



Rockway and First (North Pelham) Pastoral Charge
8th Sunday after Pentecost, July 19, 2026
Worship at Home

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

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: God welcomes us to the table of grace and gathers us into loving fellowship.

P: We come with our joys and our sorrows, trusting the God who wipes away every tear.

L: "Now, the dwelling of God is with men, and God will live with them." (Revelation 21:3)

P: Let us worship the God who welcomes us, comforts us, and makes all things new.

Hymn 434 **For the beauty of the earth**

Prayers of Approach and Confession

Gracious and loving God,
 you prepare a table where all people are welcomed, you come near to those who are hurting, and
 you promise to wipe every tear from our eyes. You are the God of life, whose love is stronger
 than death, whose grace is greater than our failures, and whose presence never leaves us.

We come before you with thankful hearts. We praise you for the hope you have given us through
 Jesus Christ: the hope of a renewed creation, the hope of life beyond death, and the hope that
 nothing can separate us from your love.

Yet, merciful God, we confess that we often live as though fear, sorrow, and death have the final
 word. We worry about the future. We depend too much on our own strength. We hold on to
 resentment instead of offering forgiveness. We sometimes fail to make room at the table for
 others.

Forgive us when we overlook those who are lonely, hurry past those who are grieving, or pretend
 that another person's tears are not there. Forgive us when we speak of heaven but fail to live by
 the values of heaven—welcome, compassion, generosity, peace, and love. Hear us now as we
 confess to you in silence the fears, failures, and hidden burdens within us. (silence)

Compassionate God,
 you do not turn away from us. In Jesus Christ, you come close to us, carry our sorrows, forgive
 our sins, and lead us from death into new life.

Through Christ, we are forgiven. Through Christ, we are welcomed. Through Christ, we are
 made new. Fill us again with your Holy Spirit. Renew our faith when we are afraid. Open our
 eyes to the tears of others. Make our churches places of welcome, healing, forgiveness, and hope.

Help us live by the values of heaven here and now, until the day when you make all things new and gather us around your eternal table. With confidence in your compassionate love, we now pray together in the words Jesus taught us, 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 123 (R) **When we all get to heaven**

Prayer for Understanding

Loving God,

open our hearts to your Word. Help us trust your promise, receive your hope, and live by the values of heaven here and now. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Responsive Psalm 23

Isaiah 25:6–8; Matthew 4:23; 6:10; Revelation 21:1–6

Sermon

Every Tear Wiped Away

Is there a heaven? What will it be like? Will we recognize one another? Will pain, grief, and death finally be gone?

These are questions many people carry, especially as we grow older, lose people we love, or face changes in our health and strength. Our Christian hope rests in the promises of God revealed in Scripture and in Jesus Christ.

The Bible does not give us a detailed map of heaven. It does not answer every question. Instead, it gives us beautiful pictures of what life with God will be like. These pictures give us hope and shape the way we live here and now. Today's Scriptures offer four pictures of heaven: a joyful feast, the wiping away of tears, the defeat of death, and life forever in the presence of God.

The first picture is a feast. The prophet Isaiah says, "On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food." Isaiah imagines God welcoming people from every nation to a great table. There is enough food. There is joy. No one is forgotten, excluded, or pushed aside.

I think of the fellowship and refreshments we share together after worship on the second and third Sundays. The coffee is poured, the cookies come out, and for a few minutes, no one is in a hurry to leave. I think, too, of our Easter breakfast every year, when the tables are full, and the

room is warm with voices and laughter. No one checks who is sitting where. No one is turned away because the table is full. There is always room for one more chair.

This is one of the Bible's pictures of heaven. Heaven is like being welcomed to God's table. It is a place of friendship, belonging, and joy. We are known and loved, and there is a place for us. This picture also tells us something about the church. If heaven is like God's welcoming table, then the church should be a place where people feel welcomed and valued. Our meals, conversations, worship, and fellowship can give people a small taste of God's kingdom.

The second picture is God wiping away every tear. Isaiah says that God "will wipe away the tears from all faces." Revelation repeats the promise: "God will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more." What a tender picture this is. God does not ignore our tears. God does not tell us to hide our sorrow or pretend that everything is fine. God comes close enough to see our pain and gently wipe away our tears.

I remember sitting at the bedside of a woman near the end of her life. She was too tired to speak much, but she reached out and held my hand. She did not need me to explain heaven to her. She only needed to know she was not alone. That is what this picture of God gives us. Not a distant promise, but a presence close enough to touch. God knows the whole journey of our lives. God knows the grief of losing someone we love, the loneliness of an empty home, the worry of difficult news, the frustration of a body that cannot do what it once did, and the fear of an uncertain future.

The promise of heaven is not that our suffering does not matter. It is that suffering will not have the final word. Grief will not have the final word. Loneliness will not have the final word. God's love will have the final word. This shapes how we live as the church. We reflect the compassion of heaven when we notice the tears of others. It begins when we sit with someone who is grieving, call someone who is lonely, bring food to someone who is ill, or listen without rushing to give advice. We cannot remove every sorrow, but we can refuse to let people carry sorrow alone. Through simple acts of compassion, God may use our hands, voices, and presence to bring comfort.

The third picture is the defeat of death and the renewal of creation. Isaiah says that God "will swallow up death forever." Revelation declares, "Death will be no more." The Bible calls death an enemy because it separates people and wounds families. Yet God raised Jesus from the dead. The resurrection of Jesus is God's promise that death will not win. Jesus passed through death into new life, and because he lives, we also live in hope.

