



**First Presbyterian Church of New Philadelphia**

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**Rev. Joseph Svancara, Pastor**

**Sunday Worship Service**

**April 26, 2026**

\*All who are able, please stand.

**Announcements & Prayer Concerns**

Finance Committee will meet this Tuesday (April 28) at 7pm.

Bible Study will be this Wednesday (April 29) at 10am.

AA will meet this Wednesday (April 29) at 8pm.

Our Sunday Morning Study Group will be meeting next Sunday (May 3) at 9:15am.

Next Sunday (May 3) is our "First Celebration Sunday" with Holy Communion in worship followed by our church brunch. All are welcome!

**Opening Prayer**

LORD, our Creator, you are more than just the good shepherd who provides what we need, you also are the assurance of where home and possibility originate from. Help us to hear your voice, to understand where it comes from, that we might be led on a pathway of peace and security for all we do. **Amen.**

**Prelude    *The Lord's Shepherd*    Arr. R Hughes**

**\*Call to Worship (Psalm 100)**

Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all you lands! Serve the LORD with gladness; come into God's presence with a song.

**Know that the LORD is God, our maker to whom we belong; we are God's people and the sheep of God's pasture.**

Enter the gates of the LORD with thanksgiving and the courts with praise; give thanks and bless God's holy name.

**Good indeed is the LORD, whose steadfast love is everlasting, whose faithfulness endures from age to age.**

**\*Hymn #118    *The Day of Resurrection!***

The day of resurrection!  
Earth, tell it out abroad;  
The Passover of gladness,  
The Passover of God.  
From death to life eternal,  
From this world unto the sky,  
Our Christ hath brought us over  
With hymns of victory.

Our hearts be pure from evil,  
That we may see aright  
The Lord in rays eternal  
Of resurrection light;  
And listening to His accents,  
May hear, so calm and plain,  
His own "All hail!" and, hearing,  
May raise the victor strain.

Now let the heavens be joyful,  
Let earth the song begin,  
Let the round world keep triumph,  
And all that is therein;  
Let all things seen and unseen  
Their notes of gladness blend,  
For Christ the Lord his risen,  
Our joy that hath no end.

**\*Prayer of Confession**

Even when we recognize the good shepherd of our souls we too-willingly trust others who claim to speak or know the divine better than others:

**LORD, our Creator, you are the watchful sovereign over our lives and this world, who holds accountable all those who claim to speak in your name. Though we know you we often wander from you to pursue the ideas of others, which turn out to be false and lead to dead-ends. Help us to return, to recognize and memorize your voice, and know where to go to seek your assurance. Amen.**

**\*Silent Confessions and Prayers**

**\*Assurance of Forgiveness**

Even when we wander we have a shepherd, a leader, a warrior willing to go to the ends of creation to protect us, guide us, and bring us home.

**When we reach the end of our wanderings Jesus is willing to pick us up to bring us back. We submit, accept, and rejoice in this one-of-a-kind strength!**

**\*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:

Ezekiel 34:1-31

34 <sup>1</sup> The word of the Lord came to me: <sup>2</sup> Mortal, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel: prophesy, and say to them—to the shepherds: Thus says the Lord God: Ah, you shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? <sup>3</sup> You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fatlings; but you do not feed the sheep. <sup>4</sup> You have not strengthened the weak, you have not healed the sick, you have not bound up the injured, you have not brought back the strayed, you have not sought the lost, but with force and harshness you have ruled them. <sup>5</sup> So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd; and scattered, they became food for all the wild animals. <sup>6</sup> My sheep were scattered, they wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill; my sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth, with no one to search or seek for them. <sup>7</sup> Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: <sup>8</sup> As I live, says the Lord God, because my sheep have become a prey, and my sheep have become food for all the wild animals, since there was no shepherd; and because my shepherds have not searched for my sheep, but the shepherds have fed themselves, and have not fed my sheep; <sup>9</sup> therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: <sup>10</sup> Thus says the Lord God, I am against the

