

THE ST. ELIZABETH NEWS

A loving Community of Orthodox Christians

St. Elizabeth Orthodox Mission Church
 2265 E. Cherokee Drive Woodstock, GA 30188
*A parish of the American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese
 Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople*
 Ruling Hierarch: His Eminence Metropolitan Gregory of Nyssa



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 Father Deacon Steven Hanes
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www.stelizabethga.org



33rd Sunday after Pentecost
Epistle: [Colossians 1:12-18](#)
Gospel: [Matthew 22:1-14](#)



Christ is Among us!

Christ is among us! He is and always shall be! Welcome to St. Elizabeth Orthodox Church and thank you for celebrating the Divine Liturgy with us!! What a joy it is to be together in God's House. If you have never been to an Orthodox Church before, you are about to participate in the Divine Liturgy. The Liturgy is the work of the people and that means that all of your prayers are necessary and you have a job to do this morning! We hope you will stay and join us for coffee hour in the atrium. Please feel free to ask Fr. Matthew any questions you might have! May God's blessing be with all of you!



This Week's Music...

Tropar Tone 8 - Page 102

Kondak Tone 6 - O unashamed intercessor of Christians,
 * ever loyal advocate before the Creator, * do not
 disregard the prayerful voice of sinners * but in your
 goodness* hasten to assist us who trustfully cry out to
 you: ** Intercede always, O Mother of God, in behalf of
 those who honor you!



Icon of the Parable of the Wedding Feast



- Tuesday 1/23 9am-** Divine Liturgy
- Thursday 1/25 9 am-** Divine Liturgy: Followed by Coffee and Catechism Class
- Saturday 1/27 4 pm-** Great Vespers
- Sunday 1/28 10 am-** Divine Liturgy
- Tuesday 1/30 9 am-** Divine Liturgy
- Thursday 2/01 5:30 pm-** Great Vespers: The Feast of the Meeting of the Lord in the Temple
- Friday 02/02 9 am-** Divine Liturgy: The Feast of the Meeting of the Lord in the Temple
- Saturday 02/03 4 pm-** Great Vespers
- Sunday 02/04 10 am-** Divine Liturgy
- Tuesday 02/06 9 am-** Divine Liturgy
- Wednesday 02/07 5:30 pm-** Moleben followed by Question & Answer Session
- Friday 02/09 9am-** Divine Liturgy: Followed by Coffee and Catechism Class
- Saturday 02/10 4 pm-** Great Vespers
- Sunday 02/11 10 am-** Divine Liturgy

Important Note:

Please take the time to fill out a Stewardship Commitment / Membership Card for the 2024 Calendar Year - Every Orthodox Christian Needs a Parish Home, and Saint Elizabeth’s is Yours!

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Holy Communion is reserved for Orthodox Christians who have properly prepared themselves, non-Orthodox visitors and inquirers are invited to come forward at the end of the Liturgy to venerate the cross and receive the Antidoron (blessed bread).

The Parable of the Wedding Feast- *By Father Andrew Stephen Damick*

In this passage from Matthew, the Lord tells the parable of a king who gives a marriage feast for his son. He sends out his servants to call those who have been invited, but the guests refuse to come. They all have more important things to do, and some of them even kill the servants.

In this version of the parable, the king in his anger destroys the city of those who refuse to come. And then he tells his servants to go out into the streets and find new people to attend the feast. This parable parallels the story told in Luke 14, where we hear about the specific excuses of those who will not come—one has just gotten married, another has bought some land, another has bought some cattle, etc. (Luke 14:16-24).



This portion of the parable as heard in the first century served as a warning to the Jewish people—God’s original “wedding guests.” They were the chosen people. But when He sent His Son Jesus to gather them into the wedding banquet which is the Church, they would not receive Him and instead killed Him. And then God permitted the Romans to come and destroy even the great Jewish Temple in Jerusalem in the year 70. It remains destroyed to this day.

And those who are gathered in from the streets to be part of the wedding banquet represent the Gentiles, who are now called into the Church to feast with Christ.

