

Knox Presbyterian Church
Rev. Emma Duncan
June 15, 2025

FATHER'S DAY



Greetings

Call to Worship

Leader: The Lord says, "I am the vine, you are the branches."

People: Each Sunday, we gather to stay rooted in Christ.

Leader: Come now, as branches of the vine, ready to bear fruit.

People: Come now, to worship and abide in our Triune God. Amen.

Music: Celebration Hymn (Written by Patricia Kirby; Tune – The church's one foundation)

Our praise and celebration in faith we bring, O Lord.
Your guidance and direction we graciously adore.
For years of steadfast caring, each step along life's way.
Has brought us Thy true blessings, for each of us this day.

Be ever near, Dear Father, as we prepare to live
The visions of our founders, the words our Bible gives.
Grant that we may encounter peace, hope and harmony.
A congregation molded in strength and destiny.

For future generations, Rise up! Renew! Revive!
The will of all believers who pray God's world survives.
The troubles we encounter. Give spirit to lead on!
We celebrate your blessings, through Christ, Your living Son.

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

O Heavenly Father, we gather from near and far to offer you our worship today, for you are the God of our salvation. On this beautiful spring day, we are awe of the beauty of your created world. We admire the beauty of each person for we are all created in your image, O God. Your Word is unchanging and yet you continue to surprise us as your Spirit moves among us. Your love is as old as time and as fresh as the rising sun each morning, especially when we consider the agony of the cross. And if this wasn't enough, you sent your Holy Spirit to the disciples so that the Gospel could spread around the world and throughout the millennia. O Triune God, thank you for the gifts that you have lavished upon us.

Blessed Lord Jesus, our thankful hearts are burdened by our sinfulness. We try to be the people that you call us to be, but we mess up, over and over again. As individuals, we grumble and complain about our lives while ignoring the poor and marginalized. We speak harsh words that tear others down instead of building them up. As the Church, we have failed to spread the Good News of the Gospel. We have ignored the commandments of Scripture. We have not abided in your love.

Have mercy on us, O God, for our sins are many. Do not cut us off from you. Do not throw us away. Forgive our sins and graft us to your body, the Church.

O Lord, you are far more generous with us than we deserve. You satisfy us with your grace and answer us when we call out to you. By your Spirit, transform us – body, mind, and soul. Revitalize the Church so that the world may believe that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, the Son of God.

We pray all these things in the blessed name of 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

Sisters and brothers, we are so fortunate that the Bible records many stories about the different ways people have failed to follow God. Because in those stories, we also get to see how deep God's forgiveness and love truly are! Through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the same forgiveness and love are offered to you and to me.

In the name of Jesus Christ, receive the Good News of the Gospel – we are forgiven! Thanks be to God. Amen.

Announcements

1. Welcome! Happy Father's Day!
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 to Ovidio DeCesare for doing the readings today.
4. Thank you to Carolyn Haacke for playing while Peter is on vacation.

5. Midweek Social Drop-in

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

6. Presbyterian Church Picnic – **LAST DAY TO BUY TICKETS**

(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

7. 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

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: In the bulb there is a flower #674 (all verses)

Children's Time: Fruitful Living

Prayer of Illumination

Let us pray. O blessed Trinity, in whom we live and move and have our being, we invite the Holy Spirit into our hearts and minds as we hear the Scriptures proclaimed today. Root us in your most holy word. All honour and glory are yours, O God. Amen.

***Our Old Testament reading is taken from the Book of Psalms
and we will be reading Responsively Psalm 1.***

Leader: Blessed are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked,
or take the path that sinners tread, or sit in the seat of scoffers;

**People: but their delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law they meditate
day and night.**

Leader: They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in
its season, and their leaves do not wither.

People: In all that they do, they flourish.

Leader: The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away.
Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of
the righteous;

**People: for the Lord watches over the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked will perish. Amen.**

Our New Testament reading is taken from the Gospel of John and we will be reading chapter 15, verses 1-12.

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you.

Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me.

I am the vine; you are the branches.

Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.”

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

Reflection: When God says I AM – The True Vine

I have been preaching through the Gospel of John since January and today is my last reflection on this Gospel for the rest of the year. I love this Gospel and I hope that our time in this amazing book has helped you learn more about who God is revealed to be through his Son, Jesus Christ. Indeed, this Gospel is 100% focused on the story of Jesus and John expressed his goal with these words in chapter 20 – **Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.** (John 20:30-31)

Today our focus is on Christ's final I AM statement – **I am the true vine.** (John 15:1) There are two ways in which this passage can be studied and reflected upon – one at the micro level and one at the macro level. At the micro level, we can reflect on this passage on a personal level. And this is the literal interpretation of this passage because Jesus was talking to his disciples – I am the vine and my Father is the vinegrower. When you are cut off from us – either by God the Father who prunes the vine or by your own choice to leave the faith - then be warned...you will wither and die. Jesus was telling them that they would not survive without being connected to God the Father and God the Son.

