



Rockway and First (North Pelham) Pastoral Charge
13th Sunday after Pentecost, August 23, 2026
Worship at Home

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

CALL TO WORSHIP

L. Among the things Jesus said about the Kingdom of God that he envisioned among us, were these sayings: “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. ...”

P. Jesus said: “Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.”

L. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.”

P. Jesus said: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.”

All. May God bless us with such hearts and minds to live in harmony with God and with others.
 Amen

Hymn 321 **Praise to the Lord, the Almighty**

Prayers of Approach and Confession

Blessings and praises be given to You: our Creator, Redeemer and Lord God!

We thank You for this past week, with its joys, and for the safety and prosperity we are blessed with in this land. We thank You for our families and for our friends; for those who visit us & for those who make time for us from day to day – with a brief telephone call, or with a helping hand here & there; perhaps especially now, as some of us strive to put our homes together again after the flooding two weeks ago. God, they are a blessing to us, and most certainly, their faith and their love for You and for your people is our gift from You! Thank you.

God, Redeemer and merciful Spirit: You know our hearts are not always filled with such gratitude. We forget You. We forget those in need of help and prayer. We speak things that we should neither speak nor think. All too often our lives show little of the love Jesus gave to us and why he gave His life for us. Forgive us great Redeemer. Forgive us merciful God. May our neighbour and the stranger forgive us also.

Restore our hearts to be as Jesus said they should be, in order for everyone to experience His Kingdom here on earth. Amen (pause)

We pray all this 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

Hymn 631 Jesus' hands were kind hands

Children of God Moment - What if mom brought home a new baby? (And dad wanted to give it away?)

Prayer for Understanding

Holy Spirit, Spirit of wisdom and light,

May the Words we read from Scripture be Your Word for our lives. May our hearts receive the teaching and any correction to our faith they may offer us. Amen

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Responsive Psalm 124

Exodus 1: 6-21; 2: 1-10, Romans 12: 1-8

Sermon The Value of a Baby

Most of us know the biblical stories about the Exodus or about Moses. They are powerful commentaries on their times –

Our Old Testament text for today probably refers to the Egyptian era under Rameses II, who archaeologists believe, built the great storage cities of Pithom and Rameses; who's remains seem to indicate cities that were meant to be more than urban dwellings.

The biblical story characterizes a 'king' of arrogance and brutality who has no regard for his people – especially, perhaps, for the Jewish people who had come to the Egyptian territory of Goshen by the invitation of a past pharaoh or 'king', whom their ancestor Joseph had faithfully served in a time of prosperity – but also during hardship, namely those seven years of widespread famine the Bible also tells about.

It is easy to draw a parallel between the King of Egypt described in our Scripture today and the powerful rulers of our time in the USA, in Russia or China! Our Canadian context makes us see the betrayal by an old 'friend' and fair trading partner especially clearly as we struggle with this new animosity presently. I myself have supported a young man emotionally and spiritually who spent almost a year in ICE detention in the States because of his dark skin and country of origin. During his detention he was regularly reminded that he would be deported, reminded that he had no permanent status in the country he grew up in etc.

Years ago I was also personally, repeatedly intimidated by US border agents because of my country of origin when crossing into the USA. My wife and young family were not spared the hours of waiting, visible, intentional disrespectful treatment and regular reminders that the USA was not obligated to let me enter!

BUT, these real stories, experienced by Canadians – and now especially felt by young persons looking to build their own future as Canadians, is not what these stories in Exodus are meant to bring up for us to contrast the Bible with, in

worship, I believe! Instead, a modern comparison might be: the pictures we see on the United Nations posters or Help a Child appeal letter-heads: of starving children, children without their parents who have perhaps died & been left to look after their smaller siblings etc. I believe our Exodus stories for today, about the Jewish suffering under the new King & the beginning story about the boy Moses, are meant to contrast for us the inhumanity of some – and the suffering they create -- and the hope that goodness can bring others; many others, begun by just a few initially! * The Hebrew midwives Shiphrah and

Puah are the 'faces' of this hope and goodness, that the world needs at all times – not just in times of exceptional evil or even exceptional prosperity when morals and human respect for others falls so low that we kill, enslave or exploit one another for personal benefit! The King of Egypt has made himself more 'entitled' than even his own people – which was the accepted way in those days for a King, but his total inner corruption is intentionally described in our text as a testament to evil incarnate; to be taken very seriously by us – but then also, to be eclipsed by the goodness of the Hebrew women, and by the strength of the Hebrew women in general and by the power of their 'white lie' that serves to save God's people in generations to come! Will we learn from them?!

It came to me as I reflected on the teachings offered to us in these stories today, how precious life is; how precious a newborn life is! Not only human life, but all new life! I thought of the cute kittens of a mountain lion, whom the mother will defend with her life. I thought of domestic animals, usually very docile, who will become angry and dangerous if they perceive a threat to their young one. The image of the North Atlantic Right Whales came to me; images of mothers entangled in a fishing net. Dead, to which the starving calf clings frantically. She was their only nurturer and protector. Or a mother whale carrying her dead calf around the ocean for weeks, grieving their passing! Those are mind-pictures that might be compared to the destruction & evil our world creates! The beautiful life we say God created, is destroyed by not caring, by hating, by selfish ambition and by misplaced goals and policies that aim to enrich one party & destroy the other!

