



**Rockway and First (North Pelham) Pastoral Charge**  
**Easter Sunday, April 20, 2025 – 10:00 am**  
**Worship at Home**

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

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

L: Words of faith's story help celebrate this day of resurrection:

**P: God creates a new heaven and a new earth, be glad and rejoice!**

L: God's steadfast love endures forever; the Lord has become our salvation.

**P: The stone was rolled away – he is not here, he is risen.**

L: We say with joy: Christ is risen!

**P: He is risen indeed! Hallelujah!**

Hymn 243

**Jesus Christ is risen today**

**PRAYERS OF APPROACH, CONFESSION and ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

Here we are, O God.

We've finally made it through the hustle and bustle of Easter preparations, the excitement, the frustration, the anticipation, and the response. The joy of gathering as family and friends—and the agony of feeling lonely, wounded, or grieving what we've lost—it's all part of our lives, O God.

Some of us carry more of one experience than another. But all of us struggle with these opposing movements within: tensions, conflicting desires, divided wills...choices we're proud of, and actions or thoughts we wish we could undo, if only we dared to admit them.

So hear us now, O God, as in silence, we take a moment simply to breathe. (pause)

We breathe in your love not because we are worthy but because you offer it freely, no matter what is in us now. (pause)

We breathe out the toxins: resentment, bitterness, hopelessness, shame, envy, and the self-focus that leaves us numb to others. (pause)

We breathe in your love again, O God. We breathe out everything that poisons our spirits. (pause)

And now we hear your word to us this Easter morning: Jesus Christ is risen! He is risen indeed. Hallelujah! His rising opens a path for us too, O God. But do we believe it?

Resurrect our faith, strengthen our hope, and inspire our love as we continue to worship God. We pray all this in the name of the resurrected Lord, Christ Jesus. Amen.

### **Hymn 299 (R)**

### **He Lives**

### **Prayer for Understanding**

Risen Jesus,

open our hearts to your living presence. Let your Word awaken new faith, new hope, and new love within us. May we not just hear of resurrection—but experience it in the depths of our lives. Amen.

### **SCRIPTURE PASSAGES**

Responsive Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

1 Corinthians 15: 1-8; John 20:1-18

### **SERMON**

### **Encountering The Resurrected Jesus**

Today is Easter Sunday, so we celebrate Jesus's resurrection from the dead. The resurrection is an extraordinary claim. Some of us here may find it hard to imagine, because it is not something experimentally provable, or like anything we have ever experienced. All we have is the statements of those who witnessed the risen Christ through their senses: sight, hearing, and touch, and in their spirits.

For those who met the risen Jesus in the Bible, it made all the difference in their personal lives and in the world. For the biblical witnesses, meeting the risen Jesus was about experiencing resurrection in their own lives. The resurrection is not an intellectual matter, nor is it about scientific proof. It is about faith, hope, and love. It is a spiritual matter.

The Apostle Paul was so shocked and astounded when he met the risen Christ that he stopped persecuting the followers of Jesus. His encounter with the risen Christ was life-changing: He was totally transformed in mind, spirit and way of life, even though, like us, he had not met Jesus when Jesus was alive.

So what was Paul's experience of the risen Christ like? He was going through inner turmoil when he sanctioned the stoning and death of Stephen. He felt threatened. He had received permission from the authorities to begin a campaign of persecuting and arresting Christians in the hope of stamping out Christianity before it spread any further. But he was nevertheless starting to question himself inside.

Then at one point, it all fell apart. Paul had a nervous breakdown on his way to Damascus because he couldn't deal with the conflict in his spirit. The risen Christ was calling him and wouldn't relent. Eventually, Paul broke down. Lightning flashed and thunder rumbled, and he heard a voice. He fell off his horse and became temporarily blind. The risen Christ spoke to him: "Paul, Paul, why do you resist me so? Why do you persecute me?"

Many people might have claimed that this was all in Paul's head, but that didn't matter. The most important thing for Paul was that the resurrected Christ appeared to him and spoke to him as surely as if he were there in flesh and blood. And Paul's life was radically changed forever from that day forward.

When Mary Magdalene, the first witness to the resurrection, had an encounter with the risen Jesus, it was an embodied experience. She saw him, heard him, and finally recognized him. This was the case with the other disciples as well. They saw Jesus, and lest they think him a ghost, he ate before them. He showed them the marks of the nails on his hands and feet, and they touched him to see that he was real flesh and blood. He was the same, but he was completely different. He was all body, and yet this was not the same flesh and blood that had been mutilated a few days earlier. Something dramatic and unimaginable had taken place.

The first witnesses not only knew the living Jesus but also met the resurrected Jesus. They were shocked and astounded, but not necessarily for the same reasons we would be shocked and astounded 2000 years later. That is because most people in Jesus' day believed in the resurrection, only it was supposed to be something that would take place at the end of the world, some time in the future. What was shocking and amazing about the resurrection of Jesus was that it happened right in the midst of their lives.

