

CONNECTIONS

News and Views of Oxford County United Churches

Vol 5 Issue 5

May 10, 2023 Page 1 of 8

Abundant Living for All

On April 24, 2023, the Township of Norwich voted to exclude Pride flags and all other non-civic flags from being flown on its property. Instead, the municipality has moved to only fly flags representing municipal, provincial and federal governments. **More distressing, perhaps, was the vote against the establishment of a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee.**

This issue has created a huge division in the community, with those who are part of the 2SLGBTQ+ community fearing for their safety, and allies responding with strategies to continue to promote love and acceptance for all people.

As I read the news last week, I was reminded of Karl Barth, the Swiss theologian, who, in a 1963 interview with Time magazine, shared these words:

"Take your Bible and take your newspaper and read both. But interpret newspapers from your Bible. Newspapers," he says, "are so important that "I always pray for the sick, the poor, journalists, authorities of the state and the church—in that order. Journalists form public opinion. They hold terribly important positions. Nevertheless, **a theologian should never be formed by the world around him—either East or West.** He should make it his vocation to show both East and West that they can live without a clash. **Where the peace of God is proclaimed, there peace on earth is implicit. Have we forgotten the Christmas message?"**

As we seek to live out the vision of peace and justice and love, we only have to look to our Bible to see how Jesus modelled for us so beautifully

**WHEN THE POWER
OF LOVE
OVERCOMES THE
LOVE OF POWER
THE WORLD WILL
KNOW
PEACE**

Jim Hendrix

how we should be in community with each other. And we read Jesus' words about how he came that we may have abundant life. On Sunday, April 30, I preached these words:

How should we live in a way that brings abundant life to all people?

Because this is what Jesus meant when he



said he has come for all people to have

abundant life, not just a select few. We find abundant life and we invite others into abundant life as we follow the example of the early Christian communities in the book of Acts, devoting ourselves to learning and to fellowship and to breaking bread and praying together. We read our Bibles and we take those words of Jesus to heart: to welcome the stranger, to feed the hungry, to care for the sick. **We follow Jesus' example of making space for those on the margins, those who society may have cast out or cast down, and we love them.**

Why? Because they are loved by God and worthy of love. We enter into relationship with all God's beloved - those who look like us and act like us, and also those who do not. We find common ground when we break down barriers and break bread together. And yes, I know this sounds idealistic. But the reality is, this is not always an easy thing to do. It means letting go of some assumptions about others, letting go of judgment, opening up hardened parts of our hearts and dealing with a whole lot of people who are content to leave people out of the realm of God's love and acceptance.

And this is the struggle right now in our community. There appears to be a lot of resistance to the 2SLGBTQ+ community. There are some loud and strident voices that are dominating the conversation and threatening the safety and security of members of that 2SLGBTQ+ community.

CONNECTIONS

News and Views of Oxford County United Churches

Vol 5 Issue 5

May 10, 2023

Page 2 of 8

And as always, things are heating up. And words are being carelessly thrown down. Heels are being dug in.

I recall the [words of our song of faith](#):

Jesus crossed barriers of race, class, culture and gender. He preached and practiced unconditional love... And he commanded His followers to love one another as he had loved them.

May it be so.



Feature article by Lori Minler, DLM, pastor of Mt Elgin UC since January of 2020 - formerly served at Princeton-Etonia U.C. Pastoral Charge and Trinity UC, Ingersoll.

1) 2SLGBTQ+ (Two-Spirited, Lesbian, Gay, Transgender, Queer/Questioning)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abundant Living for ALL	Cover
Editorial—Marg Murray, co-editor	2
Masthead	2
Oxford County of Ontario Helps Ukraine	2
Oxford Worship Services – reference	2
OXFORD UC—Comings and Goings	3
Camp Tanner	3
Obituaries + Prayers	3
OURS -	4
Oxford Prayer Cycle	4
CHURCH EVENTS – time sensitive	5
Operation Sharing	5
Caring Heart Support Network	5
Citizen Led Vote against Privatization of Health Care	5
For Children of All Ages – G. Wright	6
Global Heatling – M. Murray	6
CLOSE to OXFORD	7
United Church Rural Ministry Network	7
Sharing Circle and Grandmother's Tea	7
ANTLER RIVER WATERSHED Region	7
ARW Prayer Cycle	7
FOOD FOR THE SOUL- Two Steps	
Forward Part 1 G. Wright, co-editor	8

OXFORD WORSHIP SERVICES

Information can be found on their Websites, Facebook pages, contact information etc. Summary is [here](#).

