# **Mission and Service Stories: July–August 2025**

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

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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 6: 100 Years of Spirit and Song

On Sunday, June 8th, Gower Street United Church in St. John’s, Newfoundland, was alive with joyful celebration. The sanctuary buzzed with warm greetings, laughter, and the unmistakable hum of love and connection as people gathered to mark The United Church of Canada’s 100th anniversary. Many more joined the festivities via livestream, sharing in the spirit of the day from near and far.

It was a celebration of history, community, and hope. Guests admired the church’s beautiful historic architecture, an ideal setting for such a milestone. The choir, along with the Gower Community Band Bell Choir, filled the space with soul-stirring music that brought both tears and smiles. Liturgical dancers brought Pentecost flames to life, their movements echoing the Spirit’s energy and presence.

Moderator The Right Rev. Dr. Carmen Lansdowne and General Secretary Rev. Michael Blair presided at the service, and The Rev. Prof. Dr. Jerry Pillay, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, offered a stirring message calling the church to remain rooted in deep spirituality, bold discipleship, and daring justice.

Thanks to your gifts to Mission and Service, vibrant ministries continue to thrive, offering not only worship and music, but hospitality, outreach, and a strong voice for love and justice in their communities.

[Your support](https://united-church.ca/donate) helps carry this legacy forward. Thank you for being part of the story. Here’s to the next hundred years, together.

## July 13: Words That Carry the Spirit

On June 8, during The United Church’s Centennial Celebration at Gower Street United in St. John’s, NL, a historic moment unfolded. A newly translated Mohawk Bible was formally dedicated, a powerful act of spiritual continuity and cultural renewal. The Bible stands as a successor to the Union Bible that was prayed over when The United Church of Canada was formed in 1925. Now, nearly a century later, this new translation was lifted in ceremony and celebration, symbolizing a deepening journey of reconciliation.

Language is more than words, it is worldview. It carries the wisdom of ancestors, the heartbeat of community, and the sacred connections between people, land, and Creator. When a language is lost, something immeasurable disappears with it. That’s why projects like the Mohawk Bible translation matter so profoundly.

Created through decades of devotion, linguistic skill, and cultural insight by Harvey Satewas Gabriel, with the support of generations of women in the Gabriel family and the communities of Kanesatake and Kahnawake, this translation is both a labour of love and an act of resistance. Collaborators worked with care and humility, in close relationship with the Mohawk Nation, to ensure the translation honoured the depth and specificity of the language.

Your gifts to Mission and Service help make work like this possible, supporting the preservation of Indigenous languages and cultures, and walking alongside communities in respectful partnership.

[Ohiatonhseratokénti: The Holy Bible in Mohawk](https://ucrdstore.ca/products/ohiatonhseratokenti-the-holy-bible-in-mohawk?_pos=1&_sid=c5d9cf447&_ss=r) is available through the UCRD bookstore, ensuring that this living word will continue to inspire and teach for generations to come.

Thank you for [your gifts](https://united-church.ca/donate) to Mission and Service that are helping keep language and spirit alive.

## July 20: Sacred Care for Those Who Carry the Weight

In 2024, a group of 23 Indigenous United Church ministers and spouses from northern Manitoba and Ontario gathered for a much-needed retreat at Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre. This time of rest, healing, and renewal was made possible by [your generosity through Mission and Service](https://united-church.ca/donate/2025npr).

For many, it was the first opportunity to gather with others who truly understand the weight they carry. These ministers are often the only ones available to walk with their communities through addiction, suicide, and profound grief. The emotional and spiritual toll is immense.

“The number of youth funerals we do now is overwhelming,” says Rev. Grant Queskekapow, who was ordained in 1987. “When I started in the United Church, we buried a lot of elderly people. But now we bury a lot of youth who die as a result of suicide.”

At the retreat, ministers were offered trauma-informed support, rest, and spiritual care through sharing circles, art therapy, and cultural practices like beading. The space allowed them to grieve, to speak the unspeakable, and to begin to heal.

It was more than a retreat. It was a lifeline.

The impact was clear. Participants returned to their communities with renewed strength and a deep sense of support. Because of this, a second retreat is being planned for September 2025 to once again offer this crucial care.

And the need has only grown.

As wildfires sweep through northern Manitoba, nearly 17,500 people are being evacuated from First Nations communities facing dangerous conditions and blocked escape routes. Once again, our Northern Indigenous ministers are offering strength and leadership, even as they face these threats themselves.

