



Rockway and First (North Pelham) Pastoral Charge
11th Sunday after Pentecost, August 9, 2026
Worship at Home

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

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: Come, seeking God with open hearts and renewed hope.

P: “**God is not far from each one of us.**” (Acts 17:27)

L: Come with all that you are—your questions, longings, joys, and needs.

P: “**In God we live and move and have our being.**” (Acts 17:28)

L: God meets us where we are and leads us toward new possibilities of faith, hope, and compassionate love.

All: **Let us worship the living God, who is always near.**

Hymn 290

Immortal, invisible, God only wise

Prayers of Approach and Confession

Here we are, O God.

We gather as Your people and come before You just as we are. You created the world and everything in it. You give us life and breath, yet You are not far from any one of us. In You we live and move and have our being. We praise You for Your greatness, Your mystery, and Your compassionate love.

You know us more deeply than we know ourselves. You see our joys and sorrows, our faith and questions, our hopes and hidden fears. Still, You welcome us and hold us in love.

Forgive us, O God, when we try to make You fit our plans or treat prayer as a way of getting what we want. Forgive us when money, success, comfort, or pride become more important than loving You and our neighbours. Forgive us when we judge others, compare ourselves with them, or fail to recognize their God-given worth. Hear us now in the silence as we offer You the confessions of our hearts. (silence)

Compassionate God, forgive us and renew us. Through Jesus Christ, assure us that we are loved, even when we fail, doubt, or lose our way. By Your Holy Spirit, open our hearts to Your presence. Teach us to seek Your will, trust Your nearness, and grow in compassion, hope, and love. 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 389

Breathe on me, breath of God

Prayer for Understanding

Living God,

open our minds to your Word and our hearts to your presence. Help us seek your will, trust that you are near, and grow in the compassionate love of Christ. Amen.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Responsive Psalm 8

Acts 17:16–34; Matthew 7:7

Sermon

Ask, Seek, and Knock

"Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you." These words of Jesus are familiar to many of us. They are words of hope. But what do they really mean?

Some people hear this promise and think it means God will give us whatever we want, if only we pray hard enough. Better health. More money. Success. A quick end to every problem. This idea has a name — the "prosperity gospel." It says that faithful people will always be comfortable, and struggling people must be doing something wrong.

But Jesus was not handing out a blank cheque. He was teaching us to trust the goodness of God, not to control it. And this morning's reading takes us right into that same question, in a very different setting. In the book of Acts, chapter seventeen, the apostle Paul walks into the city of Athens, a city full of temples and statues to every god you could imagine. And there, among all those altars, Paul finds the words we need to hear today.

Athens was a deeply religious city. The people had built shrines to cover every possibility, every fear, every hope. And tucked among them, Paul found one altar with a strange inscription: "To an unknown god." Just in case they had missed one. Just in case some god out there needed to be kept happy too.

Paul does not laugh at this. He does not scold them for having too many gods. Instead, he uses that altar as his starting point. He tells them, in effect: you already sense that something greater is out there. Let me tell you who it is.

That search is not so different from our own. From ancient times, people have offered prayers and sacrifices hoping to earn a blessing. If life went well, the gods must be pleased. If life fell apart, the gods must be angry. We see the same thinking in the book of Job, where Job's friends assume his suffering must be punishment for some hidden sin. The book of Job pushes back hard

against that idea. Faith was never meant to be a business deal, where we give God something so God owes us something better in return.

And if we are honest, that quiet bargaining still shows up in us today. We may believe that if we pray enough, attend church enough, and live carefully enough, God owes us protection from illness, grief, and loss. There is nothing wrong with asking God for help — God welcomes every honest prayer, for healing, for work, for peace in a hard relationship. But prayer was never meant to give us an edge over someone else, as if God loved one team, one family, or one outcome more than another.

So Paul offers the people of Athens — and offers us — a much bigger vision of God than a shelf full of statues could ever hold.

First, Paul says, this God cannot be boxed in. "The God who made the world and everything in it," Paul tells them, "does not live in shrines made by human hands." God is not an object we can carry around or control. God does not need our gifts, as though we were keeping God fed and happy. This means we cannot bargain with God — we cannot say, "I have done my part, so now you owe me mine." Real faith starts not with bargaining but with wonder. We look at the size of the universe and the mystery of our own lives, and we realize we do not possess God. We belong to God.

But here is the turn that matters most. Although this God is far greater than we can grasp, Paul says this same God is also very near. "God is not far from each one of us," he tells the crowd, "for in him we live and move and have our being." The Maker of everything is closer to us than our own breath.

That truth matters in a particular way as we grow older. Our health changes. We lose people we love. Roles that once gave us purpose come to an end, and we may wonder, quietly, whether we still matter to anyone. But our worth was never based on what we could produce or accomplish. We are precious simply because we belong to God, and God holds us in love. Even when we feel forgotten, God remembers us. Even when we cannot find words to pray, God already knows what our hearts are asking.

