

Regional Rambler

Living Skies Regional Council The United Church of Canada



January 21, 2026 – 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 66](#). Updates from the Pastoral Relations desk.

NEW: Reminder: Ministry Personnel Prayer Gathering – a time to connect

All ministry personnel – *active, retired, honorary associates, and candidates in appointment*, are warmly invite to a once a month, one hour online gathering on the **4th Tuesday of each month (January 27)**. For details of what to bring and link information, [please see the calendar announcement](#). This is a simple space to pause, breathe, and remember we are not alone in ministry. Come for prayer, community and the gift of communion shared across our regions.

NEW: Assessment invoice available

It is now possible to view the invoice from the United Church of Canada regarding the assessment levied for your community of faith for 2026. You can find this information through your ChurchHub account. For more information, including an updated mailing address if paying by cheque, [please follow this link](#). A reminder that if payment is made annually, it is due **February 1**.

NEW: Sacraments elder training

The Committee on Lay Leadership Support offers an online opportunity for Sacraments Elder training each spring. We are currently assessing interest to determine whether to offer again this year. If you are interested in taking the training to be newly licensed, or would like a refresher as a current Sacraments Elder, please contact Tracy Murton at tmurton@united-church.ca.

Planning for health emergencies in your community of faith

Faith communities have been asked by the Government of Canada to help respond actively and proactively particularly around the resurgence in measles outbreaks that the country is currently witnessing. While we assume that vaccine hesitancy is typically not an issue for many within the United Church, we are asking for [this information to be shared](#) so that our communities of faith can be prepared and so that we continue to be good neighbours in our local communities.

Annual report writing is fun!

It's that time of the year again – a moment to reflect on 2025 and all the amazing ministry that has happened in your community of faith. As you prepare to write the annual report, please take a look at [these guidelines](#) from the Committee on Community of Faith Support. They would also like to highlight the Manual requirement to have your financial statements reviewed, a step that many folks miss. If you have any questions, please contact Tracy Murton at tmurton@united-church.ca.

2026 Annual Declaration – Now Open

The portal for completing the 2026 Annual Declaration is now open on ChurchHub.

All ministry personnel (active, voluntary associates, and retired), including candidates, are required to complete the annual declaration before **April 30** in order to remain in compliance with United Church standards for ministry personnel and to maintain eligibility for calls, appointments, and licenses for sacraments and marriages.

Access the declaration by logging on to ChurchHub: <https://churchhub.ca/>.

Once logged on, you will need to:

- Declare whether you have had any criminal charges in the past year
- Attest that you have reviewed the *Creating Safe and Respectful Environments Policy and Procedures*
- Attest that you have reviewed the *Ethical Standards and Standards of Practice for Ministry Personnel*

Follow [this link](#) for a guide to assist you in this task or contact Laura Fohse, Vocational Minister, for assistance.

Are You Missing Vocational Minister, Laura Fohse's Emails?

I promise, I'm not ghosting you! Every so often I send out an email to all ministry personnel in your region — little check ins, updates, reminders and invitations. I understand there may be some who are not receiving them. If this is you: **(1)** check your junk mail and **(2)** your ChurchHub email address needs to be up-to-date for the magic to work.

If you haven't received a message from me in a while (or ever!), just send me a quick email at lfohse@united-church.ca and I'll make sure you're added. I'd love for you to be included — no one should be left standing outside the metaphorical church gathering space wondering where everyone went!

Preparing a records transfer for the archives?

We're nearly ready for you! Please reach out to the archivists, Erin Acland and Leanne Templeton, to discuss your plans for transferring records. ***All transfers require an appointment!** The best way to reach us is via email at Livingskiesarchives@united-church.ca

It's been a long time waiting for the Living Skies Regional Council Archives to reestablish itself. We have a new home in the basement of Grace-Westminster United Church, Saskatoon, and a Young Canada Works Intern currently on site. While we wait for the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan to fix their elevators and send us Living Skies boxes, we want to connect with community members that have been patiently holding onto records.

- ***Please do not drop off records without an appointment.**
- Contact the archives to receive forms and guides.
- Schedule a transfer date.
- Ask us any questions about your record-keeping system.

2. Wider Church Information:

Epiphany 2026: Guided by the Light

Strengthening Invitation, Cultivating Belonging, Making Room at the Table

Epiphany is a powerful time to strengthen our invitation practices. Many people are reflecting on belonging, connection, and hope as a new year begins. Learn how your community of faith can extend a welcome invitation to your neighbours and foster belonging within and beyond your congregation. Click [HERE](#) to see full article and contact information for your Growth Animator, Jordan Cantwell.

An Invitation to Wonder - Online Discernment Weekend February 20–22, 2026

Is something stirring in you? A wondering about ministry — what it is, how it looks, and whether it might be calling your name? Join us for **An Invitation to Wonder**, a gentle online retreat for people exploring a call to ministry in The United Church of Canada.

