

The Harcourt Herald February 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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and Technical Support:
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The Harcourt
Herald is
published 10
times per year
(in paper and
digital formats).

Submission
Deadline: 20th
of each month.
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From the Editor's Desk

It seemed appropriate to dedicate this February issue of the Herald to the theme of love – romantic, cosmic, agapic, all kinds. We are walking into the third year of Covid! This pandemic has brought us all so much stress, pain, sorrow. We have realized that what we miss most is the face to face contacts, the hugs, the spontaneity of meeting people, trusting, laughing, touching. Of all times, we seem to need a lot of love these days. Thus, a whole issue on love.

I am grateful for the range of writers who have come forward, and so touched by the depth of sharing! In a sense, choosing a theme for the Herald each month, and inviting people to think and write about it, seems to have brought us closer to each other: we learn about our joys and fears and loves and experiences in a way we probably hadn't before.

In these trying times, it is important to recognize that Harcourt's staff and volunteers are overworked, trying to learn new skills, trying to keep alive old dreams of being church without the traditional trappings we have come to associate with being church. Staff are barely hanging on, and the financial position of the church is not helping. Do you know how many volunteer hours goes into maintaining and keeping together the Harcourt community? Just think of it for a moment: all those folk who maintain the property, pay the bills, develop workshops and programs, run weekly gatherings, worry about the future... I wouldn't be surprised if it takes the equivalent of 20 full-time staff to provide a vibrant church experience week after week. Don't you think the church deserves to be adequately funded so that our paid accountable staff can do their job effectively? There is so much to do!

Miriam will go onto a well-deserved sabbatical for three months starting in February, and we welcome Rev John Lawson who will be for that time our Supply Minister for Worship and Pastoral Care. I'm sure we'll hear from him in the pages of the Herald in the near future.

Love is patient, love is kind.

Rev. Miriam Flynn

It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.

(1 Corinthians 13: 1-8)



These words from Corinthians are a popular choice as scripture read at weddings. I once heard a minister suggest to a couple she was marrying that they make it part of their wedding anniversary celebration to re-read this passage together each year. Certainly, those who wish to keep the vows of marriage fresh can find wisdom and inspiration in this text.

But the Apostle Paul did not have romantic love in view when he wrote these words to the people of the early Christian community at Corinth. He was not speaking of *eros*, but *agape* – the love God has for us; the love we reciprocate to God and the love (in the form of good will, benevolence and delight *in the other*) that we offer to one another. The love we share as community is to be actively expressed as patience, kindness, rejoicing in truth, bearing, believing, hoping and enduring all things. It is love that does not seek its own advantage; love that does not “puff up” one’s own ego, position or privilege, but rather seeks to “build up.”

In a competitive, individualistic and increasingly polarized world, this vision for shared life in community stands in sharp contrast to the thrust and parry we so often observe among the influencers and interest groups dominating our public life. We only need to look at the news or go on-line to find envy, boastfulness and pride executed as near-art forms by those who choose to gain a bit of ground at the expense of others. In the realm of public debate, civility is often in short supply, while patience and kindness are nowhere to be seen.

When we live immersed in such a culture, we might ask if the perfect love Paul envisions is even possible.

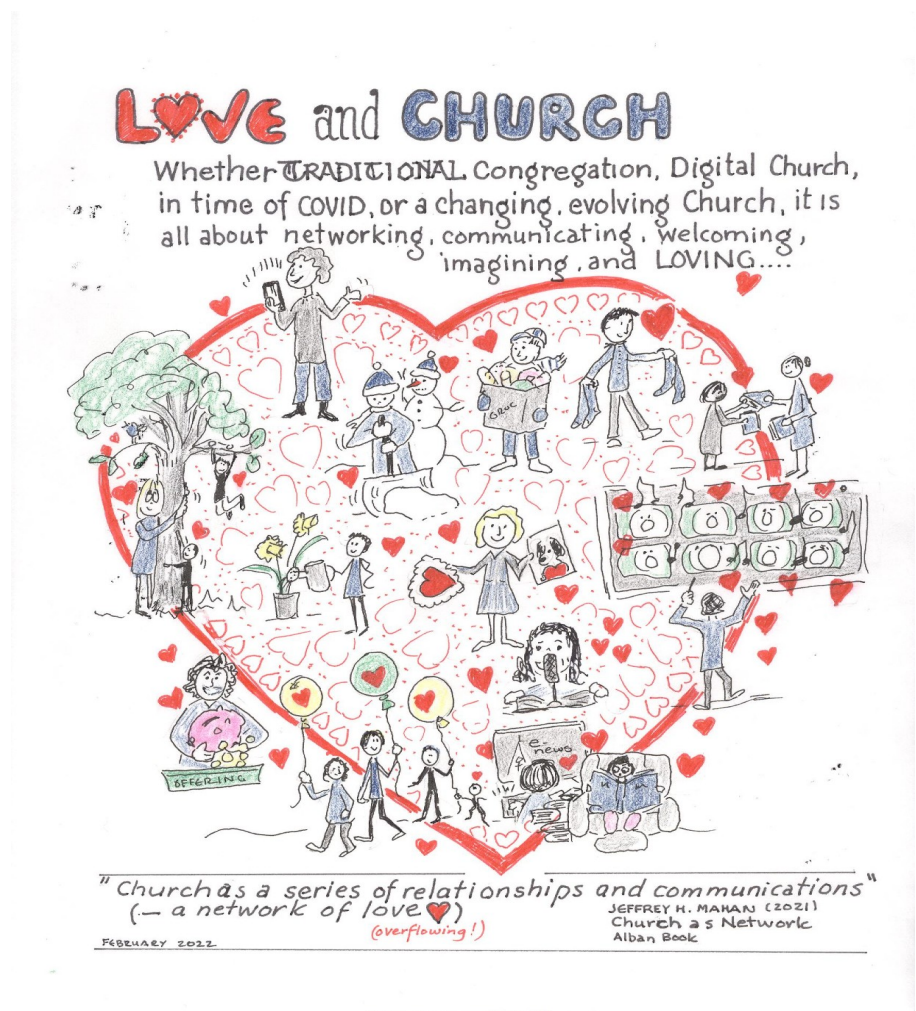
Well, one of the true joys and challenges of Christian life is that it is not a solo journey. We are formed as Christ followers in community – not just as Sunday school children or as seekers of personal enlightenment, but as practitioners of love who are given a lifelong opportunity to grow in the practice.

As a friend once expressed it, *God loves us just as we are and too much to let us stay that way*. Yet human ego prefers just about anything to falling, changing or dying. Growing in love invariably means some dying to self – not as self-abasement, but as self-emptying that makes room for love to flow *to us* and *through us*. Loving others happens best when we are so grounded in our sense of God’s presence and love for us, we can let go of our fearful grip on the need to protect our own small ego patch and the need for certainty that binds, rather than protects, us.

Theologian, peace worker and story-teller Padraig O'Tuama recounts the observation of a palliative care physician that people who are dying tend to say four things: they say "Please forgive me," or "I forgive you." They say, "Thank you" and "I love you." O'Tuama reflects that meaning-making, throughout our lives, can move us from the question, "Who am I meant to be?" to statements that demonstrate an awareness our lives are lived in reciprocal interconnection; statements that recognize how we can hurt and heal each other and how much we can mean to each other, too.

