

The **Harcourt
Herald**

The life and work of Harcourt
Memorial United Church
Guelph, Ontario, Canada
Summer, 2017

**Transgender:
One Family's
Journey**

**Who is our New
Minister?**

**Spiritual Tourism:
Visiting a Holy Well
in Ireland**

Harcourt Memorial United Church

An Affirming Congregation of the United Church of Canada

We are a people of God called together and sent forth by Christ to

Seek | Connect | Act

Our Mission:

Inspired by the Spirit, we participate in Christian practices that strengthen us in the building of just, compassionate, and non-violent relationships

Our Vision Statement:

To be an authentic community of spiritual growth and service

Our Core Values:

Risk...Respect...Responsibility...Vulnerability...Trust

Our Purpose:

To welcome and strengthen in community all who wish to serve God and follow the way of Jesus

Harcourt Memorial United Church

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The Harcourt Herald

Published 10 times each year

by the

Communications Committee

Your contributions are welcome!

Deadline: 20th of each month

Sept-June

Editor: Gillian Joseph

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Printer: Anne Purkis



Cover Photo: St Colman's Well, Ireland. Photo by Charles Nelson, Wiki Commons.



The Ministers' Quill

The Warmth and Beauty of Harcourt – Outside and In

by Miriam Flynn

It was a cold March evening last year, when I first stepped across the threshold of Harcourt Memorial United Church. A notice that the Maundy Thursday service had been cancelled, due to a storm, was still posted on the front door. Though it was undeniably winter outside, I received a warm welcome from the circle of people gathered in the chapel. And I still remember my delight and surprise at being led into the main worship space to discover that the east wall of the sanctuary wasn't a *wall* at all, but a bank of windows that overlooked a garden. Even in the cold and silence of a snow-covered March night, the beauty of God's good creation could be seen from that space. My entire experience that evening made me think, "There's more to this church than you might think from the outside!"

Upon return from a recent study leave, I was struck yet again by the beautiful and ever-changing scene outside the sanctuary windows. The trees in the garden had come into full bloom during my absence and a riot of bright pink blossoms met the gaze of all who peered out that Sunday morning. I realized I now had seen the garden in all of its seasons. No stained glass window could evoke more beautifully the miracle of Divine creation and re-creation than the view through the Harcourt window.

So, as I come to the end of my first year of ordained ministry, I find my heart full of joy and gratitude at the remarkable journey through the seasons I have experienced here at Harcourt. For shared life within a faith community involves more than looking upon the world through the same glass window.

Being church means journeying together through the seasons of our own lives and upholding one another, as spiritual meaning-makers, in times of celebration and in times of lament. Here, we tell and re-tell the stories that remind us who we are and what we are called to be, so that we may see the world outside our window through the *prism light* of Christ -- in all its beauty, complexity and heart-wrenching potential. *Being church* means going *into* the world with that new vision, alive to the Spirit's call to live out our love of God and all creation in this new season in the life of our church.



Photo by G. Joseph

God’s grace is at work in the garden in all seasons. May God’s grace so continue its course of creation *and re-creation* in our lives and community of faith that people who come to look *in* our windows find, “There is more here than you might think from the outside!”

Worship Schedule

by Jim Ball

Except where noted below services take place at 9:00 AM in the Chapel, 10:30 AM in the Sanctuary, and all-ages MANNA 10:30 AM in the Friendship Room. Nursery Care is available at the 10:30 services.

June 4	Pentecost	
June 11	Trinity – communion	
June 18	Pentecost 2 - baptism	
June 25	Pentecost 3 – Ministries celebration SUMMER SCHEDULE BEGINS ONE SERVICE 10am ONLY	Picnic in the garden
July 2	Pentecost 4	ONE SERVICE 10am ONLY
July 9	Pentecost 5	ONE SERVICE 10am ONLY
July 16	Pentecost 6	ONE SERVICE 10am ONLY
July 23	Pentecost 7	ONE SERVICE 10am ONLY
July 30	Pentecost 8	ONE SERVICE 10am ONLY
August 6	Pentecost 9	ONE SERVICE 10am ONLY
August 13	Pentecost 10	ONE SERVICE 10am ONLY
August 20	Pentecost 11	ONE SERVICE 10am ONLY
August 27	Pentecost 12	ONE SERVICE 10am ONLY
September 3	Creation 1 – REGULAR SCHEDULE BEGINS ON SEPTEMBER 10TH	ONE SERVICE 10am ONLY

by Lorraine Holding, Chair of Council

Writing for this final issue before summer means that I am reflecting on activities in May and anticipating important events in June.



Many guests attended our annual Affirming service on May 7 when we were stirred by Lori Hick's family story and the music provided by the Rainbow Chorus and our choir. Six guests from St. Paul's United Church in Walkerton visited as a step in their discernment process towards becoming an Affirming Congregation. Following the service, ten Harcourt representatives shared our journey and experiences to answer our guests' questions. Their letter of thanks reinforces the value of Harcourt's decision early in this century:

"We were particularly impressed how becoming Affirming was part of your expression of faith as a community, centred on God's love and inclusiveness. The welcome we received from the members of Harcourt Memorial is an indication of how you are living out your faith and mission."

On May 17, Council fulfilled our responsibility to vote on four remits approved by the 42nd General Council in 2015, part of the process towards final decisions at General Council 43 in 2018. We held a special discussion on April 23 to help us understand the issues and prepare to vote. After thoughtful consideration, we voted as follows:

- Remit 1 – Three Council Model: Yes
- Remit 2 – Elimination of Transfer and Settlement: Yes
- Remit 3 – Office of Vocation: No
- Remit 4 – Funding a New Model: Yes

Our next responsibility is to study Remit 6 – One Order of Ministry and vote before February 28. I encourage you to explore the study materials (www.gc42.ca/remits) and share your thoughts with Council members over the next few months. This is another significant, denomination-shaping change to the United Church of Canada.

Council designed a May 28th meeting for members of all committees/teams to share updates on current/key projects and to highlight cross-group connections required to carry out our plans and actions.

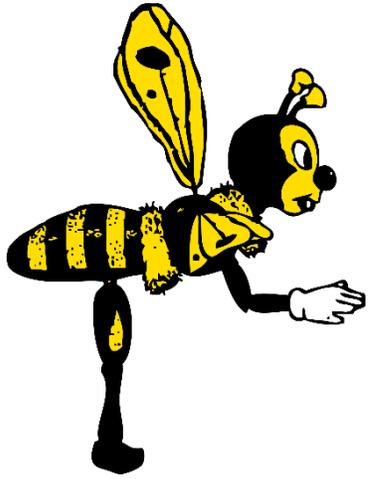
June brings focus to Harcourt 20/20 Phase 2. We anticipate the Joint Search Committee's report and recommendations regarding the vacant position of Minister of Worship, Pastoral Care, Christian Formation and Justice & Outreach. Decisions made at a special Congregational Meeting on June 4 will guide us as we continue our journey.

Building on the success of our 2016 small conversation groups, Council is planning another opportunity this month. Join us to enjoy community and help shape our shared future through discussing your interest/passion(s) with others across the congregation. This time we will focus on four areas of Harcourt's life: spiritual growth; music; community; justice. We thank Valerie Fessenden for accepting the task to help coordinate hosts, dates and registrations. Please plan to participate!

While summer offers a slower pace and/or opportunities to explore other places, Harcourt doesn't stop. Keep in touch. Check what's happening inside and outside our church. Experience and celebrate the many blessings that Harcourt provides as our community of faith. With faith and hope,



The Latest Buzz...



- **Former United Church of Canada Moderator Talks About His Struggle Managing Cancer**

David Giuliano talks about his ‘fight’ with cancer and suggests that it may be time to find new metaphors to describe the process of managing this awful disease.

<http://news.nationalpost.com/features/learning-to-live-with-cancer>

- **Does Religion Make You More Altruistic?**

The larger the role faith plays in the lives of Canadians, the more likely they are to say they value altruism over self-fulfillment, a new poll has found. The survey, conducted by the Angus Reid Institute in partnership with Faith in Canada 150, is part of a year-long project gauging Canadians’ beliefs and religious practices. It grouped respondents into four categories ranging from non-believers to religiously committed who attend places of worship regularly. <http://news.nationalpost.com/news/religion/altruism-vs-self-fulfillment-faithful-in-canada-are-more-caring-but-compassion-has-its-limits-poll-finds>

- **London Area Advocates Give Dolls to Politicians in Support of the United Church of Canada “Bread Not Stone” Project.**

Rag dolls — Dolls of Hope — are again a big part of Woods’s and Laurel Kenney’s world as co-chairs of the London and Middlesex “Bread Not Stones” campaign for the United Church of Canada. Handing out dolls to politicians is intended to encourage them to think about and to act to abolish child poverty in Canada.

<http://www.lfpress.com/2017/05/19/dolls-of-hope-campaign-aims-to-reduce-child-poverty>

- **Institute for Economics and Peace Publishes Global Peace Index**

Researchers said conflict costs had an enormous impact on economies worldwide. They called for more money to be spent on peace building. The report found that the world became 0.28% more peaceful over the past year as a result of a drop in state-sponsored violence and several other factors <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-40118188>

New to Harcourt? Welcome!

