

# CONNECTIONS

## News and Views of Oxford County United Churches

Vol 3 Issue 3

March 10, 2021

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### HOLY WEEK – EASTER EDITION



#### Jerusalem – East 4 (i)

Here too we come to crux. Not so fine  
to focus comfortable mind on these last hours.  
Triumphal Entry's joy *could* still be ours –  
where wakened stones proclaim and branches sign  
the welcomes of Christ's coronation shouts  
onto fair Jerusalem's bright air.  
But shouts awoke the worm, and burrowing doubts  
sour the fruit of joy. Enemies take care  
to follow and accuse. From donkey colt  
to Pilate, comes a slide to the abyss  
of others. So Christ comforts lost revolt  
born dead inside a friend's last ghostly kiss  
as gardens weep for Pilate, and calls His fate  
to take Him now, till crowned at Heaven's gate.

#### Crucifixion – East 3 (i)

It's told in bits: four scenes out of order  
as if a tale too manifestly sad  
for visiting straight out. See in the border  
of Christ's most plundered hour the dozing heads  
of his best friends, to whom he'd offered all.  
In front of him the thorns; in angel's cup  
Betrayal's bleeding yet to come, a call  
through Solitude's resplendent dark. Look up  
to where full darkness took him. Faithfuller friends  
crowd close dismayed, helplessly still yearning  
for God to disappear the cross. But ends  
were drawing tight, the dull pace of our learning  
left Him no other choice. So we're led deep:  
into Gethsemane's interrupted sleep.



*Sonnets by Robyn Butt of the stained-glass windows in  
First St Andrews UC, London. Photo credits, Jim Silcox*

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### Spring isn't here – yet blossoms are!

This Special Holy Week – Easter Edition features 3 sonnets by Robyn Marie Butt on our Front and Back Covers. These sonnets were inspired from the stained-glass windows at First St Andrew's United Church in London and are part of a book The Window Sonnets, soon to be published. We are delighted to share this rich resource for meditation.

Just as a **cactus blossoms**, ideas blossom to secure help during challenging times. As **snow drops blossom**, Doug Hall asserts that **Christian theology can blossom after Christendom**. As Jesus non-violently challenges empire in a peace parade, we are inspired. All of creation needs both nurturing and a sure and solid foundation. Dig deep and journey with us in this month's stories as we celebrate our common creation from stardust.

This month we've launched a new column, **FOR CHILDREN of all ages (FCoaa)**, featuring stories and drawings of other creatures on Mother Earth: Snapping Turtles are paired with an activity, **'Where is Tessa Turtle?'**. Find all 6.

*Marg Murray co-editor*



*photo credit Glen Wright*



### FOOD FOR THE SOUL

#### The Peace of Christ – Part Three.

**We could call it a peace parade.** We all know the story; **Jesus on a donkey**, surrounded by cheering, palm waving followers heading toward Jerusalem.

**On another road, from the opposite direction**, according to Jesus scholars Crossan and Borg, there was **another parade**; a grand display of Roman infantry and cavalry, **a deliberate show of strength and power by the Empire**, in case there was any doubt about who was in charge.

Jesus was equally as intentional. The book of Zechariah states, "The Messiah will ride into Jerusalem on a colt. The war chariots will be driven from Israel and the soldiers from Jerusalem, (9:9-10).

When Jerusalem came in sight, **Jesus wept and said, "If you only knew the way of peace"**. (Luke 19:44) Jerusalem had been taken over by Pax Romana. Rome's version of peace was to conquer and hold. **In the conquest of Palestine in 63 BCE, they moved into Jerusalem, took 2000 prisoners, then crucified them.** They then put in place a governing council and priests who were compliant with the purposes of Rome. **The temple became the center of government and the headquarters of taxation.** Wealthy landowners confiscated peasant farms and moved into Jerusalem as part of a wealthy aristocracy. When Jesus arrived in Jerusalem and proceeded to overturn the money changing tables in the temple, **he was not just protesting the fact that forgiveness had to be paid for, but the temple had become an instrument of Rome's power and control.**

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Jesus knew well that the consequence of challenging Caesar was death by crucifixion. So, on that fateful Friday, to all who were present, **it appeared that the Empire had won. It took just over 36 hours before the news began to spread that it had not. Despair became hope; tears of deep sadness became tears of great joy!**

We are familiar with Robert Frost's "Two roads diverged in a wood, and I, **I took the one less travelled by. And that has made all the difference**". The same could be said of parades.

