



First Presbyterian Church of New Philadelphia

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Rev. Joseph Svancara, Pastor

Sunday Worship Service

March 8, 2026

*All who are able, please stand.

Announcements & Prayer Concerns

This evening is our monthly Friends of the Homeless meal at 6pm. A sign-up sheet for volunteers is available in the church office. While meals funds are good, please consider donating to our other FOTH efforts!

Bible Study will be this Wednesday (March 11) at 10am.

AA will meet this Wednesday (March 11) at 8pm.

Our Sunday Morning Study Group will be meeting next Sunday (March 15) at 9:15am. We are starting a new book and is the ideal time to join!

The Tables of Eight dinner group will be meeting March 28 at 6pm. The cost is \$10 per person, and RSVP can be given to the church office or to Carolyn Berry.

During the Lenten season we are taking up a special collection for the PCUSA. The One Great Hours of Sharing benefits the development ministries of the denomination. Donation envelopes and information are available on the mission table.

Opening Prayer

LORD, our Creator, you prepare us for your presence by challenging us with opportunities for peace and healing. For if we cannot yearn for, imagine, and strive for wholeness with our neighbors how can we accept it from you? **Amen.**

Prelude *Jesus Loves Me* Arr. D Paxton

***Call to Worship (Psalm 95)**

Come, let us sing to the LORD; let us shout for joy to the rock of our salvation.

Let us come before God's presence with thanksgiving and raise a loud shout to the LORD with psalms.

For you, LORD, are a great God, and a great ruler above all gods.

In your hand are the caverns of the earth; the heights of the hills are also yours.

The sea is yours, for you made it, and your hands have molded the dry land.

Come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the LORD our maker.

For the LORD is our God, and we are the people of God's pasture and the sheep of God's hand. Oh, that today you would hear God's voice!

“Harden not your hearts, as at Meribah, as on that day at Massah in the desert. There your ancestors tested me, they put me to the test, though they had seen my works.

Forty years I loathed that generation, saying, ‘The heart of this people goes astray; they do not know my ways.’

Indeed I swore in my anger, ‘They shall never come to my rest.’”

Hymn #543 *Abide With Me

Abide with me: fast falls the eventide;
The darkness deepens; Lord with me abide!
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.

Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;
Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away;
Change and decay in all around I see.
O Thou who changest not, abide with me.

I need Thy presence every passing hour;
What but Thy grace can foil the tempter's power?
Who, like Thyself, my guide and stay can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, Lord, abide with me.

I fear no foe, with Thee at hand to bless:
Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness.
Where is death's sting? Where, grave, thy victory?
I triumph still, if Thou abide with me.

Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes;
Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies:
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee;
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.

***Prayer of Confession**

We often claim to know what it takes to live with others, but often succumb to force and everything unholy for the order we so crave:

LORD, our Creator, when the world, and nations, roar with conflict it is so easy to be caught up in the hype. We believe what we do is right and necessary, and fills us with a pride that ours is the right way. But we forget the ones who suffer the most under conflict, the ones who do not benefit, and the lives and potentials destroyed in a split second. Help us to see beyond what is preached to us by all powers in this world, and see the ones we are truly called to serve and save in our decisions and allegiances. Amen.

***Silent Confessions and Prayers**

***Assurance of Forgiveness**

Even when we fail to have peace with each other, the peace with you given by Jesus Christ encourages us to keep searching for the way.

Let us not trust in armies, policies, alliances, or anything else temporary. But in the promise and realization that you can make all things new.

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 17:1-7

17 ¹ From the wilderness of Sin the whole congregation of the Israelites journeyed by stages, as the Lord commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. ² The people quarreled with Moses, and said, “Give us water to drink.” Moses said to them, “Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord?” ³ But the people thirsted there for water; and the people complained against Moses and said, “Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?” ⁴ So Moses cried out to the Lord, “What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me.” ⁵ The Lord said to Moses, “Go on ahead of the people, and take some of the elders of Israel with you; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. ⁶ I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink.” Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. ⁷ He called the place Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarreled and tested the Lord, saying, “Is the Lord among us or not?”

