St. John the Merciful Orthodox Church

6220 S. Orange Blossom Trail Suite 305 Orlando, FL 32809
OrthodoxOrlando.com

2026 Annual Parish Meeting Agenda

Sunday, January 25th, 2026
[Immediately following the dismissal of the Divine Liturgy]

I. **Opening:** Call to Order and Singing of "O Heavenly King..."
II. Roll Call (Please Sign In)

[We will recess for approximately 15 minutes]

III. Approval of the 2025 Annual Meeting Minutes
IV. Rector's Report [attached]
V. Warden's Report [attached]
VI. Treasurer's Report *[presented orally, charts attached]*
VII. New Business

1. **Presentation of the 2026 Budget** [attached]
2. **Selection of 2026 Parish Council: Two open slots**
3. **Selection of 2026 DOS Assembly Delegate and Alternate**
   [Tue-Fri in Mid-July, St. Augustine, FL]

VIII. **Adjournment with Prayer** and Singing of "It is Truly Meet..."

Following the meeting, those who are interested can participate in a guided conversation about parish development topics and how we can work toward achieving our goals as a mission parish together.

St. John the Merciful Orthodox Church
6220 S. Orange Blossom Trail STE 305 Orlando, FL 32809

2025 Annual Parish Meeting Minutes

Sunday, January 19th, 2025

Call the Meeting to Order - Joshua Fassler, Warden

- Opening Prayer (Fr. David)
- Confirm Quorum Attendance *(Eric Phillips) 78 total in attendance, a total of 75% of our voting members present*

State of the Mission: *(Fr. David)*

President's Report: *(Joshua Fassler)*

Treasurer's Report: *(Erich Bunofsky)*

- Rearview Mirror (Review of 2024 finances)
- Windshield (2025 budget).

Budget Approval was unanimous

Elect our Lay Delegate for Annual Diocesan Assembly and New Parish Council Members: *(Subdeacon Peter)*

Approval was unanimous

Closing Prayer: *(Fr. David)*

St. John the Merciful Orthodox Church

Annual Rector's Report - 2025 Review and 2026 Outlook

Preface: Growth and the Challenges of Growth

St. John the Merciful Orthodox Church has gone through many changes in the past year. We have been in our larger new "tabernacle" rented location for one year, in which time we have celebrated many Sunday and Festal Divine Liturgies, baptized 16 souls, received 6 adults through chrismation, enrolled 11 catechumens, married 2 couples, and had our first funeral and burial as a mission parish. Our largest liturgy attendance recently on January 4th had 110 people in church. This is more than four times the attendance of the first regular Sunday liturgy I served at St. John's in May 2023. Glory to God!

Brand new services celebrated in our community are our first Holy Unction, several new Akathist hymns were heard in our church—including Fr. John's newly-translated Akathist for St. John the Merciful served for the first time ever in English! I think we may be the only storefront mission in the country with two priests, a deacon, and three choir directors. These are great blessings!

We are growing, and we will continue to grow as we open up our doors and let the outside world that is hungry for the Orthodox faith learn about our parish. We are living through a pronounced "surge" of interest in Orthodox Christianity, and our task as clergy and laity together is to ensure that those come to us are being converted not to an imagined or idealized "Orthodoxy," nor to aesthetic, cultural, or ideological preferences, but to Jesus Christ Himself—encountered in repentance, humility, worship, and sacramental life within His Church. This work belongs first to the clergy, but it can never be accomplished by clergy alone. A mission on the path to becoming a parish is healthy only when responsibility is genuinely shared and when longer-term members model stability, hospitality, patience, and generosity for those who are new. The witness of those who have come before—the years of labor, sacrifice, and persistent faithfulness that built this mission must not be forgotten, but at the same time we must keep our focus on the work ahead of us in the coming year to grow not only in numbers but in maturity—learning to approach change with patience, gratitude, and shared responsibility.

