

THE HARCOURT HERALD

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

April, 2020



HE IS RISEN!

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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Monday to Friday, 9am to 12pm and 1pm to 3:30pm

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Your contributions are welcome!

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The Ministers' Quill

by Miriam Flynn

What a difference a week can make – in the life of a church and our daily lives! When I headed out on study leave following the March 8th worship services, I did not expect *that Sunday* would be the last time we would gather for worship at Harcourt for a while. I never dreamed that the choir's beautiful rendition of the Jan Garrett song *The Spaces In Between Us*, would take on prophetic meaning as social distancing became our way of life for the present time.



True, a group of us had already met to do some preliminary planning in the event of an outbreak affecting our community, but the speed at which events unfolded and the global sweep of protocols concerning travel, restrictions on public gathering and the need for social isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic has been beyond anyone's reckoning.

In the wake of changes that touch all of us, our church community is finding innovative ways to carry on our common life of faith, as we care for one another and our neighbours. As usual, I find myself in grateful awe of the gifts and commitment of the people of Harcourt who are adapting quickly to alternative forms of meeting, decision making, carrying out spiritual practice and keeping connected with one another.

For some, this unexpected time of enforced withdrawal from the busyness of our culture's perpetual cycle of production and consumption, has proven to be a welcome time of Sabbath. It has become a chance to cease traveling, buying and selling and to "center down" as poet Lynn Ungar (2020) has termed it.

It is said that Shakespeare wrote *King Lear* while quarantined during the plague. Many creative people are similarly inspired to seize the opportunity that time and solitude make possible. My crafty cousin posted this quip on Facebook: *Attn. Knitters & Crocheters: Do not fear self-isolation. This is what we have been training for!* And so, the bakers have been busy making egg tarts, the artists among us have returned to their paints and the poets have given voice to the angst and invitation of the present moment.

Wisconsin native, Kitty O'Meara (2020), shared her hopeful perspective about the good that might come out of our being "*together, apart*" in a poem that begins with the line: "*And the people stayed home.*" O'Meara imagines the way our purposeful listening, reading,

dancing and praying might result in a changed way of living that is ultimately healing for us and our earth.

There is gift in the wisdom of the long view and the inspiration and encouragement that people sharing this experience are able to provide for one another.

And there is blessing to be found in the small kindnesses and simple acts of practical care that the Harcourt community provides for one another and our neighbours in times like these. Each day, I feel grateful for the many ways I witness people extending care -- by dropping off groceries, checking in with one another and offering support to those who are anxious or overwhelmed.

For some, loss of income or the inability to access social and medical services is causing hardship and risk that will increase over time. And we simply cannot know the challenges we may face as individuals, families and community in the weeks to come. We do know, that as people of faith, we can feel free to lament, together, and before God, in the compassionate space our shared vulnerability opens up. We can carry one another, even as Christ carries us. We can love one another, even as Christ loves us.

Whether we are able to gather for worship in the usual way, or not, we will continue to be present to one another as companions on this shared journey.

We will continue to connect, to offer our care for one another and to hold each other close in spirit and prayer in times when we must be physically apart. Throughout, we remember that we are not alone. God is with us.

God's love surrounds us, filling all *the spaces in between*.

References:

Ungar, L. (2020) Pandemic. <http://www.lynnungar.com/poems/pandemic/>

O'Meara, K. (2020). And the people stayed home. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oi1INrtc0pQ>

On Optimism and Hope

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vK3oQ6l51a8&feature=youtu.be>

by Jim Ball

Not long ago, while attending one of Harcourt's study gatherings, I said that I consider hope and optimism to be two very different things. My remark raised a few eyebrows. People seemed a little curious. Given how the pattern of our common life has dramatically changed in recent days, and will continue to change, I thought it might be appropriate to say a little bit more about hope and optimism. And to ponder the ways in which they serve the present moment.

I consider optimism to be based on calculation. And extrapolation. It is a conclusion we reach built on evidence we see. By following the trajectory of graph trends, we observe now, a certain portrait of the future comes into view. Depending on the evaluative criteria we use, we judge the portrait favourable or not. If favourable, we tend to speak of the future *optimistically*.

Hope is different. Hope is grounded in trust. And imagination. It sees the future through the lens of possibilities not yet factored into our equations. Hope understands that the future is not shaped simply by the factors we know and measure. The future is often influenced by factors we do not or cannot see. Hope leaves the door to the future ajar. It rejects easy determinism. Hope is humble. And never to be confused with magical thinking, which is merely wish projection. Hope is open. Un-knowing. And expectant. It is not easily bullied or silenced by the present weight of facts. It is resilient precisely because it understands that all of the relevant evidence may not yet be in. Including the impact of any future decisions we might make. Hope makes space for the power of imagination, and for the impact of human choices birthed out of it. Which is no small thing in our present moment of history.

We have every reason to be optimistic about the impact of the Coronavirus on the general population. The present math says that over the next two years perhaps half of us will contract the illness. Of those infected, most will experience only minor symptoms. A full 85% of us will recover without much difficulty or lasting effect.

But there is sobering news among the good. The math says that the remaining 15% will experience more severe symptoms. A significant number of these will require hospitalization. Among those 60 years of age and up, the risks are higher. Sadly, some will not survive.

This, at the moment, is the cold, hard math. The numbers encourage us to be optimistic for the population at large. And optimistic too for the at-risk group as a whole. But uncertainty lingers for each of us in terms of how our own body will respond should we get infected. There is no knowing in advance. Overall, the numbers are in our favour, which reassures our minds, but maybe not our hearts. I have yet to encounter an equation that offers a satisfactory hug.

Hope, by contrast, speaks to the heart. It dwells in the landscape of imagination and creativity, which, by definition, is a place optimism and pessimism cannot go. Hope knows that there is more going on than what the math can predict. Not in terms of the spread of the illness but in relation to how we choose to live with it. Our questions are many right now. Our lives are not reducible to the calculus of individual survival, even if worry about our personal fate presently preoccupies us. Our thoughts and hearts also turn in these days toward those we love. To those we know. And even to those we don't know, but care for from a distance. Imagination and creativity have only begun to add their shaping voice to the conversation, the journey and the outcome. And the power of such factors ought never to be underestimated.

The scholar and poet Ruben Alves (1972) once said that hope *“is the (sense) that imagination is more real and reality less real than it looks. It is the hunch that the overwhelming brutality of facts that oppress ... is not the last word. Hope is the suspicion that Reality is more complex than realism wants us to believe, that the frontiers of the possible are not determined by the limits of the actual, and that ... life is preparing the creative events which will open the way to freedom and resurrection.”*

Which is a fancy way of saying that while math may have gotten rocket-ships into orbit, it was the power of a dream that led us into space and kept us at the work of getting there. Calculation is one of the ways we build a bridge to the future. But hope is one of the ways the future builds a bridge to us, and calls us into it. Our ancestors expressed this conviction in religious language. They affirmed the future's openness by saying that *“the future belongs to God.”* More contemporary authors speak similarly when they say that *“grace bats last.”* All of them remind us that there is space and reason to breath and to trust. And to look and move forward with heads and hearts up.

