

Knox Presbyterian Church
Rev. Emma Duncan
June 8, 2025

PENTECOST



Greetings

Call to Worship

Leader: Holy Spirit, Lord and giver of life

People: Come and renew all of creation

Leader: Holy Spirit, advocate and teacher

People: Come and show us the way

Leader: Holy Spirit, wind and flame

People: Come and burn in our hearts

All: Unite us in the love of Christ as we worship you! Amen.

Music: All things bright and beautiful (#435, all verses)

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

Holy God, from our scattered lives, we gather to praise you, for you are great and wonderful; wise and compassionate. At the dawn of creation, you sent your Spirit to bring forth light and life. You created every creature on this planet from the giant whales of the oceans to the tiniest microorganism. You formed each one of us in your image and gave us minds that think, bodies that move, and hearts that love. Through your Son, Jesus Christ, your way has been made known to all nations. Through the flames of Pentecost, your Spirit gave birth to the Church with energy and purpose. We offer you our thanks and praise that your Spirit continues to be at work in the world, bringing renewal and hope here and everywhere.

As we worship you in joy, O Lord, we must admit that we have done things this week that we are not proud of. We have judged others to make ourselves feel better. We have spoken harsh words to the people we love. We have gossiped and betrayed confidences. We have stayed silent in the face of injustice and cruelty. We have forgotten to follow the teachings of Christ.

O Lord, in your mercy, hear our pleas for forgiveness. Save us from temptation. Deliver us from evil. Be gracious to us and bless us with the power of your redeeming love.

Thank you, Lord Jesus, for your amazing grace. We do not deserve your forgiveness and yet, you freely give. As you poured out your Spirit upon the disciples so long ago, transform us into bold ambassadors of the Gospel. Shine upon us and make us new creations in Jesus Christ. Inspire and equip the Church to share Christ's love with our neighbours, friends, and the whole world.

We pray all these things in the name of Jesus Christ, our Risen and Ascended Lord, 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

Even when darkness is all around us, there is always light to be found. Even when we feel lost, God's Spirit is alive and at work, surrounding us with peace and healing, faith and hope. This is true because of what Christ accomplished on the cross.

Beloved in the Lord, receive the Good News of the Gospel – in Jesus Christ, we are forgiven. Do not be afraid of the future; instead, rejoice that Jesus Christ is your way, your truth, and your life. Amen.

Announcements

1. Welcome!

2. Join us for a time of fellowship and conversation after worship. Coffee Fellowship will be held downstairs in our Fellowship Hall.

3. Thank you!

Thank you to everyone who participated in our 180th Anniversary service last week.

4. Midweek Social Drop-in

Starting June 11, every Wednesday from 9:30-11:00 a.m.

5. 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

6. 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

7. Concert – St. Luke's Anglican Church

8. Financial Update (April 2025)

Revenue - \$33,190.40 (includes anonymous donation of \$10,000)

Expenses - \$21,765.12

Presbyterians Sharing - \$4,520.11 (includes funds transferred from Trustees)

PWS&D - \$181.00

Operating Surplus - \$12,425.28

The Board of Managers continues to monitor our expenses closely in cooperation with Session. With our surplus from 2024 and our current surplus, we do not need to access any funds from the Trustees.

Thank you for your generosity!



Music: We are one in the Spirit (#471, all verses)

Children's Time: Spiritual GPS

Readings

Neil Manson

Neil

Prayer of Illumination

Let us pray. We come to you today so weary and worn from the cares of life. In this time of worship, come to us, O Holy Spirit, through God's most holy Word. Give us glad hearts as we listen to what you want to say to us today. We pray this in the name of Jesus, who is the way, the truth, and the life. Amen.

Our Old Testament reading is taken from the Book of Psalms and we will be reading Responsively Psalm 67.

Leader: May God be gracious to us and bless us

People: and make his face to shine upon us,

Leader: that your way may be known upon earth,

People: your saving power among all nations.

Leader: Let the peoples praise you, O God;

People: let all the peoples praise you.

Leader: Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,

People: for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth.

Leader: Let the peoples praise you, O God;

People: let all the peoples praise you.