While our original hope was to gather in person, we will now be offering this retreat online via Zoom, allowing participation from near and far. Instead of full days on screen, the weekend will unfold in intentional blocks of time, with room for group exploration and personal discernment woven throughout. *This is not a commitment. This is not a decision-point.* This is simply space to listen - to your heart, your questions, and the Spirit moving within you.

[Click here to register.](#) **Deadline for registration is Saturday, January 31.**

All are welcome — youth, young adults, mid-lifers, elders, lifelong United Church folks, newcomers, seekers, and those simply curious. **If something is nudging in you... come and wonder with us.**

Short reminders of our history for the Centennial year continue

As we leave the Centennial year, here is another of Gayle's Simonson's very short stories about United Church history. Many thanks to Gayle, who offers us these 100-word history vignettes for use in your own community! **Please remember to credit!** For our *forty-first and forty-second vignettes*, she writes:

NEW: Extension work has always been important to the theological colleges and the church has tried to keep up with technology. Libraries were always accessible by mail to rural ministers, but radio introduced information to a much broader audience. When the University of Alberta established a radio station (now known as CKUA) in 1927, faculty of St. Stephen's College began presenting lectures twice a month. In 1945, Principal E. Thompson received a grant from the UCC Radio Board Committee and began broadcasting weekly. Nationally Berkeley Studio produced videos for TV and as films. Today, in addition to websites, Regional Councils and many congregations have their own YouTube channels to ensure that church information is readily available for those interested.

NEW: Sometimes we should remember the contributions of early churches in Canada. Salem Chapel British Methodist Episcopalian Church in St. Catherine's is the oldest black church in Ontario. Canada's Slavery Abolition Act had been passed in 1834 and this site became an important terminus on the Underground Railway. Famed abolitionist Harriet Tubman lived nearby from 1851-1858 and helped many slaves cross the border from the U.S.A. Today it is a place of pilgrimage for many. School tours can be arranged and in summer, groups can book a tour. It was designated a Canadian national historic site in 2000. It was also the first international listing by the U.S. National Parks Service in its Underground Railroad to Freedom program.

3. Upcoming Opportunities:

Community of Faith Calendar

Please check out our CoF calendar for upcoming local events. 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 near to them.

Last Chance: 'Kindle in Us the Fire of Your Love' - The Holy Spirit as Hope, Peace, and Unrest

A four-week series offered by Don Schweitzer, PhD on Zoom; **Thursdays, January 22, 29, February 5 & 12 from 1:00 – 3:00 p.m. (CST)** To [learn more and register](#). A workshop offered by **Spirit River Community: A Retreat Centre Without Walls**: <https://www.spiritrivercommunity.org/>

Yes, Your Annual Meeting Can Be Inspiring! A Stewardship Webinar [Register now!](#)

January 28 at 11:00 am–12:00 pm CT Annual congregational meetings are required — but they don't have to be dull or discouraging. This one-hour online gathering will offer practical tools for shaping an annual meeting that reflects your congregation's ministry, tells hopeful stories, and invites members, donors, and newcomers into a shared vision for the year ahead. [See more...](#)

4. Reminders:

Reminder: Treasurers

Treasurers and Liaisons with ADP payroll service are reminded to complete the data required for **2026 salary changes**. The 2026 Minimum Salary Schedule is available online through: [Minimum Salaries for Ministry Personnel \(2026\)](#). This includes the **pulpit supply rate** for visiting ministers. The increases to the salaries of ministry personnel **are not automatically made by ADP**. General Council Office staff do not update ADP with minimum salary data. Your pastoral charge ADP administrator must update the minister's salary in TeamPay or inform ADP of the new salary amount for the pay period beginning **January 1**.

The GreenSpirit Chaplaincy is a year old!

Is your community of faith interested in hosting a GreenSpirit weekend (or a Sunday) focused on ecological spirituality, creation care & creation prayer, and rural spirituality? Contact Shawn Sanford Beck at greenpriest@hotmail.ca for more details. (Rural congregations in the Living Skies Region of The United Church of Canada are prioritized, but ecumenical and urban options are also possible.) For more information on the GreenSpirit Chaplaincy, head over here: <https://linktr.ee/greenpriest> and sign up for [GreenSpirit news here](#).

Financial administration update

As announced before Christmas, from **January to March**, Heather Dootoff will be looking after year-end and the audits. Rob Smith has begun as our new part-time Financial Administrator. From Tuesday to Thursday, he can be reached at robertsmith@united-church.ca. Questions related to budget and expenses can be directed to him – be certain to use his full name to reach him as there is another Rob Smith in the system. *Welcome aboard to both Heather and Rob!*

Weekly events:

- ***Online Bible study - Wednesdays at 1 pm (SK time)** Contact jcantwell@united-church.ca for more information. Click here to join: <https://bit.ly/41Vh93V> *New participants always welcome!*
- ***Strengthening Invitation** - the Growth Department prays for and with communities of faith each **Thursday at 11a-m Central / 10am Mountain** Register to join us [here](#). Send your prayer request to growth@united-church.ca (you can send a request even if you're not attending)