

Knox Presbyterian Church
Rev. Emma Duncan
November 23, 2025



Welcome

Special Music: O Lovely Peace by Handel
Duet by Susan Gudgeon and Daniela Carnevale

Call to Worship

Leader: Around the world this day, the global Church celebrates the “The Reign of Christ”

People: Christ Jesus, friend of the poor, the meek, and the merciful, has been enthroned above

Leader: We worship Christ as our light and our salvation

People: We have no need to be afraid

All: In this time of worship, come and seek the face of the Lord! Amen.

Music: Come thou almighty King (#293, all verses)

Prayer of Adoration and Confession

Wonderful are your works, O Lord! You created everything from the depths of the sea to the highest mountain and beyond. You knit us in our mothers’ wombs. We praise you for we are fearfully and wonderfully made. You gave us a Saviour who loves and forgives us and while on earth, gave us teachings on which to build our lives. You gave us your Spirit to direct the Church until Christ comes again in glory. How great are the blessings that you have lavished upon us! We worship you all the days of our lives.

Merciful Father, as our Creator, we have no secrets from you. You know when we sit down and when we rise up. You are acquainted with all of our ways. And so, you already know that we fall short of the teachings of Jesus. We do not love as we should. We are impatient and selfish. And it’s easier for us to judge others rather than fixing what is broken in our own lives. To make matters worse, we like playing ‘god’ rather than trusting in your divine will.

Forgive us, O Lord, for our many sins. Deliver us from evil. Save us from temptation. Save us from ourselves.

Thank you, Lord Jesus, that you have already paid the ultimate price for our sin.

We ask, O God, for the wisdom and strength to be our best selves. We ask for the vision to be co-workers in the kingdom of God.

We pray 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

God knows your name. God knows the burdens of your heart. He knows us completely – the good, the bad, and the ugly. And yet he still loves us. He loves us so much that he sent his only Son to die for us. This is the Good News – we are forgiven! Thanks be to God. Amen.

Announcements

1. Welcome!
2. We welcome Susan Gudgeon and Daniela Carnevale to our service today. Thank you for sharing your musical gifts with us!
3. Thank you to Jackie Harrington for doing our readings today.
4. **Annual General Meeting – TODAY after worship**
A light lunch will be served between Worship Service and Annual Meeting in the Bell Tower Room. The Annual Report is now available.
5. **Christmas decorations – November 25th at 9:00 a.m.**
Volunteers needed
6. **Congregational breakfast – November 29th**
Everyone is welcome. The breakfast is free, but there will be a freewill offering. Please bring a non-perishable food item for the Burlington Food Bank. Contact the church office by **November 24th if you plan to attend.**
7. **Smith's Funeral Home Christmas Memorial Service**
Date: Sunday, November 30, 2025
Time: 4 p.m.
Place: St. Paul the Apostle Parish, 2265 Headon Road, Burlington
8. **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.

A flyer for Christmas services at Knox. The title "Christmas @ Knox" is in red. Below it is a quote: "The Magic of Christmas is not in the presents, but in the presence of the Christ Child." and "Join us as we celebrate the birth of our Lord!". There are two sections: "Worship Services" and "Special Events", both in green. The "Worship Services" section lists: November 30th - Candle of Hope & Sacrament of Holy Communion; December 7th - Candle of Peace; December 14th - Candle of Joy; December 21st - Candle of Love & Children's Play; December 24th @ 4:00 p.m. - Carols and Communion Service. The "Special Events" section lists: November 29th @ 9:00 a.m. - Congregational Breakfast; November 30th @ 10:15 a.m. - Carol singing; December 7th @ 10:15 a.m. - Carol singing; December 14th @ 10:15 a.m. - Carol singing. At the bottom, it says "All services will be held in-person and broadcast on our YouTube channel." and includes a quote from Isaiah 9:6: "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6". The address "461 Elizabeth Street, Burlington, Ontario L7R 4B1, (905) 333-3013, www.knoxburlington.ca" is at the very bottom.

Christmas @ Knox

*The Magic of Christmas is not in the presents,
but in the presence of the Christ Child.*

Join us as we celebrate the birth of our Lord!

Worship Services

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And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Isaiah 9:6*

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9. White Gifts (Season of Advent)

It is part of our Christmas tradition to help those in need during the holidays. These are the organizations we support:

- *Burlington Food Bank
- *Carpenter Hospice
- *Reach Out for Kids Centre
- *Wellington Square U.C. community meal program

How can I support this ministry?

Between November 24th and December 15th, you may give a monetary gift (no gift cards please!) by designating “white gift” on your regular envelope or by E-Transfer. Please contact Kathy in the office to make special arrangements. All of the funds received will be equally split between these organizations to support their excellent work in our community!

Music: I am the church! You are the church! #475

Children’s Time: I Just Can't Wait to Be King

Enchorus Children's Choir
presents

Enchorus & Friends

A concert of seasonal music by
Enchorus and
Variante Harp & Flute Duo

Saturday, December 6, 2025
2:30 - 3:30 p.m.

