

Investment Advice

Oak Grove Presbyterian Church, Rev. Dr. Anne Fisher
January 26, 2020; Galatians 6:2-10

Have you ever noticed how the most important ideas come at the end of the conversation or at the end of a letter? That may be the case with Paul and the church in Galatia. He has lots of good things to say about the law and the fruits of the Spirit and now in these closing words we sum up both points. These words from Galatians 6:2-10, 18:

²Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. ³For if those who are nothing think they are something, they deceive themselves. ⁴All must test their own work; then that work, rather than their neighbor's work, will become a cause for pride. ⁵For all must carry their own loads. ⁶Those who are taught the word must share in all good things with their teacher. ⁷Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow. ⁸If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh; but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit. ⁹So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest-time, if we do not give up. ¹⁰So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith. ¹⁸May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers and sisters. Amen.

The Word of the Lord; **Thanks Be to God**

Well you know what season of the year it is. It's tax season. It is also church season. We begin a new year with new officers; we will be having our annual meeting in less than a month. Today we inaugurate the first Church Chat. In preparing for taxes, some of you consult your investment advisor to get the most out of what you have. Well today, I consider you investors in Oak Grove church. You have come today knowing that we want some ideas and responses from you. This will not be a passive church day! You care enough about this church and its future to invest your prayers your time and your thoughts. What makes us care about this church and why is it important to us?

As your transitional pastor, I am appointing myself as your very own church investment advisor. As we get ready for the conversations to come, here is some church investment advice:

As we think about Oak Grove, let's start with a realistic baseline. Let's start with where the church is today -- not in the past being led by your very favorite pastor. We are a church of 489 members under 500. Talking about the days when the membership was twice that much is not helpful. Invest in what we have today, which is a group of committed talent caring people who are seeking to make a difference in the world. Do not be limited by what was but start with what is and go from there.

Another piece of investment advice is recognizing our status in our culture. There was a time when the mainline church influenced our communities and our government. When all the members of the Supreme Court were members of a mainline protestant church. Now there is only one. It was also a time when the lines blurred between civil religion and mainline Protestant. That was not helpful and those days are over. The mainline Protestant voice is no longer the loudest or most influential voice of faith. Remember the greatest prophets were not in positions of power within the culture. We have something to say to our world today. Invest in our voice from the sideline. How do we make our witness of God's love not get lost in the dissonant voices that surround us?

My third piece of investment advice is regarding our return. Often, we approach things thinking about our own benefit. Every investor expects a good return. As we invest in our church, our returns come not by what our neighbors are doing and not by getting what we can for ourselves but by sharing each other's burden. How do we show God's kingdom to others? How do we live a life that is faithful to Christ's teachings, many of which run counter to our culture? When we live beyond thinking about our own gain, we receive abundant rewards beyond our imaginations.

I am asking each of you to make an investment into Oak Grove church today! Our worship will continue as we get into the different groups. As we do, I ask you to listen; listen for what we can do with our church today and not be the church of yesterday. I ask you to be bold, not to go for the easy answers that might keep things as they are, because we all know that there is no such thing as keeping the status quo. Our status and numbers tell us that. Consider how Oak Grove does not only benefit you and your family, but how we can be witnesses to God's love through Christ in this world. I ask you to dig deep, to listen to what God is calling you to do to in this dynamic work in being a church.

Recognize that what each of us says comes from the heart and from a love of this church. Learn from each other. This is important work that we are doing so my advice to you is to invest your heart into today's work. It is because of each of you that this is a wonderful beautiful church.

I close with words from the Apostle Paul: May the grace of our lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers and sisters. Amen.