

## From Jim's Desk

A few years ago I looked out toward the back left corner of our yard I imagined a lovely garden shed standing there. Friends suggested I insulate and heat it, just in case I tried to sneak one of those large plasma screen TV's into the house and Anne got mad. I eventually ignored both thoughts and set upon constructing a gazebo. Of sorts. I say "of sorts" because it does not conform exactly to the pictures on the covers of most woodworking magazines. It is what I like to call "custom". So far it has been two years in the making. In the first summer of the project I had a lovely concrete pad poured for the structure. I looked at the pad for a year. The wood – ridiculously expensive red cedar, and thick – was finally purchased and made its slow way, by ox-cart it seemed, from the west coast to my driveway, arriving at the beginning of the second summer. The wood was then moved with great ceremony from the driveway to the concrete pad, where it sat for another year. My dad's advice constantly echoed in my mind: "Don't buy real estate twice" and "never rush an important thing" and "good foundations are everything." Next on the agenda was hardware. None of that flimsy store bought stuff for this project. I wanted to build something to last. I ordered sixty brackets made out of heavy angle iron at a steel mill in Bolton, and then had the whole lot galvanized in Acton. All along I had been doing the calculations – wood of a certain thickness and width can carry only so much weight over a certain distance. Otherwise the carrying beam will bow. Will

bend. Will break. The uprights will fall in. And the whole thing will come down. I wanted to create safe space, so I needed to make good choices about the materials, their dimensions, and the manner of their connection. In the third summer, during the weekend before my arrival at Harcourt, the edifice went up. It stands still, and didn't budge an inch during that terrible windstorm not long ago. But as are most things in life, it is not finished. It remains a work in progress.

People building anything have to ask themselves questions about purpose and form, about dimensions and materials. They have to get clear about what is going to carry the weight and why. Organizations and communities have to ask the same questions. What are we building and why? How wide apart ought the uprights to be, and how substantial must the carrying beam be to hold things up? And what are the appropriate materials?

As we seek to strengthen and renew community here, construct what is faithful to our past and relevant to God's future, we are invited to ask similar questions. We take it as a given, and a good, that opinions on just about any topic will inevitably collide and mix and dance together under the shelter of our structure. But we also understand that certain values and ideas have to serve as upright and beam. Harcourt has set the value of openness as a core construction material. It is not just a sign on the door or in the bulletin. It is core identity, framing and carrying everything we do. But that piece of identity, like everything else, is a work in progress.

One way of expressing this core value involves how we talk about our faith and make space for other views. When we express our beliefs as truths, for example, we set the stage for a collision. But this confrontational dynamic changes when we see theology as a tool, not a truth. Our theology carries a meaning that matters to us, but the words, the images, the metaphors we use are not to be confused with the meaning itself. All truths, said Northrop Frye, are shadows but the last. The last truth he called love, as did St. Paul. On this side of that last truth stand all of our approximations, the tools of understanding that help us imagine the truths we value. Each theological approach responds to particular questions and concerns that are alive in the questioner. Each of these approaches has strengths we use to respond to these concerns, and weaknesses, which become more apparent as a new generation rises up and asks different questions than the generation before. It is not uncommon for the theological answers and approaches helpful to previous generations – from creeds and hymn lyrics to Bible translations and understandings of God - suddenly to appear awkward in their ability to answer the questions of new generations. Inevitably the emerging group remakes its theology to respond and to be faithful to its times. All generations of Christians have done so. In this sense all theology is transitory, a constant work in progress. It is “open.” The important thing is that whatever theological approach we bring with us needs to be able to respond adequately and effectively to the questions and concerns of our times. Our understandings may not be shared by the per-

son beside us in the pew. That is OK, because what is different between us is our choice of tool, and not necessarily a difference in truth. So long as our theologies work for us, help us, support us, help others, and do no harm to self and others, we celebrate and make space for the difference. We make safe space. And if what we bring suddenly seems too limited for us, if we become dissatisfied with our own theology’s answers, then we will be glad for the shelter of this Harcourt community - where difference dances together in respect - where we weekly open ourselves to other voices and ways and the possibility of change and growth.

