

The Harcourt Herald November 2022

The Harcourt United Church Community





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 Kate Ballagh-
Steeper,

Pamela Girardi:
Manna Lead Coordinator,

Alison MacNeill:
Director of Music Ministry.

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From the editor's desk

November - a time to remember.

Every year on November 11, Canadians pause in a moment of silence to honour and remember the men and women who have served, and continue to serve Canada during times of war, conflict and peace. We remember the more than 2,300,000 Canadians who have served throughout our nation's history and the more than 118,000 who made the ultimate sacrifice.

And this is also the time to remember those who are/were special to us directly. Those who have nourished us, taught us, supported us – those who have left us as well as those who still care for us.

We do remember them; we consciously revive, bring to our awareness previous events, experiences, or lessons learned. And in sharing with each other those special moments we give thanks.

In this issue, through sharing stories, may we be lifted up - an antidote to the daily news stories which trouble us so much.



Image by Susann Mielke from Pixabay

One of the last flowers in our garden.

Message from Rev. John Lawson for November 2022 Issue Harcourt Herald

It has been a delight and an honour to come out of retirement to offer ministerial leadership in Harcourt's time of transition.

Now I can return to "retirement" to try to figure out what it means for me. (I know that many of you have a full and fulfilling retirement – and I have been inspired by your example.) I retired during the pandemic and so things have turned out somewhat differently than I imagined. (Haven't they done that for us all!) And now again, I'm left with the question, "What now?"

I am of the firm belief that we never retire from our Christian service – in the church but also in God's world. Retirement does mean that I can lay down some responsibilities so I can pick up new avenues of exploration and service. I have had a long-time concern and commitment to environmental issues with a particular concern around the climate crisis. I feel a call from God in that area. But I'm not sure what that looks like. It's time now for new exploration. Two of my heroes are now themselves seniors as well as active and committed environmentalists.

David Suzuki has just announced that he is retiring from his role as host of the *Nature of Things* after 43 years. But at 86 years old he still has fire in his belly to raise concerns and work for solutions to pressing environmental problems. And he has issued a challenge to all seniors – now that we have the time and resources – join the fight for a clean and healthy environment for our children and grandchildren.



Another hero is American journalist, environmentalist and climate activist, Bill McKibben. As he enters his senior years, again he is challenging people of my age (and perhaps your age too) to get involved and step up. He has started a new group called [Third Act](#).

And there are other Canadian seniors getting involved – for example, [Seniors for Climate Action Now](#).

If some of you, who are much wiser and more experienced in your retirement than I have suggestions for me – I would love to hear from you.

Again, I thank you and thank God for this time with you. And I ask God's blessing on you in your new chapter of ministry in partnership with Rev. Kate Ballagh-Steeper.

Council News

Lorraine Holding, Chair



In November, Harcourt begins another new chapter in our community of faith journey. We look forward to the arrival of Rev. Kate Ballagh-Steeper as our minister and various opportunities to get acquainted. Our Welcoming Sunday is on November 6. Please join us for worship at Music & Message or Manna that day. The Harcourt Café will offer refreshment between the services.

Council's October 19th meeting included updates and reflection on several current projects that are important in our path forward.

- We continued discussion related to stewardship and fundraising approaches. We approved a fundraising proposal from Ashley Kizis, a member of Manna, in support of the Chairs Fundraising Initiative. Watch for details in November about her children's puzzle, The Children's Makers Market. We also approved an application (being prepared by Merrill Pierce) to Waterloo Presbytery Extension Council for a second grant to support the purchase of the chairs.

Have you tried the sample chair in the Greeting Area?

- We reflected on the recent four-week Liminal Series and our overall learnings. We are very grateful to the Spiritual Life Committee for their study guideline, and to John Lawson for his worship leadership and messages to help us focus on "Loss, Lament, Opportunities, and Welcoming the Stranger". We also reflected on the Transition Steering Team's mandate and leadership during the past two years. Much has been accomplished.
- We reflected on our participation in the September 27th Guelph United Ministries (GUM) meeting. We discussed our perspective about "hard questions" that each church will bring to the next meeting on November 1.

Also on October 19, the Building Partnerships Task Group hosted the first workshop led by Kendra Fry and Dave Harder, affiliates with Trinity Centres Foundation. Read Steve Pierce's update on our process to explore the possibilities of becoming a community hub.

We invite all Chairs of committees/teams to join our November 19th Council meeting. This will be an opportunity to help orient Kate to Harcourt leaders, priorities, issues and activities.

We continue our path of adaptive change and new perspectives about our ministry in Guelph. We are not alone. God is with us.

With faith and hope

Partnership/Community Hub Project

Steve Pierce

On October 19th, eleven people attended an introductory meeting of the Partnership/Community Hub Project. The meeting was led by Kendra Fry and Dave Harder, from the Trinity Centres Foundation (TCF). Harcourt has signed a contract with TCF to provide resources for this project. Those in attendance represented various groups and interests within Harcourt, including Manna, Worship Committee, Trustees, Council, Transition Steering Committee and Property Committee. Members from the core Task Group were also in attendance.

