

CENTRAL OKANAGAN UNITED CHURCH NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2026



2026

SEND IN YOUR PHOTOS AND
NEWS FOR UPCOMING EDITIONS
OF THE NEWSLETTER!





Central Okanagan United Church

JANUARY 2026

WELCOME



SUNDAY WORSHIP

Worship together on Sundays at
10am - 721 Bernard Ave, Kelowna
Zoom and Facebook Live options
available. All Welcome!

CONTACT ADMIN

Delaine / E-Letter & Newsletter Submissions
delainec@centralokanaganunitedchurch.com

Saibun / Room Rentals, Bookings & Buildings
saibunh@centralokanaganunitedchurch.com



 (250)762- 3311

 MAIL TO: PO BOX 24042, KELOWNA BC, V1Y 9H2

 CENTRALOKANAGANUNITEDCHURCH.COM

Outreach

Looking Back at 2025

We still have one more Tuesday morning Outreach session to go as I write this, but 2025 has already broken all previous records. Over 6,300 meals were served and over 6,200 bags of groceries distributed over the 51 weeks we were open. In January we were averaging 110 and 100 respectively but by the end of the year we were over 160 and 150 respectively. Our Christmas turkey dinner on the 16th saw us serving 175 meals and filling 152 bags of groceries. While we might wish the numbers were lower, the demand is great and continues to grow.

A heartfelt thank you to our Outreach partners:

- the Lake Country Food Bank and The Salvation Army who provide bread, desserts and produce for our program every week, and support for our grocery program, and
- the ProVision Grant program from the Pacific Mountain Regional Council of the United Church of Canada which covers the cost of our wonderful Interpreter and Inter-Cultural Inter-Faith Program Lead, and also contributes to the cost of groceries each week and supports our workshop sessions on Inter-Cultural Awareness, Reconciliation, and Homelessness and Poverty.

With the support of these organizations, our grocery and food offerings are more wholesome and balanced, and our Tuesday mornings are greatly enhanced.

And a big thank you to all the incredible individuals who volunteer to help with Outreach in any capacity. The Outreach team is incredibly dedicated and a joy to work with.

Approximately 60 individuals volunteer in about 10 different areas over the course of a week to make our Tuesday mornings possible. They truly are amazing and their efforts are greatly appreciated by everyone involved, especially our guests.

And of course, another big thank you goes out to the entire congregation for the prayers; the acts and words of kindness and thanks; the donations of cash, gift cards, non-perishable food items, cloth bags, toques, and so many other items that make our jobs and the lives of our guests easier.

Outreach truly is one big group effort, and we should all be proud of what we accomplish to help those in need in our community.

Happy New Year!

continued on next page...

Looking Ahead to 2026

Our Outreach program will continue on Tuesday mornings. We will be working with our current partners and hopefully with some new partners as well, like the Okanagan Tree Fruit Project. Our program is continually evolving to keep pace with the realities of community needs. If you know of any organization that might be a good partner for COUC, please let us know. If you are looking for a way to get involved in something that is rewarding, do not look any further because we have something for everyone and we would love to talk to you. If interested in getting involved, please contact Jayne Brooks at k.jaynebrooks@gmail.com or Andrea Hess at andrea@centralokanaganunitedchurch.com

Workshops Coming Up

On Saturday, January 10th from 10 AM to 12 PM at the church, Syilx knowledge keeper Jasmine Peone will offer another workshop. This is the third of three sessions learning about the cultural teachings and perspectives of the Syilx people. We will explore Syilx ways of life prior to contact, look at the impacts of colonization and reflect on how we can all move forward together. We will also look at what it may mean to do our work on these stolen lands and our roles in Truth and Reconciliation. RSVP to Andrea: andrea@centralokanaganunitedchurch.com

- Saturday, January 10th– 10:00 to 12:00 pm At COUC
- This is the third of three sessions where we will learn about the cultural teachings and perspectives of the Syilx people. We will explore Syilx ways of life prior to contact, look at the impacts of colonization and reflect on how we can all move forward together. We will also look at what it may mean to do our work on these stolen lands and our roles in Truth and Reconciliation.
- Jasmine Peone is a Syilx knowledge carrier, language and cultural teacher and a hiphop artist. She is an Indigenous trans woman from the community of Westbank First Nation who comes from a culturally active family. Jasmine has a passion for sharing the teachings of her ancestors and using it as a bridge to connect cultures.
- RSVP Andrea: andrea@centralokanaganunitedchurch.com



In February, we will start the 3-part series on homelessness and poverty.

