



First Presbyterian Church of New Philadelphia

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www.newphilapc.org



Rev. Joseph Svancara, Pastor

Sunday Worship Service

February 2, 2025

*All who are able, please stand.

Announcements & Prayer Concerns

Our monthly church brunch will be after service today- all are welcome to attend!

Session will meet this Monday (February 3) at 7pm.

Bible Study will be this Wednesday (February 5) at 10am.

AA will meet this Wednesday (February 5) at 8pm.

Our Sunday Morning Study Group will meet on Sunday (February 9) at 9:15am.

Next Sunday (February 9) at 6pm will be our monthly Friends of the Homeless Meal. A sign-up sheet is available in the office for volunteers. While funding for the meal is good, please consider donating toward our other Friends of the Homeless efforts (Operations Fund or Jack's House of Hope Project).

The "Tables of Eight" dinner group will meet on February 15 at 6pm. RSVP is required, and the cost is \$10 per person. A sign-up sheet is available in the office, or you may contact Carolyn Berry or Mike Smith.

In preparation for the 2024 annual congregational meeting all committee heads should have their reports into the church office no later than February 20.

As the construction of Jack's House of Hope takes place, we thank you for your patience in terms of parking at the church. Parking is available on the gravel lot along the fence and side alley, and on the street along East High Ave. The inner section closest to the door is reserved for handicap/limited mobility parking and drop off. Thank you for keeping the entrance to this clear (marked by cones)!

Opening Prayer

LORD, our Father, you are our hope and refuge in times of trouble and uncertainty. You have filled us with your Word and prepared us for your work. Show us the

difference we can make around us when we allow faith, hope, and love to guide.
Amen.

Prelude *The King of Love My Shepherd Is* arr. Engles

***Call to Worship (Psalm 71)**

In you, O LORD, have I taken refuge; let me never be put to shame.

In your righteousness, deliver me and set me free; incline your ear to me and save me.

Be my strong rock, a castle to keep me safe; you are my crag and my stronghold.

Deliver me, my God, from the hand of the wicked, from the clutches of the evildoer and the oppressor.

For you are my hope, O Lord GOD, my confidence since I was young.

I have been sustained by you ever since I was born; from my mother's womb you have been my strength; my praise shall be always of you.

I have become a portent to many; but you are my refuge and my strength.

Let my mouth be full of your praise and your glory all the day long.

Do not cast me off in my old age; forsake me not when my strength fails.

For my enemies are talking against me, and those who lie in wait for my life take counsel together.

They say, "Pursue and seize that one whom God has forsaken; because there is none who will save."

O God, be not far from me; come quickly to help me, O my God.

May my accusers be put to shame and waste away; let those who seek my misfortune be engulfed by scorn and reproach.

But I shall always wait in patience, and shall praise you more and more.

My mouth shall recount your mighty acts and saving deeds all day long; though I cannot know their number.

I will begin with the mighty works of the Lord GOD; I will recall your righteousness, yours alone.

O God, you have taught me since I was young, and to this day I tell of your wonderful works.

Now that I am old and gray-headed, O God, do not forsake me, till I make known your strength to this generation and your power to all who are to come.

Your righteousness, O God, reaches to the heavens; you have done great things; who is like you, O God?

You have shown me great troubles and adversities, but you will restore my life and bring me up again from the deep places of the earth.

You strengthen me more and more; you enfold and comfort me.

Therefore I will praise you upon the lyre for your faithfulness, O my God; I will sing to you with the harp, O Holy One of Israel.

My lips will sing with joy when I play to you, and so will my soul, which you have redeemed.

My tongue will proclaim your righteousness all day long, for they are shamed and disgraced who sought to do me harm.

Hymn #85 *What Wondrous Love Is This

What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul,
What wondrous love is this, O my soul!
What wondrous love is this that caused the Lord of bliss
To bear the heavy cross for my soul, for my soul,
To bear the heavy cross for my soul!

To God and to the Lamb, I will sing, I will sing,
To God and to the Lamb, I will sing;
To God and to the Lamb who is the great I Am,
While millions join the theme, I will sing, I will sing;
While millions join the theme, I will sing!

And when from death I'm free, I'll sing on, I'll sing on.
And when from death I'm free, I'll sing on;
And when from death I'm free, I'll sing and joyful be,
And through eternity, I'll sing on, I'll sing on.
And through eternity I'll sing on.

***Prayer of Confession**

We often champion and idolize love as the greatest thing in the world but fail to follow-through on what it means. But your rule and guidance wipe away the false perceptions and teaches us the true meaning of your greatest gift:

LORD, our Father, you have called us to love you with all our being and to love our neighbor as ourself. But we often fail to understand that meaning, and even place conditions on it to make ourselves more comfortable. Teach and reveal how we might love more fully and abundantly, so others see you through in all we do. Amen.

