

CONNECTIONS

News and Views of Oxford County United Churches

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AT LAST - GOOD NEWS FOR REFUGEES

(Editorial comment. Refugees leave their homeland where they are subject to persecution or death. Most can never return. They can live for years in a no person's land awaiting approval to come to a safe country. [There are 23 million refugees under The UN Refugee Agency's mandate.](#))

We want to provide you with some updates concerning our sponsored refugees.

With **Bisrat Yemane's** arrival, **St David's UC sponsored Eritrean refugee**, we hoped we might be welcoming others soon. Bisrat is now living with a relative in Guelph and working at an automobile parts manufacturing company. We have recently received welcome news that **Sara Temnewu and her 3 children** (shown



here Lt-Rt: Fithawi, Selam, Sara and Naod), being sponsored by St David's, have an interview on March 10 in

preparation for their move to Canada after 3 long years of waiting in Ethiopia under dangerous conditions. St David's await word that will tell them that another 2 young men also have an interview date.

Trinity United's sponsored **Al-Mohammedawi family of 5** has recently received word that they will be interviewed on March 1. They have been waiting since



2017 as refugees in Turkey to hear this news. (shown below Lt-Rt: Wisam, Nedi Al-Saadi, Anaam, Razan, Shahad). They are excited and grateful that the final steps in the procedure to bring them to Canada will soon be starting. They will be living in London to be close to the co-sponsor, the father's sister and her family.

Knox United is waiting to hear that the application to sponsor **Maqssoud**, an Afghani refugee in Islamabad, Pakistan, has been approved. There is troubling news regarding expired visas of Afghan refugees in Pakistan. Maqssoud is in that position but a return to Afghanistan to renew his visa could be a death sentence for him. Recently it has been published in a CBC article that the Afghan government is not going to arrest or deport Canada bound Afghan refugees but will impose fines and possibly blacklist them from reentering Pakistan. What a catch 22 situation to be in! There are probably thousands of Afghan refugees in the same position.

Westminster United has submitted their application for a Syrian family of 5 living as refugees in Lebanon. The **Hamoudi** family consists of a single mother and 4 children. Westminster has learned that the United Church refugee office is considering a plan to allow fund raising to continue while the application is being processed instead of having to have all the funds in place before that begins. This will shorten an already extended time period for the family to wait.

Both Knox and Westminster continue to fund raise and your donations to help bring these people to our beautiful, safe country of promise would be appreciated. **On Feb 21 you could travel to Knox United,**

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CAMP TANNER

HIRING Year-Round Camp Tanner Co-ordinator

Applications are being accepted for the position of Camp Tanner Co-ordinator. The successful applicant would be responsible for the planning of the 2023 camps, assisting with the hiring of staff, promotion of the camp, and training of staff. For a complete job description, please refer to the [Camp Tanner website](#). Resumes with two letters of reference may be submitted to camptannerstaffing@gmail.com.

2023 Key Contacts:

Board Chair: Justin Murray 519-303-1995
jdwmurray6@gmail.com

Registrar: Gail Kavelman 519-709-0282
gkavelman@gmail.com

Treasurer Kim Slager, 515375 11th Line,
Woodstock, N4S 8G1, 519-539-8777
Meet the rest of the [board](#).

OXFORD COUNTY OF ONTARIO HELPS UKRAINE

Volunteer hosts needed to provide shelter temporarily for families arriving now.

ALSO NEEDED support systems – rides to work etc.

New Warehouse at 126 Graham St (old Hydro One) is open to Ukrainian families and refugees from other countries. Contact Irene Tiegs (519-536-5554)

To find out more about how to help, join their [Facebook page](#) or ask Karen + David Murray, and Larisa Zhukova (an eye surgeon) to speak to groups. Contact oxfordhelpsukraine@gmail.com.

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



WORLD DAY OF PRAYER

Informed Prayer and Prayerful Action



Even though Taiwan has a wide diversity of religions, all religions co-exist with few conflicts! And Christianity has contributed significantly to education and medical care. On going blessings of the outreach of Rev. George MacKay from Embro!

The background paper about Taiwan is [here](#). The theme is: **"I have heard about your faith" based on Ephesians 1:15-19.**

Virtual Oxford

Unfortunately, due to the death of my brother, I am unable to organize it this year.

