

The Harcourt Herald November 2020

The Life and Work of
Harcourt United Church

*Thank you, Gillian
for 10 years as editor*





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

Church Administrator:
Wendy Guilmette

Worship, Communication
and Technical Support:
Shaina Ensing

Custodian: David Kucherepa

The Ministers: The People
with Reverend Jim Ball and
Reverend Miriam Flynn

Director of Music Ministry:
Alison MacNeill

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

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The Minister's Quill by Miriam Flynn



This past spring a “Zoom” townhall meeting was held for members of Guelph’s four United Churches to share with one another their experience of church during lockdown. At that time, people expressed a sense of loss at not being able to attend Sunday worship in their own church buildings. They missed choir and congregational singing. They missed not being in one another’s physical presence to pass the peace or offer a warm embrace of greeting, celebration or consolation. Yet, people also expressed their enthusiasm over the innovative and satisfying forms of connection that were being made within their congregations – through telephone trees, on-line gatherings and the shared experience of virtual worship.

When our facilitator asked the questions, “Is there anything we, as church, have gained through this time? Is there any way in which your ministry has been enhanced?” the positive responses were varied and surprisingly plentiful. People welcomed some of the possibilities that technology presented, not only for the present, but the future, as well.

And it was clear, that people also welcomed some of the insights gained through the difficult adjustments that had been thrust upon us -- not the least being a new self-awareness of just how adaptable and resilient we could be!

When I considered the question of how my ministry was enhanced two words immediately sprung to my mind: “essential” and “transcendent.” It seemed to me that the disruption of pandemic naturally redirected people’s focus from the everyday pre-occupations that usually consume us, toward deeper reflection on what was truly essential for life. Individually, and as a community, we began searching for that which allowed us to transcend present suffering and bring hope. This kind of reflection is inherently spiritual. My ministry was enhanced by the receptivity of a world that seemed suddenly to be on the same wave-length as those who seek the presence of God as *essence* and *transcendence*.

Several poets were alive to the change in sensibility that pandemic lockdown brought to a world previously enthralled in the ceaseless movement of people and demands of commerce. Kitty O’Meara’s “And the People Stayed Home”¹ garnered a lot of attention and many found inspiration in Lynn Ungar’s² invitation to find Sabbath in the imposed interruption of our times.

But now, of course, the children are back at school and our shops are re-opened. We know that many of the restrictions and adjustments necessary to preserve public health must continue indefinitely and that our collective race to outlast this pandemic will be a marathon not a sprint. The novelty of feeling as though a national “snow day” had been declared, has long since evaporated as we now settle in to managing the new reality of our changed situation. We know that some of the changes we’ve made and lessons we’ve learned have *changed us*. We sense that some of this transformation should continue... but we still cannot fully imagine what the results of our metamorphosis may be...

Many sense the portent and opportunity of this time, yet planning for the future – as individuals, families and communities of faith – can be difficult. There seem to be so many variables to consider because the course of the pandemic remains uncertain.

This is a time when our faith may guide us...after all, as Christians we are people of “the now and the not yet.” The renewed spiritual focus of pandemic times on that which is *essential* and that which *transcends* can serve us well, at Harcourt, as we discern future needs.

Over the past seven months we have worshipped together, found ways of connecting as community and lived out our faith in the world – and we have done that through our presence and experience beyond the walls of the building on Dean Avenue that many of us are used to calling “the church.”

1 O’Meara, *And the People Stayed Home*, accessed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oi1INrtc0pQ>

2 Unger, *Pandemic*, accessed at <http://www.lynnungar.com/poems/pandemic/>

What does that tell us about *the essence* of what it is to *be the church* together? How does our shared identity and life as a community of faith *transcend* the space where we have gathered?

These will be vital questions as we move forward in the year to come. And so I leave them with you to ponder and share a prayer that may serve also as reminder, that the Spirit is with us always – *essence and transcendence*.

Holy One,

We pray that you would cultivate hope in us --changing our hopes from the small to the transcendent, from the particular to the essential. Seed hope in the power of, as yet, unimagined alternatives. Give us the courage to move confidently toward the horizon, as you keep us connected to one another, receptive to the world you love, and turned, always, toward you.

Amen.



Letter from the Editor's desk.

Dear members of Harcourt.

As you may have noticed, I have taken on the task of maintaining the great tradition of Harcourt's monthly newsletter. I am aware that I am stepping into some very large shoes.

Gillian's work was outstanding! Thankfully, she provided me with very detailed instructions, and Wendy and Shaina are there to help.



In this time of Covid-19 good communication tools have become an even more important means to keep the Harcourt community together.

Gillian's format for the newsletter was excellent, and I don't want to play too much with it. I will make one suggestion, given that the pandemic does not allow as much person-to-person interaction. As a first step to make the Harcourt Herald more interactive I will introduce a section called: **Letters to the Editor** for the December issue.

I hope that Harcourt members will continue to participate through articles, letters, pictures and notifications. Now I invite you to contribute letters on matters of concern to you regarding the Harcourt community. All letters need to be signed. And again as a reminder: it is very important for submissions that copyrights be respected, especially for photos and copied articles. The deadline for materials will be still the 20th of each month, and the email address is still theherald@harcourtuc.ca

This November issue is dedicated to ways our Harcourt congregation is and has been coping with this time of Covid-19. The restrictions to keep the virus in check are necessary but harsh. Much has been lost without direct contact with each other. On the other hand, there have been substitutes that help maintain connections. In this issue you will find descriptions of feelings of loss, how coping has been achieved, and some hopes describing initiatives to overcome, in articles from the Ministers, Council, Committees, groups and individual members.

Enjoy! And help make this vehicle somewhat interactive by sending comments, your own thoughts, your coping mechanism, your feeling of loss.

I look forward to serving you, and will do so to the best of my abilities.

Marion Auger

Council News (for November 2020 Herald)



Commitment and genuine care for our community of faith and its future are just two qualities demonstrated by so many Harcourt people. This month's update includes just a few important projects that have progressed since writing my October Council News.

- Council's joint meeting with Chairs of committees/teams on September 23 was very helpful through sharing updates and changes that we have experienced during the past months of pandemic. I shared Five Priority Clusters for Harcourt that reflect Council's recent discussions (see the chart that follows). This list was prepared just prior to receiving Jim Ball's retirement decision. The list still stands, knowing that the impact of our change in pastoral relations underlies each cluster as we move into our time of discernment.
- On October 9, the Steering Team appointed to guide Harcourt's discernment process met for the first time. Members are: Lorraine Holding (Chair); Miriam Flynn; Dan Ganesh (Worship); Pamela Girardi (MANNA); Bill Lord (Spiritual Life); Pat Martin (Ministry & Personnel); Tammy teWinkel (Council). Tasks include planning for ministerial supply coverage to begin in January, and developing a plan to ensure the Congregation is involved in the discernment process. There is much work ahead for the Congregation in 2021 as we look to the future and determine what we want Harcourt to become. Separately, a small group will plan a celebration of Jim's ministry before he retires. Keep watching for news.
- The Re-entry Planning Group meets regularly to define details, and make recommendations to Council for adjustments to our re-entry plan. An update about our work is included elsewhere in this newsletter.
- Council recognizes that there is some excitement and energy to move forward with flexible seating in the Sanctuary. This fall, we have returned to discussion about how we might progress, considering our changed practices during the pandemic. A significant portion of our September and October meetings has focused on the need for a full implementation plan and the possibility of a temporary, experimental phase to move towards replacement of pews with chairs. Our discussions reflect a deep sense of responsibility to keep faith with the Congregation's decision one year ago. We want to be transparent and work from details of an implementation plan as directed by that decision. We need people who are willing to work on the research that is required. If you have

energy and commitment for this, please contact any member of Council or me (council-chair@harcourtuc.ca). Work continues!

- Our connections with the wider church are also important and tie into planning for the future. Within Guelph United Ministries (GUM), discussions of the four council/board Chairs and the small GUM Repurposing Church Properties Working Group continue to explore what steps are possible related to our individual and collective futures and projected sustainability.

There is so much on our horizon. With God’s help and listening for the Spirit, we are committed to our many roles, Harcourt’s people and ministries.

With faith and hope.

Lorraine Holding, Council Chair

Five Priority Clusters for Harcourt

What is church?	Strengthening the neighbourhood groups	Community engagement focus	Planning for Harcourt's future	Stewardship
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does church express and experience reincarnation? • There are tensions/pulls between experiencing church as a getting together and experiencing virtual church. • Various worship experiences/formats (including MANNA, funerals, weddings). • Connections to others within the church community → Is loneliness an issue? • Broader pastoral care needs? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connections can be high tech (virtual) and low tech (gathering in outdoor space). • Aspects of hospitality and pastoral care. • Other communication tools to support the congregation, including website upgrade. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Round Table process (issues of poverty, housing, racial and Indigenous relations). • How to do outreach and support (e.g., providing safe space). • Sustainability of Harcourt and GUM churches tied to repurposing church properties/buildings, including Hubs to meet community needs and financial sustainability. • GUM planning for the future and possible support from United Church Properties Corporation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revisit vision, mission, purpose, strategies, core values. • Develop a process to get input during COVID-19 to explore Congregation's priorities. • Revisit structure/ governance and leadership gaps. • Other ways of doing church (e.g., project groups outside of committees). • Council as a clearing house to ensure coordination and alignment with purpose. • Mentoring the next generation. • Changes in Sanctuary to increase flexible space (e.g., for MANNA, other users). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People and financial (operating, M&S, pillars). • Reassessing how we serve the church and help others to serve the church. • Planning for live streaming, changes in Sanctuary and Greeting Area.
← Impact of Jim Ball's retirement →				

Our Harcourt Music:

“After silence, that which comes nearest to expressing the inexpressible is music.”

