



First Presbyterian Church of New Philadelphia

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Rev. Joseph Svancara, Pastor

**Sunday Worship Service
May 4, 2025**

*All who are able, please stand.

Announcements & Prayer Concerns

Today is our monthly church brunch following service. All are invited!

Bible Study will be this Wednesday (May 7) at 10am.

AA will meet this Wednesday (May 7) at 8pm.

Our Sunday Morning Study Group will meet on Sunday (May 4) at 9:15am. We will be covering Chapter 9 "Foxe's Book of Martyrs". See Rev. Joe if you wish to attend!

We will not be holding our Friends of the Homeless dinner next Sunday due to Mother's Day. Instead, we will be delivering a meal for them after service. While meal funds are good, consider donating toward our other Friends of the Homeless efforts (Operations Fund/Jack's House of Hope).

Graduation Sunday will be held on May 18 during service. If there is a graduate you wish to see honored, please let the church office know before May 15.

Opening Prayer

LORD, our Father, you have placed the spirit of the prophets within us to give your good news to all we know. Your Jesus has charged us with feeding the sheep. Help us realize what we can do within a world which does not know you, but awaits for its eventual salvation. **Amen.**

Prelude *O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing* arr. Kelly

***Call to Worship (Psalm 30)**

I will exalt you, O LORD, because you have lifted me up and have not let my enemies triumph over me.

O LORD my God, I cried out to you, and you restored me to health.

You brought me up, O LORD, from the dead; you restored my life as I was going down to the grave.

Sing praise to the LORD, all you faithful; give thanks in holy remembrance.

God's wrath is short; God's favor lasts a lifetime.

Weeping spends the night, but joy comes in the morning.

While I felt secure, I said, "I shall never be disturbed. You, LORD, with your favor, made me as strong as the mountains."

Then you hid your face, and I was filled with fear.

I cried to you, O LORD; I pleaded with my LORD, saying, "What profit is there in my blood, if I go down to the pit? Will the dust praise you or declare your faithfulness?"

Hear, O LORD, and have mercy upon me; O LORD, be my helper."

You have turned my wailing into dancing; you have put off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy.

Therefore my heart sings to you without ceasing; O LORD my God, I will give you thanks forever.

Hymn #517 *We Come as Guests Invited

We come as guests invited
When Jesus bids us dine,
His friends on earth united
To share the bread and wine;
The bread of life is broken,
The wine is freely poured
For us, in solemn token
Of Christ our dying Lord.

We eat and drink receiving
From Christ the grace we need,
And in our hearts believing
On Him by faith we feed;
With wonder and thanksgiving
For love that knows no end,
We find in Jesus living
Our ever-present Friend.

One bread is ours for sharing,
One single fruitful vine,
Our fellowship declaring
Renewed in bread and wine:
Renewed, sustained, and given
By token, sign, and word,
The pledge and seal of heaven,
The love of Christ our Lord.

***Prayer of Confession**

In the midst of our frustrations, confusion, and despair we cry out to the LORD who promised to restore for something greater:

LORD, our Father, you have tasked us with feeding your sheep, giving your good news, and living your salvation. But we confess we have not done so with all our might, and still look for reasons to exclude and write-off others. We do not know what to do or how to teach, but in trusting your Spirit alone we can know. Amen.

***Silent Confessions and Prayers**

***Assurance of Forgiveness**

Out of our confusion, our despair, and our nothingness the LORD turns mourning into dancing and darkness into infinite light!

The LORD can make a way out of anything and anyone, so let us focus on exemplifying him first before anything.

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 61:1-11

61 ¹ The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; ² to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; ³ to provide for those who mourn in Zion—to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, to display his glory. ⁴ They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations. ⁵ Strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, foreigners shall till your land and dress your vines; ⁶ but you shall be called priests of the Lord, you shall be named ministers of our God; you shall enjoy the wealth of the nations, and in their riches you shall glory. ⁷ Because their shame was double, and dishonor was proclaimed as their lot, therefore they shall possess a double portion; everlasting joy shall be theirs. ⁸ For I the Lord love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. ⁹ Their descendants shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed. ¹⁰ I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. ¹¹ For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.

