

CONNECTIONS

Stories of being church today in Oxford County

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PLAY HARD and LEAVE IT ALL ON THE ICE!



Rev. Mark Marshall gave this brilliant sermon at the 100th Anniversary worship at Westminster United Church, Thamesford – “Let’s Sing a Hundred Praises” on June 8, 2025. (based on the Pentecost story from Acts 2 and modernizing the inaugural worship of the United Church of Canada.)

“That All May Be One”

The **First Period** of **Game 7 of the Church Union Cup**. The **Galilee Disciples** have had a rough go this season – it’s surprising they’ve made it this far. Their coach for the past three years or so has been absolutely killed in the press, but his message seems to be making a comeback. Will he live again? He explains to the team that, even though he must go, he will send another to inspire them – to help lift their spirits and bring them together as a true team. But in **this game against the Flying Pharisees**, they seem worn, lost even. **Can The Disciples get a second ‘wind?’ Can something ‘spark’ them to deliver? Can something bring them together to really understand one another? Can this advocate that their coach spoke of give birth to a true team?** It’s troubled times for the **Disciples** – we can only hope this new spirit can help them on to victory . . .

Second Period - Well, it was a rough first period. The **Disciples** almost looked drunk out there, but they assure us they’re still in good form. In fact, **they promise their second string will be playing as though they’re looking 1900 years into the future – 1925 to be exact.** It’s a whole new team. They’ve pulled up **players from the Methodist, Presbyterian, and Congregationalist farm teams** to make this union. It’s been a tough slog to bring them together, but, now in this Mutual Street Arena, we’re going to see just how much they can lean on each other to make one unified team. They think back to their beloved coach’s words – “**that all may be**

one” (John 17:21.) The opposition will bring their A-game and make it tough – trying to divide this new Disciples team, to play to their weaknesses, to challenge them and that for which they stand. **Will the Disciples play as a team, carry each other’s load, lend a hand, be strong in the power play and rally when they’re shorthanded?** Only time will tell if they are truly prepared to work together for the win . . .

Third Period Now we’re in the third and final period – a real nailbiter of a game! With yet another string of players, we can only ask if these all-new Disciples will keep playing the game they’ve been playing or **if they will respond to everything their opposition is throwing at them and play the same old game, but in new ways. The team looks leaner, maybe even showing some fatigue, or dare we say, age?** But they still seem resolved – to follow what their coach told them, to keep their stick on the ice and to play as a team. The puck’s about to drop, so let’s check in on the action:

Hatred wins the faceoff and the puck is taken up the ice by that strong combo of **Fear and Division**. **Fear** takes the shot and **Hope makes the save**. You have to hand it to The Disciples goalie – **Hope never gives up but defends relentlessly**. And now **Patience and Integrity** skate away with the puck, beaten by the **Pride and Envy** defense. Now **Courage and Empathy** defend while **Greed and Manipulation** have their attempt. It’s a real battle between the two forwards, but now **Hope** has the puck. **Hope crosses the blue line on a real breakaway. Hope shoots . . .**

We interrupt this programming for a special announcement:

*Do you ever feel like it’s all too much? Like you have a hundred years of toil and strain beating you down? **We have an answer –The United Church of Canada. We are striving*** (Continued on page 2)

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to be a place of warmth, safety, and community. We are working against fear and division. We are a people of hope. And we live out that hope in our communities by offering help, healing, and wholeness. We live it out in our worship and in our witness – 'that all may be one.' Forget keeping score. Leave it all on the ice. Trust that God has it all in hand. And come together as we have for over 100 years. Bring your past, hope for the future, but most of all, be present – on the cusp of a new century, together.

A SINCERE THANK YOU to the Centennial Granting Committee of The United Church of Canada Foundation and to the Hope Council for their generous funding towards the three events at Westminster UC.

