

# **The Harcourt Herald May 2022**

The Life and Work of Harcourt United Church





## ***Harcourt Memorial United Church***

An Affirming Congregation of the United Church of Canada

We are a people of God called together and sent forth by Christ to... **Seek. Connect. Act.**

**Our Mission:** Inspired by the Spirit, we participate in Christian practices that strengthen us in the building of just, compassionate and non-violent relationships.

**Our Vision Statement:** To be an authentic community of spiritual growth and service.

**Our Core Values:** Risk... Respect... Responsibility... Vulnerability... Trust

**Our Purpose:** To welcome and strengthen in community all who wish to serve God and follow the way of Jesus

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## From the Desk of the Editor

Winter is trying to persist this year, (I write this toward the end of April) but we know, this is a losing battle!!! So, no more thoughts about the “white stuff” that Andre, in his moments of wishful thinking, calls “Banana blossoms”!

I am now already in my third year helping publishing the Harcourt Herald. Thanks to all you who have written great articles for it, and thanks to all of you who enjoy reading it.

I want to give you some heads-up about my involvement, though. There is no doubt: I enjoy working on it, getting your submissions, formatting them for publication, working to ensure that members of the Harcourt family stay in touch. But .... I also strongly believe that any volunteer job, and therefore also this job, is not a life-commitment! It's time for me to start thinking of passing on the torch. Being editor might be a scary thought at first. More importantly, it's a great creative opportunity, and there are surely many of you out there who could do it, enjoy it, put your own personal mark on it, and thus keep it relevant.

So... if you are interested or know someone who might – let us know. Maybe you want to dip your toe in? Why not join our team for a while and see if you like it? I personally work best in a team situations: interested in joining Judi Morris and me??????????????

We suggest topics for every edition, but, these are merely suggestions and not written in stone. The key is that we want the Harcourt Herald to be a communication hub for our community. Put into your to-do-list that **for June** we suggest **articles about your hobbies**. And also note that, as usual, there will be no editions for the months of July and August. We will then start afresh again for September.



Our tool for staying in touch with each other via phone, visit, or digitally is the Harcourt Directory. Please update your information in order to have the correct information.

## Council News

*Kent Hoeg, Vice-Chair*

Normally, our Council Chair, Lorraine Holding provides a monthly update from Council. She is on a well-deserved holiday, so I will have to do 😊.

Council met on April 20, and we continue to work through many high priority items.

***If you read nothing else, please read this.*** Our financial situation was a significant area of concern and conversation. Recent articles in the e-Weekly and this month's Harcourt Herald by Brian Magee (Chair, Finance) have highlighted the seriousness of our financial situation. Although, as a congregation at our Annual Meeting we approved a \$95,000 deficit, this was meant as a bridge as we transition from the pandemic to getting back to more normal ways of being church, having church rentals and gathering once again. We knew that this would be a challenging transition, hence the deficit budget. But it was always clear that we needed to find ways to address our finances and to lower this deficit. Distressingly, as Brian Magee has pointed out, at our current levels of giving we are tracking towards a \$145,000 deficit!! Needless to say, this is not sustainable.

John Lawson, at the Council meeting, made a wonderful comment: "We have a treasure in Harcourt, and we need to protect it". Yes! Harcourt does so much for so many. Our programs support ourselves and the many communities that we belong to. Council discussed strategies around a financial recovery plan. They include 'short term' ideas related to fund raising, but also more sustainable ideas around Stewardship. To meet the immediate financial challenge, your Church Council will set up a small "Task Group". I have agreed to lead this Task Group, but we also need people who may be skilled at taking ideas into action, crafting effective communications, willing to make phone calls or meet with people. (If you have any of these skills, please let me know – your help will make all the difference.) Over the next many weeks all of you will be hearing from us asking you to help us put Harcourt on a firm financial footing once again. Together, we will meet this challenge. And we need all of you to make it a success. I know you love Harcourt and treasure its ministry and outreach. We know we can count on your support in this ongoing mission. And we look forward together to ensure that Harcourt not only survives but thrives in the years to come.



The **Reentry Group** met on April 19 and Council was updated on the safety protocols that will be in place at Harcourt. Essentially, until late May we will keep the same protocols as we have now. Masking will be required for indoor worship services, including funerals and memorial services. The Minister and choir may continue to unmask while speaking or singing. In addition, we strongly encourage everyone entering the building to wear a

mask while circulating through it. This protects our staff and other visitors as well as ourselves. Masks are optional for groups meeting in a specific room for the duration of the meeting, but continue to be strongly recommended by our medical officer of health. The Reentry Group meets again on May 17 to review the decision. Check the Harcourt Website and e-Weekly Newsletter for updates.

The **Transition Steering Team** provided us an update on the wonderful work that they continue to do. We can look forward to the group providing Harcourt with further understanding of the 3 visioning themes presented at our last Annual Meeting, including how these themes are integrated with one another. There is also a focus on grief, loss and lament, exploring how we at Harcourt can support one another.

The **Search Committee** informed Council that we have submitted the position description for a full-time Minister of Worship, Sacrament, and Pastoral Care as a vacancy to the Human Resources Commission, Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council. We await their approval and posting of the vacancy. The Search Committee has also been working at crafting the interview questions and scoring process.

Finally, Lynn Hancock has agreed to be Acting Chair, Communications Committee. Thank you!

## Spring Gardens for our Time

John Lawson

I was told that this issue of the Harcourt Herald is dedicated to the theme of spring. As I write this, looking out on the snow falling the day after Easter, the longing for real spring is strong. I'm more than ready!



I've had a lifelong love of gardening and one of its pleasures is the planning and anticipation. This winter I read two gardening/nature books (*Nature's Best Hope* and *Bringing Nature Home*) that have opened up new worlds for me. They are by the author and entomologist Douglas Tallamy. (They were highly recommended to me by Nora Chaloner, whom some of you at

Harcourt will know.)

Tallamy makes a strong case for planting native species. It turns out that insects are often very specific feeders and depend on sometimes only one or two species of plants. Most of us are familiar, for example, with the Monarch butterfly that eats only milkweed. So, it is no

good to introduce a “butterfly bush” to give nectar to adult butterflies if there is no habitat for the Monarch caterpillars to live and grow into adulthood.

