

Knox Presbyterian Church
Rev. Emma Duncan
JANUARY 26, 2025



Greetings

Call to worship

Leader: Creator God, we are people who need your love

People: Give us your love, O Lord

Leader: Redeeming God, we are people who need your forgiveness

People: Grant us your mercy, O Lord

Leader: Guiding God, we are people who need your direction

People: Show us the way, O Lord

All: Taste and see that God is good! Amen.

Music: All praise to you, O Lord (#181, all verses, tune – This is my Father’s world)

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

Bless the LORD, O my soul. O LORD, my God, you are very great. You are clothed with honor and majesty. You stretch out the heavens like a tent and set the beams of your chambers on the waters. You set the earth on its foundations, so that it shall never be shaken. O God, we praise you for all you have given us, for all you have done for us, for all that you are to us. In our weakness, you are strength. In our darkness, you are light. In our sorrow, you are comfort and peace. In you, there is no need for us to be afraid.

Heavenly Father, even though you are our strength, we are still afraid. And our fears lead us to sin. We fear the unknown even though you are always with us. We fear the stranger even though Jesus tells to love our neighbour and forgive our enemies. We fear the future so we hoard and stockpile things that we should be sharing our abundance with others. We doubt the promises of Scripture, including that through Jesus Christ, we can have an abundant life.

O Lord, in your mercy forgive us. In your compassion, O God, heal and redeem us. Restore to us the joy of your salvation.

Thank you, redeeming Saviour, for your abundant grace, which frees us from our sin and molds us into new creations in Christ Jesus. Open us to the movement of the Holy Spirit in our midst so that we can be the men and women that you desire us to be. Guide us to be the true Church of Jesus Christ.

We pray in the holy 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

Brothers and Sisters, there is no failure that God cannot redeem. There is no distance God cannot cross. There is nothing broken that God cannot restore. In our sinfulness, God does not push us away, but gathers us in. This is true freedom – to be loved by our awesome God! Through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we have been forgiven. Give thanks to God for our cup overflows! Amen.

Announcements

1. Welcome!
2. Join us in the Fellowship Hall after worship for refreshments and conversation.
3. Thank you to Janice Bielski for doing our readings today.

4. Name Tags

For the month of February, we will be bringing back an old tradition of wearing name tags on Sunday mornings. This will give us a chance to re-acquaint ourselves with old friends and meet new ones.

5. Next Sunday – Presbyterian World Service & Development Sunday

Envelopes in the pews

6. Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

2025 World Week of Prayer for Christian Unity - Burlington				
Day	Date	Time	Church	Address
Sun	2-Feb-25	4:30PM	St. Raphael's Roman Catholic Parish	4072 New Street
Mon	3-Feb-25	7PM	St. Luke's Anglican Church	1382 Ontario Street
Tue	4-Feb-25	7PM	Grace United Church	2111 Walkers Line
Wed	5-Feb-25	7PM	Burlington Anglican Lutheran Church	3455 Lakeshore Road
Thu	6-Feb-25	7PM	Archangel Raphael & St. Marina Coptic Orthodox Church	1160 Blair Road, Unit D1

7. Financial update from December 2024

Total Revenue - \$40,397.73

Total Expenses - \$20,070.43

Thank you for your generosity!

8. 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: Jesus' hands were kind hands (#631, all verses)

Children's Time: It's magic!

Prayer of Illumination

Let us pray. Heavenly Father, illuminate our minds by the power of your Holy Spirit, that as the Scriptures are read and your Word proclaimed, may we be filled with wisdom, faith, and hope. We pray this in the blessed name of Jesus Christ, our Saviour. Amen.

Our Old Testament reading is taken from the Book of Psalms and we will be reading Responsively Psalm 104 verses 1-15, & 24.

Leader: Bless the LORD, O my soul. O LORD my God, you are very great.

People: You are clothed with honor and majesty, wrapped in light as with a garment.

Leader: You stretch out the heavens like a tent;

People: you set the beams of your chambers on the waters;

Leader: you make the clouds your chariot;

People: you ride on the wings of the wind;

Leader: you make the winds your messengers,

People: fire and flame your ministers.

Leader: You set the earth on its foundations, so that it shall never be shaken.

