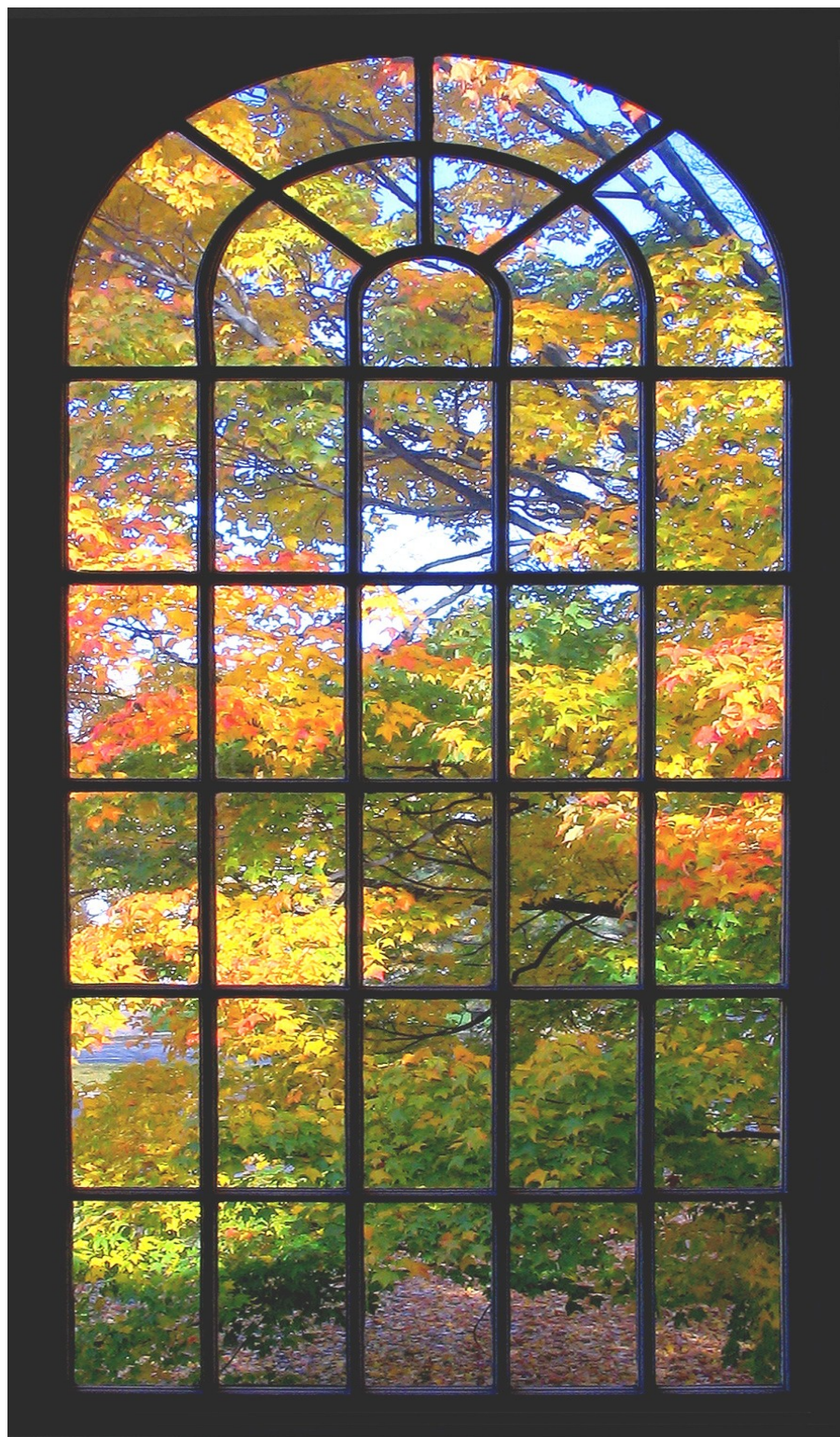


# **The Harcourt Herald October 2023**

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

### **The Ministers:**

Custodian: David Kucherepa

Office hours:  
Tue - Fri, 9-12am

The People with  
Rev Kate Ballagh-Steeper

Pamela Girardi:  
Manna Lead Coordinator,

Alison MacNeill:  
Director of Music Ministry.

87 Dean Ave.  
Guelph, ON N1G 1L3  
519.824.4177  
office@  
harcourtcommunity.ca

The Harcourt Herald is published 10 times per year (in paper and digital formats).

Submission Deadline:  
20th of each month.

harcourtherald@  
harcourtcommunity.ca

Herald Team:  
Marion Auger  
Judi Morris  
Andre Auger  
Lisa Browning  
Marilyn Whiteley



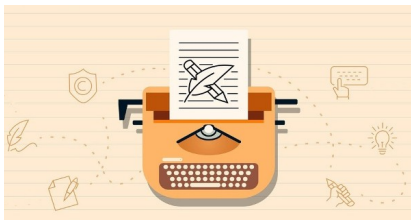
## Table of Contents

From the editor's desk.....	4
Mentors in the Faith – Kate Ballagh-Steeper.....	4
Council News - Kent Hoeg, Chair.....	5
Hello! It is great to meet you. - The Planted Seed Montessori School.....	8
Partnerships/Community Hub Project - Project Update – Steve Pierce.....	10
Food for the Journey – In Praise of Ministers - Andre Auger for the Spiritual Life Committee.....	11
Inspiring Faith Leaders – Lynn Hancock.....	14
Working a Production Line with Jim – Andre Auger.....	15
Wonderful Memories – Marnie Allen.....	16
The Gift of Ministry in the Secular World – Paul Webb.....	18
Food For My Journey - Ann Middleton.....	18
The Blessing of Preaching – John Lawson.....	20
Two Church People Who Have Touched Me – Peter Gill.....	21
A Highlight In Ministry – John Buttars.....	22
Highlights of Ministry - Stan Bunston.....	24
Bill Hrychuk: A Transformation Guru - Arlene Daves-Fuhr.....	25
Highlights of my years in ministry - Henk Dykman.....	26
“Movers of the Spirit” – Dan Ganesh.....	26
Welcome to Guelph Project – Peter Gill.....	29
News from the Caroline Harcourt Group.....	30
Thanksgiving 2023.....	31
Harvest Bowls Event:.....	31
The Antique Sale Returns.....	32
Life changes! Janet Gostonyi.....	33
An Interview with The Very Reverend Bruce McLeod – Judi Morris.....	33
Bruce's After-Supper Words.....	42
Harcourt's Ministers, Part 1 - Marilyn Whiteley.....	43
Safe - Lisa Browning.....	46
Life Events:.....	48
Passages.....	48

## From the editor's desk

Reflecting on ministers and their ministry has proven to be a rich topic: just look at the heft of this month's issue! Such a great follow-up to the wonderful service in September to celebrate our Jubilands. So much good material to read this month! A big thanks to all contributors.

A member of our Board of Trustees has suggested that, for November, we dedicate an issue to the various facets of stewardship. This can also be a rich and rewarding topic. I will come up with the guiding question in a few weeks.



In the meantime, I am still looking for someone to take over the reigns as Editor. If you like the written word, if you see the Herald as an important vehicle to keep the Harcourt community together, and if you have about 10 hours each month, why not consider it?

## Mentors in the Faith – Kate Ballagh-Steeper

This month's Herald is chalk full of stories about ministers who have inspired and mentored and been a companion on the faith journey. I would add, that it is indeed a great privilege to serve as a minister among the people of God.

I have had some wonderful clergy mentors over the years. But I want to take an opportunity to share the story of Mildred – a lay person who taught me about faith. Mildred was in her mid 80s when I met her. Always elegant and proper but also warm and gracious. Mildred's spine was weakening and discs were disintegrating. Soon she was in a Long Term Care home, and bedridden. I don't really know how she did it, but even bedridden and in considerable chronic pain, she still remained elegant and proper, often with a jaunty scarf around her neck. Through my many visits with her, she would tell me that she had pain but it wasn't really complaining, more just stating a fact. She wanted to hear the Psalms and was grateful for our time of prayer together. She prayed for others. When she died, all of the nursing and PSW staff that had cared for her were sorrowful – for she had treated them all

with dignity and respect and a gracious love. Despite her physical limitations, she was still able to be a faithful witness to God's love in ways that lifted others up. It is probably 30 years ago that Mildred died, but her life and her deep faith continues to guide and speak into my own. When I am aware of my limitations – rather than rail against them and complain – there is a faithful grace in leaning into them and doing what I can, trusting the Spirit to do what I cannot.

Mildred is but one of the many, many lay people who have inspired and led me. Who have been your mentors? May we all be conscious of the ways we might be mentors to others.  
Peace, Kate

## **Council News - Kent Hoeg, Chair**

Did we have summer? While I do hope that many were able to slow down a bit and enjoy the summer, I do know that lots of Harcourt activity occurred! My thanks to the efforts of so many.



### Alcohol Policy

Council was required to meet once during the summer to discuss a proposed Alcohol Use Policy. With the leadership of Stephen Pierce many participated in crafting a policy, which we believe protects Harcourt and our community. The congregation was also given an opportunity to review. On August 1, Council unanimously approved the policy. If you would like a copy, please reach out to me or the Office. We are ready, if and when someone would like to rent our premises and serve alcohol.

### Council Meeting of 9/20/23

Council met with a full agenda. Highlights include:

- Security System
  - We are excited that we received two grants with respect to improving our building security. This should give much relief to staff, our congregation members and

renters. Many assisted in providing information to the grant applications, but a special shout out to Kate Ballagh-Steeper who spearheaded getting us \$2,500 from the United Possibilities Fund and Carolyn Davidson who led us to \$10,000 from the Ontario Anti-Hate Security and Prevention Grant.

- Larry Smith has been leading the charge to find us a building security system. For approximately \$12,000 plus GST Council has approved the installation of:
  - a) A security alarm system. This will provide us with wireless door contacts for our perimeter doors and indoor motion detectors. We will be able to detect that the doors are locked and our system will be monitored 24 / 7 if we find a breach in the doors or motion detected.
  - b) An Access Control System. This will provide us “fob” access to the Daycare entry and both front entry doors. This will allow us to provide staff and renters with fobs (no keys!) that can be programmed but not duplicated. If lost, we just remove access to that fob! When the rental is done, we remove access.

