

## Worth Taking a Look At ...

### PERSONNEL COMMITTEE UPDATE

1. Personnel Committee is looking for back-up substitute people to assist in the Sunday morning nursery area from 10:00 A.M. to 12:00 noon. Occasionally, the regular worker has a need to be absent for family matters. Although we have one person on call, we really should have a second possibility when these are short-notice requests to help out at a time when other plans may have already been made. Suggestions by congregation members for this paid substitute position would be much appreciated. Please call the church office or 519-824-4012 if you have a name to suggest.

2. This year Personnel received 23 responses to the request for staffing feedback. These responses were so thoughtfully prepared and submitted and we thank you for taking the time to value this opportunity to give your feedback. The responses have been organized and shared with the staff members and those which were non-specific to any one person were put on a list and shared with all staff members as well as various committees. It is our hope that in future years the responses will continue to grow in number and thoughtful ideas.

3. At the May 20th Council Meeting, Council passed the following motions:

(i) That Council recommend to the June 2009 congregational meeting that the

Congregation request Waterloo Presbytery to approve the expanded position of Children, Youth and Family Designated Lay Minister to replace the previous position of Children and Youth Ministry Staff Associate at Harcourt Memorial United Church effective July 1, 2009.

(ii) That Council recommend to the June 2009 congregational meeting that the Congregation request that Waterloo Presbytery adopt a motion to declare a vacancy and authorize a search for a 30-hour per week annually-renewable contract position of Children, Youth and Family Designated Lay Minister at Harcourt Memorial United Church.

(iii) That Council recommend to the June 2009 congregational meeting that the Congregation delegates to the new Council the responsibility of recruiting and appointing the Search Committee for Children, Youth and Family Designated Lay Minister.

### LABYRINTH

The Labyrinth will not be available at Harcourt during the months of June, July and August. However, we have been invited to use the Labyrinth at Three Willows United Church, 577 Willow Rd. The Labyrinth has been painted on their parking lot, on the west side of the building, which is the least used area for parking. There is a gazebo near it where you can sit and meditate if you prefer. We hope you will find the experience of walking the Labyrinth outside very rewarding.

## **FOOD FOR THE JOURNEY**

### **From the Spiritual Life Committee**

#### **Discernment**

In spiritual and church circles these days, there are probably few "buzz words" that are used - and misused - as frequently as "discernment." Discernment is one of the key characteristics of a "vital congregation," according to Diana Butler Bass. When Rev Anthony Robinson spoke here a few weeks ago he too used the term. Someone asked me afterwards "But how do we actually DO discernment?"

Let's get one thing clear: "discernment" is not just another - vague, but more "Christian" - word for "deciding." While there is something about deciding in it of course, the secret lies more in "listening for" than in "deciding to."

In order to engage in true discernment, we have to start with a fundamental premise: we believe that God speaks to us, that the Spirit is alive and well in our midst, and that, if we learn how, we can actually "hear" - albeit not necessarily clearly or every time - what God wants us to hear. If we are unable to accept that premise, we won't understand what is unique about discernment.

A second fundamental premise is that we accept that "we live in God's world," not ours. The secret in discernment lies in Jesus' famous words in the Garden of Gethsemane: "Not my will, but yours." Discernment is all about listening for God's deep desire for us. So the first aspect of discernment involves

"letting go and letting God." As the famous Franciscan spiritual director, Richard Rohr, has said: "Your life is not about you." If we still think our life is about us - our plans, our success, our strategies, our desires - we won't appreciate the uniqueness of discernment's openness to God.

We start discernment, then, in our prayer practice. In prayer, we ask for clarity on the issue we need to discern. And we wait with openness and attentiveness. We pay attention to the feelings that arise as we pray; we pay attention to energy or enthusiasm as we reflect on the issue; we watch dreams we have through our period of discernment. With time, and patience, a pattern emerges: an insight, a phrase that sticks in our minds, perhaps a recurring image, or a sense of excitement. We discuss these with a spiritual companion, a trusted friend or a trusted small group, to make sure we aren't fooling ourselves.

Moreover, in our prayer practice, we constantly seek to respond to a call from the Transcendent rather than to our own needs, desires and preferences. We purify our thinking so that we are truly seeking to let the Spirit rather than our own needs guide us.