This can happen well only under a beam of openness that is carried by the firm timbers of mutual respect and care. It is not a way of being that a minister or Council can carry alone. I thank you for doing your part to hold up this house of welcome down many years – to be the living timbers of openness. I also invite you, as you brave the winter months, to consider how, both individually and collectively, we might stretch ourselves during this coming year to live what we already are with even greater enthusiasm and effectiveness. God being our helper.

Winter Blessings!  
Jim.

## **Worth Taking a Look At ...**

### **FOOD FOR THE JOURNEY FROM THE SPIRITUAL LIFE COMMITTEE**

#### **THE ECUMENICAL WEEK OF GUIDED PRAYER**

**March 1 TO March 7, 2009**

**Registration forms at Church Office**

Are you wondering about attending the Week of Guided Prayer? I should like to tell you of some of my experiences and hopefully it will help you to make up your mind. The Week helps provide you with opportunities to learn more about prayer, to develop insights about your life and to have a deeper relationship with God.

I usually go through an inner struggle between wanting to go and feeling I am too busy to fit it in. Then I remember how glad I was, that I had taken part in the Week in previous years, and sign up. I look on this time as a gift to myself and to God and try to keep that week clear of extra commitments. I enjoy the feeling of freedom and peacefulness this special week gives me.

The first Sunday afternoon everyone meets and a few of the prayer forms are taught. You are introduced to your Prayer Guide and decide where and when you will meet each day. It gives you a good feeling to see so many people from so many different churches, all interested in prayer. You are certainly

not alone in wanting to become closer to God.

Your Guide will give you a passage of Scripture and a suggested method for you to pray and meditate with for at least half an hour and then you make notes about what happened in your prayer. Try to find a place to pray where you can shut the door and be free of interruptions. I also like to have at least an hour of free time if I need to use it, because I like to be able to stop praying and stop writing when I feel ready and not go by the clock.

When you enter into prayer you need to clear your mind of the many thoughts which keep bubbling up. One of the ways to do this is calmly breathing in and out, sometimes slowly repeating a word or phrase and sensing the Holy Spirit all around and within you. A prayer method which might be suggested you use when reading the Scripture is to imagine you are either watching or taking part in the passage. You see, hear and feel all that goes on and it can be a very vivid and moving experience for you. Sometimes when nothing in the Scripture speaks to you, you can just sit quietly, putting yourself in God's hands, offering your time and attention to God, maybe feeling love or thankfulness or the presence of God with you.

When you feel you are finished, it is a good idea to start writing about what has just happened, while it is still fresh in your memory. This is almost a continuation of your prayer, because you are putting on paper what went on in this special time, when you made your-

self open and available for God to communicate with you. Sometimes as you are writing, new thoughts and understandings come to you, so you write your new insights down as well. I find that for the rest of the day my mind often goes back to what happened in this special prayer time

The following day you visit your Prayer Guide and discuss what has happened in your prayer time. This person has been specially trained and helps you to see and understand what has happened and what it means. A new scripture will be assigned and the same pattern of praying, writing and visiting your Guide goes on from Monday to Friday. By the end of the week I have always found that something very special has happened to me and I am so grateful that I took the Week of Guided Prayer. I have taken this Week many times over the years and when I look back I realize how blessed I have been by taking it. You never know where God will lead you but it will always be where you needed to go.

Margaret Bates

### **JOINT SEARCH COMMITTEE**

The Joint Search Committee began meeting on November 27. As of January 14, the committee has met five times and is currently holding weekly meetings. The job ad for the full-time ordained minister will be coming out in the February Observer with the application deadline of February 17, and can also be found on Harcourt's website. We do appreciate input from the congregation. If you have the name of a minister you would

like the Joint Search Committee to consider or other input please let Randy Seager, the corresponding secretary know, at: randy.seager@rogers.com.

