



Rockway and First (North Pelham) Pastoral Charge
14th Sunday after Pentecost, August 30, 2026
Worship at Home

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

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name.

People: We bless the Lord who forgives, heals, and surrounds us with steadfast love.

Leader: God's mercy is new every morning and His compassion never fails.

People: We gather to praise the One who restores our lives and renews our strength.

Leader: Come, let us worship the God who calls us to testify to His love.

All: With grateful hearts, we lift our voices and bless the name of the Lord.

Hymn 350

To God be the Glory

Prayers of Approach and Confession

God of grace and glory, You are the One who calls us into life, who surrounds us with mercy, and who meets us with love that never lets us go. You speak light into our darkness, hope into our fear, and peace into our restless hearts. We praise You for Your steadfast compassion, for Your presence that carries us, and for the quiet strength You give in every season. You alone are worthy of our worship, our trust, and our thanksgiving.

Merciful God, in Your presence we confess our sin. We have turned from Your ways and forgotten Your call to love one another. We have spoken harshly, acted selfishly, and held back forgiveness when You ask us to give it freely. We have trusted our own strength instead of resting in Yours.

Forgive us, Lord. Renew our hearts, reshape our desires, and restore us to the path of Christ. By Your Spirit, make us a people who testify to Your love in all we say and do. Trusting in God's mercy and resting in His grace, let us join our voices in the prayer Jesus taught us to pray,

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

“Friends, having confessed our sin and received the deep mercy of God — mercy that restores us, lifts us, and makes us whole — we now turn to one another as people renewed by grace. Let us share the peace of Christ, and the peace that binds us together in love.”

Hymn 373 **Jesus Loves Me**

Children of God Moment: **Story: The Airport Piano Player**

Several years ago in Chicago O’Hare Airport, a traveler noticed something unusual near one of the busy terminals. In the middle of all the noise — rolling suitcases, boarding calls, rushing crowds — there was an old upright piano. And sitting at it was a man in his late sixties, playing softly.

He wasn’t performing for applause. He wasn’t collecting tips. He wasn’t even looking up.

He just played — gentle, familiar hymns. “*Great Is Thy Faithfulness.*” “*It Is Well with My Soul.*” “*Blessed Assurance.*”

People hurried past at first. But slowly, something began to happen.

A young mother stopped, tears in her eyes, holding her toddler close. A businessman set down his briefcase and exhaled like he hadn’t breathed all day. A flight attendant leaned against a pillar, listening with her hand over her heart. A group of teenagers sat cross-legged on the floor, quiet for the first time in hours.

One by one, strangers formed a small circle around the piano — not speaking, not rushing — just listening. The music created a kind of sanctuary right there in the middle of an airport terminal.

When the man finally paused, someone asked him why he played.

He smiled and said, **“I play because people forget they’re loved. And sometimes a song reminds them.”**

Then he went right back to playing.

No sermon. No spotlight. No platform.

Just a simple act of love offered to whoever happened to pass by.

And dozens of people walked away changed — comforted, steadied, reminded that God’s love meets us in unexpected places.

Prayer for Understanding

“Speak to us, O God, through Your living Word. By Your Spirit, open our hearts, clear our minds, and draw us toward Your truth, that we may faithfully follow Christ. Amen.”

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Psalms 103 – God’s restoring love

Isaiah 58:6–12 – God’s outward-moving love

John 13:34–35 – Love as the mark of discipleship

John 15:9–12 — “Abide in my love.”

Sermon Testify to Love

Years ago, there was a show on TV called, *Touched by an Angel*, starring Della Reese and Roma Downey, anyone remember the show? At its heart, *Touched by an Angel* was a show about heavenly messengers sent by God to help people at critical crossroads in their lives. Each episode centred on someone who was hurting, grieving, afraid, or lost — someone who needed to be reminded that:

God loves you.

God sees you.

God has not abandoned you.

Ordinary people, touched by extraordinary love, become witnesses of God’s presence in the world.

The show’s entire premise is about testifying to love — not through grand miracles, but through presence, compassion, and truth spoken at the right moment.

In one episode, country singer, Wynonna, sings the song, Testify to Love, after the death of her son. The whole message was this: love leaves a mark that outlives us. Love becomes the evidence of God’s presence in ordinary people doing extraordinary acts of kindness. There’s a line from the song that says: “For as long as I shall live, I will testify to love.”