Simply said, discernment is about listening for God's deepest desire for us at this time. If the issue you are dealing with is really serious, you might wish to learn more about the techniques of individual discernment. There are plenty of books written, and Harcourt's Spiritual Companions have experience with discernment techniques. Just ask!

There is individual discernment, but there is also communal discernment. Instead of debating and voting - typical secular approaches to decision-making - some Christian communities have adopted a discernment approach in order to move forward. There are formal techniques - a "spiritual technology" really - for engaging in communal discernment. The Quakers are the past masters at communal discernment. Their "clearness committees," and their worship services in silence until the Spirit "speaks," are techniques that they have evolved to facilitate proper discernment. Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuits and creator of some of the most useful spiritual exercises, also developed a significant "technology" around discernment; many of these have been incorporated into the practices of the Christian Life Communities - small groups of folk committed to living their lives in light of Ignatian spiritual practices.

Regardless of the tradition of origin, all group discernment processes share similar features. Techniques of discernment always help us listen; they also help us become keenly aware of our own deceptions and illusions - things which keep us from "hearing" God's Word to us; they help us set our Egos aside so that we can hear God - and each other. They help us remember that we are God's people, not our own; that our life is not about us - we play a role, albeit small, in God's much grander picture. These techniques help us slow down, become aware of our self-centredness and pride, listen to even the most timid voice among us as equally the voice of God. The techniques of discernment place

the living Spirit right at the centre of our decisional processes.

In the end, once we manage to move away from secular models towards a "discernment" model of making decision, whether for ourselves or in our community, we have begun the journey of living "in Christ" where we can say with joy and conviction "not our will, but yours, God."

Andre Auger,  
for the Spiritual Life Committee

**ADULT FAITH FORMATION EVENT**  
*"Welcome to the church of the future -  
what every effective lay leader needs to  
know!"*

Almost 100 people, from Harcourt and sister churches in Guelph, came to hear Anthony Robinson, a visiting professor at Emmanuel College, speak on what's happening in and to the Church today and what lay leaders are called to do about it.

You've noticed the changes over the years: Sunday shopping is just one of the symptoms. It used to be that no one questioned whether they went to church on Sundays: it was simply, well, "expected." That's what "good" citizens did. Church was a part of our lives. Being a Christian was synonymous with being a responsible citizen, a good parent, a productive worker, a community volunteer. The term coined for this long period of history is "Christendom." It refers to that implicit contract between church and state,

where, in return for state support (tax exemption, etc) the church would educate the young, instill civic virtues, provide social norms, and officiate at important public functions.

This "Christendom" arrangement started, believe it or not, with Constantine, in the 4th century, who, after battling the underground Christian movement - as his predecessors had ever since that upstart Jesus was convicted and executed three hundred years earlier - converted to Christianity and declared it the faith of the state. Jesus' original vision and message haven't been the same since.

Tony Robinson's basic message was simple: we're experiencing the end of Christendom and a difficult but much-needed return to the original idea of what it meant to be a follower of Jesus.

When attendance began flagging in the late 60s, church leaders thought it was a "technical problem" which could be solved by better programs, more popular ministers, smarter marketing. When that failed, the Church looked deeper and realized that this was not a "problem" to be "solved," but a challenge to be addressed through a deeper conversion experience. What became clear was that it's not about membership; it's about discipleship. We now know that this "crisis" is a call from God to renew: the answer lies in a change of hearts and minds. Robinson called this the beginning of a new "people of God". He argued that we need to be intentional in order to be the people that Jesus has invited us to be. This requires a new openness to

God; we need to let God be God. This is a unique opportunity: we do not need a better plan or program, but a deeper faith. We need to ask new questions: why has God called us here as church? In Christendom, we didn't have to worry about how to be a Christian; now it's become a real issue; we can't take our Christianity for granted any more; we must become intentional about it. We need to rediscover Christian Formation, we need to learn what it means to embody Christianity as a way of life. The idea of Christianity is not to make better citizens but how to make followers of Jesus. It was comfortable being a "member"; it's harder work becoming a "disciple."

