

THE FRONT PEW

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

Fall 2025 – Volume 23 Number 3

Valerie's Reveries

I was watching a squirrel recently in the 32-degree heat in the middle of the day. He seemed undisturbed by the sizzling air as he went about his work. He had purpose. He was on a mission. He was not to be distracted.

He was knocking down every last sap-dripping pinecone from the spruce tree in my yard. Every. Single. One. Into the grass they fell with their sticky sap messiness. But he wasn't done. Once the squirrel had dropped them, he went around collecting them for his winter cache, ignoring my dog and me.

He put one in his mouth and came to my front porch. He climbed up into the large ceramic flowerpot, ignoring the geraniums, and he deposited the pinecone in the soil.

He went down the porch steps, turned around, stood up and looked where he had just left it. Then he turned his head and looked to the other side of the porch where another pot sat. He studied it for a moment, then climbed back up the steps and pulled out the pinecone he had just buried and took it to the *other* pot, where he buried it and scurried away. I'll never know why he preferred the pot on the left to the pot on the right.

I began wondering, what is our purpose as a church that would have us so determinedly working, so clear in our mission that *nothing* would pull us off track?

I believe Jesus said it well: *"I have come that they may have life, and have it abundantly."* We grow into this invitation, and along the way we create such an open and inviting and welcoming space that others who come begin to know the *same* invitation, and together we carry that invitation out into the community beyond until we are simply being moved by the Spirit with *such* a purpose that it cannot be thwarted, not even by the sticky sap messiness of every last one of us.

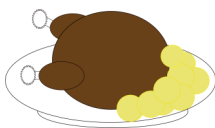
Valerie



Save the Date!

Our Turkey Team will be hosting a Fall Feast/Turkey Dinner on **Sunday, October 19th**, so make sure to mark your calendars. More details will be provided in the announcements in the coming weeks.

One thing is for sure, we can look forward to delicious food, and a time of great fellowship.



Maintenance News

2025 has been quite an active year so far. Projects we have had going to date:

- ◆ the whole basement and stairwell repainted
- ◆ the basement floor stripped and waxed
- ◆ carpets cleaned in narthex, sanctuary, chapel, kitchen, main hallway and boardroom
- ◆ two large spruce trees removed because of severe virus damage
- ◆ remaining tree stumps ground down
- ◆ replaced 3 furnaces in old furnace room
- ◆ repaired hot water tank
- ◆ sewer line flushed out
- ◆ replaced fire-monitoring panel and fire panel due to a lightning strike that hit the cell tower immediately behind the church. This caused a tremendous power surge, damaging these panels, which then required an update in their electrical wiring to meet current codes
- ◆ investigated a water leak in the basement kitchen
- ◆ currently in the process of redoing landscaping under the church sign facing Riverbend Road, repainting the sign, replacing ballasts, and installing LED lighting

So there is a lot of activity behind the scenes - all part of being proactive with maintenance issues in an older building.

Don Trenn,
Maintenance Director

Welcome Back from the Spiritual Formation Committee

Dear friends at Riverbend United Church,

As we move into a new season together, the Spiritual Formation Committee warmly welcomes you back to the rhythms of congregational life this fall. Whether you've travelled far or stayed close to home over the summer, we hope you've found time for rest, renewal, and connection.

We're excited to share that **Sunday, September 14th** will be a special day in the life of our church. During worship, we'll celebrate the **Blessing of the Backpacks** — a meaningful moment for our **school-aged children and youth** as they begin a new year of learning and growth. But this blessing is for all of us: **adults are warmly invited to bring a bag or backpack they use for work, volunteering, or day-to-day activities.** Together, we will reflect on the ways we carry our commitments, responsibilities, and hopes into the world — and we will bless them with care, strength, and grace.

Following worship, we'll continue the celebration with **ice cream sandwiches!** Gluten-free and lactose-free options will be available so everyone can enjoy a sweet treat and time to reconnect.

Looking ahead, please **stay tuned for details about a young family gathering** this fall — an opportunity to come together in fun, fellowship, and faith. And as we approach the **National Day for Truth and Reconciliation on September 30th**, we invite you to continue reflecting on what reconciliation means to you personally and as part of our church community. Small acts of listening, learning, and reaching out can open pathways of healing and justice.

We're grateful to walk alongside each of you as we seek to grow in spirit, compassion, and love.

