

The Harcourt

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



Herald

Practicing
Religion in
Outer Space

Our Library
Showcases
*Religion and
Ecology*

A Harcourt
Family Says
“Thank you”

Christ Has Risen - Happy Easter!

April, 2019

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

87 Dean Avenue, Guelph, Ontario N1G 1L3

Office Hours:

Monday to Friday, 9am-noon; 1pm-4pm

Phone: 519-824-4177

Fax: 519-824-9448

Email: office@harcourtuc.ca

Web: www.harcourtuc.ca

Ministers: The People with
Reverend Miriam Flynn (ext. 222)
Miriam@harcourtuc.ca
Reverend Jim Ball (ext. 223)
Jim@harcourtuc.ca

Director of Music Ministry:
Alison MacNeill (ext. 225)
alison@harcourtuc.ca

Church Administrator: Anne Purkis
Worship, Communication & Technical Support: Shaina Ensing
Custodian: Darko Cikovic

The Harcourt Herald

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Your contributions are welcome!

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theherald@harcourtuc.ca

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The Ministers' Quill

by Jim Ball



In the early nineteen nineties, I joined the Caledon Trailway Committee. It was a community group created by the Town Council to advise it on the development and protection of the Trail. In 1989, the Town acquired a 35-kilometre-long ribbon of land from a train company. A nominal fee was paid, and an equivalent sum was returned to the town to defray the cost of park improvements. With one hundred culverts to maintain along its length, the monetary gift was gratefully received. A public process was held to determine the uses of the Trail, which prohibited motorized vehicles like snowmobiles and motorcycles and encouraged walking, hiking, running, horseback riding, cross country skiing, snowshoeing and cycling.

In the early nineteen nineties whispers of a national Trail project began to circulate. The trail project would seek to unify the country from coast to coast to coast. Provincial Trail organizations were talking and a small group of prominent Trail enthusiasts and businesspeople began to organize. The Alberta rep was Bill Pratt, who had been one of the prime movers behind the Calgary Winter Olympics. Dave Turner, head of Park Development in Caledon, connected early to these conversations. He was instrumental in helping us apply for, and be recognized as, the first official segment of the Trans Canada Trail. Our recognition took place in 1995.

Following this came word of the funding strategy. The project would invite donations, with recognition on plaques housed in pavilions. A blend of national strategy and local funding would determine where pavilions were built. My understanding is that a very short list of communities sought funding at this time. The question of where the first pavilion would be built would be determined by which among them could move most quickly.

Caledon was one of those communities. To the initial seed money of twenty thousand dollars, the Caledon Trailway Committee sought matching dollar support from the Caledon Council. We also wanted political support. In preparation for our presentation and request, we approached the Historical Society, the Women's Institute, the Conservation Authority, business leaders, artists, Trail users and other interested community members. We asked them to contribute their wisdom and practical suggestions. We asked because we knew that project would not proceed unless it had wide support. And we asked because we firmly believed that the smartest person in the room is the room. Their insights would only strengthen our presentation. All of these conversations, partnerships and preparations took place in the winter of 1996.

We presented a series of plans to Council. We introduced an **economic plan** for Trail Use and Trail development, not just for Caledon East, but for the entire Trail, including every village and village park it ran through. We presented a **park development plan** for Caledon East. We presented a **funding plan**, explaining how we would secure additional funding to create the park and the pavilion. We presented a **citizens use plan**. And we presented a **report on permissions** received, or in process, that would make the project viable. A little overwhelmed, Council unanimously supported our request.

In April of 1996, Trans Canada Trail executive members traveled to Ontario and Caledon to inspect the site and sign off on the project. They did so, knowing that we had only seven weeks to create a park, build a pavilion and organize a grand opening. The start date was May 1. The deadline was June 22. They gave their blessing and their money and they kept their doubts to themselves.

This is what they saw (below). An empty field. (The thin guy with the dark hair on the right is me!). It rained six of the seven weeks of the construction project. Or at least it felt that way.



We began by digging a pond in the centre of the site. The design feature would not have happened had we not found an engineer who was expert in the matter of the impact of ponds on class-A cold water streams.

To provide assurance that the pond would have no significant impact on the stream (and on the trout) the engineer was dependent on technology designed at the university of Guelph. A couple of professors developed it. One of them was David Elrick. We covered the cost of the float and the company contributed the digger and the work. We sold the soil and by day three had a fabulous pond, a clean work site and money in the bank.

We bought several truckloads of Warton stone and gave three different landscape companies the opportunity to showcase their expertise. They each had their own section of

the park to work. They outdid themselves.

Discounted and donated trees, discounted or donated materials, discounted or donated labour and funds directly offered quickly added up. For every dollar of seed and town money provided, business and community members gifted back five more. That ratio of 5 to 1 became the national standard for the Trans Canada Trail organization when negotiating partnerships with communities across the country. People were generous. And everyone involved believed they were building not simply a pavilion or a park but instead the first major segment of a national dream.



Park creation advanced rapidly. And while it did, additional trail improvements were made at the same time. One of the bridges crossing the little Credit River needed replacing. At a cost we couldn't afford. We got the idea to phone the military engineers to see if one of their units needed practice putting up a Bailey bridge. They leapt at the opportunity.

In addition to park and pavilion construction, and bridge and trail improvements, another working group planned, with the support of Town staff and of the Trans Canada Trail, an opening day festival.

Just in time the project was done. Amazingly it all came together. And the town prepared for the thousands who would gather.



The Trailway celebrations brought together dignitaries from across the country. Waters from the three oceans were poured into the pond. World War 1 biplanes and triplanes flew overhead. Speeches were made. A ribbon was cut. It was remembered that the movie documenting the driving of the last spike of the national railroad had been filmed only a few hundred feet away from where the

new pavilion stood and the new dream was birthed. And this young guy hosted the event.

More was done in the parkland in those early months. A national advertising campaign began in earnest, with Lloyd Robertson voicing the commercials. Newsletters began to tell the story. Within a year a small covered bridge was constructed by local citizens, organized by members of the United Church and my coffee shop crowd.



A walk honouring leading Canadian citizens from Caledon was created. An arboretum was also created. And in the years since several other national trail initiatives came to Caledon for concept development, testing and advertising purposes. I have been asked to host the last two major celebrations at the park - the tenth and twentieth anniversaries. Both times funeral commitments kept me from being present. Two and a half years ago, the Trans Canada Trail and its sponsors replaced the pavilion in Caledon East. It is now blue. Apparently the new generation of trail leaders felt a need to refresh the branding.



But while the national trail has moved from success to success, and has linked people and communities across the country, I remember how an idea mobilized the imaginations and energies of an entire village.

I also remember how ordinary citizens came together during seven wet weeks in the spring of 1996 to build a park that helped change a nation.



Caroline Harcourt Women's Fellowship will meet at 11:45 am on Monday, April 8th in the Friendship Room. All women are welcome.

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 for more information.



Holy Week Services 2019

Friday April 19 Good Friday
10:00am Worship in the Sanctuary
A quiet service of readings, reflections and songs.

Saturday April 20 Holy Saturday
3:00pm Vigil in the Chapel

Sunday April 21 Easter One Service Only
10:00am Worship for all ages in the Sanctuary.
Nursery care available.
A service of good news and great joy!

*We hope that you will join us in worship as we
make another year's journey through Lent to
Easter and together hold the sacred stories of
these seasons within our own.*

Harcourt Memorial United Church • 87 Dean Avenue, Guelph N1G 1L3 •
www.harcourtuc.ca • 519-824-4177 • office@harcourtuc.ca

by Lorraine Holding, Chair of Council

Council's March 20th meeting focused on Harcourt's participation in the Guelph United Ministries' (GUM) consultation process, continued connections with our local neighbourhood, and progress on our internal priorities.



We welcomed eight of the Harcourt people who have connection to the GUM Conversations for Change. Our purpose was to reflect on discussions to date, and to prepare for the March 30th session. Together, we shared and listened to our learnings, our hopes and our concerns. Our collective understanding will support our participation in, and contribution to, the continuing conversations. We are aware that input from our community of faith will be important as the process becomes more specific. We appreciated facilitation by Peter Jackson and Bill Lord during this hour of our meeting.

