

# the front pew



Vol. 16 No. 6 RIVERBEND UNITED CHURCH 14907-45 Ave., Edmonton, AB June 2018

## Message From the Board Chair

The Chair's misplaced pen has been found! It was under the couch, but now that it is back in my hand I can jot down a few thoughts.

We passed our cash neutral budget in March. Many thanks to those who had their hand in drafting, reviewing and adopting it, especially to David Olsen and Tom LaPointe for their leadership. What is exciting is that for the first time that I can remember, we have an expansionary budget. I certainly hope this is a trend that will allow us to pay down our mortgage while expanding our services to meet the needs of our community of faith.

This coming summer marks the end of a dynasty as Ben Severson will be resigning as Youth Coordinator. He has done such a great job, that it seems only natural that he could be the Youth Leader in perpetuity. But just as my children get older every year, Ben has accepted full time work and is engaged to be married in a few short months. We wish him well and thank him for his service to our community and to God.

Barring last minute excitement, I will

assume that our Congregational meeting on Sunday May 27<sup>th</sup> went well. I am pleased to say that all most board positions were filled and everyone agreed to stay on for another term. In addition to returning members, we will have a few new faces which is great! Renewal of leadership is important. We can all rotate in, and then, rotate out. One position that remains open is that of Chair-Elect. I guess that, as Chair, I am getting an engineering passing grade (that is a 5-0 to go!) but I am thinking that I will need to shift from my laissez-faire consensus style to a more dictatorial authoritarian rule to prevent being elected for life. Just kidding. In seriousness, the Church is run by volunteers and being a steward for God includes offering up to him our time and talents. Yes, we need money to keep the lights on, but we also need many peoples' hands to breathe life into our Church life. Consider how your gifts would be best placed in the service of God in one of our many committees or boards.

One of the teams that I am very proud of is the Affirming Committee. I know the ethos of the United Church is that of inclusiveness. The Gospel is full of examples of Jesus interacting with and caring for the marginalized in

society. In my undergraduate degree I took an elective from Queen's Theological College – needless to say I was the only non-seminary student in the class. When Jesus said, “let the little children come to me ... for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these.” (Matthew 19:14) he was indeed talking about kids, as so many of the images of this conjure, but a little more too. At the time infant mortality was about 30% and slightly more than half born lived to the age of 10. I came to learn that it was not uncommon to even *name* a child until they were a few years old. Today we understand Jesus' talking about the poor, prostitutes and can stretch our imaginations for thug-like tax collectors with whom Jesus cavorted with. But at the time, children, even children of the wealthy, were below even these dregs of humanity that Jesus preaches we must love. I can go on and cite more examples of how the gospel law of love triumphs over any civic laws dictated to try and tame newly-freed wandering nomads or civilize a generation of barbarian Israelites into city dwellers as described in Deuteronomy or Leviticus, but I won't. Practically every other page in the New Testament does this for me.

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## Riverbend Fibre Crafters

Following our great success in establishing a Prayer Blanket/Shawl Ministry, the knitters and crocheters of Riverbend United Church have a new project planned!

November 11, 2018, will mark the 100th anniversary of the end of The Great War; also known as The War to End All Wars. Sadly, we all know that great event did not end all wars, but we commemorate the hope for World Peace that the date signifies. Marking this, our needleworkers will produce as many knitted and crocheted red poppies as we can manage. The exact format of our 'yarn bombing' is yet to be decided, but we will decorate our church with masses of handcrafted poppies on Sunday, November 11.

If you knit or crochet, please consider contributing to our effort. Patterns will be available in the narthex, or you can create your own or find ones you like on the internet or other sources. Poppies should be red with black centres, and any size from 3-5" or so.

You will also soon find a collection box in the narthex for your donations....and if you have any great ideas for presentation of our display, please talk to Carolyn Miller, or join us on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons (1:30-3:30 pm) where we gather to knit, crochet, or work on any other crafting projects we have on hand. Quiet meditation or group discussion are part of our gatherings as well.



**Audrey Skinner**

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In my graduate degree I took some marketing courses. One of them left an impression on me. The sessional-instructor gave everyone one of those colorful wooden multi-lettered blocks we had as kids and asked us to pick our favorite side and hold it up. He then told us that our customers only saw the other side of the block. A good lesson in marketing and in life! We, as a community of faith, know and feel that we are a welcoming open community that embraces the gospel of love, but those currently outside the circle only have 2000 years of history and culture telling them what Christianity is all about. It isn't pretty. Let's be honest, the marriage of politics and Christianity hasn't always been good for the soul. Those outside the Church do not know what goes on inside. They do know the Christian cultural stereotypes of bigotry, self-righteousness, science-bashing and minority persecution that have been the hallmark of the "church" for millennia. When you listen to the news, how many times do you hear "Christian" without being an adjective for the "Right"?

