



EXPLORING...

GATHERING AT 50 YEARS



“The most effective worship is that which is home grown, i.e., emerges naturally out of a congregation or small group.” —**John Ambrose**,
Special Assistant-Worship, 1974

“Gathering has a nice double meaning. In the first place, it suggests...a gathering of worship resources. But more important, it suggests the event the resources are intended to serve: the gathering of the faithful to worship.” —**Fred McNally**,
Special Assistant-Worship, 1983

WHAT IS GATHERING?

Gathering is a worship resource in two parts: the print magazine, *Gathering*, is published four times a year, and *GatheringWorship.ca*, the companion to the print resource, is updated year-round to include additional resources and bonus material for each issue. If you subscribe to *Gathering*, you automatically have access to both resources. *Gathering Worship* is used in United Churches and other denominations across Canada, as well as regularly in five other countries: the United States, Bermuda, Great Britain, New Zealand, and Australia. We have also had subscribers from Japan, Nicaragua, Guyana, the Philippines, Ireland, Jamaica, and Thailand.

The Gathering Advisory Board (GAB) is composed of six or seven volunteers from churches across Canada: a combination of ministers and musicians, and lay and clergy, along with the Editor, Music Editor, Program Coordinator for Worship, Music, and Spirituality, and Program Assistant. GAB suggests themes, consults on content and format, helps recruit writers, and discusses worship practice and theology in the United Church.

GATHERING VISION STATEMENT

In September 2007, the Gathering Advisory Board crafted the following vision statement:

Gathering is a periodical by and for worship planners and leaders. It is a gathering of gifts from the church for the church; gifts that come out of lived experience. Gathering is the pulse of United Church of Canada worship practice and theology. It is grassroots: a variety of voices, a connection with colleagues, a reflection of the changes and evolution in worship, and an opportunity for sharing wisdom and teaching about worship practice.

WHY WE GATHER

Gathering in community to receive God’s whisper of hope and possibility.

Gathering at font to feel the outpouring of God’s compassion and kindness.

Gathering at table to taste God’s assurance and challenge.

Gathering in prayer as the work we are called to do for God’s world.

Gathering in song to experience the transcendent rhythm of the Holy.

Gathering in community to discover the image of God reflected in each other.

Gathering with others to share pain and joy, disappointments and dreams.

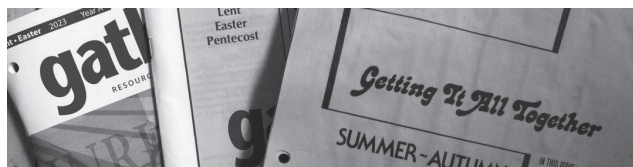
Gathering to be changed in the encounter with each other and with God’s word.

Gathering to be encouraged for seeking justice and living hope day by day.

Gathering the gifts of God for the people of God and beyond.

Gathering is our radical act in a scattered world.

Susan Lukey, *Editor of Gathering*



GATHERING: HOW IT ALL BEGAN

The phone call came in the late fall of 1972. It was from a senior member of staff at the United Church General Council Office. Would I meet with two staff members of what was then the Division of Mission in Canada? Their “mission” was to ask if I would consider taking on a newly created staff position as Consultant in Worship for the United Church. Flattery and anxiety comingled in me as they made their presentation: flattery to be asked and anxiety in saying farewell to a wonderful congregation after only three years of ministry with them. No actual job description was available: only a few sentences about nurturing the worship practices of the church in those changing times. That “limited guide” to filling a new position in the church’s national staff turned out to be a blessing. It allowed me much latitude in developing the work that I felt needed to be done.

Most of the fall of 1973 was spent visiting various regions of the church to see—and be seen—and to offer some introductory worship workshops. Time and again, in the workshop evaluations, concern was expressed about the lack of fresh resources for worship: prayers, music, drama, sermon ideas, special seasonal resources, etc. In the late fall and winter of 1973/74, I rummaged through my own files to see what “fresh” offerings I might have to share with the church. I also went through the files of the former Celebration Centre, which had operated for several years out of St. Andrew’s United Church, Toronto. The centre had been blessed with the creative leadership of the Rev. Ron Atkinson for nearly five years. When it closed, its files were lodged at the General Council Office, providing the church with a rich array of worship resources.

From these two sources, materials were brought together to form the first edition—Lent-Easter 1974—of a new worship resource: *Getting It All Together* (GIAT). For the next year, with the help of my wife, Catherine, materials were sorted

and assembled on the dining room table of the Ambrose home. (Even my adult children remember papers scattered all over the table for several days, with each of the early editions, and therefore having to eat at a card table.) The collection was then refined by the Consultant in Worship (me), typed out by the consultant’s secretary, sent to the publishing staff to give the resource a more professional look, and then mailed to all pastoral charges across the country.

Along with the quarterly mailings went a request to ministers and lay people to share resources from their own files for upcoming editions. At first, the response was light, but it began to grow exponentially as people became comfortable sharing their home grown efforts. It was under the leadership of my successor as Consultant in Worship, the Rev. Dr. Fred McNally, that the brilliant decision was made to replace the long title of the resource to one word: *Gathering*. And the resource continues 50 years later. Amazing!

John Ambrose served as Special Consultant in Worship, 1972–1979.

MEET THE TEAM **gathering**

We, the Gathering Worship editorial team, would like to introduce ourselves to the whole Gathering Worship community! Get to know a bit about who’s behind the names that appear frequently on your page and screen—the people who put it all together.

Meet the Editor: The Rev. Susan Lukey

To my amazement, I have been editing Gathering magazine now for 20 years and Gathering Worship online for two. Let me introduce myself.

I grew up on a mixed farm with cattle, grain, chickens, and a huge garden, just outside of Acme, Alta., a town of approximately 400 people. I completed my public schooling there, and then went on to do a Bachelor of Education at the University of Alberta. I taught school for five years back in my hometown of Acme, working with Grades 2, 3, and 4, as well as teaching music for all the elementary students. I loved teaching public school, but the Spirit kept nudging me

toward ordained ministry. I completed my Master of Divinity in 1989 through the Vancouver School of Theology (VST), and my internships for ministry were in Ladner, B.C., Queenswood, Ont., and Kingston, Jamaica. I also hold a Master of Theology from VST (1995). My thesis focused on the children's hymns in the 1930 *Hymnary of the United Church of Canada*. My husband, the Rev. David Robertson, and I have served our whole married life in team ministry, first in a four-point rural charge centred in Brooks, Alta., and for the last 28 years at High River U.C., High River, Alta.

I began as Editor of Gathering in March of 2003. At that time, David and I were working three-quarter time each, as well as managing the wonders and challenges of being parents to our two young children, ages three and five. Now, 20 years later, those two little ones are amazing young adults, pursuing music and political science, and David and I are still in team ministry at High River U.C., both working full time.



