

decisions you make during your lifetime. For more information on this important subject talk to your pastor, or write your Annual Conference United Methodist Foundation, or Office of Development.

So you
want to write
your own will?

These simple
steps will help
to make it a
little easier.

You can do it!

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This information is provided as a service. It is not intended to be legal advice on a specific issue. Always consult your own attorney when considering these and other matters.

A Christian's
Guide to
writing your
own will

WILLS



Where to Start

So, you want to have a will, but you have no idea where to begin. In fact, the hardest part about writing a will is knowing where to start. These helpful suggestions and insights should get you going in the right direction.

As with any major decision, it is important to discuss your plans with your spouse, or a close friend if you are single, and agree on essentials before meeting with your attorney to draft the will. You'll want to have everything organized in advance to ensure that your time with your attorney is productive.



Remember that your will is basically a description of your plans for distributing the assets you have. It is important to be thorough and include all important decisions and information.

Make a List

Identify all of the things you value: real estate, insurance policies, bank accounts, securities, bonds, mutual funds, significant items of personal property, mortgages, royalties, life-interests in property, assignable income arrangements, etc. List everything that has value or means something special to you or someone else. It's important to present your attorney with a complete picture of your possessions. Even though the small stuff may seem insignificant now, including your intentions for later on will ensure there's no confusion and that everything goes where it belongs when you are gone.

Whom to Include in the Will

What you own is only half the equation: Its distribution at your death is the other half.

Make another list. List the individuals you want to remember in your estate plan and will. Included may be your spouse, children, parents, siblings, other family members, and friends. List the institutions and organizations that you support now and wish to support after death. You may want to remember The United Methodist Church, or one, or more, of the Church's agencies or institutions. What about your college? What about the special charitable organizations you believe in and support? Keep in mind that charitable institutions and the church cannot receive anything from your estate unless you specifically name them in your will.

Match Your Desires With Your Possessions

The objective in making a will is to match your assets, including property (both tangible and intangible), with the individuals and organizations that you care for and choose to remember.

Note which items should go to which individuals. For instance, list the china you promised your daughter. Mention the antique collection you promised to a faithful friend. Identify each designation to guarantee that right items go to the right individuals.

Outline all bequests. For instance, if a child or your spouse should receive an income for life, detail this so the attorney can draft a testamentary trust to accomplish the bequest. Many goals may be accomplished by using charitable arrangements, such as trust and annuities. By being included in a

will, these arrangements benefit one or more individuals during their lifetimes and your charitable interests at a future time.

Four Ways You Can Give

Giving through your will can be very rewarding and beneficial. There are four basic ways to give through your will.

- 1) One of the best methods is a bequest based upon a percentage of your estate. This also provides a buffer against inflation.
- 2) The most common method of giving through the will is a specific dollar amount.
- 3) A bequest can give an individual, church, or institution specific personal property or real property.
- 4) After all other bequests have been designated, what remains is the residue. Be certain to designate how the residue will be distributed.

Stewardship Is Important

God calls us to be faithful stewards of our possessions. We practice stewardship of our income during our lifetimes, but many of us forget stewardship of our accumulated wealth. A will is one way to continue faithful stewardship. Today, one out of two Americans dies without a will. Will you continue to be a faithful steward, or will you allow stewardship to stop with death?

May We Help?

The United Methodist Church wants to help you create and keep your will current. Creating your will may be one of the most important stewardship