EDITORIAL

We have stories to build awareness of the needs of refugees, the perils of global heating and how to resist privatization of our health care. We also celebrate new ministries, the lives of colleagues who have passed and the arrival of refugees to Oxford with community programs on safety and wellness. Oxford County - where we are mostly accepting of diversity. Oxford United Ministries - where we dare to look at stories which make us uneasy. Many of us aren't comfortable with change, conflict and/or confrontation. Still with God's help may we react with grace, good humour and without judgment.

The truth may make us uncomfortable. But that doesn't make the truth false.

Marg Murray co-editor



CONNECTIONS – News and Views of Oxford County United Churches

Submissions no greater than 250 words will be considered and are due by Noon Friday, June 9, 2023

Publication Date Wed. June 14, 2023

CO-EDITORS: Marg Murray + Glen Wright

To add or remove names, email

oxfconnections@exculink.com

CONNECTIONS website

oxfordunitedministries.ca

Oxford United Ministries Facebook page

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



OXFORD COUNTY OF ONTARIO HELPS UKRAINE

To find out more about how to help, join their [Facebook page](#). Contact oxfordhelpsukraine@gmail.com for speakers (Karen/David Murray & Larisa Zhukova) or information on **Potluck Dinner, Saturday, May 27 at 5:30 pm.**

Thank you to all who have helped.

CONNECTIONS

News and Views of Oxford County United Churches

Vol 5 Issue 5

May 10, 2023 Page 3 of 8

OXFORD UC COMINGS + GOINGS



CONGREGATIONS IN SEARCH MODE

- **Kintore UC**
- **Dundas St UC**
- **Brooksdale UC**



Welcome sign at Hebron UC for **Kathleen Welch**,

Designated Lay Minister (DLMIT)!

Rev. Susan McIlveen was warmly welcomed by the congregations of Avondale and Otterville at a joint service and potluck lunch on April 30 at Otterville. Oxford is pleased to welcome Susan back to Oxford and look forward to her message in June CONNECTIONS."

OBITUARIES Prayers for the families of these servants of Christ who served here in Oxford Presbytery:



Rev. W. Dale Allison With sadness but gratitude for even a short but memorable time as his colleague in Oxford Presbytery, we note Dale Allison's death in March. Dale served at Brownsville U.C. His obituary is [here](#).



Judi Restemeyer former licensed lay preacher [died recently in Courtenay, B.C.](#) Her twin sister, Joni Leduc, expressed gratitude for all the thoughtful kind words, condolences, love and support to Judi. Celebration of life on July 7 in Miracle Beach Provincial Park, Vancouver Island.

GRAND RIVER BOOKSTORE

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

STITCH SUPPER CLUB [Facebook page here](#), [website here](#) **Each Thursday at Trinity UC in Ingersoll. 4:30-6:00**



CAMP TANNER

REGISTRATION FOR CAMPS

July

Intermediate - July 9-14
Junior - July 16-21
Intermediate - July 23-28
Junior - July 30 - Aug 4

August

Junior - July 30 - Aug 4
Senior - Aug 6-11
Junior - Aug 13 - 18

Junior camp is for ages 7-10.
Intermediate camp is for ages 10-13.
Senior camp is for ages 12-15.

STILL HIRING – Male counselors, lifeguards & first aiders

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.

NEEDED VOLUNTEER COOK HELPERS

Are you feeling called to feed hungry campers? A certified cook has been hired who knows the menus and quantities for morning and afternoon. **Still needed are 2 new volunteers for each shift** (7:30 am-2 pm) and (4:30 pm – 7:30 pm). Sunday hours 3:00 -7:30 pm; Wednesdays and Fridays hours are half days (7:30-2:00). About 50 people need to be fed. Comfortable shoes and head covering required. **If interested, please contact Sheila at 519-349-2768.**

Thank you for caring.

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](#).

CONNECTIONS

News and Views of Oxford County United Churches

Vol 5 Issue 5

May 10, 2023

Page 4 of 8

OXFORD UNITED REFUGEE SUPPORT COMMITTEE (OURS)

The work continues. We are gratified to see results. **St David's sponsorship** of Bisrat Yemane is complete. Bisrat is self sufficient, living in Guelph and working in an automotive manufacturing facility. He studies ESL classes in the evenings and on line. It is good that he was able to leave Sudan and come to safety before the unrest.

