

# THE FRONT PEW

A seasonal newsletter celebrating the life and work of  
Riverbend United Church

Fall 2021– Volume 19 Number 3

## Valerie's Reveries, September 2021

Dave Hollis, formerly a President in Walt Disney Studios and now focused on all human beings fulfilling their potential, wrote this of these COVID days:

*"In the rush to return to normal, use this time to consider which parts of normal are worth rushing back to."*

I resonate with his sentiment. I am not sure I want to "return to normal" in all its facets.

Sure, I want us to be able to connect in person again—to sit freely around a table with our families and friends, to enjoy outings together in theatres and concert halls, rinks and restaurants, and to sit beside "our peeps," as Jill Spaner calls our brother and sister church members, mask-less and nudged up beside each other. I want all of that.

But I don't want us to lose sight of what we have learned over the last 18 months:

We are all in this thing called being human, together.

We need each other.

We don't actually live in isolation.

We are woven in the same tapestry of life with the unhoused, the immigrant, the drug addict, the robins and the blue jays, the poplars, the spiders and dolphins and bats.

We are woven together as the earth makes its way around the sun, as the stars of the Milky Way and beyond beckon us into the Mystery.

We are woven together with the people of China and Afghanistan and Haiti and Texas, with the families of Indigenous children in unmarked graves, with the descendants of those who made decisions in our past that are now revealed to be tragic.

If we go back to "normal," forgetting what we have poignantly seen in this time, not letting our new perspective change us and our ways, we will be making a mistake.

Albert Einstein said,

*"No problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it."*

We aren't in the same level of consciousness we were in 18 months ago. Will we spring back to it? *(continued on page 2)*



## Valerie's Reveries, September 2021

(continued from page 1) Not if we keep listening to what we have all learned, listening to the insights gained, listening to our new sense of what is meaning-full, listening to the prophetic voices of our day.

As the prophet Isaiah said for God,

*"Incline your ear and come to me. Listen, so that you may live."* (Isaiah 55:3)

Listening with you,

Valerie

## Report from Chair of the Official Board

Hi Everyone,

It seems like just yesterday summer was beginning and now it is winding down and soon school will be starting again. And also in September, Riverbend United Church will resume live worship. The Board has decided to resume live worship on September 12. We will not be requiring people to pre-register but we will be asking people to wear masks and respect social distancing. We will also be live-streaming the services so if you are not comfortable attending church in-person, you can watch the service from home either at 10:30 am or later (or both!). The Board will continue to monitor the COVID-19 situation and take appropriate action.

Our two summer students, Jacqueline Cooksey and Nathan Hodder, were introduced in the last issue of the *Front Pew*. They have been super helpful this summer and we thank them for all their good work. Nathan is going to stay on with us into the fall on a part-time basis helping with live-streaming our services and continuing

his work on our church website.

We are also excited to welcome our new youth leaders, Luke Nelson and Madison Prairie, who are starting in September. You will find more information about them elsewhere in this newsletter.

And as mentioned in the last issue of the *Front Pew*, we have a new accompanist, Sherry Steele who will be starting with us in September. So there will be some new and some familiar faces amongst us as we resume live and live-streamed services starting September 12.

As always, I am so thankful that our congregation has continued to support the church with regular givings such that we have not had to make any substantial cuts to our programming. I am also grateful for the many people who share their time and talents to keep our services rich and rewarding, our church building in good order and the business side of our church operational.

Hope to see you soon in person!

Marv Severson,  
Chair RUC Board

## Affirming News-Part One

Sometimes it can be difficult to know where to start looking when you want to explore a social justice issue more thoroughly. The social action section of the United Church of Canada website ([www.united-church.ca/social-action](http://www.united-church.ca/social-action)) is a great place to start. Here you will find two options, firstly, there is **act now**, which gives information on important issues such as the Thursdays in Black Movement and the Call for Global Vaccine Access for All and includes suggestions on how to raise awareness, as well as giving opportunities to donate to various humanitarian crises such as the Earthquake in Haiti. Secondly, there is **justice initiatives**, which are longer-term goals of the UCC, covering topics from conversion therapy, ending poverty, sponsor a refugee, to anti-racism and ending gender-based violence along with many more. Again you will find suggestions on how to raise awareness and links to help you explore the issue in more detail. Another excellent resource is Affirm United ([affirmunited.ause.ca](http://affirmunited.ause.ca)) which on its website states "Affirm United a proud partner of The United Church of Canada for the support of all gender identities and sexual orientations." Finally, you can visit the Northern Spirit Region website ([www.northernspiritrc.ca](http://www.northernspiritrc.ca)) where you will find more information on programs and resources at a local level.



