

Perspective

A Newsletter of the First Presbyterian Church
of Phoenixville, Pennsylvania

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First Presbyterian Church
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Table of Contents

Message from Pastor Doug.....	2
Advent schedule.....	3
Prophets & Angels Celebration.....	4
Clerk of Session report.....	4
Women's Circle.....	5
Parish Life Committee.....	5
Mission Action Committee.....	6
Personnel Committee.....	6
Sunday School.....	7
Church Growth Committee.....	7
Finance & Stewardship Committees.....	8
Worship & Music Committee.....	9
Deacons.....	9
Nominating Committee.....	10
December calendar.....	11
January calendar.....	12

From the Pastor

Luke 14:28-33

²⁸ For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether he has enough to complete it? ²⁹ Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it will begin to ridicule him, ³⁰ saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.' ³¹ Or what king, going out to wage war against another king, will not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to oppose the one who comes against him with twenty thousand? ³² If he cannot, then while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for the terms of peace. ³³ So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions.

Jesus said some frightening things. When we, in the comparably affluent 21st century, living in the wealthiest nation ever to exist, read the above passage, our scramble begins. Many of us feel we are Jesus's disciples, and none of us have given up all of our possessions (to my knowledge), so what do we do with this text, and others like it? Because Jesus is not shy about talking about the cost of following him, nor is he hesitant to name wealth as a barrier between us and him; camels going through the eye of the needle and so on. And of course, for those of us who are broke, or have been broken and might be again, it sounds even less fair. I and many people my age and younger have a negative 'net worth', i.e. more debts than we have assets. So what exactly are we going to give away?

Some of this can be worked through with the difference in context between an Iron Age agrarian occupied territory then, and a late capitalist information economy today. The comparison is not 1:1. At the same time, that sounds like yet another excuse to hold on to what we have. I can imagine what Jesus might say.

Historically, this was why Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox clergy were not allowed to own property, get married, or have children - so that they would have no motivation to accumulate property because they had no one else to support and no one to inherit it. At the same time, the Roman Catholic Church in Europe owned literally a third of all of the land on the continent and was far wealthier than any individual nation for hundreds of years. That is how they got around texts like this. Individual clergy owned nothing, but the church that supported them had far more wealth than kings and emperors. A bishop who took a vow of poverty and 'owned nothing' could easily live in a palace willed with servants and defended by soldiers, receiving taxes from lands he controlled. On behalf of the Church, of course.

What brought this to mind this week wasn't reflecting on wealth, but rather, conversations about racial justice that took place at the last Presbytery meeting in mid-November. The Presbytery meeting was hosted by the Racial Justice Task Force, formed a few years ago in Donegal Presbytery to study and make recommendations around racial issues. They led worship, and during a pause in worship we spent time in small groups discussing racism, its impacts, and our response as disciples of Jesus.

One thing that becomes clear in these conversations, in the church and elsewhere, is that we are all at different places mentally and emotionally with regard to racial justice. Almost everyone agrees that racial justice is important, and that racism is wrong. Those who believe otherwise don't say so aloud, except in very particular company. For some, they thought we could address racism by focusing on people of color who are flourishing and doing well instead of focusing on the problems that they face. Others talked about the work they had done and were doing around racial reconciliation, and even in those cases, there is always the nagging sense that it is not enough.

Our own group's discussion took a turn that reminded me of the passage above. We talked about the distance between what we were theoretically able to do compared to what we were willing to do.

2. continued...

One pastor put it this way: "Of course people are in favor of racial justice - as long as it doesn't cost them anything, and as long as it doesn't affect their children's or grandchildren's lives, or chances at getting a job, and as long as it doesn't affect their paycheck or their retirement. As long as they can still do whatever they want to do, sure they're in favor of it. But the moment it costs them something, well..."

When most of us say we care about an issue, what we are describing is a feeling that we have - a feeling of empathy or sympathy, anger or pity. The problem is that these feelings come relatively easily, and they fade just as easily. Our feelings might not have anything to do with our behaviors. We might care deeply about an issue, and talk about it without friends and family, and watch documentaries about it, but not donate a single dollar, or volunteer a single hour, to do anything about it.

