



Rockway and First (North Pelham) Pastoral Charge
Thanksgiving Sunday
October 12, 2025
Worship at Home

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

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: We come today as people who do not always remember to give thanks.

P: Too often, we feel entitled to what we have and what we receive.

L: At times, we feel sorry for ourselves.

P: At times, we dwell on what seems unfair or what has gone wrong.

L: Yet we come to see life again as a gift from God.

P: We come to find new inspiration — to experience the power of thanksgiving and the goodness of life, even in a world where much can go wrong.

Hymn 803 **Come, Ye Thankful people, come**

Prayers of Approach and Confession

Come, find us, O God, in this hour. Come, find us. We have come to worship you, O God. Remind us of the blessings in our lives, that we may be truly thankful.

As we gather for worship, O God, remind us of the ways you have acted in the past, that we may remember your faithfulness. As we gather for worship, O God, open within us an attitude of thanksgiving, an awareness of your abundant goodness.

We are here to be grounded in you again. Hear us in the silence, O God, as we open our hearts and minds to you. (Pause)

Come to us. Find us. We long to let you in. Fill us with good things, O God. Fill us with thanksgiving. In the name of Christ, we may claim our wholeness now, even though life is uncertain, fragile, fearful, and sometimes insanely hectic.

When we leave this time of worship, may our eyes first see the abundance in our lives, and may our voices first share words of thanksgiving. These things we pray in the name of Jesus, the Risen Christ, 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.

Duet **“Jesu, Joy of Man’s Desiring”**(J.S. Bach) Joy Joung and Harry Park

Hymn 435 **All things bright and beautiful**

Prayer for Understanding

Gracious God,
open our hearts to receive your Word with gratitude. May your Spirit help us to hear, understand, and live out your truth with thankful hearts. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Responsive Psalm 111
2 Corinthians 9: 6-15; Luke 17: 11-19

SERMON

The Gift of Thanksgiving

Many people today do not see or feel the giftedness of life. Instead of giving thanks, we often take things for granted. We see so much as something owed to us, something we deserve, or something we earned through hard work. We speak of rights, and once we call something a right, we often forget it is also a gift.

To see something only as a right is to miss a basic truth — that it could easily have been otherwise. Think for a moment: what if we had not been born in this country? What if we had not been surrounded by love, opportunity, or the resources that shaped our lives? What if we hadn’t met the people who taught, guided, and supported us along the way?

We’ve all seen stories in the news that remind us how fragile life’s blessings can be — families fleeing the conflict in Ukraine, the violence in Gaza, or the civil unrest in Sudan. Safety, home, and peace — things we think will last forever — can vanish in a moment.

I remember reading about Mariia Dibrova, who fled the invasion of Ukraine with her family in 2022. Like millions of others, she endured the unimaginable journey out of a war zone. They left behind their home, careers, and community, carrying only what they could and hoping desperately for safety.

When Mariia and hundreds of other Ukrainian refugees arrived on a chartered flight in Halifax, Nova Scotia, they were met by volunteers who offered warm welcomes, food, and shelter. Mariia said, “So grateful and so speechless about that. All people were so welcoming to us and very kind.” Even though her new life in Canada was filled with challenges — job searching, language barriers, and deep homesickness — her heart was full of thanksgiving. Her gratitude came not from comfort, but from the gift of safety and kindness shown by strangers.

On this Thanksgiving Sunday, I think we all need a dose of Mariia’s spirit. Why is it that we so easily forget to give thanks? Why do we slip into focusing on what’s wrong, what’s missing, or

what's unfair? And what can someone like Mariia — a refugee who lost almost everything — teach us about gratitude?

Let's turn to today's Scripture to explore those questions. In Luke's Gospel, Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem when he enters a small village. There, ten lepers approach him from a distance. They are not allowed to come near anyone. In those days, leprosy was not only a terrifying illness but also a social curse. Lepers were forced to live apart, away from family and community. People feared that touching them could spread the disease.

The ten lepers cry out together: "Jesus! Master! Have mercy on us!" Jesus stops and looks at them — not with fear or disgust, but with compassion. He tells them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." That was the law's way of confirming they were healed so they could return home.

