



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
OF MOORESTOWN

A church living out God's love

As people who've experienced the merciful welcome of Jesus Christ, we belong to Him and to one another.^a In our desire to grow deeper in our faith, stronger in our love, and more effective in our service, we've outlined the following ways,^b based on God's Word, to be the foundation for creating a culture or an atmosphere "thick with love".^c They're not rules or laws to be obeyed but rather the ways we train, remind, and encourage one another to be the church.^d

^a*You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body. (1 Corinthians 6: 19 – 20)*

^b*May your ways be known throughout the earth, your saving power among people everywhere. (Psalm 66: 2)*

^c*As a prisoner of the Lord, I urge you: Live a life that is worthy of the calling He has graciously extended to you. Be humble. Be gentle. Be patient. Tolerate one another in an atmosphere thick with love. (Ephesians 4: 1, 2)*

^d*Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us. Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God's glory. (Romans 5: 1 – 2)*

Background

We, the church family of First Presbyterian Church of Moorestown, deeply believe that: In life and in death we belong—body and soul—to our faithful Savior Jesus Christ. Therefore, we trust that Jesus has fully paid for our sins and set us free from the tyranny of selfishness, evil, and death. We also believe that we belong to one another. Though we're all frail and broken people, we're striving to create here "an atmosphere thick with love" by encouraging and reminding each other to lean into a community committed to knowing God and making God known. The following "ways" are based on the Bible, God's Word, and are meant to aid us in becoming people who reflect God's image. They're not rules or laws to be obeyed but rather reminders, encouragers and prompts pointing us to the ways we should live with one another to reflect that image.

At this important moment in our congregation's history, we're giving intentional and focused attention to how we can better "be the church". This means we're thinking about the atmosphere or culture of our congregation. We've identified twenty-five culture statements or "ways" that we'll consider week by week. You'll hear about our Way of the Week in worship and at almost any meeting or study that happens. The idea is that we're all trying to learn or be reminded of how we can be the strongest and healthiest people we can be for God's purpose and glory.

1. **BE THIRD.** God is first, others are second, and you're third. Don't just think about your own interests, but be interested in others.^a Don't think less of yourself, just think of yourself less and others more.^b

^a*Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. (Philippians 2: 4)*

^b*"And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you." (John 13: 14, 15)*

2. **SPEAK THE TRUTH WITH LOVE.** Speak honestly and directly in a way that clearly reflects love and support for one another.^a Be courageous enough to say what needs to be said, even when it's difficult.^b Address issues directly with those who are involved or affected; speak to, not about, others.^c

^a*Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them. (Ephesians 4: 29)*

^b*Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. (Ephesians 4: 31)*

^c*Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church (Ephesians 4: 15)*

3. **LISTEN GENEROUSLY.** Be quick to listen and do so with your undivided attention.^a Minimize the distractions and let go of the need to agree or disagree. Suspend your judgment and be curious to know more rather than jumping to conclusions.^{b,c} Above all, listen to *understand*.

^a*Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. Human anger does not produce the righteousness God desires. (James 1: 19, 20)*

^b*Spouting off before listening to the facts is both shameful and foolish. (Proverbs 18:13)*

^c*Wrongdoers eagerly listen to gossip; liars pay close attention to slander. (Proverbs 17:4)*

4. **ALWAYS ENCOURAGE AND CELEBRATE.** Show gratitude and appreciation by regularly acknowledging the good works you see everywhere.^a Look for signs of spiritual growth and maturity among our members and staff. When you see it, point it out and rejoice.^b Pass on good reports that you hear about others.

