



Rockway and First (North Pelham) Pastoral Charge
5th Sunday of Easter, May 3, 2026
Worship at Home

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

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me." (John 14:1)

P: We come with open hearts, trusting in God's presence among us.

L: We come to worship, to pray, and to listen for God's voice.

P: We come as a community, learning to walk in the way of Jesus.

L: We come to be shaped by God's love.

P: We come to grow in faith, hope, and love together.

All: Come to us, O God, and reveal yourself to us in Jesus' words and Spirit.

Hymn 371 **Love divine, all loves excelling**

PRAYERS OF APPROACH, CONFESSION and The Lord's Prayer

We come, O God, as we are. Some of us come with grateful hearts. We are thankful for who we are, for where we have come from, and for where we are now in our lives. We are hopeful about what will be, and we are learning to trust you.

Yet some of us come with fear, O God. Some of us are burdened by our past. Some of us feel confused about where we are today. Some things are the result of choices we have made and actions we have taken. Other things come from circumstances we did not choose, or situations we could not manage as we had hoped.

We know we are responsible, O God, yet we are often quick to blame others, and sometimes we are quick to blame ourselves. At times, we feel resentful, discouraged, or stuck. Hear us now in the silence as we make our confession to you. (Silence)

Whatever we confess, you already know, O God. Yet confession draws us closer to you. It opens space within us for a deeper and more honest relationship with you.

Fill us with your love. Shape us by the way of Jesus. Give us new faith and new hope to meet the changing circumstances of our lives. Help us to live your love in action, through our hearts, our hands, and our feet. We pray in Jesus' name, who taught us to pray together, 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.

Sharing The Peace of Jesus Christ

Hymn 229 **Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love**

Children of God's Moment

Prayer for Understanding

Loving God,
open our hearts and minds to your Word. Help us to see your compassionate love in Jesus, and teach us to live that love in action through our hearts, our hands, and our feet. Amen.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Responsive Psalm 31: 1-5, 15-16
1 Peter 2: 1-10; John 14: 1-19

SERMON

More Than Belief

What does it mean to be a real Christian? It sounds like a simple question. But the more we think about it, the deeper it becomes. We live in a fast-changing world. People follow many different paths. Some hold strong faith. Others have stepped away from it. In the middle of all this, we are invited to ask honestly: what is the heart of our faith?

No matter how long we have been on this journey, the question still matters. If everything else were taken away—buildings, traditions, programs—what would remain that truly makes us Christian? The psalmist gives us a starting point. In Psalm 31, he says, “In you, Lord, I have taken refuge... be my rock of refuge.” His life was not easy. He had fears and struggles. But he knew where to turn. He trusted God. And that simple trust is where our faith begins. So again, what does it mean to be a real Christian?

Let us begin with belief. A Christian is someone who believes something. But sometimes faith can feel heavy, as if we must carry many ideas just to belong. When it becomes too complicated, it can lose its power to shape our lives. At the center, there is one simple belief. We believe that Jesus gives us the clearest and most trustworthy picture of God.

Many people believe in God. But Christians look at Jesus—his life, his words, his actions—and say, “This is what God is like.” When we look at Jesus, we do not see a distant or harsh God. We see a God who sits with the lonely, who heals the broken, who welcomes those others have rejected. We see a God whose nature is compassionate love. This is the foundation. Everything else grows from here—how we see the world, how we treat others, and how we understand our purpose.

But belief alone is not enough. Being a real Christian also includes spiritual practice. Faith is not only something we think—it is something we live. In 1 Peter, we are described as “living stones.” A single stone may be strong, but it cannot form a house alone. When stones come together, they become something greater—a place of shelter, a place of belonging.

In the same way, we are not meant to live our faith alone. We gather for worship. We pray together. We sing, listen, and care for one another. Through these simple practices, our faith grows stronger.

Some people say they are “spiritual but not religious.” And we can understand that. Many people are searching for God, even if they feel unsure about the church. That longing is real and important. But the Christian life, as we receive it in Scripture, is deeply connected to being together. It is in community that we learn how to love, how to forgive, and how to serve.

