



First Presbyterian Church of New Philadelphia

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Rev. Joseph Svancara, Pastor

Easter Sunday Worship Service

April 20, 2025

*All who are able, please stand.

Announcements & Prayer Concerns

Today is the last day we are collecting for the PCUSA's "One Great Hour of Sharing" to benefit the denomination's hunger, disaster, and development ministries. Thank you to everyone who has generously donated!

The Finance Committee will meet this Tuesday (April 22) at 7pm.

Bible Study will be this Wednesday (April 23) at 10am.

AA will meet this Wednesday (April 23) at 8pm.

Our Tables of Eight dinner group will be meeting on Saturday (April 26) at 6pm. The cost is \$10 per person and RSVP is required, either to the church office or with Carolyn Berry.

Our Sunday Morning Study Group will meet on Sunday (April 27) at 9:15am. We will be covering Chapter 7 "Foxe's Book of Martyrs". See Rev. Joe if you wish to attend!

Opening Prayer

LORD, our Father, the resurrection of your Son is a sign of promise and renewal for all of creation. An opening of opportunity, and a breaking of your will through our fears.

Help us to embrace your Jesus and not to fear what his victory changes. **Amen.**

Prelude *Jesus Christ Is Risen Today* arr. Page

***Call to Worship** (Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24)

Give thanks to the LORD, for the LORD is good; God's mercy endures forever.

Let Israel now declare, "God's mercy endures forever."

The LORD is my strength and my song, and has become my salvation. Shouts of rejoicing and salvation echo in the tents of the righteous:

“The right hand of the LORD acts valiantly! The right hand of the LORD is exalted! The right hand of the LORD acts valiantly!”

I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the LORD.

The LORD indeed punished me sorely, but did not hand me over to death.

Open for me the gates of righteousness; I will enter them and give thanks to the LORD.

“This is the gate of the LORD; here the righteous may enter.”

I give thanks to you, for you have answered me and you have become my salvation.

The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.

By the LORD has this been done; it is marvelous in our eyes.

This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Hymn #123 *Jesus Christ Is Risen Today

Jesus Christ is risen today, Alleluia!

Our triumphant holy day, Alleluia!

Who did once, upon the cross, Alleluia!

Suffer to redeem our loss. Alleluia!

Hymns of praise then let us sing, Alleluia!

Unto Christ, our heavenly King, Alleluia!

Who endured the cross and grave, Alleluia!

Sinners to redeem and save. Alleluia!

But the pains which He endured, Alleluia!

Our salvation have procured; Alleluia!

Now above the sky He's king, Alleluia!

Where the angels ever sing. Alleluia!

Sing we to our God above, Alleluia!

Praise eternal as God's love; Alleluia!

Praise our God, ye heavenly host, Alleluia!

Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Alleluia!

***Prayer of Confession**

The tomb is open, the body is gone, the angels have announced, and the women have confirmed. But we still consider all this to be an idle tale and resist the change upon us:

**LORD, our Father, the awakening of your Son from death is beyond anything we know to be true or possible. For all intents and purposes, we should not be here listening to this, but you have called us. Allow your story, allow your renewal, to wash over us and sweep away everything keeping us from embracing you.
Amen.**

***Silent Confessions and Prayers**

***Assurance of Forgiveness**

Jesus is not here in the embrace of death but has gone before us to prepare the way and announce the victory over everything oppressive. By the power of baptism, we are reminded of our liberation and what we are freed to pursue.

**No person, power, or idea can hinder or stop what the LORD sets into motion.
And we wait in anticipation of what this all means.**

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:

Isaiah 65:1-25

65 ¹ I was ready to be sought out by those who did not ask, to be found by those who did not seek me. I said, "Here I am, here I am," to a nation that did not call on my name. ² I held out my hands all day long to a rebellious people, who walk in a way that

is not good, following their own devices; ³ a people who provoke me to my face continually, sacrificing in gardens and offering incense on bricks; ⁴ who sit inside tombs, and spend the night in secret places; who eat swine's flesh, with broth of abominable things in their vessels; ⁵ who say, "Keep to yourself, do not come near me, for I am too holy for you." These are a smoke in my nostrils, a fire that burns all day long. ⁶ See, it is written before me: I will not keep silent, but I will repay; I will indeed repay into their laps ⁷ their iniquities and their ancestors' iniquities together, says the Lord; because they offered incense on the mountains and reviled me on the hills, I will measure into their laps full payment for their actions. ⁸ Thus says the Lord: As the wine is found in the cluster, and they say, "Do not destroy it, for there is a blessing in it," so I will do for my servants' sake, and not destroy them all. ⁹ I will bring forth descendants from Jacob, and from Judah inheritors of my mountains; my chosen shall inherit it, and my servants shall settle there. ¹⁰ Sharon shall become a pasture for flocks, and the Valley of Achor a place for herds to lie down, for my people who have sought me. ¹¹

