



**First Presbyterian Church of New Philadelphia**

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**Rev. Joseph Svancara, Pastor**

**Sunday Worship Service  
June 29, 2025**

\*All who are able, please stand.

**Announcements & Prayer Concerns**

Today is the last week we will be taking up a special collection for the PCUSA's Pentecost Offering- to benefit their ministries to children and young adults. A portion of this offering will be retained to our church and donated to Noah's Hope, and matched by our mission budget. Information and donation envelopes are available on the back mission table.

Bible Study will be this Wednesday (July 2) at 10am.

AA will meet this Wednesday (July 2) at 8pm.

Our Sunday Morning Study Group will meet on Sunday (July 6) at 9:15am. We will be discussing chapter 16 of "Foxe's Book of Martyrs". See Rev. Joe if you wish to join!

Next Sunday (July 6) is our "First Celebration Sunday" with communion and our monthly church brunch. Bring a friend, all are welcome!

**Opening Prayer**

LORD, our Father, you call us to serve you in love to our neighbors and ourselves. By the power of the Holy Spirit help us understand the meaning of that service, and how we might serve in a way that promotes freedom, not bondage, to anything else. **Amen.**

**Prelude    *In Christ, There Is No East or West*    arr. Dale Woodward**

**\*Call to Worship (Psalm 16)**

Protect me, O God, for take refuge in you; I have said to the LORD, "You are my Lord, my good above all other."

**All my delight is in the godly that are in the land, upon those who are noble  
among the people.**

But those who run after other gods shall have their troubles multiplied.

**I will not pour out drink offerings to such gods, never take their names upon my lips.**

O LORD, you are my portion and my cup; it is you who uphold my lot.

**My boundaries enclose a pleasant land; indeed, I have a rich inheritance.**

I will bless the LORD who gives me counsel; my heart teaches me night after night.

**I have set the LORD always before me; because God is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.**

My heart, therefore, is glad, and my spirit rejoices; my body also shall rest in hope.

**For you will not abandon me to the grave, nor let your holy one see the pit.**

You will show me the path of life;

**in your presence there is fullness of joy, and in your right hand are pleasures forevermore.**

**\*Hymn #277    *O God, Our Faithful God***

O God, our faithful God,  
O fountain ever flowing,  
Without whom nothing is,  
All perfect gifts bestowing,  
Grant us a faithful life,  
And give us, Lord, within,  
Commitment free from strife,  
A soul unhurt by sin.

God, grant us strength to do  
With ready heart and willing,  
Whatever You command,  
Our calling here fulfilling;  
And do it when we ought,  
With zeal and joyfulness;  
And bless the work we've wrought,  
For You must give success.

If dangers gather round,  
Still keep us calm and fearless;  
Help us to bear the cross  
When life is bleak and cheerless,

To overcome our foes  
With words and actions kind;  
O God, Your will disclose,  
Your counsel let us find.

**\*Prayer of Confession**

The LORD is our good above all others, who never abandons us amid our struggles. But do we trust in him above all else, or trust more in practices enforced by humans?

**LORD, our Father, you are our light and source of salvation. Everything you have given the Church is a means to promote your freedom, your liberation, and your healing from all destructive powers. But we tend to worship and place more priority in your rites than in your power, as if they are the same. Help us look beyond the works of our hands, our traditions, to see your power at work and what is possible beyond human means. Amen.**

**\*Silent Confessions and Prayers**

**\*Assurance of Forgiveness**

By Jesus Christ we are called to freedom out of bondage, and service instead of slavery.

**Christ is of immense benefit to us, by him we meet the true divine presence which helps us see what is real and worthy of living.**

**\*Hymn #579    *Gloria Patri***

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;  
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,  
World without end. Amen. Amen.