- **Resignation of our Payroll Administrator**

- John Phelps has resigned as our Payroll Administrator.
- MOTION passed: Harcourt wishes to thank John Phelps for his contribution as Payroll Administrator. His dedication has been very appreciated and we are so grateful to the gifts that he has brought to Harcourt.
- **HELP!!** We need someone to take on these duties. After all our staff do wish to get paid 😊. Please reach out to Roz Stevenson at [rstevens@uoguelph.ca](mailto:rstevens@uoguelph.ca) do get more details.

- **Record-keeping and Archiving.**

- United Churches are expected to have a Records Retention policy and send applicable records to the United Church of Canada Archives in Toronto.
- It's been a while since we cleaned up our many documents such as Committee Minutes, Annual Reports, photographs, architectural drawings etc.
- Carolyn Davidson has graciously offered to develop a retention policy and begin the clean up of our records. Thank you Carolyn!

- **WOW Regional Council Update**

- Carolyn is the Harcourt representative at Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council.
- We could use others – please contact Carolyn if you may be interested.
- The WOW Fall Regional Council Meeting will be held virtually (Zoom) from Thursday September 28 to Sunday October 1.

- One agenda item will be discussion around Remit 1 – Establishing an Autonomous National Indigenous Organization.
- Beyond the Fall meeting:
  - a) Workshops on Remit 1 will be held several times in 2023 to provide information
  - b) All churches are to vote. A lack of voting means NO!
  - c) Council will work with Carolyn and better understand what this means and ensure a vote occurs before the March 2024 deadline.
- GUM Update
  - GUM met on September 19. GUM will move towards a smaller and more nimble structure which will be led by an Executive Group. This group will set up Working Groups to get stuff done! Less talking more doing!
  - This is a very strategic move, as all churches struggle with the ability to find leaders, volunteers, and of course income to cover expenses.
  - We plan to use our March 3, 2024 Harcourt Annual Congregational Meeting to provide more information and direction.
- Community Hub Update
  - Lauren Martin was hired as our Rentals Coordinator in late August. Welcome Lauren. She's already been spectacular.
  - Ashley Kizis was hired as our Community Relations person. She's working to find us partnerships!
  - Our rental income to August 31 has already exceeded our 2023 budget! Superb!
  - With this success means we are busy, and this means we need volunteers.
    - a) Change seating arrangements. Renters have been overwhelmingly positive on the ability to have flexible seating. We can use people to help in set up.
    - b) Hosts for evening and weekend rentals. We require people who can be present to unlock doors and welcome renters into our building, and locking doors when they are finished. The tasks involve responding to any requests that may be made and to monitor the activities. Hosts will be given a phone number to call if there are any questions or concerns.
  - Of course, we also find new challenges with an ever-increasing use of our rental space. Storage for renters, garbage disposal, minor damage, scheduling all adds an additional amount of planning and effort.
  - Please contact Steve Pierce ([steve.pierce@sympatico.ca](mailto:steve.pierce@sympatico.ca)) with questions and to offer your assistance.



## Financial Update

Finally, I do need to discuss our Finances. As of the end of August, we are showing a deficit of approximately \$3,000. Compare that to a \$72,000 deficit we saw in August 2022. On the surface that looks extremely positive.

Rentals is certainly a shining star. It is over double last year.

We have also received two significant and ONETIME memorial donations totalling \$65,000 to the Operating fund. Without those gifts we would be close to last years shortfall.

The brutal reality is that we have significant financial challenges. We have an aging congregation and sadly see a decline in our membership – meaning a drop in givings. Stewardship letters and other approaches sometimes yield a onetime increase in givings, but not enough to offset our losses.

On top of that we have less individuals to lead initiatives or Committees, and a continued reduction in those able to volunteer their time. That is not to take away from the MASSIVE efforts of many. It's just that we need more.

We are exploring many avenues through the Hub, GUM and other investigations. However, as Council Chair I have a responsibility to be transparent to the congregation. While we are working extremely hard at finding ways to generate revenue, we may soon find it necessary to significantly cut expenses. I don't know if that will be next year or in two-three years. But the time will come unless we find new approaches.

Current Council and Committee members cannot do this alone. We need you to follow your passions and find ways in which you can contribute.

Collectively, we will find a way forward!

## **Hello! It is great to meet you. - The Planted Seed Montessori School**

Staff, Students and Parents

Dear Harcourt Friends,

We are so grateful (and excited) to be welcomed into this beautiful space!

We are a small and committed group of teachers, parents, grandparents, caregivers and children who came together to create Planted Seed Montessori School! We are a non-profit and are so happy to be putting down some roots within the Harcourt community. (Read more about us at: [www.plantedseedmontessori.ca](http://www.plantedseedmontessori.ca)). You might wonder what we all have in common? That's easy, we love our kids! We also happen to love nature, learning, and community.



The Montessori philosophy is a child-centred approach to learning. Each child learns uniquely and at a pace that is natural to them. As such, our learning environments are very hands-on. We have wonderful, unique materials for learning all subjects – from math to botany, to geometry, to language, to reading and beyond. We also value community, the environment, and actively participating in the world around us! We spend a lot of time outdoors learning about the natural spaces around us.



With the school year well underway, we are hoping to uncover ways in which we can participate in this great community hub!

A few ideas that come to mind are:

- Tidying or planting in the garden?
- Making soup for the upcoming fundraiser for Chalmers?
- Reading with Elders?

We would appreciate hearing from you, especially with any ideas of how we might contribute to our new community.

Please say hello if you see us out and about. You can also connect with us:

[info@plantedseedmontessori.ca](mailto:info@plantedseedmontessori.ca)



## **Partnerships/Community Hub Project - Project Update – Steve Pierce**

In an effort to keep members of the congregation informed of our activities, please find below a short summary of what has been happening with the project.

- Lauren Martin was hired as our Rentals Coordinator in late August. Lauren had an orientation with Pat Eton-Neufeld and has since been learning the ropes. She is learning that each request to rent space has its own challenges and each request is certainly different than others. Lauren is playing catch-up at the moment but hopes to respond to each request with greater ease once she is familiar with the processes and procedures. The number of requests to rent space is increasing now that September has arrived.
- We are going to move toward a more formal structure for the Rentals and Community Relations Group. This is important given Lauren's hiring. We will take on all rental responsibilities and would not involve Property in these discussions unless there was a need to do so. We will not be taking on property or building management responsibilities.
- We have received our first inquiry for alcohol at an event. This request was reviewed but the event organizer changed the event to another venue.
- As we develop the project, we were told by the consultants that we would face a number of operational issues. We were told that it will be very difficult to operate the hub project with volunteers only. Here are some of the operational issues that are increasing as the project grows:

There is a small number of people who are currently involved in the set-up of chairs in the sanctuary. As the sanctuary becomes busier, the challenge is making the changes in a shorter period of time. It would be great if we had a team of 4-6 people. There is a system in place and any changes that are required are completed in one hour or less.

Another operational issue involves large groups that meet in the evenings or on weekends. We have raised the issue previously of having hosts present to respond to any requests during these times and to monitor the event. Recently, we had damage reported in the lower hallway involving Montessori property. Again, there are a small number of people covering this task.

We have a storage problem. Many groups want storage. We have a limited amount of storage and have reached our capacity. We have removed all the “stuff” behind the stage and placed most of it in the balcony. This is to make ready for renovations to store excess chairs. Whether all the “stuff” can go back into this area is not known.

One final operational issue involves garbage. We have been asking smaller or private event organizers to take their garbage with them. This does not work with more public and larger events. We have had some response from people saying they would pay more to not deal with garbage but we would still have to get rid of it. We are restricted in terms of how many carts we are allowed on garbage day. We may have to look into having a dumpster as another church has had to do. The other option is for volunteers to make dump runs for which there is also a cost.

#### Events:

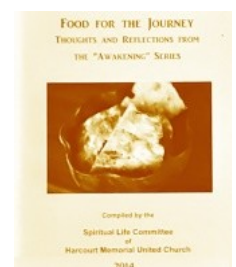
As the fall progresses, so does the number of requests for space. We have lost the K-W Symphony as one of our renters as they are unable to continue their season.

#### Some events coming up:

- Chalmers Harvest Bowls Fundraiser
- Jane Lewis Concert and Fundraiser for Chalmers
- Market Events

#### **Food for the Journey – In Praise of Ministers - Andre Auger for the Spiritual Life Committee**

This issue of the Herald is dedicated to “ministry,” as a follow-up to the celebration of the long ministerial careers of our retired clergy. In this brief article, I want to celebrate the roles ministers play in the life and vitality of our communities of faith. While it is true that we are all called to some form of “ministry” – as captured in the famous expression “the priesthood of all laity” – to best be followers of The Way, we need the guidance and support of a trained minister.



Any human endeavour which wishes to thrive over the centuries needs some form of trained guidance to ensure both faithful continuity and prudential adaptation to changing circumstances. Christianity, like all major religions, has a very long history. What Jesus thought he and his followers were about and how most of contemporary Christianity actually goes about his original vision are two vastly differing realities. Church buildings, elaborate liturgies, complex organizational structures as well as a lot of theological concepts would have been totally foreign to the early followers of Jesus. Times change, needs change, thought evolves. All true. But how to remain as faithful as possible to the original insights of the one we consider our model and our guide?



John Wesley was no stranger to the challenges of remaining faithful to Jesus' original vision. Methodism was an antidote to an Anglicanism which had become entrenched in pageantry and hierarchy. He believed that to remain faithful to the living tradition required a balance of four dimensions: Scripture for sure, the tradition as well, but contemporary experience and critical reason also played a key role. The path forward for faith lay in an ongoing conversation between our Sacred Texts, the history which led us to this point in time in our faith, our understanding of the world in which we currently live, and our own knowledge and reasoning. This insight has become known as the famous "Wesleyan Quadrilateral."

Keeping these four aspects of our faith in ongoing conversation with each other is no mean task. One that could easily consume most of our waking hours. Few of us can afford this, as we try to balance family, work, and personal life. There are those among us, however, for whom this kind of endeavour is a passion. A call. A vocation.

