



First Presbyterian Church of New Philadelphia

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Rev. Joseph Svancara, Pastor

***Sunday Worship Service
June 22, 2025***

*All who are able, please stand.

Announcements & Prayer Concerns

This next week our church secretary will be out on vacation. Rev. Joe will be available by calling the church office first.

Finance will meet this Tuesday (June 24) at 7pm.

Bible Study will be this Wednesday (June 25) at 10am.

AA will meet this Wednesday (June 25) at 8pm.

Our Sunday Morning Study Group will meet on Sunday (June 29) at 9:15am. We will be discussing chapter 15 of "Foxe's Book of Martyrs". See Rev. Joe if you wish to join!

During June we will be taking up a special collection for the PCUSA's Pentecost Offering- to benefit their ministries to children and young adults. A portion of this offering will be retained to our church and donated to Noah's Hope, and matched by our mission budget. Information and donation envelopes are available on the back mission table.

Opening Prayer

LORD, our Father, the work of your people is longstanding and crosses the ages for our benefit. Help us to realize the faithful work of our ancestors and how they have responded to your divine call, so we might respond even more faithfully. **Amen.**

Prelude *O Perfect Love* arr. Martin

***Call to Worship (Psalm 133)**

How good and how pleasant it is, when kindred live together in unity!

It is like fine oil upon the head, flowing down upon the beard, upon the beard of Aaron, flowing down upon the collar of his robe.

It is like the dew of Hermon flowing down upon the hills of Zion.

For there the LORD has commanded the blessing: life forevermore.

Hymn #442 *The Church's One Foundation

The Church's one foundation
Is Jesus Christ her Lord;
She is His new creation
By water and the word.
From heaven He came and sought her
To be His holy bride;
With His own blood He bought her
And for her life He died.

Elect from every nation,
Yet one o'er all the earth,
Her charter of salvation
One Lord, one faith, one birth;
One holy name she blesses,
Partakes one holy food,
And to one hope she presses,
With every grace endued.

Though with a scornful wonder
This world sees her oppressed,
By schisms rent asunder,
By heresies distressed,
Yet saints their watch are keeping;
Their cry goes up, "How long?"
And soon the night of weeping
Shall be the morn of song.

Mid toil and tribulation,
And tumult of her war,
She waits the consummation
Of peace forevermore;
Till with the vision glorious
Her longing eyes are blest,
And the great church victorious
Shall be the church at rest.

Yet she on earth has union
With God the Three in One,
And mystic sweet communion
With those whose rest is won:

O happy ones and holy!
Lord, give us grace that we,
Like them, the meek and lowly,
May live eternally.

***Prayer of Confession**

The work of the Church aids us in riding the waves of modernity, but often we forget the history and resources at our fingertips:

LORD, our Father, we thank you for the work of your Church, and of your people, throughout the ages. But we confess that we often forget, or do not appreciate, what that work means. What Christians have done in history has been a response to your Spirit of truth. Help us realize this great work, so we might see the great Christ who stands over all. Amen.

***Silent Confessions and Prayers**

***Assurance of Forgiveness**

The visible God, firstborn of all creation, who holds all things together by his goodness, receives and bestows divine forgiveness that we might share in the good things of divine mystery.

Christ alone shows and reveals what all work is done for in this world, and prepares us to see the Spirit move in all situations.

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 Nicene Creed

On June 19, 325 AD some 300 bishops and teachers from around the Roman Empire met in Nicaea (modern-day Iznik, Turkey) in a first ever ecumenical council to discuss issues of the Christian faith. The product is the following creed, which is still in active use in many forms:

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father the only-begotten; that is, of the essence of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made both in heaven and on earth; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down and was incarnate and was made man; he suffered,

and the third day he rose again, ascended into heaven; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

And in the Holy Ghost.

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:

Colossians 1:15-23

1 ¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; ¹⁶ for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. ¹⁷ He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. ¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross. ²¹ And you who were once estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, ²² he has now reconciled in his fleshly body through death, so as to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him— ²³ provided that you continue securely established and steadfast in the faith, without shifting from the hope promised by the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven. I, Paul, became a servant of this gospel.

