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Send submissions, suggestions, ads and letters to the editor to: [bridge@londonconference.ca](mailto:bridge@londonconference.ca)

All material is subject to approval by the editor of *The Bridge*.

## Have a Great Day!

***Good Morning! This is God.  
 I will be handling All of your problems today.  
 I will not need your help. So, relax and have  
 A Great Day!***

This is the prayer that my spiritual director suggested I pray each morning before I do anything else.

I am always startled by the words, "I will be handling all of your problems today" and then the clincher, "I will not need your help." Well, how annoying is that?

Of course I have to be in charge. Of course I have to fix the problems, after all *the buck stops here*. What's with the relaxing and having a Great Day??

What would a Great Day be anyway?

We have raised over \$92,000 to date through our Hope Book to help:

- people in Japan make 'Peace on Earth' tomato juice,
- people in Cuba organize an organic garden and earn some needed income,
- people in Sarnia at the Inn of the Good Shepherd, people in Windsor at the Downtown Mission and kids in London to have a backpack program for the East London United Church Outreach ministry, and
- people in Mozambique (until Karen and Bill Butt notified us not to send any dollars after Nov. 1/09 because of significant reductions in funding and staff. We hope things will change for the Christian Council of Mozambique.)

***This is a Great Day!***

Our gifts of money have been a Great Day for lots of people in need, here in Sarnia, Windsor and London and overseas. In some cases, we have probably even saved lives.

***Now that is truly a Great Day!***

Let me reiterate what has already been shared but worthy to be told again. Because of London Conference creating the Hope Book, and putting the administrative procedures in place to make sure the money goes where it says it will, and then because of you and your gifts (mine, too) in Mozambique one garden of medicinal plants was created with 24 special plants used to treat HIV-AIDS. That grew to 3 gardens, and from the seeds and cuttings, another 31 gardens started up, each under the careful eye of a volunteer trained in cultivation, preparation and medical use of the plants.

Now there are 209 gardens.

Over 60,000 people are being helped by these medicinal plants.

Over 60,000 people is equivalent to us helping all the people in Stratford, Essex and Ingersoll combined.

That's a lot of people.

We are making a difference because we believe.

***It is a Great Day!***

--- Heather McLean

***Congregational Futures and Development: What are our Options????***

Whenever a congregation is talking about its future, whether they realize it or not, they are actually talking about mission. The fundamental mission unit for the United Church has always been the local congregation. As congregations change, mission changes and so does ministry. And that means we have to change too.

So what are our options? Better still, what does God need us to do? Where is the Spirit leading?

Assuming that God's Spirit is in the deep and faithful discussions about our futures, consider the following possibilities for your congregation:

1. Continue and develop ministry in present location.
  - a. two key elements are staffing and building costs
2. Share facilities with another congregation.
3. Relocate to a growing area of the community.
  - a. need fresh vision, energetic leadership
  - b. need commitment to change and risk
4. Explore the option of being in ministry in new ways (*there are many ways to develop this option*).
  - a. 'yoking' with another congregation – ministry personnel shared by two congregations
  - b. merging or amalgamating – two congregations coming together
5. Disband as a congregation (*there are many ways to develop this option*).
  - a. taking membership elsewhere
  - b. blessing the new ministry in a new congregation by carrying forward some of your ministry programs there
  - c. 'Folding the Tent' imagery

Each of the above options is a valid and faith-filled option. Each of these options is open to what God can do with us. On May 1, 2010, the Rev. Judith Gilliland is joining our Conference staff as the Congregational Futures Development Minister. We look forward to her ministry among us.

[Adapted from Hamilton Conference's resource, 'Co-operating Congregations', inspired by material from the Diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island – used with permission]

**The Gift of the 'Amazing' Grace****----- Planned Giving**

Grace is one of those 'saints' in a congregation. She is just like her name—generous and kind-hearted. Everybody in town knows her. She sold her car and now walks everywhere. "Better for the environment," she says. People grin when they see her coming because she wears her 'Corner Gas' toque everywhere.

When we met, Grace wanted to talk about 'a planned gift'. She had \$20,000 that would soon be coming due from a GIC and she wanted a United Church Gift Annuity for her church. At 77 years of age, the current gift annuity rate for her was 6.51%, which would provide her with \$1,302 in income each year for her lifetime and a tax receipt for a charitable donation of nearly \$6,700. If Grace were to live a normal life expectancy the congregation could expect to receive about ½ of her original gift, namely \$10,000, on her death. But Grace wanted her congregation to receive the full \$20,000.