Further details on Poster.

We are especially grateful to the ProVision Fund for supporting these special workshop events.

Stewardship

Your Stewardship team wishes you all the best in the coming year, and thanks you for your contributions over the past years and in the future. With your support, the incredible work and many programs offered by Central Okanagan United Church (COUC) will continue.

Happy New Year!

Have you made your New Year's Resolutions yet? I was thinking about my possible resolutions today and mine might be:

- to get more active and healthier
- to spend more time with family and friends
- to eat less chocolate – please, not that one!
- to give more to those in need – What? Can I possibly give more? I really don't have any more time to give and financially I'm already giving to so many causes that CRA keeps auditing me to check my reporting!!!

But, on the plus side of that last one, what a blessed position to be in: to have enough for what I really need in my own life and even more to share with others who need a little extra support. And doesn't it make my heart sing when I send that money to an organization that reaches out and truly helps so many people.

A lot of organizations are doing great work in our community, across Canada, and around the world. We all recognize that we can only do so much, and we cannot possibly support every charitable organization that exists – but we can support some.

That is why the Stewardship Team is so grateful that you have put your faith, your time and talent, and your hard-earned money into supporting COUC and its many programs from worship and Bible studies to programming for children, youth and adults; from outreach for those in need in our local community to supporting projects across Canada and around the world through our donation to the Mission & Service Fund and other initiatives.

When we give to our church, our combined contributions make a real difference in the world. As we sang at the CGIT Vesper Service in December, "It only takes a spark to get a fire going and soon all those around can warm up in its glowing."

Think of all those who feel more comfortable, safe, confident, blessed, and loved because of what you personally offered to COUC and what COUC offered to them. Each individual gift becomes so much more when we all work together as a church to help bring the world God imagined to life.

We are all blessed to be a blessing for others. May it be so in 2026.

Your Stewardship Team

*Thank
You*

YEAR-END DEADLINES FOR SUBMISSION OF 2025 EXPENSES AND INVOICES

The next dates for payment of invoices and reimbursements will be January 6th and 20th. If you want to be reimbursed for an expense you have incurred on behalf of the church, please submit the invoice and/or cheque requisition with complete details to Saibun Hasibuan in the office.

Invoices received and approved by January 5th will be paid on January 6th.

All 2025 expenses should be submitted and accounted for by that date, but definitely no later than January 19th for payment on January 20th.

The financial records will go to the auditor at the beginning of February so all 2025 transactions must be processed in January.

Thank you!

TAX RECEIPTS FOR 2025

Tax receipts for the period March 1 to December 31, 2025, will be issued in February.

The tax receipts for the period January 1 to February 28, 2025, were distributed in March of this year according to CRA and government legislation relating to the postal strike at the end of 2024, so you already have the tax receipt for the first two months of 2025, and COUC will only be issuing tax receipts for the last ten months of 2025.



Queer Vespers

Central Okanagan United Church - 721 Bernard Ave

Monthly Evening Queer Vesper Worship at COUC

Worship Fellowship Community Connection



6:00pm

Monthly:

January 18th

February 15th

March 15th



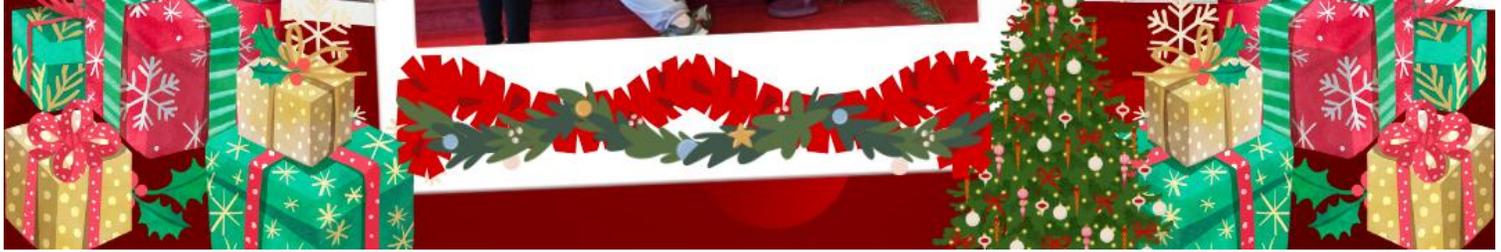
721 Bernard Ave.
Kelowna BC



centralokanaganunitedchurch.com



Advent & Christmas 2025!





