



**First Presbyterian Church of New Philadelphia**

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**Rev. Joseph Svancara, Pastor**

**Sunday Worship Service**

**March 22, 2026**

\*All who are able, please stand.

**Announcements & Prayer Concerns**

Finance Committee will meet this Tuesday (March 24) at 7pm.

Bible Study will be this Wednesday (March 25) at 10am.

AA will meet this Wednesday (March 25) at 8pm.

Our Sunday Morning Study Group will be meeting next Sunday (March 29) at 9:15am.

The Tables of Eight dinner group will be meeting this Saturday (March 28) at 6pm. The cost is \$10 per person, and RSVP can be given to the church office or to Carolyn Berry.

During the Lenten season we are taking up a special collection for the PCUSA. The One Great Hours of Sharing benefits the development ministries of the denomination. Donation envelopes and information are available on the mission table.

Order forms are available for Easter tulips! Simply fill out the form and drop in the offering plate with your payment, or turn into the church office.

**Opening Prayer**

LORD, our Creator, you are the author and giver of life. You make possible what humans deem impossible, and challenge what we will believe. Let us wait on you this day to see where you will take your people in searching for what is true resurrection.

**Amen.**

**Prelude *There is a Green Hill Far Away* Arr. R Hughs**

**\*Call to Worship (Psalm 130)**

Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD; O LORD, hear my voice!

**Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication.**

If you were to keep watch over sins, O LORD, who could stand?

**Yet with you is forgiveness, in order that you may be feared.**

I wait for you, O LORD; my soul waits; in your word is my hope.

**My soul waits for the Lord more than those who keep watch for the morning,  
more than those who keep watch for the morning.**

O Israel, wait for the LORD, for with the LORD there is steadfast love; with the LORD  
there is plenteous redemption.

**For the LORD shall redeem Israel from all their sins.**

**\*Hymn #384    *O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go***

O love that wilt not let me go,  
I rest my weary soul in Thee;  
I give Thee back the life I owe,  
That in thine ocean depths its flow  
May richer, fuller be.

O light that followest all my way,  
I yield my flickering torch to thee;  
My heart restores its borrowed ray,  
That in Thy sunshine's blaze its day  
May brighter, fairer be.

O joy that seekest me through pain,  
I cannot close my heart to Thee;  
I trace the rainbow through the rain,  
And feel the promise is not vain  
That morn shall tearless be.

O cross that liftest up my head,  
I dare not ask to fly from Thee;  
I lay in dust life's glory dead,  
And from the ground there blossoms red  
Life that shall endless be.

**\*Prayer of Confession**

We proclaim and yearn for what is true life, but still struggle and succumb to matters of  
the flesh:

**LORD, our Creator, we have been told the story of resurrection and the promise of eternal life so many times in our lives. We accept this as a truth, a reality, and something that has happened. But we have not accepted its example, its imitation, its call to get up and follow after. In your Word, in your promises and teachings, challenge us to see what resurrection means, and how we might follow after as you have already empowered us to do. Amen.**

### **\*Silent Confessions and Prayers**

#### **\*Assurance of Forgiveness**

Even when we struggle with the pull and example of the flesh, we have one who was not tempted by sin, who experienced sin, to teach us the meaning of salvation.

**In Jesus Christ we see how we might be led and healed, may we have the courage and trust to accept what he shows.**

#### **\*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:

Ezekiel 37:1-14

37 <sup>1</sup> The hand of the Lord came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. <sup>2</sup> He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. <sup>3</sup> He

said to me, “Mortal, can these bones live?” I answered, “O Lord God, you know.”<sup>4</sup> Then he said to me, “Prophecy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord.”<sup>5</sup> Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live.<sup>6</sup> I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the Lord.”<sup>7</sup> So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone.<sup>8</sup> I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them.<sup>9</sup> Then he said to me, “Prophecy to the breath, prophecy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.”<sup>10</sup> I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.<sup>11</sup> Then he said to me, “Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.’”<sup>12</sup> Therefore prophecy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel.<sup>13</sup> And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people.<sup>14</sup> I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken and will act,” says the Lord.

