



First Presbyterian Church of New Philadelphia

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Rev. Joseph Svancara, Pastor

Sunday Worship Service

January 11, 2026

*All who are able, please stand.

Announcements & Prayer Concerns

Today we will start the process of de-decorating our sanctuary from Christmas after service. Any and all help would be appreciated!

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

Bible Study will meet this Wednesday (January 14) at 10am.

AA will meet this Wednesday (January 14) at 8pm.

Our Sunday Morning Study Group will be meeting next Sunday (January 18) at 9:15am. We are deciding on our next study, so it is a perfect time to join if interested!

Opening Prayer

LORD, our Creator, in the baptism of your Son Jesus Christ you revealed the true servant in whom you find delight. In our baptisms you have proclaimed your promises, called us your own, and given us clarity as we live in the world. Help us to remember, and accept, what you have gifted and challenged us with so we can be your true people. **Amen.**

Prelude *Deep River* Arr. L Smith

***Call to Worship (Psalm 29)**

Ascribe to the LORD, you gods, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. Ascribe to the LORD the glory due God's name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.

The voice of the LORD is upon the waters; the God of glory thunders; the LORD is upon the mighty waters.

The voice of the LORD is a powerful voice; the voice of the LORD is a voice of splendor.

The voice of the LORD breaks the cedar trees; the LORD breaks the cedars of Lebanon; the LORD makes Lebanon skip like a calf, and Mount Hermon like a young wild ox.

The voice of the LORD bursts forth in lightning flashes.

The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness; the LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.

The voice of the LORD makes the oak trees writhe and strips the forests bare. And in the temple of the LORD all are crying, "Glory!"

The LORD sits enthroned above the flood; the LORD sits enthroned as sovereign forevermore. O LORD, give strength to your people; give them, O LORD, the blessings of peace.

Hymn #72 *When Jesus Came to Jordan

When Jesus came to Jordan
To be baptized by John
He did not come for pardon
But as God's Holy One
He came to share repentance
With all who mourn their sins
To speak the vital sentence
With which good news begins

He came to share temptation
Our utmost woe and loss
For us and our salvation
To die upon the cross
So when the dove descended
On Him the Holy One
The hidden years had ended
The age of grace began

***Prayer of Confession**

The grace of the LORD is open to all, and his people are open to all, but often we exclude or condition based on our fears and uncertainties:

LORD, our Creator, your baptism is a sign of divine acceptance, certainty, and purpose in a chaotic world. You accept us, but we often exclude others. You deem us worthy, but we condition worthiness. Purge us of all thoughts, ideas,

and teachings which instruct keeping others at a distance. And in remembering our baptism reveal who we must bring close. Amen.

***Silent Confessions and Prayers**

***Assurance of Forgiveness**

As the Holy Spirit fell on the first believers, Jew and Gentile alike, grace and forgiveness is given to all who repent and yearn for a better life.

Life is open and available, the Church is ready, and we are ready to receive.

***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 42:1-25

42 ¹ Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. ² He will not cry or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; ³ a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. ⁴ He will not grow faint or be crushed until he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his teaching. ⁵ Thus says God, the Lord, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people upon it and spirit to those who walk in it: ⁶ I am the Lord, I have called you in

