

Perspective

A Newsletter of the First Presbyterian Church
of Phoenixville, Pennsylvania

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Table of Contents

Message from Pastor Doug.....	2
Mission Action Committee.....	4
Worship and Music Notes.....	5
Stewardship.....	5
Antiracism Book Club Review.....	6
Scrip Card Orders.....	6
Finance Committee.....	7
Deacons Dialogue.....	7
Parish Life.....	8
Clerk of Session Report.....	10
Inspirational Messages.....	11
January calendar.....	12

From the Pastor

Philippians 2:5-8

⁵ Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited,
⁷ but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form,
⁸ he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death— even death on a cross.

I have just started a new book I was looking forward to reading: *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity* by David Graeber and David Wengrow. David Graeber is one of my favorite thinkers, and he and David Wengrow had worked for a decade on this book. Sadly, Graeber died before he could finish it, so Wengrow has finished it for both of them. The book is a look at human history, including the long years before anyone wrote anything down, with what they hope are fresh eyes. In looking at human history back to the beginning, of course, what they're really talking about is who we are, as humans.

I am nowhere near finishing the book, so I can't give a full review, but so far it is well worth reading. I feel like I learn something on almost every page. One thing that I found striking was the premise (not just Graeber and Wenger's, but one they articulate) that while human beings do have some instincts for dominating one another in hierarchies, inherited along with the other great apes, what makes us specifically human is our ability *not* to behave that way. Or to put it another way, any troop of chimpanzees can figure out how to push each other around and be domineering and obnoxious - what makes us human is that we don't have to behave that way if we choose not to.

This is in stark contrast with some popular thinkers like Jordan Peterson, who would argue that not only is it human nature to dominate and be dominated, but that people are more comfortable and at peace when they are in a hierarchy, with someone lording over them, and when they can in turn lord it over others beneath them. For Peterson, the human soul cries out for domination and hierarchy. When we try to escape that nature, it just makes things worse for us.

Personally, I'm deeply suspicious of anyone who feels most human and most at home when being told what to do, or when telling someone else what to do. I love Tolkien, and I've quoted him before:

"the most improper job of any man, even saints (who at any rate were at least unwilling to take it on), is bossing other men. Not one in a million is fit for it, and least of all those who seek the opportunity."

Of course I would say this counts for all people, men and otherwise, and I think Tolkien would too. He just wrote those words decades ago, as a man, surrounded by men, with men in mind. (As a detour: in Scandinavia, where there are far more women bosses than in other parts of the world, at least one study has found that they abuse power at about the same rate as men do. The problem seems to be the power, not the gender.)

2. continued....

We are such a strange species. I doubt other intelligent species, like orcas or gorillas, gaze up at the night sky and wonder “What does it mean to be an orca? What is my nature, as a gorilla?” One way we stand out is that we struggle to find our place in the world. Or, as has been said before, ‘of all the creatures that live on earth, only humans pay rent.’ We struggle with our place, and we struggle to become more human, and to remain human.

I agree that one thing which makes us stand out compared to other creatures is that we can choose not to dominate each other, even though we do have an instinct to do just that. Scripture joins us in this effort to be more genuinely human in many ways. There is the Jubilee, where debts are cancelled, property is returned, and slaves are set free on a regular basis, making it impossible to accumulate a lot of property and power over time. In contrast to all nearby cultures, the kingship of Israel was rooted in the Law which came from God and not from the King, so that the King (in theory at least) would answer to God no less than anyone else. The prophets, of course, continually lift up the oppressed, the hungry and the sick as worthy of justice, mercy and dignity.

In the New Testament, Christ continually says that his kingdom is a great reversal of all hierarchies, and tells his followers that others may lord it over one another, but not so with them. We have the earliest church after Pentecost selling all they have and sharing everything in common, so that everyone would have enough. Paul says that there is no longer Jew and Gentile, slave and free, male and female - three more hierarchies dismantled.

Those are just a few examples that came to mind as I thought about this.

Of course, many of us are stuck in hierarchies. We have bosses; we have those we are supposed to be bossing. The world is not as it should be. I think we need to find ways to lead without bossing, to step out of hierarchies and treat everyone as an equal, and to endure being bossed without seeing it as inevitable. We can cultivate a holy discomfort with bossing, and see where that takes us. We can share with others who might not know that there is a better way to be human.

Christ, our example, our symbol, our sibling, shows us the way not only to love ourselves, our neighbors, our enemies, and God, but also how to become more fully human. We do this by remembering that everyone is equal - that God does not place a person above another. If we find ourselves, strange creatures, wondering who we are, we know where to look: to the one who, taking on humanity, emptied himself.