As they go, something miraculous happens — they are healed on the way. But that's not the end of the story. One of the ten, realizing he has been healed, turns back. He praises God in a loud voice, falls at Jesus' feet, and thanks him. And this man, Luke tells us, was a Samaritan — a foreigner. Samaritans were outsiders, despised by the Jews. Yet it was the outsider who recognized the gift and returned to give thanks.

Jesus asks, "Were not ten made clean? Where are the other nine?"

Here lies the insight: sometimes it is those who have been most excluded or most broken who understand the depth of grace and the power of gratitude. Just like Mariia, the Ukrainian refugee, the Samaritan teaches us that thanksgiving often begins with those who know how easily everything could be lost. Gratitude is born when we realize that what we have — even the smallest thing — is a gift, not a guarantee. To see our lives as gifts opens our hearts to compassion for those who do not share the same blessings. It transforms not only how we see others but how we live ourselves.

There is another gift in this story: thanksgiving itself transforms us from within. It renews our perspective, our faith, and even our health. Modern research now confirms what Scripture has taught all along. People who live with thankful hearts experience greater emotional resilience, better relationships, and deeper peace. Scientists have even found that gratitude and faith can change the brain's chemistry — strengthening joy and healing from within. In other words, giving thanks isn't just polite manners. It's a way of living that aligns our hearts with the heart of God.

The Apostle Paul understood this well. In our second reading, from 2 Corinthians 9, he speaks about giving — but not about giving as an obligation. Paul was trying to help the early churches build unity between Jewish and Gentile believers. The church in Jerusalem was poor and struggling, while many of the Gentile churches were more prosperous. Paul invites them to give to one another not out of duty or guilt, but from thanksgiving.

He reminds them that generosity flows from gratitude, not from pressure. “God loves a cheerful giver,” he writes. And then he adds that those who sow generously will also reap generously — not just in material things, but in spiritual abundance.

Paul doesn’t say, “You owe it to them.” Instead, he says, “Give because God has already given so much to you.” When we give freely from thankful hearts, we discover a deeper joy. Our giving connects us to God’s abundance and strengthens the bonds of love among us.

Thanksgiving, then, is not a single day on the calendar. It is a way of life — a spiritual practice that opens our eyes and softens our hearts. The Samaritan leper didn’t just say “thank you.” He returned, fell at Jesus’ feet, and praised God with all his heart. That is thanksgiving in its truest form — worship, joy, and awe at the goodness of God.

Likewise, when Mariia gave thanks for safety and kindness in a new land, she was bearing witness to something holy — that even in hardship, God’s grace can be found. And when Paul urged the Corinthians to give with joy, he was reminding them that generosity and gratitude are two sides of the same coin. We cannot truly be thankful without also being generous.

So, what might it look like for us to live with thanksgiving in our hearts?

It might mean waking up in the morning and giving thanks for breath, for light, for a new day. It might mean recognizing the kindness of others — a friend who listens, a neighbour who helps, a stranger who smiles. It might mean giving a little more of ourselves — our time, our resources, our compassion — not because we must, but because gratitude overflows.

The Samaritan was healed twice — once in body, and again in spirit. His heart was made whole by thanksgiving. Paul’s churches were strengthened not only by gifts of money but by the joy and love those gifts carried. And Mariia’s life, though marked by loss, was renewed by gratitude for the safety and kindness she found in others and in Canada.

May we, too, find our inspiration in these lives. May Thanksgiving fill our hearts — not as a moment, but as a way of seeing and living. May it draw us closer to God and to one another. For gratitude is not just a feeling — it is a way of living, a way of loving, and a way of seeing that everything we have is a gift of grace. Amen.

Trio

“Now Thank We All Our God”

Joy, Harry, and James Park

Hymn 802

For the fruits of all creation

Invitation to the Offering

Doxology

Prayer of Dedication

Thank you, O God!

You have given life to all living things and richly provide us with everything we need. Bless us, and bless these gifts we offer to you from our hearts. Show us the life that is truly life —the life found in a spirit of thanksgiving. Amen.

