

Knox Presbyterian Church  
December 28, 2025

Rev. Emma Duncan's last Sunday



Greetings

Call to worship

**Leader: We gather together in this place**

People: Prophets and dreamers, singers and poets

**Leader: We who dare to imagine a world renewed**

People: We who dare to dream God's dream

**Leader: God is our refuge**

People: Our Lord guides us on the way

**All: Come and worship, all you who dream and imagine. Amen.**

Music: Good Christians, all rejoice (#141, all verses)

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

O Holy One, creator of all that is, lover of all people, we gather to worship you in humility and reverence. You made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them. We celebrate your goodness and marvel at the diversity of life on this planet. And in the fullness of time, you sent part of yourself into the form of a helpless infant. That baby would grow into a man who would show us the way of love and forgiveness. Together with the global Church, we worship you as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and we will sing praises to you as long as we live.

Compassionate Saviour, as we leave the Christmas season, we confess that some of us may be relieved that it is over. Christmas is supposed to be the most wonderful time of the year, but truth be told, it can be very stressful. The hustle and bustle of shopping, gift wrapping, cooking, and cleaning has left us exhausted. We sang the old familiar carols and now we want to go back to bed. Forgive us, O Lord, for not focusing on the true meaning of Christmas. Forgive us for not sharing the Good News of the Christ Child. Forgive us for putting our trust in the wrong people.

O Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world – in your great mercy, forgive us! Free us from our sin. Save us from the bondage of temptation and evil. Save us from ourselves.

Thank you, Lord Jesus, for giving us life through your great sacrifice on the cross. Send your Spirit into our lives, into our communities, and in the Church so that we may shine Christ's light into the world. May others see the salvation of Christ through us.

We pray all these things in the name of the Christ Child who taught us to pray:

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

As 2025 comes to a close, always remember that the Good News of the Gospel is for all people. There is nothing we have done, nothing we will ever do, that will separate us from the love of God made known in Jesus Christ. This love is yours! This love is mine! Receive the gift of God's forgiveness with joy in your heart. Amen.

## Announcements

1. Welcome! Join us for fellowship down in our hall. As today is my last Sunday, there will be special treats.
2. Thank yous...
  - a. Ovidio di Cesare for doing our readings today
3. Financial update
  - a. Today is the last day to have your givings in for the 2025 tax year
  - b. 2026 Offering Envelopes are now available
4. Moving into 2026  
Interim Moderator – the Rev. Dr. Vicky Eldridge. She will be preaching on January 4<sup>th</sup>.
5. Presentation by Sharon White, Clerk of Session

Music: Angels from the realms of glory (#146, all verses)

Children's Time: Don't forget the dandelions...

Prayer for Illumination

Let us pray. Sovereign Lord, as we ponder the story of Jesus as a baby, we too long to see God's salvation. By your Spirit, illuminate the Scripture readings today so that Christ's light may be revealed to us. In Christ's holy name we pray. Amen.

**Our Old Testament reading is taken from the Book of Psalms and we will be reading Responsively Psalm 146.**

Leader: Praise the Lord!

**People: Praise the Lord, O my soul!**

Leader: I will praise the Lord as long as I live;

**People: I will sing praises to my God all my life long.**

Leader: Do not put your trust in princes, in mortals, in whom there is no help.

**People: When their breath departs, they return to the earth;  
on that very day their plans perish.**

Leader: Blessed are those whose help is the God of Jacob,

**People: whose hope is in the Lord their God,  
who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them;  
who keeps faith forever;  
who executes justice for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry.**

Leader: The Lord sets the prisoners free;

**People: the Lord opens the eyes of the blind.**

Leader: The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down;

**People: the Lord loves the righteous.**

Leader: The Lord watches over the strangers; and upholds the orphan and the widow,

**People: but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.**

Leader: The Lord will reign forever, your God, O Zion, for all generations.

**People: Praise the Lord! Amen.**

**Our New Testament reading is taken from the Gospel of Luke and we will be reading chapter 2, verses 22-40.**

When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord”), and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.”

Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah.

Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what was customary under the law, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

“Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word,  
for my eyes have seen your salvation,  
which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,  
a light for revelation to the gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.”

And the child’s father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him.

Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, “This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul, too.”

There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. At that moment she came and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

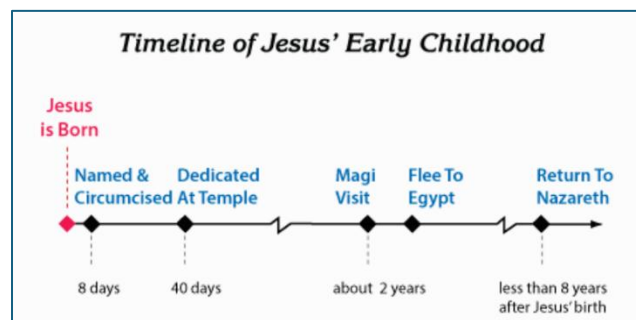
When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom, and the favor of God was upon him.

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

## Reflection: The Will to Dream – Generational Praise

It is bittersweet that the last time that I preached on the story of Mary and Joseph meeting with Anna and Simeon was at the end of December 2013, after my first Christmas at Knox. I normally take vacation the week after Christmas, so I haven't been around to preach on this passage. I regret this because this passage is a gem!

I've always been fascinated by the stories that we have of Jesus' early life – and I know that I am not the only one - because we have so little information about this time in his life.



