

The Harcourt Herald May 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:
Casey Connor

Custodian: David Kucherepa

The Ministers: The People
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part-time pastoral care
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Manna lead coordinator,
Director of Music Ministry:
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Table of Contents

The Minister's Quill.....	4
From the Editor's desk.....	6
Letter to the editor:.....	6
Council News.....	7
A Guide to the Liturgical Year – Year B The Season of Pentecost.....	8
Exciting opportunity.....	10
From the Trustees.....	11
Custodian David Kucherepa carries on.....	12
A Big Thank-You.....	13
Jesus poses challenges for us all.....	13
Community narrows, but Harcourt reaches out.....	14
Growing and nurturing a “cyber-congregation.”	15
Mowats note benefits of altered lifestyle.....	17
One of us.....	18
Bright blessings found among the uncertainties.....	19
My community is very much alive.....	21
Adapting to technology isn't new.....	22
Facebook foray brings back memories.....	23
Pause announced on communal garden activities.....	24
Church Garden Corner.....	25
Life Events:.....	26



The Minister's Quill

by Rev. Miriam Flynn



Supper at Emmaus , Caravaggio, c.1601

This past Sunday we read the story of the appearance of the resurrected Jesus to those walking along the road to Emmaus. It was only as Cleopas and his companion sat down to eat with the stranger who accompanied them, that they recognized *Jesus* in the breaking and sharing of bread. During a reflection and listening circle I was part of, several of us expressed wonder at how exotic this formerly ordinary experience now seems. Imagine trekking all day with strangers, walking and talking freely, only to share an indoor meal at day's end!

A beautiful baroque rendering of the Supper at Emmaus hangs in the National Gallery in London. Last year, when people found themselves excluded from the gallery due to the lockdown, artist Lionel Stanhope decided to bring art to the street by painting a large mural of this Caravaggio classic on the wall of an alley in southeast London. Stanhope's version has a twist however ... the Christ who readies himself to break the bread is wearing blue medical gloves.

Stanhope wanted to bring the inspiration of this classic artwork to the people of the city, while making a relevant statement about our lived experience in this unusual time. See Stanhope's mural here:

<https://cnalifestyle.channelnewsasia.com/lifestyle/london-street-art-coronavirus-caravaggio-12704622>

I have been thinking lately about Stanhope's bold action in taking art to the street and wondering what actions of hospitality and solidarity we might offer at this time. Understanding, as we do, that Christ is known in the breaking and sharing of bread, how best may we welcome others to the table of equity and inclusion?

In pandemic times, how do we break and share bread with the stranger who is our neighbour? How do we walk with others in solidarity and bear witness to the reality of the new life and grace of the resurrection?

Recently United Church of Canada congregations across the country held vigils (in person and online, as local protocols dictated) in support of a Guaranteed Liveable Income. While the pandemic has clearly demonstrated our interdependence, it has also exposed the fault lines of inequity that place an inordinate burden on some. As British writer Damian Barr put it: “We are not all in the same boat. We are all in the same storm. Some are on super-yachts. Some have just the one oar.”

Learn more about the recent vigils and UCC support of GLI here:

<https://www.nsnews.com/in-the-community/church-hosts-vigil-in-support-of-guaranteed-livable-income-in-front-of-north-van-mps-office-3616429>

<https://united-church.ca/social-action/act-now/create-guaranteed-livable-income-program>

The third wave of Covid-19 in Ontario has made the effect of these inequities upon the health of our community very clear. For many, staying at home is a privilege they cannot afford, where no paid sick leave is available. The need to choose between caring for one’s health and paying the bills is real for many and, given the reality of community and workplace spread of the virus, this has a direct effect upon our capacity to get the pandemic under control.

Peter Juni, is a top scientific adviser to the Ontario government as a member of the Covid-19 Science Table. He has commented publicly on the need for policies that recognize the way social inequities are affecting the spread of infection. Juni identifies the marginalized and those in the essential workforce outside of health care as the people who suffer the most, as are the neighbourhoods where these people live. Juni urges government to address the root cause of community and workplace spread by ensuring efficient paid sick leave.

How might we use our voices and influence to encourage our leaders to address inequities in ways that promote health for everyone? Might an email or letter written today be a means of walking in solidarity and making space at the table? For as the travellers to Emmaus discovered so long ago, the stranger who shares the path with us is not a stranger at all, but rather the one who was made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

From the Editor's desk



Even as a happy introvert I long for direct contact with friends and groups. But with the growing number of restrictions this is proving to be quite a challenge. However, I keep thinking that we live in a time where we now have access to means of communication that have made some connection still possible. Without computers, the internet and clever communication software we would be much more lost than we are right now.

That works for many people, but I know of some who are not comfortable with computers and/or don't have any of the devices that help us stay in touch. So, even though I want to praise the use of Zoom, Skype or other apps, I cannot do this without being aware of the privilege I have.

However, the Harcourt office is trying its best to stay inclusive. Hard copies of the Harcourt Herald are mailed and hand delivered to many members of our congregation and also available in the plastic box on the church steps. Is that enough? What else can we do to keep the Harcourt community alive and well-nurtured?

For a long while, I have found myself almost holding my breath until this is over and we can get back to "normal" (whatever that means). Now this third wave makes me more pessimistic about thinking that everything will soon be back to "normal."

What are some more ways to stay in touch? I hope this issue of the Herald will show us more ways to nurture our community and our relationships.

June is Pride Month. Do you have something to contribute on this subject for the next issue, the last before the summer? Remember readers like short and precise articles. Send your thoughts to theherald@harcourtuc.ca

Letter to the editor:

Greetings to All *Gary VanArragon*

A number of people have asked whether it would be possible to provide financial support to the newly arrived Syrian family about which you have received several emails from me.

