

The Harcourt Herald March 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 Editor's Desk



“March”: does that not sound lovely? Closer to Spring, closer to flowers in gardens and closer to the wonderful smell and sounds of a warmer season beginning. Renewed energy is emerging – even for my old bones!!!

In the meantime, we go through Lent toward Easter, and the heart of our faith – Resurrection. Not an easy claim to accept: that despite all that our senses tell us about the finality of death, Jesus has shown us that there is much more to our life.

This month, we asked you to share an “Easter experience” in your life. A few of you responded. We hope you find these articles to give you a little lift!

From our Minister – Kate Ballagh-Steeper

What interesting themes Marion comes up with for the Harcourt Herald! I am always interested to read the reflections people offer!

It may not be obvious when we have had an Easter experience, and might take time and reflection before we recognize it. Or it might shake us to our core and we have no doubt of a Holy encounter. Each of us will have different experiences.

When I think of an Easter experience, I think of moments when I have been changed. One that comes to mind is the birth of our children. I experienced a death of sorts – certainly it felt like it! No longer were we going to live with the same freedom as we had before the baby arrived. My focus shifted from self to the baby and her needs. Although our lives got rather limited ... from the outside it might have looked like life was contracting, but in reality it expanded tremendously.

Another Easter experience I could share was at the third or fourth funeral I conducted in my first year of ministry. I was the minister at two small rural churches. A young woman, younger than I, and the daughter of one of the families long involved in the church was killed in a car accident less than a kilometre from home. It was devastating for the family and for the church and wider community. The funeral service was held at the church. The Church was packed, the whole community was there including many young people. Before the service I was very

nervous, so I prayed asking God that my voice might remain steady and calm throughout the service. By God's grace it did. I pronounced the benediction and there was the most peace-filled, Holy silence I have rarely experienced. We were all being held by God's holy presence. For weeks after the funeral, many, many people spoke to me about what they experienced in that moment. In the midst of death and our grief, we glimpsed Easter.

While I haven't had such a dramatic experience since, there have been many moments in worship and at the graveside, when God's presence gently blows in touching a breaking heart, connecting those gathered in unity, offering peace.



May Easter encounter you!

Council News - Kent Hoeg, Chair



As always, before providing the highlights of the previous Council, I try to respond to Herald question of the month. This month we were asked to describe an Easter experience in our lives.

My thoughts went directly to how our Easters have gone for the past many years. No matter where we lived, Heather and I would always travel to my parents during Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas. My kids would get to enjoy some time with the grandparents. Even as the kids got older, they looked forward to these visits. If they had partners, they came too! We somehow managed to find sleeping arrangements for everyone. Also, my one



brother and his family (who lived in the same town as my parents) would always join us for the big Easter/Thanksgiving/Christmas dinner.

At time passed, my parents moved to Guelph, into an apartment. No longer able to host larger gatherings, we (Heather and I) happily took on the tradition. Again, my brother and family always joined for the dinner celebration.

Time moves forward. My parents have passed away. But we continue to hold holiday dinners at our house. My kids never miss coming. My brother and his children/grandchildren still come.

It's funny. Heather and I have probably never attended an Easter (or Christmas) service. We've always been with family. Of course, the spirit has always been with us.

Council Meeting of 02/21/24

February's meeting was a very rare quick meeting! Just over an hour (usually it's two to two and a half hours).

Our discussions focused only on the upcoming Community of Faith Annual meetings. We ensured that we had all our plans in place. Zoom preparation, how we would handle votes, sanctuary set up, questions that we would ask the congregation, plans for food and childcare. Contingency plans if we don't have quorum during our February 27 Budget Approval meeting.

Satisfied that we had addressed all the logistics of the meetings, we only had one more item to cover.

We said thank you to Tammy teWinkel who after 16 years on Council as our Visioning Representative will be stepping down. It's not an understatement to say we all had many mixed feelings. Sad that Tammy will not be at March's Council Meeting. Yet so much gratitude for all that she has done. Her thoughtfulness, her creativity, her insight, her many, many talents. Tammy is still active in other aspects of Harcourt (choir and a Trustee member to mention but two), however Council will certainly miss all that she contributed. But, as we stated in the meeting ... "enjoy your 'sabbatical', we'll find a way to get you back".
THANK YOU, Tammy!!!



Financial Update

We don't yet have an approved budget for 2024, but we do have our January financials. Our income in January surpassed our expenses by \$18,000. A very good start to the year. Respectfully, Kent Hoeg hoeg@rogers.com.

What has Manna been up to? - Pamela Girardi

This month you may have noticed:

- handmade bird feeders in the garden
- laughter as small groups tried to fit on a "shrinking ship"
- people wearing shorts and summer clothes to church in February
- pancakes being made in the Sanctuary
- crock-pots of delicious lunch and cookies made by a big group of helpers

Each week we read the scriptures and wonder: How can we creatively share this teaching or story to this all-age group? How can we make space for people of all ages to share their insights? How can we practice its message together?

We found ourselves learning through play. We found ourselves making and sharing food. We learned from each other's Lenten traditions and practices. We made finger labyrinths. We used stairs and actors to show the power hierarchy of the Roman Empire when Jesus was an adult. We heard little voices speaking wisely about why Jesus would welcome and include tax collectors and Roman centurions. We heard Julie Henshaw share about Supportive Housing in Guelph. We even got to hear an original poem by Kent :)



**Summer Camp
in the Winter**
*Love Tenderly
Olympics 2024*





Making bird feeders
practicing hospitality



Food for the Journey: An Easter Moment at l'Arche - Kevin Steeper for the Spiritual Life Committee

There is a book that I have been recommending to everyone I meet. It is entitled *The Age of Insecurity* and the author is Astra Taylor. Perhaps you have read it or at least have heard of it. I like this book because it does a good job of describing the "spirit of the times" and the insecurity that we are seeing in our world today. If we are honest we feel that anxiety and fear and we see it in others as we journey together towards the Easter event in this age of insecurity. It is at times such as this that I turn to one of my favourite stories in the Bible, namely the Easter story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24:13-35. I invite you to give it a read.

