

March 2026

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Reflections on 2025

Rev. Valerie Oden

Every single day, I am grateful to be part of this congregation. We should never take for granted belonging to a community of faith that is so alive.

That aliveness is evident in the spirit of welcome so many newcomers tell us they feel. It is present in warm smiles, in children who dance during worship, and even in the occasional flurry of socks flying through the sanctuary for those in need.

It echoes through the halls in laughter on Tuesday and Wednesday mornings as groups gather. It rests in the sacred silence of the new contemplative prayer group. It deepens through the wholehearted conversations of our book studies. And it is made tangible in the care shown to one another during difficult times.

This vitality is also visible in the commitment of our leaders and the generosity of our volunteers. Members offer their time, talent, and treasure with open hands. Overflowing bins of winter clothing bore witness to our concern for the wid-

er community, as does the continually replenished food pantry on the corner.

We are blessed with a fine staff, an engaged and thoughtful Board, a faithful Care Team, and a volunteer Facilities Manager, Don Trenn, who tends this building and its grounds as if they were the most sacred place on earth—which, for many, they are. We are indeed a sacred space where hundreds from the neighbourhood come to celebrate the birth of Christ, confident they will encounter thoughtful worship, beautiful music, and an authentic spirit of inclusion. Christmas Eve was made even more special this year by the gift of tenor soloist John Tessier.

In the past year, we hosted the Northern Spirit Regional Meeting with extraordinary grace and calm, welcomed three new staff members, discerned meaningful Orange Shirt commitments toward reconciliation, and shared monthly worship with elders at the Devonshire Senior Community, where our handbell choir also offered music.

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The aliveness of RUC is recorded in these pages. Our gratitude goes to the lay leaders and staff for the ministries shown here, to all who contribute in so many ways, and to our Office Manager, Jacqueline Hunt, who continues to bless us with her wide range of professional skills. I trust you'll enjoy the journey as you read.

And as we step into 2026, our Board is exploring a central question: How do we most faithfully steward this season of abundance and vitality? It is, after all, a season.

May we receive it with gratitude, tend it with care, and celebrate it wholeheartedly.

~ In gratitude,
Valerie



Chair of the Official Board

I officially began the duties of Board Chair in July 2025. At that time, our church was basking in the aftermath of hosting a highly successful Northern Spirit Regional Meeting. We had received glowing reviews about our welcoming spirit, attention to detail and most importantly, the thriving nature of our church community. As the year has progressed, I am constantly reminded of the positivity, compassion and dedication of the church members I serve.

Along with a balanced budget, Riverbend United has been blessed with a substantial Legacy Fund. The

Board has been committed to developing a process by which legacy gifts can be dispersed in a timely, consistent, trackable manner. Up to this date, we have approved two proposals, one for supplying much needed materials for our church family room and youth programs and the other to fund a Men's Shed program to support the mental wellness of our larger community.

We are fortunate to fund such valuable programs beyond our operating budget.

This is an exciting time for Riverbend United Church. A series of meditation meetings have been well attended prior to Sunday services. Plans are underway to continue this form of worship. The Board has enthusiastically supported the updating and expansion of our current library to align with the children's curriculum and the reflection themes of our services.

In this day and age, it is not uncommon for people to "church shop" before determining which congregation they will join. Our church is seeing more newcomers walk through the doors. We have been told that our message of love and inclusion has resonated with perspective members.

We are thankful that Reverend Valerie Oden continues to shape our diverse congregation into a community of faith with her inspirational presence.

~ With gratitude,
Patti Hunter



Outreach Committee

Once again the congregation of RUC helped start the New Year by tossing 530 pairs of new socks to support those in need. New, warm, dry socks are a gift from the heart for those in the inner city. They are always greatly appreciated.

Father's Day lunch at the Bissell Centre saw members of RUC distribute 260 bagged lunches to residents of the inner city. The assembly of the "lunch bags" was done in record time due to the church volunteers who donated their time to contribute to this cause.

The collection of winter clothing was alive and well in 2025! Numerous trips were made to drop off the donations helping those in need feel a little warmer during Edmonton's cold winter.

A big thank you to the RUC congregation for supporting the Food Pantry initiative. As fast as the Food Pantry box, outside the church, is filled the food donations leave. Even members of the Riverbend community are helping to restock the box. It is wonderful to see the community involved.

The Outreach Christmas initiative chose to support Operation Friendship, a program for seniors in need. Cash donations were used to purchase sweatpants/joggers, long underwear, toiletries and Christmas treats. Our church support was and is greatly appreciated.

None of these Outreach initiatives would come to fruition without the support of you, the congregation. It was a busy year.

~ Erin James
Outreach Committee



Some 2025 activities at Riverbend United Church

- RUC Youth Biblical cake making
- 2025 Children's Christmas Pageant
- Terwillegar Farmer's Market Outreach



Music Director

Many of us kicked off the New Year by taking a bit of a “field trip” to Convocation Hall to enjoy Sherry Steele’s wonderful winter recital! It was the perfect way to start the year! Her performance was inspiring, and we are proud to have her with us to support the choir, and sometimes the ensemble, with her piano skills and musical expertise!

As winter was nearing its end, plans for the Easter Season got underway, and for the first time, Alison Grant-Préville, our Bell choir conductor, and I paired the choir and bells together for a beautiful rendition on Palm Sunday of “All Glory Laud and Honour” which also featured Marv Severson on trumpet! The hardest part of collaborating is pinning down a mutual rehearsal time! We, of course, managed to do so, and right after that, we began looking for our next chance to get together!

The choir finished off our final service before summer break with what has become a traditional “Hymn Sing.” For 2025, we featured hymn suggestions from our various RUC “interest groups”, including the Walkers & Talkers, the Men’s Club, the Turkey Team, the Crafting Group, the Ministry and Personnel Committee and, of course, the RUC choir members! This is always a great way to wrap up the choir season.

As usual, summer sped by, and we were soon excited about the musical possibilities that were in the works!

Once we got organized in September, we began to get excited and curious about what might be coming soon in the latest “Marvelous Music” Concert. It is organized by Marv Severson and participated in by a talented line-up of only River-

bend musicians, young and old (but young in spirit!). I have to say that this group really outdid themselves this year, and we all enjoyed a particularly “Marvelous” evening!

Christmas plans start early, of course, for our music groups. The bells and choir performed together once again, this time at our annual Carol Sing. Alison wrote a bell arrangement for “Sing African Noel” for the occasion.

Christmas Eve is always the highlight of the year. We featured the RUC Bell choir at the first service, and were blessed to have John Tessier amaze us with his version of “O Holy Night” at our second. We decided to experiment with using battery operated candles for our early “candlelight service” and then used our usual “real candles” for the second service. It was an interesting experiment, but it was obvious that there is just nothing like singing “Silent Night” in a “real” candlelit sanctuary!

2025 was a very good year!

~ Respectfully
submitted,
Paula Roberts
Music Director



Children's Ministry

2025 has been a year of meaningful transition, growth, and renewed vision within the Children's Ministry at Riverbend United Church. In March 2025, I officially stepped into the role of Children's Ministry Coordinator, following Krystal's leadership. During the month of March, Krystal and I worked side by side to ensure a smooth and thoughtful transition. This overlap allowed for continuity in programming, relationship-building with families, and a clear understanding of the ministry's rhythms and expectations. After her departure, I assumed full responsibility for the role and have continued building on the strong foundation that was already in place. I am deeply grateful for the support of church leadership, volunteers, parents, and the broader congregation throughout this transition.

At present, we have approximately 13 children registered in our Children's Ministry program. On an average Sunday, we welcome between five and six children in regular attendance. While attendance numbers fluctuate due to family schedules and seasonal factors, the consistency of participation has allowed us to foster strong relationships and create a safe, welcoming, and engaging environment for faith formation.

The spring season was marked by joyful celebration and community engagement. Easter Sunday was a highlight, featuring a well-attended

Easter egg hunt that brought energy and connection to our families. The children also participated in Mother's Day by distributing flowers to mothers and mother figures in the congregation, offering a simple but meaningful gesture of appreciation. These moments not only enriched the children's experience but also strengthened intergenerational relationships within the life of the church. Behind the scenes, considerable time was dedicated to evaluating curriculum resources and planning strategically for the months ahead to ensure our programming remained developmentally appropriate and spiritually enriching.

