

The Harcourt Herald January 2021

The Life and Work of
Harcourt United Church





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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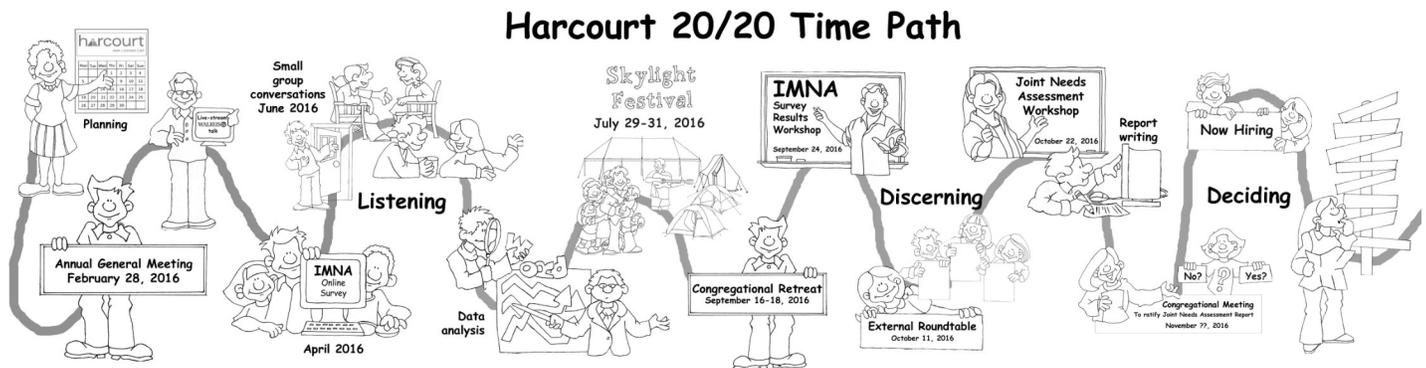


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The Minister's Quill by Rev. Miriam Flynn

Ten years ago British singer-songwriter Jamie Lawson captured listeners' ears and hearts with a song about the unexpected grace and sorrow of a couple's shared life journey. The song was called *I Wasn't Expecting That*. It seems to me that song might serve as the anthem of a decade. The title could certainly be a thematic refrain for all that has transpired in the wider world since I began my ministry with Harcourt almost five years ago. I recall speaking at the Harcourt Men's Breakfast the morning after Hillary Clinton lost the American presidential election. We saw an unexpected bump in church attendance in the early part of 2017. It was as though the inauguration of a more cynical era left liberals of faith scratching their collective heads in anxious wonder about what the world was coming to – as though people released a collective spiritual sigh: *I wasn't expecting that!*



When I first came to Harcourt the congregation was engaged in a discernment and visioning process dubbed “Harcourt 20/20.” This produced a sound analysis of congregational need and introduced the ambitious aspirational goal of embracing radical change. But “Harcourt 20/20” did not, and could not, anticipate the ways in which radical change would be thrust upon us, and indeed, upon the entire world, as the year 2020 actually unfolded. As Australian futurist-speaker and facilitator Alex Hagan has put it: “For all the talk of 2020 Vision over the past few years, it turns out we had some pretty significant cataracts.”

At Harcourt, 2020 proved to be a year of remarkable adaptation to radical change as three on-site Sunday worship experiences found new expression in virtual form. Bible study, prayer groups, Council, committees, coffee time and progressive Christian discussion groups all found alternative means of connecting via “Zoom.”

Low tech means of networking proved crucial as well. Harcourt’s Neighbourhood Hosts, organized by Lynn Hancock to provide information necessary for updating our directory, served as communication conduits in the early days of the pandemic, reaching out to congregation members and adherents by telephone just after Easter. This allowed us to identify people who were unable to connect virtually and to offer them the option of receiving a weekly mailing, including newsletters, prayers and occasional copies of the Sunday message.

As 2020 drew to a close, Harcourt said “good-bye and God bless” to Rev. Jim Ball who retired after serving this community of faith for twelve years. Jim’s inspirational preaching and storytelling, his pastoral presence and strategic vision will all be missed. We at Harcourt will also miss Anne Ball’s presence and ministry among us, particularly as a leader of our alternative, inter-generational “community within a community” known as MANNA. Anne’s creative spark, child-wise instincts, genuine interest in the people around her and willingness to pitch in and help wherever needed, added much to our leadership circle. I knew I would miss my partner in ministry when he left, but as to the mix of emotions that would flood me in the days leading to Jim’s retirement...well, *I wasn't expecting that*. As a colleague and friend, Jim has been an empathetic listener, a mentor, a collaborator, co-conspirator and *comrade-in-peace*. I will miss our debates and shared commiserations and most of all, the laughter that graced our team ministry, as soul-quenching as rain showers in a dry season.

