

Knox Presbyterian Church  
Rev. Emma Duncan  
JANUARY 19, 2025



Greetings

Call to worship

**Leader: Come to hear the Word of the Lord**

People: We long to experience God's forgiveness and love

**Leader: Come to find community**

People: We want to feel welcomed

**Leader: Come to receive the blessings of God**

People: So that we can be a blessing to others

***All: Come and worship the Lord! Amen.***

Music: We praise you, O God #425 (all verses)

Prayers of Adoration and Confession (including The Lord's Prayer)

Wonderful are your works, O Lord! You created everything from the depths of the sea to the highest mountain and beyond. You knit us in our mothers' wombs. We praise you for we are fearfully and wonderfully made. You gave us a Saviour who loves and forgives us and while on earth, gave us teachings on which to build our lives. You gave us your Spirit to direct our lives until Christ comes again in glory. How great are the blessings that you have lavished upon us!

Merciful Father, as our creator, we have no secrets from you. You know when we sit down and when we rise up. You are acquainted with all of our ways. And so, you know that we fall short of the teachings of Jesus. We do not love as we should. Instead of following Christ's command to come and see, we shy away from sharing the Good News of the Gospel. We would prefer to be the gods of our own lives rather than following your divine plan.

In your great mercy, O Lord, forgive our sins, for they are many. Save us from temptation. Save us from ourselves.

Thank you, Jesus, that you have already paid the ultimate price for our sin. We ask, O God, for the wisdom and strength to be our best selves. We ask for the courage and vision to be co-workers in the kingdom of God.

We pray all this in the strong name of Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray, saying...

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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

### Assurance of Pardon

Beloved in the Lord - God knows your name. God knows the burdens of your heart. He knows us completely – the good, the bad, and the ugly. And yet he still loves us. He loves us so much that he sent his only Son to die for us. This is the Good News – we are forgiven! Thanks be to God. Amen.

## Announcements

1. Welcome!
2. Join us in the **Bell Tower Room** after worship for refreshments and conversation.
3. Celebration of Life service for Dorothy Prior  
We will be celebrating Dorothy's life and faith TODAY at 1:30 p.m.
4. Thank you to Arch Jollymore for doing our readings today.
5. Sermon Series on the Gospel of John  
For the first half of 2025, I will be preaching through the Gospel of John. She has prepared a reading plan that takes you through the entire Gospel. This reading plan is available in the sanctuary or through the church office.
6. Volunteers Needed for Coffee fellowship  
Sign-up sheet is in the Fellowship Hall.
7. Upcoming Events  
Sunday February 9  
Sacrament of Holy Communion  
Saturday March 1, 9:00 a.m.  
Congregational Pancake Breakfast  
Saturday April 12, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.  
Easter Eggstravaganza

Music: Will you come and follow me #634 (all verses)

Children's Time: Come and see

Prayer of Illumination

Let us pray. Holy God, we come to you as seekers on a journey. We know that we need you in our lives, Lord. Transform us through your Word and by your Spirit so that we may be faithful followers of Christ. In his name we pray. Amen.

**Our Old Testament reading is taken from the Book of Psalms and we will be reading Responsively Psalm 139 verses 1-18.**

Leader: O Lord, you have searched me and known me.  
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;  
you discern my thoughts from far away.

**People: You search out my path and my lying down  
and are acquainted with all my ways.  
Even before a word is on my tongue, O Lord, you know it completely.**

Leader: You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me.

**People: Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain it.**

Leader: Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?

**People: If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.  
If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,  
even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast.**

Leader: If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me,  
and the light around me become night,"

**People: even the darkness is not dark to you;  
the night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you.**

Leader: For it was you who formed my inward parts;  
you knit me together in my mother's womb.

**People: I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.  
Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.  
My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret,  
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.  
Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.**

**In your book were written all the days that were formed  
for me, when none of them as yet existed.**

Leader: How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them!

**People: I try to count them—they are more than the sand;  
I come to the end—I am still with you.**

**Our Old Testament reading is taken from the Book of Exodus and we will be reading  
chapter 3, verses 1-12.**

Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed.

Then Moses said, "I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up." When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." Then he said, "Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." He said further, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

Then the Lord said, "I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt."

But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"

He said, "I will be with you."

**Our Gospel reading is taken from the Gospel of John and we will be reading chapter 1, verses 43-51.**

The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.

Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth."

Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"

Philip said to him, "Come and see."

When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, "Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!"

Nathanael asked him, "Where did you get to know me?"

Jesus answered, "I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you."

Nathanael replied, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"

Jesus answered, "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these."

