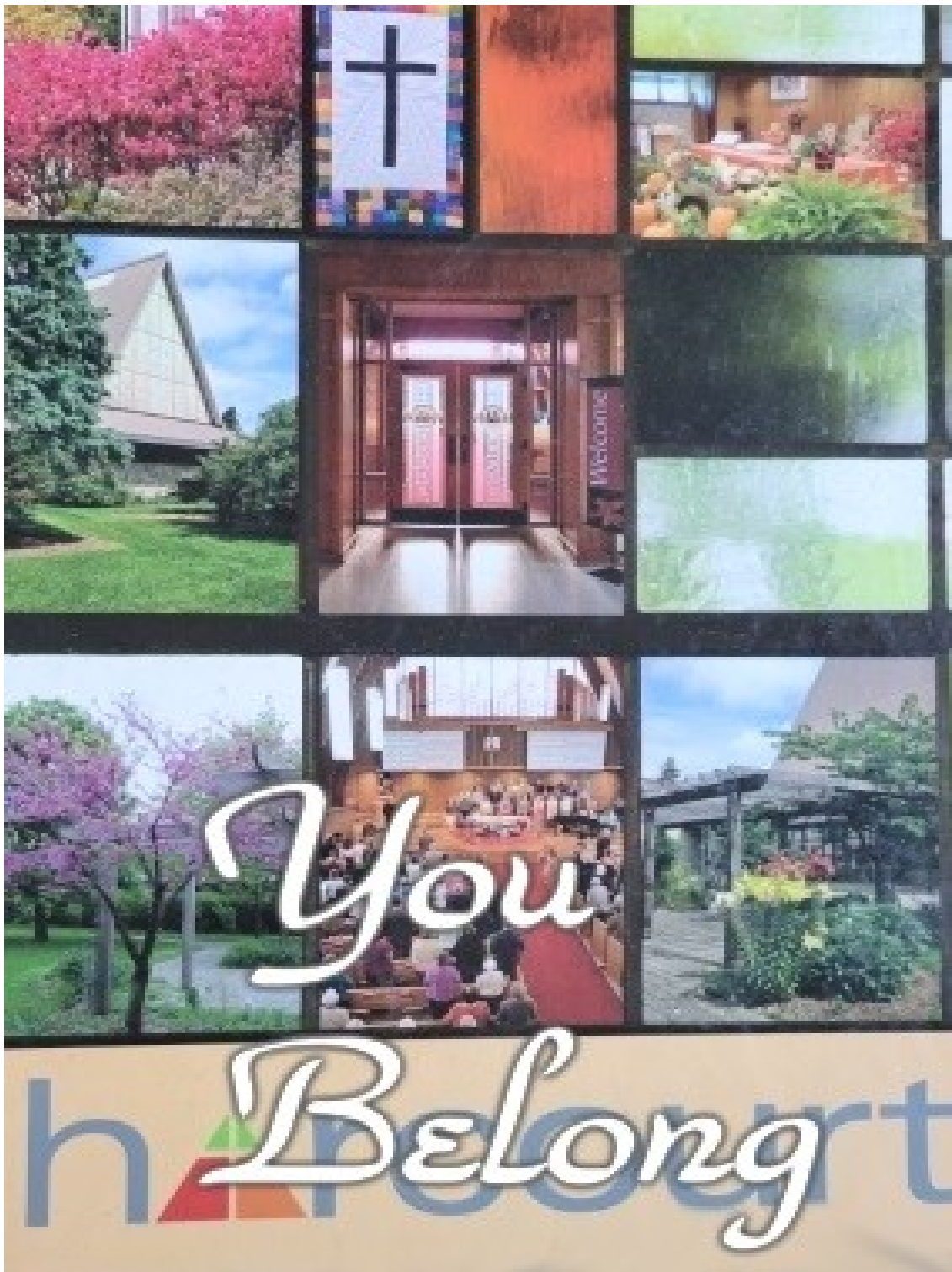


The Harcourt Herald October 2022

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

The Ministers: The People
with
Reverend John Lawson,

Pamela Girardi:
Manna Lead Coordinator,

Director of Music Ministry:
Alison MacNeill

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

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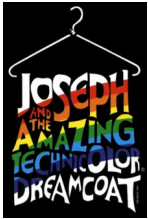
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From the Desk of the Editor

In 1985, when we bought our dream house on Wolfond Crescent, we decided that we wanted to walk to church, and thus changed from Dublin United Church to Harcourt Memorial United Church. In an interview with the then intern Karen Hilfmann Milson, she said that the best way to belong to a Church community is to join in one of their activities.

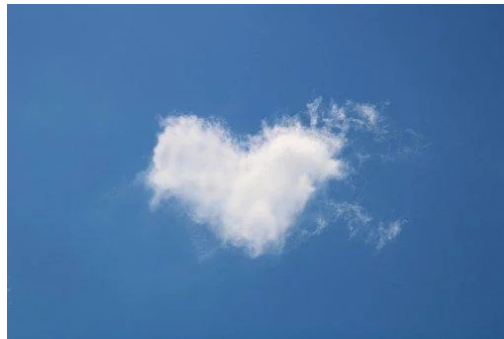


At that time Alison McNeil was preparing for the musical “Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat,” and so I joined the production prop-department under the leadership of Mark Sears. The rest is history! I have probably been in almost every committee Harcourt had to offer. I was even Chair of Council for a year!

And that is what I like about the Harcourt community: it welcomes people who get involved with small (or not so small) tasks, it accepts of what people bring, and it thrives on their creativity.

So, here we are, the Harcourt Herald functions, now more than ever in these Covid times, as one of the important communication vehicles among the Harcourt community.

In this issue, people have shared with us their love and their dreams for Harcourt, as well as their sense of loss, as Harcourt continues to change as it adapts to new times.



Minister's Message Harcourt Herald - October 2022 Rev John Lawson

We hear the little phrase “get back to normal” a lot these days. Since the pandemic overturned our lives, we are so happy when we can “get back to normal” with a family reunion, or an in-person concert or a theatre production. We all find ourselves rejoicing when we are able – even in simple ways – to get back to what had been taken for granted – normal.

But I think we are also realizing that some “normal” is not coming back. Some things are permanently changed.

Curiously this epiphany occurred to me on the beach – a kind of parable if you will.

