

# **The Harcourt Herald February 2024**

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

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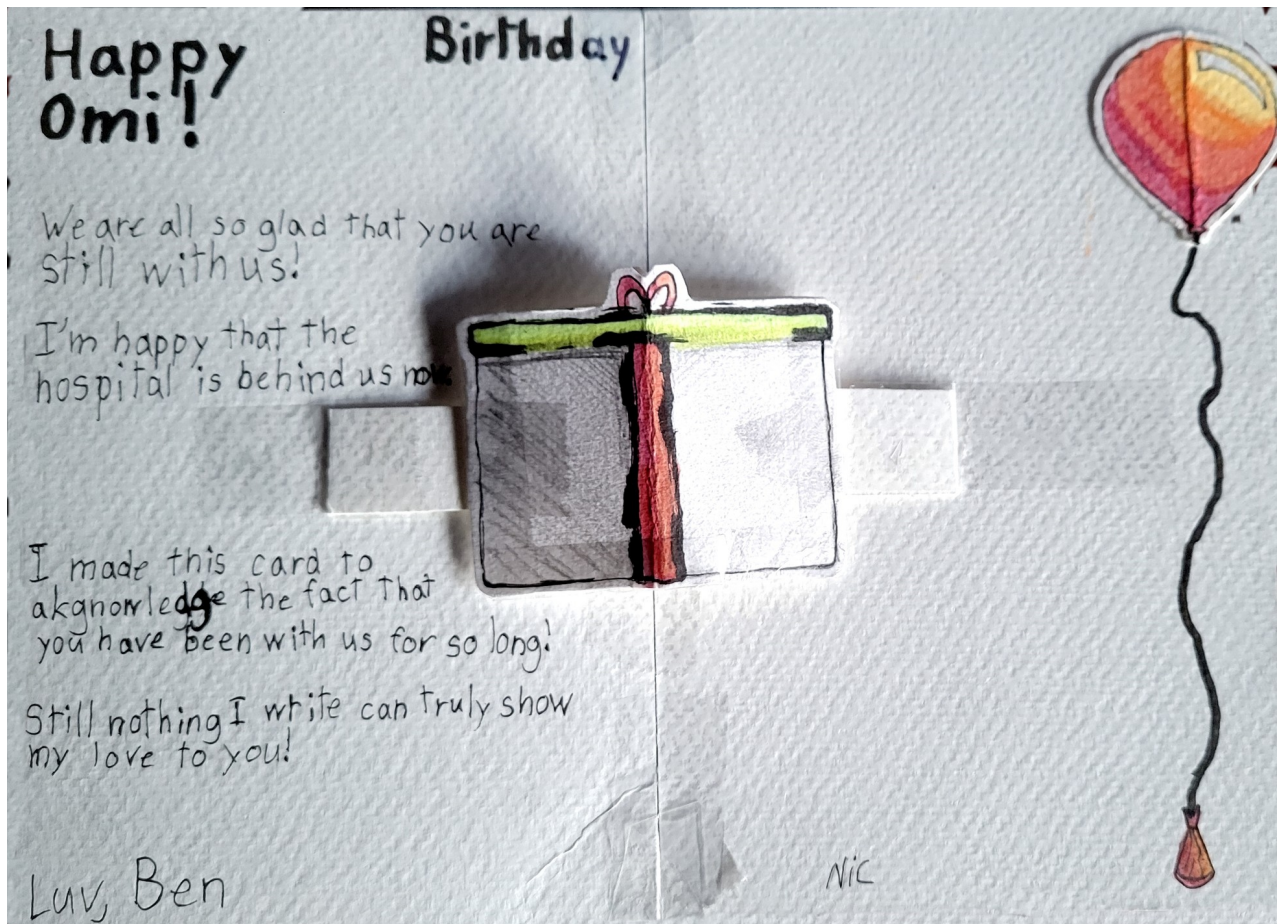


## From the Desk for February 2024

Winter. Time to relax, pick up neglected hobbies, or stay indoors or even “do something” with the “white stuff.” It is a time to slow down, knowing that, underneath the snow, the bulbs will eventually wake up, and Spring will come.

And it is time to reflect. Does “An unexpected act of Love” become something to ponder about? Something that may have happened almost unnoticeably? It is not only the overwhelming moment when someone tells me they love me; no, it is most often just a gesture. And “love” might be a too strong word to describe that moment of recognition when I realize this person – or God! - really likes me/cares for me.

See Gerry’s descriptions of the various words for love, a spectrum of ways to light warm feelings in us. I hope you enjoy the issue!



**From our minister** – Kate Ballagh Steeper

We sing about it. We write endless stories about it. We watch movies about it. We engage in offering and receiving it. We think about it. I suspect we also long for it too, which is what may bring many of us to church week by week. It is love. Love between one another, our pets, the world and God. Is there any greater motivation than love – offered or received? Holy or human?

This year, Ash Wednesday falls on Valentine's day. Though it hasn't been a long practice in the protestant church to acknowledge Ash Wednesday with a service and the marking of ashes on the hand or forehead, it is the service that marks the beginning of the Lenten season. Lent and Easter is a story of love. God's love for humanity. God's call to restoration and renewal. We will gather for a service, stay tuned for details.

