

CONNECTIONS

News and Views of Oxford County United Churches

Vol 4 Issue 10

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BLESSING OF NEWNESS FROM THE OLD

The Window Sonnets by Robyn Marie Butt

Stained glass and sonnets seem to be a natural pairing. The Sonnet, a 14-line poem, originated in Italy in the thirteenth century. By that time, coloured glass windows in cathedrals and monasteries had become a familiar and sophisticated art form.

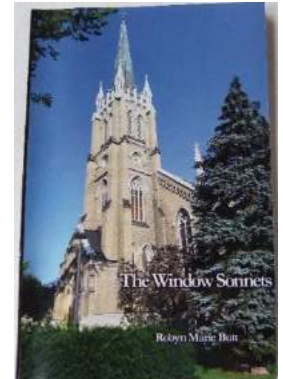
These two classic art forms come together exquisitely in **The Window Sonnets**, thanks to author Robyn Marie Butt and photos by Jim Silcox and Kathryn Skelly (cover photo by Richard Bain). The 57-page full colour paperback features a poetic commentary inspired by the historic stained glass windows of First-St. Andrew's United Church, London, ON.

Bain's front cover photo of towering First-St. Andrews United Church framed by a giant spruce and the hint of a complimentary maple, anchors the setting. Silcox and Skelly give us window colour and perspective that enable the reader to see the windows with vivid clarity. The back cover photo of an outdoor sculpture made from old organ pipes, standing against the church wall in winter, is a picture that invites a thousand words.



For one to compose 30 Sonnets that begin with a five Sonnet "Introit" and "Caveat" then move to poetic commentary and reflection on the windows of First-St. Andrew's is an awesome task, to say the least. Robyn Marie Butt does that with poetic precision and power, sometimes prophetic, sometimes pastoral but always deepening and widening for us the biblical scene or story caught in coloured glass.

The Caveat includes a criticism of King Henry VIII for ordering the destruction of the mediaeval multi-racial coloured windows as "papist", so that much-later window craftsmen "Whitened" the skin of biblical characters. Before Henry's "reforms" people could see, states the sonnet, *...God **like** us, come to warm/ our sorrows into hope.* Butt concludes the next sonnet with the words, *It's we/ must let our many-coloured Lord go free.*



In sonnet iii of four that address the huge Chancel Window, the focus is on the women. The concluding couplet reads *Having known birth she'd know/ gift grows gift; that gifts remembered, glow.*

On the Memorial Window East, dedicated to those from the church who lost their lives during the first world war, the sonnet mentions *grief or loss that anchor us in night* then continues prophetically, with *seems we'll always still/ need this window.* This invitation to grieve takes us deep into an almost forgotten part of our faith – lament. What a gift to have a window of lament for a church's healing ministry.

Included in this window is a Roman soldier, pointing to the early church's conflict with

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Rome. This is brilliantly described in the words, *through Rome's fist/ slide love's Resistance....*

These are just a small sample of the poetic gems that give these windows new life.

Over thirty years ago, Old Testament professor Walter Brueggemann wrote a book called **Finally Come the Poet**. The title is a reference to the Old Testament prophets, who when speaking with and to power, with conviction and compassion resorted to poetry. **The Window Sonnets** by Robyn Marie Butt keeps that sacred tradition alive with poetic brilliance.

Glen Wright

Robyn Butt, a writer and poet, is a Woodstock resident. To order **The Window Sonnets** contact First-St. Andrews United Church, London by phone at 519-679-8182. Cost is \$20. All profits going to FSA outreach.

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oxfconnections@execulink.com

CONNECTIONS website

oxfordunitedministries.ca

Oxford United Ministries Facebook page

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

We are not simply to bandage the wounds of victims beneath the wheels of injustice, we are to drive a spoke into the wheel itself.

***Dietrich Bonhoeffer, theologian,
anti-nazi dissident***

EDITORIAL

We honour **The Blessing of Newness from the Old** with Robyn Butt's sonnets from stained glass windows, Advent inspiration from our stories, songs and ancient scriptures, and renewing our discipleship. Together, as disciples, we dig deeper to respond to the climate crisis which impacts our ministries and lives, including Camp Tanner, outreach ministries and our health.

We've brought back CHURCH EVENTS of upcoming Bazaars, Church Suppers etc. To have your event included, please email oxconnections@execulink.com with details. Posters will be included if room.

MM

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OXFORD United Churches—COMINGS AND GOINGS

APPOINTMENT to a COMMUNITY OF FAITH.

- Nancy Vandenberghe, Candidate, PT 20 hours/week from 2022-08-01 to 2022-12-31 appointed to College Avenue UC.

