



Rockway and First (North Pelham) Pastoral Charge
Transfiguration / Holy Communion, February 15, 2025 – 10:00 am
Worship at Home

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

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: “While Jesus was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, ‘This is my Son, whom I love... listen to him.’” (Matthew 17:5)

P: We come to listen to Jesus.

L: We come to listen to the God whom Jesus reveals.

P: We believe; help our unbelief.

L: In a world filled with many voices and much doubt,

P: Steady our hearts and strengthen our faith.

L: As we eat the bread and drink the cup,

P: Open our ears to Christ’s voice within us and among us.

All: Renew us, O God, through your living Word, that we may trust you with confidence and walk in your light.

Hymn 299

Holy, holy, holy

PRAYERS OF APPROACH, CONFESSION and ASSURANCE OF PARDON

We are here to listen, O God.

Quiet the distractions and noise within us. Still our restless thoughts, and draw us into the depth of our hearts as we turn toward you.

We listen for your Word. We listen for the place where your truth meets our lives. We listen for clarity, for courage, for hope and direction.

Show us where love needs to grow in us—in certain places, in certain relationships, in the ways we speak and act. Teach us to be truthful, yet patient and kind. Help us give others the freedom to think and live differently, as you gently guide us all. Hear us now in the silence, O God, as we confess our struggles and place our hope in you. (silence)

Inspire us in all we do: as we listen and sing, as we think and feel, as we welcome one another, and as we share this holy meal together. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

The Peace of Jesus Christ

Hymn 500

Open my eyes, that I may see

Prayer for Understanding

Loving God,

as we hear your Word, quiet our hearts and open our minds, that we may listen to your beloved Son and follow his guiding light with trust and courage. Amen.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Responsive Psalm 99

Exodus 24: 12-18; Matthew 17: 1-8

SERMON

Listening to the True Authority

Trust and confidence are very important when we face something new. Think about learning how to swim for the first time. Or travelling to a country you have never visited before. Or preparing for an important exam. Or going into surgery. Or applying for a job or a program. In all these moments, we need something solid to stand on. We need someone or something we can trust.

In my previous pastoral ministry, I met a woman who is not yet a Christian, but she is very interested in becoming one. She wants to be a sincere believer like the friends who invited her to church. She has been attending Bible studies and worship services. However, as she listens and learns, she finds herself struggling. She asked honest questions. Why must she confess that she is a sinner because of a story about the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil”? She feels she is a good person. Why did Jesus have to die to save her? She never asked him to die for her. She told me that she feels uncomfortable during worship because she cannot fully agree that she is a sinner and that Jesus died to save her soul. Her struggle is sincere. She is not rejecting faith. She is wrestling with it.

In her situation, having sincere Christians beside her makes a big difference. People with faith, wisdom, and experience can gently guide her. Their lives carry a certain authority for her. But there is something else happening too. As she struggles, she is also discovering something within herself. Her own questions, her own search, and her own longing are shaping her faith.

So in her journey, there are two kinds of authority. One comes from others in the community of believers. The other comes from within, from her own honest struggle and reflection.

But there is also a third authority that brings these two together. That authority is God. God is not only outside us. God is also within us. Through the Holy Spirit, God surrounds us, guides us, and gently speaks to our hearts. And in Jesus Christ, God reveals both who God is and who we truly are. In Christ, we see that God is both beyond us and close to us. God is an authority that is both external and internal.

This leads us to an important question: Who is the authority in our daily lives? Who or what shapes our thinking, our choices, and our beliefs?

Today’s Gospel reading gives us a powerful image. It is the story of Jesus’ transfiguration. Jesus takes Peter, James, and John up a high mountain. There, something extraordinary happens. His face shines like the sun. His clothes become dazzling white. For a moment, his true glory is revealed. Then Moses and Elijah appear, speaking with Jesus. This is very important. In the Old Testament, Moses represents the Law, and Elijah represents the Prophets. In our reading from Exodus, Moses

also goes up a mountain to receive the commandments from God. So when Moses and Elijah stand beside Jesus, it shows that Jesus stands in continuity with God's saving work. It shows his authority.

And then comes the clearest sign of all. A voice from heaven says, "This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him." "Listen to him." These words matter deeply. They point us toward the true authority in our lives.

But what does this story teach us about authority? Does it mean we must simply accept everything without question? Does it mean we stop thinking for ourselves? I do not believe so. There is no shortcut to truth. There is no easy way to faith. Each of us must walk the journey personally. Faith cannot simply be borrowed. It must become our own.

We live in a world filled with confusion, injustice, and fear. We need order. We need guidance. We need wisdom. In our Presbyterian tradition, we believe we are reformed according to God's Word, especially as revealed in Jesus Christ.

