



St. Raphael of Brooklyn Antiochian Orthodox Christian Church

Metropolitan SABA, Primate
Father Symeon Kees, Pastor

722 E. College St., Iowa City, IA 52240; Tel. (319) 337-6784
<http://www.raphaelchurch.org> onesymeon@gmail.com

Dear St. Raphael Church family,

As 2025 approaches, it is nearly time for us to pass a budget for the coming year by vote at our annual meeting in December. As usual, the Parish Council has constructed a proposed budget for our voting members to consider and, we hope, approve. The Council prepares annual budgets by examining income and spending during the past year and our anticipated needs and goals for the upcoming year.

During 2024, our budget continued to supply funding for multiple ministries including our food pantry and other aid to those in need, community garden, and Christian education, in addition to supporting our parish by providing for liturgical items, choir development, building maintenance and improvement, and other expenses. We were also able to complete our long-planned project to build a kitchen.

However, we did more than simply continue what we were already doing. We are blessed with a consistently growing number of new faces as more seekers and new catechumens discover Orthodoxy through our community, and reaching and welcoming each of them was possible because of your contributions. God willing, this growth will continue in 2025 and beyond. This will present opportunities as well as challenges for us to work together to meet, in part by preparing as best as possible to be financially prepared for them.

With the exception of occasional grants received for specific ministries like the food pantry and our community garden, everything at St. Raphael Church is funded entirely by contributions from members and others who graciously decide to give to us. This means that a funded and balanced budget is crucial.

Pledges may be returned in one of the following ways:

1. Mail the enclosed form to the parish street address or drop it off at the church (please mark it "Attention - Treasurer" so only the Treasurer opens it); or
2. Fill out the online form found on the church's website and in this email. Electronic forms will be forwarded to the Treasurer for confidentiality purposes.

As with last year, we will construct our list of voting members eligible to vote at the December meeting using returned pledge packets. A person or couple who returns a pledge packet, no matter the amount pledged, will be on the list to receive ballots at the meeting (assuming other requirements for eligibility under our Constitution are met). If you have any questions, please contact Father Symeon or Austin Collins.

We ask everyone to prayerfully consider the amount they intend to pledge for 2025. While we know that not everyone who donates to the Parish is able to commit to a monthly pledge, the pledge system forms the foundation for our ability to create a budget, as it is the most reliable indication of what our income will be.

For the same reason, fulfilling committed pledges is crucially important, as the budget was built in part on the anticipation that pledges represent future receipts.

Most importantly, our sharing in the financial support of St. Raphael Church is part of our service to God and his Church, and is one way that we can all participate in spreading the Gospel in Iowa City. As always, we are sincerely thankful for the support of each and every one of our parish members in this work.

In Christ,

Becky Morey, Stewardship Coordinator and Treasurer