



Rockway and First (North Pelham) Pastoral Charge
7th Sunday after Pentecost, July 12, 2026
Worship at Home

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

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: Come, let us worship God, who plants seeds of hope in our hearts.

All: We come with open hearts, ready to receive God's love.

One: God is at work, even when we cannot see what is growing.

All: We trust God's hidden work in us, in the church, and in the world.

One: "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." (Hebrews 11:1)

All: Lord, grow in us a humble, steady, and living faith.

One: Let us become good soil for God's word.

All: May our lives bear fruit in prayer, kindness, patience, and love.

One: Come, let us worship the God who gives life and makes love grow.

All: We worship God with faith, hope, and thanksgiving. Amen.

Hymn 330

O God, our help in ages past

Prayers of Approach and Confession

Here we are, O God. We have gathered. We have come before you.

You know us completely. You see the faith within us, even when it feels small. You see the hope within us, even when it feels weak. You see the love within us, even when it needs to grow. You also see the worries we carry, the grief we hold, the tiredness we feel, and the fear that sometimes closes our hearts.

Merciful God, forgive us when disappointment makes our hearts hard, when worry chokes out our peace, when impatience weakens our trust, and when fear keeps us from receiving the seeds of your word. In this quiet moment, we bring before you what words cannot fully express: our regrets, our burdens, our hopes, and our need for you. Hear us now in the silence of our hearts.
 (pause)

Loving God, make our hearts like good soil. Soften what has grown hard. Deepen what has grown shallow. Clear away what has become crowded with fear and worry. Plant in us the seeds of faith, hope, and love. Teach us to wait with patience, to trust your hidden work, and to follow Jesus with open hearts.

Let your love enter us, heal us, and flow through us, so that we may become the heart, voice, hands, and feet of Christ in our church and in the world. We pray in the name of 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.

Passing the Peace of Jesus Christ

Hymn 486 (R) **Open my eyes that I may see**

Prayer for Understanding

Loving God,

open our hearts like good soil. Plant your word in us today. Help us to listen with faith, wait with patience, and trust your hidden work in our lives. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Responsive Psalm 91

Genesis 18: 1-15, 18-23

Hebrews 11: 1-3, 8-12; Matthew 13: 1-9

Sermon

Faith Like Good Soil

What kind of faith do we need in this season of our lives? What kind of faith helps us keep going when our bodies grow weaker, when grief visits our hearts, and when the future of the church feels uncertain?

Many of us know what it means to feel vulnerable. Some of us live with health concerns. Some of us carry grief for loved ones who are no longer with us. Some of us feel lonely at times. Some of us worry about our children, grandchildren, friends, and neighbours. And many of us worry about the future of the church. We remember days when the pews were fuller, when there were lots of children, more energy, and more programs.

Yet in the middle of all these changes, God is still with us. God still speaks. God still plants seeds of hope. God still works in ways we cannot always see.

A garden can teach us something about faith. When gardeners plant seeds, they do not see what is happening under the soil. They prepare the ground. They water. They wait. For many days, nothing seems to happen. But deep under the surface, life is beginning.

That is often how God works in us. We may not see quick results. We may wonder whether our prayers, our worship, and our small acts of kindness really matter. But God is at work beneath the surface, growing quietly in our hearts, in our church, and in the world.

In today's gospel reading, Jesus tells a parable about a farmer who went out to sow seeds. Some fell on the path, and the birds ate them. Some fell on rocky ground, sprang up quickly, and

withered for lack of roots. Some fell among thorns and were choked out. But some fell on good soil, and produced grain—thirty, sixty, even a hundred times what was sown.

Jesus says the seed is the word of God, and the soil is the human heart. Good soil is a heart that hears God's word, receives it, and lets it grow.

God is always sowing seeds—love, mercy, courage, forgiveness, hope. The question is not whether God is still working. The question is whether our hearts are open enough to receive what God is planting.

Sometimes our hearts become like the hard path, when disappointment makes us afraid to hope. Sometimes they become like rocky ground, when trouble makes our faith feel weak. Sometimes they grow crowded like thorny soil, when worry chokes out our peace.

But by God's grace, our hearts can become good soil again—even in older age, even in a small church, even in a season of change. God can soften what has grown hard, deepen what has grown shallow, and clear away what has grown crowded.

Today I want us to think about three simple parts of faith: faith as openness, faith as patient waiting, and faith as trust.

First, faith is openness. In Genesis, Abraham and Sarah were very old when God gave them a promise: that they would have a child, and that through them many people would be blessed. It seemed impossible. Sarah laughed when she heard it—an honest laugh, born of years of waiting and disappointment.

God did not reject Sarah for laughing. God met her in her doubt and asked, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" That question is still for us today. As a church, we may sometimes feel like Abraham and Sarah. We may say, "We are too old. We are too small. Our best years are behind us." But God may still be asking us, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?"