## Youth Ministry Update

In June we said thank you to Joel Fleck for his years of service with our youth ministry, and immediately we launched a search for new leadership. A small team advertised the role, conducted interviews, and are now thrilled to introduce two excellent candidates that are keen to work together in a shared role of leadership. We are pleased to have male and female representation in our leaders and they have many great ideas about how they will work together to develop relationships with, and engage our youth members.

Please allow Luke Nelson and Madison Prairie to introduce themselves:

Hi, my name is Luke and I am excited to be a youth leader in this coming year. I am a third-year University of Alberta student studying Ecology, Evolution, and Environmental Biology. I have a passion for nature and the outdoors, and I love spending my time biking, kayaking, fishing, hiking, and birdwatching. I also love music, and have previously played keyboard in both rock and jazz bands. I love working with young people, and love the community that Riverbend United Church provides. I grew up in the youth program and really valued my time in it, so it will be great to take on a leading role this year.



My name is Madison and I am a third-year student at the University of Alberta. I am working toward completing my Bachelor of Education. I have always enjoyed working with youth and volunteered in several elementary and junior high classes throughout high school and my first year of university. In my free time I enjoy reading (and annotating), hiking, canoeing, and looking for mugs to add to my collection. Most of all I enjoy spending time with my two younger brothers. I am looking forward to spending time with the youth group as a leader.

## Children's Ministry Welcome Back!

I hope you have all had a fantastic summer and are ready to join us back in the church again in the Fall. I know some of you may have some concerns, so I would like to address some of the safety protocols we will be committing to for the foreseeable future:

- Children must have a registration form completed upon attendance for the first time, and an attendance log will be kept each week
- Hand sanitizer upon entry and exit of the area will be required
- Masks will be required the entire time
- Shared supplies will be limited and cleaned weekly in the classroom
- Singing/games may look different; however, we will find ways to keep music in our ministry.

For those children that may not join the programming, I

will be putting together some packages to help keep them entertained throughout the service. As well, I will be setting up a take-out Bible Story/Children's library for those interested in reading at home.

Things will look a little different this year, there will be some changes, and I am dedicated to making it fun, comfortable, and safe for everyone. To do this, I am going to need your help. On Sunday, September 12<sup>th</sup>, I will join Madison & Luke (Youth) to host a "kick-off" out in the parking lot/churchyard (weather permitting). We are hoping that the children/youth will come join us for some activities, games and brainstorming sessions on how to make this year the best year ever!

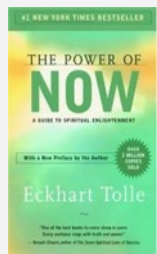
If you have any feedback, questions, or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

I look forward to seeing you all again, very soon!

Krystal Manuel  
Children's Ministry Coordinator  
Call/Text: 780-289-1630  
E-mail: Krystal\_Manuel@hotmail.com



## Fall Book Study



*The Power of Now* by Eckhart Tolle  
Wednesdays,  
September 29 – November 10, 7:00 pm  
Possibly with a mix of in-person and  
Zoom  
Led by Valerie Oden

In the Spring of 2020, just after all this started, when we didn't quite yet know what it was, a church member said to me, "We only have Now. That's all we really have is Now."

As we have all become aware of the fragility of any plans we might make, and as we are daily reminded of the fragility of life and the future, this may be a really good time to re-visit Tolle's best-selling book that calls us to live with Presence in this moment.

We will kick off our study with an outdoor gathering at the home of John Adomonis around a fire on Wednesday, September 29<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm. Bring wine or cheese and come connect.

Please order your own book or let Valerie know if you'd like one ordered for you. And please email your intention to join for communication purposes:  
[valerie@riverbendunited.org](mailto:valerie@riverbendunited.org)

## Fall Bible Study



Journeying with Job  
Sunday mornings  
October 10, 17, 24  
9:30 – 10:15 am  
In-person in the church,  
led by Valerie Oden

Job of the Hebrew Bible is a character worth studying. When everything is taken from him, still he remains faithful to his sense of the divine.

