

CONNECTIONS

News and Views of Oxford County United Churches

Vol 2 Issue 4

April 8, 2020

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DEPLOYING THE CHURCH – in a time of anxiety.

Cancellations, postponements, closed until further notice, pandemic, emergency, COVID 19. These words have become all too familiar to us. We are feeling anxious. Last week, what we thought was impossible has become all too possible this week.

We laugh, we cry, we wonder why, we recall stories from our own families, we re-examine stories from our Bible, we sew, we look for connections between health, economics and climate change, we join Facebook groups, we hope, we reach out to support each other, we worship in new ways, we seek wisdom from our Moderator, we pray.

In short, this issue contains those stories which have shaped and will shape our response to anxiety and grief; how we are sorting out the new ways we are deploying the church today. There has never been a more important time to be church than today.

LOVE IS GOD'S JUSTICE AT CORPORATE LEVEL



FOOD FOR THE SOUL Easter 2020

– The Power of Love

It is an Easter season like no other. On Palm Sunday there were no children skipping down church aisles shouting hosanna and waving palm branches. Although apartment dwellers shout, bang kitchen pots and cheer in support of front line workers. This year those are the sounds of love.

On Good Friday, out of love for others, we will not gather in churches but we know the story. We will remember those who stood around the cross wondering what on earth was happening and who might be next to die. When they heard the words of Jesus' question to God, "Why have you forsaken me?" they recognized that question as their own. And when Jesus went on to speak words of such compassion and love in the face of intense suffering, they would have felt God's presence.

That first Easter Sunday was a mix of great joy tempered with lingering grief and fear. A week after that wonderful Sunday, the disciples were still locked down in someone's back room in Jerusalem. But Jesus' presence, in one way or another, persisted. Some were witnesses while others just knew in their hearts that the day, and the world, belonged to God and not to Caesar. Love prevailed, as it does, as it will.

These are anxious times. This year we share the anxiety, the joy and the love in our own homes, as they did on that first Easter. GW

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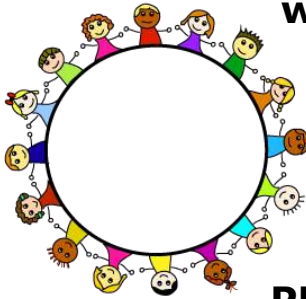
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As we care for each other, we

**welcome
opportunities
to join in
prayer.**



PRAYER CHAIN

We are grateful to Olga McKellar for being the contact for on going pastoral concerns. You can email Olga at o.mckellar@sympatico.ca with concerns etc.

PRAYER CYCLES

1. Update of former Oxford Presbytery March 11, 2020 (<https://tinyurl.com/Oxford-prayer-March-11-2020>).
- United Church of Canada – Antler River Watershed
<https://www.prayercycles.ca/antler-river-watershed26c697c9>

Congregations seeking Ministerial Leadership:

Avondale UC (Tillsonburg) working with Otterville UC; Hickson UC, Norwich UC, Oxford Centre-Curries Pastoral Charge, Sweaburg - West Oxford Pastoral Charge, Foldens UC, Burgessville UC.

Knox UC Embro has called Rev Susan Cole effective September 1, 2020. **Dundas St UC** is searching for a Youth Minister and Minister as Rev Bonnie Pilkey is retiring May 1, 2020. **Innerkip UC** - short-term Ministerial Leadership while Rev Karen Low is on Medical Leave. **Richwood UC** - Rev Mary Elford has given notice for June 28.

PRAYERS of all considering SHARING Ministerial Leadership and STEWARDING assets etc.



OXFORD UCW

"With Corvid 19 concerns Oxford County UCW will be cancelling all events till the end of June.

Be safe and stay home. God Bless,
Lorna Gardner, President-Elect of Oxford UCW, from Hebron UC"

COMINGS AND GOINGS AROUND OXFORD...



Facebook Group from Chalmers UC in Kintore.

Mission: Scrub

Caps - PPEs for our front line

healthcare workers

(<https://tinyurl.com/sayvrtx>) invites you to join with them.

This originated in response to the need for Scrub Caps for our frontline healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. **Please help us make some caps and keep our healthcare workers as safe as possible.**



**HOSPITAL GOWNS
needed for**

peopleCare long term care homes. Kits (with materials available for local pickup in Tavistock.

