# Mission and Service Stories: July‒September 2024

Mission and Service—helping transform lives, inspire meaning and purpose, and
build a better world.



The United Church of Canada/L’Église Unie du Canada

Contents

[Welcome to *Mission and Service Stories*! 3](#_Toc174105719)

[July 7: Ministers’ Retreat: Respite and Reflection 4](#_Toc174105720)

[July 14: Climate Justice through Cultural Movement 5](#_Toc174105721)

[July 21: Restoring Lost Languages 6](#_Toc174105722)

[July 28: Facing an Uncertain Future in Lebanon 7](#_Toc174105723)

[August 4: Building Community through an Afterschool Program 8](#_Toc174105724)

[August 11: Minority Youth Forum: The Power of Bringing Youth Together 9](#_Toc174105725)

[August 18: Nothing Can Hold Us Back 9](#_Toc174105726)

[August 25: Church Offers Unique Ministry in National Park 11](#_Toc174105727)

[September 1: Moments of Connection 12](#_Toc174105728)

[September 8: It Starts with Education 13](#_Toc174105729)

[September 15: A Journey of Faith and Peace 14](#_Toc174105730)

[September 22: Inuinnaqtun Language Revival Group 15](#_Toc174105731)

[September 29: Update: Pastors Retreat—Respite and Reflection 16](#_Toc174105732)

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## Welcome to *Mission and Service Stories*!

*Mission and Service Stories* are for sharing with our faithful supporters to show them the amazing work their gifts make possible.

These stories can be used in services, in newsletters, and in face-to-face conversations. The more they’re shared, the more people will understand just how life-changing Mission and Service is!

For videos of some of the work you make possible, visit the [Mission and Service playlist](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLQDu-SgFb3RgRuLXGcT2-DvK8VeECsVdv) on our YouTube channel.

We hope this resource is helpful and inspiring.

As always, we would **love to hear your feedback**. Drop us a line at ms@united-church.ca and let us know what you like, what we can improve on, and what we can focus on developing.

Blessings,

The Philanthropy Team

## July 7: Ministers’ Retreat: Respite and Reflection

Northern United Church ministers are facing a crisis. The number of deaths in northern communities has been immense, and the grief of burying community members, especially young people, has been overwhelming. The emotional toll of ministering to a grieving community is enormous, and ministers are in dire need of rest and renewal.

A [ministers’ retreat](https://united-church.ca/stories/pastors-retreat) is being planned for October 2024. The retreat will provide rest, training in crisis management, and spiritual renewal, and will allow leaders to return with renewed strength to help those in need. Ministers will participate in a blend of training and respite opportunities, including learning about vicarious trauma and administering Naloxone, and relaxation opportunities through art therapy, beading workshops, and sharing circles.

Through your generous support of Mission and Service, this retreat is on its way to being a reality.

If you would like to support the retreat, please [give here](https://united-church.ca/donate/2024npr). Every dollar donated will be matched by a contribution from the Healing Fund. Thank you.

*Hear what northern ministers are experiencing and what they need to keep going:*

[Listen to Lawrence](https://youtu.be/5Swli03VzKk).

[Listen to Grant](https://youtu.be/KXzCNjDj8sk).

[Listen to Olive](https://youtu.be/aVfwuBA1uKI).

## July 14: Climate Justice through Cultural Movement

Mission and Service partner the World Student Christian Federation Asia-Pacific collaborated with the Bangladesh Student Christian Movement on a workshop called “Youth Leading Change: Climate Justice through Cultural Movement.” Through discussions and activities, it aimed to raise awareness among young people about climate challenges and empower them to take local actions.

Over four days, 50 passionate students from various regions of Bangladesh came together to address the critical issue of climate change. They explored the severe impacts on communities and livelihoods, particularly the displacement caused by floods. Floods force families to migrate to Dhaka, now one of the world’s most densely populated cities.

The heart-wrenching stories of displaced families deeply resonated with the participants, igniting their determination to drive change. Equipped with knowledge and tools, these young leaders are now poised to advocate for climate justice and inspire their communities.

Your generous support of [Mission and Service](https://united-church.ca/community-and-faith/get-involved/mission-and-service) helps make workshops like this possible. Thank you.

## July 21: Restoring Lost Languages

These days, most of us have access to technology that allows us to learn the world’s common languages. But countless languages—including many Indigenous languages—can only be learned from their few remaining speakers.

Revitalizing a lost language, as one of our partners in Nunavut is doing, is an important way to preserve not just the language but also the culture that surrounds it.

