

Perspective

A Newsletter of the First Presbyterian Church
of Phoenixville, Pennsylvania

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Phone: 610-933-8816

Fax: 610-933-8060

www.fpc-phoenixville.org

email: secretaryfpc145@gmail.com



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

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From the Pastor

Hebrews 11:13-16

¹³ All of these died in faith without having received the promises, but from a distance they saw and greeted them. They confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth, ¹⁴ for people who speak in this way make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. ¹⁵ If they had been thinking of the land that they had left behind, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶ But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; indeed, he has prepared a city for them.

The reading from Hebrews above is the text that I chose as a thematic text for our Leadership Retreat this past Saturday. Each year, the Elders and Deacons meet together for a joint gathering, and for a few years now I've taken this opportunity to lead them through some learning and sharing together. We look at what scripture says about Elders and Deacons, and then what the Book of Order has to say. I invite them to share their own experiences of serving as leaders in those ordained ministries. We then look at the past, present, and future of the congregation together, and choose a few big priorities for the coming year.

When choosing a text for the retreat, I usually just go with my gut. I want to choose something that's open-ended enough to discuss that also reflects my own perceptions of where we have been, where we are, and where we are going. The door is open for church leaders to tell me that the passage doesn't resonate for them as it does for me, but it usually prompts an interesting discussion, and sometimes an insight that I'm not sure would have come up otherwise.

As I chose this reading, the Gospel reading from this past Sunday was on my mind, in particular Jesus explaining to Pilate that his kingdom 'is not from here', and how you can tell it isn't from here because his followers aren't violently trying to defend it. I'm also often thinking about hope. This has not been an easy couple of years, to make a grand understatement, and sometimes it's challenging to find hope.

I've talked before about how for some of us, the holidays are the best time of the year, and for others, the holidays are the hardest time of the year. (For others, of course, it's an in-between time) I keep this in mind when talking about Advent or preaching during this season - all the talk of the joy of the season can be hard for those who grieve during this time, while on the other hand, the joy is real for many and I don't want to tamp that down or make the time less happy.

The question seems to be, what are we hoping for? For those hoping for a happy time to spend with friends and family, some will see that hope fulfilled, while others will not, and they will have to seek out their joy in other ways. How we experience the holiday season will change over time as our life circumstances change.

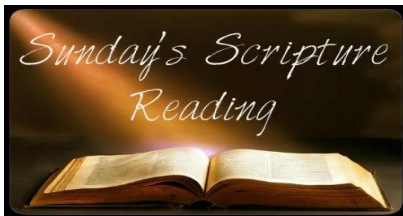
Christian hope has always been a specific kind of hope. It isn't hope that the holidays will go well, or that we'll get along better with our families, or that we will have a particular kind of experience. Christian hope is the prophetic hope that the world is being changed, and will ultimately be entirely changed, according to God's loving purpose. This hoped-for change began long ago, and will take place over the course of our lives, and will continue long after we are gone.

The reading above from Hebrews reflects this. The author of Hebrews is listing some of the great names of the faith in the previous verses, and giving them as examples of people who acted in faith because of their hope. They were seeking a homeland, and left the familiar behind in order to find it. They had every opportunity to turn back to what they knew, but they had put their trust, their faith, in something more.

Whatever our experience of the holiday season, I think that 'something more' is our hope as Christians. We might see reflections and echoes of that hope in what is around us, but our hope is in something more - a heavenly country, our true homeland. God has prepared a place for us, there, and in the fullness of time, we trust that our hope will be fulfilled.

That's the hope of this season - that the goodness and the joy we experience is an echo of what is to come, and that the things about the holidays that we find difficult are temporary in the face of our promised homecoming. So we celebrate in the meantime, knowing that in some ways we are 'strangers and foreigners' in the world, and whether our holidays are difficult, or a time of joy, or somewhere in the middle, we know that our hope is in that 'better country', and that God will lead us home.

Pastor Doug



Upcoming Scripture Readings

December 5th: Malachi 3:1-4; Luke 3:1-6

December 12th: Micah 5:2-5a; Luke 1:39-45 (46-55)

December 19th: Zephaniah 3:14-20; Luke 3:7-18

December 26th: TBA



Advent is Here!!!

2nd Sunday of Advent – December 5th

3rd Sunday of Advent – December 12th

4th Sunday of Advent – December 19th

Christmas Eve – Friday, December 24th

5:00 pm Family Service

9:00 pm Candlelight Communion Service

December Sunday School

Join us to celebrate the birth of Jesus on Sunday, December 19th. This Christmas celebration will take place in Fellowship Hall at 9:30am.

We will partake in Bible stories, songs, arts and crafts and more... Plan on attending this hourlong event as we observe the Christmas season.



2021 Advent Devotional

Here is the link to the Advent devotional provided by the PCUSA. Printed copies are available in the narthex and the church office.

Take time to read and prepare for the coming of the Christ child.