Council took time to debrief the results of the Annual Meeting. We considered comments heard since then and our learnings. We acknowledged the commitment of 73 people who attended and provided significant comments to the discussion, following the helpful presentations by Merrill Pierce and Sonya Wu-Winter.

Based on the close vote to approve the enhanced 2019 budget, we considered if other options to proceed with the Community Engagement Animator are possible (e.g. a shorter contract to focus on one/two specific 'projects'). We will apply for an Embracing the Spirit Innovation Grant by April 15. Ministry & Personnel Committee is finalizing the job description to recruit a MANNA Support Worker.

Council approved a Request for Action for Harcourt to participate with Dave Elloway, Guelph's Deputy Chief Emergency Service Administration & Emergency Preparedness, to develop a Harcourt Emergency Plan that will be integrated with the city's Emergency Preparedness Plan. This will involve representatives from some Harcourt committees, our local community (e.g. Old University Neighbourhood Residents Association), and individuals with specific expertise. Joan Barham hosted an initial information session on March 4.

We confirmed Anne Parsons as Harcourt's Mission & Service Advocate. Thanks, Anne, for volunteering to lead this important stewardship role.

We approved a new "Policy & Procedure: Acknowledgement of Financial Gifts to Harcourt."

We learned of potential opportunities for federal funding that might support initiatives focused on community integration of settled refugees.

Jim Ball shared some of his intentions for his sabbatical time, including a focus on implementation of change. Our closing prayer offered a blessing for faith, learning, inspiration and enjoyment as he starts his sabbatical, knowing that we will be with him in spirit.

With faith and hope, we continue our Harcourt 20/20 journey in the months ahead.



Harcourt Men's Group

by Bill Lord

The next meeting is **Wednesday, April 10th**. Rev. Dave Jagger will speak on Planned Legacy Giving:

How can we make a difference in the lives of others after we are gone? Come and learn seven different ways you can leave a testament of your faith and your belief in generosity and taking care of others. Resource handouts will be available.

Dave is Stewardship & Gifts Officer for Western Ontario Waterways Region (plus Antler River Watershed Region and Horseshoe Falls Region) of the United Church of Canada.

John Phelps will have coffee and tea ready at 7:45 a.m., the meeting will begin at 8:00 a.m. Murray Woods will be the leader.

In your date book please record the date of May 8, 2019 for our next meeting. The topic will be announced at that next meeting.

New to Harcourt?



Church office

Tel: 519-824-4177

E-mail: office@harcourtuc.ca

Web Site: www.harcourtuc.ca

Seek – Connect – Act

The Neighbourhood Lens



- **Guelph Polarized on Declaring Climate Emergency**

Some members of Guelph city council are polarized on whether the City of Guelph should join some other municipalities in declaring a climate emergency. Several Canadian cities, including Hamilton, have officially declared climate emergencies and some members of council want to see Guelph take that step to enhance and broaden the city's efforts to battle climate change.

<https://www.guelphtoday.com/local-news/debate-over-guelph-declaring-a-climate-emergency-heats-up-1334432>

- **Guelph Works Toward Earning *Smart Cities* Prize by Educating About Food Waste**

The City of Guelph is bringing together a panel of food experts to offer tips and tricks on how people can cut down on food waste in restaurants and in their own homes. The *Let's Talk About Food* event will feature local chefs and food researchers. They'll be discussing their approaches to making healthy and nutritious food and how they manage food waste. The event is part of the city's larger initiative to increase access to affordable, nutritious food and decrease food waste.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/kitchener-waterloo/guelph-lets-talk-about-food-panel-1.5061634>

- **U of G Faculty and Students Showing How Indigenous Land-based Learning Can Help Fight Climate Change**

Using food as a starting point for action, faculty and students at University of Guelph have launched a community-based research program to promote conversations and opportunities that forge and rekindle relationships focused on traditional foodways. Garden sites have been established with the assistance of the local Indigenous community at the University of Guelph Arboretum to address food access and knowledge barriers and explore innovative land-based education and practices.

<https://www.tvu.org/article/how-indigenous-land-based-learning-can-help-fight-climate-change>

Dear Friends,

As I prepare to engage in a dedicated time of learning and renewal, I want to leave you a suggestion for your own reading, reflection and personal renewal.

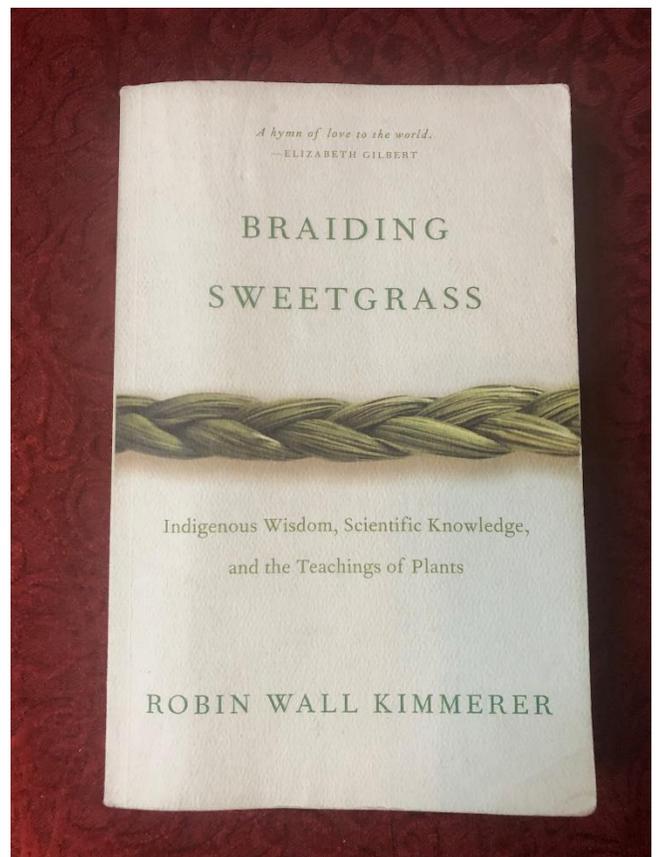
Robin Wall Kimmerer is a professor of botany and an aboriginal elder. I have found her reflections on nature and life, integrated as they are with her people's traditions and stories, both inspirational and challenging. Of the many books I have read over the years, this one is among my favourite five. Which is saying much.

There are many issues facing Harcourt as we look forward. There are also many issues facing Canadians and all citizens of the planet. A careful examination of the understandings and forces that influence local and particular matters often uncovers the ways in which they are connected to larger ones. How congregations move forward with faithfulness, intelligence, relevance and energy is not unrelated to the challenges that concern our neighbours in the wider world.

There are bridges of meeting, of understanding, and of new collaboration waiting for us all. Voices like Robin Wall Kimmerer point at some of them. Reading her work reminds me of my great grandmother and the values - practical, frugal, environmental, social, and spiritual - that informed and seasoned everything in her kitchen, family and community life. There are times when looking forward requires a thoughtful looking back. With a treasuring of the wisdom that came before us. There is also a time for an equally responsible looking around and looking forward. I hope for you such a reflecting time while I am away, a season that brings fresh clarity, wisdom, energy and joy.

Peace to you!

Jim



Thumbprint Bio



Mary Savage is joining our staff team as part-time pastoral care minister during Jim's sabbatical time. Mary grew up in Guelph and moved to Toronto to study Occupational Therapy (O.T.) at the University of Toronto. For a number of years, she practiced as an O.T. in Toronto and Mississauga. While working, she began taking courses at Emmanuel College in Toronto and became a candidate for ministry from Bloor Street United Church. Since her ordination in 2000, Mary has served three pastoral charges: Underwood-Wesley in the Bruce, Norfolk Street in Guelph, and for the past twelve years, Westminster United in Waterloo. Mary retired from Westminster U.C. this past summer and has been spending a great deal of time catching up on reading, sleeping, knitting, walking her dog Murray, and trying to perfect the making of sourdough bread.



Easter Pysanky Eggs

Committee and Group News

Seven Pails for Seven Leaks: Property Committee Report

by Dave Hume, Chair of the Property Committee

Seven pails! That's how many Darko had to deploy to catch all the leaks on the first warm day of March. The problem areas seem to occur where there are flat roof sections. These areas have gravel and tar roofing material as the top surface of the flat roof sections. We are looking into the cost of reroofing with rubber membranes but the first quote of \$13,000 made us realize we have not budgeted to do that in 2019.

