

CONNECTIONS

News and Views of Oxford County United Churches

Vol 5 Issue 3

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UNIQUE NEW SHARED MINISTRY

During the height of the pandemic, Michael Shewburg and I talked about the possibility of a collaborative ministry agreement with our neighbouring churches. While we had some conversations with others, it seemed that **St. Paul's United Church in Paris**



(SPUC) where I am the full-time minister, and **Richwood United Church (RUC)** where Michael is the ¼ time minister, would be the two that could best work together

at this time. We began more formal chats with our respective church boards, as well as our Regional Council Minister of Congregational Support, Rev. Lynne Allin, in Spring 2022. Once the conversation began, things happened quickly! By October 1st, 2022, our agreement was in place, and we started our new relationship with one another.



Collaborative Ministries look different from one community to the next and are based on the needs of the communities who are entering into these agreements. The way our agreement works is that I lead worship at both Richwood and St. Paul's three Sundays in any given month, and Michael leads worship once a month. In the months of five Sundays or neither of us is available to lead, we have a list of pulpit supply leaders who help us out.

In the weeks I am not leading Sunday worship, I am able to lead or create alternative worship services, events, or activities for both SPUC and RUC. It has also been a great opportunity for Michael and me to get creative about shared services like Anniversary Sundays, Holy Week, and Easter Sunday.

I believe that one of the things that has made this shared ministry so successful is that Michael and I are part of larger group of 6 colleagues in

the United Church, who serve congregations between Toronto and London and represent 3 different regional councils. For the past 3 years, we have been meeting online weekly to collaborate and share resources that enhance the ministries we offer. We have used the following book studies as a guide for our worship services and bible studies: "We Make the Road by Walking" Brian McLaren; "And She Said: Monologues on Biblical Women" Betty Radford Turcott; and are currently working through "Alphabet of Faith" by Sara Jewell. We've enjoyed bouncing preaching ideas off one another, and have also done virtual guest preaching in times when our services were online. We've supplemented seasonal worship resources from [Sanctified Art for Advent and Christmas, and Lent and Easter](#).

We are just about to enter the 6th month of this agreement between Richwood UC, and St. Paul's UC, and so far, so good! The greatest advice I can give **to anyone who is considering a shared ministry agreement is this: remain open to the Spirit's leading. Don't let history, or pre-conceived notions guide the way you want to be in relationship.** One of our guiding principles as we planned what our ministry together would look like came from the regional council template for drafting our agreement, and it simply says this: **"As neighboring congregations in this covenant relationship, we commit to exploring ways of supporting each other and of building bonds of Christian community between us."** We



hope our story will help inspire other congregations who are considering shared ministry to go for it!

Rev Sarah (Grady) Horvath provided this feature article. Sarah formerly served Curries + Oxford Centre U.C and married Paul Horvath, Nov. 5, 2022, at St. Paul's UC, Paris.

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Submissions no greater than 250 words will be considered and are due by Noon Friday, April 7, 2023

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Oxford United Ministries Facebook page

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

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Huh. Record profits... record poverty.

It's almost as if the two are connected.



EDITORIAL

In this season of Lent, let us read our faith stories through the lens of all being God's Beloved, affirming our uniqueness and also that we were created for connections – to God, to others, to all created things. For it is our uniqueness which helps us develop new shared ministries, be a learning circle to covenant with a student minister, be a counsellor for Camp Tanner, welcome refugees, provide a much-needed homeless shelter, offer caring support for those grieving.

Oxford United Churches are predominantly rural in an increasingly urban county. Sharing our faith stories that we might better understand each other and help encourage each other. I was encouraged by the women of Taiwan as they shared their unique faith stories for the World Day of Prayer. All of these are signs of God's work in the world. We are blessed.



PRINCETON-ETONIA Covenants with Jane Baxter



*Left to Right:
Ruth Mills, Jane Baxter, Linn Shea, Debra Ward.*

On February 26, 2023, Princeton-Etonia Pastoral Charge held a covenanting service with their Student Minister Jane Baxter, her Lay Supervisory Team and three members of her Circle of Accompaniment. **Jane is in a Supervised Ministry Education appointment until September 30, 2024.** The celebration included music ministry of a trio of singers as well as a duet of violin and piano. A time of refreshment and fellowship followed the worship service.

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CAMP TANNER REGISTRATION FOR CAMPS OPENS March 14

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

Junior camp is for kids ages 7-10.

Intermediate camp is for kids ages 10-13.

Senior camp is for kids ages 12-15.

