

# The Harcourt Herald

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

*December, 2018*



- **The Christmas Carol as an act of resistance!**
- **Pick up a good book for Christmas**
- **Poems, games, cartoons, news and so much more!!**

# 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**

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**Your contributions are welcome!**

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# The Ministers' Quill

by Jim Ball



At the beginning of the great depression, many of America's best sculptors organized to create the society of medalists. Each year a new medal was issued, and artists were free to base their work on whatever theme or issue inspired them. What was produced over the next seventy years was a series of medals that captured the spirit of the times. Perhaps none does so as powerfully as that made by Edward McCartan in 1939. It is entitled, "old world, new world."

The first side of the medal anticipates the outbreak of the coming global conflict. It depicts a terrified mother shielding a naked child from the spectre of the four horsemen of the apocalypse. The horsemen, figures from the biblical book of revelation, represent the terrors that haunt humans and the earth. The four are war, famine, disease and death.

The second side of the medal depicts a future that exists beyond conflict and trauma. The horsemen are gone and replaced by rays of light. Where castles once stood, a new city rises up. Where barren ground once lay, a lush forest now grows.

At the end of the church year, the Christian tradition asks a simple but challenging question: *how then shall we live?* And, in particular, *in what ways can we move,*



*Edward McCartan 1939 bronze medal/meditation on peace and war*

*more and more, from the worldview and realities of the horsemen to the world of light and possibility of a peaceful tomorrow?*

The following poem, shared on November 18th at Harcourt, is my attempt to work with the imagery found in the McCartan medal and the book of Revelation. You will see that as I reflected on the imagery and the journey, I discovered again how much of our journey forward requires that we look within. I discovered too how each of us is helped on the way by particular voices of encouragement and challenge.

Jim

## The Other Horsemen\*

I hold no love  
for those forces that haunt  
the earth - the powers  
that terrorize  
and harm  
landscapes  
and lives.

Change agents they may be,  
but they are none I welcome.

Our lives and hearts know them.  
In literature and imagination  
they are called *the horsemen* -  
bringers of storm and shadow,  
suffering and the grave.

By tradition, they are four.  
By reputation, fierce.  
By experience, withering.

Their names are  
    War,  
        Famine,  
            Disease,  
                and Death.

We meet them in that order.

Each seeks to separate us  
from the existence we have known.  
Each would take from us  
the peace and resource,  
health and breath  
we need for life.

They damage nations and communities.  
They destroy workplaces and families.  
They pursue us everywhere.

We recognize the sound of their  
approach.  
We stir at the thunder of their coming.

They appear in the form their names suggest.  
And as their metaphorical equivalents.  
Either way, they appear.

We see them.  
We witness the horror they bring.  
We lament the trauma they inflict.  
The nightly news chronicles  
the devastation of their passing.

Their bloodless form is no less violent.  
Conflict, poorly managed, leads to a parting of the ways.  
People grow distant.  
They withdraw presence and support.  
They fill the growing gap between each other  
with fiction,  
sowing discord and mistrust.  
All too soon  
wound and longing and dis-ease  
work together  
to unravel relationship  
and possibility.

And so Death comes.  
Literally. Figuratively.  
It matters little the form.  
One is much like  
the other.

We see the blight of the riders everywhere.  
Certainties armoured up.  
Dogma weaponized.  
Forcing a future, not negotiating one.  
Forgetting that most things *imposed*  
will be *opposed*.

How quickly we confuse power with authority.  
How quickly the fear of conflict and of losing  
drives us to avoid the honest work  
of struggle and negotiation.  
How quickly the fear of want intensifies our wanting.  
How quickly our dis-ease with limitation  
infects and poisons  
our capacity for openness  
and generosity.

So it has always been -  
*fear shrinks the heart*  
*and leads us to wall up*  
*or reach too far.*  
We come to incarnate  
the very behaviours we would  
condemn.

I used to think the horsemen were realities  
on the outside,  
forces to wear armour against.  
But their origins are within.  
We contend with projections, terrible and fierce.  
Each one of them fueled by fear.

If we wish to know their source,  
we need only look to ourselves.  
It is as Pogo says:  
*'We has seen the enemy, and they is us.'*

This is a learned outcome.  
We do not begin this way.

We arrive in this world  
    *unknowing,*  
        *vulnerable*  
            *and prone to mistake.*

This is no sin  
but core identity  
and the beginning of wisdom.

On the journey to understanding  
and achievement  
we encounter people  
who love and encourage us  
*just as we are.*

But early and soon  
we meet forces  
that punish us for our frailty -  
forces that would have us believe  
we must become certain, secure  
and perfect  
to avoid shame and hurt.

And so a pursuit begins for what we cannot have.  
We reach for what is unattainable  
and end up settling for  
something far less,  
the poorer substitutes we know as  
dogma, violence and self-righteousness.

Receiving incomplete comfort from these,  
we continue to experience fear, anxiety  
and self-loathing.  
We redirect these out  
as anger and despair, threat and criticism,  
as heightened intolerance of difference,

as unchecked nationalism and toxic narcissism  
and as persecution of every form of humility  
and doubt.  
In such ways and more  
we become complicit in the work  
and scourge  
of the horsemen.

It often takes us years to discover the degree  
to which we have become compromised  
and directed away from ourselves.  
Years to uncover the ways our decisions  
and behaviours contribute to ill-health,  
inside and out.  
Years to make peace with human limitation.  
Years to trust our adequacy  
and the earth's abundance.

John of Patmos -  
the author of the Book of Revelation -  
was first to write of the horsemen.  
His vision, called *the apocalypse*,  
presents two possible futures.  
The first depicts *cosmic carnage* -  
a future filled with all the horrors the horsemen bring.  
The second depicts *cosmic communion*.  
It promises the restoration and reconciliation of all  
that is damaged and estranged.

The first depicts a living hell.  
The second promises a new heaven  
and a new earth.

The horsemen are associated with the first possibility,  
with a future of carnage, ugliness and hurt.  
John does not speak of horsemen  
for the second.  
He does not describe riders who serve the vision  
of a peaceful tomorrow.  
But silence need not mean absence.

Someone wise once encouraged me  
to fade back what is harsh,  
and to keep fading it back  
until I found the form that  
was constructive and non-violent.  
Take a word like *condemnation*  
and fade it back to *criticism*.  
Fade it back further to *evaluation*.  
and then to *feedback*.

and then to *mirroring*.

And so forth.

Keep fading the harsh face of things back  
until a form is found that is gentle, kind  
and positive.

I was encouraged to do this in the hope  
it would help me understand how  
much that is damaging  
does not begin so.

And so I asked myself whether I could fade back  
the horsemen into something other  
than the harbingers of destruction  
they were.

As I contemplated the exercise I realized  
there were, indeed, *other horsemen* -  
riders who served a vision  
of healing and hope,  
influences that nurtured life.

A rider who was not War came to me  
carrying a sword.  
The sword separated truth from falsehood  
and appeared in the form of a question.  
“What if?” the rider asked.  
And in that moment  
my certainties were undone.

A rider who was not Famine came  
seeking to take from me  
my want of take.  
The horseman carried a set of scales  
symbolizing balance and freedom  
from the weight of all that sat  
heavy and unquestioned  
in me.  
The rider asked, “What if?”  
And in that moment  
my hunger for the unnecessary  
began to abate.  
I felt fresh energy  
to trust in life’s abundance and grace,  
and to bear, with greater resolve,  
the discomfort of wanting  
what I could not have and did not need.