**The Apostles' Creed**

**I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.  
Amen.**

**Reading of the Scriptures**

*All Scripture lessons come from the Revised Common Lectionary. Prescribed lessons are underlined, with pastoral inserts to preserve the integrity of the passage.*

Hear the Word of the Lord:

1 Kings 19:1-21

**19** <sup>1</sup> Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. <sup>2</sup> Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So may the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life like the life of one of them by this time tomorrow." <sup>3</sup> Then he was afraid; he got up and fled for his life, and came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah; he left his servant there. <sup>4</sup> But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a solitary broom tree. He asked that he might die: "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am no better than my ancestors." <sup>5</sup> Then he lay down under the broom tree and fell asleep. Suddenly an angel touched him and said to him, "Get up and eat." <sup>6</sup> He looked, and there at his head was a cake baked on hot stones, and a jar of water. He ate and drank, and lay down again. <sup>7</sup> The angel of the Lord came a second time, touched him, and said, "Get up and eat, otherwise the journey will be too much for you." <sup>8</sup> He got up, and ate and drank; then he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb the mount of God. <sup>9</sup> At that place he came to a cave, and spent the night there. Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" <sup>10</sup> He answered, "I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away." <sup>11</sup> He said, "Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by." Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; <sup>12</sup> and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. <sup>13</sup> When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then there came a voice to him that said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" <sup>14</sup> He answered, "I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away." <sup>15</sup> Then the Lord said to him, "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus; when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael as king over Aram. <sup>16</sup> Also you shall anoint Jehu son of Nimshi as king over Israel; and you shall anoint Elisha son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah as prophet in your place. <sup>17</sup> Whoever escapes from the sword of Hazael, Jehu shall kill; and whoever escapes from the sword of Jehu, Elisha shall kill. <sup>18</sup> Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him." <sup>19</sup> So he set out from there, and found Elisha son of Shaphat, who was plowing. There were twelve yoke of oxen ahead of him, and he was with the twelfth. Elijah passed by him and threw his mantle over him. <sup>20</sup> He left the oxen, ran after Elijah, and said, "Let me kiss my father and my

mother, and then I will follow you.” Then Elijah said to him, “Go back again; for what have I done to you?” <sup>21</sup> He returned from following him, took the yoke of oxen, and slaughtered them; using the equipment from the oxen, he boiled their flesh, and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he set out and followed Elijah, and became his servant.

#### Galatians 5:2-15

**5** <sup>2</sup> Listen! I, Paul, am telling you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you. <sup>3</sup> Once again I testify to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obliged to obey the entire law. <sup>4</sup> You who want to be justified by the law have cut yourselves off from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. <sup>5</sup> For through the Spirit, by faith, we eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. <sup>6</sup> For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything; the only thing that counts is faith working through love. <sup>7</sup> You were running well; who prevented you from obeying the truth? <sup>8</sup> Such persuasion does not come from the one who calls you. <sup>9</sup> A little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough. <sup>10</sup> I am confident about you in the Lord that you will not think otherwise. But whoever it is that is confusing you will pay the penalty. <sup>11</sup> But my friends, why am I still being persecuted if I am still preaching circumcision? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed. <sup>12</sup> I wish those who unsettle you would castrate themselves! <sup>13</sup> For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. <sup>14</sup> For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” <sup>15</sup> If, however, you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.

#### Luke 9:51-62

**9** <sup>51</sup> When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. <sup>52</sup> And he sent messengers ahead of him. On their way they entered a village of the Samaritans to make ready for him; <sup>53</sup> but they did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. <sup>54</sup> When his disciples James and John saw it, they said, “Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?” <sup>55</sup> But he turned and rebuked them. <sup>56</sup> Then they went on to another village. <sup>57</sup> As they were going along the road, someone said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.” <sup>58</sup> And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.” <sup>59</sup> To another he said, “Follow me.” But he said, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.” <sup>60</sup> But Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.” <sup>61</sup> Another said, “I will follow you, Lord; but let me first say farewell to those at my home.” <sup>62</sup> Jesus said to him, “No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God!**

**Sermon    *The Fourth Sunday of Pentecost***

A life in the Holy Spirit, reflecting the hope and promise of the LORD, of being a disciple of Jesus Christ is a calling beyond anything this world can offer. Vocations and jobs can exist within the world which utilize, and exploit, the talents of others. Making people give so much of themselves without necessarily finding any meaning or feeling like they accomplished anything. Jobs will always entice, work never ends, so how do we discover freedom and opportunity within the circumstances we find ourselves in?