And the occasion of Jim's retirement has initiated, once again, a time of future-gazing for Harcourt, as we assess needs and listen to where the Spirit calls us to be the body of Christ in the time to come. Our inability to fully anticipate the duration, effect and implications of the pandemic for our lives and the life of our community of faith, implies the need to approach "long term planning" with humility. But our lived experience as a congregation who have responded to the unexpected with resilience, imagination and faith, gives us confidence.

Nostalgia for a time that will not return is unlikely to be helpful, but remembering our shared story is essential. Lofty visions with time-frames equal to "forever" are unlikely to be useful, but remembering our purpose is vital. We may not be able to see the highway's end, but we may anticipate what lies beyond the next bend and embrace the forward journey with the hopeful anticipation and daring plans worthy of God's people on the move.

Epiphany comes to the wise, not because they have planned more thoroughly, but because they have the faith to follow a star. Security comes to the wise, not from the voice of authority, but the advice of a dream.

Christ is not found at the nexus of the magi's perfect calculations, but in the place where they find themselves *overwhelmed by joy*. That is where the star stops and God is revealed to the wise. Just as disappointment and sadness can catch us unaware, so too can revelation and grace. Our destination of encounter with Christ cannot be perfectly plotted or predicted but it can be faithfully pursued. And when we have arrived at our intended destination, we should not be surprised to hear ourselves joyfully exclaim: *I wasn't expecting that!*



By Roz Stevenson

Letter from the Editor's Desk.

Thanks to Wendy and Shaina, this Herald is appearing before Christmas!



We are facing a Christmas in a very unsure world right now... Not at all the Christmas we normally look forward to. As Rev Miriam said: “We weren’t expecting this.” However, the Christmas message is still the same: Be not afraid” and “Peace on Earth”. May it be so!

Thank you, Peter Gill, for your Letter to the Editor last month. Yes, the Herald is becoming very bulky – it is, after all, one of the very few communication tools Harcourt has that reaches out to (hopefully) all Harcourt members.

The print copies available for pick-up are a small step to help those who are not comfortable reading the Herald online. I have also added a searchable index to the online version so you can go directly to the articles that matter most to you.

As for your suggestion of shorter weekly issues, I need to think a bit more about this. I suspect it’s more work than I can put into it right now.

In the meantime I ask that contributors work toward short, precise submissions, if at all possible.

In this issue we will have articles that look forward to “new beginnings,” to our wishes and hopes, but also some that maybe look backwards and assess how these times have changed us.

Again, a very good Christmas and a better 2021 to all. Marion

Letter to the Editor

Joan Barham

The Harcourt Herald is a key way for Harcourtians to keep in touch with the thriving life of Harcourt especially during COVID – 19. Thank you to all those who contribute and intentionally keep us “in the loop” with respect to the vital work you are doing. Letters to the Editor enable our various opinions and thoughts to be expressed. Let your voice be heard!!



MANNA

Pamela Girardi.

2020 has brought many changes for Manna. Instead of gathering in the Friendship room, we have been gathering together in our home on zoom, and in the gardens outside of Harcourt. There is a lot that we miss about being together, but there have been amazing new blessings in this time too!



It has been a gift to worship together from our homes. At first, every Manna service on zoom ended with show-and-tell! Manna kids were excited to show their Lego creations, baking, stuffies, and things around their home. There has been something special about sharing communion from our couches. We've shared highs and lows of navigating this unknown and challenging time over glasses of wine and tea. Manna has provided community and a bit of normalcy during a year with so many changes.

As we rolled into May, Merrill got out her bike! We started to drop off craft kits, treats, communion and other supplies for Manna at peoples homes. Merrill would bike around town and drop off packages on door steps. "Merrill's Magic Bike" became a thread that wove us together. We had a common craft or snack to share during our Sundays. Through the fall and now into Advent we have many people volunteering to bake, create, and drive around town to spread this kind of cheer to one another. For Halloween, Laura Hofer and Isaac Hofer dressed up and sneakily dropped off a bag of treats for all the Manna kids!



The fall brought chances to be outside and see one another's masked faces. We sat on blankets in the garden and heard Shannon, Jerry and Phil's music live. We could see the inches taller our kids had grown.



We were able to walk the Advent Spiral as we normally do. These things that were so normal last year are things we treasure in a new way now.

We are so grateful for the amazing passion and creativity of our ministers and lay leaders this year. The challenge of engaging all ages through zoom is one that they have met with love, thoughtfulness, and amazing adaptability. We are also grateful for our Manna children who now lead us in reading, singing and sharing. Their voices and gifts add so much to our worship!

Our greatest challenge as we look to the new year is that Jim and Anne are heading into their retirement together. Manna is losing both an amazing minister and lay leader.

Anne has volunteered many times a month for Manna these years. She has brought her teaching passion into our services, helping us know how to best serve our younger ages. She is full of creativity, joy, kindness and laughter. Anne has connected us to Chalmers and our larger Guelph community - passing on her values of service and social justice. Anne's presence will be so very missed.



