

CONNECTIONS

News and Views of Oxford County United Churches

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THE PERSISTENT SPIRIT

In the beginning, the Church was a spiritual movement with no established building or organizational structure overseeing the people as they gathered. As the Spirit descended in their midst they were moved. In this issue, we report on signs of the multi-faceted movement of the persistent Spirit in our midst (Curbside Spirit, remembering colleagues, butterflies, the 1997 London Conference 'moo-ving into the 21st Century' London, Norwich UC's 200 year history, discerning Pentecost in the Pandemic, Darning Socks to extend their life, as well as Calls to Action both to be in solidarity with Indigenous peoples to advance reconciliation (TRC and Bill C-15) and with those refugees living in dire circumstances in Tigray, Ethiopia. We lift up the place of eco-theology in sorting our way forward and the need to move quickly and intentionally to restore Mother Earth. All of these move us toward A New Community.



Marg Murray co-editor



There is an old joke: Two planets meet in space.

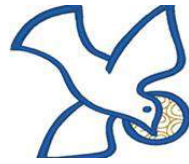


The one asks: "How are you?"

The other replies, Oh, I'm not at all well. I'm ill. I have *homo sapiens*."

The other answers, "I am sorry to hear that. That's really bad. I have had it too. But never mind – it will pass."

from [*Hope for these Troubled Times* by Jurgen Moltmann](#), page 16



FOOD FOR THE SOUL

The Peace of Christ –

Part Five

The Curbside Spirit

May is the month this year in which the church celebrates Pentecost. We hear once again of the people of many nations gathered together in one place (Acts 2:1.) When the Spirit came upon them they were able to understand one another, though they spoke different languages. Any hint of racism vanished. It was an expression of the hoped for Kingdom of God.

Since we are in lockdown and barred from gathering in one place, the title is a reference to the Spirit finding other places to meet with us. We encounter the Spirit curbside, so to speak.

To answer the question posed last month: "What was gained and what was lost when Rome finally accepted the Christian Church?"

What was gained was Christian access to the entire Roman Empire. What was lost was the church's independence. The church was still under the domination of Rome and soon found it was expected to comply with its goals. The first church Council in 325 CE was called by the Emperor to meet at Nicea and mend a growing faction over the divine nature of Jesus. It wasn't that Constantine cared about the theological arguments, he just wanted unity.

So began the long church and state relationship that often meant the church adopted the nation's interests. Yet the non-violent witness that we know as the peace of Christ was not lost. It was honoured by mystics and Monasteries, by faithful women and men in the many religious orders. When the church strayed too far

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from the original vision, the Spirit acted to reform and reshape this beloved community of faith.

The spirit of reform, as we might guess did not start in Rome, the main street of the Empire, but in its nether regions, on the curb, so to speak. I will relate just one example.

There were three young men in Germany who began to read the works of Ulrich Zwingli, a Swiss theologian. Inspired by Zwingli, they set about in the 1500's to form a new faith community based on the life of Jesus. This new community believed in and practiced adult baptism and the primacy of the Lordship of Jesus. This group, called Anabaptists was a threat to the beliefs and practices of the state church. Unwilling to recant, the young men were burned at the stake and their wives drowned. Such was the cost of living out the peace of Christ.

Two hundred years later an Anabaptist couple, my grandparents, several generations back, to avoid persecution, left Germany and went to Holland where they were welcomed by the followers of Meno Simons. From there, as Mennonites, they emigrated to North America.

So did the non-violent peace of Christ survive and if so, where do we find it today? Stay tuned for the last in the "Peace of Christ" series under "Food for the Soul" in the June issue of CONNECTIONS.

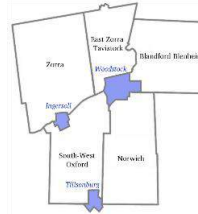
Peace.

Glen Wright, Co-editor



Our email address is:
oxfconnections@execulink.com

COMINGS AND GOINGS AROUND OXFORD...



