



**First Presbyterian Church of New Philadelphia**

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**Rev. Joseph Svancara, Pastor**

**Sunday Worship Service**

**January 26, 2025**

\*All who are able, please stand.

**Announcements & Prayer Concerns**

The Session meeting has been rescheduled for February 3 at 7pm.

Finance committee will meet this Tuesday (January 28) at 7pm.

Bible Study will be this Wednesday (January 29) at 10am.

AA will meet this Wednesday (January 29) at 8pm.

Our Sunday Morning Study Group will meet on Sunday (February 2) at 9:15am.

Our monthly church brunch will be next Sunday (February 2) after service. All are welcome!

**Opening Prayer**

LORD, our Father, your Word and law is perfect for uniting people together and giving direction in all troubles. Help us to see what we might learn from our common presence, and how your Church's union makes unbelievable change. **Amen.**

**Prelude** *I Will Sing My Maker's Praises* arr. Manz

**\*Call to Worship (Psalm 19)**

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky proclaims its maker's handiwork.

**One day tells its tale to another, and one night imparts knowledge to another.**

Although they have no words or language, and their voices are not heard, their sound has gone out into all lands, and their message to the ends of the world, where God has pitched a tent for the sun.

**It comes forth like a bridegroom out of his chamber; it rejoices like a champion to run its course.**

It goes forth from the uttermost edge of the heavens and runs about to the end of it again; nothing is hidden from its burning heat.

**The teaching of the LORD is perfect and revives the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure and gives wisdom to the simple.**

The statutes of the LORD are just and rejoice the heart; the commandment of the LORD is clear and gives light to the eyes.

**The fear of the LORD is clean and endures forever; the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.**

More to be desired are they than gold, more than much fine gold, sweeter far than honey, than honey in the comb.

**By them also is your servant enlightened, and in keeping them there is great reward.**

Who can detect one's own offenses?

**Cleanse me from my secret faults.**

Above all, keep your servant from presumptuous sins; let them not get dominion over me; then shall I be whole and sound, and innocent of a great offense.

**Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my strength and my redeemer.**

**\*Hymn #167    *God's Law Is Perfect and Gives Life***

God's law is perfect and gives life,  
Revives the weary soul;  
God's testimonies are all sure,  
Wisdom for all to hold.

The statutes of the Lord are just  
And give the heart delight;  
God's precepts are direct and pure  
And give the eyes clear sight.

The fear of God is always clean,  
Enduring as the sun;  
The judgements of the Lord are true  
And righteous, every one.  
And even more to be desired  
Than gold, the finest gold,

And sweeter than the honeycomb,  
The words God spoke of old.

Your servant finds enlightenment  
By means of them, O Lord;  
And in the keeping of Your law,  
There is a great reward.  
But who can tell how often they  
Offend unknowingly?  
From all my secret faults, O Lord,  
I ask You to cleanse me.

Lord, keep me from presumptuous sins;  
Let them not rule my soul;  
Let all my words and all my thoughts,  
My Lord, Redeemer, Might,  
Find favor now, and always win  
Acceptance in Your sight.

#### **\*Prayer of Confession**

We attempt to make your Word the priority in all we do, but do not take the proper time to allow it to work. By returning our focus to you we regain what our efforts alone have lost:

**LORD, our Father, your efforts to order and structure our lives provide positive change in all we do. But we confess when we try to push your influence where it does not belong, and in ways you do not will. Help us to stop, focus, and appreciate the wait your law allows so we might see what is more important.  
Amen.**

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

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

By the presence and comfort of the Spirit of Christ in our lives, evidenced in baptism, we experience a unity and direction which truly rejuvenates our beings.

**We are made one with our Creator, each other, and the whole of creation.  
Harmony reigns through obedience to the Word of Life.**

##### **\*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:

Nehemiah 7:73b-8:12

<sup>7</sup><sup>73</sup>When the seventh month came—the people of Israel being settled in their towns—  
<sup>8</sup>all the people gathered together into the square before the Water Gate. They told the scribe Ezra to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had given to Israel.  
<sup>2</sup>Accordingly, the priest Ezra brought the law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could hear with understanding. This was on the first day of the seventh month. <sup>3</sup>He read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive to the book of the law. <sup>4</sup>The scribe Ezra stood on a wooden platform that had been made for the purpose; and beside him stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah on his right hand; and Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hash-baddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam on his left hand. <sup>5</sup>And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up. <sup>6</sup>Then Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and all the people answered, "Amen, Amen," lifting up their hands. Then they bowed their heads and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground. <sup>7</sup>Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, the Levites, helped the people to understand the law, while the people remained in their places. <sup>8</sup>So they read from the book, from the law of God, with interpretation. They gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading. <sup>9</sup>And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the Lord your God; do not mourn or weep." For all the people wept when they heard the words of the law. <sup>10</sup>Then he said to them, "Go your way, eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions of them to those for

whom nothing is prepared, for this day is holy to our Lord; and do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength. <sup>11</sup>So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, “Be quiet, for this day is holy; do not be grieved.” <sup>12</sup>And all the people went their way to eat and drink and to send portions and to make great rejoicing, because they had understood the words that were declared to them.