With this I AM statement, Jesus encouraged his disciples to abide in him. To dwell. To remain. To be connected. To hold onto Christ. It's important for us to remember that Jesus spoke these words in the final week of his life, so Jesus was looking towards the cross. And so, his message here had multiple meanings. For Judas Iscariot, the one who would soon betray Jesus for a few pieces of silver, it was a warning of what was to come. It was also a message for the other disciples – including John who wrote this Gospel – that they would be tempted to cut themselves off from the Lord, but Jesus was telling them

to hold on. It's going to be a rough few days, but I promise that if you abide in me, you will be given strength for the journey.

For believers throughout the generations, Jesus is also encouraging us to hold on. When we stay connected to the branch, we will be blessed! We will be nourished and strengthened. Also, when we follow Christ's command to love one another as he loves us, we will bear fruit and others will come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. And of course, there are echoes of Psalm 1 in Jesus' teachings – when we delight in the Lord, *we will be like tress planted by streams of water, which yield fruit in its season, and their lives will not wither. In all they do, they prosper.* (Psalm 1:3) For many people, this passage gives them great comfort to face the storms of life. It also strengthens their resolve to serve others in Christ's name.

That's the micro level interpretation of this passage.

And now for the macro level.

As of last week, we are in the season of Pentecost. In this season, we are reminded that Christianity is more than just a **personal** faith tradition. With the birth of the Church, we are encouraged to be in fellowship with other believers. As a group of believers, we need to stay rooted to Christ. We need to be nourished and strengthened in worship, service, and in community. Now, of course, there are so many ways to view this passage at this macro level. We could consider this congregation as a vine that is attached to the Presbyterian Church in Canada, which has its roots in the Church of Scotland. You could go even farther and connect us to the Protestant vine of the global Church. And then there are divisions within these vines based on theology, traditions, and practices. Even within our region, there are many differences between Presbyterian congregations. There are conservative, evangelical congregations as well as affirming congregations that

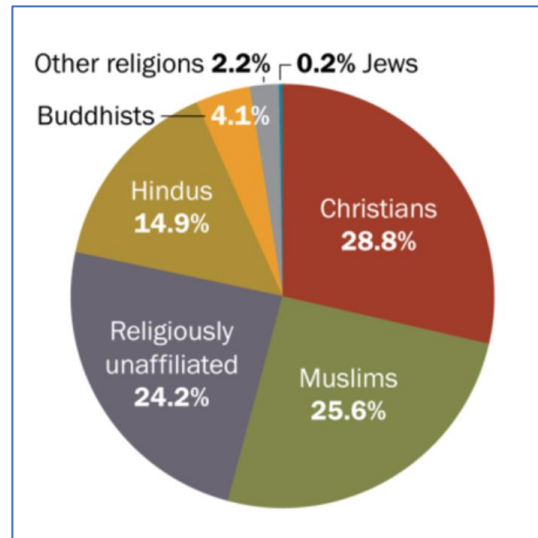
welcome the LGBTQI+ community, and everything in between. There are Presbyterian congregations in this area that would not consider calling a woman minister. And let's not forget styles of worship, especially when it comes to music! There is no doubt that there are many different vines!!

When I consider this passage from John 15 at the macro level, I am comforted because the Church is much bigger than us. No matter what our differences are, when we abide in Christ and follow his command to love one another, then we can ALL flourish. We can ALL bring people to Jesus.

That said, there is also a warning in this passage for the global Church. God the Father will prune and throw away the vines that are not bearing fruit. God will also prune the vines to make them healthier. To be honest, we are in a season of pruning right now. And that's not just my personal opinion. It's fact. The Pew Research Center, a think tank based in the U.S., published a 10-year study of religion this week.¹ This study looked at the world's largest faith traditions from 2010 to 2020. Christianity is still the largest religion in the world, but our numbers are declining while Islam is on the rise. And do you know what the third largest religion is in the world? Guess...

¹ <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2025/06/09/how-the-global-religious-landscape-changed-from-2010-to-2020/>

The 'nones.' Those who have no religious affiliation.



