

# **The Harcourt Herald January 2022**

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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## From the Desk – January

Here we are, entering the New Year! I can remember the anticipatory dread I felt when we were entering Y2K... Is that what I am feeling as we enter 2022?



I used to look forward to a new year, but now, I am not to sure what I expect! Certainly Covid19 will still be with us – and with a vengeance called Omicron! And any hope for freedom soon is being undermined as I write this...

However, we are fighters. We can deal with a lot and have shown, for almost two years now, that we don't give up easily. I am old enough to remember that we suffered through seven years of World War II and somehow got back on our feet.



"Bloom where you're planted" remains the best advice I can think of for these times. Let's look what we at Harcourt have accomplished during this two years:

- we have an up-to-date technology to live-stream events at Harcourt;
- we are seriously looking into expanded possibilities for the use of our building;
- many of us have become proficient Zoom users and can even produce decent YouTube video clips to complement Harcourt's outreach;
- we have excellent staff, a forward-looking council, and many, many initiatives and involvements with our congregation and the wider communities around us
- and Manna has experimented with a wide range of ways to "be church" in these challenging circumstances.

As for me personally, friendships have stayed strong, even new friendships have developed, and support groups, both formal and informal, have sprung up all over the place.

So, it's still possible to wish everyone a HAPPY NEW YEAR and really mean it!



We received many complimentary comments for how the Herald has adapted to these times and picked up the challenge of helping people stay in touch as a congregation. Thanks for the encouragement.

So, continuing the trend for now: for the February issue we're going to look at love! Love in all its forms – romantic love, passion, family love, and "agape" - that form of affirming someone in becoming the best he/she can be. Love between couples. Love in the family. Love of neighbours. Love of the members of the human race. Love of our world. Love of God's creation. What stories of love would you like to share with our readers?

So, please send us articles for the February 2022 Harcourt Herald, by the 20<sup>th</sup> of January. We are looking forward to your thoughts and stories.





## Survey Feedback



It's always a risk trying to design a "perfect" vehicle for keeping people interested in and informed about Harcourt and its members. The "Goldilocks" stance – not too long, not too short, not too profound, not too folksy – is almost always elusive. Our editorial team tried surveying you the readers to see what was working and what was not. We had too few responses to discern with any degree of certainty what works and what doesn't. (The paucity of responses already tells us something, though, doesn't it?)

As I read over the few responses we did get, I would have to say – and I hope I am reading the data as objectively as I can – that most people seem mostly satisfied. It looks like those who answered the survey read the Herald in total or in good part. For most, the Herald seems to be a good way to stay in touch with members of the Harcourt community. Most seem to think the length is about right (No, no one said it was too short!) Most also seem to appreciate the slight shift in format that favours a particular theme each month and like to see a wide variety of contributors. This shift in format seems to work, especially in light of the vastly improved e-Weekly which Casey Connor puts out every Thursday: the Herald no longer needs to focus on news items, which are often out of date by the time the Herald comes out anyway! It was suggested that we check out font types that are "sans serif" to make it easier to read. This will already be changed in the January issue.



## Our Minister

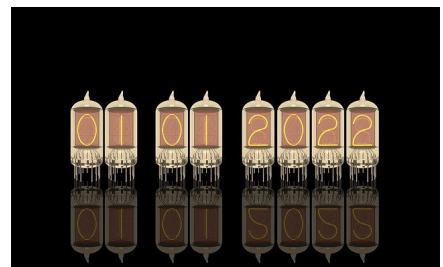


These are challenging times, especially with the recent decision to rethink all Christmas services in light of new pandemic regulations. Rev Miriam Flynn has been a faithful contributor to the Herald throughout the years. This year, she has been swamped with obligations. I am sure she would wish me to extend to all of you her warmest greetings for the Christmas Season. We look forward to reading her in the coming months – Ed.

## Council News

*Lorraine Holding, Council Chair*

As we begin a new year, we are asked to focus on dreams, expectations, changes and events for 2022. Council's December 15<sup>th</sup> meeting included some of each.





