

CONNECTIONS

News and Views of Oxford County United Churches

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FOR THE DURATION – AND BEYOND

'For the Duration' was a common expression during World War 2. It seems appropriate to reclaim it as we wrestle with not just the Covid pandemic but the concurrent pandemics of economic injustice, racism and climate change. As we seek to look after each other and creation it is good to be reminded that wrestling is the beginning of blessing, which is the corner stone of our Present and Future Church.

This month our stories include:

- 'Hellos' from Susan Cole and Sherpherd Munikwa
- 'Goodbye' from Karen Low,
- Prayer Cycles and Prayer Chain
- A Letter to our Provincial Government re school reopening.
- Registration for Social Forum on Sept 11-13 in London (in person or on-line)
- Opportunities for volunteering in the ongoing ministry at Five Oaks and in our congregations.
- The F.T.D. Club - Bob Giuliano
- September is Climate Action Month – Kairos
- God's Dream for Creation – Jim Antol
- Indigenous Canada – online course at U of Alberta
- History of 2-spirit people
- Urgent opportunities to sign petitions for a Just Recovery and for human rights of children in Occupied Palestine
- Change in leadership at National Office
- **Save the Date** for Regional Council meeting October 29 - November 1, 2020
- See page 14 for worship services in Oxford

FOOD FOR THE SOUL



Cameron Trimble

offered a webinar mid-August.

The Future Church

What will the church of the future look like? Cameron Trimble, United Church of Christ pastor, author and CEO of The Centre for Progressive Renewal at Emory University, Atlanta, believes she knows. She bases her vision on what some churches are already doing. Cameron was brought to us on zoom by the Antler River Watershed Regional Council.

Trimble has observed, as have we, that because of the Covid-19 pandemic, churches have resorted to producing worship services online. Those who have opened those services to the wider community and world, have **discovered that there are people out there who tune in.** These new viewers are **not just in Canada but around the world.** Trimble believes that this will continue long after Covid-19 has been contained. She says that the message of the progressive church is so very suited to the needs of the world. **The message is interactive and inclusive; it seeks justice and practises compassion.**

But will these people support the church financially? Trimble reminded us that already **46% of US churches have facilities for online contributions.** During one of the discussion sessions, one of the participants suggested that we did not need buildings or the institution and that perhaps we should get rid of the church as we know it and just follow Jesus. **Trimble pointed out that at the heart of the church is the gathered**

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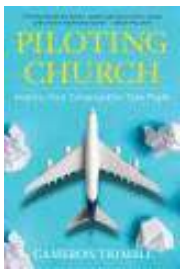
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community. Without that we are not a church.

Trimble also reminded us of Phyllis Trickle's saying "that **every 500 years the church has a rummage sale.**" Trimble suggested that this is happening. Churches are closing and buildings are being sold. **The pandemic is accelerating this. Trimble says that this has given time for churches to reflect on their life and purpose and can lead to renewal.**

You can hear an interview of Trimble with [the Raven Foundation](#) called "Piloting Church: Helping your Church take Flight,"

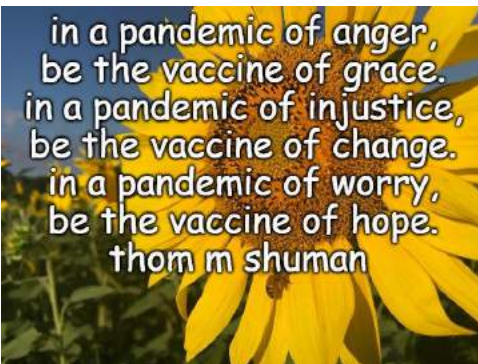


which is also the name of one of her books. At 15:08, in the interview she is asked the purpose of the church. Her one sentence answer could be the mission statement of any or perhaps all churches. **In a**

time when churches are struggling to re-group, it is a pleasure to hear someone who believes it is also a time of renewal and hope. GW

PRAYER CYCLES

- **Oxford United Churches updated**
<https://tinyurl.com/Oxford-Prayer-August-12-2020>
- **United Church of Canada – Antler River Watershed**
<https://www.prayercycles.ca/antlerriverwatershed>



COMINGS AND GOINGS AROUND OXFORD...

