



**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**

**Sunday Worship Service**

**December 29, 2024**

\*All who are able, please stand.

**Announcements & Prayer Concerns**

The church office will be closed on Wednesday in observance of New Years Day.

Bible Study is canceled for this week.

AA will meet this Wednesday (January 1) at 8pm.

Our Sunday Morning Study Group will meet on Sunday (January 5) at 9:15am.

During December we will be taking up a special collection for the PCUSA's Christmas Joy Offering to benefit the denomination's student and retired minister's fund. Today is the last day to donate and thank you to everyone who has!

Next Sunday (January 5) is our monthly church brunch following service- all are welcome and invited!

**Opening Prayer**

LORD, our Father, the entrance of your Son, your light, into creation restores and guides us on your proper path. Help us realize what the coming of Christ changes, and removes, from our lives that we might see you for who you are and what you will do.

**Amen.**

**Prelude O Come Little Children arr. Schaum**

**\*Call to Worship (Psalm 148)**

Hallelujah! Praise the LORD from the heavens; praise God in the heights. Praise the LORD, all you angels; sing praise, all you hosts of heaven. Praise the LORD, sun and moon; sing praise, all you shining stars. Praise the LORD, heaven of heavens, and you waters above the heavens.

**Let them praise the name of the LORD, who commanded, and they were created,  
who made them stand fast forever and ever, giving them a law which shall not  
pass away.**

Praise the LORD from the earth, you sea monsters and all deeps; fire and hail, snow and fog, tempestuous wind, doing God's will; mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars; wild beasts and all cattle, creeping things and flying birds; sovereigns of the earth and all peoples, princes and all rulers of the world; young men and maidens, old and young together.

**Let them praise the name of the LORD, whose name only is exalted, whose splendor is over earth and heaven. The LORD has raised up strength for the people and praise for all faithful servants, the children of Israel, a people who are near the LORD. Hallelujah!**

**\*Hymn #28    *Good Christian Friends, Rejoice***

Good Christian friends, rejoice  
With heart, and soul, and voice;  
Give ye heed to what we say:  
Jesus Christ is born today;  
Ox and ass before Him bow,  
And He is in the manger now.  
Christ is born today!  
Christ is born today!

Good Christian friends, rejoice,  
With heart, and soul and voice;  
Now ye hear of endless bliss:  
Jesus Christ was born for this!  
He hath opened heaven's door,  
And we are blest forevermore.  
Christ was born for this!  
Christ was born for this!

Good Christian friends, rejoice,  
With heart and soul and voice;  
Now ye need not fear the grave:  
Jesus Christ was born to save!  
Calls you one and calls you all,  
To gain the everlasting hall.  
Christ was born to save!  
Christ was born to save!

**\*Prayer of Confession**

When one sins against the LORD, how might they appeal and seek proper restoration?  
By confession, by meek humbleness, we seek the answer by an honest evaluation of  
our lives:

**LORD, our Father, when we look at our lives and ourselves we find a wanting emptiness. We have sought security and power, wealth and opportunity, purpose and meaning beyond your order and control. We have worshiped chaos rather than order, and our lives, minds, and hearts reflect what we have done. Help us to understand how we might appeal, what your restoration entails, and what you have sent your Son to accomplish. Amen.**

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

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

The LORD has sent capable prophets and priests to lead the way back and change his people. And by the ultimate priest-prophet, Jesus Christ, divine wisdom and direction is available to us.

**Let us look beyond outward appearances and reasons and realize all the LORD has accomplished is for our greater good and prosperity.**

