



NORTHERN SPIRIT REGIONAL COUNCIL

The United Church of Canada

Regional Council News

January 12, 2021

Announcements and information of interest to the people of the Northern Spirit region.

If you have news to share or information about an upcoming event or learning opportunity, please write a short article, and send it to Kathy Jackson, Administrative Support: kjackson@united-church.ca. We are unable to include posters or other attachments, but links to further information may be included. Alternatively, our Community of Faith Events Calendar is open 24/7 for posting about online events that are open to the public. Events can be posted directly to the Newsfeed: <https://northernspiritrc.ca/add-your-community-event/>.

Family News

We are happy to share the news that retired Diaconal Minister, Betty Marlin, has been honoured with the Order of St. Stephen's College in recognition of her "life-long commitment to the vision of justice and compassion in the vocation of Diaconal Ministry in The United Church of Canada". We offer our congratulations to Betty, along with our appreciation for all that she has done in our region, and in the former Alberta and Northwest Conference. For more details about this fitting honour, please visit the St. Stephen's College web site: <https://www.ualberta.ca/st-stephens/community/honorary-degrees-and-awards/2020-recipients.html>.

On a more serious note, we have been advised that there was a small fire in the Irma United Church sanctuary on December 23 or 24. While there was little fire damage, the smoke damage was extensive, with soot covering virtually everything in every room. We ask that the Congregation be held in thoughts and prayers as its members face the days, weeks, and months ahead, dealing with emotional and spiritual concerns, as well as the tasks of cleaning and restoring their building.

COVID-19 Concerns Continue ...

Important Update: Congregational Annual Meetings for 2021

A reminder of a notice sent late last year: the General Council Executive has suspended the requirement to hold Congregational Annual Meetings until June, in light of the pandemic. You can still hold an online meeting as possible, but meetings are not required. [Please click here for details](#). Further details about related matters like Budgets and Annual Reports will be shared later this month.

Church Finances Webinar

On January 27, at 5:00 AB (Mountain), we will focus on any loose ends from 2020 including PD27 filing, whether to issue T2200 forms for employees working from home, payroll upgrade to Teampay, assessment processing, and of course, the latest on federal support programs. [Click here for details and to send in your questions](#).

Map of Online Worship Services Across the United Church

As more and more communities of faith join in online worship, or refresh their skills and expand their reach, the national map (found online [here](#)) is updated as information is received. Share the link on your website and social media, as many Canadians are looking for supportive spaces in this difficult time. Be sure to add or update your listing and help people find you [through this form](#).

Alberta Government is Supporting Safe Faith Community Gatherings

On November 9, the Alberta government announced that it is investing \$1 million to help faith-based and cultural organizations recover costs associated with COVID-19. From hosting online events, to facility upgrades and offering PPE, faith-based and cultural community groups have persevered to continue bringing hope, joy and connection to their communities. The new Faith-based and Cultural Facility Relaunch Grant will provide funding to offset costs related to following public health measures to ensure important religious and cultural gatherings can continue safely. For more information, please visit: [Faith-Based and Cultural Facility Relaunch Grant](#). Application intake deadlines are December 15, 2020, and March 1, 2021.

Federal, Provincial and Territorial Guidelines

The Federal, and all Provincial and Territorial Governments continue to provide updated guidance and direction regarding re-launching after the pandemic. Please be sure to continue to monitor the web sites for your jurisdiction:

[Health Canada](#) [Alberta](#) [British Columbia](#) [Northwest Territories](#)

Featured News ...

News from the Regional Council Executive

The December Newsletter from the Executive is now posted to the Regional Council web site. Please click on [December Executive Newsletter](#) to see what the Executive has been doing on our behalf.

Reminder: Regional Council Annual Meeting Evaluations

If you registered for the Regional Council's 2nd Annual Meeting, you would have received an evaluation invitation in mid-December. Please remember to fill it out! Need the link? It will be in your inbox - or possibly, in your spam folder, despite our best efforts. If you can't find the link, please contact the Regional Council Office, NorthernSpirit@united-church.ca.