Most invasive and introduced plants – which are often the most common plants in our gardens and in the shrubs around our house – provide little or no habitat for local insects. Compare this, for example, with our native white oak, that supports nothing less than 534 species of insects ... to say nothing of the other creatures that thrive and survive on the acorns.



Why are insects so important you might ask? They provide the primary food for many other species, especially birds. Without insects, birds will not be able to provide enough food for their fledglings to grow. Birdfeeders are no substitute. This is one of the primary reasons for the catastrophic fall in bird populations.

So, my plan this year is to plant more native species with the hope of attracting and hosting insect life upon which so much of life depends.

Douglas Tallamy urges everyone who has a few square metres of front or back yard to make a welcoming space for native plants and insects and animals. He calls it, “Bringing Nature Home”.

What would it look like to drop our colonial mindset for our gardens and churches to embrace an indigenous way of thinking? We talk about decolonizing and finding ways to embrace indigenous cultures – perhaps our very own roots. This means letting go of imperial dreams. Letting go of the idyll of green lawns leading up to the manor house with its sculptured landscape. (These landscapes were only achieved after ejecting the peasants, having a steady stream of rents coming in and having an army of groundskeepers to keep nature at bay.) We need to wean ourselves from such things and root ourselves in *this* place – with its unique landscape and creatures.



And finally, what would it mean for the United Church or Harcourt to become an “Indigenous Church”, no longer under the vision of the Constantinian church, but more accurately reflecting the land and culture where we live and move and have our being?



## A Lasting Legacy for Harcourt

Judy Cimino, on behalf of the Trustees



May is “Leave a Legacy” month in Canada and as such, we would like to highlight the enduring gift given by Lila Engberg to the Harcourt Community.

Lila was a Family Studies professor at the University of Guelph whose work empowering women in developing countries changed the lives of women around the world. Throughout her lifetime she also held university teaching positions both in Malawi and Ghana and in her retirement she travelled widely, acquiring a personal collection of art and artifacts.



Before she passed away, Lila knew that she wanted to give a generous and thoughtful gift to the church where she had attended for 60 years. Harcourt meant a lot to Lila and she wanted to leave a meaningful contribution.

Her art collection benefitted Harcourt Church close to \$ 6,000. What a beautiful way to give back!





# *May is Leave a Legacy Month in Canada*

**April and tax season have come and gone. Like many of us, you may have missed the opportunity to consider how a Legacy gift can support Harcourt and its Christian outreach.**

Legacy Giving allows you to shift monies from the CRA to a charity and cause of your choice. A gift to Harcourt is a way of acknowledging that Harcourt has had an impact on your life and on the lives of those important to you and your community. Each type of gift has different benefits both to you and to the Church, as well as different tax and financial implications.

Last March, we could not have imagined how a virus could destabilize our entire world. Never has the need been greater to provide support to those who are struggling, both physically and spiritually. We ask you to consider, before next year's tax season, how your Legacy gift can help us to sustain Harcourt's mission.

Type of Gift	Advantages
<b>Bequest or In your will</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- You can make a gift in your will to any area of the Church.</li><li>- You can divide your gift among several programs and ministries of the United Church.</li></ul>
<b>Life Insurance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- A substantial future gift is created to support the ministry and mission of the Church.</li><li>- This type of gift can be made for a relatively small outlay of cash.</li><li>- This type of gift does not reduce the size of your estate.</li></ul>
<b>RRSP RRIF and TFSA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- A substantial future gift is created to support the ministry and missions of the Church.</li><li>- Your estate receives a charitable donation receipt that will offset taxes, which will in turn replenish the value of your estate.</li><li>- Designating a ministry as the beneficiary of a policy helps avoid probate fees on these gifts.</li></ul>
<b>Stocks, Mutual Funds and Bonds</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- You can make a gift without depleting your bank account.</li><li>- You receive a charitable donation receipt for the value of the stock, mutual funds, and bonds.</li><li>- You pay no tax on the capital gain of the donated stocks, mutual funds, and bonds.</li></ul>

For additional information, attend our virtual presentation on May 29th, 1:30 pm. Find sign-up information in the e-harcourt weekly update.

## ***Legacy – More than just Giving - A Free Seminar***

The Harcourt Trustees would like to follow up on their popular Lunch and Learn seminars with a virtual presentation on Sunday May 29<sup>th</sup>.

Join us from home at 1:30 in the afternoon for a presentation with Jessica Smith from the United Church of Canada. Jessica has seven years of experience with the planned/legacy giving portfolio. She will discuss the types of planned gifts people can make to Harcourt United Church, the positive impact those gifts can have, and the tax benefits that can be realized.

Registration will be available soon in the e-harcourt weekly update or feel free to contact the church at 519-824-4177.

### **The Spirituality of Stewardship**



**You have been treated generously,  
so live generously.  
(Matthew 10:8, MSG)**

## Financial Update

Brian Magee, Chair Finance

At the March 2022 budget session, it was suggested that frequent financial updates for the Harcourt community would be beneficial for members in gauging their financial support. The members of Council, committees and teams are updated monthly. Quarterly financial information will be distributed to all members and adherents by announcements in the e-weekly and the Herald.

Please refer to the table below.

At the end of March, **Harcourt's deficit stands at \$36,677**. At the current rate, by the end of 2022 the deficit will grow to \$146,000. Significantly larger than the budgeted deficit of \$95,000.

At the end of March, the operational bank balance was \$82,581 and liabilities (funds owed to non-operational activities) were \$82,663. Liabilities include: \$30,000 owing to the Pillar, \$32,000 chair fund, \$12,000 live-streaming fund, \$2,500 Saturday Night Supper fund, \$4,444 M&S funds for March, plus other non-operational funds. If Harcourt needed to pay out all of the liability amounts, the bank account balance would be zero. That means that if over the next quarter, April 1<sup>st</sup> to June 30<sup>th</sup>, expenses exceed operational revenue, Harcourt will be in a debt position.

