

Knox Presbyterian Church
Rev. Emma Duncan
May 18, 2025



Greetings

God Save the King

Call to Worship (Psalm 100)

Leader: Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth.

People: Serve the Lord with gladness; come into his presence with singing.

Leader: Know that the Lord is God.

People: It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people and the sheep of his pasture.

Leader: Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise.

People: Give thanks to him; bless his name.

All: For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever and his faithfulness to all generations. Amen.

Music: Praise him, praise him, Jesus our blessed Redeemer (#372, all verses)

Prayer of Adoration and Confession

Father, Creator, Saviour, Shepherd, Messiah—we know you by many names, Lord. We gather here today for many reasons, but our prime focus is to worship you and glorify your most holy name. We gather as your flock to love and bless you, O Lord. We yearn to experience your presence in our lives.

O blessed Shepherd, as we offer you our worship, we also admit that we are like lost sheep. When trouble comes, we follow our own path because we think that our way is better than yours. When adversity plagues us, we run and hide forgetting that we can dwell with you. When someone new comes along with something shiny to show us, how quickly we listen to the wrong voice!

O Lord in your mercy, forgive our sins are many.

Come, blessed Trinity, and take away our sin. Rescue us from the darkness. Dispel our gloom and despair. Spread your table before us and feed us from your hand. Help us to listen for your voice. Lead us in the paths of righteousness so that we may dwell with you forevermore.

Remind us each and every day that it is YOU who we worship.

All this we pray in the name of our risen Lord and Saviour, 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

There are many references to shepherds and sheep in Scripture, including the prophet Isaiah in chapter 53, where he says - [All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way.](#)

The Lord knows of our sin and because of his great love for us, he sent his Son into the world to offer us forgiveness, mercy, and grace.

Beloved in the Lord, receive the Good News – in the name of Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, we have been forgiven! Amen.

Announcements

1. Welcome!
2. Join us for a time of fellowship and conversation after worship in our Fellowship Hall downstairs.
3. Thank you to Rick Craig for doing the readings today.
4. Volunteers Needed for Coffee fellowship. Sign-up sheet is in the Fellowship Hall.
5. **Financial Update (January – March 2025)**
Revenue - \$50,074.77
Expenses - \$63,262.85
Presbyterians Sharing - \$7,155.26
PWS&D - \$565.00
Deficit - \$13,188.08
6. Next Sunday – Sacrament of Holy Communion
7. Happy 100th birthday Bruce Kerr!

Knox Presbyterian Church 180th Anniversary Celebrations

Spring Concert

Sunday May 25th at 1:00 p.m.

Featuring: Circle of Harmony Women's Chorus

Tickets \$20 per person

Anniversary Worship Service

Sunday June 1st at 10:30 a.m.

Guest Preacher: The Rev. Dr. Richard Fee

Former Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Canada

Anniversary Luncheon

Sunday June 1st at 12:00 p.m.

Royal Canadian Legion

828 Legion Road, Burlington

Tickets \$20 per person

To reserve your tickets, call 905-333-3013.

Knox Presbyterian Church (Burlington)
461 Elizabeth Street
www.knoxburlington.ca

Music: Saviour, like a shepherd lead us (#485, all verses)

Children's Time: Silly Sheep

Prayer of Illumination:

Let us pray. O God, you know us better than we know ourselves. As the Bible is read today, help us to listen for your voice. Lead us on the right path and keep us safe in your Word. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, the Great Shepherd of our souls. Amen.

Our Old Testament reading is taken from the Book of Psalms and we will be reading Responsively Psalm 23.

Leader: The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

People: He makes me lie down in green pastures.

Leader: He leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul.

People: He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.

Leader: Even though I walk through the darkest valley.

People: I fear no evil.

Leader: For you are with me.

People: Your rod and your staff—they comfort me.

Leader: You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.

People: You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

Leader: Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.

People: And I will dwell in the house of the LORD my whole life long.

Amen.

Our New Testament reading is taken from the Gospel of John and we will be reading chapter 10, verses 1-18.

“Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.”

Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

So again, Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own, and my own know me, just as the Father knows me, and I know the Father.

And I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So, there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason, the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.”

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

Reflection: When God says I AM – The Good Shepherd and Gate

[In front of the Communion Table]

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil;
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff—they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD my whole life long.

