



Rockway and First (North Pelham) Pastoral Charge
15th Sunday after Pentecost, September 6, 2026
Worship at Home

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

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me... to bring good news to the poor. Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." (Luke 4:18, 21)

P: God's grace has come among us. Today, we hear it again.

L: "Just as the body is one and has many members, so it is with Christ. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one is honoured, all rejoice together." (1 Corinthians 12:12, 26)

P: We are the body of Christ — each one welcomed, each one needed. United in faith, hope, and love, let us worship God.

Hymn 651

Guide me, O thou great Redeemer

Prayers of Approach and Confession

Loving and compassionate God,
 you created us in love and call us your own. You gave us this beautiful world to enjoy,
 neighbours to love, and a community in which to belong. You call us to care for your creation
 and to serve one another as members of Christ's body.

Yet we confess that we do not always follow your way. With clenched hands, we find it difficult
 to give or receive. With closed eyes, we fail to see both the pain and the beauty around us. With
 hesitant feet, we do not always move toward those who need our care. Hear us now as we open
 our hearts before you and confess our sins in silence. (silence)

Merciful God,

you know us completely and still love us faithfully. Forgive us through Jesus Christ. Remind us
 that your grace is greater than all our faults and failures. By your Holy Spirit, open our hands,
 open our eyes, strengthen our feet, and soften our hearts. Help us to recognize that every person
 is precious, every member is needed, and everyone has a place within the body of Christ.

As we hear your Word today, renew our faith and transform our lives by your Perfect Love.
 Make us instruments of grace and hope in our homes, in our churches, and in the communities
 where we belong. 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 682

Just as I am, without one plea

Prayer for Understanding

God of love,

open our hearts through your Word, that we may know we belong to you and to one another as the body of Christ. Amen.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Responsive Psalm 133

1 Corinthians 12: 12-27; Luke 4: 14-21

Sermon

You Belong Here

What does it mean to belong? To belong means more than having our name on a church roll or being invited into a room. It means knowing that we are welcomed, valued, and needed. It means being able to say, "There is a place for me here."

Belonging is one of our deepest human needs. Yet the world often places conditions on it. We may feel that we must be attractive, successful, healthy, wealthy, or connected to the right people. We may feel that we must speak, believe, or behave in a certain way before we will be accepted. Sadly, even the church has sometimes placed conditions on belonging. Churches have doctrines, traditions, and moral teachings. These can guide us and help us grow in faith. But they can also become walls when they are used without compassion.

For various reasons, I sent my two daughters to a Catholic elementary school when they were in Grades 2 and 4. During school Masses, they did not go forward to receive Holy Communion with most of their friends. Because they had not been baptized in the Catholic Church, they were not permitted to receive the Eucharist. I understand that this came from the Catholic Church's particular understanding of Communion. Yet, as a father, I felt sad. My daughters did not understand all the theology behind the practice. What they understood was that they were being separated from their friends. At that moment, they felt that they did not completely belong.

A Presbyterian minister once told me another painful story. A teenager whom we will call Sara became pregnant by an older man and later gave birth to a daughter. Sara's parents asked their church to baptize their granddaughter. The church leaders agreed, but only if Sara was not present. Because she had given birth outside marriage, they believed that her presence would be inappropriate. The child was baptized, and the grandparents made the promises. The young mother was not allowed to take part.

Whatever concerns those church leaders may have had, their decision caused deep pain. Sara was a young person who needed care, protection, guidance, and love. Instead, she experienced shame and exclusion. Baptism is a sign of God's grace. It tells us that God reaches toward us before we

can earn or deserve anything. When baptism or Communion becomes a way of humiliating or rejecting someone, we need to examine our practices again in the light of Jesus.

This does not mean that Christian beliefs and traditions are unimportant. They help us understand our faith and live faithfully. But our doctrines and traditions must serve God's purposes of grace, truth, healing, and love. They should help lead people toward God, not become walls that keep wounded people away.

Today's Gospel reading shows us the kind of community Jesus came to create. Jesus begins his public ministry in Nazareth, his hometown. On the Sabbath, he goes to the synagogue where he had worshipped since childhood. He stands up and reads from the prophet Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor." He speaks of freedom for captives, sight for the blind, and release for the oppressed. Then Jesus says, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

Jesus is saying that God's promised time of grace has arrived. God's love is not only an idea for the future. It is present and active in Jesus. Through him, good news is reaching people who have been forgotten, rejected, or pushed aside. The poor include people without enough money, food, shelter, security, or power. They also include those who are lonely, grieving, ill, imprisoned, oppressed, or excluded. Jesus announces that God has not abandoned them. God sees them. God loves them. God acts for their healing and freedom.

Does this mean that Jesus is not interested in people who are successful, comfortable, healthy, or respected? No. Jesus loves them too. But Jesus warns that pride and self-sufficiency can make us forget our need for God. They can also make us blind to the needs of our neighbours. None of us is completely self-sufficient. We all need grace. We all carry some weakness, sorrow, regret, fear, or wound. Some struggles can be seen, while others remain hidden. It does not matter whether we have made a great success of life or whether life has sometimes felt like a mess. Before God, we are all imperfect people who are deeply and faithfully loved.

