

CONNECTIONS

News and Views of Oxford County United Churches

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FROM THE EDGES – HOPE

When we are content and happy at the centre of things, we tend to form an 'insider's group' unable to recognize our idolatries or shadow side. **But those on the edges** offer us the '**knowledge of the outsider**', the reminder of whose we are. We are in awe of the **faith of Sara Hagos**, as she waits in anticipation in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to come to Canada. Mystics and prophets **often chose** to live their lives on these edges or liminal spaces. The rest of us may also either enter these liminal spaces as we reflect on the sharp edges of life or we may find ourselves moved out to the edge. In this issue are stories of folks or communities experiencing a greater sense of the Spirit which has given them new hope.

- Rev. Jane VanPatter retiring this month reflecting on her visit to Africa
- Our gratitude for living in Oxford
- the UCW embracing a zoom meeting – to share the importance of women and girls in Zambia
- the opening up of outreach lunches at St Paul's UC in Tillsonburg
- the history of Curries UC as they celebrated both their 165th Anniversary and De-commissioning
- the continuing ministry of Operation Sharing with shelter and food
- the relationship of Climate Change and Human Rights
- Long Term Facilities Day of Action
- Encouraging prayers for the Annual General Council Recall Meeting, October 24 and the Annual Meeting of Antler River Watershed Regional Council October 29-November 1
- See page 10 for worship services in Oxford



FOOD FOR THE SOUL

SEARCHING FOR HOPE IN A TIME OF CHANGE.

"The Times, they are a Changin'" was Bob Dylan's song of 1964. The issues were civil rights, the war in Vietnam, long hair and the Beatles' visit to the US. Those issues, as important as they were, seem dwarfed by what we are facing.

The war against Covid-19 rages on with increased vengeance; racism has yet to be dealt with and the recent storms and wildfires in the US are a reminder that our industrialization, the pride of the developed world, has moved us toward global warming and a possible point of no return. **The times are a changin' indeed.** The world is a mess.

This gets added to the regular worries about family, friends, unemployment, health etc. **It is not that our lives are devoid of blessings - they aren't - but accumulated stresses send us in search of hope.**

In the midst of writing this I received on my Facebook page, from Sara Hagos, one of the refugees that we are sponsoring, two texts: **Psalm 119 and John 6**. These biblical texts, which she sends regularly, are in Tigrinya, her language, but the references are in English so I am able to look them up. **In Psalm 119 Sara has allowed herself the luxury of lament.** It is **176 verses of a plea for deliverance from oppression.** The last verse states. "I am wandering like a lost sheep. Come and look for me." **Sara knows the value of being able to grieve.**

The text from John's gospel is the story of the feeding of the 5,000. **A boy steps up and gives away his lunch for the common good. All are fed - with**

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leftovers to take home. It is a text infused with hope. So, thank you Sara for two timely texts. **The faith and courage of Sara and her family are an inspiration for us all.**

Stepping forward and giving something up for the sake of the common good might just be a way of healing the world, and us. It is hopeful. As the writer John might say, "Do that and you will be surprised what God can do." **However, it will mean many difficult changes. Are we able to do it? We live in hope.** GW



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They are open and selling books online.

CONNECTIONS
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"SEASON OF MISTS AND MELLOW FRUITFULNESS..."



How privileged we are to live in a part of God's world where we experience all 4 seasons!

The colours of the trees this October are spectacular.

The abundance of corn, squash and pumpkins is amazing.

To see the harvest coming off and in - beans, corn, apples, vegetables, fruit - is awesome!

THANK YOU, GOD.

As we continue to live within the bounds of Covid and listen daily to the news of the pandemic we realize that **Oxford County is blessed.**

We wear masks and stay separated, but our hospitals are able to function.

Our children are able to attend school.

We are able to manage our lives even though we are working within new limits.

Our churches are adapting to new ways.

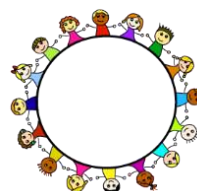
THANK YOU, GOD.

Because we are your thankful people, **show us ways to serve one another and to reach out to serve our neighbours.**

Help us to remember to share abundantly with our world-wide family.

Help us to care for the earth, our world, as you do. **Amen.** Olga McKellar

PRAYER CHAIN



Contact Prayer Chain Leader Olga McKellar for on-going prayer concerns.
o.mckellar@sympatico.ca

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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 has disbanded (note article pg 7).

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

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

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

REPORTERS FOR CONNECTIONS

Local reporters—those living in Oxford County who like to share stories, poems, photographs or artwork! Some of our most important reporters are church secretaries and former Presbytery members!