Many of us have been reciting the 23rd Psalm since childhood. We learnt it in Sunday School and some of you even had to memorize Bible passages in public school. Regardless of which version you know, this Psalm has given comfort and strength to generations of Christians *and* Jews. For me personally, this is one of the Bible passages that I recite when taking off in an airplane because I don't like flying. And on a professional level, this is the most popular passage that I have preached on for a funeral service. We have all had moments when this timeless Psalm has strengthened our faith and given us hope.

And when you add this Psalm to the fact that Jesus used the same imagery to reveal himself as the Good Shepherd, then we have an incredible example of how the Old and New Testaments are interconnected. The Messiah, Jesus Christ, is revealed to us in the teachings of the Hebrew Scriptures.

These two passages together are truly a beautiful thing.

[Walk up to the Pulpit]

Do you know how hard it is to preach on these familiar passages? Do you know how challenging it is to say something NEW about passages that many of you have known since childhood? The Rev. Dr. Will Willimon, a retired Bishop in the Methodist tradition, who is a gifted writer, scholar, and one of the greatest preachers of our time, described these passages as “limp from overuse.”¹

And to be honest, I agree with him.

So, what I want to do today – with Professor Willimon as my guide and inspiration – is to take some time to bask in the glow of these two passages and the promises contained within them. I’m not going to talk about their historical or cultural significance in the time of King David or Jesus. I’m not going to connect the dots between the Old and New Testaments. I’m not going explain all of the nuances. Preachers and theologians who are much smarter than I am have already done this faithful work.

Today you do not have to DO anything. At the end of this reflection, there will be no list of things for you to do this week. There will be no altar call to deputize you as ‘assistant shepherds’ who help the Good Shepherd bring about the kingdom of God. And that’s because Psalm 23 and John 10 – known together as the “Shepherd passages” – **are not about us!!** In our society that is hyper focused on the individual, the Shepherd passages invite us to reflect on the actions of God as our Creator, Redeemer, and Guide.

¹ <https://asermonforeversunday.com/sermons/not-my-favorite-sunday/>

And so, in the midst of the craziness of our world, opening your Bible and basking in the timeless power and beauty of God's most holy Word is often the only thing that makes sense. But not to get our marching orders or a job description about what it looks like to be a good minister or a good disciple...but to be reminded of who GOD is. Who does God reveal God-self to be? And so, that's what I did on Friday on your behalf. I printed out our Bible readings for today and spent time with them, circling the words that jumped out at me and phrases that spoke to me.

Before I share with you what I found, it's important for you to remember that I am NOT the Shepherd. Don't rely on me to build your relationship with the Lord. What I am about to show you does NOT require a Master's degree. Anyone can do this with a piece of paper and pen. I share these thoughts with you as a fellow sheep who has not always followed the right path and who has gotten stuck from time to time.

For those who are watching online, I am going to disappear from your screen for a few minutes, but you will be able to hear me. I promise that I'll be back shortly!!

Here is what the Holy Spirit revealed to me about these passages...

Scripture Readings

Rick Craig

Prayer of Illumination:

Let us pray. O God, you know us better than we know ourselves. As the Bible is read today, help us to listen for your voice. Lead us on the right path and keep us safe in your Word. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, the Great Shepherd of our souls. Amen.

Our Old Testament reading is taken from the Book of Psalms and we will be reading Responsively Psalm 23.

Leader: The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

People: He makes me lie down in green pastures.

provision
→ rest, glorious rest!

Leader: He leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul.

People: He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.

Leader: Even though I walk through the darkest valley.

People: I fear no evil.

} do not be afraid
in life or in death

Leader: For you are with me.

People: Your rod and your staff—they comfort me.

Leader: You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.

People: You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

Leader: Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.

People: And I will dwell in the house of the LORD my whole life long.

Amen.

SLIDE CHANGE

In the 23rd Psalm, I was reminded that the Shepherd offers his sheep – meaning you and me - provision and nourishment. He leads us towards safety and rest – glorious rest! He restores our weary souls. Even when we are anxious, even when we are surrounded by enemies, even when we are dying, the Shepherd promises us peace and comfort for he is always near. He anoints us in goodness and mercy.

