

CONNECTIONS

News and Views of Oxford County United Churches

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OUR CONTEXT. JESUS' WAY, GOD'S LOVE.

God's love is '**power within**', a dignity shared with all of life to become more fully human and part of creation. Much of our history has celebrated '**power over**' which has been destroying our planet earth without regard for sustainability and limiting our humanity.

In this month's stories, **listen for the Other Voices which have been silenced for too long.** Stories have been organized around the 3-fold pattern of the journey to the cross:

OUR CONTEXT (pg 2) includes our Communities of Faith, Operation Sharing, Camp Tanner and the work of the OURS Committee re the safety of our extended family in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

JESUS' WAY (pg 5) includes prayer for each other, book reports of Norwich's 200-year church anniversary, finding God in the Pandemic, SKYLIGHT Festival and info on Octopus.

GOD'S LOVE (pg 8) helps us become more human as we relate to God, to each other and to creation - our worship, our social and ecological justice initiatives.



Marg Murray co-editor



FOOD FOR THE SOUL

OTHER VOICES

In June of 1925 the newly formed United Church of Canada inherited 7 residential schools from the Methodists and 5 residential schools from the Presbyterians. There were 25 day schools for indigenous students as well. By 1925 these schools were government funded and supervised with the churches providing the administrative and teaching staff.

It is not that the church is blameless. While reporting was not to church but to Government, we are not aware of any protests coming from the church.

The Mount Elgin Residential School was located on a farm at Muncey, now known as the **Muncey-Delaware Nation, 26 kms west of St. Thomas. The children worked the farm every other day giving them only a half time school experience. Health care was neglected.** As one survivor stated, "I had a friend who was ill and could not work. I told the supervisor who said she was just lazy. Finally, she could not walk. She was taken to the infirmary where she died a few days later."

Europeans had come to North America to duplicate the life they knew but did not have in their homeland. The voice of new opportunities in a "New World" was strong. **Prosperity meant buying land and clearing it of trees so they could plant crops. Indigenous people, like the trees, were in the way.** The Government's purpose was to impose European values and lifestyles on the Indigenous people. To that end there was a need to break their spirit (and the Spirit) beginning with the children.

We wonder, from our twenty first century perspective, how could this example of blatant injustice have gone on so long?

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Where were the voices of protest? There were some. **There were other voices.**

In 1907 the government commissioned a **study on the state of the Residential School** system with research conducted in the schools in Saskatchewan. The report came back pointing out the abuses and stating that something had to be done. The report was ignored.

In the 1930's artist and poet Emily Carr said that the reason **she painted Totem Poles was because she wanted people to see them in their natural setting before they were all taken down and shipped off to museums.** Carr had great admiration and love for the Indigenous people. There are times we need to listen to preachers and politicians. There are times when we need to listen to the poets. There were those of our generation who said, "**Our ancestors were wrong. We need to close the residential schools**". The schools were closed but **the racism continued.**

Now, the newly discovered unmarked graves of Indigenous children have got our attention. Was there anyone there to hear those last cries in Ojibwa or Cree; children's cries for moms, for home, for justice? **We do know that now that they are being heard. The children have been given a voice. The silence has been broken. It is part of the truth; it will be part of the reconciliation. It is a step along the way, to deeper contrition and compassion, to greater humility, and to greater hope.**

Glen Wright, Co-editor



p.s. See the early 2000s film "[Our Healing Journey](#)" by the Chippewas of the Thames.

This 3-fold pattern of the theology of the cross (Our Context, Jesus' Way, God's Love) is adapted from work of Oxford native, the Rev. Dr. Douglas John Hall. This summer as we live in the urgent reality of heat waves, forest fires, covid variants, economic worries about a just transition, we think about our faith, trusting God to be with us in these challenging times.

OUR CONTEXT



COMINGS AND GOINGS AROUND OXFORD

CONGREGATIONS SEEKING MINISTERIAL LEADERSHIP:

We hold in our hearts and prayers those communities of faith as they journey to live out God's mission.

