



Rockway and First (North Pelham) Pastoral Charge
Easter Sunday, April 5, 2026 – 10:00 am
Worship at Home

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

Hymn 243

Jesus Christ is risen today

Welcome & Announcements

Easter Sunday Call to Worship (provided by PWS&D)

L: Alleluia! Christ is risen! The world is forever changed.

P: Alleluia! Christ is risen! We are forever changed.

L: We need not fear, for the God of the covenant promises to be with us through every change.

P: May we always be open to new ways of living, relating, serving and seeing.

L: May the God of life remind us that death never has the final say.

P: May the risen Christ prove to us that violence and hatred will never win.

L: May the Holy Spirit, our advocate, lead us to advocate for others.

P: May we go boldly forward to live out the love, justice and hope that Easter proclaims.

PRAYERS OF APPROACH, CONFESSION and ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Here we are, O God.

We come to you this Easter morning after busy days—full of preparation, excitement, and expectation. Some of us come with joy, grateful to gather with family and friends. Some of us come feeling tired, lonely, or carrying quiet grief. All of this is part of our lives, O God. And we bring it all to you.

Within us, we often feel pulled in different directions. We make choices we are thankful for, and others we wish we could take back. So hear us now, O God, as we pause in silence and simply breathe. (pause)

We breathe in your love—not because we have earned it, but because you give it freely. (pause)

We breathe out what weighs on us—resentment, bitterness, fear, shame, and anything that keeps us from loving you and others. (pause)

We breathe in your love again, O God. We breathe out all that burdens our hearts. (pause)

And now we hear the good news of this Easter day: Jesus Christ is risen! He is risen indeed. Hallelujah! Because he lives, we are forgiven. Because he lives, new life is possible for us.

So renew us, O God. Lift what is heavy within us. Fill us again with faith, hope, and love. We come to worship you in the name of the risen Jesus, our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

**May the Peace of Christ be with you all
And also with you**

Trio **Because He Lives / In Christ Alone** Joshua/Sophia/Joanna

Hymn 250 **I danced in the morning**

Prayer for Understanding

Risen God,

open our hearts and minds as we hear your Word. Help us to see and trust the truth of the resurrection, not only with our thoughts, but in our lives. Let your living Word bring faith, hope, and new life within us. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Responsive Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

Violin “Jesu, Joy of Man’s Desiring” (Bach) Joy Joung

New Testament Acts 10: 34-43

The Gospel John 20: 1-18

SERMON The Evidence of Love

How do we know the resurrection is real? This question has been asked for two thousand years. Every Easter, we gather in beautiful churches. We sing joyful hymns. We see flowers placed on the altar. But underneath all the celebration, there is often a quiet voice in our hearts asking: *How do we know?* How do we know that Jesus—the same Jesus who was crucified on a Roman cross, who suffered and died, and was laid in a cold stone tomb—was truly raised to life on the third day?

If we are honest, it sounds impossible. Death feels final. We see it in our own lives, in our families, and in our communities. We know what it means to come to the end of something. So when we say that the grave is empty, we are making one of the boldest claims in all of human history. This morning, I want us to think about three ways of “knowing.” We will think about the evidence of the senses, the evidence of history, and the evidence of the heart.

The first people who knew about the resurrection experienced it through their own senses—their eyes, their ears, and their hands. The Gospel stories are not written as myths or legends. They are told as the witness of people who believed they were describing something real.

For those first followers, the resurrection was not an idea. It was a shock. They saw Jesus alive again. They sat with him. They heard his voice—his familiar tone, the way he always spoke.

They touched his hands and saw his scars. They even watched him eat with them. He spoke about things only Jesus could know—shared memories, moments they had lived together, the way he explained Scripture. For them, the resurrection was something they knew with their whole bodies.

But there is something important to notice. That kind of knowing belonged to them. It does not belong to us in the same way. We were not there. We were not in the upper room. We were not at the empty tomb. If the resurrection is only something that happened long ago, it can feel like just a story in a book—something distant and hard to connect with. So we need to look deeper.

In the Gospel of John, we see different reactions to the empty tomb. Mary Magdalene arrives first. She is grieving. Her heart is heavy with loss. When she sees that the stone has been moved, she does not think of resurrection. She thinks someone has taken the body. She runs to tell the others.

Then Peter and another disciple—likely John—run to the tomb. They do not find Jesus. They find something very strange. The linen cloths are there, neatly folded. It is such a human moment. Peter looks carefully. He tries to understand. He is thinking, analyzing, trying to make sense of what he sees—but he cannot reach a conclusion. He is left confused.

But John responds differently. The Gospel tells us that John saw—and believed. He did not have all the answers. He could not explain how it happened. He did not have proof in a scientific sense. What he had was “the empty.” He saw the absence of death where death should have been. And somehow, that was enough for him to take a step toward faith.

That is very close to where we are today. We do not see Jesus standing in front of us. But we do see “empty places” in our lives—places where something new begins, even when we cannot fully explain it. Faith often begins right there—not with certainty, but with trust.

Because we cannot see the resurrection directly, we often look for evidence the way historians do. In science, we test things in a lab. But in history, we look at what happened *after* an event to understand what must have taken place.

Think of it like a family story. Imagine you find old medals from the Second World War in your home. You were not there. You did not hear the sounds of battle. But you know the war was real. Why? Because you see the evidence in the life of someone you love. You hear their stories. You notice how their experiences shaped them—how they value peace, how they carry themselves, how they remember.

The resurrection works in a similar way. Look at what happened after Jesus’ death. In our reading from Acts, Peter stands before a crowd and speaks with courage and clarity. He says, “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power.” He speaks about Jesus’ life, his death, and then boldly declares: “God raised him.”

