



2019 Annual Report

Riverbend United Church

February 2020

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Reflections on 2019

Rev. Valerie Oden

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We are blessed to have such strong, committed leaders in this congregation who keep us moving forward, as well as countless behind-the-scenes "quiet disciples" who serve in unseen ways throughout the years. Deep gratitude to each of you who give to the ministries of this church by your prayers, your financial gifts, your quiet service and your leadership.

I would call 2019 for our church one of settling soil. We didn't lay fallow, but we also didn't take on any big visions after a year of focusing on becoming an Affirming Ministry. The pages of this Annual Report tell stories of a church active and healthy. We've seen some long term leaders and servants retiring from their volunteer roles and new leaders and servants stepping in. As new people integrate into the life of the church, we can be grateful for the spirit of this congregation that is truly welcoming to all.

Here are some highlights of this past year that I've seen unfold:

- In the Spring we offered a Confirmation journey with four of our high school youth, and then confirmed each of them and four adults into the life of the Christian Faith. The Book Study Groups continue, and a new Grief Group was begun this fall.
- The summer saw renovation in the basement by our partner school E2 Academy for children "twice exceptional." Deep thanks to Board Chair Matthew Schoenhardt for his wisdom, vision, and tireless work on behalf of the Board and the church to make this partnership feasible and fruitful for all.
- Our "property guys" have been busy this year! Thanks to all for the various repairs and improvements to the facility.
- The Funeral Reception Catering ministry, the Prayer Shawl ministry, and the Care Team continue to offer ministry and service of compassion to those in need.
- In addition to the monthly worship services offered at Devonshire and Grandview Care Centres, this Fall we added one at Lifestyle Options in Riverbend Square, all of which will continue.
- Our Staff remain diligent, committed, faithful and fruitful. Jackie keeps the place running; Joanne tends to health and care matters; Paula and Andrew bring the songs of the angels into our worship; Lois shepherds our handbell ringers; and Joel and Emily have been offering programs for our youth and Children. In December we said farewell to our Children's Coordinator Emily Severson after four years of serving us faithfully, and we welcomed our new Children's Coordinator Krystal Manuel into 2020.
- This year saw the inaugural meeting of the Northern Spirit Region of the United Church in Slave Lake, AB. All churches are still working out this tran-

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Rev. Valerie Oden (continued)

sition to the new United Church structure.

I am thankful for the ongoing wisdom of Rev. Tom Sawyer, our Minister Emeritus, who has recovered nicely, perhaps miraculously, from critical health matters last Spring. Welcome back, Tom!

Thank you to our members for your ongoing support of me, the staff, and the ministries of the church, not only with your financial gifts and presence, but with your hearts and expressions of love.

As we move into 2020, we will be celebrating our 40th Anniversary. Well done, good and faithful servants!

Valerie

~ Valerie Oden, Lead Minister

Chair of the Official Board

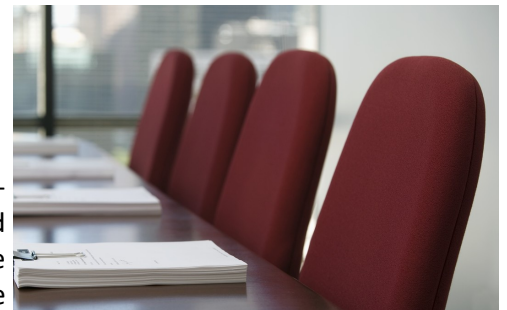
It looks like the long-desired palace coup has occurred! I will be gratefully stepping down as Official Board Chair and handing things over to Marv Severson this spring. This past year we got several things done. Recently we brought on some new staff including Catherine Evoy to help with the office and Krystal Manuel as our new Children's Ministry coordinator. Thanks to Christine Ens for leading this team and Phil Sevigny for being on the committee.

Before I go too far, our staff must be acknowledged for the great work they do that enables this congregation to thrive! Thanks to Valerie Oden, Jacqueline Hunt, Paula Roberts, Andrew Sims, Joanne Olson, Lois Samis Lund, Emily Severson and Joel Fleck for their care and nurturing of our Community of Faith over the past year.

