

Regional Rambler

Living Skies Regional Council The United Church of Canada



April 22, 2020

Response to the mass murder in Nova Scotia

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Responses to the mass murder in Nova Scotia

With the rest of the country and church, and with the people of Region 15, we mourn the enormous violence and trauma created by one person. We pray, mourn, and act with the affected communities and with grieving families and friends. [Please see this message from our Moderator.](#)

Regional Council 15 of the United Church notes that an online prayer vigil is being planned for **Wednesday, April 22, 2020** at 2:00pm Atlantic time (**11:00AM in SK**). More information will be circulated in the near future as we have it, on Facebook ([Northern Spirit group](#); [Living Skies group](#); [Prairie to Pine page](#).) It will also be shared at youtube.com/unitedchurchofcanada

This note is from Eric Skillings and Catherine Christie, members active in leadership of the Canadian Rural Church Network (CRCN): The Lord says, "Wailing will be in all the broad ways, and they will say in all the streets, 'Alas! Alas!', and they will call the farmer to mourning." (Amos 5:16)

In a rural area of Colchester County, Nova Scotia, and across Canada, people are beginning to understand the extent of the killings and destruction caused by one man over a 12-hour period. Grief and lament are expressed at the more than 18 deaths... This is an especially grievous action, happening as it does in such a small rural area, and thus very shocking to us who are residents of such rural communities throughout the country and world. We believe, don't we, that our communities are basically safe and close, and so it shakes our confidence to see the vile depths of what has happened.

Please pray for comfort and strength for those who grieve and lament in this time.

1. Living Skies Regional Council News:

[A second COVID-19 letter to Ministry Personnel from Rev. Adam Hanley](#), Program Coordinator, Ministry Personnel Vitality, Office of Vocation

Reminder: COVID-related news for the Regions will be posted on our websites as they are available. Currently a task groups is working on the question of emergency finances. For national resources, such as finances and worship, see the national site.

Thank you for your patience with the incredibly fast flow of information.

Ongoing Regional check in and support meetings The Regional Council will continue with **Tuesday ministry personnel check ins** that are Region-specific. Please see your Regional Council's Events calendar or check with your Pastoral Relations Minister.

We will also continue with **lay leadership Wednesday evening meetings** for all three Regions, **at 6:30 PM** in SK. **Topic for April 22: Check in for pastoral charge supervisors** (lay and OM). Supervisors have specific responsibilities and roles at the best of times - and now things are a bit more complicated. Join this gathering for support and conversation. **April 29:** Members of Ministry and Personnel Committees.

Meeting link for all Wednesdays: <https://united-church.zoom.us/j/978525442>

(Do not post this link on social media or your congregational website, please. Share it by email.)

Governance during the pandemic - Several important updates and clarifications were released following last week's meeting of the General Council Executive. Congregational governance: [a governance overview is here is here](#), and a [specific resource is here](#). There was also a [temporary amendment to some key pastoral relations policies](#).

Ministry Personnel Re-appointments – if the pastoral relationship with your ministry personnel is due for renewal in June, it must be completed via ChurchHub this year. This requires that both ministry personnel and communities of faith have active ChurchHub accounts. If you have questions regarding your ChurchHub account, please contact Tracy Murton (tmurton@united-church.ca). If there are no changes to the terms of the appointment, the reappointment requires approval from the governing body only, so see the information on the Regional Council website about guidelines for those meetings during these times. Prior to the meeting of the governing body, click "send draft email" which will send a draft copy of the form to the Regional Council for review.

Annual Declaration for Ministry Personnel From April 1 to June 30, ministry personnel (including candidates in Supervised Ministry Education appointments or other appointments) will be able to submit their annual declaration on criminal charges form on ChurchHub. This form needs to be filled out no later than June 30, 2020 to remain compliant, including being eligible for calls or appointments and for licenses for sacraments and marriages.

To fill out the annual declaration, log in to [ChurchHub](#) and "My Ministry Page." Look to the right for the "My Professional Requirements" box and then select the "Annual Declaration 2020" link. If you completed your annual declaration anytime from January to March 2020, then you actually were completing your 2019 annual declaration. You will need to log into ChurchHub and complete your annual declaration for 2020. Please contact the [Office of Vocation](#) if you have any questions.

Voluntary Chaplains The Committee on Ministry Personnel Support has gathered together a group of 5 people who have offered to serve as Voluntary Chaplains for ministry personnel in Living Skies Regional Council. The recognition of the ongoing isolation and the unique challenges to ministry during this pandemic has created a call to ensure ministry personnel have the support and resources that might be needed for health, joy and excellence in the practice of ministry. The list of ministry personnel has been divided regionally amongst the chaplains who will endeavour to contact each individual by telephone or email. While each minister has been "assigned" a chaplain to make the initial contact, all of the chaplains are available during this time for conversation and support. The Committee wishes to express its deep gratitude and appreciation to Cathy Coates, Joan Rennie-Laing, Deborah Smith, Jackie Van't Voort, and Heather Wyatt for their willingness to serve in this way.