Peace. Glen Wright. Co-editor



### WHERE IS TESSA TURTLE? Find all 6!



### 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.



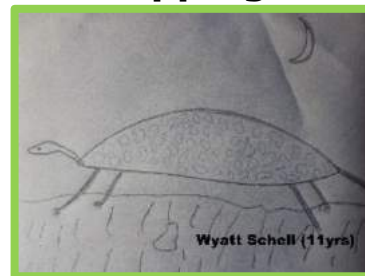
Check [website](#) for updates to status re registration etc.

[Facebook page](#)



### FOR CHILDREN of all ages (FCoaa)

#### The Snapping Turtle



Did you know that. . .

the snapping turtle has been here for **90 million years**; it spends winters in the mud at the bottom of ponds or lakes and **can hold its breath for about 6 months**; the older the mom turtles get, the more eggs she lays; she may live to be a hundred and lay a hundred eggs.

**Whether they hatch into girl turtles or boy turtles depends on the temperature of the eggs.** Girl turtles come from the warmer eggs.

**Isn't that awesome? (ITA)**

#### Next month- The Honey Bee.

Draw a picture of a honey bee, name it and send it to us for next month.



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



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### ZOOM VIRTUAL GATHERING



#### Tri-Regional UCW of

Antler River Watershed,  
Horseshoe Falls and Western  
Ontario Waterways Regions

#### "A STEP TOWARD DIVERSITY"

The UCW gathering last Saturday February 20 was excellent and well attended. The theme was 'A Step Towards Diversity'. **One particularly interesting speaker was**

**Rev. Stephanie McClellan who was diagnosed as a teenager with rheumatoid arthritis.**

She described her faith journey and her nation-wide

ministry with persons with disabilities. **We**

**must first of all and above all appreciate the**

**gifts and individuality of persons with disabilities.** She instanced a village where every home had a ramp even though only **one person in the village was wheel-chair-bound and needed the ramp.**

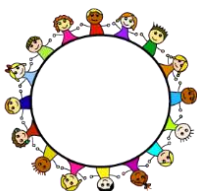
*Report of Laurel Kenny (UCW of St. Andrew's UC London) to Antler River Watershed Region's Social and Ecological Justice Meeting, February 24, 2021*



### 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.

### A Few Thoughts Around Spring Cleaning

Am I alone in tiring of the unsolicited calls from strangers wanting to clean my ducts? At least twice a week I am called away from some chore or activity to answer yet another such request. **As the spring light strengthens, no doubt more dust appears, but how much priority ought I to give it?**

Cleanliness is next to Godliness, I am told; spring cleaning is necessary. But, in these covid times for the second spring, I have some other priorities: **remembering that we are all made of stardust and very valuable, remembering that wiping dirt off**

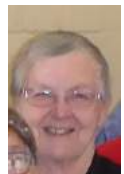


**little faces is never as important as is putting smiles on them, finding time to dance and laugh and giggle with friends, even on the phone, is life giving and life getting, building relationships is better than wiping up dirt.** Dusting and sweeping, even using vacuum cleaners, are lifelong chores, whether you are rich or poor. **But do not spend all your energy on keeping things spick and span. Whenever you do you lose the face of a loved one and you miss the face of God.**

I admit we need to keep a balance to stay healthy and to stay close to God. God will not judge us only by our tidiness or our housekeeping. **God will judge us by our Love;** concern for dust should never overshadow our concern for others.

**Remember it is possible for us to see God's face in every person we meet, live with, or work with.** Even a covid lockdown, **even a covid year can be blessed; life can be a delight instead of a struggle.**

*Olga McKellar*



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### WANTED: FOR CONNECTIONS

**For April, we need your help. Draw and name a Honey Bee.** Send them to [oxfconnections@execulink.com](mailto:oxfconnections@execulink.com) by Friday, April 9. All that are submitted will be published.

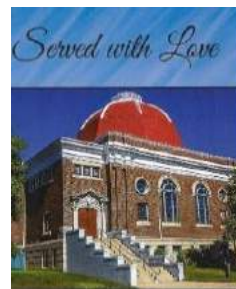
**LOCAL REPORTERS** - those living in Oxford County - to share stories, poems, photographs or artwork! We deeply appreciate all our varied story writers/reporters. The rewards are immeasurable!