We have a trailer near the shores of Lake Huron in Southampton. I have walked and swam and grown to love this beach every year since I was a teenager. I have watched the water rise and fall over the years. But a couple of years ago the water was exceptionally high; we had a difficult time trying to find a place to lay down a beach towel between the water and the eroding sand dunes. Massive amounts of sand were moved.

Over the past couple of years, the water has now receded to a “more normal” level. And yet, the beach itself hasn't returned to normal. Where there had previously been only sand, now there is gravel with small stones. Furthermore, the part of the beach that had been only a sliver of sand is now a massive and wide stretch of sand. The old beach that we knew is gone and is not coming back. This is the new normal.

I realized, as the ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus said, that the only normal is change.

I think we are coming to sense what a few of these changes might be. Here are a couple thoughts.

Some folks are never coming back to Sunday morning “traditional” worship. Rather, some will gather online. Others will gather in a more relaxed and informal way with Manna. And then there will be those who tune into our live stream or YouTube recorded service – some of whom we might not ever know. We now have to redefine the way we understand “congregation” and how we might find new ways to build community.

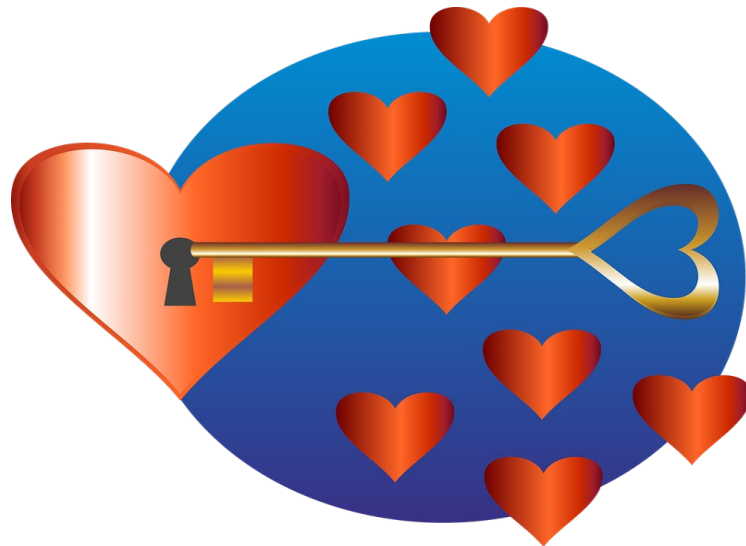
Another change will be that, in the depth of winter when the snow is blowing outside, we probably won't be tramping through the snow to get to a meeting at the church. Instead, we will log onto Zoom in the comfort of our warm home to join the meeting. For some who found getting out difficult, this will now enable them to participate. We might also be able to

draw upon the expertise of others from places around the world and bring them into our meetings as well. How might these newer forms of technology enable us to widen the circle and invite voices we don't typically hear to the "virtual table"?

The thing about all these changes is that we could never have dreamed them up or planned for them. They happened and we learned to adapt. New possibilities were opened up.

It seems to me that the invitation for us now is to have an open heart and to use our imagination to embrace new possibilities and opportunities raised within this changing landscape. To see it not simply as a loss and a diminishment but as God's new opportunity.

It is curious to me why often we think of God as unchanging. Of course, God's love and faithfulness do not change. But surely in an ever-evolving universe, God delights in the unfolding of creation. God is not unmoved by being in a relationship with us and with creation. Maybe we, too, will learn to delight in the unfolding and the new possibilities that come with change?



Council News Lorraine Holding, Council Chair

What is most important to you about belonging to the Harcourt community? Council is very aware about the many aspects that individuals value about being part of Harcourt. Most of all, we know that connecting with others is important, especially through worship and groups where we work together to explore and carry out our forms of ministry.



Our September 21st Council meeting focused on four components that reach across Harcourt and are important to our future.

- **Re-entry Planning Group Update:** With changing public health guidelines in Ontario, Harcourt is shifting to “masking is now optional”. However, we encourage everyone, or any group, who wishes to wear a mask for their own safety and comfort, to do so with our full support. Other best practices are included elsewhere in this newsletter. We look forward to seeing more people connecting through Harcourt activities.
- **Stewardship Coordination and Leadership:** We continue to consider the Financial Recovery Report and some strategies to emphasize the importance of Harcourt’s need for more people to contribute their time, talent and financial support. Watch and listen for increased communication about sustainability for the future. We will be recruiting people for small task groups, such as one to focus on fundraising ideas and implementation.
- **Transition Planning and Work:** We appreciate the leadership of the Champions for our visioning priorities, and the report from their first meeting. Details are in this newsletter. Our Liminal Series (September 11 to October 2) has provided a focus to move forward on our journey, through “intentional lament to joyful preparedness for what lies ahead”. The Transition Steering Team set the wheels in motion to include these “next near steps” this fall.

Another focus will be led by a small strategy group to review our staffing model and emerging needs.

- **Guelph United Ministries (GUM):** Sustainability issues face each partner in GUM. On September 27, a meeting of ministerial staff and members of each governing body focused on the impact of COVID-19 on our ministries and GUM, and how GUM will move forward in terms of leadership.

As we move through the next few weeks and anticipate the arrival of Rev. Kate Ballagh-Steeper, we continue to plan, implement and move forward. Harcourt’s success depends on **people’s energy and financial support**. We need to know that folks who receive e-weekly and

the *Harcourt Herald* want Harcourt to continue as a community of faith. As you are able, please share your gifts, time and activities to live out our mission as God’s people through our visioning priorities: building partnerships, spiritual life, worship and supporting the growth of Manna. “Turning Toward New Opportunities” and “Welcoming the New” in our Liminal Series invite us to be active participants on Harcourt’s journey. Watch for upcoming opportunities and tasks that call **you** to participate and strengthen our connections.

With faith and hope.



Update from the Re-entry Planning Group Megan Ward



With the changing epidemiology of COVID 19 in Canada and Ontario, the public health guidance is also evolving. Specifically, there is now a high level of immunity from both natural infection and immunization. As a result, public health restrictions are reducing and at Harcourt we are recommending the following guidelines:

- Get your booster of COVID vaccine according to the schedule
- Continue with good respiratory infection practices including hand sanitizing and good ventilation
- Stay home if you’re ill
- **Masking is now optional** but we encourage everyone who wishes to wear a mask for their own safety and comfort to do so with our full support



The Re-entry Planning Group will continue to monitor the COVID 19 situation and will update these recommendations as necessary.