There are a couple of phrases in that story that always capture my attention. The first is, "But we had hoped . . ." I cannot think of a more poignant phrase. So much of our human condition is wrapped up in those four words especially in these times of insecurity. But we had hoped that the outcome would be different. But we had hoped that the diagnosis would be different. But we had hoped that the violence would end. These few words speak of disappointment and discouragement. Yet, there is that mention of hope and this speaks to our stubborn faith that the God who makes all things new is still very much present and working in and through the risen Christ. For what is faith but being grasped by ultimate concern, to that to which we give our heart?

This mention of stubborn faith brings us to the second phrase and it is, "Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him". This phrase follows the act of Jesus blessing, breaking and sharing the bread. It is in that sacramental moment that the disciples are given clarity that cuts through their feelings of discouragement, disappointment, anxiousness and fear. This scene reminds me of an experience I had when I was working and living in L'Arche with mentally and physically challenged adults. It is the custom in L'Arche to have devotions following the evening meal.

One evening we gathered around the table as a community. The question was put out to the group for reflection. What does God look like? As we went around the table listening to answers, Pat got unsteadily to his feet and left the table. Pat was one of the mentally challenged adults in the community and he could only utter a few words. He returned to the table with a ceramic plaque from his room. On it were inscribed the words Micah 6:8. Pat then went to the kitchen and got a piece of bread. He came to each of us and broke off a piece to share with each one of us gathered. This was followed by the kiss of peace. This is what God looked like for Pat.

I have never forgotten that experience. It was in that moment that I was given clarity to the presence of God in Pat's life, a man deemed useless and often overlooked by the wider culture that grasps for achievement, appearance and affluence. It remains powerful because it reminds me especially in this Easter season that how we see the world matters and what we see makes a difference for our lives, that in the symbol of the rejected and risen Christ discouragement and disappointment are not the last word. In the symbol of bread broken, blessed and shared God continues to work in and through us for the good of God's Kingdom. In blessed community hope and strength is found in this age of insecurity.

Peace of Christ. The Rev. Kevin Steeper



Grace and Death and Love¹ – Andre Auger

after Richard Rohr

The goodness of God fills all the gaps of the universe, without discrimination or preference.

God is always resurrecting.
The GPS Voice, always suggesting a way to fulfilment.
This is God's Job.

¹ *Much More to Ponder*, Guelph 2023, One Thousand Trees, p. 92-3

This is what God does.
All the time.
This Universe, is, after all, God's Body,
God's Incarnation,
God's concrete actualization in space and over time.
In collaboration with the semi-autonomous processes which set this Universe in motion.

Death is not just our one physical dying, but it is going to the full depth,
hitting the bottom, going the distance,
beyond where I am in control,
and always beyond where I am now.

Everything falls. Everything eventually fails.
Empires collapse, buildings crumble, projects fail, companies go bankrupt, marriages dissolve,
humans die.

And our belief is that this does not represent the sum of it.
There is more to it.
Much more.

If we walk right into the dead-end canyon wall,
we discover we walk right through.
If we plumb the depths of our despair,
we discover that we come out the other side, changed.
If we live through our grief,
we discover some new life and some sense of peace.
When we die,
we enter into the Life of God.
There is always a beyond.
And not one of our making.

*When you go to the full depths and death,
sometimes even the depths of your sin,
you can always come out the other side -- and the word for that is resurrection.*

There always is another side.
Which is not of our making.

This is God at work.
Always.
God is always resurrecting.

This is not my world. It is God's. May I trust God.



Glimpses of Little Easters – Bill Lord

The theme for this month's Harcourt Herald seems an inviting one. I heard the call to explore the meaning of resurrection and Easter through metaphors. I have on occasion presented my life journey as a series of metaphors. Hence, I enjoy using the perspective of metaphor. However, I'm reminded of what a professor of mine said once about metaphor, "it only walks on three legs."

I think we get a glimpse of unexpected new life through our unique life experiences. I will share two stories of unimagined futures. We are often too busy constructing limiting boxes to imagine anything like the new life that awaits us outside the box. Scripture reminds us that, behold, I make all things new.

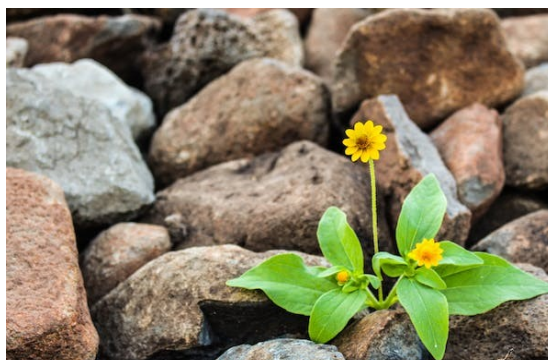
In 1969 I attended a seminar on adult education in the church. It was sponsored by Toronto Conference and was held in the former boardroom of the Toronto School Board on College Avenue in Toronto. Then, I was the associate minister of Eastminster United Church on the Danforth a few blocks east of the Don Valley Parkway. The leader of the day was the late Dr. Alan Thomas, then Executive Secretary of the Adult Education Association. His presentation and process of working with adults was challenging. After the seminar, I asked him where I could learn more about adult education. He replied, go to the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education and go to the Department of Adult Education on the seventh floor.

One afternoon, after completing visiting hospitals in downtown Toronto I went to O.I.S.E. There I met the registrar, Dr. Donald Brundage. We had a pleasant conversation. He was an active member of another United church congregation in Toronto and his father had been a United Church minister in Alberta. He said there's only one problem you have to face, registration closes in less than a week. You must make your application, provide two letters of reference, at least one from a past professor and the marks for your degrees from Western and Emmanuel. Remember, this was in the day before fax, Internet, computer, or texting. Somehow, it all happened and at the end of September, I left Eastminster and was a full-time graduate student. Two years later, I graduated with an M. Ed. That experience in the board room was not unlike that of John Wesley, who described his experience in the chapel in Aldersgate as "My heart was strangely warmed". My heart was strangely warmed and challenged that day. I could not even begin to imagine what transpired from my choice to study adult education and learning - a personal Easter. I have often described my life experience in the following metaphor, "on my way from Jerusalem to Jericho. I fell among creative educators".