Perhaps now is an appropriate time to remember the difference between optimism and hope. A time to remember too why the present moment calls for both. Calculation matters in these days. We ignore evidence at our peril. But the future is determined by more than graph trends. A heart alive with love, empowered by faith willing to work through the night, and opened by hope to possibilities not yet seen is a heart that can move mountains. *“Hope is the melody of the future,”* Alves (1972) concludes. *“And faith is to dance it.”*

In a context of social distancing, this remains our time to hear and to dance. To find ways to reach out to one another with compassion and encouragement. To stay in daily contact with at least two or three people more vulnerable than ourselves. To support our communities of belonging and serving, including Harcourt Church and the Chalmers ministry, and to hold in love and prayer, even at a distance, all family members, friends and neighbours.

Now is a time for clear, thoughtful and optimistic minds. Now a moment for hopeful, creative and loving hearts. Now an occasion for hands to reach out, figuratively yet practically, across all divides and distancing. It is also a time for troubled hearts to be a little less afraid. Not because the problem is gone. But because we are only now beginning to lean into it with clarity, imagination and resolve. We can lift up our hearts, not because the storm is past, but because the future is open. It belongs to God. This remains a world in which grace bats last. And each of us has a role in making and keeping it so.

So, optimism, hope and peace to you. Comfort and peace.

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Harcourt Memorial United Church

Reference:

Alves, R.A. (1972). *Tomorrow's child: Imagination, creativity, and the rebirth of culture*. New York; Harper & Row.

Mark 16:5-7: "As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. 'Don't be alarmed,' he said. 'You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter, "He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'"

Sunday Services

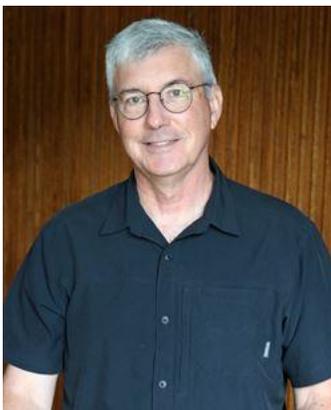
All gatherings and services ordinarily held at the Harcourt building are suspended

*The building is closed **but our community is open....***

Together, we seek, connect & act our shared life of faith.

Please note that due to the COVID- 19 outbreak, Sunday worship services are currently suspended and the Harcourt church building will remain closed until further notice.

Our office administrator continues to work from her home to respond to calls and e-mails during weekday office hours. Rev Jim Ball and Rev. Miriam Flynn can be contacted by e-mail or by leaving a message with the church office. Staff and lay volunteers continue to explore innovative ways to connect and extend care to our members and our neighbours. Please check this [link](#) regularly for worship and prayer resources and updates about connecting with our community of faith. Our webpage is www.harcourtuc.ca



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A Message from One of Our Ministers

A message from Rev. Miriam Flynn, filmed on March 19, 2020.



Please hold the Ctrl button on your computer and click your left mouse button on the photos above or below to hear the messages.

An Invitation to Daily Prayer

An invitation from Rev. Jim Ball, recorded on March 19, 2020.



Please also consider visiting our webpage for Lenten services, parts of which have been recorded and placed online for your reflection this season. Please hold the Ctrl button on your computer and left click the URL below.

<https://www.harcourtuc.ca/service-recordings/>



**The UCC Moderator's
Online Sunday Worship
for
March 29th**

Council News

by Lorraine Holding, Council Chair

So much has changed since our March 1st Annual Congregational Meeting!

Harcourt's Council recognizes that our Community of Faith, like all other parts of society, is under great stress with the arrival of COVID-19. We are thinking about all who will miss weekly worship, small group gatherings, and connections through committees/teams that carry out our many ministries. We are proactively planning ways to offer connection through email, phone calls and other social media contacts. Checking in with each other can 'make someone's day'.

While the church building is closed, our staff team is working as they are able remotely. They can be reached by email or phone (519-824-4177). Messages are checked often. We are grateful for their commitment and contributions while we learn to do routines differently and try new things.

For the first time, Council met using Zoom video conferencing on March 18. We were amazed at how well it worked with eleven of us in our circle. Other Harcourt groups might like to try this free service. It is just one of several communication tools available. If you would like assistance to discuss various options, please contact Shaina Ensing through the church office. Watch for other information and ways to connect in the days ahead. Our Communications Team, the Tech Team and our staff are working diligently.

What did Council discuss at our meeting?

- We welcomed and appointed Mary Harding as Umbrella Councillor for Christian Life. That cluster includes Worship Committee, Spiritual Life Committee, MANNA Leadership Team, and other Christian Formation teams (Youth Groups; Library; Adult Faith Formation).
- We received M&P's update that Wendy Guilmette has been hired as Church Administrator on a permanent basis. We look forward to her roles on our staff team.
- We discussed implications of COVID-19 planning for our staff team, management of our facility/property, financial management, pastoral care and worship alternatives. Our Congregational Meeting to focus on the 2020 budget is postponed until further notice.
- We briefly discussed a draft of Shared Principles for the four governing bodies (Councils) to guide the continuing work of Guelph United Ministries (GUM).

- We are disappointed that Rev. Dr. Paul Miller's visit to Harcourt on March 15 was postponed. He generously taped his sermon to share with you, as well as a presentation focused on GUM's work. You can view these on our website. This initiative will begin to answer the question raised at our Annual Meeting about what's ahead in the GUM planning process.
- Council plans to meet weekly by videoconference, or more frequently if necessary. We will continue to support our congregation, our staff team, our financial and property management through the coming weeks. We will support new ways of being church during this pandemic. We are grateful for the time and talents offered by many people.

Blessings as you take care of yourself, those close to you, and our Harcourt community.

With faith and hope.

Lorraine Holding, Council Chair

Additional information following Council's March 25th video conference

As public health directives and government decisions continue to evolve daily, the impacts on our life as a community of faith continue. On March 25, United Church of Canada (UCC) General Secretary Nora Sanders confirmed that **church buildings were not named as essential, and therefore Ontario church buildings need to be closed**. Buildings can still be entered by a designated person to check heating, water, and security, but no work can be done from the church. She thanked and encouraged all employees and ministry personnel who continue to pastorally care for people through social media, telephone, and other creative ways to connect with members and worship together.

What are the impacts for Harcourt?

- Council approved this motion "that Harcourt Memorial United Church extends closure of our building until further notice due to the COVID-19 crisis, guided by public health advisories over the coming months."
- Our staff team has worked creatively and speedily to learn and test different ways to communicate, supported by our Tech Team. Miriam and Jim started to produce taped messages at the church. Now this week, different methods must be explored and tested to work off-site. We thank all who are contributing to these tasks. We ask others to allow some breathing space while we readjust plans made last week.
- Council appreciates that other committees/teams and small groups are connecting within their circles. Experimentation continues in this changed world.

These impacts are significant. New ways of being church are appearing ... and sometimes change daily. We are grateful for the support and contributions of all in our Harcourt community. Remember, God is with us. **We are not alone. Thanks be to God.**

ABC NEWS

(Anything But Corona!)

- **Crows love vending machines**

A strange experiment in wildlife behavior turned into a jaw-dropping lesson. Joshua Klein talks about how building a vending machine for crows (who are actually very smart) has helped to teach people about the empowerment of embracing biological diversity.