Come Grow in Faith With Us!



To contact the Church: Office e-mail office@harcourtuc.ca or call 519 824-4177

Visit our webpage at www.harcourtuc.ca for information about services, supports, room rental, activities and outreach

Check out our videos on YouTube

<https://youtu.be/Uk20MNxUa98>

Seek.Connect.Act

Committees and Groups

Harcourt Announces Successful Candidate for New Minister

by Kathy Magee, Joint Search Committee Report

The Joint Search Committee (JSC) was called in response to visioning work of the congregation in our Harcourt 20/20 process and approval of the Report of the Joint Waterloo Presbytery/Harcourt Memorial United Church Needs Assessment at a congregational meeting November 27, 2016. Members of the JSC are Jon Welch, Melissa Kwiatkowski, Dan Ganesh, Pam Girardi, Kathy Magee (chair), supported by consultants Marilyn Sears (M&P) and Bill Lord. Andrew Hyde is the Waterloo Presbytery ministerial representative and Noreen Uberer is the Waterloo Presbytery lay representative.

We focused our search on the key points from the Needs Assessment Report, and the job description for the Minister for Worship, Pastoral Care, Christian Formation, and Justice and Outreach. Harcourt is a model of shared and equal ministry, so job descriptions for both ministers are identical. The position was advertised in the On-Line Observer and on the United Church of Canada National Vacancy List. Ten applications were received. Each applicant was asked to submit written responses to four screening questions that focused on their approach to ministry and vision for the future at Harcourt. A short list of four candidates was developed from these responses and interviews were arranged. Three interviews were done in person and one, because of distance, was done via Skype.

The interview questions addressed areas of job interest and experience, relationship skills within and beyond the church, conflict management, spirituality and theology, and personal growth and development. It was a thorough and engaging process. Following reference checks and much prayerful, honest and heartfelt discussion among the JSC team, one candidate emerged as best meeting the needs and vision of Harcourt as we move into the next phase of our journey forward. At a congregational meeting June 4, 2017, the congregation approved our recommendation that Miriam Flynn be called to ordained, full-time ministry at Harcourt, beginning August 1, 2017.

We are delighted that Miriam will be joining our staff in this role. We have come to know and appreciate her over the past year. Now that Miriam will be moving into the role of Minister for Worship, Pastoral Care, Christian Formation and Justice and Outreach, we look forward to further benefiting from her skills and expertise. Miriam's vision for a vibrant church of the future that lives within and beyond the Harcourt community, her compassion, ability to form authentic relationships, negotiation skills, and sense of humour will be so important as we move forward together into the exciting and unknown future.
Kathy Magee, Chair, on behalf of the Joint Search Committee.

Come and *Smell* Our New Books in the Library

by Mary-Lou Findlay, Library Committee

These books have just been added to our library stock – hope there is at least one that will catch your interest! Look for them on the display shelves.

For those who are concerned about, interested in and/or involved in Harcourt 'money matters':

- * Stewardship for Vital Congregations
Anthony B. Robinson 248.6 ROB

This is one book in a “series of resources providing local churches with engaging, insightful, and useful tools to revitalize and prepare themselves for ministry in the 21st century. The authors are United Church of Christ clergy whose churches demonstrate vitality”.

- * Ministry and Money A guide for Clergy and their Friends
Dan Hotchkiss 254.8 HOT

Some chapter titles: Money as a Spiritual Challenge; Advocating for Truthfulness; Advocating for Generosity.

For those with a passion (or even just a bent) for history (and agriculture):

- * This United Church of Ours
Ralph Milton 322 MIL

A thoughtful, insightful, and light-hearted look at the United Church of Canada. And it comes with a study guide!

- * To the Seventh Generation the Evolution of a Family Farm in Canada, 1823-2015.

Marilynn Crow 630 CRO

From our own Lynn Crow comes this account of the evolution of a family farm in Puslinch. A very timely look at the importance of the family farm, even in our day.

“A book has got smell. A new book smells great. An old book smells even better. An old book smells like ancient Egypt”.

Ray Bradbury

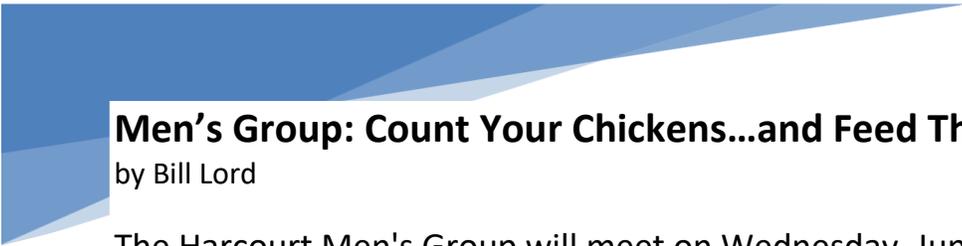
For those with an interest in 'Progressive Christianity':

- * The Divine Dance. The Trinity and Your Transformation
Richard Rohr 248 ROH

Drawing from Scripture, theology, and the deepest insights of mystics, philosophers, and sages throughout history, Fr. Rohr presents a compelling alternative to aloof and fairy tale versions of God.

For those who just want a good novel to read – especially if it's a Mitford story:

- * Come Rain or Come Shine
Jan Karon

A blue decorative graphic consisting of several overlapping, semi-transparent shapes that form a pointed, arrow-like shape pointing to the right. It is positioned behind the text of the Men's Group announcement.

Men's Group: Count Your Chickens...and Feed Them Well!

by Bill Lord

The Harcourt Men's Group will meet on Wednesday, June 14th. Ted Sefton, one of our own members, will be the guest speaker. He is a specialist in poultry nutrition and will give a talk on "The Contributions of Poultry Nutrition to Human Health." All men are welcome to attend and you are invited to bring a friend or a neighbour who would enjoy this session. Henk Dykman will have the coffee and tea ready at 7:45 a.m. and the meeting will begin at 8:00 a.m. Sandy Middleton will be the leader. In your date book please record the date of September 13th for the next meeting. The program will be announced at the June meeting.

An Adventure in Columbia for Harcourt Teens

by Ruth Tatham, Caroline Harcourt Women's Fellowship

Almost three dozen women gathered at the May 8th meeting of the Caroline Harcourt Women's Fellowship to hear and enjoy a vivid, illustrated presentation by teenagers Lillian Carvalho and Kaitlyn Lew. The girls, aided by their mentor Merrill Pierce, showed their great enthusiasm for the "working vacation". Sponsored by various groups from the United Church of Canada congregations, and from similar youth from the Methodist Church of the United States, the educational trip gave our young people an opportunity to see another culture, and work on the early beginnings of a structure which would become the community's church building in the future. Our teens were part of the TCOW organization..."Two countries, One World"...Harcourt congregation has sponsored similar pairs of youths for these excursions for several years.

Lillian and Kaitlyn emphasized the great learning experience, seeing a culture where the families lived without the amenities we take for granted, living in poverty, walking miles to and from schooling and the free meal that went with it. The Guelph youths, including some from other congregations were amazed at the warmth of the welcome they received...and by the glimpses they got of how other cultures could survive and find meaning and happiness with so few possessions. The listeners saw that the girls could accept that poverty is relative and happiness does not hinge on possessions alone.



The June 12th meeting of the Caroline Harcourt women's Fellowship will be its special spring devotional and social seasonal wind-down and will, as usual, welcome all women in the Friendship room at 11:45. Please watch Sunday church bulletins and weekly "congregational friends" e-mails for more details.

A Paean (A song of praise or triumph!)

by Ben Fear, Property Committee

There are some jobs in this world that are very often carried out so efficiently that they are easily under-appreciated, not intentionally, but because whoever performs the task does it so expertly that the beneficiaries of the effort are barely aware that it was done or in some instances they may never even know it needed doing.

Several years ago I resided in a city where on a given day each week someone came and carried our garbage from its place at the rear of the house and placed it at the curb and then, after it was collected by a driver with a truck, the containers were returned to their place in the back yard. I never saw the carrier and I don't think I really appreciated the efforts until moving to a city in which "Do it yourself" plus recycling was in vogue, a system which entailed sorting, bags, boxes and multiple containers and trips to the curbside.

Recently I, along with members of the Property committee, were able to experience the absence one of these "get it done without a fanfare" types and it was an eye opener. We, I say we, but it was four different people during the week who unlocked the church in the mornings, then the day's work began. or normally should have. There were eight different people doing cleanup and lockup. In addition to the Harcourt Church Groups, groups which meet at regularly scheduled times and for whom the church is kept cleaned, there are numerous other meetings held by groups who elect for their purposes to use our facilities regularly or occasionally. They do so for various reasons. Some like the parking, some like the piano and some like the acoustics, but all like the friendliness, helpfulness and cleanliness. The first contact is with Anne in the office and the cleanliness of the building when they use it are on everyone's list. The user's satisfaction and the income derived from that usage is very important to us.