#### Romans 8:1-17

<sup>1</sup> There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. <sup>2</sup> For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. <sup>3</sup> For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, <sup>4</sup> so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. <sup>5</sup> For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. <sup>6</sup> To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. <sup>7</sup> For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law—indeed it cannot, <sup>8</sup> and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. <sup>9</sup> But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. <sup>10</sup> But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup> If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you. <sup>12</sup> So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh— <sup>13</sup> for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. <sup>14</sup> For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. <sup>15</sup> For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, “Abba! Father!” <sup>16</sup> it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, <sup>17</sup> and if children, then heirs, heirs of God

and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

#### John 11:1-45

11 <sup>1</sup> Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. <sup>2</sup> Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. <sup>3</sup> So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, "Lord, he whom you love is ill." <sup>4</sup> But when Jesus heard it, he said, "This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it." <sup>5</sup> Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, <sup>6</sup> after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. <sup>7</sup> Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." <sup>8</sup> The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?" <sup>9</sup> Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this world. <sup>10</sup> But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them." <sup>11</sup> After saying this, he told them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him." <sup>12</sup> The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right." <sup>13</sup> Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. <sup>14</sup> Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. <sup>15</sup> For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." <sup>16</sup> Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." <sup>17</sup> When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. <sup>18</sup> Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, <sup>19</sup> and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. <sup>20</sup> When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. <sup>21</sup> Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. <sup>22</sup> But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him." <sup>23</sup> Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." <sup>24</sup> Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." <sup>25</sup> Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, <sup>26</sup> and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" <sup>27</sup> She said to him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world." <sup>28</sup> When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary, and told her privately, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." <sup>29</sup> And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. <sup>30</sup> Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. <sup>31</sup> The Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there. <sup>32</sup> When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." <sup>33</sup> When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. <sup>34</sup> He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." <sup>35</sup> Jesus began to weep. <sup>36</sup> So the Jews said, "See how he loved

him!"<sup>37</sup> But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"<sup>38</sup> Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it.<sup>39</sup> Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days."<sup>40</sup> Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?"<sup>41</sup> So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, "Father, I thank you for having heard me.<sup>42</sup> I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me."<sup>43</sup> When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!"<sup>44</sup> The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."<sup>45</sup> Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.

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

### **Sermon    *The Fifth Sunday of Lent***

Sometimes it is difficult to walk in this world knowing what we know. The Gospel of Jesus Christ, the hope of the LORD, by default makes us see and experience things in a much different manner than anyone else. Not for the reason we are 'special' or 'above' anyone else, but what we see as important now is at odds with what the world sees as important. That is why sometimes the Church is criticized, sometimes attacked, because what we present does not fit with another's ideal of life. But that is exactly why Jesus taught and did what he did, and what we will experience very soon. To grab our attention and make us realize what the power of the LORD is, what it accomplishes, and makes us see even when it does not fit with our ideal.

When Jesus traveled to Bethany to see his friend Lazarus and his sisters there was the expectation Jesus would do something for his dear friend. The heartbreak of Mary and Martha when they said "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died" is something we might have heard ourselves from someone we love. Faith, hope, love, and prayer are all the greatest gifts the LORD could give us, and surprise us when they do not cure terminal illness, fix violence, or solve all of our woes in one shot. So when Jesus proclaims himself the "resurrection and the life" it is a challenge as much as a promise, a challenge of what we believe the kind of life he will bring about. Now Jesus does literally raise Lazarus back from death because that is what people needed to see to understand what the LORD's chosen one was supposed to do. But for us today that "resurrection and life" may look totally different but is what we need to experience for our faith and belief to blossom.

That is the point of Ezekiel's prophecy with the valley of dried bones. It is a vision, and a truth, of what makes a people and gives them purpose and life. At the time, Israel seemed defeated and overrun by its enemies- and perhaps some of its own people teaching and deciding nonsense! But the prophet speaks and sees the body of

believers come to life, but also become animated because of the LORD's spirit. This people was not conjured up, did not originate by coincidence or human decision, it was the LORD bringing about life where it was needed to advance his will for the whole of creation. Israel then, and now, opens the door to others about purpose and meaning and creates a refuge for those to find it.