I continue to love learning and growing through my work on the Gathering Worship Resource. One of the things I so appreciated while I was teaching school was the staff room. I could walk into the group of teachers gathered there and put out a query such as, "Anyone have a good idea for teaching fractions?" or "How do I deal with a parent who doesn't like the fact that I have the students' desks in a semicircle?" and there was always someone with ideas and resources to share.

When I began ministry, I missed the staff room: the collaboration and the wealth of ideas that came from colleagues who had more experience and approaches I hadn't thought of. Then I realized that Gathering is my staff room. I can open the pages (and now, search the website) and find a new idea that sparks possibilities for my worship planning or choose a prayer for a service that brings a perspective beyond my own to the congregation.

I am a worship planner, like you. I create the worship service for our congregation each week and share the preaching with my husband. I know the challenges of putting worship together while also being called upon to preside at a funeral (or two) in the midst of a week with several meetings

and hospital visits. I know the weeks when words just won't come together for prayers or for a sermon because my spirit is dry.

Even after 20 years as Editor, it is always a thrill to open up the submissions that are sent in by subscribers like you. There is always a fresh idea, a creative way of sharing the ancient story, or a phrasing in a prayer that captures my spirit. And I get to share those with the Gathering community!

When I am selecting prayers and other worship resources for Gathering, I think of worship leaders from coast to coast. I ask myself, "How will this prayer work in Newfoundland and in the B.C. interior?" "How might I tweak this idea so it will make sense in Saskatchewan as well as Quebec and Northern Ontario?" "Will it work for the worship leaders in New Zealand, Bermuda, the United States, and other places where Gathering subscribers live and lead worship?"

I am privileged to be entrusted with the worship materials that worship leaders like you submit. Gathering has been, and always will be, a collection of worship resources by worship leaders who have developed these materials for use in their own congregation. Gathering only works because people share what they are creating. If you've never submitted something to Gathering, please do so! Don't hesitate! Please share!

I have the tender task of editing your submissions. The Gathering team edits all submissions to make sure they work in the many different contexts and congregations in which they are used. While a certain phrasing may work when you share it in your context, we might need to change it just a bit so that it works across the country and, indeed, around the world. We edit according to The United Church of Canada Style Guide and the specific guidelines that the Gathering editorial team and the Gathering Advisory Board have set out, so that worship materials come to life for the broadest scope of worshipping people. Of course, you are always welcome to adapt these materials for your own context.

The editing of Gathering has become a spiritual practice for me. On days when my spirit is tired and my vocation of ministry is stretched thin, I love settling down at my computer and

working with the worship materials that will go into Gathering. I feel all of you around me as I choose prayers, edit dramas, and draw together resources that I pray you will find inspiring and encouraging. As I spend time with each prayer and consider what tweaks in phrasing might be needed, I am blessed and energized by God's Spirit connecting me to all of you.

Besides congregational ministry and curating Gathering, I also love drinking tea, reading, knitting, sewing clothes, quilting, walking, and volunteering with Scouts Canada. I'm also passionate about parenting, family, and children's spirituality, which all came together in my book *Adventures in Faith and Family* (2021, UCPH).

I look forward to the worship ideas and resources you send my way as we continue the spiritual work of enlivening the worship life of our congregations as worship leaders from across Canada and throughout the world. Thank you, and God bless you in your ministry!

Meet the Music Editor: Tammy-Jo Mortensen

I have had the pleasure of working in many different denominations in Canada, yet the majority of my career has been spent in various positions within The United Church of Canada. While I was baptized Lutheran, my family wasn't really the churchgoing type, so for me, it all started with my first "position" as an assistant organist in my undergrad. The music director said to me, "Go get a bulletin from the narthex," and I said, "A what? From where?" I certainly had a LOT to learn! After my first Sunday, I thought, *Seriously, you do this every week?* and I was hooked! From that moment, I knew this would become a career and truly a vocation. And here I am, almost 35 years later, still hooked!



Throughout my career, it has been important to me to seek out education and experiences that take my musical and leadership skills to a higher level, and I have found those

opportunities in my many church positions. Continually learning and then creating opportunities for others to worship through music, arts, and the word is still a passion.

I also have a Bachelor of Music in Organ from the University of Alberta, a Master of Music in Organ from McGill University, and a Master of Music in Choral Conducting, also from the U of A. My musical work has allowed me to perform and conduct in places throughout North America as well as in Europe and Asia.

I enjoy the tasks I do as Music Editor of Gathering, and I can't believe I've been able to work on this project for over 10 years! I especially love the connections I make with other church musicians across the country. The people who work together on Gathering are amazing, wise, and thoughtful, and I am so thankful for them. I always look forward to receiving submissions from all of you, compiling material, meeting with the team, editing, and proofreading. That's a lot of work for a small number of paid hours, so please be patient if I don't respond to you right away!

All the time and effort that went into getting GatheringWorship.ca off the ground was immense, and we hope that, as you use it, you will discover the power of the search engine, which can find just the right thing in the vast quantity of material already there—and more is being added every day.

Yet compiling and editing music for Gathering is just a small part of my larger musical life. In addition, I teach private music lessons, I'm the harpsichordist for the Alberta Baroque Ensemble, and I conduct a community handbell ensemble. I have also worked with many groups as an arts administrator, and I'm currently the Operations Manager of the Korora (formerly Kokopelli) Choir Association in Edmonton.

I love using what others call my "eagle eyes" for editing and proofreading church bulletins or Gathering, but you also can find me researching and producing my weekly radio show *Maple Infused Classic Breakfast* on bigradio.com or falling asleep reading the same three paragraphs night after night of whatever book I am trying to tackle at the time! Of course, I make sure to enjoy spending time with friends and family, playing board games, planning date nights with my husband, and being creative in the kitchen with my son, who is apprenticing to be a chef!

Meet the Worship, Music, and Spirituality Program Coordinator: Dr. Alydia Smith

What brought me to leadership? My first jobs were with the City of Scarborough, working as a youth programmer, where I did everything from birthday parties and summer camps to leadership training and after-school programs. I loved creating spaces where children and youth could thrive and shine. When we shine, I think it is a glimpse of the Divine within each of us.



That was when I knew I was called to pursue a vocation that helped people connect with the Divine within themselves. Although this divinity within is not limited to Christianity, I chose Christian ministry because it is the path to the Divine that I most connect with. I was clear on my call by age 17, but I was uncertain about how to pursue it. The only ministry paths that I thought were open to me as a woman were to be a nun or a preacher's wife. (I was raised in a tradition that did not ordain women.) It wasn't until I stumbled upon a United Church that I learned other paths were possible. I could also be a minister!