Email rev.mary@rogers.com;

see poster <https://tinyurl.com/hospital-gowns>

Knox UC, Embro have a group of sewers making hospital gowns!

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CAMP TANNER NEWS

Update from Camp Tanner:

Following the current direction put forward by the Province of Ontario regarding social distancing and the closure of non-essential businesses, **Camp Tanner has unfortunately decided to cancel our May long weekend Camp.** The health and safety of our campers, staff, volunteers and families continues to be our top priority and operating camp is not possible at this time. We understand this will be a disappointment to our campers and staff, and we'll miss you all very much! **At this point no decision for summer camps has been made.** More information will be given as soon as we know what the plan is and will be posted at www.camtanner.ca and on our Camp Tanner Facebook page.

The Alison Lupton concert which was to be April 17 has been postponed until the fall.

Take care and stay safe!



In response to the current COVID-19 pandemic **Five Oaks has been closed since March 16** as required by Provincial order. **Several staff members have been laid off.** Those remaining are working from home where that is possible and are being paid for a reduced number of hours – although most of them voluntarily continue to work full hours. **Several other measures have been implemented to reduce ongoing costs:** on-call staff have been told they will not be called in; many fridges and other appliances have been unplugged; the heat has been reduced in most buildings; some service contracts have been discontinued.

Despite these measures, there are continuing costs that cannot be avoided. To make matters worse, there have been two break-ins involving most buildings resulting in some damages and the loss of some equipment. Volunteers now patrol the grounds and buildings in shifts.

Maintaining cash flow is critical to weathering this storm. Were you planning to donate to Five Oaks later this year? **Could you do so earlier than planned?** If you are able to donate, you can do so by e-transfer to finance@fiveoaks.on.ca or by cheque sent by regular mail to Five Oaks, 1 Bethel Road, RR 3, Paris ON N3L 3E3.

Thank you for your ongoing support of Five Oaks.

Submitted by Dave Schell, Member of Finance Committee of Five Oaks



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COVID-19

We are at war and the enemy is COVID-19. Because this enemy cannot always be seen, **we are vulnerable to surprise attacks.**

My mother used to tell the story of being in the yard **during WWI** when a horse drawn buggy stopped in front of their farm. A man got out, set up a tripod and began taking



pictures. She said that she and her three sisters and brother raced to the safety of the house. They

thought the man must be a German spy. A

month later the man returned to sell them the picture. We have the picture. (see above)

I was 8 when **WWII ended** but **remember vividly the ration books and tokens.** Meat, sugar and gasoline were in short supply. And of course, there were no chocolate bars. **We flattened tin cans and rolled up empty toothpaste tubes and took them to school so our soldiers would have tanks and guns.** Each time we heard a squadron of planes overhead we wondered if they were our planes. We gathered around the radio daily at six p.m. to hear who was winning and who was losing. **We all had someone overseas in the fight.**

It is a different kind of war now, but it needs to be taken just as seriously. **In some ways we feel more helpless.** A doctor in New York said on Friday, "We have 15 masks left. We have 500 patients who have tested positive. We have run out of pain medication to keep critical patients comfortable. Some are pulling out their breathing tubes choosing a quicker death." A nurse from another hospital says, "We have 1600 patients that have tested positive. We have lost many nurses

through death. At first, I came to work in fear, now I work in sheer terror."

In world wars we could recruit and get soldiers battle-ready in six weeks. You can't do that with nurses and doctors. During the world wars, factories retooled for the war effort. Rolls Royce made engines for Spitfires. Those who were not in the military were fully employed. People came together in many ways to support each other. Now unemployment is at its highest peak. **People worry that they will not be able to meet rent or mortgage payments. Getting together is out of the question.**

Granted, **there are people and companies stepping up to meet needs.** There are **stories of extreme kindness and courage.** Countries will find new ways to support one another and work together.

