

CONNECTIONS

News and Views of Oxford County United Churches

Vol 5 Issue 10.

November 8, 2023 Page 1 of 8

GRATITUDE, JOY + DREAMS

OURS Report November 2023

With files from Marj Martin, Chairperson of OURS (Oxford United Refugee Support)

There was great joy and celebration as the congregations of Trinity UC (Ingersoll) and St David's UC (Woodstock) welcomed their sponsored refugee families during worship and lunch.

At Trinity UC, on September 24, the AL-Mohammedawi Iraqi family of 5 and their co-sponsors were introduced and welcomed by Janet McQueen, the Chair of the Church Board. The family expressed **their joy and thankfulness** to be here. Our guest preacher, Rev Bonnie Pilkey, reminded us that as Muslims and Christians we share the same God.



In this picture the family gathered around the welcome sign which the children at Trinity UC made. In the top row (Lt to Rt) Nedi (mom), Wisam (dad), Shahad and Razan (in blue shirts); and Anaam (in front of Razan).

This family lived in Turkey as refugees following their escape from a threat to their welfare by a terrorist group. All 5 of the family spoke. The 3 daughters used English to convey a heartfelt message that demonstrated how school attendance has helped them learn our language. Their parents both spoke with the help of Marwa Sabri, the co-sponsor and sister of Wisam, who provided translation. Following this a pot luck lunch was enjoyed. Personal greetings from Trinity folk were many as new friendships were formed.

On October 22nd St David's UC welcomed and introduced their sponsored Eritrean family of 4, Sara Temnewu and her children. Rev Jeffrey Smith warmly welcomed them. Carol Ewing presented material which she and Glen Wright prepared about the struggles and eventual successes which they have experienced. Escaping religious persecution and a tyrannical political system in their home in Eritrea, they became refugees in Ethiopia.



Several family members accompanied them including Sara's sister and co-sponsor, Abrhazion Temnewu (2nd from left above) and her daughter Azieb (1st from left above) who graciously **thanked** the St David's congregation for all they have done to bring many of their family to Canada over many years, **allowing them to dream**.

A baked potato lunch with cookies and ice cream followed in the Kirk Hall where the family was greeted by new and old friends.



Shown above are the family dressed in their traditional beautiful celebration garments with members of the OURS committee to whom they had gifted outfits as well. Back row: Christen Currie, Carol Ewing, Naod, Janice Landers, Abrahazion, Marjorie Martin. Seated: Grandma (Sara's mother), Sara, Fithawi, Selam. It was truly a joyful celebration.

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EDITORIAL

The pictures and stories of our latest refugees are powerful reminders of our common humanity. Yes, they are grateful to be here. And their joy is contagious and softens our hearts. May the words of Azieba, niece of Sara, '**allows them to dream**' remind us of our common need to dream of ways we can cooperate or collaborate with each other to be the **new thing** which God is working on here in Oxford.

But dreaming in isolation is hard and isolation is not healthy. The work **is** huge. We **can** help each other (the 90-year-olds and the babies); we can laugh together; we can eat together; we visit the plays or suppers at our neighbouring churches; we can investigate ways to learn at Five Oaks or Nations Uniting and ways to volunteer at our Region.

But also Glen reminds us in his Food For The Soul, that even as we are strengthened once again by God's grace, and unconditional love, we are called to turn around, to align our dream with God's dream of unconditional love and justice for all of creation – all our relations.

The December 2023 ISSUE of CONNECTIONS will be our last monthly issue. My esteemed co-editor is retiring. I hope to publish 3-4 times a year.

We live in God's world.

Marg Murray co-editor



UCW FALL EVENT – Oct. 16, Dundas St. United in Woodstock. The chosen topic was **Laughter and Hope**. It was after Rev. Ruth Butt read Rev. Susan



Sparks' book Laugh Your Way to Grace: Reclaiming the Spiritual Power of Humor and recognized a kindred spirit that Ruth agreed to speak of her own life. For the personal stories Ruth recounted were the essence of laughter and grace. The gathering responded warmly to our friend and colleague as she shared. Yes! even in her mid 90s! MM

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THE DECEMBER (AND FINAL MONTHLY) EDITION OF CONNECTIONS WILL BE PUBLISHED WED. DECEMBER 13, 2023. Submissions no greater than 250 words will be considered and are due by Noon Friday, December 8, 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/>



World Day of Prayer 2024

Friday, March 1

Interested in a virtual gathering for this? Contact [Marg](#).

