

THE FRONT PEW

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

Summer 2026 – Volume 24 Number 2

Valerie's Reveries

"Aging is not a problem to be solved but a journey to be traveled." – Parker Palmer

My mom is not failing. She's completing.

Years ago, my younger brother came up with the phrase "Feed two birds with one seed." He declared it his mission to replace the common expression "Kill two birds with one stone." I've helped the cause whenever I can, because words matter. The language we choose quietly shapes the world, little by little.

Recently, I've begun a similar little mission: replacing the phrase "She's failing" when speaking about an elder with "She's completing."

This summer, starting June 15, I'll be taking a Leave of Absence to spend time with my 88-year-old mom in Colorado. Her mind is slowly tiring after many long and beautiful turns around the sun. My mom is not failing. She is completing.

Ram Dass said something lovely: "We're all just walking each other home." Thank you for allowing me this time so I can walk alongside my mom for a while on this tender stretch of the journey.

The church is in good stead. The Spiritual Formation Committee has put together a slate of wonderful worship leaders, and throughout July, we will worship with our friends at St. Paul's United Church. They will join us at Riverbend in August.

Our Care Coordinator, Holly Ruryk, will continue tending to our Pastoral Care needs in the beautiful way she does, supported by the Care Team. We also have neighbouring clergy on call for funerals, though frankly, no one is allowed to die this summer. (Said with utmost fondness and love for our people.)

And our amazing Office Manager, Jacqueline Hunt, will keep the life and work of the church running smoothly, as always.

I'll be back in the Office September 8. Until then, peace to all of you, wherever your summer days take you.

Valerie



Holy Humour Sunday:**June 14th 10:30 a.m.***"Come before God with laughter." Psalm 100***(Submissions due June 7)**

Other United Churches have been doing it, and now it's our turn to share in a Humour Sunday on June 14th.

If you have a tasteful joke, story, or funny meme or cartoon or short video that you want to share, **sign up** in the narthex by Sunday, June 7. You have 1 minute to share - only 1 minute, leaving the longer stories for after worship.

We need you to SIGN UP in advance so we can organize content, prepare digital submissions, etc. You can also call the church office or send an email with what *type* of content you are sharing.

Come ready to LAUGH before God!

(Throughout this issue you will find jokes under the heading Holy Humour Sunday! Hopefully, they will provide you with some inspiration - The Front Pew Team)

Website "Refresh"

As you may be aware, the Official Board held a retreat at the end of March to evaluate where we are now as a community of faith and how we can continue to grow and evolve. As part of the discussions, it was felt prudent to review our website, which is 5 years old. The review would look at the information displayed on the site and include questions such as:

- Is it still relevant?
- Is there additional information which should be added?
- How easy is it to navigate our website?
- At the same time, the review would look at other church websites. Can we learn anything from them to help improve our own website?

Upon completion of the review, a report will be submitted to the Board. Carolyn Miller volunteered as the Board member to lead this review and is looking for 2 or 3 other people to join her. If this is something you are interested in being involved with, then please let Carolyn or the church office know. Thanks!

RUC- A Poem

Another year has passed in this faith family. Let's look back, let's look back happily!

Sunday mornings filled with fellowship, and laughter,

chatting with walkers, contemplative practitioners, or even a crafter.

Our care team café was really a treat. You were sure to find something sweet to eat!

Handbells ringing, our choir singing, the Ensemble's music was really swinging!

Christmas carols sung joined by the community. It really gave us all a sense of unity.

The garage sale was a resounding success. Thanks to our coordinators who took all the stress.

Our youth and children were a delight to behold, bringing us joy with the stories they told.

RUC groups continued to flourish, being together helped our faith to be nourished.

This is just one small snippet, of all we can achieve with the help of the Spirit!

Holy Humour Sunday!**Hymns for Christians as they get older!**

Precious Lord, Take My Hand, And Help Me up
Go Tell It on the Mountain, But Speak Up
Guide Me, O Thou, Great Jehovah, I've Forgotten
Where I've Parked the Car

Blessed Insurance

It is Well With My Soul, But My Knees Hurt

(The Front Pew Team thought of another one:

*My Love Colours Outside the Lines, I've Forgotten My Spectacles
Maybe you can think of a few others!)*

A Peek Inside the Boardroom

Have you ever wondered what happens at Riverbend United Church board meetings? Who is involved and what is discussed? I offer a glimpse of the current board as an attempt to illustrate how it operates as a crucial underpinning to our church life.

As the current chair, I determine the monthly agenda. The items discussed at a meeting might range from the purchase of a new sign to the planning of a retreat envisioning the future of our congregation.

