

Knox Presbyterian Church
Rev. Emma Duncan
November 16, 2025



Welcome

Call to Worship

Leader: How beautiful are the places where you dwell, O Lord

People: This house cannot contain your glory

Leader: Even the heavens are bursting with the goodness of your presence

People: Happy are those who find their strength in you

Leader: Hear our prayers this day, Holy God

All: As we worship you with hope and joy! Amen.

Music: The Great Physician now is near (#359, all verses)

Prayer of Adoration and Confession

Holy God, you are sovereign and eternal. You are mysterious and wonderful. You orchestrate day and night and the changing of the seasons. You created all creatures on this planet. You gave each human being minds to think, hearts to love, and hands to serve. All that we are and have comes from you. We thank you especially for your Son, Jesus Christ, who carries our burdens and heals our wounds. Be with us in this time of worship as we sing for joy to the living God.

Compassionate Lord, you know who we are. You know everything that we have said and done. We yearn for things - money, power, fame, control - that will never satisfy us. We worship things that will never bring salvation. We judge others so that we can feel better about ourselves. We conveniently forget the basic principles of our religion – love, faith, and hope. Forgive us, O Lord, for our sins are many.

O Great Physician, heal us! Save us from our sin! Be our sun and shield!

Thank you, Lord Jesus, for your forgiveness, mercy, and grace. We do not deserve these precious gifts and yet you freely give. Teach us to put our trust in you, O Lord God of hosts! Send your Spirit among us so that we may follow Christ's teachings. Inspire the global Church to share the radical love of Christ.

We pray 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 – hear these words of hope from Psalm 103:

Bless the Lord, O my soul,

and all that is within me, bless his holy name.

Bless the Lord, O my soul,

and do not forget all his benefits—

who forgives all your iniquity,

who heals all your diseases,

who redeems your life from the Pit. Psalm 103:1-4

In the name of Jesus Christ receive the healing and redeeming power of God's love and grace. Be renewed and transformed by this perfect gift. Amen.

Announcements

1. Welcome!
2. Join us for a time of fellowship and conversation after worship in the **Bell Tower Room**.
3. Thank you to Jean Lowe for doing our readings today.
4. **THANK YOU** to Deb Settle, Catharine Davidson, Dawn Flood, Judy Graham, and Janet MacIntyre for their leadership on the Elves Emporium. And thank you to the many elves and their countless hours of work to make the **ELVES EMPORIUM** a success!!! It takes a village!
5. Please join us for our **Annual General Meeting** on **Sunday November 23rd** after Worship Service. We'd love to see you there. The Annual Report is now available. Thank you to Kathy Kelly for all of her work putting the report together!
6. **Santa Clause Parade – Volunteers needed**
Sunday December 7th in the afternoon (approx. 1:30-4:00 p.m.) Volunteers need to set-up and serve hot chocolate to the community during the parade. If you are available, please contact the church office.

Music: Jesus' hands were kind hands (#631, all verses)

Children's Time: Operation!

Presentation of Bible to Scarlett Marchinko

Prayer of Illumination

Let us pray. O Great Physician, enlighten us with the wisdom of your most holy Word. Send your Spirit into each heart and inspire us to experience the wonder of your amazing grace. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

Our Old Testament reading is taken from the Book of Psalms and we will be reading Responsively Psalm 84.

Leader: How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts!

**People: My soul longs, indeed it faints for the courts of the Lord;
my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God.**

Leader: Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself,
where she may lay her young, at your altars, O Lord of hosts,
my Sovereign and my God.

People: Blessed are those who live in your house, ever singing your praise.

Leader: Blessed are those whose strength is in you,
in whose heart are the highways to Zion.

**People: As they go through the valley of Baca they make it a place of springs;
the early rain also covers it with pools.
They go from strength to strength; the God of gods will be seen in Zion.**

Leader: O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer;

People: give ear, O God of Jacob!

Leader: Behold our shield, O God;

People: look on the face of your anointed.

Leader: For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere.

**People: I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God
than live in the tents of wickedness.**

Leader: For the Lord God is a sun and shield; bestowing favor and honor.

No good thing does the Lord withhold from those who walk uprightly.

People: O Lord of hosts, blessed is everyone who trusts in you. Amen.

Our New Testament reading is taken from the Gospel of Matthew and we will be reading chapter 8, verses 1-13.

When Jesus had come down from the mountain, great crowds followed him, and there was a man with a skin disease who came to him and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean." He stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing. Be made clean!"

Immediately his skin disease was cleansed. Then Jesus said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."

When he entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, appealing to him and saying, "Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, in terrible distress." And he said to him, "I will come and cure him."

The centurion answered, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only speak the word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, with soldiers under me, and I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this,' and the slave does it."

