

NETWORKS, CLUSTERS AND TASK GROUPS

Chinook Ministry Support Cluster	Contact: Carolyn Conarroe
Chinook Worship Circle (Cluster)	Contact: Elaine Little / Sandra Watson
Korean Ministers Cluster	Contact: Rev. SunDo Hyun
Reconciliation United (Saskatoon area)	Contact: Jordan Cantwell
Refugee Network Liaisons:	
Liaison: Donna Nelson	Liaison: Jim Tenford
Regina and Area Cluster	Contact: ReginaAreaCluster@gmail.com
Facebook:	https://www.facebook.com/groups/2205391406391275/
Saskatoon and Area Cluster	Contact:
United Church Rural Ministries Network	Contact: Catherine Christie
United Church Sask Camps Network	Contact: Lindsay Mohn
Western Intercultural Ministries Network	Contact: Mathias Ross and Salesi Takau
Women of the United Church Network	Contact: Dawn Weber
Affirming Process Task Group	
Member: Joy Cowan	Member: Robert (Bob) Hayes
Member: Shelly Manley-Tannis	Member: Allison Sarauer
Member: Yoonjoo Shin	Member: Tony Thompson
Member: Jackie van't Voort	
Rural Pastoral Care Task Group	
Member: Marilyn Peters	Member: VACANT

For more information about networks, task groups and clusters, please contact Julie Graham at jgraham@united-curch.ca

CHINOOK WORSHIP CIRCLE CLUSTER

Our small congregations continue to show that the number of people in the pews does not indicate the vitality of the congregation. Small, rural congregations can be most vital and alive. Motivated supporters are key to keeping church in the community.

Often, it's a congregation of 8 or 10 that works to maintain their 100-year-old building, knowing it serves as a beacon/guiding light for the community. They make significant donations to Mission & Service every year, support church camp, give financial support for refugee families coming into the larger community, support the food bank and provide hampers or gift cards locally where there is need.

Our group of worship leaders include retired ministry personnel, lay and licensed lay worship leaders-several are also Sacrament Elders. We meet 4-5 times during the year via Zoom or, when it works, we meet in person and share a meal. We serve a large area in the southwest, there is great distance between some of our preaching points. On average, we each lead worship two Sundays per month.

In our pastoral charge we often lead additional services: during Lent, during Advent-Blue Christmas, Remembrance Day service, etc. In Abbey, painting and repairing our 100-year-old church building before our town's birthday celebration was a community affair.



PHOTOS: some of the volunteers who painted Abbey United Church in 2023.

Sandra Watson,
Co-ordinator for Chinook Worship Circle

THE REFUGEE ADVISORY TEAM

So often in refugee sponsorship it seems like a “hurry up and wait” kind of job. We hurry to get all the forms submitted, and then wait for a long time for the processes to complete. Then all of a sudden, we get word that our new friends will be arriving. Quickly! So then we hurry to make final arrangements, then we wait again. Covid increased the waiting times significantly of course and while the “crisis stage” of the pandemic is largely behind us, it's still

impacting sponsorships because of the tremendous backlogs that were created. This is further impacted but the various crises that have occurred in the past few years. While some of these conflicts have not added greatly (yet) to the work of sponsorship, such as the crisis in Gaza, attention and resources are spread thin between the various groups of people who have been forced from their homeland.

Even with the delays and complications, we have had opportunity to welcome many newcomers to Canada and when this happens, those involved are reminded of the joy and satisfaction of participating in this sacred work.

So how can you be involved?

Sponsor! This is the most obvious way of making a difference to someone in great need. There are several ways this can happen and a great place to start in to look at the webinars offered by the Refugee Sponsorship Training Program (RSTP) at <https://www.rstp.ca> . This website is full of valuable information and the webinars on how to get started rotate through on a regular basis.

Help other communities of faith. Not all churches have the capacity to undertake a sponsorship of their own but those who do would be very happy to accept help from other groups, either through volunteering, offers of money or donations of items families will need to get settled.

Ask questions and vote! When some of those politicians knock on your door and ask for your support, ask how they plan to help increase and manage Canada's capacity to welcome refugees.

Promote peace! Supporting organizations (such as the United Church) that promote international cooperation and peace can go a long way to helping. After all, the best way to help refugees is to ensure people do not have to become refugees.

Support climate justice! One of the biggest drivers of human migration in the 21st century is going to be climate change. As wars are fought over dwindling resources, as more areas become uninhabitable because of heat and desertification, and as sea level rises, more and more people will need to flee their homes.

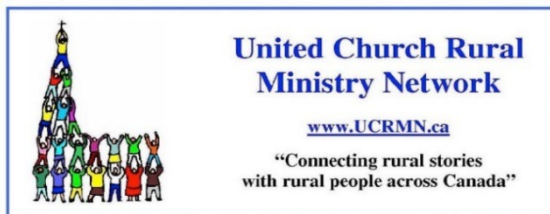
If you and your faith community would like to know more about how you can help, please contact:

Jim Tenford: sunsetunited.jim@gmail.com

Donna Nelson: msdonnanelson@gmail.com

Or participate in a webinar at <https://www.rstp.ca>

UNITED CHURCH RURAL MINISTRY NETWORK



The United Church Rural Ministry Network (UCRMN) is a national network, that connects electronically sharing stories and news of rural communities across Canada (and around the world), by networking with lay and clergy leaders of rural communities of faith. Find us on website ucrmn.ca .

Let me walk with you through some of the resources on the UCRMN website. Peter Chynoweth (Cochrane, AB) is the web minder. The **'Network'** connection includes a partner Atlantic Canada network called Rural Roots Through the Holy which has sponsored conferences in the Maritimes for 3 years. *In the Prairies* highlights the ecumenical Centre for Rural Community Leadership and Ministry (CiRCLe M) which has connections to Saskatoon Theological Union. CiRCLe M is hosting a conference, *Experiencing the Rural Culture of the Alberta Foothills*, June 18-21.