An e-transfer route would be the simplest. The information to access that is as follows:

The e-transfer can be sent to the family's email address which is:

almuslimjamal@gmail.com

First Name: JAMAL Last Name: ALMOSLIM

For the Security question please use:

Favourite city? And the answer would be: Guelph21

Dublin has sent out a call for bedroom single beds, mattresses, bedding & end tables for a government sponsored family with 11 kids age 6-19. The family is very grateful for all the support they have received so far. So. Thanks to all of you!

Council News

Lorraine Holding, council chair



May brings continued progress on several initiatives important to Harcourt and Guelph United Ministries (GUM). On April 21, council focused on these at our meeting.

We approved Ministry & Personnel Committee's recommendation to create a new full-time position for **worship, communication & technical support**. Resulting from Shaina Ensing's resignation, this combines the two part-time positions in place since January and continues our experimentation during our discernment time. We welcome Casey Connor to this 35 hour a week position for a six-month contract, effective April 28.

Council received and briefly discussed the **GUM Final Consultant's Report & Recommendations to Governing Bodies**, prepared by Rev. Paul Miller following his work with GUM for the past three years. It will be discussed by the governing bodies of the GUM partners before release more broadly. We appreciate the participation of approximately 30 Harcourt people in the recent GUM Covid Conversations. Obviously, there is a link between the discernment processes of GUM and Harcourt. We will share further information as soon as we can.

Miriam Flynn provided information on an immediate **GUM collaborative initiative** to demonstrate support and gratitude for staff at Guelph General Hospital (GGH) for their ongoing dedication to caring for patients. GUM will sponsor a free beverage and cookie during two weeks – 1800 staff work at GGH. Council approved commitment of GUM funds up to a limit of \$5000 for this outreach project. An ad hoc group is exploring other opportunities for support.

Bill Chapman presented a revised mandate for Harcourt's **Communications Committee**, which council approved. *"The Harcourt Communications Committee exists to ensure that the members of the communities within Harcourt and the larger geographical community that Harcourt ministers to and within have the most comprehensive, clear and helpful information dissemination system possible."*

Harcourt Conversations – Round 2 are planned for May 8-17. Theme leaders, facilitators and scribes are preparing four focused discussions, aiming to translate ideas and energy into concrete actions for Harcourt's future. Council encourages active participation in these sessions. Additional information will be sent to those who register on Sign-Up Genius.

The theme leaders for each topic are:

- Worship/preaching – Kathy Magee, Merrill Pierce, Bill Chapman;
- Spiritual growth and learning by the faithful – Peter Jackson, Lisa Beattie;
- Hospitality & community building – Steve Pierce, Lynn Hancock;
- Responding to the needs of the world – Peter & Jill Gill, Rosalind Slater.

Much information about the changing nature of United churches across Canada is shared through **Embracing the Spirit e-news, EDGE, and Broadview magazine**. If you haven't explored these resources, one article of interest is in the April/May issue of Broadview. An interview with Jordana Wright describes her role with Activate Space, a social enterprise that helps congregations excel as community hubs. <https://broadview.org/jordana-wright-interview> The live-stream fundraising initiative continues, and the equipment is ordered. Watch for news about a sale of art pieces donated to Harcourt by the late Lila Engberg.

With faith and hope, our journey unfolds. Lorraine

A Guide to the Liturgical Year – Year B The Season of Pentecost

Andre Auger



Pentecost occurs this year on May 23. That Sunday will initiate the longest series of texts in the church year. They are often referred to as “Ordinary Time.” How boring ... just one Sunday after another with a string of random Gospel readings, right? Wrong! When I was working with Jim to put together the *MANNA backgrounders* for each of the three years in the liturgical cycle, I struggled at first to figure out what this string of Sundays was about. I remember suddenly seeing the pattern emerge, first in one year, then in all three. The Sundays after Pentecost are like the final chapters in a mystery novel, when the shoe drops, when the “aha!” moment happens, when the whole plot suddenly makes sense. Many congregations never get a chance to appreciate the logic of the liturgical year because it's summer, and the living is easy and preachers shift into summer mode ... and we never get to hear the punch line!

So, what are these Sundays about? The message runs something like this: okay, we've looked at the birth and life of Jesus; we've watched him in action and heard his message; we've participated in his passion and we've celebrated his resurrection. Now he's gone. What are we supposed to do? In each of the three years, Ordinary Time tells us, each in its own way, with its own choice of texts: **we have all we need to carry on Jesus' vision of an alternative community called the Kingdom of God.** No, there's no message about what music to sing, or how to build our churches, or what should church polity look like, or who's a member and who's not. They are a reminder that we already have at our fingertips everything we need to be followers of Jesus and live the values of compassion and justice.

So let's watch this message unfold over the first part of these Ordinary Time Sundays in Year B.

Pentecost**John 15.26-27; 16.4b-15****Story of Pentecost**

The author of the Gospel is reminding us that we will be sorely tested – accused and tried, really – by the courts of the dominant culture, and we will need to witness to our trust in Jesus' project. Standing up for our commitment means practising the ways and values of a share culture rather than a greed culture. We are invited to pay a lot more attention to the work of the spirit within and among us, watching where the energy is in a group, learning to stay silent, listen, and discern, and taking our cue from inspiration to speak out, move, do when we are called to.

Trinity Sunday First Sunday after Pentecost John 3:1-17 Trust Jesus' program

The Lectionary uses the Sundays after Pentecost to explore what it means to carry on Jesus' project of the Kingdom of God, an alternative way of living together based on compassion and distributive justice. The texts seem to focus on the two essential characteristics of the Kingdom: feeding the hungry and healing the sick. Nicodemus is a dramatic stand-in for all those who try to make sense of Jesus through the eyes of established religious structures. What Jesus is inviting us to do is to let go of what we have been taught by institutional religion, because it long ago lost the ability to hold on to the radical nature of God's dream for humanity. The established religions too long ago made their peace with the dominant culture and were no longer able to prepare people to be born from above, to listen attentively to the work of the Spirit, to follow her where she might take us.

