

## CONGREGATIONAL PROFILE



"Vintage Knox (1883)" by Laura Woermke (2019)

**Knox Presbyterian Church**

**55 Hincks Street**

**St. Thomas, Ontario**

**N5R 3N9**

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## Introduction – Who We are

### We open wide our doors

*To all who would know God and do God's will; to all who would live and serve to make the world better; to all who seek comfort and would find rest; to old and young, wise and unlearned, rich and poor, saint and sinner, this church opens wide its doors and in the name of Jesus Christ bids you welcome to our Father's house.*

For decades these words of welcome have appeared on our Sunday worship bulletin. In many ways, the phrase “we open wide our doors” has been our watchword at Knox and we continue to strive to live this vision in the following ways:

**As a community of welcome and hospitality in our neighbourhood.** Several of our activities and events are designed to be meaningful for our neighbours, including a monthly Toonie breakfast, a Wednesday morning caregiver and tots program, a knitting group, and musical productions throughout the year featuring outside performers. Knox regularly donates to the local Foodbank and our women's groups and committees host events to raise funds for the local hospice, El Sistema, and a local housing project.

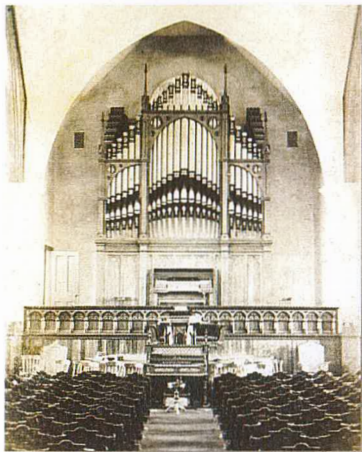
**As a community that ensures newcomers and long-timers feel at home.** Our weekly coffee times after worship and numerous activities midweek have helped us to continue to live our identity as welcoming people of God. Knox has a strong pastoral care committee that regularly visits the over 75 people connected to our congregation who are in long-term care, retirement homes, or confined to their own houses due to illness or age. While these members can no longer attend worship, we believe that our congregation can still be a church home to these people. We seek to provide a worship experience that is traditional but accessible. The noise and excitement of children are welcome in our sanctuary. We value a meaningful children's time and have invested in programming for our youngest members so that they can enjoy and find value in Sunday School (known at Knox as “Sunday Kool”), at children's activities, and in our nursery. As a welcoming congregation, we believe that all people – regardless of their abilities, age, sexual orientation, wealth, ethnicity, or past experiences are beloved children of God, and belong within the family of the church. Knox is an inclusive congregation.

**As a community that shares the gift of our building.** Every week, “we open wide our doors” to community groups who need space to meet. Golden K Kiwanis meet in Rodney Hall; Girl Guides, Embers, and Scouts use the Christian Ed Hall; AA, University Women, and Field Naturalists groups hold meetings in various spaces within our church. Recently, we have been blessed to welcome local musical groups into our sanctuary for concerts. We allow worshippers who are a part of the local mosque down the street to use our parking lot during those times when we do not require it.



## Our Story

In the early 1830's, new immigrants from Scotland began holding worship services in St. Thomas. By 1837, the first Presbyterian church building was constructed on New Street and the congregation was named St. Andrew's. This congregation moved to Talbot Street, and finally settled on Hincks Street in 1883. Knox continues to worship in this 141-year-old sanctuary.



Over the decades, numerous renovations and upgrades have taken place, while still honouring the legacy and integrity of the neogothic



construction. Knox, St. Thomas was the first Presbyterian Church in Canada to install a fully operational elevator, to ensure all people were able to access the sanctuary for worship.

In the 1950's, a Christian Education building was constructed to meet the growing needs of young families; a small chapel was added on the main level. In the 1980's, a Library/meeting room and conservatory were built. Neighbouring homes were purchased to create a large, paved parking lot. The sanctuary and front hall were renovated in the 1990's and in the last decade, the Christian Education space and nursery were updated. Throughout the years, Knox has become known for its faithful presence, generosity, and forethought in the community.





