

CONNECTIONS

News and Views of Oxford County United Churches

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Being human, being Christian

Increasingly as our world changes around us, we must adapt. But we mustn't forget what it means to be fully human, to care for each other and to care for the earth. Our stories this month are about being human and Christian.

OUR CONTEXT (pg 2) of our Communities of Faith – covenanting service of Jane Baxter with Princeton-Etonia P.C. and Antler River Watershed Region, a guest column on our alienation, on line resources for COP26, Operation Sharing prepares for Christmas and their fall newsletter.

JESUS' WAY (pg 5) details our **November 17 session with Ecotheologian Rev Dr Jessica Hetherington**, the lawn chair sit-in at in Woodstock, and using the Medicine Wheel to examine our lives.

GOD'S LOVE (pg 7) - birds were here before us, a memory from a visitor from Germany, and what we do, we hold in our hearts. **Ads for a Music Theatre in Thamesford this week Nov 12 to 14th** and a Bazaar, Nov 20 at St Paul's in Tillsonburg. We're grateful to Robyn Marie Butt for offering her poem Winterhorse for Advent (pg 12).



Marg Murray co-editor

Ecotheology

Climate Justice

Join us for second evening with Ecotheologian & United Church minister, Rev. Dr. Jessica Hetherington. We find hope and are transformed in remembering 'that we are creatures of Creation'. Rev. Jessica will preach a sermon (recorded for future use), describe her process, and answer your questions.

Nov 17th, 2021 – 7pm to 8:15pm – Zoom

Please contact Rev. Doug Peck at
rev.douglas.peck@gmail.com
or call / text 519-872-6011

This event is hosted by
Oxford United Ministries

Finding hope through faith in a time of ecological crisis.

Rev. Dr. Jessica Hetherington



FOOD FOR THE SOUL

More Than Benches

It's November. You can feel the chill in the air. By now you may have heard that the Woodstock Council with a 5 to 1 vote has removed all downtown benches and picnic tables including those at the Museum Square. They have also hired two guards at \$50,000 to make sure those, often homeless, who like to gather in the park, don't.

November this year marks the beginning of Advent, that special time of the year when we make an extra effort to reach out to the marginalized as part of the preparation leading up to the celebrating of Christ's birth. We are also aware that poverty is much more than a one-month experience.

Is it possible to eliminate poverty? It is but not easily. We are halfway there. The churches, the community and all levels of government are involved in addressing the problem. We need governments to do more which means higher taxes.

Russian philosopher Nicolas Berdyaev once said, **"Bread for myself is a material problem. Bread for my neighbour is a spiritual one."** That would make **voting for higher taxes a spiritual act.**

But back to the benches. The news of the bench removal brought to mind Pete Seeger's haunting ballad "Where have all the Flowers gone?" We could substitute the word benches for flowers. "Where have all the benches gone, long time passing. Gone to storage everyone. When will they ever learn? When will they ever learn?"

There may be a problem in the downtown that needs to be addressed. It is just that

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if we are going to spend \$50,000, there should be a more hospitable way for the Friendly City to solve it.

There is no small irony if they decide to put up Christmas lights in the park where this year there will be no room to sit down. Or they could add a sign, "No Vacancy" like in first century Bethlehem.

There is a parable from Matthew's gospel (25:31) where Jesus said, "I was hungry, and you gave me food. I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me," The people said, "We don't remember. . ." Jesus then said, "I was the one you were helping."

It is something that I will remember when I see the Christmas lights in the downtown park, a park and a city, sad to say, that has lost far more than its benches.

Glen Wright



FORMER OXFORD PRESBYTERY MEMBERS ON THE MOVE

Rev Doug Peck is moving from Kintore-Brooksdale UC to Lambeth UC in February. 12 years ago, Doug joined Oxford Presbytery. Congratulations and blessings to Doug.

Rev Stan Stanhope recently moved to the Maples Home for Seniors in Tavistock and would welcome visitors. Call ahead (519-655-2344).