But it is not enough to say, "The Bible says it, so that settles it." It is not enough to say, "The church teaches it, so it must be true." And it is not enough to assume that others must know better than we do. God did not create us to be robots. God created us with minds that think, hearts that feel, and spirits that respond. God created us for relationship—for love. And true love is never forced. It is never blind. It grows through trust and understanding. So authority, in the Christian life, is not about control. It is about relationship.

Jesus did not force Peter, James, and John to understand everything at once. Even after the transfiguration, they were confused. They made mistakes. They doubted. The Gospels do not hide this. Instead, they show us disciples who grow slowly, sometimes painfully, into deeper faith. That is how God works with us too.

This brings us to something important. Authority in our lives must grow out of our own spiritual journey. God invites us to question, to seek, and to wrestle. God does not want blind faith. God wants living faith. Living faith asks questions. Living faith struggles. Living faith grows. If faith is to become truly ours, we must invest in it. We must reflect. We must pray. We must listen. We must take time to think deeply about what we believe and why we believe it.

God desires an intimate friendship with us. Think about that. The Creator of the universe desires friendship. Not fear. Not forced obedience. Friendship. Part of God's life, through the Spirit, lives within us. That means when we search honestly for truth, we are not alone. When we struggle with doubt, we are not abandoned. When we ask difficult questions, God is not offended. God works within our thinking, within our experiences, within our mistakes and our growth.

So for a final reflection about authority: we must learn to hear God's voice not only outside us, but also within us. This does not mean we ignore Scripture. It does not mean we ignore the church. It means we listen deeply. We weigh what we hear. We allow God's Spirit to guide our understanding.

As Presbyterians, we believe in the God who created the entire universe. We also believe in Emmanuel—God with us. The Holy Spirit continues to open our hearts to new insight and deeper truth. God speaks through Scripture. God speaks through the community. And God speaks quietly

within our own hearts. Jesus never controlled his followers. He challenged them. He questioned them. He loved them. He allowed them to grow into their own calling. He treated them not as servants only, but as friends.

Perhaps we are not so different from the woman I mentioned at the beginning. We all have questions. We all have moments when faith feels difficult. We all struggle to understand. And that is not a weakness. It may be the beginning of deeper faith.

The voice from heaven said, "Listen to him."

To listen to Jesus does not mean to stop thinking. It means to open our hearts. It means to trust that as we walk honestly, God will guide us. It means allowing Christ to shape both our minds and our spirits.

So may we continue to grow through our questions, through our doubts, through our joys, and through our struggles. May we trust the God who is above us, around us, and within us. And as we listen, truly listen, may God become not only our authority, but our most intimate companion in life. Amen.

Hymn 671 **I heard the voice of Jesus say**

Invitation to the Offering

Doxology

Prayer of Dedication

Loving God,

we offer these gifts with thankful hearts; as we listen to your beloved Son, shape our lives and our giving to follow his loving authority in trust and joy. 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)

Loving God,

we thank you for feeding us with the bread of life and the cup of grace. In this holy meal, you have reminded us to listen to your beloved Son. Quiet the many voices around us and within us, and help us hear Christ more clearly. Strengthen our faith where it is weak, steady our hearts where they are uncertain, and guide our steps as we follow him. May your Holy Spirit work within us and among us, so that we may live with trust, courage, and love. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Hymn 540

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

Benediction:

May the love of God guide you like a steady light, the voice of Jesus lead you in truth and grace, and the Holy Spirit dwell within you, giving you trust, courage, and peace. And all God’s people said, “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, February 22, at North Pelham**

***Guest Preacher Next Sunday:** We will welcome Chaplain Jason Walt as our guest preacher. He will lead worship while Rev. Jacob leads the service at Kirk on the Hill in Fontheil. We look forward to welcoming Chaplain Jason and sharing in worship together.

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

Monday Tai Chi Cancellation: No classes will be held on Monday, February 16, due to Family Day. Kindly share this message with other participants.

***Tuesdays – Quilting at North Pelham** - starting at 9:00 am

***Wednesdays - Bible Study:** Join us every Wednesday at 10:00 AM at North Pelham, led by our spiritual leader, Diane McMillan.

***Thursdays – Outreach 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.

***Annual Congregational Meetings:** Rockway's Annual Congregational Meeting will be held on March 1, and North Pelham's will take place on March 8. Members are encouraged to attend as we reflect on the past year and look ahead together. Please ensure that annual reports are submitted by this Sunday or early next week, so they can be prepared for distribution on the 22nd. Thank you for your cooperation and participation.

***Prayer Requests and Pastoral Care:**

We are a church family, and we are here to pray for you. If you or someone you know is facing illness, surgery, hospitalization, grief, or any other need, please contact your elder or your minister, Jacob, so we can pray with you and offer pastoral care and support. Jacob's contact information: **Phone: 289-213-2797; Email: jacoble0501@gmail.com** Your sharing helps us care for one another faithfully, so that no one walks alone. ***"Carry one another's burdens."*** (Galatians 6:2)