The second story I want to share is about an experience that I had while camping with the United Church in Manitoba. In my first year there at camp, we had problems with one of the biggest boys in the camp. He was continually acting out. He would beat up on other littler kids. He wanted to prove he was king of the castle. We tried to discipline him throughout the whole time without any effective response. As we prepared for the next year, on reviewing the names of boys who were coming, his name was at the top of the list. The co-leader and I knew that he would be a year, older, bigger, and more powerful and would probably cause us even more problems. We decided to shift our perspective. We would try to work with him. So when he arrived at camp, we sat down with him and we stated that there's no question that you are the strongest and biggest kid in the camp. We know that you can beat up any other kid anytime you want. We're asking you to do something important for you. Use your strength to care for others. Watch over the smaller boys and defend them if necessary.

At the end of that camp as we were saying goodbye, he said last year I hated you guys and this year I think you're great. Our shift made a difference in his life by inviting him to a future he had never imagined. That was 59 years ago and I have no idea where his future took him. That summer made a great difference for us as co-leaders and for him as a camper. New life, a little Easter after painful experiences previously. I trust that these two real life experiences will invite you to reflect on your own life. Where were the big surprises?

Celebrate the little Easters.



An Easter Moment at Harcourt – Lawrie Jones

I had an Easter moment one summer Sunday at Harcourt when I heard Lisa Browning's version of the "Our Father" prayer.

It read:

*Spirit within me and around me,
Source of my strength and my comfort,
Fill the void within me,
and lead me to my highest good.
Keep me safe, healthy and happy,
Generous in spirit, and peaceful in contemplation.
Help me let go of past hurts and resentments,
Allowing positive energy
To encompass all aspects of my life.
In all that I am, all that I think, and all that I do
May your love be reflected and reinforced.
Now and always,
Amen.*

This prayer changed my life. Now every morning I start my day with this prayer. It challenges me to use all of my senses to hear His call; to partner with Him, as together we walk through our day. Surprisingly, when this happens you begin to see how God is so creative in coaching you how to love.²

Recently I saw God's work in the new BDC TV commercial. It shows Alex Schürmer, a Canadian musician, playing the Theremin, and as he plays his music, he is turning on light bulbs representing struggling new businesses being resurrected by the services of the Business Development Bank of Canada.³

The Theremin creates eerie, beautiful music without human touch. It does this by the musician delicately moving his hands and fingers to alter radio waves generated by the Theremin. It is so magical, it is so transformative. Imagine if you will, that it is not Alex playing the Theremin but God; and the light bulbs are not struggling businesses but are souls. And, perhaps you might be one of those souls.

Or, perhaps - you are the musician playing the Theremin with God as your partner and you are bringing light and love to some needy soul.

² God is calling: 1 Samuel 3 -1-20

³ Alex Schürmer: Bulbs for BDC You Tube

“Easter Moments” – Anonymous

When I think of Easter, I think of the Resurrection. Yes, Jesus coming back to Life. The ones who loved him and the disciples who did not recognize him until he revealed himself. So to me, Easter is Resurrection and Coming Back to Life.

Easter Moments can happen at different times through the year. What brings you “Back to Life”? Maybe looking at your spouse and recognizing the things you first noticed so many years ago? It can often bring a renewed perspective on your journey together and blessings.

An Easter Moment can happen when you are focusing on all of your challenges for that particular day. You offer prayer for guidance and feel the burden lift and you “Come back to Life”.

An Easter Moment happens when you are speaking for a moment with someone who’s spouse or child has recently passed away. You share with them their and your common belief that we are a Resurrection People.

An Easter Moment happens when we think back to our Parents or Grandparents who were not afraid of Death. They believed in life everlasting, the loved ones they would see after they passed. They took comfort in the structure and simplicity of their faith.



I think about the simple lessons from Sunday School about Jesus and the empty tomb. How as a child you did not question that story but believed that Jesus offered that precious gift to all who believed in him. As a child and as adults we often remember the Bible verses we memorized in those days. John 3:16 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believed in him should not perish, but would have everlasting life”.

My Easter Moment speaks to me about Resurrection in Life. Believing and knowing you are on a pathway in life that is not random. That although you may not know the stops along your journey, the blessings you have received are ones to be thankful for. That your life has a divine guiding force that moves you forward to your promised destination.

We are Resurrection People if we believe in God’s gift of his Son for our salvation. Praise to our Lord, for all of the Easter Moments in our life’s journey.



Ordinary Miracles – Lynn Hancock

“In The Bulb There is a Flower”. The title of this hymn from Voices United pretty much says it all for me as far as an example of Easter Moments. Ordinary Miracles. At my age, I know that Spring WILL come. I know that tulips and crocuses WILL appear in flower beds. I know that bulbs would have been planted in order for those beautiful spring flowers to appear. Even though I know these things to be true, I’m still amazed! Spring has become my favourite season in Ontario; perhaps because of “ordinary miracles”.



As many of you will know, the first verse of this hymn is:

*“In the bulb there is a flower,
in the seed, an apple tree,
in cocoons, a hidden promise
butterflies will soon be free!
In the cold and snow of winter
there’s a spring that waits to be,
unrevealed until its season,
something God alone can see.”*

Ordinary miracles of Spring? I believe so.

Most of you know that I have become known as “The Bubble Lady” in Guelph. I will always remember that I was introduced to this on Easter weekend of 2013. It was a transformational weekend that changed my life forever. I have been inspired by adults who have responded with “Wow” and have shared their appreciation of the therapeutic effects while dealing with P.T.S.D., brain injuries, concussion and anxiety.



I have come to realize how important this activity has become for me and my sense of well-being. I have set intentions of letting go

and have come to realize that it was the letting go that made room for something new in my life.

Most recently, I was inspired by two children. One little girl was patiently waiting for more bubbles to be released. She said: "Bubbles just make everything better." She was four years old!!! Another boy, approximately six years old, was running around, excited to pop as many bubbles as he could. Suddenly, he was heard saying: "This is the best day of my life".

What can I say?! Ordinary miracles? Easter moments? Am I to learn from the children and nurture my child-like sense of wonder?! I believe so. I still remember witnessing kindergarten children's delightful reactions to a field of dandelions. They saw them as bright yellow little flowers to be picked. What teacher has not been offered a bouquet?! I look forward to my next "Easter moment"; my next "ordinary miracle".



