

CONNECTIONS

News and Views of Oxford County United Churches

Vol 1 Issue 12

December 11, 2019

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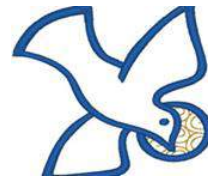
INDEX OF OUR STORIES

The Advent themes of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love are revealed as the Spirit calls us into the space of reconciliation and peace.

- **Food for the Soul** –young prophets move us to deep change.
- **Friends of Oxford** – January 15 Supper and Lynne Allin joins us.
- News of our **Refugees** at Christmas.
- Celebrating 153 years of **Eastwood UC**.
- **Sydney Elias** moves on from Norwich.
- Operation Sharing Newsletter and Coats for Kids and Adults.
- **Gifts with Vision** are gifts worth giving which change the world.
- Congratulations to **Hyuk Cho**
- **Camp Tanner Dinner Auction February 8, 2020**
- Report of Annual Meeting of Camp Tanner, November 27
- Thank you FROM **Mark Marshall and Lydia Marshall** for their Palestine-Israel journey. **Thank you TO Mark and Lydia for educating us re the 'problems' in the Holy Land** – especially in Advent.
- A story of **St Nick and a dying girl's wish**
- Retired Clergy and Licensed Lay Worship Leaders.
- Report from **Stan Stanhope on Pensions**.
- Link to **Five Oaks re Membership Meeting, January 11, 2020**.
- Link to **Antler River Watershed RC December newsletter** (you can also subscribe)
- **Confirmation Weekend** Pearce Williams Camp on February 21-23.
- **Scott Woods at College Ave UC**, December 16.
- **Blue Christmas service** St Paul's UC, December 13 at 1:00 pm and **Choir December 15 at 2:30 pm**.
- Events and Programs for Families
- Updated December 11, **Prayer list for Oxford Presbytery**

FOOD FOR THE SOUL

Kick Start



It's beginning to feel a lot like . . . Advent. For some churches Advent is time for the annual reading of **John the Baptist stories of preparing the way for Jesus**. The story begins even before John's birth. Luke tells us when John's mother Elizabeth heard that Mary was pregnant with Jesus, her baby (John), jumped for joy: **a kick in the womb felt around the world**, - at least by half of the population; **a kick start to John's life as a prophet**.

All four gospels tell of John's adult life. His message: "Repent (turn your life around) and be baptized. Be honest and fair in your dealings with others; if you have two of anything give one away; if someone asks you to walk a mile with him, walk two." **John was attempting to move that fractured world toward greater reconciliation and peace.**

Today we don't have to look far to see such prophets. **Among them is teenage Greta Thunberg addressing the UN Assembly on climate change**. Like Greta, there are tens of thousands, mostly young people, taking to the streets with a message not unlike John's. "Turn around, change your ways or mother earth will no longer be able to bring forth life," something she has been doing for about 3.5 billion years.

This movement, more like a twinge than a kick start, is a bold sign of new life, an early stage of new hope. . .for mother earth, and for us.

Happy Advent.
GW

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FRIENDS OF OXFORD PRESBYTERY

WEDNESDAY, January 15

Supper + Table Groups +

Speaker Lynne Allin,

Minister, Congregational

Support and Mission of Antler River

Watershed Region

6:00 –8:30 pm

Cost: \$10.00

College Ave. UC

Woodstock

Please contact Lloyd Bennett

pastorlloyd@collegeave.ca,

by Friday, January 10. (Note diet

restrictions) Meal catered by Bullwinkles

of Operation Sharing.

In the event, that you are unable to

attend after January 10, we ask you to

pay for the meal.

Lynne will briefly review the

responsibilities of the Executive, and

the 3 Commissions: Covenant, Human

Resources and Mission and

Discipleship.

She will share the Tools

and Resources

available from the

Region (aka stuff they

know, and stuff which we

need to know!)

