

CONNECTIONS

News and Views of Oxford County United Churches

Vol 4 Issue 8

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GATHERING + GOSPELLING – A SUMMER WORSHIP SERIES

"When we don't examine the deeper assumptions behind why we gather, we end up skipping too quickly to replicating old, staid formats of gathering."

— **Priya Parker, *The Art of Gathering: How We Meet and Why It Matters***

As much of the world shifted back to in-person gatherings, the time was ripe for our faith community to explore the 'hows' and 'whys' of Sunday morning worship. For most United Churches (and, quite frankly, most churches), worship on Sunday morning starting some time between 9:30 and 11:00 is pretty standard. And the structure of worship can be startlingly similar between churches.

This is not a bad thing. But I believe there is value in diving deep into the purpose of worship gathering, so that it continues to be meaningful and valuable in the development of our faith.



Using Priya Parker's book, *The Art of Gathering: How We Meet and Why It Matters*, **our congregation explored the questions of why and how we gather, and which of those practices hold meaning for us.** We answered questions together during worship:

What brings you to church today?

What is your favorite space at church?

Where do you like to pray?

What is your favorite hymn?

Do you make a better host or a better guest?

What do we enjoy about gathering?

What are your gifts?

We offered up these questions right near the beginning of the service and provided a minute or two for reflection, and then we **took some time to answer them together a little bit later in the service.** And while we didn't always have concrete answers that morning, I heard from many folks throughout the week as they reflected on the conversations from Sunday morning.

We also experimented with different ways of praying and listening to scripture and **one morning the chairs were rearranged to be "in the round."**

We wrapped up the series a few weeks ago and I sent out a survey for folks to provide feedback on the series, and we will use that

Discipleship for Earth Healing



A dynamic weekend of spiritual exploration and ecological commitment with the Rev. Dr. Jessica Hetherington, Ecotheologian



WHEN & WHERE

- Friday, Sept 30 to Sunday, Oct 2 at Trinity United Church, 118 Church St, Ingersoll ON

To register, contact
Lynne Dunlop at
lynndunl@execulink.com

- **Friday 7:00 p.m.: Keynote talk**
- **Saturday: Workshops**
- **Sunday : Worship 10:30 a.m.**

In person (limited) or streamed, no cost.
For more info go to

jessicahetherington.ca/events

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information to help shape worship as we go forward.

It felt good to stretch our wings a little bit, to bump up against discomfort and explore the source of that discomfort. It felt good to have conversation and a great deal of laughter in the service, as well as moments of profound reflection and deep meaning.



We are all called to go out into the world and love

and serve. Worship that is meaningful and spirit-filled strengthens us to do that work well. This is not just the job of the minister or the musicians or the worship committee.

We all participate together to make worship meaningful—we open ourselves up to the Spirit, we offer what we can and pay attention to the places that God is calling us to.

*Feature article by Pastor Lori Minler,
Mt Elgin UC.*

Editorial...

Each month our Cover Page will feature an article of a local new experience. Interactions in our gatherings are important. With our increasing diversity and disconnect from the earth, we seek to ensure that we are listening deeply to those who are different, particularly the oppressed. As Jesus listened deeply. MM

NEEDED - HEBRON UC

is looking for 12 copies of **MORE VOICES**. If you have any or know of some at minimal cost, contact Lorna Gardner, Hebron Board Chair,
nanofmany321@gmail.com.

Many Thanks!

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Submissions no greater than 250 words welcome and due by Noon Friday Oct. 7, 2022

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CO-EDITORS: Marg Murray + Glen Wright

To add or remove names, email

oxfconnections@execulink.com

CONNECTIONS website

oxfordunitedministries.ca

Oxford United Ministries Facebook page

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



OXFORD—COMINGS AND GOINGS

COMMUNITY OF FAITH PROFILE APPROVED.

Innerkip UC. Karen Willis, DLM, appointed long term half-time, July 1.

CONGREGATIONS IN SEARCH MODE

- **Avondale UC** (T'burg)+Otterville UC
- **College Ave UC**
- **Dundas St UC**
- **Kintore + Brooksdale UC**

DISCIPLESHIP FOR EARTH

HEALING with Rev. Dr. Jessica

Hetherington, Ecotheologian.



Together we can learn about our connections between our place in creation and the need for lament. Together we can deepen our discipleship response to the ecological crisis. Together we can explore and make our commitment to healing the Earth.

