

St. Benedict's Stewardship FAQ

What is Stewardship?

Philanthropy says, "This is mine, and I am giving it to you to use for a specific purpose." Charity says, "This is mine, and I am giving it to you to use as you see fit." Stewardship says, "Everything I have is God's, and I am returning a portion of it to God through the church so the church can carry out God's mission in the world." Stewardship is what I do, with all that I have, after I say, "I believe." Christian stewardship is a grateful and responsible use of God's gifts to do the work to which God calls us, in the light of God's purposes as revealed in Jesus Christ. We often talk about stewardship in church, but stewardship is a "whole life" practice, not just restricted to our lives at St. Benedict's! Christian stewards, empowered by the Holy Spirit, commit themselves to conscious, purposeful decisions about how they use their treasure, time, and talent.

What is pledging?

Pledging is the means by which you let St. Benedict's know how much income or assets you will contribute to the parish's mission and ministry in the coming year. You can pledge at any time, though we encourage folks to make their 2024 pledges between October 1 and November 5 during our Pledge Campaign. We ask every household to consider making a pledge, no matter the size. You may decide to pledge a lump sum annually, or recurring payments quarterly, monthly, or weekly.

Why should I pledge?

Pledging is a sign of your commitment to St. Benedict's: to the ministry and mission we share in this place. St. Benedict's requires resources: staff, programs, and facilities all cost money. The act of pledging--regardless of the amount--is a way of saying "I've got skin in the game," and it is a promise to your church community. A pledge is also an act of faith and active witness: a testimony that you believe, by God's grace, you have enough. Practically, a culture of pledging helps St. Benedict's to maintain wise financial habits: the finance committee and vestry can plan and budget more effectively when they know how much revenue to expect.

How much should I pledge?

The amount of your pledge is a prayerful decision among you, your household, and God. You might begin reflection by looking at how your spending reflects what you value. Are you offering God the first fruits, or what is leftover? Everyone's circumstances are different, and as St. Paul says, "Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Cor 9:7). What amount will not be coerced through guilt or shame, but given in joy, freedom, and generosity? Some parishioners commit to the biblical model of the tithe (more on that below). Others choose to grow their habit slowly, increasing their pledge each year by an incremental percentage. Some reflect on what small sacrifice they might make this year--the cost of one dinner out per month? the equivalent of streaming services?-- to build on their pledge. Maybe you are a new pledger and you are just beginning to incorporate this practice. Last year, pledges at St. Benedict's ranged from \$4 a week to just over \$500 a week. *There is no wrong answer, and no amount too small.*

What is a tithe?

The biblical model of the tithe began with Abraham who "gave one tenth of everything" (Genesis 14:20) and continued through Moses, David, Solomon, and Job. Tithing was encoded in Levitical law, and gifts were given to support the Temple and the poor. Jesus commends it (Matthew 23:23). At the 1982 General Convention of the Episcopal Church (and at conventions ever since) the tithe was upheld as the standard of giving by Episcopalians for God's work. Tithing requires a leap of faith, but those who tithe find their lives to be enriched in many ways that go beyond material treasures. Folks who are discerning what tithing might look like in their own lives often have questions: "Is that 10% pre- or post- tax? Is it 10% just to the church or can I give to other causes?" A wise Bishop once told me (when I asked that very question!) "if you are looking for the legal parameters, you're missing the point and the gift that tithing offers our own souls. Fulfill it according to whatever guidelines you decide; they're not important." Remember the purpose of tithing: it is a spiritual discipline that makes us givers, draws us closer to God and gives us peace about our money and possessions. We should never give in such a way that fills us with fear, or shame, or dread, or resentment. These things are not of God.

How do I pledge?

We'll have pledge cards available during the campaign: in the mail, in your bulletins-- you can't miss 'em! You can drop your completed pledge card in the offering plate, drop it by the church office, or mail it to St. B's. Or, if you prefer to pledge online, go to mysaintb.org/giving and fill out the easy digital pledge card.

Then what? How do I pay it?

Your choice! There are so many options. You can drop a check each week in the offering plate, set up monthly auto pay through your bank (if you need help with this, ask Ashley Brown, our bookkeeper ashleybrown@mysaintb.org), or pay online at mysaintb.org/giving.

What happens if I need to change my pledge?

Financial circumstances can change over the course of a year for many reasons and in many ways. You can always revise your pledge at any time, in good faith. You may contact Ashley Brown or Mo. Jenna to let us know.

Can't I just put money in the plate?

Yes, you can... any donation will benefit the ministries of St. Benedict's, and we are grateful for generosity of all kinds. A pledge, however, has some added benefits to the church, and helps the parish be a good steward of its own resources. Through your pledges, the finance committee and vestry have the information they need to prepare an accurate, balanced budget for 2024, and make decisions for staffing, programs, and maintenance. During this season of pandemic recovery and renewed growth, making wise financial decisions as an organization is even more critical.

Is my pledge tax deductible?

Absolutely! St. Benedict's provides a receipt at year-end for your tax-deductible contributions for that year, but only if you pay by check, credit card, stocks or use a pledge envelope for cash.