The Inuinnaqtun language is the cultural foundation of the Inuinnait people, who live in the central Canadian Arctic. The literal meaning of the word Inuinnaqtun is “to be like an Inuinnaq (a person).” Today, fewer than 600 people can still speak Inuinnaqtun fluently. Many lost the language when they were removed from their communities and sent to residential schools.

Pitquhirnikkut Ilihautiniq/Kitikmeot Heritage Society in Cambridge Bay, Nunavut, is working hard to keep Inuinnaqtun alive. One-on-one language immersion sessions with mentors inspire reconnection. Through everyday conversations at home and on the land, mentorship is helping to heal the wounds of systemic oppression.

In partnership with Mission and Service, Inuinnaqtun language mentors get resources to allow them to spend 300 hours a year working with their apprentices to begin to restore the language.

Your gifts to [Mission and Service](https://united-church.ca/community-and-faith/get-involved/mission-and-service) help partners continue to restore language and culture. Thank you.

## July 28: Facing an Uncertain Future in Lebanon

Hamdan wants to become a doctor someday. As the oldest son, this young teenager dreams big amidst the daily struggles that he and his family face.

Hamdan’s family came to Lebanon several years ago to escape the war in Syria. They can barely afford their monthly rent, food, household expenses, clothing, and medical needs. While his father works in a produce shop, his mother stays at home to care for the family’s four children and two other family members. This family of eight lives on the father’s pay and a small income supplement they receive from the UN.

Like Hamdan, many children in Lebanon are at risk of losing their education because an economic crisis—intensified by the COVID pandemic and the devastating 2020 explosion in Beirut—has plunged their families into poverty. When parents can’t pay school tuition, children face an unstable future. The Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) assists Lebanese students and Syrian refugees ages 8‒13 with tuition and fees to secure their education and prevent them from becoming a lost generation.

One thing Hamdan’s parents don’t have to worry about anymore is his education. With tuition assistance provided by MECC to Hamdan and his siblings, they can continue to study until graduation and gain entrance into a university—giving Hamdan a chance to achieve his dream.

Your support through [Mission and Service](https://united-church.ca/community-and-faith/get-involved/mission-and-service) helps remove barriers for teenagers like Hamdan so they can work toward their dreams. Thank you.

## August 4: Building Community through an Afterschool Program

“I’m going to sleep here!” Amarah, age 6, threatens from under the table. Along with her sisters, she hides from her family at the Tomken Grove Afterschool Program’s pickup time. This is a common occurrence because every Tuesday at 6:30 p.m., the children feel that two hours together is not enough.

Through the passion of Westminster United Church in Mississauga, ON, the Tomken Grove Afterschool Program aims to encourage community among local children. The program creates a recreational space outside of school where neighbourhood kids can spend time together in an electronics-free environment.

Some form of physical activity is always scheduled: dance battles, obstacle courses, hula-hooping, spending time outdoors and more. Snacks such as fresh fruits and yogurt keep the kids healthy and energized, and everyone is involved in cleanup responsibilities for snack and outdoor time, which encourages independence and innovation.

Your gifts through [Mission and Service](https://united-church.ca/community-and-faith/get-involved/mission-and-service) help programs like this as they encourage community and connection. Thank you.

## August 11: Minority Youth Forum: The Power of Bringing Youth Together

*Ashley Keeping was one of two United Church young adults selected to attend the Minority Youth Forum in Japan, hosted by the Center for Minority Issues and Mission.*

*Ashley writes:*

“Just like Miyako residents, I live on an island and can relate to their everyday lives on their island, as it was small and humble just like here in Newfoundland. There was one prominent difference. The majority of the residents are seeking peace from their own government, something we don’t have to worry about here in Canada. God called upon me to see how the people of Miyako Island are living, and to share with everyone their struggle for peace.

“The Minority Youth Forum program brought together young adults from Canada, Japan, and Taiwan. The Youth Forum experience showed me how powerful it is to bring youth together to share our culture, to share our faith, and to share our stories. To be able to have discussions with youth from other cultures about how we can change the world gives me so much hope for our future.

“This trip filled my heart with joy, hope, and love for the wonderful people that I can now forever call friends. It also taught me that you need to find, keep, and treasure peace, as well as pursue it for the rest of your time, and that I will do. Thank you, Miyako, for everything you taught me.”

The Youth Forum is an ecumenical initiative of churches in Japan, supported by The United Church of Canada and Mission and Service. Your generosity through Mission and Service helps programs like this one that inspire peace and learning. Thank you.

Read Ashley’s [full blog here](https://united-church.ca/blogs/round-table/pursuing-peace-atlantic-pacific).

