



**First Presbyterian Church of New Philadelphia**

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**Rev. Joseph Svancara, Pastor**

**Sunday Worship Service**

**February 22, 2026**

\*All who are able, please stand.

**Announcements & Prayer Concerns**

Today following service we will be holding our annual Congregational Meeting with lunch. All members are encouraged to attend- your votes and ideas count!

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

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

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

Our Sunday Morning Study Group will be meeting next Sunday (March 1) at 9:15am. We are currently reading "Man's Search for Meaning" by Viktor Frankl, and is open for anyone to join!

Next Sunday (March 1) is our "First Celebration Sunday" with communion and worship and brunch following service. All are welcome!

Thank you to everyone who participated in our "Souper Bowl Sunday" collection for the Dover-New Phila Food Pantry!

**Opening Prayer**

LORD, our Creator, you teach us to be mindful of temptation, what it desires, and takes from us. You have always led your people into the wilderness to teach and instruct them how to live within the world but not become part of it. Help us to learn, realize, and understand what your Jesus leads us to do within these forty days. And what awaits us for our redemption. **Amen.**

**Prelude**    *Jesus Walked This Lonesome Valley*    **Arr. H Livingston**

**\*Call to Worship (Psalm 32)**

Happy are they whose transgressions are forgiven, and whose sin is put away! Happy are they to whom the LORD imputes no guilt, and in whose spirit there is no guile!

**While I held my tongue, my bones withered away, because of my groaning all day long. For your hand was heavy upon me day and night; my moisture was dried up as in the heat of summer.**

Then I acknowledged my sin to you, and did not conceal my guilt. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD." Then you forgave me the guilt of my sin.

**Therefore all the faithful will make their prayers to you in time of trouble; when the great waters overflow, they shall not reach them. You are my hiding-place; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with shouts of deliverance.**

"I will instruct you and teach you in the way that you should go; I will guide you with my eye. Do not be like horse or mule, which have no understanding; who must be fitted with bit and bridle, or else they will not stay near you."

**Great are the tribulations of the wicked; but mercy embraces those who trust in the LORD. Be glad, you righteous, and rejoice in the LORD; shout for joy, all who are true of heart.**

**\*Hymn #81    *Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days***

Lord, who throughout these forty days  
For us didst fast and pray,  
Teach us with Thee to mourn our sins,  
And close by Thee to stay.

As Thou with Satan didst contend,  
And didst the victory win,  
O give us strength in Thee to fight,  
In Thee to conquer sin.

And through these days of penitence,  
And through Thy Passiontide,  
Yea, evermore, in life and death,  
O Lord, with us abide.

Abide with us, that so, this life  
Of suffering over-past,  
An Easter of unending joy  
We may attain at last!

**\*Prayer of Confession**

Although the temptations we face may seem obvious, we still give in because of our tendency to misunderstand the decisions we make:

**LORD, our Creator, you have made us with free will- the ability to know good and evil. You give us choices to make every day, and we often choose the wrong ones. You have not made a defective creation or a mistake within us, but we have failed to exercise rightly what you have given. Restore us through the journey and redemption of Jesus, and help us realize what awaits to save us.  
Amen.**

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

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

Sin and mistakes will happen, but they are not the end. By the example of Jesus Christ we can rise again with the LORD's help, but only if we truly accept.

**Right teaching and ways are within our grasp. LORD, help us to believe and to accept.**

#### **\*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 2:4-3:24

2<sup>4</sup> These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created. In the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, <sup>5</sup> when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up—for the Lord God had

not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground; <sup>6</sup> but a stream would rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground— <sup>7</sup> then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being. <sup>8</sup> And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. <sup>9</sup> Out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. <sup>10</sup> A river flows out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it divides and becomes four branches. <sup>11</sup> The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one that flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; <sup>12</sup> and the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. <sup>13</sup> The name of the second river is Gihon; it is the one that flows around the whole land of Cush. <sup>14</sup> The name of the third river is Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates. <sup>15</sup> The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. <sup>16</sup> And the Lord God commanded the man, “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; <sup>17</sup> but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.” <sup>18</sup> Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.” <sup>19</sup> So out of the ground the Lord God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. <sup>20</sup> The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner. <sup>21</sup> So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. <sup>22</sup> And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. <sup>23</sup> Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman, for out of Man this one was taken.” <sup>24</sup> Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh. <sup>25</sup> And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed. 3 <sup>1</sup> Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God say, ‘You shall not eat from any tree in the garden?’” <sup>2</sup> The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; <sup>3</sup> but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.’” <sup>4</sup> But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not die; <sup>5</sup> for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” <sup>6</sup> So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. <sup>7</sup> Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves. <sup>8</sup> They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. <sup>9</sup> But the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, “Where are you?” <sup>10</sup> He said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I