IN OUR HEARTS AND PRAYERS

In Oxford, we have 11 vacant pulpits. Mostly rural, each church is unique in searching for transformation, peace and justice.

CONGREGATIONS SEEKING MINISTERIAL LEADERSHIP:

Avondale UC (Tillsonburg) with Otterville UC interviewing candidates; Hickson UC; Norwich UC; Princeton-Etonia Pastoral Charge; Beachville (Sweaburg - West Oxford) Pastoral Charge; Foldens UC; Burgessville UC. Oxford Centre UC.

CHANGES IN OXFORD:

Curries UC is disbanding.

Innerkip UC – Karen Willis, part-time appointment Nov 20, 2020 - June 30, 2021.

Knox UC, Embro – Rev Susan Cole started September 1. See articles within.

Oxford Centre UC is in the process of selling their building and finding a place to worship elsewhere.

St David's UC (Woodstock) have called Rev Jeffrey Smith from Eden UC (Mississauga) to begin November 9, 2020.

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MOVING FORWARD

KNOX UC, Embro welcomed Rev Susan Cole on September 1, 2020. *Susan graciously provided this article on her faith journey and the new study that Knox UC is undertaking.*



I was born in Toronto and **grew up in the borough once known as Etobicoke.** Although I was baptized in the United Church, I had no involvement in church life growing up.

Twenty-two years after graduating with a Bachelor of Fine Arts at York University, and feeling a call to ministry, I returned to university earned my Master of Divinity and was ordained in the United Church of Canada on June 6, 2015. I accepted a 30 hours a week position as the coordinator of an outreach ministry in Kitchener/Waterloo called Community Ministry and worked there until June 2020. **I am very passionate about the importance of outreach ministry and helping those who are struggling with loneliness and marginalization.**

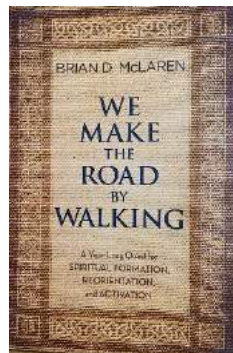
I am excited to be in my first full-time congregational ministry position and looking forward to getting to know Knox United's faith family, and the people of Embro. I am especially excited about the shorter commute. **I also feel very comfortable and "at home" in the Embro area as I have ancestors who settled the land around Brown's Corners and founded Browns United Church.**

I have been married to my husband Stephen Graham, of the Thamesford area, for 32 years. We have two adult children. **We have lived in this area for 30 years and presently live on a farm less than a kilometre from the farm where Stephen grew up.** We have a small

greenhouse and a large garden. This year we will have harvested 4676 bulbs of garlic! We enjoy growing the food we eat and process much of it for the winter months. In my spare time I play hockey, read, listen to music and take long walks in our woods. **For many years I have been active on stage at my "home" church in Thamesford.** I have played Sister Amnesia in Nunsense 1, 2 & 3 as well as rolls in The Sound of Music, Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat and Anne of Green Gables.

Stephen and I love to travel and have gone to Germany, France, Costa Rica, Hawaii, Mexico, Boston, Florida and took a road trip across the USA that took us to the Grand Canyon. In these strange and changing times, we are content to homestead on the farm.

Making The Road By Walking @ KNOX UNITED CHURCH, Embro



This year at Knox UC in Embro, we are going to be exploring the book "We Make The Road By Walking" written by Brian D. McLaren as we journey together **seeking aliveness.** My hope is that everyone will obtain a copy of this book and

that within its pages we will find themes, reflections and challenges to activate our faith. **We have also drawn the circle wide and have joined other faith communities on the road.** Rev. Maya Landell at [Islington UC](#) in Toronto, Rev. Anita Spiller at [Jordan Station](#) in Niagara, Rev. Sarah Grady at [St. Paul's UC](#) in Paris, Richwood UC in Richwood, Pastor Dawn Young Hill at South Cayuga Community Church in South Cayuga, Rev. Doug Peck at Chalmers/Brooksdale in Kintore and Brooksdale and I, **will gather regularly (virtually) to lift each other up, share**

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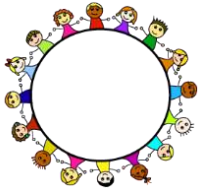
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resources and gifts, and investigate the richness of this book.