Jan Richardson, a poet, minister and artist offers this blessing for Ash Wednesday;

***Will You Meet Us? (For Ash Wednesday)***

Will you meet us  
in the ashes,  
will you meet us  
in the ache  
and show your face  
within our sorrow  
and offer us  
your word of grace:

that you are life  
within the dying,  
that you abide  
within the dust,  
that you are what  
survives the burning,  
that you arise  
to make us new.



And in our aching  
you are breathing;  
and in our weeping  
you are here  
within the hands  
that bare your blessing,  
enfolding us  
within your love.

May love in all its forms hold you through this coming Lenten season. Kate



## Council News - Kent Hoeg, Chair



Happy New Year! May we all find the happiness that we most certainly deserve! For this article we were asked to write about “an unexpected act of love”. My goodness, that’s made me think! There’s probably so many big and small. Initially my thoughts went to “unexpected acts of kindness”. But love? Of course, I can think of the many loving actions of my wife, kids and parents. But is that unexpected?

After some thought, my mind went to early September of last year. My mother had passed away a couple of weeks before and there was a knock at my door. A co-worker was standing there with a platter of meats and cheeses. It's not that I know this co-worker too, too well. We work in the same department at the University, but it's not like we socialize. We may talk every few weeks, when meeting in the hallway, but not much more. But there she was, dropping by to say she was sorry about my mother's death. This was an unexpected act of love. She cared and let me know. Though we talked for several minutes, she wouldn't come in for tea or coffee. She just wanted me to know that she was thinking of me and went on her way. Made me feel good. It was unexpected. And it motivates you to "pass it forward". I will certainly do that.

### Council Meeting of 01/17/23

Council meetings are always packed full. The agenda is busy, and we have much to discuss. It's not unusual for us to start at 7:00pm and continue to well past 9:00pm. However, I always enjoy these sessions. We talk, we laugh, we listen, we engage, we contribute.

The January Council meeting's primary focus was the upcoming Annual Meeting on March 3. Surprisingly (or not) it takes quite a bit of preparation. How will the agenda flow? Who will do what? What time do we start? Will we combine the 9:45am Music and Message service with Manna? How will we let the 9:00am Spiritual Experience Group know. What about the Thursday Evening Chapel Service? Will the meeting be in the sanctuary, on Zoom, or both? How will we set up the meeting space? Will we have food? Who will handle that? What about announcements? Will the Annual Report be ready? What about child-care? How do we keep it short? Will we get quorum (50 people). What about presenting the financial budget?

Whew – are you tired yet?



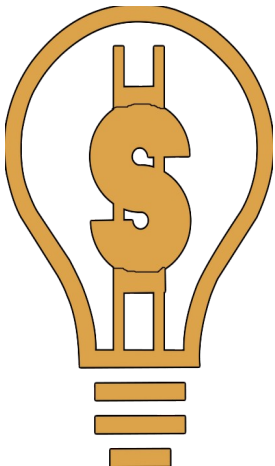


Here's where we ended up:

- We will have a Community of Faith Meeting on Wednesday February 27 at 7:00pm via Zoom. This will be to present the 2024 Financial Budget. If we have quorum, we hope to pass a motion to accept the budget presented, if not it will be presented again at the March 3 meeting.
- On Sunday March 3, at 10:30am we will have one service, allowing for the Annual Meeting to start by noon.
- We are hoping for the meeting to be both in-person and via Zoom.
- The sanctuary will be configured to allow us to move quickly from the service to the meeting.
- A hearty snack will be provided.
- Childcare will be provided.
- We went through the agenda, including discussing what breakout group discussions we could have.

We will finalize our planning at our February Council Meeting.

#### Financial Update



We did it! If you haven't heard the good news. 2023 started the year with an approved budgeted deficit of over \$73,000, and we ended up with a surplus of over \$42,000!

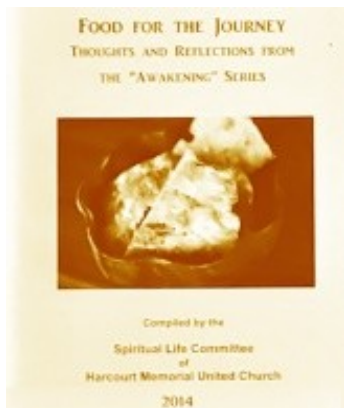
Let me repeat that. Through the generosity of yourselves we ended 2023 with a surplus of over \$42,000. This is such affirmation of your belief in the good work that Harcourt does. Thank you!

Given the surplus, Council made a motion to pay back \$10,000 of the \$80,000 we have previously borrowed from the pillars. This is certainly a step in the right direction.

#### Final word

As we start a new year, I want to thank all of you for what you do. You all contribute to Harcourt in some way. No matter how you support Harcourt – it's important and it matters.





## **Food for the Journey – Kathy Magee, for the Spiritual Life Committee**

Greetings from the Spiritual Life Committee. Each month our committee members are invited to contribute a reflection in the Harcourt Herald for your consideration. In February, it is my turn, and my pleasure, to offer some thoughts about love. How lucky am I to have that assignment! For it seems to me there is nothing more Spirit-based and essential to our faith journey than love.