Worship resources The questions about everything from technology to music licensing continue to fly. Here's your home base for some national resources: <https://www.united-church.ca/community-faith/being-community/tools-worship-during-covid-19>

Earth and Camping Sundays As the weather warms, even with social distancing in place we can enjoy community with all our relatives: the new green plants, the returning birds, the ice receding from the water. We know that the pandemic has resulted in a lighter human footprint on the earth, for now, and challenges us to live differently into a new “normal”.

We also know that camping programs everywhere are in jeopardy this summer, and that our camps need support. We give thanks for the volunteers and staff who keep our camps going, and for the many campers and families who will one day return to our beautiful outdoor ministries.

Please consider how your online worship and your giving might lend some support to the Earth, and to the outdoor ministries that help all generations be in touch with the Earth. Have a look at liturgy options for: [Earth \(or Environmental\) Sunday](#) [Camping Sunday](#)

Congregational giving at a time like this In many ways, the church can now reach out further than before. Our doors may be closed, but funds are still needed. Please see this excellent overview of options for giving regularly and at a distance, and share this in your community of faith newsletter. It covers the steps for PAR, an overview of Canada Helps, and more: <https://www.united-church.ca/community-faith/being-community/congregational-finances-and-covid-19>

A Trans Christian Faith Perspective Some time in the fall, delegates to Regional Council gatherings/ annual meetings will be voting on Remit 1, which proposes renewed, gender inclusive wording Basis of Union wording about who can become a minister in our church. If you'd like to talk further about this important change, and explore how to have good intro conversations about trans and non binary identities, please contact Julie Graham, Justice and Communications staff, jgraham@united-church.ca Watch this recorded 90-minute webinar where five trans and non-binary people share a little of their personal stories, and how their Christian faith has made a difference along the way. Hear about how they understand their gender identity, why language is important, and why the church has been an important part of their lives. [Click HERE](#) to access the recording as well as to find *Resources for Going Deeper*.

Spiritual Directors The Committee on Ministry Personnel Support is putting together a list of Spiritual Directors within our Regional Council who would be available to offer spiritual direction for people within the region. The list would be available on our website for people who are looking to engage with a Spiritual Director in the region.

If you are would be willing to be on the list please contact Bev Diebert (bdiebert@united-church.ca) to give your consent and your contact information.

Make a difference with letter writing: Str8 Up is based in Saskatoon and is a community based and supported gang exit program. It helps gang members leave their gang behind and supports them in moving into a life free of violence. That demands commitment, support, and relationship. Relationship is a particular challenge in these times, so we're being invited to join in letter writing. Please have a look at this [Facebook event](#) for details or email Emily Carr at emily@str8-up.ca

Str8 Up shares space with our own Integrated Community Ministries and with Micah Mission, and all three serve an area of the city that is deeply under-served and vulnerable because of trauma, racism, and colonization. People from all over the province live there.

Regina Anti-Poverty Ministry action invitation to us Ok, we cheated a bit. To some extent, this is about COVID. And to a large extent, it's not. People living in poverty will be disproportionately affected by this pandemic, because they were being badly affected by “normal” circumstances before. Assistance rates don't cover the basics, as you'll see in this action. You're invited to look at the numbers, and reflect on your own situation. Then you're invited to remind our provincial government that the needs of the most vulnerable must shape its decisions. Please prayerfully consider sending a short message to the government. [Full details are all here, and please share widely](#). We may be self-distancing, but our care and our voices need not be in quarantine.

Parklands Restorative Justice is a ministry supported in part by members of our Regional Council and our Mission and Service givings. They work out of Prince Albert with prisoners and are [using letters to stay in touch with inmates who are now doubly isolated](#).

Update from the South Sask Hospital Chaplaincy We've posted an update by chaplain Lorna King [here](#).

2. Wider Church Information:

National COVID updates - are starting to slow down, but the emerging pieces are detailed, and longer term. Thank you for your patience with these endless updates. Please continue to use your community of faith channels to share these.

National Time-sensitive Webinars

April 22: Congregational finances during the pandemic, part 4. This continuing Wednesday series keeps us up to date on financial aid that continues to evolve rapidly. Webinars are recorded and can be watched after the fact. Time: 5:00PM in SK. Access this through [United in Learning](#) or the [national church's YouTube channel](#).