HIRING – ALL POSITIONS Apply now.

APPLICATIONS CLOSE MARCH 18

Thinking about applying to be on the Camp Tanner Staff team this summer?

This is your reminder to apply now.

To apply go to www.camptanner.ca/staff and fill out an application.

If you have any questions, please reach out to camptannerstaffing@gmail.com.

They will happily walk you through the process.

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, N4S8G1, 519-539-8777
Meet the rest of the [board](#).



OXFORD U.C. COMINGS AND GOINGS CONGREGATIONS IN SEARCH MODE

- Hebron UC
- Dundas St UC
- Kintore +
Brooksdale UC



OXFORD COUNTY OF ONTARIO HELPS UKRAINE

"February 23 marked the one-year anniversary of Russia invading Ukraine 🇺🇦. Karen and I (David Murray) pray for you and your families here and overseas. For those who have settled in Oxford County you have enriched our lives."

David [streamed](#) the Candle-lit Vigil in solidarity with Ukraine in London on February 24 - a touching testimonial to the resilience of Ukrainian people.

Still needed: Volunteer hosts to provide shelter. **ALSO NEEDED** support systems – rides to work etc. **To find out more about how to help, join** their [Facebook page](#) or ask Karen + David Murray, and Larisa Zhukova to speak to groups. Contact oxfordhelpsukraine@gmail.com.

Thank you to all who have helped.

All help is deeply appreciated!

CHURCH EVENTS

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.

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

ETONIA UC, ALL YOU CAN EAT SPAHETTI SUPPERS.

101 Hwy #2, Etonia (wheelchair accessible), **First Wednesday of month** (October – May). Time: 5:00-6:30 pm; Cost: Adults \$20, children (12 and under) \$5, pre-schoolers free. Take out available. Check out [PrincetonEtonia Facebook](#) for cancellation due to weather.

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OPERATION SHARING



Ongoing needs and ways to volunteer are on their [website](https://www.operationsharing.ca), or call 519-320-1372

ext. 4 or email info@operationsharing.ca.

OPERATION SHARING IS GROWING



The above is also the hotlink to CBC article on opening the needed shelter. Below, Shawn Shapton, Executive Director of Operation Sharing proudly shows off the newly opened homeless

shelter, **Tillsonburg**

INN Out of the Cold,

which came together within a month. They are truly appreciative of the help and support from everyone who

made this happen. **Avondale U.C.** for hosting the Inn; **Healing Hearts Tillsonburg** (Facebook group) for their generous donation of bedding, clothing and hygiene products. This group grew from 3 in October 22 to over 700 this month! *(MM's personal note. In 1982 a number of us answered God's call to start Operation Sharing. Until 1996, I served 11 years at Avondale Zion UC. Thanks be to God for this opening of hearts and doors.)*



FOOD FOR FRIENDS

Blessings for your Dollar at the till so others can shop with dignity and make nutritious choices.

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)

raised over \$175,000 this year. Shout out to ALL who participated and organizer Scott McKague.



CARING HEART SUPPORT NETWORK – at St. David's UC, Woodstock.

For events requiring pre-registration please call/text 519-536 3370.

www.caringheartssupportnetwork.com

Wednesday, March 15: Food For

Grieving Hearts, Wednesday, March 15. 5:30 - 7:30 pm. Cost is \$10.00. Anyone who is grieving the loss of a loved one is welcome to attend. Pre-registration is required by March 10.

Thursday, March 23: Powers of

Attorney, Wills and much more. Join The Caring Hearts Support Network at 7:00 pm. Lawyer Tom Henderson of Nesbitt Coulter, and David Harris of Green Private Wealth Harbourfront Wealth Management, discuss these very important topics. Question and answer period will follow as well as light refreshments. Join us for this Free event. Registration not required.

Saturday, March 25. Death and Donuts. Come join us to have lighthearted conversations about some thought-provoking topics all while enjoying coffee and donuts. Saturday March 25, 10 am - Noon. Pre-registration is required by March 23.

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.

Mar 12 Foldens, Janine Lunn SM,
Lynne Dunlop PCS

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

Mar 26 Drumbo, Ken Jackson RS,

April 2 Dundas St, Margaret Trapnell RS

April 9 Richwood UC, Michael Shewburg
+ Sarah (Grady) Horvath


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CALLING ALL CLIMATE ACTIVISTS:

A poster for 'Give it up for the Earth! 2023'. It features a green globe with the text 'GIVE IT UP' arched above it and 'FOR THE EARTH!' arched below it. Below the globe, it says 'Take action to reduce emissions, build solidarity with Indigenous Peoples, and call for federal action to achieve climate justice.' and 'February 22 - April 6, 2023'. At the bottom, there are logos for 'CITIZENS FOR PUBLIC JUSTICE' and 'FOR THE LOVE OF CREATION', along with the website 'cpj.ca/fortheearth'.

