

Perspective

A Newsletter of the First Presbyterian Church
of Phoenixville, Pennsylvania

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From the Pastor

Psalm 68 [a] (NIV)

⁴ Sing to God, sing in praise of his name,
extol him who rides on the clouds [b] ;
rejoice before him—his name is the Lord.

⁵ A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows,
is God in his holy dwelling.

⁶ God sets the lonely in families, [c]
he leads out the prisoners with singing;
but the rebellious live in a sun-scorched land.

Footnotes

1. [Psalm 68:1](#) In Hebrew texts 68:1-35 is numbered 68:2-36.
2. [Psalm 68:4](#) Or name, / prepare the way for him who rides through the deserts
3. [Psalm 68:6](#) Or the desolate in a homeland

(February 2023 already? That can't be right.)

Normally I provide a Bible quote from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) because that is the Bible in our pews, and the one I used as an undergraduate religion major, and the one I used in Seminary. This time the quote is from the New International Version (NIV), probably the most commonly used translation among Protestants. Generally speaking, the NRSV has more recent scholarship supporting the translation, and the NIV puts a little more effort into following the flow of the Hebrew and Greek in its translation. Both are good, and it can be good to compare. If nothing else, it's important to keep in mind that the Bible wasn't written in English, so we're always reading a version of the text. And even when we can read ancient brumbly texts in museum archives in the original languages, we are still reading a person's translation of their experience into words.

This time I chose the NIV translation over the NRSV because of the difference in the way they translate Psalm 68:6a. The NIV has "God sets the lonely in families" as you see above, while the NRSV has it "God gives the desolate a home to live in." My inexpert reading the Hebrew of that text tells me that of course both are viable translations (I don't expect improving on the work of either the NRSV or NIV translation committees). The word translated "families" or "a home" is *bayit*, overwhelmingly translated as *house*, and then the second most common translation in the Bible is *household*. It only comes up as *family* in a few places, of which this is one. (*dwelling* in verse 5b is a different Hebrew word altogether)

I liked family because it is more evocative and specific compared to home. A home could be a shelter, or a studio apartment, or a houseboat on a river, or a camper van. A family, though, is something more. You could say perhaps that home + family = household, but there is a lot more to being given a family compared to given a home. You can't win a family on a gameshow; you can't buy a family with a mortgage.

"Chosen family" is a new-ish term for an old concept: when someone is born into a family that doesn't work for them, either because of dysfunction or abuse or simply a lack of the right kind of love, they can, over the course of their life, pull together a family that they choose to function in place of the one into which they were born. I think there are plenty of people who have experienced some version of this.

My example is that I was, and still am for the most part, estranged from my family members who live in Florida: my father (while he was alive) and my four half-siblings on my father's side. They have all lived within 20 minutes of each other since I was a kid - I'm the one that moved away, and most of my attempts to remain in contact since then have been unsuccessful. As they weren't successful, I admit, I tried less often, and less hard. I think that this estrangement, and all of the issues around it, made friends in my life even more important to me. I'm very loyal, maybe in part because I learned that sometimes you feel like you need a relationship with people in your life, but you just can't make one work. When it does work, that relationship is worth protecting.

2. *continued....*

(Maybe you have something like that in your life, where you've built what you needed because the situation you were born into, or that developed in your family of origin, didn't work.)

My experience is only a tiny echo of the experience that others go through - who end up in the foster system, or who are driven from their home because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. When I worked in a hospital in San Francisco, something like 40% of the homeless population in the city were LGBTQ teenagers. Whatever their families thought of their orientation or gender expression, the situation was literally unlivable, or they were driven from home intentionally. Found family was all they had, and often this found family was a collection of people they encountered on the streets. I've seen this same pattern in the stories of many people I have met since.

Reflecting on Psalm 68, I think that the work of building a found family is holy work. It is also work that we do, as a church, all the time. In my internship church, one of my responsibilities with leading the children's and youth programs, and the main metaphor we used for those programs was the "family of God." That metaphor has made sense to me in every church since. We are the family of God, and we are called to grow into the family that God intends. Part of this means welcoming families seeking a church home, and part of it means building one another up as a found family, and part of it means dealing with the issues we have inherited from our families of origin.