Lindsay Lennox

### **‘PUTTING ‘THE CHRIST’ BACK INTO ‘CHRISTIAN.’**

So you care about Jesus, but don't quite know what to do with 'Christ'? What could Paul possibly mean by 'putting on Christ'? Interested in reflecting on the images of the 'Cosmic Christ'? Then join Andre Auger and other men for Lent 2009 on Saturday mornings from 9:30 to 12. Give yourself the gift of time for yourself, to meditate, reflect and share with other men in a safe and accepting environment. The themes we will explore in meditation include the Christ archetype, Christ and Cosmology, Christogenesis - our role in the fulfilment of the Christ, Christianity as doctrine or practice, stages on the Christian journey, and "Christing" - being a Christian is becoming a "Christ." If "Christian" for you implies some sort of spiritual journey, and you're already on it, come and explore that journey with us. For more information, contact Andre at 519-8245-6329 or aauger002@gmail.com

### **LGBTQ LIVING THE WELCOME TEAM UPDATE**

The LGBTQ Team of Living the Welcome began meeting in October 2008 and we went right to work by connecting with the Harcourt community and LGBTQ service providers.

In November we asked members of the congregation to join us for a facilitated discussion on the topic of "How Affirming is Harcourt?". We received great input on what people think is working really well and on what we need to develop. The team has taken this information and set out an action plan with both immediate and long term goals.

Our meeting in November with LGBTQ service providers in Guelph helped us to get informed about what these services offer in the community and how we can work together. This session even led to the service providers submitting a joint funding proposal to the government for a coordinated website and they have already received approval to go ahead with the project!

We hosted potlucks in October and January for Harcourt's Queer & Allied community with amazing results. We have had fantastic turnouts at these events and the atmosphere is one of great friendship, great conversation, and great food!

Kathryn Hofer  
Chair, LGBTQ Living the Welcome Team

### **M&S MINUTE**

First of all, thank you to all the faithful regular donors to the Mission & Service Fund and a special thanks to the new donors who helped us reach our goal of \$100,000!

...And the Council said, AMEN!

The M&S Fund has been called the lifeblood of the United Church because it provides over 60% of the funds needed for our operations both in Canada and our partners overseas.

Two projects that receive M&S funding in Guelph are the Chalmers Community Services and the new United Church chaplain at the University of Guelph. Hopefully these people will come and tell us their stories in person.

## **Youth News**

### **MINISTER'S SOIREE FOR YOUNG ADULTS**

When: The first Wednesday of each month,

Where: 16 University Avenue East

Time: 5.30 – 7.30

Who: Young adults and their friends.

What : Varies! Dinner is provided. It is helpful if you call 519 - 836 - 0433 or [jbarham@sympatico](mailto:jbarham@sympatico) on the Monday before to confirm the number attending and any food allergies or preferences

It's relaxing and fun . Do come!

## Groups & Events

### **CAROLINE HARCOURT WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP**

The January meeting was treated to an informative talk on "Foot Care" by Joan Charlebois, R.N., who owns and operates a home-visiting foot care business here in Guelph. Joan, who is well-known in Harcourt's choir and congregation, added a musical interlude, in song and on guitar.

The February 9 meeting of the CHWF will feature a talk and discussion on "Poverty in Guelph", including Harcourt congregation's response to that. The speaker will be recent addition to the congregation, the (Rev.) Diane Clark, former minister of Chalmers United Church, now retired and active in the "new" Chalmers Community Resources Centre at 40 Baker Street, where she works with many Harcourt people, including one of the centre's founders, John Buttars. All women are always welcome; the meeting will start promptly at noon. Each woman is asked to bring one or two items of non-perishable food for the Food Share Shelf at the Centre ... as well as her own sandwich.

### **MARGARET ROSE UCW**

Our February meeting is a Valentines Party. Bring your hearts full of love and we'll swing to love songs. All ladies invited: 1:30 p.m. in the Friendship Room on Wednesday, February 11th.

### **GLEN MILLER CONCERT 2009**

A Tribute to Glenn Miller Concert will be produced this year by our own Guelph Wellington Chapter of Stroke Recovery Canada as a fundraiser to support their Peer Support Group and the new Stroke Survivor Visiting Programs at our Guelph hospitals.

In 2007 they brought you the Gospel Jazz Group to a sold out audience at Harcourt. Your assessment – "Most fun I've had in years !!!"

Last year they produced the Benny Goodman Tribute Concert to another full house at War Memorial Hall. Your assessment – "Give us more of the same!!!"