We begin each meeting with a heartfelt prayer to guide us in our decision making. The last month's minutes are reviewed and approved. Sheila Luther, our diligent secretary, has accepted the position of chair elect and will be leaving her current post this fall. We will miss her secretarial expertise but welcome her knowledge and experience in this new position.

Matthew Schoenhardt wears two hats at the board meetings. As the treasurer he informs us of all matters financial. He is also the lease manager for church rentals. He has a demanding work schedule but performs his duties with a smile and a joke or two along the way.

Our minister, Valerie Oden reports on the spiritual and community life of the church. Her reports include updates such as weddings and funerals and the planning of special services. Valerie brings an inquiring mind and soothing presence to a board with members of diverse opinions.

Don Trenn, our facilities manager, oversees the maintenance of the church building and grounds. He spends countless hours inspecting plumbing and heating equipment and all aspects of the church inside and out. Don willingly does the tasks large and small that he is uniquely qualified for.

Christine Ens is the head of our ministry and personnel committee. This committee serves as the human resources arm of the church and oversees all paid positions including our minister, office personnel, music and children/youth ministry. Christine, with her calm respectful approach, has assembled and maintained a highly qualified staff.

Various committee co-ordinators report to the board when significant issues arise in their areas of expertise. Jill Spaner brings a vast knowledge of church affairs in her role as the Northern Spirit Regional rep, plus a keen sense of humour. Carolyn Miller takes a no-nonsense approach in her affirming committee reports. The twinkle in her eyes lets us know that she is up for a bit of fun. Erin James has the concerns of the wider church community well covered as head of outreach. Her caring nature shines in this position. Darryl Sparling and Dawn Power are currently serving on the board as members at large. Both are interested in the operations of the church and have a strong desire to be involved. They each bring a unique voice to the table. Joan Robinson, our past chair, regularly attends board meetings. She adds experience and wisdom to our decision making.

I have painted a rosy picture of our board meetings. Being strong individuals, at times we clash over ideas. A few stalemates have occurred. There are difficult decisions to be made. There is also much laughter and lightness during our meetings. A fellowship has formed among this diverse group. The belief that we are all working toward a higher purpose often softens differences. The future of our church community is always front of mind.

On June 7, we will be holding a congregational meeting to introduce and affirm the current board. This board will sit until the spring of 2027.

We need new members. Our secretarial position is open for this fall. New members at large are always welcome. Both the legacy and ministry and personnel committees are seeking new members. If you are interested in serving or learning more, please reach out to any one of us.

Patti Hunter
Board Chair

Summer Worship

We are, once again, partnering with St. Paul's United (11526 76 Ave NW) for summer worship in July and August.



JULY

July services will be hosted by St. Paul's United (11526 76 Ave NW) and **there will be no Sunday service in our church building.** We know some of you are concerned about parking at St. Paul's. Please be assured there is plenty of street parking on Sunday mornings.

AUGUST

August services will be hosted by RUC at our church. As hosts, we will need greeters to welcome both our own congregation and the congregation of St. Paul's each Sunday. More details will be provided in the weekly announcements, with information on how to sign up as a greeter.

The weekly service will take place at 10.30 am and will continue to be livestreamed.

We hope that you will be able to attend some, or all, of these services. It is an opportunity to become reacquainted (or connect for the first time) with the congregation of St. Paul's (our birthing church).

Care Team Update

The care team continues to support and meet the needs of our church members. We stay connected with many members of our congregation through phone calls, visits, conversations following Sunday services and by sending cards. As we meet every 1-2 months, we warmly welcome you to join our team. Please contact myself or Valerie should you have questions, concerns or would like more information.

We were pleased to host our second conversation café, the Lenten café on March 15, 2026. It was a meaningful opportunity for fellowship and discussion and we look forward to hosting another café gathering this fall.

In addition, our care team will be hosting a Scam and Fraud Prevention presentation on **June 24, 2026.** We recognize this is an important and much needed presentation and it promises to be an informative evening for all. Please contact the church office to reserve your spot!

Warm blessing
Holly Ruryk

Riverbend Men's Shed - starts October 7th

The goal of the Men's Shed is to connect men through activities and common interests to build friendships. Connection, camaraderie and community is the desired outcome. This project is one of the first to be funded through the RUC Legacy fund.

The Riverbend Men's Shed will be run out of Riverbend United Church every Wednesday night from 7 to 9pm beginning in October. Activities will include guest speakers, card games, offsite visits and other activities agreed upon between participants. There will be an attendance fee of \$2 per visit to cover some costs. We will use various fundraising activities to fund the program in the long term. You do not need to be part of the church community to be involved. This program is an opportunity for Riverbend United Church to reach out to the community

For further information or inquiries contact David James through the church office.

Holy Humour Sunday!