In the fall, we introduced the GO Project curriculum, beginning with *Remembering the Saints in Our Lives*. November provided a natural opportunity to explore themes of remembrance, gratitude, and legacy. The children learned about All Saints Day and reflected on both historical saints and the "everyday saints" in their own lives—individuals who model kindness, love, and compassion. We also engaged thoughtfully with important observances such as Remembrance Day, World Kindness Day, and Trans Day of Remembrance. Through scripture, discussion, and creative activities, the children were encouraged to consider why remembering the past matters and how their actions today shape the legacy they leave for others. These lessons fostered em-

pathy, reflection, and a growing awareness of the broader world around them.

Throughout the fall, the children also participated in special Sundays, including Halloween Costume Sunday and Whole Community Worship services, which allowed them to remain present in the sanctuary and engage more fully in congregational life. Intentional adjustments were made to curriculum pacing and lesson structure better to meet the developmental needs of our current group, ensuring that the material was accessible, engaging, and meaningful.

The Advent season focused on the themes of Hope, Love, Joy, and Peace. The children participated in crafts, baking activities, and rehearsals as they prepared for the Christmas pageant. The Christmas Pageant in mid-December was a significant success. The children and youth demonstrated confidence, dedication, and teamwork, and their worship leadership was a visible reminder of the vitality and importance of our younger members within the congregation. During the Christmas season, when regular Sunday School programming paused, pew packs and children's bulletins were prepared and made available to support families who attended worship.

In January, we transitioned to a lesson structure aligned with the United Church lectionary, allowing

Children's Ministry

(continued)

the children's learning to connect more directly with the themes being explored in Sunday worship. Through stories such as the Baptism of Jesus, the Beatitudes, the calling of the disciples to become "fishers of people," and the visit of the Wise Men, the children engaged more deeply with scripture while developing skills in discussion, curiosity, and reflection.

Overall, 2025 has been a year characterized by steady growth, intentional adaptation, and renewed commitment to nurturing faith in our youngest members. The successful leadership transition, thoughtful curriculum development, meaningful seasonal programming, and consistent Sunday engagement have all contributed to a ministry that is relational, in-

clusive, and grounded in the life of the congregation. I remain grateful for the continued encouragement and support of our church community as we walk alongside our children in faith, learning, and joy.

~ Respectfully submitted,
Alec Gallant (they/them)
Children's Ministry Coordinator

Affirming Committee

One theme that has been apparent as we welcomed new members to RUC this year is that being an Affirming community of faith was one of the deciding factors in joining us. However, it is more than being affirming; it is the genuine welcome and warmth that enfolds each and every one of us on Sunday mornings and beyond. It is not something we have to think about consciously all the time; it seems it is just our way of being. We are indeed a blessed family of faith.

In August, we had the opportunity to walk with other local Affirming United Church communities of faith in support of our LGBTQIA2s+ siblings. As Jill reported in the Fall Front Pew, it was very powerful to walk the parade route, with spectators cheering at least 3-4 deep on both sides of the street.

In September, during worship, we created our "commitment to reconciliation" orange t-shirt, which

was an opportunity for each of us to make a personal commitment to walking the path of meaningful reconciliation with our Indigenous siblings. The orange shirt continues to be displayed in the Narthex, as a reminder of our commitments and an opportunity for us to take inspiration on walking the path of truth and reconciliation together. Our administrative assistant, Sage, contributed a wonderful article to our Winter Front Pew sharing her thoughts on the orange t-shirt together with some helpful book and film recommendations.

We continue to have a representative on the Official Board, which allows us to look at any decisions made on behalf of this faith community through an Affirming lens. We always appreciate input from you regarding any Affirming topics you would like to explore more fully here at RUC.

~ Carolyn Miller
Affirming Committee



Legacy Committee

The benefit of a large bequest to the congregation was the establishment of an endowment fund, managed by the United Church of Canada Foundation, for the purpose of providing ministry to the greater Riverbend United community. The first funds for dispersal were available in 2025 but only from the Opportunity Fund as the Legacy Fund could not be accessed until 2026.

The Legacy committee, composed of Diane Hawrelak, James Allen, Tom Sawyer, and David Olson (Chair) met four times in 2025. They reviewed the mandate of the committee and discussed the procedure for reviewing proposals for projects, and reviewed projects.

The first proposals were submitted to the committee. The committee members reviewed the proposals, asked questions, and solicited responses from the applicants when appropriate, discussed, and made their recommendations. These recommendations went to the Fi-

nance committee for confirmation, and then were presented to the board for final approval. Given the length of time required for reviewing and re-reviewing and the board's busy schedule, the board gave its final approval to the successful applications on January 13, 2026.

The successful applications were:

- Title: **Materials for youth and family room programs**
- Applicant: Sheila Luther
- Award: \$2000
- **Summary:** This project is to provide financing for materials for youth and family room programs. For the youth program there is benefit in providing updated and expanded materials, including sporting equipment and games for their program and associated storage bins or shelves if needed. For the family room, there is benefit in providing updated toys and books for their programs.

- Title: **Men's Sheds of Canada**
- Applicants: David James, Darren Hinger
- Award: \$15,000
- **Summary:** Men's Shed is a group of men who get together in their community to develop new skills, discover new interests, and make new friends. For many men, aging and retirement can lead to loneliness and a loss of purpose, and that's where Men's Sheds come in. A Men's Shed is grounded in the idea that men communicate more effectively when they're "shoulder to shoulder" with other men. We propose to start a Men's Shed group at Riverbend United Church.

Respectfully submitted,
David M. Olson

Trustees

The 2025 Board of Trustees of Riverbend United Church was comprised of:

- Terry Hunt, Chair (Trustee since 2012)
- Joan Robinson (since 2006)
- Matthew Schoenhardt (since 2019)
- David Turner (since 2012)
- Peggy Robinson (since 2019)
- David Olson (since 2023)

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.



Spiritual Formation

The Spiritual Formation Committee oversees all aspects of worship and Christian education including service planning, communion, sanctuary décor, music, adult education as well as children and youth ministries – aspects that contribute to fulfilling worship services, programs, and learning opportunities. We were once again happy to highlight the work of our committee at the Ministry in Motion event early in the fall.

Thank you to this strong committee for their dedication to RUC over the past year. In addition to our minister Valerie Oden, the committee is comprised of the following members:

- Jennifer Tupper (Chair)
- Joanne Little
- Krystal Manuel / Alec Gallant
- Nathan Schoenhardt
- Carolyn Miller
- Peggy Robinson
- Christy Middleton
- Daina Sparling (until fall 2025)
- Graham Gaine (joined in fall 2025)

As she always does, Reverend Valerie led inspiring, meaningful and engaging worship services and series, facilitated a variety of learning opportunities through book and other forms of study, and supported lay leaders to share their perspectives in services. Through all the seasons of the church calendar, Valerie brings deep care, passion and insight to the pulpit. In the summer, RUC shared in worship with St. Paul's United Church with

services offered at St. Paul's in July, and at Riverbend in August.

Whole Community Worship services were held throughout the year and aim to engage all ages in theme-based worship. Once again, we have Carolyn Miller to thank for sharing her creativity and insight in the coordination and execution of these services. Her approach to Truth and Reconciliation and her invitation to all members of the congregation to share their commitments during the September Whole Community Worship was especially poignant. We also have Carolyn to thank for creating the digital Advent calendar for members of our community to engage with during the Christmas season, and organizing the Christmas prayer tree at the back of the church. Livestreamed worship continues to be an integral part of our outreach ministry made possible because of the time and talent of the audiovisual team who ensure that our services are of high quality. And who doesn't love ice-cream, which was handed out by the SF committee after the June 8th service!

