



Rockway and First (North Pelham) Pastoral Charge
5th Sunday after Pentecost, June 28, 2026
Worship at Home

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

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: As Canada Day comes near, we gather with thankful hearts for this land and its blessings.

P: We worship God, whose love is wider than all nations and deeper than every fear.

L: God heard the cry of Ishmael and said, “Do not be afraid.” (Genesis 21:17)

P: God still hears the lonely, the wounded, and the forgotten.

L: Jesus says, “Do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.” (Matthew 10:31)

P: We trust the God who knows us, loves us, and calls us to compassion.

L: Come, let us follow Jesus with courage and hope.

All: We worship God with thankful hearts and open lives.

Hymn 328

This is my Father’s world

Prayers of Approach and Confession

How awesome to be here, oh God, in this moment, listening for you to speak to us! How awesome to be here, breathing, heart pumping, spirit opening, mind pondering, body calming so that your presence can be felt and discerned, developing us that six senses, O God, that spiritual sense in us.

Make us aware that you are always searching for us through the words and actions of others, through the circumstances and situations of life, the happy times and the difficult ones too, through opportunities to pray, to worship, and to open ourselves to you intentionally.

But we are also here, O God, as people who carry burdens: we carry burdens from our relationships; we carry burdens from our jobs and other responsibilities; we carry burdens because of our health or the health of someone we love; we carry burdens because we worry and care for specific people, for the wider world and the Earth itself; we carry burdens because we want to do better and be better than we too often are. We fail even as we succeed, Oh God. We fall into our worst even when we can be incredible at our best. Here us now as we confess to you in the silence of our hearts. (pause)

Confession is a step toward restoration and renewal, oh God. It is a step through the death of taking stock of our lives now, toward resurrection into newness. Speak to us in this hour. Speak to us words of forgiveness, acceptance, peace, grace, new purpose in what we do, attentiveness to primary relationships, to family, to community.

You are able to do all things, O God, to make possible what feels and seems impossible to us, and so we pray to you. And we pray in Jesus name, same Jesus, 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.

Hymn 307 **God of the sparrow, God of the whale**

Prayer for Understanding

Gracious God,
open our hearts to your Word. Help us hear your voice saying, “Do not be afraid,” and guide us to follow Jesus with courage, compassion, and hope. Amen.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Responsive Psalm 34:4–8, 17–18
Genesis 21:8–21; Matthew 10:24–39

Sermon **Faithful Christians in Canada**

As Canada Day comes near, many of us feel thankful. We are thankful for this land, for the beauty of creation, for the freedom we enjoy, and for the blessings we have received in this country. Canada, at its best, is a place that welcomes refugees and newcomers. It is a place where people from many backgrounds can live together, work together, worship together, and seek the common good.

But Canada Day can also invite us to ask deeper questions. What does it mean to be a faithful Christian in Canada today — in a changing country, where Christian faith is no longer assumed, where many cultures live side by side, and where people often live more individually? How do we love this country honestly — not only by celebrating its blessings, but also by facing its wounds? How do we follow Jesus in a country where many people still live with fear, racism, poverty, loneliness, injustice, and exclusion?

As Christians, we are called to love our country, but our deepest loyalty belongs to God. We are called to be good neighbours, faithful citizens, and compassionate people. But before we are anything else, we are followers of Jesus Christ. That means we look at our country, our community, and our own lives through the eyes of Jesus.

Fear has a way of shaping how we live. Fear can close a heart. It can make a community suspicious of strangers. It can make a church quietly build a wall around itself without ever deciding to. Think of a door that used to stay open, slowly easing shut over the years — no one decision to close it, just fear, a little at a time. Sometimes we fear people who are different from

us. Sometimes we fear change. Sometimes we fear that our churches are too small, too old, or too tired to make a difference.

But Jesus says to his disciples, "Do not be afraid." In Matthew 10, Jesus speaks to his disciples before sending them into the world. He does not promise them an easy road. He says, "It is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher." If we follow Jesus, our lives should begin to look like his life. Our hearts should begin to reflect his heart.

Jesus lived without fear of loving people. He touched the sick. He welcomed children. He ate with sinners. He spoke with outsiders. He forgave those who failed. He stood with the poor, the wounded, and the forgotten. He showed us that God's kingdom is not built on fear or control. It is built on love, mercy, justice, and compassion.

