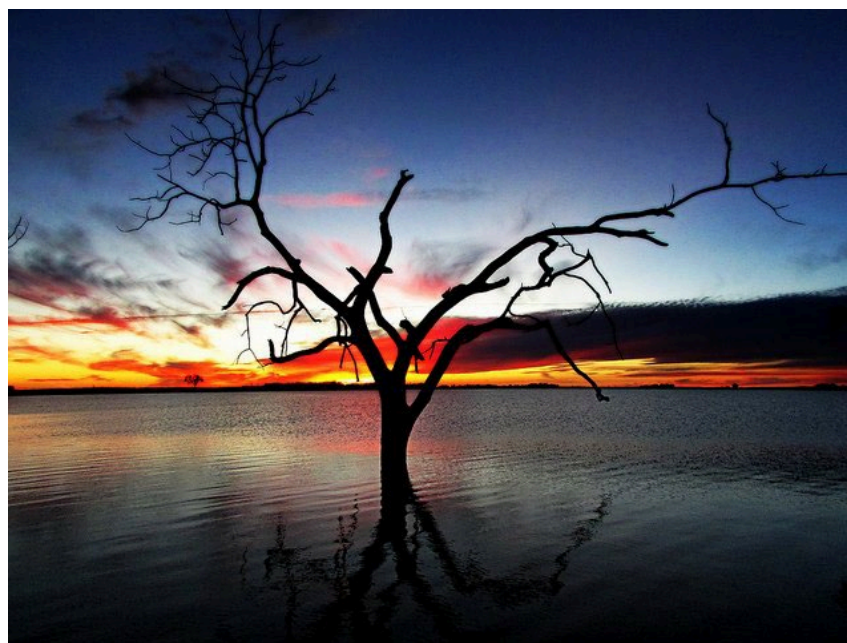




NORTHERN SPIRIT
REGIONAL COUNCIL
THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA

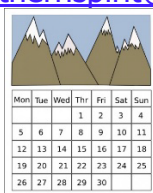


News from the Region: February 7, 2024



News of interest to the people of the Northern Spirit Region.

If you have news or events to share, please write a short description, with a clear headline and a link to more information, and send it to northernspirit@united-church.ca.



★ Add your local events to our Northern Spirit events calendar! ★
[Click here to view upcoming events.](#) And [click here to submit your event.](#)

Featured News

★ **Regional Council response to Alberta's planned legislation targeting transgender people**

The chairperson of the Regional Council, Rev Helen Reed, [has responded to Alberta Premier Danielle Smith's announcement](#) regarding the planned restrictions of the rights of transgender, non-binary, Two Spirit, and other gender diverse children and youth.

Since these proposed restrictions include health care and sports, it is likely they will also affect communities within our Regional Council in Northeast BC and NWT, if passed. This week Northern Spirit, Chinook Winds, General Council, and Affirming Connections (Calgary) are meeting to look at action options. All our voices are needed, and MLAs will likely need to be our first line of contact. A number of community vigils and demonstrations have already taken place; please continue to watch your local media and social media. Some anti-hate sites have already noted with gratitude presence from local United Churches. Showing public support for trans youth and children at vigils, through flags and signs, in worship, and more, is so important: even if we never know the results.

★ **Hate mail being sent to Affirming ministries: help us stop it at the border**

Transphobic and homophobic hate mail from the US is again being sent to United Church Affirming ministries and possibly non-Affirming ones too. The package contains print messages and a USB key and often has a Customs declaration that it is a “gift.” Some or all are sent from “Woodward Publications” in Oklahoma.

If you receive mail that you suspect to be this or other hate correspondence, please contact your Regional Council office. Do not throw the package out immediately, and if you open it, do not use the enclosed USB key! [Please click here for full information on how you can help stop this](#) by adding information to the Canadian Border Services Agency case we have opened.