Jesus, in Luke 9:51-62, demonstrated the work his disciples were to dedicate themselves too as his mission came to completion. In the shadow of Jerusalem, of the cross, his example and reasoning for following becomes very stark to those who are listening. The disciples were still caught up in the idea of retribution when Jesus was rebuffed by the Samaritans. They expected the reaction would be fire raining down from heaven to consume the heretics, like in the days of Elijah the prophet. But instead they were rebuked by Jesus, who taught what it meant to follow and dedicate oneself to his mission. Each time someone addresses Jesus wanting to follow him it is made clear that this is a mission which requires dedication toward a single goal. One cannot be split between the priorities of the world and those of the LORD. One must come to the decision that Jesus, as the LORD's chief representative to creation, has the better task and should be sought after. Jesus knew what awaited him at Jerusalem and still pressed on toward that goal. We know following Jesus will lead to a confrontation, a clash, with what the world claims is important- and sometimes will go to great ends to enforce. But it is in those clashes we will discover the greater dedication.

St. Paul speaks about that greater dedication, that greater task, in Galatians 5:2-15. It seems like St. Paul goes back to the idea of circumcision so much in his letters, but it is a symbol so stark and sensitive that it grabs attention from those reading. Many in the Church at the time still practiced, and attempted to enforce, the Jewish rites and rituals upon new believers. Seen as indispensable to the faith, was still a living connection to the ministry of Christ, and communicated the promises of the LORD made to their ancestors. But that type of teaching, that type of dedication to practice, confused the gentile Galatians in the Church about what was truly necessary to be disciples. It was St. Paul who starkly reminded the people that circumcision alone accomplished nothing, following the law alone did not produce the results needed, everything needed to orient toward the example of Christ. An example of hope, opportunity, freedom, and emancipation from obligation and subjugation to human means and morals. St. Paul was stark in saying those so obsessed with those practices should cut them off and free themselves from the burden! Dedication to neighbor's problems, loving and seeing oneself as cherished by the LORD for divine plans, that is what breaks the cycle of sin in a way nothing else could do.

Elijah the prophet had such an experience, in 1 Kings 19:1-21, after he confronted and defeated the false prophets of his day with fire. Even this victory and vindication of the prophet was not enough to stop the powers-that-be from threatening to hunt and kill

Elijah. So he would run away into the wilderness, scared for his life and confused as to where this would lead him in his calling. He was aimless until the LORD came to him in the manner of physical provision to sustain him and give ability to recognize the true God when spoken too. In a directionless circumstance the LORD would give direction and tell Elijah what he would do. In this case, it would be to anoint new leaders that would enable the people to know and live the holy instruction of the LORD- which would defeat the influence of the tyrannical king or queen of Israel. It could not be done half-heartedly, because it would require all of the being to remain loyal to the task. Which caused Elisha to literally kill and burn all his farm equipment so he would not be able to turn back from what called him to serve.

Our service does not necessarily mean selling off and burning our homes, closing out bank accounts and throwing our money away, or giving up what anchors us to our communities. But the dedication required by disciples makes us be more considerate of what we serve, what we allow ourselves to become wrapped up in, and if it serves a purpose of buying the freedom of others from oppressive and limiting teachings and influences. Each time we engage with another we should be a challenge to what their dedication is toward, a clarifying example, and a gentle reminder of a more powerful influence over the world and its problems.

There was a recent story that was put out in the national media about a priest from Pennsylvania who is celebrating his 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ordination to the priesthood, at age 100! Father James Kelly has served for decades in parishes in Pennsylvania, traveled all over the world, met St. Teresa of Kolkata and remained good friends with her until her death, and still wakes up at dawn to recite daily mass for others in the senior home he currently lives in. He reportedly gives the same prayer when he wakes up every morning: "Lord, what surprise do you have for me today? I hope it'll be a nice one that I'll love and enjoy. I never know, but I want to thank you for whatever happens today." And while his ongoing ministry has shrunk to the few residents who gather for mass every day, it has the impact of making one claim: "It's not in a beautiful chapel or church. But it's here that I can offer my love and efforts to the Heavenly Father" (<https://www.msn.com/en-us/health/other/at-100-this-globetrotting-catholic-priest-still-bakes-pies-enjoys-opera-and-celebrates-daily-mass/ar-AA1HAEI9?ocid=emmx-mmx-feeds&cvid=adeb230a01724594b9165d60955c43f7>).

