



**First Presbyterian Church of New Philadelphia**

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**Rev. Joseph Svancara, Pastor**

**Sunday Worship Service  
December 24, 2025**

\*All who are able, please stand.

**Welcome**

**Opening Prayer**

LORD, our Creator, on this night you remind us of how you have come into the world. You come into our problems, issues, fears, and uncertainties. You declare your good news when things are at their darkest, so the dawning of your light will be the most glorious. Remind us of what we can do to welcome you and celebrate that you are with us always. **Amen.**

**Prelude *It Came Upon The Midnight Clear* arr. L A Warriner**

**\*Call to Worship (Psalm 96)**

Sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth.

**Sing to the LORD, bless the name of the LORD; proclaim God's salvation from day to day.**

Declare God's glory among the nations and God's wonders among all peoples.

**For great is the LORD and greatly to be praised, more to be feared than all gods.**

As for all the gods of the nations, they are but idols; but you, O LORD, have made the heavens.

**Majesty and magnificence are in your presence; power and splendor are in your sanctuary.**

Ascribe to the LORD, you families of the peoples, ascribe to the LORD honor and power.

**Ascribe to the LORD the honor due the holy name; bring offerings and enter the courts of the LORD.**

Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness; tremble before the LORD, all the earth.

**Tell it out among the nations: "The LORD is king! The one who made the world so firm that it cannot be moved will judge the peoples with equity."**

Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea thunder and all that is in it; let the field be joyful and all that is therein.

**Then shall all the trees of the wood shout for joy at your coming, O LORD, for you come to judge the earth. You will judge the world with righteousness and the peoples with your truth.**

**\*Hymn #31    *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing***

Hark! The herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the newborn King.  
Peace on earth, and mercy mild,  
God and sinners reconciled!"  
Joyful, all ye nations rise,  
Join the triumph of the skies;  
With the angelic host proclaim,  
"Christ is born in Bethlehem!"  
Hark! the herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the newborn King!"

Christ, by highest heaven adored,  
Christ the everlasting Lord!  
Late in time, behold Him come,  
Offspring of the virgin's womb.  
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;  
Hail the incarnate Deity,  
Pleased in flesh with us to dwell,  
Jesus our Emmanuel.  
Hark! the herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the newborn King!"

Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace!  
Hail the Sun of Righteousness!  
Light and life to all He brings,  
Risen with healing in His wings.  
Mild He lays His glory by,  
Born that we no more may die.  
Born to raise us from the earth,  
Born to give us second birth.

Hark! the herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the newborn King!"

**\*Prayer of Confession**

The glory of the LORD shines around us and beacons us to walk into something unexplainable, but we confess we allow our uncertainties and fears to override all of that:

**LORD, our Creator, we confess that we allow the weight and problems of the world to dictate what we do and how we feel. We see reports of abusive and misused power, false wisdom and hope given, and guarantees that will never amount to anything. But in the coming of Jesus, your true Son, you provide what we need to live despite all of that. Allow us to look past what discourages us so we might see the hope within our reach. Amen.**

**\*Silent Confessions and Prayers**

**\*Assurance of Forgiveness**

Into all of our hopes and fears, the Savior of the world appears so we might know what is true, right, and life-giving.

**By our confession, our proclamation, of what the LORD is doing we realize who we are and can become by that help.**

**\*Hymn #29    *Go, Tell It On The Mountain***

Go, tell it on the mountain,  
over the hills and everywhere;  
go, tell it on the mountain  
that Jesus Christ is born!

While shepherds kept their watching  
o'er silent flocks by night,  
behold, throughout the heavens  
there shone a holy light.  
Go, tell it on the mountain,  
over the hills and everywhere;  
go, tell it on the mountain  
that Jesus Christ is born!

The shepherds feared and trembled  
when lo! above the earth  
rang out the angel chorus  
that hailed our Savior's birth.  
Go, tell it on the mountain,

over the hills and everywhere;  
go, tell it on the mountain  
that Jesus Christ is born!

Down in a lowly stable  
the humble Christ was born,  
and God sent us salvation  
that blessed Christmas morn.  
Go, tell it on the mountain,  
over the hills and everywhere;  
go, tell it on the mountain  
that Jesus Christ is born!