When Jesus heard him, he was amazed and said to those who followed him, "Truly I tell you, in no one in Israel have I found such faith. I tell you, many will come from east and west and will take their places at the banquet with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the heirs of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

And Jesus said to the centurion, "Go; let it be done for you according to your faith." And the servant was healed in that hour.

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

Reflection: Heroes of the Faith – Dr. Robert McClure

In 1965, a Canadian journalist by the name of Pierre Berton, published a book called “The Comfortable Pew: a Critical Look at Christianity and the Religious Establishment in the New Age.”¹ As an outsider looking in, Berton’s book was a brutally honest critique about what he saw happening in the mainline Protestant denominations in Canada during a very turbulent time in history. He said that the church in Canada was becoming ‘spiritually bankrupt.’ Listen to this quote:

...a truly Christian reformation could come about...through some terrifying persecution of the Christian Church – a persecution that would rid the Church of those of little faith, of the status-seekers and respectability-hunters, of the deadwood who enjoy the club atmosphere, of the ecclesiastical hangers-on and the comfort-searchers. Once the Church becomes the most uncomfortable institution in the community, only those who really matter will stick with it. At this point, one would expect the Church to come back to those basic principles of love, faith, and hope that have made martyrs out of men. (142-3)²

The book was a national bestseller and needless to say, it made many Christians very uncomfortable.³ 60 years later, sadly one could argue that Berton was prophetic about the decline of the church in this country. We have much to repent for because there have been many circumstances where we have **not** followed the basic principles of faith, love, and hope within the Church.

So why I am sharing this with you? What does this have to do with this week’s hero – Dr. Robert McClure?

Most of you have never heard of Dr. McClure. Born in 1900 to Canadian Presbyterian missionaries, McClure was a Canadian physician and medical missionary. He spent his life serving in some of the most challenging places in the world - China, Taiwan,

¹ <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/2612466-the-comfortable-pew>

² <https://inaspaciousplace.wordpress.com/2011/01/10/the-comfortable-pew/>

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Baird_McClure under Moderator section

Gaza, India, and Borneo – healing the sick and caring for the marginalized. He was a very humble and practical man. He learned local languages, trained local medical staff, and rode a bicycle. McClure wasn't afraid of the danger of his work. Once he was parachuted into the jungle to save downed pilots. In the build-up to the Second World War, he worked for the Red Cross to assist with prisoner exchanges between the Japanese and the local guerilla forces in China. But as he told the story in a TV interview in 1979, the prisoner exchange didn't happen because the Japanese put a price on his head. He didn't want them to 'cash that cheque' so he moved on to other work.⁴ In Gaza, he was asked to perform knee surgery for a local sheik. The man was anxious about the procedure and to calm him down, McClure said a short prayer in Arabic and English before the operation. Afterwards, the sheik made McClure promise to say this prayer before every surgery that he performed, which McClure did for the rest of his career.⁵ In India, he initiated programs to help combat the spread of tuberculosis and polio. And for that time, he was considered radical for introducing family planning and contraception programs in India.

In the 1960s – when Pierre Berton was making Christians very uncomfortable – the United Church of Canada responded in a unique way to Berton's criticisms of the clergy...they elected the first lay Moderator of their denomination, Dr. McClure. He was the Moderator of the United Church of Canada for 3 years from 1968-1971. As a layperson with a lifetime of witness and service, he was a breath of fresh air for the denomination. At the time of his election, he said, "In appointing a layman as a Moderator...with probably 50 expert theologians present, it's obvious the United Church...wanted a clear view of the relationship of the Canadian citizen to the needs of a very shrinking world."⁶ In his term as Moderator, McClure did indeed show how Canadian

⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s8KMDxmxAjs&t=544s>

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Baird_McClure Under Gaza section

⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Baird_McClure Under Moderator section

Christians to put our faith into action. And as someone who didn't shy away from controversy, he was outspoken on the pressing issues of the day. He got into some 'hot water' by supporting legalized abortion, accepting American draft dodgers during the Vietnam War, expressing the importance of sex education and family planning. He was ahead of his time in many ways – he supported worship services happening on different days of the week and wanted churches to embrace a new technology by accepting credit cards for donations. He even – gasp! – proposed that worship services didn't need a sermon to be considered worship.