We should not leave that interpretation there, however. This is not just about Jews and Gentiles. This is about anyone who has been given the invitation to the feast of faith and refuses to take advantage of it. Yes, the Jews as a nation lost their status as the chosen people because they would not join the new chosen people, which is the Church. But any Orthodox Christians can also lose his status as being among the chosen if he will not accept Christ’s invitation to the feast of faith. Just because we are formal members of a parish does not mean that we are feasting at the banquet. It is not only Jews who have lost their place at the table—whole parishes and even nations who have abandoned Christ have found themselves outside the communion of the chosen.

That is why this parable should serve as a warning to any church and to any Christian who do not avail themselves of what the Son of God is offering as He calls us into the marriage banquet. You cannot count yourself as a wedding guest if you do not show up to the wedding. It is not enough merely to have received the invitation. It is not enough merely to send a gift or a card. You have to show up. You have to participate. You have to be engaged. Or else you are not a guest at the banquet.

But there is more to this story.

This version of the parable of the marriage feast here in Matthew 22 adds another detail not found in Luke’s account—the man who comes to the feast and is found without a wedding garment. The king is visiting with his guests, and he sees this man without a wedding garment on. And he asks him how he got in there without that garment. And the man says nothing. He is “speechless.” So the king casts him out from the feast.

Now, this may seem like a strange detail—why would this man be cast out of the marriage feast just because he’s not wearing the right clothing? Didn’t the king insist on finding people out in the streets to come to the feast? Are they really all supposed to be suited up?

There is a cultural detail we need to know to understand this piece of the story. In that time and place, the wedding garment was provided by the host and given to the guests as they came into the feast. So why did this man not have one on? The answer is that he must have been given one but either refused to put it on or that he put it on and then later decided to take it off. **Continued on the Next Page**

Even though we don't hear this Gospel every year, the image presented here of the wedding garment should be quite familiar to us, as it is sung about at the Bridegroom Matins services served in the evenings of the first part of Holy Week. It is one of the most famous hymns and most famous melodies in the Byzantine musical tradition. Here is the text:

I see Thy bridal chamber adorned, O my Savior, but I have no wedding garment that I may enter. Make radiant the vesture of my soul, O Giver of Light, and save me.

This is the prayer of someone who has heard the call and come to the wedding banquet and is standing outside ready to come in. He sees the bridal chamber "adorned" but confesses that he has "no wedding garment" so that he can enter. And he prays to the "Giver of Light" that He would make his soul's vesture "radiant" so that he can enter into the bridal chamber and therefore be saved.

So what is this "wedding garment" for us?

It is the grace of baptism. If you have ever been to an Orthodox baptism, you know that a white baptismal garment is placed on the newly baptized Christian. It is perhaps less noticeable for babies than it is for adults, but there is still that white garment put on. This is the "wedding garment" that is needed for entrance into the marriage feast. But the physical garment is a symbol of the garment of baptism, which is Christ. "As many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ," as we sing, quoting St. Paul (Gal. 3:27). Christ Himself is the "wedding garment," the "vesture of [the] soul" that we sing to be made "radiant."



But we should not think that, just because we have entered into the marriage feast that begins by becoming part of the Church through baptism and eating and drinking from the Table of the Lord—the Holy Eucharist—that we are thereby guaranteed to be able to stay at the feast.

This man from the parable was definitely at the feast. And he had been given the wedding garment. But when the King came for him, he was not wearing his garment. He was not "wearing" Christ. So he was bound, hand and foot, and "cast into outer darkness"; "there men will weep and gnash their teeth." Why? Because he did not obey the Lord of the feast.

So we have two warnings in this passage: The first is for those who were invited to the marriage feast but refuse to come—these are those who make excuses. Historically, they were the Jews, who did not heed Christ's call and instead killed Him. And the Gentiles were therefore invited in and took their place. But this applies even now to any who are invited but do not come. This is not just about Jews and Gentiles. It is also about "members" and "not yet members." Just because someone is a "member" or has an Orthodox Christian heritage does not mean that he is actually at the marriage feast. He has to respond to the invitation and enter in.

The second warning is for those who accept the invitation but do not do what is needed in order to remain at the feast. The man found without his wedding garment was cast out by the king. And if we do not keep the wedding garment on for ourselves, keeping Christ on by imitating Him, by repenting of our sins, by receiving the sacraments, by sacrificing ourselves and our possessions, then we who once put on Christ by baptism have put off Christ by our failure to obey Him.