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

### **Black History- An Ingersoll Story**

Most people will know where the Dollarama is in Ingersoll. **Only a few people will know that it was once holy ground.** Or at least it was the site of a Methodist church that was **one of the destinations of the Underground Railway.** It was that church that hid escaped slaves in the attic until they could find a more permanent home.

Hear the whole story from [this link](#) from the Oxford County Library. I know March is not Black History month, but the story came to us in February and after all should we not be celebrating Black History in the other eleven months? GW



#### 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.

**Please note our email address is:  
[oxfconnections@execulink.com](mailto:oxfconnections@execulink.com)**

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*See also the following story  
of Norwich United Church.*

**Check out their [webpage](#) for current  
programs and possibilities!**

Once again, Five Oaks has opened their doors to contribute to Canada's food security. The first group of 48 farmers to quarantine is set to land in the first days of April. **They need our help.**

Preparation for the guests includes staying in communication with farm managers, scheduling arrivals, making modifications and updates to many of the spaces on the property, and collecting items needed to host the guests. **Five Oaks is calling on the community for donations of items such as:**

- Mini fridges or apartment sized fridges
- Bookshelves
- Small dressers
- Small area rugs or carpet runners
- Warm sweaters and coats
- Spanish language items like novels, magazines, crosswords
- Coffee makers
- Kettles
- Games, Cards, Puzzles
- Art supplies

Those able to donate can contact Five Oaks at 519-442-3212 or [hospitality@fiveoaks.on.ca](mailto:hospitality@fiveoaks.on.ca) to arrange a time for drop-off or pick-up.

**Five Oaks** is a not-for-profit Interfaith/Intercultural spiritual centre, originally founded in 1952 as a United Church training facility **offering its own** retreats, programs, and summer camps, and **provides a sacred natural setting for facility rentals** by groups and personal retreats, with cozy rooms, meals from an on-site chef and 117 acres of forest and trails on Grand River.



### **An Idea that Blossomed in a Pandemic!**

*Norwich United Church (NUC)*

Early in July, **on an impulse, I sent a note to Five Oaks asking if they might have some resources or suggestions for our Shepherding Elders at NUC.** Not only were we without the services of a minister, the Covid-19 restrictions were making it much more difficult to maintain contact with the people of our congregation. **We needed some new strategies and some compassionate support to be more effective in offering pastoral care.**

Fortunately, despite the usual summer holiday disruptions, Judy Steers, the Program Animator at Five Oaks set up a phone chat to discuss ideas. **She immediately recognized our need to keep connected and "fed" during a challenging time.** Following that first conversation she met with her colleague, **Karen Eade** and the two of them started brain-storming ideas for **offering a new program that would be tailored to our requests yet might have broader implications for other groups in similar situations.** Early in the fall, the three of us met on a Zoom call. Karen and Judy had the broad outlines of a series of workshops and were **in the process of applying to Edge for a grant to assist in this development.**

As we were not comfortable with meeting in person, **Karen and Judy concentrated their attention upon making a series of on-line workshops that would be designed to foster a sense of community amongst the team and give us a new model for considering how to reach out and offer effective pastoral care.** Eventually we had a total of 12 people with internet connection and a desire to be a part of this initiative. We met over three Monday evenings in late January and early February. The



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workshops were well-designed to encourage people to talk and to share freely with no sense of judgment. The strategies were presented with good visuals and discussion and one of the facilitators kept notes as we conversed.



**These notes were sent out to all participants following the workshop.** We were encouraged to share how each one of us approaches the task differently, but appreciated how we used our unique talents and the technology that was available. **We came away with a fresh sense of how we could connect more effectively and why we do the things we do. We also recognized one another as part of the same team and realized how important it is to support one another in this work.** Since our final session on February 8, we've had an additional Zoom meeting with only the local participants to follow up on our discussions and also review the lists of people we serve.

Karen Eade and Judy Steers have generously offered to host a follow-up Zoom meeting shortly after Easter to check in on us, offer suggestions and any further resources that might be useful.

**We felt valued, supported and armed with a new sense of camaraderie through this experience.** Indeed, it feels like this was a positive result of all the Covid-19 restrictions! **We were proud to be the trial group for this new program "In A Strange Land" now being offered to others through Five Oaks. We heartily recommend it based upon our experiences with Judy and Karen.**

*By Karen McSpadden, Norwich United Church*



**FOR THE LOVE  
OF CREATION**

**For the Love of Creation campaign** runs until **October 4, 2021** (the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi and the end of the Season of Creation).