### **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 9:1-21

9 <sup>1</sup> But there will be no gloom for those who were in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. <sup>2</sup> The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness— on them light has shined. <sup>3</sup> You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder. <sup>4</sup> For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. <sup>5</sup> For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire. <sup>6</sup> For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,

Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. <sup>7</sup> His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this. <sup>8</sup> The Lord sent a word against Jacob, and it fell on Israel; <sup>9</sup> and all the people knew it— Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria— but in pride and arrogance of heart they said: <sup>10</sup> “The bricks have fallen, but we will build with dressed stones; the sycamores have been cut down, but we will put cedars in their place.” <sup>11</sup> So the Lord raised adversaries against them, and stirred up their enemies, <sup>12</sup> the Arameans on the east and the Philistines on the west, and they devoured Israel with open mouth. For all this his anger has not turned away; his hand is stretched out still. <sup>13</sup> The people did not turn to him who struck them, or seek the Lord of hosts. <sup>14</sup> So the Lord cut off from Israel head and tail, palm branch and reed in one day— <sup>15</sup> elders and dignitaries are the head, and prophets who teach lies are the tail; <sup>16</sup> for those who led this people led them astray, and those who were led by them were left in confusion. <sup>17</sup> That is why the Lord did not have pity on their young people, or compassion on their orphans and widows; for everyone was godless and an evildoer, and every mouth spoke folly. For all this his anger has not turned away; his hand is stretched out still. <sup>18</sup> For wickedness burned like a fire, consuming briars and thorns; it kindled the thickets of the forest, and they swirled upward in a column of smoke. <sup>19</sup> Through the wrath of the Lord of hosts the land was burned, and the people became like fuel for the fire; no one spared another. <sup>20</sup> They gorged on the right, but still were hungry, and they devoured on the left, but were not satisfied; they devoured the flesh of their own kindred; <sup>21</sup> Manasseh devoured Ephraim, and Ephraim Manasseh, and together they were against Judah. For all this his anger has not turned away; his hand is stretched out still.

#### Titus 2:11-15

2 <sup>11</sup> For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, <sup>12</sup> training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, <sup>13</sup> while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. <sup>14</sup> He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds. <sup>15</sup> Declare these things; exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one look down on you.

#### Luke 2:1-20

2 <sup>1</sup> In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. <sup>2</sup> This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. <sup>3</sup> All went to their own towns to be registered. <sup>4</sup> Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. <sup>5</sup> He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. <sup>6</sup> While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. <sup>7</sup> And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was

no place for them in the inn. <sup>8</sup> In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup> Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: <sup>11</sup> to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” <sup>13</sup> And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, <sup>14</sup> “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!” <sup>15</sup> When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” <sup>16</sup> So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup> When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; <sup>18</sup> and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. <sup>19</sup> But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. <sup>20</sup> The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

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

### **Sermon    *The Nativity of the Lord***

When we celebrate Christmas, we are not celebrating the birth of a new religion, ideology, or another wise teacher. We celebrate something more, something deeper, and much more expansive which connects us all together. And not just those in the Christian community, but humanity as a whole. The themes of light in the darkness, welcoming the stranger, and outreach to the disregarded touches on some of the core needs a person in any culture, place, or time has. And it is an event which is not confined to an ancient, distant, Roman providence. It lives and breathes right now and shows what is real within our own struggles- which have barely changed as the ages roll.

When the prophet Isaiah was speaking about one who would be called “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” he was speaking to a people who were caught in a violent disarray. This prophecy was given in the middle of what is called the “Syro-Ephraimite War”, a war about political advantage, regime change, and the future of the monarchy and the LORD’s promise to David. Attempts of the other nations to usurp the monarchy of Judah to achieve political victory left the rulers and people wondering what guarantee they had for the future. And the LORD promised through the prophet a child shall be born to continue the lineage, to be the promised ruler needed, and a sign that earthly ambition cannot topple divine promise. Later Christian teachers applied this prophecy to Jesus, one who was also born under political uncertainty and fear of what was left for those faithful to the LORD.

But it is not just the birth of Jesus himself, it was who received that declaration first. It was not the political elites in Rome of Jerusalem, not the priests in the temple or

religious scholars, but the shepherds in the field. Those on the outside of power, those who lived under the shadow of oppression and uncertainty, and given an opportunity to see the LORD was working for them as much as anyone. Not by toppling empires or instigating revolutions, as some might be tempted to do. But to know that the LORD responds to the needs of his people, and provides a resource and wisdom to save us and not the systems we find ourselves in. To rejuvenate and heal us first and foremost, and from what we are given we then use to heal what is around us.

