

Worship – Our Values and Vision

First Presbyterian Church of Hattiesburg

We believe that worship is, broadly speaking, the Christian's joyful response in all of life to what God has done for us in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We believe that the corporate expression of this lifestyle of worship is the regular gathering of God's people in a service of worship on the Lord's Day, and we are committed to offering our God worship that reflects and pursues these values and characteristics:

Gospel-Centered

- The Gospel is the good news of God's favor poured out on sinners through his Son. Worship is a response to this free grace given to us in Christ, not a way of acquiring or earning God's grace.
- We believe that the Gospel is what every worshipper needs, whether a visiting skeptic, a new believer, or a long-time church member, because the Gospel is how God both converts unbelievers and nurtures believers. Gospel-centered worship is naturally evangelistic, and so we aim to offer worship that is accessible and inviting to the unbelievers among us.
- We strive to make the Gospel clear not only in the individual elements of our worship service (the sermon, prayers, songs, etc.), but also in the overall flow and structure of the service itself.

Biblical

- We believe that our worship should be guided and regulated by how the Triune God directs us to worship in his Word.
- Covenant theology shapes our worship principles and practices. We view corporate worship as divinely initiated, redemptive dialogue between God and his covenant people.
- Every aspect of our worship service demonstrates a deep engagement with Scripture because we believe that the Holy Spirit uses God's Word to instruct, correct, and train in righteousness.

Corporate

- God's people are called to worship together as a body of believers who express their common union with Christ and communion with each other through corporate worship. We strive to offer our worship in a way that glorifies God alone while engaging, edifying, and ministering to the broad range of people that God has called together in this body.
- Worship is a corporate activity of the people, not just the ministers and musicians. We strive to offer worship that encourages the full and active participation of the people throughout the service.
- We prioritize the congregation's voice as the primary musical instrument in the worship service. We embrace a deep love for the hymns and songs from our Reformed and Presbyterian tradition, as well as current hymns and songs that reflect our theological commitments.

Reverent and Welcoming

- Our passion is to offer glorifying worship that reflects God's majesty, transcendence, and holiness, in a manner that is warm, welcoming, and approachable. Our aim is reverent worship that is presented with excellence, structured with thoughtfulness, and led with joy.

Stewardship Statement

We, the Session of FPC Hattiesburg, believe that Biblical stewardship is the Christian's cheerful, mindful management of all that God has entrusted to each of His children. We believe that God has equipped every member of His church with both tangible and intangible resources, and that our offering of the first-fruits of these resources is how God advances the Gospel, not only throughout the world, but also in the hearts of His people within the local church.

The following statements are what we believe the Scripture teaches regarding stewardship, and what we desire to be more and more true about us as a congregation:

- We give because it is an indispensable form of worship (Rom 12:1). Worship has been described in our Vision & Values Statement as, “. . . *the Christian's joyful response in all of life to what God has done for us in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.*” Within the context of the local church, this response can be measured in how, and how cheerfully, we spend our time, our energy and our money. We give not because God needs these things, but because He delights in these things (2 Cor 9:7), and because we delight in Him.
- We give because it is an essential aspect of Christian discipleship (Matt 6:2-4). Our Lord commands and expects his followers to be givers.
- We give because we are heavenly minded (Matt 6:19-21).
- We give because God expects a return in proportion to how He has blessed each one of us and we can expect to be judged accordingly (Matt 25:14-30).
- We give because God takes notice and assigns value to what we offer Him, regardless of the amount (Mark 12:41-44).
- We give because it is evidence of love, which in turn is the hallmark of the Christian church (1 John 3:16, John 13:35)
- We give because there is need (1 John 3:17).
- We give because God uses this opportunity to prove Himself as an unparalleled Benefactor (Mal 3:10-11), which in turn serves as a witness to a watching world (Mal 3:12), rendering stewardship, particularly tithing, a form of evangelism. Therefore, while stewardship is not limited to our finances, nevertheless, tithing serves as a reliable barometer of our heart-orientation to God and to a lost world around us.

In his farewell address to the Ephesian elders, the Apostle Paul quoted Jesus as having said, “*It is more blessed to give than to receive* (Acts 20:35).” As elders, we therefore conclude that a giving church is a healthy church and it is our desire to see our members grow into cheerful givers in whom God delights and chooses to bless.