

CONNECTIONS

Stories of being church today in Oxford County

Vol 7 Issue 4

October 22, 2025

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LIFE - CONTINUAL CHANGE

From inception, we are **a miracle of change** – evolving from a few cells to a grown being with, on average, of **37 trillion cells!** There are over 200 different but important types of cells - stem cells, cells in our blood, nerves, muscles and cartilage, etc. We continue to change until we die.

Change at our spiritual level happens differently, strongly influenced by what has happened and is happening in our lives. In the Gospel of Matthew "Everydisciple ... is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is **new and what is old**" (Matthew 13:52 NRSVUE). The movement between the old and new helps us to embrace change!

How do we handle mistakes? In 1946, a mistake in the Revised Standard Version translation of the Bible fed anti-gay sentiments among Christians. Last week, Norwich U.C. hosted the film **1946: The Mistranslation That Shifted Culture**. (see [here](#)). Personal stories were featured in the film as well as noted scholars where Love helped folks **to stay connected**. Scholarship affects change in Biblical translations. One man, **Rev. David Fearon** (1938 – 2023) who served at Norwich UC (1981-1988) challenged the RSV Committee's use of 'homosexual' in **1 Corinthians 6:9**. 10 years later the New Revised Standard Version changed the translation to 'sexual perverts'! Previous CONNECTIONS has the story (see [here](#)).

Our world is changing dramatically. God's love is constant and found in between our stories.

A PRAYER FOR RECONCILIATION

Where there is separation,
there is pain.

And where there is pain,
there is story.

And where there is story,
there is understanding,
and misunderstanding,
listening
and not listening.

May we - separated peoples, estranged
strangers, unfriended families, divided
communities -

turn toward each other,
and turn toward our stories,
with understanding,
and listening,
with argument and acceptance,
with challenge, change
and consolation.

**Because if God is to be found,
God will be found in the space
between.**

Amen.

*Daily Prayer with the Corrymeela Community,
Padraig O Tuama, p.45*

CONGRATULATIONS REV.

Jane Bain! Jane recently graduated from The Atlantic School of Theology. She was ordained into the Ministry of Word,



Sacrament and Pastoral Care at St. Andrew's United Church on June 14, 2025. **Rev. Jane is the minister at Etonia Princeton United Church.**

Many thanks to Horseshoe Falls Region for allowing me to be a part of their Celebration of Ministry and thank you to my family and all the guests who came from several congregations to support me.

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– Glen Wright	

CONNECTIONS – Stories of Being Church Today in Oxford,

EDITOR: Marg Murray

EDITOR EMERITUS: Glen Wright

Proofreader: Dave Schell

To add or remove names, email

oxfconnections@execulink.com

CONNECTIONS website

oxfordunitedministries.ca

Oxford United Ministries Facebook page

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



OTHER WAYS FOR CONGREGATIONS TO SHARE THEIR EVENTS

Post congregational news and events on congregation's Facebook Page and [Antler River Watershed Facebook](#).

OR

BE IN TOUCH with other churches 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 **BUT** first, make sure you follow us on United Ministries Facebook page! Facebook manager still needed!

NEXT issue of CONNECTIONS in 2026.

Request for articles/events will be sent to church contacts, 2-3 weeks before publishing deadline.



PRAYER CYCLES - OXFORD + ARW REGION

We offer the Prayer Cycles begun by Rev. Don Keenlside (of blessed memory) for Oxford Presbytery and by Rev. Wayne Irwin for ARW Region for all the ministers/churches/pastoral charge supervisors in Oxford County (see [here](#)) and ARW Region (see [here](#)).

NEW SHARED HOME FOR CANVAS LABYRINTH



[Norwich United Church](#) and [Knox United Church \(Embro\)](#) are the shared custodians of the 25-foot painted Labyrinth. Until June 30, 2026, **Norwich UC looks after bookings**. In July 2026, it will be Knox UC, Embro.

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OXFORD UNITED CHURCHES

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

GOD IS DOING A NEW THING

SHARING our stories and our prayers with our neighbouring communities of faith.

HICKSON UNITED - GRACE UNITED

"A New Beginning Together: With joy and gratitude, we celebrate the approval of **the amalgamation between Hickson United Church and Grace United Church, Tavistock.**

This was affirmed by both congregations and our regional partners in the Antler River Watershed and Western Ontario Waterways Regions.

We celebrated this joyful new beginning in worship on Sunday, September 21, 2025, with thanksgiving and prayer during worship, followed by a potluck lunch.

We are deeply grateful for this coming together, and for the community that will continue to grow as we move forward in faith, sharing our gifts, praying, worshiping, and serving Christ and our wider community together, as one body in Christ."

