

# **The Harcourt Herald January 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 of the Editor



Now it is the time for all the “the white stuff”. (We like to call it “apple blossoms”...). With it comes the joy of snow shovelling, slippery roads, and the cold. Best to just sit by a warm fireplace and read something funny, or reminisce about the funny things that have happened in our lives.

Andre talks about “Laetare Sunday,” a Sunday during Lent when, in the ancient Church, it was appropriate to make jokes and be silly at a worship service. Laughter to lift the spirits. About our children and grandchildren it is easy – but to laugh about oneself????

Well, now I can laugh about myself: at my stay in St. Mary, whenever I needed some help, I would ring the little bell, and when the nurse came I would always first make a joke that should explain why and what I needed. My humour was not always appreciated by nurses, whose time are limited. My joke often fell on impatient ears.

So, in the “bleak midwinter,” we’ve asked for funny stories. Here they are!





What a fun way to kick off the New Year with some stories to make you smile or laugh! Although sometimes we cringe or moan about attending a church meeting, it has been my experience that often there is at least one moment of laughter and sometimes more. These may not be gut splitting, roll on the floor kinds of exchanges but they are delightful nonetheless. Laughter can release any rising tension and help us to find more agreement than we might perceive.

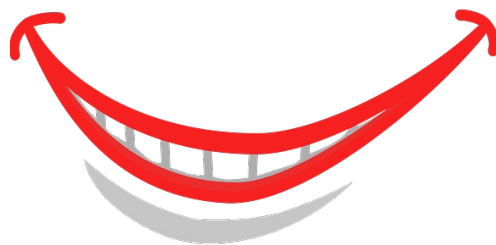
When I was first ordained and serving in my first congregations in Eastern Ontario. I had moved to the floor from the chancel, and on my way back up the steps I caught my foot on the bottom of my robe and did a face plant. I laughed, if somewhat embarrassingly, but then others joined in. Later, Kevin who had been at the service said that I really do slapstick humour best!

Another memorable moment occurred when Kevin and I were leading worship together at Lakeshore UCC in Goderich. I was doing the announcements. He had asked me to let people know that the Bible study he was running was open to anyone, even if they had not attended the previous ones. So I said to the congregation; ‘you are welcome to attend the Bible Study of Thursday even if you hadn’t been other weeks, because you didn’t miss anything’. I realized what I had said the moment it was out of my mouth. I paused, and the congregation paused. Thankfully Kevin let out a loud belly laugh – allowing the rest of us to laugh. That pregnant pause and then the laughter that followed, still makes me laugh.

Laughing together builds community. It is important to have times of levity and fun together because it helps us to risk a little vulnerability with each other drawing us closer together. To that end, I’m wondering if we might have an afternoon of board games followed by a potluck supper – perhaps in February? Eating and playing and laughing together is an important part of a life in faith together. Let me know if you’d be willing to help with this! ([kate@harcourtcommunity.ca](mailto:kate@harcourtcommunity.ca))

Enjoy the pages that follow!

Peace,  
Kate





## Council News - Kent Hoeg, Chair

Tis the season to be jolly. For this article we were asked to present something funny that happened to ourselves or others. I struggle with this question. Perhaps it's because I have such a poor memory. Perhaps it's because I'm not quite sure what is funny to one person, would be considered funny to others.

Is it funny that, as a 14 year old, I went skiing with a friend? He was quite good and assumed I was too. He took me on a chair lift to the top of the hill. As I was jumping off, the lift hit me on the back of the head knocking me to the ground. One of my skis fell off my boot and it proceeded to gracefully glide down the hill without me. I limped with one ski on, one ski off down the hill to embarrassingly get my lost ski. I spent the rest of the day on the bunny hill.

Is it funny that, as an adult, I went to change a leaky faucet stem in our kitchen? The stem came out quite easy. So did the flow of water that followed onto the counter and gushing to the floor. Lesson learned – turn off the water first!

Is it funny when I sat on a lawn chair and the meshing broke and I went right through the chair?

Is it funny when I started to go down the wrong direction on a street in Dover, England?  
Is this what you call self-deprecating humour?

I think I'll leave the funny stories to others.

### Council Meeting of 11/22/23 and 12/20/23

In the last Harcourt Herald article, I could not provide a Council update for our 11/22 meeting as the deadline for submissions had already passed. So, I will now provide the highlights of our 11/22 and 12/20 meetings.

- Discussions occurred around the naming of our Community Hub – how does Harcourt Commons sound?
- New rental opportunities continue to be brought forward. Clearly the message that Harcourt is a welcoming space is important to our community.
- 2024 Budgets continue to be reviewed by Council. This will be up for discussion and voting by our Congregation. We are projecting a smaller deficit in 2024 than we budgeted in 2023, but a deficit, nevertheless. So let the conversation begin!

- Council accepted the transfer of membership of Lyn McLeod from St. John's United Church in Alliston to Harcourt Memorial United Church. Welcome Lyn, we are glad you are here.
- Council approved the transfer of additional records from Harcourt's archives to the regional archives in Toronto.
- Council voted on "Remit 1: Establishing an Autonomous National Indigenous Organization". The vote was unanimously in favour. Please read the November 2023 issue of the Harcourt Herald for more information about this Remit.
- GUM is alive and well. The newly formed GUM exec will meet on January 23, 2024 to further explore opportunities that will allow the four Guelph United Churches to work more closely together. A good example of this is the December 31 service to be held at Trinity United Church. You are all encouraged to worship in one space that day. GUM is also hoping to ramp other GUM committees like our Ambassador's Team – a group which will help each church better understand the purpose, activities, and value of GUM.
- Council is also planning for our next Congregational Meeting, March 3, 2024. An important activity where the congregation shares its voice on the direction of Harcourt.
- To give adequate time at the March 3<sup>rd</sup> Congregational Meeting, we are hoping to provide the budget package for discussion and vote in February. This is not firmed up, but is a possibility.
- So much activity at Council. So much activity within Harcourt.

### Financial Update

As of November 30, we show a surplus of \$14,506 (income over expenses). This is exciting news. We continue to receive many generous donations by so many of you – many with comments thanking Harcourt for the great work that we do. Final word

In last month's Harcourt Herald, I indicated that I would love to hear from you. What would you like to see from me? What information am I not giving you? What direction would you like to see Harcourt move in? Sky's the limit – let me hear your hopes and dreams.

I'm still waiting for someone to reach out 😊 .

Respectfully, Kent Hoeg [hoeg@rogers.com](mailto:hoeg@rogers.com).



## Call for Engagement – Kent Hoeg

*[Kent delivered this message at the Music and Message service, as well as at Manna. We thought it important enough to reproduce his plea in the Herald. - Ed]*

I've had some personal tragedies in the past few years. Harcourt has helped me through those times.

I have found friends through Harcourt. I have had good times at Harcourt.

In return, I have supported Harcourt financially and through my donation of time. I do try to do my part for Harcourt.

Harcourt has been there for all of us, whether it be spiritually, social interactions, via outreach, via prayer and support.

And in return, so many of you have supported Harcourt with your love and commitment.

I know so many have given so much. I know there are many who have dedicated many hours to the good of Harcourt and our mission. To all of you, I thank you. Not in my role as Council Chair, but as Kent Hoeg. Thank you for your dedication, thank you for your talent and resources.

And now I am speaking to those of you who have not been at a point that you could help. Possibly you are new, possibly you took a break from previous volunteering, possibly your situation has changed, possibly you didn't know the urgent need. For those sitting in our church today. For those listening at home. To Manna. I'm speaking to the entire congregation.

