

# **The Harcourt Herald April 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

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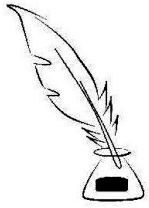
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## The Minister's Quill

by Rev. Miriam Flynn

### Harcourt helix – dreams and ladders



Alone in the wilderness, Jacob did not have heaven on his mind. Forced into isolation, on a journey into the unknown, survival was his most critical concern. For Jacob had fooled his father into making him heir and was now thrust out of the family fold and sent on a mission to find a wife. Safety required that social distance be maintained between Jacob and his resentful brother and so his departure was hasty. All that Jacob knew, and all that gave him comfort, lay behind him, and an uncertain future lay ahead. How fearful and tired he must have felt, as he found a rock to be his pillow and lay his weary head down for the night.

As Jacob sleeps, the wakeful world of his fear, guilt and loneliness recede. He is enveloped in the dream of a ladder set up on the earth, the top of it reaching to heaven, with angels of God ascending and descending on it. A dream of ladders centres Jacob in the reality that heaven and earth are always intertwined. A dream of ladders precedes God's assurance to Jacob of accompaniment, protection on his journey and the promise of homecoming. (Genesis 28:10-22)

When the idea of the Harcourt helix was first introduced, it brought to my mind the story of Jacob's ladder with angels running up one strand and down the other.

Early in the pandemic, writer Arundhati Roy suggested the pandemic was a *portal*, when she insightfully observed that we had reached a significant time of transition:

*Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next.*

*We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us. Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world.*

As we continue to absorb and integrate the lessons of pandemic a year later, we seek to wrestle a blessing from emergence that takes us beyond the mere desire for a "return to normal." And the portal begins to feel more like a tunnel than a doorway. So perhaps, the metaphor of a ladder



is apt. To get to the next rung we will need to honour grief, to name what has been revealed and learned and recommit to the higher purpose that calls us to a re-imagined world. Realizing this world will require repositioning that stretches our tolerance for change, even as the newly revealed angels of interconnection urge us on.

Here, at Harcourt, our current process of discernment takes on particular meaning in the context of the pandemic experience. Where is the Spirit calling us as a community of the faithful in this time and place? What dreams and ladders release us from our fear of uncertainty as they reveal pathways of connection and promise? Let those dreams become our reality and those ladders be our means of opportunity. Though the future cannot be fully seen, the Spirit of God can be fully trusted – to accompany, protect and fulfill the promise of homecoming.

As spring arrives once more and hope for healing rolls out with the vaccinations, we experience the miracle of new life that Easter proclaims.



## From the Editor's Desk



One year! One year since we have been locked out of Harcourt. One year of all kinds of restrictions due to Covid-19.

We miss the direct contact with friends and family, outings to restaurants, leisure shopping, attending concerts, theatre, other public entertainments. The list is long ... And yet, I need to confess not everything has been negative. We have appreciated our garden, the daily walks in the neighbourhood, the convenience of online shopping, the many entertainments on TV that became free because of the corona virus. And I must not forget learning different ways to communicate via the internet, using the computer to engage in new forms of relationship building. We have also appreciated the mostly orderly way Canadians followed the instructions of the experts and authorities. The entrance into the second year looks more hopeful in terms of conquering the virus.

Overall, we have moved forward a good deal in terms of finding ways to cope. We will retain these technological accomplishments and benefit from new ways of being together as community, independent of geography.

## Letters to the Editor

*During our recent AGM, a comment was made that prompted me to write this note to the Herald. There was a question raised about MANNA participants contributing (or not) financially to the church. During that discussion, someone said: "so we are carrying MANNA." I have heard this from different sources. I do not know where this thinking is coming from. I thought we were a community of faith where all members are supported without judgement, as to how much time and money they are able to contribute. All of us contribute depending on many different factors that reflect our life circumstances. I thought Harcourt was a place where all are welcome. The above thinking needs to change if we are to be a community of faith where everyone is welcomed, supported and "carried" by all. May we contemplate this as we consider our future together.*

Merrill Pierce

*We want to say how important it was for us to be able to join together with all of you to celebrate and remember Mom. The memorial service was such a special moment, and was made so much more meaningful by being able to do this together with so many of her friends and family from all parts of her life and from around the globe. We enjoyed your stories and will continue to cherish your friendship, and so we hope our paths will cross again soon! Know that our homes are open to you all, and there may even be a pavlova to share.*

Much love, The Barhams

The memorial service is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bEqBuHpWpPw>

Joan's obituary is at: <https://www.passagescb.ca/obituaries/joanbarham>

## Council News

### *Lorraine Holding, Council chair*

At council's March 17 meeting, our debriefing of the congregational annual meeting highlighted these points:

- Attendance by 79 people in our first virtual congregational meeting was excellent.
- Technical support by Casey Connor (staff), Bill Chapman and Larry Smith was very important to manage slides/video, voting, Zoom tools (chat, "raised hand.")
- Participation through questions/comments worked smoothly.
- Our required agenda items and other updates were accomplished in a timely manner with appropriate focus.
- We launched *Harcourt Helix: Our Ladder to Our Future* as the theme for our discernment process.

Mark Sears reported that almost \$19,000 has been raised for the live-streaming system purchase. Promotion of the fundraising initiative continues. Council agreed that the purchasing process should proceed as quickly as possible, aiming for use by September.