A little girl was late for church, so as she was running she prayed, "Dear Lord, please don't let me be late for church." Suddenly she tripped and fell. She got up and continued praying, "Dear Lord, please don't let me be late for church." Then added, "But please don't shove me, either!"

Outreach Committee Spring Update

Our first event of 2026 was the Sacrilegious Sock Toss. This much anticipated annual event saw socks flying in the sanctuary with the goal being to get a "basket" in the containers provided. This year the congregation contributed 365 pairs of socks which were donated to people in need within Edmonton's inner city. These socks are always warmly received by the Mustard Seed for distribution.

Closely following came Mother's Day. Donations for babies, such as diapers, wipes, formula and food, were generously made and will be distributed to different agencies in Edmonton. There was an abundance of articles which will help immensely as the cost of these items continues to increase.

Father's Day is fast approaching and once again RUC will be providing the Father's Day Lunch at the Bissell Centre. The church has been supporting this annual event for more years than I can remember. Monetary donations to RUC are used to buy food items in order to provide a bag lunch for the inner city clients. Volunteers from the church attend a church service at the Bissell Centre followed by the distribution of the lunches. It is a wonderful time of fellowship and connecting with people.

The Outreach Committee continues to accept food donations for the Food Pantry located outside the church. This project has been very successful with members of the community also dropping off food items directly in the Food Pantry.

We continue to accept clothing donations that are donated to the Mustard Seed. Any warm clothing items can still be donated as they will be stored until the weather once again starts its downward slide. Sadly, there will always be a need for these items but it warms one's heart to know that we, as a congregation, can make someone else's life a little easier one step at a time.

Thank you
Erin James

Ministry and Personnel Committee update

As you have read in Valerie's Reveries on the first page, Reverend Valerie has been granted a 12 week compassionate leave of absence to spend time with her mother this summer. The 12 week leave is comprised of vacation time, study/renewal leave, paid compassionate leave and an unpaid leave of absence.

Valerie will be in the pulpit on June 14th, and will begin her leave the following day. She will be back to work on September 8th, resuming worship leadership on September 13th. Excellent plans are in place to fill the pulpit during this leave (*see page 14*). Our shared worship arrangement with St Paul's will continue this summer and will take care of the four Sundays in July. Pastoral care needs will continue to be met by our Care Coordinator, Holly Ruryk, and her wonderful care team. Referrals can be made through the church office.

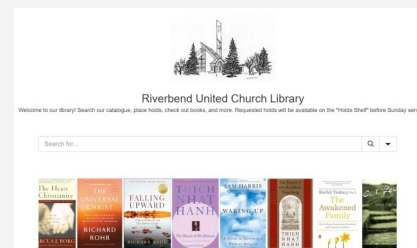
If you have any questions, please consult with M&P chair Christine Ens.

Library Renewal Update!

This spring the church hosted a successful "spiritual book drive" to add new books to our library. A big thanks to everyone who contributed. We now have many new, exciting reads in our collection!



The Library Team selected a library webpage app called LibraryCat that will greatly increase the usability of the library. The app will allow you to browse the collection, search for and check out books, place holds, and much more. Here is a sneak peek of the library homepage, which has a search bar and a scrolling display of newly added books!



We are planning for a fall launch of the revitalized library. Watch for updates and additional details. You can reach the Library Team at library@riverbendunited.org, if you have any questions or suggestions.

2026 Garage Sale Update

What an incredible week! Thanks to the generosity, hard work and dedication of so many volunteers, this year's garage sale was a wonderful success.

A heartfelt thank you goes out to everyone who helped in big and small ways. To the setting up and taking down of tables, sorting donations, pricing items, assisting shoppers during the sale, staffing the cash tables and staying to help with the final cleanup. Every task mattered and every helping hand (big and small) contributed to the success of the event.



It was such a pleasure working together and seeing the spirit of teamwork throughout the week. Because of your time and effort, we are thrilled to share that the garage sale raised an outstanding \$7,300.00.

Way to go, team - and thank you again for making this event such a meaningful success!

Holly Ruryk and Janet Pattison
Garage Sale Coordinators



(We all know that none of this would have been possible without our amazing coordinators who practically lived in the church for a week, which was on top of all the weeks of planning. Thank you, Holly and Janet!)

A Garage Sale Story (kind of!)

One of the pros (or is it a con?) of working the garage sale is that while you do a bit of spring cleaning, searching for items to donate, invariably you find yourself walking out of the church with a few items, thereby refilling the space your spring cleaning made! So, this year I consciously decided that I would only donate and wouldn't take on any volunteer shifts which would ensure that I wouldn't be tempted to bring anything home...it would be a spring cleaning success story; my plans were set ... or so I thought.