**A campaign to restore our earth – not alone but together with others.**

[Register as an organizer For the Love of Creation's faith-in-action campaign](#), to mobilize people of faith across Canada.

There will be a **public witness event on April 22, Earth Day**. Many events are planned. Learn about one of them:

<https://www.earthday.org/earth-day-2021/>

For ideas about how to reduce your Green House Gas (GHG) emissions check out: [9 ideas](#) from Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ) as well as [Greening Sacred Spaces](#) and the [Carbon Footprint](#) calculator.

CPJ has set up an online action in partnership with the Christian Reform Church's (CRC) Centre for Public Dialogue. Yes. It is important to **write 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.



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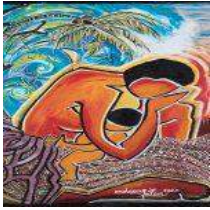
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### Oxford Gathered for the World Day of Prayer (WDP)



#### 2021-Vanuatu

It was fun and meaningful  
- **an unforgettable Zoom  
gathering for an  
excellent WDP service!**

47 people gathered from across Oxford (Harrington, Kintore, Brooksdale, Huntingford, Embro, Innerkip, Hickson, Hebron, Etonia, Princeton, Norwich, Burgessville, Woodstock, Curries, Oxford Centre, Eastwood, Ingersoll, and Tillsonburg) and Stratford to celebrate with the writer country Vanuatu and our brothers and sisters across the world. **At least 17 congregations (United, Anglican, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, Baptist and others) were represented.**

We chatted about Vanuatu's education system, motto 'In God', difficulties for women and vulnerability of islands in the ocean. We also sought local prayer requests. **During the service, we even had Bible Study (Matthew 7:24-27, build your house on rock not sand) with breakout groups!** Special recognition to Rev. Doug Peck and Kintore and Brooksdale United Churches for graciously hosting us and to Doug's daughters Adele (9 yrs.) and Naomi (6 yrs.) who provided tutoring for the breakout groups! Major Shirley King of Salvation Army, Toronto in her devotional message encouraged us **to build our lives on the foundation of love as shown by Jesus and to dig deep to have a firm foundation.**

Thank you to all who attended and helped to spread the word.

**A glimpse of the joy shared in this service is evident in these screenshots** of the 37 participants remaining after the virtual service was completed.

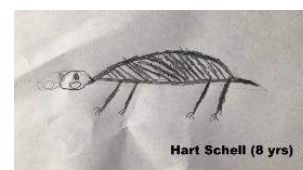
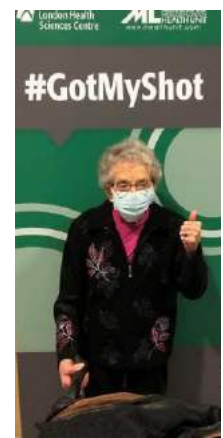


For those of you who missed this opportunity, the video is still available <https://wicc.org/>.

**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 payable to WICC, 47 Queen's Park Crescent East, Toronto, ON M5S 2C3 MM

### #TrendingSocialMediaVaxStar Ruth Butt!

Once again, and even in retirement, **Ruth inspires us!** A few weeks ago, she confessed that she didn't just want to 'walk the halls' of her Retirement Home in London, she wanted to see the outside world. **Today, she rides her stationary bike** which sits at the foot of her bed and **reports on birds, geese and humans** (etc).





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Hotlinks are:

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

### **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.

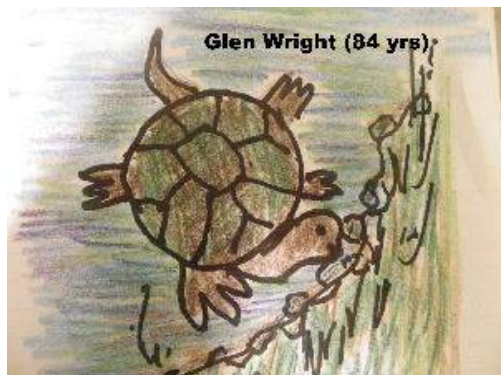
Paul's Anglican Church

in Woodstock. Free of charge for those 16 and up.

