

Knox Presbyterian Church  
Rev. Emma Duncan  
June 22, 2025



Greetings

Call to Worship

Leader: Come, all who are weary, all who are carrying burdens so heavy

**People: Jesus will give us rest**

Leader: Come, take what Jesus has to offer: love, forgiveness, and grace

**People: Christ will give us peace**

Leader: Come, learn from Jesus

**All: Come, let us worship our God, who leads us into life. Amen.**

Music: Now thank we all our God #457 (all verses)

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

King of all the earth, creator of the universe, holy Triune God, from everlasting to everlasting, you are Lord. You are our refuge and our strength, an ever-present help in times of trouble. We rejoice in your loving kindness and grace. We praise you for Christ who fully reveals your divine purpose for humanity; in his life, we see the pattern of our living; in his death, we see your love poured out for us; in his resurrection, we see freedom and eternal life. We praise you for your Spirit who guides and nurtures us along the path that we tread. Holy God, with all that we are – we worship you now and always.

Merciful Father, Scripture teaches us to be still and know that you are God, but we struggle with this. There are so many people and things demanding our attention. In our restlessness, we ignore the teachings of the Bible. In our selfishness, we do not share our wealth with others. In our arrogance, we do not care for our planet as we should.

O Lord, in your great mercy, forgive our many sins. Free us from temptation. Save us from ourselves.

Thank you, Lord Jesus, for your abundant love and abiding grace. You do not abandon us to our own devices and schemes; instead you love us generously and passionately. You gather us in your loving arms and are with us always. Like seeds that are planted in good soil, help us to flourish as we seek to be rooted in your love.

We pray all these things in the holy 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

Brothers and sisters in Christ, receive the Good News of the Gospel - God the Father did not send his only begotten Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save it. This promise of salvation and eternal life is freely given to each one of us. And because of this promise, we are forgiven in the name of Jesus Christ. Thanks be to God! Amen.

## Announcements

1. Welcome!
2. Welcome our friends from Brant Hills and Burlington East Presbyterian churches.
3. Join us for a time of fellowship and conversation after worship in our Fellowship Hall.
4. Thank you to Hella Hanson for doing the readings today.
5. TODAY

I will be leaving for the picnic at Crieff Hills immediately following the service. Because most of our children are up at the picnic, there will be no children's time today.

### **6. Midweek Social Drop-in**

Every Wednesday from 9:30-11:00 a.m.

### **7. Shared Summer Worship Services**

Starting next week, we will have the congregation of Brant Hills Presbyterian Church worshipping with us.

### **8. Doors Open Burlington**

Saturday August 9 from 10-2

In celebration of our 180<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, we will be participating in Doors Open this summer. Each volunteer will work a 2-hour shift, either from 10-12 or 12-2. If you are able to volunteer for this event, please contact Kathy Kelly.

Music: Lead me, Jesus; I will follow #646 (sing twice)

Prayer of Illumination

Let us pray. Heavenly Father, it is so tempting for us to ignore the teachings of Scripture. Deliver us from this temptation as we hear your Word proclaimed. By your Spirit, sow seeds of hope and truth into our hearts today. We pray this in the blessed name of Jesus. Amen.

**Our Old Testament reading is taken from the Book of Psalms and we will be reading Responsively Psalm 46.**

Leader: God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

**People: Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth should change,  
though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;  
though its waters roar and foam,  
though the mountains tremble with its tumult.**

Leader: There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,  
the holy habitation of the Most High.

**People: God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved;  
God will help it when the morning dawns.**

Leader: The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter;  
God's voice resounds, the earth melts.

**People: The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.**

Leader: Come, behold the works of the Lord;  
see what desolations God has brought on the earth.

**People: The Lord makes wars cease to the end of the earth;  
breaks the bow, and shatters the spear; burns the  
shields with fire.**

Leader: "Be still, and know that I am God!

I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth."