Ephesians 2:1-22

2 ¹ You were dead through the trespasses and sins ² in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient. ³ All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else. ⁴ But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us ⁵ even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— ⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God— ⁹ not the result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life. ¹¹ So then, remember that at one time you Gentiles by birth, called “the uncircumcision” by those who are called “the

circumcision”—a physical circumcision made in the flesh by human hands—
¹² remember that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. ¹⁵ He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶ and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. ¹⁷ So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; ¹⁸ for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, ²⁰ built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. ²¹ In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; ²² in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.

Luke 1:1-4

¹ ¹ Since many have undertaken to set down an orderly account of the events that have been fulfilled among us, ² just as they were handed on to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, ³ I too decided, after investigating everything carefully from the very first, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴ so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed.

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

Sermon *Nicea Sunday*

There are certain events and celebrations in our faith which are so central to what we believe and who we are: Easter (the day of the Resurrection), Christmas (the day of the Incarnation), Pentecost (the day of rebirth by the divine spirit), and many others which the Christian calendar is built around. But there are also many other celebrations and events which are lost in the shuffle of history, overlooked in their significance, but are also wholly important to who we are and why we believe. This year marks a significant celebration to anyone of the Christian faith, if they choose to recognize it for what it is. On June 19, 325 AD some 300 bishops and teachers from around the Roman Empire met in Nicaea (modern-day Iznik, Turkey) in a first ever ecumenical council to discuss issues of the Christian faith. The product is the following creed, which is still in active use in some form:

*We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible.
And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father the only-begotten; that is, of the essence of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, true God of*

true God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made both in heaven and on earth; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down and was incarnate and was made man; he suffered, and the third day he rose again, ascended into heaven; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. And in the Holy Ghost.

During the first three centuries of the Christian faith it grew and spread out of the region of Judea to throughout the Roman Empire. A persecuted and misunderstood faith which challenged the conventions of Roman life, and life in general. Revealed through the Jewish people and culminating in the teachings and works of Jesus of Nazareth- later called 'the Christ', the anointed one. It was in 306 AD when General Constantine won a decisive battle to secure the Roman emperorship, and established Christianity as a recognized religion in the Empire. It was not that Constantine 'legalized' Christianity but gave legal and recognized status to the Christians and their practices. It allowed them to build churches, participate in public life, and even receive tax-exempt status like many of the pagan institutions. But it also revealed a widening gap within the faith, between those who debated whether Jesus Christ was truly divine or merely human. Those who held the latter position, called Arians, said that Jesus was a created being subordinate to God and rejected the idea of the Trinity.

Now, it could have been pragmatism on Constantine's part, or a desire for divine truth, which made him call for all the Christian leaders to gather. Pragmatism, because the faith being used to unite the empire was at risk of being broken; or faith, because Constantine was baptized as a Christian during his reign. But the call was put out and all the bishops and teachers gathered to discuss these issues and call upon the Holy Spirit to reveal what the LORD desired them to have. It was a desire and yearning I feel is reflected directly from the Gospels, in Luke 1:1-4. The story of Jesus, the teaching of the fellowship, was not done haphazardly. There were many who were there to see these miracles, hear these teachings, and witness what the divine was revealing through the person of Jesus Christ. All of these told their story, they were collected and became part of what united the people together during periods of persecution and hardship. When it seemed like the world was against them, they rested in the hope that the LORD, through their faith, would enable them to live.

Colossians 1:15-23 and Ephesians 2:1-22 are both letters of St. Paul to the various Christian communities of his time. Reminding them under hardship, controversy, and confusion what the reason is for the faith they have. Before any problems came their way it was Jesus who was in their midst, to bring them to belief, and show them what was most important in this life. By his intervention came the knowledge of sin and the realization that a life based solely on individual desire, control, and power was a meaningless life destined for self-destruction. But in seeing and experiencing the warmth of the teachings of Jesus, the effects of his works, one could see the divine in a way which restored harmony and peace within those struggling. Jesus provides the foundation and assurance needed to understand what is true and capable, and what is

meaningless and destructive. And this is what enabled our faithful ancestors to resist times of persecution and subversion of the faith, because of what they experienced their LORD giving them first.

That Nicene council sought unity for the fellowships under their care, and a desire to understand where the LORD was leading his people. Arianism attempted to do this by denying who Jesus was as the outstretched arm of the Father, and now is the dustbin of history along with other human-made efforts at unity. The creed was a result of faithful service, striving for truth, and acceptance of what the Holy Spirit had to teach. Nicaea was not an attempt to bring unity, it found unity as it truly enters this world in our most uncertain times. That is why the creed endures after 1700 years, and why it remains a statement many return to when the work of the Church becomes muddled or confused. For the fellowship it is a handy reminder of how the LORD works, so we might keep it with us for those times of change and doubt.

