

“Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. In fulfillment of his own purpose he gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would become a kind of first fruits of his creatures.”

JAMES 1: 17-18

What is a Pledge?

Each year we ask all parishioners to make a thoughtful, prayerful, and intentional commitment to financially support the ministry and mission of St. Luke's. Pledging is simply promising to give a certain amount of money to St. Luke's in the following year. This is accomplished by completing a pledge form that indicates the amount of your pledge and when you intend to give the money, i.e., weekly, monthly, etc.

What does my pledge support?

- Formation— personal growth through Christian education, baptism, confirmation, and marriage preparation
- Discipleship—outreach efforts that change lives through Moveable Feast, Family Matters, Cathedral Shelter, the Seraj Library project, Connections for the Homeless/Hilda's Place, and U.I.C. AIDS clinics
- Choir for youth and adults
- Clergy and staff who provide uplifting worship and music, pastoral care, and parish administration and who maintain and preserve our worship space, property, and grounds
- A sacred space where we gather to experience God's love as we celebrate God and one another
- Routine building operating expenses such as utilities, insurance, and roof and organ maintenance
- Contributions to the greater Episcopal community through the diocesan pledge

Does my individual pledge really make a difference?

Absolutely. St. Luke's relies on the revenue from the offerings of its members and visitors. At present, around 63% of our annual income comes from pledges, and we need to increase that proportion. We do not have endowment funds from which to draw funds for normal and expected annual expenses.

If you are new to St. Luke's or new to pledging, we hope you will make a pledge to support the parish in the upcoming year. Even if you pledge a minimum amount, please take the step of pledging as part of your spiritual practice for giving. Our hope is to have 100% participation. Every dollar promotes the ministry and mission of St. Luke's and is greatly appreciated.

Can I just put my offering in the plate without pledging?

Yes, but because we depend on offerings to maintain operations, making a pledge tells us how much money St. Luke's will have to carry out ministry for the coming year, and thereby helps us set our 2017 budget. The total amount pledged for 2017 is critical information that the vestry uses in making careful and purposeful decisions about church activities, ministry, worship, and building operations during the budget process and throughout the year.

On a personal level, pledging also helps transform giving into a spiritual practice. You make a commitment, and fulfilling it becomes a regular

practice just like worship and prayer. Please note that pledging is *not* a prerequisite for participating in the life of St. Luke's. We welcome all to share in celebrating our faith regardless of pledge. *However*, we hope that all who consider themselves members of the St. Luke's community will pledge. Pledging allows you to make intentional decisions about your financial giving. When you plan ahead for your giving, you make conscious choices about spending money in ways that reflect your faith and values.

How do I determine the amount I should pledge?

The traditional measure of giving to the church is the tithe. **Tithing** is the biblical principle whereby a person or family gives 10% of what they earn back to God through the church. We encourage you to consider tithing or to work toward a tithe.

If a tithe sounds daunting to begin with, consider **Proportional Giving**. Start with your expected income for next year and determine a percentage that feels right for you both spiritually and practically. From ancient times, people have given the first fruits of their labor, the first and best portion to God. So a good start for Proportional Giving may be 2½% of your income, which is equivalent to pledging the first hour's pay of each 40-hour work week.

If you have been pledging, we are most grateful for your support. You may want to consider adopting the practice of Proportional Giving for your 2017 pledge and beyond. Determine the percentage of income you have given in the past, and based on your expected income for next year, prayerfully consider increasing the percentage for 2017.

Finally, there is **Radical Giving**. Consider a pledge that stretches your resources, demands sacrifices, or pushes beyond what is comfortable into reassessment of your priorities and your commitments. You may find that as you reorder your finances around giving, you also find your life reordered around God.

How do I make a pledge?

A pledge can be made by completing and returning a paper pledge form, which is enclosed, or online through our *virtual pledge card*, which can be accessed through St. Luke's website.

Can I change my pledge if my financial circumstances change?

Yes. We understand that circumstances can change over the course of the year. Sometimes people wish to give more than they originally pledged. Other times, they need to reduce or cancel their pledge. Simply contact the rector or wardens through the church office.

When is my pledge for 2017 due?

Although a pledge can be made at any time during the year, it is our hope is that you communicate your 2017 pledge by **December 4, 2016**. This information will enable the vestry to complete the budget process in December and present a realistic budget at the annual meeting in January.

Questions?

The rector, wardens, and stewardship commission are always available to answer questions about pledging. Please contact them through the church office: office@stlukesevanston.org, 847-475-3630.