- Avondale UC (Tillsonburg) and Otterville UC continue to interview candidates.
- Hickson UC.
- Norwich UC approved a shared Ministry agreement with KTV (Kelvin, Teeterville, Vanessa) Pastoral Charge and await ARW Human Resources Commission's confirmation of Janice Pow as half-time minister.
- Beachville (Sweaburg - West Oxford) Pastoral Charge completed their profiles and are setting up Search Team.
- Foldens UC to worship with Sweaburg - West Oxford.
- Burgessville UC.
- Peace UC is looking at a short-term appointment for September 1, 2021. They will complete and get approval of the proper documents before interviewing candidates. The Search team has been approved. Mary Anne Silverthorne has been appointed the Pastoral Charge Supervisor.
- Oxford Centre UC held a decommissioning service in June.

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NEW MINISTER AT PRINCETON-ETONIA Pastoral Charge effective August 16 for 1 year at 20 hours a week.

A warm welcome to Jane Baxter who has been appointed to Princeton-Etonia Pastoral Charge. Jane is a student minister from Fairview UC, Brantford and start August 16. We anticipate an opportunity to learn more about Jane in our next CONNECTIONS.

Former Oxford Presbytery Members on the Move!

Rev Chris Matheson has moved to Westlake United in Peterborough to begin in September. Chris joined Oxford Presbytery at Peace U.C. in Plattsville in the fall of 2019 just as our church structure was changing. Congratulations to Chris on his new position and many blessings on Westlake UC.

Rev Bonnie Pilkey – Retired has been appointed a VAM at ST Paul's UC Tillsonburg.

OURS

ANNUAL MEETING

Sunday September 19 1:00 pm

**St David's United Church,
Woodstock**

Everyone welcome – especially those interested in assisting refugees to come to Canada.

(OURS) OXFORD UNITED REFUGEE SUPPORT COMMITTEE URGENT!

The UK's newspaper, The Guardian advises that the potential for an Ethiopian civil war is escalating as troops from the Tigray region are in conflict with the federal government

over self-governance as well as the demand for the federal government to end the blockade of Tigray and the withdrawal of all opposing troops.

These troops include the Ethiopian army, forces from other Ethiopian regions and Eritreans. There are anecdotal reports of troops entering homes in Addis Ababa capturing those inside and taking them away to be shot.



We are very concerned for the safety of the Temnewu family (Sara and her 3 children) who are Eritrean citizens living

as refugees in Addis Ababa. We await with hope **that they will soon have their interviews to come to Canada as Permanent Residents.**

We also pray for the safety of Mussie Habte and Kidane Habte in Addis Ababa – that they can escape the violence.

St David's UC has applied to co-sponsor these 2 Eritrean refugees. Our applications, however, for them are not as far along in being accepted by our federal government.



CAMP TANNER

[Facebook page](#) and [website](#).



A huge success!

Very thankful for the wonderful volunteers who made our bottle drive happen, as well as all for our community members who donated!

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OPERATION SHARING



Hotlinks are:
[Website](#),
[Facebook Page](#)

Volunteers are key to the many ways our community supports Operation Sharing. This spring, they recognized these 3 esteemed volunteers at their annual award presentations:



John Klein Geltink received the prestigious Val Drane award for his long service on the Board. John is a member of the Ingersoll Reform Congregation.

Scott McKague received the Volunteer of the Year Award for his work on the Coldest Night of the Year Fundraiser for The INN.



Tilly Van Dersar received the Kindness Award for her work at the Bullwinkle's Eatery. She is seated here

with the rest of Bullwinkle's crew: Kathy Stephenson, Judi Brown, Natasha Hoogkamp, Marilyn Schmiedl and John Smith.

Read more about these volunteers and the work of Operation Sharing in their Summer newsletter, "Helping in Unity" highlights [here](#).

Two ways to donate to the programs of Operation Sharing: webpage [here](#) or mail Treasurer of Operation Sharing, P.O. Box 20081, Woodstock, Ontario, N4S 8X8.