### Financial Summary 1st Quarter

<u>SOURCE</u>	<u>JAN</u>	<u>FEB</u>	<u>MAR</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Donations	26,526	30,611	26,684	83,821
Other Income	11,349	4,441	4,588	20,378
Total Revenue	37,875	35,052	31,272	104,199
Total Expenses	33,360	45,630	61,886	140,876
Surplus/Deficit	4,515	-10,578	-30,614	-36,677

### 2022 Accumulated

Surplus/Deficit	4,515	-6,063	-36,677
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**Note: January revenue includes government subsidy of \$6,349**  
**March expenses include property insurance of \$8,645**



During the pandemic Harcourt's doors were closed due to Government imposed restrictions to limit the spread of COVID-19 and keep people safe. Let's not close Harcourt's doors again due to the lack of operating funds. Please consider donating or increasing your annual donation amount as you are able. Every dollar helps us move forward.

## The Spirit at the McMichael

Megan Ward

Have you ever had that experience when your world view is changed in an instant, and you catch a glimpse of a completely different way of understanding reality? I had that experience recently when I went to see a new exhibit at the McMichael Art Gallery in Kleinburg.

The gallery has mounted a public showing of the Sobey Family art collection and in a very stimulating way has juxtaposed artists from different times and places. The Sobey family has been collecting Canadian art for three generations and has some wonderful paintings from some of Canada's most beloved artists. What caught me out, and made me hold my breath, was the contrast in the portrayal of indigenous life by settler versus indigenous artists. For room after room, history was rewriting itself, culminating, for me, with three large panels by Ken Monkman. I won't give it away, just in case you want to go and see for yourself or take a tour through the website.

Sometimes artists can take us out of ourselves and carry us into new levels of understanding which challenge the mental loops and emotional patterns which have become our habit. I find myself heading to indigenous collections in any gallery I visit now. I'm drawn to the place that humans occupy in a world that seems to encompass all of creation, and in which the spirit world is interwoven seamlessly with daily life. It's humbling and enlivening at the same time.

The thought pattern which gets broken for me when I see this art, whether it is painting, sculpture or an installation, is the idea that humans are the stewards of creation. We are not particularly good at stewardship, and have a significant history of destruction. It opens me up to another way of thinking of my place on the earth, and another way of feeling about all of life around me.

I wonder, is this the breath of Spirit upon my cheek?





## Tea Ceremony

This poem was shared at Women's Spirituality  
with permission of the author Claire Sylvan

Sometimes I gulp tea mindlessly, while driving, writing  
Heedless of the fragrance, of the moment,  
Appreciating only the warmth.

Sometimes we gather, in a circle,  
Not in pews before an altar but no less a sacrament:  
An outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace,  
The teapot our chalice.

Earth yields her minerals, her humus, to the tiny rootlets  
Draw up in water's embrace, to the furthest branch,  
Nourishing each fragrant leaf yearning to the sun warmth.

Generosity of rocky fissures, pure water  
Releases air at fire's persuasion  
Then rests, steeping, changer and changed,  
Leaves now limp releasing essence,  
Spiralling colour, fragrance, in patient profusion.

The dance of all these, and the gift of those  
Who tended, transported, offered,  
Move here in our circle, weaving our lives, infusing our soul.



## Manna notes

Manna worked on the beatitudes and Roz captured some of the work in her artwork.

### Some Beatitudes

From Manna folks  
February 2022

**Blessed are those who seek  
hope through uncertainty.**



"oh... I  
thought  
they said  
'best-attitudes'."



**Blessed are you who love  
everyone, including yourself.**



**Blessed are those who  
share with others.**



**Blessed are those who  
are in isolation and are lonely.**



**Blessed are those who bring us joy.**



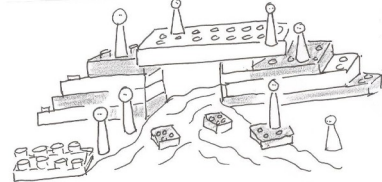
**Blessed are those who are kind.**



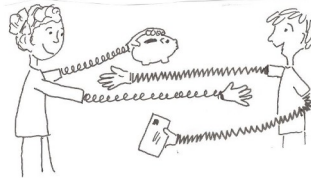
**Blessed are the mediators.**



**Blessed are those who build bridges.**



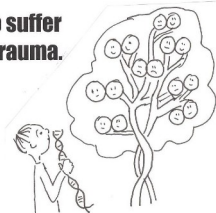
**Blessed are those who reach out and connect.**



**Blessed are those who make cookies for us.**



**Blessed are those who suffer  
From family of origin trauma.**



**Blessed are those who are sharing  
the burden of decision making.**



**Be yourself at all times and  
listen for the truth of others**

## **I was asked “What keeps you connected to Harcourt?”**

Sarah Lowe

There are lots of things that keep me connected to Harcourt, but mainly it's worshipping in person at a Sunday service.

I was fine watching on ZOOM or You-Tube for a while, but really missed singing in the choir, and seeing people. So now, as long as I am in town, and can get to the church in person, that's what I will do!



I love being in the beautiful sanctuary with other members of the Harcourt community; participating in the timeless rhythm of prayers, readings and hymns; singing in the choir, and pondering a thoughtful address; then chatting to people afterwards.

The traditional service is the most comfortable for me, but I also attend the Manna service sometimes, to share in intergenerational worship. I hope to do this again soon. I was

sorry to miss the first combined service, on Easter Sunday, as we needed to be in Prince Edward County for a celebration of Life. Watching it in real time on my cell, and singing along with the hymns, anthem and Halleluiah chorus, while my partner John drove, was lovely. But it wasn't the same as being there!

Will there be more combined services? I hope so. The pandemic has fragmented our community in so many ways that any opportunity to bring us together is welcomed.

Whatever the service, I hope more people will soon feel comfortable making the move back to attending Church in person. For me, it is a weekly anchor. A big Thank You to the many people who make live worship possible!