BUT there are 2 Excellent options through the Women's Interchurch Council of Canada (WICC):

1. The full-length WDP 2023 - Taiwan service video is now available on wicc.org! You can watch it anytime!
2. There will be a **NATIONAL** online WDP 2023 service on **Saturday, March 4th** at 1 pm EST. Breakout rooms before and after the service will give folk a chance to "catch up", talk and share your thoughts. **To join this service, and receive the Zoom link,** please go to <https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/national-world-day-of-prayer-2023-virtual-service-tickets-517837414647>



Donations to World Day of Prayer 2023

Donations are encouraged online at <https://wicc.org/donations/>. Donations are gratefully received for the Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada's grant program. In 2021/2022, 15 grants totalling \$58,500 were distributed nationally and internationally to help restore social justice. You can [read more](#).

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CHURCH EVENTS

Norwich UC, Norwich

3rd ANNUAL FAMILY DAY GAME CAFÉ

Monday, Feb. 20, 12-8 pm, 200+ Games for all ages, Snacks, Game Hosts, Score 44 and More, Play a fun old favourite or try something new! Admission Free – Donations Welcome. Call 519-863-3637

ST. PAUL'S UC, TILLSONBURG:

COMMUNITY KITCHEN WEEKLY LUNCH Every Saturday until April 29/23, 11:30 am-12:30 pm. A hot meal will be provided. All are welcome.

MESSY CHURCH PROGRAM

'March of the Penguins' on March 4 from 10:00 – 12 noon. Join us for crafts, games and lunch to follow.

ROY LEBLANC, an international award winning Elvis Impersonator, March 11 at 2:00 pm. Tickets \$25, Call Dianne Parnell at 519-871-3454.



**FOR THE LOVE
OF CREATION**

Norwich United Creation Care Team

reminds us to look ahead.

During the week of April 16 – 23, engage in a climate justice activity...praying, learning, acting.

Earth Week 2023 – Together for the Love of Creation

For the Love of Creation is a widely supported Canadian faith-based initiative for climate Justice.

<https://fortheloveofcreation.ca/> For 'how to' guides to encourage dialogue on climate change see their section on ENGAGEMENT.

There are 3 guides available: Creation, Climate and You; From Concern to Action; and Building a Better Future.

Obituary REV DAVID FEARON



The Reverend David Sheldon Fearon died at the age of 84, peacefully in his home in Nanaimo, Vancouver Island, B.C.

at the beginning of January, 2023.

David was minister at Norwich UC from 1981-1988. Marie Avey notes in her recent book 'The Church that Spawned a Village' that it was a harmonious ministry. CONNECTIONS reported on the story of his Biblical scholarship in [March 2020](#) page 4.

David's story is told in more detail in [this article](#) in the Los Angeles' **blade**. According to United Church Retired minister Rev. David Shearman, "Fearon's story is one of challenging scriptural interpretation, mistranslation and acknowledging a unique and special call to ministry. **He is one of the pioneers and saints of the United Church of Canada.**

His scholarly challenge to established scriptural translation is yet to be fully disclosed but will be the subject of an upcoming book to be published in mid-2023." Rest in Peace, David Fearon.

PRAYERS We pray for all leaders and especially those with life changing diagnoses.

We keep in our hearts: the **Rev. Jim Evans** and his wife Karen Paton-Evans. Jim, a former member of Oxford Presbytery, serving New Vision UC, St. Thomas, is presently at Sakura House with a cancerous brain tumour. **Olga McKellar** recently underwent surgery for a new hip and is currently in Rehab in Woodstock. **Rev Susan McIlveen's** call to Avondale-Otterville United Churches has been delayed due to a health issue which is being addressed in Winnipeg.

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OPERATION SHARING



On going need for non-taxable items such as personal hygiene products, etc.. Call 519-320-1372. Operation Sharing's website notes that they are accepting spring clothing.

See their [website](https://www.operationsharing.ca) for ongoing needs and volunteer opportunities. For details, email info@operationsharing.ca, or call 519-320-1372 ext. 4.

Food For Friends



Blessings for giving a Dollar at the till for others to make nutritious choices so they can shop with dignity.

Donations - on their [website](https://www.operationsharing.ca) or mail Treasurer of Operation Sharing, P.O. Box 20081, Woodstock, Ontario, N4S 8X8



COLDEST NIGHT OF THE YEAR (CNOY)

This year's challenge is to raise money to help those experiencing homelessness, hurt and hunger.

On February 25 be part of either a 2 or a 5 km winterific walk which is also hosted in 170 + communities across Canada.