In peace and hope,

The Spiritual Formation Committee

Newcomers Welcome

Sunday, November 9, 11:45-1:00

New to the church in the last year? Join some of our lay leaders and other newcomers for a light lunch and to learn more about the activities and ministries of the church. We want to get to know you!

Fall Book Study

Living Buddha, Living Christ By Thich Nhat Hanh

Sunday mornings at 9:30

October 5 – November 2

Join us for lively discussion using this classic book of wisdom for our springboard. You're welcome to come even if you aren't reading the book. Please sign up in the narthex or email or call the church office to order a book. \$25.

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

Matthew 18:20

Affirming News

The Saturday morning of August 23rd dawned bright and sunny as a group of us from RUC made our way to Sir Winston Churchill Square to walk with folk from six other local Affirming United Church communities of faith in support of our LGBTQIA2s+ siblings. We were met there by, quite literally, thousands of like-minded others wearing a wild assortment of bling and colourful theme-based costumes. (The decision was made that next year we will definitely have to up our colour/brightness game as James' rainbow socks seemed to be the loudest fashion statement we had.)

It was very powerful to walk the parade route, with spectators cheering at least 3-4 deep on both sides of the street. We (Dawn and Ron) proudly carried our Riverbend United Church banner, which was recognized by the community.

We would highly recommend joining us next year for a fun yet important statement of faith.



Young Family Event September 28

Calling all young families! Join us after worship on September 28 for a gathering of children, youth and adults. We'll share in a simple lunch together, then the children and youth will have activities with Alec and Nathan while the parents meet with Valerie and get to know each other. This event will run 11:45 – 1:15.

RSVP by September 21! We want to be able to plan appropriately. Call the church office: 780-430-7375 or email valerie@riverbendunited.org

RU in Action – it's back!

Sunday, October 5, 11:30 am

Join our 7th **RU in Action** - an extended coffee time after the service to share the wide variety of activities and involvement opportunities at RUC. And to sweeten the pot, this will also be a Muffin Sunday! This gathering will likely be held in the basement, although I am considering ways we might accommodate the event upstairs.

Committees, teams, musical groups and other activities will all be represented. Each group can represent themselves as they choose with a display, photos, sign-up, or handouts they might like to share. Please stay for a coffee, muffin and a visit while you explore all that RUC has to offer.

Questions? See Christine Ens or contact the office.

Worship at RUC this Fall

Belonging, Sharing, Sun-setting. These are the themes we'll explore together this Fall, while mixing in delightful fellowship, growth, and service opportunities. Join us on the journey!

September 7, 14, 21: Belonging: The Radical Welcome of Christ

"The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'"
Matthew 25:40

What does it mean to *really* accept grace -- that we are loved just as we are, that we are welcome in the kin-dom of God, that we *belong*? What does it mean to realize that others are also loved just as they are, that all *belong*? How do we accept the radical welcome of Jesus for ourselves, and offer it to *everyone* we meet? We'll explore this theme to kick off our year beginning September 7th.

September 14 is Welcome Back / Ice Cream Sundae / Blessing the Backpacks. See details in these pages. September 21st, RUC member Richard Pawsey will engage in a Faces of Faith dialogue with Valerie, sharing some of his journey into a sense of belonging. On September 28, Carolyn Miller and the Ensemble will lead a Whole Community Worship on the Fruits of the Spirit, and we'll honour Truth and Reconciliation Sunday that day.

October 5, 12, 19: Joyfully Sharing: Time, Talent, Treasure

"God loves a cheerful giver." 2 Corinthians 9:7

We'll give thanks for our abundance through October, exploring our gifts of time, talent and treasure and what it means to joyfully share these gifts. October 5 is Worldwide Communion Sunday. October 12 is Thanksgiving Sunday and we'll honour the Wednesday Walkers and Talkers 35-year anniversary as part of that service. And on October 19, the Turkey Team will serve us up a lovely Fall Feast. The month closes with another Whole Community Worship led by Carolyn Miller and the Ensemble.

November 2, 9, 16: Lessons from the Setting Sun

"Teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom." Psalm 90:12

The setting sun reminds us that our days are limited. Far from despair, this can bring wisdom and gratitude to our daily life. Between the sun's lowering and its setting, the light turns golden — "the golden hour," we call it. So too, awareness of our mortality can make life *radiant* with meaning. As the sun disappears, we trust the dawn will come again. Our faith holds death and resurrection together — we live and die in the divine love.