– Aldous Huxley

It seems like an eternity has passed since that day in mid-March, when the pandemic became reality for us in Canada. The day I and the board of the Rainbow Chorus regretfully concluded that we needed to cancel our entire season. The day we at Harcourt had to take the decision to cancel all church services and close the building down “until further notice”.



Jim, Miriam and I had quickly realized that our services needed to be recorded and presented on-line. I had to come up with a way to make music – when I couldn’t even meet with a single person to record a solo (much less leave the house!)

Who could have guessed that *singing* -- one of the most wholesome activities on earth, one that enriches the soul, enhances worship, has countless health benefits – could suddenly become a risky venture?

After the shutdown, the **Choir** met on Zoom – but, happy as we were to see each other and tell our stories, it became abundantly and laughably clear that we couldn’t sing together on-line, the internet lag being too great.

So...I discovered the world of audio engineering. This warrants an entire article on its own, but in short, rather than in rehearsal, I spend hours huddled over my computer, producing hymns and other music from individual tracks, recorded by singers at their home. On their phones. They entrust their voices to me, which I then layer up into something that sounds, hopefully, like they are all singing together in the same room. This process is time-consuming, but I have learned a lot, and am grateful to have found a way to continue to “make music” for Harcourt. Recently the **Choir** met for a couple of outdoor rehearsals, in person, in the Celebration garden. This was a tremendous relief and joy for us, singing some our favourites – masked and muffled – while shedding some tears. We hope to meet some Sunday afternoons as weather permits.

The **Lightshine Singers**, our women’s choir, cancelled their season of *SingOuts* to local assisted living homes. We will not meet again until it is safe to do so, but all are keen to take up singing together again.

The **Handbell Choir** has been meeting for the past month, outdoors in the garden at first, and now in the sanctuary. We are masked, distanced, and everyone now has their own table and music. No one can hear what I am saying through my mask half the time, but it's sure great to be together again!

The **Rainbow Chorus** is taking a "fallow season" - occasionally meeting for some outdoor in-person singing, along with Zoom and outdoor social events. We have done one large scale "virtual choir" recording, which you can find on YouTube. All 35 voices were individually recorded at the height of our shutdown, sent to me for assembling into this lovely performance. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QYCXkQ88nUE>

When we sing together, we feed our spirits, as well as the spirits of those that listen -- we experience something much larger than ourselves. To be silenced, especially at a time when we could be of great comfort to others, has been a source of great frustration and loss for us, and for all choirs around the world.

But we have been taking care of each other, and treasuring some of the simple joys of life. We all hope and pray that very soon it will be possible to "take up our song" again.

Miss you all!

Alison, Director of Music Ministry



Blessings abound at MANNA!

MANNA gathered outdoors for a chilly but beautiful time together over the thanksgiving weekend! We explored the theme of wilderness by listening to the story of how God provided manna (a bread-like substance which covered the ground) to the Israelites who were wandering in the desert, feeling tired and hungry and frustrated. We participated in the story through dramatic responses, including grumbling to our leader, Moses! We spent some time exploring the outdoors, looking for things from nature that we might use to survive if we were living in the wilderness - wood to build a shelter or burn for warmth, and berries and vegetables to eat were just some of the nearby findings. We worshipped with song, and we celebrated our thankfulness with chalk messages on the sidewalk. To remind us of God's gift of manna to the Israelites, our leaders provided us with a surprise take-away - a bag containing dry oatmeal, or powdered mashed potatoes!



Julie Henshaw



From the Harcourt Property Committee.

Dear Harcourters

There is no down time for the property committee. Sarah Lowe co-ordinated a successful clean up of the church gardens on Saturday September 26th as well as at least two afternoon sessions for the Celebration Garden. Another group trimmed the Norway Maples on Saturday October 17th. Many thanks to all of the volunteers.



Then, there are always church equipment issues: the riding lawnmower (battery), leaf blower and the kitchen dishwasher. The good news is that the heating system is on with no leaking valves or pumps etc.

The pre-school is operating at a reduced capacity with no sessions on Tuesday or Thursday. Rental income will be decreased substantially in 2020.

Please consider volunteering with the property committee. We would really welcome fresh faces. *Franklin Webster*

Finances in Pandemic Times

The circumstances of this past year have been a first-time experience for all of us. We are learning how to carry on in different ways to try to maintain normality through this time. For the Finance Committee it has been a challenge to get the word out to members and friends on alternate ways of continuing to make donations to support Harcourt's important work. The loss of rental income has significantly reduced Harcourt's revenue. Not being able to be in the church office on a regular basis to receive funds, pay bills (including getting two signatures on cheques) and reference past files has been problematic.

Fortunately, members have continued their financial support for Harcourt. The United Church of Canada's Financial section and United-in-Learning section have provided invaluable assistance in helping congregations navigate COVID times by providing financial webinars and a help desk. The Government of Canada's wage subsidies are greatly helping Harcourt through this difficult time.

In many ways we will not be going back to pre-pandemic operation. Moving forward with different ways of communicating will require additional revenue and everyone's support.

Submitted by Brian Magee



The Ministry and Personnel Committee



This is one of the committees that keep our Church functioning on a daily basis. There are a number of things that the United Church has tasked the Ministry and Personnel Committee.

They are

- a) being available for consultation and support for matters involving the pastoral charge staff
- b) overseeing the relationship of the pastoral charge staff to each other and to people in the congregation;
- c) regularly reviewing the working conditions, responsibilities, and compensation of all pastoral charge staff;
- d) making any recommendations needed as a result of these reviews to the governing body;
- e) revising position descriptions of pastoral charge staff as needed;
- f) conducting annual performance reviews of the pastoral charge staff;
- g) ensuring pastoral charge staff make use of opportunities for continuing education that they have been given; and
- h) maintaining close contact with the regional council Pastoral Relations Committee or equivalent

This year has been a particularly busy year for our Committee with the hiring of a full-time Church Administrator, the hiring of a Custodian on a contract basis and renewing our MANNA Support Worker's contract earlier this year.

When the COVID virus set in and the closing of businesses including our Church building put an immense amount of pressure on our Ministers and staff to be immensely flexible and learn a new way of carrying on the business of the Church while continuing to minister to our congregation. Our Committee has attempted to support the Ministers and staff through that transition. Our Ministers and staff have been ever so flexible the past several months and continue to be.

Traditionally summers are a quiet time for our Committee. This summer has been the exception. Meetings continued throughout the summer by Zoom and between those meetings we often connected by e-mails.

As we continue into the fall we will be working with the Congregation and Steering Committee to hire a person to replace Jim as he moves into retirement and continue to support the Ministers and staff as the Church building slowly begins to open and through the transition to a new Minister.

I would like to thank the Ministers and Staff for their patience and understanding and their grasping of new technology to minister to the congregation. 2020 has been a year which none of us could have predicted in 2019, however, Ministers and staff have stepped up to the challenge *Submitted by Pat Martin*

Stewardship: Finding a good fit.....can make ALL the difference.

When I accepted the role of Councillor for Stewardship, I knew I had big shoes to fill. Kent Hoeg walked the talk and inspired many with his narrative budgets. Although I knew I could never fit his shoes, I have discovered that finding a good fit for me can make all the difference. Finding good fits have been energizing! I have discovered that when I find a good fit, it can result in a win, win, win.

I must confess that Bill Lord inspired me to consider the role of Councillor for Stewardship. He has been a fabulous mentor and continues to be generous with his time and perspectives. When he sent me a link to an article in "Leading Ideas", I read:
"Nearly half of congregations say stewardship is the biggest challenge they face as a result of the COVID-19 crisis."

Stewardship expert Clayton Smith says churches can bounce back and suggests three ways to move forward with sustained generosity.":

1. Focus on pastoral care.
2. Develop a financial recovery plan and
3. Know that relationships matter.

When I moved to Guelph and became a member of Harcourt, I found small group gatherings to be a wonderful fit for me. I was energized by the opportunity to meet new people in an environment that felt safe and I thrived in the welcoming atmosphere. I have tried on many hats over the past seven years and some have fit better than others. I realize that my involvement with the food truck experiment was not a good fit. No regrets but not a good fit - different priorities and values. My involvement with All Things Christmas, on the other hand, has evolved to a perfect fit.



The past couple of years, I have chosen to be an official greeter. Speaking of hats, I am the proud owner of a Christmas tree hat and it fits perfectly.

I can meet and greet customers and be witness to their smiling faces as they emerge from the sale delighted with their purchases and feeling better as a result of their experience.

