

# CONNECTIONS

## News and Views of Oxford County United Churches

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### The Crisis Continues ...and Yet

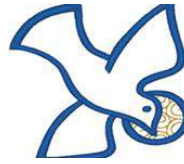
It has been, and is, a hard and difficult winter. **And yet**, written deep in each of our hearts, is God's covenant to work with us to restore and heal our relationships with each other and the earth so that all of creation is respected and loved. Every little bit that each of us does is valued and important and critical to flattening the curve.

Inside are some '**and Yet**' stories for building a better world:

- UCW explores diversity
- Innerkip UC welcomes Karen Willis
- Five Oaks confesses 'adapting to Covid'
- Eric Skillings helps build national resource for rural churches
- We celebrate Black History month
- We celebrate the life of Carmen Holbrough
- Oxford United Ministries hosts a virtual World Day of Prayer Mar 5
- Old memories inspire Pre-Easter outreach
- Items needed for Operation Sharing
- Feb 20 Fundraiser for Inn out of the Cold
- We pray for Refugees in Ethiopia
- We learn about Palestine through cooking lessons and more
- For the Love of Creation campaign mobilizes people of faith re Climate Crisis.



### FOOD FOR THE SOUL



### The Peace of Christ – Part Two – Restoring the Family

When Jesus said, "My peace I give to you, not as the world gives . . ." **he did not spell out what the world was offering.** He didn't have to. Everyone knew all too well how that **first century world was broken.** It was a world of **the acceptable and embraced at the top and the unacceptable and shunned at the bottom.** That **social curve was steep and nasty.** At the top were Jewish men and boys; at the very top were men with religious titles such as Priests and Levites. Not so important were women and girls. At the bottom were Romas, Samaritans, divorced women, people with physical or mental illnesses, thieves, and Jews who colluded with Rome, such as tax collectors.

**Jesus' peace work was to flatten the curve; to identify the hypocrisy of the perceived "righteous", to embrace the shunned and change their story.**

Jesus tells the story of a good Samaritan and the not so good Priest and Levite. When the ten people who had Leprosy were healed, **Jesus can't resist telling people that the only one who came back to give thanks was a Samaritan.** When the five times divorced Samaritan woman came to the well in Samaria, Jesus asked her to help him get water and offered her the "living water." **He then engaged her in a theological conversation as he would have done with a fellow Rabbi.** Suddenly, she had a new story and a new life. She was part of the family. When a Roman Centurion came to Jesus and asked him to heal his daughter, **Jesus obliged and said he had never seen such faith.** When tax collector Zacchaeus climbed a tree to get a better look, Jesus invited him down and

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**asked to go to his home for a meal**, a custom afforded only family or close friends. Zacchaeus was instantly transformed from hated tax collector to friend of Jesus; from outcast to member of the family.

**To use another metaphor, these people had been unfairly "framed".** Jesus took away the confining societal frames and **replaced them with the frameless love of God.** He was acting out what he had said to his disciples, **"The kingdom of God is within you."** That work was and is the peace of Christ.

May the peace of Christ be with you; and may you be the peace of Christ for others. *To be continued. . .*

Peace. Glen Wright, co-editor



### **COMINGS AND GOINGS** **AROUND OXFORD...**

#### **CONGREGATIONS SEEKING MINISTERIAL LEADERSHIP:**

*Each community of faith has a unique journey of faith as they live out God's mission. We especially hold those seeking ministerial leadership in our hearts and prayers as they discern their journey.*

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



[website.](#) [Facebook page](#)

**Summer of 2021:** programs being developed. **Job postings for staff** this week. **Registration** for returning campers opens February 17; the public on March 1.