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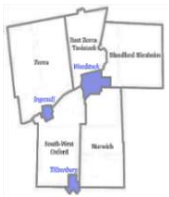
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OXFORD UC COMINGS + GOINGS



The Rev. Janine Lunn

was ordained October 28 at St. Andrew's UC, St Thomas.



It was a wonderful, spirit-filled Celebration of Ministry for everyone who participated: the meaningful land acknowledgement of the Rev. Kerry Stover; the gracious welcome of St Andrew's UC; the lighting of the Christ candle; the joyful singing of



our faith by the choir and the congregation; the empowering sermon of the Rev. Susan Browning who compared the new thing of Lydia's bi-vocational ministry in Acts 16 to Janine's reminding all of us to be open to the NEW THING God is doing in the church and the world; the moving ordination service led by the Rev. Cheryl Bolton. All present felt encouraged by the Spirit.

Janine is shown above with the jug presented to her from Antler River Watershed Region and below at the laying on of hands. See [here](#) for Janine's story in September CONNECTIONS.



CAMP TANNER

On October 13 the Board of Directors made **the difficult but right decision to close Camp Tanner.** While there

are wonderful and fantastic memories, the cost and feasibility of proper staffing on rented property are untenable. **The Board appreciates all the many many hands and hearts who have supported them over the years.**

The Annual Meeting will be held on Tuesday, November 28 at 7:30 at Knox UC, Embro.



OXFORD PRAYER CYCLE

Prayers for our ministry in the world.

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

Nov 12 ARWR staff, Chery-Ann Stadelbauer-Sampa, Executive Minister on sabbatical till Nov 30, Mark Laird, Acting Executive Minister + staff

Nov 19 Kintore, Pirie Mitchell

Nov 26 Brooksdale, Janet Uren

Dec 3 College Ave, Nancy Vandenberghe

Dec 10 Innerkip, Karen Willis

Dec 17 Knox (Embro), Susan Cole

Dec 24 Burgessville, Janice Pow PCS



OPERATION SHARING

The need for supplies and opportunities to

volunteer continue. Please visit their [website](#), their [Facebook page](#), call 519-320-1372 ext. 4 or email info@operationsharing.ca

NEW LOCATION! The CHRISTMAS PLACE – Huron Park Baptist Church (199 Burwick St) Details (donations needed, donation drop-off times, invitations and registration deadlines, volunteer opportunities) are on their Facebook page, click [here](#) or call Cathy Laye. volunteer coordinator at 519.537.7185.

The Inn opened at Avondale UC in Tillsonburg on Nov. 1 – May 1.



STICH SUPPER

CLUB, Trinity UC,

Ingersoll [Facebook](#)

[page here](#), [website here](#)

Each Thursday 4:30-6:00 pm

Volunteers needed. Sign up here:

www.stichsupperclub.ca/volunteer-sign-up

ST. PAUL'S UC, 88 Bidwell, TILLSONBURG: COMMUNITY KITCHEN

Each Sat. until April 29/24, 11:30 am in the Multi-purpose room. A free hot meal will be provided. All are welcome.

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CHURCH EVENTS

ETONIA UNITED CHURCH

All-you-can eat Spaghetti Suppers

101 #2 Hwy., Etonia,

First Wednesday of every month from October to May (except January), 5 to 6:30 p.m. Cost: Adults \$20; children 12 and under \$5; preschoolers free. Includes dessert, refreshments. Wheelchair accessible. Takeout available.

PEACE PLAYERS PRESENT COMEDY 1,2,3 and FLUSH



Peace United, 20 Samuel Place, Plattsville.