The theme of this month's Herald is "an unexpected act of love". Examples that came to my mind caused me to reflect on what love is. Erich Fromm describes the basic elements of love as care, responsibility, respect, and knowledge of ourselves and others. Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians, so beautifully describes what love requires of us – patience, kindness, not being envious or boastful, not irritable or rude or bossy.

Knowing that God's love for us exceeds our expectations and limitations helps us through the bad times. The times of loneliness, isolation, uncertainty, and despair. In the words of Paul, God's love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things and never ends. What a wonderful and daunting example for us to follow! We know that giving and receiving love, and connection with others, are essential to our sense of ourselves, and the world around us. It requires compassion and understanding, and takes courage and commitment. Think for a moment about a time when you did something kind or thoughtful for someone, without expecting anything in return, or even seeing the results of your action. It no doubt took some extra effort, or thoughtfulness on your part. Stay with that memory, and feel the emotions it still evokes for you. Now think for a moment about a time when you received an unexpected act of love. What was that experience like for you? Stay with that memory and feel again the warmth, compassion, thoughtfulness and energy that was wrapped up in that act. Those experiences are living giving – for the giver and the receiver.

I am blessed to have an abundant store of memories of acts of kindness I have received. I still feel a warm glow when I see the butterfly pin that I was given by a member of a seniors' group that I facilitated. She had been pretty quiet, not seeming particularly engaged with the group. After the last session, she slipped the pin into my bag, with a note saying she felt God's love through me. I received a Christmas gift that so perfectly spoke of love and understanding that it took my breath away and brought tears to my eyes. Recently, as Brian was recovering from shoulder surgery, I went out to shovel our driveway, to find that our neighbours had already done the shovelling. These acts that we perform or receive, some small, some more significant, are expressions of love. We, as followers of Jesus, know they are ways for us to

share God's love and light. They encourage us to be faithful examples of the patience, kindness, compassion, joy and thoughtfulness that are the touchstones of our faith.

So, treasure the times you are the recipient of such love, and be aware of opportunities to share it with others. Let us remember Jesus' call and God's promise. Let us be the eyes of kindness, the ears of patience, and the voice of love.



### **Trinity of Love – Bernard McNamee**

*[Bernard spent a number of weeks in Hospice, and was eventually released, because he had improved so significantly. Almost two years have transpired since the events Bernard describes here. -Ed]*

It all started when there was a call from the specialist. Your red blood cell level is extremely low, he said. After a lengthy discussion of what this meant, it seemed that if nothing was done, my life could be rather short.

There were two possible ways to go, a number of blood transfusions, or a heavy dose of a super drug. I took the second choice. A day later I was taking regular doses of rather large white pills.

As the days went by I began to feel very ill and told the specialist I wanted to stop taking the medication. This was supposed to be done slowly and took several miserable days to stop.

At that point I collapsed while trying to walk and ended up in hospital with very low blood pressure. At this point the medical opinion was that the only way to get better was to go back on the heavy medication. This I refused to do as it made me feel so dreadful.

The doctor's opinion was that if i didn't take the medication I would probably die within a week.

I opted for that route and went to Hospice the next day.

While this was going on, I received visits from many friends, family and acquaintances who were very supportive. I began to feel a sense of loving support from friends and family. Some of whom even came and slept beside me at night. This led to feelings of love and connection to so many loving friends and well wishers.

A profound sense of God's love began to fill me and I had this awareness of a loving Creator creating life through love - a Trinity of love from the Father creating form and life through love. It was a very powerful felt experience and much more than just thoughts in my mind. It was a lived experience - all of this while I didn't expect to be waking up each morning.

I did continue to wake up, and I still have memories of God the loving Creator, even though they are no longer so powerful. I am extremely grateful to all those who visited me while I was sick and helped to wrap me up in God's love through their loving kindness.

### **An unexpected act of love – Lorraine Holding**



An unexpected act of love - the warmth of a prayer shawl comes to mind. Like other churches, for many years, Harcourt has offered prayer shawls to provide comfort and blessings. A few times, I was able to present shawls to Ministers who were completing their time with us, or arriving to begin a new pastoral relationship. Then, I received my own prayer shawl at the 2023 Annual Meeting as a token of appreciation. Now, wrapped in my shawl on wintry evenings, I feel the warmth and love of Harcourt friends. Thank you, to those who knit or crochet and for the blessings that you offer with each shawl.

## Love is a Many Splendoured Thing – Gerald Neufeld



. . . and it is often best expressed with intensity and passion in a good melody. Like most love songs, the third line in this popular song express something deep and universal about one of our most profound human emotions. “Love is nature's way of giving a reason to be living.” The ancient Greeks had seven or eight words to express the many splendours of love. Three of them encapsulate some of our most familiar feelings of love.

*Eros*, the love often felt most strongly in our youth, has been expressed by poets and singers in popular songs throughout the ages. The first verse of John Dowland’s song *Come Again*, published in 1597, reads:

“Come again  
Sweet love doth now invite  
Thy graces that refrain  
To do me due delight.  
To see, to hear,  
To touch, to kiss,  
To die with thee again  
In sweetest sympathy.”