So I suggested that she consider a Charitable Remainder Trust (CRT). I explained that a CRT would leave the full \$20,000 intact for her congregation at her death. The immediate charitable donation tax receipt would be much larger: over \$13,850. However, the income on a CRT would be based entirely on interest earned, would vary from year to year and would be fully taxable.

Grace liked the idea of the larger tax receipt, which she could use against this year's income. The variability of income didn't particularly worry her, she said. In fact, because she didn't have to rely on the income, she planned on donating that back to the church as well. Grace felt that the rate of return from The United Church of Canada on the CRT would likely be more than she would earn from a new GIC. I pointed out that both the Gift Annuity and Charitable Remainder Trust should be looked upon as gifts to the church, with a bonus of having a bit of an investment.

We prayed together and I promised to drop by with the paperwork next week. Grace reached for her toque, saying, "Keep your stick on the ice!"

"Are you a Red Green fan?" I asked.

Grace grinned. "It just sounds like a real Canadian thing to say," she said, and we both laughed!

**Want more information? Call/Email Lisa Di Veto at 519-754-1803 or [ldiveto@united-church.ca](mailto:ldiveto@united-church.ca)**



***Killer drought, cholera, HIV infection rates of 35% – the bad news goes on and on in Quelimane. Everyone learns to cope, to not expect great change. But sometimes good news is needed and that’s what this letter is about. Two great big successes.***

There’s excitement around the Christian Council of Mozambique office and PEDRA because for the first time ever a PEDRA bursary girl is going off to medical school. Dulce Osorio is only 17 but won a spot in the national Eduardo Mondlane University Faculty of Medicine. Admission is very competitive and most who win admission are: 1) male, 2) from the economically better-developed south and, 3) from families who can afford to send their children to the best schools. Our Dulce is none of these.

***For the first time ever a PEDRA bursary girl is going off to medical school!***

Dulce said she gives a lot of the credit to PEDRA, especially the theatre program which helped develop her self-confidence and speaking poise. Last week she caught the bus for Maputo to go 1,600 km away from her family for 6 hard years of school to come. But PEDRA will be cheering her on.

There is also a buzz about Gilda Banguelo. She is one of the singers who records music and music videos in the Christian Council of Mozambique studio. Gilda has built up a strong provincial fan base under her artistic name, Melu.

***Melu is a star and is on the news, tv and radio. But she says she’s still a Quelimane girl.***

She entered a national singing competition sponsored by Mcel, the national cell-phone service-provider, and won at the provincial level. Melu was flown to Maputo for the national finals and she won there as well. This is a very big media deal in Mozambique. She won a car, a huge cash prize (by Mozambican standards) and a recording contract. But Melu says she’s still a Quelimane girl and is going to keep recording with our studio where she learned her craft. This publicity photo was shot by our studio crew in Quelimane for one of Melu’s videos.

We feel blessed by God for the privilege of working with young women like Dulce and Melu.

*‘Melu’*

*Gilda  
Banguelo*

----- In mission and service, Karen and Bill Butt -----

As part of our summer Sunday School curriculum for 2009, we planted a pizza garden, with tomatoes, basil, marigolds for pest control and beans (just 'cause we love them!).

We also planted a sunflower house, with not as much success as we would have liked!

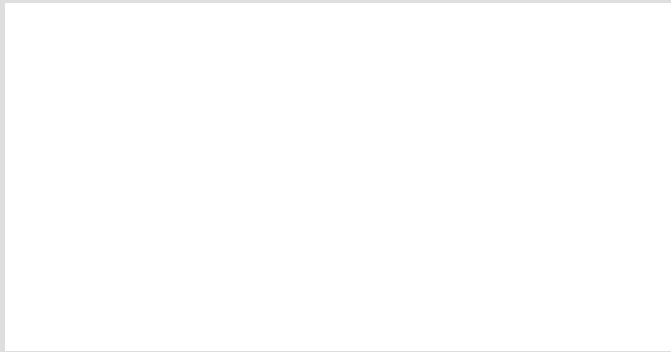
Our garden provided the congregation with an ongoing supply of produce and we cooked pizzas to enjoy at the end of the tomato season.

One Sunday we made our own garden markers out of concrete.