The Apostle Paul, in Romans 12:1-8 can be helpful in understanding this

contrast that the Old Testament presents us. As you know, Paul was a 'late-comer' to the Christian Way. He was originally on the 'other side', so to speak;

he persecuted the followers of Jesus, who in a sense 'pushed back' against the destructive forces that again devalued and forced God's people into servant roles – not just under the Roman yoke – but oppressed the Hebrew people; Jesus' people; God's people with laws and traditions that were not divine nor communicated by prophet nor Divine Spirit for the faith of the people in their God nor contribute to the reverence for the people whom the priests and scholars were charged to serve, teach and lead –

As the followers of Jesus grew in numbers, the early Church leadership and

teaching fell into a similar sin, we believe, and the Apostle speaks fairly clearly about the 'about turn' believers need to make! Instead of inflating one's own importance, one is to make oneself a holy, living sacrifice, acceptable to God! That is certainly opposite to how we sometimes present ourselves in our society and in the Church, showing off our prosperity and our privilege or our 'smarts', for whom the world is 'our oyster'; for us to conquer and for others to miss out on! *On the other hand, our spiritual essence naturally seeks the divine mercy

and Essence of God! This union rekindles the knowledge of goodness and what is beneficial for life; for everyone! What Paul goes on to say, I give you in my own words: is that the community of believers, gathering together as all equal in God's sight & equal as we sit or stand beside one another in the pew, worshipping God & no one else – shows the world the face of God! We can actually show the goodness and renewal of life that our society needs and seeks, and yet avoids because it is suspicious of this 'other worldly superstition' that Christians profess.

Remember those Hebrew midwives; women who were only valued as slaves, and as nothing else – how they are a beam of light in the darkness of their time. Think of Moses – his ray of hope for the Hebrew slaves as he grows and discerns right from wrong, and as he rises to the occasion that his heart & conscience direct him to follow! Think of how our narratives begin with the image of babies; disposable, suffering, defended by their mothers & by God!! Even the baby North Atlantic Right Whale has that right to life and we are called to see all life with that same reverence that even a mother animal deserves, and we are to protect them!

Jesus came into our world preaching Good News! What is that news for you? Will you accept the burden of Jesus' challenge, to be a light in your part of the world, in your family ...? Can you commit yourself to God even when God blesses you with new understandings & opportunities to love and to forgive, and to 'do church' in a different way, and to be Christ among us?

One commentary I read said that as we gather in community, ie. as we gather as the Church or as believers and as people of faith in God: we constitute or make visible, the person of Jesus. That's certainly powerful, isn't it!? Amen

Hymn 96

Let us with a gladsome mind, praise the Lord so good and kind

Invitation to the Offering

With deep gratitude for the healing and freedom that Jesus offers, let us present our offerings to God. Our offering will now be received.

Doxology

Prayer of Dedication

May You find these gifts pleasing, generous Spirit. The beauty and abundance of your creation encourage us to also share our gifts as best as we are able.

Feed the hungry. Heal the sick. May they be used to advocate for justice in the world

where injustice prevails. May they be used to liberate those who are enslaved, trafficked or exploited by a cruel world. Amen

Prayer of Thanksgiving and for the People

Holy, loving, guiding Spirit; our God: hear our prayers.

We thank you for the blessings we receive from your Hand. May all people in this world be so blessed very soon also! – also, continue to open our hearts and minds to the wonders of the universe we are a part of in this amazing age of discovery.

Thank you God, for reminding us that we are also part of this great adventure, and we have the responsibility to care for & protect what is revealed, but also to care for that which is still our world, with the creatures, the land, air & waters that have nurtured us forever in the past.

Today, Lord, we are reminded of the struggle it takes to be faithful. It is sometimes hard to be bold. It is sometimes unpopular to stand up and speak up in defense of the environment when others speak of economic benefits, or to speak of human rights and the need for health care and mental health care, when making our country great is at the top of our political & national agenda.

God, this is not Your will and not 'what is good, and what is acceptable and perfect in Your sight' & not good and acceptable for all people in this land and everywhere – and we know it. Repeating the popular slogans is 'conforming to this world', as the Apostle teaches. Help us, God, to discern his words and to be Your people; the community that speaks truth and wisdom and goodness in our struggling world today – and help us be the 'safe haven' for those who are struggling with life and with the powers that are destroying us. Show them they can turn to the Christian Church for help. May our hands be the hands of Jesus for them.

Finally, we pray for Leaders in this world. God, you raise up those with gifts to guide us. Gift them with your Spirit. May they teach us and lead us in Your ways again. Heal your world. Save us from the evils we heard about in your word today; very real evils. Save us, with Your very real and powerful love again. Amen

Hymn 757

Come sing, O church, in joy

BENEDICTION

As you go from this place, go as the people of God: loved and forgiven; loving & forgiving others. And may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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, August 23, at 10:00 am at North Pelham**

***Summer Pulpit Supply:**

Rev. Jacob will be on holiday from **August 10 to August 31**. During his absence, we are grateful for the spiritual leadership of our guest worship leaders:

- **Mr. Kent Reynolds – August 30**

***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.

***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)