<https://www.goodnewsnetwork.org/engineer-builds-vending-machine-for-crows/>



- **Woman writes love letters to people who need them the most – would you help?**

“I published a simple question on my blog: ‘Do you need someone to write you a love letter today?’ and my inbox filled up with heartbreaking stories,” Hannah Brencher told Good News Network. “That one question changed my life forever as I spent the next year writing hundreds of love letters to strangers in all parts of the world.”

<https://www.goodnewsnetwork.org/anonymous-love-letters-lift-the-spirits-of-anyone-signed-up-on-website/>. If you want to help this organization to write letters, visit <http://www.moreloveletters.com/get-involved>

- **Thinking about raising chickens in your Guelph backyard? What could possibly go wrong??!**

There is a growing trend among city dwellers to raise chickens in their backyards, but there are many things people should know before they start flocking to the nurseries and stocking their coops. <https://www.guelphtoday.com/grounded/getting-the-scoop-on-keeping-a-coop-2108711>



What to do while you're waiting...

**Bored with social isolation?
A dozen activities to get the
grey cells moving!**

1. Here are **some space and astronomy activities** you can do from the safety of your home right now . If you're looking for ways to keep occupied, keep your kids in learning-mode while school is canceled, and expand your horizons -- all at the same time -- luckily there are lots of space and astronomy-related activities you can do at home and online. For example, go to the [Heavens Above website](#) to find out when the International Space Station is flying over your backyard in Guelph. Or, why not help scientists around the world by becoming a Citizen Scientist and doing real scientific activities. A great place to find [astronomy related Citizen Science activities is at the Zooniverse](#). For more suggestions visit <https://www.sciencealert.com/try-these-astronomy-activities-to-keep-you-busy-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak>
2. Musical or just like to **create combinations of interesting sounds**? Have fun being creative with your friends – maybe tape your sound sequence for a laugh. Check out Patatap at <https://patatap.com/>
3. Play **Bible Jeopardy** online. <https://www.christianity.com/trivia/jeopardy/#>

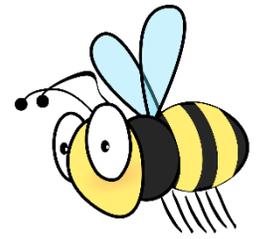
4. **Wikipedia version of "Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon"** will have you obsessed. The game generates two random Wikipedia articles and you have to find the fastest path from one to the other through hyperlinks.
<https://www.sixdegreesofwikipedia.com/>
5. Play an incredibly addictive game where you **guess locations in God's world from pictures**. Geoguesser shows you a photo and you guess where the photo was taken on a map. <https://www.geoguessr.com/free>
6. Play a word game called Freerice and **answer word definition questions correctly to make a financial payment to the World Food Programme (WFP)** to support its work saving and changing lives around the world.
<https://freerice.com/>
7. Wander through the gallery to **find paintings that represent scripture**.
<https://bible.7thunders.biz/hidden-object/game-gallery.php>
8. **Learn a new language** for free at www.Duolingo.com
9. Find things that people are giving away for free at
<https://www.freecycle.org/>
10. **Ten amazing bets you will always win!**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4VG2bOaHMog>
11. **Send an extraordinary letter** — Compose a letter online and the World's Smallest Postal Service will transcribe it in the tiniest of script, seal it with a miniscule wax seal, and send it with a magnifying glass so your recipient can read it. <https://www.leafcutterdesigns.com/worlds-smallest-post-service/>
12. Create a paper airplane that will **break a Guinness world record**
<https://www.goodnewsnetwork.org/how-to-make-record-setting-paper-airplane/>

COMMITTEES AND GROUPS

Busy Bees...Lots to Do!! Report from the Property Committee

by Dave Hume, Chair Property Committee

Suddenly, things slowed down. Sunday Worship stopped. Rentals stopped. Pre-School stopped. Income really slowed down. So now, on March 20, David Kucherepa, the custodian, is in the church on a daily basis. Mark Sears and I and David set up a list of things that David could work on while the church is closed. Those were things like repairing the baseboards in the hallways, fixing chairs, and reorganizing the shelves and cupboards in his storerooms. Frank (new Grandpa) Webster and Gary Parsons helped fix leaking taps before the church was closed and Peter Robinson and Walter Johnson repaired some of the choir chairs. Larry Smith helped David replace burned out light bulbs and remove a year's worth of flies from the light globes. It seems like there is always stuff to do! Special thanks to Wendy Guilmette and Sarah Lowe for handling all the changes that had to be made regarding rentals.



We have a spring cleanup of the outside grounds and windows scheduled for Saturday, May 2. If the COVID-19 crisis has hopefully subsided, the Property Committee would appreciate all the help we can get.

The Magical World of Books Can Help!

by Mary-Lou Funston, Library Committee

*By the time you receive this edition of the Herald Lent will nearly be over. Although the Church is closed, the following are some titles from the library that might interest you. Also, don't forget to check out the online **Harcourt Library Catalogue** on the Church Resource page for other book titles and descriptions. There are still opportunities to spend some time each day in reflection on what this means for you. With that in mind the following are some possibilities for guiding your reflections.*

* THERE'S NO ATM IN THE WILDERNESS

United Church Publishing House 242UNI

From the Preface: This book “.....invites you into a spiritual journey that explores your relationship with money and its impact on your faith life. The daily meditations are personal reflections by people in The UCC who have wrestled with their own relationship with money in light of their faith.”

* WHAT'S IN A WORD

David Winter 242 WIN

The author invites you, on each of the Sundays of Lent, to focus on just one word from a saying of Jesus. This is done by means of a short discussion of the chosen word, followed by a time for reflection, a prayer and a thought for discussion.

* WILDERNESS VOICES Observer Writers Reflect on Lent

242 SIN

A number of members of the UCC, some of whom will known to some of you, have contributed reflections on Lent, inviting thoughtful consideration of what it means to be Christian.

These are only 3 of several Lenten guides in the library.

The following two books that I have chosen to highlight for this edition are autobiographies.

* BONE / DYING INTO LIFE

Marion Woodman BIO WOO

From the Foreword: “This book is about living, not dying. It’s about dying into life.” The author, through her journaling, tells the story of her fight with cancer. And “about the soul work required to heal both.” (body and soul) The book ends with an Afterword by her husband, Ross, in which he describes his struggle with his wife’s illness.

* HERE I STAND

John Shelby Spong BIO SPO

The subtitle says it all: “My Struggle for a Christianity of Integrity, Love & Equality”

I do hope that you will enjoy reading during this challenging time.

ANNOUNCING THE
HARCOURT CHURCH **LIBRARY**
BOOK SERVICE

Here's how it works:

1. Check out the Harcourt Library Catalogue of book holdings online at <https://bit.ly/2JhiHfz> (or we'll mail you a copy).
2. Choose the book(s) etc. that interest you.
3. Send an e-mail to Harcourtbook@yahoo.com to request a book etc. or phone 519-837-8453.
4. A member of Harcourt will contact you and work with you to purchase a local or digital copy of the material that you want.



The United Church Statement on the CoVID-19 Virus

Discussion about COVID-19 is growing as confirmed cases of COVID-19 (coronavirus) continue to spread. As a church, we have prepared the [Emergency Plan](#) to help communities of faith plan ahead for contingencies that may or may not arise, realizing that planning ahead is a way to reduce anxiety.

We urge communities of faith to respond to COVID-19 with compassion, prevention, and prayer.

