

Regional Rambler

Living Skies Regional Council
The United Church of Canada



February 4, 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: Are you talking about it in your Community of Faith???

We need your help in planning the "in-person" Living Skies Regional Council Meeting for **May 27-30, 2027**. Would you consider placing this item on your Annual Congregational Meeting Agenda. The Agenda item would be whether your community of faith would be open to hosting this event in your community either on your own or with the help of a neighbouring community of faith. All that is needed is a preliminary interest. Final decision would be made later, after consultation with the Living Skies Regional Council Meeting Planning Committee. Contact is Miles Russell at russella@sasktel.net or 306-547-8517. Thanks for your consideration of this important event.

NEW: A Change to the Tuesday Ministry Personnel Gatherings

Starting **this month**, the online facilitated ministry personnel gatherings for Living Skies will occur only on the **2nd Tuesday** of the month (**February 10**); the gathering set for **February 17** has been cancelled. The calendar on the website has been updated to the new schedule.

NEW: Save the date

Join the Regional Council, Moose Jaw: Zion United Church and Deborah Smith as we covenant together on **Tuesday, February 17 at 5:00pm**, followed by pancake supper. Information regarding livestream to follow.

NEW: Stats are interesting and fun!

It's time for the Community of Faith statistic forms to be filled out. These forms can be found on your ChurchHub account. This is the information that informs the annual assessment for your community of faith, and is also an opportunity to be attentive to the trends happening locally. [The instruction booklet is at this link](#). Contact statistics@united-church.ca for further assistance. Stat forms are due **March 2, 2026**.

NEW: Information regarding Bill C-9

Some communities of faith have been contacted by local MPs regarding Bill C-9. The recommendation from the General Council Office follows:

Our first and overall concern about Bill C-9, known as the Combatting Hate Act, is about its impact on the right to protest. To this end, in late 2025, The United Church of Canada joined a coalition of organizations to amplify the concerns of racialized folks, 2S and LGBTQIA+ communities, and civil liberties organizations, among others. Those concerns remain and are [outlined here](#).

It is clear some Members of Parliament are actively using the removal of the religious text defence to hate crimes charges as a fear-mongering tactic amongst churches, promoting the idea that people may be prosecuted for simply reading scripture. This is false; it misrepresents and grossly exaggerates what the law would do if it were passed.

The United Church of Canada has concerns with Bill C-9's impact on the right to protest, first and foremost. People who are already targeted by hate campaigns, or policed heavily, will feel more vulnerable because of Bill C-9. The debate about religious text not only draws attention away from this larger issue, but also is misinformation or a misinterpretation broadcast by some MPs.

The Criminal Code says that **wilfully promoting hatred against any identifiable group** is an offence. In Canadian law, for activities to be considered "wilful promotion of hatred," it would require much more than simply reading a religious text.

We remain committed to standing against hate speech and acts of hatred.

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.

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.

2. Wider Church Information:**NEW: National Church seeks Nominations**

Do you have the expertise the church is seeking for these denominational groups? Do you know someone who does? Serving on a committee is a great way to live Deep Spirituality, Bold Discipleship, and Daring Justice. To see what national opportunities are available, see the [nominations for 2026!](#)

NEW: Faithful Footprints Grants re-open

[Faithful Footprints grants for energy efficiency and reduced fossil fuel use](#) are being re-opened after the long pause. All submissions to be considered for this year need to be in by **April 30th**.

Summer Camps

It's still winter outside, but it sure is nice to be thinking about SUMMER CAMP!

Watch the dates carefully for Staff, Counsellor, and Volunteer applications as well as Camper Registrations!

Camp Tapawingo:Camper Registration - **open with early bird pricing**Staff Application - **Open!**Volunteer Application - **Open!****Lumsden Beach Camp:**Camper Registration: **Monday February 2**Staff and LIT Application - **Watch for postings and dates.**Volunteer Application - **Open!****Camp Shagabec:**Camper Registration - **Friday March 13**Staff Application - **Open due March 27**Volunteer Application - **Open!****Camp Woodboia:****Watch for info and dates!****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.

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-fifth and forty-sixth vignettes*, she writes:

NEW: Two for the price of one – that is what most churches expected until recently. There were expectations that the minister's wife too would contribute to the life of the congregation. After Ferne Hazell married student minister Charles Hickman in Toronto, life changed drastically. In 1944, they travelled to southern Alberta where things taken for granted in Toronto were not yet available. Accustomed to the modern electric world of Toronto, Ferne now had to adjust to wood stove and heating, and gas and oil lamps. Food – garden produce, fruit from B.C. and even chickens - needed to be canned each fall. Yet most women adapted to their new circumstances and the expectations of congregations for youth work and much more, as did Ferne. Into their nineties the Hickmans were beloved for their zest for life, their gentle wisdom and their strong commitment to their faith.

NEW: Music has long played a significant role in church life. The Methodists in particular had a strong tradition of congregational singing with many hymns written by Charles Wesley. While many long for the traditional hymns of their youth, new hymns have also been introduced and become favourites. One who has contributed many, along with musician Ron Klusmeier, including thirteen in *Voices United*, is Walter Farquharson. A minister for many years in Saltcoats, Saskatchewan, he was also a teacher and local politician, as well as active in the broader church. In 1990, he was elected Moderator. During his term, he supported the creation of the Moderator's Task Force on Residential Schools to examine in depth the church's involvement in the residential school system.

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.

The Great Exhale: A Gentle Pause for Faithful Souls - *A retreat for clergy*

All active ministry personnel (currently in, or searching for, a call or appointment) from Prairie to Pine, Living Skies, and Northern Spirit Regional Councils are warmly invited to **The Great Exhale**, a retreat for rest, renewal, and connection, held **May 5–6** at **Star of the North Retreat Centre** in St. Albert, Alberta.

Designed with spaciousness in mind, this retreat offers time to rest, reflect, pray, laugh, walk, and simply breathe—alongside worship and shared learning. The retreat will be facilitated by **Rev. Jordan Cantwell**, with gentle sessions focused on listening deeply, reconnecting with God, and renewing imagination for ministry.

Flexible registration options are available to support accessibility. More information can be found on the registration form. **Registration deadline is March 15**. Click [here to register](#)

Contact Laura Fohse, Vocational Minister for more information.

4. Reminders:

Pastoral Relations Ponderings - [Pastoral Relations Pondering Vol 66](#). Updates from the Pastoral Relations desk.

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.

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)