



First Presbyterian Church of New Philadelphia

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Rev. Joseph Svancara, Pastor

**Sunday Worship Service
September 7, 2025**

*All who are able, please stand.

Announcements & Prayer Concerns

Today is our monthly "First Celebration Sunday" with Holy Communion in worship followed by our church brunch. All are invited!

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

AA will meet this Wednesday (September 10) at 8pm.

Our Sunday Morning Study Group will be meeting next Sunday (September 14) 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 (September 14) at 6pm is our monthly Friends of the Homeless dinner. A sign-up sheet for volunteers is in the church office. While meal funds are good, please consider donating toward one of our other FOTH efforts (FOTH Operations/Jack's House of Hope).

Opening Prayer

LORD, our Creator, by your mercy and care you craft and form us to be our best selves in the face of the world. Help us to also encourage, and shape, those who come to us so they might understand what is best. **Amen.**

Prelude *Take My Life, and Let It Be* arr. Sarah Poole

***Call to Worship (Psalm 139)**

O LORD, you have known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up; you discern my thoughts from afar. You trace my journeys and my resting-places and are acquainted with all my ways.

Indeed, there is not a word on my lips, but you, O LORD, know it altogether. You encompass me, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain to it.

Where can I go then from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I climb up to heaven, you are there; if I make the grave my bed, you are there also. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand will lead me and your right hand hold me fast.

If I say, “Surely the darkness will cover me, and the light around me turn to night,” darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day; darkness and light to you are both alike.

For you yourself created my inmost parts; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I will thank you because I am marvelously made; your works are wonderful, and I know it well. My body was not hidden from you, while I was being made in secret and woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes beheld my limbs, yet unfinished in the womb; all of them were written in your book; my days were fashioned before they came to be.

How deep I find your thoughts, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I were to count them, they would be more in number than the sand; to count them all, my life span would need to be like yours.

Oh, that you would slay the wicked, O God! You that thirst for blood, depart from me. They speak spitefully against you; your enemies take your name in vain. Do I not hate those, O LORD, who hate you? And do I not loathe those who rise up against you? I hate them with a perfect hatred; they have become my own enemies.

Search me out, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my restless thoughts. Look well whether there be any wickedness in me and lead me in the way that is everlasting.

Hymn #281 *Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah

Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah,
Pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but Thou art mighty;
Hold me with Thy powerful hand;
Bread of heaven, bread of heaven,
Feed me till I want no more,
Feed me till I want no more.

Open now the crystal fountain,
Whence the healing stream doth flow;
Let the fire and cloudy pillar
Lead me all my journey through;
Strong deliverer, strong deliverer,
Be Thou still my strength and shield,
Be Thou still my strength and shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan,
Bid my anxious fears subside;
Death of death, and hell's destruction,
Land me safe on Canaan's side;
Songs of praises, songs of praises,
I will ever give to Thee,
I will ever give to Thee.

***Prayer of Confession**

The LORD crafts and guides us into what is right, but how often do we allow others to form and manipulate us into their delusions?

LORD, our Creator, you have formed us into your likeness so we can grow into our potential as you imagined. But we too easily allow others to form us, conform us to their standards, and serve their corrupted imaginings. Help us to help one another, to see each other as equal members of your body, and set each other up for success by your ways alone. Amen.

***Silent Confessions and Prayers**

***Assurance of Forgiveness**

By the mercy of the LORD through Jesus Christ, our cups are filled, we are made salty again, and ready to speak the Word to those who need it.

We receive the LORD's heart in this action, and know by this he remains with us forever.