WELCOME Rev. Marilyn Arthur to Oxford Ministries. Marilyn serves at Grace United in Tavistock (see above).

Needed ON GOING PULPIT SUPPLY for Sweaburg, Foldens, + West Oxford UCs; Avondale UC, Tillsonburg; Otterville UC.

MOVING TO SEARCH PROCESS Otterville UC.

DECIDED TO REMAIN OPEN Avondale UC, Tillsonburg.

PRAYING for ministers and their congregations while ministers are on **Restorative Care:** Pastor Lori Minler (Mt Elgin UC and Newark UC); and **Parental Leave:** Rev. Jennifer Canning (Peace UC, Plattsville).

SYMPTATHY EXTENDED to

the following families of ministers and/or former contributors to CONNECTIONS:

Darlene Hardy (retired DLM of St. David's UC, Woodstock) and her family on the death of her husband, Bill. Obit is [here](#).

Rev Karlene Brown (St. Paul's UC in Tillsonburg) on death of her father in Jamaica.

Family of **Carol Ewing**, former Chair of the Oxford United Refugee Support Committee. Carol was outstanding and unfailing in her ongoing support of new residents of Canada. Obit is [here](#).



OXFORD EVENTS

TRINITY UC,

Ingersoll

AN AFTERNOON OF MUSIC

Sun Oct 26 2 pm



NORWICH UC,

BAKE SALE Oct. 25, 8 am-12 pm

cookies/bread/tarts/squares/cupcakes+

ST. PAUL'S MESSY CHURCH, T'burg

November 1 from 10-12 noon

"Brown Paper Packages Tied up with String"

Join us for crafts, games, music and good food too!

A youth/family orientated event. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

St. Paul's United Church, 88 Bidwell St., Tillsonburg

WESTMINSTER UC, THAMESFORD

BBQ + CAR RALLY – NOV 2

BBQ – 12:00 pm (free will offering)

Instructions – 12:45 pm

Rally Departure – 1:00 pm

Wrap up with coffee + pastries 3:30 pm

[Register online](#)

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ETONIA PRINCETON UC, 101 #2 Hwy



THANK YOU to all who came out in support of our Roast Beef Dinner Fundraiser on Tuesday, September 23rd. Please note that we've replaced the monthly Spaghetti Supper with the **following Fundraising Dinners on Wednesdays. TIME: from 5:00 to 6:30 p.m. with takeout available.** Dinners include dessert and refreshments. **Prices yet to be determined.** Check out our [Facebook page](#) for updated information and any possible cancellation due to weather.

November 5, 2025 - Ham & Scalloped Potatoes

February 4, 2026 - to be determined

May 6, 2026 - Spaghetti Supper.

ST. PAUL'S UC, Tillsonburg
**Christmas Bazaar: Saturday,
November 15, 2025**

88 Bidwell St., Tillsonburg.

9:00 to 1:30 p.m.

\$2 admission includes tea/coffee and cookies.

Greenery, gifts and baking. Join us for a wonderful start to the holiday season.

PEACE UC, Plattsville

We regret to inform everyone that the "CHATEAU LA ROACH" DINNER THEATRE that was scheduled for November 2025 has been postponed 'til next year'



CONTINUING CELEBRATIONS

Princeton Etonia

Princeton and Etonia United Churches looked **at each decade since 1925** and each month I gave a bit of history for the decade and then we sang a song or hymn created or re-created from that same decade. We got through all the decades by the end of May.

June 8, 2025, our two congregations met with five other rural congregations at Bethel Stone United Church for '**An Olde Fashion Church**' picnic. We shared in worship together and then, in the United Church's best way, we had a picnic lunch provided by all the congregations. Games and a Candy Toss rounded out the afternoon.

June 10th at 10:00 a.m. Etonia Princeton United Church held a Membership Celebration and celebrated the Sacrament of Holy Communion. This Sunday, members of the **new Etonia Princeton United Church** committed themselves as members and received new Membership Cards. We ended the service with a 100th cake!

Submitted by Rev. Jane Bain



FIVE OAKS CENTRE

See their [webpage](#) + [facebook](#) for their latest programs.

Donations gratefully accepted (see here).

POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY

In 2020, the Ontario Government released a 5-year strategy to reduce poverty. Read the document [here](#). Today, the government is asking for feedback on that strategy. See [here](#). Read it carefully and **think about the people who are homeless, who use food banks, the children who don't bring school lunches. COMMENT EXTENSIVELY.** The Closing date is tight, **November 30, 2025.**



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LOCAL OUTREACH

ST. PAUL'S COMMUNITY KITCHEN, Tillsonburg

Every SATURDAY 10:30 coffee
11:30-12:30 lunch

OPERATION SHARING Wdsk



**VOLUNTEERS
NEEDED +**

supplies. Please visit their [website](#) or [Facebook page](#), call 519-320-1372 ext. 4 or email info@operationsharing.ca



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

Each Thursday 4:30-6:00 pm

Volunteers needed. Sign up here:

www.stichsupperclub.ca/volunteer-sign-up

CARING HEARTS SUPPORT NETWORK

Colouring Through Grief
3rd Wed. every month
6:00-7:30 pm

Grief and the Holidays
Nov 26 and Dec 3 6:00 -7:30 pm
St David's UC, Woodstock

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

website: www.caringheartssupportnetwork.com



Camp Tanner

Dissolution of the Camp is underway - **Secretary of Camp Tanner Inc.**, Gail Kavelman, gkavelman@gmail.com .

NUC SUMMER CAMP WHERE "TOGETHER WE THRIVE!!"



What do you get when you mix sunshine, laughter, and a sprinkling of creativity? The Norwich United Church

Summer Camp, of course! This year, we celebrated our 19th summer of fun, friendship, and growth with an eight-week day camp and leadership program that brought together children from senior kindergarten to grade six—and even a special art camp for the older kids.

Each week was a new adventure, with themes

like *Journey to the Past*, *Camp Jam – Battle of the Bands* and *Colour My World* sparking imaginations and

building connections. Campers were creative with crafts, played outdoors at the park and conservation area, splashed around at the community pool, and set off on field trips to local hobby and fruit farms.

We even had visits from The Clay Lady and a Mad Scientist, plus hands-on workshops with local artists and crafts people – so there was never a dull moment!

Our student volunteers (grades 7–10) kicked off the summer with Junior Leader



Camp week, then spent the rest of the season volunteering, learning, and having a blast. **Nine local youth took part in our paid leadership**

program, picking up skills like teamwork, communication, creativity, and problem-solving. But perhaps most importantly, they learned empathy and compassion by working with children from every corner of our community—growing into leaders who



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truly understand and appreciate different perspectives.

Of course, none of this would be possible without the incredible support from **ARWRC Mission Support, Hope Council, Canada Summer Jobs Program, Norwich Township, and our very generous community sponsors. Thanks to this support,** we're able to keep our mission strong: offering a safe, inclusive space where children and youth can grow spiritually, emotionally, and socially—while making memories that last a lifetime. *Submitted by Suzanne Crosby, Norwich UC Summer Camp Committee*



Oxford United Refugee Support OURS -WESTMINSTER UNITED, Thamesford continues fundraising for the Syrian family of 5 (single mother and 4 children) who are still in Lebanon.

To contribute, please write "Refugee Sponsorship" in the memo line of cheques. Westminster UC, 115 George St. Thamesford, ON, N0M 2M0.

GRANDMOTHERS' TEA

We eat and share stories with our Indigenous neighbours.

OCTOBER 29, 2025

NORWICH U.C., Norwich
Contact 519-863-3637

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 to arrange a ride!

Hallowe'en Dressing optional

FAIR TRADE OLIVE OIL PALESTINE

email Dave Schell davidwschell@gmail.com

Zatoun 750 ml \$30.00.

The Mohawk Residential School (aka the Mush Hole)



ceased as a school in 1997. It continued to be used for offices until it was declared unsafe. It has been transformed into a place of learning, reflection and reconciliation. It reopened on September 30 and now stands as both a **memorial** to a dark aspect of Canada's history but also **a tribute** to the resilience of the survivors. The site has housed **The Woodland Culture Centre**, open since 1972. It has art galleries, a history museum and a library on the ways folks interacted with Indigenous Nations over the years. Earlier in August, my husband and I attended the powerful film **Nature of Healing** at Six Nations hosted by 6 survivors of the Mohawk Institute – described as a prison for children (15,000) where they lost language, families and culture. Some were kidnapped to be taken to the school. All have dealt with the trauma of the abuse they experienced and continue to deal with it - but they want their children and grandchildren to know of their resilience. Since 2021 the Survivors' Secretariat (see [here](#)) has led the investigation into missing children and unmarked burials at the Mohawk Institute. It will be well worth a trip to Brantford to go through the restored site. The plans for Indigenous Peoples Day are related in this CBC story from Hamilton (see [here](#)).



Visible Rallies for public health across Oxford + Ontario.



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ONTARIO HEALTH COALITION ACTION ALERT

Ontario Health Coalition OHC (title is not linked!) has launched a petition to the Federal Government calling on them to enforce the Canada Health Act in Ontario. In Ontario, the increasing number of private clinics violates the Canada Health Act which bans user fees and extra billing. This is happening frequently with cataract surgeries, MRIs and CTs, and primary care. **You can sign the online petition [here](#)** and as well the printable petition [here](#). **Petition is closed for signatures Jan 16, 2026.**

Check out OHC's [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.