The Practice of Easter Moments - Mary Harding

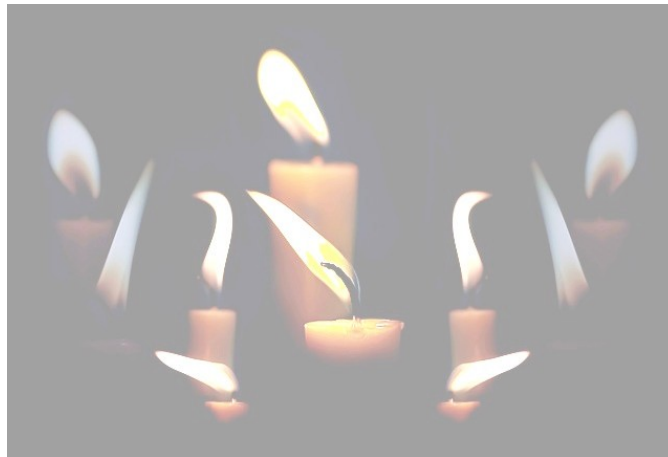
For many years I inwardly dreaded Easter's approach as, for me, it rekindled the suffering and death of my son. On Easter morning I could not joyfully sing "Arisen". Grief can linger in the oddest places and its long fingers reach out and attack when least expected. Only mourning can lead to morning. It has been a long journey to come to what I can now write about Easter moments.



Now, I can acknowledge, without sarcasm, that every day offers opportunities to let go, to allow something to die. I can choose to release that which is not serving my growth and

evolution, to open to the possibilities right where I stand, to embrace the process of metanoia. I engage in this process mostly through mindfulness but also through intentional practices. Some mornings I revisit dreams from the night before, and the invitations therein. Sometimes working with my SoulCollage® cards identifies needs, invitations, or the heart's deepest desire. Inevitably in doing a self Therapeutic Touch session I clear blockages, congestion, stagnation, and open to Love's flow. Whatever the process, I get out of the way, and open to be a conduit for Source.

Again and again, there are invitations to acknowledge what is - with loving care - and to allow fresh energy to flow freely in, out and through me. And so, in a state of deep connectedness, where gratitude and compassion reign, often a smile breaks through. Oh, the sadness and grief are not annihilated, they are part of the whole, part of the family of me. This acceptance frees me to nurture all sensations, nudges & challenges. "This too shall pass.." we've often heard it said. Easter is waking up to my universe-interconnectedness, accepting the constant shifting and flowing, and being grounded in Love. It is greeting the sunrise with thanks. We grieve deeply, because we have loved deeply. Life and Death are everyday miracles opening me to awe and wonder. Blessed am I. Blessed are You. Blessed Be.



Everyday Easter Moments: Kitty at the Dinner Table - Stan Bunston

Kitty has been in the household since his entry on the palm of my wife Joanne's hand – before Lioness, our other cat, before Lilly, our thirteen year old Labradoodle and – well – long before me. Kitty is twenty years old! Yes, he shows his age – almost skin and bones with mangy clumps of fur. But he is sooo ALIVE! He knows what he wants, not only concerning the basics of food and water, but MEOWING loudly or rising up on his hind legs to let us know which room he wants to access, or what cuddling he needs.

Sadly we said good-bye to Lioness a few months ago. Maybe it was witnessing Lioness's gradual decline that altered Kitty's habits in one significant way. Once a day, as soon as there is enough activity in the kitchen to suggest the preparation of the mid-day meal, Kitty enters the adjoining dining room and sits quietly and patiently for the dining room meal (photo attached). Of course, not surprisingly, once the food is on the table, he wants to join in “our” food. Pulling the chair back from the table only indicates to him to try again at another chair, reminiscent of a musical chairs game.



To us, this elder Kitty is a resurrection story in everyday life, reminding us of that Creation is alive. Life wants to live and do so as abundantly as possible. Yes, he walks more slowly. He jumps up on chairs and sofas with surprising grace even though there is the odd time his balance is a bit off. And while his clawing and scratching at a closed bedroom door demanding entry or sitting on a yoga mat when he spots an outstretched hand that might be willing to tussle his neck can be annoying, he knows he is a beloved member of the family.

Like Kitty, as we age we want to be engaged and ALIVE! So we smile and caress our dear old feline with gratitude for his presence and his inspiration to live fully and honour all of Creation.

Tale of twins

[This parable has circulated around the internet over the last couple of years in different forms. According to Wayne Dyer, the original story was told by Henri J. W. Nouwen. (In Our Greatest Gift, Harper One, 2009, pp. 18-19). However, it appears that all of these “mini-versions” have been adapted from the writings of Pablo Molinero. - Ed]



The Parable

In a mother's womb were two babies. The first baby asked the other: "Do you believe in life after delivery?"

The second baby replied, "Why, of course. There has to be something after delivery. Maybe we are here to prepare ourselves for what we will be later."

"Nonsense," said the first. "There is no life after delivery. What would that life be?"

"I don't know, but there will be more light than here. Maybe we will walk with our legs and eat from our mouths."

The doubting baby laughed. "This is absurd! Walking is impossible. And eat with our mouths? Ridiculous. The umbilical cord supplies nutrition. Life after delivery is to be excluded. The umbilical cord is too short."

The second baby held his ground. "I think there is something and maybe it's different than it is here."

The first baby replied, "No one has ever come back from there. Delivery is the end of life, and in the after-delivery it is nothing but darkness and anxiety and it takes us nowhere."

"Well, I don't know," said the twin, "but certainly we will see mother and she will take care of us."

"Mother?" The first baby guffawed. "You believe in mother? Where is she now?"

The second baby calmly and patiently tried to explain. "She is all around us. It is in her that we live. Without her there would not be this world."

"Ha. I don't see her, so it's only logical that she doesn't exist."

To which the other replied, "Sometimes when you're in silence you can hear her, you can perceive her. I believe there is a reality after delivery and we are here to prepare ourselves for that reality when it comes...."

An Interview with Lorraine Dykman - Judi Morris

I had a most captivating visit and interview with Lorraine and Henk Dykman in their home. The Dykman's need little introduction to Harcourt folk. Lorraine's portion of the interview will be in this March issue, and Henk's in April. The interviews will intertwine at times.

Henk has agreed to contribute stories each month to share the ministry he developed with and for world war II veterans.

[The first one in this new series appears in this issue, - Ed]

Judi: Lorraine, with February being the month of love, tell us how the two of you met, fell in love, were married and produced two beautiful daughters whom you shared with Harcourt's Community in their growing up and adult years.

Lorraine: We met at Naramata in B.C. Naramata is a lay training centre like Five Oaks. It's on Okanagan Lake, between Penticton and Kelowna, on the east side of the lake.