April 23: Congregational programming During the pandemic, United-in-Learning is offering a weekly series for ministers and church leaders, with just-in-time skills and reflections intended to help us all respond to the unusual situation we find ourselves in. If you have specific requests or suggestions for future topics, please [CLICK HERE](#) to email us! [Here's full information on this weekly series](#).

United in Learning will continue to offer its regular programming as well. [Click here for info](#).

Emergency financial information: new web resources The national church continues to offer us extensive information on emergency finances- no easy task, as the federal government continues to make important and helpful changes to financial aid congregations can access. Here is your new Emergency Finances home page: <https://www.united-church.ca/community-faith/being-community/emergency-funding-congregations>

Please review it carefully, as the order in which we do things is important. [Here's an overview of things you'll need to consider](#).

Refugee sponsorship during "distancing" The Refugee Sponsorship Training Program (RSTP) is a service and coalition that's often been very helpful to United Church communities of faith involved in the crucial ministry of welcoming refugees to Canada. The distancing we're all practicing makes some aspects of sponsorship and support very difficult. But if you're sponsoring a person or family, [here's a helpful bulletin of suggestions from the RSTP](#).

3. Upcoming Learning Opportunities:

Centre for Christian Studies: Pastoral care event, April 28, 11:00AM in MB and NW Ontario: Join the Centre for conversation about using a **Trauma Informed Approach to Pastoral Care** in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Register in advance: https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJUvdu2rrD0rHdJDnxvb7IZ_x2DuH53MnG7w

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

Eco-Commoning project online national events, April 24, May 21 Join us online to think creatively about commoning, social innovation and social enterprise in communities of faith. Take part in an interactive key-note presentation from Rev Dr Ted Reeve and The Very Rev Bill Phipps on how the social/economic theory of "communing" applies to spirituality and communities of faith; engage with local stories and take-part in conversation-style action planning and reflection through the World Cafe model. Prairie resource people who are part of local "eco-commoning" will join us. [Full details are available here](#).

Affirming Connections online day May 2 Life does go on! And Alberta's Affirming Connections invites us to continue our LGBTQIA2S+ journey all the more in the midst of this pandemic. They've opened this all day event to Affirming leaders and seekers everywhere. For full details please see your Regional calendar and the [registration and agenda link here](#).

Events in Living Skies: highlights - All of these are posted on the Living Skies [Events calendar](#).

May 2: Affirming Connections event <https://affirmingconnections.com/>

May 21-23: Regional Gathering / Service of Praise and Celebration (Humboldt) – cancelled

4. Reminders:

Financial Name Change The official name has now been changed on the bank account. Cheques should now be made out to “*Living Skies Regional Council*”. Please pass this to anyone who may send a cheque to the Regional Council office.

Cancellation of the Annual Gathering Please see the letter from Rob Reed, Convenor of the Regional Gathering and Tricia Gerhard, Chair of the Regional Council Executive with an [update on the Annual Gathering](#).

St. Andrew’s College ReJUNEvation 2020 – cancelled For more information, please [visit here](#)

[A letter to the Ministry Personnel with in our Region from Rev. Adam Hanley](#), Program Coordinator, Ministry Personnel Vitality, Office of Vocation

[A Pastoral Letter](#) from Rob Reed, the Convenor of the Regional Gathering and Tricia Gerhard, the Chair of the Living Skies Regional Council Executive.

The work of the Pastoral Relations Committee - [Pastoral Relations Ponderings Vol 14](#)

Super Easy Guide to Zoom This is a gift via Shining Waters Regional Council and web meetings specialist Amy Lenzo. It will appeal to all you visual learners. [Download the PDF here](#).

Video resources on trauma and self care Rev Diane Strickland specializes in helping us survive and recover from community and personal trauma and has been involved in crisis care and recovery in High River and Fort McMurray, AB. She offers an [overview on supporting one another](#) here, and these videos offer further “pandemic practicums”. Please share- and thank you, Diane.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DUIX9OaerzI&t=34s>

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/KlrJZE2I9aQ>

A note about recording and posting Regional Zoom discussions While we have been recording the lay leaders’ gatherings Wednesday night, we’re going to stop, and we won’t be posting any of the previous ones. It’s too much of a privacy concern. These gatherings are about community and questions; they’re not presentations. If you’d like to learn about a specific topic, please check the excellent resources at United in Learning. And of course, our regular Wednesday evening three-Region meetings are the place to be. Check your Region’s website calendar for the details.

Coronavirus scams and gathering congregants’ contact info safely Many communities of faith are gathering data from members and adherents to facilitate connections for worship, pastoral care, stewardship requests or governance matters. Please think through your approach carefully, because (predictably) coronavirus scammers are also hard at work. [Click here for recommendations on doing this safely](#).