Letters to the Editor

Editor's note: An apology was extended and accepted. MM

Avondale UC Tillsonburg is not on the church info list. We meet Sundays at 10:30 with covid protocols. All welcome. Together, Avondale UC and Otterville UC are looking for a new minister. Trained lay supply are filling in. We returned to our beautifully decorated sanctuary the first Sunday in October. *George Baird*

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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. The climate crisis and Covid pandemic have exposed fault lines which we can no longer ignore. We are thinking human parts of Creation and can make connections between our personal and collective lives in our faith journey.

OUR CONTEXT



COMINGS AND GOINGS AROUND OXFORD

CONGREGATIONS SEEKING MINISTERIAL LEADERSHIP:

*We hold in our hearts and prayers **all** our communities of faith (see prayer cycle page 7) as we live out God's mission - in particular:*

- **Avondale UC** (Tillsonburg) and Otterville UC interview candidates.
- **Hickson UC** – no update
- **Beachville (Sweaburg)** - West Oxford Pastoral Charge are setting up a Search Team.
- **Foldens UC** to worship with Sweaburg – West Oxford.
- **Burgessville UC.** no update

COVENANTING SERVICE

Sunday Nov 14 between Jane Baxter, Princeton Etonia Pastoral Charge and Antler River Watershed Region.



Facebook page and website.

The Annual General Meeting

is Wednesday, **November 24 at 7:30 pm.** This will be held virtually.

E-mail camptannerinc@gmail.com for the Google Meet link.

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Dyane Matthews is a keen observer, well known for her thought-provoking questions. She promises a follow-up article! A former member of Oxford Presbytery and Faith UC, Dyane lives in Beamsville with her partner Rev. Judith Gilliland.

Covid: Our Summons

Is the real issue facing us during this difficult time not how we are coping with this virus, or the vaccination options available but rather has it revealed **our alienation from one other and the Divine mystery?**

Has this pandemic exposed the weakness of our civilization; the decline and decaying of absolutes; our care of and for one another. Is the refusal to adhere to government requests, the resistance to accept the information science is offering and the reluctance to consider the welfare and health of one another a symptom of the deterioration of our society's core values? **Perhaps the significant dynamic in this failing is that we no longer recognize and feel the interconnectedness between one another; have ceased to accept our interdependence upon one another and are not committed to the responsibility of and for one another.**

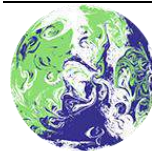
People are angry, frustrated, fearful. Frequent visits with loved ones have been interrupted; we have had to wear masks that are often uncomfortable, and some are hesitant to go out. Several folks are fearful of what might happen in the near future regarding their freedom. In essence our normal way of life has been interrupted. The pillars that have sustained our society during our history as a people are crumbling. However, **is now "for such a time as this" that we as the people of God must confront this attitude.** Is now the time for the church

to be prophetic; to name the true evil in our society; call it out and then dedicate our energies and resources to develop strategies to overcome and transform it.

Remembering that as "the people of God" we have been called to co-create the "kin-dom" here on earth. The invitation issued by Jesus was that we are to live with integrity; to exercise justice, express mercy, grant forgiveness and show love for all.

As faith communities we are to demonstrate moral leadership; to live out the message of the "gospel" that we are not alone and that all people matter, especially the least, the most vulnerable amongst us. It is our task to demonstrate to our society that there is a different way of living; from **deep conviction not superficial image; from conscious choice not habit and from an of economy of love not profit.**

Dyane Matthews



UN CLIMATE
CHANGE
CONFERENCE
UK 2021
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ITALY

COP26
Oct 31 – Nov 12
Glasgow,
Scotland

Mia Mottley, Prime Minister of Barbados pleads for strong action to **save the islands.** The National Observer reports [here](#) the promises of Canada: to stop financing for fossil fuel projects **overseas;** to slash emissions of methane; and to invest in clean technology and help developing countries adapt to changing climate. But as [Karri Munn-Venn of Citizens for Public Justice](#), notes, Canada hasn't kept previous promises. **Still her hope rests on the work being done by the youth, and local groups.** Daily highlights from the COP26 Ecumenical Delegation are [here](#).