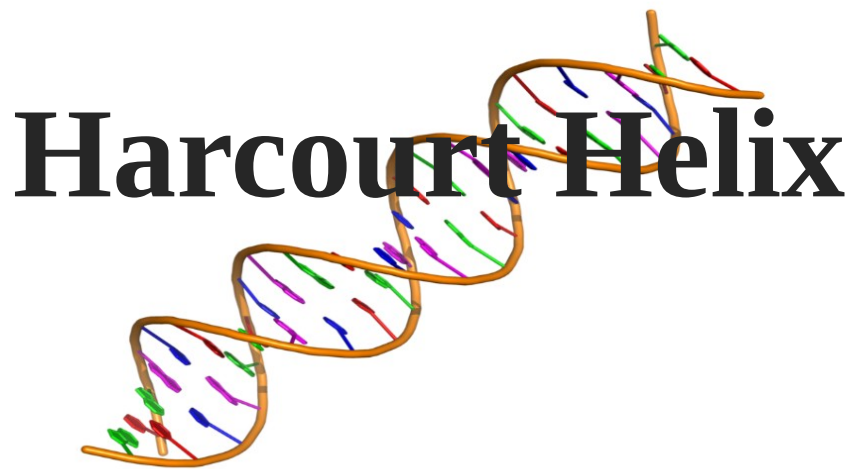
Focusing on the future, council shared our personal results of the Change Readiness Assessment in preparation for the *GUM Covid Conversations Round 2*. We also reviewed the transition steering team's update from *Harcourt Conversations – Round 1* and plans for Round 2. All of these opportunities are intertwined as part of our discernment process.

*Harcourt Conversations – Round 1* involved 70 participants. The notes taken indicate an increased awareness of critical issues facing us for the next five years.

- There is general agreement on some aspects: digital technology will continue to play a large role; varied worship styles will continue to be valued; small groups will play a role in relationship building, spiritual development and discussion; commitment to social justice and community partnerships will continue to be important as will being an affirming LGBTQ+ friendly community with a liberal/progressive theology; being a safe community to explore theology, lifestyle, personal stories and faith growth; and being a centre for excellence in spiritual growth and faith development; re-purposing and reshaping the building, perhaps as a community hub or other alternatives will be important; aging members' levels of activity will decrease or end.
- There is a spectrum of mindsets towards change, between "going to church" and "being the church."
- Affirmation and support of MANNA's future as a growing ministry is important, including suitable physical space.
- Future directions need to be "resource tested" for available resources of people, energy, and finances.
- Leadership and exploration of the future must involve younger generations.







*Helix Ladder by Vcpmartin - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0,  
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=80147407>”*

## **Ladder to our future by Daniel Ganesh**

Harcourt is once again at a crossroads. The future is unclear. Several well-known factors such as declining membership and attrition along with the retirement of a minister have triggered a re-evaluation and realization that the traditional methods may no longer apply. While Harcourt does not lack talent, ideas or leadership, alternatives need to be investigated; a collective vision needs to be articulated and priorities set and established. Covid-19 has only exacerbated this process of change. This dilemma is not restricted to Harcourt, and within Guelph, we and our GUM partners are in the process of rethinking and restructuring our community of faith.

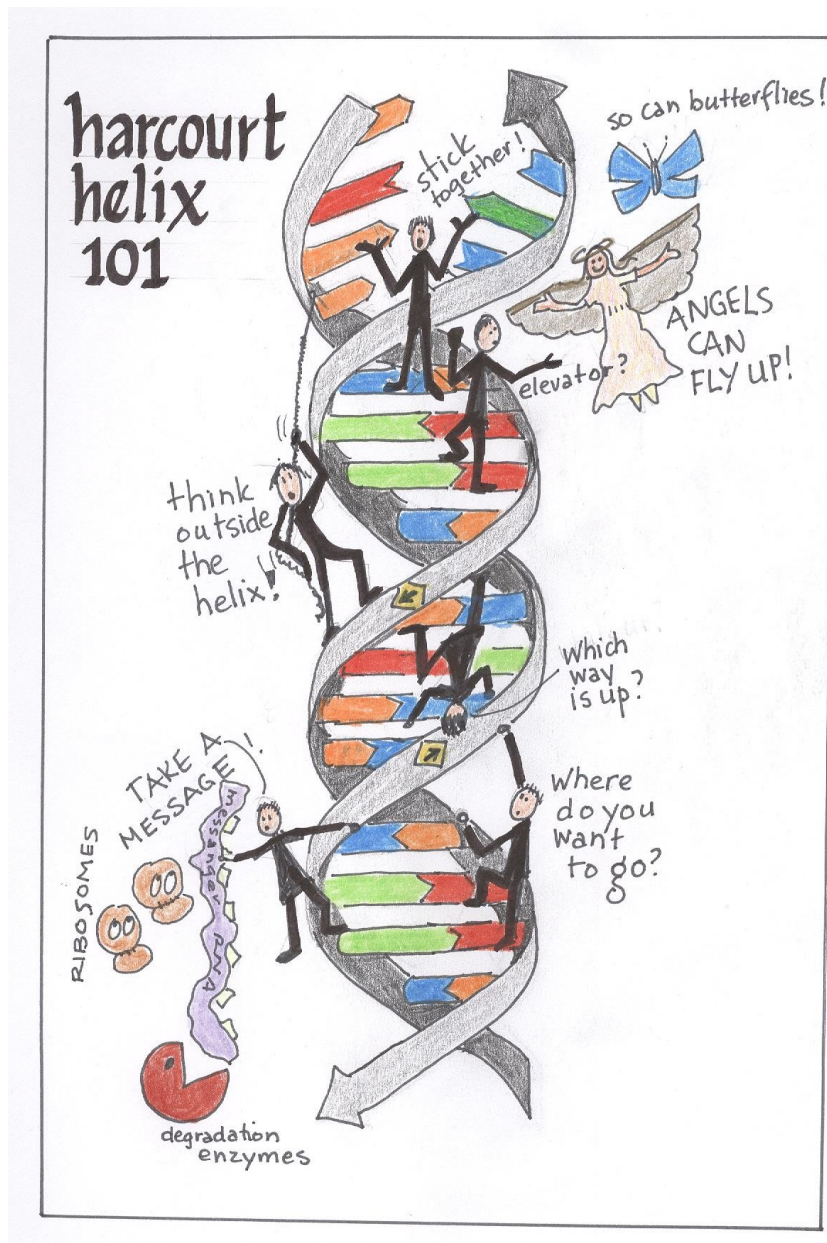
In an analogous manner, Covid-19 has also triggered tremendous change in society and our ability (or inability) to adapt. It has especially affected how we worship as a church community, our ability to meet face to face and the way in which we celebrate communal sacred rites such as communion. However, some of the adaptations we have made – such as online worshipping and outreach – have provided gateways of opportunity to re-imagine our future church community.