\$10
under 16 free

Knox Presbyterian Church
461 Elizabeth Street
Burlington

Tickets available at the door.
enchorus.ca / varianteduo.com
catherinerichardsonarts@gmail.com

ENCHORUS
CHILDREN'S CHOIR

Prayer of Illumination

Let us pray. O Triune God, you are our help in ages past and our hope for years to come. God of change and renewal, by your Spirit, reveal to us the life-giving reign of Jesus Christ as the Scriptures are proclaimed today. Amen.

Our Old Testament reading is Psalm 139 verses 1-18.

Leader: O Lord, you have searched me and known me.

You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from far away.

People: You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, O Lord, you know it completely.

Leader: You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me.

People: Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain it.

Leader: Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?

**People: If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.
If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,
even there your hand shall lead me, and our right hand shall hold me fast.**

Leader: If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me become night,"

**People: even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day,
for darkness is as light to you.**

Leader: For it was you who formed my inward parts;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.

People: I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.

**My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.**

Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.

**In your book were written all the days that were formed for me,
when none of them as yet existed.**

Leader: How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them!

People: I try to count them—they are more than the sand; I come to the end—I am still with you. Amen.

Our New Testament reading is taken from the Letter to the Hebrews and we will be reading chapter 11, verses 1-3 and 8-16.

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Indeed, by faith our ancestors received approval. By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible.

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance, and he set out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he stayed for a time in the land he had been promised, as in a foreign land, living in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise.

For he looked forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. By faith, with Sarah's involvement, he received power of procreation, even though he was too old, because he considered him faithful who had promised. Therefore, from one person, and this one as good as dead, descendants were born, "as many as the stars of heaven and as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore."

All of these died in faith without having received the promises, but from a distance they saw and greeted them. They confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth, for people who speak in this way make it clear that they are seeking a homeland.

If they had been thinking of the land that they had left behind, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better homeland, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God; indeed, he has prepared a city for them.

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

Reflection: Everyday Heroes

The book of Hebrews is a curious book within the New Testament. It is the only book in the New Testament where the author is unknown. Early biblical scholars named the book “The Epistle of Paul to the Hebrews,” but later scholars agreed that this letter/essay/sermon is so different from Paul’s other writings, that he could not be the author. Today, the generally held view is that this book was either written by Barnabas or Apollos. Both men were colleagues of Paul who were Jewish converts. They both had the background in the Greek language and the Hebrews Scriptures to write this book.

Even without concrete information about the author, the Book of Hebrews is considered a theological masterpiece. Scholars are in agreement that this book was written for an audience of Jews who had converted to Christianity but wanted to merge the Christian faith back into Judaism. To counter their desire, the author wrote about the absolute supremacy of Jesus Christ. And he argued his thesis with extensive references to the Hebrew Scriptures that all point to Jesus Christ. Quite frankly, that’s why you don’t hear a lot of sermons from this book. Hebrews is much easier to explore in a small group Bible study than to explain all of its nuances and complexities in a sermon.

For example, in the introduction of the book, the author describes the kingship of Christ in this way...

Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever;
a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom.
You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness;
therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions
by anointing you with the oil of joy. (Hebrews 1:8-9)

These two verses refer to Psalm 45 and Isaiah 61 and this book is FULL of such references. Studying Hebrews is like a game of ‘connect the dots’ – there is no doubt that the author wants us to understand that Christ the King is the appointed heir of God the Father

(Hebrews 1:2) and he uses his extensive knowledge of the Hebrew scriptures and Israel's history to prove his point.

In our reading from Hebrews chapter 11, he provides an impressive list of heroes from the Old Testament. I selected Abraham and Sarah for two reasons. The first reason is a practical one – this book is 40 verses long so I had to be selective. The second reason is that both men and women are included in this list of heroes. Other heroes listed include Abel, Noah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Samson, David, Rahab, and many more.

And after the author gives us this 'who's who' of ancient Jewish history, he brings us back to Christ the King when he says in chapter 12:

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. (Hebrews 12:1-2)

Hopefully some of you will remember that I used this passage two weeks ago when we talked about the Olympic athlete and missionary, Eric Liddell. This great cloud of witnesses – these heroes of the faith – challenge us and inspire us as we run our own races.

As I conclude this short sermon series on heroes, there are two things that I want to highlight. The first thing is this...everyone – and I mean EVERYONE – has the ability to be a hero of our faith. You do not need to be a biblical scholar like Henri Nouwen. You don't have to be an Olympic athlete like Eric Liddell or doctor like Robert McClure. Each one of us has the potential to be a Christian hero, each and every day. As everyday heroes, we can proclaim the love of God in word and deed in our daily interactions with others. We can use our vocations to point others to Jesus Christ, the pioneer of our faith. We can courageously work towards bringing down systems of oppression and injustice.

We can make sacrifices for the sake of the Gospel. And as the author of Hebrews later stated in chapter 11, as heroes, our weaknesses can become strengths.

