

Perspective

A Newsletter of the First Presbyterian Church
of Phoenixville, Pennsylvania

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From the Pastor

Thank you for the questions you've shared so far and placed in the box in the Narthex. I thought I would use this Perspective to answer some of them. They're not connected, so I'll take each one individually, and like any good question, each one of them could have a long answer, and I am going to split the questions into Part 1 and Part 2. For each, I'll add a brief passage from the Bible that comes to mind, which I think is connected to the question and my answer.

1. "According to Reform(ed) theology, do good atheists go to heaven?"

Revelation 20

¹¹Then I saw a great white throne and the one who sat on it; the earth and the heaven fled from his presence, and no place was found for them. ¹²And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Also another book was opened, the book of life. And the dead were judged according to their works, as recorded in the books. ¹³And the sea gave up the dead that were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and all were judged according to what they had done. ¹⁴Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire; ¹⁵and anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

To clarify, according to Reformed theology, no one 'goes to heaven.' The idea is that when one of us dies, we go into the grave like anyone else, but that at the end of history, when God's plan has culminated, everyone will be resurrected from the dead and judged. Those who are "in Christ", that is, who put their trust in Jesus and lived a Christian life, who were animated by the Holy Spirit and changed over time to better reflect the image of God, etc., are resurrected to eternal life in a new heaven and a new earth that have come together as one place. Those who are not in Christ are basically returned to death. Their resurrected body is destroyed with finality (in the lake of fire, above) as well as death itself. From that point onward, there will be no more death.

Also, in Reformed theology, one does not receive eternity with God because one is good. In contrast to texts that seem to say that one is judged primarily by their actions, Reformed theology focuses on God's "unmerited grace", meaning the love and mercy that God shows to people who do not deserve it. So it isn't as if you do a certain number of good deeds compared to bad deeds and earn a spot in the new heaven and the new earth. Rather, God loves you and Jesus goes before you to prepare a place for you there (John 14:3-4), and the Holy Spirit takes up residence in your life and changes you over time to prepare you to live with God forever. But particularly in Reformed theology, there is no point where we can look at God and feel like we earned something by being good. When we are good, it is in response to God's goodness, not so that God will reward us.

So the simplest answer, especially looking at the historical Reformers, is no. And, to be fair, I've met a lot of atheists who do not want to go to heaven, or to be resurrected in a new heaven and a new earth, etc. If that happened to them, it would be a big surprise, and also done against their will, contrasting with Christians who hope for such an eternity. Now, are there tens of thousands of books written on this topic over the last 500 years? Of course! And not all Reformers agreed even in the 1500s, and certainly not all Reformed traditions and theologians agree today. But I think a majority Reformed view, historically as well as perhaps today, would be that good atheists do not go to heaven.

2. How did church become church?

Matthew 16

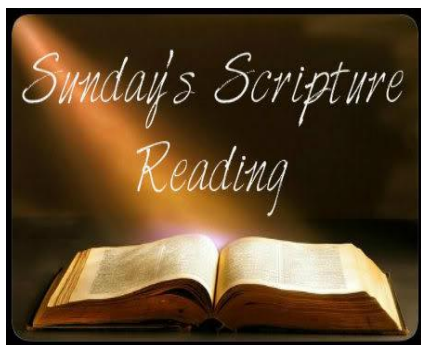
¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷ And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but my Father in heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.

2. *continued....*

When we read the word “church” in the New Testament, the Greek word being translated is almost always ekklesia. The word also means, more commonly, gathering or assembly. It was a word for whenever people got together, in public or otherwise, planned or unplanned. Early Christianity was understood in simple, direct terms. They called their religion “the Way” and they called their gatherings “gatherings.” At these gatherings they would share a meal together, remember Jesus and his last meal, recite passages of the Hebrew scriptures together (remember, most could not read and owned no books), and sing songs. Lucky gatherings might have a teacher, like Paul or Peter or Barnabus or Timothy, who could speak with them and help them learn more about Jesus and the Christian way of life. Some gatherings might have a copy of a letter, like one of Paul’s letters, that someone could read aloud. These gatherings were often illegal, so they would meet in the home of whomever had the largest house. This meant that people who weren’t usually sitting together for a meal - slaves, masters, men, women, children, rich, poor - would sit together in a Christian gathering each week.