Is the kind of love that Paul envisions even possible? Well, perhaps as a practice we accept we will never perfect, except through God's grace; and certainly as a practice we pray God will always *grace us with*, as our growing edge.

May we continue to look to community as the place God grows us in love. May we be open to let others delight us, sadden us and truly influence us. And may the Spirit so infuse our lives that the medium of love that grows us, becomes the message of love we live out in the world. In love, Miriam.



Roz Stevenson:

Council News

Lorraine Holding

Despite another round of gathering restrictions in January, Harcourt activities did not stop. We hope that February brings more opportunity to meet in person.

Council's work in January included these significant items:

- Appointment of Pamela Girardi, Congregational Designated Minister, as full-time Manna Lead Coordinator to December 31. Her role will include some community engagement facilitation with the broader congregation.
- Appointment of Rev. John Lawson as full-time Supply Minister for Worship & Pastoral Care during Miriam Flynn's sabbatical until April 30.
- Approval for Ministry & Personnel Committee to advertise for and hire a part-time Worship, Communication & Technical Support assistant for 8 hours/week. There is increasing need to provide additional technical support for Sunday worship, funerals, weddings or special services. A lack of enough volunteers is a key factor.
- Approval to present the proposed 2022 budget to the congregation at the Annual Meeting. Brian Magee, Finance Committee Chair, summarized recent updates that include a large projected deficit. Impacts from living through a two-year pandemic have affected budget planning. Increasing revenue is essential. Harcourt's ministries are valued and our visioning process is focused on the future. Any reductions in what is offered would affect many people. All who feel connected to Harcourt have a role to financially support our community of faith as they are able. Watch for more details and a Zoom information session before the Annual Meeting.
- Update on the flexible seating project and Chairs Fundraising Initiative. Look for Carolyn Davidson's report in this Herald.
- Initial plans for the Annual Meeting on March 6. We discussed a recruitment effort for some key roles: Council Vice or Co-Chair; Communications Committee Chair; task group for a stewardship program; task group for fundraising ideas. Harcourt's future depends on people willing to step forward to share your gifts of leadership.

The Re-entry Planning Group will continue to monitor Ontario's changing public health restrictions over the coming weeks. Watch for e-weekly updates.

With faith and hope,
Lorraine Holding, Council Chair

Notice of Congregational Annual Meeting

Sunday, March 6, 2022

1:30 – 3:30 p.m. on Zoom

Watch for Annual Report, Meeting Agenda and Registration Details

Chairs Fundraising Initiative

Carolyn Davidson

As we officially kick off a fundraising campaign for the flexible seating project, we are grateful for the **\$5,000 grant** from the Waterloo Presbytery Extension Council and for the **28 donors** who have already contributed **more than \$16,000** toward this project.

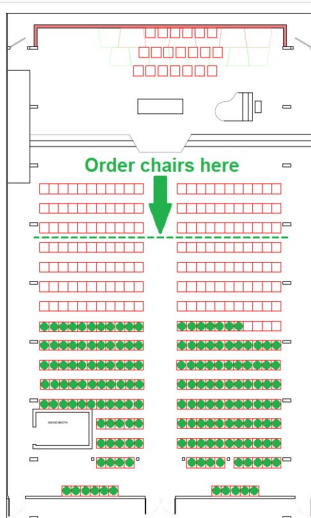
Flexible seating will allow us to explore different worship styles, expand the use of our Sanctuary for different types of user groups, and support the growth and future of our Manna community. An implementation plan to make this dream a reality was approved at a congregational meeting on November 28, 2021.

We are committed to raising 75% of the projected total cost of \$45,000 (\$33,750) before we place our order. Our chosen supplier is in the process of moving their operations out of the province, and it will be late summer before they are able to resume manufacturing. In the meantime, we will continue our fundraising efforts so we are ready to place our order at the earliest opportunity.

Here's how to donate:

- **By e-transfer** to office@harcourtuc.ca – write “Chairs Fundraising Initiative” in the message.
- **By cheque**, payable to Harcourt Memorial United Church – write “Chairs Fundraising Initiative” on the memo line.

Take a Seat!



Want to “Buy a Chair”? The suggested donation for a single chair is \$150, but all donations in any amount are gratefully received. Memorial donations will be recorded in the Memorials Book on display in the Greeting Area.

Please... take a seat! (As you are able.)

Update on the Harcourt Gym Floor

Dave Hume

In the week between Christmas and Jan. 1, a new tile floor was laid in the gym by a contracting company. When it was finished, members of the Harcourt Property Committee were not satisfied with the job. Aaron Ferraccioli, owner of Ferra Flooring, came and inspected the floor and agreed that the job was not satisfactory and that he would “make it right”. The extremely cold outside temperatures on the two days when the tiles were being laid likely was one of the reasons why the tiles did not adhere to the concrete floor properly. Now (Jan. 20) the Harcourt Property Committee is waiting to hear back from Ferra Flooring about what’s next.



An Important Financial Message

Brian Magee, Chair, Finance Committee

The pandemic has taken its toll in many ways on individual, families and organizations. Harcourt is no exception. In 2021 Harcourt’s operating deficit was \$47,000. The operating budget for 2022 projects a deficit of \$95,000. The deficit is not a result of increased spending but rather a decrease in revenue. To have a balanced budget, committee expenditures would have to be cut by about 18%. If we cut committee budgets by that amount, we could no longer provide the services and fulfill the vision to which Harcourt is committed.

Reduced revenue comes from three main sources: loss of rentals due to COVID restrictions, cancelling of fundraising events, and Sunday Service offering by envelope or cash donations. Envelope donors are receiving new 2022 envelopes this year. Please use the envelopes to donate and help reduce our deficit. Consider donating monthly if dropping off or mailing envelopes on a weekly basis is difficult. Better yet, switch to PAR. It is easy and only

costs Harcourt a flat fee of \$45 a month for the service. The cost of purchasing donation envelopes for 2022 was \$384. If everyone was on PAR, we could save the envelope expense, reduce the time spent by volunteers to count the offering and receive a stable monthly income. Harcourt needs your support now more than ever.

Council is looking at new fundraising initiatives and new ways to launch a stewardship campaign in 2022. The bottom line, that is in the red, can only be reduced in 2022 by financial support from Harcourt members, friends and those that benefit from its existence. With your help we can start a financial recovery plan to meet our commitments in 2022 and carry us into the future.

Our Harcourt Connection

Marion Auger, for the Communications Committee

In the last month’s issue of the Herald you were introduced to plans for an up-to-date online Church-Photo-Directory. Well, it is here and ready to be used by all of us.

I, for my part, am using it already! Frequently! Phone numbers and email addresses have often changed since the last Directory in 2016 and I can now easily go online and find the updated information. Each family is now able to securely update their own contact data including photos! And each of us has access to all the updated information.

So, let’s get going!

How? Kent Hoeg has created a very detailed, thorough manual that is easy to follow: all you have to do is click on the link (found at harcourtuc.ca or in e-Harcourt), enter the email address that the church office has on record for you (to prove it’s you) and create your personal password. (Yes, issues of confidentiality have been addressed!)