### **ZOOM VIRTUAL GATHERING**

**Tri-Regional UCW** of Antler River Watershed, Horseshoe Falls and Western Ontario Waterways Regions



#### **"A STEP TOWARD DIVERSITY"**

**Saturday,  
February 20,  
2021**

**@ 10:00 am (link open at  
9:30 – sing along 10 min before  
10:00)**



Leadership:

Rev. Stephanie McClellan  
Rev. Sandra Bendall  
Rev. Thérèse Samuel

Join Zoom Meeting by Computer- click the Zoom link below:

<https://united-church.zoom.us/j/91399944781...>

Meeting ID: 913 9994 4781

Password: 253172

Contact [Kdouglas@united-church.ca](mailto:Kdouglas@united-church.ca)

### **PRAYER CYCLES**

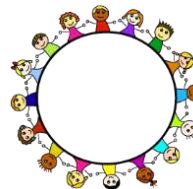
- **Oxford United Churches Dec. 2020**

<https://tinyurl.com/Oxford-Prayer-Cycle-for-UCC>

- **Antler River Watershed**

<https://www.prayercycles.ca/antlerriverwatershed>

### **PRAYER CHAIN**



Please contact Prayer Chain Leader [Olga McKellar](#) for on-going prayer concerns.

**CONNECTIONS  
has a website:**

[oxfordunitedministries.ca](http://oxfordunitedministries.ca)

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### November 29, 2020, Innerkip UC welcomed Karen Willis.



*A warm welcome to Karen from readers and editors of CONNECTIONS. We look forward to a time when we can greet her in person.*

Greetings! It is wonderful to be here in Oxford County serving Innerkip United

Church.

My name is Karen Willis and I am a Designated Lay Minister (DLM) with the United Church. I have been serving in solo ministry for almost 8 years now and Innerkip in my second pastoral charge appointment.

Prior to answering the call to ministry in 2010 (I'd been *sensing* the call for a number of years before that), I worked in Marketing and Sales management for a North American paint and coatings company. Quite a shift isn't it? As I look back on my work life, I can definitely say that I was "a square peg in a round hole" in the business world. Although I had successes in the field, I never felt like I was truly in the place I was meant to be. So, I took time for some soul searching and informal discernment before I entered the formal discernment process.

I grew up in Dundas, ON and attended Binkley United Church as a child and youth. After college, I married and moved to Burlington and then on to Millgrove where I settled in for a number of years and where I became very involved in church life and governance. It was through Millgrove United Church that I did my discernment and that community still holds a place in my heart. Prior to coming to Innerkip, I was minister at Linden Park Community United Church of the Hamilton Mountain.

In 2018, I moved to Paris with my daughter Katie, who is presently attending the University of Guelph, and our miniature schnauzer Beau.

Over the past 5 years I have developed a passion for counselling ministry and I currently have a part time counselling practice and I have recently begun working with Waterford United Church in the development of a counselling outreach ministry in that region.

I am constantly learning how to tune into the Spirit's nudging. I can say that it was once I learned to listen to the Spirit within that my journey toward living fully into who God designed me to be truly began. I hope to share and explore my faith and understanding with the people of the Oxford community.

Blessings,  
Karen Willis



***Five Oaks programs inspire connection to Spirit; to Self; to Each Other; and to Nature, especially to this sacred space.***

Current programs and possibilities are on their [webpage](#) or [hospitality@fiveoaks.on.ca](mailto:hospitality@fiveoaks.on.ca).



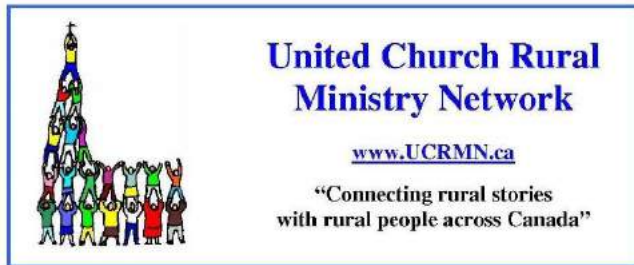
**Or listen to the [Balance](#) message in which Michael Shewburg confesses** his 'learning to adapt Five Oaks during Covid' (based on Isaiah 61:1-4 and Luke 5:1-11 with inspiration from Rob Bell and Brian D. McLaren.)

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**A big welcome to the readers and supporters of "Oxford Connections".** I am Eric Skillings – a Designated Lay Minister in South Buxton Ontario (South of Chatham). I was born and raised in Innerkip and was sponsored to ministry from **the Innerkip United Church in 1997. Yes – My mom is Ruth Skillings** – who is doing very well in Park Place in Woodstock – soon to be 93.

**I have a passion for Rural Ministry.** I served on the London Conference Rural Life Committee for over 25 years and served on the Rural Symposium Planning Team for 16 years. I am also involved with the Canadian Rural Church Network (11 denominations across Canada interested in Rural Ministry) <http://www.circle-m.ca/crcn/>, and since 2007 on the Executive of the International Rural Churches Association <https://irca.online>.

