



CITY FELLOWSHIP
BAPTIST CHURCH

MISSION & VALUES

OUR MISSION

THE PRAYER & PURPOSE OF CITY FELLOWSHIP

As a church we desire to become a Bible-saturated, Cross-centered, multi-ethnic family that seeks to demonstrate the reconciling love of God through Gospel-driven deeds of mercy.

OUR VALUES

THE VISION THAT DRIVES OUR MISSION

The landscape of Jackson is awash with churches. One might justifiably ask, is another church really needed? We believe the answer is yes. The mission that compels us in planting City Fellowship is specific and rises directly from real needs in this particular community.

As Jackson grows, she is in danger of traveling the way of many great cities before her: the way of ongoing racial strife, and socio-economic fragmentation. How we engage with these needs is critical to the propagation of the Gospel. If, indeed, the local church is to be a display of God's glory in the earth, then that display must be incarnational, just like the ministry of Jesus. More and more ministries are needed that feel a calling to purposefully live and work among the needs of their communities.

Of course, only scripture rightly serves as the lens through which we perceive all of those needs. Here are some specific concerns in our community, and how we feel they should be perceived, and hopefully addressed through the ministry of City Fellowship...

1. A view of *ethnic and socio-economic reconciliation* driven by 2 Corinthians 5

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ (in the message of reconciliation); certain that God is appealing through us, we plead on Christ's behalf, "Be reconciled to God."

There is an undeniable ethnic thread that runs through the story of the bible, and very often it is a negative one. It seems that no matter what we do, no matter what we try, the thorn that simply will not be removed from the side of mankind is that of ethnic strife.

In this, of course, God has a plan. Throughout the law and the prophets we see the “suffering servant”, the “man of sorrows” that will come to inaugurate a new covenant to be made with the “seed of Abraham”. We see the Christ who is coming to do the impossible: to reconcile a depraved humanity and a Holy God. We see God breaking into history and doing something only He, in His grace, can do. And he chooses to illustrate this gracious act of reconciliation by bringing together religious, ethnic and social groups that would normally not associate with one another, and uniting them in Christ. As the book of Ephesians teaches us:

“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility...that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.”

Here we see that God cares about racial reconciliation, not because it’s warm and fuzzy, or modern and enlightened, but because it illustrates the reconciling love of God for us. Christians crossing lines of class, race and culture for Jesus' sake should be a natural implication of the Gospel.

2. A view of “seeking the peace of the city” driven by Jeremiah 29

“Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.”

Evangelicals, on the whole, are notably anti-urban. Americans in general have seen cities as places to be feared and escaped once the financial means were available to do so, and the church has unfortunately adopted this view. Even in our small city, this trend is obvious. As of the year 2007, the 38305 zip code has enjoyed a 14.54 percent population growth, while the 38301 zip code (the downtown area) has experienced a negative growth of 3.09 percent in the same amount of time (according to Sperling’s “Hometown USA”). Not surprisingly, household income levels and real

estate values reveal a greater concentration of Jackson's poor in the "city center". What is the right response of the people of God in light of these facts? The Jeremiah 29 principle seems to be one of engagement and collaboration rather than flight or separation. The false prophets had told the people to stay outside the city in their own religious and ethnic enclaves. They advised suspicion of the city, even hatred for it. God rebuked those prophets through Jeremiah who tells the people to pray for the city, to root for it, to seek its peace. The use of the word "shalom" implies that God intended for His people to have a redemptive kind of love for Babylon. For us, seeking the "shalom" of the city is working for good schools, safer neighborhoods and better parks. It is earnestly seeking the good of all of her citizens, for just like the exiles in Babylon, we too are strangers here. This world is not our home. The book of Jeremiah gives us guidance on how we are to engage with this city (and world) in which we are just "passing through". One day the New Jerusalem will be established, and Christ will reign in the New Heavens and the New Earth. Our primary job, as the church, is to "go and tell" of this coming kingdom, recognizing that nothing but the second coming of Christ will finally reverse the effect of the fall on our cities. But we are also aware that the way the church serves the city now, either points a watching world toward that coming kingdom or away from it.

3. A view of *justice, mercy and compassion* driven by Luke 10

"Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" "The one who showed mercy to him," he said. Then Jesus told him, "Go and do the same."

If we are to follow after Christ, this means we must walk where he walked, and this will necessarily lead us among the fatherless, the homeless, the hurting and dispossessed. The book of James calls it "true religion" to look after orphans and widows. It is normal and natural for truly converted people to become like the "Gospel Neighbor" we see in the story of the Good Samaritan, a man who exposes himself to great physical and financial risk for the sake of a man he normally would have despised. As Christ points out in the Sermon on the Mount, it is through the good deeds of these kinds of neighbors that men may come to "give glory to your Father in heaven". So we are to understand that our good deeds have gospel implications. Being a father to the fatherless points to the one true father who runs to prodigal children. Feeding the hungry points to the bread of life. Housing the homeless points to He who is faithful to give the exile an eternal home. Of course, salvation must come through the hearing of the word. But when the Gospel message is heard, it rings true or untrue according to what has been seen in the life of he who proclaims it.

4. A view of *marriage and family* driven by Ephesians 5 and 6

This mystery is profound, but I am talking about Christ and the church.

Our first tutors on the nature of God are found in our parents. God intends that the relationship between a man and wife should be such that when their child reads in the bible about the love that Christ has for the church, that child should say, “I recognize that in the love my dad has for my mom”. This is why God’s concern for the fatherless is so pervasive in the bible. Not only because the fatherless are among the most vulnerable in our society, but mainly because their understanding of God is handicapped at a young age. Of all the households in Jackson, 43.9% are described as single parent, placing our city among the 101 top cities in the US for this living arrangement. We call this a crisis, and are compelled to action not only because of the social costs of fatherless ness but, more importantly, because of the theological costs. It is imperative that the church be populated with strong families, led by men who feel a burden, not only for their own children, but also for the estimated 11,000 fatherless children in this community.