Now think about who Peter was before this. Just a few weeks earlier, Peter was afraid. He denied even knowing Jesus—three times. He hid behind locked doors, afraid for his life. So what changed? How did a frightened man become so bold?

Within a short time, these followers of Jesus became fearless. They were willing to suffer, to be imprisoned, and even to die for their message. People do not risk their lives for something they know is not true. Something happened to them. Something changed them. The most powerful explanation is that they truly encountered the risen Christ.

And yet, even history is not enough. For the resurrection to matter to us today, it must move from our minds into our hearts. It must become something we experience in our lives. Peter gives us a key in Acts: “Everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

Throughout his life, Jesus showed God’s love in action. He forgave people whom others rejected. He welcomed those who were pushed aside. He healed, restored, and lifted people up. And even on the cross, as he was suffering, he prayed: “Father, forgive them.”

The resurrection is God’s “yes” to that prayer. It is God’s “Amen” to love. It tells us that love is stronger than hate, that forgiveness is stronger than sin, and that life is stronger than death. This is where the resurrection becomes real for us.

Every time we forgive someone who has hurt us, we are living the resurrection. Every time we choose compassion instead of anger, we are living the resurrection. Every time we reach out to someone who is lonely or struggling, we are living the resurrection.

As a church, we are called to follow the way of Jesus. We do not just talk about resurrection—we live it. We see it when we visit someone who feels forgotten. We see it when we listen with care and patience. We see it when we let go of old hurts that have weighed us down for years. We see it when we choose hope, even when things feel uncertain.

I have seen this in our own community. I have seen people find peace after carrying pain for many years. I have seen kindness bring healing where there was distance. I have seen small acts of love make a real difference in someone’s life. These are not small things. These are signs of resurrection. They are signs that Jesus is still alive and at work among us.

So this morning, where do you find yourself? Maybe you are wondering. Maybe you are unsure. Maybe you are quietly hoping. That is okay. You do not need to have every answer. Just look around you. Look at the ways lives are changed. Look at the ways hearts are healed. Look at the ways love continues to grow, even in difficult places. That is where we begin to see the truth of the resurrection.

When I see a person find peace after years of struggle, I see the resurrection. When I see a community come together to care for one another, I see the resurrection. When I see love continue, even after loss, I know that the tomb is empty. The resurrection of Jesus is real because his love is still alive. It is alive in this church. It is alive in this community. It is alive in you. So let us say it together, not just with our voices, but with our lives: **Jesus Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Hallelujah!**

Hymn 257

The strife is o’er, the battle done

Invitation to the offerings**Doxology****Prayer of Dedication**

Risen God,
we offer these gifts with thankful hearts. Use them to share your resurrection life, bringing love, hope, and new life to others. Amen.

Confessing our faith based on the Apostles' Creed**Invitation to the Lord's Supper****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)**

Risen Jesus,

we thank you for meeting us here—in this bread, in this cup, and in the quiet places of our hearts. You have fed us with your love and reminded us that death does not have the final word. Your life is alive in us.

Now send us out in your strength. Help us to live what we have received—to forgive as we have been forgiven,

to love as you have loved us, and to bring hope into the empty places around us. When we feel uncertain, remind us that you are with us. When we feel weak, renew us with your risen life.

May our lives become signs of your resurrection in our homes, in our church, and in our world. In your living and loving name we pray, Amen.

Hymn 258

Thine be the glory

Benediction:

May the love of God, the grace of the risen Jesus, and the power of the Holy Spirit help you live the resurrection each day. 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

**We acknowledge that we meet on the traditional
 Territory of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe**

Announcements:

***Worship on Sunday, April 12, at Rockway**

***Easter Breakfast – With Thanks:** We give thanks to God for our joyful Easter Breakfast as we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. Special thanks to **Asa** for generously donating organic eggs for our Eggs Benedict, to the **young people** who prepared and served the meal, and to all who came, enjoyed the breakfast, and gave donations. **All proceeds will be sent to Rose City Kids in Welland** to support children and youth in need.

***Monday Tai Chi & Qigong – Easter Monday Break:** Please note that there will be no Tai Chi & Qigong class tomorrow, as it is Easter Monday. Classes will resume on Monday, April 13 at the usual times.

***Joint Session Meeting:** A Joint Session Meeting of Rockway and North Pelham will be held on April 8 at 7:00 p.m. at Rockway.

***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.

***Remembering Catherine Tirpko:** This Sunday, April 19, we will take a moment during our worship service to remember and celebrate the life of Catherine Tirpko, a beloved member of our North Pelham congregation. Following the service, Catherine's family will graciously prepare and serve refreshments for a time of fellowship together. All are warmly welcome to stay and share in this meaningful time of remembrance.

***Mission Awareness Sunday, April 26, at Rockway:** On Sunday, April 26, we welcome Mackenzie Warren, Donor Relations Specialist from Pathstone Mental Health, as our guest speaker for Mission Awareness Sunday. Pathstone Mental Health is the lead agency for children's mental health in Niagara, providing compassionate care and support to children, youth, and families facing anxiety, depression, trauma, and other mental health challenges. We look forward to hearing more about their vital work in our community. Please join us!

*** West St. Andrew's Annual Beef Dinner**

West St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church is hosting their Annual Beef Dinner on Saturday, April 11, 2026 at 5:30 PM, located at 42 Pelham Road, St. Catharines. Tickets are \$25 per person and include roast beef, mashed potatoes, carrots, salad, tea/coffee, and homemade pie. All are welcome!

***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: jacoblee0501@gmail.com** We are here to pray and care for one another. “Carry one another’s burdens.” (Galatians 6:2)