



News from the Region: January 21, 2026



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.

[Check out our local events calendar](#), and [submit your own community events!](#)

Family News

♥ We are sad to share news of the death of *Rev. Raymond Olsen*, in December 2025. A celebration of Rev. Ray's life will be held Saturday, February 7, 2026 at 11:00 a.m. at Riverbend United Church, 14907 45 Avenue NW, Edmonton, AB. [Read his full obituary at this link.](#)

♥ **2026 marks the 50th Anniversary of Robert McClure United Church**

We will be hosting a Celebration Dinner with storytelling & music on Saturday January 24, 2026 @ 5:30 p.m. The meal will be prepared by Homestead Catering. The cost of the dinner is \$30.00/ person. Tickets must be purchased by January 18th. There is limited seating. Tickets can be purchased by contacting the church office and payment by e-transfer to office@robertmclurechurch.org. Please indicate when purchasing

tickets if Gluten Free or Vegan meals are preferred. There will also be a special worship service on Sunday January 25, 2026 with lunch to follow to continue our 50th anniversary celebrations. We hope that you can join us for our celebrations.

★ **2026 Annual Declaration – Now Open**

The portal for completing the **2026 Annual Declaration** is now open on ChurchHub. All ministry personnel (active, voluntary associates, and retired), including candidates, are required to complete the annual declaration **before April 30** in order to remain in compliance with United Church standards for ministry personnel and to maintain eligibility for calls, appointments, and licenses for sacraments and marriages.

Access the declaration by logging on to ChurchHub: <https://churchhub.ca/>.

Once logged on, you will need to:

- Declare whether you have had any criminal charges in the past year
- Attest that you have reviewed the *Creating Safe and Respectful Environments Policy and Procedures*
- Attest that you have reviewed the *Ethical Standards and Standards of Practice for Ministry Personnel*

Follow [this link](#) for a guide to assist you in this task or contact Laura Fohse, Vocational Minister, for assistance.

★ **Resource: Description of Lay Representative Role**

As many churches prepare to hold annual meetings and elect Lay Representatives to the Council, the Executive has prepared a document outlining the purpose and responsibilities of this role. [Click here to view this document \(pdf\)](#), and share with anyone in your community considering or taking on this important role.

Financial administration update

As announced before Christmas, from **January to March**, Heather Dootoff will be looking after year-end and the audits. Rob Smith has begun as our new part-time Financial Administrator. From Tuesday to Thursday, he can be reached at robertsmith@united-church.ca. Questions related to budget and expenses can be directed to him – be certain to use his full name in order to reach him as there is another Rob Smith in the system. *Welcome aboard to both Heather and Rob!*

Northern Spirit Prayer Cycle for 2026 now available!

The Northern Spirit prayer cycle for 2026 is [now available at this link!](#) This prayer cycle is created to ensure every congregation in our Region is held in prayer over the course of the year. Our prayer cycles are always linked on the [Worship Resources](#) page of our website.

Community of Faith Items:

- Living Spirit United in Drayton Valley has a *reception desk* they are looking to give away. 5 feet long / 22" inches deep / Height from floor to desk top - 30" / Height from floor to customer height - 44" / Top shelf is 44" from floor, 12" wide and runs the full length of the desk. It is quite heavy and in mint condition- not a scratch anywhere! Contact Dianne, livingspirituniteddv@gmail.com for photos and more information.
 - Daysland United Church has both *Voices United and More Voices hymnbooks* available for any churches who will give them a good home! Contact Sharon MacFadyen via united.dkr@gmail.com.
 - Faith United Church (Edgerton, AB) has made the difficult decision to close our doors. The congregation would like to donate the 14, ten foot *solid wooden pews* to another United Church in the Northern Spirit Region. The recipient would be responsible for arranging pickup. The preference is for the pews to go as one lot. Please contact Stephanie Spornitz 780.842.9669 for more information and pictures.
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Wider Church News & Resources

★ *The Manual, 2026 Now Available Online*

Looking for *The Manual, 2026*? The latest edition is now available at the top of the [Handbooks and Guidelines page](#). It is also available in French on [EgliseUnie.ca](#). Any errors and/or omissions should be reported to ntreksler@united-church.ca.

Toward 2035 Strategy Resources Now Available

[Toward 2035 \(T2035\)](#) is a hopeful, church-wide strategy designed to guide us toward a future that is resilient, inspired, and diverse. This strategy is grounded in the truth of our emerging reality and compelled by our continued call to discipleship. To include people in the pews in this vital conversation, a [new resource page](#) has been developed. Please use these resources in your communities and share them widely.

In Case You Missed It...

When a Health Emergency Affects Your Ministry - Measles Resource

For over 20 years, health emergencies have been in the news. Even the more common cold and flu season has an impact on our worshipping communities and ministries. How do we support these communities while protecting them? The most recent health emergency to emerge has been the resurgence of measles. How would your ministry respond if there was an outbreak within your community? While we all hope that we

never have to face such a situation, it helps to be prepared and have a plan. [Click here to access a document](#) with some information and ways to manage risk and develop a plan within your community of faith (word doc, will automatically download to your device).

Executive Minister Shannon McCarthy Sabbatical Reminder

Shannon McCarthy is on sabbatical from **Dec 1, 2025** to **March 2, 2026**. The Pastoral Relations Minister ([Adam Hall](#) – Northern Spirit) will be acting Executive Minister during this period. Shannon's Executive Assistant, [Chantal Winslow](#) will direct any other inquiries to where they need to go. [Full sabbatical announcement and details on our website](#).

Temporary Stewardship Support Contact

While Vicki Nelson, Community of Faith Stewardship Support staff for Western Canada, is away on medical leave, **Brenna Baker**, a stewardship colleague, will be available for questions or inquiries. Brenna can be reached at bbaker@united-church.ca.

Worship Resources:

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

[Third after Epiphany - January 25, 2026](#)

[Fourth after Epiphany - February 1, 2026](#)

[Black History Month 1 - February 1, 2026](#)

[Black History Month 2 - February 8, 2026](#)

[Tranfiguration Sunday - February 15, 2026](#)

[Black History Month 3 - February 15, 2026](#)

[Ash Wednesday - February 18, 2026](#)

[First Sunday in Lent - February 22, 2026](#)

[Black History Month 4 - February 22, 2026](#)

* [Click here to access Northern Spirit's 2026 Prayer Cycle](#)

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



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