

# What's Better Than a Budget?

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by Rod Fillinger

Talk of budgets, or lack thereof, is all the rage in Washington, D.C. this week. Will there be a federal budget, or will there be a shutdown? Does the federal budget really matter if Congress just appropriates more money for pet projects or “emergency” expenditures? The entire approach to the federal budgeting process is one of scarcity. More programs. More special interests. More entitlements. Too little revenue. Budgeting is a limiting measure — you may only spend this amount and no more. **OBC does not have a “budget” for 2019.** But, unlike the federal government, that does not mean that there will be a shutdown or a careless indifference to how much is spent.

What is a budget? Merriam-Webster defines a budget in several ways. The first entry is: *a, usually, leather pouch, wallet, or pack, also its contents*. The fourth definition provided is one that is more familiar: *the amount of money that is available for, required for, or assigned to a particular purpose*. These two definitions provide a consistent view and approach to the expenditure of money. There is only so much in our wallet, so we have to decide how to spend it. There is wisdom in fiscal responsibility and counting the cost before beginning projects or undertaking expenditures (Luke 14:25–33). But in this same passage, the real cost that Christ talks about is that of discipleship, not construction. The focus is on the priorities of the heart, not the prevailing market rate of construction materials.

So at OBC, rather than having a budget that approaches ministry with a mindset of scarcity, we want to have a **ministry investment plan**. This is not a mere word-game, semantics to simply call what is in actuality a budget by another name. It is a difference in approach, mindset, and heart. As we magnify Christ, grow saints for every labor of love, make disciples, and move out to the nations with the gospel, we desire as a family of believers, a royal priesthood called to service to the King, to have a ministry investment plan that furthers this work of magnifying Christ.

As God provides, this plan will reflect the priorities where we will invest the increase that he provides. The ministry investment plan that the elders will be presenting for 2019 at the January 13th members’ meeting reflects biblical priorities that shape how we invest in ministry at OBC. This does not mean that we will spend money that we do not have or neglect to track spending, but it does provide direction to how we will spend the money that we do have from the Lord.

This past summer we looked at the “treasure principle” in Sunday School: where your treasure is, there will your heart be also (Matthew 6:19–21). We should always be asking: Where are we putting our treasure? What does our personal spending reflect about what we value? What does our spending as a local church reflect about where our treasure and our hearts are? What does our spending reflect about how well we remember that everything we are and have is because of God’s gracious provision to us? If we treasure magnifying Christ, maturing saints, making disciples, and moving out to the nations with the gospel, we need to invest our earthly treasure in kingdom work that yields eternal dividends. The elders are asking each of you, and themselves, to consider how you might invest more in the work at OBC.

More details will be provided, but investment areas that highlight priorities for this next year are:

1. *Restoration of the vocational pastors' salaries.* Three years ago our vocational (full-time) pastors voluntarily took a significant reduction. They have each added children to their family in that time. We need to provide financial support to them because they labor in preaching and teaching (1 Timothy 5:17–18). We are not paying them to preach and teach – we are paying them so they are free from financial concerns *to* preach and teach. The 2019 ministry investment plan restores the salaries to the pre-cut level.
2. *Enhanced support of missionaries.* Continuing and increasing our partnership with missionaries is another investment priority. Our own Bruce Forsee is raising support to train pastors and church leaders throughout the world with Training Leaders International. As a point of application of making disciples and moving out to the nations with the gospel, we want to serve as Bruce's sending church. This requires an increased investment in missions while continuing to invest in other ministry opportunities.
3. *Maintaining our physical building.* Our facility is now 15 years old. Maintenance needs require attention. Our building is not an end to itself. It is a tool to engage ministry, a cross-cultural beacon of the gospel in Lake Ridge and the surrounding region.
4. *Walking beside our eternal family.* Our congregation is increasing in diversity — both ethnic and socio-economic diversity, and prayerfully this will only increase in 2019. Our body will have more needs and we are continuing to look at ways to foster care and community in our church. While much of this care is relational and spiritual, it also includes financial investment. How will we care for our brother and sister?

So as we approach 2019, let us consider: Where is our treasure? Rather than giving to a budget, give to advance the kingdom work for our Lord in his outpost known as Occoquan Bible Church.

Consider how you might invest more for the kingdom at OBC. Our mission, our purpose, our core existence is the glory of God. May this be our heart's treasure as reflected in our investment in His work at OBC.