St. Paul tells the Roman Christians about the intersection they live in, that their battle is not with each other but with the various purposes at war within them. The tendencies of the flesh, the physical world and what lives within it, may make sense on the surface. But when approached with the wisdom of the gospel, examined by experience, they reveal a different purpose and life than they present. Not to say we must disengage with the world, throw up the draw bridge, and label everyone on the 'outside' as evil. But it is learning to be circumspect about what approaches us, what it is wanting to do, and if it truly comes from the LORD to better the life of his people. And St. Paul says that wisdom and purpose of Christ can be ours if only we "suffer" with him- which does not mean pain or suffering. In the Greek this word means to "sympathize, be a part of, and accept example". In what Jesus is about to show us in the Passion and Resurrection, are we willing to look to and accept it to experience something new? Will we allow it to challenge our preconceptions and refine our knowledge? Or just allow it to be an excuse to go back to ways which are comfortable, but leave us stagnant?

The Passion of Christ is a chance to open and make ourselves vulnerable to what the LORD would have us possess. To step into the divine light, no matter how blinding it might be, because it uncovers and reveals what we have been holding on to. It is an opportunity to know ourselves, know others, and know the truth better than we have before. Which is a benefit to our lives, to the community of believers, and to those who look at us and wonder what we truly offer them.

### **Prayers of the People**

*Let us remember in prayer:*

*Mary Ellen Beans, Terry Carpenter, Fritz Chambers, Michelle Chamberlain, Mary Jane Dougherty, Don Eberheart Jr., Allison Folly, Kay France, Jamie Frank, Judy Hass, Alice & Errol Jacobs, Victoria Kasten, Amber Loftis, Will Long, Tom Netting, Ruth Patrick, Bob Pierre, Mark Preusser, Stefani Seth, Josh Shaeffer, Dane & Cindy Smith, Derrick & Mandy Smith, Dean & Heidi Unzicker, Simone Villarruel, Holly Waldenmyer, The Friends of the Homeless of Tuscarawas County & The Homeless of Tuscarawas County.*

LORD, our Creator, we celebrate you as the source of life for all in this universe. You are the one who makes the stars shine, earth to spin, rain and snow to fall, plants to grow, and animals to have their food and provision in all seasons. You have granted us the gift of life, to live, move, think, and act. To represent your divine order, creative imagination, and empathy to ensure your garden is tended and cared for. But we often

become distracted from what is true life, focus too much on our own security and existence, and forget what you alone can provide. You have provided us with the wisdom of the ages, the holy instruction of our faith ancestors, voices of the prophets, feeling in poetry, and example of your Son to give us all we need. In this season of expectation, challenge, and new life may we come closer to understanding what Jesus Christ shows with his Passion and reveals with the empty tomb.

We call upon this mystery of life and faith, this awe of your power and possibilities into the situations where there is no clear answer...*Reading of the Prayer List*...LORD, in your loving mercy, hear our prayer.

*Moment of Silence*

In all prayers answered, and yet to be answered, you lead us further on your right paths and into the mind of the Spirit. All so we might immerse ourselves in the life you intended, through the prayer you have gifted:

**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**

Accepting the divine example means to give up what we have to make room for what is true. In our giving we make room in our lives, and make resource available for all to experience as well.

**Offertory    *Breathe on Me Breath of Life*    Arr. M Bartlett**

**\*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 Creator, you give us all good and perfect things to empower us and enable us to live your name before others. In our works, our resources, we ensure your Church can do the same thing so resurrection and salvation can be experienced by all.  
**Amen.**

**\*Hymn #383    *My Faith Looks Up to Thee***

My faith looks up to Thee,  
Thou Lamb of Calvary, Savior divine:  
Now hear me while I pray,  
Take all my guilt away,  
O let me from this day  
Be wholly Thine!

May Thy rich grace impart  
Strength to my fainting heart,  
My zeal inspire;  
As Thou hast died for me,  
O may my love to Thee  
Pure warm, and changeless be,  
A living fire!

While life's dark maze I tread,  
And griefs around me spread,  
Be Thou my guide;  
Bid darkness turn to day,  
Wipe sorrow's tears away,  
Nor let me ever stray  
From Thee aside.

When ends life's transient dream,  
When death's cold sullen stream  
Shall o'er me roll.  
Blest Savior, then, in love,  
Fear and distrust remove;  
O bear me safe above,  
A ransomed soul!

**\*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    *The Cross of Christ*    Arr. R A Martene**

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

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