Please hold them in your prayers.

[Your continued support](https://united-church.ca/donate/2025npr) through Mission and Service is essential. You are helping provide healing space for those who carry the grief of entire communities. You are ensuring they do not carry it alone.

Thank you.

## July 27: Healing with Compassion: Sue’s Story at Wesley

Sue, 61, has faced a lifetime of challenges, starting in her youth when her mother was involved with organized crime and jailed for fraud. Later, as a young mom, a car accident left Sue with chronic back pain. And last fall, a fire destroyed her Hamilton apartment, forcing her onto the streets. Despite these struggles, Sue has found stability at Mission and Service partner Wesley. In Wesley’s special care unit, Sue is working to overcome the drug addiction that she has lived with since she was 11. While the process has been difficult, she is slowly reducing her drug use with the help of prescribed medications and support from Wesley’s staff.

The care unit operates under a harm reduction model, allowing clients like Sue to manage their addictions in a supported environment. Wesley’s program is part of a broader effort in Hamilton to address homelessness and substance use. Recently, the program expanded its capacity, and now provides about 30 beds for individuals struggling with multiple substances. Clients are not expected to quit drugs immediately but are supported in stabilizing their lives, receiving medical care, and reconnecting with family. Wesley’s team includes doctors, nurses, and addiction specialists who help clients find their own path to recovery.

For Sue, this support has been transformative. Her room at Wesley provides a much-needed sanctuary, offering a reprieve from the constant stress of homelessness and addiction. She continues to focus on her recovery, working in the garden and taking steps toward quitting fentanyl altogether. Sue dreams of eventually finding her own home and reuniting with her beloved cat, Kitty Cat, who was rescued from the fire and is being cared for by a friend.

Your gifts through [Mission and Service](https://united-church.ca/donate) help support people like Sue on her ongoing journey to build a better future for herself and her children. Thank you for your continued support.

Sue’s story was recently featured in The Hamilton Spectator. [Read more about Sue’s story](https://wesley.ca/sues-story-healing-trauma/).

## August 3: Wonder and Worship in the Wilderness

United Church camps create space for children and youth to grow in faith, friendship, and love for the earth. Among whispering trees and winding trails, young hearts open to wonder, discovery, and connection.

At Cave Springs Camp in Beamsville, Ontario, that’s exactly what happens. Nestled along the beautiful Niagara Escarpment, campers leave behind the noise of everyday life to discover something deeper: a sense of belonging in nature and with each other.

Surrounded by birdsong, rustling leaves, and forest paths, the campgrounds come alive with joyful discovery. A camper excitedly shouts, “I found a salamander!” bringing others running in awe. Even something as simple as a uniquely shaped rock becomes a shared moment of intrigue and delight.

These moments matter. Whether singing around a campfire, engaging in outdoor activities, gathering for meals, or sharing quiet reflection during evening worship, children at Cave Springs form lasting bonds. They gain confidence, feel seen, and discover what it means to be part of a caring community, held by both people and creation.

This kind of connection can change lives. It encourages gratitude, deepens compassion, and nurtures a love for the earth that lasts long after camp ends.

Thanks to [your support](https://united-church.ca/donate) of Mission and Service, these life-giving experiences continue, not only at Cave Springs, but at all United Church camps. You are helping young people grow in spirit, courage, and care. Thank you.

## August 10: General Council 45

Every three years, something remarkable happens in the life of The United Church of Canada. People gather to listen, learn, worship, and make decisions that will shape the future of the church. It’s called General Council, and it’s more than a meeting. It’s a moment of deep connection.

At the culmination of the 45th General Council in 2025, young adults, elders, ministers, lay leaders, and global partners will come together, some in person and others online, to imagine what’s next for our church. They’ll share stories from small rural congregations and vibrant urban ministries. They’ll worship in many languages. They’ll discuss bold questions about justice, faith, and the future. And at the heart of it all is a shared commitment to living out God’s mission in the world.

Through [your gifts](https://united-church.ca/donate) to Mission and Service, General Council flourishes as more than a meeting. It becomes a gathering where young voices are amplified, where global partners are present, where accessibility matters, and where everyone has a seat at the table. Your support helps cover technology that connects distant regions, translation services that make space for everyone’s voice, and travel support for those who otherwise couldn’t attend.

