



**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**

**March 2, 2025**

\*All who are able, please stand.

**Announcements & Prayer Concerns**

Our annual congregational meeting is today following service. All are welcome to the luncheon! Be sure to stay for the meeting as well!

Bible Study will be this Wednesday (March 5) at 10am.

AA will meet this Wednesday (March 5) at 8pm.

We are partnering with our neighboring churches for a joint Ash Wednesday Service on March 5 at 7pm at Emmanuel Lutheran Church. Join us as we start the Lenten season together!

Our Sunday Morning Study Group will meet on Sunday (March 9) at 9:15am. We are starting a new book study, "Foxe's Book of Martyrs". See Rev. Joe if you wish to attend!

Join us for our Tables of Eight Dinner on March 15 at 6pm! RSVP is required and the cost is \$10 per person. Sign-up sheet is available in the church office, or you may RSVP to Carolyn Berry.

Next Sunday (March 9) is our monthly Friends of the Homeless Dinner at 6pm. A sign-up sheet for volunteers is available in the church office. While funds for the meal are good, please consider donating toward our other Friends of the Homeless efforts (General Fund or Jack's House of Hope).

**Opening Prayer**

LORD, our Father, the revealing of your Son's glory is a sign you have removed the separation between you and your creation. You have deemed us ready to see, and embrace, all that you entail. Make us ready in this season to experience the joy of resurrection, through the opportunity of struggle. **Amen.**

**Prelude    *Lord Revive Us*    arr. Martin (1868)**

**\*Call to Worship (Psalm 99)**

The LORD is king; let the people tremble. The LORD is enthroned upon the cherubim;  
let the earth shake.

**The LORD, great in Zion, is high above all peoples.**

Let them confess God's name, which is great and awesome; God is the Holy One.

**O mighty king, lover of justice, you have established equity; you have executed  
justice and righteousness in Jacob.**

Proclaim the greatness of the LORD and fall down before God's footstool; God is the  
Holy One.

**Moses and Aaron among your priests, and Samuel among those who call upon  
your name, O LORD; they called upon you, and you answered them, you spoke  
to them out of the pillar of cloud; they kept your testimonies and the decree that  
you gave them.**

O LORD our God, you answered them indeed; you were a God who forgave them, yet  
punished them for their evil deeds.

**Proclaim the greatness of the LORD and worship upon God's holy hill; for the  
LORD our God is the Holy One.**

**\*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**

Our words, actions, thoughts, and motivations veil us and cause a separation between us and the LORD. But when we draw closer to the divine, that barrier is torn and cast aside:

**LORD, our Father, in our desperation for safety and understanding we read into your actions and Word only what we want. We cut ourselves off from understanding, and limit what we can become. With the revelation of your Son, allow your character and nature to change us. Show and invite us into what is better, and give the courage to leave all else behind. Amen.**

**\*Silent Confessions and Prayers**

**\*Assurance of Forgiveness**

Human teaching and interpretation leads to anxiety and confusion, but divine revelation leads to wisdom and confidence. By what Jesus Christ reveals, the LORD's trust is seen.

**The separation, the veil, between us and the LORD is removed to prove we are ready for what the LORD deems best.**

**\*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:

Exodus 34:29-35

**34** <sup>29</sup> Moses came down from Mount Sinai. As he came down from the mountain with the two tablets of the covenant in his hand, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God. <sup>30</sup> When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, the skin of his face was shining, and they were afraid to come near him. <sup>31</sup> But Moses called to them; and Aaron and all the leaders of the congregation returned to him, and Moses spoke with them. <sup>32</sup> Afterward all the Israelites came near, and he gave them in commandment all that the Lord had spoken with him on Mount Sinai. <sup>33</sup> When Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil on his face; <sup>34</sup> but whenever Moses went in before the Lord to speak with him, he would take the veil off, until he came out; and when he came out, and told the Israelites what he had been commanded, <sup>35</sup> the Israelites would see the face of Moses, that the skin of his face was shining; and Moses would put the veil on his face again, until he went in to speak with him.