[Presbyterian Mission Agency Advent and Christmas Devotional for 2021](#) | [Presbyterians Today](#) | [Presbyterian Mission Agency](#)

Worship and Music Notes

“O come, all ye faithful” are the words to a very familiar hymn for the Advent/Christmas season. I believe that we should all take this to heart and make every effort to attend church, in some fashion during this Advent/Christmas time. As mentioned last month, at least one hymn for each service will be from a specific time frame eventually working our way up to the present. What a wonderful way to mix Advent with our 175th celebration.



Thinking ahead to Christmas eve, we will have the usual 5 PM service for children (You may be cast in the pageant) and families. Later that evening we will have our traditional Communion service at 9 PA.

“O come let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.”

See you in church.

News from the Finance Committee

Key financial numbers year to date through October are as follows:

- Pledges are \$ 9,551 short of our expected pledge income
- Non-pledges are \$ 4,356 short of our expected non-pledge income
- Expenses are \$ 24,039 less than had been expected
- The church received \$ 37,606 in Covid-19 grant funds
- Our year-to-date revenue to expense result is favorable at \$11,837, but if we had not received the Covid-19 federal grant and made savings in our operating expenses, our position would be \$61,646 less than it is



Please Note:

For contributions to be credited to your 2021 statement, offerings must be received by Sunday, Jan 2, 2022. Contributions received after that date will be reflected in your 2022 statement. Thank you.

Parking Lot Appreciation

The Stewardship Committee would like to thank everyone who volunteered in the parking lot on Friday and Saturday evenings, May through October. With your help, we raised \$5,986.25 for the church, as we spent time together and got to meet many of our neighbors (including neighborhood pets).

We would also like to thank committee member Pam Bodam for organizing and scheduling for us each week. Job well done.

Thank you...Thank you...

A huge “Thank you” to each and every one who donated to help our neighbors in Mont Clare. We were able to give them \$1,850 in Lowes and Target gift cards to help them as they recover from the flooding caused by Hurricane Ida.

FPCP Families Trip to Valley Forge

The FPCP families group met for a hike at Valley Forge on 11/6/21. 9 kids with their families, along with a few of our Sunday School teachers and canine friends, enjoyed a hike from the visitors center up past the cabins. They met park rangers dressed in traditional uniforms that the soldiers wore, making a bonfire. The kids had a lot of fun asking them questions about the camp site, including what they ate and where they did their "business"!

We learned about the natural landscape of the park, and how different it looked during the war without many of the beautiful trees we see there today. We also completed a scavenger hunt! The kids enjoyed searching for items in nature, as well as cannons, statues, and George Washington along our route. We hope to do this type of event again, likely in a different part of the park, as exploring God's world through nature was a fun way to get to know one another.



Scrip Gift Card Orders

Let the Stewardship Committee help you with your **Christmas shopping**, while at the same time provide you the opportunity to support our church.

We are placing orders for **gift cards** every Wednesday, beginning **December 1**.

(Orders will be placed **12/1...12/8...12/15...and...12/22**)

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, drop it off at her home, (14 Schofield Road, Phoenixville, PA 19460), or see her at church on Sunday morning.

Orders and checks must be received by the day before the orders are placed (**Nov. 30...Dec. 7...Dec. 14 & Dec. 21**). Please make checks payable to "First Presbyterian Church DR".

You do not need to fill out an order form. We will do that for you.

Happy Christmas Shopping!!!

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



PARISH LIFE



Trivia night will return in 2022 – stay tuned for the dates!



Save the Date!

Your Parish Life Committee cordially invites **children of all ages** to join us for an **intergenerational Christmas caroling** event, outside on the church steps on Sunday, **December 12th at 4:00pm**. (weather permitting.)

Following a time of singing and making music together, we will warm up with cups of hot chocolate and treats.

Plan to join us for a fun time as we celebrate the coming of Christmas!

6. *continued....*

Foodology

Searching for ideas for Christmas breakfast? Here's a tried and true recipe that's sure to please!

Sour Cream Coffee Cake

INGREDIENTS

2 TSP of Cinnamon ¾ cup of sugar
Mix together sugar and cinnamon and set aside

¾ cup of Butter	1 ½ tsp of baking powder
3 cups of flour	1 ½ tsp of baking soda
1 ½ cup of sour cream	1 ½ tsp of vanilla
3 eggs	1 cup of sugar
Greased Tube cake pan	

INSTRUCTIONS:

Set oven at 350 degrees

In a large bowl, beat the butter w/ 1 cup of sugar at medium speed until fluffy.

Add flour and remaining ingredients and beat low until completely blended.

Beat 3 minutes at medium speed. Spread ½ batter into the pan and sprinkle ~ half of the cinnamon / sugar mixture.

Spread the remaining of the batter into the pan and then put the remaining cinnamon and sugar on the top.

Bake 45-50 minutes or until the cake pulls away from the sides. Cool in pan on wire rack

Submitted by Lynne Williams

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 October we had an average of 52 worshipping in person (wearing masks) and an average of 19 households viewing the 10:30am YouTube premiere with 5 *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

- Death - Melissa Langevin (non-member) joined the Church Triumphant on October 22, 2021. Pastor Hagler officiated a memorial service at Devlin Rosmos Kepp and Gotcha Funeral Home. Melissa was the daughter of Doris Langevin a member.
- The current membership is 172.