The purpose of the meeting was to introduce us to a visionary process and to engage in an affinity mapping exercise.

I will give a brief description of a few topics which were raised.

Before asking us a series of questions, the leaders commented on a difference between the kind of questions they would be asking and the kind of questions that churches usually ask. The latter were described as “church” questions. Typical “church” questions are: Where are the children and youth? How do we get more people to join the church? How much does it cost? These questions tend to lead churches to become stuck.

The following questions were asked, requiring those in attendance to respond with single words, which were posted and then grouped into common categories: Who are we on our best day? Who do we want to be? What do we add to our neighbourhood? There were many responses that reflected commonalities with some identified as “outliers”.

During the session, interesting perspectives were presented. One way of looking at our building and location on Dean Ave is to see it as property. The word “property” implies ownership and that the property is mine which allows me to dictate who can enter, when and under what conditions. A different perspective is to consider our building and location as “land” which reflects an Indigenous understanding. Within this perspective, we “hold” the land which implies the idea of a “commons” and “ours” not mine.

The project continues when we meet again in November.

A Word of Thanks

Judy Cimino, John Phelps, Larry Smith, Dan Ganesh, Elizabeth Bone, Megan Ward, Trustees

November 15 is National Philanthropy Day in Canada.

As Trustees for Harcourt, we are witnesses to the many volunteer hours, the acts of kindness, and the gifts small and large which bless us and our community throughout the year. It is a privilege to pause and honour each of these gifts of time, service and resource.

The preamble to the Act creating the National Philanthropy Day is worth reading again because it touches on what many of us feel and value, and what so many in our congregation embody in their own lives.

An Act respecting a National Philanthropy Day

Preamble

Whereas philanthropy is the spirit of giving without expectation of reward;

Whereas Canadians continue to be inspired by the dedication of volunteers who devote themselves to improving the lives of others;

Whereas philanthropy helps build strong communities and active civic participation by bringing people together to serve a common goal;

Whereas countless Canadians have benefited from the help they have received from charitable organizations and caring individuals;

Whereas through the dedicated work of caring individuals and organizations, November 15th has come to be known throughout Canada as National Philanthropy Day;

And whereas it is important to honour all Canadians who demonstrate the spirit of giving by recognizing National Philanthropy Day;

Now, therefore, Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate and House of Commons of Canada, enacts as follows:

the National Philanthropy Day Act.

From each of us to each of you, thank you.

Food for the Journey

Andre Auger for the Spiritual Life Committee

The Editor-in-Chief of the Harcourt Herald (aka my wife) reminded me that it was my turn to write an article for the regular column sponsored by the Spiritual Life Committee, “Food for the Journey.” What was I going to talk about this time?

Then it struck me: why do we even call this column “Food for the Journey”? It implies we’re on some kind of a spiritual journey and that we need sustenance. What journey are we on, and what might constitute sustenance? It seemed as if these were good questions to explore!

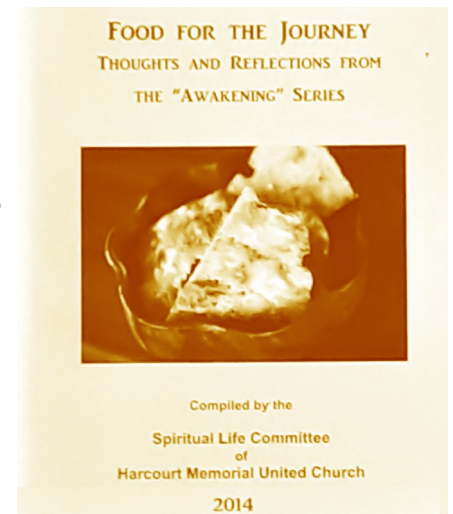
A journey seems to imply a place we’re from and a place we’re going to. It also implies some kind of intention: we’re not wandering, we’re not standing still, and we’re not just going around in circles. We’re going somewhere with a purpose. Does that apply to our faith life?

For some people, spiritual life might best be described as staying in our original spiritual home and enjoying all that we already have. Faith for them is not a journey – it’s a state: we live day by day, by the beliefs we grew up with.

For others, the metaphor of “journey” works better. We start off life with a Sunday School faith. Life happens. We spend a lot of time trying to make sense of our life in terms of our faith. Some of us end up rejecting our original naive faith and craft something more appropriate; some throw it all out as being irrelevant to their understanding of life; and some simply ignore the nagging questions and just get on with what really matters to them.

Sometimes, when we look back after a decade or so of such journeying, we find ourselves with a committed faith that’s miles from where we started. Sometimes it’s a question that we have gone deeper in our relationship with whatever we call “God” than we ever thought we could. Sometimes, we realize that the theology we grew up with no longer works and we have spent time and energy forging new understandings, often at considerable risk. So perhaps for these people, the concept of “journey” is a very real one. For these people there was an original “there” and now there is a “here,” and they have the suspicion that they have not yet “arrived” at a destination – if they ever get to one.