shepherds; and I will demand my sheep at their hand, and put a stop to their feeding the sheep; no longer shall the shepherds feed themselves. I will rescue my sheep from their mouths, so that they may not be food for them. <sup>11</sup> For thus says the Lord God: I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. <sup>12</sup> As shepherds seek out their flocks when they are among their scattered sheep, so I will seek out my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places to which they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. <sup>13</sup> I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the watercourses, and in all the inhabited parts of the land. <sup>14</sup> I will feed them with good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel shall be their pasture; there they shall lie down in good grazing land, and they shall feed on rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. <sup>15</sup> I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord God. <sup>16</sup> I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with justice. <sup>17</sup> As for you, my flock, thus says the Lord God: I shall judge between sheep and sheep, between rams and goats: <sup>18</sup> Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture, but you must tread down with your feet the rest of your pasture? When you drink of clear water, must you foul the rest with your feet? <sup>19</sup> And must my sheep eat what you have trodden with your feet, and drink what you have fouled with your feet? <sup>20</sup> Therefore, thus says the Lord God to them: I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. <sup>21</sup> Because you pushed with flank and shoulder, and butted at all the weak animals with your horns until you scattered them far and wide, <sup>22</sup> I will save my flock, and they shall no longer be ravaged; and I will judge between sheep and sheep. <sup>23</sup> I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. <sup>24</sup> And I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them; I, the Lord, have spoken. <sup>25</sup> I will make with them a covenant of peace and banish wild animals from the land, so that they may live in the wild and sleep in the woods securely. <sup>26</sup> I will make them and the region around my hill a blessing; and I will send down the showers in their season; they shall be showers of blessing. <sup>27</sup> The trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield its increase. They shall be secure on their soil; and they shall know that I am the Lord, when I break the bars of their yoke, and save them from the hands of those who enslaved them. <sup>28</sup> They shall no more be plunder for the nations, nor shall the animals of the land devour them; they shall live in safety, and no one shall make them afraid. <sup>29</sup> I will provide for them a splendid vegetation so that they shall no more be consumed with hunger in the land, and no longer suffer the insults of the nations. <sup>30</sup> They shall know that I, the Lord their God, am with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are my people, says the Lord God. <sup>31</sup> You are my sheep, the sheep of my pasture and I am your God, says the Lord God.

#### 1 Peter 2:1-10

2 <sup>1</sup> Rid yourselves, therefore, of all malice, and all guile, insincerity, envy, and all slander. <sup>2</sup> Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation— <sup>3</sup> if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. <sup>4</sup> Come to him, a

living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and  
like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood,  
to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. <sup>6</sup> For it stands in  
scripture: "See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious; and  
whoever believes in him will not be put to shame." <sup>7</sup> To you then who believe, he is  
precious; but for those who do not believe, "The stone that the builders rejected has  
become the very head of the corner," <sup>8</sup> and "A stone that makes them stumble, and a  
rock that makes them fall." They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were  
destined to do. <sup>9</sup> But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's  
own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out  
of darkness into his marvelous light. <sup>10</sup> Once you were not a people, but now you are  
God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

### John 10:1-21

<sup>10</sup> <sup>1</sup> "Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but  
climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. <sup>2</sup> The one who enters by the gate is the  
shepherd of the sheep. <sup>3</sup> The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear  
his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. <sup>4</sup> When he has brought  
out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know  
his voice. <sup>5</sup> They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do  
not know the voice of strangers." <sup>6</sup> Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they  
did not understand what he was saying to them. <sup>7</sup> So again Jesus said to them, "Very  
truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. <sup>8</sup> All who came before me are thieves and  
bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. <sup>9</sup> I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will  
be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. <sup>10</sup> The thief comes only to steal  
and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. <sup>11</sup> I am the  
good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. <sup>12</sup> The hired hand,  
who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves  
the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. <sup>13</sup> The hired  
hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. <sup>14</sup> I am the good  
shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, <sup>15</sup> just as the Father knows me and I  
know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. <sup>16</sup> I have other sheep that do not  
belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will  
be one flock, one shepherd. <sup>17</sup> For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down  
my life in order to take it up again. <sup>18</sup> No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my  
own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have  
received this command from my Father." <sup>19</sup> Again the Jews were divided because of  
these words. <sup>20</sup> Many of them were saying, "He has a demon and is out of his mind.  
Why listen to him?" <sup>21</sup> Others were saying, "These are not the words of one who has a  
demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?"

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

**Sermon    *The Fourth Sunday of Easter***

Jesus as the good shepherd is the quintessential image of the Christian faith. Having a savior and teacher who is tender, kind, patient, and provides all that we need as his followers. And when we think about the world and all the teachings, ideologies, and practices out there it feels like we are taking in real nourishment for the first time. The Resurrection reveals the one who can provide all that we need and is trustworthy to provide all that we need. But do we rely too much on that image, that mentality, and are too dependent on Jesus to give us what we need? Of course, he knows us better and gives what is needed to be well. But it ignores the fact that sheep have minds, decide things for themselves, and have the tendency to explore and wander. That in itself is not bad because we are using the bodies and wills the divine has created for us, but it is what we choose to do with them that necessitates a shepherd. But not one who does everything for us, keeps us penned up for eternity, and never realize our place within the greater flock.

In John 10, even before Jesus declares himself the good shepherd, he describes himself as the gate. In ancient shepherding the animals were not penned up their whole lives, they were taken to wander and graze and then brought back to the pen at night for safety. The gate represents home, security, belonging, and a tangible community where one plays an active part. Jesus realizes we have the ability to get up and walk, and so he leads us and gives us opportunity to explore beyond our little home at what the wider creation has to offer. Knowing where home is and who we can trust is part of the process of being built into something purposeful, coming into our own as we were created to be, and realizing how we can promote and bring people to the one we trust with our very lives. We are called not to simply inbreed within the flock to increase the numbers, but to actively seek beyond and into other flocks who is lacking that one who provides growth.