What did the resurrection of Jesus really mean to the first witnesses? It meant that resurrection is no longer just something that happens at the end of time or the end of life. The resurrection is not a future event, but a present one. The resurrection is about something happening right in the midst of life. In other words, while life is being lived, something of a different dimension, a different plane of reality, is intersecting with everyday reality to alter it forever.

What, then, does the resurrection of Jesus mean to us personally? Does it make a difference in our everyday lives, where most of us live, work, play, and struggle? What should experiencing the risen Christ mean? If the resurrection of Jesus matters in our faith and life, it has to meet us and transform something within us when and where we live, not only in times of joy, but also in our failures, struggles and hardships. Because these things are all part of our real lives.

If we too are to experience the resurrection as it happened in first-century Palestine, for that first cluster of witnesses, then we need to experience a change, right in the midst of our current lives as we are living them. We too can meet the resurrected Jesus. The resurrection of Jesus means receiving something new and different that we didn't have before. Something will then change in our lives. This is not about the recovery of that which is lost. It is about experiencing something new beyond the loss. This is not about recovering our health, but something new beyond that. Experiencing the resurrected Jesus means new faith, new hope, and a new love we didn't have before.

Experiencing the risen Jesus means newness, something that tells us the best is yet to come, even if we have lost it all. Experiencing the risen Jesus means new insight, a new ability to love, to

forgive, and to let go. It means a new capacity to be open to one another and to recognize a possibility in life we have never imagined before.

The risen Jesus calls us all the time through other people and circumstances, through inner stirrings and external acts of grace and compassion. But unless we are open and unless we live within the framework and spirit of faith, such experiences and stirrings remain fragmented instead of being integrated in some larger vision and relationship we call faith. Experiencing the resurrected Jesus is a continuing invitation for us to witness the gift of Easter, so that as people of Easter, we who believe in the resurrected Jesus may face our various life struggles and uncertainties as threads to be sewn together as we too walk through death to resurrection. And when that begins to happen, we no longer need proof that Jesus rose again. We have all the proof we need. We are witnessing it all around us and experiencing it ourselves in our present lives.

To believe in the resurrection is to experience and to live in the spirit of the Risen Jesus in our daily lives. To experience and live the resurrection is to open our eyes and hearts and be awakened by the spirit of the resurrected Jesus. On this Easter Sunday, may we discover something new we haven't discovered before, something of the truth of the resurrection of Jesus. And may we discover this as part of a movement and change in each of us that will continue into eternity. Amen.

### **Hymn 674**

### **In the bulb there is a flower**

### **Invitation to the offerings**

### **Doxology**

### **Prayer of Dedication**

Thank you, O God, for this beautiful Easter day.

May these gifts reflect the new life you bring as we continue to celebrate the risen Jesus. Bless them and bless us so that we may become signs of resurrection in the world. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

### **Confessing our faith based on the Apostles' Creed**

### **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)**

Risen Jesus,

You have met us at this table with grace too deep for words. You have fed us with your love and opened our hearts to the mystery of new life.

As you called Mary by name and appeared to Paul in his weakness, so call us now into lives that reflect your risen presence. Help us to carry your hope into our struggles, your peace into our conflicts, your joy into our sorrow, and your love into a world so in need of healing.

Let the truth of your resurrection live in us—not only in what we believe, but in how we forgive, how we serve, and how we love. In the resurrected Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.

### **Hymn 258**

### **Thine be the glory**

### **Benediction:**

May the God of life fill you with hope, the Risen Jesus walk with you in love, and the Holy Spirit awaken new joy within you. Go now in resurrection peace. 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**

<p><b>We acknowledge that we meet on the traditional          Territory of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe</b></p>
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## Announcements:

**\*Worship on Sunday, April 27, at Rockway**

**\*Mission Awareness Sunday – April 27!**

Next Sunday is **Mission Awareness Sunday**, and we are excited to welcome **Mike Lethby**, Executive Director of **The RAFT** in St. Catharines. RAFT (Resource Association for Teens) supports vulnerable youth in the Niagara Region through outreach, a resource centre, and an emergency shelter. Come hear how lives are being changed and how we can be part of this meaningful mission! Don't miss this inspiring Sunday!

**\*Wednesday Bible study:** Diane McMillan will lead Wednesday Bible study at 10:00 AM at First Church.

**\*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.

**\*Guest Preacher: Rev. Anita Van Nest on May 11 | Rev. Jacob's Study Leave from May 6-12:**  
We're delighted to welcome Rev. Anita Van Nest as our guest preacher on May 11 while Jacob is on study leave from May 6-12.

**\*Connect with your Minister Jacob for pastoral visits.** Reach Jacob at [jacoble0501@gmail.com](mailto:jacoble0501@gmail.com) or 289-213-2797.