I do not think I could even start to list the members of our congregation that contribute something more valuable to the life of our Church than money: their time and energy. To all of them, if I could speak for God I would say well done my good and faithful servants!

With David Olson's foresight, we voted to create two funds at Riverbend United: the Opportunity Fund and the Legacy Fund. Both assets' funds are held and managed by a foundation for United Church of Canada. Access to these funds are purposely placed outside of our normal operating committees: they are not raided for budget short falls! The Opportunity Fund, or as I like to call it, the pay-it-forward fund, will accept donations that are not destined for general expenses, but earmarked for something special. What? That is where the pay it forward comes in. People can access these funds to implement ideas today, and pay it back later. The second is the Legacy Fund, where only the interest will be accessible. Due to congregational generosity and a congregational member's bequest, both endowments will be in funds soon.

But what would my annual report be without some discussion of the basement? As you may know, in late 2018, we agreed to turn over the entire basement expansion to E2 Academy for the twice gifted. This provincially recognized and partially funded school is the only school of its kind in Alberta and focuses on children who cannot



be educated in public school system due to their unique needs. Children are a blessing, and when E2 children are having a good day I encourage you to talk to them. None of the students are intrinsically violent, however they do have *significant* special needs. If you see one of the children in obvious distress, do not try and get involved! Please stifle your Good Samaritan impulse, get an E2 staff member and get out of the way. This is the best way to help them and keep everyone safe.

This past summer Geoff Halferdahl and I spent many, many hours supporting E2's \$100,000 renovation of our basement. My grateful thanks to Geoff for his help! Like all renovations, it uncovered some building deficiencies. This, and RUC's funding of a dedicated fire escape corridor, resulted in approximately \$10,000 of costs for us. This renovation supports a great campus for E2 that enhances childhood learning and minimizes the

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Chair of the Official Board (continued)

unpleasant interactions between our Community of Faith and the students of E2. For the next four and a half years, E2 now has exclusive, dedicated access to the basement expansion (which is why the doors are locked). All of the custodial care for this space is organized and paid for by E2. In the fall of 2020, the next stage of the campus progresses with only high school programming upstairs, capped at no more than 10 students. The balance of the students will be in one of the five classrooms downstairs.

The potential next and final stage of E2 renovation would be the installation of a separate entrance to the basement on the west side of the building by the parking lot. This expansion would be completely at E2's expense and may (or may not) occur in the summer of 2021. Prior to any work, congregational consultation would occur including some form of visualization such as artist renderings or architectural drawings.

The summer renovation had its share of problems including a late start due to architectural issues regarding fire escapes. I would also like to thank our City Counsellor, Tim Cartmell, for his support with speedy permitting resulting in opening only a week later than planned in September. Which brings me to River City Play School (formerly Greenfield). In the spring of 2019, the existing board of River City moved to disband as they could not find a new location and were not viable in our space. This motion failed. The entire old board resigned and a new one took over. In the transition, they failed to renew their operating permit in June, re-applied and received their permit in mid to late October. The new board had a rocky

start and we, at the Church, were unable to get responses on key issues, including signing the lease, from River City. With this lack of communication and commitment from them, I moved to request that either River City sign a lease or move out in December. River City faced significant challenges including: missing the fall term and therefore losing one of their paid staff; needing to find a new home for fall of 2020; and extremely low enrollment for the winter term (six children). As a result their new board voted to disband in December 2019. I relate all of this with sadness for the role I played. While myself and the board supported River City's attempts at finding a new home, this outcome was never our intention, and I personally feel culpable. I am not actively trying to recover River City's six month's of unpaid rent. My focus is (and was) on getting the area emptied and leased to E2 for February through to August.

More fun! Now I get to talk about money! Partially as a result of lease structuring, my three-year term as Board Chair has seen three consecutive budgetary expansions. While some of this has gone to cover increased and much needed office support, the rest has been ear-marked. Our community of faith worships in a \$3 million plus building with many members of our community also using it. Like any \$3M building, we have both wear and tear and capital maintenance to consider. Yes, rentals contribute to wear and tear, but they also contribute \$129,000 to our budget. That's 28%! In comparison our mortgage payments including principal and interest is only \$57,000. Once we add utilities, insurance, janitorial, snow removal and lawn services (another \$47K) our total building costs

are \$104K, still \$25k less than our rental revenue. At a very reasonable 1 to 2% of value, the capital maintenance of a \$3M building would be \$30,000 to 60,000 a year. This is a cost we need to cover and simply put, we haven't! Our prior years' budgets have funded far short of this level.