**Second Sunday after Pentecost
the world's standard****Mark 3:20-35****Don't measure Jesus' program by**

Common sense is the great tool of the dominant culture. It is often common sense that prevents us from engaging the spiritual life. So it was easy for people to dismiss Jesus, his actions, and his teachings as the product of someone who has gone out of his mind. What he is asking us to do violates all the tenets of common sense. Do we find ourselves tempted to judge Jesus' call in terms of common sense? In terms of the cultural values around us? Surely Jesus can't mean thus and such ... it's just too radical ... it would affect my way of life ...

Third Sunday after Pentecost Mark 4:26-34 What's this alternative community like?

This Sunday we look at two of Jesus' many parables about the Kingdom of God, that dream of God of an alternative way of being human together, based on compassion and distributive justice. In the first, perhaps it's the idea that we really don't know how the Kingdom develops, but we know that when we spread the Word through words or deeds, something good happens and grows disproportionately. In the second, farmers who were listening to Jesus would have understood: small and powerful and no respecter of boundaries, the Kingdom – like the mustard seed – grows within the dominant culture, from small gestures to large communities which eventually challenge the status quo of empire.

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost Mark 4:35-41 Faith in the kingdom even in adversity

The key line is always the same. Why are we afraid? Why do we have so little faith? How many times does Mark make the point: the disciples don't get it; they're always afraid; and they don't have enough faith, enough trust. In what/whom do we put our trust? Do we, like the disciples, believe in the forces of nature, or market forces, or the force of military violence? What would we do differently if we truly trusted the divine presence within and around us?

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost Mark 5:21-43 The alternative community is about making whole

Healing is different from curing. The latter is medical. The former is social and communal. We heal when we restore people to loving, accepting and non-judgmental communities. And then we engage in table fellowship with those we heal – one of the most intimate kinds of relationship. How might we, as a middle-class, suburban congregation, engage in such healing and table fellowship practices? What might that look like?

We'll explore the remainder of these Sundays in Ordinary Time in the June issue.

Exciting opportunity

Brian Magee

Have Covid-19 restrictions got you down? Do you lack stimulation and a challenge? If so, contact Brian Magee at bkmagee@rogers.com or 519-821-3575 for an exciting opportunity. You could be the next Harcourt treasurer or co-treasurer. Bookkeeping knowledge is required, along with familiarity with accounting software. This once-in-a-lifetime opportunity is available now so do not hesitate to get your name submitted.



News from the property committee

Dave Hume

Several topics occupied the April 13 meeting of the property committee. Among them were:

- Rental rates for the Royal City Pre-School. Frank Webster described the current situation as “wait and see,” meaning we need to know if and when the pre-school will be operating.
- When to shut the boilers off. The plan is to shut the hot water heating off in the first week of May and to have a technician from Wellington Heating and Plumbing walk us through the details of shutdown and servicing the system.

- Cutting Grass. Thanks to Gary Parsons for getting the riding mower and push mower ready to go. We intend to have David Kucherepa make a first cutting in the week of April 19, starting with a 3” cut.
- BruMac Plumbing replaced the old water softener after it failed.
- Frank Webster and John Phelps completed a Stats Canada survey of commercial and institutional energy use. We had a look at a disturbing video of a prowler next door, captured on a night-time motion sensor camera, which raised questions about video camera surveillance at the church. The property committee will be following up.

From the Trustees

May is Leave a Legacy Month in Canada

April and tax season have come and gone. Like many of us, you may have missed the opportunity to consider how a Legacy gift can support Harcourt and its Christian outreach.

Legacy Giving allows you to shift monies from the CRA to a charity and cause of your choice. A gift to Harcourt is a way of acknowledging that Harcourt has had an impact on your life and on the lives of those important to you and your community. Each type of gift has different benefits both to you and to the Church, as well as different tax and financial implications.

Last March, we could not have imagined how a virus could destabilize our entire world. Never has the need been greater to provide support to those who are struggling, both physically and spiritually. We ask you to consider, before next year's tax season, how your Legacy gift can help us to sustain Harcourt's mission.

Type of Gift	Advantages
Bequest or In your will	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - You can make a gift in your will to any area of the Church. - You can divide your gift among several programs and ministries of the United Church.
Life Insurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A substantial future gift is created to support the ministry and mission of the Church. - This type of gift can be made for a relatively small outlay of cash. - This type of gift does not reduce the size of your estate.
RRSP RRIF and TFSA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A substantial future gift is created to support the ministry and missions of the Church. - Your estate receives a charitable donation receipt that will offset taxes, which will in turn replenish the value of your estate. - Designating a ministry as the beneficiary of a policy helps avoid probate fees on these gifts.
Stocks, Mutual Funds and Bonds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - You can make a gift without depleting your bank account. - You receive a charitable donation receipt for the value of the stock, mutual funds, and bonds. - You pay no tax on the capital gain of the donated stocks, mutual funds, and bonds.

This chart is from the United Church brochure "Gifts that Last Lifetimes"

For additional information and to obtain a brochure related to a specific type of gift mentioned, please contact John Phelps - Chair of Trustees.

Custodian David Kucherepa carries on

by Ann Middleton

I first met our custodian David Kucherepa when I crawled through the hedge on the north side of the church parking lot one day in early fall to ask him to turn off his whipper snipper because it was making too much noise. A group of us were holding a meeting in a back yard and couldn't hear each other over the din.



David was very gracious when I explained the situation. Quiet descended while he did other jobs around the property and we carried on with our agenda. Looking back, I had a nerve!

A church custodian needs good people skills and fortunately David has those, although he is seldom called on to use them in the current situation. Normally he would be meeting people all day long as he worked inside and out, doing yard and property maintenance and keeping the inside clean and in good nick. When I telephoned him last week for this interview, he was in the midst of wet vacuuming the rug in the friendship room.

