

Knox Presbyterian Church
Rev. Emma Duncan
December 7, 2025



Advent Two - Candle of Peace

Carol singing before the service (10:15 a.m.)

Welcome

Call to worship (PWS&D Advent Liturgy)

Rev. Emma and Richard Duncan

Leader: The psalmist dreamed of a world where leaders govern with righteousness, and the poor are treated with dignity and justice.

People: In this new creation, the oppressed are set free, the vulnerable are protected and peace flows like a river.

Leader: Today, too many experience violence, poverty and persecution. Yet, they yearn to know peace.

People: We long to live in that new creation, where God's glory is revealed on earth, through justice and peace. Today, on this second Sunday of Advent, we light the candle of peace as a prayer of longing.

The candle of peace is lit.

Let us pray together: Living God, help us to recognize your presence wherever people work for peace. Teach us to be instruments of your peace in the world. Come, Lord Jesus.

Music: Hark the glad sound (#118, all verses)

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

O Lord of hosts, blessed are you, who alone does wondrous things. You created the universe in all its complexity. You ordered the sun, moon, and stars around our planet. You created each creature – from the birds in the air to the fish in the sea to the tiniest microorganisms that are invisible to the human eye. You made each one of us in your image and gave us meaning and purpose. You took part of your divine self and lived among us in the form of your Son, Jesus Christ. Throughout all generations, he is our Saviour, Redeemer, and Friend. In this season of Advent, we join our voices in praise with the global Church and bless your glorious name forever and ever.

Heavenly Father, as we hear the story of John the Baptist today, we recognize that we need to hear his call for repentance. O God of peace, we confess that there are many ways that we maintain “peacefulness” at the expense of others. We turn our eyes away from human suffering to maintain false contentment in our own hearts. We settle for compromises that harm the vulnerable. We yearn for good deals at the mall rather than yearning for your peace. We prefer to put up walls around us that keep the world out.

O Lord, in your mercy, hear our cries for forgiveness. We repent of our sins – both as individuals and as a society.

Thank you, Lord Jesus, for hearing our prayers. Shower us with your grace. Take us – mold us, refine us – into the people of faith that you desire us to be. Transform us into bold witnesses who proclaim the Good News of the Gospel. Inspire people of faith all around the world to work together for the coming kingdom of heaven.

We pray in the holy name of our Saviour, 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

Hear this Good News: God pours out mercy, rushing over us like a river. In the name of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven. Claim your inheritance as a beloved of God and be at peace with God, your neighbour, and yourself. Amen.

Announcements

1. Welcome! Join us for fellowship down in our hall.
2. Thank yous...
 - a. Jean Low for playing the carols
 - b. Neil Manson for doing our readings today
3. Next Sunday
Luncheon after worship. Hosted by the Jollymore family.

4. 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!



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

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

Special Events

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

**All services will be held in-person
and broadcast on our [YouTube channel](#).**

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

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November 28, 2025

To the people of Knox,

It is with mixed emotions that I announce that I have submitted my letter of resignation to the Presbytery of Hamilton and the Session of Knox. I will be leaving Knox as of December 31, 2025. My last Sunday in the pulpit will be December 28, 2025.

The past 12 years at Knox have been a real blessing in my life, but I have been wrestling with the fact that God is calling me into a new season of ministry. I have accepted an appointment as the General Presbyter in the Presbytery of Brampton. This two-year contract takes my ministry in a completely different direction and God willing, will give me an opportunity to serve the broader denomination at a critical time in our history.

I wish to express my gratitude to each one of you for your support and encouragement over the years. We have shared both laughter and tears and I trust that our Triune God will continue to guide you into the future.

May the Lord bless you and keep you. Rev. Emma



The Presbyterian Church in Canada
The Presbytery of Hamilton

Citation

The Session of Knox Presbyterian Church

Citation regarding the resignation of the Rev. Emma Duncan

Emma Duncan minister of this congregation, having laid her resignation before The Presbytery of Hamilton. The Presbytery hereby cites, the session and congregation to appear at the meeting of the presbytery be held avia Zoom on the day of Ninth (9) December in the year 2025, at 7 o'clock pm, that they may give reasons, if they have any, why Emma Duncan's resignation should not be proceeded with, with certification that if no appearance be made, they shall be held as consenting to her resignation.

In order to facilitate this citation, the session is asked to appoint two-three representatives to attend and, when called upon, to speak to the presbytery.