When I finally joined and became active in the United Church, I wrongly assumed that there was an age requirement to be a minister. I was fine with this as I didn't feel like I was a good enough Christian to be a minister, yet. I did not know then that the struggle to be a better Christian is continuous; I would never "feel" ready to be a minister. So, while I gained life experience, I found other ways to live out my vocation of helping others shine: I worked as a Learning Strategist and Disabilities Counsellor to university students.

One May, after a regional church event, a minister asked me to apply for a position that she was leaving at a local church. I did not feel ready to be in congregational ministry, but she encouraged me to try, so I did. I fell in love with congregational ministry and was amazed every week by the miracle of corporate worship. One Pentecost, I remember being overwhelmed by the beauty of the people gathered. A young woman in my Sunday school class who had

forced her parents to come was beaming with pride while leading worship with a father and daughter duo who were sharing a musical offering accompanied by the caretaker on drums and a person I had invited on bass who hadn't been in the church for many years. We had no other reason to be together in such an honest way, but like the disciples, another motley crew, we worked together with what we had to praise God. It was stunning and I felt honoured to be a part of it. Ever since, I have worked on honing the craft of curating and creating worship that glorifies God and helps people shine the Divine within themselves and glorifies and reflects God through worship.

I am grateful that my call at 17 has led me to supporting and resourcing the worshipping life of the United Church. From editing the Gathering Worship resource to sharing bedtime blessings around the campfire, it all leads me closer to the Divine.

Meet the Copy Editor and Production Coordinator: Catherine Dorton

Hello, I'm Catherine, and I've been working with the Gathering team since 2016. Though I came to my role with plenty of skills—over 25 years of experience as an editor—and had even worked on a few projects for the United Church Publishing House, I had a lot to learn! All cultures have their own language, and the United Church is no different. But I was delighted to find that instead of ferreting out organizational jargon, which is often a big part of the copy editor's job, I was learning the language nuances of a culture that strived to be clear, inclusive, anti-oppressive, and respectful of the writer's voice. I feel so fortunate for that, and for the years I've spent being part of such a supportive, collaborative, and hard-working team.

The United Church is one of my two non-book clients. The other is the Toronto District School Board. But most of the time, I work as an editor and proofreader for book publishers, on a mix of adult and children's fiction and non-fiction. At Christmas, I will often pinch-hit a few shifts at my local bookstore (Book City!), where I've been working on and off for years. And my favourite hobby, of course, is reading! I also love walking, and I plan my routes to pass by as many little free libraries as I can. I have an embarrassing

number of teetering piles of unread books in my living room.

One of my favourite themes from Gathering over the years was Wild Church because being outdoors and active is where I feel most spiritually connected and closest to Creation: walking in the woods, paddling on a lake, or, if I'm lucky enough to travel away from my home in Toronto, hiking up a mountain.

When I was a kid, some people at our (not United) church told my mother not to let me dance in the aisles because I was too distracting! Reading the perspectives of Gathering contributors has put that family story, and many other things, in perspective. It has broadened my world view. And now, and after a decades-long hiatus, I've taken up dancing again—ballet, contemporary, Nia, jazz, I'll try almost anything (but probably not in a church!).

I hope you, the Gathering community, are enjoying getting to know the Gathering team, because so many of you so generously share yourselves with us. Thank you.

Meet the Graphics and Layout Designer: Ian Ball

After graduating in 1995 from Durham College's Graphic Arts Program, I designed publications such as *The Anglican*, the newspaper for the Anglican Diocese of Toronto, and *Inside Soccer Magazine*. I also created *The Presbyterian History of Uxbridge*, a history book for St. Andrew's-Chalmers Presbyterian Church. Growing up Presbyterian, I was familiar with the similar worship liturgy of the United Church; Trinity U.C. in Uxbridge and St. Andrew's-Chalmers shared summer worship services for a number of years.

I began working for The United Church of Canada as a Graphic Designer in 2003. I have worked on many projects and gradually I was assigned to Gathering. Now I work from home and with the launch of GatheringWorship.ca, Gathering has become my main focus. I have a watercolour gallery in the front of my house and I am on the Victoria County Studio Tour. This photo is of me participating in the staff Christmas Craft Show and Sale at the UCC Office—2017.



Gathering has always been a great project. As we work ten months in advance,

I find it amusing to be designing the winter issue in the heat of the summer and creating for summer in the coldest days of winter.

I am really grateful to be a part of the Gathering community, knowing that God's message is being delivered and used around the world.

Thank you to all the others who are (or have been) essential to the creation of Gathering

- Ministries in French for translating English prayers. Denis Fortin has lovingly and beautifully provided translation for many years, currently supported by Etienne Marcoux
- Margaret Crammond, our faithful and excellent proofreader
- Maria Elena Oliva and Sartu Mohamed, Program Assistants, who have offered awesome program support through the years!
- Joyce Cosby for our beautiful cover designs
- Carina Cruz for help with layout and design
- Joy Pestano and Kim Allin for managing our subscriptions and inquiries
- David Sparks, Bob Root, and Geoffrey Wilfong-Pritchard who have served as chairs of the Gathering Advisory Board and helped keep the dream of a Gathering website alive
- The Gathering Advisory Board and all who have served on it! We didn't want to miss anyone by naming names. We are grateful for your devotion, time, energy, and commitment to supporting worship across our denomination and beyond.

Thank you also to

- all who use Gathering to plan and inspire your weekly worship
- all of our contributors who generously share your materials
- all who have previously served as Editors and Music Editors of Gathering
- all who have served the Worship Desk (in its various forms)
- all who have worked on various aspects of graphics, design, and production, caring for Gathering on its way to publication

- The Canada Council of the Arts, which provides a grant in support of the print publication
- The United Church of Canada for continuing to support the production of this resource (both in print and online) for worship leaders across the country and the world

Together we make Gathering a gift from
God's people for God's people.

Thank you!

FROM THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN PART OF THE GATHERING STORY

Gathering 50 Years: Let's Celebrate!

50 years of Gathering!

50 vibrant years for Gathering, a worship resource that stays up to date.

Check out GatheringWorship.ca.

50 years of Gathering!

50 formative years when we discovered that what works in the local faith community can enrich liturgy nationally, even globally.

50 years of Gathering!

50 encouraging years for those who didn't think their liturgy was good enough and found out that it was good enough to print in an international worship resource.

50 years of Gathering!

50 years of applause for outstanding editors and worship enthusiasts in the General Council Office.

50 ans de Gathering!

50 ans de Gathering qui offre la liturgie en français.

50 years of Gathering!

50 years of guidance from the Gathering Advisory Board, reflecting, guiding, supporting.

50 years of Gathering!

