

Knox Presbyterian Church  
Rev. Emma Duncan  
FEBRUARY 9, 2025

SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION



Greetings

Call to worship

**Leader: For God so loved the world**

People: The sparrows, the mountain lions, the whales, and the people

**Leader: For God so loved the world**

People: In sickness and health, in success and failure

**Leader: For God so loved the world**

People: Enough to become one of us, enough to offer new life to us

**All: Let us worship the Lord! Amen.**

Music: Love divine, all love excelling (#371, all verses)

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

O Holy One, you are holy, eternal, and almighty. You created all things including each one of us. You are loving and forgiving. In the fullness of time, you sent your only begotten Son into the skin of a human being. As a man, Jesus experienced the highs and lows of life, just like we do. As your divine Son, he showed us what perfect love looks like when he died on the cross for the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. You are our God and we are your people. In this time of worship, we seek an encounter with you because your steadfast love is better than life itself.

As we hear the familiar story of Nicodemus today, O great Teacher, we are reminded that we are sometimes unsure of who Christ is. We wonder if he is who he really says he is – the Son of the Most High God. Father, forgive us when doubt you. In this time of so much uncertainty and anxiety, forgive us for putting our faith in the wrong people. Forgive us for valuing our possessions more than our relationships. Forgive us for not loving the world as you do.

O Lord, have mercy on us all! Save us from the temptations of this life. Help us to resist the evil forces of this age. Forgive our sins, for they are many.

O Holy Spirit, as you blew over Nicodemus' heart, blow in us today. May we hear the testimony of our Lord with open minds and new insight. Even when we doubt, you are near. Even when we are afraid, you are present. Give us faith to be reborn in your love and transformed into the men and women that you need us to be in the coming kingdom of God. May the global Church also be reborn in your love so that the world may know Jesus Christ.

We pray all these things in the divine name of 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 in Christ – hear the Good News! For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son and whosoever believes in him will not perish but have everlasting love. God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. (John 3:16-17) Receive this message of salvation with joy in your heart and take that love into a hurting world. Amen.

## Announcements

1. Welcome!
2. Join us in the Fellowship Hall after worship for refreshments and conversation.
3. Thank you to Jackie Harrington for doing our readings today.
4. TODAY – Sacrament of Holy Communion (explain for online watchers)
5. 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.

6. Next Sunday – Sacrament of Baptism
7. Upcoming Events

Saturday March 1, 9:00 a.m.

Congregational Pancake Breakfast

Saturday April 12, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Easter Eggstravaganza

Music: God of the sparrow, God of the whale (#307, verses 1,2,3,6)

Children's Time: Wherever the wind blows

**Prayer of Illumination:**

Let us pray. Eternal God, your Spirit inspired those who wrote the Bible and enlightens us to hear your Word anew each day. Guide us to be reborn in Christ Jesus. In his holy name we pray. Amen.

***Our Old Testament reading is taken from the Book of Psalms and we will be reading Responsive Psalm 63 verses 1-8.***

Leader: O God, you are my God, I seek you,

**People: my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you,  
as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.**

Leader: So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary,  
beholding your power and glory.

**People: Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you.**

Leader: So I will bless you as long as I live;

**People: I will lift up my hands and call on your name.**

Leader: My soul is satisfied as with a rich feast,

**People: and my mouth praises you with joyful lips when I think of you on my bed,  
and meditate on you in the watches of the night;  
for you have been my help, and in the shadow of your wings I sing for joy.**

Leader: My soul clings to you;

**People: your right hand upholds me. Amen.**

**Our New Testament reading is taken from the Gospel of John and we will be reading chapter 3, verses 1-17.**

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.”

Jesus answered him, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.”

Nicodemus said to him, “How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?”

Jesus answered, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, ‘You must be born from above.’ The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?”

Jesus answered him, “Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things? Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

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

Prayer not written in advance.

## Reflection: Second Chances

For those of you who are new at Knox, you need to know that I am not interested in sports at all. Not even the Olympics! But even someone like me has noticed that there is some sort of big football game this afternoon...called the Super Bowl? 😊 In celebration of this event, I have written two sermons...a short one and a long one. The short one is 6 words long and the long one is 1,200 words long. [Hold up two print outs]

Which one would you prefer?

Well, too bad, you are getting the long one!!