This hybrid event is Friday night September 30 - to Sunday, October 2, at Trinity United Church, Ingersoll. While there is no charge for the event, **registration is required for both in person and virtual.** The workshops include time in a nearby park which is wheelchair accessible. To register contact Lynne Dunlop at [<lynndunl@execulink.com>](mailto:lynndunl@execulink.com) or 519-539-3805. There is more info at this website [the Rev. Dr. Jessica Hetherington](http://the.Rev.Dr.JessicaHetherington) We are grateful for our sponsors, Oxford Legacy Fund and Hope Council of ARWRC.



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Oxford Welcomes Janine Lunn, Student Minister



Joining the congregations of Sweaburg, Foldens and West Oxford in September for a Supervised Ministry Experience, Janine Lunn is a candidate for ordained ministry. Living on the family farm in Elgin

County, she is originally from a farming community southwest of Ottawa. Together with her spouse Brad they are raising three teenaged children, assorted pets, farm animals and crops.

A lifetime member of the United Church of Canada, Janine brings her interests of food security, care for creation and music to her leadership. With hands-on experience leading children's programming, 'Paint with Spirit' nights, camp chaplaincy and pulpit supply, the latest step in the journey was a Supervised Ministry Experience with Trinity United on Hale & Mt. Zion United, both in London. This COVID-era placement led to new adventures including hybrid worship, parking lot and porch visits for pastoral care and leading small groups by zoom. A recent highlight has been supply ministry with Chalmers & St. Andrews (Kintore & Brooksdale) that saw the return of Tractor Sunday, a service celebrating rural and farm life.

Janine looks forward to making connections within the community and finding creative means to navigate our 'new normal' together in ways that help us all live out the respect, kindness and fairness that have deep roots in many traditions and in the Jesus story.

IN IT TOGETHER – COVENANTS AND RELATIONSHIPS

The 3-way Covenanting Service between Antler River Watershed Region (ARWRC),



Mt Elgin UC and Lori Minler

was celebrated on Sunday, August 28.

Rev. Lynne Allin, of the Region delivered

an awesome message on John 1 from The Message reminding us that covenant is about relationships and at the heart of relationships is the truth that we are 'in this together' with God, with our neighbour, with our families – with everyone and every part of creation. She helped me to understand how the Region supports congregations and what covenants mean. I encourage you to watch the service [here](#). Lynne's sermon starts about 29:00.

MM



[Facebook page and website](#)

We have officially arrived at the end of our summer. We are so glad to have been able to get back to camp after such a long time being closed. We know that a lot of work goes into making our summers a great experience. We really want to take this time to help thank everyone that was a part of summer 2022. Thank you to the staff who work countless long hours. Thank you to the board members who do a ton of things behind the scenes. Thank you to the volunteers who help cook, clean and much more. Thank you to all our generous donors throughout the year. Lastly, thank you to our campers, without you camp wouldn't happen either.

Thanks for being a great bunch of kids to spend our time with. We hope to see you all in the future!



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DEATH – Gwen Parker



Former faithful member of Oxford Presbytery Gwen Parker of Peace United in Plattsville, died recently. Gwen had just celebrated her 90th birthday.

Her obit is [here](#).

Oxford County of Ontario Helps Ukraine

Folks interested in supporting Oxford County of Ontario Helps Ukraine are encouraged to join their Facebook page. You can see posts on [Facebook page](#) for housing list, August 29. Also on Facebook, are posts for donations of furniture, job opportunities.

Bethany Lutheran Church, Woodstock is issuing receipts for money donations!

There is a support group for host families to share information. Fuller report in [August CONNECTIONS](#), pg 5 or email oxfordhelpsukraine@gmail.com.

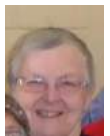
“Love one another” (John 13:34)
“Love one another” (John 13:35)
“Love one another” (John 15:12)
“Love one another” (John 15:17)
“Love one another” (Rom 12:10)
“Love one another” (1 Thess 3:12)
“Love one another” (1 Peter 1:22)
“Love one another” (1 John 3:11)
“Love one another” (1 John 3:23)
“Love one another” (1 John 4:7)
“Love one another” (1 John 4:11)
“Love one another” (1 John 4:12)
“Love one another” (2 John 5)

FROM THE HOSPITAL BED

During WW II bombing raids, a single night would often spell the end of three or four church buildings. For example: Church of England, Baptist, Methodist and Congregationalist. So, the next morning remaining members would gather and work together to sort through the ruins and salvage items such as hymnals, prayer books and Bibles as well as useful furnishings such as chairs and benches and even an occasional piano! Then, working together, the surviving clergy and church members would make a simple shelter such as a Quonset hut designated to be shared by the four congregations as a place of Christian worship. By the next Sunday the new ‘church’ was open and full of worshipers. Maybe the leader was a Baptist and the musician was Anglican. Maybe the furniture was mismatched and the cups were cracked but nevertheless, we worked and worshiped together and were strengthened in community.

