

Summertime – and the giving is easy

The Book of Common Prayer refers to people of my father-in-law's age as "those of riper years", but I say he's more of a late bloomer. He began to use email about 10 years ago and now at 89 years of age he's an internet enthusiast and a technology whiz. One of his favourite pastimes is playing on-line cribbage with people from all over the country. He pays some of his household bills by touch-tone telephone. Bank machines are no challenge for him, just a convenience. He mastered the use of a digital camera a couple of years ago, and downloads photographs to his home computer so he can share them with family and friends. But maybe he's not all that unusual. Research shows that seniors form one of the fastest growing internet user groups.

Technology and giving

Technology has made life more convenient for people of all ages. Take car insurance for example: I pay my premiums in equalized monthly pre-authorized payments. My insurance company makes it simple to do so, and why not – it knows that I'll not miss a payment, and the convenience factor means I'm less likely to shop around for a different broker. I wonder how many people still write cheques for their monthly mortgage payments, house insurance and heating bills. Chances are most have authorized their bank or trust company to withdraw monthly payments from their chequing account. It's easy and convenient to pay household expenses automatically. Financial institutions are leaders in using technology that's all about service.

But wait a minute. If we're paying our insurance and heating bills with pre-authorized payments, and giving to our churches with cash and cheques at the end of the week, that sounds like the latter is getting second shrift. Well, it is. We should be honouring God with the first and best we've received. In fact, we are to give our "first fruits" – right off the top – back to God in grateful response to what God has given us. And we are to give at the beginning, not the end of the week, the month, or the year.

Responding back to God

Have you prayerfully considered how and when you give to your parish? Is it in proportion to your income and to how you've been blessed? Giving reflects our commitment that God and the Church are at the heart of our lives. It's through our giving and our commitment to our parish that we acknowledge the importance that our parish holds in our life. When we give to our parish we are really giving *through* our parish to positively affect the lives of others. Our gifts help us say thank you - for the gift of life, for the love we've received, and for God's faithfulness through good times and bad. It is a way to proclaim that, contrary to messages of scarcity that often surround us, we have enough.

Giving via Pre-Authorized Giving is modern technology's methodology for "first fruit" giving. It's easy to do, and you'll enjoy this summer more than ever when you're giving "first fruits", giving proportionally, and guaranteeing that your gift will be received even when you can't be in your parish! Just ask your Parish Administrator or Envelope Secretary for a Pre-Authorized Giving (PAG) form, and pray before making your response. You can also fill in the form online at www.niagara.anglican.ca

Have a great summer!