## Thoughts on Spring and Harcourt

Angela Jimenez

The two topics for the May Herald are "Spring is finally here!" and "What connects you most to Harcourt United Church?". I feel the need to state that at the moment I am still in Thunder Bay. When the article comes out I won't be, but at the moment where I am, it looks more like Christmas than Easter. There is snow on the ground and on the trees. It looks almost picture-perfect, like the ending of the 1954 film *White Christmas*. Despite the appearance, it is



nevertheless spring. Spring brings one of the most amazing things I think. That is rebirth. Trees begin to grow buds so that they can grow big beautiful leaves, baby animals emerge and that is one of the most beautiful sights to me. Heck, even Canadian geese are cute for a short while until they become a menace. The sun graces us with its presence and its warmth so that winter can be left behind and new growth can begin yet again. I imagine spring is some people's favourite season. It is not mine but I enjoy it nonetheless. Spring for students like myself in post-secondary represents the end of a school year. That can be exciting and scary depending on where someone may be at in their education. I have just started and I'm way too fearful. I still think about high school (when we had four days off for Easter). Spring brings the end of hibernation. Literally or figuratively we like bears come out of our caves and back into the outside world. With Covid, we have done a lot of hibernation, so much that I don't think any of us could have imagined. As things begin to normalize into our new normal it feels at times like seeing a rainbow after a rainstorm. The beauty is being seen for the first time in a long time. A song that reminds me of spring is *Sunshine On My Shoulders* by John Denver. The song starts with the lyrics "Sunshine on my shoulders makes me happy, Sunshine in my eyes can make me cry, Sunshine on the water looks so lovely, Sunshine almost always makes me high".



Now to the second question, "What connects you most to Harcourt United Church?". This one I find most intriguing especially since I am a sixteen-hour drive away from Guelph which is never where I thought I would be. At this point in my life, the farthest away I ever thought I would be was Toronto and that is only an hour or a bit longer. What connects me most to Harcourt United Church are the people. I chuckle a bit saying that: my whole life I wondered why I went to church and my mom would always say because of the community and I never really believed her or took that in but it truly is the people and the community. Since being away I have aided Manna whenever they were online by doing the technical aspects in our Zoom services. Whenever I wasn't overwhelmed with school or homework I would still attend the Manna leadership meetings, I have been reached out by different members of the Herald if I would like to write something. Remarkably I have felt more connected while I have been away. I have received letters to my address in Thunder Bay from members of the congregation, I have received encouraging emails from people saying things such as how proud they are of me, or



how brave I am to be doing for going to school where I am, I have received compliments on what I have written for the Herald which shocks me to because most of the time I think I am writing nonsense. I guess something important must be in my writing or something resonates with someone. I have had text conversations and phone calls with people from the church. Some people who have known me since I was born. I'm mainly shocked that people find it interesting that I have decided to choose a career in film. I for sure thought that not just congregation members but other people in my life would put me down about going into the arts. I must be surrounded by artists. I'm most excited to come home and be part of in-person worship again because without human connection where does that leave us?



## **The Signs of Spring I Like Best.**

Rosalind Slater

Lilly Of The Valley.

Sweet as sugar and heady as wine, the beautiful perfume attacks my nostrils. In France they're called May flowers because they bloom in May and it is customary in that country on May 1st to be presented with a tiny bunch of May flowers if you happen to be staying in a nice hotel or breakfasting in a classy bistro. Muguet is the French name for the flowers but the scent cannot be mistaken for it's the same whichever country they're blooming in. They're sweet. almost sickly sweet but pleasant and vibrant as a summer breeze in a hot country. "Wake up, senses!" they seem to demand. How can you stay asleep through such intoxication? Pick a few and form a small corsage to pin to your lapel. They'll remind you of Spring and the fairy gardens you knew in childhood.



## Why I Value Harcourt

Andre Auger

I first entered the sanctuary at Harcourt in 1984, when it hosted the second Ecumenical Week of Guided Prayer. I was impressed that a Protestant church was even interested in spirituality and spiritual practices. When we moved into the neighbourhood we decided that, since Harcourt was within walking distance, we would see if it could become our church base. Marion got involved in the workings of the congregation a lot earlier than I did, making the rounds of most of the committees and even serving as Chair of the Board at one point.

Thus we've been around this church for over 35 years. I've railed at some aspects of my church – who among us hasn't at one point or another? I was certainly disappointed when Harcourt fumbled with creative ways of being church during the pandemic. For a while we preferred to worship at a church that offered true participatory online worship almost as soon as the lockdown was declared in March 2020, and to participate in Harcourt's online Holy Listening Circle.

But when I put all the cards on the table, Harcourt offers me the best opportunity to learn to “be church” in these challenging times: I identify six reasons that keep me closely connected: it offers a progressive theology; it celebrates diversity of expressions within itself; it encourages and empowers lay leadership; it acknowledges the centrality to our faith of intentional spiritual practices; it provides safe spaces to share doubts and questions and explore alternative answers to deep theological questions; and it behaves like a true “ecclesia” – it calls us together, it equips us, and it sends us out to do God's work in the community. Let me say a brief word about each.

**Harcourt espouses a progressive theology:** it takes advantage of sound contemporary biblical scholarship. For a while, it even invited big names on modern scholarship to address us – Bruce Chilton, Marcus Borg, Amy-Jill Levine, Tony Robinson, to mention only a few. Harcourt is not afraid of science, and explored the “New Story” with Brian Swimme. And it remains deeply faithful to our Sacred Story, while jettisoning theological notions that have proven unhelpful and/or inaccurate, like substitutionary atonement, and biblical literalness.

**Harcourt celebrates diversity.** Of course we are an affirming church, and I notice how much we benefit from the deep spirituality of people of different sexual orientations. But I refer as well to a diversity of worship forms. I like to think of Harcourt not as a uniform congregation, but as a federation of congregations, each with their own unique identity. Harcourt is certainly not defined in my eyes by the traditional service on Sunday mornings. Manna is already five years old and offers a unique approach to worship that appeals to all generations. (I do regret the loss of the more contemplative and communal 9 AM service in the Chapel...) There is also a sense that Harcourt grows organically as it respects the talents and

passions that its members bring. Just think of the garden and the orchard; the hours members spend at Chalmers; the music program; the weekday small groups.

**Harcourt encourages, celebrates, and uses a wide range of lay leaders.** I wouldn't be surprised if, when we totalled up the number of hours laity at Harcourt spend in ministry each week – on the building, the gardens, spiritual programs, communication media, etc – we found that Harcourt benefits from 20 full-time people, over and above paid staff. And Council has moved away from the “command and control” approach, where every activity had to be approved beforehand, to an “encouragement and empowerment” model which allows lay leaders to emerge according to their passions and talents.