## Dreams

We will continue to explore **Three Themes: A Visioning Story** (presented at the November 28<sup>th</sup> Congregational Meeting) led by the Transition Steering Team. We invite people to consider which one, or more, of the themes captures your interest, passion, and commitment of time, energy, talents and financial resources:

- **Support growth of Manna;**
- **Worship shift, spirit and integration;**
- **Building partnerships through physical and technical resources.**

Our **Living Faith Story** will describe Harcourt as a community of faith that lives out the United Church of Canada's updated mission: **Deep Spirituality; Bold Discipleship; Daring Justice; Courageous Community**. Harcourt will re-purpose as a missional church, perhaps through this statement: **Harcourt is on a journey from the current congregational organizational structure towards empowering various communities of the faithful to live out their passion, one step at a time, into a future filled with experimentation and learning.**

## Expectations

Our discernment process will continue through the next few months to complete our Living Faith Story and proposed staffing model as quickly as possible. Opportunities for people to continue exploration of our visioning story will occur. Committees and teams will be encouraged to channel their work towards the three themes.



Collaboration with Trinity United Church to sponsor an Afghan refugee family as immigrants to Canada will continue as a new initiative. Harcourt support will be organized at an appropriate time.

Is it a dream or an expectation that we will have reduced impacts from COVID-19? The Re-entry Planning Group will continue to monitor all public health guidelines and our protocols as a community of faith.





### Anticipated Changes

During Miriam Flynn's planned sabbatical (February 1 to April 30), we hope to welcome a Supply Minister for Worship & Pastoral Care. Combined with an expanded Manna Lead Coordinator role and occasional coverage to assist with worship leadership and urgent pastoral care needs, our ministerial short-term staffing plan will be in place.

With the November 28<sup>th</sup> approval of the implementation plan to replace pews with chairs, we anticipate a successful fundraising initiative to move the project forward. Timing depends on support from across Harcourt. We are pleased that the former Waterloo Presbytery Extension Council approved our application for a \$5000 grant for the project.

### Events

Our 2022 Congregational Annual Meeting will be held virtually on Sunday, March 6. Extra Congregational Meetings will be called to approve our Living Faith Story and any proposed ministerial staffing needs.

## **Congregational Annual Meeting**

will be held virtually  
on Sunday, March 6, 2022

May we venture into 2022 with good health, energy, faith and hope.



Roz Stevenson



## Food for the Journey

Some personal thoughts as we enter 2022

*Bill Lord, Spiritual Life Committee*

Different members of the Spiritual Life Committee have accepted the invitation to prepare an article for the Herald. I was asked to do it for January—a time when we are entering a new year and all its possibilities.

I have recently been reading two books. The first is called ***The Wild Edge of Sorrow: Rituals of Renewal and the Sacred Work of Grief*** by Francis Weller. The other is by Rev. Dr. Jacqui Lewis and its title is ***Fierce Love: A Bold Path to Ferocious Courage and Rule-Breaking Kindness That Can Heal the World.*** Both authors have moved me, and I share some of the ideas that were triggered in my thinking. They have placed items on my radar screen so I can no longer avoid them.

Perspectives matter! Are we a human being on a spiritual journey or are we a spiritual being on a human journey? If we are the latter, then we are called to be midwives to each other as we birth the next chapter in our story. Within some of the following, may you hear the whisper of the Spirit.

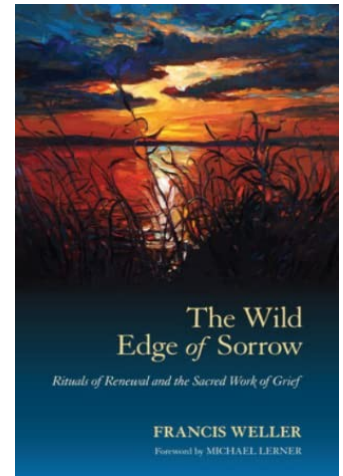
A quote from Lewis own words (p. 137). “This is your calling friend, to make sure no one in your posse is left behind—all of these people are your posse.” Who in our world are being left behind? Here is an invitation to the communities of the faithful to look beyond their walls and respond. So, that all get to the table and are fed.



