

Knox Presbyterian Church  
Rev. Emma Duncan  
June 1, 2025

180<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY SERVICE



Ring Bell at 10:20 a.m.

Prelude: Sweet hour of prayer written in 1845 by W. Walford

Carolyn Haacke

Call to Worship: Holy, holy, holy #299 (verse 1)

Greetings

This is the day that the Lord has made;

Let us rejoice and be glad in it!

We give thanks to God as we celebrate our 180<sup>th</sup> Anniversary!

Land Acknowledgement

As we celebrate this milestone today, we must acknowledge the sharing of this land. The land on which we gather has a complicated history. It is the traditional territory of the Haudenosaanee and the Anishnaabe first peoples which was then 'gifted' to Mohawk Nation Chief Joseph Brant by the Crown for his services to Britain during the American Revolution. Brant received this gift in 1798, but since he died just nine years later, he had little opportunity to do much with the land grant. James Gage purchased 338 acres of land from the Brant estate and laid out a plan for a town, first known as Wellington Square, and then renamed Burlington in 1873. Mr. Gage's son, Andrew, and his wife, Martha, then gifted a portion of this land for a new church, a church that became Knox Presbyterian Church. We acknowledge the complexity of the history between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples and with respect for Indigenous history, spirituality, and culture, we give thanks for the privilege of gathering on this land.

Music: Your Hand, O God, Has Guided #477 (all verses)

### Prayer of Adoration and Confession (including the Lord's Prayer)

Heavenly Father, as we gather together in your name, we come with grateful hearts. We praise you for your creation. You spoke and the world came to be. You set the moon and the stars in their places and then created all creatures great and small. You formed human beings in your image. And if all of this wasn't enough, you poured yourself into a human body in the form of Jesus Christ. He defeated the bonds of sin and death to set us free. On the day of Pentecost, the Church began and your Spirit continues to guide the global Church. You have been our dwelling place in all generations and we worship and praise your most holy name.

Redeeming Saviour, even as our lips praise your name, our minds wander to the cares of this world. We fall short of your standards and we need your forgiveness in our lives. As individuals, we often value wealth and power over generosity and compassion. Forgive us, O God. As a society, we seek quick and easy solutions instead of doing the hard work justice and reconciliation. Forgive us, O God. As your Church, we often focus inward rather than outward. Forgive us, O God.

Thank you, Lord Jesus, for your amazing grace!

Nurturing Spirit, through your movement all around us, renew our faith. As we celebrate this anniversary today, help us to always remember that Jesus Christ is the cornerstone upon which we build a solid foundation. May this foundation support us in our daily walk with the Lord.

We pray in the blessed name of the 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

In Psalm 118, we hear these words - **the stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This is the LORD's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.** Scripture reveals that this cornerstone is Jesus Christ. Through the death and resurrection of our Lord, we are no longer rejected, we are forgiven. Thanks be to God. Amen.

## Announcements

Thank you to everyone who is participating in today's worship service and to those who worked 'behind the scenes' during the planning process.

- ✚ Musicians – Jada Dawson, Peter Hanson, Carolyn Haacke
- ✚ Reader - Jackie Harrington
- ✚ Elders & members of Anniversary planning group
- ✚ Kathy Kelly

Following the worship service, there will be no coffee fellowship. Instead, we will proceed to the Legion for our luncheon.

## Welcome Dignitaries and Special Guests

- ✚ MP Katrina Gould
- ✚ MPP for Burlington Natalie Pierre
- ✚ Councillor Lisa Kearns - City of Burlington
- ✚ Alison Coventry – Burlington East Presbyterian Church

## Welcome to the Rev. Dr. Richard Fee

A native of Alberta, Rick commenced his vocation in 1976 through a secondment to The Presbyterian Church of Nigeria. After 16 years there, he returned to Canada to serve as Director of Presbyterian World Service and Development. In 2004-2005, he served as Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church. In 2005, he was appointed General Secretary of the Life and Mission Agency. He is retired, but has recently completed work as lead researcher of a film entitled, *“Operation Lights Out: Canadian Humanitarian Aid During the Nigerian-Biafran War, 1967-1970”*. Pre-COVID, he travelled to Spain, Portugal, Malta, France, and Italy to walk the Camino pilgrimage. He serves on the Board of Knox College and does genealogy research. His son, Nkwuda and daughter-in-law, Kelechi, have two children.

