



# The United Church of Canada

## Living Skies Regional Council

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Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice: they will have their fill.  
(Matthew 5:6 Inclusive Bible Version)

May 21, 2020.

To our kin – the people of the Living Skies Regional Council of The United Church of Canada. Grace and peace to you, in the name of the one called the Prince of Peace!

We are writing in response to the hateful, hurtful acts of vandalism that took place against a number of United Church Affirming Ministries, as well as two Anglican congregations, and the Unitarian Universalist congregation, all in Saskatoon, on a number of days at the beginning of this month.

Upon first receiving the news of graffiti being used to spread hate and instil fear, our initial emotions were anger and sadness. Our first thoughts were about the safety of the people – those known and unknown to us – for whom these buildings represent sanctuaries, places of learning and fellowship, and staging points for outreach, to their communities and beyond. Our first response was to offer prayers, and send messages to our United Church kin, because it was the quickest thing we could do, being at a distance.

Since news of these acts of vandalism has spread, we are so very grateful for the diverse and creative ways the affected Communities of Faith, their surrounding communities, and many of you from Living Skies have responded with words and acts of empathy, encouragement and support. We have a sense that all of the love, generosity and faith that has been shared in these past couple of weeks have tangibly illustrated the words of *A New Creed: We are called to be the Church: to love and serve others, to seek justice and resist evil...* We thank you for all these expressions of faith.

And yet, the initial acts of vandalism bring to light so many challenges and troubles in our world, our country, and our communities. In awareness of the challenges and troubles, it occurs to us that our Living Skies Regional Council – which includes the Executive and the people of all our churches and ministries – must consider what more it might be involved in, to effectively nurture and sustain justice and compassion and faith within all our communities.

To those in the LGBTQIA+ and Two Spirit communities, and especially our kin in Affirming Ministries in Saskatoon and within our Living Skies Regional Council, we want you to know that our deepest desire is to continue to work to be in solidarity with you. We also recognize that inclusion is a foundational element to Affirming Ministries, which is significant because we recognize that inclusion is a basic belief we aspire to, within our United Church. So, we long to receive your wisdom and learn best practices for nurturing this in our Communities of Faith. We thank you for your patient guidance.

To the Saskatoon Affirming Ministries that were specifically targeted – St. Andrew's College (Dea. Dr. Richard Manley-Tannis), Grosvenor Park United Church (Rev. Nobuko Iwai), McClure

United Church (Rev. Debra Berg and Rev. Laura Fohse), St. Thomas Wesley United Church (Rev. Brian Maitland) – we hope that you understand how much we admire your faith and grace during this time. We are grateful for your leadership – for your strength, your courage, and your understanding. We continue to trust that you will let us know if and how our Living Skies Regional Council may respond, in support of your needs.

Friends, the world and communities that we live and minister within have a deep need to be reassured that our God is a God of love. We pray that, by faith, we may all find the courage and strength to reflect God's love into our world and our communities. And we pray that, by faith, we may accept the challenge to follow Jesus' life example, to serve humbly, justly and compassionately.

Blessings,

Rob Reed, Diaconal Minister,  
Convenor of the Regional Gathering, and

Rev. Tricia Gerhard,  
Living Skies Executive Chairperson.