I am excited about this journey we are taking together, and I hope you are excited about it too! Keep an eye on [Knox Embro's Facebook](#) page and our posts about our journey and the resources available to us. Take a look at any links that are sent your way. **Be sure to begin by watching Brian D. McLaren's videos called "Seeking Aliveness" and "[We Make The Road By Walking](#)" as we take our first steps on this journey.**

Blessings & Peace,
Rev. Susan

"We Make The Road By Walking" can be purchased from Grand River Bookstore at Five Oaks, sales@grandriverbooks.com or call 519.442.3366, (mailing costs \$5) or independent book stores.



PRAYER CHAIN

Contact Prayer Chain Leader Olga McKellar for on-going prayer concerns.

o.mckellar@sympatico.ca

July 1, 2020, Dundas St UC welcomed Rev Sherpherd Munikwa.



A warm welcome to Sherpherd and his family from readers and editors of CONNECTIONS. It is difficult for all of us these days but especially for any minister who moves

under these circumstances.

Rev Sherpherd Munikwa was **born in Nyajena district, Masvingo province in Zimbabwe.** He is the 5th born in a family

of six to the late Mr and Mrs Mudemba Munikwa who were devoted Protestant Christians and members of the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe.

After high school he moved to Triangle a nearby Sugar production area, where he stayed for seven years. **Sherpherd's seven years in Triangle were like Moses' years in the Median wilderness when he was attending Jethro's flock.** There were years of spiritual training and growth, faith formation widened and deepened in Jesus Christ. **The Lord spoke to Sherpherd vividly in many different ways** starting from the age of 21. In Triangle he served the church like any other full member of the church, he led Sunday Services, taught Catechism, led youth groups and participate in evangelism outreaches as well as performing any duty in the church as assigned by the Church Council or by the Minister.

In 2000 he couldn't resist God's calling into the full-time ministry as a ministry personnel, he went for training at Murray Theological College for four years. In 2004, he was ordained as a Minister of Word, Sacrament and Pastoral Care in Chinhoyi Congregation where he served up to 2013. **During his years in Chinhoyi he served the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe and the community at large in various positions:** Presbytery Youth Coordinator, Presbytery Actuary, Presbytery Synodical Committee Representative, Theological College Board of Governors Secretary and Zimbabwe Council of Churches member. **Sherpherd loves his studies so much. He studied with the Zimbabwe Open University, with Justo Mwale University in Zambia and with Atlantic School of Theology.**

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In July 2013 Sherpherd started as an Ecclesiological Lecturer at Murray Theological College of the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe up to April 2014. He moved to the United Church of Canada in 2014 with his wife Adline and their three girls, Inzwirashé Grace, Kupakwashe Rejoice and Tovimbanashe Joyce. **He went through the admission process until he was admitted on May, 05, 2016.** He served as the Minister of Word, Sacrament and Pastoral Care in Carmanville Pastoral Charge in Newfoundland where he started on April 7, 2014 to June 30, 2020. **He survived seven winters in Newfoundland, where he came with his family as strangers and they left as family members because of the great love, caring and hospitality of Newfoundlanders.** That's where they consider home away from home as of now. They listened to God's calling and joined Dundas Street United Church in Woodstock on July 01, 2020. **Due to these uncertain days, it was not a good and hospitable move.** There are no people outdoors, church activities and communal gatherings are in slow motion. **If it were not for the love and care of Dundas Street United Church family, it would be too difficult for the family.** Rev Sherpherd and his family are hoping that things will be all right soon by God's grace. **There is no storm which lasts forever.** At the fullness of time, the pandemic will be over and they are hoping to enjoy and explore the area and its neighborhood as well as learn the religious and communal life of the area.

Rev. Sherperd Manikwa, smunikwa@gmail.com



CURRIES UNITED CHURCH

John McIntyre, Trustee of Curries UC reports that their sale on Saturday, August 29 went well. 'I couldn't have had a

better team to organize the sale. And the customers were great... There were no complaints... There were lots of church people both local and distant... Folks wore masks, kept distant and even offered donations over the sale prices. We were very pleased. **Thank you to all who supported us.'**

CONDOLENCES

Dennis Pilkey (1951 – 2020)



Our thoughts and prayers go out to Rev. Bonnie Pilkey, who recently lost her husband, Dennis. At the end of June, Bonnie had just joined the ranks of the retired. We send Bonnie and family much love that they may know God's grace, compassion and hope especially at this time.