A rider who was not Disease came next  
carrying an arrow.  
The arrow was aimed at my craving.



It sought to expose and diminish  
my addiction to the comfort  
of the imagined known way.  
“What if?” the rider asked.  
And in that moment  
I felt a spark of courage  
to face the fever of my anxieties  
and to believe in the possibility  
of exercising patience enough  
to empty them of their heat and power.

A rider who was not Death came finally  
to what could no longer stand in this new world  
that was less of Fear’s making  
and more and more of mine.

With scythe in hand, the rider said,  
“I set before you life and death. *Choose life.*”  
Not life as I had come to know it,  
but rather as it first was  
and still could be:  
    *un-knowing,*  
        *vulnerable*  
            *and prone to mistake.*

This way of being is no sin.  
What is sin is the damage we do  
to avoid this truth.

I understood then that  
to choose life meant first  
to choose death.  
To let go.  
To embrace a kind of emptiness.  
And to recall that  
such emptiness is  
the very place where Spirit moves  
and begins to fashion  
a new creation.  
Just as it was in the beginning.

This is, I believe, what it means *to remember my future.*  
*And ours.*

When we enter at last that land  
where no roads or known ways lead,  
we must give up our maps  
and learn afresh the landscape  
*just as we are.*

I have known death and life.

They can be much alike.  
And each has its riders.

While the harms of the original horsemen  
remain everywhere present,  
the questions and influences of the other riders  
also roam the earth, and serve,  
if we would but let them.

As I age, I would become a better person  
if I would hear and heed them more.  
For gently they work away in me,  
making space for the vision of a fairer  
and more compassionate  
tomorrow,  
inviting me to leave the coerced path

in favour of what Paul once called  
*a more excellent way.*

In this life journey of deconstruction and reconstruction,  
of turning and maturation,  
the other riders do not inflict on me  
the grief of letting go.  
Nor do they impose the difficult work  
of remaking.  
I do this.  
Any power they have  
I give them.

And since I backslide often  
they come to me regularly.  
They reach out in the voices  
and modelling of real people  
who do not know  
the full extent of their influence  
or of my gratitude.

As I consider the stewardship of my life  
and endeavour to choose daily the vision  
I would live into,  
I remember the riders -  
both those of shadow and those of light -  
and I try to follow the leading of the latter,  
who are my better angels.

I do so understanding  
that my life will continue to be marked  
by struggle and sacrifice,  
that clarity, courage and commitment  
will frequently fail me,  
and that the lie -

not about my limitation  
but about my inadequacy -  
will continue to haunt me  
and seek to damage me and, through me, the world.

But I am helped in knowing I am not alone  
in the work or the journey.  
That you too know of what I speak and feel,  
and hear still,  
amid the noise and clamour of human suffering  
and planetary sorrow,  
voices of light and possibility.

As I go forward,  
I would ask who the other riders are for you,  
the ones whose gentle, difficult, open questions  
have reached out to you down the years,  
inviting you to shed fear  
and to remember yourself as acceptable and enough  
in this good earth.

Whoever these riders are for you and me,  
may we continue to welcome them. And hear them.  
And when our wrestling with their questions is done,  
may we thank them  
and bless them on their way.



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Dedicated to those 'other riders'  
beyond the circle of my immediate family  
who made a path and helped me find my own -  
*Heinz, Don, Bruce & Bill* -  
servants all of the peaceable realm.

\* *The horsemen* is a metaphor that is best interpreted inclusively - as powers, influences and people that are represented by the pronouns *he, she, they, and it*.

# Worship Schedule

Harcourt offers three distinct regular Sunday morning services:

At 9 a.m. in the Chapel, at 10:30 a.m. in the Sanctuary, and MANNA service at 10:30 a.m. in the Friendship Room. Nursery services are available from 10:00 to 12 noon. Visit our website at: [www.harcourtuc.ca](http://www.harcourtuc.ca) for more information

## THE SEASON OF ADVENT & CHRISTMAS

### Season of Advent

|            |                                   |             |                  |
|------------|-----------------------------------|-------------|------------------|
| December 2 | <b>Advent 1</b>                   | <b>Hope</b> | <b>Communion</b> |
|            | Luke 21:25-36 (little apocalypse) |             |                  |

|            |                               |              |  |
|------------|-------------------------------|--------------|--|
| December 9 | <b>Advent 2</b>               | <b>Peace</b> |  |
|            | Luke 3:1-6 (John the Baptist) |              |  |

|             |  |            |  |
|-------------|--|------------|--|
| December 16 | <b>Advent 3</b>                            | <b>Joy</b> |  |
|             | Philippians 4:4-7 (rejoice!) / Luke 3:7-18 |            |  |

|             |  |             |  |
|-------------|--|-------------|--|
| December 23 | <b>Advent 4</b>                                    | <b>Love</b> |  |
|             | Micah 5:2-5a / Luke 1:39-45, (46-55) (Mary's Song) |             |  |

|                   |                                      |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <b>9:00 a.m.</b>  | <b>Coffee &amp; Carols in Chapel</b> |
| <b>10:30 a.m.</b> | <b>MANNA in Sanctuary</b>            |



### Season of Christmas

|             |                      |                                       |
|-------------|----------------------|---------------------------------------|
| December 24 | <b>Christmas Eve</b> | <b>4 p.m. Family Service/ Pageant</b> |
|             | Luke 2.1-20          | <b>10 p.m. Communion</b>              |

|             |                      |  |
|-------------|----------------------|--|
| December 25 | <b>Christmas Day</b> | <b>9:30 a.m. Led by Spiritual Life Group</b> |
|-------------|----------------------|--|

|             |                    |                                   |
|-------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------|
| December 30 | <b>Christmas 1</b> | <b>One service only - 10 a.m.</b> |
|             | Luke 2.41-52       |                                   |

by Lorraine Holding, Chair of Council

November's Council meeting focused on planning for 2019.

We supported a proposal from Spiritual Life Committee to expand the Covenanted Spiritual Companions' role to be more proactive at Harcourt. Watch for more publicity about their availability to provide "Spiritual Companionship", a one-on-one confidential relationship in which a trained person assists another person in the search for a closer union of love with God. This is another example of experimentation in the spirit of Harcourt's radical change narrative.



We decided to extend Sonya Wu-Winter's contract to February 28, 2019. She has met with several internal and external people to explore what community engagement means and how it could enhance Harcourt's ministries within our community. Specific tasks for the next three months include: a debriefing discussion about our experiment to host Food Trucks; an exploration meeting/process about Justice and Outreach initiatives at Harcourt; continued work on what a community engagement staff position might include; and a presentation at our Annual Meeting.

We discussed an initial draft position outline for a Community Engagement and Social Justice Animator. We heard about steps taken this year to discuss what paid support would enhance Children, Youth & Family ministry, including MANNA and Youth Groups. Each of these significant topics is in response to the motion approved at the February 2018 Annual Meeting.

We discussed the proposed 2019 Budget, presented by Kent Hoeg on behalf of Finance Committee. We are very grateful for their analysis and projections. Meeting the revenue targets approved in February to support Harcourt's Revitalization and Radical Change initiatives is important to decisions we will make for the coming year. We sincerely thank those who have already met the goal of a 10% increase in their personal financial givings. We anticipate givings that will arrive by December 31 to further reinforce our ongoing commitment. With gratitude, we also acknowledge all the time, talents and energy that so many people contribute to our weekly, monthly and annual activities as part of being a vibrant church. With gratitude, we look forward to continuing our Harcourt 20/20 journey, supported by a Community of Faith committed to joining God within our external community. Blessings for hope, peace, joy and love as we prepare for a meaningful Christmas. With faith and hope.