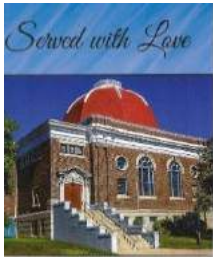
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St Paul's UC, Tillsonburg



88 Bidwell Street
Community Kitchen
Hot Take-out Lunch
Every Saturday from
11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Serving from ramp
entrance.



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

Operation Sharing's [Fall newsletter](#) has details about their Christmas programs (**gift cards for Christmas Place**) and the **Coats for Kids and Adults program** (need appointment). Years in the making, Eric Schmiedl, the newsletter editor just completed his science fiction/fantasy trilogy, *Realities: Continental War!* Students needing **tutoring in math and English** can get help from their Extended Family program. Get full details in their newsletter [here](#).

From their website - **Coats for Kids and Families need snow pants and snowsuits for toddlers and infants size 24 months and up.**

Additional Support:

You can support **Food for Friends with 25 cents** at the participating grocery store checkouts. Details of the need to fill the Operation Sharing's **Taxable Items Cupboard** can be found on page 5 of [October CONNECTIONS](#) or call Bonnie at 519-529-3361 with questions. Homelessness is a harsh reality anytime but especially winter. **The Inn of Oxford** offers temporary shelter and needs supplies, gift cards, clothing. Details also found on page 5 of [October CONNECTIONS](#) or reach Darryl Watson at 519-537-0336.

Woodstock: Bullwinkle's Eatery & Hospitality Training Centre

\$ DONATIONS \$\$

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.

CHRISTMAS PLACE

Operation Sharing, The Children's Aid Society and Power of HOPE have combined efforts to bring an enhanced Christmas Place this Holiday season.

Families in need should pre-register to receive gift packs for children up to 18 years old. Details including Registration forms are on their [Facebook page](#) or [here](#).

Those able to give monetary or gift cards (preferably Walmart or Giant Tiger) can bring the donations to College Avenue United Church, parking lot entrance.



See Current Programs and Possibilities 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.

Thursdays, Nov 11, 25, Dec 2 + 9

Creation Story & Oral History (Online Event)

Registration Closes November 10th at 11pm

Based upon traditional knowledge and oral history of the Anishinaabeg, or otherwise known as the Ojibwe, of Southern Ontario, this demonstrates another side of history.

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*Our faith journey in Jesus' Way directs us to hear the stories of those on the fringe of power - the vulnerable, the dispossessed and the suffering (both us and the rest of God's creatures). Aware of our privilege gained from **power over** and the need to have a **sustainable future for all**, we work for a just transition **both individually** with each other to make change on small things and link them together; and **collectively** to make systemic changes.*

JESUS' WAY

Changes to our collective behaviour are necessary to affect changes in our climate. And where is God in all of this? Have we misunderstood our scriptures? What can I do? These questions are important. Oxford United Ministries is pleased to offer the following 2 opportunities to learn more about ecotheology and get the makings of 2 worship services for use later.

Rev Dr. Jessica Hetherington

returns to help us sort through what it means to be human and one of the creatures of the earth. How we think of God affects how we behave toward each other and our home on earth. This critical thinking is needed during this ecological crisis. In practicing our discipleship, we find hope; we are transformed.



Join us on

Nov. 17, 2021: 7 – 8:15 pm – Zoom.

"Reorienting ourselves as creatures of the earth"

Rev. Jessica will preach a sermon (to be recorded for future use); she will describe her process for writing her sermon and answer our questions! Those who register early will receive the scripture lesson. All participants will receive additional helps for a

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worship service (scripture, prayer, suggestion for hymns and benediction.)

Contact Rev. Doug Peck at rev.douglas.peck@gmail.com or call/text 519-872-6011 to obtain Zoom details.

Rev Jessica will also return on



Wed. Dec. 15, 7:00 pm
"The ongoing journey of being a new disciple"

These sessions are free. We acknowledge and appreciate the support of the Oxford Legacy Fund.