Romans 5:1-11

5 ¹ Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. ³ And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵ and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. ⁶ For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. ⁸ But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. ⁹ Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God. ¹⁰ For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. ¹¹ But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

John 4:1-42

4 ¹ Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard, “Jesus is making and baptizing more disciples than John” ² —although it was not Jesus himself but his disciples who baptized— ³ he left Judea and started back to Galilee. ⁴ But he had to go through Samaria. ⁵ So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶ Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon. ⁷ A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink.” ⁸ (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) ⁹ The Samaritan woman said to him, “How is it that

you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) ¹⁰ Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." ¹¹ The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?" ¹² Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?" ¹³ Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." ¹⁵ The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water." ¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come back." ¹⁷ The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; ¹⁸ for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!" ¹⁹ The woman said to him, "Sir, I see that you are a prophet. ²⁰ Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem." ²¹ Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ²² You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³ But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. ²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." ²⁵ The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us." ²⁶ Jesus said to her, "I am he, the one who is speaking to you." ²⁷ Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you want?" or, "Why are you speaking with her?" ²⁸ Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, ²⁹ "Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?" ³⁰ They left the city and were on their way to him. ³¹ Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, "Rabbi, eat something." ³² But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." ³³ So the disciples said to one another, "Surely no one has brought him something to eat?" ³⁴ Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work. ³⁵ Do you not say, 'Four months more, then comes the harvest'? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting. ³⁶ The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. ³⁷ For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.' ³⁸ I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor." ³⁹ Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I have ever done." ⁴⁰ So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. ⁴¹ And many more believed because of his word. ⁴² They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world."

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

Sermon *The Third Sunday of Lent*

Ordinarily, politics is a topic many churches would do well to stay away from. Not just because the topics can be divisive, but distracting. As Christians, we are called to focus on the LORD and what the teachings of Jesus Christ would have us do in the pursuit of the divine. To focus too heavily would be to split our priorities and allegiances, to crowd out the way of God for the mere suggestions of other people. Yet events come to a head that force the LORD's people to contend with their calling within a world and society dead-set on its own ways. And war is such an event.

The war with Iran has been particularly lamented because of the potential for destruction, disruption of the current order, and the unknown aftermath it will bring. And with how the United States has conducted Middle Eastern policy for the last quarter century, the track record does not seem positive. The official stance of the Presbyterian Church USA (PCUSA) is a call for diplomacy, understanding, and attention to the innocents caught up within the fighting. Both in the immediate fighting, and those who will take a larger brunt of the cost of war- financial and otherwise. We also do not want to get caught up in the "blame game"- who is the bigger villain: Iran or the United States. Many have a lot to say in either case, and it is also easy to claim reason and calm when emotions are at their breaking point. War is a human-made condition that has existed, exists, and will continue to exist independent of our stance on it. So how do we be Christians, how do we follow Jesus, within something so antithetical to the gospel?

Even as we agonize over what Jesus would prefer, he has already set the tone for us in his encounter with the Samaritan woman. Just in speaking, teaching, this woman at the well he crossed a lot of lines and taboos set out by other people. First, Jews had no dealing with Samaritans. The Samaritans are believed to be the descendants of the ten tribes of Israel taken into exile centuries earlier, who then intermarried with their conquerors while in exile- seen as a betrayal by those in power at the time. The animosity was so great that it was considered defiling for a Jew just to walk in their territory, and it was seen as a religious duty to take the longer way around. Second, a man never spoke to a woman who was not his wife in public. Considered improper and scandalous, based on old ideas that women were property and unable to participate equally in society. Just in this brief conversation Jesus shatters all those presumptions and demonstrates how the gospel must cross all barriers to bring the LORD's creation together. That superficial notions of worshiping at one mountain verses another, under one religious system verses another, are revealed to be controlling and hindering rather than helpful. The one who truly worships the LORD does so in truth, in commitment, with an understanding that the good things in life must be shared and enjoyed by all to mean anything! That is how so many came to believe that Jesus was the promised Messiah, because of how he willingly came to them instead of shutting them out.