We are finding that we can keep in touch with our grown children and grandchildren even though they can't come into our home. We chat outside at a safe six feet. They call more often and ask if there is anything we need. **For younger families who face unemployment it is not so easy. While this war, like others, will one day be managed and won it will not be anytime soon.** So much depends on us. **We know the routine: stay at home don't come within 6 feet of anyone you don't live with etc.** To follow the rules is an act of love... and hope. **We are all in it and will get through it together.**

GW

**April distance
brings May
existence**

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COMING TOGETHER For Sunday Services- Differently

We are grateful to those ministers who have made their services available either through live streaming on Sunday morning (see their webpage) or through emailing their messages/videos upon request. Throughout Oxford, people are reaching out to each other to stay in touch, check in and share resources. **See page 12 for details.** These stories show creativity in deploying church!

WILLIS UC, Drumbo Ken Jackson reports that no one in their church family has been ill due to COVID-19. "But there are adjustments that all of us have had to make. **Some have alluded to a sense of "aloneness"** - not exactly loneliness, since it is possible to stay in touch with family and others through various electronic means - **but a sense of missing the sight and touch and physical presence of children, grandchildren and others.** But people's spirits are good, and their trust in God is solid.

We do have a weekly email that goes out to those in our congregation with computers. Not all of them have one. And some that do aren't really tech savvy enough to handle much beyond emails. **So we decided that we would use the lowest common denominator to bring our faith community together in worship - the telephone. Everyone can manage that.**

We had a great Palm Sunday service today by conference call. We had a check-in time, greeted each other as they came on the line, discussed our congregation's current situation, and even sang happy birthday to one of our

members who was celebrating it today. Then we proceeded with our service, using prompted responses in place of liturgy, and a scripture reading by a ten-year-old who did a super job! **The sense of community was terrific. Maybe we couldn't be together in person, but God's Spirit was certainly with us as we worshipped.**

And we had a full "church". **We found that we'll have to expand our platform to make room for more.** The response has been very positive, and we're looking forward to a triumphal Easter service next Sunday. The virus is no match for the determination of our community of faith."

HEBRON UC, Nancy Vandenberghe Reports that her "weekly sermonettes are emailed to the congregation. I include a **Scripture related colouring sheet for the children** (and some adults have coloured it, too), an audio recording of me playing 1-2 hymn(s) with written words included, at the end of the sermonette, as well as a copy of written prayers of the people. **I connect with our children, weekly, to have a FaceTime visit** and little prayer. I deliver the sermonettes to Oxford Gardens' front doors and the staff deliver to the rooms of those from our congregation. **Some of our church family have also been delivering copies of the sermonettes, to staff in long-term care facilities, for delivery to their loved ones, too.**

It has been my pleasure to connect, via phone, with many people who are in long-term care or remaining in the safety of their homes. **I put my phone on speaker mode, then take and play their hymn requests... I am happy to do this for anyone.**

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SHARE YOUR STORIES and PICTURES OF DEPLOYING CHURCH

Due Date for Submission for next issue is May 11, NOON.

Contact Glen or Marg, the editors,
oxfconnections@execulink.com

COVID19 DISTRUPTS PLANS - FROM KHARTOUM



Just last month, **Freweini Mabrahtu** (at left with 2 daughters and son, Bistrat) decided to take her girls to Uganda thus leaving the refugee program

- the 2-3 year wait in **Khartoum** was too **long and too dangerous**. Here are her words of gratitude and frustration. 'Me with my family are in a good condition. Thank you so much. **I really appreciate your kindness towards my family**. Yes, at this time it is some how difficult, but no problem God can help us. Sometimes I worked **but now all are sitting in our house because of the corona, but I know we should have to be stronger more than any time.**' The Oxford United Refugee Support Committee is helping Bistrat apply for the refuge program.

Glen Wright, Member of Oxford United Refugee Sponsorship Committee

LEGACY FUND details available next month from **Lynne Dunlop** re proposals to further the ministry of clusters or networks by multiple United Church communities of faith in Oxford – i.e. **new ways of deploying the church in Oxford.**

While Easter is often a time we bring people together to celebrate – please – this is **NOT** the year to do so. Gather with those with whom you live. Connect with others online or by phone. Wait to gather for celebrations with people outside your immediate household until we're given 'All Clear' from our Public Health Officers.

The celebration will come.
The community will gather.

But not right now.