Over the past 2000 years there are many minorities other than LGBTQ that have been persecuted by the Church, but let's start with a single step. For me this is not about atoning for the Church, but providing emotional permission to those who have excluded themselves from Grace to return to the Divine in a safe space. While some LGBTQ feel that there is no place for them in the "Church", we can let them know that God does indeed love them, has always loved them, and will always love them. We just need to welcome them into our Community of Faith.

How do we let those outside the circle know that there is room for them inside? One way is to share the rainbow. That is why when the Affirming vote comes, I am voting yes.

**Matthew Schoenhardt**

## Affirming Process

When I first heard about the affirm process, about 5 years ago, I was not for it. We had just been through the building project which was somewhat divisive and I figured the affirm process would also be divisive. I was also not a big fan of United Church processes. We had recently been through a JNAC and I was not keen to go through another "process". I also felt that we were already welcoming to all, so why not leave things as they are and not rock the boat.

However, my thinking has changed. I was always prepared to vote yes to become an affirming congregation, but previously I was worried that if we took this step some people would leave our church. Now I am concerned that if we don't become affirming, some people will leave our church. I don't think that anyone should feel threatened to vote one way or the other, but it would sure be great if we could all vote in unison. Here is my perspective:

As a white, straight, English-speaking, middle class, able-bodied, protestant, right-handed male living in Canada, I don't know what it is like to be a minority; to be marginalized. However, what I can do is try to empathize with the marginalized and try to put myself in their shoes. If I was a marginalized person, I think I would look for explicit signs that I was welcome as opposed to a lack of signs that I was not welcome. So as a non-marginalized person, I think I should try to do what I can to help the marginalized feel welcome and accepted. And if that means taking the step of becoming affirming and adding a few rainbows then I think that is what we should do. You can argue that it should not be necessary, yet it is, because it is. Here is another way to look at it:

### Valerie's Reveries

*"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven." -- Ecclesiastes 3:1*

As summer lands with its invitation for renewal, I think of sitting on decks, gardening, lemonade, and hide & seek. I think of mountains and creeks and wet tennis shoes from crawdad hunting.

I think of how we rely on the sun, and also the rain, and how the fruits and veggies that nourish us grow in the soil each day as the earth spins on its axis and saunters around

The United Church Web Site states: "The United Church prides itself on being open and welcoming as Jesus was, regardless of age, race, class, gender, orientation, or physical ability."

The definition of the word "affirm" is: "state as a fact; assert strongly and publicly". The affirm process is really just allowing our congregation to affirm that we agree with the above statement. If we don't affirm, we are saying we don't agree with the basic principles of the United Church of Canada. If that is the case, what are we? ... Lutherans? (That was my attempt at a little levity. I was raised Lutheran but switched to United Church partly because I thought the UC was more open and accepting).

What have we got to lose by becoming affirming? What possible bad could come from this? I'm pretty good at seeing both sides of an issue, but I really can't see a down side to this. All we are doing is declaring that we believe one of the basic principles of the United Church - that all people are equal, and all people are valued and welcome. If and when we vote on becoming affirming my hope is that 100% of us vote yes and the affirm process can be unifying for our congregation instead of divisive.

If you have concerns about the affirm process, I would hope you would discuss them with Valerie or with someone on the affirming team. Or even me.

*Marv Severson*

p.s. I never thought I would be a spokesperson for the affirm team, nor was I asked to be. However, after hearing some of the discussion on this topic I was moved to share my thoughts on the subject with the Affirm team and they suggested I submit them to "The Front Pew".

the sun. And I think of the seasons of life-- those of the earth and those of our human journey through time.

Each moment is a precious chance to be grateful.  
Each difficulty is a unique opportunity to open our hearts and grow through the pressure.  
Each day is another invitation to be nourished on the journey by grace and offer someone else the same.  
And each season of the earth and of our lives is another season to be amazed.

