



First Presbyterian Church of New Philadelphia

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Rev. Joseph Svancara, Pastor

Sunday Worship Service

May 10, 2026

*All who are able, please stand.

Announcements & Prayer Concerns

Today is our monthly Friends of the Homeless Meal. Due to Mother's Day we will not be hosting the meal, but will provide a meal directly to the shelter. While meal funds are good, consider donating toward our other Friends of the Homeless efforts.

Bible Study will be this Wednesday (May 13) at 10am.

AA will meet this Wednesday (May 13) at 8pm.

Our Sunday Morning Study Group will be meeting next Sunday (May 17) at 9:15am.

We will be anticipating a Graduation Sunday Service on May 17. If you have a high school or college graduate you wish to have honored, please let the church office know!

May 23 at 6pm is the monthly Tables of Eight dinner group. The cost is \$10 per person, and RSVP is required either to the church office or to Carolyn Berry. All are welcome!

Opening Prayer

LORD, our Creator, the Resurrection is a sign over your defeat of evil within this world. But is also a sign of how close you are, who you are, and what you desire for our lives.

As we await the coming of your Advocate to seal this new agreement with creation may you show us what can happen when we accept you as you are- and not as we, or others, want you. **Amen.**

Prelude *I Need Thee Every Hour* **Arr. R Lowry**

***Call to Worship** (Psalm 66)

Be joyful in God, all your lands; be joyful, all the earth.

Sing the glory of God's name; sing the glory of God's praise.

Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds! Because of your great strength your enemies cringe before you.

All the earth bows down before you, sings to you, sings out your name."

Come now and see the works of God, how awesome are God's deeds toward all people.

God turned the sea into dry land, so that they went through the water on foot, and there we rejoiced in God.

Ruling forever in might, God keeps watch over the nations; let no rebels exalt themselves.

Bless our God, you peoples; let the sound of praise be heard.

Our God has kept us among the living and has not allowed our feet to slip.

For you, O God, have tested us; you have tried us just as silver is tried.

You brought us into the net; you laid heavy burdens upon our backs.

You let people ride over our heads; we went through fire and water, but you brought us out into a place of refreshment.

I will enter your house with burnt offerings and will pay you my vows-

Those that I promised with my lips and spoke with my mouth when I was in trouble.

I will offer you burnt offerings of fatlings with the smoke of rams; I will give you oxen and goats.

Come and listen, all you who believe, and I will tell you what God has done for me.

I called out to God with my mouth, and praised the LORD with my tongue.

If I had cherished evil in my heart, the LORD would not have heard me;

But in truth God has heard me and has attended to the sound of my prayer.

Blessed be God, who has not rejected my prayer, nor withheld unfailing love from me.

Hymn #123 *Jesus Christ Is Risen Today

Jesus Christ is risen today, Alleluia!
Our triumphant holy day, Alleluia!
Who did once, upon the cross, Alleluia!
Suffer to redeem our loss. Alleluia!

Hymns of praise then let us sing, Alleluia!
Unto Christ, our heavenly King, Alleluia!
Who endured the cross and grave, Alleluia!
Sinners to redeem and save. Alleluia!

But the pains which He endured, Alleluia!
Our salvation have procured; Alleluia!
Now above the sky He's king, Alleluia!
Where the angels ever sing. Alleluia!

Sing we to our God above, Alleluia!
Praise eternal as God's love; Alleluia!
Praise our God, ye heavenly host, Alleluia!
Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Alleluia!

***Prayer of Confession**

Even though we desire the LORD for our lives we are distracted by our caricatures of the divine which pulls us away from true purpose:

LORD, our Creator, we admit that our imaginations are set on the wrong ideas. We imagine and build you up into something you are not and are tempted to push that idea onto others. But the coming of your Spirit shows you speak for yourself, how you pull us back from our imaginings, and see you as you are. Help us to accept this vision, to internalize this truth, and accept what you would have us see and know so the world may know we are your disciples. Amen.

***Silent Confessions and Prayers**

***Assurance of Forgiveness**

Even when we drift away from true purpose and vision the LORD pulls us back. And Jesus Christ expresses the will of the divine that can be counted on.

By Jesus Christ we can see, hear, and know what is true so our lives may serve what matters.

