

CONNECTIONS

News and Views of Oxford County United Churches

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BECOMING HUMAN

We are all born to help each other no matter where we are. **Awareness of 'here'** starts in our mother's arms. It changes as we learn to care for others and nature and to leave no one on the margins. **We can be at different places but not indifferent to pain and destruction** as you will see in this month's stories.

OUR CONTEXT (p 2) of congregations in the search process for new leadership; words of wisdom from Pastor Lloyd Bennet; Camp Tanner opens registration; congregations open their hearts to refugees; World Day of Prayer connects; rejoicing at the spirit of Oxfordites supporting the Coldest Night of the Year.

The stories In Christ (pg 8) prompt us with the Give it Up for the Earth campaign for Lent; the last in the series of Ecotheology and Discipleship with Rev Dr Jessica Hetherington on March 16; guest column on the increasing threat of privatization of hospitals; and questions about long-term care beds in Oxford.

A NEW CREATION (pg 10) prayer cycles; Barn Swallows; Traffic Lights and Life; Lent Activities; Science (Oil + Ukraine + IPCC); General Council news and a book review.



Marg Murray co-editor

Ecotheology and Discipleship

Join Rev. Doug Peck for our last session: **Being Church in the World: Collective Discipleship with Ecotheologian & United Church minister, Rev. Dr. Jessica Hetherington!** Rev. Jessica will preach (recorded for future use), teach and discuss with us!

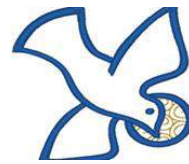
March 16, 2022 - 7:00 to 8:15pm - Zoom
To register, please contact Lynne Dunlop at lyndunlop@execulink.com

See the free Ecotheology and Discipleship preaching series at <https://tc.churchwebcanada.ca/oxford-united-ministries>

Hosted by Oxford United Ministries
Funded by Oxford Legacy Fund.

Rev. Dr. Jessica Hetherington

Finding hope through faith in a time of ecological crisis.



FOOD FOR THE SOUL

The Language of Love - Part Three Justice

"Deep Spirituality, Bold Discipleship, Daring Justice" is the mission statement issued by the United Church's General Council. I like it. It is both descriptive and prescriptive even without verbs; **a call to action in just six words.** It reminded me of another six-word mandate, this time with verbs, spoken in the eighth century BCE by the prophet Micah. (6:8) This directive was the answer to Micah's question to God, "Then what shall we do?" **The answer to Micah: act justly, love mercy and walk humbly.**

Justice is common to both statements. Moreover, we are witnessing in Ukraine the greatest injustice the world has known since 1994 in Rwanda when 800,000 people were slaughtered in 100 days. So, **justice, which is part of the language of love, is our focus.**

The pivotal experience in the Hebrew faith was the Exodus. After four centuries of oppression under the Egyptian Pharaohs, most of that time as slaves, there was **an undivided commitment to establish a just society; a community where there was no oppressed and no poor people.**

This plan is outlined in Leviticus 25:1-39 and in Deuteronomy 15:1-12.

Every 7 years all debts would be cancelled giving people a chance to start over. The land was to be left uncultivated in the seventh year, giving the land a time to recover.

Every 50 years the land would be returned to its original owners. **Land**

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was not to be “permanently sold” because the land really belonged to God. This was a justice of giving back; a justice where all people would have what they needed.

There is no evidence that this plan became a reality for very long, but **the idea of this new community where needs would be met and people could live without fear would persist.** This new community was the central theme of the prophets. Micah described this community as a place “where everyone will sit under their own vine and their own fig tree and no one will make them afraid. (Micah 4:4) Isaiah spoke of swords being turned into plough shares and spears into pruning hooks.

Jesus’ ministry was a ministry of restoration; of giving back what had been lost or taken away; of bringing back to the centre those who had been relegated to the margins. His phrase for this new community was “the Kingdom of God”. It was a community that would emerge if God ruled the world. He set about to build this community in the shadow of empire-building Rome. Thousands, who resisted, including Jesus, were crucified.

