

From Jim's Desk

THE WAY FORWARD - AN OVERVIEW

Hi friends! Do you know the story about the folks who were given the task of planning and constructing a road through a heavily forested valley? As the work-crew piled out of the truck that had delivered them safely to the site, the engineer responsible for making sure the new road was level and straight started to review the equipment as it was being unloaded. An assistant, with compass and clipboard in hand, made notes. A foreman gathered workers in clusters, and began assigning tasks to each group, doing so according to their skill and experience. One was handed a tin of red paint to mark the trees for cutting. To another was assigned the task of identifying the species of trees that were being cut. To yet another, small chain saws to be used in the capping of trees, while to yet another the heavy duty chain saws, to be used to cut the trees down at their bases. A second foreman organized the heavy machinery and cranes, while yet another oversaw the transportation responsibilities, making sure there were sufficient trucks to carry wood out and carry gravel in. With the sound of a whistle the crews descended upon the forest and began their work. Just as they were getting started, someone climbed to the top of the largest, nearest tree, looked around, and suddenly called out, "Wrong forest!"

We too at Harcourt have a construction project of sorts underway, a path to create, and a

journey to make. It involves building the future church, which is not quite the same as extending the past one. How will we move from having a dream about a better future to having a compass to help us get there? How will we move from having a compass to creating a roadmap to help us through the details of the journey forward?

Long before Wendy and I got here folks at Harcourt asked these questions and began to work on pieces of the response. The heart of the response was a document that has been described variously as the VISION document, the JNAC document, or the Strategic Planning document. It is a sizeable text that for the last two years has been posted on the Harcourt website (www.harcourtuc.ca). It is full of wonderful history, dreams, and plans. In a phrase, the document is our person at the top of the tree, helping us identify the right forest in which to ply our skills and energies.

The challenge for us - we who are the work-crew right now at Harcourt - is to know which pieces of the Vision need attention first, and which pieces second. What kind of lens do we have that will help us discern the way through so many good ideas to find the ones that will work best for us and those we serve? What tools will help us discern the proper path? And what supports are in place to get the job done once we are clear about which jobs are first?

It seems to me that it would be helpful for all of us to know how church leaders and members of Harcourt are engaging this task and these questions. It seems equally important

to create a mechanism to keep everyone well informed about the pieces that are falling into place and helping guide our work. I am proposing that we all imagine our project to be one requiring clarity about seven pieces, and that in the months ahead we will report on our progress and understanding about each of these pieces. This will give everyone at least two things: a clear sense of our overall approach to the project, and insight about our understandings of the key pieces guiding the project.

Every project needs at least seven pieces. They are pieces everyone in leadership must know, and ones everyone else might do well to know. In order of importance they are these:

1. The congregational purpose or identity statement

This statement articulates our reason for being.

2. The congregational values statement

This statement reflects our LIVED values, and not just our professed ones.

3. The congregational vision statement

This statement weaves our purpose and values together in a way that succinctly expresses our priority work for the coming years - It is sometimes referred to as a Mission statement.

4. The congregational strategic planning document

This contains significant details regarding preferred options and pathways

5. A Timetable for implementation

6. An Organizational structure (i.e. governance model)

This is designed to help achieve our strategic plan within the given timetable.

The timetable informs the nature of the governance model.

7. A ministry model with clear responsibilities assigned to roles, with appropriate personnel hired/called to help achieve/realize the plan along with an equipped and energized laity.

These are the pieces we are working on and working with at Harcourt to help us move into God's future. In the months ahead we will report on each of the seven, keeping you informed about what we are thinking and how we are doing with each piece and with the overall project.

Blessings!
Jim

Worth Taking a Look At ...

**CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILY
MINISTER SEARCH**

On October 21st, Council received a report from the Congregational Search Committee, which has been working hard since mid-July. A summary of the report is given below. This announcement was included in Sunday's bulletin (October 25th), and an opportunity to meet and discuss the report was provided after both the 9:00 and 10:30 services.

The search for a Congregational Designated Minister (CDM) or Designated Lay Minister (DLM) for the position of Children, Youth & Family Minister (CYFM) arose from an expansion of the job description of the previous Staff Associate position of Children and Youth Worker. This change reflects the recognition that Christian development for children and youth at Harcourt needs to move from the traditional "Sunday School" model to provide resources and support for Christian nurturing within the family.

