



**First Presbyterian Church of New Philadelphia**

217 E. High Ave, New Philadelphia, OH 44663

330-343-7114

[www.newphilapc.org](http://www.newphilapc.org)



**Rev. Joseph Svancara, Pastor**

**Sunday Worship Service**

**May 17, 2026**

\*All who are able, please stand.

**Announcements & Prayer Concerns**

Session will meet this Tuesday (May 19) at 7pm.

Bible Study will be this Wednesday (May 20) at 10am.

AA will meet this Wednesday (May 20) at 8pm.

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!

Our Sunday Morning Study Group will be meeting next Sunday (May 24) at 9:15am.

**Opening Prayer**

LORD, our Creator, you have set Jesus Christ as your chosen ruler and guide over all creation. His place by your right hand shows he continues to work for our best in this life. Help us to consider what it means to give good news in his name, and the power we have to heal the world as you want it. **Amen.**

**Prelude    *Come, Holy Ghost*    Arr. R Wilson**

**\*Call to Worship (Psalm 47)**

Clap your hands, all you peoples; shout to God with a joyful sound.

**For the LORD Most High is to be feared: a great king over all the earth, who subdues the peoples under us, and the nations under our feet; who chooses our inheritance for us, the pride of Jacob, whom God loves.**

God has gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of the ram's horn.

**Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises to our king, sing praises.**

For God is king of all the earth; sing praises with a song.

**God reigns over the nations; God is enthroned on high.**

The nobles of the peoples have gathered as the people of the God of Abraham.

**The rulers of the earth belong to God, who is highly exalted.**

**\*Hymn #458 *Earth and All Stars***

Earth and all stars, Loud rushing planets  
Sing to the Lord a new song!  
Hail, wind, and rain, Loud blowing snowstorm  
Sing to the Lord a new song!  
God has done marvelous things.  
We will sing praises with a new song!

Steel and machines, Loud pounding hammers  
Sing to the Lord a new song!  
Limestone and beams, Loud building workers  
Sing to the Lord a new song!  
God has done marvelous things.  
We will sing praises with a new song!

Classrooms and labs, Loud boiling test tubes  
Sing to the Lord a new song!  
Athlete and band, Loud cheering people  
Sing to the Lord a new song!  
God has done marvelous things.  
We will sing praises with a new song!

Knowledge and truth, Loud sounding wisdom  
Sing to the Lord a new song!  
Daughter and son, Loud praying members  
Sing to the Lord a new song!  
God has done marvelous things.  
We will sing praises with a new song!

**\*Prayer of Confession**

The LORD charges us with going out in faith to proclaim the good news of Jesus, but we struggle in our actions and underestimate our true impact:

**LORD, our Creator, we are a people committed to proclaiming your faith and truth to all we encounter. But we attempt to do it alone by our own ideas, personality, rationale, and ignore the one who makes it all possible. Jesus is in heaven with you making possible what is impossible and gifting a Spirit to**

ensure all we can do. Help us to recognize, accept, and appreciate what Jesus is making possible as your true head of the Church and King of this world. Amen.

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

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

Even when we misunderstand and misjudge our actions we always know where, and whom, to look too for our correction and guidance.

**Jesus sits at the LORD's right hand in completion and finality, and that is where we must look for our purpose and being.**

#### **\*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 1:1-11

1 <sup>1</sup> In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning <sup>2</sup> until the day when he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. <sup>3</sup> After his suffering he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. <sup>4</sup> While staying with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. "This," he said, "is what you have heard from me; <sup>5</sup> for John baptized with water, but

you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”<sup>6</sup> So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?”<sup>7</sup> He replied, “It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority.<sup>8</sup> But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”<sup>9</sup> When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.<sup>10</sup> While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them.<sup>11</sup> They said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”