Jim's ministry, deep listening and creativity imagined Manna into being. He has mentored and encouraged the Manna community - from lay leaders creating worship to our musicians to our children serving communion. He has found words of prayer, ritual and ways of sharing our stories that are meaningful for all ages. He listened carefully to the interests of the community and wove them into worship. He has also brought his passions for reconciliation, justice, history, science, art and music into Manna, along with his joy for community, playing, being outside, and making and sharing food.

Manna will not be the same without you, Jim and Anne. We are ever grateful to you ministries with Manna!!!

Council News

Lorraine Holding, Council Chair

It's December 19 and snow is falling. Interesting – that's the same first sentence that I wrote one year ago. How times, the world and Harcourt have changed since then!

As we begin a new year, our community of faith enters a new phase in our ministry together. Here are a few updates to give an overview of the month(s) ahead.

Short-term Staffing Plan

As recommended by the Transition Steering Team, approved by Council and supported by Ministry & Personnel Committee, our three-pronged approach to staffing various roles is proceeding. This approach will provide flexibility to test potential scenarios that might evolve during our discernment time. Decision-making about a future staffing model will likely take up to a year.

Rather than looking for a full-time Supply Minister appointment, these steps are being implemented to begin as early as possible in January.

- **Three temporary part-time contracts:** Search is underway for a **Supply Minister for Pastoral Care** (20 hrs/week) and a **MANNA Lead Coordinator** (15 hrs/week). An additional **Worship, Communication & Technical Support Assistant** (15 hrs/week) will begin on January 6.
- **Supply preachers/speakers** will participate in pre-recorded worship services every other week while Miriam continues her rotation with MANNA. The schedule is already filled until Easter.
- Our **Voluntary Associate Ministers and other lay leaders** will assist with special pastoral roles in which they have expressed interest (coordination of pastoral care initiatives, graveside services or weddings).

Our Discernment Process

Designing our discernment process is the second task of the Transition Steering Team. Participation in planning our future is essential. We want to involve as many Harcourt folks as possible over the coming months.

- A first round of conversations will be held on Zoom from January 24 to February 6. Watch for more details about afternoon and evening opportunities.
- A second round of conversations will be held in the spring.

Naturally, as a partner in Guelph United Ministries (GUM), some wonder how our Harcourt process could interact with our sister churches. Two conversations hosted by GUM, and facilitated by Rev. Dr. Paul Miller, will take place February 18-24 and March 16-24. Read the details in this newsletter about "COVID Conversations – Challenges and Opportunities". We encourage a broad cross-section from Harcourt to participate.

Impact of COVID-19

The Re-entry Planning Group is carefully watching local public health advisories to determine if any changes to our protocols are required. If another closure of our building is required, we will take the necessary steps to ensure the safety of all.

Annual Meeting Date Changed to Sunday, March 7

Council will plan a virtual Congregational Annual Meeting, another new experience. Watch for details.

May we venture into 2021 with good health, energy, faith and hope.

Annual Report Submissions

To the Harcourt Team Leaders, Committee Chairs and Coordinators of Groups at Harcourt:



The end of the year is rapidly approaching and with it comes the task of assembling Harcourt's Annual Report. Please submit a brief report including some of the highlights of 2020 to Wendy at office@harcourtuc.ca before Jan 15, 2021. Beat the rush and submit your report early!

Guelph United Ministries: "Covid Conversations – Challenges and Opportunities"

Lorraine Holding

The impact of Covid 19 has been truly universal. Everyone without exception has been touched by it. And Covid has profoundly changed our churches. Some of those changes will be permanent, affecting how we gather, how we worship, how we plan, how we use our buildings.

You are invited to participate in two online "Covid Conversations" where together we will look at the changes our churches have had to make, the lessons we are learning, and what church life after Covid may look like.

Please note: These conversations are intended for everyone, not just for your church's leaders. Your voice is needed to discern how best to respond to those changes as we prepare for a post-Covid future.

Each conversation is offered on multiple dates. Please select one date for each.

Conversation One: *Where are we? What has changed? What has stayed the same?*

Dates: (Choose one.)

Thursday, February 18 7:00 – 8:30 p.m.

Sunday, February 21 2:00 – 3:30 p.m.

Tuesday, February 23 2:00 – 3:30 p.m.

Wednesday, February 24 7:00 – 8:30 p.m.

Conversation Two: *What lies ahead? What is essential to being the church? Possibilities and Opportunities.*

Dates: (Choose one.)

Tuesday, March 16 2:00 – 3:30 p.m.

Thursday, March 18 7:00 – 8:30 p.m.

Sunday, March 21 2:00 – 3:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 24 7:00 – 8:30 p.m.