★ **Level Up! Website creation for local ministries**

Websites are an important part of the toolbox for communities of faith of any size or location, but setting up a new one or doing a refresh can seem daunting. Some Regional Councils have worked with Cheri Uthe of Faith Productions to develop an adaptable, affordable template for church websites. This template is built on the WIX web-builder platform and can be adapted to any congregation or ministry. There are a variety of options and support packages available. Cheri can complete and deliver a “plug ‘n’play” site for you, serve as your ongoing website support person, share information about various charitable grants for discounts on software licensing and webhosting, and more. [Please have a look at a summary here](#), and think about this option if your site needs a refresh or if you’re just getting started.

★ **Faith Spaces | Safe Spaces anti-racism gathering: February 11, 1-4:30 p.m., Edmonton**

The Edmonton-based Faith Spaces | Safe Spaces initiative (faithspacesafespacesyeg.org) is a grassroots coalition that is all about fostering unity, understanding, and social justice within and amongst faith communities as we stand together in the relentless pursuit of eradicating racism in all its forms. On **February 11th, 1:00-4:30 pm**, in conjunction with United Nations World Interfaith Harmony Week, and during Black History Month, Faith Spaces | Safe Spaces will bring together a growing network of passionate people from diverse spiritual and religious backgrounds who are committed to the work of anti-racism in the Edmonton area. This gathering will include multifaith and intercultural expressions of ceremony, prayer, song, and food.

We will also hear from a gifted panel of speakers from different spiritual paths. Do you want to be part of this movement too? Join us at the Boyle Street Plaza (9538-103A Street, Edmonton) on February 11th. To register for free tickets, please visit the [EventBrite Link](#).

Updates on Remit voting: set a date; accessing your M&S or Community of Faith ID

Two letters were sent recently to all pastoral charges in the Regional Council: [Click here for the letter from General Secretary Rev Michael Blair](#), and [click here for the letter from your Regional Council leadership](#). Both have important reminders and resources on the Remit on creating an autonomous Indigenous organization within the United Church. You are urged to set a date for a vote if you have not done so already. Do not hesitate to call the Regional office with any questions, so that we can put you in touch with resource people.

In order to vote, you will need your Mission and Service number or your Community of Faith ID. Your Mission and Service number can be found in your ChurchHub account or in your PAR info, if you use PAR. When you sign into your ChurchHub.ca, your Community of Faith ID number should be in the upper right-hand corner of your screen. If either of these aren't set up for you or just don't work, don't hesitate to call the office and we'll help.

The remit vote deadline date is **March 31, 2024**.

Wider Church News & Resources

★ Have a Heart Day for First Nations kids, February 14

Have a Heart Day is a child and youth-led reconciliation event that brings together caring Canadians to help ensure First Nations children have the opportunity to grow up safely at home, get a good education, be healthy, and be proud of who they are. Every year, the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society invites us to send a letter to the Prime Minister and our MP, and to work with the kids in our lives to do so. There's even a fun letter template featuring Spirit Bear to help us get the word out. [Click here for details and the letters](#).

★ Refugee advocacy and sponsorship news

In [the latest national refugee news](#), there's everything from an update on a global conference of which the United Church was a part; a new sponsorship support fund; support for LGBTQ people seeking refuge; and training opportunities. Have a look, and note the "subscribe" button at the bottom. This newsletter is occasional, super helpful, and won't overwhelm you!

★ Action: Major concerns about Canada's military sales to Israel

United Church people are asked to keep [writing our members of Parliament using this action tool](#) or our own letters, as concern grows that Canada's military exports to Israel may risk complicity in genocide. In their December 2023 report, "[Fanning the Flames](#):"

[The grave risk of Canada's arms exports to Israel](#)," Project Ploughshares reveals that Canadian corporations, with permits granted by the Canadian government, regularly export military hardware and components to Israel. (Project Ploughshares is the ecumenical peace research body related to the Canadian Council of Churches, of which The United Church of Canada is a member.) In fact, when adjusted for inflation, Canadian sales in 2023 were almost as high as the peak year, 1987. Only by ending its military exports to Israel can Canada meet its domestic and international obligations to eliminate violations of international humanitarian law in Gaza, including possible war crimes.

