



Rockway and First (North Pelham) Pastoral Charge
Easter Sunday, March 31, 2024 – 10:00 am
Worship at Home

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

CALL TO WORSHIP (provided by Presbyterian World Service and Development)

L: Christ is risen!

P: He is risen indeed! Hallelujah!

L: The stone had been rolled back and the tomb was empty. The angel told the faithful women, “He has been raised. He is not here.”

P: And so we have hope — a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

“May the God of hope go with us every day.”

Hymn 243

Jesus Christ is risen today

PRAYERS OF APPROACH, CONFESSION and ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Awesome God,

We come before you on this beautiful day that you have given us. This day in the Church year holds paramount significance. Today is a day of celebration and joy; it is a day of hope and renewed faith. It is a day when we open our hearts to a fresh infusion of your love: love that can redeem and renew, love that is able to heal, love that is able to fill us with fresh peace as we face the complexities, the endless ups and downs that challenge and triumph in our lives.

We thank you, O God, for the precious gift of hope, especially as many of us carry burdens from our past: burdens that weigh us down in the present, memories, things for which we feel deep remorse and shame, things that evoke anger, frustration, and a sense of injustice.

We reflect on our personal lives, O God, and also contemplate the world around us. We ponder the future of this earth and reflect on our actions and omissions, acknowledging the rise of darkness ahead.

In our relational lives, O God, we wear many hats—parents, children, husbands, wives, friends, neighbours, and members of various communities. We consider those we know, their struggles, and our own. We ponder our responsibilities, sometimes feeling inadequate for the task.

Listen to us, O God, on this Easter Sunday morning as we take a moment of silence to open our souls and hearts before you. (pause)

Meet us, O God, in the silence and through words and music. Meet us in the imagery of Easter, with words about the cross and the resurrection of Jesus, some of which are familiar, some of which confound us. Find us where we are, in the particularity of our lives. Fill us with fresh faith, new hope, and renewed energy to love passionately.

In Jesus' name, we are forgiven. In the risen Christ's name, we are forgiven and renewed, with possibilities for our lives opening again and again before God and with God. And we pray all this in the name of the resurrected Lord, Christ Jesus. Amen.

Hymn 250

I danced in the morning

Prayer for Understanding

Dear God,

As we prepare to delve into the sacred scriptures from Acts 10:34-43 and Mark 16:1-8, we ask for your divine illumination to guide our hearts and minds. In the face of loss, may we find hope in Christ's resurrection. Grant us the courage to embrace renewal. Guide us to share this hope with others. Amen.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Psalm 118: 1-2, 14-24

Acts 10: 34-43, Mark 16: 1-8

Trio

Oh, Praise the Name

SERMON

Jesus' Resurrection

Loss comes in many different forms and it comes to us all. It can be traumatic and disorienting. We lose our sense of control and feel broken and alone. What kinds of losses have we known in our lives? The most obvious one most people think about is the loss of a loved one. Can anything be more devastating?

There are of course many other losses in life that are not as extreme. We can lose relationships that matter to us, or jobs that have given us a sense of identity and vocation. We may not be accepted by a certain school that would have enabled us to fulfill a precious dream. We may lose our vision and hope when things don't go according to plan. We can lose our health and our ability to do the things that give us meaning and purpose. We can lose a circle of friends and feel betrayed by those we have trusted.

Loss is something that cannot be avoided. But the point of life is not to overcome our losses so that they no longer affect us. The point of life is not to develop toughness and lose our vulnerability. No. The point of life is to find a way of flourishing, and of developing creative ways to integrate the losses of life into transformation and growth throughout our human journey.

That's what the cross and resurrection of Jesus is all about. The cross is about loss. The story of Holy week is all about Jesus' passion, suffering and death. Then the resurrection opens up a

whole new world of possibility, a world that takes the losses and makes them into something precious and even redemptive.

In the Gospel of Mark, which is the earliest biblical account of this happening, the resurrection is described in the eight verses we heard read this morning. There is a single detail that speaks volumes: “When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. They had been saying to one another, ‘Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?’ When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back.”

The stone which was very large had already been rolled back! Then the women hear an angel in the empty tomb saying “Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified has been raised.”

Resurrection to new life means that the large stone that separates us from God has rolled away. Through the resurrection of Jesus, God’s own life is given back to the world and to those who believe. Newness of life and eternal life are now possible for all of us. We can celebrate newness of life even through our suffering, loss, and death, just as our risen Lord, Christ Jesus did. That’s why we as followers of Christ identify ourselves as Easter people.