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:

Jeremiah 18:1-23

18 ¹ The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: ² “Come, go down to the potter’s house, and there I will let you hear my words.” ³ So I went down to the potter’s house, and there he was working at his wheel. ⁴ The vessel he was making of clay was spoiled in the potter’s hand, and he reworked it into another vessel, as seemed good to him. ⁵ Then the word of the Lord came to me: ⁶ Can I not do with you, O house of Israel, just as this potter has done? says the Lord. Just like the clay in the potter’s hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel. ⁷ At one moment I may declare concerning a nation or a kingdom, that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, ⁸ but if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will change my mind about the disaster that I intended to bring on it. ⁹ And at another moment I may declare concerning a nation or a kingdom that I will build and plant it, ¹⁰ but if it does evil in my sight, not listening to my voice, then I will change my mind about the good that I had intended to do to it. ¹¹ Now, therefore, say to the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: Thus says the Lord: Look, I am a potter shaping evil against you and devising a plan against you. Turn now, all of you from your evil way, and amend your ways and your doings. ¹² But they say, “It is no use! We will follow our own plans, and each of us will act according to the stubbornness of our evil will.” ¹³ Therefore thus says the Lord: Ask among the nations: Who has heard the like of this? The virgin Israel has done a most horrible thing. ¹⁴ Does the snow of Lebanon leave the crags of Sirion? Do the mountain waters run dry, the cold flowing streams? ¹⁵ But my people have forgotten me, they burn offerings to a delusion; they have stumbled in their ways, in the ancient roads, and have gone into bypaths, not the highway, ¹⁶ making their land a horror, a thing to be hissed at forever. All who pass by it are horrified and shake their heads. ¹⁷ Like the wind from the east, I will scatter them before the enemy. I will show them my back, not my face, in the day of their calamity. ¹⁸ Then they said, “Come, let us make plots against Jeremiah—for instruction shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come, let us bring charges against him, and let us not heed any of his words.” ¹⁹ Give heed to me, O Lord, and listen to what my adversaries say! ²⁰ Is evil a recompense for good? Yet they have dug a pit for my life. Remember how I stood before you to speak good for them, to turn away your wrath from them. ²¹ Therefore give their children over to famine; hurl them out to the power of the sword, let their wives become childless and widowed. May their men meet death by pestilence, their youths be slain by the sword in battle. ²² May a cry be heard

from their houses, when you bring the marauder suddenly upon them! For they have dug a pit to catch me, and laid snares for my feet. ²³ Yet you, O Lord, know all their plotting to kill me. Do not forgive their iniquity, do not blot out their sin from your sight. Let them be tripped up before you; deal with them while you are angry.

Philemon 1-25

¹ Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our dear friend and co-worker, ² to Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house: ³ Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴ When I remember you in my prayers, I always thank my God ⁵ because I hear of your love for all the saints and your faith toward the Lord Jesus. ⁶ I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective when you perceive all the good that we may do for Christ. ⁷ I have indeed received much joy and encouragement from your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, my brother. ⁸ For this reason, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do your duty, ⁹ yet I would rather appeal to you on the basis of love—and I, Paul, do this as an old man, and now also as a prisoner of Christ Jesus. ¹⁰ I am appealing to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I have become during my imprisonment. ¹¹ Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful both to you and to me. ¹² I am sending him, that is, my own heart, back to you. ¹³ I wanted to keep him with me, so that he might be of service to me in your place during my imprisonment for the gospel; ¹⁴ but I preferred to do nothing without your consent, in order that your good deed might be voluntary and not something forced. ¹⁵ Perhaps this is the reason he was separated from you for a while, so that you might have him back forever, ¹⁶ no longer as a slave but more than a slave, a beloved brother—especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord. ¹⁷ So if you consider me your partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. ¹⁸ If he has wronged you in any way, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. ¹⁹ I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand: I will repay it. I say nothing about your owing me even your own self. ²⁰ Yes, brother, let me have this benefit from you in the Lord! Refresh my heart in Christ. ²¹ Confident of your obedience, I am writing to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say. ²² One thing more—prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping through your prayers to be restored to you. ²³ Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you, ²⁴ and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers. ²⁵ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

Luke 14:25-34

¹⁴ ²⁵ Now large crowds were traveling with him; and he turned and said to them, ²⁶ “Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple. ²⁷ Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. ²⁸ For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether he has enough to complete it? ²⁹ Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it will begin to ridicule him, ³⁰ saying, ‘This fellow began to build and

was not able to finish.’ ³¹ Or what king, going out to wage war against another king, will not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to oppose the one who comes against him with twenty thousand? ³² If he cannot, then, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for the terms of peace. ³³ So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions. ³⁴ Salt is good; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? ³⁵ It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; they throw it away. Let anyone with ears to hear listen!”