The words “To see, to hear, to touch, to kiss, to die with thee again,” sung in ascending melodic phrases, have been described as “a ladder of love.” To die, the pinnacle of that ladder, is a common Renaissance euphemism for the consummation of love in its most beautiful physical expression. (Listen to Julianne Baird’s performance of *Come again* on YouTube.) However, as we age we might begin to identify with the lyrics of a show tune by Rogers and Hart called *My Funny Valentine*.

“Your looks are laughable  
Unphotographable  
Yet, you're my favourite work of art.”



True love looks past physical attributes to seek intimacy with the inner nature of a loved one. (Listen to Ella Fitzgerald and many others on YouTube.)

As we ascend the ladder of Greek words for love, *philia* expresses a deep friendship or kinship with another person or group of people. (*Philo*, a related word, is used in words like philosophy and in Philoharcourtian. No, I just made up that word to express a “phial” connection to a church group.) The popular song, *You Raise Me Up*, may have a different meaning for anyone who listens to it. But at its core it expresses a strong sentiment of filial love.

“You raise me up, so I can stand on mountains,  
You raise me up, to walk on stormy seas  
I am strong, when I am on your shoulders  
You raise me up to more than I can be.”  
(See Josh Groban and dancers on YouTube.)

Related to *philia* is the Greek word *storge* that was used to express love between parents and children—kinship love. The Rankin Family’s song *We Rise Again* speaks of our continued love expressed through generations of children. “We rise again in the faces of our children / We rise again in the voices of our song.” Today, when so many people are single and without children, *storge* is found in a variety of configurations that create kinship. (Listen to Anne Murray on YouTube.)

*Agape*, Greek for selfless, unconditional love, is used in New Testament Greek to describe the unconditional love between a parental God and us. Throughout the ages song writers and composers have poured their most profound feelings into music expressing the love of the divine around us and within us. Our hymns are filled with love and praise and, during the past 600 years, composers have expressed their deepest thoughts, filled with spiritual meaning, in countless vocal compositions large and small. A wise person once said to me, “We don’t *fall* in love; we *climb* in love.” That seems like a good metaphor for how we grow in honest, committed—yes, *loving*—relationships. Whether it be a commitment to an intimate partner, a true friend, a community, the divine, or even our strongly held beliefs, when love is the basis of that commitment, it is in giving that we receive, as St. Francis said. And to quote John Denver,

“Perhaps love is like a resting place  
A shelter from the storm  
It exists to give you comfort  
It is there to keep you warm  
And in those times of trouble  
When you are most alone  
The memory of love will bring you home.”

(Listen to *Perhaps Love* with John Denver and Placido Domingo on YouTube.) The song we began with concludes, “Yes, love is a many splendoured thing.”



### **Love conquers all – Sandy Middleton**

I was fortunate to be born into a loving and happy family. My early childhood was spent under the conditions of a country at war. Despite that reality, my parents did everything in their power to provide my brothers and me with a safe and secure home, always supported by their steadfast love for us. Even with the severe limitations of rationing, we never went hungry, and somehow Mum always managed to provide special meals and treats for special occasions such as birthdays and Christmas. Over the years my parents’ love for us never wavered and it carried us through some tough times, including emigration from Scotland and adaptation to our new life in Canada. At this stage of my life I thought I knew what love meant, but I have discovered, there was still much to learn.

Following Dad’s death in 1969 Mum moved to Guelph to be closer to our family. Although she soon developed her own circle of friends, primarily through St. Andrew’s Church, she enjoyed being involved in our busy family life. As Ann and I were both working, Mum was a valued helper in preparing meals, babysitting, and interacting with her grandchildren. Thus, it came as a devastating shock to us all when, in 1988, she was diagnosed with terminal cancer. Gradually, as her needs for care increased, it became clear that she could no longer live on her own.

Ann, without hesitation, volunteered to have Mum come and live with us during her illness. Fortunately, our home on Lyon Avenue was easily modified to accommodate for Mum's needs. Ann arranged things in such a way that even when Mum became bed-ridden she could remain actively involved in family life. She ate her meals at the same time as we did and was always interested in hearing of the day's events at school and work. Ann handled most of the care arrangements that needed to be made and, without complaint, accepted the intrusions of many visitors, including doctors, nurses, friends, and out of town family members. Mum was with us for 14 weeks, and though we knew what the eventual outcome would be, it was a special family time of deeply shared love, storytelling, and even laughter. I remain profoundly grateful to Ann for this amazing gift of love that she so unselfishly gave, both to her mother-in-law and to me, that permitted Mum to live out her final days in a familiar place, surrounded by her family.

When it became clear that Mum was gradually failing, her wonderfully caring doctor told us that the end was near, and that we should call the family together to say their "good byes". Soon after, Mum and I were quietly talking one evening about deeply personal matters when it became clear that she was tiring. After a moment of silence, she gently squeezed my hand and asked, "Do you love me enough to let me go?" I was stunned. Never, had I been challenged by such a profound question. As tears welled up in my eyes, I quietly asked God for guidance. I hesitated briefly then, with a deep sense of God's presence with us, I replied, "Of course, Mum, with all my love I will let you go." Her hand relaxed, she closed her eyes and gently lay back on her pillow. It seemed that a load had been lifted from her. At that moment, I understood the deep mystery of God's love; a love which had surrounded us both at this most intimate moment of our lives.