Give it up for the Earth! 2023

includes three action items:

- [Access resources](#)
- [Biodiversity Webinar, March 23](#)
- [Sign the Open Letter](#) to Stephen Guilbeault, M.P. Minister of Environment & Climate Change, Will you give it up for the Earth?

For any comments, inquiries, or accessibility requests, please contact Maryo Wahba at maryo@cpj.ca.

GRAND RIVER BOOKSTORE

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

PRAYERS We pray for all of our church leaders. We keep in our hearts: **Olga McKellar** is home now recovering from surgery for a NEW HIP! **Rev Susan McIlveen's** call to Avondale-Otterville United Churches has been delayed due to a health issue which is being addressed in Winnipeg.



WORLD DAY OF PRAYER

Informed Prayer and Prayerful Action

On Friday, March 3, people from across the world, gathered to pray with women of Taiwan "to hear about their faith" (Ephesians 1:15). The enlightening virtual service of the Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada (WICC) is [here](#). Norwich UC offered a unique gathering blending local experience with the WICC service. Larry Martin, former Warden of Oxford County and seasoned municipal politician, had visited Taiwan in 2019 at the invitation of the Taiwanese government to prepare for their 150th Anniversary of the Presbyterian missionary Rev. Dr. George Leslie Mackay from Embro. In Martin's words **'We were treated like royalty.'** He also noted that the Taiwanese were faced with similar issues as us - climate disruption, waste disposal, plastic waste, and the use of non - fossil fuel energy sources **BUT that they were further ahead.** Letters of encouragement written by the World Day of Prayer writing team were read. They were addressed to the women and girls in Taiwan who had shared their faith stories with them. A helpful clip was shown from WICC interview of [Janet MacFadyen with Rev. Michael Stainton](#), Chair of the Taiwanese Human Rights Association of Canada. MM



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OXFORD WORSHIP SERVICES

Check with individual churches re in-person worship, streaming or conference call services: churches have websites, Facebook pages or email addresses.

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 UC Pastoral Charge

Joint monthly services at 10:00 am.

Alternate **March at Etonia.**

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

SAVE THE DATE (and your stuff!)

ReuseApalooZaha

When and Where?

**Saturday, April 22 –
Earth Day**

Sweaburg Ball Park Pavilion

8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Sweaburg United Church Women will be selling snacks and beverages.

Details here [Re-Use-A Palooza](#)

FOR CHILDREN OF ALL AGES.

The Arctic Tern

If this creature does not fill you with admiration and awe, then no creature will. As suggested by the name, the Arctic Tern nests and spends the summer in the Arctic. There is not a lot of time or energy spent on a nest. She just finds a small dent or hollow on the ground, deep enough to keep the eggs in one place. The baby Terns walk within a few hours. With rapid growth they are flying in about a month. Both parents feed the young insects, crustaceans, and fish.

So taken with this land where in the summer the sun does not set, this Tern family flies south for our winter, not to Florida but to the Antarctic, a distance of about twenty thousand kms.



This master of migration, this sleek incarnation of speed and grace has even learned to sleep for brief periods

on the wing. If these birds could talk you might hear conversations such as, "I intended to touch down on the beach at Daytona, but found myself in Key West. I guess I must have dozed off."

At this time of year we are beyond tired of cloudy days. We can understand creatures that go to the ends of the earth just to be in a place where the sun never sets.

Now that's a "Snow Bird", or rather a "Sun Bird" par excellence. How awesome is that!

GW



**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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UNITED CHURCH RURAL MINISTRY NETWORK (UCRMN)

"Connecting rural stories with rural people across Canada"

Of the 25 United Churches in Oxford, all but the 6 churches in Woodstock, Ingersoll, and Tillsonburg are in rural communities which means most **(75%) of our churches are rural**. Further, 36% of Oxford's population is rural compared to 18% of Canadians who live in rural areas. What could we in Oxford County learn from the rural stories of what is happening in the rest of Canada? And what could we share with them that might be helpful?