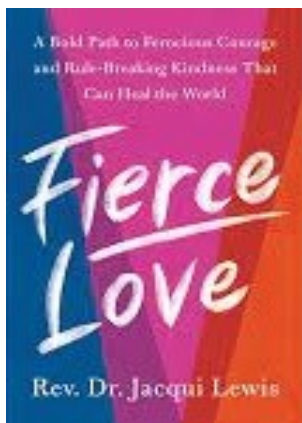
We are called to expand our lives and widen our horizons. Normally we live in a narrow band of emotions and activities. However, James Baldwin, (quoted in Lewis p.127) wrote “Not everything that is faced can be changed but nothing can be changed until it is faced.” And so, we are becoming acutely aware of movements in our world like Black Lives Matter, white supremacy, unexamined assumptions of white culture, climate change, plights of refugees, aboriginal reconciliation, and psychological and economic fallout from the pandemic. The virus did not create all these longstanding issues, but it has identified and intensified them as challenges that we can no longer avoid.



Lewis also quotes Archbishop Desmond Tutu (p. 67). "We are not responsible for what breaks us, but we can be responsible for what puts us back together again". In our world, choices matter. So, 2022 will present us with choice points personal, communal, and societal. In what ways will our faith story impact our choices? Weller's book is an invitation to identify and experience our losses not only as individuals but as a community as well. We join with others seeking paths of healing and reconciliation for what has broken us.



We live within taken-for-granted assumptions of empire that dominate us and our culture. First individualism, we are unique individuals and that puts us at the centre of our world—me first. Secondly, we are led to believe that we live in a world of shortage and scarcity. Reminders to reinforce this are the empty shelves at stores and news of the back orders for microchips. We are called as Christians to challenge these assumptions. Also, we must stand up against nationalistic assumptions that lead to militarism and a buildup of defence systems. As a result, many in our world are starving or living in violence, not of their choosing. Yet we remind ourselves that future opportunities matter. The pastoral theologian Howard Clinebell shared these words with me many years ago—"we live in a broken and birthing world." Over the years, they have prodded me to clarify my thinking about choices for action in the world.



Let us stop, look, and listen to our faith story. We are being invited to a deepening of our relationship with the God of unconditional love. Also, we are challenged to a widening of our horizons for justice in the world. In what ways is the spirit inviting you personally and the community of Harcourt United to live and love differently in 2022? We do have choices to become intentional and to re-purpose our lives in loving, imaginative, and creative ways.

## A Picture is Worth a 1,000 words.

*Kent Hoeg*

A church directory is always such a valued book. We can find names and contact-information for our Harcourt Community. And pictures! We put names to faces and immediately get that wonderful connection to one another.



The last Harcourt Directory was done in 2016. So much has happened since then!

While we all love a hard copy directory, it does become outdated soon after publishing. Well, do we have a solution for you! Very soon we will be publishing an online Harcourt Community Directory! We can also print hard copies for those that need the “touch and feel” approach!



Highlights of the directory:

- Access anywhere, any time from your computer or smart phone.
- You are in control of your data. You can update your family's information, allowing Harcourt to always having the most current information. Of course, we can do it for you as well.
- See photos, staff directories, event pages, Council and Committee memberships, and of course contact information.
- When using from a smart phone, you can press a person's phone number and automatically call that person. Or you can press a person's address and receive a map and directions to their place.
- And security/privacy is front and centre. Only those in the Harcourt Community Directory will be able to access the directory.

Are you excited? You should be. We are just putting the finishing touches on the directory format and then will start a communication plan to tell you how you can sign-on, have you verify your information, upload a photo and so much more!



## **The United Church's Digital Future**

*Tom Auger, UCC Edge*

Over the course of many conversations I was having through my involvement with the Future of the "Friends of Guelph" group, my work as virtual choir director for Norval United Church in Georgetown, and my relationships with the folks at Edge (the innovation incubator of the United Church of Canada) I came to realize that all across the country, United Church congregations (amongst others) were asking themselves the same questions and coming up with innovative solutions to address the significant challenges the pandemic brought to worship and ministry.

I also discovered to my surprise that the "United" church was actually quite fragmented and siloed and that there was an immense duplication of effort happening everywhere in Canada! And this effort was sapping volunteers, lay leaders and ordained folk alike, who all felt – shockingly – that they were on their own to solve these hefty technological (and sometimes theological) puzzles.

The more I discovered, the more convinced I became that the Church at the national level had an opportunity to provide strong leadership in matters pertaining to the adoption and innovation of technology in ministry, worship and outreach, and that a coordinated, focused effort to amplify the efforts of those in the Church who were innovating, while providing support and connections for those who were seeking answers would have a significant impact.

