

The Harcourt Herald April 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

Church Administrator:
Wendy Guilmette

Worship, Communication
and Technical Support:
Casey Connor

Custodian: David Kucherepa

Office Hours: Monday to Friday
9am to 12pm and 1pm to 3:30pm

The Ministers: The People
with
Reverend Miriam Flynn,
Pamela Girardi
Manna lead coordinator,
John Lawson, Supply
Minister for Worship and
Pastoral Care
Director of Music Ministry:
Alison MacNeill

87 Dean Ave.,
Guelph, ON
N1G 1L3
519.824.4177
harcourtuc.ca

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

Submission
Deadline: 20th
of each month.
theherald@
harcourtuc.ca

Herald Team:
Marion Auger
Julie Henshaw
Judi Morris



Table of Contents

From the Editor's Desk.....	4
Resurrection – 2022.....	5
Council News.....	7
Harcourt Solar Panels – A 10 year update.....	8
Lenten Reflections.....	11
Christmas during Lent.....	13
A Spring Poem.....	14
Of Lent and Easter.....	15
On Ukraine.....	16
Resurrection, Now and Then.....	17
For Ukraine.....	18
War in Ukraine.....	20
How are we called to respond?.....	20
A poem/prayer by Chelan Harkin.....	23
A Better Way - Meditations For Holy Week 2022.....	23
New Life from Grief and Loss!?!.....	24
Food for the Journey.....	26
An Interview with Lisa Browning.....	26
The Harcourt Library.....	29
NOTES FROM THE CHANCEL COMMITTEE.....	31
Caroline Harcourt Fellowship Circle.....	32
Harcourt Communal Gardens.....	32
AWA (Amherst Writers and Artists) Writing in Groups – reflections and an invitation.....	33
Passages.....	35
Our Moderator, Richard Bott, has written a prayer for Ukraine.....	36

From the Editor's Desk

Marion Auger

Early spring – always the same. Visions of new life in snowdrops and crocuses, quickly buried beneath yet another winter blast. And still, we know: spring flowers will win out! Crucifixions are followed by resurrections. Easter joy, and Spring joining forces to fight their way in to our waiting hearts. And then the good news of loosening up Covid restrictions and learning that we can meet again in the Sanctuary on Sundays!

All this joy and anticipation dampened by the news of a developing war in the Ukraine. Last century, Hitler dreamt of an “Aryan Nation” and killed millions to realize it, failing in the process. This century, a new dictator dreams of a unified “Rus” people. On the backs of millions yet again. How slowly we humans learn.

And what can we do? Have a look at Peter Jackson's article in this issue – he gives us some suggestions how we can help.

Please use the official Herald email
(I believe it will now work OK again)
theherald@harcourtuc.ca



Proof that God raised Jesus from the dead is not the empty tomb but the full hearts of his transformed disciples. The crowning evidence that he lives is not a vacant grave but a spirit-filled fellowship. Not a rolled away stone but a carried-away Church! - Clarence Jordan -

Resurrection – 2022

Rev John Lawson

Something happened. Something wonderful, totally unexpected, disturbing – yet wonderful – happened that first Easter. That is the witness of those first women and men – friends and followers of Jesus – who came expecting death and found Life. "He is not here – he is risen!"

For them it was like a second Big Bang opening up a new universe of understanding and possibility. Something new had entered existence changing their whole view of reality. A new day 1.

The resurrection is central for Christians. It is either a stumbling block or a passage into New Life and a new realm.

What churches, especially United Churches, say – or do not say – about the resurrection is always a litmus test, it seems to me, about how they are willing to tackle the core of our Christian Faith. It is a fine line. There is a danger of saying too much – the Gospels are very clear on this – or saying too little – most often the fault in United Churches.

Whatever is said is best said, as Emily Dickinson puts it – Slant.

*Tell all the Truth but tell it slant —
Success in Circuit lies;
Too bright for mind's infirm intent,
The Truth's superb surprise.*

*As Lightning to the Children eased,
With explanation kind;
The Truth must dazzle gradually,
Or every man be blind.*

I love the mystery of the resurrection. It speaks to me of God. It speaks to me of not knowing, not controlling, sitting on the brink of the edge of another dimension and catching a glimpse of another universe which shines its light into ours and illuminating everything with beauty and love. Perhaps better, not another universe, but another dimension of an expanded universe.



It amazes me that in a universe that is expanding with new scientific discoveries and mysteries we continue to try to reduce the mysteries of our faith into a 17th century Newtonian worldview. When scientists estimate that the cosmos is 70% dark energy, 25% dark matter and everything we see amounts to only 5% of what exists – surely the overwhelming reality is that our existence is nothing short of a miracle set in the midst of a deep mystery.

The Christian witness of faith is that throbbing at the heart of this mystery is a Love that we call God that holds all creation in the most profound love imaginable.

I love the way that Cynthia Bourgeault describes how God unveils the mystery of the resurrection in different ways to different people.

“Jesus is present in physical density only insofar as is necessary to match the density of doubt that is blocking the view. Mary Magdalene needs only to see him in order to be reassured, and so Jesus appears to her as a vision. Thomas’s doubt is deeply visceral, so he receives a fully visceral resurrection appearance. And some who are particularly advanced on the path, such as John, the beloved disciple, never seem to require a private visitation at all; they already grasp the whole picture in their inner insight. Jesus is corporeally present only to the degree that people cannot yet see with the eye of the heart. As the eye of the heart opens, there is more and more freedom to release the physical traces and simply allow the naked immediacy of love to meet heart to heart.” Cynthia Bourgeault in The Wisdom Jesus

The Way may be narrow, as Jesus said, but the dimensions are multiple. The mystery is not far away but pressing in upon us. Life in all fullness and joy is not far away – we're in the midst of it. I pray that the world would be open to that over-flooding mystery of Love and Life slanting into the dark places of our world. Especially, at this time, in places of conflict and hatred such as the Ukraine. That all would feel it – that all would share it.

A Blessed Easter to you all!

Council News

Lorraine Holding

April – Spring – Easter – Fresh Beginnings. These words brighten my days.

Harcourt's core values: Risk – Respect – Responsibility – Vulnerability – Trust. These words underlie our many opportunities to reflect and make decisions as Council and our Community of Faith.

Our Congregational Annual Meeting on March 6 found 72 people on Zoom responding to Harcourt's 2021 reports and looking ahead to the future. We continued to explore the possibilities within our visioning stories: Building Partnerships through Physical & Technical Resources; Worship Shift, Spirit & Integration; Support Growth of Manna. We listened carefully to Brian Magee's presentation about the 2022 budget and overview of Harcourt's financial status. We asked questions about trends over the past several years in relation to Harcourt donors and giving levels. We talked about the projected deficit of \$95,000 and possible ways to increase revenue. We approved the budget, knowing that all who feel connected to Harcourt have a role to support our ministries financially as we are able. Contributing our time, talents and energy is also important to remaining a vibrant Community of Faith. Our core values are deep-rooted.

Since the Annual Meeting, the Transition Steering Team and Council have worked diligently to complete the next steps required to create a position for a full-time Minister of Worship, Sacrament & Pastoral Care. Council has approved our Community of Faith Profile for submission to the Covenant Commission of Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council (WOW). We have approved the Minister's position description for submission to WOW's Human Resources Commission. We have appointed the Search Committee: Kathy Magee (Chair); Dan Ganesh; Laura Hofer; John Phelps; Tammy teWinkel; supported by Bill Lord and Sandra Welch as consultants. Our core values will guide the search process.