Compassion

Overwhelming statistics outlining the number of confirmed cases and deaths from COVID-19 make it easy to disassociate the numbers from the people and communities involved.

As a church, we seek a compassionate response that acknowledges the personhood attached to each statistic. We know that the people affected include not only those infected by the COVID-19 virus but also their families, friends, co-workers, and community members. We mourn with people whose loved ones have died, who have lost their livelihood through the growing economic impact, who have lost community through self-isolation and limited travel, and, who have lost a sense of security through fear of contamination or racial discrimination.

We also offer our prayers of thanksgiving for the professionals who are providing leadership in the treatment and containment of the virus, and our prayers of concern for those who put at risk their personal health to serve and support others, especially those who are most vulnerable.



Prevention

We hope the most vulnerable people in our society will be able to rely on us—communities of faith—to do all that we can to prevent the spread of both the virus and of the fears surrounding it. As faith leaders, we can familiarize ourselves with the guidelines outlined in the [Emergency Plan](#) to ensure that people are able to seek comfort in our places of worship. We can ensure that our gathering places promote good preventive practices, and when necessary, we can provide alternative programming—like online worship or Bible study, or bagged lunches for meal programs—for those who are most at risk in large group gatherings or are isolated due to vulnerability.

By mirroring the compassionate presence of Christ and providing clear and specific information, faith leaders can help to mitigate the spreading fear around COVID-19. We encourage communities of faith to

- seek and share stories from those most affected by the virus, praying with our kin around the world
- repudiate and dispel all comments about COVID-19 that are prejudiced or racist, or that attach COVID-19 to a race or ethnicity
- practise and model good personal hygiene by washing our hands often, coughing or sneezing into our sleeves, and avoiding touching our face or the faces of those who are most vulnerable
- educate community members on how they can prevent the spread of viruses

Prayer

Our faithful response of compassion and prevention needs to be surrounded and guided by our continual prayer for the well-being of all people. May we continue to collaborate and learn from health care professionals as we seek ways to honor and respect all people at all times.

For more information, click on [Faith Communities and COVID-19](#).



“Talent is God’s gift to you. What you do with it is your gift to God.”

- Leo Buscaglia

by Lynn Hancock, Umbrella Councillor for Stewardship

When I accepted the role of Umbrella Councillor for Stewardship, I was excited by the opportunity to discover more about the folks who feel connected to Harcourt. I was curious to learn more about people’s passions, hobbies, interests. I was curious to learn how people spent their time. Time spent that energized them, rejuvenated them and gave them purpose. I was looking forward to getting to know people better. Having attended some very powerful services; e.g. the celebration of life for Darko, I was aware of how multi-faceted we all are. How talented we are and how much people appreciate us when we offer the best versions of ourselves. I could not have imagined that days after I accepted the role, I would be given an opportunity to witness people at their best during a time of uncertainty and crisis on a global scale. Wednesday evening, March 18th, I participated in a conference call using Zoom. Another first for me. Thanks to those who shared their talents and gifts. So many people are responsible for the success of this, I’m not even going to attempt to include names. At the end of the meeting, I said I was “thrilled”. I am so proud of the men and women who responded to a need, took initiative and made it happen.

We are now in uncharted waters. We know not what today will bring, never mind tomorrow. Never mind five years from now. As Loretta Laroche (nd) said: *“Yesterday is history. Tomorrow is a mystery. Today is a gift and that’s why we call it the Present”*. I am already hearing stories of the kindness of neighbours, friends and families who are supporting their parents and grandparents to stay at home. I’m also hearing stories of those who, advised to stay at home, are reaching out and making phone calls to stay connected. They are calling loved ones in Guelph and around the world. They are sharing their gifts of compassion. I am looking forward to finding out how folks are spending their time at home. Whether you are knitting prayer shawls or baby clothes for newborns, writing, dancing, reading, praying, laughing, singing, calling loved ones.....whatever you are engaged in that sustains you at this time, I would love to hear your stories. Particularly how you are able to offer your time and talents in the support of yourself and others. I would LOVE to have GOOD NEWS stories to share. Please call me, Lynn Hancock, at 519 763-7094 or email me at

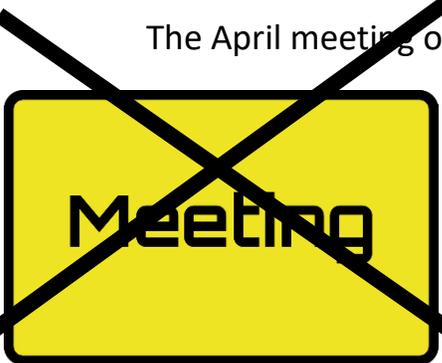
lynn.hancock@sympatico.ca. Those who may have drifted away from Harcourt, may be reading the Herald on-line and interested to see how we, as a community of faith, are responding both compassionately and financially to this most recent challenge. Let's behave in a way that best reflects who we are and offer people a choice. May the Blessings Be!

References: Leo Buscaglia Quotes. (n.d.). BrainyQuote.com. Retrieved March 25, 2020, from BrainyQuote.com Web site: https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/leo_buscaglia_150305

Laroche, L. (nd). Life Is Short--Wear Your Party Pants: 10 Simple Truths That Lead to An Amazing Life. <https://www.keynotespeakers.com/topicdetail.php?speakerid=3853>

Caroline Harcourt Fellowship Cancels Meeting

by Jean Hume

The April meeting of the Caroline Harcourt Women's Fellowship Circle has been cancelled. Marilyn Whiteley will be our guest speaker in May unless that meeting has to be cancelled too. Stay tuned. The callers will keep the members updated. If May is cancelled then Marilyn will present her message in September. Keep in touch with other members during these anxious times and please call Jean Hume if you need something or just want to have a visit. If you have news that should reach all the members, call Jean and she will have the callers alert the members on their list. Good Health to All of you.

Keeping Harcourt Afloat: A Message from the Chair of Finance

by Kent Hoag, Chair of Finance

As we all deal with our new realities, I am so thankful for those around us. The passion, compassion and dedication of Harcourt staff, Council and so many of you have me in awe as we continue to find ways to connect with one another. We continue to adapt the best that we can.

These interesting times have created new challenges, and not surprisingly we continue to find innovative ways to overcome. With our building closed we have lost revenue streams of rentals and of course Sunday offerings. Currently,



through PAR, we have 121 members who contribute a combined total of \$16,000 each month to the operating fund. This compares to the roughly \$12,000 per month that we receive from Sunday offerings. We are not panicking, with our current PAR givings and cash in the bank we can sustain ourselves for a few months. However, we will shortly feel the impact of the significantly lower revenue.

I write this article to suggest ways in which you can help.

PAR. Automatic Payment through your bank. This is the most effective way that we keep a consistent revenue stream. Setting up PAR is easy! Just print and fill out the form located at https://www.united-church.ca/sites/default/files/resources/form_par-authorization.pdf. You can contribute to “Local church” (meaning our Operating Fund), “Mission and Service”, or “Other” (which can be Property Pillar, Outreach Pillar, Music and Arts Pillar or Spiritual Life & Education pillar).

Send (with a VOID Cheque) to: Harcourt Memorial United Church, 87 Dean Avenue, Guelph, Ontario, N1G 1L3 (or you can drop it in the mail slot at Harcourt’s front door).

