

Walking the Path of Gratitude: The Journey to Generosity
The 2018 Annual Giving Campaign of The Falls Church Episcopal

Pledging FAQ

Q: What is a pledge?

A: A pledge is simply a written indication of how much you intend, or “pledge” to give, over the course of the next year, to your church.

Q: Why are pledges important? Can't I just put money in the offering plate?

A: While all giving is welcome, pledges are vital because they allow your vestry to budget (reasonably predict) income for the following year.

Q: How do I decide how much to pledge?

A: Many people think of their pledge simply as a dollar amount: I will pledge \$ _____. However, pledging is a spiritual practice – from a spiritual point of view, every bit as important as prayer and worship – and so we encourage you to think of your pledge amount differently:

1. Take a few minutes between now and the time you fill out a pledge card to figure out what *proportion*, or *percentage*, of your (net, after tax) income you give back to God in thanksgiving – whether that “giving back” is only to The Falls Church, or is along with other organization(s) doing God’s work. What is the percentage? Is it 1%, or even less? Is it 2%, 3%, higher? **What proportion of your income are you currently returning to God in thanksgiving?**
This proportion is private. That’s only between you and God. No one needs to see it but – for the sake of knowing the role that money and wealth play in your personal finances and spiritual life -- it is an important number for you to know.
2. Once you do the math and know the percentage or proportion of your income you’re giving (or thinking about giving), then:
 - a. If the percentage is less than five percent, you are encouraged to **make the jump** to five percent – yes, all in one fell swoop, cold turkey! – for 2018, and to plan your 2018 personal budget accordingly. We can make a good argument for all your giving to go to The Falls Church Episcopal – what higher purpose is there than the worship of God, reaching out to the poor and needy, providing pastoral care to the lonely and suffering, and passing on the faith (and our beautiful church buildings and grounds) to another generation of worshippers? – but again, **this giving campaign is more about your need to give than our need to receive**. So as long as you are giving 5% of your income back to organizations who are doing God’s work in the world, give it to anyone you want. If you accept this challenge, we promise you will experience a wonderful liberating sense of joy and freedom.
 - b. If the percentage is *already* five percent but less than the biblical call to give back ten percent, we encourage you to **develop a plan** that will, over the course of time and taking your individual circumstances into account, gradually get you to the ten percent figure. Again, we can promise that your sense of joy and freedom will increase as the percentage increases.
 - c. If the percentage is already ten percent or even higher, then, thanks be to God, you already know the sense of joy, peace and freedom we are describing, and we encourage you to **tell your story to others** – don’t hoard your discovery and the joy that accompanies it...share it with others.

Q: How do I actually pledge – what are the logistics?

A: If you are already contributing financially to the church, you will receive a pledge card in the mail after October 26th.

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By far the easiest way to pledge (and make payments on your pledge according to any schedule you prefer) is through your REALM account. Simply log in, click on “Giving” and then click on “Pledge” and it will walk you through the process. (If you haven’t yet logged in and set up your initial account in REALM, check your email for your recently re-issued invitation, or send an email to realmhelpdesk@thefallschurch.org.)

Or, you can go to our website (www.thefallschurch.org) and click on the button that says “pledge” in the upper right hand corner.

Or, you can fill out the paper pledge card and either mail it in, or put it in the offertory plate on any Sunday between now and Sunday, November 19.th

Again for planning purposes, **we ask that you return your card/make your pledge by Sunday, November 19th**, when we will have a **combined 10:00 worship service and a “Celebration of Giving” potluck lunch** afterwards to conclude this year’s campaign.

Q: How do I fulfill my pledge? All at once? Once a month? Each week?

A: You can fulfill your pledge any way that best suits your financial situation. Most people prefer to make payments on their pledge on a monthly, weekly, or every-other-week basis, although some people prefer to make a lump sum gift. Again, you can set up any payment schedule you want through your REALM account, where you can also easily and securely keep track of your payments. You can also write checks, utilize your bank’s bill pay service, or make automatic credit card payments through our website. (If you use a credit card, we ask that you please consider adding an additional 3% to your pledge to offset the charge the church incurs for credit card payments.) You can also donate securities. And for those of you who are taking Required Minimum Distributions (RMD’s) from retirement plans, there can be significant personal tax advantages to directing RMD’s to The Falls Church. Please consult with a financial advisor.

Q: What is the 2018 Annual Giving Goal?

A: We have a goal of raising \$675,000. The 2017 Annual Giving Campaign resulted in \$529,000 in pledges.

Q: Why is the 2018 goal so much higher than last year’s?

Our goal is higher because in 2018, driven by our new vision and strategic priorities, we plan to make several important additions to staff to *better support our growing congregation*, including the hiring of a *full-time parish administrator*, enhancing our *communications* and *financial management* functions, and increasing staffing resources for our *children’s and youth ministries*. These actions will *free our clergy up to concentrate on pastoring, preaching, and teaching* additional Sunday and weekday adult Bible studies and *better meet the congregation’s hunger for additional adult formation, fellowship, and outreach opportunities*.

Q: What is the most important thing to remember about pledging?

A: The most important things that you should remember about pledging are:

- That unlike every other organization you may support financially, *The Falls Church Episcopal’s Annual Giving Campaign is more about your need to give than the church’s need to receive*. Giving a percentage of your income back to God in thanksgiving is the single best way to break the hold that money has on us.
- That God loves a cheerful giver.
- That giving should come NOT from a place of “ought” or “should” but out of a sense of gratitude and thanksgiving for God’s blessings, and
- Every nickel of every dollar given in fulfillment of your pledge is wisely and carefully spent supporting a faith community that is making big, permanent, positive differences in people’s lives.

“Glory to God, whose power working in us can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine.” (Ephesians 3:20).