If you missed our Sept 22 interview with Rev Jessica, you can [see video here.](#) MM



"There is no way to peace along the way of safety. For peace must be dared. It is itself the great venture and can never be safe. Peace is the opposite of security. To demand guarantees is to want to protect oneself. Peace means giving oneself completely to God's commandment. Wanting no security, but in faith and obedience laying the destiny of the nations in the hand of almighty God. Not trying to direct it for selfish purposes. Battles are won not with weapons, but with God. They are won when the way leads to the cross."

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Fano, Denmark, 1934

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

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LONG TERM CARE – CRISIS

The government of Ontario introduced legislation (October 28, 2021) called the NEW LTC Act which sounds hopeful but does not increase care to 4 hours per resident per day until 2025; drops the requirement that the government promote the delivery of long-term care by non-profit organizations.

The Ontario Health Coalition provides a detailed analysis [here](#).

In other words, we need to continue to monitor and advocate for better care.

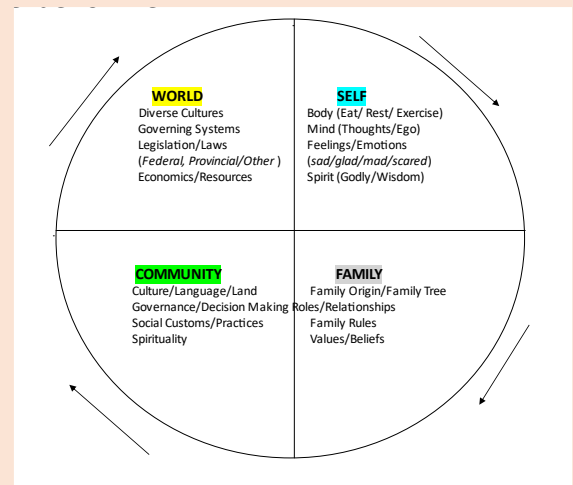
HOMELESSNESS IN OXFORD



On November 4, about 100 people gathered in lawn chairs in Museum Square in Woodstock to protest the removal of benches and picnic tables from the downtown area. Some held signs "What's Missing? Benches! Compassion!" Some spoke with Heart FM from Oxford Coalition for Social Justice and Unifor 636 ([listen here](#)). There is no easy solution. We need to work together to end homelessness. [The Oxford Housing Action Collaborative](#) (OHAC) is an alliance of community partners to end homelessness in Oxford. **Our church buildings are community hubs and real estate assets. Could we make better use of them for people who are homeless? Housing for all is an important choice for us to make.**

SIX NATIONS SHARING CIRCLE (formerly Grandmother's Tea)

The October Sharing Circle led by Gloria A Cook, an elder from Manitoba, was **profoundly valuable**. Using the Medicine Wheel, Gloria helped us understand the traditional way of living a healthy life. Everything which Gloria said was consistent with my knowledge of having mature healthy relationships. **First, she showed us the 4 components of the Medicine Wheel for the Order of Life: self, family, community and world.** Movement around the wheel gives a whole picture.



Next, she delved deeper into Our Whole Self: My Mind, My Feelings, My Body, My Spirit. It is a powerful and ancient teaching about life. ([See here.](#))

Gloria now works in her local community on the process of reconciliation. She joined us by Zoom!

For those interested in attending the next Sharing Circle on Monday, November 29 1:30-3:30 pm, please contact Rhonda Johns at Nations Uniting nations.uniting@gmail.com for Zoom details.

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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. We act with integrity.

GOD'S LOVE

-BECOMING HUMAN

PRAYER CYCLES

We are invited to pray each week for a Community of Faith in Oxford and in the Antler River Watershed Region. Prayer is sharing our concerns, joys and work. Supporting each other, we are not alone in our ministries.

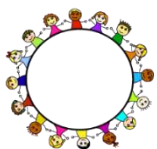
For Oxford United Churches: list is [here](#).