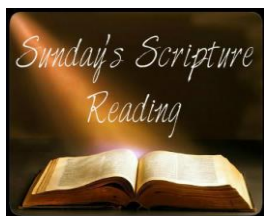
We are the family of God, and this family has nothing at all to do with where we were born, or our genetics, or even our particular language and culture. The family of God is always a found family, there to be found because God has already built it for us, and I'm thankful for that.

Pastor Doug

Men's Group Book Discussion



Join the Men's Group on the 3rd Sunday of each month after church for lunch and discussion. Starting in 2023 they will be reading *The Fellowship of the Ring* by JRR Tolkien, followed by *Cry Like A Man* by Jason Wilson, founder of the Cave of Adullam in Detroit. Come see Pastor Doug if you have any questions, or would like for him to order you a book, and feel free to join the group any 3rd Sunday whether you are reading the books or not.



Upcoming Scripture Readings

February 5th: Isaiah 58:1-12; Matthew 5:13-20
February 12th: 1 Corinthians 3:1-9; Deuteronomy 30:15-20
February 19th: Leviticus 19:1-18; Matthew 5:38-48
February 22nd: (Ash Wed.) Joel 2:1-17; 2 Corinthians 5:20-6:10
February 26th: Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7; Matthew 4:1-11

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.



Church Growth Update

Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 1 Thessalonians 5:18



Gratitude Journal

By now you may have heard about the Gratitude Journal activity that we have planned to begin on Ash Wednesday, Feb 22, and continue throughout the year. This will be a fun and engaging way for people of all ages to focus on the many blessings around us.

We have been collecting notebooks to make sure everyone who wants to participate is able to do so.

Bridge of Hope

We continue to enjoy time with our family, and this includes moving house, again! Our family has moved right next door to their current apartment and will now occupy a full three-story home. God's timing is perfect as the family welcomes home Ja'Naya, the eldest of our family members. Ja'Naya is looking forward to being with the family again, helping with the logistics of sibling care, working, saving, and attending flight attendant school. Tre continues to do well at Kutztown, Ja'Sir is enjoying his senior year at Phoenixville, Jordyn (our burgeoning actress) loves Barclay, and baby Jayden is making her way in the world, walking, chatting, and stealing hearts. We look forward to our next gathering which will be a family dinner.

Prison Ministry

Thank you for all of the calendars for our friends behind bars.

Our regular visits to Books Through Bars (BTB) are going well and we have at least one new-comer 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> .

Website Redesign

Our small team of IT/social media folks is building a new website for the church, one that shares our enthusiasm for children, commitment to adults, and passion for community and social activism.



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:6109338816) and she will forward your requests on to Amy.

Deacons' Dialogue



St. Valentine's Day is upon us, and our thoughts turn to love. Love of our Lord, love of our family, love of our friends, love of our pets. As Deacons, our thoughts are also turning to love of our planet, which provides a home for our family, friends and pets.

Something that often gets missed along the way is how food waste affects our loved ones, and our planet. One culprit in particular is misunderstanding of 'best before' labels. Unlike 'use by' labels, which are found on perishable foods like meat and dairy, 'best before' labels have nothing to do with safety. They may even encourage consumers to throw away food that's perfectly fine to eat.

Our global neighbors, like the UK and European Union, are making strides toward tackling this problem by having major food chains that remove the 'best before' labels from pre-packaged fruit and vegetables.

The EU is expected to announce a revamp of its labeling laws, including abolishing the 'best before' labels altogether.

As Christians, we are driven to leave future generations with a cleaner, healthier planet. As FPC members, we can do our part by using our senses, rather than a 'best by' date, to decide what to eat, and what to dispose of. Of course, we're not talking about ignoring 'use by' labels – this is unhealthy and dangerous. So we ask – the next time you have a pre-packaged fruit or vegetable – or any product labeled with a 'best by' date – smell it! Taste it! Test it for firmness and check for spots or other indications of spoilage.

Let's show our planet some love this Valentine's Day!

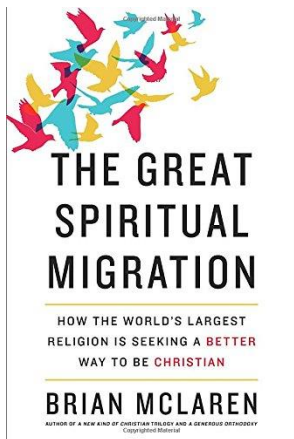
Sanctuary Flowers



As you may know, each week we give the sanctuary flowers to a member who has a special occasion, or just may need something to brighten their day. We are looking for volunteers to assist with the delivery of the flowers when that's called for – also, if you know someone who could use some cheer or has a special occasion to celebrate, please let us know.