This also requires that we remain disciplined about what belongs at the center of parish life. We do not come to church to do our own will, to satisfy personal preferences, or to build a parish around secondary matters. We come to be strengthened by the Word of God, to be nourished by the Body and Blood of Christ, and to serve one another. The health of a growing parish depends upon this shared spiritual posture: the willingness of each member—whether a long-standing member or a brand-new inquirer—to approach parish life less as a consumer and more as a servant.

As the parish grows, sponsors and mentors become increasingly essential. This has practical implications, but it is first of all spiritual. A sponsor must be someone grounded in the Orthodox faith, faithful in attendance, and willing to be a real example to the person he or she sponsors—even if that example is sometimes simply one of repentance, humility, and perseverance.

1. Hospitality as a Core Expectation

The Hospitality Meal and Fellowship Ministry (Coffee Hour) is central to our health as a community; it is one of the essential ministries of the parish. In a community of our size, participation in hospitality is increasingly understood as a normal expectation of membership, not an optional add-on. Hospitality is pastoral, catechetical, and foundational to cohesion. It is not an "extra" but is essential to our mission.

Closely related is the establishment of a Greeters Ministry, which shapes first impressions and follow-up with visitors and inquirers.

2. Clergy and Development of Leadership

We are thankful for the longtime efforts of Deacon Mark Buchman, who has faithfully served this mission from its inception, and over the past year we have welcomed our attached retired priest Fr. John Bartholomew into our community. I am thankful for the service of both of these faithful men which allowed for me to go and serve an outdoor liturgy this past Sunday for Camp St. Christopher's Winter Camp and help "project" the ministry of SJTM outside of our four walls.

Our Parish Council continues to be headed by the leadership of our Warden Erich Bunofsky, treasurer Wendy Lee, and longtime council member Subdeacon Peter Porr. The other two slots—one for secretary and one as a general council member—will be voted on at the meeting.

We have a Communications Team up and running, headed by Christine McCullough with three other members who are working on getting all of our electronic and paper communications in sync and regularly offered. This is a new initiative, so it will take a few months to "work out the kinks" as we launch our new website, but there is much work already done behind the scenes and I am thankful for the workers. We are also continuing behind the scenes to fine-tune our catechesis team and that will also be expanding soon. Our Church School Team, headed up by Alison Marsh is continuing to expand as our needs grow. We will soon be spinning up a formalized Greeter Ministry.

There is a need for additional leaders to come forth for additional ministries for outreach and to assist with our youth. If you feel called to serve in these capacities, please reach out to me!

3. Financial Overview and Stewardship Trends

Moving to a new location always comes with unexpected challenges. We have tripled our amount of space for worship, fellowship, and education, but this also resulted in unplanned expenses, such as multiple air conditioning repairs last summer.. In the interest of our faithful to see us grow and purchase a property for a more permanent home, we have seen very healthy donations to our building fund while tithing donations to our general fund were not quite as expected, which led to using a large portion of our checking account funds in 2025 to pay for repairs and for months when our tithes did not meet our expenses.

Healthy parishes generally try to avoid dependence on any single donor or small group of larger donors, and while we have made important strides toward that goal by significantly increasing our

number of pledging households this year *(37 pledging households this year vs 26 last year)* our total pledged dollar amount for 2026 is 17% less than 2025.

This introduces the reality that attendance and pastoral needs are growing faster than stewardship. As the Chancellor of our Diocese told me recently, pledges are a helpful planning tool, but they are not the most reliable indicator of a parish's real financial health or future trajectory. What matters far more is what our actual income has been over the past year or two, adjusted for changes on the ground like people moving out of the area, major givers cycling out, or families hesitating or holding back for reasons that often have nothing to do with dissatisfaction or lack of trust but for current household economic circumstances.

Our actual donations last year were $215,492.52, which were slightly under the budgeted expectation of $220,030. The 2025 budget was made as a 10% deficit budget, so that $220k budget last year was 10% more than what was actually pledged, and we only missed that target by 2%.

The move to a larger space is a forward-looking decision we made together, and those always create a period of tension and uncertainty before they bear visible fruit. Growth rarely arrives on the same timeline as the lease!