Lights! Over the break week in March, most of the remaining LED lights were installed while the Pre-School children were away. So now all the lights have been converted except the upstairs washrooms, the light above the entrance near the play-yard and the main office. Check out how bright the upstairs hallway is now! We will be applying right away for the rebate on the work done in March.

The Property Committee is planning to put in a railing up the middle of the steps to the main entrance from the parking lot. Several people have indicated they would feel more secure climbing the steps if there was an additional railing. At the last Property Committee meeting, the committee members voted to prepare a list of similar projects that could be done and to ask for some financial support because this list would be for non-budgeted items.



Guelph Wellington Seniors Association Feeling Better Move Well Program



What: A gentle group fitness class

Where: Harcourt United Church, 87 Dean Ave. Guelph
(in the gymnasium)

When: Tuesdays, 10:30 a.m.

Who: Adults age 55+, any fitness level, join anytime!

A donation of \$2.00 a class is gratefully appreciated

The trained volunteer leader will adapt the class program to accommodate any fitness level,
seated or standing versions.

Classes have aerobic, strength, balance and stretching components.



OUR BEAUTIFUL HARCOURT GARDEN TAKES A BIT OF WORK



PUT YOURSELF IN THIS PICTURE!!

COME OUT FOR FUN AND FELLOWSHIP

**SATURDAY MAY 4
or (rain day) Saturday May 11**

Come around 9 AM....and you'll be home for lunch!

Honour a Loved One This Easter

by Barb Friend, Chair of Chancel

Would you like to continue our tradition of honouring loved ones or to celebrate a special event by donating towards the purchase of an Easter plant? If so, please contact Barbara Friend at barfriend52@gmail.com; cell: 519-803-5032 or home: 519-763-5032 by April 15th.



Not Sure You Know Enough About the Link Between Religion and Ecology?? Check out Our Library

by Mary-Lou Funston

Since Harcourt is planning meetings to talk about what further we can do, as a congregation, to deal with the ecological crisis we are experiencing, I am presenting a list of the books we have in our Library, that deal with the topic.

- * Life Abundant Rethinking Theology and Economy for a Planet in Peril
Sallie McFague 261.8McF
Ms McFague “argues that responsible discipleship today entails disciplined religious reflection. ...without serious reflection on their worldview, ultimate commitments and lifestyle, North American Christians cannot hope to help ensure the “good life” for all people and the planet.”
- * A New CLIMATE For Theology. God, the World, and Global Warming
Sallie McFague 261.8 McF
Ms McFague has followed the previous volume with this updated look at the subject of global warming. The book is divided into 4 parts:
 1. The Science and Its Significance for Theology
 2. Exploring God and the World within Climate Change
 3. Serving God and Living in the City within Climate Change and
 4. Despair and Hope within Climate Change
- * Eco faith: Creating & Sustaining Green Congregations
Charlene Hosenfeld 261.8HOS
“A practical, hands on, how to, user-friendly guide to transform the way people of faith care for the earth.” As a congregation we are doing many, of not most, of the

suggestions the author makes – but there is always room for improvement!

* God and the Market: Steps Towards a Moral Economy

Ted Reeve (editor) 261.8REE

This is a United Church of Canada publication from 2000. It “helps us to understand the full implication the total domination of the global marketplace has over our economic lives...”

* Living Ecological Justice: A Biblical Response to the Environmental Crisis

A Publication of Citizens for Public Justice

This small volume, intended for use by committees and small groups in congregations, is divided into 3 major parts:

1. Protecting What We Love
2. The Biblical Case for Creation Advocacy
3. Towards Abundant Life for All Creation

Each part includes exercises proposed by a variety of theologians from different faiths. Each exercise includes a short 1-2 page ‘homily’, 2-3 questions for discussion, followed by several suggested activities and then a closing prayer.

* 50 Ways to Help Save the Earth. How You and Your Church Can Make a Difference

Rebecca Barnes-Davies 261.8 DAV

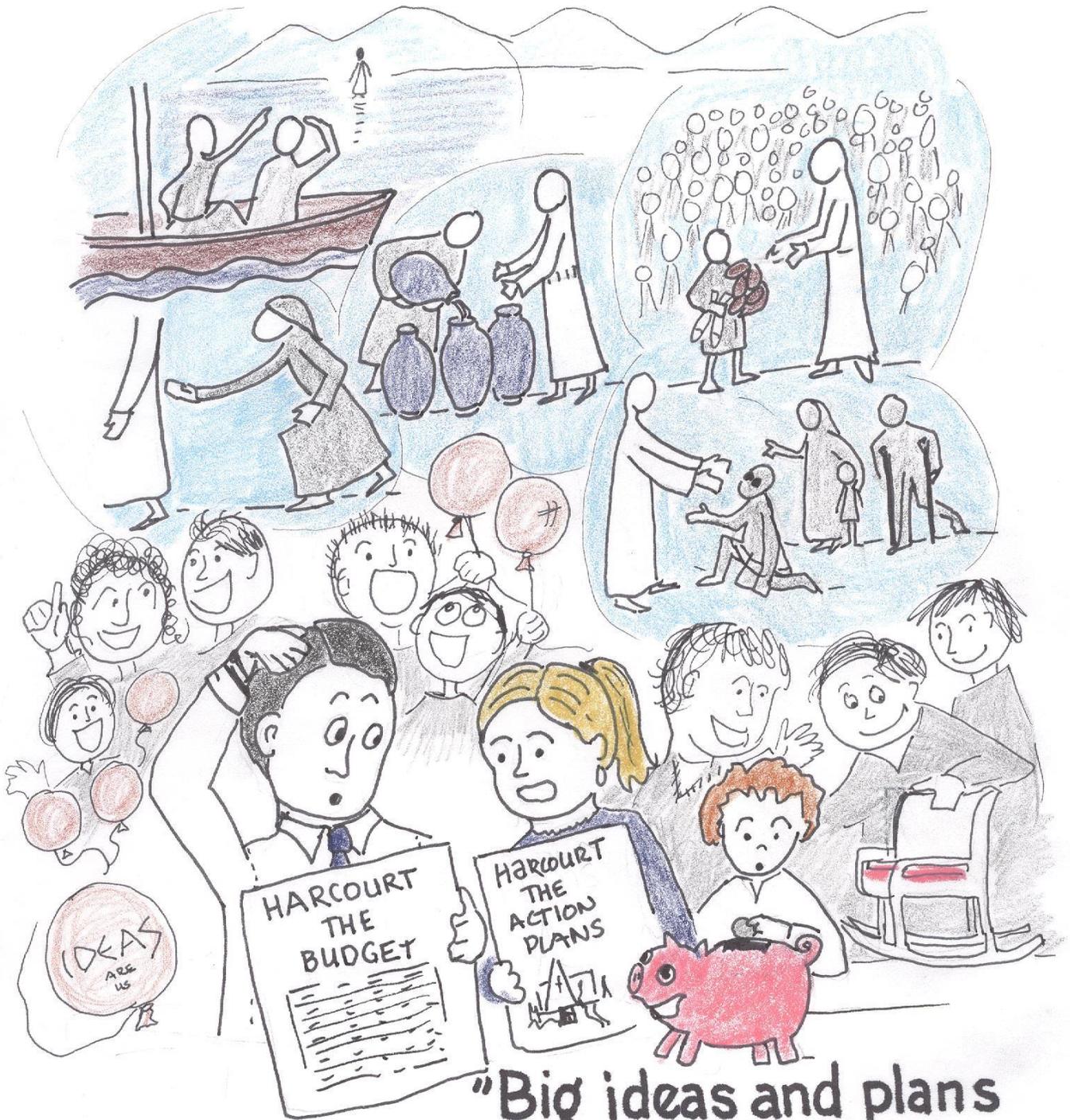
This book is full of very practical suggestions for how groups, families and individuals can do to help.

* Ecologies of Grace: Environmental Ethics and Christian Theology

Willis Jenkins 261.8 JEN

The author suggests a guide to use of the book: it...”is divided into two parts. The first part surveys the field of Christian environmental ethics; the second offers constructive theological investigations that test the field’s background of grace.” His guide goes on for several pages.

All of these books will appear on the individual book stands on the shelves – easy access! I hope you will come in, browse and borrow.



