

Regional Rambler

Living Skies Regional Council The United Church of Canada



February 7, 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: 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.

UPDATED: 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.

NEW: 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 Uthe 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.

New Justice Team for Living Skies and open house -- Tuesday, February 20, 10:00AM-11:30AM

The new Living Skies Justice Team is starting the work of re-engaging our broader social and ecological justice commitments. Community and sharing updates are an important part of this work, and they invite you to come and share your social and ecological justice work and interests at an online open house **Tues, Feb. 20, 10:00AM-11:30AM**. [Please click here for the details](#). Rev SunDo Hyun, Chantalle Morrow-Fesciuc, and Rev Jonathan Worrall are the current team members, and remind us that they would welcome some new members, and are happy to tell you more about the shape of the work.

Annual Declaration – Early Bird Draw

You’ve made it through another intense Advent and Christmas season! We know, and appreciate, how much you have put into your ministry as you enter this season of Epiphany. Of course, there are always more tasks and ministry waiting for you in 2024. The **Annual Declaration** process is one of those important (and simple) tasks to add to your list.

Follow the link below to ChurchHub and complete your **Annual Declaration** by **February 16th** and your name will be entered into an **Early Bird Draw** for a chance to win a \$50 Gift Card, of your choice. <https://churchhub.ca/> **Need help accessing ChurchHub?** Please contact ministry@united-church.ca. Questions about the Annual Declaration process can be answered by your Vocational Minister or feel free to send an email to LGiffin@united-church.ca.

An opportunity – maybe for you?

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 for these vacancies click [express interest or nominate someone](#).

Hear ye; hear ye. Good News is here!

The Living Skies Regional Council Meeting Planning Committee is pleased to announce the next regional meeting will be held from **June 13 to 15 (2024) at the Travel Lodge** (Idylwyld Dr. N. and Circle Dr) **in Saskatoon**, with the **Moderator, the Right Rev. Carmen Lansdowne** attending for part of our meeting. The Service of Praise will be at a United Church in Saskatoon (as yet undetermined) on **Sunday, June 16**. This year the **registration fee will remain at \$175.00**.

At your upcoming Annual Meeting, **please remember to elect or appoint your Community of Faith’s Regional Council Representative** (each congregation is entitled to have and send at least one). Their involvement in the wider church is extremely important in keeping our Living Skies Regional Council functioning and healthy for the long term.

Watch for the more information about the Regional Meeting coming out soon!

An important event only you can create: set a date for your vote on Remit 1! Need help finding the right resource? Want to connect with someone for a conversation about questions? Let us know. Contact the Regional office and we will help you find who and what you need. Phone: 306-704-0181. Email: livingskies@united-church.ca

Ministry Personnel Gatherings

Facilitated gatherings for all ministry personnel (active or retired) continue every **Tuesday at 1pm** on Zoom. Please check the website calendar for [connection information](#) to join colleagues.

2. Wider Church Information:

NEW: 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.

NEW: Have a Heart Day for First Nations kids, February 14

Have a Heart Day is a child and youth-led reconciliation event that brings together caring Canadians to help ensure First Nations children have the opportunity to grow up safely at home, get a good education, be healthy, and be proud of who they are. Every year, the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society invites us to send a letter to the Prime Minister and our MP, and to work with the kids in our lives to do so. There's even a fun letter template featuring Spirit Bear to help us get the word out. [Click here for details and the letters](#).

NEW: 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!

St. Andrew's College "Year of Intention" - Tomorrow

St. Andrew's College and the Saskatoon Theological Union next **"Year of Intention"** webinar will be on **Thursday February 8, from 7:30 – 9pm (Sask. Time)** Our panel discussion will include LTS' Dr. Kyle Schiefelbein-Guerrero and SAC's Dr. Becca Whitla, among others. Together, we'll be investigating liturgical resources which center LGBTQIA2S+ people and communities. To attend, use the [zoom link here](#). For more details, contact shawn.sanfordbeck@saskatoonthetheologicalunion.ca

Stewardship conversation and training opportunities, multiple dates, January through May

When you are ready to make good stewardship a core part of your community of faith, these courses are here to help. Each course has a specific focus enabling you to set goals, create a plan, and be successful, and includes both learning and practical elements. [Access all the options, details, and dates here](#). Questions? Vicki Nelson, vnelson@united-church.ca.

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. Regional opportunities are being sent out through this newsletter and other channels over the next month. If you know someone who should be considered for one of the national roles, 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.](#)

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'.

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.](#)

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:

Pastoral Relations Ponderings - [Pastoral Relations Pondering Vol 49](#). Update from the Pastoral Relations desk.

Jordan Cantwell, our new Growth Animator has a letter of explanation and invitation.

[Click here to see the full letter.](#)

Celebrating two new Affirming ministries! Westminster UC, Humboldt, and Mayfair UC,

Saskatoon Congratulations and gratitude to two Living Skies communities of faith who have recently voted in favour of [becoming Affirming ministries](#) who publicly, intentionally, and explicitly embrace Two Spirit and LGBTQIA+ communities and people. [Westminster United Church in Humboldt](#), and [Mayfair United Church in Saskatoon](#), thank you for your years of careful discernment, conversation, worship, and learning, and for this commitment to living out the good news that God's love embraces all. May your journey continue in new ways. We look forward to hearing more about your planned public Affirming celebrations.