All conversations will be on Zoom. They will be facilitated by Rev. Dr. Paul Miller who has been working as a consultant with Guelph United Ministries. Links will be provided a week before the event.

You will receive instructions on how to sign up in Harcourt's e-weekly news.

Communicating Your Thoughts in 2021

Joan Barham

2021 will be an important year for the Harcourt congregation to collectively share their thoughts and decide where our future lies.

Opportunities are coming for you to engage and put your two cents worth into our path forward.

The "COVID" year has opened up many opportunities for Harcourt. It has been a year of immense activity for Council, Committees and Groups and reorganizing to ensure inclusiveness for those without internet access when Harcourt became an online church and our building was locked down.

Be sure to participate and shape our future among the many opportunities we have. It is an exciting opportunity to consider how we can now enrich our way of following Jesus in a post COVID future which now offers new opportunities. Bring your thoughts and prayers as we, together, move forward.

News from M&P

Sandra Welch

Casey Connor will join the Harcourt team on January 6th, 2021 in her role of Worship, Communications & Technical Support Assistant. Casey's responsibilities include providing technical assistance to Shaina Ensing and the Worship team; videotaping ministers, lay liturgists and guest speakers in preparation of pre-recorded services and act as the Zoom host for funerals and events.

Casey has provided a brief bio below.

Hello everyone! I'm so enthused to be joining the team at Harcourt and working with Shaina. My name is Casey Connor, and I'm from Burlington. I recently graduated from the University of Guelph's Psychology program, and I loved it so much here I decided to stay. Fun fact about me: I was a legislative page at Queen's Park in eighth grade! Really, google it! I'm excited to meet you all and help you with your tech needs!"



Items from Harcourt stored in Terry and Dot Daynard's barn

Dave Hume

Four members of Harcourt Property Committee went to Daynard's farm on Paisley Road. The visit was arranged to investigate and record the stored items and how we could remove them. The items stored are as follows:

One small oak pew, four straight pews, steel roofing panels, a dining room table with 2 drop-side leaves and two middle leaf extensions,

Church members are invited to place bids on these items to dhume@uoguelph.ca.



One small oak pew. 54" wide and 18" deep.
With a divider for two people.



Four straight pews
(4 seats and 4 backs,
no ends or braces underneath).
Each blonde oak set is 9 feet long.



Steel roofing panels. Each panel is about 18" wide. Twelve are 21.5 feet long, one piece 20 feet long, one 15 feet long, and one 13 feet long. There are also about 20 steel edge trim pieces, each about 12 feet long. (Total of 459 sq. ft of steel roofing painted red)



A dining room table with 2 drop-side leaves
and two middle leaf extensions.

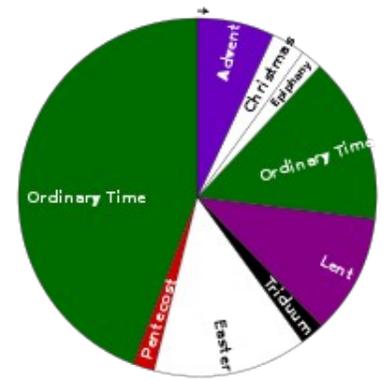
The table is dark brown with a pedestal base and curved legs.
8 feet long and 3.5 feet wide with all extensions in use.

There are four chairs that have carved backs and
petit-point-embroidered seat cushions in excellent condition.

A Guide to the Liturgical Year – Year “B”

The Seasons of Christmas and Epiphany

Andre Auger



We continue with our exploration of the Seasons of the Liturgical Year. All three Liturgical Years are structured the same, though the texts they rely on differ. All three begin with Advent, which reflects on waiting for the key figure in our history, Jesus. We are about to experience the second Season of the Year, namely Christmas, which focuses on central truths of the Christian message around the nature of Jesus. Epiphany will follow, which tends to introduce us to the central import of the Christian message to the world.

Christmas	Luke 2:1-14, (15-20)	A counter-cultural birth
First Sunday after Christmas	Luke 2:22-40	Foretelling of great things

Luke’s telling of the birth of Jesus is essentially a treasonous counter-story to the official Roman religion, in which the Emperor is celebrated as born of the union of a God and a human. Contrary to the elite background of Caesar, this cosmic incarnation plays itself out in the midst of poverty and marginalization. The Gospel of the first Sunday after Christmas reminds us that today’s challenge is breaking the Good News out of the sanctuary and into the streets.