Once you have signed onto the directory, you can search for your name or that of anyone else in our congregation, and get address, phone number and email. And for those of us who prefer to work with our cellphone – there is an App to download and you have all this information, as well as directions to their house, in your pocket. All of this is described in the manual.

Voila! Have a look! Update your family’s information, and

Get started.....



Food for the journey

Peter Jackson and Bill Lord

This month we step down after six years as co-chairs of Harcourt's Spiritual Life Committee. It has been a wonderful journey that has taught us so much. We are grateful for the trust that the Harcourt community placed in us.



Three lessons stand out. We are sharing them here in the hope that you may glean a few ideas from them.

First, we have tried to treasure our travelling companions. Each member of the committee is wonderfully accomplished, willing to offer suggestions, willing to help others improve on them, and willing to do the work for which they have energy and to decline that for which they lack that energy. They have also been generously supportive of us when we sometimes stumbled.

Second, we have tried to pay attention to group process. We began each two-hour committee meeting with half an hour of check-in, quiet meditative reflection and sharing amongst participants. You might think this was an extravagant expenditure of fully one quarter of the committee meeting, but it quietened and focused us all, and made space for Spirit to move amongst us. At the close of the meeting we asked where each participant had experienced that movement. There is no predicting when, how or whether Spirit's presence will be felt, but we believe the intentional use of that first half hour helped to pave the way.

During the meeting, we paid attention to group process. Both of us have long experience in 'reading a room', and it was extremely valuable to have each other's support in this critical task for which two heads are better than one, especially when transferring these skills to the unfamiliar on-line world we have inhabited these past two years. After each meeting, the two of us would debrief individual and group dynamics, and seek to know how to do better next time.



The third lesson is in participative leadership. We sought to create a safe container of agenda, group process and meeting note-taking, and then to get out of the way to allow the individual and group creativity to blossom. And it did. Each member of the Committee was as

capable of leading as we were, and it was a gift to be able to allow leadership to move around the committee from topic to topic.

The result of our approach was that serving on the committee no longer seemed a drain of energy. Instead it usually energized us and other participants told us they felt the same. We left meetings feeling inspired and committed. The journey became the food that nourished us.

Throughout these six years the support of the wider Harcourt community has been invaluable. We have appreciated the feedback on our many efforts, such as the retreats, the Lenten and Advent meditation guides, the vigils and worship services, the Bible studies, the support to the Covenanted Spiritual Companions in their work, and sponsoring the online Holy Listening Circle which began its weekly meetings on March 29 2020. On several occasions we provided process consultation to the Council and its Chair.

Moving forward, we hope to provide our full support to the new co-chairs, Sharon Chapman and André Auger. And the two of us will find a new reason for regular FaceTime calls that have replaced the meetings over coffee where our friendship developed as we worked together.

The Velveteen Rabbit

Bill Chapman suggested we include this story

A soft and fluffy Velveteen Rabbit lived in a toy-box in a Boy's room. Each day, the Boy opened the toy-box and picked up Velveteen Rabbit. And Velveteen Rabbit was happy. Then newer, brighter toys came into the toy-box. They had special tricks. Some could move when the Boy pushed a button. Others bounced high. Velveteen Rabbit had no special tricks or buttons. No wonder the Boy started to choose these other new toys.



Thanks to Ella, 12, Windsor CO

At night, when the toys were back all in the toy-box, the other toys talked with pride about the fine things they could do. Velveteen Rabbit was quiet. There was not much to say. Only one other toy in the toy-box was like Velveteen Rabbit. Cowboy Horse was also a soft, fluffy toy. But he was old. Most of his hair was worn away. He had only one eye left.



Thanks to Josh, 13, Windsor CO

Cowboy Horse said to Velveteen Rabbit, "Soft toys like us are really the lucky ones. We get loved the most. And when soft toys get loved and loved, we can become Real." "What is Real?" said Velveteen Rabbit.

"Being Real is the best," said Skin Horse. "You can move when you want to move. When you are Real, if you are loved, you can show your love back."

This story has been adapted from "The Velveteen Rabbit (or How Toys Become Real)" written by Margery Williams (also known as Margery Williams Bianco)

<https://storiestogrowby.org/story/early-reader-velveteen-rabbit-short-stories-kids/>



“For God so loved the world....” (Jn 3:16) – What does it mean?

Andre Auger

We Christians are invited to “preach the Gospel always, using words if necessary.” So we perform good deeds, deeds of love, of compassion. But every now and then we need to use words to bring the “Good News” to a hurting world. If I were asked what I understood by the Christian belief that God loves us, what would I reply? How do we share the core truth of our faith that God loves us? It’s on bumper stickers. People quote it all the time. “For God so loved the world...” Isn’t that the verse we turn to if we want to talk about love?

Why is that notion convincing fewer and fewer people? Stats Canada shows that not many people feel that religion offers them any sort of credible answer to the challenges of today. Why is that? I can hear the objections now: “If God so loved the world, why did He allow...?” “If God is Love, why is there so much hate in the world?” or more personally “If God really loved me why did He allow this to happen to me?”

Yep, Jn 3:16 is a hard sell. A loving God is a hard sell these days..

Part of the problem, as far as I am concerned, is that we tend to fall back on antiquated understandings of “God” and of “Love.”

Let’s tackle the second of these difficulties. What do we really mean when we say “love”? We usually associate “love” with a feeling, a desire, a yearning, a passion. At least the Greeks had specialized words to talk about love, which we don’t. Four in fact! What we tend to understand by “love” they would have said “eros,” as in “erotic.” They would have used the word “philia” to talk about love between friends who share interests. And they would refer to love of family, of kin and clan as “storge.” “Agape,” in Greek thought, refers to that kind of love where we affirm the other into the fullness of their being, whatever that is. In this form of love, we honour the other, and desire the best for them, on their terms. This kind of “love” is an act of will, not a feeling. Only this understanding of love can get us to appreciate what the authors of the Gospels might have meant when they have their Jesus say that we are to love our enemies.

Thus, “God so loved the world” could mean that God affirms the world – the universe! - into the fullness of its being, whatever that is. God would be, in this understanding, the driving force behind evolution, urging the universe on toward its fulfillment, whatever that might be. Now, that’s not too bad! I can live with that.



Remains the tricky question of what can we possibly mean by “God”? So long as we live out the remnants of a theology that puts God “out there” somewhere, as a Being, even a perfect,

self-sufficient Supreme Being, we're going to have major problems explaining why such a Being would love the universe.



It may come to us as a terrible shock, but that notion of God was never Jewish, or even early Christian! It comes to us from Greek philosophy, at a time in the Middle Ages when Christian theologians were trying to make sense of their faith with the tools they had available. Classical Christian theology was born when scholars rediscovered the Greek philosophers. Greek thought – whether from Aristotle or from Plato – placed “God” as a Prime Mover totally outside the realm of matter. We still live with the fallout of that aberration.

In Jewish thought, the sacred name for God is the tetragram “YHWH.” It is never pronounced, and is always replaced by “Adonai,” Lord. In Jewish Scripture, YHWH is totally involved in the affairs of the world. YHWH walks with humanity. YHWH cares. YHWH is like a father, like a mother hen... YHWH loves Israel. But here’s the rub: there is a dimension of judgment and punishment and manipulation that we have to face with this notion of a “loving God” in Jewish and in Christian Scripture. At least it’s a very far cry from the God of the Greeks. But this understanding of YHWH has problems of its own: it is tribal; it supposes a God who intervenes in the course of human and natural affairs; it attributes human emotions to YHWH. This is far too small a God for our current world view! Science and cosmology are aggressively forcing us to discard this view.