So which is true — is God far above us, or right beside us? Both. God is greater than the universe we can see, and closer than the breath in our lungs. That is not a contradiction to solve. It is the heart of the mystery we call faith.

And that nearness is not just meant to comfort us — it is meant to change us. Paul goes on to say that meeting this God means turning away from the idols that quietly run our lives. An idol does not have to be a statue. It can be money, status, our need to always be right, or the fear of what people think of us. These things promise safety, but they only leave us comparing ourselves to others and wondering if we measure up. Paul points instead to Jesus Christ, raised from death, proof that cruelty and loss do not get the final word. Through the risen Christ, God calls us to turn around and begin again, as many times as we need to.

We were made in God's image, out of love and for love. Jesus shows us exactly what that love looks like in action — compassion, forgiveness, and a readiness to serve rather than be served. That is the "heart, hands, and feet" our own church tries to live out: not just believing the right things about God, but letting that belief move our hands toward the people around us.

So here is one small, concrete thing to carry with you this week. Think of one person you have quietly been keeping score with — someone you have been measuring against yourself, or bargaining with in your head, or holding at arm's length. This week, do one deliberate act of kindness for that person. A phone call. A card. Sitting with them a while. Not because they earned it, and not because it will earn you anything from God. Simply because that is what it looks like to live near a God who is already near you.

Paul's words that day got a mixed reception. Some in the crowd laughed at the idea of resurrection. Others said they would like to hear more. But a few believed — among them a man named Dionysius and a woman named Damaris — and they followed.

We face that same choice every week. We can keep reaching for small gods we think we can manage, gods who owe us comfort in exchange for our good behaviour. Or we can open our hands to the living God that Paul described — the God who is greater than anything we can imagine, and closer than our very next breath.

So let us keep asking, seeking, and knocking — not only for what we want, but for what God wants to grow in us. Let us ask for compassionate hearts. Let us knock on the door of a deeper, more loving life. For the God we are searching for is not far from any one of us. In him we live, and move, and have our being — and in the risen Christ, we are always held, always loved, and always led toward hope. Amen.

Hymn 461 **Be thou my vision**

Invitation to the Offering

Doxology

Prayer of Dedication

Living God,
receive these gifts. Receive our lives, too. Free us from seeking only our own comfort and security. Use what we offer, and use us, to carry the compassionate love of Christ to others. Amen.

Prayer of Thanksgiving and for the People

Thank You, O God.

You speak through the wonder of creation, through the lives of other people, and through the gentle movement of Your Spirit within us. Teach us to listen and recognize Your voice among the

many voices around us. Free us from treating prayer as a way to get only what we want. Open our hearts instead to Your will and to the deeper purpose You have for our lives.

Thank You for the gifts and abilities You have placed within us. Thank You that, at every age and stage of life, we can still grow, serve, and share Your love. Guide each of us in becoming the heart, hands, and feet of Jesus, faithful to Your calling.

God of compassion, we pray for our troubled world. Be near to those affected by wildfires, floods, storms, war, and violence—those who have lost homes, loved ones, and safety. Give strength to those who rescue, shelter, rebuild, and care. Turn the hearts of leaders away from hatred, and lead the nations toward justice, compassion, and peace.

We pray for those overwhelmed by the demands of daily life, for caregivers who are tired, for those living with chronic illness, and for families carrying grief or conflict. When the way forward is hard to see, surround them with caring people and practical help. Remind them that their lives are precious and that they do not carry their burdens alone. In silence, we now place before You the people and situations we are carrying in our hearts. (silence)

We pray especially for Don Hallett. Surround him with Your grace and mercy as he receives medical treatment. Give him strength, comfort, and healing, and sustain his family caring for him in Your love.

We also remember members of the North Pelham and Rockway church families who are quietly struggling in body, mind, or spirit. Even when their needs are unknown to us, they are fully known to You. Hold them close, and help us notice how we may care for them.

Living God, bring healing to our bodies, minds, and hearts. Bring peace where the past cannot be changed, and new beginnings where one chapter of life has ended. You are greater than we can imagine, yet You are not far from any one of us. In You we live and move and have our being. Fill us with gratitude, deepen our trust, and lead us forward in faith, hope, and compassionate love. We offer these prayers in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Hymn 637 **Take my life, and let it be consecrated**

BENEDICTION

May God hold you close, the risen Jesus lead you home, and the Holy Spirit fill you with compassionate love—for God is always near. 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, August 16, at 10:00 am at Rockway**

***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 16 and August 30**
- **Rev. Martin Wehrmann – August 23**

We give thanks for their spiritual worship leadership and pray that God will bless them as they share God's Word with us.

***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)