

Perspective

A Newsletter of the First Presbyterian Church
of Phoenixville, Pennsylvania

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From the Pastor

Leviticus 20*

¹³ If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall be put to death; their bloodguilt is upon them.

Leviticus 20:13 and Leviticus 18:22 are two of the passages in the Bible sometimes called “clobber passages” - Bible passages used to clobber LGBTQ folks specifically. These verses are flung at people like weapons, quoted as if they end the conversation. Checkmate! Without exaggerating, I have probably been told hundreds of times that the PC(USA) has abandoned scripture in our decision to provide same-sex marriage ceremonies and ordain LGBTQ persons, and Leviticus looms large when those charges are repeated.

Here’s the thing: these two passages are not actually on the side of people who oppose LGBTQ equality. They are almost certainly about pederasty - the common practice in the ancient Greco-Roman world of older men having a sexual relationship with boys they are mentoring. This practice is disturbing from a modern viewpoint, and was disturbing to the ancient Hebrews as well. Some of the earliest writings we have on this practice come from about 200 years before Leviticus was written - by that time, it was a widespread practice, and something the people of Judea would have observed regularly.

When describing this practice, the older man was referred to (in Greek) as a ‘man’ and the younger person was referred to as a ‘male’, since they were not old enough to be legally termed a ‘man.’ This is an important distinction when we look at the Hebrew text for the passages from Leviticus. Both passages say:

וְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁכַּב אֶת-זָכָר מִשְׁכָּבִי אִשָּׁה

Remember to read right to left because it’s Hebrew 😊 Translated, it says, “If a man lies with a male as with a woman...” Note that - if a *man* lies with a *male*. That is an odd thing to say. The text could very easily say if a *man* lies with a *man*; if an *ish* lies with an *ish* as with an *issha*, but it doesn’t say that. It says if an *ish* lies with a *zakar* as with an *issha*. That’s a strange wording to use for the law, unless the law is specifically referring to pederasty. In that case, it is a clear condemnation, and it also explains why there is no parallel law referring to the behavior of the *issha* (woman). Pederasty was an exclusively male practice, meaning there was no reason to give a parallel law for women - which one would expect to see if this was a condemnation of same-sex relationships.

So if we read an anti-gay bias into the text, then it is an odd way to condemn homosexuality, given that it is awkwardly worded and also only mentions male behavior. But if we read it as a condemnation of pederasty, then the text makes sense - even the awkwardness of saying “male” instead of the Hebrew words for “boy” or “youth” makes sense because it matches the Greek terminology used to describe pederasty.

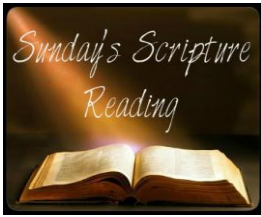
Historically, these texts were not understood by Jewish interpreters to be a condemnation of same-sex relationships until after 324 CE, when brutal anti-homosexual laws were passed by Emperor Constantine. Rabbis changed the interpretation of those two texts as a way to discourage behavior that was now punished by the death penalty in the Roman Empire. But from the time when they were first written in about 500 BCE to that point in 324 CE, these texts were interpreted by the scholars who knew them best as condemning pederasty. This is not to say that Iron Age Judaism was affirming of same-sex relationships (it generally was not) - only to say that these are not texts that support that position.**

Like a lot of the verbal weaponry we deploy to justify keeping people from experiencing equality, these two clobber passages lose their clobber when read closely with an understanding of their historical context. This of course doesn’t mean people will stop using them. For some, once they’ve picked up a weapon, it’s very hard to put it down, especially when it means they have to rethink a view they’ve held for a long time. My goal in sharing this perspective was mostly to reassure folks who are committed to equality that no, we do not have to ignore the Bible to get there.

Pastor Doug

*Leviticus 18:22 is similar, but Leviticus 20:13 is outwardly more harsh and the same analysis applies to both.

**I’m in debt to a lot of Seminary reading as well as *The Jewish Standard* among other sources for helping me be brief.



Upcoming Scripture Readings

May 7th: Acts 7:55-60; 1 Peter 2:2-10
May 14th: Acts 17:22-31; 1 Peter 3:13-22
May 21st: Acts 1:1-11 (Psalm 47); Luke 24:44-53
May 28th: Acts 2:1-21; John 20:19-23