We took a lot of photos. Here are some of them!

*Sunflowers  
and Pizza*

Lori Minler  
Children, Youth and Family Ministry  
Trinity United Church, Ingersoll



**Heart of Germany and Oberammergau.** September 17-30, 2010. Join David McKane on a Craig Travel Tour and follow the footsteps of Martin Luther, meet his wife, Katharina von Bora, explore the Reformation, visit Buchenwald and remember Dietrich Bonhoeffer, among others, who opposed Hitler, visit Nuremburg and finish with Christ's passion portrayed at Oberammergau, the village in which the play has been celebrated every ten years since 1634. Join us for this wonderful tour of the heart of Germany. Call David at 519-679-8182 or Craig Travel at 1-800-387-8890.

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## Littlewood United Church, the ‘Little Church that Could’

Littlewood United Church. The name itself causes one to visualize a little country church nestled amongst trees somewhere in rural Ontario. This visualization is quite accurate. Littlewood United is a small 117-year-old church situated on a country road approximately 12 kilometres southwest of Lambeth. Littlewood’s membership includes many families whose ancestors helped build the church (at that time Methodist) in 1893. Since 1986, we have shared fellowship and a minister with St. Andrew’s-Westminster United Church.

Our congregation is a close knit ‘family’ who not only gather each Sunday to share in worship, but also to share news and offer love and support for the happenings in each other’s daily lives. Although we are a very small congregation, we are mighty! No challenge is too great and we continue to look for new and innovative ways to support our local and global outreach programs as well as our own church. We are very proud of our efforts and thought we would like to share them with others. Listed here are many of the activities that kept us motivated and busy throughout the past year and are already being planned for the current year.

Outdoor beef barbeque - a fundraising activity that keeps community spirit alive

Murder Mystery Dinner - the antics of our local actors keep the audience in stitches as they try to figure out ‘Who Done It’ (always sold out!)

U. C. W. Fashion Show - with our own great models

Special services such as Easter Sunrise in the spring and Harvest Home in the fall

Mitten Tree for hats and mittens to donate to various schools and organizations

Small group card-making evenings with a participant donation to various charities

Ongoing handmade card sales (from a generous donor) with proceeds to charity

Advent Food Drive to support our local Food Bank (this year over 600 pounds)

Collection of toiletries for the local ‘My Sister’s Place’

Supplying and cooking dinner for families staying at the Ronald McDonald house (a joint effort)

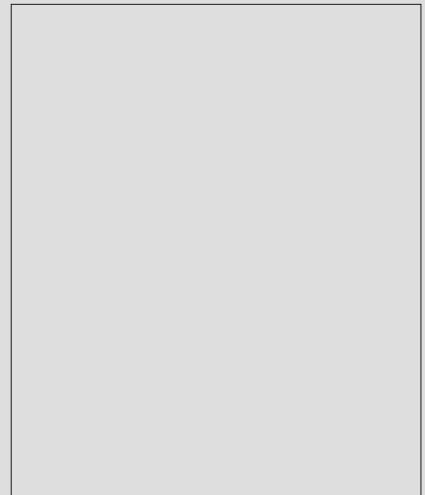
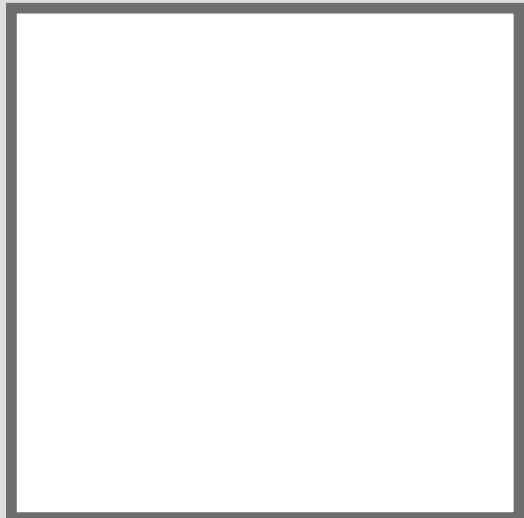
Foodgrains Bank growing project (ongoing since 2000)

Men’s Brunch - good food and fellowship

Of course, none of the above would be possible without the love and support of every member of the congregation and much encouragement and guidance from our minister, the Reverend Jessica McCrae. As a church family, we will continue to work together to keep our faith strong and our church doors open.