While you may not agree with McClure's views, there is no doubt that he was a Canadian hero of faith. He lived those basic Christian principles of love, faith, and hope in all aspects of his life – in his vocation as a physician and surgeon, in his personal life, and in the life of the church. Throughout his long career, he spoke to hundreds of groups in churches, synagogues, universities, women's leagues, medical conventions, and to the general public through the media. He first 'retired' from medical practice in 1970, but he volunteered his time and skills to OXFAM in Hong Kong, Korea, South Vietnam, Pakistan, and other places. In 1979, he 'retired' again and he and his wife settled in Toronto, but in retirement, he averaged 15 speaking engagements a month and led annual trips to some of his former mission posts in China, India, and Borneo. He even spoke at my home church in Brampton in the late 1980s. Richard and I met Dr. McClure before he died in 1991 and neither of us will ever forget listening to this seemingly frail old man speak with such passion and faith about the healing power of Jesus Christ.

In our Gospel reading from Matthew chapter 8, we see Jesus, the Great Physician, in action. He healed a man with a skin disease and interacted with a Roman centurion who begged for his servant to be healed. These two brief interactions remind us not only of Christ's power to heal, but also that he did not follow the conventional path. As a

practicing Jew living in a Roman occupied territory, Jesus shouldn't have interacted with either of these men. Jesus should not have touched the man with a skin disease because this would have made him unclean. And the centurion - a professional officer in the Roman army – was the enemy. The Jews despised the Romans and many followers of Jesus hoped that he would overthrow the Roman Empire, not help one of their officers!! Worse still, Jesus complimented the centurion for his faith! How DARE Jesus tell this Roman soldier that he would will take his place at the banquet with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven!! To say that this was scandalous is an understatement! This would have made the religious leaders very uncomfortable.

Friends, there are times in the life of each person of faith when we have to get uncomfortable. And I'm not talking about taking away the pillow behind your back on a wooden pew. I'm talking about finding ways in your daily life to share the controversial and scandalous principles of our faith – that our God is a God of love, faith, and hope. That Jesus Christ is indeed the Great Physician who binds up our wounds and saves us from our sin. We also need to share that controversial notion that the Church can and should be a beacon of light in the darkness of our world. A place of God's radical hospitality, welcome, and acceptance. A place of safety and community. A place where we can receive healing, body, mind, and soul.

That's why the stories of Christian heroes matter. As citizens of Canada and citizens of the kingdom of God, these heroes inspire us to live out our faith no matter what our gender, race, age, or social status. No matter what our vocation is, we must spread the love of Christ in word and in deed.

Amen.

Dedication of our Tithes and Offerings

Song of Thanks – We give thee but thine own (#661, verse 1)

We give thee but thine own,
whate'er the gift may be;
all that we have is thine alone,
a trust, O Lord, from thee.

Prayer of Dedication (not written in advance)

Prayers of the People (guided prayer)

This week, I will be leading you through a guided prayer. Throughout this prayer, I will leave space for silence so that we can all offer our prayers to the Lord.

Let us pray from wherever you are.

Faithful God, who fulfilled the promises made to the generations before us, thank you for your compassion, forgiveness, and saving grace. Thank you for the privilege of dwelling with you today. Let your glorious Spirit fill the Church and all people of faith with hope in these anxious times. Give us the courage to boldly proclaim your love.

Creating God, we admit that there is much that is broken in our world. From the beginning of time, you have called us to be good stewards of your creation, but we have failed miserably.

In the silence of our hearts, we pray for our planet and all creatures both great and small...

O Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayers.

Compassionate Saviour, we pray for your people. We pray for the regions of our world where peace is just a dream. Send the peace of Christ into these situations so that war will be no more. Be with injured and afflicted. Comfort those who mourn. Give strength to all of the helpers. We pray for our nation in this time of political and economic turmoil. May leaders everywhere work for healing, reconciliation, and justice.

In the silence of our hearts, we pray for the situations in our world that cause us great concern...

O Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayers.

Guiding Spirit, we pray for Christ's bride, the Church. In a time of great anxiety and fear for the future of the Church, we pray for ministers, Elders, teachers, and all believers who have accepted your call upon their lives and serve others in Christ's name. Bless the heroes of our faith both known and unknown. We also remember those who are persecuted for their faith.

In the silence of our hearts, we pray for the global Church...

O Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayers.

Triune God, we pray for the people we know who are struggling. Heal the sick. Send Christ's peace to the bereaved. Give hope to those who are afraid of the future. Send your presence to the lonely. Dry their tears.

In the silence of our hearts, we pray for our family and friends...

O Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayers.

Today we remember your children by name...

Heavenly Father, anoint us with courage and strength to be followers of Jesus Christ in our dark world. Strengthen our resolve to live into the scandalous truths of our faith – that in you, there is love, faith, and hope. Give the Church courage to speak into the uncomfortable truth that you indeed provide healing, comfort, and community to all who seek an encounter with the living God. To you – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - be all glory and honour and praise. Now and always. Amen.

Music: Brother, sister, let me serve you (#635, verses 1, 2, 3, 4, 6)

Blessing (Colossians 3 The Message)

Sung Amen