We are invited to stay with the Shepherd – but not in a barn or a sheep pen or exposed to the elements on the top of a windy hill² – but to live with God in his house all the days of our lives. And when we pass from this life to the next, we will dwell with the Lord forevermore.

SLIDE CHANGE

In John chapter 10, I read that the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, continues to offer us protection – this time from thieves and bandits. His voice is the One that we sheep need to listen to when strangers offer us things that do more harm than good. When the wolves of this world try to attack us, the gatekeeper warns us of the coming danger. And under his protection and guidance, there is salvation. There is abundant life.

And if that wasn't enough, the Good Shepherd laid down his life for the sheep. Of his own accord, Jesus sacrificed his life for us.

Jesus Christ sacrificed himself because of his great love his flock.

² Reference to my children's story - <https://youtu.be/HTJUBaN97kI?si=Lt-H2TNfNB-XrTRK>

Our New Testament reading is taken from the Gospel of John and we will be reading chapter 10, verses 1-18.

"Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers."

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So again, Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own, and my own know me, just as the Father knows me, and I know the Father.

And I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So, there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason, the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father."

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

Sacrifice of X done b/c of
his great love for his flock.



Friends, no matter who you are or what you have done or what is going on in your life right now, the promises contained in the Shepherd passages are Good News indeed. God reveals himself as “I AM” the Good Shepherd and we are his beloved sheep. And nowhere in these passages are we asked to be ‘assistant shepherds.’ In fact, we are powerless because we cannot do what God did for the world through his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. There is no human being in history who has had the power to save the world as Christ did. As sheep, we are completely dependent on the Good Shepherd for salvation and abundant life. And if anyone who tells you that they can offer you salvation by another path - beware, for they are a thief and a bandit. They are wolves in sheep’s clothing.

These promises of salvation and eternal life are why there is such deep comfort for people of faith in these passages. When we are anxious, when we are surrounded by enemies, even in the valley of the shadow of death, the Good Shepherd loves us and tells us – don’t be afraid, for I am always near.

And these promises of God’s love and goodness and mercy will NEVER get limp from overuse. Indeed, they are why we can say with confidence – my cup overflows. Amen.

Dedication of our Tithes and Offerings

Song of Thanks – Praise God from whom all blessings flow (#830)

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 of Dedication (not written in advance)

Prayers of the People

Creating God, our Shepherd, come close to us now. We are your sheep – your flock – and we are eternally grateful for the blessings of our lives. We thank you for our family and friends, for our health, for our wealth, for this nation, and for the Church. We thank you for the gift of your Son, Jesus Christ, who is our Redeemer. Of his own accord, he laid down his life for us. Thank you for sending your Spirit to be our Guide. We are in awe of the gifts that you have lavished upon us. Our cup overflows with the goodness and mercy that only you can provide!

Shepherding God, we live in an anxious world. Father, we need you in this time of economic uncertainty. We need you in this time of political instability. We need you in this time of social unrest. Protect the innocent victims of war, violence, and abuse. Restore our planet. Keep us safe from those who say they have our best interests at heart, but are only interested in their own agendas. Take world leaders along the right path – the path of peace and reconciliation.

Shepherding God, we pray for those who walk in the dark valleys. Give food and shelter to the poor, unhoused, and marginalized. Give comfort to the dying and bereaved. Strengthen those who are persecuted for their faith in Jesus Christ. Give them your glorious rest! Lord, we need the Holy Spirit to descend upon all believers in the global Church. May we – your sheep – hear the voice of the Shepherd and invite others to follow your path of wisdom and truth.

Shepherding God, there are so many people in our community who need your tender loving care. We pray for those who are ill or in hospital. We remember those who are lonely and anxious. Be with those who struggle in their workplaces or in their families. We pray for those who are weary from the stresses and strains of daily life. Surround them with your abiding presence and remind them that they too can dwell in the house of the Lord.

We pray for those who we name before you today...

Be with all these people, O Lord. Grant them your healing. Give them your comfort. Remind them that they are beloved children of God and that you are always with them.

Blessed Saviour – we come to you with the blessed assurance that you hear our prayers. In gratitude for all you have done for us, the only prayer that matters is a simple one – thank you for being our Shepherd. Amen.

Music: Blessed Assurance, Jesus is mine (#687, all verses)

Blessing (1 Peter 2:25)

Sung Amen