The SIXTIES SCOOP

Not every change is good. The amendments to the Indian Act in 1951 (original act was 1876) is such a case. It led to child welfare agencies placing many Indigenous children in foster care. Data is fragmented due to the inconsistent structure of those agencies. Recently, the Woodstock Library hosted Dr. Cody Groat, assistant professor in the Dept. of History and Indigenous Studies Program, University of Western Ontario, Mohawk and band member of Six Nations. His father was a survivor of the Sixties Scoop, and his paternal grandparents survivors of the Indian Residential School System including the Mohawk Institute. Cody grew up in Ingersoll.



While Indigenous people are only 10% of the Canadian population, they represent 60-70% of child welfare cases. Clearly, a difference in cultures. **Calls for a National Inquiry into the Sixties Scoop are warranted** to find the truth of our racial bias. **Yes. Every Child Matters. But the administrative structures re privacy and information are deeply troubling.**



The workbooks and reports for the Fall Regional Meeting on October 3-4 are [here](#). You can check with your Congregational Representative to the Region to learn more about the meeting.

To 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](#)**

PRAY, FAST, ACT: Stand with Gaza –Wednesdays in October

Difficult suffering and urgent need. Join a sacred movement of prayer, fasting and advocacy **for Palestinians in Gaza next Wednesday (Oct.29)** led by our moderator, the **Right Rev. Dr. Kimberly Heath**, on Zoom at 11:00 for 30-minute prayer circle.

The focus is Peace and Remembrance. Register for zoom [here](#).

UNITED CHURCH RURAL MINISTRY NETWORK

Find the October ENews of the UCRMN at [UCRMN.ca](#). Sign up for your own copy while you are there.

November 20 is a zoom workshop on **"Rural Culture, Rural Spirituality!"** It promises valuable insights as Shawn Sanford Beck lifts up Joyce Sasse's observation that **RURAL IS A CULTURE!**

For those in need of tech support, contact the United Church Rural Ministry Network at tech.help@ucrmn.ca. Also more information at <https://endof10.0rg>.

AND for those interested **what God is doing in rural churches around the world**, check out the July 2025 eNews of the International Rural Churches Association.



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CREATION STORIES FROM FAITH AND SCIENCE

Most of the seasons of the church year we know: Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Pentecost and a season called Ordinary Time. There is also Creation season from September 1 to October 4, which begins with **prayer for the care of the earth**. Timely, to say the least, given that we are **in a climate crisis, faced with the task of reversing global warming**. The fact that we could set the planet back a billion years, is mind numbing.

The creation theme leads us to two wonder-full sources, one faith source from Genesis and the other from science.

Scholars tell us that the creation story in Genesis 1 was written in **the fifth century BCE just after the exile, the most violent time of Israel's history**. Israel learned that the **land is losable**. They were free to go home from exile **but where was God?** In that context, Genesis 1 was a story of reassurance. God was not absent but the creator of all that was. The author, scholars call "J", tells them, through story, that the world gets messed up because people (Adam and Eve) make wrong choices. **Choosing power instead of love gets you a one-way ticket out of Eden, but no one, (Cain), regardless of what he or she has done, gets beyond God's love and care. How awesome.**

When I look at **creation from science, I am also struck with awesome wonder**.

As we know, creation, according to science, was 13.8 billion years in the making. It began with an explosive burst of energy that sent space debris in all directions. For about nine billion years it may have looked like chaos. What turned this **chaos to creativity was gravity. I**

like to think of it as getting together, as making connections. The space dust and rocks were attracted to other dust and rocks; the gases reached out to other



gases. The rocks formed planets, and the gases became suns and stars.

About a billion years ago life on earth was

limited to algae in the waters of the earth. **But life is not static, it seeks more complexity**. Algae in search of more sun, moved to shallow waters. To get even more light algae attempted to leave the sea to live on land, but there was no soil. Year after year it failed. Algae finally made it to land with the help of fungi which broke down minerals from rocks. After fungi came plants. Decaying plants along with minerals from rocks led to the formation of soil. **This creative evolutionary process had begun, from plants to animals to humans.**

We are blessed with two stories of creation, one from Genesis 1, the other from science. For me, God's awesome handiwork is in both. For how our earth came to be we look to science. In Genesis we see an author attempting to explain why **our world sometimes gets so messed up. He also shows us God stepping into the brokenness with unconditional love.**

Today, like never before, we are called to care for the earth. **The earth is God's precious gift to us, marked "Fragile. Handle with Care"; words for our time and for all seasons.**

Take Care.

Editor Emeritus - Glen Wright