Our Harcourt transition steering team searched for a symbol to define our journey ahead. The Harcourt helix was chosen.

*Why the Helix?* The helix was chosen as a symbol of hope, leadership and opportunity and the symbol of our discernment process. Typically, the development of a vaccine to treat pandemics such as Covid-19 takes five to 10 painstaking years. However, this process has been revolutionized by the development on mRNA-based vaccines. This technology uses a particular genetic coded string called messenger RNA (mRNA). The image above is actually a schematic of DNA, a helix. In simple terms, DNA sends genetic code via mRNA. The DNA molecule shares a similarity to the Holy Spirit, in that it is the very core of our being, while the Holy Spirit is the core of the Christian church.

Like a helix, our path ahead is not a straight line. The components along the helix give it its specific characteristics, similar to the demographic, economic and social factors that shape our discernment process. The bonds formed between these components act like rungs of a ladder. They create the helical shape and provide stability. Similarly, the bonds that form our community of faith serve as the building blocks in determining our future. If these bonds break, the helix becomes a jumbled mess. One side of the molecule that forms the helix goes in one direction, and the other side in the other direction. The helix is a reminder that – like Jacob's ladder – our journey ahead will have its ups and downs. The exception is that our ladder will have a connection to the Holy Spirit. Like the helix, all components (of our journey ahead) will determine the ultimate functionality of the whole.

P.S. ***It's in our DNA.*** We'd welcome one-word comments indicating your feelings, thoughts and concerns about Harcourt's future as a community of faith. If you are so inclined, you could express these words using the letters H, E, L, I, X (for X, you can use Ax, Ex or Ox). Please send to [drdanns@gmail.com](mailto:drdanns@gmail.com)



## A Guide to the Liturgical Year – Year B

### The Season of Easter

*Andre Auger*

We continue our exploration of the Liturgical Year B. Of course, Easter Sunday is about the resurrection of Jesus. But the Sundays that follow are really all about reminding us that we have everything we need to continue Jesus' vision of God's dream for humanity.



#### Easter

#### Mark 16.1-8

#### Story of resurrection

God's dream for a different form of human community has not ended in failure with the death of Jesus, but lives on. The followers of Jesus, filled with the conviction that he was still with them in a very real and experiential way were ready to shake off their fear and cowardice and take up where Jesus left off. The project Jesus initiated continues in us: "Jesus of Nazareth died an individual, the Christ was raised as community." We are not Gotham City's passive citizens, rejoicing that they had been saved by a heavenly superman. We are **part** of the very process of salvation. We see ourselves as part of the Christ – or the "Christ Project" if you prefer – with Jesus continuing to show us the way. The rest of the liturgical year will remind us of our task and how we equip ourselves to engage in it. **How might you spread the "good news" that we learn this day?**

\* \* \* \* \*

#### Easter 2

#### John 20.19-31 We have faith in the ongoing presence of Jesus

#### in the Christ

This Easter Season, we are reminded each Sunday that **we have everything we need** in order to carry on Jesus' project of evolving an alternative community to that of the dominant culture – one based on compassion and distributive justice. The Jesus Project is not about creating a parallel society, but a **counter-cultural** one with the commitment and practices to love and convert the dominant culture without violence, creating communion and healing among all. This Sunday, we are reminded that the Jesus of Nazareth, whom we have come to admire, continues to exist in some form wherever there are people who are trying to bring about a safer, more peaceful, more loving, more just world. **To what extent does such a vision of this project animate your own life?**

\* \* \* \* \*

#### Easter 3

#### Luke 24.36b-48 We have our sacred texts and the key to understanding them

We continue to be reminded that **we have all we need** in order to continue Jesus' project. We are reminded that we have what we need to understand this goal and this process in our **sacred texts**: they constitute our story, the story of our gradual awakening to God's presence, to God's



love and to God's dream for humanity and for creation. We go forward in helping God realize God's dream for humanity and for creation by “reading the times” in light of our scripture, and reinterpreting our scripture in light of our present experience. The risen Jesus will be known and recognized in community through the study of scripture and the sharing of a meal (both!). This then becomes the foundational template of Christian worship: story/study and meal. **To what extent do you live out your daily life in the light of our sacred stories? In what ways do you “read the times” in light of scripture?**

\* \* \* \* \*

**Easter 4                  John 10.11-18                  We have a model of behaviour: Jesus the Good Shepherd**

In the good shepherd, we have a model of what living in the Kingdom is like: we care for others, and especially those who are “least,” at the margins, the disenfranchised, those who the dominant culture oppresses and neglects. **How good are we at doing this? What could we do better – as individuals – as a congregation?**