Robinson had some advice for lay leaders.. Change in any organization brings with it uncertainty, discord, grief, and pain as well as excitement, challenge, hope and new strengths. Lay leaders will need to constantly model openness and hospitality and listening, in order to maintain and rebuild trust so that everyone can feel comfortable in a setting that continues to evolve. Lay leaders must take note of the Pentecost story: the disciples were asking two questions: "what is going on?" and "what then shall we do?" Lay leaders must help change the key question about our future: it's not "what do I/we want?" or even "what does Harcourt want?" but a discernment about what God might be calling us to be in this place at this time. We need to practice a new way of listening. "Discerning" is the process of prayerful listening for the Spirit living and working among us. Our sole purpose as a church is to help God do God's work here and now. Our task is this: Discover

where God is at work in our world in restoring creation and what we can do to join God's action.

Robinson summed up the role of any congregation: to welcome, to equip and to send. Our real task as a congregation is to send equipped people out into God's world to serve. There it is in a nutshell.

The following Saturday morning, about twenty Harcourt lay leaders met to reflect on Robinson's message and challenge. People left energized, hopeful, with new ideas, knowing that the path from a "membership" view of church to a "discipleship" intention is long, narrow, and fraught with challenges. With God's help, we will make the necessary journey!

The Adult Christian Faith  
Formation Group

### **GRAND BEND BEACHFRONT COTTAGE FOR RENT ON LAKE HURON**

Some space still available for 2009. Four bedroom, two bathroom, charming cedar cottage with turn-of-the-century furnishings. Private dunes and beach, grassy front lawn, woods behind, quiet streets in Oakwood Park for walking/biking, an easy 10 minute walk to Grand Bend via back roads. Reduced rates before mid-June and after Labour Day. Please direct inquiries to Vera Dyck at vera.dyck@gmail.com, or 519-763-5280.

## **Youth News**

### **VACATION BIBLE CAMP IS COMING THIS SUMMER!**

This summer our kids and kids in our community will be able to join the adventure and walk with Jesus. Our curriculum, Leslee Alfano's "Bible Adventures: Walking with Jesus" helps children understand that walking with Jesus is a daily choice and challenge. The sessions use a hiking theme to connect Bible story dramas to the realities of children's lives, with exciting activities including music, stories, games, snacks, crafts, and walking a labyrinth.

VBC will run August 10th-14th from 9am-12pm and is for children ages 4-10. Registration begins Sunday, June 7th. Forms will be available at the welcome table in the greeting area.

We are looking for adult and teen leaders to help with this year's program in several different areas: facilitating an activity (we are using a rotation model: leaders will facilitate the same activity each day for a different group of children.), music at opening and closing circle, hosts for snack time, and energetic adults to facilitate outdoor games during our mid-morning break. If you would like to join our leadership team for all or part of the week, please contact Cindy at the church office Wed.-Fri. 9am-4pm, 824-4177 or by email: cindy@harcourtuc.ca.

## Groups & Events

### COVENANTING SERVICE FOR JIM BALL

After nine months of successful ministry with Jim Ball at Harcourt, we are going to be formally celebrating with a Covenanting Service on Sunday, May 31 in 4:00 in the afternoon in the sanctuary. It will be followed by a potluck dinner in the gym, coordinated by the Fellowship and Communication Committee.

For the potluck, they suggest you bring:

- Salad, if your last name is between A-G
- Main dish, if your last name is between H-R
- Dessert, if your last name is between S-Z

However, if you would prefer to bring a dish that is different than indicated above, feel free as no one will be checking!

Check your calendars and tell your friends and let's have a good crowd to support Jim and his family at this special occasion!!!

### CAROLINE HARCOURT WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Rev. Ann Estill delighted the Caroline Harcourt women with her gift of storytelling at their May 11 meeting.

Their June 8 meeting will be a potluck lunch at noon in the church gym, followed by the now-annual Silent Auction. Women intending to attend should arrive a few minutes early with their meal contributions. It would help the committees if the "re-gifts", crafts, and garden produce or flowers for the auction could arrive by late morning at the latest.

New thermos pitchers for serving tea and coffee at Harcourt events will be purchased from the proceeds of the auction; any funds beyond that will be used to help local or out-reach charities this summer.

