

Perspective

A Newsletter of the First Presbyterian Church
of Phoenixville, Pennsylvania

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From the Pastor

Matthew 5:17-20

¹⁷ “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. ¹⁸ For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. ¹⁹ Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰ For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

I thought I would expand a bit on what I preached about on the 17th of July. My goal that Sunday was to give an introduction to how we in the Presbyterian Church (USA) read scripture. This can only be a general overview, of course, since there is not only one ‘right’ way to read.

We often think of literalists as the people who take the Bible most seriously, but I don’t think that’s the case. Taking your own surface reading as the final word strikes me as pretty lazy. Studying scripture is far too complicated and challenging when taken seriously. Smarter people than I, experts in their field, can spend their whole career studying one book, or a few passages, and continually find more there. At the very least, we should take someone’s reading with a large grain of salt if they are not fluent in both Koine Greek and Ancient Hebrew, with some Aramic as well for the latter parts of the Old Testament. Then to have read a lot of the best scholarship of the past few hundred years, one should be fluent in German and French as well. And that’s just covering the European scholars. You’ll want Attic Greek and Latin for older texts, and then you’re still ignoring what the current majority Christian world has to say about scripture (that majority lives in Latin America, Africa and Asia).

So, we must read with humility, and listen for humility in others before we take their readings seriously.

We must also read with care. There is a lot of scripture that was originally written as poetry which is now presented in English as prose. There are texts like Job that are clearly presented as a kind of fable or legend (where is the “land of Uz?” Where else do ‘the satan’ and God make wagers?) and other texts like Deuteronomy which are a summary of still other texts you might have already read. Some like Ecclesiastes are very challenging compared to much of the rest of scripture, and other texts like the Song of Solomon are vivid love poetry that many historically have argued should not be in scripture at all. We have to have in mind what kind of text we are reading when we are reading part of the Bible - it is a library more than a book.

Another example from the 2 Timothy reading we used on the 17th: when the author of 2 Timothy writes “all scripture,” *they are not referring to 2 Timothy*, or any part of the New Testament, which did not exist yet. When Jesus says that none of scripture will pass away until it is fulfilled, he is again referring only to what we call the Old Testament. There is no reason to assume that Paul thought he was writing holy scripture when he was writing his letters. It was decided generations later that what he had written was scripture, that it belonged in the same category as the scrolls of Isaiah and Exodus and Daniel. The bible has a history to it - it was written and edited and compiled over the course of at least 1000 years. The oldest texts might be from 1200 BCE or earlier, but it didn’t exist as a single book until 350 CE.

One thing I didn’t give enough of on Sunday was concrete advice. Of course, there is only so much I can cram into 20 minutes, after which people start nodding off and checking their phones, but I do have some concrete bits of advice. Some of this is a repeat of what I posted to the FPC Family group on Facebook, but I know many of you are not members of that group (or Facebook).

1. **Get yourself a study Bible.** I recommend one that uses the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) as that is what we use in the pews and in worship at FPC. It is the translation that the PC(USA) uses as a standard, and NRSV study Bibles tend to be well-researched. Specifically, I use the *New Oxford Annotated Bible* - it's what I was given as an undergraduate and as a seminary student to use. But you want articles before each book that will give you the basics of what kind of text it is, when and how it might have been written, etc.
2. **Follow your curiosity.** You can certainly start on page 1, Genesis 1:1 if you choose. That's a great place to start, and Genesis will have many stories you recognize and some others that might surprise you. But you can also start elsewhere: with the Psalms for poetry, or Mark for the earliest Gospel, or Ruth for a short story. You can learn about God's priorities in Amos or Isaiah, or read Luke and then Acts for an overview of the Gospel and the early church from a single point of view. You can read Romans for Paul's theology, or Revelation for something like a supernatural horror movie (with a happy ending).
3. **Remember context.** The study Bible will help a great deal with this, but remember: you are reading a translation, and the books of the Bible have many different authors (sometimes more than one in a single book). They were put in this particular order because it made sense at the time, but this is far from the only order in which one could read them. Texts of the Bible also comment on other texts. Job can be read as a reaction to Proverbs; Paul quotes and paraphrases parts of the Hebrew scriptures. Jesus sometimes takes passages at face value, and sometimes re-interprets them. In Acts, God tells Peter in a dream to change his interpretation of clean and unclean.
4. **Be humble.** I don't know nearly enough to be sure what a particular part of the Bible means. There is always more to learn, and I have seen an 80-year-old published Biblical scholar who is fluent in Greek and Hebrew be surprised and change their mind. I can make an educated guess, and I can know enough to live my life a certain way, but I try to remain humble, and I don't take seriously any Biblical reading that isn't similarly humble. Literalism is a shallow reading, and when people call the Bible 'inerrant' they usually just mean their own interpretation is without error.
5. **Trust you will meet God in scripture.** Ultimately, this is the main reason we read scripture - those of us who are not just geeks for early Iron Age Near Eastern writing. By the work of the Holy Spirit, despite our limited knowledge and despite reading it in translation, and even if we aren't experienced scholars, we are able to encounter God in scripture. It happens consistently enough that for three thousand years, people have kept at it. We are no different. Most of us are not here to be scholars or book geeks - we are here to encounter God, and scripture is one place we can do so.