Roving reporters—those who have left Oxford County or have a heartfelt connection to Oxford.

COMING SOON -

oxfordunitedministries.ca is presently under construction - our searchable place on the internet for monthly newsletters.

St. Paul's United Church

88 Bidwell Street, Tillsonburg

Saturday Community Kitchen meals starting October 17, 2020 from 11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. ONLY

Hot meal will be provided. Served in containers to go from the parking lot at the bottom of the ramp to St. Paul's church. No seats and no washrooms available. Two entrances to parking lot off Bidwell Street.

Sunday worship services have resumed at 10:30 a.m., pre-registration is necessary. Please call the office at 519-688-0012 for more details. The building remains closed for all other purposes.

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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MOVING FORWARD

This October, **Rev Jane VanPatter** will join the ranks of retired ministers of Oxford. Here is her retirement farewell.

So long! Farewell! Auf Wiedersehen! Good-Bye! Those words remind me of a song. In the early 1980's while serving on my ordinand pastoral charge, I received my first Pension statement from the United



Church of Canada. It indicated that my retirement year was 2020. Suddenly I had an inkling of how Moses may have felt leading the Exodus and wondering as he went, "Are we there yet!?" Though the

Song of Faith of the United Church of Canada had not yet been penned, it was indeed **a song of faith in my heart that would sustain me throughout all the ups and downs, twists and turns, expectations and un-expectations and yes even a pandemic throughout 40+ years of ministry** including two summer student minister field placements. This faith journey has led me from my hometown of Oakville, Ontario to ministry in New Brunswick, on to Manitoba where I worked with an Indigenous community, to New Brunswick again, then to Saskatchewan spending one year as "the minister's wife" (lol!) followed by clergy couple team ministry in eastern Ontario followed by a move to London, Ontario for David's new ministry position while I accepted part time ministry positions first on the Harrietsville-Mossley PC and then at Fairmont UC. When our four children were older, I returned to full time ministry at

Thorndale and Zion UCs and eventually arrived at St. David's, Woodstock where I have been blessed to serve in ministry for 13.5 years. **Along the way I have enjoyed serving on both the former Presbytery and Conference Education & Students Committees.** I also took my turn chairing Oxford Presbytery and chose as my theme song for that year, "Dance with the Spirit." **Two London Conference trips led by Bill and Karen Butt are indelibly marked in my spirit.** The first trip was to Hokkaido, Japan to meet Rob and Keiko Witmer and experience the church from a whole new perspective. What a gift it was, and a humbling one at that! The second trip was to Mozambique, Africa. This one remains **one of the most profound experiences of my faith journey. Seeing sand dams being built and the difference the dams made in such a positive way, providing water for the people in the communities to grow their own vegetable, was something to behold.** The Pedra girls program teaches life skills, promotes self-esteem, and gives young girls hope for the future by encouraging them, with the help of bursaries, to further their education. This trip in particular has opened my eyes and stirred my soul in matters of social justice and has found me singing yet another song, **"My Love Colours Outside the Lines", in recent years.** Looking back to the beginning of my ministry, I laugh when I remember thinking my retirement in 2020 seemed like such a long way off and wondering if I'd make it to the finish line intact. Now I find myself wondering where the time has gone. How is it that I am there already? **As my active ministry winds down, I offer a shout out to you, my friends in faith in Oxford County. May you fare well and**

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prosper wherever you are and may you always have a song of faith in your heart wherever your ministry leads you. Looking ahead to my retirement at the end of October another song comes to mind... **"One More Step Along the World I Go..."** So long! Farewell! Auf Wiedersehen! Good-bye, for now.

In Faith & Hope, ~ Rev. Jane Van Patter

MOVING ON/MOVING BACK?

This October, **Rev Bill Mayoros** is **moving back to his roots in Sudbury.** Bill wants to stay in touch via CONNECTIONS and has **graciously**



agreed to be one of our 'roving reporters'. First, he has to get settled! Wishing Bill and Mary an organized move, travelling mercies and much

happiness in their new home. For contact information, please be in touch with the editors.

News of former Oxford Presbytery members

Congratulations!

Christina Crawford, soon to be commissioned as a **Diaconal Minister** by Antler River Watershed, has accepted a provisional call to Forest United Church.



**Connect to Spirit, to
Self, to Each other
and to Nature.**

<http://fiveoaks.on.ca>, hospitality@fiveoaks.on.ca

Thursdays with Brian and Randy Volunteer Work Day

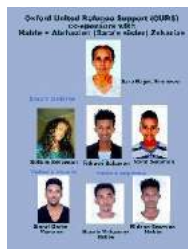
With Brian Hershey and Tom Hunt
October 21, 2020

Sunday October 18th is Thai Night!