○ Session Meeting Information:

Session is again meeting bi-monthly with the next Stated Session Meeting occurring after this issue of Perspective is published.

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





Presbyterian Women Circle

Circle will meet on December 19th following worship to study grandmother Ruth but we will also have a Christmas Cookie Swap so be sure to check your email for details. Please pack your lunch and join us as we continue the Horizon Bible Study *What My Grandmothers Taught Me, Learning from the Women in Matthew's Genealogy of Jesus*, written by Merryl Blair. Because many of us have small children in our lives we are asking that all participants be vaccinated for Covid.

Jewell Baker



Mission, Action, Concern Committee (MAC)

Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift! (2 Corinthians 9:15)

Star Tree Reminder

Thanks to all who have taken “stars” for gifts and dinner items for the eight families we are assisting this year. Reminder: All items must be returned to the church by Sunday, December 5th!

Alternative Gift Cards

This year's Alternative Gift Cards are now available for purchase following worship services on Sundays and in the church office during the week. The purchase of each \$5.00 card will support your choice of one of the following organizations: Bethany Christian Services (Safe Families program), PACS, Beekeeping Program through Presbyterian Mission, Global Water Center (confronting the global water crisis), and a Blankets program.

People to People (P2P)

The Free Coat Giveaway was held on Saturday, November 20. Thanks for all who helped out with the preparation and also on Saturday during the sale. For information about upcoming People to People events, including volunteer opportunities, visit the People to People Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/FPCPeopleToPeople>.



Any Ideas?

In anticipation of the beginning of a new year, and as the new(ish) chairperson of the MAC Committee, I am very interested in new ideas and suggestions related to the mission outreach of First Presbyterian Church. My hope is that, in the coming year, we can explore new ways to serve our Lord that will enhance our already rich and ongoing mission presence. As the Mission, Action, and Concerns (MAC) Committee, it is our call to engage in direct assistance in local and broader communities and also to advocate for the poor, hungry, oppressed, disenfranchised, and otherwise overlooked members of our shared world. Please send any thoughts you have to jeffmcl@icloud.com or discuss with me in person at church! Thanks ... Jeff McLaughlin.

2022 Pledge Campaign ... It's Not Too Late

The Stewardship Committee would like to thank everyone who has completed and returned their pledge card for 2022.

If you have not yet turned in your pledge card, please know that it is not too late! Completed cards may be returned by mail, dropped off at the church office, or placed in the offering plate on Sunday morning.

If you need a pledge card, please call the church office (610-933-8816), or Lynne Williams (610-415-1581) and we will get a card to you.

Your generous and faithful offerings help to support the ministry and the many good works of First Presbyterian Church.

By completing your pledge card, you help the Finance Committee as they plan for the coming year.

Thank you for your commitment to our church.

The Stewardship Committee



Offering Envelope Boxes

Your 2022 offering envelope boxes are ready for you to pick up in the narthex.

Please take a moment in the coming weeks to get yours.

If you are unable to pick your envelopes, please call the church office and we will deliver or mail them to you.



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.

December 2021

First Presbyterian Church of Phoenixville

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 7:30p Bell Choir	2 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	3 9:00a WIC	4 9:30a Zumba class
5 <i>2nd Sunday of Advent</i> 8:30a Bible Study 10:30a Worship	6 6:30p Zumba class <i>6:30p Staff meeting</i> <i>7:30p Property</i>	7 12:30p PACA Meeting (parlor) 6:30p Zumba class <i>7:00p MAC</i>	8 7:30p Bell Choir	9 9:00a People to People Clothing ministry 10:00a People to People Food ministry 7:00p Choir 7:00p Compassionate Friends	10	11 4:00p Piano Recital Sanctuary rented
12 <i>3rd Sunday of Advent</i> 8:30a Bible Study 10:30a Worship 11:40a Congregational Meeting <i>12:00n Worship & Music</i> <i>4:00p Christmas Caroling</i>	13 6:30p Zumba class	14 6:30p Zumba class <i>7:00p Personnel</i> <i>7:00p Parish Life</i>	15 7:30p Bell Choir	16 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	17 9:00a WIC	18 9:30a Zumba class
19 <i>4th Sunday of Advent</i> 8:30a Bible Study 9:15a Sunday School 10:30a Worship <i>Communion</i> 12:00n Women's Circle	20 6:30p Zumba class <i>7:00p Finance & Stewardship</i>	21 6:30p Zumba class <i>7:30p Session</i>	22	23 9:00a People to People Clothing ministry 10:00a People to People Food ministry 7:00p Choir	24 <i>Christmas Eve</i> 5:00p Family Worship Service 9:00p Candlelight Communion Worship Service Church office closed	25 <i>Merry Christmas!</i>
26 10:30a Worship <i>Diane Legnini vacation</i> <i>Rev. Hagler vacation</i>	27 6:30p Zumba class <i>Church office closed.</i>	28 6:30p Zumba class	29	30	31 <i>New Years' Eve</i> <i>Church office closed.</i>	1 <i>New Years' Day</i>