**WE ARE NOT ALONE!
THANKS BE TO GOD!**

"We, the healthcare workers, are not your frontliners any longer. We are your **LAST LINE OF DEFENSE**. YOU, my fellow people, are the frontliners now. The war has shifted to the community and it is up to you. This cannot be won in the confines of the hospital... "

- Dr. B. Calinawagan

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

HELPING IN UNITY: Operation Sharing's March newsletter (<https://tinyurl.com/wbt8446>) reports that, due to the Coronavirus, **the Annual Meeting is delayed until further notice.** In response to the challenging year of 2019, the **President of the Board, Marilyn Schmiedl**, says "A special thanks to the churches, businesses, organizations and individuals who continue to support Operation Sharing. The people of Oxford County have been a great support to Operation Sharing."

Find the Annual Report for 2019 here <https://tinyurl.com/rgfq3cr>.

Operation Sharing continues to reach out to the most vulnerable in our community through:

'Food for Friends' food cards program is open at College Avenue United Church in Woodstock Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 9 a.m. to noon and at Trinity United Church in Ingersoll Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9 a.m. to noon

Bullwinkle's Eatery continues at College Avenue United Church in Woodstock on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays from noon to 1 p.m. Freewill donations accepted.

The Inn homeless shelter continues at Old St. Paul's Anglican Church in Woodstock for residents of Oxford County **seven days a week from 7:30 p.m. to 7:30 a.m.**

Chaplain **Stephen Giuliano**, 'I and our staff are all still 'holding down the fort' at Operation Sharing with all programs still operating...so very proud and thankful of all of them for their dedication...and also for the periodic laughs we share together in order to reduce our anxiety as we continue on as an essential service within



the larger community. **Darryl Watson, Homeless Shelter and Coordinator Associate**

Chaplain, shared this encouraging video https://youtu.be/bUZIp_PKeZ0 which he titled 'Choose Hope over Fear.'

Financial donations for Operation Sharing can be forwarded to its Treasurer at P.O. Box 20081, Woodstock, Ontario, N4S 8X8.

March 20, 2020, our **Moderator** wrote a **caring letter to those ministries** like Operation Sharing who serve some of the most vulnerable people in our communities where social distancing and internet are difficult.

<https://tinyurl.com/ltr-from-Moderator>

Also, a story from Our Place, Victoria B.C., who also recognize that street involved people are especially vulnerable. "By protecting the underserved community, we protect everybody in the community."

<https://tinyurl.com/vz7g2b9>



<https://arwrcucc.ca/>

EASTER newsletter

<https://mailchi.mp/9081643170c7/covid-19-update-april-5-2020?e=0878d108a5>

includes a note from **Nora Sanders**, General Secretary.

sign up here <https://arwrcucc.us20.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=ee15470ca4eab124ea964929b&id=afa2614952>

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The Other Side of the Virus, An Opportunity to Awaken...

Yes there is panic buying.

Yes there is sickness.

Yes there is even death.

But,

They say that in Wuhan after so many
years of noise

You can hear the birds again.

They say that after just a few weeks of
quiet

The sky is no longer thick with fumes
But blue and grey and clear.

They say that in the streets of Assisi

People are singing to each other
across the empty squares,
keeping their windows open
so that those who are alone
may hear the sounds of family

around them.

They say that a hotel in the West of
Ireland

is offering free meals and delivery to
the housebound.

Today a young woman I know

is busy spreading fliers with her
number

through the neighbourhood
so that the elders may have someone
to call on.

Today Churches, Synagogues, Mosques
and Temples

are preparing to welcome
and shelter the homeless, the sick,
the weary.

All over the world people are slowing
down and reflecting.

All over the world people are looking at
their neighbours in a new way.

All over the world people are waking up to
a new reality

To how big we really are.

To how little control we really have.

To what really matters.

To Love.

So we pray and we remember that

Yes there is fear.

But there does not have to be hate.

Yes there is isolation.

But there does not have to be
loneliness.

Yes there is panic buying.

But there does not have to be
meanness.

Yes there is sickness.

But there does not have to be disease
of the soul

Yes there is even death.

But there can always be a rebirth of
love.

Wake to the choices you make as to how
to live now.

Today, breathe.

Listen, behind the factory noises of your
panic-

The birds are singing again

The sky is clearing,

Spring is coming,

And we are always encompassed by
Love.