Fri. Nov 10 + Sat. Nov 11, 6 pm Meal + 7:30 pm Show

Sun. Nov 12 12:30 pm Meal + 2:00 pm show

Option 1: Meal & Show \$40 Adults; \$25 Children 12 & under

Option 2: Show only – Adults \$25, Children \$10

DUNDAS ST UC, WOODSTOCK

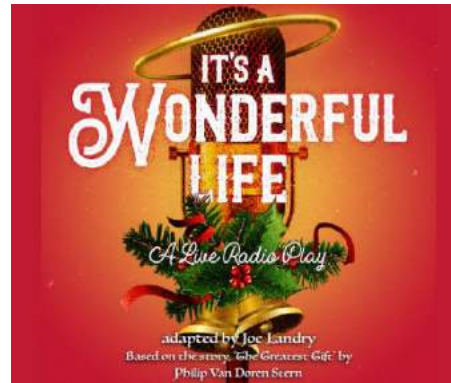
Nov 15 Gnome For The Holidays

Bazaar 1 - 5 pm, Admission \$2 (includes refreshment). Many booths, silent auction and door prizes. Wheelchair accessible.

OXFORD WORSHIP SERVICES

Websites/contact information for Oxford congregations are listed [here](#). Also check their Facebook pages for current services.

Westminster United, Thamesford



7pm:

Nov. 24,25
+ Dec. 1,2

2pm:

Dec.2

\$35.00/person including Christmas desserts + beverages.

Tickets:

<https://makingconnexions.com/show/>

or call the church office 519-285-3212.

NORWICH UNITED, Wed. Nov. 15, COMMUNITY PASTA DINNER

5:00 – 6:30 pm, All you can eat Pasta, Adults \$15, Children (12 & under) \$6; Preschoolers free. Tickets available at the door.

Call for Take-out 4:00-4:30 pm, RSVP 519.863.3637,

SWEABURG UNITED, WED. NOV. 15 PAINT WITH SPIRIT, 6:45 pm – 8:45 pm



\$20 includes supplies, no experience required only willingness to try something new! **Sign up by Nov 12, 519.671.0974,**

janinemlunn@gmail.com

ST PAUL'S UC, TILLSONBURG Nov. 18 UCW FROSTY FAIR BAZAAR



9-1:30 p.m. Admission \$2 includes Tearoom open 9-1:00 pm.

Come out and do your Christmas shopping early, crafts, knitting, Christmas decorations, greenery, jams, pickles, baking and so much more...

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HEBRON UC 676241 16th Line (corner of Cty Rd 8 + 16th Line) **12th Annual "Christmas Cookie Walk", Sat.**

Dec. 2 9:00 am Come early. Select from dozens of delightful and delicious cookies, ready to make your Christmas entertaining a little easier!

Please bring your own containers (some boxes will be available).

Cost \$10.00 per dozen.

MT ELGIN UC, MT ELGIN

Celebrity Productions Presents...

Christmas with the Legends

Sunday, Dec. 3

Matinee



SHON CARROLL
as Elvis



2:00pm



JACKIE GRAINGE
Tribute Artist

TICKETS \$25.00

Mt. Elgin United Church

324105 Mt Elgin Rd. Mount Elgin Ont.

For Tickets: Joanne 519-485-1988, Dawne 519-421-6836 or Church 519-425-2091

Refreshments to follow

CARING HEARTS SUPPORT NETWORK

at St. David's UC

190 Springbank Ave, Woodstock

call 519.536.3370 or

email info@caringheartssupportnetwork.com

www.caringheartssupportnetwork.com

Food for Grieving Hearts: Wed., Nov 15 5:45 pm, Cost \$10. Registration required by Fri. Nov 10. Caring Hearts Support Network will speak to groups about their work. Contact above.

FOR CHILDREN OF ALL AGES EVERYDAY MIRACLES

It all started with two ordinary miracles, which is always a good place to start.

I took the compost out of the bottom of the compost bin. What a miracle to have rich soil with so little effort. You put in green and comes out greenish black. It's like the greens are saying thanks to the earth for giving them life and paying it forward.

The second miracle occurred when we piled the new soil outside of the compost bin and spread some on the unions and bedding plants.

