

Knox Presbyterian Church
20 Quebec Street
Guelph, Ontario, N1H 2T4
1844 - 2004

John Knox

1514-1572, Scottish religious reformer, founder of Scottish Presbyterianism. (The Columbia Encyclopedia, 6th Ed. 2001)

John Knox believed unreservedly in the Protestant cause and fought for it with all the passionate, single-minded intensity of a Blair or Thatcher. (www.freechurch.org)



History

When John Galt founded Guelph in 1827, The Canada Company gave the Presbyterians land to build a church. St. Andrew's church was built in 1832 where the present City Hall now stands. This Congregation followed the Doctrines of the Church of Scotland.

"This involved a link with the government. A feeling of uneasiness lurked in the minds of many church people. The Church they felt, should be free from connection with the State.

*"Centennial History Chalmers Church, Guelph, Ontario
1868 - 1968*

As a result, in 1843 Rev. Thomas Chalmers and 471 ministers and many elders left the General Assembly, Edinburgh, Scotland, after their presentation of changes were again turned down thus the Free Church of Scotland was formed.

Although in Canada churches were free from state control and had the right to self-government feelings ran high and divisions occurred.

August 7th, 1844 Mr. Robert Martin, a former Ruling Elder of St. Andrew's, appeared before the Presbytery of Hamilton representing a large number of Guelph Presbyterians requesting the formation of a new **Free Church congregation**. Their request was granted and Knox's Church, as it was then known, was founded. The congregation met in a school house by the river, the Canada Company's office, homes and different places in the village. Communion were held in the United Presbyterian Church, the Congregational Church, and Norfolk St. Methodist Church. There were 104 names on the first Communion Roll. The largest part of the congregation came from the Paisley Block, Eramosa Road, Scotch Block, York Road, and Puslinch areas --only a few members lived in the village of Guelph. In 1846 Rev. Alex. McLean, a visiting supply minister, wrote-- "*Guelph,--Preached here several times; always found a large, attentive and intelligent congregation of worshipers; often the schoolhouse was literally crammed; ...Guelph is a neat, picturesque village, surrounded by a rich and romantic farming country... half as large as 'broad Scotland'.....The congregation is about to build another church. They have given a call to the Rev. Mr. MacGregor, of New Brunswick.*"

It was in the wagon shop of Robert Armstrong, a wheelwright and an Elder, where a meeting was held in early 1847 and the decision made to build a church. The Canada Company granted the Congregation a free building lot (#89) on Yarmouth Street. The contractors: John Rennie, who came to Guelph in 1844 from Scotland, did the stone work and James Armstrong did the carpentry.

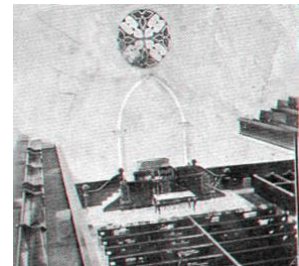
The Corner stone was laid on May 26th, 1847 and *“on Nov. 5th 1847 the church was opened and dedicated to the worship of God”*. Rev. J. G. MacGregor conducted the service assisted by Rev. George Smellie of Fergus. Thursday, November 29, 1849 the congregation met for another important event. Following a sermon by Rev. MacGregor, a title deed, by the Canada Company, *“conveying the site on which the church was erected, in perpetuity to the congregation”*. The Ladies of the Congregation made a presentation of an elegant set of silver-plated cups, flagon, etc., for use in the Communion service.

For 22 years services were held in this stone building described *“as a neat and substantial one of stone, and tastefully furnished. Walls-- so thick that it used to be said that powder and shot could not penetrate them.”* The pews were boxed shaped with doors on them. Rental of the pews contributed largely to supporting the church.