The UCRMN's February newsletter is packed with new ideas, some history, lots of inspiration – to name a few: notice of a Zoom Workshop on Collaborative Ministry on April 27, 2023, Rev. Dr. Peter Bartlett's report on "Rural Church Check-in" from January 19, a historical piece on Bruce United Church Co-op, an inter-cultural Church, and International Rural Churches Association.

[Click here](#) to read their February 2023 newsletter.

CLOSE TO OXFORD



Explore 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.

Five Oaks and the Southwest Ontario Regional Councils are joining together to create a job opportunity for Minister, Justice/Partner Program Director. See job description [here](#). Closing Date March 20.



[ARWRC webpage](#)

[Facebook page](#)

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

ARWRC Spring 2023 Meeting

May 12–13, 2023 (hybrid: in-person & online) in-person at Best Western Stoneridge Inn, London, Celebration of New Ministries Service, May 13, 2023, Lambeth United Church, London.

Registration deadline (for meeting and meals): April 24, 2023

ARW Region: PRAYER CYCLE

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

Mar 5 [Lambeth](#)

Mar 12 [Tilbury-Quinn](#)

Mar 19 [Bryanston](#)

Mar 26 [St. Andrew's-Westminster](#)

Apr 2 [Wheatley](#)

Apr 9 [Harrow](#)



Earth Week 2023

Together for the Love of Creation

United for the Love of Creation Zoom session

Learning opportunity with our Moderator Right Rev. Dr. Carmen Lansdowne.



**ZOOM SESSION:
TUESDAY, March 7, 2023,
ET, 1:30 p.m. [Register](#)**

If the time is not good for you, please register anyway so we can send you the link

to the recording.

Together for the Love of Creation Earth Week. (April 15-23) The United Church joins with our ecumenical family to be part of a national climate justice public witness.

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FOOD FOR THE SOUL

Paths to Peace and Justice - part two

Last month I asked the question, "Is the world becoming more or less violent?"

This morning as I write, (Feb. 15th) the front page of the London Free Press featured a picture of a newborn child saved from the building collapse in Türkiye. Her umbilical cord was still attached. Her mother, father and siblings did not survive. The earthquakes in Türkiye and the Syrian Arab Republic tops a very long list of "attacks": from the war in Ukraine to the pandemic to the climate crises.

It is the stuff of Lenten Journeys: a reminder of Jesus's journey to Jerusalem, the final stage in his attempt to move the world toward what he called "the Kingdom of God". When Jesus said, "My Kingdom is not of this world." he may have referred not to heaven, but the Kingdom of God on earth.

I mentioned last month that Jesus left out the line from the prophet Isaiah, "To proclaim the day of the Lord's vengeance". He replaced it with "To proclaim the year of the Lord's favour." This was the Jubilee Year, when all debts would be forgiven, and the land would be returned to the original owners. He also changed the first line in Isaiah's statement from "I bring good news to the oppressed." to "I bring good news to the poor." **Justice, that is a just portion of goods and services for the poor, was a primary concern.**

A few weeks ago, I received a cheque in the mail from the Ontario Government for the amount I would have had to pay for a current licence sticker. The cost of rewarding car owners, according to CTV journalist Jon Woodward, was 2.4 billion dollars.

But what about those who cannot afford cars. Approximately 500,000 people in Ontario receive social assistance. That 2.4 billion dollars would have added \$200.00 per month to social assistance cheques for the next two years. What a difference it would have made if the 2.4 billion had been used to meet the needs of our most vulnerable. Many would not have had to choose between food and rent.

Lent would be a good time to ask Premier Ford about that decision. It would also be a good time to think about our own church's concern for the poor.

What else might we do in a time when the world is under siege? We could take a suggestion from the world of that baby girl rescued in Türkiye.

She was named Aya by her rescuers. Aya, in Arabic means "A sign from God." Aya is now with her aunt and uncle. Her aunt also had recently given birth so she can breast feed both infants. That too is a sign from God.

To see and to be a sign from God for someone is a worthy task in Lent, and beyond. It's doable. Opportunities for that abound. . .

Blessings on the way.

Glen Wright, co-editor

Nations Uniting
Sharing Centre

A safe place to Listen, to Learn, to Heal + to Grow

Monday, March 27 at 12:30 pm, Join Rhonda Johns of Nations Uniting on Zoom For Zoom link, contact Rhonda at <nations.uniting@gmail.com>

Grandmother's Tea:

Noon till 2:00

Wednesday, March 29 at Grand River U.C., 1585 Mohawk Rd Ohsweken, Potluck lunch. Bring your favourite dish or dessert. (+cup, plate)