Faith does not mean we pretend everything is easy, or deny our age and our tiredness. Faith means we keep the door of our hearts open, even if it opens only a little—open to new possibilities, to God's voice, to new people and new ways of serving. It means we do not close our hearts simply because the church is not what it used to be.

God can still work through us. We may not be able to do everything we once did, but we can still pray, encourage, care, and shine the light of Christ. Your prayers matter. Your presence matters. Your years of faithfulness matter. Even when the church feels small, God sees every act of love, every quiet prayer, and every faithful heart.

Second, faith is patient waiting. Waiting is not easy. Abraham and Sarah waited for years. Gardeners wait for seeds to grow. Churches wait for renewal. We wait for healing, for answers to prayer, for peace in our hearts.

But waiting with faith is not empty waiting—it is active waiting. It is watering a seed before we see the sprout. It is praying before we see the answer. It is loving before we see the fruit.

Much of our ministry may seem small: a phone call, a card, a prayer, a visit, a kind word after worship, a hand held, a hymn sung with sincerity. These may seem small, but in God's hands, they are seeds. We may never know how much they mean to someone else—a word of encouragement that helps a person through the week, a prayer that comforts a grieving heart, a warm welcome that helps someone feel they belong.

God does not ask us to produce instant results. God asks us to be faithful—to keep planting, keep watering, keep loving, and keep waiting with hope.

Third, faith is trust. Psalm 91 says, "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, 'He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.'"

Trust is not easy when life is uncertain. We cannot control our health, our families, or the future of the church. But we can trust the One who holds tomorrow. Trust does not mean we understand everything—it means we believe God is with us in everything, that God's love is stronger than our fear, and that Jesus walks with us even when the road is hard.

Hebrews tells us that faith is "the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." Abraham went out by faith, not knowing where he was going. Sarah received strength by faith, trusting that God was faithful.

This is the faith we need today. Not a loud faith, not a proud faith, not a perfect faith—but a humble, steady, living faith. Faith that stays open to God's new work. Faith that waits patiently for God's timing. Faith that trusts God's loving care.

We did not choose the time in which we live, or the changes that have come to our lives and to our church. But we can choose how we respond. We can close our hearts in fear, or we can open our hearts in faith.

The God who gave Abraham and Sarah a future is still our God. The God who makes seeds grow in hidden places is still at work among us. The God we know in Jesus Christ is full of compassion, mercy, forgiveness, and love.

So let us become good soil for God's word, and let God soften what has become hard, deepen what has become shallow, and clear away what has become crowded with worry.

May God plant in us seeds of hope. May God grow in us deeper faith. May God make our lives and our church fruitful in love. And may we trust that even when we cannot see what God is doing, God is still working beneath the surface. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Invitation to the Offering

Doxology

Prayer of Dedication

Loving God,
receive these gifts as seeds of faith, hope, and love. Bless them and grow them for your work, so that through us, your compassion may bear fruit in our church, our community, and your world. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Prayer of Thanksgiving and for the People

Loving and compassionate God, we give you thanks.

Thank you that we can come before you as we are—not with perfect faith, not with perfect strength, but as your beloved children. You know our hopes and our doubts, our worries and our grief, our tiredness and our need for you. Yet you do not turn away from us. You meet us with mercy and plant your word in us like a seed.

Thank you for faith that opens our hearts, faith that helps us wait with patience, faith that teaches us to trust you when the future is unclear. Thank you for the small seeds of love among us: a quiet prayer, a kind word, a phone call, a visit, a hand held, a burden shared. In your hands, O God, nothing faithful is wasted, and nothing loving is too small.

Make our hearts like good soil. Soften what has grown hard. Deepen what has grown shallow. Clear away what has become crowded with fear and worry.

O God of compassion, we pray for the world around us. For all who suffer through earthquakes, fires, floods, and storms, especially the people of Venezuela and all suffering communities—we pray. Comfort those who grieve, and bring healing where there are tears and loss. For all who suffer through war and violence, in the Middle East, Ukraine, Sudan, and beyond—we pray. Hold close those who have lost loved ones, homes, and hope. Plant seeds of peace where fear has taken root.

Closer to home, we pray for those struggling to make ends meet, for those living with anxiety or loneliness, and for those serving faithfully in health care, education, and other places under pressure.

We pray for those awaiting a diagnosis, preparing for surgery, entering long-term care, or nearing the end of life. In this moment of silence, we name before you the people and situations we carry heavily in our hearts. (silence)

We continue to pray for Janice and Jessica, as they learn to live in your care without Jim's physical presence. Surround them and their family with comfort, peace, and strength. We also pray for Keith Rubel as he recovers from his heart attack. May your healing grace sustain him day by day.

O God, give comfort to the grieving, courage to the weary, peace to the anxious, and hope to all who wait. Help us to trust that you are still working beneath the surface, planting seeds of healing, faith, and love. Make us, as your church, the heart, hands, and feet of Jesus for one another and for the world. We pray all this in the name of Jesus Christ, our hope and our peace. Amen.

Hymn 687

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine

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 19, at 10:00 am at Rockway**

***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.

***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)