



## **YOUR KNOX LEGACY: GOOD WILL**

What comes to mind when you hear the expression "good will?" Perhaps it is the Christmas greeting "Peace on earth, good will to all," where "good will" refers to a kindly disposition toward our fellow human beings. It is a quality that Santa has and Scrooge lacks.

Or you may associate "good will" with the charity organization "Goodwill Industries." "Good will" means giving things to needy people.

There is an important additional meaning that "good will" should have. It ought to trigger thoughts of a last will and testament that has moral quality. A good will is not merely a document that will stand up under court probate as unambiguous and legal, but it is one that displays ethical concerns toward people and institutions. An individual with a good will is someone who communicates their loving disposition in what they write down concerning the disposal of their possessions after their death. A good will has an eternal dimension; it is associated with attitudes and actions that extend beyond the grave.

First, a good will should express a sensitivity to individual interests. Deep satisfaction can be gained by both the giver and the receiver if things especially significant to particular persons are left to them. These may have little material value, but much sentimental value. Samuel Johnson bequeathed to friends various books from his fine library that he knew they would individually prize. Similarly, Albert Einstein willed his violin to a grandson.

A second quality a good will expresses is social concern. An elderly person made this comment: "I want my will to provide for those causes I have cared about all my life. I'd like to continue this provision after my death."

Few Christians seem to provide anything for their church or community in their wills. While during their lives many engage in service that goes beyond their family, most of their wills suggest that all they live for is their family. Frequently wealth is lavished on relatives who already have more than the estate being divided.

A third quality of a good will is a religious affirmation. A last will and testament should, as the word "testament" suggests, include a testimonial of one's convictions. Of course a person's religious faith cannot be transferred like stocks and bonds, but you can express the hope that this non-material treasure will continue to be possessed by the next generation.

Consider the cartoon which showed two men discussing a third man who had just died. One asked, "How much did he leave?" The other replied, "Everything." You are going to leave everything. The question is where. Our wills can be a means of sharing our faith.

Studies show that 65% of Americans say they plan to make a will. But only about 30% of the 2 million Americans who die each year have done so. And less than half of those who are members of churches have wills.

Everyone has a psychological resistance to confronting her or his own mortality, even though it is one of the few assureds of our lives. People who have not made wills often procrastinate, saying they will wait until they have accumulated more property and descendants. But since younger parents are more likely to die from accidents than older ones, their will may be as crucial as those of older adults. Wills should be written early in adult life and be revised every few years as the meaning and responsibilities of life become clearer.

A good will is your last word personally, socially and religiously - as well as legally. A century from now, after both you and your loved ones have died, your personality may be largely associated with your will. It may be the most important document that you ever compose, so it is worthy of your most serious consideration. Knox church, like other institutions, asks that you consider remembering its mission and ministry in your will. So, dear friends, think on these things - and don't put off acting on your desires.

You may contact any member of the Memorial & Endowment Committee below for questions or for additional information.

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