

Part III
Managing Our Money – Pledges and EMC Gifts

(This is part of an ongoing series of articles about the church's finances by Dual Macintyre, Treasurer)

Two weeks ago, I described the overall income we expect for 2009, some \$487,500, if our estimates are correct. Almost half of that amount, forty nine percent, comes from Pledges and EMC Gifts, but what do these two terms mean and what's the difference between them?

A “pledge” is your estimate of what you plan to give to St. Paul's for a given period, usually a calendar year. It is not an iron-clad promise or a legal commitment for the amount ... it is your *estimate* of what you plan to give. We know there may be unforeseen circumstances that prevent a person from giving the full amount they planned to give. When that happens, we understand fully and will adjust our records accordingly; we also will never send out nasty “dunning” letters. But your pledge – your *estimate* – is extremely important because it allows us to build a budget based on anticipated income from pledges, not on revenue from fund-raisers that may experience a weather-related disaster.

An “EMC Gift” is a one-time gift made during our annual Every Member Canvass in lieu of a “pledge”. Several of our summer parishioners pledge to their churches back home and they feel uncomfortable pledging to more than one church, so we developed the “EMC Gift” as a way around two pledges to two different churches. Others who come to church regularly may not be Episcopalians or may worship occasionally at churches of other denominations. An EMC Gift allows them to support St. Paul's regularly, but postpone making a more formal commitment. From a financial point of view, however, we view pledges and EMC gifts as one in the same. It is interesting to note that some people pay their pledge once a year; others send in checks monthly; and still others put their payments in envelopes in the plate each Sunday. There is no preferred way ... just do what is most convenient for you. Unless you prefer to make your contribution in cash, there is also no need to have envelopes, although some people use them as reminders or to assure privacy about their donation. When checks are received, the bookkeeper posts the amount to your account based on the name(s) on the check, not the envelope number.

In past years, our EMC campaign began in the fall so we could develop a budget for the following year. While that worked well from a budget perspective, it also came at one of the busiest times of the year.... Halloween, Thanksgiving and Christmas and all the planning, activities and travelling that goes with those holidays. This year, we hope to start our campaign in late summer, while St. Paul's and its financial needs are still fresh in people's minds. Our goal is to increase pledges and EMC gifts to the point where we are not so dependent on fund-raisers to balance our budget.