After reviewing applications and interviewing short-listed candidates, the Search Committee has reported that none of the candidates were the right fit with a carefully-considered list of attributes compiled through a discernment process at the beginning of the search, or with the eligibility requirements for CDM or DLM appointments.

Council has reviewed and discussed the Search Committee's report, and has accepted the decision they recommended. Council has asked the Search Committee to continue the search process, re-advertising the position and re-opening it for applications in mid-December, and aiming to fill the position for July 1, 2010. This timing of advertising and appointment follows the traditional church appointments year (July 1 - June 30), and may be more attractive to potential applicants.

Council considers that the Search Committee, in recommending no appointment at the present time, has given us wise advice, which they arrived at with serious

and prayerful reflection, and we are very grateful to them both for their efforts and their willingness to continue in this important task.

Council recognizes that, in this transition period, the continued faithful operation of church activities for children and youth is tremendously important. We gratefully recognize the contributions made by Merrill Pierce, who has volunteered to act as temporary child and youth program coordinator, and who will continue to assist in this role. Thank you, Merrill!

For more information, or if anyone has questions or comments regarding the search process, please contact Roz Stevenson, Chair of Council (rstevens@uoguelph.ca), phone 519 821-7102 or Laurie McDonald, Search Committee Chair (tla@themcdonalds.ca) phone 519-265-4151. While we understand your interest, we do remind you that Search Committee proceedings and Personnel Committee matters are by necessity confidential matters, and members of Council and the Search Committee must respect the privacy of individuals during such discussions.

FOOD FOR THE JOURNEY
From the Spiritual Life Committee
When God Talks to Us

We at Harcourt Memorial often get caught in a bit of a dilemma when we want to talk about our spiritual journey: on the one hand we believe that God somehow relates to us, but on the other we are very uncomfortable

when people share stories of God "talking" to them. We remember articles in the secular press of someone doing something atrocious at the apparent instigation of God and we quickly equate hearing "voices" with a dysfunction of sorts. The tragedy then is this: there seems to be no safe place to share our direct experiences of God, not even our churches. In a way, we are still influenced by the world's belief that what cannot be measured simply does not exist.

And yet, create an environment that's safe and supportive, and you'll soon find people who have all kinds of stories to share of God's work in their lives. Stories of genuine "aha!" moments, moments of "Awakening," moments when we hear God. Such is the story we will hear on November 15th when Marg Bates shares a sacred moment of her spiritual journey.

What we will hear in her sharing are elements that feature almost universally in people's experiences of God:

a) it is often when we have "hit the wall" - when life as we know it has fallen apart and our assumptions about it are sorely tested - that God speaks to us;

b) God's "voice" is most often very surprising - and quite different from the self-talk we typically engage in;

c) we often experience an insight - an "aha!" - into an opaque situation that we had not managed to see through;

d) we often experience a sense of deep relief, as if a heavy burden has been removed - whether it is a grief, a loss, a tragedy, or a feeling of being trapped in negative judgments;

e) the moment comes as "gift" - unmerited, unexpected, unplanned and unexplainable;

f) the incident reverberates in our lives for a long time and brings about a lasting sense of spiritual freedom;

g) often the incident effects permanent changes in the way we see things - the way we see others, the way we see God, the way we live life - as if we had been given some of the "fruits of the Spirit," which Paul talks about in Galatians (Gal 5:22).

These moments occur more frequently than you imagine; they occur to more people than you think; they have probably happened to you - provided you haven't dismissed or discredited them...

Spend some time reflecting on the times in your life you have heard (and perhaps ignored) the "still small voice." Can you remember "hearing" a "voice" that was distinctly not yours, or anyone else's, but that spoke to you and called you beyond the impasse you were in? Have the courage to risk sharing your personal story with a friend. Participate in the after-service spiritual life discussion on the Sunday when Marg speaks. Better still join a small group at church which can companion you on your own spiritual journey of awakening.

UPDATE ON UGANDA PROJECT

Plans are already being made for our trip to Uganda at the end of January , 2010. At the present time we know that Lorraine and Bruce Macpherson and Carol Dilworth are planning to accompany us or at least be there some of the time when we are working with the students.