All women interested in this annual and enjoyable event are most welcome.

## Looking ahead . . .

### COMING THIS SUMMER ... A SPEAKER FROM ZATOON

Many of you may be aware of Zatoun products. Zatoun is the Arabic word for "olive" and it is felt that the olive tree expresses the essence of Palestine. Zatoun is best known for its fair trade virgin olive oil.

This summer Robert Massoud of Zatoun will be speaking of life in Palestine. The Zatoun organization hopes to bring the life experience of Palestinians; especially farmers who depend on the land and its fruits for a livelihood. Olives are grown and harvested by Palestinian farmers at great personal danger and cost. For most farmers (approx-

mately 75,000) olives and olive oil is their major or only source of livelihood. The annual income generated by olives and olive products is 40% of the gross product of fruit trees in Palestine and more than 20% of the national agricultural output. The olive tree is vital to life of Palestinians. However, Palestine farmers face many obstacles; such as the destruction and theft of trees, poisoning of soil, wells and herds, confiscation of land, equipment, ID cards, restricted use of water resources, restricted enclosures around farmland, lengthy and costly security checks, ...

Zatoun is a Fair Trade organization, which supports farmers in Palestine and peace in the Holy Land. Zatoun also supports Project Hope: healing through Art and Trees for life: Planting Peace in Palestine.

For more information: [www.zatoun.com](http://www.zatoun.com)  
[www.projecthope.ps](http://www.projecthope.ps)

*This opportunity to learn more about Palestine is brought to you by the Justice and Outreach Committee. We will be sure to let you know when a date is booked.*

**CANADIAN ABORIGINAL ROOTS  
- A DON'T MISS!!**

**TVO: Friday June 19 at 10 pm**

**Allan Gregg in Conversation**

presents an in-depth conversation with author John Ralston Saul (A Fair Country) on Canada's Aboriginal roots and their surprising influence on the country's evolution.

## With Heartfelt Thanks

To all the Harcourt staff and congregation,

I would like to extend my warmest thanks and regard for the hospitality you showed me during my visit to Guelph in 2008. Harcourt has left a lasting impression on me, and I will treasure the time I spent there. The community was perhaps the warmest, strongest and friendliest church community I have ever encountered. The ministers managed to reach me every service, and I left with a feeling of contentment and peace each week.

I would love to extend a particular thanks to Alison. Her leadership in the music made great services excellent, and the quality of the choir reflects the excellent leadership. I am very grateful for the opportunities to sing with the choir, which redefined my opinion of church choirs (for the better, by far.)

My love to all, and I hope to see you again whenever I visit next!

Regards,  
Barnaby Grant

## Opportunities to Serve

The CSA University of Guelph Food Bank is currently looking for donations of Rubbermaid bins, egg cartons, and cleaning supplies. We are more than willing to also take any canned items. Our hours are from 4:00-7:30 Monday- Friday if you wish to drop anything off at 640 Gordon Street.

## Library Lines

### BOOK REVIEW by Ruth Tatham

**FIC**      **Lisa Genova**      **Still Alice**  
**GEN**

Still Alice is a superbly written novel, authored by a Harvard neuroscientist who knows what she is talking about medically, and who has researched the book with input from many non-medical sources as well.

It is the story of a brilliant 50 year-old scientist who begins to forget words, directions, and concepts. At first this is dismissed by her as the result of fatigue, stress, and excessive multi-tasking as she keeps up a whirlwind life as a professor and researcher (in the realm of linguistics), wife of another researcher and professor, and mother of three beautiful grown children.

Dr. Alice Howland suddenly confronts terror when her functional losses are no longer accountable to menopause or other acceptably- ordinary body processes. She seeks medical help, and is diagnosed with "early-onset Alzheimer's disease". The world with John, her husband, will never be the same; genetic testing shows that her disease is due to a fault she inherited from her father. What will this mean to her own children?

Unlike previous books on the subject, this volume tells Alice's story from her own perspective. The author has given authenticity to the progression of fears, triumphs, sadnesses, and ultimate mental flatness of the patient as she progresses downhill in her dementia. But more amazingly, Lisa Genova has shown clearly how much and how long the emotional life of the Alzheimer patient may remain relatively intact - long after she can demonstrate to her family and colleagues that she is still Alice in the core of herself, although she cannot convey this in language to them.