Prayer of Thanksgiving and for the People

Thank you, O God!

We offer our thanks from the bottom of our hearts—in spite of all that has gone wrong, and in spite of all that can go wrong—thank you!

Children of God, what has God given you? Let us think about it in silence. (pause) Children of God, what good things have happened in your lives this year? Let us name them in silence. (pause) Children of God, how has God been with you in the hard times of life? Let us remember in silence. (pause)

For the grace that flows freely from God, we lift our voices in praise and thanksgiving.

As a thankful people, we thank the God who has given us life — and life in abundance. Yet we remember, O God, that there are problems in our communities, our province, and our nation. There are so many people in the world who struggle far more than we do. So we practice gratitude, O God, because we know that whatever challenges or struggles we face, we can face them more faithfully when we begin with thanksgiving.

We pray for the poor, the hungry, and the neglected all over the world —that their cries for daily bread may stir compassion and mercy among those to whom much has been given. We pray for those who have lost their sense of thanksgiving and see little hope for the future. May your Spirit of gratitude flow into the places of bitterness, frustration, complaint, and despair.

We pray for all nations and peoples who live amid conflict, violence, and war — especially the people of Ukraine, Gaza, Sudan, and all places torn by hatred and destruction. Bring peace, O God, where there is no peace. Protect the innocent, comfort the grieving, and strengthen all who work for justice, mercy, and reconciliation. May your Spirit move hearts away from cruelty and vengeance toward compassion and understanding.

We pray for the nations and communities that enjoy abundance and prosperity. Lift up their hearts, O God, that they may see and respond to the needs of others. May partnerships between the rich and the poor grow and flourish for the healing of the world.

We pray for the people of Rockway and North Pelham—for all who are ill, worried, or weary; for those who feel lonely, stressed, or afraid; for those awaiting surgery or undergoing medical treatment; and for those in recovery or healing at home. Pour out your strength and comfort upon them, O God. Surround them with your peace, and remind them that they are not alone, for you walk with them every step of the way.

The needs are many, and the situations complex, O God. May your power of love flow into all places where love and care are lacking, bringing comfort, courage, and hope.

In all things, teach us to live with grateful hearts — to see life as a gift, to find strength in your grace, and to walk in faith and thanksgiving each day. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, we pray. Amen.

Hymn 324

Great is thy faithfulness

BENEDICTION

May the love of God, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit fill your hearts with thanksgiving and peace, now and always. 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 19, 10:00 am at North Pelham**

Thanksgiving Sunday Gratitude! Thank you for your generous food donations both today and last Sunday. These will be delivered to the Open Arms Mission of Welland to bless those in need. Your kindness reflects God's love and provision. Happy Thanksgiving!

***North Pelham's 197th Anniversary Celebration!** Join us next Sunday, October 19, as we happily celebrate North Pelham's 197th Anniversary with guest speaker Rev. Dr. Mark Lewis! As we thank God, we are undertaking 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!

***Invitation to Church Membership:** Our churches, Rockway and North Pelham, have been home to faithful people for generations. Recently, two families who have worshiped with us decided to become members, and we give thanks for this joyful step of faith. If you have been part of our worship life and feel that this is your spiritual home, you are warmly invited to consider church membership. It's simple, meaningful, and a beautiful way to say, "This is my home. These are my people." Please speak with Rev. Jacob if you'd like to learn more. Together, we continue growing as one family in Christ.

Tai Chi & Qigong Class – Free 4-Week Program!

Join us for a gentle movement class that strengthens body and mind. Instructor **Joy Joung** will lead us in Tai Chi and Qigong, with both standing and chair-based options. Classes begin **Monday, October 20 at 1:30 PM** at **First Presbyterian Church, North Pelham**, and continue on **Oct. 27, Nov. 3 & Nov. 10**. All are welcome—no registration needed! Come, move, and be refreshed. If you have any questions, speak to Joy or Rev. Jacob.

***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 jacoble0501@gmail.com or 289-213-2797.**