**People: You cover it with the deep as with a garment;
the waters stood above the mountains.**

Leader: At your rebuke they flee; at the sound of your thunder they take to flight.

They rose up to the mountains, ran down to the valleys,
to the place that you appointed for them.

People: You set a boundary that they may not pass,

so that they might not again cover the earth.

You make springs gush forth in the valleys; they flow between the hills,

Leader: giving drink to every wild animal; the wild asses quench their thirst.
By the streams the birds of the air have their habitation;
they sing among the branches.

**People: From your lofty abode you water the mountains;
the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work.**

Leader: You cause the grass to grow for the cattle and plants for people to use,

**People: to bring forth food from the earth and wine to gladden the human heart,
oil to make the face shine and bread to strengthen the human heart.**

Leader: O LORD, how manifold are your works!

People: In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. Amen.

Our New Testament reading is taken from the Gospel of John and we will be reading chapter 2, verses 1-12.

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding.

When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine."

And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come."

His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons.

Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water."

And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward." So they took it.

When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now." Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother, his brothers, and his disciples; and they remained there a few days.

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

Reflection: To the Brim

As an ordained minister, I have had the privilege of officiating at many weddings over the years. Last year, I officiated at a wedding at Spencer's on the Lake, which is a beautiful wedding venue in downtown Burlington overlooking Lake Ontario. The bride and groom had spent months planning their special day and worked with me to create a wedding ceremony that was personalized just for them. All the work was done and now was the moment – the guests were all seated, there was music playing in the background, and the wedding party was at the back of the chapel, getting ready to process down the aisle towards me.

As the ceremony was about to start, it was quite clear from where I was standing that all was not well at the back of the chapel. It looked like there was some family drama going on. At the last minute, the parents of the groom refused to walk their son down the aisle. Only myself and the venue staff knew that this was going on as the wedding guests chatted away oblivious to what was going on behind the scenes. I could tell from a distance that the groom was upset, but the show must go on. He came down the aisle by himself and was soon embraced by the bride in a show of support and solidarity.

I never found out what happened at the back of the chapel nor if there were ramifications within their family *after* the ceremony, but this is not the first time that I have witnessed broken relationships in these moments. And unfortunately, it won't be the last. As we all know, families are complicated, including my own.

And it is this wedding drama that I have been thinking about as I reflected on the story of Jesus' first miraculous sign in John's Gospel. Before we talk specifically about this story, it's important for us to be aware that a marriage celebration in Jesus' day had a lot more significance than it does today. Weddings today – if they happen at all – are an

expression of love between two adults. Sometimes, the couples honour their families during the ceremony, but often they don't. In Jesus' day, a marriage was the union of more than two adults – it was the union between two families. Add to that, in the Jewish faith tradition, the image of a wedding banquet is used to signify the restoration of Israel. It is an expression of joy and salvation for the people of God. It is a sign of abundant life in the Lord. And Jesus continues the use of this imagery in his own ministry. There are many stories in the Gospels where Jesus uses the symbolism of a wedding feast. And in the Book of Revelation, which John wrote, it is no surprise that the imagery of a union between the bride and groom continues on.

So, weddings were a BIG DEAL in Jesus' day. The celebrations lasted for days with the banquet being the final celebration. And so, the success of the banquet was a great source of pride for the families of the bride and groom. If they ran out of wine, the banquet would have ended early and word would have spread that they failed to provide for their guests. Dishonor and shame would surely follow.

As this drama unfolded, it is not Jesus who intervenes, but his mother. Mary was obviously connected to the bride and groom in some way because she had access to behind the scenes and the issue with the wine. And she asked her son for help. But his response to her, "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come" is rather strange and needs some explanation. (John 2:4) First of all, Jesus was not being disrespectful to his mother by calling her 'woman.' In the original languages, this is better translated as 'Dear Woman' or 'Oh Mother.' Secondly, what does Jesus mean when he says, 'my hour has not yet come?' In John's Gospel, we will see this a few times because Jesus wants to make it clear that he is fulfilling God's divine plan, which John the Baptist proclaimed in John 1 – *Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the*

world! The hour of his sacrificial death on the cross has not yet come. The final revelation of the empty tomb has not yet come.

