

Perspective

A Newsletter of the First Presbyterian Church
of Phoenixville, Pennsylvania

Volume XLVII No. 3 March 2022

Phone: 610-933-8816

Fax: 610-933-8060

www.fpc-phoenixville.org

email: secretaryfpc145@gmail.com



First Presbyterian Church
Phoenixville, Pennsylvania
1846 – 2022

The *Perspective* is published 12 times a year by the First Presbyterian Church of Phoenixville. Please direct information or comments to the Church Office at 610-933-8816 or to secretaryfpc145@gmail.com.

Publisher: Sue Smith Contributors: Church Family; Proofreader: Jeanne Blackburn

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From the Pastor

Matthew 24

³ When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” ⁴ Jesus answered them, “Beware that no one leads you astray. ⁵ For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Messiah!’^[a] and they will lead many astray. ⁶ And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not alarmed; for this must take place, but the end is not yet. ⁷ For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines^[b] and earthquakes in various places: ⁸ all this is but the beginning of the birth pangs.

⁹ “Then they will hand you over to be tortured and will put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of my name. ¹⁰ Then many will fall away,^[c] and they will betray one another and hate one another. ¹¹ And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. ¹² And because of the increase of lawlessness, the love of many will grow cold. ¹³ But the one who endures to the end will be saved. ¹⁴ And this good news^[d] of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world, as a testimony to all the nations; and then the end will come.

Every time I turn on NPR while I’m driving, usually to or from the church, the news is focused on a potential Russian invasion of Ukraine. Of course, Russia already invaded Ukraine when they annexed Crimea, and the two have quietly been at war for the last eight years or so, but you probably know what I’m talking about: the most recent threatened invasion of more of Ukraine. This is, of course, “war and rumors of war,” but this term has a different meaning than it did in Jesus’s time. We have the ‘benefit’ of social media and 24-hour news channels. If Jesus’s audience in Judea heard rumors of war, the war would have been on their doorstep. We hear every rumor of every war, in the corporate hope that we remain vaguely afraid and glued to our screens so that they can sell more advertising.

Jesus connects the war and rumor of war with a second phenomenon, that of false Messiahs. Where rumor of war is far more common in our day, we might think that false Messiahs were more common in Judea two thousand years ago. In fact, from history we know of multiple leaders claiming to be the Messiah or the Son of Man or Son of God in the decades before and after Jesus’s ministry. In the stretch of about 100 years around Jesus’s life, we have Hezekiah, Judas son of Ezekias, Simon of Perea, Athronges the Shepherd, Judas the Galilean, Theudas, James and Simon sons of Judas the Galilean, The Egyptian, Eleazar son of Dineus, Menachem son of Judas the Galilean, and Eleazar son of Jairus.

It was common to refer to these Messiahs as criminals, and the Greek terms used to describe Barabas and the two ‘thieves’ crucified to either side of Jesus were also used to describe many of the Messiahs killed by the Roman government. It is possible that at the time, Barabas and the two ‘thieves’ or ‘bandits’ were other people who claimed to be Messiahs. The Greek terms support this possibility - we don’t have enough context from either story to know for sure. Either way, claiming to be the Messiah, at the time, was an offense that could bring the death penalty. Rome was famously intolerant of political dissidents, whatever they called themselves, and the punishment of choice for such resistance was crucifixion.

We might think that false Messiahs are much less common today in our enlightened, technological age, but if anything I would say they are more common than in the past. They don’t use the term Messiah any longer, for the most part, but the idea that certain people are “chosen” to save us is common.

Whenever a politician says something like “Only I can fix this problem” (spoiler: they can’t) there you have a false Messiah. Whenever we see a headline that is something along the lines of ‘this billionaire will solve climate change’ (spoiler: he won’t), we have a false Messiah being presented to us. When a religious leader says that “My way is the only way” (spoiler: it isn’t), we have a false Messiah. If anything, we currently have a profusion of false Messiahs.

Just as in the ancient world, social anxiety, the fear of war and rumors of war, the fear of inflation, the fear of scarcity, or simply the fear of people who are not like us, can drive us into the arms of false Messiahs. And it is very different from ancient Judea, because these Messiahs of our age are not insurgents organizing among the poor and dispossessed - they are the very powerful people who created and benefit from the problems they claim to be able to solve. A politician is unlikely to change the corrupt system that elected him. A billionaire is not going to dismantle the systems that create climate change but also made them a billionaire. A popular religious leader will almost never admit they are wrong, or change their mind about something, because they can't risk the loss of followers.

