



NORTHERN SPIRIT REGIONAL COUNCIL

The United Church of Canada

Regional Council News

Tuesday, April 28, 2020

Announcements and Information that might be of interest the people of the Northern Spirit Region. If you have news to share or information about an upcoming event, please send it to Kathy Jackson, Administrative Support: kjackson@united-church.ca, or post it to the Community of Faith Events Newsfeed: <https://northernspiritrc.ca/add-your-community-event/>

Family News

The Regional Council has a new Community of Faith! The establishment of Living Spirit United Church, Drayton Valley, was approved by the Executive on April 20. We extend a welcome and celebrate with the folks of Living Spirit United Church.

Responses to the Mass Murder in Nova Scotia

With the rest of the country and church, and with the people of Region 15, we mourn the enormous violence and trauma created by one person. We pray, mourn, and act with the affected communities and with grieving families and friends. [Please see this message from our Moderator.](#)

Now Hiring!

As many people know, the United Church General Secretary, Nora Sanders, will be retiring later in 2020. The search process to find her successor is now underway. Details can be found on the United Church of Canada web site: [General Secretary Position Post](#). The deadline for applications is June 19, 2020.

Online COVID-19 Updates

The Regional Council has been posting updates to the web site: <https://northernspiritrc.ca/covid-19coronavirusnews/>. Please visit the web page frequently as information and changes to information are shared.

For national resources, such as finances and worship, see the national United Church web site COVID-19 page: <https://www.united-church.ca/covid-19>.

Updates are beginning to slow down, but the emerging pieces are detailed, and longer term. Please note an important update on emergency loans and other funding. Thank you for your patience with these endless updates. Please continue to use your community of faith channels to share these.

National COVID-19 Updates

Emergency Finances Information: Web Resources

Your homepage for all COVID related finances is here.

The national church has now shared a new summary of [United Church-related emergency financial options](#). This includes a [bridging loan application form](#) that will be approved through your Regional Council. This is the first time in living memory that emergency loans on this scale are available to communities of faith nationally.

This program is made possible by a \$3 million grant from [The United Church of Canada Foundation](#). The money comes from the generous bequests of members over the years. Their gifts are ensuring the future of the church.

Please note that the Federal Government's \$40,000 CEBA loan is now off the table.

Please review all information carefully, as the order in which you proceed is important. [Here's an overview of things you'll need to consider](#) as you make a financial plan.

The continuing [weekly financial webinars at United in Learning](#) are also an important support, but please be aware that information in the older recorded webinars has likely changed.

April 29: Congregational Finances during the Pandemic

This continuing Wednesday series keeps us up to date on financial aid that continues to evolve rapidly. Times: 4:00 PM in BC; and 5:00 PM in AB, NWT and SK. Access is through [United in Learning](#) or the [national church's YouTube channel](#). These webinars are recorded and can be watched after the fact.

April 30: Congregational Programming during the Pandemic

During the pandemic, United-in-Learning is offering a weekly series for ministers and church leaders, with just-in-time skills and reflections intended to help us all respond to the unusual situation we find ourselves in. If you have specific requests or suggestions for future topics, please [CLICK HERE](#) to email us! [Here's full information on this weekly series](#).

Governance during the pandemic

Several important updates and clarifications were released following the recent meeting of the General Council Executive. Congregational governance: a [governance overview](#) is here, and a [specific resource](#) here. There was also a [temporary amendment to some key pastoral relations policies](#).

United Church Emergency Support: Information and Application Form now Live

The United Church of Canada has established a short-term emergency loan program for congregations during the pandemic. Emergency loans of up to \$10,000 are available to communities of faith that need short-term top-up after they have accessed the [government programs](#) available, or are transitioning out of the government benefits. Further information and an application form can be found here: [United Church Emergency Support: The United Church of Canada](#).

Please note that the regular Capital Assistance Loan and Grant programs will be on hold pending ongoing evaluation of the church's financial capacity to respond.

Refugee Sponsorship during "Distancing"

The Refugee Sponsorship Training Program (RSTP) is a service and coalition that's often been very helpful to United Church communities of faith involved in the crucial ministry of welcoming refugees to Canada. The distancing we're all practicing makes some aspects of sponsorship and support very difficult. But if you're sponsoring a person or family, [here's a new and helpful bulletin of suggestions from the RSTP](#).