Judi: So... this is where the romance began. *(Smiles and snickers floated across the room from both Lorraine and Henk)*

Lorraine: I was sweet sixteen, in grade eleven, and could drive the Chev. I had been sent to a weeklong course at Naramata on the recommendation of our minister. My younger sister and my mother stayed in the campground section of Naramata while I stayed in the residence and attended classes. There was this handsome, young Dutchman, who had also been sent there to explore what the United Church was like. He was graduating from Agriculture at UBC and heading to Union College (The United Church seminary at the time) to study theology.

He probably noticed me because I was the only one that served the volleyball over my shoulder in the wrong direction. He was very very competent and I the lanky teenager with weak wrists. I knew how the game was supposed to go but had a hard time making it go that way.

Judi: That's hilarious. You caught his attention by serving the ball backwards.

Lorraine: I did. I did. I didn't want to be introduced that way.

Henk: I didn't tell you that right away. *(with a soft smirk that only Henk can do)*

Lorraine: No...but I knew that.

Judi: From that meeting on, you had evenings to chat and you started dating.

Henk: As a matter of fact, Lorraine's parents invited me to come and visit on weekends, so that's what I did.

Judi: Tell us then, Lorraine... how did Henk catch your eye?

Lorraine: I think it was because I had been in isolation for a while after two years' correspondence and went back to high school in a town different from the one that I lived in, because my parents thought it was a better school. I didn't have that much social life with fellow students because I travelled back and forth with a teacher who commuted from our town. I was out of touch with other teenagers and was interested in theology for some reason. I was excited about what I was hearing and Henk was a young man who was interested in that. I mean, how likely was it to meet a boyfriend who was Christian; for heaven's sake?

He invited me to go walking beside the lake. Years later, we came back as married people with our kids. The other married people, who also happened to be clergy couples, said things like, "That's where I got my first kiss on that bridge." Naramata tended to be a romantic meeting place in the United Church.

Judi: Were your talks about theology when you went on your long walks?

Lorraine: He had a dream of taking his agriculture into foreign missions.

Judi: Henk, what church did you attend in Holland?

Henk: Dutch Reformed. It's close to Presbyterian. It no longer exists in the Netherlands.

Judi: That's interesting because Dutch Reformed still exists in Canada.

Henk: What I discovered, Judi, was that Lorraine understood more...of course I had a language issue. Still, Lorraine understood more the theological readings that I was trying to do....much faster than I did.

Judi: A young good-looking man from a foreign land with an accent...very interesting.

Lorraine: Yes... It was interesting. But it was also hard. Henk had already made two important life decisions: to immigrate and to go into ministry. I was 7 years younger and still in high school. We broke up twice before we married in June of 1962.

The two years of that first break up were very challenging and dark years for me. During my last year of high school my sister was ambushed by a rare form of tuberculosis that

almost cost her life. Then in my first year at university I was deeply impressed by the atheism of existentialists dominating discussions in our philosophy classes. If Henk had not sent me a little book, *The Courage to Be*, by Paul Tillich, I would not be in the church today.

After we married, we spent two years on a Home Missions field north east of Prince George B.C. The church rented us a house trailer that was placed on the grounds of the elementary school where I first taught. A manse/teacherage.

We returned to Vancouver for a final year of studies before Henk was ordained, May 1965. At that time the United Church sent ordinands to any place they were needed in Canada for two years. Because of Henk's agriculture background he was sent to Manitoba. He had two charges there. The first one was Weston, where Mindy was born. She was the first child of the manse for fifty years. Then we moved to Kenton, where Dieneke was born.



The church in Kenton was one of five churches in an “enlarged parish,” centred in Hamiota. It was served by a team of two full time ministers and one part time minister. The enlarged parish was a new idea designed to cope with the declining rural population.

We only lasted there for three years because of a horrific accident that took the lives of five members of a groom's wedding party while Henk was at the church waiting for them with the bride. When Henk went to the scene of the accident, the bodies were still in the two cars that met on the brow of a hill on a country farm road. The accident triggered Henk's memories of the terrifying experiences he had as a child growing up in the Netherlands during world war II. He decided he had to go back to Vancouver to get more education around dealing with folks in crisis. This education was available from the Canadian Association of Pastoral Education. Their focus was on producing Hospital Chaplains and was conducted in and around hospitals in the Vancouver area.

I got a job as a teacher librarian in a new junior high school near my Mother's home in Surry, and Henk commuted to Vancouver for five years.

Judi: When you were in Manitoba, you were the “Minister's Wife.”

Lorraine: Yes, and I hated the derivative identity. When Margaret Trudeau left, I said, "Go girl go!" The only way I could get away from being a minister's wife was to get back into teaching. In Reston, I taught one year in the high school there, and in Kenton, one year in the elementary.

Judi: We have you in Manitoba, how did you get to Guelph and Harcourt?

Lorraine: Henk had this shiny new training to be a chaplain, and he was looking for a position in a hospital. It was very hard to find those positions in B.C. He was finally interviewed in Ontario for a prison ministry instead. We arrived in Guelph, in 1978 and we both started a new job at the same time. I started at College Heights Secondary School as their teacher librarian and he in the Guelph Correctional Centre as their Protestant Chaplain.



Judi: Those kids at College Heights were lucky to have you.

Lorraine: The kids at College Heights taught me lots! They went on to very successful lives that had nothing to do with the academic world that I was comfortable with. They gave me as much as I gave them.

Judi: I bet you gave them lots, and I wasn't there.

Lorraine: Well...my library became kind of a sanctuary for those that didn't fit in. They would come and talk. The big thing I remember about teaching at that time was just the way the climate crisis is terrorizing our youth right now; they were being terrorized by the prospect of a nuclear war. There was a lot of loose talk about a nuclear war. After a conference in the fall 1983 at the University of Guelph on the nuclear issue, I got involved as an editor of a nuclear awareness curriculum designed to address student fears. Staff from three boards of education plus mentoring professors from the University of Guelph, wrote the curriculum. The editing and publishing occupied a lot of my professional time for five years.

Judi: I would believe the students looked to you for calm.

Lorraine: You did what you could, getting them to write and talk about it. I look at teachers now and wonder how they are handling the climate crisis.