It’s simple, but it’s profound. It’s a declaration that our lives — our choices, our compassion, our faithfulness — can become a living testimony of God’s love in the world.

Today, I want to explore how Scripture calls us to be people who testify to love — not just in the easy seasons, but in the hard ones too.

In Psalm 103, God’s Love Restores Us

Psalm 103 begins with a call to remember: “Bless the Lord... who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy.”

The psalmist isn’t speaking from a place of ease. He’s speaking as someone who has been lifted, healed, forgiven, and restored.

And Jesus echoes this same truth in John 15, saying: “As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love.” The love that restores us is the very love Jesus invites us to remain in — to live in — to draw strength from.

Many of us can look back on seasons where we didn’t know how we would get through. And yet, somehow, God carried us, not always by removing the struggle, but by sustaining us through it. God guides us, God supports us and God loves us.

This is the first way we testify to love: We remember what God has done for us.

God’s Love Sends Us Outward (Isaiah 58)

Isaiah 58 is a wake-up call to God’s people. They were worshipping, praying, and fasting — but missing the heart of God’s mission.

God says: “Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice... to share your bread with the hungry... to lift the yoke from others?”

In other words: Love is not only something we receive. It is something we give.

And Jesus reinforces this in John 15, where He says: “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.” Love received becomes love expressed. Love experienced becomes love embodied.

Isaiah paints a picture of what happens when God’s people live this way: “You shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.”

Imagine that — God’s people known not for judgment, but for repairing what is broken.

We testify to love when we:

- show up for someone who feels forgotten
- forgive when it would be easier to hold a grudge
- advocate for someone who has no voice
- give quietly, generously, without expecting anything back

This is where the song's message becomes real. Testifying to love isn't about grand gestures — it's about daily faithfulness.

Jesus Makes Love Our Identity (John 13 + John 15)

In John 13, Jesus gives His disciples a new commandment: “Love one another as I have loved you.” And then He adds: “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples.”

Not by our theology. Not by our traditions. Not by our buildings. But by our love.

And in John 15, Jesus deepens this calling: “As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love.” “If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love.” “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.”

Jesus is saying: Love is the evidence of the Gospel. Love is the proof that Christ is alive in us. Love is the identity of His people.

There are moments in life when everything stops — when the future becomes uncertain, when the next breath feels like a gift. For me, that moment came 2 and a half years ago when I learned I needed quadruple bypass heart surgery.

It's hard to describe the mix of fear, surrender, and hope that fills your heart in a time like that. You think about your family. You think about unfinished conversations. You think about the things you still want to do, the people you still want to love, the ways you still want to serve God.

And then you pray.

I remember lying there, knowing the surgeons would be doing everything they could — but also knowing that ultimately, my life was in God's hands. Psalm 103 says God “redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with steadfast love.” I felt that truth in a way I never had before.

And in that moment, Jesus' words from John 15 became real: “Abide in my love.” I wasn't abiding in my strength — I was abiding in His.

When I woke up after the surgery, I felt something I can only describe as overwhelming gratitude. Gratitude for the doctors. Gratitude for every prayer spoken on my behalf. Gratitude for the breath in my lungs. Gratitude for a second chance.

But most of all, gratitude for God's love — a love that carried me through fear, through uncertainty, through the valley.

And here's the part that connects to our calling today:

That second chance made me want to testify to love more boldly. More intentionally. More gratefully.

When you've been given more time — when you've been lifted from a place where you weren't sure what tomorrow would hold — you begin to see every day as an opportunity to love more deeply, forgive more freely, and serve more generously.

Jesus says in John 13 that love is the mark of His disciples. And in John 15 He says: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."

After facing something life-threatening, that command feels even more urgent. Life is too short, too precious, too fragile to waste on anything less than love.

Recently, I came across the song, Testify to Love, and I have listened to it quite a bit and the more I listen to it the more I realize that love is powerful, love is healing and love is contagious.

It's a song that reminds us that every breath we're given is an opportunity to love. Every day is a chance to testify to God's goodness. Every moment is a gift.

The song says: "For as long as I shall live, I will testify to love."

After being given a second chance at life, those words feel personal. They feel true. They feel like a calling.