How do we "keep the faith" in these days that are filled with so much difficulty? How do we keep our eyes on the light of hope? How did Job not give up?

No preparation required, just show up and we will discuss. It's not meant to cover the whole Book of Job, but the main themes. This series coincides with a sermon series on the Book of Job during the same three weeks.

## Whole Community Worship Seeks Creative Minds!

Over the years, RUC has experienced a great variety of unique lay-led monthly worship services that we refer to as WCW - Whole Community Worship. These services are to be held once a month on the last Sunday, in conjunction with the Ensemble providing contemporary music. On these Sundays, children and youth that are present will participate in the full church service rather than attending their own programs. WCW has been an opportunity to experiment with new spiritual practices, encourage collaboration between members of the congregation through discussion topics or activities, and stray from a sermon-focused service.

WCW has benefited from some great leadership over the years, and we are now seeking some new team members. This could take on various models - one or more people taking responsibility for a single-themed service, or joining a group that would work together to plan the monthly services. It could be a fantastic opportunity for a family (perhaps families) or church group to lead us in worship. Previous members of the team did not have any ministerial training, just an appetite to explore their faith in creative ways, and any one of them would be happy to share their experiences of worship planning with you.

If you are interested in learning more, please speak with Christine Ens,  
Chair, Spiritual Formation Committee  
[Ens.Christine@gmail.com](mailto:Ens.Christine@gmail.com) 780.435.0302

## Grief Support

Tuesdays, 2:00 - 3:00 pm  
October 12 - November 9  
*"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."* —  
*Matthew 5: 4*

Many of us have known grief in this time, whether brought by the loss of a loved one or the loss of connection or the loss of routine life.

Grief is hard, yet need not be endured alone. This isn't a counselling group, and there are no magic answers to grief. This is an invitation to walk with others through the wilderness of grief and recognize that "We are not alone." Let Valerie know if you are pulled to join this 5-week journey.

## Fall Worship at RUC

*Note from Valerie: This Fall's Lectionary readings are quite engaging. I hope you'll find our autumn worship enriching to your spiritual life and to our community life of connection and outreach.*

From **September 12** in person worship resumes, masks required, with live-streaming.

### September 12

COVID Insights—a congregational time of reflection and sharing.

What insights have you gained during this time? Where have you found connection and meaning? This service will be a time to listen to one another.

You can share live if you're in the room, or sign in to YouTube during the service and share via the Live Chat, or send an email ahead of time to: [valerie@riverbendunited.org](mailto:valerie@riverbendunited.org)

### September 19

Whole Community Worship led by Carolyn Miller

Children and Youth remain in the sanctuary for an inter-generational service and The Ensemble leads our music. The theme is "What is Church?" During the service we will be asking you all, either in person, through Live Chat on YouTube, or by text (number to be provided on the day) to give one word, summing up what you think of when you hear the word church. Let's see where that takes us!

### September 26

Honouring Dr. Joanne Olson

Joanne has retired from her 15 years serving faithfully as RUC's Parish Nurse. We will celebrate her time in service to us and hear from her in the Reflection.

### October 3

Worldwide Communion

What is Communion? How did it start? Why do we do it? What is it for?

All are welcome to participate in Communion.

### October 10, 17, 24

Journeying with Job

Who is Job in the Bible and how is his story relevant to our lives? How does Job remain faithful when he loses everything? How do we? This three-week sermon series will begin on October 10 with Thanksgiving Sunday. It will be augmented with a Bible Study on Job the same three Sundays at 9:30 am in the church, masked and distanced; no preparation required, led by Valerie.

### October 31

Whole Community Worship

Children and Youth remain in the sanctuary for an inter-generational service and The Ensemble leads our music.

### November 7

Remembrance Day, Communion and Stewardship Focus

In Mark 12: 38-44, Jesus tells us of the widow whose tiny gift is greater than all the riches of the wealthy. What does it mean to recognize that everything we are and have comes from and belongs to God?

### November 14 & 21

"Dying to Live" two-week sermon series

The Lectionary (schedule of Sunday Bible readings) has us looking at "Endtimes" passages these two weeks. What if we were to live as if these were indeed the last days? Not that they are, but how would our living change?