Let us pray. May the words of my mouth and the mediations of our hearts be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, our rock and redeemer. Amen.

Once upon a time there was a woman named Beth. She was in her early-70s and was a retired school teacher. She had been a Christian all of her life – in fact, she couldn't remember NOT being a Christian. From being a little kid in Sunday School all the way into adulthood, the Church had always been an important part of her life. Wherever she lived, she worshipped in a community of faith. She read her Bible faithfully, prayed regularly, and gave much of her time, talents, and treasures in service of the Church. When she and her husband retired, they devoted even *more* time to their congregation, serving at the food bank and attending Bible study.

Beth's favourite book of the Bible was the Gospel of John. She loved the stories and the imagery contained in this book. I am the way, the truth, and the life. I am the vine, you are the branches. I am the resurrection and the life. Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! Beth memorized many of Jesus' sayings from John's Gospel and they gave her comfort and strength all throughout her life.

Sadly, Beth's husband was diagnosed with cancer a few years after they retired. All of the travel plans that they had dreamed about, all of the sacrifices they made to save for retirement – all of this meant nothing now. Beth and their adult children spent years caring for him...taking him to appointment after appointment, chemo and radiation treatments. Even the surgeries didn't help. After 3 years of fighting this dreadful disease, he passed away surrounded by the people he loved.

The funeral was held in their church and family and friends came from far and wide to pay tribute to him and to offer their support. It was a beautiful celebration but then they all left. Their kids went back to their jobs and families and Beth was all alone, dealing with the paperwork and all of her husband's things accumulated over a lifetime. What bothered her the most was the silence of the house. Especially at night.

On one of the countless nights when she couldn't sleep, Beth lay in bed in the dark wondering if there was *anything* that could help her find peace and comfort. She turned on her bedside lamp and, in the darkness, the light shone on her Bible – a book that she had barely picked up in recent months. She stared at the book and said a prayer – Lord, do you have something to say to me? Are you here? Do you even care about me?

Beth sat on the edge of her bed, picked up her Bible, and flipped through the well-worn pages. She stopped at John chapter 3 and began to read the story of Jesus and Nicodemus...as she read this familiar story again, it took on new meaning for her because she finally understood Nicodemus. Here was a devout and educated man who, for whatever reason, became unsure of himself. Unsure of his faith. And he – like her – woke up in middle of the night with a longing to be with Jesus, the Messiah, the Lamb of God. And he – like her – was a teacher who now became the student in the presence of Christ.



The comforting words recorded in the Gospel of John greeted Beth like an old friend. As the tears fell down her cheeks, she prayed – thank you, Lord Jesus, for loving me. Thank you for giving me a second chance and hope for the future.

This story comes from my imagination. Beth isn't a real person. That said, this story has been influenced by the people who I have spoken to in recent weeks, including one of my closest friends who received the dreaded news that she has cancer. She and I have been friends since university and I have officiated at three funerals for her family members and I told her that I am not ready to officiate at hers.

Cancer is a nasty, awful disease that has touched the lives of every person. We ALL know people who have had cancer – some were successful in their fight while others were not. It is a cruel, cruel disease.

But the focus on my little story is not cancer. It's about the deepest longing of our souls – to have an encounter with Jesus Christ. Like Nicodemus, we have all had moments in our lives when we think that we have a firm grasp on life and our faith is strong. And then – for whatever reason – something happens and that firm foundation starts to crumble. We realize that our faith isn't as strong as we thought it was and we find ourselves asking the questions that Beth asked... Lord, do you have something to say to me? Are you here? Do you even care about me?

If you ever feel this way in your life, the third chapter of John is a good place to start in God's most holy Word. In fact, I encourage you to bookmark this passage in the Bible that you read the most frequently. Reading this story – in any season of life and at any time of day – will remind you of the hope that we have in Jesus Christ.

Because like Nicodemus, we want God to explain life and faith in the way that we can understand. But Jesus offers no explanation. Instead, he tells us that the Holy Spirit blows wherever it chooses. This mystery is not for us to understand.

Instead, we need to trust. We need to cling to our faith.

But we cling to our faith not because of fear or grief or anxiety.