So, where can we turn to make the kind of sense of “God so loved the world” that dogma-weary science-infused skeptics might be able to consider as relevant?

What if we started from a firm conviction that this vast and wonderful universe is actually the self-expression of God? God gradually actualizes God’s infinite potential in the universe as we know it. Everything in the universe concretely actualizes some tiny aspect of God’s infinite potential. The stars and the planets are a manifestation of some aspect of God. You and I are expressions of God. Everything that exists is part of God’s First Book of Revelation. We are not God, but we are an expression of God. You and I are God having a human experience.

Suddenly, at least for me, the notion that “God so loves the world” makes eminent sense: of course God loves the world! We are how God makes Godself manifest in space-time! How could God not affirm this universe into its fullness, whatever that might mean? God “agapes” the world. The universe is the “Divine Milieu,” to use Teilhard de Chardin’s expression. We “live and breathe and have our being” in God, as St Paul says it. We are in God and God is in everything. And God as Spirit infuses, informs and flows through everything. There is no “outside.” (If you need a technical term for this kind of theology, I like the expression “Trinitarian panentheism.” Drop that expression at your next cocktail party!)

And our Jesus, as the human face of God, shows us how to translate this divine “agape” into human love. Scientists who say the universe is uncaring and hostile are wrong: we humans are proof that there is love in the universe.



Well, that’s how I try to make sense of our Christian belief that God is love and loves us unconditionally. Perhaps this kind of language might make a bit more sense to those in our secular world desperately seeking to make sense of it. How would you go about telling people that your foundational truth is that God loves this world? Would your skeptical or agnostic neighbour be convinced by your explanation?

Blessing & Gifts

Judi Morris

Blessings:

John Buttars once told us, “There is a blessing in everything.” That was a hard sell to me at the time. I did however make a genuine effort to look for a blessing in everything, especially in dire disappointments and even tragedies. It took a while, but over a period of time it began to reveal itself to me.



I recall an attempt to teach the same to my granddaughter, who was seven at the time. She was riding a pony in the woods and I walked beside her. She had been complaining about her younger sister and I challenged her to find the blessing in it. She halted the pony, looked at me with a smile and said one word. “Love.”

During two years of this Covid pandemic there is sickness, and loss of life not only from Covid but because of it. Operations are cancelled put on hold and diagnostics not able to be done. With so much sickness of hospital staff there is not enough to run them efficiently if at all.

People have not been able to visit loved ones, many are imprisoned in their homes and apartments. Where in God’s name is the blessing in all this? Well, two that I know of are Zoom and YouTube.

Through YouTube I have not missed one of Harcourt's services. Had there been only in person services, I would have missed a ton of them. And I can take the time where it fits into my daily disruptions to quietly sit and take it all in. There's closed caption so if I don't hear something I can see it, and if something profound has been said, I can pause it and let the spirit move through the thought before I continue. Hymns I enjoy I can replay again and again. I can see the ministers and hear their voices and watch Alison play with her gentle vibrant enthusiasm that I always enjoyed. For a time, when things opened a bit, there were a few in the choir. It was heartwarming to see them. Choir was not available to the 9:00 a.m. service. It was a choice one made to be able have the early service.

Zoom allows people to visit, face to face, to visit with them in their homes or with virtual background which I often do because my office is in embarrassing disarray. Through Zoom, meetings can be held so matters can be discussed and dealt with. With the gifts of Zoom Harcourt members can see many they would ordinarily have not done because of the two services. Through Zoom we can hear each other individually, which we would not have done had we been in-person services. We would have smiled, maybe waived at each other, and spoken only with a select few.

Of course, we would all have done whatever we could to have prevented this pandemic but it's here and has been for two years. Rev. Bruce Suitor from Epworth United Church in Kingsville, once gave a sermon that taught us to, "Do what you can with what you got where you are." Zoom has presented us with the ability to carry on in the face of our trial, tribulations and tragedies. I bless Rev. John Buttars and Rev. Bruce Suitor for these lessons and all the technical people who have kept society together and functioning in the face of this pandemic.

Gifts:

The scripture Spiritual Listening focused on for January 16 was 1 Corinthians 12:1-11. The groups discussed their gifts. The conversation in my group included how we use our gifts for personal and God's gain and then on to as we age how sometimes we just can't or do not want to make use of particular gifts any longer and also using other gifts that are just as rich.



My busy life has not lent itself to be one of those Grandmothers hanging around and being part of my Grandchildren's lives. I most certainly was available for them to be brought to me when they were young. I taught them to ride, to transplant trees and the responsibility of poop duty. Once they no longer need looking after, they have evolved into their own lives while I continue with mine. That's how it's supposed to be.

While I awaited a brain tumour operation, I learned how big Grandmother's influence has been on many people. I was raised by my Grandmother so that was to be expected but I heard

stories from so many others. I see very little of my Grandchildren except holidays & birthdays and of course hay time. They do know how to support their Grammie there.

I am collecting Grandmother stories from as many people as I can and I want my Grandchildren one day to be able to say that I affected their lives in some special way and thought about how I could do this.

In 2020 with their cash Christmas gift I gave them a Gratitude Journal, along with a Unicorn pen that the head wiggles when you write. The internet is full of information of the benefits of keeping a Gratitude Journal. I gleaned all the information I could, condensed it giving all credits due. I included journal prompts – anything I could to encourage them to understand the value of acknowledging gratitude first hand, then in writing. My last line was, “If you are not ready for this, tuck it away and bring it out every five years. Because one day you will be ready and it will serve you well.”

In 2021 I took on with my grandchildren the gift and value of thank you notes and notes in general. I wrote of the file of thank you notes to me that I have been keeping for over twenty years. Every note that comes to me lands there (except the one from the Spiritual Listening group that had a photo of me and Tickle, it’s still on my kitchen counter with the rest of the clutter). I noted that one day when I was down on myself and one of the thank you notes randomly dropped out of the folder. I read it. It brought tears to my eyes. That was me the person was speaking of, not someone else. I flipped through some of the others and in that moment, those notes reaffirmed that I “was” a good person and did good and worthwhile things. I told them also of how every single note I received prior to my serious operation contributed to hold and strengthen me. I told them they are welcome to look through my folder anytime to help understand the gift of giving and receiving. In their package I included a plastic portfolio to keep notes to them and a package of notes for them to send. After Christmas I sent each one a thank you note for being the special person they are. Again I said, “If you are not ready for this, tuck it away until the day that you are.”

I can only hope these are gifts my Grandchildren will in time hold dear and will be able to speak to the influence their Grammie had on who they are. We may not be able to run and jump with them anymore, however we can touch and enrich their lives in other ways.