In 1868, after many meetings, the decision was made to build a new church. The location was settled when Evan MacDonald, a Trustee, gave Lot #80 on the north side of Quebec Street to the church for \$1.00 The Board of Managers assigned Mr. Smith of Toronto to design the building but it was later modified by Joseph Hobson, Chief Engineer of the Grand Trunk Railway, *“to meet the congregation’s financial needs”*. Tenders resulted in Jas. Davidson’s bid of \$5,400 for masonry work and G. & A. Bruce for carpentry work at \$1,655, were accepted. October 19th 1868. *“Rev. Dr. Ormiston gave a Thanksgiving sermon in the old church then everyone proceeded to the new church grounds where the cornerstone was laid.”* In January 1869 the church was dedicated with the final cost of \$15,000. Financing came from members as well as other Presbyterian congregations. The interior resembled the original church with box-pews, and oil lighting, The pulpit was elevated at the north end of the church, the Precentor’s desk

below it--the Communion Table in front. The Precentor and his tuning fork lead the congregation in what was *“called “Psalmody”-- the selections were limited to Psalms and Paraphrases in a metrical version.”* In 1900 the Rev. R.W. Ross *“suggested alterations be made to make the church brighter and more attractive as a church home and a Renovation Committee appointed C.E. Langley, of Toronto as architect.”* The inner half of the tower was taken down and the outer built up into the present bell tower which has never housed a bell. A vestibule was erected and the back of the building was pushed out to accommodate the new pipe organ which was installed by the young people of the congregation. The inside of the church was completely overhauled to include a new dished floor, gallery front, circular seating, gas lighting, and decorating. Folding doors replaced the partition-walls of the School Room. The old corner stone was removed from the tower and a new one was laid by Mrs. (Rev.) R.W. Ross on Aug. 21, 1900. The church reopened in February 1901.

March 16, 1904, fire gutted the interior of Knox , damaged amounted to \$6,200 and covered by insurance. A Committee of Session and Board of Managers immediately formed and the church re-opened July 10th, 1904.



Dates of Change and Happenings:

- 1847** November 5th, First Session consisted of six Elders.
- 1847** The Women's Association was organized after the formation of the Congregation.
- 1848** Sabbath School began with Robt. Martin as the first Superintendent.
- 1864** Charles Thain, first Precentor, salary— \$80 per year.
- 1868** 114 members left Knox to form Chalmers Church and the fourth Presbyterian church in Guelph.
- 1868** Board of Managers appointed when the new Knox Church was erected.
- 1874** Knox Congregation voted to join the union of Presbyterian churches to become The Presbyterian Church in Canada.
- 1874** Board of Managers adopted the Envelope System
- 1875** Annual Report, December 31st stated "*Having at the last annual meeting adopted the envelope system,and after a trial of nearly eleven months, we are happy to be able to report that it has exceeded our expectations.*"
- 1875** the congregation voted to allow the singing of hymns. As Hymn books were nonexistent five hymns were added to the collection of Psalms and Paraphrases.
- 1880** the General Assembly authorized a Hymn Book.
- 1881** copies of "Sacred Songs and Solos" acquired for use by the choir.
- 1884** Balconies were erected in the sanctuary to accommodate the congregation.
- 1887** after much controversy a reed organ and choir came into the worship service.
- 1888** Session & Board of Managers agreed the Board should take up the collection.
- 1889** February 15th, Knox Sabbath School Assoc. established a Branch Mission School in St. Patrick's Ward in a schoolhouse. Mrs. Thomas Goldie was in charge.
- 1891** the position of Precentor was abolished.
- 1893** the Session decided the Board should be responsible for the property, the raising of money for denominational projects and various other projects.
- 1894** October 14 and 15th the semi-Centennial was celebrated.
- 1896** Communion cards replaced Communion tokens.
- 1898** St. Patrick's Branch Mission School lost the use of the school house, and built a new building on the corner of Short and Toronto Street, "*this led to the formation of a separate congregation known today as Westminster-St. Paul's.*"
- 1904** October 9th and 10th the Diamond Jubilee was celebrated with a booklet.
- 1909** in the Calendar it requests members/adherents to provide their own hymn books "*as those handed out by the ushers are intended for the use of strangers only.*"
- 1925** Knox voted against union with the Methodists and Congregationalists and chose to remain Presbyterian.
- 1931** The Responsive Psalm was introduced
- 1947** Dedication of commemorative plaque for those who had died in both World Wars.
- 1947** Commemorative stained glass windows to the memory of departed members.
- 1948 to 1978** Vesper Hour Services were broadcast over CJOY from Knox Church.
- 1950** Services held in Dublin Street Church while interior of the church redecorated.
- 1951** Joint summer services began with St. Andrew's in July and Knox in August.
- 1952** Congregation installed a public address system and acoustic system with 10 outlets to replace the old hearing aid system.
- 1953** May 20th the corner stone was laid for the new Sunday School, parlour, minister's study/office.
- 1953** September 30th, a service was held to dedicate the new building.
- 1960** Knox Church hosted the General Assembly.

