

Regional Rambler

Living Skies Regional Council
The United Church of Canada



February 21, 2024 – News

*The **Regional Rambler** is our primary resource for sharing information across the Regional Council. To be added to the receiving list, please email Bev Diebert at bdiebert@united-church.ca.*

Church office workers, please feel free to use these announcements in your church bulletins or newsletters.

In this **NEWS** edition of the Rambler, new and time-sensitive items are listed near the top of each section. Items included for the first time will have **NEW:** beside the title of the event. **Dates** are highlighted in green for easy identification.

1. Living Skies Regional Council News

NEW: Pastoral Relations Ponderings - [Pastoral Relations Pondering Vol 50](#). Updates from the Pastoral Relations desk.

NEW: Jordan Cantwell, our new Growth Animator has a letter of invitation for the Lenten Season. [Click here to see the full letter](#).

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.

Annual reports are fun!

Many of you have either completed the annual meeting for your community of faith, or are preparing for it in the coming weeks. The Committee on Community of Faith Support has been researching the parameters of the Independent Review of financial books for your annual report. The definition and procedures may be found in [The Manual](#) at G.4.4 and is listed in the [Best Practices document found here](#). It should be noted that contrary to the previous advice, the person reviewing your books **could** be someone within your community of faith with the appropriate experience, so long as they are **not on the governing body or finance committee**. Perhaps you could exchange books with a nearby community of faith? Contact Tracy Murton at tmurton@united-church.ca if you have additional questions and please remember to send a copy of your annual report to her.

Centre for Christian Studies offers CCS Friday: Creating Harmonious Space

On **Friday, February 23 from 12:00 to 1:00 CST** join an online conversation about creating “harmonious space” rather than “safe space”. Harmonious space is the condition in which diversity and inclusion truly grow. Guided by author and educator bell hooks, who said, “Learning takes place in harmonious space” and “Community that allows for risk, the risk of knowing someone outside your own boundaries is love.” We will consider harmony and risk as opposed to “safety” as the best environment suitable for diversity.

Our special guest will be Deaconess Adrainne Gray, who was consecrated a Lutheran Diaconal Association (LDA) deaconess and ordained an Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) deacon in 2017. She is currently the Director for Recruitment for the LDA with a focus on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and works remotely from her home in Atlanta, GA.

CCS Fridays are free. [Please register to receive a zoom link](#).

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 Utte 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, 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.

An opportunity – maybe for you? *Less than a week left to apply!*

Northern Spirit, Living Skies, and Prairie to Pine Regional Council's Candidacy Board provides an essential role in assisting people to discern their call into ministry. The Prairie Candidacy Board is currently **seeking two lay members and a diaconal minister**. We currently meet on the **3rd Thursday of March, May, September, November at 1pm** (SK time) and **in person in January**.

This could change depending on the availability of the committee members. If you are interested but have questions, please contact Vocational Minister, Laura Fohse by emailing 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, click [express interest or nominate someone](#).

2. Wider Church Information:

NEW: 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](#).

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. If you know someone who should be considered, or if you want to lend your own unique talents to the church, let us know. Diversity—in terms of racial and ethnic background, gender identity, sexual orientation, physical abilities, geographical location, vocation or economic status—makes us strong, as the church is committed to proactively address inequities and historic patterns of exclusion. [Click here for a summary of General Council openings.](#)

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.

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!

3. Upcoming Opportunities:

Please check out our CoF calendar for upcoming local events on the LSRC website. Watch for other upcoming events to be added. Our [Community of Faith events calendar](#) is open 24/7 for online events! As long as the public is invited, you can post it. From workshops to worship, go for it. [Here's the handy form](#). Be sure to **submit your events**, so folks don't miss events in their own 'backyard'.

Queen's House Retreat and Renewal Centre welcomes you! Their ecumenical programming combines in-person and online events using Zoom. Please visit their webpage for a list of all upcoming programs and to register for all programs: <https://www.queenshouse.org/programs/> ***Nourish Your Mind and Nurture Your Spirit at Queen's House!*** For inquiries/additional information contact Sarah Donnelly, Programming Director: 306-242-1916 x226.

If you are considering an event at Queen's House, please connect with Bookings Coordinator, Angela Brockmeyer. Angela can be reached at 306-242-1916 x230; bookings@queenshouse.org.

4. Reminders:

Survey: Mental health and illness in Canadian congregations

Do you attend or lead a Christian church in Canada? If so, on behalf of a national partnership between the Flourishing Congregations Institute and Sanctuary Mental Health Ministries, you are invited to participate in a ten-to-fifteen minute online survey. This survey will explore the experiences of Canadian congregants living with mental illness or mental health challenges, attitudes towards and beliefs about mental illness and mental health challenges in Canadian churches, and the congregational supports and resources related to supporting mental health and wellbeing. [Click here for the survey.](#)