

14. Suggest a special-purpose memorial. Often people are motivated to make a will in order to provide a special prayer chapel or similar memorial for a loved one.

Twelve reminder things to do:

15. Use your weekly bulletin. Insert a one-line reminder regularly:

"Have you remembered the church in your will?"

"Have you tithed your estate in your will?"

"Is the Lord's work one of your heirs?"

"Does your will include your gift to God?"

16. Use your tract rack. Many excellent brochures and booklets on wills are available. Keep a supply in your tract rack and change them frequently.
17. Use your benevolence literature. All your printed materials on giving can include a one-line reminder -- even the offering envelopes.
18. Use your bulletin board. Post excerpts from the tract rack literature on wills. Post clippings from the newspapers about bequests left to other churches or other causes and highlight the key sentences and phrases. Keep the exhibit up-to-date.
19. Use your church library. Make sure your library includes several books on the importance of having a will, things to remember when making a will, estate planning, and related subjects. Check the public library for titles to add. Check with attorneys in your congregation for suggestions on other books written for laypersons.
20. Enlist the attorneys among your members. Encourage them to ask the clients, "Do you want to make a bequest to your church or other charity?"
21. Enlist the bankers. They, are involved every day in estate matters, especially those relating to trusts and foundations remind them to suggest bequests to the church.

22. Enlist the insurance agents. They are also in estate planning. They can recommend that a will be written and remind clients that many people make bequests to their churches.

23. Preach sermons on the subject. Christians are called to be good stewards of their property now and after death. Every Christian can make a commitment to the Lord for future ministry in Christ's name.

24. Send out special mailings. Many pastors send special mailings to their members twice a year -- not on giving in general, but specifically on wills and bequests. "Ask and it shall be given you..."

25. Take advantage of the "Wills Emphasis Sunday". The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) observes "Wills Emphasis" Sunday on the first Sunday in May. To support this observance, the Zacchaeus Society provides a variety of leadership and educational materials at no cost to local congregations. Sample packets are available from The Society. Churches may observe Wills Emphasis on any Sunday during the year. Resource materials are available year round.

26. Tie-in with special religious weeks. All year long you have special weeks for missions, Christian education projects, and other church outreach programs. Each one is an excellent opportunity to suggest bequests to aid those particular causes in specific ways.

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Writing a will is an essential step in estate planning and can help church members become better stewards. Integrating these 26 suggestions into your ministry can help you motivate members to write their will and include a bequest to the church.

26 THINGS A PASTOR CAN DO TO ENCOURAGE BEQUESTS

The Zacchaeus Society
P.O. Box 6425
Columbia, SC 29260
803-783-8064
www.zacchaeus.org

Why Encourage Bequests?

- A. **Mission and ministry can benefit from bequests.**
Outreach and church resources for programs are increasing.
- B. **No one can make a bequest without writing a will.**
Pastors may anticipate bequests from people who haven't written their wills. When a person dies without a will, the state distributes the property to family members – so there is no opportunity for a charitable gift.
- C. **Many people don't have wills.** More than 50 percent of the population do not have a will.
- D. **The gift potential is tremendous.** It has been reported that every week about \$100 million is left by people who die without a will. Some of your members may need to prepare a will.
- E. **Pastors can encourage bequests.** By knowing which tools are available to assist pastors in encouraging bequests, pastors can achieve surprising results from from simple, but consistent efforts.

That's why we have compiled 26 ideas for pastors to use to encourage more bequests.

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Four announcement things to do:

- 1. Announce from the pulpit when a bequest has been received.
This is an indirect reminder to members, an expression of appreciation to the family, and evidence to the congregation that bequests are acknowledged.
- 2. Announce bequests in the weekly bulletin or newsletter.
This reinforces the pulpit announcement.

- 3. Report bequest to denominational publications. If the bequests are big enough or unusual enough to be considered newsworthy, an item in your denominational publication will remind your members and friends again of the importance of making a bequest.
- 4. In all instances, publicize gifts received through bequests, regardless of their size.

Five acknowledgement things to do:

- 5. Write the family. Send a handwritten note/letter to the surviving spouse and family members telling how much the church appreciates the bequests. It will go a long way toward encouraging bequests.
- 6. Apply the bequest specifically. When a bequest is general, don't let it disappear in the operating funds of the church or in the general building fund. Suggest a need to which it can be specifically applied. This adds meaning and significance, while providing more opportunities to remind others.
- 7. Label the gift, if possible. Use bookplates on hymn books, brass plaques on pews, organs, stained glass windows. For the later gifts, consider naming a room, a chapel, or a wing of the church in memory of the giver. This can be a memorial fund that is part of a larger endowment fund. This public appreciation encourages bequests.
- 8. Hold a dedication service. Some gifts may be appropriate for a service of dedication. An opportunity for more publicity and reminders.
- 9. Observe the anniversaries. Some bequests have built in anniversaries such as annual awards or scholarships. other significant gifts can mark their anniversary with a rededication service or reminder in the newsletter or bulletin.

An educational thing to do

- 10. Hold a wills clinic. As a service to your members, have a series of evening programs at the church. Invite an attorney, a bank trust officer, a certified public accountant, and an expert on charitable giving. Perhaps invite the development director of a church-related college and the development officer of The Zacchaeus Society.

You may be able to get all the speakers from among your own members. However, outsiders won't be difficult to enlist since most experts in these areas welcome opportunities to speak at meetings and clinics. Set up your program to allow for individual talks, panel discussions and questions-and-answer sessions. Provide supplies for taking notes.

More and more churches are holding such clinics. Pastors find they have a multiplier effect in the congregation. As the ripples of influence widen, and as more and more wills are written, more bequests are received.

Four conversational things to do:

- 11. Ask for a place in the back of the line. Talk to members about a residual bequest or remainder beneficiary gift. Sometimes the estate is larger than expected or other heirs die before the will is probated.
- 12. Ask about life insurance policies. Many people have policies they no longer need or haven't thought about in years. The children they protected have grown up, or the businesses they protected have been sold. The church can be named owner and beneficiary of a policy, entitling the giver to an income tax deduction.
- 13. Ask about guardianship for the children. This is an often overlooked reason for young parents with minor children to have a will --- in the even both parents are killed simultaneously. This reminder can motivate people to write their wills.