This has all changed! Thanks to the efforts of Geoff Halferdahl, Dave Olson and Ray Hawrelak our new budget includes a capital maintenance allowance of \$50K annually. This may sound extravagant, but it is our "best guess" at what is we needed to keep our building in good repair and avoid short notice, major capital campaigns (i.e. cash calls) when things fail. The first item of this on-going budget, while not sexy at all, is a building condition and energy audit. This report will provide expert opinion on how much we should be spending, what we will need to spend it on, and when we can expect to pay for it. This report will form the backbone of future years' spending plans. Early spending may include (no promises): new, wheel chair accessible front doors (that actually close and stop the air!); and repairing the original portion of the parking lot adjacent to the building.

Back when I acted as Project Manager for the expansion, little did I know what the future had in store. God's work needs many hands but over the past few years he seems to have liked mine a lot. I was our project manager for the expansion and by regularly saying "no" was able to bring it in slightly below budget. I knew we could not afford to go over with every extra dollar adding to our mortgage! (which by the way currently stands at \$475K).

Chair of the Official Board (continued)

This engagement led to me being asked to stand for Chair Elect, and subsequently acting as Chair of JNAC to hire Valerie. Then it was three years as Board Chair and effectively acting in a new board role, that of Lease Manager! In the role of Lease Manager, I want to especially thank Jackie who not only tended the headaches of dealing with the day-to-day tenant issues but also vigorously fielded rental requests. Acting as Lease Manager we worked through our long-term tenant leases which affords us the ability to pay our mortgage and maintain the building.

Phew! While I will be stepping back from leadership for a while, I encourage you to step forward. It does not have to be a marathon, nor in the role

of a committee chair, but seek involvement in the running of our Church. We all have talents to share to contribute to the well-being of our Church. Being part of our Community of Faith calls us not only to come on Sundays and to offer a weekly donation, but to give up our time and talents to care for our community. An easy start is to help out with our immediate needs and work from there.

Engagement in Church activities outside Sunday morning can deepen your connection with our God and your neighbours and becomes a reward unto itself. God has uses for your money, but really needs your time.

As I reflect on the world that the Church lives in today, I cannot help

but be thankful for Riverbend United. Whereas many churches, in rural areas like both my parents and in-laws, and nationally, are struggling to stay afloat, we at Riverbend United are blessed with an abundance of riches.

One measure of that is our stable and reliable finances, whose growth is allowing us to expand our stewardship. This is a by-product of a community of faith that spends its time and talents in the service of God.

I would encourage you to be the light shining in the darkness and consider what time and skills you can offer up to God's service.

~ Matthew Schoenhardt
Official Board Chair

Music Director

Although we did not take on any "big" projects like a cantata, 2019 was a busy, successful, and very satisfying year for our Riverbend music ensembles: our bell choir, ensemble, and choir, as well as a few "independent" soloists from within the congregation who generously donate their talents from time to time to enhance our musical endeavours.

Special music for Black History Month was featured as usual in February, and included the first "public" performance by our "small but mighty" drumming group for the African tune, Siyahamba. This group still meets regularly for 30 minutes prior to every choir rehearsal.

March's highlight was a night of Irish music organized and hosted by Doug

Spaner that involved the choir, ensemble members, and soloists. It was especially interesting to explore familiar folk melodies that have become known by both their secular and sacred texts, such as Wild Mountain Thyme (Spirit Open My Heart), and O Danny Boy (We Shall Go Out with Hope of Resurrection).

Our June hymn sing featuring favourites selected by choir members, was an especially nice way to transition into summer.

In the fall, we decided to reprise our special set of Ron Klusmeier music in support of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. It was again very successful thanks to the generosity of our congregation. This event also began a series of collaborations among our

choir, soloists, and ensemble members which strengthened the bonds of friendship and camaraderie among the various Riverbend music groups and individual musicians.

