

Perspective

A Newsletter of the First Presbyterian Church
of Phoenixville, Pennsylvania

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From the Pastor

Leviticus 25:1-5

25 The LORD spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, saying, ²“Speak to the Israelites and say to them: When you enter the land that I am giving you, the land shall observe a Sabbath for the LORD. ³Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard and gather in their yield, ⁴but in the seventh year there shall be a Sabbath of complete rest for the land, a Sabbath for the LORD: you shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard. ⁵You shall not reap the aftergrowth of your harvest or gather the grapes of your unpruned vine: it shall be a year of complete rest for the land.

The Jubilee was to come every seven years for the Hebrew people. It was a year of sabbath for all humans and animals, for the plants and for the land. It was a time when people would restore property they had purchased to the original owners, especially if anything had been sold because someone had fallen into financial difficulty. Similarly, slaves would be freed, especially since it was commonplace for the poor to fall into slavery if they couldn't pay their mounting debts. It was a societal reset built into the Law that God delivered to Moses on Mount Sinai. Historically, we don't know how often or how faithfully it was practiced, but as I've said on Sundays, if Jubilee went without saying, it wouldn't have been said.

When I started at FPC in 2014, it was a stressful time for the congregation for a number of reasons. There are many stories - I don't need to recount them here. But my first four years were more difficult than average, I would say, for one's tenure as a pastor. (That was the impression I got from my colleagues, at least, when we compared notes) It was stressful for me, my family, and the congregation, but we got through it as well as we could. In 2018 there was a final vote on whether I would become the long-term pastor here, rather than temporarily designated, and in that year I was installed a second time in my new capacity. It hardly felt like a time to ask for a sabbath - it was a time to move forward, to try new things, and to welcome new people. Functionally, I came back the following Monday and we continued our work and ministry together.

We had a year and a half after my installation, and then COVID hit. Once again, all of us were struck by stress and upheaval, almost entirely out of our control. We all have COVID stories, and again, I don't need to recount them here. But 2020 through 2022 hardly felt like a time to ask for a sabbath - we were regularly changing plans and renegotiating our life together, responding to changes around us and trying to make sense of changes in the congregation. All of us were going through this crisis together, and plenty of people don't even have the luxury of asking for sabbatical time.

Meanwhile, I have been accumulating continuing education days. The minimum for a pastor is two weeks per year, and I've asked Personnel to let some of them 'roll over', but my ongoing experience is that I often have time for continuing education but not money. Conferences and classes and travel are expensive! So I end up having time, but limited ways to use that time, especially over the last few years.

The recommended time-period for a sabbatical, according to the PCUSA, is every 5-7 years on average. That said, many pastors never have a sabbatical, in part because 7 years is the average length of time that a pastor remains at any given church. Also many smaller churches cannot afford to offer a sabbatical. This coming June 2023 will be my 9-year anniversary at FPC. It's been a rollercoaster of 9 years, at times. I'll admit to being worn out.

Donegal Presbytery lists the following purposes for a sabbatical: Learning, Adventures, Sabbath Rest, Endings, and Preparation for New Beginnings. Of those, I don't see a need for an ending or new beginning, but I would love some extended time for learning, adventures, and sabbath rest. It's simply part of the job, but I would like a few weekends with Pam and Poppy. Normally my day off is Friday because I need to work Saturday and obviously Sunday, which means we have to carefully negotiate time we spend together on a given weekend, and fit that time in days that for me are work days. Usually my weekly sabbath is Friday afternoon through Saturday morning - something like a Jewish shabbat, ironically. We get weekends together when Pam and I take vacation time, but most years, that's it. I would like to spend a few Saturdays and Sundays in a row together.

2. *continued....*

I have other thoughts and plans. I would like to visit the worshipping communities of my colleagues in town, to see what God is doing there. I would like to travel to Maine so that my uncle can teach Poppy and me to sail. I would like to travel to Florida, see some of my estranged family, and get my father's funeral plaque from his church (they're holding it for me because the building where it was installed had to be demolished) and find a good place for it. I know that I will get a lot of writing done. I would like to visit my mom and her partner - she's now the age my father was when he suddenly died, and that's on my mind. And I'll spend time driving Poppy to and from Taekwondo camp, and two and from Firebird theater camp, and generally doing dad stuff.