Music: We are blessed to have Paula Roberts leading our Music Ministry along with our wonderfully talented accompanist Sherry Steele. Together they support members of the choir in sharing their beautiful voices at every service. We continue to enjoy music from the handbell ringers, with Alison Grant-Préville as Director, and the Ensemble sharing their talents one Sunday per month. There are so many talented singers and mu-

sicians, and every contribution made to our music ministry is deeply appreciated.

Children: Krystal Manuel, continued in her role as the Children's Ministry Coordinator into 2025, and we are grateful for her leadership in continuing to grow this program, engaging all ages in her program and its activities. After Krystal stepped away, Alec Gallant took on the Children's ministry with care, commitment and passion.

Youth: After the departure of Luke Nelson as Youth Ministry Coordinator, Nathan Schoenhardt took on this important role and hit the ground running. Through Sunday discussions, evening and weekend youth events, many jointly organized with St. Paul's, our youth have the opportunity to connect for fun, fellowship and faith.

Sanctuary Décor: Special thanks to Peggy Robinson and her team of willing volunteers for maintaining our ever-changing sanctuary displays.

~ Blessings,
Jennifer Tupper



Handbell Choir

Our 2025 season brought great things to The Riverbend United Church Handbell Choir (RUC Bells). Last spring, we were very pleased to receive a much-needed grant of \$500 from the Alberta Guild of English Handbell Ringers to help us replace the antiquated and laborious table set-up that the choir has been using since the choir's inception in 1985, 40 years ago.

Thanks to the grant, RUC Bells welcomes our new collapsible, lightweight, plastic tables!! Easy set-up and take down. And with additional budgeted money from the church and a generous gift from Fiona and Steve Bamforth, we are now the proud recipients of a full and complete set up: plastic tables and new foams enough for our 3-4 octave group, with ample elbow space!

We are lucky enough to have church member volunteers who sewed us basic protective covers for the foams, as well as beautiful performance covers to dress us up. A huge thanks to Pat Parkinson, Peggy Robinson, and Richard Pawsey for their expertise in sewing and their community-mindedness.

We are also very grateful to Riverbend United Church for support, both in enthusiasm and financially, to obtain everything we needed for our new set-up.

A huge thank you to all who supported this project for enabling RUC Bells to play in style and comfort for years to come.

In May 2025, RUC Bells paid a visit to The Devonshire to perform for

Alison Wood, one of RUC Bells' first directors back in the '80's. Alison had a fabulous time and the bells brought her much joy!

Late in 2025, we were very pleased to welcome two new ringers to our ranks: Elise Barber, a new member of Riverbend United along with her family; and Susanne Sandy. Their interest in joining us lined up well after our December performances when 2 of our members needed to give up their positions in the bell choir. What grace that Elise and Susanne came along just at the right time!

Respectfully submitted,

Alison Grant-Préville
Director of RUC Handbells

RUC Bells visit The Devonshire care centre in May 2025



Maintenance & Facilities



Greetings to all the congregation and a belated welcome to the new year.

2025 was a very busy year for the maintenance department and the following is a list of projects that were carried out in 2025:

- Arranged for furnace and air conditioning maintenance
- Stripped, waxed and polished basement floor
- Cleaned carpet in Narthex, Sanctuary, kitchen and all offices on west side of church.
- Largest project of year – prepping walls and repainting basement and front stairwell.
- Roof inspection – inspected for loose tiles, replaced any loose screws
- Inspect sewer line for water erosion
- Controlled parking and security requirements for United Church Northern Spirit meeting

- Removed 3 large Spruce trees and stumps that were disease infected
- Replaced security panel damaged by lightning strike
- Replaced Fire panel damaged by lightning strike
- Upgraded Telus fire panel monitoring
- Initiated and set up Fire Safety Response Plan as now required by new Fire Safety code
- Replaced 3 furnaces in old furnace room
- Cleaned and thoroughly sanitized ceiling tiles and area above ceiling tiles in basement kitchen that had been compromised by a fungus infection due to condensation. This was also inspected by a professional company
- Re-painted and did some landscaping to LED sign facing Riverbend Road
- Replaced and installed 14 strings of Christmas lights for

- outside trees
- Arranged for snow removal contract for sidewalks and parking lot. Due to our weather so far have had parking lot cleaned twice and sanded three times
- Arranged and installed the sidewalk candles for the Christmas Eve services

I would like to thank all the congregation and the Board Members for your support in approving the expenses required to properly maintain the building and property.

~ Respectfully yours,
Don Trenn
Maintenance & Facilities

Official Board 2025 — 2026

- Chair
- Chair Elect
- Past Chair
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Maintenance & Facilities Manager
- Ministry and Personnel
- Outreach
- Affirming Team
- Spiritual Formation
- Lease Manager
- Northern Spirit Representative
- Member-at-Large
- Member-at-Large
- Clergy

- Patti Hunter
- Joan Robinson
- Sheila Luther
- Matthew Schoenhardt
- Don Trenn
- Christine Ens
- Erin James
- Carolyn Miller
- Jennifer Tupper
- Matthew Schoenhardt
- Jill Spaner
- Dawn Power
- Darryl Sparling
- Valerie Oden



Youth Ministry

My work as Youth Leader began in the spring of 2025; the program started with small numbers and has been steadily growing since.

The youth program includes weekly Sunday morning discussions. In the spring, those discussions averaged 1 or 2 youth and focused on a variety of topics ranging from faith to ethics to social media. Much of those discussions focused on different parables as we discussed the importance of the story as well as the “so what” discussion, where we tried and applied the lesson to our own lives. At the start of Advent, numbers increased slightly and we started a general series about the Liturgical calendar, and the significance of different moments of Jesus’s life, and why we think it is included in the gospels.

I focused on creating a safe space of welcome, where all youth could express their mind and ask questions. The small group made it easy for us to discuss whatever youth wanted but made it tough to have longer discussions that included multiple perspectives.

The youth program also featured a weekend event twice a month. We averaged 2-3 youth for events and most events took place at the church. We had events including biblical cake making, games night, DIY escape room as well with some off-site events like bowling.

In the fall, I put out a more organized long-term schedule and more youth started coming out. We en-

joyed activities events like pumpkin carving and sledding and nerf guns, with every event featuring some of our favorite games like ‘Kick the can’ and ‘Sardines’.

In the Fall, we also had some group events with St. Paul’s United and Robertson-Wesley United youth groups. These combo events, gave youth an opportunity to meet people similar in age within a larger group. The group events were Corn Maze and activity games at Riverbend. This collaboration also gave me an opportunity to learn from the other two leaders. I look forward to collaborating with these other groups in 2026.

The youth program had taken a hit from Covid and numbers had been decreasing. In addition, the gap in programming saw many youth age out and families’ and youth’s priorities change. With this said, it has been a joy to see the group grow this year. Not all youth can attend

every event or discussion, but there is a solid group of eight or so youth that try and make it out whenever they can.

The group continues to look for new members and welcomes any youth looking for a community to join. All are welcome.

~ Nathan Schoenhardt
Youth Ministry Coordinator



Care Team



The Riverbend United Church Care Team has been busy meeting the needs of our congregation. We continue to make phone calls and visits in the home, hospital or care centre and even some lunch dates. As well, numerous cards have been sent; be it thinking of you, get well, in sympathy, new baby and our newcomers. This year we were able to send Christmas cards to those church members on our care team list as well to those who are

no longer able to attend church in person. We feel receiving a card does lift one's spirit.

Sadly, we recently lost two of our members, Mary Neden and Jamie Bain, who were such dedicated and valued members of this team. Their kindness and commitment will be deeply missed.

The Care Team hosted its first conversation café; the Christmas Café was open on Sunday December 7, 2025 from 11:30 to 12:30. Church members gathered to enjoy fellowship, coffee and goodies in a welcoming and relaxed café-style setting. It was well received and we are planning to continue this conversation café series into the new year.

As we look ahead into 2026, we are excited to be planning and discussing a variety of upcoming presentations. We look forward to sharing more in the coming months.

If you have any ideas, requests or suggestions please feel free to contact me or any members of the care team.

We are incredibly grateful for the loving, caring and supportive members of this Care Team. Their dedication is truly appreciated and makes a meaningful difference in our congregation.