## Affirming News-Part Two

Orange Shirt Day began on September 30<sup>th</sup> 2013, as a way to honour Indigenous children who were taken from their homes to attend residential schools. This year the government passed legislation to make September 30<sup>th</sup> a federal statutory holiday called The National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. This was the 80<sup>th</sup> call to action in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action report, which called for a day to "honour survivors, their families, and communities, and ensure that public commemoration of the history and legacy of residential schools remains a vital component of the reconciliation process." Here in Edmonton both the Public School Board and the Catholic School Board, as well as the University of Alberta have recognized this day and will be closed, which will allow many to pause for reflection.



## Fall Health Corner

Welcome back everyone to a new season of the Health Corner. Fall is a season of change...the leaves change colour and fall from its tree, children go back to school willingly or otherwise, and people are back from their summer vacations and start to settle into the rhythm of the workplace. In terms of health promotion days, the season of Fall is perhaps one of the busiest.

### September:

Acne Awareness Month  
 Arthritis Awareness Month  
 Childhood Cancer Awareness Month  
 Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Awareness Month  
 Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month  
 Prostate Cancer Awareness Month  
 Sickle Cell Awareness Month  
 World Alzheimer's Month  
 National Polycystic Kidney Disease (PKD) Awareness Day - September 4  
 International FASD Awareness Day – September 9  
 World Suicide Prevention Day - September 10  
 Terry Fox Run - September 19

### Autumn Equinox 2021 at 1:20 p.m. - Wednesday, September 22

World Rabies Day - September 28

Terry Fox is a hero to many Canadians, including myself. Terry's cancer diagnosis put in motion a run that changed the world. He dipped his artificial leg in the Atlantic Ocean in St. John's, Newfoundland on April 12th, 1980 and proceeded to unite Canadians in a way never before; to run across Canada to raise funds for cancer research. The only thing that could have stopped Terry from reaching the Pacific Ocean did. Cancer returned in his lungs and he was forced to stop in Thunder Bay, Ontario on September 1st, 1980 after having run 5,373 kilometres.

Before his death on June 28, 1981, Terry had achieved his once unimaginable goal of \$1 from every Canadian. More importantly, he had set in motion the framework for an event, The Terry Fox Run, that would ignite cancer research in Canada, raising more than \$850 million since 1980, and bring hope and health to millions of Canadians.

This year, details are still slim, but the Terry Fox Run is scheduled for Sunday, September 19.

### October:

Breast Cancer Awareness Month  
 Occupational Therapy Month  
 Respiratory Therapy Week – October 24 – 30  
 Canadian Intensive Care Week - October 27 to 30  
 World Cerebral Palsy Day – October 6  
 World Mental Health Day - October 10  
 World Sight Day - October 10  
 National Psoriatic Arthritis Day - October 19  
 International Stuttering Awareness Day - October 22  
 Brain Cancer Awareness Day - October 24  
 Halloween – October 31

### November:

Lung Cancer Awareness Month  
 Osteoporosis Month  
 Movember  
 Fall Prevention Month  
 National Domestic Violence Awareness Month  
 Crohn's and Colitis Awareness Month  
 World Pneumonia Day - November 12  
 World Diabetes Day - November 14  
 International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women - November 25  
 Stomach Cancer Awareness Day - November 30

Remembrance Day falls on Thursday, November 11 this year. Remembrance Day has been observed since the end of the First World War to remember armed forces members who have died in the line of duty. In most countries, Remembrance Day is observed on 11 November to recall the end of First World War hostilities that formally ended "at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month" in 1918.

Here at Riverbend United Church, we have an annual, poignant service close to November 11 where we pause to reflect on price of our freedom and the lives lost in doing so.

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:  
 Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.  
 At the going down of the sun and in the morning,  
 We will remember them...