CONGREGATIONS IN SEARCH MODE

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

SHARED MINISTRY AGREEMENT

- Between Richwood UC (Antler River Watershed RC) and St. Paul's UC, Paris (Horseshoe Falls RC)

Rev. Tracy Crick-Butler, Trinity UC, Ingersoll, has given notice for January 2023. We have appreciated her ministry. Blessings on her next steps.

DISCIPLESHIP FOR EARTH HEALING

with Rev. Dr. Jessica Hetherington, Ecotheologian. The event



this past weekend at Trinity UC, Ingersoll was intense but fun and inspiring. For me, hearing and experiencing a new creation story (which differs from the Genesis 1 account mostly in terms of the time) helped me feel deeply connected not only to my human ancestors but also to the evolutionary process of the universe. I have new understanding of the phrase 'we stand on the shoulders of our predecessors.' CONNECTIONS will be unpacking this material in future articles.

Sign up for her newsletter, [Following in the World](#), from her website, [the Rev. Dr. Jessica Hetherington](#).

CAMP TANNER



Annual General Meeting

Friday, November 25th, 7:30 pm, at Knox U. C., Embro

This critical meeting is to review this past summer,

recruit new members, and **discuss the future of our camp.** **NEEDED:** is a full (12 member) Board of Directors, including the filling of executive positions (Chair, Registrar and Treasurer), as of the Annual General Meeting. Position Descriptions can be found on their Facebook page [here](#). **If these positions are not filled, the Camp Tanner Board of Directors has made a tentative motion to dissolve Camp Tanner Inc.**

If you are interested in the future of Camp Tanner or in joining the Board of Directors, please come to the AGM on Friday, November 25, at 7:30 pm at Knox United Church in Embro.

Email any questions to camptannerinc@gmail.com!

ALL WELCOME TO ATTEND



OXFORD COUNTY OF ONTARIO HELPS UKRAINE

WAREHOUSE NEEDED – This story on [Heart FM](#) details the need for a new warehouse (12,000 square feet). While over 50 Ukrainian families have relocated to Oxford over the past several months, more are on their way. The current situation in Ukraine is grim with the colder weather coming. **Hosts are also needed.** Join their [Facebook page](#) to see how you can help.

Invite a speaker – Karen + David Murray, and Larisa Zhukova (an eye surgeon) are available to speak to groups. Email oxfordhelpsukraine@gmail.com.

**Thank you to all who have helped.
All help is deeply appreciated!**

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HOW WAS YOUR HALLOWE'EN?

Olga McKellar

Hallowe'en is a fun time marking the gathering of the darkness after the wonder of light and color, of loss and yearning after the joy and abundance of harvest.

I had never heard of it while I was growing up in England. Instead, we celebrated Guy Fawkes Night on Nov.5.

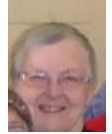
"Remember, remember the fifth of November with gunpowder, treason and plot. We see no reason why gunpowder season should ever be forgot." We hitched our celebrations annually to the dark evening so close to Hallowe'en with a huge masquerade parade, loud music, folk dancing, costume judging which ended on the village green. There we lit a huge bonfire on top of which was a straw stuffed manikin said to be Guy Fawkes. Everyone carried a foil covered potato to set deep into the embers of the fire as it burned and we all enjoyed fireworks until the fire was burned down and we could rescue our spuds, open the foil and eat our treat.

On one such night, my dad, then a handsome thirtyish man, allowed Mum to remove his false teeth, add a curly grey wig and an old woman's dress stuffed at bust and hips, plus streaks of dirty looking makeup until Dad became an old, ugly crone, armed with a large wooden spoon. Then he danced all around the parade scaring all available children and amusing all the adults who tried to name him. When they reached the Green, he was awarded the first prize for his costume.

What fun we all had! The fireworks were grand, the music lively, the dancing lively. We enjoyed every minute. Guy Fawkes or Hallowe'en, both are celebrations of remembrance, barriers against darkness and death as winter comes.

Christians can celebrate with all people as the days shorten and we celebrate the fact that soon the season will change, light will

return. But as Christians we also remember that Advent has come with its promise of Christ's birth. We begin to prepare our hearts to welcome our Saviour into our hearts afresh.



CHURCH EVENTS

WESTMINSTER UC, THAMESFORD presents, DRINKING HABITS, Nov 11, 12, 18, 19 at 7:00 pm; Matinee Nov 12 at 2 pm. Cost for Evening is \$35.00 with finger food and beverages; for Matinee \$25 with concessions for sale. Tickets: makingconnexions.com/show

ST. PAUL'S UC, TILLSONBURG, COMMUNITY KITCHEN LUNCHEON

Every Saturday from October 15- April 29/23, 11:30 am-12:30 pm, A hot meal will be provided. All are welcome. Please use the ramp entrance to the church.