This month we begin **the season of Lent.** Our thoughts this year will be drawn to those in Ukraine who resist, at the cost of their lives, the empire-building of Vladimir Putin. Our prayers include prayers for some expression of justice that will stop this madness. **We are in need of “daring justice” but not so daring that we are plunged into a nuclear war.**

Is there hope? In the short term, further destruction and death seem to be inevitable. Our lament will continue. However, empires and their builders

eventually will fail when confronted by those who seek justice. The universe leans slightly toward new life. That is the good news! At least that’s how I see it.

Blessings. *Glen Wright co-editor*



*Our newsletter is separated into **Our Context, In Christ and A New Creation.** As faithful thinking human parts of Creation, we seek to make better 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 cycles on page 11) as we live out God’s mission.*

Congregations In Search Mode – Accepting Applications:

- **Avondale UC** (Tillsonburg) and Otterville UC
- **Beachville Pastoral Charge** (Sweaburg UC + West Oxford UC)

Congregations Working Through Steps of Search Mode:

- **College Ave. UC**
- **Kintore and Brooksdale UC**
- **Foldens UC** has a Shared Ministry Agreement with Beachville PC.
- **Burgessville UC** has LLWLs.

Rev. Margaret Trapnell has been appointed short term supply at Dundas UC until August 31.

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MOVING ON –

TO NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE

Lloyd Bennet, recently retired from College Ave UC, is moving!

(Pictured with his wife Pam)



Thinking about Change

"Nothing is permanent except change" I 'Googled' it to see that it was first spoken by Heraclitus – a Greek philosopher from back in the sixth century BCE, back when the Babylonians were sacking Jerusalem.

Talk about Jerusalem, that was change. None of us have experienced that sort of life altering experience. On a lesser scale, Pam and I are dealing with some significant change in our lives. Following 12 wonderful years of Ministry at College Ave it seemed right for me to retire. Forget freedom 55 or even 65, **that I was turning 71 had a way of fixing my mind on thinking about a change.**

With that change came the notion of moving closer to our daughter and our two granddaughters who live in Niagara-on-the Lake!

We began considering Virgil as a destination and a home just behind their school. That would be nice but perhaps just a little too much wishful thinking. On May 5th we will move to Virgil, a house just behind the school! God is Good.

We purchased a home even before we put our home in Norwich on the market. A good friend bet me that it would sell in 48 hours. **Two and a half weeks later I would find myself awake at three in the morning wondering what might happen next.** Pam said we'd just end up owning two homes: a summer one and a winter one.

More than once I felt convicted about the number of times, I had preached on Jesus' teaching about not being anxious about life but rather in prayer making our requests known to God. I felt like such a hypocrite as I lay there at 3 AM. But it did sell and **so we are about to leave the only home we have ever owned for a new adventure.** A change that we are looking forward to but again not without its own anxiety.

As the old philosopher said, change is inevitable. I guess it all depends on how we adapt to it. It's been hard leaving College Avenue UC and will also be hard leaving the many friends we have come to know from our association with what we used to call Oxford Presbytery.

I end this with an encouragement to not be anxious. Once again, **I learned a lesson that seems so very hard to remember,** that God has a way of coming through and making things turn out for the best even as we lie awake at 3 AM.

I was reminded recently of a quote by Julian of Norwich, who lived back in the fourteenth century. "All will be well." She made that confession based on her belief in a loving God who can help us through any situation.

And so, from Lloyd, of whom you may soon say "was of Norwich", **stay committed to the belief that whatever the change we face, "All will be well".**

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

Save your

EMPTY BOTTLES!

The bottle drive is Friday April 22. One Drop off at Knox UC, Embro 5-7 pm.

Pickup can be arranged by emailing camptanner@gmail.com.

LOOKING FORWARD TO SUMMER! We're HIRING!

Check out the various job descriptions: <http://www.camptanner.ca/staff.html>

And the [photo](#) on Facebook for campers ages 16+ to be volunteer staff (aka CITs).

Needed: lifeguards, craft directors, counsellors, counsellors in training and first aid personnel. Deadline for Job Applications Extended to Wednesday, April 13.