All was going well until Jill Spaner approached me in the church parking lot and said conspiratorially, (I'm not sure if she was worried Holly or Janet would overhear and kibosh the deal!) "I've got a Connor McDavid toaster that I'm planning to donate to the church garage sale, but if you would like it, I can give it to you". My first thought was, "What on earth is a Connor McDavid toaster?" Jill explained that you toast your bread, and an image of Connor McDavid appears on your toast. And just like that, my spring cleaning success story became an epic failure. I am now the proud owner of the toaster, the church has an extra monetary donation in the offering plate, and Jill has managed to make a bit of space at home.



Looking at this picture of the toast, (don't worry, the other side of the bread was fired to a lovely golden brown), I can see a young Connor McDavid, can you?



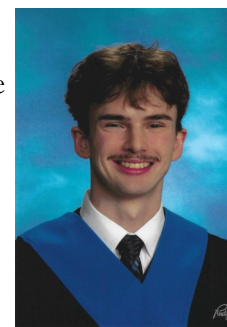
Submitted by Carolyn Miller

Holy Humour Sunday!

A mother went to wake her son for church one Sunday morning. When she knocked on his door, he said, "I'm not going!" "Why not?" asked his mother. "I'll give you two very good reasons," he said. "One, they don't like me. Two, I don't like them." His mother replied, "I'll give you two good reasons why YOU WILL go to church. One, you're 42 years old. Two, you're the minister!"

Connor Bowhay

Connor Bowhay has grown up here in Riverbend, spending a lot of his time outdoors and some of his time playing music with the Marvellous Marv crew. Being a part of the RUC congregation has brought Connor joy and taught him the importance of community. He hopes to continue spreading this joy as he moves into the next chapter of his life.



Graduates 2026

During recent worship services, we acknowledged the graduates highlighted on these next two pages. However, we know that there are many among the congregation who also have family members and friends who have reached the milestone of graduating from either high school, college, or university, and we offer our congratulations to everyone who is graduating and wish them much success as they move on to life's next adventures.

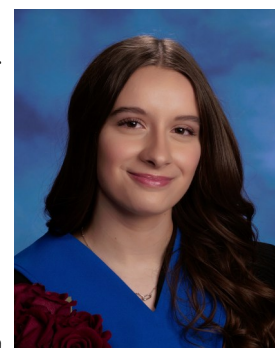
Adam Hawrelak

Adam Hawrelak is the son of Ray and Diane Hawrelak, and he has been coming to the church all his life. Adam has very fond memories of the youth group from when he was younger, such as attending youth events and participating in the cantata, and he still very much enjoys coming for the Christmas Eve service and listening to the music. He is very excited to have graduated from Trent University with a degree in Business Administration, along with a specialization in finance. What took him to Trent University, which is located in Peterborough, Ontario, was an opportunity to play varsity lacrosse, which he thoroughly enjoyed for 4 years.



Alise Sevigny

Born in Regina, SK in 2008, Alise moved with her sister and parents to Edmonton in 2017. She attended the French Immersion programs at Brander Gardens and Avalon Junior High, and is graduating from the French Immersion program at Harry Ainlay high school this June, achieving honours with distinction.



Alise was baptized at Wesley United Church, Regina, and confirmed at Riverbend United a few years ago. From 2019-2025, Alise was a competitive trampolinist, training 14+ hours a week at Ortona Gymnastics. She had her greatest success competing in synchronized trampoline, winning a Provincial Gold Medal and silver at the Western Canada Cup.

She has also enjoyed horseback riding since she was 6, taking lessons in Regina, and now at Whitemud Equine where she also works as a TA, Summer Camp Counsellor, and participates as a volunteer in the Horsemanship Development Program (HDP). She is a voracious reader, loves music, the Saskatchewan Roughriders, travel and time at the family cottage on Wakaw Lake, in Saskatchewan.

Adair Ramsey Tilghman

Adair is the granddaughter of Ron & Marlene Ramsey. Adair graduated from Gonzaga University, Spokane, Washington, where she was a competitive rower, with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing. Growing up, Adair spend many Christmases here in Edmonton visiting her grandparents, and attended the RUC Christmas Eve service with them.



Lukas Bucerius

Lukas Bucerius was born on November 20th, 2008 in Toronto. He spent the first four years of his life in Toronto, attending Bloor Street United Church, before moving to Edmonton.

Lukas has two younger brothers: Samuel and Benjamin. His extended family lives all over Germany and twice in his life, he spent a year in Germany, attending German schools. Lukas also spent three weeks in Heidelberg this past summer, working in a Theoretical Chemistry Lab



at the University of Heidelberg. He has visited Europe many times - including Italy, Austria, Norway, the Netherlands, and most recently, the UK.