May we see the beauty of the feast and enter in. And coming to that great marriage banquet, our prayer will be that glorious hymn from Holy Week:

I see Thy bridal chamber adorned, O my Savior, but I have no wedding garment that I may enter. Make radiant the vesture of my soul, O Giver of Light, and save me.

To the Giver of Light and the Lord of the Feast be all glory, honor and worship, to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen. - *By Father Andrew Stephen Damick*

Saint Elizabeth Orthodox Church

Woodstock, GA

“Christians, have we understood the great responsibility that we have taken on before God through baptism? Have we come to know that we must conduct ourselves as children of God, that we must align our will with the will of God, that we must remain free from sin, that we must love God with all our hearts and always patiently await union with Him? Have we thought about the fact that our heart should be so filled with love that it should overflow to our neighbor? Do we have the feeling that we must become holy and perfect, children of God and heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven? We must struggle for this, so that we may not be shown unworthy and rejected. Let none of us lose our boldness, nor neglect our duties, nor be afraid of the difficulties of spiritual struggle. For we have God as a helper, who strengthens us in the difficult path of virtue.”

-Saint Nectarios of Agenia

Become a Member of Saint Elizabeth's!

www.stelizabethga.org

Announcements:



- **Meal-train for the Sajem's- There is still a spot available to sign up to help out the Sajem's!** Sign up to provide a meal for Yvette and Johnny as Yvette recovers at home!- <https://bit.ly/sajem> - Follow this link or use this QR code to sign up!
- **Sunday School Today!**
- **Sunday School Teacher's Appreciation and Planning Meeting Next Sunday During Coffee Hour!-** If you have taught or would like to teach Sunday School, we want to thank you and invite you to a special planning meeting next Sunday (1/28) during Coffee Hour.
- **Annual Winter Parish Meeting Date?:** We are looking to set the date for our Winter Meeting for Sunday 2/25. Please let me know of any seasons not to set this as the official date. If there are no issues with the date brought up in the week ahead, this will be the officially scheduled date.
- **Will you serve the Church in a Greater Way?-** Are you interested in serving on the Parish Council or being an active leader in the different ministries of the Church? Please prayerfully consider how you can help in the ministry of Saint Elizabeth's!
- **Important Stewardship Note:** If you have been waiting to fill out a Stewardship Commitment Card for 2024 online because the year is listed as last year, please go ahead and use last year's form. I am having trouble accessing the website to update the form, but they are still being sent to my email. Alternatively, you can fill out a paper version and put it into the offering box.
- Do you have questions about something we do or believe in the Orthodox Church? You are probably not the only one wondering! Let Fr. Matthew know and an article will be placed in the bulletin.



ST. ELIZABETH ORTHODOX CHURCH

Stewardship Offering / Membership Card 2024

Everyone in our community is asked to fill out a Stewardship Offering / Membership Card. All Orthodox Christians need to be the member of a parish.