**Harcourt acknowledges the centrality to our faith of intentional spiritual practices.** My own personal passion and interest lies in spiritual practices and an intentional spiritual life. After my retirement in 2000, I retrained as a spiritual director and was delighted to find a Protestant church which acknowledged the importance of personal and communal spiritual life. Look around you at other United Churches to see which ones have an active “Spiritual Life Committee,” or “Covenanted Spiritual Companions.” (Yes, there are a few in this immediate area, but that is precisely thanks to our work!) All this, of course, is, in large part, the legacy of Rev John Buttar. Trained in Ignatian spirituality, he was on to something foundational: one of the key findings of recent scholarship on church wellbeing is that “vital” congregations result from members who engage in intentional and consistent spiritual practices. In a sense, Harcourt has taken over the leadership provided earlier by the Lowville Prayer Centre. Here are some notable features of Harcourt's spiritual dimension: we create meditation materials for Advent and the Easter Season; we offer annual congregational retreats, and we have significant collaborative ventures with local retreat centres – both Five Oaks and Loyola House.

**Harcourt provides safe spaces to explore, doubt, question, one's faith.** How often have I heard that church is not a safe place to talk about one's faith?... How is that even possible? At Harcourt, the “Holy listening” practice defines a radically different way to hear each other into being across diversity. Whether it's on a Sunday morning or at one of our weekday groups, we share with each other, at a very deep personal level and in safety, about questions, doubts, insights, or tentative conclusions we have about our faith. Even our annual congregational meetings use this approach to encourage more meaningful sharing.



In sum, **Harcourt lives out its role as “ecclesia” – it calls us, it equips us, and it sends us out.** Just like the earliest Christian communities. I often hear that the church as we know it is dying. True, the traditional rites and rituals appeal to fewer and fewer faithful. But I believe Harcourt has what it takes to blossom into the new Church of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. All we have to do is take advantage of our strengths and our “charisms” (beautiful word!). And keep ourselves financially solvent! That’s why I remain faithful to Harcourt.



## Poem

Mary Harding

First, the snowdrops and life pushing through frozen ground..  
Then snow, sleet, rain, winds - return to gloom  
And..bird song ramps up and greets each new day  
Crocuses pop out, purple, white, yellow  
..snow returns  
As the old song says, sorrow and joy flow mingled down.





## I Value My Harcourt Community

Deborah Murray

Harcourt to me is like a special family made out of community support, warmth and being affirming towards one another in order to accept everybody for who they are! Seven years ago, I discovered this family and it opened a new window in my life towards new friends to meet, new opportunities to try and help out with and new community outreach projects to do.

My first time at Harcourt was with my Sisters in Girls Guiding as we celebrated the life of a past Guider who had also been a member of the church for many years. At the memorial one thing that really touched my heart was the music of the Harcourt Choir. I thought it was so beautiful I couldn't find words to express how gorgeous it was! I discovered at this memorial the warmth of so many members of the church along with the ministers with whom I had lovely chats after the service! There was such a feeling of welcome and acceptance! It was then that I made the decision to join Harcourt's family! As the years progressed I met all sorts of lovely individuals and eventually joined the Choir myself to help make more beautiful music!

I loved how there were two services every Sunday and I tried out both and found them both lovely in their own individual ways! I found Manna to be unique in its own special way: full of warmth and community and variety for everybody and I enjoyed being a part of it! I had to choose between going to Manna and the later service, because I wanted to also be in the choir. It was a difficult choice, but I eventually decided to stay committed to the choir most of the time. I participated in many of the community events throughout the years and had fun with movie nights and being a part of groups and committees to help the church run. Everybody around was always so full of warmth and support it truly felt like a special family made of community, support and love!

That's what I've always found makes the heart of a church is when the congregation is able to make such a supportive community family so full of warmth and care.



## Springtime – Waiting & Resurrection

Julie Ashley

I recently gave this figurine that my aunt lovingly handcrafted to a friend who is undergoing cancer treatment. Before him, Maxine, a late well-known friend of Harcourt, kept it while she endured the long wait for a lung transplant that gave her more loving years on this earth.



When we are waiting for that “something”, whether it be a clear diagnosis, or the date we can gather normally without masks at church, this waiting can feel so elusive and painfully beyond our grasp. Undeniably, we can all relate to this, especially currently, as we all wait for life to return to normal, we wait with heavy hearts for the resolution of the Russian-Ukraine war; and we more familiarly wait for the end of a very long winter, with snow and cold weather refusing to leave.

But more joyfully and life-giving is the Resurrection that we witness every day around us – friends overcoming the rapaciousness of cancer tearing through them at lightning speed; being bed-bound from nausea, yet bouncing back to daily activities after the chemical assault on their earthly bodies. Or the resurrection of people’s attitudes that were focused on small annoyances who, after experiencing the loss of a family member or friend, have shifted to hearts of gratitude and recognizing with a renewed perspective, the preciousness of life.

I am so inspired by the enduring Ukrainian people who continue to rise up, struggle to survive, yet help each other in spite of the weighty tomb of Russian’s military oppression and destruction.

There is a song called “Fall Down As The Rain” played at my friends’ funeral and the lyrics went like this...

“And if I get to heaven  
I will not stay  
I'll turn myself around again  
And fall down as the rain

...

And when I finally reach the ground  
I'll soak into the sod  
I'll turn myself around again  
Come up as goldenrod

...  
And then when I turn dry and brown  
I'll lay me down to rest  
I'll turn myself around again  
As part of an eagle's nest

...  
And when that eagle learns to fly  
I'll flutter from that tree  
I'll turn myself around again  
As part of the mystery

I think of this song often when I think of those who have gone before us, believing they are renewed in some manner – truly a mystery. It encourages me to remember that Waiting and Resurrection are a natural part of our existence and fundamental to our Christian faith tradition. Springtime reminds us of this powerful truth yet again.

## **Covid Reflections**

Lisa Browning

*Hope is the thing with feathers,  
that perches in the soul,  
and sings the tune without the words  
And never stops, at all.  
~ Emily Dickinson*

I have never been one to watch the news very much. And so, on March 17, 2020, when we received an email at work stating that “if you are not feeling well, go home” I was a bit surprised. I went into my manager’s office and asked, “Do I really have to go home?”