**"Big ideas and plans
need energy and money.
Where do they get the idea that
MIRACLES happen?"**

Community News

A Grateful Family

by Laura & Mike Hofer

On February 17, 2019 we had the privilege of having our daughter, Emily, baptized at the MANNA service. We know the approval for this was not easy for the bodies who make these decisions, and for some members of the wider church, but we are so grateful. MANNA is our small piece of Harcourt! If not for this MANNA experiment, we would most likely be attending one of the 3 United Churches that we pass by on our way to Harcourt.



MANNA is our worship community, but more than that, it is where our friends, our social group and our support network is. For example, upon arriving at Harcourt on the morning of the baptism, we realized that we had forgotten Emily's baptism dress. All she had was the hoodie she was wearing to be warm in the car. We live too far away to have gone home to retrieve her dress. Yet we had

not one, but two MANNA families offer to go back to their own homes nearer to the Church to get dresses that their own daughters had worn for their baptisms. What an amazing community! The dress Emily ended up wearing was a baptism dress given to a family by former Harcourt minister Monica Moore!

The baptism was a beautiful and very personalized service, with so many friends leading and participating in it. All of the children present helped wrap our daughter in a prayer shawl –an incredibly touching way for the children to welcome a new baby into Harcourt and the MANNA family.

We want to offer our sincere thanks to Rev. Jim Ball, Andre Auger, Pamela Girardi, Shannon Kingsbury and Merrill Pierce for all they did to make the baptism



personal and extra special for our family. Thank you also to all of those Harcourt members who were bold and brave and allowed us to have our daughter baptised at MANNA instead of the traditional way, and to those Harcourt members who came from the service in the sanctuary to attend. It meant so much to our family.

What I Didn't Learn in Sunday School (A Personal Testimony)

by Andre Auger

Last week I co-led an eight-day retreat at Loyola House with my friend Bernie Carroll, SJ. It was great. But the material we were presenting – quite at the edge of contemporary theology, and very much out of sync with the theology of the Eucharistic liturgy we attended each day – got me to reappraise my faith journey these seven decades.

I consider myself a “progressive” Christian... I don't particularly like the term, but it's better than “liberal,” which has lost its original meaning, and now suggests “wishy-washy.” I sure can't simply say that I am a Christian – the fundamentalists have hijacked the term. What I mean by “progressive” is that I remain deeply committed to the vision Jesus had of an alternative way of being human, and I consider my essential task as healing, reconciling, forgiving, and loving. Of course, I owe a lot to my early childhood upbringing in a Christian home, a deep attachment to my local church, and the Christian education I picked up at home, at church, and at school. But...

They never taught me that our Gospels were not written by eyewitnesses to the events of Jesus' life, but some 30 to 50 years after the death of Jesus, by people in vastly differing communities, in different parts of the Empire... They never taught me that no one knows who the authors are... They never taught me that when I read “Jesus said” I need to read “This is what the author of Gospel X had his Jesus say.” That, of course changes everything. For whom was the author writing? What points was he trying to make? Why does he differ on this or that point from the authors of the other Gospels? We're dealing with theological fiction in the best sense of the word. It may not all be factual, but it is in a very deep sense true. But the texts mean something quite different from what I had been told.



They also never taught me to pay attention to the life, times and socio-political realities of first century Palestine. They never told me that the authors – and their audiences – knew full well what dangerous times they lived in, and the radical nature of what they were writing. To write what the Gospel writers wrote, at the time, would have been considered treasonous: to even use the word “Gospel” (“evangelion” in Greek) was dangerous, because that was the

term used for any “good news” about the emperor. Calling Jesus “Son of God” would have been like a writer in Nazi Germany declaring that Jesus, not Hitler, was “der Führer.” Same for “Saviour” - Caesar was Saviour! Nobody told me that Jesus spent his short life showing people how to live faithfully and lovingly in the midst of crushing political and economic oppression. Certainly, nobody showed me that Jesus’ path is in strict continuity with the long Jewish belief in limiting wealth through “Jubilee” or “Sabbath” practices.

Neither did anyone teach me that science was creating a new vision of the world, founded on sound, replicable experimentation and theorizing, that was totally at odds with the world view of Jesus’ time – let alone of the Reformers’ time! (I still look upward to “heaven” when I know there’s nothing there but infinite space!) That everything evolves. That evolution is the only game in town! So, of course, no one told me that there could never have been a “Garden of Eden” out of which a first man and woman were kicked because they had disobeyed God. Beautiful story – and true in a very profound way! - but not factual. Nor did anyone take the trouble to unpack the implications of that: that we don’t have a God who is so angry with the human race because we disobeyed “him” that he needed some “sacrifice” of repentance, but loves us so much that he “sent” his “son” to die in our stead. This interpretation might have made sense in the days of merciless kings who demanded absolute respect, but certainly not today. Nobody at Sunday School suggested that Jesus was executed because he was a threat to the Roman Empire!

When I was older and studying Church history, certainly nobody spent much time describing to me honestly what happened in the first three hundred tumultuous years of the new religion. No one spent any time describing the all-too-human people who fought with each other over interpretation of the faith; who wrote counterfeit pieces to defend a point of view; who modified the copied text to suit their ideological purposes; who burned manuscripts of opponents; who had theological opponents killed or imprisoned; and who finally did what the emperor told them because Constantine wanted a simple religion to unify his vast land. Nor did anyone tell me that there were a vast number of “Christianities,” or that Church leaders who finally won the ideological battle had created the terms “heresy” and “orthodoxy” to convince people that there really was only “one right way” to believe. No one told me that what started as a faithful way of living in the midst of empire had become a set of doctrinal propositions. None of this makes me angry. On the contrary, I am relieved: I had always been taught that what happened in the first few centuries of Christianity was Spirit-led, and doctrines that I can no longer adhere to were unchangeable “dogma” or “creed.” Their all-too-human origin allows me to give them the respect they deserve, as an earlier era’s attempt to understand deep mystery, and then to move on to try to make a bit of sense in terms of today’s understandings.

And of course, no one knew at the time I was taught that someday theologians and biblical scholars would start writing for laypeople instead of only for each other, and that we

would have access to more knowledge and insight into the mysteries of our faith than any previous generation of laity. A new “Gutenberg revolution,” just like the information revolution that started the Reformation...

And so I read. And I discuss. And I take this stuff very seriously.

And my faith has grown beyond anything I could have imagined. I am no longer hampered by myths that made no sense; but I can savour the truths these myths were trying to convey. I am no longer compelled to imagine a static universe created “in seven days” by an external deity; but I can marvel at this God-infused complex, evolving, magnificent creation. I no longer need to believe that “Jesus died for our sins”; but I can affirm that the way Jesus shows us saves us from our deepest flaw – our self-centredness. And I am increasingly painfully aware that following Jesus puts me at odds with the dominant consumerist/industrialist/militarist culture which does not treat dissidence very well. At least I now have a better idea of why I bother to be a “Christian.”

Does any of this stuff resonate with you? Are you struggling, trying to “live the questions” rather than carry around obsolete doctrinal baggage? Are you wondering what you still truly believe? Or are you shocked by my testimony? Harcourt is very fortunate: there are many people in this congregation who would welcome an opportunity to engage in a conversation about these issues, including all our Covenanted Spiritual Companions!

Peter’s Fragments: Bits and Pieces of Wisdom

by *Peter Jackson*

“’Tis the year's midnight, and it is the day's ...
The sun is spent ...
... life is shrunk,
Dead and interr'd.

Love ruin'd me, and I am re-begot
Of absence, darkness, death: things which are not.

All others, from all things, draw all that's good,
Life, soul, form, spirit, whence they being have;
I, by Love's limbec¹, am the grave
Of all that's nothing.”

Thus wrote John Donne in his poem “A Nocturnall Upon St Lucie’s Day”. In the Julian calendar, St Lucie’s day is the shortest day of the year, the winter solstice. For John, it is also the saddest, as he laments the death of someone he loved; scholars think it was probably his

wife Anne. In writing these lines, John gives authentic voice to the utter hopelessness that many of us feel in the midst of despairing grief.

Ignatian spirituality recognizes that each of us will experience times of desolation and times of consolation. Ignatius describes consolation as “some interior movement in the soul through which the soul comes to be inflamed with love of its Creator and Lord ... every increase of hope, faith and charity, and all interior joy which calls and attracts to heavenly things and to the salvation of one's soul, quieting it and giving it peace.”