I have heard the minister's function described with three words: **priest**, **pastor**, and **prophet**. "**Priest**" has a very ancient and honourable ancestry: the priest was usually someone set apart somehow, "called," as it were, to serve as bridge, or link, to the Transcendent. Most often, this setting apart was symbolized by vestments, to remind us of the uniqueness of this calling. Being a minister is not a "job," as the rest of us might understand it. I recognize that this "apartness" was abused in many denominations, and many United Church clergy prefer to downplay this aspect of the role of minister. Remains that there is something that sets the minister apart. We expect of ministers that they're engaged in a regular and intentional relationship with what we consider the Transcendent in life. While not the only dimension of that apartness, we remember that only the minister can perform some of the essential rituals which tie the community to the Transcendent, such as communion and baptism.



**“Pastor”** is the function we know best, and come to expect of our ministers: they care for their “flock” the way a good shepherd does. They know their congregation well. They walk with members through tribulation and trial. They celebrate rites of passage in the lives of members. They are the listening and feeling heart of the community of faith. They teach; they encourage; they console; they guide; they may even admonish; they inspire.

Typically, we’re not as keen about the third dimension of the role of minister: that of **“prophet.”** A prophet is one who speaks God’s Truth to a community. Think of Isaiah or Amos! Prophets are rarely liked. The prophet calls us back from apathy, comfort, self-centredness or self-deception. The prophet stretches us to think beyond the values of our everyday world – wealth, status and power - to what really matters to God – compassion, forgiveness and distributive justice. The prophet challenges us to re-examine our often simplistic and convenient understandings of Jesus’ original vision. The prophet makes us uncomfortable. And that is as it should be.

I wish those three terms exhaustively described the role of “minister.” Alas, there is more. Much more. The minister is also administrator, often of a fairly complex organization, consisting mainly of volunteers. The minister is also mentor, teacher, supervisor, and, not uncommonly, “cheerleader.” Not to mention attending meetings of any number of organizations, church- or charity-related. I remember several years ago calculating that Harcourt’s ministers averaged between 60 and 80 hours of work every week.

So, yes, ministers do more than write a weekly sermon!



Ministry is not a job. It is a “vocation.” A calling. Fewer and fewer are accepting the call and its many responsibilities. Let’s acknowledge that special role that ministers play in our lives and in the life of our community of faith. Let’s be grateful for it. Let’s celebrate it.

## Inspiring Faith Leaders – Lynn Hancock

In order to keep this article to an “article” and not a book, I will not be mentioning anyone by name. I tried that in my draft and realized after two pages, that I wouldn’t have time to contact everybody in time for publication so that they could respond to what I had written. Although they are all Christian and have that in common, they have all impacted me differently, based on their unique gifts, life experiences and wisdom. I’m saying “they” because most reading this will not be members of the clergy. This is my attempt to pay tribute to all those who have been “called”.

Although we were invited to “write about a minister or church leader who had an impact on your faith development”, I came to realize that I couldn’t do it. I couldn’t single any one out for the purposes of this issue. What I came to realize was that I have been extremely blessed by ministers and pastors throughout my life. Men and women who have inspired me. Taught me. Modelled for me. Soothed me. Comforted me. Held the space so that I would feel safe to share my faith journey. Men and women who have encouraged me to call them by their first names.



Compassionate ministers who have conducted funeral services, memorial services, celebrations of life have made the unbearable bearable. I have come to value the opportunity to gather and celebrate the life of a beloved. I have learned how multi-faceted we humans are. It is a gift to hear from family members and friends who can speak from the heart and share personal stories. Ministers who have comforted and soothed me in times of grief have listened with compassionate ears. I felt heard and supported. When presiding, they refer to the one being celebrated, having listened to family and friends. The ministers I pay tribute to are too many to mention. How blessed am I.

Looking back and reflecting, I have come to appreciate their unique contributions at a pivotal time. They were where they needed to be when they needed to be there. I guess that’s why I have come to respect “the call”. I choose to believe that they had the faith required to respond to invitations and opportunities to serve and offer their unique ministry.

## Working a Production Line with Jim – Andre Auger

I have had many encounters with clergy which have had an impact on my faith - clergy friends with whom I have discovered new theology that made so much more sense, spiritual directors who have listened to me patiently and guided me so gently, priests and pastors I have worked with on retreats, etc.

One encounter stands out for me above the rest, though. It lasted three full years, and proved to be an intense collaboration on a topic that came to capture me and feed me. When Manna was still quite young, it crossed my mind that what its leadership needed at the time was a comprehensive, progressive and useful guide to the Liturgical Calendar.

harcourt  
think | connect | act

An Introduction  
to the Liturgical Cycle  
for  
MANNA



For some reason, I decided to embark on a critical commentary on the Gospels for each Sunday in the 3-year cycle. Manna was Jim Ball's idea, and, at the time, thought that such a systematic resource could be useful. He agreed to mentor me as I undertook to write a weekly analysis of the Gospel. At first, we seemed to work in fits and starts – a bunch of Sunday resources would appear which would keep Manna going for a while, and then nothing. But soon, we got into a rhythm: I would produce a batch covering, say, a particular Season of the Liturgical Year. Over and above all his other tasks, Jim would read them with his red pen, and then gently propose corrections, amendments, or

an alternative point of view, or offer me encouragement to carry on, always in very respectful and supportive language. Our theologies were a bit different, as one would expect, and I think I tested his patience on more than one occasion.

Over time, though, we created a true production line: I would write, then submit; Jim would read and comment; I would amend, then publish. And always in a timely fashion. First one Year, then the next, and finally the third.

I learned to appreciate the pedagogical wisdom of the Lectionary, and came to see it as essential to any congregation, to keep it in touch with its great Story and to highlight every year what it meant to be a community faithful to the life and teaching of Jesus. I'll never know how badly I might have strained our relationship, but I developed a healthy respect for Jim's wisdom and scholarship. I learned a great deal from him, and, frankly, I look back at that collaborative effort with great gratitude and satisfaction. (I think the "Backgrounders" – as they were called - are still around somewhere, and may even still be useful...)

## Wonderful Memories – Marnie Allen

As I share my story I feel a warm ripple of excitement in my heart. As I look back on my journey I see how I have been blessed with people showing up at just the right time.

My Name is Marnie Allen and I was forever changed by ministers who spoke a different language, listened to me and heard me. I was born in Montreal in the late forties to parents who were in their forties. That was quite a generational gap at that time. My early exposure to religion was the Anglican Church. I still remember sitting in a pew in my early teens listening to the concept of a finger-pointing God way up in the sky, watching my every move. He wanted me to repent for my sins. I didn't really have a concept of what sin was but I knew it was not something very good. I felt ashamed and I didn't know why. Only now do I realize that I was not the only one who created a similar interpretation during those years.



I left the church and went on a journey of faith upon finishing my formal education and moving into my new life. I spent some time with Hinduism and Buddhism. I created a smorgasbord of beliefs and practices that worked for me.

Then the “FLQ Crisis” happened. Along with the crisis came the formation of “The Office de la langue française”, and “Bill 101” forbidding the use of English, my mother-tongue, as much as possible. I was to learn that many “Anglophones” (the English speaking public in Quebec) experienced Trauma during this time. My husband and I made the decision to leave our birthplace and hopefully create a new life in Ontario.

I had not been using the word God for many years. I did and do believe in the presence of something much greater than myself. I call this presence “Spirit”. So this is what I did: I MADE A DEAL WITH GOD.

The deal was: If “HE” got me out of Quebec I would go back to church. Well, “HE” did! Terry’s former boss in Montreal had moved to Guelph. He had a position available for Terry if he wanted it.

There begins a new journey with Christianity at the age of 38. I would keep my promise and chose St. David and St. Patrick’s Anglican Church. It never entered my mind to experience a different denomination. The minister at the time spoke a different language to what I remembered. He was talking about being out in a canoe at sunset, mesmerized by so much beauty that tears came to his eyes as





he felt the presence of God in the nature surrounding him. That was a concept I could embrace. My understanding shifted in one sermon.

Then Rev. Mary-Ellen Berry brought her light into my life. She had a different language about God - again, a language I could understand. I asked for a private meeting. As I sat down I said, "I do not believe in the virgin birth". I waited anxiously for her reaction. "Neither do I", she responded. I was so surprised that I settled into a discussion that totally changed some of my views. I felt like I had moved from Elementary school to High School. I learned so much from her. She started week-end retreats at Crieff and really helped me blossom. Then she left!!!! That was a very hard adjustment for me.

I did keep my promise to go back to church and I did leave after 7 years. Mary-Ellen holds a tight place in my heart as the catalyst in new understandings and perspectives. I did return to studying Buddhism. I still love to meditate.

Once again, I found my way back to Christianity at Harcourt United. My friend Maxine invited me to come to hear Jim Ball. He made a difference. His closing Blessing always brought tears to my eyes. I always liked the Holy Listening Circle after the 9 o'clock service. It was a wonderful chance to discuss the sermon of the day. I always felt I belonged in this circle and was enthralled with other people's perspectives.

Then came COVID and we went online. What a different experience. And now a number of years later we have morphed into a very special "coming together" of like-hearted people who are willing to listen to our Hosts giving their story of a reading they have chosen. Once again, I have very "special to me, retired ministers" who are sharing their wisdom and experiences. I sit with awe and wonder at the gifts we all bring to the circle. I am blessed with many Wise Elders in my life.

For me, a lot revolves around words and perspectives - some fit, some don't, and some help me stretch.

## **The Gift of Ministry in the Secular World – Paul Webb**

While I was serving a 4-point pastoral charge in Saskatchewan, a request came from our National church's partner in Hong Kong. The Church of Christ was seeking a person with a background in social work and theology. Since I met those requirements I said "Here I am". So with my wife's consent we packed up our family and moved to H.K.

After serving as Executive Director of H.K. Christian Service for several years, I was invited to join the H.K. CSS, a secular organization for non-profit social agencies as Director of Research and Development. I agreed to accept that position only if the church viewed this as an extension of its mission. The church agreed and so I joined the Council.

Shortly after I began work there, the H.K. government decided to develop a 5-year plan for social services and a second plan for physical and mental rehabilitation services. Since most of the direct social services were subsidized by the government, it was important to get their input into these 5-year plans. It became my responsibility to involve all the local agencies to get their dreams and plans for the future. In the meantime, a senior British civil servant was given the task of co-coordinating the government's input.

Then, with a small support committee we would meet and hash out a final agreement. It was a demanding, lengthy process but was finally completed and published. I believe it was the first time the colonial government had ever made such long term plans.