## **CONGRATULATIONS!**

### **Coldest Night of the Year**

**Fundraiser** in Woodstock Has Raised Over \$77,000 for the INN



## **OXFORD UNITED REFUGEE SUPPORT COMMITTEE (OURS)**

### **Our Refugee Families – an update**

Thank you once again for your ongoing support for Bisrat in Khartoum, Sudan



and for Mussie, Kidane, and Sara, her daughter, Selam and her sons Fithawi and Naod in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

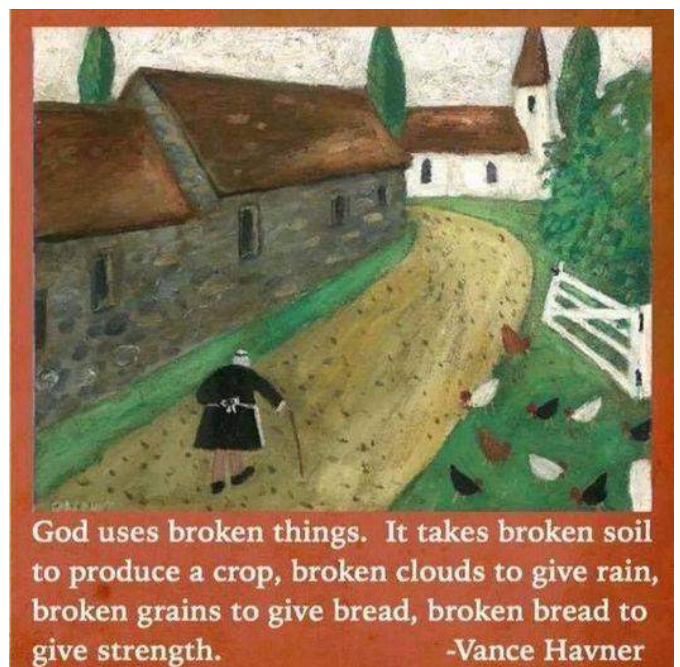


**We had not heard of the progress of the application we submitted November 5,**

**2019 for Sara and her**

**family, so we enquired. We were told that the forms had been misplaced and we were required to reapply. After some letter writing, the ministry has agreed to predate the new forms back to Feb. 4, 2020!**

Continue to keep these folks in your thoughts and prayers. **They are part of our extended family of faith.** GW



God uses broken things. It takes broken soil to produce a crop, broken clouds to give rain, broken grains to give bread, broken bread to give strength.  
-Vance Havner

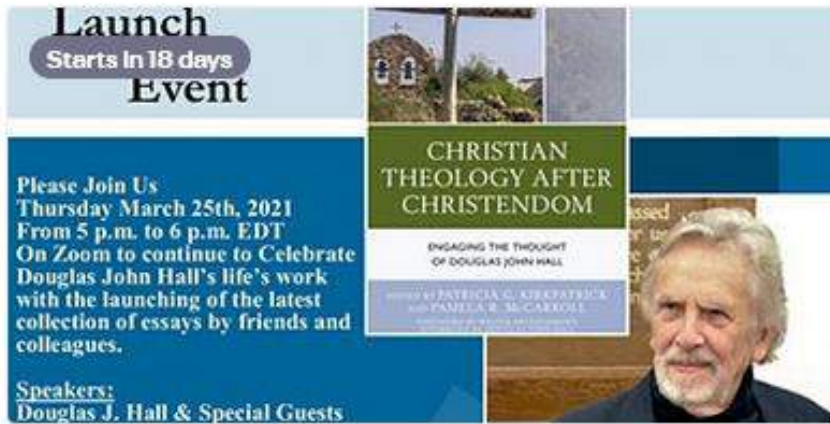
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**Launch**  
Starts In 18 days  
**Event**

Please Join Us  
Thursday March 25th, 2021  
From 5 p.m. to 6 p.m. EDT  
On Zoom to continue to Celebrate  
Douglas John Hall's life's work  
with the launching of the latest  
collection of essays by friends and  
colleagues.