So as you listen, I invite you to reflect on your own story — the moments when God carried you, restored you, and gave you strength you didn't know you had.

Let this song be our prayer, our response, and our commitment.

At this time, we'll listen to *Testify to Love*.

So, to summarize today's message, Psalm 103 reminds us that God's love restores. Isaiah 58 reminds us that God's love sends us outward. John 13 reminds us that God's love defines us. John 15 reminds us that God's love sustains us and commands us to love others.

And *Testify to Love* reminds us that this calling is lifelong.

I would be remiss if I didn't touch on the passing of Dolly Parton this week because I think this is yet another example of testifying to love and bearing witness to what it means to be a Christian. Quoted once as saying, "I always ask God to work through me and let me be a light of some kind and help in this world" And that is Dolly's legacy — she loved all people and this love was sincere and genuine and came from a place of reverence and respect. Dolly's love was infectious and planted the seeds for so many people in many ways. I think of the staggering number of books — 330 million books put into the hands of children from her Imagination

Library – 330 million – take a moment to process that number. I think it is safe to say, her life was a blessing to many.

So, for as long as we shall live, may we testify to love — in our homes, in our communities, in our church, and in every place God sends us.

Amen.

Hymn 481 **Blest be the tie that binds**

Invitation to the Offering

“With grateful hearts for God’s steadfast love, let us offer our gifts as a testimony to His goodness.” Our offering will now be received

Doxology

Prayer of Dedication

Gracious God, for all Your gifts of love and mercy, we give You thanks. Bless these offerings and use them to lift burdens, to strengthen this church, and to share Your love with those in need. Make our giving a reflection of grateful hearts and lives dedicated to Your service. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Prayer of Thanksgiving and for the People

Gracious and faithful God, we come before You with hearts full of gratitude. You have carried us through seasons of joy and seasons of fear, through valleys we never expected to walk, and through moments when Your love was our only strength. For Your steadfast presence, Your quiet mercies, and Your healing grace that meets us day by day, we give You thanks.

We thank You for the gift of life itself — for breath, for strength, for renewed hope, for second chances and restored futures. We thank You for the ways You hold us when we are anxious, uncertain, or afraid, and for the ways You lift us when our spirits grow weary.

We thank You for this church family, for the love that binds us together in Christ, for prayers spoken and unspoken, for hands that help, for hearts that care, for the compassion that reflects Your own. Bless this congregation with unity, tenderness, and courage as we seek to testify to Your love in all we do.

Lord, we lift before You the people of this community: those who are celebrating, those who are grieving, those who are healing, those who are searching, and those who feel alone. Surround them with Your comfort. Strengthen them with Your peace. Renew them with Your hope.

For those facing illness, bring healing and calm. For those carrying burdens, grant relief and rest. For those walking through transitions, give wisdom and clarity. For those who feel forgotten, remind them they are held in Your everlasting love.

Make us, O God, a people who testify to love — in our words, in our actions, in our compassion, in our courage, in our willingness to serve and to forgive. Shape us into a community that repairs what is broken, lifts what is heavy, and shines with the light of Christ.

We thank You, Lord, for blessings behind us, mercies beside us, and promises ahead of us. Keep us faithful. Keep us grateful. Keep us close to You.

In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Hymn 371 **Love divine all loves excelling**

BENEDICTION

May the love of Christ surround you, the grace of God sustain you, and the Spirit empower you to testify to love in all you do.

Go now in the peace of Christ, the strength of the Spirit, and the everlasting love of God. 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, September 6, at 10:00 am at North Pelham**

*** The RPCW will meet Wednesday September 2 at 1:30 PM at the church.**

***Session Meeting Wednesday September 9th at 7:00 pm at Rockway**

***Fall Fellowship BBQ – Join us following worship on September 20th for a Fall Fellowship BBQ at North Pelham– more details to come**

***Tai Chi & Qigong – classes will resume on Monday, September 7, at 1:30 p.m. and 2:30 p.m. Yes, Tai Chi starts on Labour Day – Please help to spread the word**

***Wednesday Bible Study –will resume on Wednesday, September 9, at 10:00 a.m. at North Pelham.**

***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: jacoble0501@gmail.com** We are here to pray and care for one another. “Carry one another’s burdens.” (Galatians 6:2)