celebrating

100

YEARS OF THE
UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA



**CGIT VESPERS
SERVICE**



100TH
 1925-2025

ANNIVERSARY
 Deep • Bold • Daring

**MORE 100 YEAR EVENTS COMING
UP THIS YEAR THROUGH JUNE 10!**



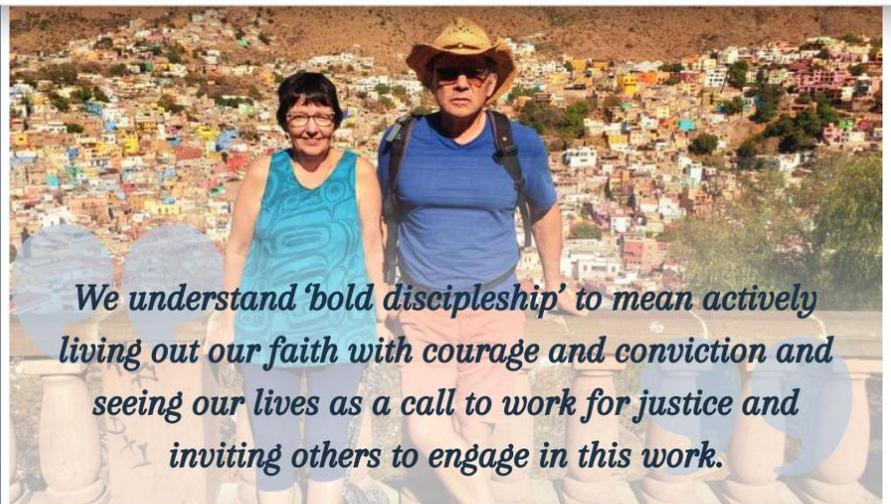
○ ○ ○ ○ ————— **CENTRAL OKANAGAN UNITED CHURCH**
Cheryl Perry
IN CONVERSATION WITH *Debbie Hubbard*
FROM COMMUNITY MINISTRY

Let me begin by taking the opportunity to thank you, Debbie, and others in Community Ministry, for promoting the sale of oil to support Palestinian farmers and the education you have provided to those who have purchased it. I understand that over the last six years more than \$65,000 worth of olive oil, Za'atar, Medjool dates and olive oil have been sold throughout the Okanagan and Kootenays!



Q: Can you tell us something about how you & Dean became involved in this justice work and how your faith informs your work?

Dean and I made our first pilgrimage to Palestine-Israel in 2012 with St. Stephen's Theological College in Edmonton. What we witnessed shattered our image of what we had thought was the Holy Land. We wanted to learn more and applied to serve for a three-month term as an Ecumenical Accompanier with the World Council of Churches. Subsequently, we served as human rights observers in Bethlehem and East Jerusalem from 2014-2015. Our commitment to advocating for Palestinian self-determination and an end to the occupation is grounded in the request of Palestinians for us to go home and share what we have witnessed and from our understanding of the United Church's call to 'Bold Discipleship'. We understand 'bold discipleship' to mean actively living out our faith with courage and conviction and seeing our lives as a call to work for justice and inviting others to engage in this work.



We understand 'bold discipleship' to mean actively living out our faith with courage and conviction and seeing our lives as a call to work for justice and inviting others to engage in this work.

Q: Since October 7, 2023 we have all seen images on the news of the bombing in Gaza . We have heard reports of more than 70,000 Palestinian killed, another 170,999 injured along with the displacement of 1.9 million people and the destruction of 90% of the infrastructure. This must be so much more personal for you and Dean. What are your feelings as you hear from those you have met and know?

Our feelings vary depending on the day - everything from anger and frustration at the silence and inaction of the international community including our government and the churches, to deep sadness and grief as we hear about the unemployment, the loss of land, the increased number of settlements and checkpoints, to gratitude when Canadians come to learn and engage in advocacy work. What has been the hardest for us is the growing sense of hopelessness of Palestinians as they see their situation continuing to deteriorate while the world watches.