Then there are 'Resources'. I would like to recommend to all 'Tech Resources'. Martin Dawson, from Cornwall, PEI, and web minder Peter Chynoweth write thoughtfully, with humour and matters of ethical consideration of computers. They discuss the use of inexpensive software, like the free Jitsi meet instead of Zoom, refurbishing old and tired computers using open source software – in short, 'tech for scarce budgets' with an eye to keeping our tech out of landfills.

Next comes practical and helpful information on Collaborative Ministry, ways for congregations and communities of faith to work in partnership with others.

Then there are interviews that Martin hosts: With Peter on Open Software as an Ethical Alternative; with George Bott on Rural Connect; with Catherine Smith on her views of rural ministry and initiatives in the Maritimes; with Catherine Christie and Eric Skillings on the founding and workings of UCRMN. (These interviews are also found on Short-Wave Radio stations, a huge love of Martin's).

The next area is Workshops, with information about the quarterly Zoom workshops that UCRMN has hosted through the years. During this Regional Council year, 2023-24, workshops have been: on April 18 - Social Media in the Rural Church, facilitated by United Church Digital Team, Cara Czech, Stephen Fetter and Aaron Gallogos; Feb. 15 – Life Long Learning facilitated by St. Andrew's College staff, Dr. Bernon Lee and Shawn Sanford Beck; Nov. 16 – Pastoral Care to the Rural Church, led by Kathy Douglas of Antler River Watershed; Sept. 21 – further discussions on Collaborative Ministry; June 22 - Radically Welcoming and Rural, the opportunities of Diversity in the Rural Church.

Then there is ENews, with an archive of all the past ENews, from 2020 to 2024. We print 9 editions of UCRMN ENews during the year. Events happening throughout the Church are publicized, advertising from Regions and committees, the regular column on Tech Advice, a regular column from Joyce Sasse's Gleanings of a Prairie Pastor, reports from Conferences, and most importantly, stories from congregations of community action and ministries. We love to have stories shared. If you have something to tell, send an article (about 300 to 500 words) to editor@UCRMN.ca.

There are over 400 members of UCRMN across the country and in most Regional Councils. As a Network, UCRMN asks for financial support from each Regional Council. We thank those who have given support from their Networking funds. Our suggestion is \$300 from each RC - UCRMN wishes to support all the Regional Councils in their rural ministries. (70% of United Church congregations across the country are in rural or small towns, therefore a relevant cost to each Regional Council.)

UCRMN members are taking part in the "Rural Townhall" by Edge Network for Ministry Development, to hear peoples' thoughts about what is going on in rural churches, and how rural ministries can be supported.

We are a grassroots initiative for Rural Ministry in The United Church of Canada. Our goal is to connect the many Rural Ministry initiatives across Canada.

Respectfully submitted by UCRMN Board:

Catherine Christie, President UCRMN, Abbey, SK, Living Skies RC

Eric Skillings, Secretary/Treasurer UCRMN, Merlin, ON, Antler River Watershed RC

Shelley Roberts, Vice President UCRMN, Lanark ON, Eastern Ontario Outaouais RC

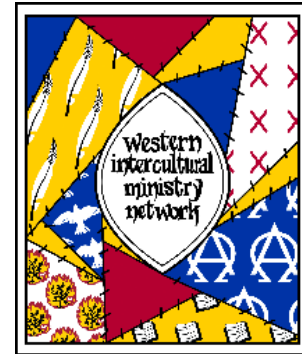
Donna Mann, Officer UCRMN, Elora ON, Western Ontario Waterways RC

Yvonne Terry, Officer UCRMN, Milestone SK, Living Skies RC

WESTERN INTERCULTURAL NETWORK

The Western Intercultural Ministry Network includes the people of, and leadership from Prairie to Pine, Living Skies, Northern Spirit, Chinook Winds, Pacific Mountain Regional Councils, and the Indigenous Church)

The Western Intercultural Network is a relatively 'young' network of communities in the United Church of Canada committed to a fully inclusive and intercultural church, covering the five Western Regional Councils.



The network holds gatherings, educational events and online conversations that focus on intercultural discussions and dialogue.

Network members are engaging in and promoting action in their regions towards living out the UCC's vision of being an intercultural church ([Vision for Becoming an Intercultural Church | The United Church of Canada \(united-church.ca\)](https://www.united-church.ca)). An executive composed of representatives from the five Western Regional Councils of the United Church offers us leadership.

Our vision of becoming an intercultural United Church encompasses:

- Racialized people and communities, which includes ethnic churches within the United Church, racialized lay leaders, and ministry personnel, and more.
- Indigenous people and communities, within the United Church and beyond, of all traditions.
- People with disabilities.
- LGBTQIA+ and Two Spirit people and communities.
- The privileged, yet broken, who are seeking wholeness and justice.

We are each worthy individuals and numerous cultural groups, and richer for our diversity. And we are at the same time engaged in a common pursuit of caring for each other and the planet. We honour our identities, and the spaces where they intersect. Our ministry includes courageous (and awkward!) conversations about our diversity, and about the social privilege and history that hinder right relationships. We believe the Good News of Jesus Christ calls us into such conversations, right relationship, and mutual transformation.