We might wonder what a 1700-year-old statement of faith from an ancient past impacts what we do today? It is because those ancient Christians were more like us than we care to admit; had the same struggles, doubts, factions, and arguments we have within the Church right now. There is a famous story from Nicaea involving the teacher of Arianism, Arius, and the bishop St. Nicolas. We know St. Nicolas as being the patron saint of children, from where the image of Santa Claus comes from. Well, during that meeting Arius made a comment which angered St Nicolas causing him to get up and slap Arius across the face! It is shocking to us but also fits with some of the arguments and rhetoric we see in our world today. Nicaea was not filled with superhuman teachers and leaders, they were human and had struggles just like us. But it was how the Holy Spirit pulled them, allowed them to set aside their struggles, in pursuit of what was better. That is what is available to us, is the solution to all the Church schisms and controversies, and issues in our world right now. The LORD governs and reigns in all situations, and the gospel is good news in all situations and circumstances. If only we place that first and foremost in all we do, striving toward divine truth and understanding, the LORD will bless us with unity and give a solution to our strained relationships and problems. Unity does not come from right doctrine, teachings, or stories- but from the LORD. And will use it to create a true, powerful people who will answer the needs of creation.

Prayers of the People

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, Bill & Cheryl Graham, Judy Hass, Alice & Errol Jacobs, Barry Jacobs, Victoria Kasten, Amber Loftis, David Mackey, Breanne Mathias, Will Long, Tom Netting, Ruth Patrick, Bob Pierre, Carol Phillips, Mark Preusser, Stefani Seth, Josh Shaeffer, Marlene Singhaus, Cindy Smith, Derrick & Mandy Smith, Janis

Stover, Dean & Heidi Unzicker, Simone Villarruel, The Friends of the Homeless of Tuscarawas County & The Homeless of Tuscarawas County.

LORD, our Father, we look at the conditions and histories of our world and wonder where goodness lies. Nations and peoples war, governments manipulate, leaders become corrupted, and we are left wondering what we can do and give ourselves toward. But your people, your Church, has always lived in this tension and always taught what we can do despite such circumstances. The holy work of your people has inspired so much, brought us toward better and more complete faith, and bestowed a valuable inheritance by which we can carry out your great ends. We admit that we do not keep our history close, reinterpret based on what makes sense to us, or underestimate your control in such events. But your Spirit is present always, taking control where it is needed, and setting your people up to succeed so healing and peace may be found. We thank you for the workers, teachers, and leaders of our faith who have strived so hard and now have their rest with you. Help us to carry on their work and legacy, and see where your Spirit can take us by our willingness.

Such work is not confined to the past, but aids us now as we seek the answers to all the joys and concerns we face...*Reading of the Prayer List*...May the Spirit who guides all into truth and righteousness always guide us in these works right now.

Moment of Silence

We thank you, LORD, for giving a sure foundation by which we might live. We thank you, Christ, for showing us what we have failed to understand before. We thank you, Spirit, for guiding all in the proper way. So we might pray in joy:

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 work of the Church has always been about representing our Christ and what he can do. Let our gifts reflect that reality!

Offertory *O We Have Found a Lovely Vine* 1629 Shaker Tune

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, you have given your people countless gifts and treasures by which to enjoy your goodness and live as we ought. Let us use what we give this day to proclaim what is possible and what you bring about to answer the needs of all peoples.
Amen.

Hymn #440 *In Christ There Is No East or West

In Christ there is no east or west,
In Him no south or north;
But one great fellowship of love
Throughout the whole wide earth.

In Christ shall true hearts everywhere
Their high communion find;
His service is the golden cord,
Close-binding humankind.

Join hands, disciples of the faith,
Whate'er your race may be.
All children of the living God
Are surely kin to me.

In Christ now meet both east and west,
In Him meet south and north;
All Christly souls are one in Him
Throughout the whole wide earth.

***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 *Go Tell It on the Mountain (Spiritual)* arr. Young**

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

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All worship messages, devotions, and church news are available on the First Presbyterian Church website (www.newphilapc.org).