

Knox Presbyterian Church
Rev. Emma Duncan
FEBRUARY 2, 2025



Greetings

Call to worship

Leader: Blessed are those who place their trust in God

People: For He is the maker of heaven and earth

Leader: Our God gives justice to the oppressed

People: And food to the hungry

All: Our God reigns – now and always! Amen.

Music: O sing to our God (#453, all verses)

Prayers of Adoration and Confession (including The Lord's Prayer)¹

Holy God, with snow around and first light of this new week upon us, we gather together here in this time and place to sing your praise. Your glory is ever above us, your mercy is ever with us, your everlasting arms are ever around us. You are God, and we are yours, and we will sing praises all the days of our lives.

Lord, we pray, have mercy upon us as we come before you in a time of confession. We lay before you all of the challenges and regrets of this past week. There is no doubt that we have fallen short of the teachings of Jesus. We speak words of anger and harm those who are closest to us. We are jealous, selfish, and we hoard our earthly treasures, forgetting that everything that we have comes from you. We feel overwhelmed by the world's problems and we hope that someone else is going to do the work of justice and restoration in our broken world.

¹ Adapted from PWS&D Sunday worship resource

Forgive us, O blessed Redeemer, for our sins are many. Save us from temptation and the forces of evil that move us away from you.

Lord Jesus, there are no prayers or hymns or sermons that can ever express how much we love you. Thank you for forgiving us – it is a blessed gift that we do not deserve nor can ever repay.

In gratitude, O God, we place our trust in you. We pray for faith to believe that you *do* rule with justice and truth, that evil will one day be defeated. Restore us in hope to be partners in your kingdom building work. Send your Spirit into the hearts of believers and into our communities of faith all around the world to be beacons of light in the darkness.

O Lord, you are our hope and our salvation. Hear our prayers as we pray the words of Jesus, 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

Church history teaches us that Christ's disciple, John, was the only disciple who lived to an old age. All of the other disciples, apart from Judas Iscariot, were martyred for their faith in Christ. In one of John's letters, which he wrote towards the end of his life, he offered this assurance of pardon - *If we confess our sins, [God] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* (1 John 1:9)

Beloved in the Lord, receive this Good News in hope and joy – in the name of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven! Thanks be to God. Amen.

Announcements

1. Welcome!
2. Join us in the Fellowship Hall after worship for refreshments and conversation.
3. Thank you to Neil Manson 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. TODAY – Presbyterian World Service & Development Sunday
Envelopes in the pews
6. Next Sunday – Sacrament of Holy Communion
7. 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

8. Financial update from December 2024 (reminder about email sent out on Friday)

Total Revenue - \$40,397.73

Total Expenses - \$20,070.43

Thank you for your generosity!

9. Upcoming Events

Saturday March 1, 9:00 a.m.

Congregational Pancake Breakfast

Saturday April 12, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Easter Eggstravaganza

Music: The church is wherever God's people (#484, all verses)

Children's Time: Cleaning Up

Prayer of Illumination

Let us pray. Holy and gracious God, may your Spirit guide to receive your Word with a sense of awe and wonder. Open the eyes of our hearts to the hope that we have in Christ Jesus. A hope that welcomes the stranger. We pray this in Christ's precious name. Amen.

Our Old Testament reading is taken from the Book of Psalms and we will be reading Responsively Psalm 146.

Leader: Praise the Lord!

People: Praise the Lord, O my soul!

Leader: I will praise the Lord as long as I live;

People: I will sing praises to my God all my life long.

Leader: Do not put your trust in princes, in mortals, in whom there is no help.

**People: When their breath departs, they return to the earth;
on that very day their plans perish.**

Leader: Blessed are those whose help is the God of Jacob,

**People: whose hope is in the Lord their God,
who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them;
who keeps faith forever;
who executes justice for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry.**

Leader: The Lord sets the prisoners free;

People: the Lord opens the eyes of the blind.

Leader: The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down;

People: the Lord loves the righteous.

Leader: The Lord watches over the strangers; and upholds the orphan and the widow,

People: but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.

Leader: The Lord will reign forever, your God, O Zion, for all generations.

People: Praise the Lord! Amen.

Our New Testament reading is taken from the Gospel of John and we will be reading chapter 2, verses 13-22.

The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables.

Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!"

His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me."

The Jews then said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?"

Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

The Jews then said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?"

But he was speaking of the temple of his body.

After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

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

Reflection: Threads of Opportunity

As a firm believer in lifelong learning, I am currently doing an online course called “Themes in the Gospel of John” which is being taught by the Rev. Dr. N.T. Wright. And so far, it’s very good. Dr. Wright is a retired Bishop from the Church of



England and one of the most brilliant New Testament scholars of our time. I have used his writings before and we have done some of his Bible studies. What I like about his teachings is that he explains very difficult theological concepts in a way that everyone can understand. The first module is on the theme of justice and here is his simple yet profound definition of justice - ‘putting things right.’ Whether we seek justice in the court system or in our relationships or in the world, we human beings know the difference between fair and unfair and we want things to be put right. We want balance, restoration, and justice.