*Carol Baker,*

*Secretary of the Congregation*



## Resource Centres Present

Dorothy Haug / Essex Presbytery Resource Centre



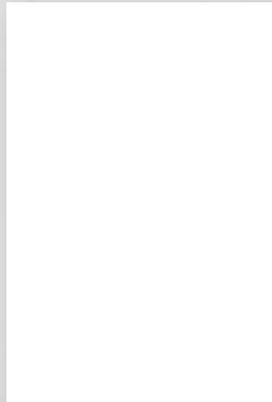
### The Case for God

by Karen Armstrong

Another trip through history, this one focused on the great lengths to which humankind has gone in order to experience a sacred reality that is called by many names such as God, Brahman, Nirvana, Allah or Dao.

Ms. Armstrong looks at how this impulse has become diminished in our time but how the insights of the past can help us to build a faith that speaks to the needs of our age - one based on a practical discipline of compassionate life that will help us to break out of the 'prism of self-hood'.

978-0-307-39743-0

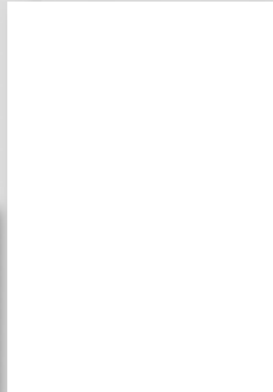


### The Great Emergence

by Phyllis Tickle

How Christianity is Changing and Why - examines the 'emergence': what it is, where it came from and how it will shape the future. In a sweeping overview of church history, Tickle places us now in a moment of great opportunity and challenge (possibly akin to Jeremiah's exhortation to the exiles?).

978-0-8010-1313-3



### The Future of Faith

by Harvey Cox

Examines the difference between 'belief and faith'. Cox notes that 'religious' people of today are more interested in ethical guidelines and spiritual disciplines than in doctrines and explains this move away from dogmatic religion against the backdrop of three periods of church history: the Age of Faith, The Age of Belief and the Age of the Spirit. (Definitions of these are particularly interesting).

978-0-06-1755521

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- THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY OF SOUTHWESTERN ONTARIO
- CHUM TELEVISION



Life & Faith is a locally created television program on the three A-Channel stations located in London, Windsor and Wingham and across Canada on ExpressVu and StarChoice.

*We'll see you at the*

*86th Annual Meeting  
of London Conference  
at the Hellenic Centre in  
London, Ontario*

*May 28 to May 30th, 2010*

*Children At Conference*

*for children aged 8 - 14  
at Camp Kee-Mo-Kee  
wooded trails, streams &  
lodge, cabins & a chapel*

*Deadline: April 20!*

*Kennon Callahan!!!*

*at The Stoneridge Inn  
London, Ontario*

*June 11<sup>th</sup> to June 13<sup>th</sup>*

*Limited Seating! Call Now!*

*online registration & payment available at [www.londonconference.ca](http://www.londonconference.ca)*

## Coming Events



### FIVE OAKS PROGRAMS

For information or to register, telephone (519) 442-3212 or visit [registrar@fiveoaks.on.ca](mailto:registrar@fiveoaks.on.ca)



[www.fiveoaks.on.ca/programs](http://www.fiveoaks.on.ca/programs)

**April 19 - Practicing Forgiveness to Heal the Planet** - In this time of ecological crisis Alanna Mitchell, author & journalist, explores how we can spiritually respond to the state of the planet.

**April 23 - 25 - Neos: Youth Ministry in an Intercultural World** - In an ever-changing world come & explore with Adele Halliday & others what intercultural ministry might mean when working with youth.

**May 7 - 8 - Luke's Jesus & Sabbath Economics** - Ched Myers delves into the personal & political implications of the economy of grace as told & shown by Luke's Jesus, and discusses how Sabbath economics might be places at the centre of a new ethos.

**May 17 - Spiritual Practices of Islam** - Raheel Raza, author of 'Their Jihad...Not My Jihad', introduces spiritual aspects of Islam found in the teaching of Sufi mystics like the call to prayer, Muslim prayer, chanting & meditation.

**June 21 - Centering on the Solstice with Labyrinth and Mandala** - Walk the path towards your own centre through reflective and creative exercises. Join us in exploring the light within as we drink in the light of solstice.

### UNITED CHURCH WOMEN

For information or for registration details telephone Marilyn Mitchell 519-762-3335.