Of course everyone needs sustenance, whether they are enjoying staying close to home or are engaged in an arduous journey. The needs may not be quite the same, though. A trek requires food of much higher caloric value than a leisurely walk around the garden. Food for a



journey is meted out more intentionally, especially if the journey turns out to be more challenging than expected.

So, what “spiritual food” do you need? It might include a deeper relationship with Jesus of Nazareth, via some type of Bible study program. Or perhaps it might involve a commitment to a regular spiritual practice, in order to develop mindfulness. Or perhaps it’s the experience of a pilgrimage to some sacred “thin place,” such as Iona or the Camino. Or perhaps what we need is a week of silent retreat at a monastery. Or a commitment to daily reading from a spiritual master. Or a regular yoga practice. Or a regular walk in nature paying close attention to the sacredness of the environment.

Do you know what sustenance you need? Trying out different spiritual diets is one way. Checking with spiritual friends you trust is another. Of course you can participate in a week-long or a week-end retreat and talk with a spiritual director there. You have access to a ton of spiritual resources. Within an hour’s drive you have access to Five Oaks, Crieff Hills, Loyola House, or the Sisters of Saint John the Divine, to name only four! But right in your own backyard, you can take part in the annual Guelph Ecumenical Week of Guided Prayer in February. And even closer: Harcourt itself is one of only a handful of congregations that have a Spiritual Life Committee and trained spiritual directors ready to work with you in whatever way is most helpful to you and to your specific journey. Explore our website on spiritual practices – <http://spiritualpractice.ca/> . Talk to us. Tell us of your needs – your particular journey, your specific intention. And Godspeed on your journey, wherever it might lead you!

Why I Come to Harcourt

Theresa Daly

[This article arrived was submitted for October’s theme but unfortunately arrived after it was published. Ed]

Then Jesus said,
“Come to me,
all of you who are weary
and carry heavy burdens,
and I will give you rest” *Matthew 11:28*

I will be forever grateful to Jean and Peter Jackson and Ruth Tatham, (God bless her) who personally guided me to Harcourt. I remember my first 9 a.m. service and the experience of staying after for something called, the *Holy Listening Circle*. I had never seen or heard anything like this. How refreshingly different, that ordinary people would gather and listen respectfully to each-other's experience of the service and the reading.

One Sunday stands out, though, when I heard a comment that so perfectly described why I keep coming to Harcourt. When it was her turn, one long-time participant, a social worker, like myself, shared that she came on Sunday to rest and for rejuvenation. She described a life outside of church (much like my own) that was dedicated to the care of those suffering from physical or emotional issues. She said church gave her the opportunity to be "filled up again" so she could go out to do "God's work" (my words) for the rest of the week. She put into words what I had not been able to express yet ... my experience of church as being a refuge.

I am the facilitator for the *Guelph Wellington Parkinson Support Group*, the care partner's support group and a group of folks living at Riverside Glen who have PD. Because I know the Guelph health care community so well (from my work years) I spend time outside of meetings directing people to local and regional resources and supports. This is a volunteer position. Parkinson's Disease has been described as heartless. It takes an independent, capable person and grinds away at their ability to move, to speak, to think clearly and to be self sufficient. At every meeting I marvel at the strength of the human spirit, to stand up to such a cruel disease, for which there is no cure. Who wouldn't want to ease the suffering of these good people? So I make myself available, daily, weekly, and monthly, to provide education and support.

It is demanding work, to be in the presence of real suffering, on a daily basis.

By the time Sunday arrives, I am tired. Sometimes I feel sad that humans have to suffer this way. I occasionally worry about the exhaustion a care partner is experiencing. I get frustrated that there are not enough resources targeted to people with Parkinson's. I am thinking ahead to what advocacy I will do next week, or what guest speaker I will invite to a meeting. I am tired.

I come to the [*On line*] *Holy Listening Circle* at Harcourt a bit depleted. And there, in the church, or on Zoom, are folks who first ask how the week was, showing genuine concern. This is followed by a host who brings me back to my centre, the life and teachings of Jesus Christ -

the very ground on which I build my life of service. The hosts bring an intelligence and historical perspective that sometimes takes my breath away.

And then it is my turn, in a smaller group, to put into words what I heard and experienced in the reading and the host's words. When I hear my own thoughts, out loud, something in me gets stronger. The respectful, non judgmental "holy listening", practised by group members is genuine and empowering. Sometimes there is even a feeling, as Sharon Chapman once remarked, "we have been standing on Holy Ground, this week" after a particularly deep and thoughtful sharing session. Ahhhh. I exhale. I have heard the deep wisdom of others and of myself. I have reconnected to the Divine in me. I remember why I am doing, what I do. I feel stronger, supported by a community who care.

The [*On line*] *Holy Listening Circle*, combined with my intentional practice, to keep Sunday very quiet and restful, leaves me with the knowledge that I can go another week, to "Carry each other's burdens" *Galatians 6:2*

Why Harcourt?

