



First Presbyterian Church of New Philadelphia

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Rev. Joseph Svancara, Pastor

**Sunday Worship Service
July 27, 2025**

*All who are able, please stand.

Announcements & Prayer Concerns

Bible Study will be this Wednesday (July 30) at 10am.

AA will meet this Wednesday (July 30) at 8pm.

Our Sunday Morning Study Group will be meeting next Sunday (August 3) at 9:15am.
We are currently reading through "The Practice of the Presence of God" by Brother Lawrence. See Rev. Joe if you want to join!

Next Sunday (August 3) is our "First Celebration Sunday" with Holy Communion in worship and Church Brunch afterward. All are welcome!

This is the last Sunday we will be taking up a special collection for Dress-A-Child, a local effort to provide back-to-school supplies and clothes for children in our area. This will be matched by our mission budget. Donation envelopes are available on the back mission table.

Opening Prayer

LORD, our Creator, you call us by faith to come and seek the needs of our hearts. In your worship help us to set aside those other ideas, opinions, and interpretations of the world so we might see the goodness of your news for everything we do. **Amen.**

Prelude *I Will Sing of the Mercies* arr. Martin

***Call to Worship (Psalm 138)**

I will give thanks to you, O LORD, with my whole heart; before the gods I will sing your praise.

I will bow down toward your holy temple and praise your name, because of your steadfast love and faithfulness; for you have glorified your name and your word above all things.

When I called, you answered me; you increased my strength within me.

All the rulers of the earth will praise you, O LORD, when they have heard the words of your mouth.

They will sing of the ways of the LORD, that great is the glory of the LORD.

The LORD is high, yet cares for the lowly, perceiving the haughty from afar.

Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you keep me safe; you stretch forth your hand against the fury of my enemies; your right hand shall save me.

You will make good your purpose for me; O LORD, your steadfast love endures forever; do not abandon the works of your hands.

Hymn #555 *Now Thank We All Our God

Now thank we all our God
With heart and hands and voices,
Who wondrous things hath done,
In whom this world rejoices;
Who, from our mothers' arms
Hath blessed us on our way
With countless gifts of love,
And still is ours today.

O may this bounteous God
Through all our life be near us,
With ever joyful hearts
And blessed peace to cheer us;
And keep us in His grace,
And guide us when perplexed,
And free us from all ills
In this world and the next.

All praise and thanks to God,
Who reigns in highest heaven,
To Father and to Son
And Spirit now be given.
The one eternal God,
Whom earth and heaven adore,
The God who was, and is,
And shall be evermore.

***Prayer of Confession**

We trust in the power of prayer to meet the needs of others, and ourselves. But how much do we hold ourselves back based on what others teach us?

LORD, our Creator, you know everything inside of our beings. You know our minds and hearts, know what we are capable of, and nothing escapes your sight. We hold back out of fear of displeasing you, or because we see you differently than what you are. Teach us to pray, help us to trust, and let knowledge of you replace the faulty ideas of the world. Amen.

***Silent Confessions and Prayers**

***Assurance of Forgiveness**

Jesus himself has disarmed all powers, rulers, and authorities in this world so we might be freed through forgiveness to seek abundant life through him.

Let us let go of trust and dependence upon others and know who to seek for our joy.

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:

Genesis 18:16-33

18 ¹⁶ Then the men set out from there, and they looked toward Sodom; and Abraham went with them to set them on their way. ¹⁷ The Lord said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, ¹⁸ seeing that Abraham shall become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? ¹⁹ No, for I have chosen him, that he may charge his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice; so that the Lord may bring about for Abraham what he has promised him." ²⁰ Then the Lord said, "How great is the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah and how very grave their sin! ²¹ I must go down and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry that has come to me; and if not, I will know." ²² So the men turned from there, and went toward Sodom, while Abraham remained standing before the Lord. ²³ Then Abraham came near and said, "Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? ²⁴ Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city; will you then sweep away the place and not forgive it for the fifty righteous who are in it? ²⁵ Far be it from you to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?" ²⁶ And the Lord said, "If I find at Sodom fifty righteous in the city, I will forgive the whole place for their sake." ²⁷ Abraham answered, "Let me take it upon myself to speak to the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes. ²⁸ Suppose five of the fifty righteous are lacking? Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five?" And he said, "I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there." ²⁹ Again he spoke to him, "Suppose forty are found there." He answered, "For the sake of forty I will not do it." ³⁰ Then he said, "Oh do not let the Lord be angry if I speak. Suppose thirty are found there." He answered, "I will not do it, if I find thirty there." ³¹ He said, "Let me take it upon myself to speak to the Lord. Suppose twenty are found there." He answered, "For the sake of twenty I will not destroy it." ³² Then he said, "Oh do not let the Lord be angry if I speak just once more. Suppose ten are found there." He answered, "For the sake of ten I will not destroy it." ³³ And the Lord went his way, when he had finished speaking to Abraham; and Abraham returned to his place.