This experience, though difficult at the time, has become increasingly precious to me. Although Mum's death brought sadness, I have taken great comfort from knowing that the love which we were able to share with Mum, gave her comfort and strength as she passed through death supported by her own deep faith and secure in the knowledge that Love conquers all.

## Deep Love Given & Received - Judi Morris

I've had four or five divorces in my lifetime and I'm still with my first and only husband.



The “divorces” were with horses. Horses to me are on a similar plane as that of a spouse. Some just don’t have it and have to go. Others like my husband, are keepers.

Interesting enough, all our original horses lived long, and I do hope happy lives, here. They are all buried on this farm ... who knows where my husband will end up.

Replacements have been the problem. None could come close to filling the hooves of our four originals. Bill’s hunt horse, my hunt pony, Breezy (good God we had a relationship. We loved and respected each other in ways that nobody understood ... we were so much alike) and our daughters’ ponies they hunted with and took to Pony Club. I have come to realize it must be easier to replace a husband than a good horse.

Today Amigo is on my mind. Amigo was not a replacement; he was a steppingstone for our daughter Andrea, who at 6’ tall outgrew her 13 2 H pony. We loaned her the \$5,000 to buy the near 17H Percheron cross, 35 years ago. She needed a horse Amigo’s size. They had a beautiful relationship and successful show career. When she became too busy with life ... he became mine ... well ... sort of.

Amigo was the most wonderful horse to foxhunt or at an event. He engaged his hind and covered ground like none other, yet with reasonable light pressure on the bit, would slow



or come to a halt. He took me everywhere I wanted to go – into Guelph on Christmas Day for the Harcourt Christmas Service. On my birthdays I packed a lunch and went out for over five hours, carrying in my side pack, not only my lunch but a very heavy cell phone so I could call for the horse trailer if I went too far. He took me out in the dark searching for a lost dog. He got caught in wire and stood still while I shuffled off his very high back to the ground and unwrapped the wire from his leg. Other horses would have jumped around and tore their tendons. I would have felt safe on him riding along the 401.

We aged together. On a particular ride a gun went off as we cantered along a field. It startled every muscle in me stiff, while he shot forward. I landed behind the saddle. We have had horses that would buck you off in a flash if you landed there. I figured I would be eating dirt at any given moment and wasn't thrilled at the thought of the damage my bones would suffer in the process. He gathered his wits, came to a halt and waited for me to scramble back into the saddle. The canter resumed. A tale most would feel exaggerated ... but I was there.

Not the end of the ride yet ... farther along he stumbled on the up beat of the trot and went down on one knee. This time I landed in the front of the saddle and did my best to prevent landing on my head. I threw my arms around his neck like a hug and used the hug to keep my head up. His next movement would undoubtedly have me tasting the dirt of a different field. He didn't move ... that caught me off guard. I continued to hang onto his neck, waiting for him to go down until I realized he stood suspended ... one knee on the ground and another bent and ready to go there. He waited for me to scramble back into the saddle. Once in the saddle again he pushed himself up with his left leg and the right knee that was on the ground came up and he stood again ... then proceeded forward with his trot.

In that moment I felt deep love transmitting both ways.



Over time his teeth deteriorated. He could no longer masticate hay. I am a hay seller, but he required expensive special feed and probiotics to help with digestion. He was a very big horse and it took a lot of expensive feed to sustain him for five more years. The cost over that period of time would have bought me an expensive horse. Most people would have put the horse down. Amigo deserved better.

When the time came for him to go, I led him for his final walk in the forest across the road then removed his shoes. He needed to be as he was born. A chapter in my life was over.

The divorces all followed the loss of him .... nothing could fill the bill. Many years later a 40" Shetland came along that I named Tickle. I put a cart behind him. Deep, rich love has grown between us both and again is given and received in similar yet different ways.

## **A Grandparent's Love – Tammy teWinkel**

When I was teenager and I first heard the term “unconditional love” and what it meant, I immediately thought of my grandmother – my mother’s mother.

Of the 18 grandchildren on my mother’s side, I had the good fortune to spend likely the longest time with her while she was on this earth – being one in the older set and of that set, living quite close to her. For the first 6 years I lived next door in a very small village northwest of Ottawa; for the next years, up until university, we visited at least once a week from Ottawa. The fact that my Mum was the only daughter of eight children, and that I was Mum’s only child, also brought lots of opportunity to spend time with her in a unique way.



As a child, visiting in the summer, I was always trying to find ways that I could express my love and appreciation to her. One summer, I had managed to save up a little bit of spending money and found that there were innumerable treasures to be had at the small general store in the village – and for 99 cents or less! The mother lode! The kind lady at the till patiently helped me each day to pick out something special for me to bring back to Nanny. Nanny, of course, said that I should not spend my money, but I did take great joy in seeing some of my gifted treasures occupying a special place in various rooms in the house.