David started working one month before lockdown in March of 2020. He remembers it was chaos. "We didn't know at first if I was supposed to be staying at home, in other words out of a job." David's wife Miranda Mafe is in IT at the university, so she could work from home, but only if David was there to look after their two-year-old daughter Mia. And if David was providing daycare, it was impossible to be at work.

"I was at home for a month," he says, "then I started popping in and out throughout the day until September when Mia's daycare opened again." Since then it's been closed a few times, but in the meantime David and Miranda have welcomed a son Dylan, born December 30. Now Miranda is home with the children and David enjoys the peace and quiet of his Harcourt work space.

David is willing to put his hand to most things to support his family. He trained in media studies at Ryerson, but jobs in that area have been few and far between. Among others things, he has been employed by the city's parks and recreation department, conducted interviews with artists who are part of Guelph's vibrant music scene for CFRU and worked in some pretty high stress situations like customer service.

For now, he just waits for things to get back to a semblance of normal before Miranda returns to work in December.

A Big Thank-You

by Ben Fear



A sincere thank you for your cards and encouraging messages which coupled with your soups and sweets added pleasant surprises to the days. The Hydrangeas were an Easter gift from you all and they continue to brighten the scene.

I'm stagnating at home controlled nicely by social distance and maintained with love by Janet Jon and Jeanne whose expertise is augmented from long distance by Jeff. The prognosis is long term which will test their stamina.

I am looking forward toward the warm sunny days of summer. Thank you all sincerely,

KEEP SMILING BEN

Jesus poses challenges for us all

Edna Miller

Jesus asks "Do you love me?" and then he challenges us: "Feed my sheep." As I face the challenges and apathy that accompany Covid lock downs, I am challenged to ask myself: How much do I really love the Christ? How much do I love my neighbour, my community, my church, my world? Do I really care? Do I love enough to show it? Do I love enough to overcome my apathy, my reserve, my lack of confidence, my fears to express that love? Do I love enough to act?

If I say “Yes, Jesus, I do love,” then how do I express that love, that concern, that caring? How do I open the doors to my heart and let the message out? Does it really matter how we say it? Does it matter how we show it? The list of possibilities is longer than we sometimes realize. If we think about it, we know how. If we love enough, our hearts will find a way. Maybe even write a letter for the Herald.

Community narrows, but Harcourt reaches out

Mike Peleschak

Early last March, 2020, I was preparing to go to choir practice on a Thursday evening when the six o'clock news reiterated the story of the week: some flu-like virus was barreling into Ontario, and susceptible people like seniors should avoid groups or crowds. I stayed home and we did not go to church that Sunday. A week later, as you know, everything else was being closed down. Well, that was certainly a prophetic decision. I haven't been to choir practice or church since!

While it was very frustrating to lose our freedom to choose what we want to do and when and where to do it, I think we're coping reasonably well. Our biggest blessing is our family. We have two families in Guelph and one in London. They are great friends and interact regularly. We hear from all of them almost daily by text or by phone, and they're all willing to pick things up for us or do chores around the house. Our eldest, Martha, introduced us to Zoom immediately (she was using it in her international lecturing), so we began weekly Monday night dinners on Zoom worldwide, including grandchildren in London, Kingston, Halifax and England, and cousins in Haliburton, Italy, and Australia.

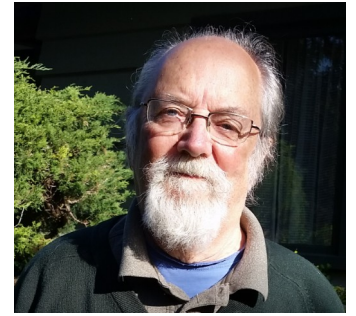
As everything went virtual, Harcourt's outreach community went into action. Judy Cimino has phoned us several times to greet and check in. Alison MacNeill has done a remarkable job in having choir members record their voices, then compiling choir-led hymns. We have found Mindstretch on Zoom a great connection – with the church, with God and with our community of members.

We look forward to worshipping live on site with our Harcourt family some day, but until then we find the online services quite meaningful. I know they're recorded and available anytime, but we like to prepare ourselves for worship and watch on Sunday morning – because that's church time.



Growing and nurturing a “cyber-congregation.”

Andre Auger



This month’s Harcourt Herald theme – in what ways have I learned to nurture community during the pandemic? – really resonates with me. Over the past 13 months I have watched different congregations wrestle with their identity – shrunk in terms of physical contact, yet vastly expanded in terms of outreach via the internet.

I dug into my files and pulled out an article I had submitted to the Herald some six years ago, when I had just learned about the wonders of Facebook through a workshop organized by Harcourt’s tech expert of the time, Nick Swan. I don’t know if it ever got published, but as I reread my copy, I realized with a wry smile how prophetic the article was ... We have indeed learned a lot about how to nurture community during the pandemic!

Here are some passages from it, with further reflections based on our lockdown experience.

*So my question is: how do we nurture those individuals whom we might consider a virtual extension of our congregation, a “cyberchurch,” so to speak? I guess we ought to start our answer by asking ourselves how we nurture people who take part in the congregation in person. The answer, I would imagine, is much the same as we have been giving ourselves over the past several years as we have reflected on what it means to be Harcourt: **we welcome, we equip, and we send out.** It has always been so. In the early churches, there were “catechumens,” (people receiving instruction in the principles of the Christian religion) who were seekers. These were welcomed and taught. They became disciples, students, followers of the Way of Jesus. Seasoned disciples became apostles (“apostolein = to be sent out), starting new communities as they travelled.*

What might it mean, then, to welcome, equip and send out a virtual congregation?

Welcoming involves building a community, or a series of small communities where people feel comfortable and safe, where they know each other, where a stranger or a newcomer can quickly feel s/he belongs. And belonging implies being informed, being recognized, being accepted, contributing, being supported. What would this mean for our cyberchurch?

