



# NORTHERN SPIRIT REGIONAL COUNCIL

## The United Church of Canada

### Regional Council News

February 16, 2021

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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](mailto: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/>.

### COVID 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.

#### **Congregational Annual Meeting Top Secret Secret Voting Strategies and More**

Many communities of faith are going ahead with congregational meetings online, and have many good questions about voting. [Here are some thoughts](#) from Executive Minister Shannon McCarthy on not-so-secret ballots and your community of faith's online Annual Meeting. [Here's a good resource](#) from some of our kin in the Shining Waters and Canadian Shield Regional Councils that outlines the various options. (Hint: there's really no such thing as a completely secret ballot for everyone.) The Centre for Christian Studies has just released a great [recorded "how to"](#) workshop (and a [hilarious video](#) that may sound just a bit familiar).

#### **Federal, Provincial and Territorial COVID Pandemic Guidelines**

Please continue to check the Federal, and all Provincial and Territorial Governments for updated guidance and direction related to the pandemic: [Health Canada](#); the provinces of [Alberta](#) and [British Columbia](#); and the [Northwest Territories](#).

### Featured News ...

#### **St. Andrew's United Church, Spruce Grove: Celebrating 100 Years!**

In November, 2020, as part of the celebration, the people of St. Andrew's developed and published a 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Book which is now "in stores" (our church) for sale at \$25.00 per copy. This "table topper" book uses pictures, messages from past ministers, and stories from many members, past and present, to tell the story of how ministry grew in "the Grove". Please see further information, including

the “smiling faces” of the editorial committee on the Northern Spirit news feed:  
<https://northernspiritrc.ca/northern-spirit-news/>.

### **Update on Bill C-15 and the United Church**

Following discussions with the National Indigenous Council and the Elders Council, The United Church of Canada has not signed on to the ecumenical campaign supporting the federal Bill C-15 on the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Both the Council and the Elders cited the need for community discernment, as outlined in the Calls to the Church, before a decision could be taken. This reflects our commitment to the Declaration, which we continue to support as the framework for reconciliation. We also continue to encourage everyone to learn more about the UN Declaration. It remains one of the many crucial calls to our church within the TRC Calls to Action. (You can download a [free PDF of the text here](#) and read the KAIROS summary of the Declaration’s long journey.) This newsletter includes information about a related event from churches who have taken a position on Bill C-15. And watch for future news about an upcoming event on diverse points of view on Bill C-15, hosted by KAIROS Prairies North.

### **Canada, the Churches, and Bill C-15**

On February 18, at 5:00 pm (MST), Archbishop Mark MacDonald, Chief Wilton (Willie) Littlechild, Professor Sheryl Lightfoot, and Ellen Gabriel, will describe Bill C-15, the legislation that the government of Canada is introducing to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. [Register here](#).

## **In Other News ...**

### **Indigenous Lenten Series: Ahogichipabi**

On Wednesdays, February 17 to March 31, at 7:30 PM (MST), join us this Lenten season as we explore Christ’s journey into the desert and the connection this has to Indigenous spiritual traditions: the 7 sacred teachings of the Assiniboine and the Vision Quest. We will examine the intercultural traditions found in Indigenous Christian theology and how this impacts our spiritual formation and worldview today. This series is sponsored by the Chinook Winds Regional Council and the Urban Indigenous Circle. [Click here](#) for the Facebook event. [The Zoom link is here](#). Contact Tony Snow for more information: [tony.snow@hillhurstunited.com](mailto:tony.snow@hillhurstunited.com)

### **Affirming Get-Together for Northern Spirit**

On Tuesday March 2, 6:30-8:30PM (MT), join us on Zoom! Calling all ministries and people who are LGBTQIA+ and Two Spirit-affirming, or 2SLGBTQIA yourselves. We know COVID is making Affirming work harder, even as it also makes life harder for trans, non-binary, queer, Two Spirit and questioning people - especially youth and elders. Come out to this check in and reminder of resources that are out there to help your ministry. Give and receive some good energy and support. You don’t need to be officially Affirming to come: all are welcome. To RSVP and for the Zoom Link, email Shylo Rosborough [affirming.ministries@rwuc.org](mailto:affirming.ministries@rwuc.org) ,or Julie Graham [jgraham@united-church.ca](mailto:jgraham@united-church.ca).