Submitted on behalf of the Deacons by, Ellen Williams

Lenten Book Study



Join Bob & Chris Wittrock in reading and discussing Brian McLaren's book **"The Great Spiritual Migration, How the World's Largest Religion is Seeking A Better Way To Be Christian."**

The author explores three main topics: The Spiritual Migration (from a system of beliefs to a way of life); The Theological Migration (from a violent God of domination to a nonviolent God of liberation); and The Missional Migration (from organized religion to organizing religion).

We will meet on Thursday evenings at 7PM via Zoom, beginning February 23 and ending March 30.

Please email Chris to sign up and get the Zoom link.

Cwittrock22@gmail.com

Budget Update

Finance reminds all that it is never too late to submit your pledge for the 2023 budget year.

- The church finished 2022 with a negative Total Net Income of \$12,320 vs a projected \$59,900 deficit projected, made possible through a very generous angel gift mid-year.
- The 2023 budget forecasts a deficit of \$81,000 given our current pledge levels and anticipated expenses.
- Increased energy prices, building maintenance issues and staff salary increases are the principal reasons for the forecast.
- Investment returns are tracking with market conditions and were negative for the year.
- Session will determine the disposition of the Harrop estate soon, and may provide a means to alleviate financial pressures in the short term.
- A known challenge to begin 2023 is the sanctuary ceiling repair, which has recently had its insurance claim refused. More to follow as this discussion ensues.

What is Per Capita Apportionment?

Per Capita apportionment monies will help provide the means to strengthen the connections of the Presbyterian Church USA, to build lasting relationships, and to help all Presbyterians share God's love through mission and ministry.

Our church apportionment is \$37 per member.

Please use the blue envelope in your box of envelopes or if you use direct deposit envelopes will be available for you to use.

This money will help support our church, Donegal Presbytery, Synod of the Trinity, and the Presbyterian Church USA.

Stewardship Committee



Mission, Action, Concern Committee (MAC)

I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. (John 13:34)

Coat and Clothing Giveaway – January 14

On Saturday, January 14, 54 people stopped by to select items from our large supply of coats and winter clothing for all ages. “Left-over” clothing is donated to other local organizations such as Green Drop and Liberty Thrift.

Upcoming Garage Sale – March 25

Our next Garage Sale will take place on Saturday, March 24. In addition to clothing, please consider donating kitchen supplies, towels, sheets, blankets, knick-knacks, books, and other household items (except furniture, TVs, or computers).

Meals for St. Mary’s Franciscan Shelter

During the week of February 6 – 10, we will again be providing dinners for the residents of St. Mary’s Franciscan Shelter. To sign up for all or part of a meal (for 12 to 14 people) on that day, respond to the SignUp Genius that you received via email or follow this link to sign up: <https://tinyurl.com/4h9wawv8>. Detailed instructions are included with the online sign-up. There is also a sign-up sheet in Fellowship Hall.

Souper Bowl 2023!

This year’s Souper Bowl of Caring event will take place at First Presbyterian Church on Sunday, February 12. We will be collecting canned goods and cash donations to support local hunger relief. So, start setting aside your canned goods to drop off at church on Sunday, February 12. You can also drop off donations during the week in the church office.

March is PACS Month at First Presbyterian Church

And while you are collecting canned goods for the Souper Bowl of Caring, set aside a few more for our PACS collection in March. Stay tuned for details on specific items that are most needed.

Good News!

Our Bridge of Hope family has moved into a larger home! Parthenia and her family were able to rent a row home located in the same block as their previous small apartment. It’s great that they have a little more room to spread out and the kids are very happy in their new rooms! We will continue to call for furniture and other household items as Parthenia communicates those needs to us.

Mission Focus: Regional Missions

The MAC Committee recently completed work on the mission budget for 2023. Our church community has maintained long-term relationships with two regional missions, Spanish Health Ministry and Welcoming the Stranger. Thankfully, we were able to increase our annual donations to both of these organizations for 2023.