#### Ephesians 1:15-23

1<sup>15</sup> I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason<sup>16</sup> I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers.<sup>17</sup> I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him,<sup>18</sup> so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints,<sup>19</sup> and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power.<sup>20</sup> God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places,<sup>21</sup> far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come.<sup>22</sup> And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church,<sup>23</sup> which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

#### Luke 24:36-53

24<sup>36</sup> While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.”<sup>37</sup> They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost.<sup>38</sup> He said to them, “Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?<sup>39</sup> Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.”<sup>40</sup> And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet.<sup>41</sup> While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?”<sup>42</sup> They gave him a piece of broiled fish,<sup>43</sup> and he took it and ate in their presence.<sup>44</sup> Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.”<sup>45</sup> Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures,<sup>46</sup> and he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day,<sup>47</sup> and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.<sup>48</sup> You are witnesses of these things.<sup>49</sup> And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on

high.”<sup>50</sup> Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them.<sup>51</sup> While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven.<sup>52</sup> And they worshiped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy;<sup>53</sup> and they were continually in the temple blessing God.

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

### **Sermon    *Ascension Sunday***

As the season of Easter, the celebration of the Resurrection, comes to a close we look back and see what it has offered to us within our lives and engagement with the world. The word ‘engagement’ is key because that is what Jesus did in most of the accounts of his appearing. The Passion had caused most of the disciples, and most witnesses, to scatter and become fearful and uncertain. They followed, saw and heard, what Jesus had done and had hopes he would be the one to restore the fortunes of Israel. Jesus brought the disciples back together and united them once again under the true power of his teachings and brought understanding from their misplaced ideas.

Their idea of Israel was too small, too concentrated, and too concerned about the powers of this world. Jesus did indeed restore Israel’s fortunes, by enlarging it and bringing those on the outside to find a home within. Nothing was replaced because of Jesus’ actions but restored to what they were supposed to be, and we are the beneficiaries of that enlargement of the LORD’s people in finding a home here right now! We celebrate Jesus going into heaven to be with the LORD but are left with a goal and mission by him as he leaves. Acts 1 starts the age of the Church with the charge of being Jesus’ witnesses to the very ends of the earth. The ending of Matthew’s gospel also charges the disciples to go throughout the world and baptize all into the name of the triune God. As Jesus united the disciples, and us, together in faith and mission we are charged to go and unite others together with the hope of Jesus’ rule and actions. Jesus now rules in heaven and is governing the Church toward its true purpose, but how will we respond to that certainty?

Luke 24 is the last appearance Jesus makes to the disciples in that Lukian narrative (comprising of the gospel and Acts) and demonstrates that what they are experiencing is true. Jesus is alive in every sense of the world, even going so far as to request a fish dinner and eating with them! All to demonstrate the teachings and charge by him are not the interpretation of others after the fact but an order from the master himself. Jesus opens the Scriptures to have everything makes sense to this point and then bestows a great responsibility. Jesus makes it clear: “Once you only had the Scriptures to guide and make clear the will of the LORD, but because of me you can now LIVE and DEMONSTRATE that will to others.” The people of the LORD are restored to being the messengers of the LORD’s order, wisdom, understanding, and rule to a world that has forgotten it.

And that is a charge within our ability to live right now, because it has been lived before. In Ephesians 1, St. Paul praises and thanks the LORD that the believers in the Ephesian church were able to take in and live the Gospel for themselves. That they were able to open themselves to the ongoing teaching and revelation Jesus was giving through his Spirit in them, and they could recognize it! Jesus' rule is an active rule and not a silent one. He is not shut up in heaven with only one written instruction to us. He continually unveils what it means to live that goal in everyday life and practice what it means to accept illumination from the LORD before anyone, or anything, else. The Ephesian believers learned what it means that Jesus was the head of the Church by constantly obeying and listening for his voice. To have their gathering be about receiving essential instruction and practicing what they already knew to be true. They slowly allowed themselves to be built up into the people of the LORD, and in the process demonstrated the master's power even if he was far away and unable to be seen physically.