Harcourt needs you. We are at a pivotal point. Contributions are down, volunteers are dwindling.

I'm standing here before you, asking that those of you who could offer some new found energy – we need you!

I reached out this week to check in on the status of some committees.

Finance is in search of a chair, a treasurer, a payroll person, an envelope secretary. Without these Positions we may be forced to hire these roles – at a cost that we just can't afford. Council needs a vice chair, we need new Umbrella Councillors. We've had people on Council for plus 10 years. Ministry & Personnel has asked for more 1-2 more volunteers. Property needs a 2-3 more members,



including someone to take leadership of the care of our gardens. The Trustees need 1 more member.

We know many of our amazing volunteers need to have a break, and we need others to step up. Don't look away. The strength and value that we receive from Harcourt is through our members, including our volunteers. But we are in a critical situation. We cannot survive without your stewardship.

Harcourt supports me in my need. Harcourt supports you. Please call or email me and offer your support. We will find a role for you. We need each other!

Thank you.

## **Reflections on Harcourt United Church's community engagement project (Hub) in 2023 -**

Patricia Eton-Neufeld

In 2023, a committee of dedicated Harcourt Church members began exploring how they could engage in a wider community outreach and move towards becoming what has been referred to as a community hub. This past year was a time for many stepping stones as the committee explored different paths to sharing the resources of Harcourt Memorial United Church with the wider community to become a more relevant presence in Guelph while maintaining our commitment to be an open, welcoming church community.

In this reflection, I would like to share some of my personal experiences with our early "outreach rentals" to explain how collaborations with other community groups not only generate a valued source of revenue, but also how and why the experience of renting our facilities to community groups weaves together with the outreach Harcourt was already associated with. Through the church's initiatives I believe we have created a more vibrant, beautiful, and ultimately stronger community fabric.

The 'Planted Seed Montessori School' was the first organization that approached us "looking for the exact right place for this beautiful program to land and call home for many years to come." To continue the quote, "We have no intention of inserting ourselves into a building and taking over, nor do we see ourselves being mere renters of a space. We are seeking community and we hope we have found it with you. We see Harcourt as a beautiful space to call home for our school." The school consists of two Montessori teachers with over 32 combined years of Montessori teaching experience. Both have lived internationally and have taught school together for 5 years. The students come from families who are determined to create a dynamic community school that offers a half-day of full Montessori classroom work as well as a half-day of experiential learning.



Harcourt also has an aesthetically appealing sanctuary space with an ideal acoustic and seating capacity for community concerts. In 2023 eleven organizations used the sanctuary to present their concert events. On December 1<sup>st</sup>, the University of Guelph Choirs presented a concert titled "Sanctuary" in the Sanctuary. After the event, we received a note from the University choir conductors that reads in part, "We were musing about Harcourt and your mission to foster growth, creativity and – indeed – sanctuary in Guelph. What a beautiful, progressive, generous approach. We feel truly blessed to benefit by your volunteers' time, and we know that our singers will learn important lessons by observing your example of altruism and humanitarianism."

A community that we have had the pleasure of getting to know and host is the Eritrean Christian community. They arrived at Harcourt looking for a large space to host baptism celebrations. At this point we have hosted eight of these events in the gym on Sunday afternoons and evenings. Some of these people have been through unbelievable difficulties and circumstances before they arrived in Canada where they have been able to find work, get married and make a home. When they are blessed with a child they want to celebrate that important event with family, friends and their entire community. For those of us who are retired and have grandchildren, it is perhaps difficult to remember when we were in our late 20s and 30s and the excitement of starting new jobs that ultimately led to careers, buying homes, having children, and celebrating those events with family and friends. I feel the Eritreans have rekindled a part of Harcourt, experienced 50 years ago with a new church, through their dancing, singing, joyous conversation and exuberant enthusiasm for life and celebration in their new home.



Finally, I would like to tell you a little bit about The Nightingale Centre for Grieving Children, Youth and Families. I first met Jodi, the Executive Director, at the end of June when I responded to an email inquiry, and invited her to Harcourt to see and experience our space. The Nightingale Centre provides grief and bereavement support to children, youth, and families who have experienced the death of a significant person in their lives. The centre offers a series of eight sessions, three times per year, at no cost to the participants. Each Monday



session is for two hours. At the end of the fall session Jodi reported, "your space is working perfectly for our groups." The Nightingale Centre has now requested a booking for the same spaces for a winter series. In my meetings with Jodi I explained that our rooms at

Harcourt are varied and each of them have unique qualities that can facilitate a particular program. Each room also has a very unique "feel" about it that is important when you are dealing with bereaved children and youth. As I walked together with Jodi through the Harcourt facilities in our first meeting, we talked about the needs of the participants in her programs and how the building could facilitate the feelings of safety, openness, and hope that are so vital for young people and families dealing with grief.

I am very excited about the possibilities for 2024 and building upon the varied and unique relationships we have nurtured in 2023. As we work together on this project I have come to know and appreciate much more deeply a number of Harcourt parishioners. If you are at all interested in a truly unique opportunity to serve at Harcourt, please speak to Steve Pierce or me about how you can be a part of this experience and contribute to the success of the Harcourt community Hub. There are a number of ways to participate. Through the act of volunteering your life can be enriched by working together with people in ways you may never have imagined.

### **Brief Summary of 2023 Activities:**

In 2023 Harcourt hosted 11 different musical organizations in the Sanctuary: Guelph Chamber Choir, Rainbow Chorus of Guelph/Wellington, Elora Singers, KW Symphony Baroque Series, University of Guelph Choirs, Guelph Youth Singers, Guelph Concert Band, Guelph Symphony Orchestra, Suzuki String School, Kiwanis Music Festival, and James Gordon for the Gordon Lightfoot Tribute Concert.

In addition, the Harcourt United Church Choir hosted a popular fundraising concert, as did Jane Lewis and Tannis Slimmon, as a fundraiser for Chalmers Community Services. Four different music teachers held their end of year recitals in the church. The Lightshine Singers and the Jane Lewis vocal meditation group each uses the Sanctuary 1½ hours every week.

Monthly and occasional meetings were held in the Sanctuary by 5 groups: PROBUS Club of Guelph, Old University Neighbourhood Residents Association, Ecumenical Campus Ministry, The Guelph Seminar and the City of Guelph Ward 5 Town Hall. In addition, Third Age Learning holds its Fall and Winter 8-week series in the Sanctuary.

For the first time in 2023, Harcourt hosted the Exalters' Church Weekend Conference, a monthly Hindu group, five Cool Aunt Creatives Markets, and the Harvest Bowls event to raise funds for Chalmers Community Services. With each of these new initiatives, valuable lessons were learned in how to use the sanctuary space differently from what we consider more "normal" use of the space for musical events, meetings and lectures.

The chapel is sometimes used in association with concerts for musicians to gather before the concert event. It has also become the meeting place for the After Stroke Group membership lunch, the Grapevine Group and, probably most significantly, the Nightingale Centre for Grieving Children, Youth and Families that also uses 202/203 and the Nursery for smaller groups. Last winter the Great Big Theatre Company also used the chapel but very quickly outgrew that space and are now in another church in Guelph. The Guelph Guides have also found a new home in the chapel because the Montessori School occupies the Friendship Room where the Guides formerly met.

Room 202/203, with its Board Room table, has become a favourite room for many meetings of different Harcourt groups as well as for the Chalmers Community Services board meetings. This room also hosts the youngest members of the Nightingale Centre for their grief counselling sessions.