To get her address, please call Dundas UC (519- 537-7935).

<https://www.brockandvisser.com/obituary/Dennis-Pilkey>



To

order books call 519-442-3366

Or email sales@grandriverbooks.com.

Mail delivery is \$5.00,

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

They are open and selling books online

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MORE VOICES NEEDED:



Hebron UC is looking for some copies of More Voices. Please arrange with Sandra Stock

<rsstock@execulink.com>

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NOW ON [FACEBOOK!](#)

LIKE AND FOLLOW US

From former Oxford Presbytery members

David Allan (1937-2014) was a candidate for ministry from Central UC and helped set up the structure for St. David's UC, Woodstock. He served at Bloor St UC in Toronto for over 20 years. At the urging of his congregation, his prayers were published. The following is included with the permission of his wife, Marilyn.

Offering

Bring the busy streets with you
and the hurried week
yesterday's anger, and this morning's
mistakes.

Bring the children's crying
and the memories of shouting
and mix it with this measure of stillness...

'till laughter begins to build again
and words come out
clearer and finer,
and all the doors are open,
the raw world ringing rain-washed,
soft,
towards healing and hope,
and bruised lives bending and blessed,
come to worship.



The Rev. David R. Allan from [Crosswalks: Prayers from a City Church](#)

Thank you note from Stan Stanhope recovering from a fall:

"To let you know that I am out of hospital. Norma and I would like to thank you all for your cards and prayers. The next two months are going to be busy with more exercises and doctor's appointments.

Have a great Fall and enjoy the wonders of the changing seasons. Shalom: Stan"



ZOOM Virtual UCW Gathering of 3 Regions

Saturday, October 3, 2020

10:00 am

Theme: A Step Forward

Topic: Women for Change, Zambia

Speaker: Rev Dr. Japhet Ndhlovu,

UCC Program Coordinator,

Southern Africa and South Asia

(National UCW 60th Anniversary Project)

Sing and worship together

Renew Friendships in the optional breakout rooms

A link will be sent out before BUT you will be able to view it anytime.

Contact Rev Sandra Bendall (519-671-3961, sandra.bendall@execulink.com)

GOOD NIGHT BUT NOT GOODBYE



As summer ends, the counsellors sing 'an end of summer song' just like they do at the end of each week. Hope you all made the best of this summer from home! Until next summer, **this is goodnight but not goodbye.** Check out their [Facebook video](#)

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Face Protection and Smaller Classes, PLEASE!

The following is the letter, August 22, 2020, written prior to the Thames Valley School Board's decision to make masks mandatory for grades JK to grade three. It was sent to Mr. Ernie Hardeman, MLA, Oxford, to Stephen Lecce, Ontario Minister of Education with a copy to William McKinnon, Oxford's representative on the Thames Valley Board of Education.

With grandchildren in grades one, three, seven and nine, I am more than a little concerned about their return to school during this Covid-19 pandemic. I am pleased by the steps that your government has taken and encouraged by your words so often repeated: "We will do everything in our power to see that our children are kept safe." That says to me that your plans are a work in progress and that you are open to further suggestions. I have two.



The first is to supply plastic face shields for those students from JK to grade three.

A face shield was mentioned by Dr. Peter Lin as an effective mask alternative. It is most curious that for the children least likely to understand or practice social distancing, children with their hands on and into most everything, you provide no personal protective equipment. The adjustment to plastic face shields would be relatively easy. They are not hot like a mask and the teachers probably wear them. They are easy to clean, and the face is revealed. In a time of increased stress, to be able to read facial expressions is vital for both teachers and students.

The second suggestion you have heard many times. Cut the class sizes. You

have said in so many ways that groups of fewer numbers are safer. If this applies to adults who understand and respect social distancing, how much more does it apply to children who may not. If you can't come up with the funds for all elementary school grades, apply this to the junior grades.