righteousness, I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, ⁷ to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness. ⁸ I am the Lord, that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to idols. ⁹ See, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth, I tell you of them. ¹⁰ Sing to the Lord a new song, his praise from the end of the earth! Let the sea roar and all that fills it, the coastlands and their inhabitants. ¹¹ Let the desert and its towns lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar inhabits; let the inhabitants of Sela sing for joy, let them shout from the tops of the mountains. ¹² Let them give glory to the Lord, and declare his praise in the coastlands. ¹³ The Lord goes forth like a soldier, like a warrior he stirs up his fury; he cries out, he shouts aloud, he shows himself mighty against his foes. ¹⁴ For a long time I have held my peace, I have kept still and restrained myself; now I will cry out like a woman in labor, I will gasp and pant. ¹⁵ I will lay waste mountains and hills, and dry up all their herbage; I will turn the rivers into islands, and dry up the pools. ¹⁶ I will lead the blind by a road they do not know, by paths they have not known I will guide them. I will turn the darkness before them into light, the rough places into level ground. These are the things I will do, and I will not forsake them. ¹⁷ They shall be turned back and utterly put to shame— those who trust in carved images, who say to cast images, “You are our gods.” ¹⁸ Listen, you that are deaf; and you that are blind, look up and see! ¹⁹ Who is blind but my servant, or deaf like my messenger whom I send? Who is blind like my dedicated one, or blind like the servant of the Lord? ²⁰ He sees many things, but does not observe them; his ears are open, but he does not hear. ²¹ The Lord was pleased, for the sake of his righteousness, to magnify his teaching and make it glorious. ²² But this is a people robbed and plundered, all of them are trapped in holes and hidden in prisons; they have become a prey with no one to rescue, a spoil with no one to say, “Restore!” ²³ Who among you will give heed to this, who will attend and listen for the time to come? ²⁴ Who gave up Jacob to the spoiler, and Israel to the robbers? Was it not the Lord, against whom we have sinned, in whose ways they would not walk, and whose law they would not obey? ²⁵ So he poured upon him the heat of his anger and the fury of war; it set him on fire all around, but he did not understand; it burned him, but he did not take it to heart.

Acts 10:1-48

¹⁰ ¹ In Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of the Italian Cohort, as it was called. ² He was a devout man who feared God with all his household; he gave alms generously to the people and prayed constantly to God. ³ One afternoon at about three o'clock he had a vision in which he clearly saw an angel of God coming in and saying to him, “Cornelius.” ⁴ He stared at him in terror and said, “What is it, Lord?” He answered, “Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God. ⁵ Now send men to Joppa for a certain Simon who is called Peter; ⁶ he is lodging with Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the seaside.” ⁷ When the angel who spoke to him had left, he called two of his slaves and a devout soldier from the ranks of those who served him, ⁸ and after telling them everything, he sent them to Joppa. ⁹ About noon the

next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. ¹⁰ He became hungry and wanted something to eat; and while it was being prepared, he fell into a trance. ¹¹ He saw the heaven opened and something like a large sheet coming down, being lowered to the ground by its four corners. ¹² In it were all kinds of four-footed creatures and reptiles and birds of the air. ¹³ Then he heard a voice saying, "Get up, Peter; kill and eat." ¹⁴ But Peter said, "By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is profane or unclean." ¹⁵ The voice said to him again, a second time, "What God has made clean, you must not call profane." ¹⁶ This happened three times, and the thing was suddenly taken up to heaven. ¹⁷ Now while Peter was greatly puzzled about what to make of the vision that he had seen, suddenly the men sent by Cornelius appeared. They were asking for Simon's house and were standing by the gate. ¹⁸ They called out to ask whether Simon, who was called Peter, was staying there. ¹⁹ While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Look, three men are searching for you. ²⁰ Now get up, go down, and go with them without hesitation; for I have sent them." ²¹ So Peter went down to the men and said, "I am the one you are looking for; what is the reason for your coming?" ²² They answered, "Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man, who is well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation, was directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and to hear what you have to say." ²³ So Peter invited them in and gave them lodging.

The next day he got up and went with them, and some of the believers from Joppa accompanied him. ²⁴ The following day they came to Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. ²⁵ On Peter's arrival Cornelius met him, and falling at his feet, worshiped him. ²⁶ But Peter made him get up, saying, "Stand up; I am only a mortal." ²⁷ And as he talked with him, he went in and found that many had assembled; ²⁸ and he said to them, "You yourselves know that it is unlawful for a Jew to associate with or to visit a Gentile; but God has shown me that I should not call anyone profane or unclean. ²⁹ So when I was sent for, I came without objection. Now may I ask why you sent for me?" ³⁰ Cornelius replied, "Four days ago at this very hour, at three o'clock, I was praying in my house when suddenly a man in dazzling clothes stood before me. ³¹ He said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God. ³² Send therefore to Joppa and ask for Simon, who is called Peter; he is staying in the home of Simon, a tanner, by the sea.' ³³ Therefore I sent for you immediately, and you have been kind enough to come. So now all of us are here in the presence of God to listen to all that the Lord has commanded you to say." ³⁴ Then Peter began to speak to them: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, ³⁵ but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. ³⁶ You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. ³⁷ That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: ³⁸ how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. ³⁹ We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; ⁴⁰ but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, ⁴¹ not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as

witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. ⁴² He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³ All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name. ⁴⁴ While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word. ⁴⁵ The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles, ⁴⁶ for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter said, ⁴⁷ “Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” ⁴⁸ So he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they invited him to stay for several days.