In Case You Missed It...

Opportunities to serve the Regional Council and the national church

Both the Regional Council and General Council seek people to serve on a range of committee and task groups. Regional opportunities are being sent out through this newsletter and other channels over the next month. [Click here for the first Nominations Newsletter featuring the Pastoral Relations Commission](#). If you know someone who should be considered for one of the national roles, or if you want to lend your own unique talents to the church, let us know. Diversity—in terms of racial and ethnic background, gender identity, sexual orientation, physical abilities, geographical location, vocation or economic status—makes us strong, as the church is committed to proactively address inequities and historic patterns of exclusion. [Click here for a summary of General Council openings](#).

An opportunity – maybe for you? - Prairie Candidacy Board

Northern Spirit, Living Skies, and Prairie to Pine Regional Council's Candidacy Board provides an essential role in assisting people to discern their call into ministry. The Prairie Candidacy Board is currently **seeking two lay members and a diaconal minister**. We currently meet on the **3rd Thursday of March, May, September, November at 1pm** (SK time) and **in person in January**. This could change depending on the availability of the committee members. If you are interested but have questions, please contact Vocational Minister, Laura Fohse by emailing lfouhse@united-church.ca or phone 1-800-268-3781, ext. 2005. If you know of someone who may be a good fit, please tap them on the shoulder and give them Laura's contact information. **Deadline for applications is February 26**. To apply for these vacancies click [express interest or nominate someone](#).

Regional meeting 2024: May 2 and 9 online

The Northern Spirit Executive has chosen Thursday May 2 and 9 for an online regional meeting. More details will be shared through the winter and spring. The need for face to face connecting has not been forgotten! The Regional Council strongly encourages us to plan for Cluster and other gatherings, as we continue to work towards renewing relationships and communication that struggled through both the restructuring and the pandemic. Please remember that Regional funding is available for such work. If have a Cluster that's up and running or soon will be, please [contact Chloe Burns](#) at the office,

so we can update the Clusters and Networks contact list.

Reminder for Ministry Personnel: Annual Declaration 2024

You've made it through another intense Advent and Christmas season! We know, and appreciate, how much you have put into your ministry as you enter this season of Epiphany. Of course, there are always more tasks and ministry waiting for you in 2024. The Annual Declaration process is one of those important (and simple) tasks to add to your list. Follow the link below to ChurchHub and complete your Annual Declaration by February 16th and your name will be entered into an **Early Bird Draw** for a chance to win a \$50 Gift Card, of your choice: <https://churchhub.ca/>. Need help accessing ChurchHub? Please contact ministry@united-church.ca. Questions about the Annual Declaration process can be answered by your Vocational Minister or feel free to send an email to LGiffin@united-church.ca.

Worship Resources:

See United Church [Worship Resources](#) for upcoming Sundays and special celebrations.

[Black History Month 2 - February 11, 2024](#)

[Transfiguration Sunday - February 11, 2024](#)

[Ash Wednesday - February 14, 2024](#)

[Black History Month 3 - February 18, 2024](#)

[Black History Month 4 - February 25, 2024](#)

* [Click here to access Northern Spirit's 2024 Prayer Cycle](#)

- [Click here to access past Newsletter issues.](#)
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Available Items!

Pickardville United has some items to disperse, including: Good News Bibles, Voices United hymnbooks, candlesticks, collection plates, baptism & communion items, & more! For full list & photos, contact: pickardvilleuc@gmail.com.





Northern Spirit Regional Council Office

13535 122 Avenue NW Edmonton Alberta

780.435.3995

northernspirit@united-church.ca

www.northernspiritrcc.ca



Image Credits: Neuharth, Spencer. Sunset sets the sky ablaze at South Dakota's Waubay National Wildlife Refuge, from **Art in the Christian Tradition**, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN. <https://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=56414> [retrieved February 7, 2024]. Original source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Waubay_NWR_Sunset_\(9737733990\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Waubay_NWR_Sunset_(9737733990).jpg).

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