Credit Card - CanadaHelps.org. This website helps charities and non-profits fundraise. You can donate to Harcourt and get an instant tax receipt. Go to <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/harcourt-memorial-united-church/> and select the Donate Now button. Fill in the form provided. Easy!

Cheque - Mail. Good old Canada Post is always another method. Even with the office closed, we continue to pick up and process our mail. Insert a cheque (or many post-dated cheques!) into your regular Harcourt Offering Envelope. You can mail it to Harcourt or drop it in the mail slot at Harcourt’s front door.

Our church may be physically closed, but, more than ever, we continue to do the work of the church. Your contributions help make it so.

If you have any questions, I’d be happy to discuss at 519-265-5956 or hoeg@rogers.com.

Blessings.

Healthy Practices – Healthy Outcomes

by Peter Jackson and Andre Auger
Spiritual Life Committee

Harcourt has been talking about “radical change” for quite a while now... Little did we think it would happen quite this way! We are all struggling to figure out how we go on living in a world that has changed so dramatically so quickly, as a result of the alarmingly fast spread of Covid 19. Of course, we have immediate living problems to deal with – how do I keep my job? How do I keep my children safe? How do I make sure my family and I have what we need to continue living under these new and extreme conditions?

Two observations, though: there are signs of a remarkable change in our politicians. And what an opportunity to develop some deeper spiritual practices to see us through!

Perhaps the biggest sign of hope we see is the widespread acceptance of an interventionist role for government in addressing this crisis. Most everyone seems to acknowledge that the market economy is not able to solve this problem. Instead we are seeing broad support for the role of government in reshaping the institutional structures within which we all function. And we are seeing a generous compassion and shared sense of fairness directing that reshaping.

We are also seeing remarkable levels of cooperation between parties and levels of government. There seems to be little or no partisan posturing for petty advantage or intergovernmental squabbling over jurisdiction and priorities. We can hope that this spirit of cooperation for the public good will inform discussions that will be needed when honest differences of opinion emerge.

This spirit of voluntary cooperation with physical distancing guidelines can be seen in a multitude of individual acts. For example, children and youth are limiting their contact with friends, parents are preparing to homeschool children during school closures, seniors are self-isolating or venturing out very rarely and only when unavoidable. Each of these small steps is what we can do to play our small part in the larger attempt to flatten the curve of infection.

We also see people changing work habits to working from home where they can. Meanwhile, others continue to go to work in essential occupations, which have expanded to include not only medical and utilities workers but unsung heroes such as cleaners, bus drivers and supermarket cashiers. And many companies are doing their bit, redirecting manufacturing to make masks and sanitizer, changing business hours and retail delivery methods.

And Harcourt too is making big changes very rapidly. All this has happened in the eight days, as we write, since Premier Doug Ford extended March break by two weeks. Wow!

We do not believe for one moment that God sent Covid-19 in order to bring about these consequences. But we believe firmly that divine Love is apparent in many of the ways in which we are responding to this crisis. And it may yet provide the impetus for a similar determination to tackle the other great challenge of our time: the climate crisis.

As to the second point: we know there is a spiritual dimension to everything, and that, especially in difficult times, spiritual practices are important.

Both of us are dealing with this new situation just as anyone else, and we are struggling with the same issues. We thought one of the small contributions we could make would be to reflect on all this from the perspective of spiritual practices. Andre has been adding pages to his website www.spiritualpractice.ca on practices that may be helpful during this time of pandemic.

Many people are floundering with a lack of structure in their lives. When we have so much “nothing” in our day that we don’t know what to do with ourselves to get through the day, then negative thoughts run wild. We are all used to rhythm and routine in our weeks.

A colleague of mine, Kerry Wilson, also a spiritual director, focuses on self-care. One set of strategies she suggests is to create some healthy structure in your day and week. These include:

- ✓ healthy body routines (wake up times, eating, exercise & stretching, time to walk outside in open spaces and connect with nature/get fresh air),
- ✓ healthy spiritual routines (daily prayer time, specific prayers to deal with fear),
- ✓ practices to keep your spirits up (daily time to connect with others and do self-care, choosing uplifting hobbies, food, music or videos),
- ✓ taking on an at-home project to help keep your hands and mind occupied,
- ✓ reaching out to others (offering help, intercessory prayer, daily connecting via media),
- ✓ limiting the amount of news you consume as an intentional practice.
- ✓ if you think of this as retreat time, you might be encouraged to create a bit of structure to help you through the day

Anxiety, or more specifically “anticipatory dread,” is our greatest threat right now. There is a range of practices to help reduce and minimize such anxiety. Here is a list, and there is a more detailed description of each on the website.

Practices that keep us in the Now:

- *Mindful breathing*
- *Praying a Mantra*

- *Walking meditation*
- *Eating meditation*
- *Accepting the “What is”*

Practices that remind us that “all manner of things shall be well”

- *Meta – the practice of “loving-kindness.”*
- *Lectio Divina on classic passages about God’s Presence*
- *Countering negative stories and misinformation*

Practices that keep us from “running ahead of the Grace”

Other practices you will find on the website include:

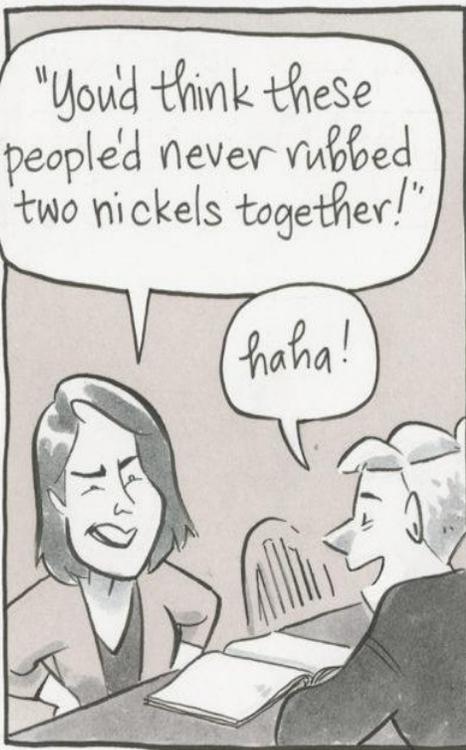
- To control anxiety*
- To offset loneliness*
- To re-balance our understanding of life*
- To honour our radical co-dependence*
- To re-balance our understanding of Providence*
- When Covid 19 strikes*

What practices might you suggest? What is giving you hope? Let us know at aauger003@gmail.com and we will publish the results on the Harcourt website: look on the Spiritual Growth page.



Take a moment to be grateful: *Thank You Lord for Your Blessings on Me.* Song and video submitted by Esther Devolin. HOLD THE CTRL BUTTON ON YOUR COMPUTER AND LEFT CLICK YOUR MOUSE ON URL BELOW.

[HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?V=1JKO7TAXHR0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1JKO7TAXHR0)



da'ille '20

COMMUNITY

Lockdown

A Reflection by Brother Richard Hendrick OFM
From the Franciscan Seculars website (with permission)
<http://franciscanseculars.com/richard-hendrick-lockdown-coronavirus/>
Submitted by Wendelin Galatianos and Joan Barham

Yes there is fear.
Yes there is isolation.
Yes there is panic buying.
Yes there is sickness.
Yes there is even death.