I encourage all of you to continue to explore, experiment and find the best fit(s) for you. You may discover, like me, that there are opportunities to share your gifts and talents in ways that are satisfying, sustainable and make a difference. When I retired from teaching in Etobicoke, I remember giving myself permission to volunteer based on a win,win,win criteria. So far, it has served me very well. - Lynn Hancock

Re-thinking the role of the Communication Committee

During the last 10 years, the Communication Committee has worked with many people to ensure that we have communication tools. The website, social media, E-Letter, Harcourt Herald, Harcourt Walkers, Sharing of Committee and Council Minutes/Documents, Support for Special Events, and Sign up Genius.



As times have changed some of these tools need to be updated. Some have changed the original “shape” that they had. Since COVID, the E-Letter has changed somewhat and staff have added a new Friday Reminder. And of course, thanks to many, many hard working people we are now “a church on line” and through the vision of Lynn Hancock, “a church on the ground” through our neighbourhood groups. This while our building has been firmly shut.

Communication is concerned if you know what is happening at Harcourt. We are called to be active in our faith so if you are not aware of our church life, wherever it is happening, how can you be part of it? ***We need your input as to as to how can we better interact with you as part of the Harcourt family.***

We do have virtual interactive groups **Mindstretch: A Discussion Group with No Boundaries.** Every Thursday at 8:45 am.

Explorations in Progressive Christianity. Every Monday at 10 am.

Holy Listening Circle: Scripture, Prayer, Discussion. Every Sunday at 11 am.

Coffee and Chat. Every Sunday at noon.

MANNA: All Ages Worship Experience. Every Sunday at 10:30 am.

Harcourt Cares. Harcourt Facebook Group.

WHAT IS MISSING FOR YOU? A walking buddy? Virtual lunch or dinner groups? Engaging in a special issue groups (do you have an issue you want to work on?).

Elsewhere in this Harcourt Herald, we are asking that you consider participating by sharing “news” through the Harcourt Herald. There are many great stories/photographs/..... you have to share, we are sure of that!

Be “in” to improve communication at Harcourt. Send us your thoughts!

Joan Barham, 519 836 0433; jfhbarham@gmail.com

Update from the Re-Entry Planning Group

The Re-Entry Planning Group was tasked by Council to develop safe ways of opening the church building for worship, church groups, and renters. The group has representatives from Council (Lorraine Holding and Mark Sears), Property (Dave Hume and others), Worship (Karyn Davies), Ministry and Personal (Marilyn Sears), Tech Team Mark Sears), Communications (Joan Barham), church staff (Wendy Guilmette and David Kucherepa), and draws on the public health experience of Megan Ward.



Because the mandate of the Planning Group is to support all those wishing to use the building, we take requests as they come in, and help the group plan for a safe experience for all. To date we have supported safe return to work for church staff and the preschool, use of outdoor spaces including the garden (photo competition awards) and the parking lot (tool library repair cafe), the gym (Autistic Services dog training) and use of sanctuary space for the hand-bell choir and other rehearsals. We have three events with 25 or more participants coming up soon which will help us test our protocols for registration, self assessment, personal protective measures, seating and safe entrance and exit. In virtually all situations five key requirements apply: registration for the event, self assessment for symptoms and risk, masks, physical distancing and hand sanitizing.

The Royal City Preschool is holding classes on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays and are the only people who may use the back door on the bottom level opposite the playground. A few other small groups are beginning to use the building and there have been a few requests to rent space in the coming months. If an individual or group wishes to come to the church

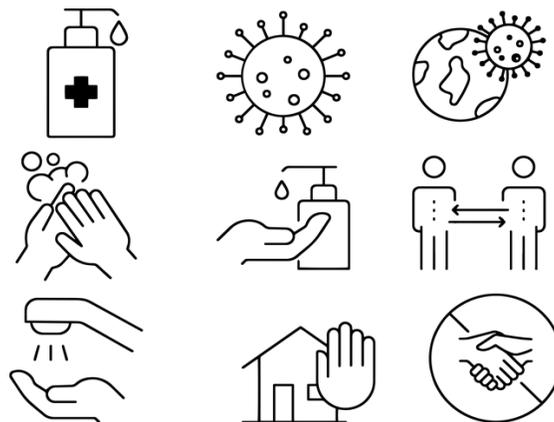
building, they must either call ahead and set up an appointment with the Church Administrator or a Minister or ring the doorbell and wait for someone to answer the door.

The sanctuary has only been used by the Handbell Choir and the Re-entry Group. A memorial service and a wedding are being planned and services are by invitation only. All guests will be required to follow the protocols mentioned above. The possibility of having the All Things Christmas event in the gym is in the process of being worked out. There is no date set yet for in-person Sunday worship and that will eventually be determined by the Worship Committee and Worship Team.

We are often asked about in-person worship in the sanctuary and other spaces. Those decisions are led by the Worship Team and Worship Committee, supported by Council. The Re-Entry Planning Group is standing by to lend a hand in the planning once the request is made. In the meantime, we have created some instructional videos to provide an idea of what to expect when you come to the church. They will be posted soon on the church website. Check them out!

We appreciate the patience of all who wish to be a part of the Harcourt community and to gather within the church building. We are thankful for the ability to use Zoom, YouTube, email, Facebook and phone to stay connected. We hope you have taken the opportunity to join in the weekly virtual worship services that have been so ably organized by our ministers, staff and volunteers. We look forward to being able to meet safely for worship in the building as soon as possible.

Lorraine Holding and Megan Ward, Co-Chairs, with input from Marilyn Sears.



Harcourt's Library

Although the Harcourt Library has been closed for some time, the Committee members have not been idle. For example, in the spring we received a large donation of books for consideration. Books were distributed to a number of people who kindly took the time to examine them with the goal of evaluating their suitability and make recommendations. The result will mean several fresh titles on the Library shelves.

Look for them once the Library is accessible again, they will be eagerly awaiting you. We hope to share a list of new additions at some point.

Mary-Lou Funston and Janet Webster.



Caroline Harcourt Friendship Circle

Over the years, members of the Caroline Harcourt Circle have used some of their monthly collections to purchase the items to fill five Christmas Bags for the Chalmers Christmas Gift Campaign.

The group voted to disperse their money on hand to various projects at their last Christmas meeting. There have been no meetings since then, so there has been no collection of money to support the project at this time.

Members wishing to contribute financially to the project are invited to send a cheque to Harcourt Memorial United Church, stating on the cheque that it is for the "Chalmers Christmas Gift Bag Campaign".

Many of the members have been so good at checking in with each other. Thanks to all of you for keeping in touch. We sure do miss the opportunity of sharing good fellowship. If any members wish to be contacted or would like to have just a good visit, please do not hesitate to call Jean Hume. If you have news that you wish shared with other members, let Jean know and she will contact the callers to share your message. We do know that Eleanor has moved to The Royal on Gordon and we wish her well in her new home.

Wishing you all good health and happiness
Jean Hume



Harcourt Men's Breakfast group

Greetings,

Recently I have been talking with Murray and Sandy at different times, about the future of Harcourt men's group. I think we should have a conversation via zoom to consider possible programs for November, December and the future.

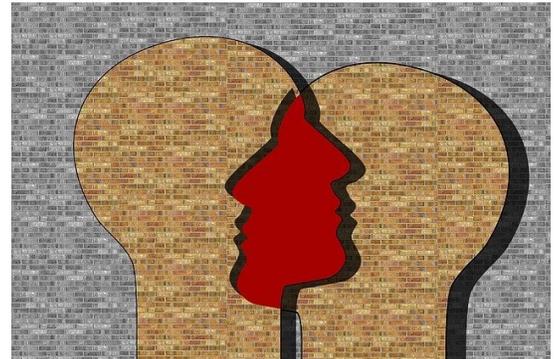


Thinking especially as we approach Jim's retirement, that we should give him one more chance to speak to the men's group. Of course we still have the three guest speakers who had been invited and were cancelled by the closure of the Church building: these included Gerald Neufeld, Arnold Bethune and Mark Sears.

I'm writing to ask if you would be willing to join such a discussion to explore new ways that we can continue the program for the men's group? It would be very helpful if you could indicate possible dates and times when you could meet: Wednesday, Thursday or Friday are available at the moment for me. Blessings, *Bill Lord*

Exploring big questions

What's the purpose of life? Where can we catch glimpses of God? How do we understand suffering? What does it mean to be a church? And how then shall we live?



Every week, a small group of people gathers to explore such questions. We usually brief ourselves by reading in advance a provocative article or a chapter from a book. Recently, for example, we've used an article from Broadview, a book by a cell biologist on religious naturalism, and questions on the nature of dreams and visions. Soon we will begin to look at the Book Of Revelation from the perspective of progressive Christianity.

We won't try to reach a consensus or a decision or even to convince one another. Instead, we aim for each participant to gain fresh insight from listening attentively to other points of view. Usually an hour's conversation provides enough food for several days of further reflection.

If you'd like to experiment in this way of broadening your mind, you'd be welcome to join us. Mindstretch meets on Thursday mornings, from 8:45 to 10:00. To receive the link to our ZOOM discussion, contact *Mike Peleschak* at peleschak@bell.net.