2019's version of the "Marv"elous concert planned by Marv Severson must have set a record for number of participants! At curtain call time, the front of the sanctuary was literally crowded with talented folks from the ensemble and choir, as well as many Riverbend soloists and special guests. This was so exciting to see!

Continuing the collaborations with soloists, even Advent, usually a relatively quiet time musically speaking, featured Christine Guptil on a memorable solo with the choir for a piece called "Silence to Song" and drew a

Music Director (continued)



request for a repeat performance at the Carol Sing. And speaking of the Carol Sing, a fun addition this year was the opportunity for the children in attendance to play jingle bells for (of course!) Jingle Bells!

Lastly, for me, the biggest highlight of the season was at our Christmas Eve services featuring the bells, and choir, with the added voices for “Ding Dong Merrily on High” of the ensemble singers, and, for the first time, some voices from among our youth!! I hope to find more opportunities that lend themselves to combining all age groups for one or two performances during the year.

We are still adding to our music library to modernize it and keep up with the changing styles of church music. Some printed music that is simply too old and no longer useful has been retired from our filing cabinets to make room for new titles we have been purchasing as our budget allows.

Our handbell choir director, Lois Samis Lund, tells me that the bells were busy this past year, as usual, and that luckily, no maintenance or big repairs were required to keep everything in good playing condition. The choir and bells are planning a big collaboration sometime in 2020, to which we are looking forward.

In closing, I would like to note that sadly we will be saying goodbye to two of the key members of our musical family in 2020. Emily Severson left us right after Christmas to continue her schooling, and Andrew Sims will be leaving us in July for his new home in Courtenay on Vancouver Island. Both of these wonderful musicians will be missed, but we will look forward to the beginning of a brand new musical journey in 2020.

~ Respectfully submitted,
Paula Roberts
Music Director

Outreach Committee

The Outreach Committee proceeded with two major projects this year, the E4C Father's Day lunch at Bissell Center and a Christmas Party at two women's group homes. The success of the Father's Day lunch can be attributed to generous contributions of food and cash from members of the congregation as well as their physical assistance on the day of the lunch.

This year we personalized the Christmas gifts in the donation bags for women and seven members of River-

bend United Church also attended the Christmas party. The women were receptive to the personal touches and responded with vigorous dancing, singing and hugs. A great time was had by all, we promised to try and have a BBQ and perhaps plant flowers and gardens with them in the spring. Both of the yearly endeavors received grateful thanks and we the committee pass the thanks on to where it belongs: to you, the congregation. **THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU!**

For 2020 we are adding a new project in support of literacy in the inner city. We will be setting up a box to receive new and gently used children's books and we will happily haul them downtown on a regular basis. We support all children becoming the best they can be.

We also expect to put a call out for warm winter clothing around September or October.

~ Submitted by
Judi Cook & Erin James

Children's Ministry



January – June 2018

Regular children's programming continued early in the year. Child involvement in services was maintained through Children's Time, where children come forward to hear a story or contribute to a small discussion delivered in front of the congregation. Following this and a children's hymn, children go downstairs for Sunday School which is run in a one-room school house style. Attendance varied week to week, but on average, 4-10 children could be expected. As the Sunday School teacher, Emily followed seasonal themes as well as a curriculum called "A Joyful Path" from Progressive Christianity to plan lessons. One Sunday in February, the kids got involved by preparing muffins for after the service on Muffin Sunday and helping to serve.

The Family Room program for children ages 0-4 years continues to be run by a team of volunteers and is organized by Emily. This room provides a space for the youngest children in our congregation to learn and play during the service.

September – November 2019

A new year of Sunday School began with 'Welcome Sunday' on September 8. Numbers were a bit down in the start of the year as many of our regular families expressed scheduling difficulties with other activities such as swimming, hockey and soccer that also occurred on Sunday mornings. Many of the regularly attending children are in later elementary and are exceptionally intelligent, allowing for wonderful discussions to take place during our circle time. Many of the children are close friends and attend school together. Often, we joined up with the youth group and Joel Fleck to do activities together, as many of the youth are in Grade 7 and 8 and are still friends with the Sunday School kids.

