



Rockway and First (North Pelham) Pastoral Charge
Epiphany Sunday, January 4, 2026
Worship at Home

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

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: As we begin a new year, we come to God just as we are—carrying hope, carrying questions, carrying what feels broken.

P: We come seeking light, guidance, and a new way forward.

L: God says, *“A bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench.”*
(Isaiah 42:3)

P: We praise the God who meets us with gentleness and mercy.

L: Jesus walks with us, not from above, but from within our lives.

P: We open our hearts to walk with Jesus in this new year.

L: Come, let us worship God, whose love brings strength, healing, and peace.

P: Let us worship God together. Amen.

Hymn 651

Guide me, O thou great Redeemer

PRAYERS OF APPROACH, CONFESSION and The Lord's Prayer

God of all life, Source of all being,

we thank you for the gift of life you have given us through your Word. We did not ask for this life, yet you have given it to us freely, as a sign of your grace and love.

O God of Light, who led the wise ones by a star and revealed your Son to all people, stir our hearts at the beginning of this new year. Open us to see your gentle glory and to walk in your way with trust.

God of mercy and loving-kindness, you sent Jesus among us as a gift—not to overpower the world, but to bring healing, justice, and peace. We confess that our pride and fear often dim the light you place within us. We fail to use our gifts fully, we turn away from cries for justice, and we struggle to live your peace. Hear our hearts now as we speak to you in silence. (Pause)

In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven and set free to begin again. Cleanse us and renew us in this new year. Guide us on our journey with Christ, with all its challenges, joys, and possibilities.

We offer you our lives, our hopes, our dreams, and our vision for 2026. Fill us with the quiet joy of your presence and the courage to live with humility, compassion, and generosity.

We renew our trust in you, O God, for Jesus Christ is our Way, our Truth, and our Life. In his name we pray, as he 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.

The Peace of Christ

Hymn 373

Jesus loves me, this I know

Children of God Moment

Prayer of Understanding

Gentle God, as we hear your Word, open our hearts. Help us to see your light, to trust your way, and to be changed by your love. Through Jesus Christ. Amen.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Psalm 29

Isaiah 42:1-9; Matthew 3:11-17

SERMON

Beginning the Year with Jesus

As we face the realities of life, we often wonder how to mend what is broken, how to move forward when we feel stuck, how to live with conflict and loss, and how to find stability when everything feels uncertain.

Each of us has our own way of responding. Often, we react without even thinking. Some of us push harder. Some of us withdraw. Some of us try to fix everything quickly. Others carry things quietly inside. But as we begin a new year, it may be worth asking a deeper question: Are our usual ways really helping us? Is there perhaps another way—one that brings more peace, more healing, and more life?

Many of us come into this new year carrying heavy things. Some have experienced injustice. Some have lost control over their health, their work, or their relationships. Some feel anxious, lonely, tired, or discouraged. When this happens, how do we respond? Do we blame others? Do we blame ourselves? Do we become bitter, or do we shut down and carry shame quietly inside?

The Bible is full of stories, but underneath them all is one great story. It begins with creation, a gift from God. It continues as that gift is damaged by human fear, pride, and brokenness. And it reaches its turning point in Jesus Christ, whose life reveals God's deepest way of being with us. This story offers us not just comfort, but direction. It shows us a way to face what is broken, what is stuck, and what feels beyond our control.

Today, as we begin a new year and enter the season of Epiphany, we begin again the journey of walking with Jesus. Epiphany is about light—about God being made known. The question before us is simple but important: What kind of strength, wisdom, and hope will God offer us as we walk with Jesus in this new year?

To receive something new, we usually need to be open to change. The Bible uses the word repentance for this. Repentance does not mean feeling ashamed or guilty. It simply means being willing to turn, to change direction, to let go of old ways that no longer bring life. Without openness to change, there is no movement. Without openness, there is no new beginning.

So we ask: What change might God be inviting us into this year? What ways of thinking, reacting, or controlling might we need to loosen so that something better can grow?

Our scripture readings help us explore these questions. Psalm 29 presents a powerful and dramatic image of God. “The voice of the Lord is over the waters.” “The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars.” “The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness.” We are invited to imagine thunder, lightning, roaring winds, and crashing waves. God is described as greater than all the forces of nature, seated as king over the flood.

This image of God can be comforting. It tells us that God is stronger than chaos, stronger than disaster, stronger than anything that threatens us. And the psalm ends with a beautiful promise: “May the Lord give strength to his people. May the Lord bless his people with peace.”

This is the God many of us learned about as children—the strong God who steps in, fixes things, and restores order. And sometimes, this image is exactly what we need.

But life also teaches us something else. Not everything can be fixed by strength alone. Not every problem responds well to force or control. In fact, sometimes strength used in the wrong way makes things worse.

Think about relationships. Trying to control another person often damages trust. Think about illness. Forcing optimism or pretending everything is fine can leave people feeling unheard and alone. Think about conflict. Winning an argument does not always heal a relationship. Think about the world. Violence and power have not brought lasting peace.

So we come to a crossroads in our faith. When life remains broken, when problems do not simply disappear, what do we do? Some people give up on faith altogether. Others hold on, but sense that their image of God needs to grow and change. Perhaps the problem is not God, but the way we have imagined God.

This is where Isaiah speaks with surprising hope. In Isaiah 42, God announces something new: “Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights.” This servant will bring justice to the nations—but not in the way we might expect. “He will not cry or lift up his voice.” “A bruised reed he will not break.” “A dimly burning wick he will not quench.”