Tammy te Winkel

[*This article relates to the theme of October's Herald issue and arrived too late for inclusion at that time. - Ed*]

Upon returning to Guelph for more education in the late 1980's, I was in touch with Alison [MacNeill], with whom I had sung in the University of Guelph choir for a number of years. Alison updated me with respect to her new job as Music Director at Harcourt. She told me the choir needed sopranos, which made me wonder what they did with sopranos - for I had never heard of a church choir needing singers in this section. For every other section - yes!

So away I went - very happy to have found a lovely group to do some singing with. But, I re-entered the 'church' world with my antennae on alert. How much 'Religion' would I have to endure?

So, what made me stay: the ability to be at peace with sitting in the congregation with all my questions and doubts. For the first time, I was in a 'religious' building and I didn't feel that I was made to think or feel anything I didn't want to. Rather, I felt more and more comfortable

in being able to think and feel with all the questions swirling in my mind and heart. It felt like a trust was slowly forming.

... and I'm still there - with all my questions - but with a greater sense of balance of how I can live with the questions and benefit from a community that holds up a faith of considering people and the world around us in all its glory and pain.

Since those initial days 34 years ago, I have continued to benefit from the music community, but have also grown with other ways - many of which were wholly unexpected.

Visioning - what, me?

Member of Council - what, me?

Member of the Spiritual Life Committee - what, me?

Who knew?

The people and the experiences that I've gained from these various 'tasks' and volunteer work have provided me with internal growth and strength, as well as a strong base of community and fellowship. Quite simply, I believe that I would not have had the opportunities for spiritual awareness and deeper reflection without having had the Harcourt community in my life.

... not to mention the laughter!

Thank you.

Important Influencers in my Life

Gay Slinger

When asked to write about who has influenced me in my life and how, I immediately thought of my parents, family and friends, teachers, historical figures, figures of current world news.

But as I considered further, I realized I have been influenced by too many people in my life to individually recount. No one figure alone stands out as so many have helped shape who I am. Throughout my life, I have learned from others around me the principles of honesty and integrity, of fairness, of compassion, of using one's abilities in service of others, especially



those less fortunate. I learned by hearing what these people said and, importantly, seeing what they did to actively live out these fundamental principles. I was very fortunate to have encountered people who encouraged me to stretch beyond my comfort zone, people who saw ability when I did not, whether at school, in my profession, at church, in the community. So many have shaped how I think and who I am.

Being in relationship with husband, children, siblings, parents, friends has taught me what honest, loving support looks like, what patience looks like, what joy looks like, what facing adversity looks like and what strength, wisdom and grace can come from being in community. I have been inspired by people who are living lives of hope, resilience and courage in the face of enormous challenge, some leading others to do the same. I have been inspired by people who have made life-altering decisions to change their personal circumstance and live their lives more positively, more fully, appreciating each day as a new opportunity for experience, not mired in the past or living only for the future. I have been inspired by the wonder of our grandchildren, learning so much each day, doing new things, expressing new thoughts, feeling powerful feelings and learning how not to be overwhelmed by them. I have been inspired by the utter joy of music, of art, of the magnificent beauty of our world and been humbled in seeing our vulnerability to the forces of nature and human cruelty. I have been grounded by an ever-evolving personal understanding of and relationship with God.

But inspiration does not always translate into action. My influencers, past and present, may act as a beacon of sorts as to what I should be doing now and are certainly a source of much of my belief system and values ... but the ultimate influencer of who I am and what I do is really just me. Individual responsibility for how one lives life. How I respond to those influencers now may be very different to how I responded years ago. Priorities change, patterns change, energy changes.

And let's not forget the impact of the Covid pandemic as an enormous "influencer" in how we have all lived life and connected with others, not just during past unprecedented periods of lockdown but still ongoing. We had to withdraw from being in personal contact with others and learned even more to rely on technology to gather information and be with each other. Old patterns of behaviour were broken and are hard now to restore.

As I write this while we are still emerging from that time of separation and trying to re-establish old connections and patterns or create new, I sense the need within myself to listen again to all my life's influencers and be inspired again to engage in living out the principles and values they instilled within me. Time again for personal accountability and responsibility ... and new beginnings.



Influences in my Life

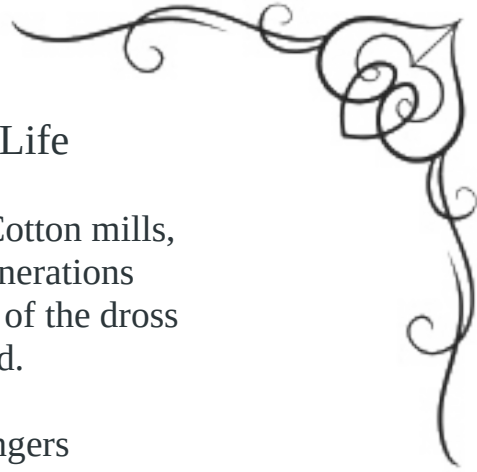
Rosalind Slater

I have lived a long and happy life and many people have contributed to that happiness. I grew up in a multi-generational home with grandparents until I was in my teens, when they passed away. My mother was my mentor, living a life that I would lead as I grew to adulthood. When she married my Dad she moved into the small cottage to live with her infirm in-laws. As the woman of the house she masterminded the home in all things especially cooking wonderful food. She took care of her in-laws until they died and then very shortly afterwards my dad had a stroke and she became his caretaker as well. She was one foot shorter than he was, but she pushed him around in a large Bath chair and then taught him to walk again with great strength of purpose.

