

# Perspective

A Newsletter of the First Presbyterian Church  
of Phoenixville, Pennsylvania

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Volume XLVI No. 10 November 2021

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First Presbyterian Church  
Phoenixville, Pennsylvania  
1846 – 2021

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The *Perspective* is published 10 times a year by the First Presbyterian Church of Phoenixville. Please direct information or comments to the Church Office at 610-933-8816 or to [secretaryfpc145@gmail.com](mailto:secretaryfpc145@gmail.com).

Publisher: Sue Smith Contributors: Church Family; Proofreader: Jeanne Blackburn

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# From the Pastor

*Thank you to everyone who stayed with us for worship during the Blessing of the Animals on Oct. 24th, despite the rain. As I promised, I've written out the sermon here in the Perspective, with the readings. The format will of course be different from my usual, as I don't use a manuscript, but I hope it's a blessing.*

## **Psalm 148**

- <sup>1</sup> Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord from the heavens;  
praise him in the heights!  
<sup>2</sup> Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his host!  
<sup>3</sup> Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, all you shining stars!  
<sup>4</sup> Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens!  
<sup>5</sup> Let them praise the name of the Lord, for he commanded and they were created.  
<sup>6</sup> He established them forever and ever; he fixed their bounds, which cannot be passed.<sup>[a]</sup>  
<sup>7</sup> Praise the Lord from the earth, you sea monsters and all deeps,  
<sup>8</sup> fire and hail, snow and frost, stormy wind fulfilling his command!  
<sup>9</sup> Mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars!  
<sup>10</sup> Wild animals and all cattle, creeping things and flying birds!  
<sup>11</sup> Kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all rulers of the earth!  
<sup>12</sup> Young men and women alike, old and young together!  
<sup>13</sup> Let them praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is exalted;  
his glory is above earth and heaven.  
<sup>14</sup> He has raised up a horn for his people, praise for all his faithful,  
for the people of Israel who are close to him.  
Praise the Lord!

## **The Word Became Flesh**

- <sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.  
<sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being <sup>4</sup> in him was life,<sup>[a]</sup> and the life was the light of all people. <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

We begin at the beginning, as we find it in the Gospel of John. We begin with the Word, through which everything was created, life and light shining in the darkness, contending with the darkness.

We have talked about this before, but when we read that word, “Word,” especially with the capital W, we are reading the English translation of the Greek word “logos.” Logos means more than just “word”, as in spoken word, or words on a page, though it also means those things. By the time John’s Gospel was written, logos was a 500 year old philosophical term that meant *a pattern that makes sense of the world*. So Greek philosophers would argue over what was the logos - what was the nature of the world? Or what was a metaphor that makes sense of the world for them? What was the pattern that they discerned - the Iron Age version of a “theory of everything?” This is why I like to translate logos as “pattern.” In the beginning, there was the pattern, and the pattern was with God, and the pattern was God. Through this pattern, all things were created, light and life. And the pattern contends with the darkness, and is not overcome.

2. *continued...*

Those of you who know about the etymology of words like biology and geology know that we get the word biology from bio - life - and logos. Bio-logos. We get geology the same way: geo - earth - and logos. Geo-logos. These are patterns that make sense of the world - in these cases, the living world and the world of soil and stone and volcanism.

These various ways of making sense of the world, even in a scientific sense, are logoi. Each one is a logos.

In Christianity, we talk about general revelation, and about natural theology. General revelation is the idea that God communicates to us not just through scripture, and prophets, and our own hearts, but through the natural world as well. Sometimes it's said this way - the world bears the fingerprints of the One who created it. Another way to say it is that there is a pattern in the world around us. A logos - God's logos.

Natural theology is the outgrowth of general revelation - it's the practice of thinking about who God is based on what we see in creation. Of course creation isn't the only source of insight about God, but we can focus our attention there to learn particular things we might not learn otherwise.

So if you experience God in nature, you are in good company. If you feel close to God through the joy and wonder of scientific discovery, you are caught up in an ancient practice. The logos of God and the -ologies of science are not the same, not interchangeable, but Christians have always found the pattern of God in creation, going all the way back to the author of John, and before.

Our Psalm reading this morning is one of many reminders, primarily in the Hebrew scriptures but found throughout the Bible, that all of creation is able to respond to God.

We have some animals here with us, but not only animals, plants - fruit trees and all cedars! - and the land itself - mountains and all hills! All of creation is able to respond to God, with praise and rejoicing. No less than we are able.