CONGREGATIONS SEEKING MINISTERIAL LEADERSHIP:

We hold in our hearts and prayers those communities of faith seeking ministerial leadership. Each one is unique as they journey to live out God's mission.

Avondale UC (Tillsonburg) with Otterville UC; Hickson UC; Norwich UC; Princeton-Etonia Pastoral Charge; Beachville (Sweaburg - West Oxford) Pastoral Charge; Foldens UC; Burgessville UC.



Keep on eye on social media for some fun posts and activities over the summer. [Facebook page](#) and [website](#).

Keep safe, and continue to keep the camp spirit alive,

Grrrruff & The Camp Tanner Board

July 10 -BOOTLE DRIVE details later.



To order books call 1-888-668-0871, email sales@grandriverbooks.com **Order books online** [here](#). Mail delivery \$5.00.

PRAYER CYCLES

- **Oxford United Churches Dec. 2020**
<https://tinyurl.com/Oxford-Prayer-Cycle-for-UCC>
- **Antler River Watershed**
<https://www.prayercycles.ca/antlerriverwatershed>

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CONDOLENCES

Rev Gary Carruthers (1945-2021)



Gary was honest, hardworking and compassionate. He loved to chat and often engaged me so passionately in conversation, that I'd forget time – and at least once had to run to catch the Woodstock train. For Gary was my classmate at Emmanuel College, a colleague in Oxford Presbytery and a valued friend. He welcomed and made us laugh.

Gary served at Foldens and Salford UC and in Sarnia. Regrettably, his stroke (2008) shortened his ministry and he moved with his wife, Jean, to Manitoba in 2010.

Jean is deeply appreciative of the care that Gary received and was truly comforted that the 'zoom' Funeral service led by Rev Mark Bellamy could also include her and their classmates: Rev. Dr. Tracy Crick-Butler and Rev. Carol Ferguson. Part of the reception included Rev. Paul Rodey. (all familiar to many here in Oxford). Access to the funeral service is [here](#) and to his obituary [here](#).

We keep Jean and their families in our thoughts and prayers. MM

CONNECTIONS has a website:

oxfordunitedministries.ca

BAG IT is a whimsical engaging short video about plastic – yes, the material



which was created to be thrown away. It turns out, however, that **there is 'no away'** Not in the proposed Walker Landfill in Beachville

quarry or indeed in any landfill. Question raised: **"Is your life too plastic?"**

FOR CHILDREN of all ages

FCoaa)

Butterflies - Part One

Butterflies are awesome!

Butterflies, like bees, go through four stages of growth, egg, larva, pupa, sometimes called a chrysalis and adult. Except for the few butterflies that fly south for the winter, most butterflies spend the winter as eggs, larvae or in the pupa stage.

Did you know that butterflies never eat? They just drink. They have a mouth but no teeth and their mouth is fitted with a tube for drinking nectar. The tube called a proboscis is rolled up for flying and unrolled for sipping nectar from flowers.

But butterflies, like us, can't grow strong with sweet nectar alone. They need minerals which we get when we eat vegetables. Butterflies get their minerals from mud. Do you think to a butterfly mud tastes like chocolate?

Also, butterflies taste with their feet. If you could taste with your feet they would probably make socks and sandals in flavours such as cherry, chocolate and vanilla. How cool would that be? When butterflies land on a flower they can tell by tasting the petals if the flower has nectar.

Isn't that awesome? (ITA)

Next month, in part 2, we will talk about Monarch butterflies. Monarchs deserve their own story because of where they spend the winter.