When the church gathers in love, listens in faith, and decides with courage, something beautiful is born...a church ready to move forward, together.

Thank you for supporting the deep, connective work of Mission and Service. Thank you for helping the church gather, discern, and grow.

## August 17: Ladles of Love

At Spring Park United Church in Charlottetown, PEI, the annual Soup Luncheon in support of Mission and Service has grown into something truly special—a celebration of community, compassion, and connection.

More than just a meal, it’s a moment where people gather to enjoy hearty soup, delicious desserts, rich conversation, and the joy of being together. The Sunday service sets the tone with powerful Mission and Service stories and guest speakers who remind us why this work matters so deeply. Each message connects to the wider church, and to people whose lives are being changed thanks to your generous support.

The luncheon also connects generations. Youth and adults alike enjoy laughter and connection, filling the space with energy and purpose. Mission and Service volunteer Joyce MacLeod adds a thoughtful touch by placing Mission and Service bookmarks and pens on each table, quiet reminders of the impact our shared generosity can have.

With over 20 dedicated volunteers offering their time and efforts, the Soup Luncheon is more than a tradition. It’s a living expression of faith in action, showing how [support](https://united-church.ca/donate) of Mission and Service continues to nurture hope, build relationships, and change lives.

The response from the community? Overwhelmingly positive. Year after year, this event continues to strengthen the bonds at Spring Park United, offering a living example of how Mission and Service helps us grow in faith, friendship, and love. Thank you for being part of Mission and Service, making a difference locally, in Canada, and around the world.

*If your community of faith shines a light on Mission and Service,* [*we’d love to hear from you*](https://united-church.ca/community-and-faith/get-involved/mission-and-service/connect-mission-and-service)*!*

## August 24: Framed by Creation

Waterton United Church rests in the heart of Waterton Lakes National Park in Alberta, where wind brushes the tall grass and mountains rise like blessings above the lake. Surrounded by breathtaking natural beauty, the church is a place of welcome, wonder, and worship. A sanctuary within a sanctuary.

The United Church has had a presence in the park since 1955. The current building, dedicated in 1961, was thoughtfully designed to honour its setting. Architect George Watson positioned the sanctuary’s great cathedral window to frame Mount Vimy, inviting creation into every service.

“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,” says Carol Watt, Secretary. “It’s a special thing that happens. It touches something deep within.”

Your gifts through Mission and Service help keep the church open year-round for youth group sleep-overs, weddings, meetings, occasional workshops, and retreats. In the summer, guest ministers and musicians arrive weekly to lead worship from late June through September, filling the sanctuary with inspired voices and music that echoes across the valley. The church hosts youth retreats, weddings, and spiritual gatherings, and with a small room and kitchenette tucked behind the sanctuary, it also welcomes leaders seeking quiet and renewal.

“Providing space for reflection and retreat is an important aspect of the ministry we offer,” Watt shares.

A newsletter captures the heart of it: “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](https://united-church.ca/donate) ministries that honour and care for community and creation. In places like Waterton, where land and spirit meet, your gifts help make sacred encounters possible.

## August 31: Education Shaped by Compassion

In some parts of the world, children are preparing to return to school. They are sharpening pencils, packing backpacks, and stepping into another year of possibility. But in communities across the globe, education can look very different.

Our global partners understand that education is more than just access to classrooms or books. It’s a foundation for hope, dignity, and lasting change. Because they are rooted in their communities, Mission and Service partners can respond directly to local needs, creating educational opportunities that are culturally relevant, spiritually meaningful, and deeply empowering.

Picture a kindergarten class in a refugee camp where children are not only learning letters and numbers but reclaiming a sense of safety and possibility. Imagine a young adult encountering their faith in a new way, guided by mentors and peers who offer space for honest exploration and spiritual growth. Think of parents gathered in workshops tailored to their realities, where they share stories, strengthen leadership skills, and envision a future grounded in compassion and justice. Envision elders and youth learning together, reviving ancestral languages and knowledge long threatened by colonization and displacement.

These aren’t just moments of learning; they are acts of restoration, resilience, and renewal. And they are possible [because of you](https://united-church.ca/donate).

Your gifts to Mission and Service help sow seeds of wisdom, faith, and belonging in ways that last. With each lesson shared, each language reclaimed, and each community strengthened, we come closer to a world shaped by understanding and care.

Thank you for continuing to walk with our partners as they nurture learning that transforms lives, one student, one teacher, one story at a time.