And so, on Saturday, May 16, 2009 at War Memorial Hall they are presenting the Glenn Miller Tribute Concert with a very professional 17 piece orchestra including a boy and girl singer which, of course, was standard in those days.

Last year the concert was sold out a month in advance so don't be disappointed. Get your tickets now. Reserved seating, first come, first served.

Tickets can be purchased from Joanne in the Harcourt office 519-824-4177 or from Don Milley 519-822-0744 or Jim McKinnon 519-821-3541. They are \$ 30. each or there are a limited number of dinner/concert packages, at the Cutten Club, available for \$ 65. each.

## With Heartfelt Thanks

### FROM THE JUSTICE AND OUTREACH COMMITTEE

Following the Justice and Outreach Sunday on November 9th 2008 we were able to take three carloads of food to the Chalmers Downtown ( Previously known as Friday Fairshare Food Shelf ) We thank everyone who donated non-perishable food at the service.

We would also like to thank everyone who donated to our Advent (White Gift) Appeal. \$3,140.00 was raised for the Anishnabeg Therapy Fund.

### MANY THANKS

- for the generosity of the Men's Breakfast Group who supported the purchase of books for the children of International Students who live in Married Student Housing at the University of Guelph.

- to those in the Congregation who provided used toys for the children of the International Students in Married Student Housing at the University of Guelph. Joy and Love were indeed evident at the "End of Year Party" when these gifts were distributed.

- to those in the Congregation who distributed invitations, wherever you went, to our Harcourt Christmas Events.. We will contin-

ue to ask you to spread the word about our Life at Harcourt through such invitations from time to time.

- to the families in the Congregation who invited International Students to their homes for a meal during the Christmas break. A comment from a University Staff person was that this generosity embodied the real meaning of Christmas.

## Opportunities to Serve

### MISSION AND SERVICE 2008

The congregation set the 2008 target for contributions to the Mission and Service Fund at \$100,000. The actual for 2008 is \$100,840 which includes \$2000 from the UCW. This is another great response to help others in Guelph and around the world.

Jim McQueen

### PLEASE RECYCLE ALL USED "TRIMMED" STAMPS .

These are still being sent to the Leprosy Mission in Toronto and are sold to stamp dealers. The money is used for the work of the mission. Please be sure that the stamps are not damaged and place them in the drawer of the credenza, marked "stamps", located upstairs outside the offices. Thank you.

## **TWO REQUESTS FROM THE JUSTICE & OUTREACH COMMITTEE**

Justice and Outreach Committee has noted that the response to our efforts for Amnesty International campaigns have been poorly supported. We should like some feedback from the congregation on this matter. If we are to continue we seek a volunteer to help out. Please address your comments to John Batt at 519-767-1715 or johnbatt@rogers.com

The Justice and Outreach Committee is looking for people to be added to a list of "Friends of Justice and Outreach" The purpose of this list is to identify interested people who can be called or emailed for help with a particular project. There would not be a need to attend our meetings and they will only be asked if our project needed help over and above the committee members. Interested people can call John Batt at 519-767-1715 or email at johnbatt@rogers.com

### **LIGHTS, SOUND, ACTION**

The Sanctuary has lights which provide drama; screens which go up and down with words which "miraculously" appear on the screen along with beautiful images; and a sound system which enables all of us to participate no matter where we sit ( the great equalizer). Are you:

- wanting/called/interested in being involved in enabling this part of the Sunday by Sunday Ministry of Worship?

- unable to work any of the equipment?

- wondering what it would be like if the Minister had a sermon that you thought had gone on long enough and you were able to cut off the sound? (no don't think of that!);

The Electronic Communication Team will be offering training for all who wish to join this strategic team of people who enable worship at Harcourt.

Please rush to call/e-mail::

Mike Peleschak 519 - 822 - 3522;  
peleschak@sympatico.ca

or Joan Barham 519 - 836 - 0433;  
jbarham@sympatico.ca

We really want to get the training underway!