Pastor Doug



Upcoming Scripture Readings

August 7th: John 4:16-26; Romans 11:33-12:8; Exodus 3:1-6
 August 14th: TBA; Rev. Moir guest preacher
 August 21st: Isaiah 56:1-8; Matthew 22:23-33
 August 28th: TBA



Deacons' Dialogue



Looking to broaden your knowledge of other cultures? As Christians, we should welcome all cultures. Part of this process, naturally, involves learning more about the food, entertainment, and beliefs of those cultures.

Here's your opportunity!

Saturday, July 30th, Alianzas de Phoenixville will present their 12th Annual Cultural Diversity Festival in Reeves Park from 1PM to 5PM. Here you will experience great food, entertainment for the entire family, raffles, community resources, and much more. And, as if anyone needed another reason to attend, a group from First Presbyterian Church will be providing entertainment in the form of puppet shows and singing (in both English and Spanish). The presentations are appropriate for children of all ages and will include opportunities for audience participation. So, if you are at the Festival on the afternoon of July 30, look for the FPC gang and join in the fun! For more information about this event, check the Alianzas website (<https://www.alianzasdephoenixville.org>) or contact Jeff McLaughlin at fpcchildrenandyouth@gmail.com.

Alianzas de Phoenixville strives for equity and dignity in diverse communities, regardless of their country of origin. The group does this by providing services to the under-resourced, and by promoting intercultural exchanges to connect all individuals in the community.

Your Board of Deacons can't think of a better way to enjoy a sunny summer Saturday than to eat, play, and learn - all the while enjoying the diversity of other cultures.

Submitted on behalf of the Deacons by, Ellen Williams

Church Parking Lot Donations



If you were in Phoenixville last month you must have heard about BlobFest but did you know church members, on behalf of the Stewardship Committee, made \$913.00 "parking" cars in the church lot during the 2-day event? Friday night was especially fun chatting with those dressed for the Colonial Theater "Run-Out" but even on a regular First Friday we meet folks from the area or far away who park in our lot while spending time on Bridge Street.

So far this summer volunteers have collected **\$2,835.00** for our church, working on First Friday's and special events (when weather permits).

If you want to help in the future please see Lynne Williams, Jewell Baker or check your email for the Sign-up Genius. Thanks, from the Stewardship Committee

Church Growth Update



Bridge of Hope

The family is doing well, and the kids are excited to get back to school! We have a child starting 3rd grade, one starting 12th grade, and two college students who need some dorm supplies. If you would like to help support our family, you can do so by buying Target cards through the Scrip program. We think Target cards are the best all-around option and will really help to stretch the family budget. We will collect the cards in the office and provide them to the family by Aug 13th. We would appreciate your help, as would the family. Thanks in advance.

Prison Ministry

On June 9, Amy Myers and Chris Wittrock attended an online panel discussion co-hosted by Healing Communities, PA, entitled, *An Interfaith Conversation on Successful Reintegration in West Philly and Beyond*. The focus of our discussion was the important role of our church communities in establishing strong relationships with prisoners while they are in prison, and the importance of maintaining support two-three years after they have reentered the community. One way to form a connection is by becoming a pen pal.

While at the meeting, Chris connected with Dr. Latisha Webb, Co-founder & Lead Visual Creator at Opportunity, Inc., a non-profit based in Southwest Philadelphia. In August 2020, Dr. Webb created the Sista2Sista Soul2Soul program to connect women in the community with 318 incarcerated women who are serving 20-plus year sentences in PA state correctional facilities, Cambridge Springs and Muncy. We learned that women do not receive family visitors as frequently as their incarcerated male counterparts, because the children are often placed in social support systems or are staying with families who lack transportation. If you would like to learn more about being a pen pal and restoring hope to these women, please contact Chris at cwittrock22@gmail.com.