The gym is a very versatile venue and hosts a wide range of activities including March break and Summer camps, the Eritrean community's baptism celebration parties, fundraising dinners, pre-concert artist gathering spaces, post-concert receptions and fundraising silent auctions, a successful Christmas Market hosted by Cool Aunt Creatives, and a very successful antique sale.

On Wednesdays the gym has become the home for Sandlot Sports with its very unique approach to skill acquisition and motor development in young kids. On Monday and Tuesday evenings the gym continues to host the Beavers, Cubs and Scouts. On Thursday the very charming Autism Dog Services training happens in the gym.

Last summer the parking lot was alive with the action of the Pedalheads Bike Camp and we look forward to hosting them once again in 2024. Last summer also saw the gardens alive with the sound of children for summer camps, and we look forward to hosting them again in 2024.

Harcourt United Church is becoming a vibrant community Hub that provides opportunities for a variety of organizations that benefit from the flexibility of the church's spaces and resources. We and the people of Guelph are blessed with the results of this initiative that gives us opportunities to contribute to the community within which we live and work.





## **What has Manna been up to – Pamela Girardi**

You may have noticed little ones wandering the halls at Harcourt with their instruments this Advent. Or perhaps lots of youth group artists sipping on hot chocolate in Room 203. It was a joy-filled month!

The collage below shows images of the adults of the Manna Brainstorming/Planning committee and the Senior Youth Group trying their hand at linocut printmaking. We had linocut artist Sarah Fuller join our Manna service during Advent. Sarah's art is faith-based and messages about social justice. During our service we saw several of her images of Mary, the Magnificat, and the nativity set in her town of Los Angeles and in her experiences with the LA Catholic Worker community.

We were inspired to try to make our own. You can see some of the artwork of our Senior Youth (grades 8-12) and Manna Brainstormers below :)

Our other collage of photos on the next page shows images of our third Sunday of Advent. On this music sharing Sunday, anyone could sign up to share a piece of music. We had lots of wonderful pieces to put us into the Christmas spirit that were woven into our service.

Ahren played a song he wrote on the piano entitled "Pickle" to start us off. It was beautiful! Mary taught us the song 'Holy Angels' by Sara Thomsen. Did you know we have ten wonderful Manna children and youth who are students at the Suzuki String School of Guelph??? They got together to practice and played 'Silent Night' on their violins, violas and cellos under Antonio's leadership. Janet played us 'Little Drummer Boy' on her recorder with the help of several young drummers. Grace shared hand drumming with us. Peter and Jill taught us to 'Twist and Shout' and Elizabeth and Jerry got us 'Rocking Around the Christmas Tree'.

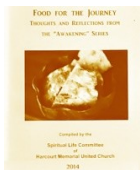
We are grateful for all of the music shared - the pieces that gave us time to reflect and sink deeper into our service message - and the pieces that got us up dancing and singing as a community.

Music and art are some of the important ways that Manna comes together to reflect, to share our faith and commitment to social justice, to build community, and to celebrate!









## Food for the Journey - Did Jesus ever laugh? - Bill Lord for the Spiritual Life Committee

Thanks, Marion, for asking me to write on behalf of Spiritual growth, a significant part of life for each one of us. As most of you reading this article will know, I have focused much of my time of over 60 years of ministry on education and especially adult learning. Adults learn differently than children. The main difference is that when an adult discovers a new idea he or she must reconcile where it fits in their experience. For a six-year-old there is just the quality and quantity of life's experiences to explore. For the adult this often involves unlearning so that we can gain a new perspective.

I am also aware that the theme for this month's Herald is LAUGHTER. I am challenged by holding in one hand faithfully inviting individuals to deepen the spiritual life and doing that in the context of laughter.

There is a story that I carry in my memory that still makes me laugh when I retell it each time.

In many churches, at least in the past and for some it is still happening, the children's story was part of the morning worship service. A minister, not the best Storyteller in the world, called the children to come forward and gather around him. He said "I am going to ask you a question: What has a bushy tale, climbs trees, and hides nuts in preparation for winter?" After a prolonged silence, a little boy said, "I know you want me to say Jesus, but it sounds like a squirrel to me!"



This story not only brings laughter but also a challenge. In what ways have we led people to believe there is only one answer even when we know life is never like that. There are always choices. Such is the case with opportunities for spiritual growth - there are options.

We have just come through the season of Advent. The focus this year was on the birth narrative as told by the gospel of Luke. On the first Sunday we heard the story of Zechariah and Elizabeth, the parents of John the Baptist. The first people to hear their story would immediately connect it with that of Abraham and Sarah. When Sarah was told that in her old age that she would have a baby -- **she laughed**. But, she named her son Isaac, which has the meaning of **"one who laughs"**. I remember a colleague of mine was invited to preach the sermon at an amalgamation service when two aging congregations were joining together. He chose Sarah laughed as the text. He said basically you're like Sarah: you can laugh; but remember the rest of the story and remember Isaac and his place in biblical history.



In 1973 the artist Willis Wheatley, who was the illustrator for the New Curriculum of the United Church of Canada, painted four facial portraits of Jesus. Only one became famous and popular. It was originally called "Christ the Liberator". \*\* But it very quickly became popularly known as "The Laughing Christ." People either loved it or hated it. I can understand why the hate. My Sunday school years convinced me that Jesus was much too serious to laugh. This painting captured the world's attention and more than a million copies of it have been sold worldwide. Like the messages delivered to Zechariah and Elizabeth and to Abraham and Sarah, this picture was a theological statement to prepare for the new and unimagined future.



One thing about growing old is that one carries with one packets of history, like this strong United Church story of the Laughing Christ and its theological impact on the world over the last 50 years. Maybe we can believe and allow joy and laughter to change our perspective on life in and with the Spirit, as we enter 2024. That may even make God laugh with us or at us; who knows?

\*\* Here are two links where you can see the facial portrait and learn about the artist.

A story about the artist

<https://vancouver.sun.com/news/staff-blogs/meet-the-creator-of-the-laughing-jesus-photo>

An interview with the artist

<https://musiklus.com/in-isolation-march-27/>



## Old Habits Die Hard – Andre Auger

Communion had gone particularly well at Manna that Sunday morning. As we prepared the elements before the service, Pamela and I, both former Catholics, shared some of our experiences with Catholic Communion. We both could tell stories of times when the priest or an altar server had dropped a host: what a ritual had to be followed to retrieve the fallen host, much to the embarrassment of the careless one, since Catholics believe that each particle of host contained the body of Christ.



At worship that morning, Jim had presided over the blessing of the elements, and the children who helped with communion were especially careful not to spill or drop anything on the nice carpet. Everything went according to plan.

As we cleaned up, however, some crumbs of the communion bread fell to the floor. Both of us gave out an instinctive yelp: the horrible had happened! Jim, not

missing a beat, went to get the carpet sweeper, and, in no time, had cleaned up the mess. Both Pamela and I stood there in horror, then howled with laughter, as we realized how much our past was still present. Jim, deadbeat as always, lifted up the sweeper with the particles of bread, and solemnly pronounced: this is a new form of “monstrance\*”.

\* For those unfamiliar with Catholic ritual, a “monstrance” is a golden sun-like device which can hold a communion wafer so that, at certain high rituals, it could be displayed on the altar, and the faithful could adore Christ contained in the wafer.