As we return to increased opportunities to gather in person, our Community of Faith will celebrate spring and Easter in a variety of ways. In this next phase of fresh beginnings in the pandemic, our core values will guide our consideration for others.

With faith and hope, we continue our journey.



Harcourt Solar Panels – A 10 year update

Sarah Lowe, Mark Sears and Frank Webster

History

The project for a 10kWh solar array installation on top of Harcourt’s gym roof was proposed to the Harcourt congregation in 2010, by a sub-committee of the Property Committee. The team was composed of Steve Dyck, Patricia Eton Neufeld, Michael Hofer, Harry Ragetlie and Brian Thompson (Property Chair). The project was eligible for the Micro FIT Program under the Province’s Green Energy Act, where green energy from small scale installations had, at that time, a guaranteed payment of 80.2 cents per kilowatt hour of power generated over a 20 year contract. The benefits were considered to be environmental, economic and educational (see Report on *Proposed installation of Photovoltaic solar array April 6 2010 revised October 2010*).

The project was approved at the winter Annual General Congregational Meeting on February 27, 2011. The system was installed by Solar G mid-year and became operational on June 21, 2011. According to Harcourt’s financial statements, the cost was \$74,599. This was paid for through donations of \$45,078. with the balance coming from part of a planned legacy gift from Hugh and Pauli Reid which had been earmarked for “an enduring physical project”. Income generated under the contract was predicted to be \$9,000. per year for 19 years. (*2011 Annual Report and Report on Proposed Installation*).



Above: Harcourt UC Solar Array on roof of gym, Feb. 24, 2022.

Power and Income Generated: 10 years since installation (see tables and Chart)

The project has performed almost as predicted, generating a welcome annual revenue stream averaging \$8,900 per year. The original cost was paid off after 8.5 years, by the end of 2019. Total income to the end of 2021 is \$93,303.

Harcourt solar panels: Power production kWh and Income

Year	\$ Income	Power kWh	production	Tigo data
2011	4239	5286		6210
2012	9394	11713		10540
2013	7540	9401		9780
2014	8936	10739		10920
2015	9620	11986		12090
2016	9365	12081		12070
2017	8823	10939		11170
2018	8726	10719		10980
2019	8601	10791		11310
2020	9015	11294		7090
2021	9044	11245		8720
Total	\$93,303	116194		110880
Average	\$8906	11091		

(Average 2012-2021)

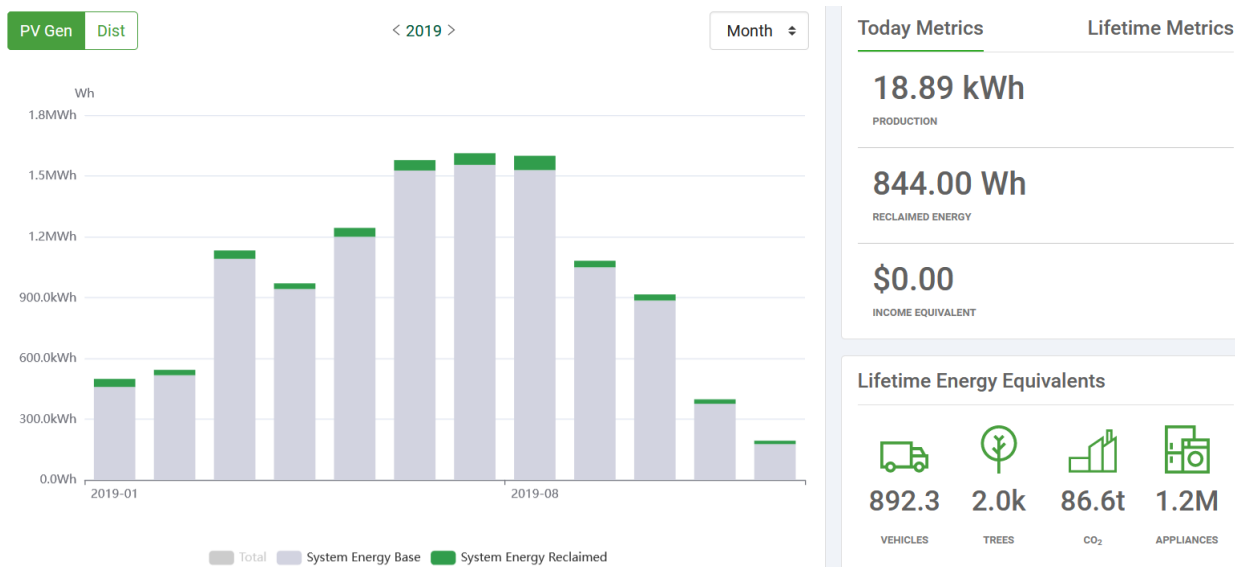
¹2011 to 2013 production derived from Harcourt revenues divided by .802

²2014-2021 Alectra records (formerly Guelph Hydro)

*Tigo data missing some production in 2020 and 2021 when Wendy was not in the office to reboot the router

Power production has been reasonably consistent, apart from 2013 when there were some technical issues. The best years were 2015 and 2016 with an annual production of approximately 12,000 kWh yielding annual revenue of almost \$9,500. Total production to date is 116,194 kWh with a yearly average over the last 10 full years of 11,091 kWh.

Due to our climate, power production follows an annual cycle with the maximum production in the months of June, July and August. A typical year of solar energy production follows a predictable curve as seen in the graph below for the monthly production in 2019. The graph also provides the reader with estimates of the amount of CO₂ not generated by solar energy alternative and equivalents in terms of vehicles emissions, appliance production and use and sequestration by trees.



After 20 years

If the next ten years are similar to the first ten years, then our lifetime production will be in the neighbourhood of 230,000 kWh and our estimated income will be \$184,000. The environmental impact for our solar array is measured in Lifetime Energy Equivalents and amounts to 890 vehicles, 2,000 trees, 86.4 tons carbon offset and 1.2 million appliances. (From the TIGO notification website).

If you would like to observe the energy production of our solar array in real time, you can access the output information from our website. Click on '**GREENING HARCOURT**' and then on the next page '**Solar Panels**'. Click on the highlighted words: "See our solar panels performance in real time". You are then able to view at any time the energy production in many different ways.

Lenten Reflections

Marilyn Whiteley

[The article did not manage to get into print for the March issue on Lent – ed]

When I was growing up in Illinois and attending the local Methodist church, I'd never heard of Advent. Lent, however, was an important part of the church year. It began with a service on the evening of Ash Wednesday. No, there was no imposition of ashes, but it was a solemn service held, like Sunday services, in the sanctuary. My father was the choir director, and the choir was present. And as soon as I was considered old enough to go, my mother and I were present, too.

But that was just the beginning. From then on, every Wednesday until Holy Week there was a church service, and we attended. During Holy Week, there was no Wednesday service. But Thursday evening there was a communion service. In our congregation, the communion service was partly spoken and partly sung, not just by the choir but by the entire congregation. My

father had painstakingly made the stencil for a little booklet giving all the words and the music, so everyone in attendance could participate—and they did. When it was done on Holy Thursday, it seemed to me to be the most solemn service of the church year.

Good Friday was a school holiday, but businesses were open as usual—until noon or the early afternoon. Then just about everything shut down, to reopen in the late afternoon. It was during this solemn gap in time that the Methodist choir presented its Good Friday offering, *The Crucifixion*, by John Stainer. I think I could still sing the alto line of “God so loved the world” from memory, I’ve sung it so many times. I now recognize the Victorian excess of the 1887 oratorio, but I must confess that if I hear parts of it, I’m still drawn back into it. It was the high point of Lent. Then we just waited for Easter, which began with a sunrise service.