# New To Harcourt?



## Come Celebrate With Us!

Church office  
Tel: 519-824-4177  
E-mail: [office@harcourtuc.ca](mailto:office@harcourtuc.ca)  
Web Site: [www.harcourtuc.ca](http://www.harcourtuc.ca)  
Seek – Connect – Act



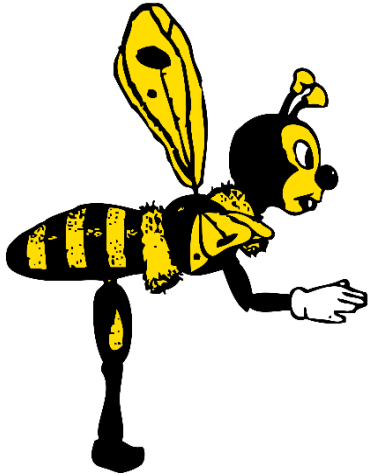
# Check out the Harcourt Online Christmas Message



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EUMqhO86Ef8>

# The Latest Buzz...

## United Church Announces More Changes



Almost a century after its establishment altered the country's religious landscape, the United Church of Canada is once again preparing for change. <https://www.capebretonpost.com/news/local/united-church-of-canada-set-for-organizational-restructuring-in-2019-260898/>

## Atheist Minister to Keep Her Position in the United Church

The Canadian Press reported last week that the settlement reached with the Rev. Gretta Vosper of Toronto is confidential, though both sides stated they are pleased with it. The Right Rev. Richard Bott, who has led the United Church in Canada since July, pointed to the core values of faith in God and inclusiveness as part of the reason why Vosper will be allowed to continue her service. <https://www.christianpost.com/news/atheist-minister-keeps-position-confidential-settlement-united-church-of-canada-228480/>

## Vancouver Japanese Congregation Compensated for Church Lost During Internment

The United Church of Canada is paying \$500,000 in compensation to a Vancouver Japanese congregation for the loss of its church building during the Second World War. The congregation, which now has a home on Victoria drive, lost their original church in 1952 following the internment of hundreds of Japanese

Canadians. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/vancouver-japanese-congregation-compensated-for-church-lost-during-internment-1.4911012>

## United Church of Canada Urges Members to Contribute Stories About Racism

Canadian Heritage is interested in hearing from all Canadians, especially those who have direct experience with racism and discrimination and those who offer intersectional perspectives. What information and wisdom can you offer Heritage Canada? Have your say by **December 9, 2018!** <https://www.united-church.ca/social-action/act-now/help-shape-new-federal-anti-racism-strategy>



# Committee & Group News

## Poinsettias – A Star Among Plants

by Barb Friend, Chair of Chancel Committee

So, what does a poinsettia have to do with Christmas? One interpretation of the plant is that it is a symbol of the Star of Bethlehem, the heavenly body that led the three wise men, to the place where Christ was born. Or, a Mexican legend tells of a girl who could only offer weeds as a gift to Jesus on Christmas Eve. When she brought the weeds into a church, they blossomed into the beautiful red plants we know as poinsettias today, known as Flores de Noche Buena (Spanish for "flowers of the holy night").



The Chancel Committee will be adding poinsettias to our Advent décor for the Sundays December 16<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>. If you would like to place flowers in remembrance of a loved one or to commemorate a special event, please contact Barbara Friend by **Dec 10<sup>th</sup>** at home: 519-763-5032, cell:519-803-5032, or email: [barfriend52@gmail.com](mailto:barfriend52@gmail.com)

## Challenge: Can You Make It Sparkle?

by Carol Jones, Property Committee

**Still Wondering How to Get Involved?** Harcourt's kitchen is consistently used by many groups each week. Like all kitchens it needs regular attention to keep it clean and in top notch condition. **We need your help!** If you can, on an occasional basis share your talents to make our kitchen sparkle, Please contact Carol Jones, 519-824-9791 or by email at: [cajones1@sympatico.ca](mailto:cajones1@sympatico.ca). Thank you, on behalf of the Property Committee.

## Gifts With a Vision

by Ann Estill

Do you ever wish you could turn your back on the consumerism of the Season? Here's your chance. Check out the Gifts with Vision catalogue. Some are on the table in the Greeting Place. Or go online to: <https://www.giftswithvision.ca/>. There you will find an array of projects and items you can support through the Mission and Service Fund. Everything from a turkey dinner at Fred Victor Mission to a month's bus pass for a low income person, from an urban bee project for children in Montreal to a bicycle for a pastor in Zambia. There is something for everyone on your list and in your chosen price bracket. You'll have the satisfaction of knowing your money goes directly to the right place.



Photo by Jerry Daminato

## Harcourt Men's Group Takes a Trip to the Baltic

by Bill Lord

The photo above is of the presentation by Henk Dykman, an active member of Harcourt Congregation, and choir member. He has spoken to the group in the past on his research into the stories of Canadian soldiers who served in Holland during the second world war. His topic last month was "Lest we forget." The next meeting will be Wednesday, December 12<sup>th</sup>. The speaker will be **Malcolm Coutts**, an active member of Harcourt Congregation and former choir member. He taught physics in secondary school and in retirement his interests have shifted toward history. His topic will be a PowerPoint presentation on "**A trip to the Baltic.**" All men are welcome to attend. You are invited to bring a friend or a neighbour who would enjoy this picturesque journey. Bill Higgins has signed up to have coffee and tea ready at 7:45 a.m., the meeting will begin at 8:00 a.m. Sandy Middleton will be the leader.

In your date book please record the date of **January 9, 2019** for our next meeting.

## March Break Retreats at Loyola House

by Andre Auger for the Spiritual Life Committee

Why not feed your soul this coming March Break 2019? Following our highly successful 7-week Retreat in Daily Life called “Learning to Dance the Trinity’s Dance of Love,” in the Fall of 2016, Father Bernie Carroll, SJ and I will team up again to offer two back-to-back retreats at Loyola House during March Break next year.

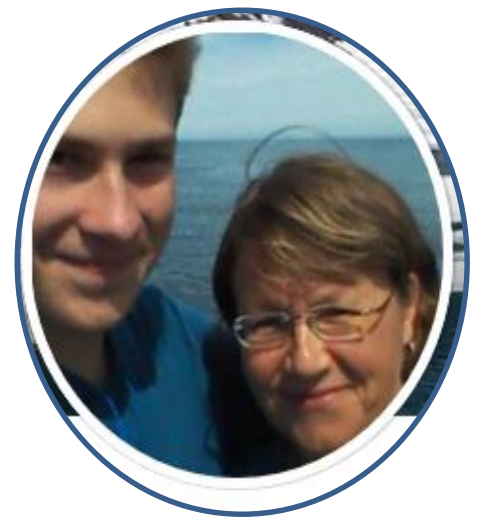
The weekend retreat will offer an opportunity to reflect on Evolution as God’s tool for growing a universe. This will be followed by a five-day retreat reflecting on humanity’s contribution to this growth, which some theologians are calling “Christification,” or the process by which we are called to complete the Christ as Omega-Point. This retreat will focus on Jesus’ vision of an alternative way of being human together based on compassion and distributive justice.