2 Corinthians 3:1-18

**3** <sup>1</sup> Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Surely we do not need, as some do, letters of recommendation to you or from you, do we? <sup>2</sup> You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all; <sup>3</sup> and you show that you are a letter of Christ, prepared by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. <sup>4</sup> Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. <sup>5</sup> Not that we are competent of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our competence is from God, <sup>6</sup> who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of letter but of spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. <sup>7</sup> Now if the ministry of death, chiseled in letters on stone tablets, came in glory so that the people of Israel could not gaze at Moses' face because of the glory of his face, a glory now set aside, <sup>8</sup> how much more will the ministry of the Spirit come in glory? <sup>9</sup> For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, much more does the ministry of justification abound in glory! <sup>10</sup> Indeed, what once had glory has lost its glory because of the greater glory; <sup>11</sup> for if what was set aside came through glory, much more has the permanent come in glory! <sup>12</sup> Since, then, we have such a hope, we act with great boldness, <sup>13</sup> not like Moses, who put a veil over his face to keep the people of Israel from gazing at the end of the glory that was being set aside. <sup>14</sup> But their minds were hardened. Indeed, to this very day, when they hear the reading of the old covenant, that same veil is still there, since only in Christ is it set aside. <sup>15</sup> Indeed, to this very day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their minds; <sup>16</sup> but when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. <sup>17</sup> Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. <sup>18</sup> And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being

transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.

Luke 9:19-36

9<sup>18</sup> Once when Jesus was praying alone, with only the disciples near him, he asked them, “Who do the crowds say that I am?”<sup>19</sup> They answered, “John the Baptist; but others, Elijah; and still others, that one of the ancient prophets has arisen.”<sup>20</sup> He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered, “The Messiah of God.”<sup>21</sup> He sternly ordered and commanded them not to tell anyone,<sup>22</sup> saying, “The Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.”<sup>23</sup> Then he said to them all, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.<sup>24</sup> For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it.<sup>25</sup> What does it profit them if they gain the whole world, but lose or forfeit themselves?<sup>26</sup> Those who are ashamed of me and of my words, of them the Son of Man will be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.<sup>27</sup> But truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God.”<sup>28</sup> Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray.<sup>29</sup> And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white.<sup>30</sup> Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him.<sup>31</sup> They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.<sup>32</sup> Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him.<sup>33</sup> Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah”—not knowing what he said.<sup>34</sup> While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud.<sup>35</sup> Then from the cloud came a voice that said, “This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!”<sup>36</sup> When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.

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

### **Sermon    *Transfiguration Sunday***

The Transfiguration of Christ, the event when Jesus revealed his divine essence, the full glory of the LORD before the disciples, is an event which prepares us to enter the Lenten season. A season of dedication, curiosity, and discovery about who it is we are following and taking direction from. What he plans on doing, and how open we are to receiving that plan no matter how outrageous and unbelievable it might seem. The disciples in Luke 9:19-36 had such misunderstanding and confusion while amid confessing his identity. What did being betrayed and killed by the leadership of the nation have to do with being the Messiah? Why did following him entailing taking up an object which represented something so oppressive and meant for death?

Perhaps it is a matter of perspective on our end, when we traditionally give up attachments in this life for the sake of spiritual awareness. The idea of sacrifice does in fact allow room to be made to accept and embrace that divine identity among us, but perhaps there is also more which can be done? The taking on of practices, virtues, and ideas which allow us to explore beyond what we know to be true. Instead of cowering and believing that the presence of the divine means we are lower than dirt, it instead empowers us to see what we can become because of divine love.

That is what St. Paul focuses on in 2 Corinthians 3:1-18.

While speaking to the believers about what makes him, and his associates, affective leaders and teachers he admits there is nothing that makes them special. They are not superhuman, have secret 'insider' knowledge that gives them an advantage, or are more competent than any others. It is the removal of the veil which allows them to speak and proclaim what they do. The veil is used to express the work of the LORD which we cannot do for ourselves, that outside power which must happen to set us on the right course.

Many Christian traditions have the idea of the veil in their practices and worship services. Often described as something which covers something precious, marks it out as holy, and indicates something to be taken seriously. But it also has the secondary effect of showing something to be untouchable, meant only for certain people to approach, which is the opposite of what Christ intends. He is there to show how present the LORD is in our lives, where divine life can be experienced, and can be freely accessed without fear or hesitation. The truth of the gospel being learned, the divine essence of Christ being shown, is a sign of trust that we are ready to accept and internalize such understandings.

At one point, the veil was necessary to protect and to guide. Like what is spoken of in Exodus 34:29-35.

The people of Israel at this point had been without their God, without knowledge of God, for about 300-400 years while in slavery in Egypt. Their time in the wilderness was a period of learning, preparation, and gradual understanding and acceptance. To have Moses come down with the commandments with his face shining a divine afterglow might have confused and terrified the people without understanding. He veiled himself so the people might be taught gradually, so they might learn without distraction. Their eventual crossing into the Promised Land was a divine decree saying, "You are ready." Experiencing the divine essence of Christ, hearing the gospel truth, is a sign from the LORD to us saying, "You are ready." Moses' shining, Christ's glory, is what is made available to us when we embrace this process.