The Women's Spirituality Group in a Time of COVID-19



The Women's Spirituality Group normally meets one Monday evening a month in the Harcourt chapel. This year we have been reading a book together: *The Wisdom of the Body: A Contemplative Journey to Wholeness for Women* by Christine Valters Paintner; each month a member of the group leads a discussion of one of the chapters of the book. Our meetings also include a check-in by all members and a meditation.

Since COVID-19 required us to end meeting in person, we have gotten together each month via Zoom. We have continued with each member checking in at the start of our meetings; this practice has been especially helpful as we have shared how the pandemic has impacted our daily lives and supported one another through this unprecedented time. At some of our meetings we have continued to discuss our book; at others we have focused on meditation, check-in, and general discussions of how people are managing. For our June meeting we had a solstice celebration via Zoom, where we "met" outside in our backyards or on our decks and shared a virtual toast to welcome the Summer season. Members read aloud relevant and inspiring poems and readings to the group.

While all of us miss the personal contact of meeting in person, group members have found the opportunity to connect very satisfying and helpful during these months. Women in the group are dealing with a number of challenges during this time, and the opportunity to meet in a safe and trusted circle has proven very meaningful and helpful to many of us. We very much look forward to the day when we can light one candle together rather than our individual candles at home, but for now we are finding light in the darkness through Zoom!

Submitted by Lorna Rourke



Holy Listening Circle

Many of us yearn to hear a word from Spirit speaking to us. Such a word does not come at our bidding, but may surprise us at any time. One way of opening ourselves to Spirit's speaking is by intentionally listening for it, for example in worship, in scripture, and in words spoken by other people or the still small voice inside us.

The Holy Listening Circle is held at 11-o'clock on Sunday mornings. We listen to each other as we share our reflections on the week's scripture passage or on the Harcourt worship service. Listening to what other people have to say makes our hearing more acute for Spirit speaking to us personally.

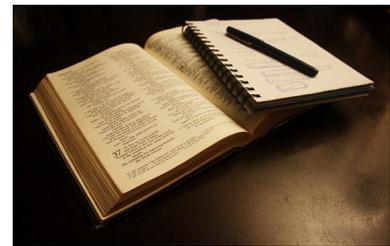
The emphasis is on respectful listening. There is no arguing and no attempt to convince one another. And there is no obligation to speak at all: some people come just to listen.

Listening is conducted in small groups of six to eight people. Each group is led by a facilitator drawn from a team of ten people who have made a commitment to this ministry. If you'd like to come along and try out the Holy Listening Circle for yourself, contact *Peter Jackson* at pdjackson@rogers.com.

An invitation to further learning

The Bible contains much wisdom, which can illuminate our lives today. There are at least three steps to accessing this wisdom:

- first, to read naively, as if the words were addressed directly to you today;
- next, to understand the author's intent in preserving the particular story for his or her community of the faithful;
- third, to re-read the story with an 'informed naivete', viewing the words through the lens of your understanding of the author's context and intent.



Through this disciplined approach, you may gain understanding of the ways in which the text speaks to your contemporary life context, if you remain open to the leading of the Holy Spirit. In doing so, you may unlearn assumptions that you have taken for granted or even have been taught about scripture. You can learn to pay attention to the specifics of the text which may be very different from the taken-for-granted or literal meaning, and to consider a possible metaphorical intent by the author.

Beginning on November 21, Spiritual Life Committee is offering a four-week study of the birth narratives in Luke's Gospel. Program leaders will be Bill Lord and Bill Chapman, each of whom is a retired ordained minister with a deep background in and commitment to adult learning. Supporting them are Peter Jackson and Marion Auger.

To register for the four week study, Saturday mornings from 10:00 to 11:00. For for more information, please contact Marion Auger at augermarion00@gmail.com.

Submitted by Peter Jackson

The Dream Factory

***“NEVER LOOK DOWN TO TEST THE GROUND
BEFORE TAKING YOUR NEXT STEP; ONLY
THEY WHO KEEP THEIR EYE FIXED ON THE
FAR HORIZON WILL FIND THEIR RIGHT ROAD.”***



These words of Dag Hammarskjold are chiseled in stone in the Chapel Of Peace on the Canadian/US border at Boissevain Manitoba and Dunseith North Dakota. His words seem counterintuitive to anyone who has hiked in Canada’s north country, where failure to look down can quickly lead to tripping on a root or rock. They will seem similarly unhelpful to church leaders carefully trying to avoid pitfalls in these tricky times.

Dag’s point, though, is a good one: we need to keep our eyes fixed on the goal toward which we are striving so that each step carries us in the desired direction. Our hope in this article is to pose questions that have the effect of lifting us to the treetops to peer toward the horizon before descending again to the arduous work of hacking a path through the tangled undergrowth.

Mainline churches have been experiencing a steady decline in average attendance and stewardship of time, talent and money for several years now. The deep change has been accelerated and accentuated by COVID-19. We are all concerned about the future of the church and it is becoming urgent that we develop a new vision, a new understanding of what it means to be the body of Christ in Guelph and in our world.

Hence, we are invited as a community of faith to ponder some new questions:

What future vision of the church are we working towards?

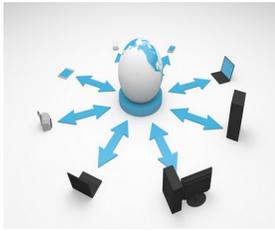
In what ways does that vision of the church differ from the past?

Are the differences about fundamental purpose and values or about how to live them out?

We invite your responses to these strategic questions, and your suggestions of better questions that deserve consideration. Please respond to pdjackson@rogers.com.

Peter Jackson and Bill Lord wrote this article and we acknowledge the inspiration and support of Bill Chapman, Joan Barham, Daniel Ganesh, Karyn Davies and Kathy Magee who convened this ad-hoc group. We named ourselves The Dream Factory, and we will be meeting again in November.

Explorations in Progressive Christianity



Looking for a safe place to sound out your doubts, share your insights, raise your faith questions? “Explorations in Progressive Christianity” meets regularly via Zoom at 10:00AM on Monday mornings. Typically, we will have individually watched an assigned YouTube video, and, on Zoom, we engage in two Rounds of sharing – just like “Holy Listening Circles.” We learn by listening to each other. We are typically around ten regulars, with a few others dropping in now and again. Recently, I asked what topics the group was interested in pursuing. Three topics rose to the surface: Christianity and World Religions, Christianity and contemporary thought, and life after death. If you are interested in trying us out, send me an email at aauger002@gmail.com and I will include you on my email list. You would then receive an invitation to the next Monday morning Zoom meeting.

Andre Auger

A tribute for Jim

Jim Ball retires on January 1 after 12 years at Harcourt. We will miss him and would like to show him how much his ministry has meant to us as individuals.

As part of the celebration of Jim’s time with us, we plan to put together a book with pictures and memories. In order to do this, we need to hear from you, the people of Harcourt. Please write a note to tell Jim how much you have appreciated his ministry. Did he provide you with counselling or support when things were tough? Did one of his messages really resonate with you? Did he offer you spiritual companionship? Do you have a funny story, a picture or a cartoon to share. Do you know someone from afar who has benefited from his ministry perhaps when a family member died?

And Jim has not done this alone. Anne has taken an active role in the life of Harcourt in Manna, the choir and as a volunteer at Chalmers Community Services. We’d like to hear how Anne has contributed to the church in ways that have affected you.

Please send your messages to Ann Middleton (famiddleton@gmail.com) or give me a call at 519-836-3033 by Nov. 20.

Ann Middleton

Joyce Kelly named Voluntary Associate Minister

Rev. Joyce Kelly has been named a Voluntary Associate Minister at Harcourt. Joyce has been an ordained minister for 40 years, serving churches large and small, mainly in Toronto Conference, with short stints in Florida and Australia. At Harcourt, Joyce expects to be involved in pastoral ministry and worship leadership as needed. In addition to all facets of ministry, she has served as a Spiritual Director for many years.



As a Voluntary Associate Minister, she – like Harcourt’s two ministers – is a member of Western Ontario Waterways, rather than the church she serves. Joyce joins Bill Lord and Debbie Shanks in this position.

Joyce and her husband, the Very Rev. Bruce McLeod, former Moderator of the United Church of Canada, moved to Guelph almost five years ago and have been attending Harcourt since then.

by Ann Middleton

Realities in the time of Covid-19

“My mother is in a nursing home. I can only see her through the window in the Commons Room. She is confused and doesn’t understand why I am not visiting her anymore, or feeding her or taking her for walks. I try and explain as best I can on the phone or even the occasional FaceTime conversation, but she just doesn’t get it. THIS ALL SEEMS SO UNFAIR. To be so isolated, and cut off and not understood. And I can’t be there to hug her and tell her that I LOVE HER”



Our lives have been forever changed and we are scrambling trying to find our way in a world that seems unfamiliar and at best awkward. Family, community, celebrations, shopping, commuting, medical appointments, work, school, etc., etc., have all been drastically altered and we have been forced to adapt as best we can.