Only once was I asked to preach on the Biblical story of Noah. Read on and you will discern why. I had tons of fun with this particular Genesis passage, if you know what I mean. There are oodles of Noah and ark jokes, such as, “On the ark, why did Noah have to discipline the chickens? They were using fowl language.” Also, there are numerous key life-lessons to learn from this story:

It’s important not to miss the boat. Plan ahead and remember, it wasn’t raining when Noah built the ark. To be safe, it’s often good to travel in pairs. Speed isn’t always an advantage for the cheetahs climbed aboard the ark but so did the snails. When you’re stressed, float for awhile. All storms eventually end, no matter how intense or devastating they may be. Life’s multicoloured rainbows provide joy and reassurance as well as solidarity with the LGBT+ community.

As a minister, I was elated with the boat-load of Noah and ark material. I dug in my oars and began to reflect. A virtual flood of ideas emerged. Quite the deluge! Like one of Noah’s sons, I felt I had to “ham” it up a bit. It was tough to reign in my thoughts in order to create a well-crafted 15-minute message. As I continued to prepare, I was able to pare the material down to a manageable length.

After all the atrocious puns, jokes, and digressions, like 1 Peter 3, I referred to some similarities between baptism, the church community, and Noah's ark. As Shane Claiborne and others have noted, the situation in the ark, like the church, can sometimes get rather messy, claustrophobic, restrictive, even smelly, but to remain outside would be to risk drowning. The church, like the boat Noah constructed, should be a refuge. Even when it’s rather chaotic or unsure of the direction it is headed, the church should still be a comforting and challenging safe place, as well as an instrument of salvation. The church is a humongous, unwieldy life boat. An eclectic community of open-hearted believers. A shelter that provides hope and understanding amidst the wild and wondrous aspects of life.



## Wardrobe Malfunction – Bill Chapman

I should never hurry. I should never hurry. I can't remind myself of that enough.

It had snowed heavily Saturday afternoon and evening and I got up early Sunday morning to get the snowblower started up to blow 2 1/2 feet of snow off 300 ' of driveway so Sharon and I could get out to be at church.

We had to be there. We were the ministers!

I raced back in after clearing the drive, raced upstairs to the bedroom and changed back into "go-to-church- clothes" and then raced back downstairs to get my coat and heavy, and tall, snow boots out of the closet. Raced out to the garage to put the bibles, worship service notes and materials, and all the usual paraphernalia in the car and then raced back in to get the last of everything we needed.

Sharon, wise woman that she is, asked, "Do you have shoes to wear at church?" " You only have socks under those boots!"

I raced to the closet, reached in and grabbed a pair of shoes. Threw them into the last bag, raced to the car and we were off.

When we got to church Sharon went in to start getting the sanctuary ready and I stayed out to help a couple of the congregants shovel the sidewalks and wheel several of the wheelchair bound congregants from the nursing home across the street up the ramp into the sanctuary.

Finally. Everything was ready. I walked into the office, hung up my coat opened the bag for my shoes and found ,,,, one brown low cut Oxford shoe for the left foot and one black high cut Blundstone for the right foot. In reaching in to my closet at home I'd grabbed the two centre shoes from two pairs sitting side by side.



So there I was all morning at the front of the church with mismatched feet to the delight and amusement of the congregation.

Never hurry. Never hurry. Always look!



## The Road to Gettysburg – Donna Chapman

*[Donna is a regular participant in the On-line Holy Listening Circle, and lives in London, ON. - Ed]*



Perhaps my attempts to gain a foothold on the battle grounds of Gettysburg didn't have as dire consequences as Pickett's charge but it did come with some uproarious trials long memorialized in friendly gatherings since. The journey was long drawn out as the first attempt to survey that American consecrated ground with my friend was disrupted by car trouble. A few years later finding ourselves below the Mason Dixie Line, it was felt that our movement north could and would include Gettysburg.

The first strategic error was following the GPS that took us through the heart of Philadelphia. The Expressway was three times the length of Toronto's Don Valley Parkway and crawled three times as slowly. Were we destined to fail getting there once again? The cleaning lady at a Service Centre looking up the hours of the battlefield park assured us it was open till dusk that mid-June day. So we quickened our pace through the rolling hills of Pennsylvania on to Gettysburg National Park at last arriving in the parking lot. Famished we opened the back of our SUV wagon to grab our provisions. My friend standing next to me took hold of the nachos and I hoisted up the jar of salsa. Left holding nothing but the lid, the jar full of sauce crashed like a cannonball on to the pavement. I then remarked how miraculously I was not a casualty of the carnage of salsa spray. But alas, my friend's capris had become the victim of shards of onions and tomatoes.

Unlike the under-supplied Confederates who had once canvased the nearby town for shoes, my friend could pull out from her supplies a clean pair of pants. As she tactically opened the car doors to block the view of her actions to change into new apparel, she heard a stranger with a camera enthusiastically announce, "Oh look a catbird is eating some salsa by this license plate, "OHCATS". I've got to get this shot!" No doubt sometime later he would discover in the background of his impromptu picture not only had he captured the rebel grey catbird next to my Ontario vanity plates but also a pair of bare legs with pants surrounding someone's ankles.

We did not give up. We marched on only to discover the Visitor's Centre was closing much earlier than we were led to believe and the park rangers had retreated for the evening.

Left discouraged but not defeated we came up with a plan. Taking on board the last minute purchased self-guided CD tour of the battlefield, we pulled out of the parking lot on our tactical journey. And immediately became lost in the heart of the town. Meanwhile the commentator said through the car speakers, “Be sure to drive safely obeying all traffic signals and signs!” Just then my friend shouted out louder than the Rebel’s cry “STOP!”.



Slamming on the brakes at the sudden appearance of a stop sign, our supply of melting ice water in the small cooler came shooting from behind us sending a wave of ice and liquid cascading over the centre console, into the cup holders, floor mats and of course onto my friend’s second pair of clean pants in the last hour.

Bedraggled and wet we never did find the starting point of the tour. But we did come upon the second marker where the first shots of the battle had rung out and consequently we then did what needed to be done. In full display to all the serious American tourists around us, we opened our car doors and flung out the shards of ice, waved in surrender our water filled floor mats, and laughing with great glee announced our presence at the battlefield. And like General Daniel Sickles of the Union Army whose amputated leg he visited from time to time at the Smithsonian, we too visit with our laughter the memories of our eventual conquering of Gettysburg.

## **The Snake - Judi Morris**

An OPP squad car pulled up in front of our house. Oh crap. I fretted the woman reported us. What I could be charged with? Maybe we caused the woman to suffer a heart attack or stroke?

My neighbour, Jim Christie, stepped out of the car, which had all windows down. Cicadas spoke to the heat and humidity of the day.

“Hi Jim,” I said with a reserved tone.



He responded in an unusual friendly manner ... it didn't ease my skepticism or tension about the reason for his visit. After a few niceties and an uncomfortable pause, I addressed the elephant in front of my house. "Are you here about the snake?"

"The snake?" he questioned.

"You mean you don't know about the snake?" I timidly asked.

"I stopped in to ask how the incubator you borrowed is working, but ... I guess you need to tell me about the snake."