“I don’t know how you feel,” she said.

“Well, I don’t feel great,” I replied.

“Then go home.”

There was nothing seriously wrong with me ... I was just feeling a little run down. But I did what I was told, and I went home. The next day, I was back at work, but not for long. We received another email, stating that we were all to go home, and would be working from home until further notice. It was then that I learned about Covid.

I never would have guessed that we'd still be dealing with this more than two years later. I, and many others, thought March Break 2020 might be extended, to keep the kids out of school, but then everything would go back to normal.

And here we are ... As I write this, it is two years and one month to the day, since I was sent home, and the world changed. It hasn't been easy, by any stretch of the imagination. Because I live alone, I found it especially difficult not being able to socialize with people, and having no one to talk to except by phone or over zoom. The most difficult challenge for me, though, was having to come face to face with those thoughts and feelings that I had stuffed deep inside. But when you're alone, with no distractions, you eventually realize you have no choice but to face those things you tried so hard to avoid.

In retrospect, it was the best thing that could have happened to me. As Brené Brown says, "Only when we are brave enough to explore the darkness will we discover the infinite power of our light." I carried that lesson with me, through the isolation that Covid forced upon us all.

I confronted fear, anger, and hopelessness, just as so many others did. As a publisher, I found it fascinating how many people approached me about publishing a book during the last two years .. and especially how many people were interested in publishing poetry. I firmly believe that people need to tell their stories, to express themselves, to be heard. Especially during the times like we have just been through.

My second grandchild was born during Covid (funny, isn't it, how we refer to Covid as a period of time now?). I have a photo of my daughter wearing a mask while holding her newborn baby. What a story she will have to tell my granddaughter, about the day she was born! I published a book of stories written by mothers who gave birth during the last two years. Amazing, sad, yet full of hope too, I think.

A few weeks ago, I noticed a mourning dove sitting in a planter on my front porch. I didn't think too much about it (other than how beautiful the dove was) until I noticed, a week or so later, two eggs lying in a nest in the planter. I was excited, full of hope, waiting to see those eggs hatch. I have numerous bird feeders in both my front and back yards. Birds are such a blessing to me.



I became more and more concerned when the mother dove did not return to the nest. One day, after the unexpected cold and snow we experienced a week or so ago, I saw that the eggs had frozen and cracked. Yesterday, I watched a dove walking along my front pathway, close to that nest. I choose to believe it was the mother, longing for her babies.

"Life is difficult," said Scott Peck. Yes, it is. And it has been especially difficult during the last two years. But we must hold on to hope. We all will continue living post-Covid ...



perhaps with a new perspective and new values, which is not a bad thing at all. The mother dove will no doubt lay more eggs, and have more babies. And hope will live on.

## **“In the Bulb There is a Flower”**

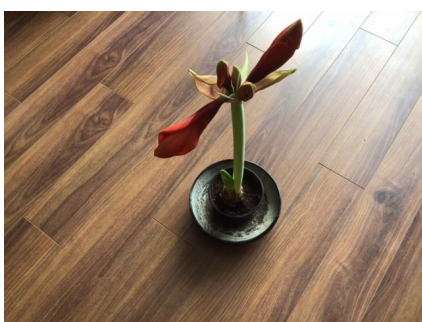
Lynn Hancock

1. In the bulb there is a flower; in the seed, an apple tree;  
In cocoons, a hidden promise; butterflies will soon be free!  
In the cold and snow of winter there's a spring that waits to be,  
Unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.
2. There's a song in every silence, seeking word and melody;  
There's a dawn in every darkness, bringing hope to you and me.  
From the past will come the future; what it holds, a mystery,  
Unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.
3. In our end is our beginning; in our time, infinity;  
In our doubt there is believing; in our life, eternity.  
In our death, a resurrection; at the last, a victory,  
Unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.

*Words and music: Natalie Sleeth, 1986*

For Christmas, 2021, dear friends gave me a Red Lion Amaryllis kit in a box. It included a pot, soil and bulb. Included in this article are two photos. I could not have imagined how much I would come to treasure this gift. I have sung this hymn many times. It has become one of my favourites. Even though I have come to witness that in the bulb there is a flower, it still seems like a miracle to me. Nothing less than a miracle. I anticipate this Spring as a season of miracles.

In the Holy Listening Circles, I have come to appreciate that, in the first round, there is an opportunity to share what touched us. In the second round we are invited to share what we are taking away. “In the cold and snow of winter there's a spring that waits to be”. Wow! How profoundly written! It is easy to identify with that this year. My takeaway from this hymn is how much better my life could be if my daily intention is to let go and let God; especially if **“God alone can see.”**



# I Finished Reading Acts! ...and several other books

Roz Stevenson



Early in January, in a Facebook post, United Church Moderator Richard Bott suggested that from January through to Easter 2022 would be a good time to read the whole of the New Testament. He listed weekly readings – but only five per week, because, as he said, things get busy. I started in January, and am pleased to say that I have now finished the Book of Acts! You might think I am well behind and may never get to Revelation, but you need to know that the reading order proposed *wasn't* from the first to the last page in the usual New Testament order. We started with Mark, then several of Paul's letters – with many of the words that are familiar from church liturgies. Matthew's gospel, Corinthians and Romans took us into February, which finished with John's gospel.

Now, I have read books before that tell how the Holy Bible was assembled, put together, revealed. But not too long into this reading exercise, I had to dig out "**A History of the Bible**" by **John Barton** – a thick and recent (2019) book. It reminded me of some basic New Testament chronology, which dates some of Paul's Letters (authentic ones!) earlier than Mark and the other gospels. Barton also usefully commented that the books of the New Testament didn't become Scripture immediately and that the manuscripts included weren't officially chosen until the third century. There were references to various Church Fathers and their writings and debates, which sent me to "**Christian Beginnings: From Nazareth to Nicaea AD 30-325**", by **Geza Vermes** (2012). (I bought this paperback a while back, probably because it had fish on the cover. One advantage of Covid-lockdowns is that some of the book pile finally gets read.)

