



**Rockway and First (North Pelham) Pastoral Charge**  
**Orange Shirt Sunday**  
**for Truth and Reconciliation in Canada**  
**September 29, 2024**  
**Worship at Home**

**Email:** [northpelham.rockwaypc@gmail.com](mailto:northpelham.rockwaypc@gmail.com) **Website:** <https://northpelhamrockwaypresbyterian.ca>

### **CALL TO WORSHIP**

**L:** Jesus teaches us, “Whoever welcomes one of these little ones in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me welcomes not just me, but the one who sent me.” (Mark 9:37)

**P:** **We gather in this sacred space to embrace the spirit of welcome and to share that warmth with one another.**

**L:** We come not clothed in pride or pretense but in our honest, humble, and vulnerable selves, recognizing our shared humanity.

**P:** **Speak to us, O God, during this time of worship with the words we need to hear. May we worship you in spirit and in truth, reflecting your love and grace to all!**

Hymn 422                      **Sing a new song unto the Lord**

### **Prayers of Approach and Confession**

Tender God, we come before You today, seeking understanding. We know we make mistakes, sometimes serious ones, but we long for Your love, forgiveness, and a second chance. We are here seeking renewed focus and direction in our lives, for we are easily distracted, discouraged, and disillusioned. We often forget who we are and what we are called to do. We forget that Your call to love is not just for Sundays but for every day—in our work, our homes, and our play. With those we claim to love and even with those we find difficult to love.

We need Your guidance in how to speak truthfully, make our claims for justice, and determine what is right. Teach us how to challenge the wrong we see, yet open our hearts to hear other perspectives, to forgive and let go, to build bridges of reconciliation, and to open doors where healing is possible. Hear us now, O God, as we offer our silent confession to You... (pause)

You hear us, O God.

You confront us with the truth—through our conscience, through life's circumstances—yet You always offer forgiveness as Your final word over us. May Your forgiveness not only be felt deep within, but may it shape the direction and focus of our lives in the world. In the name of Jesus, who taught us to pray together, we say,

## **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.

Hymn 740                      **Make me a channel of your peace**

## **Prayer for Understanding**

Gracious God,

as we hear Your Word, open our hearts to Your truth. Teach us humility and guide us by Your wisdom so we may live in love and service. May Your Spirit lead us as we walk in Your ways. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

## **SCRIPTURE PASSAGES**

**Responsive Psalm**  
**The Gospel**

**Psalm 1**  
**Mark 9: 30-37**

## **SERMON**

### **Humility is True Greatness**

As human beings we are part of God's entire creation, in which all beings are equal. We need to be aware of the harmony and equality amongst all of the web of God's life, whether it be humans, plants, or animals. We should never think of ourselves as better or worse than anyone else in a spirit of comparison or competition. Such understanding and acceptance capture the spirit of humility, which is a fundamental foundation and value in our hearts, minds, and souls, enabling us to love and care for our loved ones and others.

Humility is demonstrated in understanding our identity as small parts of God's whole creation and through considering others before ourselves. In the Aboriginal tradition, the wolf is the teacher of this lesson. In one of the Seven Sacred Teachings of the Aboriginal tradition, humility is represented by the wolf, who lives his life as part of a group. He bows his head in the presence of others out of deference and, once he has hunted, will not partake of the kill until it can be shared with the pack. His humility and respect for the community are hard lessons but are integral to the Aboriginal way of life.

The reality, however, is that we live in a world where everyone is selling themselves and inflating their abilities out of intense ambition and hard competition for material goods that go beyond what is needed. Competition can help bring out the best in some people, but it also creates anxiety. It encourages exaggeration on one side and dismissiveness towards others on the other. Competition also creates more losers than winners and can polarize and divide people instead of bringing them together.

In today's gospel story, Jesus and the disciples are on their way to Jerusalem. They may all be going to the same place, but their perspective on what will happen and what it all means could not be more different. Jesus knows that the leaders of the nation have rejected his message and

that it will be dangerous for him to enter Jerusalem. He knows he will be killed. For their part, the disciples have their own plans. They want to prosper and be successful. They want greater power in their lives. They are following Jesus because they believe he will open the door to all those things. This is why they are arguing about who is the greatest. The greatest among them will receive the greatest privilege and position, for if Jesus is indeed the messiah, there is glory in store, not suffering.