So then, what do I take from the text quoted above? If nothing else, I take the idea that when we are surrounded by anxieties, when we are feeling them ourselves, and when all the news seems like bad news, we must not let that drive us into the arms of a false Messiah. Not even if the false Messiah seems like someone we'd get a beer with; not even if they are very wealthy and successful; not even if they are part of our political or religious tribe. Whenever someone says "Only I can fix this", or "Only I am right", they are literally supplanting the place of God. And when we put our existential trust in someone like that, we are putting them in the place that God should occupy in our lives. When all of the news is bad, it can be very hard to trust God, but it is in those very times when we must, because in the end, only God is trustworthy.

Pastor Doug



Upcoming Scripture Readings

March 6th: Proverbs 11:1-13; Matthew 6:19-34

March 13th: 1 Kings 19:4-21; Revelation 1:9-20

March 20th: 1 Peter 4:7-11; Matthew 20:1-16

March 27th: Numbers 5:5-10; Romans 10:5-13

Worship and Music Notes

Lent starts with Ash Wednesday on March 2. Some think of Lent as a time to give something up. Let's try to reverse that and pick something up.

The first option is a wonderful Lenten devotional from Pittsburgh Seminary. It is available on line at www.pts.edu/devotional_1.

Once you are on that page, just scroll down to the date you want and click on the online option. A few printed copies will be made available for those who need them.

The second option is the study entitled "A Celebration of Discipline". The book by Richard Foster was first published in 1970, but we will be using an updated edition available from Amazon or Christian Book Distributors. If you prefer that the church order a copy for you, let Pastor Doug know. Keep an eye on the bulletin for the "meeting" times for this study.

Our Ash Wednesday service will be live and broadcast, just like our regular services, on Wednesday, March 2 at 7:30 PM. Communion will be served and the service will be in the sanctuary with no meal prior to the service.

See you in church

3.





Mission, Action, Concern Committee (MAC)

Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. (Galatians 6:2)

Winter Clothing Giveaway: February 12

On Saturday, February 12, 41 people stopped by to select coats and other winter clothing. Some of the “left-over” items were delivered to Jubilee Ministries in Coatesville.

Garage Sale: March 26

The People to People Garage Sale is coming up on Saturday, March 26. More information will be available on the P2P Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/FPCPeopleToPeople>.

Souper Bowl 2022

This year's Souper Bowl of Caring was a big success! We collected 117 cans of food and \$61 in donations, all of which was delivered to Phoenixville Area Community Services (PACS). Special thanks to all who helped with this effort, especially our amazing Sunday School friends!



March Mission to Supply the PACS Pantry

During the month of March, we will again be collecting donations for Phoenixville Area Community Services (PACS). Throughout the month, there will be containers in the narthex and outside the church office for nonperishable food items and other household needs.

Check the church bulletin (or <https://www.pacsphx.org/donate-goods>) for a list of specific items needed. Monetary contributions are welcomed, as well (either cash or check to First Presbyterian Church of Phoenixville). Donations can also be dropped off in the church office. Contact Sandy Heidel (csheidel@verizon.net) or Jeff McLaughlin (jeffmcl@icloud.com) with questions.

Good Works Volunteers Needed

Among the top-rated priorities in the recent MAC priorities survey was “Participation in a one-day Good Works home project.” Workdays in our area are coming up on March 12 and April 9. The commitment is from 8:15 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. If you want to volunteer and/or receive information about these workdays, send an email to Good Works at business@goodworksinc.org. You can also find general information about Good Works at <https://www.goodworksinc.org>. If you do sign up for a Good Works project, please let us know (Jeff McLaughlin at jeffmcl@icloud.com or anyone else on the MAC Committee)!

News From the Philippines



Through the MAC Committee, our church supports the mission work of Reverend Cathy Chang and Juan Lopez (with daughter Aurelie) in Southeast Asia, particularly in the Philippines. In a recent message to supporters, Cathy and Juan reported that, amid the added challenges of COVID-19, their advocacy work among Filipinos has continued. In particular, there is concern about upcoming national elections (May 2022) for president, vice president, senators, and congressional representatives. In addition to disinformation and other election irregularities, citizens and journalists are regularly subject to intimidation and arrests. We are asked to pray that Filipinos do not become discouraged from participating in the political process. On a positive note, Cathy and Juan report that their worship and Sunday School programs are thriving. They are also facilitating a webinar series about the electoral process, with topics ranging from whether the church should be involved in social issues, fake news and how to spot it, political dynasties, and corruption. In their words: “Thankfully, this small group and local church are one constant source of life and light.” Let us continue to pray for sustaining “life and light” among those who are served by Reverend Cathy Chang and Juan Lopez.