Send us your Monarch pictures (oxfconnections@execulink.com by June 4) We can hardly wait to see them. Thanks. GW

**Look for the 2
Butterflies in our
pages!**

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RELIC FROM OUR PAST



The theme was 'moo ving into the 21st century' for the 1997 London Conference held in the new Civic Centre in Woodstock. This

'relic' t-shirt comes to us via Dorothy Arnold from Don Bucknell who was Oxford Presbytery Rep for Salford UC. Both Dorothy and Don are members of Trinity UC, Ingersoll. In my mind, I still see Don's wide smile proudly wearing this t-shirt.

WONDERING OUT LOUD

Looking for pictures of the marvelous hangings which transformed the arenas into our worship workspace.

ANNUAL MEETING NOTICE **THE HOPE COUNCIL**

of Antler River Watershed Region
(operating on behalf of the United Church Council of Middlesex Presbytery)
Annual General Meeting

May 13, 2021 at 7:00 pm

For **Zoom invitation**:

Go to Eventbrite.ca; search - Hope Council Annual Meeting; click on Hope Council; follow registration directions and the Zoom link will be provided.

This meeting will be of interest to former members of Middlesex Presbytery and other interested parties. We look forward to seeing you on May 13, 2021. Sincerely, Richard Golden
President of Hope Council.

The NEW CLIMATE DENIALISM Our political leaders accept the reality of human induced climate change but continue to promote and practice a political agenda that fails to align with the scientific consensus of what we must do. A Good War – mobilizing Canada for the Climate Emergency Seth Klein ECW Press, Canada 2020

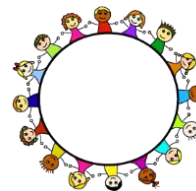
NORWICH UC – 200 years

"The Church That Spawned A Village - Norwich United (Methodist) Church 1820 to 2020" attempts to show the breadth of activity that has occurred on the same Norwich spot (3 church buildings) for 200 years, beginning with **the oxen grunting as they cleared the great hardwood tree stumps** up to the reopening of services in September 2020 with Covid restrictions.

Esteemed Methodist leaders and seven United Church Moderators have spoken from pulpits on that spot. **The exceptional acoustics have allowed many concerts with notable performers.** Mission has been a driving force in the congregation.

An Oxford Presbytery Possibilities grant to paid part of the cost of production. The book will be sold for \$30. **Please contact Marie Avey at ottlawn@gmail.com or call 519-863-2215 for a copy.** Submitted by Marie Avey

PRAYER CHAIN



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



[ARWRC webpage](#)

[Facebook page](#)

Most recent newsletter [March 29](#)

[2021](#) describes the following:

Reconciliation and Indigenous Justice Events

Hon. Murray Sinclair, Friday, May 28 at 1:30 pm (EDT) [Go to Registration form](#)

Regional Council Spring Meeting -

ONLINE Thursday, June 10 to Saturday, June 12

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

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



ANNUAL MEETING NOTICE

Sunday, May 30 at 2:00 pm.

[Registration is required for the Zoom link](#)

This year, Five Oaks continues to host agricultural migrant workers during their isolation.



There is a 5 km Walkathon (June 20-25) to raise \$50,000 for need roof repairs. To register visit their [webpage](#).



Good food, if you live close to Five Oak, check here for [RETURN of TAKE OUT DINNERS](#)

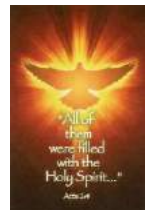


PENTECOST IN A PANDEMIC

My first cousin, Steve, has worked in front line health care in the suburban Toronto area for many years now. Working in Diagnostic X-Ray, he considers himself secondary front line as he has supported the critical care areas of the hospital.