**People: The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Amen.**

**Our Old Testament reading is taken from the Book of Deuteronomy and we will be reading chapter 30, verses 3-5.**

...then the Lord your God will return you from your captivity and have compassion on you, gathering you again from all the peoples among whom the Lord your God has scattered you. Even if you are exiled to the ends of the world, from there the Lord your God will gather you, and from there he will take you back. The Lord your God will bring you into the land that your ancestors possessed, and you will possess it; he will make you more prosperous and numerous than your ancestors.

**Our New Testament reading is taken from the Gospel of Matthew and we will be reading chapter 13, verses 1-9.**

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables, saying: "Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on a path, and the birds came and ate them up.

Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. But when the sun rose, they were scorched, and since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. If you have ears, hear!"

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

## Reflection: The Scattering of God's People



*View from Mount Nebo, the traditional site of Moses' grave.*

The Old and New Testament passages that we just heard were selected by the Rev. Mike Aldred, minister at Brant Hills Presbyterian Church with my addition of Psalm 46. Mike is preaching at our joint church picnic this morning and so we decided that we would both preach on the same texts. Even the sermon title is his choice. All three passages have common themes – our connection to the land and our deep desire to be connected with the Lord.

Our short reading from chapter 30 of the book of Deuteronomy is part of a larger story about the Israelites' final years of wandering in the wilderness. They were in the territory of Moab where the Jordan River flows into the Dead Sea. They could actually SEE the promised land from the mountains in this region - so they were very close to the promised land. **(refer to picture)** They had been scattered in the wilderness all of these long years and now it was time for God to gather his people and bring them back to the land of their ancestors. During this final season of their wanderings, Moses transferred leadership to Joshua, gave a final blessing to the people, and then passed away. (Deuteronomy 31-34)

In Psalm 46, we have a celebration of the security and blessings that we have when we reside with God, who is our refuge and strength. Even as the world changes all around

us, God will not be moved. Even though the nations are in an uproar and kingdoms fall, God will not be moved. Almighty God is with us. For your trivia buffs out there, Psalm 46 is an important part of the history of Protestantism because it was Martin Luther's inspiration for his hymn – A Mighty Fortress is our God.

And then we have our Gospel reading from Matthew chapter 13 where we hear the Parable of the Sower. This is a very familiar passage for many of us where we hear of God's Word being scattered on different types of soil.



Throughout the millennia, there have been many instances where the people of God have been scattered. God's people have been scattered because of war and conflict – over land and natural resources. God's people have also been scattered because of sin and temptation. There are times when we have created our own wildernesses – whether that is because we crave power over others, our love of money, our worship of idols, our struggles with addictive behaviours, or a whole host of other temptations – by our own choosing, we have wandered far from the Lord. Humanity's tendency to give into sin and temptation is seen in the story of the Israelites. It is also seen in the Parable of the Sower. Jesus tells us in this parable that we fail to live in the fertile soil of our faith. Instead, we live among the rocky places and thorns. Our faith is shallow and therefore, is exposed to the harsh conditions.

There is no doubt that it is easy for us to scatter.

But our Scripture passages remind us that our God is a God who gathers. The Lord WANTS to be with us. The deepest desire of God's heart is to be among his people – giving them prosperity, blessings, and nourishment so that we live in rich and abundant

soil. When we gather close to God, when we dwell with the Lord, we can also be still. We can find rest for our weary souls. Jesus reminds us of this promise of rest earlier in Matthew's Gospel when he says - "Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. (Matthew 11:28-29) This is especially true when the storms come, when it feels like the earth is shifting beneath our feet, because Scripture assures us that God is our refuge and strength, ever present in times of trouble.

God's desire to be with us is also expressed in the Parable of the Sower. In this parable, we are told that God sows his most holy Word on ALL of the soil, not just the good soil. The Almighty God is a **generous** God because for him, all soil is holy ground. No matter what sins and temptations we are dealing with, no matter what wilderness we are wandering around in, God will sow his seeds of love, forgiveness, and hope everywhere. God will find us and gather us into his open arms. And because of this wonderful promise, WE are then able to bear fruit in the name of Jesus Christ.