Coming from 15 years as a senior executive in the high-tech sector I couldn't help but hypothesize that a technological Centre of Excellence at the national level would give the Church the opportunity to step into the 21st Century and into the leadership role within our communities and ecumenical partnerships that we had once held in the early days of our formation. Theology aside, I firmly, firmly believe that the United Church of Canada, as a social justice platform if nothing else, continues to have a vital role to play in the evolution of our democracy and our country, and is uniquely positioned to do so.

I also believe that today, the Church is hampered by a perplexing (to me) reluctance to boldly embrace the opportunities that technology affords us in this new reality of social media, "digital natives" and of course, the challenges (and make no mistake: the opportunities!) of the current pandemic. Those that have shifted paradigms and fearlessly tried have seen incredible results in terms of new membership, new outreach, new forms of ministry, more meaningful and appropriate forms of worship, and greater positive impact.



My casual, almost whimsical suggestion that the UCC today – right now – needs a CTO (Chief Technology Officer - the role I had most recently held in Industry) was actually met with a fair deal of enthusiasm – tempered by skepticism at the (slow) velocity of change within the church's hierarchy.

Thus, a pilot project was born. Edge UCC approved and funded a 3-month pilot project to demonstrate the appetite and needs within the Church for a group of individuals focused singularly on technology within the context of worship, ministry and outreach. The work began on the first of October and is coming to an end this year.

During that time I interviewed or met nearly 100 folk within the church who were either working on exciting applications of technologies to address their current set of challenges – moribund rural churches, congregations seeking better engagement in a time of isolation, ministers seeking to reach non-traditional audiences, and those looking to create bridges of reconciliation and inclusivity. Despite the diversity of the work being done, my data continued to prove that so many folk within our United Church are spending more time than ever solving the same technical challenges, creating similar content for online or hybrid services, and working alone in silos when they should be collaborating and uplifting each other.

Burnout within our volunteers, staff and ordained folk is real.

The output of only 3 months of discovery now consists of over 1000 data points, that I will be sharing publicly, about innovative solutions, tools, hardware and software in use across the Church in Canada, and most importantly, the people who have boldly engaged in the work of innovating, daring, failing and iterating that is the hallmark of nimble, disruptive, successful organizations across every sector. Once the work is (not complete - that is a much larger vision) in a minimum viable format to distribute I will disseminate it as widely and accessibly as I can. My hope is to enable and empower a network of folk within the Church, our ecumenical partners and our communities who are united in their vision of revising our mental model of "church" as 4 walls and a steeple with service on Sunday delivered in-person to folk sitting in pews.

We are that, but we are more than that, and we are called to be even more.

I am deeply energized by a vision of us all, together, embarking on the journey to once again become an innovation leader within our community, to build together an alternative, deeply counter-corporate version of democracy that can change the world

and bring about the true Kingdom of God as I understand it. To do so, we must work with the tools that are at our disposal, and meet folk where they are – and this includes social media and the so-called "metaverse" – while at the same time living into that disruptive, humble, authentic and genuine human experience that we embody so well.

Our voice of an inclusive, humble, tolerant, just, affirming Christianity is too vital in today's world to be passed up in favour of loud, fundamentalist "early adopters". We must truly unite as a Church and share our collective resources and expertise to embrace and rise up to the challenges our current time has offered to us as opportunity.

The project I have been graciously allowed to undertake is just the beginning. The real work is to break down our traditional ways of thinking about worship and ministry. The real work is to challenge our concepts of self-sovereignty and the individuality of congregation. The real work is to humbly embrace, support, encourage and uplift each other in our efforts to deepen our ministry and outreach, while bringing new meaning to what it is to BE Church.

## **My thoughts for 2022...**

*Tammy de Winkel*

"Hope is a star."

It's a phrase that keeps going through my mind at this time of year. It also speaks to my state of mind with the work we are doing on the transition team.

Hope is an important commodity right now. Covid has challenged us in ways that we didn't have a chance to anticipate. But, it has also given us experience to know that we can adapt, pivot, and converse with each other meaningfully while we're doing that.



This also speaks to my state of mind with the work we are doing on the transition team. Transition is never easy, often because it means dealing with uncertainty; dealing with leaving things behind without knowing what will be there in their place.

Trying to discern a path through transition for a community of people with diverse needs and desires, while dealing with the discomfort of transition is not a simple, straightforward task.