I worked for one year in Lynchburg, Virginia, in the foothills of the Blue Ridge mountains. I attended a Methodist church there. It happened that the area suffered an unseasonably stormy winter. The city was built on a number of hills, and when snow came, driving was impossible. A storm hit on Ash Wednesday. No church service. And there were storms that cancelled services on succeeding Wednesdays. The lack of services made me realize how deeply the custom of Wednesday services during Lent had become ingrained in me. They served as a regular reminder that I was living in the season of Lent, a season for reflection.

That was long ago, and regular Wednesday evening services are a distant memory. So how can I now live in the season of Lent? Over the years, I have “given up” and I have “taken on,” with, I admit, mixed results. An Ash Wednesday service still begins the season, and it felt incomplete last year not to attend one. And for years, beginning with Ash Wednesday, I have been “taking on” some devotional reading as part of my daily quiet time for reflection and prayer.

What of this year? I remember hearing someone say at the beginning of Lent last year that, with the pandemic, it felt as though we’d been living in Lent for months. Now, as the days are lengthening and restrictions are cautiously starting to loosen, perhaps it is time for a new practice, a practice of gratitude. Perhaps I can use the season to pause, not just daily but many times a day, to notice bits of grace and to give thanks. For a long time, we have been under a dark cloud. Let us notice the light and be grateful!



Christmas during Lent.

John Phelps

We all agree that Covid has changed so many of our normal day-to-day activities. Travel plans, in-door dining and large Birthday/Anniversary celebrations, all put on hold until it was safer to gather in large groups. One of the hiccups facing our family was we hadn't really counted on the postponement of Christmas 2021.

Christmas 2019 and 2020 including gift exchanges, we celebrated by Zoom, doing without our normal Christmas Eve soirée, and the hosting of our family Christmas dinner. We felt, like so many others, 2021 was going to be the turning point. With everyone vaccinated, visions of normalcy danced in our heads. Early December saw the start of our Christmas hustle and bustle with the planning of holiday menus, shopping for a turkey and wrapping gifts. As in previous years, we plan for 10 to 12 of us sitting down on the 25th, enjoying a big turkey dinner with all the trimmings... Guess what!

The first hint of trouble came when Covid infection numbers started to increase. Omicron rose its ugly head and infected so many. Over-crowded hospitals and "lock-downs" were the big event of the day. So, out of an abundance of caution, we called the whole thing off. No point putting ourselves, our grandchildren or our family from Kingston and Hamilton at risk.

Our Plan B was to push Christmas to mid January and combine it with several January birthdays. Didn't happen. I got a bad cold, possibly Omicron. February was looking good. Not to be. More family illness. How about early March? The stars were starting to align. Everyone was healthy and work schedules were clear. Eureka! We were set to celebrate March 12/13. Christmas during Lent. However, this much anticipated get together nearly didn't happen.

This time Mother Nature, with her little bag of tricks, tested us. On Friday, the big travel day, we were hit with a snow storm. Relatives from Kingston travelling to Guelph found the roads gradually getting worse driving west. Take the 407, I said, there will be less traffic, I said. ETR 407 was a mess. Sure, less traffic meant fewer cars, but the roads remained snow covered. Trucks in the ditch, a fender bender or two and not a snow plow in sight. It only added a grueling white knuckle two hours to the trip.

My brother, heading north on Hwy 6 from Hamilton endured a similar situation. Low visibility and slippery roads. Glad to report all arrived safely, and it turned out to be a great weekend. We sat down to dinner, joined hands, said the blessing and commented how thankful we were to be together for the first time in several years. And in a brief moment of silence, I was overcome by the thought that life is short. We must be swift to love and make haste to be kind. We never know what lies ahead for us.

A Spring Poem

Anonymous

I'm gazing out my bedroom window

I'd say about an hour now

Upon a grey but brightening sky

First day of spring has come our way

The rain from overnight, has washed most snow away

Small patches still linger in the woods

A wind of promised warmer days

Blows softly through the trees

The Robin and the Redwing dash about

Their mating calls heard o'er the fields

With nests to build for eggs to lay

Their day is filled as nature planned

The sky turning blue as I arise

A cloud or two drift high above

The curtains of my window flutter

Enjoy the day, its finally spring

Submitted by John Phelps

Of Lent and Easter

Judi Morris

We will still be walking through Lent toward Easter when this issue of the Herald first goes out. Some will have completely abandoned their Lenten effort to give something up or take something on. Many will bravely remain faithful to their commitment. Myself, I prefer to use it as a time to grow in some manner – John Buttars showed us how to do that. Sometimes I am successful, sometimes...not so much. Rather than be disappointed with my effort I might tack on extra weeks - whatever it takes to get the job done.

Easter carries a hefty load of meanings, symbols and customs which begin and end on different days, depending on how one travels through the experience. For children their first recollection of joy at Easter is of the Bunny visiting their household sending them hunting for eggs and chocolate and filling baskets.

Attaching the rabbit to Easter comes from an ancient pagan tradition - where many Christian traditions came from. From the 17th century came a tradition of a German Hare bringing eggs to good children. Hares and rabbits had a connection with spring seasonal rituals because of their remarkable fertility. But the children had to hunt for the eggs. The eggs were not just left out in the open for easy picking. The spring festival called “Eostre” honoured the goddess of fertility and celebrated spring. As far back as medieval times eggs have been part of Easter as a symbol of new life. Some even say the egg represents Jesus’ tomb. We have all been in awe with how Eastern European countries paint and decorate them. Legends describe eggs turning red, a colour often used with events surrounding Jesus’ death and resurrection. Christians celebrate the spring festival, Eostre, in the joy and commemoration of Jesus’ resurrection.

Children still enjoy the experience of colouring eggs, usually with store bought dye. They set them out for the Easter Bunny to sneak in and hide them and sometimes included is a surprise chocolate or toy.

In 325, the Council of Nicea (the first council in the history of the Christian Church) decreed that Easter should be observed on the first Sunday following the first full moon after the spring equinox (March 21). Isn’t that a mouthful? That puts Easter on any Sunday between March 22 and April 25. Holy Week, which precedes Easter, begins with Palm Sunday, remembering Jesus’ “street theatre” of a kind of “reverse procession” into the city, different from the pomp of the entry into Jerusalem of the Roman occupier.

Resurrection Sunday. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James, went to the tomb to discover the body gone and whereupon an Angel told them not to be afraid. He has risen as he said he would. This is a day to rejoice and be glad.

All Christian denominations have their own liturgical emphases for Easter. The Easter sunrise service, for example, is a Protestant observance. I have only read about it but never experienced it. Every year I would offer the opportunity to Harcourt they would say it was a great idea....let's do it next year. Perhaps it came from the Gospel narrative of Jesus' Resurrection, where Mary Magdalene went to the tomb "while it was still dark" (John 20:1 or Matthew 28:1 and Luke 24:1). It must be a service of jubilation as the sun rises and darkness fades.

Foods associated with Easter are hot cross buns, a pastry traditionally eaten on Good Friday in Britain. They are a sweet bun with fruits, spices, and a white cross symbolizing the suffering of Christ.

I encourage you to journey through Easter in your own way, at your own speed; write a few lines each day. Send them to us so we might share them in the next newsletter in one form or another. We love hearing from all of you.

On Ukraine

John Buttars

A penny for your thoughts on this horrific war in Ukraine. And it wasn't very long ago that I could have asked a penny for your thoughts on Ottawa and border crossing demonstrations, occupations, blockades, police actions. Not to mention this ongoing awful pandemic with its rising rates of infection in areas around the world even as we unmask...and some of us unmask hesitantly.