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

Sermon *The Fourteenth Sunday of Pentecost*

The image of the potter and the clay is a metaphor that has been used many times in the Church to describe who the LORD is to us, and our place under divine rule. The LORD is the ultimate creator and has purposefully and intentionally designed each and every person in this world as seen fit. There is no mistake with how creation takes place, no coincidences or accidents, or reason to see anyone else as lower or higher than another. Each and every human was at one point nothing but dirt before the divine breathed life into us, and do not exist independently from the Creator- even if there are time we think, or wish, we were. Jeremiah exposes that mentality very clearly as he started to speak the Word of the LORD to Israel, reminding them how they were purposefully led and shaped in the wilderness to this specific moment. But the people in their own hearts did not consider this purposefulness, or thought this act of favor indicated an idea of specialness which made the collective people declare in voice and action, “We will follow our own plans, and each of us will act according to the stubbornness of our evil will”. Silly to think some people would respond in that manner, but watching the actions of others can show the potential for brazenness within us.

Jeremiah is reminding the people how the LORD shaped them, how he shapes all the peoples in creation, and set them up as part of that divine will. Those who embody and exemplify that will experience understanding and realization which makes them prosper, and those who reject it disqualify and cut themselves off from life itself. And those who are brazen and evil-minded will prefer to ‘kill the messenger’ rather than change, like what happened to Jeremiah. But this is also just a realization of the message presented, the reality of judgment, which exposes the ultimate truth about everything and invites repentance. Jesus himself describes that when he speaks about considering the cost for everything; from building a tower, waging war, and who you chose to listen to for guidance and advice. Just because it comes from a supposed higher-up in life means nothing, there is wisdom which must be searched for and adhered to. That is why the LORD gave Israel such rules, laws, and instructions so they might understand and recognize life-giving wisdom when it appears. Inviting close relationship and fellowship between such persons and parties to create a people who can serve faithfully together. Sometimes it means stepping out of your familiar circle to see, but the Spirit allows all to find life when they earnestly desire it.

That is the situation seen within Philemon, when St. Paul was writing on such a specific point to demonstrate the potential of the gospel. One of the shortest of the New Testament letters, it was written to the man Philemon on behalf of the man Onesimus. Onesimus was a slave who had run away from his master and ended up in the presence of St. Paul. Onesimus eventually became a Christian and feared returning to his master Philemon, because of the potential punishments for runaway slaves in the Roman Empire. So St. Paul used his authority as an apostle to advocate for Philemon taking back Onesimus freely, and even pledging to pay for any damage being done. But it was an attempt to have Onesimus return not just as a slave, but as a fellow believer who would only add and make the local fellowship better by his inclusion.

It may seem weird to see St. Paul speaking on matters of slavery like they were no big deal, especially with historical hindsight with how bad slavery could be. Make no mistake, slavery was and is dehumanizing. It was the same in the Roman Empire as in the old American South. But within the Roman Empire at its height it has been estimated 10-20% of people were in some kind of slavery- almost 50-60 million people. An integral part of the Roman economy and way of life, there was no way to overturn such a thing at the same. So St. Paul, when he writes to slaves, tells them to use that life as a means of demonstrating who is the greater master to those they were serving. And to the master's wrote to treat those in their care with the same care demonstrated by Christ to them. Each household, each fellowship of saints, could then demonstrate and shape each other in way to become their best to the world. Instead of just looking for ways to beat each other down and arrogantly take for themselves, the old way of things, instead see others as created in the same image of God as themselves. With the same opportunity to live and contribute which builds and makes better the garden all are a part of.

