



Rockway and First (North Pelham) Pastoral Charge
Transfiguration Sunday, February 11, 2024 – 10:00 am
Worship at Home

Email: northpelham.rockwaypc@gmail.com **Website:** <https://northpelhamrockwaypresbyterian.ca>

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: “Then a cloud appeared and covered Peter, James, and John with its shadow, and a voice came from the cloud, ‘This is my own dear Son—listen to him!’” (Mk 9:7)

P: **We gather here to worship God, seeking to transform our hearts and spirits by creating space and time to listen to God’s voice.**

L: As we prepare to partake in Holy Communion, we come with open hearts, ready to receive the spiritual nourishment it provides.

P: **We come to worship, yearning to experience awe, reverence, and transcendence in the presence of the Divine.**

P: **Come and meet us as we worship you, O God, during this sacred time.**

Hymn 461

Be thou my vision

PRAYERS OF APPROACH, CONFESSION and ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Transfiguring God,

We come to you in this hour grateful for the blessings of life yet mindful of its challenges. We find joy in our experiences, yet we also encounter difficulties that weigh heavily upon us, dear God. Our relationships bring us fulfillment and love, yet they, too, can be fraught with conflicts, disagreements, and feelings of inadequacy.

O God, we seek guidance, strength, and peace in your presence. We long for a deeper sense of fulfillment, clarity of purpose, and hope for the future. Grant us the faith to trust in your plan, the courage to face our struggles, and the love to heal past wounds and forgive ourselves and others.

We acknowledge our shortcomings and ask for your forgiveness, O God. May we find the strength to take responsibility for our actions and embrace the opportunity for renewal and transformation. Hear now our silent confessions as we lay our burdens before you. (pause)

You know us intimately, O God, and love us unconditionally. You see beyond our flaws and imperfections to recognize the beauty and potential within us. Amidst our worries and doubts, you perceive our strength and resilience. Help us embrace our true selves, acknowledging our greatness and weaknesses.

May this moment of reflection and prayer bring us closer to understanding who we are in your eyes, O God. May your grace and mercy guide us as we navigate life's challenges, transforming our fears and anxieties into courage and resilience. Amen.

Hymn 687

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine

Prayer for Understanding

Merciful God,

Illuminate our hearts as we approach Your word. In life's stresses, we turn to you for guidance and solace. Help us find peace amidst the chaos and strength to navigate the challenges we face. Teach us the discipline of listening for your voice in the midst of our busyness, and grant us the courage to trust in your transformative power. Amen.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Psalm 50: 1-6, Mark 9: 2-9

SERMON**Practicing the Presence of God**

We all experience periods of stress in our lives. Modern life is full of stress, and we all react in similar ways. Our pulse rate increases, and we can feel the tension increasing in our muscles. For many of us, stress levels can get pretty high. Even if we aren't highly stressed right now, a small change in our unpredictable and vulnerable lives can cause a dramatic rise in our stress levels.

There are so many circumstances and situations we have to contend with that can cause stress: frustrations in our lives and things we cannot control or change. Then, there are some relationships that are stressful for some of us, especially if filled with conflict, tension, or disagreement. Many of us experience stress with the issue of finance, and financial stress is increasing everywhere: for individuals, groups, and the governments of cities, provinces, and even the country. Do we have enough for tomorrow? This is a perennial concern.

So do we have helpful ways of finding new energy and new joy so that the stresses in our lives don't overwhelm us as much as they currently do? What can we do to reduce our stress?

In our technologically driven modern lives, our smartphones, screens, and listening devices are our main tools to escape stress. Texting, surfing the net, watching TV and movies: this is what we do. Technology is now used not only for communication and information but also for escape and entertainment, and to protect ourselves from loneliness and isolation.

But has technology made our lives less stressful or more stressful? Many researchers report that modern technology has, in fact, made things worse. Technology promises that we will be able to get more things done more easily, become more connected, tap into more entertainment, and thus enjoy a life that is easier and happier. However, the exact opposite has happened. People are more harassed, more distracted, more stress-filled, and more exhausted than ever before. Burnout is a regular occurrence in the workplace and in relationships. More people are sick or on leave due to being overwhelmed by stress than by any other single factor. And loneliness is more prevalent than ever in spite of all the communicating.