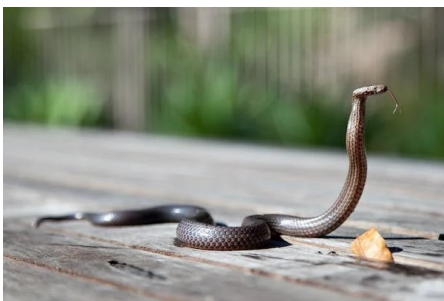
The snake story goes like this: Remember, Cicadas reported the temperature and humidity, and air-conditioning in cars was not common yet, even in squad cars. My girls did not want to be hauled to the grocery store with me – they wanted to keep their game of crazy eights going. They had set out a blanket under the ash grove in the front yard. At ages 10 and 11, they had never been left alone on the farm before. My trip to the grocery and back would take 40 minutes max. This was a good time for a first.

I returned to find them rolling with laughter. They couldn't speak a word. Every time they tried, they grabbed their stomachs and rolled with laughter pain again and again. The story came out in-between their gasps for air.

We had an old Doberman named Tory Bert. The Bert came from Sesame Street. We all had middle names and the girls insisted he had two names as well. From an early age they trained Tory Bert to deal with the snakes in their lives. He did a fine job. All they had to do was scream "SNAKE!!" to send him into seek and destroy mode. No snake slithering along was safe on this farm. Once he had them in his jaws, he flipped them up and down into the air to bring about their demise.

On this day, while they played their game of crazy eights, a snake took a fateful journey across the county road in front of our farm. In true form, Tory Bert raced out onto the road to do his job ... protect them from harm. At the same time a car came along from Guelph. The girls leapt to their feet screaming for the car to stop ... it did.

An elderly woman was kind enough to stop for the dog on the road. The dog continued his mission to execute the snake. At this point the girls' laughter flared up. In broken sentences with attempts to breathe and wipe uncontrolled tears they finished their report:



Tory Bert grabbed the snake – a breath

He flung it in the air – a gasp  
It went through the open window – crying and  
rolling ensued  
Landed on to the woman's lap – howling & gut grabbing  
There was a scream - they screamed in pain  
The door of the car opened – more gasps to breathe  
The snake came flying out - more gut grabbing  
The door of the car closed - crying returned  
The car burned rubber down the road - more gut grabbing  
She kept screaming until the car was out of sound distance  
- breathing returned to almost normal

"I thought she must have filed a complaint against us," I told Jim.

“Judi,” Jim said. “If our office got a call from an elderly woman because a dog threw a snake in her car, they would ask her where she lived ... then would have sent the white coats to her house.

## What Tree? - Lisa McTaggart

When launching a new program with lots of parts (particularly individual species of plants and all the people who are going to plant them) there can be hiccups. For example, some of the plants might not make it onto the truck for delivery. But, with creativity and cell phones, these little snafus can be fixed.

120 of the 125 plants for the Take Root Pick up after the Sunday service in May were delivered to Harcourt the day before by the City staff person. Pamela and Jill and Martin Litchfield the Take Root Project Coordinator realized after the truck had already driven away that there were no larch trees.

A quick phone call to the Riverside yard where the trees were being sorted for delivery identified the error – there were five surplus larches. They had made it from the nursery to the Riverside yard, but hadn't made onto the truck making all the deliveries that day.

My daughter, working for the City Stewardship Group helping out at the public works open house at Municipal Street overheard the details of the error. She would return to the yard at Riverside to drop off the truck she was using to for the open house. She could indeed pick up the trees and do a special delivery on her way home to the very same neighbourhood.

She connected directly with Martin Litchfield to confirm exactly what was missing. He said they needed “five larch trees”. Denya heard they needed five large trees. She asked what type, hoping they would fit in her car. But she needed to know what type of tree.

“Larch”, Martin answered. “Yes large, but what type?” Denya persisted.

Fortunately, native larch trees are also called tamarack. Unmistakable even over poor cell connections. And all five fit in a Leaf (the car made by Nissan).

The next day, all the plants made their way to their new homes.



### **Just a few of many humorous experiences over the years at Harcourt – Peter Gill**

#### Hospitality Plus:

Earlier this year Manna and the Music/Message services held a joint worship which included communion. Pamela asked my 9 year old grandson Oliver if he would distribute the bread, which he agreed to do. As he and I were sitting in the front row I was his first “customer”. Oli picked up the piece of bread with the tongs and handed it to me and then asked “would you like a cracker as well grandad?”

#### John Buttars’ favourite swear word:

A good many years ago during a sermon John pointed out that his team minister at that time, Jean Wright, always left her office light on when she came down the stairs for morning worship. John, of course, always turned his off. As soon as worship ended I ran up the stairs, turned hers off and John’s on. After supper I called John to tell him he wasn’t quite as virtuous as he made out. “You bu\*\*er, I KNEW I turned my light off!”

#### Captive Audience:

One of Keith Slater’s many talents was writing short chancel dramas to bring the scripture to life. So one Saturday morning, Jill and I were in the sanctuary rehearsing with Keith when an undertaker wheels a coffin in and leaves it just in front of the stage. Keith mused “I wonder if there’s anyone in there” (stupid question I thought). A few minutes later the undertaker returns and lifts the lid and leaves again so we rehearse a bit more and then go to

take a look at the deceased individual. Keith remarks "I hope we get a better reception from the congregation than we've had from this fellow".

### April Fool's

Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> April several years ago. I've forgotten what our anthem was that Sunday but it was a gentle piece. Alison came rushing in from the 9.00 service (as usual) and the choir is all waiting. She starts playing a lovely introduction and we break into a rollicking calypso/Caribbean song "Shut de door, keep out the devil". Alison isn't usually lost for words and the look on her face was priceless – the choir had gone rogue!

### **The Humour in ALS – Rosalind Slater**

Keith had a great sense of fun, even when facing death. I am going to tell you a story of one of his jokes, one which I planned to recount in the eulogy I gave at his celebration of life, but Rev. Wendy, who was officiating, thought not acceptable as it might upset some of the congregants attending that day. I hope none of my readers will be upset by this piece, I am only sharing it as a funny experience and one that I HOPE will bring laughter to many, as it did to us at the time. I should say that Keith was suffering from A.L.S.

Ever since his admittance to the hospital, Keith had received a steady barrage from doctors and nurses trying to persuade him to sign a D.N.R form. He was adamant that he was not signing one and he asked me to promise not to sign either. I promised, an easy thing to do after all the other things I'd done for him recently. Just then the daily doctor visit happened, a new doctor we hadn't seen before. He began in the usual way and led to the fact that no D.N.R. had been signed. I explained that Keith didn't wish for a D.N.R. and so had chosen not to sign it and I'd promised to uphold his wishes.

Well, this doctor took a different route from all the others and began to explain the reason for D.N.R., and the difficulties that could arise if Keith persisted. 'They will try all methods to resuscitate you' he said 'they will beat your chest with paddles' they might break your ribs. Silence happened, of course Keith could not speak at this point of his illness and for once I was speechless. Then Keith gestured for his sign language board and for me to interpret for him. 'How many ribs?' he asked. 'I could probably spare a couple.'



## **An Interview with Rev. Sharon Chapman & Rev. Bill Chapman - Judi Morris**

For those familiar with the stories of Jesus, you know he was a teacher, he was compassionate, he was caring. As you read through this interview you will see both Chapmans have displayed those traits throughout their time as clergy and into retirement.

Judi: You are both retired Baptist clergy. Baptist to United Church of Canada ... what comes first here ... the chicken or the egg? I will begin with; how long have you been coming to Harcourt and what brought you to Harcourt then go for the back storey.