○ ○ ○ ○

CENTRAL OKANAGAN UNITED CHURCH

Cheryl Perry
IN CONVERSATION WITH Debbie Hubbard
FROM COMMUNITY MINISTRY



Q: I understand that because of the deteriorating situation, it has become increasingly more difficult to get shipments of the products. Can you share a little bit about what led to the decision by Community Ministry to discontinue selling the olive oil and Za'atar?

There are several factors impacting the supply of the olive oil to international markets. The first being the occupation by Israel (land confiscation, movement restrictions, water control, settler violence and the destruction of the olive groves) and climate change (drought, temperature shifts) leading to lower yields and economic risk, compounded by structural issues like aging orchards, high production/export costs and the tariffs imposed by President Trump. At the local level, Dean and I were the key leaders for coordinating the sales. Both of us want to increase our focus on political advocacy and supporting learning and engagement opportunities such as the Palestinian Land Exercise. At the moment there is no one else to step into the coordinating role and so we felt it was best to discontinue the sales of the olive oil and Za'atar. We will continue to sell the Peace by Chocolate chocolate, keffiyehs and Medjool dates at the Community Ministry Table each month. We have about two dozen bottles of olive oil remaining for folks to purchase.

Q: Do you have a final reflection to share with folks at Central Okanagan United Church?

Thank you for creating the space to store the oil and for all the purchases made over the years. Many folks' first encounter with Palestine was through the olive oil and it was made possible because of COUC's support. Special thanks also to the church bookkeepers who tracked the income and expenses over the years. Not an easy task as we had three different suppliers. In November 2025, Palestinian Christians launched Kairos Palestine II, "A Moment of Truth: Faith in a Time of Genocide." This document issues an urgent call to Christians around the world to stand with Palestinian Christians and all Palestinians to address the violence and suffering experienced in Gaza the West Bank and Israel. It is an invitation to take a stand that might involve genuine risks. Sometimes physical risks through protective presence and solidarity delegations or pilgrimages, but also the risk of alienating those around us in order to speak the truth and through nonviolent actions like BDS - (Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions), vigils, rallies, and letter writing to or meeting with elected officials. If folks are interested in learning more or staying informed about future educational and advocacy opportunities they can send an email to Debbie at seekingequalrights@gmail.com.



SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

If you would like to submit a piece of news / information or photos for our weekly E-Letter or the Newsletter, please follow these guidelines. Unfortunately, we cannot take on outside promotions unless expressly approved or linked to COUC. Email submissions to: delainec@centralokanaganunitedchurch.com

Please Note: Placement order is determined by the season or theme of the publication. Seasonal church articles will always place first in order.

01

Please edit, spell check and double check your written articles before submitting. We unfortunately do not have the capacity to do this for every article we receive.

02

Article length:

E-Letter: Keep these to one short paragraph or 100-200 words.

Newsletter: 350 -400 Words = One Page MAX.

Due to the many articles we receive, please adhere to these limits.

03

Photos:

If your article has a photo to accompany it, please include brief info / people's names etc. For photo collections, a short sentence of explanation of the set is fine.

04

Deadlines:

Weekly E-Letter:

Submit by Thursday 10am, for Friday

Newsletter:

Submit by the 21st of the month

for the following month's issue.

ie: submit by March 21st for the April issue



Our Congregation's PAR Program

How to Participate

1. Prayerfully decide what you will give each year, and divide that amount by 12.
2. Fill out the authorization form, and attach a cheque marked "VOID."
3. Give this to our designated PAR contact person, or leave at the church office.
4. The amount will be transferred from your account to our congregation's account on the 20th of each month. You can modify or cancel your donation, change how it is designated, or change your information at any time.

Why Participate?

If you have automatic withdrawals from your bank account to pay your bills, taxes, or mortgage, then you already understand the PAR principle.

Besides being convenient, using PAR for your offering ensures regular monthly givings to help our church's ministry even when you are away. You will be providing our congregation a dependable flow of contributions, which increases our overall financial stability.

Your regular giving supports the ministry of Central Okanagan United Church (COUC) and the many programs that are offered, from worship services in church on Sunday to worship in Senior Care Homes throughout the week; from Sunday School and other children and youth programs to SongShine, book studies, and Walk and Talk for the young at heart; from the morning grocery and meal program for members of our local community to programs of education and support for Reconciliation, Inclusion, and Justice for all.

Your giving also supports the Mission and Service fund of the United Church of Canada and its work at home and abroad through its many vibrant and vital ministries for the healing of the world. COUC currently gives \$33,000 annually to UCC Mission and Service.