Nov. 7 College Ave (Wdsk) Lloyd Bennett
Nov. 14 Innerkip Karen Willis
Nov. 21 Knox (Embryo), Susan Cole
Nov. 28 Burgessville, Lloyd Bennet PCS
Dec. 5 Mt Elgin, Lori Minler
Dec. 12 St Paul's, Karlene Brown-Palmer
Dec. 19 Avondale (T'burg), Judy Campbell PCS

For ARW Region:

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

Nov 7 [Woodstock: Dundas Street](#)
Nov 14 [London: Rowntree Memoria](#)
Nov. 21 [Bothwell-Wabash](#)
Nov. 28 [Dexter-Port Stanley](#)



PRAYER CHAIN

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

FOR CHILDREN OF ALL AGES BIRDS

In November, the day after the first snow, we put up the bird feeder. For most of the year the birds are on their own, but in winter we give them a little help.



What is truly amazing about birds is they were here millions of years before we were. The birds we see came from the time of the dinosaurs that lived from 100 to 66 million years ago. These bird ancestors were small, had feathers but instead of beaks they had mouths and teeth. These birds survived when their larger sister and brother dinosaurs didn't.

The birds with beaks evolved or were created in the last forty million years. **We can use the word "evolved" when we speak of science, or the word "created" if we want to use a faith word.** That work is still going on. We refer to that in The New Creed that is sometimes repeated in worship when we say the words, **"We believe in God who has created and is creating. . ."**

[Click here](#) to watch a bird video submitted by Bob McTavish (St. David's UC). What a riot of colour and sound! All that in the last forty million years, and if we manage to save our planet, there will be more birds to come.

Now isn't that awesome?

GW

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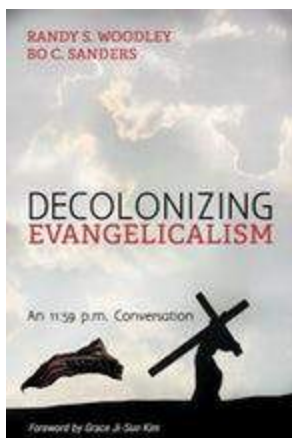
FYI

Interests, Informs or Inspires!
READERS share ...the fiction you are reading, the movies you are watching or the songs you are singing!

TWO FORMER ADVERSARIES OFFER TIPS ON BUILDING BRIDGES

Ruth and Maurice Francis (St Paul's UC Tillsonburg) brought to our attention an inspiring article in the October-November issue of Guideposts. It is a story about an environmental lawyer who was always shutting down lumber businesses meeting someone who made a living from cutting down trees. **They began a meeting of both sides to work out their differences and found new life for the forest as well as for the lumber industry.** Watch [this short video](#) of them sharing the how of it! If you have that issue of Guideposts, it is on pages 51-56.

MM



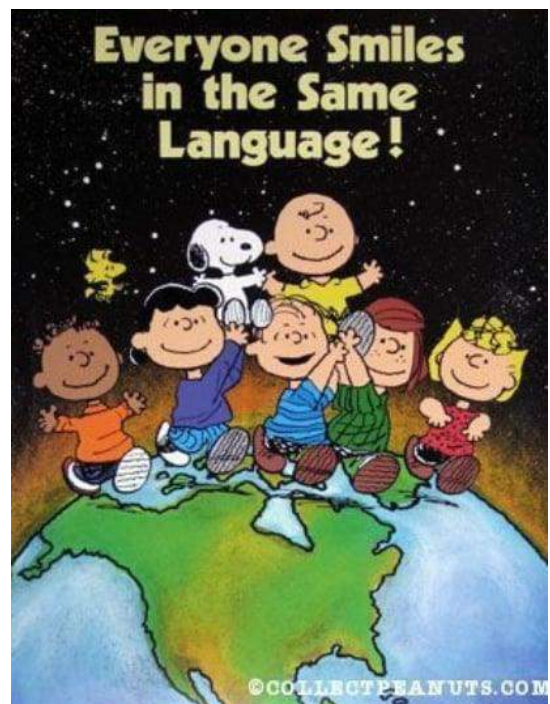
Decolonizing Evangelicalism by Randy Woodley & BO Sanders. An excellent and easy read about postcolonial theology both from the indigenous theology and academic theory to change the conversation about following Jesus today. It helped me understand how much of my faith is bound to my culture.