**Speakers:**  
Douglas J. Hall & Special Guests

**CHRISTIAN  
THEOLOGY AFTER  
CHRISTENDOM**  
ENGAGING THE THOUGHT  
OF DOUGLAS JOHN HALL  
EDITED BY PATRICIA G. ALLEN, PATRICK  
AND PAMELA R. M. GARDNER  
Published by Eerdmans

### Book Launch - Christian Theology After Christendom

Thu, Mar 25, 2021 5:00 PM EDT

Free order #1638601567 placed  
on Today at 5:41 PM

[Go to online event page](#)

I highly recommend this book launch. Doug Hall, a native of Oxford, has been a family friend and mentor since I graduated high school. My husband, Dave Schell, and I attended the presentation of these papers at the Colloquium in November 2019. It helps to know where we've come from as we discern the way forward. **'Meditating on and inspired by the groundbreaking work of contextual theologian Douglas John Hall, this book traces fresh lines on the rutted ground of theological discourse.'** (Nicholas Athanasiadis). There is hope! Sign up – It is free!

#### Attend Event

You are invited to the following event:

### BOOK LAUNCH - CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY AFTER CHRISTENDOM

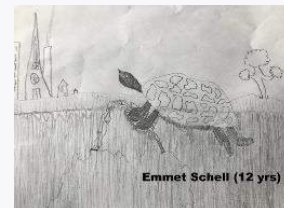
To Celebrate Douglas John Hall's life's work with the launching of the latest collection of essays by friends and colleagues.

Share this event on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

We hope you can make it!

Cheers,

McGill's School of Religious Studies and Emmanuel College at  
Victoria University in the University of Toronto



### STORY TELLERS OR POETS

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

**CONNECTIONS will publish stories or  
poems that help us care for creation.**



[ARWRC webpage](#)

[Facebook page](#)

Their most [recent newsletter March 3 2021](#)

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### Truth and Reconciliation (TRC)

Canada's TRC issued Calls to Action to the church. Reconciliation means **learning about the history of our land beyond the headlines in our media**. Both of the following online resources are excellent learning opportunities.

Check out their websites and register for the online learnings for those of interest:

1. **Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre is convening a monthly series of online conversations called 'Introduction to indigenous lands and issues in Canada'**

The schedule, topics and speakers are noted [here](#) including Former Moderator Stan McKay.

Remaining topics include background on Caledonia issue, indigenous child welfare, indigenous people and resource development - traditional lands and environment protection.

2. [Reconciling Ways of Knowing](#) brings together **Indigenous knowledge and western science for the benefit of our shared natural world**. These last 2 dialogues envision a new way of relating to each other and the land.  
Dialogue 7: **Connecting Spiritually with the Land and Each Other**  
Dialogue 8: **Across Ways of Knowing & Relating to Land.** MM

The Antler River Watershed Social and Ecological Justice Network website.

<https://arwsej.ca>



### WASTE- What? Why? Where?

When I no longer had use of something, I used to throw it out. **Now I appreciate that there is NO OUT.**

When I bought a new T-shirt, I used to **give the old one away**. Now I realize that it **often ends up in the dump** – not here in Oxford but on the other side of the world.

When I took waste to the landfill, I didn't realize that it **was filling up too quickly**. Now I realize that **disposing of waste in landfills is an out-of-date solution to an age-old problem**.

**Waste is as much a part of God's creation as you or me.**

**Mother Earth is my friend.**

**Is Mother Earth your friend?**

**How can we help heal Mother Earth?** MM



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### Memorial East (1)

If misbehaving nations overrun  
we would push back. And die. To such lost friends  
here grieving lifts a complex sheet of sun:  
in it stand Hebrew heroes, those God sends  
when all seems hopeless. To promised home,  
Joshua's trumpet, battle plans; a stone  
from David's slingshot and he sings  
from hopelessness the poetry of kings.  
St. Paul and Timotheus, through Rome's fist  
slide love's Resistance, fierce and shining list  
of Christ's far stronger passions. Into all  
steps the risen ascended Lord, raised tall  
in sacrificial scarlet. Death-scars healed,  
to Hallelujah Chorus He offers Death Repealed.

*Sonnet by Robyn Butt of the stained-glass windows in  
First St Andrews UC, London. Photo credit, Jim Silcox*

## 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)

**Innerkip UC**

[https://youtube.com/playlist?list=P\\_LByPBZsnc\\_JI4bIMphIVVbRuBZX86mcoj](https://youtube.com/playlist?list=P_LByPBZsnc_JI4bIMphIVVbRuBZX86mcoj)

[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](#)

**Willis UC, Drumbo** Sunday services by  
conference call. [drumbocharge@hotmail.com](mailto:drumbocharge@hotmail.com)



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**Next Publication:** Wednesday,  
April 14, 2021

**SUBMISSIONS DUE:**

Noon Friday April 9, 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.