### **Black/African Heritage Month: Resources for Congregations**

February is Black History (or African Heritage) Month in Canada, a time to honour the contributions and struggles of peoples of African descent. How do you (and your congregation) plan to mark it? The United Church has many [worship resources](#) for each week, including new blog posts, prayers, and a new Black

History Month service for 2021. Here, for example, [Nancy Oliver-MacKenzie shares](#) about the work of Montreal's Union United Church for social justice in the Black community and beyond through a written reflection and a video.

### **Faith on the Move: a National Online Journey through Lent**

On February 23, March 2, March 9, March 16, March 23, and March 30, at 11:00 am (MST), you are invited to join a community of friends to walk through Lent, sharing in a risky, surprised-filled adventure and exploring the places that will challenge you and stretch you to your limits. This year's Lenten book is full of reflections on hope and change to help us cherish the complex stories of the Bible. It's good to read by itself; it's even more exciting to read together with others! Or, come join in for a chance to kickstart your reflections, so you're ready to share them with the group you might lead later in the week. Come join this set of 6 weekly 60-minute webinars that will give you a chance to connect with others walking the same journey. For more information, please visit the United in Learning web site. Come join us on the journey, as together we explore the resources in this thoughtful new book from UCPH, and seek ways to deepen faith, hope and love for ourselves and each other. [Please refer to this link](#) for a full description, and to confirm times, as the dates fall over the daylight savings time change.

### **Affirming PIE Day 2021 Resources and Video Launch**

PIE= Public+Intentional+Explicit: the standard for creating a safer sacred space for LGBTQIA+ and Two Spirit people. For 2021 and its many online events, [Affirm United/ S'affirmer Ensemble](#) and Calgary's [Affirming Connections](#) ask: What ingredients or recipe make up your PIE and your radical hospitality? Have a look at the materials to help you animate Affirming PIE Day on Sunday, March 14, including a [new worship service](#). Check out [online events](#), and add your own. Your gathering or worship doesn't have to be complicated ... it doesn't even have to include pie (any dessert or savour treat is welcome. But do make it PIE. And, if you want your PIE hot, check out the forthcoming short video on a topic that is overly close to many LGBTQIA+ people: [What the Hell?](#)

### **Annual Meeting Planning Committee: Are you called?**

A reminder that the Nominations Committee wants you to consider who might help plan the 2021 Regional Council Annual Meeting. [Have a look at the details here](#). Please consider this invitation, or invite others to do so, and please share it widely.

### **United Church Rural Ministry Network: Upcoming Workshops**

As part of their mandate, "Connecting rural stories with rural people across Canada", the UCRMN is hosting two workshops to support to rural ministries. For more information about the Network, please visit their web site: <https://ucrmn.ca/>.

**Ashes and Resurrection: How are COVID Days Shaping Us for Newness?** February 18, 2021, 11:00 am to 1:00 pm (MT), Tickets are \$10. C.S. Lewis said, "you can't go back and change the beginning but you can start where you are and change the ending". How are our practices in these days - our ways of being church "together while apart" - shaping us for newness? What are we discovering as an answer to the question, why is the church? Participants will share practices that nourish and connect us these days, and also, how they open our hearts to something new. There will be time to just be together to share stories, and time to be encouraged, to take heart in these days with Scriptural themes of annunciation and exile, stars and wilderness. For more information, or to register, please click [here](#).

### **Practical Technology Possibilities for Rural Churches**

During COVID, many of those in small and rural churches have learned more than they thought possible about sharing technology, and find that learning will well serve the church in the future. The UCRMN will

be facilitating a workshop on practical tech possibilities. Please contact [editor@ucrmn.ca](mailto:editor@ucrmn.ca) if you would be interested in participating, and indicate whether you would like to see it before Easter to help with Easter prep (early to mid- March) or in mid-April (post-Easter). Tickets are \$10 to help cover the cost of the workshop.