To register, visit cnoy.org and click on the REGISTER button.

Scenes from last year's effort, are available on Operation Sharing's website.

The Little White Church at the End of the Road – Story of Life, Loss, and Hope

Karli Longthorne curated this story of Eastwood United Church for PARO (People's Archives of Rural Ontario, University of Guelph) Featured are 2 lifelong church goers, Sylvia Longthorne and Jacquie MacLeod. [A must see and hear story!](#)

OXFORD WORSHIP SERVICES

Check with individual churches re in-person worship, streaming or conference call services. Churches in blue have websites or Facebook Pages. Note 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

Princeton/Etonia Pastoral Charge, , alternating monthly joint services at 10:00 am. **February Services hosted by Princeton.**

Richwood UC – 9:30 am

St. David's UC, Woodstock

St. Paul's UC, Tillsonburg

Southwest Oxford UC: Facebook

janinemlunn@gmail.com

Sweaburg, sweaburguc@gmail.com

West Oxford, currieb@sympatico.ca

Foldens, kirbymk02@gmail.com

Trinity UC, Ingersoll

Westminster UC, Thamesford

Willis UC, Drumbo open for both in person service and conference call. drumbocharge@hotmail.com



STITCH SUPPER CLUB

[Facebook page](#)

[here](#), [website here](#) **Supper Club is each Thursday at Trinity UC in Ingersoll. 4:30-6 pm.**

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FOR CHILDREN OF ALL AGES.

The Semipalmated Sandpiper

What if your name was longer than you are? We could say that about one of the marathon athletes of the bird world - the "Semipalmated Sandpiper". The bird has webbing between its toes so it can better walk on mud or wet sand. The word "palmated" means webbed.



This shore bird, about 6 inches from beak to tail and weighing less than 2 ounces, nests in summer in the Canadian Arctic. The new born chicks are walking and looking for insects to eat soon after they hatch. In less than three weeks they are flying, which is absolutely amazing.

These Sandpipers fly south for the winter and on their way, most of the ones born in the eastern Arctic, stop for rest and food on the mud flats of Nova Scotia's Bay of Fundy. There they fill up on insects and crustaceans.

What is remarkable is they are able to fly nonstop for three days to get to the Bay of Fundy and then fly nonstop over water for another three days to get to their winter home in South America. That would be for us like running at full speed for three days and nights without food or sleep.

What an awesome little bird. There are birds that fly even farther to their summer home. But that is a story for next month.

GW

SAVE THE DATE (and your stuff!)

Re-Use-A Palooza

April 22 – Earth Day

Sweaburg Pavilion

UNITED CHURCH RURAL MINISTRY NETWORK (UCRMN)

Connecting rural stories with rural people across Canada

The January 19 Zoom Workshop 'Checking in with the Rural Church' was a wonderful chat with United Church Canadians. The Rev. Dr. Peter Bartlett summarized [General Council's Strategic Plan](#) showing the relationship between call, vision, values, commitments and affirmations.



You can download this graphic [here](#). In discussing 'Can you see yourself in this?' there

was a strong sense that rural concerns were ignored. **We were encouraged to bring our concerns of poverty, health care and big business taking over the community to our Regional Councils to be addressed.**

And yet. Still. Amazing things are happening across Canada. I was really impressed by the story of retired Rev. Carole McKenzie. She is one of 3 volunteers who help with the **Star City Community Pantry** which supplies groceries to up to 13 people/week with a monthly cost of about \$1000. Amazing given that the population of Star City is 460 and their congregation numbers 3-8 people on any Sunday. The pantry is open to all every Thursday afternoon and has grown to be a meeting place with coffee and cookies. Seeing is believing! Watch this Edgy Conversation with Carole McKenzie from the Emerging Spirit website. <https://youtu.be/FLef2pKBbWc> "People who have more than enough are sharing with people who have less than enough."

Find the UCRMN newsletter at <https://ucrmn.ca/> with Eric Skillings (formerly of Oxford!)