AND ALSO, to the choir members from 7 different churches who found and wore their favourite



hockey sweaters (the first worship of the new United Church of Canada was held in a hockey arena – but they didn't have

drums!), to those who developed and organized (especially **Rev Mark and Cheryl Marshall**) the worship service (see [bulletin outline here](#), which

had both old hymns and modern music!), set and cleaned up, sang solos, accompanied on the piano and drums, wrote prayers, led worship and served communion. **The whole evening was filled with spirit and wonder! Powerful and truly inspiring.**



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CONNECTIONS – Stories of Being Church Today in Oxford,

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<https://www.facebook.com/OxfordUCMinistries/>



"THAT ALL MAY BE ONE."

"FORGET KEEPING SCORE."

(PLAY HARD mm) **"LEAVE IT ALL**

ON THE ICE. TRUST THAT GOD

HAS IT ALL IN HAND." Mark

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OTHER WAYS TO SHARE WHAT'S HAPPENING!

October 2025 will be the NEXT issue of CONNECTIONS A reminder notice to be sent 1 week before deadline.

In the meantime, post congregational news and events on your Facebook Page and [Antler River Watershed Facebook](#).

OR

BE IN TOUCH with others via email. See [here](#) for list of United Churches and ministers in Oxford.

OR

Oxford United Ministries Facebook page is a place for congregations to post their activities. Make sure you follow us on Facebook. Facebook manager still needed!

100th Anniversary Prayer

Loving Creator, you have called us to this time of joyful celebration. Inspired by the rushing wind, descending doves, tongues of fire, and birthday candles, this occasion is a festival filled with music, and our souls are enlivened. We cannot help but join the voices lifted in praise and spirits dancing in the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.

On this **100th Anniversary, Sunday**, may we enter into a new way of being church.

Our Creator has claimed us as God's own.

We find courage in whose we are.

As God's spirit pours upon us,
We embrace visions, trusting the Spirit to guide us through who we are now and who we will become.

In our loving Creator God, we trust,
we are not alone.

Thanks be to God.

Amen

Janice Pow



OXFORD UNITED CHURCHES

Websites/contact information for Oxford congregations' **worship times are listed [here](#)** + also on Facebook.

GOD IS DOING A NEW THING- again in this new century of UCC!

Created for relationships we are grateful to **SHARE** our stories and our prayers with our neighbouring communities of faith. **LETTING GO** and feeling both the sadness and pain as well as the joy and hope of God being with everyone going forward as **Innerkip UC** formally disbanded; the promise of **Princeton UC** amalgamating with their sister church to become the newly constituted **Etonia Princeton United Church. WELCOMING Rev. Karen Willis** on August 1, 2025 to **College Ave. UC** in Woodstock. **ANSWERING THE CALL FOR INCREASED NEED FOR PULPIT SUPPLY** at Sweaburg, Foldens, + West Oxford UCs; Avondale UC, Tillsonburg; Etonia-Princeton UC, Etonia; Mt Elgin UC and Newark UC; Otterville UC; Peace UC, Plattsville. **MOVING TO SEARCH PROCESS** with Otterville UC. **PONDERING NEXT STEP** with Avondale UC, Tillsonburg. **PRAYING** for ministers and their congregations while ministers are on Restorative Care: Pastor Lori Minler (Mt Elgin UC and Newark UC); Rev. Jane (Baxter) Bain (Etonia Princeton UC); and Parental Leave: Rev. Jennifer Canning (Peace UC, Plattsville).



PRAYER CYCLES - OXFORD + ARW REGION

For years, we've updated the Prayer Cycle started by Rev. Don Keenlside for Oxford Presbytery which includes all **the ministers/churches/pastoral charge supervisors in Oxford County**. Congregations are invited to use the Prayer Cycles in our prayers (see [here](#)) and for **ARW Region** (see [here](#)).

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CONTINUING CELEBRATIONS



MT ELGIN UC



The Community Barbeque and adoption of 100 Painted lady Butterflies on June 14 included face painting, cookie decorating, hamburgs and hot dogs. Pastor Lori Minler and Cindy Collins cleaned and fed the larvae faithfully. It was awesome to witness **their miraculous transformation and their release on**

June 27 was truly spirit filled.



Some butterflies flew off to begin their travels to distant places; some hung around to say 'hi'; some nestled in the wild flowers which Mary Jane Budd had tended – not quite ready to leave!



