

CONNECTIONS

News and Views of Oxford County United Churches

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The Mystery of New Life

The following is an overview of the Keynote address at the learning event at Trinity UC, Ingersoll, in early November with the [Rev. Dr. Jessica Hetherington](#).

DISCIPLESHIP FOR HEALING THE EARTH

Although as Christian disciples we worry about the ecological crisis, we seek ways to act which embody hope. Those of us attending were encouraged as Rev. Jessica led us through the stages of Witnessing, Lament, Who We Are in Creation so that we could answer the question: How we are to Respond? In future issues we will provide more details.

Witnessing: the ecological crisis from a Christian perspective. The Universe is old (13.7 billion years) but the speed at which this crisis is happening is unprecedented. The scientists at the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) state that we will have trouble meeting, within the next decade, the 1.5 degree Celsius Centigrade over pre-industrial temperatures. We are in the 6th Extinction period with widespread species extinction. In the 2 previous extinctions (250 million years ago) the

biodiversity loss took 10 million years to recover! Further, we have 20 million refugees today. By 2050, it is estimated that we will have 50 million!

Lament: to be brutally honest with God remembering God's actions in the past. Even though we feel numb or want to hide, **we trust that God** can handle our honest feelings of fear and despair. We look to the Psalms, Lamentations and Job knowing we are connected to God, to earth community and with each other.

Who are we in Creation? Everything is interconnected and interdependent in creation, but humans are a complex part of creation. Worldview is how the world functions. The present worldview, however, is divorced from the natural world. Starting with science, (Newton and Descartes) the physical world was isolated from humans and has been assumed to have no meaning. It was up to humans to conquer and master this physical world. We are indebted to Thomas Berry a geologist, and Sallie McFague, an eco-theologian who have challenged this worldview, encouraging us to re-interpret dogmas and doctrines in light of what we know from our earth sciences.

Creche scene knitted by Ruth Bailey of Princeton for Marg Murray + Dave Schell of Sweaburg



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Ecological literacy is about learning about plants inside our house or birds outside our windows.

We cannot care for what we do not know. We cannot know what we have not experienced.

How are we to respond? We respond not only as global citizens but also as Christian disciples – living our Christian belief out in the world. Discipleship is beyond ethics – Jesus not only fed the poor but also had a deep relationship with them – something beyond doing the right thing.



Costly discipleship is picking up our cross and carrying it – our response is saying ‘yes’ to the will of God for our lives.

We are hopeful as we live out our discipleship even in a burning world because we aren’t on our own. We pray and reflect and pay attention to experiencing God in the natural world around us. We understand the ecological crisis as being more than one more Justice issue. It is the reality of our planet. And all parts of our planet are connected. We are not alone. God is **with** us. We are part of community.

Vespers For our closing vesper service We placed tea lights on a world map where we



felt healing was most needed. Our souls were strengthened with the music of Susan Barta and Avori Barta in the service prepared

by Lori Minler and Lynne Dunlop.

We commend to you the newsletter of Rev. Dr. Jessica Hetherington, **Following in the World.** Sign up on [her website](#).

MM

CONNECTIONS – News and Views of Oxford County United Churches

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CONNECTIONS website

oxfordunitedministries.ca

Oxford United Ministries Facebook page

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

EDITORIAL

Christmas – the celebration of the wonderful mystery of how **“all things are made new or possible.”** Stories of coming together to heal the earth, to welcome new appointments/calls, to house the homeless (here or globally), to retain Camp Tanner and upcoming events to open our eyes to do the impossible, with God’s help!

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OXFORD United Churches—COMINGS AND GOINGS

CALLS/Appointments to a COMMUNITY OF FAITH.

- Rev Susan McIlveen has been called to Avondale – Otterville, 2023-01-01
- [Nancy Vandenberghe, Candidate, FT from 2023-01-01 to 2023-06-30 appointed to College Avenue UC.](#)

CONGREGATIONS IN SEARCH MODE

- Dundas St UC
- Kintore + Brooksdale UC

Retired Ministers

Living in Tillsonburg: Randy Covey (return) and Richard Hollingworth

CONDOLENCES

Fred Heeney 1929-2022



For years, Fred Heeney represented West Oxford UC at Oxford Presbytery. Most recently until church restructuring in 2019, he served on the Administration and Finance Committee. We remember and appreciate his faithful service. Student Minister Janine Lunn conducted his Funeral service on November 23 at West Oxford UC. Reportedly it was a beautiful gathering and send off for him. Sincere sympathy to his family, friends and church.