## **Presbyterian Church Picnic**

(In partnership with Brant Hills and Burlington East churches)

Sunday June 22 at Crieff Hills Retreat Centre

Tickets are \$25.00 per person and will be available next week

10:30 a.m. – gathering

11:00 a.m. – worship

12:00 p.m. – lunch

1:00 p.m. – Games and time to explore the property

**Knox will also be open for worship on June 22**

## **Shared Summer Worship Services**

This summer, we will be sharing worship services with Brant Hills Presbyterian Church as follows:

Worship at Knox: June 29 - July 27 // Worship at Brant Hills: August 3 - August 31

1. MP Katrina Gould
2. MPP for Burlington Natalie Pierre
3. Councillor Lisa Kearns - City of Burlington
4. Presbyterian Church in Canada  
From the Rev. Dr. Patricia Dutcher-Walls, Moderator of The Presbyterian Church in Canada

Grace and peace to you, in the name of God our creator, saviour and sustainer.

It's with deep joy and heartfelt gratitude that I bring greetings on behalf of The Presbyterian Church in Canada as you celebrate the 180th Anniversary of Knox Presbyterian Church in Burlington, Ontario. What a wonderful milestone, marking nearly two centuries of worship, spiritual growth, and community service.

Since its founding in 1845, Knox has stood as a beacon of Christian witness in Burlington. Through times of difficult challenge and great joy, Knox has remained a steadfast sign, pointing to the presence and love of God. I give thanks to God for the generations who have gathered within Knox to worship, pray, and serve.

This anniversary is not only a time to look back on your rich history, but also to look forward with hope and renewed purpose. As you reflect on all that God has done in and through Knox over the past 180 years, may you recommit yourselves to the future and the continuing the work of Christ Jesus in our community and beyond...

May this celebration inspire all of us to remain faithful stewards of what we receive from the hand of our gracious and bountiful God.

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

Children's Time: A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away...

Special Music: The Building

Jada Dawson

Prayer for Illumination

O God, our help in ages past, you are our hope for years to come. We give you praise for the gift of your most holy Word. By your Spirit, let faith, love, and hope grow in us as we seek to bear fruit that glorifies the name of Jesus. In his blessed name we pray. Amen.

**Our Old Testament reading is taken from the Book of Psalms and we will be reading select verses from Psalm 90.**

Leader: Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.

**People: Before the mountains were brought forth,  
or ever you had formed the earth and the world,  
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.**

Leader: You turn us back to dust, and say, "Turn back, you mortals."

**People: For a thousand years in your sight  
are like yesterday when it is past, or like a watch in the night.**

Leader: You sweep them away; they are like a dream,  
like grass that is renewed in the morning;

**People: in the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers.**

Leader: For all our days pass away under your wrath;

**People: our years come to an end like a sigh.**

Leader: The days of our life are seventy years, or perhaps eighty, if we are strong;

**People: even then their span is only toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away.**

Leader: Turn, O Lord! How long? Have compassion on your servants!

**People: Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love,  
so that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.  
Make us glad as many days as you have afflicted us,  
and as many years as we have seen evil.**

Leader: Let your work be manifest to your servants,  
and your glorious power to their children.

**People: Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us,  
and prosper for us the work of our hands—O prosper the work of our hands!**

**Our Old Testament reading is taken from the Book of Isaiah and we will be reading chapter 40, verses 1-8.**

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God.

Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

A voice cries out:

"In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD;  
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain.

Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

A voice says, "Cry out!"

And I said, "What shall I cry?"

All flesh is grass; their constancy is like the flower of the field.

The grass withers; the flower falls,

when the breath of the LORD blows upon it; surely the people are grass.

The grass withers; the flower falls;

but the word of our God will stand forever.

**Our New Testament reading is taken from the Apostle Paul's letter to the Ephesians and we will be reading chapter 4, verses 1-16. This reading was changed by Rev. Fee after the bulletins were printed.**

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it is said, "When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people."