*Warmly,  
Valerie*

## June, July & August Health Corner

As Spring comes to a close and the long hot days of summer await us, here are some health events and celebrations that will be taking place over the summer months. June is the busiest month of the summer starting with it being National Spina Bifida & Hydrocephalus Awareness Month. Each year, the month of June is designated to raising awareness of spina bifida and hydrocephalus. Spina Bifida is a neural tube defect which occurs when the spine fails to close properly during the first four weeks of pregnancy. About 85% of babies born with spina bifida will also have hydrocephalus which is an accumulation of fluid on the brain. There is no single known cause for spina bifida or hydrocephalus, but proper nutrition and vitamin supplements before conception can help reduce the risk of neural tube defects. All women of child bearing age should take a daily multivitamin containing 0.4mg of folic acid in the months before conception, in addition to including natural sources of folic acid such as whole grains, leafy vegetables, fruits and beans into their diet. NPH -normal pressure hydrocephalus is a condition that affects adults over the age of 55. The symptoms are gait disturbance, incontinence and mild confusion. The condition is often misdiagnosed as Alzheimer's or Parkinson's. If detected early with a CT or MRI scan the symptoms can be partially or fully reversible. More information can be found at <http://www.sbhac.ca>.

June is ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease) Awareness Month. Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) is a neurodegenerative disease with various causes. It is characterized by rapidly progressive weakness due to muscle atrophy and muscle spasticity, difficulty in speaking (dysarthria), swallowing (dysphagia), and breathing (dyspnoea). People living with the disease become progressively paralyzed due to degeneration of the upper and lower motor neurons in the brain and spinal cord. Eighty per cent of people with ALS die within two to five years of diagnosis. Ten per cent of those affected may live for 10 years or longer. ALS has no known cure or effective treatment yet. For every person diagnosed with ALS, a person living with ALS dies. Approximately 2,500 - 3,000 Canadians currently live with this fatal disease. More information can be found at <http://www.als.ca>.

June is Stroke Month. A stroke is a sudden loss of brain function. It is caused by the interruption of flow of blood to the brain (ischemic stroke) or the rupture of blood vessels in the brain (haemorrhagic stroke). The interruption of blood flow or the rupture of blood vessels causes brain

cells (neurons) in the affected area to die. Every year, 50,000 Canadians have a stroke - that's one every 10 minutes. Stroke can happen at any age and survivors will be left with some level of disability after stroke, and many will never be able to return to work. 5500 Albertans will experience stroke this year. Almost all survivors recover to some extent. With good rehabilitation and support, many Canadians who survive a stroke can go on to lead full, meaningful lives. What are the five signs of stroke?

1. Weakness: Sudden loss of strength or sudden numbness in the face, arm, or leg even if temporary.
2. Trouble Speaking: Sudden difficulty speaking or understanding, or sudden confusion even if temporary.
3. Vision Problems: Sudden trouble with vision, even if temporary.
4. Headache: Sudden severe and unusual headache.
5. Dizziness: Sudden loss of balance, especially with any of the other signs.

Stroke can be treated. That's why it is so important to recognize and respond to the warning signs. If you experience any of these symptoms, CALL 911 immediately! Information can be found at <http://www.heartandstroke.ab.ca>.

As we, at Riverbend United Church, are actively exploring on whether to become an Affirming congregation, you might be interested to know that June is also home to LGBTQ2S+ Pride Month. The occasion is being marked across Canada and beyond with parades, dances, festivals and other events. Pride month celebrates freedom and equality for **everyone**. It recognizes the value of diversity in all of us and helps to create solidarity in support of human rights for all. Closer to home, Edmonton celebrates Pride Festival from June 8-17. *The main purpose of the Edmonton Pride Festival Society is to celebrate and respect the dignity of individuals and the rights of all members of society regardless of sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, gender expression, cultural or ethnic background, colour, age, physical or mental ability, religious or social affiliation or beliefs.* The week includes the ever popular Pride Parade which takes place on Saturday, June 9 beginning at 11:00 am in Old Strathcona. For more information, please visit <http://www.edmontonpride.ca>.

Special days celebrated in June are...

- National Health & Fitness Day: June 2
- World Environment Day: June 5
- World Elder Abuse Awareness Day: June 15
- Brain Injury Awareness Day: June 29

## Recruitment of members to a Legacy Fund Program Committee

The Board has passed the terms of reference for the Legacy Fund Program Giving Policy. These are also our congregation's marching orders for setting up our two funds: the Legacy Fund and the Opportunity Fund. As part of this policy, the Board has directed that a subcommittee of the Finance committee be established to carry out the work of the Legacy Fund Program. This is a call for volunteers to serve as the inaugural members of this important committee.

We will recruit up to six members. Hopefully, the membership will reflect the diversity of the congregation. No experience in accounting or finances is required; just good common sense. Once the initial set up period is over, the committee members will have three-year terms that will be staggered such that one or two members' terms will be completed every year. Members can renew for a second three-year term and then must take one three-year term off after which they can be re-appointed. The workload will not be onerous. There may be monthly meetings initially to set up the funds and working policies, but after that the committee will need to meet only three or four times per year or at the call of the chair.