If you are unwilling to increase the deficit, raise our taxes. What is money when lives can be saved - or lost? Though I have not taken a survey, I believe that the people of Ontario also want to "do everything in their power to see that our children are kept safe."

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely, Glen Wright, Woodstock.

Mr. McKinnon responded that he agreed with the points that I was making.

OXFORD UNITED REFUGEE SUPPORT COMMITTEE (OURS)

If you wish to support these families, cheques should be made out to St. David's United Church with **REFUGEE SPONSORSHIP** in the memo line and mailed to:

St. David's United Church, Treasurer
190 Springbank Ave., North,
Woodstock, Ont. N4S 7R1

Editor's note: For ease of reference, all the OURS stories published in CONNECTIONS are stored online at:

<https://tinyurl.com/OURS-Committee-2020>



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Wrestling is Where the Blessing Begins

Rev Karen Low has been on medical leave since March 2019. Personally, I have been blessed with her ministry – which started with wrestling.



We've included her thoughtful letter of resignation to the Congregation of Innerkip Pastoral Charge (effective

October 31, 2020). MM

So often, over these many months, I have been reminded of poet Jan Richardson's piece entitled "Jacob's Blessing". **"If this blessing were easy," Richardson writes, "anyone could claim it. As it is, I'm here to tell you that it will take some work."** She goes on to say, **"This is the blessing that visits you in the struggling, in the wrestling, in the striving. This is the blessing that comes after you have left everything behind, after you have stepped out, after you have crossed into that realm beyond every landmark you have known."**

Since taking my leave from you last year, I have scuffled with health concerns that prompted major surgery and grappled with the lingering impact on my body and my spirit. I have contended, as we all have, with the COVID-19 restrictions and the recognition that I fall within vulnerable categories. I have tussled with the increasing needs of two aged and much-loved parents. **And I have wrestled with the questions, "What now?" "What next?"**

"It's not that this blessing is so difficult, as if it were not so filled with grace or with the love that lives in every line. It's simply that it requires you to want it, to ask for it, to place yourself in its path."

It is in the pause between the rounds that I have heard the call that the time has

come for me to step into retirement – a place from which I might better be able to tend to the needs of my family and my soul, and **to discern the grace that lies in the journey both taken and yet to come.**

My decision to retire has not come easily. I miss being a part of you. I miss the flow of the seasons of the church and the striving to bring something of the Divine amongst you.

I thank you for the welcome you provided to both Annie and me and the gifts of your presence with which you continue to bless the Church and the wider community. The world around you is richer for it.

As I continue to try to regain ground lost since my leave-taking (and replace the 40 lbs. that went with it), it is **my hope that retirement will bring renewed inspiration for innovative forms of service in the future.**

I wish all of you blessed days ahead, both as a Charge and as God's beloved. **Perhaps you too will find yourself wrestling with some of the same questions: "What now?" or "What next?"** I can do no better than leave you with Jan's closing words of Jacob's Blessing ... **"So when this blessing comes, born in the hands of the difficult angel who has chosen you, do not let go. Give yourself into its grip. It will wound you, but I tell you there will come a day when what felt to you like limping was something more like dancing as you moved into the cadence of your new and blessed name."**

As you go dancing, I bid you peace ...

Rev. Karen E. Low

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**This will be a great event.
Support it with your donation in
addition to your attendance.**

September 11-13 online +

Inspired by the World Social Forum movement, the **Regional Social Forum** will provide an open meeting space for people, community groups and organizations to share ideas, information, experiences via workshops and presentations of local and global concern. [Register here.](#)

Speakers include local folk: [Eric Schmiedl](#), [Bryan Smith](#) of OPAL Alliance (Oxford People Against Landfill); [Brandon Doxtator](#) of London Health Coalition and lots of others including well known author, [Linda McQuaig](#) speaking on "How the Rich are Stealing Canada's Public Wealth – and We Must Stop Them!"