It was a highlight in my ministry - on loan from the church working in a secular setting.

## **Food For My Journey - Ann Middleton**

When I retired at the relatively young age of 55, I knew there would be many opportunities ahead. And the decades since have indeed been a remarkably fertile period in my life. Sandy and I have travelled widely, discovering that we loved the rough landscapes of Patagonia, the Azores, Iceland and Norway. We have spent months in New Zealand and also in Australia where our married life began.

I have had time to nurture friendships now over 50 years in the making and taken delight in new companionships. We have spent enriching times with our adult children who are compassionate and joyful. Our family has expanded to include four grandchildren. They are brave and funny, and they make us proud.

One of the best things about retirement is having the time to pursue spirituality in community. We at Harcourt have been lucky to have had John Buttars as our minister for so many years. John has a genius for bringing people together in situations where they can express their own opinions and learn from the wisdom of others.

I was the beneficiary of the generosity and kindness of many people who shared their wisdom in Bible Study and Mindstretch groups. In addition to John, these quiet teachers included Doris Singleton, Marilyn and Hugh Rose, Everson Sieunarine, Lillian Davidson, Evelyn Elmslie and Kathleen Hall.

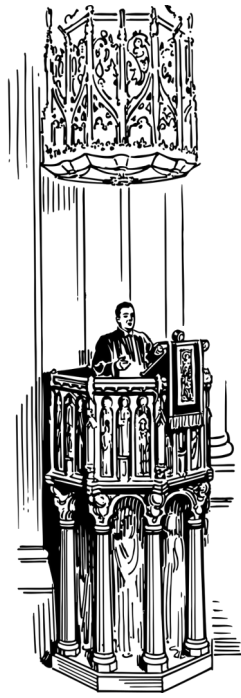
Since then, I have had the good fortune to attend Insight Meditation classes with Judy Myers Avis. This is another wise community that has helped me find a quiet centre in my life.

For all these opportunities I am deeply grateful.



## The Blessing of Preaching – John Lawson

I was invited as a “retired minister” to share something that was “a highlight of your years in ministry”. I found myself hard-pressed to name one incident or memory. Upon reflection I found that one of the things I treasured most was the privilege of crafting and speaking a sermon week by week. The regular week-by-week discipline.



Early on in my ministry I remember running across a little parable that was very helpful in shaping the way I felt about the weekly tasks of ministry – especially the preparation and delivery of sermons. The little thought experiment goes something like this. If you would be asked to remember a specific meal your mother, father or caregiver cooked for you over the many years that they did that – you might be hard-pressed to do so. Perhaps one extraordinary Christmas dinner or Thanksgiving dinner would come to mind. But it was the daily faithfulness of good food put on the table daily that sustained you, allowed you to grow up healthy and strong. And so it is with worship and a sermon. Perhaps there was one or two memorable sermons that stick in your mind. But more likely it was the regular feeding you received week-by-week that nourished your soul and gave you direction and spiritual growth.

My dad was a Presbyterian minister and when I started out in ministry, he offered some advice about leading worship and especially preaching a sermon, which he held in the highest of regards. He said that it was a great privilege to stand up before congregation – be it large or small – where they have taken time to listen to you for 15 or 20 minutes – or, in the case of my father, 30+ minutes. He said, “they deserve your very best”. It is both a privilege and a responsibility – the two go together. I took his advice to heart.

And so I have found that the weekly rhythm of sermon preparation to be one of the highlights and burdens of the week. The privilege granted by the congregation to take the time and energy to wrestle with Scripture (and it often felt like wrestling – like Jacob wrestling with the angel) to extract a blessing. And then the privilege of standing in front of the congregation and reflecting on ancient words and how they speak to us across time today. On occasion there were those wonderful, blessed moments when the light shone through – when my words felt part of God’s glorious Word. Wonderful, mysterious – and a deep privilege.

And then there is the time when my word is received by the congregation as God’s Word – which is also very mysterious. I can remember in one of my first congregations, a rural



congregation, where an old farmer in the very back row slept through every sermon I preached. I trust now that God could use that nap in ways that I missed back then. But you can see on the faces of others how they are attentive, and that the words resonate with something in their lives. And then shaking hands at the back door with that person or another member of the congregation who thanked me for some word I spoke – some word which I swear I never said. It is all a great mystery about how the Word becomes flesh and alive in our lives.

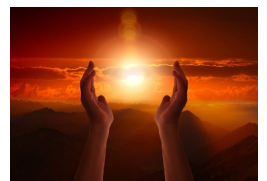
The poet Denise Levertov in her poem “The Secret” talks about the mystery of how a poem touches a person’s heart with a secret below the words – yet but through the words. Worship and a sermon are like that.

*“I love them  
for finding what  
I can’t find,  
and for loving me  
for the line I wrote,  
and for forgetting it  
so that  
a thousand times, till death  
finds them, they may  
discover it again, in other  
lines  
in other  
happenings.”*

## **Two Church People Who Have Touched Me – Peter Gill**

I would like to acknowledge two people, both related to Harcourt, who have influenced my faith journey.

About thirty years ago, phew!, Jill and I were part of a LIFE (Learning, Insight, Fellowship, Encouragement) group led by Tom and Marg Wilson which used to meet on Sunday evenings to reflect on a bible passage or a particular theme. Tom was the primary leader and occasionally he would encourage Jill and me to lead the conversation. The meeting always ended in prayer and the wonderful thing that I learned to embrace was to pray in an unrehearsed, spontaneous



manner. Until that time I felt that prayer needed to be crafted, honed and delivered perfectly. My LIFE group experience taught me to let go of that notion and to simply be in the moment.

The second individual is my long-time friend and hiking companion John Buttars. John was a new minister at Harcourt when we started attending. John's ministry had many facets to it but for me his ability to deliver a message in personal terms resonated more than anything else. He might recount an anecdote from his own life which I could totally relate to in my life. I think this helped me to realize that many of my life's experiences are spiritual in nature and



not simply an event which takes place in isolation. One other thing which John performed which had a hugely emotional impact for me was offering a blessing during communion – his words never failed to comfort and strengthen me. I think I was able to carry that comfort and strength in my day-to-day living.

## **A Highlight In Ministry – John Buttars**

Highlights in ministry? I could say receiving a beautiful kayak upon retirement at Harcourt Church was a highlight of ministry. I still take much joy using it. This summer I improved my paddling technique so there is less strain on my shoulders. That has given me great satisfaction.



I am writing this on Monday the 18<sup>th</sup> of September. I have an email from Susan Finlay, a former UofG student who used to attend Harcourt. She went on to become a medical doctor, eventually settling in Sudbury when her husband Glenn got a position at Laurentian University. They began attending St. Peter's where Dawn Vaneyk was minister. Dawn too had been a student here. She became a candidate for ministry from Harcourt. For at least three decades she was minister at St. Peter's and retired a couple of years ago. At about the same time she was diagnosed with a cancer. She wrote this past summer that she had been diagnosed with a second cancer and a couple of weeks ago Susan emailed to say that Dawn had had a stroke and was in palliative care. Susan's most recent email, the one I haven't responded to yet, is that Dawn didn't recognize her on her most recent visit. Many hearts are breaking.

Decades ago I read a few pages in an American Lutheran book on becoming a minister. The author stated that if you like learning, if you like being stretched emotionally, intellectually, spiritually, if you are willing, even eager to grow and change, then consider the Christian ministry. That is my experience. It has been tragic events like Dawn's illness and so many others from accidental deaths to betrayals of trust and misuse of power and authority that has caused me to become a totally different person from when ordained in May 1970.

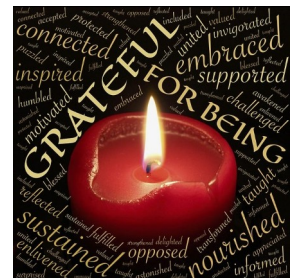
I have had to learn new skills. Nobody taught me how to handle a suicidal person on the phone or even how to lead adult study groups or chair a meeting. I have had to learn how to deal with criticism and rejection. Examples: The anonymous note directed at me left in the pew after worship or two individuals exclaiming the same day after worship that they would never be back at Harcourt. It was the start of the Iraqi war and one said I had been anti-American and the other nauseatingly pro-American. I had to learn to distinguish such reactive criticism from the healthy critique that caused me to examine my soul, my theology, my privileged maleness, my insensitivities. Inclusive language was probably the first major challenge from a congregational member that began a sea change in my inner orientation and my outer actions. Many followed. Multiple joys and sorrows, many conversations, even secrets shared have caused my theology to totally transform into what some might call a theology of the cross.

Even retiring has contributed to my maturation. I left a multitude of friends in Harcourt but a teacher can't return to the classroom nor a doctor to her former patients. You have to give space for those who follow. You have to reinvent yourself. Retirement has left me with a wound of leaving but you can grow and learn from wounds. And speaking of wounds, there has been huge personal growth and learning in response to the disorienting diminishment of the Western church these last 50 plus years.

So that is the highlight in ministry for me, the gift of it all, what I have gained and been given emotionally, spiritually, intellectually, even physically. Ministry has been my teacher. The uniqueness of congregational members, sometimes complicated human dynamics within the congregation plus so many different kinds of situations have provided the instruction and the location for growth and learning. If I had to put it in one sentence, it would be something like this: Seeking to discern the movements and spirits within myself, in my most intimate relationships and within and beyond the Christian community in order to sense a way to find the Holy One, this has been transformative.

Thank you. I am blessed.

PS A day later and I have just heard that Dawn died early this morning. Hearts are still breaking.



## Highlights of Ministry - Stan Bunston

After graduating from Emmanuel College and ordination in 2009 at age 62, I was sent by the United Church to a part time position (“part time” in theory at least) in Hanover, Ontario. As I reflect on the three years in that position, my mind is drawn back to one of the most lasting and hopeful conversations I ever had with a wise professor back at the College on the subject of pastoral ministry. I loved the simplicity and clarity of his advice for one new to the role of minister in a congregational setting: “Just love the people and the rest will sort itself out” and “No, personally, you do not have to 'have it all together' but it is best that you not be 'coming apart'.” That perspective stayed with me as I came to know and love the folks in that congregation and town.