The work of the committee will begin as soon as the committee is formed. There are investments to be made nearly immediately. A full set of Terms of Reference will be sent to interested candidates. Please contact David Olson if interested in serving ([780-4361482](tel:780-4361482); [dmolson@ualberta.ca](mailto:dmolson@ualberta.ca)).

Thank you!

*David Olson*

## RUCyouth Update

It is a poignant thought to realize that this is the last RUCyouth update I will be tendering for this publication. I will be not be returning as youth coordinator next year, as I am now working, teaching full time. There will be appropriate plans in place for our group, which will continue onwards, as it has through many changes in leadership. We are also just wrapping up our youth year, which as I reflect back on this one and others, was an example of "same, same, but different". With our adapting group and church, we have been trying to keep our heart the same, let go of that which is not meaningful and take on new things when possible. We offered a youth-lead service instead of a cantata; we once again held an all ages dance; we had a garden party; we volunteered at the Ronald McDonald house; we put together a Christmas hamper for a family in need; we hosted affirm events and we played plenty of games. Throughout all of this, our focus has always been on fellowship and growth. We connect with one another, in the hope of connecting with something beyond ourselves. We have put greater focus into outreach and all ages church connections, and look forward to supporting these initiatives in the future.

Our youth programming will resume in September following the long weekend, and the youth will be out for the awesome summer events.

Thanks for everything!

*Ben Severson*

## Strawberry Tea!

The Women of Riverbend United Church invite you to join them at their annual Strawberry Tea.

**When:** Tuesday, June 12th

**Time:** 11:30 am—1:00 pm

**Where:** Riverbend United Church

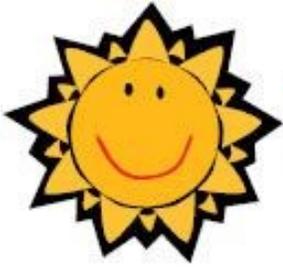
14907—45 Avenue, Lower Level

**Cost:** \$10 per guest—pay at the door

We will serve you a light lunch followed by angel food cake fresh strawberries smothered with real whipped cream.

For more information call: Leslie at 780-435-2218 or Jackie in the Church office at 780-430-7275





# WELCOME SUMMER

C X A G N B H R C I Y J D L M K R A P E M E H T  
 A A T E P A R T I E S V F R U G A D H B T I J N  
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 J W H C O O K O U T S W E E S D L K I J F M D P

AUGUST  
 BEACH  
 BIKES  
 CAMPING  
 CARNIVAL  
 COOKOUTS  
 FIREFLIES  
 FIREWORKS  
 FISHING  
 FLIPFLOPS

FUN  
 HULA HOOPS  
 ICE CREAM  
 JULY  
 JUMPROPE  
 JUNE  
 MOVIES  
 PARADES  
 PARTIES  
 PICNICS  
 POOL

POPSICLES  
 ROLLERCOASTER  
 SANDALS  
 SPLASH  
 SPRINKLER  
 SNOWCONES  
 SUNGLASSES  
 SUNSCREEN  
 SWIMMING  
 THEME PARK  
 VACATION

## A View From the Rear Pew

by Brent Skinner

Peace, order, and good government. These are the principles on which our Canadian nation was founded. Not for us the chaos of a revolution or the messy overthrow and beheading of kings. No! We Canadians like written rules and laws and expect each citizen to stay within the bureaucratic boundaries.

Canada is great! Everything is so predictable. Try driving in Istanbul or Rome where there are no evident rules of the road. Apply for a building permit in France and count the months and years until you can put a shovel in the ground (while I have never really tried to build anything in France, I do watch those DIY shows when visiting the dentist or asthma clinic). Pay a little 'baksheesh' to the desk clerk in Morocco to upgrade your hotel room, or to the luggage handlers at the Johannesburg airport to ensure that your suitcase is not unfortunately slashed as it comes off the plane.

When people say 'Canada rules!', they mean that it is a fabulous country that follows the rules.

Canadians line up respectfully when waiting for a restaurant table, grocery store check-out, bank machine or airplane toilet. Woe to the stranger who breaks the lineup rules. They will get dirty looks from all the other people in the line and maybe even some dark muttering. Have you ever been in queue to come board an airplane when someone from boarding zone 3 slips into boarding zone 2? You can feel a lynch mob forming... which is kind of silly, because everyone has an assigned seat already and nobody really wants to go to Toronto anyway.

Practically any sport, recreational event, or business transaction requires the filling in of multiple forms, often via the internet. Our legal and justice system is particularly notable in this regard, and thankfully we have lawyers, accountants and soccer coaches who can help us navigate the paperwork. I am currently co-executor of my deceased mother's estate and am fortunate to have an accountant brother to explain what all these forms mean and where to sign.