2023-2024 Activities

- The Network held its first in person Network Conference since 2019 from October 19 – 21, 2023 at Star of the North Retreat Centre in St Albert AB, Treaty Six. The event was attended by approximately 30 persons. The group enjoyed the opportunity to connect in person with others from across the five western regions as well as one person from Ontario, around the theme ***Daring Justice: Intercultural and***

Decolonizing Lenses on Truth and Reconciliation. We are grateful for the engagement of these presenters in making the event a success with their topic focus areas:

- Russel & Charlene Burns: Protocol and Cultural Awareness
 - MiYeon Kim: “Magpie, You Bring the Good News: Interculturality and Creativity in Ministry”
 - Becca Whitla: “Singing and Praying Justly”
 - Lloyd Nyarota: “Toward a Better Society: The Church’s Mission and Ministry of Reconciliation: A study from Zimbabwe discussed in a Canadian Context”
 - Chris Pullenayegem: “Hiding in Plain Sight: the Impact of Immigration”
 - Murray Pruden: “The Act of Storytelling - Collective Street and Community Theatre, “Approaching Intercultural & Decolonizing Lenses on Truth and Reconciliation”
- Throughout the past year the Executive continued discussions on how well the network is addressing its Mandate and TOR. The discussions confirm that education on intercultural vision is key work of the network. This education focus is delivered through continuing Coffee Chai events and in person events, when possible.
 - The network did not have its usual Coffee Chai sessions in the past year, choosing to focus on delivering this first face-to-face event since 2019.
 - The network sees broadening its involvement in other UCC intercultural and anti-racism work as key. Members of the network have done so in various ways, including contributions of written reflections to the 40 Days on Engagement on Anti-Racism series.
 - The Executive has been asked from time to time throughout the year to disseminate information to the network about opportunities to serve on UCC committees or working groups and to encourage persons in the network to discern their involvement and submit nominations to these groups.
 - Since June 2023 the WIMN Executive has been liaising with Emo Yango, Identity and Mission Network Coordinator at GCO, and responding to invitations to participate, along with other ethno-cultural networks within the UCC, in discussions that contribute to the strategic plan development. Specifically, WIMN and other ethno-cultural networks have been asked to discern what a long-term national support would look like for these networks. These discussions included meetings of the network executive with Emo Yango, as well as participation of representatives from WIMN in online and a face-to-face discussion in Toronto in early October 2023 on this topic. WIMN has a unique voice at the table as the group is the only intercultural network that is formed across several Regions. The network is happy to contribute to this work. One outcome of these discussions is that moving forward, ethno-cultural network leads will meet online quarterly and there are plans in place to meet once per year (in October) in person.

Annual Meeting

WIMN hosted its Annual meeting on October 20, 2023 at Star of the North Retreat Centre in St Albert AB, Treaty Six, in conjunction with its Network Conference.



At the meeting some edits to the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the network were approved. The updated TOR can be reviewed [here](#).

The members of the Executive that guided the Network's activities for 2022-23 chose to remain involved and to offer their gifts and stewardship for the work of the network for another year. Thank you!

The Executive for 2023-24 comprises:

Co-Chairs: Kathy Yamashita (Chinook Winds) and Deborah Richards (Pacific Mountain)

Secretary: Rev. Chelsea Masterman (Northern Spirit)

Pacific Mountain: Alwin Maben (past chair)

Chinook Winds: Rev. Dr. OhWang Kwon

Northern Spirit: Dorcas Muketha

Living Skies: Mathias Ross, Salesi Takau

Prairie to Pine: Damber Khadka, Bill Millar

Staff support: Julie Graham (Living Skies, Prairie to Pine and Northern Spirit Regions),
Chris Mah Poy (Pacific Mountain and Chinook Winds Region)

The Executive has been meeting monthly for 90 minutes. In early 2024 we changed this schedule and will now meet bi-monthly for 60 minutes, with other planning discussions for events occurring as needed in between meetings. This provides an opportunity for us to connect about activities in our regions.



Looking forward

The Executive will continue to build on its ongoing discussions on how the Network will engage in supporting and living out the call within our regions to be an Intercultural Church. The Network is also continuing to engage with other Ethnocultural groups within the UCC via the Ethnocultural Network Leads group.

Upcoming Events

Coffee/Chai time series will continue in 2024 in September and November (in conjunction with the Annual General Meeting).

Contact Us

If you would like to be contacted about WIMN events you can [sign up for occasional updates here](#); you can unsubscribe at any time, and we don't share your information with anyone else.

Respectfully submitted by

Kathy Yamashita and Deborah Richards

Co-Chairs

On behalf of the Executive of the Western Intercultural Ministries Network

March 25, 2024

THE WOMEN OF THE UNITED CHURCH NETWORK

Zoom Executive meetings were held January 5, April 30, June 3, September 15, and November 23, 2023 as well as consulting by telephone and e-mail.

A Women's Gathering was held in 2023 in Esterhazy and plans were made to hold a Women's Gathering in 2024 in Saskatoon....Where will it be in 2025?

Dawn Weber, Co-Chair and Phyllis Robinson, Treasurer, represented Saskatchewan United Church of Canada Women at the National UCW Annual Meeting held at Queen of Apostles Renewal Centre in Mississauga from September 20 to 24, 2023. Our region wrote the thank-you cards to the special guests.

Highlights from the National UCW Annual Meeting, September 18 to 22, 2023.

On Monday, September 18, 2023, UCW women from across Canada arrived at Queen of the Apostles Renewal Centre in Mississauga, Ontario, for the National UCW (NUCW) meeting. Each Regional UCW was represented by two women. We were about to embark on a busy time of learning, discussion, worship, and fellowship. President Nancy Risto's theme for her term was, "Where There's Faith, There's Hope", with the scripture Jeremiah 29: 11, "For surely I know the plans I have for you", says the Lord, "to give you a future with hope". Incoming President Barbara Davison's theme is "Lead not only by word, but by action". Scriptures: from Nehemiah 2: 20, "The God of heaven will help us succeed. We, his servants, will start rebuilding this wall" and 1 Corinthians 12: 12 – 27, "One body with many members." The new National UCW secretary is Cheryl O'Sullivan and Angie Musonza is the UCW contact at General Council.