These retreats will be of particular interest to those who enjoy such thinkers as Richard Rohr, Teilhard de Chardin, Louis Savary, Brian Swimme, Ilia Delio and John Dominic Crossan, authors on whom we have based our retreat material. Spaces are limited, and people are already signing up. If you’re interested, don’t put registration off too long. If you want more information, just talk to me.

## A Musical Treat for The Caroline Harcourt Women's Fellowship

by Jean Hume

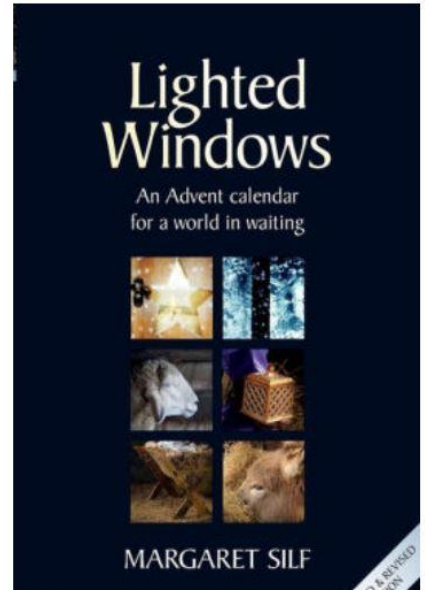
The Caroline Harcourt Women's Fellowship Christmas lunch meeting will be held on **Monday, December 10th at 11:45am**. We are to experience a special treat of music again this year. Alison and Gabriel will tell us about Gabriel's internship program under Alison's supervision. This is a new experiment so come and hear about Alison's initiative. Their program will include leading us through a few favourite carols. Following their program, we will have a devotional lead by Pat Kandel and THEN we will enjoy our Christmas goodies with Tea and fellowship. Bring your bag lunch and a friend too.



## Pick up a Book For Christmas!

by Mary-Lou Funston, Library Committee

**For those of you who are interested in using the Advent period for a contemplative reflection on the whole season, the following two books may be helpful:**



- \* **Lighted Windows: Advent Calendar for a World in Waiting**  
Margaret Silf                      245SIL  
This is a 37 day spiritual journey that takes the reader through the scriptures to find the message of Advent and Christmas.

- \* **The Midwife's Story Meditations for Advent**  
Times

Nancy Reeves                      242REE

This small book is divided into 3 sections

- First, a brief introduction with suggestions for use
- Second, a poem "The Midwife's Story" accompanied by art
- Third, suggested themes and scriptures to be meditated upon during 2 sessions/week.

**For those with children, you may find one of these books an interesting way to celebrate Advent:**

- \* **The Christmas Mystery**  
Jostein Gaarder                      F GAA  
This author of "Sophie's World" has written an Advent tale about a young boy, an old Advent calendar and time travel back to Bethlehem.  
The book is written in such a way that each day of Advent tells a bit of the story, culminating, of course, on Christmas Eve.
- \* **What Color is Christmas? Daily Devotions, Rhymes and Seek-and-Find Pictures for Advent**    J MEA

**For Christmas books specifically, I have chosen several for children.**

For those of Primary age, I have chosen two of the several we have in the Library. For the Junior-aged crowd, I have chosen several, each of which approaches the Christmas story in a unique way.

## PRIMARY

- \* Only A Star Margery Facklam  
This book answers the question, "What were the trimmings on the first Christmas morning?"
- \* The Christmas Baby Marion Dane Bauer  
Describes all the visitors to the stable – all kinds of animals, angels, shepherds, kings.

## JUNIOR

- \* Brother Gabriel and The Secret of Christmas Bob Hartman  
This is a chapter book suggested for family reading together. Each chapter ends with some questions to discuss and a prayer.
- \* Waiting for Noel An Advent Story Ann Dixon  
In this story the mother is telling her Christmas-born child the story of waiting for his birth. She uses the Advent wreath and candles to connect it to Christmas.
- \* Christmas Tapestry Patricia Polacco  
This story, based on what has been claimed as a true story, brings together "two families, two faiths, and two lonely people..."  
(I was deeply touched by this one)
- \* Probity Jones and the Fear Not Angel Walter Wangerin Jr.  
The magical tale of a young girl, an angel, and the very first Christmas pageant.
- \* The Huron Carol Frances Tyrrell  
This familiar carol is beautifully illustrated.
- \* A Northern Nativity William Kurelek  
William Kurelek has imagined the Christmas event happening in a wide variety of settings, and has painted the settings and those who would be present at the Event.
- \* Pippin the Christmas Pig Jean Little  
This delightful tale tells how a small pig helped to make a modern Christmas story for a homeless mom-to-be.
- \* The Small One Alex Walsh  
A story of the donkey who carried Mary to Bethlehem.

\* Amahl and the Night Visitors

Gian Carlo Menotti

\* A Christmas Story

Brian Wildsmith

This is the story of the young donkey whose mother was the one to carry Mary to Bethlehem. He was lonely for his mother, so he and his young caretaker, Rebecca, followed them to Bethlehem.

\* The Christmas Miracle of Jonathan Toomey

Susan Wojciechowski

How a deeply unhappy woodcarver finds himself again through his relationship with a young boy.

ALL THE CHRISTMAS BOOKS ARE KEPT ON SPECIAL SHELVES IN THE LIBRARY.

The adult books are kept on a shelf below the Biography section. The shelf is marked with a label.

The Junior books are kept on the Junior cubicle on a shelf facing the window.

The Primary books are on the Primary cubicle, on a shelf facing the computer.

## **Busy, Busy, Busy! Property Committee Update**

by Dave Hume, Property Committee

The Property Committee met on November 13<sup>th</sup> and finalized their budget for 2019. One of the things the Property Committee tries to do is keep the rental income larger than the Property Committee expenditures. The projected rental income for 2019 is \$50,000, based on contracts already signed. Many thanks to Sarah Lowe and Anne Purkis for hours on the rental contracts. The Committee also discussed the relative merits of changing from pews to chairs in the sanctuary as opposed to keeping the pews, talked about how we can finish mulching the leaves (and hoped the snow wasn't here to stay) and heard about the plans for *All Things Christmas* from Frank Webster. There has been a hot water valve in the gym that has malfunctioned and will be replaced in the next week. Darko and Dave cleaned the leaves out of the downspouts on the sides of the gym. Mark Sears is cleaning the leaves out of the pathway from the parking lot to Forest St. We're already into our fall snowplowing.



# ALL THINGS REALLY CHRISTMAS...

"IT'S OK, SANTA! GO HAVE A COFFEE AND  
US ANGELS WILL HANDLE THE CHURCH CROWD.  
THEY ALL WANT THE SAME STUFF — WORLD  
PEACE, FOOD AND HEALTH FOR ALL — AND TO  
SAVE THE PLANET...!"



# Community News

## **Sustenance**

submitted by Ben Fear

Why go to Church? A church goer wrote a letter to the editor of a newspaper and complained that it made no sense to go to church every Sunday. "I've gone for 30 years now," he wrote, "and in that time I have heard something like 3,000 sermons. But for the life of me, I can't remember a single one of them. So, I think I'm wasting my time and the pastors are wasting theirs by giving sermons at all."

This started a real controversy in the "Letters to the Editor" column, much to the delight of the editor. It went on for weeks until someone wrote this clincher: "I've been married for 30 years now. In that time my wife has cooked some 32,000 meals. But, for the life of me, I cannot recall the entire menu for a single one of those meals. But I do know this. They all nourished me and gave me the strength I needed to do my work. If my wife had not given me these meals, I would be physically dead today."