Epiphany 1	Mark 1.4-11	Baptism of Jesus
Epiphany 2	John 1:43-51	Call of Philip & Nathaniel
Epiphany 3	Mark 1.14-20	Call of Simon & Andrew
Epiphany 4	Mark 1.21-28	Freeing the possessed
Epiphany 5	Mark 1.28-39	Healing of the sick
Epiphany 6	Mark 1.40-45	Healing of person with leprosy

The baptism John, offered only at the Jordan, was a symbolic re-entry into the Promised Land, to build a “Kingdom of God,” as an alternative to the Roman Empire. Jesus will show us how we go about this. The message of the second Sunday of Epiphany is that this Jesus will do great things: we need to follow him! The Gospel for the third Sunday reminds us that we need not be victims of the dominant culture: we can follow Jesus and help create a more just and compassionate community. On the fourth Sunday, Jesus serves notice to the religious establishment: the task is not to preserve rituals, but to heal the world. The Gospel for the fifth Sunday tells us that our task is about healing, i.e., bringing back into community. Finally, when there is a sixth Sunday (not every year), we note that our society is dysfunctional, and that our task is to correct that dysfunction.

Sharing the Memories

Harcourt congregation pays tribute to Jim on retirement

Ann Middleton

Retirement parties are a great place to celebrate over good eats and not-so-good coffee, but they aren't always the best place to share memories and heart-felt thanks. Those sentiments tend to surface in a quiet moment after church, in the minister's office or during a chat over coffee. But for this retirement, we do not have the luxury of parties or casual meetings.

For this reason, Harcourt has put together a book full of stories, pictures and affectionate anecdotes from members of the congregation, retired ministers and staff. More than 60 people contributed to this book, *Sharing the Memories* to mark Jim's 12 years at Harcourt.

Choir member Carolyn Davidson sums up the feelings of many respondents when she comments on her gratitude for the energy and vision Jim has brought us, for his sense of humour and justice, his steadiness, integrity and compassion.

That compassion and spiritual guidance during very dark times are mentioned by several contributors. One church member, whose parents died recently, commented how her family felt that Jim really knew and understood both of them. "You took the time to gently enquire about their strengths and even their weaknesses and you helped us remember them with such love and humour," she writes. "You helped us craft services that honoured them and lifted us up."

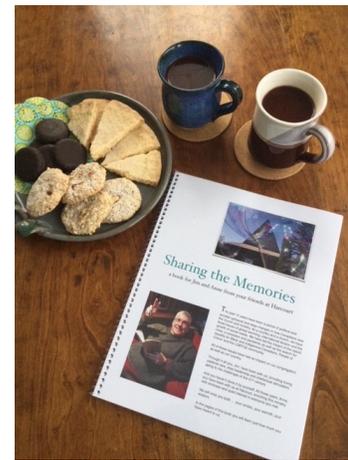
Rev. Miriam Flynn comments on Jim's many gifts as preacher, storyteller, biblical scholar and liturgist and praises his ability to form community where "difference is not something to be extinguished, but rather a gift we learn from and adapt to."

Mentor and long-time friend Bill Lord says he has deeply appreciated Jim's biblical insight and the sermons flowing from it, a sentiment echoed by the Rt. Rev. Bruce McLeod, former moderator of the United Church of Canada. Bruce, who sits in a pew three quarters of the way down on the right hand side of the sanctuary with his wife Rev. Joyce Kelly, says "we have all been nourished in prayers and preaching by Jim's scholarly and painstaking respect for the Word. He does us the weekly honour of careful preparation – never wasting our time – as he lifts distracted lives into the realm of Creator Spirit's surrounding Grace." Jim and Bruce go back a long way. They had a shared ministry at Richmond Hill United Church in the 1980s.

A theme that recurs over and over in these messages is Jim's benediction. As one member says: "*Life is short ... I can't hear it often enough.*" Some fasten on "*Be quick to love,*" others on "*Hasten to kindness.*" On the subject of the blessing, June Crewson writes: "This personifies the Jim I've always known and appreciated."

A young member of the congregation thanks Jim for teaching her prayers that have changed her life, another for the prayer writing workshop he gave.

Another theme that runs through the book is coffee and Jim's love of sweets. Some of us have met with Jim in coffee shops; many have brought him coffee. Joanne Lockie, long-time



church secretary, remembers “our common love of coffee – the good strong stuff.” She says “I’ll picture you now, enjoying a cup – with your feet up – relaxing at home.” Peter Gill has written a play for Jim all about his love of girl guide cookies. Heather Hoeg says of Jim’s patronage of the All Things Christmas bake sale: “He comes early to have a look. And he buys. And he buys more ... he says it’s to give away, but I’m pretty sure he wants to sample it all!”

Marilyn Whiteley points out that Jim appreciates Harcourt’s history. “His is neither a dry academic interest nor a sentimental one. For Jim, the past is part of our ongoing story, and from time to time he has used that story to help us see what Harcourt may learn and how Harcourt may move into the future.”

Four pages of the book are devoted to pictures and memories from Manna, one of Jim’s great legacies for Harcourt.



But *Sharing the Memories* is not just about Jim. It’s also a tribute to Anne. “Anne, you have taken an active role in the life of Harcourt through Manna, the choir and Chalmers Community Services,” says Lorraine Holding. “We have appreciated that you walked alongside us.”