~ Holly Ruryk
Care Team Coordinator



2025 Statistics

Marriages	1
Deaths	10
Baptisms	6
Residents & non-resident members:	324
Residents & non-residents households:	257



Ministry & Personnel

The Ministry and Personnel (M&P) Committee acts under the guidelines of the Manual of The United Church of Canada, serving as the human resources arm of our church. The committee functions around three roles, which are the consultative and supportive role, the healthy relationships role, and the supervisory role. We provide resources and support for the staff and the community of faith with respect to any issue affecting staff of our church, including our minister and lay employees. The Committee works to build positive and trusting relationships between staff and members of the community of faith.

Early in the year we completed our

search for new leaders for both our children's and youth programs. In March we were thrilled to welcome Alec Gallant as our Children's Ministry Coordinator and Nathan Schoenhardt as our Youth Ministry Coordinator.

In August we modified the operations of the office and were pleased to have Sage Giroux join our team to support the administration of our church on Thursdays and Fridays.

Riverbend United Church is blessed with staff who are committed to their work and we are thankful for this work in our community of faith. If congregational members have praise or concerns about

staff, both ministry personnel and lay employees, these can be shared in signed correspondence with the committee. Comments can be sent to a confidential email address: mpchair.ruc@gmail.com. The issues will be considered confidentially by the M&P Committee, who will recommend action.

M&P Committee members include Christine Ens (Chair), Diane Hawrelak, Lisa Bossert and Debbie Webb. Special thanks to long-term members Doug Spaner and Moira Walker who concluded their service to the committee.

~ Christine Ens
Chair,
Ministry & Personnel

Men's Walking Group

The Men's group started on November 4, 2023. We started with just a few guys, and we still have just a few guys. A few men have come and gone, but there is a core group of four of us that have persisted. The benefit is that we have gotten to know each other better, and can more easily share with each other. Because of this, we all think it is worth continuing!

We are however looking for a few more men to join us! We meet most Saturdays at 10:00 a.m. for a 30-minute chat, and then go for an optional walk, anywhere from 20 to 40 minutes with the pace and distance depending on who wants to walk.

The Men's Walking Group changed their name in March 2025 and is

now called the Men's Discussion and Walking Group as we are more of a discussion group than a walking group.

Each week usually 3 to 4 guys show up which enables a group conversation where everyone has a good chance to talk at some length. We start off with a check-in sharing briefly how our week has gone. Frequently we then break into discussions about world politics, social issues, health issues, personal activities and many other things.

On some Saturdays in January 2026, partly because it was very cold for walking, we started playing board games after a brief chat. This has gone well and may continue sporadically throughout the year. We usual-

ly take a break in the summer and resume in September.

The men's group meets in the chapel, but occasionally meets elsewhere, so stay informed by:

- checking out the weekly announcements.
- emailing the office at contactus@riverbendunited.org to join the email list, or
- leaving a message for Dennis at the office at 780.430.7275.

Please consider joining this group for fellowship, health and sharing of ideas. Drop in and check us out. No big commitment; it's pretty easy going.

~ Dennis Nolan

Wednesday Walkers & Talkers

On Wednesday mornings, ladies from the church and friends meet in the church parking lot. Some of the ladies walk at 9:00 a.m. for an hour in the neighbourhood, and some at 9:30 a.m. for a half-hour walk. At 10:00 a.m. more ladies arrive for our lively coffee-time chats. We have an active group of 21 members and another nine ladies who have been part of the group but who are no longer able to actively participate but like to stay in touch.

In June 2025 we celebrated 35 years of walking together. Our anniversary luncheon was held at the local restaurant Brew and Bloom. Above the landing in the stairwell is a banner presented to



the church to celebrate our 35th anniversary. New photos of our group over the past 35 years are hung alongside. You will recognize familiar faces along with members who have moved or passed away. We are grateful to the leadership and inspiration of Bette Woodhead who began a "walkers group" to support women in the congregation. Bette passed away in 2023.

There's nothing like a breath of fresh air or a clear blue sky on a

frosty winter morning, a perfect time to go for a walk with a friend you've walked miles with or have just met. We walk all year round with the exception of -20 weather, icy conditions or smokey days. Talking time is at 10:00 a.m., bring your own coffee or other beverage. Our conversations cover many topics and life's experiences. We share joys, laughter, concerns, and sometimes tears. We help out with church activities when extra hands are needed whether it's the garage sale or

folding bulletins for special worship services.

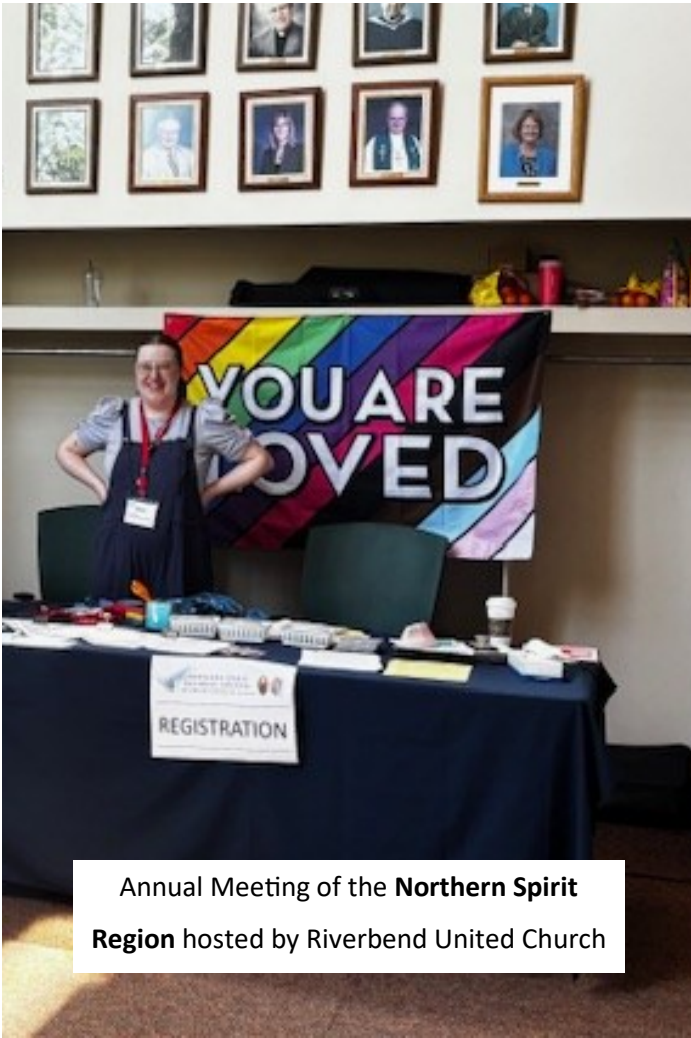
Dorothy Hitschfeld, Patti Hunter, Georgianna McDavid and Glynis Maley co-ordinate walks and activities. Questions? Please contact the Church office at 780.430.7275 or join us Wednesday morning with your walking shoes on or your coffee cup in hand. We're happy to meet you.