Are you trying to make summer plans for your family? Registration for campers opens March 18. The schedule is below!

July 10-15 is intermediate camp

July 17-22 is junior camp

July 24-29 is intermediate camp

July 31-August 5 is junior camp

August 7-12 is senior camp

August 14-19 is junior camp

Reminder:

Junior Camp - ages 7-10

Intermediate Camp - ages 10-13

Senior Camp - ages 12-15.

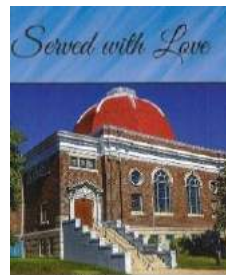


See Current Programs and

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.

St Paul's UC, Tillsonburg



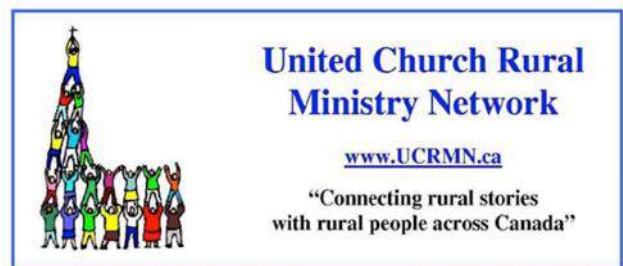
88 Bidwell Street

Community Kitchen

Hot Take-out Lunch

Every Saturday from 11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Serving from ramp entrance.



To order call 1-888-6680871; email sales@grandriverbooks.com; online <https://www.grandriverbooks.ca/> Mail delivery \$5.00.

THE OXFORD LEGACY FUND still taking requests in 2022!

Submit your requests to Lynne Dunlop

lynndunl@execulink.com

For details of Fund see [here](#).

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OXFORD UNITED REFUGEE SUPPORT COMMITTEE (OURS)

NOTE: *The UCC is a Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH). A sponsoring church is a Constituent Group (CG). Resettlement Operations Centre – Ottawa (ROC-O or ROCO) is a department of the Immigration Refugees Citizenship Canada (IRCC).*

A recent communication from the Resettlement Operations Centre in Ottawa has given us an indication of why we are having an extended time of waiting at every step of the application process. The following email was sent to us by Khwaka Kukubo, Advisor at the Refugee Office of the United Church of Canada (UCC) in Toronto.

The application to sponsor **Al-Mohammedawi Abdulrazzaq Sabri** was submitted last year in December 2021. Resettlement Operation Centre in Ottawa (ROC-O) is experiencing a huge backlog and have let us know that "*ROC-O unfortunately continues to experience growing delays with processing of SAH sponsorship applications. While I understand this is terribly frustrating and disruptive to your work, please rest assured that there are no particular SAHs who are being singled out in this regard - this delay is a result of ROC-O's capacity and is therefore impacting all SAHs.*"

It was a pleasant surprise that the application for the **Al-Mohammedawi family** has reached Ottawa in December 2021 as we were told the above applicant was on the 2022 waiting list at the UCC refugee office. **However, it is a disappointment that the backlog exists and will delay the hopes of this family and so many other refugees.**

The application for **Maqssoud Mohammed**, who escaped from

Afghanistan into Pakistan, will soon be complete and sent to the refugee office of the UCC for processing before it is sent to Immigration Refugees Citizenship Canada (IRCC). **Knox United Church in Embro** is the co-sponsor with Maqssoud's sister Hanna who lives in Woodstock. Sharon Fraser is a committee member of OURS and has taken the lead in preparing the application and keeping the congregation of Knox informed so that they are able to make knowledgeable decisions regarding financial and other requirements of sponsorship. Thank you, Sharon, for your dedication and many hours spent on this sponsorship. Knox will be fundraising to raise **\$10,000** to support Maqssoud for a year on his arrival.

No further update is available for the 7 St David's sponsored refugees. Explanation of the money follows.