From the Clerk of Session

- ❖ Average Sunday morning attendance:
 - In March we had an average of 69 worshipping in Fellowship Hall (wearing masks) and an average of 20 households viewing the 10:30am YouTube premiere with 4 chatting.
 - Easter Sunday had 132 worshipping in person, in the Sanctuary and 20 households viewing YouTube with 3 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:
 - Nine new members received on Easter Sunday – Terri Camilari, John & Karen Catafesta, Laura Hobbins, Dan & Jenn Howe, Randy & Sandy Schrack, Zach Sorrell. Brigitte Anderson has met with Session and will be joining soon.
 - Current membership is 174.
 - No other changes
- ❖ Communion
 - On Easter Sunday, April 9th approximately 110 received communion.
 - Next communion will be Sunday, May 7th and again on Pentecost, May 28th.
- ❖ Session Meeting Information:
 - 1/24 meeting: Session voted unanimously to move forward with the sanctuary and roof repairs.
 - 3/28 meeting: A motion to switch from masks required to masks optional, with the exception that those serving communion to be masked, PASSED with one abstention.
- ❖ Minutes of the March 28, 2023 Session Meeting will be reviewed at the May 23, 2023 Stated Session Meeting and will be in the following Perspective.



Jewell Baker, Clerk of Session



Presbyterian Women Circle

We continue the PW/Horizons Bible Study, *Celebrating Sabbath Accepting God's Gift of Rest and Delight* by Carol Bechtel. All women are invited to pack a lunch and join us in the parlor on the third Sunday following worship.

April's discussion was on Sabbath and Hospitality and this quote by Joan Chittister had meaning for us... **"Hospitality is simply love on the loose."** May 21st chapter is titled Sabbath and Self-Care, study guides are available.

Jewell Baker

Worship and Music Notes

You have two opportunities to celebrate Communion this month. The usual first Sunday, May 7 and the last Sunday, May 28 which is also Pentecost (remember to wear something red). May 28 is also Memorial Day weekend, so yet another good reason to attend worship.

Sunday May 21 is the day we will recognize everyone involved in our music program. That would include our choir, hand bells, and Praise team. We will not forget our individual musicians that occasionally add their talents to our worship.

We will also recognize YOU the congregation member, for without your contribution we would be missing a great sound. I've visited churches where the congregation just stands for the hymns, etc. and it does not provide a good worship experience. Thank you for being good congregational singers.

See (hear) you in church



Church Growth

Gratitude for Mothers and Mother Figures

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. May's theme is "Gratitude for Mothers and Mother Figures." Watch for reminders and examples in the BEAT and on our Facebook page. Here are the prompts for each week ahead of time:

- May 7: How do you honor your mother/mother figures?
- May 14: How do you care for others?
- May 21: How do you care for our natural world?
- May 28: How do you advocate for others/justice?

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#/>

Please look at the books we need right now at BTB, and be sure to look at the type of books they DO NOT need. <https://www.booksthroughbars.org/donate-books>

Alternatively, you can purchase books from the Wishlist using [this link to Bookshop.org](#) and have them shipped to Books Through Bars 4722 Baltimore Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19143. And by ordering from Bookshop.org, you will be supporting small booksellers.

First Presbyterian volunteers were featured in a video shared by Philadelphia Mayor, Jim Kenney. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LzvjVBInIo4&ab_channel=PHLserves, and don't miss the :54 mark!



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, May 1.

Missions: Local Focus

- Updated Numbers
 - **Phoenixville Area Community Services (PACS)** - we collected 336 pounds of food consisting of 300 items and over \$200 in monetary donations. MAC presented all of this to Debbie McGinn, Program and Development Coordinator at PACS on Sunday, April 16th, who also shared what PACS does. Thank you again to those who donated!
 - Garage Sale benefitting **People to People**. 28 people assisted in the sale served over 266, and \$2,297.64 was raised



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

- 3/20/23 - [The Clinic](#) for our \$1,000 contribution on 2/20/23

Mission Focus: National Focus

Thank you to everyone who participated in our Letter Writing Campaign through [Bread for the World](#). We dedicated 35 letters to support the Farm Bill on Sunday, April 2nd.

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

Mission Focus: Global Missions

Thank you to those who donated to the Turkey/Syria earthquake fun. We collected \$1,300. This money will go towards meeting immediate needs, such as hygiene kits, psychosocial support, shelter, medicines, winterization items, food packages and more have been processed. PDA will be present for the long-term recovery.

5. continued....

We have received an update from the Vissani's. Please see an excerpt:

We met Sam soon after arriving in Zambia in 2016. He was introduced to us as a competent bricklayer—just the kind of person we were looking for at the time. Little did we know that Sam would not only neatly construct a patio that has served us for seven years, but would also grow into a leader in our ministry with an enormous heart for people and Jesus. He's such an encouragement to us and the whole team—we wish you could meet him! Here are a few of the ways he makes an impact:



- Last year he used all his vacation days, as well as some unpaid leave, to travel to his ancestral home on the other side of Zambia to teach them everything he has learned about farming and following Jesus
- He is constantly asking to learn new things, from how to make spreadsheets to how to reduce the wear-and-tear on a clutch
- The farm team, whom Sam leads, has grown in maturity and ability under his loving, humble leadership
- He relishes a good problem to solve, and he is not afraid of complicated solutions
- Recently he asked to shorten his work week (at a loss of pay) to spend more time discipling and teaching metal fabrication to unemployed youth in his community

In short, Sam sees his role at Foundations Zambia as much more than a job—it is an opportunity given by God to grow as a disciple, make more disciples. It is such a privilege to watch Sam go against the cultural norms (which are not limited to Zambia!) in this way. We pray that his attitude will be infectious and our team will grow in their callings.