So, to be faithful Christians in Canada means this: we follow Jesus in the place where God has planted us. We care for those who are lonely. We listen to those who are hurting. We welcome those who feel like outsiders. We become the hands, feet, voice, and heart of Christ. Our reading from Genesis gives us a powerful and painful story. Abraham and Sarah had waited a long time for a child. Finally, Isaac was born. But in that household there was also Hagar, an Egyptian servant, and her son Ishmael. Sarah became afraid and jealous. She did not want Hagar and Ishmael to remain. So they were sent away into the wilderness.

This is not an easy story. Hagar is vulnerable. Ishmael is vulnerable. They are pushed out with very little. Soon the water is gone. Hagar cannot bear to watch her child suffer, so she sits at a distance and weeps. But the story does not end with human rejection. It turns toward God's compassion. God hears the boy's voice. God sees Hagar's tears. God sends a messenger to say, "Do not be afraid." Then God opens Hagar's eyes, and she sees a well of water.

That is the good news. When people are pushed aside, God sees them. When people cry in the wilderness, God hears them. When people feel forgotten, God remembers them. God's compassion is wider than our fear. God's mercy reaches beyond the people we usually notice.

So if we want to be faithful to God, we must ask: who are the Hagars and Ishmaels among us today? Picture someone you actually know — maybe a senior who lives alone and goes days without a phone call. Maybe someone is new to this country, still learning where they belong. Maybe someone sitting quietly in a pew on Sunday, carrying a grief or a fear that no one else can see. They are not a category. They are a person, with a name, near us.

And sometimes, we ourselves may feel like Hagar in the wilderness — tired, afraid, wondering where hope will come from, feeling like the water has run out. But God still says, "Do not be afraid." God still opens our eyes to see the well of grace near us. God still gives us strength for today, and people to love, and people who love us.

In Matthew 10, Jesus also says that those who lose their life for his sake will find it. I want to be careful and honest here, because this is not a small thing to say to people who have already lost so much. This is not a promise that suffering is good, or that God sends us pain to teach us a

lesson. God does not want anyone to suffer needlessly, and if you are carrying real loss or illness or grief right now, that pain is not a test you have failed. What Jesus means is something different: when we let go of fear and self-protection, we discover a deeper life underneath. When we stop guarding ourselves so tightly, we find room to love and be loved. We do not become empty. We become more alive.

This is the way of Jesus. The cross is not a symbol of defeat. It is the sign of love that refuses to give up. It is the sign of compassion to enter human pain rather than turn away from it. To take up our cross is to follow Jesus in costly love — to choose compassion when fear tells us to protect ourselves, and forgiveness when resentment feels easier.

For our churches in North Pelham and Rockway, this calling does not need to begin with anything large. It can begin with ordinary acts of faithful love. A phone call to someone who is lonely. A visit to someone who is sick. A prayer for someone who is grieving. A warm welcome to a newcomer. A shared conversation at Bible study. A moment of friendship in Tai Chi, walking group, or coffee chat. A simple act of kindness that tells another person, "You are not forgotten. You are loved."

These ordinary acts matter. In them, the love of God becomes visible. In them, Christ is present. In them, the church becomes what it is called to be — not a building only, but a community of compassion, courage, and hope.

As Canada Day approaches, we give thanks for this country. But we also pray for it. We pray that Canada may become more compassionate, more just, and more welcoming. We pray for healing between peoples, and for those who live with fear, and for those who are pushed aside.

We do not need to be afraid. Jesus tells us that even the sparrows are known and cared for by God: "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's knowledge... So do not be afraid" (Matthew 10:29-31). If God cares for the small sparrow, then surely God cares for each one of us — the lonely, the sick, the grieving, the newcomer, the wounded, the tired church, and the fearful heart.

So may we trust the God who says, "Do not be afraid." May we follow Jesus with courage and compassion. May we become faithful Christians in Canada, sharing the compassionate love of Christ with our neighbours near and far.

And may God open our eyes, like Hagar's eyes were opened, so that we may see the well of grace before us, receive the water of life, and share that life with others. Amen.