***Silent Confessions and Prayers**

***Assurance of Forgiveness**

The Father's heart is full of love for all creation, and through Jesus Christ we understand its meaning in the truest sense.

By the ministry of Jesus, in the example of baptism, love is no longer a feeling or idea but a righteous action which overcomes all our mistakes.

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:

Jeremiah 1:4-19

1⁴Now the word of the LORD came to me saying, ⁵“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.” ⁶Then I said, “Ah, Lord GOD! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy.” ⁷But the LORD said to me, “Do not say, ‘I am only a boy’; for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and you shall speak whatever I command you. ⁸Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, says the LORD.” ⁹Then the LORD put out his hand and touched my mouth; and the LORD said to me, “Now I have put my words in your mouth. ¹⁰See, today I appoint you over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to pull down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.” ¹¹The word of the LORD came to me, saying, “Jeremiah, what do you see?” And I said, “I see a branch of an almond tree.” ¹²Then the LORD said to me, “You have seen well, for I am watching over my word to perform it.” ¹³The word of the LORD came to me a second time, saying, “What do you see?” And I said, “I see a boiling pot, tilted away from the north.” ¹⁴Then the LORD said to me: Out of the north disaster shall break out on all the inhabitants of the land. ¹⁵For now I am calling all the tribes of the kingdoms of the north, says the LORD; and they shall come and all of them shall set their thrones at the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem, against all its surrounding walls and against all the cities of Judah. ¹⁶And I will utter my judgments against them, for all their wickedness in forsaking me; they have made offerings to other gods, and worshiped the works of their own hands. ¹⁷But you, gird up your loins; stand up and tell them everything that I command you. Do not break down before them, or I will break you before them. ¹⁸And I for my part have made you today a fortified city, an iron pillar, and a bronze wall, against the whole land—against the kings of Judah, its princes, its priests, and the people of the land. ¹⁹They will fight against you; but they shall not prevail against you, for I am with you, says the LORD, to deliver you.

1 Corinthians 13:1-13

13¹If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ²And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. ⁴Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant ⁵or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. ⁷It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. ⁸Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. ⁹For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; ¹⁰but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. ¹¹When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. ¹²For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully,

even as I have been fully known. ¹³And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

Luke 4:31-44

⁴³¹He went down to Capernaum, a city in Galilee, and was teaching them on the sabbath. ³²They were astounded at his teaching, because he spoke with authority. ³³In the synagogue there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice, ³⁴“Let us alone! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.” ³⁵But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be silent, and come out of him!” When the demon had thrown him down before them, he came out of him without having done him any harm. ³⁶They were all amazed and kept saying to one another, “What kind of utterance is this? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and out they come!” ³⁷And a report about him began to reach every place in the region. ³⁸After leaving the synagogue he entered Simon’s house. Now Simon’s mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked him about her. ³⁹Then he stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. Immediately she got up and began to serve them. ⁴⁰As the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various kinds of diseases brought them to him; and he laid his hands on each of them and cured them. ⁴¹Demons also came out of many, shouting, “You are the Son of God!” But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew that he was the Messiah. ⁴²At daybreak he departed and went into a deserted place. And the crowds were looking for him; and when they reached him, they wanted to prevent him from leaving them. ⁴³But he said to them, “I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other cities also; for I was sent for this purpose.” ⁴⁴So he continued proclaiming the message in the synagogues of Judea.

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

Sermon *The Fourth Sunday of Epiphany*

The arrival of Jesus into this world, his ministry among us, is not just revealing new truths and understandings but the redefining what we already know. All in creation has been given by the LORD for us to use, but often it can be misused and twisted to fit some broken agenda. Part of the divine mission is to wrestle back control of what was misused and ensure it occupies a proper place within our lives. Everything is the LORD’s, and it will be ensured that all things serve the LORD again.

That is what Jesus demonstrates as he conducts his ministry in Luke 4:31-44.

It looks like Jesus is aimlessly traveling throughout the region of Galilee, the ‘sticks’ of the kingdom of Judea in this portion of the Roman Empire. It might seem like he is hopping about doing whatever with no rhyme or reason. But everything Jesus does is for the purpose of proclaiming and materializing the rule of the LORD in this world, especially among those who might be glossing it over or in real need of it. It is not

enough just to intellectually recognize that Jesus is the Son of God it must be experienced. That is why Jesus silences the demons who attempt to proclaim him as such among the people; Jesus did not want the people to passively receive information. Jesus wanted his actions to teach the people, allow his miracles to demonstrate what he came to accomplish, and reset the people's standards of what love and care were. That is what would cause real change in the world and set the people up to be proclaimers of change within the wider creation.

Much like the prophet when he was called in Jeremiah 1:4-19.