December 2019

The children of RUC led a service during advent, where they did a wonderful job performing the play titled "Twas the Night Before Christmas", written by Kendra Smiley and adapted by Emily. Rehearsals began in mid-November and ran for three weeks,

finishing up with a dress rehearsal on the morning of December 14. Many children demonstrated their vocal talents by performing Christmas hymns throughout the play. Lukas Bucerius played the cello and Morgan Byl played guitar, accompanied by Joel Fleck (Youth Coordinator). Joel Fleck and Marv Severson were a big help to Emily in putting on this play, as Joel helped at rehearsals with music and Marv did musical set-up and sound. Props were minimal and were created by Emily. Much positive feedback was received following the service.

On December 15 following the Christmas play, there was a celebration with cake to recognize my four years as Children's Ministry Coordinator. This was a special time where I was able to engage with many people in the congregation. I have thoroughly enjoyed the four years I have worked for RUC, and will continue to cherish the relationships I have built during this time, especially with the children.

~ Submitted by Emily Severson,
Children's Ministry Coordinator

Parish Nurse

During winter, 2019, the Riverbend United (RUC) Church Care Team, Rev. Valerie Oden and I kept ourselves and others warm as we supplied meals, prayer shawls & blankets, and supportive visits to members (and their families) of the congregation who were in hospital and healing following illness/surgeries/injuries and in long-term care settings. We continued a practice of sending cards to families on the anniversaries of losses. On January 13, 2019, twenty (20) people gathered for a light lunch and seminar facilitated by Serenity Funeral Homes. We had an opportunity to consider our own and our family member's wishes around decisions to be made at the time of death. We learned how we could be prepared for all the details that need to be considered when such certainties as losses in our own families occur.

When spring arrived, members of the congregation celebrated Lent and Easter and some planted seeds in our new wooden garden planters. The RUC Care Team planted seeds of love and compassion as we extended care to several members of the congregation who were dealing with chronic

health conditions that were changing their lives significantly. For some, the health challenges required they move to settings different from where they had previously lived. We tried to accompany them during these life changes.

Long, warm summer days allowed time to be spent with several long time members of our congregation who were being assisted by palliative care services. During visits, we had rich conversations about what has really mattered most in their lives and how they wanted to be remembered.

Fall 2019 brought harvest time in our container gardens and much new life to the RUC congregation; six (6) new babies were born in our midst! The crafting team got busy creating lovely baby blankets so the RUC Care Team could deliver them to our newest congregational members. What a joy! New life is such a beautiful reminder of the cycle of life right in our midst. We also accompanied other families as they experienced major losses of loved ones in their lives, a reminder that "for everything there is a season".

As the Advent season approached, the RUC Care Team planned and conducted a healing service (Dec. 12, 2019). It was designed for those among us who had experienced recent or past losses and wanted to take a quiet moment in the holiday season to remember special people no longer with us, to acknowledge the pain we feel even in the context of the joy of Christmas season. Learning to carry both joy and pain within us is indeed a spiritual practice worth developing further for maximum spiritual well-being.

As we enter a new year and a new decade, may 2020 bring rich spiritual blessings to all in our midst. Moreover, may we travel life's journey together, sharing in both the joyful and the challenging times. Looking ahead, the health ministry has a number of possible group seminars being planned for the coming year: Seminar by Serenity Funeral Homes; CPR/First Aid; Leaving a Legacy; Leaving a legacy through organ donation. If you have ideas/requests for any other sessions, let me know.

~ Sincerely,
Joanne Olson, PhD, RN, FAAN
Parish Nurse

Trustees

The 2019 Board of Trustees of Riverbend United Church was comprised of:

- David Hitesman (since 2012);
- Terry Hunt, Chair (Trustee since 2012);
- Tom LaPointe (since 2000, retired in 2019);
- Marg Morley (since 2013);
- Joan Robinson (since 2006);
- David Turner (since 2012); and
- Matthew Schoenhardt (2019).

The role of the Trustees is primarily to hold title to the real and tangible property of the congregation and ensure its proper use and protection. The Trustees act in conjunction with, or as directed by, the (managing) Board of Riverbend United Church acting on behalf of the congregation.



Youth Ministry

Overall, I would say that this year has been positive for the Riverbend Youth Group, both in growth and fun. The joint youth events with St. Paul's could not have gone better. Denise and Rony (St. Paul's leaders) have been very good mentors for me. Every single one of our events with St. Paul's had a greater turnout than any of our events last year. This is a good system and I will try to keep this going for the future. A goal of mine is to host more events at Riverbend and open it up for even more United Church youth groups.