St David's U.C. also expect to welcome a family of 4 very soon. This family has been waiting a long time as refugees in Ethiopia to come to Canada to join many relatives. They are approved and are waiting to receive their flight details.

Two additional young men also in Ethiopia will be next to be welcomed by St David's. These sponsorships will complete their commitment to sponsor 7 Eritreans who fled their country to escape persecution.

May 26th **Trinity United in Ingersoll** along with their co sponsor will welcome an Iraqi family of 5 who have lived in Turkey as refugees since 2017. The apartment hunt in London is underway with increasing awareness of inflationary rental rates and limited availability. The Trinity congregation has donated furnishings for the apartment with the exception of a few items. We are grateful to the "Oxford County of Ontario Helps Ukraine" committee for their help in locating some of these items.

Knox United in Embro now has had notification that their refugee, an Afghani living as a refugee in Pakistan, has had his application approved and the next step in the process is proceeding. The congregation continues to fund raise in support of the sponsorship. A successful and tasty pancake supper was held on Shrove Tuesday and enjoyed by many.

Westminster United in Thamesford has raised approximately 45% of the funds required to sponsor a Syrian family of 5 living as refugees in Lebanon. If any group is interested in co-sponsoring with

Westminster, they would like to hear from you. **They are creating awareness of the project and fundraising in the community by serving Breakfast sandwiches at various events.**



Beverages, muffins, and breakfast sandwiches will be available at the church yard sale on Saturday, **May 20 during Thamesford's May24 festivities.**

Sponsorship donations always appreciated. Please write **"Refugee Sponsorship"** in the memo line of cheques. Income tax receipts issued by the church. **Knox UC**, PO Box 59, Embro ON, N0J 1J0; **Trinity United Church**, 118 Church St., Ingersoll, ON, N5C 2X6 + **Westminster UC**, 115 George St. Thamesford, ON, N0M 2M0.

Submitted by **Marj Martin (Chair of OURS)**

Notice of Annual Meeting

Oxford United Refugee Support (OURS)

Sunday, June 25, 2023 at 1:30 PM

Trinity United Church

118 Church St Ingersoll

Entrance off King St

All Welcome to Attend



OXFORD PRAYER CYCLE

Prayers for each other and our ministry in the world.

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

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

May 21 Kintore, - Pirie Mitchell PCS

Brooksdale, Janet Uren, RS

May 28, College Ave. UC, Nancy Vandenberghe SDLM

June 4 Innerkip UC, Karen Willis DLM

June 11 Embro, Susan Cole

CONNECTIONS

News and Views of Oxford County United Churches

Vol 5 Issue 5

May 10, 2023 Page 5 of 8

CHURCH EVENTS

PRINCETON UC

Safety and Awareness

Fraud/Scams, Personal Safety at home, banking and more.

Q&A session.

Wednesday May 31, 2023

1:00 – 3:00 pm

For more information, call Jane Baxter
519-761-8682

COLLEGE AVE UC

22 Wilson St., Woodstock

Scott Woods &

his multi-talented band

Old-Fashioned HOEDOWN.

Thursday, June 15 at 7:00 pm.

A family friendly, fun and fast-paced exciting show of championship fiddling, country music, award-winning step dancing and humour.

Tickets are \$45 with cash/cheque at Hallmark Shoppe (519-539-5996), Early Bird Coffee (519-532-3127), or College Ave. UC (519-537-6062); to order with credit card call the [Scott Woods Band](http://www.scottwoodsband.com) Office at 1-855-726-8896 (toll free). Proceeds support College Ave. UC.



at St. David's UC

190 Springbank Ave, Woodstock

Pre-registration is required:

Please call/text 519-536 3370, email

info@caringheartssupportnetwork.com

www.caringheartssupportnetwork.com

Death & Donuts, May 13 10 am–12 pm

Lighthearted Conversations in small groups about thought-provoking topics.

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.

OPERATION SHARING



For ongoing material needs and volunteer opportunities, please visit their [website](http://www.operationsharing.ca), their [Facebook page](https://www.facebook.com/operationsharing), call 519-320-1372 ext. 4 or email info@operationsharing.ca.

Save the Date!
Operation Sharing
Annual General Meeting
May 25 at 6:00pm
Information to follow on their
Facebook page

Creativity Challenge! Bullwinkle's Name Change Contest! Submit your new name on their [Facebook page](https://www.facebook.com/bullwinkles). Winner receives a \$30 gift card to the unique eco-friendly [Jarful Refillery](http://www.jarfulrefillery.com) on Light St. Contest closes May 22.