The LORD called Jeremiah during a time when Jeremiah was at his weakest. Whether that was at a chronologically young age or during a moment of profound inexperience, it is hard to say. What is emphasized is that Jeremiah was not ready when the LORD first called him and needed the Word of the LORD to be placed into him by cleansing and revelation. It is something which did not come naturally, and that is the point. Jeremiah needed to be taught and shown what he needed to do, and the impact that it would have on those he was going to. It would be a message and ministry not accepted by many, especially not by those already in power and control, but which would have a lasting impact because it would demonstrate the power of the LORD when it was needed the most. The LORD's people do not just speak the truth and reality of divine rule, they live it even when it is at odds with the rest of the world.

As St. Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians 13:1-13.

This is the famous love passage which is often read at weddings, highlighting the love a newly-wedded couple are to have. But it is not a 'how-to' guide for romantic love, but a reminder to the Church of the love they are to have which has first been demonstrated by Jesus Christ. A reminder that if anything is not done in love, without care and commitment to the well-being of another, it is no different than the cacophony of noise already out in the world. Love is what makes the difference because it means healing, building up, and making different things than how they were before. It is looking at someone else's needs and how we might give of ourselves for their good. It does not look for the best deal or the quickest outcome, but the best long-term solution to what someone else is facing. This is completely at odds with the rest of the world and will leave us at a disadvantage when it comes to what is deemed 'successful' and 'worthy'. But in the same way Jesus went out of his way for those whom the authorities had forgotten, we are to go as well so the true power of the LORD can be witnessed.

The Church does not have to offer instantaneous solutions for people's problems, because sometimes there are none. But it can be a place where the problems of our lives can be temporarily placed at the door so we might focus on the best solutions based on our commitments as disciples. Where we might truly wrestle and understand why Jesus is the Son of God based on what he provides us, and what we are willing to seek from him. Everything he does is for our benefit, the benefit of those who watch us,

and is how we understand little-by-little what the LORD desires the most. It allows us to stop being so dependent on the world, and others, and witness what is true and necessary for life to flourish. To see love as more than a mere emotion, and as an action which guides and illuminates everything around us. And to see Jesus as more than just a miracle worker, but an example of how the LORD's will can come to life in the most ordinary of ways.

Celebration of Holy Communion

Let us remember in prayer:

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

The LORD be with you! **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts! **We lift them to the LORD.**

Let us give thanks to the LORD, our God! **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

LORD, our Father, from your heart comes the greatest and purest love we can ever imagine. All you do, and have done, is not because of power, control, ego, ownership, hurt, or survival. All you are comes from a commitment to seeing your creation live vibrantly and abundantly, and your way is committed to communicating that into all we do. There have been points in our lives where we have failed to understand, or see, your love. So we wandered to seek it in other places, from people or things who promised but could not come through. So we were left alone, desolate, and desperate. That is when you came, filled us with your good news, and showed us who we could rely on and receive those guarantees. So we might join with your eternal saints to live and sing:

Holy, holy, holy LORD. God of power and might. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD. Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed are you our rock and our redeemer, our king and teacher, the one who brings love and mercy to all who are hungry and thirsty. That is why the one who bears your seal of authority, Jesus Christ, invited all who were closest to him for a meal. He broke bread, poured the cup, and offered them out of generosity and hospitality- even to

those who would betray and deny him. This act of hospitality reveals, confronts, and restores all who participate. And you invite us now so we might see through that mirror darkly and witness that mystery of faith:

Christ has died. Christ has risen. Christ will come again.

Bless all who come to this table and eat of this meal. May all who are hurt and scared find the love that bears and restores all things and prepares for a better way to be lived. A way which makes us free, liberated, and confident to be your disciples everywhere we go. **Amen.**

Receiving the Elements

LORD, our Father, your abundant love has filled all this day and cleansed our beings to be filled with your word. From your healing, from your cleansing, you have opened us to know, receive, and live true love in all we do. Send us forth prepared to proclaim, and live, the Word of the LORD given by your Son in his 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

The LORD is close to those who are hurting, and by our offerings we help to bring assurance and safety to those in need.

Offertory *May Choirs of Angels Lead* arr. Powell

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, love is not arrogant, anxious, proud, or annoying. Love builds up, inhabits all we do, and introduces a better life. You have shown us this firsthand in our lives and show us again in our actions. May all we give be an act of building and restoring love which aids others, and ourselves. **Amen.**

Hymn #298 *There's a Wideness in God's Mercy

There's a wideness in God's mercy,
Like the wideness of the sea;
There's a kindness in God's justice,
Which is more than liberty.
There is no place where earth's sorrows
Are more felt than up in heaven;
There is no place where earth's failings
Have such kindly judgment given.

For the love of God is broader
Than the measures of the mind;
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind.
If our love were but more faithful,
We would gladly trust God's word;
And our lives reflect thanksgiving
For the goodness of our Lord.

***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 *Festive Voluntary* arr. Smith**

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

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