Letters of Support to Korean Minister Disciplined for Same Sex Blessing

In August 2019, the Rev. Lee Dong-hwan of the Korean Methodist Church accepted an invitation to bless the crowd at the Incheon Queer Festival. As a result of this support, in October of 2020 he was stripped of his ability to practice as a minister in the Korean Methodist Church for two years. Members of the Korean Ministers' Network of the United Church have offered a public solidarity letter, as have some United Church ministries. [Please click here](#) for a copy of the Network letter, further information, and a gracious thank you video from Rev. Lee speaking to his decision and commitment.

Clusters and Networks Update (and a Reminder of \$\$!)

We know more online meetings may be the last thing on your mind. But just in case: If you are considering starting a new Network or Cluster, or if you've already been gathering, please take a moment to make sure that the Regional Council knows you're meeting. If your Cluster or Network is open to new members (and we hope it is) please make sure you're listed. Please contact the Regional

Council Office (NorthernSpirit@united-church.ca) or Julie Graham (jgraham@united-church.ca) to make sure we have contact information and a short description. And remember: there is money in the Regional Council budget to support your work. Maybe you want an offer to pay for event registrations or resources. Maybe you want to submit receipts for a get together lunch over Zoom to support a sense of community. Don't let funding worries get in the way! Questions about this? Contact the Regional Council Office.

In Other News ...

Embracing the Spirit Innovation Grants

United Church Innovation Grants are all about catalyzing ideas that are just sprouting in your community of faith. This could mean the fledgling idea has started to be experimented with, or the idea itself is in its infancy. The grants support communities of faith that are willing to stick their necks out and take a leap of faith. Innovation Grants are up to \$5,000 in funding and the application due dates for 2021 are: January 15; April 15; July 15; and October 15. For more information, visit the Embracing the Spirit web site: [Innovation Grants](#), or consider [booking a conversation](#) with the Embracing the Spirit team.

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Resources

This year's global Week of Prayer for Christian Unity runs from January 18-25. The theme for 2021 is "Abide in my love and you shall bear much fruit" (John 15:5-9). A wide range of ecumenical resources are available [here](#); add your own [event listings here](#).

A communion service from the United Church is available [here](#).

Ecumenical Services: Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

The Edmonton and District Council of Churches will be hosting its Week of Prayer for Christian Unity prayer service and the EDCC Annual General Meeting on Sunday, January 24, 2021, via Zoom. The prayer service, organized by the Ukrainian Eparchy of Edmonton, will begin at 3:00 p.m., and will be immediately followed by the Annual General Meeting. Everyone is invited to participate, and those who do not wish to stay for the AGM may simply leave the Zoom once the prayer service is complete. Please contact the Regional Council Office (NorthernSpirit@united-church.ca) to receive the Zoom link.

You are also invited to join the national online Ecumenical Service on Sunday, January 24, at 1:00 PM in AB (Mountain). The service will be offered in French and English. [Register here](#) to receive the Zoom or YouTube links.

Up-to-Date 2021 Minutes for Mission: Where to Find Them!

The 2021 Minutes for Mission are being shared in two formats, in addition to the basic print booklet which has been mailed to all congregations. For videos, [please click here](#). These are under their own playlist on the United Church's YouTube site. Book mark this!

COVID means that our Canadian and global partners' work is adapting quickly. In order to help us keep up to date, the texts of Mission and Service Minutes for Mission are also being offered online.

Please find these along with accompanying photos for use in your presentations or social media at <https://united-church.ca/community-and-faith/get-involved/generosity-through-mission-and-service/stories-our-mission>

Stewardship Newsletter

The United Church Stewardship Newsletter comes out monthly and has lots of good updates. You can subscribe by signing up [here](#).

Faith on the Move: Lenten Resource Now Available

The Lenten devotional for 2021, *Faith on the Move: Daily Reflections on Hope and Change*, is now available from the United Church Bookstore (UCRD). This new book focuses on themes of movement and change, physical and spiritual journeys. These daily reflections, contributed by diverse contributors, invite us to reflect on, and embody, God's welcome and love for people who are on the move - for a variety of reasons. A study guide for in-person or online groups is included. [United in Learning](#) will also be hosting six webinars throughout Lent to explore the book so you can connect with others walking the Lenten journey. [Order your copies today!](#)

Opportunities to Serve the Regional Council

The Nominations Committee is looking for people from throughout the Northern Spirit region to fill vacancies on the Executive, and the Commissions, Committees and Task Groups. A list of the 2020-2021 leadership, noting vacancies, has been posted to the Regional Council web site, and updates will be posted as they happen. Please check out the "[Get Involved](#)" page. If you, or someone you know, is interested in playing a role as our Regional Council continues to develop its mission and ministry, please contact the Regional Council Office: NorthernSpirit@united-church.ca. There are many opportunities available. Where do you feel called to get involved?