This servant is strong, but gentle. Determined, but compassionate. Faithful, but humble. He does not crush what is already fragile. He does not silence what is barely surviving. Instead, he protects, restores, and patiently brings justice to life.

Here we begin to see another kind of strength—a strength that does not dominate, but heals; a power that does not overwhelm, but stays close. What looks like weakness is actually deep courage. What seems fragile is quietly faithful.

The Gospel continues this same message. Jesus comes to the Jordan River to be baptized by John. He is not standing on a throne or watching from a distance. He is standing in the muddy water, in line with everyone else—the broken, the searching, and the stuck. Jesus comes not as a ruler from above, but as one who steps fully into human life. He does not stand apart from our weakness; he shares it. He does not fix the world from a distance; he walks within it. Jesus shows us that real transformation happens not by controlling life, but by entering it with love, patience, and truth.

As we begin this new year with Jesus, we are invited into this different way of living. Following Jesus does not mean becoming stronger in the way the world defines strength. It means becoming more honest, more open, more compassionate. It means learning to work with our vulnerability rather than hiding from it. It means trusting that God can bring new life not despite our weakness, but through it.

This is not an easy invitation. For many of us, it is hard to imagine that things can truly change. Some have been struggling for a long time. Some carry grief, disappointment, or fatigue that does not go away quickly. Hope can feel risky.

And yet, the season of Epiphany gently asks us: Are we willing to believe that God is not finished with us? Are we willing to trust that walking with Jesus may open a new way—one step at a time?

Beginning a new year does not mean everything suddenly becomes better. But it can mean choosing a different posture. Instead of tightening our grip, we learn to open our hands. Instead of demanding quick solutions, we learn to walk patiently. Instead of judging ourselves harshly, we allow grace to meet us where we are.

As we journey with Jesus toward Easter and beyond, we are invited to surrender what weighs us down—our deepest fears, our hidden shame, our anger, our sense of failure. Surrender does not mean giving up. It means creating space. Space for healing. Space for wisdom. Space for God's Spirit to work within us.

Jesus' way does not promise control, but it does promise presence. It does not remove all pain, but it offers meaning and hope. It does not deny death, but it leads us through death into resurrection.

So today, at the beginning of this new year, we make a simple commitment—not to be perfect, not to be strong, but to walk with Jesus. To stay open. To trust that even in what feels broken, God is quietly at work.

May 2026 be a year when we discover this deeper strength. May it be a year of gentler hearts, wiser choices, and renewed hope. May it be a year when we learn again that God's light shines most clearly not through force, but through love. Amen.

Hymn 634 **Will you come and follow me**

Invitation to the offering

Doxology

Prayer of Dedication

Gracious God,
all we have is your gift. As we offer what we bring, use these gifts to heal, to bring justice and peace, and to build this community of faith as a spiritual home of love, trust, and hope. Through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer of Thanksgiving and for the People

Gracious and loving God,
we thank you for meeting us here at the beginning of this new year. Thank you for your living Word, for the gentle light of Christ, and for your faithful presence among us.

We give you thanks that you walk with us: not from a distance, but within our joys and our struggles, within what feels strong and what feels fragile. Thank you for showing us that true strength is found not in control or force, but in love, patience, humility, and trust.

We thank you for this community of faith: for the care we share, the grace we receive from one another, and the hope we discover together. May Rockway and North Pelham continue to be a spiritual home where hearts are welcomed, wounds are tended, and your peace takes root and grows.

Loving God, we now bring before you those who are on our hearts; those we love; those who are hurting; those who are worried, grieving, lonely, or in need. In the quiet of this moment, we name them before you in silence. (Silent prayer)

Hold them in your mercy, surround them with your care, and work in their lives in ways we cannot always see. As we go from this place into a new year, carry with us what we have received today. Give us courage to walk your way, openness to be changed, and faith to trust that new life is possible, even where things feel broken or unfinished.

We place this year in your loving hands. Guide us, renew us, and lead us forward, through Jesus Christ, our Way, our Truth, and our Life. Amen.

Hymn 479

The church's one foundation

BENEDICTION

May the grace of God, the gentle way of Jesus Christ, and the renewing power of the Holy Spirit go with you into this new year, guiding you in love, peace, and hope. 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 Worship on January 11, 2026, at North Pelham**

Monday Tai Chi & Qigong

Great news! Our Tai Chi & Qigong classes return on Monday, January 5, 2026, at North Pelham. Join us at 1:30 PM **or** 2:40 PM—choose the class that feels right for you. Everyone is welcome. Come move, breathe, and be refreshed!

RPCW Meeting: The RPCW will meet on Wednesday, January 7 at 1:30 p.m. at the church.

Wednesday Bible Study

Wednesday Bible Study will joyfully resume on Wednesday, January 14, 2026. We look forward to gathering again in the new year to grow in faith, hope, and love—together.

Outreach – Thursday Walking Returns!

Join us for our Wellness Walk and Coffee Chat! We meet at 9:30 a.m. at Canada Games Park to enjoy a refreshing walk together, followed by a joyful coffee chat at 10:45 a.m. at Rockway with hot, fresh coffee. Come for the walk, stay for the fellowship!

***Session meeting:** Our joint session meeting will be held on Wednesday, January 14, 2026, at 7:00 pm at Rockway.

***Rev. Jacob Lee's Study Leave and Guest Preacher:** Jacob will be on study leave from January 5 to 12. During his absence, Mr. Kent Reynolds will lead the Sunday service on January 11, bringing God's Word to guide and bless you all. May this time bless our congregations as we grow together in faith and love.

***Connect with your Minister Jacob at jacobleee0501@gmail.com**
or 289-213-2797 for spiritual support, discussions, or getting acquainted.