

CONNECTIONS

News and Views of Oxford County United Churches

Vol 5 Issue 6

June 14, 2023

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INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY

HOSTING UKRAINIANS



In February 2022, when war broke out in Ukraine, we felt compelled to help in some way. We had recently ended twenty-plus-years as foster parents, leaving areas of our large house unused. It seemed natural that we could use that space for Ukrainians fleeing to Canada – and so started our hosting journey.

In March, we inquired of Dave and Karen Murray ([Oxford County of Ontario Helps Ukraine](#)) about becoming a host family. Then, we discussed with potential families by text and video chat and found a match with one family. On May 21, 2022, our family grew by five – a father, mother, and three girls (15, 12, and 1,) and their dog, "Lucky!"

The next while was full of appointments – SINS, work permits, OHIP, and eventually G1 license applications, along with free 'shopping' at the warehouse in Woodstock which gathers household donations for new immigrants. Google Translate helped us hear about their stories from Ukraine, all they had lost in the war, and their heartache for their homeland.

We delivered many welcome baskets to Ukrainian newcomers and hosted monthly potlucks in our barn/hall to build connections and support where they could speak in their own language. Thus, in June 2022, we met another family that needed a new home, so our family grew by four more - a father, mother, and their daughter (5), and son (1.) So, there were 18-21 people at our dinner table every night! (Pictured below)



Continued on page 2

EDITORIAL

Even as we struggle with wildfires, we share stories of faith in action, **of inclusion and of diversity**: hosting Ukrainians, Trinity UC's excitement at the arrival of the Al-Mohammedawi Family, Norwich United's Pride Service, the welcome of Rev. Susan McIlveen, the new Supervised Ministry Education site at Sweaburg, Foldens and West Oxford as well as facing the challenge of collaborative ministries and decolonization. Wanting to stay connected and hear the stories of our neighbours after our restructuring, we committed **to publish CONNECTIONS for 5 years which brings us to December 2023**. To that end, we secured funding from the Oxford Legacy Fund. **Questions:** is there interest in continuing a local newsletter? What are the stories you would miss? Are you able to help publish it? Would you be prepared to pay a small amount? (**Note:** the present annual cost is about \$300.00 to rent the word processing program and the website for Oxford United Ministries.) Perhaps most importantly could you help us discern our way forward in the coming months i.e. talk/write/pray with us.

Thank you for your support.

Marg Murray + Glen Wright co-editors

Save the Date!

Wed. Sept. 27

**Friends of Oxford
Presbytery IS BACK!**

Eat, laugh, visit, sing and LEARN!

VISIT: 5:30 pm

EAT at 6:00 pm

Where? To be determined.

**WHAT IS COLLABORATIVE
MINISTRY?**

at 7 pm, Eric Skillings of UCRMN
will answer that question!

email murrayschell@gmail.com to help

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Hosting Ukrainians continued...

We were pleased to show them this corner of Canada – Niagara Falls, Toronto, the St. Jacob's Farmers' Market, the Stratford Festival, local parades, the CNE, etc. – but, mostly, we got to know each other. We got to learn so much about their homeland as they, in turn, worked to learn our ways here in Canada.

Moving to a new country is difficult. Our first family struggled with English and with Canadian life, deciding to move on in December 2022. Their space was soon filled by a single woman who was already connected to our second family. Together, they worked hard, and we're proud to say moved into their own lovely rental house in Woodstock on May 1, 2023 – close to work and allowing the older sister to stay at the school she loved.

Hosts are offering hospitality to those who, by no fault of their own, have found their own home untenable. **It has been as rich an experience for us as it has been helpful to them.** Many hosts are doing just as much with less space than we have. Many others have helped with donations, driving, welcome baskets, or at the warehouse. There is so much that can be done, and we're proud that the people of Oxford have done more than their share.

"Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it." *Hebrews 13:2*

We now have many Ukrainian angels living in our midst, right here in Oxford! *Feature article by Cheryl and Mark Marshall. Cheryl is a member of Oxford United Refugee Support Committee (OURS). Rev. Mark is minister at Westminster UC, Thamesford. Both are former members of Innerkip UC.*

OXFORD WORSHIP SERVICES

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

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CONNECTIONS – News and Views of Oxford County United Churches

THE SUMMER EDITION OF CONNECTIONS WILL BE PUBLISHED WED. AUGUST 2, 2023. Submissions no greater than 250 words will be considered and are due by Noon Friday, July 28, 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/>

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

Volunteers needed. Sign up here: www.stichsupperclub.ca/volunteer-sign-up

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OXFORD UC COMINGS + GOINGS CONGREGATIONS IN SEARCH MODE



- **Kintore UC**
- **Dundas St UC**
- **Brooksdale UC**
- **Plattsville UC parental leave**

GAY PRIDE WORSHIP

Congratulations to Norwich United Church and their minister Janice Pow for celebrating Gay Pride month in worship on the first Sunday in June.

This spirited celebration included a church festooned with rainbow banners and "gay" flags given to each worshipper at the door. Every hymn and "Amen" became a flag waving event. Although congregations may not choose that model of worship to celebrate Gay Pride month, Norwich UC stands as an example for us in proclaiming, "All are welcome in this place". In flying a Pride flag, they are making a statement that **'We seek to be a safe place in this town'**. This is an invitation to check out the June 4, service of Norwich UC [online](#). It may be a reminder of that inclusive Spirit that we proclaim in this season of Pentecost. GW

Consider these resources: [Antihate resource](#); [United Against Hate - in support of 2SLGBTQ](#)

Us Hire a Student Minister? Yes!

Since September 2022 the Beachville Pastoral Charge has had the pleasure of working with Student Minister, Janine Lunn. She is willing to share a fresh perspective on old ideas and traditions. Janine has a network of fellow students to gather options for Sunday Services. She is open to learning from us, too - the things that have worked, the hymns we love, and the pews everyone sits in. Janine has brought visual aids and Facebook. We've taught her how to serve 150 meals in 1 hour. It has been a good mixture of old and new. Yes, we've had to wade through

some paperwork but by combining the thoughts of each of our committee members we prepared a thoughtful evaluation. Having a student minister in our pulpit, we've gained a great deal. We took a leap of faith and gained a knowledgeable, dedicated, enthusiastic and eager leader. We gained someone with new ways and means to prod us along our path of faith. **It turns out we have found a great traveling companion.** Submitted by Dorothy Garfat of Sweaburg UC.

Editor's note: 2 volunteers from Foldens UC, Sweaburg UC + West Oxford UC formed the Lay Supervision Team, to meet 4 times over 8 months. While it was challenging, they found it was manageable and are pleased that Janine will stay for another year. We are hoping Janine will be ordained this fall.

Janine reported 'They have been very welcoming and supportive, and we have been able to work together and collaborate on different worship styles and outreach.'



Photo of the congregations' June 4 'Praise in the Park' outdoor service at Foldens Community Centre with Bruce Jakeman of Sweaburg UC on the guitar. Photo by J. Lunn

If you are interested in hiring a student, watch [this video](#), UCC Office of Vocation to become a Supervised Ministry Education site (SME). Currently in Oxford, Princeton-Etonia UC Pastoral Charge (Jane Baxter, SM) and Hebron UC (Kathleen Welch, DLMIT) are also SME sites.

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WELCOME BACK TO OXFORD

Rev. Susan McIlveen

I was born and raised in Oxford County but have lived and worked in Newfoundland, Saskatchewan, northern Ontario, and Manitoba. I completed my M. Div. through the Atlantic School of Theology's five-year Summer Distance Program, during which time I also served in full-time student ministry experience appointments. I was ordained in 2021 in Winnipeg.

Moving back to Oxford to serve with the people of Avondale United Church in Tillsonburg and Otterville United Church is not quite like coming home again since so much has changed in the county, even in the past 15 years. Still, I've enjoyed revisiting some favourite sites this spring (especially the trilliums at the Trillium Woods outside Sweaburg) and look forward to catching up on the changes.

Avondale and Otterville have been in a collaborative arrangement on paper for about three years. They are just beginning to live into what that will mean for sharing a worship leader, juggling time commitments, and finding ways to learn, grow, and serve God in relationship with one another. The call of God and the United Church to learn, grow, and serve alongside them is a privilege.

I look forward to connecting with new United Church colleagues, especially in Oxford County, and hope to meet you face-to-face soon.
Susan McIlveen

Consider these resources:

[Antihate resource.](#)

[United Against Hate – in support of 2SLGBTQ](#)



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.