We'll explore these themes in November, including a more practical workshop sponsored by the Care Team. On November 23, Marv Severson and the Ensemble will lead us through a service on "The Spirituality of Popular Music" for a delightful cap on Fall at RUC before we enter the season of Advent on November 30th. *(continued on page 5)*

Contributors Welcome (and encouraged!)

The purpose of the *Front Pew* is to share in the life and work of Riverbend United Church. We would also love to be able to highlight stories from members of the congregation. Perhaps you have a particular hobby, or have attained a milestone in your life, or are involved in a community project that you would like to share with us all. Maybe the thought of writing the article is overwhelming to you, no problem, just get in touch with a member of the *Front Pew* team, give them the details, and they can put the story together for you. Finally, if there is anything you would like to see in the *Front Pew*, or you feel is missing, please let the team know.

Worship at RUC this Fall *(Continued from page 4)***September**

- 7 Belonging 1
- 14 Belonging 2: Welcome Back /Ice Cream / Blessing the Backpacks
- 21 Belonging 3: Faces of Faith dialogue with Richard Pawsey
- 28 Whole Community Worship with Carolyn Miller and the Ensemble
- Young Family Event after worship*

October

- 5 Joyfully Sharing 1: Time Worldwide Communion Sunday *RU in Action*
- 12 Joyfully Sharing 2: Talent Thanksgiving Sunday *Walkers 35th Anniversary*
- 19 Joyfully Sharing 3: Treasure *Fall Feast*
- 26 Whole Community Worship with Carolyn Miller and the Ensemble

November

- Saturday Nov. 1—Marvelous Music Concert*
- 2 Lessons from the Setting Sun 1: The Gift of our Mortality
- 9 Lessons from the Setting Sun 2: The Golden Hour *Newcomers Welcome*
- 16 Lessons from the Setting Sun 3: The Dawn
- 23 Whole Community Worship with Marv Severson and the Ensemble:
“The Spirituality of Popular Music”

**On this
journey of
faith...**

**We walk
together in...**

**Deep
Spirituality**

**Bold
Discipleship**

**Daring
Justice**

Another Evening of Marvelous Music

Save the Date - Saturday, Nov 1 for Another Evening of Marvelous Music.

Please reserve Saturday, November 1, at 7:30 pm for a free concert of marvelous music featuring about 15 musicians of all ages from RUC.

As always, we will be playing favorite pop tunes mostly from the 60s and 70s and we will have strings and horns and a steel pan! We will play songs by: Elton John, The Beatles, Chicago, Joni Mitchell, ABBA, Fleetwood Mac and many others.

As in previous years, the concert is free and no tickets are required, but donations are accepted and much appreciated.

Hope to see you there!

Cheers,
Marv Severson

(This truly is a joyous event in the life of our church. The music covers many genres and you are bound to find a song to sing along with. 5 from the Front Pew Team)*

RUC Handbell Choir – Fall 2025

Now that the first season of RUC Bells under my direction has wrapped up, I'm excited to get going with season 2! At the start of last fall we had 3 ringers, which grew to 11 ringers in a very short time. Many of those newbies had much enthusiasm, but little musical experience, particularly with reading the notes and rhythms. Fortunately, the beginners were quick learners and we got on to making great music in a short time. Our Christmas repertoire added to the festivities both during Advent, and for the Christmas Eve service.

In the Spring, we worked up new repertoire and had a nice collection of songs to share with the congregation, as well as make an excursion to The Devonshire Senior's complex. Our aim for that performance was to serenade our former RUC Director of Handbells, Alison Wood, who has become a resident of The Devonshire. We had a fantastic performance! Alison was immensely appreciative, as were the many other residents who came to listen.

New equipment!

Over the summer a wonderful thing happened! We have been graced with the funds to update the very old and clunky equipment (tables and foams) that we have been struggling with all last year. With the large increase in the number of ringers, we were in great need of more surface area (and elbow room!) to play comfortably with 11 ringers. Now, with the new set-up, RUC members will have more space on the tables, and have a much easier time with set-up and take-down thanks to a grant

from *The Alberta Guild of English Handbells Ringers*. We are also immensely grateful for a generous donation from our beloved and long-time members, Fiona and Steve Bamforth. Thank you so much, Fiona and Steve, for nurturing the development of our RUC Handbell Program.