Over time, as Christianity became legal, and continued to spread and become more popular, people began to donate money so that they could build permanent buildings that would be churches we might recognize today. In a church, more people could gather at once than if they were spread out in people’s homes. It was then easier to gather together enough money to pay someone to stay there and teach the community all the time, rather than wait for occasional visits by traveling teachers (apostles, prophets, preachers, bishops, etc.). Churches became public places for the community, and also served as shelters and sanctuaries for people who needed safety. Churches were groups of people who worked for the betterment of their community, and places where Christian traditions were maintained. At our best, that is still what the church is today, I think.

Pastor Doug



Upcoming Scripture Readings

June 4th: Genesis 1:24-2:3; 2 Corinthians 13:11-13
 June 11th: Genesis 12:1-9; Matthew 9:9-13, 18-26
 June 18th: Romans 5:1-8; Matthew 9:35-10:8 (9-23)
 June 25th: Romans 6:1-11; Matthew 10:24-39
 July 2nd: Genesis 22:1-14; Romans 6:12-23
 July 9th: Song of Solomon 2:8-13; Romans 7:15-25a
 July 16th: Genesis 25:19-34; Romans 8:1-11;
 Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23
 July 23rd: Genesis 28:10-19a; Romans 8:12-25
 July 30th: Matthew 13:31-33; 44-52



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



Deacon Dawkins is at your service! Need a pick me up? Dawkins is an expert at puppy love! As a certified therapy dog, Deacon Dawkins specializes in a special kind of comfort. He's patient, he's kind, he's loving - just what the doctor ordered when it comes to a spiritual lift, companionship and the kind of love a furry friend can provide when it's needed most!

So, please feel free to let your Board of Deacons know if a visit from a very special deacon is in order. He will bring a smile to your face and a song to your heart. Jenn Johnson has generously offered to share her best friend with any member who needs a little extra boost. And don't we all, sometimes?

Thank you, Jenn and Deacon Dawkins, for being a part of all of our lives!

Submitted on behalf of the Deacons by,
Ellen Williams

Worship and Music Notes

Welcome to summer. Are you planning a vacation or a staycation or neither? It does not really make a difference as church has something for you if you are here. Some other church can be your place of worship for Sundays you are not here. If you are here, there is the pick-up choir on the second Sunday of June (6/11), July (7/9) and August (8/13). If you are interested, just meet Diane at the piano in the sanctuary at 9:45 AM.

Sunday, July 9th is Old Time Religion Sunday. We will sing some old hymns as well as experiencing what an old time worship service may have been like (don't worry we will not make it exceptionally real and turn off the air conditioning). If you attend this service, you will be in for a treat (see the notes from Parish Life elsewhere in this Perspective).

Communion will be served on the first Sunday of July and August.

See you in church



Church Growth Committee

Prison Ministry:

Book Through Bars:

Join us for one of the upcoming visits on the third Saturday of the month as we assist in packing books for prisoners and organizing their library. This month will be on Saturday, June 17th. 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>

Yokefellowship:

Yokefellowship is a support organization for people while incarcerated and after providing small groups and mentoring. If you are interested in learning more, with the hope that you'd be able to commit a few hours a month or so, please reply to Kristin Craven (Kristin.c.craven@gmail.com) by Saturday, July 1.

Queer Circle:

Chester County Pride Fest:

Come see us at the Chester County Pride Fest where FPC will have a table! Pride Fest is on **Saturday, June 10th** from **12 pm – 5 pm** on **Bridge Street**.

Teach-In

Our first official event at the church will be in a teach-in. Those who are interested in being better allies or who have questions are welcome to join. The Teach-In will be held on **Monday, June 26th** at **7:00 pm** in the **Parlor**.

Gratitude Journal:

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. In June, the theme is “Gratitude for Fathers and Father Figures.” Watch for reminders and examples in the BEAT and on our Facebook page. Here are the prompts for each week ahead of time:

June 4: How are you thankful for laughter?

June 11: Are there outdoor activities that you're thankful for – past or present?

June 18: How do you honor your father or father figures?

June 25: Is there a freedom you are thankful for?

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!