was naked; and I hid myself.” <sup>11</sup> He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” <sup>12</sup> The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate.” <sup>13</sup> Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent tricked me, and I ate.” <sup>14</sup> The Lord God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, cursed are you among all animals and among all wild creatures; upon your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. <sup>15</sup> I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.” <sup>16</sup> To the woman he said, “I will greatly increase your pangs in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.” <sup>17</sup> And to the man he said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life; <sup>18</sup> thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. <sup>19</sup> By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” <sup>20</sup> The man named his wife Eve, because she was the mother of all living. <sup>21</sup> And the Lord God made garments of skins for the man and for his wife, and clothed them. <sup>22</sup> Then the Lord God said, “See, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever”— <sup>23</sup> therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken. <sup>24</sup> He drove out the man; and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a sword flaming and turning to guard the way to the tree of life.

#### Romans 5:12-21

5 <sup>12</sup> Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned— <sup>13</sup> sin was indeed in the world before the law, but sin is not reckoned when there is no law. <sup>14</sup> Yet death exercised dominion from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who is a type of the one who was to come. <sup>15</sup> But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died through the one man’s trespass, much more surely have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for the many. <sup>16</sup> And the free gift is not like the effect of the one man’s sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brings justification. <sup>17</sup> If, because of the one man’s trespass, death exercised dominion through that one, much more surely will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness exercise dominion in life through the one man, Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup> Therefore just as one man’s trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man’s act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all. <sup>19</sup> For just as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous. <sup>20</sup> But law came in, with the result that the trespass multiplied; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the

more, <sup>21</sup> so that, just as sin exercised dominion in death, so grace might also exercise dominion through justification leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

#### Matthew 4:1-11

4 <sup>1</sup> Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. <sup>2</sup> He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. <sup>3</sup> The tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." <sup>4</sup> But he answered, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.' " <sup>5</sup> Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, <sup>6</sup> saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.' " <sup>7</sup> Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.' " <sup>8</sup> Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; <sup>9</sup> and he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." <sup>10</sup> Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! for it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.' " <sup>11</sup> Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

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

#### **Sermon    *The First Sunday of Lent***

When people think about Lent they believe it is a type of spiritual battle against temptation. They vow to give something up in commemoration of Jesus' sacrifice for our sins, a penitence for wrongdoing to 'make up' with the LORD. But we know that the sacrifices and vows we take are not for that purpose, since salvation is not a transaction. There is nothing the LORD could possibly want from us since the LORD already owns and controls all within the universe. Rather, the practices we perform are for our own benefit to walk away from distraction and focus on the divine voice wishing to give us direction. It is not a 'battle' against temptation, but an understanding of what temptation is actively doing to us. So what exactly is it and how is it truly overcome?

That goes back to the very moment of creation, when the LORD created humanity and blessed us. We were created to tend to the garden of creation, to represent physical order within the universe, and reflect the divine rule and love which pulled all from chaos. The creation story presents free will, the ability to know and decide good from evil, as a bad thing we were not supposed to have to begin with. When the story was penned it was meant as an explanation as to why there is free will and why people choose to do bad things. It posits that free will did not originate with humanity, it was created by the LORD for a purpose, and how we chose to use it is what screws things up. Many use this story to either blame humanity, blame women, blame the devil, and even blame the LORD for the way things are- but there are plenty of fingerprints from everyone within this episode. But the devil never held a gun to Eve's head and forced her to eat, Eve never threatened Adam to eat with her- all of it was a willing

acceptance of mistruth from a source desiring chaos rather than order. Temptation does come from evil powers within this world, represented and embodied within the being of the devil (Heb. *Satan*: the adversary), but its acceptance by us is what allows it to become truly destructive. Wringing our hands over everything that is bad, but we as individuals accept and tolerate it in our lives. Our desire to have things our own way make us spurn divine order and believe chaos is the answer.