In the midst of the Ottawa blockade one of the editors of Dublin's newsletter asked if I could write something that would bring some note of wisdom to a chaotic situation. Then Judi Morris phoned on behalf of the Harcourt Herald for something similar in the midst of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the non-war in President Putin's eyes.

Discerning how to follow Jesus during this chaotic time in 2022, that is the challenge. For the Dublin newsletter I found myself concluding with the following;

With his indigenous roots, United Church minister Alf Dumont, mimicking the four directions of his native spirituality, writes of the four loves of Jesus: Love God, love neighbour, love self, love enemy. I came to see that ...(they) were my neighbours but they were also my enemies. Soft enemies. Not enemies like Ukrainian and Russian forces lined up against each other ready to kill. Not enemies like a couple in a no-holds divorce

battling it out through the courts and supported by expensive lawyers. United Church people don't talk about having enemies. We tend to see ourselves as too nice for that, too open, too accommodating. I do not want to demonize the Christian demonstrators in Ottawa or at border points over the last weeks. They are Canadian citizens like me. They are my sisters and brothers in Christ. When we both say the Lord's Prayer, we start with "Our" and neither one of us has the right to disenfranchise or denigrate the other. Christian and Canadian like me. In addition, some are despicable in their words and actions, being bigoted in the worst possible ways. The Christian protesters have not been clear enough in dissociating themselves from those who are clearly hateful, racist, misogynist, and disrespectful. Having said that, Jesus commands are clear: Love neighbour, love enemy. The very least I can do is hold them within the loving light of Jesus Christ and in humility seek the courage to proclaim my different understanding of what it means to follow Jesus.

When it comes to the Ukraine war, I find myself helped by the book *The Wild Edge of Sorrow: Rituals of Renewal and the Sacred Work of Grief* by Francis Weller. A particular thanks to Sharon Chapman who introduced me to this book. It is a gem. In it the author tells the story of a woman wailing in grief over the Iraq war. He writes, "She wept and wept about the land being poisoned by fragments of bombs made with depleted uranium. She cried about the hundreds of thousands of civilians killed or wounded by the assault." The author, taking in her abundant tears, asked her if she had noticed the plum blossoms outside the window or the mustard also in bloom. She had not. He then said to her, "'We cannot possibly face the horrors of Iraq with any sense of balance without also remembering the beauty of the world—the plum, blossoms and mustard blooming.' We must couple grief and gratitude in a way that encourages us to stay open to life." (pg. 106)

For me, that is the challenge of the present moment of Covid, of demonstrations and blockades, of horrible suffering in Ukraine, not to mention the tragedy in Tigray, in Myanmar and Israeli/Palestinian wounds that stretch back decades and so much more suffering and anguish around the world laced with the intergenerational suffering as a result of Canada's residential schools: To stay open to life. Jesus did promise that he came to bring life and life in all its abundance (John 10: 10). That is how I sense the call of Jesus Christ at the moment: To stay open to life, to embrace with wide open arms both grief and gratitude.

Resurrection, Now and Then

Toni Wagner

April is usually associated with Palm Sunday, Good Friday and Easter. The season begins, among others, with Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem; teaching, the last supper, Jesus' arrest, the crucifixion and the resurrection. Whatever happened to the song "Up from the Grave He Arose"? When I was much younger, we used to sing that song regularly at Easter

time. The first and last lines of the chorus tells the meaning of Easter in a nutshell. “Up from the Grave He Arose”, and “Hallelujah! Christ arose!” The fulfillment of a prophecy and someone who would bear all our sins and griefs.

Another resurrection, if it is to take place, is the resurrection of the Ukraine, only this would take place out of the ashes of its former self. My mother and father came from the Ukraine some ninety-five years ago, after my dad spent three years in the Siberian Region. I asked some questions but I wish I had asked many more, a hint to those who might still get answers. Many of us are amazed and surprised at the resilience and the show of patriotism of the Ukrainian people. I, for one, should not have been surprised. In November in a venue similar to this, I said that democracy cannot be taken for granted but that work would be required to maintain it. Some time ago, I worked with a man who was with the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers and held the most senior civilian position in their Great Lakes head office in Chicago. In 1991 when the Iron Curtain fell, he resigned his position saying he was returning to his homeland, Estonia, to help form the new government. I should have sensed the fervour of a people whose country taste freedom and democracy for the first time.

I wonder what mom and dad would have thought of the situation in Europe and in the Ukraine in particular...

For Ukraine

Arlene Davies-Fuhr

Like much of the world, Bryan and I are horrified and shocked by the unconscionable, unnecessary, and brutal war in Ukraine. We are particularly appalled and saddened since we have a personal connection with that nation. Bryan’s grandfather Conrad Fuhr was born in 1881 in Bolechow, Austria-Hungary, which is in present day south-western Ukraine. In 2004, just prior to their Orange revolution, I taught a six-week writing course at a university in Kyiv.

While in Ukraine, we hiked in the Carpathian Mountains, 25 km from where Conrad Fuhr was born; walked the cobblestone streets of Chernihiv, Lviv, Crimea, and Kyiv; attended magnificent operas; and enjoyed impressive museums. We witnessed first-hand the poverty as Ukraine is a country where most professionals cannot afford a house or a car and do not have the luxury of retiring because they need their full monthly salary. While we were there, we made money from the daily food allowance provided by my college in Edmonton because we ate as the locals did and found food very reasonable. For the duration of our stay, like my Ukrainians colleagues, we didn’t eat lunch so that was another saving.

Right now, we have friends in Kyiv who chose not to leave their beautiful city. These friends hunker down every night in deep subway stations that ironically the Soviets themselves

built when Ukraine was part of the USSR. One person comments on Facebook every morning to indicate she is alive. Yaroslava is religious and posts prayers to God and the Archangel Michael requesting protection and safety.

Can you imagine what living like this must be like? We are painfully aware of the hardship and anguish. Every mouthful of our delicious meal reminds us of Ukrainians scrounging for food and melting snow for drinking water. As we walk outside, in our peaceful community, we feel incredibly blessed. Unlike most folks in Ukraine, we are not terrified when an airplane flies overhead. It is our personal opinion that the West is not doing nearly enough regarding this catastrophe but our monetary donations and our prayers of support are still vital and meaningful.

The season of Lent encourages reflections regarding the way of the world and the nudging of our loving Creator. Lent begins with wearing crosses of ash on foreheads and remembering “We are dust and to dust we shall return.” It is fitting that it was during Lent Russia chose to invade the peaceful, democratic country of Ukraine. It unsettles us to ponder how to respond to such atrocities as, from a distance, we witness the daily evil inflicted on innocent women, children, and ordinary old folks. It is heartbreaking to see beautiful cities with exquisite cathedrals and architecture reduced to rubble for no apparent purpose than to feed the misguided, grandiose aspirations of a demented dictator.

So we cry out, “*Lord, hear our prayers.*” We take strength from scripture passages like Deuteronomy 31: “*Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened of them, for the Lord your God goes with you. Your loving Creator will never leave you nor forsake you.*” And in Zephaniah, “*The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save you. Your Creator rejoices over you with gladness. The Holy One holds you with love. The Beloved exalts over you with loud singing.*” The Gospel of Luke confidently asserts, “*Nothing is impossible with God*” and Matthew says, “*Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.*” In Romans 8, we find: “*For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*”

Words of Scripture provide comfort and encouragement but Ukraine’s celebrated, national poet gives us pause. Taras Shevchenko writes:

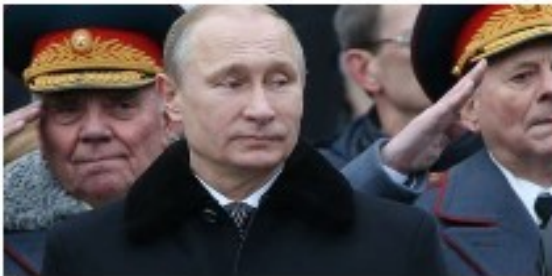
“It’s terrible to lie in chains,
To rot in dungeons deep
But it’s still worse, when you are free
To sleep, and sleep, and sleep.”