So we cleaned the bathrooms, all of them every night. We checked the towel dispensers and the toilet paper. We cleaned the basins and unplugged one. We plunged a toilet and cleaned a splashed mirror or two. We polished up the counters and swept the floors, wet mopping where needed. I think we even changed a light bulb and then vacuumed the rugs in the sanctuary. There was a music festival taking place which hosted 200-300 elementary school pupils in the sanctuary for 7 hours a day for four days, just our luck. We had to vacuum the sanctuary to have it clean for the next day's competitions and that was a lot of dried cranberries and M&M's. We vacuumed the Chapel, we vacuumed the Friendship Room and we swept the gym... oh those animal crackers. We cleaned the kitchen, took out the garbage brought in the cans and all the while this cleaning was going on 21 different groups were coming in - using and leaving the building. The narthex, the floor and the halls were mopped, because they are, at least weekly, or more often depending on the weather so we did them. We heard no complaints about our work in spite of the fact that unlike a normal week the

bathrooms were not checked and cleaned several times a day if required, but only at the close of a day's activities. Some nights it took three people to do the work, some nights only two. We were fortunate that the weather was decent, no snow or heavy rains. Each night after the day's activities we followed his routine. The building was checked to make sure everyone was out. We checked the taps and toilets to make certain they were not running. We checked that the lights, stove and appliances were off. The doors, all six of them, were secured and locked. The windows were closed and locked. Some nights there are events that run late and patience is displayed. We displayed patience. We didn't cut any grass or shovel any snow, we didn't have any problems with the furnace. and we didn't have any leaks from the roof to contend with. All in all, we did a pretty good job. We had to ... because we were substituting for a PRO. Nevertheless the Property Committee under Dave Hume was happy to say, unanimously "Ahhhh, tomorrow Darko's home".

Happy Birthday Canada from Harcourt!

by Jean Hume, Caroline Harcourt Women's Fellowship

The Caroline Harcourt Friendship Circle of Women plan to celebrate Canada's 150th Birthday with an all Canadian theme. Dave Mowat and John Ogilvie will speak on their topic, "The Klondike Gold Rush, 1898-with Harcourt Connections". In keeping with the theme, we would like the members to wear red and white or something "fashioned" by a Canadian. Our dessert will be special! In the 1920's one of the first recipes taught in domestic science classes was how to make Baking Powder Biscuits – or Tea Biscuits and if one tablespoon of sugar was added they were known as Shortcakes. As noted in "A Century of Canadian Home Cooking", one hundred year old Mrs. Margaret MacDonell, who taught WW I war brides about Canadian cooking, remembered teaching young girls all over Saskatchewan to make these biscuits with quick hands and a light touch. Our own Jean Julian with her quick hands and light touch will be making these shortcakes in the church kitchen right before our gathering. Red strawberries with a dollop of white whipped cream will be our festive Canadian Dessert. We will have our devotional and music too, as is our custom. Please come and join us, as all women and their guests are welcome. Bring your bag lunch for **11:45am on Monday, June 12th** in the Friendship Room.

Justice is More than Just Us!

by Edna Miller & Arlene Davies-Fuhr, Justice and Outreach Committee

Justice is more than Just Us. It extends far beyond the walls of Harcourt United Church and is most effective when we work together with others who are also working for Peace and Justice. GUM Guelph United Ministries is one of our partnerships. The Peace and Justice committees of its member congregations meet together two or three times a year to share

ideas, resources and programming. Support of Chalmers Community Services is one of our mutual concerns. So is support for the Ecumenical Chaplaincy. One specific area of current concern is Education about and support for our indigenous neighbors. Concern about poverty in Guelph is another. Currently Gum is not sponsoring any projects itself but an effort is being made to inform each other of our individual churches various initiatives so we can support each other and avoid unnecessary duplication of programs. We encourage our members to take advantage of some of these opportunities. They are often advertised in our Bulletin and on our website.

The United Church of Canada was a founding member of KAIROS, an inter church organization focusing on Peace and Justice issues. It has an active group here in Guelph with which we are connected. Water concern is one of its major interests and KAIROS is in turn affiliated with Wellington Water Watchers. They are highlighting this concern at *Waterstock*, an afternoon of music, speakers, displays, etc. at Erin Fairgrounds, June 11th. They are also distributing postcards *Water for Life, not Profit* to be mailed to Premier Kathleen Wynne. KAIROS offers the opportunity to host and or participate in the Blanket Exercise, an experiential way to hear and enter into the history of indigenous peoples. St Paul's Parish is hosting the exercise Sat. June 3rd at 2:00pm. We are hoping to sponsor one in Guelph in the fall perhaps here at Harcourt. This is just one of the ways it tries to promote truth and reconciliation with our indigenous neighbors. A Speaker series in the fall is another.

By the time you have read this, KAIROS Guelph will have addressed their concerns about the implementation on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and their support of Private Member's Bill C-262. Meeting with our local MP is an annual KAIROS event. This year's submission addresses not only indigenous rights but Climate Change issues and poverty elimination through adequate guaranteed annual income and affordable housing. We too can add our voices to these issues through our own letter writing and petitions. Recently there have been several more requests for fresh fruit and vegetables for newly arrived refugees. In this endeavour, we partner with Jim Estill's group and other sponsors. Individuals from Harcourt welcome newcomers to Guelph and interact briefly with the refugee family while we deliver the produce. This is a valued and much appreciated aspect of our caring community.

There are still other organizations with whom we are or should be affiliated. Our LGBTQ people are actively involved in their broader umbrella group. Some members belong to Amnesty International. Our connections are important. We are strongest when we stand together.

Community

I Have Been Thinking about Stories...

by Jim Ball, Minister

Harcourt continues to be a community of capable, generous people. We contribute much to the occupational fields in which we labour, to the social organizations and initiatives we serve and to the families and faith community to which we belong. We do so at home, teaching children to read. We do so at the university, advancing the knowledge of students. We do so by sitting at the bedside of people in hospice. We do so by accompanying and counselling families through moments of challenge. We do so by supporting community service initiatives through agencies like Chalmers and UNICEF and Beads of Hope and the Heart and Stroke Recovery group. Down the years we've created and participated in walks that raise funds for all manner of health concerns and healing initiatives. We've gardened and sewed and coached and mentored and accompanied people through every stage and challenge of life. And we've engaged important social justice causes through the national Mission and Service Fund as well as through local community projects.

Much of this story of service is a best kept secret. It has unfolded without much awareness. When our daughter graduated from the University of Guelph I was pleasantly surprised to see one of Harcourt's members on the platform. He was a recently retired professor and former dean. I was even more pleased to learn that he was being installed as a Professor Emeritus of the university. We had opportunity that day to learn much more about his career, his contributions and his achievements. It was a story and a life to be celebrated. I remember wondering how many more accounts of service, generosity and accomplishment existed in the life stories of Harcourt members.

Significant are the stories and lives of our cleaners, realtors, hair stylists, factory workers, teachers, professors, administrators, managers, accountants, executives, home economists, stay at home parents, musicians, nurses, veterinarians, lawyers, salespeople, therapists, social workers, family counsellors, business consultants, physicians, musicians, engineers, builders, independent contractors, computer specialists, small business owners, the unemployed, the transitioning, the retired and more who have coached, encouraged, welcomed, equipped, supported, and served within



their fields and beyond. They have contributed much insight, wisdom, thoughtfulness, compassion, encouragement, skill and dedication to their occupations. And they have found meaningful ways to contribute their gifts and presence to the life and work of the Harcourt congregation. Through their efforts and way of being in the world they have raised the quality of individual and community life. Through them scholarships, studies, symposiums, exchange trips, advisory visits, committee work, community organizing activities, fund raising efforts and emergency relief initiatives have been created, offered, shared, and implemented, all for the strengthening of a larger, wider world. When, for example, we listen closely to the stories of the members of the UCW and the Caroline Harcourt group, we learn of the leadership they have offered, nationally and internationally, to 4H, to The Women's Institute, to the Y, to the Guiding movement, to the creation of safe shelters for women, youth and children here in Guelph, and to other community initiatives of empowerment and care. When we listen to the stories of our university educators and the administrative community that keeps them operational, we learn of the contributions they have made to their specific disciplines, to students, to the university, and to education in Africa, Asia and Central America.

The stories of our most important experiences, significant learnings, meaningful contributions and grace-aware moments of receiving and sharing - of holding on and of being held - live here in abundance. They are stories that can inspire, strengthen, encourage, challenge, equip and lead us forward. ***They will do so in relation to the degree that we know them.*** In recent years we have been trying to release these stories and skills within the life of our congregation. We've been trying to listen to one another. We have been doing so in an effort to understand better our respective needs and hopes. And we have been doing so out of a desire to welcome these gifts and perspectives safely and helpfully into our common life.