Here is a chart that I found online which gives us a good visual representation about what we know about his early life. After his family's return from Egypt because of the death of King Herod, the next story that we have of him is at the age of 12 years old when he got 'lost' in the temple while visiting Jerusalem. (Luke 2:41-52) And after that, we have nothing until he is around the age of 30.

The story that Ovidio read for us today is full of nuance and meaning. Not only does it connect the Old Testament with the New Testament, it also reminds us that Jesus grew up in a devout Jewish family. The trip from Bethlehem to Jerusalem is 10 km. To put that in context for you – the trip from the church to Appleby Line and Upper Middle Road is 10.9 km. So this wasn't a long trip, but of course, Mary and Joseph didn't have a car or access to Burlington Transit. We don't know how long it took them to make this journey,

but it couldn't have been easy to do for a woman recovering from childbirth who had to carry their newborn son.

They made this journey for two reasons – first, so that Jesus could be presented in the temple and second, so that Mary could receive the rite of purification according to the law of Moses. According to Leviticus 12:2-8, a woman must be purified 40 days after the birth of her son. This includes making a sacrifice to the Lord to atone for her sins. The sacrifice of two turtledoves or pigeons was available to people who were poor and could not afford a lamb.

Mary and Joseph were fulfilling their obligation as devout Jews. And even though they could not afford to sacrifice a lamb, their infant son would grow up to become the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. (John 1:29) Mary needed atonement from a priest, but her son would eliminate this need because of the sacrifice he made on the cross.

### **The old is made new.**

While Mary and Joseph were in the temple, they met two people – Simeon and Anna. Both were also devout Jews who were waiting for the coming of the Lord's Messiah. Both were destined by God to be in the temple on that day so that they could see the Christ Child with their own eyes. Mary and Joseph's experiences with Simeon and Anna also connect the old with the new because the covenant of the Lord was revealed throughout the generations.

And what is so amazing about Simeon's song of praise is that he points to the *future* of Jesus' ministry beyond the people of Israel. Simeon prophesized that the salvation of Christ would be shared with the Gentiles. We don't realize how controversial this

statement was. Remember that they were in the temple in Jerusalem – the holiest of holy places in the Jewish faith. To those who heard Simeon’s song of praise, they would have been shocked!

And yet, that’s exactly what happened. The Good News of the Gospel was revealed to the Gentiles and spread far beyond the 10 km distance between Bethlehem and Jerusalem. It has been passed down throughout the generations. It has been passed on to you and to me.

We have been blessed with salvation through the Lord’s Messiah, Jesus Christ.



And as my ministry draws to a close here at Knox, I want to remind you that you will CONTINUE to be blessed with salvation through your faith in Jesus Christ. Generations of people have passed through this sanctuary guided by the Holy Spirit to experience our Triune God. Generations of people have passed through this sanctuary looking for forgiveness of their sins. Generations of people have come here looking for a sense belonging, a renewal of their faith, and strength for whatever comes tomorrow.

**And this will continue.**

Future generations will come to know Jesus through this place and more importantly, because of you. Because you carry the light of Christ within you – a light so bright, so strong, so everlasting - and that light shine will continue to shine through you so that others may see the glory of the Lord with their own eyes.

Friends, beloved in the Lord, good people of Knox, as I said on Christmas Eve, there is no need to be afraid of what tomorrow brings because Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, will never leave you. Be strong in the Lord, be filled with wisdom, and continue to sing songs of praise for the next generation. May the favour of the Lord be with you. Now and always. Amen.

## Dedication of our Tithes and Offerings

### Song of Thanks: Emmanuel #114

Emmanuel, Emmanuel  
His name is called Emmanuel.  
God with us, revealed in us,  
His name is called Emmanuel.

### Prayer of Dedication (not written in advance)

#### Prayers of the People

God of the generations, you are our help in ages past and our hope for years to come. As another year draws to a close, we are so thankful for the blessings of this life. We thank you for all of the people who you have put in our lives, especially family and friends who love and care for us. We thank you for our health and wealth. We thank you for this great nation.

Triune God, we are eternally grateful for the gift of our faith. We honour the great cloud of witnesses who have been beacons of light. We remember all who have nurtured and sustained this congregation. For ministers and lay people who have been witnesses for Christ in this community. We praise you Lord for all of the joy and laughter. For all of the accomplishments and successes of these years. We also acknowledge that there have been many struggles and heartaches. You have travelled with us on this road and have never abandoned us. Thank You, Lord, for being with us in good times and bad. We ask for your continued guidance as this congregation goes into the next chapter of its history. Be with the Rev. Vicky Eldridge, the incoming Interim Moderator, and the leadership of Knox as they seek to do your will.

As we celebrate the life of this congregation, we humbly acknowledge that our reality is just a dream for others. We pray for congregations who struggle to keep their doors open. We pray for Christians around the world who put their lives at risk by worshipping you. Be with your people, O God, and give us hope, courage, and determination to continue to serve you no matter what challenges we face. Remind us that your Church will never be defeated.

O Holy One, we pray for the younger generations. We pray for all your children, known and unknown to us; guard their bodies, strengthen their minds, and give them joy. They

live in a world that is so complex. In our rapidly changing society, give them strength, courage, and resilience. Give them hope for the future. May they experience the joy of your salvation.

Today we remember those who name before you...

Heavenly Father, as we go out into an unknown future, remind us that tomorrow is not unknown to you. You go ahead of us each day to prepare the way of hope, peace, joy, and love. Remind us that you are always near. In Christ's glorious name we pray. Amen.

Music: One more step along the world I go (#641, all verses)

The Blessing (Philippians 1:3-6, 9-11)

Sung Amen