^a*We always thank God for all of you and pray for you constantly. As we pray to our God and Father about you, we think of your faithful work, your loving deeds, and the enduring hope you have because of our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Thessalonians 1: 3, 4)*

^b*When the church at Jerusalem heard what had happened, they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he arrived and saw this evidence of God's blessing, he was filled with joy, and he encouraged the believers to stay true to the Lord. (Acts 11: 22, 23)*

5. ASSUME POSITIVE INTENT. Decide to trust that other members are being fair, honest, and concerned for the well-being of our church.^a Set aside your own judgments and preconceived notions.^b Surrender the urge to criticize and judge—it doesn't help.^c

^a*Most important of all, continue to show deep love for each other, for love covers a multitude of sins. (1 Peter 4:8)*

^b*But if you are always biting and devouring one another, watch out! Beware of destroying one another. (Galatians 5: 15)*

^c*Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. For you will be treated as you treat others.” (Matthew 7:1)*

6. FORGIVE . . . AGAIN. Just as God forgives us, heal relationships by extending forgiveness with grace and generosity.^{a,b} Forgive everyone everything.^c Start by praying for those you resent or hate. Ask for every blessing you would want for the one you're struggling to forgive.

^a*“If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.” (Matthew 6: 13, 14)*

^b*Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you. (Ephesians 4: 31)*

^c*Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. (Colossians 3: 13)*

7. KEEP THE UNITY, SAVOR DIVERSITY. Thank God that, like parts of the human body, we're not all the same. Be open to learn from others, regardless of their age, background, experience, or tenure with our church.^a We make better decisions and grow as people when we consider multiple perspectives.^b Listen with curiosity to others and consider how to use their ideas.^c

^a*Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future. (Ephesians 4: 3-4)*

^b*How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in harmony! (Psalm 133: 4)*

^c*Don't think you are better than you really are. Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us. Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, so it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other. (Romans 12: 3-5)*

8. JUMP IN. Life is full of unexpected problems and needs, large and small. Pay attention to moments when God calls you to action, no matter how ordinary or extraordinary the situation may be.^a See “disruptions” as invitations to share Christ’s love.^b Write a note. Visit the sick or the grieving. Share a meal.

^aO people, the LORD has told you what is good, and this is what he requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God. (Micah 6:8)

^bWhat good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don’t show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone? Suppose you see a brother or sister who has no food or clothing, and you say, “Good-bye and have a good day; stay warm and eat well”—but then you don’t give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do? So you see, faith by itself isn’t enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless. (James 2: 14 - 17)

^cDear children, let’s not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions. Our actions will show that we belong to the truth, so we will be confident when we stand before God. (1 John 3: 18)

9. PRAY FIRST AND PRAY AGAIN. Ask *first* for God’s guidance and blessing in everything you do.^a Through prayer, ask for wisdom and for God’s will to be done.^b Pray for others as well, that God’s love and blessing would be revealed to them in good times and in bad.^c

^aTrust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take. (Proverbs 3: 5, 6)

^b” May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.” (Matthew 6: 10)

^c Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere. (Ephesians 6: 18)

10. JOIN HANDS. Work as a team.^a Collaborate with each other, our professional staff, our lay leaders, and our congregants to find the best solutions. Collaboration lightens the load, generates better ideas than individuals working alone, and unleashes the gifts God has given us all.^b

^aTwo people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble. (Ecclesiastes 4:9)

^bAs iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend. (Proverbs 27:17)

11. MAKE OTHERS AT HOME HERE. Warmly welcome newcomers and visitors.^a Offer your name with a smile. Reach out and greet the person you don't know after worship, during Coffee Hour, in Youth Group or Sunday school. Show a genuine interest in others.^b

^aWelcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. (Romans 15: 7)

^bWelcome her in the Lord as one who is worthy of honor among God's people. Help her in whatever she needs, for she has been helpful to many, and especially to me. (Romans 16:2)

12. OWN OUR CHURCH. The work of the church isn't defined by pastors and staff alone; it comes from each member actively participating in the life of Jesus Christ.^a Claim ownership of FPCM's mission, programs, and property. Each is an expression of how God is working among us! Support others. Be informed. Volunteer for a new role. Live like you're the church—because you are!^b

^aAll of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it. (1 Corinthians 12: 27)

^bThis makes for harmony among the members, so that all the members care for each other. If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it, and if one part is honored, all the parts are glad. (1 Corinthians 12: 26)

13. OPEN DOORS FOR OTHERS TO LEAD. Encourage others to step into leadership by sharing responsibilities and mentoring.^a Let go of the jobs you've always done and allow new leaders to emerge. Remember that our youth and young adults are not the future of our church but are vitally important for our *present*.

^aTherefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28: 19 – 20)

^bDon't let anyone think less of you because you are young. Be an example to all believers in what you say, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity. (1 Timothy 4:12)

14. GROW FAITH. Take advantage of every chance you have to form your faith—through small groups, classes, and personal study. Be a disciple and look to learn from those who know more of the Bible and Christian life than you do, then look for opportunities to share what you've gained with someone else.^{a,b}

^aThen, calling the crowd to join his disciples, he said, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me. (Mark 8:34)

^bYou have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Now teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others. (2 Timothy 2:2)

15. WELCOME CHANGE. Be curious about new ideas, perspectives, and approaches. Get excited by the possibilities that change can bring.^a What worked in the past won't always work in the future, for God is doing new things.

^a*“And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. For the wine would burst the wineskins, and the wine and the skins would both be lost. New wine calls for new wineskins.” (Mark 2: 22)*

^b*“And the one sitting on the throne said, “Look, I am making everything new!” (Revelation 21: 6)*

16. GIVE CHEERFULLY. Rejoice, you get to give!^a Think of giving as a privilege rather than an obligation, a joy instead of a burden. As you consider all that's been entrusted to you—time, abilities and money—ask, “How is God calling me to share what I've been given?”^b

^a*“You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. “For God loves a person who gives cheerfully.” (2 Corinthians 9: 7)*

“Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full—pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back.” (Luke 6: 38)

17. SHOW WHO YOU REALLY ARE. Our church is for “real” people. Bring your true self, including your joys, your sorrows, your fears, your strengths and your weaknesses.^a God loves you as you are.^b Don't hide your struggles, failures or problems.

^a*“When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. (Romans 5:6)*

^b*“For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. (John 3: 16)*

18. ASK FOR HELP. Part of being a real and authentic member of the church is to acknowledge your weaknesses and to be willing to ask for God's help and the support of others.^a None of us can go it alone. Vulnerability is a sign of strength and a gift to others.^b

^a*“Each time he said, “My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness.” So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me. (2 Corinthians 12: 9)*

^b*“But whatever I am now, it is all because God poured out his special favor on me—and not without results. (1 Corinthians 15: 10)*

19. ACCEPT AND DON'T CAST STONES. God's love opens the doors of our church to all people.^a Just as Jesus did, welcome people as they are.^b It's not up to us to judge. Love unconditionally, and as Christ has received you, receive others.

^aThere is one God and one Mediator who can reconcile God and humanity—the man Christ Jesus. He gave his life to purchase freedom for everyone. (1 Timothy 2: 6- 7)

^bTax collectors and other notorious sinners often came to listen to Jesus teach. This made the Pharisees and teachers of religious law complain that he was associating with such sinful people—even eating with them! (Luke 15: 1 – 2)

20. FIND STRENGTH IN BELONGING. At FPCM, you're loved and valued.^a Claim us as your family.^b Rather than withdrawing, allow struggles and disappointments to deepen your sense of belonging.^c Pray for chances to bring healing to relationships. Please be patient! God isn't yet finished with us or with you.^d

^aFor we don't live for ourselves or die for ourselves. If we live, it's to honor the Lord. And if we die, it's to honor the Lord. So whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. Christ died and rose again for this very purpose—to be Lord both of the living and of the dead. (Romans 14: 7 – 9)

^bThey worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity. (Acts 2: 46)

^cJesus knew their thoughts and replied, "Any kingdom divided by civil war is doomed. A town or family splintered by feuding will fall apart. (Matthew 12: 25)

^dThe Lord is compassionate and merciful, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. (Psalms 103: 8)

21. YOU'RE SENT, NOW GO. We're blessed to be a blessing.^a God intends to use you to bless, heal, restore, and liberate a dark and hurting world.^b We're here for others: in our families and our community and in the world. Go to the need. Live missionally.^c

^aI will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you. (Genesis 12: 2, 3)

^b"You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father. (Matthew 5: 14 – 16)

^cPublish his glorious deeds among the nations. Tell everyone about the amazing things he does. (1 Chronicles 16: 24)

22. EMBRACE REST. Make time in your week to step back from work, school, and stressful demands.^a Since Christ has freed us, we no longer have to be obsessively driven.^b Take a walk, play, nap, meet up with friends, share a meal, or just take some time in solitude.^c