This year has also presented some challenges. I got off to a bit of a slow start this year, partly due to the fact that I was in transition due to a move. Being off the ball meant it was difficult to schedule time in our own building as it was sometimes rented out to other groups. Another challenge is that while we have maintained a consistent turnout at most events, it seems to always be the same youth (which is not a bad thing!). I have had a lot of difficulty reaching out to parents and youth that don't attend as frequently. In the future, I will be reaching out to youth by cell phone, this should be much more effective. The last difficulty that I've had as of late is that there are no young adults in our congregation (literally none after Emily left). In the past, young adults would come to youth events to serve as leaders. This made it easier to coordinate driving and organizing. From a personal standpoint, it can be lonely being part of a community with no one close to your age.

I'd like finish by talking a bit about my experience with the youth retreat that I attended the weekend of February 7th to 9th, 2020. While it technically

isn't part of the 2019 annual report, I feel like everyone should be aware of what I learned during my time away. Markus Maclean and myself attended the retreat with 13 other youth and 5 other leaders from 6 different congregations (Wetaskiwin, Salisbury, Viking, Irma, St. Paul and Riverbend).

Markus and I both went into the weekend feeling unsure and skeptical about faith in general. Over the course of the weekend however, we became very close with the other youth/leaders and it was quite sad to part ways. I was touched by the way the youth in attendance looked up to me and the way they always wanted me to participate in their activities. This made me remember why I love being a youth leader.

I was also comforted by the ways in which the older leaders shared their wisdom and experience with me. As for Markus, I think he went in feeling disconnected from the United Church in general, however I think the retreat served as a reminder for what drew him to church in the first place. My only regret from the weekend is that I was not able to share this experience with the other youth from Riverbend!

This year's activities included:

- January 19th: Ice skating and shinny, 6 people attended (4 youth, 2 leaders) skated and played shinny at the Brookside rinks before returning to the church for hot chocolate.
- February 9th: Dance and karaoke night, 10 people attended (6 youth, 4 leaders) played Just Dance and sang karaoke at the church
- February 23rd: Biblical cake making, 8 people attended (4 youth, 4 leaders) decorated cakes at the church

then played games. Cakes were auctioned the following morning and \$500 was raised for the Stollery Children's Hospital.

- March 30th: Escape room, 3 people attended (1 youth, 2 leaders)
- April 20th: Easter "Hangout", 3 people attended (3 leaders).
- May 25th: Bike adventure, 4 people attended (2 youth, 2 leaders) cycled down past the Fort Edmonton footbridge and took a break by the river bed before returning to the church
- June 15th: Year-end party, 7 people attended (3 youth, 4 leaders) played games and had snacks at Joel's house to wrap up our year.
- Sept 21st: Youth Kick Off event. Snacks, board games and ultimate Frisbee outside. 6 youth attended, 1 leader.
- November 2nd: Marvelous Marv Concert. Although not specifically a youth event youth were invited and some participated.
- November 8th: Games with other Youth at St. Paul United church. This was our first joint youth event and it was a great success. 5 RUC youth, 2 RUC leaders, 5 SP youth, 2 SP leaders. Several of our youth commented on how this was the most fun they'd ever had at a youth event.
- December 16th: RUC youth group hosted St. Pauls for baking cookies and gift exchange. 5 RUC youth, 1 RUC leader, 7 SP youth, 2 SP leaders. Everyone had a very fun time.
- December 17th, RUC youth helped the Children's Ministry with their Christmas play. Several of our youth participated. Afterwards, the youth sold cookies to the congregation and raised over \$500 dollars for the Stollery Children's Hospital.

~ Submitted by Joel Fleck,
Youth Ministry Coordinator

Facilities / Property & Maintenance

The Facilities Team has been busy in 2019. Many of you will notice a number of changes as you look around the Facility; new cupboards in the Sunshine Room where the Sunday School meets; setting up the Family Room and a new Youth Room (in the space at the bottom of the stairs on your left), complete with a large storage closet; removing half of one pew to better accommodate mobility challenged individuals; re-alignment of the choir loft 'half wall'; and building a new cupboard outside the Choir Room for the Ghana congregation's musical instruments.