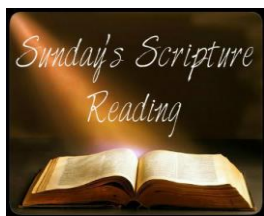
To be fair, we are presented with far too much to care about - to be angry about, or sad about, or scared about, or more rarely, happy about. Media companies leverage those emotions to keep our attention so they can sell advertising - they definitely don't care the slightest bit about whether we act to make any of the situations we care about better. And even if the deluge of issues to care about was well-meaning and well-intentioned, it still quickly exceeds our ability to do anything about any of it.

So perhaps the key question is not what we care about, but what we are willing to sacrifice for. There is a cost to doing good - are we willing to pay it? Having counted the cost, what is worth it to us - worth our time, our money, our energy and effort?

Over the last few years in particular, I have found it helpful to focus my feelings, as much as I can, on things where I can have an impact. In the back of my mind is the question: what will I do about this? If the answer is that I'm unwilling or unable to do something, then I try to let that concern go as much as I can. It is a way of keeping myself honest, with myself and others. It's also encouraging, because I end up meeting other people who are taking action, and we are able to encourage one another, because it can be hard to carry on where there is so much in the world going wrong.

I'm not able, or not willing, to give everything, but I take some comfort in being able to say what I have done, little as it is, to build up the kin-dom of God here and now. It certainly isn't all that I'm called to do, but it helps me avoid the paralysis of caring about everything at once.

Pastor Doug



Upcoming Scripture Readings

December 4th: Various readings during the musical presentation

December 11th: Isaiah 35:1-10; Luke 1:46-55

December 18th: Romans 1:1-7; Matthew 1:18-25

December 25th: Isaiah 9:1-7; Luke 2:1-20



The Season of Advent is here!

1st Sunday of Advent – November 27th

2nd Sunday of Advent – December 4th

3rd Sunday of Advent – December 11th

4th Sunday of Advent – December 18th

Christmas Eve – Saturday, December 24th

5:00 pm Family Service with communion

9:00 pm Candlelight Service at the First United Methodist Church
(865 S. Main Street, Phoenixville)

Congregational Meeting

A Congregational Meeting has been called for Sunday, Dec. 11, 2022 at 11:45 a.m. (Following the worship service.) The purpose of this meeting is to present the nominees for the next class of Elders and Deacons, and to vote on this slate of officers.

Nominees are:

Elder

Karin Goodman
Cassy Gulden
Jill Kleppinger
Jeanie Osterhoudt
Kathryn Grocki (1 year term)

Deacon

Paulette Mark
Lucinda Parrish
Lynne Williams
Bob Wittrock

CELEBRATION OF ADVENT

On our Sunday, December 4th worship service, the Choir and Friends will be presenting PROPHETS AND ANGELS, a festival of lessons, poetry, anthems, and hymns to celebrate this preparatory season. Please be sure to join us at the regular Sunday, 10:30 a.m. service for this special presentation.

The Choir of FPC



From the Clerk of Session

- ❖ Average Sunday morning attendance:
 - In October we had an average of 61 worshipping in person (wearing masks) and an average of 21 households viewing the 10:30am YouTube premiere with 7 *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: no changes. Current membership is 171.
 - Birth: none
 - Death:
 - William Wagner (former Elder at FPC) joined the church triumphant on October 22, 2022. A celebration of Bill's life was held at Spring Mill.
 - Wedding: none
 - Baptism: none
- ❖ Session Meeting Information:
 - Receiving PCUSA Peace and Global Witness Offering on October 3rd was approved.
 - Return to celebrating the sacrament of the Lord's Supper using a "modified" intinction was approved.
 - The next Stated Session Meeting is on December 20, 2022.
 - Minutes of the October 25, 2022 Session Meeting and the November 20 Budget Meeting will be reviewed at the December 20, 2022 Stated Session Meeting and will be in the following Perspective.



Jewell Baker, Clerk of Session



Presbyterian Women Circle

All women of the church are welcome to join our Circle meeting following worship on the third Sunday of the month. This year we are using the PW/Horizons 2023 study *Celebrating Sabbath: Accepting God's Gift of Rest and Delight* by Carol M. Bechtel. Please pack your lunch and join us, study guides are available.

Jewell Baker

PARISH LIFE



The Annual Tradition Continues

Christmas Caroling hosted by Your Parish Life Committee

Join us for Christmas Caroling & Hot Chocolate on December 4th at 4:00.

Featuring our own Rebecca Barkley leading our singing.

The Sunday School kiddos will present a song for everyone to enjoy!

After caroling we will warm up with hot chocolate and all the fixings.

Please join us in raising our voices to the Lord at this Christmas event!

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!



