



**First Presbyterian Church of New Philadelphia**

217 E. High Ave, New Philadelphia, OH 44663

330-343-7114

[www.newphilapc.org](http://www.newphilapc.org)



**Rev. Joseph Svancara, Pastor**

**Easter Sunday Worship Service**

**April 5, 2026**

\*All who are able, please stand.

**Announcements & Prayer Concerns**

Bible Study will be this Wednesday (April 8) at 10am.

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

Our Sunday Morning Study Group will be meeting next Sunday (April 12) at 9:15am.

Next Sunday (April 12) is our monthly Friends of the Homeless dinner at 6pm. A sign-up sheet is available for volunteers is available in the church office. While meal funds are good, please consider donating toward one of our other FOTH efforts (Operations/Jack's House of Hope).

Today is the last day for the special collection of the PCUSA's One Great Hour of Sharing- benefiting the development ministries of the denomination. Thank you to everyone who has donated!

Easter tulips are available to take at the conclusion of service. All unclaimed tulips will be delivered to our shut-in's and planted in the church garden this week.

**Opening Prayer**

LORD, our Creator, we come to witness and celebrate the resurrection of your Son, but also to celebrate the renewed and illuminated life now available to us. Help us to discover what is now available to us, provided for us, out of your love and mercy.

**Amen.**

**Prelude *Alleluia, Christ Is Risen* Arr. Kirby**

**\*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 #113 *Christ the Lord Is Risen Today!***

"Christ the Lord is risen today!" Alleluia!

All creation, join to say: Alleluia!

Raise your joys and triumphs high; Alleluia!

Sing, O heavens, and earth reply, Alleluia!

Love's redeeming work is done, Alleluia!

Fought the fight, the battle won; Alleluia!

Death in vain forbids Him rise; Alleluia!

Christ has opened paradise. Alleluia!

Lives again our glorious King; Alleluia!

Where, O death, is now your sting? Alleluia!

Jesus died, our souls to save; Alleluia!

Where your victory, O grave? Alleluia!

Hail the Lord of earth and heaven! Alleluia!

Praise to You by both be given; Alleluia!

Every knee to You shall bow, Alleluia!

Risen Christ, triumphant now. Alleluia!

**\*Prayer of Confession**

Even with the assurance of resurrection and new life we have fears that crowd out our excitement for what is available to us:

**LORD, our Creator, as your power is made known and realized in the raising of Jesus, we still cling to fears and habits from the old life. We hold onto destructive thoughts and behaviors, and too-willingly trust other sources that promise a counterfeit purpose- often at great cost! Help us to look up, to see what your Son is demonstrating, and ushers us into, amid our doubts and troubles. Amen.**

### **\*Silent Confessions and Prayers**

#### **\*Assurance of Forgiveness**

Even in the aftermath of evil and destruction Jesus greets his disciples in peace and a smile on his face.

**He welcomed his own from despair to awe and offers the same to us gathered now.**

#### **\*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:

Jeremiah 31:1-14

31 <sup>1</sup> At that time, says the Lord, I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people. <sup>2</sup> Thus says the Lord: The people who survived the sword found grace in the wilderness; when Israel sought for rest, <sup>3</sup> the Lord appeared to him from

far away. I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you. <sup>4</sup> Again I will build you, and you shall be built, O virgin Israel! Again you shall take your tambourines, and go forth in the dance of the merrymakers. <sup>5</sup> Again you shall plant vineyards on the mountains of Samaria; the planters shall plant, and shall enjoy the fruit. <sup>6</sup> For there shall be a day when sentinels will call in the hill country of Ephraim: "Come, let us go up to Zion, to the Lord our God." <sup>7</sup> For thus says the Lord:

Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob, and raise shouts for the chief of the nations; proclaim, give praise, and say, "Save, O Lord, your people, the remnant of Israel." <sup>8</sup> See, I am going to bring them from the land of the north, and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth, among them the blind and the lame, those with child and those in labor, together; a great company, they shall return here. <sup>9</sup> With weeping they shall come, and with consolations I will lead them back, I will let them walk by brooks of water, in a straight path in which they shall not stumble; for I have become a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn. <sup>10</sup> Hear the word of the Lord, O nations, and declare it in the coastlands far away; say, "He who scattered Israel will gather him, and will keep him as a shepherd a flock." <sup>11</sup> For the Lord has ransomed Jacob, and has redeemed him from hands too strong for him. <sup>12</sup> They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion, and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the Lord, over the grain, the wine, and the oil, and over the young of the flock and the herd; their life shall become like a watered garden, and they shall never languish again. <sup>13</sup> Then shall the young women rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old shall be merry. I will turn their mourning into joy, I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow. <sup>14</sup> I will give the priests their fill of fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with my bounty, says the Lord.

### Colossians 3:1-17

<sup>3</sup> <sup>1</sup> So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, <sup>3</sup> for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

<sup>4</sup> When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory. <sup>5</sup> Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry). <sup>6</sup> On account of these the wrath of God is coming on those who are disobedient. <sup>7</sup> These are the ways you also once followed, when you were living that life. <sup>8</sup> But now you must get rid of all such things—anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language from your mouth. <sup>9</sup> Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices <sup>10</sup> and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator. <sup>11</sup> In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all! <sup>12</sup> As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. <sup>13</sup> Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. <sup>14</sup> Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. <sup>15</sup> And let the peace of Christ rule in your

hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. <sup>16</sup> Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. <sup>17</sup> And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

#### Matthew 28:1-10

28 <sup>1</sup> After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. <sup>2</sup> And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. <sup>3</sup> His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. <sup>4</sup> For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. <sup>5</sup> But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. <sup>6</sup> He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. <sup>7</sup> Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.' This is my message for you." <sup>8</sup> So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. <sup>9</sup> Suddenly Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. <sup>10</sup> Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

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

#### **Sermon *Easter Sunday***

The Resurrection of the Lord is the crown of the Christian year and the climax of everything we believe and have faith in. It is a sign of the new age by which humanity has crossed into and represents what the LORD wills for his creation. Of course, having it make sense to the world is easier said than done! Jesus rising again from the dead makes no sense and goes against everything the world says is true and possible- and that is the point! The Resurrection is the ultimate attention-grabber for people to make them pay attention to what is happening around them. To have them pick up their heads, come out of their own sequestered realities, and realize that something has changed. As Christians, we are charged with making this truth known to the world and help to explain all that is happening. But how do we explain such an event? What proofs or evidence could ever convince the hardest of skeptics to come to our side?

I am convinced there is not. Sure, there are some historical, archeological, and relic artifacts which help to explain the plausibility of the event. But if someone is dead-set against believing then they can come up with any rationale to explain them away. That is why I am convinced the greatest proof of the Resurrection is not scientific evidence, historical gleanings, or well-crafted rhetoric- it is us! Those of us who are gathering to celebrate, who gather each Sunday to mark the newness of creation, and in every day listen to the voice of the LORD and follow the way set by our master Jesus. We have

been gathered together not by coincidence or convenience but with purpose to a common cause.

In Matthew 28, the women at the tomb are grappling with the reality after the Passion. The religious leaders of Jerusalem and Romans have stamped their authority with force onto Jesus and all he stood for, threatened anyone who claimed to follow his way, and caused them scatter for their lives and livelihoods. They seemed to be spared for the moment in the fact that they were women, supposedly with no ability to change the direction of the narrative. That is, until they receive the visitation from the angel and receive the news that Jesus has risen and has gone on ahead of them. They become the voices which proclaim this to the scattered disciples, gather them back, and prepare them to hear from the LORD. Fulfilling what was spoken about in Jeremiah 31 in the gathering of all the LORD's people after their time of exile and judgment. The LORD promises to unite his people, his whole creation, together once again by his own power. He would bring back all of those who have gone their separate ways and kept separate based on human conditions and reasoning. They will be able to come and rest in his presence, be a source of nourishment and fertility for the world (represented by the mention of Ephraim- the tribal region known for abundant agriculture and herding), and by their presence represent a newness of life others may come and discover for themselves.