Nanny’s gift to me was to feel loved, recognized, and worthy – all with much humour, playfulness, and a little bit of devilment on the side. In the last month of her life, having battled cancer for several years, and knowing she was taking a last trip to the hospital she had asked that all her children and their spouses come in and talk to her alone, one by one, as they were able. This also included me. It turns out, she had saved some tough questions for me. Tough as

it was, I treasured the fact that she trusted me and looked to me for hope. Later that afternoon, I accompanied her in the ambulance as we took the hour or so drive into Ottawa. Once we had her settled, I needed to get on a train, return to Whitby, and begin a 3-week family trip out west with my then husband and his parents. I found I was unable to move from her bedside. In these last weeks, when she needed hope and courage, she found strength to give it to me. She held my hands, looked into my eyes and heart, and told me it was OK to go. She gave me strength to walk out of the room. Her last gift was to stay with us until Labour Day weekend, which allowed me to return from the west and be by her side, ushering her into her next journey.

I continue to keep up a lively conversation with her spirit.

May any of you in a grandparent type of role have the opportunity to bestow unconditional love on those in your circle. You may never fully know the impact but know impact will be there.

### **Latest News on the “Welcome to Guelph” Project – Peter Gill**

As I write this, the Shirzai family is approaching three months since their arrival in Canada. To say that a lot has happened during that time would be an understatement! Sameen, the sister who has lived in Canada for many years, has been an enormous help and in spite of having a young family of her own has worked tirelessly to help the family settle here.

A few notable things have happened recently:

- In addition to the two young men who are attending John F. Ross high school, three family members are now attending ESL classes. We are endeavouring to have Nazila, the younger of the two sisters and who has the strongest English, enrol in continuing education rather than ESL. Ziauddin, the dad, is waiting to start his basic ESL class.
- The city provides newcomers with a free bus pass for a year and most of the family are now using public transit to get around. It helps that their house is on a bus route. This has given them a sense of independence and agency.
- The two sisters, Malila and Nazila, have begun playing indoor soccer at the university on 21<sup>st</sup> January. They played competitively while in Tajikistan which proved to be a tremendous benefit both from a physical and emotional standpoint.

- Salahuddin, the eldest son who has a civil engineering degree, is starting to look for employment. He has updated his resume and is anxious to begin work. He was the family's primary breadwinner while they were in Tajikistan.

The Harcourt/Trinity committee meets monthly with Sameen to discuss issues and provide support where we can. Please continue to hold this family in your prayers as they acclimatize to Canadian weather and Canadian culture.

### **Lemonade Time - Judi Morris**

*[Due to the illness of Judi's interviewees, this month's Interview has had to be postponed. Instead, Judi has provided a "behind-the-scenes" glimpse at her experience with interviewing. - Ed]*

Crab apples produced a bumper crop this year so I took to work and made over thirty jars of jelly to give away. People expect things like that from me, however it became clear in the morning they had not jelled. Darn ... and darn again. A lot of time and work went into that effort ... it had to be revived ... somehow. I dumped three jars into a pot in an attempt to cook it down to jelly stage. That only presented further disappointment ... dark, nasty tasting taffy that wouldn't come out of the jars. Raised by my Grandmother, who lived through two world wars and a Great Depression, I am well versed understanding it's a sin to waste anything ... particularly food.

My brain lit up. The product had the appearance of syrup, maybe it could be used on pancakes. Bingo! Not only was all not lost - it has a divine flavour and might possibly rival maple syrup. I wrapped them up along with my no fail pancake recipe. Hmm I thought ... maybe I should produce it this year and sell it. Col. Saunders was a late bloomer .... why not me? I had just made lemon aid from that near disaster. Ma would be pleased.

Up to now I have completed at least twenty interviews for the Harcourt Herald and I am at a loss for words to express how it has probably done more for me than any of the people who have been interviewed to date and for any who might have read them.

The aspirations of my youth were first to be a minister/missionary. My Father said I could only be a Deaconess because I was a girl. "Only "sounded like the bottom of the barrel – I suffer from claustrophobia and passed on it.



Animal technician and journalism spoke to me in high school. "You don't need an education," my father told me. "You are only going to get married one day and have children." On that advice I left high school in the middle of grade twelve for a job in a bank. That way I could buy myself a sports car ... first came an Austin Healy Sprite and I later upgraded to an Austin Healy 3,000, which I had bought from a blind man.  
(really ... I was glad he never smashed it up)

Fast forward. Twenty five years after my Father's prophecy had been fulfilled, and I had become an animal technician with my own livestock. Marion Auger, the Herald's editor, asked me to write something for the Herald, which I did ... then she asked if I would help with the Herald monthly. Only stolen moments were available to me, yet Marion presented an opportunity to dabble with the last of the three ... journalism, and she never asked for proof of education! An earlier edition of the Herald contained an interview. I not only wanted to do that, I already knew who I wanted for my first victim .... Sandy Middleton, known to the Harcourt Community as the Bird Man of Harcourt.

We were still in a bit of Covid lockdown so the interview was conducted by telephone. I presented the questions to Sandy over the phone but could not write fast enough and Sandy agreed for me to send him the questions and he would send me back the responses. That interview made me so happy. I have known Sandy for a long time and often asked him about birds that I saw on our farm. His story of how his father fostered his interest in birds with a Skylark captivated me.