As I lie here in the Ingersoll Hospital, presently under a COVID lockdown that isolates us all from seeing family and friends, I cannot help but remember those bombings and their effects. It is easy to feel helpless and alone but, it is possible to draw together in the Spirit, share the positive and walk on the sunny side of life.

Olga McKellar



(Editor’s note: Olga is home now continuing her recovery from a fractured pelvis!)

THE OXFORD LEGACY FUND

still taking requests in 2022!

Submit your requests

lynndunl@execulink.com

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40 years ago this fall, members of the 5 United Churches in Woodstock

(Chalmers, Central, St David's, Dundas and College Avenue) and their respective ministers (Bruce Sutor, Austin Snyder, Peter Scott, Harry MacPherson, Mel Fisher) worked together to offer an inclusive, no strings attached, helping hand to those in need. We had no fixed venue but used graciously offered space. First Baptist joined when John Fury came to town. By 1987, The Meeting Place settled at New St. Paul's Anglican church. And from the wider community, there was always support from churches, service clubs, unions, schools and businesses.

NEEDS CONTINUE. See their new [website](#) for supplies and personal care items for **The Inn** (Oxford's Emergency Shelter), **The Meeting Place**, **Bullwinkle's Eatery and Hospitality**, **Food For Friends**



Be blessed when you **give a Dollar at the till** for others to make nutritious choices so they can shop with dignity.

Donations - on their [website](#) or mail Treasurer of Operation Sharing, P.O. Box 20081, Woodstock, Ontario, N4S 8X8

Oxford PRAYER CYCLE



Together we pray for each other in our mission in the world.

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

Sept 11, Lynne Dunlop PCS, Foldens
Sept 18, Janine Lunn SM, Mary Anne Silverthorne PCS, Sweaburg + West Oxford,
Sept 25, Ken Jackson, RS, Drumbo
Oct 2, Margaret Trapnell RS, Dundas St
Oct 9, Michael Shewburg, Richwood
Oct 16, Jennifer Canning, Peace (Plattsville)
Oct 23 Retired Clergy (see [here](#))

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 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 open for in person service and conference call.

drumbocharge@hotmail.com

FOR CHILDREN OF ALL AGES.

Scarab Beetles – masters of recycling

The most fascinating of the Beetle world has to be the Scarab Dung Beetle.

It is found mostly in dry tropical climates.



For those unfamiliar with the word "dung" you might recognize this as poo or poop.

But back to basics. . .

The Scarab is one of the best recyclers. It dines on animal poo. There is enough undigested food in animal poo to give the Scarab Beetle all the nutrients it needs. **When there is too much competition, that is too many beetles for the poo pile, the beetle forms a poo ball and rolls it away to feed its family elsewhere.**

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It does this by rolling this ball backwards, pushing it with its back feet, while upside down. How on earth does it see where it is going? What is remarkable is that it rolls the ball in a straight line, using the sun by day and the moon or the milky way as a guide by night. **The beetle, about one and a half inches long can roll a ball about 30 times its weight.**

Now isn't the Scarab Beetle absolutely awesome??? How wonderful is creation!

GW

WELCOMING BISRAT YEMANE



Bisrat Yemane, who arrived from Sudan in June will be officially welcomed during the **10:30 worship service at St. David's U.C., Woodstock, Sept.**

25th. A "Baked Potato" lunch will follow. All are welcome. **If you plan to stay for lunch, please let Carol Ewing know at pcewing@sympatico.ca.** or 519-537-5462. We look forward so much to this special celebration.



OXFORD UNITED REFUGEE SUPPORT COMMITTEE (OURS)

We anxiously await news of Maqssoud, the Afghan man (Knox UC, Embro) who escaped to Pakistan. Westminster UC, Thamesford has prepared forms to assist the Hamoudi family, Syrian refugees in Lebanon. Westminster is frequently in touch via Zoom with their family already building a friendship.

Sponsorship donations would be appreciated. **Please write "Refugee Sponsorship" in the memo line of cheques. Knox UC, PO Box 59, Embro ON N0J 1J0; and Westminster UC, 115 George St. Thamesford, ON N0M 2M0.**

CLOSE TO OXFORD

GRANDMOTHERS TEA

Sept.28, (tba, email [Rhonda Johns](mailto:Rhonda.Johns@nations.uniting@gmail.com) <nations.uniting@gmail.com>)

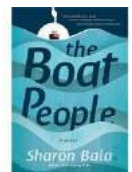
Oct. 26, Norwich UC

Noon till 2:00 pm

FIVE OAKS

Books and Coffee - October

Online Book Study with Diversity and Inclusion Specialist Nazra Ranmall. Her experience and knowledge will help guide the exploration of character, plotline and point-of-view, making meaningful connections to your everyday life. Register [here](#).



