



NORTHERN SPIRIT REGIONAL COUNCIL

The United Church of Canada

Regional Council News

April 27, 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/>.

Regional Council Annual Meeting Updates ...

3rd Annual Regional Council Meeting: The Countdown is On!

The Regional Council is meeting, online via Zoom, next week, on the evenings of **Tuesday and Thursday, May 4 and 6, 2021**. Those who have registered to attend the meeting, should now have received a Confirmation Email. If you have registered, and have not received an email with the Zoom links and other information, please contact the Registrar (kjackson@united-church.ca).

The Registration Form link has been sent to Communities of Faith, Ministry Personnel, and known Elected Lay Representatives. If you have not received the link to register for the meeting, please contact your Community of Faith, or the Registrar.

As further details about the Annual Meeting unfold, they are being posted, along with the Annual Meeting Workbook, on the Annual Meeting page of the Regional Council [web site](#).

General Council 44 Commissioners: Job Description and Invitation

The Regional Council is still seeking people to serve as Commissioners to the 44th General Council, to be held online in 2022. Although 2022 seems like it is still a long way into the future, the deadline for the submission of Commissioners' names and contact information to the General Council Office is in June 2021. Thus, the Northern Spirit Regional Council will elect its Commissioners at our Annual Meeting, **May 4 and 6**. [Have a look at the full details here](#). Please help by spreading the word, and directing yourself and other interested persons to the [Nominations Form](#). Even if you, or a good candidate you know, have limited internet or older equipment, do not let that keep you from applying or from encouraging others. General Council planning will include accessibility for a video meeting.

Pentecost Service for the Whole Regional Council

Join Northern Spirit Region on **Sunday, May 23**, for a Pentecost service! Led by ministers and lay people from across our region, this service shares the theme of the Regional Council Annual Meeting (May 4 and 6): "Loving Our Neighbour and Ourselves." We encourage you to use the service as an alternative to your community of faith's regular Sunday service, and offer your worship team a Sabbath Sunday. The service will be available on the [Northern Spirit Region YouTube channel](#), where you will be able to play the video from there, or share it on your own YouTube channel. It will also be available on Google Drive, so that those with a slower connection can download it in advance. The download link will be emailed in the Regional Council E-Newsletter during the week before the service.

Featured News ...

Kirk United Church Centre

Interested in being a Board Member or member-at-large for a not-for-profit and Incorporated Ministry of The United Church of Canada? Kirk Centre is looking for United Church members and community-minded people to join in creating a unique community hub environment in the heart of northwest Edmonton and for all the surrounding Communities. For more information, please visit the Kirk Centre web site: <https://www.kirkucentre.com/memberships>.

Research Study: Bi-Vocational and Part-Time Ministry

With the support of the United Church Foundation, the Rev. Dr. Ross Bartlett, Director of United Church Formation, and Adjunct Professor at Atlantic School of Theology, is conducting a study of the experiences and conditions of the growing number of bi-vocational and part-time ministers within The United Church of Canada. Some estimates suggest that over 40% of clergy will be serving in part-time appointments/calls by 2030. Yet we know very little about this rapidly growing group. Dr. Bartlett is hoping to provide the church with a baseline of data from which to consider a wide range of its governance and employment policies. More information can be found [here](#).

Being Black on the Prairies Series

As part of continued work on Black Lives Matter, the CBC is offering an exciting multimedia story series on being Black in a Prairie context. Through five themes - Migration, Putting in Work, Black and Indigenous Relations, Politics and Resistance, and Black to the Future - this project places Black people's experiences at the centre of the Prairie narrative. [Click here for more information](#).

In Other News ...

Mental Health Awareness Week Resources

May 3-9 is Mental Health Awareness Week in Canada, and this year, the United Church will mark Mental Health Sunday (May 2) for the first time. [Worship resources](#) will be coming soon, and during the week itself there will be [live sessions with chaplains and ministers](#) on the church's [Facebook page](#). General Council Office staff person Amy Crawford has also written a blog post entitled "[Breaking the Silence about Mental Health](#)".

Stewardship - It is a Journey

You are not alone. Really. You are not.

Join other communities of faith from Northern Spirit on **The Journey**, as together we learn Stewardship Best Practices that can help you increase revenue in order to better fulfil your mission. This May, interested Communities of Faith can form a Learning Team, and participate in four 2-hour sessions to learn about best practices in stewardship, plus receive ongoing coaching and support. Spaces are limited, so reach out to Vicki Nelson (VNelson@united-church.ca) right now for more details or to express interest. Don't walk alone.

The Regional Council Needs You More ...

The Nominations Committee continues to seek out and invite nominations for vacancies. Right now, members are needed for the Regional Council Executive, and in particular, a Chairperson-Elect. There are also vacancies on the Communities of Faith, Lay Leadership, and Ministry Personnel Support

Committees; the Annual Meeting Planning and Nominations Committees; the Youth Council; and Commissioners to the 44th General Council. Volunteers are the lifeblood of the United Church: we rely on the wisdom and talents that committed individuals bring to their involvement in the work of the Regional Council. Nominations and self-nominations are equally valued, so please consider where you might be involved, and talk to others about where they might find a place in the Northern Spirit Regional Council as it continues to develop its mission and ministry. For more information about Regional Council Roles or to complete the Expression of Interest and Nominations form, please visit our web site: <https://northernspiritrc.ca/about-us/get-involved/>.