LONDON REGIONAL

Resistance & revolution for a just green recovery

Opening ceremony by Dan & Mary Lou Smoke



Zoom Speakers:

Brandon Doxtator
Raul Burbano
Lisa Fithian
John Clarke
Yves Engler
Natalie Mehra
Linda McQuaig
Bryan Smith
Brent Patterson

Lynn Brown
Larry farquharson
Eric Schmiedl

Sept 11th from 4 to 8 pm
Free vegan meal and music
at Gibbons park in person
(Masks & Social distancing)

Sept 12/13th online (Zoom)
from 10 to 5 pm

RSVP: <https://londonregionsocialforum.wildapricot.org/>



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

Bullwinkle's Eatery and Hospitality Training Centre in Woodstock

Takeout lunches available on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays (from noon to 1 pm)

Running temporarily out of College Avenue United Church. Tuesdays and Thursday, lunch is minimum of \$1; Wednesdays, lunches are free.

Good News!

**We've been blessed with
volunteers for food preparation!**

Oxford County: **Food for Friends**

Support this program with 25 cents each time you shop at supporting grocery stores in Woodstock and Ingersoll.

The Inn

The Inn homeless shelter, serving all of Oxford County, is at Old St. Paul's Anglican Church in Woodstock. Free of charge for those 16 and up. It operates nightly from 7:30 p.m.

Mail financial donations for Operation Sharing to Treasurer of Operation Sharing, P.O. Box 20081, Woodstock, Ontario, N4S 8X8.

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

VOLUNTEER WORK DAY

With Brian Hershey and Tom Hunt

Wednesday, September 30-9:00 – 4:30

We welcome you to help us care for this space we all love, to enjoy seeing other

Five Oaks volunteers (from a wee distance) and share the joy of working, eating and playing together.

All ages are welcome.



This Volunteer Work Day will focus on the Labyrinth, upper level gardens and scraping and painting the Friendship House.

Free lunch included for registered participants!

[Please Register](#)

Questions? Email

hospitality@fiveoaks.on.ca

Sunday night meals (pick-up) see [Facebook page](#).



This week is barbequed brisket! (order by Fri. noon)

The F.T.D. Club

The story of Moses standing with arms outstretched to part the water of the Red Sea...people, once slaves, risk the walk to freedom... becoming exhausted holding his arms up...others in the camp seeing his fatigue...stepping up to hold up his arms.

As Bob Giuliano preached an Anniversary Service of a rural church, he was touched by **the young women bringing their children to celebrate with their beloved young woman minister.** He wrote this article. MM

"..I was reminded of many years ago when my mother was minister of **two little churches in the Ohio Valley.** During the Second Great War, when the men had gone off to Europe and the Pacific, **my mother was left with a town full of young mothers with little kids and a lot of fear.** As a matter of fact she was one **with** them. Her husband, my dad, had gone off to war with the men of his church, unable to remain behind.



So she too, for five years, lived on the edge of life, smelling the smoke of battle in her dreams.

In those days our house was full of young women. **My mother gathered them for regular meetings where they could talk of their loneliness and the anxieties they suffered about the war.** They helped one another with the red tape of government and the postal services. They gathered to make socks and cookies and letters of hope to send to the front lines. Mom guided them in learning to pray and helped them cook and sew.

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They met once a week, were on the phone often and **named themselves the F.T.D. (For The Duration) Club.** It was a common expression in those days which some of you will remember; **the 'Duration' was a temporary designation of the war.** So, for the duration, they gathered and held one another when the telegrams came, "Wounded in Action," "Missing in Action, Presumed Dead" and finally "Killed in Action." **She led them in their support and care for each other and she led them to the graves high on the hill overlooking the Valley and the river, where the bodies of their men were sent to rest.** Most difficult of all, I suspect, she helped them accept the dark news when there was only a small package of a man's belongs and a letter from his commanding officer. Their lover had been left to be buried on foreign soil.

...I was taken back to the parlor of our small parsonage where I, as a young kid, listened in on the singing and laughter and the fun of the F.T.D. Club. Although I was too young to realize it then I **remember the gift that our home became to those who sometimes came by themselves to confess their loneliness and their weariness in the war.**

The day came when the F.T.D. Club's minister received the feared telegram too: "Wounded in Action." The young women came with pies and casseroles and held their minister friend while she trembled in their love and her fear. **They held her arms aloft day after day while she parted the waters for other to walk to freedom."**¹⁾

¹⁾Elpidio - Letters of Hope, Bob Giuliano, p 119-120, The Ginger Press, Owen Sound, 2006. With permission of his wife, Betty Giuliano. Bob's son, Stephen Giuliano, is Chaplain of Operation Sharing, Woodstock.