The diverse historic views and debates were enlightening, especially when beginning to read the Gospel of John. Having read Mark, Matthew, and the earlier letters, I found myself a bit surprised at the language in John. (*A couple of times I wondered "what's he been on?!"*)

Reading on into March, there were two weeks of less commonly read Letters. I liked the short ones – "*I will save my news until we have a chance to meet.*". I have written Christmas cards like that. THEN came Revelations! Bless **Elaine Pagels** and "**Revelations; Visions, Prophecy, & Politics in the Book of Revelation**" (2012), which got me through this New Testament book!

By April, it was the home stretch with Luke and then Acts of the Apostles. The text in Luke is, of course, very familiar, but I realized that a lot of the travelogue

sections were not so familiar – except perhaps the men who were not drunk at nine o'clock in the morning (Acts 2), which I think I have had to read in a service – twice.

OK, so I finished reading through the New Testament. But there are a couple of other books – one read and one just begun – that I found relevant to this journey. One, **“After Jesus Before Christianity”** (2021) written by **Erin Vearncombe, Brandon Scott and Hal Taussig** for the Westar Christianity Seminar, summarizes recent studies of early Jesus movements. Little of what we call “Christianity” was obvious from its first two centuries - and that includes what comprises our New Testament. Then, just to keep the story rolling, comes a new book from **John Dominic Crossan, “Render Unto Caesar: the struggle over Christ and Culture in the New Testament “** (2022). He compares and contrasts how the writers of Luke/ Acts and of Revelations view Rome ... and I am still in Chapter One.

#### Book References (other than New Testament Books!)

*A History of the Bible: The story of the world's most influential book.* 2019. John Barton (Viking) ISBN 9780525428770

*Christian Beginnings: From Nazareth to Nicaea AD 30-325* 2012. Geza Vermes (Penguin) ISBN 978-0-141-03998

*Revelations; Visions, Prophecy, & Politics in the Book of Revelation* 2012. Elaine Pagels (Viking) ISBN 978-0-670-02334-9

*After Jesus Before Christianity. A historical exploration of the first two centuries of Jesus Movements.* 2021. Erin Vearncombe, Brandon Scott and Hal Taussig for the Westar Christianity Seminar (Harper One) ISBN 978-0-06-306215-3

*Render Unto Caesar: The Struggle over Christ and Culture in the New Testament* 2022. John Dominic Crossan (Harper One) ISBN 978-0-06-296493-9

## **Harcourt Communal Garden (HCG)**

Jill Gill

This will be our 12<sup>th</sup> growing season in the HCG. All the produce we grow is donated to the Chalmers food pantry. So far we have donated close to 7,000 lbs of organically-grown vegetables, herbs and fruit. Chalmers is a Harcourt-supported charity helping to feed some of Guelph's most food-insecure folks.

The HCG is entirely maintained by volunteers who plant, water, weed and harvest from June until late October each year. We work in teams of 3 or 4, each week for 2-3 hours. Each team is assigned to be in the garden about 6-7 times from June-October. Lisa Mactaggart, Landscape Architect and Urban Farmer par excellence, plans our crop rotation and prepares seedlings for planting each year. Before Covid restrictions (BC!), families from the Manna

community have helped in early June to plant seeds and seedlings to start the garden growing. We are ever hopeful that this might be a possibility again this year.

Last year, with an Urban Agriculture Grant through 10C, Our Food Future and Harvest Impact, we were able to make upgrades and improvements to the garden and look forward to reaping the benefits this growing season. We're planning on even more "vertical growing" opportunities than last year!

This year we are short on volunteers to maintain the garden. If you have an interest in gardening nutritious, organically-grown vegetables that will help nourish many folks in need in Guelph, please consider volunteering for the Harcourt Communal Garden. The time commitment is reasonable –teams spend 2 - 3 hours, 6 or 7 times during the season from June until the end of October. You need not be an expert gardener, just willing to learn and get your hands dirty and have some fun! Please contact me, Jill Gill at 519.767.1244 or email me at [peter.gill@sympatico.ca](mailto:peter.gill@sympatico.ca) and let me know you would like to participate in this satisfying volunteer activity.



## Latest News from Chalmers

Peter Gill

Most of you will remember the pre-Covid days when Palm Sunday became Garment Sunday at Harcourt. This tradition was started in the early days of Jim Ball's ministry and provided a wonderful assortment of spring clothing for Chalmers guests. Unfortunately this is the third spring where we have not offered clothing – the logistics of handling it, the number of guests who would mingle around the clothing racks made it too unsafe. This Palm Sunday we were delighted to receive 241lbs of food and diapers instead, so thank you to those who donated – it is so much appreciated.



Chalmers has remained open throughout the pandemic to supply food to those in need. During the worst of the early wave we bagged and served food outside at both our downtown and west



facilities. For a time the decision was made to only have volunteers under the age of 70. We cancelled our popular cafes, our clothing and mending services, our providing household goods and small appliances. The decision was made to concentrate on food.

To date that policy has not changed although staff is beginning to reconsider options. There is discussion about reopening the cafes as a first step but of course we continue to maintain a mask mandate, so providing coffee and snacks in a confined space will be challenging. We are also discussing having access to the large Willow Grove room at Three Willows where our guests used to meet and share conversation and snacks before receiving their food in the portable. Meanwhile we continue to have hundreds of guest visits per week – the pandemic, cost of food and housing make life very difficult for those struggling to make ends meet.

So how can you help? For those attending Harcourt in person, don't forget that there is a shopping cart in the greeting area where you can drop off your food items – check the weekly e-bulletin for suggested products. For those who prefer to support with their money, all contributions are gratefully received. Cheques can be mailed, dropped off at 41 Macdonell or given to me to pass on. If you want to pay online, simply go to the (new!) Chalmers website – [www.chalmerscentre.ca](http://www.chalmerscentre.ca) and click on the donate button.

**Thank you, Harcourt, for your continued support.**

## **An Interview with Dan Ganesh**

*Judi Morris*

When I saw Dr. Dan Ganesh during the Spiritual Listening Zoom gatherings, I realized I knew very little about him, (partly due to the fact I am a 9 O'clocker) and the best way to find out for myself was to interview him.

Judi: Dan, I believe you work at U of G but I have no clue what you do there so I don't know yet what I should be asking you.