Open the windows of your soul

And though you may not be able
to touch across the empty square,

Sing.

- Written by Fr. Richard Hendrick, OFM,
March 13th 2020



**Winnipegger
creates Lego
version of prime
minister's address**

Simple. For everyone.

<https://www.cbc.ca/player/play/1721092675775>

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Connecting Health, Economics and The Climate Change Crisis

'The ankle bone is connected to the leg bone, the leg bone is connected to the knee bone...' Our bones, heart and lungs etc. are all interconnected so that we can breathe and walk and talk... so we can live.

That is **how we and the world we inhabit were created**. All of creation – the earth, the air, the water, the fire – all creatures are connected in the web of life of which we are one part.

I haven't even asked why we were created. We're here. When it **rains too much**, we know that the soil needs rain for the seeds to grow – even when we are disappointed to cancel our plans for the beach or are devastated when our homes are flooded. When **the air has too many particles of dust** we have difficulty breathing – even though we can only find work where the pollution originates. I hope you get the picture. **We can't imagine there is any other way of living**. The way of the world today is **neo-liberal economics** – 'market-oriented reform policies like "eliminating price controls, deregulating capital markets, lowering trade barriers" and reducing state influence in the economy, especially through privatization and austerity."¹⁾

In the western world, we elect governments who defer to corporations concerned about private profit (predatory economics at times) rather than making decisions for the sake of the common good.²⁾

For years, scientists have warned of a pandemic. Since the SARS epidemic of 2003, which was also a coronavirus, **vaccines were developed but never proceeded beyond the pre-clinical level**. Why? **There was no profit in**

preventing a future catastrophe. For too long before COVID-19, we've accepted that less government was better. In truth, **we've also forgotten our Biblical roots**.

3 years ago, when Old Testament scholar, Walter Brueggeman was asked about what the biblical pattern of challenging empire at work was in today's world he replied "It's the oligarchy of concentrated wealth...the network of the wealthy and powerful in the U.S. and around the world who basically outflank or control governmental structures. **The control of technology is key, but more importantly is the control of imagination**. So that it becomes impossible to imagine any social reality outside the scope of what that system offers."³⁾

We've forgotten that Moses confronted the Egyptian empire and Jesus confronted the Roman empire for freedom from injustice and for love. God's love. God's justice for all.

Scientists have long warned that climate change will impact not just our environment, but also our health by increasing rates of infectious disease.⁴⁾

Why were we created? Not to do the hokey pokey (as much fun as that is) but **to imagine new ways to share God's love and justice for all**. With courage, we'll work together, locally, nationally and globally to do this. *Marg Murray, Member of Antler River Watershed Social Justice Network*

¹⁾ Wikipedia

²⁾ Noam Chomsky

<https://truthout.org/articles/chomsky-ventilator-shortage-exposes-the-cruelty-of-neoliberal-capitalism/>

³⁾ Walter Brueggemann

<https://www.redletterchristians.org/big-trouble-comin-an-interview-with-walter-brueggemann/>

⁴⁾ <https://www.businessinsider.com/climate-change-making-health-crises-like-coronavirus-frequent-worse-2020-4>

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NOT EVERYTHING IS CANCELLED



SUN IS NOT CANCELLED
SPRING IS NOT CANCELLED
RELATIONSHIPS ARE NOT CANCELLED
LOVE IS NOT CANCELLED
READING IS NOT CANCELLED
DEVOTION IS NOT CANCELLED
MUSIC IS NOT CANCELLED
IMAGINATION IS NOT CANCELLED
KINDNESS IS NOT CANCELLED
CONVERSATIONS ARE NOT CANCELLED
HOPE IS NOT CANCELLED

Rabbi Richard Address, D.Min

***Our Long and Winding Road
Seeking our Path in the Longevity
Revolution***

Siloam United Church, London

*Rabbi Address was well received at the
Boomer Conference at Siloam UC in 2019.*

***Rescheduled for October 31, 2020
Saturday, 2:00 - 9:00 pm***

Excellent Online resources

- from **United Church of Canada** on Facebook United Church:
<https://www.facebook.com/UnitedChurchCda/>
- Check out what is happening in our region, **Antler River Watershed Regional Council**
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/arwrcucc/?ref=bookmarks>
- and former **Oxford Presbytery Facebook page:**
<https://www.facebook.com/Oxford-Presbytery-690395957746547/>

FRIENDS OF OXFORD

April gathering is POSTPONED... till later date...