~ Glynis Maley
Wednesday Walkers & Talkers

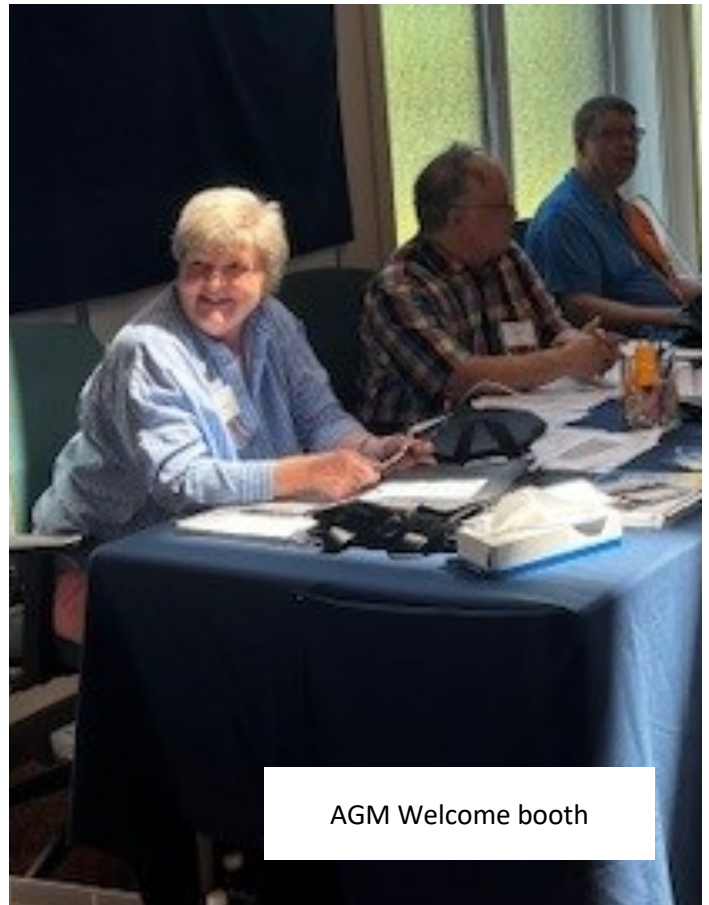


Marvelous Music concert - November 1, 2025

Northern Spirit Region



Annual Meeting of the **Northern Spirit Region** hosted by Riverbend United Church



AGM Welcome booth

Riverbend United Church continues to operate actively within the Northern Spirit Region of the United Church of Canada.

We were “invited” and agreed to host the 2025 Annual Meeting of the Region in late May 2025. This entailed 4 (long) days of meetings, workshops and worship with over 130 Clergy, lay leaders, youth, Regional and General Council representatives from communities of faith across the central and northern parts of Alberta and NWT and into northern BC. The congregation was extremely engaged, volunteer-

ing in worship, hospitality, serving and cleaning up after many meals, parking and building maintenance.

A huge thank you to the more than 40+ volunteers for their efforts which impressed all who attended!

Several members of the congregation participated in an 8 session lecture series (online) on the History of the Conflict in Palestine sponsored by the region. Several others joined other Edmonton congregations in marching in Edmonton’s Pride Parade. Once again a contribution was made to the region’s No Room at the Inn project of a

portion of the giving received Christmas Eve.

A new relationship is in the works with the newly formed First Third Ministry, again sponsored by the Region and headed up by Kevin Guenther. This is a shared ministry focused on children, youth and young adults. More to learn about this in the coming year...

~ Jill Spaner
Northern Spirit Regional Representative

2025 Ministry Team

Rev. Valerie Oden	Lead Minister
Rev. Tom Sawyer	Minister Emeritus, Honorary
Paula Roberts	Music Director
Sherry Steele	Music Ministry, Accompanist
Alison Grant-Préville	Music Ministry, Handbells
Lois Samis Lund	Handbell Director Emeritus, Honorary
Alec Gallant	Children's Ministry
Nathan Schoenhardt	Youth Ministry
Holly Ruryk	Care Team
Jacqueline Hunt	Office Manager
Sage Giroux	Office Assistant
Rob Beghin	Audio-visual Technician
Nathan Mills	Audio-visual Technician
Tuan Bangsa-Jayah	Maintenance



IN MEMORIAM

- ◆ Susan Donna Thompson
- ◆ Lael Clarisse Bhambhani
 - ◆ Mary Ann Neden
 - ◆ Barbara Lynn Dzenick
 - ◆ Peter Juliebo
- ◆ Evelyn Marvin Millman
 - ◆ Fred Shepel
 - ◆ Carrie Alice Svendson
 - ◆ James Robert Bain
 - ◆ Rev. Raymond (Ray) Olsen

Riverbend United Church
14907 - 45 Avenue NW
Edmonton, Alberta
780.430.7275

www.riverbendunited.org
contactus@riverbendunited.org



Riverbend United Church

2025 Annual Report

Appendix A

Treasurer's Report

2025 Financial Information

2026 Budget

UCC Foundation Report - RUC Opportunities
Fund

2025 Annual Treasurer's Report

Submitted by:
Matthew Schoenhardt

Thoughts on 2026 Budget

Hi! This is my second Annual Treasurer's Report.

2025 had some financial surprises. While we started off the year a little behind in our offering budget, by the end of the year because of a few unexpected single large donations we turned a meaningful surplus and saw offerings increase for the first time since 2020. This year's budget (again) basically balanced itself. As I stated last year, we – the Community of Faith of Riverbend United Church – have the financial flexibility to start thinking of how our Ministry and Calling in this world could be ...

Without irony I shared this budget with the Board and talk of Joseph telling Pharoah of the seven years of plenty followed by the seven years of famine. Over the next few years (not necessarily seven) we have a demographic window to expand our Ministry and future-proof our Church. I encourage us all to discern what this could look like and the commitments we need to deliver to make that happen.

I open with the question: "How can we use these gifts to be Christ's hands and feet and voice in Edmonton?"

Where the money comes from and how we use it

I know most of us are not accountants and I have tried to use some different techniques in explaining things to the Board. It went pretty well (so I will continue using them):

1. Bucket size. If you, like our Minister, really want dollars and pennies details they are at the end. Our annual budget is roughly \$500,000 and 1% is \$5000. With this mindset I have broken our accounting into larger sources and uses of funds.
2. I will use two different kinds of diagrams – Sankey (sources and uses of funds) and waterfalls (how things changed from then to now, or budget to actual, or actual to new budget)