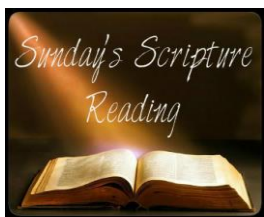
My bid for funding for a longer and more involved sabbatical this year fell through, so what I am thinking is this: I will take this coming August 2023 as a one-month sabbatical, and during the month of April I will complete a second grant application for funding for something more elaborate in 2024 ('more elaborate' in this case meaning long-postponed travel). If that grant application is successful, I will request a sabbatical in 2024 lasting between one and two months. In total, that will be three months at most, which is the normal length of time for a pastoral sabbatical.

You may be thinking: "Doug! How will we survive without your wise words and dulcet tones on Sunday morning?" Fortunately for you, my mentor and colleague Rev. Jane DeFord has agreed to preach each Sunday in August. She is also able to moderate Session when they meet, if Session decides to meet in August. If there are pastoral emergencies while I am on sabbatical, I already have three local colleagues who are willing to help: Rev. Mark Young from FUMC, Rev. Dan McDowell from GraceCrossing, and Rev. Samuel Ndungu from St. Peter's.

I am preemptively thankful for the opportunity to have a short sabbatical this year, and am hopeful about having a more involved one next year (though the grant for which I'm applying has a 2.5% approval rate, so I'm not yet writing it in my calendar in pen). I appreciate the Personnel Committee and Session being open to the idea when we discussed it last year at length. I hope to come back in September refreshed, re-energized, and with some new stories to share as well.

Pastor Doug

Upcoming Scripture Readings



April 2nd: Philippians 2:5-11; Matthew 21:1-11
April 6th: 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; John 13:1-17, 31b-35
April 9th: Acts 10:34-43; John 20:1-18
April 16th: Acts 2:14, 22-32; John 20:19-31
April 23rd: Acts 2:14, 36-41; Luke 24:13-35
April 30th: Acts 2:42-47; John 10:1-10



Palm Sunday Worship

April 2nd at 10:30 am

Maundy Thursday Communion Service

April 6th at 7:30 pm

Good Friday Service at 1st United Methodist

April 7th at 7:30 pm

Easter Sunday Worship

April 9th at 10:30 am

PARISH LIFE

*The 2023 FPC Easter Egg Hunt is on!
Easter Sunday, April 9th right after the service.*



Please join us for the 2023 Easter Egg Hunt on the church lawn.

The eggs will be stuffed with nut free candy.

The event is rain or shine, with Fellowship Hall being our backup plan in case of rain.

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!

From the Clerk of Session

- ❖ Average Sunday morning attendance:
 - In February we had an average of 69 worshipping in person (wearing masks) and an average of 20 households viewing the 10:39am YouTube premiere with 5 chatting.
 - Ash Wednesday Service had 30 in person and 5 viewing YouTube.
 - 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:
 - Amber (Morby) Majcher has requested removal from the roll via conversation with her mother Robin Fetter. Amber, Andy and their family are active at a church in Royersford.
 - Current membership is 165.
 - No other changes
- ❖ Communion
 - On Sunday, February 5th approximately 50 people were served.
 - On Ash Wednesday, February 22 approximately 30 people were served.
 - Next communion will be Maundy Thursday, April 6th then Easter Sunday, April 9th.
- ❖ Session Meeting Information: Minutes of the January 24, 2023 Session Meeting will be reviewed at the March 28, 2023 Stated Session Meeting and will be in the following Perspective.



Jewell Baker, Clerk of Session

Church Growth

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. 1 Peter 1:3

Gratitude for New Life

You are invited to join Church Growth in a journey of gratitude. We will be reflecting on weekly prompts throughout the year, and building up a regular practice of gratitude in our lives. For April, our theme is "Gratitude for New Life." Watch for reminders and examples in the BEAT and on our Facebook page.

Here are the prompts for each week ahead of time:

- April 2: What new thing are you starting?
- April 9: What could you bring back to life?
- April 16: How are you nurturing yourself so you can grow?
- April 23: How do you give thanks for growing all around you?
- April 30: How can you share what you have grown?

Minute for Gratitude. If you would like to share your reflection (1-2 minutes) after a specific prompt or something you are grateful for, please let us know, and we can let you share!

Bridge of Hope

Please keep the family in your prayers as Mom looks for a job that's closer to her home, with greater flexibility and good health benefits. Please pray with us for our family, and if you know of a used, reliable car for sale, please reach out to Pastor Doug.