Lukas attends Old Scona Academic, also called OSA, in Edmonton, which is an academic high school close to Whyte Avenue. In his spare time, Lukas directs the OSA music club, is a part of the Model United Nations Club and attend competitions. He is also a part of the Senior Edmonton Youth Orchestra on Cello and also plays Saxophone. This May, he will attend the Provincial Championships on Saxophone. He is also part of the Edmonton Nordic Ski Club for cross-country skiing.

This fall, Lukas will be attending the University of Toronto, living at Victoria College and majoring in physics.

Asher Ammann

Asher Ammann is the grandson of Glynis and Doug Maley. He attends Louis St. Laurent High School, and will be graduating from Grade 12. He will be heading to Ontario next year, to continue playing hockey. Asher was baptized at Riverbend United Church in 2008, and his parents, Christina & Mark, were married here in 2004.

Luke Nelson

Luke has been a member of the church for about 15 years, when he joined along with his parents Sheila Luther and Randy Nelson. He was part of the youth group during secondary school, and later became youth leader. *(Your leadership was a true blessing, Luke!)* This year Luke is graduating from a Master's of Science degree in biology from the University of Alberta. In his degree, Luke researched the evolution of fossil fish.



Affirming News



This June, we will once again acknowledge and celebrate Pride month. Our rainbow railings will be back in June (and a little bit of July), and our Affirming pew hangers will decorate the sanctuary throughout the summer months. On June 7th, the Affirming team will assist Valerie in leading a Pride Sunday worship service.

We would like to offer our congratulations to St. David's United Church in Leduc, which became an Affirming community of faith in March of this year.

On June 21st, we can look forward to a very special worship service, led by Jennifer Tupper and Jill Spaner, honouring National Indigenous Peoples Day.

Holy Humour Sunday!

A woman was driving her children to church. She said to them, "Do you remember why you have to be quiet in church?" Her oldest child replied, "Yes, because people are sleeping!"

Summer Health Corner

Greetings all! Welcome to the summer edition of Health Corner. To announce the arrival of the new summer season, the Summer Solstice greets us this year in Edmonton on Sunday, June 21 at 2:24am. The word "solstice" comes from Latin solstitium - from sol (sun) and stitium (still or stopped). During that day, the sun reaches its highest position in the sky, and we receive the longest amount of daylight of the entire year: 17 hours, 1 minute, and 30 seconds this year. After that Sunday, our days begin to become shorter losing a few seconds of daylight daily until the Winter Solstice in late December.

The summer months bring the least amount of summer health events but perhaps the most depressing ones... ALS, hepatitis, and overdose. It does not sound uplifting, does it?

However, not all events occurring in the summer are disheartening. For example, June 5 is National Doughnut Day as this sweet treat is always celebrated the first Friday in June. Last year, the best-selling doughnuts in Canada were the Apple Fritter followed closely by the Glazed doughnut, and the Honey Cruller coming in third.

July is National Ice Cream Month. According to statistics, Canadians prefer chocolate ice cream over vanilla regarding flavour, but vanilla is always the perennial best seller. These two favourites are followed in popularity by the flavours of Mint Chocolate Chip, Maple Walnut, Butterscotch, Cookie Dough, Cookies & Cream, Strawberry, and Moose Tracks. However, some provinces prefer other flavours. For example, the best seller in Nova Scotia is Moon Mist, Newfoundland & Labrador prefer Orange-Pineapple, and in Manitoba it is a flavour called Blue Licorice.

August is National Dog Month. Did you know that the most popular breed of dog in Canada is the Labrador Retriever? According to the Canadian Kennel Club, this breed is followed closely by the Golden Retriever, German Shepherd, Poodle, French Bulldog, Australian Shepherd, Havanese, Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, Bernese Mountain Dog, and the Shetland Sheepdog. These beloved breeds are literally from all over the world!

So, please pay special attention to your furry friends this August and maybe give them an extra treat, scratch behind the ear, or belly rub.

Health events recognized this summer include:

June

ALS Awareness Month

World Environment Day: June 5

National Doughnut Day: June 5

National Health and Fitness Day: June 6

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day: June 15



July

National Ice Cream Month

National Injury Prevention Day: July 6

International Self-Care Day: July 24

World Hepatitis Day: July 28



August

National Dog Month

International Youth Day: August 12

World Humanitarian Day: August 19

International Overdose Awareness Day: August 31



The dog days of summer refer to weeks between July 3 and August 11. These are usually the hottest days of summer. They are called dog days not because the temperature can make you pant like a dog but because these days were named after the Dog Star Sirius, which rises around this time. Sirius is the brightest star in the night sky. The name means "glowing" in Greek; a fitting description as only a few planets, the full moon, and the International Space Station outshine this star.