~ From the poem, For the Fallen by Laurence Binyon

Peace,  
 Dawn



## Singing Through the Pandemic

We are all aware of how blessed we are at Riverbend United to have so many talented musicians in our midst, willing to share their gifts with us. This became even more apparent as we navigated our way through the COVID-19 pandemic. When the church building first closed its doors in March 2020, members of the Ensemble stepped up to lead us musically in worship as we transitioned to online services. It soon became apparent that we were not going to be able to meet in person any time soon and at that point, the choir started recording our hymns to be used during worship. Through the marvels of technology, each member of the choir was able to record themselves and send the recording to Paula and her husband, Jamie Kidd, who wove the voices together to create the sound of our virtual Riverbend Choir. Throughout the months, we were able to sing (in the comfort of our own homes) some favourite hymns and learn new ones too. The choir created a wonderful version of Amazing Grace for Easter 2021 and even produced a Spiritual Medley for Black History Month. In addition, our handbell choir provided some recordings of their rehearsals which meant we were still able to enjoy the sound of the bells. Of course, none of this would have been possible without the commitment of our musicians to keep “singing (and playing) through the pandemic” and for that we are eternally grateful. *(Our online service on August 15<sup>th</sup> featured members of the choir sharing their favourite hymns and anthems and explaining why they selected them. Check it out on YouTube– the Front Pew Team.)*

“Let us come before God with thanksgiving and sing joyful songs of praise.”

### Psalm 95:2



### A quick note from Paula!

It looks like we will have “live” music when we return to services on the 12th! Yay! Although you won’t be able to see their lips moving behind our special “singers masks”, be assured that the choir will not be lip-syncing to one of their recordings!!

We are looking forward to getting to know our new accompanist, Sherry Steele, and I heard through the grapevine that our Ensemble and bells will be gearing up as well!

Hope you all had a great summer, and I’m looking forward to a beautiful and musical Fall!

Paula Roberts  
Music Director

### RUC Worship at Community Retirement Homes

Once a month, Valerie and our accompanist Sherry Steele will be going to different retirement centres to offer worship, pending a green light from each facility’s administration. If you are a resident of one of these, please join us! If you know someone who is a resident, please let them know of these opportunities for worship.

**Lifestyle Options**, Riverbend, on the third Thursday of each month at 2:00 pm (with their pianist)

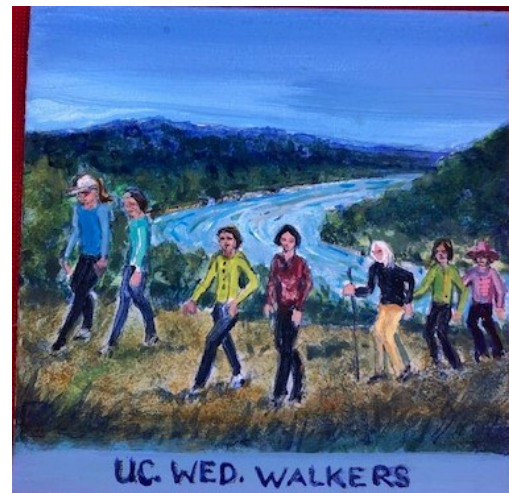
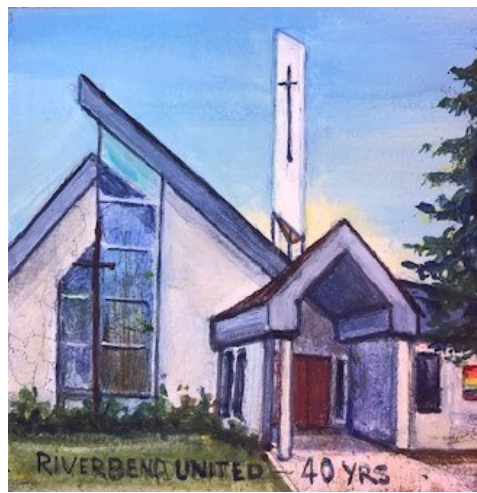
**Capital Care Grandview** on the fourth Thursday of each month at 10:00 am

**Devonshire** on the fourth Thursday of each month at 11:00 am



### Community League Tiles

To celebrate 50 years of Riverbend Community League, the community was invited to paint 4” x 4” tiles, that reflect what makes our neighbourhood special and unique and a great place to live. The Community League held a series of paint workshops through the summer for people to come and paint a tile, or you could paint in the comfort of your home with a paint kit and follow an instruction video. The tiles, when completed, will be put together to create a Community League 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Mural which will be mounted and permanently displayed at the Riverbend Community Centre, 258 Rhatigan Road East. Donna Chamberland took up the challenge and painted two tiles, one showing the Wednesday Walkers in action, and the other our church building, highlighting our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary . Both tiles look fantastic and will be in the blue section of the finished mural. Thank you for sharing your talents Donna.