My family were Methodists and this fact was something I was never allowed to forget. I remember our minister when I was in my teens. His name was Mr Hodgekinson and he came to visit Grandma regularly. He was wonderful and very human. On one of his visits Grandma accosted him for keeping me out late at youth group the previous Sunday night, and he must have seen the way my cheek blanched because he didn't give me away and tell her that I hadn't been to youth group. I had actually been out on a date, with my mother's permission, and grandma had not approved of this so she tried to embarrass all of us in front of the minister. Through that man I learned a lot about truth, for he had a way with Grandma that I'd never seen used on her before and he lives in my memory as one of the good guys of my life. Until I moved to Harcourt he was my favourite minister of all time.

Around this same time I was being taught by my favourite teacher. Mrs. Dieziel taught us English and she had a love of Shakespeare that she imparted to the whole school. I already had a love of the bard imparted by my parents, so she enhanced this love. My father had bought me a little book of children's stories by Shakespeare and he read that book to me each night before going to bed.

I remember another teacher who played a big part in my life, He was a Prof. at University of Guelph and he taught Psychology. It was my first semester after passing the mature students entrance exam, I chose that course, goodness knows why, but I did so badly on my first midterm I almost had to leave before I'd hardly started and that Prof. allowed me to write an essay to improve my marks. In addition to all these wonderful mentors in early life my three daughters have taught me a lot from the other side of life's spectrum and I was lucky enough to meet a wonderful husband to share life with and all its difficulties as we got older. All in all I have a lot to give thanks for.



Poem About my Life

I am from coalfields and Cotton mills,
the dirt and grime of generations
who scratched a living out of the dross
and made it good.

I am from hymn singers
whose glorious tones rose to the heavens
in praise of their maker on Sunday
and scrubbed the step with donkey stone,
their red knuckled fingers bleached raw
with cold and a life in the washtubs,
on Mondays.

I am from workers and walkers,
the first in their clogs,
the second in their sturdy boots
as they enjoyed country walks on holidays,
Easter, Whitsuntide
and sometimes Christmas.

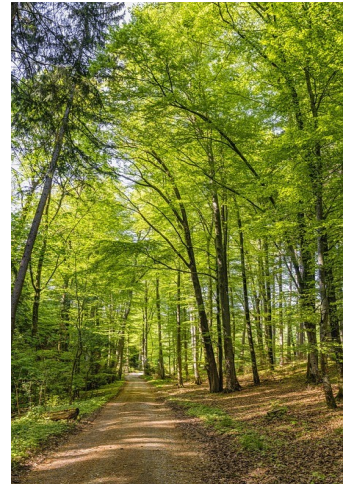
I am from the dirt of the earth
and the glitter of sunlight on the mountains
where the horizon touched the top
with shafts of pure light
which brought joy to the freed workers
on their occasional outings.

I am from Father's woodworks
and Mother's mill
and the bricks of Manchester.

Connecting through Nature

Arlene Davies-Fuhr

I have never been a gardener. True, I like weeding and smelling flowers but that's about it. Now, here in Guelph, I have started to connect with the soil in more tangible and visceral ways. My maternal grandfather, Harry, was an incredible gardener. He had wanted to be a farmer when he emigrated from Britain, but farmland was not available in the part of southern Ontario where he desired to live. However, this grandparent did have an extensive and very impressive garden in Smiths Falls which enabled him, during the depression, to sell vegetables in order to make ends meet.



Bryan's father, Conrad was a farmer who knew about the ways of nature and the joy of planting and harvesting. By getting my hands dirty and intentionally planting them in the earth of my garden, I feel a deep and solid connection with my ancestor as well as Bryan's dad. Gardening enables me to strengthen a relationship with a grandparent I barely knew and extend a connection with my father-in-law. Planting and maintaining the garden is an activity that I truly enjoy. This process gifts me peace and an appreciation of nature's sustaining and ever-affirming presence.

Perhaps that is why I am drawn to Guelph's Forest Church led by Mary Savage. At Forest Church, after a brief welcome and reading, participants are encouraged to wander, explore, and appreciate, as we are sent off to find a part of nature that particularly speaks to us in energizing ways. During this time of worship, guided by Indigenous and Celtic spirituality along with the Holy Spirit, I see all of Creation as my relations. This, in turn, highlights an affirming connection with my grandfather, Harry Hignett, as well as Bryan's father, Conrad Fuhr.

These mindful, natural experiences gift insights that are significant and sustaining. Nature encourages me to adopt a more positive outlook, even during tough and distressing moments, as I am grateful and thankful for the thousands of blessings I have received.