That is what is available to us, what should be building the Church now, and keeping us grounded among the many opportunities to demonstrate the wisdom, insight, and love we have. Now that we have heard the message of Jesus, have seen the Scriptures, and experienced the renewal of life by him how will we choose to respond? We are not being forced to witness all we have seen, we are choosing to carefully express what has changed for us by knowing this. Faith is a careful and considerate choice we make, one in which the LORD helps to exercise our abilities and slowly build what we know to be true and make available for others to experience. It also prepares us to receive the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the living Christ, and know who it is coming from and why he acts in the way he does. In a sense the Resurrection is not ending but taking on a new form of life for us, to show that the true divine way of life will be taught and come through. It does not depend on the right interpreter, organization, or conditions within society or the world to receive. It will come through because of willingness, obedience, consideration, and yearning because Jesus shows there are more good things to expect!

### **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, at last we see the finalization of your Resurrection at work. Your anointed one, your chosen teacher and governor, the promised king of your people has taken his place at your right hand- in your favored position. He sits in finality and promise, to judge and guard the world and everything in it, and properly order and lead

your Church into its promised work. This is not a benefit that stops for us who believe, but a promise to all in creation that there is one capable of continually guiding the world to its true purpose and meaning. Though we all fight and struggle against it our hearts eventually rest in you and finds our life's work through you. You have given the prophets, leaders, poets, and others to contribute to your grand story to reach the world. But now is the opportunity to live it, embrace it, and strive to make it part of ourselves to have it make sense to those still not knowing. Help us as your people to exemplify and live your story, and not just speak it, so all might know how deep and wide your salvation and healing can be to all areas of life.

By ourselves we can do nothing, which is why you promise the Holy Spirit. Help us now through that Spirit of guidance to know your will, and our position, in the unfolding prayers of those in need...*Reading of the Prayer List*...LORD, in your loving mercy, hear our prayers.

### *Moment of Silence*

We thank you for this time to celebrate, to rest assured, that there is one always on our side to help bring to life and purpose our faith and desires. To understand the true meaning of love and mercy, and understand ourselves, through the guidance of the prayer you always make available:

### **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 ensures we have what is needed to respond to his good news from the LORD, and how we respond demonstrates the power he places into our hands.

**Offertory    Supplication    Arr. Gerald Peterson**

### **\*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, for the longest time you have provided the Scriptures to guide your people into all truth and understanding. Now, through Jesus, you challenge us how we

will respond to all you have given. May what we offer be a small portion of our commitment, and a demonstration of what we entrust your Church to accomplish in faith. **Amen.**

**\*Hymn #151    *Crown Him with Many Crowns***

Crown Him with many crowns,  
The Lamb upon His throne;  
Hark, how the heavenly anthem drowns  
All music but its own!  
Awake, my soul, and sing  
Of Him who died for thee,  
And hail Him as thy matchless King  
Through all eternity.

Crown Him the Lord of love;  
Behold His hands and side,  
Rich wounds, yet visible above,  
In beauty glorified:  
No angel in the sky  
Can fully bear that sight,  
But downward bends his burning eye  
At mysteries so bright.

Crown Him the Lord of peace;  
Whose power a scepter sways  
From pole to pole, that wars may cease,  
Absorbed in prayer and praise:  
His reign shall know no end;  
And round His pierced feet  
Fair flowers of paradise extend  
Their fragrance ever sweet.

Crown Him the Lord of years,  
The Potentate of time;  
Creator of the rolling spheres,  
Ineffably sublime.  
All hail, Redeemer, hail!  
For Thou has died for me;  
Thy praise shall never, never fail  
Throughout eternity.

**\*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    *Look, Ye Saints!*    Arr. T Chesterton**

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

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*All worship messages, devotions, and church news are available on the First Presbyterian Church website ([www.newphilapc.org](http://www.newphilapc.org)).*