## August 18: Nothing Can Hold Us Back

Audacious Hope, the national youth and young adult event, brought together over 450 energetic young people and passionate youth leaders July 3-6, 2024, for an unforgettable experience at Brock University in St. Catharines, ON. Through the combined efforts of The United Church of Canada Rendez-vous team and The Presbyterian Church in Canada’s Uplift team, this landmark event was the first-ever collaborative youth event by the two denominations.

Each day included inspiring and vibrant worship led by the incredible Adele Halliday and Mitchell Anderson. Attendees were captivated by a lineup of phenomenal speakers and workshop leaders, including Moderator the Right Rev. Dr. Carmen Lansdowne.

Your generosity through [Mission and Service](https://united-church.ca/community-and-faith/get-involved/mission-and-service) helps continue programs and workshops that encourage youth in their faith. Thank you.

More [videos from Audacious Hope](https://www.youtube.com/%40UnitedChurchCda/videos) are available on The United Church of Canada YouTube channel.

## August 25: Church Offers Unique Ministry in National Park

Canadian churches grace unique places: restaurants, storefronts—even movie theatres. Perhaps the most serene of all settings, though, is a national park.

Waterton United Church is situated in the heart of Waterton Lakes National Park in Alberta. Although the United Church has had a presence in the park since 1955, the current building was dedicated in 1961. The cathedral window in the sanctuary, designed to frame the mountains, offers a breathtaking view.

“Architect George Watson framed Mount Vimy,” explains Carol Watt, Secretary. “People who aren’t involved in the church but just stop to visit look out captivated by the view of the mountain over the lake. It’s a special thing that happens. It touches something deep within.”

Your gifts through [Mission and Service](https://united-church.ca/community-and-faith/get-involved/mission-and-service) help the church remain open year-round. In the summer, Sunday services take place from late June through September with support from guest ministers. Other services are offered during high holy times throughout the year. Youth groups use the building as retreat space, and the chapel is a popular space for weddings. With a small room and kitchenette behind the sanctuary, the church also draws leaders who want to retreat.

“Providing space for spiritual reflection and retreat is an important aspect of the ministry we provide,” says Watt.

A newsletter reads, “Waterton United offers a unique ministry to the wealth of summer visitors who flock happily into the national park and then find this gem of a United Church of Canada.”

Thank you for supporting churches in remote places that witness in a unique way to the majesty and grace of God.

## September 1: Moments of Connection

Have you ever stepped into a forest surrounded by birds chirping, insects calling, and leaves rustling in the wind? The leaders at Mission and Service partner Cave Springs Camp in Beamsville, ON, are encouraging children to leave the hustle and bustle behind to enjoy moments of connection with nature and each other.

Nestled right on the Niagara Escarpment, the joyful sounds of children discovering and playing echo throughout the campgrounds. “I found a salamander!” someone exclaims as other campers rush over to see. Something as simple as “Look at this cool rock!” draws laughter and excitement. These moments of connection are powerful, allowing everyone to be present and supportive.

In such a peaceful setting, the beauty of nature reminds children of the simple joys of friendship and gratitude. This experience can inspire a deep appreciation for the earth and a desire to take care of it. Children make music, worship, explore creativity through art, challenge themselves, and connect with others, all together in nature.

Your support of [Mission and Service](https://united-church.ca/community-and-faith/get-involved/mission-and-service) allows children to continue connecting in nature at United Church camps. Thank you.

## September 8: It Starts with Education

Through your generous support of Mission and Service, our partners are nurturing seeds of wisdom and faith in communities across the globe. By supporting educational initiatives, individuals are empowered to explore their spirituality, deepen their knowledge, and build a better future for themselves and their communities.

Imagine a classroom of [kindergarteners in a refugee camp](https://united-church.ca/stories/kindergarten-refugee-camp) where children eagerly gather to learn about the world and their place in it. Picture a young adult discovering the [profound teachings of their faith](https://united-church.ca/stories/nothing-can-hold-us-back) for the first time, safely supported by their peers. Consider a group of [parents and guardians gathered in a workshop](https://united-church.ca/stories/leading-generations), sharing their hopes and dreams for their communities, guided by mentors who inspire them to lead with compassion and justice. Imagine people learning and [restoring lost languages](https://united-church.ca/stories/restoring-lost-languages) to preserve precious history and culture.

These moments of growth are at our heart, and they are made possible by your compassion and generosity. As we look to the future, the impact of educational initiatives through Mission and Service partners becomes even clearer. Every lesson learned, every skill acquired, and every relationship built contributes to a larger tapestry of hope and resilience.