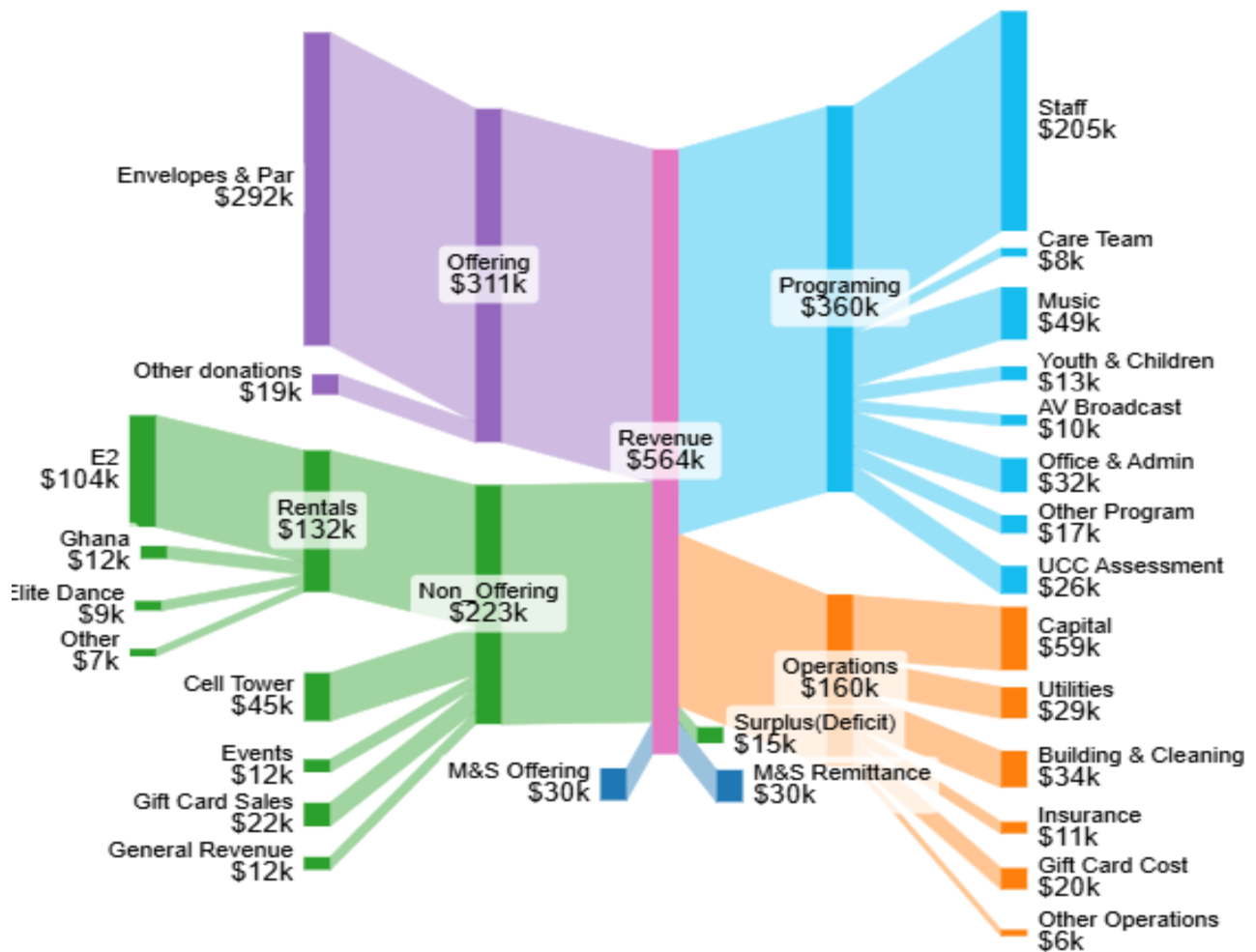


Figure 1: Where our Money comes From and Goes To in 2026 (Sankey Diagram)

In Figure 1: Where our Money comes From and Goes To in 2026 (Sankey Diagram) we can see that offerings are approximately \$311K of our \$564K of revenue or about 60%. You can eyeball this as the width of any bar is correctly scaled to the drawing. The purple “offering” is slightly more than half of the total revenue and is comprised mostly of envelopes and PAR (Pre-Authorized Remittance – i.e. automatic bank transfers that make it easy for our Counters and Envelope Steward to maintain accuracy and confidentiality). This visual also makes it easy to see that our Offerings do not cover all of our Programming costs, let alone our Operations (building) costs.

To make up that shortfall we have other sources of revenue. About 40% of our revenue comes from “non-offering” (green bars) with about 90% of that from long-term rentals. We have three key in-building tenants and one exterior:

1. **E2 Academy:** A registered special needs school that has exclusive access to approximately half of our basement and who is the largest source of our rental revenue. It should be noted that E2 Academy pays a utility rider to account for their increased utility usage;
2. **The Ghanaian Methodist Church** rent our sanctuary on Sundays for worship along with other space at other times;

3. **Elite Dance** is a for-profit community dance school that rents our lower hall several weeknights; and,
4. **Rogers Communications** who leases space for a cell phone tower housing equipment from Rogers, Telus and Bell.

Finally, we have about \$24k of other revenues. General Revenue includes the fees collected from weddings and funerals while Events includes things like the Garage sale, Marvelous Music concerts and Yoga classes. Please note, that “Gift Card Sales” is the total revenue from the card sales, not the profit, and there is matching expense called “Gift Card Cost”. The difference is the net contribution.

Not included in the purple offering bar is Mission and Service Offering (or “M&S”) shown in darker blue. This is offering that folks designate for the United Church of Canada’s Mission and Service Fund, which supports activities outside the wider Church. These are things like community supports, emergency relief, development work, social and environmental justice, and food security both in Canada and around the world. The \$30k of M&S offering is passed on dollar-for-dollar to the United Church of Canada, with zero remaining at Riverbend United Church.

I have broken our spending into two main buckets:

- a) Programming, the Church activities we see, feel and participate in; and,
- b) Operations, the behind-the-scenes things that keep the rain out and the lights on.

Programming, shown in light blue, used about 2/3rds of our budget and includes paid staff (Minister and Office Manager), contractors and expenses that support our Care Team, Music, Youth, Children, and digital Ministries. Included in this Programming is “Other” which are things like pulpit supply (when Valerie is on vacation or away), bulletins, candles, weddings, funerals and special events.

Programming includes the United Church of Canada Assessment (“UCC Assessment”). This is Riverbend United’s fair share-contribution (mostly determined by our attendance and revenue) to the operations of the greater United Church of Canada. In business terms, the UCC Assessment is an invoice we pay to fund head office! In a perfect world the UCC Assessment strictly goes to paying United Church of Canada staff and operations expenses while our voluntary M&S Offering funds the United Church of Canada’s outreach. We could argue that UCC Assessment is an Operations expense, however I elected to put it into Programming as it how our Ministry fits into the larger Church.

The other 1/3rd of the budget goes to Operations which has five main buckets:

1. **Building and Cleaning:** the day-to-day costs of running a \$5M building with lots of use and includes our handyman, snowplowing, routine inspections and toilet paper.
2. **Capital:** the money we spend on keeping the building in good shape. Key spending this year will be a new sign and some replacements and improvements to the sound system. It is common to spend 1-2% of the value of a property on capital maintenance every year. For us that would be funded at \$30-60,000 annually but actual spending would not be perfectly even. Generally, we have been lean on this in past years. It is like replacing the shingles on your house, sure you can get one more year out of them – until you can’t as the roof leaks. Then not only do you have to replace the shingles but also must repair the water damage. Good capital maintenance precludes costly negligence. Don Trenn has a great plan to keep our building safe!
3. **Utilities:** gas, water, sewer, garbage and power (which is much smaller thanks to solar panels!)

4. Office and Admin: things like printing bulletins, accounting “audits”, computer support and software.
5. Insurance: seemingly an ever-increasing line both for Riverbend and the rest of us!

The final line is the planned surplus or deficit. We are planning for a modest surplus for 2026 in anticipation of using that surplus for expanded Ministry that has yet to be discerned. The actual numbers might show a slight 3% surplus but as I said, I work in buckets of \$5000, and we should not pretend to be more accurate or predictable than that!

2025 Financial Review

The next difference is the introduction of waterfall diagrams with the vertical axis in thousands of dollars. This waterfall diagram starts with the planned cash balanced budget of 2025, and shows the variations (differences to budget) to how we actually ended up, a \$80k surplus.

Orange bars are unfavorable results – either less for revenue items or more for expenses – while **green bars** are favorable – either more for revenue or less for expenses. For instance, offerings were \$57,000 better than budgeted while “other operations” were \$10,000 more expensive than planned.