UCW FROSTY FAIR BAZAAR, Saturday, November 19 from 9-12:00 pm. Free Admission. Bake Table, Jam, Jellies, Pickles, Christmas Decorations, Knitting, Sewing & Crafts.

MESSY CHURCH: December 3, 10-12 noon, **'It's a Wonkey Donkey Christmas'** Families welcome, come and enjoy crafts, music and stories with a meal to follow.

MT ELGIN COMMUNITY CENTRE – An Afternoon of Music with **KILEY JOE Masson and his Rhythm Associates** (Don Maxwell, Kenny Archer, Ray Ovington). **Sunday, December 4, 2:00 pm**, Mt Elgin Community Centre, Tickets \$30 per person. For more information call Joanne: 519-485-1988 or Dawne: 519-421-6836, Proceeds to the on going ministry of Mt. Elgin United Church.

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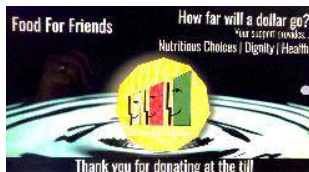
OPERATION SHARING

Christmas comes with cold weather.

Operation Sharing's Fall newsletter, *Helping in Unity*, suggests ways we can help – Coats for Kids and Adults with Marilyn Schmiedl, Christmas Place shopping with Kathy Gardiner, the Coldest Night of the Year with Scott McKague (February 25). New day space coordinator, Lisa, is introduced and we're reminded of the ongoing 'cleaning up' for their Bullwinkle's Eatery. **Read their latest newsletter [here](#):**

Ongoing needs and volunteer opportunities are noted on their informative [website](#). For details, email info@operationsharing.ca, or call 519-320-1372 ext. 4.

FOOD FOR FRIENDS



Blessings on you as 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
Shout out to Mt Elgin UC which did a Donation Drive for The Inn! Pictured below is Pastor Lori Minler.



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 are noted for congregations with a vacancy.

Nov 13 ARWR, Cheryl-Ann Stadelbauer-Sampa + Staff

Nov 20 Janet Uren, Kintore + Brooksdale

Nov 27 Nancy Vandenberghe, College Ave.

Dec 4 Karen Willis, Innerkip

Dec. 11 Susan Cole, Knox Embro

OXFORD WORSHIP SERVICES

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

[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

Richwood UC – 9:30 am

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

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

Sweaburg, sweaburguc@gmail.com

West Oxford, currieb@sympatico.ca

Foldens, kirbymk02@gmail.com

[Trinity UC](#), Ingersoll

[Westminster UC](#), Thamesford

Willis UC, Drumbo open for in person service and conference call.

drumbocharge@hotmail.com

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FOR CHILDREN OF ALL AGES.

With a Little Help from our Friends

We feed the birds in winter so in the spring, when it is grass cutting time the bird feeder gets moved to its place behind the pine tree in the corner of the yard. Last spring, since there were a few seeds left in the feeder, I moved it into the garden.

This year we wanted sunflowers so I bought a package of seeds, thinking that seeds selected for growth might be more reliable than those relegated to bird feed.

When I opened the package, the seeds looked more like just the shells of seeds, as if the packaging machine was scraping out the last seeds in the bin. I planted and watered them anyway and waited. . . and watered and waited. Nothing happened.

A few weeks later when we began weeding, we noticed a couple of strange plants, already about 4 inches high. We left them. In another week they had doubled in size. They were not where we had planted the sunflower seed but about three meters away, not far from the bird feeder. We lived in hope. Then we noticed some buds and more growth and finally blooms. Sunflower blooms! I took a picture of them.



Had a finch or a cardinal in search of the perfect seed kicked out a couple of seeds that happened to land at just the right place?

We watched the sunflowers mature, grow old, bow their heads under the weight of seeds, as if in an extended prayer of thanksgiving. Then one afternoon we watched a goldfinch hang upside down under one of the seed heads, plucking out a seed or two. It was a tender moment of humility and grace.

GW

OXFORD UNITED REFUGEE SUPPORT COMMITTEE (OURS)

Bisrat Yamane is now in school full time. Habte Zecharias (co-sponsor with St. David's UC) reports Bisrat's mother, Freweini and his sisters have made their way to Holland, are fine and the girls are happy to be in school. They speak with Bisrat once a week.

We continue to pray for **17 additional refugees as they endure a long wait in difficult living conditions.**

Four Oxford County Churches have applied or are applying to sponsor these refugees.

Eleven of the refugees have approved applications and are awaiting the final steps that will bring them to Canada.

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.