\* \* \* \* \*

**Easter 5                  John 15.1-8                  We know we are part of a greater whole: the metaphor of the vine and the gardener**

This Sunday we are reminded that we are far from alone in our task of continuing the program of Jesus. In fact, we take our nourishment, our energy, our drive, our motivation from the fact that we live in Christ just as Christ lives in us. We cannot truly be Christian apart from community: no more than a vine branch can survive without remaining attached to the vine. **To what extent do you see your Christian life unfold in community? Where do you get your strength, your energy, your motivation to be the kind of Christian you are?**

\* \* \* \* \*

**Easter 6                  John 15.9-17                  We know Jesus' project is all about love**

This love is not the romantic, warm fuzzy stuff. It's an act of will which **affirms the other into the fullness of their being, whatever that may be.** Affirming the other means at least having a sense of what might constitute the other's wholeness and knowing it may not look anything like ours. This kind of love requires understanding, empathy, celebration of differences and recognition that unity is not about sameness but about diversity in complementarity. **What does such love look like within a church community like Harcourt? How do you go about sharing this love with others? What spiritual disciplines do you invoke in order to be non-judgmental in your loving?**

## **Covid speeds planning for live streaming services**

**by Mark Sears**

Since Covid-19 lockdown began a year ago, we have made a number of changes to our normal routines. Some were not very pleasing, but others were quite good for us. Some of the activities we volunteered for were a direct result of Covid-induced restrictions, such as Harcourt re-entry planning, helping set up and record speakers for virtual Sunday services, many Zoom meetings of council and committees at Harcourt as well as meetings of my Model A Ford chapter and Marilyn's PEO women's group.

The need for a more inclusive communication mechanism for connecting our church community became apparent. This has been especially true of those times when Harcourt has been unable to properly share and celebrate the death of a loved one during this past year. So I have spent many hours with my electronic technical committee and the worship team on planning for live-streaming of church services.

Covid-19 has encouraged us to replace many of our usual activities. We have spent much more time meeting with our family and friends via Zoom. Because we had to cancel many of our travel plans, we have made time for projects such as gardening and I even painted the house last summer. Gyms have been closed so we, like so many others, have taken to walks in the neighborhood that allow us to meet with friends at a proper distance. We have decided to cook together more often with a weekly choice of soup for the winter and when BBQ season arrives, I plan to enhance my skills at outdoor cooking.

**All in all, there have been many new opportunities presented to us and we have tried to make the best of them.**

**So many changes...**

**by Wendy Guilmette, -Church Administrator**

I started working at Harcourt full time in September of 2019. Who would have thought that just six months later I would be asked to leave my office and work from home. I was told to pack everything I would need and take it with me. The problem was that I needed everything.

It was an emotional time. I wasn't quite sure how I was going to do this. I enjoyed saying hello and chatting with people who dropped by the church. I loved watching the children playing in the gym and outside. Do

you know that the preschool children come to the offices to sing to us at Halloween and Christmas? Such a wonderful time hearing their little voices. I loved hearing about quilting and prayer shawls and from other groups that frequented the church. I enjoyed interacting with everyone. These are things that I knew I would miss.



So what happened next is a blur. Everything was so fast. I was told to leave the building immediately. I changed the messages on the phone, added signs to the doors and said goodbye to the preschool which was also closing their doors for an unknown length of time.

I brought my office home, taking over my spare room with a computer and monitors and boxes. It took time to get into the swing of things, but it happened. I was allowed to go into the church once a week to check mail, do some printing and water plants.

During this last year with the help of volunteers:

- The church directory was completely updated
- Big brown envelopes were filled and delivered weekly – with the bulletin and other news – to people who have no computer access, so they could be included in weekly happenings at Harcourt.
- Neighbourhood telephone and delivery volunteers were recruited to keep members of the congregation in touch.
- The historic roll was updated.
- The annual report and church statistics were submitted and we used Zoom for the annual meeting.
- We as staff changed our way of working, meeting weekly on Zoom. We became more flexible to meet needs.

Zoom became the norm for meetings. Amazing what you can do when you are in a pandemic and not able to meet face to face. Before we knew it, everyone was Zooming.

And church went online.

With much help from our techs, we are able to get Sunday services, Holy Listening Circle, Manna and other meetings online. We also have had memorial services on Zoom. This worked very well for us and the families involved.

When we were allowed to return to the church, Shaina and I split up our office time to reduce contact with one another. We worked part days from the church and part days from home. Currently, we are working from home again due to this last lockdown.

David, our new custodian, is working hard to keep things clean and sanitized. We also welcomed Casey to the tech team. We said goodbye to Rev. Jim Ball.

It has now been one year and we are still working through this pandemic. There are vaccines now, so I am hopeful that in the not-too-distant future we can see each other again. I look forward to that day. Take care, stay safe, wear your mask, wash your hands ... you know the drill!

## **My responses to the past year**

***by Jerry Daminato***

### **The negatives**

I lost a close friend to this virus. I am still sad and grieving.



Elizabeth and I like travelling around seeing different geography and cultures. This was curtailed last year when Justin said: "If you are Canadian, you should come home." I remember hearing those words as we sat on a bench in the quad of a San Antonio, Texas mission, streaming CBC. A five-month adventure cut to three weeks in the blink of an eye.

I miss not being able to visit friends, having and giving hugs and no family Christmas.

### **The Positives**

I appreciate even more this quote often recited at the end of the service:

*"Life is short. We don't have much time to gladden the hearts of those who walk this way with us. So, be swift to love and make haste to be kind."* (Henri-Frédéric Amiel)

I have suddenly found myself using my musical talents and audio engineering technical skills and offering them up in music.