Spanish Health Ministry is located in Kennett Square, PA, and ministers to members of their local community with special medical and health needs. For example, a 21 year old woman named Paola has received much-needed care through the effort and support of Spanish Health Ministry. Paola is a quadriplegic with cerebral palsy who needs a feeding tube and is subject to seizures. Her on-going care requires three different specialists in addition to a family doctor. In addition, her mother, Rosario, takes care of her on a 24-hour basis at home.

7. *continued....*

There are lots of challenges inherent in all of that and Spanish Health Ministry helps make it work for this family. Paula attends a Friday morning Bible study at Spanish Health Ministry and the folks there describe her this way: “Though nonverbal, Paola has the most beautiful smile and she loves hearing the ladies sing praises to God.” It is a blessing that in 2023, the MAC Committee is able to increase support for this important ministry in our region.



Welcoming the Stranger was founded 23 years ago by Reverend Sturgis Poorman, Jr., a former pastor at First Presbyterian Church who, upon his retirement, remained a friend to many in our congregation. The mission of Welcoming the Stranger is to facilitate compassionate and caring assistance to immigrants and refugees in need. This support is offered in the form of classes in English as a Second Language (ESL), computer skills, and United States citizenship exam preparation for adult immigrants and refugees in the Philadelphia metro region. Since 1999, Welcoming the Stranger has taught over 4,900 students from 104 different countries. All of their programs are free of charge for students, which makes support like ours critical to their ongoing mission. Again, we are grateful that we are able to increase our support in 2023.

From the Clerk of Session

- ❖ Average Sunday morning attendance:
 - In November we had an average of 67 worshipping in person (masked) and an average of 18 households viewing the 10:30am YouTube premiere with 4 chatting.
 - In December we had an average of 63 worshipping in person (masked) and an average of 15 households viewing the 10:30am YouTube premiere with 4 chatting.
 - Christmas Eve attendance at 5:00 was 43.
 - 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
 - Current membership is 171.
 - Birth: none Death: none
 - Wedding: none Baptism: none
- ❖ Congregational Meeting December 11, 2022 the following were elected to leadership.
 - Elder for 3-year term; Karin Goodman, Cassy Gulden, Jill Kleppinger, and Jeanie Osterhoudt.
 - Elder for 1-year term; Kathryn Grocki.
 - Deacon for 3-year term; Paulette Mark, Lucinda Parrish, Lynne Williams, and Bob Wittrock.
 - Thanks to outgoing officers Chris Wittrock, Ron Williams, Mike Eitl and Karen Drummond.
- ❖ Session Meeting Information:
 - A motion from Christian Education - Motion to approve expenditure of approximately \$1000 for new Bibles to present to our Sunday School kids, as follows: Celebrate Wonder Storybook Bible (pre-K to Grade 1)- Spark Storybook Bible (Grades 2 through 4)- Action Bible / Grow Bible (Grades 5 through 8). In addition, a selection of age-appropriate Bibles will be purchased for reference use in the three Sunday School classrooms. Approved.
 - Office copier e-vote was passed with 9 yes and 2 no reply votes. Session approved purchase of replacement copier again during the meeting.
 - Session voted to recommend 7% increase for Pastor Hagler.
 - Session voted for 7% increase for personnel.
 - Minutes of the December 20, 2022 Session Meeting will be reviewed at the January 24, 2023 Stated Session Meeting and will be in the following Perspective.



Jewell Baker, Clerk of Session

Sunday School

Our Sunday School classes have been very well-attended and very active over the past couple of months. In the wake of a variety of Advent and Christmas activities, we are now settled in to a couple of months of what the church calls “Ordinary Time.” But we suspect that will be anything but ordinary for our group of creative and motivated children! What a blessing it has been to observe the increase in numbers and consistency of attendance at Sunday School.



As a reminder, Sunday School classes take place every Sunday during the regular worship service. Children typically begin in church with their parents, then leave for Sunday School after Pastor Doug’s children’s message. In addition to regular Sunday School classes, stay tuned for other special events and intergenerational opportunities that we will planning through the Spring.



One of the key factors contributing to the success of our Sunday School program is our talented and energetic crew of Sunday School teachers. Here’s a special shout-out to all of those teachers ... and also to all of the parents who support the program by bringing your children to church each week. Thanks to all!

If you have any questions about Sunday School – or wish to volunteer to help out with the program – contact Jeff McLaughlin at fpcchildrenandyouth@gmail.com.

