

In the book of Ecclesiastes, the Teacher instructs those who wish to be wise to – *Cast out your bread upon the waters, for after many days you will get it back.*

Another way to understand this ancient wisdom may be straightforward way of sharing this wisdom might be to console one another – *Always be ready to be generous – without a thought for a present reward. For, some day, you may find a most unexpected belssing*

We hear the wisdom of this teaching through the voice a servants that echoes through our congregational history, Marion Fairman. Marion was the spouse of Ed Fairman, the pastor of the Seminary Presbyterian Church.

In the preface to their book, The Tumbling Walls, Marion wrote, *How can anyone say with certainty when an idea arises. ... One Sabbath morning at the New Wilmington Missionary Conference during a sermon by Dr. Donald Buck of the Foreign Mission Board, he spoke of the need for someone to go and see and tell the church at home. It was as simple as that. We didn't even hear the rest of the sermon as Ed turned to me and said, "We could do that." It took us a year to get ready, to find the money, to close our pastorate, to store our furniture, to count the cost (emphasis added).*

Miami University students may have been sitting with Ed and Marion on that very day. Jean Butterfield once left a note for me that read –*For several years, numerous students traveled to the New Wilmington Mission Conference with the Fairmans'. Five or six of those students became doctors, others became nurses and teachers in mission stations. Still others became ministers and many strong leaders in many churches.*

Ed and Marion's journey took them to Pakistan, Egypt, the Sudan and Ethiopia. That journey so changed Ed and Marion Fairman that upon their return, Ed became the long-time director of the New Wilmington Mission Conference. Marion went onto earn her doctorate in English and teach at Westminster College in New Wilmington. In the summer, Marion served as summer staff at the Mission Conference.

At the New Wilmington Mission Conference in 1984, young man named Mark Hare from southeastern Ohio met Marion. Mark and a small mission team had just returned from India. Marion worked with the team of young adults as they prepared to tell the conference at worship all they had gone to see and serve.

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Since 1997, Mark has served in Haiti and the Dominican Republic sharing the good news of God's love for all people and all creation, sustainable farming and reforestation initiatives.

When Mark married Jenny about ten years ago, they added Community Health Evangelism to their portfolio. In the new year, Mark, Jenny and their two daughters will begin a new assignment in Costa Rica.

Next month, Mark and Jenny will be joining us for a weekend of worship, fellowship and learning.

OPC has sponsored the ministry of Mark and Jenny for a number of years. Only in preparation for their visit in November, did we learn that Marion Fairman left such a lasting legacy in the life of Mark Hare. *Cast out your bread upon the waters, for after many days you will get it back.*

That's what Stewardship is – it is sending out bread upon the waters. Stewardship is the original venture capital investment.

The Seminary Presbyterian Church invested in Marion Fairman. Marion invested in Mark Hare who invested in thousands and thousands of people in Caribbean and these will invest in thousands more.

As this congregation grows in ministry and mission throughout 2020 and years to come, we are asking you to make a pledge if you never have before or haven't for years.

If you are pledging – step up to a tithe – which is the older English word for a tenth of one's income.

If you are tithing – step up beyond 10%.

Join your brothers and sisters in faith by generously giving to the 2020 Stewardship Campaign. All gifts matter, every pledge of any size matters.

Began in 1818 - this ministry may be the oldest continuous witness to the light and love of Jesus Christ throughout Oxford. We are calling on you to cast your bread upon the waters – for the Marion's of tomorrow – for Mark's of the future.

OUR – GIFTS – MATTER
– here and around the world
– now and for generations to come.

(adapted from the sermon for worship on October 20)