Revelation 5:1-14

5 ¹ Then I saw in the right hand of the one seated on the throne a scroll written on the inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals; ² and I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" ³ And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it. ⁴ And I began to weep bitterly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. ⁵ Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep. See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals." ⁶ Then I saw between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders a Lamb standing as if it had been slaughtered, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. ⁷ He went and took the scroll from the right hand of the one who was seated on

the throne. ⁸ When he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell before the Lamb, each holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. ⁹ They sing a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation; ¹⁰ you have made them to be a kingdom and priests serving our God, and they will reign on earth." ¹¹ Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels surrounding the throne and the living creatures and the elders; they numbered myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, ¹² singing with full voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" ¹³ Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, singing, "To the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!" ¹⁴ And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" And the elders fell down and worshiped.

John 21:1-19

21 ¹ After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. ² Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. ³ Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. ⁴ Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵ Jesus said to them, "Children, you have no fish, have you?" They answered him, "No." ⁶ He said to them, "Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. ⁷ That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the sea. ⁸ But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off. ⁹ When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. ¹⁰ Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." ¹¹ So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. ¹² Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?" because they knew it was the Lord. ¹³ Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. ¹⁴ This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead. ¹⁵ When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs." ¹⁶ A second time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep." ¹⁷ He said to him the third time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him,

“Feed my sheep. ¹⁸ Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go.” ¹⁹ (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, “Follow me.”

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

Sermon *The Third Sunday of Easter*

Part of understanding the impact of the Resurrection on this world, and our lives, is understanding and reacting to the world's impression of it. It is obvious that many do not believe the claims we make, or cast doubt on our witness. Many theories about how the crucifixion took place, or if Jesus really died, abound and influences people's beliefs and actions. The way people act in the world, the way nations roar against one another, how neighbor treats neighbor, indicates the god and faith they already hold. So how do we as the fellowship live amid all that, interact with those kinds who seek us out, and be a presence of comfort and certainty?

The prophet speaks to this uncertainty and hope in Isaiah 61:1-11. Many know this is the same passage Jesus uses as his inaugural sermon, and the reason why he taught and lived the way he did. His coming is a liberation to people stuck in darkness, blinded by the distractions of the world, and imprisoned under others' expectations and standards. This was Isaiah, or the prophetic community at the time, speaking why the divine voice was necessary during the time of Israel's exile- as harsh and deliberate it could be at times. It echoes back even to the time of the Exodus from Egypt, when Israel was enslaved and deprived of their ability to worship the LORD. Sure, they knew about the LORD, had the stories of the patriarchs, and intellectually knew of his existence. But they were not able to worship, act, and live according to his character and expectations. The Egyptians dominated them, their beliefs crushing the people of the LORD in ways which hurt and deprived them. Until the LORD granted them liberation by the prophet Moses, and received the law by his hand, which showed and proved the way they should go. The same is happening after Israel was conquered by Babylon, and teaching the people of the LORD how to live amid a people who do not recognize the LORD- except through how they see Israel. How they will act, how they listen to the prophetic guidance, will be how they will affect the world and usher in the healing needed.

For the fellowship that prophetic guidance comes to its height in Revelation 5:1-14.

The way St. John wrote revelation was being a prophetic voice to the Christian community then and now, and not just at the end. What does the faith provide, how does Christ reign amid their struggles, and what does it mean to live in a world blinded to the already-and-not-yet reign of the LORD? The number of seals on official scrolls and documents indicates their importance and who they are meant for. The number seven is used throughout scripture as a number of completion, of divinity, of an

authority and power beyond all else in the human world. The fact that Jesus can take the scroll and open its seals shows the importance and power the LORD has given to him, and the capability to carry out the LORD's tasks. In a world where the belief in intermediaries in religion and in the divine order was rampant, because one NEVER approached the king or emperor themselves, the access to Jesus speaks volumes. All authority is settled in the person of Jesus, all guidance is seen in the teachings of Jesus, and the example of Jesus is what will catch attention and make it focus. Jesus is in the place he is because of the desire the LORD has to liberate and unite all creation back to where it should be. To include even those with authoritarian beliefs and ideas, enemies who seek our destruction or discredit, or those who mistake or underestimate what we do.