As of the end of 2021 there were 5 in-trust accounts at First Ontario in Woodstock in the name of **St David's United Church Refugee Sponsorship** totalling **\$46,979.74**. A family of 3 as well as 4 individual refugees will be the recipients. Each refugee or family will be given money for start-up costs and then 12 monthly payments for living expenses. The amounts are determined by a formula suggested by ROC-O.

Trinity United Church Ingersoll's Refugee account for a family of 5 showed **\$32,731** by the end of 2021 with fundraising ongoing. The estimated budget to support this family for a year is **\$37,576**. The budgeted amount to raise is higher than other sponsorships as Trinity will be responsible for shelter costs for a year as the co-sponsor is only able to accommodate the family until an apartment can be found.

We are happy to tell you about the intention of **Westminster United Church in Thamesford** to sponsor a Syrian family of 5 refugees (a mother

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(OURS Report – continued)

named Tihani Adnan and her 4 children) who are living in deplorable conditions as are many other refugees in Lebanon. The family came to our attention by Abdoll Apouzeeni a man living in Woodstock. He will be a co-sponsor. Cheryl Marshall, a member of OURS, took the request to her congregation in Thamesford. The congregation has given it's approval and is in the early stages of learning about sponsorship, setting up a committee and considering a budget to support the family. It is estimated that they will need a budget of \$20,000 for the sponsorship (as per the government sponsorship cost table).

As with all our sponsorships, "in kind" allowable donations are calculated and added to the amounts shown above. The numbers shown are the "cash" amounts needed.

Please consider a donation to refugee sponsorship. You will receive a tax receipt for your donation from a sponsoring church. Please make cheques out to the church with "Refugee Sponsorship" in the memo line.

The churches accepting donations are:

Trinity United Church

118 Church St.,
Ingersoll, On N5C 2X6

Knox United Church

116 Kincardine St.,
PO Box 59,
Embrow Ontario N0J 1J0

Westminster United Church

115 George St,
Thamesford, On N0M 2M0

In the months to come, we will let you know of needs for household start-ups as the refugees start to arrive.

For now, we wait.

*Submitted by Marjorie Martin,
Chairperson OURS committee*

Oxford Gathered for the WORLD DAY OF PRAYER (WDP).

Informed Prayer and Prayerful Action

Yes. We gathered again VIRTUALLY for WDP, 2022. This year, the host countries



of England, Wales and Northern Ireland provided wonderful pictures, stories and worship materials based on **"I Know the Plans I Have For You"**

Jeremiah 29:1-14. The Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada adapted the service and produced a video. Marg Ogar of Kintore UC invited us to Zoom, with Pastor Lori Minler and me. 22 from Embro, Harrington, Ingersoll, Richwood, and area as well as the congregation of Norwich and Pastor Janice Pow gathered.



Rev Jennifer Goddard-Sheppard of BC spoke of God's plans for a people even living in exile as so many have felt during this pandemic. While living in exile is hard, it can often be the very experience of exile which leads us to God. **She inspired us to engage, expect and be excited in our relationship with God.** In spite of technical difficulties it was good to pray together.

Donations to WDP 2022

Donations are gratefully received as they are vital for maintaining World Day of Prayer and delivering the Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada's grant program. [Donate here.](#) MM

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

Still Needed:

Adult warm winter gloves or mittens. call Bonnie at 519-529-3361 with questions.

Drop off donations at 22 Wilson St., Woodstock (College Ave. UC) or in Ingersoll at Trinity UC. Call Bonnie for times.

Support **Food for Friends with 25 cents** at the participating grocery and other store checkouts.



The Inn of Oxford

offers temporary year-round Emergency Shelter run out of Old

St. Paul's Anglican Church in Woodstock. It is Oxford County's only Emergency shelter for men and women. In the [January 28 story on Heart FM](#), Oxford County Council voted in favour in turning the Inn into a 24/7 operation. No details are available yet, but we pray that it is soon!

The current list of items needed and details about delivery are available on the pinned list at the top of their Facebook Page. See [here](#) or reach Darryl Watson at 519-537-0336 or theinn@operationsharing.ca.

