

# Saint Raphael of Brooklyn Orthodox Church

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Beloved Parishioners and friends of the Church of Saint Raphael of Brooklyn:

May God bless you always!

The Church of Saint Raphael has been planted by God in Iowa City for the salvation of the people in our Greater Iowa City area. *We are* the Church of Jesus Christ, founded upon the Holy Apostles, in Iowa City. We are the temple of the Holy Spirit for hearts seeking authentic spirituality and the “pillar and ground of truth” for minds eager to know what is stable and real. (2 Cor 6.16; 1 Tim 3.15, RSV). In our beautiful church building on East College, we offer prayers for our city and for the whole world. Here, heaven and earth meet.

And we are just getting started! Let’s go from here into the future with a **bold vision** for who we can be and what we can accomplish with God’s Power, active in us and manifest through us.

What we give to the Church is an **investment** in the heavenly Kingdom that never ends and also an investment in Christ’s continuing work on earth. Our parish has done so much good already because of the leaders, donors, benefactors, and workers who have **invested** their money, time, skills, and energy into the life of the Church. God gives us life, breath, and health. How much are we willing and able to offer God in thanksgiving and love for what He has given us?

You may know how God once required His people in Old Testament times to offer a *tithe*, ten percent. Those of us within the New Testament Church don’t observe the tithe as any kind of divine legal requirement, but we teach it as a practical Biblically-based model that effectively helps churches to fulfill their purpose and potential. We are thankful to those who are willing and able to pledge ten percent of their projected income for 2024. If you are not yet committed to giving ten percent, at least approach tithing as “proportional giving,” that is, commit to pledging a certain *percentage* of your income to the Church. If you are already giving proportionally, please consider increasing the percentage of your pledge for next year. Whatever you do, give with faithfulness, love, and joy! “Each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor 9.7, RSV).

Let’s all work together, in giving and prayer, to make 2024 by far the best year yet. How much of what God has bestowed upon us can we generously invest back into His Church so that **we can accomplish great things** for our salvation, for the nurturing of our children, for the feeding of the hungry, for the guidance of the lost, and to God’s glory? Let’s pray that God multiplies what we give so that we reach astonishing heights in ministry-building in the Name of Jesus Christ.

Yours in Christ,

*Father Symeon*

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The Church of St. Raphael is a parish of the  
Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America  
Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East

*“The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch” (Acts 11: 26)*