Recently I was reminded again of my question. Someone remarked that a retired minister of some renown worships at Harcourt. I was not sure to whom they were referring. For there are as many as fifteen retired ministry personnel connected to us. All of them have served with distinction. One is indeed a celebrated former moderator. But he would be the first to point out that a few rows back and over sits one of his classmates who was the gold medalist in their year. A few rows forward sits another accomplished retiree who is affectionately known as "the woman who has stories in her mouth." The MANNA children love the tales she shares. By the garden window sits another retired colleague, who, among other important things, is a survivor of a prisoner of war camp. In the choir sits another colleague. He spent a career listening to the challenges and hopes of broken, incarcerated people. Still another is a minister/ social worker who helped bring a sense of dignity and safety to people struggling on inner city streets. He did so in Toronto and Hong Kong. Still another, a minister/surgeon, spent decades traveling the globe binding up the wounded and literally opening the eyes of the blind. Still another, a leader in the field of adult education, received, just two weeks ago, the distinguished Alumni/ae award of Emmanuel College at the University of Toronto. To date, the award has been bestowed only seven times. Two of the

seven recipients worship at Harcourt. Yet another colleague has been an important voice in end-of-life matters, seeking dignity and options for all who enter the valley of shadows. Yet another, several actually, have served in educational ministries of congregations. They have done so with significant creativity and effectiveness. Yet others have helped Protestant communities like ours embrace and deepen the gifts found in Ignatian spiritual exercises and spiritual accompaniment. And among the many important things yet another retired colleague has done is this: in 1990, she served as the only representative from Toronto Conference to the General Council Commission that reviewed the controversial 1988 national church policy on ordination. Under her wise leadership the Commission heard respectfully all affirmations and objections to the '88 decision. The Commission then carefully addressed the concerns one by one, ultimately recommending that the United Church stay the course with its decision. The rest, as they say, is history. The decision to embrace a path of greater openness, acceptance and love paved the way for Harcourt's own decision, fifteen years later, to become officially an affirming church community. And we've only begun to scratch the surface.

When we encounter these stories, when we move beyond the formal "Hello's" and "How are you's" exchanged across sanctuary pews, we inevitably meet tales and lives that move and inspire us. Yet to hear well these stories we often must commit to two rounds of listening. The first round often connects us to the sunshine side of people's lives - to the history of goals met and contributions made and challenges overcome. In the face of this narrative of success it is easy to conclude that we belong to a community of competence - one that consists of high achieving people who are refreshingly generous and progressive and open. Which, as self-descriptions go, is reassuring. Being competent and generous and open is a good way of being.

But this would be only part of the story. And, sadly, it is the part that can keep us from being more for, and with, one another. The success narrative, no matter how accurate, frequently blinds us to what is also true and possible for us. An idealized image that projects success can inhibit risk and personal growth. It can discourage participation.

A second round of listening would try to hear the other part of the story that belongs to every story. That other part is the one that involves our weakness and brokenness and anxiety and fear. That other part is the one that includes the history of our failures and dysfunctions, our denials and disappointments - a history of struggle that is ongoing, that constantly challenges our esteem and our joy, and from which there is no easy, if ever, rescue or heroic overcoming. This is the part of the story and the self we see when we hope no one else is looking. This is the self we frequently try to hide behind a veneer of achievement. And one of the unfortunate things about this is that we forget, and are encouraged to forget, that it is our vulnerability that allows us to span the distance that separates us one from another. It is our wound that allows our voices to reach into other wounded hearts, doing so with grace, healing and hope.

I would submit that it is only when a community acknowledges, with honesty and vulnerability, its limitations and weaknesses, that it has a chance of becoming more and better than it has been before. Years ago I worked in a community of highly successful people. The achievement was motivated by a variety of factors. These included passion, curiosity, a desire to make a difference and wound. The role of wound surprised me. I came to see that within the knot of factors motivating achievement, low self-esteem touched a significant percentage. Rather than face and heal the wound, many sought to put it out of sight by surrounding themselves with a narrative of achievement and a mountain of stuff. Few wanted to stop long enough to count the cost or to do the work that could bring about change and balance and healing.



Two rounds of listening help us hear and value both parts of our story - the part of the story that roots us in our strengths and links us to a community of competence. And the part of the story that roots us in our weaknesses and weaves us into a community of compassion. The first encourages us to be a generous people with open hearts. The second leads us to live in solidarity with others and to relate to one another with broken-open hearts.

Several years ago I had a conversation with one of our members. The person was someone without fancy degrees or titles. Someone not naturally inclined to speak, lead, or organize. Someone less noticeable in a landscape of skill and ability. People were talking about their recent involvements. The activities and accomplishments cited all seemed important, and were. She remained quiet. I asked her what she was thinking and feeling. She said that she felt a bit overwhelmed. She thought that the few things she did do really didn't measure up to what others were describing. "I knit a little," is all she offered. When I asked her to say more I discovered that she knit to pass the time when the memory of loved ones lost filled her with feelings of grief and loneliness. "I end up knitting often," she confided. Enough, I discovered, to outfit a good part of Guelph! "At first I thought it was the grief that fueled this," she said, referring to all the knitting. "And in the beginning it was. I was just trying to distract myself. But now, all these years later, I'm thinking it was also the love." She was only trying to remember herself in a world of love. I was gob smacked. Stories. "Do you know what you can learn when you listen?" someone once asked me. **"Everything."**



In the coming weeks and months our church Council and members will continue to promote ways of listening to one another and learning from one another. As we move forward I'd ask you to consider doing this as well: some Sunday morning that you happen to be at Harcourt, look around and find two people you don't know, or don't know well. Go and invite them to join you for coffee after church. I don't mean go downstairs to the gym, though that too is an important place and opportunity for connection. I mean go to the Second Cup, or the Red Brick, or Tim Horton's, or Planet Bean, or Balzac's or the William's Coffee Pub. Someplace where you can sit down and hear each other comfortably. Invite one another to share a little about their life journey. Share only the part of your story you feel comfortable sharing. What has been a highlight? What has proven hard or challenging? What has been an important achievement? What has been an important setback? What has been an important learning? What has been an important gift received? What or who helped make the good moments good, and the bad ones bearable? When and how did grace enter in? When and how did you help pass grace along? What do you hope people will remember about you and your story? Agree on a time limit for your visit. Make up your own questions if these prove unhelpful. Try not to interrupt one another. Take turns. Thank one another before you part ways. Remember each other's names and write them down when you get home. Do this once, twice, or maybe three times and you will surely hear what I am continually thankful for hearing - namely the stories of the people who worship here and bless the world. The gift of these stories is everywhere. We just need to slow down long enough and open ourselves well enough to hear them. And to celebrate them. And to find ourselves and others strengthened in the sharing. Summer Blessings!

Chalmers Capital Campaign – Harcourt Wrap-Up

by Peter Gill

No, this doesn't mean we are no longer accepting donations and pledges! We would like to thank the Harcourt congregation for its generosity and support after the service on 4th June.

For those who have been away or are still considering making a donation, pledge forms will be available on that day. These can be dropped off at the Harcourt church office or mailed to CCSC's temporary address at Three Willows United Church. Thank You.

Tales from the Harcourt Garage Sale #2

by Janet Webster

The Garage Sale has come and gone for another year. This kind of event certainly offers glimpses into the many personalities, moods and attitudes of the public. There are the regular visitors who are excited to see this year's offerings. There are collectors, the children eager to add to their treasures, the parents who delight in their finds, young people furnishing a home, grandparents buying a classic toy, the music lover, the book lover buying that out of print item and many others.

There are also what I call *Mr/ Ms Yadon't's*, and *Mr/Ms Yashuda*. These are the ones who have suggestions such as:

*Why Don't you open earlier?, Serve coffee? Have a trunk sale in the parking lot?
Why don't you charge admission? Open Friday evening?*

Or they comment:

You should have a black cloth under the jewelry. You should price everything. You should invite the book dealers. Have more signs. You should have reminded me, I forgot about this sale!

Well, you sure can't please all the people all of the time. Thank goodness there are their pleasant cousins who say:

Why don't I wash these dirty donations so they look more inviting? Why don't I greet people and direct them? Why don't I take the unsellable things home to my clear garbage? Why don't I make coffee for the workers? Why don't I give you \$20 for this \$5.00 item?

There are other interesting characters too such as:

- The woman who thought the price on a signed print was too high: *"I'll wait here and buy it when you cut the price in half"* she said!
- *"You charge too much, after all you get everything for free!"* Ignoring the fact that the whole point is to raise funds for a church!
- The gentleman who bargained a price of \$3 down to \$1.50 and then asked for change from a \$50 bill!
- The woman who returned saying that she had purchased various items and was charged \$24 but added up the items later and it should have been \$22 ... *"So I want this teacup and saucer at no charge"*.

Those are the ones who make you smile (sort of) but they are certainly outweighed by the visitors who tell you this is their favorite sale. The ones who thank you for doing this and for picking up donations. Who thank you for helping them downsize and express gratitude on behalf of the Food Bank and Hope House for passing on our extras. The ones who say this is their first time in the building and “*Everyone seems so nice!*” or “*What time are your services again?*” The teens who appreciate the chance to earn volunteer hours for their school credits.

