



First Presbyterian Church of New Philadelphia

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Rev. Joseph Svancara, Pastor

Sunday Worship Service

February 1, 2026

*All who are able, please stand.

Announcements & Prayer Concerns

Today is our “First Celebration Sunday” with holy communion in worship, followed by our monthly church brunch. All are welcome to come!

Bible Study will meet this Wednesday (February 4) at 10am.

AA will meet this Wednesday (February 4) at 8pm.

Our Sunday Morning Study Group will be meeting next Sunday (February 8) at 9:15am. We are currently reading “Man’s Search for Meaning” by Viktor Frankl, and is open for anyone to join!

Next Sunday (February 8) is our monthly Friends of the Homeless Dinner at 6pm. A sign-up sheet for volunteers is in the church office. While meal funds are good, please consider donating toward our other FOTH efforts!

February 22 we will hold our annual Congregational Meeting following service that day. It will feature a pot-luck luncheon, and a sign-up sheet is available to list what you can bring! In preparation for the meeting all chairs from committees in 2025 should have their reports into the office by February 19.

We will be worshiping with our neighbor churches for Ash Wednesday (February 18) at 7pm at Trinity Episcopal Church in New Philadelphia. All are welcome as we start the season of Lent together as a Christian community!

During the month of February, we will be taking up our “Souper Bowl Sunday” collection to benefit the Dover-New Phila Food Pantry. Donation envelopes are available on the back mission table!

The Session needs a volunteer to become this year’s Clerk of Session. Please see Rev. Joe or a current member of Session if interested and want a description of the position.

Opening Prayer

LORD, our Creator, you alone show us what is blessed and beneficial that we might discover and live true life. By the words of your Jesus, show us who we can be when divine unity is our driving force. **Amen.**

Prelude *Heavenly Sunshine* Arr L Shackley

***Call to Worship** (Psalm 15)

LORD, who may dwell in your tabernacle? Who may abide upon your holy hill?

Those who lead a blameless life and do what is right, who speak the truth from their heart; they do not slander with the tongue, they do no evil to their friends; they do not cast discredit upon a neighbor.

In their sight the wicked are rejected, but they honor those who fear the LORD. They have sworn upon their health and do not take back their word.

They do not give their money in hope of gain, nor do they take bribes against the innocent. Those who do these things shall never be overthrown.

Hymn #465 *Here, O Lord, Your Servants Gather

Here, O Lord, your servants gather,
hand we link with hand;
looking toward our Savior's cross,
joined in love we stand.
As we seek the realm of God,
we unite to pray:
Jesus, Savior, guide our steps
for you are the way.

Many are the tongues we speak,
scattered are the lands;
yet our hearts are one in God,
one in love's demands.
E'en in darkness hope appears,
calling age and youth;
Jesus, Teacher, swell with us,
for you are the truth.

Nature's secrets open wide,
changes never cease;
where, O where, can weary souls
find the source of peace?
Unto all those sore distressed,

torn by endless strife,
Jesus, Healer, bring your balm,
for you are the life.

Grant, O God, an age renewed,
filled with deathless love;
help us as we work and pray.
Send us from above
truth and courage, faith and power
needed in our strife:
Jesus, Master, be our way,
be our truth our life.

***Prayer of Confession**

We often want to do what is right, but allow the empty promises of the world to become our obsession:

LORD, our Creator, the world is full of promises and visions of what life is like, but without you they mean nothing. And we have bought into them in the hope of discovering something exciting and powerful. Forgive us for seeking a life apart from you, and may your words and instructions kindle in us a desire and knowledge of how you made life to be. Amen.

***Silent Confessions and Prayers**

***Assurance of Forgiveness**

Even when it seems we have gotten lost, the words of Jesus bring us back to what is true. In baptism we are cleansed from the false promises of others and rejuvenated to proceed in our true calling.

Where else can we go, only He has the words of true life! Thanks be to God!