This is a hard, but normal moment in the life of any mission, and in talking with the rectors of many successful parishes in our diocese, they have all had these moments. For 2026 we are presenting a "no-frills" budget of $232,850, that has the basic necessities, and it is a 20.5% deficit from our estimated income from pledges and 2025 giving for alms, building fund, and candles of $181,500.

The budget before you reflects restraint, not ambition: it funds the basic, ongoing work of worship, pastoral care, and administration, while assuming that stewardship will mature over time rather than be forced in a single year.

This means that stewardship must now deepen and not merely broaden.

4. Stewardship as a Shared Spiritual Discipline

For this reason, stewardship must be understood not only as a financial obligation, but as a spiritual discipline shared by the whole parish, and a concrete means by which the Church grows. The Church does not exist through clergy effort alone, nor can it thrive through the generosity of a small number of households. A healthy parish requires broad participation—as able by the various circumstances our lives—in order to remain stable, flexible, and free to pursue its mission.

The majority of households give faithfully, but often at levels well below a traditional tithe. The next phase of parish life will require several families to take a prayerful step forward in their giving—not out of pressure or coercion, but out of gratitude and commitment to the future of the Church.

We are also mindful that many families are living within changed and often tighter economic realities. For this reason, we ask—especially of our longer-established members—to prayerfully and intentionally consider legacy giving, including memorial gifts and provisions made through estate planning. Such gifts are not sought for ordinary operating expenses, but are specifically directed toward long-term capital needs as we seek to purchase our first property as a parish community.

The financial strength of St. John the Merciful has been built through generosity, sacrifice, and careful oversight. Preserving that strength will require continued transparency, disciplined planning, and a shared commitment from the whole parish. Stewardship is not about keeping the lights on; it is about ensuring that the Church remains free to worship, to serve, and to grow without fear or instability. If we approach this work together—with generosity, gratitude, and trust—there is every reason to believe that our mission parish will continue to thrive, not only financially, but spiritually.

Conclusion: Shared Responsibility, Steady Hope, and Faithfulness in Christ

As this report makes clear, St. John the Merciful Orthodox Church stands at an important moment in its life. We are no longer a small mission finding our footing, but neither are we a finished institution. We are a growing, maturing community learning how to carry the blessings God has given us with wisdom, patience, and humility.

Throughout this report, several themes have emerged consistently: Growth is a gift, but it requires structure. Ministry is a blessing, but it requires shared labor. Stewardship is essential, but it must be grounded in gratitude rather than anxiety or pressure. Above all, our life together must remain centered on Christ, the Gospel, the liturgical life of the Church, and love of neighbor. When those things remain central, the many practical decisions before us find their proper place and proportion.

It is important to say clearly that membership in a mission of this size now carries real expectations. Participation in the life of the Church is not limited to attendance alone. Prayer, generosity, service, and hospitality are no longer "extra" activities for a few particularly committed individuals; they are normal expressions of belonging to a living Christian community. Whether one is a long-standing member or newly received into the Church, each of us is called to contribute to the good of the whole according to our gifts, talents and season of life.

As we move forward, I ask each parishioner to approach the coming year with a spirit of cooperation and trust. Be generous with your time, your talents, and your resources. Be patient with one another. Keep the liturgical life of the Church at the center of your calendar and your priorities. And above all, remember that we do not come to the Church to have our preferences affirmed, but to be healed, nourished, and shaped into servants of Christ and of one another.

If we continue in this spirit—grounded in prayer, unified in purpose, and committed to shared responsibility—there is every reason to be hopeful. By God's mercy and grace, St. John the Merciful will not only sustain its current life, but will continue to bear fruit in the South Orlando/Kissimmee area and for the wider Church in the years ahead.

Respectfully submitted,

Fr. David Galloway
Priest-in-Charge
St. John the Merciful Orthodox Church

Warden's Report Annual Meeting 2026

To the faithful parishioners,

Thank you for your attendance and support at our 2026 Annual Meeting. My main role as the church's warden is to support and align us all towards our mission to establish a permanent English-speaking Orthodox church in the Central Florida area. With this goal being front of mind in every decision that we make, I ask for your support as we continue towards this vision.