Moving Forward on our Journey Kathy Magee

In September "Harcourt's Champions" met. We get a chuckle out of that name. We are six people who have agreed to lead task groups to put into action all the hard work you, the Harcourt community of faith, have done to identify our four priorities:



Steve Pierce for **Building Partnerships**

Andre Auger for **Spiritual Life**

Dan Ganesh for **Worship**

Merrill Pierce and Pamela Girardi for **Supporting Growth of Manna**

My role is to help with the integration of our themes. We were grateful to have Lorraine Holding, our inspiring Chair of Council and member of the Steering and Transition team join us for our meeting. We recognize the importance of sharing with you the encouraging progress that is being made.

Building Partnerships

Peter Gill, Mark Sears, Mary Harding, and Gerry Neufeld have agreed to work with Steve in bringing this theme to life. They have met with Kendra Fry and Dave Harder, associates with the Trinity Centres Foundation. This group has expertise working with churches in developing partnerships, with the church as a community hub. The team's work has resulted in a Community Hub Project proposal. Council approved the proposal and final contract negotiations with Trinity Centres Foundation are complete and the project will begin in October. Integrating Harcourt's objectives, vision and mission into a community hub plan is an integral part of the process. There will be opportunities for our community of faith to have questions answered, to listen and be listened to. This is an important and exciting step in realizing one of the priorities you have identified as key to Harcourt's journey into a future filled with experimentation and learning. Stay tuned!



Spiritual Life

Andre and the Spiritual Life committee devoted part of their annual committee retreat to discerning how best to support, enhance and enrich the spiritual life of our community of faith. In addition to the many opportunities this committee currently provides for the community of faith to explore spirituality, "next near steps" in five areas of focus for this theme were identified.



1. The Spiritual Life Committee will work with the Worship Committee and the ministerial team on the Liminal series for September to help the congregation grieve the loss of a past which will not return and prepare with joy and enthusiasm for a new and unknown future.
2. In the medium term, the Committee will seek to discern new ways to utilize the digital world, social media and YouTube for fresh opportunities for spiritual growth within Harcourt and the wider community.
3. Over the next few years, the Committee plans to offer informal opportunities for each Harcourt task group and committee to reflect on its work in the context of living in and creating “thin moments, times and places.” The Committee would use storytelling as their main approach, with leading questions designed to focus on the specific missional task of each group.
4. Also in the medium term, the Committee will offer opportunities for individuals to share with the congregation experiences of “thin moments, times and places,” in a manner similar to the “Awakening” series of a few years ago.
5. The Spiritual Life Committee will work with the Worship Committee and the ministerial team on creating moments in the worship services that encourage the experience and the sharing of “thin moments, times and places”.



Supporting the Growth of Manna

Merrill and Pamela outlined seven goals that will advance this priority.

1. Working toward long term sustainable leadership. Recognizing the demands on families' time and energy, the focus will be to encourage Manna participants to assume leadership roles for small, time-limited projects. By drawing in more Manna members, there will be increased ability to share tasks and responsibilities.
2. Creating inviting physical space, attending particularly to what is welcoming for children. Flexible seating will greatly enhance the ability to do so.
3. Youth Engagement. Once a month adults, children and youth will have separate sessions. It is important that Youth have their specific needs addressed, particularly their strong interest in social justice issues.
4. Social Justice Learning and Action. Monthly, there will be an Outreach Sunday. The whole Harcourt community of faith will be invited to join with Manna and "do good work in the community". Housing, food insecurity, reconciliation, and climate are primary areas of focus.

5. Community Care. Already a strong element of the Manna community, this model of pastoral care will be supported and enhanced.

6. Experiment and Grow as a Church Community. The objective is to meaningfully engage those currently connected to Manna, and draw in others, particularly those who might not otherwise consider a church connection.

7. Manna Choir. Plans are in place to have an ad hoc Manna choir. There will be no regular commitment, just a willingness to show up and sing. Shannon Kingsbury has agreed to lead this vibrant aspect of Manna worship.

Worship

Dan and the worship committee have done an incredible job over the past two and a half years. The amount of "pivoting" they have done would make the rest of us dizzy! With our new minister set to be in place November 1st, the Worship committee is excited about working with a complete ministerial team. In the meantime, they are working very hard on "next near steps" for the Worship theme. Recognizing the importance of lament in the ability to look forward, and working with the Spiritual Life committee, the Liminal Series is in place for September. Hybrid forms of worship will continue to adapt and evolve. The Spiritual Life committee will be an ongoing resource for the Worship committee. Opportunities to work with our sister churches in GUM will be explored and encouraged.



A small group will be gathered to analyze the comments from the recent survey to develop a worship model. Evaluation will be based on listening and discerning what is important to people as we journey forward in uncertain times. Dan is eager to draw in people who are not currently involved in worship planning but feel called to explore this fascinating and essential part of Harcourt's life.

Now What?

As you can see, it was a productive, Spirit-filled meeting. There are many points of intersection and threads connecting the four priorities. We will work together to ensure that each theme is supported, connected and moving forward. We will be keeping you informed through the E-Weekly, the Harcourt Herald, the Manna Weekly and over coffee or lemonade in the Harcourt Café on Sunday mornings.



We need YOUR interest, energy and input. Which of the themes is closest to your heart? Please consider joining the priority group that excites your passion or at least triggers your

curiosity. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions or would like more information (bkmagee@rogers.com or 519-821-3575).

In the words of Paul in his letter to the church in Corinth in a Liminal time....

*Now there are varieties of gifts but the same Spirit
And there are varieties of service but the same Lord
And there are varieties of activities but the same God who activates all of them in everyone.
To each is given manifestations of the Spirit for the common good.
1Corinthians12: 4-7*

Let us join our gifts, service and activities to live out our mission as God's people in building partnerships, deepening our spiritual life, creating meaningful worship and supporting the growth of Manna.

Food for the Journey Bill Chapman, for the Spiritual Life Committee



I love picnics!

Remember this cartoon character Yogi Bear and his buddy BooBoo!

Remember the trouble Yogi generated for the "Ranger" by stealing picnic baskets? I wonder what he liked the best? Sandwiches filled with ham and cheese? Tuna sandwiches or the makings for hamburgers or hot dogs? Fruit? Or the luscious cakes, pies or cookies for dessert?