Grief Groups (with the aid of material from Dublin's Don Parr and his experience with Hospice Wellington) were opportunities to build a trusting community of 7-10 people who could share deeply and support each other in their journey of loss and reconciliation. Unlike more secular settings, our sessions opened and closed with prayer. In times of distress we may be called to reach out to Spirit / Great Love seeking and finding solace in our faith and church community. Perhaps such times of suffering can be a “highlight of intimacy” in the Presence of the Sacred.

On a lighter note, I fondly remember a social occasion – one of many – when community and church friends gathered for enjoyment. In this event we were celebrating the 90<sup>th</sup> birthday of Irma, a well known pianist in the community and former church organist. On arriving midst the gathered crowd enjoying refreshments and conversation, I spotted our honoured 90 year old and made my way to greet her. Since Irma was in a wheel chair, I simply slid down on one knee to be face to face with Irma. What I imagined to be a quiet conversation turned into hilarity as someone observed that Irma, who to that date had never married, was receiving a marriage proposal from “Reverend Stan”!

Births and deaths, joys and suffering, laughter and tears – relationships with each other and Holy Mystery are all part of the life and leadership offered in pastoral ministry. While only a few years in “paid, accountable ministry” in my particular case I do believe we are all called to ministry for a lifetime. In the beloved words of our United Church “New Creed” – words that invited me to travel more deeply into ministry: “We are not alone, we live in God's world. ... In life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us. We are not alone. Thanks be to God.”

## Bill Hrychuk: A Transformation Guru - Arlene Daves-Fuhr

Believe it or not between the ages of 9 and 26, I was a quiet, demure person. My mother was unsupportive and emotionally abusive, so I learned not to freely share my thoughts. That approach changed somewhat during high school and a bit more at university but mainly I remained shy and insecure. Hard to imagine, right?

A major change occurred when I met Bill Hrychuk. He had studied at Union Theological Seminary and, years later when I met Walter Wink, the theologian recalled that Bill was an outstanding, extremely talented student. Bill claimed Jesus' parables should make the hair on our arms stand up and if we weren't on CSIS's watch list, we weren't being faithful. However, Bill chose to train as a teacher and be an English instructor in a large high school in Edmonton. The students in his classroom were his congregation. He deliberately chose not to become a minister but to relate to young people as well as those in our United Church congregation.

Bill taught anyone who was willing to listen that it was a good thing to challenge authority and disrupt the status quo. He was aware society rewarded "rule-keepers" and toadies. And that was me. In those days, I was conservative. I didn't question my superiors and I did what I was told. Well, more or less. With a few exceptions.

Bill was an encouraging mentor who taught folks to think for themselves. To question, and investigate, and have the confidence to stand up for what they believed. Justice, prophetic call, and the use of one's talents to make the world a better place, were major themes with Bill. One of his favourite books was *Rules for Radicals*. Somehow he was the one who sensed that below my superficial, compliant personality resided a raging rebel..

Bill and others established a Social Justice Institute that, for one week every June, used a local seminary to hold classes on distributive justice, prophetic response, and radical action. These workshops shaped my outlook in monumental and impactful ways.

Bill suggested I might give the same attention to scripture as I had to literature, by beginning with an Old Testament course. As he suspected, I was hooked. I went on to earn a Masters of Theology degree from St. Stephen's College in Edmonton.

Sadly, Bill developed lung cancer in his thirties. Throughout his illness, he was honest, and passionate, as he shared his hopes and struggles. He really felt he could beat cancer. One Sunday, when he mentioned staff at a cancer clinic were treating him like a number, not a person, folks picked up the phone and things radically changed. When Bill passed away nine months after his diagnosis, his wife and three girls were distraught as was our entire church community. We felt bereft. But some forty years later, Bill's memory shines brightly in all

those he impacted. He has physically departed but there's a strong sense he still endorses our unconventional activities and celebrates our achievements. His voice resides deep within us and stirs our souls.

## **Highlights of my years in ministry - Henk Dykman**

After ordination in Vancouver I was assigned to start in parish ministry in rural Manitoba.

After seven years a terrible disaster happened when two cars crashed one evening on a gravel road in my parish. They were both hurrying to a wedding. I was at the church waiting with the bridal party. Their happy expectations were quickly changed to deep grief. To my surprise, I could share their grief in a way that they deeply appreciated. For the funerals of the five victims I also got support from two other ministers. We served together in an "enlarged parish". (Two rural ones joined together.)

I realized I needed to understand more about my gifts in ministry and I went back to Vancouver for a course in Supervised Pastoral Education, supplied by CAPE (Canadian Pastoral Education) at the Vancouver Pastoral Institute. My study helped me to qualify for Chaplaincy positions in Ontario so in September of 1978 I started as protestant chaplain at the Guelph Correctional Centre. Doug McCarthy, the R C chaplain already there was a great support to me. After a few years I became a Supervisor with CAPE and the Guelph Correctional Centre became a training institute for CAPE programs. Three months of each year I supervised an average of five seminary students or newly ordained clergy for whom these months could become a first step toward chaplaincy. I found I had been graced with my true calling.

## **"Movers of the Spirit" – Dan Ganesh**

I have been asked to recognize in writing a Minister or Church figure who influenced my faith. On reflection, I can't think of any one individual, but it is more a group of people who have impacted my faith journey. I refer to them simply as movers of the Spirit, since I feel that my faith is manifested more through my actions rather than words.



The first figure influencing my faith did so before I was born. Many have heard the story of how my eldest brother (I am the youngest of seven children) would put on his best clothes and disappear on Sunday mornings in the small village in Guyana where my parents lived. My brother was going to listen to Catechist Samuel Seeram (later Reverend), who regaled all the villagers to stories from the Bible. Seeram's stories always continued to the following Sunday, thereby keeping my brother's interest. My sister and then my mom were curious as to where my brother was going, and so off they went on a following Sunday. It was there that my mom listened to Seeram's message, met Betty (Seeram's wife), and became part of the Lutheran Church Women's League. In short, this was how my family moved from being Hindus to becoming Christians.



My father became a Lutheran some years after, since it offered him the opportunity to become Head Master of Ascension Lutheran School, located on the outskirts of Georgetown, the capital. My Dad never really forgot his Hindu roots, and I still have relatives who maintain their Hindu faith today. However, my parents both became devout Lutherans, such that my Dad became a Lay Minister (including when he came to Canada), but it was my Mom whose faith was unbounded. As I write this, I am realizing the role my parents played in moving my spirit. My parents were good friends of the Lutheran pastor at Ascension, Hector Magalee. Pastor Magalee was smart, always had a great smile but I sensed also a bit of rebel in him (even though I was just about 10 years of age). But he always seemed to have time to chat with me, and he was one reason that I found Church so enjoyable. On reflection, Jim Ball had some mannerisms that reminds me of Magalee.

So the Lutheran Church became part of my upbringing where I became an Acolyte, sang in the Choir and joined the Luther League (the youth group). At that time, I attended Calvary Lutheran Church which was closer to my home in Georgetown. I was a typical teenager – a bit rebellious, ruled a bit by hormones. The priest in Calvary at that time was Pastor John Bollinger. Pastor Bollinger was a solid, great soul who became an influencer in my life, despite the relatively short time I interacted with him. He encouraged me to take leadership roles in the Luther League at Calvary but also for the Lutheran churches around Georgetown (spanning several Lutheran Churches in Guyana). When a friend was having trouble with his parents, Bollinger asked me to offer support (that friend and I remain close friends to this day). Prompted by this memory of Bollinger, I checked on the internet and was filled with nostalgia as I listened to several of his past parishioners in North Carolina wishing him a happy 90<sup>th</sup>! I note now with some sadness that this gentle soul passed away in December 2021, and I regret not having tried to reach out to him.

When I arrived in Canada in 1972, I completed High School in Ottawa for two years before coming to Guelph in 1974. During that time in Ottawa, I felt no connection to the Lutheran Church in Ottawa – perhaps too much culture shock, and too foreign from the Lutheran Church I knew in Guyana. During my years at University of Guelph, I was somehow attracted to Harcourt Church while walking on Dean Avenue. I knew nothing of the United Church. I started attending (on a very occasional basis), and like everyone else, was drawn to Rev. John Buttars. John had that bearing and look, but I must admit, I did find a few of his sermons where I was left with a “Huh?”. But that was part of his intrigue, because I felt that I didn’t listen close enough. Later, when Brenda (who came from an Anglican background) and I decided to get married, we approached John. John holds a special place as he performed our wedding ceremony on Sept 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1983, which we found out several years later was also the day of his and Barb’s anniversary. This was the initiation of another stage of my faith journey – becoming a member of the United Church.

Of the Ministers since then, the movers of my spirit were Reverends Jim Ball, Bill Lord and Monica Moore. I should not forget Miriam Flynn. All of us involved in Worship during the pandemic had a terrific faith journey, because we never knew what to expect one week to the next. When Don Macaulay asked me to join the Christian Care Committee, it offered me the chance to work with Monica. Monica offered the outlier view of sometimes a staid approach to worship. Her ideas didn’t always work, but it was a contrast to John, yet somehow it was invigorating. While her time was relatively brief, it allowed opportunity for me to grow in my own faith journey, to get to know the Harcourt faith community and to feel a part of it. With regards to Jim Ball, there is so much I can say about him. In Christian tradition, we think of pain almost as a virtue. After all, Jesus suffered on the cross for our sins. When Jim Ball drove from Georgetown to Guelph, and officiated at my Mother’s funeral service whilst in the throes of a severe shingles attack, I remain in awe of his faith, commitment and strength. His impact on me remains strong especially as I was involved in the visioning process for Harcourt. His concepts and thoughts and how our faith community will function in the future always resonate and are never far away.

Finally, I acknowledge Bill Lord. Bill has reached across several decades of Ministry and is always willing to mentor, listen and be a friend. His depth of knowledge is profound. He speaks frankly and honestly. I always enjoyed his messages on the times he led the Worship. He continues to be an inspiration to me in my faith journey, and is a definite mover of my spirit.

## Welcome to Guelph Project – Peter Gill

On 18<sup>th</sup> September we received the wonderful news that the seven members of the Shirzai family have received their permanent resident visas from Immigration Services. The Canadian government has now sent a request to the International Organization for Migration to proceed with final settlement arrangements. The estimate is that the family will be here within 7-12 weeks.