Well, literally all of Harcourt’s gathering activities are currently mediated by the internet. Pastors I have talked to from other churches say that attendance at church-sponsored events has grown considerably. Distance is no longer an obstacle. With a little Google skill, one can identify any number of religious communities that invite us to join them. Now, rather than geography, it’s interest, values, and quality of the worship or community experience that can determine what church group I want to join.

Continuing with the earlier article:

Next equipping: *Equipping is about helping people grow in their faith; it's about seeing our individual stories as part of the Great Story, and understanding that Great Story in light of our experiences. It's also about reading the times, i.e., interpreting world events in terms of Jesus' project for an alternative culture to the dominant one. And it's about providing the tools we*

need to serve as vehicles of God's Love in the world. What would this mean for our cyberchurch? Can we have virtual groups which never meet, but which could discuss a book, a video, a movie? Can we post sermons, or even services, as text or mp3 files? Can we offer to provide some form of personal support to spiritual journeys via email or Skype?

WOW! Has this ever come true! Even all of my spiritual direction is now done via Zoom or Skype. I have directees from up to 150 km away. Harcourt boasts several Christian formation activities that have moved entirely to Zoom for the duration of the pandemic. These groups remain steady and committed. I hear of more and more people accessing podcasts and seminars offered by prominent spiritual leaders from around the world. I am now comfortable leading retreats for Loyola House or Five Oaks from my own home. Attendance does not seem to be affected. If anything, these retreats attract an audience from a far wider geographical area.

Back to the earlier article:

*Finally, a congregation **sends out**. This is the missional aspect of church: it's about getting people out to be the love of God wherever they are. It's about identifying one's passion and skills and helping people connect with community needs which could use them. It's about providing the support and encouragement to people involved in missional activity. Think of all the ways in which Harcourt supports people identifying their passion and their skills to help bring about a healthier and more just community. What would this mean for our cyberchurch? Could we regularly post opportunities to serve? Could we even crowdfund as a way to invite stewardship from our cyber-community?*

I know that some churches have been wildly successful during the pandemic in fundraising for various local charities. I am aware of a growing number of internet pressure groups supporting progressive social policies and environmental issues. Certainly, people use social media to express their support – or opposition – on various societal issues. The recent United Church social media campaign for a basic wage is an example of this. So there are significant ways in which we can be sent out.

Yes, we all long to be together again in one geographical place. But is our longing blinding us to a new kind of church community being born? One that is defined not by geography but perhaps by theology, or by a particular quality, or social issue? I suspect that congregations which shift their thinking toward proactively including and engaging their cyber-members will stand a better chance at growing than those that are simply trying to survive until the pandemic is over in order to return to the old ways.



Mowats note benefits of altered lifestyle

David Mowat



Society will be markedly changed by this pandemic in some ways that are beneficial. For example, our two daughters and their husbands are fortunate to be able to work from home on their computers and phones. One son-in-law used to spend a stressful and polluting hour each way driving across Toronto on the busiest part of the 401. When normality eventually returns, it will be interesting to see how many changes will be long term. The other son-in-law and daughter will be able to ride bikes for 20 minutes to their offices, if needed, in downtown Toronto in complete safety on new lanes with guards.

One of the several opportunities that Helen and I have enjoyed is online duplicate bridge. We didn't play until Helen's golf and tennis seasons were over and my balcony flower garden put away. From mid-November through to late April, Helen regularly played six times and I five times a week with friends, but scored against 15 other tables. It is very intensive, so we generally play only for two hours. You can type a bit of chat back and forth during the game if you wish.

We also enjoyed online reading (Cloud Library), Globe and Mail, shopping, church services and even buying potted flowers last spring. I was having difficulty reading much of the Globe because of small print and restricted use of ink. Online you can easily increase the size of the print. Also, the modern version lists titles under various categories so that you can scan quickly for articles that interest you. Moreover, the amount to recycle is greatly reduced.

We continued to keep fit during the isolation. Even in summer when Helen played golf or tennis, she often did some warm-up stretches, squats or push-ups at home first. I regularly work out for half an hour in our fully adequate home gym and/or walk/do sprints outside. This was the first winter in many years that we didn't go south for some warmth and recreation. For mental well-being and physical activity, we followed advice and got outdoors more often to enjoy the fresh air and nature. To encourage this, we invested in more thermal clothing and winter hiking boots. We aim to take more advantage of the nearby arboretum and green space

which includes nearly 10 km of trails. In addition, we soon will have our doctors, dentist and, in my case – barber – within walking distance for convenience and no pollution.

The aspect that Helen and I probably missed the most initially was musical theatre, concerts, choirs, singsongs and ballroom dancing. In our nearly 58 years in Guelph, we have loved dancing at big ballrooms and attending music and theatrical events in town and at Stratford, Drayton, Elora and Niagara-on-the-Lake. The latter was generally a two-night outing with super theatre, glorious flowers, historic homes and patio dining. Such fun! Then at Christmastime, we looked forward to carol sings, Guelph's many musical concerts and, of course, family gatherings.

A saviour for us has been modern digital communication, including Zooming. This was the year we were introduced on our new large-screen TV to YouTube music, beginning with marvellous Christmas in Vienna concerts from the opera hall. We must have watched 15 years of performances. From the Royal Albert Hall in London, we enjoyed the Salvation Army carol concert and several BBC Proms, especially those with the superb John Wilson orchestra and singers. And joyous Songs of Praise came from many of Great Britain's massive ancient cathedrals, including Easter services with the traditional hymns. So enjoyable and stimulating!

It is worthwhile to reflect on how the Covid-19 and climate change crises may have beneficially altered our lifestyle.