Worship and Music Notes

As of this writing, there has been no snow. So I’m still in a post Christmas type of mood. Yet, here I am writing about Lent. Yes, Ash Wednesday is February 22. We will be having a soup and bread supper (thanks to Parish Life) at 6 PM followed by a Communion service at 7 PM. Please come for both or just the service. We haven’t had this meal and service for a while because of COVID. It will be nice to celebrate in a pre COVID way. Look for a way to make reservations (so we can plan correctly) beginning in February.



There will be a Lenten devotional available. The finishing touches are being made so I can’t give you a link to the devotional nor print any yet. Keep an eye out for that information soon. Also keep your eyes open for some special services towards the end of Lent. As always.... See you in church.

Wanted: Used Ink Cartridges

We are continuing to collect used cartridges to recycle at Staples. The church receives a \$2 credit for each cartridge. You may drop off your cartridges in the church office or through the mail slot on the office door. This program helps you recycle your cartridges, while at the same time assisting the church.





Raise Right Gift Cards



After a short respite from the "**Raise Right**" scrip gift card frenzy of December, orders can be submitted again! **February 8 and 22** are the next times gift cards will be ordered.

The money needs to be turned in by **Feb 6** for an order on the 8th and by **Feb. 20** for the order on the 22nd. There are so many ways to use these cards. You get the full amount paid to purchase items, but the church gets a percentage donation from the companies. Last year the church received over **\$2300** from participating companies with this program. It is as easy as sending an email to Lynne Williams – brettdrew@comcast.net or send a text to Lynne at 610-955-4749 with the cards you want and the amounts. cards will be ready to pick up by the following Sunday.





Pub Theology

The next Pub Theology will meet on Sunday, March 12th 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!



Attention Redner's Shoppers

Redner's has a rebate program which will pay the church 1% of the value of all register receipts processed at their locations. You may place them in the box in the narthex or the church office.

Please make sure that you are a member of the Redner's Rewards program. You must have your rewards card scanned when you make your purchase for the church to be able to benefit from the purchase. To become a rewards member just stop by the customer service desk to pick up your application and a rewards card.

February 2023

First Presbyterian Church of Phoenixville

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 10:00a AARP Board Meeting 7:30p Bell Choir	2 9:00a Clothing ministry 9:00a WIC 10:00a Food ministry 7:00p Choir	3 9:00a WIC	4 9:30a Zumba
5 <i>Communion</i> 8:30a Bible Study 10:30a Worship 10:45a Sunday School	6 9:00a Clothing Ministry 6:30p Zumba <i>Shelter Meals →</i>	7 6:30p Zumba <i>Shelter Meals →</i>	8 7:30p Bell Choir <i>Shelter Meals →</i>	9 9:00a Public Health Mgt 9:00a Clothing ministry 10:00a Food ministry 7:00p Choir 7:30p Compassionate Friends <i>Shelter Meals →</i>	10 <i>Shelter Meals</i>	11
12 8:30a Bible Study 10:30a Worship <i>Souper Bowl of Caring</i> 11:45a Sunday School 12:00n Worship & Music 5:00p Bridge of Hope Dinner (FH) 7:00p Pub Theology	13 9:00a Clothing Ministry 2:00p MAC 6:30p Zumba 7:00p Finance 7:30a Staff meeting	14 6:30p Zumba 7:00p Parish Life 7:00p Personnel	15 7:30p Bell Choir	16 9:00a Clothing ministry 9:00a WIC 10:00a Food ministry 12:30p Church Growth 7:00p Choir 7:00p Christian Education	17 9:00a WIC	18 9:30a Zumba 10:30a Books Through Bars
19 8:30a Bible Study 10:30a Worship 11:45a Sunday School 12:00 n Men's Group 12:00 n Women's Circle	20 9:00a Clothing Ministry 6:30p Zumba <i>Perspective Articles due for March</i> Church office closed <i>Presidents' Day</i>	21 6:30p Zumba 7:30p Property	<i>Ash Wednesday</i> 22 6:00p Soup & Bread Dinner 7:00p Ash Wednesday Communion Service	23 9:00a Clothing ministry 10:00a Food ministry 7:00p Choir 7:00p Lenten Book Study	24	25 8:00a – 11:00a MaxSold Auction Pick Up
26 8:30a Bible Study 10:30a Worship 11:45a Sunday School 7:00p Antiracism Book Club	27 9:00a Clothing Ministry 6:30p Zumba	28 6:30p Zumba No Session				