We are told that Jesus notices that the disciples are debating with each other about who is the greatest, even though they do not respond when he asks, "What were you arguing about on the road?" Jesus then pours ice water over their egoistic illusions. "Listen," he tells them. "I will be killed. But this will not be the end of the story. I will be raised, but not before much hardship and pain, and this will include public humiliation and disgrace."

Jesus teaches them humility so that they may become greatest in building the kingdom of love and in living a mutually abundant life with others. Humility is the basic value they need if they want to succeed with God. Humility is the personal characteristic God wants them to increase, and they need it most if they want to become truly great before God. Jesus goes on to explain humility: Humility is about learning who we are as imperfect and limited human beings. We need to learn how to live with grace within our limitations, vulnerability and needs. That's why Jesus uses a child as his model. A child is a human being whose dependence, neediness, weakness, and vulnerability are indisputable. As adults, we tend to cover up this reality. We try to protect ourselves with our finances, possessions, accomplishments and abilities. Many are the ways we try to cover up the basic fact that, as smart, as able, and as successful as we are, we all have our basic limitations, weaknesses and limits, our needs and vulnerabilities. We depend on many factors and people to affirm who we are, to discover our character, and to believe in ourselves. Unless we can come to accept the reality of who we are, we will have a difficult time tolerating, let alone embracing, others in their weakness, need, and fragility.

Humility is about learning to stop making comparisons. It is about refusing to be driven by competitive ambition, of having to win in order to feel good, of having to be better than others in order to feel superior, because otherwise, we cannot accept ourselves and love ourselves. Humility is about knowing our place in the web of life. We all depend on and are interdependent with others on this planet, and ultimately, we depend on God. Imagine a world without the love, affirmation and opportunities others can afford; a life without family and community to embrace and love us. How could we really prosper in such a world? How could we even know who we are and love who we are if we have no sense of being loved? Love is about being supported, listened to, guided, and formed in patience and tenderness. It is about being forgiven, and welcomed into community by others who are at one time strangers and have no obligation to welcome us other than by the grace of God that moves them. If we fully understand that we are a small part of the whole world, we not only express our gratitude in word and prayer, but we also live out our gratitude by offering to others the love and support we ourselves receive.

We live in a world where there is fierce competition in many areas, producing a few winners and a lot of losers. But we should confidently understand that we are precious and important to God whether we succeed or fail in this or that, no matter how high we fly or how low we fall. We

confess our sins every Sunday and seek our forgiveness and renewal. This is a spiritual way through which we become more authentic before God and more grounded as human beings because through our confession and renewal, God cleans and renews us, strengthens and humbles us.

Humility is an essential part of God's law of compassionate love. We must practice it day and night in our daily lives, no matter our accomplishments, for true happiness and abundant life with others. The wolf, which represents humility in the Aboriginal tradition, is a wonderful witness to the kind of humility Jesus is talking about.

May we as faithful followers of Jesus learn how to live abundantly with others in humility, being honest about our being as just a small part of the web of God's life, with all our weakness, vulnerability, and the dependence of children. Amen.

Hymn 490                      **God of grace and God of glory**

### **Invitation to the Offering**

#### **Doxology**

#### **Prayer of Dedication**

Generous God,

we humbly offer these gifts as a small part of the abundance You have given us. Use them to further Your work of love and justice in the world. May our offering reflect hearts grounded in humility, serving others and building Your kingdom of compassion and grace. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

#### **Prayer of Thanksgiving and for the People**

Awesome God,

we gather here for many reasons, but most of all, to learn the spirit of gratitude. We are here to say thank You, for the gifts You give us—gifts beyond what we deserve or could ever earn.

We lift up to You those who suffer: those caught in the midst of war and violence, those facing fires, floods, storms, and earthquakes. We pray for refugees on dangerous journeys, seeking safety and a new home. We hold before You the broken relationships with the First Peoples of this land, and our responsibility to care for the Earth we share. On the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation in Canada, we especially pray for Indigenous peoples, the children whose identities, cultures, and traditions were stolen in residential schools, and the generations still carrying that trauma.

We lift up those who feel lost or devalued, who have been mistreated because of their skin color, faith, culture, gender, or identity. We remember those burdened by economic hardship, those caring for loved ones, facing illness, loss, or searching for meaning. We especially pray for Catherine Tirpko in her new home at the Meadows of Dorchester, and for Fran Johnson, Marie Lampman, and Tom Keenan.