One of us

by Ann Middleton

Joan Charlebois says the thing she has missed most during this past year is music. A Down East girl, Joan plays the piano and guitar, sings in the Harcourt choir and has fun every month with the Arkell hootenanny group. At least she did all those things until a year ago when that community disappeared almost overnight. "I miss the physical connection at church, the laughter and the camaraderie of singing together. I haven't picked up my guitar for a year and only now am getting back to the piano."

The music and family back home in Cape Breton are the biggest losses for Joan. But she counts herself truly blessed. "I'm one of the lucky ones," she says. "I have a job that I love and enough money to pay the bills." A nurse, Joan has her own business providing foot and hand



care to seniors, many of them suffering from diabetes or arthritis. She is sometimes the only person they see in a week.

On the weekends, Joan and her husband Steve enjoy walking on Guelph's riverside trails. Since they live in a condo, they can't visit with their grown children and grandchildren in the backyard, but they have managed to visit outside.

Joan is thankful for what she describes as two miracles in her life. Fifteen years ago Steve, who has multiple sclerosis, needed an electric scooter to get around. Now he can walk and works full time as a compliance officer at Walmart. Their son Justin recovered several years ago from viral meningitis and encephalitis after being placed on a respirator.

And now, in the absence of the communities that were so important to Joan, there is one thing the Charlebois do every weekend without fail. Look for them Sunday afternoon at the Dairy Queen on Woolwich Street. They'll be enjoying their weekly chocolate sundaes.

Bright blessings found among the uncertainties

Arleen Fuhr

*Life doesn't always get better.
But you do. You get stronger.
You get wiser. You get softer.
With tattered wings you rise.
And the world watches in wonder
At the breathless beauty of
A human who survived life.*

L. R. Knost



It might seem strange to view the deadly Covid-19 virus as a gift, but for me this quarantine period wove strands of bright blessings amongst the uncertainty and stress. Suddenly, I could no longer schmooze with my friends. After March 13, 2020 the hours and days stretched out toward the horizon, but I rose to the challenge of discovering creative ways to use my leisure time.

For five years, I had been part of a memoir group led by Ann Estill here in our Village by the Arboretum. As a result, I had spent hours reminiscing and recording my recollections. Covid also enabled me to take part in a course about ancestors run by Jim Ball. Once again I began to work diligently on my memoir and discover ways to include First Nations perspectives.

During the lockdown, the University of Minnesota offered three opportunities to compose brief, original, one-act plays over a two-day period. Each time, I found myself befriended by unique and bizarre characters of my own invention. They entertained me at a time when I was feeling lonely and isolated.

A sadness for us as a couple is that we have yet to hug our youngest granddaughter who was born in Winnipeg at the end of February, 2020. However, Bryan and I quickly became adept at FaceTime which has enabled us to interact with Margo and visit with her family as well as other people from afar.

We learned about Zoom and how that technology can connect us in meaningful ways with folk in Harcourt's small groups. Zoom also meant we could chat with 20 individuals from our University of Alberta graduate school days. We have known each other for 50 years and since 2006 have reconnected by arranging week-long get-togethers in different parts of the world. The September 2020 gathering in Canmore Alberta had to be cancelled, but Zoom enabled folks from Thailand, different parts of Canada, Britain, and Germany to enjoy a virtual coffee time.

The wizardry of Zoom also invited experts of various sorts to magically appear in our living room. Brian Carwana gave leadership as he gathered those interested in an intensive week-long exploration of major world religions. This past fall, Guelph Third Age Learning featured various experts lecturing on pandemics and other health-related issues. The winter series focused on women in science in the morning and Canadian architecture in the afternoon. What a rich educational experience! We are now participating in the Summer Lecture Series and are enjoying these sessions immensely.

Technology enabled lively discussions as a small group of us investigated issues of prejudice through an exploration of Drew Hart's book, *Trouble I've Seen*. The book club in our village moved online and at Harcourt a virtual book club formed. Even our vipassana meditation class provided online sessions. The instructor and the camaraderie helped me to deal with the isolation of the pandemic and provided hopeful coping strategies.

Covid has provided other intriguing possibilities. Five Oaks Education and Retreat Centre in Paris offered an intensive online weekend adventure involving photography and poetry. Each participant discovered, as L.R. Knost advised, "When life feels too big to handle, go outside. Everything looks smaller when you're standing under the sky."

The gift of time nudged me to take on a nine-month journey with the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises. I appreciated the opportunity to contemplate, meditate, pray and reflect as I created collages and captured aspects of my experience. The process deepened my relationship with scripture in a thoughtful, impactful manner. The Ignatian journey also included sharing with an insightful companion-guide.

During the summer, Bryan and I embarked on several trips. In Stratford, we enjoyed a picnic lunch and hiked along the Avon River. To celebrate our 47th wedding anniversary, we travelled to Kincardine, drove north to Sauble Beach, then back to Fergus for a delectable fish supper on the Goofie Newfie's outdoor patio. The end of September found us at Severn Lodge where we spent several days enjoying the scenery in and around Gloucester Pool on Georgian Bay as well as savouring the lodge's sumptuous meals.

As a retired college English instructor, I eagerly devoured mystery novels and historical fiction. A brief, daily journal encouraged me to record my thoughts and activities during the lockdown. Through participation in a venture by the county's Community Resource Centre, I was matched with a pen pal. Like I had when I was in elementary school, I agreed to compose and receive an encouraging and supportive letter once a month. As a result of this endeavour, I have been motivated to write cards and notes to my six grandchildren in order to correspond with these important and fabulous young people.

During this Covid hibernation, I have learned more than ever how vital it is to be kind to myself and others. As I listen to folks more intently, I see it is fine to have different opinions, and it is okay to make mistakes. Each day is a blessing which reveals ways for me to be a better version of myself. I always aim to do the best I can. That is enough.

I have discovered to get through these rough times, I can lift others up and stifle my minor criticisms. I can recognize other's humanity and genuinely appreciate different gifts and abilities. And I can love others and myself even on days when it's very tough to do that.