Leader: The earth has yielded its increase; God, our God, has blessed us.

People: May God continue to bless us; let all the ends of the earth revere him. Amen.

Rev. Emma:

Our New Testament reading is a combined reading. As today is Pentecost, I will be reading that story from the Book of Acts chapter 2, verses 1-21 and Neil will be reading John 14:1-6, which is connected to the sermon series that I have been doing on the Gospel of John. Let us listen to God's most holy Word.

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them.

Neil:

[And Jesus said...] Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me.

Rev. Emma:

All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each.

Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language?"

Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia,
Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,
Phrygia and Pamphylia,
Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene,
and visitors from Rome,
both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs
—in our own languages we hear them speaking
about God's deeds of power."

Neil:

In my Father's house there are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going."

Rev. Emma:

All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine."

Neil:

Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?"

Rev. Emma:

But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

'In the last days it will be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.
Even upon my slaves, both men and women,
in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.
And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below,
blood, and fire, and smoky mist.
The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood,
before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day.
then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

Neil:

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

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

Reflection: When God says I AM – The Way, the Truth, and the Life

We often forget that the Bible was written over the span of thousands of years. Even without the controversy about how long it took for the world to be created, the stories contained in Old Testament cover over 3,000 years of human history.¹ There is also a gap of over 400 years between the last writings of the Old Testament and the birth of Christ. For example, scholars believe that Psalm 67 – our Responsive Psalm for today – was written during the time when Israel was held captive in Babylon, which took place over 500 years before Jesus was born.² A long, long time...

That said, there are times when events in the Bible move at a much quicker pace. Take our two New Testament passages as an example – John 14 and Acts 2. Because many of us are visual learners, I created this timeline to connect these two stories...

Timeline from John 14 to Acts 2

I am the way, the truth, and the life – Took place around the final Passover that Christ celebrated before his death

Thursday Last Supper → Prayed in the Garden → Arrested

Friday Trial → Crucifixion

Sunday RESURRECTION

Christ appeared to the disciples and others for 40 days after his Resurrection

Christ's Ascension

Pentecost – Took place 10 days after Christ's Ascension

Approximately 60 days between 2 stories

¹ <https://biblehub.com/timeline/>

² <https://www.blueletterbible.org/study/parallel/paral18.cfm>

60 days. Give or take a few days. That's all.

With today as Pentecost, if you go back 60 days, that was Monday April 7th. Think about ALL of the things that the disciples experienced in 60 days!!

The disciples, with the exception of Judas Iscariot, were present at both events. In John chapter 14, they heard Jesus predict his own death and then tell them with great love and compassion – **do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in me.** I'm going away, but I promise that I will come back and take you with me because **I am the way, the truth, and the life.** Follow me and you won't get lost. And 60 days later - after Jesus had died, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven – the disciples were together praying when the rush of the Holy Spirit came upon them like wind and fire.

In this moment, the disciples were transformed. Not only could they speak languages that they had never learnt, they received their mission – go and spread the Good News of the Gospel. **Finally, the disciples understood everything.** On that first Pentecost, the pieces of the puzzle started to make sense. All that Jesus said and did converged into a hopeful vision of the future. Jesus Christ IS the Messiah, the Lamb of God, the Bread of Life, the Light of the World, the Good Shepherd, and the Resurrection and the Life. He is all of these things and so much more. And the Holy Spirit came – as Jesus said it would – to guide, encourage, and strengthen the disciples to take Christ's message of love, forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life out into the world. But not as drunken or fearful men – instead, the Spirit transformed them into bold and courageous evangelists who would proclaim that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. This was the **way** forward for the disciples. This was their **truth**. This became their **life's** mission.

The transforming power of the Holy Spirit guided the disciples to spend the rest of their lives pursuing this mission of bringing people to Christ and growing the Church. Indeed, all of them – with the exception of John – would be martyred because of their work. John, whose Gospel we have been reading through since January, was the only disciple to die of natural causes.



Fast forward another 2,000 years and we find ourselves in sitting here in this beautiful sanctuary or watching this service online. We are in a nation that didn't exist in the disciples' time and they would have considered everything about our society as foreign and alien.