Prison Ministry: Books Through Bars

Join us for one of the upcoming visits on the third Thursday of the month as we assist in packing books for prisoners and organizing their library. Sign up here: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/8050f4aada722a1fb6-books1#/>

We are always accepting books on behalf of BTB. Please visit the website to read the requirements and follow the donation rules. <https://www.booksthroughbars.org/donate-books>.

First Presbyterian volunteers will be featured in a newsletter in April celebrating Volunteer Appreciation Month. We will share the newsletter when we receive it!



Men's Group Book Discussion

Join the Men's Group on the 3rd Sunday of each month after church for lunch and discussion. Feel free to join the group any 3rd Sunday whether you are reading the books or not.

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.





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 and she will forward your requests on to Amy.

Worship and Music Notes

Here are some tidbits that will give you things to look forward to in our Holy week and Easter worship services.

Palm Sunday (April 2 at 10:30) will be full of the waving of palms by our younger congregation whose singing will be joined by the congregation. Our bell choir will present a piece that gives us the sense of the approaching of the entrance into Jerusalem and its passing by.

Maundy Thursday (April 6 at 7:30 p.m. – with Child Care) Come as we through Communion, commemorate the institution of Communion.

Our choir, along with the choir from the First United Methodist Church, will add to the meaning of our worship service. Here are phrases from the 3 anthems: “Ubi Caritas” – Where charity and love are, God is there. “I sat down” – He brought me to the banqueting house and His banner over me was love. “Cantique de Jean Racine” – O Redeemer divine, our sole hope of salvation. The musicians and congregation of First United Methodist Church will be joining us.

Good Friday (April 7 at 7:30 p.m. – At First United Methodist Church, 865 Main Street, Phoenixville). Our musicians and congregation will join the Methodists in a very moving service of Shadows. It will make for a very meaningful Good Friday service.

Easter (April 9 at 10:30 a.m.) Come rejoice and sing Hallelujah!

See you in church.



April Scrip Orders

Happy Spring...Happy April!!

We will be placing orders for gift cards on **Wednesday, April 5** and **Wednesday, April 19**.

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 (**April 4** and **April 18**).

Please make checks payable to “First Presbyterian Church DR”. All money raised goes to benefit First Presbyterian Church.

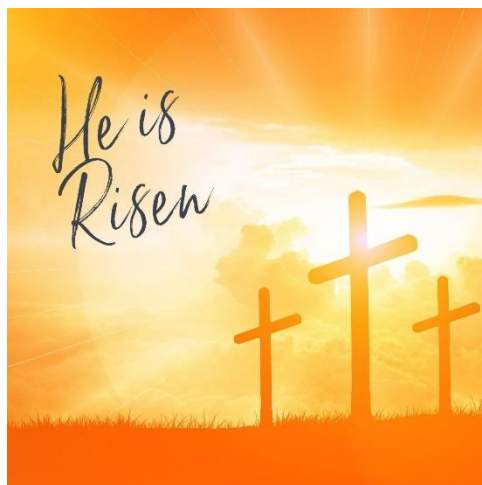
As always, thank you for continuing to support this program!

The Stewardship Committee





Deacons' Dialogue



Your Board of Deacons wishes each and every one of you a joyous, blessed Easter.

We ask that this Easter, please take the time to remember all of those who sacrificially serve others. The armed forces, nurses, doctors, caregivers, teachers, and all of those who selflessly serve as Jesus taught us to do. These dedicated folks never count the costs of blessing others, so let's say a special prayer for them, and ask God to bless them and their loved ones.

Submitted on behalf of the Deacons by,
Ellen Williams

One Great Hour of Sharing...A Friendly Reminder



During the weeks of **Lent**, we have invited you to give generously to “**One Great Hour of Sharing**”. Know that it is not too late to contribute.

Envelopes are available in your offering envelope boxes, and on the table as you enter Fellowship Hall, or you may send a check to the church office with **OGHS** noted in the memo line.

You may also use this as an opportunity to clear out your **collection of coins!!**

Join our Sunday School children and fill up a “**fish box**” with coins.

Boxes are available on the table by the envelopes.

Offerings will continue to be received throughout Lent, with a special dedication on the **Sunday after Easter, April 16.**

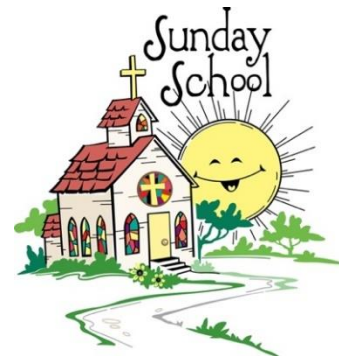
Together we can once again help change the lives of many.