When you think of a picnic what resonates the most for you? Whatever your memories a picnic brings back the sights, sounds, smells and feelings of a day spent out of doors, travelling with family and friends, exploring new places and enjoying the journey and the meal.

A picnic is food for a journey. Physical food, bringing nutrition and energy for our bodies.

But there are other journeys we embark on that require a different kind of food. Different nourishment to keep us energized for the tasks we engage in. One of these journeys is our spiritual one. We are spiritual beings on a journey of discovery in this physical world, learning about love and grace, pain and joy, giving and receiving, delight and sorrow and like our physical bodies requiring nourishment on a physical journey, our spiritual selves also need nourishment.

What will we pack in our picnic basket to feed our souls?

For me I need a variety of things.

I need awareness of the Holy One who is travelling with me so I can give and receive grace and wisdom. I must be aware of the presence of the Holy One journeying with me. That awareness allows me to think out loud in prayer and to whisper the quiet concerns of my heart when I need to have someone listen.

I journey with Scripture. Some of it stored in my mind and some written so I can reflect and meditate and dialogue with the words and ideas written and reflected on by countless generations of fellow wanderers before me sharing their thoughts and ideas.

I journey with my eyes on creation around me, the creator's first "Bible" written in green and bright colours and blue to reveal the joy and whimsy and creativity of the 'giver of all good gifts'.

In my picnic basket I also pack the spiritual gift of knowledge and intelligence that have been given and entrusted by the Holy One. I can ask questions, puzzle through answers, struggle with unknowing, challenge my own understanding and grow.

And I pack in some friends. Those I trust to allow me to be me. Those who want the best for me and will push and challenge me to be all the Holy One wants me to be. Friends to laugh with, cry with, love and be angry with. Friends who are also spiritual beings who will share their own journeys and enrich mine.

I love picnics. I love to sample all the delights I



pack a picnic basket, launch into new places and have packed, physical baskets and spiritual ones.

Why I Go to Harcourt Dave Hume

This is an interesting exercise to put my thoughts and reasons down on paper. There are lots of different reasons, it turns out. First, a little background. I was raised to go to church. My father was an Elder in St. Paul's United Church in Milton. He told me once that he had been on a church board for 50 consecutive years. My mother was a staunch member of the WMS (Women's Missionary



Society). They hardly ever missed going to church. I went to Sunday School and Church Young People's (albeit in Lowville United Church because I went to high school in Burlington, rather than in Milton, so many of those young people rode the school bus with me). My late brother Gordon, when I was growing up, was a Divinity Student at the University of Toronto and served several charges in Ontario before he worked in the United Church Head Office as the Director of New Church Development for the United Church. Gordon and I had lots of good discussions about religion, his studies and, later, his work for the United Church.

When I was an undergraduate student at the Ontario Agricultural College, I was honoured to receive a Danforth Fellowship to spend some time in St. Louis and then at a Christian camp in Michigan. On my return to Guelph, the campus chaplain, Padre Young, asked me to speak about the experience in War Memorial Hall. I distinctly remember that a young woman named Jean



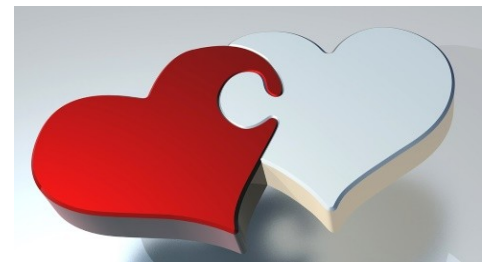
Fuller was there and she later became my wife and the mother of our children. She, like me, came from a family with a strong church background. It seemed natural that, after we returned from Iowa and my Ph.D. studies, that we would go to Harcourt because we lived on James Street, which was nearby.

Both of us got involved in Harcourt activities. Jean has spent a lot of time helping, particularly with the Margaret Rose Christian Fellowship. I was church treasurer for a few years and served a total of about a dozen years on the Property Committee and as a member and Chair of Harcourt Council. One of the things I learned was that I felt better about myself when I was also feeling that I was able to contribute my time and help Harcourt thrive.

What I value in belonging to the Harcourt community

Sandy Middleton

When we came to Guelph in 1966, we immediately began looking for a church home. Thankfully, it did not take us long to find Harcourt, which immediately appealed to us with its proximity, its familiar form of worship, its music, its liberal and progressive theology, its concern for social justice and its open friendly atmosphere.



Over the ensuing 56 years, Harcourt has become an important part of our lives in so many ways. In addition to providing regular weekly worship, it has been the church in which we have raised our children, where we have found comfort, support and solace in times of trouble, joyful celebration at weddings and baptisms and community support at times of tragedy, for example the South Asian tsunami.

But what makes Harcourt so special? In a nutshell, it has been the combination of its timely and relevant service to the community, provided by the people who make up our fellowship and the caring ministerial leadership.

Through my long involvement with the life of the church, I have been privileged to know and work with many remarkable individuals. Harcourt is so richly blessed with talented and experienced people from all walks of life, many of whom are prepared to willingly share their talents in leadership. Harcourt is a vibrant, respectful and egalitarian community. I am grateful for the commitment of our hard-working council and its various committees, our trustees, our small group leaders and the various bakers, musicians, knitters, quilters, sale organizers and gardeners, all of whom contribute so much to the life of Harcourt. As a result, I can find the resources within the church to meet my needs, whether it be for silent meditation and reflection on my faith, uplifting community worship or joyous laughter over a shared meal.

But without a clear understanding of its mission, the above would have little of lasting value to offer. It is with gratitude and respect that I espouse Harcourt's commitment to the identified core values and stated purpose "to welcome and strengthen in community all who wish to serve God's world and follow the way of Jesus." With such a foundation, Harcourt has provided the opportunity for me to engage meaningfully with fellow travellers on life's journey, as together we worship and explore our faith and spirituality. Such engagement has helped me deepen my understanding of what it means to be Christian and led me into a closer relationship with God as I try to follow the way of Jesus in an increasingly complex world.

Thank you Harcourt for enriching my life in so many ways.

Adapting to Pandemic Challenges Larry Smith

I'm a people person! COVID has taught me that.

