

CONNECTIONS

News and Views of Oxford County United Churches

Vol 5 Issue 4

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Personal Reflections on Creativity and Easter

I was fortunate in high school to take an art program at College Avenue Secondary School in Woodstock taught by exceptional Oxford County artists. But then, life happened, and work and family led the dance. Easters, as the wife of a United Church minister, were rich, with sacred reverence as well as the fun of Easter hat parades, Sunrise Services and flowering the cross.

In 2013, my world fell apart as I experienced the death of my stepson, our family dog and my husband. I was reeling with grief and loss. In 2014, I was scheduled for two knee replacement surgeries, and I was living one day at a time. But, in this time of grief, loss and pain, seeds of a new beginning were also planted.

As I was gearing up for my second surgery, my daughter, who was pregnant with my granddaughter, came to me with a quilt and a request. Would I please paint some pictures of the cute little bugs on the quilt for the nursery – a project for my recovery

time. Of course, I said yes. The surgery happened and I was healing – if you've had a knee replacement you know that recovery is not a piece of cake!! My daughter asked one day if I'd started the paintings. "Well, no," I said, "I just don't feel up to it."

Her reply? "Mom, there's nothing wrong with your hands!" And the fire was lit...

And my passion was lit! I've had so much support and encouragement from my family and friends on my creative journey. Art lessons from different artists, studying

You Tube videos, and painting many paintings have helped me continue to learn new things to develop my skill every year. I've been a part of Oxford Creative Connections for at least 7 years, taken part in the Oxford Studio Tour – this year is 4 years – and I'm being recognized as an Oxford County artist.

My art and creativity is a reflection of my deep connection to Nature and an expression of my partnership with God, the great Creator and Source of all that is. I am always exploring new ways to show my true colours in the world.

I hope you can find a link to your own creative passion story. We all have one. What creative urges have been dormant in you just waiting for the stone to be rolled away? It is my hope that Jesus' story and my experience can speak to you and call you into your own creative path.

The photos are of the quilt and those first little bug paintings as well as a recent Daylily painting. I like looking back at some of my first paintings

to see how far I've progressed. I hope seeing my progression can inspire you and help light your creative fire too.

Vonnie Snyder, Artist, exhibits her art on [Cornflower Cottage Art](#). She would welcome a visit during the [Oxford Studio Tour](#) (May 6-7, location #8-295 Tunis St, Ingersoll) Vonnie was one of the original employees of Operation Sharing in the mid 1980s. Email contact is ysnyder54@gmail.com. Her husband, Rev. Austin Snyder served Central UC, Woodstock and did interim ministry at Trinity United, Ingersoll, Innerkip/Eastwood and Burgessville. He died in 2013.



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**Submissions no greater than 250
words will be considered and are due
by Noon Friday, May 5, 2023**

Publication Date Wed. May 10, 2023

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/>

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EDITORIAL

Easter helps me see more clearly the importance of love and justice over violence and coercion. **We have agency to choose to protect what we love and creativity to act.** During Earth Week 2023, April 16-23, the UCC joins with other faith groups in [Together for the Love of Creation](#). Creativity is critical for forming new or rekindling healthy relationships with each other and with our fellow creatures and creation. Our purpose is life for ourselves and the next 7 generations - whether we are painting, figuring out how to repurpose our waste, mourn departed friends/colleagues, place ourselves in colonialism or work together to advocate cooperatively for a greener and fairer economy - the common good. There are limits to our growth. There is no limit to God's love.

Marg Murray co-editor



**"Too much bad news for complacency.
Too much good news for despair!"**
"Donella Meadows, leading environmental
mind of the 20th century."

Jessica Hetherington on the radio!



In a recent radio interview on the Radical Reverend show on CIUT Radio 89.5 FM, the Rev. Dr. Jessica Hetherington summed up the relationship of being a disciple of Christ and climate emergency. We work for the common good because it is good. We believe that there is something which happens beyond our actions which give us hope. Our hope develops from our felt connection to the earth. You can listen to it [here](#).

**Jessica will be speaking at the Spring
meeting of ARWRC on May 12-13!**

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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CAMP TANNER

REGISTRATION FOR CAMPS IS NOW OPEN

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.

STILL HIRING – ALL POSITIONS Apply NOW

Looking to be apart of a great summer team? Camp Tanner is happy to be still accepting applications for all positions. Check out www.camptanner.ca/staff for job descriptions and application forms. Send all questions as well as resumes and completed forms 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, N4S8G1, 519-539-8777
Meet the rest of the [board](#).