^a*On the seventh day God had finished his work of creation, so he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because it was the day when he rested from all his work of creation. (Genesis 2: 2 – 3)*

^b*Then Jesus said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. (Matthew 11: 28)*

^c*Then Jesus said to them, “The Sabbath was made to meet the needs of people, and not people to meet the requirements of the Sabbath. (Mark 2: 27)*

23. WORSHIP WITH YOUR WHOLE HEART. Your life is meant to be an act of worship.^a Every breath, action, and thought flows from God and can bring him glory. Praise God everywhere and embrace the opportunities to regularly worship with your church family.^b

^a*Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need. (Matthew 6: 33)*

^b*Let everything that breathes sing praises to the Lord! (Psalm 150: 6)*

24. TELL YOUR STORY. God has done and is doing something unique in your life.^a Has God answered a prayer, provided help, or blessed you? Share it.^b Ask God for opportunities to share your faith in Christ by words and deeds.^c

^a*“Now, go back to your family, and tell them everything God has done for you.” So he went all through the town proclaiming the great things Jesus had done for him. (Luke 8:39)*

^b*Has the Lord redeemed you? Then speak out! Tell others he has redeemed you from your enemies. (Psalm 107: 2)*

^c*“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)*

25. REJOICE ALWAYS. The Kingdom of God is a party!^a Let healthy laughter fill our meetings, our meals, and even our worship.^b Allow the joy of our faith to be clearly evident in our speech and on our faces.^c

^a“But his father said to the servants, ‘Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. And kill the calf we have been fattening. We must celebrate with a feast, for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found.’ So the party began.”

(Luke 15: 22 – 24)

^bAlways be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice! (Philippians 4: 4)

^cA cheerful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit saps a person’s strength. (Proverbs 17: 22)

Note: All scripture references are from the New Living Translation, with the exception of reference “c” in the Preamble.

Tips for Starting Meetings with the Way of the Week:

1. All scheduled meetings—committee meetings, staff meetings, rehearsals, small groups, classes—should begin with the Way of the Week as the first agenda item. The Way of the Week will be posted on our website and at the front desk of the office.
2. Share the Way of the Week and cite a biblical passage or two from the Study Guide.
3. The person leading the meeting should be responsible for seeing that this happens.
4. If there's a printed agenda, be sure to list this as the first agenda item.
5. Keep the discussion to no more than 3-5 minutes. If the discussion goes on too long, and begins to erode the time available for the rest of the agenda, you'll not want to continue the ritual.
6. If you're having a great conversation that you hate to stop, thank people for their engagement and suggest that anyone who can stay for a few minutes after the meeting is over is invited to continue the discussion where you left off.
7. The leader of the meeting should identify the Way of the Week and then initiate the conversation.
8. The more interactive the discussion is, and the more people are involved, the better.
9. The leader may want to make a brief comment about what this Way means to him/her, but then should quickly transition into getting others involved.
10. The best way to get others involved is to ask specific questions, e.g.:
 - a. Who has a story they'd like to share where this Way was relevant recently?
 - b. Why do you think this Way is important to our success?
 - c. What do you think will be the impact on our church if we don't practice this Way successfully?
 - d. What do you find to be the most challenging about practicing this Way?
 - e. What are some of the techniques you use to practice this Way?
 - f. What can/will you do to increase your focus on practicing this Way this week?
 - g. How do you think you can improve how well you practice this Way?
11. After you've been doing this for a while, consider asking other members of your committee or group to lead a weekly discussion. Give them some advance notice so that they can feel prepared. You'll find that the level of ownership they take over the Way changes dramatically when they're asked to lead a discussion.
12. These discussions are some of your best opportunities to teach and reinforce the Ways. This is where you work through the subtleties, gray areas, and nuances of them. There are many layers of nuance to these, as you'll undoubtedly see.
13. Depending on each person's role, they may be in a fair number of different meetings in a given week and will therefore talk about the week's Way multiple times. That's a good thing.
14. Thank you for helping to shape and strengthen our culture for God's purpose and glory.