Dr. Wright began his lecture on justice by talking about why so many people like watching crime dramas or reading murder mysteries. Why is it that we all like a good ‘who done it’ story? Dr. Wright suggests that we like these kinds of stories because there is always a resolution at the end of the story. The crime is always solved. The murderer is always caught and justice is served.

Sadly, real life is not that simple.

We see unfairness and injustice in every aspect of life. And the truth is that we all know that justice matters, but we aren’t very good at doing anything about it. We feel overwhelmed by the scale of injustice in our world and we are paralyzed by inaction to put things right.

While we all struggle with feelings of helplessness, it is clear from our Gospel story today that Jesus had no such reservations! When Jesus was presented with injustice, he didn't dither or come up with an excuse. He didn't walk away. **When he saw something that wasn't right, he acted.** In the temple, he found people selling livestock and the money changers doing 'earthly business' in the Lord's house. This is the ONLY story recorded in the Gospels where Jesus got really angry, even violent. He made a whip of cords and drove the vendors out of the temple. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. In anger, he shouted, "Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" (John 2:14-16)

And what was the response to his actions in the temple that day?

Well, it depends on who you ask...

For the religious leaders, they were outraged. In anger, they confronted Jesus and asked him – who do you think you are? What gives you the right to come in here and tell us what to do?! This is our house, not yours. Jesus makes no apologies for his actions – instead, he begins talking about himself...this temple, *my body*, will be torn down and then re-built in three days. For the Jewish leaders, they were beginning to see that this Jesus was going to be a problem.

But for the disciples, Jesus' actions in the temple were evidence that he was the real deal. He is the Son of God and their Saviour. And after Christ's death and resurrection – where he put right the greatest injustice of them all - the disciples would remember this encounter with new understanding. They would remember him working for justice in the house of the Lord. They would remember that he was predicting his own future – that he was giving them clues to solving his *own* murder mystery.

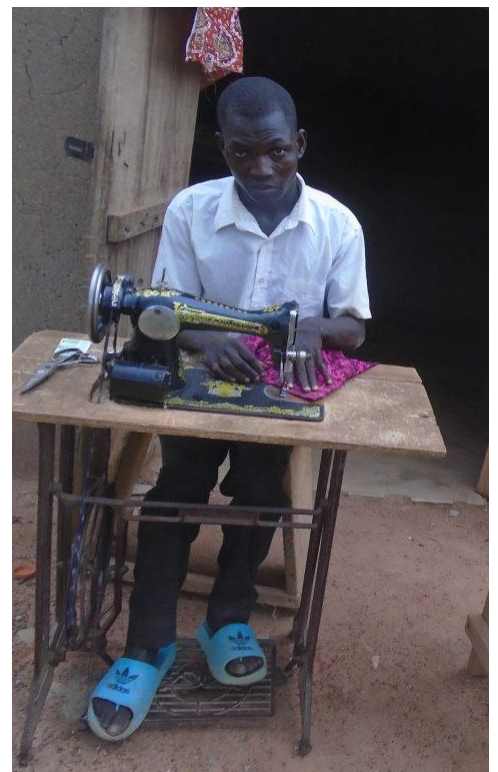
And what is our response to this story?

How can WE engage in the work of justice that Jesus began when he walked this earth? What can WE do to clean up the messiness of our broken world?

Of course, there are many ways in which we can participate in this work. In big ways and small ways. We can use our place of privilege here in Canada to advocate for those who struggle around the world. We can offer our time, our talents, and our money to organizations that offer healing and restoration. We can support the work of Presbyterian World Service & Development.

Here is one story from the work that we do through PWS&D.

This is Salifu Awini, a 24-year-old man who lives in Garu, Northern Ghana. Located in West Africa, Ghana is considered one of the more stable countries in this region since its transition to multi-party democracy in 1992. Formerly known as the Gold Coast, Ghana gained independence from Britain in 1957, becoming the first sub-Saharan nation to break free from colonial rule. Although not a wealthy country, its economy is stable because of its natural resources such as gold, cocoa, and the recent discovery of oil deposits.²



When Salifu was a child, he contracted severe meningitis, leading to permanent hearing loss and a speech impairment.³ Salifu's parents are poor small-scale farmers. In order to give their family a better future, Salifu's parents enrolled their children in elementary school, except for Salifu. Because of the stigma within their community about people with disabilities, his parents believed that there was

² <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13433790>

³ <https://presbyterian.ca/pwsd/threads-of-opportunity/> and [https://presbyterian.ca/pwsd/where we work/ghana/](https://presbyterian.ca/pwsd/where_we_work/ghana/)

no point in sending a child with a disability to school. As a result, Salifu was isolated, leading a lonely life at home while his siblings attended school.