In the silence of our hearts, we bring before You all the people and situations that weigh on us, yearning for Your healing touch. (Silence)

Loving God, we pray for faith in Your power to heal and uplift, and for hope that Your love brings peace.

By learning gratitude, we release the toxins of self-pity and bitterness within us. Through gratitude, our spirits open to the beauty in the world, in others, and in ourselves. No matter what we have suffered, are suffering, or fear in the future, You promise possibilities of joy, fullness, and peace beyond what we can imagine. We lift our love and prayers for the world in the spirit of gratitude. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

**Hymn 671                    I heard the voice of Jesus say**

### **BENEDICTION**

May the love of God our Creator, who made us all equal in His sight, the grace of Jesus Christ, who showed us the way of humility and service, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, who empowers us to live in love and unity, be with you now and always. Go in peace to serve the Lord. Amen.

**Sung Response- Go Now In Peace**  
**Postlude**

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

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**\*Next Sunday Service, October 6, at 10:00 am at North Pelham**

**\*Prayers and Support for Catherine Tirpko's New Transition:** Catherine Tirpko has recently moved to the Meadows of Dorchester nursing home in Niagara Falls after living with her son George and daughter-in-law Mary for the past 20 years. While she is settling in well and enjoys her new surroundings, there are moments of adjustment, especially at night. Please keep Catherine in your prayers as she navigates this new chapter of living independently. Let's continue to support her with our love and care during this transition.

**\*Exciting Elder Election and Ordination Ahead!** Exciting news for Rockway Church! Following the service, we will hold a congregational vote for Janice Wiley as a new elder. If all goes smoothly, we will celebrate her ordination on Sunday, October 13. Please keep Janice in your prayers as we look forward to welcoming her into this vital role!

**\*Fall Barbecue Lunch Fellowship, October 6!** Join us for a joyful barbecue lunch at North Pelham on October 6, right after the service! Sign up on the sheet, and don't forget to bring your

grass chair. Let's enjoy a wonderful time of fellowship together! Please also bring a desert or salad to share. Beverages will be provided.

**\*Celebration of Holy Communion:** On October 6, we will gather to celebrate the Sacrament of Holy Communion. Let us come together in faith to share in this sacred meal, remembering Christ's love and grace for us all.

**\*Thanksgiving Sunday Gratitude – October 13!** We'll celebrate Thanksgiving by giving thanks for God's abundant blessings! Let's express our gratitude by bringing life-giving and life-sustaining food into the church. After the service, the food will be donated to the Open Arms Mission of Welland, where God's blessings will be shared with those in need. Thank you for joining in this act of love and generosity!

**\*North Pelham's 196<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration!** Join us on October 20 as we joyfully celebrate North Pelham's 196<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with guest speaker Rev. Pearl Vasarhelyi! As we thank God, we're launching a special mission project to support the Brock Chaplaincy. Donations collected during the service will help students in need, and contributions made through the church are eligible for a charitable tax deduction. Let's come together in prayer and gratitude, spreading love and support as we celebrate this special milestone. We look forward to celebrating with you!

**\*Winter Apparel Drive**—As another Anniversary Celebration project, we will be collecting good-used winter coats, hats, mittens/gloves, and scarves to support Brock Chaplaincy's Winter Coat program. Please consider this when you are going through closets. This drive will run for the month of October, and your donations can be dropped off at either Rockway or North Pelham. Thanks for your consideration of this worthwhile project!

**\*Rev. Jacob's New Leadership Roles in Niagara Presbytery and Stamford Presbyterian Church:** Jacob has been installed as the Moderator of Niagara Presbytery, beginning in September and continuing through to September of next year. In addition, he is currently serving as the interim moderator for the congregation of Stamford Presbyterian Church. While taking on these responsibilities, he will serve faithfully as our pastor. Please keep him in your prayers as he leads in these crucial roles and supports the work of our church and the wider Presbytery.

**\*Wednesday Bible Study:** Join us every Wednesday at 10:00 AM at North Pelham, led by Diane McMillan.

**\*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.

**\*Connect with your Minister Jacob for pastoral visits. Reach Jacob at [jacoblee0501@gmail.com](mailto:jacoblee0501@gmail.com) or 289-213-2797.**