Desolation is the direct opposite: “darkness of soul, disturbance in it, movement to things low and earthly, the unquiet of different agitations and temptations, moving to want of confidence, without hope, without love, when one finds oneself all lazy, tepid, sad, and as if separated from Creator and Lord.” John Donne’s *Nocturnall* describes such an experience.

Ignatius gives advice on how to proceed through experiences of desolation, which may be summed up as: persevere, be patient, and pray. You may feel little energy and little love, he says, but God will always leave you with ‘grace enough’ - enough, we may trust, to sustain us while we hope for the grace of consolation. Try to make some positive action, says Ignatius; even a small positive act can help set your feet on the path out of desolation.

Perhaps for John Donne the very act of voicing his hopelessness was a small step in the right direction. Even within this sad situation he found what a recent movie calls ‘collateral beauty’. In this movie a man who is retreating from life after a tragedy “questions the universe by writing to Love, Time and Death. Receiving unexpected answers, he begins to see how these things interlock and how even loss can reveal moments of meaning and beauty.”

These sources, John Donne, Ignatius and the movie, encourage us to have confidence in God’s constant presence, even though our awareness of that Presence is variable.

¹ Limbec is an obsolete term for a retort used to distill liquids to their essence.

Sources: John Donne: *Poetical Works*, Oxford University Press reprinted 1966; David Fleming S.J., *Draw Me Into Your Friendship*, Saint Louis 1996; *Collateral Beauty*, Warner Bros 2016

The Trust Exercise

by Miriam Flynn

Do you recall as a child being invited into a trust exercise with peers where you formed a circle and each one took a turn falling backward into the arms of her companions? I must admit I hated that kind of thing – I just couldn’t trust that, despite good intentions, others would not drop me. Whether it’s in our DNA or the result of early experience, some of us have



Sketch by Jenny Wilson

a hard time letting go of control and feeling confident that a strength other than our own will uphold us.

Recently, my sister-in-law decided that we “hard-working women” needed a break -- and so we arranged a date when she would pick me up and we would have a “girls’ night out.” The problem was, that she didn’t tell me where we were going or what we were going to do. I was told not to wear jeans and to bring my passport. *My passport???!!!*

As the day for our assignation approached, I became just a bit anxious. My daughter laughed and said, “Mom, you really don’t like surprises, do you?” I said, “Of course I like surprises...as long as I know *where I’m going* and *what I’m doing!*” Well it turned out that we went to see the Buffalo Symphony Orchestra playing with a jazz ensemble called the *Hot Sardines*. It was a wonderful evening. One I never would have dreamed up on my own and yet something that was right up my alley.

At Harcourt we speak often of the need for radical change. Less often, we acknowledge that radical change can only come where there is radical trust – in God and in neighbour. Letting go, is part of making room for what comes next. So much easier said than done!

At our intergenerational service, MANNA, a group of us recently considered what we found most surprising about the story of Jesus calling his first disciples. One person expressed my own thoughts – it is remarkable how men who had known only a fishing life, dropped their nets and followed Jesus. Their sense of call must have been compelling to elicit this stunning response. Had they heard Jesus and been pulled into the vortex of his vision of *kin-dom*? Or, was it simply that the overfished waters and imperial control of commerce in the region meant they saw little that would prove life-giving if they stayed where they were? Whatever their thinking, these fisher folk leaned heavily into the risk of transformative experience by committing themselves to *a relationship* rather than an outcome. To follow Jesus, they had to let go of their need to know precisely where they would be going and what they would be doing. This radical change in their lives required radical trust.

In January, representatives of the four United Church congregations in Guelph, met for the first of a series of Conversations for Change, led by professional facilitators, Rebecca Sutherns and Rev. Paul Miller. The purpose of the project is to explore opportunities for greater collaboration between the GUM (Guelph United Church) ministries and to engage in

collective discernment of where the Spirit is calling us to be the United Church in our city, for today and the future. With this, we hope to develop a strategic plan for consolidations that will support a sustainable United Church presence in Guelph.

At our first meeting, participants were honest in sharing those reservations and concerns about change that we had all brought with us. It was clear from our discussion that people were at different stages in their consideration of the challenges and possibilities for church revitalization and change. It was clear that some participants were more abstract visionaries, while others were concrete problem solvers and others still, process people, for whom asking the right questions was as important as finding the right answer. So there was diversity within our unity -- and yet, a summary of our afternoon's discussion revealed great positive energy, as people were encouraged to imagine together the collective future of our church.

The GUM Conversations for Change require us to show up, be present to one another and be prepared to commit to *relationship*, rather than a particular process or outcome. Those of us from Harcourt, offer our gifts and allow ourselves to receive the light of the unique experiences, charisms and faith of others. Together, we seek to discern the collaborative path God calls us to, knowing we may end up in a place we never would have dreamed up on our own -- that is precisely the place God intends us to be. Like the trust exercise of children, we must be prepared to recognize and fall into the strengths of the circle, as we offer our own presence to uphold the group. Radical change always requires radical trust, for tests of trust are ultimately tests of faith -- in neighbour and in God. The second facilitated meeting in the GUM conversation for Change Project is taking place at Trinity United Church on Saturday March 30th at 9:00 A.M.

The Community 
Where Digging Makes a Difference
by Jill Gill

With the wildly changing weather patterns this winter you might well be longing for the return of spring with warmer temperatures and thoughts of spending more time outside -- perhaps in the garden. I happen to know of an excellent project to capture those daydreams and turn them into productive (or should I say produce!?!) activity. It's the Harcourt Communal Garden.

The Communal Garden is entirely maintained by volunteers who plant, water, weed and harvest from June till late October. This will be our ninth season of harvesting edibles from

several on-ground and raised beds on the western perimeter of the parking lot and a bed adjacent to the Memorial Garden. So far we have harvested almost 4,800 lbs. of fresh, organically-grown vegetables, herbs and fruit for donation to the Chalmers Community Services Centre (CCSC) food pantry in downtown Guelph. They are distributed to CCSC guests (some of the most food-insecure folks in our community) and supplement the regular food offerings that they receive. CCSC is a Harcourt supported charity.

Families from Manna help with planting of seed and seedlings when the ground has warmed sufficiently. We are planning a “Blessing of the Seeds and Seedlings” on Sunday, May 26 with a rain date of June 2nd. Lisa Mactaggart has already started many vegetable seedlings which will need to be transplanted in April and May. Any folks, including high school students who need volunteer hours, who would like to be involved in this project, please let Lisa know at lmactaggart@sympatico.ca

Last season we had a dozen dedicated volunteers who worked in teams of four for 2-3 hours on the weeks when they were scheduled. Each team gardened an average of six times between June and the end of October. We would like to increase our number of volunteers, so if helping in the Harcourt Communal Garden is an activity that interest you, **please join us for a short planning meeting (approx. 1 hour) in the Chapel, following the 10:30 a.m. service on April 7.** You do not need to be an expert in vegetable growing, just be willing to learn and get your hands dirty! **Our first work ‘party’ will happen on Saturday, May 4 from 9-noon.** Rain date May 11th, same time and place. Please save the date. Even if you can’t commit to the entire season of garden maintenance, you are welcome to join in on our infrequent all member work ‘parties’.

If you would like to volunteer to help with the garden, but are unable to attend the planning meeting, or if you have any questions, please contact Jill Gill at 519.767.1244 or email me at peter.gill@sympatico.ca

Building the Harcourt Legacy

by Marilyn Crow

As initiated in 2018, the Harcourt trustees invite all to a 3rd *Lunch and Learn* session, immediately following the 10:30 services on Sunday, May 5th, 2019. The topic of this year’s gathering is “Wills and the Role of the Executor.” Our guest presenter is **Robin-Lee Norris**, a former Guelph lawyer currently managing her own succession planning business. *Lunch* will be served in the gym at 11:45, with guests moving to the Friendship Room at 12:45 for a 1-hour *Learn* session that will include ample time for questions.

Including Harcourt in your planned giving is one of the ways you can support our vision for future community outreach. Please indicate your intention to attend by contacting the office (office@harcourtuc.ca) or letting one of the trustees know.