This is the beginning of Christian belonging. We do not belong because we have proved that we are good enough. We belong because God, in compassionate love, welcomes us. We come with our strengths and weaknesses, our faith and questions, our joys and sorrows. Christ meets us as we are and begins to make us whole.

In our second reading, the Apostle Paul describes the church as the body of Christ. The Christians in Corinth had become competitive. Some believed that their spiritual gifts made them more important than others. Paul answered them with a simple picture. A body has many parts, but it is still one body. A foot is not less important because it is not a hand. An ear does not stop belonging because it is not an eye. Every part is different, and every part is needed.

Paul also says that the members of the body that seem weaker are indispensable. The world may judge people by their strength, speed, independence, appearance, or achievements. The church must see people differently. In the body of Christ, no one is useless and no one is unnecessary. The person who can no longer do what they once did still belongs. The person who needs help

still has dignity. The quiet person has gifts. The grieving person has a place. The child, the newcomer, the person with questions, and the lifelong member are all precious to God.

This is an especially important message as we grow older. Our health may change. Our energy may become limited. We may no longer be able to serve the church as we did years ago. We may sometimes wonder, "Do I still matter? Am I still needed?" Paul's answer is clear: yes. You are still part of Christ's body. Your prayers matter. Your wisdom matters. Your presence matters. Your kindness matters. Even when you cannot do as much as before, you remain loved, honoured, and necessary within God's family.

Paul tells us, "If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it." Belonging means that we do not leave one another alone. When someone is ill, we call or visit. When someone is grieving, we sit beside them. When someone cannot hear well, walk easily, or follow the service quickly, we make room for them. When someone offers a gift, we receive it with gratitude. When someone is missing, we notice. When someone returns, we welcome them with joy.

Our congregations at Rockway and North Pelham may not be large, but every person matters. We do not need to become impressive in the eyes of the world. We are called to become faithful in the way of Jesus. We are called to be a community where people experience God's compassionate love; where no one can say, "I do not belong," and no one can say to another, "I do not need you."

My daughters and Sara experienced painful moments of separation. We cannot change every painful event from the past. But we can decide what kind of church we will be today. The sacraments carry sacred promises and should be received with faith and care. Yet they must never become weapons of shame. They are gifts of Christ that point us toward God's grace and invite us to welcome, nurture, and walk beside one another with compassion.

May we become the body of Christ that Paul describes: a community in which every person is valued and every gift is received. When one person suffers, may we all share that suffering. When one person rejoices, may we all rejoice. Guided by the Spirit of Jesus, may we bring good news, healing, freedom, faith, hope, and love to one another and to the world around us.

May everyone who enters our churches be able to say, "I am known. I am loved. I am needed. By the grace of God, I belong." Amen.

Hymn 634

Will you come and follow me

Invitation to the Offering

Doxology

Prayer of Dedication

Generous God,

receive these gifts and use them to help others know that they are loved, needed, and belong within the body of Christ. Amen.

Prayer of Thanksgiving and for the People

Thank you, loving God, for creating each of us in love and giving us a place within the body of Christ. Thank you for every person gathered here. Thank you for faithful prayers, caring hands, listening hearts, wisdom gained through the years, and the simple gift of one another's presence. Thank you that no one in your family is unimportant. Each person is precious, each gift matters, and every member has a place. Thank you that when one of us suffers, we do not suffer alone; and when one of us rejoices, our joy is shared.

With grateful hearts, O God, we now pray for our world. We pray for all affected by fires, floods, and disasters here in Canada and abroad; for all who suffer amid war and violence in Ukraine, Sudan, the Middle East, and elsewhere; and for our own country in this time of trade conflict and uncertainty with our neighbours. Comfort those who grieve. Strengthen caregivers, first responders, and all who work for peace. Give our leaders wisdom, courage, and patience, and guard us against fear and bitterness. Help us remember that we belong to one human family.

Send your Spirit, O God.

We pray, too, for those closer to home. We pray especially for Diane and Jill as they mourn the death of their beloved father, Roy Johnson. Comfort them and all of Roy's family. We also grieve as a church family the loss of a faithful member and dear friend. As one member suffers, help us all to share that sorrow with compassion and love. We pray for those facing illness, grief, loneliness, or an uncertain future, and for caregivers who feel tired or overwhelmed. Remind them that they are seen, loved, needed, and never alone.

We now name silently before you the people within our circle of care and concern. (silence)

Compassionate God, bring healing where healing is possible, peace when the way is uncertain, courage to change what can be changed, and grace to accept what cannot be changed. Open our eyes to see clearly, our hearts to love deeply, and our hands and feet to serve faithfully. Send us into the world to help others discover that they, too, are known, loved, needed, and welcomed within your family. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Hymn 324

Great is thy faithfulness

BENEDICTION

May God hold you, Jesus walk with you, and the Holy Spirit guide you, knowing that you belong. 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, September 13, at 10:00 am at Rockway**

In Loving Memory: We share with sadness the passing of Roy Johnson, a faithful and beloved member of our church family. Roy's funeral and interment were held last Friday at North Pelham. We continue to hold his daughters, Diane and Jill, and all of Roy's family in our prayers during this time of loss. Please remember them and reach out with a card, a call, or a kind word in the days ahead.

***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 tomorrow, 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: jacoblee0501@gmail.com We are here to pray and care for one another.

“Carry one another's burdens.” (Galatians 6:2)