Woodstock: Bullwinkle's Eatery & Hospitality Training Centre

The Bullwinkle's team serve delicious, hot meals Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 12 noon to 1 pm at College Ave UC.

\$ 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.



Woodstock COLDEST NIGHT WALK incredible success!



Event Organizer, Scott McKague, reported that \$206,529 had been raised – twice the original goal! **"I don't even know what to say to that to be honest. Unbelievable,"** commented McKague in [Woodstock Sentinel Review](#). There were 43 volunteers, 67 teams and 401 walkers at the Coldest Night of the Year. The above picture was taken in front of Old Saint Paul's Anglican Church. **The Woodstock total was the fourth highest in Canada, trailing Kitchener, Surrey, B.C., and Collingwood by a few thousand dollars.**

Director of the Inn of Oxford, Darryl Watson, said "It was a great success, and **it was amazing to see so many people gathered together** at Old St. Paul's Church/Shelter to begin their walk. **Our community just needed one event to rally behind and show the spirit of Oxford County, and this was the event.** At one point we were number one in Canada for the funds raised. As the walk ends and people go back to their lives, for some of us our work continues and **let us not forget the reason for this event. There are still people struggling with homelessness and many other barriers. Continue to be kind to our homeless friends and people in general** and carry forth the spirit of this walk to our everyday life. Remember: **the smallest act of kindness, can change someone's life."**

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In Lent, we dare to listen to voices which have been silenced and reflect critically how both war and the climate emergency are re-shaping our world. We connect our actions with the needed systemic changes.

In Christ



Are you ready to Give it up for the Earth!?

The climate crisis demands urgent action. To move forward in a good way, we must prioritize Indigenous autonomy, transform our economic and social structures, and create space for the voices that have been traditionally marginalized and continue to be vulnerable to the changing climate. To mark the season of Lent, **Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ)** and **For the Love of Creation** invite you to participate once again in: **Give it up for the Earth!** Either online or by postcard, this faith-in-action campaign raises awareness about climate change and mobilizes people across Canada to reduce household greenhouse gas emissions, engage in learning and relationship building, and collect signatures as a demonstration of support for increased federal climate action. **Participating in the campaign through our faith community encourages local dialogue about reconciliation and climate justice,** and collects/forwards campaign letters. **Our participation also helps to build energy and momentum behind the faith-based call for climate justice!** Norwich UC's Creation Care rep ([Dawn Jones](#)) will be happy to forward any questions you have to CPJ. Check out their website **For the Love of Creation** see here <https://cpj.ca/fortheearth>

ECOTHEOLOGY AND DISCIPLESHIP

We look for God even in the dust of ashes and war. Hope keeps us alive.

JOIN **Rev Doug Peck** and Ecotheologian and UC minister, **Rev. Dr. [Jessica Hetherington](#)** for our last session. **March 16 7:00-8:15 pm.** Rev Jessica will preach, teach and discuss with us.



This is an incredible FREE opportunity to learn, acquire a taped sermon AND be inspired! Rev. Jessica will offer a short teaching following which we'll have a rich discussion. **This latter part will be taped and available only to those who register and attend.**

Whether we are preaching or chatting, we ARE part of the wonder of creation as we are transformed into 'NEW' disciples.

If you missed the previous amazing 4 sessions, they are on the [Oxford United Ministries website](#).

We appreciate the support of the Oxford Legacy Fund.

MM

Rev Dr Jessica Hetherington
Wed. March 16, 7:00 -8:15 pm
Session 4 "Being Church in the world: Collective Discipleship"

Please register ahead of time with Lynne Dunlop to receive the zoom link lynndunl@execulink.com.

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Private Hospitals ... Here? Why you should care!

Guest Column by Bryan Smith, Chair of Oxford Coalition for Social Justice.

In an astonishing announcement on Feb. 1st, Health Minister Christine Elliott opened the doors wide open in Ontario to all that is so very wrong with American medicine. No doubt you have heard the stories: Show your credit card before seeing a nurse in the Emergency Ward; Bankruptcy after Surgery; Hospitals closing leaving not just neighbourhoods but whole communities without anywhere to go when their loved ones need care.