It fulfills the request of the risen Jesus in John 21:1-19. The fact that Jesus is asking the disciple who betrayed him so numerous and vehemently shows the power of the Resurrection to guide and reorient toward what is best. To "feed my sheep" means to go and find the sheep in the first place; those who have wandered, those who have amnesia, and who may have picked up the bad habits of the world while away. To teach, exemplify, and make real the holy instruction which gives identity and purpose. Sometimes it will be very labor intensive and painstaking work, and will take a while with no immediate gratification, but will serve to not only restore those to the faith but refine our faith in the process. Making us understand our place within the Gospel, and what we have been built up and where we have been purposefully placed to accomplish.

Our work should be that of inclusion for the purpose of liberation, of showing and teaching others what the Resurrection provides and indicates what we can be. It is not a historical event we just recount like clockwork, but something we are invited to participate in. Jesus' presence liberated the disciples, and the worst of them, to true faith and understanding. He provided generously to all who saw him, and did not hide anything even when rejected and criticized. Know that the Resurrection shows a power that we should respect and gather around around the most, but also shows something better than the world. How we live with and act shows others how important it is, which is a better proof than any physical evidence or reasoning can provide.

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, 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.

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!**

We give up our joy, excitement, celebration, and merriment to you, our LORD, whose promises are from eternity and lead into eternity. You made the world and everything in it, guided all things to this moment in time, and invite all to taste and see the good you can make. Before we were distant from one another, and now we are together. Once we were at each other's throats for power and control, and now we seek peace and harmony among ourselves. We are different and think differently, but can come together for a common cause. Your Jesus has changed everything and makes us see all things, and people, differently. You have freed us to worship you with all our hearts and no longer to be controlled or manipulated. So we celebrate this eternal triumph with all the hosts of creation in their song:

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.

By the broken bread, the broken body, and the blessed cup, the spilled blood, we do not despair in what has been but glory in what is to come. These mark the signs of the Kingdom in our grasp, the victory over every power and idea which seeks to dominate.

You have empowered your fellowship to engage with a distracted world and destructive ideas. To exemplify a better way, to demonstrate a healing possible, and a harmony which causes wars and uproaring to cease. You are leading all toward this fantastic conclusion, and you have charged us to aid in that outcome in all we do. To articulate the mystery of faith in all our walks in life:

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

Fill us with your Spirit, and remind us of what was provided for our vital work. All we do is of importance with making the Gospel known to all, and each person has been charged with making your good news come to life. Guide us all in that discovery and engagement, and to never see enemies but friends in all we do. So the world gives you glory for all you have set into motion.

Amen.

Receiving the Elements

LORD, our Father, you have uplifted us in body and spirit to your good news and possibilities. By what you have blessed through your Word and Sacraments, let us take to those who need it so all might understand this world as you see it. To no longer be tricked by the works of evil, but to overcome by the word of our testimony in you. To live the prayer you have taught:

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

In the joy of the Resurrection, let us give toward the teaching and inclusion of all into this fellowship and its work!

Offertory *I Need Thee Every Hour* arr. Lowry

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 all people to the joy of your fellowship and salvation. What you provide is a clue for how we might include, feed, and heal your precious sheep from flock's unknown. Help us to trust in your guidance, and where your works lead us for our betterment. **Amen.**

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

Come, ye faithful, raise the strain
Of triumphant gladness;
God had brought forth Israel
Into joy from sadness;
Loosed by Pharoh'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 Ye Pure in Heart* arr. Diemer**

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

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