Shevchenko also says: “All has gone to rest, and I don’t know whether I’m alive or will live or whether I’m running like this through the world for I’m no longer weeping or laughing.”

We passionately encourage folks to stand in solidarity with Ukraine in whatever way possible. In addition to prayers and donations, consider wearing yellow and blue ribbons or

clothing, the colours of the Ukrainian flag. Maybe purchase plastic or real sunflowers, if you can find any. Post pictures of sunflowers on websites. Be a visible supporter of the nation of Ukraine and indicate that you stand with its beleaguered, yet feisty, citizens.

War in Ukraine



How are we called to respond?

When Spiritual Life Committee considered this question a few days ago, each of us confessed to feeling overwhelmed, powerless and deskilled. Yet as we listened to each other, we began to see that there are a number of small actions that each of us can take. None of us on our own can make much of a difference; together we may have some small influence. Here are the things that we are doing, and you can too.

Pray for Ukraine

Elsewhere in the Herald is a poem/prayer by Chelan Harkin. The United Church lists other lovely prayers [here](#) (just click), including Sunflowers in Ukraine by United Church Moderator Richard Bott.

Donate money for Ukraine

There are many appeals for Ukraine: choose one you trust. Charity Intelligence Canada offers useful advice [here](#). The United Church has a Ukraine Crisis Appeal [here](#).

Listen to other people

A listening ear can help anyone to work through feelings of grief, anger and vindictiveness. Unicef gives tips for listening to children about conflict and war [here](#).

Keep vigil on April 16

The Easter Saturday vigil (3 to 4 pm) will include Ukraine as one focus. Participate in the vigil in the sanctuary or online (to receive the zoom link, email spirituallistingcircle@gmail.com).

Write to Canadian politicians

You can urge Canadian leaders to take action to alleviate the situation in Ukraine. The Member of Parliament for Guelph is Lloyd Longfield (lloyd.longfield@parl.gc.ca).

Write to Russia's Ambassador to Canada

You can urge Russia's ambassador to adopt a more humanitarian approach by sending an email to consul.ottawa@mid.ru. Begin your email like this:

His Excellency Oleg V. Stepanov
Ambassador of the Russian Federation in Ottawa
Dear Ambassador Stepanov

Support local Ukrainian communities

The Ukrainian Church Guelph Community posts news of events such as solidarity peace walks and fundraisers [here](#).

Be kind

Unfairness and violence flourish; some degree of complicity is unavoidable. Take action, however small, in a contrary direction, especially when you are downhearted. Every kindness - supporting those who suffer, giving resources to the needy, working for justice - helps us to live into a better way.

Keep your eyes open

Watch the e-harcourt for news of other events; and then pray as if none of the other suggestions will make a difference.

The February 25th post to <https://www.facebook.com/Chelan-Harkin-Poetry-852401341798484/>

A poem/prayer by Chelan Harkin

(instagram chelanharkin)

I don't know how
to write about war

My pen does not know how to
approach
that kind of wreckage

Or how to describe the scope of the
wingspan
of this black bird
whose shadow of terror
cloaks itself over whole countries
choking out safety, continuity,
stability.

My words shy away from addressing
this serrated edge
that cuts through countries
and hearts

and viciously tears at the fabric
of this universe
that is love.

I quiver at this moving factory
of government sanctioned terror
and desecration.

War is the deepest vandalizing
to the temple of life

and to the safety and wellbeing
that should belong to us here

It's so horrific
this colossal weaponry
that the human heart -
made to host God's tenderness-
can still amass

This terrible expression of the
collective
untended, putrefied wound
that metastasizes its terrors
can make my words
want to hide underground
in a bomb shelter of silence

I don't know how to write
of truth like this

So I plunge the prayer in my pen
into deeper inkwells

of the universal humanity
whose stream I have touched
that lives within us all

and beseech it to hurry up
and remember itself.

A Better Way - Meditations For Holy Week 2022

Peter Jackson

In these weeks leading to Easter, we are appalled at images of destruction in Ukraine. We may feel overwhelmed and powerless. Spiritual Life committee has prepared some meditations aimed at helping us find a better way, following the way that Jesus showed us in journeying through that Holy Week so long ago.

There is one meditation for the week leading up to Palm Sunday (April 10) and then one meditation daily up to Easter Sunday. You can access A Better Way [here](#) or obtain a printed copy from the church building on Dean Avenue.

New Life from Grief and Loss!?

Stan Bunston

When the Harcourt community chose to dedicate its life around the “core values” of Risk, Respect, Responsibility, Vulnerability and Trust, it was before my time in this church, but it has always stimulated my imagination and my admiration. Never, in my opinion, has there been a time when the first named core value – RISK! – has held such crucial significance for the church at large. This community, by Grace, has been gifted with insight that undergirds so much continuing innovation and experimentation. Examples include solar panels, Harcourt vegetable gardens, offering the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises, Manna, and more recently the Holy Listening Circle and Live Streaming as we adapted to both technological change and COVID.

Harcourt's distinctive array of “core values” illustrates big picture thinking and that invites me to share a recent daily meditation from Richard Rohr (March 6, 2022) on the “Five M's,” illustrating the stages of change historically in religious and cultural institutions. The big picture pattern begins with a huMan (John Wesley and the Methodist revival, for example), followed by Movement (the energetic, creative and often chaotic phase), then Machine (or Institution, a necessary, understandable change), then Monument and eventually Memory. The most dangerous part of the cyclical pattern is the focus on maintenance and self-preservation in institutional life that can calcified the institution.

The lesson I take from this is that our RISK core value can invite us to continually open our hearts and minds through experimenting with ways of being faithful to the way of Jesus. Harcourt's Spiritual Life Committee endorsed one such experiment over these past months, a “Grief and Lament Experimental Group.”

As Covid continued to beat upon all of us in the fall of 2021, the Spiritual Life Committee began to raise questions about what more we could learn about the place of loss, grief and lament in all our lives, accentuated by Covid but seemingly much more fundamental to human life. “As Irish poet John O'Donohue wrote, 'Life is growth in the art of loss'” (Weller, p.121).

Three members of the Spiritual Life Committee (SLC) – Bill Lord, Sharon Chapman and myself –agreed to learn more about lament, how it impacts our lives, and consider what initiatives might be developed within the SLC's mandate and focus, namely: to help the Harcourt community be attentive to the movement of the Spirit and to offer opportunities for spiritual growth.

Early on we also decided that we needed an experiential approach – not just book learning. Before addressing any usefulness to the Harcourt community and beyond, we needed to immerse ourselves in the study and experience of lament. Three other SLC members – Andre Auger, Kathy Magee and Lisa Beattie – agreed to join the aforementioned facilitator participants for six weekly meetings on Zoom that began on January 16, 2022.

In planning for this experiment, we came upon a book entitled *The Wild Edge of Sorrow* written by Frances Weller, “psychotherapist, author and soul activist” who has spent more than thirty years synthesizing many modes of thought and traditions in developing what he calls “soul-centered psychotherapy.”