People deal with loss in different ways. Loss is personal, and so the journey to resurrection and new life has to be personal also. It is not enough to believe in the resurrection in some general way. It is not enough to believe that we somehow come to life again after we die. The resurrection begins for everyone personally in this life - whenever and however we encounter Christ on our journey through loss.

In today’s gospel, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome, go to the tomb filled with despair over the painful and awful death of Jesus. Then, in their brokenness, they hear the amazing news that Jesus is alive again. Here too loss is an essential part of the journey toward newness of life, which is eternal life.

Just as Peter in Cornelius’ house heard the story, we also hear of Jesus’ resurrection. But there is a big difference between hearing the story and becoming part of it. There is a doubt that darkens Easter - the doubt that you and I can really walk in newness of life. We might feel that the massive stone in our life is just too big. That Jesus rose to new life is easy to believe, but we have difficulty believing that we too can rise to new life in him. As Easter people, and as followers of Christ, we *can* be changed, but do we want to be changed? Are we willing to be changed, and to change that which we can change, while accepting that which we cannot change, and to know the difference?

Rolling away the stones that imprison us that we might come forth into the bright and powerful light of the risen Christ does involve effort on our part. It means committing anew the bits and pieces of our fragmented lives to the vision Christ has for us. Loneliness and despair can kill us. The light and life and love of the risen Christ can hold us and keep us. We can choose to commit our fragmented lives together to a vision of Christ at work in us and others in and outside

Rockway and North Pelham. For we are all invited again and again to the life and work of the church so that we may share in a loving and caring life with others.

We can choose to proclaim hope and not despair, life and not death, light and not darkness. Easter adds another dimension to our personal and communal life journeys. Faith and hope in God's steadfast love gives us new strength, courage, and hope to work together to get through the problems and challenges in our family, church, and community lives.

Christ's resurrection frees us from fear and gives us power to confront hatred, injustice, disappointment, and death. Not even death can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Jesus has given us a new commandment: "Love one another as I have loved you. And if there is this love among you, then all will know that you are my disciples." This is not just "love one another" with human love. That's Valentine's Day love. Jesus said, "Love one another *as I have loved you*." There is a big difference between "love one another" and "love one another as Jesus loves us." Loving one another as Jesus loves us means forgiveness, compassion, healing, sacrifice, new life, and peace.

The resurrection of Jesus tells us that Christ passed through death to resurrection. So too we can pass through our many different forms of loss and sufferings into a new life, a life in which God is always with us, providing us not with what we want, necessarily, but with what we need under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. There is no room for despair: our Easter faith tells us that God can raise us up and renew our personal and communal lives.

Filled with resurrection strength, hope, courage and faith, let us go out of this building to bring newness of life and hope to our family, church, and community.

Jesus Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed! Hallelujah! Amen.

Hymn 255

Now let the vault of heaven resound

Invitation to the offerings

Doxology

Prayer of Dedication

God of grace and God of glory,

Day by day, you shower us with blessings. As you have raised us to new life in Christ, give us glad and generous hearts. We offer to you, in return, our gifts, both of money and of ourselves. Use us, we pray, to give gifts to others in the name of the resurrected One. Amen.

Confessing our faith based on the Apostles' Creed (Iona Creed, Scotland)

Invitation to the Lord's Supper

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)

Gracious and loving God,

As we partake in this Holy Communion, we are reminded of the profound message shared in today's Easter Sunday service. Just as the stone was rolled away from the tomb, the Resurrection of Jesus breaks through the barriers of our lives, offering us new hope amid loss and suffering. Help us, like Mary and Salome, to embrace the reality of your resurrection in our own lives. Grant us strength and courage to spread your message of love and new life in our families, churches, and communities. In the resurrected Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Hymn 258

Thine be the glory

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, April 7, at Rockway**

***Thank you!** "Thank you everyone for the cards and best wishes on my 80th birthday." – Roger Miller

***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.

***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.

***The RPCW meeting:** they will meet on Wednesday, April 3 at 1:30 PM at the church.

***Guest Preacher: Rev. Pearl Vasarhelyi on April 14 | Rev. Jacob's Study Leave from April 8-15:** We're delighted to welcome Rev. Pearl as our guest preacher on April 14 while Jacob is on study leave from April 8-15.

***Spring Book Sale by the Canadian Bible Society:** The Niagara Branch of the Canadian Bible Society will host a Spring Used Book Sale at Fairview Mall on April 19-20, 2024. Please spread the word and bring books, DVDs, and CDs early on those mornings. Assistance in setting up tables and refreshing displays is appreciated.

***Connect with your Minister Jacob for pastoral visits.** Reach Jacob at jacoble0501@gmail.com or 289-213-2797.