See and hear with your own eyes: <https://www.cbc.ca/player/play/1998422595853>. Look and listen again! It's incredible and very dangerous.

In fact, Ontario has already learned the hard lesson of putting our health into the hands of private, for-profit companies. **Extracting money is their goal, not compassionate care.** Even before the COVID 19 pandemic, when [the Ontario Health Coalition published "Situation Critical" in 2019](#), filled with horror stories about inadequate care, staffing and equipment in Long-Term 'Care' facilities, there were dire problems. Because it was hidden in warehouses for the elderly and ill, few knew. There was, of course, for residents in these facilities, their families and the public no missing the level of suffering and death statistics when COVID struck hard and the Army was called to rescue people left alone, without water or food, in soiled clothing and fouled sheets as overworked staff pleaded with their supervisors to find them more help. **Someone should care.**

Statistically, the worst possible place to be for care is in a private, for-profit facility. Quality of life is low; duration of life is short, according to months of research by the Ontario Health Coalition.

Now, the Ontario government plans to make hospitals into another nightmare for families. **Privatizing them will not magically make more PSWs, nurses, and doctors to care for people. Instead, it will move qualified staff out of our public hospitals and cut their available funds.** Accountability is rare: The start of the outbreaks and lockdowns in long-term facilities could have been avoided if unannounced, thorough inspections had routinely detected unacceptable hygiene and care conditions and ordered them fixed. Instead, the government halted them. When families complained and said they would use the courts to correct utter neglect, **the government changed the law, thus favouring operators, not residents** and those who loved them. **Someone should be accountable.**

In Ontario, we have the fewest available hospital beds for any province in Canada, the fewest nurses, the lowest funding. Privatization will not fix this; it looks to take money out of health care not add capacity to carry out needed diagnoses, interventions and surgeries. As a matter of fact, the current government is also looking to take money out of health care on all fronts, talking about Ontario's debt with fictionally high numbers according to the Legislature's Financial Accountability Office, underestimating potential revenues, and planning for \$18 Billion dollars in cuts down the road. This is a road we cannot afford to go down.

Both locally and provincially, the Ontario Health Coalition cares. This is why they held a recent press conference attended by editors of Oxford CONNECTIONS, members of the public, an astounded leader of a retirees' association, and the Oxford Coalition for Social Justice. **This is also why the Coalition is planning a**

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full public summit to lay out the facts, and describe a better way forward for caring, compassionate, capable and accessible health for all, on April 2 at 10:30 am. This event will be by Zoom for the tech-savvy among us, and may also offer face-to-face opportunities to see, hear and question experts in the field of proper public health delivery. **Linda McQuaig, whose trenchant financial analysis of health, home, hospital, and long-term care will speak.** She and the event are not to be missed. For access to the meeting, to join the work of the Ontario Health Coalition and locally the Oxford Coalition for Social Justice, email bryasmit@oxford.com.

You care. Political leaders should know that!

**Public Summit on Health Care
Ontario Health Coalition
Virtual**

**April 2 at 10:30 am
Speaker – Linda McQuaig
For access email
bryasmit@oxford.com.**

LONG TERM CARE – CRISIS

question for our elected officials

At present, there are 28 new and 100 upgraded long-term care beds **being developed** at peopleCare, Tavistock, and 160 new beds at peopleCare, Tillsonburg. **The question is why didn't the County of Oxford (Woodingford Lodge) apply for any of these beds.**

Why does this matter? [In the February edition of the Monitor](#) (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives) **privatization** doesn't save us money, doesn't create more jobs, doesn't improve services, doesn't introduce competition and create efficiencies. **We care who delivers our public services.**

A NEW CREATION

*Being called beyond our comfort levels, we commit to use **our power to love** others and creation to effect change: to be **a new creation in God as Love**. Our work is **power with**. Fully human and alive with the Spirit, we treat others and nature as subjects (not objects).*

PRAYER CYCLES



We are invited to pray for each other and our mission in the world – our Communities of Faith in Oxford, in the Antler River Watershed Region and our General Council. We support each other as we share our concerns, joys and work. We are not alone.