You are likely to hear more about this author's insights in the coming months, but let me share three of Weller's suggestions. The first is that he invites us to significantly expand our understanding of the universal human experience of loss and grief, which he puts into five different “gates” of grief, namely:

1. Everything We Love, We Will Lose (including our health / lives)
2. The Places That Have Not Known Love (including shame, wounds, trauma, soul loss)
3. The Sorrows of the World (human diminishment of the natural world)
4. What We Expected and Did Not Receive (cultural loss of the “village” and authentic belonging)
5. Ancestral Grief (grief carried by us rooted in the past; also. loss of place for ancestral wisdom)

The second insight is that, in our death- and loss-denying society, we need an “apprenticeship with sorrow,” learning the right relationship with grief, not too far and not too close. Grief-work requires being present in our adult selves and having a safe “container” of support.

Finally, Weller's stories illustrate the critical role of ritual, grounded in community, to support the healing of the wide expanse of griefs and losses throughout our lives. Not surprisingly, some of the examples that Weller turns toward to illustrate healing communities come from the wisdom of indigenous culture – wisdom that has been lacking in our present day hurry up, individualistic and youth oriented culture. Weller's lifetime of work with grief and loss has lead him to create rituals for groups dealing with loss. He is witness that, through the work of the soul and a strange “alchemy” that we might call Grace or Spirit, sorrow can be transformed into energy for life, repairing the world and living more fully engaged with all of life.

I read Weller as pointing toward new life, a resurrection story! I am deeply grateful for Weller's insights which have impacted and challenged me toward spiritual growth and feet on the ground engagement.

I hope to continue to walk that “apprenticeship with sorrow” within family, within Harcourt and within the broader community to face, with companions, the brevity of all things and love more fully now.

Food for the Journey

Lisa Beattie for the Spiritual Life Committee



I was listening to a wonderful sermon by Rev. Miriam Flynn when she said “we do not inhabit the wilderness alone.” I found the phrase so comforting that I wrote it down on a slip of paper and keep it on my desk. One never knows how a few words may impact a person, and for me those words have become my companion when I am feeling particularly worried about something. It holds true whether that worry is close to home or in the big picture of geo-politics or the environmental crisis or any thing that simply feels vast and out of my control. Then I see my slip of paper and I remember again that we do not inhabit the wilderness alone.

A lone voice - or two or three gathered together - can represent the feelings and beliefs of multitudes. This seems to me is what Jesus may have been referring to and is a truth that sustains me.

An Interview with Lisa Browning

Judi Morris

Lisa Browning and I enjoyed catch up as I interviewed her over the phone. Lisa is well-known to many in Harcourt’s congregation, as a member of the Fellowship & Communications Committee, coordinator of the annual Christmas dinner, and as editor of the Herald for many years. Many of us who knew her in those roles may discover, as I have, that there is so much more to Lisa than we realized. Outside of Harcourt, Lisa founded One Thousand Trees in 2010, and in that capacity coordinated many gatherings at Harcourt, for community and spiritual growth. Lisa has expanded her horizons considerably since then.

Judi: Your web page, One Thousand Trees, tells us that, in addition to providing writing, editing, and publishing services, you have chosen to focus on three specific branches of One Thousand Trees: Saplings (children’s book publishing), Sharing (anthologies of empowerment stories), and Stories magazine (a monthly online magazine of the poetry, prose and personal reflections of local, and not-so-local, writers).

I know that you have a B/A in English and worked as an editor for over fifteen years, with experience in both public and private sector, and in 2018 you were honoured as one of Guelph Y's Women of Distinction, as a Community Champion. That's an impressive portfolio to carry around.

Lisa: Thank you! I've been blessed to have been presented with a lot of opportunities in my life, when it comes to storytelling, especially.

Judi: The following quote appears on your webpage: "I firmly believe that telling our stories and speaking our truth is the most effective and efficient path to empowerment."

Lisa: That's actually a quote from me! All of the 2018 Women of Distinction Honourees were asked to come up with a sentence or phrase that reflected their passion and values. I think it fits!

Judi: What sparked your interest to start One Thousand Trees?

Lisa: It's an interesting story, I think! At the time (around 2009), I was doing a lot of charity work, but most of it revolved around sitting on committees. I got to the point where I really didn't want to sit in meetings all the time ... so I resigned from everything. But, because I've always had a strong belief in the importance of giving back, I needed to find something else to replace the charity work. I had always wanted to publish a magazine, so I sat with that idea for a while, and the concept of One Thousand Trees magazine gradually became a reality.

Judi: Where did the name One Thousand Trees come from?

Lisa: It's funny ... many people think (understandably) that I have something to do with either planting or taking care of trees! And because I am a publisher, and therefore use a fair number of trees for the books I produce, it might seem a bit odd that I have such a name. But there's actually a logical, and rather heartfelt, reason behind it.

At the time that I was developing the concept for the magazine, Mike Elrick, who was a teacher at Centennial and I believe was a member of Harcourt, was fighting a battle with lung cancer, and had started a blog to document his journey. Because I was so inspired by both his vulnerability and his courage in doing that, I read the blog often. When Mike was no longer able to keep up the blog himself, his wife Heather took it over. Now to backtrack a bit, Mike was also very heavily involved in the Community Environmental Leadership (CELP) program at Centennial. I'll never forget the day that Heather wrote in her blog post that his CELP students had planted 1,000 trees in Mike's honour. Right then, I knew I had my magazine name.

Judi: How did you feel when you pressed the key to make the first issue live?

Lisa: You know, even though it was over 10 years ago, I can still remember that feeling of “Oh my God, what have I done?!” There’s something very disconcerting about putting yourself out into the world in such an open and honest way. And of course, all the insecurities and inner critic’s messages come to the surface. But the magazine was very well-received, so I was soon able to exhale!!

Judi: I understand that One Thousand Trees magazine is no longer being published.

Lisa: Correct. I actually stopped publishing it in 2020 ... after 10 years and 120 issues. At the time, it was starting to lose momentum, I thought. I was getting fewer people writing for me, and fewer people providing feedback on each issue.

Judi: But you inspired others, for over ten years. You crossed over the line of self-doubt into one of undaunted capability. You must feel pleased.

Lisa: If I’m totally honest with myself (and I ignore that inner critic!), yes, I can say that I’m proud of what I have accomplished. It was a lot of work, but it was well worth the effort. And to be able to help others get their stories out in the world is definitely my passion in this life.

Judi: So what are you doing now?

Lisa: Well, I’ve started a new magazine called Stories. It’s interesting ... after I discontinued One Thousand Trees magazine, I heard from several regular readers and writers alike, saying that they missed the magazine. So I did a lot of thinking, and decided to fine-tune things a bit, and do a magazine focusing just on writing ... poetry, prose and personal reflection. I’ve been doing that for about six months now, and it’s going really well! I’m also doing a lot of books for people, including children’s books. Anything with a theme of wellness or creativity is what I like to do most. And of course the mentoring and inspiring/encouraging people to tell their stories really feeds my soul.

Judi: What is your vision going forward?

Lisa: Just to keep it going! I feel very blessed to be able to do what I do. And I am beyond grateful for the trust that my writers and other clients have placed in me.

Judi: Thank you Lisa, not only for spending time with this interview but for your countless contributions to Harcourt, the community of Guelph and its surroundings, and all who have been blessed by your gifts and influence. We are all so much richer because of you.