**We cling to it because of love.**

For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son and whosoever believes in him will not perish but have everlasting love. God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. (John 3:16-17)

As I said at the beginning of my reflection, my short sermon is 6 only words long – **For God so loved the world** – because in the end, love is all that matters.

Whatever is going on in your life, know that you are loved by our God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Whatever is going on in the world, know that God is in control. God created this world and he loves it still.

And so, as we gather to celebrate the Sacrament of Holy Communion together, know that you are a beloved child of God, saved through the perfect sacrifice of our Lord, Jesus Christ. It is my hope and prayer that the Holy Spirit will move among us so that we can experience the deepest long of our hearts – to be surrounded by God's love.

Amen.

**Hymn: Here is the bread: here is the wine (#546, all verses)**

## The Sacrament of Holy Communion

### Invitation

Brothers and sisters in Christ – there is no need to sneak around in the dark to find Christ. Because He is here with us now. No matter who you are or what burdens you carry with you, know that you are welcome at Christ's table.

This table reminds us that God loves and forgives us and he desires to have an encounter with us – one where we will be reborn through the movement of the Holy Spirit.

Come and experience the living Christ as we celebrate this joyful feast!

### Apostles' Creed

Let us join together and confess our common faith in the words of the Apostles' Creed. Please stand if you are able.

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son our Lord

Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,

Born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate,

Was crucified, died and was buried;

He descended to the dead.

On the third day, he rose again;

He ascended into heaven,

He is seated on the right hand of the Father,

And he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church,

The communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,

The resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Amen.

## Prayer

Creating Father, you spoke and your spirit blew over the formless void and created the earth, sea, and sky. You separated the light from the darkness. You brought forth vegetation and commanded the earth and sea to give birth to living creatures both great and small. You created man and woman in your image. And it was all good. We give you honour and praise for the work of your hands.

Redeeming Saviour, you are the greatest gift of all. You became flesh and dwelt among us. You entered the river Jordan to take on our sin, you called the disciples one by one, you turned water into wine, you did miraculous signs, and you reached out to many different people – sinners and saints alike. Through your life's example, you challenge us to think differently, to act boldly, to love compassionately, and to forgive unconditionally. Through your death and resurrection, you destroyed the temple and re-built it in 3 days. In you, we have forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life. In you, we are reborn.

Nurturing Spirit, let your wind blow through this place, through these people, and upon our offerings of bread and wine. Let the bread of life nourish our souls. Let the cup of salvation overflow with your grace and mercy. Pour out your Spirit and the blessings of heaven upon us. Gather your Church together so that all people may share in the banquet that you have provided.

Through Christ, with Christ, and in Christ, all honour and glory are yours, our creator, redeemer, and friend. Amen.

## Institution of the Sacrament

Beloved in the Lord, attend to the words of the institution of the Holy Supper of our Lord Jesus Christ, as they are delivered to us by the apostle Paul:

I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you,

that the Lord Jesus, on the night when he was betrayed  
took a loaf of bread,

and when he had given thanks,

he broke it and said,

"This is my body that is for you.

Do this in remembrance of me."

In the same way he took the cup after supper, saying,

"This cup is the new covenant in my blood.

Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup,

you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

It used to be that we had no hope. But no more. Our hope is in Christ Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He willingly and obediently sacrificed his life so that we will not perish but have everlasting life. As we celebrate this wonderful hope, we pray for the Holy Spirit to come and blow over these elements. Whether these elements are present in the sanctuary or on your table at home, we recognize that the Holy Spirit is not confined to any physical space, but blows wherever it chooses. O Spirit of the Living God - take these natural elements of bread and wine and transform them into this holy mystery.

In the name of Jesus Christ, I invite you to come - all who hunger and thirst for God's grace and mercy – come and experience the Bread of Life and the Cup of Salvation!

## Sharing of the Body and Blood

The Body of Christ, broken for you. // The Blood of Christ, shed for you.

## Prayer

Eternal God, we thank you for this holy mystery in which you have given yourself to us. You have satisfied us with this rich feast, and fed the deepest longings of our souls. We have heard your love – now send us out to speak it. We have seen your love – now send us out to show it. We have been fed on your love – now send us out to share it. Through your Spirit, transform us into Christ's ambassadors. In his name we pray. Amen.

Hymn: Worship the Lord (#555, all verses)

Blessing (Colossians 3:12-14 The Message)

Sung Amen