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

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



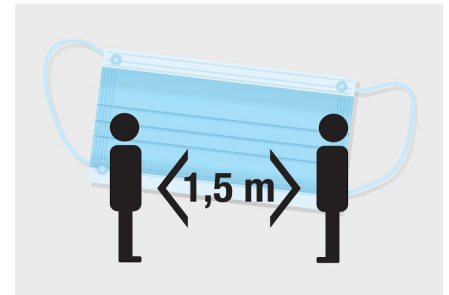
If this pandemic had happened even 10 years ago, it would have been a hugely different story with far more challenge. It would have been so

much further to go scientifically to create vaccines within a year and a significant leap of technology to get us to the point of online shopping and individually using computers and software to connect audibly and visually with each other regularly.

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

Katie and I live in the Village by the Arboretum which is normally such a gregarious place, but now when we walk, one person or group takes the sidewalk and the steps out onto the road as they pass by. It's going to take some time to work past that kind of behavior when things return to a 'new normal'. And we are not able to acknowledge birthdays, anniversaries or goodbyes in a very meaningful way.

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



We do acknowledge our medical and healthcare people, from the front-line workers who directly face and treat ill patients daily to those who are plan and are organizing our huge vaccination process, all of this happening on a never-done-this-before basis. Such remarkable cooperation!

Despite the limitations being placed over our shoulders by this pandemic, we are truly blessed to be surrounded by such able, loving and caring people.

Belonging to Harcourt Andre Auger

Three years ago, if you had asked me what it meant for me to belong to Harcourt, I would have had no trouble answering. I belonged to the 9 AM worshipping community, which fed my soul. I also worshipped at Manna, full of youthful energy and novel ways of worshipping and

learning about our faith. I was a member of “Explorations in Progressive Christianity,” which fed my mind and surrounded me with fellow seekers. And I was an active member of the Spiritual Life Committee, which gave me my purpose.

Now, almost three years into the pandemic, I have to think a lot harder. I still belong to the last two, but I haven’t attended Manna for a long time and no one even talks about the 9 AM service anymore. It’s as if it had never existed. I now find myself asking questions I would never have thought of asking two years ago: In what ways can Harcourt still be my worshipping community?

The Internet, Zoom and Livestream or pre-recorded services made an answer to the question even more challenging. The question began niggling at me when I became aware of how many people had taken to “watching” worship the way we watch any other TV show – almost like a form of spiritual entertainment. How many people have decided that it is so much more convenient to “watch” worship in PJs or with a cup of coffee, or when it’s convenient? Does that strengthen or weaken the notion of Harcourt as a worshipping community? I can remember a friend of mine saying that watching a worship service online is like watching a banquet take place without tasting any of the food. I like that. (But that only got me to ask even deeper questions: Was worship ever akin to a banquet? I’d need to ask myself what food was I actually partaking in when I still “went to church”? For sure, the 9 AM experience was far closer to the notion of “banquet” than anything else.)

So I finally realized: I’m starved! And I’ve been starved for a long time. My soul has not been fed in the way it needs... I want to worship! I want to belong to an intentional worshipping community. I want to worship God with others who want to do the same, who are willing to engage in the worship, and who share their experience of it. To put not too fine a point to it, I want a return of the 9 AM service, the closest I’ve ever come to belonging to a worshipping community.

What do I mean by “worship” anyway? The word “worship” is derived from the Old English *weorþscipe*, or “worth-ship,” meaning to attribute worth to something or someone. Thus, worship is an act which a community – or an individual – renders to someone deemed worthy of it. Worship is therefore in the first instance an act for the benefit of the One a community thinks deserves it. It is not an act designed for us! When I say I want to worship, I say that I want to take part in a collective act of giving praise and adoration to God. Moreover, worship is a participatory, communal act, not something we watch. I want to play an active role in any form of communal worship. I don’t want to sit there watching some performance unfold. (Of course, there’s the singing...)

So where do I start in describing what I long for, what I thirst and hunger for? In the first instance, worship means that I – and we – consider God praiseworthy. That implies that I/we have had experience of God’s greatness, presence, awesomeness. When was the last time you

attended a “worship service” where you experienced the awesomeness of God? Or where you heard someone share their experience of the awesomeness of God? Or where you truly felt that you were participating in a worshipping community? (The 9 AM service created the “Holy Listening Circle,” which became for me an integral part of the worship experience, because we shared with each other what we were feeling and thinking as a result of the experience.)

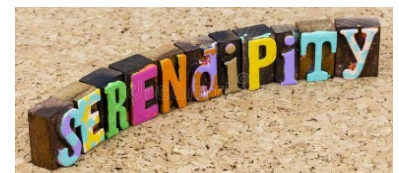
If I hunger so much, why do I still belong to Harcourt? I belong to Harcourt because I continue to hope that some day we will (re-)learn to engage in a true communal act of worship. Where we can remind ourselves of God’s awesomeness. Where we can be (sometimes painfully) aware of our own faults and limitations. Where we can reflect on our experience of God and share it. Where we can support each other in becoming a true “people of God,” by emulating the life Jesus invites us to have in the midst of Empire. And where we can recommit ourselves to being God’s people, then send each other out to live as true followers of Jesus.

In my mind, with apologies for those who prefer the traditional worship – now more honestly called “Music and Message” - Harcourt has the best chances of this happening if it has the courage to revive its commitment to the more intimate, contemplative, participatory worship it once offered at 9 AM, and what it is experimenting with at Manna.



Do you believe in serendipity? Lynn Hancock, a.k.a. “The Bubble Lady”

Of the synonyms offered by Merriam-Webster for “serendipity”, the ones that resonate with me at this time are: “blessing, godsend, opportunity and windfall”.



In the winter of 2013, I was aware that something was missing in my life. Even though I was very busy with volunteer work, I knew I was stuck emotionally and I found myself asking the Universe for help. I needed access to a much bigger picture and

perspective. So I asked for help; help from God, Holy Mystery, the Universe. The following will hopefully help you to understand how I choose to believe my prayers were answered. I asked and I received.

