em all in my new Wonder Woman Vortex dishwashing machine and it does it all for me!” “Don’t these women have a dishwasher?” And the peculiar and marvelous answer is “Yes, but they choose to do much of the dishes by hand!” They not only trust it more; it seems that they like washing dishes by hand together!

This most mundane and frankly disgusting chore of scraping half-chewed food bits, and butter globs, and sticky silverware held with their bare hands under hot water—and doing this together seems to bring this assembly of women joy. It is not just a baptism of plates and glasses, it is a pentecost of the meal. There are many competing conversations in the kitchen, a washing of the table, a coming down of clean cloths, a consecration and thankfulness of these life-giving elements. These priests are singing. Some are laughing. And all are smiling while saving the perishable in plas-

tic coffins and scraping away the unnecessary. And if it doesn’t make the fridge; it is still worthy of compost. And they all seem to know where to go; and how to line up; in whatever kitchen they are in with no rehearsals. The Theotokos entered the Temple when she was about three. So did they. They have done this ritual since they were little girls. And thousands of times later, they know this place better than any place on earth. It is quite literally an altar of their home.

I want desperately to be a part of it. But I know this is the Holy of Holies which they serve in their home. I do not dare go behind that imaginary linen cloth. God forbid that I might spill something on it, or break an heirloom dish, or somehow rent this veil, a fate the same as death. For now, and maybe forever, I will just watch it—and by watching it, and even being allowed to be served by it; I become part of it.

What in life is more necessary than drinking and eating? And what could be wiser than to eat and drink from something that is clean? What is a meal served without a washed dish? Prayer should be like doing the dishes by hand. Multiple times a day. Routine. The same serving pieces I have used my whole life. Scraping away the same half-chewed sins I can no longer stomach. Discarding this refuse resolutely in the trash without disgust or wrenching shame. And moving every familiar and ordinary thought, word, and action through the running water of a cleaner warmer heart. Letting it all with time, patiently dry. The satisfaction that it is all clean again, and put back in place. The lack of complaint about how many times we must do this. The lack of bitterness that everyone else in the other room is not doing this. And really, the lack of awareness that you are doing anything. All the while, you are praying together, even among those that have served and eaten in this place, who are smiling but no longer here, women and men, putting away pieces of life together on shelves of memory. It should not be particularly interesting or remarkable work, yet it is labor upon which everything else depends. The prayer of washing dishes—such ordinary routine with such supreme joy.

The chart below reveals an alarming trend: fewer parishioners are making a pledge commitment with each passing year. This does not mean they stop giving. It means that they are not committing themselves to giving a certain amount for the year. The net effect of this trend is that the prospect for parish revenue becomes increasingly uncertain. We are not sure what to expect because we have a lesser commitment to giving.

I encourage all of our membership to be generous in their fourth quarter giving, and to help make our financial prospects stable and secure in 2021 by filling out the enclosed pledge card and returning it to the Cathedral office. Thank you in advance for your continuing and generous support of St. George Cathedral!

Pledge Trends at St George Cathedral

| Year | 2014 | 236 |
|------|------|-----|
| | 2015 | 233 |
| | 2016 | 212 |
| | 2017 | 203 |
| | 2018 | 204 |
| | 2019 | 194 |
| | 2020 | 178 |

Please make it a priority to return your pledge card this year.

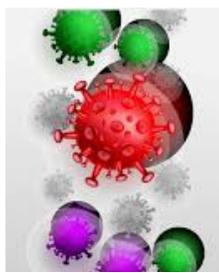
Number of Pledge Cards Returned



Pandemic could result in loss of faith in next generation, Barna researchers say

<https://www.christianpost.com/church-ministries/pandemic-could-result-in-loss-of-faith-in-next-generation.html>

The coronavirus pandemic could accelerate a loss of faith among the next generation unless churches find ways to better disciple young churchgoers and keep them connected, senior researchers at the Barna Group say.



David Kinnaman, president of the California-based evangelical Christian polling firm and Mark Matlock, director of insights, cited earlier research highlighting how a majority of young people who grew up in the church will either walk away from their faith or from the church when they become young adults, during a recent discussion about the impact of the pandemic on Christians aged 18-29.

And both believe the pandemic will make this crisis of faith even worse unless steps are taken to stanch its impact.

“I think it will. I actually think we’re going to see an increasing number of people who’ve lost connectedness with their faith community, with their usual rhythms and practices. We’re going to actually see an increasing number in the years to come and the long-term impact is even more fallout from that,” Kinnaman said.

“We know that 22% of young people today are what we call ‘prodigals.’ They lost their faith entirely. That

number grew by double from 11% 10 years ago. So what it will look like in 10 years is hard to know, but we think it’s going to actually accelerate that problem,” the Barna Group president explained.

When asked about what he was seeing and hearing from churches that are trying to respond to the problem, Matlock highlighted research showing that among adults 18-29 who were raised Christian, only 10% of them are considered ideal or ‘resilient’ disciples. Some 22% are no longer Christian and 30% are classified as ‘nomads’ because they still believe in God but aren’t connected to a church. Another 38% are considered ‘habitual churchgoers’ but have loose ties to God.

“It’s important to realize about that 22% is that they just aren’t coming to church anymore. They’ve said I no longer identify as a Christian, which is pretty serious,” Matlock said.