All this is to say that we are missing huge segments of our normal activities. Even for those of us here at Harcourt. We have had to close our Sanctuary doors and worship online. Gone are the friendly morning greetings, the hugs, the how are you questions, the coffee times, the

caring groups. Gone are the counsel meetings where you could chit chat before and after and just get caught up. Gone are the choir practices, the men's group, the tai chi classes, the daycare, and here we are making the most of what we have.

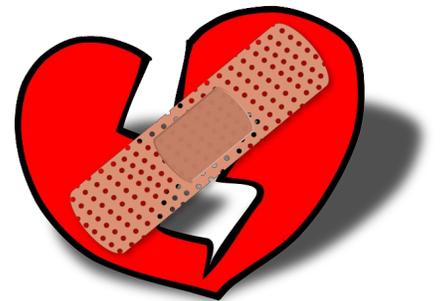
SO WHAT ARE WE TO DO WITH ALL OF THIS?

For some we have chosen to HUNKER DOWN AND RIDE OUT THE STORM as best we can, hoping that when we 'come up for air' things will have changed and gone back to the way they were. For others we have put up a TOUGH SHELL OF RESILIENCE and are moving forward and making the best of a difficult situation, but underneath wondering how long can I keep this up and where is it all leading? And then there are those of us who are honestly stepping back and saying 'I HATE EVERY BIT OF THIS AND I AM MISSING WHAT WAS! I am grieving what was familiar and life giving. I am conscious that life is changing as we speak and I am part of what is happening.

To name what has been lost, when it feels like nothing has truly died but is in limbo somewhere is very difficult and we can easily talk ourselves out of it. BUT IN FACT SOMETHING HAS DIED! SOMETHING SUBTLE YET HUGE! SOMETHING DEEP AND PERSONAL YET VAGUE AND NEBULOUS!

If we were each truly honest, what would we say we have lost?
What leaves us saddened and dispirited?
What is missing that was so familiar to us which is now gone?

To name a loss does not take away the pain or lessen the angst or even the fear, but it does affirm what we are feeling and give a name to the gut wrench that can pull us down and leave us just going through the motions of life.



What would it mean for us TO CELEBRATE all that we have experienced already in these COVID times. To SEE AND EXPERIENCE the new opportunities before us. To have learned again what home is and what a 'home cooked meal' tastes like. To savour the walks in the fall leaves, and the brilliance of the summer flowers. To come to know my partner or spouse or children in a whole new light.

In OUR LONGING FOR TOGETHERNESS as choir or even coffee time have we learned a new appreciation for relationships and the meaning of community. Has the familiar taken on a new importance. Has life become a gift rather than a taken for granted happening.

Would look forward to some shared ideas. 2014sharonchapman@gmail.com

I have to wonder in our honesty and vulnerability, we will discover a whole new experience of life in this time. COVID 19 is with us for awhile yet. None of us knows exactly what is ahead, but we can claim what we know today and what is new and fresh and life giving.

May we not be afraid to name what hurts and seems so unfair and yet also name what is life giving.

Thoughts by Sharon Chapman

Thanksgiving in a Time of Covid-19

I am writing this on the eve of Thanksgiving. Without a full family gathering. A good Thanksgiving, but incomplete. And yet, I am convinced that this Covid-19 pandemic has bestowed massive gifts upon us. Of course, in the background of these special gifts is a gratefulness for being healthy, sheltered, reasonably well-off, and... living in Canada.

But there have also been special "Covid gifts." See how this list matches yours...

One of the gifts of this pandemic for me was the realization of the value of friends. My wife and I are both introverts and prefer our own company, by and large. But we quickly realized what friends mean to us. We developed the ability to intentionally cultivate relationships with people that matter to us, with all the cautious restraints in place. Our garden faces the street; no one needs to come through our house to visit us in the garden. We had plenty of corners – both sunny and shaded – to meet in, and we could ensure all the safety measures were met. We set up a list, and began inviting people to drop over – BYO-beverage, of course. What we had taken for granted – the care and nurture of friendships that mattered – now became part of what we really paid attention to.

Another gift has been learning to see our residence as monastery rather than as prison. Of course, we couldn't engage in shopping as leisure activity or therapy. And travel was out of the question. Seeing this place as a monastery gave it a special sacredness. I have learned to appreciate our house and garden and to savour it under different weather conditions and times of the day. Each and every moment offers something to savour. I have come to content myself with the richness of what I already have and where I already am.

I also (re-)learned the Serenity Prayer – to have the courage to change what I can, the serenity to accept what I can't, and the wisdom to know the difference.

I have learned to slow down. What has struck both me and my wife is that, by slowing down, by paying attention to the detail of beauty and good fortune around us, the only attitude we know how to live by is the attitude of gratitude.

I have also learned to live in the moment. Someone advised me to stop “living among the ruins of the future.” The future is inevitably in ruin: illness, loss, and death. But the future is not: Now. My deepest spiritual task is to stay in the Now and appreciate it; savour it; celebrate it; be thankful for it. The Present is enough! Meditation, breath prayer, letting go of unhelpful thought trains...

Another gift I experience are the many opportunities to do good – even just small gestures. And these gestures start with the very community in which I live. I find myself engaging in small acts of kindness to those in my neighbourhood. People walking on the street drop in for a chat; we check in on each other to see how people are coping. Neighbours share their amenities with each other. Perhaps this is the gift of rebuilding our local communities.

Another aspect of this gift is the reminder that I have a choice: to focus on the good, the bad, and the ugly, or to pay attention to the stories of courage, self-sacrifice, loving-kindness, compassion and justice. I remain aware of the former, but give more weight to the latter.

A major gift is the opportunity to think of what a “new normal” would look like. Perhaps we can begin designing our new “normal” with a simple question: When is enough enough? Certainly our economic system says “Never!” We always have to grow. In fact economic growth seems to be the only measure industry and government know... What would a community look like which was based on a philosophy of “enoughness”?

This pandemic has also helped me focus on my responsibilities toward the society in which I live. The requirements of social distancing and wearing masks has brought out disturbing traits in a number of individuals. On the other hand, I watch as some of us re-learn what our responsibilities to our society are. Might one of the gifts of this pandemic be a rediscovery of what it requires of each of us to live in a healthy, growthful society? Might we begin to get the point that living in community requires reining in our self-centredness?

I have witnessed Canadian politicians of all stripes seeming willing to provisionally set aside their ideological platforms to focus on one thing: the Common Good. Are we learning perhaps that ideologies per se are not good grounds for governing? Politicians who succeed in this pandemic seem to be the ones who make evidence-based decisions, where science and medicine are given their due.

This pandemic has also allowed me to think seriously about what it means to be “church.” While we have people who are longing to get back into a sacred environment they associate with their faith, I am increasingly fascinated by this fact: several churches offering first-class liturgies on Sunday, are seeing “attendance” significantly exceed their regular Sunday

attendance. And I don't mean a percentage increase. I mean a manifold increase! Four and five times their regular church attendance! What is going on? There seems to be a hunger for spiritual nourishment, given this huge increase in on-line attendance at services, live and canned. THIS is our new mission field. This is our cyber-congregation: what do these seekers need? What is feeding them? How does the Church come alongside them, find out how they wish to grow in their lives, and provide them the resources they need? Should we not be facing the fact that "church" might never be the same, if this pandemic is ever over? And that this would be a good thing? This pandemic might even get us to ask the question: "What does it mean to "be Church" when we can't go back to a building?" Should we not be making plans for a radically different way of being the "Body of Christ"?

So, on the eve of this Thanksgiving, I am increasingly aware of the gifts this pandemic is offering me. We're not through this rough time. By a long shot. And I may yet get very weary of this restricted living. But right now, I am able to extend my arms and say "Thanks!"

Andre Auger



Harcourt Cares Facebook Group



Back in March, shortly after Harcourt decided to close the church building due to COVID, a few of us decided to set up a private Facebook group to help members of the Harcourt community stay connected. Inspired by CareMongering Guelph, the goal of the

Harcourt Cares Facebook group is to provide a safe space online for Harcourt folk to stay in touch during the pandemic, and to share concerns and encouragement. Currently the group has 79 members.

Over the past seven months, members of the group have shared inspirational quotes, reflections, art, poetry, music and humour. We get regular reminders of links to the weekly recorded service, and we see what MANNA has been up to. Sara Lowe regularly posts photos of the gardens and of the ongoing work by the physically-distanced-but-deeply-committed members of the Property and Community Gardens committees and other volunteers. Alison MacNeill has shared accounts of outdoor rehearsals by the choir and the Rainbow Chorus, and

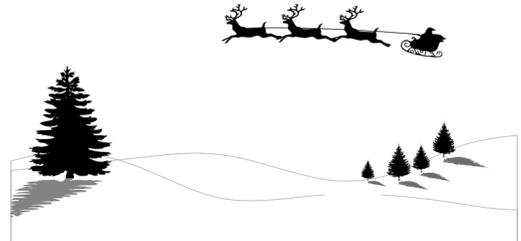
of an indoor rehearsal with a “spaced-out” Handbell Choir. Extra tomato, squash and marigold seedlings found new homes.

If you are interested in learning more, visit <https://www.facebook.com/groups/harcourtuc> or reach out to one of the administrators, Carolyn, Alison or Miriam.

