



Rockway and First (North Pelham) Pastoral Charge
Pentecost 13 Sunday, Septemer 7, 2025
Worship at Home

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

Opening Hymn 434

For the beauty of the earth

Welcome and announcements

Call to Worship

One: “God looked at everything God had made, and indeed, it was very good.” (Genesis 1:31)

All: **We come to rejoice in the beauty and goodness of creation, as God sees and delights in it.**

One: “Now God’s home is with people! God will dwell with them, and they shall be God’s people... God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death, mourning, crying, or pain.” (Revelation 21:3–4)

All: **We come to be reminded of God’s vision of life, which is also our vision in Christ.**

All: **We are here to worship God in spirit and in truth!**

PRAYERS OF APPROACH, CONFESSION and The Lord’s Prayer

We come, O God. We seek, O God.

We long to know and feel more deeply the goodness of life, the beauty of creation around us, and to take it in with all our senses.

Yet we confess that we are often weighed down by tension and stress, by worry and anxiety, by cynicism that expects the worst instead of the best, by fear that mistrusts instead of trusts, by anger that keeps us from embracing others as brothers and sisters, for all their flaws and imperfections.

Hear us now, O God, as we bring our burdens and negativity to you in silence. (Pause)

You know us, O God.

You know us as your beloved creation, full of beauty, grace, splendor, and mystery. And you know us as we sometimes become fearful, envious, compromised, and broken.

Forgive us, restore us, and renew us in this hour of worship. Help us to see and live into your vision of life and communion, here and now, and in the life to come.

We pray in the name of Jesus, and together we pray as he taught us, 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 328 **This is my father’s world**

Children of God Moment

Prayer for Understanding

O God of vision and light,
open our eyes to see your goodness, open our ears to hear your truth, and open our hearts to receive your hope. Through your Word, draw us into your vision of life, that we may live in communion with you and with one another. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Responsive Psalm 48

Genesis 1:26-31; Revelation 21: 1-7

SERMON

Discovering God’s Vision

This past summer, I watched a movie about the life of Louis Zamperini, an American World War II veteran, Olympic distance runner, and Christian evangelist. His story is unforgettable—full of hardship, suffering, and, most importantly, the power of forgiveness and faith. I’ll come back to his story later, but I mention it now because it connects deeply with today’s theme: discovering God’s vision for our lives.

Visions and dreams are closely tied to our hopes for the future. When we carry a clear vision of where life is headed, we tend to feel less anxious and more confident. A vision provides a sense of direction in a world that is constantly shifting beneath our feet. Without it, life can feel scattered, uncertain, and even overwhelming.

Now, when I speak of vision, I don’t mean simply practical things like financial security, good health, or strong family ties—though these are all important and valuable. The Bible tells us that human life needs something deeper. We need a vision that integrates all aspects of our existence—a vision that connects our decisions, our values, and our longings into something whole.

This kind of vision is not about predicting the future, but about understanding God’s purpose and direction for our lives. It is a vision that steadies us when plans fall apart, that reminds us of what matters when lesser things compete for our attention, and that shapes the way we respond to the joys and struggles of daily living.

Where, then, do we find such a vision? As Christians, we turn to the Scriptures, where God reveals the larger picture of life’s meaning. Today’s readings—from the very first chapter of Genesis and the closing vision of Revelation—offer us a profound sense of God’s vision for us.

The opening of Genesis gives us more than just an account of beginnings. It shows us the heart of God's vision. After each act of creation, God pauses and declares, "It is good." At the end, looking upon everything together, God calls it "very good."

This affirmation matters. It tells us that the world is not random or meaningless. Creation is filled with goodness, beauty, and purpose. Evil and brokenness come later through human choices, but at the core of God's design is delight.

Then comes the special moment of humanity's creation: "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness." (v. 26) These words reveal God's desire for a unique relationship with us. To be made in God's image is to be created for communion—with God, with one another, and with the world itself.

So, God's vision for us is that wherever life takes us—whether through success or hardship—we are meant to discover goodness, to share in beauty, and to live in harmony with others, with the earth, and with the Creator who made it all.

This vision continues in Revelation, the final book of the Bible. The writer describes a breathtaking hope: "Now God's home is with people! God will dwell with them, and they shall be God's people. God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death, no more mourning, no more crying, no more pain."

What a vision! It tells us that history is not meaningless chaos. In the end, God will renew all things. But even more importantly, it shows us that God's ultimate desire is to be among us. Throughout history, human beings have endured suffering, tragedy, and loss. Yet Revelation reminds us that God's vision is not to remain distant, but to come close, to dwell with us. For this to happen, forgiveness, repentance, and transformation are necessary. That is why the cross and resurrection are central to our Christian faith.

On the cross, God entered into the depth of human suffering and injustice. God did not remain aloof but took on our pain. In the resurrection, God declared that suffering and death do not have the final word. The resurrection proclaims that life, hope, and communion will ultimately triumph.

This is not only a future promise—it is a present reality. God's vision is already breaking into our lives, inviting us to live in communion and abundant life here and now, even in the middle of our struggles.

But let's be honest. Knowing God's vision is one thing; living it out when life turns harsh is another. When hardship interrupts our plans and pain grips our hearts, how do we continue to live in communion with God? How do we keep faith when sorrow, loss, or injustice seem overwhelming?

This is where Louis Zamperini's story becomes such a vivid witness.