SEPTEMBER IS CLIMATE ACTION MONTH coinciding with World Council of Churches' Season of Creation (Sept 1 – Oct 4) to renew our relationship with our Creator and all creation. **The theme of this year's Season of Creation is Jubilee for the Earth, a time of restoration and hope that requires radically new ways of living with creation.**

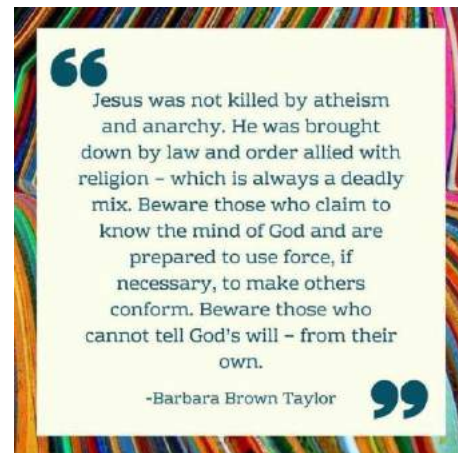
This year, the pandemic is clarifying and amplifying the interconnectedness of all creation. KAIROS provides these resources for September.

- September 1 – [World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation](#)
- September 16 – #LiveLaudatoSi Learning [Webinar on Just Transition](#) hosted by the Global Catholic Climate Movement and Faith & the Common Good
- September 19-26 – [Global Week to Act for SDGs](#)

Learn more about the [Season of Creation](#).

#30DayKAIROSCheckChallenge

It is not too late to join others in the challenge. Print off your [ACTION Card](#) to follow and track your actions this month. Share your completed actions on social media, using the hashtags #KAIROSClimateAction and #30DayKAIROSCheckChallenge.



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God's Dream for Creation

"How can you know all these facts [about climate change] and still have hope?" For me, faith and hope are rooted in the conviction that, **regardless of how bad things may be, a new story is waiting to take hold—something we have not yet seen or felt or experienced. God is calling us—as individuals and congregations—to work with God and others to champion that new story.**

For the vast majority in our society, that new story remains unseen. **Wresting our future from the grip of fossil fuel seems impossible—our addiction is too strong, affordable options are too few, and the powers that defend the status quo are mighty, indeed.** We cannot be



creation's viability.

We become partners with God when we act in unfamiliar, untested ways. Those new actions will be guided by **a preferred future that embraces:**

- **resilience in place of growth**
- **collaboration in place of consumption**
- **wisdom in place of progress**
- **balance in place of addiction**
- **moderation in place of excess**
- **vision in place of convenience**
- **accountability in place of disregard**
- **self-giving love in place of self-centered fear.**

freed by chipping away at this millstone. **We must begin to live into a new story by changing the human prospect [of destruction] and restoring**

God dreams of a time when love and mutual respect will bind humanity together, and the profound beauty of creation will be treasured. Let us embrace God's dream as our own. Suddenly, the horizon of our hope comes nearer. As we live into God's dream, we will rediscover who we truly are and all of creation will be singing.

Jim Antol, United Church of Christ, abridged from Richard Rohr's daily meditations

IMPORTANT! FREE!

Truth and Reconciliation – an opportunity to learn about history from an Indigenous perspective.

Indigenous Canada is an online course offered through the University of Alberta and is open to all, can be completed for free. The 12-week course is described as **looking at history from an Indigenous perspective** and exploring "key issues facing Indigenous peoples today from a historical and critical perspective highlighting national and local Indigenous-settler relations." **Topics include fur trade and other exchange relationships, land claims and environmental impacts, legal systems and rights, and contemporary Indigenous life, art and its expressions.**

I've been wondering what [2-Spirit](#) means and am grateful for this resource. 2-Spirit people were often the visionaries, the healers and the medicine people, respected as fundamental components of our ancient culture and societies. This is our guiding force as well as our source of strength. This is the heart of 2-Spirited People of the First Nations... whose way of life has been drastically altered by historical circumstance MM

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PETITIONS

CPJ (CITIZENS FOR PUBLIC JUSTICE)- Petition (open till Oct. 6)

One of the lessons from the current crisis is that there is profound wisdom in Indigenous teachings about the interconnectedness of all creation. Respecting this interconnectedness is critical for ecological and economic integrity, right relations with Indigenous peoples, and for a [holistic, just recovery](#) from the pandemic.