That is about it for this edition of Health Corner. I hope you all continue to shine throughout the summer, and I will "see" everyone back here in the fall.

Peace,
Dawn

Whole Community Worship Submitted by Carolyn Miller

Over the past 12 months, we have enjoyed four whole community worship services. Worships where we have all stayed together, singing, praying, exploring, praising God, and giving thanks for the gift of Jesus as our teacher and guide. Together, we have experienced the scriptures told in a Godly Play style, a sacred way of storytelling, including Jesus being tempted in the desert, and the story of creation. We read from the Message Bible and the Rhyming Bible, along with children's books which held a message for us all. Together, we learned more about the Fruit of the Spirit and created a Truth and Reconciliation commitment shirt, which has been displayed in the Narthex for almost a year. Together, we explored what it means to share God's bounty and marvelled at the colours of creation.

I feel very privileged to plan and lead these services. Still, it is your enthusiasm and willingness to be a part of them that make them successful, so I want to thank everyone who read scripture, led the call to worship, crafted decorations, attended, either in person or online, and wrote on sticky notes. I truly believe it is a special time when we can all be together, as the Spirit moves among us.



I especially want to thank a gifted group of musicians, our Ensemble. They musically led all the services and seem to have the wonderful ability to infuse joy into every hymn and song selected. They willingly take on any musical challenge presented, and we are blessed to have their musical leadership. Somehow, the services wouldn't be the same without them.

When we return in the fall, our whole community worship services will resume. If you have read this article and think this is something you would like to be involved in (e.g. planning, reading, leading, or ideas), please let me know. I would be more than happy to have a chat (and sign you up!)

RUC Contemplative Practices

Following Easter, a small group has been meeting before each Sunday service from 9:30-10:00 am for silent meditation, lectio divina, and sacred sharing. We find that it can really deepen our experience of Sunday worship. We will continue meeting for the month of June and then take a break for the summer. Everyone is welcome to join us!

At the conclusion of Valerie's creation series, we practiced video divina by watching the film 'The Tree of Life', which touches on themes of creation, life, death, and the presence of God in our lives. We used contemplation stones (collected from the North Saskatchewan River) to help us connect with chosen themes in the film. We shared our reflections on the movie during a time of sacred sharing.



Holy Humour Sunday!

By the time Bobby arrived, the hockey game had already started. "Why are you so late?" asked his friend. "I couldn't decide between going to church and going to the hockey game, so I tossed a coin," said Bobby. "But that shouldn't have taken too long," said his friend. "Well," replied Bobby, "I had to toss it 35 times!"

Contributors Welcome (and encouraged!)

The purpose of the *Front Pew* is to share in the life and work of Riverbend United Church. We 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. We would love to hear from you!

Children's Ministry Update Submitted by Alec Gallant

As we moved through the season of Lent this year, the children and I stayed closely connected to the lectionary, focusing our lessons on the stories leading up to Easter Sunday. Together, we explored Jesus' journey to Jerusalem, the meaning of Holy Week, and the hope and joy that comes with the resurrection. It was wonderful to see the children engage thoughtfully with these stories, ask meaningful questions, and connect the lessons to their own lives and experiences of faith.

On Easter Sunday, we held our annual Easter egg hunt following the service and were incredibly grateful for the wonderful turnout from families and members of the congregation. Downstairs, the children enjoyed colouring Easter-themed activities, sharing snacks, hunting for eggs, and spending time together in fellowship and celebration. The room was filled with laughter, excitement, and community spirit, making it a joyful way to celebrate Easter together as a church family.

Following Lent and Easter, our lessons continued to connect closely with what was happening upstairs during worship. We spent time helping the children better understand the scripture readings, prayers, and themes being shared during the service so they could feel more connected to the wider worship life of the church. These conversations have created meaningful opportunities for the children to grow in their understanding of faith while also encouraging participation and curiosity.

Throughout the month of May, the children have been exploring the theme of Creation. Together, we have been learning the Creation story and reflecting on the beauty and wonder of the world God has made. The children have especially enjoyed activities centered around nature, creativity, and caring for the world around us. These lessons have sparked thoughtful conversations about gratitude, stewardship, and the importance of appreciating creation in our everyday lives.

On Mother's Day, the children created painted flower vases for the moms, grandmothers, and mother figures in their lives. Each vase was uniquely decorated and filled with care, creativity, and love.

It was wonderful to watch the children take pride in creating something meaningful for the important people in their lives.

On May 24, we also hosted a young family event where families gathered together for pizza and swimming at the recreation centre. Events like these provide



opportunities for families to connect outside of Sunday mornings, strengthen relationships within the church community, and create lasting memories together. It was a fun and welcoming afternoon filled with conversation, laughter, and fellowship.