ST DAVID'S UC, Woodstock

On Sunday June 8, St. David's UC welcomed 14 new members The spirit is alive and well at St. David's.

WESTMINSTER UC, Thamesford

Car Rally in October. Plans are to worship early in the afternoon, followed by the rally, then a Barbecue supper back at Westminster - folks could choose to just take in the rally and barbecue, too. Contact info@makingconnexions.com or (519) 285-3212 to get details as they come available. *(Editor's note: sounds like fun – hope no one gets lost!)*

OPERATION SHARING



**VOLUNTEERS
NEEDED +**

supplies. Please visit their [website](https://www.operationsharing.ca) or [Facebook page](https://www.facebook.com/operationsharing), call 519-320-1372 ext. 4 or email info@operationsharing.ca

St. David's United Church: Faithful Footprints Grant

The Faithful Footprints Grants are designed to reduce financial barriers for energy efficient projects. The goal of the grants is to start the process of de-carbonizing the United Church of Canada buildings across the country.

St. David's United Church recently received approval for a **\$30,000** Faithful Footprints Grant from the UCC. We are helping the UCC reach the goal of 80% carbon reduction in their buildings by 2050. Projects completed at St. David's include:

- Replacement of our double-sided LED lawn sign
- Replacement of refrigerator (no freezer)
- Installation of 7- LED Floodlight fixtures- parking lot
- Replacement of our commercial gas stove with 2 free-standing electric ranges
- Installation of 3- LED Floodlight fixtures with 1-RAB Two Head LED Motion Sensor Light-north side of church greenspace
- Installation of motion sensor lights in washrooms
- Lighting upgrade to LED's –entire church except the Sanctuary
- Installation of 2 ductless air conditioners with heat pumps in Kirk Hall.



Thanks to the UCC we were able to reduce the costs of these projects to St. David's by 44.3%!

Submitted by Joyce Jackson, Chair of Property, St.David's UC

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STICH SUPPER CLUB, Trinity UC, Ingersoll [Facebook page here](#), [website here](#)

Each Thursday 4:30-6:00 pm

CONGRATULATIONS – NEW HEAD COOK IS Jo-ann Claessens!

Volunteers needed. Sign up here:

www.stichsupperclub.ca/volunteer-sign-up

CARING HEARTS SUPPORT NETWORK

LIVING WITH LOSS
(a 6-week long grief support group)

Starts SEPT. 2 6:30-7:30 pm
St David's UC, Woodstock

To register, please call 519-536-3370 or email info@caringheartssupportnetwork.com

website: www.caringheartssupportnetwork.com

Zatoun FAIR TRADE OLIVE OIL FROM PALESTINE

Available locally from Dave Schell
davidwschell@gmail.com

750 ml \$30.00.



Camp Tanner

Direct questions about its dissolution to the **Secretary of Camp Tanner Inc.**, Gail Kavelman, gakavelman@gmail.com.

NEW SHARED HOME FOR CANVAS LABYRINTH

[Norwich United Church](#) and
[Knox United Church \(Embro\)](#)



are the shared custodians of the 25-foot painted Labyrinth. This year, Norwich UC looks after bookings for 1 year. In July 2026, it will be Knox UC.

OURS - Oxford United Refugee Support

Update on people whom our Congregations have sponsored to come to Canada. Let us keep them in our prayers.

ST DAVID'S UC, WOODSTOCK



Noah Kidane Eseyas, born June 21 (Ethiopia) to **Kidane (London, Canada)** and his wife,



Freweyni (Ethiopia). Kidane's harrowing story (at 17 years old escaping from Eritrea, living in an Ethiopian Refugee camp, eventually being sponsored to arrive in London at 27 years – see December 4, 2024 issue of CONNECTIONS [here](#)). St David's UC is in the process of co-sponsoring to bring his wife and son here. Prayers that Kidane may find work and prayers for safety and wellbeing of Noah and Freweyni.

Salmawit from Sudan who escaped to Egypt (her story is in May 2024 CONNECTIONS [here](#)) **has been missing since January 15**. She was a veterinarian in Sudan and taught English. **It is heart breaking that it is common for refugees to be kidnapped and taken back and imprisoned in their home.** She is co-sponsored by her cousin Luella and husband Jacob here in Woodstock. Prayers for her safety and well being.