#### **\*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:

1 Samuel 2:12-36

**2**<sup>12</sup>Now the sons of Eli were scoundrels; they had no regard for the Lord <sup>13</sup>or for the duties of the priests to the people. When anyone offered sacrifice, the priest's servant would come, while the meat was boiling, with a three-pronged fork in his hand, <sup>14</sup>and he would thrust it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; all that the fork brought up the priest would take for himself. This is what they did at Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there. <sup>15</sup>Moreover, before the fat was burned, the priest's servant would come and say to the one who was sacrificing, "Give meat for the priest to roast; for he will not accept boiled meat from you, but only raw." <sup>16</sup>And if the man said to him, "Let them burn the fat first, and then take whatever you wish," he would say, "No, you must give it now; if not, I will take it by force." <sup>17</sup>Thus the sin of the young men was very great in the sight of the Lord; for they treated the offerings of the Lord with contempt. <sup>18</sup>Samuel was ministering before the Lord, a boy wearing a linen ephod. <sup>19</sup>His mother used to make for him a little robe and take it to him each year, when she went up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. <sup>20</sup>Then Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, and say, "May the Lord repay you with children by this woman for the gift that she made to the Lord"; and then they would return to their home. <sup>21</sup>And the Lord took note of Hannah; she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters. And the boy Samuel grew up in the presence of the Lord. <sup>22</sup>Now Eli was very old. He heard all that his sons were doing to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who served at the entrance to the tent of meeting. <sup>23</sup>He said to them, "Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings from all these people. <sup>24</sup>No, my sons; it is not a good report that I hear the people of the Lord spreading abroad. <sup>25</sup>If one person sins against another, someone can intercede for the sinner with the Lord; but if someone sins against the Lord, who can make intercession?" But they would not listen to the voice of their father; for it was the will of the Lord to kill them. <sup>26</sup>Now the boy Samuel continued to grow both in stature and in favor with the Lord and with the people. <sup>27</sup>A man of God came to Eli and said to him, "Thus the Lord has said, 'I revealed myself to the family of your ancestor in Egypt when they were slaves to the house of Pharaoh. <sup>28</sup>I chose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to go up to my altar, to offer incense, to wear an ephod before me; and I gave to the family of your ancestor all my offerings by fire from the people of Israel. <sup>29</sup>Why then look with greedy eye at my sacrifices and my offerings that I commanded, and honor your sons more than me by fattening yourselves on the choicest parts of every offering of my people Israel?' <sup>30</sup>Therefore the Lord the God of Israel declares: 'I promised that your family and the family of your ancestor should go in and out before me forever'; but now the Lord declares: 'Far be it from me; for those who honor me I will honor, and those who despise me shall be treated with contempt. <sup>31</sup>See, a time is coming when I will cut off your strength and the strength of your ancestor's family, so that no one in your family will live to old age. <sup>32</sup>Then in distress you will look with greedy eye on all the prosperity that shall be bestowed upon Israel; and no one in your family shall ever live to old age. <sup>33</sup>The only one of you whom I shall not cut off from my altar shall be spared to weep out his eyes and grieve his heart; all the members of your household shall die by the sword. <sup>34</sup>The fate of your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, shall be the sign to you—both of them shall die on the same day. <sup>35</sup>I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who shall do according to what is

in my heart and in my mind. I will build him a sure house, and he shall go in and out before my anointed one forever. <sup>36</sup>Everyone who is left in your family shall come to implore him for a piece of silver or a loaf of bread, and shall say, Please put me in one of the priest's places, that I may eat a morsel of bread.' ”

### Colossians 3:1-17

<sup>3</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.

### Luke 2:41-52

<sup>24</sup>Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. <sup>42</sup>And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. <sup>43</sup>When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. <sup>44</sup>Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. <sup>45</sup>When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. <sup>46</sup>After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. <sup>47</sup>And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. <sup>48</sup>When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, “Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety.” <sup>49</sup>He said to them, “Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?” <sup>50</sup>But they did not understand what he said to them. <sup>51</sup>Then he went down with

them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart. <sup>52</sup>And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.

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

### **Sermon    *The First Sunday of Christmas***

We have prepared, and accepted preparation from the LORD, to witness his light coming into the world. The arrival of Jesus Christ marks the season of Christmas and is such a triumph to celebrate which is why ancient Christians celebrated it for twelve days straight. These “Twelve Days of Christmas” are something we of the modern era could benefit by reacquainting ourselves with to truly settle into and appreciate the divine gift among us. Most people think Christmas is over the moment the presents are opened, the roast dinner is devoured, and the tree and decorations come down. But it makes the season more anti-climatic than it should be. Now is when we should be contemplating, seeing, and testifying to the Word of the LORD, the light of the divine, present in our world. Seeing the weight that Jesus Christ is to bring all things close to him, even the things which should already have a weight of their own in our lives.

Which is what the stories of Luke 2:41-52 and 1 Samuel 2:12-36 illustrate.

After the nativity narrative, there is not much that is known about Jesus until he starts his ministry as an adult. All the gospels make clear is that the holy family went to Egypt to escape King Herod’s attempts to kill the prophesied Messiah, and how the family fulfilled the traditional obligations by offering their first-born male child to the LORD in the temple by dedication and sacrifice. This is the only story about Jesus in his childhood, emphasizing how different he was from typical children. He was typical in that he got separated from his parents while in a busy city and was probably excited to be in such a place when his hometown was a small village out in the sticks. But when his parents find Jesus, he is in the temple of all places talking and debating with the old priests and scholars. What is stranger is that they were giving this child their busy time when you normally did not entertain a child’s ideas too much. The religious establishment, without their knowing then, were under the weight of divine instruction and guidance in their midst. The ones who were charged with teaching the people of Israel in the ways of the LORD were themselves being taught. Such is the emphasis of Jesus’ life and purpose as the ideal servant.

That compares to the time of the Judges, when the prophet Samuel was miraculously born and served in the holy priestly tabernacle from a young age. It was in a time when the priesthood, administered by the family of Eli, were corrupted and failed to live up to the instruction the people of Israel needed. Both sons were quite literally ‘skimming off the top’ of the sacrifices for themselves and enriching themselves and using the LORD as a cover. In response, the LORD promises this family would be removed from their honored position and be made to suffer dishonor in the eyes of their people. As it

happens when one not only sins against their neighbor, but also against the LORD. But even though the priests, the appointed intercessors and arbiters between the people and the LORD, were unable to do their duties the LORD ensured restoration would come that would enable the people to see clearly the proper way. A young child was the hope of the priesthood, and of a holy life for the people. That is the mantle Jesus has taken on and wears continually.

As is outlined in Colossians 3:1-17.