<https://fiveoaks.secure.retreat.guru/program/sunday-night-dinner-october-18th/>

OXFORD UNITED REFUGEE SUPPORT COMMITTEE (OURS)

Refugee update Oct. 2020

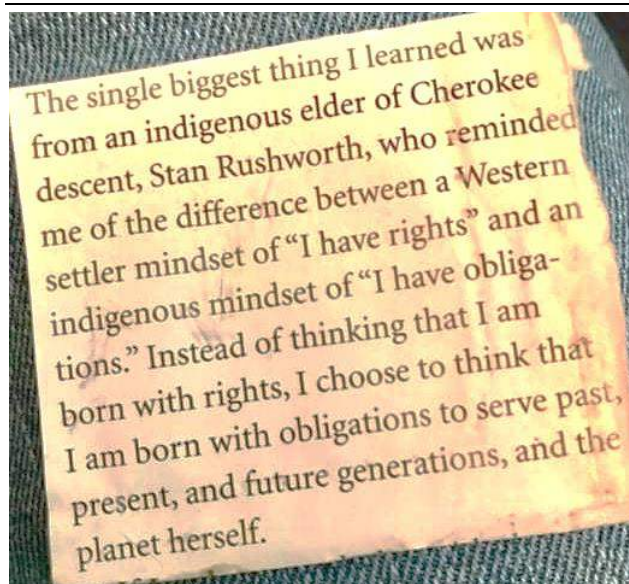


In the next two weeks all United Churches in Oxford will be getting by email an updated story of the refugee families we are sponsoring along with this new poster (see to the left) and guide.

Congratulations! As of Oct 4th, we have just \$3,810 to go to reach our goal. In June the amount was \$7,000. **We are sponsoring seven members who belong to four different families.** All the funds except for the \$3,810 have been raised. **We appreciate so much the very fine effort of the United Church members of Oxford.** GW

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



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"A STEP FORWARD" – A UCW VIRTUAL EXPERIENCE

On Sat., Oct. 3, 2020, 103 UCW members from Antler River Watershed, Western Ontario Waterways and Horseshoe Falls Regions gathered on Zoom for a program entitled, "A Step Forward".



The 1 ½ hour gathering was well worth every minute spent online.

Kathy Douglas welcomed everyone to the Zoom Gathering.

Win Czum, from Horseshoe Falls UCW,

introduced **Beulah Hayley**, President of National UCW.

Beulah's greetings were based on Matthew 21:22, "Whatever you ask for in prayer with faith, you will receive".

Ann Reiber from Western Ontario Waterways introduced **the guest speaker, Rev. Dr. Japhet Ndhlovu, UCC Program Coordinator for S. Africa and S. E. Asia.** Rev. Dr. Japhet spoke about the ongoing **UCW project, "Women for Change Zambia"**. This not-for-profit organization **works to uphold gender equity and equality.** By the end of 2019, the UCW has sent \$35,000 for girls' education and scholarships. With this money 20-30 girls from grades 10 – 12 will receive an education. **There are 500,000 children in Zambia that receive no education. Girls and young women need money, uniforms, and equipment to attend schools. Girls often suffer gender violence, pregnancy, and early marriages. The motto is, "Take a girl back to school". We can help!**

Rev. Sandra Bendall from Antler River Watershed lead us in worship. Rev. Sandra

based her worship on Luke 9:10-17, "Feeding the Five Thousand". She reminded us that during this Covid pandemic we must turn to God and pray for it to run its course. Three beautiful Hymns were sung for us to enjoy and sing along to, "Morning Has Broken", "I, the Lord of Sea and Sky" and "It Only Takes a Spark".

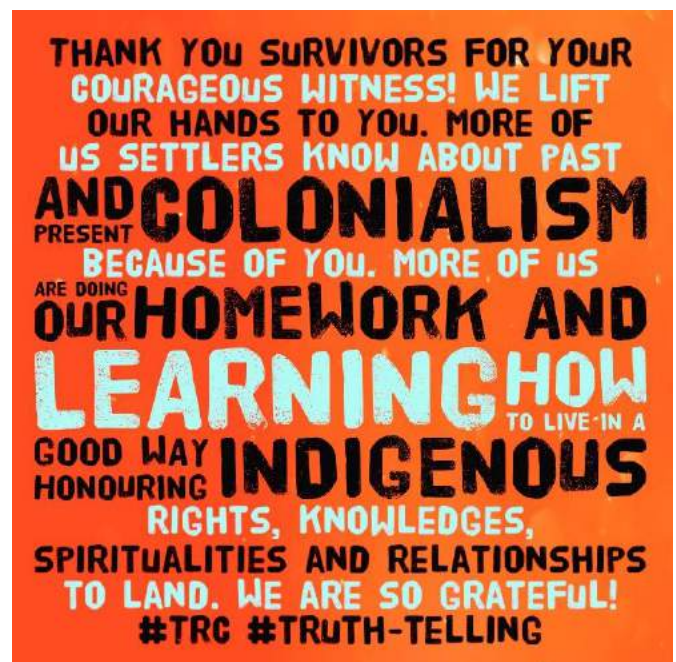
The members of each Region were given a time to introduce themselves.