But it's not about me – **it's about what's happening with Rural Ministry across Canada.** During the summer of 2020, we wondered how we might support rural ministries as **we have had to learn new ways to be the Rural Church during the pandemic.** With help from EDGE and the United Church Foundation, **we formed the United Church Rural Ministry Network** <https://ucrmn.ca>. We started with an online presence and have added monthly ENews and bi-monthly online workshops related to Rural Ministry.

**Our monthly ENews shares many of the Rural Ministry initiatives and ventures happening across Canada, especially in the United Church of Canada.** Go to <https://ucrmn.ca> to join

our ENews mailing list. Some past stories are:

- "Rural Connect" – supporting Rural Churches through Technology (July)
- Licensed Lay Worship Leadership (July)
- "Two Rural Churches Becoming One" (August)
- **"The Invisible Infrastructure Behind Rural Communities". (Winter 2020 - #5)** – The important place faith buildings have in holding rural communities together. **Excellent!**
- **Lots of resource articles on technology for free, rural issues and reflections on Rural.**

Give it a shot, and we think **you will be pleasantly amazed with what's happening in Rural Ministry in the United Church of Canada.** Feel free to forward this email to your Rural Ministry colleagues and lay friends, so they too, can know what's up with Rural Ministry in Canada. If you realize later, this ENews is not for you - at the bottom of each eNewsletter is a link to unsubscribe, and a link to let us know how we can improve.

### WORKSHOP

#### **"Ashes and Resurrection – How are COVID Days Shaping Us for Newness"**

**February 18, 1-3 pm**

Cost \$10.00

**Leader:** Rev Dr. Catherine Smith,  
New Brunswick Rural Ministry

Register at <https://ucrmn.ca> from the Workshop Page.



### Workshops.

We have hosted several two-hour online Zoom Workshops on the themes of:

- **"Coming Together While Apart: Being Church During COVID"** led by Dr. Marvin Anderson.
- **"Grief"** led by Donna Mann.

.....(Continued on page 5)



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Both workshop summaries can be found at <https://ucrmn.ca>

Check us out <https://ucrmn.ca>.

Send your rural ministry story to [editor@UCRMN.ca](mailto:editor@UCRMN.ca) and we will share your Rural story in our next ENews.



May God bless your ministries!  
*Eric Skillings, South Buxton UC*

May 2020-**Eric preparing for Ruth's Birthday Drive-By.**

### FEBRUARY IS BLACK HISTORY MONTH

#### Resources:

- A series of blogs and short videos that can be used as **Minutes for Mission presentations** can be found on this Facebook page [here](#) (available to all)
- [Broadbent Institute](#) Important resource **Addressing Environmental Racism in Black Communities in Canada**
- For local resources page 9 [CONNECTIONS – January, 2021](#).

**"As Christians,  
we must root out fear,  
and commit to practices that  
help us to ground our actions in  
love." —  
former Moderator Jordan Cantwell**

### WANTED: FOR CONNECTIONS

**LOCAL REPORTERS** - those living in Oxford County - to share stories, poems, photographs or artwork! We deeply appreciate all our varied story writers/reporters. The rewards are immeasurable!

**ROVING REPORTERS** - those who have left Oxford County or have a heartfelt connection to Oxford.



### **Amanda's Benediction**

Sixty years ago, the US President elect was the first to invite a poet to be part of the inaugural ceremonies. The President-elect was John F, Kennedy; the poet was Robert Frost. It was Kennedy's "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country," that was remembered.

This time the high marks go to the poet. The last three lines of Amanda Gorman's poem:

"For there is always light,  
if only we're brave enough to see it.  
If only we're brave enough to be it,"  
serve as a timely benediction (bene-good, diction-word) of hope and a clue to building a better world. GW



**Damini Awoyiga**, a spoken word poet, performs for Black History Month her inspiring poem **Together We Stand** in front of the Black Cultural

Centre in Cherry Brook, N.S.