## Worship at Knox

As the only Presbyterian Church in St. Thomas, we seek to offer traditional worship that is relevant and meaningful for all. We are proud of our choir, our beautiful Casavant organ, and grand pianos. Our service is livestreamed and recorded for broadcast on the local Rogers television network. We appreciate traditional hymns, but also welcome music and liturgy from a variety of times and places. We are currently discussing ways to make the front of our



sanctuary space more flexible and accessible. The sounds of children and babies are welcome in our sanctuary. We have embraced the use of “worship wands” during our youth hymn. Youngsters are welcome throughout worship, but generally join in the service for the first fifteen minutes, and then attend nursery or Sunday Kool for the duration of the service. All children are welcome at the Lord’s Table at Knox. Hymn

books are located in every pew. A weekly bulletin is produced, and often a newer hymn is included. Knox has CCLI and One Music licensing for copying and livestreaming.



Welcoming new Members





## The Ministry of Music at Knox

At Knox Presbyterian Church, the Music Ministry is an old and cherished tradition. The first small pump organ was approved at Knox in 1880. It was a very controversial decision by the Session. A small group of Knox members were so outraged by the notion of music in the sanctuary that they left St. Thomas and walked to the Presbyterian Church in Fingal (a journey of about 3 ½ hours) to attend church and demonstrate their protest.

The protest was short lived because a space for an organ was incorporated into the design of the current building. Knox now houses one of the largest pipe organs in Ontario, perhaps surpassed by only one in the Toronto area. The Knox organ is a 4 manual Casavant Organ (4209 pipes in 73 ranks). The sanctuary also houses a 7'6" Yamaha grand piano. Both instruments are used weekly in the Knox services. Knox has an assortment of other instruments that are used as needed.



The Knox Senior Choir is a vital part of worship services at Knox. It is a choir of about 20 SATB voices (post-Covid). There are currently three paid section leads in addition to one section lead position that is currently vacant. The music at Knox is a blend of traditional hymns and anthems as well as more contemporary works. While maintaining the traditional focus of our worship services, there is an intentional move to include music that is relevant to our younger members and young families. Knox also has a small children's choir and a hand chime choir under lay leadership.

Our Knox Director of Music, Amadeusz (Sandy) Kazubowski-Houston is a gifted, multi-talented musician. He prepares the weekly music plan in consultation with the Minister and then leads the Senior Choir in their Thursday night practices as well as Sunday morning services. He plays both the grand piano and the organ with enthusiasm and amazing skill. He is known for his impromptu flexibility, his creativity, and his charismatic style.



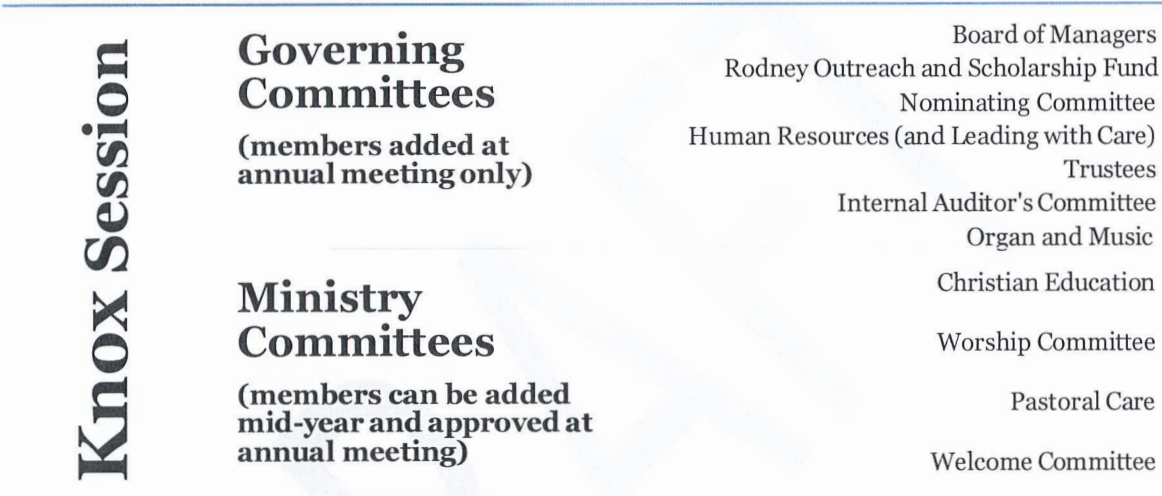
The Ministry of Music at Knox St. Thomas is an integral component of the weekly worship experience.