A recorded version of this program will be available on the regional website but is not yet vetted and edited.

An excellent morning, Sandra Stock

London Regional Social Forum

(Sept 11-13) Videos of some issues of local and global concern. In the above video, [Eric Schmiedl](#), Bi-polar disorder at 2:2:24; [Bryan Smith](#), of OPAL Alliance at 4:20:48. The day before, At the start of this video, [Linda McQuaig](#) spoke on government and Covid-19.



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CURRIES UNITED CHURCH



The origins of a church in Curries began in **1855** with the purchase of land by the East Oxford Congregation of the **Wesleyan Methodist Church in Canada**. The church was called Zion and built east of the current building where the parking lot is. In **1861**, land was purchased to the east for a burying ground. The Zion Church was part of the Woodstock circuit and later the Oxford Circuit. In **1874**, it became part of the newly formed Oxford Centre Circuit. In **1885** land to the west was purchased for the construction of a new church. The **present church was built here in 1891**. Pews from the old church were used in the balcony of the new church. **The former church building was moved to the north and became a hall, then a school, and was eventually purchased by the municipality and converted back to a community hall.** It was demolished in **2012**. The site of the former church became a parking lot and still contained a horse shed and outhouse. A wooden porch ran along the south end of the new church allowing folks to descend from a carriage and then enter the building. In **1892** a row of spruce trees was planted along the west side of the church. Today, only two of those trees remain, positioned between the church and County Road 59 (then known as the Norwich Road). In **1906 the manse was built across the road directly west of the church.**

The completion of the Port Dover and Lake Huron Railroad in **1874** brought rail service to the community. The rail line crossed the Norwich Road at the Curry farm south of the church. Thus, **the community became known as Curries Crossing**. A station house was placed there, which still stands today. The house sits on an angle to the road as it was positioned to face the rail line. The name of the cemetery was changed from Zion to **Pleasant View Cemetery in 1899** and, according to some records, the name of the congregation was changed to Curries in **1903**. In any event, in **1936 the rail line was removed, and the name of the community was shortened to Curries.**

In **1950** the horse shed was removed although a portion of it was retained as a garage, that still stands just to the north of the church. **In 1953**, the wooden steps were removed and replaced with concrete ones. By **1955** water was installed, and in **1957**, the washrooms were added on the north end of the building.



The present church was built by Mr. Merrill of Norwich, who was a prominent builder, and is identical to the church that he built in **Bright**.

For many years, Curries was one of the largest rural congregations in the region. The **Women's Missionary Society** was organized in **1892**. In **1913**, a second group, called the **Helping Hand Club** was established. This group was very active in sending socks, sweaters, and food to soldiers **during the First World War**. After the war, they supported the upkeep of the manse and the church. In **1953** they became the **Women's Association**, and in **1962 they merged with the Women's Missionary Society and became the United Church Women.** They continued to serve the church and

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provided lunches and banquets for many church and community events.

As well, there were numerous youth groups and an active Sunday school. **The Sunday school met for an hour either before or after the main service until 1995.** At this point, the Sunday school began to operate during the church service.

In spite of having some good ministers and committed volunteers and lay people, our congregation continued to age and dwindle. **Attendance steadily declined, with fewer marriages and baptisms, and more funerals and people moving away.**

Faced with rising operating costs plus the upkeep of an aging building, we held numerous suppers and concerts to help pay the bills. **Fundraising became a permanent endeavour and we became increasingly financially dependent upon a handful of households.** In spite of this, we continued to support community outreach and **contributed generously to the Mission and Service Fund.**

By 2019, we had lost several more prominent members, attendance hovered around 15 people per Sunday, and our financial outlook was bleak. By October 2019, our minister Rev. Sarah Grady accepted another call. At this point, we had difficult decisions to make, along with our sister church, Oxford Centre United. A vote was held, and we decided to disband. **During the past year, we have moved forward with the process of disbanding and selling our building and possessions; a process made more difficult by the current pandemic that also compounds our sense of loss and isolation.**

On September 27, 2020 we celebrated our 165th Anniversary and Decommissioning Service; socially distanced in the parking lot.