STILL NEEDED

The beneficial programs of Operation Sharing always appreciate our support - BUT particularly during the pandemic. Please find the details on [page 9 of June Issue of CONNECTIONS](#):

- **TAXABLE ITEMS CUPBOARD.** Call Bonnie at 519-539-3361.
- **FOOD FOR FRIENDS**
- **WOODSTOCK: BULLWINKLE'S EATERY AND HOSPITALITY TRAINING CENTRE**
- **A HOMELESS SHELTER- The Inn**
- **GOOD CLEAN CLOTHING -all ages**
- **EXTENDED FAMILY PROJECT HELP FOR STUDENTS** email Eric Schmiedl at eric Schmiedl@yahoo.ca or call 519-539-5926



Current programs and possibilities are on their [webpage](#).

A sacred place for peoples of all faiths as well as spiritual seekers to gather in community to live, work, learn, pray, play, heal and act for justice.

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*On our journey of Jesus' Way, we hear the voices of those on the fringe of power -the vulnerable, the dispossessed and the suffering. Those of us living with our privilege gained from **power over** find it difficult to recognize that God is already there. We are changed.*

JESUS' WAY

PRAYER CYCLES

An invitation to pray each week for a Community of Faith in Oxford and in the ARW Region.

For Oxford United Churches: list is [here](#)

Foldens, Vacant Lynne Dunlop PCS Aug 15

Sweaburg + West Oxford, Vacant, Mary

Anne Silverthorne, PCS Aug 22

Drumbo, Ken Jackson RS, Aug 29

Dundas St (Woodstock), Shepherd

Munikwa, Sept 5,

Richwood, Michael Shewburg, Sept 12

For Antler River Watershed Region:

<https://www.prayercycles.ca/antlerriverwatershed>

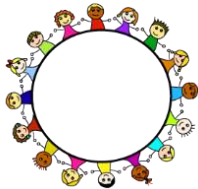
[Suburban](#), Talbotville. Aug 15

[Richards Memorial](#), London, Aug 22

[Avondale](#), Tillsonburg, Aug 29

[Kintore: Chalmers](#), Sept 5

[Sarnia: Grace](#), Sept 12



PRAYER CHAIN

Please contact Prayer Chain Leader [Olga McKellar](#) for on-going prayer concerns.



To order books call 1-888-668-0871, email sales@grandriverbooks.com

Order books online [here](#). Mail delivery \$5.00.

THE AWESOME OCTOPUS

Squidward Tentacles, as you may know, in the cartoon, Sponge Bob Square Pants is actually an Octopus. He is rather small and



can sit on a chair with his legs just reaching the floor. **A real octopus**, if she were sitting on a

chair in your living room would weigh about **35 pounds** and her arms would be able to touch the living room walls, that is if your living room was at the bottom of the ocean.

Octopuses, (yes you can say octopuses or octopi, both are correct, though octopuses is now favoured and is more fun to say) have **eight arms**, although two sometimes are used for walking and six for gathering food. So they are a little like us, except we don't have 6 arms. Wow, would that ever be fun. Think of all the things you could do at once.

Octopuses can swim very fast. They not only have 8 arms or legs but a water jet that they can squeeze to help shoot themselves along the seabed. Since they have no bones, they can slide through the smallest openings in the rock and can make their bodies look like sand or rocks when hiding from very large fish.

An octopus has three hearts, one for general purpose and one for each set of gills. It would be like having a heart for each of your lungs and another for pumping blood to the rest of your body. That is something that did not get passed on to us from our sister octopus. I guess because we don't have to suck oxygen from sea water on the bottom of the ocean.

Now, isn't that awesome! GW

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FYI I, I, I OUR NEW MONTHLY FEATURE

**An opportunity for READERS
to share what Interests,
Informs or Inspires you!**

Share with us the fiction you are reading, the movies you are watching or the songs you are singing!

BOOK REVIEW "THE CHURCH THAT SPAWNED A VILLAGE"

Land at 50 cents an acre and plans for a new church and new village in Oxford County is bound to catch the attention of anyone with rural roots. The land acquisition of 15,000 acres by two Quaker entrepreneurs, Peter Lossing and his brother-in-law Peter DeLong is just one of the historical facts in Marie Avey's book "The Church that Spawned a Village."