Submitted by Carolyn Davidson

ALL THINGS CHRISTMAS

In this uncertain time, many have been wondering about All Thing Christmas. The short answer is YES! It will happen but differently. The sale is planned for Saturday morning November 28. We will be working on the arrangements on Thursday November 26 and Friday November 27.



Several creative volunteers have said that they will be available once again to make arrangements. Unfortunately, the casual, drop in system of volunteers we enjoyed in previous years will not work well under COVID protocol.

The committee met by zoom on October 21st to address to address logistical issues. As outlined in the October Herald, the activities will be limited to the gym, with one entrance. On the Thursday and Friday, volunteers will need to sign in and work at safe distances from each other. That means that any workers will need to let us know what times they would like to help and come for those times.

How can you contribute? ----- So glad you asked!

Please donate any plastic pots 8-10 inches in diameter that can be used for outdoor displays. Donate any potting soil you have - used or unused.

Donate any containers suitable for indoor arrangements.

AND.....

Sign up to help with the many tasks that make this event so successful.

Here is a list of our needs:

Before the Sale:

- 🌲 fill the pots with soil the week before the sale (watch for date)
- 🌲 journey to the farm to cut greenery (1/2 day)
- 🌲 cut greenery into pieces appropriate for the arrangers under their direction
- 🌲 prepare greenery stems and bundles for the do-it-yourself clients

🌲 create decorative sticks with pine cones, spray teasels , milkweed pods etc

At the Sale:

🌲 assist on the Saturday with sales (not sure what this will look like but probably take items to customers' cars, direct traffic at the door etc)

🌲 assist with clean up at noon on Saturday.

Be creative with extra things you might have around your home. At this time, we do not plan on selling treasures, but it is amazing what the designers can do with random things! We have seen arrangements incorporating a small decorative violin, skates, a broken snowshoe, a small sled etc. etc. So pass on to us those items gathering dust.

We will use Sign up Genius again to facilitate recruiting workers, OR call / email Janet Webster at 519 821-0953, or fwebst0953@rogers.com with suggestions, offers to take on a task, or to ask questions. *Thank you all.*

Submitted by Janet Webster

Church Garden Corner – Witch-Hazel, a late bloomer

What a show of fall colour this year! Is it better than usual or are we just looking at things differently? Last year on this page I was raving about the burning bush at the back door of the Greeting Area. This year it is something different, and even more interesting.



How about a tree that only flowers in the Fall, around the time the leaves are starting to turn colour? The plant with this odd reproductive strategy is our native witch-hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*). There has been some discussion on why a tree would flower now, when most other trees are shutting down for the winter. Perhaps it is to get the undivided attention of the small flies and bees that pollinate it.

Our beautiful witchhazel tree is in the Celebration Garden beside one of the red oaks near the cedar hedge. Now, towards the end of October, the flowers are still festooning the branches as the lovely yellow leaves fall all around them. In the forest, you would also see the matured capsules from last year, but for some reason our tree doesn't seem to produce any fruit. You may know of the witch-hazel as a medicine. An extract from the leaves and bark was used extensively indigenous people, and witch-hazel is now widely available in North America as a herbal medicine for a variety of uses, including skin care.

If you are looking for an interesting small tree for your own garden,

consider planting the unusual, pollinator-friendly, native witch-hazel!

Sarah Lowe

Chalmers – How are we doing?

On a recent ZOOM meeting, Cathy Taylor, executive director of the Ontario Nonprofit Network, reported that approximately 20% of Ontario's charities and not-for-profits are in danger of closing down due to the pandemic. At the onset of Covid, Trinity United's Contact Place, an emergency food pantry located in the church on Speedvale Ave. voluntarily shut down. While this was a very difficult decision on the part of Trinity, Chalmers was the recipient of several hundred pounds of food as well as a generous financial donation for which we are tremendously grateful.



People frequently ask me how Chalmers is doing and my usual answer is “we’re managing” or something like that. All of our ‘non-essential’ services – clothing, household items, mending, café mornings, knitting and conversation circles have been put on hold for the past 7+ months. We have focused solely on food distribution. Our usual choice-based model e.g. cheese or milk powder, cabbage or cucumber, has been eliminated as we bag a list of preset items. Often guests will hand back items they don’t need or want – it’s not perfect but it’s been working. Food purchases have soared as demand has increased and in-kind donations have almost dried up. Our food budget for 2020 was set at almost \$90,000 and we will spend close to \$120,000. Fortunately we have been blessed with an outpouring of financial support from individual supporters as well as from organizations – the United Way, Guelph Community Foundation and the City of Guelph have all donated emergency funds. So we expect to break even for the year but are anxiously looking to 2021.

I mentioned non-essential services offered by Chalmers. For many people these can be a lifeline for those who have become even more marginalized during Covid. People want to know when we can offer coffee, snacks and conversation or when they can get clothing fixed. Unfortunately we are not able to accommodate them at this point.

The cold weather is just about here so we are making plans to have guests come into both our downtown and west locations probably by early November. Obviously we must do this safely and efficiently so numbers will be strictly limited at any one time but it is a small step towards re-establishing the relationships we wish to maintain with our guests.

Thank you to all those Harcourt folk who have supported us over the years and especially during this time. Your help is tremendously appreciated by guests, staff and volunteers.

Peter Gill

Things I Miss during Covid Time:

The Prayer Circle, Wellington Park Retirement Residence

As a member of the Spiritual Life Committee, twice a year for three years I had the privilege of leading a wonderful gathering at Wellington Park Retirement Residence on Janefield Avenue. We called it our Prayer Circle, but it was often fondly referred to as our Heart Group. Different from Bible Study, it was a chance for residents to share the experience of living their lives as Christians, to deepen their relationships with God and with each other. It started with a faithful group of residents who were Harcourt members, but quickly expanded (as many Harcourt activities do) to include anyone who wanted to join the circle. The group adopted the Sacred Listening format that allowed each person to be heard and respected. It was such a gift to share in the stories of lives filled with love, trauma, faithful church affiliation, loss and joy. In every session, there was a palpable sense of Spirit in their care and concern for each other, their laughter and their wisdom.



Our last session in December 2019 focused on “Exploring Advent Together”. It was a meaningful and touching journey through remembered traditions, and changes in practices, understanding and relationships. We had plans to meet again in Spring 2020, to continue in our well established (and well attended) six-week series. This plan, of course, was one of the many beloved worship experiences that had to be cancelled when Covid 19 arrived. I miss sharing time with this incredible group, and look forward to once again lighting the Christ candle with them and seeing its light reflected in their lives and hearts.

Kathy Magee

Staying Close to My Harcourt Family

In March when the Covid-19 pandemic hit us, I was very concerned about how we might stay emotionally close while maintaining safe physical distancing. For thirty-nine years I have attended Harcourt, and the nine o'clock service in particular has been such a community of support for me. I was uneasy about the changes that would be inevitable. I would miss the informal conversations before and after the service, and the hugs. As the weeks and months have unfolded, I have been very impressed with the energy and effort that many Harcourt people have put into helping us all to stay close. When I learned that the church building would be closed for all three of our Sunday Church services, I was sad but I innately knew that church is not the building, but rather the people. I enjoyed the virtual shared Gum led services in the summer time, but I was glad to have our own ministers back to lead us in September. Miriam, Jim and Alison have done a great job learning technology and delivering an on-line

weekly worship experience that is very similar in form and content to our in-person services. It has been so nice to see the easily recognizable faces of greeters and readers, and to hear the voices of familiar singers, bell ringers and choir members. With the technical support of Alison and Shaina Ensing, the recorded services have enabled us to feel the connection and be challenged by a message that becomes homework for our week. Since these services are pre-recorded one can listen to them on-line, whenever one has the time, and from wherever location one might be.

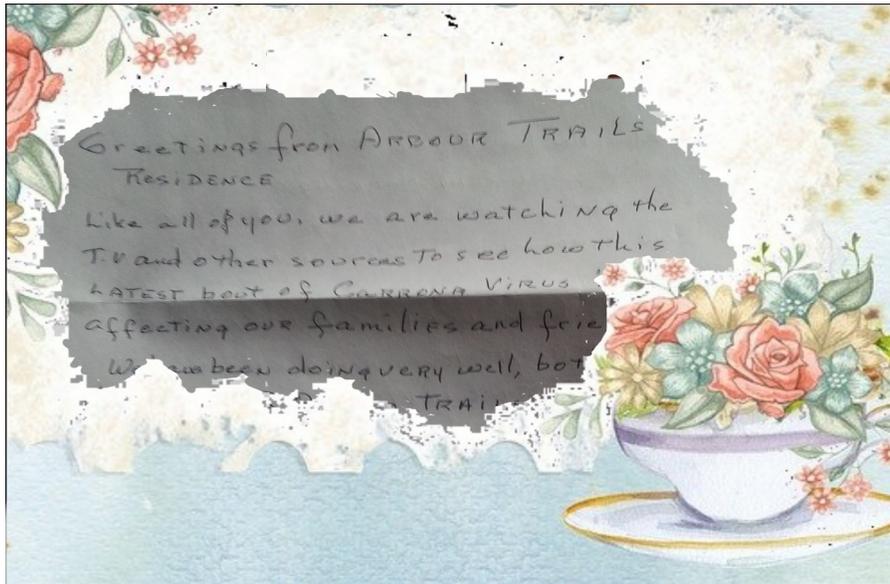
The second part of my weekly spiritual practise has been prioritizing my attendance with the Holy Listening Circle. This is certainly my service after the service... Part Two. This circle sharing time that the Spiritual Life Committee routinely provided after the nine o'clock service, is now a regular and popular activity for many people to attend by Zoom at 11:00.