50 years of contributors discovering that they have a prayer voice of their very own and that others listen carefully to that voice.

50 years of Gathering!

50 years of searching a lectionary-based resource that enables us to find themes to resonate with every season of the church year.

50 years of Gathering...

(Add your own reason for thanksgiving; your faith community's reason for thanksgiving)

50 years of Gathering and we rejoice!

In another 50 years?

Gathering will still be inspiring, challenging, and enabling worship leaders to grow.

Thanks be to God!

So...let's gather! Let's party! Let's celebrate!

*David Sparks, Past Chair of the
Gathering Advisory Board*



Gathering Is Vital

A while ago, I was talking with a friend whose United Church experience ended in the late 1960s. When I told them what I was doing with both Gathering and the Then Let Us Sing! group, they responded by saying, "I didn't realize anyone was still writing hymns." Based on that small sample of one, I wonder how common an assumption this is. For many of us growing up the United Church in the 1960s, "new hymn" was oxymoronic. Yet certainly in the time that I've been in ministry and in the time that I've chaired the Gathering Advisory Board, we've witnessed an explosion not only of hymn writing, but liturgical writing as well. Gathering has been there to curate and distribute the variety of materials that are created and used within the United Church and beyond.

I've been on the Gathering Advisory Board for 10 years and Chair for the last six years. In that time, I've come to appreciate over and over just how vital Gathering is as one of the public faces of the United Church. If someone were to ask me these days, "What does the United Church believe?" I'd point them to our faith statements, but I'd also point them to Gathering. Gathering is where what we believe is embodied. It's our word made flesh. As I look back over the issues from my time on the board, I discover the things that truly matter to congregations of our church and how those concerns are lifted up sometimes in lament, sometimes in praise, and always in thoughtful reflection on our community's scripture.

It has always been a pleasure and a challenge to be part of the discussions we've had, whether they be on liturgical language or the way to mark special events and days of the church in worshipful ways. As a sometimes contributor to Gathering, I've been humbled to see the care with which my offerings have been voiced by others, and I'm sure every contributor feels the same way.

As we approach the 100th anniversary of The United Church of Canada, it's awe-inspiring to look back at our worship life to see where we've been and, most importantly, to notice how our worship has continued to be in conversation with the movements and concerns of our larger society. Gathering, in its different incarnations, has been such an important part of those conversations. It continues to be an honour and privilege to be part of the creativity that is Gathering.

Geoff Wilfong-Pritchard, *Current*
Chair of the Gathering Advisory Board



Gathering for 50 Years, and Beyond

In the beginning was worship. Before prayer books and hymn books, before church buildings and denominations, there was worship. Or, to be more precise, there was gathering (*ekklēsia* in Greek). In this sense, worship has always been contemporary. As long as people have gathered to encounter the One who is Holy Mystery, worship has been contemporary, here and now, yet paradoxically ancient and emerging. So when, in the early seventies, John Ambrose, Special Assistant–Worship, put out an invitation to worship leaders to share their prayers and liturgies, services and sermons, the result was a stroke of genius—or let's say inspiration. When John and Catherine assembled packets of coloured pages at their kitchen table to send out to congregations, how could it not be a bestseller? It was both a nationwide mirror of the United Church gathered for contemporary worship, then and there, and a prescient looking glass into the future of what worship was becoming. It wove a web of worship before there was a web and cast a net before there was a net. It was getting it all together before we talked of crowdsourcing, before we could even imagine Google or online worship. Let the people say, "Thanks be to God" for 50 years of *Getting it All Together* and Gathering!

Speaking more personally, Gathering has been an immeasurable blessing to me. Editors like Sylvia Dunstan, Thomas Harding, Nancy Hardy, and Susan Lukey taught me that not only does every writer need a good editor, every liturgical resource needs skilled and gifted curators. The first place I ever had anything published was in Gathering—a eucharistic prayer that later became Prayer C in *Celebrate God's Presence*. In my academic life, it was 10 years of writing a little column for Gathering, "Worship Words," that both formed the basis of my book, *Gathered for Worship*, and transformed my scholarship. It was the discipline of that kind of writing that convinced me of the need to express and embody liturgical theology in pastorally grounded practices of worship. But, of course, that is what Gathering has always sought to do. When feminist theology and inclusive language began to transform the language of worship in the eighties, it was Gathering that helped model it for me when I was starting out in pastoral ministry. Over the years, I have looked to Gathering to help support the liturgical implications of a succession of theological interventions and liturgical transformations, including the Liturgical Movement, liberation theologies, post-colonial criticism, decolonial practices, Creation Spirituality, Indigenous wisdom, Two-Spirit and LGBTQ+ awareness, and anti-racism work. Like the necessity of gathering, the work of worship is never done. Thus, the work of Gathering is never done—and that's the way it should be, always animated by the grace of God and guided by the strong and tender leading of the Holy Spirit. *Soli Deo gloria!*

William S. Kervin wrote the "Worship Words" column for *Gathering* from 2001 to 2011. These columns were collected into *Gathered for Worship* (UCRD, 2010).

Foundations to Ministry

I'm ancient. When Susan Lukey invited me to share some reflections about Gathering on its 50th birthday, I realized that *Getting It All Together* was one of the first United Church publications to which I subscribed when I was ordained in 1974. Ancient. *Getting It All Together* and Gathering have been foundations in my ministry all through the years, something I could count on to stimulate my thinking, challenge my theology, help me

frame and shape liturgy, and offer me insight and teaching.

One of the things I love about Gathering is the way in which it brings our whole church together, across time zones and geographical distances. Names and communities of faith appear under each submission so that readers are reminded that The United Church of Canada is bigger than any one congregation, and each of us is part of the whole. Like many of you, I suspect, I have my favourite writers—names I look for as I peruse Gathering when it first arrives. Many of these are people I have never met, and yet I feel as if we are friends. I have a sense of their theology and the way they approach the wonder-full and daunting task of preparing and leading worship week by week.

John Ambrose has long been a hero of mine. His faithfulness to The United Church of Canada and his gentle, insightful approach helped birth this great and sustaining contribution that has enriched our lives together for half a century now.

Over the course of the last 50 years, our church has continued to explore and live into its call to be God's people in all the places life calls us to be. We have tackled many important issues: human sexuality, the meaning of ordered ministry, our place in society, Affirming ministry, equal marriage, poverty, family, the place of children in the church, and so much more. Through it all, GIAT and Gathering have supported and undergirded our worship, reminding us of our call to love and serve.

It was one of the joys of my ministry to serve on the Gathering Advisory Board. A small group of sincere, dedicated folk who care about the worship life of our denomination meet regularly to attend thoughtfully to this work, always with the intention of strengthening the Body of Christ.