Some less visible accomplishments include cleaning up a black mold problem in the basement kitchen, balancing the heat distribution to warm up the Chapel and cool the Choir Room, and installing two hearing loops in the sanctuary so some who have not been

able to hear services (very well) for many years, now can.

The Facility Team also dealt with repairs to 2 furnaces, the hot water re-circulation system, replacing outdated smoke detectors and fire alarm box, provided support to the E2 renovations in the basement, as well as dealing with the chronic basement mice problem.

All of this work was accommodated with a Facility Team annual budget of about \$21,000 in utilities, \$14,000 in janitor and cleaning, \$9,000 in maintenance and \$12,000 in renovations. We are now setting aside funds to recognize that as the facility ages, more physical assets will need attention. We are also looking to reduce operating costs by improving energy efficiency when and where possible, accessing a newly established national



United Church 'greening' fund. With a few long standing Facility Team members stepping back after many years of dedicated and appreciated service, we are in need of help. There are opportunities in both long-term planning and short-term hands-on work in a wide variety of things.

~ Respectfully submitted,
Geoff Halferdahl,
Facilities Team Leader

Official Board 2019 — 2020

Chair	Matthew Schoenhardt
Past Chair	Christine Ens
Chair Elect	Marv Severson
Secretary	Jon Spaner
Treasurer	Ray Hawrelak
Affirm Committte	Jill Spaner
Finance Chair	David Olson
Member-at-Large	Phil Sevigny
Ministry and Personnel	Heather Dettman
Northern Spirit Representative	Jill Spaner
Outreach	Judi Cook
Property & Maintenance	Geoff Halferdahl
Spiritual Formation	Joanne Little

Community Garden - Riverbend United Church



Late May 2019

Mid-July 2019



In spring 2019, the RUC Board approved the construction of a small community vegetable garden on church land, comprising two raised beds, designated East and West, approximately 12 feet long and 6 feet wide. We gave an undertaking not to use pesticides or herbicides and to use natural soil conditioners.

The raised beds were constructed by Duane Evans and sited between the church and Riverbend Road. This aspect was chosen because it was level, had good sun exposure and was close to water access. The planting followed square foot gardening principles and incorporated companion planting (growing crops that complement each other) and interspacing these with pollinators and flowers that attract beneficial insects and repel pests.

We grew a wide variety of produce. Leafy vegetables were mainly planted in the West bed which was covered by a floating row cover to deter pests like leaf miner and caterpillars. Surprisingly, the rabbits were not a problem. We planted a variety of greens, including Swiss chard, New Zealand spinach, mesclun, iceberg lettuce and spinach, together with tomatoes and herbs. In the East bed, we planted tomatoes, miniature zucchini, carrots, onions, potatoes, beets and herbs.

The summer was cool and wet which meant on the one hand that we did not need to water every day, but on the other hand the sun loving crops did not do so well. We produced far more crops than expected. We had not anticipated that we would have to find people in the community that would benefit from the harvest.

Through the help of Sheryl Bowhay, we were able to distribute the produce to Brander Gardens Rocks on three occasions. We were also able to supply some vegetables to the RUC Fall Feast, Steve concocting a vegetarian dish of the more unusual greens.

We believe this project was cost effective and afforded the church an increased community profile. Thank you to several members of the congregation, Irene Meglis, Marie McLean, Janet Fung and others for supplying seeds and getting their hands dirty this year. We anticipate that this initiative can be continued and even expanded in 2020 if there is a will.

~ Respectfully submitted,
Stephen and Fiona Bamforth



Affirm Committee

RUC's first year as an Affirming Congregation has been one of laying the groundwork for our sustainability with this important new way of being. We have established a permanent seat on the Church Board for an Affirming Committee member. Our intent is that this Board Member will hear all Board decisions, financial, program, staffing and worship decisions through "affirming ears" and pay attention and draw our attention to where we can be more inclusive and active in wel-

coming the marginalized into our congregation.

The Affirming Committee has supported all of the accessibility changes undertaken by the Property Management Committee and continues to remain involved in the decisions made with regards our tenants (E2 Academy).