WESTMINSTER UNITED, THAMESFORD

Fundraising continues for the Syrian family of 5 (single mother and 4 children) who are still in Lebanon. They stay in touch and so far, are safe but constantly hear rockets being fired overhead. We await the next steps from our government.

Donations are appreciated.
Please write "Refugee Sponsorship" in the memo line of cheques.
Westminster UC, 115 George St. Thamesford, ON, N0M 2M0.

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NATIONS UNITING INVITES YOU TO JOIN US IN A FILM SCREENING

Title: Nature of Healing



AUGUST 20, 2025 AT 10 AM

**Nations Uniting 1652 Chiefswood Rd,
Ohsweken, ON N0A 1M0**

In Person Seating 15 , Light lunch

To Register contact Rhonda @ 519-445-2424 **Email:** nations.uniting@gmail.com
Deadline is Aug. 15 Film is done by our Community Members The Residential School Survivors, telling their stories, feelings on how they survived.

Donations will be free will. Proceeds will be going toward a Memorial Park. For the ones who didn't make it home

GRANDMOTHERS' TEA

Grandmother's Tea is a way to get to know our indigenous neighbours. For over 18 years, the Tea has moved from place to place. Together we eat and share stories.

JULY 30, 2025

Grand River UC

1585 Mohawk Rd.

Ohsweken, ON N0A 1M0

Grand River U.C @ 519-445-0955

AUGUST 27, 2025

Grace Anglican, 4 Pearl St, Brantford

September 24, 2025

Five Oaks, Paris

TIME: 12:00- 2:00 pm

Join us for potluck lunch. Bring your favourite dish and recipe to share AND *your own plate, cup and cutlery.*

Email [Marg Murray](mailto:Marg.Murray) to arrange a ride!



**Sat. Sept 6 ReuseApalooza at
Embro COMMUNITY CENTRE,
8:00 am to 12 pm**

FREE EVENT - fun way to reduce, reuse or recycle. **Check out the Details here:**

<https://www.reuseapaloozaha.ca/>

Find out more about the people working to make our community a better place: Cycles of life, Victoria's Quilts, Operation Sharing, OX On the Run, Transition to Less Waste

Looking forward to seeing you there.

<https://www.reuseapaloozaha.ca/>

Unable to take:

Residential garbage

Car Seats and Helmets

Upholstered Furniture

Hazardous waste

No Drop-off after 11:00

ONTARIO HEALTH COALITION

Public Medicare the most vulnerable in our community regardless of race, sexual orientation, age nor being able bodied. Our gospel says 'even as you have done it to the least of these, you have done it to me.'

This government does NOT have a mandate to privatize any social services: health care or education. OHC website is [here](https://www.ontariohealthcoalition.ca/).

Check out this [Briefing Note](#) as well as this [Fact Sheet](#) or the online videos [here](#).

Drop by the table of the [Oxford Coalition for Social Justice](#). at Woodstock Farmer's Market Saturday mornings.



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FIVE OAKS CENTRE

See their [webpage](#) + [facebook](#).

At the 2024 Annual Meeting of the members on June 22 we enjoyed John Bell's message of quality of church community, were pleased that there is a high retention of staff but disappointed in the resignation of Michael Shewburg, the Executive Director. The Board has promised to meet with members in the fall to improve communications. It was good to see old friends and enjoy the superb dinner!

Donations gratefully accepted (see [here](#)).

Call to Act: Love, Faith, and Bold Action during Pride 2025

June is Pride month. Our national church office is encouraging us to write our MPs to make sure that our new government hears loudly that protecting 2S and LGBTQIA+ people's rights around the world is a key priority!



The increasingly authoritarian bent of some global governments attacks the vulnerable.

WRITE YOUR MP

For more information and suggested letter see [here](#).

At The United Church of Canada, we affirm that gender and sexuality are gifts of God, and welcome people of all sexual orientations and gender identities.

