



News from the Region: June 25, 2025



St. Luke's United Church in Fort St. John B.C. celebrated the 100th Anniversary of the United Church of Canada on June 8th with a Worship Service, followed by a barbeque, celebration cake, and wagon rides.

If you have photos of your church's centennial celebrations, please [send them to the office](#) to be featured in our 2025 newsletters!

Short reminders of our history for this Centennial year

*Throughout 2025, we'll be featuring very short stories about United Church history. Thanks to historian Gayle Simonson in Edmonton, we can also offer 100-word history vignettes for use in your own community! [Here are vignettes 1-8](#). **And brand new, [here are vignettes 9-17](#)**. (Word format; when you click, the file will save automatically to your Downloads folder.) For our next vignette, she writes:*

Union did not end in 1925. In 1930, the Wesleyan Methodist Church of Bermuda became a part of the United Church of Canada. There are currently three congregations. Once part of the Maritime Conference, since the UCC restructured a few years ago, they are part of the Bermuda Nova Scotia Regional Council. In 1968 the Evangelical United Brethren joined and the UCC is also in full communion with the United Church of Christ U.S.A. A founding member of the Canadian Council of Churches, UCC is one of 24 members and several affiliates "seeking unity amid its own unparalleled diversity." UCC is one of 352 members of the World Council of Churches who work together globally for unity, justice and peace.

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.](#)

Family News

★ **Newsletter Summer Schedule:**

This is the last regular Wednesday newsletter of the summer. Special send-outs will be sent for anything urgent or time-sensitive, and regular weekly newsletters will resume on **August 27!** The [online events calendar](#) will continue to be updated: please share your church events there!

♥ We are sad to share news of the death of *Rev. James J. Strachan*. James John Strachan was ordained into ministry with the United Church in 1959, and prior to passing marked 65 years as UC clergy. A memorial will be held Monday, July 7, 2025, 2:00 p.m., at First United Church, Wetaskiwin, AB. Live-streaming will be available on the First United Church, Wetaskiwin YouTube channel. [Further remarks about James' life and ministry are shared by son-in-law, the Reverend Joe Ball, Director and teaching Chaplain at Brandon General Hospital.](#)

♥ **Daysland and Killam Pastoral Charge** will be honouring Rev. Deanna Cox's De-Covenanting Service which is scheduled for **August 24, 2025** in Killam at 7pm. There will be cake and refreshments to follow.

★ **Centennial greetings video from every Regional Council**

At the start of the United Church's national Centennial service, [a video of greetings from all Regional Councils was shown](#). Feel free to use this in your community of faith! Prairie to Pine, Living Skies, and Northern Spirit used a collection of photos to show the work of the people of the whole Region, organised and edited by Young Adults and Youth Prairie to Pine member Nicholas Dubé. Look for some familiar faces! Thank you to two SK photographers who gave us photos of the northern lights over Castleton United Church, in honour of the theme of the service.

Centennial greetings from the Regional Council

We turned 100! Let's declare the whole year a Centennial. [Here are video greetings from the Regional Council Executive.](#)

★ **Centennial thank you, and new mini stories!**

Thank you to all who have held and will hold creative, Spirit-ed community gatherings to commemorate our 100th birthday. Our regional calendar and community of faith social media show the wide range of creative happenings, from choirs to tree-planting, community history conversations to plans for future ways of serving and funding our communities. Congratulations to all who created these spaces.

Thanks to historian and writer Gayle Simonson for adding another four stories to the Centennial collection she has written, and again, feel free to use these in your own communications. [Please see the updated post here.](#)

★ **Summer letter from the Growth Animator**

[Click here to read a letter of encouragement and invitation](#) from our Growth Animator, Jordan Cantwell, including an example of a summer activity that can help your church connect to your neighbourhood and community. All of Jordan's letters are archived [on our newsletter page](#) (scroll to the bottom!).