The Harcourt Library

Mary Lou Funston

Welcome back to the Harcourt Library – after 2 years of absence. It is wonderful to have the room back to being a Library, having gone through a ‘storeroom’ stage for several months. When I was able to get back in to bring things up to date, I found that there was a fair number of ‘new’ books, catalogued and ready for labelling before shelving. Thank you to the donors of these volumes. I have tried to sort the books into categories - more or less successfully!

This first category contains books that are MEMOIRS of one sort or another:

Not Just the Strap. Discipline by Control in Ontario Schools 1900-1960, Vera C. Pletsch
371

Vera Pletsch, who was part of Lila Engberg’s “family”, “...offers an intriguing analysis of discipline during the formative period of Ontario’s history, when locals and parents controlled education.”

My Story. The Florence Nightingale of the North Nurse Myra Bennett BIO BEN

Myra came to Daniel’s Harbour on Newfoundland’s Northern Peninsula in 1921. “She was known simply as The Nurse along the 200 miles of coast that was her responsibility.”

Room for All of Us. Surprising Stories of Loss and Transformation, Adrienne Clarkson
920.071 CLA

“Draft dodgers, Holocaust survivors, Ismailis, Chileans, Anglo Quebecers, Serbian and Tamil Refugees – Amazing people with unforgettable stories about their Canada.”

Unbowed. A Memoir, Wangari Maathai 333 MAA

“...Wangari Maathai, the winner of the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize and a single mother of three, recounts her extraordinary life as a political activist, feminist, and environmentalist in Kenya.”

PERSONAL SPIRITUALITY

A Religion of One’s Own. A Guide to Creating a Personal Spirituality in a Secular World.

Thomas Moore 235 MOO

...The subtitle says it all!

Consecrated Religious Life. The Changing Paradigms, Diarmid O’Murchu 255 O’MU
O’Murchu is speaking as a Consecrated Religious about the paradigms from which they (and we) have been acting, how these are changing in our time, and what new paradigms mean for us.

The Ironic Christian's Companion. Finding the Marks of God's Grace in the World, Patrick Henry 234 HEN

"...he leads us on an invigorating journey in which the ground beneath our feet is constantly shifting and we take with him the leaps that faith invites."

Of War and Love, Dorothee Solle 831.904 SOL

"Mingling incisive poetry with sinewy prose, this is a memorable statement of the Christian response to the overarching moral problem of our time."

Walk in a Relaxed Manner. Life Lessons from the Camino, Joyce Rupp 263 RUP

The story of her pilgrimage along the Camino de Santiago.

Prayer Seeds. A Gathering of Blessings, Reflections, and Poems for Spiritual Growth

Joyce Rupp 242 RUP

Still. Notes on a Mid-Faith Crisis, Lauren f. Winner 283 WIN

FAITH AND THE CHURCH

If the Church Were CHRISTIAN. Rediscovering the Values of Jesus, Philip Gulley 261.1

GUL

"...Philip Gulley provides a profound picture of what the church could look like if it refocused on the priorities of Jesus." This book has obviously been well read by its donor – please don't let that keep you from enjoying the reading of it. Each chapter is headed with the book title then goes on to indicate which of two options is the more important.

Saving Jesus from the Church, Robin R. Meyers 262 MEY

How to Stop Worshipping Christ and Start Following Jesus

"Every once in a while, a book comes along that changes everything. This is the book."

Archbishop Desmond Tutu

Rediscovering VALUES. A Guide for Economic and Moral Recovery, Jim Wallis 174 WAL

"Jim Wallis shows that the solution to our problems will be found only as individuals, families, friends, churches, mosques, synagogues, and entire communities wrestle with the question of values together."

Healing the Heart of Democracy. The Courage to Create a Politics Worthy of the Human Spirit, Parker J. Palmer 320 PAL

"Building on his decades of social activism and inner life exploration, Palmer examines ways to restore the invisible infrastructure of American politics."

DVDs to help you explore the questions of faith

Does Christianity Have a Future? Schism, Scandal, and Loss of the Sacred DVD35 CRO
“Experience....Marcus Borg, John Dominic Crossan, and Joan Chittister...exploring topics of faith and life...”

The Challenge of Jesus

230 CRO

This is a DVD set with Resource guide. Dr. Crossan “delves into Jesus’ historical landscape to unearth the forces that shaped Jesus’ circumstances and message.”

ON A LIGHTER NOTE:

The Colors of All The Cattle, Alexander McCall Smith

McC Fic

The New No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency Novel in which Mma Ramotswe runs for office.

For the Junior set:

Amazing Friendships between Animals and Saints, Greg Kennedy SJ

J KEN

This is a delightful book of stories of the relationship between 8 saints and their animals. The author is a Jesuit priest working in spirituality and ecology at the Ignatius Jesuit Centre. The illustrations have been done by our own Kerry Wilson. She has provided a *Can You Find?* checklist at the back of the book, which looks like a lot of fun to do.

NOTES FROM THE CHANCEL COMMITTEE

Barb Friend

In celebration of our return to church services as they were prior to Covid, the chancel committee will be decorating the sanctuary for Easter. If you would like to contribute towards the purchase of a plant to honour a loved one or to celebrate a special occasion, please contact Barb Friend. Deadline April 10th

Home: 519-763-5032

Cell: 519-803-5032

Email: barfriend52@gmail.com



Caroline Harcourt Fellowship Circle

Jean Hume

The doors of the Church have been re-opened!!!! Megan Ward, chair of the re-entry committee has stated that she feels safe for the group to meet again after Easter. While many are still a little leery about gathering together, others are questioning when the group can come together to enjoy some fellowship in the near future.

The Friendship Room has been booked for Monday, June 13th from 11:30-2:00pm. Please come with your bag lunch. Tea and treats will be served. Let's share some fun and update our news as we worship in prayer and song. The phone callers will contact their group members during the first week of June to confirm the date and your presence. Remember that ALL Church Women are welcome.

PS: As the demand for renting space in the Church increases, and the income from rental fees is greatly needed, the group may have to consider meeting in the afternoon only. This will be a topic for discussion at the June meeting.

Harcourt Communal Gardens

Jill Gill

As I write this article, we have had several tantalizing days of temperatures well above zero and the maple sap is flowing at breakneck speed. Of course this bodes well for the maple syrup production this year. The warmer temperatures, sun and sounds of the birds singing is causing me to look forward to gardening season - specifically in the Harcourt Communal Garden (HCG).

This will be our 12th growing season in the HCG. All the produce we grow is donated to Chalmers Community Services Centre food pantry. So far we have donated close to 7,000 lbs of organically-grown vegetables, herbs and fruit. Chalmers is a Harcourt-supported charity helping to feed some of Guelph's most food-insecure folks.



The HCG is entirely maintained by volunteers who plant, water, weed and harvest from June until late October each year. We work in teams of 3 or 4, each week for 2-3 hours. Each team is assigned to be in the garden about six times from June-October. Lisa Mactaggart, Landscape Architect and Urban Farmer par excellence, plans our crop rotation and prepares seedlings for planting each year. Before Covid restrictions (BC!),

families from the Manna community have helped in early June to plant seeds and seedlings to start the garden growing. We are ever hopeful that this might be a possibility again this year.

Last year, with an Urban Agriculture Grant through 10C, Our Food Future and Harvest Impact, we were able to make upgrades and improvements to the garden and look forward to reaping the benefits this growing season. We're planning on even more "vertical growing" opportunities than last year!

We are always looking to increase our volunteer team, so if helping in the Harcourt Communal Garden is an activity that interests you, please contact me, Jill Gill at 519.767.1244 or email me at peter.gill@sympatico.ca and let me know. You needn't been an expert vegetable gardener, just willing to get your hands dirty and have some fun. We have several accomplished gardeners who are eager to share their knowledge with volunteers. We'll be scheduling a garden work "party" in mid to late May to get the beds prepared for planting. Be sure to contact me to volunteer for this rewarding activity.