OXFORD UC COMINGS +GOINGS CONGREGATIONS IN SEARCH MODE

- Dundas St UC
- Kintore UC+ Brooksdale UC

PRAYERS We pray for all of our church leaders. We keep in our hearts: **Olga McKellar** recovering from surgery for a NEW HIP! **Avondale-Otterville United Churches** will welcome **Rev Susan McIlveen** at a joint service on **April 30, 2023** with Fran Bell.



OXFORD COUNTY OF ONTARIO HELPS UKRAINE

Yes. Volunteer hosts to provide shelter are still needed.. **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:

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

May 6 from 10:00 – 12 noon - MESSY CHURCH presents **Mad Hatter's Tea Party**. Free lunch provided, Crafts & Games. A Youth/Family Event.

ETONIA UC:

ALL YOU CAN EAT SPAGHETTI 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.



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

Seniors Enjoying Nature Together,
Mondays 1-3 pm From May 1 to June 26 (Excluding Victoria Day). Details and register are [here](#).

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OPERATION SHARING



info@operationsharing.ca.

Ongoing needs are on their [website](#), or call 519-320-1372 ext. 4 or email



Operation Sharing has always needed and appreciated their volunteers to help run their many programs

and services. The general application form is available [here](#).

Current VOLUNTEER Opportunities

Board of Directors If interested, please send coverletter and resume to jess@operationsharing.ca. **Deadline to apply is April 24, 2023.**

Bullwinkles Help with dishwashing. Tuesday-Thursday, 12:30-1:30 pm.

Food for Friends. Position described [here](#).

FOOD FOR FRIENDS

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

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

Eric Schmiedl passed away on March 22, 2023 in Woodstock Hospital with his wife Marilyn Schmiedl at his side. Eric was a valued volunteer and employee of Operation Sharing for over 20 years. He was editor



extraordinaire of Operation Sharing's newsletters (Helping in Unity and Oxford Insight), Extended Family Project and an original employee of Inn out of the Cold. You can view his obituary [here](#).



Kathleen Welch of Norwich UC is blessed in the laying on of hands of left to right: Rev. Marg Murray (wider church family), Pastor Janice Pow, Karen McSpadden (Discernment Committee), Marilyn Robillard (family/friends), Liz Stone (Chair of Council), Celia Orth (Burgessville UC, neighbouring church). Kathleen is now a Designated Lay Minister in Training at Hebron UC, her Designated Learning Site.

CARING HEARTS
SUPPORT NETWORK



at St. David's UC, Woodstock

For events requiring pre-registration please call/text 519-536 3370, email info@caringheartssupportnetwork.com www.caringheartssupportnetwork.com

Food For Grieving Hearts, Third Wednesday of every Month (except June, July): 5:30 - 7:30 pm. Cost is \$10.00.

Living with Loss - 6-week Grief Support Group. Contact for upcoming dates.



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.

April 16 Peace (Plattsville), Jennifer Canning
April 23 St. David's (Woodstock), Jeff Smith
April 30 Retired Clergy see list.

May 7 ARWRC elected- Jane Van Patter + Exec.

May 14 ARWRC staff - C.A.Stadelbauer-Sampa- Staff

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REV. JIM EVANS obituary

Ministry was more than a calling for Rev. Jim Evans. It was his way of life.

In the midst of a successful career designing hundreds of restaurants and other interiors, Jim answered his call to ministry in his mid-thirties. While completing his Masters of Divinity degree at Emmanuel College, Jim served as a student minister in Qualicum Beach, BC and Tecumseh, ON. In 1996, he was settled at Knox United Church in Embro, ON, where Jim served for eight years.

Soon after taking the pulpit at Grace United Church in St. Thomas, ON in 2004, Jim's congregation was surprised to see their minister featured in global media. News items spotlighted the clergy union organizing drive Jim, his wife, Karen, Rev. Del Stewart and Rev. Dr. David Galston had launched with the CAW. Ten years later, Jim was proud to be the inaugural president of the Unifor Unifaith Community Chapter, a professional association and advocacy group for United Church of Canada clergy, other faith workers and their families.

Combining life and professional skills, Jim designed the Embro church's new, accessible building addition; helped unify Grace and St. Mark's United Churches into New Vision Community Church in St. Thomas; and advised on designs for hospital chapels.