### Faces of Faith

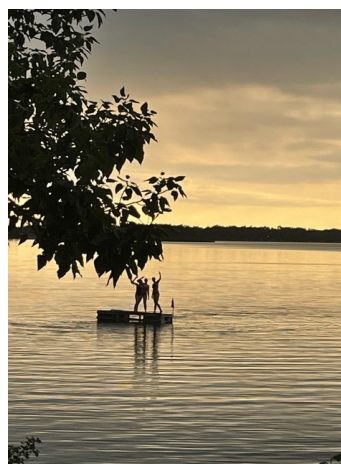
We hope that you have been enjoying the “Faces of Faith” segment featured in our Summer worship services. *The Front Pew* team had a lightbulb moment and thought it would be a great idea to continue this feature in the *Front Pew*. We are hoping to include two or three members of the congregation in each issue. All you need to do is answer three (or is it four?) questions, namely:

- How long have you worshipped at RUC, and why do you worship here?
- What is your favourite thing about RUC?
- What are your interests outside of church?

and if you can please include a photo of yourself as it helps to put a face to a name. You can send your bio to either Carolyn Miller, Christine Ens or Bev Sawyer for inclusion in a future edition of the *Front Pew*. It will be wonderful getting to know you all a bit better.

### Faith on the Move...For Summer

Thank you to everyone for the photos submitted throughout the Summer for us to share as “Faith on the Move”. It was great to see you out and about, exploring, and enjoying yourselves. We look forward to seeing you soon so that you can share stories in person. *(We added a couple of our favourite pictures to the article-The Front Pew Team)*





## The Turkey Team

The Turkey Team is all about promoting fellowship and friendship through hospitality (a great combination we are sure you will agree). It started as an idea to have a Fall Feast for the congregation to celebrate Thanksgiving. This proved very successful, with well over 100 people attending and more congregational dinners have followed. As a progression from this, a community dinner was held, where the families involved in Brander Gardens ROCKS (now Riverbend ROCKS) were invited to come and break bread with us and share in some games fun. This wonderful event was enjoyed by everyone attending and has led to more collaborative dinners, with the women of Brander Gardens now sharing in the food preparation. We are led to believe that peals of laughter can be heard as the food is prepared and stories are shared. The “Turkeys” (as they are known in the congregation) also took a leading role in the preparation of the corn cobs which were given out for several years at Art in our Park. On one occasion there was a corn shortage which meant they were unable to secure corn cobs, that was no problem for the Turkey Team, they gave out popcorn instead!! During the pandemic they became aware of food scarcity issues with our Brander Gardens neighbours and two initiatives were undertaken. In Fall 2020 we had “Soup for the Soul”, where families were provided soup, buns and cookies and in Spring 2021 lasagnas, bread, salad and pudding mix were provided as “Lasagna with Love”. If there is an event taking place in the church, which involves food, you will usually find a “Turkey” or two. We look forward to seeing what initiatives the Turkey Team will undertake, once we are all together again in person. If you would like more information on the Turkey Team please contact either Christine Ens at [ens.christine@gmail.com](mailto:ens.christine@gmail.com) or Jill Spaner at [jcurd@shaw.ca](mailto:jcurd@shaw.ca).

**“For where two or three come together in my name, I am there with them”.**

**Matthew 18:20**



### Did You Know?

We are sure you have all seen the banner “We Are One in Christ” hanging in the Sanctuary covered in felt handprints. Did you know that this banner was made in 1995, with the Alpha and Omega panels added in 2000 for all the youth of our congregation who have been confirmed since 1995? The confirmands trace and sign their handprint which is then added to the banner. Due to the number of confirmands, a blessing indeed, a further banner was added which states “We Are Not Alone”. These wonderful banners were created by Audrey Skinner and LaVon Holgate.



Riverbend United Church  
Exploring Faith, Engaging Community

Contact us at:

Phone: (780) 430-7275

Email: [contactus@riverbendunited.org](mailto:contactus@riverbendunited.org)

Website: [www.riverbendunited.org](http://www.riverbendunited.org)

Co-Editors: *Bev Sawyer & Christine Ens*

Publication Design: *Carolyn Miller*

Mail List Manager: *Jacqueline Hunt*

A newsletter of Riverbend United Church, distributed quarterly by email or inserted in Church mailboxes.

Call for contributions will be made about two weeks prior to the next deadline as noted below.

***Next deadline: 12th November 2021***