# Stewardship of God’s Gifts

## The Gift of the People

Knox’s greatest strength is its people. A strong Session oversees the life and ministry of the church’s various committees and groups. We seek to be a congregation that encourages all members to use their gifts of time, talent, or treasure for the glory of God. While elders are ordained and serve for life (unless they request a leave or resign); committee membership is reviewed yearly by the Nominating Committee, and terms are generally a three-year renewable commitment. Below is the organizational chart for our congregation.



There are many other groups and activities within the congregation. While these groups do not regularly report to the Session, they are ultimately accountable to the Session. They include:

- Knox Presbyterian Women (and its subgroups: Knitters, Sew-It-Seams, Kitchen Whiches, Crafters, Young Moms’, Outreach Circle)
- The Canadian Food Grains Committee
- The Men’s Club
- The Book Club
- The Wednesday Morning Bible Study
- “Let’s Do Something”
- The Archives Committee
- The Library Committee
- Library Café
- The Knox Talks quarterly newsletter

## The Gift of Church Staff

All church staff report to the Human Resources Committee. The Minister is an ex officio member of this committee.

- Transitional Minister: Rev. Donna Kerrigan
- Christian Education and Outreach: Meghan Brockington (30 hours/week)
- Director of Music: Amadeusz (Sandy) Kazubowski-Houston (12 hours/week )
- Office Administrator: Kathy Kestle (24 hours/week)
- Communications Assistant: Aylin Gorgun (as required)
- ECE Staff in the Nursery on Sunday Mornings: Angie Anderson (1 hour/week)
- Custodian: Woolley Maintenance Service
- Audio-Visual: Dion Vansevenant





## The Gift of Our Building

The building of Knox Presbyterian Church is one of the most beautiful sanctuaries in the city. Built in sections over the span of 140 years, it is a monument to our congregation's faithful stewardship of the gifts that have been shared with us from generations past.



**The sanctuary** has a seating capacity of 500 and is located on the second floor of the main building. It can be accessed via three stairways and a full-service elevator. The audiovisual equipment is located in the balcony. It is a concert-ready audio-visual system run by a team of trained volunteers, under the direction of a professional audio-visual technician.

**Rodney Hall** is named in honour of much loved and long-serving minister, Rev. Dr. Harry Rodney (who served Knox from 1944-1996), and seats over 200 people. It is used weekly for coffee and refreshments following worship, for funeral and wedding luncheons, and for numerous meetings. Rodney Hall has a large screen TV which is used for announcements, presentations, and recognition of birthdays and anniversaries.

**The Church Library** was built in the 1980's and is home to our church's library and archives. It is also used for meetings and Bible study mid-week. The Knox library is fortunate to have a professional librarian who volunteers her time to keep the book collection organized, functional, and up-to-date.





The Kitchen Whiches

flip pancakes here every Shrove Tuesday. The kitchen is also used every Sunday for the preparation of goodies and coffee.

**The Christian Education Hall and Nursery Spaces** are used for large group Sunday School activities, Indoor Playground, Scouts, Guides, Ember meetings, and for other functions (small luncheons, midweek group meetings etc.). Knox has a dedicated and well equipped nursery space for children ages 0-4. The nursery is staffed by a licensed Early Childhood Educator and a group of volunteers.

**The upstairs classrooms** are accessed via two stairways and are used every Sunday for our "Sunday Kool" program. They are also used for children's programming like Vacation Bible School and Kids' Clubs. The space is newly renovated and multi-functional and includes two dedicated children's washrooms.



Indoor Playground



Minister's office

**The W.D. Carroll Conservatory** is a large space for the choir to practice and meet on the east side of the sanctuary that was constructed in the 1980's. It includes office space for the Director of Music and a grand piano.

**The Kitchen** is well used! It is a health unit approved facility with a commercial dishwasher and coffee maker, and the Kitchen Whiches use this space for preparing meals; the breakfast teams cook up eggs and bacon for Saturday breakfasts and the Men's Club

**The Office Space** is located at the front of the Christian Education building. The administrator's office is right in front of the entrance. The minister's office is to the right of the entrance and includes a private closet and washroom, an electric fireplace, and ample storage for books. A seating area provides space for small meetings with the minister.