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:

Micah 6:1-16

6¹ Hear what the Lord says: Rise, plead your case before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice. 2 Hear, you mountains, the controversy of the Lord, and you enduring foundations of the earth; for the Lord has a controversy with his people, and he will contend with Israel. 3 O my people, what have I done to you? In what have I wearied you? Answer me! 4 For I brought you up from the land of Egypt, and redeemed you from the house of slavery; and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. 5 O my people, remember now what King Balak of Moab devised, what Balaam son of Beor answered him, and what happened from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the saving acts of the Lord. With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? 7 Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" 8 He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? 9 The voice of the Lord cries to the city (it is sound wisdom to fear your name): Hear, O tribe and assembly of the city! 10 Can I forget the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the scant measure that is accursed? 11 Can I tolerate wicked scales and a bag of dishonest weights? 12 Your wealthy are full of violence; your inhabitants speak lies, with tongues of deceit in their mouths. 13 Therefore I have begun to strike you down, making you desolate because of your sins. 14 You shall eat, but not be satisfied, and there shall be a gnawing hunger within you; you shall put away, but not save, and what you save, I will hand over to the sword. 15 You shall sow, but not reap; you shall tread olives, but not anoint yourselves with oil; you shall tread grapes, but not drink wine. 16 For you have kept the statutes of Omri and all the works of the house of Ahab, and you have followed their counsels. Therefore I will make you a desolation, and your inhabitants an object of hissing; so you shall bear the scorn of my people.

1 Corinthians 1:10-31

1 ¹⁰ Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you

be united in the same mind and the same purpose. ¹¹ For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters. ¹² What I mean is that each of you says, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos," or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ." ¹³ Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? ¹⁴ I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, ¹⁵ so that no one can say that you were baptized in my name. ¹⁶ (I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.) ¹⁷ For Christ did not send me to baptize but to proclaim the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its power. ¹⁸ For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹ For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart." ²⁰ Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹ For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. ²² For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, ²³ but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, ²⁴ but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵ For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength. ²⁶ Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. ²⁷ But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, ²⁹ so that no one might boast in the presence of God. ³⁰ He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, ³¹ in order that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

Matthew 5:1-12

5 ¹ When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. ² Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying: ³ "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. ⁵ "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. ⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. ⁷ Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. ⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. ⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. ¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹ Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

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

Sermon *The Fourth Sunday Of Epiphany*

The Beatitudes of Jesus, beginning the famous Sermon on the Mount, is a passage that most Christians might have memorized or claim is their favorite passage of scripture. But when I hear the Beatitudes, I am reminded of a quote given by famous author Kurt Vonnegut in his collection of essays "A Man Without A Country":

"For some reason, the most vocal Christians among us never mention the Beatitudes (Matthew 5). But, often with tears in their eyes, they demand that the Ten Commandments be posted in public buildings. And of course, that's Moses, not Jesus. I haven't heard one of them demand that the Sermon on the Mount, the Beatitudes, be posted anywhere. 'Blessed are the merciful' in a courtroom? 'Blessed are the peacemakers' in the Pentagon? Give me a break!"

While Vonnegut is known to have had a deeply cynical attitude toward religion, he was able to pick up on the differences between someone who truly believed in it versus those who simply used it. Many of his anti-war writings come from when he served in World War 2, was held as a POW in Dresden, Germany doing forced labor, and narrowly escaped an Allied bombing raid by hiding in a slaughterhouse meat locker. It cemented in him the view that no matter what side of a war, conflict, or issue you were on it still had the potential to cause immense harm to innocents. That resonates today when we look at our world, our society, current events in America and ask if what is happening is right? When our government seems to demonize others who are different and use it as an excuse for any action. No matter what side of the divide you sit on it is a matter of understanding what these actions have the potential to do. Will they make a better nation, a better society, a stronger and more resilient people?

As Christians, we seem to stand within the gap of all these opposing sides with a message that seems very inconvenient for all involved. We present a gospel, a Jesus, who seems more interested with how we conduct ourselves in the world rather than with how pious we seem to others. A Jesus who strips away all the superficialness and masks we, and others, dress themselves in so we might see the true motivations and devotions which lie in our hearts. The Beatitudes might seem idealistic and impractical within the world, but that is a challenge for us to seek our strength and purpose beyond the world and those who lead in it. That is the message the prophet Micah preached when speaking of what the LORD desired most of his people. It did not matter which 'side' the people chose; the northern kingdom represented by the house of Omri, the southern kingdom represented by the house of Ahab, which religious system advocated, because the covenant of the LORD was for the proper ordering of all the people involved. If they had the nerve to cheat, to lie, to justify violence for the most minor of reasons, no offering in the temple could ever cover it. To truly be right before the LORD requires a humility, a laying down of 'arms' one used to hold power in life and over others, and a complete acceptance of the LORD's right to dictate by the one Spirit.