I have been working with MANNA and Shannon Kingsbury and feel a calling to create some of the weekly music by recording/producing and playing guitar, bass, virtual instruments and helping to create slideshows with lyrics for singing at MANNA. We collaborate and digitally record music files and send them to each other until we have completed songs with many voices and instruments. Sometimes the voices are our Harcourt and MANNA friends. We do all this from our homes, one instrument or voice at a time and never in the same physical space. The conditions of Covid have freed me up and given me the time to do this.

Last fall Shannon and I were able to perform live in the garden at Harcourt to the Sunday MANNA group while staying socially distanced. It went quite well and I look forward to doing this again.

I am grateful for technologies like Zoom and YouTube and Facebook that have allowed Harcourt to continue to meet and communicate. Many members of the congregation and staff have jumped out of their comfort zones to learn new skills to accomplish this.

I also look forward to meeting together again!

### **Interview with Shannon Kingsbury, MANNA Musician**

*by Julie Henshaw*

**Julie:** I know you a little bit from the context of MANNA, but for those who don't know you, could you share a little bit about your involvement at Harcourt?

**Shannon:** It started off with Jim Ball, who also lives in our neighborhood in the ward. I would often see Jim, and he's a friendly, lovely soul. And one day he stopped me on the street



and started telling me about MANNA and asked me if I would ever be interested in coming and sharing some music. And I was thrilled to do that. And that's how it all began ... learning from Jim about this interesting, intergenerational, lay-led service. And it tweaked my interest, and once I started coming and sharing music, I developed attachments to the families and so it's been a few years now.

**Julie:** I had no idea that's what brought you to Harcourt and MANNA. Just so I'm clear, it was just from meeting Jim in the neighborhood ... there was no other kind of church influence?

**Shannon:** That is correct, although I should mention my dad is a retired United Church minister, so I grew up in the United Church. I hadn't been to church much since I left home and carried on with my life and career and raising my daughter. I hadn't found a home church for myself. As these stories go, there's a roundabout way that we kind of come back to our beginnings, right?

**Julie:** Interesting observation. Now that you've shared that your dad is a retired United Church minister, I'm curious, when friends and family find out, or hear about your involvement in church, what kind of questions do you get or what kind of things are they curious about?

**Shannon:** Oh, that's a great question, and I guess that would depend on whether the question is coming from my immediate family – like my siblings who also grew up with that background – or my friends. We have a beautifully diverse community here. And I would say that I have relationships and friendships with folks of all different faiths and backgrounds and beliefs or agnostics or whatnot. I think when I talk about MANNA, people are always curious because I usually describe it as experimental or intergenerational and it is sort of hard to describe what MANNA is, because really, it's the people. And that's the beauty of it. It's whatever the people bring, with wonderful support from the ministers of course. So that's sort of the question – what is this? You're part of a church, but you're not part of the traditional service? So that would be the question – what is this MANNA?

**Julie:** And whether it's friends from diverse backgrounds or whether it's other people who attend Harcourt, what's one thing you wish other people knew about MANNA?

**Shannon:** Well, the word that's coming to mind is fun.

**Julie:** Fun?

**Shannon:** Yeah, fun. You know, people tend to think of church as an austere environment; something very prayerful or quiet or traditional. And while all those things can exist and there can be a beautiful place for meditation and sanctuary, when I think about the generations at MANNA, I think about fun and how dynamic it can be to share sacred space and worship with folks of all ages and include food and song and play.

**Julie:** Is there anything you've thought about just as we've been talking that you wanted to add or share?

**Shannon:** One of the big parts of my year has been the continuity of doing music for the MANNA service and just how grateful I am to everyone in that community for being willing to try out this strange digital dimension for being in community together.

**Julie:** I think that's a wonderful gift that you've brought to MANNA. And if I understand correctly, your music has been shared with the other services as well.

**Shannon:** I've had opportunity a few times to do some collaborations with Alison which is always wonderful. She's such an incredible musician. And of course Jerry Daminato has been amazing in collaborating for MANNA music. Jerry has a background in recording and production and music so his skills have definitely been an asset to us creating pre-recorded media that we play for MANNA. So I'm thrilled, and I'm sure I speak for Jerry as well, that some of the things we've done that we thought would only be seen once by the MANNA community have been shared with the wider community.

**Julie:** I follow different Facebook groups that Harcourt is part of and I know when some of your music was shared, there was quite a response around people finding it really beautiful and being really appreciative of it.

**Shannon:** That's wonderful to hear, because one of the things that musical folks are missing right now is hearing people sing along live or seeing how the music might touch someone. You can see that visually I guess but it's not the same as being in the room with people and having the feedback of singing or clapping, playing along or just the emotion of being together and feeling people moved

**Julie:** Your work during the day is teaching music privately?

**Shannon:** I teach from home (video-conference), but I have a home studio. About 15 years ago, I started specializing in music with children. I went to Sheridan College for musical theater and I worked a bit in the industry. And then after I had Harmony, my daughter, I was more interested in early childhood music. I studied that at the Royal Conservatory and it just took off. And the more children I worked with, the more adults would say "I really want to learn to sing" or "I want to explore music" or "I love the joy that kids have when you're teaching them, and I just want to feel that again." So now I have quite a large client base and it ranges from kids to adults and some young professional musicians who are instrumentalists exploring their voice for the first time. I also have retired folks who are finding time to pick up music again.