Pastor Doug



Upcoming Scripture Readings

January 2nd: Jeremiah 31:7-14; Ephesians 1:3-14

January 9th: Isaiah 43:1-7; Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

January 16th: Psalm 36:5-10; John 2:1-11

January 23rd: 1 Corinthians 12:12-31a; Luke 4:14-21

January 30th: Jeremiah 1:4-10; 1 Corinthians 13:1-13



Mission, Action, Concern Committee (MAC)

Behold, I am going to do something new. I will even make a roadway in the wilderness, rivers in the desert. (Isaiah 43:18-19)

Thanks for Star Tree Generosity

Thanks to all who contributed to the Star Tree and to the food baskets for local families. We pray that the receiving families sensed the amazing love of Christ as the ultimate gift of this season.

Thanks for Alternative Gift Card Purchases

We are also thankful for those who purchased alternative cards, which benefited five different organizations, including both local and global missions. In all, 123 cards were sold. By the way, the most “popular” cause (most cards sold) was PACS (29 cards), with Bees (27) running a close second place. All income from sales of the gift cards will go to the five organizations represented.

P2P Facebook Page

Be sure to regularly check the People to People Facebook page to learn about upcoming events and calls for volunteers. The address is: <https://www.facebook.com/FPCPeopleToPeople>. If you have something to post to the Facebook page, please send the information to Jeff McLaughlin at jeffmcl@icloud.com.

MAC Priorities Survey

As we plan for 2022, the MAC Committee is very interested in new ideas and suggestions related to the mission outreach of First Presbyterian Church. We hope to focus on new and existing efforts that reflect the priorities and callings of our diverse congregation. Our call is 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 follow the link below and complete a short survey related to mission priorities. Paper copies of this survey will also be available in the narthex at church. The survey is here: <https://tinyurl.com/2p8f8c76>. You can also use the QR code to



get

to the survey.
Thanks!

Our Mission Partners: The Vassanis

The MAC Committee has had a long-term supportive relationship with Dan and Mary Vissani, missionaries serving in Zambia. The Vissani’s mission service is focused on agricultural stewardship and they assist farmers in implementing sustainable and environmentally responsible practices. Here is an excerpt from their latest report from Zambia:

“Every rainy season here is unique, and while there is usually a dry spell at some point in the season, it doesn't usually occur right after the first rains! For some farmers, the situation is dire. [However,] farmers who have embraced a new approach to land stewardship are likely to have soil richer in organic matter, which holds on to moisture. Farmers who have braved ridicule from their neighbors and mulched their fields have vastly more moisture in their soil than those whose soils are baking in the hot sun. Rain is finally back in the forecast. ... We thank God for His mercy, continue to follow his ways revealed in Creation, and call others to do the same. Thank you for generous support and encouragement of this ministry to which God has called us. By His grace we'll continue to teach and demonstrate the wisdom of His ways.”

Worship and Music Notes

Welcome to a new year! This time last year we were on YouTube and beginning to plan for outdoor services. Now we are worshiping in the sanctuary and enjoying the fellowship that allows. While we don't know what the future holds, we continue to plan for in person worshiping and on YouTube.

I must admit that for me, hearing everyone sing, pray and worship together was and is a real morale boost. I hope it is for you also.

As we chart our path through these uncharted waters of the pandemic, please feel free to communicate with this committee if you have ideas or concerns.

Looking forward to a good year ahead, I hope to

See you in church



First Presbyterian Church of Phoenixville is going to start sending cards, letters or thank you notes to Jen Johnson's nephew Peter Johnson (serving in the Navy) or his squadron thanking him/them for their service.

If you would like to send a card or note, please put it in the basket in the Narthex that has the above picture on it. Jen will collect them and then mail them to her nephew. On the envelope put either Peter or Squadron.

If you would like to send an email instead, please send the email to Jen Johnson physedjj@verizon.net and she will forward the email to Peter or his squadron.

If you prefer to mail, send them to Jen Johnson 107 Harvard Drive Trappe, PA 19426 c/o Peter Johnson.



2022 Pledge Cards

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

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

Your completed pledge cards help the Finance Committee as they plan for 2022.

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. There are also cards available in the narthex and church office.

We **thank you** for your financial support and continued commitment to our church.