Fred crafted this creche scene which has been part of our family tradition for years. His instructions - simply 'push in or out.'



MM



OXFORD COUNTY OF ONTARIO HELPS UKRAINE

The cold increases AND the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine increases. This next wave of Ukrainians fleeing the war will be much bigger. The stalwart group of volunteers here in Oxford are helping those who are already here.

NEEDED: Host Families, support systems in the community and resources to help them settle here. We can be creative – get a few people together to sponsor a family, buy food or shelter, transportation.

New Warehouse at 126 Graham St in the old Hydro One building, graciously provided by the City of Woodstock and Community Employment Services. Open to Ukrainian families and refugees from other countries in need. Contact Irene Tiegs (519-536-5554)

Join their [Facebook page](#) to see how you can help.

Speakers Karen + David Murray, and Larisa Zhukova (an eye surgeon) are available to speak to groups. You can invite them by emailing them at oxfordhelpsukraine@gmail.com.

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



As the saying goes, the Stone Age did not end because we ran out of stones; we transitioned to better solutions. The same opportunity lies before us with energy efficiency and clean energy. [Steven Chu](#)

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CAMP TANNER

At the Annual General Meeting on Friday, November 25, 10 Board

Members were successfully recruited to fill the key positions of Chair - Justin Murray; Treasurer - Kim Slager; Secretary - Sheila Greason; Registrar - Gail Kavelman. After meeting with the new owner of the property, the executive is very hopeful of a promising relationship. Plans are already underway for summer camp of 2023.

Appreciation is extended to those who have offered their skill set and time.

Contact information for Treasurer Kim Slager is 515375 11th Line, Woodstock, N4S 8G1, (519 539 8777)

**NEEDED: 5 Board Members
for Camp Tanner. Contact Sheila
Greason at greasonsn@gmail.com**

"every day somewhere in the world the nativity scene is alive."



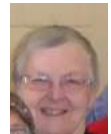
Piece for December

The phone rang; an excited voice bubbling with joy shared good news: we have a new great grand daughter as of this morning. She is called Huldah or Hilda, like the famous Jewish scholar of the Old Testament. Let's hope she will be as clever and wise as her namesake.

I admit I had to look her up in my Bible Dictionary where I remembered that in her times the patriarchy was more open to women's spiritual and mental gifts, less closed to women leaders like Sarah, Anna, or Deborah.

I have not known many girls called Hilda but I like the way it rolls off my tongue. I hope it becomes a more popular name in future; I hope it reminds us that women of faith were expected to teach the children the writings, stories and habits of faith in God. Have been tickled all day thinking and rejoicing in the delight my friend is taking in her new great grand daughter. What a marvelous early Christmas gift!

Olga McKellar



CHURCH EVENTS

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.

SWEABURG UC Christmas Eve,

Please join us for the Christmas Eve Service that has been greatly missed for the last two years, in person at Sweaburg UC at 8:15. For a time of song and reflection. A free will offering will be split between Operation Sharing and Sakura House. The Bell will ring at 8:00 pm.

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OPERATION SHARING

The November 21 post on their [Facebook page](#) shows a short video on their renovated space and programs. The need for warm clothing, food and non-taxable items continues as stated on their [website page](#).

Read their Fall 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.