Likewise, if I had not gone to church for nourishment, I would be spiritually dead today!"

## **Gift Cards Can Make Such A Difference**

by Merrill Pierce

Once again this year, we are participating in the Adopt-a-Family program run through The Children's Foundation of Guelph and Wellington. For the past few years we have donated gift cards that are given to teens, parents and young adults that are on their lists. They appreciate our participation to this worthy cause, as it fulfills a huge need. The recipients are also very appreciative as these cards may be the only thing they receive in this season.

The cards that are found to be most appreciated are \$ 25 cards from Stone Road Mall, Cineplex, Walmart, Shoppers Drug Mart and \$10 cards from Tim Hortons.

You can buy these cards yourself, or donate the money and the cards will be bought for you. We will be accepting orders or cards starting November 25th, between the two services and after the 10:30 and Manna services. The cards or money are due December 9<sup>th</sup>. Thank you for your continued support of this ministry in our community.



This year we will again be taking information so you all receive a tax receipt for your donations. For more information contact me at: [smpierce@sympatico.ca](mailto:smpierce@sympatico.ca) or phone 519-836-8867.

## **Peter's Fragments**

*bits and pieces of wisdom from Peter Jackson*

"... at my back I always hear  
Time's wingèd chariot hurrying near;  
And yonder all before us lie  
Deserts of vast eternity ... "

These words were written about 370 years ago by poet Andrew Marvel as part of an effort to woo a young woman. It is interesting that his love poem features so prominently the bleak prospect of death, an ever-present feature of life in 17th century Europe, as it is also within our Harcourt community.

Andrew's response was to turn even more vigorously to life, arguing

"Now therefore, while the youthful hue  
Sits on thy skin like morning dew ...  
Now let us sport us while we may ..."

The love Andrew had in mind was definitely of the physical variety, and his urgency reflected more than a trace of self-interest. Nonetheless, his message is somewhat consistent with the blessing we hear often from Jim Ball: Friends, life is short and we know not how long our journey will be. Let us then be quick to love, and hasten always to kindness.

That was the blessing shared at the end of the All Saints and Souls worship service on November 4th. Afterwards, a handful of us gathered in a Holy Listening Circle, as we do each week, to share what had touched us in that service. As we sat down, our grief was new again and our emotions were raw.

Yet after half an hour of attentive listening and reflection our mood had shifted to include deep gratitude for all the gifts we had received - from our departed loved ones, from ancestors unknown to us, from each other and from the presence of Spirit always with us. As we left the chapel, we were resolved to try to live lives that honoured these gifts and their givers.

Loving, and loving now, always makes sense.

Sources: The Poems of Andrew Marvel, Routledge and Kegan Paul limited, London 1966.

## **The Gifts of Diminishment – Suffering Well**

by Andre Auger

The last time I saw Maxine Lipinski was in May... I had committed myself to meeting with her each month to have her share with us the spiritual practices that have worked for her as she dealt with the complications emerging from her double lung transplant over two years ago. Two articles have already appeared in the Herald. Maxine's summer was not a pleasant one, and this was the first time she has felt able to engage with me in further conversation. We met at the hospital, where she is once again undergoing treatment.

Teilhard de Chardin (2010) talks about seven stages of suffering. In particular, he describes that crucial point where the patient realizes that hope of recovery fades and she must face diminishment. He suggests that we fight diminishment with all our might until that point, knowing God fights alongside us. But when it becomes clear that our condition continues to deteriorate, he invites us to turn our struggles over to God in whose hands we give ourselves in trust. Maxine seems to teeter at that cusp: does it continue to be realistic to hope for better days? Or is it wiser to begin the process of shedding, and letting go and letting God?

For Maxine, even approaching this tipping point is not defeat. She continues to live in Consolation, not Desolation – to use Ignatius's terms for describing the quality of one's spiritual journey. "Desolation" is defined in Ignatian spirituality as the sense of being thrown onto one's own devices, abandoned by God, and spiraling into gradual aloneness. "Consolation," on the other hand, whether it is pleasant or not, is the sense of living in the flow of God's abundant love, even in the midst of pain. Maxine knows she is being held.

Of course, spending most of your time in bed feeling lousy gets you to ask yourself the question of whether you still have a purpose in life... For Maxine, this purpose has been reduced to its simplest expression: be loving in the present moment. Bring what joy you can to those who care for you. Remembering, as she does, the name of a nurse who is caring for you yet again may be a small matter, but it brings such joy to the care-giver to be recognized and acknowledged.

For Maxine, a spiritual practice that has come to have considerable meaning for her has been saying the Rosary. This has surprised her, as she has never been fed by rote prayer. Yet, confined to bed, and with little energy for extended periods of time, the Rosary, with its

predictable pattern of prayer, allows her to hold a whole range of people in her thoughts – even Trump and Ford, she admitted (For a description of the Rosary as spiritual practice, see <http://spiritualpractice.ca/what/what-2/the-common-christian-practices/meditation/forms-of-meditation/the-rosary/> ).

The value of rote prayer is one of creating a space for concerns to be identified and voiced. Kallistos Ware, the great Orthodox spiritual leader, has spoken eloquently of the importance of creating this space through the repetition of any simple Mantra (See for example, Ware, Kallistos, *The Orthodox Way*, 2001, St Vladimir's Press, p. 68s). He offers the famous "Jesus Prayer" as a means to do this: "Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, have mercy on me." We may quibble with the theology – as we might with the Hail Mary in the Rosary – but there is no doubt that such mantras "soften" the heart and open a space for holding others in prayer.

As Maxine was struggling to find words to express the present state of her spiritual practice, she began articulating what I recognized as two out of the three dimensions Henri Nouwen (1985) attributes to a spirituality of suffering: the dimension of returning to the helplessness of the child, that of the solidarity of being sibling to others suffering, and the example of parenting others in suffering well. For Nouwen, "good" suffering includes accepting that we are once more dependent as children are. The gift of this is that it allows others to minister to us; we become the occasion for ministry. This is hard to do, especially when we have been used to doing the ministering ourselves. "Good" suffering also includes remembering that we never suffer alone. We suffer alongside millions around the world who, right now, are in pain and discomfort as we are. There is solidarity there, as well as a broadening of perspective. Finally, "good" suffering invites us to "parent" others into their own inevitable time of diminishment and letting go. Others learn from us as we wrestle with diminishment and loss of hope. How we choose to bear diminishment becomes an irreplaceable gift we offer those around us.

I left Maxine after over an hour's conversation. I realized: I am still healthy for the moment – for which I am of course grateful. But Maxine's courage, perseverance, and dogged confidence in God's mysterious love were overwhelming and became for me a model. One dimension of Nouwen's "good" suffering Maxine had not talked about – the "parent" - was the one she was living right now, and I was learning. May I have half of Maxine's faith and conviction when my health wanes!

#### References:

Nouwen, Henri (1985). *Our Greatest Gift: A Meditation on Dying and Caring*. New York: Doubleday.

Savary, Louis M. (2010). *Teilhard's Seven Stages of Suffering*. St. Louis, MO: Paulist: Press

## The Latest from Chalmers – A New Shopping Cart!

by Peter Gill

I'm sure some of you have noticed that Harcourt has inherited a larger shopping cart used for the weekly Chalmers donations. Let's put it to good use and fill it with food (and clothing) each and every week.