June 7 will be my final Sunday until the fall season. The Children's Ministry downstairs will resume on September 13, when we will once again celebrate our annual Blessing of the Backpacks during worship as children and youth prepare for the new school year ahead.

Over the summer months I will be spending time planning for the upcoming year of children's ministry. I am looking forward to developing new lessons, activities, and opportunities for children and families to grow together in faith and community. I also hope to create more opportunities for families within our church to gather, connect, and enjoy the beauty of God's creation together throughout the year. Thank you to all the families, volunteers, and members of the congregation who continue to support and encourage our children's ministry. Your care, presence, and participation help make this ministry a welcoming and meaningful place for our children to learn, grow, and belong.



RUC Solar Report submitted by Matthew Schoenhardt

It has been a little while since I ran numbers and let folks know how our investment back in 2022 in solar panels has been doing. Our Solar panels project has been quietly doing exactly what was promised:

Helping us live with respect in creation

Offsetting our ~40% carbon footprint from Alberta’s gas-powered energy grid;

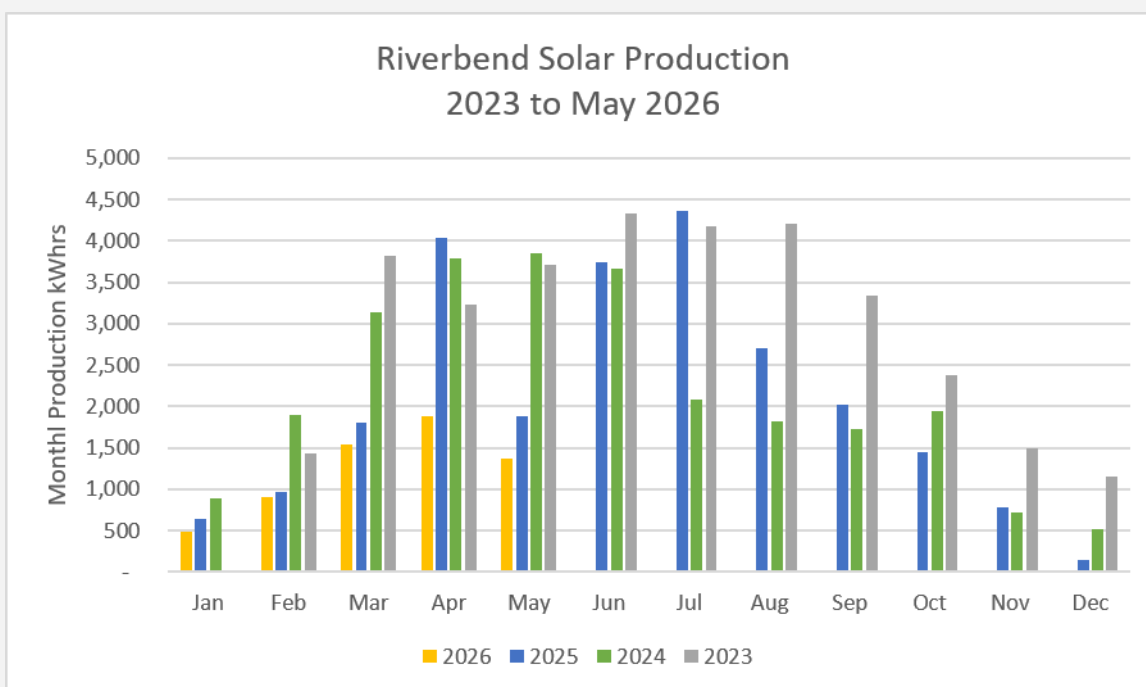
Supporting Reconciliation

By employing and promoting First Nation’s businesses; and,

Increasing our financial sustainability

By lowering our power bills by about \$4600 annually.

Every year we are making about 25,000 kilowatt hours of power, or enough to power 3.5 typical Alberta households as shown in the graph below. This is more or less the anticipated production with some months higher and some lower due to snow, cloud cover and forest fire smoke. Last year the carbon credit company we were partnered with shut down and I moved our carbon credit selling to another firm. While the various elections have monkeyed with the price of carbon, we are still earning about \$1000 a year from selling carbon credits. Selling carbon credits is part of how we transition from fossil fuels to a green economy. Our atmosphere should not be a free sewer for waste, and carbon prices and their trading puts a cost on this pollution.



As you may recall, when we installed phase 1 and phase 2 of the solar panels we used Newo Energy, a First Nation company based out of Camrose, Alberta. Last year, at the UCC centennial celebrations we hosted, one of the workshops was Newo presenting what they do and how the installation of solar panels might benefit other churches in our region. Several churches have expressed interest. *(continued on page 13)*

Maintenance Department Update

Wow! It is hard to believe that we are prepping the May edition for 2026 already.

