



## NORTHERN SPIRIT REGIONAL COUNCIL

### The United Church of Canada

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April 2020

Dear friends in the Northern Spirit Regional Council

Holy Week has begun, and with it, our annual journey toward Jerusalem with Jesus. This year, there is a realistic quality to this journey which cannot be avoided, as much as there is always a temptation to skip past the heavy weight of Good Friday. That is because Good Friday is real *now* as we live sequestered lives. The weeks of isolation have stretched on without a guaranteed date for us to be released from our physical separation. And yet, still, we are bold to say on Easter Sunday the old and ancient words, "Hallelujah! Christ is Risen!" The tomb unsealed and the body transformed is the new beginning we set our hearts on, even while remaining apart.

Most of you will have heard by now that the 2020 Northern Spirit Regional Gathering in June has been cancelled, as approved by the Regional Council Executive. The Regional Gathering Planning Team explored postponing the June in-person Gathering to the fall. However, the uncertainty of what might unfold in the months ahead made recommending a postponement to a definite fall date difficult and unwise. At the same time, the Planning Team is aware that there are some practical things, such as electing General Council Commissioners and dealing with a forthcoming Remit, that will require some kind of online meeting in the fall. More importantly, we are aware that finding community connection in one way or another with each other is vital beyond anything an online Gathering can provide.

The current Regional Gathering Planning Team will conclude its work once the fall online gathering takes place. We continue to meet and will let you know when an online gathering is to take place. I wish to thank Chairperson, Deborah Hoekstra, and Committee Members, Susan Waldie, Shelley Sabo, Kathy Jackson, John Helps, Sharon Adams and Neil Lundy, for the time and energy they have devoted to planning for our 2020 Gathering. I would also like to thank the people of Camrose United Church for stepping forward to be the local hosts for 2020. Nominations for the 2021 Regional Gathering Planning Team are being sought, to ensure that we have a strong in-person Regional Gathering when next we meet face-to-face.

As Holy Week unwinds its way toward Easter and the celebration of the resurrection and transformation of Jesus, I pray that for each of us there will be an awakening out of isolation toward the grace of deeper connection with God, with ourselves as United Church people and with our belonging to human community around the world.

Blessings to all and to each!  
Rev. Britt L. Aerhart, Convenor  
2020 Northern Spirit Annual Gathering  
Northern Spirit Regional Council

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Northern Spirit Regional Council Office  
13535 122 Avenue NW Edmonton AB T5L 2V7 780.435.3995  
[www.northenspiritrc.ca](http://www.northenspiritrc.ca)

Earl Reaburn, Pastoral Relations Minister  
[ereaburn@united-church.ca](mailto:ereaburn@united-church.ca)

Kathy Jackson, Administrative Support  
[kjackson@united-church.ca](mailto:kjackson@united-church.ca)