#### 1 Corinthians 12:12-31

<sup>12</sup>For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. <sup>13</sup>For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. <sup>14</sup>Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. <sup>15</sup>If the foot would say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. <sup>16</sup>And if the ear would say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. <sup>17</sup>If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? <sup>18</sup>But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. <sup>19</sup>If all were a single member, where would the body be? <sup>20</sup>As it is, there are many members, yet one body. <sup>21</sup>The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” <sup>22</sup>On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, <sup>23</sup>and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; <sup>24</sup>whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, <sup>25</sup>that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. <sup>26</sup>If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it. <sup>27</sup>Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. <sup>28</sup>And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. <sup>29</sup>Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? <sup>30</sup>Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? <sup>31</sup>But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.

#### Luke 4:16-30

<sup>16</sup>When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, <sup>17</sup>and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: <sup>18</sup>“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, <sup>19</sup>to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” <sup>20</sup>And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. <sup>21</sup>Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” <sup>22</sup>All spoke well of him and

were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, "Is not this Joseph's son?" <sup>23</sup>He said to them, "Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, 'Doctor, cure yourself!' And you will say, 'Do here also in your hometown the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum.'" <sup>24</sup>And he said, "Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet's hometown. <sup>25</sup>But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land; <sup>26</sup>yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. <sup>27</sup>There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian." <sup>28</sup>When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. <sup>29</sup>They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. <sup>30</sup>But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.

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

### **Sermon**    *The Third Sunday of Epiphany*

As Christians, we know that the Word of God is essential to our lives. We refer to it by many names: the Bible, the Torah, Scripture, the law, and holy instruction. But many people think it just refers to the written form of the Word and overlook that it refers to Jesus. He is the Word of God for many reasons, principally because he is the LORD's response to the needs of our lives and world. We speak to the heavens and ask for responses and miracles all the time but fail to see that the response and miracle is already among us. He can do great and marvelous things but can also indicate what we already have to help us. The fellowship, the community of the saints, is how we understand and are united to the LORD's response. We try to understand it all on our own and rely on our own preexisting or learned knowledge, but unity is essential and indicates what is already in our grasp.

As the prophet instructed the exiles of the LORD in Nehemiah 7:73b-8:12.

The prophet Nehemiah started out in a prestigious position in exile as the cupbearer for the king. Now the cupbearer's job was to taste whatever the king was given to ensure it was not poisoned, which does not seem like such a prestigious and sought after job to us. But since it was such a dangerous job it ensured great riches and privileges in court, and ensured one had the ear of the king for any request. Yet, even with all this available Nehemiah was still sad and unfulfilled because of the state of his people who returned to their native land. So he approached the king with permission, and means, to return to Jerusalem to help rebuild the city. The king granted the quest and off Nehemiah went!

Nehemiah worked to help rebuild the temple, the city walls, and restore life there for the people. But more importantly, he worked to establish his people into the LORD's covenant again. He had the people of Jerusalem gather publicly outside of the Water

Gate; a portion of the city walls he personally financed, but was also a gate responsible for bringing water up to the temple for worship and cleansing. Reciting the Word at that place reminded the people what the LORD's power allowed for them and made them into. Hearing it together reminded them of how they were united as a people, and what kept them as a holy fellowship to the LORD. It was not their own power, desire, or imagination. The proclaimed and spoken Word reminded them what the true Word of their lives allowed.

It is also what Jesus did in the inaugural sermon at the start of his ministry in Luke 4:16-30.

Jesus speaks and proclaims the Word of God from the prophet Isaiah, about how the LORD gave the ability to speak truth, freedom, and liberation to the people. About how no earthly power defines, forms, or hinders them. Only the LORD gives the Spirit necessary to accomplish anything. Jesus reminds the people that same Spirit which unites them also brought in and united others to the fellowship of Israel, such as the Zarephath widow and Naaman the Syrian. Both of these were Gentiles who had no ethnic ties to the people of Israel, but the LORD still sent his prophets to them to proclaim his power and favor. A proof that no earthly ties or attributes guarantees the LORD's favor, only a desire to seek his grace and mercy. The audience hearing Jesus did not like this and tried to kill him as a result, showing the fierce reaction some have to a unity not on their terms- when they are not in charge. But with the people of the LORD, with the Church, no human is ever in charge no matter how much they pretend. Jesus is the head of the Church, can bring in and dismiss anyone he chooses, and directs what the activities and mission will be.

