

Laura, called to be a teaching elder as a follower of Jesus Christ by the will of God and The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

To my Knox Family in Victoria – dear friends and saints in the community of faith.

Grace to you and peace from our Creator God and Jesus Christ our Redeemer.

They say that retiring from a pastoral charge is not always easy. They – whoever they are – are correct! This has been our life for 22 years. I think I started investing my heart and energy right from the moment I preached for the search committee in Port Alberni in May 2003 – thanks for the drive, Lorraine. The wait from that weekend to the September visit when I preached for the call here seemed interminable and then we needed to go back to Edmonton for me to be ordained and to pack and to move. Strange how things are moving in a bit of a circular fashion as I will begin a four-month part-time ministry position with First Presbyterian Church in Edmonton this September. When the opportunity came up, I realized that the physical and emotional distance would be good for all of us – mostly for me. Sorry Steve – sorry Enzo.

Once the pastoral tie is dissolved at the end of August, I won't be able to come back to haunt you for a time – no funerals or visits or special events. All of us must continue to strive for the peace and harmony of the church. It will be challenging to disconnect but they say (again, who are "they"?) it is best to generously separate from the congregation in order for you to find your own path without my interference or influence. I have every confidence in the session and your interim moderator to guide this congregation wisely and well. They will do so prayerfully, thoughtfully and under the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

However, before I lose my pulpit – soap box – authority to speak – there are things I would like to say. You are an amazing group of people – humble, kind, generous, patient, forgiving, compassionate. All the things Colossians 3:12-17 exhorts you to be. My gratitude knows no bounds. People are often impressed when I say I have been here nearly 22 years – thinking that I have done something special. I believe we have done something special together. We have formed a congregation that is peaceful and not anxious. We are flexible and adaptable – accepting and willing to try new things, even risky things. We honestly care for one another and for each person who comes to worship. In addition, we have tried to learn about people in the world who are vulnerable and need whatever help, support and solidarity we are able to offer – whether they live around the corner or across the globe.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, "Those who love their dream of a Christian community more than they love the Christian community itself become destroyers of that Christian community even though their personal intentions may be ever so honest, earnest and sacrificial. God hates this wishful dreaming because it makes the dreamer proud and pretentious. Those who dream of this idolized community demand that it be fulfilled by God, by others and by themselves. They enter the community of Christians with their demands set up by their own law and judge one another and God accordingly. ...Do what is given you, and do it well, and you will have done enough."

You have loved the Christian community of Knox – unpretentious and imperfect, yes – but placing faith in Jesus at the center, you have acknowledged that God builds the church. We participate as we are able and give thanks for God's grace. I believe that together we have done what God has given us to do – we have done it well most of the time – thanks be to God for that.

For myself, I did my best – most of the time – to honour the vows I made at my ordination and the promises I made to Knox Church at my induction but I never, ever did any of it alone. Steve and our boys have been with me every step of the way – encouraging, questioning, helping and loving me into my better self. Our extended family and close friends have also been constant support and frequent sounding board. In addition, I have been blessed with mentors and confidants and spiritual guides in abundance. There truly are too many to name but here are a few... Noel Kinnon, Wayne Stretch, Murdo Smith, Mary Carroll, Hope Stenton, Marg Hosie, John Carr, John Dowds, Jenn Geddes, Fiona Gow, Lynda Gill, Nan Zorn, Lyle McKenzie, Ian Victor...

They say (!) it takes a village to raise a child – and a congregation, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to raise up a minister. Being a leader and teaching elder is a hollow thing if no one trusts you. Thank you for your trust and for your prayers.

The Reverend Laura T. Kavanagh
July 2025

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. (John 14:27)