Matthew 3:13-17

3 ¹³ Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. ¹⁴ John would have prevented him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” ¹⁵ But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he consented. ¹⁶ And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. ¹⁷ And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.”

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

Sermon *Baptism of the Lord Sunday*

The rite of baptism in the Church is often a practice brought out on an occasional basis but is one that is foundational to the Christian life. As religious affiliation and attendance in our society might seem to be slipping it makes us see baptism in a truer light. It is not a practice for just initiating new members into the faith, is not a magical ritual offering a quick-fix to worldly problems, but a moment of remembrance and stability for who we are called to be. In Matthew, when we recount the story of Jesus’ baptism, it is a reminder to the whole of the people who this man from Nazareth is and who he represents as he starts his ministry. Many theologians question if this was the moment that Jesus became the Son of God when the Holy Spirit is given to him. But it would be more appropriate to see this as a coronation of sorts; Jesus was already born as the Son of God, and this public declaration emphasizes how this representative of the divine will serve the people with the purpose of passing on essential wisdom for life. Jesus also stands as the representative of humanity in this instance as well, reenacting the creation story when the LORD created humanity by his spirit and called that work “good”. Jesus was not being endowed with a special status or special powers in that moment, rather demonstrating what the LORD is willing to offer those who trust and accept the divine promises.

When Isaiah speaks, he talks about the chosen servant; one who stands for justice, rightness of life, and offers a gentle hand and assistance to those who struggle to

shine. When the prophet was speaking in this moment, he speaks to a people who struggle to know the right way and who to listen too. The nation of Judah at the time was struggling and teetering, caught between rival kingdoms and empires who saw the existence of the Jewish people as an inconvenience to their worldly success. Others sought to subjugate, assimilate, undermine, and destroy them- how could a people successfully live amid all that? That is when the promise of a servant who would give sight to the blind, freedom from prison, was given to drive the people to what was better. To the Jews in the 7th-8th century BC it was a lesson on how to be the servant themselves to people who knew no better. Later attributed to Jesus by Christian scholars as one who taught and demonstrated what the rule of the LORD stood for, this hymn of the divine servant is a promise that the world and its ideas would not hinder the people. That the LORD's spirit would aid in deconstructing the prisons the people have built around themselves, move the seemingly 'immovable' and oppressive idols, and inspire a praise that would catch the world's attention. Aiding others in projecting a sign that something has changed.

That is what Acts focuses on when recounting the first baptisms of gentiles into the Church. What seems like a forgone conclusion of including all people into the Church was a serious question for consideration in the first century. The man, Cornelius, was referred to as one who "feared God" for a reason. At that moment in time the people of Israel considered themselves to be a closed community, going back to their time in Babylon. It allowed them to preserve themselves, preserve their culture, preserve their faith amid pagan influence from their conquerors. But had the drawback of slowly forming an ethno-faith, a religion one had to be born into to participate. Going against the original promise that Israel would be a "light to the nations", a "kingdom of priests" drawing the world back to its creator. But there was some allowance for conversion which often involved rites and rituals which could be burdensome- the practice of circumcision being an obvious turn-off for many. It also required a complete cut-off from one's old life; family, friends, connections all had to be abandoned for the sake of being part of the 'chosen people'. A step below full conversion was 'God fearing', someone who worshiped the LORD and adhered to the rituals but were still seen as not 'full' and 'true' members of the community. And part of the gospel of Jesus was shattering this 'holy wall' mentality and that the promises of the LORD were only for a small and select group.

Even Peter, chief of the apostles and leader of the Church, had to be purged of these ideas. Seeing a vision of both clean and unclean animals (from the Jewish perspective) taught Peter that such designations did not, and could not, determine who would be accepted into this renewed life. All life was created, and originates, with the LORD who called the creation of the human race 'good' in the first place. Who gave Jesus Christ as the one to unite a separated creation with a renewed and singular purpose and mission. And the acceptance of the Holy Spirit by those gentiles showed how the Church will be, with baptism as a sign to seal the deal. A moment to confirm a renewal

of human life to what it was supposed to be and is given by the LORD which benefits all in the end.