Henk was a Prison Chaplain, so I got to choose where we took our children. We couldn't take them to prison. (*Judi laughs*). We did take them to the prison for Easter and Christmas to talk to the guys and be as a family on those occasions. Henk, of course, went to Presbytery, so

he had met John Buttars and thought that would be a good church. I thought, 'I get to decide this', so I visited around the other churches and discovered... he was right.

In those days I got involved with Harcourt's choir. At that time Blair MacNeill was the music director. Alison was a teenager. I was with the choir until 2009. In 2009 I was diagnosed with stage 3 colorectal cancer that was actually cured by 14 months of rather severe treatment. Unfortunately, that treatment left me with equally severe handicaps that made attending an evening choir practice difficult. But I had thirty years in Harcourt's choir. It was my first community.

Judi: You have done more than Choir. I know you were involved with Mindstretch and the Week of Guided Prayer at one point.

Lorraine: Yes. The week of Guided Prayer began in '83 and it first happened at Harcourt. I was involved and deeply touched by that. John Buttars and Ellice Oliver began doing the Ignatian Exercises. Then I had an opportunity to do them in '85. So, I got involved in keeping the Week of Guided Prayer alive. Harcourt had a lay Ministry committee that I belonged to. When John Buttars had a sabbatical in the mid '80's, I chaired the Lay Ministry Committee and part of my job was keeping the Week of Guided Prayer alive.

Later I got involved with Spiritual Directors of Ontario which was formed in '91. I ended up editing a directory of Spiritual Directors available in Ontario. I edited that directory from 1993 - 2006. After that I got involved in training to be a spiritual director myself.

John Veltri S. J., actually got me started in working as a spiritual director on silent retreat weekends at Loyola House. 1993 he was looking for a gay friendly guide for an MCC retreat at Loyola house. That led me to getting the Jesuit training at Loyola House. In 1994, supported by Harcourt, I began the Jubilee programme connecting to Emmanuel College's continuing ed programme in Toronto. John Veltri also got me started offering the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises.

Judi: What did the Ignatian Exercises do for you?

Lorraine: I have done the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises three times. The first in 1985, was done in the nine-month version from home. It was extremely empowering and got me involved in social issues. The second time in 1995, I did the Exercises in 30 days of silence at Loyola house. That experience was both confirming and deeply healing. I was one of many women in the 60's who gave up a child for adoption. It affects you profoundly. You just carry on with your life. The thing is you mustn't talk about it because that child has another life somewhere and you are being very discreet about the connection...particularly in those days there was a lot of unnecessary secrecy and shame around adoption. The silence, shame and grief affected me and I'm sure made me much more tolerant of kids who were difficult to teach because I relied

on someone else being good to my son. It took a long time for me to realize that I had deep grief issues to deal with.

When I did the Exercises the second time, some of that grief was healed. It was the roots of my experience of giving up my son, how it had impacted me and what parts of me needed healing. When I came out of the Exercises, I found myself easily praying for James' adoptive parents and I was deeply at peace. It was unexpected because I was looking at doing spiritual direction. I ended up healing bits and pieces I had not been paying attention to.

Judi: What other things might you have been involved in at Harcourt?

Lorraine: Generally Lay Ministry Committee, the Week of Guided Prayer that I worked on, and, of course, spiritual direction. I wanted to ground my Ministry of spiritual direction in my home congregation. There was no way of doing that in Protestant churches. I needed to have a supervision committee and the Spiritual Life Committee was there to oversee Ellice and me as spiritual directors. We would come with how many we were directing and any issues we had.

Judi: Can you explain to us what spiritual direction actually is?

Lorraine: It has a misleading name because we really don't direct anybody. It is a listening ministry and helps a person listen to themselves and to the Spirit that moves within us all. It's so easy to have an interior experience discounted but when you describe it aloud to another person it has a respected place in your consciousness and you can grow from that.

After I retired from teaching in '98 I was able to work as a spiritual director full time for a decade. I also became involved forming supervision groups for spiritual guides in Guelph. In 2000 I did a supervision internship at Mercy Center in California. But my chief joy in those years was offering Ignatian Spiritual Exercises from Harcourt with an ecumenical team of directors. We used a combination of group meetings for presentations plus the usual nine-month programme with prayer guides. I also offered that same programme at Five Oaks. It was way of giving back the gift that had enriched my life so much.

Judi: You spoke of your son. You have been reunited. I recall the process was slow. You gave it all the patience you had and now have a relationship with him.

Lorraine: Yes, I do, and it was a joy to introduce him to Harcourt folks summer of 2012. I have a great Granddaughter who is called Claire Lorraine. I have a relationship with my Californian Grandson as well. It took courage for my son to find out who his birth mother was. He was born in California and was there the most of his life. He became a Lt. Colonel in the armed guard and served in Afghanistan and Iraq. I put my name on the Californian Adoption register in '91 and if he registered, they would connect us. He had been paying somebody to find me, but it didn't work out. He registered 21 years later than I, and he worried that I might not be at the same

address. He came to Guelph in August. There was a lot of anxiety on our part preparing for him to come. What would he think about who we were? Would he understand Canadians?

I took a hotel room at the Harbour Front in Toronto for our first meeting. I didn't want to be in the kitchen cooking while everybody else was visiting. We took a trip to Centre Island the next day. I was able to give him a letter of his birth father and tried to fill him of what happened.

Judi: What would you now like to share with others?

Lorraine: After being involved in the spiritual direction, (or companioning) ministry, which has an ecumenical and even interfaith reach, I come back to the vows that I made upon confirmation in the long-ago United Church of 1955, that would make "faithful use of the means of grace." Or as the Buddhists might put it, "I would practice, practice, practice." It has taken all those years since, to truly understand the importance of that vow. Even as our bodies need a good night's sleep to mend the physical, mental, and emotional fraying of our daily rough and tumble life, so our spirits need the daily time of quiet and prayer, meditation, and reflection to allow ourselves to be spiritually healed and re-energized. Otherwise, all that justice work we feel called to do is just an invitation to burn-out!

As modern Christians, we can often dismiss the role of Jesus as Healer, probably because we don't understand it and find it embarrassing. In 1972 Henri Nouwen wrote a wonderful little book called *The Wounded Healer*. In the book he portrays the true Messiah as *the one* who "tends his wounds one-by one." In other words, it was Jesus's willingness to find time and places apart for prayer and inner healing for himself that allowed him to be the healer of others.