From the Grant Writing Team

Jacqui Busch, Kristin Craven, Pastor Doug Hagler, Amy Myers, Lucinda Parrish, and Chris Wittrock.

The team met in January to discuss resources, grants we are presently working on, and organize a draft 'tracking process'. A few of us set out on a refresher course in grant writing through a 501c3 organization, The Parish Resource Center (PRC), located in Lancaster. You can read more about PRC [here](#).

PRC is accepting applications for a grant writing course, which offers deeper training and individual consultations to produce a grant proposal. We have submitted our application and hope to be selected as one of the 12 organizations to move forward. Our project is to develop a prison ministry at FPC, which includes developing critical partnerships within the Phoenixville Community. To that end, we ask you to Save the Date for a community meeting entitled Prison Ministry 101, on Sunday, April 3 at 2 p.m., in the FPC sanctuary. Stay tuned to the bulletin for event details.

We invite your ideas (and partnership) for obtaining grants for First Presbyterian. Keep an eye out for the Grant Writing Request Form, which we will make available electronically and in the narthex.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Wittrock

Foundation	Progress Report	Notes	Next Steps	Contact
Oldham Little Church Foundation	Working on the LOI	Construction grant to benefit FPC buildings. The amount of the grant is presently unknown		Kristin Craven
Synod of the Trinity Peacemaking Grant	I just finished distributing funds to support the vigils we've been holding twice a month since July of 2020.	These vigils have brought together a few dozen organizations and congregations from the Phoenixville area to stand in solidarity with Black Lives Matter and be a witness for racial justice.		Pastor Doug

Pub Theology

The next Pub Theology will meet on Sunday, March 13th at **7:00 PM** at **The Foodery**, (325 Bridge St, Phoenixville). Join Pastor Doug in a discussion of theological topics and current events over food and drinks. Listen, chat, and hash things out...it's fun and thought-provoking!



Men's Group

All men of the congregation are welcome to meet with Pastor Doug for a Men's Group gathering after the service on Sunday, March 20th.



Palm Sunday Worship
 April 10th at 10:30 am
Maundy Thursday Communion Service
 April 14th at 7:30 pm
Easter Sunday Worship
 April 17th at 10:30 am

March Scrip Orders

We will be placing orders for gift cards three times in March. Orders will be placed every other Wednesday (March 2, 16 & 30). If you would like to place an order, please call or text Lynne Williams at 610-955-4749 (cell), or send an email to (brettdrew@comcast.net). We will complete the order forms for you. Orders and checks must be received by the day before the orders are placed (March 1, 15 & 29). Please make checks payable to "First Presbyterian Church DR". As always, thank you for continuing to support this program! The Stewardship Committee



One Great Hour of Sharing

As Christians we are called to love one another by sharing what we have with those in need. One way to answer this call is through our gifts to "One Great Hour of Sharing". This is the single, largest way that Presbyterians come together every year to help our neighbors in need around the world.

A gift to this offering enables the church to share God's love by providing relief to those affected by natural disasters, by providing food to the hungry, and by helping low-income communities overcome injustice and oppression.

During the season of **Lent** (March 2 – April 17) we invite you to give generously to "One Great Hour of Sharing". Envelopes are available in your offering envelope boxes, in the pew racks, or you may send a check with **OGHS** noted in the memo line.

Offerings will be received throughout Lent, with a special dedication on **Palm Sunday, April 10**. Together we can once again help change the lives of many.

Thank you for your life changing offering.



On-Line Contribution Information

Several visitors to the church have asked about on-line giving. Below is the link to Faith Life, the app. that handles our on-line contributions.

If you are a friend or member of the church, and you have an envelope number, you can include when the on-line account is set-up. If you do not have an envelope number, you can contribute as a friend.

You can also access the link on the church web site. Direct any questions to fpctreasurer145@gmail.com. Thank you. <https://faithlife.com/fpcop-n/give>



Sunday School

Sunday School is back!! Following a pause in January, Sunday School resumed on February 13th, and it felt so good!

As we strive to keep everyone safe, Sunday School continues to be held once a month in Fellowship Hall.