St. Paul writes to the church disputing what is true, authentic, Christ-centered teaching and community. The people have struggled under the weight of false philosophies, false teachings, and understanding what is true and worthy of emulation in their lives. They asked the apostle, "How do we know what is right?" The apostle makes them understand that Christ need to have their minds, hearts, and spirits- essentially their whole beings if any transformation is to occur in their lives. Knowing that Jesus is the visible image of the invisible LORD makes the people see everything so differently. Jesus is a king, prophet, priest, teacher, and guide but is also none of those things. He is more than those things, the ultimate version of what those positions are for proper order to enter the lives of the faithful. His weight is what will pull all that is virtuous and beneficial toward us, enable us to recognize what they are, so we might start to implement them into all our actions. On our own we can do nothing good, but Jesus ensures we have access to the divine toolbox so we might live with a better and healthier purpose.

It might be easy, and has been easy, for people to write Jesus off as just another human teacher or guru. Someone in a long line of other prophets and guides peddling the same promises and instructions. But his presence is different than all the others, because his presence pulls all that is necessary into our lives. Our proximity to Jesus as his followers ensures we will receive all that he asks for, and all he ordains into his presence. He is the manifestation of the one who called order out of chaos, and continually cuts through chaos that we might grow as the LORD imagines us to be. Underestimating what Jesus is and can do is us still worshiping chaos, and still trying to bring about our own imaginings instead of accepting what is necessary to live. This season of Christmas, this opportunity to focus on what is in our lives, is a chance to see through chaos and what divine order is. What it brings, what it nurtures, and pulls into our lives by our mere proximity and relationship to this anchor of the LORD. Allow Jesus to anchor your lives and wants, to bring to your minds and homes the things that are virtuous, so you might recognize for the year ahead what will be for your good and what will only lead to ill.

### **Prayers of the People**

*Let us remember in prayer:*

*Dominic Aquino, Tom & Amy Aquino, Mary Ellen Beans, Terry Carpenter, Fritz Chambers, Angie Chamberlain, Michelle Chamberlain, Mary Jane Dougherty, Allison*

*Folly, Kay France, Jamie Frank, Judy Hass, Alice & Errol Jacobs, Barry Jacobs, Victoria Kasten, Amber Loftis, Breanne Mathias, Peg McIntire, Will Long, Tom Netting, Ruth Patrick, Bob Pierre, Carol Phillips, Janet Porter, Mark Preusser, Stefani Seth, Josh Shaeffer, Marlene Singhaus, Cindy Smith, Derrick & Mandy Smith, Janis Stover, Simone Villarruel, Jay Watt, The Friends of the Homeless of Tuscarawas County & The Homeless of Tuscarawas County.*

LORD, our Father, we bask and marvel in the season of your Son. We celebrate the arrival of Jesus, of you, into our world and lives and the promises you bring. But we admit that we wonder about what this Jesus actually brings; we see how similar he is to us and are skeptical about what another human can teach us? We have seen self-proclaimed leaders and guides in our own world, have seen them at their best and worst, and wonder if there is anything to be impressed by? Yet you have known we will feel this way and recognize our doubts and jadedness. You have not just given another king, another priest, another prophet, another leader, or another servant. Jesus resets all of our expectations, makes us realize what we do need from those over us, and how you overcome all to give it to us. You redefine our communities, our values, our beliefs, and bring us closer to what you desire our lives to be. Your Jesus sets us on a path toward true humanity.

This path may not be a journey we will complete within our lives, or within many generations, but you prove we can come closer than we ever could by relying on you. Our strengthened lives, our sturdy spirits, and loving actions prove how you restore and make us whole. By the challenges, and heartache, brought into our lives may you demonstrate what we are becoming...*Reading of the Prayer List*...Guide us in our joys and concerns, and help us realize who can be when in such confrontation.

### *Moment of Silence*

As we strive forward under your faithful instruction, continue to teach us what it means to celebrate and look to your Son. So the prayer you provide are not just words but a realization of what you have of 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.**

### **Offering our Gifts**

When we offer before the LORD, let us not seek our reward in doing so. All we give points the way to others as to who is the more capable power for their needs.



**Offertory *Ave Maria* arr. Schaum**

**\*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, we do not offer like the wayward priests of history trying to extract a good price. We offer in thankfulness for what we have seen by your capable Son, and how we stand right now. May all we offer bring others forward and give them a chance to witness the one who truly comes in your name. **Amen.**

**\*Hymn #23 *Angels We Have Heard on High***

Angels we have heard on high  
Sweetly singing o'er the plains,  
And the mountains in reply  
Echoing their joyous strains.  
Gloria, in excelsis Deo;  
Gloria, in excelsis Deo.

Shepherds, why this jubilee?  
Why your joyous strains prolong?  
What the gladsome tidings be  
Which inspire your heavenly song?  
Gloria, in excelsis Deo;  
Gloria, in excelsis Deo.

Come to Bethlehem and see  
Him whose birth the angels sing;  
Come, adore on bended knee  
Christ the Lord, the newborn King.  
Gloria, in excelsis Deo;  
Gloria, in excelsis Deo.

**\*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   *Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming*   arr. Schaum**

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

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