<https://www.cbc.ca/player/play/1850248771603>

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### CONDOLENCES

#### Rev Carmen Holbrough (1938-2021)



So many of us have stories about Carmen, this fine man of faith, **who always approached you with a smile, and a hand outstretched in**

**friendship.** Here is one of my stories.

Carmen was London Conference President the year we built and dedicated White Oaks United Church in London. There is a liturgy for the opening and dedication of new churches. The Conference President knocks on the door of the sanctuary. He is welcomed in by the minister and the service of dedication begins. I had not told the congregation what was going to happen. Carmen's knock was deliberate and loud causing the congregation to wonder what on earth was happening. I went to the door and **there was Carmen, radiant, grinning from ear to ear. His knock reminded us that this was a time to celebrate!** Carmen went on to let us know how proud the Conference was that a new congregation had been established and a church had been built. That day, for the congregation and for me, was one of the highlights of ministry. We got the distinct impression that it was one of the highlights of Carmen's year as President as well.

What a special time of celebration and sharing it was for all of us. *Glen Wright*

Carmen's [obituary is here](#). We keep Noreen and family in our hearts and prayers.



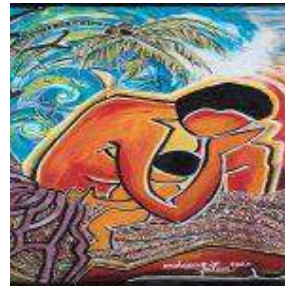
**To order books** call 1-888-668-0871, email [sales@grandriverbooks.com](mailto:sales@grandriverbooks.com) **Order books online** [here](#). Mail delivery \$5.00.

### WORLD DAY OF PRAYER -

Informed Prayer and Prayerful Action.

**Friday, March 5, 2021 at 2:00 pm**

(link will open at 1:30 for chatting)



This year you are invited to **gather virtually (with other folk from Oxford)** to view the excellent video prepared by the Women's

Interchurch Council of Canada with the host country Vanuatu - a group of islands in the south Pacific east of Australia.

Rev Doug Peck of Kintore-Brooksdale United Churches invites us to a 'scheduled meeting of World Day of Prayer - Oxford United Ministries. zoom service.

Time:

Mar 5, 2021 2:00 PM Eastern Time  
(Canada)

#### Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84514398422?pwd=ZUpMcmlhLWXYOY0pnSURHdks5cTkwdz09>

Meeting ID: 845 1439 8422

Passcode: Oxford

**If you have trouble on Friday, March 5, email [rev.douglas.peck@gmail.com](mailto:rev.douglas.peck@gmail.com).**

**Donations** can be made on [the website](#) of the Women's Interchurch Council of Canada and their WDP Grant program. Or by text (647) 953-5557. Or by cheque

**Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada**, 47 Queen's Park Crescent East, Toronto, ON M5S 2C3

Income tax receipts issued for donations over \$20.00.

**Resources:** music, video on Vanuatu, large printed service etc. are available here

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<https://tinyurl.com/WDP-2021> or here  
[resources](#)

### WHAT HAS COVID TAUGHT ME LATELY?



Under Lockdown these days I have had time to learn **the joys of reminiscing. looking back over eighty years.** I begin to see patterns that emerge from the generations, from the routines of life, the physical and mental quirks passed from fathers to daughters, from mothers to sons. Even events in the church and community pop up new as life moves along.

For example, **back in 1948** when I was a recent immigrant to Canada and a recently confirmed member of the United Church, on fire with new faith and anxious to serve God both in my community and in my world, I joined the YPU (Young People's Union) in my local congregation. There were a dozen members all determined to make a difference. But how?

**One of the four United Churches in Bermuda, all part of the Maritime Presbytery of the UCC, had lost its roof in a hurricane.** It was a small poor congregation like ours. The roof would cost \$400.00 to repair. So, **12 young people pledged to earn \$100.00 between us, through Lent up to Mother's Day,** so that at least the Bermuda Church would have 1/4 of their new roof.