Now that we have an idea of their arrival we are in contact with a real estate agent to help us find a 4 bedroom house. Right now we have two requests:

- Financial donations: we are committed to financially support the family for 12 months. Based on our “best guess” budget, we are going to need to raise \$15,000 in addition to the \$25,000 Harcourt has already committed (the same request will be made of Trinity). Fundraising will be commencing very soon but donations now will be gratefully received. Payments should be designated to the refugee fund.
- Volunteer assistance: there are going to be many opportunities to help with the settlement of Saliha and her family. If you feel called to help, please contact one of the Harcourt team members – we have a number of areas which will need some volunteer time – from transportation, health support, education, orientation, household items and others.



The Shirzai family has experienced extreme trauma and dislocation in the past couple of years. We want their experience of settling in Guelph to be as problem-free as possible. We are sure that the Harcourt congregation will do its very best to make sure that happens.

Committee members: Peter Gill, Jill Gill, Ilona Dobos, Ros Slater, Kate Ballagh-Steeper

## News from the Caroline Harcourt Group


On September 11, 2023, this fellowship group met at the home of Jean and Dave Hume. Many thanks to Dave for his exemplary directing of traffic and parking! Approximately 20 women enjoyed visiting and chatting. Even without an accompanist, they joyfully sang “Come in and sit down, You are a part of the Family”.

The main reason for the gathering was to say goodbye to Leone Sutor, a member of the group for many years, and pianist for most of the meetings. She and her husband Doug are moving to Woodstock to be closer to family. We enjoyed hearing of their early years in Guelph and how they joined Harcourt when it was first established.

Jean asked people to share their first experience with this group and the stories were wonderful. Many of us had never heard of the fashion show in Centennial year and wished we could have witnessed the modelling of negligee! We also heard of the rewarding experience of providing refreshments at funerals and making mincemeat pie filling as a fund raiser, among other experiences. For several years they sent packages of winter accessories to remote communities and organized the filling of Christmas bags for local needs.



With the rental of the Friendship Room to the Montessori school for welcome income, this group will need to explore options for moving forward. Jean outlined several possibilities. With the physical challenges, careful thought is needed. Like so many changes, it can be seen as an opportunity to evolve, perhaps in a slightly different direction. With the amount of lively conversation and laughter, it was obvious that fellowship is important to the participants. Now, to decide how that can happen from here on in.


 Thanks to Jean for her thoughtful, dedicated leadership these past 12 years. Time to step back, and rest Jean.

Looking forward to see what happens next!!



## Thanksgiving 2023

"Thankfulness is the quickest path to joy" – Jefferson Bethke

The Chancel Committee will be continuing our tradition of decorating the sanctuary for Thanksgiving. Would you like to assist us by donating towards the purchase of chrysanthemums? You can dedicate this to a loved one or to recognize a special event.

To donate, please contact Barb Friend  
cell: 519-803-5032  
email: [barfriend52@gmail.com](mailto:barfriend52@gmail.com)  
deadline Monday Oct 2<sup>nd</sup>.

## Harvest Bowls Event:

Harcourt is hosting a Harvest Bowls event on October 24<sup>th</sup>, in the sanctuary from 7-9 P.M. It is a fundraising event for Chalmers. Participants will choose a hand made pottery bowl, donated by local potters, eat some delicious soups donated from local restaurants and our very own Manna group, as well as delicious breads from local bakeries.

Tickets are available on Eventbrite. The link is below:

<https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/harvest-bowls-tickets-680488749167?aff=ebdshpsearchautocomplete>

Plan to come and support the work that Chalmers does in the community.



Come, choose a handmade soup bowl to take home.



## The Antique Sale Returns

In April 2023, Harcourt hosted a sale of vintage, collectibles and antiques in the gym. Before the sale ended that afternoon, many of the vendors wanted to know when the next sale would take place.

The Harcourt Board has agreed to another sale, to be held on Saturday, November 18, 2023. Proceeds will go to Harcourt.

Approximately a dozen vendors will be offering vintage tools, china, glassware, sewing notions, vintage Christmas items and more. Again, adult admission will be \$3, with free admission for children.



A bake sale took place on the same date and we would like to offer it again. Unfortunately the Hoegs are not available on that date to run the bake sale but have offered their support, advice and files if anyone could take on this project. The bake table was very popular and garnered many funds for Harcourt as well.

Watch for more details and feel free to contact me if you would like to help out or organize the Harcourt bakers!

Janet Webster ([janetwebster717@gmail.com](mailto:janetwebster717@gmail.com))

### ANTIQUES, COLLECTIBLES AND VINTAGE SALE

Date: Saturday November 18, 2023

Time: 10:00 AM -3:30 PM

Place: Harcourt Gym

87 Dean Ave

Guelph

Admission: Adults \$3, Children free



## Life changes! Janet Gostonyi

It is so great to nap!  
Or  
observe with joy the happenings in the garden.  
Love and quiet  
are so  
precious.  
Rest with the Lord.  
He will show you the way.



## An Interview with The Very Reverend Bruce McLeod – Judi Morris

*People who know Bruce McLeod tell me, Bruce is honest, open, humble and doesn't shy away. He has a marvellous memory and a sharp mind. They say Bruce has a strong passion for church and what it is about and a fervour for human rights and social action. You will clearly see all of this in the interview with him. Judi Morris*

Judi: Bruce McLeod, thank you for this time with you. You were the 25<sup>th</sup> and the youngest Moderator of the United Church of Canada (72 – 74). You have a doctorate on preaching from Union Theological Seminary in New York...were the minister of Bloor Street United..... a frequent columnist in the United Church Observer.... practised extensive outreach via television and by ministry in shopping malls and beyond traditional congregational worship. You were an Op Ed columnist for the Toronto Star for eight years and produced 450 columns. Our Jim Ball was your assistant at Richmond Hill.

Bruce: He was my associate, not my assistant. He was never just an "Assistant." That was his very first assignment as a minister. And he blessed us all.

Judi: So Bruce, before we start, please tell me what I'm missing here?

Bruce: You have too much already!

Judi: Oh, I know there's more.

Bruce: Well, I was a Commissioner for the Ontario Human Rights Commission for a term in the 70's.

Judi: Before we move back through all of that, we'd like to know what brought you to Guelph and where were you born and raised and if you can tell us a bit about your family.

Bruce: I was born in Toronto in 1929. That's where I grew up, went to school and university. Then it was on to New York for graduate study. Why did we come to Guelph? Well, Joyce (*The Rev Joyce Kelly*) and I married, now nearly 40 years, were living in a Toronto waterfront condo. Joyce is also a UC minister, (most recently at nearby College Street United). When she joined me in retirement, we decided to leave the city's din and dirt.

Guelph was an easy choice. Two classmates from Emmanuel '53 (Don & Ruth Parr and Art & Ruby Waters) lived at the Arboretum Village for years, and loved it. We looked no further! We just love this welcoming, friendly, community.

Ours is a blended family, I have three daughters, and Joyce also has three "children". All are near retirement age. We are surrounded by Grandkids and Greats. Birthdays, weddings, and new births, proliferate. Everyone lives fairly near, and we see them a lot.



Judi: Have any of these children followed in your footsteps?

Bruce: Not so far. They're all following their own footsteps as they should.

Judi: This is a really stupid question. Learning Joyce is a minister, so that makes it more stupid.

Bruce: Ask away! (we were both laughing)

Judi: Well.... I doubt this will go into the interview, but here it goes. While I was growing up, a church ministry was always a joint couple's effort. The man preached, prayed and officiated at funerals and weddings - the woman, who we saw, knew and loved as much as the minister, played piano and taught Sunday school. I often wondered what a minister would do if he loved a woman who could not play piano. He wouldn't have been able to marry her. So, I must ask ... and with a smile, did your wife play piano. We already know she was busy at a different church preaching. (Joyce could be heard heartily laughing in the background.)

Bruce: Not a stupid question at all. That used to be the case very often, but now ministers' wives are as different from each other as any other wives. They don't have to play the piano. They don't even have to go to church!

Actually, I'm the piano player in our family. Music has always been a big part in my life. I've relied on the piano in all my congregations.

My Dad bought a Steinway Baby Grand in 1929, just before I was born. I grew up hearing my Mom and big sister, playing it. Since coming to Guelph, *Mark's Piano*, has refurbished it, and kept it in pristine condition. My old fingers can't stretch like they used to, so I've had to plan for its future. Sadly, none of my kids' houses have room for it, and none of them plays.

I was so pleased to find the *Avenue Road Music School and Performance Centre* in Toronto, near where I grew up. They made it part of their current renovations. Sad to see it go out the door last year. I'm so pleased to think of fresh fingers learning on it, and in knowing it'll still be appreciated in years to come.

Judi: Your church upbringing... were you raised within the United Church, or are you an import?

Bruce: (laughed) I was born into the United Church - I was the first ever homegrown Moderator in the UC.. All the others were former Presbyterians, Methodists, or Congregationalists.

Judi: At what age did you begin to realize ministry could be for you and what/who might have been the inspirational force toward that?

Bruce: Well, I always knew it was an option. My Dad was an active layman both in both local and national Church. He chaired the National Finance Board for twenty years. My uncle, Hugh was a former UC Moderator. But he lived in BC, and I didn't see him much, growing up.

I do remember, as a kid, watching my Dad. He travelled up and down the land pushing for higher salaries and more stable pensions for ministers, not knowing there'd be another minister in his own family. He was not an overtly religious man. His religion was in his actions, not his words. I noticed that.

He sat beside me every Sunday in church. I still hear his voice on the bass line of "*The Church's One Foundation*." Yes, he might wind his watch during the "long prayer". But there he was, a successful businessman, bowing himself weekly before something greater than he was. (I noticed that too!)

My Mom, like him, grew up in a small town church family. At home, we often sang hymns around the piano while she played. She always stayed connected to St. Christopher House, a Settlement House in downtown Toronto, where she once worked. A few years back, she was honoured at *the Fifty-Year Celebration of the St. Chris School of Music*, which she started.

Both my parents lived out their “Christian vocations” quietly, before my eyes. I noticed. Neither ever nudge me towards ministry.

Nor did our minister, Stanley Russell, who later became a good friend. I was surprised the first time he invited me to “lunch and a movie”, assuring me first that he’d never “burst into prayer unexpectedly”, or “inquire into the state of my soul!”

My parents, and minister, were significant, but quiet, models for me. I noticed them.