Louis grew up in California and became an Olympic runner, known for his speed and determination. When World War II broke out, he enlisted and served as a crewman on B-29

bombers. During one mission over the South Pacific, his plane went down. He and two other crewmen survived, clinging to a small life raft for 47 days. They endured blazing sun, thirst, hunger, and circling sharks. One man died. Louis and another barely made it to land—only to be captured by the Japanese.

What followed was years of cruelty. Louis was imprisoned in camps, beaten, starved, and humiliated. One guard in particular, known as Watanabe or “the Bird,” singled him out for especially brutal treatment. For two and a half years, Louis lived under this torment. Against all odds, he survived and returned home when the war ended.

But survival did not mean peace. Like many veterans, Louis returned deeply scarred. He suffered from what we now call PTSD. He had nightmares in which he relived his torture. He turned to alcohol to numb the pain. Rage burned inside him, especially toward Watanabe. His marriage faltered. His life was spiralling downward.

Then came a turning point. His wife attended revival meetings led by a young evangelist, Billy Graham. She found peace, hope, and renewal in Christ. She prayed for Louis, urged him to come, and finally, he agreed. At the meeting, he felt something stir within him. Later, reading a Bible in a quiet park, Louis felt a release. Hatred loosened its grip. Rage gave way. Something inside was healed. From that day, the nightmares stopped. He gave up alcohol. He reconciled with his wife. He devoted himself to helping troubled youth through the Victory Boys Camp. In time, he even returned to Japan. He visited prisons where some of his former captors were held. To their astonishment, he embraced them and said, “I forgive you.” Though he never met Watanabe again, he released him too, forgiving him from the heart.

Louis’ life shows us how God’s vision is not just about heaven; it is about transformation here and now. Through faith, hope, and love, he experienced communion with God and reconciliation with others. He became a living example of resurrection life breaking into a broken world.

And this is where his story touches ours. Most of us will never endure torture camps or life-or-death ordeals. But we all face struggles—aging, illness, grief, financial worries, fractured relationships, loneliness. The “bad stuff” intrudes into every life sooner or later.

When it does, we can let bitterness consume us, or we can open ourselves to God’s vision. Like Louis, we can discover that God’s forgiveness is greater than our pain, that God’s love is stronger than our fear, and that God’s presence can bring freedom, abundance, and peace even in the darkest valleys.

This is what it means to live in communion with God. It does not mean avoiding hardship. It means trusting that God walks with us, that resurrection life can break through even when we feel trapped, and that God’s vision for us is life in its fullness.

So, as we reflect on Genesis and Revelation, and on the witness of Louis Zamperini, let us hear God’s invitation. In worship, we glimpse God’s vision of communion. In prayer, we are

reminded that God dwells with us. In daily life, we are called to live out faith, hope, and love, so that God's vision becomes visible in us.

May Louis Zamperini's story, and the vision of Revelation, inspire us to return again and again to the God who dwells among us. And may God continue to help us discover joy in creation, healing in brokenness, and fullness of life—here and now, and in the life to come. Amen.

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

Invitation to the Offering

Doxology

Prayer of Dedication

Generous God,
you give us life, hope, and a vision of your kingdom. Receive these gifts, and use them to bring your love, your healing, and your abundance to the world. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayers of Thanksgiving and for the People

Awesome God,
you are the source of all communion that is genuine and heartfelt. You have created us not to be alone, but to be in relationship. Inspire us once again to reflect deeply on the substance of our relationships with all life in every circumstance we face.

Hear us now as we take a moment in silence to thank you for the particular relationships in our lives that support us, ground us, and bless us. (Pause)

Gracious God,
our thanksgiving widens into intercession for your troubled world. We pray for places torn apart by conflict, cruelty, and despair: for the people of Gaza facing famine and devastation, for Ukraine and all lands gripped by war, for Colombia and the Congo, where violence displaces so many, and for the desperate journeys of refugees on land and sea, seeking safety yet too often meeting tragedy.

Lord, where there is hunger, bring bread; where there is war, sow peace; where there is despair, spark hope; where there is hatred, kindle your love. Gather the nations into your vision of life and communion.

Compassionate God,
we also pray for our own community. You know those among us who suffer quietly with illness, pain, or worry. You know the grief carried by those who mourn. You know the loneliness of the isolated, the stress of those facing financial uncertainty, and the questions of those searching for meaning and direction.

And now hear us, O God, and read our hearts in a moment of silence, as we name before you a particular situation or a person for whom we carry a heaviness of concern.

Draw near to them with your healing presence for their body, emotions, mind, or spirit. Surround them with your comfort and care. Strengthen us as a faith community to walk with one another in love, to forgive as we have been forgiven, and to share your vision of abundant life with the world around us.

We offer these prayers, O God, trusting in your mercy and resting in your promise. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, who dwells with us and brings us peace. Amen.

Hymn 651 **Guide me, O thou great Redeemer**

BENEDICTION

May the Creator who delights in all that is good, the Christ who brings us forgiveness and hope, and the Spirit who renews us with abundant life, go with you and keep you in peace. 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, September 14, at 10:00 am at Rockway**

***Joint Session on Sept. 10:** Rockway's Session will meet at North Pelham on Wednesday, Sept 10 at 6:15 pm to review membership. The Joint Session of Rockway and North Pelham will follow at 7:00 pm.

***Presbytery Pulpit Exchange:** On Sunday, September 14, we are excited to take part in a special Presbytery of Niagara pulpit exchange! Rev. Jacob will be leading worship at Kirk on the Hill in Fonthill, while we warmly welcome Rev. Anita Van Nest

*** Wednesday Bible study led by Diane McMillan will resume on September 10 at North Pelham at 10:00 am**

***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 or 289-213-2797.