But you who forsake the Lord, who forget my holy mountain, who set a table for Fortune and fill cups of mixed wine for Destiny; ¹² I will destine you to the sword, and all of you shall bow down to the slaughter; because, when I called, you did not answer, when I spoke, you did not listen, but you did what was evil in my sight, and chose what I did not delight in. ¹³ Therefore thus says the Lord God: My servants shall eat, but you shall be hungry; my servants shall drink, but you shall be thirsty; my servants shall rejoice, but you shall be put to shame; ¹⁴ my servants shall sing for gladness of heart, but you shall cry out for pain of heart, and shall wail for anguish of spirit. ¹⁵ You shall leave your name to my chosen to use as a curse, and the Lord God will put you to death; but to his servants he will give a different name. ¹⁶ Then whoever invokes a blessing in the land shall bless by the God of faithfulness, and whoever takes an oath in the land shall swear by the God of faithfulness; because the former troubles are forgotten and are hidden from my sight. ¹⁷ For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. ¹⁸ But be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating; for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy, and its people as a delight. ¹⁹ I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and delight in my people; no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it, or the cry of distress. ²⁰ No more shall there be in it an infant that lives but a few days, or an old person who does not live out a lifetime; for one who dies at a hundred years will be considered a youth, and one who falls short of a hundred will be considered accursed. ²¹ They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. ²² They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands. ²³ They shall not labor in vain, or bear children for calamity; for they shall be offspring blessed by the Lord—and their descendants as well. ²⁴ Before they call I will answer, while they are yet speaking I will hear. ²⁵ The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox; but the serpent—its food shall be dust! They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, says the Lord.

10 ³⁴ Then Peter began to speak to them: “I truly understand that God shows no partiality, ³⁵ but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. ³⁶ You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. ³⁷ That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: ³⁸ how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. ³⁹ We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; ⁴⁰ but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, ⁴¹ not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. ⁴² He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³ All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

Luke 24:1-12

24 ¹ But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. ² They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³ but when they went in, they did not find the body. ⁴ While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. ⁵ The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. ⁶ Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, ⁷ that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.” ⁸ Then they remembered his words, ⁹ and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. ¹⁰ Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. ¹¹ But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. ¹² But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.

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

Sermon *Easter Sunday*

We come together on this day to celebrate the Resurrection, rebirth, and the realization of the LORD's promises to all of us. We come to realize what is possible, what has been done for us, and what guides us into new meaning and purpose for everything we do. But joy and celebration alone do not mark this occasion. There are also the feelings of shock, uncertainty, doubt, and challenge in what Jesus has accomplished. It is something that does leave a small voice in the back of our minds saying, “Did this really happen?” And it is true that we do not have solid physical evidence; scant archeological and scientific evidence to validate all our claims. The absurdness of this account is even recorded in Luke 24:1-12, with the disciples receiving the witness of the women at the tomb as an ‘idle tale’. However, I posit a different kind of evidence to

the validity of the Resurrection: It is all of us. Everyone gathering to remember and recount the events after all this time, and who continue to see this event as a major turning point for our lives. After all these thousands of years there are those who still draw their purpose from the works of Jesus, showing something has happened beyond human reasoning and explanation. And that is the point of such an event; to break into our world, reset everything we believed, and challenge everything we have trusted in. A rearrangement of the whole of the universe and reality itself so we might see clearer than we ever have before.

That is what allowed St. Peter to stand up and make the proclamation he does in Acts 10:34-43. The same person who denied knowing Jesus three times to not be seen as affiliated with him, intimidated because of the religious authorities, now standing in their own house to make this bold accounting. That can only happen when one realizes the limitations of institutional and human power and ability compared to the divine. The salvation of the LORD does not respect nationality, race, ethnicity, religious affiliation or conviction, but comes to reveal what is true. That is why the view of Christians, then and now, is seen as so dangerous because it is disruptive. It disrupts the status quo, disrupts the power and relational dynamics, and draws attention back to the Creator who is the only one who can judge and govern effectively for the benefit of all.

