



Rockway and First (North Pelham) Pastoral Charge
Sunday July 18, 2021

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost Worship at Home
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Take a moment to quieten yourself, and to prepare for worship, bringing your heart and mind to this time with God. (You may light a candle for your time of worship)

Call to Worship:

In moments of anxiety, God leads us to still waters. O God, we come to you.

In moments of confusion, God leads us in right paths. O God, we come to hear your voice.

In moments of loneliness, God is with us. O God, we come into your presence, seeking your love.

In all our moments, God is with us. So, we come to praise the One who restores our lives.

Let us worship God.

Opening Prayer of Adoration and Confession:

God our Maker, in summer we easily marvel at the world you have made, the colours of sunrise and sunset filling the horizon, the intricate beauty of flower gardens and natural parks, the quiet dignity of a river in its course, and the steadfast presence of a rock face carved over time. You show us how each small piece of your creation depends in many ways on all the others.

Summer growth depends on spring rains; health for each creature depends on the wise balance you have set between each species; the quality of life on the respect we show one another.

Wise and patient God, we marvel at the world you love. Our worship joins the songs of all creation to bring you praise, honouring you and the relationships you have set between us all, through Christ, firstborn of all creation.

God our Maker, as we marvel at your creation, we confess we often take it for granted. We don't know what to make of reports about the damage human life causes. We prefer to live as if our lifestyles make no impact on the earth. We confess we don't really want to change. Yet we wonder if the way we live is pleasing to you. For all the ways we put your creation at risk and harm the earth, we ask for your forgiveness. Teach us how to live in this marvellous world with love and respect for you and for your whole creation.

And we respond using the words, that He taught us:

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.

Scripture Reading: Psalm 23 (NIV)

The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Hymn: “We are God’s people” # 472 Book of Praise

Words: © Fred Bock Music Co 1976

1. We are God’s people, the chosen of the Lord,
Born of the Spirit, established by the word;
Our corner stone is Christ alone, and strong in him we stand:
Oh let us live transparently, and walk heart to heart and hand in hand.
2. We are the body of which the Lord is head,
Called to obey him, now risen from the dead;
He wills us be a family, diverse yet truly one;
Oh let us freely give our gifts and so shall God’s work on earth be done.

Reflection: “Beside Still Waters”

The 23rd Psalm is one of the most familiar passages of our faith. It is one that we often turn to for comfort during those times that we are feeling lost and alone.

In the second verse of this favourite psalm, a beautiful scene is painted – leading us beside still waters. One can easily picture a quiet pool of pure, clear water, sparkling in the sunlight. There are birds singing, insects buzzing, flowers nodding in the breeze, and clouds floating overhead in a spring blue sky. How wonderful such moments are. We are renewed and refreshed as we live in the quiet places of our lives. God is in the heavens and all seems right with the world.

But life is not always so peaceful and serene. At times there are very deep waters through which we struggle – waters that may hide stones and gaps in the riverbed and that cause us to stumble and fall as we walk forward. We cannot see our way clearly, for the waters are dark and murky. We are filled with doubt, as the way is dangerous and unknown. We read that, even as we walk in valleys filled with shadows, fears, and perhaps death, we are led through to the other side. In psalm 69 the writer pleads that the deep might not swallow him up, and prays that God will rescue him from his enemies, or from sinking into oblivion in the waters.

In the closing verses of Psalm 23, we read that a table is prepared for us in the midst of our enemies. The psalmist knows that life is not always lived in quiet, peaceful places. But we are assured that the one who leads us is there even in the darkest and most troubled times.

Many people are drawn to and fascinated by “white water” stretches of rivers. To stand on a riverbank and watch as the water rolls and tumbles over rocks and boulders is a powerful experience. Many of the rocks are hidden, but, as the water crashes over and around them, we know they are there. Sometimes a way can be found through the rapids, but it can be dangerous, even for someone skilled with a paddle. The less daring must often find a way to go around the treacherous waters. Explorers and fur traders of the past knew where all the rapids were and they also knew where to portage around the most dangerous ones.

Sometimes in our lives we can meet the boulders head on and confront turbulent times with courage, strength, and faith to carry us through. But there are many times when we need a carrying place – a way around the danger. It is a longer route and not always easy. The burdens must be carried on the back and shoulders and the footing is often uncertain. It is not a sign of weakness to find another path around life’s rough places. It can be very tiring to find a safe way around the danger, and it is still a time of struggle.