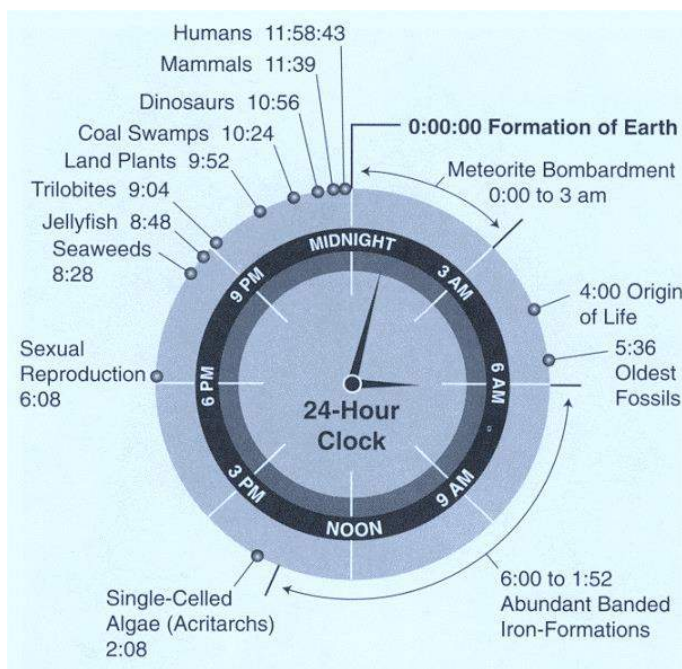
FOOD FOR FRIENDS



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

24-hour CLOCK



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.

Dec. 11 Susan Cole, Knox Embro
Dec 18 Janice Pow PCS Burgessville
Dec 25 Lori Minler, Mt. Elgin
Jan 1 Karlene Brown-Palmer, St Paul's (T'burg), Karen Hodges CDM, Maurice Francis VAM, Bonnie Pilkey VAM
Jan 8 Susan McIlveen, Avondale - Otterville
Jan 15 Lori Minler, Newark
Jan 22 [Licensed Lay Worship Leaders](#)
Jan 29 Tracy Crick-Butler, Trinity UC, Ingersoll, Judy Campbell VAM

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.

'The Strawberry Poison Dart Frog

In the country of Costa Rica lives this amazing Strawberry Poison Dart Frog. The "poison dart" in its name comes from the



fact that its skin is poison. Indigenous people once used blow darts. They discovered that if they rubbed the dart across the

skin of this frog it took on the poison which helped in hunting.

The amazing thing about this frog is how it looks after its baby tadpoles. The eggs are laid after a rain, in a small pool of water in the forest. The problem with this is sometimes this water dries up before the baby tadpole grows into an adult frog. However, there is a tree in Costa Rica that has cup shaped leaves that collect water. The adult frog, usually the mother, goes to the tadpole, gets the tadpole to cling to her back, climbs the tree and deposits the tadpole into its new home, one tadpole per leaf cup. Since there is nothing to eat in these leaf cups, she lays an egg for food for each tadpole. She keeps doing that until the tadpole grows into a frog. Then she loads the baby frog onto her back and heads down the tree where the baby can find a home on the forest floor.

Now isn't that just amazing? There's a sister with the problem-solving ability to ensure the survival of her species; for us an ability much admired and much needed.

GW

OXFORD UNITED REFUGEE SUPPORT COMMITTEE (OURS)

Sponsorship donations always 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)**

UNITED CHURCH RURAL MINISTRY NETWORK



The uniqueness of rural churches is no surprise to us in Oxford! Still, it can be valuable to share our stories with each other. This UC Rural Ministry Network recommends the "Rural Café" Process, a valuable help in the story telling process. Download it or use it online. It is a disciplined process - **"The 'story telling' experience is to listen, not judge or offer advice or try to fix it. AND not to compare yourselves to the other - God has blessed each of us with different gifts"**. Find the resource here <https://ucrmn.ca/resources/> and read the latest **ENews #22- November 2022** [here](#).

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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To order call 1-888-668 0871; email sales@grandriverbooks.com; online <https://www.grandriverbooks.ca/>
Mail delivery \$5.00.

SHARING CIRCLE VIA ZOOM

Monday, January 30, 1:30 – 3:30 pm, To join contact [Rhonda Johns](#).

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Grandmothers Tea

January 25, 2023



Hosting Community of Faith:
For the New Year of
2023 month of January

St. Thomas Anglican Church
110 Francis St. Cambridge, ON
N1S 2A1
Contact: 1-519-623-5400

Time: Noon - 2:00 pm

Hello Everyone,
Come to a potluck lunch
Bring your favorite dish.
For the time of
Friendship and Sharing

Struggling to Balance the Budget?