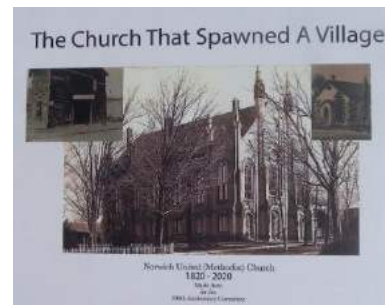
This history of Norwich United begins with 50 families, some Quaker and some Methodist, making the 500 mile trek from lower New York State to Oxford County in 1811. Among them was the family of Adam Stover who asked for 3400 acres, 1000 acres for each of his three sons and 400 acres for his daughter. It was Adam's son, Michael, a Quaker, who became a Methodist, who donated the land and helped build the first Methodist Meeting House in 1820; a place for worship and study that would become Norwich United in 1925. It was Michael who envisioned a village around the church and helped fund those first merchants.

This is a rare glimpse of church and community life over a 200-year span. The story begins with this Quaker and Methodist settlement. You will learn that

the Methodists took up an offering only in class meetings but not in worship for the first 70 years; that in a financial crisis, they rented pews at four and two dollars a year, depending on pew location.

The reader will be taken through Church Union in 1925, the changes in the Women's organizations from WMS and WA to UCW, and the introduction of the New Curriculum. You will sense the importance of ministerial leadership. The congregations welcomed, worked with, appreciated, loved, and said goodbye to 45 clergy over the 200 year period.

In the chapters "The Golden Years" and "Changes and more Changes" while the



stories may be about Norwich United, they reflect what was happening to most United Churches across our country. An

example of change is found in two of the over 160 pictures of church life. The Official Board in 1960, according to the photo, consisted of 43 members, 40 men and 3 women. In the 2011 photo of the Church Council there are 10 members, 9 women and one man.

This is an account of hopes and dreams, of grace and generosity, of witness and wit, of achievement and attrition, of love lived and life shared; a 200-year historical, social, emotional and spiritual journey of faith. As author Marie Avey has said, "It is a story that needed to be told." Indeed, it is! For this labour of love by Marie Avey and her assisting team we give a wholehearted "Thank You!"

It is a story that leads to the question, "Where is God seeking to take us next?" Wherever it may be. the back cover of the

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book gives us a timely benediction. It is in the form of our creed, the first two lines of which give us both encouragement and mandate: "We are not alone. We live in God's world."

"The Church that Spawned a Village", 174 pages, \$30.00, is available from Marie Avey at ottlawn@gmail.com or at 519 863 2215.

Reviewed by Glen Wright

"God and the Pandemic – a Chrisitan Reflection on the Coronovirus and its aftermath"

By N.T. Wright,
2020, London , U.K.

What are we supposed to think about the Coronovirus Crisis?

Some people think they know: "This is a sign of the End. It's all predicted in the book of Revelation". Others disagree but are equally clear: "This is a call to repent. God is judging us all." Others try to place blame on the Chinese or the World Health Organization (WHO) or the Government.

N.T. Wright examines these reactions and finds all of them wanting. He invtes Christians to consider a response built on a careful reading of the whole Bible, Chrisitian history and on the way of living, thinking and praying revealed to us by Jesus.

Wright suggests profound answers to many of our questions:

- What should be the Christian response?
 - How should we think about God?
 - How do we live in the present?
 - What can Covid teach us about ourselves?
 - How do we recover and move ahead?
- Wright's book is accessible and practical. I read it at one sitting and found it clear and

Bibilical without being simplistic or dogmatic.

Try it. You will enjoy it.

Recommended by Olga McKellar



SKYLIGHT: Nurturing a narrative of hope, joy, and transformation

Registration is open for 2 one day events, August 28 and 29. Because of Covid restrictions, registration is limited to 100.

REGISTER now!