Actions have been and will continue to be taken in "branding" ourselves as an Affirming church to the community and specifically the LGBTQ community through displays of the rainbow symbol.

One locus of interest and energy has

been the endorsement of the Affirming Committee of the new Learning Together Towards Reconciliation group which has been meeting monthly and has involved study of Indigenous experience, spirituality and politics. This group continues and includes various activities, reading, multi media study and participation in larger community events.

Affirming Committee members are also actively participating in an Edmonton wide collection of Affirming Ministries. Participation in this Committee is open to all!

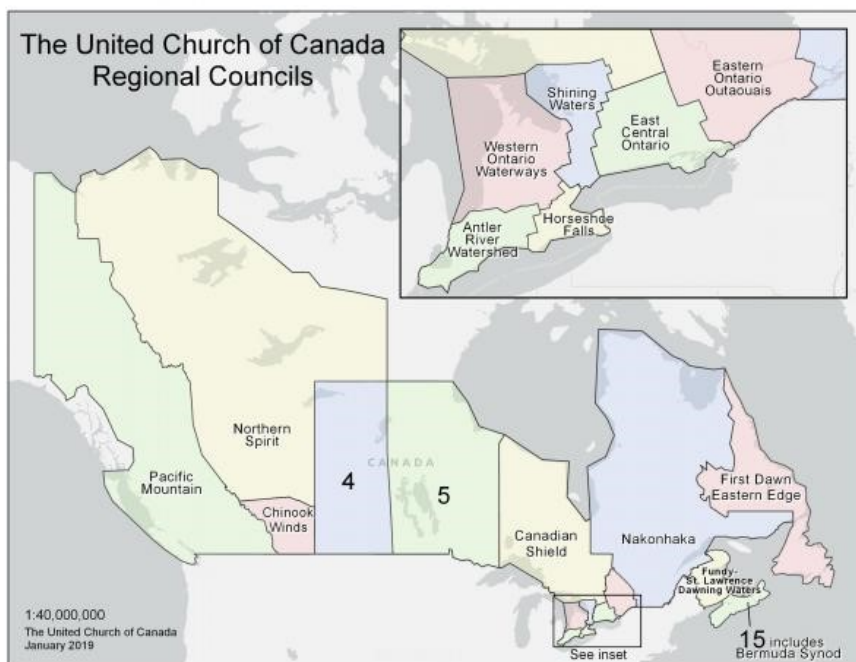
~ Submitted by Jill Spaner,
Affirm Committee

Northern Spirit Region

RUC participates as an active member congregation of the United Church of Canada's Northern Spirit Region (an amalgamation of the former Edmonton Presbytery and Alberta Northwest Conference). We attended the first Annual Meeting of this body, a three day Conference in Valleyview AB in May, 2019.

New methods of communication and connection through social media continue to be experimented with as the larger church learns how to exist as a National church given financial restraints.

~ Respectfully submitted
by Jill Spaner,
Northern Spirit Region Representative



Ministry Team

Rev. Valerie Oden	Lead Minister
Rev. Tom Sawyer	Minister Emeritus
Joanne Olson	Health Ministry & Care Team
Paula Roberts	Music Director
Andrew Sims	Music Ministry & Accompanist
Lois Samis Lund	Music Ministry, Handbells
Emily Severson	Children's Ministry (2019)
Krystal Manuel	Children's Ministry (2020)
Joel Fleck	Youth Ministry Co-Coordinator
Jacqueline Hunt	Office Manager

2019 Statistics

Baptisms	6
Confirmations	4
Marriages	2
Deaths	12
Members (residents & non-residents)	408
Households (members & adherents)	329
New members in 2019	8



IN MEMORIAM

- ◆ Leslie Elaine Berezowsky
- ◆ David Williams Evans
- ◆ Gerald Arthur Goodall
 - ◆ Mary Henderson
- ◆ William John (Bill) Hilton
- ◆ Hendrik (Hank) Hoekstra
- ◆ May Lees
- ◆ Peter William Markowski
- ◆ Jean Phyllis McDavid
- ◆ Frederick Douglas Miller
- ◆ Sandra Ruth Sather
- ◆ Joan Leslie Youngs