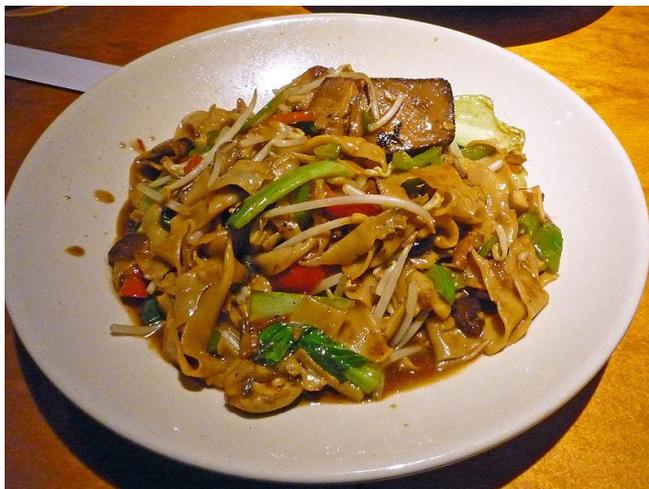
This year we deposited a total of \$2,929.95 into the Harcourt accounts and made only one trip to the land fill (where even the attendant noted that Harcourt had two sales within a month). I have been asked how that amount compares to previous years. In 2015 we raised \$2,400; in 2016, \$2,815.15. We’re doing better step by step.

Thank you for your generous donations and your willingness to give up several hours of your weekend to make it all happen. And thank you to our customers...even the cranky ones. We love to see (and hear) you!

Invitation to Help: Saturday Night Supper

by Jill Gill

As I write this article, we prepare for the Saturday Night Supper on June 3rd, and I’d like to say thanks to all who supported this event by volunteering to serve or providing food or cash donations for food purchase. The many folks who were treated to dinner are very



appreciative of the delicious food and friendly atmosphere provided by Harcourt volunteers. Our next opportunity to host SNS is several months away – **Saturday, September 9th**. We’ll need twelve volunteers to prepare and serve the dinner plus many more folks to supply the food for our menu of Pasta Casserole (recipe provided), Caesar Salad, cheese, pickles, rolls, assorted fruit pies, vanilla ice cream, juice, milk and coffee. Food and volunteers should be at Royal City Church, 50 Quebec Street (enter via back door) by 5 p.m.

Volunteers will be required until 8 p.m. You can sign up on the sheet on the Greeting Place desk or online by going to the Harcourt website, click on ‘Connect with Community’, then ‘Saturday Night Suppers’. Scroll down and click on ‘Sign-up online’ to pick a slot.

If you’ve never volunteered to serve at Saturday Night Supper, I invite you to speak to someone who has to find out what a fun and rewarding experience it is. Thanks for your ongoing support in serving a wholesome and delicious meal to some of Guelph’s most food-insecure.

A Book Review:

***Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End* by A. Gawande (2014).**

New York: Henry Holt & Co.

by Ann Estill

When author Atul Gawande, a surgeon, meets his wife's grandmother, she inspires him to think about the experience of aging. As he explores her story and meets many others of the same age, he sets out to find as much as he can about growing old successfully, retirement settings, nursing homes and assisted living.

I liked his directness, such as the quote "Death, of course, is not a failure. Death is normal" for example. Although it might seem like a depressing topic, the reader is given many short real life stories of people who have grown old or ill. He has a knack of drawing you into their stories. You want to know what happened next.

Basically, Gawande is concerned with how to make life meaningful when we're weak and frail and can't fend for ourselves anymore. As he says, "All we ask is to remain the writers of our own stories. That story is ever changing.....to make choices and sustain connections to others..." I particularly liked the story of his father, also a surgeon, who redefined himself when he faced a terminal illness. He might be a role model for us all. You learn that you may not know or choose the circumstances of your life but you can be the author of your own story by what you do with those circumstances.

My only disappointment with the book was Gawande's ambiguous take on physician assisted dying. Many of the lives he studied could have been good examples of this choice.

A Knitted Symbol of Love and Appreciation

by Jim Ball

Harcourt has a tradition of knitting shawls. We call them prayer shawls. They express the congregation's love and care for others. Our members knit them in various sizes and various colours. Some are large and some are small. We give them to babies. We give them to seniors. We give them to people shut in at home. We give them to people facing illness. We give them to people experiencing loss. We give them to people moving away and to those traveling and to those newly arrived. We give them to people to remind them that they are remembered. And we give them to people to remind them that they are loved and appreciated and valued. Just as they are.

Last summer, some of us began to think about today and Harcourt's affirming commitment. Our thoughts immediately turned to the Rainbow Chorus and its members. We thought about what you mean to us and we thought about what you mean to a wider community. We also thought about the members of our own choir and the important service they provide to us and others. The members of both choirs share many things - you share a love of music. You share the beauty of music with the world. And you know moments when you must sing through tears. The values you represent and the gifts you share and the gift you are, are important to us. And we cannot express well enough our gratitude for all that you do to bring people together and to foster a more inclusive world. So we created Rainbow Squares. Well actually Joan Bowland, Anne Ball, Anne Piper, June Crewson and Catherine Stevenson knit them. They began knitting last fall. The squares are not simply an expression of our affection and gratitude for you.



One of more than a hundred rainbow squares created for the members of the Rainbow Chorus and the Harcourt Church Choir. Presented on Affirming Sunday, May 7, 2017.

They are also and especially a symbol and reminder to you that, at all times, you are loved and appreciated and valued for who you are. Thank you!

We're Updating the Harcourt Congregational Database!

by Nick Swan, Church Technical and Office Support



If you've moved or changed your contact information recently, or if you're new to Harcourt and want to stay in touch, you can fill out a Database Update Form (found in the Greeting Area or in the pocket on the office door) and submit it to the church office. Also, if you would like to receive the Harcourt e-Weekly, please let Anne know at the church office to be added to the mailing list. Thanks!

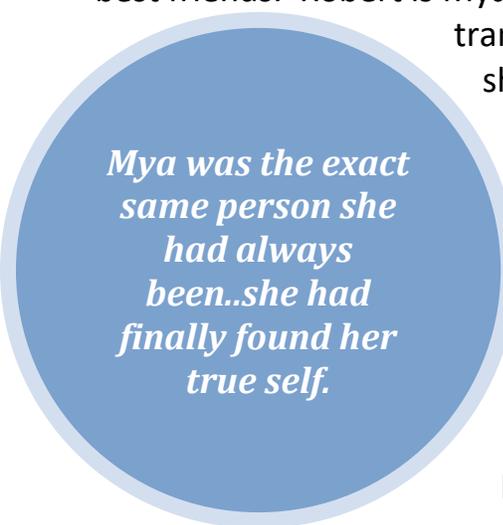
A Family's Journey: Address from May 7th Affirming Sunday

by Lori Hicks

Before I begin, I have to say how pleased and excited I was when I heard about your church's beliefs regarding LGBTQ issues. When I met with Miriam and Jim, they explained the things your church does and what the Affirming Service is for. I wanted to cry. I had to leave my church two years ago after a lifetime of attending. Mya was no longer allowed to be an official member or take any leadership role in that church because of her identity. I will not be a part of a church that excludes anyone, especially my own child.

I was asked to come to this Affirming Service today to talk about my experiences raising a transgender child. That child is now 29, so raising Mya in the 90's and early 2000's was probably a little different than it would be now. The subject of being transgender back then was never talked about in the news. There were no documentaries or movies or TV dramas with transgender characters. At least not that I saw. No one told us what to do or how to handle each situation. So if Mya was a young child now, I'm sure we would have done a few things differently. But overall, we would probably have done most of it the same.

We took our cue from Mya. Like most kids, she knew what she wanted. I have 2 children, Robert is a 26 year old male and Mya is a 29 year old transgender female. My Husband and I are very blessed to have a close relationship with both of our children. They are best friends. Robert is Mya's biggest supporter and always has been. Mya started her transition about 3 years ago. We were not surprised when Mya told us she was transgender. In the moment, Mya was very emotional. We felt bad for her because she thought we would be upset. My husband and I had the exact same reaction. We looked at each other, we looked back at Mya and said, to paraphrase, "well yeah". The reality of that change simply started with Mya changing her name and wearing women's clothing. Mya was the exact same person she had always been. I would say, as we all started to adjust to those changes, Mya became a more comfortable person. She had finally found her true self. She had been uneasy and very anxious living as she was before.



Mya was the exact same person she had always been..she had finally found her true self.

When Mya was designated male at birth, we named her Michael. She was a very easy, content baby. As she started to get older and started to play, she made choices. She always chose what would be considered a girl's toy. We gave her traditionally boy things, but she would change them or make her own toys. She loved playing with the Fisher Price people, but would only play with the ladies. She made little brides with clothes pegs and tissues. Mya has a cousin a few years older. Slowly but surely her dolls and ponies made their way home with us after family visits. At this point, I need to say that Mya has given me permission to refer to her child self as a boy and use the name Michael. As parents, we kind of wondered why a boy would want to play exclusively with girls toys. But he was still so

little and it made him happy. What difference could it make? We assumed, at the beginning, he would grow out of it.

A couple of years later, Robert was born. Michael was more than happy to have a playmate to dress up with. At 2 years old, Robert didn't know they were always dressing up as girls. He didn't care, they were having fun. They wore tea towels on their heads for long hair and my aprons for dresses. At the time, none of this seemed like a big deal. We knew Michael was very creative and didn't worry about it. You see I was a stay at home Mom. Most of this happened at home.