“There’s another group we call nomads that still identify as a Christian, they’re not connected to church. But there’s another group, they’re not really as connected to God but they’re coming to church pretty frequently and that’s what we call the habitual churchgoers. And then there’s the resilient, kind of what we call the ideal disciple,” he continued.

Stewardship as “Commending” Ourselves to God?

Let us commend ourselves and each other, and all our life, unto Christ our God.

by Fr. Calinic Berger

We hear these powerful words of exhortation constantly in church. What do they really mean?



The word that we hear as “commend” in this litany does not mean “recommend,” as in our common usage, but translates a word used to indicate an official “handing over” or “transfer.” For example, it referred to deeds or documents in a court of law, a deposit made in a bank, and even to the risk involved by making an investment in a business venture. In other words, it meant a handing over of personal property for safekeeping or for profit, in such a way that this transfer could not be reversed simply at will. As one can imagine, such a transfer therefore presupposed a conscious and purposeful commitment.

What a choice of a word! When we hear therefore, “let commend ourselves” we are being called to make a transfer that is complete and involves our very being, our inner selves, into the hands of Christ. In fact, our Lord Himself forged this path for us on the Cross: “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit” (Lk 23:46). And yet, as if to leave no ambiguity that this is not something we do once but is indeed an all-inclusive call, the Church adds the words, “and all of our life.” Our life is more than our material possessions and includes our dreams, our goals, our heart – that upon which expend our time and focused energy.

And yet the litany does not stop there. It adds, “and each other.” One wonders: how we could possibly commit someone else to the Lord? Yet we also see this pattern already set in the early Church: “So when they [Paul and Barnabas] had ordained presbyters in every church, praying with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed” (Acts 14:23). What a beautiful image indeed! Paul and Barnabas could not provide everything, though they had given so much, and so they placed



their flock directly under the Lord’s care. Similarly, we entrust those whom we love, those with whom we form one church family, those with whom we share our life, to the Lord – for their profit and safe-keeping.

The amount of responsibility and commitment to which this litany constantly calls us is indeed formidable. To transfer ourselves, our whole lives and all of our family, friends and fellow faithful out of our own possession and over to the Lord, is indeed to hold nothing back. Such is a complete commitment that includes the whole interpersonal fabric of our lives.

What indeed could be a higher standard of stewardship than this? Perhaps for this reason, this exhortation always comes last, after all of our requests to God have been made, as our final word before the priest offers a doxology. Is such even possible? Perhaps that is why we first have to “call to remembrance” that we are not alone in making this commitment, but have with us the Theotokos and all the Saints. And what a beautiful standard of stewardship, indeed, that in the household of God, we are called to give over everything, and likewise to be given over, to Christ.



Fulfill your pledge by
Automatic Monthly Withdrawal



Please contact Doren at the Cathedral office to obtain the form

Community Support

by Traci Spencer

we'd love to have you join us!

"for I was hungry and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me" — Matthew 25: 35-36

Completed Projects

Lord's Diner

On Sunday, October 18th, St. George volunteers served the homeless in our community from 5:00-7:30 p.m. Thank you for your heart for feeding the homeless in our community. Join us the third Sunday of every month to serve at The Lord's Diner. Please call Mikell Awwad at 250-3016 if you are able to serve.

Cook Up A Storm

On Saturday, October 24th St. George volunteers helped make casseroles and cookies for the homeless in our community.



What's Coming Up ?

Warming Soul's Center

On Thursday, November 19th St. George volunteers will serve homeless men and women at the WARMING SOUL'S CENTER, 841 N. Market, from 6:00-7:30 p.m. Please let Traci Spencer know if you want to serve at 371-5599. The Warming Soul's Center feeds the overflow homeless shelters that open 11/1. This year the community is opening three overflow shelters, 2 for men and 1 for women; which provide a dry place for people to stay/sleep from 5:00 p.m. until the next morning.

Next Meeting November 10th

12:00 noon in the Conference Room.
We would love to have you join us!

We will meet in the St. George fellowship hall so mask up and join us in this worthwhile ministry of making a difference in our community.

Please contact Traci Spencer at 371-5599 if you would like to be involved.

Looking at 2021 Agencies

The community support committee will make decisions on giving to the remaining agencies and discuss agencies that we want to serve in 2021.

Christmas Food Basket Project

After counsel from Fr. Paul and discussion on our committee, it was decided, with much dismay; that we had to cancel the Christmas Food Basket project due to COVID-19. The project would be too difficult to do and maintain social distancing.

Late Fall Continuing Catechesis Prayer in the Orthodox Church

November 11:

The Lord's Prayer – Fr. Calinic

November 18:

The Jesus Prayer – Fr. Paul

November 25:

No presentation,
due to the Thanksgiving Holiday.

Series will resume **December 2**

All presentations will follow
Wednesday Vespers at 7:30pm,
in-person and live stream at

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82361961493?pwd=a1dhdENzVS80YmxhVitUYTNFdGIMZz09>

Meeting ID: 823 6196 1493

Passcode: 67206

This will be broadcast on our usual Facebook and YouTube links as well

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCnOr97AzdC5YM3NDDt-xEXA>

Facebook: [stgeorgewichita/](https://www.facebook.com/stgeorgewichita/)

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