Antiracism Book Club Book Review:

Love Your Enemies by Arthur C. Brooks

I've read this book twice, first with the TILT group and second with the Antiracism book club, and I enjoyed the discussions in both settings. The subtitle of this book truly encapsulates the purpose of the writing, i.e., How Decent People Can Save America from the Culture of Contempt. I have observed an increase in anger and intolerance in America over the past ten years. Although this book focuses on contempt within a political frame, the author clarifies that this is a human problem, not a political one. We can apply this advice to all relational challenges. According to Mr. Brooks, we can resolve issues with people we angrily disagree with, but we can't resolve issues if there is contempt between us. For example, an angry person may say, "I care about this issue, I'm fighting for it, I'm not backing down," but a contemptuous person will retort, "YOU are an idiot, YOU are not a patriot, YOU are beneath me." It seems our emotional DNA gets wrapped around a given issue, and we lose the ability to see the world from another vantage point. I hear this during discussions on the caste system in the US (yes, we have a caste system in this country). For me, the biggest issue Mr. Brooks writes about is the danger of 'ideological siloing,' which means we stop spending time with people who disagree with us or have a different perspective. We gravitate toward and exclusively spend time with people who think like us, work like us, and share the same beliefs.

As proposed by Mr. Brooks, the solution is to expose us to different perspectives and actively listen. To actively listen, we offer the speaker our full attention, we don't think about what we will say next, and we maintain an open mind. I would add that reading books and listen to podcasts on controversial topics can be a safe way to listen to others, expose us to new perspectives, and encourage our growth. We are also encouraged to focus on the commonality of a situation, such as what common goal(s) we share, allowing that common goal to align our hearts and lay the groundwork for our path forward. The author closes the book with five rules to survive the culture of contempt.

One, refuse to be used by influential, manipulative people and forces that are on your side of the debate (including people, media, publications that offer little on 'the other perspective').

Two, go places where we are not invited and say things people don't expect. We can approach all conversations with respectful curiosity and learn something about ourselves and others.

Third, say no to contempt and treat others with love and respect, even when it's complicated (i.e., be part of the solution and not the problem). Four, improve how we disagree and allow the discourse to include a healthy competition of ideas, remembering that disagreement will enable us to grow and not reject the person. Five, tune out and disconnect more from unproductive debates. Remember Mom telling you to pick your battles? Mom was right *again*.

(Chris Wittrock)

From the Finance Committee

- Contribution statements for 2021 will be sent by the middle of January. If you have questions, please call the church office (610-933-8816) or e-mail fpctreasurer145@gmail.com.



- Several visitors to the church have asked about on-line giving.

Below is the link to Faith Life, the app. that handles our on-line contributions.

If you are a friend or member of the church, and you have an envelope number, you can include when the on-line account is set-up. If you do not have an envelope number, you can contribute as a friend. You can also access the link on the church web site. Direct any questions to fpctreasurer145@gmail.com.

Thank you.

<https://faithlife.com/fpcop-n/give>



Deacons Dialogue

Your Board of Deacons would like to wish each and every one of you a blessed Holiday Season. May God fill your Yuletide Season and all of your days with immeasurable prosperity and joy. It is our honor and privilege to serve our congregation every day of the year, and especially during this sacred time of the birth of our Lord and Savior.

Submitted on behalf of the Deacons by,
Ellen Williams



Prayer Chain & Prayer Requests

Amy Myers 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.

PARISH LIFE



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



Parish Life Caroling Event a Smashing Success!

On December 12th congregants enjoyed an all ages caroling event, and fun was had by everyone. The younger set had jingle bells, and we had musical stylings by Rebecca Barkley. After singing we warmed up with hot chocolate and treats.

Thank you to everyone who joined in – we hope you had as much fun as we did!



Foodology

This oh so simple side dish will have your guests coming back for more!

Scalloped Oysters

INGREDIENTS

- 1 Pint oysters (best cut up into quarters)
- 4 Cups crackers (Becky's grandmother used round crackers with zig-zaggy edges, but we're not sure they make those anymore; oyster crackers work just fine)
- 1 1/4 Tsp salt (maybe less; seems a bit heavy when using salted crackers)
- 1/4 Tsp black pepper
- 1/3 Cup melted butter
- 2 Cups oyster juice and milk (add enough milk to oyster juice to make 2 cups liquid)

INSTRUCTIONS:

Melt butter and toss with crackers.

Add alternate layers of crackers and oysters to a greased casserole dish. Add seasoning to liquid and pour over contents of dish.

Bake at 375 degrees for 30 minutes or maybe a bit more.

This is from the "Mennonite Community Cookbook" although we're sure Grandma just did it from memory.

Submitted by Becky Sinapius

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!

Scrip Gift Card Orders

We would like to thank everyone who continued to support the Scrip Gift Card Program in 2021. You helped raise over \$2,000 for the benefit of the church.

Now it's time to begin a **New Year...2022!!**

We are placing orders for gift cards every other Wednesday in January (**Jan.5 and Jan 19**).

If you would like to place an order, please call or text Lynne Williams at 610-415-1581 (home) or 610-955-4749 (cell) or send an email (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 (**Jan. 4 & Jan. 18**). Please make checks payable to "First Presbyterian Church DR".