Unlike some teen-agers, I never knew what I was “going to be”, even at university. So in 1948, I decided to try a summer “mission field.” The Church sent students out each summer, from May to September, to staff little churches without ministers, most on the prairies.

So, at age 19, there I was, in Success, Saskatchewan. Fortunately, people were friendly and patient. This city boy had never before seen a church without a Chancel. The first thing I did was change the church furniture around. I shoved the big central Pulpit to the side, and heaved the Table up to the centre of the platform. At next day’s first service, nobody said a word. They were used to summer students!

I stumbled along, learning as I went. But I was “churched out” at summer’s end. I stopped going to church so regularly. Parents and minister never said a word. Still, I began thinking I’d give Theology a try. Again, to my surprise, I just loved it, and did fine. Classmate, and later Village neighbour, Art Waters invited me to speak to his Young People about summers working in New York. Again to my surprise, that too went well.

I still get surprised when people respond positively to something I’ve done publicly. But all continued to go well, and I was ordained seventy years ago last Spring.

Judi: As a young student in theological college, what were your burning issues?

Bruce: To get all my essays done on time! This was all new to me. Also at that time I was Student Assistant at Deer Park UC. Preaching my first sermon there, before people who remembered me in short pants, was enough challenge. I wasn’t yet involved in social issues.

But the New York Settlement experience was important. Forest House was in a mainly Black area of The Bronx. If this white guy raised his voice reprovably, protective shells went up at once Kids became unreachable. I learned so much there. Like never again to play Stephen Foster songs, like *Old Black Joe*. I've never played them since. Perhaps that was the beginning of social awakening for me,

Judi: At what stage did you envision a United Church of Canada, that would become more open and welcoming to new ideas than had previously been the case.

Bruce: I just assumed that would happen. I went out expecting change to be welcomed, and so it was. People never said, "Whoa, you can't do that!". I found encouragement everywhere. It was the right time.

Judi: Has the United Church progressed as you had hoped?

Bruce: Well, the church, like all institutions goes through stages. When I began professionally in the 50's & 60's, we were in a boom time. Sunday schools overflowed. Morning and night services were jammed. The thing to do Sundays was "go to church" No competition - Sunday shopping, sports or movies. No question, an easier (too easy?) time than now to begin as a minister.

But culture changes, and we've moved on seventy years. No more bulging Sunday Schools, or overflowing churches. The atmosphere is very different now. Not all bad news, we should remember. Perhaps the Church is becoming more what it was in the beginning - the way it was always supposed to be.

Jesus said, you are to be like "salt" - flavouring the whole, not dominating, turning the whole world into salt. Who wants a dish full of salt? No, just enough to give flavour, all that's needed. And you need to be small to do that. Big and overwhelming doesn't work. So, in many ways, the change in culture brings us opportunities to learn, and grow into a "savory" minority group again - like salt.

Judi: What would a young Bruce McLeod have on his mind today entering Emmanuel College?

Bruce: It's so different today. Being encouraged on every side is not like going into a place where people don't even know the Lord's Prayer. It's hard to imagine myself beginning Emmanuel, not knowing what I know today. I'm not sure I'd last! I might choose another vocation entirely. Like being an English Professor.

Judi: Stepping back and looking at some of these things you have done, let's take the Moderator. The young Moderator. Most of us know there is a Moderator, and there's new ones all the time, but what does a Moderator do? Why would anybody want to be one?

Bruce: Well, if you want to be Moderator, you probably won't be. That's an old UC tradition, that seems to be changing a bit – now there are even "US-style" campaign speeches beforehand! I, however, was totally surprised by my election. even had to go out and buy a tie! I'd never thought it would happen. But...it did!

The new Moderator can define that role personally, it's wide open. The word itself implies what the job is – to "moderate" (i.e., "chair"), debates for about 400 elected GC "Commissioners", sent from across Canada, to make or change official UC policy. Until the next Council, the Moderator is the UC's official public voice. In my day, the Moderator's election was the Council's first order of business.

At the moment the result was announced, I was called forward, to be officially installed as the UC's 25<sup>th</sup> Moderator. I sat down, picked up the gavel, and began "moderating" the 400 Commissioners who'd elected me. Now, it's different. the new Moderator isn't installed until, sometimes, days later.

I liked the old system, where you're thrown right in from the start. Commissioners who elected me helped us all muddle through, with much laughter along the way. I got to know their names, and where they came from. Their issues become my issues. It was fun! Years later, people would come up, smiling, "I was there when you were elected", they'd say.

The biggest issue, as we began, was Christian/Jewish relations. As Council opened, the UC faced two lawsuits –One alleged anti-Semitism *in the United Church Observer*. (Much loved Editor Al Forrest was then the sole North American voice publicly criticizing Israeli policies on occupied Palestine). The other was Al's own suit against the Jewish organization, *B'nai B'rith*, citing death threats, and crosses burnt on his home lawn.

Following the Council there were six months of lunch meetings with Jewish and UC leaders. A Statement resulted, lamenting extremism on both sides. But the issue never went away. Moderators get hundreds of letters. I answered my two years' worth, every one by hand. About half called me "criminally ant-Semitic". An equal number labelled me a "Jew-lover". Each pile on my desk remained about the same height!

Judi: Bruce, of all the positions you held in life, which were the most rewarding to you, and perhaps why or what parts?



Bruce: I've always been proud of being a United Church parish minister. Whether working as a Toronto Star columnist, or employed briefly at the *Ontario Human Rights Commission*, everybody always knew I'd be back leading worship in my church on Sundays. As Moderator, I chose not to become another "Head Office" bureaucrat. Getting home to my little family, and my own congregation, after ten-day church visits across the land, was what kept me going.

Parish ministry blesses the minister, as well as congregations. Leading public worship, and being with people in times of joy and crisis, is a privilege, not a burden.

Judi: I read about your experience in Taiwan. It was incredible. It put me in mind of Hugh Rose's experience in Korea. Did that change or reshape your thinking or missions in life?

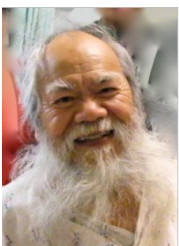
Bruce: It all seemed to happen just by chance – a sudden invitation came to replace Observer Editor Al Forrest on a small group press trip to Taiwan. I jumped at the chance, even though knowing we'd be hosted by the repressive government of Chiang Kai Shek.

Defeated by the Red Army, in 1947, Chiang fled to Taiwan, 100 miles west, claiming the island for China. It's now known that he slaughtered thousands of potential resisters. His smiling portrait on billboards everywhere. Chiang, a master of public relations, made sure the world never knew.

Like generations of gullible Westerners before, we were deluged with so many banquets and briefings in accent-free English by our mostly US-educated hosts there seemed hardly time or energy, to look further.

But then, a heavily-accented, but familiar Taiwanese whisper in my ear warned, "there are other people you should meet." That night, a doughty *Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT)* driver whisked me off to meet well known Political Science Professor, *Peng Min-Min*. He was under house arrest for "planning" to publish a proposed "*Constitution for a Democratic Independent Taiwan*." I carried a copy home, little realizing its importance. Quickly translated, it was hailed by the Taiwanese Resisters across North America.

Eventually arriving home, I found three exiled Taiwanese students at my door, thanking me for writing some mildly anti-Chiang articles in *The Globe and Mail*. One, Albert Lin, later a dauntless advocate for Taiwanese independence, became a much loved and respected United Church leader, and life-long friend.



Albert, an exile, couldn't return to his homeland, even for his mother's funeral. Later, a tireless advocate for Taiwanese Independence from China, he

introduced the PCT to *World Council of Churches* programs of citizens' non-violent social change, arranging for hundreds of Taiwanese resisters to come to Canada for training. Progress towards Taiwan's first ever democratic election in 2002 unfolded, remarkably, without public violence.

In following years, I travelled several times to Taiwan. I learned how a woman, returning home from visiting her imprisoned husband, found her sister and two babies, murdered on the floor. No one would buy such a house of horror. So, the PCT purchased it, naming it *Light of Justice Presbyterian Church*. (So much better, I thought, than naming it after a street, like Bloor!)



The UC General Council later sent me to Taiwan, with 500 signatures, to publicly protest the arrest of a young democracy-promoting Taiwanese-Canadian, the first Canadian ever named by Amnesty international "Prisoner of The Month."

In 2010, Joyce and I were welcomed to speak across Taiwan. My topic was "*Following Jesus Beneath the Flags of Caesar*". Joyce also spoke in several churches, and was there for a moving reunion with aging Professor Peng, Now celebrated as the "Father of Democracy" in Taiwan. My story pales beside his. But I will never forget my adventure in Taiwan.



Judi: Did you also go to Vietnam?

Bruce: Yes. Vietnam was a huge issue in those days. We had 27,000 draft resisters living in Toronto, many attending Bloor Street Church. Here I am in Taiwan, I thought, I'm this close. I'm going to go to Viet Nam! I invited the other journalists to come along but they went straight home.

In Saigon, USAID got me on a flight north on a two-seater plane. Flying low, we saw where the deadly Canadian-manufactured defoliant "*Agent Orange*", had stripped trees so the

road could be better strafed. Too late! Viet Cong guerrillas left the road and travelled through the jungle. At the camp, we saw mutilated children. Burned by napalm.

Back in Saigon, I saw six little boys at 6am, asleep in an outdoor market – one so thin he's lying on a bar rail. Each boy was reaching for another – arm or leg flung out. I thought of my own three little ones, each safe in her own bed at home. The photo, above my desk now, still speaks to me. Back in Toronto, I showed the pictures to a Rotary Club. Some walked out, muttering I must be a communist!



At that time, Judi, mothers in Toronto were having trouble sleeping at night. They took Valium, but it didn't work. I thought then, and think now, that was because age-old nerve ends were reminding them their children were hurting in Vietnam.

The Vietnam experience was perspective-changing for me. "I have heard their cries, and have come down to deliver them", Moses heard God saying (Exodus 3:7). More than ever, I knew the church needed to hear that too.

*There's more! The second half of Judi's interview with Bruce will be published in the December issue of the Herald. - Ed*

## Bruce's After-Supper Words

*at a Street Party in the Village by the Arboretum, Guelph. August 2023.*

Poets sometimes say it best

So Robert Frost, some years ago:

(Or was it after last night's fire-flood-and-gun-death News?)