Name: _____

Family Members: _____

Birthdates: _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

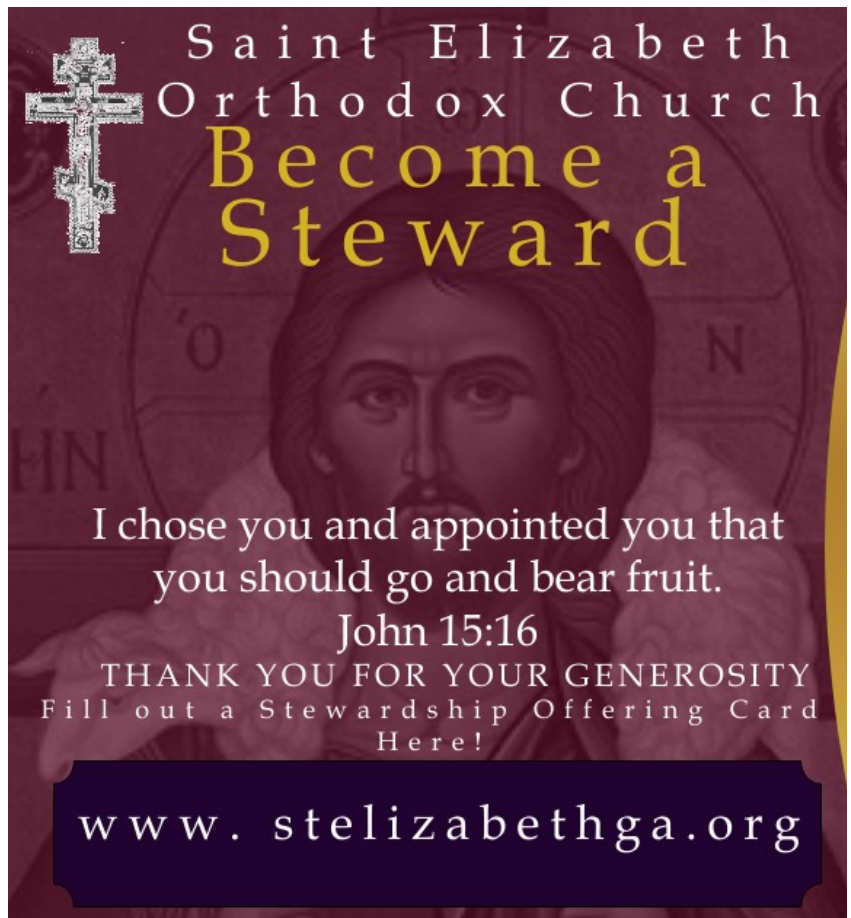
In gratitude for God's blessings, I/we are offering to God, through St. Elizabeth's, the following amount:

\$ _____ weekly \$ _____ monthly \$ _____ quarterly \$ _____ annually \$ _____ one-time

Donations can also be made online at www.stelizabethga.org

Please use this space to write how you/ members of your family would like to offer your time and talent to serve Christ and His Church:

Signature:



Saint Elizabeth
Orthodox Church
**Become a
Steward**

I chose you and appointed you that
you should go and bear fruit.
John 15:16
THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY
Fill out a Stewardship Offering Card
Here!

www.stelizabethga.org

Please Turn in Your Stewardship Offering Card in a Envelope
Directly to Fr. Matthew, Email the information to
fatherdutko@gmail.com, or you may Mail it to Rectory at 2263
East Cherokee Drive

Thank You So Much For Your Offering to Saint Elizabeth!

Stewardship of Time, Talents, and Treasures in the New Year

As we find ourselves in the beginning of this new year, it's a good time for us to reflect on what it means to be a steward of God's House. To serve the Church is a great gift, but the gift only comes to us when we hear God's voice calling to us and respond with joy. When we respond like the prophet Isaiah saying, "Hear I am Lord, send me!" (Isaiah 6:8) This is not really a choice, but rather it is a responsibility. God is calling us to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him. He is calling us to be His hands and His feet in the world.

Stewardship is much more than a financial commitment; it is a calling to care for one another, to care for God's House, and to care for the world. It is a commitment to love our God and all of His creation with all of our heart, soul, and mind.

Our duty as stewards extends to the very core of our being. God calls each of us to be active participants in the life of His Holy Orthodox Church. It is an invitation to put God first in our lives, to love His Church passionately, and to offer our time, talents, and treasures in service to His divine purpose. All of us have something more to offer for the fulfillment of God's calling in our lives

The Church is more than just a physical structure; it is a living and breathing body of believers, each contributing their unique, one of a kind human gifts. All of our gifts together collectively form the vibrant tapestry of Saint Elizabeth's. God is not only asking for our financial commitment, but He yearns for us, for our hearts, for our souls. The Church needs us to be fully present, engaged, and dedicated to the greater cause: that all things should be done for the glory of God.

This year you fill out your stewardship cards, you are encouraged to make pledge to dedicate your energy to serve the Church with renewed vigor and commitment. If everyone was able to offer just a few more hours of time each month, imagine what could be possible. The more devoted each one of us becomes, the more abundantly God will bless us as a community. Our collective dedication creates an atmosphere where the Holy Spirit thrives, and the ministries of the Church flourish.

In the coming months, let us actively seek ways to contribute to the ministries of the Church, whether through volunteer work, sharing our talents, or making a financial commitment. Let our actions speak louder than words and may our commitment to stewardship be a testament to our love for God and His Church. Together, we can continue to foster a community that radiates the love of Christ and fulfills the divine purpose set before us.