Reflections on Love

Julie Ashley

February is the month we celebrate Valentine's Day, a day with which, ironically, I have a love-hate relationship. It's gratifying that we take a day to be intentional about expressing our love, but it also irks me that we need a special holiday to "love intentionally"; mostly, because every other day, we often let other distractions get in the way. Maybe it is because those most deserving of our love don't shout at us to do anything – one of the hallmarks of loving behaviour. Paul talked about this to the people in Corinth - Love does not demand its way and is actually very quiet. As a caring parent, friend or leader, we often quietly love and are silently pray for other. Like God's love, there's no dramatic entrance or proclamation.

When I reflect on Valentine days past, I fondly remember when our five children were quite young. We made valentine pockets for each bedroom door. Then they wrote a "love note" to each sibling. It was such fun to see how each child expressed themselves, and how excited they were to receive these little notes of affection. Love is so innocent and pure at that young age.



Speaking of pure love, you may want to watch "Love on the Spectrum" on Netflix. I was so impacted by the innocent love of those on the autism spectrum who would vulnerably share their deep love, in spite of risk and potential disappointment.

My friend is publishing a book, with the ultimate desire for readers to let "Love Win the Day" everyday. His proposed chain of command is "Me-Us-All" suggesting that we always begin with self love first, before we can truly love another. Not a new idea, but is written in such plain English, it might just catch on. Somewhere along the line, many of us lost self-love, leading to unfortunate outcomes where we are loving others while on an empty tank, or are unable to absorb others' love, or God's love, leading to depression, loneliness and lack of self-worth.

Being a fan of researcher and author, Brene Brown, I would be remiss to not share one of her quotes about risking love:

"Love will never be certain, but after collecting thousands of stories, I'm willing to call this a fact: A deep sense of love and belonging is an irreducible need of all men, women, and children. We are biologically, cognitively, physically, and spiritually wired to love, to be loved, and to belong."

I will finish this by saying that I am SO thrilled to observe and experience the many ongoing exchanges of love I see within the Harcourt Community. Belonging is such a wonderful outcome from participating in these circles. It feels like Valentine's Day at Harcourt many days. God's love with skin on. **Thank God for love.**

Fierce Love: A reflection

Arlene Davies-Fuhr

I am captivated by a book and series of podcasts we are exploring in Mindstretch called *Fierce Love: A Bold Path to Ferocious Courage and Rule-Breaking Kindness that can Heal the World* authored by Dr. Jacqui Lewis. Lewis explores love in our “hot mess” time of Covid, prejudice, indifference, and injustice. Lewis begins with the need to love ourselves, just as we are, at this stage on our life’s journey. Like many of us, I find it difficult to love myself. To delve deeply into my own experiences to unearth valuable messages. To accept, understand, and forgive myself can be tough but this is where unconditional love takes root and where I grow the God-spark within me. To love others, I need to model kindness toward myself.

Dr. James Loder defined love as a “non-possessive delight in the particularity of the other.” Joy of others’ abilities and characteristics as well as my own without criticism or judgment. Such love embodies *ubuntu* – Zulu for “I am who I am because we are who we are.” I affect others and I am impacted by folks. Through interactions and connections, I am reminded that God pours out love to me, to all of humanity, to the entire universe.



Archbishop Desmond Tutu says, “We are not responsible for what breaks us, but we can be responsible for what puts us back together again.” Life’s complications and what humanity has done to the environment brings pain and sadness. I carry hurt in bulging suitcases that break my back. Although the bags are heavy, I have trouble setting them down. My life has not been easy but my personal story helps me “discover the best of what it means to be alive.” I celebrate my resilience and tenacity, my humour and aliveness.. Rather than anger and frustration, I can “show kindness and affection wildly in order to make fierce love real.” In my relationships, fierce love asks me to discover different perspectives, to be a support and be supported, to heal and be healed. This kind of connection creates deep affection and wild kindness. Fierce love opens a space within me which is why I love my husband, teachers, friends, refugees, those who struggle or who have a different take on life.

Fierce Love asks me to “confront boldly. To transform circumstances with moral courage.” To approach tough situations with curiosity and insight. To reframe experiences. The year my daughter refused to connect with me, I lavished kindness towards her and her family. The experience taught me fierce love can soften hardened hearts: theirs and mine. This Christmas, I received a Celtic cross that my daughter designed and spent 30 hours creating. As she embroidered, she meditated and poured love and positive thoughts into each stitch. It taught me how vital it is to “leave no one behind” especially those who aggravate or distress me.



Fierce Love asks me to “live justly. To choose fairness and equality every day.” This is difficult yet I try to do what I am called to do. Share encouraging comments and find ways to make a difference. To speak up for the disadvantaged and work at fostering an open heart as I attempt to understand those who hold challenging views. Fierce Love asks me to “find joy purposefully for it is the water of life.” To use Jacqui Lewis’s term, I have a superpower which we all possess. I have the capacity to enrich the world and make my family, my community, my church a better place. Now I have to go out and make fierce love real!

“Remember God Loves You”

Edna Miller

“Remember God loves you,” proclaimed the minister. “What does that mean? What is love?”, I ask.

The other day I was watching my Grandson playing with his Legos. He loves these Legos and is very creative. One little piece connects to another little piece then another and another. A house, a car, a tree, another building and on it goes until a whole town appears, then a miniature world emerges. And I see my young grandson, a little god creating his world, loving what he is doing.

God too creates by making connections, I reflect. One little particle, one atom, one molecule, one piece connecting with another until our world emerges. I imagine God too loving what God is doing. If God is love then making connection, creating unity is love and I am one of God’s particles, one of God’s little pieces called to unite with other pieces making loving connections.

That is a challenge. What am I called to connect with? Whom am I called to connect with? How do I make those connections with my world, with creation, with neighbour, with family? How strong are those connections? How strong should they be? Each connection is different yet each connection is an expression of our creator God. Each connection is an expression of our loving God. Each connection is love.

So when you ask what is love for me love is creating God’s world by making connection. Love is connection.

Thank you, The Herald, for an opportunity to connect to be a little more loving.



From Manna Kids

Laura Hofer

Isaac (6 yrs old) drew our family and his 4 grandparents, aunt, uncle and cousin.



Emily (3 yrs old) said her hands picture is "waving to daddy" and she loves "Ayden, Ember, Mommy and Daddy" (Ayden and Ember are her friends from day care).

Love....

Heather Hoeg

What better time to speak of love, than in February near Valentine's Day?

Love is patient. Love is kind. We all know the start of this lovely reading from Corinthians used at many weddings.

You never have to look far to find love in our lives. You might have been lucky enough to have shared your life with someone special. I have been most certainly blessed to share my life with my absolute love. We have been together since high school! We have had many, many, blessings in our lives. And have been so fortunate to have caring communities of faith wherever we have called home. You can call it fate, God's love or whatever you like, but we have always ended up in places where the love of family takes priority in people's lives. Yes, family and love go hand in hand. But the love of extended family over the years has also brought much joy to our lives as well. Dear friends with whom we share a meal and laugh is such a fulfilling love.

But it's the love of family that is most precious to me. As day-to-day life carries on, love is not always patient. But you carry on and support each other.

Recently, we have experienced a huge tragedy in our lives. It seems strange to experience love and tragedy at the same time. But you do. Getting a phone call from someone when you just seem to need it. Or our community of faith praying for us. That is love. Simple as that.

There is a beautiful quote that was shared with me in the past year by the grief support group at Harcourt. Another experience of pure acceptance and love.