Each year the number of students decreases although expenses stay about the same because of the annual increases in fees. Right now food prices in Uganda are high. Uganda has not suffered the droughts that Kenya has this year, but being a landlocked country, the cost of fuel increases the price of all imports and this affects hostel fees . The cost of food for all those students who live on their own in rented accommodation as well as those in hostels has increased.

Our 6 secondary school students are finishing up their last term for the year; 2 of the students will be writing government exams, one writing Sr. 4 late in October, one writing Sr. 6 in November. Their results on these exams will determine their placements for 2010.

Students who graduated from Certificate level courses are able to find employment but at a lower salary, one that does not enable them to live independently. Even with a Diploma, finding paid employment usually entails working for 2 or 3 months without pay until they become familiar with the job. This year we enabled one student with a certificate in Child Care and one in plumbing

to start upgrading to Diploma level . The 3 primary school teachers all need to upgrade and hopefully will be able to do it while working but will need financial help which we hope to be able to provide for them. We also hope to help the young woman who has a certificate in Lab. Technology to return to school to upgrade to Diploma level. Since 6 of the College students will complete their Diploma level courses in the middle of the year we hope to have sufficient funds to help students upgrade where necessary.

We appreciate the help of congregation members as well as others who contribute to the fund. Without your help we would not have been able to provide funds for these students. At the present time we are not planning to add students to our list, and we expect our current students will need funding for another 5 years, with the numbers decreasing each year. Of course if we could find eager volunteers to take our place, it would be no problem finding needy students with whom to continue the project.

In November we will have Certificates for gift giving . For gifts of \$100.00 or more we have an attractive certificate with a picture of one of our students on it for giving to people on your list who you think would like to make a gift of "EDUCATION " to a young Ugandan student , or to someone for whom it is difficult to find a suitable gift. We also expect to have more Ugandan beads for sale in November since one of our last year Sr. 6 students has been making them while waiting to return to school in October. Fortunately a friend has been in Uganda for part of

September and October and will be bringing the beads back for us.

We continue to need your support. Please help us to assist these students to get an education or acquire a skill that will change their lives forever. One educated young person can change the life of their whole family by sharing their knowledge with younger members and inspiring them and also by aiding in their financial support.

Gifts to support the project should be made to Harcourt Memorial United Church marked "UGANDA". They may be included with your Sunday Offering, mailed to the church, or given to a committee member. A tax receipt will be included with your regular church receipts, or provided as required.

THE WAY FORWARD - GETTING TO THE FIRST PIECE

In the overview found earlier in this edition of the Herald, I listed the seven planning pieces required to help us on our journey. It will be immediately apparent to Harcourt folks that the congregation has already created item four in this list (i.e. the Strategic Planning document, otherwise known as the JNAC or Vision document). The items that fall before and after it that are less clear to the congregation. Please know that two things have happened this past year about these matters: First, the Council of the congregation has worked to create a fresh governance model to help us conduct our work well, and has begun the task of reviewing

more carefully how and where it deploys its paid accountable ministry and staff leaders. Second, work has been done in smaller circles and teams to discern afresh the pieces at the top of the list, beginning with the purpose or identity statement. Why does Harcourt exist? What is its identity? What is its core business? How do we express our answer to these questions in a single, simple, and memorable sentence?

The answer to these questions - all of them linked to the matter of purpose - has been discerned within the historic documents of Harcourt. The discernment group - a collection of lay members old and new, along with me - met many times to review Harcourt's story and to discern within it the connection between the history and ministry that has been lived and the picture of a future Harcourt imagined by the strategic plan. The conclusion was that no new words about who we are or want to be need to be created. Again and again, down more than two decades, Harcourt has articulated its purpose and lived it in practice: To be Christ in the world. Among the many words that speak of this purpose, this sentence stands out: To welcome into community all who wish to serve God's world and follow the way of Jesus. They were written somewhere back in the days of John and Jean, and even they are not sure of the date of their exact creation.

The sentence summarizes clearly our strong commitment to hospitality and generous welcome, to matters of justice and healing - concerning ourselves with the well-being of the earth and all who live upon it, beginning with

that part within our reach, and to the path of life-long learning within the Christian tradition and Christian community, figuring out with others and for ourselves the significance of the wisdom and way of the teacher from Nazareth. Hospitality. Outreach. Christian Formation. All done in community. That is Harcourt's past. It is its present. It is its future. As best we can make it so. God being our helper.