Minute for Mission



A Health Crisis

In the Kalpakkam area of Tamil Nadu province, India, the local fishing community is dealing with a very different threat than the one it faced with the 2005 tsunami. A nuclear power plant became a death trap during the tsunami, with several workers drowning within its walls. No one knows how many died for sure, as the government never released a number.

Today, some villages believe the nuclear plant is still connected with death and destruction. They say that people go fishing and suddenly die afterwards from a lack of blood circulation. Rates of cancer, birth defects, infertility, and autoimmune and neurological diseases have increased, affecting young and old alike.

Mission & Service partner the Human Rights Advocacy and Research Foundation works in the region to help affected families, often paying medical costs. For those families where the primary breadwinner has prematurely died or been incapacitated, the foundation helps with finding employment, school costs, and other day-to-day expenses.

The Department of Atomic Energy says that the rates of radiation are too low to cause a health effect. Local doctor, Dr. Pugazhendhi, who runs a local clinic with the foundation's assistance, has seen an increase in illness and believes radiation plays a part in this increase.

The Human Rights Advocacy and Research Foundation trains the local community about its rights and how to organize to collectively and defend their rights to clean air, water, and land.

If Mission & Service giving is already a regular part of your life, thank you so much! If you have not given, please join me in making Mission & Service giving a regular part of your life of faith. Loving our neighbour is at the heart of our Mission & Service.

[Companion video available. View or download at www.youtube.com/unitedchurchofcanada.]

ANNUAL HARCOURT GARAGE SALE

Saturday, APRIL 27, 2019

8:30am – 12pm

At Harcourt United Church 87 Dean Ave.

Proceeds support our programs

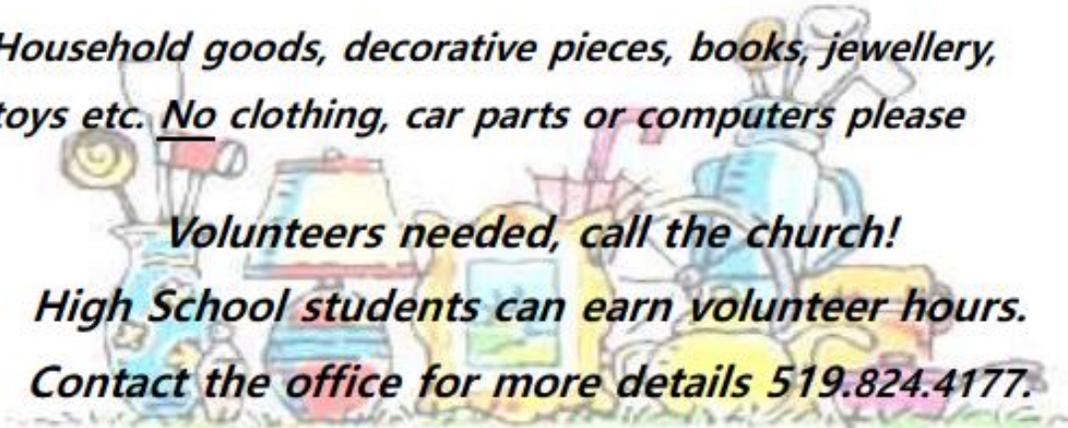
**Bring Donations to the Gym on
Friday, April 26**

*Household goods, decorative pieces, books, jewellery,
toys etc. No clothing, car parts or computers please*

Volunteers needed, call the church!

High School students can earn volunteer hours.

Contact the office for more details 519.824.4177.





A VIGIL FOR HOLY WEEK

**A personal retreat
at your own pace,
in your own space.**

**On Easter Saturday, April 20th, 2019
you are invited to join us
in the Chapel at Harcourt
from 3 to 5 pm.**

**"A Vigil For Holy Week"
is available at [Http://www.harcourtuc.ca/](http://www.harcourtuc.ca/)
and printed copies will be available
following worship on April 7 and 14, 2019**

Chalmers Food Program: Reflecting and Projecting

by Peter Gill (Published in Chalmers Newsletter. Reprinted with Permission)

Peter Gill recently sat down with Sophia Podrozny to find out more about the origins of Chalmers' Good Food program. Sophia, a registered dietitian who now works with the family health team, was the architect of the program.

Peter: How did you first get involved with Chalmers?

Sophia: It was the fall of 2006 and Lori Ryan-Gray, the manager back then, contacted me to ask if I could help design a 'basket' of nutritious food for their guests. The food pantry was operating in the basement of Chalmers United Church and was pretty much run by members of that church.

P. What had they been doing before?

S. Well, there was hardly any money to spend on food so Chalmers relied on donations mostly. If we served 75 guests in a week and we had donations of 50 cans of soup, we would go out and buy 25 cans. There was no food budget back then but when John Buttars became chair, we established a budget. I don't recall much being spent on fresh produce purchased although we would occasionally get donations of a bushel of apples or tomatoes from someone's garden. There was not a real strategy around what was offered. I got a lot of feedback from volunteers that they did not feel good about the foods they were handing out. We did get products from the Ontario Association of Food Banks and back then the quality was much better. It declined a lot over the next few years.

P. And so we decided to sever our relationship with the Guelph Food Bank a few years back. How did you decide what food items we should be offering?

S. In 2007 the new Canada Food Guide had been published so I tried to adhere to those guidelines as much as possible - fresh fruit and vegetables, protein, dairy, whole grains, some carbohydrates. The goal was to provide food for 2-3 days which guests could access every two weeks. We couldn't afford to buy all these things at one time so the basket had to be introduced over a period of years. Chalmers also started to ask donors for specific foods, peanut butter or pasta for example. It was a gradual process. I must say that Chalmers was extremely forward-thinking in adopting this nutritious food program. I did some research when I first started and could hardly find any food banks that had an intentional policy of offering good food - it's much more common now of course.

P. What do you think Chalmers should be looking at around its food program for the future?

S. Well, there's a new Canada Food Guide which might be an opportunity to look at what you offer. Essentially the new guideline is that 50% of your plate be fruits and vegetables, 25% protein and the other 25% whole grains - brown rice, oatmeal, whole wheat pasta for example. I think you should go back to offering oatmeal at your cafe mornings as well as the treats.

I know you're doing a lot more than just offering food these days but I would like to see a more integrated approach to food along the lines of the Stop Community Food Centre in Toronto where communal cooking takes place and cooking classes as well as the growing of produce. I know there's a plan to have a rooftop garden at 42 Carden and the community kitchen is under construction. If you can make use of these facilities, that would be great. I've always been proud of Chalmers' approach to helping marginalized people - not doing any means testing or requiring proof of need, and treating people with respect, referring to them as guests. I think the food program that was designed ten years ago was very much part of that philosophy.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Passing:



Estill, Ann Aurelia (née Wilcox) passed away at her home in Guelph, Ontario on February 23rd, 2019. She was 87 years old. Ann was born in Poughkeepsie, New York in 1931. The middle sister of 3, she is survived by her younger sister Margaret Kellner. Ann majored in English and Religion at Elmira College (class of '53). She was married to Don for 62 years until he passed away in 2016. Proud mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, after her children grew up Ann became a United Church Minister and preached in Ontario and in

Iowa. Associated with the Guelph Guild of Storytellers, Ann loved to tell stories, read books and spend time at the Arboretum. She was an avid writer. Ann and Don completed their memoirs in 2009, but Ann kept at it, sending articles to family and friends until the end. In fact, she was writing a story for the Harcourt Herald that was to be submitted for this issue. She

also mentored other budding authors in her memoir writing group.

Ann and Don were generous philanthropists. In lieu of flowers, the family asks that donations be made in her memory to The Brain Tumour Foundation (www.braintumour.ca) or The Nature Conservancy (www.natureconservancy.ca). A tree will be planted in memory of Ann in the Wall-Custance Memorial Forest, University of Guelph Arboretum. Dedication service is Sunday, September 15, 2019 at 2:30 pm.



