

Consider Yourself Asked!

In a recent column, Jim Harnish, pastor of Hyde Park UMC in Tampa, wrote, "Let's talk about what happens when you die." He wasn't talking about souls in heaven, but about what happens to our assets here on earth. Jim quoted a shocking statistic. While 72% of Americans give to churches or charities every year, only 8% include a bequest to those churches or charities in their wills.

And here's an even more shocking statistic – well over half of all Americans don't even have a will. Actually, every Florida resident does have a will – one written for you by the state legislature. You may not agree with its provisions, and the only way to ensure that your wishes are carried out after you die is to have your own will or estate plan. Wills are important for people of all ages and incomes. It's just as important for young families to have a will as it is for grandparents, particularly for families with young children where guardianship issues can arise.

Some people believe that you have to be rich to include estate gifts in your will, but the truth is that many middle-income people discover that their will is the best – and perhaps the only – opportunity they have to make a significant gift to a cause they believe in. According to Marlene Ferreira, a spokesperson for the national **Leave a Legacy** program, "Anyone can do it. You don't have to be wealthy. You just need to have a will."

Here are some suggestions:

- Include a gift to your church in an updated will.
- Name your church as a beneficiary of a life insurance policy or retirement plan.
- Consider a Charitable Gift Annuity with the Florida United Methodist Foundation, naming your church as the final beneficiary.

You may fund your gift with real estate, securities, cash, or a percentage of your assets. Many Christians who have practiced tithing throughout their lives may consider designating 10% of their estate as a continuing witness of their faith.

The National Committee on Planned Giving sponsored a study to find out why more Americans haven't planned a gift from their wills. Two answers came back: "I didn't know I could," and "Nobody ever asked me." As Jim wrote, "Consider yourself asked."

The Florida United Methodist Foundation is available to help you in any aspect of planning a gift to your church. For a confidential, no cost or obligation consultation, please call 1-800-282-8011, extension 106, or email Foundation@fumf.org