As humans, we tend to think of ourselves as singular and unique - and I think we are wrong about that. Wherever we look for unique human attributes, we find them in the natural world all around us. The more we look, the more we find ourselves reflected in nature:

Human attributes: everywhere we look, we find things we thought of as uniquely human - (briefly, but if you want to geek out about intelligence in nature come find me any time) orcas have culture passed down through the generations; dolphins not only have language but have names and local dialects; whales discovered the thermocline, probably millions of years before humans did, and they use it to communicate with one another across thousands of miles - they share songs like its Spotify; crows can use tools and pick locks; bees can be taught to play soccer; and if you teach apes a language we know, they can create their own metaphors like any poet.

Scripture reminds us many times of a view that was essentially universal until not that long ago. Like pretty much every pre-industrial culture, the Bible represents the view that the natural world is responsive, and in its own way, intelligent. The hunter-gatherer societies that existed for over 200,000 years all believed this, and the few that still survive all believe it. The author of texts like the Psalms and Job believed this.

3. *continued...*

And by comparison, our viewpoint, materialism, has led in mere generations to ecological collapse and mass extinction. Where's the intelligence in that?

We have this fantasy that there are humans on one side, us, and on the other side is "the environment." So we talk about saving "the environment", and we look at those who care about "the environment" with respect, or pity, or even contempt. Environmentalists are seen as idealists, and industrialists as the realists among us, and clearly the industrialists are winning. But now, we face widespread environmental collapse, and climate-change-fueled natural disasters, and the bill for all that industrialism is coming due. One way or another, we will be paying it for generations.

There is no "the environment." There is the world, and the way we live in it. The air, the water, the land that we all depend on for everything responds to God and responds to us as well. Living this materialist fantasy of humans over here and "the environment" over there, to be concerned about or not as we choose, is revealed to be a catastrophe.

Through the psalm, and other reminders in the Hebrew scriptures, we are reminded that the world is alive, full of life and light; that it hears God's voice no less than we do, and responds to God no less than we do. If we truly remembered this, it would drastically change the way we treat "the environment."

We are here to celebrate the creatures in our lives - and perhaps we'll expand this celebration in the future. We could have a blessing of gardens in the spring, for example. Remember, mountains and all hills; fruit trees and cedars; not just the animals, but all of creation praises God.

But we are here to bless the creatures that bless us, especially the ones who share our everyday lives. They don't just make our lives better - which they certainly do! - but they reflect, for us, the pattern of Christ in the world, the logos of God. They remind us that we are not separate from the world, and that we are not unique in our ability to worship. They are a reminder to us that all of creation can respond to God as we do. May we remember this, when we decide how to treat the world around us.

Let us give thanks to God our Creator for all the gifts so freely bestowed upon us and for the beauty and wonder of your creation, in earth and sky and sea;

**We thank you, Lord.**

For the richness of the mountains, plains and rivers;

**We thank you, Lord.**

For all that is gracious in the lives of men and women;

**We thank you, Lord.**

For all creatures that breathe, and move, and have life;

**We thank you, Lord.**

For the songs of birds and the loveliness of flowers and trees;

**We thank you, Lord.**

For the trust you have shown in giving into our care these, our animals;

**We thank you, Lord.**

That each creature here may be treasured with care;

**We pray to you, Lord.**

That we may love and honor all your works, O God;

**We pray to you, Lord.**

That we may continue to grow in our grateful enjoyment of your abundant creation;

**To the honor and glory of your name, now and forever, we pray to you, Lord. Amen.**

Almighty God, our great Creator, yours are the praise, the glory, the honor, and all blessings! All things belong to you alone. We praise you for giving us the animals, birds and fish which fill your world. May we think of you and thank you when we play with and care for our animals. We ask you, Lord, that we may be good to our animals always, so that they may be happy also. Help us always to take care of them so that they will be healthy. O God, your world is wonderful, and we give you thanks. Amen.

Pastor Doug



### Upcoming Scripture Readings

November 7<sup>th</sup>: Isaiah 25:6-9; Revelation 21:1-6a

November 14<sup>th</sup>: Deuteronomy 6:1-9; Mark 12:28-34

November 21<sup>st</sup>: Revelation 1:4b-8; John 18:33-37

November 28<sup>th</sup>: Jeremiah 33:14-16; Luke 21:25-36



### The Season of Advent is near.

1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent – November 28<sup>th</sup>, Communion Service

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent – December 5<sup>th</sup>

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent – December 12<sup>th</sup>

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent – December 19<sup>th</sup>

**Christmas Eve – Friday, December 24<sup>th</sup>**

**5:00 pm** Family Service

**9:00 pm** Candlelight Communion Service

### Worship and Music Notes

We will begin a yearlong celebration of the 175<sup>th</sup> year of our churches' mission in Phoenixville on Sunday, November 7. In addition to the beginning of our 175<sup>th</sup> celebration, it is Communion Sunday and All Saints' Sunday.