None of us is clear on what the future holds; we can only know that we have each other on the journey. So, as 2022 dawns, my hope is that I, and we, can embrace these values:

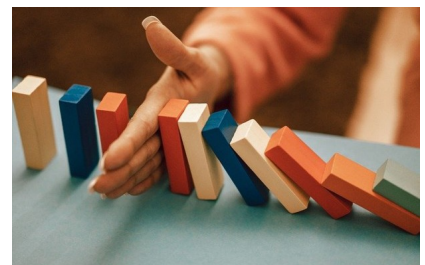
- allow & accept risk - with an eye to understanding what we can learn, not just what the result is
- keep company with compassion, with forgiveness laced through
- look at decision-making with future generations in mind
- stem the fear of being vulnerable; it is possibly a place where we can be more open
- remember that we are on a path, where the eventual outcome of each next near step will not be obvious to us right away

Dare I call it – faith.

## **Time for Some Stability!**

*Pat Martin*

When I was asked to share my thoughts about my dreams for 2022 the word “Stability” came to mind. It seems for the past several years from a Ministry and Personnel Committee perspective there has been so much change with our staff. For one who “likes the status quo” I have found it a difficult time.



We began by increasing our staff with the hiring of Shaina and then Casey for our Technical needs. This area is still evolving and will at a minimum require a number of volunteers. Without them we will be looking at more staff. Pamela was hired to assist with the needs of the Manna community. Then with untimely death of Darko and Anne's retirement Wendy and David joined our staff. Jim's announcement of his retirement has now brought us to where we are today. We were fortunate to have



Marcie join us for a six month contract. At our request she extended her contract for another six months. However she will be leaving us at the end of December.

The Transition Steering team has been working feverishly to formulate a long term plan for our Congregation. How we are going to get there and what resources we need in place to accomplish this all the while dealing with the challenges of Covid remains a real challenge.



So, for 2022 my hope is that the Transition Steering Team is able to complete its work in the early part of the year. I hope its recommendations will be acceptable to our Congregation. I hope that Ministry and Personnel will be able to bring about any change in staffing levels required to put those recommendations into place. Yes, the status quo part of me would love to see things the way they were in

February of 2020 but I have come to realize that is not going to happen and we must move forward for the sustainability of our congregation and the United Church presence in Guelph.

## Little Women's Christmas

*Judi Morris*

*Beannachtaí na laeanta Saoire agus Nollaig na mBan  
go brea doibh go leir*

I heard about Nollaig na mBam, Gaelic for Little Women's Christmas, in Ireland many years ago. The more I learned about this annual celebration for women, the more I knew I had to offer it.



January 6 is the 12<sup>th</sup> day of Christmas, also known as Epiphany, the day the wise men visited Jesus. In some traditions it is known as Little Christmas. In Ireland and many other parts of world, Christmas trees are not taken down till after Epiphany.

John Buttars once brought to our attention how much work Christmas is for women and he encouraged men to participate. It is women who send the Christmas

cards, do the shopping for food and gifts, do a major part of the decorating, the wrapping, preparation of the meals, the clean-up, and the taking down, not to mention looking after the children through all of this.

Little Women's Christmas on January 6 is a day for women to gather together without these chores. It originally began in an Irish pub. The women who participated made a big dinner the day before so there would be leftovers for their families. Then they went out for the day, leaving their husbands in charge of everything, including the children and their feeding.

Those women shared stories about how their lives were going – they supported each other and had a good time. They sang, danced, drank and laughed and went home happy.

Now Nollaig na mBam is now held in homes. Women cook big the day before to leave food for their families. On January 6, they bring some of their leftovers to create a potluck. No one woman is responsible for the day; it's a shared time with no assignments; everyone does a bit. If one of the women is having a difficult time financially, the leftovers are sent home with her.



I have been holding this event every year except one when I cancelled because of illness. That year two of the women came and took me out for lunch. The rules of this day: "There are no rules." Women dress as they feel like, dressing up if they want to, dressing down if they want. I try to dress as crazy as I can – at least wear crazy socks. One year I wore my riding pants because I yearned to ride but it was too cold.

Over time, we have created some of our own traditions to bless the yule log and select a ceremony to pass from the old year to the new. One year we performed a play about the yule log. With hobby horses we galloped hilariously around in front of the fireplace.