The gift of this new old sentence about our purpose is that it can serve both as a lens through which to look upon present work and as a guide for prioritizing the work proposed in the Strategic Planning document. Looking back at the past year we can ask and quickly answer these kinds of questions: How have I, as an individual Harcourt member, shown hospitality towards others this year - at Harcourt or in the wider community, on Sunday mornings or through the week? How have we as a community done this? How have I modeled fairness and compassion for God's world in my day to day decisions? How have we done so as a community of faith? How have I been intentional in my ongoing learning about what it means to be linked to Jesus, to his teaching, to his practices, to his faith, to his community? How has the Harcourt community expressed in programming and processes this same intentionality in learning and Christian formation?

Looking forward, we can ask of the strategic planning document: How does its recommendations expand our capacity to be welcoming? To be a community? To be just, and compassionate, and engaged in God's

world for the better? To be life-long learners in the Christian journey?

We are just getting ground under our feet in the task of integrating the strategic planning work done before Wendy and I arrived into our programming and processes. The emergence, out of old, valued documents, of a sentence that seems capable of summarizing who we have been, who we are, and who, with God's help, we will become, has been a huge gift. It now is poised to serve as the first of our seven important planning pieces. We ask our children to memorize scripture passages and helpful sayings. Perhaps we would do well to model for them what we find valuable, committing the following to memory, and finding occasion to use it to make clearer our path.

To welcome into community all who wish to serve God's world and follow the way of Jesus.

Next month, more about piece number two: Values.

Blessings!
Jim

Youth News

We are in a period of transition while a search committee works to fill the position of Designated Lay Minister for Children, Youth and Families. I have volunteered to continue the Kids' Church and Youth Group activities until the position is filled. I appreciate the

support that the congregation is giving to help with Godly Play, Breakfast Café and Youth Group. If you would like to help with any of these groups, please contact me. I can answer any questions about what is involved with each group. Many hands make light work!

Suzanne Webster has volunteered to help with the Super G Youth Group that meets most Friday nights. In November, we look forward to doing an Amazing Race Challenge, a weekend retreat, preparation for the Angel Tree Project, and an Advent sleep-over retreat. Specific dates and details will be e-mailed to everyone as dates are firmed up. If we cannot find a date for the retreat that suits all of the youth, then we may defer it until the spring.

In Godly Play, during November we will continue to hear the sacred stories involving Moses and the exodus and the Ten Commandments. Then we will learn about the Ark and the Tabernacle and the building of the temple by Solomon.

In Breakfast Café, we will continue to watch episodes of the Simpsons and discuss the theological messages in each. As well, we will look at Faith Talk questions.

Merrill Pierce

Youth Music:

The whYBe band has been practising under the direction of Jerry Daminato, Ken Carey and Jane Tweeddale during this interim time. We are pleased to announce that Emma

Schnurr will be joining the band and assuming a leadership role, as a Music Intern, allowing Jerry, Ken and Jane to continue in a supporting role. Emma is a senior student at Centennial High School. She plans to study music and is aiming to attend Humber College next year. She is an accomplished vocalist, having sung at Hillside Festival this year, and some of you may have heard her when she sang at our Guelph Cares event. She also plays guitar and keyboards, and writes her own songs. She is excited about joining the band. The band practises in the sanctuary on Thursday evenings, except when there is a conflict of use of the space, at which time the practices will be held on Sunday mornings.

Alison MacNeill
Merrill Pierce

Angel Tree Project:

The Super G group will be organizing the Angel Tree Project again this year. This is part of the Children's Foundation of Guelph and Wellington, the Adopt-A-Family Holiday Program. They appreciate Harcourt's participation in this Project.

The volunteers who run this program need the gifts by Monday, December 14th, as the latest possible date. Therefore, the angel tags will be available on Sundays, November 22nd and 29th, and the gifts will be due by Sunday, December 6th.

You can choose a tag with gift suggestions in the Greeting Area before and after church on the Sundays mentioned above, and then buy the gift and return it by December 6th. Place

the gifts under the tree in the sanctuary, unwrapped and with the tag attached, and then put an angel on our tree. If you buy clothes, please include a gift receipt in case the clothes do not fit. The basket with the glass angels will be beside the tree. Your participation in this Project will help brighten a family's Christmas season.