**Want to do your own Online Workshop?** You supply the topic and the leadership, and UCRMN will supply the logistics, such as advertising, registration, Zoom platform, and all the administration needed for a successful workshop. E-mail Connor at [office@UCRMN.ca](mailto:office@UCRMN.ca) to talk about possibilities.

## Events ...

### **Perspectives on K-12 Education for Reconciliation Panel Discussion**

On February 17, from 7:00 to 9:00 pm (MT) Alberta's Remembering the Children Society, of which the United Church is a member, will host this panel discussion. [Click here for details](#). Join in and see why this event is important to our TRC commitments.

### **Unsettling the Word: Biblical Experiments in Decolonization**

On Thursdays, from February 18 and 25, from 11:30 am - 2:30 pm (MST), you are invited to join with Indigenous and settler resource people to challenge and change our reading of the Bible. This series is hosted by the New Leaf Learning Centre. [Full details are here](#).

### **Introduction to Indigenous Lands and Issues in Canada**

From February 20 to June 19, host Adrian Jacobs, Sandy Saulteaux Spiritual Centre's Keeper of the Circle, invites you to join Indigenous elders from across Canada in a series of opportunities to explore the cultural and historic foundations to today's headlines. Join in for this series of online conversations in response to the Indigenous education mandates from Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Final Report. For a schedule and further information, or to register, please [click here](#).

### **2021 Lent Programs at Providence Renewal Centre**

**Expressions of Hope: Voices of a Resurrection People:** In collaboration with the Edmonton District Council of Churches, Providence Renewal Centre is offering a series of reflections, from leaders in a variety of Christian denominations, on how scripture invites experiences of Divine providence. Listen to the weekly pre-recorded message (posted every Tuesday during Lent), then join other listeners and Providence Renewal Centre staff on Wednesday evening to discuss what you noticed, wondered about and appreciated. The discussions will be held on Wednesdays, February 24 to March 24, from 7 to 8 pm. There is no charge for this series, but pre-registration is required for Zoom access.

**Fasting: An Exploration and an Invitation:** on Saturday, February 27, from 10 am to 4 pm, via Zoom, Providence Renewal Centre is offering an opportunity to explore and experience fasting as a spiritual exercise. Fasting is one of the three pillars of the Lenten season in the Christian tradition, along with prayer and almsgiving. Through prayer, silence and whatever degree of fasting that you wish to engage in, spend a day entering into this Lenten season and explore fasting (not necessarily from food!) as a means to feed your soul. You may bring whatever snacks you need for your day, beverages provided. This retreat will take place via ZOOM. The registration deadline is February 22.

For more information about either of these programs, please visit the Providence Renewal Centre website: <https://providencerenewal.ca/>, or telephone 780-701-1854.

### **Affirming Conversation and Check In**

Please check the Calendar of Events listings on the [Northern Spirit web site](#) for information about a March 2 invitation for all Affirming, in process, and curious ministries, and all LGBTQIA+ people and allies.

### **Hopeful Economics UnConference**

On March 3-5, 2021, the United Church's EDGE Network will host "Hopeful Economics", a way of looking at the world, and the assets and abundance that it has, and making that work for everyone. With an incredible lineup of speakers, you'll dive deep into the relationship between social enterprise and faith. You'll learn about the economic impact of churches and how to pitch your community of faith to form new partnerships. For details, agenda, and registration, please visit:

[https://whova.com/web/virtu20\\_202012/](https://whova.com/web/virtu20_202012/).

### **Save the Date!**

The Living Skies Committee on Ministry Personnel Support is hosting an online Lenten Retreat for Ministry Personnel, in collaboration with St. Andrew's College. Leadership will be provided by Diane Strickland, faculty members from the College, and members of the Committee. The Retreat will be hosted March 16 and 17, 8:30-10:30 am and 12:00-2:00 pm. The cost is \$25 for the two days, and will include discounted access to resources from Diane, and a worship service for use on March 21. Registration details will become available in the coming weeks, and will be included in this newsletter.

## **Learning Opportunities ...**

### **United in Learning: Great New Opportunities**

United in Learning is offering several new webinars and workshops. To view a list and find more information, please [click here](#) for the latest in new opportunities.

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