MM

"How to Be Alone" by Pádraig Ó Tuama, A Poetry Film by Leo G Franchi is an animated interpretation of this well-loved poem by this Irish poet and theologian. **Ó Tuama** has been director of Corrymeela the established Irish retreat centre known for building community amidst conflict. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HgZT6UJocRs>



Want to connect with others about social and ecological justice issues? Join **the Social and Ecological Justice Network of the Antler River Watershed Region with others who are passionate about social justice concerns.** Their website, <https://arwsej.ca>, is a valuable resource in Climate Justice/Crisis, Poverty, Boomer Spirituality, Middle East Justice, Canadian Foodgrains Bank, United Church Women, Right Relations and Mozambique.



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DAGMAR WERNER AND US

It was the 9th of November in 1989. We were living in London. Our guest was the



Rev. Dagmar Werner, a Lutheran Pastor serving in Communist East Berlin. She was one of the guests of London Conference the year that pastors from other denominations and

countries were invited to the Conference to tell us what it was like to be a Christian where they lived.

Pat (*in picture above with Dagmar*) and I were asked if she could stay at our home during the few days that she was in the city.

Dagmar and her husband were both Pastors. The church that she served consisted of about 20 families. Dagmar and her husband had refused to join the Communist Party although being members of the party meant certain privileges. Not joining the Party was a faith decision.

On the Thursday of her week with us she was invited to visit some of the churches in London. Not much was happening except a fashion show, to raise money, being held at one of the large downtown churches. She attended and said that she wanted some time to explore the city after the event.

That happened to be the day of the announcement that the Berlin Wall was coming down. We could hardly wait for Dagmar to return so we could share the good news.

When Dagmar returned, she was obviously upset. Before we could tell her about the Berlin wall, she said that when she left the church, **she was stopped by a man who asked her for money. She said, "I did not know what to do. I**

looked at him and started to cry. I felt so badly. We do not have homeless people in East Berlin." Then she added, **"It must be so hard to be a Christian in your country."**

There we were face to face, both feeling sorry for each other. I almost forgot to tell her about the wall and when I did, she said **"Oh no, now we will have poor people in our country."** She was right. A few years later I remember reading that the Salvation Army had been invited into East Berlin to help needy people. Also, the advances Mikhail Gorbachev made in meeting the needs of the poor would not last. Now 13% of people in Russia live below the poverty level, slightly more than Canada's 11%.

It is difficult to be a Christian when there is so much need. We also know that walls do not work. Sooner or later they come down. We know that Germany opened its borders and took in more than a million refugees from Syria. It is what countries in the "free world" do.



The world will have changed for Dagmar and her family as it has for us, but **I am sure she is giving her time and energy in what we all see as part of our task – living and working for the world's healing.**

In that difficult task we are not alone.

It is God's world. That gives us immense hope.

GW



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

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WHAT WILL YOU WEAR TO YOUR FUNERAL?

Dark November; Hallowe'en; Death; **Costumes!** I have been jolted back to a time early in our ministry when Peter and I lived in the manse in Courtland, ON, with our 3 children: Darren, Neil and Shelley. They were all 3 preschoolers, and **the manse was adjacent to the cemetery**, separated only by a woven wire fence. **Every week there was at least one funeral which ended in the cemetery and my children found them fascinating.**

They would stand glued to the fence to watch every detail of the ritual and listen to the cadences of the liturgies very very carefully.

Once the people had left, the kids retired to the patch of garden behind our garage, carefully dug a suitable grave in the sandy soil, **then busily re-enacted the most recent funeral.** One boy would play Funeral Director, the other Minister. Shelley was always the deceased. She dressed up in old curtains and lay in the grave with her hands neatly folded and her eyes closed. The Boys' performances became polished and very credible. They did not know any of the words, of course, but their cadences and gestures were great. We and many of our friends were quietly impressed and vividly amused.

Thinking this month of their play acting, I wondered what I might like to wear for my own funeral, what clothes, which rituals, which liturgies. I mean, we each take nothing but ourselves with us to death, but we do not leave this world empty handed. We take with us what we hold in our hearts: negative, angry thoughts, or peaceful, loving ones. Thanksgivings and blessings, or hostility and hatred.