Please contact Marg Brooks: contributions@centralokanaganunitedchurch.com

Pre-Authorized Remittance (PAR)



Specify the amount of monthly donation to be deducted from your chequing account. Contact the office to join PAR or make changes to your current PAR contributions.

Please contact Marg Brooks:
contributions@centralokanaganunitedchurch.com

Cheques & E-Transfers

Please make out cheques to Central Okanagan United Church, and place in one of the offering offertory boxes in the sanctuary, drop off at 721 Bernard, or mail to:

Central Okanagan
United Church
PO Box 24042
Kelowna, BC
V1Y 9H2



E-transfer your donation to
finance@centralokanaganunitedchurch.com

Donation of Shares

Contact Marg Brooks for information.



Bequests or Memorial Gifts

Include Central Okanagan United Church in your will or make a gift in memory of an individual.

Thank you for your generous and continued support!



Winter

What's on at COUC
Groups
Events
and More!

Exploring Addiction, Poverty and Homelessness in Kelowna

February 1st and February 8th
11:30am to 1:30pm at COUC.

Join John and Andrea for a two-part series exploring addiction, poverty and homelessness in Kelowna through the lens of lived experience and the importance of peer support. Discussion and questions will be encouraged and welcomed.

We will take a break to enjoy soup and a bun together during the session

RSVP TO ANDREA

andrea@centralokanaganunitedchurch.com





CENTRAL OKANAGAN UNITED CHURCH

LIFE PLANNING CONVERSATION SERIES ON ZOOM

**February Evening Sessions
Held on Zoom**

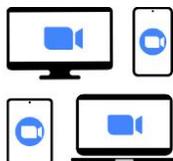


OUR SESSIONS WILL INCLUDE

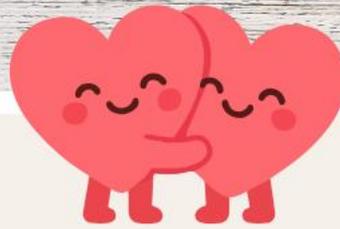
- **Planning a Meaningful Service with Cheryl Perry**
- **Advance Care Planning with Dr. Julie McNally**
- **Writing Your Own Obituary with Ally Phillips**



More information to come!
Watch E-Letters for info.



FEBRUARY 7TH



GIFT BASKET AUCTION

Baskets for those who love - All things!
Pet Lovers, Chocolate Lovers, Food Lovers,
Spa Lovers, Wine Lovers...!
Make a basket or just join in to bid!

Contact for more info or to donate a basket:
Judy McCaulay, Beryl Itani, Myrna Holman or Cheryl Perry

A large, abstract watercolor splash in various shades of teal and green, with soft, irregular edges, occupies the top half of the page. The text is overlaid on this background.

Thursday Breathing Class

WITH SYLVIA CLERKE

Thursdays at 11am
Please have a non rolling chair
and a glass of water

ZOOM LINK AVAILABLE IN FRIDAY E-LETTER



**Strengthening Voices. Inspiring Possibility.
WHERE VOICES COME TO LIFE**

Mondays at 1:00pm

Welcome to *SongShine*, vocal music and creative drama-based classes designed for those who have communication issues due to Parkinson's, stroke, other neurological challenges, or aging. Our goal is to help you communicate more easily and clearly. *SongShine* harnesses the power of brain, breath, and emotion to reclaim voices. It creates community, camaraderie, and confidence

...AND IT'S FUN!

Meet: Mondays at 1pm, at Bernard Church, in Room 14

Hosted by Choir Director Sylvia Clerke

**Keep up to date, watch worship videos and more.
Find us online! Like and Follow us on Facebook &
Subscribe to our YouTube Channel!**

Website

<https://centralokanaganunitedchurch.com>

Facebook Page SUNDAY LIVESTREAM SHOWN HERE

<https://www.facebook.com/Centralokanaganunitedchurchkelownabc>

Facebook Group (Our Private Church Group)

(A Private Group for members & friends of COUC to share church news or discussion)

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/319967703235745>

United Church of Canada Private Group –

Join in for all UCC chat & news!

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/UnitedChurchCda/permalink/10167795547890401/>

YouTube Channel (Worship videos posted weekly):

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJRqGV1Zra36gbm1jSlks1w>





Happy New Year

Welcome 2026!

From
Central Okanagan United Church