He has often remarked, in glowing terms, about the dedicated front-line workers that he works with daily. **The tenacity, strength, wisdom and dedication are beyond comprehension** as these physicians, nurses, technologists, as well as many others, have fought over the past 14 months, night and day, to keep people off the ventilator and to fight for the lives of those who are on. **"These people are nothing short of hero's and once all is said and done, they really should be honored with the highest civilian honor that any country could bestow upon any of its citizens..."** What a privilege it's been over the years to work with such a dedicated, hard working and focused group of people in front line health care. The majority of these people have familial and cultural backgrounds from India, China, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Africa, and Russia to name but some. **Where Steve works, religion, race, creed, color, sexual orientation or country of origin play no part in patient care. "We're all part of an inclusive team that many of us call family", says Steve, "and I'm thankful to be a part of it".**

So this year, when I join the St. David's United you-tube worship on Pentecost Sunday and hear once again, from the book of Acts of the **people of every nation gathered in one room with little flames of the Holy Spirit dancing above their heads, I will think of Steve and the life saving team. For them and for thousands like them I will say a prayer and give God thanks and praise. GW**



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DARNING SOCKS.



My granny used to darn socks every evening as we sat around her fire and listened to the radio.

She could listen to us, listen to the radio and at the same time **meticulously weave smooth darns over the many holes we all made in our socks.**

You do remember darning, don't you? It was careful weaving built over a hole worn in a sock or other knitted garment with the help of a darning needle, sized to suit the weight of the sock or other clothing. **She would hold the sock carefully over a clean, hard, potato inside to hold it steady and use a darning needle loaded with yarn closely matched to the damaged clothing** while she wove dense and even lest wearing the patched item would rub and cause a blister to the wearer.

One Christmas, I remember, we kids pooled our pennies to buy gram a new, modern item: **a darning mushroom of polished wood that would replace her potato.** She opened her gift and appeared delighted with this advanced technology! It was not long before we were each old enough to get our own darning mushroom and begin to learn how to darn our own socks.

Darned patches never quite matched the things they patched but **they certainly extended the lifetime of the clothing.**

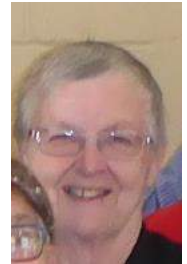
In these covid times, as week after week each of us loses beloved family members and longtime friends to the virus, it often feels **as if holes are appearing in the fabric of our personal lives.** The deaths of long time friends leave gaping holes; the deaths of beloved relatives break our hearts. No loss happens without leaving its hole.

But, each of us only has one life so **we each need to reach out to mend it.** Mourn our losses, yes; but, never give up on life. **Let new friends in to share your life; accept new family members; rejoice in babies who become part of your fabric. Begin to patiently weave others into your life's circle.**

In other words, pick up your darning mushroom and start weaving new life into your new circle.

Take courage! Ours is a God who is always making all things new.

Olga McKellar



HELP OUR IMAGINATIONS!

Creation is inclusive: you, me, the youngsters next door, the honey bees, the trees - all the biodiversity of our living earth. **AND we are all interconnected:**

We need stories which expand our imagination of how to care for each other and for creation. Stories to help us move toward each other, to help us navigate our differences, to deepen our friendships and our capacity to disagree, to help us be truly alive.

We invite you to share your personal stories or poems or pictures about yourself, your community of faith, about caring for creation. Please submit to oxfconnections@execulink.ca.

CONNECTIONS will publish stories or poems. It helps our imagination.

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

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THE TRC (TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION) AND BILL C-15

The adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was at the heart of the Final Report of the TRC and Calls to Action to the Church.

BILL C-15 is an important first step in Canada's adoption of UNDRIP (United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People) legislation. On May 4th the **Canadian Council of Church's Forum for Intercultural Leadership and Learning** hosted a **webinar with former TRC Commissioners**, Murray Sinclair, Wilton Littlechild, and Marie Wilson. They discussed the legislation and **clearly asked people to write ASAP to the Senate to pass this legislation**. Over 2000 people have already watched the recording of [this webinar](#). The purpose of Bill C-15 is to review and assess all the existing legislation which is impacted by this important legislation. This work should really have been done earlier. It is important that it be passed before the next election. Details about sending a letter, the template, and addresses can be [found here](#).