We had many challenges last year from executing a move to a larger location, to negotiating lease terms, and various facilities issues from HVAC and plumbing to noisy neighbors. Despite these challenges, I'm happy to report that our average attendance has increased, we've had a record number of catechumens join the mission, and we've received many into the church through baptism and chrismation. Lastly, our digital footprint will be enhanced soon after the completion of our new website and the livestreaming of our services. We now have the systems in place to continue to grow and, God willing, be permanently planted in the Central Florida area in the coming years.

While 2025 was an overall success, there is still much to do in 2026. As we will discuss in this meeting, we are presenting a deficit budget this year, and it will affect how parish life looks. First off, I want to explain that it is not abnormal for a small, mission church like SJTM to have a deficit budget. In fact, this has been the case for us for the past few years. However, we are dealing with larger numbers than in the past which require us to cut costs in certain areas. For example, Pascha and feast days celebrations will likely be pot-luck style gatherings and we'll be calling upon you, our parishioners, to donate coffee throughout the year to maintain our level of hospitality, and we'll likely be taking up collections throughout the year for flowers and such when needed.

With all that said, we have a lot to be thankful for. SJTM has made a large impact on the community. Our mission is very close to being a "full-service" Orthodox parish. From weekly vespers to Sunday school and catechumen classes, and let's not forget at our church, coffee hour is always more than coffee and always more than an hour. Despite the financial challenges we face this year, the parish council and I remain confident about the overall health of the organization and optimistic that we will continue to grow and thrive in 2026. We have a presence in the community, a larger location with room to grow, and most importantly the support from you, the faithful parishioners.