We gathered with singing before each session, and had morning worship and vespers each day, led by women from different regions. Each day included business meetings, guest speakers, and time with our friends from across the country. NUCW Business Reports were received from our President, Regional Presidents, and others. President Nancy Risto announced that the 65th anniversary of UCW will be in Ottawa, July 19 to 23, 2027. (Keeping in Touch January 2024 by Margery Wright).

Monthly newsletters have been written, distributed by email and mail by Mary Mohn, Editor. Mary is our Sask UCCW Communications Officer, our representative to the National UCW *In Touch* Newsletter [formerly *Keeping In Touch*] and contact person for Sask UCCW on the UCW web page. The Sask UCCW Newsletters and revised Statistics Form are online at the Living Skies Regional website at www.livingskiesrc.ca under Programs>Women's Network.

The Sask UCCW *Statistics Form 2023/2024* was circulated with a deadline date for returns by March 1, 2024. As of March 2023 there were 275 Saskatchewan UCCW Members. For *Mission and Service* we raised \$19,075 in 2022.

UCW Bursary Fund Committee Report

UCW Bursary Fund Committee met once in 2023. It was by zoom in March. Only one application was received and \$2000.00 was awarded. The current balance in the Bursary Fund is \$6392.75.

A total of \$700.00 was received in donations this past year. Thank you, cards have been mailed out to all who donated.

This year's application deadlines are February 29, 2024 and October 31, 2024. Only one application per person per year is allowed.

Committee members are Chantal Ntibategera, Allison Irvine, Joan Brown, Dawn Weber and Mary Mohn. Submitted by Mary Mohn, on behalf of the UCW Bursary Fund Committee.

A Saskatchewan United Church of Canada Women Annual General Meeting was held by Zoom on Sunday January 7, 2023. The following were elected by acclamation and installed as Executive for the coming year:

Past Co-Chair: Chantal Ntibategera, Prince Albert,
Co-Chairs: Dawn Weber, Saskatoon, Diane Thurlow, Meadow Lake,
Vice Chair: Allison Irvine, Shellbrook,
Treasurer: Phyllis Robinson, Saskatoon and
Secretary: Barbara Byers-Bradley, Saskatoon.

The following agreed to let their names stand for office in 2024:

Past Co-Chair: Dawn Weber, Saskatoon,
Co-Chairs: Diane Thurlow, Meadow Lake, Allison Irvine, Shellbrook,
1st Vice Chair: Deborah Ferber, Saskatoon,
Treasurer: Phyllis Robinson, Saskatoon, and
Secretary: Barbara Byers-Bradley, Saskatoon.

The next National UCW Meeting is scheduled to be held September 16 - 20, 2024 at Queen of the Apostles Renewal Centre in Mississauga, Ontario.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of Saskatchewan United Church of Canada Women

Co-Chair: Chantal Ntibategera,
1st Vice-Chair Allison Irvine,
Secretary Barb Byers Bradley

Co-Chair: Dawn Weber, Diane Thurlow,
Treasurer Phyllis Robinson,
Communication officer Mary Mohn.

LIVING SKIES REGIONAL COUNCIL AFFIRMING TASK GROUP

Since our exciting unanimous vote on becoming an Affirming Region at our 2023 Regional Meeting, our Regional Affirming Task Group has met in-person and by Zoom.

Our Affirming Task Group was honoured to be invited to attend the Unity in Diversity: Exploring 2Spirit / Indigiqueer Perspective Symposium on March 11, 2023 in Prince Albert, hosted by the Metis Western Region II. The purpose of the symposium was to build positive relationships and a bridge of understanding by sharing experience and knowledge about who they are as 2Spirit / Indigiqueer people with the broader community. The symposium was excellent and very informative.

We developed a Regional Work Plan for 2024-2025. This Work Plan was approved by our LSRC Executive and by Affirm United / S'affirmer Ensemble and will be presented as a motion for approval at the Regional GM Gathering.

Our Task Group was also involved with the planning of the Regional Meeting Affirming Celebration Service. After the Affirming Celebration Service, the task mandated for our group will be completed and our Task Group will be terminated.

A newly elected Regional Affirming Committee will be elected to continue the on-going work required on being an Affirming Region.

A big thank you to Allison Sarauer, Tony Thompson, Shelley Manley-Tannis, Yoonjoo Shin,

Jackie van't Vort, Joy Cowan, Bob Hayes, and Julie Graham (LSRC Staff) for their work and dedication as members of the Regional Affirming Task Group.

NOTE: The Living Skies Regional Council Nominations Committee is looking for volunteers to serve on the Regional Affirming Committee. If you feel the call please contact the Nominations Committee or if you required more information contact Julie Graham LSRC.

Living Skies Regional Council Affirming Action Plan – April 2024

This is a living document and can/will change with the approval of the LSRC Executive.

The Living Skies Regional Affirming Committee is committed to following the Living Skies Regional Council Regional Affirming Statement, and will encourage the Region to be open to the Spirit as it lives into its Affirming commitment; the committee will use an anti-oppressive and intercultural lens in its work.

By Affirming, the Regional Council means:

Actively advocating for justice in issues of sexual orientation, gender and gender identity in particular, as well as: life experiences, disabilities, ethnicities, race, cultures, ages, geographic locations, economic circumstances, mental and physical health, and those we have yet to discern, both within the church and ministries of our Region, and in the wider community.

Committee members will be a diverse group with a minimum of 4 members, with the power to work with ad hoc groups on specific tasks. Members do not need to be part of an Affirming ministry. Term: three years, renewable once. Reports to the Living Skies Regional Council Executive.