Colossians 2:6-23

2 ⁶ As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him, ⁷ rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. ⁸ See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the universe, and not according to Christ. ⁹ For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, ¹⁰ and you have come to fullness in him, who is the head of every ruler and authority. ¹¹ In him also you were circumcised with a spiritual circumcision, by putting off the body of the flesh in the circumcision of Christ; ¹² when you were buried with him in baptism, you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. ¹³ And when you were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive together with him, when he forgave us all our trespasses, ¹⁴ erasing the record that stood against us with its legal demands. He set this aside, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ He disarmed the rulers and authorities and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in it. ¹⁶ Therefore do not let anyone

condemn you in matters of food and drink or of observing festivals, new moons, or sabbaths. ¹⁷ These are only a shadow of what is to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. ¹⁸ Do not let anyone disqualify you, insisting on self-abasement and worship of angels, dwelling on visions, puffed up without cause by a human way of thinking, ¹⁹ and not holding fast to the head, from whom the whole body, nourished and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows with a growth that is from God. ²⁰ If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the universe, why do you live as if you still belonged to the world? Why do you submit to regulations, ²¹ “Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch”? ²² All these regulations refer to things that perish with use; they are simply human commands and teachings. ²³ These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-imposed piety, humility, and severe treatment of the body, but they are of no value in checking self-indulgence.

Luke 11:1-13

11 ¹ He was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.” ² He said to them, “When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. ³ Give us each day our daily bread. ⁴ And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us. And do not bring us to the time of trial.” ⁵ And he said to them, “Suppose one of you has a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; ⁶ for a friend of mine has arrived, and I have nothing to set before him.’ ⁷ And he answers from within, ‘Do not bother me; the door has already been locked, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.’ ⁸ I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, at least because of his persistence he will get up and give him whatever he needs. ⁹ So I say to you, Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. ¹⁰ For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. ¹¹ Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for a fish, will give a snake instead of a fish? ¹² Or if the child asks for an egg, will give a scorpion? ¹³ If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

This is the Word of the LORD.

Thanks be to God!

Sermon *The Eighth Sunday of Pentecost*

As disciples of Christ, our service to the LORD is not just in our actions but also in our attitudes and attention. We must be in a state of mind and position to receive from the LORD all that the divine wills, to witness all that the LORD allows to happen in our midst, and have our hearts and motivations changed. The LORD is unique among all of the created order due to the desire of the divine to commune, converse, and connect with us. The LORD is not one who hoards everything and leaves us in absolute

mystery due to ego, but lays all the cards down on the table so we might make informed and better choices for our lives. Some mysteries do exist because of our limited viewpoint to see them in this side of eternity, but the desire to share is a key attribute of the divine for our betterment. Prayer is a key practice by which humanity has used to reach outside of ourselves and connect to the divine for as long as our species has existed. But prayer is more than just the language and words used, the rites and cultural practices lived, it is an attitude by which we recognize who is more capable than anything else in our lives. And act of turning away from what has failed us and receiving what is needed- even if our lives are disrupted in that delivery.

We see Jesus in Luke 11:1-13 teaching the disciples to pray, the words that we use for the Lord's Prayer even today. Immediately, we might see a discrepancy in what Jesus teaches. The words used do not seem to line up with how the prayer is used in our worship, or in how they are reported in the other gospels. What we have to remember is the one who is reporting: St. Luke- a Gentile believer who is writing an account for other Gentile believers with no Jewish understanding or background. The Christian community receiving this was coming from a background in which prayer and worship had a completely different understanding. A singular, all-powerful, all-knowing deity was an alien concept to them. Their prayer was not about connecting to the divine but appeasing it and honoring it, as if the gods were just like humans and had the same needs as us. That is why Jesus tells a parable about prayer alongside the prayer itself, to show that devotion and steadfastness were also key. Not because that was a guarantee one would get something, but to practice going before their creator again and being acquainted as a result. Just the act of going before the divine changes us and acts as a spotlight to everything else in our lives out of sync with that will.

That is how the story in Genesis 18:16-33 is shown, after Abraham has his meeting with the mysterious strangers who travel onward to the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to prepare for their destruction. But earlier in Genesis, Abraham's nephew, Lot, and his family go to settle near those cities. It is out of fear for part of his clan, and knowledge of their righteousness, that Abraham petitions the LORD that anyone might be spared from the wrath. Now it may appear that Abraham is trying to act like a used car salesman and haggle with the LORD, as some might have the habit of doing in prayer. But this idea of 'negotiating' is the old way of thinking that our efforts can somehow appease the divine, as if the LORD is just like us. But the LORD is not human, is not in need like we are, and is not as egotistical as we sometimes can be. Everything done is for our benefit and our change, to help us learn and grow out of old habits and embrace what is real. That is why the LORD acquiesces to Abraham's requests time after time. We know that Sodom and Gomorrah were eventually destroyed showing not even 10 righteous were in those cities. But that outcome communicates to Abraham that the practices, and promises, of those cities were not right to build faith on. The path that Abraham was on was one which would cause growth and fulfillment of promise, so this episode gives Abraham cause to keep going.