**Times were not great in Oxford County.** \$25 a week was the average working man's wage. Most of us were farm kids who had regular daily chores to contribute at home plus schoolwork and church activities of choir practice, Sunday School and Worship. Some had music lessons or team sports which took more of their time. **But we were determined. We set a goal of adding at least 50 cents each per week to our project - \$6 a week minimum.**

We could earn 3 cents per quart picking strawberries for a farmer in the area who had a fruit stand. Several busy women would pay 50 cents an hour for childcare occasionally. Another farmer needed a field of beets hand hoed and thinned and would pay 50 cents a row. Another family needed rubbish carted to the dump. **No job was paid more than 50 cents an hour but with persistence we each made our weekly 50 cents.** We prayed hard and we worked hard. **We had help:** the Sunday School decided to give their Birthday money, (1 cent for each year from everyone who had a birthday) to our project; the Ladies Group gave the proceeds from a bake sale after Church one Sunday. So, **on Mother's Day Sunday, when all our pennies were added up, thanks to God and to everyone who had worked so hard, we had \$157.40!** Alleluia! Off went the money and back came a fervent thank you from Bermuda.

**Now we are in another time of difficulty because of Covid.** Our congregations are wondering how to earn funds to continue to serve our community when we are unable to use the events we have been used to organizing. **I was wondering, for example, how we might help Operation Sharing from now until Easter.** The need is great, and our means are not. Reminiscing has given me an idea.



We can donate 25 cents every time we shop in Woodstock or Ingersoll at Shopper's Drug Mart or grocery stores Foodland, Sobey's and Food Basics. That money goes directly to distribute Food Cards for non taxable items. Perhaps you are faithful about giving your quarters; perhaps you have never put a quarter in



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for the Foodbank of Operation Sharing at the cash. These days as I only go to the drug store and to the grocery store, I could put in \$1.25 for the cause each week. There are more than 100 people in St. David's UC and 3 United Churches in the City. If we all prayed hard and were faithful, together we could give over \$300 a week. In 10 weeks, that would be \$3000 which is more than most money-making events garner.

Can you make this your preEaster resolution? **"I will faithfully give \$1.25 to Operation Sharing by remembering to give 25 cents every time I go into one of these businesses."** *Olga Mckellar*



Hotlinks

are:

[Website](#)  
[Facebook Page](#)

**Food for Friends** has a cupboard for taxable items to help individuals stretch their monthly income.

During the Pandemic it has become increasingly more difficult to keep our cupboard supplied.

### **THE FOLLOWING ITEMS ARE NEEDED:**

Deodorant, shower gel/body wash  
toilet tissue, shampoo/conditioner  
shaving cream razors, dish soap  
toothbrushes/toothpaste, Kleenex  
tissue tampons/sanitary pads, laundry  
soap all purpose cleaner

**DONATIONS** Bring to the Operation Sharing Office, College Avenue UC, 22 Wilson Street, Woodstock. Please use door off Peel Street

Monday, Wednesday And Friday  
Mornings 9-12 Noon.

If you have any questions, please call  
Bonnie at 519-539-3361.

**Thank you for your support.**

### **Woodstock: Bullwinkle's Eatery and Hospitality Training Centre**

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

### **Oxford County:**

#### **Food for Friends**

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

**Two ways to donate:** webpage [here](#) or mail Treasurer of Operation Sharing, P.O. Box 20081, Woodstock, Ontario, N4S 8X8.

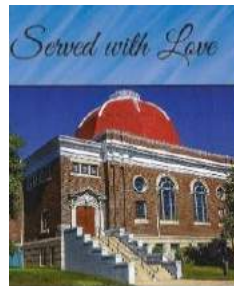
A homeless shelter, serving all of Oxford County at Old St. Paul's Anglican Church in Woodstock. Free of charge for those 16 and up



### **FUNDRAISER for the Inn (hotlink)**

Coldest Night of the Year (CNOY). It's cold out there. The Coldest Night of the Year is a covid-safe, family-friendly walk to raise money for charities serving people experiencing homelessness, hurt, and hunger. Walk with us (virtually) on February 20, 2021 – there's a place for everyone!

### **St. Paul's United Church**



88 Bidwell Street,  
Tillsonburg

**Saturday Community Kitchen meals continue from 11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.**

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.



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### OXFORD UNITED REFUGEE SUPPORT COMMITTEE (OURS)

**Good News!** We are grateful to the United Churches of Oxford and others for your support of our work. Our treasurer's report shows that we **still need to raise \$960** to meet our goal of \$8,300. When



this has been realized it will go into a trust fund for Bisrat Berhe Yemane (to left), a young man living as a refugee in Khartoum, Sudan.