ALL WELCOME MM



ARWRC

GRANDMOTHER'S TEA

The next Grandmother's

Tea is 12 noon till 2 pm,

January 29 at

Nations Uniting

Ohsweken,

Email the editors for a

ride



Oxford Refugee Support Committee

Refugees and Christmas

There are two reasons why our thoughts turn to refugees at Christmas. **At this time, we remember marginalized people** and while Luke's story of Jesus' birth ends with Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus returning to Nazareth, **Matthew's has the holy family fleeing to Egypt as refugees because their homeland was no longer a safe place under King Herod.**

Similarly, our thoughts turn to **our own refugee families who have left their home country of Eritrea.** This Christmas, **Sara Temnewu, 22 year old daughter Selam, 17 year old son Fithawi and 13 year old son Naod are happy in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.** Selam is able to knit and sell the white outer garments worn by women in that culture. Naod is in school where he is focusing on learning English. Their luxury item is a two bedroom house. **On Christmas Eve, they will have the freedom of finding a church and worshipping in safety.**

Our **other family, Freweini Mebrahtu, her 19 year old son Bisrat and daughters Salem (8) and Sasayt (6) who are in Khartoum, Sudan,** were turned down because it was alleged she did not have the proper documentation. Our appeal failed. We are re-applying through The United Church. This means they will **spend at least another two years in Khartoum.** There the adults will not be able to work and the children will not be able to go to school. **However, Freweini is just happy to be given another chance.**

PLEASE keep these families in your prayers!

Glen Wright, on behalf of the OURS Committee.

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MOVING FORWARD

On November 24, Eastwood UC was packed with those with deep ties for the De-Commissioning Service. Rev Maya



Landell lead us in worship with Rev Jim Evans from ARWRC and Rev Derek Perry of St. John's Anglican

church, Eastwood. We sang old hymns, offered prayers of thanksgiving and forgiveness,



congregants touched both the waters of our baptism and the soil to nurture 2 amaryllis bulbs as we let go of what would hinder us from going forward. One of the bulbs went to our sister church, Innerkip UC, to remember us; one to Five Oaks who almost closed but had had another chance. We also enjoyed cookies and cider!

Video and pictures available at <https://1drv.ms/u/s!AiDNGgSFiqOAqhzcDvcm3JI7WIF5?e=LEPgvk>. (Note: Download them to watch.)

LABYRINTH

Innerkip UC will be the custodian of the 25 foot painted Labyrinth. For the time being, please contact Jacquie McLeod 519 532 2914 to book it. Donations for use to M+S.

VOICES UNITED contact Jacquie McLeod 519 532 2914

19 copies with music, 29 copies words, 1 large spiral bound.

SYDNEY ELIAS MOVES ON



This month, Norwich United Church says goodbye to our minister for the past 5 ½ years, Sydney Elias.

Sydney arrived in Norwich from Scarborough, and more

than one of us (but especially me) expressed our concern about how he would cope with the change from an urban to a rural environment. **Aside from a little run in with a baby raccoon**, he fit in and became an active presence in the community.

Norwich United Church had completed a 2-3 year period of introspection to figure out who we were, what our mission was, and what we saw as our role in the community. In other words, **we knew who we were and what we wanted in a minister – and we got that with Sydney.**

Sydney is a true preacher – partly due to his Methodist roots, but also because that's who he is. Soft spoken and even tempered, Sydney has never raised his voice, even at Council meetings. He has the ability to bring us together; to remind us of our focus and **to help us to see God at work in our lives and in the life of the church.**

Sydney has led us through some challenging times and helped us to make some difficult decisions. Through it all, Sydney has remained gracious, thoughtful and patient.

We knew what we wanted when we called Sydney. But we got more than what we wanted – we got what we needed.