It is also what St. Paul writes in Colossians 2:6-23, which is meant to keep the church going in the faith of Christ. It is that encouragement and proclamation of Christ's defeat of every power and authority in this world, in their lives, which helps the believers to know what is trustworthy. Those who are advocating for the believers to order themselves in specific ways like circumcision, festivals, and other rites and rituals are stuck in the same old thinking of trying to appease the divine by human means. Those ones puff themselves up on the legalization of religion, which only helps their cause but not in the health and well-being of those others. Christ stands supreme above all that, opening the door to true realization and wisdom, and the knowledge that nothing in this world holds a monopoly on the gospel. It is good to dwell on what makes the best life, review philosophies and teachings, but not buy into everything they say. It is a call to consideration, to stop and check what these teachings and interpretations of other humans are saying and bring them before the LORD for verification. The LORD is truth and will reveal what is true divine will and not- but only if we come to him.

Prayer is a guarantee and a warning, a warning of what life will be like if we do not willingly come. People often give up on prayer because it does not give them what they want, but that is because they approach prayer the same way as approaching another human with higher power than oneself. There is no appeasement in prayer, no 'sucking up' to the boss, and no hiding anything as if we were smart enough to do so. It is about being in a space, a mindset, a position, by which we open the whole of our beings and be vulnerable before the creator. Nothing is going to surprise or shock the LORD, since he already knows who we are. The LORD is just waiting for us to recognize it out of what has already been revealed to us and then ask for clarification and what we truly need. Prayer is all about getting us back before the divine again, to set us before the divine character, and letting that presence be what drives our change. That disarms all attempts in this world by others to change and mold us, and even heals us of that damage by exposing us to what is true. Prayer makes us truer to who we are, and builds us into what we can become, but only if we let go of how the world has taught us and see the LORD as the LORD is: truth, guidance, grace, wisdom, and love for what we seek to accomplish and who we desire to be.

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, 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 Creator, one of the great gifts you have given humanity is the power of prayer. The ability to speak with you, commune with you, receive your direction and guidance, and also know we are not alone. Through this simple act you demonstrate so much of your power and ability, and desire to be close to the ones you love. By the Holy Spirit you remain connected to guide your fellowship in all that it does, comfort it in times of struggle, and bring change and transformation for your gospel to shine. We admit this gift comes into fulness by faith and willingness, and sometimes we are not good at that. We are so willing to trust in other powers, other teachings, and other people and their interpretations than you. We lock ourselves, and others, in boxes thinking we are helping. But allowing your Spirit to move where it wishes, teach others to recognize its coming and going, and enabling them the ability to follow is the greatest thing we can do as disciples. Help your people to accomplish this first and foremost and what it will cause your people to do.

May the same Spirit who guides the Church into all righteousness also help us realize what we can do in the joys and struggles we bring forward...*Reading of the Prayer List...*

Moment of Silence

We thank you, LORD, for revealing our hearts today and uncovering all hidden motivations and misplaced priorities. May our faith become stronger and our dedication to the fellowship ever more loving and considerate. In the way Jesus has taught us to pray may we continue to honor:

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 knows how to give good gifts to his children and teaches us how to give faithfully to each other.

Offertory *Sweet Hour of Prayer* 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 Creator, the whole of this world is yours and everything within it. You cultivate good things in our lives so we might be changed and reminded of what truly matters. May all we give foster growth and faith for those who seek you with all their hearts. **Amen.**

Hymn #349 *Let All Who Pray the Prayer Christ Taught

Let all who pray the prayer Christ taught
First clear the cluttered heart.
Make room to breathe the living thought
Those well-worn words impart.

Dismiss the fear that this world drifts
With no one in command.
Your pulse and breath are signs and gifts
From God's attentive hand.

Refine and test each passing aim
Against this final one:
Has your life hallowed heaven's name
And has God's will been done?

Discard each vengeful hope that's fed
The dreams of wars you'll win,
Then freely ask for daily bread
And pardon from your sin.

Examine how temptation breeds
Inside the mind's dark maze,
Acknowledging that your life needs
Deliverance from its ways.

By faithful discipline prepare
And inward holy space
That when you offer Jesus' prayer
Your heart may fill with grace.

***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 *God of Our Fathers* National Hymn**

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

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