



Rockway and First (North Pelham) Pastoral Charge
Pentecost 2 Sunday / Holy Communion, June 22, 2025 – 10:00 am
Worship at Home

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

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: “When the day of Pentecost came, all the believers were gathered in one place...

Suddenly, there came a sound like a rushing wind, filling the whole house.” (*Acts 2:1–2*)

P: We gather to be filled by the Spirit’s presence and power.

L: We come seeking hope, healing, and strength for the journey.

P: We come to Christ’s table, drawn by grace and united in love.

L: Come, Holy Spirit of the risen Christ.

P: Come and renew us again!

Hymn 389

Breathe on me, breath of God

PRAYERS OF APPROACH, CONFESSION and ASSURANCE OF PARDON

God of love,

We come into your presence to worship you. You are the One who speaks to your people—in every language, through every life situation, in every heart. Speak to us again today.

O God—Father, Parent, Son, and Spirit—You are known by many names, and yet you know each of us by name. Shine your light into our hearts and help us hear your voice. O God, who speaks through the way and voice of Jesus, challenge us. Inspire us. Call us again to walk the path of love and grace.

Ever-present God,

You are everywhere, passing through all creation, seeing, knowing, and loving beyond our understanding. Yet sometimes, O God, we feel far from your peace. We carry burdens—questions, doubts, and fears. We confess we have closed our hearts to the movement of your Spirit. We have tried to limit your love. We have failed to love across the barriers that divide us. In our actions—and in our silence—we have taken part in systems that hurt and exclude others.

Hear us now as we confess to you in silence those things we carry in hidden and hurting places within us. (pause)

Come to us with the mercy of Jesus. Come to us with the promise that we are still your beloved children. Come to us with your healing Spirit—alive and moving in this season of Pentecost. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.

Hymn 641

One more step along the world I go

Recognizing Keith Rubel's Faithful Music Ministry

Prayer for Understanding

Spirit of the living God,

speak to us in the language of our hearts. Open our ears to hear your truth, our minds to receive your wisdom, and our souls to welcome your love—that we may be united in Christ and alive in your Spirit. Amen.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Responsive Psalm 104: 24-34; Genesis 11: 1-9; Acts 2: 1-18, 21

SERMON

What Kind of Language Does God Talk?

Have you ever struggled to fit in? I think this is the experience of so many immigrants and refugees, trying to find a way to fit in and to become part of the larger whole, especially in terms of language and culture in Canada as a foreign land.

Anyone who has had the experience of being in a minority is vulnerable to feeling isolated and hopeless in situations where they cannot express what they want to communicate with others. Language thus can be a huge barrier in separating us from others and society.

From the story about the tower of Babel in our Old Testament reading, we are told that the inhabited world was smaller in ancient times and everyone spoke the same language. The people decided to make “a city with a tower that reached the sky.” This story was written down at the time the Israelites were servants of the great Babylonian empire. What we know from the ancient records is that building such a tower would have required massive amounts of physical labor. This would have meant slave labor. Speaking “only one language” meant speaking the language of the majority who ruled.

If we understand this background, we can see the story might have a hidden message. Even if it appears that God causes linguistic confusion so that the people no longer understand each other, the hidden message may be that the multiplication of languages gave people the freedom to get away from the dominant culture and the dominant language. Why is it that so many immigrants and refugees feel so grateful to be in Canada? One major reason is the freedom to be completely Canadian without having to give up the language and culture from which they have come. Canada is like Babel in a way. One of the most beautiful and promising aspects of being Canadian is the possibility of being fully a citizen without having to hide our differences. How graceful it is!

But the question is: what unites us? Is there any basis for unity?

Our second New Testament reading challenges and provokes us. The early Christians are gathered in one place. The Holy Spirit comes upon them, and the external signs are wind and fire. Jews and converts from all over the world have gathered for the religious festival of Pentecost, which is second only to Passover. They hear these Jewish Christians praying loudly and enthusiastically and they gather to see what is going on. And they hear a message of salvation, hope, and love for the people, but, rarely and surprisingly, they hear it in their own languages.

Pentecost is a turnabout of Babel, but with a big twist. The variety of languages doesn't change. There is no going back to one language. Instead, there is one message spoken in all the different languages at once. The unity is not in sameness, but in diversity. It is a message that is big and wide enough to be spoken into every language and every culture.

The message is that God's love is powerful enough to overcome any barrier or obstacle to relationship and to communion. Language and culture symbolize our distinctiveness and diversity. God's love respects this distinctiveness without the distinctiveness having to be a barrier to a greater unity. As human beings made out of love and for love by a God who is love, our distinctiveness is God's gift. This is why we have to love others in all their particularity if we truly want to love them through God's eyes and heart.

And the love that crosses barriers, inspires reconciliation, and establishes communion is what the Holy Spirit of the risen Christ is all about. Whenever we hear a message like this, we should hear the Spirit speaking to us because, as the followers of Christ, we know who this Spirit is.