Letter to Alberta Chiefs in support of their reminders of Treaty relationships

The Being Good Relations Network has written a solidarity letter to the Treaty 6, 7, and 8 chiefs, expressing solidarity with their strong reminder that all of Alberta is Treaty land and that this fact is central to the province's continued courting of separatist groups. [Please see the full letter here.](#) Your community of faith is most welcome to use the letter as a resource for writing your own.

Pastoral letter from the Moderator and Regional letters on the wildfires

Northern Spirit, Living Skies, and Prairie to Pine regional councils often collaborate. Now we are facing a collaboration none of us want: wildfires. All three Regions have communities who have been forced to flee or are facing evacuations, and all three are relying on the courage of first responders and the efforts of relief agencies. As our Moderator, Rt Rev Carmen Lansdowne said, "As I write this, you continue to face the devastation and displacement from wildfires across Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. The New Creed speaks of our commitment to "live with respect in creation," a teaching from Indigenous members of the church. We acknowledge that these fires are the result of our lack of respect." [The letter is here as a PDF file.](#)

Living Skies' own [statement is here](#); Prairie to Pine's [is here](#). Northern Spirit's fire situation is now also starting to worsen and communication to the Region is being considered. We pray especially for the people in Fort Nelson and area, as the highway has closed and re-opened a few times.

★ **Supporting Wildfire Evacuees and Rebuilding through the United Church Foundation**

Donations are being accepted to **The United Church of Canada Foundation** through the *Ann Baker Trust Fund for Emergency Relief*. Gifts to this fund will support the emergency relief efforts and provide assistance and comfort to the folks whose lives have been turned upside down. Your generosity and gifts are

deeply appreciated as thousands of people in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta are being evacuated, and many have lost their homes or businesses. [Please see the Canada Helps link here.](#)

♥ **The Power of Prayer: call for daily prayer for wildfire impacts.**

Keewatin Circle, the Indigenous United Church in Manitoba, invites you to pray with them for all communities in Canada regarding the forest fire emergencies. **Praying will take place for 1 hour each evening beginning at 7:00pm CDT (Manitoba/ NWO), 6:00pm Mountain and CST, 5:00 pm Pacific.** We are praying for the following:

- *Rain*
- *Safety of all communities*
- *Safety of evacuees*
- *Safety for all those responding to the needs of evacuees.*
- *Safety for those who are in communities fighting fires.*
- *As well as the animals both domestically and wild*

We are asking that all communities pray with us, as prayer is stronger when we come together in time of need.

Wider Church News & Resources

★ The latest national overview newsletter, **E-ssentials**, is now out and [available here.](#)

★ **General Council 45 begins online**

The 45th General Council, the highest decision-making body of the church, has been constituted online and will continue to meet online until it moves to in-person and online in Calgary AB August
[All ongoing details are here.](#)

★ *(Updated)* **United Church of Canada Apology to Two Spirit and LGBTQIA+ / queer/ gender-diverse people: Friday, August 8th at 9:00AM Mountain Daylight, Knox United Church, Calgary and via livestream on the [national church's YouTube channel.](#)**

This is an advance notice of a very important commitment by the United Church to offer a public apology, with more details to come from the General Council 45 planners. This worship service is open to all. If you are considering attending in person, please contact your Regional office or regional justice minister Julie Graham at jgraham@united-church.ca so that the Regional Affirming Committees can be aware of who wishes to attend, and can look at carpooling as needed. If you are participating via livestream, please consider if you can host a space in your church (or another church) to join in worship and support together.

★ **Affirming ministries:** If you are sending a representative to the **Affirm United AGM in Charlottetown**, please email Julie Graham, jgraham@united-church.ca

★ **Join the Centennial Legacy campaign!**

As we continue celebrating our centennial year, the Foundation invites all communities of faith across the church to take part in our most ambitious and impactful fundraising initiative yet. The Centennial Legacy Campaign encourages legacy gifts that honour the past 100 years while, ensuring a vibrant future for the next 100! To learn how your congregation can get involved, visit www.CentennialCampaign.ca.

