

WITNESS MATTERS

When I was growing up I was the oldest child and my parents often admonished me to set a good example. It was one of those canned parental speeches that used to make me roll my eyes. And it was superseded only by the “*When I was your age*” and “*You’d better clean your plate because there are starving children in the world*” editions. This particular harangue drove me particularly nuts for a couple of reasons. For one thing, setting a good example generally meant not doing something I had my heart set on doing. Really, why is it such a bad thing to ring your neighbors’ doorbells and run away giggling? But also, I really didn’t believe that my brother or anyone else would want to emulate my behavior, good or bad.

When I got a little older I started to learn a thing or two about people following my lead. I was as shocked as anyone when a girl at school started wearing the same outfits as I did. And if you saw those outfits, you’d be shocked too. Or, when I voted in my very first presidential election and I was not only able to get all my dorm-mates to register, but to actually vote for the candidate I was supporting (no politics here; I cannot divulge that candidate’s identity). Eventually it did begin to dawn on me that the people we spend time with do notice the things we do and say and, at least from time to time, behave in kind.

Generally speaking I don’t consider myself as being evangelical in nature. I think that people should do what’s right for them (following a period of prayerful consideration, of course). But I also know that I pay attention to what people I admire are doing and think about whether I should be doing the same thing. Like participating in a walk-a-thon to help cure a

disease. Or tutoring school children on Saturday mornings. Or making a charitable gift to an organization I care deeply about. Such as my church and its good work.

I know many people who are uncomfortable with the idea of publicly proclaiming their own good work and philanthropy. And I would agree that one should not be boastful about these things. But knowing that I take my own cues from others at times, I feel some actions are important enough for me to stand up and bear witness.

If you are thinking about making a planned gift to support the work of your church, why not ask at your church office if someone who has already done so might be willing to talk to you about how and why they did it, and what it means to them. And if you decide to create such a gift, don’t be *Anonymous* on your church’s legacy society roll. Bear witness to the wonderful thing you are doing and let others see the example you are setting.

For the free booklet, *Making a Planned Gift*, or for more information about leaving a gift to your parish, contact a Planned Giving committee member or the Episcopal Church Foundation at 800-697-2858 or www.EpiscopalFoundation.org.