**Meet the staff on [Facebook page](#) –
FRING – Director; BAJA, GERKIN, plus
To Registrar: contact Gail Kavelman
519-709-0282 gkavelman@gmail.com**

STILL HIRING –

Male Counselors, Lifeguards & First Aid Support

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.

STILL NEEDED

VOLUNTEER COOK HELPERS

**Campers need to eat! 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).
You will work with the **certified cook**
who knows the menus and quantities for
morning and afternoon. **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](#).

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OXFORD UNITED REFUGEE SUPPORT COMMITTEE (OURS)

Trinity United Ingersoll welcomes the AL-Mohammedawi Family

The Al-Dean family-home in London is a joyous, busy household where the Al-Mohammedawi family will live for the month of June until they move to their own apartment on July 1. Our sponsored family arrived at Pearson Airport from Istanbul on the evening of Friday May 26 into the loving arms of Marwa and her family which includes her husband Basim and their children. Marwa, our co-sponsor, is the sister of Wisam Al-Mohammedawi. Marwa, Basim and their then two children were sponsored by Trinity several years ago. They now have four children who, like their parents, are happy and contributing Canadian Citizens.

Marwa approached our church in August of 2021 to co-sponsor her brother and his family who had fled into Turkey from Baghdad, Iraq in 2017 to ensure the safety of their three daughters following the tragic loss of their twelve-year-old son at the hands of a terrorist group. **Our congregation agreed to sponsor them.** Shown below are L to R: **Wisam, his wife Nedi Al-Saadi, Razan (15yr), Anaam (18yr), and Shahad (11yr)** - smiling and happy to be safe in Canada.



A sponsorship committee was formed to look after all aspects of sponsorship and keep the congregation informed about financial goals, needed donations of household items and progress being made. Our sponsorship committee is grateful for the support of our congregation and others in our community who contributed. Kiwanis

Ingersoll and the Ingersoll Foundation provided funds to purchase tablets for the three girls which will enhance their educational needs as school begins in the fall.

We have found an apartment for them in White Oaks, London. A volunteer moving crew will take the donated items that will furnish their apartment from storage at Trinity to their new home on Canada Day. Other settlement related tasks are already well underway such as obtaining SIN and OHIP numbers, orienting them to their new city, neighbourhood and schools. Plans are being made for English classes. The three girls have some ability to converse in English gained by long distance communication with their cousins in Canada over the past five years. Understanding the Canadian monetary system and the importance of budgeting are high on the agenda to ensure our funds, committed for their first year's support, will be wisely spent.

We will be arranging a time of fellowship at the church for the congregation to meet them and experience first hand the genuine gratitude felt by this family. Sponsorship is not easy, but the rewards are absolutely heart warming, and, for new Canadians, life giving.

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

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

Notice of Annual Meeting Oxford United Refugee Support (OURS)

Sunday, June 25, 2023 at 1:30 PM

**Trinity United Church
118 Church St Ingersoll
All Welcome to Attend**

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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.

June 18, Burgessville, Janice Pow, PCS

June 25, Mt Elgin, Lori Minler

July 2, St Paul's (T'burg), Karlene Brown-Palmer, Maurice Francis, Pat Cook, Bonnie Pilkey, Karen Hodges

July 9, Avondale+Otterville, Susan McIlveen

July 16, Newark, Lori Minler

July 23, Licensed Lay Worship Leaders (LLWL)

July 30, Trinity (Ingersoll), Judy Campbell PCS

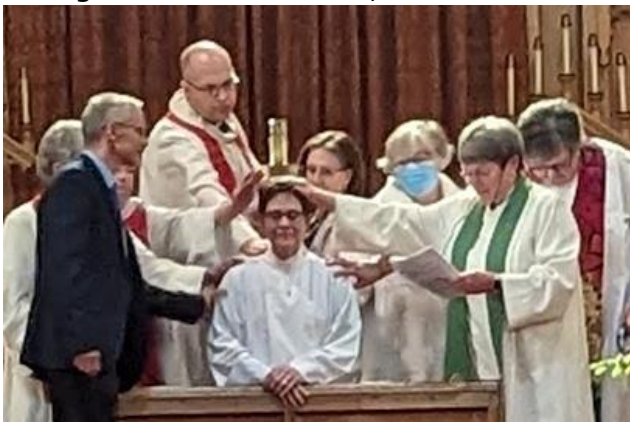
Aug 6, Westminster (Thamesford), Mark

Marshall, Gerard Hamoen

Aug 13, Hickson,

THE COMMISSIONING OF NANCY VANDENBERGHE, DLM

at the ARWRC Celebration of Ministry,
on May 13, 2023. Nancy is serving at
College Ave UC, Woodstock.