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:

Acts 17:16-34

17 ¹⁶ While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was deeply distressed to see that the city was full of idols. ¹⁷ So he argued in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and also in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there. ¹⁸ Also some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers debated with him. Some said, "What does this babbling man want to say?" Others said, "He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign divinities." (This was because he was telling the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.) ¹⁹ So they took him and brought him to the Areopagus and asked him, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? ²⁰ It sounds rather strange to us, so we would like to know what it means." ²¹ Now all the Athenians and the foreigners living there would spend their time in nothing but telling or hearing something new. ²² Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, "Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. ²³ For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, 'To an unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. ²⁴ The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, ²⁵ nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. ²⁶ From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, ²⁷ so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us. ²⁸ For 'In him we

live and move and have our being'; as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we too are his offspring.' ²⁹ Since we are God's offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. ³⁰ While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹ because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead." ³² When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some scoffed; but others said, "We will hear you again about this." ³³ At that point Paul left them. ³⁴ But some of them joined him and became believers, including Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

1 Peter 3:13-22

³ ⁸ Finally, all of you, have unity of spirit, sympathy, love for one another, a tender heart, and a humble mind. ⁹ Do not repay evil for evil or abuse for abuse; but, on the contrary, repay with a blessing. It is for this that you were called—that you might inherit a blessing. ¹⁰ For "Those who desire life and desire to see good days, let them keep their tongues from evil and their lips from speaking deceit; ¹¹ let them turn away from evil and do good; let them seek peace and pursue it. ¹² For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil." ¹³ Now who will harm you if you are eager to do what is good? ¹⁴ But even if you do suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated, ¹⁵ but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord.

Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; ¹⁶ yet do it with gentleness and reverence. Keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who abuse you for your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame. ¹⁷ For it is better to suffer for doing good, if suffering should be God's will, than to suffer for doing evil. ¹⁸ For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, ¹⁹ in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, ²⁰ who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. ²¹ And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you—not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²² who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.

John 14:15-31

¹⁴ ¹⁵ "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. ¹⁷ This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you. ¹⁸ I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. ¹⁹ In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see

me; because I live, you also will live. ²⁰ On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. ²¹ They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.” ²² Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, “Lord, how is it that you will reveal yourself to us, and not to the world?” ²³ Jesus answered him, “Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. ²⁴ Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me. ²⁵ I have said these things to you while I am still with you. ²⁶ But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. ²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. ²⁸ You heard me say to you, ‘I am going away, and I am coming to you.’ If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I. ²⁹ And now I have told you this before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe. ³⁰ I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no power over me; ³¹ but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us be on our way.”

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

Sermon *The Sixth Sunday of Easter*

In this season of Easter we have strived to celebrate and commemorate the Resurrection of Jesus Christ- his power in rebirthing creation and his faithfulness in the face of evil. The results of the Resurrection are beyond just assuring us a place in heaven and shattering the evil powers which surround us, it teaches us how to live now and what is available to us from our faithful God. Jesus’ triumph over death is an attention-grabber for all in the world, to bring attention to the words and example given even before this miracle of the LORD occurred. Jesus teaches us who we are, who we have always been, what we can be, and what steps we must take in order to embrace it. The Resurrection makes all things better in this life by placing the power in our hands to decide what is a benefit to living.

Yet the Resurrection is also an assurance of the power above all power, a truthful revelation- reveal- of the LORD and what the divine actually is like. It strips away all the stereotypes, caricatures, misunderstandings, and ignorance about the one who has given us life and allows us to draw life each day. Many can, and have, claimed to speak for the LORD on many occasions and for a multitude of reasons- and how many of those reasons have fallen flat? The false prophets have, and will, be swept away by history but what of those left after who are left confused and resentful of what they have been presented? Announcing the Resurrection is not a forceful argument of why our way of seeing the LORD is true, but slowly introducing the real God and reacquainting those hurt with who actually stands with them.

That is what St. Paul does in Acts as he waits in Athens for his traveling partners to return on their apostolic journey. We might remember from our history classes that the Greek religion was polytheistic- made up of many gods who resembled humans, animals, and other combinations of creatures. But most of those idols and symbols were recognized even then as a representation and embodiment of the divine. There was an understanding that there was a force and power beyond all those images, and many philosophers strived to make sense of it. Stoics and Epicureans had their theories about how the world came into being, who constructed it, and how life was supposed to function in order to embrace that purpose. But in each of these philosophies the power, force, or god- call it what you will- was impersonal, beyond the concerns of mere humans, and was a creator of life but not a governor. St. Paul stepped in with the Gospel to demonstrate that “unknown god”, that misunderstood and mysterious vision of the divine which long alluded the eyes of philosophers and priests. Jesus is the embodiment of that “unknown god” and worked to make the divine known to humans, to reacquaint those with one who was creator and governor of all. And the fact that some of those who heard St. Paul’s witness came to believe show that fact touched something within them. They were responding to the truth that the creator was not far off and unapproachable, but willing to instruct and guide life in its uncertainties.