Overall, in spite of the difficulties and disruptions that Covid-19 has presented, there have been unanticipated delights and serendipitous benefits. Perhaps the gifts provided by a deadly pandemic are what Paulo Coelho envisions when he writes: "Not all storms come to disrupt our life. Some come to clear our path."

My community is very much alive

Gay Slinger

When we first went into lockdown last year, it felt that I had a community of two – me and my dear husband, John! And we were both wondering how this was all going to work – being confined at home in a Canadian winter with only each other. Really? Looked to be rough, even for an introvert.

But, very quickly, and with great love and respect for John, I happily discovered that my community was, in fact, still alive ... mostly thanks to technology. FaceTime, Facebook Messenger, texts, emails, telephone, and now, Zoom ... all essential to me maintaining community.

Through them, I have stayed connected to family and friends locally and internationally as closely and as often as I want to be. Technology has allowed us to see and talk with our children and, yes, most gratefully, our wonderful grandchildren. While it doesn't replace hugs and cuddles in person, we are still able to be "present" with those whom we love. I have three sisters all living within a couple hours of each other when home but, in the past, we'd get



together maybe twice a year. Now, we meet regularly on Zoom every couple of weeks, something we'll continue to do even after lock-downs end and which we all consider to be a pandemic gift as we wonder, how did we not do this before?

Technology has allowed me to stay connected with Harcourt and other volunteer responsibilities in the community, all on my own time and in the ease and comfort of my own home. Yes, sometimes the technology has its own issues and sometimes online visits and meetings can be awkward without the spontaneity and exuberance of in-person conversations. But still, community lives! I have come to appreciate that those relationships that have deep roots in my life continue to be an active, supportive, loving presence and that I can continue to contribute to my community despite lock-downs. In person will be good when able ... but this is surprisingly good too ... and will continue.

Beyond technology, we have also been able, as permitted, to maintain community in person – with neighbours in our condo building with occasional safe, distanced, masked hall visits, with friends on porches or driveways and, for about three weeks, golfing ... all according to protocols! Oh, how wonderful it's been, when able, to see people in person, even at a safe distance. When out for walks, just smiling and saying hello to others on the street, even behind a mask and at a distance, helps connect us to the larger community.

I've also found being alone can be freeing, calming, peaceful. A community of one can be good too.

We all need community. It doesn't have to be large and it doesn't have to look like anyone else's. It just needs to be enough to give us the positive energy each of us needs for our daily journey especially in these challenging times.

Adapting to technology isn't new

Lisa Beattie

Once upon a time, I had no idea how to use email or send a fax. And I had never even heard of Zoom in those halcyon days of January and February 2020 when the world had no idea that a pandemic was coming our way. I was quite worried about that grim wall of technology that seems to stand, impenetrable, in the way of my simply and easily reaching the people I wanted to reach. Funnily enough, this has even applied at my job in healthcare where I now speak to others in my team through software, as we are not able to gather for daily staff meetings in the same room. Instead, we call in from separate offices and conference rooms and gather on the computer in our little squares that look like postage stamps. When we are physically in the same room with clients and other staff we have masks and face shields and a three times a day rota of sanitizing high touch surfaces like light switches and door knobs.

It is all so odd and unexpected, both at home and at work.



But in surveying this past year plus, I feel so grateful we live in an age of digital technology because of the ways it has helped us to stay in touch with an immediacy and affordability not known in the past when friends and family were not physically together. I see how the technology we have at our disposal tries to address what we are really seeking – connection with one another in meaningful ways. When I moved from the UK back to North America I was so very grateful for email. Phone calls at that time were exorbitantly expensive and letters slow, but emails soothed the loneliness of separation and even allowed crazy new brevity such as: “Had boiled potatoes with supper tonight. Speak soon.”

The truth is I will never be comfortable with learning new technology, and like us all I long for the day when the pandemic is over. But I am very glad my workplace has been able to stay open, and I have found I am comfortable with asking for technical assistance and have done so many, many times at home and at work over the past year. Thank goodness for the help in the Harcourt office!

When I reflect on growing up with black and white TV and a big gas guzzling Chevrolet – or watch a historical drama on Netflix – I see that I may not have liked it but I – and we – have continually and successfully adapted to new technology all along the way.

Facebook foray brings back memories

by Ann Middleton

Jane McNamee has undertaken an unusual practice during the past year. Every day she has posted a picture taken from her family archive onto Facebook with an explanatory story. I asked if it had become a burden, coming up with something different every morning.

And it seems the answer is no. “From the beginning I thought the project would be a reminder of something I’ve had in the past that I think beautiful or had special meaning,” she says. “It helps me be grateful.”

Jane started with her grandparents, Alfred Townsend Bucknill and Brenda Boulnois. Her grandmother was one of the first women to go to Oxford and her grandfather, a high court judge and member of the Privy Council, was knighted for his services to the country.



“My grandmother was an inspiration to me,” Jane said. “Her life was quite sad.” They had two children with a form of muscular dystrophy that was passed on to Jane and her sister. Their daughter, Jane’s aunt, died of the disease at age 12.

“But in spite of it all, my grandmother had a lovely sense of humour and was a very thoughtful person,” says Jane. “I wanted to honour those grandparents: they paid for the foot surgeries my sister and I needed as children before the National Health scheme came into being in Britain.”

Jane’s grandmother Brenda Bucknill as a young woman. One of the first women to attend Oxford, she was a lifelong member of the Jane Austen Society and left Jane her book collection, including a volume called *Psychoanalysis for Simple Folk*.

After a series of pictures and stories about that generation, Jane, the oldest of six children, moved on to her childhood in the English countryside. Those post-war pictures and stories elicited responses and other photos from nieces and nephews in Australia and New Zealand, Belgium, Hong Kong and the UK.

