



Rockway and First (North Pelham) Pastoral Charge  
*Lent IV, March 15, 2026*  
Worship at Home

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### CALL TO WORSHIP

L: We come to worship God from many different places in life.

**P: Some of us feel blessed, and the world seems to work well for us.**

L: Some of us know what it feels like to be overlooked, misunderstood, or judged.

**P: Some of us have felt blamed for our struggles or treated as if we do not belong.**

L: Yet God calls us together today.

**P: We come seeking to see more clearly and to love more deeply.**

L: We open our hearts to the Spirit of God.

**P: Come to us, Creator God. Open our eyes and hearts, that we may follow Jesus with compassion and courage.**

Hymn 500

**Open my eyes, that I may see**

### PRAYERS OF APPROACH, CONFESSION and The Lord's Prayer

Peaceful and loving God,

you are the source of our peace. Your presence quiets our restless hearts and fills our lives with a deep and gentle joy. When your love touches us, our hearts overflow with gratitude and we long to share that love with others.

Yet we come before you today with honest hearts. Sometimes life feels heavy and difficult. Sometimes we know the reasons for our struggles, and sometimes we do not. There are days when worries stay with us through the night. There are moments when we feel tired, discouraged, or uncertain about the path before us.

In this season of Lent, we come seeking your light and your mercy. Search our hearts, O God. Hear the quiet prayers we carry within us: our hopes, our fears, our gratitude, and our sorrow. (silence)

Come to us again this hour, loving God. Open our eyes to your grace. Renew our hearts with your peace. Help us to see with compassion, to love more deeply, and to follow the way of Jesus. And now, with one voice and one heart, we pray the prayer Jesus 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.

The Peace of Christ

Hymn 203                    **When Jesus the healer passed through Galilee**

### **Children of God's Moment**

#### **Prayer for Understanding**

Loving God,  
open our eyes and our hearts as we hear your Word today. Through your Spirit, help us to see your truth, to receive your love, and to follow Jesus with compassion. Amen.

### **SCRIPTURE PASSAGES**

**Responsive Psalm 146**

**John 9: 1–41**

### **SERMON**

#### **When Love Opens Our Eyes**

Today I would like to begin with a story. Susan and her husband once dreamed of becoming parents. Like many couples, they hoped to welcome a child into their home and fill their lives with love. But they soon learned that having biological children would not be possible. After much prayer and careful thought, they decided to adopt. On paper, they were the perfect couple—stable, loving, and ready to care for a child. After months of waiting, the phone finally rang. A baby boy had been born and needed a family.

When Susan first held him, her heart overflowed with joy. His name was Tom. He had soft hair, bright eyes, and tiny hands wrapped around her finger. Susan felt that a miracle had been placed in her arms. But during Tom's first year, Susan began to notice something concerning. Tom's movements were slower than other babies his age. His muscles seemed weak. Simple tasks that should have come naturally were difficult for him.

Doctors began running tests. After many appointments and many anxious days, the diagnosis finally came. Tom had muscular dystrophy, a disease that slowly weakens the muscles of the body. The doctors explained what this might mean. One day, Tom would need a wheelchair. His strength would slowly fade. His life expectancy was uncertain.

For Susan, it felt as if the ground had suddenly shifted beneath her feet. Not long after that diagnosis, the adoption agency asked Susan and her husband to come to a meeting. They admitted that important medical information had been missed. They had promised a healthy baby. And then they said something that shocked Susan.

They told her that if she wished, she could return the child. Susan later said that in that moment she felt something deep in her heart. Tom was not a mistake. He was not a problem to fix. He was her son. She refused immediately. To Susan, Tom was a gift placed in her life, and she chose to love him fully.

But hardship sometimes reveals what lies hidden in our hearts. After a few years, Susan's husband found the situation too difficult to face. One day he left. Susan was now alone, raising Tom by herself. Later in life, Susan often shared a simple truth she learned through that experience: "You don't choose what falls into your lap in life. But how you respond—that makes all the difference." Susan decided that Tom's life would not be defined by his illness. She would help him experience joy, purpose, and love. Now keep Susan and Tom's story in your heart as we turn to today's Gospel reading.

In the Gospel of John, chapter 9, Jesus and his disciples meet a man who had been blind since birth. To understand this story, we need to remember what life was like in those days. There were no eye specialists, no support programs, and no systems to help people with disabilities. Most blind people had no way to earn a living. Many survived only by sitting on the roadside and begging.