Dan: While I collaborate with colleagues at University of Guelph, I actually have my own business called *Bos Nutrition Services Inc.*, which I started eight years ago. Prior to that, I worked as an Animal Nutritionist and Director of Nutrition in the Feed Industry for 25 years. My role today and in Industry is quite varied, and I have been blessed with being exposed to several affiliated areas (like food safety, quality control, disease risk management etc). I am however, on a road to retirement.

Judi: Being a farmer with livestock, that's really interesting to me.  
So...tell me... what brought you to Harcourt?

Dan: This will be hard to keep short! I attended the University of Guelph in 1974. During my first semester, I was in the basement of the MacLaughlin Library where I ran across a very serious young lady. (All the West Indian students congregated in the basement of MacLaughlin and it was fondly referred to as the Ghetto!) We just said hello... she said that her name was Brenda and then she left (*we were a bit noisy and she wanted to study*).

I knew at that moment that this was the girl I was going to marry. It took two years of arduous labour for her to even bother with me, since she was intent on her studies. Our bond actually came from being study partners, although she was stars ahead in terms of the quality of grades. My head was likely somewhere else. Our relationship blossomed even though she left to pursue medicine at University of Toronto and I did graduate work in the Department of Animal & Poultry Science. We became strong supporters of Greyhound during this period. One day, during that time, I was walking down Dean Avenue and saw Harcourt Church. For whatever reason, I felt drawn to it; then had a feeling that this was the Church I wanted to get married in. I have no logical reason why I felt that way. After all, I knew nothing about the United Church. As a Lutheran in my country of origin, Guyana, I never felt the same affinity for the Lutheran Church in Canada. Brenda was an Anglican. Brenda and I attended a few services at Harcourt and then arranged to meet with Rev. John Buttars. We mentioned our desire to be married there. John proceeded to interview us, and in a rather gruff tone (*well, as gruff as John could get*) he told us that we could not use Harcourt as a gas station. We were married in Harcourt Sept 3, 1983 (*Sept 3 incidentally is the Buttars' wedding anniversary, a fact that I didn't realize until several years later*). John visited us at our home but other than that, there was no "welcome mat" from Harcourt. We just kept coming.

Judi: So...you were never indoctrinated into Harcourt or served tea and cookies as a new member at a welcome gathering yet you find yourself on committees with many responsibilities. How did you get there from "just keeping coming"? (and I might add, we at Harcourt are so very glad you did.)

I also understand you are from Guyana. Can you tell us about that journey?

Dan: No, we were never formally made into members of Harcourt. It was more of a slow dissolving process. But I have heard from several others that Harcourt can

struggle with being a welcoming community. Our experience wasn't really that different. But I just assumed that it was just the way it was. I knew several members of Harcourt who were affiliated with the University of Guelph, and Brenda also worked as a summer student for another. Brenda also got to know Peter Hendry (*member of Harcourt at that time*) and later joined with him in a shared Medical Practice. I became involved with the Christian Formation Committee working with Don Macaulay and later Monica Moore. Murdo Mackinnon kept asking me to join the Choir. I didn't join until much later. And so on. As for Guyana, I came to Canada in 1972.

Judi: What did you like about Harcourt that kept you coming?

Dan: Although my parents were not Christians originally (there is another fable here), they became Lutherans and by the time I was born (*the 7<sup>th</sup> and last child*), being Lutheran was established although I still have several relatives who are Hindus. My Dad was a lay preacher and a Head Master for one of the Lutheran Churches and Schools in Georgetown, Guyana. I was an altar boy, sang in the Church Choir and as a teenager, quite involved with the (youth) Luther League. As such, Church attendance was indoctrinated into my DNA, even in those spells when I didn't attend regularly. I admired John Buttar's sermons and his ability to meet the challenge of a large but fairly intellectual and sometimes critical congregation (I saw some of these professors in action in my Department (☺)). I enjoyed the talent of the Choir. As for Harcourt, I didn't mind not being welcomed, likely because I was also shy. My time in Church was a personal time for me. I sat in essentially the same spot each week, and got to know the folks around me to nod hello to. It must have worked admirably because it was not uncommon for me to be asked (even after several years of attendance) when I entered Harcourt – "Welcome to Harcourt. Is this your first time here?" As for my two children, their attendance at Sunday School was sporadic. Of course, my involvement at Harcourt has all changed now!

Judi: You have mentioned only some of the Harcourt committees that you are on. I know there are more. Can you tell me the rest of them?

Dan: I have found to my chagrin, that with Harcourt, toe dipping is difficult. Rather whole-body immersion can occur before you know it! However, there are several people who devote much energy to Harcourt. Some have served much longer than me. I give accolades to each of them. Some of my current roles are finite (hopefully) – such as the Steering Committee and the Search Committee. I serve on the board of Trustees, Co-Chair the Worship Committee and on occasion serve as Head Usher.

Judi: Dan thank you for this and all you do here at Harcourt. It is all so interesting and to think - Harcourt has been blessed because you "Just Kept Coming."

I am certain that I can speak for Harcourt and all its members – Dan and Brenda Ganesh: we "Welcome" you both to our Harcourt Community with open arms.



## **An Unfinished Tapestry**

Sandy Phair

This morning I am calmly holding my ponderings  
I am gently fondling the fears and losses that I cannot expel  
Paradoxically I embrace love and I am open to grace  
I am woven with my losses and fears into God's own life  
God does not protect but always sustains  
The tapestry design includes order, disorder and reorder  
Grace and love are in every thread  
The stitches are short and numerous  
like emotions  
like lives  
The tapestry is made to be beautiful  
and has many colours and textures  
It is intricate with many complex combinations  
All beings are warp or weft  
I accept that I will never see the finished project.





## Life Events:

## Passages



**Ty Henshaw**, on March 26th, 2022, in his 36th year

## Note from Harcourt Office on up-coming Memorials

Wendy Guillemette

Harcourt has lost many members during the pandemic and many Memorial Services have been postponed until it was deemed safer. Here are those we know of:

Elizabeth MacKinnon	May 13 at 1pm
Blair MacNeill	May 27 at 2pm
Margaret Alexander	June 3 at 2pm
Don Macaulay	June 10 at 1pm
Ty Henshaw	June 11 at 11am