There has been one interview every month since then. The process being the same at first. One thing I learned from that process was when the responses that came back, they were interesting, however were toned down and lacked the richness of response when the questions were first asked. Too much time to think altered the responses.

I knew there was more to Lisa Browning than I knew to ask about and ended up asking her to give me questions to ask. As a professional, Lisa led me through that one. I since have learned to ask the question: "is there anything you would like us to know"?

Several people I have taken out for a drive with my carriage pony, Tickle, but had yet to understand the recording potential of my cell phone. They all obliged by my sending them the questions after. I was lucky with them, not everyone is astute with computers.

Things opened up. I could safely go to peoples' homes; Edna Miller served me tea and cake made with tomato soup. I had been slow on the uptake of my options for the interviews; over time they expanded to my using zoom. Zoom provided not only the opportunity to see

people, but most important, a recording. I no longer had to ask people to send me their responses after I asked the questions.

I felt a solid responsibility to have something for Marion by the 20<sup>th</sup> of each month. Sometimes it came close to the wire. After every interview is how I like it, I send it to the person involved, to be approved by them. Everything I submit to print has to be accurate and in their voice. If they feel they have overshared and want something removed, they are given that opportunity. They must be happy .... or the interview will not be used.

One of the deadlines loomed and an interview could not to be used. There would be nothing that month. A thought came to me. Instead of asking one person a bunch of questions, I would ask one question to a bunch of people and promised them the responses would be anonymous. I called it an Interview with Many People and One question. A different take that received positive feedback. It provided lemon aid.

From Zoom I graduated to using the recorder on my Mac. A rich interview in my home with the reverends Sharon and Bill Chapman in front of my fireplace. I served lunch that day because they wanted to collect greens before they left. They not only collect greens here, they trimmed trails with me along the way, saving me a lot of work in the spring. (*All things Christmas used to do that for me.*) Oh My ..... when we stood up after a long, detailed and impressive interview I pressed play and there was no recording! We had spent two hours on it! I could never .... ever be able to recall their answers in their voice. I am not sure how long it took me to resume breathing that day. They asked me to send the questions and they would make a recording at home and send it to me. Bill and Sharon worked on that for a couple of hours without success and agreed to redo the interview with Zoom. They had by then already invested four hours with the interview. Does that not tell you something about the Chapmans? The interview had a do over. The responses were great, however only I knew the initial responses with a special richness. I Blessed them so many times for seeing the interview through, Bill told me I had to stop blessing him. The Chapmans produced the sweetest lemonade ever.

When Harcourt folk hear my voice on the end of the telephone they respond in various ways. Some think I am calling to interview them and they are not comfortable, some think I am calling to interview them when I am calling to get background on somebody they know, and sometimes I call people just to say hello. I have yet to figure how to get around assumptions of my purpose of a telephone call.

I put the Dykmans on my radar for February and March. Lorraine's interview led with the story of how she and Henk met and fell in love for the benefit of the February issue, and Henk's would follow in March. Henk agreed to write something every month, and maybe continuous,

about when the Canadians liberated him and his family in Holland. This time I had practised over and over with my computer for recording and with my phone for back up. I felt confident to record the interview in their home.

Edna Miller's interview was high on my list of successful one, then came the Chapmans. After my visit with the Dykman's, their interviews might just top all. Is it possible I might be getting better at this; the answer to that is "No": it's the Harcourt congregation, so very rich with grace that each new interview feels better than those before.

Lorraine and Henk came down with Covid and are unable to approve the interview. It is on hold.

We needed lemonade for February and Marion suggested I interview Conor, Harcourt's Administrative and Technical Support. I made an appointment to meet him at the office Tuesday for the interview and arrived eight minutes early. Fifteen minutes later, Kate came out of her office and informed me Conner was sick and would not be coming in.

This left little time for lemonade for the February issue, so this submission is it.

There have been mistakes along the way and I want to take this opportunity to correct one. I have known many of you very well for a long time and one such person is Dr. Marilyn Whiteley. She is "Marilyn," to me and I neglected to refer to her at the beginning of the interview as "Dr." Marilyn Whiteley. Marilyn worked for and earned her doctorate during times when women in the field of religious studies were suppressed to serving tea and cookies. She has a book documenting her journey and struggles with this, *Threads of Joy*. I am certain there is a copy in the Harcourt Library. Marilyn fought for every bit of credit she earned and she deserved and deserves a lot of credit. In her style and grace, she never corrected me. Dr. Marilyn Whiteley's grace never ceases to amaze me.

I do hope you have loved February's *LemonadeTime*, learning about the Harcourt interview process. I can tell you that I love working with everyone, and love and feel gratitude for the learning I receive as I go.



One evening, many years ago, when I was an undergrad student at the University of Waterloo, I was walking through the parking lot of the building in which my class would take place, when I was suddenly, unexpectedly, struck by an overwhelming sense of knowing, of being guided and protected, and oh-so-deeply loved. It was such a profound experience that it stopped me in my tracks. It took me out of my worried and frazzled frame of mind, and caused me to stop. To be still.

I didn't think too much about it at the time, but I never forgot it either. Although I didn't know it at the time, I know now that it was a sacred moment, in which I experienced the presence of God.

