

Eternal Life here and now
(Isaiah 45: 18, 19; John 3:1-10)

Isaiah 45:18, 19

For thus says the LORD, who created the heavens (he is God!), who formed the earth and made it (he established it; he did not create it a chaos, he formed it to be inhabited!): I am the LORD, and there is no other. I did not speak in secret, in a land of darkness; I did not say to the offspring of Jacob, 'Seek me in chaos.' I the LORD speak the truth, I declare what is right.

John 3:1-10

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. 2 He came to Jesus by night and said to him, 'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.' 3 Jesus answered him, 'Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.' 4 Nicodemus said to him, 'How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?' 5 Jesus answered, 'Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. 6 What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not be astonished that I said to you, "You must be born from above." 8 The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.' 9 Nicodemus said to him, 'How can these things be?' 10 Jesus answered him, 'Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?'

217th Anniversary! What does this special occasion tell us? God called the people who lived around the area more than 2 centuries ago together as a special people with very special responsibilities. It is easy to say what those responsibilities were. We can also ponder whether those responsibilities changed with time or not.

What is clear to us is that the world in which the Rockway Church was established as a communion in Christ is still a communion in Christ gathering together as the people who glorify, praise and worship God. Though we lament how we now lack numbers unlike the days of old, yet, we gather in Christ's name to love God and love one another, being faithful to the great commandment we received from the Lord.

Another sure thing to remember is that there are many people, who followed Christ from birth to death in this area steadfastly, lived the faith out as best as they could. Of course, like any other human organization, there were many who were beautiful, not so pretty, sometimes far from

imperfect people were part of this congregation, too. In God's grace, Christ formed this congregation with the good, bad and ugly of humanity. Those who were far less than Christ like and a bit too close to the devil were included because Christ came not for the righteous, but for the sinners, the lost ones.

To me, the 217 years of witnessing Christ here demonstrates a very important matter concerning the Way, the Truth and the Life. We may see life as ebbs and flows of births and deaths, welcoming and parting, saying 'Hello' and 'Good-bye.' In the past, baptisms were incredibly joyous occasions while funerals were deeply sad and grief stricken. The existence of this church as a communion, however, tells us that the Life we share in is not fleeting, but lasting and continuous.

If the land on which this building stands can speak, if the Comfort Maple in North Pelham has a voice, the wonder of Christ's story in this area—how people loved one another in Christ's name and also love those were far far away through mission projects—can be shared from the very beginning of the arrival of those following Christ all the way to today.

The story of Rockway is like many other Presbyterian congregations around the world. It might not have done earthshaking legacy projects, it might not have a string of very famous Christian leaders who changed the world but what it did was to be faithful in steadfast love for God and one another—the very ordinary things that made life worth living and giving life to all those who came in contact.

Rockway Presbyterian Church along with the First Church, North Pelham made it possible for those living in the surrounding areas to feel, experience and know Christ, revealing the God who loved the world so that the Son was sent in order to save the world. This morning's Isaiah passage points to something that we often do not talk about, but is pivotal in understanding who we are today.

It is true that we cannot provide without-fail scientific evidence of God's existence in the world where material (physical) evidence is necessary to prove all things. What we can let the world know firstly is that when we seek God, God is no longer invisible, but visible. God is revealed, not as invisible and distant God residing somewhere we cannot fathom, but as the one who created heaven and earth and all there in and as the one who is experienced through the communion of Christ and his people. Our God does not hide in a land of darkness. Rather, our God speaks truths in broad daylights through the body of Christ each and every day. To the world that seeks objective proof, God, through the Church (which is Christ and his people) reveals the world where loving God and neighbours is the primary purpose of being. What the world does not see in their darkness is very subjective love that extends to those who are weak, meek, poor, hungry, abused, neglected, forgotten and the lost without condition.

Like Nicodemus, the world carries on with its own understanding where fame, power, and all things people consider necessary and important take precedence over each person in suffering. Their concern, even when they seek truth, has everything to do with themselves and their own well being unlike what Christ and his people stand for generations after generations.

Sometime ago, during a time with children in worship, I asked a simple question: “why do we have a church building here?” Why do you have a church building called Rockway here? Why are we so attached to this building? Why do some people get upset if we are to close this church building and sell it to a developer who may build more houses?

Some of us may accept the decline as a sign that there is no need for a church building here. Indeed, in our hymnbook, there is a hymn saying that ‘church is not a building’ and that ‘church is a people.’ We try to equate spiritually what it means to be God’s people by remembering that ‘a wandering Aramean’ was our faith ancestor and that the building is not important.

Imagine my surprise when a child who came from Palestine and was being educated in a Catholic School put up his hand and shouted, “a church building shows everyone God’s presence in the world.” This is, of course, a very insightful and essential way of understanding.

However, in our Protestant tradition, as we have spiritualized our world, dividing physical things to be less of a value than spiritual things, we have no qualms about selling a church and letting it be turned into anything a buyer wants it to be. This understanding has blinded us from the most important aspect of how this Rockway church building witnesses God’s presence to all who pass by silently, holding within itself the history of loving the lost, hungry, thirsty, weak, meek, persecuted, abused and without hope.

Unless we know that a church building also is an entity that witnesses God’s presence in the world (in Rockway’s case for 217 years) we cannot truly appreciate our calling and why God through Christ called us into being as Christ with his people to love and serve God and the world. In a way, we become more like Nicodemus in this morning’s passage.

The entire existence of Rockway as well as First Church has been a simple purpose: To love God and neighbours. For 217 years God spoke clearly to all those who came, went and are still here how God loves the world through everyone who were and are part of Rockway Church and First Church.

May the symbol of God’s presence in this world continue with a vibrant ministry of love that is not afraid to lay down its life for another! May you continually be the place of hope for the poor, hungry, thirsty, weak, meek, persecuted, abused, neglected and lost! Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

***Next Sunday Service, June 28, at 10:00 am at North Pelham**

***Welcome to Our Guest Preacher, Rev. Wally Hong:**

This morning, we joyfully celebrate Rockway's 217th Anniversary, giving thanks for God's faithfulness across generations. We are blessed to welcome Rev. Wally Hong as our guest preacher today. As we celebrate with grateful hearts, we also remember our Anniversary Mission Project, supporting The RAFT, which helps homeless youth in St. Catharines. Special envelopes are available for those who wish to contribute.

***Monday Tai Chi & Qigong – Summer Break:**

Tomorrow, Monday, June 22, will be our last Tai Chi & Qigong class before the summer break. Classes will pause for July and August and will resume on Monday, September 7, at 1:30 p.m. and 2:30 p.m. Thank you to all who have participated in this joyful wellness ministry!

***Wednesday Bible Study – Summer Break:** Our Wednesday Bible Study, led by Diane McMillan, will have a summer break. The last study before summer will be on Wednesday, June 24, and we will resume on Wednesday, September 9, at 10:00 a.m. at North Pelham. Thank you to Diane and all who have faithfully shared in this time of learning and fellowship.

***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.

***North Pelham Hall Open House, June 28:**

The North Pelham Youth Association welcomes our community to an open house at North Pelham Hall on Sunday, June 28th from 12-5 p.m. Drop in after church for a BBQ to celebrate another step in their accessibility renovations. All are welcome!

***Holy Communion at Rockway – Sunday, July 5:**

Join us for Holy Communion at Rockway as we share in Jesus' love and grace.

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. Let us keep them in our prayers as they prepare for this joyful new chapter of life together. May God bless them with love, joy, and peace.

***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)