When this COVID-19 pandemic is over it will be truly a blessing to see old friends face to face (within 6 feet) and make new friends. We'll eat, listen to each other's stories and Bible stories, sing together and generally be open to the spirit.

In the meantime, let us know how you are making CONNECTIONS.

Email editors if you are interested in a Zoom meeting!

**SOCIAL JUSTICE FAIR of
Antler River Watershed
Region for May 9 2020 has
been **Postponed....****



**ANTLER RIVER WATERSHED
Regional Council Meeting on
May 29-31 has been cancelled.**

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UCC Moderator, Right Rev. Richard Bott Sunday Services

The Moderator online worship link during covid-19 pandemic.
<https://www.united-church.ca/covid-19>

Moderator's Easter Message

God is doing things. Mysterious things. Miraculous things. Incredible things. Resurrection things. Whether we know about them or not. And we will celebrate those things with great joy and wonder-filled alleluias—when the time is right.
<https://tinyurl.com/tud3osv>

Easter Sunday special Live Streamed Holy Communion at 3:00 pm

<https://www.youtube.com/unitedchurchofcanada>

Join the Moderator in daily prayer using Voices United.

On his Facebook Page, Richard testifies to the importance of following **the 'liturgy of the hours' which shape his day and grounds him in his life as a disciple of Jesus.** There is a resource in Voices United 'Services of Daily Prayer' page 905 or <https://tinyurl.com/Prayers-from-VU>. If you're looking for something to give a bit of shape to your day, consider joining our Moderator in this spiritual practice.
<https://www.facebook.com/ModeratorRichardBott/>.



INDIGENOUS CHURCH

In the midst of the many cancellations across the church and the disruption to programs to teach us about Truth and Reconciliation, **the National Indigenous Elders Council**, offered the whole church its [wisdom and assurance](#) in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Elders advise us all to take care of each other, to heed medical advice, and to continue to engage in prayer and ceremony even as we are unable to come together to do so.

They included in their message this gracious prayer from the Indigenous Ministries and Justice Circle.

Creator, God,
We ask you to be with us.

We pray for those who are ill, and for those we cannot be with as closely as we wish.

When we are afraid, help us to remember and be grateful for:

Water, which gives life.

The land, which sustains us and restores us to health.

The wisdom of Elders, who guide us.

Our young people, who deserve a bright future.

Our strength and resilience, which will bring us to a new day.

Help our leaders respond appropriately to the specific needs of Indigenous communities.

Help us to walk compassionately with all who are ill or afraid.

Help us to understand that we are all relatives.

In Jesus' name we pray.
Amen.

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HOPE, GRATITUDE AND SOLIDARITY:

A MESSAGE TO CANADIANS FROM RELIGIOUS LEADERS IN CANADA IN RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

"In spite of present sufferings, which can seem overwhelming at times, the flames of hope cannot be extinguished," the statement reads. "Love, which gives life its fullest meaning, continues to seek out the common good in spite of individual difficulties."

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

Social distancing baptism



AVAILABLE IN OXFORD

Services -live streamed

(Some will also be on their websites)

Kintore UC Facebook live feed at 11:00 am:

<https://www.facebook.com/morethanSundaymorning/>

Peace UC, Plattsville at 10:am

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

Westminster UC, Thamesford 10:30 am,

<https://makingconnexions.com/live/>

Services (message and/or

video are available by email request.

College Ave UC –

pastorlloyd@collegeave.ca

Dundas St. UC –

dundasstunited@execulink.com

Hebron UC

rsstock@execulink.com

Mt Elgin UC

mtelginucbusiness@gmail.com

St Paul's UC, Tillsonburg

stpaulsunity@execulink.com

St. David's UC, Woodstock

stdavidswoodstock@gmail.com,

Trinity United, Ingersoll

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May 13, 2020

SUBMISSIONS DUE:

Noon Monday, May 11, 2020

You may share widely.

To add or remove your name to this mailing list, email

oxfconnections@execulink.com

Submissions and feedback welcome.

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