Harcourt folk are extraordinarily generous to Chalmers throughout the year - especially during December – with financial, food and other donations. The whole organization thanks you for this generosity and commitment.

Sadly, demand continues to increase and sometimes outpace our ability to provide. Guest visits have increased by 34.4% from January-October 2018 compared to the equivalent period in 2017. This number is skewed a little by our being closed downtown while waiting for the new building to be finished. A more realistic number is probably about a 20% increase which still presents a big challenge.

So as we enter the Advent and Christmas seasons, please help us fill the new, spacious shopping cart. Thank You.

## Harcourt Communal Garden

by Jill Gill

The veg and herb garden is put to bed for the winter, but I must let you know that the results from the Salsa Taste Testing on Thanksgiving Sunday was (drum roll please!) ... the Medium Salsa, using one chili pepper in the recipe won over the Hot Salsa by a slim one vote! The Salsa Fest in September was a great success and we will be making this an annual event with more activities planned for next year. Save the date – **Sunday, September 29, 2019 from 1-4 p.m.**, here at Harcourt.

# The Garden of Life

by Jim Ball

“The master of the garden is the one who waters it, trims the branches, plants the seeds, and pulls the weeds. If you merely stroll through the garden, you are but an acolyte.”  
Vera Nazarian

There are evenings when I ask myself: In which direction did my life’s energies lean most this day? In what ways did I garden? Where and why did I only stroll? And what, within me or around me, impeded my ability to lean in the direction of my purpose and heart’s deepest longing? After listening awhile, I give thanks for the day. And then I rest in the promise and possibilities of the coming one.



Photo by Jim Ball

# AED Education Event

**January 19, 2019**

**9-11 a.m. in the Harcourt Gym**

## As a Member of Harcourt...

**Familiarize yourself with the  
Automated External Defibrillator (AED)**

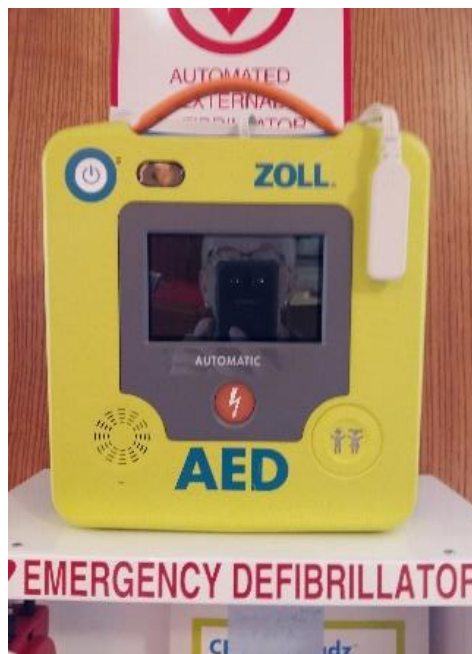
**Learn from a Paramedic**

**You could save a life**

**Register with Esther Devolin**

**519-836-7675 or [ekdevolin@sympatico.ca](mailto:ekdevolin@sympatico.ca)**

**Refreshments**





# It's That Time Again!



## Harcourt Memorial United Church

### Call for Submissions for the Annual Report 2018

**To: Harcourt Team Leaders, Committee Chairs and Coordinators of Groups at Harcourt including those who received sponsored space.**

The end of the year is rapidly approaching and with it comes the task of assembling Harcourt's Annual Report. Please submit a brief report including some of the highlights of 2018.

**Team Leaders, Committee Chairs** Please include all the names of your team or committee members in 2018. For retired and new members be sure to include the date they left or joined you.

**Coordinators of Groups** The information in these reports also assists in compiling the statistics for the United Church of Canada. Be sure to include the numbers of the participants and, in the case of children and youth, the ages as well. Be sure to include leaders, facilitators and organizers in your numbers.

#### Report Guidelines

- Please keep your submission to 1/2 - 3/4 of a page. Your article will be edited as necessary.
- Create your report as a word doc and use Arial 12 font. Please keep fancy formatting to a minimum as I will be re-formatting the reports so that they are all set-up the same way.
- Submit your report by email to [office@harcourtuc.ca](mailto:office@harcourtuc.ca) with the document attached.

**The deadline is January 12, 2019 but beat the rush and submit it early.**

Need help? There are extra copies of past annual reports in the church office if you would like to see examples of past submissions or ask Anne for assistance.

Thanks!

Anne Purkis, Church Administrator

**NOW, HERE is the PERFECT CHRISTMAS GIFT!**

**Who needs STUFF?**

**Give your loved ones an EXPERIENCE!!**

The Rainbow Chorus is busy preparing for their 25<sup>th</sup> year anniversary concert! With the wonderful Alison MacNeil as their Music Director, the Rainbow Chorus celebrates at the River Run Centre with a concert featuring musical highlights from the past 25 years.

**Saturday January 26th 2019**

**7:30pm**

**River Run Centre**

**Tickets are \$20 for adult**

**Not to be missed. BEST CHRISTMAS GIFT EVER!**





## Some Peace and Quiet on Christmas Morn

by Peter Jackson

Need a quiet time after the hustle and bustle of Christmas Eve and Christmas morn? Need a fresh slant on the Christmas story to rekindle your spirits? Why not join us in the Chapel, Christmas morning at 9:30 AM for an informal worship... A bit of (non-carol) singing, some readings, a time to meditate, and, if you so choose, an opportunity to share after the service. Brought to you by the Spiritual Life Committee.

## Last Supper of the Year is an Important One

by Jill Gill

Harcourt's last opportunity for the year, to host Saturday Night Supper will be December 22, 2018 at Royal City Church, 50 Quebec Street. So close to Christmas and a wonderful way to share our generosity with others who are less fortunate than ourselves. As always, we will require twelve volunteers on the night to prepare and serve the dinner and many more folks to provide food for our much loved menu of Pasta Casserole, Caesar Salad, rolls, pickles, cheese, juice, coffee, assorted fruit pies and (our Christmas special) **Candy Cane crackle ice cream**.

There is a sign-up sheet on the desk in the Greeting Place or you can volunteer online at Sign up Genius. To sign up online, go to the Harcourt website, click on "Connect with Community", then "Saturday Night Supper, scroll down and click on "Sign up Online" to pick a slot. Volunteers and food should be at Royal City Church (enter via back door) by 5 p.m. Volunteer servers will be needed until 8 p.m.

Many thanks, in advance, for your continued generous support for this worthwhile outreach project. For more details, contact Jill Gill - at [peter.gill@sympatico.ca](mailto:peter.gill@sympatico.ca)

# Manna Invites you to Pub Night

*In vino et cervisia veritas!*



*“Behold the rain which descends from heaven upon our vineyards; there it enters the roots of the vines, to be changed into wine; a constant proof that God loves us, and loves to see us happy.”*

Benjamin Franklin

**Tuesday January 15 at 7:00 p.m.**

**Shakespeare Arms - Harvard Road, Guelph**

**A relaxed social time!**

**Contact Meryl Pierce for more information**

# Where is God?

by Jean Jackson

As children, many of us were taught that though God's creation was good and beautiful (The Lord God made them all), God was in the church, which was above and superior to creation. These teachings flowed from the beliefs in the dominant church. From the very early centuries the authorities in the dominant church taught that Jesus had established a church with Peter at the head, and therefore authority rested in the church. Only bishops and priests were God's mouthpieces, and the only place to find God was in the church. Also, and this intensified as time passed, that we are all intrinsically sinful, and the church's practices are our only hope of salvation. This "sinful" belief persists in many denominations.