Our regular visits to Books Through Bars (BTB) are going well and we have at least one newcomer per visit. Please consider joining us on the third Saturday of the month to help pack books for prisoners and organize their library. We are always accepting books on behalf of BTB. Please visit the website to read the requirements, and please follow the donation rules. <https://www.booksthroughbars.org/donate-books>.

Our PAR Recycle Works (<https://home.par-recycleworks.org/>) project was a success, and we thank all of those who participated. PAR is looking forward to another trip to the burbs!

Financial Results / Mid-Year

- Pledges to date are short of planned giving by \$11,500
- Non-pledged giving is favorable by \$300
- Expenses are favorable by \$3,300
- We have received a generous donation from a church member.

This donation will enable the church to end the year much closer to budget than we were tracking year-to-date.



Your continued support of the church is greatly appreciated. Contribution statements were emailed/mailed out in July. Call the church office if you have not yet received your statement.

Christian Education

Virtual Scavenger Hunt

Everyone from the First Presbyterian Church community is invited to participate in a Virtual Scavenger Hunt between August 12 and 27, 2022. Here's how it works.

First, register [here](https://tinyurl.com/FPCScavengerHunt) (tinyurl.com/FPCScavengerHunt). Be prepared to come up with a team name; you can use your own name, a pseudonym, or any name you want! On August 11, everyone who registered will receive a list of destinations to visit around Phoenixville. These will include local nonprofits and other community-focused locations. Teams can partake in the "hunt" anytime between August 12 and 27, as individual schedules allow.

At each spot, take a photo to document your visit, then share the photo on the [FPC Scavenger Hunt Facebook Event Page](#) or email it to fpcchildrenandyouth@gmail.com.

On Sunday, August 28, we will host a celebration and culminating event in Fellowship Hall after worship service. We hope you can join us! If you have any questions, please reach out to Jeff McLaughlin at fpcchildrenandyouth@gmail.com.



Needed: Sunday Teachers and Assistants for Fall 2022

Beginning in September, weekly Sunday School sessions will take place during the worship service. For this reason, we need a rotating group of adults to serve as either lead teachers or assistants in Sunday School. Prior teaching experience is not a requirement. Lesson plans will be provided and each group will have two adults on hand at all times. Please prayerfully consider volunteering for this important ministry to the youngest members of our congregation. Contact Jeff McLaughlin at fpcchildrenandyouth@gmail.com.

Caregiver Support Group

Pastor Doug is wondering whether there is interest in a Caregiver Support Group for our congregation and community. The focus would be people who are caregivers at home, not necessarily professionally (though professionals would be welcome too). Meeting time and day would be TBA based on who is interested. This would simply be a time to gather and support one another. Contact Pastor Doug if you are interested. 415-300-7912 cell, pastor145@comcast.net



Prayer Chain & Prayer Requests

Amy Myers, our Prayer Chain Coordinator, will be happy to forward your prayer requests to the members of the prayer chain. You can email Amy at fpcprayerchain1@gmail.com and members will be lifting you up in prayer. You may also call Sue Smith at [\(610\) 933-8816](tel:(610)933-8816) and she will forward your requests on to Amy.

PARISH LIFE



FPC'S FINEST!

Our July 10th service brought everyone out in their finery for Old Time Religion Sunday, followed by – what else? – An ice cream social! The ladies and gentlemen attended in their best vintage attire. Kids of all ages gathered on the lawn after for a well-deserved cup or cone – complete with all of the toppings.



A super summer treat – we can't wait for next year!

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!

Inspirational Thoughts, Quotes & Proverbs to Live By —

- “Pain borne with fortitude is better than pain borne with despair.”
- “We achieve happiness by forcing ourselves to accept what God wants for us.”
- “Expectations are borne of hope or of fears.”
- “Where peace is the goal; peace will prevail.” A. A. Low
- “Life up your eyes on high and see who has created these stars.” Isaiah 40:26
- “My soul finds rest in God alone.” The Psalms
- “The Lord is close to the broken hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.”
Psalm 34:18
- “Compassion in which ethics takes root, does not assume it’s true proportions until it embraces not only man but every living being.” Albert Schweitzer
- The grand essentials in this life are something to do, something to love, and something to hope for.” Addison
- “The riches that are in the heart cannot be stolen!” Russian Proverb
- “Four things come not back: the spoken word, the sped arrow, the past life, and the neglected opportunity.” Arabian Proverb
- “Nothing is more highly to be prized than the value of each day.” Goethe
- “Anger is as a stone cast into the wasps’ nest.” Indian Proverb
- “A burden which one chooses is not felt.” Italian Proverb
- “Those who know when they have enough are rich.” Chinese Proverb
- “A man’s foibles are what makes him lovable.” Goethe
- “Habits are first cobwebs, then cables.” Anonymous
- “Our senses don’t deceive us; our judgement does.” Goethe
- “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.” Romans 15:15