Eventually, he was identified by the Presbyterian Church in Ghana's 'Community Based Rehabilitation Program' as a candidate for assistance. In this program, Salifu was given a sewing machine and he enrolled in training in dressmaking and tailoring, which provided him with the tools and knowledge to pursue a career path. He also received training in soap production and small business management, which equipped him with more skills to help him become self-sufficient. Salifu successfully graduated from these training programs in 2022. His newfound skills have boosted his confidence and opened up new opportunities for income generation. Salifu is now self-employed and earns a living by sewing and selling his goods.

As we sit here in our comfortable pews – or watch this service online from the warmth of our homes – it's hard for us to imagine all that Salifu and his family have been through. And there are several layers of injustice here – the poverty of subsistence farming, the lack of adequate health care for a sick child, the barriers to a quality education, the stigma of having a disabled child, and for me as a parent, the worst one of all...the difficult decision to favour one child over another in order to secure the family's future. We will never be able to walk in their shoes.

But that doesn't mean that WE can't help.

That's why organizations like Presbyterian World Service and Development are so important. The mission of PWS&D is to work towards a sustainable, compassionate, and just world. They seek to accomplish this through the priorities of improving food security, health, and livelihoods. They advocate for human rights, provide emergency relief, and assist refugees. In their most recent Annual Report, Presbyterians across the country donated \$5.3 million dollars to this ministry and when combined with matching grant

programs and the resources of our ecumenical partners, these funds were multiplied into \$10.8 million dollars.⁴ And Salifu and his family are just one of many families whom we have supported with these funds. Through PWS&D and our partners, we have provided this family with hope and a future. They have received justice and restoration. Salifu has been given threads of opportunity because of us.

Friends, our support of PWS&D, along with the work that we do in Burlington and the work of our denomination across Canada, this is truly kingdom building work. And when we think about this work in the context of the teachings of Jesus in the Gospel of John, we are reminded that all that we have is from the Lord. This is NOT our house – it belongs to the Lord. We are stewards of these gifts and Christ commands us to use them gifts to provide threads of opportunity in a world that longs to be put right.

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

⁴ <https://presbyterian.ca/pwsd/about-pwsd/financials/>

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.

Whatever we will face this coming week, O God, we begin in gratitude for the blessings of our lives. Receive our offerings in thanksgiving. Through the ministry of this congregation, through the work of Christian mission may the world know that Jesus Christ is Lord. To you be all honour and glory and praise. World without end. Amen.

Prayers of the People⁵

Holy God, your Son came down from his place at your side and walked this earth for the sake of humanity, to reveal your great love and usher in the beginning of your kingdom. After giving his life as a ransom for many, Christ returned to you, and together, you have sent your Spirit to us. O Triune God, you continue to fill human emptiness with your goodness, you still come to human weakness with your strength, you lead us in the ways of life. Now touch us with healing and new hope as we lift up our prayers to you.

O Lord, when we are anxious about the affairs of our world, remind us that this is your world, not ours. Remind us that you are not indifferent, that your covenant with humanity is still intact. As we heard in Psalm 146, we are to put our trust in you and NOT the princes of our world.

Remembering this, Lord, how can we feel forsaken, or give way to hopelessness? You are with us and your sovereign hand is still upon human history. You continue your work amongst us and your kingdom WILL come, your will WILL be done.

⁵ Adapted from PWS&D Sunday worship resource

Holy and loving God, we lay before you the many people who suffer in a world that longs to be put right. We remember those whose days are shaped by famine, poverty, and war. We pray for all whose lives are diminished by the injustice of governments or economic systems. Let the harvests of our world be neither hoarded nor squandered. Let the nations of our world pursue justice, healing, and restoration.

We thank you for all who, in spite of so many obstacles and challenges, are at work for good. We honour those who refuse to listen to their critics and work for justice regardless of the personal cost. We thank you especially today for our brothers and sisters in Christ across this nation and around the world who live out the teachings of Christ. We thank you for the work of Presbyterian World Service and Development and our ecumenical partners. Send your Holy Spirit to us and inspire us to join in their work. Massage our hearts into new life and unclench our hands for greater generosity.

Loving and compassionate God, we pray for those who are near and dear to us. Be with the people who we know who are struggling with complex issues in their lives. We pray for people we know who seek justice for unfair treatment in the workplace and for those who are victims of crime, abuse, or neglect. Send the peace of Christ into these situations, O Lord, and heal them – body, mind, and soul.

Today we remember your children who we name before you...

Heavenly Father, we have so much to be thankful for. Help us to always remember that everything that we have comes from you. Give us the courage to be wise stewards of these good gifts so that the world will be put right in Christ's name. Amen.

Music: I'm gonna live so God can use me (#648, all verses)

Blessing (John 14:27)

Sung Amen