But,
They say that in Wuhan after so many years of noise
You can hear the birds again.
They say that after just a few weeks of quiet The sky is no longer thick with fumes
But blue and grey and clear.
They say that in the streets of Assisi
People are singing to each other
across the empty squares,
keeping their windows open
so that those who are alone
may hear the sounds of family around them. They say that a hotel in the West of Ireland
Is offering free meals and delivery to the housebound.
Today a young woman I know
is busy spreading fliers with her number
through the neighbourhood
So that the elders may have someone to call on. Today Churches, Synagogues, Mosques and
Temples
are preparing to welcome
and shelter the homeless, the sick, the weary
All over the world people are slowing down and reflecting
All over the world people are looking at their neighbours in a new way
All over the world people are waking up to a new reality
To how big we really are.
To how little control we really have.
To what really matters.

To Love.

So we pray and we remember that

Yes there is fear.

But there does not have to be hate.

Yes there is isolation.

But there does not have to be loneliness.

Yes there is panic buying.

But there does not have to be meanness.

Yes there is sickness.

But there does not have to be disease of the soul

Yes there is even death.

But there can always be a rebirth of love. Wake to the choices you make as to how to live now.

Today, breathe.

Listen, behind the factory noises of your panic The birds are singing again

The sky is clearing,

Spring is coming,

And we are always encompassed by Love. Open the windows of your soul

And though you may not be able

to touch across the empty square,

Sing.

No Showers Ahead!

by Jill Gill

You may recall that a **Baby Shower** was planned to take place on Sunday, March 22 from noon-2 p.m. at Harcourt UC to help Fuad Ali and Kashan Hama Rashid prepare for the birth of their twin boys on April 23 at McMaster. However, with the current closure of the church because of the Corona Virus this has been cancelled. We are still collecting both cash donations and/or gifts (you can see a list of some needed items at <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/8050F4CAEAC2EAB9-Kahsan>) If you wish to make a contribution, you can drop off cash or baby items to any of the following people: Mary Harding, 51 Winston Cres. (harding.mej@gmail.com); Jean Jackson, 16 Maplewood Dr. (jean.jackson@rogers.com); Anne Parsons, 100 Basswood Dr. (anneparsons2@gmail.com) , or Jill Gill, 70 Forest St. (peter.gill@sympatico.ca). We would appreciate if you'd arrange to drop things off by Friday, March 27th, or contact one of us to say when that might be possible. That way we can sort things before delivering them to Kashan and Fuad on your behalf.

The plan now is to have a “meet the babies” celebration when they are a couple of months old and the Corona Virus threat has passed. Fuad and Kashan will be able to thank you in person at that time.

For now, thank you for your continued generosity to this family, who truly appreciate the Harcourt congregation as part of their extended family. We will let you know about a date to “meet the babies”.

Lenten Resource

by Peter Jackson

Challenge and Path, the Lenten resource developed by Harcourt’s Spiritual Life Committee, can be accessed on the Harcourt website. It appears as a clickable link under the heading Spiritual Life Committee Resources part way down the Spiritual Growth page (<https://www.harcourtuc.ca/spiritual-growth/>).

The companion resource for Holy Week is entitled *Following the Way*. It will be available through the same location on the website a few days before Palm Sunday.

Chalmer’s Gets Cracking – Eggs and Cheese

by Peter Gill

One of the beauties of Chalmers’ downtown location is our proximity to other organizations in the same building at 42 Carden Street. This gives us the opportunity to share information, ideas and spread the Chalmers name.



One of those organizations in our building is the Community Engaged Scholarship Institute (CESI), a department of the University of Guelph which collaborates with local not-for-profits on various research projects.

In 2019 two masters of applied nutrition students conducted a survey at our West location. The CESI study was to explore culturally appropriate food choices and this survey was done pictorially as one of the challenges we encounter, at Chalmers West especially, is the ability to communicate with our guests who are mostly newcomers with limited English language. Several questions were asked in the survey and the first one was to list the top choices of food they would want to have access to. Here were the top 5:

Eggs (54 respondents)

Cauliflower (50)

Broccoli (49)

Ginger Root (49)

Tomatoes (49)

Until 2 or 3 years ago the Chalmers shopping cart at Harcourt only contained non-perishable items and then Ann Middleton hit on the idea of an 'egg and cheese Sunday' once a month. These items were collected in coolers and taken straight to Chalmers and put in the fridges. We've known for many years that eggs were the most important staple in the Chalmers food offering and the survey bore this out - and there seem to be no obvious cultural barriers around eggs.

So thank you to Ann for organizing and the Harcourt congregation for faithfully bringing eggs (and cheese) once a month. Our guests really appreciate it.

Another Chapter in Maxine's Spiritual Journey

by Andre Auger

Over the past few years, I have written a couple of articles describing my experience of Maxine's spirituality. As she continues to struggle, with little relief in sight, others have moved in to support her in this phase of her journey of diminishment. One of these is Julie Ashley, who composed the following poem, as a result of a recent visit with Maxine. With her permission I share this with you, as an addition to our ongoing listening in to Maxine's spiritual journey.

I only really knew Maxine when she was either waiting for a transplant, or trying to recover from her transplant. I know her life was much healthier and larger before, but I am writing this about the Maxine that I know and love – and this all seems even more poignant, given these times of social distancing Julie

What Maxine Taught Us ...

Why **not** use the hours and days and months stuck inside
To reflect on all the amazing gifts of our lives? The special people we have met, recounting stories and memories of a life lived well?

Why not sport pink or purple or blue hair?
Even if our bodies can't play, our hair can!

Why not wrap ourselves in lovely clothes
And surround ourselves in beauty, since God's art is all around us?

Why not hold our cats, our family, our friends, our children even closer, so they know they are truly a part of us?

Why not speak truth, even when it is challenging?
Because it is the truth. And denying it doesn't make it so.

Why not love others even **more** than they love us?
Learn to receive, and in doing so, give to the giver?

Why not look for the good, even when confined to our spaces or beds?
Turn the silver lining inside out, so storm clouds lose their power?

Why not give thanks to the Universal One, a Loving God who gave it all to us in the first place?
And why not look death graciously in the face and give thanks for that too.

Why not love deeply and fully while we still have a heart that beats – until it doesn't?

Why not create a legacy of love SO DEEP and joy SO BIG
That it lives on, far beyond our bodily experience?
That beauty, love, truth and gratitude are truly the greatest gifts we can give each other.
And why not keep asking questions until our final breath. Why not?

That's what Maxine taught us.



The United Church of Canada suggests that you may want to read the United Church's 2020 Lenten devotional, [Faithfully Yours](#), this Easter Sunday for your own time of reflection. Just hold the Ctrl key on your computer and left click your mouse on the words "Faithfully Yours" above to view a description.

An Easter Prayer

by Nancy Elizabeth Hardy

Reprinted from the United Church of Canada website

Great and glorious God,
you have rolled away the stone and raised Christ to life,
and now you invite us to share in the Good News.
Give us the courage to welcome the winds of change in our lives
as it sweeps the sidewalks
and brings hope to hungry families, released prisoners,
sick and sad people of all ages.
In this season of Easter,
run with us in the joy of new life
that transforms the way we see the world and one another.
For Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed! Hallelujah!