Submitted by Sharyn Funderwhite

Raise Right Gift Cards



It's time to think about some **back-to-school** shopping! Think about shopping with **gift cards** to your favorite stores. Your purchase of gift cards will financially benefit the church.

In **August** we will be placing orders on **Monday, August 15** and **Wednesday, August 31**.

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

(August 14 & August 30). Please make checks payable to “First Presbyterian Church DR”.

As always, thank you for continuing to support this program!

The Stewardship Committee



Mission, Action, Concern Committee (MAC)

Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, so I send you."
(John 20:21)

Offering of Letters



Thanks to all who participated in our June Offering of Letters. Working together, children and adults prepared 26 letters that were mailed to Congressional representatives in Washington, DC. We continue to pray that our words will reach the hearts of our leaders, moving them to act on behalf of poor and hungry families. Our next Offering of Letters will take place in September.

Donations for the Next Garage Sale

We are currently accepting donations of household items and clothing for our next Garage Sale, which will take place in the fall (no furniture or computers/TVs, please). In addition, volunteers will be needed for set up, assistance during the sale, and clean up; watch for details. Donations are also welcome for the next MaxSold online auction, to take place in September or October.

Next Virtual Journey to Guatemala

The next virtual journey to Guatemala, entitled *The New Face of Mission*, will take place on Wednesday, August 24 at 7:30 p.m. The program, taking place on Zoom, will focus on fostering healthy cross-cultural relationships and, specifically, countering the effects of colonialism. There is a recommended book associated with this online experience: *Freeing Congregational Mission: A Practical Vision for Companionship, Cultural Humility, and Co-Development*. The authors, Hunter Farrell and Bala Kyllep from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, will direct the virtual journey. If you would like a copy of the book (no cost to you), contact Jeff McLaughlin at fpcchildrenandyouth@gmail.com before August 12.

Mission Focus: Greece



Nadia Ayoub is our FPC Mission Co-worker currently serving the Lord in Katerini, in the northern part of Greece. In her Spring 2022 newsletter, Nadia reports on her work with both locals and refugees in that area. There are currently a number of Syrian refugees in Greece who have, after many years, still not had their asylum requests approved. Nadia participates in a ministry for women called *Friday Teatime*, which provides a supportive opportunity for refugee women to gather, share their experiences, and receive encouragement. Nadia and her colleagues then follow up with support in the form of calls to the asylum office, legal assistance, and help completing paperwork required for children's schooling. Greece is also currently receiving refugees from Ukraine. Nadia's church is working with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to help facilitate settlement for these Ukrainian brothers and sisters, as well as the remaining Syrian refugees still living in Greece. Nadia asks that, in addition to our continued financial support, we pray for her ministry and for the displaced families with whom she works.

Worship and Music Notes

Please note that the pick-up choir will be on the first Sunday of August (all others are the second Sunday). So don't miss your opportunity to join in. September's pick up choir will be the second Sunday. Not much else happening besides everyone trying to keep cool. The sanctuary is comfortably cool. Worshiping via YouTube should allow you to be comfortable and if you are traveling, find a church to worship. Keep an eye out for what will be happening in September. See you in church



From the Clerk of Session

- ❖ Average Sunday morning attendance:
 - In May we had an average of 52 worshipping in person (masked) and an average of 19 households viewing the 10:30am YouTube premiere with 5 *chatting*.
 - In June we had an average of 45 worshipping in person (masked) and an average of 18 households viewing the 10:30am YouTube premiere with 4 *chatting*.
 - 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: Bob Kline requested transfer to Great Valley Presbyterian Church.
 - Current membership is 173.
 - Birth: none
 - Death: none
 - Wedding: none
 - Baptism: none
- ❖ Session Meeting Information:
 - Information from the May 24, 2022 Stated Session Meeting and July 18, 2022 Special Session Meeting will be reviewed at the August 23, 2022 Stated Session Meeting and will be in the following Perspective.