Mission, Action, Concern Committee (MAC)

Because of the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to shine upon those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace. (Luke 1: 78-79)

Offering of Letters



In this month's Offering of Letters, we will urge our elected representatives to support the 2023 Farm Bill. A major part of this bill is funding for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or SNAP (formerly known as Food Stamps). For this reason, the Farm Bill has real and lasting impact for those in our community who struggle to feed their families. Stay tuned for more information in the bulletin about the December Offering of Letters. In the meantime, you can also find and download helpful information here: <https://tinyurl.com/2fsn3z42>

Star Tree and Alternative Gift Cards

Thanks to all who are participating in these important ministries of our church community.

Mission Focus: Local Mission, e.g. You!

Though the MAC Committee initiates and coordinates many of the mission-related activities of First Presbyterian Church, the actual mission work extends far beyond our small band of committee members. Along with so many members of our local and regional communities, we are grateful for the efforts of all who have supported and participated in ministries such as these over the past year:

Alianzas de Phoenixville

Bread for the World (Offering of Letters)

Bridge of Hope

Christmas Baskets

Good Works, Inc.

Mom's House of Phoenixville

Orion Communities

People to People Mission

Phoenixville Area Community Services (PACS)

St. Mary's Franciscan Shelter

Star Tree

This is not a complete list of all you have done to help bring about God's Kingdom of peace and justice in our local community. If you would like to know more about any of the ministries listed here, ask any member of the MAC Committee.



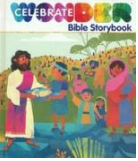
Personnel Committee

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.

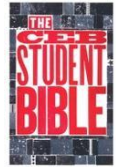




Bibles for Young Disciples



On Sunday, November 20, FPC children aged 3 and older received new Bibles in church. Three different versions were distributed, corresponding to the three grade-level groups in our Sunday School program. If you have a child at home, ask for an introduction to the new Bible and use it as a basis for family discussions.



Sunday School in December

We will meet for Sunday School each Sunday during Advent but not on Sunday, December 25.

Heifer International Project



Our Sunday School children continue to collect funds for the Heifer Project.

In December, we will ask the children to help us decide what project to fund through Heifer International. Thanks for helping our youngest disciples engage in this project of practical Christian love and compassion. Contributions to the Heifer Project will help farmers and communities improve their access to food and clean water and improve their standards of living.

Church Growth Update

The Wittrocks enjoyed participating in the pack-a-thon at Books Through Bars, helping the organization catch up on invoicing requests and packaging for shipment. Our friends will enjoy receiving their books just in time for the holidays.





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.



2023 Pledge Campaign

The **Stewardship Committee** would like to thank everyone who has completed and returned their **pledge card for 2023**.

Your generous and faithful offerings support the ministries and the many good works of First Presbyterian Church.

If you have not yet turned in your pledge card, please know that **it is not too late!** We ask that you take a moment to reflect on your giving for the coming year. **Know that by completing your pledge card, you are helping the Finance Committee as they plan for 2023.**

Completed cards may be returned by mail, dropped off at the church office, or placed in the offering plate on Sunday morning.

If you need a pledge card, please call the church office (610-933-8816), and we will get a card to you.

We **thank you** for your financial support and your continued commitment to our church. The Stewardship Committee



Message from Finance and Stewardship – 2023 Contribution Envelopes

In 2023 there will be changes in the distribution of pledge / contribution envelopes. These changes are due to members and friends that contribute via the Faith life on line giving app., and those that have checks sent directly from their bank. Envelopes will not be distributed to those that give in this manner.

Instead, they will be provided with a member / family contribution number that will be used to record and track their contributions. Envelopes in the pew will be used for Per Capita and other special offerings throughout the year.

Those members that contribute via the envelope system, envelopes will continue to be provided. However, your envelope number may change.

Please direct any questions to fpctreasurer145@gmail.com or call the church office.

*** 2023 Contribution Envelopes ***

Contribution envelopes for next year will be available Sunday, December 11th. They will be on the table outside the church office. If there are any questions please contact the church office or fpctreasurer145@gmail.com.

Parking Lot Appreciation...

The Stewardship Committee would like to thank everyone who volunteered in the parking lot on First Fridays and for special Saturday events, May through November.

With your help, we raised a total of \$4,178.00 for the church, as we spent time together and got to meet many of our neighbors.

(note...this total does not reflect what was raised through "Give Butter")

A job well done! Thank you!