Hymn 634

Will you come and follow me

Invitation to the Offering

Doxology

Prayer of Dedication

Thank you, O God, for the many ways you bless us, and for the many ways you call us to be a blessing to this community and to the world. Bless these gifts, we pray, that they may support this community of faith and help us share your compassionate love with our neighbours near and far. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Prayer of Thanksgiving and for the People

Thank you, O God, for the gift of this day. We are alive. We are breathing. We are here in your presence. For this, we give you thanks. Thank you for the many reminders that we are loved: for family and friends, for brothers and sisters in Christ, for the freedom to worship together, for food to eat, clothes to wear, homes to shelter us, hospitals to care for us, and places of learning, community, and friendship. Many are the reminders of your love, O God, and we thank you.

You are the source of all love. You are the ground of all compassion. You nourish our spirits so that we may love others not only in words, but in action, kindness, and truth. Hear us now as we thank you for specific blessings in our lives in the silence of our hearts. (pause)

With thankful hearts, we also bring before you the needs of your world. We pray for the people of Venezuela after the deadly earthquakes: for those who grieve, those who are injured, those who are missing loved ones, and those working to rescue, heal, and rebuild.

We pray for people living in places of war and violence, especially in Gaza, Ukraine, Sudan, and all places where fear has become part of daily life. Protect children and families. Strengthen those who work for peace. Teach the nations to choose mercy over hatred, and justice over destruction.

We pray for those facing hunger and famine, for families who do not know where tomorrow's food will come from, and for communities where conflict, poverty, and climate disasters have made life fragile.

We pray for refugees and newcomers around the world, for those who have left home seeking safety, dignity, and hope. May they find welcome, protection, and a new beginning.

We pray for communities affected by extreme heat, storms, floods, and natural disasters, especially the vulnerable, the elderly, the poor, and those without safe shelter.

We pray for Canada, where many still face racism, hate, and exclusion. Heal hatred against Jewish, Muslim, Indigenous, racialized, and vulnerable communities. Make us people of courage, compassion, and peace.

God of Hagar and Ishmael, you hear the cry of those in the wilderness. God of Jesus Christ, you say to us, "Do not be afraid." Open our eyes to see the wells of grace around us, and open our hearts to become signs of your care.

We pray for those in our own community who are afraid, lonely, grieving, or ill. We pray for those facing surgery or treatment, those living with chronic pain or disability, and those who carry the heavy responsibility of caregiving.

We especially remember the family of Jim, who has passed from this life into your eternal care. We pray for Janice, Jessica, Joel, and all Jim's family. Surround them with your comfort and peace. Hold them gently in their grief. Give them strength for the days ahead, and fill their hearts with gratitude for Jim's life, love, service, and the memories they will continue to carry.

We pray for all who have lost loved ones, through illness, accident, or sudden sorrow. Hold them in your tender mercy. Give them comfort, strength, and the hope that love is never lost in you.

When the needs of the world overwhelm us, renew our faith. When our hope grows dim, shine your light again. When fear closes the door of our hearts, help us follow Jesus and open that door with love. Hear us now as we pray for those we carry personally in our hearts. (pause)

Gracious God, bless us, renew us, and send us out with courage. Help us become the hands, feet, voice, and heart of Christ in our community, our country, and your world. We pray for healing in body, mind, and spirit. We pray for peace where there is fear. We pray for hope where there is despair. We pray for compassion strong enough to become action. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

Hymn 635

Brother, sister, let me serve you

BENEDICTION

May the love of God, who hears every cry, the grace of Jesus Christ, who says, "Do not be afraid," and the power of the Holy Spirit, who opens our hearts to compassion, be with you now and always. 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, July 5, at 10:00 am at Rockway**

***A Note of Thanks:** Thank you for your prayers, cards, flowers, kindness, and support during Jim's time in hospital and following his passing. We are deeply grateful for the care and love we have received from our church family during this difficult time. – Janice, Jessica, Joel, and families

***Rockway's 217th Anniversary – With Thanks**

We give thanks to God for the joyful celebration of Rockway's 217th Anniversary. Through our Anniversary Mission Project, \$790 was collected to support youth in need through The RAFT. As God has faithfully blessed Rockway through the years, we are grateful to share those blessings with others. Thank you for your generous support in God's love.

***Tai Chi & Qigong – Summer Break**

Tai Chi & Qigong classes are now on summer break for July and August. Classes will resume on Monday, September 7, at 1:30 p.m. and 2:30 p.m.

***Wednesday Bible Study – Summer Break**

Wednesday Bible Study is now on summer break and will resume on Wednesday, September 9, at 10:00 a.m. at North Pelham. Thank you to Diane and all who shared in this time of study 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)