Judi: What is your hope for spiritual direction in Harcourt or the United Church?

Lorraine: When in 1995, Harcourt accepted my request to become a Covenanted Spiritual Companion accountable to Harcourt through the Spiritual Companionship Sub-committee (of the Lay Ministry Committee), I received many gifts, including being covered for liability on Harcourt's insurance Plan! But it was the ongoing being accountable for my work to my home community of faith that was of most value and which I hope has been continued and developed further after the Spiritual Companionship Committee transformed into the Spiritual Life Committee in 2006. Much has been lost in the recent pandemic years and most churches and denominations are in kind of "survival" mode now. And the "times" we find ourselves in have utterly changed! My hope and prayer is that those who are called to the ancient ministry of spiritual companionship in this new time will find as much support as I was given — even if how that will happen is not that clear to us now.

Judi: Lorraine ... The honesty and openness of your life's journeys will direct others to make important and some difficult decisions, some I expect may follow your lead and embark on new journeys in their own lives, be it spiritual or otherwise.

Your touching story is rich with care for people. It emits a tale of Love. Love of family, love of self and Love of God.

We graciously thank you. May your prayer be answered.

→ *(Next month, Interview with Rev. Henk Dykman)*

Lest We Forget: A Ministry of Remembrance

– 1. My Mother's Question - Hendrik Dykman

[With this issue, we start a new series written by Henk Dykman. Henk has spent many decades researching and writing about WW II in his home country of The Netherlands. -Ed]

She started the conversation that warm afternoon in August of 1983 in our garden at Janefield Avenue, Guelph, in the usual way: "Henk, I am 82 now, I may not live much longer...." And then it came, a surprise: "but, before I die, could you please try to find out what really happened to that Canadian soldier who was shot on our doorstep on the day we were liberated?"

Wow! We had all assumed the man had died after father had asked about him and heard: "Shot in the chest." But my mother had joined so many, many mothers after World War II with the persistent question, "What if?"

The shot had come when we, -- grandparents, parents, my sister and I -- were busy celebrating in our vegetable cellar having survived some hair-raising moments during a Canadian attack. Now it was over, we were unhurt, free and safe with all those men in their funny khaki uniforms having taken over the whole house. But they were not safe yet! One step out of the house and one of them was shot. They had come in universal carriers, driving



through enemy lines. But when the infantry tried to follow, it was across a field that still was covered by the crossfire of two machine guns. The men were pinned down! I remembered that shot.

So I promised my mother: "Mother, I have seen a history book in the library of the Guelph Correctional Centre, where I work, that covers the Canadian campaign in Europe. I will see what I can find in there."

Well, when I went to work I found it was rather easy. In the G.C.C. library book was a little map with the attacking Canadian regiments at Zutphen, Netherlands. One regiment had made a funny 90 degrees turn from going north to west at the point close to where our house was in the countryside. S D & G Highlanders were the initials of that regiment. I remembered those from our liberation and I saw now that they stood for Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders. From eastern Ontario!

I wrote to the editors of the Canadian Legion Magazine and what came back? A letter from retired Major Reginald Dixon. He began at D-Day as an officer with the Glens (S D & G) and kept up his acquaintances with them. Reg had an answer to my inquiry about the soldier who was shot on April 4, 1945, from the commanding officer of Support Company of the Glens at that time. Gordon Wrigley was the man who was shot but he took the bullet in his elbow, not his chest. Gordon was the driver of one of the two universacarriers, the one commanded by Sgt. Cecil Scott. He was left with a stiff arm but survived quite well otherwise. However, he had died a few years before my mother's request!

Reg suggested I ask the Legion Magazine to place a request for contact with Gordon Wrigley or family or friends and that too went very, very well. So that three years later, in 1986, mother and father and I made a camper trip to Sudbury, where mother handed to a son of Gordon Wrigley the helmet which his father had worn on the day he was shot!

Mother's question was answered, but for me that was only the beginning of a long journey.

An Unusual Easter Story - Lisa Browning

When I first received this month's prompt, I started to think about what "Easter story" I had to tell. Nothing came to mind, except little snippets of memories. But then, as I walked on the trail with my dog, the answer came. It was an Easter memory, but not the kind you'd expect. It was a memory so life-altering that I was surprised that it didn't come to mind immediately after receiving the writing prompt. That's a good thing, though, as it shows that I have healed.

I'm not going to delve back into the trauma of my past. I've talked about that enough. But it's relevant for one reason: it sets the stage for this, my unusual Easter story.

It was the Thursday before Easter, 2012, and I was looking forward to visiting friends up in Wiarton, Ontario for Easter Sunday. At the time, I was in the process of extricating myself from a very abusive relationship, and I definitely needed a break.

The process of separating had been brutal up to that point but, perhaps because a holiday was coming up—usually a time of joy—my soon-to-be ex-partner's manipulation and cruelty reached its peak. Legal, financial and health issues finally brought me to my knees, and I ended up in Guelph General under "suicide watch."

Easter Sunday morning, my brother came to visit me in the hospital, and brought me a lily. The nurses immediately confiscated it, as 'Form 1' patients were not allowed to have "foreign" items in their rooms. My silent tears spoke to the nurse on duty, and she brought the lily back, and placed it on the table in my room so I could look at it.

