



Seasons, Stewardship, and Staying the Course
Rev. Dr. David S. Bell, President & Executive Director

Year-End Investment Reflections for Church Leaders and Ministry Partners

"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven." Those words from Ecclesiastes resonate deeply when reflecting on the investment landscape of 2025. Like many journeys of faith, the path markets traveled last year was not straight or predictable. Stretches were marked by uncertainty and disruption, followed by periods of renewed confidence. For long-term stewards of ministry resources, the year served as a reminder that faithful investing is less about reacting to every turn and more about remaining grounded in purpose.

A Year Shaped by Uncertainty—and Adjustment

The early months of 2025 tested investor confidence. Policy decisions, particularly around trade, introduced volatility and unsettled markets. Equity prices moved sharply, supply chains faced renewed pressure, and inflation concerns resurfaced. Investors responded cautiously. Fixed income markets reflected growing unease as longer-term interest rates rose and as credit conditions tightened.

These moments were uncomfortable, especially for church investors entrusted with assets meant to support ministry over generations. However, such seasons are not unfamiliar. They are the times when discipline matters most and when resisting short-term reactions helps preserve long-term opportunity.

As the year progressed, conditions began to shift. Markets adjusted to new information, and attention returned to economic fundamentals. Volatility remained, but its influence diminished as clarity slowly emerged.

Economic Signals: Strength with Complexity

By year-end, the economic picture was one of resilience, though not uniform strength. Economic growth exceeded expectations during the third quarter, driven in part by changes in trade dynamics and stronger consumer activity. Households continued to spend, but not evenly. Higher-income families sustained demand, while many lower-income households faced increasing strain. This divergence helps explain why economic data and public sentiment often tell different stories.

Beneath the strong overall growth numbers, the economy showed what is often called a “K-shaped” pattern. This means that some people and businesses are doing quite well, while others are falling further behind. Many households are feeling the pressure of higher costs, confidence about the future has weakened, and unemployment has inched higher. More companies have also struggled to the point of bankruptcy than at any time in many years. At the same time, the large amounts of money being borrowed to invest in new technologies, including artificial intelligence, have raised questions about whether all of this spending will pay off. Together, these signs remind us that even when parts of the economy look strong, many on Main Street are still facing real financial strain, making affordability a growing concern.

Business investment followed a similar pattern. Outside of technology-related spending, many companies remained cautious. At the same time, investment in computing and software accelerated, underscoring the growing influence of digital infrastructure and artificial intelligence across the economy.

Inflation pressures eased over the course of the year, settling closer to levels that allow households and businesses to plan with greater confidence. The labor market cooled modestly, contributing to the Federal Reserve’s decision to begin reducing interest rates late in the year. This reduction was an important shift after an extended period of restrictive policy.

Markets Respond and Rotate

Financial markets reflected these developments in nuanced ways. U.S. stocks finished the year higher, though leadership shifted throughout the year. International markets experienced a period of strength, aided by currency movements and improving global conditions. Bonds, after years of limited returns, once again provided meaningful income and stability within diversified portfolios.

Even significant political disruptions, including a prolonged government shutdown, did not fundamentally alter market direction. While such events increased uncertainty and delayed information, markets often looked beyond them particularly since economic fundamentals remained intact. For long-term investors, this reality reinforced an important lesson: short-term disruptions can feel decisive in the moment, but they rarely determine long-term outcomes.

Artificial Intelligence: Broad Impact, Thoughtful Engagement

Artificial intelligence continued to shape both markets and investment conversations in 2025. While headlines often focus on a small group of large technology companies, AI’s reach is far wider. Its influence now extends into energy, manufacturing, infrastructure, logistics, and services. It is reshaping how organizations operate and compete.

At the same time, enthusiasm must be paired with discernment. Adoption is uneven, valuations vary widely, and the pace of change introduces new risks alongside opportunity. Issues such as energy use, workforce transition, data governance, and environmental impact deserve careful attention, particularly for faith-based investors guided by values as well as returns.

AI also presents opportunities beyond portfolio exposure. When applied responsibly, it can enhance research, improve operational efficiency, and support better-informed decision-making. The challenge is not whether innovation belongs in long-term portfolios, but how to engage it with intention, oversight, and humility.

What 2025 Reinforced for Faithful Stewards

Above all, 2025 reaffirmed enduring principles. Markets change. Narratives shift. Seasons come and go. However, a diversified, value-aligned investment approach, which is rooted in patience and guided by mission, remains resilient across cycles.

For churches and ministry partners, investing is not an exercise in speculation. It is an act of stewardship, designed to support worship, service, and witness both now and in the future. The past year reminded us that faithful stewardship does not require certainty, but it does require discipline, perspective, and trust in a long-term process.

As we enter a new season, uncertainty will remain a constant companion, but so will opportunity. By staying anchored in purpose and committed to thoughtful, long-term stewardship, we continue to position our ministry resources to serve faithfully no matter what the next season may bring.

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