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OXFORD PRAYER CYCLE



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

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

Feb 12 Hickson

Feb 19 Hebron, Jane Van Patter PCS

Feb 26 Norwich, Janice Pow, DLM

Mar 5 Princeton Etonia, Jane Baxter SM, Ken Jackson, PCS

Mar 12 Foldens, Janine Lunn SM, Lynne Dunlop PCS

Mar 19 Sweaburg + West Oxford, Janine Lunn, SM, Mary Anne Silverthorne PCS

CLOSE TO OXFORD



Explore current **Programs + Possibilities.**

[webpage](#) [facebook](#)

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[ARWRC webpage](#)

[Facebook page](#)

Subscribe [here](#) to the newsletter of Antler River Watershed. See their February 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/>

ARW Region: PRAYER CYCLE

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

Feb 12 [Thorndale](#)

Feb 19 [Leamington](#)

Feb 26 [Ivan](#)

DEFICIT DILEMMA WORKSHOP

Deficits make us anxious and drain our energy. Subjects addressed on January 11, included the importance for leadership to remain calm and to make a plan. We were reminded that we are not in the building management business; and **talk about money needs to be paired with how money helps us live out the Gospel.** This worthwhile event was hosted by the 3 regional councils of Antler River Watershed, Western Ontario Waterways and Horseshoe Falls with over 185 people in attendance! **If you missed this workshop or would like to review the content, a link to both the recording and the PowerPoint slides are available on our regional council website under [Congregational Support Toolkits](#) see #12 - Community of Faith Finances.** Develop scenario budgeting to describe possibilities (e.g. if renters leave) with a plan. Certainties and unknowns apply to both income and expenses. Check out propelnonprofits.org (search 'scenario planning'). Make online giving easy. Available grants and resources. Etc. Etc.



General Secretary, Michael Blair addressed Regina

Churches on the background of the Strategic Plan of the National church Call. The new words DEEP BOLD DARING echo the ancient words in 2 Corinthians 3:12 'With that kind of hope to excite us, nothing holds us back.' The church has been invited into a process of discernment for its future – decolonized, anti-racist, humble, collaborative and interdependent. Blair's address starts at 10:00 min on https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EVqJZj_19mE

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FOOD FOR THE SOUL

Paths to Peace and Justice - part one

In first-century Palestine there were **at least three theologies or three paths to a world of peace and justice.**

Rome's theology was quite simple. The emperor Caesar called himself the saviour of the world. On every coin, including those used by Jesus and his disciples, were the words, "Caesar Son of God". **Peace was to be kept by military force.**

When King Herod died about 4 BCE, there was the threat of revolution. To restore order the military was brought in. Two thousand of the resisters were rounded up and crucified. "Peace" was restored.

Another theology involving violence was that of John the Baptist. His message was to get your life in order because the Messiah was on his way and God was about to separate the wheat from the chaff. **If you were judged to be chaff, you would be burned.**

This may have come from Isaiah 62. The writer uses the image, not of threshing, but that of a wine press. As God's enemies are squeezed, blood will flow like wine. The author of the book of Revelation uses the same image. (14:20)

The third path to God's kingdom, as we know, was that of Jesus.

At the beginning of his ministry, Jesus went into the synagogue in Nazareth and was asked to read in worship. (Luke 4:15-19) He was handed the scroll of Isaiah. He selected verses 61:1-2a: As Luke records it, **God's redeeming plan was to bring good news to the poor, release to the captives, sight to the blind and set the captives free.** Missing was the line in Isaiah's statement: "To proclaim the day of

the Lord's vengeance". Jesus left it out. This may have been the most important words never spoken. Then Jesus adds. "This has been fulfilled." The kingdom of God is already here, though there is still much work to be done.

The response was stunned silence followed by the statement "Isn't this Joseph's son?" Jesus recognized a put-down when he heard one. Carpenters were part of the peasant class. There was no middle class in Palestine in the first century. The son of Joseph would have no authority to speak.

Now it was Jesus' turn to respond. He cited a couple of examples where God had chosen the outcast. One was that, while there were many lepers in Israel, God had chosen Naaman, a leper from Syria, for healing.

It was only then that the crowd got angry, grabbed Jesus and took him to the brow of a hill to push him to his death.

Jesus had outlined the trajectory of his ministry: raising up those society had designated as the lowly: **bringing the outcasts back to the center.** Jesus Seminar scholar John Dominic Crossan describes the ministry of Jesus as Radical Egalitarianism. That was the path for Jesus, and for us, to a world of greater peace and justice.

So, how are we doing in that path of discipleship, after nearly 2000 years? Is the world moving toward less or toward more violence? What do you think?



Blessings, *Glen Wright, co-editor*
....to be continued.



Read how Chloe Cooley's act of resistance in 1793 started changes in slavery in Canada. See [here](#).