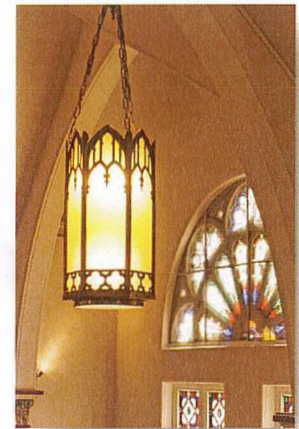
## The Gift of Church Finances

As a longstanding community of faith with a spirit of good stewardship and generosity, Knox grows its ministry through the management of several funds.

**The General Fund** is our operating budget. General offerings given through Pre Authorized Remittance (PAR), Canada Helps, e-transfers, cheques and cash are managed in this fund.

**The Legacy Fund** was established over a century ago and is managed by the Board of Managers. The terms of the fund state that interest generated can be used for the general work of the church. Each year, the general fund receives \$50,000-\$70,000 in interest from the Legacy Fund.

**The Building and Restoration Fund** is used to cover major repairs or improvements at Knox since the building is quite large and old. Memorial donations are placed in this fund which is managed by the Board of Managers. In times past, the Building and Restoration Fund has been used to replace windows in the Christian Education building, purchase new boilers and improve the electrical system of the church.



**Rodney Outreach and Scholarship** was established in recognition of Rev. Dr. Harry Rodney and is used to award scholarships to students from Knox entering post Secondary education. It is also used to fund outreach endeavours within the church and the community. In the past, this fund has been used to provide seed money to support the hiring of new staff, support a neighbouring church's work to become self sufficient, send children to Camp Kintail, and support youth mission trips (recent trips include mission work in Newfoundland and in Kamloops, British Columbia). This fund is managed by the Rodney Outreach and Scholarship Fund.



Mission trip to Kamloops, BC

**The Welfare Fund** is managed by the Session to address immediate financial needs within the congregation and the community.

## The Gift of Our Time

The church calendar at Knox is filled with a variety of regular events, activities and meetings. There are also a number of key events that are well known in our community and that are anticipated and well attended.

### September

- The Neighbourhood Party - a Friday or Saturday evening in the church parking lot with free hotdogs and refreshments, live music, face painting and games.
- The Kirkin' o' the Tartan – a worship service that acknowledges the Scottish roots of St. Thomas and the Presbyterian Church in Canada, this service is a “homecoming” Sunday for many and includes the London Firefighters' Pipe Band leading us in a parade through the streets of St. Thomas to worship.
- Orange Shirt Sunday – on the Sunday closest to September 30<sup>th</sup>, Knox acknowledges our denomination's contribution to the Residential School System and colonialism and its impact on the Indigenous people of Canada.



The Kirkin' o' the Tartan



Neighbourhood Party

### October

- World Communion Sunday – celebrated on the first Sunday of the month
- Foodgrains Sunday – Worship is followed by a luncheon in support of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank
- Pumpkin Carving – a community event for children and young families.

### November

- Anniversary Sunday – This worship service date is moveable, depending on the date of Remembrance Day.
- Remembrance Day Sunday
- The Annual Tartan Bazaar



## December

- Communion is celebrated the first Sunday in December
- A Time to Remember Service – organized alongside VON Bereavement Services, this is an evening service for those in the congregation and community who are grieving.
- Christmas Pageant Sunday – a full service led by the children of the church.
- Christmas Eve Family Service 6pm – averaging 50-100 people
- Christmas Eve Traditional Service 8pm – averaging 300-450 people



## January

- Knox Women's Retreat
- Robbie Burns Luncheon (after worship)

## February

- Pay It Forward Luncheon hosted by youth and young families

## March

- Communion is celebrated the first Sunday in March
- Shrove Tuesday Pancake Dinner
- Ash Wednesday Service (10:30am) in the Knox Chapel
- Garage Sale



## April

- Maundy Thursday Supper and Evening Worship (averaging 50-80)
- Good Friday Morning Worship, featuring choir and guest musician
- Easter Morning Worship at 10:30am (averaging 300-400)
- Mission Awareness Sunday with a special coffee break, focusing on a particular mission project.



