

Stewards of God's Bounty

I understand that someday I will die. After the funeral is over (I expect you all to come) and the orchestra and majorettes have left, my children will be reminded in a meaningful way of how I have left my worldly possessions. I want them to hear a will that reflects the associations and values that directed and undergirded my life. Family, of course, is first. Next comes my church.

I don't have a bunch of money to leave, but it is important to me that as I go out of life I do things properly. My estate planning is not solely about avoiding taxes, although that needs to be done, but about leaving a legacy that my family can be proud of, that has no surprises or disappointments, that enriches them emotionally and spiritually as well as financially.

One way that I have chosen to do this is with a charitable gift annuity. There are a couple of reasons for this.

The first is that I can do it now, while I still have all my marbles, or anyway enough marbles to get by. At this point, I don't know what my estate will be, or what divisions would be appropriate, or even how many heirs I will have. I am paying up front, in a way, so the gift will go to the church at my death, but will not come out of other legacies. If it looks as though I will end up with a ton of money and my children are well off, I'll make a bequest to Trinity, also, but that may depend on the marbles issue.

The other reason is that I want income. I have children, grandchildren and future grandchildren to provide for. Right now, their futures are not assured, as families are young and still struggling. I want to be able to help them with orthodontists, summer camp, bail money, ballet lessons or whatever is needed. Also, women in my family live practically forever, so I must plan for longevity. I'll probably be toddling up to the choir stalls long after anybody wants me there. For my situation, an annuity works. I won't outlive it.

I called the Episcopal Church Foundation and they came up with a quite respectable guaranteed income for the amount I chose to give. When I die, the remainder (probably about half of the original gift, since they will be paying out to me for many years) will go to Trinity. Win win situation. One can make a smaller initial gift by using their pooled income fund or go hog wild with charitable remainder trusts and whatnot that require more funding.

The important thing is that I am giving to God, in the form of my beloved church, and demonstrating in death my love and gratitude for the richness of the life he gave me.

Erwin Gunnells