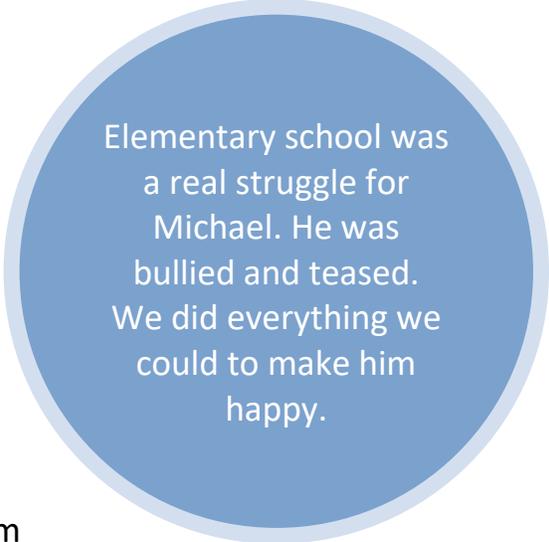
Then Michael started kindergarten. Michael was busting to start school, he knew there was a dress up centre there. What could be better? Sadly, that is where he learned that the world, especially other boys, did not approve of his choices. This was when his anxiety started. He knew at 5 years old that he didn't fit in. He was different from all the other boys. Why he was being teased and ostracized was a very difficult thing to explain to a 5 year old. All his friends were girls, and they were nice to him, but when the girls had their birthday parties, Michael was not invited. Things like that were heart breaking for all of us.

Elementary school was a real struggle for Michael. He was bullied and teased. We did everything we could to make him happy. Michael had been asking for a couple of years to take ballet. Sports were torture for him, so putting him in baseball or hockey was definitely out. Michael loved Ballet. He was usually the only boy, but I think that made him more comfortable.

As parents, we often heard negative comments. " We were doing the wrong things," "we were making things worse for him", etc. Easy to say when it's not your child. Michael was lonely and anxious. Again, we wanted to make him happy.

At Christmas time the kids would make their Christmas lists for Santa. Robert's list was always typical boy stuff. Michael's list was always dolls and Barbies. Christmas morning should be an exciting, happy time for kids. I will never forget Robert's face when he opened his Little Tykes Basketball net. So what to do about Michael's list? Ignore what he asked Santa for and give him "appropriate" toys? I don't know about you, but we couldn't do that. Why would it be ok for Robert to get the things on his wish list but not Michael? That would be so cruel.

By then we did have thoughts and conversations that maybe Michael was gay. But what would we have done differently? You have to remember, in the early 90's "transgender" was



Elementary school was a real struggle for Michael. He was bullied and teased. We did everything we could to make him happy.

not even in our vocabulary. Michael never talked about wanting to be a girl.

We were a church-going family. Our children had attended Sunday School their whole lives. When they became adults, they both left the church. They felt it was hypocritical to condemn Michael's lifestyle. Michael says he realized he was gay around the age of 10. Around that same time he was being taught at church that being gay was a sin and an abomination. So was suicide. His first panic attack was in a Bible Study when he came to the realization he was going to Hell either way. He had no way out. I find this heart breaking that a child would be taught this. The person teaching that class would have been devastated if they had known how Michael felt. Everyone at our church loved him and still do. But the Bible Study leader was only teaching what the church believed and Mya doesn't blame him in the slightest.

Sometimes what you think is the worst thing that happens in your life, turns out to be the best thing

High School was somewhat easier for Michael, but he was becoming a ticking time bomb. He was living a double life. The pressure he felt was unbelievable. In school and in his social life he lived as a gay person. At home and at church, he acted as though he was straight. Still always thinking he was going to Hell.

His first panic attack was in Bible Study when he came to the realization he was going to Hell...

Michael became an excellent liar. We had no idea. He'd always been such a good kid. We believed everything he told us. It was also very hard on Robert. He went to the same school as Michael and knew everything that was going on. I don't know how Robert managed. We found out a few years after Michael finished high school, that some of his teachers knew he was struggling and referred to him as an explosion waiting to happen. No one from the school ever contacted us. I still don't understand that. Maybe we could have intervened earlier and gotten help for him.

Michael did make it to University, but by then he was too mentally ill to be in school. He came out to us during his first month of University. He was 19. We were not completely surprised, but I was terrified. My fears were many. His life was difficult enough. I was sure coming out would make it more difficult. When we realized how severe his mental illness was, we sought help for him. With some medication and counselling he return to school a few times. After about 2 years, Michael had to quit school and return home. He had a mental breakdown and initially spent 6 weeks at the Homewood Hospital. I remember thinking shortly after Michael came out, that one day I might wish this was my biggest challenge. I was

right. Mental illness is extremely difficult to live with. It puts a lot of the other things we worry about into perspective.

The last 7 years have been quite a journey. It's been a very slow process and a lot of hard work on Mya's part to get to the place of mental health she's at now. When Mya started her transition to female we saw a marked improvement in her mental health. Being her authentic self made such a difference.

I'm sure you've all heard people say: "Sometime what you think is the worst thing that happens in your life, turns out to be the best thing". That is completely true for our family. We are closer than ever. We didn't always agree how to handle everything, but we learned to communicate better. We have all grown as people. Learning not to judge and trying to be more understanding. We have heard many stories from Mya's friends, most completely heart breaking.

Most young transgender people have little to no support from their families. We have heard the same thing from all the professionals we have encountered during this process. I find this so sad, and I don't understand it. What happens to unconditional love? Do we only love our children if they grow up and live exactly the way we think they should? If they don't, the love gets turned off? When I originally told my parents that Michael was gay, my Father's first response was "now you need to love him even more". Wow, what a beautiful thing to say. This can be a scary and uncertain time for anyone. Isn't that when a family should be the most supportive and understanding? Our entire extended family have been unbelievably supportive. Of course they all knew Mya as a child, and it all made perfect sense.

I'd like to thank you all for giving me the opportunity to tell our story. What I've realized through all of this is that people are uncomfortable with things they don't understand. Take time to educate yourself. Spending time with people that may, at first, make us uncomfortable is the first step to understanding. Once we push ourselves out of our comfort zones, we will eventually get comfortable in that new place. I have done it with both mental illness and with LGBTQ issues. It wasn't easy, but I am a better person for it. I wouldn't change any of it. I have been very uncomfortable in certain situations but I had to push myself. Where would Mya be, or my entire family be for that matter, if I decided it was too messy and not my comfort zone? There comes a time when we cannot ignore and dismiss what we may not like because it's not what we think is "normal". There is no such thing as normal. Society has tried to squeeze everyone into a mold to make life neat and tidy. But now we know, those old ways of thinking don't work. It's not healthy for anyone. My hope is that as transgender people feel more accepted, they will simply become part of society as they should be, with the same rights as everyone else. Everyone will be comfortable, everyone will stop judging and everyone will love them even more.

Dear Harcourt Mem. United,

May 2017

THANK YOU

for the support you've shown ECM
at UofG over this academic year.



www.ECMguelph.org

Having a faith neighbour like you is
such a blessing to our ministry and
our campus. Peace and joy.

the Ecumenical Campus Ministry UofG

Harcourt Communal Garden

by Jill Gill

Harcourt's Communal Garden which is planted, maintained and harvested entirely by volunteers, donates all of the organically grown produce we harvest, to the food pantry at (CCSC) Chalmers Community Services Centre (temporarily located at Three Willows United Church). The permanent move to 41 MacDonell St. will happen July 1.

You may have wondered if there is some way that individuals can contribute fresh produce to CCSC along with the non-perishables that we usually donate. The answer is **YES**. I'm suggesting that anyone who has a home garden might consider **planting some extra plants or an extra row of vegetables** to be picked for CCSC. If you would like to do this, please contact Jill Gill (519.767.1244) or email me at peter.gill@sympatico.ca and I can explain when produce can be dropped off at Harcourt to be delivered at the same time as the Harcourt yield.



Photo by Jill Gill

We got off to a wonderful start at our first work 'party' on Saturday, May 13. The weather was very cooperative and several of our volunteers were present to weed, loosen the soil in prep for planting, build chicken wire (critter-proof) cages around the on-ground beds, reinforce the chain fence, amend the compost piles, plant seeds and harvest asparagus and rhubarb. This was a great start to the season.

So far we have harvested 7 kgs (14.4 lbs) including, kale, rhubarb and asparagus. The kale that was picked in April was harvested almost a full month earlier than previous years as the result of the hoop house that was constructed over the far raised bed last fall. Such a treat for the CCSC guests. On Sunday, May 28 there was a 'Blessings of the Seeds and Seedlings' ritual at Manna during the 10:30 a.m. service, followed by planting into the garden. It was a lovely event.

Overheard at Harcourt's Coffee Hour (An Imaginary Conversation)

by Peter Jackson

Primus: Did you read that piece in the April Herald, the primer on Progressive Christianity? It's pretty clear that Harcourt is a progressive church, eh? We've got most of the characteristics: spiritual vitality, intellectual integrity, transgressing gender boundaries, commitment to Christianity without superiority, and a focus on justice and ecology.