**April 18 & 19 - Annual Gathering** - The London Conference United Church Women Annual Gathering at Parkview United Church in Stratford. Theme 'One More Step Along the World I Go'. Theme Speaker: Michelle Owens of Atwood United. Study: Anne Martin from National Office. Register by March 23. For more info: 1-519-485-1169.

**April 30 to May 2 - Westminster Weekend** - Being held at the Best Western Stoneridge Inn, London. The theme is 'Spirit, Open

My Heart'. The theme speaker is Rev. Deanna Gibson and the worship leader is Rev. Annalee Kerr. Register by April 9. Four workshops to choose from. For more info: 1-877-899-2485.

**July 24 - Summer Event** - An exciting event is planned for a summer's day at Siloam United Church in London. The theme is 'One More Step Along the World I Go'. The theme speaker is Bonnie Simonato and special music is provided by Jade Lester. Register by July 14. For more info: 519-351-1138.

### HURON UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

**April 17 and May 1 - Dark Night of the Soul** - For clergy, spiritual directors and lay people. St. John of the Cross offers us a rich way to discern characteristics of 'the dark night' experience in our spiritual lives. Explore the art and skills needed to navigate through this journey. For more info: 519-438-7224 ext. 289.

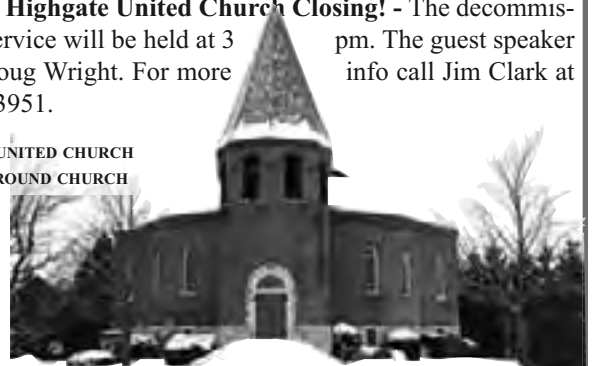
### OTHER EVENTS

**May 2 - 50th Anniversary Fairmont United Church** - The service begins at 11 with Rev. David McKane. We extend a warm welcome to all friends past and present for this memorable occasion. For more info call William Whitlock at 519-451-3978.

**April 7 - 10 - SnowStar Conference** - At Arden Park Hotel in Stratford. Focus is on 'Ecofeminism. On April 8 Amy-Jill Levine offers a public lecture on Jesus, Women, Gender & Sexuality. For more info: [www.snowstarinstitute.org](http://www.snowstarinstitute.org).

**June 27 - Highgate United Church Closing!** - The decommissioning service will be held at 3 pm. The guest speaker is Rev. Doug Wright. For more info call Jim Clark at 519-678-3951.

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## FOR AND ABOUT CHILDREN, YOUTH & YOUNG ADULTS

A regular column that invites contributions from youth & young adults of London Conference.

### *The Reason I believe in Camp*

*by Joe Richards, Pearce Williams Christian Centre*

I believe in camp because Camp believed in me.

When I first went to Camp I was quite young and have many fond memories of times spent in nature, learning about Camp and making friends. I also have memories of the not-so-good times – where other children made fun of me, where things didn't seem to work out for the best and where I felt alone.

Through both the good and not-so-good times Camp was there to comfort me. During the summer or during the rest of the year the thought of Camp helped make everything better. Camp was there to help me understand that other children did not always think before they spoke. Camp was there to teach me that the good times outweigh the bad. Camp believed in the child I was and the young adult I was becoming. Camp moulded me into the adult I am today – helping me learn to solve problems, be independent, believe in myself and in others, to believe in Camp.

I work full-time now at Pearce Williams Christian Centre – Elgin Presbytery's Summer Camp and Retreat Facility. I call myself a "Summer Camp Professional". My mission is to make sure that Camp keeps believing in all of the campers and staff that come to Camp each summer. This is my calling. This is what I do. This is what Camp has called me to do.

All of our United Church Camps help many children each summer. Camp has gathered many people – staff, board members, supporters, campers, parents – to help our community grow and be strong.

Every child deserves a week at Camp, so Camp can show the child that it believes in who they are and who they will be.

The reason I believe in Camp is because Camp believed in me.

*Read the article a second time and now replace 'Camp' with 'God'.*