David Sparks chaired the Gathering Advisory Board before I did, with grace and quiet conviction. It was a privilege for me to offer what I could when he retired from that position. I was on the Gathering Advisory Board for about 10 years. What a privilege to work with Susan Lukey, whose commitment to this work is spectacular, encouraging, and inviting. She is devoted to making sense of what I'm sure is challenging material. If you want to know what theology The United Church embraces, you'll find it all in the pages of Gathering.

As well, Tammy-Jo Mortensen brings wide experience and expertise to the music ministry of the church and does so with wisdom and joy. Working with a number of folks at Church House and noting their dedication to this publication is heartening. What may just magically appear in your mail (after subscribing and sending money!) is the work of a community. From my experience, it is a work of love. In my time on the Gathering Advisory Board, Betty-Lynn Schwab and Alydia Smith have been at the Worship Desk—again, bringing rich gifts with a wide perspective, not only of our own church, but of the church around the world. We have been blessed.

When I retired as Chair of GAB, I was gifted with a wonderful piece of art, which hangs in my dining room. It says:

*Ice cream, bare feet, children,
long hair, short hair, no hair
cats, dogs, and small dragons
are welcome here anytime!*
—Author Unknown

The gift represents Gathering for me—a place for everyone, including dragons, a community gathered for a common purpose: to celebrate love.

Long may Gathering continue, long may it continue to bless all those who contribute to it, those who read it, and those whose lives are touched by it whether they have heard of Gathering or not. I believe our church is richer, wider, deeper, more faithful because of Gathering. I am grateful.

Bob Root, Past Chair of the Gathering Advisory Board

Inherited Spirit

The late the Rev. Sylvia Dunstan was an early editor of Gathering whose worship leadership at Conference events I very much appreciated. In the eighties, we became acquainted through a mutual friend, the Rev. Dr. Paul Fayter (a regular contributor to Gathering for many years), and my respect for Sylvia grew.

When Sylvia was dying in 1993, I prayed an Elisha-like request: that I might inherit a share of her spirit. About a year and a half later, and soon after being ordained, I found myself in the role of Editor of Gathering.

I enjoyed getting to know and working with Fred Graham of the Worship Desk and admired the skills of copy editor Kathryn Lingwood—a special talent. The administrative assistant for worship helped keep things organized. Going into the United Church national office to pick up the submissions (in those days when being able to send electronic files was only just on the cusp of being possible, especially in rural areas like my own) helped me to feel more connected to the wider church.

Receiving worship material from people across Canada, and occasionally from other countries, felt like my own meditation time. It was a privilege to read the submissions and consider what might be most helpful to other worship leaders for the seasons of the church year.

My teenaged son, Dave, did the typing for my years of Gathering work; he was quicker than I. It must have been part of his Christian formation, too; we now sit together in worship most Sundays in Delisle, Saskatchewan.

One trend I noted in my time as editor was that an increasing number of prayers had no form of address at the start. They simply launched into the body of the prayer. It was sometimes unclear if they were intended to speak to God or if they were a bidding prayer, encouraging the congregation to talk with the Holy One about something. The special services for days in Holy Week and other occasions, especially the ones with multiple speakers, received good feedback from subscribers and I used many of them in my own pastorate, too. The small scripture summaries, preaching ideas, and hymn suggestions submitted by invited contributors I hope were as helpful to the subscribers as they were to me in planning upcoming worship in my own locale.

Editing Gathering opened some other doors for me. I became the United Church representative to the Canadian Council of Churches Week of Prayer for Christian Unity production group. It was a role I enjoyed for about 10 years with a very cooperative group of diverse Christians from about 10 denominations, at the time.

I celebrate that Gathering has continued to be compiled and available to worship leaders for all these decades, and I thank Susan Lukey for her many years as Editor.

Marilyn Leuty, Editor 1995–2001

Those Coloured, Carefully Stapled Pages

I began working in the United Church in the late sixties as a diaconal minister. As Director of Christian Education in a large multi-staff church, I was seldom asked to do any worship leadership (although I did play the organ for the evening services). But I loved my subscription to Gathering, and when it came, I would look at those coloured pages carefully stapled together and smile. Many years later, I still had them on my shelf, and I used over and over again John Ambrose's liturgy for the Easter Saturday vigil, among other things.

After working at the national office as Mission Study Editor for a number of years, I returned to Emmanuel College, was ordained, and found myself in the pastorate. I still subscribed to Gathering, now white paged, with glossy paper and an eye-catching cover. And this time, I used it as a worship leader. What a gift, with its careful adherence to the lectionary, the resources for special occasions, and most of all, the scope of the people who sent material, coast to coast, urban and rural, young and not so, experienced in all the variety our church represents.

So, when the opportunity came to be Editor of Gathering for a few years, I was excited and challenged. I loved getting the material that was sent to Fred Graham's Worship Desk and then forwarded to me. I came to know some of the writers. Some sent in material often, and I would recognize their names and places, even when they moved. Those were not online days, and I still remember cutting up the material and assembling it on my dining room table before typing up the copy and sending it to the production people. And of course, since I was now a worship leader, the resources came in very handy!

My life has moved on, but my interest and involvement in public worship has not, as I have continued to offer leadership and use all the resources our church (and beyond) has to offer. I will always be grateful for the privilege those three years of editing Gathering gave me.

You see, I have always thought that public worship is the core of who we are as church. In our singing and praying, in our attention to the Word, we can come close to our creator God in both praise and lament, form a community of caring for one another and the world, and work together to

live in peace and justice. As worship leaders, our task is to be one with the worshipping community, and at the same time, help our congregations to respond to God's Word in prayer and song that is both spiritual and tuned to our times.

To do this, we need resources that are both poetic and timely, tuned to scripture and events of the day. And what better gift for us than the publication of *Gathering*.

Nancy E. Hardy, *Editor 2001–2003*



Passion, Dedication, and Commitment

During my 35 years as a member of the Communications staff team at the General Council Office of The United Church of Canada, I have been privileged to work on the many resources and publications that are produced to support and nourish the life of the United Church. *Gathering* magazine has always been one of my favourite resources to be involved with.

I have been a witness to the passion, dedication, and the commitment of the *Gathering* Advisory Board members and all those who contribute content to the magazine. I feel so fortunate to be part of the production team of this valuable magazine. The evolution of *Gathering* magazine from its early days to what it is today has been wonderful to see. New cover illustrations, advertising space for information sharing, and now the new *GatheringWorship.ca*—truly an incredible journey.

Special kudos go to Carina Cruz and Ian Ball for their design skills in the layout of the magazine.

Looking forward to the next 50 years!