Eight months ago, I had never heard of Zoom and I did not want to be thrust into the arms of technology, but by accepting to stay in the flow of change it has become a very rich gathering. The sessions are intentionally designed to follow a format where there can be understanding, validation, and care rather than debate, criticism or judgment. Only one person at a time is unmuted and all others are tasked to be attentive listeners. Everyone is allowed to pass or share what is on their minds and their hearts; their ponderings, questions and worries. There have been several new people willing to help facilitate the small breakout groups and the level of sharing about the scripture passages or the services has been intimate and meaningful. What could have been an empty minimal space has been filled with rich scriptures, prayers, messages, reflections, insights, and tender compassion. Church was not on hold. This is flow and we, as a Christian community of seekers, are choosing to move with it and be with what is happening.

In this transitional space we have had to make peace with not knowing what is coming next, or when. We can commend ourselves for accepting the invitation to surrender and to stay together. We have accepted an invitation to give over to Something larger than ourselves, and to trust that we will be held and supported in whatever we need in order to navigate the uncertainty. This faith community called Harcourt has not dissolved. We have been given an opportunity to explore and have conversations about embracing the Mystery and the power of transition from what has been, to what might yet be. Transformation seems to happen when we are not in charge. Perhaps it can't ever happen when we are holding on to control.
Humbly submitted by Sandy Phair

Greetings from Arbour Trails Residence



Like all of you, we are watching the TV and other sources to see how this latest bout of Coronavirus is affecting our families and friends.

We have been doing very well, both in the Village of Arbour Trails and our other building, Ailsa Craig.

Most of our activities have been cancelled but we still enjoy some lovely walks to see the gorgeous trees, coloured in their autumn glory.

We have been requested that visits be restricted unless necessary (i.e., medical, etc.). Several times our bus has taken a few of us to see the changing colours and to get a break driving in the countryside known so well by our bus driver. Our chaplain has tried to have a short service on Sunday morning on different floors where we can sing a few hymns, which of course is a delight to me.

It has been very important that we don't visit too many people as in the visiting we may pick up the virus and the whole place will be quarantined. Of course we miss you all.

We realize we are not unique in our isolation and like everyone else we are looking forward to being together again.

Thanks for the weekly envelopes with news of the church and copy of the sermon.

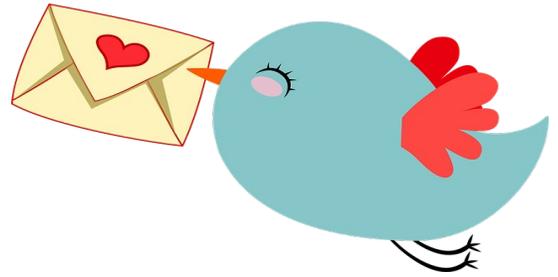
God bless you all. Hugh Rose sends his wishes as well.

God bless you all,

Fran [Matheson]

Letter from Joan Bowland

Marion asked me if I would like to share a few thoughts about how the Covid virus has changed my life.



I was three when the Second World War began, living in England. In some ways Covid reminds me of that time. I remember my parents being anxious and uncertain of what was ahead of us. I sometimes get that feeling now, but I know that this will pass, and we all have to do our part in staying safe and healthy.

In the beginning my family did not want me to go out. They said they would do my shopping for me, and I needed to isolate! Then a very kind neighbour offered to do my shopping when he was doing his own so I accepted. It felt like a holiday: no commitments; I could just do whatever I wanted, when I felt like it. That was good for a few days, but I was missing seeing my friends, and having a reason to get up in the morning.

I began calling friends just to keep in touch; that helped but I still miss the face to face visits. I go for a walk every day, for fresh air and exercise: got to keeping moving.

We have managed a few face to face visits outside, which have been good, and I did start doing my own shopping a few months ago. That was stressful the first few times till I got the routine worked out. I did not want to make any mistakes!

Now that the cooler weather is here we are having to work out how we can visit and keep everyone safe. This is a challenge we are all dealing with, I know.

The Harcourt weekly services have been a highlight for me; it is helping me to feel a part of the Harcourt community still, even though we are not able to be there in person.

I have been keeping in touch with my siblings in England through Messenger, WhatsApp and the phone. We are fortunate to have access to all of this technology. Unfortunately, Zoom is still giving me trouble, but I am still working on it!

Maybe I can put in a little plug for the Prayer Shawl Ministry. We are still knitting away at home. If anyone is in need of a shawl, or you know someone who should have one, please call Wendy in the Office and she would tell you how to go about getting one.

Blessings,

Joan Bowland

Lila Engberg – An extraordinary life

Lila Engberg was the granddaughter of Swedish pioneers who settled southwest of Edmonton at the end of the 19th century. Her mother remembered making the trip to their 160-acre tract of land as a five-year-old child. The family of 11 arrived in Leduc on an immigrant train from the US. Since there were no roads, they walked 14 miles to their unbroken farm, accompanied by their cattle and horses and a wagonful of household goods. Many Swedish farmers were lured from the border states by the promise of free land in the Canadian west at the time.



Lila was born on the Engberg farm on April 24, 1923. The only girl in a family with four children, she helped her mother churn butter, bake bread, preserve fruits and vegetables and make wool-lined quilts for their unheated bedrooms.

A good student, she was dispatched to Normal School in Edmonton to become a teacher. Lila recalled in her memoir that she was not given a choice in the matter of profession. During her training, she was sent to a one-room school in northern Alberta for the months of January to March. There she was horrified to find she would be sharing the bed of her landlady.

After four years of teaching, Lila went to the University of Alberta where she obtained a degree in home economics which opened the door to a career that empowered women in Africa, Asia and South America. Through the University of Guelph and Mount St. Vincent University in Halifax, she worked in Ghana and Malawi where she helped develop degree programs to benefit women and children and developed extension programs to allow women to become leaders in their communities. She also worked with the FAO and the UN in countries around the world.

Lila's many adventures in Africa included a road trip in a Toyota Tercel from Malawi to Victoria Falls, then south to the Drakensberg Mountains in South Africa by way of Zambia, Zimbabwe and Botswana. On the long pot-holed road into Lusaka, Lila and her friend were stopped repeatedly by soldiers. "What have you got for me?" they asked. "What did we have?" asks Lila in her memoir. "With fear and trembling we gave away our food, a bit at a time, including a cake – tin and all," she recalls. For the return trip they bought cigarettes. To their surprise, although the pot holes remained, the road blocks had disappeared.

Many of us knew Lila in the last quarter of her long life, when she was retired from the University of Guelph, living in a house at the Village on the Green and later at Wellington Park surrounded by the art treasures she collected during her professional life – carvings and paintings, textiles and pottery. Many of these artifacts were sold in 2011 when she moved to her retirement home, raising thousands of dollars for the Stephen Lewis Foundation.

Although Lila became much more active at Harcourt after her return from Africa, she was involved in the life of the congregation from 1957 when she joined the choir at the Brooklyn Mission. Later she was a member of Dancing with Scriptures and Mindstretch as well as the Women's Spirituality Group. The passion for social justice nurtured in Africa and while doing her PhD studies at Cornell during the Vietnam War blossomed in her work with Harcourt's chapter of Kairos, an inter-faith advocacy group working for a better world.

Lila had a gift for friendship. She kept up with her African and expat companions to the end of her life. She treasured the ministers at Harcourt and the friends with whom she travelled in countries around the world and close to home. She cherished those who brought her watermelon and peaches in her retirement home and rescued her in medical emergencies, the bringer of books and chocolate bars, those who shared meals with her, did her shopping and took her to appointments, the friend who played board games and the friend who gave her Deedle, her much loved cat.

Although Lila travelled far from her Alberta home, she was graced with "family" around the world. In particular, Doug and Vera Pletsch, friends from Ghana days in the 1970s, surrounded Lila with love for 45 years, caring for her tenderly at the end of her life. A day before she died, friends from Harcourt visited and sang the 23rd Psalm for her. The psalm was read again at her graveside at the Engberg plot in Alberta. Then her family gathered for a last farewell at the farm where she was born 97 years ago.

Over the past few years, Lila wrote her memoirs with the support of Ilona Dobos. Excerpts from her final words follow.

Letter to God

*I know you God and feel you around me keeping me in good spirits and well, and protected always. Thank you! Although I have aching bones and back, I feel blessed. I am so grateful to have found this place within me which keeps me so well! I look forward to each day even though I cannot participate in activities which require my hearing. Being able to see and read is a gift – a great gift from you, God. And I can see and enjoy the treetops, summer and winter – outside my window. I am grateful to have this view. When I am here inside my two rooms I am grateful for the collection of pictures I have hanging on my walls and my collection of artifacts. You have helped me see the beauty in each, and the memory each represents – every day. Oh God, help us to love one another – stranger and friend, and bring peace in our fractured world. Help us take care of our environment and all that lives on our earth – a place of wonder!
Love, Lila*

Lila died on September 23, 2020. Her obituary is available at <https://www.guelphtoday.com/obituaries/engberg-lila-2740585> Sections of her memoir were published in the Harcourt Herald in September and November of 2019.