But as I said last week, everything that John recorded about Jesus in his Gospel points towards the cross and empty tomb. And so, Jesus obeyed his mother and performed this first miracle, revealing to the disciples that he is indeed the Son of God. Don't forget what he said to Nathanael in John chapter 1 – **you will see great things.** (John 1:50) Jesus ordered the servants to fill 6 stone jars to the brim with water and to take it to the chief steward for approval. Jesus did not say anything else beyond this – this miracle simply happened because the servants obeyed Jesus.

And in my imagination, after this miracle took place, Mary and Jesus went back to their seats at the banquet and continued to enjoy the festivities.

And the disciples?

They sat in stunned silence. WOW. Did that really happen? They cautiously sipped the wine that they knew Jesus just transformed and the steward was right - it was **good wine!** For them, this was the first sign that Jesus was the real deal. He was – and still is - a miracle worker who does great things. But this was no cheesy magic trick like I did for my children's time. Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Word made flesh, the Lamb of God, whose greatest miracle was conquering death once and for all. And when we believe in him, we too can experience joy, salvation, and an abundant life that is full to the brim with the blessings of God.

In addition to these blessings, we too – like the Israelites – long for restoration.

I last preached on John 2 during the pandemic in February 2021. I re-read that sermon this week. I preached on this passage just a few weeks after my Uncle passed

away from COVID and we were in the middle of another lockdown. During that lockdown, there were 4 people in the sanctuary on a Sunday morning – myself, Peter on the organ, and Gord and Geoff running our AV and livestreaming equipment. Now don't get me wrong, I appreciate these three men tremendously, but leading worship in an almost empty sanctuary was ROUGH!! I was trying to encourage you while I was struggling myself.

That was almost 4 years ago. The pandemic is over and we have been worshipping in-person for almost 3 years now. But there is still much that is broken in our world and our yearning for restoration is just as strong as it was during the height of the pandemic. And I think that's because we expected – we hoped – that once the pandemic was over, everything would be fine. Life would go back to normal. And indeed, life is back to normal in so many ways. We are able to live, work, go to school, and worship in the same way as we used to. We can see our family and friends without having to wear masks and drench ourselves in hand sanitizer. But whatever 'normal' means for us, **that doesn't necessarily mean that restoration has taken place.**

As Christians, we believe that true restoration is only possible through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Only Christ has the power to transform our broken family relationships, our broken economic and political systems, and our broken world. Only Christ can heal the wounds of our planet. Only Christ can transform ordinary people into his disciples. Jesus Christ is the bridegroom, who through his death and resurrection, has promised to put the world right. That restorative work has begun, but it not yet complete. That will only take place when Christ comes again – and when that time does come, what a party it will be!

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.

Prayer not written in advance.

Prayers of the People

Lord, we need a miracle today. The pandemic may be over but we yearn for restoration. In a world full of violence, corruption, greed, anger, and despair, we need a miracle. In a world full of broken people, abused and neglected children, young people with no hope for the future, families who cannot provide food, clean water, and shelter, seniors who are isolated, we need a miracle. Come, Lord Jesus, and let your joy and salvation flow in abundance. Let your grace and peace reign down from heaven.

O Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, send your healing and restoring waters of life to those who are thirsty and living in a weary land. We pray for restoration to come.

Where there are wars, bring your peace.

Where there is starvation, fill the empty bellies.

Where there is despair, send your hope.

Where there is drama in families, let there be reconciliation.

Where there is abuse, bring your tender mercies.

Where there is illness, bring your healing.

Where there is grief, send your comfort.

Where there is injustice, restore your people.

May Christ's transforming power be received and welcomed with joy.

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

O God of steadfast love, at the wedding in Cana your Son Jesus turned water into wine, which helped to usher in the joyful news that the dawn of salvation has come! Inspire the global Church to be united in its mission to share this Good News. Bring us together to work for your coming kingdom. In a world where so many people are skeptical and cynical about Christianity, send your Holy Spirit and fill churches around the world with a passion for Christ and a heart for serving others in his name. Fill us to the brim with hope and joy and faith.

Come, Lord Jesus, come and make all things new. Amen.

Music: Lord of all power (#626, all verses)

Blessing (1 John 4:7-12)

Sung Amen