For Oxford United Churches: list is [here](#). For congregations with a vacancy, Pastoral Charge Supervisors are noted.

Mar 13 Drumbo – Ken Jackson RS
Mar 20 Dundas St – Liz Lemon VAM
Mar 27 Richwood – Michael Shewburg
Apr 3 Plattsville – Jennifer Canning
Apr 10 St David's Wdsk – Jeff Smith
Apr 17 [Retired Clergy](#)

For ARW Region:

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

Mar 13 [Glencoe-Appin](#)
Mar 20 [Woodstock: College Avenue](#)
Mar 27 [St. Thomas: Central](#)
Apr 3 [Ingersoll: Banner](#)
Apr 10 [Blenheim](#)
Apr 17 [Richwood](#)

For GENERAL COUNCIL 44

We join the commissioners to GC in prayer during this important time for our church with these words:

We name ... with prayers of love and blessing today.

**Holy God, reveal yourself and
your words as we pray for ...**

**Come, Holy Spirit. (listen for God)
Jesus is here... A thanksgiving... Pray
for someone else... Pray for yourself...**

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FOR CHILDREN OF ALL AGES

Barn Swallows

Next to English Sparrows, Barn Swallows were the most numerous bird dwellers in the barns in our community. **Swallows are fast enough and nimble enough flyers to catch and eat insects on the fly.** I guess you could call that fast food. Every Spring they were there in our stable building mud nests on the rough round ceiling beams.

Swallows grace the skies of every continent except Antarctica.



I want to tell you about a group of European Swallows. (Can you think of a better word than group? How about a "Serenade of Swallows"?) This Serenade of Swallows **flies each fall from Europe to the African country of Nigeria where they spend winter. It's a 1500-mile journey, but the distance is not the only challenge. They have to fly over the dry and deadly Sahara Desert.** That takes immense courage. Where are they going to get a drink?

It just so happens that in the middle of the Sahara there is a small lake. The bad news is that it's a salt water lake, too salty to drink. However, at this lake there are millions of insects that not only are able to drink the salt water but turn the salt water into fresh water which collects in their bodies. So, when the Swallows feed on the insects, they get enough water and protein to continue the journey. Now isn't that amazing?

Swallows have learned to live in harmony with nature. We have to learn or re-learn how to do that. That learning and the courage to put it in practice is critical for the survival of generations to come; **for the survival of all of nature**, including the Swallows. gw

TRAFFIC LIGHTS AND LIFE.

Have you ever noticed how contrary traffic lights can be? Some days I can drive along Dundas St. towards Eastwood and every traffic light will shine green. What a wonderful day! Other days I am stopped at Clarke St by a red light and every single light along the route will also



shine red. What a bummer! Sometimes yellow dominates: should I floor it to make it through, or stomp the brakes and trust the car behind to stop?

Do you know who invented the automatic traffic lights, the ones that frustrate me? It was in 1923 and remains the most successful, efficient and democratic way to safely handle traffic at a busy intersection. **The inventor was an American black man, Garrett Morgan.**

Maybe you have wished he had not invented them when you were running late and had been forced to stop over and over by a bally red light. **But that light assures everyone of a fair turn at passing through whatever their age, sex, race or bank account may be.** The only exceptions are emergency vehicles and funeral processions.

Many other cultures than our own think us foolish to rush through life like rats in a maze without ever stopping to smell the roses along life's way. **Traffic lights can help to slow us down and change our points of view.** As you wait for a red to turn green, you have time to notice the colors of autumn, to utter a small prayer of thanks, of confession, of supplication. **Perhaps we have time to see who is driving the car next to us, to smile or wave at a neighbor or friend.**

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I wonder if we might install a few small traffic lights in our houses to help us remember all that makes our lives rich and beautiful. Next time a red light slows you down thank God for Garrett Morgan, inventor of the traffic lights.



