



Rockway and First (North Pelham) Pastoral Charge
Ascension Sunday, June 1, 2025
Worship at Home

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

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: Jesus prays for his followers, *"Father, may they be in us, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they be one, so that the world will believe that you sent me."* (John 17:21)

P: **We come to worship, longing to know the love that Jesus and the Father share—a love that invites us into unity and purpose.**

L: *"Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you, and these know that you sent me. I made you known to them, so that the love you have for me may be in them, and I in them."* (John 17:25–26)

P: **We come to worship, eager to learn the truth of your love and to experience the glory that Jesus shares with us. Let us worship God together—in joy, in spirit, and in truth!**

Hymn 471

We are one in the Spirit

PRAYERS OF APPROACH and CONFESSION

God, Creator of all things through Word and Spirit,
 You have given us life in love, by love, and for love. From our first breath, you welcomed us into this world. And when we take our final breath, you welcome us into eternal communion with you and with all who have gone before.

You are the beginning, the middle, and the end of all that is, all that was, and all that will be. This comforts us, O God. You are always gracious and merciful. You judge us not by rules, but by your love. You love us, you honour and respect us, just as you do your Son, Jesus, for we are all your beloved children.

Yet sometimes, we see you only as a judge, measuring us by laws and expectations. We forget your gift is grace, not a burden. We are afraid of your dream — that we might live in unity, as friends who truly love, respect, and honor one another.

Hear us now in silence as we open our hearts to you in confession. (pause)

O God, your love does not stop at acceptance. Your love stirs us, lifts us, and transforms us. When we welcome your love within, we grow, we change, we come alive. We become more of who you created us to be. Speak to us in this hour of worship, O God. Speak to us — we are listening. This we pray in the name of Jesus Christ, our compassionate healer, who taught us to pray, saying:

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 475 **I am the church! You are the church!**

Prayer for Understanding

God of glory,
 As we hear your Word, open our hearts to your truth. Teach us to glorify you by loving and
 respecting one another. Make us one, as Jesus prayed. Amen.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Responsive Psalm 97
Acts 7:51-60 to 8:1; John 17: 15b-26

SERMON

To God be the Glory

Glory: What does the word mean for you and for me? Often when we think about the word, we think about other words that go with it – things that mean something to us in our world: things like success, things like recognition, things like achievements and accomplishments that are recognized, that are acknowledged, that are appreciated. We think about things like power, fame and glory, making money and accumulating possessions. This is what we often think about because this is what the world around us thinks about. That's what life is about. And if it's not about our own success and glory and achievements, then it's about our children and our grandchildren. This is what we want for them. This is what we dream for them. This is what we imagine.

The word “Glory” means a lot to us. This is very important because we love our own, our children, and grandchildren. We love ourselves, and we love certain people. And so, it means a lot to us that they do well in life. The question is: what are our values, well, all about? What is achievement all about? What is the true meaning of glory? I asked this question, especially on the Ascension of Jesus, through his prayer, in which there is the spiritual message of unity through glory.

In Jesus’ last prayer with his disciples, he prays that they may become one, just as he and the Father are one in mind and heart. He also prays for all those who will come to believe in him because of their words and actions. He prays that all these people will be one with him and his Father – all together in a communion of mind and heart. Jesus is thus praying for you and me also, and for all who are the Church, from generation to generation.

The glorious unity that Jesus prays for relies on glory in the form of respect and honor for others, which is the same glory God gave Jesus, and which Jesus gave his followers, that they may be one, even as God and Jesus are one.

The unity based on the glory Jesus prays for is not a unity connected to social power, authority, wealth, or knowledge. Jesus prays for a unity of mutual respect, honor, and a close love of one another – in all the relationships we share with one another - as we respect them, help them carry their burdens, and enable them to become blessings to one another and to their community – God being our helper. In John’s Gospel, we see the union of Jesus and God, who are united in their love for the world. It is this unity of love, respect, commitment, and sacrifice for which Jesus prays. We are to love one another in a unity that comes from the glory God and Jesus enjoy in the Holy Spirit, who is at work everywhere in God’s one human family.