Secunda: Yes, but I'm not sure that does more than scratch the surface. I looked up the Eight Points Of Progressive Christianity and what strikes me most is what is missing. There's nothing about Jesus being God's child, about the resurrection or about God. In fact the word 'God' is not even used.

Primus: Oh, that's a bit troubling. What are the eight points, then?

Secunda: Here they are: "By calling ourselves progressive Christians, we mean we are Christians who...

1. Believe that following the path and teachings of Jesus can lead to an awareness and experience of the Sacred and the Oneness and Unity of all life;
2. Affirm that the teachings of Jesus provide but one of many ways to experience the Sacredness and Oneness of life, and that we can draw from diverse sources of wisdom in our spiritual journey;
3. Seek community that is inclusive of ALL people, including but not limited to:
 - Conventional Christians and questioning skeptics,
 - Believers and agnostics,
 - Women and men,
 - Those of all sexual orientations and gender identities,
 - Those of all classes and abilities;
4. Know that the way we behave towards one another is the fullest expression of what we believe;
5. Find grace in the search for understanding and believe there is more value in questioning than in absolutes;
6. Strive for peace and justice among all people;
7. Strive to protect and restore the integrity of our Earth;
8. Commit to a path of life-long learning, compassion, and selfless love."

source: (<https://progressivechristianity.org/the-8-points/>), [reproduced with permission].

Primus: OK, it's not altogether clear. It says "we are Christians who ..." but doesn't say what is considered implicit in being Christian. Clearly, though, it is something different from what is called 'conventional Christians' - another term that is not defined.

Secunda: Hmm. And perhaps these eight points don't mention God because the word is so familiar, we all think we know what it means, whereas terms such as "the Sacred" and "the Oneness and Unity of all life" make us stop and think.

Primus: Yes, there's a lot to reflect on. These eight points are more like the beginning of a conversation than a comprehensive theological creed.

Secunda: Yes, a provocative beginning. What I especially like is the statement about the value of questioning. These days it seems to me Harcourt is more like a group of people tackling similar questions than a group holding on to identical answers given by someone in authority.

Primus: I agree. People sometimes say that Christianity is a 'confessional faith', meaning that the path to entry requires assent to a set of belief-statements. Here at Harcourt we seem to embrace instead a path of 'Living The Questions'. The path includes intellectual exploration, such as in Mindstretch, the Saturday morning 'explorations in progressive Christianity' and small groups exploring faith and end-of-life issues. The path also includes practical experimentation in living differently in light of Jesus's teachings - for example in Manna, working with Chalmers and in the gardens and in many other ways.

Secunda: You know, centuries ago the church tried to put questions aside by setting out the Nicene Creed and demanding that everyone subscribe to it - or be banished from the church. You weren't even allowed to believe that everyone contains a spark of divinity, yet that belief survived thanks to the mystics who sought and experienced direct communion with God.

Primus: Hmm. I've heard people around Harcourt speak of such 'awakening moments' in their lives. And I've heard people describe themselves - and every person - as an incarnation of God, or as 'God's self-expression'.

Secunda: I'm reminded of what 13th century mystical prophet Meister Eckhart said:

*The seed of God is in us.
Now, the seed of a pear tree grows into a pear tree;
and a hazel seed grows into a hazel tree;
a seed of God grows into God*

Primus: Did you say 13th century? I thought you said that kind of belief statement was forbidden by church authorities.

Secunda: Well, some of Eckhart's teachings were declared heretical after his death. Heresy is anything that varies from 'correct' creeds, known as orthodoxy, established by church authority. Eckhart stands in a long line of mystics who held such variant beliefs. Some of them survived without being declared heretical - for example, theologians who follow Francis of Assisi hold many beliefs similar to Eckhart's. Labels such as 'orthodox' and 'heretical' sometimes get used for political reasons.

Primus: I'm glad that progressive Christianity is inclusive. As far as I'm concerned, any theology - by which I mean a description of God's character and relationship to the universe - is certain to be wrong, because God is bigger, more mysterious than any of us can imagine. So inclusiveness is desirable. In fact, I'd even say we should spend less time on theology and more on discerning movements of the Spirit as we seek to follow Jesus's example, his way of justice and compassion.

Secunda: We can be grateful to be part of a congregation that encourages us to live the questions. Thanks for chatting. Let's continue the conversation another time.

Book It Baby! Congregational Retreat - Fun and Spiritual

by Andre Auger for the Planning Committee

Block these dates in your calendar: September 29 – October 1. These are the dates of the 2017 Congregational Retreat, at Loyola House. Our upbeat theme is "On Being a Beloved Child of God." We have a program for children and a program for adults, along with some times when adults and children come together. There will be fun things for the kids to do (which some adults might find particularly inviting as well)! Like last year, the program will be generously paced to allow time by yourself, some time in your small group, as well as some time as a whole group. The cost will be similar to last year, with half the cost picked up by the Spiritual Life Pillar fund. More information will appear in the September Harcourt Herald.



"When I admire the wonders of a sunset or the beauty of the moon, my soul expands in the worship of the Creator".

Mahatma Gandhi

Announcements

Passing



Hubble, Edwin Barry died peacefully on Friday, May 19th. Barry was born in Winnipeg, Manitoba on April 6, 1937. He was a Chartered Accountant, specializing in corporate tax at INCO, Texaco Canada Inc. and London Life Insurance Company. Barry's first love was music and he sang with the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir, the Fanshawe Chorus London, the Gerald Fagan Singers, the Kitchener Waterloo Philharmonic Choir and in many church choirs. He is survived by his wife of 55 years, Betty, his daughters, a son, his grandchildren and his two brothers. Memorial donations made to Harcourt Memorial United Church, Diabetes Canada, or the Alzheimer Society of Canada would be appreciated.



Jordan, David Carlyle "Carl" died peacefully on Sunday, May 28. Carl was born in Brampton, Ontario and died in Ottawa in his 91st year, in the early morning, as the sun rose with a brilliant pink horizon. As a full professor he served two terms as Chair of the Department of Microbiology at the University of Guelph. He held an international reputation in his area of expertise and continued this work at institutions in England, Australia, Papua New Guinea, Wales, Hawaii and Belgium and at sites in the Canadian sub-Arctic and high Arctic. In addition, he participated in invited lecture tours of several countries including India and China. He also was the author of over 90 scientific publications and was a founding member of the Canadian Association of Microbiologists. His community work included executive positions on the Boards of the Guelph, Wellington and Dufferin Branch of the VON, the Guelph Arts Council, the AIDS Committee of Guelph and Wellington County (where he was awarded a life membership) and the Guelph-Wellington Men's Club. He was an ardent collector of clocks, antiquarian books and Asiatic art. He is survived by his wife Marian, by his three sons and his grandchildren. Donations to the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO) Foundation would be appreciated.

Wedding

Ryan Sullivan and Elnaz Latifi, May 6, 2017

Other Announcements

- **Last Call! Skylight Festival**, July 28-30: Group discount available. Cost for each member of a group of more than six is \$120, seniors \$99, children under 12 are free. Cheques are due May 14. Make cheques out to Merrill Pierce. Questions? Contact Merrill at smpierce@sympatico.ca or 519.836.8867. Learn more at www.skylightfestival.ca
- The Justice & Outreach committee invite you to join “**Waterstock**” on June 11th. Presented by the Wellington Water Watchers and Riverfest Elora at the Erin Fairgrounds. An event that advocates “Water for Life, Not Profit”. Including musical guests Jim Cuddy, Bry Webb and Harrow Fair. Guest speakers are The Water Brothers and Anita Stewart. Many delicious food vendors and more! Entertainment from 12-5 pm. Visit www.ourwaterstock.ca for more information.
- **Fundraiser concert for Ecumenical Campus Ministry** - Tuesday June 13, 7:30pm at St. Andrew’s Presbyterian (161 Norfolk St., Guelph). Come enjoy a wonderful evening of music and support the ministry of the Anglican, Presbyterian, and United Church at the University of Guelph. The Shout Sister! Choir will be showcasing their vocal skills, and you will get to learn all about the campus ministry’s activities on campus. Tickets are \$10 each - and available from choir members or at the door. Children 12 and under are free. Doors open at 7:00pm. To learn more about Shout Sister! Choir, visit www.shoutsisterchoir.com. For more info on the Ecumenical Campus Ministry, visit www.ECMguelph.org. If you cannot attend, but would like to support the campus ministry, donations can be made at www.canadahelps.org if you search for “Ecumenical Campus Ministry - U. of Guelph”.

Behind the Scenes

by Gill Joseph

Well, Well, Well....

Going to Ireland this summer? Want an unusual, but spiritual, experience? Why not include a visit to some ancient holy wells along your journey? The Bible has many references to wells in it and several wells that Jesus visited have become holy shrines. Although there are holy wells and holy waters all over the world, Ireland claims to have more than any other country, with 3,047 of them catalogued to date. My husband and I had the pleasure of joining an expert on the topic of holy wells in Ireland, Dr. Ronan Foley from Maynooth University, as we drove through the breathtaking countryside of central Ireland. We stopped near to one of his favourites, St. Ciaran’s well, which lies in a lonely

field just off the ancient pilgrim road between Ballycumber and Clonmacnoise.