FOOD FOR FRIENDS

Loonies for Love. Your Dollar at the till helps others shop with dignity and make nutritious choices.

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

CITIZEN LED VOTE AGAINST PRIVITIZING HEALTH CARE



You can vote! On May 26 & 27, there will be a community-led referendum on Ontario's privatization of our public hospitals. Polling stations will be open across Oxford County at various stores, churches, & gas stations! **Have your say!** Visit the Oxford Coalition for Social Justice page on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/oxfordcoalition) or write bryasmit@oxford.net for locations & hours. **OR** you can vote online [here](http://www.voteontario.ca).

Profit does not belong in health care. It's your health! They are public hospitals! You can vote!

CONNECTIONS

News and Views of Oxford County United Churches

Vol 5 Issue 5

May 10, 2023

Page 6 of 8

FOR CHILDREN OF ALL AGES. The Fork-tailed Drongo

Do birds ever tell fibs? The Fork-tailed Drongo lives in the Kalahari Desert in South Africa.

The Drongo has a special talent for imitating sounds. In the Kalahari live those adorable little animals called Meerkats. They dig burrows in the ground for sleeping and safety but spend most of the time out of their burrows foraging for food, beetles and scorpions.

Hawks are the enemies of Meerkats. For safety, Meerkats appoint one of their members to watch for hawks and send out a warning cry if a hawk is sighted.

Hawks are also enemies of Drongos so when a Drongo hears the warning sound coming from the Meerkat, it hides.



When the Drongo realised it could imitate the warning call, it would warn the Meerkats of an incoming hawk. So it began to help the animals keep safe by warning them of their common enemy.

Now Drongos eat the same things as Meerkats so sometimes, when the Drongo has trouble finding food and when it sees that the Meerkats have unearthed a few beetles or scorpions, the Drongo sends out the warning call even though there is no hawk in sight. The Meerkats run to the safety of their burrows and the Drongo flies in for the food. So far, the Meerkats have not caught on to the fact that sometimes the Drongo's warning is a lie.

Perhaps sharing a little food is payment for the times Drongos sound the hawk warning and save lives.

What do you think?

GW

Global Heating¹ – We are running out of time but not out of options

Right now, Mozambique, where Oxford churches



have in the past sent money for sand banks, wells, and schooling

girls, is experiencing unprecedented rains, flooding and drought. Countries close to the equator are experiencing the almost uninhabitable impacts of Global Heating, so much so that some climatologists **forecast that within 10 years, there will be 2 billion climate refugees from them²**. We know burning fossil fuels releases Carbon into the air, trapping energy from the sun and causing global heating. And yet, **Canadian banks are major funders of fossil fuels while also greenwashing their commitment^{3,4}** **AND Ontario**, ignoring **proven renewable energy solutions** such as Wind, Waves and Solar (WWS)⁵, **recently announced massive expansions of fossil fueled gas-fired electricity** to meet demand. This in the face of the feds currently developing regulations to enforce its net-zero electricity plan⁶. Even if the feds shut down new facilities built after 2025, the companies building new gas-fired power plants in Ontario would still get paid – for years!

But Ontarians can push back because municipalities have to agree to any gas plant expansion. We live and worship in municipalities. Visit the website of the [Ontario Climate Emergency Campaign](#), which encourages diverse groups to work together for our shared climate action goals. Visit [here](#) to see the 12 Goals. Take the Climate Pledge to act and protect; sign the [petition](#) to demand government

CONNECTIONS

News and Views of Oxford County United Churches

Vol 5 Issue 5

May 10, 2023

Page 7 of 8

accountability to that Climate Action Plan. Email Marg murrayschell@gmail.com with questions or interest.

- 1) Rev. Dr. Jessica Hetherington, United Church of Canada <https://jessicahetherington.substack.com/p/friday-notes-whats-in-a-word>
- 2) Rev Jim Antal, United Church of Christ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPfx7IACSYM> at 5:21 min
- 3) National Observer, [Competition Bureau](#)
- 4) National Observer, [RBC was the world's top fossil fuel funder in 2022](#)
- 5) [Beyond Gas Campaign in Ontario](#), [The Backgrounder to this campaign](#) and the [Beyond Gas Information Toolkit](#)
- 6) <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/ontario-gas-plant-electricity-doug-ford-government-1.6820256>

CLOSE TO OXFORD

NATIONS UNITING – SHARING

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

May 29, 1:30-3:30, [Nations Uniting Sharing Circle](#) - To join this event and be part of their mailing list contact Rhonda Johns at nations.uniting@gmail.com.

