



NORTHERN SPIRIT REGIONAL COUNCIL

The United Church of Canada

Regional Council News

February 9, 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://northernspiritr.ca/add-your-community-event/>.

COVID-19 Pandemic Continued ...

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.

Resources for Online Congregational Annual Meetings

Several of our Communities of Faith are going ahead with Congregational Meetings online, and have many good questions about voting. Here are good resources from some of our kin in the Shining Waters and Canadian Shield Regional Councils that outline various options. (Hint: there's really no such thing as a completely secret ballot for everyone.) [Click here](#) to have a look at their meetings resources. See this news from the Centre for Christian Studies about a [February 12 Workshop](#) on the same topic.

Alberta Government Support for 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](#). The final application deadline is March 1, 2021.

Federal, Provincial and Territorial Guidelines

The Federal, and all Provincial and Territorial Governments provide updated guidance and direction related to the pandemic: [Health Canada](#); [Alberta](#); [British Columbia](#); and [Northwest Territories](#).

Featured News ...

Job Posting: United Church Stewardship Animator for Western Canada

The Philanthropy Unit of The United Church of Canada is seeking an individual to fill the role of Stewardship Animator, Western Canada, on a full-time basis (35 hours/week) for a 6-month term serving the provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia. This lucky person will be working with the people of our Regional Council. But: the deadline for application is February 16, 2021, so please put the word out as quickly as possible. [Full details are here.](#)

Naramata Centre: Embracing the Spirit Video

For the past 70 years, Naramata Centre has gone through many variations of who they are and who they serve. In 2020 they planned for eight weeks of programs, as well as a new spring program, and were quite prepared and excited. Then, they had to reimagine how to be "in community," if they could no longer have 1,000 people onsite. So, they immediately began streaming some of their more popular events to see what would happen when they addressed the question, "Is it possible to create community when we are physically apart?". And the answer was, "Yes!" This led to the "All Access Pass" which enabled people to invite friends to come with them. They could join as many events as they wanted, and offer the discount to family, friends, or even their community of faith. This has grown in momentum: one event saw 9,000 attendees! The whole story of Naramata's strategic shift can be viewed in this video: [watch the whole story.](#)

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.

Northern Spirit Regional Council 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.

In Other News ...

Affirming PIE Day 2021 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?](#)

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.

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 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](#).

National United Church: New Opportunities to Serve

From conflict resolution facilitators to researchers into Black experiences in the United Church, please visit the United Church web site to find out what's available and consider both your own call and others' gifts. [See details here](#).

Upcoming Events ...

Unsettling the Word: Biblical Experiments in Decolonization

On Thursdays, until February 25, from 12:30- 2:30 PM (MT), you are invited to join with Indigenous and settler resource people to challenge and change our reading of the Bible. On February 11, Cheryl Bear will present on the topic, "Decolonizing Christianity". [Full details are here](#).

Moosehide Campaign Against Violence

On Thursday February 11, from sun up to sun down, please join Ceremony, fasting, and action commitments online across Turtle Island. [Click here](#) for the schedule and registration.

Annual Meetings Online: Workshop

On Friday, February 12, from 11 am to 12 noon (MT), the Centre for Christian Studies is hosting this information-sharing and discussion session on best practices for holding a church annual meeting online, using a platform like Zoom. [Details and registration are here](#).

Pancakes and PIE!

On Tuesday, February 16, at 5:00 pm (MT), Affirm United/S'affirmer Ensemble asks us to join them in the kitchen for a Virtual Pancake Supper on Zoom, with entertainment from Pam Rocker, and a friendly cook-off in two home kitchens! We'll also get to talk about [P.I.E. Day 2021](#) (Sunday, March 14) and what's cooking there. Facebook event: <https://fb.me/e/1ufTk8ggqF>

Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper - With a Twist

Shrove Tuesday falls on February 16, this year, the last day before Lent begins on Ash Wednesday. Vegreville United Church has invited its community to acknowledge Shrove Tuesday by making a pancake supper in their own homes. The Twist is this: that the \$\$s they would spend to attend a

pancake supper be donated to their favourite charitable organization. Their Community of Faith, of course, is suggested as a choice. How will you acknowledge Shrove Tuesday this year?

Event Spotlight: Perspectives on K-12 Education for Reconciliation Panel Discussion

On February 17, 2021, from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. (MT), this event will provide an opportunity to learn from qualified and knowledgeable education partners about why the Alberta government needs to “make age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal peoples’ historical and contemporary contributions to Canada a mandatory education requirement for Kindergarten to Grade Twelve students”. Please [click here for details](#). This event is hosted by Alberta’s Remembering the Children Society, of which the United Church is a member, and it is a chance for us as a church to live into the TRC Calls for Action to which we’ve committed.

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 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 to talk about possibilities.

Circles of Support

We are all living through the same pandemic - "all the time, same storm but with different boats". We are also living through precarious economic times, austerity plans and divisive, dangerous politics. This non-faith-based support circle uses expressive art methods to process our thoughts and feelings around the current time. Each session will start by checking in with each other, then sharing feelings and thoughts, exploring possible hopeful futures through being creative together, and closing the time together. The circles will be held from 11:00 am to 12:30 p.m. (MT), on January 23, February 20 and March 20, 2021. You are invited to come to one circle or many, and to bring and eat your brunch (or not). The hope is that we will feel less alone during this stage of the pandemic and political climate. To register, please visit <https://www.rwuc.org/artistic-justice-workshops/>.

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](#).

Training for Ministry of Supervision

This intensive is being offered February 22-26, 2021, in order to equip people to be credentialed as supervisors for Supervised Ministry Experience students within the United Church of Canada and within other denominations. The Certificate in Ministry of Supervision provides participants with the information and skills to mentor individuals preparing for ministry. The instructors are the Rev. Brenda Fawkes and the Rev. Dr. Andrew Richardson, Office of Vocation Ministers in the Pacific and Atlantic regions. This course, designed for clergy and lay individuals, is available to participants from any region of Canada or beyond, and is offered in partnership with the Vancouver School of Theology. It will be presented in an online (Zoom) format using Canvas for student and instructor interaction and resources. The course fee is \$211.50. Class times will be 10:00 am to 1:00 pm (MT). Prerequisite: a minimum of five years experience in congregational ministry and leadership. For more information or to register, please visit: <https://vst.edu/courses/certificate-in-ministry-of-supervision/>.

Licensed Lay Worship Leader Training

Licensed Lay Worship Leaders (LLWLs) are individuals, supported by their communities of faith, who have offered their faith, insight and skill at Worship leadership in order to support the ministry and mission of The United Church of Canada in the Northern Spirit region, and who have taken the appropriate training. United Church training for LLWLs is provided through a 4-part educational program of [United in Learning](#). Registration is now open for Unit 2 of the LLWL online training! In Unit 2, the focus is on preaching. For more information or to register, please visit [this page](#) of the United in Learning web site. If you plan to take part in this training, please make sure you register before the orientation webinar on February 15.

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