Summer Nursery Help Needed

As an update to our nursery plans going forward, we have been searching to hire someone, and will continue to do that. In the interim, there is a SignUp Genius to allow us to staff the nursery (3 and under) during the summer. Please prayerfully consider volunteering for a Sunday, so that we are able to provide care for our children during the worship service. (See SignUp Genius link)

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/8050f4aada722a1fb6-summer1/103049921#/>

Summer Parish Life Reminders!

Mark your Calendars!



FPC's Annual Ice Cream Social

Sunday, July 9th immediately following Old Time Religion Sunday. This will be hosted on the church lawn, or in Fellowship Hall should it rain.

Volunteers wanted - Lemonade in the Shade!

Please see the sign-up sheet in the Narthex. Come pour a glass and mingle with your fellow congregants!

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



Meeting

Our next Parish Life meeting will be held on Tuesday, June 13th at 5:30 at Fitzwater Station in Mont Clare. New members warmly welcomed!

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, our children “took over” the worship service by leading prayers, providing readings, performing music (ukuleles and kazoos), and participating in other aspects of the service. They did a fantastic job with all of it! I trust that you were as proud of our FPC kids as we were.

Thanks to our fabulous group of teachers, the FPC Sunday School program has really grown and developed over the past year. On May 14, we also celebrated Teacher Appreciation Day in church by recognizing our Sunday School teachers. The names were read aloud in church, but here they are again. When you see any of the folks on this list, be sure to thank them heartily for all they have done on behalf of the children of our church.



Jewell Baker
Rebecca Barkley
Sue Casey
George Cockerill
Kristin Craven
Amy Ellis
Cassy Gulden

Pam Hagler
Laura Hobbins
Jill Kleppinger
Gail Landazuri
Cara Lewis
Jeff McLaughlin
Jessica Murphy

Jeanie Osterhoudt
Sarah Pilotti
Mona Sabia
Jane Shier
Becky Sinapius
Gail Schnaedter
Lynne Williams

The final Sunday School session of the school year was held on May 21. During the final session, the children put together breakfast bags for neighbors in need. This was followed by a celebratory luncheon on the church lawn.

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.



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)

Missions: Local Focus

Good Works:

Thank you to Jewell Baker, Sandy Heidel, Wendy Pennypacker, and Eileen and Bob Russell for making lunches for Good Works on Saturday, May 13th. They made and delivered 34 lunches consisting of 15 ham, 15 turkey, and 4 cheese sandwiches to 3 Good Works sites.

Congregation service day:

MAC is planning a Congregation Service Day on *Saturday, July 15th, from 9:00 am – 4:00 pm*, where we all help each other.

If you have tasks that need to be done in/outside your home and you need some assistance, you can sign up as an "I need help". If you are available and have the time, vehicle, tools, or skills you think would benefit someone, you can sign up as "I can help." You can also sign up for both!

Some examples of *I need help* might include: moving furniture, yard work, fixing a leaky pipe, or just kid-watching for a bit so you can tackle these projects. Think of those things that have been on your to-do list forever.

Some examples of *I can help* might be I have a pickup truck that can move big furniture, I am strong and can help move things, or I have some power tools I can lend.

To sign up, visit <https://bit.ly/FPCServiceDay> or talk to Pastor Doug. MAC will best match folks based on who needs help and who is offering help. The final time will be determined through the pair match.

Ex. John needs help hanging some photos. Jane has a hammer and some time. MAC matches them together. Jane and John agree that 12:00 pm on Sat, July 15th works best for them.

PACS: A Simple Gesture

We had such a great turnout for our March collection, we wanted to partner with PACS year-round. In talking with them, PACS offers a program, "A Simple Gesture," where you can fill a green reusable bag every other month with "Hot List" items.

Sign up to be A Simple Gesture participant and help our neighbors: <https://bit.ly/ASimpleGesture>

Alternative Greeting Cards: MAC will be selling Father's Day cards to benefit Good Works.

Mission Focus: Global Missions

Dan Vissani / Zambia

MAC is hosting Dan Vissani, who is serving in Zambia, on *Friday, July 14th at 11:30 am at the [Great American Pub](#)*. MAC is asking folks to pay for themselves as we do not have the budget to cover everyone. The price range for lunch is \$15-\$20. If you would like to join us, RSVP to Kristin Craven at MissionFPC145@gmail.com. If you would like to attend but are financially unable to, please talk to Pastor Doug or Kristin Craven.