That is a message often repeated to the LORD's people and seen in the Exodus account. The LORD providing clean water to Israel as they traveled in the wilderness is a moment of grace and challenge. A proof of care as Israel learned what it meant to live for the LORD once again and understand that their lives were not entirely determined by their sense of right and wrong. The LORD provided that to them and set them up in ways by which to live and demonstrate it. And even when they failed to live up to it, it still provided a lesson to those watching.

St. Paul makes it understood to the Roman church that justification, being right, with the LORD also means being right with each other. People yearn to please the LORD, but it does not happen by superficialities. You can go to a nice church, memorize all the lessons and prayers, participate every moment of your life, but if it does not aid you in having a relationship with your neighbor then what good is it? Jesus Christ demonstrated the lengths by which the LORD went to make us right, set us on the right path, and recognize what is important. Those lessons must translate with how we relate to each other. Peace with the LORD radiates us and makes us see everyone else in a different light. How we treat each other is also how we see the LORD. It is a continuous cycle which should make us question any other way suggested to us.

So we are challenged in conflicts of any form to look beyond the human propaganda, the hyped-up emotions and reasons, to see how the LORD enables life and wholeness to continue. Who is truly in need and taking the bigger punch compared to others, and what we can do to bring help when it is needed. War is sometimes necessary, but it does not have to be glorified. Some people might meet their justified end, but we do not have to gloat about it. As Christians, as those who have had their needs met by the divine already, we simply aid those to experience hope when it appears to have blown to kingdom come. We cannot erase what has happened, cannot raise the dead, but demonstrate that life can continue and be healed under the right conditions. So we do not focus on blame or who deserves to win, if anyone does, but demonstrate what is necessary for life to flourish so conflict might not be necessary.

Prayers of the People

Let us remember in prayer:

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, Victoria Kasten, Amber Loftis, Will Long, Tom Netting, Ruth Patrick, Bob Pierre, Mark Preusser, Stefani Seth, Josh Shaeffer, 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, we face a time and situation where conflict seems to overshadow all that we do. When war breaks out, uncertainty and fear abound, and many come

from all places with the supposed answer. We know there is evil in the world, and people with less-than-trustworthy intentions, but we are called to be a light to them as to anyone else. But it is hard when we are told they are an enemy, and when we know they are created in your image. Sometimes conflicts are necessary, but we do not need to glorify or take perverse pleasure in them. Instead, help us to find the service we need to do in the middle of such situations. Help us to see where Jesus leads us, has us cross lines and perceptions, to offer a glimpse of the divine to one who is struggling.

We pray for all people caught in warfare and conflict, but also those in our lives who are under the strain of sickness and uncertainty...*Reading of the Prayer List*...LORD, in your loving mercy, hear our prayer.

Moment of Silence

We thank you LORD that you have us abide and walk with you even amid the destruction we cause. So we might learn, grow, and see what is most important to you. All so your prayer might live and give realization to the world:

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 ability to cross the lines and walls which divide us by giving what we have to make prosperity open to all!

Offertory *Ave Verum* Arr. B Price

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, you provide all that is needed to have a just world and society, one where all your creatures can live without fear or uncertainty. May all we give bring that promise to life and teach us what is possible in our service to you. **Amen.**

Hymn #401 *When Will People Cease Their Fighting?

When will people cease their fighting?
When will armies wage no war,
Nations conquer not their neighbor,
Weapons idle, used no more?
When will guns and bombs be silent?
When captives be set free?
All creation groans in longing
For the world's true liberty.

Floods and earthquakes, drought and famine
Plague the world with awesome ill,
But far greater is war's horror
Caused by human, stubborn will.
Blest are those who, working, praying
Purpose in their hearts to be
Instruments of peace,
committed to the nation's harmony.

As we strive for peace with vigor,
Hoping to be shown the way,
We are strengthened in the knowledge
Of a future, perfect day;
For we know that deeper, richer,
Peace is ours when Christ shall reign:
Then will all our swords be plow-shares
And God's children free from pain.

***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 *In The Cross of Christ I Glory* Arr. J Stainer**

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

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