UNITED CHURCH RURAL MINISTRY NETWORK (UCRMN)

Deep down, we know we can't keep going with dwindling numbers or finances. It is discouraging and tiring. Taking the creative risk in working together in formal ways (shared, collaborative as described in [May CONNECTIONS](#)) brings a sense of hope. The Spirit is present. **Come out on September 27 and meet Eric Skillings of UCRMN**, formerly from Innerkip UC, presently DLM at South Buxton P.C..

CHURCH EVENTS

COLLEGE AVE UC

22 Wilson St., Woodstock

Scott Woods

Old-Fashioned HOEDOWN.

Thursday, June 15 at 7:00 pm.

A family friendly + fast-paced show. **Tickets are \$45** with cash/cheque at **Hallmark Shoppe, Early Bird Coffee, or College Ave. UC** (519.537.6062); or to order with credit card call the [Scott Woods Band Office](#) at 1-855-726-8896 (toll free). Proceeds support College Ave.

CARING HEARTS
SUPPORT NETWORK



at St. David's UC

190 Springbank Ave, Woodstock

Living with Loss – 6-week Grief Support Group. A safe and supportive space to explore your grief with the guidance of trained facilitators.

Monday, July 17, 6:30-8:00 pm

To register, please call/text

519.536.3370, email

info@caringheartssupportnetwork.com

www.caringheartssupportnetwork.com

OPERATION SHARING



The need for supplies and opportunities to volunteer continues. Please visit their [website](#), their [Facebook page](#), call 519-320-1372 ext. 4 or email info@operationsharing.ca.

NEWS! Bullwinkle's will be called "THE SHARING TABLE". The winner, Bev Eckert, receives a \$30 gift card to the unique eco-friendly Jarful Refillery on Light St.

Their Annual Meeting was held 5:00 pm, June 12, 2023 at College Ave. United Church.

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FOR CHILDREN OF ALL AGES.

The Lyrebird

Last month, you may remember the Fork Tailed Gondo, the bird that has learned how to tell lies, (or engage in fake news). One of our readers wrote to us and said this bird that lies "gave her pause".

So after the "liar" bird, why not follow it with the Lyrebird. This amazing Australian bird gets its name because its displayed tail feathers resemble a lyre. The purpose of the feather display is to impress and attract a would-be mate.

The Lyrebird is a master of mimicry. While it has a song of its own, it loves to imitate the sounds it hears in the forest. It can imitate the sound of the kookaburras so perfectly that kookaburras answer back. Does this make it the only multilingual bird on the planet?

But not only does it imitate other birds, its repertoire may include the sound of axes, crosscut saws, chain saws and even the shrill sounds of fire engines. (You can hear this on Google's YouTube.)

Does that make the Lyrebird a liar? No. it's more like Anne Murray recording Gordon Lightfoot's "Cotton Jenny." Anne just liked the song.



So if a lyre player wandered into the woods and began playing the first five bars of Waltzing Matilda, would the lyrebird add that to its song list? I think so. Now that would be a sure winner in attracting a mate, wouldn't it? GW

JUNE IS INDIGENOUS MONTH

What is a Ribbon Skirt? Unique to each nation, wearing the ribbon skirt is about reclaiming their identity and wearing that proudly. It is a cultural protection against assimilation and degradation. Read more [here](#).



NATIONS UNITING – SHARING CIRCLE: *A safe place to Listen, to Learn, to Heal + to Grow,*
June 26, 1:30-3:30, Nations Uniting

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

Grandmother's Tea (bring your favourite potluck)

June 28, Noon 'till 2:00 pm.
at Five Oaks Centre, 1 Bethel Rd, Paris. Please bring utensils, cup, plate. To share a ride email murrayschell@gmail.com



[ARWRC webpage](#) [Facebook page](#)

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

Highlights of ARWRC Spring 2023 Hybrid Meeting are in their [May 17 newsletter](#).