CPJ shares their latest paper, [Restoring Indigenous Rights](#), an exploration of how implementing the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples can advance climate justice in Canada. Drawing on the invaluable insights of Indigenous activists it seeks to place the sovereign rights of Indigenous Peoples at the heart of CPJ's work for climate justice.

In order to carry this work forward, CPJ has joined the **Ecumenical Circle on the UN Declaration**. Also, through our collaboration with Canadian faith communities in the [For the Love of Creation](#) climate initiative, we have launched an [e-petition](#) that calls on the Government of Canada to:

- Reduce GHG emissions by 60% below 2005 levels by 2030 through a just transition;
- Honour the rights of Indigenous Peoples; and
- Support climate action and pandemic response in the Global South.

BASIC INCOME Petition – sign before Sunday, Sept. 13

ISARC (Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition) encourages us to persuade the Federal Government to include a Basic Income in the upcoming Budget. We are asked to sign a petition supporting a private member's Bill. <https://www.leahgazan.ca/basicincomemotion>

Read the message from Basic Income Canada and sign the petition. <https://basicincomecoalition.ca/>

CJPME (Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East) – Human rights of children in Occupied Palestinian Territories Petition



Children growing up in the Occupied Palestinian Territories live under a **military occupation**. Their day-to-day reality includes home and

school demolitions, water rationing, the loss of family land, checkpoints and military gates, night raids, detentions and imprisonment. **It's time for Canada to stand up for their rights.**

CLICK HERE to sign Petition e-2667, which calls on Canada to appoint a Special Envoy to monitor and report on the human rights of children in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.



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[ARWRC webpage](#)

[Facebook page](#)

Are We Ready to Open?

As communities of faith consider re-opening, it can be difficult to know where to begin. Various sources of information on the internet vary in accuracy and can be overwhelming.

We advise that you consult with your [local health unit](#). This is particularly important as restrictions and requirements vary between communities.

[This checklist](#) is to help get you started by identifying some general things to consider as you create your own re-opening policy and procedures. It is not an official or exhaustive list, and it is based on the information available as of July 2020. There are several links included, but again your own [local health unit](#) and the [Ontario government resources](#) are your best sources of information.



[Michael Blair - new General Secretary of the United Church of Canada](#)

[Nora Sanders on her faith, challenges and the United Church's future](#)

Interview of Retiring General Secretary, Nora Sanders

SAVE THE DATES

ARWRC Regional Council Meeting

October 29 - November 1, 2020

[Check for up-to-date information](#)

AVAILABLE IN OXFORD

Worship Services Check for details of open or on-line streaming etc.

College Ave UC pastorlloyd@collegeave.ca

Dundas St. UC

<https://www.facebook.com/dsuc285/>

Hebron UC - rsstock@execulink.com

Kintore/Brooksdale UC

<http://www.kintorechurch.com/sunday-morning.html>

Knox UC

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

Mt Elgin UC website:

<https://mtelginunitedchurch.webs.com/>

Norwich UC:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCMplrx3w-f6iEa5dgJmvqbw/featured>

Peace UC, Plattsville at 10:am

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

St. David's UC, Woodstock

stdavidswoodstock@gmail.com,

St. Paul's UC, Tillsonburg

stpaulsunited@execulink.com

Trinity United, Ingersoll

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDcxYbhDAUqxEx2yd4kx0Q>

Westminster UC, Thamesford 10:30 am

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

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October 14, 2020

SUBMISSIONS DUE:

Noon FRIDAY October 9, 2020

Names can be added or removed by emailing

oxfconnections@execulink.com

Submissions and feedback welcome.

You may share widely.

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<https://tinyurl.com/Oxford-CONNECTIONS-2019>

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<https://tinyurl.com/Oxford-CONNECTIONS-2020>