Source: Pew Centre of Research

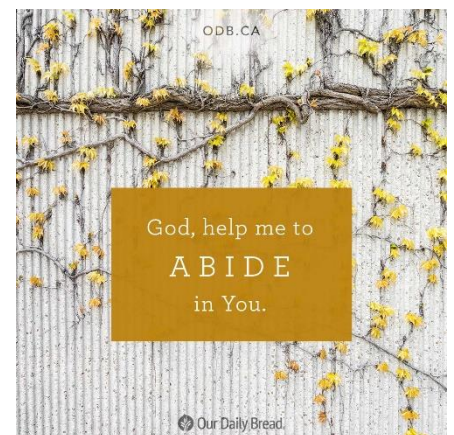
And here is a distressing quote from this study about the 'nones' - "...unaffiliated people continued to grow as a share of the global population because many affiliated people around the world – primarily Christians – are “switching” out of religion.”²

Christians are 'switching out of religion.'

Do you want that means? They are cutting themselves off from the true vine. They no longer feel that it is necessary to hold onto Jesus.

So, my friends, there is work to be done.

As individuals, we need to strengthen our bond with Christ. We need to hold onto Jesus, who is the Bread of Life, the Light of the World, the Good Shepherd, the Resurrection and the Life, and the Way, the Truth, and the Life. As Christians, our faith in Jesus Christ must give our lives meaning and purpose, nourishment and strength.



² <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2025/06/09/how-the-global-religious-landscape-changed-from-2010-to-2020/>

As a collective, as the body of Christ, as the global Church, we need to be revitalized in our sharing of the Gospel. No matter what our differences, no matter how our theology is different, no matter what hymns or praise songs we like to sing during worship, we HAVE to follow Christ's command to love one another. If we keep Christ's commandments, if we abide in his love, only then can the branches and vines of the Church be strengthened to bear fruit in a world that desperately needs to hear the message of hope, joy, peace, and love of Jesus Christ.

The truth is that we need both the micro and macro interpretations of this last I AM statement of Jesus. We need to strengthen our own faith so that the Holy Spirit can use us to strengthen the Church.

Are you ready to do this work? I am.

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

Faithful and Holy Friend, there are not words eloquent enough to thank you for all that we have because of your love and saving grace. We are grateful for the beauty of your creation, for our relationships with others, for the wisdom of your most holy Word, and for the fellowship of the Church. We are especially thankful for the gift of your Son, who is the true vine. Let your Spirit guide us to stay rooted in Christ, to grow in faith, and to invite others to know Jesus.

Loving Father, we thank you for our earthly fathers! Thank you for fathers who gave us life and for the men who have cared for us as their own children. We honour their love and legacy. O Lord, many need your comfort here today because they are missing fathers while others are missing children. May your spirit of warmth and comfort be with those who find Father's Day difficult.

True Vine, help us to abide in You.

Loving Saviour, we pray for fathers around the world. We lament for fathers who struggle to provide food and shelter for their families. We pray for fathers who have to teach their children how to avoid bombs and gunfire. Be with those fathers who have had to make the difficult decision to leave their homes and communities in order to provide a future for their families. Lord in your mercy, help us to us create a world where families of all shapes and sizes can live in peace and plenty.

True Vine, help us to abide in You.

Loving Spirit, we pray for justice in our world. We remember all those who struggle to find justice in the workplace. For those who are unemployed, underemployed, or exploited. We pray for the poor and homeless. We pray for those in the west who are dealing with forest fires. We pray for those whose communities are ravaged by war, conflict, and violence on the streets. Father, we pray especially for our neighbours to the south who have had a terrible week! Grant them your peace. Give them your hope. May the Church be a beacon of hope in this dark world.

True Vine, help us to abide in You.

Guiding and nurturing Spirit, we pray for the global Church. The Church has many diverse branches with different theological understandings of Scripture, different traditions and customs. Sadly, we acknowledge that there is much division within your body. Show us the way to unity through Christ Jesus. Bless all of the churches in Burlington. May we work together to strengthen your presence in this community. In the global Church, send your hope where there is fear. Let your love and peace flow where there is persecution. Bless our service, O God, so that we may love as you have loved us.

True Vine, help us to abide in You.

Heavenly Father, we remember those who need to experience healing in our lives. We lift up to you those who we name before you...

True Vine, help us to abide in You.

Father, we are your beloved children. We are the body of Christ. You call us to be workers in your vineyard. Help us to be good workers — people of faith who work with one another to strengthen the branches of your Church. Send your Holy Spirit to empower us to be witnesses of your love and grace, so that in meeting us, people will meet you. All honour and glory are yours — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — world without end. Amen.

Music: There is a Redeemer #358 (all verses)

Blessing

Sung Amen