As life went on — after university, through marriage and divorce, raising my daughter, and working through more pain and trauma than I sometimes care to remember — I didn't take much time out for stillness. For experiencing that presence of God. I had too many others things to do!

I have told the story before, of my infancy and early childhood. Being raised by a perfectionist father and a manic-depressive mother presented its own challenges. (Note: I see these now as gifts, because I firmly believe that everything happens for a reason. I also know now that both of my parents were products of their own upbringing, where abuse and abandonment were ever-present realities.)

I developed the belief that my worth lay in my accomplishments, and I adopted my father's perfectionism as one of the standards by which I lived my life. Or at least I tried.

The concept of *Not Good Enough* is prevalent in our society, and it became almost a mantra for me. I never stopped. There was always something to do. Always something to improve. Always something to show my value. Believing subconsciously, my mother's assertion that "We are not on this earth to be happy" and "Whatever can go wrong, will go wrong," I developed a victim mentality, and a deep-seated fear of life itself. I definitely forgot about that moment in the parking lot, and the profound sense of worthiness that I felt then.

Even as I dealt with and recovered from the darkest moments in my life, I did not take the time to be still. I remained hyper-vigilant, vowing that I would never return to those dark places again. And I continued to *do* ... rather than just *be*.

**“Go placidly amid the noise and the haste,  
and remember what peace there may be in silence.”**  
**Max Ehrmann, *Desiderata***

It was an early morning, very recently, when I sat in silence just after waking up. I hadn't yet started the frenzied pace of production that my days had become, and I hadn't yet allowed anxious or fearful thoughts to enter my mind. I was simply there, in the silence. And in that silence, I felt peace. In that silence, I received comfort, reassurance, and support ... just as I had back in the UW parking lot so many years ago.

**“It's time to retreat from your life and go inward so you can reverse the  
process of being a victim of life and instead become a creator of it.”**  
**Dr. Joe Dispenza, *Becoming Supernatural***

Could it actually be possible for me to go through life without worry? Without shame? An unequivocal “yes” came back to me. That realization has changed my life. I can't explain it, but I know it is the greatest gift of love — and self-love — that I have ever received. I learned to relax and, more importantly, I learned to trust.

I now make time to be in silence, at least once every day. I give my concerns and my questions over to God, and I wait for the answers that I know will always come. And I remember the words of Max Ehrmann, who said ...

**“You are a child of the universe no less than the trees and the stars; you have a  
right to be here. And whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is  
unfolding as it should. Therefore be at peace with God, whatever you conceive  
Him to be. And whatever your labors and aspirations, in the noisy confusion of  
life, keep peace in your soul. With all its sham, drudgery and broken dreams, it is  
still a beautiful world.”**





Llew Little's father was a stone mason, and the family had little money, but Llew wanted an education. His goal was to become a doctor and a missionary. The family scrimped and saved to send him to university. However, one time when Llew saw no possibility of continuing his studies, the remarkable intervention of Carolyn Harcourt came to his rescue. (See Jean Little's telling of the story in the January 2003 edition of the *Harcourt Herald*.)

While Llew was at university, he often preached at the evening services of the Brooklyn Mission, and he also organized a young people's organization there. After he completed his medical studies, he and his wife, Flora, also a physician, went to Formosa (now Taiwan). It was there that their daughter Jean was born in 1932.

The CGIT girls at the Brooklyn Mission kept in touch with the missionary couple. They sent a doll in CGIT uniform to be given away to someone there, and the girls in Taiwan sent a doll in return. With the doll came several extra pieces of clothing, and everything was carefully labelled with its name and use. The Brooklyn girls had a showcase made to protect the doll and its clothing. Then they were ready to show off their new room and its treasure. They made paper cherry blossoms with which to decorate the room, and proudly received many compliments on their work when they opened it for viewing.

For many years, that doll — in its showcase — had resided in Harcourt's archives, being put on display at several Harcourt anniversary celebrations.

I don't remember how it came about, but somehow, when I was writing the history of Harcourt Church, I mentioned the doll and its connection to Jean Little within Ruth Tatham's hearing. Oh, said Ruth, I must show the doll to Jean. I felt hesitant to phone the famous children's author with the suggestion. (To be sure, we had served together on a pastoral relations committee years earlier, but she'd have no reason to remember me.) But Ruth took the matter in her own capable hands and contacted Jean. Yes, she would like to have me come and bring the doll.

So it happened that one winter day I called upon Jean, her sister Patricia de Vries, and her great-nephew Ben, bearing the doll, which I had carefully taken from its case. I was warmly welcomed. Though Jean's eyesight was very limited by this time, she examined the doll carefully by sight and touch. Her face glowed with pleasure as she recited the names of the various pieces of clothing; she was clearly delighted to be visited by this reminder of the past.



Perhaps, after all many years, it is time for the doll to find a new and appreciative home. But it remains a remarkable — and delightful — link with the past of the Brooklyn Mission and Harcourt Church.

## Life Events:

### Passages



**Johnson, Dr. Walter Halliday**

Died on Tuesday, January 16, 2024 at the age of 76 years.



**Barham, Dr. Richard**

Died on Monday, January 22, 2024.