—from *Worship in the City: Prayers and Songs for Urban Settings*
by Nancy Elizabeth Hardy (UCPH, 2015)

Join the “Sewing” Circle: Harcourt Communal Garden

by Jill Gill

“Best laid plans...” they say. Well, so much for the meeting that has been scheduled to organise the Harcourt Communal Garden on Sunday, April 5 at noon in the Chapel. If we are back at church by then, it will happen, but that looks more and more unlikely as time passes.



However, the actual garden WILL happen! This will be the 10th season of harvesting edibles from the Harcourt Communal Garden. So far we have harvested 5,521 lbs of organically-grown vegetables, herbs and fruit entirely for

donation to the Chalmers Community Services Centre food pantry. This produce is distributed

to Chalmers guests and supplements the regular food offerings that they receive. Chalmers is a Harcourt-supported charity in downtown Guelph.

Our Communal Garden is entirely maintained by volunteers who plant, water, weed and harvest during the spring, summer and fall each year. Families from Manna help with planting the seeds and seedlings (that Lisa MacTaggart is nurturing for us) when the ground has warmed. Last season we had 15 volunteers who worked in teams of four, for 1-3 hours during the weeks they were scheduled. Each team gardened six times, on average, from June until the end of October. We also scheduled a couple of work 'parties' where as many folks as were available got together for a three-hour session to blitz the work that needed extra time.

We would love to increase our number of volunteers, and since this is our 10th season, we will plan some special ways to celebrate our successes and the great spirit of generosity that lifts our activity of producing and sharing fresh, locally-grown food with many of Guelph's food-insecure folks.

If **helping in the Harcourt Communal Garden is an activity that interests you**, please email me at peter.gill@sympatico.ca or call 519.767.1244 to let me know that you'd like to take part. I can then email the group to say when we might meet face-to-face and discuss if (and when) folks will be away so I can make a schedule for the teams. You don't need to be an expert in vegetable gardening, just be willing to learn and get your hands dirty! With all the talk around Covid-19 constantly in our faces from all media sources, perhaps the hopeful thought of seedlings and growing local food in a few months can lift our spirits.



REMINDER: **Earth Day** is celebrated in communities around the world on April 22 each year. Churches have chosen to mark this time by participating in community events and through liturgical celebrations. For suggestions about how to reflect and worship on Earth Sunday please visit: <https://www.united-church.ca/worship-special-days/earth-sunday>



Carbon emissions fell as electricity producers moved away from coal.

21 March 2020 - Carbon emissions from the global electricity system fell by 2 percent last year, the biggest drop in almost 30 years, as countries began to turn away from coal-fired power plants. A new report on the world's electricity generation shows that the steepest cut in carbon emissions since 1990 occurred as the US and the EU turned to cleaner energy sources. (<https://globalgoodnews.com/science-news-a.html?art=1584835991119618538>)

Most religions, including Christianity, **believe that environmental stewardship is important.** This article compares the articulated beliefs associated with environmental stewardship among several major religious groups and finds that there are many common elements. <https://www.religionworld.in/religion-and-the-environment/>

The Church Garden Corner

Harcourt's Spring Flowers

by Sandy Middleton

If I were to ask you to name some spring flowers, I suspect that names such as snowdrop, crocus, daffodil, hyacinth, and tulip, would come to mind. I wonder, however, if anyone would also include in their list, silver maple, white birch and red oak?

If not, why not? because **ALL** of the fore-mentioned are flowering plants which, produce their flowers at this time of year. In the first group, the flowers are obvious because they relatively large, colourful, fragrant, and are produced on leafy plants that emerge from the ground. In the second



group the flowers are small, relatively colourless, odourless and are borne on the terminal twigs of woody plants such as trees and shrubs, where they are easily overlooked.

Though all flowers have the same function, which is to provide pollen to fertilize the ovary and produce seed, the manner in which pollination is carried out is by one of two methods: either by animals (insects, birds, and even bats), or by the wind. The showy, fragrant, flowers have evolved to provide attractive rewards (sugary nectar, and energy rich pollen) for the animals that can feed on them and, in so doing, have effected an efficient method of pollination, through their pollen covered pollinators. By contrast the small, somewhat insignificant flowers, rely on the wind to disperse their pollen. As a result, they have evolved to put their energies into the formation of many small flowers, designed to produce immense quantities of small, light-weight, pollen, some of which will eventually stick to the exposed stigma of a suitable member of its own species (or human beings who suffer from hay-fever!).

So, let's present you with a challenge. Take a look at a daffodil flower (of which there are many on Harcourt's grounds, thanks to the recycled potted plants donated a number of years ago) smell it, admire its colour, then see if you can recall your elementary biology to identify sepals, petals, anthers (male organs), and stigma (female organ), and watch for the insects buzzing around as they carry out their pollination duties. Now, let's visit the silver maple outside the library. At this time of year, you should be able to see the small reddish clusters of flowers on the tips of the branches. If you can reach a low branch collect a flower and note how insignificant it seems, that it lacks fragrance, but has a multi-filamented ring of stamens clustered around the feathery stigma. Although you may not recognise it as such, it is a true flower, although I doubt if you will see them for sale in the florists' shops.



Photo: Silver Maple: Finger Lakes Native Plant Society

If you have time, wander the grounds and enjoy all of Harcourt's spring flowers. The experience might even prompt you to escape the gloom of current coronavirus epidemic by humming Nanki-Poo's song from Gilbert and Sullivan's *Mikado*:

*"The flowers that bloom in the spring
Tra -la
Breathe promise of merry sunshine---"*

Easter Should be a Time for Christians and Muslims to Bond

by Ayeda Husain (used with permission)

As printed in Huffington Post Canada, March 28, 2018

For the Sufi mystic and poet Jalaluddin Rumi, spring was more than spring: it was a reflection of all that was divine, in our lives and history.

In his poem, "[Spring is Christ](#)," he writes of how a flower is more than a flower, a tree more than a tree and the wind more than just wind. He writes of a love so strong it permeates everything it comes into contact with. And he writes about Jesus and his mother, Mary: Jesus as the spring that brings plants into bloom after a lifeless winter, and Mary as the tree that gives life, refuge and shade.



Surprisingly for many in the West today, Islamic mystical poetry is full of allusions to Jesus and Mary. The only religion besides Christianity that accepts Jesus as a prophet, Islam confirms his unique birth and the Qur'an [refers to him](#) as the "Messiah," the "Messenger," the "Prophet" and the "Word and Spirit of God."

It is a commonality that is often overlooked by fundamentalists on both sides who choose to focus on the points of divergence. And yet, at this moment, when so many seem to be rooting for a collision between the Christian West and Islamic East, there has never been a greater need for both sides to acknowledge their shared heritage.

Easter has always reflected a universal renewal of life, hope and faith. It's a renewal of this very faith, one that Rumi wrote about in the 13 century, that so many of us could do with today.

For Muslims, there are two ways to look at Jesus: the literal and the metaphorical. Literally, the position of Jesus is very clear: he was a prophet of God. All Muslims are therefore commanded by their religion to respect and revere him and to learn from his life, his teachings and the sacrifice he made.

Metaphorically, one need only look at Sufi poetry to see how deeply engrained the story of Jesus is into the Islamic mystical tradition. As Dr. Javad Nurbakhsh writes in his book, [Jesus In The Eyes of The Sufis](#), there is "scarcely a Sufi poet who has failed to cite Jesus in his verse."

