



NORTHERN SPIRIT REGIONAL COUNCIL

The United Church of Canada

Regional Council News

Tuesday, May 5, 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, 2020. We extend a welcome and celebrate with the folks of Living Spirit United Church.

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

Please note important update on emergency loans and other funding below.

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 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.

May 6 Webinar: 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.

May 7 Webinar: 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](#).

United in Learning will continue to offer its regular programming as well. [Click here for info](#).

Governance during the Pandemic

Several important updates and clarifications were released following the April 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.

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.

Stewardship News from Jane Harding

In many ways, the church can now reach out further than before. Our doors may be closed, but funds are still needed. Please see this [excellent overview](#) of options for giving regularly and at a distance, and share this in your community of faith newsletter. It covers the steps for PAR, an overview of Canada Helps, and more: <https://www.united-church.ca/community-faith/being-community/congregational-finances-and-covid-19>.

COVID and Stewardship: Supporting Global Partners

People of the United Church have asked how they can support our church as we reach out to partners and the vulnerable communities they work with during this time of pandemic. The United Church is now accepting donations to help support Mission & Service partners in the global South as they work to meet

the needs of these communities in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. To learn more and support this appeal, visit [COVID-19: Global Response](#).

Many of the communities that Mission & Service partners work with are already living with hunger, lack of access to water, crowded living conditions, and limited health care. COVID-19 has made these heartbreaking realities worse. The United Church is [working faithfully with partners](#) to address immediate needs for food and supplies to help keep communities safe during the pandemic.

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 helpful bulletin of suggestions from the RSTP](#).

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.

Gatherings for Lay Leaders and Pastoral Charge Supervisors are on hold for now, but we will gather as needed, as the situation continues to evolve. Watch this newsletter and Facebook for invitations! Have an idea for a gathering topic? We need to hear from you. Please email the Regional Council Office: NorthernSpirit@united-church.ca

Community Ministries on the COVID Front Line

Here in Northern Spirit Regional Council the [Bissell Centre](#), [Inner City Pastoral Ministry](#), and the [Jellinek Society](#) join sixty such ministries all over our church who are facing extraordinary challenges because of COVID and distancing. They're supported in part through our givings to Mission and Service, and also through generous congregational and personal donations of time, skills, and money. No doubt your congregation is facing challenges of its own. Please share these stories with them as you can, so they can have a glimpse into the vital work they're supporting at a distance in the midst of this crisis:

<https://www.united-church.ca/news/front-lines-covid-19>.

In Other News ...

Free to a Good Home

A retired minister in our region has an alb, stoles, and belts that are no longer used or needed. If anyone can use a 6' minister's stuff, or a home communion set (2 available), please contact the Regional Office.

Series on Racism and the Hope for Real Reconciliation

Gratitude is offered to the people of St. Albert, Saddle Lake Cree Nation, and others who took the difficult step of publicly naming racism in their community. Many if not most Canadian communities have the same struggle with racism; only by naming it can we start to move beyond it. This multi-part article series explores different local perspectives on racism and its impacts on Indigenous people and communities, and looks closely at local efforts to address it. [Access it here.](#)

Together We Worship: Trial Subscription Extended to May 31

The Northern Spirit Regional Council Executive has approved an extension to funding a one-month trial subscription to Together We Worship, an online worship resource created by Allan Buckingham: <https://togetherweworship.ca/>. Communities of Faith can now subscribe for the month of May. Information and application forms were sent to churches last week. Please contact the Regional Office for more information.

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).

Eco-Commoning Project Online National Event, May 21

Join us online to think creatively about communing, social innovation and social enterprise in communities of faith. Take part in an interactive key-note presentation on how the social/economic theory of "communing" 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.](#)

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.

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