On Easter weekend of 2013 I sang in the Humbercrest United Church Choir on Good Friday. We sang a Requiem for choir, organ and instrumentalists. When I woke up on Saturday, I decided to go for a drive. I didn't want to organize anything, call anybody. Just drive with a possible destination of the beaches in the east end of Toronto. When I drove in to the parking lot of the Boardwalk café, I was attracted to two spectacular kites in the air; one purple, one fuchsia. Yes. I still remember the colours. As I approached the two adults at the base of the kites, I recognized the woman. What were the odds? Her parents knew my parents at Humbercrest U.C. After chatting a while, she said: "You should try bubbling". **Opportunity?** Her kite partner had a set in his vehicle and off I went. I decided to explore more parks in Toronto that summer. I heard more "wows" that summer than I had heard in 31 years of teaching; 30 of those years in the elementary panel. What was missing in my life? Apparently Joy. Inspired by the reactions of others, I decided to set an intention of letting go. When I received an email from a friend notifying me that her father's funeral service would be at Three Willows Church in Guelph in September, I made plans to attend. The service was on a Saturday and I signed my lease at the White House Apartment building on the following Tuesday. What if all that letting go created the space for something new?! After spending 60 years in Toronto, I was ready to embrace change. **Godsend?** Did I have family in Guelph? No. Did I have friends in Guelph? No. Was I scared? No. I was fearless. Was this an **opportunity?** Absolutely. And I embraced the change. I now choose to believe that this opportunity was a gift to help advance my soul's journey. I was ready and Spirit knew it. I felt supported and I experienced a smooth transition. During one of 9 trips to Guelph in December, I decided to locate one of the United Churches on Dean Avenue. The warm reception, hospitality and welcoming on that day (mid-week) was all I needed. I could submit an entire article on all the boxes checked on that one visit. I knew I had found my new church home.



When I heard of the series being recommended for September, I was inspired by Bill Lord's support and leadership. I was inspired by his apparent inspiration. When I realized that the first Sunday in the series would be on September 11th, I took note. Interesting. Then the world was informed of the end of the reign of Queen Elizabeth. The end of an era. Queen Elizabeth experienced her last breath within hours of inviting the newly elected Prime Minister to form a government. The end of an era indeed. Tributes are pouring in from around the world as people grieve their loss. As the Harcourt community is invited to reflect on "Grieving Loss and Embracing Change", we are obviously not alone. Based on the constant "Breaking News", folks around the world are grieving loss. How many are looking forward to embracing change?





I could not have imagined the blessing, godsend, opportunity and windfall that “bubbling” would offer. I continue to be amazed by the gifts of Spirit these last nine years. I have now met thousands of people in public parks. I have been blessed to witness deeply personal stories from total strangers. Folks who have inspired me by their reactions. People soothed and calmed by the bubbles themselves and the experience of bubbling. People who have suffered from brain injuries, car accidents, P.T.S.D., concussion. Bubbles released and set free to morph, be carried by updrafts, bounce off the water. **Windfall?** Asked about the secret to bubbling? I respond, it’s all about the wind. What is the wind but the breath of God? “Wow” says it all. Wonder of wonders. What else can you say? Words at times fail to capture the essence of phenomena like the Northern Lights in Northern Saskatchewan, a rainbow at Ayers Rock/Uluru in Australia. For me, I will ALWAYS remember that I was introduced to bubbling on Easter weekend. **Serendipity?**

What if we, as a Harcourt community of faith, need to take this time to grieve our losses in order to embrace change? God knows what blessings, opportunities await when we ask. What could we receive?!

Join us at Everdale Farm for our Community Harvest Day! Pamela Girardi, for Manna

On Sunday October 30th, Harcourt is getting together to pick vegetables at Everdale Farm for our Community Harvest Day. Everdale Farm is growing over \$100,000 of fresh organic food to be given to local organizations as part of the effort to address food insecurity in our region.

In late 2020, 1 in 7 Guelph residents reported living in a food insecure household. Since then many of our local organizations that provide emergency food, such as Chalmers, have seen an increase in demand during the pandemic and as a result of higher food costs.



Harcourt knows that it takes a community to feed a community. We grow fresh produce in our garden and orchard for Chalmers guests. This year we also grew vegetable seedlings for the West Willow Village community garden. Harvesting together at Everdale is another way we can support one another. The food we harvested is being distributed to the Shelldale Farm Park, Guelph United Way, Second Harvest/Food Rescue,

East Wellington Community Services, Orangeville Food Bank, and the Indigenous Food Security group at Southwest Ontario Aboriginal Health Access Centre.

Last year at the farm Manna harvested carrots. We were provided with gloves, tools, bins and knee pads/kneeling cushions. We had a great afternoon chatting and picking. The ground had been loosened for us so the work was simpler. No experience was needed. Even our littlest helpers were great harvesters! When we got tired we were welcomed into the barn for some snacks and drinks.



This year we will be at the farm on Sunday October 30th from 1 to 5pm. This is enough time to harvest lots of food for community members in need, take some well-deserved breaks, and enjoy the day on a beautiful farm. We know some of us may grow tired faster than others or have other needs. Please know that you can come to harvest for the amount of time that works for you and rest and leave when you need to.

It will be a meaningful and fun afternoon - you may want to invite friends and family to come and join!

Watch for a sign up in the e-weekly during the month of October or visit our sign up information page here. <https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/community-harvest-days-2022-tickets-397135963357?fbclid=IwAR32rj-1ocMZRdulWqWdgGNNRfxVjCE9-SrMir9XBphpoqCdbI4GFAwH3U4>

If you have any questions, please contact me at yourweeklymanna@gmail.com.



Reflecting on the Queen Jane McNamee

After her recent death, I spent some time reading about Queen Elizabeth and her life. The papers were full of praise and some amazing details. I read as many as I could. Elizabeth

was important to me as my Queen, but also as someone I had known all my life. She was someone I felt I had grown up with as a girl in England during WW II.



The early photos of her with her sister during WWII were literally brought home to me. They were on the daily evening newspaper my father brought back from London, after his work there. In particular there was one of her in a land girl uniform which is an image I remember well. I know I thought if she could train to refit trucks, so could I! There must be other women of my age who might have thought the same thing, and will miss her inspirational leadership.

Recently because of her death, the newspapers were full of details about our late Queen and her life. I found some details which caught my interest as particularly interesting. On one occasion I was delighted to read that she chose her accessories to match the occasion. For instance when she was meeting Donald Trump for the first time, she chose to wear a broach given to her by the Obamas. After England left the European Union she wore a blue and yellow stoned broach to Parliament, the colours of the European Union.

We have seen the Queen many times over the years. Whether she was at a racetrack, in a landau, or arriving at her grandsons William's wedding, or bracing the freezing rain from a festooned barge for her Diamond Jubilee, she was always irreplaceable herself. The slight smile, the special wave, the stable sense of duty that carried her through decades of tumult and trivia!

She will be missed!



The Joymakers Anne Piper



In 1974, a group of women at Harcourt Church, inspired by Jean and Leslie Pipes, got together to learn to play the guitar. Over the next two years other women joined our group - a violinist, a mandolin player, and a banjo player.

