



News from the Region: March 19, 2025



Short reminders of our history for this Centennial year

Throughout 2025, we'll be featuring very short stories about United Church history. Thanks to historian Gayle Simonson in Edmonton, we can also offer 100-word history vignettes for use in your own community! [Here are vignettes 1-8](#). (Word format; when you click, the file will save automatically to your Downloads folder.) For our fifth vignette, she writes:

"Women have always played active, if undervalued roles in church activities. Methodist women were sometimes allowed to preach prior to union but were never ordained. In 1923, Saskatchewan resident Lydia Gruchy graduated with top honours from Saskatoon's Presbyterian Theological College (now St. Andrew's). She was initially refused ordination but finally, in 1936, became the first woman in the United Church to be ordained. Acceptance of women in ministry was slow but in the 1980s, my congregation had two women ministers. After attending a different congregation on holiday, our two young daughters looked up, wide-eyed, and commented, "We didn't know men could be ministers!""

News of interest to the people of the Northern Spirit Region.

If you have news or events to share, please write a short description, with a clear headline and a link to more information, and send it to northernspirit@united-church.ca.

★ Add your local events to our Northern Spirit events calendar! ★
[Click here to view upcoming events](#). And [click here to submit your event](#).

Family News

♥ Congratulations and blessings to staff member Chloe Burns on her February 22 marriage to Maclean Strathern!

★ February 27 gathering on unmarked burials: gratitude for all who participated

Many thanks to the 70 plus people from across Alberta and beyond who attended Our Sacred Obligations gathering on February 27, online and in person. We learned and talked together in circle, and were privileged to hear from Rev John Snow, a United Church minister who survived residential school; his brother Rev Tony Snow; elder Wilson Bearhead, and Sara Stratton, the national church's justice and reconciliation animator. We offer gratitude and respect to every First Nations and Métis person who brought their experiences and knowledge to the circle; over one third of the participants were Indigenous. Thank you to every non-Indigenous person made the choice to be in this listening and learning space. Special thanks to the planning team, the Edmonton Being Good Relations Cluster, Northern Spirit Regional Council, and the deeply hospitable community of Southminster Steinhauer United Church/ Spiritual Seekers United in Community. This gathering needed much support and commitment to make it into a good space, and we were blessed to have that support.

As always, we ran out of time for everything, and one follow up will be supports for engaging settler denialism of unmarked burials and the impacts of residential schools. [Here is a PDF of Sara's presentation](#), which we hope will give a broad overview of the report on unmarked burials and missing children. Our work will continue together.

★ March Executive Update:

The Executive of NSRC met online and in person, Wednesday March 12th. The main theme of this meeting became "if we want to do something, let's do it big and bold!" We were inspired after hearing about NSRC Commissions and committees working hard to connect with communities of faith and ministers in different ways, reviewed as always our financial picture, the business that may need to come to the in person meeting in May 2025, as well as heard about themes arising for General Council 45's conversations.

We are excited to announce that we empowered the staff, along with Executive members, to develop a new staff position to focus on our ministry of serving those under 30 (called First Third Ministry). We are very grateful for the legacy funds from Alberta Northwest Conference and Presbyteries that will help in funding these new roles. More to come at our Annual Meeting in May 2025!

★ **May is PAR Month!**

Communities of faith all over Canada will be promoting consistent monthly giving through PAR all month long. Your community of faith should get involved!

PAR makes both giving and receiving simple for donors and communities of faith. If you haven't promoted your PAR program recently, or are not currently accepting automatic monthly donations, May is your month to grow generosity in your congregation. There are resources—like letter templates, flyers and even a sermon—in the **Downloads** section of [this website](#). You can also reach out to your stewardship support person Vicki Nelson via [email](#).

Job Posting: St. Paul's (Edmonton) is seeking an Accountant/Bookkeeper.

Where: St. Paul's United Church, 11526 76 Ave NW, Edmonton AB, T6G 0K7. This is a casual position (typically 8 to 10 hours per week). The bookkeeper must be willing to work flexible hours, in-person at St. Paul's. [For full details and qualifications, click here](#). For questions or to apply, contact office@stpaulsunited.org. Applications will be accepted until March 21, 2025.

From the Growth Animator: **Lent: The Perfect Time to Strengthen Invitation**

Ok, so maybe Lent isn't the *best* season to invite new people to church, but it is the perfect time to start planning how your community of faith is going to strengthen your invitation for Easter! [Click here to find out](#) how you can grow your congregation's capacity to invite your neighbours into a transformative relationship with the risen Christ this Easter. *Brought to you by the Growth Department*. Contact your Growth Animator anytime: Jordan Cantwell, jcantwell@united-church.ca, 306-477-1978.

