UNITED CHURCH RURAL MINISTRY NETWORK

The United Church Rural Ministry Network (UCRMN) is a national network, connecting 515 subscribers from all of the Regions in Canada, an electronic network sharing stories and news of rural communities across Canada (and around the world), and bringing together leaders of rural communities of faith – lay and clergy. In 2020, we received a one-time start up grant of $5,000 from United Church Foundation and got going. UCRMN is a charitable organization that receipts donations from Regional Councils, Congregations or interested people. At UCRMN.ca, there is a link for online donations, and information for emailing e-Transfers or mailing cheques. UCRMN has requested that all Regional Councils (or tri-Region groupings) put UCRMN in their annual budgets; 70% of United Church congregations across the country are in rural or small towns, therefore this support is a relevant cost to each Regional Council.

Our primary ways of connecting with people are e-Newsletters (10 times a year), quarterly Zoom workshops and the ongoing presence of our website, https://ucrmn.ca, online. Peter Chynoweth of Cochrane, AB, has been our Web Minder since October 2022.

The e-Newsletters are always available for sharing worship ideas and hopeful stories from rural congregations. Regularly, there is excellent tech advice and challenges from Martin Dawson in PEI and from Peter Chynoweth in Cochrane, AB, who write the regular 'Tech Corner'. In addition, the e-Newsletters publicize events happening throughout the Church which are of interest to rural folks, advertising from Regions and committees like Affirming Connections, Learning on the Way, etc. Rural Routes Through the Holy conference held in the Maritimes for a number of years receives good coverage through the UCRMN newsletter and website as Catherine Smith is a partner of the UCRMN Board. Chinook Winds has also held rural ministry conferences publicized by UCRMN. If other Regional Councils would like to connect with the wider rural constituency, let us know through editor@ucrmn.ca. We invite all rural congregations to connect and receive e-newsletters through registering on the website (ucrmn.ca).

Our Zoom workshops this year: Jan. 20 "LLWL Check in" (continuation of conversation with Licensed Lay Worship Leaders across the country. So interesting and helpful finding out the different practices within Regions, and supporting each other. Continued in June.) May 15, "How to Save your Computer" (as Windows 10 reached the end of its life and Windows made demands for new systems, Martin and Peter, our tech gurus, talked about open source software as a secure, ethical and economic option for churches). Nov. 20, "The gifts of Rural Culture" (Shawn Sanford-Beck led some thinking about the gifts rural communities offer the wider church shaped by Joyce Sasse's observations on rural culture). Jan. 22, 2026, Christine Jerrett who is leading the ChurchX Lenten Study on book, Bless, Break and Share, led a discussion to hear a rural perspective on the theme. Feb, 19, 2026, Lay-Led Congregational Leadership. These workshops are advertised in the e-Newsletters and offered free of charge. Registration is done through Eventbrite,. Reports on a number of the workshops that were held are found on the UCRMN website.

IRCA (International Rural Churches Association) Day of Prayer will be hosted by UCRMN folks again this year, on April 16, with some stories of local ministries and opportunity to pray for them. You can check last year's program out on the IRCA website (https://irca.online/24-hour-prayer-zoom - the Americas).
UCRMN members take part regularly in the "Rural Townhalls" by United in Learning to hear peoples' thoughts about what is going on in rural churches, and how rural ministries can be supported.

Finally, UCRMN always is looking for members to serve on our national Board, as e-Newsletter Editor, Workshop Coordinator, or on the Finance Committee.

Respectfully Submitted Catherine Christie - President, UCRMN (Abbey, SK)