

Regional Rambler

Living Skies Regional Council
The United Church of Canada



January 7, 2026 – News – *Happy New Year*

*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: 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!*

NEW: 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.

NEW: 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 questions, please contact Tracy Murton at tmurton@united-church.ca.

NEW: "An Invitation to Pilgrimage through Imagination" A Living Skies Region Contemplative Gathering. St. Andrew's College (in partnership with leaders from the Living Skies Regional Council, Northern Spirit Regional Council, and GreenSpirit Chaplaincy) invites you to our next contemplative gathering, to be held on **Friday, January 9, 2026 at 09:45AM on Zoom**. Come spend 40 minutes or so in quiet contemplation, centered on the ancient practice of lectio divina. [Join us via zoom](#) right over here. Meeting ID: 890 9407 4776 Passcode: 453650 **All are welcome ... and invite a friend!**

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 ... bookings for 2026 are happening now! (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: <https://mailchi.mp/b5aa445de64c/greenspirit-chaplaincy>

2. Wider Church Information:

NEW: 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.

NEW: United in Learning has several offerings for the new year

United in Learning has several new and upcoming webinars, network meetings and mandatory programs for Ministry Personnel. [Click here](#) to see what is being offered or visit the [CHURCHx website](#) to view the entire United in Learning Catalog.

NEW: E-ssentials – Check out information from the national Church [Click here to view](#).

Spiritual Practice learning circle January 13 to February 19 (Tues and Thurs, online.)

A six-week online course from the Centre for Christian Studies for anyone who wants to explore spiritual practice in the Christian tradition and nurture the spirituality of their congregation. For more information, visit <https://ccsonline.ca/program/courses-and-circles/sc05-spiritual-practice/>

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2026 - Free resources available now

“There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling” (Eph 4: 4)
Download the entire kit, including the International theme materials, and special resources developed for Canada [found here](#). The WPCU is traditionally observed from **January 18 to 25**. [Weekofprayer.ca](#) is a project of the Canadian Council of Churches, the Prairie Centre for Ecumenism, and the Centre canadien d'oecuménisme.

Short reminders of our history for this Centennial year continue

Here is one of Gayle'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 *thirtieth-nineth vignette*, she writes:

NEW: Early in the 20th century, novels by Ralph Connor were very popular. However, many Presbyterian/United Church people knew him better as their minister Charles Gordon. Ordained in Calgary, he served at Canmore from 1890-1893 before relocating to St. Stephen's in Winnipeg. While in Canmore, Stoney hunters sometimes used the church for services. In a 1936 letter, he recalled, “the religious spirit was high among them.” He served as a chaplain during World War I. Widely respected, he preached at the opening assembly of the League of Nations. He also, before union, served as moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. In front of Ralph Connor Memorial United Church in Canmore, a bronze plaque erected in 1943 contains in part the inscription, “his primary concern was always for the Church of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God.”

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.**

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!

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 in their own 'backyard'.

An invitation from Messy Church Canada:

You are invited to a gathering to connect, share ideas, and pray for and with one another on **Wednesday, January 7, 2026**. There are 2 time options for gathering on ZOOM. **1:00 p.m. Central time** (Saskatchewan, Manitoba, NW Ontario, and some of the North) **And an evening session: 7:00 p.m. Central time.** *You are welcome at one or both!* Here's the link for **BOTH sessions**: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/4098204079> . Meetings will be the **first Wednesday of the month**.

Godly Play Core Training 2026 - Get ready to enter the stories of our faith

Via Zoom (**9:00 am to 12:30 pm PT**) **January 10 & 24, February 7, 21 & 28, March 14, 2026.**

Through an action/reflection model of learning you will learn more about creating sacred space, building and working in community, nurturing spiritual development, using silence, story and play to make meaning. All learning takes place in a prayerful and playful atmosphere with creative and experienced Godly Play trainers. **Cost:** \$350 CDN to register for all sessions. **Space is limited** to 12 people. [See here for more information or to register.](#)

'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)** Click here to learn more and register:

<https://www.spiritrivercommunity.org/courses/'kindle-in-us> . A workshop offered by **Spirit River Community: A Retreat Centre Without Walls**: <https://www.spiritrivercommunity.org/>

4. Reminders:

REMINDER: From the Regional Council Office:

- 1) The **mail forwarding service** through Canada Post stopped at the **end of December**. Please make sure the address you have for the regional office is **423 Main St. N., Moose Jaw, SK S6H 0W5** (mail sent to the Athabasca St. E. address won't be forwarded).
- 2) The phone number for the **Living Skies Regional Council office** is **1-639-396-0200**. The old 306-721-3311 **does not** connect to the United Church anymore. *Please update this information.*

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**.

Prayer Cycle for 2026

The **2026** Prayer Cycle, available for use in your bulletins, announcements or during your Prayers of the People, is now posted on the Regional Council website under [Resources> Worship](#). It can be found in the Prayer Cycle box, near the bottom of the page (just click on it and it will open). Also, in that expanding list, is the World Council of Churches Ecumenical Prayer Cycle [link](#).

Pastoral Relations Ponderings - [Pastoral Relations Pondering Vol 65](#). Updates from the Pastoral Relations desk.

Weekly events:

- ***Online Bible study - Wednesdays at 1 pm (SK time)** Contact icantwell@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)
- ***Ministry Personnel Gatherings - Tuesdays at 1:00pm on Zoom**. Connection info is in the calendar.