Worship and Music Notes

Tis the season..... Start your season by going on line to www.pts.edu/devotional and then scroll down to the Advent Devotional. That will take you to an Advent devotional which you can read on line or print. There will be copies available in the church office.

If you want to get your Advent started early, you can come to church on Saturday, November 26 any time between 9 AM and noon to help decorate.

On the second Sunday of Advent our choir will present a special service of music and readings. This should be a wonderful service.

Christmas Eve at 5 PM we will have our usual family service. This year we will also celebrate Communion. Christmas Eve at 9 PM we will join in the celebration of Christmas Eve with our brothers and sisters down the street at the United Methodist Church (865 Main Street). Imagine how wonderful it will be with twice the ministers, twice the musicians and twice the congregation praying, singing and celebrating. Better yet, don't imagine it, come and experience it!

Come the following day, Sunday to celebrate Christmas day in the fellowship hall at our church.

The next Sunday is New Years' Day and I can think of no better way to start the new year than to worship in church. The following week, we will celebrate Communion.

See you in church





Deacons' Dialogue



Your Board of Deacons would like to take a moment to wish you all a very Merry Christmas!

During this season, we will be celebrating Hope, Peace, Love and Joy. We pray that all four of these will fill your lives in every way, this Christmas and beyond. We are grateful to God.

This Christmas, as in all previous years, we celebrate "Immanuel" (God with us). Without Christ's presence among us, we would be lost. Through God's presence, working within us, we are being healed, transformed, reconciled and made whole. We pray you have a blessed Christmas, and a Happy New Year.

Submitted on behalf of the Deacons by, Ellen Williams

NOMINATIONS NOW OPEN



Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee requests names from the congregation to form the Nominating Committee Members At Large, to serve during the calendar year 2023 until the 2024 Congregational meeting.

The Nominating Committee is composed of two Elders appointed by Session, one of which must be currently serving on Session; one Deacon representative appointed by the board, and four at-large members of the congregation. The congregation votes on these four nominations. It is this new Nominating Committee that will find the next slate of officers.

Please submit names to the church office no later than Sunday, Dec. 4th.

Thank you from the 2022 Nominating Committee:

Chris Wittrock, Moderator

Adam Smith, 2nd Elder

Deacon: Ellen Williams

Members at large: Jeanne Blackburn, Liz Carrabine, Cathy Walker, and Frank Craven

Raise Right Gift Cards

HO...HO...HO...

Just in time for Christmas shopping and gifting, we will be placing orders for gift cards every other Wednesday (December 7, December 14 &...yes...even...December 21!). You may choose from over 700 retailers. There are retailer lists in the church office and as you enter Fellowship Hall.

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 (December 6 & December 13 & December 20). Please make checks payable to "First Presbyterian Church DR".

Thank you...Thank you... for continuing to support this program as a percentage of each order goes to benefit the church.

Wishing you a Blessed Christmas!



December 2022

First Presbyterian Church of Phoenixville

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				9:00a WIC 1 9:00a People to People Clothing ministry 10:00a People to People Food ministry 7:00p Choir S. Smith vacation	2 9:00a WIC S. Smith vacation	3 9:30a Zumba class
2nd Sunday of Advent 4 8:30a Bible Study 10:30a Worship 10:45a Sunday School No Deacon's meeting 12:00n Worship & Music 4:00p Christmas Caroling	5 9:00a People to People Clothing ministry 6:30p Zumba class	6 6:30p Zumba class 7:00p MAC	7 7:30p Bell Choir	8 9:00a Public Health Mgt 9:00a People to People Clothing ministry 10:00a People to People Food ministry 7:00p Choir 7:00p Compassionate Friends	9	10 8:00a – 11:00a MaxSold Pick Up (fellowship hall)
3rd Sunday of Advent 11 8:30a Bible Study 10:30a Worship 10:45a Sunday School 11:45a Congregational Meeting-Officers Elec. 12n Star Tree gift sorting 7:00p Pub Theology	12 9:00a People to People Clothing ministry 6:30p Zumba class 7:00p Finance	13 6:30p Zumba class 7:00p Personnel 7:00p Parish Life	14 7:30p Bell Choir	15 9:00a WIC 9:00a People to People Clothing ministry 10:00a People to People Food ministry 7:00p Choir 7:00p “We Are” Live Vigil @ Main & Bridge	16 9:00a WIC	17 9:30a Zumba class
4th Sunday of Advent 18 8:30a Bible Study 10:30a Worship <i>Offering of Letters</i> 10:45a Sunday School 12:00n Women's Circle 12:00n Men's Group	19 9:00a People to People Clothing ministry 6:30p Zumba class	20 3:00p – 5:00p Mom's House Christmas Party (fellowship hall) 6:30p Zumba class 7:30p Session	21 8:00a – 2:00p Mom's House using Fellowship hall 12:30P Church Growth 7:30p Bell Choir	22 9:00a People to People Clothing ministry 10:00a People to People Food ministry 7:00p Choir	23	24 Christmas Eve 5:00p Family Worship Service 9:00p Candlelight Communion Worship Service @ 1st United Methodist Church
25 Merry Christmas! <i>No Bible Study</i> 10:30a Worship <i>No Sunday School</i> <i>Diane Legnini vacation</i>	26 6:30p Zumba class <i>Church office closed.</i>	27 6:30p Zumba class <i>Church office closed</i>	28	29	30 <i>Church office closed.</i>	31 New Years' Eve