Murray, Kenneth George. After a long full life, lived with purpose and generosity, Ken Murray died peacefully in Guelph at Hospice Wellington in his 95th year on Saturday, March 2, 2019. He is survived by his wife, Marilyn and his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Ken was predeceased by his first wife, Helen Volker (1995). He was born in 1924 in Chatham, Ontario and grew up in small town Ontario - Buxton, Newbury, Zephyr and Keene. After serving two years in the Canadian Navy during the Second World War, he enrolled in the Ontario Agricultural College in 1946, married and graduated in 1950 with a BSc (Agriculture). His first job was as a salesman for J.M. Schneider Inc. in Kitchener, and he retired in 1987 as President. Following

retirement, Ken played a leadership role for more than 20 years at the Homewood Health Centre, serving as President and Chair, creating the Homewood Foundation and sitting on the Homewood Research Institute Board. Raising beef cattle was a favorite pastime for Ken, both on his home farm in North Dumfries Township and later in Bruce County. Ken lived his life following the example of his minister father. The Universities of Guelph, Waterloo and Laurier have all benefitted from Ken's generous spirit, particularly his support for student scholarships and awards and he has received numerous honors and awards in recognition of those contributions. He received honorary degrees from the University of Waterloo (1995) and the University of Guelph (1996). One of his proudest moments was in 2001 when he became a member of the Order of Canada. A celebration of Ken's life will take place at Harcourt Memorial United Church, 87 Dean Ave., Guelph on Saturday, March 30, 2019 at 1 p.m. followed by a reception at University of Guelph Arboretum, College Ave. E., Guelph. Burial will take place at a later date at the Ayr Cemetery, Ayr Ontario. In lieu of flowers and in memory of Ken, please consider a donation to the Ken Murray Fund at the Kitchener Waterloo Community Foundation, Harcourt Memorial United Church, Guelph or Hospice Wellington.

Other Announcements

- The annual **Easter Egg Hunt for Dogs** for National Service Dogs (NSD) is fast approaching and Sophie (the companion of Arlene and Bryan Fuhr) is looking forward to filling her Easter Basket. The event will be held on Good Friday, April 19 and she would welcome your donation to help support NSD programs that train service dogs for autistic children, veterans with PTSD and other disabled people. (For more information on all the programs offered by the NSD go to their website - www.nsd.on.ca.)
- Guelph United Performers – **Community Children’s Choir** starts Sunday, April 28, at 11:30 a.m at Trinity United Church, 400 Stevenson St N. All boys and girls in our community, ages 6 to 12, are invited to sing with us! Our Choir will be singing at Trinity’s Family Picnic on Sunday morning, June 16 at 10:00 a.m. Please tell all your friends and neighbours about us. Contact Barbara 519 824 6172.
- Guelph United Performers – **Community Theatre Camps** are accepting registrations now. July 8 to 12, and July 22 to 26 at Trinity United Church, 400 Stevenson St N. Morning Camp, ages 6 to 10; 9:00 a.m. to noon. Afternoon Camp, ages 11 to 17; 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Contact Barbara 519 824 6172. www.guelphunitedperformers.com

Behind The Scenes

Communion on the Moon: The Religious Experience in Space

by Rebecca J. Rowland

(This article was originally published on the website TheAtlantic.com and is republished here with The Atlantic's permission).

Our secular endeavor of space exploration is flush with religious observance. Why is that?

Before the launch this weekend of three human beings into the ether of space around the Earth, before they boarded their Soyuz spacecraft, and before the rockets were fired, precautions were taken. Not the humdrum checklists and redundancies of space exploration -- assessing the weather, the equipment, the math -- but a preparation with a more mystical dimension: the blessing, by a Russian Orthodox priest, of the spacecraft, as it sat on the launchpad on the Kazakh steppe.

The scene, as shown in NASA photographs, presents a tableau that seems incongruent, but may just be fitting.

The discordance is obvious: Here we are, on the brink of a new expedition to space, a frontier of human exploration and research that is the capstone of our scientific achievement. "The idea of traveling to other celestial bodies reflects to the highest degree the independence and agility of the human mind. It lends ultimate dignity to man's technical and scientific endeavors," the rocket scientist Krafft Arnold Ehricke once said. "Above all, it touches on the philosophy of his very existence." His *secular* existence.

And yet here is a priest, outfitted in the finery of a centuries-old church, shaking holy water over the engines, invoking God's protection for a journey to near-earth orbit. That these two spheres of human creation co-exist is remarkable. That they interact, space agencies courting the sanction of Russian Orthodox Christianity, is strange.

For reasons both straightforward and opaque, the secular, scientific work of space exploration cannot shake religion, and over the last few decades of human space travel, astronauts of Christian, Jewish, and Muslim faith have taken their religious beliefs into orbit, praying out of duty, in awe, and for their safe return.

That latter reason -- risk -- is perhaps the most basic explanation for the religious appeals of space explorers. On the ground, people led by popes, presidents, and their own instincts pray for astronauts' safe deliverance. Is there any supplication more succinct than what astronaut Scott Carpenter radioed to John Glenn, as the rockets powered him off the ground? "Godspeed, John Glenn." The *Book of Common Prayer* includes astronauts in an optional line in its Prayer for Travelers: "For those who travel on land, on water, or in the air [or through outer space], let us pray to the Lord."

And of course, astronauts pray for their own safety. It's hard to imagine atheists in foxholes; it is at least as hard to imagine them in space shuttles. In his memoir, astronaut Mike Mullane recalled the night before launch, lying in bed wracked by fears. He checked his nightstand for a Bible and found that there wasn't one. But he writes, "I didn't need a Bible to talk to God. I prayed for my family. I prayed for myself. I prayed I wouldn't blow up and then I prayed harder that I wouldn't screw up."

But prayers for safety are basic. Astronauts' religious practice in space has played out in more beautiful and complicated ways. There is no more moving example of this than when the astronauts of Apollo 8 -- the first humans to orbit the moon and see the Earth rise over the moon's horizon -- read the first 10 verses of Genesis.

Here's the scene: It's Christmas Eve, 1968. The spaceship with three men on board had hurtled toward the moon for three days, and they have now finally entered the moon's orbit, a move requiring a maneuver so dicey that just a tiny mistake could have sent the men off into an unwieldy elliptical orbit or crashing to the moon's surface. But all went smoothly, and they are orbiting the moon. On their fourth pass (of 10), astronaut William Anders snaps the famous Earthrise shot that will appear in *Life* magazine. On their ninth orbit, they begin a broadcast down to Earth. Astronaut Frank Borman introduces the men of the mission, and, then, this:

"And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters and God said, 'Let there be light,' Borman read.

And it was so.

Through this broadcast and this photograph, I think we can begin to taste the kind spiritual experience astronauts must have as they travel to distances, and perspectives, so few have known. As John Glenn said, "To look out at this kind of creation out here and not believe in God is to me impossible. ... It just strengthens my faith. I wish there were words to describe what it's like."

This ultimate scientific endeavor does not answer the questions religion seeks to answer; it brings humans into a close encounter with their own smallness, the Earth's beauty, and the vastness of the cosmos. Faced with these truths, is it any wonder that some astronauts turn to religion? Some surely find comfort in the words of secular philosopher-scientists like Carl Sagan and Neil deGrasse Tyson. But others will find that the ancient religions of Earth have some greater power, some deeper resonance, when they have traveled safely so far from their homes. Astronaut James Irwin put it this way: "As we got farther and farther away it diminished in size. Finally it shrank to the size of a marble, the most beautiful marble you can imagine. That beautiful, warm, living object looked so fragile, so delicate, that if you touched it with a finger it would crumble and fall apart. Seeing this has to change a man, has to make a man appreciate the creation of God and the love of God."

This is in part the sentiment Buzz Aldrin relays in his 2009 memoir as he recounts how he took communion in the minutes between when he and Neil Armstrong became the first humans on the moon's surface, and when Armstrong set his foot down on the dust. Aldrin says he had planned the ceremony as "an expression of gratitude and hope." The ceremony was kept quiet (un-aired) because NASA was proceeding cautiously following a lawsuit over the Apollo 8

Genesis reading, but it proceeded with a tiny vial of wine and a wafer Aldrin had transported to the moon in anticipation of the moment (personal items were strictly restricted by weight, so everything had to be small). He writes:

During those first hours on the moon, before the planned eating and rest periods, I reached into my personal preference kit and pulled out the communion elements along with a three-by-five card on which I had written the words of Jesus: "I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me, and I in him, will bear much fruit; for you can do nothing without me." I poured a thimblefull of wine from a sealed plastic container into a small chalice, and waited for the wine to settle down as it swirled in the one-sixth Earth gravity of the moon. My comments to the world were inclusive: "I would like to request a few moments of silence ... and to invite each person listening in, wherever and whomever they may be, to pause for a moment and contemplate the events of the past few hours, and to give thanks in his or her own way." I silently read the Bible passages as I partook of the wafer and the wine, and offered a private prayer for the task at hand and the opportunity I had been given.