Gay Slinger, who sang with Anne in what she describes as that “wonderful joyous group, the choir,” says: “You have always been unfailingly uplifting and positive in spirit, always quick to offer a hand or kind word whenever needed. You have generously given so much of your time and talents to the life of Harcourt and the Guelph community ... your presence has been a gift to us.”

And the last words come from Judi Morris who served on the search committee that appointed Jim Ball to Harcourt: “The team of Jim and Anne will leave a tender, empty space that no one who comes after will be able to fill. It will be a special place we will carry around in our hearts and minds, feeling blessed for the time we have had with them.”

A letter to Jim

Ellice Oliver

Hi Jim.

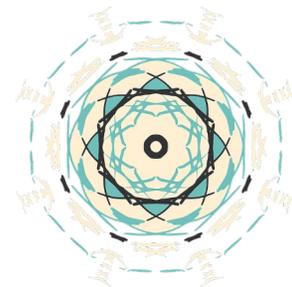
Having read and listened to what people such as Joan and Richard Barham and Wendy Brown had to say in praise and celebration of your ministry I can only echo their words. What I didn’t hear mentioned was Stillpoint. Because I found this small group of great personal value and because I think it brought out a part of you not usually seen in other activities such as worship, I decided to write about it. I want to thank you for your leadership with this group.

As I remember it, Stillpoint was a small group that met weekly at noon during the early years of your ministry at Harcourt. The name, Stillpoint, was based upon a poem by T.S.Eliot. Excerpts from the poem include “At the Stillpoint of the turning world...neither from nor towards, at the Stillpoint, there the dance is.” The group time included a check-in, music (classical or contemporary), silence, sharing and a closing prayer.

What was new to me was using contemporary music for prayer. I had prayed with hymns, chants (e.g. Taize music) and classical music (during silent retreats at Loyola House). Your eclectic choice of contemporary music brought me the gifts of insight and wisdom. The time of silence and prayer at noon helped me to ground myself in the midst of a busy life.

Thank you Jim

Blessings and peace, Ellice



All Things Christmas

Carol Jones, Lisa McTaggart, Heather Sullivan, Heather Hoeg, Marilyn Sears, Janet Webster

Many have read the e-weekly reports on All Things Christmas Pandemic Style but here is a summary.

In short, we proved that we can pivot our efforts meeting the challenges of a socially distanced and outdoor sale.

A small group met to debrief shortly after November 28 when we identified many positive aspects. But we also admitted that there is room for improvement. The co-operative weather was a huge factor in our success as was the willingness of so many people to work in smaller groups, often outdoors, to create arrangements and bundles of plant material.

However, we wanted to hold perhaps evening and weekend preparation sessions so that they are more welcoming to those working during the day and those caring for children. We know that we cannot continue as we have been. We hope to be more inclusive and also ease our stress levels!

It became very apparent that this event is important to both the Harcourt community AND the neighbourhood. On-line sales were very successful. The fellowship in the gym and parking lot both on prep days and the sale day was so rewarding.

Watch for opportunities to learn more. In the February Herald we will feature "The People Behind All Things Christmas". We will be recruiting those interested in being "apprentices". For example, would you like to attend a bow-making workshop in September, learn how we spray paint the plant material, how and where the cedar, spruce boughs etc. are cut and collected? If we wish this event to continue, we need to pivot again and spread the workload and the fun! We know now that major change is possible.

One question to consider: what is the goal of All Things Christmas??? Is it for Harcourt or the Community?? Obviously the funds raised are very welcome as noted by the Finance Committee. This year, it became clear that it is also a community builder. We pray that aspect continues. Even with the special situation in 2020, the sale raised \$6293.30, approximately \$1000 less than last year. Not bad!!



Be sure to read the Herald

Joan Barham

Read Online - <http://harcourtuc.ca/space-resources/harcourt-herald/>

Or type "Harcourt Herald" in the Search box on the Harcourt's home page.

Pick up a hard copy – available in the outside pick up box on the parking lot side of the main entrance.

Or – print a copy at home from the online Harcourt Herald.

Remember: you can now save your spot and read the online Harcourt Herald in several sessions if you so choose.

Testimony: Losses and New Beginnings

Andre Auger

Interesting topic for this month's issue of the Harcourt Herald: "New Beginnings." The topic implies thinking about the future... and my spiritual practice is all about focusing on the Present Moment! But what "new beginnings" can I think about when we are perhaps still only half-way through the Covid-19 pandemic? Do I reflect on what "New Year's Resolutions" I want to make? That's failed me for 70+ years! I can't imagine that's going to change: first I have this determination to do things differently for a week or so, then I lose my resolve, then I rationalize why it wouldn't have worked anyhow; finally, I downright abandon any resolve and I'm back to where I was...