Jesus’ prayer is “not only on behalf of his disciples, but also on behalf of those who will come to believe in him through their words (v.20).” The word “love” appears five times in four verses. Today, maybe it is better to say respect. Jesus prays that all believers will be one, united in the very same respect that unites him to the Father. That unity is a sign that brings others, the world, to believe. God’s glory is found in the respect that unites Jesus’ followers to one another and to the world God loves. Equipped with the glory of the Spirit, we are called to share our pleasures and pain, contentment and anger, satisfaction and frustration with one another. That is the will of God for us, and the abundant living in Christ that God promises.

Stephen’s story is one of courage and patience in the midst of threats and fears of persecution. You remember how Paul was persecuting the Church? Increasing tensions among the Jewish factions put Stephen and “some who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen” on a collision course. The Jewish council, as you heard, “became enraged and ground their teeth at Stephen. They dragged him out of the city and began to stone him.”

We Christians remember Jesus’ journey to the cross, in which he showed God’s glory in the form of forgiveness, not only to his faithful followers, but also to those who hurt and killed him. In the same way, while they are stoning him, Stephen prays, echoing the words of Jesus on the cross, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Then he kneels down and cries out in a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” Stephen’s faithful union with the Father and the Son shows the Spirit at work for the glory of God. Stephen is the first, but certainly not the last Christian martyr. Many are still being killed and serving others by sacrificing themselves because of their Christian faith in the spirit of the glory through which we become one. Yet the blood of the martyrs and the commitment to serve others even with sacrifice are the seed of the church.

Jesus still prays that his Church be one. Many attitudes and actions threaten that unity, that glory. Persecutions still scatter the disciples and send them underground. Individual lives and our self-centred ways of not living together are the main thing that separates us as churches. However, the Church, in the spirit of God’s glory, can be an instrument of loving unity and show the fragmented community of Pelham and the Niagara region and the world beyond that unity is possible.

We must make an effort to be Christ-like to live our lives full of glory. We are called to love one another to the degree that Jesus loves us and those who believe in him, even to the point of death. The prayer Jesus models keeps us in touch with God, who loves, respects, and honours us as imperfect, vulnerable human beings, just as we respect and honor God. The glory that comes

from God in us and others saves us from indifference, intolerance, addiction, selfishness, and shame. God's love encourages us together to break the chains of indifference, a desire-centred way of life, apathy, and disrespect for others.

Today in the church's calendar, we celebrate Jesus' ascension to God. So today we remember the Jesus who is the source of life, and are thankful to the Source of our life to whom we will return someday. In particular, we Christians are one with Jesus, who is one with God. Since we are challenged to be one with one another, let us love one another as Christ loves us. That is to glorify God. That is the glory God gave Jesus, which is the same glory Jesus taught his followers and teaches each of us now.

As Christians, we believe that we are all created by God's love, in God's love, and for God's love, so that we might shine with the glory of God within us, which is the same glory God gave Jesus. Therefore, we are all invited to let our own light of glory shine in our daily lives in our family, church, and the community we belong to. This is the way Jesus prays to God before he leaves his followers.

Our ultimate goal in life is not to be healthy, wealthy, famous, prosperous, or problem-free. Our ultimate aim in life is to bring glory to God by respecting and honouring God with all our heart, mind, and strength, as well as with our limitations and weaknesses. In the same way, our ultimate purpose in life is to bring glory, which is the same as respect and honour to others in our family, church, and community. Our commitment and sacrifice to grow and manifest the glory Jesus gave us are essential for the glory of God, because the glory of God always comes at the sacrifice of ourselves through the transformation of ourselves beyond our own ego-selves. When we live for the glory of God, we show God's goodness within us, living through us, instead of just ourselves.

May we bring to God the glory God gave Jesus and which Jesus showed on his human journey, especially on the cross, by forgiving those who hurt, betrayed, abandoned, and killed him. May we manifest glory as respect and honor and love, not only to others we meet, but also to ourselves as God's precious and beloved children, so that we all may be one in our hearts, minds, and actions.