Sharon: We have been coming for about 4 ½ or 5 years. We retired from our last church with The Baptist convention in Ontario & Quebec and moved back to Guelph; we could not attend the church we had pastored in and so began to look for another church and first went to Dublin St United. I personally needed to have a church that was fully affirming and I needed that to be out in the open and not hidden or not fully accepted. I had connections with John Buttars, Andre Auger, and several Harcourt people years before when we pastored in the city. It was a natural fit for me at least, to come to Harcourt and be involved. And I really appreciated the Harcourt Ignatian listening. There is a whole undercurrent of a spiritual listening understanding of one another which I found really significant.

Bill: I was born & raised in Guelph. When I was a very young child my parents decided they wanted to go to a church and the closest church to them (they lived where the Bread Bar is now,) so they went to the Brooklyn Mission on Martin Street. Rev. Rose was their Pastor. I was baptized there. My parents had a falling out and stopped attending. I continued to go for cubs and my early years of Boy Scouts. The woman who was the scout master was Mary Clifford. I think she was a Mission participant.

Judi So ... Bill ... I am *gobsmacked* to learn you attended the Brooklyn Mission! The beginnings of Harcourt we often hear about. Most of us thought you were a Harcourt import and it turns out you are more of an original than the rest of us! Can you tell us what the Brooklyn Mission was like for you if you can recall any of it?

Bill: Yes ... physically it was just a basement with a roof on it. They didn't have the money to finish the building back then. They put the basement in and a set of stairs going down and they put a flat roof on top and we met in that basement.

Judi We often hear about it being a mission church. Did you experience their outreach?



Bill: They were an outreach, I believe, of Norfolk. The people of Norfolk were concerned of the poor people on the south side of the river and wanted to start something. But really, I don't know much about the church other than the minister ... The minister continued to visit my family even though they stopped attending. My Mom enjoyed Rev. Rose. He would come up and have tea with her. That was when I was about 10 or 11.

Judi: We have you here at Harcourt now ... I met you both at the 9:00 a.m. where you participated in the Sacred Listening Circle. Your contributions were quite deep and rich. The penny dropped when I learned you both are retired ministers. How different was U C's style of service for you? You both certainly fit in Harcourt like two dirty shirts.

Bill: There's very little difference other than some of the liturgy and some of the formal activities like baptism by immersion for adults. The United Church baptizes children and babies. The liturgy – the worship service was virtually identical.

Judi: You speak about the immersion for baptism. What happens if someone can not bring themselves to be literally dunked?

Bill: We throw them in ... ha ha ... no ... There are alternatives. One of the most common alternatives is to take a pitcher of water and pour it over their head. The key thing was, it was adult believers' baptism, so you had to say you wanted it for yourself.

Judi: Sharon, you told me the other week that there are basically three types of Baptists which clarified things for me. Can you explain?

Sharon: There is the Fundamental Independent Baptist Church which we have in Canada and they really do their own things. They can be quite legalistic and puritanical. There is a middle group that Southern Baptists might fit into ... here it might be the Evangelical Fellowship Baptists. They would be more moderate, but neither group would have women in ministry for a long time. The Southern Baptists have more recently, but it has caused a real split in them. Then there is the group that we were involved in Canada called the Canadian Baptists. We were the Canadian Baptist Convention of Ontario & Quebec; and in the States, it was the American Baptists. They would be more on the moderate - I wouldn't really call them Liberals - but more progressive in terms of theology ... women had a place in Ministry. There certainly was some concern there and criticism, but they did ordain women.

Judi: What took you both into ministry? Were you raised in religious homes? Can you briefly tell us about your families?

Sharon: I started out as a young child. My parents and my Grandparents were very committed Christian Scientists. When I was about 8 years old, we moved to a new suburb of Toronto and a United Church was just starting up in the neighbourhood. My Dad said, "I think this is where we should go as a family," so we started to attend the United Church at that point. My family went to church on Sundays and they did get involved in the United Church, but I wouldn't have called them overly religious by any means. In fact, when Bill and I announced that we were going into ministry, my Mother found that very hard. She wasn't quite sure what that meant and was concerned that we might go off in some mission field somewhere in the world and she wouldn't see me again. It was definitely a call on our lives and we responded to it.

Bill: My family attended church until I was 5. For me to go into ministry was a huge shock. My family was very solidly blue-collar class ... I was the first and only person in my Father's family to go to University. I had gone and done Urban studies and Transportation Programming at McMaster and to go from working for the department of highways to saying I wanted to go into Ministry was a big step.

Sharon: We both graduated from University the same year. I graduated from Guelph and Bill from McMaster. And that summer we got married we had no ambitions to be in ministry at all. We moved to Toronto. I was in Teacher's College; Bill was working for the department of highways. We got involved with a nearby Baptist Church. After a year in that church, we realized we wanted to be more involved with mission work. So, we ended up going to Thunder Bay to run a home for indigenous girls. It was a very large house and housed 13 kids as well as Bill and me and another couple. These kids had come down from the northern communities and went to high school in Thunder Bay. At that same time Bill was working on further education and I was teaching. We had no idea or understanding of residential schools or what the Department of Indian Affairs was. A person from Indian Affairs came to the house once a week and sat with us and talked with the kids to make sure they were doing OK. We had no idea the control he had over them. I wish we knew then what we know now; we would have had a much better understanding of our kids. They would have been the children of Residential School Survivors. For the most part they would have been parented very poorly. It was out of that one-year experience that we went further into Ministry. Bill, you can pick up there.

Bill: We knew that we wanted to be involved with people and the options were to go on as teachers or be involved in ministry. Both our Pastors, one from Toronto and one from Thunder Bay encouraged me to look at ministry. The one from Toronto said I should apply to the school he had graduated from because it was such a good quality school. So, I applied to Eastern Baptist Seminary in Philadelphia and was accepted.

Judi: Philadelphia? Did you feel safe there? That's a city with a rough reputation.

Bill: Well ... our church was in the inner city of Philadelphia. The area we lived in was very rough. There was high rise slum housing on one side and low-rise slum housing on the other... it wasn't a safe area. Having said that, people got to know Sharon and me as two things; one was as clergy, so we were neutral – we were the people who helped anybody and so we were basically protected by everybody. And we were known as being Canadian. The Philadelphia Flyers were winning the Stanley Cup in those days so all the kids wanted us to teach them to play hockey. So, we were pretty immune.

Judi: From what I hear you saying Bill, I am curious; was the calling on behalf of promoting scripture or teaching, supporting and caring for humankind?

Bill: I didn't see myself as an evangelist, working as a "Hail, Come to Jesus person." But I did see myself, especially coming out of the group home with the aboriginal kids, as a person who had a real heart for people. And I wanted to work in their lives ... have time to work with them as families ...I wanted the connectivity with kids, families, and parents. One of the things working in the school taught me, was that we can only deal with so much with a kid at school, but there's a whole lot more going on there, whereas a minister might be able to do more. So, it was more of an idea of working with people, helping people, supporting people.

Judi: So ... How, when and where did such a well-suited couple meet?

Sharon: We met in Guelph at a party off campus at a Twister Board game. For those of you who remember, it's a game with lots of big dots on a big sheet. You spin a spinner and keep putting a foot and hand on the dots. Bill says we were very intimately involved on this twister board. All I remember is he had corduroy pants and loafers. Bill had come home from University and I had just started at the U of G.

Bill: The following Sunday we both went to church at Harcourt and saw each other again.

Judi: Harcourt worked its fickle finger of fate into your lives. Were you married before or after you were called?

Bill: Before. I was working as an engineer for the department of Highways, Sharon was at Teacher's College. We were comfortable, involved in good jobs, and had no idea of Ministry.

