

"He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us, for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God."
— 2 Corinthians 9: 10-12



**First
Presbyterian
Church**

New Bern, North Carolina

October 30, 2023

Friends,

At some time in your life, I hope you have had a gift-giving experience that has filled you with joy; not because you received a thoughtful, and generous gift, but because you gave one.

I invite you to recall one of those times. A time when you were so grateful for someone that you were moved to give generously of yourself. Maybe you went out of your way to do something kind for this person, or spent hours finding or making the perfect item to show how much you were thinking of them. Maybe you baked a cake or made a special meal. You channeled your intense love and affection into a mindful, meaningful, tangible gift. In this season of stewardship, you are invited to give this way to God.

God's love is constant: ever present and yearning to be received and shared. You may feel it most intensely when there is great joy or great pain, being wholly loved or cared for by God. How do you respond to those overwhelming emotions? As it says in the scripture, you glorify and amplify God's goodness by giving – joyfully – back to God.

Giving is one way to provide a foundation (and often a reset) for your life. It helps you reevaluate priorities and place yourself in the attitude of gratitude; a gratitude that comes from within as you feel and appreciate God's love. Sometimes gratitude flows naturally and other times it is a gift that you must cultivate, but at its best gratitude inspires emotions that leave you overflowing with thanksgivings to God.

So respond through joyful giving. You are surrounded by ways and places to give of your time, your talents, and your treasures. And you have, time and again, shown that First Presbyterian Church, New Bern is a community where your gifts spread God's love and vision into the world.

Here are just a few of the ways your gifts make a difference:

- The Rev. Patrick Ryan is already an integral part of our ministry of education and care.
- You support the Coastal Women's Shelter, Merci Clinic, Camp Albemarle, Religious Community Services, Reviving Lives, Interfaith Refugee Ministry, and more.
- You sent life-saving medical equipment to Ukraine and watched youth and families grow in faith by supporting the Lamb Institute in person in Honduras.
- Every month, you host almost 100 different community groups and gatherings for support and shared interests. Our open doors are helping to transform lives.
- We've welcomed Daniel Sansone to the organ bench and expanded our video capabilities so people worshiping at home experience worship in real time, in community.
- You've nurtured youth and children: more than 50 youth attended our Blessing of the Backpacks service for this school year, and over the next six weeks we will baptize five children into our community of faith.

You have made these good works (and more) possible, and we know you do not want to pull back, even as it asks more of you. By supporting this place of worship and service, you not only "supply the needs of the saints" but also extend God's word and work in many ways.

In past years we have talked about proportional giving - giving back to God a percentage of what we are given. And giving enough that it makes you stretch a little; a reminder that all you have is God's. This year, I challenge you to find the joy and privilege in giving and to give until you overflow with thanksgivings to God.

In Peace,

Anna Pinchney Straight



Why Do We Give?

We were created by a generous God to be a generous people. When we give, it is good for us and bolsters our spirit. Giving increases our trust in God, as we lean into God's promises for abundant life. Giving transforms who we are and connects us to the broader work for God's kingdom.

Psalm 24

The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it.

2 Corinthians 9: 10-12

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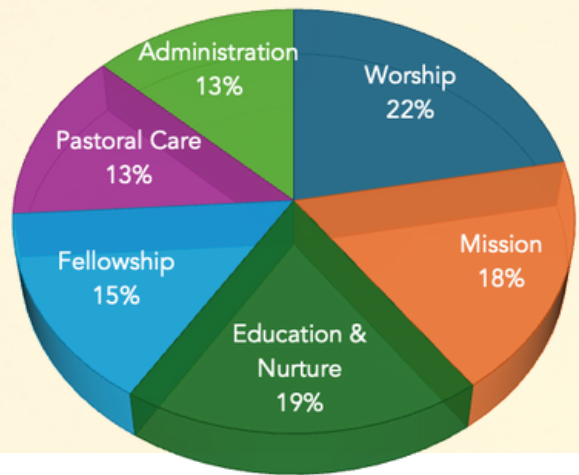


Scripture calls on us all, as followers of Christ, to offer a significant portion of what we are given in service to God. This act of faithful discipleship carries the power and the promise to prepare a place for God's Kingdom here in our world and in our lives as we grow in the teachings of Jesus.



Given Faithfully, Managed Faithfully

You have many opportunities to give generously and to many good causes; we are grateful for your pledge to First Presbyterian Church, New Bern, which carries out the love and mission of God.



DISCERNMENT GUIDE

How Much Should I Give?

Our Christian life is an offering of ourselves to God. In the Lord's Supper, we are presented with the self-offering of Jesus Christ for the life of the world. As a people who have been claimed and set free by Christ's grace, we respond with gratitude, offering God our lives, our spiritual gifts, and our material goods. We give our tithes and financial gifts as an act of thanksgiving and a sign of our trust in God and God's perfect will.

In Deuteronomy, Moses reminds the people of God's faithfulness in bringing them out of enslavement in Egypt. In grateful response, the people are called to offer their first fruits (the first portion of their harvest) to God, one-tenth (a tithe) of their income. These gifts sustained the life of the temple from the earliest days of the Israelites. The Biblical model of the tithe - 10% of one's income - should be our goal.



A Guide for Discernment: How is God Calling You to Give?

We invite you to prayerfully consider...

- What elements of First Presbyterian Church's mission and ministry touch your life most deeply?
- How are you called to strengthen the kingdom of God through faithful tithes and offerings?
- Do you give as a percentage of your income? If not, what keeps you from doing so? If so, why might taking the next step be difficult?

After your discernment, please complete your 2024 Pledge Commitment Form or set up your pledge in your Realm account. If you have questions about setting up your pledge, please contact Summer Hough, Finance Administrator. We're hoping to receive all pledges (whether online, mailed in, or given during the pledge dedication service on November 19) to help keep the church's 2024 budget development process moving forward!