## June

- Communion is celebrated on the first Sunday in June
- Bibles are presented to students in grade 3
- Worship at Pinafore Park, followed by the church picnic

**July & August** – Worship takes place in the air-conditioned Rodney Hall





## **Knox by the numbers**

Active members: 348

Adherents: 60

Average Worship Attendance: 190

Average Viewership Online: 100 (on livestream), 300-500 (broadcast on Rogers TV)

Average Christmas and Easter Attendance: 400

New members in 2023/24: 42

Baptisms in 2023/24: 15

Weddings in 2023/24: 7

Funerals in 2023/24: 53

Children enrolled in Sunday School: 60

Average Sunday Kool Attendance: 8-30

2023 Annual Report available upon request

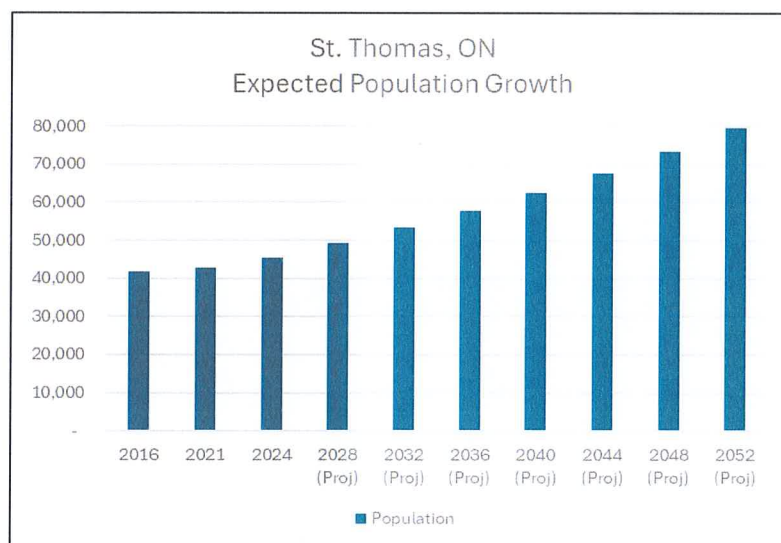


## St. Thomas – Our community

### Watch us grow!

Located in the heart of Southwestern Ontario in beautiful Elgin County, St. Thomas is a growing city, surrounded by numerous picturesque towns, lakeside villages and historic hamlets. While it is a short 25-minute drive to London, St. Thomas functions very much as an independent community. With over 42,000 residents, St. Thomas is large enough to provide all the amenities of city living, without the hassles of busy streets or expensive parking!

In 2023, it was announced that St. Thomas will be the home for Canada's largest EV battery plant. It is projected that this facility will employ 3000 people. According to Census Canada, the rate of growth in our community will be increasing dramatically over the next 20 years.



Anticipated annualized growth of 8%

**Source: Growth Analysis Study, Watson & Associates**

Presented to St. Thomas City Council, June 7, 2024

### Health Care in St. Thomas

There is a 157-bed hospital which offers comprehensive health care, including imaging and an MRI machine. There is a chemotherapy and physiotherapy unit within the St. Thomas hospital, as well as a new emergency department and mental health wing.

There are several long-term care facilities in the county, as well as numerous retirement homes. The Barrie Family Hospice of Elgin recently opened its doors providing 8 private suites in a home-like setting with round the clock palliative care.



## Education

The community boasts numerous excellent elementary and high schools totaling nine elementary schools and three high schools. These schools belong to either the Thames Valley District School Board or the London District Catholic School Board, with both offering French Immersion as an option at one of their elementary schools. Additionally, there are several private schools in St. Thomas, with many offering faith-based education programs.

St. Thomas also hosts a satellite campus for Fanshawe College in town, and is only a short drive from the main campus in nearby London, Ontario. That close proximity also places Western University within easy reach offering easy access to many undergraduate, masters, and doctoral programs.

## Recreation

St. Thomas is known for its outstanding parks system, with thirty-five parks spread over 457 acres. There is an excellent indoor skating rink facility with two ice sheets, a fitness track, and a gymnasium (Joe Thornton Community Centre), and a second arena has an additional ice sheet (Memorial Arena and Auditorium).