Wednesday, Jan 11, 7:00 – 8:30 pm

Anxious about finances? Curious about
Options to Increase Revenue and Reduce
Expenses?

DEFICIT DILEMMA WORKSHOP

Join the workshop with this Zoom link:

[https://united-
church.zoom.us/j/82313360309](https://united-church.zoom.us/j/82313360309)

Any questions, email [Lynne Allin](mailto:Lynne.Allin).

ARW Region: PRAYER CYCLE

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

Dec 11 Siloam, London
Dec 18 Windsor: Korean
Dec 25 Otterville
Jan 1 Emmanuel, Windsor
Jan 8 First-St. Andrew's, London
Jan 15 First, St. Thomas
Jan 22 Villages United
Jan 29 Princeton/Etonia

A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM MODERATOR CARMEN LANDSDOWNE



You can listen to it [here](#)
Moderator Carmen offers us
her church family an uplifting
Christmas message of how our
faith reminds us **that all**

**things are made new or possible again
in the coming of the Christ child.** The
Good news gifts of beauty, peace,
goodness, comfort, joy, redemption,
vulnerability and salvation are ours to
share. She encourages us to **Be the Good
News, See the Good News and Share
the Good news this Christmas season.**
Grateful for her Christmas message which
is a wonderful blessing.



[ARWRC webpage](#)

[Facebook page](#)

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

**Ensure that your Community of Faith
is listed on your Churchhub account.**

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

**Note: New Mission and Service
Transfer Deadline is Sunday,
January 15, 2023.**

All 2022
Community of Faith Mission and Service
donations need to be transferred by
January 15, 2023. Transfers received after
January 15, 2023, will be designated for
2023.

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FOOD FOR THE SOUL

Advent Part II – The Other Joshua

"A young woman will conceive and bear a son and he will be called the son of the most high." When that long awaited word came to Mary, the son was given a name. "You shall call him Jeshua," said the angel. We know the name as Joshua, which meant "the one who saves" or "the one who delivers". "He will save us from our sins" adds Matthew.

When the text was translated into Greek, Yeshua or Joshua became Iesous. Some of you may remember the letters IHS on a banner or a cross. These were Iota, Eta and Sigma, the first three letters of Iesous. We know what the original Joshua delivered. It was Jericho. "Joshua fit the Battle of Jericho". If you google that spiritual you will get Mahalia Jackson's wonderful version. If you remember the story, the walls came down without a spear being thrown, or a sword being drawn.

What if our sins are wall building and Jesus is the one who lived and died to bring down walls. Mary seemed to indicate that when she broke into the poetry of Isaiah the prophet when she heard the angels' birth announcement: "The mighty will be brought from their thrones and the lowly will be raised up. The poor will be fed and the rich will go away empty."

The ministry of Jesus was one of getting rid of the walls that had been built by religious authorities. His was a ministry of inclusion. We remember the Samaritan woman at the well, or the one man, a Samaritan, who came back to thank Jesus for his healing. We recall that Jesus refused to vilify the Roman soldier who asked that his daughter be healed. The story of the Good



Samaritan takes on new meaning if it was a parable and not an event. That certain man was on his way from Jerusalem to Jericho. We are all on the Jericho journey.

Are the walls coming down? The Santa Clause parade in Toronto this year was led by a float depicting the Indigenous creation story, a not so small sign of respect from a European culture bent on genocide. At the end of the summit on world poverty, the poorer nations brought forward a plea to compensate them for the pollution caused by the richer countries. The poorer countries are the first to suffer in the climate crises. Church communities have long shut out members of the LGBTQ2S community but that is changing.

Last Sunday was the third in Advent. The theme was joy. Remember what Elizabeth said about the baby in her womb when pregnant Mary came into the room. "He jumped for joy!" Those walls of judgement that had crept into Mary's head suddenly vanished. **It was just the beginning of the life of this Joshua/Jesus who would bring down walls on the way to peace on earth.**

Next Sunday in worship we light the candle of love. Along with the carols will be that other tune that I can't quite get out of my head. "Joshua (the other one whose birth we celebrate) fit the battle of . . . and the walls came tumbling down." Hallelujah!

Merry Christmas.

Glen Wright, co-editor