GRAND RIVER BOOKSTORE

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

Mail delivery \$5.00.



[ARWRC webpage](#)

[Facebook page](#)

Subscribe [here](#) to the newsletter of our region, Antler River Watershed.

Regional Council Fall Gathering **October 28 & 29 2022**

Registration coming soon for Ministry Personnel or the Lay Representative of your community of faith (**BE SURE your Representative to Regional Council is listed in your Churchhub account.** If not, email [Pretima Kukadia](mailto:Pretima.Kukadia) with their name and community of faith and city.) This is an important opportunity to connect, have your voice heard and learn what's happening.

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ARW Region: PRAYER CYCLES

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

Sep 11 [St. David's, Woodstock](#)

Sep 18 [Forest](#)

Sep 25 [Strathroy](#)

Oct 2 [Peace United](#)

Oct 9 [Courtright-Sixth Line](#)

Oct 16 [Rural United](#)

Oct 23 [Ilderton](#)

NATIONAL

Rt Rev Carmen Lansdowne our new Moderator, at her August 7 Installation Service answered the question of GC 44 "Who Do You Say That I Am". She spoke boldly of our unfinished business, of Jesus as friend, as butterfly and as Aslan – one who really listened to the oppressed. Watch the Installation [here](#). Her address starts at 1:25.

GLOCAL – making Global local
World Council of Churches (WCC) meets in Karlsruhe, Germany



this week. Former Oxfordite, Hyuk Cho (2nd from left) is attending along with our new Moderator, the Right Rev Carmen Lansdowne

and other delegates of the United Church. They join thousands of delegates from around the world. Check out [this site](#) for a taste of this profound ecumenical event witnessing faithful hope. In the opening address, [WCC moderator Dr Agnes Abuom](#) declared: "**At its best, the assembly is a spiritual celebration of the power of God's love to renew our minds and hearts so that we may become a countercultural force driven by [#solidarity](#) with the most vulnerable people and God's creation.**"

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FOOD FOR THE SOUL

Justice Matters

A plan for justice came early in Biblical stories. The plan was that all people should have a "just" amount of the world's goods and services; that all would have social and economic opportunities a place to live and food security.

On God's last day of creation, it was not human beings that were created but the Sabbath. Did God save the best until last? As important as a day of rest is, sometimes we forget that the Sabbath became a template for justice. Every seventh-year debts were to be forgiven. All were to take a year off from work. Even the earth was to be given a year's rest. The purpose was to make sure there were no poor in the land and that the earth was given time to heal.

Then every 50 years (7x7+1) this was to be repeated plus the land was to be returned to its original owners. It was the jubilee, the time of the great adjustment or applied justice.

I wonder if the harvest festival called Pentecost, 50 days after Passover, the Emancipation Day for Jews, may have contained Jubilee hope. Add to that the Spirit of Pentecost that we celebrate and you have a Spirit of love (justice) that would not be contained.

If you are looking for a current "Pentecostal" moment i.e. distribution of harvest driven by a spirit of justice, it was Aug. 1st of this year. It began with a blast of wind that was heard around the world. The wind was directed through a ship's whistle. Against all odds, the first shipload of grain left a Ukrainian port, food for those most in need. In the midst of one of the

great injustices of history, The UN, Turkey and yes the Russians, brokered the release. That first ship of twenty thousand tons of corn was followed, by 30 more and counting. By the way, Aug. 1st marked the seventh (Sabbath) month of the war. A coincidence? At the very least it is a sign of immense hope.

Although God's vision of a "just" world where all people have what they need has never gone away we are still working on a plan. Adding to the difficulty is our climate crisis. We cannot think of justice without its inclusion. We are on a slippery slope of possibly losing the earth's ability to sustain life.

Such urgency has compelled some of us to plan a weekend of spiritual, down to earth reflection and action with The Rev. Dr. Jessica Heatherington. Details are elsewhere in this CONNECTION edition.

We begin Friday evening, Sept. 30th. Sept. is not the seventh month but it is the ninth month, which has its own rebirth symbolism for mother earth and for us. We believe it to be nothing less than a vital part of our call to deep spirituality, bold discipleship and daring justice. You are invited, Blessings, *Glen Wright, co-editor*