Leone Sutor was our musical director. As we increased in our abilities we started to sing as we played, and some women who just liked to sing

joined us. By 1976, we were “on the road” – the “Joymakers” – singing and playing guitar as entertainment at meetings and nursing homes, at least once or twice a month in Guelph and area. Some important events we played at were the County Plowing Match in Teviotdale, the opening of the original Guelph Civic Museum, and the 25th Anniversary of Harcourt Memoria; United Church.

The Joymakers retired in 1981. In 1982, the group still wanted to sing. We changed our name to the “Lightshine Singers” and increased our membership with friends from around the city of Guelph. Gerry Roffey, director of the Children’s Choir at Harcourt was our Director, and Leone Sutor was our pianist. We practised every Wednesday morning at Harcourt and were an outreach group for the church, as we continued to sing around the City. We had two more directors after Gerry, and the, in 2019, Alison MacNeil, Harcourt’s Director of Music, agreed to be our conductor.



And then the Covid virus took over and we could not sing in retirement homes.

Leone Sutor and Anne Piper have been members of both groups since the beginning. In 2022, we managed one rehearsal, and still hope to get together again, as we love to sing and share our music.

Note from the Chancel Committee Barb Friend, Chair

– Thanksgiving 2022

Hard to believe that Thanksgiving is just around the corner! The Chancel Committee is once again decorating the sanctuary for Thanksgiving Sunday. If you are interested in donating towards the purchase of a chrysanthemum and dedicate it in memory of a loved one, please contact Barb Friend.

DEADLINE: Oct 3 2022

Barfriend52@gmail.com

Home: 519-763-5032

Cell: 519-803-5032



P.S. don’t forget to pick up your plant after the service!

“Thank you for your hospitality” – lemonade in the garden Sarah Lowe

Back in the spring I wrote about the importance of Sunday services in keeping me connected to Church. Getting back to “in person” services is a real joy.

Part of the joy is in seeing people, and feeling part of a church community again. During the summer months, volunteers from the choir hosted lemonade for everyone in the Celebration Garden after the services. What a treat to catch up with members and also meet our visitors, including Three Willows friends, old and new!

“Thank you for your hospitality” one of the visitors said, as she left. They were simple words, but meant a lot - a gracious appreciation of Harcourt’s welcome!

I am encouraged that social times such as these are helping re-build our Church community.

Thank you, volunteers from choir, for kick starting social times during the summer months- with lemonade in the garden!



An Interview with Marilyn Whiteley Judi Morris



I took Marilyn Whiteley out for a carriage ride with Tickle while we did this interview. We paused at a cabin while I explained it had once

belonged to Phyllis Oughton, who had been a long time Harcourt member. She took a photo that shows the cabin and the beautiful day it was.

Judi: Marilyn, you have been a long-time member of Harcourt and Women's Spirituality, where I came to know you best. How long have you been associated with Harcourt?

Marilyn: Hugh and I started attending Harcourt early in the fall of 1966, and we joined the church sometime that Fall. After Hugh moved to Guelph that spring, he had "church shopped" and narrowed the choices down to two. Once we were married and I came to Guelph at the end of August, it was pretty easy to choose Harcourt.

Judi: Now that you have told me that, I have to ask you....what was it that made Harcourt an easy choice at that time? And, leading to the theme of this month's Herald. What is most important to you about belonging to the Harcourt community?

Marilyn: It was immediately clear that members of the Harcourt congregation weren't just passive recipients of a Sunday morning sermon. They were lively people who took their faith seriously, and that led them to study, to participate in social action, to deepen their spiritual lives, etc. And that is still what is most important to me about the Harcourt community.

Judi: During that period, you have worn a plethora of hats. Can you tell us of your other involvements within the Harcourt community?

Marilyn: Yes, I guess I've worn many hats in 56 years: as Bible study leader; member of pastoral search committee (twice); librarian; director of the children's choir; leader of several "historical" church services (the first one being on John Wesley and Methodism); presbytery representative; trustee (when the Trustee Board was reorganized and there were women on it for the first time!); archivist; member of the two committees that led to Harcourt's becoming an affirming congregation; and writer of the Harcourt history, besides being member of various groups including the choir, the hand-bell choir, and Women's Spirituality.

I may have set the record for the shortest time anyone was a member of the Official Board. I attended one worship committee meeting and one board meeting, but I was directing the children's choir at the time, and it was decided that it was a conflict of interest for me to be on the worship committee, so that ended that.

I was asked once if I would become chair of the Official Board, but at the time I was chairing the United Church's national Committee on Archives and History and was president or something of some other organization, and I had the good sense to say no, I couldn't take on anything more. I was never asked again, and it wouldn't have been a good fit anyway.

Judi: Your August 7th message wowed me ... but I really don't know why. It was a full-on Marilyn Fardig Whiteley message. Your memoir, *Threads of Joy*, clearly shows what I mean by that. You are selling *Threads of Joy* and donating the proceeds to Harcourt. Without giving it all away, can you give us a short resume of the book and explain how anyone can purchase a copy?

Marilyn: The restrictions of COVID gave me the opportunity to reflect and to write, and gradually I realized that I had a message I wanted to share: namely, that when things in my life didn't turn out the way I hoped, I had been graced with amazing new opportunities. Maybe, just maybe, I can help others look for similar grace in their lives.

I'm no entrepreneur, and I've set the price to give me no profit. It bothers me that, although the book has been published through Blurb.ca, it's printed in the U.S., and so the postage for a single copy is ridiculously high. However, if I order at least ten copies at a time, I can get an author's discount and also save on shipping. That's why people can get copies directly from me—at a much better price than if they ordered from Blurb. But of course I've also given a copy to Harcourt's library.

Judi: When members of the congregation were invited to join the choir for the Halleluiah Chorus at Christmas and Easter, "The Whiteleys are all there," I would say to Bill. "This is going to be good." The power & strength of the Whiteley voices always came through distinct and clear. There had to be regular family music in the Whiteley home. Your boys didn't develop that musical ability from Sunday school. Can you tell us of family's music involvement.

Marilyn: I have a strong musical background—I've written about it in the memoir—so it was only natural to have music in our home. And it happened—fortunately—that the Guelph's Suzuki String School opened at just the right time for our sons to study violin. I was the designated "Suzuki parent" to practise and learn along with them, and I was delighted when eventually music became their own thing for each of them, not something forced on them.