St. Stephen's College Launches a Re-Designed MTS Degree

St. Stephen's College has redesigned its Master of Theological Studies (MTS) degree and is currently accepting applications for 2021 admission. The re-designed MTS invites students to encounter diverse faith traditions and cultures in ways that enrich their person and deepen their social engagement. The core courses are oriented toward cross-cultural and inter-religious experiences, personal and intellectual formation, and development in community leadership. Dedicated specializations in Faith and Culture or Spiritual Care allow students to deepen their spiritual understanding and/or focus on a new vocational field. For more information, see our website: www.ualberta.ca/st-stephens.

Learning Opportunities ...

Training for United Church Conflict Resolution Facilitators

The United Church of Canada is seeking applicants to serve as Conflict Resolution Facilitators under its Dispute Resolution Policy: https://www.united-church.ca/sites/default/files/handbook_dispute-resolution.pdf. Successful applicants will have a basic familiarity with the theology, polity and procedures of The United Church of Canada; strong pastoral skills; the ability to travel anywhere in Canada (post-pandemic); the ability to facilitate conflict resolution processes remotely via Zoom or similar technology; completed a basic course in alternative dispute resolution approved by the General Council office; and practical experience in mediating/facilitating alternative dispute resolution processes. Additional requirements and information are posted under Jobs and Opportunities on the United Church web site: <https://united-church.ca/opportunities/conflict-resolution-facilitators>. Applications must be received via email to cgunn@united-church.ca by February 15, 2021.

Blanket Exercise Teaching & Sharing Circles: Winter 2021 Series

Led by Indigenous Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers with extensive KAIROS Blanket Exercise experience, these (90-minute) interactive Zoom-based sessions aim to build positive relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people through truth, sharing, and open dialogue. Beginning January 19, topics offered in the public sessions (\$25 registration fee per session) include: the Impact of Residential Schools; We Are All Treaty People; the Doctrine of Discovery; Métis Teachings; Shannen's Dream & Jordan's Principle; Social Injustice in the Court System; the 60s Scoop; Child Welfare and Practice Standards; Missing and Murdered Indigenous People; and the power of Growing Healing Gardens. Each topic can also be booked as a private group session by contacting cumana@kairoscanada.org.

For the full schedule and to register, visit: <https://www.kairosblanketexercise.org/kbe-virtual-teaching-sharing-circle/>.

Deepening Practices of Restorative Solidarity

February 12-15, 2021, live on Zoom from unceded Chumash territory, in the Ventura River Watershed, California, please join the 2021 Bartimaeus Kinsler Institute. More information: <https://www.bcm-net.org/study/bki2021>. The Bartimaeus Institute has many ecumenical Canadian connections, including resource people Harry and Germaine Lafond, of Muskeg Lake Cree Nation and the Metis Nation, respectively. Consider creating the usual Canadian delegation online this year, and deepen engagement with decolonizing discipleship.

Interim Ministry Network: Fundamentals of Transitional Ministry

The IMN will be hosting its 2021 training events via Zoom. Several dates are offered throughout 2021 for each of three courses: FTM: The Work of the Leader; FTM: The Work of the Congregations; and Effective Transitional Leadership. For more information, the event schedules, and to register, please visit the Education page on the Interim Ministry Network web site: <https://imnedu.org/education/>

2021 Virtual Festival of Homiletics: Registration Now Open

The COVID-19 pandemic has made life harder for just about everyone. To uphold the health and safety of our communities, the Festival of Homiletics will be hosted virtually again in 2021. [Registration is now open](#) for the virtual Festival of Homiletics, May 17–21, 2021. We're excited about the [superb thinkers and teachers](#) who will present on this year's theme, "Preaching for the Future Church".

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