Seeking volunteers

We are in search of a few volunteers skilled in sewing to make covers for our beautiful new foams and tables. If you are able to help for a VERY good cause, please let Fiona or myself know and we can share the details of what is needed.

Interested in joining RUC bells?

This fall, all members but 2 have returned and we have already filled one of those spots with a new member, and the other is taken care of because our ringers have grown in their skills, which allows for 2 of the former spots to be condensed into one.

However...If you are interested in joining us, there are options for expansion, so please get in touch with me, Alison Grant-Préville, to let me know you'd like to join us.

With great gratitude and excitement for the new year to begin.

Alison Grant-Préville
Director of RUC Handbells

Music Notes

Fall is in the air, and our music ministry is buzzing with excitement! Our music groups are gearing up for what promises to be an inspiring season of worship through song.

The RUC choir has a few new anthems up their sleeves and is eager to share these beauties with the congregation! Meanwhile, our RUC handbell choir is gearing up and is truly excited about their second full season with Alison leading the way.

And our RUC ensemble has marked their calendars and will lead us in song on the last Sunday of most months, ensuring regular opportunities to lift our spirits to a rhythmic beat.

AND with any luck, there may be some collaborations!! Choir+Bells; Bells+Ensemble; Choir+Bells+Ensemble... Imagine the possibilities!

To top things off, let's do another "Pop-Up" choir! Stay tuned!!

Paula Roberts, Music Director

Fall Health Corner

Welcome back everyone to a new season of the Health Corner. Fall is a season of change...leaves change colour and fall from the trees, children go back to school, people are back from their summer vacations and start to settle into the rhythm of the workplace again, and it is the start of another new hockey, football, and basketball season.

In terms of health promotion days, the season of Fall is perhaps one of the busiest...

September

Arthritis Awareness Month

Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month

Prostate Cancer Awareness Month

World Suicide Prevention Day: September 10

Terry Fox Run: September 14

Autumn Equinox 2025 begins at 12:19 pm on

Monday, September 22

National Day for Truth & Reconciliation/Orange Shirt Day: September 30

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 like 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, which would ignite cancer research in Canada, raising more than \$850 million since 1980, and bring hope and health to millions of Canadians.

This year, the Terry Fox Run is scheduled for Sunday, September 14 at Kinsmen Park starting at 11:00 am. For more information on the run, please visit <https://terryfox.org>

The National Day for Truth and Reconciliation is a day that honours the children who never returned home and the survivors of residential schools, as well as their families, and communities. Public commemoration of the tragic and painful history and ongoing impacts of residential schools is a vital component of the reconciliation process. Both the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation and Orange Shirt Day take place on September 30.

Orange Shirt Day is an Indigenous-led, grassroots commemorative day intended to raise awareness of the individual, family, and community inter-generational impacts of residential schools, and to promote the concept of "Every Child Matters". The orange shirt is a symbol of the stripping away of culture, freedom, and self-esteem experienced by Indigenous children over generations. On September 30, Canadians are encouraged to wear orange to honour the thousands of survivors of residential schools.

October

Breast Cancer Awareness Month

World Cerebral Palsy Day: October 6

World Mental Health Day: October 10

World Sight Day: October 10

World Psoriasis Day: October 29

Halloween: October 31

November

Osteoporosis Month

November

Fall Prevention Month

Remembrance Day: November 11

World Diabetes Day: November 14

International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women: November 25

Daylight Saving Time 2025 ends on Sunday, November 2 at 1:00 am. Remember to 'fall back' an hour before you go to bed so you are not super early for church that Sunday.

(continued on page 9)



Outreach Committee Update

With fall just around the corner, the Riverbend United Church **Outreach Committee** is gearing up for its fall and winter projects:

- The food pantry collection is ongoing with a slight twist. Notices in the weekly Announcements will include food item suggestions for the next month.
- The clothing and toiletry collection box will reappear in the Narthex in October for your donations. As the weather starts changing, please remember those in need as you prepare for the cold.
- Finally, the annual Christmas project will start in November; new ideas are always welcome.

Thank you.

Erin James for the Outreach Committee.

Bucket List ✓

submitted by Carolyn Miller

I'm sure we all have a bucket list of some sort. Some people write everything down and check it off as they achieve something from the list; for others it is not so much a list as something they have always wanted to do, unsure if it will ever be achieved.