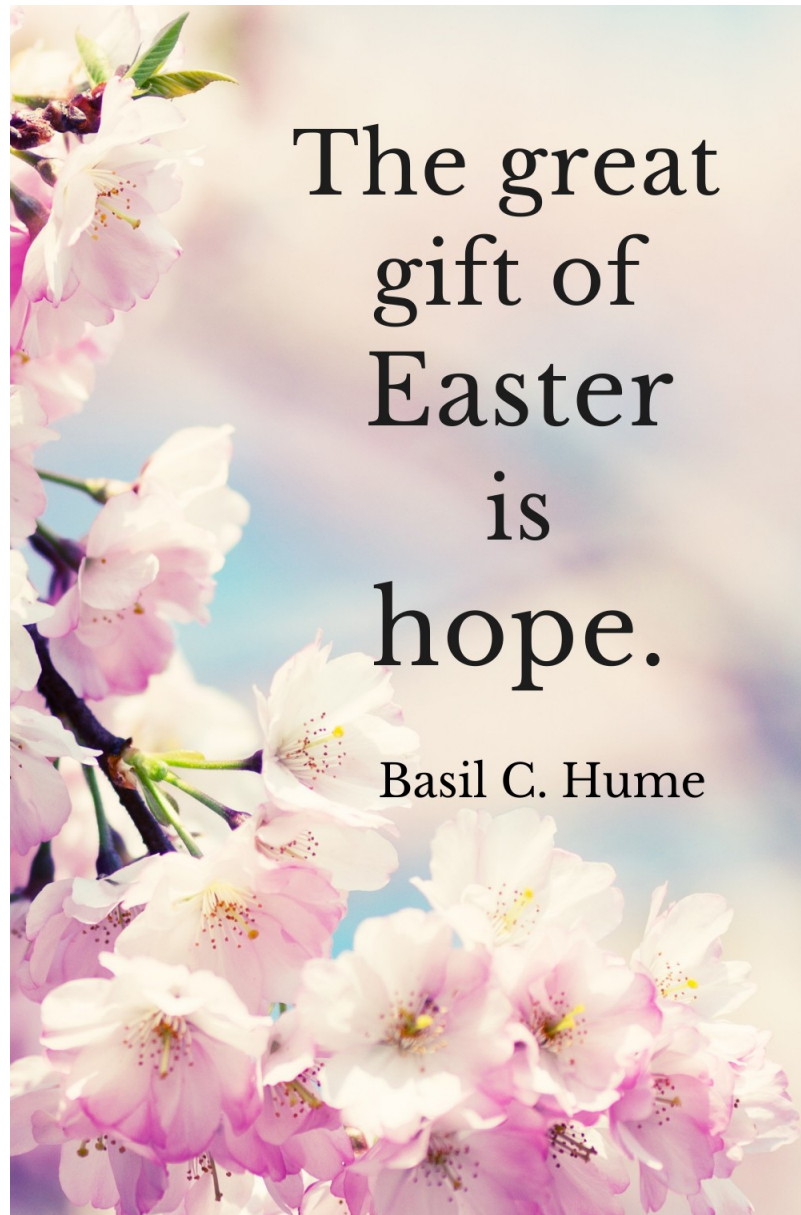
Needless to say, it was not the Easter I had hoped for. But it was the Easter I needed.

The doctors wanted to admit me to Homewood, but I refused. My perfectionistic self would not allow myself the 'luxury' of time off work, and complete attention to self. I did, however, agree to out-patient status. And the rest, as they say, is history.

Homewood saved my life. Through some amazing programs, I healed from the abuse, and I also came to realize that the abuse was just a symptom of the underlying issues, which were my lack of security, identity, and self-esteem, stemming back to my childhood.

Fast forward 12 years, and it's easy for me to see why I would have forgotten Easter 2012. Of course, the memories and, more importantly, the lessons learned, will always be a part of me. But they no longer define me.

Cardinal Basil C. Hume once said, “The great gift of Easter is hope.” It was hope that got me through the Easter of 2012, and it is hope that sustains me today, despite whatever challenges I might face.





We are in the season of Lent. Later will come Palm Sunday, then Maundy Thursday and Good Friday and finally Easter at the very end of the month. How will you observe these special times this year? Harcourt's traditions have changed over time, but always this has been an important season in our church calendar.

One custom from the very earliest days of Harcourt was a special Lenten appeal for some particular cause selected each year. Families were asked to contribute a cent-a-meal —one penny given by each person in the family for each meal — and to bring this money to church at the end of Lent. Later the cent-a-meal suggestion was forgotten (I suspect in hopes of large contributions!) and the recipient for each year's appeal was chosen by Harcourt's Social Concerns Committee.

Palm Sunday was a special occasion, occasionally including a cantata performed by the choir. A later feature was a small palm cross given to each member of the congregation, and occasionally there was a procession commemorating Jesus' entry into Jerusalem.

In the early days of Harcourt, members of the congregation were reminded that the local ministerial association was holding a Good Friday service in one of the churches in the city; Harcourt rarely held a service of its own on that day. But that changed. On Good Friday of 1973, the "young folk" were involved in a worship service of quite a different sort, a chancel drama titled "One Friday in Eternity." It was a "Passion Play with modern overtones." Joyce Robinson directed the high school group, assisted by several adults. Murdo McKinnon led a youth choir in the singing, and Keith Slater played Pilate.

The players needed a large wooden cross for Simon of Cyrene to take from Jesus. Don McLean, the minister at that time, was a good woodworker. He got weathered planks from the Wolfond lot of used building materials and constructed the cross. In later years it remained a focal point in the chancel area each Easter season.



Harcourt held its own services on Maundy Thursday and on Good Friday, and by 1990 a Saturday evening Vigil had been added.

Of course the high point of the season was Easter. The sanctuary was often decorated with lilies, donated by members of the congregation and often delivered afterwards to “shut-ins.” (Later lilies gave way to other flowers because of allergies.)

On Palm Sunday in 1989, the bulletin announced that the “Hallelujah Chorus” from Handel’s *Messiah* would be sung on Easter, and those interested in joining in singing it were invited to come to the last half-hour of the Thursday evening choir rehearsal and also to come for a half-hour practice on Easter morning. The tradition of concluding the Easter service with the “Hallelujah Chorus” continued, but that of inviting people to rehearse it did not—probably because Alison MacNeill recognized that many people knew the piece quite well enough, and those who might be a little weak could be carried along by the singers familiar with this classic.

One service on Easter became two, and then for several years one Harcourt family and then another took responsibility for serving a breakfast between the two services. Some years the earlier service included communion; later the two services were “almost the same.” Eventually the breakfast gave way to hot cross buns provided after each service.

In 2000, Easter was on April 23. The announcements on Palm Sunday gave this invitation for Easter: “6:15 Gather on the west lawn for a silent Easter walk as we welcome the sunrise at 6:24 am. This is in honour of Earth Day on the 22nd. 7:15 early morning service on the west lawn, again with an Easter plus Earth Day theme. Followed by breakfast (\$2 each appreciated), in the Friendship Room.” This was followed by an Easter service with communion at 10:00.

Over time, two services have given way to one, and Guelph’s United Ministries may now share in some Holy Week services. But this season remains a high point of the Christian year. May you again find ways to participate in this holy time, and may you once again share in the joy of Easter!



Life Events:

Passages



McNEILL, Angela died on January 23, 2024



Leslie Hyde, December 27, 1950 – February 11, 2024