"Every time the grief steals my breath, I remind myself that the love was worth the pain."

Love, it's at the core of our being. To help one another through life is what it's all about for me.

But every once in a while, we all need to be reminded that:

Love is patient

Love is kind

Love does not envy

Love does not boast

Love is not proud

Love does not dishonour others

Love is not self-seeking

Love is not easily angered

Love keeps no record of wrongs

Love does not delight in evil

Love rejoices with the truth

Love always protects

Love always trusts

Love always hopes

Love always perseveres

Love never fails

Corinthians 13:4-8



An Unlikely Romance.

Joan Charlebois

I moved to London Ontario because nurses were paid so much better than in Nova Scotia. I started at the Victoria General hospital in Halifax in CCU and I really went through culture shock and really didn't like London. So my friends took me out one night to a talent contest at a bar in downtown London. I entered and won with a steak dinner. I had three beers so I was feeling flirty to the guy that was seated across the room with his roommate. The next thing I know he was coming toward me. He went specifically behind my chair and told me how much he liked my singing and would like to see me again. So I invited him out for the steak dinner. That was in May 1970.

I had to go to Nova Scotia to write an exam and told him that I was taking my old job back at the Victoria General in Halifax. (We had dated about a month). On the Friday evening before I was to fly out on the Monday he came over for coffee after his shift. He got on his knee and said "I don't know if we love each other (we were both on rebound). But I can't imagine not seeing you again" so he proposed with a beautiful ring. I felt the same so I said yes!



Then he told me there was something under the chesterfield pillow for me and guess what it was? The return airplane ticket. I said "You cocky son of a gun, what if I had said no?" He told me "you would never had known the ticket was there."

So I went home told my parents (they thought I had lost it) and wrote my exam and returned to London. That was in June and we married August 1st. There were bets on as to how long we would last because we were opposites; but we fooled them. We celebrated our 52nd anniversary this year.

And I wouldn't have it any other way! He has been my best friend, mentor and our love grew as we dealt with all the challenges that came our way and I am a much stronger person because to them.

Love –my top ten

Peter Gill

When Marion Auger, intrepid editor of the Herald, asked if I would write an article about Love for the February issue, my initial reaction was "no way" – how can I possibly put together such an article? On my daily morning walk I sometimes come up with an "aha" moment. I

realized that I didn't necessarily need to write an ARTICLE about love but I could write about the PEOPLE and THINGS I love. So here's my top ten list of some of the people and activities or things that I would say I love:

Jill, my darling wife of 51 years – and to think that I used to believe, not so long ago, that people who were married for 50 years were old. May we continue to grow together and individually.

My two wonderful daughters – both accomplished, independent, socially-minded. They challenged me around feminism, inclusive language, male role models. And a son-in-law who loves my daughter and his children and truly is a role model.

My two beautiful grandchildren – my heart is filled with joy when I am around them. I am filled with hope for the future when I see the potential in these young people.

Being in my garden – not necessarily working in it. I love the feeling of being in a little bit of nature even if it's just outside my back door.

Volunteering at Chalmers – making a small difference in the lives of people who live with scarcity. Listening to their stories. Having a real purpose.

Listening to loud 60's rock music – favourites - Rolling Stones "Gimme Shelter"; The Who "My Generation" (listen to the 14 minute version on YouTube).

Conversation with friends – sharing thoughts, feelings and opinions. Being in a safe space where I can laugh or cry with equal abandon.

Singing – my mother often used to say that the Gill men had good singing voices – maybe it's the Celtic heritage. Choral singing for me is camaraderie, therapy, expression of faith.

Travelling (pre-Covid) - mostly non-guided, find your own way around. Favourite city – Paris.

Reading – most recently (on my own) "Finding the Mother Tree"; to Jill "The End of Craving". Reading to Jill has been wonderful bonding experience for us both.

I am grateful that Marion asked me to be part of this edition of the Herald. It helped me think about a few of the things I treasure and hold dear.



Love/Appreciation

Lynn Hancock

About twenty years ago, a friend of mine introduced me to the book: “The Message from Water”. After seeing the photos in the book, I felt inspired to order a copy for myself. Dr. Masaru Emoto is the author. What I remember most powerfully was feeling that I finally had visual proof that music, lyrics, thoughts, words and prayers had effects and the effects could be captured on film. Although there is much to explore on the internet relating to Dr. Emoto’s published books, I am including this link to a YouTube video of about 7 minutes. (please skip the ads). <https://youtu.be/FTORSP3uNMA>

Opposite the photo capturing the effects of water exposed to the Japanese characters: “Love/Appreciation” there is an English translation of Dr. Emoto’s notes that reads as follows: “People’s consciousness contained in love and appreciation. We took pictures of numerous crystals from the sample but this was the very first beautiful crystal that we saw.”

Indeed, there is nothing more important than love and gratitude in this world. Just by expressing love and gratitude, the water around us and in our bodies changes so beautifully. We want to apply this in our daily lives, don’t we?



Strong resemblance to the crystal with the words, “Thank you”.

Sandy Phair on joining Harcourt, small groups, spirituality, and God’s love

Julie Henshaw

Sandy Phair has been coming to Harcourt for over 40 years. We made some time to talk about her thoughts and experience of God’s love. Here is an excerpt of our conversation. Segments of the conversation have been edited for brevity.



Julie: You’ve been here for a long time. What keeps you at Harcourt?

Sandy: I think it's the small groups. I belong to the Progressive Christianity group, which I really love. And I attend the Circle Sharing [Sacred Listening Circle - ed] time. Those things keep me curious about Christianity and curious about Christ as the centre of where we're headed in love. I can do readings on my own, but I need to be in small groups with others that are also seekers. I consider myself a seeker and I want to know more.

J: And can you tell me a little bit about the Progressive Christianity group?

S: Yes. We meet from 10am - 11:30am every Monday, and Andre Auger takes a leadership role with us - he's part of the Spiritual Life Committee - and he always chooses videos or podcasts, something that we can listen to. We have done books in the past. We have a topic - right now, we're talking about the Mystics. We meet, and we listen to the podcast and then we [share] responses to these two questions: "What did we think about the podcast? and then, What did we hear other people say about the podcast?". There's no debating. There's no interjecting. There's no judgment. It's just a time of sharing of "What's coming up for us? and Where are things sitting with us? and How do we apply what we just heard to our lives today?". I find it very stimulating, and the people are lovely. I've been with them for 12 years. So, I'm close to a lot of them - although new people have joined - there's younger people that have joined, and because of Covid, people are coming from other cities, because [people can participate] online. We always have a check-in of "How are people doing?" So, if there are things that are coming up in peoples' personal lives that we can pray about, and hold in our space, then we do that. It just feels very warm and very caring.

J: I'm very drawn to the way that [you've described] the group process - it's not a debate... like you said, it's a reflection of what you heard, and what spoke to you out of that content. And then that second go-around, if you were inspired by what you heard from other people - I think that is a really lovely way to have conversations that we don't really get to do in everyday life. We're always, back and forth with each other or debating each other's points, and this just sounds... so different.

S: It's very respectful.

J: Respectful. Exactly. A respectful way to talk and to contemplate ideas. For folks who have never been to the Sharing Circle or the Holy Listening Circle, how would you describe that experience?