Jewell Baker, Clerk of Session



Presbyterian Women Circle

Looking to September, Circle will use the PW/Horizons 2023 study *Celebrating Sabbath: Accepting God's Gift of Rest and Delight* by Carol M. Bechtel. We meet on the third Sunday following worship, September to June so please join us. I'll be ordering study guides soon so let me know if you would like a copy.

Jewell Baker

Personnel Committee

The Personnel committee is interested in receiving feedback from the congregation about our staff's performance. Please feel free to email Jean Osterhoudt (jeanoster@comcast.net) or any committee member with your thoughts. If you would like to speak to the committee in person, please let us know and we will schedule a time at our next meeting.



Volunteer English Program

Change someone's life and see how it changes yours!

Tutors provide weekly, one-to-one English language instruction for adult immigrants or refugees who speak one of over 50 languages spoken in Chester County. Tutors must be available for a one-year commitment to tutoring. Prior teaching experience is not required. Life experience, time and compassion for helping others is a plus!

Join us at the August 2022 Virtual Tutor Training Workshop

Dates: Monday, Aug. 22nd; Thursday, Aug. 25th; Monday, Aug. 29th

Time: 9:00 am – 11:00 am each morning

Where: Zoom Virtual Platform

Workshop fee: \$40 for materials

Register online at volunteerenglish.org

References and background checks will be conducted before being matched with a student.

GOSPEL CONCERT WITH THE GUIDING LIGHTS

Don't miss the unique doo-wop harmonic blend of this 5 man acapella group from Philadelphia in an evening of live entertainment for all ages close to home!

Bring your family, friends and neighbors.



SATURDAY, OCTOBER 1ST at 7pm

St. Luke's United Church of Christ

200 West Main Street, Trappe, PA 19426

Advance sale tickets are \$18 by Sept 1st

(Dessert refreshments included)

Call 610-489-4933 to purchase your tickets.

Funds raised will be used for St. Luke's Ghana mission.

August 2022

First Presbyterian Church of Phoenixville

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 5:00p Staff meeting 6:30p Zumba	2 6:30p Zumba 7:00p MAC meeting	3	4 9:00a WIC 9:00a Clothing Ministry 10:00a Food Ministry J McLaughlin vacation	5 9:00a WIC J McLaughlin vacation	6 9:30a Zumba J McLaughlin vacation
Offering:C Wittrock 7 9:45a Pick Up Choir 10:30a Worship – Communion 12:00n Worship & Music 12:30p Deacons meeting 2:00p Piano Recital rental J McLaughlin vacation	8 6:30p Zumba 7:00p Finance & Stewardship J McLaughlin vaca S Smith vacation	9 6:30p Zumba 7:00p Parish Life 7:00p Personnel J McLaughlin vaca S. Smith vacation	10 S. Smith vacation	11 9:00a Public Health Mgt 9:00a Clothing Ministry 10:00a Food Ministry 7:30p Compassionate Friends meeting S. Smith vacation	12 Rev Hagler vacation S. Smith vacation	13 Rev Hagler vacation
Offering: M Eitl 14 10:30a Worship Rev. Lawrence Moir 7:00p Pub Theology Rev Hagler vacation Diane Legnini Vacation	15 6:30p Zumba Rev Hagler vacation D. Legnini Vacation	16 6:30p Zumba 7:15p Christian Educ 7:30p Property Rev Hagler vacation D. Legnini Vacation	17 10:00a AARP Board meeting D. Legnini Vacation	18 9:00a WIC 9:00a Clothing Ministry 10:00a Food Ministry 7:00p “We Are” Live Vigil @ Main & Bridge Streets D. Legnini Vacation	19 9:00a WIC D. Legnini Vacation	20 9:30a Zumba 10:30a Books thru Bars Perspective articles due for September D. Legnini Vacation
Offering: K Grocki 21 10:30a Worship 12:00n Men’s Group Diane Legnini Vacation	22 6:30p Zumba D. Legnini vacation	23 6:30p Zumba 7:30p Session D. Legnini vacation	24 7:30p Virtual Journey to Guatemala D. Legnini vacation	25 9:00a Clothing Ministry 10:00a Food Ministry Diane Legnini Vacation	26 D. Legnini Vacation	27 D. Legnini Vacation
Offering:R Williams 28 10:30a Worship 12:00n Scavenger Hunt Party 7:00p Antiracism Book Study via Zoom	29 6:30p Zumba	30 6:30p Zumba	31			