Specific responsibilities will include but are not limited to:

For the committee

- Hold an in-person Regional Affirming Committee Gathering at a minimum of once per year and self-determine the number of on-line meetings as required.
- Implement and/ or continue to develop and update the Affirming Action Plan so that it is a living and relevant plan.
- Prepare an annual budget for the Regional Affirming Committee (to include the annual \$1000 fee for Affirm United / S'affirmer Ensemble and costs for one representative to attend the AUSE annual conference.)

Relationship with Affirm United / S'affirmer Ensemble

- Continue to work closely with Affirm United / S'affirmer Ensemble (AUSE) and follow their Summary Document for Regional Councils.
- Send a representative to the yearly AUSE annual conference.
- Promote the work of Affirm United/S' Affirmer Ensemble through education and engagement, by encouraging ministries to become Affirming Ministries, and by offering support to those that are. This includes promoting equal access to all rites and sacraments.

Support, connection, and education

- Encourage the creation of a network of the already-Affirming communities of faith and people, or those in discernment, for mutual support and sharing of resources. As one expression of this, connect people with public, intentional, and explicit online Affirming educational workshops within the Living Skies Regional Council.
- Develop resources and spaces to help governance, ministries, and individuals use an Affirming lens, and to celebrate the importance of Affirming commitments and the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.
- Bear in mind that this Regional Council ministers on Indigenous lands, and shares responsibility for living out the Apologies and the TRC Calls to Action, and ensure that these responsibilities are reflected in our work. This includes but is not limited to ongoing work alongside Two Spirit communities and people.
- When it is necessary to speak truth to power (governments, police, and other institutions), create advocacy channels for the members of the Regional Council to participate in addressing major concerns related to a policy or incident.

Work with the Regional Council's structures and policies

- Review all existing and new policies and major Regional Council decisions through an Affirming lens, including inclusive language policies.
- Work with all Regional Council governing bodies to bring an Affirming approach to their work.
- Encourage the Regional Council and ministries within its bounds to remove barriers to participation in the life and work of Living Skies Regional Council.
- With the relevant planning committees, help ensure that major in-person and online meetings and gatherings of and within the Regional Council follow best practices for the full and safe participation of all the communities named in the Affirming Statement.
- Be a resource to the Region and its ministries for work toward accessible and fully inclusive properties, facilities, resources, and systems.

Guaranteed Livable Income (GLI)

The United Church of Canada has had a motion on record, since 1972, to support and call for a guaranteed livable income. The closest we have come to such a program was during the COVID pandemic. The payments received were given to people who were out of work due to the pandemic. A national grouping of people from the United Church have been working on ways to create educational tools for our congregations, with videos, and resources for church services to help us understand the desperate need for a guaranteed livable income in this country.

Over the past year our group in Regina have been working with a Right Relations group that is working on issues of "Food Justice". I spoke before them about 11/2 years ago and our group was invited in to help organize such future gatherings. There was a regional zoom meeting on the Guaranteed Livable Income (GLI), in April. Participants from Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and western Ontario attended. The next regional zoom gathering will be June 25-26, 2024. I will be one of the panelists at this gathering. Hope to see you there.

Have provided a GLI presentation to Eastside United Church and have spoken about GLI in church services, over the past year. We need to continue the call of our church for a guaranteed livable income for all people. Please join us in building a just world, if we won't do

it for one another, let's do it for God.

Saskatoon folks have been busy as well. Here is their report:
Teresa Jones and Kate Heuer co-facilitated two book studies on Guaranteed Livable Income with the community of faith formerly Meewasin United Church, now SSUC - SK [Spiritual Seekers United in Community, a satellite community of SSUC in Edmonton]. In the fall of 2023 we discussed Senator Hugh Segal's "Bootstraps Need Boots", a personal story which led him to champion guaranteed livable income. Next the group decided to delve deeper by studying Evelyn Forget "Basic Income for Canadians" (2020). As we concluded our study, we decided to meet in June to strategize and plan how we might promote GLI in Saskatoon. In the meantime, we continue to educate ourselves by attending GLI events online.

Bonnie Morton, Sask. GLI Rep.
bonnie.morton@gmail.com

REGIONAL MINISTER: JUSTICE AND COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

If the church is dead, that's news to me. We're back to in-person events, fundraising in person is back in full swing and so is everything else, as evidenced by our events calendars. In the moments when all we can see is scarcity, I think we need to celebrate that deep and spirit-ed commitment to ministry in our communities.

Cross-regional work



National Indigenous Spiritual Gathering

I was honoured to attend this gathering in Edmonton in July 2023. I was present to listen and, as it turned out, to help with photos. This was a very important space in which to listen, and to sit with questions and plans regarding the Remit (next section) and the importance of urban as well as on reserve churches and spiritual communities.

Remit on an autonomous Indigenous organization

This is a crucial piece that passed to communities of faith once our three Regional Council votes in May and June 2023 passed. It was a major priority for staff and key volunteers through the end of March 2024. A dedicated and constantly updated website resource page was our home base, paired with the General Council 44 site.



We held three open learning sessions online, together bringing together 300 people to learn from First Nations colleagues and knowledge keepers Charlene Burns (Maskwacis FN), Russel Burns (James Smith Cree Nation), Gloria Cook (Fisher River Cree Nation) and Murray Pruden (Executive Minister, Indigenous Ministries and Justice). The admin and pastoral relations staff pulled together new contact sheets prioritizing pastoral charge governing body contacts, and we sent out multiple letters to all pastoral charges. In January we launched phoning campaigns to pastoral charges who had not yet voted, and during Holy Week we squeaked through the deadline and into a national Yes vote.