But perhaps the hardest burden was not the blindness itself. Many people believed that suffering must be the result of sin. If someone was sick or disabled, people assumed that either the person or the parents must have done something wrong. So when the disciples saw the blind man, they asked Jesus a question that people still ask today. "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

Notice what they are doing. They are not asking how they can help the man. They are asking who is to blame. This way of thinking is very common. Even today, we sometimes look at people who are struggling and quietly wonder what they did wrong. Sometimes we blame the poor for being poor. Sometimes we blame those who struggle with mental health. Sometimes we blame those who live on the margins of society. Blaming someone can make us feel more comfortable. It allows us to walk away without asking difficult questions.

But Jesus responds in a very different way. Jesus says something that must have surprised everyone who was listening. He says, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned." With those words, Jesus breaks the chain that people had tied between suffering and punishment. The man's blindness is not a curse. It is not a punishment from God. Instead, Jesus says that God's works will be revealed in him. This does not mean that God caused the blindness. Rather, it means that God's love and power can appear in the way people respond—with healing, compassion, and courage.

Jesus then heals the man. But the miracle is not only about eyesight. The man who once sat quietly begging now begins to speak with courage. When the religious leaders question him, he does not hide the truth. He tells them what Jesus has done. The man who once could not see now sees clearly. And those who believe they understand everything are revealed to be blind.

Now let us return to the story of Susan and Tom. We do not believe that God caused Tom's illness. But we saw something beautiful growing through their lives. God's presence was revealed in Susan's love. God's strength was revealed in her courage. Tom grew up knowing that his life mattered. Even when his muscles became weaker, his spirit remained strong. He played sports from his wheelchair. He loved music. He enjoyed traveling with his mother.

Together, Susan and Tom began to speak up for people living with disabilities. They did not ask people to feel sorry for them. Instead, they asked for something very simple—dignity and access. They wanted people to see that everyone deserves to belong. Over time Tom's body became weaker, but his life touched more and more people.

At the end of the story in John 9, Jesus speaks again to the religious leaders. They cannot accept what has happened. Not because the miracle did not happen, but because it does not fit their ideas about how the world should work. They are comfortable with the system as it is. They believe they already understand everything. But they refuse to see what is right in front of them.

Jesus tells them something very important. If they were truly blind—if they truly did not know—they would not be guilty. But the real problem is that they refuse to see. And sometimes we face the same challenge. Many of us live in places of comfort. Our lives may be stable. The systems around us may work well for us. But they do not work well for everyone.

Following Jesus means learning to see the world through the eyes of those who struggle. If we are healthy, we must listen to those who are not. If we are comfortable, we must notice those who are pushed aside. To follow Jesus is to stand beside the person sitting in the dust—not above them.

Eventually, Tom's illness reached its final stage. His body could no longer continue. I had the privilege of being with Susan and Tom near the end of his life. When Tom's funeral was held, the church was overflowing. Many people came to honor him—neighbors, students, community leaders, and friends. Outside, the street was lined with Wheel-Trans buses. The community Tom had encouraged and supported came to say thank you. And the atmosphere was not one of defeat. It was one of gratitude.

People spoke about the courage they had seen in Tom. They spoke about Susan's love. They spoke about the way their lives had been changed. Tom's body had been weak. But his life revealed something powerful. God's love had been shining through him all along.

As we depart today, Jesus's question still resonates with us: Do we want to see? Each of us encounters situations that come unexpectedly—things we did not choose. Some of us carry burdens. Some of us face illness, grief, or uncertainty. Others of us move through systems that work well for us, while others struggle. The question is not about guilt. The question is about vision. Will we open our eyes to the people around us? Will we see our neighbors not as problems, but as gifts?

Susan once said something simple and wise: “You don’t choose what falls into your lap in life. But how you respond makes all the difference.” That is also the message Jesus gives us today. When we respond with love, courage, and compassion, God’s work is revealed.

May God open our eyes so that we may truly see. Amen.

Special music

**The Lord’s my shepherd**

**Joy Joung**

Hymn 592

**I, the Lord of seas and sky**

### **Invitation to the Offering**

#### **Doxology**

#### **Prayer of Dedication**

Loving God,

with grateful hearts we offer these gifts to you. Open our eyes to see the needs of others and use our lives and our offerings to share your love in the world. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

#### **Prayer of Thanksgiving and for the People**

Gracious and loving God,

thank you for seeing us as we truly are. You see us not only when we feel strong and confident, but also when we feel weak, tired, or uncertain. You see our struggles and our fears, and still you love us.

Thank you for loving us as your children, precious in your sight and full of possibilities for what we may yet become. Meet us in our weakness, O God, and renew us with your strength. Meet us in our confusion and guide us with your wisdom. Meet us in our impatience and fill us with compassion and love.