Christopher Dumas, *Publisher-Creative Director, The United Church of Canada/L'Église Unie du Canada*

Living into Liturgy

In those early years of the *Gathering* story (preceded by *Getting It All Together*), *Gathering* was such an unprecedented gift to those of us in ministry. I can still remember my excitement when, in the library of a retiring minister, I found pages from *Getting It All Together* gathered in a tattered three-ring binder. The idea that people in the United Church were generating these worship resources and sharing them was wonderful! In those days, most of the materials available to those of us in congregations were either dated (the 1972 *Service Book* anyone?),

came from the United States, assumed access to far more reference resources than one had in a small, rural community, or came between covers that required you to buy the whole book for the one or two things you really wanted. There were a few exceptions, mostly published on shoestring budgets. So, one waited eagerly for those *Gathering* envelopes to arrive! Throughout those years, *Gathering* filled a critical gap in so many ways. Besides providing an opportunity for grassroots worship leaders to share materials, including new lyrics and music, along with special services and liturgical resources geared towards the seasons and the (then) *New Common Lectionary*, it provided a forum where worship-related ideas could be floated within a community of practitioners.

Over the decades, particularly as the national resources (both human and financial) dedicated to sponsoring and fostering worship declined, *Gathering* took on more and more of a flagship role in the United Church's constantly evolving living-into-liturgy. It provided a launch pad for many of those whom we regard as trusted worship crafters today. Their first efforts were received, affirmed, and given tangible expression in *Gathering's* pages. The United Church owes an enormous debt of gratitude to folks like John Ambrose, who had a vision of a shared, homegrown, worship resource, and particularly to Susan Lukey for shepherding this project for 20 years as it has matured and found its voice. Thanks also to the various section editors and other folks who have shaped and crafted different materials into coherent presentations for each issue. Imagine trying to develop a publishing schedule for a resource that is, almost entirely, dependent on the contributions of unpaid writers who are doing the work in the context of already demanding roles and lives! Truly a journey of faith and trust, and one that, by grace, tapped into the deep commitment of many to craft liturgies and ponder the elements of worship, to give expression to the Divine in local communities of faith. The popularity of *Gathering* across the English-speaking world is a testament to the ongoing shared quest for those words of hope, healing, and liberation for all God's people. Congratulations on 50 years!

Ross Bartlett wrote "*Preaching Pointers*" columns from 2004 to 2022. These were collected in *Gathered for Preaching* (UCRD, 2021).

The Voice of the Church

The resources in Gathering have inspired, nurtured, and supplemented my study of scripture and the preparation of Sunday worship for over 25 years. I always appreciate reading and listening (in spirit) to the prayers that are offered to the whole community in each issue. As I read them, I find myself being included in the community of pray-ers. Thank you, each one of you, for this gift.

We mentor each other when we submit our stories, opinions, and prayers. Each issue of Gathering is a bit like being at a national gathering with some familiar faces, some people here for the first time, some regulars. This is a grassroots venture, so there are no experts, only people who have journeyed a path and are excited to show a way that we can journey together. Discovering work from people I have known over the years, from parish ministry, conferences, retreats, and seminary, is like having a wee visit and sharing the good news.

When I was not in congregational ministry, and not leading worship, I was surprised by how much I valued Gathering magazine. I did not need the resources for planning, but I followed the “Sunday by Sunday” weekly lectionary because it added structure to my daily devotional practice. I listened for the voice of the church and the calls of her people. It was a luxury to read the columns with some space for dreaming. I did not feel like “I should” do this or that. I just enjoyed the wisdom, prayers, and hopes being shared.

When Susan Lukey (Editor of Gathering) queried if I might be interested in writing a column, “for the preacher’s soul,” I felt like my prayers had been answered. I have long felt a call to the care of souls, particularly for clergy and workers in the church. Combining this with writing poetry was an invitation to draw from my own soul, with the freedom to reflect and hopefully inspire others from the depths and across the breadth of our ministries and experiences in worship.

Ministry can be a lonely experience. We share from our hearts in the pulpit, but to maintain healthy boundaries, we don’t socialize with or confide in our parishioners. We hold people’s hard stories and confidences, without sharing them with anyone but God. We can get very tired and weighed down. On the other hand,

it is tempting in ministry to get caught up in administrative and technological demands. These vital tasks take up lots of time but can be wearing on our souls. Writers for Gathering push through these experiences to remind us that “we are not alone.” We are part of a movement that echoes the prayers of our beloved Teacher, who inspired us to put our words into action as a community. We need each other. May our words reflect “the Word,” and may our gatherings inspire the world.

Wendy MacLean has written the “*Inspiratio*” column since 2011.



Many Hands! Many Hearts!

As a freshly minted doctoral graduate in the field of liturgical theology, I was excited to be named to the position of Officer for Worship and Music in the United Church in the summer of 1988. My predecessor, the Rev. Dr. Fred McNally, was quick to point out that tending to Gathering would be a pivotal assignment, and that support would be available from the poet and priest the Rev. Sylvia Dunstan. She and I met almost weekly for three years (email was not part of life at that point!) and selected the prayers and articles for each succeeding issue. Sylvia’s profound gifts for prayer cadence, United Church theology, and congregational life laid the basis for an exciting and rewarding time.

Beyond the processes around Gathering was a vast network of related organizations and projects that naturally fed the contents page. At the top of the list was the standing committee on worship, with an engaged partner from each conference from Cape Breton to Vancouver. The advice and suggestions of these dedicated liturgy watchers proved invaluable regarding themes, topics, and contributors. The United Church also participated in the efforts of the National Council of Churches (USA) Committee on Worship and the Arts, where additional ideas surfaced for the journal. Perhaps more importantly, I assumed the work-in-progress of McNally related to the Consultation on Common Texts, where the revision of the *Common Lectionary* was well underway. Throughout the denomination were practitioners who critiqued that lectionary week by week and submitted their observations. All the remarks were summarized and inserted into consultations in Manhattan, until the *Revised Common Lectionary* emerged in

1992. Our United Church played a valued and important role in shaping the final document, and Gathering was a part of that initiative.

Pertaining to our own denominational agenda, one cannot overlook the naming of a committee of 24 people to oversee the development of a new hymnal, soon to be called *Voices United*, and its outstanding editor, the Rev. Dr. John Ambrose. It had been determined early on that the collection would include brief prayers and other orders of worship, and behold! materials were already on hand as found in past issues of Gathering, as well as in *Worship for All Seasons*, a separate compendium of homemade Canadian prayers and liturgies.

With the publication of *Voices United* in 1996, and its expansive range of canticles, psalms, and hymns, even more relevant information to assist worship planners and leaders was available and valued. A music editor also became an important feature of Gathering. Many hands, many hearts, many thanksgivings attach to this notable success story! **Fred Graham** served the *Worship Desk* from 1988 to 2001.