**Julie:** And do you teach any instrument or only certain instruments or only voice?

**Shannon:** My focus is really always voice, because that's my first love, but I teach music theory and I'll help out folks who want to learn how to play the piano or play chords on the piano. I have kids and adults who are writing songs and I support them in that way. I don't play anything with frets, so I don't play guitar. I've been in schools a lot as a guest musician and stuff like that.

**Julie:** Thank you for your time, and for sharing your thoughts Shannon.

## **What's up at MANNA?**

### ***Laura Hofer***

When I was asked to write a Herald article about what MANNA has been up to lately, I didn't know where to start, so I asked my kids around the dinner table and I think I'll mostly stick to the things that stood out for them.

The first thing Isaac mentioned was that MANNA starts every service with the song "Open my Heart" as our prayersong. It is such a beautiful way to pause and centre ourselves for worship.



Emily loved making felt hearts. Last month, the MANNA leadership team delivered little craft kits to each family. Included were several pieces of felt, thread and a needle. Jill Gill led us in sewing little stuffed hearts. These hearts are meant to be lost and found over and over again, perhaps in your family or community or with a friend. One person hides the heart and when another finds it, they remember they are loved. In our house, sometimes the heart is found within minutes of being hidden, and sometimes it takes several days. We all love this new tradition.

Then there was our MANNA baking day. Close to the one-year anniversary of the declaration of the global pandemic, we had a Sunday service when we baked scones in our own kitchens and shared a meal of soup and scones. A little bit of self-care, peace and community in this crazy world.

We have also learned about Noah's Ark. Bringing our furry friends to MANNA, we learned that "You are loved... and so are they" from the book *Old Turtle and the Broken Truth*. We also played online games together on a Friday night. MANNA has become such an important weekly event for our family. We are so grateful.



## **A Harcourt Family**

### ***Ann Middleton***

Melissa and Andy Kwiatkowski have been challenged personally and professionally during the past year. But the parents of 11-year-old Lucia and 13-year-old Hania have been luckier than many couples. "My parents have been part of our family," Melissa says, "helping us out from the beginning." Judy and Vince Mendicino pick their granddaughters up from school, make a snack and get Lucia and Hania started on homework. Judy, a retired teacher, was a godsend during the months the children were studying from home, Melissa says. "My mom came every day to support the kids, making sure they had their plan for the day, helping with any questions and providing nutritious meals."

Andy works from home five days a week in the high energy world of Shopify, Canada's digital commerce giant. Melissa is primary health director for Guelph's Community Health Centre which is coping with the dual crises of opioid addictions and deaths and a Covid outbreak in the homeless population.

**“It's a struggle for everyone,” Melissa says. “Every family or couple or individual has their own unique challenges and benefits just now.”**

## **The Year 2020**

**by Elizabeth Bone**

You asked about my experience of the past pandemic year. Not being able to travel for months at a time in Clifford, our big red truck, and with our trailer has been one of the biggest disappointments for us. We talk about the places we want to see but can't make any real plans while everything is still unknown.

The most difficult change to cope with though is not being able to be close to our family and friends or go to the theater, concerts and events. Otherwise, being retired, our time spent at home has been much the same. We are fortunate not to have to deal with working from home while children are going to virtual school. The constant vigilance and worry and seeing people in masks has been tiring.

There are also some positive aspects to these pandemic times. I have really enjoyed contributing to the pre-recorded services, even when we were camping in northern Ontario. The virtual services, Zoom MANNA and Zoom coffee time meant that we were still able to be a part of the Harcourt community from afar, sitting (at a distance of course) in a Tim Hortons. Other times, I can go to church in my Pjs! I have grown closer to the MANNA community and enjoyed the many fun activities that have taken place together while apart.

The pandemic isolation is not so bad for me as an introvert ... it means I can stay at home without feeling guilty! I have learned new things like grocery shopping online and like it. While it is not the same as meeting friends in person, it has been easier to get together over Zoom. Since 2011, after our 40<sup>th</sup> high school reunion, I have been getting together with dear friends a few times a year. This usually involves a great deal of organization because of busy schedules and travelling, but this year we have met more often.

One thing that is both positive and negative is having surgery to repair my rotator cuff. It is a good time to be healing with no commitments and no pressure to do things along with lots of time to do the exercises. The downside is that I have lots of time to do things I want to do but can't do with just my left hand – like drawing, painting, sewing etc.



I am longing for a time when we can put aside the masks and hug one another.

Elizabeth Bone and Jerry Daminato were at the San Jose mission in San Antonio, Texas when the prime minister suggested all Canadians should return home last March.

## **I'm a people-person! Covid has taught me that.**

**Larry Smith**

I think of myself as somewhat of an introvert, someone who would prefer to stand in the back row of the choir, and also to think carefully before offering an opinion. That part hasn't changed much, but I clearly do yearn for and miss the warm companionship, handshakes and hugs!

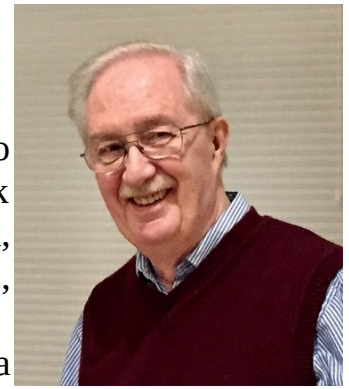
Harcourt has adjusted so well and graciously to become a supportive church outside of the church. There is still that genuine deep love and care that now has to be done via cards, phone calls, Zoom sessions and emails. But those don't come close to the buzz of excitement and anticipation just before the 10:30 service starts on a Sunday morning, coffee time in the gym or the positive and loving atmosphere when entering the choir room, ready to sing on a Thursday night!