Baptism reminds us that faith cannot be bottled or trapped in amber, it engages with the world and adjusts to make the gospel of Jesus more applicable to any situation we come across. It is also a reminder that faith is not lived alone and does not succeed or fail with us. Faith is a journey, an exploration, a holy experiment in understanding what the presence of the LORD offers to us and anyone we come across. To order life not by force or coercion, but by making us understand what is truly important and essential. And that when we mess up, and we always will, how we might go back to what is true and dependable. While its practice might not be enacted as often as we would like, its meaning is always lived and remembered every time we worship and live as a faithful community. As we remember our own baptisms today, remembering the promises and fulfillments of divine mercy in our lives, we understand this as uniting us more than any other force or power ever could in our lives. And to whoever we receive as a community that is the LORD granting an essential part of our lives too. An openness to receive both the divine and our neighbor and experience Eden once again, a unity creation is starved of and must see lived by our participation and willingness.

Remembrance of Baptism

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, Victoria Kasten, Amber Loftis, Breanne Mathias, Will Long, Tom Netting, Ruth Patrick, Bob Pierre, Mark Preusser, Stefani Seth, Josh Shaeffer, Marlene Singhaus, Dane & Cindy Smith, Derrick & Mandy Smith, Dean & Heidi Unzicker, Simone Villarruel, Holly Waldenmyer, Gene & Ruth Joyce Zimmerly, 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!

Beloved people of God, our baptism is the sign and seal of our cleansing from sin, and of our being grafted into Christ. Through the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Christ, the power of sin was broken and God's kingdom is realized within our world.

Through our baptism we were made citizens of God's kingdom, and freed from the bondage of sin. Let us celebrate that freedom and redemption through the renewal of the promises made at our baptism.

I ask, therefore, to once again reject evil and sin, to profess your faith in Christ Jesus, and to confess the faith of the Church, the faith and hope into which we were baptized.

Trusting in the gracious mercy of God, do you turn from the ways of sin, renounce evil in all its forms and all its empty promises in the world?

I renounce them.

Who is your Lord and Savior?

Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior.

Will you be Christ's faithful disciple, obeying his word and showing his love?

I will, with God's help.

We give thanks to you LORD, for in the beginning your Spirit moved over the waters and by your Word you created the world, calling forth life in which you took delight. Through the waters of the flood you delivered Noah and his family. Through the Red Sea you led your people Israel from slavery into freedom. At the Jordan River your Son was baptized by John and anointed with your Holy Spirit. By water and your Word you claim us as your children, making us heirs of your promise and servants of all.

We praise you for the gift of water that sustains life, for the Tuscarawas River which nurtured the native peoples for so long and the first European settlers. Which allowed them to live together peaceably by the proclamation of your gospel, a sign of how your kingdom draws all creation back together. Above all we praise you for the gift of new life in Jesus Christ, which this water represents. Shower us with your spirit, and renew our lives with your forgiveness, grace, and love.

To you be given honor and praise through Jesus Christ our Lord in the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and forever.

Amen.

Anointing with Water

Blessed as you, LORD our God, who bestows grace through second chances and constant reminders of who we are and meant to be. By your promises proclaimed, sealed, and remembered by water may we become a source of sustenance and hope in all we do and seek to do. So in all things the prayer you have gifted may be realized:

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

The gifts of the Church are for the good of all people everywhere. In what we offer today may it emulate what the LORD has done first for all.

Offertory *Jesus, The Very Thought of Thee* Arr. Dorothy Wells

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 give wonderful and opportune gifts to and through your people. In what we give now may the way to life be made easier to walk for those searching and looking to us. **Amen.**

Hymn #492 *Baptized in Water

Baptized in water, Sealed by the Spirit,
Cleansed by the blood of Christ, our King;
Heirs of salvation, Trusting the promise,
Faithfully now God's praises we sing.

Baptized in water, Sealed by the Spirit,
Dead in the tomb with Christ, our King;
One with His rising, Freed and forgiven,
Thankfully now God's praises we sing.

Baptized in water, Sealed by the Spirit,
Marked with the sign of Christ, our King;

Born of the Spirit, We are God's children,
Joyfully now God's praises we sing.

***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 *Songs of Thankfulness and Praise* Johann Pachelbel**

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

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