Thank you for your life changing offering.



Sunday School

During the season of Lent, we have explored a number of Easter-related topics in Sunday School. We have also been looking at some of the parables of Jesus, stories he told while traveling around with his followers. A new addition to the two older Sunday School rooms is a question box, in which children can place questions for Pastor Doug. In future worship services, some of these questions will be addressed in sermons or children's messages.



On April 2 (Palm Sunday), children will participate in the worship service by distributing palms and by joining a procession. With this in mind, we have been practicing the hymn *Filled With Excitement*, which the children will sing along with the choir and congregation on Palm Sunday.

Speaking of music, Rebecca Barkley visited our Sunday School classes in March to introduce the ukulele. With her class supply of ukes, she led the children in learning some chords and songs. At some point in the future, look for the "ukulele ensemble" to appear during a worship service to share some songs.

On Easter Sunday, while we will not be holding Sunday School classes, children will receive "activity bags" with which to occupy themselves during the worship service. There will be two separate versions of the bags, one for younger children and one for older children. Many thanks to Laura Hobbins for assembling these activities!

Two intergenerational events have been organized by Sunday School parents. First, on Friday evening, March 31, a creative evening for parents, families, and friends was planned for the *Nailed It DIY Studio* in Phoenixville. Second, a Family Bingo Night is planned for Friday, April 14. Check the Sunday bulletin for details about Family Bingo Night. Thanks to Jill Kleppinger, Sarah Pilotti, Pam Hagler, and Sue Smith for organizing these events.

As a reminder, Sunday School classes take place every Sunday during the regular worship service, from about 10:45 until 11:45. To assure adequate time for our teachers to complete their lessons, we encourage parents to delay walking upstairs until 11:45, so children don't become distracted at the end of their Sunday School time.

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.

Employment Position - Nursery

Starting in June the Christian Education Department is looking to fill a position in the church nursery. The Nursery Caregiver is responsible for the care of the youngest children on Sunday during the worship service. The candidate must be at least 18 years old. All state clearances are required. Previous experience in a childcare setting is preferred. The position is for approximately 1.5 hours. The pay will range from \$20-\$30. Please contact the church office if you are interested. They will provide you with a more detail job description.



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.



Mission, Action, Concern Committee (MAC)

For this is what the Lord has commanded us: "I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth." (Acts 13:47)

MAC Updates:

To contact the MAC Committee, email MissionsFPC145@gmail.com.

The MAC Committee is looking for new members. We are the place for you if you would like to assist in planning local, regional, national, and global mission activities! We meet via Zoom on the first Monday of the month at 2:00 pm. The next meeting is on Monday, April 3.

The MAC Committee is looking for a treasurer. If you are interested in helping out, please get in touch with us at MissionFPC145@gmail.com

Thank you!

The MAC Committee would like to thank those who participated in our food collection for **Phoenixville Area Community Services (PACS)**, our Garage Sale benefitting **People to People** as a helper or buyer, and our Letter writing campaign to support the 2023 Farm Bill. We will include updates in the following Perspective.

Missions: Local Focus

Thank you notes received. See the bulletin board at the entrance of Fellowship Hall for some of these correspondences.

- 1/20/23 - [Orion Communities](#) for our \$165 contribution on 1/3/23
- 1/25/23 - [PACS](#) for our participation in the 2022 Holiday program by adopting three families
- 2/23/23 - Thank you note from [Meals on Wheels, Phoenixville Chapter](#)

Summer Mission: The MAC Committee wants input on what the congregation wants to do for a summer mission project in July. Options include a one-day/weekend service event, a week of one-day opportunities, and a week-long trip. Let us know your interest and availability for serving. We will be collecting responses until Monday, April 17th. <https://bit.ly/SummerMissionsFPC>

Mission Focus: Global Missions

We have received an update from our friends, Cathy Chang & Juan Lopez, who serve in the Philippines and are supported through MAC. Here is an excerpt from their letter. To read the full update, visit bit.ly/FPCComeAndSee

Dear friends and family,

From February 4–16, 2023, the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program and Presbyterian World Mission co-hosted a Travel Study Seminar. The theme was "Root Causes and Current

9. *continued....*

Challenges of Forced Migration and Labor Trafficking.” Our hosts were the faith communities, migrant-serving organizations, and migrants and their families.