Racism during the Pandemic: A United Church Member Reflects

From the beginning of this pandemic, incidents of racism against Asian communities and individuals have marred our communal response to COVID. [In this reflection on racism and COVID](#), Kim Uyede-Kai notes that, "The curve of the escalation of the disease of racism is rising with the curve of the escalation of COVID-19. While there is presently no vaccine against either disease to stop the spread of both, COVID-19 will eventually be eradicated. Racism will continue to mutate unless we make collective

efforts to stop the spread.” She concludes with practical suggestions that could help us identify and address racist comments and acts in our day to day conversations and relationships.

Regional COVID-19 Updates

Emergency Financial Support for Communities of Faith

The Regional Council Executive met on April 20, and considered how the Regional Council might provide short-term relief to communities of faith during this time of pandemic uncertainty.

Emergency Relief Fund: funds available to assist with disaster recovery and extraordinary costs related to the current emergency. (Not intended for major capital or payroll expenditures).

Interest Free Loans: (a) up to \$1,500 per Community of Faith, intended to assist with bridging payroll expenses until federal government funding becomes available. (b) up to \$10,000 per Community of Faith to assist with payroll and community engagement costs until the end of 2020.

For more information, or to apply for any of these programs, please contact the Regional Council Office. More information can also be found in the [Northern Spirit Regional Council Executive Newsletter](#).

Ongoing Regional Check-In and Support Gatherings

The Regional Council will continue with Tuesday afternoon Ministry Personnel check-ins that are Region-specific. The connection details have been emailed to active Ministry Personnel. Please contact the Regional Council Office for further information.

This week we will host **the last of the weekly Wednesday evening gatherings for Lay Leaders and Pastoral Charge Supervisors in all three Regions**. Future gatherings will be scheduled as needed or when there is a particular topic of interest, and will be publicized in this newsletter and posted on the web site [Calendar of Events](#). If you have ideas and questions that would be of interest to other lay leaders and/or Pastoral Charge Supervisors, please contact Julie Graham, Justice/Communications Minister: jgraham@united-church.ca or the Regional Council Office.

April 29: Focus on Ministry and Personnel Committee Members: Join in for support and conversation with others who serve in this very important work in their communities of faith.

Times: 5:30 PM in BC; and 6:30 PM in AB, NWT and SK.

Meeting Link: <https://united-church.zoom.us/j/978525442>

(Please share this link by email, and do not post this on social media or your congregational website.)

In Other News ...

Together We Worship

In March, the Northern Spirit Regional Council Executive sent out an inquiry to all Communities of Faith about worship resources currently being used, but that information has been quickly displaced by the current health concerns. In the interim, the Executive approved a one month trial subscription to Together We Worship, an online worship resource created by Allan Buckingham.

<https://togetherweworship.ca/>.

If your Community of Faith has been using a trial subscription, please forward your feedback, including information about how it has been used, and how often, to Kathy Jackson in the Regional Office

(kjackson@united-church.ca).

Webinar: Pope Francis and Christian Unity

News from the Edmonton and District Council of Churches: the ecumenical officer for the Catholic Archdiocese of Regina is offering a webinar on the topic of “Pope Francis and Christian Unity”. This ecumenical event is scheduled to take place next Wednesday, April 29 at 3 p.m. (MDT). The webinar is free and will be using Zoom technology. Please note that, for security reasons, anyone who wishes to participate in the webinar should register in advance. Please register by email to njesson@archregina.sk.ca. All are welcome

Final Call: Affirming Connections Online Day

Life does go on! And Alberta’s Affirming Connections invites us to continue our LGBTQIA2S+ journey all the more in the midst of this pandemic. They’ve opened this all day event on May 2, 2020, to Affirming leaders and seekers everywhere. For full details please see your Regional calendar and the [registration and agenda link here](#).

Eco-Commoning Project Online National Event

Join us online on May 21, 2020, to think creatively about commoning, social innovation and social enterprise in communities of faith. Take part in an interactive key-note presentation on how the social/economic theory of “commoning” applies to spirituality and communities of faith; engage with local stories and take-part in conversation-style action planning and reflection through the World Cafe model. Prairie resource people who are part of local “eco-commoning” will join us. [Full details are available here](#).

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