There are outstanding youth hockey programs for both girls and boys and the city is home to the St. Thomas Stars (Greater Ontario Junior Hockey League).

The city also offers an indoor pool and recreation facility at the St. Thomas-Elgin YMCA, and numerous classes, activities, and athletic adventures are offered through the city and private organizations. There are several nearby golf courses, as well as new soccer and football fields at the various city parks. St. Thomas also boasts plenty of different youth

and community organizations. There's the Rotary Club and Lions Club, Scouts and Guides, Air and Army Cadets, 4H, and many more – there truly is something for everyone. Located 15 minutes from the village of Port Stanley, there is also easy access to two beaches and plenty of additional recreation options.



Worship in Pinafore Park



## Arts and Culture

St. Thomas has a vibrant arts and culture presence both in town and the surrounding area. With a number of venues showcasing both local and national artists, there is no shortage of opportunities for exposure to creative talent. Along with fascinating museums to see, one can always take in live entertainment with the Elgin Theatre Guild, West Elgin Dramatics Society, Port Stanley Festival Theatre, Aylmer Performing Arts or visit the St. Thomas Public Art Centre and view some world class art. Additionally, the city of London (only a twenty minute drive away) has all the opportunities of a larger city right at your doorstep. All in all there is no shortage of things to stimulate, educate and entertain in the immediate area.

## Caring for the vulnerable

The city continues to work hard to ensure that all members of the community have food to eat and a place to call home. A recent InDwell construction has helped to ease the housing crunch for those in need. The St. Thomas Elgin Food Bank is well established along with numerous agencies that supply food relief and assistance.

Currently, a joint endeavour between business, government, and the YMCA is under construction. It is called “Project Tiny Hope” and when completed, will provide 40 new “tiny homes” (1, 2, and 3 bedroom) rental units. It will also offer on-site social support services for its residents.



Knox Foodgrains Luncheon



## The Kind of Minister We Need

A Minister for Knox St. Thomas wears many hats. This individual will not just be a leader, they will be a collaborative member of our active church family, and in the local community. We are looking for a Minister who can balance the intellectual, spiritual and social fabric of our church. A Minister with strong skills in leading worship, who can connect with a diverse audience through homiletics would be best suited to the Knox family. As a healthy, vibrant church with members of all ages and from a variety of backgrounds and needs, pastoral care is also a large component of tending to our flock, particularly for those who find themselves in time of crisis, or less able to physically join the church community. We are hopeful to find an individual who will open our eyes to new approaches in meeting our goals of growth in the community and spiritual growth within ourselves.



## Who We Hope to Be

We are proud of our long traditions, but also look forward to building and incorporating new traditions into the Knox experience. Our future must expand our membership and attempt to meet the needs of our growing population. We have an opportunity to grow our membership, increase adherents, and expand our reach in the community. At Knox, our hope is to welcome new members of all ages with continued outreach, new initiatives, and expanded existing programs. Increased use of church facilities will open our doors to more community members, particularly new Canadians, new residents of our town and those that need our help. We wish to continue to walk in the footsteps of Christ, by living our vision of "opening wide our doors".



## Conclusion

Knox Presbyterian Church, St. Thomas, is an inclusive and dynamic congregation in the heart of St. Thomas, Ontario. With a strong sense of history, a commitment to serve, and appreciation for joy-filled worship, we hope you will give prayerful consideration to joining us as we grow in faith to love and serve our Lord and Saviour.

To learn about Knox Presbyterian Church, St. Thomas, please visit our website at [knoxstthomas.ca](http://knoxstthomas.ca)

For inquiries regarding the position at Knox, St. Thomas, please contact the Interim Moderator:

Rev. Deb Dolbear-Van Bilsen at [revdeb1717@gmail.com](mailto:revdeb1717@gmail.com)  
or at 1-519-287-2743 (Glencoe Presbyterian Church)  
or 1-519-318-0821 (Cell)

If you feel God's call to Knox, St. Thomas, please submit your application by email, in strictest confidence, to Rev. Deb Dolbear-Van Bilsen and copy Donna Ellis, Chair, the Knox Search Committee at [donnaellis782@gmail.com](mailto:donnaellis782@gmail.com) Links to your online presence are much appreciated.