Weeks passed. Then we noticed dozens of tomato plants growing from the compost. The seeds had stayed asleep all winter and spring. They did not break down like the greens. There was lots of soil, moisture, and warmth in the compost bin for them to germinate but they lacked one thing. Can you guess? You are right. It was light.

We pulled all the tomato plants but two, but how those two plants grew! The two stretched to a patch about eight feet across. Because they came late, growing from seeds, they did not have time to ripen.



What do you do with 50 or so green tomatoes?

We decided on green tomato pickles, eight pints, seven of which we still have.

We had never pickled tomatoes before, but the

taste turned out to be quite miraculous.

How awesome is that?

GW

St David's UC, Woodstock Wed. Dec 13 'Quiet Christmas Service'

A service of remembrance. All welcome. If you'd like to have your loved ones' name read, please contact Nicole (519-539-3161). Invite friends.

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– for all rural and small town folks – lay and ministry. Zoom Workshop, **Nov. 16 1:00 pm, "Pastoral Care to the Rural Church"** (especially important when you are without a minister) Register [here](#) for this free workshop. To sign up for their newsletter or check out their resources on Collaborative Ministry etc., click [here](#).

OXFORD UNITED REFUGEE SUPPORT COMMITTEE (OURS)

Donations appreciated. Income tax receipts are issued by the sponsoring church. Please write **"Refugee Sponsorship"** in the memo line of cheques. **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.



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

Diverse range of experiences for all ages: more about

Indigenous culture and history; explore nature with your family; rest and self-care; meet new people; unleash your creativity; work on communication skills!



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

[Nations Uniting](#)

Currently we are looking at films of the Residential Schools with Renée Hill, elder of Six Nations.

To join this zoom event and be part of their mailing list contact Rhonda Johns nations.uniting@gmail.com.

GRANDMOTHERS' TEA



Nov. 29 at St. Peter's Lutheran Church, 810 King St. E Cambridge Bring your favourite dish for potluck lunch. Noon – 2:00 pm. **Bring your own**

plate, cup and cutlery **Contact** Sherri Wilker swflordama@yahoo.com. For a ride from Oxford, email Marg at murrayschell@gmail.com



Subscribe [here](#) to the newsletter of Antler River Watershed. **Facebook page, webpage**

The Fall meeting of ARWR council was held, Oct 27-28 via Zoom. The YouTube video of the meeting is [here](#) (Fri. nite), [here](#) (Sat.) and Covenanting Service [here](#).

Some highlights:

- Council discussed and passed the **Category 3 remit** on the restructuring of the Indigenous Church.
- People could self-select **one** of the break-out groups to have conversations, dream, and how to move ahead on the recommendations of the **Evaluation of Governance and Staffing Models** (see [here](#)) our Regional Structure completed by Bill Allen and Jenny Stephens after receiving feedback from Congregations and Divisions. The process didn't allow time for groups to report back but notes from groups were sent to Mark Laird, Acting Executive Minister. Generally, the need to improve how we move information along was recognized.
- The Region is drawing from investment income to balance the budget.
- Greg Simpson, Chair of the Congregational Support Commission shared a video of amazing stories of congregations doing a new thing.

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CATEGORY 3 REMIT: RESTRUCTURING OF THE INDIGENOUS CHURCH

In the next couple of weeks, I will contact pastoral charges to ensure you vote.

The following material was in our October CONNECTIONS.

Every Pastoral Charge Council has a vote on the way we relate with the Indigenous Church and has until March 31, 2024 to submit your vote.

Education is an important element in our prayerful discernment concerning this remit. The material from CONNECTIONS Summer edition on page 6 is [here](#). **ARWR has provided the following new information:**

- **Some answers to questions about the Remit. See [here](#).**

Blessings on your discernment and vote. MM

ARW Region: PRAYER CYCLE

As church, we are called to pray for each other and our mission in the world.

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

Nov 12 [Port Lambton](#)

Nov 19 [Springfield](#)

Nov 26 [Southwold](#)

For December check out the website above.