Finally, if I have a serious idea on how to improve the rules, (e.g.: ban the wearing of baseball caps in public restaurants), I can take my case all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada, where a panel of wise and distinguished

men and women will make a decision that will impact baseball cap wearers for countless future generations.

Canada is great for those of us who like rules. In fact the only country that I have visited that is more orderly than ours is Japan... but I don't think that even Canadians are ready to walk-in neat little lines following a pennant and wearing cute little uniforms.

Therefore, it is a major national crisis when individuals or organizations refuse to follow the rules. How dare refugees cross the border into Canada without waiting in line and filling out all the necessary forms? What about that NHL professional hockey player who (yuccch) licks his opponents? Even worse, where does British Columbia get off when it denies neighbouring Alberta the right to expand an existing pipeline across the mountains to tidewater? What do you do in a rule oriented and law abiding country when people won't follow the rules? Other countries, like the great republic to the south, would send in the National Guard and bang people over their heads with wooden batons until everybody agrees to follow the rules. Some countries, like Venezuela, would raise the red flag of revolution, man the barricades and riot until the food ran out, all the country's tires were burned up and the International Monetary Fund stepped in and everything got worse for everybody.

The Canadian way is to fall back on the law of retaliation, as formulated by Hammurabi several thousand years ago ...better known as "as a tooth for a tooth and an eye for an eye". For example, if British Columbia refuses Alberta its constitutional right to build a pipeline through B.C., then Alberta will refuse to send them petroleum, and lower mainland drivers will see the price at the pumps skyrocket. At which point, B.C. will cut off Alberta from fresh wine, pacific salmon, apples, cherries and peaches. Alberta will then probably impose a special tax and visa requirement for B.C. residents working in Alberta followed by a B.C. entry tax for every Alberta vehicle crossing into B.C. So it would go, with outrage followed by outrage until B.C forgot why it was so opposed to the pipeline in the first place, both provinces were exhausted from the fight and nobody wanted to purchase bitumen anymore, as the world had moved on to some other energy source.

That's the only other thing about Canadians, we can turn mean and vindictive if people don't obey the rules of our civil society. Displays of rudeness can quickly turn to the lynch mob. Think about that the next time you want to cut in the line at Costco.

**Calendar: Watch for announcements of Awesome Wednesday Evenings this summer!**

Wednesday, June 6th	7:00 pm— 8:15 pm	“Digging in” Summer Discussion
Saturday, June 9th	10:00 am 11:00 am	Spring Clean Up—parking lot Edmonton Pride Parade—Old Strathcona
Sunday, June 10th	noonish	RUC Church Picnic
Tuesday, June 12th	11:30 am—1:00 pm 7:00 pm	WUC—Strawberry Tea  Board Meeting
Wednesday, June 13th	7:00 pm— 8:15 pm	“Digging in” Summer Discussion
Sunday, June 17th	8:15 am 2:00 pm	Father’s Day Lunch Bissell (meet at RUC) Grandview Service
Wednesday, June 20th	7:00 pm— 8:15 pm	“Digging in” Summer Discussion
Thursday, June 28th	10:30 am	Devonshire Worship
Friday, August 31st		FRONT PEW DEADLINE
September 7th & 8th		RUC Garage Sale

- Weekly Events**
- Mondays 7:00 pm—  
Handbell Rehearsal  
(end in May and begin  
again in September)
  - Wednesdays 9:00  
am—Walking Group
  - Thursdays 7:30 pm—  
Choir Rehearsal  
(rehearsals continue  
through the summer);  
new singers welcome!
  - Weekly Sunday  
Worship-10:30 am  
(Sunday School and  
Youth Discussion

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July is home to Canada’s 151st Birthday on Sunday, July 1st. Other days celebrated in July are...

- National Injury Prevention Day: July 5
- International Self-Care Day: July 24
- World Hepatitis Day: July 28

August is also sparse in regards to health themes and events...

- International Youth Day: August 12
- International Left Handers Day: August 13
- World Humanitarian Day: August 19
- World Overdose Awareness Day: August 31

I believe that about covers it for this issue. I hope everyone has a chance to celebrate their own special events during the summer. I wish everyone a peaceful, rejuvenating, and blessed summer season. See you back here in September.

*Dawn Power*



**CONTACT US AT:**

**Phone: (780) 430-7275**

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

*Co-Editors: Audrey Skinner & Corrina Chetley-Irvin*

*Mail List Manager: Jacqueline Hunt*

*Print Supervisor: Bev Mangano*

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