Friends, many of us will be scattering for the summer months. Whether we are going on vacation to another part of the world or up north to a cottage for a few weeks, we Canadians like to take full advantage of the warm weather to spend time with family and friends, to explore new places, and to enjoy God's beautiful creation. I myself will be off for 12 weeks starting August 1<sup>st</sup> with 2 weeks of vacation and then 10 weeks of sabbatical, which is intentionally designed for clergy to be a season REST and RENEWAL. As you make plans to scatter this summer, always remember that God is sowing seeds of grace and love all around you. Be renewed in God's amazing grace. Be nourished by the Word of God. Be still and know that God is God. But also remember that the seeds that God is sowing around you are not just for your consumption, they are to be shared. No



matter where you go this summer – even if you aren't leaving Burlington at all – remember that you may be the only Bible that people read. As people of faith, your words and your actions matter. Be kind and welcoming in a world where strangers are feared and excluded. Be compassionate and empathetic in a world where so many are quick to judge and condemn. Be loving and forgiving in a world where hatred seems to have the upper hand. In all you say and do, be a witness of the generosity of God so that all people may be gathered up into God's loving arms with this invitation – come to me, all you who are weary and carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest.

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

For all the blessings of this life, we give thanks to you, Almighty God.

We can never thank you enough for all that you have done for us.

For the beauty of your creation, we give you thanks.

For a country that is peaceful and prosperous, we give you thanks.

For the freedom to worship you without fear of persecution, we give you thanks.

For families and friends, colleagues and neighbours, we give you thanks.

For the rest and renewal that summer often brings, we give you thanks.

We are especially thankful for your Word that is sown among us.

May the seeds of your Word take root so that your kingdom may grow and flourish.

Heavenly Father, if we are to believe that all ground is holy in your eyes,  
we pray for those who are living through unholy times...

For those who are forced from the land because of war and violence.

For those who face the harsh realities of climate change.

For those who see only a barren land of hopelessness and despair before them.

Father, we mourn the loss of life in Ukraine, Israel, Gaza, and the growing conflict in the Middle East. Nations are in an uproar and it feels like the ground is shifting beneath our feet. O Lord, fulfill the promise of Scripture and make wars cease. Break the weapons of war and give us your most glorious peace.

We pray for leaders of nations and communities – may they lead with compassionate hearts, intelligent minds, and generous spirits. Give them courage and strength, wisdom and compassion. May enemies seek forgiveness and reconciliation. May strangers become friends.

Redeeming Saviour, we pray for those who suffer in this world. Today we bring before those who have no land or country or home to call their own. We remember the poor and homeless. We pray for refugees and orphans. Give nourishment to the hungry. Give strength to oppressed and persecuted. Bless your people, O God, and dwell with them.

Comforting Spirit, we remember those in our midst who are sick or injured. We pray for those who grieve in any way – for the loss of a relationship, for the loss of employment, for the loss of independence, and for the loss of a loved one. Be with those who are wandering in the wilderness of sin and temptation, addiction and hopelessness. Be their refuge and strength, O Lord.

We lift up to you those who we name today...

Send your healing power to these people, O God. Give them your comfort and peace. Give them rest for their weary souls.

Father, we also pray for ourselves. We are living in a very challenging time in history and it is sometimes a challenge to remain faithful to you. We are pushed and pulled in many directions. We are tempted to walk away from you. Through the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit all around us, guide us to stay rooted in your love and to grow in faith. Wherever we go, help us to plant seeds of love and hope. We pray these things in the name of Jesus Christ, our Saviour, who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and always. Amen.

Music: I'm gonna live so God can use me #648 (all verses)

Blessing (Philippians 4:4-9)

Sung Amen