And he said to him, "Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

**This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Amen.**

## Reflection: Who me?

Throughout the generations, God has called ordinary men and women to follow him. The idea that it has only been since the time of Jesus that this has taken place is not true. That's why you just heard part



of the story of Moses and God in the burning bush. Moses led a complicated life and yet, God had a role for him in his divine plan. The Lord needed a leader for the people of Israel during one of the darkest times in their history and Moses was the man for the job. And so, God revealed himself to Moses through a burning bush. The conversation between God and Moses is one of my favourite passages from the Old Testament because it is so honest...

God – Moses, I need you to help me fulfill my divine plan.

Moses – Who me?

God – Yes you.

Moses – Really Lord? I'm just a man with no special skills.

God – Oh is that so? Just watch me...

Later in Exodus chapter 4, Moses continues to plead with the Lord to send someone else. At this point in Moses' life, he was living a quiet life after running from the Egyptian authorities because he killed an Egyptian guard in anger. And so, he wasn't exactly eager to return to the land of his birth. Moses tells God that he is doubtful that he can be of any use – he even uses his speech impediment as an excuse. Send someone else...PLEASE!!!

But God didn't listen to Moses.

I AM who I AM and I am going to use you for my purposes. Have faith. Trust me and obey.

Ok Lord.

Here I am. Send me.

Fast forward to John chapter 1 and we find another interaction where God calls an ordinary man to follow him.

Philip – along with Andrew and Peter – met Jesus in the course of their everyday lives. When Jesus said, come and see, they immediately obeyed. But when Philip invited Nathanael to come and see Jesus, Nathanael wasn't as receptive as the others. Not only was he unimpressed that Jesus came from Nazareth, he questioned Jesus directly. How do you know me? Is this some sort of trick? Did Philip tell you something about me?

But there was something about this Jesus – something powerful and magnetic – that caused Nathanael to let go of his doubt and believe. **Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!** (John 1:49) With this statement, Nathanael expresses his conversion, his belief that Jesus is the Christ. He recognized Christ's identity as the Son of God and understood his mission, to reveal himself as a King.

What is frustrating about this story is that we know so little about Nathanael. After this interaction, he is only mentioned one more time in all of the New Testament – in the last chapter of the Gospel of John. (John 21:2) No other gospel writer mentions him. We know nothing about him –what he did for a living, what his family was like, or if he had any role in the growth of the Church after Pentecost. Nothing.

So why does John bother to include this story? What's the point of it all?



As I said last week when I introduced the Gospel of John, the gospel writer wasn't interested in a whole lot of extra details – many of the stories that we find in his gospel are just like this one, short and to the point. And the point is that God can call ordinary men and women to believe in him.

And God does this work in a variety of ways. Think about it...

- ❖ God called Moses directly. Christ called Peter, Andrew, and Philip directly. Nathanael heard about the Lord through someone else.
- ❖ Peter, Andrew, and Philip believed immediately. Nathanael didn't. Neither did Moses.
- ❖ We know a lot about Moses and the disciples, but we know nothing about Nathanael. Does that mean that God used Nathanael less than the others? Absolutely not! The Christian faith is full of unsung heroes who are not in the spotlight. There are millions of ordinary men and women who worship and serve the Lord quietly and anonymously.

John wants us to understand that there are many paths to faith. If I were to survey the people who are sitting in this sanctuary, you all have taken different paths that have led you to the Lord. Some of you are here because of what you were taught as a child. Others came to faith as adults or in their teens. Some of you believed immediately while others have struggled with doubt. Some of you have been part of this community of faith for many years while others are new. There are those who came to be part of this congregation because of the invitation of a friend while others have found us through outreach events or our YouTube channel. The important thing is that you are here, seeking to worship and serve the Lord. None of us are perfect – far from it – but God can and will use us as God sees fit.

And our role in God's divine plan?

From what we have read today from the Old and New Testaments, there are two things that we need to take to heart. First of all, we are encouraged to let go of our doubt and fear when God asks us to follow him. If God can use a murderer with a stutter, he can use you and me. If God can use a man who we know nothing about beyond his name, God can use you and me. Regardless of our skills and abilities, we have a role to play in the building of God's kingdom, in the growth of Christ's Church. And that's because God will give us the tools, the people, and the help that we need to do this work. That's what he promised Moses – I will be with you – and that promise is still available to you and me.

The second important teaching from the story of Philip, Nathanael, and Jesus is that inviting someone to experience the Christian faith is as easy as saying – **come and see**. In one article that I read this week, the author said that 'the Christian faith is [most] often passed from person to person. That's how it started with Jesus, and that's how it's been for 2,000 plus years.'<sup>1</sup> We don't have to *prove* the truth about our faith – that job has been left to people much smarter than us. We don't even have to *persuade* others to become a Christian – that is the work of the Holy Spirit. All we have to do is say – come and see. Come and see what Christ has done in my life and in the life of this church.