We have changed our time together to during the morning worship service. Children are to attend church with their families, and following the Children's message will go to Fellowship Hall with our teachers. Children age 3 and up will go to Sunday School, and those under 3 will go up to the nursery. Our next Sunday School will be March 13. (Future dates are April 10 & May 22).

We look forward to our time together!

(Note: On weeks that we don't have Sunday School, children through 3rd grade may go to the nursery area after the Children's message.)

PARISH LIFE

Happy St. Patrick's Day



Please join us for a special St. Patrick's Day edition of Zoom Trivia, featuring Judy & Hermann Ball as moderators! We will meet at 7:30PM on Friday, March 18th.

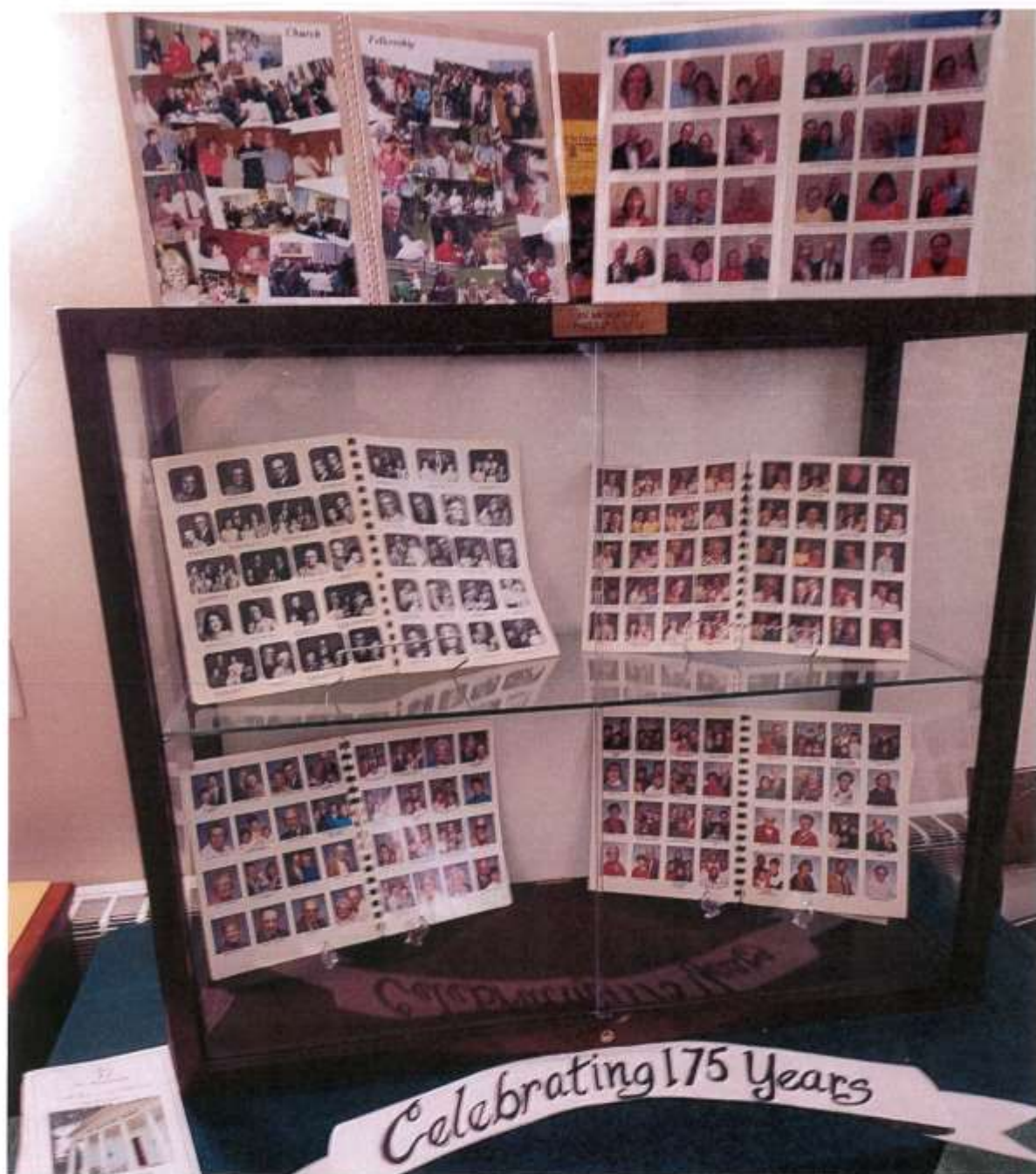


Wishing everyone the Luck of the Irish!