Cheques should be made out to St David's United Church **with Refugee sponsorship in the memo line.** Send to:

St. David's United Church Treasurer,  
190 Springbank Ave N  
Woodstock, N4S7R1

Because Habte and Abrhazion Zecharias (London), are co-sponsors with us the amount of money needed is much less.

**Trust funds are already in place** for Sara Hago Temnewu (to left) and her 3 children and 2 nephews (see below). **Living in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia,**



**however, these 6 Eritrean refugees are in grave danger from Eritrean forces who cross into Ethiopia to capture Eritrean citizens living as refugees to imprison them back in Eritrea.** Their risk of capture is high. We pray with hope that there is some movement on their file with the Ministry of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). Their sponsorship application made in November 6 2019, has been critically slowed because of Covid.



Submitted by [Marj Martin](#), Chairperson OURS

[Committee members](#) (January 2021 CONNECTIONS page 5)

### Join us for A Taste of Palestine

**TASTE FOOD - HEAR STORIES - MAKE CHANGE**

**A three-part event: February 16 + February 23, Live Zoom with Fatma and Claire from Palestine March 9 Our action!**

Cooking Demo (follow along & enjoy the flavours)

\*February 16, 9:30-11am EST Fatma Nawaja

\*February 23, 9:30-11am EST Claire Anastasis

\*March 9, at 9:30-11am to learn about the work of

United Network for Justice and Peace in Palestine Israel (UNJPPI)

& how you can help create justice in Palestine

See [Poster](#) for further details.

Follow this link to [Register](#)

**Bernie memes are fun...** but this will always be the best Bernie Sanders sitting picture.

**Protesting school segregation in 1963.**



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### NEEDED!

### STORY TELLERS OR POETS



**Creation is all inclusive: you, me, star fishes, trees, all the biodiversity of our living earth.**

We are interconnected to the living earth both as individuals and as communities. As we remember our roots, the land and the water around us, we write and share it. **CONNECTIONS will publish stories or poems that help us care for creation.**



Modelled on the former (2017-2020) Lenten campaign Give it up for the Earth! run by **Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ)**, **For the Love of Creation** campaign begins on **February 17, 2021** (Ash Wednesday) and will run until **October 4, 2021** (the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi and the end of the Season of Creation). It will also include a public witness event on **April 22, Earth Day**.

Working on this together, we can make a difference to the climate crisis.

1. [Register as an organizer For the Love of Creation's faith-in-action campaign](#), to mobilize people of faith across Canada.(or email editors!)
2. **Reduce your GHG emissions** using [9 ideas from CPJ](#) as well as [Greening Sacred Spaces](#) and the [Carbon Footprint](#) calculator.
3. CPJ has set up an online action in partnership with the CRC's Centre for Public Dialogue. **Urge your MP to support increased climate ambition and clean energy policies!** As an expression of love for God's awesome creation, tell your MP that you, as a person of faith, want

meaningful climate action – consistent with the principles of the Paris Agreement – to reduce GHG emissions and address climate change.



[ARWRC webpage](#)

[Facebook page](#)

### Worship Services in Oxford

Because of Covid, streaming services only are available at present. Check the following re specifics:

[College Ave UC](#)

[Dundas St. UC](#)

[Hebron UC](#) - [rsstock@execulink.com](mailto:rsstock@execulink.com)

[Kintore/Brooksdale UC](#)

[Knox UC, Embro](#)

[Mt Elgin UC](#)

[Norwich UC:](#)

[Peace UC, Plattsville](#) Also on Rogers TV channel 20

[St. David's UC, Woodstock](#)

[St. Paul's UC, Tillsonburg](#)

[Trinity United, Ingersoll](#)

[Westminster UC, Thamesford](#)

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**Next Publication: Wednesday,**

March 10, 2021

**SUBMISSIONS DUE:**

Noon Friday March 5, 2021

**CO-EDITORS:**

Marg Murray and Glen Wright

**To add or remove names, email**

[oxfconnections@execulink.com](mailto:oxfconnections@execulink.com)

Submissions and feedback welcome.

You may share widely.

**ALL ISSUES ARE NOW stored online**

[oxfordunitedministries.ca](http://oxfordunitedministries.ca)

**Past Issues for 2019 also stored:**

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

**Past Issues for 2020 also stored:**

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