By Ann Middleton

Majd Kabbani – An LGBTQ refugee sponsored by the GUM churches in Guelph



Majd is a talented, engaging, outgoing fellow who came to Canada as an LGBTQ refugee. Majd is a Syrian guy who was born in Saudi Arabia while his parents were working there as teachers. They moved back to Syria since he was three years old and grew up there. After he graduated from University specialized in Financial & Banking Sciences, he moved to the United Arab of Emirates to start his career

in banks and insurance.

This refugee sponsorship received funding from the Canadian Government's IRCC programme, from GUM United Churches, a Jewish Foundation in Toronto, as well as generous donations from individual folks. A benefit concert which raised \$2, 200 was held at Dublin in February, 2020 and featured the Rainbow Chorus among other groups. Many from Harcourt attended and donated baking which was sold after the concert itself.

Majd arrived in Guelph in August 2019 and was billeted at our house for a week before he moved to an Airbnb housing where he stayed for couple of months. After that, He found a furnished basement apartment and has remained there until his upcoming move to Mississauga. Although he is moving cities, he really hopes to stay in touch with people here.

In Guelph, Majd studied English to hone his skills and very much enjoyed his participation in the Rainbow Chorus where he sang in the bass section. Majd had a summer job as Customer Service Representative here in Guelph, and in November he will move to a shared apartment in Mississauga near Square One. He is doing an online programme in Automotive Business at Automotive Business School of Canada, Georgian College and is getting some OSAP funding.

Overall, it was a successful sponsorship and GUM is hoping to sponsor other refugees in the future.

Submitted by Arlene Davies-Fuhr

Adopt-a-Family Program:

The Children's Foundation of Guelph is planning to continue the Adopt-a-Family Christmas Program again this year but it will look quite different due to the pandemic. The entire program will be done with gift cards this year. In past years, I have collected money to buy cards , or collected cards you have bought and delivered them to the Children's Foundation. With the pandemic, I will not be able to do that for you this year, but you are still able to donate money or gift



cards on your own. Your generosity has been appreciated in past years, and the need is even more this year.

You can purchase cards on your own (suggested cards are: grocery cards, Shoppers, Walmart, Stone Road Mall cards, and Tim Hortons cards) and deliver them to the Children’s Foundation, or you can go online and donate money for them to buy cards. If you do not have a computer to make a donation, money or a cheque can be delivered to the Children’s Foundation on Waterloo Avenue. If you are unable to get out to buy or deliver money or cards, let me know and I can arrange to go to your place to pick it up and deliver it. Tax receipts are issued for donations of \$20 or more.

Merrill Pierce smpierce@sympatico.ca 519-836-8867

Community News Digest

Gratitude Is in the Air as Churches Honour Frontline Workers

From signs and social media posts to homemade thank-you cards, United Churches across the country are finding inspiring ways to express appreciation to front-line workers. Some are turning up the volume to express thanks and inviting neighbours to join in to

make a joyful noise. Uniting people around gratitude—a key component of stewardship—is one way congregations are living out their call to be the church. <https://www.united-church.ca/stories/gratitude-air-churches-honour-frontline-workers>



Youth and Young Adults Rendez-vous Digitally

Rendez-vous 2020 Reimagined, held August 11–14, was much like a face-to-face event. There were engaging keynote speakers, lively worship sessions, home groups, a service project, as well as workshops and spiritual practice sessions too numerous to list. Each morning started with Teachings by Elders, and each evening ended with a fun social time. Photos were shared, chats occurred, and exhibits viewed. Some people participated from home, others took part while camping, and some joined in from their church parking lots. More than 480 young people attended the various activities over the course of the event.

<https://www.united-church.ca/stories/youth-and-young-adults-rendez-vous-digitally>

The North End Harvest Market

A free fruit and vegetable market intended to support low income families and individuals to meet their healthy food needs. The Market is open on Wednesday nights from 6:00 to 7:30 at the small parking lot beside Waverley Drive School at 140 Waverley Drive. In bad weather it will be held at Portable # 6. Primary funding for the Market has been generously donated by Guelph United Ministries, an umbrella organization of Guelph's United churches and ministries. Other local groups that support the market are Guelph Neighbourhood Support Coalition, Chalmers Community Services Centre, Trinity United church, Holy Rosary Church, New Life Church, Waverley and Brant Neighbourhood Groups, and the Upper Grand District School Board. <https://www.guelphunited.org/program/north-end-harvest-market>

Pathways to Good Climate Living

Pathways to Good Climate Living uses collaboration and group knowledge building to explore and adopt actions that individuals can take to address climate change. Participants periodically get together online by Zoom. Each participant chooses an area to act on, shares it with the group, and then take specific actions, mutually supporting each other to achieve the individual goals. Participants in a recent group of travellers to good climate living found the experience to be very motivating, supportive, and hopeful. Hearing from others is very enlightening. Areas of interest to reduce climate impacts include: home energy use, food sources, transportation, consumption, finances and investment, and civic participation. <https://www.guelphunited.org/program/pathways-to-good-climate-living-1>

Loyola House to be repurposed to solve the housing problem of homeless during the pandemic

Starting next month, adults staying at the Holiday Inn will be transitioned to Loyola House. Under this pilot, the county is working alongside the Welcome In Drop In Centre, the Guelph Community Health Centre, Ignatius Jesuit Centre, Stonehenge Therapeutic Community and Canadian Mental Health Association of Waterloo-Wellington "to safely support individuals accommodated at the LHSTAP transition into permanent housing solutions." Under this new model, the county says individuals who are on-site will have "a safe place to stay; access 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; on-site health care support; (and) case management to find permanent housing." <https://www.guelphmercury.com/news-story/10220279-wellington-county-to-set-up-temporary-supportive-housing-in-north-guelph/>

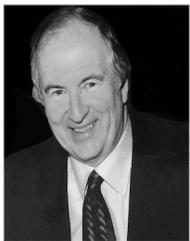
Don't just collect Milk bags ... weave mats or crochet fashion bags ...

For quite some time, all across Canada, a community of volunteers, schools, churches and businesses have been collecting milk bags. The milk bags used are the ones that hold the three smaller bags of milk. The bags are cut into strips, tied together, and then woven or crocheted into mats, stuffed into mattresses, woven into handbags, etc. These are all packaged and sent to needy countries. If you're curious about this project, contact Milkbags Unlimited, or visit their website: <https://milkbagsunlimited.ca/home/>

Passages



David Hoeg, son of Kent and Heather Hoeg, passed away on October 10, 2020. Please hold his family and friends in heart and prayer as they grieve his loss. The family will hold a private ceremony. Arrangements entrusted to the WALL-CUSTANCE FUNERAL HOME & CHAPEL, 519-822-0051 or wallcustance.com – Condolences can be sent to the family via the funeral home website below David's notice.



David Murray, proud father of Heather, Rob, and Harcourt's Deb Murray, beloved husband of Ann, died October 7, 2020. David was a well known historian, writer and former dean of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Guelph. The Murrays moved to Guelph in 1967 when David began his career at the university.

We share with you the news that **Bob Sheard** passed away on October 21, 2020. Please hold his family and friends in heart and prayer as they grieve his loss.

Postscript from the Chair of Communication

Keeping engaged in our Harcourt Family during COVID -19

While many of us are zooming in various groups and using other virtual ways of connecting with families and friends, are you, like me, feeling the absence of being with our Harcourt family members – in the flesh?

It is sooo much harder to know what is happening in our Harcourt family when we are not physically together on a Sunday. While we are aware of deaths in our Harcourt family through the Harcourt E-Letter, where else are you finding out about what is happening at Harcourt?. Do you know what is going on?

One of the key ways we have of sharing our thoughts is through the monthly Harcourt Herald. When was the last time you sent “something” to be published in the Herald?

While it is expected that committees, council and ministers, will always send an update for every Herald to keep us all informed, there is much more happening that we don't know about. The Herald is for all of us to express our thoughts in, cartoons, poems, critiques, experiences, photographs..... It is for all of us to share our bit of the Harcourt family news. Marion Auger is our new editor and her team of Ann Middleton and Julie Henshaw are already ensuring that there will be an interview and news about MANNA in every Herald. Think if there is another news niche that you might want to send to Marion each month! The more contributing journalists, the better!.

We welcome your news to keep our Harcourt family aware of each other's real life experiences and to remain strongly connected during these physically distanced times. But it does take family members' contributions for this to happen.

Ever needed to buy a new computer because it crashed in the middle of an important Zoom meeting, again, and then finding out that all your past e-mails were not on your new computer – yikes! Or how about the joy of having 21 family members spread out in Brazil, Boulder, Princeton, London England, and Ottawa on a Zoom call together at Thanksgiving? Just wonderful! Two of my experiences in the last two weeks. Let's get to know each other through the Harcourt Herald!

Joan Barham, Communications