Allow me to share some personal “come and see” moments. First and foremost, with the emphasis on faith communities and their ministries with migrants and their families, I selected two worshipping communities as the starting points for each week. At the UCCP Cubao local church, we feasted on the Word with Rev. Homar Distajo’s sermon urging us to “share the flavor of life,” extending into the sacrament of communion. Church members shared a feast of Filipino home cooking delights including adobo, the national dish. Our fellowship extended into rich sharing of internal and external migration. When we began our second week with the members of UCCP-Hong Kong Fellowship, I recall the exuberant joy while singing “When the Saints Go Marching In,” magnified by clapping and foot stomping.

Your friends in Christ,
Cathy, Juan and Aurelie

We have received an update from our friends, Drake & Andrea Williams, who travel to various countries teaching about the Bible. The Williams are supported through MAC. Here is an excerpt of their letter. To read the full update, visit bit.ly/FPCComeAndSee

This month I want to share with you about a special guest from East Ukraine that will be in the Philadelphia area.

We are looking forward to having Volodya Degtyaryov from Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine visit us between March 15 and 21. Volodya has been in East Ukraine for much of the war. Currently, Zaporizhzhia is approximately 25 miles (40 kilometers) from the front line. He is the former president of the Zaporizhzhya Bible Seminary where I taught in 2019 and 2021. He has many stories to tell about how God is providing and still blessing the church during this very challenging time in Ukraine.

If you want to hear a podcast that I taped with Volodya regarding news in East Ukraine, you can [click here](#). His testimony is very moving!

With Christian Greetings,
Drake and Andrea Williams

Thank you notes received. See the bulletin board at the entrance of Fellowship Hall for some of these correspondences.

- 1/31/23 - [Special Hope Network](#) for our \$500 contribution on 5/4/22
- [Bethany Christian Services](#) for our \$70 in 2022
- 2/23 - [Presbyterian Mission: Presbyterian Disaster Assistance](#) for our \$300 contribution on 12/7/22, \$190 contribution on 12/31/22, and \$650 on 1/25/23
- 2/15/23 - [Presbyterian Mission: Mission Engagement & Support](#) for our \$350.63 contribution on 1/25/23 for Peach & Global Witness Offering
- 2/27/23 - [New International \(Dan & Mary Vissani\)](#) for our \$1,100 contribution on 2/22
- 2/27/23 - [Special Hope Network](#) thank you note for 2022 Involvement

April 2023

First Presbyterian Church of Phoenixville

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 9:30a Zumba class
2 PALM SUNDAY 8:30a Bible Study 10:30a Worship 10:45a Sunday School 12:00p Worship & Music	3 9:00a Clothing Ministry 2:00p MAC 6:30p Zumba class	4 6:30p Zumba class	5 7:30p Bell choir	6 <i>Maundy Thursday</i> 9:00a WIC 9:00a Clothing ministry 10:00a Food ministry 7:30p Maundy Thurs. Worship Service	7 <i>Good Friday</i> 9:00a WIC 7:30p Good Friday Worship Service @ 1st United Methodist Church	8 <i>Great Vigil of Easter</i>
9 EASTER 10:30a Worship Communion No Sunday School 12:00n Egg Hunt	10 9:00a Clothing Ministry 6:30p Zumba class 7:00p Finance	11 6:30p Zumba class 7:00p Personnel 7:00p Parish Life	12 7:30p Bell choir	13 9:00a Public Health Mgt. Corp. 9:00a Clothing ministry 10:00a Food ministry 7:00p Choir 7:00p Compassionate Friends meeting	14 6:00p Family Bingo Event	15 9:30a Zumba class 10:30a Books Through Bars
16 8:30a Bible Study 10:30a Worship 10:45a Sunday School 12:00n Men's Group 12:00n Women's Circle	17 9:00a Clothing Ministry 6:30p Zumba class 7:30p Staff meeting	18 6:30p Zumba class 7:30p Property	19 12:30p Church Growth 7:30p Bell choir	20 9:00a WIC 9:00a Clothing ministry 10:00a Food ministry 7:00p Choir 7:00p Christian Education <i>Perspective articles due for May</i>	21 9:00a WIC	22
23 8:30a Bible Study 10:30a Worship 10:45a Sunday School 7:00p Antiracism Book Club	24 9:00a Clothing Ministry 6:30p Zumba class	25 6:30p Zumba class No Session meeting	26 7:30p Bell choir	27 9:00a Clothing ministry 10:00a Food ministry 7:00p Choir	28	29
30 8:30a Bible Study 10:30a Worship 10:45a Sunday School						