If you have any questions, please call Merrill Pierce.

Groups & Events

CAROLINE HARCOURT WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Our new minister, Rev. Wendy Brown, captivated two score women at the October meeting of the Caroline Harcourt Women's Fellowship. Centred on "Spirituality of Extroverts", she both introduced herself and interacted with the women through the use of symbols of spirituality in everyday domestic life.

The November 9th meeting, as usual at noon in the Friendship Room, will feature one of Guelph's finest speakers and citizens, Norm Jary, talking on "A Meaningful Life - At Any Age." All women are very welcome. Dessert and tea supplied.

Mark your calendars for the December 14th luncheon and Christmas program of the two women's groups, the C.H.W.F. and the Margaret Rose U.C.W. A great chance for

newcomers to meet new friends in the warmth of a Christmas setting.

Passages

Births:

Born Oct. 3rd, 2009, Ezekiel Julian, a son for Julian and Carrie Murphy, a grandson for Diane, Robert & Dan, and great-grandson for Rosalind and Keith Slater.

Born Oct. 15th, 2009, Gemma Clark Steers, a daughter for Erinn and Steve, a granddaughter for Diane and Brian Clark

Weddings:

Oct. 3, 2009: Yvonne DaMaren & Jeff Atkinson

Oct. 10, 2009: Krista Bradley & James Malfatti

Deaths:

Sept. 21, 2009: David Butcher, husband of Betty

Oct. 5, 2009: Victoria Woods

Mike Moves Us: A Participant's Perspective

Minga: the gathering of community members to complete a task that benefits all of the community

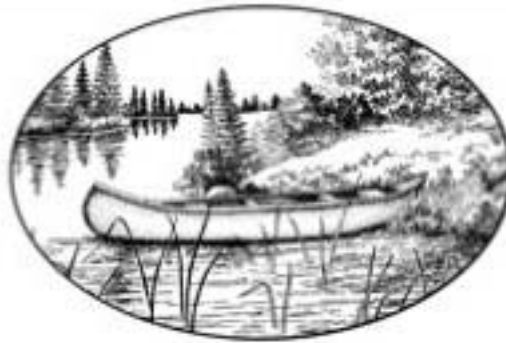
I first heard about Mike Elrick's battle against lung cancer when I was out for lunch with a friend, about a month after his diagnosis. Although I have never met Mike personally, I have had contact with his wife Heather on a number of occasions. The announcement, therefore, came as a huge shock. Since that time, I have followed Mike's progress on his blog (<http://michaelsblog.ca>) and have been completely inspired, not only by his insight and positive attitude, but also by his courage in sharing such a difficult time in his life.

I made the decision to participate in the Mike Moves Us event after much deliberation, only because I did not want to feel like I was infringing on something personal, and reserved for close friends and family. I need not have worried, as over 600 people turned up at John McRae School on Saturday, October 24. From the moment I arrived, I felt a sense of optimism in the air, mainly because of the positive energy that was so vibrantly flowing, but also because of the incredible organization of the planning committee.

The weather that day was beautiful ... not a coincidence that the forecasted rain held off until the afternoon. Being piped down to the trail by piper Doug Davidson gave a sense of formality and purpose, and watching the floatilla of 25-30 canoes and kayaks head down the Eramosa River was a sight not soon to be forgotten. A highlight for me was seeing Mike and his brother in their canoe, about halfway down the trail.

I continue to be inspired and hope-filled by Mike and his family and, in their honour, I will carry the spirit of Minga with me always.

Lisa Browning



Library Lines

Have you read any good children's books lately- to children, grandchildren, or just for pleasure? We have some for you to consider:

P Andrede Giles
Giraffes Can't Dance

P Hadathi Mwenye
The Greedy Zebra

J Pearson Kit
The Perfect Gentle Knight

J Curtis Christopher
Elijah of Buxton

Message from the Editor ...

NEW EDITOR FOR THE HERALD

I am pleased to announce that Terry McDonald has volunteered to take over as Editor of the Harcourt Herald, effective with the December issue. Any correspondence regarding the Herald can now be sent to Terry at harcourtherald@me.com.

Thank you ... it has been a pleasure to serve as Editor of the Herald over the years.

Lisa Browning