Isaiah 65:1-25 is the prophet speaking about how the current order is reset and broken by the LORD's entrance and action. Before all were confined to their own little areas and tribes, limited by what they could see and understand. That limitation causes an attitude of, "Keep to yourself, do not come near me, for I am too holy for you". We protect what we know to be true and understand, and destroy anything which threatens it because it threatens our identity. But that is our forgetting our origins, our purpose, and who created and has charge over us. Ancient Israel had that same problem which caused the LORD to break into their status quo, strip away everything they knew to be true and trusted, so they might be opened to renewed revelation and prepared for the divine reality already in their midst. The prophet writes toward the end of the Israelite exile in Babylon to make them aware of the mistakes which caused their blindness and stubbornness before. To prepare them to enter back into life in their homeland with the knowledge of how to live with the LORD in holiness and integrity. Not to be seen as lords in their own right due to their status as 'chosen', but as those who have seen the newness of creation and prepare those around them for its arrival.

The Resurrection becomes more than a story or historical event for us because of how it disrupts and breaks into the way we have done things previously. Before we were so obsessed with actions, thoughts, and beliefs we thought to be true but were only a safety blanket which kept us insulated from the world around us. We thought things could only be a certain way, we could only be a certain way, and were locked into the world of others' making. But with Jesus standing before us in victory, breaking every rule of what we thought to be true, we realize a power beyond anything we can imagine. A power not able to be owned, controlled, or monopolized by anyone and will

act in ways to purposefully bring others together. What once kept us all apart and suspicious of each other is now what makes us sit next to each other, speak and learn from each other, and see life as bigger than we could ever discover alone. The Resurrection is still happening today, the risen Jesus still appearing to all of us right now without explanation, and how we respond is proof that the LORD's salvation still works to make a people who embody the best the divine desires all the world to embrace.

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, 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, Mark Preusser, Stefani Seth, Josh Shaeffer, Marlene Singhaus, Cindy Smith, Derrick & Mandy Smith, Janis Stover, Dean & Heidi Unzicker, Simone Villarruel, Jay Watt, The Friends of the Homeless of Tuscarawas County & The Homeless of Tuscarawas County.

LORD, our Father, the Resurrection is a time and event by which we focus on meaning in the world and in our lives. We have heard this account so many times, experienced the wide range of emotions with your Passion, and have been skeptical at some point about your awakening from death. We wonder, we struggle, about how all this impacts us today and what has truly been changed as a result. But the very fact we are commemorating and celebrating is a sign that something has changed. Our hope has been shifted, our priorities changed, and our perspectives focused more intently on you. You have captured our attention, cut through the walls we have put up, and instructed us what is necessary to move forward. You have erased the dividing walls between former adversaries and enemies and given all a single mission by which we can fulfill together. Keep us mindful to this task, show us how you have broken our human efforts, and what you have replaced so we might have joy abundant.

Even though we celebrate for ourselves, our world shows there are many who do not understand or accept what has happened. Sickness, war, injury, anxiety, suffering, and rage are all indications of a humanity which has not seen or heard of you. In our minds and hearts, we lift up all those in need of your mercy...*Reading the Prayer List*...May the news of the Resurrection, of the Gospel, reach those ears through our smallest efforts.

Moment of Silence

Your Easter miracle is not just for this day or season, but for every day of our lives. Continue to prove the power to defeat death is still with us and in this world, so we might live more confidently 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

We celebrate the liberation of all creation, the ultimate change in the worldly order, by our joyful gifts toward the works of our risen savior.

Offertory *Now the Green Blade Riseth* arr. Page

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, this day is a day of celebration for all you have promised and done. The work is finished, death no longer has the final say, and all powers are put under your feet. Accept our joyful gifts as they are used to make this news known far and wide! **Amen.**

Hymn #105 *Because You Live, O Christ

Because you live, O Christ,
The garden of the world has come to flower;
The darkness of the tomb
Is flooded with Your resurrection power.
The stone has rolled away
And death cannot imprison!
O sing this Easter Day,
For Jesus Christ has risen,
Has risen, has risen, has risen!

Because you live, O Christ,
The spirit bird of hope is freed for flying;
Our cages of despair
No longer keep us closed and life denying.
The stone has rolled away
And death cannot imprison!
O sing this Easter Day,

For Jesus Christ has risen,
Has risen, has risen, has risen!

Because You live, O Christ,
The rainbow of Your peace will span creation,
The colors of Your love
Will draw all humankind to adoration.
The stone has rolled away
And death cannot imprison!
O sing this Easter Day,
For Jesus Christ has risen,
Has risen, has risen, has risen!

***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 *Thine Is the Glory* Handel & Page**

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

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