November 29th 2025
Binbrook, Ontario

Rev. Lois Whitwell
Clerk, Presbytery of Hamilton

Citation Read:

Signature

November 30, 2025

December 7, 2025

Clerk: Rev. Lois Whitwell
Ph: 905 579 8255

187 Kirk Rd Binbrook ON L0R 1C0
[email: hampresby@gmail.com](mailto:hampresby@gmail.com)

Music: On Jordan's bank (#126, verses 1, 2, 5)

Children's Time: Travel light

Prayer for Illumination

Let us pray. God of whispers and shouts, you proclaim the good news of peace from all corners of creation. As we turn to our scriptures, may the words inspire us to dream of a world where peace thrives among us. Amen.

Our Old Testament reading is taken from the Book of Psalms and we will be reading Responsively Psalm 72, verses 1-7 & 18-19.

Leader: Give the king your justice, O God,
and your righteousness to a king's son.

People: **May he judge your people with righteousness,
and your poor with justice.**

Leader: May the mountains yield prosperity for the people,
and the hills, in righteousness.

People: **May he defend the cause of the poor of the people,
give deliverance to the needy, and crush the oppressor.**

Leader: May he live while the sun endures,
and as long as the moon, throughout all generations.

People: **May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass,
like showers that water the earth.**

Leader: In his days may righteousness flourish and peace abound,

People: **until the moon is no more.**

Leader: Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things.

All: **Blessed be God's glorious name forever;
May the glory of the Lord fill the whole earth.
Amen and amen!**

Our Old Testament reading is taken from the Book of Malachi and we will be reading chapter 3, verses 1 - 6.

See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight—indeed, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears?

For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the Lord in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years.

Then I will draw near to you for judgment; I will be swift to bear witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired workers in their wages, the widow, and the orphan, against those who thrust aside the alien and do not fear me, says the Lord of hosts.

For I the Lord do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, have not perished.

Our New Testament reading is taken from the Gospel of Matthew and we will be reading chapter 3, verses 1-12.

In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said,

“The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:
‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.’”

Now John wore clothing of camel’s hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then the people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him, and all the region along the Jordan, and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit worthy of repentance. Do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our ancestor’; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham.

Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

“I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

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

Music: O day of peace that dimly shines (#732, all verses)

Reflection: The Will to Dream – Prophetic Peace

In the season of Advent, it is traditional to read the story of John the Baptist. Many of us have been hearing his story for most of our lives. And because this story is so familiar to us, we have a picture of him in our mind – of a wild looking man with long unkempt hair and leathery skin from living outdoors. He wore clothes made of camel's hair and his diet consisted of locusts and wild honey.



John the Baptist doesn't exactly fit the holiday aesthetic of our society, does he? He doesn't wear soft, red robes like Santa Claus nor does he stand by a Christmas tree with Mariah Carey's Christmas album playing in the background. He would never be hired to appear in a Christmas commercial on TV telling us about amazing Black Friday deals.

His message isn't a warm and fuzzy one either. Instead, he shouts from the wilderness preparing the way of the Lord. It's about repentance and hypocrisy. He uses harsh imagery of trees being cut down and wheat and chaff being separated. The unwanted branches and chaff will be thrown into the fire.

I come from a long line of prophetic voices – messengers of the Lord like Malachi – who proclaim...repent for the kingdom of heaven is near!!

The Messiah is on his way and he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Get yourselves ready – the liars and the cheaters and the oppressors and the brood of vipers – judgment is coming. It will be swift and painful.

Refine your offerings so that they will be pleasing to the Lord. Bear fruit worthy of repentance.

I don't know about you, but this isn't a style of preaching that speaks to me.

As we worship here in this beautiful sanctuary, we have to ask ourselves - is this really a message of prophetic peace?

Well, of course, it depends on who you ask...

If you were to ask the poor, the widows and orphans, those who are oppressed by unjust economic systems, those who face persecution because of their ethnicity, race, nationality, gender, or sexual orientation...if you ask them this question, you can guess that their answer would be a resounding YES!! There is a prophet coming who will bring peace and justice? Woo hoo! Sign me up!!

And his message of prophetic peace has a great urgency to it. His voice, echoing through the wilderness and across the boundaries of time and space, confronts the injustices of our society. It shines a light on the weaknesses of empires where power is held in the hands of a few, where peace is bought and sold to the highest bidder.

John the Baptist definitely does not fit the Christmas vibe!!

As Christians who have been hearing this story for a long time, it's easy for us to forget just how radical John's message is. And this has nothing to do with his clothes or diet. His proclamation about the coming of the kingdom of heaven was – and continues to be – VERY countercultural. I'm pretty sure that John wouldn't approve of all of the sentimentality and consumerism of the Christmas season. Instead, he tells a prophetic message to the world that Jesus Christ, the Messiah, is on his way. And he did this not by building walls or summoning an army, but by clearing the path. By proclaiming that the forgiveness of sins is possible. That justice for the poor and oppressed is possible. That peace – real, deep peace – is near.