May God bring through each of us God's kingdom of love, based on God's glory, on earth "as it is in heaven," toward the mutual abundant life God promises. May we experience spiritual joy and glory through loving one another and respecting one another, just as God and Jesus do always in heaven. Amen.

Hymn 461 **Be thou my vision**

Invitation to the Offering

Doxology

Prayer of Dedication

God of glory,
we offer these gifts as signs of our love and respect. Bless these gifts to their holy use for this community and our outreach to the broader world around us to build a world of unity in love, where your glory shines through our care for one another. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Prayer of Thanksgiving and for the People

God of life and love,
We thank you for waking us to another day held in your care. For the quiet strength that sustains us and the unseen mercy that carries us through, we are deeply grateful.

You have shown us that true glory is not found in status or success, but in kindness, humility, and the courage to love. We thank you for Jesus, who revealed your heart and taught us to walk in unity, grounded in love.

We pray now for your world, O God, for places torn by conflict, and for people suffering under injustice. We lift up especially the communities affected by the wildfires burning across the prairie provinces of Canada. Protect those in danger, give wisdom to those responding, and comfort those who have lost homes or livelihoods. Bring relief, safety, and peace in the midst of fear and destruction.

Strengthen your Church, O God, that we may be one in love and purpose. Make us a living sign of your glory: glory not of power, but of compassion; not of fame, but of faithful presence with one another.

We pray for those among us who are aging, for the dear ones who carry pain in their bodies, sorrow in their hearts and feelings, or confusion in their minds and spirits. Surround them with your comfort. Let them feel the warmth of your nearness, and remind them they are your beloved.

And now, in a moment of silence, we lift up the names and needs of those dear to our hearts, entrusting them to your loving care. (pause)

May we, as their church family, walk gently with them, offering respect, patience, and loving care. Together, may we reflect your glory by becoming blessings to one another. In the name of Jesus Christ, who prayed that we all may be one. Amen.

Hymn 371 **Love divine, all loves excelling**

BENEDICTION

May God's love, Christ's grace, and the Spirit's unity grounded in love go with you always.
Amen.

Sung Response- Go Now In Peace

Postlude

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

***Worship on Sunday, June 8, at Rockway**

***Thank You for a Wonderful Day!** A heartfelt thank you to everyone who donated, baked, grilled, planted, volunteered, and came out to support North Pelham Plant & Bake Sale with BBQ Lunch on May 24! This beloved spring tradition is more than a fundraiser—it's a joyful gathering of church and community. Thanks to your support, we raised \$2,460. Thank you for your hard work and joyful hearts!

***Thank You, Rockway Helpers!** A big thank you to everyone who attended the Rockway Cleaning Bee last week! Whether you worked inside or out, your time and effort helped make our church home shine. Your care and community spirit are truly appreciated!

***Celebrate 216 Years at Rockway!** Next Sunday, June 8, we joyfully celebrate Rockway's 216th Anniversary—giving thanks for generations of God's faithfulness! We welcome Rev. Dr. Clyde Ervine as our guest preacher and a special ocarina performance by our guest musician. In the spirit of gratitude, our Anniversary Mission Project supports The RAFT, helping homeless youth in St. Catharines. Special envelopes will be available, and all gifts are eligible for a tax receipt. Please join us to celebrate, worship, and make a difference—blessing others as we've been blessed!

***Come Early to Sing Together!** As part of our Anniversary celebration next Sunday, we invite everyone to join us at 9:45 a.m. to practice some songs together before worship begins at 10:00. Let's lift our voices in harmony and offer our songs to God with joy and unity. Your presence will make our praise even more beautiful!

***RPCW meeting:** The RPCW will meet on Wednesday, June 4, at 1:30 p.m. at the church.

***Joint Session Meeting on June 11:** Rockway and North Pelham's joint session will be held on June 11 at 7:00 p.m. at Rockway.

***Communion at Rockway – Sunday, June 22:** Join us for Communion at Rockway as we share in Jesus' love and grace.

***Wednesday Bible study:** Diane McMillan leads the 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.

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