AWA (Amherst Writers and Artists) Writing in Groups – reflections and an invitation.

Vera Dyck

I remember doing a writing retreat or two at Harcourt, earlier in the Jim Ball era – a group of us gathering to write together for an evening, and then sharing some of our writing aloud. Writing (like other kinds of creative expression – dance, music, visual art) can be a wonderful way to experience Spirit flowing through us and out into the world. Sharing what we create with each other as witnesses can bring that flow full circle into experiences of connection and wholeness.



About 7 years ago I began participating in another kind of writing group, called "AWA writing." Pat Schneider founded AWA a few decades ago with the goal of demystifying writing, helping individuals from marginalized populations to claim their identity as "writers," facilitating writing experiences "that did everything possible to open up voices, and doing absolutely nothing to shut them down." Her beliefs became principals and guidelines for a new

approach to teaching writing. Here are some of them: “A writer is one who writes.” “Writing as an art form belongs to everyone.” If you can tell a story about your day to your friend, you can write. Your writing can bring joy to you and to those who hear your words, regardless of education or training. The craft of writing can be taught in ways that encourage, celebrate and support.

I have been writing all my life, but when I started writing in AWA groups, something new began. Something exciting. I really started to feel that it was true: “I’m a writer!” and to feel the impact of my words, my voice and my stories on others – and of others’ on me. These AWA groups became the high point of my week or month, and my professional goals started to pivot. About 4 years ago I got certified as an AWA group facilitator and I’ve been facilitating writing groups in the AWA model ever since. I’m still a psychotherapist and I now also provide consultation to trauma therapists in the models that I’ve found the most helpful, but I’m slowly moving in the direction of doing more writing, and more facilitating of writing groups.

The writing is therapeutic (though not “therapy”), and while our focus is always on the writing itself, treating it as story or literature, there is also a special kind of support that comes when a group hears each other’s stories, and plays with words together. The unique AWA feedback process is entirely positive. It reminds me of the Lectio Divina practice I learned in spiritual direction with John Butters many years ago. It’s not Scripture we’re sharing, but it can still feel like a spiritual or sacred process, where we pay attention to “what shimmers,” or “what stands out,” or “what works” as others share their fresh, new, just-written words with the group.

Maya Angelou said, “There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you.” I absolutely love facilitating stories in moving from the inside to the outside. I plan to continue with AWA writing groups, developing skills as a writing facilitator with different populations, and eventually, perhaps as I head into retirement from psychotherapy, take AWA writing into a prison, or other places where marginalized people with mental health challenges end up today. In the meantime, I’m doing 2-3 writing groups every year, and welcome anyone interested to contact me about trying one out. In May there is an AWA “Write Around The World” event with many free on-line writing workshops to try out this method. It truly is for everyone.

Warmly, Vera Dyck (vera.dyck@gmail.com) Also check out: <https://amherstwriters.org>



Passages



Myrna Betik passed March 1st



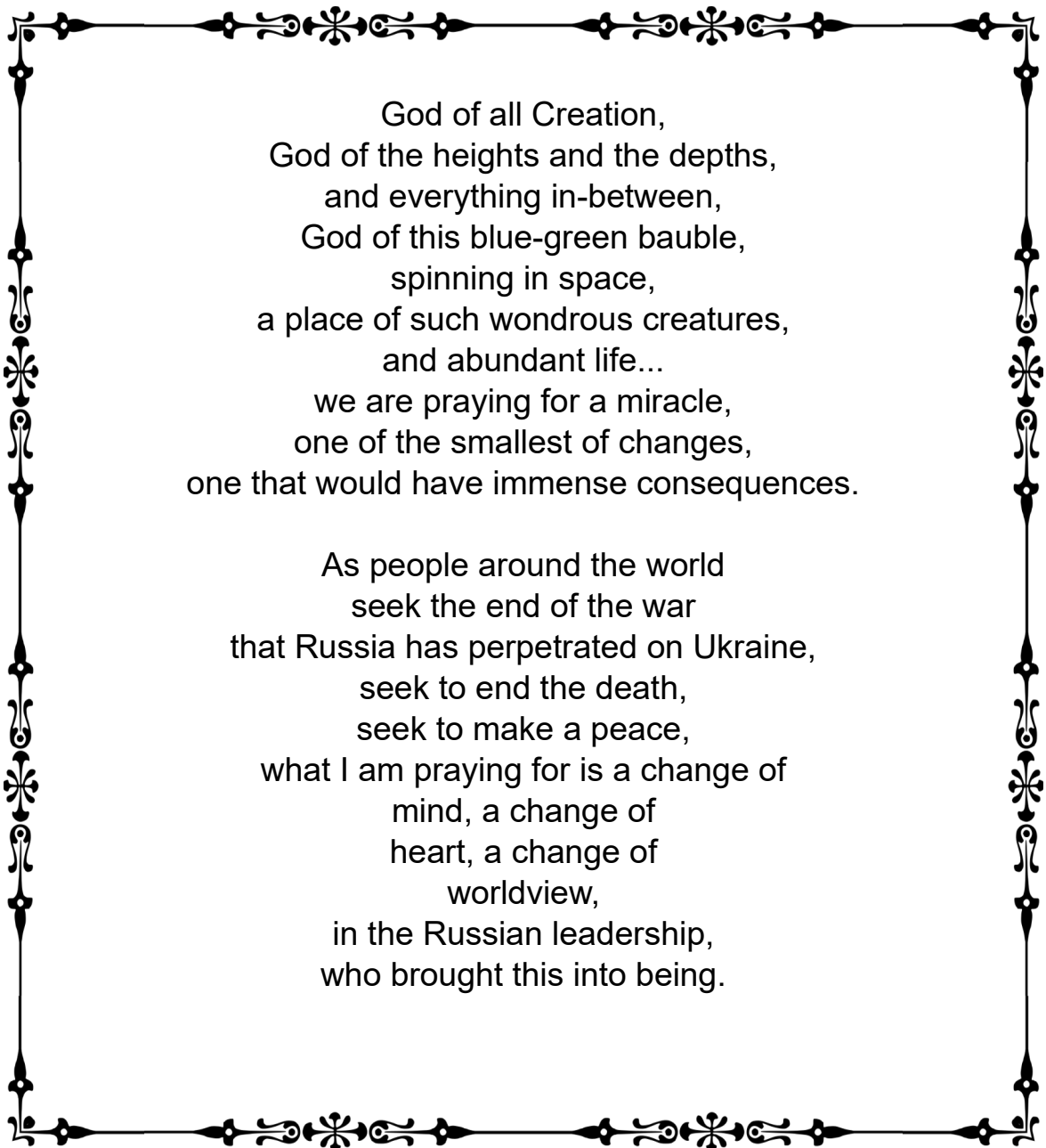
John Betik passed March 3rd



Dorothy Kurtz June 26, 1927 - March 13, 2022



Our Moderator, Richard Bott, has written a prayer for Ukraine.



God of all Creation,
God of the heights and the depths,
and everything in-between,
God of this blue-green bauble,
spinning in space,
a place of such wondrous creatures,
and abundant life...
we are praying for a miracle,
one of the smallest of changes,
one that would have immense consequences.

As people around the world
seek the end of the war
that Russia has perpetrated on Ukraine,
seek to end the death,
seek to make a peace,
what I am praying for is a change of
mind, a change of
heart, a change of
worldview,
in the Russian leadership,
who brought this into being.