

# Regional Rambler

## Living Skies Regional Council The United Church of Canada



March 6, 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](mailto: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: Sending in your Remit ballot**

Please plan to email your ballot in; information for that is on the ballot itself, which is [available at this link](#). Having difficulty getting a time set up, or with sending your results in? Have questions? Don't hold back - contact the office and we will figure out how to put you in touch with resources and people to talk with. Phone: 306-704-0181. Email: [livingskies@united-church.ca](mailto:livingskies@united-church.ca)

#### **NEW: ATTENTION: Pastoral Charges with Manses**

We have been notified by Erik Mathiesen, Chief Financial Officer of The United Church of Canada, about a requirement for all Pastoral Charges with manses to submit a CRA form related to "Underused Housing Tax" by **April 30, 2024**. **It is the responsibility of the UC General Council and Regional Councils to flag the risk related to not complying. There is an apparent duty to file - with a penalty for noncompliance.** For more information about the Underused Housing Tax, please read this [memo](#). The General Council website offers some information [here](#). The Tax was also discussed at the Treasurer's webinar held on **February 28**, including a bit of a "how to" complete the form. To watch the recording, [click here](#). The discussion about the Underused Housing Tax begins at 33:45 minutes. **To keep up-to-date** on the latest news and advice for treasurers, trustees, payroll contacts, and more, join every month. [Register here](#).

#### **NEW: Equipping the Saints**

Thanks to the leadership of our chaplains Lorna King and Emily Carr, Living Skies Regional Council has created a supportive group of lay folks engaged in pastoral visiting on behalf of their congregation. If you would like to join this group of saints, our next gathering will be on **March 14, 1:00-2:30pm** on Zoom. Rev. Brian Walton will engage in conversation with us on "What is Pastoral Care?". Please contact Bev Diebert at [bdiebert@united-church.ca](mailto:bdiebert@united-church.ca) to register. There is no requirement that you have participated in any of the previous gatherings.

**NEW: YAYA Spring Youth Retreat – April 26-28, 2024 at Knox Met United Church in Regina.**  
Grades 7 – 12 are welcome. **Cost:** \$50 (with funding available if needed.)

**NEW: Affirming PIE Day is coming up March 14: register your event**

Large and small, all services of worship and all events are welcome. There's many being planned across the Regional Council. Please add your sweet event to the national list and put this Region on the map! [Click here for the form](#). And see the rest of the website for resource galore, including new liturgies.

**You're invited: In person discernment for our new Affirming Committee: Tuesday, March 12, Calvary United Church, Prince Albert or by Zoom.** In May, Living Skies voted to become Two Spirit and LGBTQIA+ Affirming. To carry this work into the future, the Region needs to move from an interim task group to a longer-term committee, and for that, people with a passion for this work of public, intentional, and explicit commitment are needed and welcome. Come out in person or online and discern with the Affirming task group to see if you're called to help Living Skies live into its commitments. Please contact Justice Minister Julie Graham for details, [jgraham@united-church.ca](mailto:jgraham@united-church.ca)

**2. Wider Church Information:****NEW: Invitation: Worldwide Gaza Ceasefire Pilgrimage, in Lent and beyond, in SK and beyond**

In this season of Lent, pilgrims in 125 countries are mapping the 41 km length of the Gaza Strip, by walking in prayerful solidarity with the people of Gaza and calling for a ceasefire. These pilgrimages are not demonstrations; they are times of deep lament, contemplation, and community solidarity with the many, many people and the lands and waters who have been so deeply harmed by the immense violence in Palestine and Israel. They can take place in communities of any size, in any configuration, with any partners. Please consider this for your community, and contact Regional Minister Julie Graham if you'd like the simple planning resource being developed: [jgraham@united-church.ca](mailto:jgraham@united-church.ca) . [Please see the global website](#) for principles, resources, and more.

**One example:** an ecumenical group in the Saskatoon area is planning a walk on **March 23 and March 24** after Palm Sunday services, with stations for prayer, singing, and rest. Please contact Vicki Obedkoff, [vickio@sentex.net](mailto:vickio@sentex.net) for details, and watch the Regional website calendar.

**NEW: March CCS Friday – An Ecology of Faith Formation – Friday, March 15 (noon CT, 11am MT)**

Join the Centre for Christian Studies for an online conversation about the eco-system of faith formation in congregations. Our special guest will be UCC Growth Animator Greg Smith-Young. Within creation, ecosystems form as different and diverse creatures (living and non-living) interact together. Each part plays a vital role in making the whole. Ecosystems are about interdependence and integration. What can happen when we bring an "ecosystem" way of thinking into the faith formation work of congregations? Join us as we imagine the possibilities. Greg Smith-Young (he/him) is a Growth Animator with The United Church of Canada. He serves alongside existing and newly-forming communities of faith in southwest Ontario, helping them to share in what Jesus is already doing in their places: inviting, welcoming, engaging, forming disciples, and sending to share in God's Presence. **CCS Fridays are free.** [Please register HERE](#). CCS Fridays are online conversations to help us all to respond faithfully to emerging issues in local contexts. These workshops are open to anyone who might be interested. Each session will be on a **Friday from 12:00 to 1:00 CT** and in the form of a Zoom workshop. There will be a presentation that will be recorded for future viewing, plus opportunities to engage with the ideas in small groups.

**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.

**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'.

**NEW: Introduction to Godly Play – Online via Zoom - April 13 at 9:30am – 4:30pm (Mountain)**

The registration link is now open for the next Introduction to Godly Play. Originally developed with children, Godly Play is both spiritual practice and a process applicable to all ages and many settings. **Cost:** \$50 Now is [the time to register](#).

**NEW: Summer Camp in Saskatchewan!**

Yes, we did just have a wee bit of snow but spring is coming and with it the excitement amongst campers, volunteers, and staff at our amazing UCC Camps!

**Lumsden Beach Camp** (near Regina Beach): *Registration is open!*

<https://www.lumsdenbeachcamp.com/>

**Camp Shagabec** (Cypress Hills): *Registration opens March 15*, Applications for Volunteers are open. <https://shagabec.com/>

**Camp Tapawingo** (Candle Lake): *Registration is open!* Staff applications are still being accepted for head cook and lifeguard/medic. <http://www.camptapawingo.net/>

Stay tuned for updates on **Camp Christopher** (<https://www.campchristopher.ca/>) and **Camp Woodboia** (<https://www.facebook.com/p/Camp-Woodboia-100070296482386/>)

**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/> Upcoming programs include: **1) The Shadow and the Mystery of Evil – A Workshop for Spiritual Directors, Clergy, Therapists, and others in the helping professions.** This is offered in-person and on Zoom on **Thursday, March 21, 7:00 - 9:00pm. MDT and Friday, Mar 22, 10:00am - 4:00pm.** Facilitator will be Donald Bisson, FMS. [More info is here.](#)

**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](mailto:bookings@queenshouse.org).

## 4. Reminders:

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

**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](mailto:tmurton@united-church.ca) if you have additional questions and please remember to send a copy of your annual report to her.

### **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](#).

### **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!