We commend the following:
Theme Speaker, Rev. Dr. Lillian Daniel: Friday Video at 02:06; Remit 1 Information: Friday Video at 04:50; Eco-Theology, Rev. Dr. Jessica Hetherington: Saturday Video at 00:35; Celebration of Ministry Service: Saturday Afternoon.

Retired President Jane Van Patter (formerly of St. David's UC) was honoured for her grace and good humour over the past 30 months.

ARW Region: PRAYER CYCLE

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

Jun 11 [Petrolia: St. Paul's](#)
Jun 18 [Norwich](#)
Jun 25 [Dundas Street Centre](#)
Jul 2 [Wallaceburg: Trinity](#)
Jul 9 [Aylmer: St. Paul's](#)
Jul 16 [St. Paul's-Victoria Avenue](#)
Jul 23 [Tupperville](#)
Jul 30 [South Mersea](#)
Aug 6 [Riverside](#), London
Aug 13 [Cottam](#)
Aug 20 [St. Andrew's Chatham](#)

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FOOD FOR THE SOUL

Two steps Forward. . . Part Two

To continue the story of the early church after Pentecost, we turn to the book of Acts, written by Luke.

By the 10th chapter of Acts, Peter was convinced that this new community could include Gentiles. Luke describes in Acts the growth of the church in cities around the Mediterranean.

If the church's task is to change the world: to pray and work that "it may be done on earth as it is in heaven," we should not be surprised when the world pushes back. Jesus said as much when he said that those who choose to follow will need to "take up the cross."

Rome, thinking it had contained this Jesus movement, discovered it had not, so it began to persecute Christians. In spite of that, or because of the persecution and the raw courage and persistent love shown by Christians, the church continued to grow. However, in or around 60 CE both Paul and Peter were executed, probably in Rome. **The world was pushing back.**

Also, not only did the church seek to reshape the world, the customs and social practices of the world were showing up in the texts. In Ephesians 6:5 and Colossians 3:22 we read that slaves should obey their masters. Ephesians 5:23-33 states that wives should obey their husbands and husbands should love their wives as Christ loved the church. It is clear who represents Christ and who represents the church. In 1Timothy 2:11 the writer suggests that women should be silent when it came to spiritual matters.

If the church had listened to Paul's letter to the church in Galatia where he said

that in Christ there was neither slave nor free, Galatians 3:28 and heeded Paul's letter to Philemon telling him that in Christ there was no place for slavery, **one of the greatest injustices in Christian history might have been avoided.**

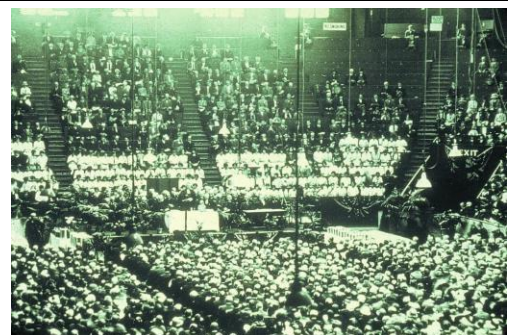
If we had noted that some of the deacons Paul appointed were women, and **if** we had listened to his words "In Christ there is neither male nor female"; **if** we had ignored 1Timothy 2:11, that women should be silent, **the Christian community would have avoided some of its historic patriarchy and it would not have taken us nearly 1900 years to ordain the first woman.**

If these epistles were not written by Paul, then Paul can be seen in a more favourable light. These texts that support slavery and patriarchy represent at least two steps back from "the good news".

To use one of St. Paul's metaphors, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels." (2 Corinthians 4:7) **To discern what is treasure and what is earthen vessel: what reflects the life and work of Jesus and what comes from the world, is the tough but necessary work (journey) of the church.** Thanks to the Spirit, that work still goes on, and needs to. Our life here on earth may just depend on it.



Blessings, *Glen Wright, co-editor*



June 10, 1925, celebrating the inauguration of the United Church of Canada. (Thanks to [Princeton-Etonia Pastoral Charge](#) for the photo)