Another time we did the 12 days of Christmas; each woman had to stand and be one of the days. It was a laugh because so many of us missed our cues. Some bring musical instruments. We entertain each other with music, song and stories. Another time a member of the group taught us a dance. We always do something with Irish sayings or Irish blessings.



We always have a time of sharing. We light a candle for any woman who has lost someone over the year and encourage that person to share her feelings if she is willing.

Some of the women are Harcourt members, others not. While the day is open to any woman, mostly the same ones come every year – strangers have become friends and part of the sharing is learning how each woman's year has gone. We offer support whenever asked and whenever we feel there is a need to do so.

We sing one Christmas song to honour the season then branch out. Every year is the same. Yet every year is different. Some are more spiritual, others more fun. The one thing we do know is that this has become a safe space to share, a special – almost sacred – day to the women who participate.

In 2021 we held a successful day thanks to Zoom and may do the same this year. A sermon I once heard in Epworth United Church, Kingsville, by Rev. Bruce Suitor, spoke to doing what we can with what we have where we are. This is what we do at Nollaig na mBam and what we did in spite of Covid last year. We are still connected.



I look forward to this day as much as I do to Christmas. We followed the lead of the women of Bera, County Cork, and eventually made it our own. I urge other women to gather a few friends and do the same. Google it; invite women to come; make it your own.

Dia Duit (God be with you).

*This greeting is used by the Irish of Ulster where my family come from for hello and goodbye. I always use it instead of regards.*

## **“New Year’s Resolutions” – 2022**

*Andre Auger*

Every year around this time, I get the annual predictions of the coming year from “The Economist”. At the best of times, this weekly review of the state of affairs of the world is not a bundle of good news. According to its pundits, 2022 will look a lot like

2021, only more so. More dictators, more pollution, more corruption, more corporate greed, more bureaucratic incompetencies. Nothing particularly cheery or uplifting.

So, how is one to live? Do I dismiss the state of the world as a bad dream happening somewhere else? Do I join yet another protest movement to try to change this nightmare? Do I circle the wagons against the dark times to come? Do I numb my despair through whatever drug of choice I can find?



Oh, by the way, I hate “New Year’s Resolutions”: they sound so great and lofty when I formulate them, but they have lost their lustre within days, only to leave me feeling once again a failure at improving my life – this exercise plan; that diet; this commitment to change a pattern of my life I don’t like...

Or do I, on the other hand, look to our model, Jesus? His times were about as bad as ours – a military occupier, a Roman upper class concentrating economic power and wealth in the hands of a few, a growing class of disenfranchised small farmers and fishers, a Temple priesthood working hard to forge an uneasy truce with the Roman occupier, and not providing much solace to its faithful...

What does Jesus do in the midst of this? First he trains a small cadre of ordinary people in a new way of being community; then he sends them out to sow the seeds of this new form of community among desperate peasants; he challenges people to think outside their claustrophobic box, to re-imagine what life could be like if they accepted God’s Dream for humanity; he reinforces the age-old vision of God’s People living in compassion and justice; he offers concrete hope that things can be better right here, right now, with a different approach to community. And he talks about small gestures, not great earth-shattering revolutions. Remember the mustard seed? Or the leaven? Or the widow’s mite?

Maybe that’s the best I can do: nurture communities of seekers and pilgrims like Explorations in Progressive Christianity, the Holy Listening Circle, the Spiritual Life Committee; work with new expressions of church emerging from this pandemic – ways of worshipping that transcend geographic boundaries and provide a genuine spiritual



community to people who prefer, for whatever reason, to participate at a distance over the Internet. And perhaps find new ways to walk with each other as we walk into old age and face the inevitable demise of our lives.

I can do far worse than to try to live out right here the United Church's new Mission Statement: "Deep spirituality, bold discipleship, daring justice, and courageous communities."

Called by God, as disciples of Jesus,  
The United Church of Canada  
seeks to be a bold,  
connected,  
evolving church of  
diverse,  
courageous,  
hope-filled communities  
united in  
deep spirituality,  
inspiring worship,  
and daring justice.



## A "Grown-up" Wish List for 2022

Wendy Guilmette

I have been asked to write an article on my thoughts and dreams for 2022. First, I want to share with you a part of a Christmas song that I love and hold dear to my heart. Below are some of the lyrics. These have always been my thoughts and dreams for a new year.