### **DONATIONS WANTED**

Chalmers Community Services Centre will be holding a fundraising sale at Harcourt Memorial United Church, 87 Dean Ave., on Saturday March 14 from 9am to 1pm. Donations of quality household items, books, collectibles, and small furniture can be dropped off at Harcourt from 9am to 3pm, Monday March 9 to Friday March 13. Money raised will go towards funding our two local food pantries, Chalmers Downtown and Chalmers West.

For information call 519-766-0874. Thank you for your assistance.

## GENEROSITY REQUEST

1) A young, single mother with two children aged 7 years and 4 months, would appreciate support, one morning a week (2-1/2 hours), from a person willing to mind the baby while she focuses on completing an application for an on-line Masters degree from the University of Waterloo , which is due at the end of January 2009. If the re were a team of four people that would mean one morning a month of support. Can we remember being a Mum with young children 24/7 in the Canadian winter?

One or two more people would be great to enhance this team.

2) A Mum living at Wellington Woods has two small children . She would like to attend the ESL class for two hours on a Tuesday afternoon. She asked whether there would be an adult at Harcourt who would stay with the children for that time period.

One or two more people would really enable this team.

For both 1) & 2) Please call Joan Barham 519 836 0433; jbarham@sympatico.ca

## Library Lines

New books! New books! These four are very much related to changes happening within our own church and in the church at large- it's worth your time to understand the possibilities.

658     Gottlieb Hildy  
Friendraising

351.1   Gottlieb Hildy  
Board Recruitment and Orientation

250     Sitze Bob  
Not Trying Too Hard

241     Sitze Bob  
Starting Simple

New books! New books! You will want to read some of the latest writing on church and on the traditional view of Christ. Both Spong and Levine are familiar to this congregation, and Vosper is the controversial minister of West Hill United Church in Toronto. Her congregation loves her, but the United Church is somewhat uncertain.

270     Vosper Gretta             With     or  
Without God

232.9   Spong John Shelby     Jesus     for  
the Non-Religious

261.2   Levine Amy-Jill  
Misunderstood Jew

## What's so Funny?

### HYMN TITLES BY OCCUPATION

Do you know your (specific) hymn(s)?  
When you go to Church this weekend be sure  
to smile as you go through your Hymnals!

#### **Dentist's Hymn**

Crown Him with Many Crowns

#### **Weatherman's Hymn**

There Shall Be Showers of Blessings

#### **Contractor's Hymn.**

The Church's One Foundation

#### **The Tailor's Hymn**

Holy, Holy, Holy

#### **The Golfer's Hymn**

There's a Green Hill Far Away

#### **The Politician's Hymn**

Standing on the Promises

#### **Optometrist's Hymn**

Open My Eyes That I Might See

#### **The IRS Agent's Hymn**

I Surrender All

#### **The Gossip's Hymn**

Pass It On

#### **The Electrician's Hymn**

Send The Light

#### **The Shopper's Hymn**

Sweet Bye and Bye

#### **The Realtor's Hymn**

I've Got a Mansion Just over the Hilltop

#### **The Massage Therapists Hymn**

He Touched Me

#### **The Doctor's Hymn**

The Great Physician

**AND for those who speed on the highway -  
a few hymns:**

#### ***45mph***

God Will Take Care of You

#### ***65mph***

Nearer My God To Thee

#### ***85mph***

This World Is Not My Home

#### ***95mph***

Lord, I'm Coming Home

#### ***100mph***

Precious Memories

*Give me a sense of humor, Lord,  
give me the grace to see a joke,  
To get some humor out of life*

# Passages

## **Births:**

On January 5, 2009, Ruby and Colton, twins for Carolyn and Billy Lake, and a niece and nephew for proud aunt, Cindy Verrall.

On January 20, 2009, Adele McDougall, a daughter for Jeremy McDougall and Maddie Griffiths and granddaughter for Bonnie McDougall and Ken & Diane McDougall.

## **Deaths:**

Mark Estill, loving son of Ann and Don Estill

## **Baptized at Harcourt on January 18, 2009:**

Callan David Alexander Newton, son of Genevieve and Geoffrey Newton, granddaughter of Heather and Brian Thompson

Caleb Thomas and Tate Gunnar Davison, twin sons of Timothy and Sara Davison





## Library Lines

**Recipe**

**Passages**