Three heart attacks could not stop Jim's ministry. Sadly, brain cancer brought his life to a close at age 61 on Feb. 16, 2023.



Photo cutline: Finding new ways to do ministry, Rev. Jim Evans turned his living room into a New Testament set for virtual vacation

Bible camp during COVID-19 lockdown in 2020.

This obituary was submitted by Jim's wife, Karen Paton-Evans at the request of the editors.

On Sunday, April 23 at New Vision United Church in St. Thomas, Jim's life will be celebrated as part of the morning worship service at 10:00 am.

FOR CHILDREN OF ALL AGES. The Wood Frog

Wood frogs are amazing. They live in the Arctic and not only sleep for six months though the Arctic winter but allow 60% of their body to freeze. Their heart stops and they stop breathing. In the spring they warm up and enjoy the full sun of the arctic summer. How great is that!



They are the colour of the tundra except for the black splotches under their eyes. Nature, or God, usually has a reason for the colouration of the species. Frogs, unlike us, have had millions of years of evolutionary adaptation. Scientists have dubbed them the "robber" frogs, because the face looks like the frog is wearing a mask.

The black markings reminded me, not of robbers but of baseball outfielders. They wear black patches under their eyes so they can see more clearly in the bright sunlight when catching flies. I wonder if frogs have the same marking for the same reason.

So, if this theory, after scientific studies, proves to be true, remember you read it first in CONNECTIONS.

Then we could change the name from the "robber" frog to the "outfielder". I think wood frogs would be pleased. What do you think?

GW

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OXFORD WORSHIP SERVICES

Check with churches re in-person worship, streaming or conference call services via websites, Facebook or email addresses.

[Avondale UC, T'burg](mailto:avondaleuc@gmail.com) 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. **April** is at **Princeton UC**

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

GIVE YOUR OLD STUFF A SECOND CHANCE!

ReuseApalooZaha

Socialize, Learn about: Transitions to Less Waste, Oxford Helps Ukraine, Good Will and Cycles of Life.

Sat. 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 [Reuse-A-PalooZaha](#)

UNITED CHURCH RURAL MINISTRY NETWORK (UCRMN)

"Connecting rural stories with rural people across Canada"

If you are curious about what is going on outside of Oxford and Antler River Watershed Region, join this Zoom Workshop on

**"Collaborative Ministry" on April 27,
2023 at 1 pm (EST).**

The cost is \$10.

[Register here!](#)

Check out our ["Collaborative Ministry"](#)

Resource Page.

**If you have a topic you would like us
to consider and know of a facilitator
to lead your topic, let us know at**

editor@ucrmn.ca

**UCRMN holds Zoom Workshops
every quarter.**

[Click here](#) to read their April 2023 newsletter with Joyce Sasse's Country Preacher Notes on a Meadowlark Giving thanks, Martin Dawson and Peter Chynoweth's Tech Corner and possible Radio Station and a Prince Edward Island Holy Gathering in June.

CLOSE TO OXFORD

Nations Uniting
Sharing Centre

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

Monday, April 24 at 1:30–3:30 pm, Join Rhonda Johns of [Nations Uniting](#) on Zoom. For Zoom link, contact nations.uniting@gmail.com

**Grandmother's Tea
(potluck): April 26**, Noon till 2:00 pm. at Mount Pleasant UC, 669 Mount Pleasant Rd, Mount Pleasant. (Bring utensils, cup, plate).



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SETTLERS NEWCOMERS.

This 4-part series from April 24 – September 25, 2023 can help us explore our histories and stories, with some time in the middle for us to learn and share about our own family history. **Where do we connect** with the forces of colonization? **What are our responsibilities** to the places where we have “settled” **and the people** whose lives that has impacted? **Where does this lead us in our discipleship?** Join me. I’m sure it will be a rich and productive learning experience. The resource book is **Healing Haunted Histories: A Settler Discipleship of Decolonization**, with Elaine Enns and Ched Myers. **For more information and to register see.** <https://catalog.churchx.ca/product?catalog=UILX2007>



Earth Week 2023
Together for the Love of Creation

EARTH WEEK APRIL 16-23



“The challenges are big and the stakes are high. Change takes all of us. Earth Week is April 16–23. Let’s show up For the Love of Creation.” —Moderator **Carmen Lansdowne** invites everyone to participate in climate justice events: to pray, learn and act for the [love of creation](#).