### [Go down from pulpit]

In closing, I want to issue a warning. I am not encouraging you to invite people to 'come and see' because of me. This isn't about me as your minister. This church is not called 'Emma Duncan ministries' nor will it



<sup>1</sup> <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/second-sunday-after-epiphany-2/commentary-on-john-143-51-3>

ever be! Each Sunday, I begin our worship services with ‘Good morning and welcome to this service of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.’ This isn’t about me at all. It’s about Jesus Christ, my personal Lord and Saviour, the One who is my teacher, my God, and my King. My role is to point you to Jesus Christ, your teacher, your God, and your King. My primary job all of these years – in times of joy and in times of sorrow – is to encourage you on your faith journey, to help you let go of your doubt and fear, and to inspire you to invite others to come and see.

For me, there is a reminder of this in up in the pulpit. This sign was made by someone (?) during the Rev. Howard Sullivan’s ministry at Knox and it says, **we would see Jesus**. It doesn’t say ‘they’ would see Jesus – it says WE. Jesus Christ is supposed to be the focus of everything that WE do in this congregation. When I am standing up in the pulpit, I am to faithfully preach the Good News of the Gospel in hope and faith according to the teachings of Scripture. I am looking for Jesus among you and you are to look for Jesus in me.

That is our job – together, we see Jesus and when he calls us, our answer is “Here I am, Lord. Send me.”

To God be the glory. Now and always. Amen.

## Dedication of our Tithes and Offerings

We will now sing our song of thanks, Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

Praise God from whom all blessing flow;  
praise him, all creatures here below:  
praise him above, ye heavenly host;  
praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

Let us pray.

God of grace and mercy, receive all our gifts, offered in thanksgiving.

We share the fruit of our labours with you, asking that you will multiply their effects in and through the Church. We also share the fruit of our time and talents, praying that you will use them to be a blessing in the lives of others. In Christ's blessed name we pray. Amen.

## Prayers of the People

Almighty and everlasting God, as we bring our prayers to you today, we know that we are surrounded by people who need to hear the "come and see" stories in Scripture, who need to meet the One from Nazareth, Jesus our Lord. Make this place of worship a place of hospitality and welcome. Make us into your disciples, who invite others to "come and see" our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

God of all people, we thank you for the great cloud of witnesses who have obeyed your command to follow Christ. Each one of us has travelled along a different road to get to today and we thank you for all those who have walked with us along the way. We remember family and friends, ministers and preachers, Sunday school teachers and youth leaders, church musicians, ordinary men and women who encouraged us in our faith journeys. We praise you for each one of them for saying 'come and see.' We also express our gratitude for the movement of the Holy Spirit in and through us.

Lord of joy, we thank you for the many people who work and serve in our community, the Church, and beyond. Thank you for all people of faith who are working anonymously and quietly to help those in need. We hear their stories and think to ourselves – I can't do that. I'm not that strong. I'm not that brave. In a world that is crying out in pain, guide us to be the hands and feet of Christ.

Lord of peace, we live in a tumultuous world. We pray for all nations of the world. Be with our neighbours to the south as they inaugurate a new President this week. May this transition be a peaceful one. We also remember the people of California as they continue to deal with the devastation of so many fires. Give strength to all those who are working tirelessly to put out the fires. Give comfort to those who have lost their homes, churches, schools, and communities. Be with the people of the Middle East as a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas comes into effect. May families be reunited. May grieving families have a chance to bury their dead. May this peace become permanent in this region of the world. We continue to pray for the people of Ukraine as they come closer to the sad anniversary of the start of this conflict. Father, we pray for all leaders in nations and communities – may they seek peace and reconciliation.

Lord of hope, we pray for your compassion and healing for those individuals in our midst who need it. We lift up to you those who are dealing with illness and disease. Those who are struggling with doubt and fear. Those who are feel alone and isolated. We pray for your comfort and presence for those who grieve. We pray for our City and all those who face challenges every day.

Together, we pray for your children by name...

Lord of love, you call your people to do things that we would not ourselves choose to do. Give us the faith to trust and obey when call us by name. You know our doubts and fears and have promised that you will never abandon us. May your Spirit move among us as we respond to your call - "Here I am. Send me." In Christ's most holy name we pray. Amen.

Music: I, the Lord of sea and sky #592 (all verses)

Blessing (Romans 15:5-7)

Sung Amen