Before walking across the field to the well, however, we first went up to the ruins of a nearby monastery which was on land that pilgrims have walked and worshiped upon since the Iron Age. Founded by St. Ciaran in 545, the site eventually became a huge religious complex and one of the great seats of power for the medieval church in Ireland. The Monastery sits right beside the River Shannon. The view across the river was so beautiful and peaceful that I had to stand there in awe for some time before finally moving on to explore the ruins. We wandered through the old cemetery and in and around the ancient stones. It gave me shivers to think that someone else had touched these same stones nearly two thousand years before I was born.



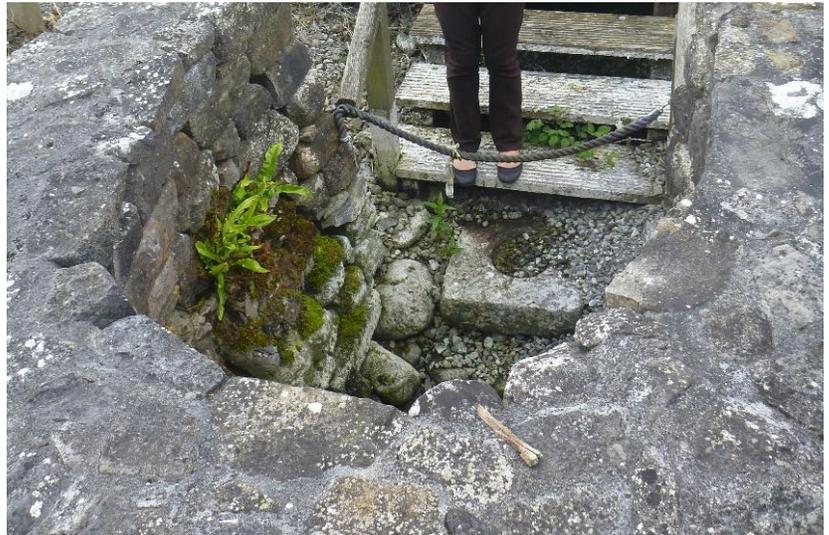
A narrow round tower that stood close by had an interesting history. Built between the 9th and 12th centuries, the tower was used by the local Irish to escape from the Viking raiders who wandered over from time to time to plunder, burn and otherwise cause havoc in the region. We were told that on learning that a group of Vikings was on its way, the townspeople would put up a ladder to the door located high on the side of the tower. Everyone would climb into the building, then someone would pull up the ladder from the inside, take it in and shut the door so no one else could enter from below. An effective, although slightly cramped, means of protection.



Further down the road we saw what was left of the unpopular Anglo-Norman de Burgo family castle that was erected in the 12th century. According to the records the townspeople were so angry at the de Burgo family that they all moved away!

Once we'd thoroughly explored the ruins of the monastery and the castle, we wandered across the field to St. Ciaran's well. According to a tale told by Saint Patrick, a leper passing by Clonmacnoise sat beneath an elm tree and asked a man to pull up some rushes. When he did so, water bubbled up from the earth and became a well. I approached the well slowly, seeing only a small, rickety old wooden staircase that disappeared into what seemed like an empty hole. Peering inside, however, I could see the spring easily. There was also a bush beside the well with bits of colourful cloth tied to it by pilgrims who had visited in more modern times – representing prayers or maybe just a symbol that marked a person's presence there. The whole scene was magical.

In ancient times, many pilgrims died from starvation or dehydration on their way. Those making a pilgrimage to Clonmacnoise would have first stopped at the well to quench their thirst, wash themselves and perhaps think about their own baptism as they started their pilgrimage. Apparently, unlike many European monastic communities in the past, baptism in Ireland took place exclusively in the wells which were at the heart of community life.



I said a prayer for my family and for my friends at Harcourt, then tied a little piece of cloth that I found in my purse to the bush. As my tiny piece of cloth fluttered in the wind, I made one more silent prayer...please let this little well be here for weary pilgrim travelers to see for at least another two thousand years!



View of the River Shannon from the Monastery



Minute for Mission

Camp Caterpillar

Our gifts for Mission & Service support safe spaces for children. Let us hear the story of one such place, Camp Caterpillar on Candle Lake, Saskatchewan. Fran Forsberg shares her experience.

“Being a mom of three gender-variant children I was afraid to give my children the experience of camp. I was afraid that my children would be singled out as weird, bullied by staff and other children for the simple fact that they do not fit into the gender norm.

“I asked around, and after being refused twice, I was told by the Rev. David Kim-Cragg about Camp Tapawingo. A member of the board took my request to the board the following week. One week later not only did I get a resounding YES, I also received the news that Alison Starks (A.J.), a Director for Camp FYrefly, had agreed to run the camp.

“I met with A.J. Both of us were very excited at the prospect of this camp for children ages 7–13 who happen to be transgender and extended the invitation to their siblings as well.

Twenty-two children, transgender, two-spirit, and cis-gender, arrived at Camp Caterpillar.

“They formed friendships. They were assured that they were safe, accepted, and valued for their authentic selves. These young humans continue to support each other through e-mails and texts.

“I speak for all the parents; we are thankful for A.J. and her staff, who are LGBTQ+. I read one comment from a boy who is 11 and trans: ‘I had the best time of my life at camp!’”

We sing thanksgiving for LGBTQ+ camps like Camp Caterpillar!

If Mission & Service is already a regular part of your giving, thank you so much! If you have not given for Mission & Service, please join me in making Mission & Service a regular part of your life of faith. In all our Mission & Service giving, with a willing heart, we sing thanksgiving to God!

Thursday June 1

8:45am Mindstretch [202]
 9:30am Stroke Recovery Executive [F]
 1:30pm Park’n Dance [G/F]
 6:00pm GUM Meeting [C]
 7:30pm Choir Practice [M]

Friday June 2

6:00pm Junior Youth Group [offsite]

Saturday June 3

9:00am Preschool Carnival [Parking lot/G/K]
 6:00pm Saturday Night Suppers

Sunday June 4

9:00am Worship Service [C]
 10:30am Worship Service [S]
 10:30am “Manna” Service [G/F]
 11:50am Congregational Meeting [S]
 7:00pm High School Youth Group [offsite]

Monday June 5

Office Closed
 1:30pm Prayer Shawl Group [202]
 6:50pm Communications Committee Meeting [L]
 7:00pm Scouts [G]

Tuesday June 6

11:30am Staff & Admin Meetings

Wednesday June 7

1:30pm Tai Chi [F]
 6:30pm Guides [F]
 6:45pm Beavers [G]
 7:00pm Recorder Group [202]

Thursday June 8

8:45am Mindstretch [202]
 7:30pm Choir Practice [M]

Saturday June 10

10:00am Sacred Circle Dance [G]

Sunday June 11

9:00am Worship Service [C]

10:30am Worship Service [S]
 10:30am “Manna” Service [G/F]
 11:30am Council Meeting [C]

Monday June 12

Office Closed
 11:45am Caroline Harcourt Women’s Fellowship [F]
 7:00pm Scouts [G]

Tuesday June 13

11:30am Staff & Admin Meetings
 7:00pm Worship Committee [C]
 7:00pm Finance Committee [F]

Wednesday June 14

8:00am Men’s Group [F]
 1:30pm Tai Chi [F]
 5:30pm Rainbow AGM and Potluck [F]
 7:00pm Ministry & Personnel Committee [L]
 7:00pm Property Committee [C]
 7:00pm Recorder Group [202]

Thursday June 15

8:45am Mindstretch [202]
 7:30pm Choir Practice [M]

Friday June 16

6:00pm Junior Youth Group [offsite]

Saturday June 17

No events

Sunday June 18

9:00am Worship [C]
 10:30am Worship [S]
 10:30am “Manna” Service [G/F]
 7:00pm High School Youth Group [offsite]

Monday June 19

Office Closed
 7:00pm Women’s Spirituality [C]

Tuesday June 20

9:00am Spiritual Life Companions Continuing Education [C]
11:30am Staff & Admin Meetings
11:30am Stroke Recovery Lunch [F]

Wednesday June 21

1:30pm Tai Chi [F]
7:00pm Council Meeting [C]
7:00pm Recorder Group [202]
6:00pm Preschool Toy Wash [K]

Thursday June 22

8:45am Mindstretch [202]
7:30pm Choir Practice [M]

Saturday June 24

No events

Sunday June 25**One Service Only**

10:00am Worship [S]
11:00am Ministries Celebration in the Garden

Monday June 26**Office Closed**

7:00pm ARCH Men's Social Group [202]

Tuesday June 27

11:30am Staff & Admin Meetings
6:00pm Waterloo Presbytery Meeting [Gym]
Supper 5pm

Wednesday June 28

1:30pm Tai Chi [F]
7:00pm Recorder Group [202]

Harcourt's Three Worship Services resume on Sunday September 10, 2017

**Have a great summer!
See you in September**