St. Paul reminded the church in Corinth of that, when they were getting bogged down in trivial details of worship, order, and who was 'better' to teach. It was true that St. Paul, among others, brought and nurtured the faith among the people, but no one individual teacher was better than the other. The LORD truly brought the growth, the result of salvation, from what was presented by human servants. To willingly surrender to that kind of authority and life seems utterly foolish to those who might have been watching, and who watch now. Give up the potential for power, control, influence, wealth, security, and everything else to an invisible man in the sky? But to us who have heard and read, accepted and studied the gospel of Jesus Christ, we know it has the potential to do much more than what is promised by other people. It truly reaches into our innermost beings, crowds out the darkness which resides within, and challenges us with what we can be. Not by our own power or discipline, but by our humility to ask for help in our greatest needs. So then the only brag we can have is in what our God can do!

The following Sermon on the Mount we as the Church, here and elsewhere, will be reading through leading up to the Lenten season is a chance to understand what the LORD asks from us in terms of our faith. When there are so many challenges around us, so many sides beckoning us, so many issues demanding our attention and response, what is the better way to engage? Do we even need to choose a human side, or align with one already spoken to us? Only by engaging in this constitution of Christ's Kingdom can we have any hope to know what our calling is and avoid the trap of compromising for the sake of earthly acceptance- which might not achieve what others expect.

Celebration of Holy Communion

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, Judy Hass, Alice & Errol Jacobs, Victoria Kasten, Amber Loftis, Breanne Mathias, Will Long, Tom Netting, Ruth Patrick, Bob Pierre, Mark Preusser, Stefani Seth, Josh Shaeffer, Marlene Singhaus, 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.

The LORD be with you!

And also with you!

Lift up your hearts!

We lift them up to the LORD!

Let us give thanks to the LORD, our God!

It is right to give our thanks and praise!

LORD, our Creator, your promised Kingdom is one of security and assurance from all the issues which plague humanity. From our earliest times you have seen your creation war and rage with itself, and with you, and fills you with grief at what we have done and not done. We have attempted to justify our actions by claiming it was done in your name, we have attempted to alleviate our guilt by forming religions, rites, and worship to explain away what we have done. But time and again, through your sent prophets, your Son, and the one Holy Spirit you have declared this is not what you have desired. A humble spirit, a broken and contrite heart, a careful reckoning of our actions, and acceptance for something different and better is the measure of our growth and devotion to you. Nothing else fits with your heavenly agenda, and so we give up the ways of the world to embrace and fill ourselves with the renewal of divine love. A love so pure, so different, so life-giving that we cannot help but sing your praises:

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

Blessed be your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave your teachings, a glimpse of heavenly promise, to the first disciples. Whose eagerness to accept true life has been preserved and communicated to us today. We have divine grace at our fingertips by your spoken and written Word, the history and traditions of your Church, the renewal of baptism, of broken bread and blessed cup- all of which point to a power and action nothing in this world could achieve. But which brings us together, nurtures us, and prepares us to articulate the mystery of faith through our words and actions:

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

This is the power of God communicated through the ages and made available to us now. What the world has dismissed but will soon realize in astonishment. By what you give to us may we use to lead the world from its stupor and to embrace what will bring true healing and fulfillment of purpose for all.

Amen.

Partaking in the Elements

We thank you, LORD, for what we have received here today. Not just nourishment to keep going, but a challenge to see your kingdom amid conflict and difficulty. A way that

will break through in this world no matter what, and which can be nurtured by our willingness and proclamation. A promise given by the words you have given us:

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 has shown what is blessed, good, and true in order to live. And we give to foster that same life in others through the work of the Church!

Offertory *Shine, Jesus Shine* Arr E Banks Elwell

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 have bestowed all that is true that we might navigate better through life's troubles. Through what we have learned, through what we give, may we help others in the same goal. **Amen.**

Hymn #411 *Arise, Your Light Is Come!

Arise, your light is come!
The Spirit's call obey;
Show forth the glory of your God,
Which shines on you today.

Arise, your light is come!
Fling wide the prison door;
Proclaim the captives' liberty,
Good tidings to the poor.

Arise, your light is come!
All you in sorrow born,
Bind up the broken hearted ones
And comfort those who mourn.

Arise, your light is come!

The mountains burst in song!
Rise up like eagles on the wing;
God's power will make us strong.

***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 *This Little Light Of Mine* Arr K Moore**

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

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