<http://www.skylightfestival.ca/register/>



The environmental crisis is ...a crisis about what it means to be human, a spiritual crisis.

The Rev. Dr. Douglas John Hall

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"Power over" dramatically affects any relationship and thus our ability to be human. God as love is **power with** (rather than **power over**). God's unconditional love **for us** and implanted somehow **within us** helps us become more fully human and alive with the Spirit. We care for each other (both next door and across the world) with respect and compassion and experience a love for creation that we have so long ignored.

GOD'S LOVE

-BECOMING HUMAN

CHRISTIAN FAMILY SUNDAY

It is good to assign a special day as Christian Family Sunday. It is also good to pray for our families all year long.

Ask yourself, "Do I ever get tired of praying for my Family?"

When I am honest, I need to confess that in my family there are several people for whom I tire of praying; they never seem to hear God and they never seem to grow in faith. It is so easy to pray for people who are facing BIG crises but so difficult to pray consistently for those tied up in picky little pimples.

So, when I find myself overlooking the needs of "Aunt Minnie Maud" or of "Uncle Claud", I try to remember this old parable: FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE.

Long ago and far away a great King set out for the mountain of Heaven. He had with him his wife, three children, a group of loyal friends, and a dog.

It was a long, hard trip and en route all his family and friends eventually died and only his faithful dog remained. As they were climbing the great mountain, God appeared to tell the King it was now time for him to enter heaven. However, God said the dog could not go with him.

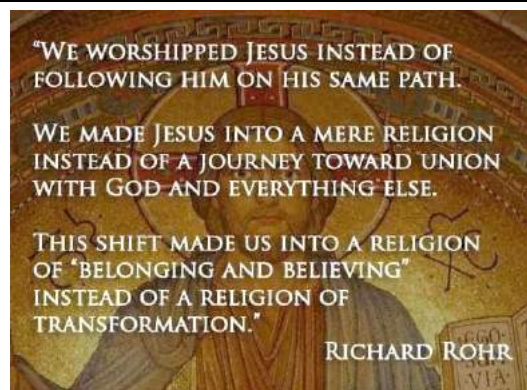
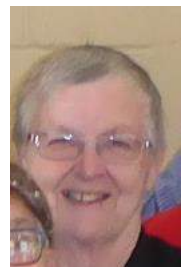
Much as he wanted to go in, the King refused to leave his dog behind. "If I can't take him, I choose not to go." There was a flash of lightning and the dog changed into Christ and for his faithfulness he was ushered in.

He walked about seeing many familiar faces, those who had been friends and those who had been enemies, but he saw none of his family and none of his good friends.

When he asked God about their whereabouts, God suggested he search Heaven and Hell, too, if he wished. An Angel helped him and finally he found them all in Hell, a place of torment and pain. The Angel prevented him from talking to them and tried to lead him back to Heaven. "I must stay here," said the King. "I had rather stay in Hell with my family and my friends than leave them here while I go to Heaven". Once again there was a flash of lightning and God appeared to the King, saying, "Because of your love and loyalty, you, your friends and family will all spend eternity together in Heaven."

Perhaps each of us can renew our resolution to pray faithfully for our family and our close friends regularly. Hey, we might even have energy left to pray for our dogs!

Olga McKellar



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National CHURCH of United Church of Canada Nation

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION of Canada and the UCC

The United Church is making [funds available](#) to support the work of Indigenous communities for the identification of unmarked graves. A special meeting of General Council Executive approved \$3 Million for this work.

SIX NATIONS SHARING CIRCLE (formerly Grandmother's Tea)

In July, I attended a very interesting, informative and hopeful presentation on one person's perspective of the journey of Indigenous People using the Medicine Wheel. The 4 parts were: 'Who We Were' (before contact); 'What Was' (what has happened after contact); 'What Is' (where we find ourselves today); and 'Who We Are' (where we need to go in light of our journey). The sharing with others – mostly 'settler' people but also some 'indigenous' people was heart felt. I was moved deeply by the stories shared.