Judi: Your book speaks of well-deserved and well-earned opportunities that passed you by because you are female. Your generation required women to perform leaps and bounds better than men to be recognized and acknowledged. The scene is changing, albeit, slowly. What advice might you have for women today?

Marilyn: I have no profound advice. I'd simply suggest that any woman look at what she has already accomplished and gain confidence from that—then press onward.

Judi: Out of your multitude of accomplishments to date, which one lit the biggest fire in you and which one are you most pleased with.

Marilyn: Well, if I may tweak your question a bit, as I look back, I think what gives me greatest satisfaction is to see how I was able to develop an unexpected “career” for myself when the traditional paths seemed closed. I put “career” in quotation marks because it never became a way to make a living! But I think that in a limited way, I was able to make a contribution, and I even gained a measure of respect within my field.

Judi: You have Harcourt’s history along with the United Church of Canada’s. Can you see the value of a corner of the newsletter being dedicated to that?

Marilyn: Interesting thought! Yes, I can see the value.

Judi: The next question of course is, would you be willing to write it up frequently?

Marilyn: Interesting challenge! Why not?

Judi: What would you most like Harcourt’s History to write about you?

Marilyn: I’d like to be seen as someone who helped members of the Harcourt community understand the congregation’s past and gain strength from the knowledge of how positively the congregation has responded to changing circumstances. I believe that knowledge will help us face the future.

Judi: What do you think as a historian, might be the future of the Christian Church?

Marilyn: I have no crystal ball, and I envy those who seem to have profound insights that I lack. But as a church historian, I have seen how the Christian Church has met challenges and adapted to change in the past. I believe that the Christian message is true and is powerful, so I have faith that this will continue to happen, even though I cannot see what forms it may take.



The Gift of Poetry Lisa Browning



I have spent a lot of time not only reading or listening to people’s stories, but also helping them share those stories with the world. Those who know me well will know that I am passionate about story-telling, and believe wholeheartedly the words of Iyanla Vanzant, who said, “When you stand and share your story in an empowering way, your story will heal you and your story will heal somebody else.” But it’s not an easy thing to do, particularly if those stories are about abuse, addiction, or trauma.

The Covid-19 pandemic caused – no, forced – many of us to deal with those traumas, to look at things in our life that we had buried because they were simply too painful to look at. And that’s a good thing, despite the difficulty. There is something very freeing about looking your demons straight in the eye. They lose their power that way ... just like the proverbial monster under the bed.

Sometimes, however, putting the entire story down on paper for others to see is too much of a challenge ... at least at first. So it’s interesting to me that, during the 2 ½ years of “Covid isolation,” I published more poetry anthologies than ever before.

Poetry can be an easier way to get your feet wet in regard to telling your story and speaking your truth. Just like putting your toes in the water rather than jumping off the dock. While the emotion and the raw truth are still present in the poem, the details can be omitted. And poetry is definitely a powerful means of reaching, and empowering, others.

Following are three examples taken from anthologies I published during the Covid pandemic:

Attempt

“I’m glad you’re here,” his mother said,
as he lay quietly in the bed.

“You had us scared. I’d miss you so.”

He closed his eyes and wished she’d go.

The pain he felt was at his core.

He’d questioned what this life was for.

Too tired now to lift his head,

no longer hearing what she said.

Thwarted in his attempt to die,

he’d give this life another try.

Finding Meaning: Poetry for Painful Times, by Beverly Nuttall

Guess Who?

Slipping through
Small soft grains of sand
To clear individual drops of dew
That lie upon the green shores' grass.
Neither rhyme nor reason
Binds me
Wandering I will go, where I want
According to my moods.
Feel me upon your face
You cannot catch me in your hands.
Search and search, playing hide-and-seek
Invisible I am.

Scattered Leaves, by Jaclyn Abrahams

Wildflower

She tried her whole life
To be a rose in the garden.
Until one day she realized
She was a wildflower
And set herself free.

A Wild Hallelujah, by Kelly-Anne Whalen

Do you have a story to tell, but are reluctant to jump off the dock? Perhaps writing a poem or two is the perfect way to get your feet wet!

Two Poems Arlene Davies-Fuhr

Insight among the Grass

Bark cracked and broken, twig is twig.
She doesn't mind. No complaints.
Just how twig is. All knobby
and crooked. Cut off from her life-source.



Some label twig dry and useless
But is she, really?
Twig intuits she has purpose
as yet unrevealed.

Twig lies amid the long, wild grass.
Waiting. Wondering.
What will come next on her journey?
A ladybug visit? Raccoon defecating?
Who knows?

Twig doesn't need to predict
the future. She is here now.
Ready. Accepting. Open.

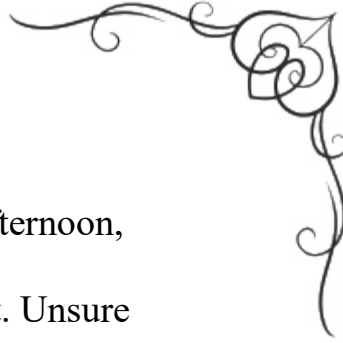
Twig is happy in the place where she
has landed. It is soft. Welcoming.
Inviting her to rest awhile amid
clover and the yellow leaves.

Twig is not alone and for that
she gives thanks. It's a natural
community, not of her choosing
but of her finding.

Twig is at peace.

August 28, 2022
Composed during Forest Church





Stillness

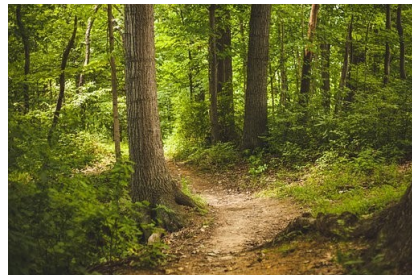
Sultry Sunday afternoon,
white moth flutters
this way and that. Unsure
where to land
in green grass, or upon
warm rock?
Luxuriate in the blessings of
this place
lichen and clover.

Breezes forming
new songs of the universe.
Melodies
enter, merge, enrich the
experience.

Sensual delights if I am
mindful.

Smell. Listen. Pause during
a hectic day.

Arlene Davies-Fuhr
August 28, 2022 During Forest Church in
the Arboretum



Life Events: Passages



Dr. Ruth Tatham passed away on August 24, 2022



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