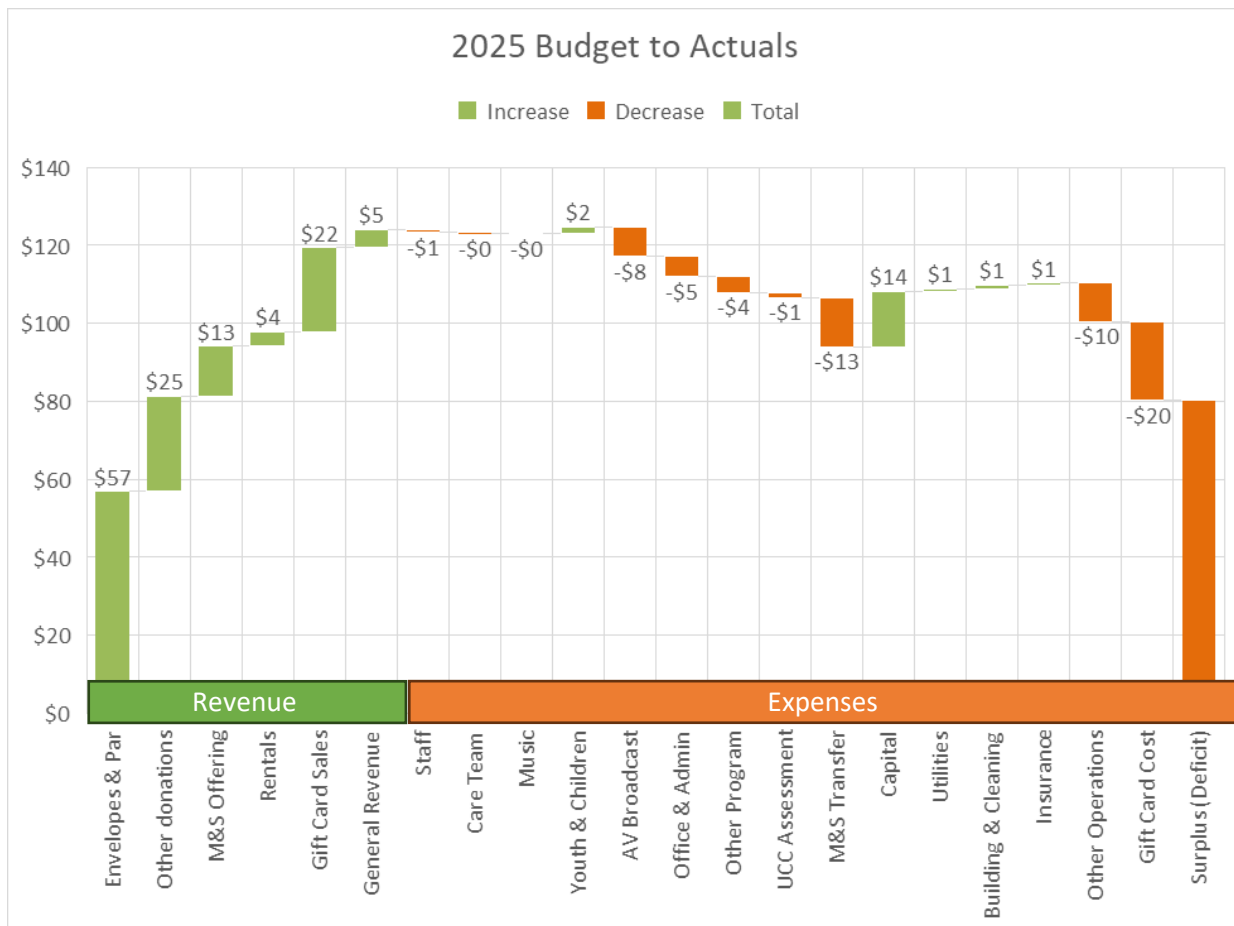


Figure 2: 2024 Budget to Actual (Waterfall Diagram)

2026 Budget

The 2026 budget waterfall, Figure 3: 2026 Budget changes from 2025 Actuals, references the 2025 actual results with red bars showing decreases for revenues or increases for spending.

- This chart starts with the 2025 actual surprise surplus of approximately \$80,000.
- We assume the extremely generous couple of one-time gifts will not re-occur lowering Givings by \$42,000 (\$25 & \$17k).
- Our cell tower has fixed revenue in five-year contract blocks. With 2025 a renewal year, our Lease Manager was able to secure a \$10,000 annual increase (~30%) and improved the contract so that future increases are tied to published StatsCan data for increased transparency and fairness.
- Various staff costs increased due to wage inflation. It should be noted our Youth program was without a leader for a portion of last year, while this year we are funding for the full year and was provided with a modest spending budget. A potentially inequitable pay structure was corrected in our Music Ministry. AV Broadcast is lower this year as we incurred noticeable cost to support the United Church centennial celebrations last year.
- In 2026 we will have some AV improvements and plan on replacing our sign. The design concept of the sign (replace as is or go digital?) has yet to be decided and a place holder has been included in the budget for a replacement as-is.
- The one-time correction for prior year's solar generation was removed resulting in an apparent increase in costs by \$4000.

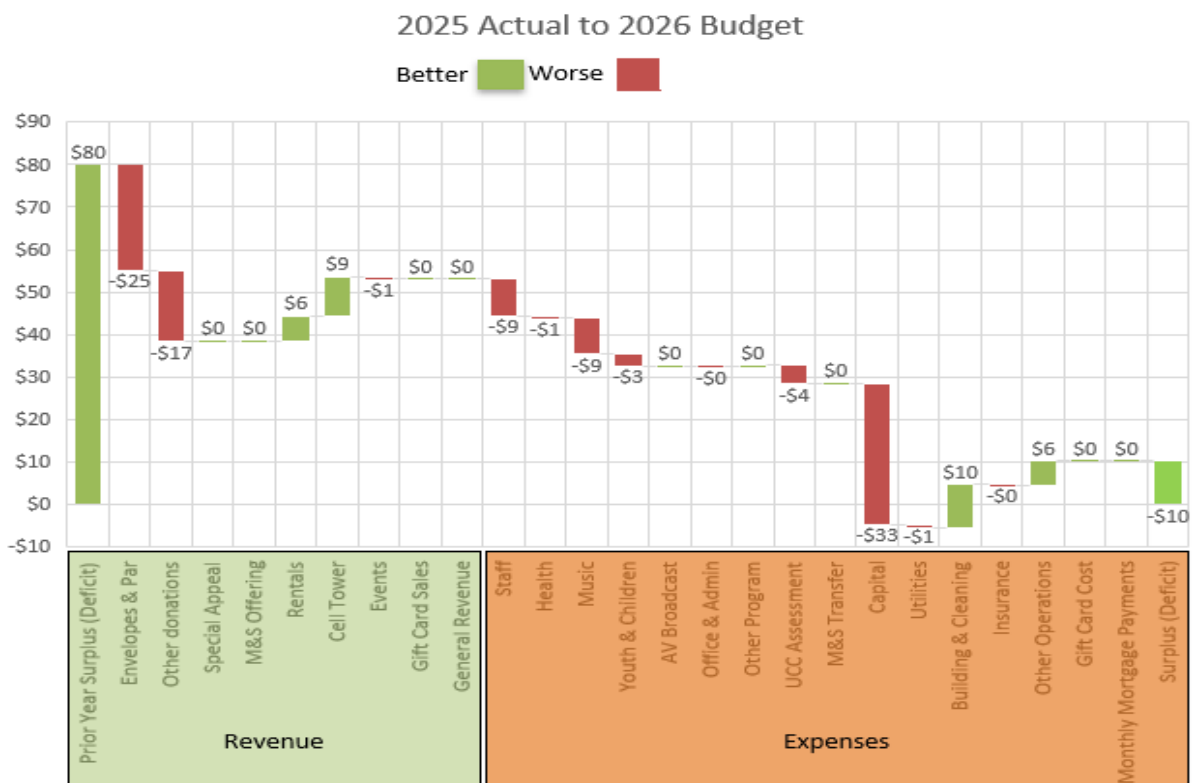


Figure 3: 2026 Budget changes from 2025 Actuals

Boring Accounting Numbers - 2026 Budget

If you got this far, either you find me amusing, are passionate about Riverbend or like Valerie prefer to see numbers (but I am slowly converting her to Sankey and Waterfall), here they are:

Accounts	Total
Income	
4000 Revenue	\$ -
4100 General Operating Revenue	\$ -
4110 Collections - Received	\$ -
4111 Envelopes & PAR	\$ 308,684
4112 Special receipts	\$ 8,646
4120 General Revenue - Non-receipted	\$ -
4122 Publications & subscriptions	\$ 383
4123 Miscellaneous revenue	\$ 9,618
4124 CanadaHelps Donations	\$ 9,588
4127 UCC Foundation donations	\$ -
4130 Event Revenue	\$ 360
4133 Garage sale	\$ 6,848
4137 Turkey Team	\$ -
41371 Community event	\$ 1,623
4139 Other miscellaneous events	\$ -
41392 Yoga class	\$ 4,355
4140 Special services revenue	\$ -
4141 Wedding income - Ops.	\$ 1,300
4142 Funeral income - Ops.	\$ 10,611
4200 Property & Maintenance	\$ -
4210 P&M revenue - Received	\$ -
4212 Special receipts	\$ 25
4220 P&M revenue - Non-receipted	\$ -
4221 Loose collection	\$ 5,203
4230 Rental Income	\$ -
4231 Rentals	\$ 125,896
4232 Cell tower	\$ 35,754
4250 Sobey's card commission	\$ 1,218
4300 Non Operating Revenue	\$ -
4310 Project appeals	\$ -
4314 Gift Card Income	\$ 20,300
4320 Mission and Service	\$ -
4321 M & S Envelopes	\$ 28,681
4322 Birthday M&S	\$ 1,110
4330 Memorial Fund receipted	\$ 10,650
Total Income	\$ 590,852