Open our eyes, as you opened the eyes of the blind man, so that we may see the beauty of your grace within us and around us. Send your Holy Spirit to lead us, that we may follow Jesus with open hearts and willing hands.

Loving God, we pray for our world, which you care for deeply. We remember the many places where conflict and war continue. Where fear, anger, and violence grow, may leaders choose the difficult path of dialogue, understanding, and peace. We pray for people living in fear and uncertainty: in Iran, in parts of the Middle East, in Lebanon, Israel, and Gaza, and for all whose homes and lives are shaken by war. O God, in a world where violence seems to grow, show us again the way of peace.

We also remember places like Sudan, where people suffer from hunger, war, and deep hardship. Strengthen those who feel exhausted and hopeless, and bring small signs of hope to those who struggle to endure each day.

Closer to home, we pray for communities facing difficulty, especially the people of Tumbler Ridge, and those who remain stranded and unable to return home safely. Bring comfort, help, and protection to all who are affected.

Loving God, we also pray for those among us whose health is fragile and whose days are filled with physical or emotional struggle.

And today we remember those who grieve. We lift before you, Linda, Jason, and Christine, as they mourn the loss of their beloved Jean. Surround them with your comfort and peace. Remind them that Jean now rests safely in your eternal love. In their sorrow, give them strength, hope, and the gentle support of your presence.

And now, in silence, we lift to you the people and situations that weigh upon our hearts. (silence)

For healing we pray, O God, however healing may come. For blessing, hope, and new life we pray, in this life and in the life to come. And for peace we pray, a deep and abiding peace. We pray all this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Hymn 670

**Amazing grace (vs. 1,2,3 & 6)**

### **BENEDICTION**

May the love of God, the grace of Jesus Christ, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit open our eyes to love and serve others. And all God's people said, "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 March 22, 2026, at North Pelham**

**\*With Sympathy:** We share with sadness that Jean, the beloved mother of Linda Hannigan, passed away on March 12. Linda cared for her mother with great love and devotion during her final years.

We invite the congregation to keep Linda and her son Jason in your prayers as they grieve the loss of their beloved mother and grandmother. May God's grace, comfort, and peace surround them in this difficult time.

**\*Willing Workers Meat Pie Sale:** The Willing Workers are now taking orders for their famous Meat Pies. 9" ~~Ground Beef~~ (SOLD OUT) or Chicken Pies are available for \$18.00 each. Pies are sold frozen and can be baked anytime. Orders can be placed by speaking to Janice Aulph at 905-246-9175. Pick up day for the Meat Pies will be Saturday, March 28, between 10 am and 1 pm.

**Good Friday Walk & Service – April 3:** Join us for a meaningful Good Friday as we reflect on the Seven Last Words of Jesus on the Cross: Walk at Rotary Park (meet at Rockway) – 10:00 AM; Worship Service – 11:00 AM; and Fellowship to follow – pizza and vegetables will be provided. Please bring a dessert to share. All are welcome—walk, worship, and fellowship with us!

**\*Easter Breakfast & Service – April 5:** Join us for Easter Sunday at North Pelham! We'll begin with a delicious Eggs Benedict breakfast at 9:00 AM (Freewill offering to benefit Rose City Kids, supporting children and youth in Welland). Our Easter Worship Service follows at 10:00 AM. All are welcome! Please invite your family members and friends to celebrate Easter together.

**\*Monday Tai Chi & Qigong Continues!**

Join us on Mondays at North Pelham for our uplifting Tai Chi & Qigong classes! **1:30 PM** – Standing-focused group, **2:40 PM** – Seated-focused group. No experience needed—just come as you are and enjoy gentle movement, peaceful breathing, and joyful community. Everyone is welcome! Questions? Please speak to Joy.

**\*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.

**\*Steve Bell Concert – April 12:**

Knox Presbyterian Church (St. Catharines) will host Canadian singer-songwriter Steve Bell in concert on Sunday, April 12 at 7:00 PM (53 Church St.). Tickets: \$25 through the Knox church office (905-641-8868) or \$26 online at SteveBell.com. All are welcome.

**\*Prayer Requests and Pastoral Care:**

If you or someone you know is facing illness, grief, or any need, please contact your elder or Rev. Jacob: **Phone: 289-213-2797; Email: [jacoble0501@gmail.com](mailto:jacoble0501@gmail.com)** We are here to pray and care for one another. “Carry one another’s burdens.” (Galatians 6:2)