### *My Grown Up Christmas List (Kelly Clarkson)*

*No more lives torn apart  
That wars would never start  
And time would heal all hearts  
And everyone would have a friend  
And right would always win  
And love would never end, no  
This is my grown up Christmas list  
This is my only lifelong wish  
This is my grown up Christmas list*



I would like to see the world get a handle on COVID. I pray that we find a vaccine that works and we can get back to normal life, whatever that may look like now.

I want to see family together again. Comfort in hugs. Joy. I would love to see people joyful sharing words of welcome and encouragement. I want to see smiles and people having fun.

Taking care of rentals, I am privy to information that most people aren't, at least in the early stages. So, I'll let you know that there is music once again in the church. Rainbow Chorus, the Harcourt Choir, Hand bells, Kitchener Waterloo Symphony is coming back, Guelph Chamber Choir is here and even a children's piano recital. Music is joyful, we could all do with a bit more of it. Happy New Year and peace to you all the year through.

## LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

*Lynn Hancock*

Have you noticed the inspiring stories included in the e-harcourt weekly updates? In response to a request for "good news", Casey Connor designated space for such stories under the heading: "Light in the Darkness". We ALL need more **good** news!!!

When I moved to Guelph, I was aware of four United Churches. I was looking for a best fit. I have no regrets. During the past two years in particular, I have been reminded on a regular basis of the level of commitment of Staff and volunteers at Harcourt to stay focused and offer an alternative to the energy of fear. As a visionary, Joan Barham saw the benefits of Live Streaming. People who came to realize her vision supported this and, as a result of their generosity, Harcourt is able to offer that option to those not able to be in person at 87 Dean Ave. Light in the darkness.



On a personal note.....as a result of my connection to Harcourt, I was contacted in September by a videographer working for CTV Kitchener. A 2 minute video was posted and a brief article was written. As of the writing of this article, if you type into the search bar: "The Bubble Lady, Guelph", you can watch this. As a result of my connection to Harcourt, I was introduced to a "co-host of a syndicated Christian Canadian radio show and podcast called Connections". **chvnradio.com/features/connections**. She had seen the 2 minute video from her workplace in Winnipeg, Manitoba. In November, our 20 minute podcast was aired. The link was provided in the e-harcourt weekly preceding Advent 3: Joy. What is my takeaway? People are out there looking for hope and light in the darkness and Harcourt has caught their attention.

What can I imagine for 2022? I can imagine more people looking for a sense of belonging. Looking for relief from the stress, anxiety and fear. Jesus was born to show us an alternative to fear. He showed us the power of love and forgiveness.

Thanks to electricity, the internet and modern technology, we at Harcourt have an opportunity to "Draw the Circle Wide" (More Voices #145). With your help, we can continue to offer Light in the Darkness. May it be so.

## THOUGHTS FOR THE NEW YEAR

*Tony Wagner*

As we end another year, our thoughts turn to some things that we would like to change in the up-coming new year and some things in general, that we would like changed in society. I have given it considerable thought and there are a couple of things I would like changed in society worldwide, and something that I would like to change in my own life.



To start, I would like society to become kinder. I think it is true that bad news gets more coverage than good news and you just have to tune in to news reports to verify this. Why is it so difficult to be kind or show acts of kindness such as holding the door open for the person behind you or supporting charities that help homeless

people or people that may not have enough food or warm clothing? We are reminded at the end of each Sunday service to "... hasten to kindness for we know not how long....". It doesn't cost very much and I'm sure it would be appreciated by the recipient of kindness.

Next, I would like to see people apologize more often and more quickly. Bumping into someone in a crowded mall or letting a branch snap back accidentally shouldn't have to require unequivocal proof that it was accidental before an apology is offered. It might even add credence to a statement in the magazine "The Economist" when referring to Canada "... the most placid neighbour imaginable...". It seems especially difficult to do in the political sphere. Having gotten that off my chest, I should tackle something in my own life. At the outset, let me say that I do not believe in New Year Resolutions. I am referring to "procrastination". I know I am one of the worst procrastinators going. Webster (the dictionary) calls a procrastinator, one who habitually procrastinates, and that is me. I don't know why. My desk is messy, and I'm told I should touch a piece of paper only once. Sometimes I handle the same piece of paper three or four times before deciding what to do with it, and sometimes the decision is made for me because of the expiry date. I've cleaned up my desk many times but within a day or so, piles start appearing. Maybe that is why I like the song "Mañana". I'm also told a messy desk is indicative of a messy mind. I don't think I have a messy mind. Nevertheless, I will try once again to overcome my procrastination. As a matter of fact, I think I'll start mañana.