Accounts	Total
5000 Expenses	\$ -
5111 Wages & Salaries	\$ -
51111 ADP staff	\$ 149,617
51119 Office Assistant	\$ 6,110
5114 Book Allowance	\$ 2,880
5115 EI Expense	\$ -
51151 ADP staff	\$ 2,649
5116 CPP Expense	\$ -
51161 ADP staff	\$ 7,111
5117 UC Benefits	\$ 14,623
5118 Employer Pension Plan	\$ 13,465
5120 Office and Administration	\$ 739
5121 Office Supplies	\$ 3,219
5122 Computer ADSL/other costs	\$ 5,556
5123 Photocopier lease, repair & use	\$ 5,797
5124 Outside services	\$ -
51241 Accounting	\$ 3,331
51243 ADP & PAR charges	\$ 787
51244 Other Miscellaneous Service Cost	\$ 80
51245 Service Fee - Donation Services	\$ 346
51249 Other	\$ 250
5125 Telephone / Comm. incl postage	\$ 5,386
5127 Travel Expenses (KM)	\$ 341
5129 Hospitality	\$ 736
5130 Management Committees	\$ -
5131 Board & Trustee Expenses	\$ 1,177
5132 Communications & advertising	\$ 1,337
5133 Ministry & Personnel	\$ 67
5138 UCC Assessment	\$ 21,997
5139 Other	\$ 334
5140 Spiritual Formation	\$ -
5141 Congregational Ministry	\$ -
51411 Contracts, honoraria & expenses	\$ 250
51412 Bulletins / Subscriptions	\$ 1,131
51413 Pulpit Supply	\$ 920
51414 Pastoral care (coffee, etc.)	\$ 89
51415 Worship supplies (candles, palms, etc)	\$ 70
51416 AV assistance	\$ 15,039
5142 Children's Ministry	\$ -

Accounts	Total
51421 Honorarium - Children's Ministry	\$ 4,960
51422 Children's Ministry - supplies	\$ 377
51429 Other Expenses	\$ 123
5143 Affirm Program	\$ -
51432 Affirm expenses and supplies	\$ 237
51439 Affirm program other	\$ 40
5144 Youth & Young Adult Ministry	\$ -
51441 Honorarium - Youth Leader	\$ 4,484
51442 Supplies	\$ 63
51449 Other expenses	\$ 271
5145 Health Ministry	\$ -
51451 Honorarium	\$ 6,600
51452 Supplies	\$ 359
5146 Special Services Expenses	\$ -
51461 Wedding expenses	\$ 650
51462 Funeral expenses	\$ 4,223
5150 Music Ministry	\$ -
5151 Honoraria	\$ -
51511 Music Director	\$ 22,037
51512 Handbell Choir Director	\$ 6,000
51513 Organist	\$ 9,142
5152 Music Expenses	\$ -
51521 Choir expenses	\$ 1,473
51522 Handbell expenses	\$ 1,088
51524 Audio visual repair & maint.	\$ 245
51529 Other misc. music expenses	\$ 509
5160 Event expenses	\$ -
5163 Garage sale expenses	\$ 701
5166 Women of RUC	\$ -
51661 Funeral Catering Exos.	\$ 1,277
5167 Turkey Team	\$ -
51671 Community Event	\$ 677
5169 Other events	\$ 4,785
5200 Committee Expenses	\$ -
5220 Outreach	\$ -
5228 Outreach Projects	\$ 3,538
5400 Non-operational expenses	\$ -
5410 M&S Disbursements	\$ 29,791
5414 Grocery card cost of goods sold	\$ 20,300
5450 Benevolent Fund (other)	\$ 1,430

Accounts	Total
5490 Miscellaneous <u>outreach</u>	\$ 138
5500 Property and Maintenance	\$ -
5520 Lot & yard maintenance	\$ -
5521 Summer maintenance	\$ 6,625
5522 Winter maintenance	\$ 7,151
5530 Bldg. operating, repair, maintenance	\$ -
5531 Insurance	\$ 10,950
5532 Safety, Security & Monitoring	\$ 10,958
5533 Utilities	\$ -
55331 Electricity	\$ 8,279
55332 City utilities	\$ 8,441
55333 Natural Gas	\$ 5,681
55334 Waste & recycle collection	\$ 5,475
5534 Bldg. cleaning & janitorial	\$ 17,179
5535 Bldg. Repair & Maintenance	\$ 8,688
5536 Capital Fixes 1	\$ 25,658
5537 Capital Fixes 2	\$ 456
5539 Handy Man	\$ 4,671
5550 P&M event expenses	\$ -
5553 Rental expenses	\$ 150
Total Expense	\$ 511,312



United Church of Canada

**2025 Report on the
Riverbend United Church
Opportunities Fund**



February 20, 2026

Matthew Schoenhardt
14746 47 Ave NW
Edmonton, AB T6H 5L4

Re: Riverbend United Church Opportunities Fund - 5155073

Dear Mr. Schoenhardt,

Thank you for all you do in support of congregations, ministries, and programs that enrich The United Church of Canada, create a more just planet, and celebrate God's abundance in the world.

I am pleased to enclose a report on the activity in your fund over 2025. It details any gifts you may have made as well as any grants made and fees levied on your fund. You may also remember that last year we transitioned to a new application, Foundant Technologies' *Community Suite*, which has allowed us to streamline our processes. However, you might also notice that some of the terminology on the reports has also shifted. To assist with understanding the report, we have also included a "Terms Legend".

We welcome any questions you have about your fund. You can reach us by toll-free phone at 1-866-430-8223 or by email at fdn@united-church.ca. I thank you once again for all you do in support of the mission, service, and work of the Church.

Blessings,

Sarah Charters
President

Encl.

Sarah Charters
President

**BOARD OF
DIRECTORS**

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Ryan Baxter, ON

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*Focusing on
the Future Together*

*Mettons ensemble
le cap vers l'avenir*



THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA
FOUNDATION

Statement of Activity
Riverbend United Church Opportunities Fund
5155073
Created on 02/20/2026
For activity from January 01, 2025 through December 31, 2025

Prepared for:

Matthew Schoenhardt
14746 47 Ave NW
Edmonton, AB T6H 5L4

Fund Balance

Opening Balance	\$412,376.69
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Receipts

Description	Period Total
General Donations Designated	\$35,916.82
Investment FMV Change	\$27,785.75
Total	\$63,702.57

Distributions

Account Name	Period Total
Expense Transfer	(\$6,579.79)
Total	(\$6,579.79)

Closing Balance	\$469,499.47
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Fund Report Terminology

Beginning Balance: The balance of the fund at the start of 2025 (January 1, 2025).

General Donations Designated: The total value added to the fund throughout the 2025 calendar year through donations (i.e. cheque, electronic transfer, etc.).

Gift of Securities Realized Gain Loss – RBC DI: This is gain or loss on the sale of gifted securities to your fund in 2025 (i.e. gifts of stocks or mutual funds).

Investment FMV Change: This is based on the overall annual performance of the investment(s) that your fund has been invested in. Year to year this number can either be positive or negative depending on the investment and markets' yearly performances. The total investment income gained in the Foundation's entire investment portfolio is split amongst all funds invested on a pro-rated basis according to the value of each individual fund.

Receipts Total: The total value added to the fund throughout the year after all the Revenue categories are taken into account.

Revenue Total = General Donations Designated + Gift of Securities Realized Gain Loss – RBC DI + Investment FMV Change

Grants: The total value of the grants made from the fund throughout the year (January to December 2025).

Expense Transfer: The fee charged to your fund for the year. Fees are calculated and charged quarterly on the average balance of the fund over each quarter.

Admin Fee Expense: This is the fee on the sale of a gift of securities to your fund in 2025 (1.5% to a maximum of \$250 per gift).

Distributions Total: The total value subtracted from the fund throughout the year after all the Expense categories are taken into account.

Expense Total = Grants + Expense Transfer + Admin Fee Expense

Ending Balance: The balance of the fund at the end of the year (December 31, 2025). *Closing Balance = Beginning Balance + Total Receipts – Distributions Total*