This is the same Jesus who, as Matthew tells us, went through the towns and villages proclaiming good news and healing every sickness and disease. Wherever Jesus went, signs of God's kingdom appeared as people were taught, healed, restored, and given hope. In the resurrection, God revealed most fully that even death cannot defeat God's love.

Christian hope is not simply about leaving the earth behind. Revelation says that John saw "a new heaven and a new earth." He saw the holy city coming down from heaven and heard a voice

saying, "See, the home of God is among mortals." The Bible's final hope is that God renews creation. God restores what has been broken, heals what has been wounded, and brings heaven and earth together in peace.

This is why caring for life now matters. The earth, our bodies, justice, and relationships all matter. God does not plan to throw away the world God made. God loves this world and promises to make all things new. Every Sunday we pray: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." We are asking God to make the values of heaven real among us now. We are asking for love instead of hatred, peace instead of violence, forgiveness instead of revenge, generosity instead of selfishness, and hope instead of despair.

Our Christian hope is not only about life after death. The kingdom of God is also God's loving rule taking shape within us and among us here and now. We do not create God's kingdom by our own strength. But through the Holy Spirit, we can live in ways that point toward it.

The fourth picture is life forever in the presence of God. Revelation says: "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them." The greatest gift of heaven is not golden streets, beautiful music, or freedom from pain. The greatest gift is God. In the life to come, nothing will separate us from God's love. Through Jesus Christ, we will enjoy perfect fellowship with God and with one another. We will be fully known, fully loved, and truly at home.

Faith does not mean that we know every detail. Faith means that we trust the One who holds our future. We may not know exactly what heaven will look like. But we know the character of God. God is compassionate. God is faithful. God is forgiving. God is full of love. The God who walks with us through this life will not abandon us at the end of it.

The biblical images of heaven are not a scientific explanation. They give us God's promise: a place at the table, tears wiped away, death defeated, creation renewed, and God forever with us. These promises also call us to live differently today.

When we welcome someone who feels left out, we give a small taste of God's feast. When we comfort someone who is grieving, we share in God's work of wiping away tears. When we forgive, make peace, care for creation, and protect the dignity of others, we show signs of God's renewed world. When we keep trusting through illness, aging, grief, loneliness, and uncertainty, we bear witness that death and fear do not have the final word. Heaven is our hope for the future, but it is also God's invitation for today.

May God help us live by the values of heaven here and now. May God make our churches places of welcome, healing, forgiveness, peace, and hope. And when our earthly journey is complete, may we trust that the God who loves us will welcome us home, wipe away every tear, and gather us around the table of eternal life. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Invitation to the Offering

Doxology

Prayer of Dedication

Loving God,

receive these gifts as signs of our gratitude. Use them and use us to welcome the lonely, comfort the grieving, and share the hope of your kingdom, until every tear is wiped away. Amen.

Prayer of Thanksgiving and for the People

Thank you, loving God,

for meeting us in the joys and sorrows of life. We thank you not because every burden is gone, but because you do not leave us to carry our burdens alone. Thank you for the table where all are welcomed, for the hands that hold us when we are weak, for the friends who share our tears, and for the hope of Jesus Christ, who has overcome death.

When grief, loneliness, aging, or uncertainty weigh upon us, help us remember that our tears are precious to you and that suffering will not have the final word. Fill us with grateful hearts, and send us out to welcome the forgotten, comfort the sorrowful, and share your healing love, until the day when you make all things new and wipe away every tear.

Hear us now, O God, as we offer our prayers of concern for the world. We pray for peace among the nations. As countries arm themselves and conflict continues, innocent people suffer loss, fear, and displacement. May the Spirit of Christ, our peacemaker, turn hearts away from violence and lead the world toward your way of justice and peace.

We pray for those living in the aftermath of earthquakes, wildfires, floods, and other disasters. Be near to those searching for survivors, mourning those who have died, or waiting for news of missing family members. Strengthen those who have lost their homes, and raise up people and communities to bring comfort, shelter, hope, and a new beginning.

We pray for those struggling with the rising cost of living, and for those whose work takes much from them but does not provide enough for their needs.

We pray for people living on the streets, carrying burdens of body and mind with too little help or support.

We pray for caregivers who faithfully care for a family member, friend, or neighbour. Give them patience, strength, rest, and people who will also care for them.

We pray for those whose circumstances feel unbearable and who cannot yet see a way forward. Surround them with compassionate people, renew their courage, and help them take the next step with hope.

We cannot know all that others carry, O God. Let compassion rise within us, even when we cannot solve every problem. Stir us by your Spirit to care where we can and to share what we have. Make us generous, attentive, and faithful to what truly matters.

Let us take a moment in silence to breathe and rest in God's presence. (pause)

Thank you, God, for every breath. It is a gift and a call to live with gratitude and grace.

Let us take another moment in silence to name before you those whom we carry with special concern today. (pause)

Bring healing where healing is possible. Bring comfort where pain remains. Give us courage and grace to live with what cannot yet be changed. We offer these prayers through Jesus Christ, our risen Lord, who is our hope in life and in death. Amen.

Hymn 258 **Thine be the glory**

BENEDICTION

May the love of God hold you, the risen Jesus fill you with hope, and the Holy Spirit lead you to comfort others, until every tear is wiped away. 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: jacoble0501@gmail.com** We are here to pray and care for one another. “Carry one another’s burdens.” (Galatians 6:2)