And quickly, we wanted to ask you to pray for our upcoming “Inspire” conference, to take place the last week of April. Up to 100 people from all around Zambia will gather for vision, encouragement and connection to those who have similar farming-and-discipleship ministries. Please pray for safe travel for all and a fruitful time.

One Great Hour of Sharing...Thank You

Thank you for your generous gifts to the One Great Hour of Sharing ministry. Your gracious contributions will help to support the many life changing missions of this ministry.

Once we have all of the offerings and “Gracie” fish boxes, we will update you on the total received.

Stay tuned...

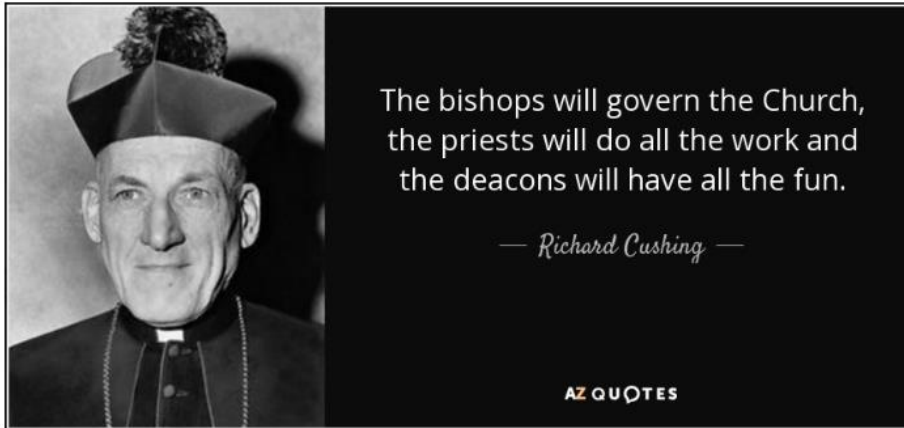


Prayer Chain & Prayer Requests

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.



Deacons' Dialogue



The bishops will govern the Church, the priests will do all the work and the deacons will have all the fun.

Richard Cushing

When most of us think of Deacons, we think of the services that we, as Deacons, provide. We care for our flock as we care for our family, because we are all one big church family - are we not?

However, our mission is not often associated with the word 'fun', and it should be! As Deacon at the Door (greeting in the Narthex at Sunday service), we find it not only warm and pleasant to be one of the first faces you see when entering church on Sunday morning, but fun to catch up with you - just to see how you're doing. We love to hear more about how your week was, how your family is, or whatever is on your mind that particular morning.

During COVID, we Deacons really missed the interaction with you, our congregant family. We are overjoyed to see your faces each week, and can't wait to have that personal connection with each and every one of you.

And yes - it's fun! You may want to consider serving if you are called. The joy is boundless!

Submitted on behalf of the Deacons by,
Ellen Williams



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.



Finance Committee 2023 First Quarter Financial Results

Income

- Pledge receipts were well below planned giving by \$ 26,000. Pledges received totaled \$37,412
- Unpledged giving was below planned giving by \$915
- Givebutter parking lot income exceeded planned giving
- Dividends and interest income also exceeded planned giving

Expenses

- Overall budgeted expenses were favorable and under budget by \$ 2,400
- Non-budgeted sanctuary repair expense totaled \$ 50,978

Net Income –Gain/Loss

- Net loss for the period \$35,401. Budgeted loss was \$15,580

Other News

- The online FaithLife giving program will be replaced by another provider in the next one to two months. The new provider will provide information on the new program ahead of the implementation. We will make all members aware of the change once we have those details.



May Gift Card Orders

It's May, and that means it's time to think about Mother's Day and Graduations!!!

We will be placing orders for gift cards on Wednesdays **May 3, May 17 and May 31.**

If you would like to place an order, please call or text Lynne Williams at 610-955-4749, 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 (**May 2, May 16 and May 30**). 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

PARISH LIFE

Spring & Summer Parish life Events!



Announcing the return of Lemonade in the Shade!

Mark your calendars for the Memorial Day weekend return of our weekly after service gathering. On Sunday, May 28th we will kick off Lemonade in the Shade.

For those of you who may be unfamiliar, each Sunday in the summer, immediately after service, we roll the cart out and serve up lemonade, water and snacks. This gives us a chance to cool off, and catch up with fellow congregants we may not have been able to connect with before or during service. Please join us!