So what can we do to respond to stress? How can we cope? Is there any discipline we can practice as Christians that represents another way of living? Are there alternatives to our screens and smartphones, our constant distractions, and the stress we feel so deeply?

The story of Jesus' transfiguration points to the solution: it is the discipline of paying attention so that we can hear God speak to us. Paying attention means creating time and space within ourselves to be in communion with God. We need to clear out the clutter in our heads and in our hearts so that we can receive something only God can give us. This is to cultivate the kind of relationship with God where we can hear God speaking deep within us, through others or through the world around us. In this way, we too can be transfigured with Christ and, in so doing, reduce the stress levels in our worldly lives.

In today's text, Jesus takes Peter, James, and John to the top of a mountain. To climb a mountain is to escape the clutter and confusion of the everyday. Looking into the valley below can be breathtaking. Mountains are places of beauty and wonder, and leaving our stresses in the world below can give us a different perspective on life.

On the summit of this particular mountain, Jesus takes the time and makes the space to pay attention to God so that something remarkable can happen. While deeply absorbed in prayer, the disciples have a vision of Jesus in all his splendour and glory. Unless they had paid attention, nothing would have happened. It is always necessary to pay attention in order to hear God speaking. Jesus is transfigured before them: he changes in form and appearance. His clothes become dazzling white, and Elijah and Moses speak with him.

Peter, James, and John witness all this. They are terrified. They are awed and astounded. They don't know what to do or say. They hear God's voice from the cloud: "This is my own dear Son – listen to him!" Looking around, Peter, James, and John see only Jesus. They are told that Jesus does, indeed, speak for God. Of course, the moment passes, the vision fades away, and they are back in the repetitious routine of everyday living with all its stress. Yet they have fresh confidence, direction, and assurance. They are not the same, even though the world and its stresses are the same.

Not only Christianity but also all other religions recognize the need to create time and space so as to pay attention. The God we believe in exists among us and within each of us. God, as the truth and the ultimate source of life, is not something outside to be discovered but something inside to be realized and heard.

Paying attention to God speaking to us, as he did to Jesus and his three disciples, is a practice of mindfulness. We can develop this skill by using breathing or some other similar meditative activity. Mindfulness meditation—which is to become aware of the emotions and thoughts that arise in the mind—is necessary for the transformation of emotional suffering, anxiety and depression. The Spirit of God and Jesus Christ, who is Light, Spirit, and Word, helps us change so that we may live in the Spirit of Peace of God and Jesus Christ. (Jn 1:1-5)

The purpose of our Sunday worship is to clear out space and time to be present – in the silence, the hymns, and the prayers. It is an opportunity to pay attention to God. Then, there is our fellowship with people in and outside the church. God speaks to us through our conversations and when we eat and drink together.

Do we carve out time in our weekly routines for quiet meditation? Are there practices that help clear mental clutter, even for just fifteen minutes? We offer a Wednesday Bible session for discussion and prayer, an intimate dialogue with God through words, silent contemplation, or thoughts. Thursdays include a walking activity, providing physical exercise that fosters inner stillness, allowing us to listen, think, and focus on our breath.

This Wednesday marks Ash Wednesday, initiating the 40-day Lenten season leading up to Easter Sunday. It's a preparation period, focusing on a specific aspect of our lives—a challenge, fear, sin, or relationship—and presenting it to God for transformation or resolution. We also provide a daily devotional booklet for morning and evening meditation throughout the 40 days of your spiritual Lenten journey, inviting reflection and openness to God's guidance.

Jesus' transfiguration is a reminder of the need for God's guiding light when our lives are clothed in darkness and stress, so that we may in turn be a source of inspiration and encouragement to others. What happened to Jesus on the mountain will happen to you and to me. One day, as we pay attention to God's voice, we, too, shall be transformed into everlasting joy, peace, and glory. We will commune with God and Christ in one spirit, and we will experience that heavenly world where stress and sorrow are changed into the spiritual joy of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

A certain level of stress will always be a part of our life. Yet creating space and time and paying attention to what God might say to us is a Christian spiritual practice that can make us calmer, more confident, and more connected with God. This does not mean our lives will be a nonstop parade of unicorns and rainbows. Nonetheless, the most important thing we can do in our lives is to create the space and time to attend to God.

With God, who is Light, Word, and Spirit and resides among us and within each of us, all things are possible. Do you believe this? Amen.