All hands on deck

If you missed the event on **March 7** of the **Moderator** speaking about **climate initiatives** with 4 panelists, the recording is [here](#). Fun and challenging learnings: how Carman became an accidental climate change activist; assumptions of our macro-economic system. **Lori Neale** shared the 4 elements of UCCCan Climate Program. **Rev. Jessica McCrae** of Maple Grove UC shared about her group Climate Courage (Jessica served in Oxford Presbytery).

Faithful Footprints – program for grants to reduce church’s carbon footprint.

I especially commend the excellent resource of Shining Water Region on **retrofitting buildings** through UCCCan Faithful Footprint’s called Near Net Zero by 2030? Retrofitting Church Buildings with Minimal Resources. Access it [here](#).

Another valuable resource is [Preserving Biodiversity](#): Creation Care from Faith to Action, aired on March 23.

Still unsure of the climate urgency?. Statement by Simon Stiell, UN Climate Change Executive Secretary on the IPCC’s Synthesis Report of the Sixth Assessment Report from March 2023. Read it [here](#).



[ARWRC webpage](#)

[Facebook page](#)

Subscribe [here](#) to the newsletter of Antler River Watershed. See their **April newsletter** [here](#) for a fuller description of the following:

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. **Registration deadline (for meeting and meals): April 24, 2023. Hotlink to register is** [here](#).

The Rev. Dr. Jessica Hethrington, eco-theologian will speak on Saturday morning.

ARW Region: PRAYER CYCLE

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

Apr 16 [Dunlop Central](#), Sarnia

Apr 23 [Alvinston](#)

Apr 30 [London: Trinity](#)

May 7 [Brigden](#)

May 14 [Colborne Street](#), London

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FOOD FOR THE SOUL

The Path to Easter.

It was the week leading up to Passover, and the Roman authorities were nervous. After all Passover was emancipation day for Jews, the celebration of the deliverance from Pharaoh's power and control.

The week began with Jesus parading into Jerusalem on a donkey. Jesus was presenting an alternative vision to Rome's version of peace and justice by way of military might. Jesus's followers were calling Jesus, Lord, Saviour and Son of God. Those titles were used to describe the emperor. If Jesus was Lord, then Caesar was not. Rome met the leaders of rebel groups with crucifixion. It was inevitable and Jesus knew it.

By Wednesday of that week Jesus and his disciples were dinner guests of Simon the leper. The meal was interrupted by an unnamed woman who came to the home and asked to see Jesus. (Mark 14:3-9). She had with her a very expensive bottle of fragrant oil called nard. With that she anointed Jesus. Jesus said that she had done a beautiful thing. What precious gifts, the fragrant oil for anointing and her love, a source of blessing and strength for Jesus on his way to the cross.

This act stood in contrast with what Jesus had been trying to get the disciples to take seriously, that he was to be betrayed, handed over to the authorities, crucified and raised from death on the third day. (Mark 10:32-40) The only response from the disciples was James and John asking for a place in the glorious kingdom to come.

"That's not mine to give," said Jesus, "but can you drink the cup that I am about to

drink and can you be baptized with the baptism I am about to undergo?" James and John were silent.

The unnamed woman understood love's commitment. The disciples did not.

Thursday evening Jesus and his disciples celebrated the Passover meal, followed by Gethsemane, the betrayal, the arrest and on Friday, the crucifixion. All serving as a painful and tragic reminder of the power of evil in the world.

Saturday, the Sabbath, was a day of shocked silence, and tears. Rome had crucified Jesus. His followers, essentially a nonviolent group, posed no threat. Rome was once more in control, or so it seemed.

But then Sunday, dawned. Everything was about to change. It was reported that Jesus was not dead but had risen. Of the various reasons for celebrating the resurrection, not least is that this empire built on coercion and violence had not won. Its days were numbered, as are the days of all empires built on power and control, on peace through military coercion and conquest. The world does not belong to those would-be emperors. "We live in God's world", as our New Creed states.

In spite of Rome's violence, God's love emerged; from despair's darkness came hope's light; from Friday's death came Sunday's new life. Easter is a glorious testimony to that. Hallelujah!

Easter Blessings.

Glen Wright, co-editor



We are an Easter people; our Moderator Right Rev. Dr. Carmen Lansdowne reminds us in her Easter Message. See [here](#).