Action for Gaza from the national church and ecumenical partners

United Church people, including those fasting, are encouraged to phone their MP's Parliamentary or Constituency office every day for 40 days. At the heart of this is a call for Canada to impose comprehensive sanctions on the Israel government, as non-violent means of applying pressure on Israel to cease its bombing and its deliberate withholding of desperately needed food and medical aid. The action calls for an embargo all trade with Israel until it ends the genocide in Gaza and its military occupation; and for placing diplomatic, economic and political sanctions on the Israeli government. There is the [full action call](#) from the national church. Mennonites, the KAIROS ecumenical coalition, and others, are participating in similar calls, as the already unspeakable circumstances in Gaza continue to worsen, and starvation deaths climb.

In early July we will have a new resource: a video of the excellent panel on why aid isn't getting into Gaza. We were blessed to have passionate experts describe the on the ground situation and wider context, and respond to many good questions. It will be posted on the Living Skies YouTube channel.

★ **UNJPPI webinar recording: Justice Proposals for Palestine**

The recording from the UNJPPI webinar about Justice *Proposals for Palestine* is now available for viewing: <https://youtu.be/OCRXD5uogF4> (1 hour 45minutes). In this recording, you will hear about the rationale behind six proposals related to Palestine that are going to the United Church General Council from the people who created them. This webinar recording is for anyone interested in learning whether you are attending the GC meetings, involved in grassroots advocacy or just want to know more about the issues. If you have questions or would like more information, please feel free to reach out to [UNJPPI](#) - United Network for Justice and Peace in Palestine and Israel.

In Case You Missed It:

Whose land is your church on?

As we move through Indigenous History Month and honour National Indigenous Peoples' Day, Harrow United Church in Winnipeg delved into this question and [came up with this public tour](#) looking at the history of the Métis community displaced in the

1950s in order to build the neighbourhood and the church. St Martin's United in Saskatoon has a very similar history. What stories about non-Indigenous church buildings could each of us help surface, and work with Indigenous communities to tell? As the 100th year of the United Church continues, let's bring more truth-telling to light.

***Then Let Us Sing!* - Now available**

We're excited to bring you [*Then Let Us Sing!*](#), the United Church's inspiring new hymnal featuring 165 new songs from diverse voices around the world. The Full Music Choir and Accompanist editions are now available to purchase at UCRDstore.ca. An online platform, accessible through ONE LICENSE, will also begin rolling out over the next few months, eventually offering vocal and congregational scores for the entire collection. Learn more about the digital platform at ThenLetUsSing.ca. To celebrate the Centennial, a special *Then Let Us Sing!* Centennial Celebration Package is now available, featuring four pieces you can use in your community until June 10, 2025. You can find this package and many other Centennial worship resources on [The United Church of Canada website](#).

New Toward 2035 Initiative

The United Church of Canada has unveiled an inspiring new initiative, "Toward 2035," as part of its centennial celebrations. This forward-looking vision aims to honour the legacy of past generations while charting a bold path for the future. In an open letter, Rev. Michael Blair, General Secretary, emphasized the importance of this moment for reflection and imagination. [Read the full news story and the open letter from Rev. Michael Blair.](#)

Worship Resources:

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

[Canadian Multiculturalism Day - June 27, 2025](#)

[Third after Pentecost - June 29, 2025](#)

[Fourth after Pentecost - July 6, 2025](#)

[Fifth after Pentecost - July 13, 2025](#)

[Sixth after Pentecost - July 20, 2025](#)

[Seventh after Pentecost - July 27, 2025](#)

[Eighth after Pentecost - August 3, 2025](#)

[Emancipation Sunday - August 3, 2025](#)

* [Click here to access Northern Spirit's 2025 Prayer Cycle](#)

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



Northern Spirit Regional Council Office
8510 95 Ave NW Edmonton Alberta
1-587-407-0330
northernspirit@united-church.ca
www.northernspiritr.ca

Photo: Photo from St. Luke's United, Fort St. John, BC :)
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