This unity of creation is further seen in the claims of Colossians 3 when St. Paul is arguing for the believers to be united under the common realization that Jesus Christ is the embodied hope of the divine for all. But first they must put away those things which separate them from each other and understand what they thought of pridefully was a hinderance to having relationship and love for one another. Now is the chance to put to rest all the ills of society and the world, to willingly surrender them and rediscover a source of life and being that others put aside due to their misunderstanding and ignorance. And in doing so they will not only be able to praise and honor the LORD and Jesus Christ but also each other and understand what was needed to have peace all along.

While all this might be a bit of 'pie-in-the-sky' hope and platitudes it is a reality made available for us, but only if we accept it. Nothing is making us accept the good news of the Resurrection, only explain what it means and what it leads too. It is the LORD working to further illuminate and bring to light all that is necessary so we might live as we were always meant too and understand what has kept us away for so long. We learn more about the world, and ourselves, and what is necessary to resist those inclinations and habits which complicate our lives. That is why Jesus took 40 days to remain and make this known to the believers, and why we have as long a season to celebrate as well. Time to let it all sink in, to absorb the absurdities of it all, consider what Jesus truly meant in his promises before, so we might come to the LORD and close to each other in the process. So we might discover what is life, safety, security, and home within a world which struggles for excuses as to why we should not.

## **Celebration of Holy Communion**

*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.*

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!**

LORD, our Creator, the words “He has risen” may seem farfetched and unbelievable at times. We live in a world often ruled by fear, intimidation, struggle, doubt, control, and ever self-consuming human impulse. People take from one another without thought, step on feelings and dignity without care, and leave those who struggle behind. But you have come not for those who wield power and authority, but to those on the outside of it. Those who look in for what they need and have been denied you provide help by the hand of those who have first received of your mercy. We ourselves know what it is like to be down and out but also uplifted and set securely on the rock of your salvation. To know life is here, is still worth living no matter what, and so long as we breathe still are of use to your great work to proclaim:

**Holy, holy, holy LORD. God of power and might. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD. Hosanna in the highest.**

Aid us in understanding the good news you put our way, the revitalization of purpose given by your Son. As he offered his disciples bread and cup, his body and blood, he offers us his essence to fill our cracked and empty vessels. Through these gifts, by being host to us, you prepare us to see your power witnessed in your mystery of faith:

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

As we accept these gifts make us remember the purchase price to be here, the willing price paid out of pure love and holiness, and the direction they take us in away from the emptiness found in deceptive thinking. The mind of Christ, the mind of the divine, is within our grasp to share and thus be healed.

**Amen.**

*Partaking in the Elements*

We thank you for gathering us to witness the new life, the new age dawning around us. Help us to go tell all the hope that has come forth, the possibilities now had, and the assurance grasped because of your work through Jesus Christ. To realize the mystery, and power, of the prayer he has 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 give what we have in celebration and excitement, to bring new life to those during struggle.

**Offertory *Andante* Arr. T Chesterton**

**\*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, we thank you for all that you bring to life and purpose by your power. All opportunities to witness and tell of your goodness, that your people, your Israel, your Church, can be set up to do the best with the good news given! **Amen.**

**\*Hymn # 107 *Celebrate with Joy and Singing***

Celebrate with joy and singing,  
Alleluia be our song.  
Jesus Christ has risen to save us,  
Praises to our Christ belong.

Through great love has come the victory;  
Life, not death, can be our claim.  
Let us now declare Christ's greatness,  
Spread good news, proclaim Christ's name.

Honor, glory, praise, thanksgiving  
Give we now to God above.  
With the cross and grave Christ bought us,  
Let us now return that love.  
By our lives of dedication,  
As we teach and testify,  
May we show Christ's love around us,  
May it grow and purify.

Worship now with shouts of gladness,  
For the Christ, the Holy One,  
On this day of resurrection  
For the world new life has won.  
Let us pray and praise the Savior,  
Trust the acts, believe the word.  
Our salvation has been purchased  
By our loving, risen Lord.

**\*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* Arr. Brian Glyncannon**

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

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