Marj Martin (Chair of OURS)

An Afternoon of Music with



KILEY JOE
& his Rhythm Associates



Don Maxwell



Kenny Archer



Ray Orlington

Sunday, Dec 4, 2022 - 2:00pm
Mt. Elgin Community Centre
333204 Plank Line

Tickets: \$30/person

For More Information, Call:

Joanne: 519-485-1988 or Dawne: 519-421-6836

Proceeds to - On going ministry of Mt Elgin United Church

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UNITED CHURCH RURAL MINISTRY NETWORK'S latest



**ENews #22-
November 2022** is
available [here](https://ucrmn.ca/). The
Rural Church across

Canada shares stories, conducts Zoom
workshops, (like January 19, 2023 to
share experiences/concerns), etc. This
Network can be a helpful resource for
Oxford Rural Churches. Check it out
<https://ucrmn.ca/>

CLOSE TO OXFORD



Check out current
**Programs +
Possibilities.**
[webpage](#) [facebook](#)

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

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<https://www.grandriverbooks.ca/>
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SHARING CIRCLE VIA ZOOM

Join Rhonda Johns of Nations Uniting in
conversation about what is happening in
our communities, what we can do to help,
about Residential School Stories,
Traditional cultures, etc.

Monday, Nov 14, 2022 at 01:30 pm

Email nations.uniting@gmail.com for
zoom access.

**"Neighbor is not a
geographic term.
It is a moral concept."**

Rabbi Joachim Prinz

GRANDMOTHER'S TEA



November 30, 2022

Chapel of the Delawares, on
Six Nations Reserve.

Contact Phone: Rhonda Johns

519- (519) 445-2424

Noon – 2:00 pm

Potluck Lunch

A time of Friendship and Sharing

A program supported by Nations Uniting



[ARWRC webpage](#)

[Facebook page](#)

**Thank you to all who participated in
the Antler River Watershed Regional
Council Fall Meeting!**

The Friday, October 28 Session recording
is here: https://youtu.be/0WhzfDAJ_vI

The Saturday, October 29 Session recording is
here: https://youtu.be/K_7179pXu7g

Check out the important information
shared on the National Church's Insurance
Program.

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

Be sure that your Community of Faith is
listed on your Churchhub account.

Contact the ARW Region for assistance:
<https://arwrcucc.ca/contact-us/>

ARW Region: PRAYER CYCLE

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

Nov 13 [Charing Cross](#)

Nov 20 [Shiloh-Inwood](#)

Nov 27 [Maidstone-Gesto](#)

Dec 4 [St. David's, Woodstock](#)

Dec 11 [Siloam, London](#)

Dec 18 [Windsor: Korean](#)

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FOOD FOR THE SOUL

Advent

"A time to be born, a time to die, A time to sow and a time to reap. . ." will be recognized as the first two lines of a poem from the book of Ecclesiastes. (3:1-8)

It was folk singer Pete Seeger who put this poem to music and added the refrain:

"To everything, turn, turn, turn. There is a season, turn, turn, turn. And a time to every purpose under heaven." He also added the line **"A time of peace, I swear it's not too late."**

I was reminded of this when I began to think of Advent which begins November 27. With Advent, we get the story of John the Baptist who called people to prepare for the coming of Jesus, by turning from their sins.

In Luke's version of the story, John suggests things like, "If you have two coats and you know someone who has none, give her or him one of yours". (3:11) It was a call to be a good neighbour, to build a place of greater justice.

So, what are the turning points for us? There are many but here are three that come to mind.

1. Racism. One of my two grandmothers had a Mennonite background. The family came from Germany in 1720 to Buck's County, Pennsylvania. The family described the new land as "a wild place, filled with dangerous animals and the equally dangerous red man." We have come a long way from that, but we have a long way to go. We have September 30, a day of Truth and Reconciliation to keep us focused on that journey.

As I began to write this article, I could hear the bang, pop and crackle of fireworks. It was the Diwali celebration in northeast Woodstock where we live. Diwali is a festival of lights, a celebration by those of

the Hindu, Sikh and Jain faith of light over darkness, good over evil. How do we tell those celebrants that we are so pleased that they have found in Oxford a good place to live, work and raise their families and that we are delighted to have them as neighbours?

2. Housing and Hunger. Premier Ford is suggesting that we should be able to build three dwellings on the land we use for one. Maybe we do use too much land, but his plan to weaken the purview of the Conservation Authorities makes us nervous.

Hunger is as close as Operation Sharing and the Christmas Place. We commend the work and hopefully can respond to that need. But who is studying how to increase incomes? How about a pilot project in Oxford on a Guaranteed Annual Income?

3. The Climate Crisis. This last weekend some of us met at Trinity United, Ingersoll on how to deepen our discipleship response to the ecological crisis and climate change. There is a critical need to be a better neighbour to the planet that gives us life.

In Advent we hear once again, **"Turn, turn, turn". It is the way to Hope, Peace, Love and Joy.**

Blessings, Glen Wright, co-editor



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