In contrast, Celtic spirituality has always seen God in all of creation, and creation as the incarnation of God. And, since humans are created in God's image, humans are intrinsically good. God is always near, the world of heaven and of earth are intertwined. The prayer attributed to St. Patrick expresses well this sense of the presence of Christ: "Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ in me, Christ beneath me.....".

Over the centuries, starting as early as the fifth century, clashes occurred between the followers of Celtic Spirituality and the wider church. There was an increasingly universal type of Christianity being practiced, with powerful leaders enforcing their belief of what was correct wherever they traveled. Other practices were stamped out. Dissenters were charged with heresy.

It is a wonder that Celtic spirituality survived, and today it appeals to many people. The practice of listening for the heartbeat of God in everyday life is very much in tune with the practice of Mindfulness, and of other disciplines which encourage us to live in the moment.

John Philip Newell is well versed in Celtic spirituality, having been Warden of Iona Abbey. The bare outline above is gleaned from a reading of his book, "Listening for the Heartbeat of God, a Celtic Spirituality".

This book will be the topic for discussion in Mindstretch, in the new year. It is hoped this will lead to an understanding of Celtic spirituality, historically and today. Everyone who is interested is welcome to come, starting on **Thursday January 10th, from 8:45 –to 10 am, in the Chapel**. For more information, contact Jean Jackson.

Listening for the Heartbeat of God, a Celtic Spirituality  
J. Philip Newell  
Paulist Press, New York / Mahwah, N.J.

# All Things Christmas Update

by Janet Webster (tired but happy!)

By the time you read this, the 2018 incarnation of All Things Christmas will be over and packed away for another year. But, as we go to publishing deadline, the sale is still a few days off. So even though I cannot tell you here the financial outcome, I am so pleased with its success to this point. Once again, it has brought people together, made new friendships and fostered fellowship. Anticipation is high as we learn of promises to bring baking, cooking, preserves, honey (over 90 offers so far!), see commitments to volunteer, receive donations. The collecting of greenery is well underway, with only one weather related re-scheduling to this point. Our visit to the Crow Family farm was a lovely sunny afternoon and the journey through the bush on the Morris property was a delight. We could always use more people on this task as the amount of cedar available to us is only limited by the number of harvesters.

I have heard many say that they are planning to visit Harcourt for their arrangements or greenery, and others will be eager to shop at the Nearly New & Jewellery displays as well as the Bake Table before resting up with a refreshment in the Café. So, fingers crossed that our efforts pay dividends but from my perspective, it is already a success. Thank you to the members of the ATC team for their co-operative enthusiasm, hard work and support. And please remember--we welcome (slightly) younger folk to join us. It really is fun and many of us have less energy than we used to.



## Eight Little Words

Instructions: Spell the correct answer with the letter combinations below to answer the question/clue.

### Question/Clue:

1. Alternate name for spire (7 letters)
2. Ritual of his body and his blood (9 letters)
3. Where the Christian soldiers should go (6 letters)
4. Sect that wrote the tune for Lord of the Dance (7 letters)
5. How many times bread will be given by our father (5 letters)
6. Where the man who placed Jesus in the tomb came from (8 letters)
7. Alternate name for the 3 wise men (4 letters)
8. Mary's cousin (9 letters)

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# nnouncements

## Baptisms:

September 16: Lakatos, Russel Mario - son of Steph and Philip Lakatos  
Vakili, Shila

November 11: Sullivan, Adrian Keyvan - son of Ryan Sullivan and  
Elnaz Latifi

## Passing:



**TUDOR**, Elizabeth (Betty) Mary (nee Herridge) on October 28, 2018. Much loved mother, grandmother and great grandmother passed away in Fergus Ontario. Pre-deceased by her husband of 54 years Keith (2007). As a long-time, ardent member and supporter of the United Church of Canada she felt particularly drawn to serving in the United Church Women's organization. Her blessings, intelligence and determination allowed her to positively navigate the many challenges she faced during her life. She leaves a legacy of love and a treasure trove of great memories. Donations to the Mission & Service Fund of the United Church or Habitat for Humanity would be greatly appreciated. Donation cards are available at the Gilbert MacIntyre & Son Funeral Home, Dublin Chapel 252 Dublin St. N., Guelph 519-822-4731 or online.



**WAGNER**, Marilyn (nee Smith) on November 20th, 2018. Marilyn died at her home in Guelph surrounded by family after finally succumbing to an illness that was supposed to take her 20 years ago. She was born September 6th, 1941 in Winnipeg, and lived her life with determination, a curious mind, and restless energy. Marilyn nurtured countless life-long relationships as one would an ever-growing beautiful garden. By every measure, her life was well and fully lived. Marilyn is survived by her husband of 57

years, Tony Wagner, and loving children and grandchildren. Friends will be welcomed by family at an informal reception celebrating Marilyn's life on **Sunday, December 2nd** from 1:30 to 4:00 at Springfield Golf and Country Club, 2054 Gordon Street Guelph. Consistent with Marilyn's many life-roles as a mother, social worker and advocate for children, she requests that in lieu of flowers donations be made to organizations that support sending children to camp such as Camp Hermosa, Salvation Army Camps, Amici Camping Charity and Kids in Camp.

## Behind the Scenes

### **The Christmas Carol As An Act of Resistance!**

by Gillian Joseph

I sometimes get tired of thinking about peace at Christmas. I know this is an awful thing to say. However, maybe you too get tired of being told that you're intolerant just because you wish people a "Merry Christmas", or because you send out Christmas cards with a nativity scene on them instead of a sparkly Santa. Last year my friends went Christmas caroling door to door hoping to bring a moment of joy to their neighbours who were ill or hurting— and had doors slammed in their faces. I've even heard that on occasion the Salvation Army's Christmas charity donation pot and parcels donated to families in need have been stolen. So yes, sometimes I can't find any peace at Christmas. However, this past week, after reading a few articles about Christmas carols, I'm beginning to think that it just might be possible to re-frame the need to focus on peace at Christmas in a totally different way. What about the idea that Christmas is not just about peace...but it is also about fighting? Christmas is a time for resistance. Yes, resistance – a glorious, purposeful fight! And you know what? This resistance has been happening for a very long time – through song. Who knew? Let me explain...

In the Bible there are many examples of songs that were written and sung as forms of resistance. As Held Evens (2018) stated earlier this year: "While Attorney General Jeff Sessions and White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders would have us believe Scripture teaches dutiful acquiesce to the state, the Bible actually brims with protest songs and prison letters, subversive poetry and politically-charged visions, satirical roasts of the powerful and storied celebrations of dissidents." Slaves also knew the power of music as resistance. When they sang their spirituals they were both praising God and protesting against the masters who locked them out of worship. Women suffragettes protesting for the right to vote linked arms and sang songs of resistance. In my lifetime, the 1970s protesters against the Vietnam war gathered publically in large groups and sang amazing songs of protest written by musicians

such as Guthrie, Dylan, Baez, Seeger, Young and others, who influenced a generation and whose music of resistance is still sung by popular musicians today.