Surprise Lake Camp Update!!

The Surprise Lake Society would like to invite everyone to celebrate the 70th Anniversary of the Camp this summer on the weekends of **July 18th** and **August 8th**. They want to honour those who have paid it forward with their time and resources, and to let everyone see what they are doing now and where they want to go. There are numerous events planned as well as opportunities to meet up and reminisce with old friends. For those folks who were out at camp in the 80's and early 90's, you may want to put this on your calendar: Andriel Pitter will be hosting a ZOOM reunion with former camp friends on **April 22** from 6:30 to 8:30 pm. To stay up-to-date with the plans and events, sign up for our society newsletter (The Loonie") on our website, <https://surpriselake.ca>, or on Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/surpriselakecamp>. See you for a sunset!

COVID-19 Concerns Continued ...

Seeking Information and Guidance from the Church?

As we continue to face the challenges of the current pandemic, new information is produced almost daily. In order to keep up with this kaleidoscope of change and concern, we invite you to visit our [Regional Council web site](#). If you visit the [United Church web site](#), and search for "covid" you will find links to a page on *Faith Communities and COVID-19*, as well as links to reflections, news, prayers, stories of hope, and much more.

Resources for Online Congregational Annual Meetings

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 wee 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](#).

Events and Learning Opportunities ...

United in Learning

[Click here](#) to read the April 26 Newsletter from United in Learning, with information about this week's webinars and other upcoming learning opportunities.

Listening to Indigenous Voices: A Dialogue on Justice and Right Relationships

This new learning and conversation resource, to be launched **April 28**, 3:00-4:30 pm (MDT), begins by exploring Indigenous worldviews, goes on to examine the history of colonization, and concludes with sessions on righting relationships, decolonization, and indigenization. You can find [more information or register here](#).

CCS Fridays

These online conversations, hosted by the Centre for Christian Studies, are intended help people of faith respond to emerging issues in local contexts. Each session is from 11:00 am to 12:00 noon (MDT), in the form of a Zoom workshop. There will be a presentation that will be recorded for future viewing, plus opportunities to engage with the ideas in small groups. Sessions are open to all and are free but you must [register here](#). Join in on **April 30** for "How It Ends", a reading by playwright Debbie Patterson. "How It Ends" is an immersive, interactive dance/theatre piece, produced in Winnipeg in 2019. It explores end-of-life issues, seen through the lens of disability. Playwright Debbie Patterson uses her lived experience of a progressive, debilitating, incurable illness to provide a new understanding of what makes life worth living, the value of suffering, and the pleasure of surrendering control.

Moderator's Town Halls on the Church's Future Directions

A report is being prepared for the October 2021 meeting of the 43rd General Council, recommending mission, vision, and key strategic priorities for The United Church of Canada. This [strategic planning process](#) is aimed at providing a common direction for 2022 to 2024. You are invited to join one of the final consultation sessions, on **May 1**, 10:00 am (MDT), or **May 4**, 4:30 pm (MDT). Members of the Indigenous Church can also choose to attend special focus groups in May and June (exact dates/times to be determined). For more details, and to register, please [click here](#).

Asian Canadian Women: Support, Strength, and Solidarity Gatherings

If you are of Asian descent in The United Church of Canada and self-identify as woman, genderqueer, and/or nonbinary, you are invited to gather together in Asian Heritage Month this May. On **May 2 and 5**, 4:00-6:00 PM (MDT), we will take time to get to know one another, to talk about our places in the church, and to explore the intersections of our racial identities and gender identities. Asian women are particularly visible and vulnerable during this pandemic time. Please be welcome to a safe meeting space to connect, lament, and honour one another. To register, please send an email to: anti-racism@united-church.ca with your full name, your email address, and your Asian ancestry.

National Worship Service of Apology and Lament for the Church's Role in Coerced Adoptions

On **May 9**, from 1:00-3:00 pm (MDT), The United Church of Canada will acknowledge its role in forced adoptions through maternity homes operated by the church. During the service The Right Rev. Dr. Richard Bott, Moderator, will offer a formal apology to mothers and all those affected by historical adoption practices. Please [see this link for more information](#).

Seeking to Reduce Harm

On **Wednesdays, May 12, 19 and 26**, at 5:00 pm (MDT), this national series will consider the idea of drug decriminalization. Our Regional Council Executive is a co-sponsor of this series, which gives us space to talk about this complex issue without taking a position on it. Themes will include Harm Reduction and UCC Engagement on May 12; Decriminalization of Illicit Substances for Personal Use on May 19; and the Theology of Harm Reduction on May 26. [Click here](#) for details and to register.

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