Keep your eyes and ears open to information about the Thanksgiving eve community service.

The last Sunday of November is the beginning of Advent.

Hope to see you "in" church.



## 2022 Pledge Campaign



As we begin the **Pledge Campaign** for the year **2022**, the Stewardship Committee asks that you prayerfully consider your financial commitment to our church.

Your generous and faithful offerings help to support the ministry and the many good works of First Presbyterian Church. Your pledge helps the Finance Committee as they plan for the coming year.

You may place your completed pledge card in the offering plate on Sunday morning, or return it by mail in the pre-addressed envelope that you receive with the card.

Please return your pledge card by **Dedication Sunday, November 21**.

**Thank you for sharing your many gifts, and for your continued financial support.**

The Stewardship Committee

## Scrip Gift Card Orders

Just in time for a little Christmas shopping, we will be placing orders for gift cards every other **Wednesday (November 3 & November 17)**.

If you would like to place an order, please call Lynne Williams at 610-415-1581 (home) or 610-955-4749 (cell).

You may mail your check to Lynne or drop it off at her home, (14 Schofield Road, Phoenixville, PA 19460).

We will complete the order forms for you.

Orders and checks must be received by the day before the orders are placed (**November 2 & November 16**). Please make checks payable to "First Presbyterian Church DR".

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

The Stewardship Committee



## Help our neighbors in Mont Clare...

We are continuing to accept donations for \$25 Lowes and Target gift cards for our neighbors in Mont Clare. If you would like to order cards through our Scrip program, we will deliver them to the appropriate organization for you.

Many families have months of work ahead as they try to rebuild their homes and lives. All donations are greatly appreciated. Thank you.

## Thank you...Thank you...Thank you!!

The Stewardship Committee would like to thank each and every member who volunteered their time on Friday and Saturday evenings, collecting in the parking lot, May through October. We will collect one last time on First Friday, November 5.

Enjoy a few months off. We will meet in the lot again in the spring! Thank you!





## November Zoom Trivia Night with the Balls!!

Our return to Trivia with Judy and Hermann in October was so much fun,  
that we are doing it again in November!

Mark your calendars for Wednesday, November 17 at 7:30 pm.  
Plan to share a fun time together with lots of chatting and laughter,  
and some serious competition!

A zoom link will be sent to you prior to the event.



## 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](mailto: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.

## From the Clerk of Session

- ❖ Average Sunday morning attendance:  
In September we had an average of 49 worshipping in person  
(wearing masks) and an average of 16 households viewing the  
10:30am YouTube premiere with 8 *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: Current membership is 172.
  - Birth: August 17, 2021 – Olivia Rose Craven, daughter of Frank and Kristen Craven
  - Death: August 29, 2021 – Donald Jarrell joined the Church Triumphant. The family will  
spread his ashes next to Joanne's following a private service.
  - Wedding: none
  - Baptism: none
- Session Meeting Information:
  - Motions passed at the August 31, 2021 Stated Session Meeting
    - A motion from the Finance Committee to approve Chuck Heidel as Treasurer for the  
balance of 2021 was unanimously approved.
    - Approval granted for MAC Jewelry sale and Facebook page.
    - A joint meeting of Elders and Deacons will be held on Saturday, November 20.

Information from the October 26<sup>th</sup> Stated Session Meeting will be reviewed/approved at  
the December 21<sup>st</sup> Session Meeting and will be in the following Perspective.

Jewell Baker, Clerk of Session





## Mission, Action, Concern Committee (MAC)

*The whole law is summed up in a single commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."*  
(Galatians 5:14)



### New People to People Facebook Page!

Thanks to the expertise and creativity of Kristin Craven, the People to People ministry now has a presence on Facebook. You can find the page at <https://www.facebook.com/FPCPeopleToPeople>. The Facebook page will be used to announce events, share information, and solicit volunteers for P2P activities. Please visit – and “Like” – the page, check in, post a comment or two, and also share it with friends! Many thanks to Kristin!



