



Bequests: One Generation Praising God's Works to Another

By Mary C. Hess, Director of Legacy Giving

Every Sunday, we enjoy the beauty of Westminster and the opportunity to worship God surrounded by great music, art, and inspired preaching. Westminster reaches out daily to the community and worldwide to promote peace and justice. Previous generations have bequeathed us this precious legacy through planning with an eye towards ensuring Westminster's vitality into the future. Every year, Westminster receives an average of seven or eight bequests from generous members who wanted to have an impact on the church they loved beyond their lifetime. They are making a difference today by the bequests they put into place years ago.

In fact, the single most-used way of making a charitable gift is by bequest in a will. This method is widely used for charitable giving for a simple reason: Many of us are unsure of whether we will have enough money to last our lifetimes, and yet still would like to have an impact on the future with a Legacy Gift. Bequests are attractive to those who wish to retain control of assets during their lifetimes, and to help their church later. Bequests can also reduce estate taxes. They can take the form of either a dollar amount, a percentage such as a tithe or 10%, or a residual of an estate, determined after other bequests have been made to heirs.

If you don't already have a will, consider doing one: making decisions about your estate now can relieve stress on your loved ones after you are gone. If you do have a will, you might consider reviewing or amending it under a variety of circumstances, including: family changes such as birth, marriage, divorce, death; children grown or independent; a move to another state; death of a named guardian; executor unable to serve; acquisition of real estate or assets in another state; change in financial situation; change in heir's situation or incapacity; change in tax law; change in charitable interests. Wills can be changed at any time by amendment, called a codicil. Contact an attorney to ensure that your intentions are properly formalized.

Bequests from our predecessors are one of many reasons Westminster is so vital today. Let us remember the words of the psalmist in Psalm 145:4, "One generation shall praise your works to another." For more information on steps to adding a bequest to your will, contact Mary C. Hess, Director of Legacy Giving, at 612.332.3421, or see www.ewestminster.org/legacyprogram.