The LORD has thinned and removed the veil, the separation, and given revelation to us because our knowledge and acceptance of it will be for our benefit and healing. As well as for those who surround and look to us as well. The disciples were asked to keep quiet about all these things because the world would not understand yet, until these things came to pass. Only in the Crucifixion, in the Resurrection, will everything make sense and ready the believers to true change and living. The time we wait for it to happen, our time in the wilderness, is something by which we can prepare and know the one who will bring all this about. To see what he is capable of, giving for us to embrace, so our trust can be focused on that which truly matters. The LORD is readying us for the greatest event in human history, deeming us ready to witness it, and knowing it will change us for the better.

### **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, Peg McIntire, Will Long, Tom Netting, Ruth Patrick, Bob Pierre, Carol Phillips, Porter Family, Mark Preusser, Stefani Seth, Josh Shaeffer, Marlene Singhaus, Cindy Smith, Derrick & Mandy Smith, Janis Stover, Bill Titley, Dean & Heidi Unzicker, Ruth Joyce Zimmerly, Simone Villarruel, Jay Watt, 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 up to the LORD!**

Let us give thanks to the LORD, our God!

**It is right to give our thanks and praise!**

LORD, our Father, blessed are you and all the praise and gratitude you deserve! You created this world, created us, to be reflections and extensions of your life and grace. A life which cannot be contained but is shared between all creatures and binds all beings together in perfect peace and harmony. Even when we upset this balance by our mindless actions you gave us instruction and guidance to lead us back to what is proper. You gradually taught our ancestors, and their lessons became our lessons, which has brought us to better wisdom and understanding. Your presence means you deem us ready to learn and grow, that we are ready for challenge, and to go beyond

what we think we deserve. All so we might sing your praise, with the hosts of heaven and eternal saints, with one resounding voice:

**Holy, holy, holy LORD. God of power and might. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD. Hosanna in the highest.**

This Lenten journey, the journey to the cross, with Jesus is a sign that you wish to transform our beings into something more glorious. You wish us to experience all the highs and lows of Jesus' works in this world so we might understand how grand your salvation is! Everything we are given by Jesus is a sign that you deem us ready to accept to become more like you. By Jesus offering his broken body, in the formed loaf, and in his spilled blood, in the poured cup, he shows the preciousness of life when offered in love to another. By accepting this gift we take on the responsibility of demonstrating this lesson, and articulating the mystery of our faith:

**Christ has died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again!**

In this table, LORD, you pull back the veil and separation between you and your creation. You invite us to dine, commune, with you and sit together for mutual relationship. May all we receive prepare us, and reveal opportunity, to experience the sacrifice and healing of Jesus Christ in all parts of our lives. **Amen.**

### *Receiving the Elements*

LORD, our Father, at this table we receive your goodness and are sent away satisfied. All we have been given is what is necessary to represent your love and opportunity to all we encounter. Let us demonstrate to others what we have found here, what is available, and what walking with Jesus can mean- as seen in 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 prepares us to take on divine work by what he invites us into. So out of what we have, we communicate what the LORD prizes most in our midst.

**Offertory    *He's Got the Whole World*    arr. Livingston**



**\*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 Father, you invite us in to partner in your work and bring about your redemption in all areas of life. You provide means for us to demonstrate this and allow life to flourish from our efforts. Bless what we give, so we might help open eyes to see your true being and truly live. **Amen.**

**\*Hymn #306 Fairest Lord Jesus**

Fairest Lord Jesus,  
Ruler of all nature,  
O Thou of God to earth come down,  
Thee will I cherish,  
Thee will I honor,  
Thou, my soul's glory, joy and crown.

Fair are the meadows,  
Fairer still the woodlands,  
Robed in the blooming garb of spring:  
Jesus is fairer,  
Jesus is purer,  
Who makes the woeful heart to sing.

Fair is the sunshine,  
Fairer still the moonlight,  
And all the twinkling starry host;  
Jesus shines brighter,  
Jesus shines purer  
Than all the angels heaven can boast.

**\*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 *Finale in C Major* arr. Bye**

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

---

*All hymn lyrics and prayers are reproduced and printed with permission from The Presbyterian Hymnal: Hymns, Psalms, and Spiritual Songs (Westminster John Knox Press, 1990), and original writing of Rev. Joseph Svancara.*

*All Scripture lessons are reproduced and printed with permission from the New Revised Standard Bible (NRSV).*

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