Singing Christmas carols has been, and continues to be, an act of resistance too. Although carols have been a tradition since medieval times, the Christmas carol church service was reportedly first presented by Bishop Edward White Benson in Truro Cathedral in England in 1880. Prior to that time, carols were mostly sung as folk songs in public places such as pubs and were often used to inspire dancing – ‘carol’ being a word that meant to dance in a ring. But as time went by, the ancient songs were spruced up by Christians and given a more religious focus. Bishop White Benson, who went on to become the Archbishop of Canterbury, was perhaps influenced by the non-traditionally resistant (for the time) lifestyle of his family, who included his gay wife, Mary Sidgwick and three of their famous children who were also gay. It is well documented that White Benson spent his early career resisting the strict rules of the Church of England around what was acceptable and not acceptable to include in a service, and how he fought to open minds by adopting new progressive interpretations of ritual – perhaps leading to his radical decision to bring carols from the pubs into the cathedral (Forsyth, 2016).

Some of the favourite carols that we sing today were written as a protest against the status quo or to resist oppression. For example, the carol “O Holy Night” was originally a French tune written in 1847 and revised by Adolphe Adams who was Jewish, with lyrics by atheist poet Placide Cappeau. Initially popular and circulated widely, it began to lose favour as subsequent reactions to the carol became anti-Semitic and critical of its socialist (for the time) message (Jensen, 2017). It gained popularity again after being translated into English in 1855 by an American Unitarian minister, John Sullivan Dwight. This is a song of political resistance and protest that had Americans singing “Chains shall He break for the slave is our brother” and “in his name all oppression shall cease” six years before the American civil war and eight years before slavery was abolished (Beck, 2012).

On Christmas Eve in 1871 during the Franco-Prussian War, a French soldier reportedly resisted orders to fire at the enemy and stood up unarmed to sing “Oh Holy Night” loudly from his trench. The surprised Germans quickly responded with a carol of their own and legend suggests that the soldiers on both sides continued to resist fighting for 24 hours as they celebrated Christmas (Nerenberg, 2017).

The history that surrounds the carol “It Came Upon the Midnight Clear”, written by Unitarian minister Edmund H. Sears in 1849, also expresses resistance to the views of its time. In these lyrics, Sears writes about the contemporary concerns around both the wars going on in Europe and the just ended American war with Mexico, saying:



“And man, at war with man, hears not  
The love-song which they bring;  
Oh hush the noise, ye men of strife  
And hear the angels sing”

A very unpopular phrase of resistance at a highly patriotic time.

Recently, Christmas carols have been sung as acts of resistance against political correctness in a more guerilla-like fashion. For example, “flash mobs” have become a popular way for groups of individuals to pop up suddenly in a public place, like a mall, without permission, to sing or play a Christmas carol or two and then to disappear into the crowd. A newspaper account of a Christmas carol flash mob that occurred at Stone Road Mall involving the Guelph Youth Symphony Orchestra can be viewed at <https://www.guelphmercury.com/news-story/2687402-guelph-youth-orchestra-silences-mall-with-flash-mob/> , and two good videos of mall flash mobs by others can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f7baFMmSv4k> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SXh7JR9oKVE>. Some people have even taken original carol tunes and changed the lyrics as a symbol of resistance, such as a group called the Nasty Women's Choir with their versions of carols that include “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing” that is sung with the same tune but different lyrics criticizing President Trump (Clarke-Billings, 2016).

So when I get frustrated by critical atheists who want to inflict their own intolerance on me, or by people who are so overly politically correct that they miss the gift of joy I am wishing for them, or when I get saddened by a world seemingly full of thieves and hate, I will think about these important acts of resistance as I sing our Christmas carols. You may be interested to know that in 2015, digital music service Spotify listed “Silent Night” as the song most played during the Christmas season, with “The First Noel”, “Joy to the World” and “Away in a Manger” as 5th, 9th and 10th most played respectively (Spotify Statistics Portal, 2015). Yessss!! Merry Christmas fellow resistance fighters.

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Spotify Statistics Portal (2015). Most-covered Christmas songs on Spotify as of December 2015. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/496785/spotify-christmas-songs/>

## From the Archive:



## Harcourt Calendar – December 2018

Updated November 15, 2018 – [www.harcourtuc.ca](http://www.harcourtuc.ca) for most up-to-date information

### Saturday December 1

8:00pm Guelph Youth Singers [S]

### Sunday December 2

9:00am Worship Service [C]

10:30am Worship Service [S]

10:30am MANNA Service [F]

3:00pm SWESH [G]

7:00pm High School Youth Group [202]

### Monday December 3

#### Office Closed

1:30pm Prayer Shawl [202]

5:00pm Level Up [202]

7:00pm Scouts [F]

### Tuesday December 4

10:00am GWSA Exercise Program [G]

6:45pm Cubs [G]

7:00pm Bell Choir [M]

### Wednesday December 5

9:30am Lightshine Singers [M]

1:30pm Tai Chi [F]

6:30pm Guides [F]

6:45pm Beavers [G]

7:30pm Rainbow Rehearsal [S]

### Thursday December 6

8:45am MindStretch [C]

1:30pm Park 'n' Dance [F/G/K]

7:30pm Choir Practice [M]

### Saturday December 8

10:00am Progressive Christianity [202]

### Sunday December 9

9:00am Worship Service [C]

10:30am Worship Service [S]

10:30am MANNA Service [F]

3:00pm SWESH [G]

### Monday December 10

#### Office Closed

11:45am Caroline Harcourt Women's Group [F]

5:00pm Level Up [202]

7:00pm Scouts [G]

### Tuesday December 11

10:00am GWSA Exercise Program [G]

6:45pm Cubs [G]

7:00pm Finance Committee Meeting [202]

7:00pm Property Committee Meeting [L]

7:00pm Worship Committee Meeting [C]

7:00pm Bell Choir [M]

### Wednesday December 12

7:45am Men's Group [F]

9:30am Lightshine Singers [M]

1:30pm Tai Chi [F]

6:30pm Guides [F]

6:45pm Beavers [G]

7:00pm Communications Committee Meeting [L]

7:30pm Rainbow Rehearsal [S]

### Thursday December 13

8:45am MindStretch [C]

1:30pm Park 'n' Dance [F/G/K]

7:00pm Sharing Evenings [F]

7:30pm Choir Practice [M]

### Saturday December 15

10:00am Progressive Christianity [202]

### Sunday December 16

9:00am Worship Service [C]

10:30am Worship Service [S]

10:30am MANNA Service [F]

3:00pm SWESH [G]

### Monday December 17

#### Office Closed

1:30pm Prayer Shawl [202]

5:00pm Level Up [202]

7:00pm Scouts [F]

7:00pm Women's Spirituality [C]

**Tuesday December 18**

6:45pm Cubs [G]  
7:00pm Bell Choir [M]

**Wednesday December 19**

9:30am Lightshine Singers [M]  
1:30pm Tai Chi [F]  
6:30pm Guides [F]  
6:45pm Beavers [G]  
7:00pm Council Meeting [C]  
7:30pm Rainbow Rehearsal [S]

**Thursday December 20**

8:45am MindStretch [C]  
7:30pm Choir Practice [M]

**Saturday December 22**

6:00pm Saturday Night Supper

**Sunday December 23**

9:00am Worship Service [C]  
10:30am Worship Service [S]

**Monday December 24****Office Closed**

4:00pm Family Service/Pageant  
10:00pm Candlelight, Carols and Communion

**Tuesday December 25-Saturday December 29  
Church Closed****Sunday December 30**

10:00am Worship Service [S]

**Monday December 31****Church Closed**