Still Alice is currently a best-selling book, being read by thousands of people with no direct connection to a victim of Alzheimer's dementia. This disease is a tragedy because the waste of the sufferer's talents is a tragedy, but the book is inspiring, a novel which will draw almost any serious reader from page one to the last page like a magnet...and leave the reader glad to have read it.

Interestingly, it has been recommended by the National Alzheimer's Association (of America), apparently the only book to be so endorsed.

## Passages

### **Births:**

On April 18, 2009, Aviana Stephanie Sandra Vermey, daughter for Tegan and Darryl Vermey, granddaughter for Sandy and Steve Phair

### **Weddings:**

May 16, 2009: Alison Friend and Martin Czenki

## What's so Funny?

After church one Sunday morning, a mother commented, "The choir was awful this morning."

The father commented, "The sermon was too long."

Their 7-year-old daughter added, "But, you've got to admit it was a pretty good show for a dollar."



## Illuminating Thoughts

### THE BRICK

A young and successful executive was traveling down a neighborhood street, going a bit too fast in his new Jaguar. He was watching for kids darting out from between parked cars and slowed down when he thought he saw something. As his car passed, no children appeared.

Instead, a brick smashed into the Jag's side door! He slammed on the brakes and backed the Jag back to the spot where the brick had been thrown. The angry driver then jumped out of the car, grabbed the nearest kid and pushed him up against a parked car shouting, "What was that all about and who are you? Just what the heck are you doing? That's a new car and that brick you threw is going to cost a lot of money. Why did you do it?"

The young boy was apologetic.

"Please, mister...please, I'm sorry but I didn't know what else to do," He pleaded. "I threw the brick because no one else would stop..." With tears dripping down his face and off his chin, the youth pointed to a spot just around a parked car. "It's my brother," he said "He rolled off the curb and fell out of his wheelchair and I can't lift him up."

Now sobbing, the boy asked the stunned executive, "Would you please help me get him back into his wheelchair? He's hurt and he's too heavy for me."

Moved beyond words, the driver tried to swallow the rapidly swelling lump in his throat. He hurriedly lifted the handicapped boy back into the wheelchair, then took out a linen handkerchief and dabbed at the fresh scrapes and cuts. A quick look told him everything was going to be okay.

"Thank you and may God bless you," the grateful child told the stranger.

Too shook up for words, the man simply watched the boy! push his wheelchair-bound brother down the sidewalk toward their home.

It was a long, slow walk back to the Jaguar. The damage was very noticeable, but the driver never bothered to repair the dented side door. He kept the dent there to remind him of this message: "Don't go through life so fast that someone has to throw a brick at you to get your attention!"

God whispers in our souls and speaks to our hearts. Sometimes when we don't have time to listen, He has to throw a brick at us. It's our choice to listen or not.





# Passages



# Illuminating Thoughts



## **EASTER REFLECTIONS** by Helen Steiner Rice

With OUR EYES we see  
The beauty of Easter  
as the earth awakens once more...

With OUR EARS we hear  
The birds sing sweetly  
to tell us Spring again is here...

With OUR HANDS we pick  
the golden daffodils  
and the fragrant hyacinths...

But only with OUR HEARTS  
can we feel the MIRACLE of GOD'S LOVE  
which redeems all men...

And only with OUR SOUL  
can we make our 'pilgrimage to God'  
and inherit His Easter Gift of ETERNAL LIFE.





# Easter Word Hunt

C H I C K L I L Y D H  
N C J N E G G S L Y R  
F G H E F W V U Z E R  
B R I S P R I N G F A  
U A D T A L C D R L B  
N S E A R C H A W O B  
N S W P A L M Y Q W I  
Y F I N D B A S K E T  
L A M B E A S T E R S  
D H U N T U L I P S I

BASKET  
GRASS  
RABBIT  
EASTER  
LILY  
TULIPS

FLOWERS  
PARADE  
DYE  
LAMB  
SUNDAY

PALM  
CHICK  
HUNT  
SPRING  
FIND

BUNNY  
HIDE  
SEARCH  
EGGS  
NEST