January 2023

First Presbyterian Church of Phoenixville

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>New Years' Day 1</p> <p>10:30a Worship Sue Casey preaching 10:45a Sunday School</p> <p>Rev Hagler Vacation</p>	<p>2</p> <p>9:00a People to People Clothing Ministry</p> <p>6:30p Zumba</p> <p>Rev Hagler Vacation</p>	<p>3</p> <p>6:30p Zumba 7:00p MAC</p> <p>Rev Hagler Vacation</p>	<p>4</p> <p>7:30p Bell Choir</p> <p>Rev Hagler Vacation</p>	<p>5</p> <p>9:00a WIC 9:00a People to People Clothing ministry 10:00a People to People Food ministry 7:00p Choir Rev Hagler Vacation</p>	<p>6</p> <p>9:00a WIC</p> <p>Rev Hagler Vacation</p>	<p>7</p> <p>9:30a Zumba</p>
<p>8</p> <p>Communion 8:30a Bible study 10:30a Worship 10:45a Sunday School 12:00n Worship & Music 12:15p Deacons meeting 7:00p Pub Theology</p>	<p>9</p> <p>9:00a People to People Clothing Ministry</p> <p>6:30p Zumba 7:00p Finance 7:30p Staff meeting</p>	<p>10</p> <p>6:30p Zumba 7:00p Parish Life 7:00p Personnel</p>	<p>11</p> <p>7:30p Bell Choir</p>	<p>12</p> <p>9:00a Public Health Mgt. 9:00a People to People Clothing ministry 10:00a People to People Food ministry 7:00p Choir 7:00p Compassionate Friends</p>	<p>13</p> <p>Set up Fellowship Hall for free coat give away</p>	<p>14</p> <p>9:00a-12:00n Free Coat Give Away</p>
<p>15</p> <p>8:30a Bible study 10:30a Worship 10:45a Sunday School 12:00n Men's Group 12:00n Women's Circle</p>	<p>16</p> <p>9:00a People to People Clothing Ministry</p> <p>6:30p Zumba</p> <p>Office Closed Martin Luther King Jr Birthday</p>	<p>17</p> <p>6:30p Zumba 7:30p Property</p>	<p>18</p> <p>12:30p Church Growth</p> <p>7:30p Bell Choir</p>	<p>19</p> <p>9:00a WIC 9:00a People to People Clothing ministry 10:00a People to People Food ministry 7:00p Choir 7:00p "We Are" Vigil LIVE</p>	<p>20</p> <p>9:00a WIC</p>	<p>21</p> <p>9:30a Zumba</p>
<p>22</p> <p>8:30a Bible study 10:30a Worship 10:45a Sunday School 7:00p Antiracism Book Group</p>	<p>23</p> <p>9:00a People to People Clothing Ministry</p> <p>6:30p Zumba</p>	<p>24</p> <p>6:30p Zumba 7:30p Session</p>	<p>25</p> <p>7:30p Bell Choir</p>	<p>26</p> <p>9:00a People to People Clothing ministry 10:00a People to People Food ministry 7:00p Choir</p>	<p>27</p>	<p>28</p>
<p>29</p> <p>8:30a Bible study 10:30a Worship 10:45a Sunday School 12:00n Annual Congregational Meeting</p>	<p>30</p> <p>9:00a People to People Clothing Ministry</p> <p>6:30p Zumba</p>	<p>31</p> <p>6:30p Zumba</p>				