When it says, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things. The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming.

But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.

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



## INTRODUCTION

*"A dragon lives forever, but not so little boys..."*

Peter Yarrow, one third of a 1960's folk trio, died on January 6 of this year. Peter, Paul and Mary were known for their caring and righteous vocals, one of the most visible folk groups of the socially conscious and politically progressive groups of that era.

They had consciously chosen a biblical moniker – "Peter, Paul and Mary" - as the name of their group. Peter Yarrow's father, a lawyer, was a Jewish immigrant who later converted to Protestantism, and that background remained a major inspiration in Peter's life and song writing.

Peter, Paul and Mary were present and sang at the "March on Washington", when Martin Luther King Jr. gave his "I Have a Dream" speech. They sang Bob Dylan's "*Blowin' in the Wind*," which became the civil rights anthem.

Their song, "*Puff the Magic Dragon*," reached No. 2 on the Billboard charts.

*"A dragon lives forever, but not so little boys  
Painted wings and giant's rings make way for other toys  
One gray night it happened, Jackie Paper came no more  
And Puff, that mighty dragon, he ceased his fearless roar"*

## BABY BOOM FORMATIVE YEARS

For many Canadian baby boomers, in the 1960's and 70's things were very black and white. Church was church. School was school. The arena was the arena. The mall was the mall. Pop songs were pop songs. Life was lived in pockets – family here, church there, school there. Things did not generally mix. A social justice consciousness from pop culture – folk songs – Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, Peter, Paul and Mary, Canadians, Ian and Sylvia and Gordon Lightfoot, etc. - coalesced and drew a generation together. But that movement was seldom associated with the church.

In my own journey, it took me a long while to see a link – to connect the dots. I was slow to recognize that for my own self-development I had to integrate the church, my

education, and the realities of the geo-political world. I grew to understand that one's life needs a foundation of core values and mature faith. I learned those pop – folk songs were relevant to me and to what was happening in the world. And I learned Christ's teachings were also relevant, contemporary and core.

I came to understand that the Bible was not a book of facts – it was a book of faith. The stories, the histories, the allegories, and the moral lessons of the Bible were applicable, *but* they had to be read with greater understanding and discernment than I had given them in Sunday School. The *literal* gave way to a fuller understanding of what faith and religion was all about. I had to take faith, God, astronomy, sociology, geography, history and theology and integrate them into a mature world view. It took a while for my theology to catch up to my sociology.

Each of us have made our own spiritual journey. Our Christianity has had to evolve; we have been summoned to learn and grow. Today we are challenged to declare what our Christianity means and how we live it. Today we seem to be surrounded by people and forces who use and abuse the Gospel of Jesus Christ for their own gain. We are astounded that they are succeeding. Part of our maturing faith is an acknowledgement that not all Christians have made the journey of maturity.

Our scripture this morning bids us to three courses of action:

**Firstly**, to find comfort in our lives – to be at peace – to learn the humility of our humanity: “All flesh is grass; our constancy is like a flower. When the breath of the Lord blows upon it, the grass withers, the flower fades.” Once we learn that God is Creator, we are then drawn forward to accept our human nature – being a creature – learning to live in harmony in creation – learning to live with others and with all of creation.

**Secondly**, we, as growing Christians, must acknowledge that we have to grow up. We are called to be mature. We are called upon to integrate our life experiences, our joys and sorrows, into a whole person. We are called upon to be true to ourselves and live an authentic personhood. God shall make us glad and prosper us, even as he guides and corrects us in our lives. We must have faith that once we have taken the name of Jesus, we are being guided by a power for good and not for ill. We are guided and live by faith, hope and love. We are raised up – from childhood to adulthood – we mature.