## Hope and Aspirations for the Year 2022.

*Rosalind Slater*

I am not a person who makes New Year resolutions. Nor do I give up chocolate (or anything else for that matter) for Lent. I think this probably stems from my Methodist background and Northern roots. What I do do, however, is look back over the year I've just lived and judge for myself what I could have done better or lived more fully. A kind of self assessment. Am I happy with the skin I'm in? This year I have to say a resounding yes. I'm looking forward to 2022 with great hope. I think we've passed the half way point of the pandemic, yes we have a new variant, but hopefully each new mutation will lead to the virus mutating itself out of being, like the mythical 'oozlem' bird.

The New Horizons Band Guelph program provides a fun and informative start to music for adults who have little or no musical experience, or who have been musically inactive for a long time, or just love to play!

I have hope that soon New Horizons band will be able to meet in person once again. I watched their Christmas sharing over Zoom. The brave ones, or technically savvy, have kept up with their playing this last two years and I applaud them greatly. As I listened to them I realized how much I have missed sharing music with all of them and I can't wait to join them again and soon I will. In the meantime my joy has been in practising my flute every day and having an online lesson through Skype once each week. Flute has become my new passion during the past five years and I aim to continue in the New Year.

Christmas celebrations began early for me this year when a friend asked me if I'd share my home with the group so that we could have a feast to celebrate the season. I love to share my good fortune with others and we had a wonderful time together. Sharing in community is what most of us have missed during the last two years of pandemic. When we were allowed by public health rules to return to our building of Harcourt for Sunday services I, along with others, felt so full of joy and thanksgiving that I was almost overwhelmed. The shared experience of release from bondage was a reminder that we should not take things for granted. Each small step to reality for the many is an enormous undertaking for the few who make it happen, and I for one am very grateful to them for the many hours expended to allow a return to some kind of normality to our church home.

At Harcourt I'm now in my fourth year on council as counsellor for justice and outreach and I'm very excited with a new project that is taking shape. In collaboration with Trinity United we aim to sponsor a family of seven refugees from Afghanistan. The



plight of this poor family has been brought to our attention by a Chalmer's guest who has been living in Guelph since 2002. She is a sister of the family we aim to sponsor and we have a strong committee in place to start working in earnest this year. This will be an ongoing project and will be my hope and plan for at least three years, so maybe my commitment to counsel will not end until our seven Afghan friends are safely in Guelph.

One aspiration that I have on a personal level for this coming year is to improve my computer skills. With the purchase of a new computer in the Black Friday sales I hope to achieve this goal, but that will mean as much time dedicated to technology as I give to my flute and writing. Knowing myself as well as I do I fear this may be a vain hope. Flute is much more fun! I still hope for the publication of my novel this coming year. The waiting time for this to happen has been longer already than a pregnancy and I see very well now why some people refer to birthing their works of literature. But with faith and fortitude I'll press on, with much hope for the outcome in the New Year.



My final hope is that we'll all be healthy and free from restrictions soon so that in August I can once again journey to the U.K. for another family wedding. This time I hope many of my Canadian family will join me on the trip as we celebrate together the union of Juliet and her fiance Andy.

And now to all my friends at Harcourt may this year bring you the peace and blessing of God's love as we move forward into 2022.





## THE LORD'S PRAYER

Eternal Spirit, all embracing life-giver.  
Help us celebrate Your holy presence within us  
and all around us.

Inspire us to become loving co-workers  
in Your ongoing creation.

Teach us to accept graciously what we cannot change.

For providing us with food and shelter we thank You, God;  
and we ask You to support us  
in forgiving ourselves and others,  
so that we may be free to receive Your love  
and to let Your light shine through.

Enable us to discern between right and wrong,  
and empower us to build  
just and loving relationships among humans.

For we trust that Your love  
and Your light moves without end  
through all creation  
and flows into the hearts of all Your children,

Amen.

Renate Amstutz