Norwich will miss Sydney's words of wisdom; his calming presence around the council table; his leadership, guidance and friendship. We give thanks for our time together and pray that God's blessings be with Sydney as he goes forth. Kathleen Welch

**OXFORD PRESBYTERY
FACEBOOK PAGE**

<https://www.facebook.com/Oxford-Presbytery-690395957746547/>

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OPERATION SHARING

<https://www.operationsharing.ca/>

In the picture below, the gymnasium at College Ave UC is filled with coats and winterwear collected for the Coats for Kids and Adults. **Several hundred families benefited** and the demand keeps growing. Donations came in from boxes set up in over 20 locations as well as individual donations. **You can read about this, Christmas Day Festivities, the Christmas Place, Food for Friends, the Inn, Bullwinkles and more in their December newsletter:**

https://1drv.ms/u/s!AiDNGgSFiqOAKVMH_bfHW67NiiGJ?e=c8HuiA



Congratulations!

The **Rev Dr Hyuk Cho**, who served the former Brownsville-Delmer pastoral charge in Oxford, has been selected to represent the United Church of Canada at the next World Council of Churches meeting in Germany in Sept. 2021. The United Church of Canada selects one ordained minister and one member of the laity to attend. We, along with Oxford churches, congratulate Hyuk on this appointment. Hyuk is now the minister of the West Point- Grey pastoral charge in BC.

GIVE A GIFT FOR THE FUTURE



Check out the website below for a wide variety of gifts to help change the world: Healing and Reconciliation, Leadership, Wellness, Safe Spaces, Education, Address Poverty and Hunger, Returning Gifts, The Future and Mission and Service.

https://giftswithvision.ca/?mc_cid=e588219337&mc_eid=e99e11cd1b

CAMP TANNER

Annual Fundraising Dinner Auction February 8, 2020 at the Embro Zorra Community Centre.



Funds raised help to support programs and keep registration costs low; **tickets available from Sheila Greason**

519-349-2768, Sandra Shurman 519-475-4833, Margaret Dykeman, 519-532-4875, email camptanner@execulink.com

Annual General Meeting

Stories of camp and campers highlighted the annual meeting on November 27. The 253 campers enjoyed the remarkable Indigenous program from the London Archaeology Museum, the new additions of Inner tube water polo and road hockey for afternoon sports activities. It is a challenge that at the end of 2020, the rental agreement runs out with the Kinsmen who have the property for sale.

Much appreciation for the support from our churches.

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THANK YOU

Thank you for our Holy Land experience! **Thank you** to the Oxford Presbytery Possibilities Fund which helped fund our exposure trip to the Holy Land. We saw many holy sites and spent an equal amount of time learning about the situation on the ground. **We learned that the 'problems' in the Holy Land are not ancient ones, but mostly stemming from a series of bad decisions post-WWII which have been further perpetrated by corrupt governments and supposed 'friends' that have not held Israeli leadership to the same account we held their oppressors to before them.** The Palestinian plight is not unlike that of our own native brothers and sisters here in Canada - **'a people without a land taking over a land without a people'** - or so the colonialists thought. There were people there and they still are and they should have their rights protected. Many have **compared the Palestinian plight to that of apartheid in South Africa**, and so the same measures are being sought to end the dilemma. **BDS - Boycott, Divest and Sanctions** - and we're proud to say we are part of a national denomination that has supported these measures, officially since GC41 in Ottawa over seven years ago. **Take the time to look into where your products come from - is it Palestinian resources being sold for profit by Israeli companies?** Are our mutual funds making money on the backs of people who are already oppressed by an unfair regime? **Are we able to lobby our elected officials to make decisions for justice in a land that so needs it?** We need to ask these questions of ourselves

and do our part to give voice to the voiceless.

It has been our pleasure to have been witnesses in the Holy Land and to share our story in the former Oxford Presbytery. We have presented to Westminster in Thamesford, of course, anyone who would come to an evening presentation in Norwich, two worship services (at Knox in Embro and Innerkip,) two UCW groups (Hickson & St. David's in Woodstock) and another worship service to be held at Richwood in the new year. While we will no longer be advertising our presentation,

Through the Keyhole: The Holy Land Today

we are still more than willing to share what we saw and heard - just let us know if you're interested.