**Thirdly**, we are to no longer be children, but we are to build one another up in the faith and we are to share the hope we have within us. Christians are to look boldly, confidently at hopeless reality, at rampant, flagrant stupidity and ignorance seen in public arenas and on television. Looking at threats and innumerable realities of death we are to declare there is hope, there is a resurrection, there is something to live for. **14 We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. 15 But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ.**

Jurgen Moltmann, Protestant Theologian, in his book, *Theology of Hope* stated, "*Hope is inherently future-oriented and articulates a vision where the future of God breaks into the present, offering a transformative hope that impacts current human conditions and societal structures.*"

For Moltmann, hope is far more than mere optimism, conviction, or anticipation – it is an active, lived reality. Hope requires engaging directly with social injustices and advocating for human dignity and the common good. True hope means aligning oneself with marginalized and oppressed groups and standing in solidarity with their struggles for liberation and justice. It involves responding to human suffering with empathy and compassion, ensuring that **hope is not passive** but a driving force for transformative action.

### **Christian Maturity - Empathy**

I received a social media posting of a photo from the LA fires last winter. It showed one house left standing – pristine, red roof, white siding, gleaming, untouched by the fires - one house in a field of the ruins of all of its neighbours. The heading declared that this was the house of a Christian. What was unstated implied that the Christian family there had been living in a sea of heathenism and that God had wiped those other folk out and spared the Christian family as a witness to their faithfulness to their God. The posting fit nicely into a "Me and God" theology, an "us/them" view of the world.

Another LA wildfires story was relayed during an interview on CTV. It told of a Canadian pastor of a denomination whose church had gone up in flames. Both the pastor and his wife spoke thankfully of the community which had arisen from their immediate circle,

from Canada and, indeed from around the world, banding together to offer support and encouragement. They said they were given strength and HOPE from that solidarity.

Richard Rohr, RC Theologian stated, *“Christianity is a way of being in the world that is simple, non-violent, shared, and loving. However, it has been made into an established “religion”. One could be warlike, greedy, racist, selfish, and vain in most of Christian history, and still believe that Jesus was one’s “personal Lord and Saviour. The world has no time for such silliness anymore. The suffering on Earth is too great.”*

The starkness of world views and Christian maturity was laid bare when Elon Musk recently stated, *“The fundamental weakness of Western civilization is empathy.”* This was countered by Hannah Arendt, German-American historian and philosopher, who stated, *“The death of human empathy is one of the earliest and most telling signs of a culture about to fall into barbarism.”*

### **KNOX BURLINGTON’S ANNIVERSARY TODAY**

While “growing up” and “growing into the likeness of Christ” may be viewed as personal spiritual development, it is equally vital for Christian institutions and congregations to evaluate, to “take stock”. The 180<sup>th</sup> anniversary is a significant time to have members discuss and evaluate how Knox is fairing.

### **Galileo (Galilei)**

Galileo is an example of how we humans are being called to mature and grow up. However, in his case, it was the church, as a living entity - which had to learn, “grow up” and mature.

Galileo was often upsetting the Catholic Church especially when he endorsed Copernicus’s idea that the Earth orbits the sun, not the other way around as the Bible says. Oops! He also debunked other church-approved Aristotelian theories by developing his own telescope and finding proof for Copernicus in the heavens. In 1616, the church ordered him to knock it off. And he did, until a friendlier pope urged him to publish his findings if he could do so in a “neutral way”. He could not; he published anyway. Hauled before the Inquisition and threatened with torture, he got off with house arrest, dying in Arc/etri near Florence, at age 77. It was Pope John Paul II who apologized in 1992 for the treatment of Galileo. After 376 years.

Many in the world today have staked a claim to Christianity and are using it as their platform to acquire, control, and dominate. The concept of inter-dependence is foreign to them; they do not wish to be questioned or reminded about the Gospel of Jesus Christ nor the requirements of being a follower. There are people who believe they should limit, truss, circumscribe God. They believe the church should remain “in house”, that the church should not be involved beyond its walls, in society, and in the world.