FARE THEE WELL CELEBRATION

Cheryl-Ann Stadelbauer-Sampa,

Executive Minister to ARW, HF and
WOW Regional Councils

Tue. Dec. 12, 2023

1:30-3:30 pm

Avondale UC,

194 Avondale Ave,
Stratford



Climate Grief: Hard and Holy

This was a unique and rewarding event. As someone with a deep passion for climate justice and a recognition of the crisis we are in, I was both curious and anxious.

Kathy Douglas (Regional Faith Formation Minister), Jen Prince, (Pastoral Care, Metropolitan UC) and Ryan Baxter (musician, Rowntree Memorial UC) led the group at Fairmont UC in London. We connected over a delicious light vegan soup. A 'spiral model of theological reflection' was used to structure the evening:

CONCRETE EXPERIENCE Climate Grief description: Ryan provided a short summary of 'teachings' about climate grief being collective as well as personal. It is easy to have information overload and not just from the internet, and really important to use trusted resources, to know the triggers which lead one to despair and it is critical to join with others and not give into isolation.

REFLECTIVE OBSERVATIONS - EXPLORE YOUR EMOTIONS AND SENSES: Kathy and Jen invited us, working individually to describe our feelings as to what had meaning, impact or gave insight. I don't usually go to my heart/feelings first. It was good to be reminded that my feelings of climate grief are normal; the antidote to despair is gratitude – the fall colours, a grandchild's whispered, 'I love you'.

ABSTRACT CONCEPTUALIZATION – NAMING IDEAS, PATTERNS and CONNECTIONS. Remembering the Biblical image of a mustard seed with its powerful DNA and how we nurture its growth with God being with us.

ACTIVE EXPERIMENTATION – How can I act? I examine climate crisis with a wide lens which interconnects many things - much like our discipleship in Christ. I deeply appreciated the evening.

Plans to offer more events like this.

Details at: <https://arwrcucc.ca/climate-justice-hard-and-holy/>

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FOOD FOR THE SOUL

John the Baptist: an Update

Just a reminder, the monthly newsletter, CONNECTIONS, comes to an end next month. **This month's "Food for the Soul" is number 54 of 55.**

I owe my life to John the Baptist. In the early eighteenth century, in Germany, my ancestors on my grandmother's side, converted from Lutherans to Mennonites. They understood the example of John the Baptist to mean adult baptism, accompanied by repentance.

It was about 1710 that they received a notice to either embrace the State Church or leave the country. They chose the latter and left for North America. Without that move, I would not be. For that I owe John the Baptist at least a little thought.

More importantly, for those following the lectionary during Advent, we meet John the Baptist, in weeks two and three.

John, "a voice crying in the wilderness", called people to turn around, repent and be baptized!

This year John's story is taken from Mark's gospel where John announces that Jesus "will baptize, not with water but with the Spirit." By the time we get to Luke and Matthew, written 10 years later, they have John say that Jesus will come with the Spirit and fire: like a threshers, he will separate the wheat from the chaff. The chaff will be burned - eternally.

How do we explain the increase in violence? Perhaps it was another 10 years of persecution by Rome. **Violence causes violence, as we are currently witnessing in the Middle East.**

Before we become too critical of this God of vengeance theology, it may have helped early Christians in their immense love, patience, and gratitude in the face of Rome's brutality. **Early followers of Jesus**

were leaving justice to God and were confident that God would deliver. This is not our theology. We believe in the God of grace, of unconditional love, and base it on scripture.

We cannot write John the Baptist off, however, because he misunderstood the nature of Jesus's ministry. There are valued truths in John's message: one of which is his call to repent, to turn around.

We have learned that in our relationship with Indigenous people. Only as we repent of our history of genocide do we open the gate for reconciliation.

The same painful exercise awaits reconciliation in the Middle East. This process of soul searching applies to Hamas, to Israel, to the UN, and to us in the rest of the world so eager to take sides. Hamas will be punished for their murderous assault on innocent civilians. Until there is "turn" toward greater justice, by all parties, the problem remains.

So in the season of the purple candles, a sign of contrition, an option might be to read Psalms of lament as we light candles: a prayer for our sisters and brothers in that broken part of God's world.

"Turn around!"

Do you hear it? It's John, still at the Jordan. Crying!

For the Advent journey, Blessings, *Glen Wright, co-editor*

