

*could someone like me*  
**COULD SOMEONE LIKE ME**  
**LEAVE A LEGACY?** *leave a legacy*

I always think that wintertime is a bit depressing. In the wake of all the activities that take place around Christmas and New Year's, I tend to hunker down and wait for spring. I prefer to stay home than to go out, I prefer to have quiet time instead of social time, and I don't know how I'm meant to keep that New Year's resolution about losing weight because I prefer to eat warm, hearty foods instead of healthy ones – but that's another story! In the midst of all this hunkering though, it turns out that I've got a lot of time to think, and, as I get older, I've learned how to take all this thinking to the next step and make plans.

One year I thought all winter about how much I hated paying rent, organized my finances, and began house hunting the following spring. One year, inexplicably, save for perhaps a little guidance from God, I became obsessed with the growing numbers of women in prisons, how they got there, and what was happening to their children during their incarcerations. The next spring I began teaching in a women's prison, something I continued to do for six years and that changed my life in ways I could never have foreseen.

Recent years have given all of us much to ponder. Our nation is at war and so many families are making profound sacrifices. The tsunami in Asia last year brought home how quickly everything can be changed forever. And of course the hurricanes Katrina and Rita this past summer and autumn demonstrate so painfully that these things don't always happen halfway around the world, but right here at home. Americans tend to respond generously

to those in need, with food and clothing, with monetary contributions, with volunteering their time. The capacity some people have for giving never ceases to stun me. You know the kinds of people I mean: the ones from modest backgrounds who respond to some urgent need with acts of kindness that humble the rest of us. Turns out you don't have to be rich or famous to do amazing things, you only have to have the will.

So this year I've been thinking about how I can be more like those people who I so admire. And I'm concocting all kinds of plans. But one thing I don't think I'll wait until spring to take care of is updating my will, making sure to make provisions in it for those charitable organizations whose work I care most deeply about. See, I used to think that only rich people could make gifts like that. But as I look to examples of people all around me, people in my own parish, regular people like me, I see the importance of doing whatever we can do; our church endowment is our collective legacy to the future. The measure of generosity is not determined by a dollar amount at all. And as I continue to try to figure out how I can be one of those people who can make a real positive impact on the world around me, I'll take whatever baby steps I can in that direction. I've already started thinking about the best way to make a planned gift to my parish and am looking forward to talking to them about it. After all, I can't stay in the house all winter!

If you want to find out more about leaving a legacy, call the Episcopal Church Foundation at 800-697-2858.