Honouring our Gathering

It is an honour for me to be a part of the expression of gratitude for and celebration of our Gathering!

While preparing for ordination, my husband and I welcomed John Ambrose's early efforts to inspire worship leaders and came to rely, regularly, on his stapled, multicoloured sheets of ideas for composing all our worship services.

When we arrived at our year-long ministry internship in 1979, our supervisor handed us his complete collection. In our great, nearly graduated wisdom, we quickly separated each issue by topic and made appropriate binders for each. Our supervisor was horrified at what we had done!

One of the best things to come out of that collection was a dramatic reading entitled "It's a girl!" You can guess which season it was. This reading was so risqué that our supervisor only let it take place as a special evening event. He began our service with an apology to all six of the congregants who dared to show up!

After ordination, we soon accumulated all of John's sheets for our ministry, and we did so with genuine gratitude! Thank you so much, John!

Now, thanks to many of you, we have a complete and up-to-date collection of Gathering on our

shelf. I was privileged to contribute to Gathering and, for a time, oversee its production. That was an extraordinarily enriching life experience. And I cherish today each moment of reading Gathering and each issue as it comes out.

Over time, we came to appreciate our supervisor's attitude and to ponder and live out what worship is and is not. Religious studies, experience, a PhD in worship, and most recently, becoming an oblate, deepens every day my sense of God's presence.

And best of all, I am still looking for God!

Betty Lynn Schwab served the *Worship, Music, and Spirituality Desk* from 2007 to 2012.

It Changed My Life

It is not an exaggeration to claim that Gathering changed my life. I took over as the first formal Music Editor of Gathering at the request of the esteemed Fred Graham in 1989, and I thoroughly enjoyed this task. As a practising church musician, I was especially interested in the new hymns crossing my desk, hymns from a wide spectrum of writers—experienced and novice, clergy and lay, of varying degrees of competence, but all heartfelt and speaking of a love for congregational singing. It was my privilege to make editorial suggestions here and there, and in doing so, I learned as much as I was able to offer.

I may never know, but I suspect my position with Gathering had something to do with being invited to join the team whose mandate it was to produce the new worship resource eventually called *Voices United*. Those wonderful five years of collegial work taught me more about hymns than any number of books or courses could have done. In turn, I became a more experienced music editor for Gathering, whose readers benefited from numerous articles in which I was able to introduce the new book's contents and gifts to worship. I emerged with a passion for hymnody that eventually led to membership in the Hymn Society of the United States and Canada and its Ontario chapter, SOCHS. I began writing hymn texts myself, led workshops, wrote articles, and upon retirement, translated this abiding interest into a Doctor of Ministry from Emmanuel College in which I developed a workshop for teaching hymn writing to laity. Some of my hymns have seen publication or won competitions; others have enriched family events like baptisms and weddings.

In the unexpected bends on life's road, working for Gathering thus brought me profound pleasure and countless personal rewards that continue to bless my days. Not least, it has been instrumental in my building a wide network of like-minded colleagues and friends. One of these cherished individuals is John Ambrose, whose vision birthed the journal into being. With a heart full of gratitude, and sincere wishes for its continued success as a valuable resource for United Church worship leaders, I offer Gathering warm congratulations on this milestone birthday!

Lydia Pedersen was Music Editor from 1989 to 1993.

A Tribute to Diversity

Happy Birthday to this wonderful resource—Gathering.

It was an honour and a delight to be Music Editor for five years, working with the editors and staff of The United Church of Canada. This grassroots initiative begun by John Ambrose some 50 years ago has continued to be a valuable worship tool for all in the church.

In support of the publication of *Voices United* in 1996, the music section of Gathering featured information about various hymns, hymn anecdotes, games, descriptions, interpretations and performance suggestions, newly composed music selections, and hymn festivals. The hope behind this plethora of ideas was to generate excitement about the new resource and ease the transition from the beloved *Hymnary* (1930) to *Voices United*. Singing the congregation's song can lead to a greater understanding of one's personal faith and corporate faith. With our voices united, we rejoice together in what makes the United Church great.

Our mutual respect for our diversity and the sharing of ideas have been the cornerstones of this resource for 50 years, and may it always be so.

Sharon L. Beckstead served as Music Editor from 1994 to 1998.

A Reflection on My Experience as Gathering's Music Editor

My six-year stint as Music Editor for Gathering was an experience unlike any other in my life as a church musician.

I came into the role rather unexpectedly, feeling a bit underqualified. But the experience lifted me up in many ways—not just musically, but socially,

intellectually, and spiritually as well...

- through the hymn writers I met in person and those I met virtually through their thoughtful submissions,
- through the events I attended: the first Worship Matters events, Music United gatherings, and various international symposia, and
- through the opportunity to meet, sing, and play with musicians from across the country, discovering both their personal and musical gifts.

All of this contributed immeasurably to my growth as a United Church musician, giving me a fuller understanding of the United Church ethos and its commitment to social justice. And, perhaps most importantly, I more fully understood the vital role of its musicians in helping all communities of faith, large and small, articulate and inspire their missions through music.

When I left the role, I moved into something that was about as unexpected as my becoming Music Editor: the role of Regional Gift Planner for Montreal and Ottawa Conference. While that would seem totally unrelated to music, the knowledge of "churchland" that I gained through my Gathering experience provided a solid foundation for the work I was about to take up. I live with everlasting gratitude for the opportunity to have served the church through Gathering.

Paul Sales served as Music Editor from 1999 to 2006.

Fifty Years of Gathering... WOW!

There is no doubt that 2023 will go down in the memories of so many Canadians as an unforgettable year for so many reasons—fierce storms, floods, landslides, wildfires, and the aftermath of a global pandemic, not to mention political instability in various areas. Wars rage on, prices go up, Mother Earth suffers thanks mainly to human activity over the last couple of centuries. Despite all that (and it IS a lot), life goes on, church goes on, and of course, worship planning goes on.

I have always been impressed by the amazing amount of resource material prepared by and available from our United Church of Canada. It seems that if you have any idea at all, there has been an article written or a resource prepared, and it is sitting on a shelf somewhere, waiting for us to need it.



Gathering is a periodical worship-planning resource. While there are several available online or from publishers, most of these worship planners are designed and produced by staff writers. Gathering is unique in that its content has always come mainly from the grassroots—from United Church worship planners from coast to coast to coast (and sometimes beyond). This means that the material you find in Gathering has been created and used by our own people, road tested in their own faith communities, and shared with generosity to the wider United Church community. This also creates the benefit of learning what other United Church faith communities are actually singing, praying, and preaching about, and gives us all an opportunity to reflect on the ethos of our entire church.