Or is it more an act of reflecting on what I would like my life to be like once this pandemic has passed? At first that sounded like longing for the "good old days" before Covid. But the more I thought about this, the more I realized that I did not wish to go back to those days. On the other hand, there were "losses and new beginnings" I was thinking of: What did I want my life to look like if all social restrictions were off? What would I gladly lose? And what would I take on?

It goes without saying that, once this pandemic is over, I will never let my family out of my sight! I will chat for hours with my adult children, and I will hug my grand-kids until my arms ache!

Next, I will continue the practice of intentional relationships: I realized that I need deep conversations, and that there are many friends and acquaintances with whom I enjoy spending time. Zoom is a poor substitute to in-person conversations.

I will give up on "leisure shopping." I have found that I simply don't need to spend my time that way. The idea of perusing stores to see what "tempts me" just seems wrong now and inappropriate: what have I lacked in the past nine months? Nothing! I have all I need. And more.

I will give up on "leisure travel." I have had decades of "wanderlust" where I simply wanted to see one more cathedral, climb one more mountain, have one more coffee at some country inn. I've come to realize that it's just another form of consumerism, and the world can't afford to have half its population flying about taking in eye candy. And I discovered that all I really need is right here.

I really want to focus on intentional community: if I learned anything during the pandemic it's that worship is a communal affair, and I want to be with others in worship. I watched many forms of intentional community develop and flourish during the pandemic – all mediated via Zoom or Facebook – but I want to be with people as we worship and learn and grow together.

I also want to act out my firm belief that congregational life is not a passive affair: a congregation is as good as the amount of lay talent and energy that pours into it. I want to see lay worship leaders; I want to be one of them; I want to see people share their faith journey; I want to wrestle with others on difficult points of our faith. I want to learn from others how they live out their faith in daily life.

I want to take to heart the federated nature of a congregation: it is not one single thing and nothing more. Jim reminded us that “church” is a “Holy Party,” (Jesus called it a “banquet”) a “field hospital” (a term I borrow from Pope Francis) for the tired, the wounded, the grieving, and the ill, a “school for Christian literacy,” and a “gym for spiritual practice.” We might have a preference for one or the other, but all four are necessary, and I need to be part of all four according to my talents and needs.

I want to practice the ultimate cosmic discipline of “unity in diversity.” I remember a well-known spiritual director telling his audience that a typical congregation is not a “lifestyle enclave” of like-minded people, but the accidental gathering of whoever wishes to follow Jesus. Biodiversity is teaching us that we lose when we focus on mono-culture, everyone thinking the same. It’s much harder work listening respectfully to people whose views and faith are different from mine, but it’s the only way I can grow. The discipline of “Holy Listening” that some of us have been practising for over ten years is one of the few ways I know that will allow me to not fall into the dualistic temptations of “power-play” – a fight to prove that my way is right – and “gridlock” – which is the result of an aversion to conflict and a tacit agreement to not resolve the issue at hand. Perhaps what I/we can learn is that it is okay to live with significant differences without conflict.

I want to live as awake as I can be. I will always have my “hot buttons.” Press one of them and I’m off! The practice I need is one of the “Compassionate Observer.” I watch myself; I observe the button being pressed; I observe the rapid move of blood through my veins; and I observe – with compassion – as I prepare my response. And I gently, and lovingly, ask myself what all this is saying about me. What is my story behind this gut reaction? Why do I feel so passionately about this? What got triggered by the other person’s comment or behaviour? If I have allowed myself a little time, I might be able to shift gears and ask of the other: What is your story? Where are you coming from? What makes your point of view so firm? Tell me about it...

And I won’t need to do all this over Zoom! I will have the Other in the flesh. I will be able to hold the Other with the same compassion I hold myself. I will give thanks that there is indeed an Other across from me. I will give thanks for the Other. I may even be able to see the Other as a whole person, and not just an argument. I actually might be able to see the Other as the Presence of Christ with me. I might even be able to hug the Other! In real!

What about you? What new beginnings are stirring within you? Our congregation grows deeper as we hear from each other!



The Gifts That Keep On Giving. Thanks be to God.

Lynn Hancock

“Gifts Differing” is the title of a book by Isabel Briggs Myers. It served as a textbook resource for the M.B.T.I. training course I completed in 1993 in order to administer the Myers Briggs Type Indicator. Anyone completing the questionnaire would be given an opportunity to claim their best fit personality type of 16 different types. Although many have completed the questionnaire, few seem to have responded the way I did. It was absolutely life changing. I applied for a transfer and accepted a teaching assignment in Etobicoke, Toronto that was a much better fit. That self-awareness tool has been a gift that keeps on giving. Although I always knew I was “different”, I didn’t know how different. I learned my preferences for processing information and making decisions. I learned how I was energized. I learned I was more interested in the process than the product; more interested in the journey than the destination. My tolerance for others dramatically increased. Once I had a better sense of the different teaching and learning styles, I became a much better teacher AND student.