As we continue through this season of Advent - a time of active waiting and journeying through the stories that take place through different areas of the Holy Land - **we are reminded Jesus, too, was born into a situation in which he was barely welcome in his own land - a lower-class Jew in Roman occupied territory, even if his family had lived in the land down through the generations.** As we revel in the mystery of Jesus' birth, God with us, Emmanuel, may we also remember the holy land in which he was born, ministered, and eventually gave up his life for God's message of love to live on for all generations. **May we find solidarity with those who have called that land their home for generations. May we pray for a just and peaceful way forward. It is possible - with God, all things are.**

Rev Mark Marshall & Lydia Marshall

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ST. NICK GRANTS DYING GIRL'S WISH

The Spirit of Giving

(The London Free Press, Saturday December 15, 2012)

It was a dark December night when 62-year-old Mike Hendrycks' phone rang.

A couple's seven-year-old daughter lay at London's Children's Hospital with barely any life left in her. **Her dying wish was to meet the real Santa Claus.** The couple had heard that Hendrycks was the best.

"Could he come tonight", they asked?

It was unlike any request he'd had before and, at first, he hesitated. **What could he give this little girl?** It was more than an hour's drive to get from his home in Sombra, to London. **Could he really make a difference?**

A pipefitter by trade, Hendrycks had been transforming himself into St. Nicholas for years.

For generations, his family has been fascinated with the gift-giving saint. Hendrycks' great uncle was the confessor for Pope Pius XII and **used his time in Rome to conduct deep research on St. Nick.**

For years, he had visited congregations and school groups, telling them the true story of Santa Claus to reveal the real meaning of Christmas.



He agreed to go first thing in the morning.

At 8:30 am he arrived at her room, dressed

like the jolly old elf with cheeks like roses, his nose like a cherry and his snow-white beard.

It's a day he will never forget. She was tiny, taking up only a small bit of space in

her bed, with curly brown hair and pale skin. She looked tired and worn, but **her eyes lit up when she saw him.**

Hendrycks asked her what she wanted for Christmas. A year later, tears still flow as he recalls her response.

"I don't want anything. I'm going to die, and I want to give what I have to other people," Hendrycks remembers her saying. **"Since you travel around the world and you know all the children, I want you to give my organs to as many children as you can,"** she said.

He glanced anxiously at her parents. They nodded. Of course, he said. **They talked together for a while** before she interrupted him and told him he'd better hurry along. **Being Santa Claus and all, she understood he was busy.**

Hendrycks spent the day at the Children's Hospital, visiting every child before making the long drive back to Sombra.

The next day his phone rang again. It was the little girl's parents, calling to tell him she had died in the night. **Seven of her organs were donated, six of them to other children.**

Hendrycks was humbled. "I really didn't want to go and drive all the way to London that day," he said. "After visiting with her, **I spent most of the day wandering around that hospital, making sure that I saw kids ...** It's something that's inspired me to help people. **Go out of your way to do that because that's what Christmas is all really about. It's the spirit in your heart.**" Submitted by Jane VanPatter

**LIST OF RETIRED CLERGY AND
LICENSED LAY WORSHIP LEADERS**
<https://1drv.ms/u/s!AiDNGgSFiqOAqBowSB9T2li0OLjq?e=BabH72>

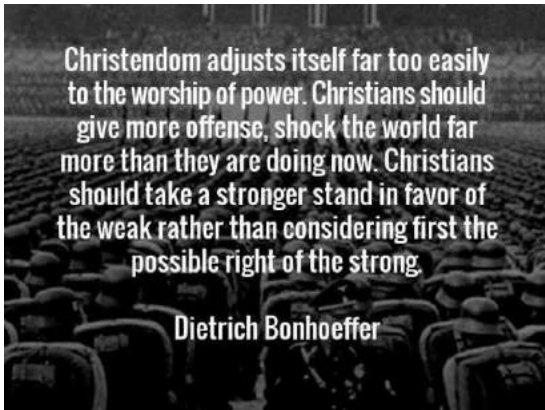
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PENSIONS

Since the 1950's, The United Church of Canada has offered to its employees

"An Earnings-Related Pension Plan." This Pension Plan has evolved over the years into a 100% sufficiently funded operation to meet the promised benefits incurred. The Pension Plan projects demographics, contributions and investment return expectations and incorporates multiple variables to arrive at a funded status. This is made possible by a team of highly dedicated personnel. **Yes, we are small, but mighty.**