That divine image is not just a physical image, not the stereotypical image of God as a grouchy old man with a long beard sitting on a throne. Rather it describes the character, the personality, the example, and ability of the divine to act. It communicates what life and reality are for, why we have been placed in such circumstances and situations, and what we can become when we embrace the right wisdom and right formation. We tend not to think about how the other people, forces, powers, and ideas in the world shape and manipulate us to fit their image and contribute to their plans. But Jesus makes us understand the consideration we must have toward those others, how we must recognize and respect the power they have, and willingly choose that which is better. It is seeing everyone with the potential for growth and change under the better circumstances, and ensuring those circumstances exist within our own circles first. Each and every one of us are the LORD's own heart given to us, presented as an opportunity, to see how we might cherish and ensure its well-being. Will we see all things as necessary and important within the fellowship, or just make rules and procedures with prop up the wrong things? Each and every one of us has the

opportunity to shape, and be shaped, by those in our presence. The manner we act is what will be taken out into the world. What will we want to see emulated and eventually come back to us?

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, 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, Dane & Cindy Smith, Derrick & Mandy Smith, Janis Stover, 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 to the LORD!**

Let us give thanks to the LORD, our God! **It is right to give our thanks and praise!**

We give you thanks, our mighty Creator, for your creation and all which inhabits it. All that you have designed has been fearfully and wonderfully made, has a purpose to serve, and is necessary for everything to operate as it should. You have created humanity as the crown jewel to showcase your mighty power, the trust in our potential, and what reality can be due to your order. But in our arrogance we take those good things and use them for our own benefit. We worship ourselves rather than you, seek security from our own imaginings, and allow others to take control for our ease and comfort. We throw away our potential, our glory, our identity, and our use because we do not think it fits our plans. But in your mercy you have not started over, but you recreate, and resculpt to bring all things back to their proper alignment. Your mercy and care watch over us in our most unpredictable times so we can sing of your praise:

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 is the one who comes in your name, your Son Jesus Christ. Light of light, true God of true God, embodiment of truest knowledge and wisdom, and demonstration of divine rule and love. In all that he teaches he warns and guides, aiding us to see beyond the conditions of our lives to what is real and possible, so we might experience a joy that never ends. He opens the door to life itself, provides us with a glimpse of who you are, so we might be like you.

That is why on that fateful night with his disciples he broke bread, and poured a cup, and proclaimed the greatness of the kingdom in their midst. To us now he makes the same promise of life eternal, if we are willing to accept the way demonstrated. By our taking these sacraments we throw away the things of the world and proclaim the divine image as the only way to know what is right. To accept the mystery of faith, and proclaim the story of salvation:

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

By these means of grace, open us to even greater grace and wisdom to see you as you are and not simply as we want you. To be changed and made greater, to know what we can rely on, and what will keep us going in the face of chaos and destruction. Evil no longer has the final say, because in all this you have declared: "It is finished!"

Amen.

Partaking in the Elements

Blessed are you and the gifts you bestow, Almighty Creator. By these you remind us of who we are, what we stand for, and our work to continue in the world. We do all these things not on our own, but with you so all might be made right with you. To fulfill the words of the prayer you have given:

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

We are called to build up the fellowship, and our fellow believers, in their struggles. By how we give we come closer to achieving this goal.

Offertory *Blest Be the Tie That Binds* arr. H.G. Nageli

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 provided so much to share and communicate to the world for its healing. Let what we receive, and you bless, aid your fellowship to be a place of realization and healing to those struggling from the delusions of life. **Amen.**

Hymn #394 *There Is a Balm in Gilead

There is a balm in Gilead
to make the wounded whole,
there is a balm in Gilead
to heal the sin-sick soul.

Sometimes I feel discouraged
and think my work's in vain,
but then the Holy Spirit
revives my soul again.
There is a balm in Gilead
to make the wounded whole,
there is a balm in Gilead
to heal the sin-sick soul.

Don't ever feel discouraged,
For Jesus is your friend,
And if you lack for knowledge
He'll not refuse to lend.
There is a balm in Gilead
to make the wounded whole,
there is a balm in Gilead
to heal the sin-sick soul.

If you cannot preach like Peter,
if you cannot pray like Paul,
you can tell the love of Jesus
and say, "He died for all."
There is a balm in Gilead
to make the wounded whole,
there is a balm in Gilead
to heal the sin-sick 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 *Hymn To The Trinity* Composer Cecil Scott-Devin**

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

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