I fall into the latter category. For the last 40 years, I have dreamed of attending the Championship (or Wimbledon as it is perhaps better known). Each year, there is always more demand than tickets, and a public ballot takes place. I have family members and friends who have entered the ballot for 10+ years without any success, and whilst it was a dream of mine, other things always seemed to take priority, and I was content to watch the Championship unfold on my TV screen.

One of my earliest memories was watching the ladies final in 1977 when Virginia Wade was presented the trophy by the Queen, who was celebrating her Silver Jubilee. And I was fortunate to be in Scotland in 2013 when the men's final took place, and will never forget the feeling of watching Andy Murray lift the trophy; a wait of 77 years since Fred Perry's success - the last British man to do so. However, I digress. This year, I entered the ballot and was unsuccessful; however, my sister also entered the ballot, and she was successful! She was offered two tickets to the number one court on July 10th for the men's doubles semi-finals and asked if I would like to go with her. Would I like to go? What a foolish question that was. Within 30 minutes of her email, my flight was booked and I was London-bound.

On a day with a 31 degree forecast, we boarded our train to Wimbledon. As with anything, there is always the worry that the event won't live up to the hype or the picture you've built in your mind, but I needn't have worried. I had a fantastic day! There is a great museum on site telling the tournament's history, along with some amazing memorabilia. The strawberries and cream were delicious (the strawberries are picked in Kent every morning at 4 am and driven to the grounds), and the tennis itself was spectacular. We were treated to two great semifinals, one featuring a British doubles team who eventually won the event, hurrah! and, as a bonus, we also saw one of the wheelchair doubles semifinals. It is truly amazing to watch the speed and agility with which the wheelchairs are maneuvered. Again, it featured a British pair, who had both already competed in the singles event that day (did I mention 31 degrees!), they truly are remarkable athletes. It was a memorable day and exceeded all expectations. Needless to say, my sisters and I are planning to enter the draw again next year!

I wonder if you have had the opportunity to tick something from your bucket list? Did it live up to your expectations? Perhaps you would consider sharing it with us in *The Front Pew*. We love hearing of your adventures.



Northern Spirit Regional AGM—May 2025

THANK YOU!

Riverbend United Church offered extraordinary hospitality for the Northern Spirit Region Annual General Meeting May 29 to June 1. The 40 plus volunteers worked to create a sacred, safe, flexible, warm space for the attendees from around our Region. The Ensemble offered an amazing worship service. The live -streaming of the conference was flawless thanks to Rob Beghin, who also upgraded our building to have Wi-Fi in most spaces.

Special thanks to Diane Trenn, Jill Spaner, and Jacqueline Hunt for their planning, leadership and coordination. Don Trenn, Christine Ens and Patti Hunter were sub-group coordinators who kept each area of hosting running smoothly: facilities, the kitchen, and hospitality.

The participants in the meeting were most grateful and expressed their appreciation with remarks like, “Wow! What a good job!” and “Your team was always there asking, ‘What can I do for you?’”

We were changed by hosting the Region; perhaps the Region was changed by our hosting.



Our fearless leaders: Diane Trenn, Jill Spaner, Jacqueline Hunt



Regional AGM pictures



Volunteers: Patti Hunter,
Christine Ens and Janet
Pattison



Northern Spirit staff, Chloe Burns



Riverbend United's Ensemble leads the Saturday morning opening worship. Pictured here: Annika Schoenhardt, Joanne Little, Doug Spaner, Ayanna Rocke, George Irwin, Joel Fleck and Randy Nelson. Not visible, Jon Spaner and Marv Severson. Many thanks!

Did You Know?

Did you know that when planning the addition to the church, the original design included the creation of a columbarium in the lower level? Indeed, it was even mentioned in the fabulous anthem written by Marv Severson, called *United in Faith*, which all our musical groups performed at the dedication worship service for the new space. After further investigation and reflection, it was decided not to proceed with this idea. In its place, we now have E2 Academy, which has rented this space and turned it into a wonderful school campus.

Fall Health Corner *(continued from page 7)*

Remembrance Day falls on Tuesday, 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 commemorated on 11 November to recall the end of First World War hostilities that formally ended in 1918 "at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month."

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...



~For the Fallen, a poem by Laurence Binyon

Peace,
Dawn



Riverbend United Church
Exploring Faith, Engaging Community

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

Next deadline: 21 November 2025