May this year be marked by a deepening of our stewardship, a commitment to put God first, and a flourishing of the ministries of Saint Elizabeth Orthodox Church. Through our collective efforts, may we recognize the divine presence among us and become a beacon of God's love and grace to the world.

Don't forget to fill out a Stewardship Commitment Card for 2024!



Parish Family Prayer List

For the Health of: The Melnikoff Family, Pani Betty Jean Baranek, Fr. James Gleason, The Paccio Family, Kara, Joanna, James, Athanasia, Ethel, Tyler, Maria, Page Family, Dean, Margaret, Metropolitan Gregory and his family, David, Joseph, Maria Starcova, David & Paulette Novak, Suzette, Bob, David, Marilyn & family, Mark, Fr. Dcn. Stephen, Michelle, James, Rachel, Kate, Fr. Blaschak & Family, Larry, Alexandra, Tammy, Trahan & Skiba Family, The Hood Family, the Milesenko Family, the Blanar Family, Burt, Sandy, Stephanie, Mary, Tommy, Stephen, Emilia, Simon, Alisha, & Aaron Zak, the Puziculiks Family, Fr. Andy, Davina, & Alexandra, Stan, Fr. Dcn. Charlie & Family, Justin, Charlie, Herbert and Mary Schleining, Spencer, Julie, Anna, Galina & Family, Irinia & Family, Fr. Jim & Pani Kathy Dutko, Rick, Katlain, Elenor, Teddy, Mark, Robert & Cindy, Melissa, Ben, Anthony, Rachel, Christine, Cora, Rick, Michelle, Tim, Robert, The Kelemecz Family, Leonard, Leo, & the Olaru Family, Joanna Price, Kim, Isaiah, the Wells Family, Dave, Ashley & family, Mary, Tim, Andrew, Robert, Derrick, Michael, Eli, Ean, Ellie, Amber, Christopher, Deborah, Nick & Rosemary, Mike, Elaiane, Roy, Lin, Dave, Sarah, Gerorge, & Edward, Stephen, Caleb, Amelia, Simon, David, the Gdovin Family, the Rodgers Family, the Kundrat Family, Yvone, George, Amberly, & baby Stella, Jessie, Dexter, Julia, Dan, Cora, Gabriel, Ethan, Tripp, Rachel, Lilly, Emmie, Charlie, Michelle, Serge, Mark, Johnny, Yvette Christine, Johanna, Nicole, Caroline

For the Departed: Evelyn & Boris Melnikoff+, Patricia+, James+, Stephen+, Anna+, Charles+, Robert+, Loraine+. Helen+, Lewis+, Jean+, Vera+, George+, George+, Ernie+, Eddie+, Maria+, Carl+, Mark+, Barry+, Jospheh+, Phillip+, Jenny+, Peter+, Bryan+, Rebecca+, Fr. Paul+, Maria+, Fr. Hazuda+, George Smisko+, Helen Spanovich+, Bob+, Alma+, Bo+, Sadding+, Fr. William George+, Violet+, Fr. Kozar+, Benjamin+, John Haddad+, Fred & Helen Milesenko+, Anna+, Natalie+, Lilly+, Christine+, Anna+, Tamara+, Anastasia+, Yvonne+, John+, Betty+, Ada+, Peter+ & Wanda+, George+, Jerry+, Barb+ & Harry+, Beth+, Louise+, Nikolay+, David+, Fr. Michael+, Natalie+, Helen+, Ted+, Tom+, Mike+, Madeline+, Tim+, Fr. John Baranek, Reader Stephen+, Dean+, Fr. Larry+, Kris+, Wathen+, Pani Elenor+, Fr. Michael+, Sally+, David+, Gene+, Kenny+, Ava+, Fr. Tony Jospheh+ & Pani Patsy+, Anatoly+, Fr. Scott+, Steve+, Claudia+, Dave+, Fr. John Duranko, Michael+, Sarah Elizabeth+ Ester+, Julie+, +Michael, +Joe

Through the prayers of the Birthgiver of God and Ever-Virgin Mary, St. Elizabeth, The Holy Fathers & Mothers, and all the Saints, may our Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ have mercy on us and save us!

Holy Saint Elizabeth Pray for us!



Keep Your Parish Family in Your Prayers!

Eternal Memory!

Christ is Among us!