

Stewardship Q&A

Q: What is the difference between a pledge and a loose offering?

Every fall, St. Barnabas conducts a stewardship campaign asking our congregation to make a financial pledge of their anticipated giving for the coming year. This allows our Treasurer, Finance Committee, and Vestry the ability to create a budget and plan ahead. Parishioners pay their pledges weekly, monthly, quarterly, or even annually online, in the mail, or in the Sunday collection plate.

Loose offering is money contributed to the collection plate each Sunday that isn't labeled or marked as a pledge. Loose offering each Sunday is designated for a different purpose (rector's discretionary fund, endowment, hospitality, & Community Cupboard). Pledges constitute, by far, the largest portion of our annual income.

Q: Who determines the church budget and financial priorities?

The Vestry of St. Barnabas are the elected lay leaders of the congregation. They work with the rector to set missional priorities and they have fiduciary responsibility for the church. Our seven vestry members are elected to staggered, three-year terms at the annual parish meeting every January.

With direction from the vestry, the annual budget is compiled by the rector, treasurer, and Finance Committee. Final edits and approval are the responsibility of the vestry.

Q: How much does the diocese contribute to the St. Barnabas budget?

Since St. Barnabas was restarted twelve years ago, we have received significant support from the Diocese of Ohio. In 2018, when receiving \$120,000 from the diocese, we agreed to a plan that steps down that support by \$10,000 every year. So, in 2023 we received \$70,000 in support. In 2024, we will receive \$60,000. Our vestry's goal is to be financially independent of the diocese ahead of schedule.

Q: Do I have to wait until the annual Pledge Sunday to make a pledge?

No! Pledge cards can be submitted anytime. For our 2024 planning, we ask that you return your 2024 pledge card – or fill it out online – between now and Christ the King Sunday, November 26. Thank you for your support.

Q: Do I have to be a member of St. Barnabas to make a pledge or support its mission?

The church is extremely grateful for your support whether you're officially a member or not. In fact, we have extremely low membership standards! Once you're listed in the directory, we consider you a member of the congregation. Some folks choose to make it official and join the Episcopal Church through confirmation or reception during a bishop's visit.

Q: If I become a member of St. Barnabas am I expected to make a pledge?

Giving back a portion of what God has given us is an important act of gratitude. Supporting the mission of the Church with our time, talent, and financial resources undergirds our Christian faith. So, yes. Members of the Church support the Church. However, each person supports the Church differently and the nature of your support is something that only you can prayerfully discern.

Q: In my prior faith tradition, we didn't share the amount we pledge with the church, but instead kept that between ourselves and God. Why does St. Barnabas ask us to share the amount we intend to give?

Pledging commits us to the spiritual practice of giving. Giving is one aspect of a larger spiritual practice of relinquishing control – or our misplaced sense of control – and putting trust in God. Practically speaking, pledging allows our treasurer, Finance Committee, and vestry the ability to budget and plan ahead. We're always working with slim margins and pledging allows us to make responsible decisions for the future of the congregation.

Q: Is there some amount of my income I am expected to pledge?

The Biblical model of tithing is 10% of our income, but for most of us this is a distant goal to work toward. Only you can decide what level of support is appropriate for you and your family. Every contribution of every size makes a difference.

Q: I made a pledge last year. Is there an expectation I will increase that amount this year?

Some families are able to increase their pledge annually to help the church keep up with increasing costs. Many others – especially those on a fixed income – are not able to increase regularly. Every gift of every size matters in our perpetually tight budgets. In 2023, we budgeted \$326,500 in expenses. For the church to continue functioning at its current level, the 2024 budget will need to increase simply to account for the financial realities we all face.

Q: Is there any benefit to paying my pledge directly from a traditional IRA?

If you are 70 ½ years old or older, you may be able to make a qualified charitable distribution from a qualifying IRA which would count towards a donor's annual required minimum distribution from the IRA. We encourage you to consult with your tax preparer to determine whether this strategy is right for you.

Q: Am I able to make a one-time gift designated for special purpose?

Yes, absolutely. We maintain restricted funds for capital updates, a music fund, a memorial fund in honor of departed loved ones, the endowment fund, the rector's discretionary fund, a fund for Christmas & Easter flowers, funds to support the Community Cupboard, and hospitality funds. Gifts restricted for other uses must be approved by the vestry before being accepted by the church. Thank you for supporting our important ministries.