Search the landfill(s) and church leaders; visit

In August the Moderator arranged for her fellow national church leaders to visit Camp Morgan, located at the Brady landfill near Winnipeg. This was done in light of the clear refusal of the then-provincial government to search the landfill, despite funding from other levels of government and a task force report that said the search was risky but feasible. It is worth noting here that by late summer, it was clear that the Conservative government had staked part of its re-election strategy on not searching. To say this was profoundly hurtful and racist is a gross understatement. Church leaders wished to push back on this.

Regional staff worked to support this, using our channels to invite all in the Region who could come to Winnipeg to join the leadership of Camp Morgan and the church leaders the day after Labour Day. This is far from a Winnipeg-only or Manitoba-only, or Indigenous-only justice concern. As the leadership at Camp Morgan said, what message does it send if government and authorities refuse to search for people who have fallen victim to violence? What message are Indigenous people to take from this?



Western Intercultural Ministries Network gathering

For the first time in four years, this network held an [in-person gathering](#) of about 33 people in St Albert AB, from all five Western Regional Councils. It was a very rich time of singing and worship, ceremony and sharing in meals, and honest conversation about the intercultural church we long for. Thank you to Mathias Ross and Salesi Takau for representing Living Skies on the Executive, which is open to all- just saying.

Palestine and Israel October 2023 began a lot of communications work about this desperate situation. I have mostly just worked with national communications, but also created a

short resource on the worldwide Gaza Ceasefire Pilgrimage for smaller communities, and worked with a Saskatoon and area group to encourage wider Regional Council participation. Generally, in all three Regional Councils only a dedicated handful of people work on this situation, mostly in Living Skies. Relationships with local synagogues and rabbis add complexity to this work. Many of our members understandably hesitate to get involved with this justice struggle, or may feel it has little to do with rural communities. But Canada is home to many diverse groups directly affected by the military occupation and related violence, and as Canadians we are also directly implicated because of continued Canadian military sales to Israel. I welcome space to keep working with a newly-emerging Palestine-Israel Regional group in Living Skies, and a planned focus on linking our harvest to the olive harvest in the Occupied Palestinian territories.

Living Skies

Decolonization conference, Saskatoon Theological Union In June 2023 I was honoured to co-facilitate a decolonization workshop at this conference, working with my Mennonite Central Committee colleague Amanda Dodge. The group was large, very engaged, and very thoughtful as we talked about strategies and commitments for decolonizing church theology, structures, and advocacy. I was able to carry some of the learnings into a KAIROS Prairies North workshop in October, where we had further discussion about getting at the roots of settler-colonial structures and culture. Part of our ongoing work on the Decolonization Committee is the racist roots of the Alberta and Saskatchewan “Sovereignty Acts” and the continued sales of SK Crown Land, both of which violate Treaty commitments.

Ochapowace and Cachacas culture camp and apology We were invited by Ochapowace First Nation to offer an in-person apology at an August culture camp on the site of the former Camp McKay and Round Lake Residential School. Good Spirit Presbytery sold the camp to the First Nation for lower than market rate some years ago, and Ochapowace has been reclaiming the site. Rev Sarah Beynon Giles and Rev Jo Mader are fairly local to the area and offered to carry the apology on behalf of the Regional Council. We did some work on wording and protocol, and they spent the day at the intergenerational culture camp, along with Anglican, Presbyterian, and Catholic representatives. Thank you to both of them for stepping into a rich and complex commitment.

Justice Team I am delighted to note that a [proposal passed during COVID](#) has resulted in a new Justice Committee, which committee members have decided to rename the Justice Team as a reflection of the approach they want take. SunDo Hyun, Chantalle Morrow-Fesciuc, and Jonathan Worrall are currently members, and remind people there is room for many more, both on the group itself and on groups that wish to take on a specific justice focus and connect to the wider Region through the Justice Team. So far we've hosted a winter general re-connect online; and in May, an open online space on the Fall 2024 SK elections, drawing on expertise on poverty and climate justice within the church and addressing which current provincial policies are causing harm, and what positive policy could look like. We hope to hold another in the early fall.

Affirming It is a privilege to accompany the skilled and diverse membership of this group. Task group members are: Bob Hayes (chair), Shelly Manley-Tannis, Allison Sarauer, Yoonjoo Shin, Tony Thompson, and Jackie van't Voort, and a past member is Joy Cowan. [Our Affirming Regional page is here](#). Our Affirming celebration at the June 2024 Regional Meeting is a high point, but not the end point, of a long journey rooted in SK Conference and River Bend Presbytery's Affirming commitments, and the commitments of the Affirming ministries and people in our Regional Council.

Dealing with transphobia and homophobia Affirming work got off to a fast start in July, with the introduction of a restrictive pronouns policy targeting gender-diverse youth ([see the related Regional statement here](#), with thanks to Lindsay Mohn and the Executive)

Country-wide September 21 transphobic demonstrations against inclusive school curricula and lenses, dubbed the "Million Person Marches", made the situation worse. Counter demonstrations and messaging were organized across the country too, and included extensive United Church participation, including in our Regional Council. This was the latest expression of a now years-long sharp increase in hate movements targeting 2SLGBTQIA+ and, particularly, gender-diverse people.



While there was concern that this new branch of the overall hate movement might gain significant traction, when a second round of demonstrations was held in October, there was far less take up. That said, we know school boards, librarians, teachers, and administrators will continue to be targeted by a movement striving to mimic strategies honed in the US. (Photo: UCC people at the Saskatoon "Million Person March counter demonstration.")



In September we held a tri-Region meeting of the Affirming networks to try to support local action against these demonstrations. Sixty people came out at short notice, and many excellent ideas and commitments were shared. I cannot express how grateful I am to our local Affirming leadership (wherever they are or are not in the formal process.) Extensive social media commentary indicated that United presence was noted by many non-church people attending the counter demonstrations, though many would have liked to see more, or assumed the UCC was not present unless it clearly self identified. Our Public, Intentional, and Explicit commitments do have a wider public impact in their presence or absence.