Mature Christianity broke open those restrictions – it leapt from the tomb and declared that even beyond death, God was to be acknowledged as the Ground of All Being. Knox Burlington, in spite of everything around and about you in the world, is called upon to declare your hope, share your hope, work with your hope.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in a sermon preached in 1934 said this: (on 2 Corinthians 12:9)  
*“Christianity stands or falls with its revolutionary protest against violence, arbitrariness and pride of power and with its plea for the weak. Christians are doing too little to make these points clear rather than too much. Christendom adjusts itself far too easily to the worship of power. Christians should give more offence, shock the world far more, than they are doing now. Christians should take a stronger stand in favour of the weak rather than considering first the possible right of the strong.”*

Tommy Douglas, Canadian politician and the man credited with being the father of modern medicare, *“We are all in this world together, and the only test of our character that matters is how we look after the least fortunate among us. How we look after each other, not how we look after ourselves. That’s all that really matters.”*

## **CONCLUSION**

Christian communities gather to forge personal faith, to grow, learn, and build up the body of Christ. Each person brings their whole person to this process. We bring the Bible as guide in faith and life; we bring our intellect, our education, our experience, our everything.

On this anniversary Sunday my hope is that Knox Burlington will remain a place for robust debate, intelligent discussion, serious learning, infinite mind-stretching and active engagement in the world – that Knox Burlington will “...come to the unity of the faith and

of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.”

Bob Dylan wrote this song in 1963.

*“What good am I, if I know, and don't do  
If I see and don't say, if I look right through you  
If I turn a deaf ear to the thunderin' sky  
And I freeze in the moment like the rest who don't try  
“What good am I, if I'm like all the rest;  
If I just shut myself off so I can't hear you cry.  
What good am I?””*

## **CLOSING**

“The grass withers and the flower fades: but the word of God shall stand forever.”

Special Music: Just a closer walk with thee

Jada Dawson

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)

Special Music: Great is thy Faithfulness

Organ and Piano Duet by Dr. Peter Hanson and Carolyn Haacke

## Prayers of the People

Eternal God we give thanks as we celebrate the 180<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Knox Presbyterian Church. We celebrate the great cloud of witnesses who have nurtured and sustained this congregation. For ministers and lay people who have been witnesses for Christ. We praise you for all of the accomplishments and successes of these years. We also acknowledge that there have been many struggles and heartaches. You have travelled with us on this road and have never abandoned us. Thank You, Lord, for being our way, our truth, and our life. We pray for your continued guidance as we seek to serve you in our complex world.

As we celebrate the history of this congregation, we humbly acknowledge that our reality is just a dream for others. We pray congregations that are struggling to keep their doors open. This week, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church gathers in Hamilton to meet and pray and worship. Guide our leaders in wisdom and grace. We also lift up to you Christians around the world who put their lives at risk by calling you Lord. Be with all branches of your Church, O God, and give us hope, courage, and determination to continue to serve you no matter what challenges we face. Remind us that your Church will never be wither or fall.

God of peace, we pray for our world. We yearn for your peace and justice to reign on this earth. Father, there is so much social, economic, and political unrest in our world today. We pray for families and communities that have been torn apart by war and violence. Be with those who have lost loved ones in these struggles. Send them your comfort. We pray for all those working for justice – whether they protest on the street or hold positions of power. Lord in your mercy – hear our prayer – send your Spirit of compassion and wisdom into these challenging situations. Only you can soften the hearts of those who speak words of hatred, prejudice, and violence.

God of hope, we pray for your people. We remember that we are not the only ones carrying heavy burdens. We pray for people who are struggling with health issues. People who are struggling in their relationships. People who worry about money. People who grieve for many reasons. Be with them all, loving God.

We remember those who we name before you today...

Almighty God, you built your church upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Jesus Christ himself as the cornerstone. Unite us in love and joy and hope as we seek to glorify and enjoy you forever. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.



Music: A Hymn of Celebration for the 170<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
Written by Jackie Harrington

Our Sovereign, Omnipotent, Ever the Same.  
These long years You've blessed us and we praise Your name.  
Through wars, devastation and bountiful times  
We humbly extol You, all glory proclaim.

From faraway countries our ancestors came  
And seeing this fine land they made it their own.  
Courageous in spirit, inspired by God's word,  
Those pioneers founded and built this church home.

And now that we're called to be stewards of Christ  
We ask You for wisdom and comfort and grace  
To live by Your teachings, no matter the cost,  
As we strive to honour You here in this place.

We pray that our daughters and sons yet unborn  
Will revere your teachings and live by Your word,  
As they face tomorrow and what it may hold,  
Secure in their knowledge that Jesus is Lord.

The Blessing & Sung Amen