Wider Church News & Resources

★ **All the latest national news is here, in the March edition of *E-ssentials*.**
[Click here to read](#).

★ **Israel breaks ceasefire agreement with immense civilian casualties; resources on Palestine for federal election**

The United Network for Justice and Peace in Palestine and Israel (UNJPPI) speaks out against this terrible violence: "In the early hours of March 18 Israel attacked Gaza with planes, drones, helicopters and tank fire, killing over 400 unarmed civilians....this massive attack is unconscionable. We urge the Canadian government to condemn this

breaking of a negotiated ceasefire and the murder of the unprotected civilian population of Gaza. May God have mercy on the souls of the dead and ensure justice for those who kill, provide armaments or stay silent.”

UNJPPI has also endorsed a five-point call for justice and peace in Palestine and Israel, focused on the anticipated federal election campaign. All five points and their accompanying education materials are in keeping with United Church policy and with actions our partners in Palestine and Israel have asked us to take. We have a voice, and we have choices. Please take a careful look at www.votepalestine.ca.

★ 100th Anniversary special edition of *Broadview* magazine

The June issue of *Broadview* will be a historic keepsake edition celebrating the United Church’s 100th anniversary — a once-in-a-lifetime issue filled with powerful stories, pivotal moments and reflections on the past, present and future of the church. [Click here for all the details](#), and to make a gift of this one-time special edition.

★ General Council nominations last call!

The national church has many openings on its various committees as the end of our three-year cycle approaches. Diversity of many kinds is a crucial part of ensuring that the church’s governance reflects its people and our many expressions of lived faith. [Please use this web page](#) to have a look, share, and get names in soon.

★ Tech help is at hand for online education at United in Learning!

For excellent online education about all things church and world, head over to United in Learning and to many other groups on Church X, our online learning platform. Because you need a one-time free account, and because technology is... touchy (to be polite), UiL has now introduced a help line. “This covers Zoom meeting challenges, course registration challenges, account problems, or questions that you may ordinarily direct to our email conedu@united-church.ca (which you can still use). If the matter is urgent, call back! Likely we just missed it on our phones. Keep this number handy!” **United in Learning Toll-Free Help Line: 1 888 531 4111**

★ New General Council website and library

General Council (the national church) has created [a new national home base](#) for: Public documents for all meetings of the General Council, plus summaries of the work of General Council Executive. The new site replaces the old General Council 44 site, and is the new home for our upcoming General Council 45.

And:

All church policies and decisions, in a format that should allow much easier searching and sharing than the previous website. These are still being transferred over, so some documents are not yet available. Again, the new website: <https://generalcouncil.ca/>

★ Mission and Service is looking for volunteers!

Why be a Mission and Service volunteer? You might have **Community Spirit:** You're already involved in your community of faith or your local community – or maybe you want to find a way to be more involved. Volunteering for Mission and Service is a good way to start. As a volunteer, you can choose to send handwritten thank-you cards to donors from lists we provide (we also provide the cards and stamps!) Contact us today and learn more about how you can help! Mission and Service Volunteer Program, The United Church of Canada: ms@united-church.ca / 1-800-465-3771.

In Case You Missed It:

New music for the 100th anniversary, free to use and enjoy

Rev Richard Hall of Wingham ON has written to the Regional Councils with a very generous gift: four original songs to be used freely across the church, including scores and sound files. Some are co-authored with past Moderator Walter Farquharson, and all include scores and sound files. Thank you for helping us honour this time, past, present and future, Richard! [Click here for full details.](#)

Worship Resources:

See United Church [Worship Resources](#) for upcoming Sundays and special celebrations.

[Loving Our Neighbours: Worship for Five Sundays of Lent](#) (Stewardship Resources)

[International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination - March 21, 2025](#)

[Earth Hour- March 22, 2025](#)

[Third Sunday in Lent - March 23, 2025](#)

[Fourth Sunday in Lent - March 30, 2025](#)

[Fifth Sunday in Lent - April 6, 2025](#)

[Palm/Passion Sunday - April 13, 2025](#)

[Good Friday - April 18, 2025](#)

[Easter/Resurrection Sunday - April 20, 2025](#)

[Earth Sunday - April 20, 2025](#)

[Second Sunday of Easter - April 27, 2025](#)

[Camping Sunday - April 27, 2025](#)

* [Click here to access Northern Spirit's 2025 Prayer Cycle](#)

● [Click here to access past Newsletter issues](#)



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