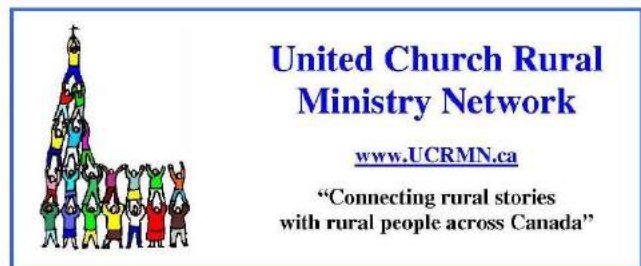
Faith in the Declaration is a coalition of Canadian faith houses and faith organizations working together to support the implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect.

Aldo Leopold



Nurturing a narrative of hope, joy, and transformation.



You can check out this website <https://ucrmn.ca> for recent workshop videos: **Ashes & Resurrection: How Covid days are Shaping us for Newness and Practical Technology for Rural Churches**. To subscribe to their eNews, email editor@UCRMN.ca.



The Social and Ecological Justice Network of the Antler River Watershed Region connects people who are passionate about social justice concerns. Their website, <https://arwsej.ca>, is a **valuable resource of the members' interest in 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.

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FOR THE LOVE OF CREATION

Join the 2021 Faith in Action campaign from now until October 4, 2021 to make a pledge to reduce your household greenhouse gas emissions, stand in solidarity with justice seeking communities, and show your support for increased federal climate action.

[More information here](#)

It is time for us to talk with each other about the climate crisis. As a grandmother, a Christian minister and an engineer, I love my grandchildren and want the best possible future for them; I get the science about the precarious state of our climate; I believe that we are part of God's world – and that it is imperative that we alter our ways. We need to help each other to move away from our reliance on fossil fuels and adapt to a new future.

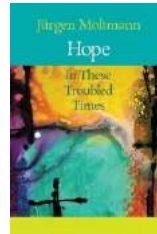
MM



Have you seen **the "Stop The Dump" signs posted throughout the Thames Valley?** This photo shows the location of the proposed landfill. Check out the OPAL(Oxford People against Landfill) [website](#) and [Opal Facebook](#) page for information. .

BOOK REPORT: HOPE IN THESE TROUBLED TIMES 2019,

by Jurgen Moltmann



Troubles abound in our world today as we face the fallout from the climate, the pandemic and the economy. The human species and our planet is at risk. Moltmann, noted German theologian, is stalwart in his pursuit of the question **"What do Christians and Christian faith have to offer?"**

From his own experience and studies, Moltmann reflects on the wide range of the ecological challenge, interfaith relations, solidarity and compassion, and terrorism in the name of religion. So far, I have found it to be a fascinating read as he explores the theological issues raised by these concerns and the roots of our difficulties in 'modernity' itself. Moltmann says **'Christian hope draws the promised future of God into the present day and prepares the present day for its future.'**

The World Council of Churches helped Jurgen Moltmann celebrate his 95th birthday by making his book available for **free on-line for a limited time. Find it [here](#).** MM

An excellent short video about the interconnectedness of creation, scripture, images of God, humans, faith and hope.

Rev Dr. Jessica Heatherington, eco-theologian, is interviewed by Rev. Mike Perrault of Rothwell UC, Ottawa.

[A Newbies' Guide to Starting to Think about Environmental Theology](#)

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A Non-traditional Blessing

May God bless you with discontent with easy answers, half-truths, superficial relationships, so that you will live from deep within your heart.

May God bless you with anger at injustice, oppression, abuse, and exploitation of people, so that you will work for justice, equality, and peace.

May God bless you with tears to shed for those who suffer from pain, rejection, starvation and war, so that you will reach out your hand to comfort them and to change their pain to joy.

May God bless you with the foolishness to think you can make a difference in this world, so that you will do the things which others tell you cannot be done.