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.





Escape Trappe Social...A Fun Evening Out!

Join First Presbyterian Church members for a fun night at Escape Trappe! We plan on going on Monday, June 19th or Tuesday, June 20th. Please fill out this survey so we can select the best time for everyone: <https://bit.ly/FPCEscapeTrappe>. Although it is an escape room, the door to exit in the rooms is never locked. The fun factor at Escape Trappe lies within solving the mystery of each escape room, not physically being locked in it! We recommend this for anyone above 8 years old. We can put groups together of up to 10 people.

For more information on Escape Rooms and Escape Trappe, visit <https://www.escapetrappe.com/>. Tickets are \$32/person. If you have questions, please feel free to contact Kristin Craven. Once a specific day and time have been confirmed, we will send further information on how to pay.

Parking Lot Attendants Needed

On the First Friday of each month, May through November, volunteers are needed to collect donations in the parking lot (depending on the weather). Not only does this benefit our church, but it also makes it more convenient for those who park in our lot.

On May 5th, we collected \$250.00, while at the same time we had the opportunity to meet many out to enjoy the evening.

We continue to need volunteers to collect parking donations on First Fridays, 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 neighbors in our community.

If you would like to help, you may sign up on the Sign-Up Genius that Sue Smith emails or you may access it on the BEAT that you receive each Wednesday. The Stewardship Committee appreciates your help.

Gift Card Orders

We will be placing orders for gift cards every other **Wednesday (June 14 & 28 and July 12 & 26)**.

If you would like to place an order, please call or text Lynne Williams at 610-955-4749 (cell).

Retailer lists are available in the narthex and the church office.

We will complete the order forms for you.

Orders and checks must be received by the day before the orders are placed (**June 13 & 27 and July 11 & 25**).

Please make checks payable to "First Presbyterian Church DR".

As always, a percentage of each card benefits our church.

Thank you... Thank you for continuing to support this program!



From the Clerk of Session



- ❖ Average Sunday morning attendance:
 - In April we had an average of 85 worshipping in person and an average of 20 households viewing the 10:30am YouTube premiere with 4 chatting. In person attendance on Easter Sunday was 132.
 - It's so nice to be worshipping in the sanctuary again and we hope to see more attending in person. Masks are no longer required. If you are not comfortable yet 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
 - Birth:
 - Davis Cole Howe was born on May 8, 2023, son of Jenn and Dan Howe.
 - Baptism
 - April 9, 2023 – Randolph Schrack , adult baptism
 - May 21, 2023 – Rose Saiya Carlesbard (DOB 2/10/23) infant daughter of Angela Carles and Cory Bardsley.
 - 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 will be on Pentecost, May 28th.
- ❖ Session Meeting Information:
 - 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. Also a motion from Finance Committee “dormant” designated memorial funds can be used for budgeted items that apply to original designation.
 - Minutes of the May 23, 2023 Session Meeting will be reviewed at the July 25, 2023 Stated Session Meeting and will be in the following Perspective.