If this pandemic had happened even 10 years ago, it would have been a hugely different story with far more challenge. No online shopping. No quick vaccines. And no easy audio and visual communication.

I catch myself clenching my teeth. Although outwardly it appears that things are going well, there is still so much uncertainty that I'm finding it harder to accept than I realized. A couple of things that Covid has changed for all of us are communion and singing. It is taking a great deal of adjustment to sit in front of a computer screen with the communion elements and feel like I'm surrounded by my Christian family. That one act alone will be a major factor in drawing me back into our church building. And singing to myself in the basement is another big change. Some may not realize that choir members are recording their independent voices and sending those tracks to Alison who magically brings them together to make choir sound like choir.

On the other hand, we have done so well in Guelph and especially within our church family as we adapt to the new way of living life. A huge debt of gratitude is owed to our Harcourt volunteers, staff and ministry as they continue to rise to the challenge of this very steep learning curve so that our services and support have never flagged.

Despite the limitations imposed by this pandemic, we are truly blessed to be surrounded by such able, loving and caring people.



## **Covid as a wake up call – will I listen?**

**by Steve Pierce**

I wish I could say I have developed new interests or hobbies, but I have not. Being retired, my routines have not been greatly disrupted. Any change has not been anywhere close to what has been experienced by families who have children in school or have experienced loss of income or people who have had to deal with Covid itself and the death of loved ones. To that extent, Merrill and I feel very fortunate.

We walk daily as we usually did pre-pandemic. After a short hiatus, we have continued volunteering at Chalmers where we have witnessed the impact of the pandemic first hand. We have greatly missed our family Sunday night dinners. We set up a family chat on WhatsApp where we talk regularly about daily events. Merrill has continued to make pies every Sunday, but now we deliver them to our two families and have a porch visit as a substitute for dinner together.

Like many others, I have felt the loss of freedom. The idea that I can't go where I want, when I want and with whom I want has been significant. Living through a pandemic certainly has changed my perspective on life and how the world can be transformed in a few short months. It is a wake-up call and the question now is will I listen.

## **What a difference a year makes! What have I learned?**

***Lynn Hancock***



I learned that it was possible to attend council meetings on something called Zoom. With tech support, I learned how to be seen as well as heard.

I learned that a spiritual Director would be able to meet with me once a week in order for me to begin the 40-week Ignatius Exercises. I came to learn how thankful I am to have my spiritual Director accompany me on my journey.

I learned how my Garmin GPS was my trusted travel companion allowing me the sense of freedom to travel on my own and explore Guelph and surrounding areas knowing that I could always "Go Home."

I learned how strict the protocols were in order to make and keep appointments at my dental clinic.

I learned how the other churches in Guelph chose to offer worship experiences in the summer.

I learned how much I was appreciating Harcourt's small group gatherings on Zoom. I learned that it was possible to feel a deep connection with folks even though I couldn't meet with them in person. Could I be experiencing a digital thin place? I have learned how generous and resilient Harcourt folks are.

I learned how much I was appreciating nature, the parks, and the opportunities to meet friends and share the bubbling experience with strangers in a safe way.

I learned that my great niece Grace was born on April 2. I learned how important technology is in order to be able to see photos and videos of this new little being. A dear friend was able to take a video of me bubbling at Royal City Park and even though I couldn't see Grace in person I was able to send the video on April 2 to Grace's parents and grandparents. I learned how amazing this little one is, blissfully unaware of the pandemic, growing, discovering, learning each day and able to communicate so much without uttering a single word. Note to self!



I have learned how risky it is to allow conditions over which I have no control to determine my sense of well-being. I have learned how dangerous it is to have elected officials – people who could not pass a psychological test – in positions of power. Finally, I have learned how difficult it is to keep my Herald submissions short.

## **Harcourt members reveal creative Covid interests**

### ***Ann Middleton***

Sarah Lowe told me in the spring not to call her between 9:30 and 10:30 in the morning because most days she was doing Sudoku with Cisca Vanderkamp. Then Mary Lou Funston mentioned she'd been on a tour of Valparaiso, the old Chilean city that tumbles picturesquely down a hillside to the edge of the Pacific Ocean. It's a pandemic, but it seems all sorts of exciting things are happening.

Cisca offered to teach Sarah how to do Sudoku over the phone. It wasn't a simple process. Sarah had a copy of the Globe and Mail at her end and Cisca had a sheet of paper and a pencil. She drew in the squares and numbers provided by Sarah and they went on from there. As the weeks progressed, Sarah became so good that they now look forward to the harder puzzles.

Mary Lou has not only visited Chile in the last year. She's been to St. Francis's hillside church at Assisi, to Glencoe where the Campbells massacred the MacDonalds in 1692, to Guernsey and the Highlands of Scotland. She said the tour of Edinburgh took her to places she hadn't visited when she lived there many years ago. Very recently she took a trip to Iceland which is currently being shaken by small earthquakes.

Mary Lou says the advantage of the virtual trips, which take place in real time with local guides, is that you're never at the end of the line or behind someone tall. Not only do you have a good vantage point, you can ask the guide questions. The trips at Virtualtrips are free although tips for the guides are welcome.

When I talked to Heather Sullivan she told me that the Zoom book group she has started at Harcourt has brought together a group who were previously acquainted, but not well known to each other. There are advantages to meeting on Zoom," she says. "You don't have to prepare food and no one has to put up with our three dogs."