Here are a few items the maintenance department has been working on along with some future projects:

- We had the gravel swept up from the parking lot
- Parking lot lines and handicap signs repainted
- June 22 weekend - lawn mowing starts for the summer season
- June 29 – basement floor, youth room floor and front stairwell will be stripped and waxed
- June 30 – narthex, sanctuary and office carpet will be cleaned
- July 13 - 23: painting of sanctuary, main kitchen, chapel, library, family room, hallway and music room
- July – damaged concrete parking stall strips will be replaced
- July – sewer line to be cleaned and inspected
- July – going to assess if we can replace light bulbs in upper sanctuary ceiling
- July – evaluation of upper sanctuary windows and upper windows in Narthex to see if seals need replacement
- July/August – going to spend some time cleaning up the shed storage and the furnace room storage area

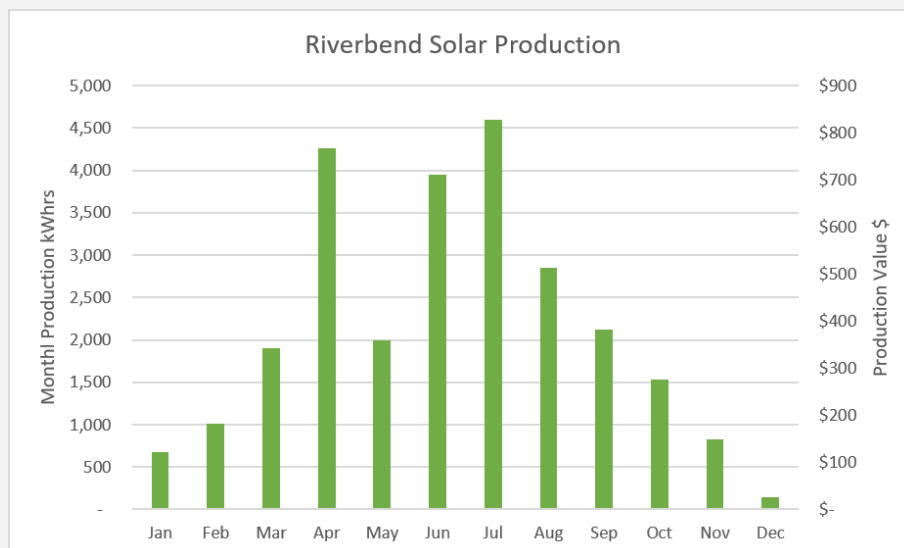
There is a lot going on at the end of June and into July as we take advantage of both E2 school being out for the summer and no Sunday services at Riverbend Church (while we gather at St Paul’s in July).

Wishing you all a great summer!

Respectfully yours,
 Don Trenn, Maintenance Director

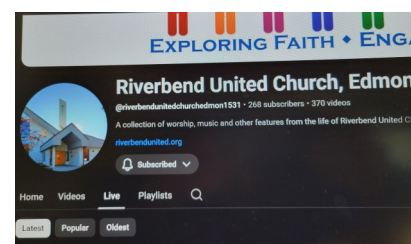
Solar Panel Update

(continued from page 12) And finally, just to appease our Treasurer, the money. Our solar panels saved us a little over \$4600 last year in power that we did not have to purchase, or pay related transmission and distribution costs. This excludes the ~\$1000 annually of selling carbon credits. All said, we are on track for the 7-year payback promised when the units were installed back in 2022 – so a little over half way there!



Did You Know?

Do you ever visit RUC's YouTube channel, perhaps looking for a particular service? Perhaps the service was a while ago, or maybe it was fairly recent; regardless, you struggle to find it. Did you know that if you click the live button, all the recorded services will appear in chronological order, which makes searching for a service so much easier!



Our Worship Leaders in Valerie's Absence

We are grateful to everyone who has agreed to lead worship as Valerie spends time in Colorado with her mom. Here is the worship schedule covering the 12 weeks of Valerie's leave of absence.

- ◆ June 21 Jennifer Tupper and Jill Spaner - National Indigenous Peoples Day
- ◆ June 28 Choir-led Hymn Sing
- ◆ July We worship at St. Paul's United Church
- ◆ Aug 2 Dawn Power
- ◆ Aug 9 Annika Schoenhardt
- ◆ Aug 16 Matthew Schoenhardt
- ◆ Aug 23 Reverend Hugh MacGregor
- ◆ Aug 30 Reverend Dr. Catherine Faith MacLean
- ◆ Sept. 6 Reverend Dr. Catherine Faith MacLean



Contact us at:

Phone: (780) 430-7275

Email: contactus@riverbendunited.org

Website: www.riverbendunited.org

Editor: 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: 4 September 2026