But if that is all there is to temptation, to evil, then there is a hope. If Satan, and evil in general, is only limited to what is willingly accepted then it can be overcome! And Jesus being tempted in the wilderness is a representation of what humanity can be, about how temptation can be resisted and the righteous path be chosen. And it requires the understanding that all in the universe belongs to the LORD already, the LORD already has proper governance over creation, and offers the better and truer means by which to live in an orderly way and not go back to chaos and uncertainty.

Jesus recognized as the Son of God that his life is the LORD's and no one else's, giving the wisdom to resist the devil and everyone else who tried to resist and block his ministry. His acceptance of divine authority gave him the strength needed to resist, and our acceptance of it gives us clarity to live and move past all the false teachings and examples blasted at us by the powers within the world. While we are falsely told there is no better alternative, that we must accept the faulty standards of humanity, divine love has given us a better means to look too.

That is why St. Paul brings up the comparison between Adam and Christ, how one man brought death and the other brought eternal life. Not to say that it was just one man, one person, who doomed the whole creation. Adam is often brought up as a representative of humanity (Heb. *Adam*: human) to put a face to the whole company. So while humanity's acceptance of their own ways and rejection of divine order brings death, Christ's rejection of worldly ways opened the way to see divine life. Christ is also the representative of the whole company of those who accept the ways of the LORD, the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the covenant it fulfills. Christ stands as the choice that humanity can become when we allow our free will to choose embodying truth and relationship in all that we do. That our individual acceptance brings into the common humanity a better means to rediscover purpose and meaning and to see salvation beyond what is currently faced. By allowing Christ to be our example, our new representative of what we see is right, we fulfill the reason why free will exists: acceptance and active participation within the divine plan. To live out what the LORD simply spoke to prove it is real.

Lent is not a battle to be overcome by sheer will, because without the right example free will always chooses what is easiest even if it degrades the whole. It is a time to be purposefully considerate and understanding of all that is around us, how it affects us, how it makes us think, and forms our relationships. If it causes all in our lives to just serve us, it must be reconsidered. If it causes a change in our lives to serve and purposefully engage with others, then that is the divine example coming to make a

home with us. This is the time to evaluate our choices to see if they contribute to a better and renewed world from past mistakes, or continue in them hoping something different will happen eventually.

### **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, mighty and great are you and your creation of all that is seen and unseen. For having created humanity in your likeness, with your divine order, and your possibilities to do good wherever we are. You have gifted us free will, knowledge of good and evil, but only kept it back knowing what we would do with it while not in proper union with you. You have confronted humanity with your ways through the law and prophets, challenging where our examples came from and what was necessarily for life and meaning. The blessings of Christ and his righteous example shows your ideal humanity, what we can grow into and become, when we allow it in our willing relationship with you. Help us all to let go of the false and misleading examples in our lives, to overcome fear of Satan and evil powers and what they can do, and accept your supreme governance of all the universe. Your name makes great things to happen, help us to accept all that it brings in all circumstances.

We ask that divine order for all we face in our lives, and for the loved ones we keep close in mind and heart...*Reading of the Prayer List*...LORD, in your loving mercy, hear our prayers.

### *Moment of Silence*

We thank you for setting up your people to do great things, to act in your name, and make the example and possibilities of Jesus Christ known to all. To fulfill and live 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**

The LORD gives a vision of what it means to partner with the divine to heal the world.  
And what we give is a means of bringing that promise to life.

**Offertory**    *O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go*    **Arr. A Peace**

### **\*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 call us to consider all decisions we make that will bring us more into your glory. From what we have given today, may it bring us closer to realizing what your work means and accomplishes for your people. **Amen.**

### **\*Hymn #275**    *God of Our Life*

God of our life, through all the circling years,  
We trust in Thee;  
In all the past, through all our hopes and fears,  
Thy hand we see.  
With each new day, when morning lifts the veil,  
We own Thy mercies, Lord, which never fail.

God of the past, our times are in Thy hand;  
With us abide.

Lead us by faith to hope's true promised land;  
Be Thou our Guide.

With Thee to bless, the darkness shines as light,  
And faith's fair vision changes into sight.

God of the coming years, through paths unknown  
We follow Thee;

When we are strong, Lord, leave us not alone;  
Our Refuge be.

Be Thou for us in life our daily Bread,  
Our heart's true home when all our years have sped.

### **\*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    *Thy Will Be Done*    Arr. B Price**

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

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