I met a young woman, a single mother who faced many problems. She had to recover her sense of self – worth following an abusive relationship. She had to find a way to care for her two young children, financially and emotionally. At times the load seemed just too much to bear. She told me about a song that gave her comfort, and contained the line, “Please hold my burden God, not for forever, just for tonight ... I’ll take it back when the morning brings the light.” She knew

that she couldn't stay in the fast water, the rapids of her life 24 hours a day. She knew that she needed rest in order to find the energy to face each new challenge. Every night she prayed this prayer and left her burdens with God. She found a way around the turmoil, and let God carry her for a few hours while she rested. Each morning, she found she could take up the challenge again. With faith, trust and the knowledge that God is present, we can, like the young woman that I met, lay our burdens aside for a time of rest and recovery. Carried by the love of God, we rest by still waters and then pick up our heavy packs, finding a way through or around our troubles. God is present in the spirit of love and hope that surrounds us, and that holy presence often comes in the form of a friend or loved one. We are able to carry on, knowing that we are not alone. Thanks be to God.

Let us pray:

God, we thank you that we do not walk alone. When the waters are troubled, you are with us. When the water is dark and murky, you are there to comfort and to sustain. When the waters are still, you are present to calm and to refresh. We give you thanks for life in all its pleasure and pain and for the assurance of your grace. Amen.

Our Offerings:

You are able to make your offering by sending a **cheque or using the PAR** (pre-authorized remittance). For Rockway contact Bonnie Roland (905-685-3985), 213 Rykert Street, St. Catharines, ON L2S 2B5 and for North Pelham contact Janice Aulph (905-892-5244) or mail 602 Metler Rd, Fenwick L0S 1C0 or drop them in the mailbox.

Prayer of Dedication Let us pray:

God of goodness and growth, receive our gifts and our gratitude for the fruitfulness you provide. Bless our gifts with your Spirit so that they may accomplish more than we can ask or imagine, for the sake of Christ, our Friend and Saviour. **Amen.**

PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING AND INTERCESSION

Good and generous God, in Jesus Christ you came to us, promising life in abundance. We give you thanks today for the abundant gifts we receive in him, the assurance of your love day by day; the relief of your mercy when we recognize our own failings; hope to sustain us when things seem bleak; and peace that comes when we trust ourselves to your eternal keeping.

These are the gifts that matter, O God, so for all these gifts and other blessings we recognize around us, we give you thanks in these moments of silence: (a time of silence)

Generous God, today we pray for all whose lives seem empty of joy because the going is tough, and friends still seem far away ... because their hearts are filled with disappointment ... because their sorrow and grief are keen this day: (a time of silence)

Support each one in your abundant compassion.

Generous God, we remember before you those who lives are empty of peace and hope because they are struggling with illness or disability ... because they are powerless in the face of violence or other forces beyond their control ...

Especially today we pray for all those facing discrimination because of their culture or their religion, and those still struggling to overcome the effects of the pandemic ... (a time of silence)

Send your peace and promise with signs of new possibility and real hope.

Generous God, we remember before you those for whom life is frustrating because they are without work ... because they have made poor choices and cannot find a way forward ... because what comes next does not seem clear ... (a time of silence)

Support each one in your abundant mercy and lead them in new paths.

We pray for those in our church family who are dealing with significant situations regarding their living situation, dealing with difficult work place incidents – may they know that they are supported through the various decisions and may they find healing. We pray for all who are coping with various treatments and preparing for surgery.

Help to keep everyone vigilant in their monitoring of the COVID 19 guidelines, to help keep us safe, so that we can return to worshipping together. God you are our strength on our journey and help us to trust in you through this time.

Good and generous God, fill us with energy & compassion to reach out to those facing difficult times. May we become the gift we have received in Jesus, for it is in his name we lift this prayer to you. Amen.

CLOSING BLESSING

We have been restored in the worship of our God. Have no fear, for God is with us.

We are dwelling in the house of the Lord, let us be God's banquet for one another. Amen.

Sung Response: Go Now in Peace

Go now in peace. Never be afraid. God will go with you each hour of every day.

Go now in faith, steadfast, strong and true. Know He will guide you in all you do.

Go now in love, and show you believe. Reach out to others so all the world can see.

God will be there, watching from above. Go now in peace, in faith, and in love.

Amen. Amen. Amen.

Don Besig & Nancy Price © 1988

**We acknowledge that we meet on the traditional
territory of the Haudensaunee and Annishnaabee**

The Sessions of Rockway and First, North Pelham continue to monitor the situation closely with regards to the resumption of In-Person worship. There will NOT be any summer worship services (indoor or outdoor at North Pelham through to the end of August).

At this time Rockway are planning for an outdoor service on Sunday August 22nd, there will not be any other indoor or outdoor services scheduled at this time.

Mission Moment – Camping from Home

For many children, Camp Douglas in British Columbia is their safe space away from home. These young campers have little to no connection with a congregation or other Christian community outside of camp. They come each summer with a hunger for God and a desire to reunite with the loving Christian community they experienced in past summers. Last year, Camp Douglas' staff adapted the camp's programming using an online platform that enabled their important ministry to continue throughout the summer. Staff ran weekly Bible studies and campfires, as well as other traditional camp activities that could be done at home. Camp Douglas was able to provide this wonderful experience in part through regional resourcing grants, supported by Presbyterians Sharing.