



NORTHERN SPIRIT  
REGIONAL COUNCIL  
THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA



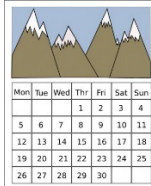
## *News from the Region: February 21, 2024*

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### **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](mailto: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.](#)

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## **Featured News**

### ★ **Lenten Letter from our Growth Animator**

[Click here to read a letter from our Growth Animator](#), Jordan Cantwell, on Lent as a season of invitation.

### ★ **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 latest Nominations Newsletter featuring the Community of Faith Support Committee.](#)

General Council openings: the national call for nominations is closing soon for various General Council and Office of Vocation roles. Check if the leaders you believe are called need any assistance to submit their interest, and don't forget to submit your own. [Click here for all General Council openings.](#)

The Prairie Candidacy Board is also currently seeking two lay members and a diaconal minister. If you are interested but have questions, please contact Vocational Minister, Laura Fohse by emailing [lfouhse@united-church.ca](mailto: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 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.

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.

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

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.**

If you have voted on the Remit, have you actually sent your vote in? Please be sure that you email or mail your response in ASAP -- we are waiting for 62% of our churches to send in their vote. Let's be united in taking seriously our responsibility to care for each other.

## **Wider Church News & Resources**

### **★ Lenten liturgy for Palestine and Israel**

In recent years, some congregations have started a new tradition; extinguishing candles on Sundays through Lent. This dimming of light during the season of Lent reminds people that this 40-day journey is leading to the cross of Good Friday. The Worship Group for the United Network for Justice and Peace in Palestine and Israel (UNJPPI) sees a connection between the journey to Good Friday and the journey of the Palestinian people. At the same time, we recognize and need to acknowledge that, in the West, we have been complicit in the ongoing discrimination towards Palestinians and the destruction of their culture, their land and their people. The Lenten Candle Liturgy contains stories, historical information, images and prayers. We humbly offer this resource for any to use as they see fit in worship or in other devotional practice. [Please click here to download it.](#)

### **★ ATTENTION: Pastoral Charges with Manses**

We have been notified by Erik Mathiesen, Chief Financial Officer of the United Church of Canada about a requirement for all Pastoral Charges with manses to submit a CRA form related to "Underused Housing Tax". [Click here to read the full memo.](#) Treasurer webinars held monthly on Churchx will include a bit of a "how to" complete the form. It is the responsibility of the United Church General Council and Regional Councils to flag the risk related to not complying with the requirement. There is an apparent duty to file - with a penalty for noncompliance.

### **World Day of Prayer, Friday March 1 or a day of your choice.**

This year's service has been prepared by Palestinian women and includes materials and a full video of the service. [Please have a look at their many prayerful and thoughtful resources here.](#)

### **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...**

### **Save the Date! 2024 Regional Annual Meeting: May 2 & 9, online**

The 2024 Northern Spirit Regional Council Meeting will be held on the evenings of **May 2 and May 9, online**, via Zoom, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.. Planning is in progress – check for updates on [the website page, here](#).

### **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.

### **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.

### **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!

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## ***Worship Resources:***

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

[Black History Month 4 - February 25, 2024](#)  
[Second Sunday in Lent - February 25, 2024](#)  
[World Day of Prayer - March 1, 2024](#)

[Third Sunday in Lent - March 3, 2024](#)

[International Women's Day - March 8, 2024](#)

[Fourth Sunday in Lent - March 10, 2024](#)

[National Affirming Pie Day - March 14, 2024](#)

[Fifth Sunday in Lent - March 17, 2024](#)

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

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