A life such as Father Kelly's is a ministry to service, because it makes others more considerate of what the LORD offers and can do for them. That service brings others before the divine, not bludgeoning them with it, and allows discovery of how they can serve within the greater divine mission. As a Church, as Christians, how are we making others more considerate of where they are within the divine? How are our everyday examples and interactions emphasizing freedom and service to what is better? The world will always emphasize what it deems important, and always will, and our duty is to point out where the LORD exists within all that.

## **Prayers of the People**

*Let us remember in prayer:*

*Dominic Aquino, Tom & Amy Aquino, Mary Ellen Beans, Terry Carpenter, Fritz Chambers, Michelle Chamberlain, Mary Jane Dougherty, Don Eberheart Jr., Allison Folly, Kay France, Jamie Frank, Bill & Cheryl Graham, Judy Hass, Alice & Errol Jacobs, Barry Jacobs, Victoria Kasten, Amber Loftis, David Mackey, Breanne Mathias, Doug McIntire, Will Long, Tom Netting, Ruth Patrick, Bob Pierre, Carol Phillips, Mark Preusser, Stefani Seth, Josh Shaeffer, Marlene Singhaus, Cindy Smith, Derrick & Mandy Smith, Janis Stover, Dean & Heidi Unzicker, Simone Villarruel, The Friends of the Homeless of Tuscarawas County & The Homeless of Tuscarawas County.*

LORD, our Father, the calling of Jesus Christ as disciples is one of purposeful choice and consideration for what it means in our daily lives. You are not a hard taskmaster who calls us to work beyond our means but gives a spirit of truth and grace so we might walk faithfully. We often struggle because we are not like other disciples, not accomplishing the same things, or impacting the world in the manner which others are. But your kingdom is wide and vast and filled with so many wonderful roles and works.

Your callings are vast and of equal importance, governed by no other human, and serviced only by your divine spirit. Help us to recognize, and celebrate, the path you have us walk down and see that our small representation is of infinite value to how you reach all creation. Thank you that we have been able to witness you as you are within our means. Help us to treasure this realization and hold it close for the benefit of all who will walk in these doors.

And for the ways you speak in our joys and concerns, in prayers which seem too large to handle, may you witness to how we help and heal in our unique ways...*Reading of the Prayer List*...Your Spirit fills all the world and allows your word to produce fruit, so help us see what we might do to cultivate that hope for others.

### *Moment of Silence*

We thank you, LORD, that your still, small voice is enough to aid us in our journeys of faith. We rely not on big signs and flashy wonders, but in willingness and dedication to your graceful tasks. To know that all which is done in faith will create a change which leads the world back to you. To fulfill the words of your prayer:

### **The Lord's Prayer**

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.**

### **Offering our Gifts**



We are disciples of Jesus Christ, servants of the living LORD. May all we offer and accomplish be in the hope of freedom to all!

**Offertory    *Just As I Am, Without One Plea*    arr. Wood**

**\*Hymn #592    *Doxology***

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise Him all creatures here below;  
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host;  
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

**\*Prayer of Dedication**

LORD, our Father, you have gathered us to serve in your name and open the door to life everlasting to all who seek it. May all we offer be in the spirit of opening new opportunities, expressing new service and callings, and allow all people to find their place with you. **Amen.**

**\*Hymn #374    *Lord, Make Us Servants of Your Peace***

Lord, make us servants of your peace:  
where there is hate, may we sow love;  
where there is hurt, may we forgive;  
where there is strife, may we make one.

Where all is doubt, may we sow faith;  
where all is gloom, may we sow hope;  
where all is night, may we sow light;  
where all is tears, may we sow joy.

Jesus, our Lord, may we not seek  
to be consoled, but to console,  
nor look to understanding hearts,  
but look for hearts to understand.

May we not look for love's return,  
but seek to love unselfishly.  
For in our giving we receive,  
and in forgiving are forgiv'n.

Dying, we live, and are reborn  
through death's dark night to endless day.  
Lord, make us servants of your peace,  
to wake at last in heaven's light.

**\*Benediction**

Hear now, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You will love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind; you will love your neighbor as yourself.

With the gospel of Jesus Christ guiding you, go into the world to live this sole purpose.

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**\*Postlude    *Guide Me Ever, Great Redeemer*    arr. Wood**

Be blessed in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ wherever you may go!

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