If you have the courage to accept these blessings, then God will also bless you with:

happiness—because you will know that you have made life better for others

inner peace—because you will have worked to secure an outer peace for others

laughter—because your heart will be light

faithful friends—because they will recognize your worth as a person.

These blessings are yours—not for the asking, but for the giving—from One who wants to be your companion, our God, who lives and reigns, forever and ever. Amen.

Sister Ruth Fox, OSB, Chaplain at Dickinson State University. In the 1980's, Sister Ruth offered this unique prayer at the Graduation Breakfast of a religiously diverse group.



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

Operation Sharing's Annual Report and Financial Report (2020) can be reviewed [here](#). Covid has been especially hard on those living on the margins – often alone. Yet the community support has been gracious and generous.

Questions can be addressed via email to the President, [Marilyn Schmiedl](#).

Woodstock: Bullwinkle's Eatery and Hospitality Training Centre

College Avenue UC. Takeout lunches available on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays (from noon to 1 pm).

Oxford County:

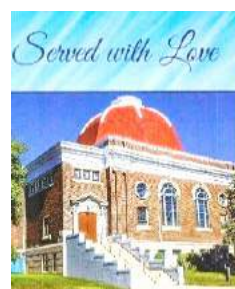
Food for Friends Please support this program with 25 cents each time you shop at supporting grocery stores in Woodstock and Ingersoll.

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



A homeless shelter, serving all of Oxford County at Old St.

Paul's Anglican Church in Woodstock. Free of charge for those 16 and up.



St. Paul's United Church

88 Bidwell Street, Tillsonburg

Saturday Community Kitchen meals continue from 11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Hot meal will be provided. Served in containers to go from the parking lot

at the bottom of the ramp to St. Paul's church. No seats and no washrooms available. Two entrances to parking lot off Bidwell Street.

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OXFORD UNITED REFUGEE SUPPORT COMMITTEE (OURS)

PRAYER SUPPORT AND ACTION NEEDED NOW:



It is distressing to know that the lives of our 6 refugees in Tigray, Ethiopia are in such danger as they await entry into Canada.

They are not alone. Thousands are also at risk. **Amnesty International** currently reports on the dire situation. "African and other world leaders must urgently speak out and do more to stem the ferocious tide of human rights and international humanitarian law violations in **the armed conflict that has now raged for six months in Ethiopia's Tigray region...**

Since the fighting broke out on 4 November 2020, thousands of civilians have been killed, hundreds of thousands of people have been internally displaced within Tigray, and 63,000 refugees have fled to Sudan. **Amnesty International** and other organizations have documented a string of serious human rights violations that include war crimes and likely crimes against humanity. There are also numerous credible reports of women and girls being subjected to sexual violence, including gang rape by Ethiopian and Eritrean soldiers."

Let us ALL be in solidarity with members of Amnesty International and call on Ethiopian authorities to ease the life-saving work of the humanitarian organizations. Join the OURS COMMITTEE in sending an e-mail now asking Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed for immediate full humanitarian access to Tigray.

WORSHIP SERVICES IN OXFORD

Because of Covid, streaming services only are available at present.

Check the following re specifics:

[College Ave UC](#)

[Dundas St. UC](#)

Hebron UC - rsstock@execulink.com

Innerkip UC

<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLByPBZsncJI4bIMphIVVbRuBZX86mcoj>

[Kintore/Brooksdale UC](#)

[Knox UC, Embro](#)

[Mt Elgin UC](#)

[Norwich UC](#)

[Peace UC, Plattsville](#) Also on Rogers TV channel 20

[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

[CONNECTIONS – News and Views of Oxford County United Churches](#)

Next Publication: Wednesday,

May 12, 2021

SUBMISSIONS DUE:

Noon Friday May 7, 2021

CO-EDITORS:

Marg Murray and Glen Wright

To add or remove names, email

oxfconnections@execulink.com

Submissions and feedback welcome.



Rachel Wright age 6 yrs