Olga McKellar



At Norwich United Church (NUC) Eco-Anxiety & Biblical Wisdom: Torn Between Grief and Hope

With Dr. Sylvia Keesmaat

Sunday evenings, March 6-April 10, 7:00-9:00 pm ET.

Support materials for participants.

Masks & spacing will be in place.

(For those preferring daytime, a recording of the previous week's session **may be** offered Sunday afternoons at 1 pm in NUC Lower hall beginning March 13 (showing March 6 session). If interested, contact [Dawn Jones](#).



[ARWRC webpage](#)

[Facebook page](#)

March 1, 2022 is the most recent newsletter, found [here](#). Next newsletter is expected in April.



SCIENCE

Oil + Ukraine + IPCC

Toxic Nostalgia vs. the Urgent Need to get off fossil fuels

Naomi Klein writes in the [March 1, 2022 Intercept](#) about the nostalgia for empire vs moving forward. It is a powerful article about the underlying connections in today's crisis.

Svitlana Krakovska is a Ukrainian scientist who is part of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) working group that produced their most recent report on February 28, 2022. Even as her country was under the Kremlin's attack, she reportedly [told](#) her scientific colleagues in a virtual meeting that **"Human-induced climate change and the war on Ukraine have the same roots, fossil fuels, and our dependence on them."**

Kravovska also [told her colleagues](#) in that closed-door meeting at the IPCC, **"We will not surrender in Ukraine. And we hope the world will not surrender in building a climate-resilient future."** Her words so moved her Russian counterpart, eye witnesses reported, that he **broke ranks and apologized for the actions of his government — a brief glimpse of a world looking forward, not back.**

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Dawn Jones of Norwich UC has curated other possible Lenten eco-activities: Enviro Stewardship, Journey to Easter, Reflect-Repent-Restore, Lenten guide to 40 Days of Positive Change & It's Time to Act. These are available [here](#).



GC44 is entirely online. We can watch! Details are on their website: <https://generalcouncil44.ca/>
Register [here](#).

We pray for wisdom for our
Commissioners and staff.

performing arts. **They believe in human creativity, determination and spirit. This powerful video addresses the Anthropocene epoch** with imagination to inspire us to look after our earth. You can access the video [here](#). It features musician Kelly Walker, dancer Alexandra Caverly-Lowery, Supported by the Ravina Project and Scared Arts Trust of the Anglican Foundation of Canada. *MM*

For those interested in attending, please contact Rhonda Johns at Nations Uniting nations.uniting@gmail.com for Zoom details.

CONNECTIONS

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FYI

Interests, Informs or Inspires!

READERS share ...the fiction you are reading, the movies you are watching, the songs you are singing, or the thoughts/questions

The Undertaking of Billy Buffone by David Giuliano

The story is set in a small Northern Ontario town close to a First Nation Reservation. It includes humour, trauma and eventual redemption. Most of the town, individually and collectively, attempts to hide and to forget shameful events of the past. Billy, the local undertaker, continues to be haunted by unrelenting memories resulting in a very lonely withdrawal into a world of fantasy. The Elders on the rez say he "disappeared but didn't go anywhere". His redemption comes through a growing relationship with Catherine, the new minister, and in his eventual sharing of the truth about past events.

I found this to be a very compelling story - hard to put down. The story is real: Catherine's pastoral care of the native community despite being unfamiliar with what is expected of her in their culture; the easy relationship between the native women and the church women as they prepare a funeral lunch; the connection between Catherine and Billy. At the same time, the seriousness of past events keeps resurfacing. There is beauty and comedy, there is brutality and despair. All are presented honestly and compassionately.

A novel well worth reading.

Submitted by Dave Schell

WORSHIP SERVICES IN OXFORD

Check with individual churches re specifics of in person worship, streaming or conference call services. Churches in blue have websites. Check also for Facebook Pages.

Avondale UC, T'burg avondaleuc@gmail.com

Burgessville UC, 10:30 am

[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 service available by conference call. drumbocharge@hotmail.com

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Next Publication: Wed. April 13, 2022

[Submissions welcome.](#)

[Due by Noon Friday April 8, 2022](#)

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