What do you want to wear to your funeral? *Olga McKellar*



Westminster United Church presents a special livestream performance of 'All Together Now!', a revue featuring fifteen songs from popular Broadway musicals like Annie, Mamma Mia, Newsies, Into the Woods and more! *All Together Now* celebrates theatre and promotes how we can all be together even when we're apart. **Tickets can be purchased to livestream in your living room, or to watch the livestream in the sanctuary at Westminster.**

Please visit makingconnexions.com/show or call 519-285-3212 for more details!

Virtual Performances:	\$20.00/viewer
Friday, November 12th - 7:30 PM	Directed by Mark Marshall
Saturday, November 13th - 7:30 PM	Proceeds from this fundraiser will support the
Sunday, November 14th - 7:30 PM	Future Vision Fund and the UCC Healing Fund.

**For tickets and info visit us at
makingconnexions.com/show or 519-285-3212**

Presented through special arrangement with Music Theatre International (MTI). All authorized performance materials are also supplied by MTI (mtishows.com).



I regretted buying the Escher GPS.

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St. Paul's United Church UCW
2021 Online
**Frosty Fair
Bazaar**
Saturday, November 20th
8:00 a.m. to 3 p.m.

To access items go to
Facebook, Frosty Fair
Bazaar
Instructions for buying and
pick-up will be given on
Facebook.
Items may be viewed now on
the website. More items
will be added each day.

Crafts, Knitting,
Sewing, Christmas
decorations and
greenery and so
much more!



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



[ARWRC webpage](#)

[Facebook page](#)

Their most recent newsletter, November 4, 2021 contains the highlights of the Antler River Watershed Regional Fall meeting including a pdf of the reports to the Region from the Executive and Commissions and can be found [here](#).



WORSHIP SERVICES IN OXFORD

Check with individual churches re specifics of in-person worship (masks, sign in, social distancing) or availability of streaming services:

Avondale UC, Tillsonburg

avondaleuc@gmail.com

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

peaceplattsecretary@outlook.com

St. David's UC, Woodstock

St. Paul's UC, Tillsonburg

Trinity UC, Ingersoll

Westminster UC, Thamesford

Willis UC, Drumbo

drumbocharge@hotmail.com also Sunday services by conference call.

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Next Publication: Wednesday,

December 8, 2021

Submissions welcome and are due:

Noon Friday December 3, 2021

CO-EDITORS:

Marg Murray and Glen Wright

To add or remove names, email

oxfconnections@execulink.com

Submissions and feedback welcome.

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website

oxfordunitedministries.ca

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WINTERHORSE

A great white horse broods
paused as snow slants from her dapples
nostrils flared scarlet, muzzle etched against cedars.
Her birds flit in the edge of the woods
and all are preparing: the fields
have pulled on her gift of a white blanket, day's light
is going bluer, stars brighten
as her trees stand alert. She breathes the time awake
and watches
over the wild things without a name
over flakes and gusting wind
over the ponds' freezing
pale-crystal shards at creek's edge. And air billows now
from her bunching shoulders, snow plumes from her knees
as she trots, circling our days
each deep hoofprint marking a place
where fieldmice hearts may shelter and find rest.

O great white horse
of winter, float your sweeping tail along our busyness
let swish from it some freshening current
toss snowdancers whirling from your mane
and whinny, whinny the month's joy
to greet the Babe our brother. He comes
this Child for whom we stir
leaning into your welcome. Help us grow still like hanging branches
to shelter the Holy Family. See, they approach.
Nicker greetings. Snort as we wade your drifts
towards our kneeling, call out our year-end praises
into your moonlit nights.

O great white horse of winter
weave green boughs, red berries
over our questing dreams:
huff out blue morning sky, low clouds, and wheel
sweeping your snow-wake like angel's wings –
great white horse, pacing
in frostfall a pattern to guide our weeks
great white horse, galloping-in
our Christ's ascendant season.

by Robyn Marie Butt