Fast forward to 2020. On May 1st, I began the Ignatius exercises based on Louis Savary’s book: “The New Spiritual Exercises” (In the Spirit of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin). I have met with my wonderful Spiritual Director on a weekly basis, and am approaching the end of this particular journey. Most recently, I have been invited to reflect on “.....all the gifts you have personally received - talents, skills, education, opportunities, families, friends...five senses, as well as your memory, intelligence, willpower, imagination, freedom to choose, the ability to love and make commitments, the ability to accomplish things, to build teams to worship etc. I realize that my gifts have taken me places I could not have anticipated. Life is full of surprises, eh?! A few months shy of my 60th birthday, I was introduced to bubbling; a gift that keeps on giving. I heard more “Wows” the first summer bubbling than in 30 years of teaching. Thanks to the wind; the breath of God.

As we begin a new year 2021, let us rejoice in the gift of a New Year. Let’s continue to recognize and celebrate our God-given gifts and share them. Talents are many and included among the many gifts from God. According to Leo Buscaglia, “Talent is God’s gift to you. What you do with it is your gift to God.”

Gifts that keep on giving. Thanks be to God.



EYAM Plague Village

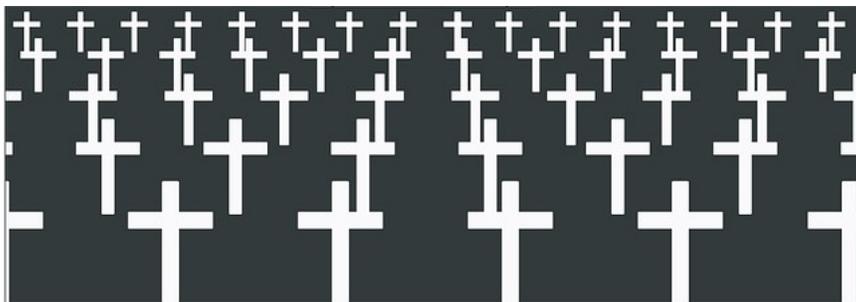
Rosalind Slater

I was thinking today of a village I visited many times in my childhood. It's strange as I get older how my mind will drift back to my early years in England. The name of the village is Eyam and it's situated just a few short miles from Tideswell where my Grandmother was born and spent her early years. If you've heard of Eyam at all it will be for its notoriety, though it also has a certain charm. It is known as Plague Village and that's mainly why my mind drifted to it today. I was thinking of the similarities of those people in 1666 to what we are experiencing today with the Covid pandemic, and how much we could learn from their self sacrifice. In 1665 and 1666 more than 70% of the inhabitants of the village were wiped out by the Bubonic Plague. The full story of their heroism can be read in depth if you care to Google it.

The contagion reached the small Derbyshire village by way of fleas wrapped up in a roll of cloth which had been sent from London to the local tailor, whose assistant George Vickers unwrapped it and hung it by the fire to dry, thus releasing the fleas. Vickers was the first casualty. Between September and December of 1665 forty one villagers were to follow him to an early death. By Spring the panicking villagers were ready to repeat the mistake made by their Southern contemporaries who had fled from London taking the disease with them. It was a newly appointed rector of the church, William Mompesson who believed it was his duty to persuade his flock to barricade themselves in Eyam and thus protect the people of the surrounding towns and villages from sharing the same fate they were about to suffer.

Mompesson himself was a controversial figure not well liked by his congregation. His predecessor, Thomas Stanley had been fired because he refused to accept the act of uniformity, which made it compulsory to use the new book of common prayer introduced by Charles II. The villagers had been on the side of Oliver Cromwell in the civil war. With the reinstatement of the monarchy, the removal of Stanley and introduction of Mompesson the villagers had enough to deal with without the Black Death. This fact makes it even more startling that Mompesson managed to join ranks with the previous rector and persuade the villagers to make their final sacrifice. In all 260 inhabitants of Eyam lost their lives to the plague in fourteen months. One woman, Elizabeth Hancock buried a husband and six children within the space of eight days. She had to drag each to the field beside her farmhouse and perform the grisly task herself because of the fear from the rest of the inhabitants that they would catch the plague. No PPE for them.

In the present day many of the houses in Eyam are decorated with plaques, next to their front doors, giving homage to the inhabitants who died of the plague making their final sacrifice for the sake of others. And each year these brave souls are remembered by modern villagers who parade around the village and to the church where a lasting memory has been depicted on the stained glass windows of the horror of 1665/1666.



Passages



Jean Julian passed away peacefully on December 1, 2020 with her family by her side. She accepted the challenges of ALS with grit, determination and good humour.



Donald Macaulay passed away on December 5, 2020.



Rev. Mary Elliott passed away on the evening of Dec. 6, 2020 at Hospice Wellington – Guelph.



Bill Chamberlain passed away on Dec. 8, 2020.

Willa Voroney passed away on Dec. 2, 2020.