Judi: You have a daughter and a son. Do either share your deep spiritual sense of Christ?

Sharon: That's an interesting question, Judi. and I would put into perspective: what does that mean in the year of 2023 as opposed to what it meant back in the seventies when they were both born. Our son and daughter were both raised in the church. They called themselves dual theologian brats. When someone would phone and ask if they could speak to the minister they would say, "Which one?" They were involved in the church when they were married but slowly moved away from it. After a while they didn't fit the church - or the church didn't fit them, I'm not sure which. Both are very much their own people ... they walk to their own drumbeat. Both our kids are very involved with serving and giving to people in many different ways. They are almost over the top. I see them still very involved with spirituality. It's a different expression of their faith.

Bill: I would say they are profoundly spiritual, Judi. Spirituality is ultimately the love that is at the core of the universe. They express that love in practical and caring and helpful ways.

Judi: Sharon, you went into teaching in your early adult life, gravitating to a hospital spiritual care provider where you did your utmost to offer hope. We learn from hospital chaplains that it's not a job you can go home from and leave behind. Can you share some of that with us?

Sharon: Hmmm ..... (she puts her head back with a tight smile & takes a deep breath before she speaks). Yes ... I loved what I did, sharing with people who were at crucial times in their life. So often it was dealing with people who were either seriously ill or were facing imminent death or who had recently suffered the loss of a relative or close friend. It was very a significant time in the lives of many people. It was a privilege to walk in those times with people. But .... the downside of all that, after years of that kind of work, the load of sadness is huge. My son said to me one day when he came home from work, "Mom ... you're sad." And I knew at that point I needed to take a break. I needed to move away from spiritual care work in the hospital and move into a different form of ministry.

Judi: Is that when you went into the prison/correctional centre as a chaplain?

Sharon: Yes, because we came to Guelph. Bill and I were both ministers at First Baptist church in Guelph and at that time I also got involved with Federal Penitentiaries right across Canada. I was on a government committee that oversaw chaplaincy work in the prisons and I also worked with setting up community chaplaincy sponsored programs for ex-offenders when they were released from prison ... I set up circles of support for sex offenders in communities right across Canada. I worked in the local jail here in Guelph. I went from chaplaincy in the hospital to chaplaincy in the prison as well as being a full-time minister at the church.

Judi: I would think that chaplaincy in prison takes remarkable skill to gain the confidence of the inmates. The time you spent as house parents in Thunder Bay would have helped.

Sharon: Ha Ha! We had some tough times as house parents. One time a police car pulled up in front of the house. A burly police officer came up to the door and said to Bill, "Is that girl out there in the car yours?" and Bill said, "Yup, that's one of our students." The police officer said, "Please come and get her out of the car. I can't do anything with her." Bill went and said for her to come. She calmly followed Bill into the house. The police officer said, "I wouldn't do your job for anything." The kids respected us. In the prison system they came in a closed room in groups of ten. I stood up and met each one of them. I shook their hand, greeted them and looked them in the eye. I think they summed me up before they even sat down. They knew if they were going to listen to me or if they weren't.

Judi: Bill ... you have the ability to turn a passage on its head, - is that Bill or is it training? (Sharon points to Bill...inferring it's "Bill")

Bill: I wasn't raised in the church, with Sunday School and church teaching, so I approach things as an "outsider" with fewer preconceived ideas. Then, when you add to that an interest in etymology (the meaning of words, and how we got them), a teacher's heart and passion to explain things, and a desire to "think outside the box", you get a recipe for seeing and describing things differently. Sometimes it's a really interesting and helpful view and sometimes it just adds to the confusion.

Judi: We are interested to learn about the congregations you served. You have lived in various cities. Where did you enjoy living the most?

Bill: Our first-time ministry as short-term missionaries was Thunder Bay running the group home; then we went to Philadelphia where we pastored a church in the inner city for three years. I was the pastor; Sharon was the associate. When I graduated from seminary we came back to Stony Creek, Ontario. Sharon decided she would be a stay-at-home Mom and both our kids were born there. After pastoring a church in Stony creek for eight years, the Baptist churches were building a bible college in Whitby and I was called as the first principal president of the Bible College. While we were in Whitby for 12 years, Sharon went back and did her seminary training in Toronto. That's where the hospital was when she was chaplain. 1995 the First Baptist church in Guelph wanted two clergy and said they would be very happy to have a married couple. We pastored in Guelph at First Baptist until 2007 when we moved to Thornbury until retirement.



Sharon: I think we both would say everywhere we lived, we loved. We really felt called and invested in the community and people. Every place was delightful .... my favourite was when we were in the little community of Thornbury, right on Georgian Bay in the heart of the Collingwood Blue Mountain Ski area. We had a very small Baptist church .... only about 35 people came on a Sunday morning. Our little church had a tremendous outreach to the community of Thornbury. We did all kinds of activities. It was an absolute delight. The other part of the delight was we lived in the country on a beautiful piece of land with the Bruce Trail running across it. We skied, snowshoed, hiked ... that was my favourite place.

Judi: You are both positive all the time. I am curious, what drives you down?

Bill: Cruelty and stupidity. When I see people being cruel, dismissive, hurting others, that drives me down. And when I watch institutions particularly, making stupid decisions – whether it's hospital, provincial government, federal government .... that stupidity really gets me down.

Sharon: I guess what I have been sad about over the last probably 20 years is the demise of the church. I have always loved the church ... since I was a little girl, I loved the church. It's not that I foresee the demise of the church; it's that I don't see us doing what we need to be doing to help it flourish. It's when we can't learn from it and we keep wanting to go back to the old ways ... that makes me sad; because I think God is teaching us some incredible lessons at this point. We need to move on ... we need to change.

Judi: I suppose I should have asked you what lifts you up.

Bill: I can answer that one. People. I love people. Some people say they want to go off into the woods and listen to the trees and talk to the birds. I want to go to the corner of Queen and Yonge in downtown Toronto and watch people because I see God in people.

Sharon: Yah...I would agree.

Judi: You both serve on Harcourt's Spiritual Life Committee and are regular leaders in the Online Holy Listening Circle (aka Sacred Circle/Holy Listening). You make great contributions there ... how does it feed you?

Bill: Again, because it's people being themselves and being honest with the Spirit. I love Holy Listening, I love Mindstretch ... the opportunity to be engaged in people's lives as they grow.

Sharon: I have appreciated not being clergy of Harcourt and so being involved with a group of lay people who are incredibly committed; oh my gosh ... so deeply committed and offering leadership, opportunities for education and outreach. I am so inspired by each one of the people that we have met and worked with at Harcourt. And that's been an absolute delight for me.

Judi: Is there a particular hymn that moves you or book that inspires you?

Bill: For me the answer would be the same for both. It's contextual. Depending on where I am in my spiritual journey, one piece of music or a book will touch me this week and really be significant and three weeks later, it wouldn't have any impact at all.

It's the context of where the Spirit is moving in my life and Spirit brings music and or a book that intersects my life and speaks to it. I don't hold onto those as if it's the only thing for the next 20 years. God has used this right now – made that impact, now I continue my journey and something else will intersect.

Sharon: Bill and I are two people who continue to move forward. Just the fact that we have left ministry, we have moved from the Baptist Convention that we were involved with for 44 years – we moved back into the United Church, got involved with Holy Listening. So, I am the same like Bill, books hymns, prayers can mean a lot to me depending on where I am on my journey.

Judi: What would you most like of a congregation to take away from a weekly service?