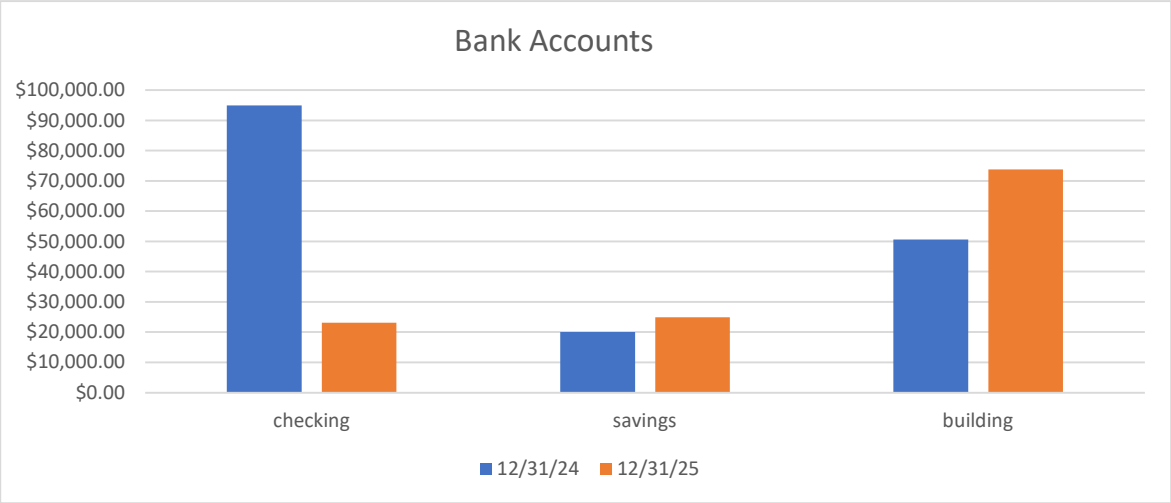
Erich Bunofsky, Warden

St John the Merciful Orthodox Church
Donations less Expenses

	2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2025 Budget	2025 Actual	Proposed 2026 Budget
Donations less Expenses					
4000 Member Tithes	$82,283.36	$110,625.28	$163,280.00	172,771.77	139,156.00
4110 Cash Donations		$12,714.00	$12,000.00	10.00	
4120 One-Time Donations	$9,549.18	$5,211.66	$35,000.00	2,621.42	
4130 Donations for Alms	$5.00	$400.00	$6,000.00	8,611.80	8,000.00
4140 Donations for Building Fund	$11,694.50	$17,494.31		24,597.64	
4150 Donations for Relocation		$20,805.49		200.00	
4160 Donations for Children's Fund		$294.25	$500.00	1,150.39	
4080 In-Kind donations				115.37	
4090 Icons				397.00	
4170 Donations for Candle & Bookstore	$254.50	$240.00	$250.00	692.25	650.00
4300 Grant Income	$32,750.00	$8,900.00			
4400 Investment Income	$1,541.43	$2,688.73	$3,000.00	4,247.88	4,500.00
Total Donations	**$138,077.97**	**$179,373.72**	**$220,030.00**	**$ 215,415.52**	**$ 152,306.00**
Expenses					
6010 DOS Tithe	$10,157.50	$14,867.00	$20,680.00	20,042.30	17,600.00
6110 Salaries and Wages	$24,886.52	$38,316.72	$40,000.00	40,000.00	40,000.00
6115 Payroll Taxes				6,824.20	7,000.00
6120 Housing Allowance	$15,754.13	$27,040.25	$30,000.00	32,500.00	32,500.00
6130 Pension	$6,108.55	$11,503.21	$12,000.00	12,415.23	12,500.00
Reimbursement / Discretionary / Phone			$2,700.00	845.50	900.00
Clergy Health Insurance			$9,000.00	1,765.77	21,200.00
6200 Liturgical Supplies	$2,522.55	$473.83		165.28	
6210 Communion & Lamp Consumables	$584.94	$336.27	$575.00	554.84	550.00
6220 Flowers for Icons	$310.03	$467.36	$600.00	202.52	
6221 Feast Day Expense				490.79	
6230 Candle Supplies	$435.84	$843.17	$1,500.00	638.23	650.00
6250 Icons				846.53	
6300 Coffee Hour Supplies & Materials	$2,717.08	$2,239.13	$3,000.00	2,511.82	1,250.00
6400 Education Expenses		$141.86			
6410 Church School Supplies & Materials		$700.00	$1,200.00	515.19	200.00
6420 Bookstore Expense	$412.19	$978.13	$500.00	1,839.47	
6610 Rent	$29,504.28	$35,805.72	$72,000.00	74,957.13	72,000.00
8000 Moving Expenses		$350.00	$7,500.00	8,560.68	
6620 Building Maintenance & Repairs	$352.80	$558.34	$3,750.00	9,070.10	5,000.00
6630 Communication and Web Expense	$114.00	$114.00			
6640 Insurance - General Liability and Property	$345.78	$375.72	$500.00	3,340.66	2,500.00
6650 Legal and Professional Fees	$280.00	$141.25	$100.00		
6670 Travel Expenses	$12,707.39	$2,117.32	$3,000.00	3,551.58	1,500.00
6680 Bank Charges	$202.36	$621.02		842.92	800.00
6710 Electricity	$1,876.18	$1,855.95	$4,000.00	7,088.99	7,100.00
6720 Water	$768.44	$188.45		274.19	275.00
6810 Office Expenses	$235.12	$715.86	$500.00	1,448.41	500.00
6900 Charitable Contributions	$270.00	$200.00			
Internal Alms			$3,000.00	11,200.00	7,500.00
External Alms			$3,000.00	400.00	500.00
Youth Activities Expense			$7,500.00	2,501.84	
Event speaker			$1,000.00	499.50	
Altar boy robes			$1,600.00	2,058.63	
6810 Subscriptions			$500.00	968.95	775.00
Total Expenses	**$110,545.68**	**$140,950.56**	**$229,705.00**	**$ 248,921.25**	**$ 232,800.00**
Donations less Expenses	$27,532.29	$38,423.16	($9,675.00)	**($33,505.73)**	**($80,494.00)**

St John the Merciful Orthodox Church

	12/31/24	12/31/25
checking	$94,935.58	$23,133.18
savings	$20,076.82	$24,975.27
building	$50,660.10	$73,836.27
totals	$165,672.50	$121,944.72