Spiritual practices do not have to be complicated. Prayer. Singing. Silence. A walk outside. A kind word to a neighbor. Even small moments can open our hearts to God. So yes, a real Christian believes. And a real Christian practices faith in community. But still, this is not the whole answer.

At the center of everything is love. Our belief should lead us to love. Our practices should deepen our love. And our daily lives should show that love in real and visible ways. But love is a word we use often. It can sound soft or unclear.

Yet the love Jesus shows us is not soft. It is strong. It is active. And it often costs something. Real love is not just a feeling. It is a choice. This kind of love becomes most clear when life is hardest.

Let me share a true story. In 2015, a small group gathered at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston for a Wednesday evening Bible study. They welcomed a stranger into their circle. They offered him kindness. Then, in a heartbreaking act of violence, that young man took the lives of nine people—people who had simply come to pray and study God’s Word. The pain was overwhelming. Families lost loved ones. A church lost faithful leaders. A whole community was shaken.

But what happened next surprised the world. At a court hearing just days later, family members were given the chance to speak. They shared their grief. They spoke honestly about their pain. And then, one by one, some of them said words no one expected: “I forgive you.” One woman said, “You took something very precious from me... but I forgive you. May God have mercy on your soul.” This moment came to be known as “Charleston grace.” It was not easy. It was not simple. It was deeply costly.

And yet, in that moment, we saw something of Christ. We saw a love that does not ignore pain. A love that does not pretend injustice did not happen. But a love that refuses to let hatred have the final word. That is the love of Jesus.

This is the kind of love Jesus points to when he says, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life.” These words are not only about belief. They are about how Jesus lived. Jesus is the way because he shows us the way of love. He is the truth because he lives truthfully in love. He is the life because his love brings life to others.

Jesus does not only speak about love—he lives it, all the way to the cross. And even though we do not see Jesus physically today, we still see him. We see him wherever his kind of love appears. We saw Jesus in those grieving families who chose forgiveness. We see Jesus when someone offers kindness without expecting anything in return. We see Jesus when a person chooses mercy instead of judgment. A real Christian is someone whose life reflects this love.

This does not mean we must be perfect. All of us fall short. We lose patience. We say things we regret. We sometimes turn away when we should step forward. But the Christian life is a journey. It includes repentance—honestly facing where we have failed. It includes forgiveness—receiving it from God and offering it to others. We grow slowly into love.

Like living stones, we are shaped over time. God is still working in us. And through all of this, we are held by one deep and steady truth: we are loved. Even when we feel unworthy. Even when we struggle. God’s love remains. Jesus shows us this again and again.

So what does it mean to be a real Christian? It means trusting that Jesus shows us who God is—a God of compassionate love. It means growing in faith through prayer, worship, and community. And above all, it means living a life shaped by love—a love that is real, visible, and sometimes costly.

The world may not see Jesus the way people once did. But the world can still see him—through us. They see him when we choose grace in a harsh world. They see him when we live with compassion and courage. A phone call to someone who is lonely—that is the hands of Jesus. A prayer for someone who is hurting—that is the heart of Jesus. A word of forgiveness—that is the feet of Jesus, walking the way of the cross. These small acts matter more than we know.

So I leave you with one simple question: How might the love of Jesus be lived out—through your heart, your hands, and your feet—this week? Let us be the place where the world can still see Jesus. Amen.

Violin

Blest be the tie that binds

Joy Joung

Hymn 471

We are one in the Spirit

Invitation to the Offering

Doxology

Prayer of Dedication

Loving God,

receive these gifts with our thankful hearts. Use them to share your love in action, so that through our hearts, hands, and feet, others may see the compassion of Jesus. Amen.

Prayer of Thanksgiving and for the People

Loving and gracious God,
we thank you for meeting us in worship today. You love us so deeply. We know this through the love we feel in our hearts—in compassion, empathy, understanding, and forgiveness.

We know your love through the people around us who nurture, support, and befriend us. We know your love in the ways this earth sustains us—in daily food, in the gift of shelter, and in the beauty that breathes life into us. Most of all, we know your love in Jesus, who shows us your heart, and calls us to live your love in action.

Yet you also call us, O God, to live out your love in our care for others. As we pray for what we care about, open our hearts to care even more deeply. Hear us now as we pray for the needs of the world.