That is what Ezekiel 34 speaks about in calling out false shepherds and those who abuse the flock. Ezekiel was a member of the priesthood of Israel, part of the class who instructed and taught people what it meant to be members of the LORD's holy promise to the world. But many members did not take that job seriously, or they wore a mask to cover up their true intentions within the job. The Hebrew scriptures are full of examples of priests who stole from the people's sacrifices, charged extraordinary prices for services, attempted to change the worship to suit themselves, or reveled too much in privilege instead of holy responsibility. And the people were the ones to pay the price for that. That is why the LORD promises a day to come when he will strip each of those false shepherds of the privilege, end their reign of selfishness and ignorance, and set up a true shepherd to nurture and build the people. Represented by David, one taken from being a shepherd of animals to lead a whole nation, to show the mentality of one who would truly guide the people into their ideal lives. One day the LORD will force all people to drop the mask they are wearing and reveal to the whole world what they are representing.

St. Peter promises that in 1 Peter 2 when he speaks to the Christians about their purpose as a people gathering under the name of Jesus Christ. That they were raised from spiritual infancy with the gospel, and now had the responsibility to represent and articulate what they know to be true. Each has been quarried from the world to build the dwelling place of the LORD, to represent all that the divine is and desires for humanity. They were not idle spectators to this, and neither are we, but living and active to show the level of impact the teachings of Jesus have on everyday life. We have been rescued and redeemed from everything false to show the power of the divine to nurture and renew. To prepare for the day when evil destroys itself, makes refugees of its once-faithful believers, and demonstrate the goodness of the LORD verses everything else. To prepare for when all the masks fall away and all intentions are revealed. We are to grow into people who stand for something that others will compare with everything else, and what will their determination be based on how they see us now?

The Resurrection is more than just a new chance of life, but to grow into something better and more life-sustaining. To demonstrate where it is we get our nourishment from, who we listen too, and where home truly is located. It is not about having everything provided for us, but what we do now that we have found one capable of provision. Will we just sit on the sidelines and be passive in the face of what the powers in the world inflict? Or will we go out in confidence of what we have been raised to be and demonstrate that which is more capable in the face of chaotic powers? Now is our chance to venture and make known why we trust in the one voice before all others, and why we willingly keep coming back despite promises made by all others.

### **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, you are the good, righteous, and proper shepherd for our lives and beings, the one who knows us better than we know ourselves. You have been with us in every high and low in life, every triumph and excitement, and in every mistake and purposeful neglect we have committed. There is nothing we can hide from you, nothing we can do to mask over our mistakes- and we do not have too. Even when we wander so far you come after us, wait for us, and provide that mercy needed when we are ready to experience it. All in life leads up to that moment of mercy that changes us, resets our expectations, and fills us with what truly is created for our good. Your Resurrection is an assurance of the way you have made, where we can find it, and

how we might return from the waywardness of life. Help us to accept, to know, to memorize, that voice which calls out to us and lets us know who we are and what we can do. Who silences all other voices and ideas that we might no longer struggle or be in fear.

We call upon that confident, firm, and gentle voice for all the fears, struggles, anxieties, and uncertainties of life we face. For ourselves, and for others...*Reading of the Prayer List*...LORD, in your loving mercy, hear our prayer.

### *Moment of Silence*

We praise you LORD for making a way, an ethic, a life that we can follow and guide others into. While we are charged with a responsibility as your people, it is a work that you promise is possible for those who trust in you. So that your gifted words can dwell and guide all people who pray:

### **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 promises provision to all people to find the proper way, and our gifts help in the task of aiding that pursuit.

### **Offertory    *Reflections*    Arr. R Hughes**

#### **\*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, in how we give we imitate and recognize all that you do. The way you provide and guide the lost, make a home for those lacking, and security for those in fear. May all that your Church does assist in this task so we might understand more what is ahead of us to fulfill and complete our lives. **Amen.**

#### **\*Hymn #115    *Come, Ye Faithful, Raise the Strain***

Come, ye faithful, raise the strain  
of triumphant gladness;

God hath brought forth Israel  
into joy from sadness;  
loosed from Pharaoh's bitter yoke  
Jacob's sons and daughters,  
led them with unmoistened foot  
through the Red Sea waters.

'Tis the spring of souls today;  
Christ hath burst his prison,  
and from three days' sleep in death  
as a sun hath risen;  
now rejoice, Jerusalem,  
and with true affection  
welcome in unwearied strains  
Jesus' resurrection!

**\*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 *Rejoice! Be Glad!* Arr. T Kendall**

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

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