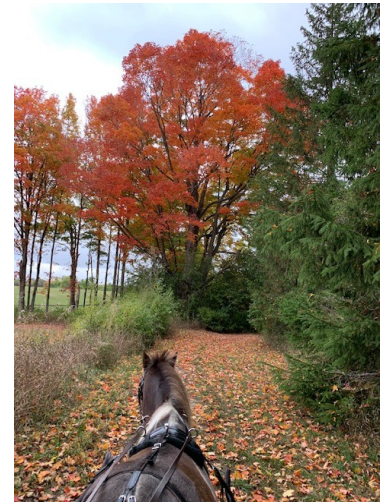
“We return to the earth.
And in between,
we garden.”
- *Alfred Austin*

An Interview with Sandy Phair

Judi Morris

Sandy Phair, as you will read, carries with her a calm yet fervent interior spirituality. She often comes for a drive with me and Tickle and this lovely fall day I took the opportunity to interview her.

Judi: I have known you from when you and Steve sat near the front on the left side of the chapel since the 9:00 a.m. service began. You don't live in the immediate Harcourt neighbourhood. How long have you been coming to Harcourt and what brought you here?



Sandy: I have been coming to Harcourt for forty years and it was Glenn and Jane Schuyler who recommended this church to me. Their three boys attended the same nursery school as our girls. They said they had recently found Harcourt and were very pleased with the church services and Sunday school.

Judi: You worked at Homewood as a social worker but other places as well.

Sandy: Yes, I worked at Harcourt for three years in the church office assisting Audrey Madigan and it was Audrey who suggested I go back into the field of social work and fully use my training. I left Harcourt and worked as a Social worker at the Homewood Health Centre for twenty years counselling addicts and their families. Much of this was based on following a twelve step program that had a spiritual component to healing.

Judi: The more I get to know you the more I am impressed and influenced by your spirituality. Can you share the history of your spiritual development?

Sandy: Nurturing my spirit being has been an important part of my life journey. I attended the Friday morning Bible Study at Harcourt for decades. I learned so much from the elders in this group. I have belonged to the Progressive Christianity Group for ten years and we watched many DVDs and audio podcasts that were enlightening. I also did the Ignatian exercises with Tarcia [Gerwing], Maxine [Lipinski] and Andre [Auger] who were excellent spiritual companions. I have done the Week of Guided Prayer and the Harcourt-Fall spiritual retreat weekends at Loyola House. I belong to the Harcourt monthly Monday Women's Spirituality Group and often attend the Wednesday meditation/book group at Dublin.

I have also expanded my practice and attended a weekly Buddhist meditation group with Judi Myers Avis and have enjoyed yoga with Jan Fuller. I have been influenced by meditations on my computer with Oprah Winfrey and Deepak Chopra, as well as Tara Brach. Throughout my life I have been influenced by a core group of women friends that I treasure because I can be

vulnerable and dive deep into questions that living has thrown at us.

Judi: You mention Buddhist meditation. Can you share a bit about that experience?

Sandy: It's a sitting meditation group and it does calm the monkey mind. We have a practice called "metta" and it is wishing loving kindness and good will towards all others. That is not unlike our Christian Golden Rule. The longer I live the more I have come to believe that life is short, and we have choices. If I practise, I can detach, witness, breathe and respond and do not have to be reactive. I cannot ruminate on the times in my past where I have missed the mark and not loved well. I want to live and bring my highest self to today. I want to handle future transitions and change well. I like the poet Stanley Kunitz who said ``live in the layers, not in the litter`` and try to focus on what is important.

Judi: The Herald has printed many of your poems. People are touched by them. I understand that you write quite frequently. What is the source of inspiration for poetry writing?

Sandy: In the past five years I write as a way of expressing deep feelings of my grief or gratitude. I have been doing Soul Collage with Margaret Grocke and from the cards that I have created I have been inspired to write poems.

Judi: Your supportive and positive nature with impressive listening skills has blessed many of us in this Harcourt Community. Being in your company is a gift. Did this ability come to you with your upbringing and/or your education in your chosen field of social work?

Sandy: I always knew that both of my parents loved me, but my father died before he could see me graduate from university or get married. Losing my father at such a transitional time in my life I think opened my heart to be compassionate to others.

Judi: Cancer has taken Steve; you had breast cancer 11 years ago, and uterine cancer in 2020 whereupon you were given 5 weeks of daily radiation - all during early Covid times. You live alone in your home and while you have family, there must have been limited interaction with others. Where did you draw your source of strength at that time to deal with the disease and the treatment?

Sandy: I have wonderful caring daughters, son-in-laws and grand-kids and I never stopped seeing them during Covid. My oncologist gave me permission to have a big bubble for support. I also had friends who paid for a driver to take me to the Juravinski Hospital in Hamilton. Accepting help from others has been a blessing to me. My granddaughter and my friend read aloud to me most days and that is still continuing. One of my favourite books is "The Five People You Meet in Heaven" by Mitch Albom and I can relate to many of his quotes. He said "The only time we waste is the time we spend thinking we are alone." All parents damage their

children... “Holding anger is a poison... There are no random acts...We are all connected...You can no more separate one life from another than you can separate a breeze from the wind... You have peace, the old woman said, “when you make it with yourself.” Love takes many forms... and it is irreplaceable.”