She was enthusiastic about the opportunity Covid had given her and Peter to spend time with three-year-old Adrian, their grandson who lives in Mississauga. He comes to them every Thursday, sleeping over and going home Friday night. "He's starting to engage with the world and I've been involved with that, taking him to the pool, the playground and the skating rink." One day Heather plans to get back to her volunteer activities at Ignatius Jesuit Centre where on Fridays she works in the front office of the retreat centre. She also looks forward to returning to her work with a before and after school program, and to her job at the Community Health Centre. There she is a "baby hugger," one of a team of volunteers who look after as many as 17 newborns while their moms take part in a postpartum therapy group. But for now she values this special time with Adrian.



Roz Stevenson says of the opportunities provided during Covid: “It’s a big world out there. I think: what can I do next?” So far she has taken courses in painting, the history of calligraphy and Scottish palaeography – the art of reading old Scottish handwriting as found in historic documents. Roz has signed up for university courses on freelearn, but most of all she’s been advancing her skill at calligraphy, a long-time interest.

When the pandemic was declared, courses and conferences all over the world were cancelled and teachers lost their income overnight, Roz says. “But now so many are teaching online.” You can take courses from the world’s top teachers, be they in Belgium or Australia. And you don’t have to worry about being short and in the back row. As in the virtual tours, everyone has a front seat on the action.

## **Finding out what goes on after dark *by Sarah Lowe***

This past year I have been taking and sharing photos. Not the professional quality ones I thought I would get to in retirement, just snap shots to capture the beauty of nature, and our local birds and wildlife

What a great way of keeping in touch with friends and family far away. I exchange a photo most days with one of my sisters in the UK, so we know what each other is up to. A few weeks ago she sent photos of snowdrops and I sent pictures of a porcupine up a tree in the arboretum. For my other sister, I print the photos out with explanations and include them with a note card most weeks. I also use Facebook for a small and select group of friends and family who seem to share a love of nature, gardens and wildlife.

I have always loved taking photos. But the pandemic has allowed me to make it a legitimate activity. Even more exciting, we recently bought a motion sensor camera. So instead of breaking up the long winter by watching wildlife in the warmer climate of central America, John and I are learning what has been prowling in the backyard overnight. This way we manage to match up the tracks in the snow with the actual animals. So far we have photographed skunks, raccoons, rabbits and a fox.



*Sarah Lowe’s new motion sensor camera captured a fox that visits the backyard regularly when the inhabitants of the house are asleep.*



*Sarah’s regular walks in the arboretum woods reveal a screech owl.*

## Garden gets growing, helpers needed

*Jill Gill*

As I mentioned last month, the Harcourt communal garden has been awarded a \$2,000 grant in the G-W Urban Agriculture Challenge by Our Food Future, 10C/Harvest Impact and the City of Guelph Smart Cities office.

Lisa Mactaggart has been diligently planting and tending to seedlings for growing this season. Before planting this year, we will be undertaking five projects funded by the grant to upgrade and repair our space: 1. replacing the rotted hemlock boards in the raised beds; 2. adding eavestroughs and a downspout on the shed to collect rain water; 3. installing a drip-feed irrigation system to water the raised and on-ground beds; 4. erecting vertical trellis panels to grow vegetables more efficiently; 5. putting up chicken wire barriers to discourage critters from feeding.

Each of these projects is a short-term activity. Separate volunteer crews will be scheduled to work – socially distanced – to complete them. If you are interested in helping, please contact me, Jill, at [peter.gill@sympatico.ca](mailto:peter.gill@sympatico.ca) to let me know where you would like to be scheduled.

As always, I am requesting volunteers to declare their intention to help in planting and maintenance of the Harcourt communal garden. This will involve two to three hours gardening work about six times during the season from June until the end of October. I'll be hosting a ZOOM meeting for those interested in helping. Please contact me at the above email address.

We are looking forward to an exciting growing season filled with new projects and harvesting of fresh, local, organically grown vegetables and herbs to donate to Chalmers Community Services Centre. Many thanks for your continued support.





## Church garden corner: signs of spring

*Sarah Lowe*

Spring is here and there's lots going on in the church garden. Life is emerging in its annual miracle. Robins and rabbits are already checking out the lawns. Before too long you will see daffodils blooming, and by the end of April the forsythia will be in its full glory with dazzling golden blossom. How can we not be encouraged?



But it's not just the plants and animals that are active. The garden has become a community hub for church members and the neighbourhood. Manna has held Sunday services here, even on cold winter Sundays, and friends and church committees will soon be meeting up safely at the benches and picnic tables.

Something new this spring is a beautiful butterfly painting suspended under the Celebration Garden arbour for the Easter season. Come and take your photo with this wonderful symbol of transformation.

Mark your diaries for May 1. If you want some May Day fun, we always appreciate extra help with the annual spring cleanup.





## Life Events:

### Passages



#### **Grace Glass** died March 1, 2021

Grace felt at home at Harcourt from her arrival in 2010. She was a member of the Harcourt Independents, the Caroline Harcourt and Exploration in Progressive Christianity groups. Always passionately interested in people, the environment and social justice, she was involved in Grey Presbytery and Knox United Church in Durham where the Glasses raised their family. Grace died on March 1 at the home of her daughter and son-in-law Julie and Albert Ashley, released from hospital so that family could be close in her last days.

Barely a teenager, Grace left the family farm to board in Owen Sound for high school. The administrative skills she learned there opened doors to jobs over the next half century. Grace was working for a lumber company in Owen Sound when Norman Glass first spotted the beautiful girl in the green suit. Destined for a job in Toronto, she wasn't interested in dating. But on her last night in Owen Sound, she bumped into Norman at a dance and they decided to keep in touch. They had been married for 40 years when Norman died in 1987.

Julie, brothers Geoff and Stephen and their families have been overwhelmed by the love and support of the Harcourt community.