Jewell Baker, Clerk of Session

June 2023

First Presbyterian Church of Phoenixville

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 9:00a WIC 9:00a Clothing ministry 10:00a Food ministry	2 9:00a WIC 5:00p Parking	3 9:30a Zumba class 11:00a – 2:00p Max Sold Pick Up
4 8:30a Bible Study 10:30a Worship 12:00n Deacons meeting	5 9:00a Clothing Ministry 2:00p MAC 6:30p Zumba class 7:30p Nominating	6 6:30p Zumba class	7	8 9:00a Public Health Mgt 9:00a Clothing ministry 10:00a Food ministry 7:00p Compassionate Friends	9	10 8:30a – 12:00n Church Work Day Outdoor clean up
11 8:30a Bible Study 9:45a Pick Up Choir 10:30a Worship 12:00n Worship & Music 7:00p Pub Theology	12 9:00a Clothing Ministry 6:30p Zumba class 7:00p Finance <i>Sue Smith vacation</i>	13 5:30p Parish Life 6:30p Zumba class 7:00p Personnel <i>Sue Smith vacation</i>	14 <i>Sue Smith vacation</i>	15 9:00a WIC 9:00a Clothing ministry 10:00a Food ministry 7:00p Christian Educ <i>Sue Smith vacation</i>	16 9:00a WIC <i>Sue Smith vacation</i>	17 9:30a Zumba class 10:30a Books thru Bars 10:30a Mosaic Music Recital, Sanctuary rented till 5:30pm
18 8:30a Bible Study 10:30a Worship 12:00n Women's Circle <i>Diane Legnini-vacation</i> Father's Day	19 9:00a Clothing Ministry 6:30p Zumba class <i>Sue Smith vacation</i> Church office closed. Juneteenth	20 6:30p Zumba class 7:30p Property <i>Sue Smith vacation</i>	21 12:30p Church Growth <i>Pastor Hagler vacation</i> <i>Sue Smith vacation</i>	22 9:00a Clothing ministry 10:00a Food ministry <i>Pastor Hagler vacation</i> <i>Sue Smith vacation</i>	23 <i>Pastor Hagler vaca.</i> <i>Sue Smith vacation</i>	24 <i>Pastor Hagler vaca.</i>
25 8:30a Bible Study 10:30a Worship 7:00p Antiracism Book Club <i>Pastor Hagler vacation</i> <i>Maggie O'Malley vaca.</i>	26 9:00a Clothing Ministry 6:30p Zumba class 7:00p Queer Circle <i>Pastor Hagler vaca.</i> <i>M. O'Malley vacation</i>	27 6:30p Zumba class No Session <i>Maggie O'Malley vaca.</i>	28 <i>Sarah Schulman vaca.</i> <i>Maggie O'Malley vaca.</i>	29 9:00a Clothing ministry 10:00a Food ministry <i>Sarah Schulman vaca.</i> <i>Maggie O'Malley vaca.</i>	30 8:00a – 3:00p Mom's House Graduation (Fellowship Hall) <i>S. Schulman vaca.</i> <i>M. O'Malley vaca.</i>	

July 2023

First Presbyterian Church of Phoenixville

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 9:30a Zumba class <i>S. Schulman vacation</i>
2 <i>Communion</i> 10:30a Worship <i>12:00n Deacons meeting</i> <i>Sarah Schulman vacation</i>	3 9:00a Clothing ministry <i>2:00p MAC</i> 6:30p Zumba class <i>S Schulman vacation</i>	4 <i>S Schulman vacation</i> <i>Independence Day</i> Church office closed	5 <i>S Schulman vacation</i>	6 9:00a WIC 9:00a Clothing ministry 10:00a Food ministry	7 9:00a WIC 5:00p Parking	8
9 9:45a Pick Up Choir 10:30a Old Time Religion Sunday <i>11:45a Ice Cream Social</i> <i>12:15p Worship & Music</i> <i>7:00p Pub Theology</i>	10 9:00a Clothing ministry 6:30p Zumba class <i>7:00p Finance</i>	11 <i>5:30p Parish Life</i> 6:30p Zumba class <i>7:00p Personnel</i>	12 <i>D Legnini vacation</i>	13 9:00a Public Health Mgt 9:00a Clothing ministry 10:00a Food ministry 7:30p Compassionate Friends <i>Diane Legnini-vacation</i>	14 <i>Diane Legnini-vacation</i>	15 9:30a Zumba class 10:30a Books thru Bars <i>D Legnini vacation</i>
16 10:30a Worship <i>12:00n Men's Group</i> <i>12:00n Women's Circle</i> <i>Diane Legnini-vacation</i>	17 9:00a Clothing ministry 6:30p Zumba class <i>D Legnini vacation</i>	18 6:30p Zumba class <i>7:30p Property</i> <i>D Legnini vacation</i>	19 <i>12:30p Church Growth</i>	20 9:00a WIC 9:00a Clothing ministry 10:00a Food ministry <i>Perspective articles due for August</i>	21 9:00a WIC	22
23 10:30a Worship <i>7:00p Antiracism Book group via zoom</i>	24 9:00a Clothing ministry 6:30p Zumba class	25 6:30p Zumba class <i>No Session</i>	26	27 9:00a Clothing ministry 10:00a Food ministry	28	29
30 10:30a Worship	31 9:00a Clothing ministry 6:30p Zumba class					