Please note: The position at Knox, St. Thomas includes a housing allowance, as well as allowances for telephone, travel, books and study.

Stipend and benefits are in accordance with the Presbyterian Church in Canada guidelines.

*"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."*

Jeremiah 29: 11



## Appendix 1 – Pastoral Skills Inventory

### Summary of Knox Church Search Committee Skills Survey

A total of 178 surveys were returned during the allotted time period representing approximately half of the Knox congregation. The survey contained 18 skills which the congregation was asked to rank from highest priority (1) to lowest priority (18). Not all surveys returned ranked all 18 skills; therefore, there is a discrepancy in the final totals in some of the skills from the total of 178. Survey results were refined through a representative methodology to more accurately reflect the total of 178 responses.

Results analysis:

1. Using only raw data and the information from the **highest priority** (rank #1), the top 5 skills are as follows:
  - i. Leading worship & preaching (124)
  - ii. Crisis visiting (10)
  - iii. Equipping church members (7)
  - iv. Administration (6)
  - v. Working with youth (6)
2. Using only raw data and the information from the **lowest priority** (rank #18), the skills ranked as minimally-essential for the congregation are as follows:
  - i. Denomination services (26)
  - ii. Evangelism (23)
  - iii. Mission outreach (22)
  - iv. Community leadership (18)
  - v. Inter church co-operation (18)

Because many people found it difficult to rank skills as a 1, 2, 3, 4 etc, the first five rankings (1 to 5) were combined to achieve more representative totals. It did not change the highest priority for the congregation, but it did change the ranking of the skills that followed. Using this revised methodology, the top 5 skills are:

- i. Leading worship & preaching (144)
- ii. Crisis visiting (100)
- iii. Pastoral care (84)
- iv. Working with youth (61)
- v. Christian education (59)

Since the survey mentioned that some of the skills should be considered together as one skill, other than the top results of “Leading worship & preaching”, the remaining skills were then grouped together under appropriate headings. The groupings are as follows:

1. **Pastoral care** (3) includes
  - Crisis visiting (10)
  - Home visiting (5)
  - Working with seniors (4)
  - Working with youths (6)

Total (28)
2. **Christian education** (3) includes
  - Leadership development (2)
  - Equipping church members (7)
  - Personal & Spiritual development (1)
  - Stewardship (3)

Total (16)
3. **Administration** (6) includes
  - Program development (0)
  - Denominational services (2)

Total (8)
4. **Community Leadership** (1) includes
  - Inter church co-operation (0)
  - Mission outreach (1)
  - Evangelism (0)

Total (2)

Therefore, using these revised groupings, the top 5 prioritized skills are as follows:

1. Leading worship & preaching (124)
  2. Pastoral care (28)
  3. Christian education (16)
  4. Administration (8)
  5. Community leadership (2)
- Total (178)

This total matches the number of surveys collected.



Based on the above summarized data along with commentary submitted through the Congregational Survey, the ideal Minister for Knox would possess the following pastoral and personal skills, experiences, and habits.

### **Pastoral Skills**

- Preaches Bible based, thoughtful sermons
- Able to work with and appeal to all ages
- Effective speaker
- Good pastoral visitor
- Well read
- Brings solid biblical and theological knowledge and understanding to worship and pastoral care
- Able to make ministry and sermons relevant to today and our way of life
- Respects confidentiality
- Able to motivate and inspire people
- Has solid counselling experience
- Brings experience from large, growing congregations
- Non evangelical
- Provides meaningful children's time to make the children eager to come to church
- Team player, supportive of the staff and lay leaders in the church

### **Personal Skills**

- Friendly, personable and approachable
- Has a sense of humour
- Is patient, kind, compassionate and sincere
- Non-judgemental and empathetic
- High Energy, self starter
- Outgoing Type "A" personality
- Can provide strong, flexible leadership
- Demonstrates honesty, integrity and trustworthiness
- Humble
- Effective communicator and a good listener
- Someone who can "walk the talk" in their faith
- Tech savvy
- Able to attract and support young families
- Creative and able to "think outside the box"