It is no wonder then that Peter goes on to quote scripture to all those gathered, representing the many languages and cultures of the world: "This is what I will do in the last days, God says: I will pour out my Spirit on everyone. Your sons and daughters will proclaim my message; your young men will see visions, and your old men will have dreams. Yes, even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will proclaim my message."

In the history of the people of Israel, under the Spirit's inspiration, prophecy is the preserve of the prophet. It is the preserve of an Isaiah, a Jeremiah, an Ezekiel, a Joel, or an Elijah. The Spirit does not inspire every man, let alone every woman. But what happens at Pentecost is an experience of the wider distribution of the Spirit. Men and women have an equal share of the Spirit, not only in Hebrew or Aramaic, but in every language and culture. God's will and love cross all barriers that we humans create in order to reach everyone and create communion in spirit and truth. God's love is the unifying power and substance. It is the message. And the specific means and pathways are as diverse and multiple as all the diversity and multiplicity of humanity.

Yet having an equal measure of the Spirit fall on everyone was an enormous threat to those who wanted to gather power and build towers for their own ego-centered ambition and greed. And so the church became Christendom, a vast institution with the power of the keys to the eternal kingdom. Heaven or hell was a fate awaiting everyone and only the hierarchy of the church had the power to bestow on humans where they would end up. The Spirit became the prisoner of the church.

Then came the Protestant Reformation. One of the most revolutionary teachings of the Reformation was the "Priesthood of all believers." God now spoke not only through ordained male priests but through every believer, and God spoke in the hearts, consciences, and minds of every believer. There were different offices in the church, but the Spirit was free to speak to everyone and everyone. This is why in our church structure, there is the office of the teaching elder. There are ruling elders chosen by the congregation. What we need to understand is that these are offices, not powers that speak for God uniquely. If the words in a worship service speak to you, that is God speaking to you. God speaks through all kinds of means, including words, music, silence. The Spirit can never be limited by human structures of authority.

And Pentecost continues to unfold in present day. It is only in this century that we have ordained women in our churches. It is only in our day that we are open to other denominations, even if we have different ways of thinking and practicing our faith. There is yet another challenge: Can the Spirit of Christ speak through other faiths? And what about people who have no faith or no faith that fits neatly into any one category or community? Can the Spirit of Christ speak through them?

I believe the only barriers to the Spirit today are the same barriers that existed around the early Christians on that first Pentecost. It is the fundamentalist spirit that restricts what the Spirit says and decides through whom the Spirit speaks. Fundamentalists are found not only in Christianity, but also in other faiths. There are also atheists who are fundamentalists in refusing to accept any possibility of the existence of something beyond. Yet the Holy Spirit of wind and fire can speak powerfully beyond all our human understanding and imagination to all those who are open to the transcendent mystery.

May we discover and experience that the Spirit of the risen Christ and God is alive and working wherever people are moved to acceptance and grace, wherever people are convicted to repent and to forgive, and whenever reconciliation takes place.

May we be thankful for our Christian community, where we are reminded, encouraged, and inspired regularly through God's words in Jesus to open ourselves and live through the Holy Spirit of the risen Christ and God. At the same time, may we also try to listen and hear the Spirit speaking in all the different languages, cultures, and religions out there in our world that God created and loves so much. Amen.

Hymn 479

The church's one foundation

Invitation to the Offering

Doxology

Prayer of Dedication

God of all people and every language,
you have poured out your Spirit freely and fully. May these gifts be used to speak love, build unity, and carry your message of hope to all. In Jesus' name, Amen.

The Apostles' Creed (Hymn # 539)

Invitation to the Lord's Supper

Hymn 540

One bread, one body (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)

Gracious God,
we give you thanks for feeding us with the bread of life and the cup of salvation. In this holy meal, we have tasted your love that reaches across every boundary—every language, culture, and difference. Send us now into the world as people made one by your Spirit. Help us to speak your message of hope in ways that others can understand—through kindness, justice, and grace. May the Spirit of the risen Jesus live in us and work through us, that we may be signs of your unity, your welcome, and your peace. Amen.

Hymn 540

One bread, one body (vv. 3-4)

Benediction:

May the love of God, the grace of Christ, and the breath of the Spirit go with you, speaking peace in every language. 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>We acknowledge that we meet on the traditional Territory of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe</p>

ANNOUNCEMENTS

***Worship on Sunday, June 29, at North Pelham**

***Sacrament of Holy Communion:** Today, we will celebrate the Sacrament of Holy Communion during the worship service.

***Rockway Anniversary Mission Project – Thank You!**

Last Sunday, we joyfully celebrated 216 years of God's faithfulness at Rockway! As part of our Anniversary Mission Project, we came together in gratitude to support The RAFT, helping vulnerable and homeless youth in our region. Thanks to your generous hearts, we raised \$1,395 to bless young people in need. Thank you for giving with such kindness and compassion—living out our call to be a blessing in the world God loves. May God continue to guide Rockway's journey with hope and purpose!

***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.

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