(Photo: St Andrew's College staff at the Saskatoon "Million Person March counter demonstration.)

I want to stress the impact this is having in our communities of faith, whether for transgender and gender-diverse members, their loved ones, their supporters; or for governance bodies and ministers who find themselves in very insistent and disruptive one-sided conversations about the threat 2SLGBTQIA rights pose. We have heard this from a number of different sources.

Communications

All of the above involves communication. A lot of my work in this area also involves colleague Bev Diebert and the rest of the three-Region communications team as we run the websites, Regional newsletters and related lists. Newsletters and contact management for the networks I support are another significant part of my work. Occasional consulting with local coalitions, communities of faith, or committees who want to know what channels we can use to support them, or how best to set up their own channels, is always fun and a good learning space. Site maintenance and media tracking run in the background all the time, as does feeding and tending to the social media beasts.

A need for a style guide and best practices for language regarding disabilities and other diverse identities has become clear. Related to this, yet bigger: **Inclusive and accessible meetings and the need for guidelines/ resources:** this came up following all three in-person regional meetings in 2023. There is a lot we can and must do to help meetings of all sizes and formats be fully accessible, and a lot of interest in working on this.

Website troubleshooting and development are always ongoing. Keeping the site up to date and running well is a priority for Bev and me, and we hope it remains a useful home base for news, key documents, events, and more at www.livingskiesrc.ca Over on **Facebook**, our group has reached nearly 800 members (because SK is the best and everyone knows it) and remains very active. Thank you to all who contribute to this community, especially our admins who keep the group safe from spam and mindful of its commitments to respectful communication.

Cluster development: this perennial need is getting more urgent as people express a sense of disconnect and isolation. At our November staff planning we talked about the need to form teams and prioritise initial Cluster meetings, complete with a free lunch and mileage where budget allows, and worship. One aspect of this work needs to be creating contact lists within the Cluster area- a need that is very pressing and is starting to see some progress. Many thanks to both Networks and Clusters in the Region who have led the way. [Remember, you can contact them here!](#)



Here's a final collage to end this report. Why this one?

This was a Two Spirit/Indigiqueer conference the Affirming team was invited to in March 2024 in Prince Albert. Rev Nora Vedress was the one non-Indigenous speaker, and by extension we as United Church people were invited. I include it here because we wished everyone in the Region could have come. The hospitality, the generosity, the stories and careful listening, the different formats and voices, the tears and the fun (yes, the fun!): all of these were role models for us. As we continue to live into being Living Skies Regional Council, may we also serve our wider communities, especially groups who are so

often targeted, and have so much to teach us about faith, hope and love, when we bring our faithful humility and our commitment to the whole beloved body of Christ.

Respectfully submitted,
Julie Graham
Regional Minister, Justice and Communication
jgraham@united-church.ca

YAYAC: YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT COMMUNITY MINISTRIES

What a great year we have had with the Youth and Young Adult Community (YAYAC)! We are starting to get our groove back post pandemic and we were thrilled to be able to host:

- YAYAC Leadership Cohort at Regional Council in Prince Albert (May 2023)
- Camp-A-Palooza 2023 in Outlook (June 2023)
- Fall 2023 YAYAC Retreat in Melfort (November 2023)
- Spring 2024 YAYAC Retreat in Regina (April 2024)
- Camp-A-Palooza 2024 at Camp Shagabec (June 2024)

Each of these events had amazing leaders and resource people and as we build our team it has been a real blessing to work with passionate and creative and caring people.

Living Skies Region Summer Camps

This past weekend, representatives from all of the summer camps travelled to Camp Shagabec in the beautiful Cypress Hills, Treaty 4 for our third “Camp-A-Palooza” gathering. The Camp Shagabec staff graciously hosted us as we spent some time in conversation about how to support each other, share resources, and work together as the “Living Skies Region United Church of Canada Summer Camps Network” (we need a shorter name).

With the change in church structure, one of our goals is to get Communities of Faith connected more directly with camps in their area, so if you are unsure if your church is connected with a camp please talk to Lindsay, Meghan or Rod and we will introduce you! The majority of youth and children’s ministry in our province happens during the summer at our beautiful camps, and one of the best ways to engage in ministry with youth and kids is to support a camp!

Living Skies Region includes the following camps:

- Lumsden Beach Camp (Treaty 4)
- Camp Shagabec (Treaty 4)
- Camp Woodboia (Treaty 4)
- Camp Tapawingo (Treaty 6)
- Camp Christopher (Treaty 6) – shared partnership with Presbyterian Church

Wider Church Projects

One of our roles as the regional YAYAC team is to connect youth and young adults to events, opportunities and projects happening in the wider United Church of Canada. This includes leadership training and job opportunities. We are especially looking forward to our youth representation at General Council 45 in Calgary next summer!

Thank you

Thanks this year to everyone who participated in or volunteered to lead/chaperone/resource our events, and to Meghan Drabble (YAYAC Animator), Rod Leuty (Camp Liaison) and Ella Hagen (Summer Student) for their work this year.

Respectfully submitted by
Rev. Lindsay Mohn

ARCHIVES

2023 was a time of transition and change for the Archives. After eleven years of championing the Archives, Madeleine McLuhan-Myers returned to being a full-time archivist for the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan (PAS) in March 2023. This change occurred because in Fall 2022, the PAS chose to end our long-standing agreement of both sharing Madeleine’s time, and of storing our records in their facilities. The PAS has given us a little over two years --April 2025-- to find a new home for our nearly 300 linear metres of archival records.