It was an excellent presentation by Gloria Cook. The slide show with some audio can be found here. ["Our Journey as an Indigenous People"](#). Gloria is Community - Capacity Development Coordinator for Indigenous Ministries and Justice of UCC. MM

For those interested, the next Sharing Circle is August 23 1:30-3:30 pm.

Please contact Rhonda Johns at Nations Uniting nations.uniting@gmail.com for Zoom details.



Plan now to celebrate ORANGE SHIRT DAY on September 30.



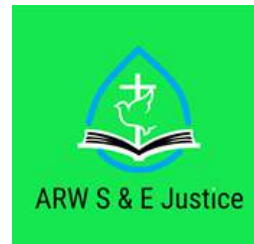
[ARWRC webpage](#)

[Facebook page](#)

Regional Council FALL Meeting -Save the Date! Thursday October 28 to Sunday October 31.

Details to register for the Regional Council Fall Meeting. Unavailable at press time.

Submit your requests from the Oxford Legacy Fund to Lynne Dunlop
lynndunl@execulink.com
Details [April Connections](#)



Check out the website, <https://arwsej.ca>, of the Social and Ecological Justice Network of the Antler River Watershed Region for valuable resources on social and

ecological justice issues: **Climate Justice/Crisis, Poverty, Boomer Spirituality, Middle East Justice, Canadian Foodgrains Bank, United Church Women, Right Relations and Mozambique.** Also includes extensive resources for local Outreach projects and community groups.

Full disclosure: co-editor Marg Murray is a member of the ARWSEJ Network and is passionate about the need for an ecological theology to address the climate crisis.

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WALKER'S DUMP PLAN – ON HOLD

Bill 197 says that any municipality with homes less than 3.5 km from the dump site has the right to stop the dump. **Councils of Zorra, Ingersoll, South-West Oxford, the County of Oxford have all said 'no' to this plan to haul 17.4 million tonnes of trash into Oxford to dump it in Carmeuse's quarry in the water table.**

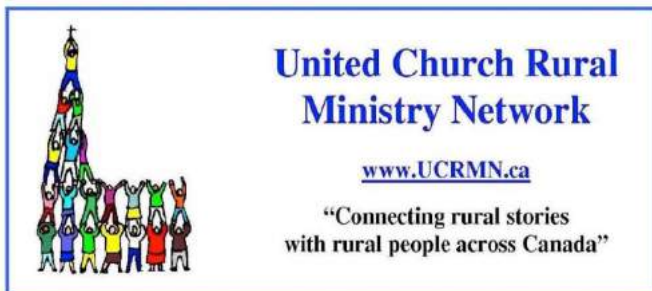
One of the ways, Oxford County is a leader in Environmental Action, is reducing per capita waste disposed.

We can extend the life of our landfill at Salford by carefully considering what we buy, how we use or re-use it, or give it away. OPAL has valuable ideas to share!

ReuseapoloozAHA returning in September! Or if you can't wait for September, check out this summary of [Donation Centres](#) prepared by OPAL.

Reducing organic waste:

OPAL also prepared tips for use in your kitchen! [Here](#) is their entertaining missive.



WORSHIP SERVICES IN OXFORD

Check with individual churches re specifics of in person worship or availability of streaming services:

[College Ave UC](#)

[Dundas St. UC](#)

Hebron UC - rsstock@execulink.com

[Innerkip UC](#)

[Kintore/Brooksdale UC](#)

[Knox UC, Embro](#)

[Mt Elgin UC](#)

[Norwich UC](#)

[Peace UC, Plattsville](#)

[>](mailto:peaceunitedplattsville@gmail.com),

[St. David's UC, Woodstock](#)

[St. Paul's UC, Tillsonburg](#)

[Trinity UC, Ingersoll](#)

[Westminster UC, Thamesford](#)

Willis UC, Drumbo Sunday services by conference call. drumbocharge@hotmail.com

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Next Publication: Wednesday,
September 8, 2021

SUBMISSIONS DUE:

Noon Friday September 3, 2021

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Submissions and feedback welcome.

oxfordunitedministries.ca

**CONNECTIONS
website**