If you'd like to contribute, we can always use lemonade mix or gallons, or individually wrapped snacks. Thank you in advance!



It's on! FPC's Annual Ice Cream Social!

Sunday, June 25th is our Old Time Religion Sunday – an event enjoyed by all. What makes this tradition even sweeter? An ice cream social! Please join us immediately after service for ice cream and all the toppings. This will be hosted on the church lawn, or in Fellowship Hall should it 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!

Sunday School

On Sunday, May 14, we will celebrate Teacher Appreciation Day in church. In addition to recognizing our fabulous group of Sunday School and adult class teachers, we will be including children in some key parts of the worship service itself. This will also be the day of our Ukulele Ensemble's debut performance in church. We hope that you and your children can join us on May 14!

As part of our preparation for the May 14 worship service, Sunday School children have been learning about the elements of a Presbyterian worship service, including the reasons behind some of the things we typically include in worship.

The final Sunday School session of the school year will be held on May 21. On this Sunday, we will follow our regular Sunday School schedule, then conclude with a luncheon on the church lawn following the worship service. Everyone is invited to join us to help celebrate a successful year in Sunday School.

We have been collecting children's questions in Sunday School and Pastor Doug will be incorporating them into occasional children's messages. We will continue to make the Question Boxes available in Sunday School and look forward to additional thoughts and questions from our youngest disciples.

Two intergenerational events, organized by parents, took place over the past month. First, on Friday evening, March 31, a creative evening was held at the *Nailed It DIY Studio* in Phoenixville. Second, a Family Bingo Night took place on Friday, April 14. Stay tuned for additional intergenerational events during the upcoming summer months.

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.



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.



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 detailed job description.



Attention Graduates

Please notify the church office with the names of those people who will be graduating from High School, College, Technical School or Grad School this year. (secretaryfpc145@gmail.com or 610-933-8816)

We will recognize all our graduates on May 14th during the worship service.

Grass Cutters Needed, No Experience Necessary

For a number of years a few church members have been cutting the grass. We need some help. If you are able to join us, please email Paul Parrish at parrishps@gmail.com



Parking Lot Attendants Needed

Beginning in May, the Borough of Phoenixville will close Bridge Street for outdoor dining and events. We will once again need volunteers to collect parking donations on the **First Friday of the month from 5:00pm – 8:00pm**. It is a great opportunity to spend some quality time with a fellow church member, as well as a chance to interact with folks in our community. Not only does this benefit our church, but it also makes it convenient for those who park in our lot.



If you would like to help or if you have questions, please contact Jewell Baker (484-459-3585) or Lynne Williams (610-955-4749).

The Stewardship Committee appreciates your time and help.



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.



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.

May 2023

First Presbyterian Church of Phoenixville

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 9:00a Clothing Ministry 2:00p MAC meeting 6:30p Zumba class	2 6:30p Zumba class 7:00p Personnel	3 7:30p Bell Choir	4 9:00a WIC 9:00a Clothing ministry 10:00a Food ministry 7:00p Choir	5 9:00a WIC	6 9:30a Zumba class
7 Communion 8:30a Bible Study 10:30a Worship 10:45a Sunday School 12:00n Deacons meeting	8 9:00a Clothing Ministry 6:30p Zumba class 7:00p Finance	9 6:30p Zumba class 7:00p Parish Life	10 7:30p Bell Choir	11 9:00a Public Health Mgt. Corp. 9:00a Clothing ministry 10:00a Food ministry 7:00p Choir 7:00p Compassionate Friends meeting	12	13
14 Mother's Day 8:30a Bible Study 10:30a Worship Teacher Appreciation Graduate Recognition 10:45a Sunday School 7:00p Pub Theology	15 9:00a Clothing Ministry 6:30p Zumba class 7:30p Staff meeting	16 6:00a VOTING all day in Fellowship Hall till 8:00p 7:30p Property	17 10:00a AARP Board Meeting 12:30p Church Growth 7:30p Bell Choir	18 9:00a WIC 9:00a Clothing ministry 10:00a Food ministry 7:00p Choir	19 9:00a WIC	20 9:30a Zumba class 10:30a Books Through Bars Perspective articles due for June/July
21 8:30a Bible Study 10:30a Worship Music Appreciation 10:45a Last Sunday School until September 12:00n Men's Group 12:00n Women's Circle	22 9:00a Clothing Ministry 6:30p Zumba class	23 6:30p Zumba class 7:00p Session	24	25 9:00a Clothing ministry 10:00a Food ministry 7:00p Last Choir Rehearsal till Fall 7:00p Christian Educa.	26	27
28 Pentecost 8:30a Bible Study 10:30a Worship Communion 7:00p Antiracism Book Club	29 Office closed Memorial Day	30 6:30p Zumba class				