S: I just love it. Several retired ministers attend and I always learn a lot from them. There's about 30 of us that come out consistently. We're sent out the Lectionary reading, then somebody takes ownership for presenting a little bit around that that scripture reading. The facilitator does a little bit of research into the background - "What was happening in that scripture passage? What was the context of what is written? Who is the audience that it was written for?" And then we [consider] "Why is it still important today?".

S: I used to think. There was nothing in the Bible that I can really sit with besides the Good Samaritan story, or the Beatitudes... there was so much in the Bible that I didn't like - it was too violent. But [the facilitators] can bring in a more knowledgeable background of what was going on at the time and what they were really trying to express. And [we can contemplate] "How does that sit with us today?". So, it's been very gentle and very inspiring to know that people have read more than I've read and can sort of say, "Why is it worth the read in the first place?"

J: Very nice. (Pause) Okay, so, switching gears here a little bit - when we considered talking to people about the topic of love, and God's love, your name just immediately came to someone's mind. Why do you think that might be?

S: I guess I've been a spiritual seeker for probably as long as I've attended Harcourt. I'm just very curious and constantly wanting to know more and learn more, and I honestly believe that love is the most important thing that people share. That is my authentic self. I'm all about love. I'm wanting to look at "Why are we here in the first place?" and to me, our purpose of being here is to grow in love and learn about love and to do it better as our life goes on.

J: And you mentioned as well, when you think about the Bible, the Good Samaritan story is one that really resonates with you. Is that part of the love that you see in terms of Christianity? Does that story speak to you in a way of love?

S: It really does. I think Jesus wanted us to break through barriers. He didn't want anyone excluded. So, when he had the person - the helper - be a Samaritan, somebody who was hated in the community and despised, and to purposely say "No, he's our neighbour" and he was the one that stepped up to the plate to help the person and saw to him that there was enough to cover the costs of taking good care of him - I just think that it's a wonderful example... it's not just priests or rabbis or theologians that we expect a lot from, we expect a lot from everybody. I think we have to show everybody that love has to be given - universally - that we love [the LGBTQ Community], we love Blacks, we love Arabs, we love Muslims, we love Hindus. There are no people that we shouldn't be loving. I think we're supposed to treat everybody like our neighbour and treat them like we would want to be treated. And love ourselves, and love God. So, to me, it's just a very short story that has such a powerful punch.

S: I'm always challenged to look at who's on the periphery? Who's being excluded? Is it the Homeless? Is it the Refugees? Is it the Blacks that are demonstrating in Black Lives Matter? Is it the people that are caring about the environment? Who is it that we're supposed to be reaching out to? Is it the Republicans that we think are way off track in the United States? We might side with the liberal Democrats and we're excluding [others]. We probably shouldn't come in with these preconceived ideas that this person is more important than that person, because in God's eyes, they certainly aren't. God loves us all. God loved Jesus, and he loves each and every one of us. And we're to treat each other with respect and kindness and love. So that's what I try to live by. It's not always easy, but I think that's what we're called to do. So, it's a calling, it's something we keep striving for.

J: So, when are the times, and where are the places where you experience the expression of God's love in your life?

S: I lost my husband almost five years ago now and there was an awful lot of people in Harcourt that were there for me, just supported me through that and continue to support me through that. And I've had cancer twice - I've had breast cancer and I've had uterine cancer and people have rallied to bring me food or take me to oncology appointments. So, I have really felt the love of the Harcourt community in my life personally. So, anytime I could give back, that would be what I would choose to do, because people have been so kind and generous to me in my times of need.

J: That's really lovely. I'm sorry for your loss. And I'm sorry for the troubles that you're having. I'm really glad that you feel cared for by the community.

S: I do. Yes.

J: (Pause). How do you suppose the broader community experiences God's love from the Harcourt community?

S: I think we've had a number of ministers that have brought their own special gifts and talents. I think different ministers have reached out to the community in different ways. Some people are really big into being a participant in GUM (Guelph United Ministries).

S: I certainly have been involved with Chalmers for the last four years. I work on Tuesdays, portioning food at the Three Willows portable. And I love that. I just love the idea that that I can measure out skim milk, or I can measure out rice into family size portions. Because [Three Willows United Church] is so close to Ontario Housing (subsidized housing) there are many newcomers who are food insecure. Ultimately, I think we need to be politically involved too. I think we need to be writing letters to our politicians asking for guaranteed income, asking for better housing. I think food insecurity, in this day and age, shouldn't be happening. I don't think that there should be First Nations that are having polluted water. I think everybody deserves clean water in Canada. So, I think we need to be both politically driven and hands-on – [doing] what we need to do today until we fix things for the better.

S: I think Harcourt has always been a big leader at Chalmers - John Buttars was the director, and Peter Gill and Stephen Pierce are past directors - but they never leave – they're still volunteers and they continue to be on the board [of directors] and to share their wisdom. There are a lot of Harcourt people that are behind the scenes of what's happening at Chalmers... I think we can be very proud of that - I think that's [Harcourt] in the community saying, "We're living our faith... we're putting our words into action" and I'm very proud of that. I think we've done a lot with the LGBTQ community - we've reached out to the Rainbow Choir. We've said, "We're a safe spot". It's not just words and putting in on the [church] sign - we're actually living it. Allison plays the piano for the Rainbow Choir and many people from Harcourt attend the concerts. I think we live our faith well. I think we can be proud when we go out in the community and say we're from Harcourt.

J: Is there anything that you've thought about while we were talking that you'd like to add?

S: I think for us to have in our Vision Statement that we want to nurture adult spirituality, we want to nurture constant learning. I think in the second half of life, which is where I am definitely, it's to just notice and marvel at, "What does it mean to try to have a personal relationship with God?". God is a He/ She that has created everything. How I've come to understand God is, that God is loving Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer. So, if I'm to be in relationship with that, if I'm called, and I matter, and God really wants to be in relationship [with me], then who can I be around that's also making that a priority? I think we have enough people who are asking tough questions in those areas, to say okay, the universe and the galaxies are much bigger than I was taught in primary school. The world is bigger, we know more... the world is older than I first imagined... if it's 14.3 billion years old, God has been at this work for a long time. God has been and will continue to always be. So, how do I incorporate that infinite love, that I'm here for a short time... I'm a spiritual being in a human body that has been loved

before I even arrived, and I will be loved when I die. How do I make the most of my living life? How do I not live in fear? How do I approach my own immortality without fear and without a lot of doubts? How do I actually sense that I am beloved, and sense that I am never alone - that I have a being, an essence, that that wants to accompany me - wants to journey with me the whole [way] - through the good stuff, the not-so-good stuff. [It's important] to have a community of faith who will talk about the stuff that's hard to talk about... talk about "What are you noticing? and What are you marvelling at today? and What are you finding full of awe today?"

S: I think if I were to change the name of Christianity, because it has a lot of bad baggage attached to it... you know, we have things that we can feel full of shame around... I think if I were to change the word, it would probably be awe-filled. It's about, standing back and meditating and being mindful and, and treasuring that this mystery is sort of a mystery between two mysteries. We don't know everything that happened before, and we don't know what will happen next.... and we don't even know what's happening right now. We don't know how God operates. We have examples and glimpses of shimmering and shininess.... that shininess of good things. I think God is full of good. I don't think God is judgmental or wants to be punishing or anything like that. I don't have a concept of a God that's like that.