And so, I found myself wondering what if the disciples could be with us today? What if John, Peter, and Thomas had a time machine and travelled to 2025 - what would they think of the Church if they spent 60 days with us?

I think that they would experience two overwhelming emotions.

The first emotion would be **joy**. Jesus Christ is still worshipped! The Church is still here! All of the disciples' efforts, all of their sacrifices were worth it because the Good News of the Gospel spread far and wide and Christ's message of love and hope continues to resonate with people of all nations and races. They would have also been so thankful that many believers worship the Lord without fear of persecution. Maybe John would

even recite part of Psalm 67 - [Let all the peoples praise you. Let the nations be glad and sing for joy!](#) (Psalm 67:3-4)

The second emotion that they would perhaps feel is more complicated – **disappointment**. In the midst of the world's brokenness, fear, and hopelessness would John, Peter, and Thomas see people praising the Lord to the full extent of the Gospel message? Would they see Christians sharing their resources with the poor and marginalized or just maintaining their expensive buildings? Are there bold and courageous evangelists in 2025 who proclaim that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved? Do Christians follow the leading of the Holy Spirit and live into the hope that Jesus Christ is still the way, the truth, and the life? Sadly, the answer to these questions is *sometimes...we do* struggle to following the teachings of Jesus. We *do* ignore the movement of the Holy Spirit and secretly hope that God's Spirit will blow over other people, not us. And yes, indeed, sharing the Good News of the Gospel and growing the Church are not always our top priorities.

I also think that the disciples would be disappointed by the divisions in the Church. I'm sure that they would be baffled by the number of denominations that exist in our community. And that even within denominations, there are divisions over theology and practice.

Joy and disappointment...

I have to tell you the truth – today's message was REALLY hard for me to write! Last week's 180th Anniversary service was fantastic. Not only did all of the planning come together behind the scenes, the service itself was meaningful and encouraging. I certainly felt inspired and I know that many of you felt the same way. 180 years is a huge milestone and one to be celebrated. It was joyful!

But the truth is that the future is rather uncertain. And that's because our world is very different from the world where John, Peter, and Thomas existed. It's far more complex and our faith has - in many ways - been pushed to the margins. Even though we have beautiful big buildings and are not being persecuted for our faith, the Church is struggling.

As I have been wrestling with both joy and disappointment this week, I was worried about being pessimistic after such an encouraging service last week. But this is the reality of the world in which I find myself and I have never been one to sugar coat the truth. As a woman of faith who tries to listen to the Holy Spirit's movement in my own life and the life of this congregation, it is my responsibility to be honest with you. So here is my realistic take on things...

Life is hard right now.

The world is broken.

Being a Christian in 2025 is hard.

Being a Minister in 2025 is hard.

And the Church's future is complex and uncertain.

And yet...this is not our Church. This is not my pulpit. It is Christ's Church.

Jesus Christ is still our Lord and Head of the Church. The Holy Spirit is still at work – in us and through us, giving us abilities we never thought possible. And when we get things wrong, God's Spirit moves around us, fulfilling God's divine plan for our lives, the Church, and the world.

This is our REAL hope for the future. That God has a plan for us as individuals and as a community of faith and even though that plan is not clear to us, the Holy Spirit will guide, encourage, and strengthen us to take Christ's message of love, forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life out into the world. When we follow Christ, we won't get lost because the Holy Spirit will transform us into people who would proclaim that Jesus Christ is indeed the way, the truth, and the life.

Beloved in the Lord – be encouraged by the teachings of the Bible because in it, we are told over and over again that there is no need to be afraid of the future because our Triune God – Father, Son, and Spirit – is going ahead of us, preparing the way in faith and in hope. 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 (not written in advance)

Music: Spirt, Spirit of gentleness (#399, all verses)

Blessing

Go out into the world, knowing that you are God's beloved sons and daughters.
Dream dreams, pursue visions and speak of God's goodness to all who will listen.

May God the Father, who breathes life into all creation, be your joy.
May God the Son, who breathes life into all people, give hope to your dreaming, and
May the Holy Spirit, who breathes life into the Church, fill you with strength and ability
to proclaim the name of Jesus in faith and in hope. Amen.

Sung Amen