Judi: I want to ask you about the groups you belong to.

Sandy: I have enjoyed belonging to the [On Line] Holy Listening Circle on Sundays from 9 to 10. We often have a check-in so we can hear how others’ weeks have been. I very much enjoy pondering the chosen Bible verses and seeing how they are still important today. The facilitators always seem to research the background of the passages in their original contexts and then pose questions that can give us permission to go deep into what truths are still there. I appreciate that there is no debating or correcting or challenging what others in the group have shared.

Judi: Harcourt, like most churches, is going through big changes. What might your vision for Harcourt to be and any thoughts of how we might get there?

Sandy: I would like us to continue to offer many small group experiences to nurture spiritual growth. I would like to attend Advent or Lenten groups, during those seasons of the church year. In between, perhaps we could discuss the daily messages from Richard Rohr or perhaps some of the issues raised in the Broadview magazine. I would also appreciate the church remaining open for drop-ins, perhaps a time of prayer and reflection for world events ie ‘could Putin choose to use nuclear weapons’; ‘do we have time and energy to work on saving the environment?’ When I went to McMaster University, a small group met every morning in the small chapel from 10 to 10:15 for a short prayer and just knowing the Baptist minister would be there consistently was comforting to me.

Judi: I can recall the day at 9:00 a.m. Sacred Circle that you shared Steve’s passing and I believe it was one of Guelph’s first Medically Assisted deaths. You became an advocate for MAID after that and started a monthly support group for families who have lost a loved one to MAID. What would you like the Harcourt community and beyond to know about MAID?

Sandy: I would like everyone to know that there is a spectrum of end of life care and that MAID is legal and is possible in Guelph General Hospital and in people's home We need to challenge the staff and boards of local hospices and Catholic affiliated hospitals to consider allowing the procedure in their facilities.

Judi: Can you leave us with one of your poems?



Five Things That Fascinate Me *by Sandy Phair*

Fireflies that do not sting or bite nor carry diseases
but for two months flutter and shine

Baby birds who squawk and grow
and within days are muted independent adults

Moon flowers that are bright yellow
and bloom only in the dark hours of a summer night

Artists who are bold enough to paint or sculpt
and create something new

People whose default code is compassion
and who help me believe that today the world is
a very fine place.



In Honour of a Friend

Lisa Browning



“There must be a reason why I’m lost.” I spoke to myself with conviction as I drove back and forth over the same country roads, just north of Sauble Beach, trying to find the entrance to Bruce’s Caves, where I planned to do some hiking. Only minutes later, I drove up to the entrance of Paul Duff’s gallery, *Paintings of the Bruce*.

I had first visited the gallery, and met Paul, two days earlier, and had felt an instant connection. Not only was I mesmerized by the beauty of his work ... I was also drawn to this very fascinating man, and spent close to an hour talking with him about a wide range of topics. I had planned on returning to the gallery before I headed back to Guelph, but the time had escaped me, and today was the final day of my vacation.

“I knew you’d be back.” Paul’s words of greeting confirmed my suspicions that this was no random meeting. And when I happened to mention that I was an editor, and Paul stated with a mixture of astonishment and enthusiasm that he needed an editor for his autobiography, the reason for my being lost became undeniably clear.

Paul's autobiography, entitled *My Life, My Art*, was the first book I ever published, and I got to know him very well during the months we worked together on that project. He was a wonderful man, and an incredible painter. He also became like a second father to me. Sadly, he passed away in October 2014, quite suddenly.

It is fitting that I think, and write, about him today in between Thanksgiving and Remembrance Day, because I will be forever thankful for having him in my life for as long as I did, and I remember him often.

The following poem, entitled *In Search of Bruce's Cave*, is known as an ekphrastic poem, because it is a response to a work of art (in this case, the painting shown in this article, which Paul painted as a gift to me).



The painting hangs

in my front hall
A place of honour
in memory of you
The colours are vibrant
golds, reds, and yellows
Sunlight streams through the leaves
on the trees
There is a stark contrast
between those leaves on the trees
and the stones of Bruce's Cave



Autumn has always been
my favourite season
I met you in autumn
while I was
in search of Bruce's Cave
Lost

