

My mother gave me so much, but one of her kindest gifts was preparing well for her death. When she died, I was devastated; I cried, wailed, and felt lost. However, she learned from the bad experiences she had with the death of her parents and had everything in order. Her records were organized. She wrote down which items had been promised to whom. She made a point to tell us in advance where documents and valuables were. And on top of that, she also consulted a lawyer to write and, as circumstances changed, to update her will. I am so grateful.



Following her example, I hope to give my nieces and nephew the same kindness. As I write, I have an appointment with a lawyer to prepare my will. Certainly, my situation differs from my mother's. She hoped very much to leave something to her three sons, an artist, a musician, and a priest, though it was always possible she would need all her resources in retirement. I hope in turn to leave something to my nieces and nephew as a sign of my love, even though it is clear they are providing very well for themselves. I also believe I will be in the position to support in death those purposes which I strive to support in life.

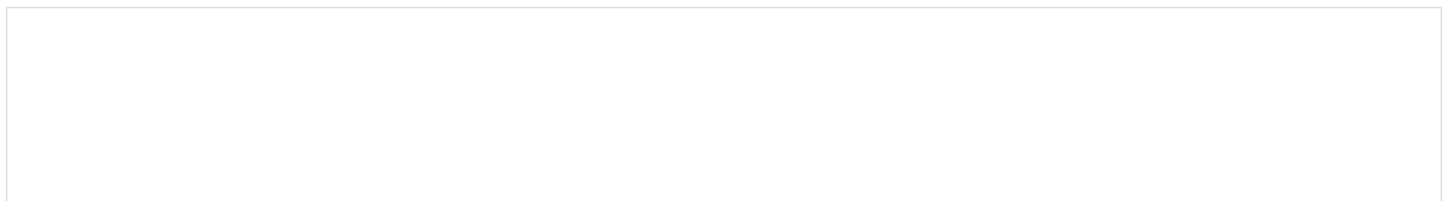
## **Our Last Testament Bears Witness**

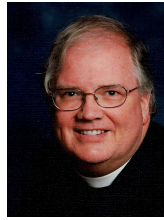
The word testament means "witness." How will my death be a witness to my family and to my community? If the way I distribute my worldly goods is a "witness," what do I want it to say? I have decided to leave bequests to several service organizations I have been associated with in life. One is my childhood parish church. It has incarnated the love of Jesus both personally and sacramentally for me to this day, and I hope it will continue to do so for others for many years to come. I value the way [Episcopal Relief and Development](#) enables partnerships with Anglican churches in other parts of the world. I will remember them. Having recently joined the board of the Episcopal Community Foundation, I understand that I am called to serve by example. [It too will be on my list of "witnesses."](#)

## **A Will is Witness to Our Intentions**

Though my nieces and nephew do not practice faith, like so many of their generation, they very much respect how important faith is to me. They also appreciate that my faith knows no outcasts. One even commented to a friend that they considered me a "real Christian." I'm not sure I want that pressure, but it is touching. I am confident the way I order my affairs in death will also make them proud, and possibly set an example for them, just as my mother did for me.

Writing a will is a thoughtful gift to our loved ones. If you have considered making one, then by all means do. If you are being entrusted with sufficient resources in life to make your will a witness, consider what kind of witness you want it to be. For all of us the affairs of this life will one day draw to a close. In that moment, by being intentional, we can express our love by supporting the people and values which matter most to us.





The Rev. John M. Hamilton (he/they) serves as Secretary on the ECF Board of Directors and is the Rector of St. Elizabeth of Hungary Episcopal Church (Dahlonega). He is also the chaplain of the Episcopal Campus Ministry at the University of North Georgia Dahlonega Campus, the dean of the Georgia Mountains Convocation of the Diocese of Atlanta, Secretary of the Community Helping Place Board, and secretary of the Dahlonega Lumpkin County Ministerial Association. John's goal in ministry is to help those who work to uncover the relevance of spirituality in general, and following Jesus in particular, as relevant in a world which should and will constantly be changing. [Learn more about the ECF Board of Directors](#)

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