S: I believe that the traits that I have, I've been made in God's image. I have a potential to shine with love like God shines with love. For me, I need to be reminded that I need to be around people who make that part of their spiritual discipline. I believe that to practice spirituality - it does take practice to do it well and to love well and to love as constantly as we can... it does take intentionality and it does take being around other people who make it a priority in their life. [For example] some people go to the gym and nurture themselves physically and some people [focus on] emotional well-being. I think to be holistically well, we have to nurture ourselves spiritually and we need healthy others who keep reminding us that [spirituality] has to become a daily practice.

S: Love isn't always easy. I think we have to be reminded that it's most important thing that we can share with each other, and you don't want to miss the mark, we want to do it, and do it well. To wake up each day with some quiet time and some reflective time of *this is going to be a good day and God and I are going to go and do something today. I'm going to co-create with God and we're going to do what we can to spread a bit of love and tenderness today and compassion today.* I prepare myself, I pray, and [I aim] to have that intentionality to do love and to do it to the best of my capacity. I think that's a gift that Harcourt has given me.

S: John Buttars believed in getting to know the Jesuits at Ignatius College more; I think [we're called] to live simply... it's not about materialistic stuff... it's not about having cars or boats or a cottage. It's nothing about any of that. It's about doing love well to those who most need us on a daily basis. It's to see our neighbour – it goes back to the Good Samaritan story - to see our neighbour in in the people we meet today - whether it's the cashier, or the banker, or the person shovelling snow, or the little child that's taking the dog for a walk. It's to be a smiling, upbeat positive energy to anybody that we come in contact with.

J: Thank you for all that you have shared. It's no surprise to me that your name came to mind when we were thinking about God's love and the importance of God's love in our lives.

Welcome to the Week of Guided Prayer and Spiritual Exploration,

“Hope and Resilience in Difficult Times,” February 27 to March 5, 2022.

Sponsored by the Spiritual Life Committee

The Week of Guided Prayer and Spiritual Exploration is an opportunity for people to learn more about prayer and explore their spirituality. It has occurred annually for almost 40 years as an experiential event: guided prayer and spiritual exploration are not reading about God, but developing, deepening and exploring a relationship with God, self, others, and the creative force within each one of us. The Week is presented by the Guelph Ecumenical Guild of Ignatian Spiritual Direction. This year, because of Covid 19, we will meet online rather than in person. We believe that the Week will be a rich experience in this new format.

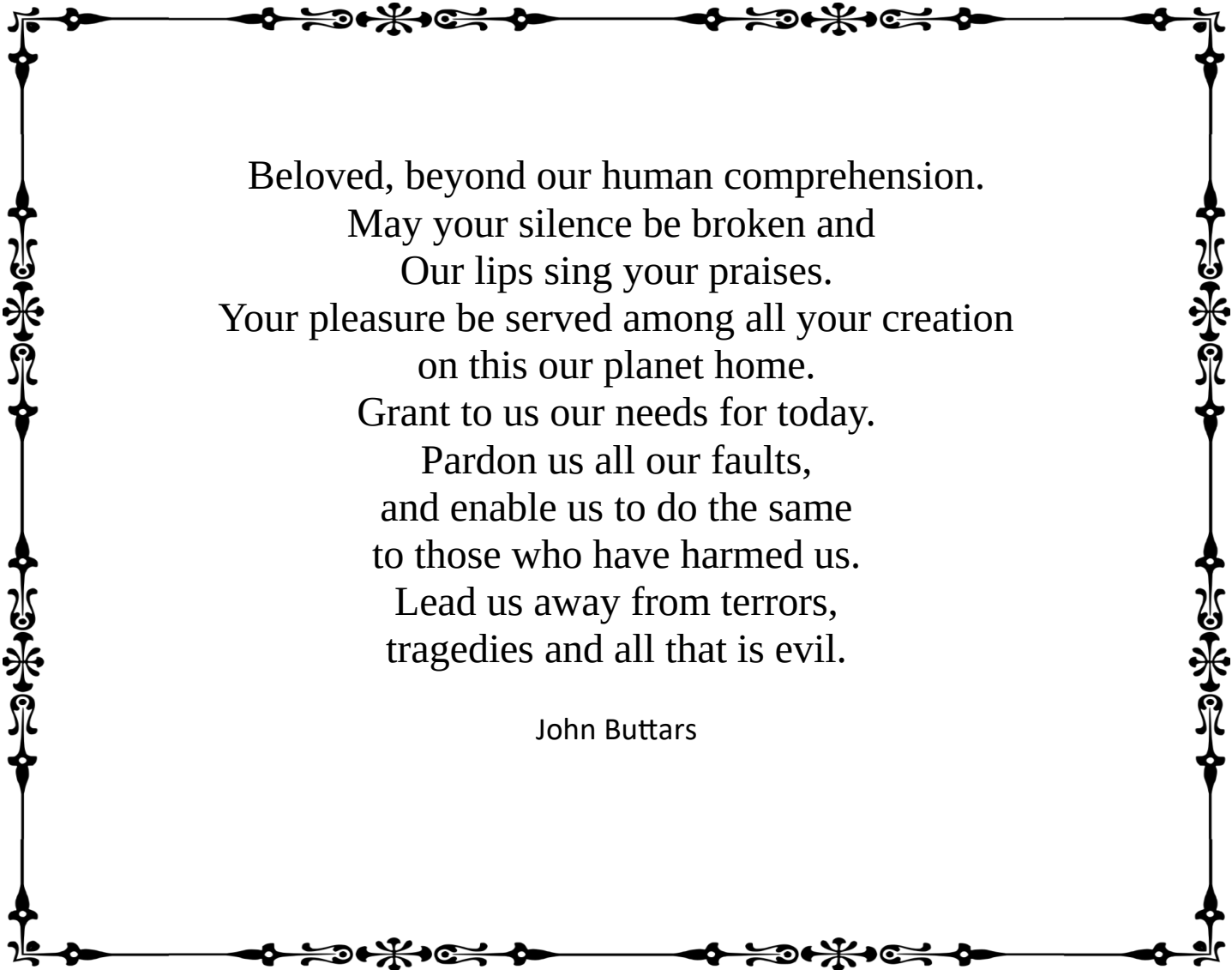


The Opening and Closing will be for all participants and prayer guides, and will be on Zoom. During the week participants will be paired with an experienced guide with whom they will meet daily for about 30 minutes by phone or online via Zoom, Facetime, etc. The guide will suggest scripture passages, texts (poems, stories), art activities and/or meditations to explore and/or pray with. Participants can share their experience, and experiment with specific ways to meet God meaningfully.

Registration by Feb. 21 at www.guidedprayer.webs.com

Advance registration is required

The Lord's Prayer



Beloved, beyond our human comprehension.
May your silence be broken and
Our lips sing your praises.
Your pleasure be served among all your creation
on this our planet home.
Grant to us our needs for today.
Pardon us all our faults,
and enable us to do the same
to those who have harmed us.
Lead us away from terrors,
tragedies and all that is evil.

John Buttars