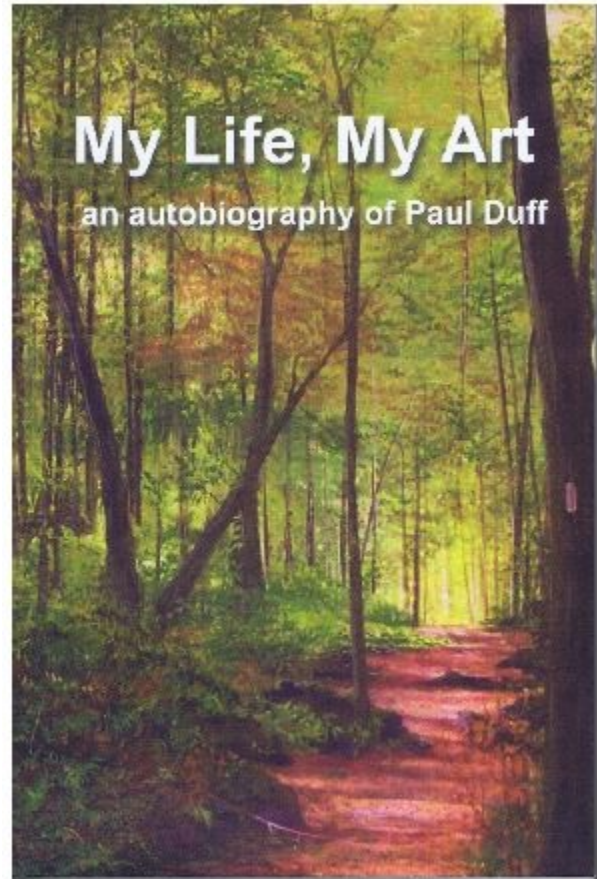
I could not find the cave
but kept ending up back
at your gallery
and so I went in
perhaps I was not lost at all

What would possess a man
to live in seclusion
for so long?
The Bruce Trail
a Canadian treasure
with 250 miles to hike
Many take it on as a life goal
"I will, in this lifetime, hike the entire trail," they say
and many have

On that trail
is Bruce's Cave
You are the man behind the brush strokes
the painting, you did for me
If I look closely
I can see you smiling at me
through those vibrant
golds, reds, and yellows
I will always be grateful that I went
in search of Bruce's Cave
because it was that search

that led me to you.

When Paul passed, I promised his wife that I would continue to do everything I could to spread the word about him. To that end, I have (with approval!) left copies of his autobiography in the Greeting Place. Please feel free to take one, so that you can get to know him, and learn about the incredible life he led.



Remembering: Harcourt's Own Mary and Martha Edna

Marilyn Whiteley



“Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus’ feet, and heard his word.”

Whenever I hear or read this story from Luke’s gospel, I think of a pair of women who were members of Harcourt, Mary Haig and Edna Boyce. A great many women have made many contributions to the life of Harcourt, but these two shine in my memory as examples of *different* ways of contributing, for one was a “Mary” and the other a “Martha.”



Mary Haig served as a Presbyterian missionary in Formosa (now Taiwan) until the time of the United Church Union in 1925. The Presbyterian church was to retain the Formosa mission field, but Mary supported church union, so she became a United Church missionary and was assigned to Japan—requiring her to learn a second Asian language. During World War II, she worked in Newfoundland, and then she returned to Japan until her retirement. In 1972, Mary moved to Guelph with her two sisters, and soon she started attending Harcourt. In her later years, after her sisters’ deaths, she lived with her nephew, Don Ewing, and his wife, Eleanor. She died in 1992, less than two months before what would have been her hundredth birthday.

Mary was a quiet person with a deep personal piety. Surgery that injured her vocal cords left her voice impaired, she continued to love hymns and recalled their words in her private devotions. When her physical powers diminished, she realized in one of her times of meditation that she still had a ministry, a ministry of prayer, which she continued to carry out until her death.

Mary wrote about her life in a memoir, *Much To Share*. As far as I know, Edna Boyce did not write about her life. That was not her style: she was focused on *doing*, not on reflecting, so I know less about her life. But I know that it was an active one. She was active in the United Church Women and, as a woman who had spent a good part of her life living on a farm, she was active in the Women’s Institute.



Once, as a leader in her local Women's Institute, she tried to find someone to demonstrate or teach some craft skill that was the recommended subject for an upcoming meeting. She could find no one—so she learned to do it herself, and taught the members. I believe she was in her eighties at the time. That was Edna.

Another story has also delighted me. It may have come from a time when Edna and her husband were living on a farm, and the country was still suffering the effects of the Great Depression. A friend shared with Edna her great anxiety: she had no food to cook for her evening meal. Edna had a pork roast which she would be happy to give to her friend, but there was a problem: the friend and her husband were Jewish. The woman was willing to accept the gift, but what would her husband think? Edna had a solution: "Tell him it's veal." And the friend accepted the gift.

Edna lived to celebrate her hundredth birthday—which was celebrated at Harcourt—and died sometime after that.

I have warm memories of being served tea and cookies by Mary in her apartment, first on Woolwich Street and later on Glasgow, and by Edna in her apartment near the stone bridge over the Speed River. And I remember them both from Harcourt's Friday morning bible study. For three and a half years, the group followed the demanding Kerygma program, and both Edna and Mary were faithful and active participants. In their eighties, they were still open to new ideas, they were still eager to learn! Now that I am in my mid-eighties—hard to believe!—I have come to realize the debt I owe to Mary Haig and to Edna Boyce. Different as they may have been in personality and in their means of service, they both modelled for me how, as one ages, one can still serve and one can still grow.

Life Events:

Passages



Dorothy Comfort passed away on October 10, 2022.



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