That is the same message St. Peter gives to the Christians in 1 Peter 3 when speaking about standing firm, steadfast, and confident when the misplaced ideas of the world come against them. It is the message that, “Do not repay evil for evil or abuse for abuse; but, on the contrary, repay with a blessing. It is for this that you were called—that you might inherit a blessing”. Inheritance was, and still is, a system by which wealth and resource are passed on to help preserve the family after a death. It was never meant to be hoarded by one person but shared by the whole of the community. We are called to share in that blessing first given to us, to ensure the Church can stand with what is revealed and thus work for the duty of telling the world. And even the resistance to controlling and coercive forces is a type of blessing as well, for it shows what can be resisted and obtained when one is trained on the right things. And to know there is one who stands before the LORD forever on our behalf, ensuring what we have to keep going out of love and concern for the world.

Jesus’ message of peace in John 14 is more than just an absence of violence, in fact looking around we can see Jesus did not promise that. But while we go through the unpredictability and harshness of life we might find our healing, what makes us whole, and seeing our daily work as worth it despite the material reward in the end. Jesus’ promise of the Holy Spirit, the Advocate, is a signal that tough times and conditions are not the end. Rather, they are the most powerful positions of proclamation there can be.

A joy and peace which fills the heart of a believer by their trust in the LORD, which cannot be robbed, overwritten, covered over, or destroyed by those who see it as a threat to themselves. This is what allows us to keep our word with the LORD, to carry out the holy instructions of our teacher Jesus and show that all potential rivals in this

world have no claws in comparison to the one who washes our consciences from all misconception and rumor.

Introducing us back to the LORD is the greatest gift Jesus could have given us. Before we were at the mercy of others' interpretations and understandings, of oral tradition which could be coopted at times by less-than-scrupulous people. But now our beings have been cleansed, introductions have been made, and we are seated with the LORD of all the universe once again. Not under judgment and condemnation, but opportunity to obtain and realize all the good things we have missed before. The "unknown" is a friend to us now, an ally, a confidant, and a comforter who provides all we need to make our lives worth the effort. We will continue to work tirelessly and thanklessly sometimes out of necessity, but our fulfillment comes from knowing the Spirit is given to us to see all things through to the end. To know we are not at the whim of fate, coincidence, or luck. That all things work together for the good of those who love the LORD and see Jesus as the way to what is just, right, and effective in all means.

Prayers of the People

Let us remember in prayer:

Mary Ellen Beans, 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, 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, your creations is so vast, wide, and diverse as to encompass and embody everything about you. That speaks to your creativity, knowledge of what your reality requires, and what fosters life and well-being. You have shown yourself so many times in human history and given your people a taste of the divine, something to aspire to and set your children on the right path. But we admit that we cling to images, imaginings, and ideas of you that make us feel safe and impose them onto others to make ourselves feel important. We confess to this and admit that we do not know you. Jesus has come to show us your true face, to know what you want and value, that we might speak and unite all into a common life together. Not by force, coercion, or convenience, but authenticity so that who you are creates peace in all situations. May the message we speak articulate healing, benefit, and love into all situations we are unsure of or fear.

And for those situations that we know nothing about, we ask for your Spirit to make known your will that we might respond as a loving presence to those who might have nothing...*Reading of the Prayer List*...LORD, in your loving mercy, hear our prayers.

Moment of Silence

In all the situations we face you have given us a Spirit of confidence, of assurance, and of service to go into the world and make known your promise. That you are here and with us always, and nothing will defeat or end us until your final word. So our lives, in all seasons and stations, might radiate 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

Jesus has come to bring peace to all, a type beyond all understanding. May our gifts aid in making it known to those in trouble.

Offertory *Dedication* Arr. Richard A Martens

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, through the promise of your Spirit you show how peace enters our lives and reorients our wayward ideas and actions. May what we give not only aid others but also aid ourselves, so we might know what the love of Jesus fosters in our midst. **Amen.**

Hymn #145 *Rejoice, Ye Pure in Heart!

Rejoice ye pure in heart!
Rejoice, give thanks, and sing!
Your festal banner wave on high,
The cross of Christ your King.
Rejoice! rejoice! rejoice,
Give thanks, and sing!

Yes, on through life's long path,
Still chanting as ye go;
From youth to age, by night and day,
In gladness and in woe.
Rejoice! rejoice! rejoice,
Give thanks, and sing!

At last the march shall end;
The wearied ones shall rest;
The pilgrims find their home at last,
Jerusalem the blest.
Rejoice! rejoice! rejoice,
Give thanks, and sing!

Then on, ye pure in heart!
Rejoice, give thanks, and sing!
Your festal banner wave on high,
The cross of Christ your King.
Rejoice! rejoice! rejoice,
Give thanks, and sing!

***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 *Now All the Vault of Heaven Resounds* Arr. Rudolph Moser**

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

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