Hymn 240

Rock of ages, cleft for me

Invitation to the offering

Doxology

Prayer of Dedication

Transfiguring God,

We dedicate the abundance you have entrusted to us to become resources for building a transfigured and transfiguring community and world. Bless these offerings as they work to spread hope and love. We ask for your blessing upon all that we are and all that we bring, that it may serve as your good news in every place, for all creatures. Amen.

Invitation to the Lord's Supper

Hymn 548

Let us break bread together (vv. 1-2)

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving & The Lord's Prayer

One: The Lord be with you.

All: And also with you.

One: Lift up your hearts.

All: We lift them up to the Lord.

One: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All: It is right to give God thanks and praise.

All: Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

All: Christ has died!

Christ is risen!

Christ comes again and again! Hallelujah!

All: "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.

Words of Institution

Sharing of the Elements

Prayer after Communion (in unison)

As we partake of this sacred meal, we are grateful for your presence in our lives. We carry the weight of stress but seek stillness to hear your voice. Like Jesus on the mountaintop, may we find moments to connect with you. Grant us mindfulness to invite your transformation. May Christ, present in the bread and wine, embody his hands, feet, and heart within us as we venture into the world. Guide us in prayer and fellowship this Lenten season, drawing us nearer to you and to one another. Make us vessels of your peace amidst turmoil. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Hymn 548

Let us break bread together (v. 3)

Benediction:

May the grace of God, the love of Jesus Christ, and the fellowship we share in the Holy Spirit be with you now and always. Amen.

Sung Response: "Go Now In Peace"

Postlude

The Life and Ministry of our Congregations, led by Rev. Jacob Lee:
Pastoral Charge of Rockway and First, North Pelham

**We acknowledge that we meet on the traditional
Territory of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe**

Announcements:

***Worship on Sunday, February 18, at Rockway**

***Heartfelt Gratitude:** "Thank you, everyone, for your cards, well wishes, and care during my heart surgery recovery. Trish and I deeply appreciate your kindness." - Kent

***Two Bible studies:** Join us for Wednesday Bible study at 10:00 AM at First Church, led by Diane McMillan. Our Thursday Bible study was suspended due to Fran's illness. She is currently at the hospital.

***Outreach - Thursday Walking:** Join us for the Wellness Walk and Coffee Chat! We gather at 9:30 a.m. at Canada Games Park to start our walk together. After the walk, we meet at Rockway for a joyful chat over hot and fresh coffee at 10:45 am.

***Quilting Gathering:** Join us for our quilting session on Tuesday, from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM at North Pelham. All sewing enthusiasts are welcome to participate!

***Offering Update: Circulating the Plate Starting February** - We circulate the offering plate during our worship service. If you make monthly offerings through PAR, you can place your PAR cards on the plate each week.

***Rescheduled Session Meeting on February 28:** Our joint session meeting scheduled for Wednesday has been moved to February 28 at 7:00 pm at Rockway. This change allows us to prioritize caring for our elders and showing love and appreciation for our loved ones on Valentine's Day.

***World Day of Prayer:** The Local World Day of Prayer service for the Pelham area in 2024 will be held at St. Alexander Church in Fonthill on March 1st at 2:00 PM.

***Special Guest Preacher: Rev. Krista Hilton** - On March 3, we are excited to welcome Rev. Krista Hilton, a Chaplain at Brock University and a priest in the Anglican Church. She will share her experiences in chaplaincy for young students and present mission opportunities for our congregation to support the ministry of spiritual and pastoral care for university students.

***Meat Pie Fundraiser:** Pre-order now for 9" Ground Beef or Chicken pies at \$18 each. Pick up on Saturday, March 16, 2024, at First Presbyterian Church from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm. Order online at <http://tinyurl.com/3sav9ctv> or call Janice at 905-246-9175.

***Annual Congregational Meetings:** The 2023 Annual Congregational Meeting for North Pelham is planned for March 10, right after the service, and for Rockway, our gathering is scheduled for March 17 following the service. Committee reports play a vital role in providing a thorough overview. Committees, please submit your reports for North Pelham by February 25th to Janice or Carole and Rockway by March 3rd to Bonnie.

***Connect with your Minister Jacob for pastoral visits.** Reach Jacob at jacoblee0501@gmail.com or 289-213-2797.