

Old South, Welcome to our home here in Roslindale.

Our homes tell the stories of who we are and how we live. Our furniture and decorating, our photos and collections show how we live and also what we value.

We invest in our homes. We update and remodel. We fix broken furnaces, dishwashers, sinks and ovens. We landscape and plant gardens. We work to shape our homes into places that feel comfortable and look beautiful to us.

These days many of us spend A LOT of time in our homes. People see inside our homes in ways they never did before. We are holding meetings and interviews in our living rooms and kitchens. We are remaking bedrooms into offices and classrooms. We are, whether we like it or not, inviting people in to see who we are how we live.

The way we live is also shown in the way we spend our money. Are you a checkbook balancer? A spender? A saver? I believe that our money--the money that my husband Jay and I make together can wield a great deal of power. Our budget will tell you the story of how we live. Jay and I began to share our money when we moved in together eleven years ago. We shared bills and then each got our own chunk of the budget to spend as we saw fit. I used some of my chunk to fund my classroom supplies, Doctors without Borders, my local NPR station and some to Old South. I was raised with the idea of giving to the church but as a young adult I wanted my money to be out changing the world, not only paying for salaries and building upkeep (which is where I assumed my church donations went).

I gave to organizations that I felt really represented me. I had a strong identity as a public school teacher and NPR listener. I could see myself in my mind's eye carrying children's books in an NPR tote bag...but giving all my money to church somehow just didn't seem as...powerful.

As Jay and I gained a mortgage and then kids we had less in that chunk of our own money to spend. We had to decide jointly how to spend almost every cent of our money. We had to really come to an agreement about how much to donate. I had the wild desire to donate 10% of our monthly budget. Jay was not so sure about sending so

much money out the door. That would have paid for our mortgage and childcare and..not not too much left over.

Instead of chasing down a specific percentage we discussed what things/places we needed and wanted to support.

I then felt obligated to give more money to Old South every month because it was our church and I loved it. I did Bible Study there with Jay and served on a committee however, I felt it was *essential* to spend money on my classroom. Teaching was an even bigger part of who I was. I love my work and feel called to it. I felt that our purchases of books and supplies for the kids in my room would make a true difference in their lives and futures. We gave some to Old South and even more to my classroom.

In a couple more years, as daycare costs lowered and our income went up we were able to move a little closer to that 10%. Jay chose an organization for disabled veterans that is important to him to add to our monthly donation. We had both become accustomed to giving away part of earnings and it became easier, with practice, to grow that amount a bit each year. This practice helped us to be in communication about how we spent and why. We learned to set goals for spending, saving and giving.

In the last few years I found that during each Epiphany season I felt called to increase our donation to Old South. I was increasingly more involved and our children were being raised in the church. Sam and Eli were giving money each week as well. Old South was becoming a big part of my identity and God was calling me to put my treasure where my heart was.

As it stands now we are just shy of that 10% mark (net not gross ;) and Old South gets the biggest chunk. There is so much that ties our family to Old South that could explain that monthly gift we make. We worship there every week. I teach Sunday school and my kids attend Godly Play. I am part of a dear and wonderful small group that is one of

my greatest blessings. Our small group has met for four years in my dining room and now on Zoom. We have wonderful ministers and our church building is beautiful!

Even during the closure of our physical church we remain connected. These days church is on my laptop on the living room floor. Eli and Sam decorate their offering envelopes and mail them in. Sam and Eli play around me, just like they did in real church, and wait to hear the “Amen” signaling the kids’ part. Sam often comes running down the stairs yelling, “Eli! Pastor Shawn is on!”

We all could name a thousand things about Old South that we love.

There are also a thousand things to love about NPR and Doctors without Borders and Homes for our Troops. My reason for putting Old South on the top of the list is because it tells the story of who I am. My neighbors, co-workers, friends, family and Facebook connections know about my church because I tell them my church’s name and where they can find it in the city and what we are doing in the world. Our children are church kids who tell their classmates it is almost baby Jesus’ birthday and write letters to their ministers. When Old South’s minister was arrested for protesting in Washington or when Old South supports affordable housing or flies rainbow flags or says that Black Lives Matter and challenges us to confront our racism I feel so proud because that is OUR church. I want to send our money out into the world with Old South so that it can change the world for the better. I want to be spiritually and financially tied to an organization that is asking all of us to remake our communities into the vision that God has for them. Giving to the church now is the powerful thing I can do. I want to invest in my spiritual home. My church home tells the story of who I am.

Church, I ask you to think: What tells the story of who you are?