We pray for all who live with fear, violence, hunger, grief, and uncertainty. Where there is hatred, bring mercy. Where there is division, bring understanding. Where there is suffering, bring healing and help. Teach us not to turn away from the pain of the world. Give us courage to choose compassion, wisdom to seek justice, and faith to believe that your love is stronger than hatred.

We pray also for our church family. Be near to those who are sick, tired, lonely, or discouraged. Comfort those who are grieving. Strengthen those who feel weak. Encourage those who feel forgotten. Give hope to those who cannot yet see the way ahead. And now, in this quiet moment, we lift before you the names and needs of those we carry in our hearts. (Silence)

May they know that they are not alone. May they feel your gentle presence surrounding them. And may we, as your people, become signs of your care—through a call, a visit, a prayer, a kind word, and every small act of love in action. Shape us, O God, by the way of Jesus. Let our hearts be filled with compassion, our hands ready to serve, and our feet willing to walk in your way. We pray all this in the name of Jesus Christ, our way, our truth, and our life. Amen.

Hymn 641

One more step along the world I go

BENEDICTION

Go in peace,
trusting in the love of God, walking in the way of Jesus Christ, and guided by the Holy Spirit. May your heart, hands, and feet show God's love in action this week. 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 Service, May 10, at 10:00 am at Rockway**

***Mission Awareness Offering – Thank You!**

Thank you for your generous support on Mission Awareness Sunday. We received \$416, which will be shared with Pathstone Mental Health Foundation to support children and youth in need. Your giving is truly love in action.

***The RPCW will meet** on Wednesday, May 6, at the church at 1:30 PM.

***Joint Session Meeting:** The joint Session of Rockway and North Pelham will meet on May 13 at North Pelham at 7:00 p.m.

***Willing Workers' Clothing Drive:** The Willing Workers' Society will hold a clothing drive from **May 3 to May 31**. Gently used clothing must be clean and in good condition. Textiles will also be accepted for **Kidney Clothes**.

***Magazine Donations Requested:** Kristen Young, a member of Rockway and a Recreation Therapist in the mental health department at Niagara Health, is collecting old or used magazines for art and craft activities that support patients in their healing. Donation boxes are now available at the entrances of Rockway and North Pelham. Thank you for helping extend care to those in need in our community.

***Monday Tai Chi & Qigong:** Tai Chi & Qigong classes are held every Monday at North Pelham. The first class begins at 1:30 p.m. and the second class at 2:30 p.m. Everyone is warmly welcome to join for gentle movement, peaceful breathing, and joyful fellowship. There is no fee to attend, as Rockway and North Pelham are pleased to support this caring ministry for both our church members and the wider community.

***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.

***Vow Renewal** - To celebrate the 30th anniversary of their marriage, Rev. Steve and Kathleen Boose will be renewing their vows on Saturday, May 16th, at 1:00 in the afternoon. This will take place at Rockway, which is where they got married all those years ago, and a reception will follow in the church basement. If you wish to attend, RSVP to revboose@gmail.com or kathleen.boose@gmail.com by May 11th so that they can ensure there will be enough food... but if you realize that you're available at the last minute, come anyway! Let's gather for a happy celebration! Best wishes only!

***Celebrating with Christine & Jason:** We are delighted to share that Christine Stewart and Jason Hannigan will be married on August 1, 2026, in Hamilton, Ontario. As they prepare for this joyful day, they warmly invite our church family to join them for their Stag & Doe on Saturday, June 20, at 7:00 PM at the Wellandport Community Centre. Let us keep Christine and Jason in our prayers as they begin this new chapter of life together, and may God bless them with love, joy, and peace.

***SAFE CHURCH:** Rockway and North Pelham are congregations of The Presbyterian Church in Canada and follow its Safe Church policies: **Leading with Care, Policy and Procedures for Addressing Harassment in the Church, and Policy for Dealing with Sexual Abuse and Sexual Harassment.** As part of our commitment to safety and care, these policies will be linked on our website and may also be reviewed anytime at: <https://presbyterian.ca/resources/resources-od/safe-church/>

***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** We are here to pray and care for one another. "Carry one another's burdens." (Galatians 6:2)