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

Happy New Year!!



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*.

In November we had an average of 57 worshipping in person (wearing masks) and an average of 20 households viewing the 10:30 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

- Membership: Current membership is 172.
- Birth: none
- Death:
 - Melissa Langevin (non-member) died 10/22/2021. Funeral held on 11/1 at Devlin Rosmos Kepp & Gatcha Funeral Home, Pastor Hagler officiating. Burial at Washington Memorial Chapel. Melissa was daughter of church member Doris Langevin.
 - Rev. Steven Garstad 9/9/2021. Steve served as Interim Pastor here.
- Wedding: none
 - Baptism: Logan Adam Grube, born 8/12/2020, son of Adam and Stephanie (Giebler) Grube. Gary and Barb Giebler are Logan's proud grandparents.

○ Session Meeting Information:

- Motions passed at the October 26, 2021 Stated Session Meeting
 - A motion from the Church Growth Committee that First Presbyterian Church become a Matthew 25 Church was unanimously approved.
 - A motion from the Personnel Committee to create a new staff position "Children and Youth Coordinator" to begin on 2022 was unanimously approved.
 - A motion from the Worship and Music Committee to have ushers begin passing the offering plate during worship was unanimously approved.
- A joint meeting of Elders and Deacons was held in the Choir Room on Saturday, November 20.
- A Special Session Meeting was held on November 30, 2021 to discuss the 2022 budget.
- The minutes of the December 12 Congregational Meeting were approved as written showing the following leadership positions for 3 year terms:
 - Elder: Jewell Baker, George Cockerill, Jeff McLaughlin, Adam Smith.
 - Deacon: Kristin Craven, Gail Landazuri, Mona Sabia.
- Session approved the date for the 2022 Annual Meeting of the Congregation to be on January 30, 2022.

Information from the December 21st Stated Session Meeting will be reviewed/approved at the January 25th Session Meeting and will be in the following Perspective.

Jewell Baker, Clerk of Session



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.

For Reflection and Inspiration

submitted by Sharyn L. Funderwhite

- “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights.” James 1:17
- “Lift up your eyes on high and see who has created these stars.” Isaiah 40:26
- “rooted and established in love.” Ephesians 3:17
- “Depression is a sign that we have been invited to undertake a new stage in the life-long journey of Spiritual Development,”
- “nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 8:39 NCV
- “Bless the Lord...who satisfies your desires with good things.” Psalm 103:2, 5
- “Compassion, in which ethics must take root, can only attain its full breadth and depth if it embraces all living creatures and does not limit itself to mankind.”
Albert Schweitzer
- “Our task must be to free ourselves by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in all its beauty.” Albert Einstein
- “Control your inner environment, and the outer environment will control itself.” AAL
- “One victory over ‘inner environment’ is worth a multitude of victories over ‘outer environment’”. AAL
- “Every moment of the year has its own beauty.” Emerson
- “Peace is always beautiful.” Walt Whitman
- “Hoping, dreaming and joyfully anticipating are the very essence of life.” AAL
- “Perfectionism is a hope, a dream and an illusion.” AAL



January 2022

First Presbyterian Church of Phoenixville

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 <i>New Years' Day</i>
2 <i>Communion</i> 10:30a Worship	3 6:30p Zumba 7:30p Property	4 6:30p Zumba 7:00p MAC	5	6 9:00a Clothing ministry 9:00a WIC 10:00a Food ministry 7:00p Choir 7:00p "We Are" vigil via Zoom	7 9:00a WIC	8
9 8:30a Bible study 10:30a Worship 12:00n Worship & Music 12:30p Deacons 7:00p Pub Theology	10 6:30p Zumba	11 6:00p Staff meeting 7:00p Personnel (Open Forum) 7:00p Parish Life	12	13 10:00a Food ministry 7:00p Choir 7:30p Compassionate Friends	14	15 9:30a Zumba
16 8:30a Bible study 10:30a Worship <i>Installation of Officers</i> 12:00n Men's Group 12:00n Women's Circle	17 6:30p Zumba 7:00p Finance & Stewardship Office Closed <i>Martin Luther King Jr Birthday</i>	18 6:30p Zumba 7:15p Church Growth	19 <i>Perspective articles due</i> 7:30p Bell Choir	20 9:00a Clothing ministry 9:00a WIC 10:00a Food ministry 7:00p Choir 7:00p "We Are" vigil LIVE	21 9:00a WIC	22
23 8:30a Bible study 10:30a Worship 7:00p Book Club	24 6:30p Zumba	25 6:30p Zumba 7:30p Session	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 2:00p Annual Congregational Meeting Via Zoom	31 6:30p Zumba					