You can check out the Fast Facts about the Pension Plan at this link <https://1drv.ms/u/s!AiDNGgSFiqOAqnNIC5of5jhiHL-K?e=31sKgC>

Submitted by Stan Stanhope



newsletter from the Antler River Watershed RC

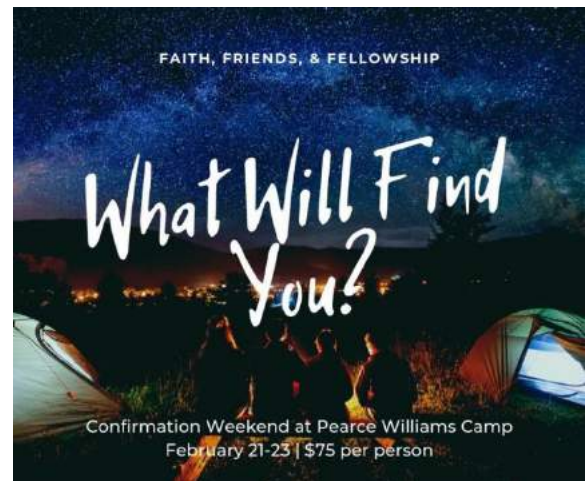
<https://mailchi.mp/9c93cb8427b6/christmas-newsletter?e=0878d108a5>

<http://fiveoaks.on.ca/>



Five Oaks Membership Dues for 2020 are owed now. Winter Membership meeting, Saturday January 11, 2020.

CONFIRMATION WEEKEND FOR YOUTH



PROGRAMS FOR FAMILIES

St Paul's UC (Tillsonburg)

December 14, 10-12 noon

Messy Church



Theme: Cat in the Hat
*You would not, could not,
should not miss a Birthday
Party such as this!!!*

Open to Adults, Teens &
Children accompanied by adults,
fun activities, singing & free lunch

**January 7 at 4:30 pm, Norwich UC
Messy Church**

Norwich UC MOMS and TOTS

each Wednesday morning in Parlour at
9:00 – 10:30 am

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EVENTS

St Paul's UC 88 Bidwell St, Tillsonburg

Blue Christmas Worship

A service of Remembrance
December 13 at 1:00 p.m.

St. Paul's choir presents

'Good News from Home Cantata'
Sunday, December 15 at 2:30 p.m.
Musical director: Shelley Vermeersch,
Soloists: Leo Archdekin, Linda McAllister, Dave Ramer and Bobbie Williams
Come and hear the music of the season
Freewill Offering

Christmas Eve Worship

December 24 at 7:00 p.m.

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**Next Publication: Wednesday,
January 15, 2020**

SUBMISSIONS DUE:

noon Monday, January 13, 2020

NEW email:

oxfconnections@execulink.com

Please share widely to help us connect
with each other

Submissions welcome.

Feedback welcome.

To remove your name from this
mailing list, email

oxfconnections@execulink.com

**Past Issues for 2019 of January,
February, March, April, May, June,
July, Special August 2019,
September, October, November:**

<https://1drv.ms/u/s!AiDNGgSFiQOAKHtXnTBBOM-xnJP0?e=jXpUYp>

PRAYER CYCLES: Communities of faith
are encouraged to pray for each other and
for our mission in the world.

CONGREGATIONS SEARCHING FOR MINISTERIAL LEADERSHIP:

Avondale UC (Tillsonburg),
Otterville UC, Hickson UC, Knox UC
Embryo, Oxford Centre-Curries
Pastoral Charge

**Prayers for Innkerkip UC and Rev
Karen Lowe (on medical leave)**

**United Church of Canada – Antler
River Watershed.**

<https://www.prayercycles.ca/antler-river-watershed26c697c9>

**Former Oxford Presbytery – updated
December 11, 2019**

<https://1drv.ms/w/s!AiDNGgSFiQOAbXZMAfveutUyYov?e=Wfb9do>