### Bridge of Hope

A local family of six has recently been introduced to the FPC Bridge of Hope neighborhood group. An initial social get-together was held on Wednesday, October 20. The new “Neighborhood Family” had the opportunity to become acquainted over pizza and other yummy fare, including a birthday cake! The group will plan additional social activities and address other needs as they arise.

### Thanksgiving Dinners

This year, Thanksgiving dinners will be coordinated with First United Methodist Church of Phoenixville, with both eat-in and delivery options available. Contact Bob Russell ([bob@rtact.com](mailto:bob@rtact.com)) with questions or for additional information.

### Star Tree

For the upcoming Christmas season, we will once again create a Star Tree, with gift and meal options for local families in need. Stay tuned for more details.

### People to People (P2P)

Between 8 and 16 meals are provided weekly by our P2P food ministry. In September, 94 requests were received for clothing and 129 people were assisted. People to People typically sorts clothing on Thursdays from 9 a.m. to noon and often on Mondays (same time) as well. Volunteers are welcome and encouraged! Contact Sandy Heidel ([csheidel@verizon.net](mailto:csheidel@verizon.net)) or Bob Russell ([bob@rtact.com](mailto:bob@rtact.com)) ... or contact P2P via the new Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/FPCPeopleToPeople>.

If you have household items or clothing that you have been holding to donate, please contact Sandy Heidel ([csheidel@verizon.net](mailto:csheidel@verizon.net)) to determine the best time to bring your items to the church.

### CEDEPCA Virtual Journeys

Several members of our congregation have nationwide in Virtual Journeys to Guatemala, CEDEPCA, the educational and pastoral with which we have collaborated during our



Guatemala. The next CEDEPCA Virtual (Zoom) Journey to Guatemala will take place on Thursday, November 18, at 7:30 p.m. The program, entitled *The Taste of Guatemala*, will include a virtual chocolate tasting and celebration led by two expert chocolatiers. The registration fee for this sweet journey will get you delivery of four artisanal Guatemalan chocolate bars and will also support the work of CEDEPCA in Guatemala. To register, go to <https://tinyurl.com/57t3mser>.

joined others sponsored by organization trips to



November 2021

## First Presbyterian Church of Phoenixville

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 6:30p Zumba class 7:30p Property	2 6:30p Zumba class 7:00p MAC	3 7:30p Bell Choir	4 9:00a WIC 9:00a People to People Clothing ministry 10:00a People to People Food ministry 7:00p Choir 7:00p "We Are" Vigil Via Zoom	5 9:00a WIC	6
Offering: BSinapius 7 8:30a Bible Study via Zoom <i>All Saints' Sunday Communion</i> <b>10:30a Worship</b> <b>12:00n Deacons Meeting</b> <i>Sarah Shulman vacation</i>	8 6:30p Zumba class	9 6:30p Zumba class 7:00p Personnel 7:00p Parish Life	10 7:30p Bell Choir	11 9:00a People to People Clothing ministry 10:00a People to People Food ministry 7:00p Choir 7:00p Compassionate Friends	12	13
Offering: GCockerill 14 8:30a Bible Study via Zoom <b>10:30a Worship</b> <b>12:30p Worship &amp; Music</b> via Zoom <b>7:00p Pub Theology @ The Foodery on Bridge</b>	15 6:30p Staff meet 6:30p Zumba class 7:00p Finance & Stewardship	16 6:30p Zumba class 7:15p Church Growth/ Christian Ed	17 7:30p Bell Choir 7:30p All Church Zoom Event Trivia Night	18 9:00a WIC 9:00a People to People Clothing ministry 10:00a People to People Food ministry 7:00p Choir 7:00p "We Are" Live Vigil @ Main & Bridge	19 9:00a WIC	20 <b>9:00a – 12:00 noon Joint Church Leadership Meeting</b>
Offering: LWilliams 21 8:30a Bible Study via Zoom 9:30a Sunday School <b>10:30a Worship</b> <b>12:00n Women's Circle</b>	22 6:30p Zumba class	23 6:30p Zumba class	24 <b>7:30p Community Thanksgiving Eve Service at our church</b>	<i>Thanksgiving Day</i> 25 <b>12:00 n Thanksgiving Dinner with First United Methodist Church</b>  Office closed.	26  Office closed.	27
<i>1st Sunday of Advent</i> 28 Offering: C Wittrock 8:30a Bible Study via Zoom <i>Communion</i> <b>10:30a Worship</b> <b>7:00p Book Study via Zoom</b>	29 6:30p Zumba class	30 6:30p Zumba class 7:30p Session Budget meeting				