Jane was a boarding student at an enclosed convent school in Sussex from age 10 to 18. There she had the friendship of a nun “who mothered me at school and we kept in touch for the rest of her life,” Jane says. Sister Mary Damien, who also appeared in the Facebook posts, “was a source of strength and inspiration.”



Next came Jane and Bernard’s marriage and move to Northern Rhodesia (later Zambia) with a three-week-old baby in 1963. On Facebook Jane has relived the five years spent in a copper mining community where Bernard worked as an electrical engineer and Jane was an announcer on BBC television which, she says, was opening up a country that was virtually unaware of how the rest of the world lived. “In every village there was a TV or two where people gathered round for classes and information about what was going on in those turbulent times.”

Jane is just finishing posting pictures and stories about that chapter of their lives which included holidays in surrounding countries, a visit to Victoria Falls and an epic drive from Capetown to their home in Zambia.

Next she will launch into the Guelph years – they arrived in Canada in 1969 – a busy time of raising two daughters, and of Jane going back to school and working at McMaster University and Chedoke McMaster Hospital in Hamilton.

Will she run out of material? Not likely. She still has more than 50 years to cover.

Pause announced on communal garden activities

Jill Gill

Just when you thought spring was here and started dreaming of early gardening joy – surprise – lockdown happened – again!

So it goes at the Harcourt communal garden. John Lawson, Peter Gill and Steve Pierce have had two sessions rebuilding the raised beds and accomplished plenty, but were unable to finish the project before lockdown was declared on April 17. The decision was made that no further building will take place until after May 20 when this will be reviewed. Safety is of paramount importance. Even when we resume garden maintenance, folks will be asked to wear masks, maintain social distance, hand wash/sanitize and disinfect any shared tools.



Lisa Mactaggart has planted seeds and is nurturing them to be ready when the soil is warm enough to put them in the garden. Stay tuned for further information about when that will happen.

Church Garden Corner

Sarah Lowe



Throughout the pandemic, the church garden has helped keep us together as a community, not just as a gathering place (see April issue of the Herald) but as a community of gardeners enjoying a healthy, creative and satisfying activity.

Last year we held several gardening sessions and a weed and wine evening, during all of which we observed the prescribed screening, sanitizing and distancing requirements. These efforts helped to produce the blooms photographed for the Harcourt Cares Facebook page and described in more detail in monthly Garden Corner articles.

Deb Murray tidying the beds 13 May 2020

We invite congregation members to join us again in maintaining the garden through the summer.

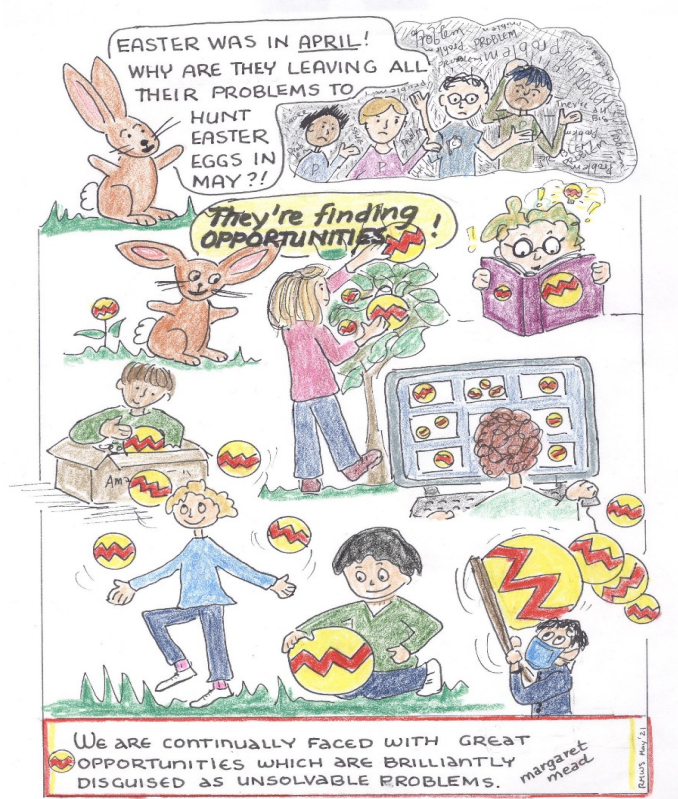
However, during the stay at home order until May 20, our activities need to be modified.

We have postponed the spring cleanup day from May 1 to May 8 and are limiting numbers to groups of three in the garden at any one time, working in shifts. Please contact me if you can volunteer on May 8 and we will set up time slots to suit.

This spring we would love to plant your spent daffodil bulbs, so if you have any, please leave them at the back door, and let me know they are there. Sarah Lowe: 519-824-7206

sarah.lowe@sympatico.ca

And Roz Stevenson's question:



Life Events:

Passages



Cynthia Moseley died at home, age 89, on April 7. She was a very active member of the Guelph community and Harcourt Church where she was a pastoral visitor, trustee, president of the UCW, Saturday night supper volunteer, head usher and – with husband Tom – organizer of several Robbie Burns dinners. Cynthia was born on August 3, 1931, to parents James and Lily Jones in Buxton, Derbyshire, England. She was the youngest sister to Joan, Joyce, Dorothy, Les, and Dennis. Tom and Cynthia married in 1949 and immigrated to Canada in 1957, settling first in Willowdale and

then North York, ultimately finding a home in Guelph. Cynthia remained an active and avid traveller, making great friends at home and abroad. She was loving mother to Laura (Michael) and David (Susan), beloved grandmother to Ethan (Jessie), Clare, Robert (Leah), Tori (Pete), and Zack and devoted great grandmother to Ellanora and Benjamin.

Note from Jerry Daminato

It was the Moseleys who set up a blind date between Elizabeth and myself at a jazz concert in 1997. Tom was to be best man at our wedding, but unfortunately died three weeks before. Cynthia and our moms were the witnesses. The Moseleys were my second parents, and I miss them very much.

Jerry