- 1966** Keates organ dedicated to those who gave their lives in the First and Second World Wars. The working part of the organ was placed behind the pipe section with the keyboard console and choir in front of the pulpit.
- 1970** Chapel Baptismal font was donated.
- 1970** Memorial stained glass windows installed surrounding the sanctuary.
- 1972** Elevator was installed in the vestibule.
- 1985** Knox Church hosted the 111th General Assembly.
- 1986** "Erase the Deficit" succeeded in wiping out the deficit which had incurred during the early years of the decade.
- 1994** Knox celebrated 150 years and Sesquicentennial History Book printed.
- 1996** Knox newsletter "*Knox News & Notes*" won the Category of: Congregations of 500 members or more. Susan Percival & Ann Strathy, editors and designers.
- 1997** January 11th Dedication of the newly renovated addition created by raising the roof on the Sunday School Auditorium providing, a new entrance, elevator space, larger office area with door control monitoring, sound system, new kitchen, library, media centre, and numerous meeting rooms all serviced by rooftop heating/air conditioning units. Designed by congregation member Sam Devlin.

Ministers of Knox

1847-1852	Rev. John G. MacGregor
1853-1858	Rev. Samuel Young
1859-1861	Rev. D. H. MacVicar
1862-1882	Rev. W. S. Ball
1883-1895	Rev. R. J. Beattie
1896-1899	Rev. W. A. J. Martin
1899-1908	Rev. R.W. Ross
1908-1913	Rev. George W. Arnold
1913-1938	Rev. Dr. A. J. MacGillivray
1938-1945	Rev. James C. Grier
1946-1972	Rev. Dr. D. Crawford Smith
1973-1986	Rev. James Peter Jones
1988-1999	Rev. Dr. Zander Dunn
2000- 2009	Rev. Thomas Kay
2011-	Rev. John Olivier

Assistant and Associate Ministers

Interim Moderators

1945-1946	Rev. H. J. Lowry, Int. Moderator
1958-1959	Rev. Leslie Nanson
1963-1966	Rev. Dr. Moore S. Gordon
1967-1968	Rev. Stuart McEntyre
1969-1973	Rev. Gordon Hastings
1973-1979	Rev. Dr. Rudolph Berlis
1979-1981	Rev. Herb Hilder
1981-1986	Rev. William Milne
1986-1988	Dr. Grant MacDonald, Int. Mod.
1986-1987	Rev. Stanley Andrews
1986-1991	Rev. Lockie Royal
1988-1991	Rev. Deborah McBride
1992-1994	Rev. Donald Pollock
1994-2002	Rev. Elizabeth Long/Jobb
1999-	Rev. Dr. Arnold Bethune
2003-2006	Rev. Sarah Travis
2012-	Rev. Dr. Shirley Gale
2016-2018	Rev. Dr. Herb Gale

*Compiled by Donna J. Speers
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