When the apostle Titus wrote to later faith communities he would write in the manner of how Christians demonstrated the LORD's salvation where they are. And it was not by conquering anything, establishing something new, revolting against power, but living in a way which nurtured society around them and gave reason for others to look up and see the dawn that has arrived. The salvation of the LORD affects us so that we might become a source of nourishment to others who need it and to demonstrate the wisdom that has entered the world.

Jesus Christ is rightly called a 'king', but his story is not one of aristocratic upbringing, religious establishment and acceptance, or political success. But setting a standard for how the world works, should work, and was designed to work from the start. How human beings are to relate to each other, depend on each other, and offer what is needed for mutual success. Jesus sets the goal for us to aspire too when we set aside all selfish ambition, and the fear of being without, and embrace seeing the world through the eyes of the Creator and not some other pretender. Light illuminates, guides, warms, and protects those in its embrace. The LORD has done so across the millennia to bring us to this point. Let us imitate the one we celebrate and make this light known in every small way so others can experience what has changed.

### **Prayer of Thanksgiving**

LORD, our Creator, this season and celebration means so much to so many people. It can mean warmth, family, celebration, and appreciation for all we have. But for others it can be a painful reminder, a haunting emptiness, a desperation and despair of what was lost or never even found. But your coming, your good news, means the same in both instances because your Son has come for all people. He fills the hungry with good things, and sends the rich away empty-handed. He lifts up the humble, and humbles the proud. He demonstrates what society and life can be when we allow divine love, wisdom, and guidance to override all our tendencies. It gives us a reason to be happy when all other things remind us of misery, incompleteness, and unfinished works. This night is a promise that you walk with us to change EVERYTHING in our midst, and reset us to what we are supposed to be. A reminder that darkness can never cover or overshadow what the light brings. That illumination is available to all who are willing to put that first.

For all the joys and concerns, celebrations and pains, in our hearts and lives we ask for that illumination to shine and make clear the direction you are leading us all in. Amid

oppression in all its forms, we trust your Spirit will provide a way to live and proclaim your goodness where it is needed. So we might be one people, united by one Spirit, driven by one cause, to pray and live the prayer you have given us:

### **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.**

### **\*Hymn #44    *O Little Town Of Bethlehem***

O little town of Bethlehem,  
How still we see thee lie!  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep  
The silent stars go by.  
Yet in thy dark streets shineth  
The everlasting light;  
The hopes and fears of all the years  
Are met in thee tonight.

For Christ is born of Mary,  
And gathered all above,  
While mortals sleep, the angels keep  
Their watch of wondering love.  
O morning stars together  
Proclaim the holy birth!  
And praises sing to God the King,  
And peace to men on earth!

How silently, how silently,  
The wondrous gift is given!  
So God imparts to human hearts  
The blessings of His heaven.  
No ear may hear His coming,  
But in this world of sin,  
Where meek souls will receive Him still,  
The dear Christ enters in.

O holy Child of Bethlehem,  
Descend to us, we pray;  
Cast out our sin, and enter in,  
Be born in us today.  
We hear the Christmas angels

The great glad tidings tell;  
O come to us, abide with us,  
Our Lord Emmanuel!

**\*Passing of the Light**

As the LORD comes to illuminate the whole world, and each of our lives, we are tasked by our own means to illumine each other. To speak words, perform acts, and entertain thoughts that drive away the darkness and make room to see what lies ahead. As we accept the light of Christ lit tonight, and pass it to each other, let it be a holy reminder of what our lives should be.

**\*Hymn #60    *Silent Night, Holy Night***

Silent night, holy night!  
All is calm, all is bright,  
Round yon virgin mother and Child!  
Holy Infant, so tender and mild,  
Sleep in heavenly peace,  
Sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, holy night!  
Shepherds quake at the sight,  
Glories stream from heaven afar,  
Heavenly hosts sing "Alleluia;  
Christ the Savior is born,  
Christ the Savior is born!"

Silent night, holy night!  
Son of God, love's pure light  
Radiant beams from Thy holy face,  
With the dawn of redeeming grace,  
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth,  
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth.

Silent night, holy night!  
Wondrous star, lend thy light;  
With the angels let us sing,  
Alleluia to our King;  
Christ the Savior is born,  
Christ the Savior is born!

**\*Benediction**

The light shines in the darkness and the darkness can never overcome it. This promise is set in stone for all time, and a reminder of how we can live in any circumstance or situation. The hope of Christ, the life of the LORD, is there to support, guide, and set

you up to do great things wherever you are. Go, and by your words and deeds,  
proclaim the hope that is now with us.

Merry Christmas, and Amen.

**\*Postlude    *Joy To The World*    arr. G Peterson**

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

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