

FAQ for Regular Givers Who Do Not Pledge

Why do I need to make a formal pledge when I already give regularly?

The commitment card is designed to help you make a financial decision, based on faith, as to how much you are going to give to the parish on a weekly, monthly, or annual basis. Making a written commitment also helps the co-rectors & finance committee prepare the parish budget for the coming year. We have provided an estimate of the operating budget, but if we do not receive enough pledges, we have to reduce our overall ministry. If we receive more than what we anticipated, we can increase our overall ministry plans for next year. The diocese uses the number of pledging units (households that pledge) to assess church health and the clergy use this number to know when to hire more staff. As we come out of the pandemic, it is harder than ever before to accurately project a budget. Rising inflation costs, attendance fluctuations, and staffing changes have made it much harder to create a budget by simply looking at last year's numbers and moving a few things around based on gut feeling. Your pledge lets us know that you are all in and that we can count on your financial support this year.

What is parish stewardship of treasure?

It begins with the recognition that everything we have has been given to us by God. Stewardship promotes an understanding of giving *time, talent, and treasure* as an essential part of what it means to practice Christian spirituality. It also means planning our giving – giving to God proportionately in relation to what we have received. We give to God first, rather than just from what is left over after all of our needs and wants have been met. If we intentionally pay for our other needs, what is stopping us from intentionally giving out of our abundance to thank God for all that He has done in our lives?

What about all the people in my parish who give nothing at all?

This used to bother us too until we realized that the real question isn't about others. The real question is: "What about me?" We've had to ask ourselves whether what we give is truly a gift to God's community, or if we are only giving what we have left over. We decided that our giving should not be based on what others give, but rather on how grateful we are for all the blessings God has given to us. Giving involves a personal faith decision that we make for ourselves based on our income and ability to give.

How much should I pledge?

That is entirely up to you. You know your situation best. This year we're asking everyone to try to take an affordable, reasonable step in increasing their giving. Our budget is increasing by 7%. St. Paul's has taken an extra step of faith as a church by hiring a full-time parish administrator because we believe freeing up priests from administrative duties will help us to accomplish our mission as we look toward the future. Many of the people who consider St. Paul's home consider the church to be among the top three charities they donate towards annually. If every person in the church gave 4% of their annual income, we would have no funding issues. Some of us can't give that much and so it's up to those who have been given more financial resources to help make up the difference. Folks with less financial resources often contribute in other valuable ways to the life of our community to make up the difference they cannot give financially. Every type of gift (time, talent, and treasure) is needed. In a year when the average cost of basic goods and services has risen dramatically, we all give what we can and what is realistic based on our own situation. When you are at peace about the size of your gift and don't find yourself making excuses to yourself for its size, and when you know in your heart that you've been completely honest with God and yourself, then your gift is the proper size.

What if I am fearful of the unknown future (losing my job, ill health, fluctuations in the stock market, rising inflation, etc.) or am uncomfortable with signing or making a "legal commitment"?

That is something you must decide for yourself, but this is not a legal obligation and we do not ask for your signature. Your pledge is simply a statement of your intention to provide support for our parish ministries. The parish understands if your situation changes, but through pledging, our parish can better plan for its ministries and budget. You can always under (or even over) pay your pledge. Your reason for not completing your pledge always remains in complete confidence. In fact, if you fall on tough times, we are probably the only organization that will give some of your pledge back to you to help you make it through the difficult circumstances that can happen to any of us (using donations made to the benevolence fund).

What if I am a snowbird and already pledge to another church back home?

We are so glad you are supporting the ministries of your local church. We encourage you to consider giving to your home church, but perhaps consider making a pledge to St. Paul's, as well. Snowbirds make up a considerable portion of our congregation and we could not minister to other snowbirds while they are here without your vital support. If you are looking for a way to stretch your faith and generosity and your financial situation allows it, why not consider making a formal pledge to the Church of St. Paul in the Desert? If you cannot do so this year, that's totally fine. We are glad you are here and know your presence contributes in so many other special ways that only snowbirds can.