Bill: I would want people to say. "We have encountered God." A sense of the holy, a sense of the divine. A sense that they have seen God and God is real.

Sharon: I would say that something in their soul has clicked. Something has touched them at a deep level. And it may not have anything to do with anything that somebody said but something happened inside of them.

Judi: Sharon ... being a female Pastor in the early days of women in ministry had obvious difficulties connected to it; however one in a Baptist setting I expect would have added hurdles. It gives me two questions. How was that for you? How did you deal with it?

Sharon: It was very difficult at times. I didn't have that many people to look up to or share with who were also women in ministry. It was hard. When I was being ordained in the Baptist church, we had to go through a questioning time that was voted on by the people who were at this question time. There was this church where I knew the people very well; they knew me

well; they really liked me and appreciated my Ministry. But because of their own rules in their particular church, they could not vote in favour of a woman in ministry. When they came to my ordination council, the people who would have voted just didn't come because they didn't want to vote against me. The two people who did come and support me, came but didn't vote. So, there were always people like that who did support me and supported women in ministry. I had to focus on that ... There were negative voices for sure and sometimes negative voices came from other women, which I found very hard. I think I upset their .... their .... I don't know ... it would shock me ever so often. Even at seminary, I never had another female teacher. There were some big hurdles ... now it's very different.

Judi: With the world as it is today, how can we keep God in it? With churches all around closing and life being too full for people to make an effort to attend church, how can children grow up knowing God? There are many children growing up now without God.

Bill: In some ways, Judi, we are better off without the church as a place to go to in order to find God, because what that teaches is that God is in one place and you can only find God there. God is not in the rest of your life, God is not in your family time around dinner, God is not at school, God is not where you are playing. So by having church as a place to go to, we encapsulate God. In one spot.

It's the worst thing we can do because it makes God insignificant and irrelevant. The best thing that God has done is tear down the walls of that church and said, "Look for me everywhere else." So, what we really need to do is help people see God at work everywhere else and then begin to believe in that God again. Why would I believe in a God that I could only find in a building on a Sunday Morning?

Sharon: Judi, the other thing we talked about in Holy Listening ... the same as there are in every other denomination, there are hierarchies. We are particularly aware in the Catholic church there is the Pope, but many other denominations have that sense of hierarchy. Even with our understanding of God in the past we have seen the crux of the chain of beings. And in fact, there is a big change in how we understand God in the last 15 – 20 years. God is now seen in the midst of life, in the midst of creation and not in this hierarchy, not up there somewhere. As a result, we then look for Christ in the life of another person and encourage that presence, encourage the brightness in them, the gifts in them or the talents and abilities. Bill and I really made an effort with our children and hopefully our Grandchildren to encourage them in the things they do, their attitude toward other kids, teachers. The way they approach their studies. It's not 'God Talk', but at this point it's the best we can offer. God does not have to be protected. God is going to be here long after Sharon Chapman is here. God will figure out who God is and how God is going to connect with all of us.

Bill:            There's an old joke, Judi. How do you protect a lion? - You let it loose. And I would say the same of God. Let God loose.

Judi:            We at Harcourt have been delighted to not only have you join our congregation, but to fully embrace it and make so many contributions in the way of participating, teaching and offering support when and wherever you can. Harcourt has been well blessed by the Chapmans. We are grateful and we thank you.

*A saying at the bottom of Bill's email*

**God has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Holy One require of you?  
To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.**



### **Harcourt History Corner - Marilyn Whiteley**

In the beginnings of the Brooklyn Sunday School in 1887, the children came barefoot to hear Bible stories—and to receive a small bag of candy. When they arrived, they were told they must wash their hands and face (though the children did not see why that was necessary). They sat on orange crates.

Gradually the school traded its initial make-shift atmosphere for a more settled one, as it moved through several locations during its early decades. Then in 1923, the Brooklyn Sunday School constructed a fine new building on Martin Avenue. In 1975, Emily Ashton wrote *The Story of the Brooklyn Sunday School—Harcourt Memorial United Church*. Here is her description of the Sunday School's later years:

"These years from 1923–1952 were busy and active. In 1928 Sunday School enrolment was 355; by 1934 this had grown to 390 and growth continued steadily under the leadership of Dr. Harcourt as superintendent. ..."



"The teachers continued their use of quarterlies for each age group, with picture rolls and picture cards in the Primary Department. Books of Daily Meditation and 'Tarbell's Teachers' Guide,' containing excellent interpretation and illustrations, were also used. Younger children's classes met in the basement room. A former pupil remembers lining up to drop pennies into the collection box, while all sang:



"Hear the pennies dropping, Listen while they fall  
Everyone for Jesus, He will bless them all.

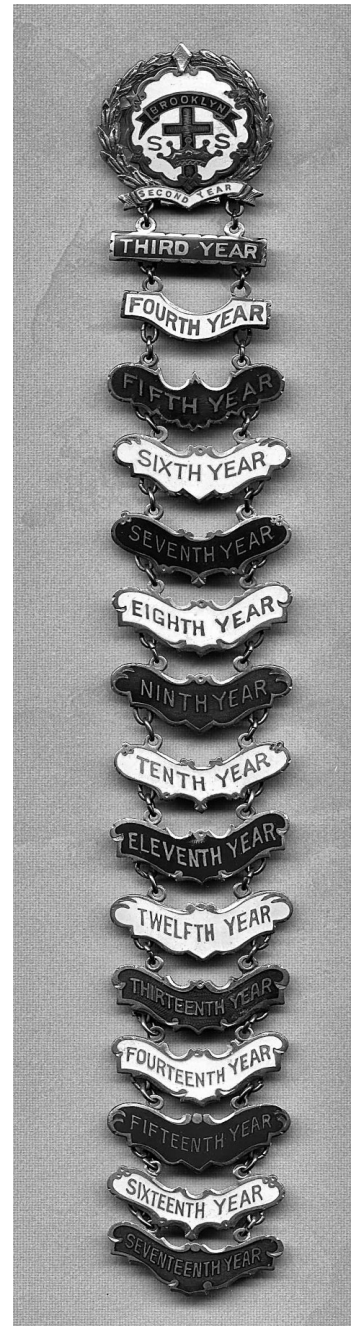
Dropping, ever dropping, From each little hand,  
Everyone for Jesus, In the Promised Land."



"The older children met for classes in the upstairs room, with each class grouped in a semi-circle around the teacher. For the first half-hour, all classes meeting together, repeated in unison the Lord's Prayer, and either the Ten Commandments, Twenty-Third Psalm, or Beatitudes, and sang hymns. Then each class would as quietly as possible pull their chairs into a circle for Bible readings and discussion. The oldest classes would vacate to the room at the back, called the 'Mothers' Room' closing the two sliding doors."

...

"The Cross and Crown system was used to record attendance. After 13 weeks of perfect attendance, a bronze pin was awarded.; after 26 weeks, replaced by a gun-metal red pin, after 39 weeks, silver, after 52 weeks, gold. Then each 13 weeks' attendance was rewarded by a certificate. At the end of the second year, a wreath was added to the pin; after the third year, and for successive years appropriate bars were added. The pupils really worked for these awards! If you missed a Sunday for other than illness, 'you went back and started again.' The reward for perfect attendance is held, we believe, by Mrs. Evelyn Duncan—20 years—truly a wonderful record!"



## Life Events:

## Passages



The Kaufman family is saddened to announce the death of **Ruth Kaufman** on November 29th, 2023 in her 94th year.