MISSION AND SERVICE

Balancing the Budget is at the heart of being Christian. When we see the value in doing God's work (healing hearts, feeding neighbours, fighting for justice) is not done - yet, we cannot refuse to continue the necessary work. **Contact Brenna Baker, Stewardship officer for southwest Regions at BBaker@united-church.ca**



Stay in touch. **Subscribe** [here](#) to the newsletter of Antler River Watershed Regional Council. See archives [here](#). Contact [Michele Petick](#) **Valuable info: see: [Facebook page](#) + [webpage](#)**

UNITED CHURCH RURAL MINISTRY NETWORK

WINDOWS 11

We've noted before that rural ministry is UNIQUE. With tight budgets, light or non-existent tech support, you'll be glad to know that UCRMN has some valuable helps. Their June ENews reports on a workshop for Rural Ministry Network in May with a cheaper option (Linux Mint) to the costly updating to the Windows 11 Operating System. The UCRMN June 2025 ENews is found at UCRMN.ca. Sign up for your own copy while you are there.

AND contact the United Church Rural Ministry Network at tech.help@ucrmn.ca. Also more in information at <https://endof10.org>.

the nine key teachings of Jesus

radical **love**
lavish **generosity**
extravagant **forgiveness**
inclusive **hospitality**
compassionate **action**
selfless **service**
a passion for **justice**
creative **nonviolence**
simple **living**

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INDIGENOUS HISTORY AND US

June marked **the 100th Anniversary of the United Church of Canada** with celebrations like we had never seen before.



June is **National Indigenous History Month** and June 21st is National Indigenous Peoples Day.

Any month is the right one to look at and appreciate the history of a people who have well over 20,000 years of experience living successfully together on this land we call home.

For Indigenous people everything was sacred and connected. Human beings were one with nature. Harmony was foundational. Respect for all living things and for the earth was a sacred task. The land was not “owned” by the people, it belonged to the Creator.

An example of a **desire to live in harmony is a story from the 17th century, in the early days of contact between Indigenous people and Europeans.** An Indigenous person seeing a French person spanking a child was horrified. Striking a child was breaking a fundamental rule of peace and harmony.

There were rivalries among the Indigenous nations, and armed conflicts over territory; rivalries intensified when alliances were made by the Wendat Confederacy with the French and by the Five Nations (Haudenosaunee) Confederacy with the English. In spite of this, **historians see the Indigenous culture as less violent than that of Europeans who settled here.**

The forming of Confederacies was a way of reducing conflicts among Indigenous nations. In the Five Nations Confederacy (later Six Nations) the rules for living in harmony and the rules for settling disputes were maintained through oral tradition. This was known as **The Great Law of Peace.** This law changed and was

amended over the years, as required, providing a dynamic rather than a static set of rules. **For one person to recite the entire law, as occurred on occasion, took three days.**

As we know, Indigenous people gave the rest of the world **a glimpse of democracy.** With the Six Nations Confederacy, the Chiefs were chosen by vote with only clan mothers voting.

What could we have learned or what can we now learn from Indigenous history? A great deal, but I will mention two things:

First, gender equality. The Six Nations Confederacy highly valued the work and wisdom of women. Indigenous people were not just decades but probably centuries ahead of us in gender equality. Decisions at the Confederation level were made by both men and women

In contrast the first General Council of the United Church was made up of 350 members, 348 men and two women. It took 11 more years before our church ordained a woman. Historically, we mostly ignored gender equality in the ministry of Jesus. We did not pay enough attention to St. Paul’s selection of both women and men for pastoral ministry, or to his indictment of patriarchy (Gal. 5:25).

Second, for Indigenous people, nature was and is sacred. Everything is connected. We are attempting to recover that harmony of life. It is an uphill battle since we are already in a climate crisis.

Also in June 2025, our Parliament rushed through [Bill C-5](#) to speed up development. Indigenous groups objected, fearing that environment issues will not be sufficiently considered. It is our hope that this time Indigenous wisdom will be heard, and heeded. *Editor Emeritus - Glen Wright, with Indigenous History information courtesy of Dr. Miriam Wright, Professor of Canadian History, U of Windsor.*