From April 2023 to present, Leanne Templeton, UCC Regional Council Archivist for Northern Spirit and Chinook Winds, and Erin Acland UCC Regional Council Archivist for Prairie to Pine, have monitored and cared for the Living Skies Archives remotely. Leanne is based out of Edmonton and has been a UCC Archivist since 2018. Erin is based out of Winnipeg and has been a UCC Archivist since 2014. Both know that caring for the Archives is a big responsibility and consider this work an important ministry of the Church.

In this time of transition, reference services were mostly uninterrupted, but few acquisitions of new records have taken place. Many donors of records (mostly Communities of Faith) have

been instructed to keep hold of their records except in urgent situations where the records were at risk. In these cases, alternate arrangements for their ongoing preservation were made.

From April 2023 to March 2024, the Archivists responded to 128 reference requests from individuals and communities seeking information and access to records. This generated approximately 1,000 points of contact with researchers, team members and communities of faith. People reached out most often to confirm life events recorded in the sacramental registers. The information contained within might be required for legal reasons, upon the death of a spouse, or for personal reasons such as to apply for a job, to marry into a certain denomination, or for peace of mind and reconnection to faith and family. Property records were frequently consulted as communities continue to grow, shrink and change. Spokespeople for Indigenous communities, and individuals, sought access to records of schools and burial grounds. Scholars reached out for access to records on a variety of topics, from study of the Ukrainian diaspora across the prairies, to women missionaries in Saskatchewan, to a music student seeking images of a rare church organ.

Anniversaries and special events represented another common theme for research requests. As the church heads into its centennial year celebrations, the Archivists expect to be busy. We would like to remind everyone that requests for records have a higher likelihood of success if there is ample time given to conduct research.

Successful delivery of archival services this year has been a team effort. Bev Diebert, Administrative Support for Living Skies Regional Council, served as the Archives point person for requests via phone and helped ensure a smooth transition. In addition, she updated the Archives' website and forms to reflect new contact information. Heather Dootoff, Financial Administrator for Living Skies, Northern Spirit, and Prairie to Pine, was essential as she conducted fifteen research trips to the PAS in Regina. Using information provided by the Archivists, Heather communicated with the PAS staff to request, search and scan records for 42 individuals and communities.

The Archivists visited Saskatchewan twice in 2023, and toured potential spaces for the Archives. So far a new home has not been found, but the search is ongoing. They also organized and hosted ecumenical meetings to discuss archives storage requirements and possible partnerships. These meetings have borne fruit, with the possible formation of an ecumenical shared-Archives currently being explored.

2024 will continue to be a year of transition, but we are optimistic that reference services will largely be uninterrupted and that a new home in Saskatchewan will be found that will serve Living Skies well for decades.

With gratitude for the help we have received and the patience that has been shown in this time of change.

Respectfully submitted,
Leanne Templeton and Erin Acland

**COMMUNITY OF FAITH STEWARDSHIP SUPPORT STAFF
FOR LIVING SKIES REGION
VICKI NELSON**

I am delighted once again to bring news from the stewardship support team, the United Church Foundation, and Mission and Service to the good people of Living Skies.

This QR code will take you to a digital filing cabinet of [stewardship resources](#)



Over the past couple of years I have had the honour of meeting with many of you, whether as participants in a *Called to be the Church: The Journey* program, through a town hall, or simply because we connected via email or over the phone. If we haven't yet met, my role is to provide resources and support to individuals, communities of faith, and other ministries in the areas of generosity, congregational giving, Mission and Service, and the work of the United Church Foundation. If you have ideas, questions or inspiration to share, please get in contact [with me](#).

One way I would love to connect in 2024 and beyond is through the learning programs, *Called to be the Church: The Journey*. We currently have 4 course offerings that provide training and support for different parts of the stewardship journey. Whether you want to learn some stewardship-first principles, get resources to run a congregational Giving Program, or are hoping to set up a Legacy Giving Program in your community of faith, we have training options for you!! One participant provided this program feedback, "*Fear no more! Your stewardship questions answered! Deep insight AND solid skill building! A must for ministries of every description!*" [You can learn more here](#).

Speaking of gratitude for shared abundance, Mission and Service is our Church's most powerful vehicle for helping to transform lives, inspire meaning and purpose, and build a better world. Together we do more. Thanks to generous people like you 2023 saw \$20.8 million raised, including Mission and Service givings totalling \$17 million and bequests, Foundation and other planned gifts totaling \$3.7 million.

Locally, Mission and Service funds supported the Regina Anti-Poverty Ministry and River Bend Integrated Community Ministries in Living Skies. Along with ministry happening across Canada and around the globe, your Mission and Service donations are making a difference. Thank you!

Setting giving goals and sharing inspiring stories about Mission and Service are effective ways to hold up and celebrate this amazing work, and to encourage deeper generosity in your community of faith. New Stories of our Mission are [posted monthly](#). If you want to bring more conversations about stewardship, gratitude, generosity and Mission and Service into your community of faith, consider signing up for the monthly newsletter [God's Mission, Our Gifts](#).

Finally, I want to share some of the exciting work of the United Church Foundation. Among the regular work of the Foundation (like providing grants to programs at Camp Shagabec, Lumsden Beach Camp, St. Andrew's College and several communities of faith), 2023 saw some exciting new developments. There are now twice-monthly webinars to share stories and build skills. The Foundation also hit the milestone of \$100 million invested. Going into 2024 there is also a special granting program to support communities of faith with their centennial events.

Thank you, Living Skies Region friends. I am so grateful for your spirit, creativity, generosity,

D22

and thoughtfulness. I look forward to learning together in 2024.

In gratitude,

Vicki Nelson, Community of Faith Stewardship Support Staff for Living Skies Region

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