Neil watched respectfully, but made no comment to me at the time.

He continued, reflecting:

Perhaps, if I had it to do over again, I would not choose to celebrate communion. Although it was a deeply meaningful experience for me, it was a Christian sacrament, and we had come to the moon in the name of all mankind -- be they Christians, Jews, Muslims, animists, agnostics, or atheists. But at the time I could think of no better way to acknowledge the enormity of the Apollo 11 experience than by giving thanks to God. It was my hope that people would keep the whole event in their minds and see, beyond minor details and technical achievements, a deeper meaning -- a challenge, and the human need to explore whatever is above us, below us, or out there.

I think in there, Aldrin gets at the heart of religious experience in space: This achievement is so momentous, so other-worldly (nearly literally), that the rituals and words of one's own religion become, as he says, "deeply meaningful." Other astronauts of other faiths -- Jewish and Muslim -- have also brought their religious practices into orbit, resulting in some thorny questions at the intersection of theology and practicality. For example, how often should a Jew who experiences 15 sunrises and 15 sunsets every 24-hour period observe the sabbath? Every seventh "day" -- which means every 11 hours or so -- for just 90-ish minutes? When Israeli astronaut Ilan Ramon was on the Space Station, rabbis decided he could just follow Cape Canaveral time. Unfortunately, Ramon was killed during the space shuttle Columbia's re-entry, so we don't have his post-mission reflections on what that experience was like. At least in anticipation of his journey, he said that though he was not particularly religious, observing the

sabbath in space was important because as a representative of Jewish people everywhere and the son of a Holocaust survivor, bringing those traditions into space, into the 21st century, represented a spirit of continuity. "I'm kind of the proof for my parents and their generation that whatever we've been fighting for in the last century is becoming true," he told the BBC. Similarly, Muslim astronaut Sheikh Muszaphar Shukor had to figure out how, exactly, one faces Mecca during prayers when you are moving at about 17,000 miles per hour and its location relative to you is changing minute to minute, sometimes as much as 180 degrees in the course of one prayer. It was decided that Shukor, who was on the International Space Station during Ramadan, could do no more than the best of his abilities, in trying to face Mecca, kneel, and perform ritual washing. A video from the Space Station showed how this wound up working, and, in a way, just how hard and odd it is to bring religion into space exploration, in a way not unlike that of the Russian Orthodox priest preparing a spaceship for launch.

For many people, space represents its own religion, a spiritual experience on its own, secular terms, with no help from the divine or ancient rituals. But for those who believe and travel into space, the experience can endow their faith with greater significance. There is awe in science because, simply, there is awe in reality. We use science to discover that reality, and some use religion to understand it, to feel it deeply.

There is perhaps nothing more human than the curiosity that compels exploration. But paired with that curiosity is a search for meaning -- we don't want to know just what is out there, we want to turn it into something with a story, something with sense. We turn to the gods for that meaning, and we turn to them for our safety as we go. Same as it's always been, same as it ever was. As President Kennedy concluded his speech on our mission to the moon at Rice University in 1962, "Space is there and we're going to climb it, and the moon and planets are there and new hopes for knowledge and peace are there. And, therefore, as we set sail we ask God's blessing on the most hazardous and dangerous and greatest adventure on which man has ever embarked."

Photo: Wiki Commons



Harcourt Calendar – April 2019

Updated March 20, 2019 – www.harcourtuc.ca for most up-to-date information

Monday April 1

Office Closed

8:30am Kiwanis Festival [S]
1:30pm Prayer Shawl [202]
7:00pm Scouts [F]
7:00pm Communications Committee Meeting [L]

Tuesday April 2

8:30am Kiwanis Festival [S]
10:00am GWSA Exercise Program [G]
6:45pm Cubs [G]
7:00pm Bell Choir [M]

Wednesday April 3

8:30am Kiwanis Festival [S]
1:30pm Tai Chi [F]
5:30pm Meditation Group [C]
6:30pm Guides [F]
6:45pm Beavers [G]
7:30pm Rainbow Rehearsal [S]

Thursday April 4

8:45am MindStretch [C]
1:00pm Park 'n Dance [G,K,F]
7:30pm Choir Practice [M]

Friday April 5

8:00am Level Up PD Camp [F]
8:00am Les Petite Pommes PD Camp [202]

Saturday April 6

10:00am Progressive Christianity [202]
3:00pm Scouts [K,G]

Sunday April 7

9:00am Worship Service [C]
10:30am Worship Service [S]
10:30am MANNA Service [F]
12:00pm Communal Garden Meeting [C]
3:00pm Vera Causa Opera [S]
3:00pm SWESH [G]

Monday April 8

Office Closed

11:45am Caroline Harcourt [F]
7:00pm Scouts [G]

Tuesday April 9

10:00am GWSA Exercise Program [G]
6:45pm Cubs [G]
7:00pm Property Committee Meeting [L]
7:00pm Worship Committee Meeting [C]
7:00pm Bell Choir [M]

Wednesday April 10

7:45am Men's Group [F]
1:30pm Tai Chi [F]
5:30pm Meditation Group [C]
6:30pm Guides [F]
6:45pm Beavers [G]
7:00pm Finance Committee Meeting [202]
7:00pm M&P Meeting [L]
7:30pm Rainbow Rehearsal [S]

Thursday April 11

8:45am MindStretch [C]
1:00pm Park 'n Dance [G,K,F]
2:00pm Parkinson Support [G]
7:30pm Choir Practice [M]

Friday April 12

8:00pm KW Symphony [S]

Saturday April 13

9:00am Brian Henry Writing Workshop [F]
10:00am Progressive Christianity [202]
12:30pm Level Up [G]
5:00pm Lisa Browning Book Launch [F]

Sunday April 14

9:00am Worship Service [C]
10:30am Worship Service [S]
10:30am MANNA Service [F]
3:00pm SWESH [G]

Monday April 15**Office Closed**

1:30pm Prayer Shawl [202]

7:00pm Scouts [F]

7:00pm Women's Spirituality [C]

Tuesday April 16

11:00am Stroke Recovery Lunch [F/K]

6:30pm Preschool General Meeting [F]

6:45pm Cubs [G]

7:00pm Bell Choir [M]

Wednesday April 17

1:30pm Tai Chi [F]

5:30pm Meditation Group [C]

6:30pm Guides [G]

6:45pm Beavers [Off-site]

7:00pm Council Meeting [C]

7:30pm Rainbow Rehearsal [S]

Thursday April 18

8:45am MindStretch [C]

1:00pm Park 'n Dance [G,K,F]

5:00pm MANNA Dinner [F,K]

7:30pm Choir Practice [M]

Friday April 19**Office Closed**

10:00am Good Friday Service [S]

Saturday April 20

10:00am Progressive Christianity [202]

3:00pm Holy Saturday Vigil [C]

Sunday April 21**Easter Sunday**

10:00am Worship Service [S]

3:00pm SWESH [G]

Monday April 22**Church Closed****Tuesday April 23****Office Closed**

10:00am GWSA Exercise Program [G]

6:45pm Cubs [G]

7:00pm Bell Choir [M]

Wednesday April 24

1:30pm Tai Chi [F]

5:30pm Meditation Group [C]

6:30pm Guides [F]

6:45pm Beavers [G]

7:30pm Rainbow Rehearsal [S]

Thursday April 25

8:45am MindStretch [C]

1:00pm Park 'n Dance [G,K,F]

7:00pm Sharing Evening [F]

7:30pm Choir Practice [M]

Friday April 26

7:00pm Junior Youth Group [G]

Saturday April 27

8:30am Annual Harcourt Garage Sale [G]

10:00am Progressive Christianity [202]

Sunday April 28

8:30am MANNA Bread Baking [K]

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 April 29**Office Closed**

1:30pm Prayer Shawl [202]

7:00pm Scouts [F]

Tuesday April 30

7:00am CMHA Youth Conference [S,C,202,F,K,G]

6:45pm Cubs [G]

7:00pm Bell Choir [M]