Grandmother's Tea (potluck): May 31,

Noon till 2:00 pm. at Mohawk Chapel, 301 Mohawk St. Brantford, contact #519-756-0240 (Bring utensils, cup, plate and a small donation to the Chapel). To share a ride. email murrayschell@gmail.com



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

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



The new look in the dining room

UNITED CHURCH RURAL MINISTRY NETWORK (UCRMN)

Two different but similar stories of "**Collaborative Ministry**" at the workshop on April 27. **The Rev. Dr. Elizabeth Cunningham** from East Central Ontario Region ministers with 5 rural United Churches, the [United Community Ministry](#). Read about it [here](#). Organization is critical to working together, but worship is the collaborative part that makes it meaningful and purposeful.

Doug Brown (DLM retired) talked about the Bruce United Church Co-operative, a 3-year experiment of 6 congregations from Bruce Presbytery with 2 fulltime ministers. Read about it [here](#). Although only 3 years, members genuinely valued this opportunity to be church creatively. Each congregation is unique. For collaborative ministry to be successful, the passion has to come from the congregations. MM



[ARWRC webpage](#)

[Facebook page](#)

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

ARWRC Spring 2023 Hybrid Meeting is May 12-13, 2023 for those registered in person or online. It promises to be fruitful and celebratory! Prayers for always appreciated. Saturday am, the Rev. Dr. Jessica Hetherington, eco-theologian is **the keynote speaker**

Celebration of Ministry will include Nancy Vandenberghe, DLM, now serving at College Ave UC, Woodstock.

ARW Region: PRAYER CYCLE

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

May 14 [Colborne Street](#), London

May 21 [Oneida](#)

May 28 [Burgessville](#)

CONNECTIONS

News and Views of Oxford County United Churches

Vol 5 Issue 5

May 10, 2023

Page 8 of 8



FOOD FOR THE SOUL

Two steps Forward. . . part one

Two steps Forward. . .part one

The saying, "Two steps forward and one step back" or "one forward and two back" have long been used to describe social or ethical movements. It could apply also to the Christian Faith.

On Sunday the 28th of this month the church celebrates Pentecost. The book of Acts tells us that when Jews from many nations gathered in a house in Jerusalem to celebrate Pentecost, the harvest festival, they heard what sounded like a mighty wind and saw what looked like tongues of fire over each person.

To interpret what was happening, Peter looked to the prophet Joel for wisdom. "There will come a time", said Peter, quoting the prophet Joel, "when God's Spirit will be poured out on all people. Your sons and daughters. . . and even slaves, both men and women will prophesy". (Acts 2:17ff)

Peter's message was clear. God's long-awaited vision for the world was about to become a reality.

Joel gets high marks for suggesting that all people will receive the Spirit and that both men and women will speak on God's behalf - two steps forward. However, Joel takes a step back by suggesting that slavery would be part of God's new community.

This is a reminder to those both past and present, that sometimes words spoken in the name of the Kingdom of God turn out to be just a reflection of values and social customs of the world.

However, Pentecost, marked a step forward for the faith.

We can give credit to St. Paul for the second step forward in faith. St. Paul

brought Christianity to the Gentiles. Peter believed that Jesus was for Jews. Luke, (Acts 2) makes the point that all in the house celebrating Pentecost were Jews. "If you want to follow Jesus, become a Jew" was Peter's message. "Not so", said Paul. Greeks and Romans (Gentiles) should be part of God's new community.

On Page 14 of their book "First Paul" (2009), John Crossan and Markus Borg suggest that most scholars believe that Paul wrote the books of Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Philippian's, I Thessalonians and the letter to Philemon. The other epistles were written by others after Paul was executed. This makes Paul, to quote Crossan and Borg, "more appealing and less appalling".

In Paul's letter to the church in Galatia he states that, "In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female". (3:28) **In one sentence Paul declares the end of racism, slavery and patriarchal sexism.** What an amazing insight from one who had never encountered Jesus except in a vision and learned of the faith from Jews he persecuted. Their only crime being they had accepted Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah.

Paul's statement in Galatians represented a giant step forward. The messages in other epistles would lead to a step back. But more about that in part two, next month. Stay tuned.

Blessings,



Glen Wright, co-editor