*"So what is this talked of mystery of birth?", he asks .*

*But riding bareback on the earth*

*Our wild mount a headless horse*

*That runs, unbridled, off its course.*

*...Our best blandishments defied,*

*(Tho) we have ideas yet we haven't tried."*

Half way thru my tenth decade, mostly confined now to my window chair, I've had one wonderful ride!

Now, of course, blessed to have landed with you in this peaceful, friendly, community, I just watch it all unfold.

Amazing new devices make up for failing eyes & ears, [audible.ca](https://www.audible.ca), with five-star readers, pushes back the walls, & brings the characters of any book I've ever heard of, to mesmerizing life again.

Kids - what? Retired already? - FaceTime, phone and visit, grands & greats turn six and 36 before our eyes.

Joyce, my calm & calming, live-in love-in, care-giver and life-bringer down so many years, makes new days welcome for this old guy. And all is good.

Every morning, if it's not raining, & there's a breeze, the early sun pours past my driveway tree, performing a unique shadow ballet of dancing leaves on my drawn window blind.

It lasts about an hour before the light moves on. What a start for the day!

Later, in my window chair, the other side of the house, two great trees hold centre stage.

I watch, and learn from them. As the year turns, they bend patiently, and move, as best they can, to the rhythm of whatever the seasons demand.

In some strange way, I see them as companion riders. They dance to a slower and more ancient rhythm, that still beats on at the heart of all that is.

People used to call it the “music of the spheres”. That old “creation Music” still brings perspective, sustenance, and hope to me, and weary riders everywhere.

Never giving up, every day it woos frantic lives, to slow down, breathe deep, catch the still familiar beat, and join the ancient dance again.

Even angels shout for joy. And old feet closer home, begin to step in time again.

And “ideas” pour in that *“yet we haven’t tried.”*

Rt Rev Bruce McLoed

## **Harcourt’s Ministers, Part 1 - Marilyn Whiteley**

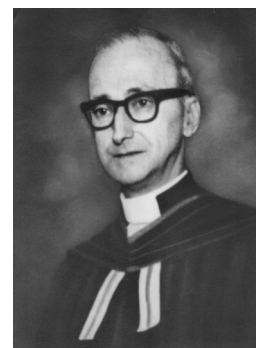
We saw in the Harcourt History Corner in March that William Rose was the minister serving the Brooklyn Mission at the time it became Harcourt Memorial United Church in 1956. So what happened next?

William Rose resigned his part-time position, and in July of 1957, the congregation issued a call to Robert Kaill to be its minister. Bob was born in Halifax. He had served in the Royal Canadian Ordinance Corps during World War II and was ordained in 1952. In September he would come from a church in Southampton to assume his duties as a full-time minister at Harcourt.

Harcourt owned a manse, which was under renovation, but how could it serve the Kaills, for the Kaill family had seven children! The necessary arrangements were made, the manse was ready when the Kaills arrived, and Bob Kaill was inducted as Harcourt’s minister.



History Corner

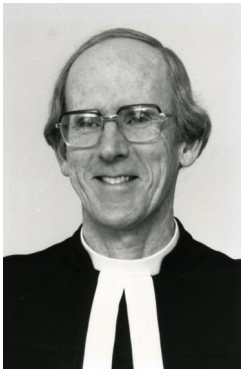




One innovation during the time of Bob Kaill's ministry was the introduction of adult study groups. This opened new doors of learning to many in the Harcourt community. Another change during this time was not at the initiative of the minister. At the Official Board meeting in October of 1965, Gary Piper made a motion that the use of all titles be dropped. Everyone, including the minister, should be greeted using their first names. Gary himself was a physician, but "Dr. Piper" became "Gary" and "the Rev. Robert Kaill" or "Mr. Kaill" became "Bob" in an attempt to wipe out distinctions within the community.

Bob submitted his resignation in October of 1967. He had been a candidate for a doctorate at the University of Waterloo, and now the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Guelph offered him a position as an assistant professor in sociology. He planned to leave Harcourt to take up that position at the end of June 1968. During Bob's time at Harcourt, he had led the congregation through the process of constructing a new church building and had helped develop more efficient organizational structures.

A Pastoral Relations Committee was formed, and its members interviewed seven ministers and heard each of them preach. Their choice, approved by the congregation, was Donald McLean. Born in Vancouver, Don had received his seminary training at Emmanuel College in Toronto and had done additional study in Edinburgh.



Don, with his wife, Louise, and their four children came to Guelph during the summer of 1968 and settled into the manse, which fit them more comfortably than it had the larger Kaill family. He began his ministry in August, and on the evening of September 4, he was inducted as Harcourt's minister.

While his duties kept him busy, in any spare time that he had, Don was an active woodworker. One year, he obtained lumber from the Wolfond wrecking yard and built the large cross that served as a focal point in the sanctuary on Easter for many years. Also in one sermon, he described the process of building a sailboat and setting sail for the first time in the lake near the family's cottage. Louise McLean was active in the congregation in women's organizations and as the organizer of a Badminton and Bible Study group. Don also initiated Bible study sessions during his time at Harcourt.



In September of 1975, he wrote a letter of resignation, to take effect by June 30, 1976. Again a Pastoral Relations Committee was formed. The members went to hear the preaching of the most promising candidates. One applicant, however, was not currently in a pastorate. This was a young man named John Buttars, and he was



spending a year as a resident in the Chaplaincy Department of Toronto General Hospital. His father was a United Church minister in Pickering, however, and John was able to schedule one Sunday morning when he would be the guest preacher in his father's church. So one morning early in the winter of 1976, three carloads of committee members travelled from Guelph to Pickering to hear the candidate. Not long afterwards the committee made its decision, the congregation extended the call, and John Buttars accepted it. Harcourt was getting a new minister.

John Buttars arrived in Guelph during the summer of 1976 with his wife, Barbara, and their two young daughters. Fiona was ready for kindergarten, while Andrea was just a toddler. All long-time church members eventually face an adjustment that they seldom consider until it presents itself: someday that venerable authority figure, "the minister," will be one of their own generation—or even younger! This was the transition that many in the Harcourt community faced, perhaps a bit sooner than they had expected with John's arrival. Yet the transition turned out to be not so difficult after all, as people were caught up in the flurry of activity that occurred during that fall.

It would take so much space to record the what happened during the thirty years of John Buttars' ministry at Harcourt that it would crowd out the rest of this newsletter. But one innovation must be mentioned. Early in 1977, Barbara and John Buttars offered members of the congregation a series of seven sessions called "Teach me how to pray." No one could have anticipated how this small beginning would grow. A second group started in May and a third in the fall. Over the next years, new groups were formed to allow more people to grow in their spiritual lives.

Meanwhile, John Buttars had discovered a new resource for growth in prayer and meditation, the Ignatius Jesuit Centre of Guelph. This contact with the Ignatius Centre provided a link, and the Week of Guided Prayer was born. The first one was held in January of 1983. It has become an ecumenical project with both leaders and participants coming from many different churches, and it has continued to the present day.



Guelph Ecumenical Week of  
Guided Prayer and Spiritual Exploration

During the thirty years of John's ministry, the Harcourt staff increased, and the story becomes more complex. But that's the story for some other month. As they used to say on radio, "Stay tuned ..."

## Safe - Lisa Browning

*"Being safe is about being seen  
and heard  
and allowed to be who you are and  
to speak your truth."*

~ Rachel Naomi Remen



In October 2012, I attended a day-long retreat at St. Brigid's Villa led by Rev. Diane Clark and Rev Jean Wright, on the beautiful grounds of Ignatius Jesuit Centre. The event was entitled *A Day Apart: Harcourt Women's Retreat*, and if memory serves there were about 30 women in attendance.

It was a difficult time in my life. I had just extricated myself from a very abusive relationship, and had also just completed outpatient therapy at Homewood Health Centre after having been hospitalized under Form 1 at Guelph General, dealing with severe depression, despondence, and PTSD. To say that I was fragile would be an understatement. Putting myself "out into the world" ... even as safe a world as Harcourt represented ... was incredibly challenging for me.

Preparing to write this submission, I went through old papers and files, trying to find some information on the retreat. (And I did ... which says a lot about me, I know!) But, in so doing, I also came across a lot of other documents outlining the struggles I faced ... before, during, and after that time. Let's just say ... tears have been shed.

I'd like to share some of my writing from that day ... in response to prompts given out to the group (prompts in bold, my responses in italics) ...

### **What are your deepest desires?**

*Peace, joy, security.*

### **I am from ... (the people/mentors/models/women who shaped you)**

*... a mother who lived in fear and anger, a surrogate mother who tried to teach me to be happy, and female teachers who led me to desire (or need) perfection.*

### **I am from ... (the values, the learnings, the passions and play)**

*... a life of discipline, where rules must be followed. I am from a place where passion and play were suppressed, and so am trying to find a place for those now.*

**I am from ... (the stories that you heard and that live in you)**

*... a place of compassion, of empathy and an overwhelming desire to help. I am from pain and tears, and an ever-growing belief that healing is possible.*

**I am from ... (anything more you'd like/need to add)**

*... God.*

I don't think I would have attended such an event, at least not at that time, had it not been hosted by Harcourt. From the first day I set foot in the church building in 1990, when I had just moved to Guelph and was looking for a church home, I have felt safe. Not just physically safe but, more importantly, emotionally safe.

I have never been comfortable being the centre of attention. It is why the work that I do involves helping others share their stories and being in the limelight, so to speak. So ... when the invitation, as we neared the end of our time together during this day-long retreat, was to sit in circle and share, I once again became the scared little girl I now realize I have been for most of my life. But the support of the women in that circle was palpable, and I did speak. I shared my pain, but also my hope.

Sitting across from me in that circle was Tammy te Winkel. Over ten years later, the look of care and compassion on her face, and the words she spoke, firmly but with intense love, are as clear to me today as they were back in October of 2012:

Be strong. You will get through this ... BE STRONG.

It was an admonition, an invitation, and a promise, all rolled into one. I don't think I ever thanked her enough for offering it. And so, I am doing so now.

I am much stronger today. And I did get through it. The quote at the beginning of this piece talks about safety as being seen and heard, and allowed to speak your truth. Harcourt has always provided that safety for me, and the *Day Apart* retreat is a shining example. For all of it, I am eternally grateful.

## Life Events:

## Passages



**Mike Peleschak**  
died on Monday September 18, 2023.