Submitted by Alan Dale, Curries UC;

Photo: courtesy of Nathalie Dale, Curries UC.



<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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NOW ON FACEBOOK!

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

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PETITIONS

CLIMATE CHANGE: WHAT IT IS AND HOW IT AFFECTS US ALL

Climate change, the greatest human rights challenge of our time, affects fundamental human rights both here in Canada and across the world. The poor and poor countries will pay the greatest cost. Guest speakers Fiona Koza, the Amnesty International Business and Human Rights Campaigner and Dr. Dianne Saxe, former Environmental Commissioner of Ontario were recorded on October 1, 2020 at

<https://youtu.be/Lf1mcNYDiQ>.

You are encouraged to sign and share Amnesty's petition to ask Environment & Climate Change Minister Jonathan Wilkinson to stop delaying action on this most critical issue of our time:

<https://takeaction.amnesty.ca/page/67681>.

For more information about climate change, Dr. Saxe recommended <https://www.ipcc.ch>, her own website <https://SaxeFacts.com> as well, the Provincial report she authored is at <http://docs.assets.eco.on.ca/reports/other-publications/Reducing-My-Footprint.pdf>.

For more about Amnesty International's work on climate and human rights, visit <https://www.amnesty.ca/climate>.



Actual photo of the Holy Spirit reminding you to focus and not get distracted

A Day of Action on Long-Term Care in Oxford and Perth

Thursday, October 8, I was grateful to join the **Oxford County Health Coalition** and UNIFOR 636's Day of Action to draw attention to the Long Term Care Facilities in Oxford. I am grateful that it was a beautiful sunny fall day for a drive, and I could drive! Some (like my brother) are confined to a wheelchair in private care facilities where the care givers are truly wonderful. But shareholders' profit is more important than how the facilities are staffed. It is important to have fulltime employees at all levels of training who can ensure continuity of care, as well as adequate care of 4 hours every day for each resident. I was part of a 6-car cavalcade driving by the private long term care homes in Woodstock, Ingersoll, Tavistock and Tillsonburg with magnetic signs reading **All long-term care should be public**.

I was energized to be part of the provincial Day of Action and appreciate the efforts of Bryan Smith of [Oxford Coalition for Social Justice](#) and UNIFOR for organizing this. Read the article from [Heart FM](#).



Read the [Ontario Long Term Care Staffing Study July 2020](#) for in depth recommendations about staffing.

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ANNUAL General Council recall Meeting – Oct. 24, 2020

gathering at 11:30am Eastern

Two major proposals on the agenda:

1. the annual approval of the audited statement
2. information and proposal coming from the General Council Executive, titled, "GCE 22 - Commitment to Becoming an Anti-Racist Denomination," in response to the directions given by the special General Council 43 recall meeting in June 2020.

Anyone interested can download a copy of the Workbook and read through what the Commissioners have received. **Note: excellent resource on anti-racism and UCC's history wrt racism.**

1. Use a search engine to find a link to "United Church Commons"
2. On that link, go to "Governance"
3. Go to General Council
4. Then to "43rd General Council (2018)"
5. "GC43 Annual Meeting, 2020-10"
6. to "2020-10 GC43 Workbook.pdf"



ARWRC webpage

Facebook page

View the October 2020 newsletter in your
[browser](#)

[Rural Connect](#) has been established to support rural congregations through the use of technology.

ARWRC Regional Council Meeting

Register by ctrl + click on the above link
Prayers request for the candidates for ministry

DATES ARE

Oct. 29 – Nov. 1, 2020

AVAILABLE IN OXFORD

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

College Ave UC <https://collegeave.ca>

Dundas St. UC

www.dundasstunitedchurch.ca

Hebron UC - rsstock@execulink.com

Kintore/Brooksdale UC

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

Knox UC, Embro

<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

<https://www.stdavidswoodstock.com>

St. Paul's UC, Tillsonburg

<http://www.stpaulsunitedchurch.net>

Trinity United, Ingersoll

<https://www.tucingersoll.ca>

Westminster UC, Thamesford 10:30 am

<https://makingconnexions.com>

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Next Publication: Wednesday,

November 11, 2020

SUBMISSIONS DUE:

Noon Monday November 9, 2020

To add or remove names email

oxfconnections@execulink.com

Submissions and feedback welcome.

You may share widely.

*COMING SOON – issues to be stored at
oxfordunitedministries.ca*

Past Issues for 2019 stored:

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

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