We look forward to sharing these special times with you!

The Parish Life Committee meets on the second Tuesday of each month at 7PM in the Zoom Parlor...Please join us!



FPC 175th Anniversary

Due to Covid restrictions and the safety of our church family, some of our plans have been put on hold. However, we invite you to take a moment and check out the 175th Anniversary display case in the narthex. Currently on display are past FPC photo directories. Take a look. Do you recognize any of these faces? My how we've changed! We celebrate who we were! We celebrate who we are!

Happy 175th!!

From the Clerk of Session

❖ Average Sunday morning attendance:

In January we had an average of 31 worshipping in person (wearing masks) and an average of 24 households viewing the 10:30am YouTube premiere with 11 *chatting*. Omicron has affected in person worship. Please think of *chatting* as the YouTube version of signing the Red Friendship Book and join in the chat, if you are able.

❖ The Life of the church

- Membership: no changes - Current membership is 170.
- Birth: none
- Death: none
- Wedding: none
- Baptism: none

❖ Session Meeting Information:

- Information from the January 25, 2022 Stated Session Meeting will be reviewed at the March 22nd Session Meeting and will be in the following Perspective.

Jewell Baker, Clerk of Session



This month we celebrate St. Patrick, so we thought it would be appropriate to honor him by learning a bit about the background of both the saint, and the Holiday. We have all heard the story of the snakes being driven from Ireland, but little else is discussed, at least here in the States.

The Irish have observed St. Patrick's Day for over 1,000 years. St. Patrick was born in Roman Britain in the fifth century, and kidnapped from his home at the age of 16. He was brought to Ireland to be a slave. After escaping slavery, he returned to Ireland to bring Christianity to its citizens. Understandably, St. Patrick is the patron saint of Ireland and its national apostle.

Today, Irish citizens observe the religious holiday by attending church in the morning, and eating, drinking and feasting in the afternoon. Lenten prohibitions are suspended on March 17th, permitting the merriment.

Happy St. Patrick's Day!

Submitted on behalf of the Deacons by,

Ellen Williams

March 2022

First Presbyterian Church of Phoenixville

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 6:30p Zumba class 7:00p MAC	Ash Wednesday 2 7:30p Ash Wednesday Communion Service	3 9:00a WIC 9:00a Clothing ministry 10:00a Food ministry 7:00p Choir 7:00p We Are Virtual Vigil	4 9:00a WIC Sue Smith vacation	5 9:30a Zumba class
6 8:30a Bible Study 10:30a Worship	7 6:30p Zumba class 7:30p Property	8 6:30p Zumba class 7:00p Personnel 7:00p Parish Life	9 7:30p Bell Choir	10 9:00a Public Health Mgt. Corp. 9:00a Clothing ministry 10:00a Food ministry 7:00p Choir 7:30p Compassionate Friends	11	12
13 8:30a Bible Study 10:30a Worship 10:45a Sunday School 12:00n Worship & Music 7:00p Pub Theology Daylight saving time begins	14 6:30p Zumba class Sue Smith vacation	15 6:30p Zumba class 7:15p Church Growth/ Christian Education Sue Smith vacation	16 7:30p Bell Choir Sue Smith vacation	17 9:00a WIC 9:00a Clothing ministry 10:00a Food ministry 7:00p Choir 7:00p We Are Vigil	18 9:00a WIC 7:30p St. Patrick's Day TRIVIA NIGHT via Zoom	19 9:30a Zumba class Perspective articles due for April
20 8:30a Bible Study 10:30a Worship 12:00n Men's Group 12:00n Women's Circle	21 6:30p Zumba class	22 10:00a AARP Board Meeting 6:30p Zumba class 7:30p Session	23 7:30p Bell choir Set up for flea market	24 9:00a Clothing ministry 10:00a Food ministry 7:00p Choir Set up for flea market	25 Set up for flea market	26 9:00a-1:00p People to People Flea Market
27 8:30a Bible Study 10:30a Worship 12:30p Deacons meeting 7:00p Antiracism Book Club	28 6:30p Zumba class	29 6:30p Zumba class	30 7:30p Bell choir	31 9:00a Clothing ministry 10:00a Food ministry 7:00p Choir		