By lighting the candle of peace today, we join our voices with the generations of Christians who believe in the hope of John's proclamation. We are invited to reclaim the peace of Christ that is radical and countercultural. We are encouraged to participate in a prophetic peace that is rooted in justice, reconciliation, and equality. There are so many ways in which we can share in John's proclamation – where this dream of peace can become our reality - at home, in the workplace, in the Church, and beyond these walls. Are there people in your life who need to hear about the enduring grace of Christ? Those who have felt unwelcome in the Church because of who they are or what they look like? Do you know people who needs to experience courageous kindness or radical hospitality? And even more radical still – do you need to seek forgiveness from someone who you have hurt? Do you need to accept forgiveness from someone who has hurt you?

This is just a glimpse of what prophetic peace looks like. And let's be clear - no one ever said that it is easy. Indeed, as the prophet Malachi said – this work needs to be refined over and over again. As I have been reflecting on these passages this week, it has been interesting to follow the news about Pope Leo XIV's (14) first trip abroad as pope. During his trip, we see powerful examples of how challenging it is to proclaim and refine the peace of Christ in our complex world.¹ His Holiness did not travel very far from his home in Vatican City, but politically and theologically, he travelled a LONG way. In Istanbul, Turkey, he met with religious leaders in the Orthodox tradition – fellow Christians who have been in conflict with the wider Church for millennia. He also travelled to war torn Lebanon and paid tribute to the victims who were killed in the explosion at the port of Beirut in 2020. He met with faith leaders in the Muslim community and talked about peace in the Middle East.

We may not have an international platform like the Pope, but we do have a role to play in proclaiming the peace of Christ. And never forget that this is sacred work. When we engage in this sacred work in our daily lives, it becomes easier to do this as a community. It becomes easier to find like-minded people who want to engage in building bridges, clearing paths, and proclaiming that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, the Prince of Peace.

Amen.

1

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Visit_by_Pope_Leo_XIV_to_Turkey_and_Lebanon#:~:text=Pope%20Leo%20XIV%20visited%20Turkey,the%20First%20Council%20of%20Nicaea.

<https://www.cnn.com/2025/11/30/middleeast/lebanon-pope-leo-visit-christian-community-intl-cmd>

Dedication of our Tithes and Offerings

Song of Thanks: Hope is a star (#119, verse 2)

Peace is a ribbon that circles the earth,
Giving a promise of safety and worth.
When God is a child there's joy in our song.
The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong,
And none shall be afraid.

Prayer of Dedication

Holy God, we bring our gifts and offerings to you because the voices of the prophets remind us of something bigger, something greater than any system this world offers us. We believe when we trust you with our resources, the kingdom of God comes much closer to reality on earth. Help us steward these gifts to create abundant life and love. Amen.

Prayers of the People

Holy and loving God, we are your people, shaped by your creative will, animated by your life-giving breath. As we enter now into a spirit of prayer, awaken us to your presence within and all around us. We know that the very act of offering our prayers to you is a radical and countercultural act. While the world shops for the perfect Christmas gift, slow us down to pause and reflect on the advent of peace. Clear a path for us so that we may experience the rhythm of your forgiveness and grace. Gather us together to proclaim that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, the Prince of Peace.

In the silence of our hearts, we cry in solidarity with a world that is in pain. We mourn the destruction of our planet because of man-made climate change. We shout for justice for the poor and the marginalized. We sing songs for the oppressed and refugee. We remember those who are persecuted because of circumstances beyond their control. We long for a world of safe streets and homes, of full bellies, of governments that work for the common good, not to line the pockets of the rich and powerful.

O Lord, strengthen the Church to hear what the prophets of old have to say to us today. Encourage people of faith to practice radical hospitality and prophetic peace. By your Spirit put us to the sacred work of mending what's broken and healing what's hurt. Inspire us to see the possibilities where we can work with others to build bridges and clear paths.

Blessed Redeemer, we lift up to you those around us who need to experience your peace. Where there is sickness, send your healing power. Where there is conflict, send your courage. Where there is grief, offer comfort. Where there is fear and anxiety, restore hope.

Today we remember your children by name...

O God of the wilderness and God of the city, we wait in hopeful anticipation of the coming of the Christ Child. May the ancient stories of our faith – of Isaiah and Malachi, of Joseph and Mary, of John the Baptist – come alive for us. May they remind us of the greatest story ever told – that our Lord, Jesus Christ, was born in Bethlehem and would grow into a man who would offer us forgiveness and mercy. Who would baptize us in faith, hope, and love. Send your radical love and amazing grace into our lives, the Church, and the world that you so love. Holy Spirit, come among us and make us co-workers in the kingdom of heaven. To you – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - be all honour and glory and praise. Amen.

Music: Comfort, comfort you my people (#113, all verses)

Blessing (John 14:27)

Sung Amen