The elevated status of Jesus in Islamic spirituality represents the relevance of his sacrifice and willingness to suffer for a cause most did not recognize.

Rumi [tells the story](#) of Mary, the lovely virgin who on her labour pangs came to a dried up palm tree. When she clung to its trunk, it showered sweet dates over her. It was her pain that led her to the tree and caused the barren plant to give forth fruit.

Rumi [writes](#):

"The body is like Mary. Each of us has a Jesus, but as long as no pain appears, our Jesus is not born. If pain never comes, our Jesus goes back to his place of origin on the same secret he had come, and we remain behind, deprived without a share of him."

Another Sufi poet, Fariduddin Attar, writes:

"If for only a moment you free yourself

From this prison around you,

You will be like Jesus,

Unique in detachment."

The elevated status of Jesus in Islamic spirituality represents the relevance of his sacrifice and willingness to suffer for a cause most did not recognize. What we learn from his life is that faith conquers all; not just the anguish of the moment but, eventually, time and space.

The larger lesson, however, is more than faith being able to move mountains; it's that Islam and Christianity are not mountains apart. They share a deep heritage based in love, one that is not to be confused with the actions of some misguided, fire-breathing followers — on both sides of the fence — who spread misinformation in their desire for division.

There is a famous account of the time when Prophet Muhammad entered Mecca in triumph. As is well known, he ordered the destruction of all idols and images. What is not well known is the tradition that when he came upon a picture of the Virgin and Child inside the Kaaba, he covered it with his cloak out of reverence, ordering it to be preserved outside the Kaaba as sacred.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Passing:



Reilly, Kenneth. Passed away on March 8, 2020, in his 89th year. Formally of Hillsburgh, Ken is survived by his wife Marilyn Reilly. Loving brother, father, grandfather and great grandfather. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to The Elliott Community or The Guelph General Hospital.



Ogilvie, John. Passed away on Friday, March 20, 2020, in his 90th year after a brief stay at Guelph General Hospital. Beloved husband of the late Ethel (nee Dempsey) (2010). To say that John was a long-life learner is an understatement. He was raised on the family farm in Cyrville, now the Ogilvie Road area of Ottawa. He obtained his B.Sc (Agr) degree from Macdonald College (McGill University), MSA from OAC (now University of Guelph) and his PhD from Purdue University. As a professor, then head of the Department of Agricultural Engineering at Macdonald College, he received the distinguished Alumni Award and was particularly active in curriculum design and multiple research papers. He joined the faculty at the University of Guelph in 1977 as the Director of the School of Engineering until 1988, and then Professor until he retired in 1995 with the honour of University Professor Emeritus. Since his retirement, John had been working with various groups to continue his love and dedication to his profession which has resulted in the 'Professor John Ogilvie Engineering Bursary' at the University of Guelph and the 'John Ogilvie Research Innovation Award' through the CSBE. When the family moved to Guelph, John and Ethel were active members of Harcourt United Church and extensively involved with Scouts Canada at the Church and elsewhere. Harcourt also benefitted from John's life-long love of technology that helped to get the Church online and allowed him to keep in touch with so many people! He always embraced various growing computer developments, designing websites and using his devices including video calls with his sister in his final few days. A small family interment will be held at Woodlawn Memorial

Gardens at a later date and a Celebration of Life will be held at Harcourt United Church in the future. For those who wish, donations in memory of John may be made to Harcourt United Church, Scouts Canada, University of Guelph or Hospice Wellington. A tree will be planted in memory of John R. Ogilvie in the Wall-Custance Memorial Forest, University of Guelph Arboretum. Dedication service, Sunday, September 20, 2020 at 2:30 pm.



Cartoon by Roz Stephenson

Behind the Scenes

Faith Not Fear

by Gillian Joseph

When the virus began to take hold in China we were very saddened, but not frightened. We sat happily in the Florida sun, walked our usual routes, played pickleball, prepared for the onset of company, went to choir practice and meetings and prepared for our upcoming concert with excitement. Only two weeks to go and we were ready. Tickets sold, costumes made, sound equipment fastened down. Our director, Cheryl, a professional musician with tons of Chorus directing experience, was glowing. She had reassured us a number of times that it was going to be a good concert this year. As the weeks passed and the statistics about the spread of the virus in other countries began to fill the news, we still felt confident. This will pass, we're fine here and when we return home in another month this will all be over. Then, in the middle of a mid-March choir practice, the community president walked into the room and told us that the concert would be cancelled. The venue was being shut. So sorry. Case closed. Words can't express our shock and disbelief, nor the pain of that sudden slap of reality that hit us squarely on the head. No, I remember thinking then, things are not all right.

At first our adult children were supportive of our desire not to leave Florida quite yet. "it's a healthy climate" they said, "you might as well stay another month". Then gradually over the next few days their concerns began to increase from "Are you sure you'll be OK" to "You MUST come home now, the border is closing, we can't get to you if you get ill, you are taking too great a risk if you stay". Already our Florida supermarkets were out of cleaning supplies and toilet paper. Fights were taking place in parking lots. Lineups were stretching down blocks to get inside stores. Restaurants were closing. Friends were stepping back from the offer of a comforting hug. Worst of all, the buzz of a happy, friendly, busy community was falling silent. We were entering the Twilight Zone!

In fear, we decided to pack up and come home to Canada as quickly as we could, even knowing that a 14-day isolation was in store. As I stood scrubbing our shutters in the driveway on Sunday morning, the day after we made our decision, a friend and his wife drove up and stopped to chat. "Say it isn't so," she said about hearing our plan for departure - I smiled sadly. Then, without knowing our religion, or beliefs, he calmly looked at me and said "You need to go to Church. That's where you should be in all this craziness. That's where we're headed. Come with us." That invitation, so calmly delivered with such conviction, centred me and flooded me completely with hope. Faith not fear. It was so obvious.

The two-day drive back was surreal. We looked out the window in awe at the beauty of the Tennessee morning fog as it nestled in the blue/grey mountains, and watched flock after

flock of Juncos fly in a show of alternating black and white across the yellow fields in Ohio. God's incredible world. Yet, while all this peace and beauty unfolded on one level, global chaos unfolded on another. After hours of waiting at the border and hearing strict instructions from the customs officer, we re-entered Canada and headed straight home to Guelph in the dark through pouring rain.

Faith not fear. The Easter story is full of fear. Jesus was afraid. The disciples were afraid. Mary and the other women at the tomb were afraid. The guards were afraid. So many others were afraid. But as well as fear, the Easter story also teaches us about faith. Faith that this death has meaning. Faith in the forgiveness that is offered to us through this sacrifice. Faith that God is always with us. Faith that we will get through this crisis now. Faith in others that we will come together to help each other. Faith in ourselves that even if things are not the same ever again, we can do this. As Jay Parini (2019) states: "Easter teaches Christians this, I believe: to emulate the faith of Jesus in the goodness of the universe-- to rest in God..." Faith not fear. Amen.

Reference: Parini, J. (2019). Easter isn't about sacrifice, it's about faith and love
<https://www.cnn.com/2019/04/19/opinions/easter-is-about-love-parini/index.html>



As of March 19th: Guelph Food Bank desperately seeking volunteers. <https://www.guelphmercury.com/news-story/9910973-guelph-food-bank-in-desperate-need-of-volunteers-amid-coronavirus-pandemic/>



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