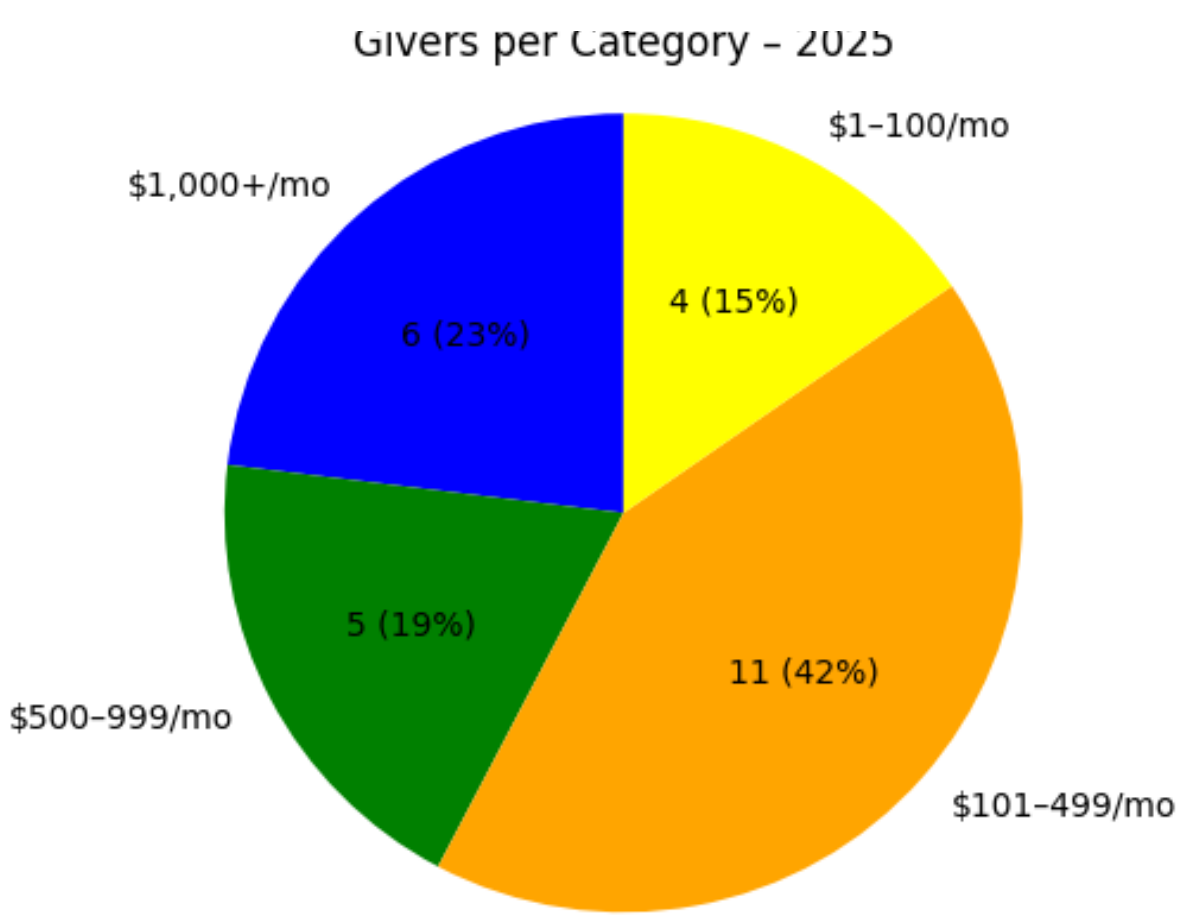


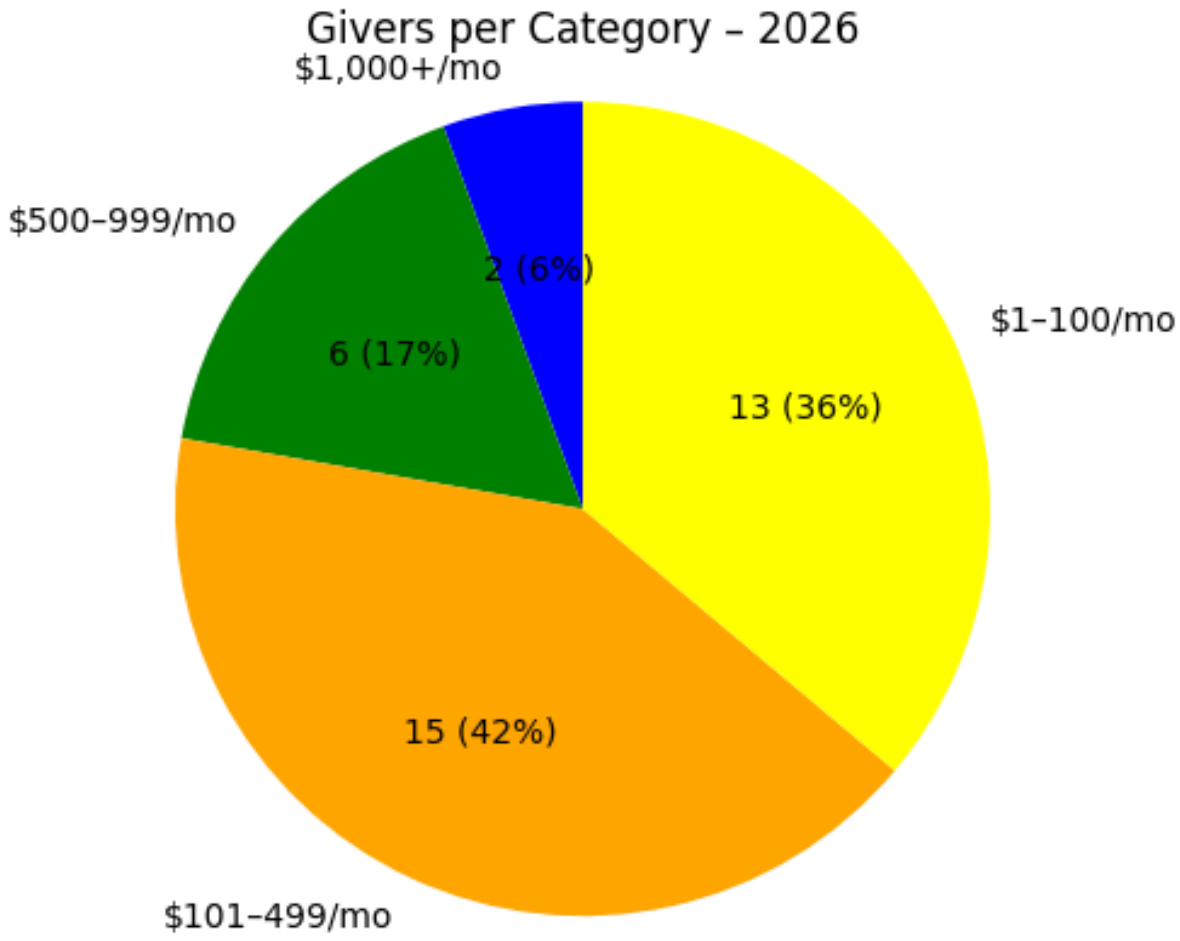
St John the Merciful Orthodox Church

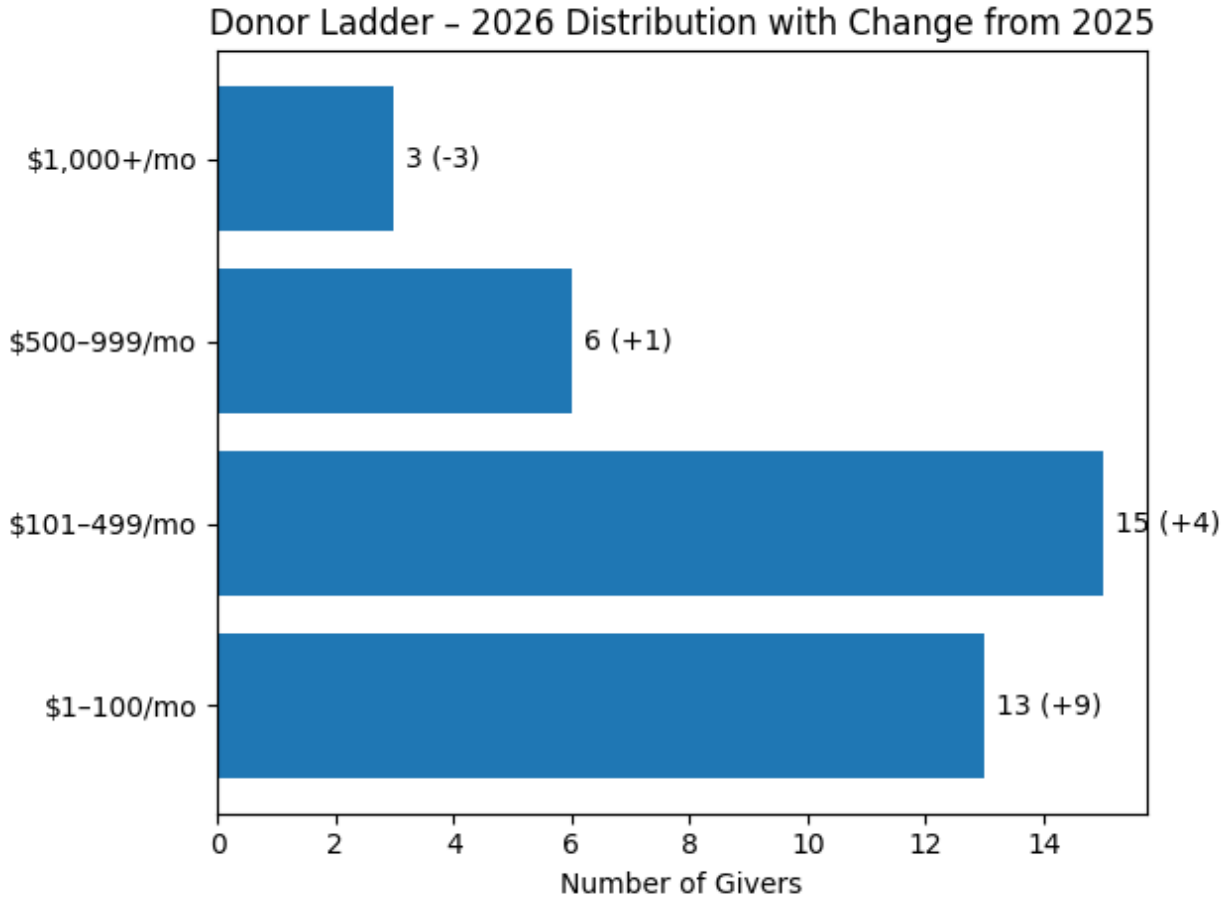
	12/24/2024	Restricted	Bal w/o Restriction	12/31/2025	difference
checking	$ 94,935.58	$33,000.00	$ 61,935.58	$ 23,133.18	($38,802.40)
savings	$ 20,076.82			$ 24,975.27	$ 4,898.45
building	$ 50,660.10			$ 73,836.27	$ 23,176.17
totals	$ 166,976.23			$ 121,944.72	

	2024 Donation
moving	$10,000.00
rent	$23,000.00

checking account	
($38,802.40)	checking difference
	items that did not affect the checking account
$4,247.88	investment income
$115.37	in-kind donation
$933.42	misc
($33,505.73)	donations less expenses


Givers per Category – 2025
$1–100/mo
$1,000+/mo
4 (15%)
6 (23%)
5 (19%)
11 (42%)
$500–999/mo
$101–499/mo


Givers per Category – 2026
$1,000+/mo
$500–999/mo
2 (6%)
$1–100/mo
6 (17%)
13 (36%)
15 (42%)
$101–499/mo


Donor Ladder – 2026 Distribution with Change from 2025
$1,000+/mo
$500–999/mo
$101–499/mo
$1–100/mo
3 (-3)
6 (+1)
15 (+4)
13 (+9)
0
2
4
6
8
10
12
14
Number of Givers