Whether it's a child in a rural classroom or an adult in a leadership program, the education provided through [Mission and Service](https://united-church.ca/community-and-faith/get-involved/mission-and-service) partners is a beacon, guiding individuals toward a path of faith, understanding, and service. Together, we are sowing the seeds of a more compassionate world. Thank you.

## September 15: A Journey of Faith and Peace

*Sophie Fitzgerald was one of two United Church young adults selected to attend the Minority Youth Forum in Japan, hosted by the Center for Minority Issues and Mission.*

*Sophie writes about her experience:*

“As a young woman in my 20s who has lived and grown up in the United Church, I have always felt God’s call to spread God’s love and peace in any way that I can. Being involved with many organizations and missions with the church, I’ve had the privilege to do this many times in many provinces across Canada but never internationally, until this past March where God called me to travel to Miyakojima island.

“On a tour of the island, we saw exactly what the Japanese military is doing to Miyakojima. We saw how they are taking the beautiful beaches and using them as training camps, putting up missile bunkers in the middle of town next to peoples’ homes and so much more. We sat and talked about how our generation can help the people of Miyakojima have peace once again, and how peace cannot be created with military and military weapons. Throughout these conversations and visits to these sites you could feel an overwhelming presence of our Creator, and was saddened when coming to the terms that everything beautiful that God created was being destroyed and will be destroyed if war does occur.

“We all need to come together to be a community, a community of God’s children striving to seek peace in the world. All people of compassion, wisdom, and belief need to come together in order to take care of one another, and to take care of our beautiful world that the Creator made. Systems of injustice can only be resolved with community and partnership with one another. I am blessed that I get to bring the partnership and stories of the people of Miyakojima island back to my island of Newfoundland.”

The Youth Forum is an ecumenical initiative of churches in Japan, supported by The United Church of Canada and Mission and Service. Your generosity through [Mission and Service](https://united-church.ca/community-and-faith/get-involved/mission-and-service) helps programs like this one that inspire peace and learning. Thank you.

Read Sophie’s full blog: [Seek Peace and Pursue It](https://united-church.ca/blogs/round-table/seek-peace-and-pursue-it).

## September 22: Inuinnaqtun Language Revival Group

The Inuinnaqtun language is the cultural foundation of the Inuinnait people, who live in the central Canadian Arctic. The word *Inuinnaqtun* literally means “to be like an *Inuinnaq* (a person).” Today, fewer than 600 people can speak Inuinnaqtun fluently, with many having lost the language when they were taken from their communities and sent to residential schools.

Mission and Service partner Pitquhirnikkut Ilihautiniq/Kitikmeot Heritage Society in Cambridge Bay, Nunavut, is dedicated to keeping Inuinnaqtun alive. They offer one-on-one language immersion sessions with mentors to inspire reconnection.

Since the initial gathering of the Inikhaliuqatigiit team in 2021, many significant successes have occurred. Over the past year, the team has worked hard together, both in person and online, to create helpful resources for revitalizing the Inuinnaqtun language. They have spent many hours making sure these resources will make a positive impact.

One big success is the development of the Inuinnaqtun Dictionary app, which is newly available for free on Android and Apple. The team has also created a beginner Inuinnaqtun curriculum called Inuinnaujunga and is working on lessons for more advanced levels. They are also teaming up with linguist Richard Compton from the Université de Quebec à Montreal to create a Community Grammar of Inuinnaqtun.

Your compassionate gifts through [Mission and Service](https://united-church.ca/community-and-faith/get-involved/mission-and-service) are supporting programs that help preserve language and culture.

## September 29: Update: Pastors Retreat—Respite and Reflection

A short while ago, we shared that a Pastors Retreat is being planned for October of 2024. This retreat will provide badly needed respite for northern United Church ministers who are facing a crisis.

The number of deaths in their northern communities has been immense. The grief of burying community members, especially young people, has been overwhelming. The emotional toll of ministering to a grieving community is enormous.

Your response has been profound and powerful. When we shared that leaders are in dire need of rest and renewal, you went into action. Thanks to your generous and outstanding support of Mission and Service, this retreat is going to be a reality.

The retreat will provide rest, training in crisis management, and spiritual renewal, and will allow leaders to return with renewed strength to help those in need. Pastors will participate in a blend of activities, including learning about vicarious trauma and experiencing relaxation opportunities through art therapy, beading workshops, and sharing circles.

Thank you for your expression of compassion through [Mission and Service](https://united-church.ca/community-and-faith/get-involved/mission-and-service) that has ensured that this retreat will move forward.

To learn more, visit [Pastors Retreat](https://united-church.ca/stories/pastors-retreat). Thank you.