Think about the list of heroes that I just gave you. Abraham was a landowner in a family business. He and his barren wife, Sarah, were very old when they obeyed God's call. God said - leave the safety of your family's land and go to Canaan. And they did. The author of Hebrews described Abraham as good as dead when God blessed him with a legacy of descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky. (Hebrews 11:12) Abel was the first person recorded to be murdered in Scripture. Noah struggled with alcohol after the great flood. Isaac and Jacob fought as brothers. Joseph was sold as a slave by *his* brothers. Moses was fugitive from the Egyptian authorities after murdering a guard and the only reason that he survived was because he married a woman whose family took. David – once a simple shepherd – became king and then abused his power. And Rahab? She was a prostitute.

For a list of great heroes, it's certainly a fascinating look at the type of people that God has used for his glory. None of them were perfect – far from it! None of them had the characteristics of what our society would call a 'real hero.' But they were heroes none the less. And why? **Because of their faith.**

Which brings me to the second thing that I want to highlight – ordinary people can do extraordinary things through their faith in God. Through faith, these heroes' weaknesses were transformed into strengths. It was because of their faith in what is unseen that God was able to make himself visible. It was because of their faith that generations of Christians – as numerous as the stars in the sky - continue to experience the hope of the living Christ. For the original audience of the Book of Hebrews, it was a reminder of how the heroes of the past were all fulfilled through Jesus Christ, the servant

King. God calls each one of us – broken and sinful as we are – to be an everyday hero. And we need to trust that God will turn our weaknesses into strengths.

Earlier this week, I had a conversation with someone in the congregation about taking on a volunteer role within the church. They wanted more details about the time commitment involved and wanted my opinion about the challenges and opportunities of this role. Our conversation evolved to talking about how easy it is – especially in the world that we live in – to feel overwhelmed and to think that our contributions don't matter in the grand scheme of things. Can I really make a difference? Can God really use my time, talents, and treasures to bring about the kingdom of God?

My answer – spoken in faith of things unseen – was yes. Yes, that person can make a difference. So can I. So can you.

But it is still true – for all of us, myself included – that we are overwhelmed by the burdens of this life. We are exhausted from carrying heavy loads. We are anxious and afraid about what the future will bring. We feel like an anonymous number in the ever-moving circle of life.

But our faith teaches us that we DO matter. That we CAN make a difference, both as individuals and as a community of faith. This is true because we are not alone in our race. Jesus Christ – who came into this world as a helpless infant – is the One who gives us courage and strength to rise above our fear and become everyday heroes of faith.

Amen.

Dedication of our Tithes and Offerings

Special Music: Laudamus Te by Vivaldi

Duet by Susan Gudgeon and Daniela Carnevale

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

O Lord our God, as we sit in quietness our thoughts are far from quiet.

We are wrestling with doubts and fears,

We are looking for answers,

We are hoping against hope,

We are seeking strength,

We are yearning to be home with you.

In the ancient teachings of the Old and New Testaments, your Word offers us comfort and peace, forgiveness and hope. We ask that you fill us with faith. Give us thankful hearts, open minds, and helping hands. Infuse us with your Spirit so that we can be everyday heroes of faith.

O Creator of all that is, we thank you for the blessings of this life. For things seen – for family and friends; shelter, food, and clothing; health and wealth – we thank you. For things invisible to the human eye – for peace and harmony; love and forgiveness; acceptance and welcome – we thank you.

O Architect of our faith, we thank you for the blessings of the Christian faith. We are so grateful for the great cloud of witnesses who have passed on your teachings to us. For parents and grandparents, friends and neighbours, ministers and Sunday School teachers...for all of the ordinary heroes who gave so much of themselves so that you are glorified. We thank you.

In a world that is so broken, we pray for heroes everywhere who work and serve and teach and heal. Be with community and church leaders who courageously seek to end systems of oppression and injustice. Be with us here at Knox and show us how we can be part of your kingdom building work. Teach us how we can grow in faith and become more and more like Jesus. We pray for business and government leaders who seek to build bridges instead of constructing walls. We continue to pray that the peace of Christ will descend on nations and communities where hatred and conflict dominate everyday life. Be with the people of Ukraine. Be with the people of the Middle East. Heal the wounded. Comfort the bereaved. Strengthen the helpers. Inspire the heroes.

O Great Physician, we pray for those who need to experience your healing in their lives. We remember family and friends who are ill or in hospital. We pray for those who are struggling in their relationships. Be with the unemployed and those who are struggling financially. Give hope to the hopeless and faith to the lost. Grant wisdom to those who need answers to difficult questions.

Today we remember those who we name before you...

O Triune God, we also pray for ourselves. You know the hairs on our head, you count each beat of our hearts. You knit us together when we were being formed and are familiar with all our ways. As people formed in your image, give us courage as we proclaim your glory in word and in deed. Help us run our race with hope as we fix our eyes on Jesus Christ, the servant King. In Christ's holy name we pray. Amen.

Music: O God our help in ages past
#330 (verses 1, 2, 4, 6)

Blessing

Sung Amen