Just as St. Paul reminds in 1 Corinthians 12:12-31.

There are many gifts and abilities, many offices and positions of authority, but not one is better than the other. Each one does not have the claim to be in charge more than another- everyone thinks they should be in charge. But it is the LORD who directs and guides through his Word, showing how each part fits in and is necessary. How the actions of each member of the fellowship influence the other, and should not be used for personal gain. No matter how noble the intent ability alone does not dictate the pace of the Church or speed up the timetable of the LORD. The LORD goes at his own pace, guarantees success and fulfillment at the best time, and gives all the ability to live into that so long as each set aside earthly ambition and seek to love in a different way. Love not by power or control, but by commitment to giving what another truly needs by one who has already proven himself.

There was a time when the Word of God was read only in community, because of lack of written Scripture or the ability to read among ordinary people. To put a Bible in the hands of every believer has produced some wonderful results, but also still leaves many issues. It can cause some to read their own prerogatives into the Church, be

filled with a sense of entitlement of how things should go, or misinform that the way the LORD is leading them is how all should be led. While we can bring our insights and stories to the fellowship, we leave open the possibility they might inspire something different, and we be changed as a result. Personal understanding leads to something greater and is not an end in itself. It places us in a position of being cleansed and purified, of knowing life exists independently of us, and someone else must draw the water for our benefit. Not just in our church, but in all areas of our lives, what is being given and spoken we would do well to wait and listen for? Who are we giving too much attention to and who are we ignoring? How is our love being expressed in what we prioritize and encourage? The hard work has been done for us, and direction is in our grasp, so let holy patience guide our work and obedience so the Word of God can remain what it should be.

### **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, Don Eberheart Jr., 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, Porter Family, Mark Preusser, Stefani Seth, Josh Shaeffer, Marlene Singhaus, Cindy Smith, Derrick & Mandy Smith, Janis Stover, Bill Titley, Simone Villarruel, Jay Watt, The Friends of the Homeless of Tuscarawas County & The Homeless of Tuscarawas County.*

LORD, our Father, your law, your holy instruction, your Word made flesh is a presence of comfort and assurance for our lives. You assure us we are never alone, have direction and guidance for all we face, and unite us together in something the world could never provide. But sometimes we overlook or over-simplify this union, thinking the Church is like any other place in the world. It is something which challenges, stretches our talents and potential, pulls us toward something better, and makes us into what we have truly been since our beginning. You restore all people and include all people who desire your mercy and grace and demonstrate to critics and detractors what you are not so you may be seen more clearly. Your Jesus fulfills your Word in us every day, the work is finished, so we never have to live in fear.

Your Holy Spirit makes clear the work of your people to do, what to leave behind, and what to wait for. Sometimes this is frustrating because we want to serve you, but the best service opportunities come in your timing and placement. You know what is best for us so help us be patient for the goodness that lies ahead. And in our lives teach us how to wait and serve in situations we have no clue about...*Reading the Prayer List*...Help us live in seasons of tension and uncertainty with the knowledge that direction will be had.

*Moment of Silence*



Thank you, LORD, that you are never silent and always teaching us the best ways to live. Keep us going forward in expectation of good times ahead of us, and the awe that you will use us to visit healing upon all we meet. So the words of your prayer are lived and 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**

By what we offer, and desire to offer, we show how the Word has been fulfilled in our lives.

**Offertory    *How Dear to Me Is Your Dwelling*    arr. Powell**

### **\*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, your Word entices the needs and desires of our lives out in the open. You bring us closer to you and open a world of possibilities for our limited work. In what we give, and desire to give, may others see how your promises fulfill and give an abundant life. **Amen.**

### **\*Hymn #327    *O Word of God Incarnate***

O Word of God incarnate,  
O Wisdom from on high,  
O Truth unchanged, unchanging,  
O Light of our dark sky:  
We praise You for the radiance  
That from the hallowed page,  
A lantern to our footsteps,  
Shines on from age to age.

The church from You, dear Savior,  
Received this gift divine,  
And still that light is lifted

On all the earth to shine.  
It is the chart and compass  
That, all life's voyage through,  
Amid the rocks and quicksands,  
Still guides, O Christ, to You.

O make Your church, dear Savior,  
A lamp of purest gold  
To bear before the nations  
Your true light, as of old;  
O teach Your wandering pilgrims  
By this our path to trace,  
Till, clouds and darkness ended,  
We see You face to face.

**\*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 *Grand Choeur* arr. Young**

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

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