Depending on one's faith community, worship planning is often done by clergy alone, clergy plus musician(s), or clergy working with a worship committee. Available resources are usually dependent on what is in the church library (if there is a library) or the personal files of the various worship planners. If you are like me, you may have a shelf with years-old copies of Gathering, and maybe a couple of copies of *Worship for All Seasons*, edited by Thomas Harding and Bruce Harding (UCPH).

Help is here! Gathering has added GatheringWorship.ca which will soon connect to Then Let Us Sing! (TLUS!). Through links from GatheringWorship.ca to TLUS!, worship planners will be able to access almost all the material from our excellent existing worship resources *Voices United*, *More Voices*, *Nos voix unies*, and our newest supplement, *Then Let Us Sing!*, with complete indexing cross-referenced across the entire portal. Developing a fully digitized worship resource is our aim as our United Church enters its second century on June 10, 2025. WOW indeed! **Lloyd MacLean** served as Music Editor from 2006 to 2012.

A Humble but Brilliant Beginning

It was disappointing. It had a basic low-cost layout, a modest cover that didn't yell "Look at me," and it was stapled roughly in just one corner. Yet, I had been introduced to this journal called Gathering as a go-to that was creating a new standard for United Church worship planners.

But this was 1988, and I was new to the

United Church. What's more, the journal was still cutting its teeth. As I dug through earlier copies, I began to appreciate how this low-budget journal had already evolved from its first editions. Also, I was appreciating how its scope of contributors was nationwide. Worship ideas of all kinds had landed on the Worship Desk from all corners of Canada and were still continuing to do so. What a low-cost, yet effective way for the church to hold hands across a vast land! (In later years, those contributions also came from the USA and overseas.)

To share is a gift. To share worship ideas that have worked for one congregation with others is a very large gift. In 1988, many contributions were handwritten or painstakingly stabbed out on some unfamiliar typewriter. Yet in each case, someone had taken the time and trouble to create a written version of a service idea that had worked for them. This, I was learning, was a significant part of United Church ethos—to give and to give humbly.

The greatness and continuing success of Gathering was founded on this ethos, and I grew proud of this humble yet brilliant product of a giving church. Well done, Gathering!

Kathryn Lingwood served as the Gathering copy editor from 1988 to 2015 as well as Editor for *The United Church of Canada*.

The Art of Being 50!

When I reached my 50th birthday, I felt I was entitled to all sorts of privileges. "Come on, I am 50, I am not going to go through this" or "I will not do that!" were the kind of phrases I was telling myself when there were difficulties that I was not in a disposition to tackle. I felt that I had given my all to many challenges and circumstances that made me some kind of a winner in life, and these difficulties or disagreements I would not deal with again.

Becoming 50 also gave me the opportunity to celebrate being a grandmother and therefore be entitled to start my meal with ice cream, together with my grandchildren (please don't tell my kids about this) or to jump in the pool with all my clothes on, just for the fun of it.

Of course, I had my share of hardships just like everybody. I am glad and sometimes proud of what has been done so far. I journeyed with my children and with friends, teachers, co-workers, and congregants who made me who I am now.

When I think of Gathering, I see the same patient journeying on the road of time with collaborators who wanted the best for our magazine and its readers, who handed in their best texts and insights so that ministers and lay pastors might find a figment or fragment to develop a theological idea or a whole service to adapt for their own community of faith.

Gathering is a creative magazine, inside the wise structure of our church, and we know we can't go wrong when we use its prayers, hymns, and ideas. It is also necessary for us all to share what we are doing in our communities so that we can be the Canada-wide church that we are, a church that allows people from across this whole country to worship and pray together. When we all pray together according to the lectionary, the power of the love that comes out of our communities is greatly increased. Love and prayer are powerful.

I would say, however, that in contrast to me, Gathering has remained wise and dignified while I was enjoying myself because of my age! It certainly is the reason why Gathering is still the very good resource it is.

Thank you to all the readers and users of our magazine, and to those who have contributed to it, who do contribute to it now, and who will contribute in the future. Happy Birthday, Gathering!

Christine Marie Gladu has written the "Digging Deeper" column since 2018.

SUBMITTING TO GATHERING

Here's what happens when you send in a contribution:

Step 1: Gather and Send. You submit your original prayers, worship services, dramas, or worship ideas by clicking the Submit button on GatheringWorship.ca. We count on you to submit worship material throughout the year! Watch our Upcoming Themes page for ideas. Writers for Weekly Services and special features are invited to write by the Editor, but we always welcome volunteers. (Contact us through GatheringWorship.ca).

Step 2: Thank You! Received. You receive a thank you and acknowledgment through the website

when your material is submitted. Material received is then forwarded to the Editor and Music Editor, who file the material by contributor to use for appropriate scriptures, seasons, and liturgical occasions. If your submission isn't used right away, it might be in line for the next time the three-year lectionary cycle comes around. We do our best to find some way to share most contributions.

Step 3: Curate, Compile, and Edit. The work starts about 10 months ahead of the first Sunday for each issue. This is (very) part-time for both Susan (High River, Alberta) and Tammy-Jo (Edmonton, Alberta), who work on Gathering in the midst of their full-time congregational and choir work. Sometimes it gets a bit interesting when they are compiling for one liturgical season, proofreading for another, and moving through a third in their congregation at the same time!

Step 4: Manuscript and More Editing. Susan and Tammy-Jo submit their files to Catherine Dorton, our Copy and Production Editor. Catherine edits the manuscript according to The United Church of Canada Style Guide and sends it back to Susan and Tammy-Jo with questions. The team also carefully considers emerging justice and theological issues when editing a piece. Material may also be modified for a broader context or to fit with a specific scripture. With so many contributors per issue, we're not able to contact you about these edits. When you send in material, you are entrusting it to the care of our editorial team. French translations of select pieces are done by Etienne Marcoux and Denis Fortin with the Ministries in French (MiF) unit.

Step 5: Graphic Design. The edited manuscript is sent to Ian Ball, who does the layout, adding in graphics and placing ads provided by the UCRD Marketing people, and creating the whole design of Gathering.

Step 6: Proofs. The first set of designed pages (proofs) is reviewed by Alydia (Program Coordinator, Worship, Music, and Spirituality), Susan, and Tammy-Jo, and proofread by Catherine. The revisions go back to Ian for inputting. Margaret Crammond, a professional proofreader, checks the second set of proofs. The pages are corrected and reviewed until we are satisfied (and still some mistakes get through...sigh!). We go through three sets of proofs as a team.

Step 7: Print. Catherine and Ian give the final and fourth proof one more look before sending the issue to the printers. The magazines are mailed approximately three months before the start of the season to give worship planners time to peruse, ponder, and prepare.

Step 8: Post. The issue (plus bonus material) is posted to GatheringWorship.ca. You can search for and download materials and create services from the current issue as well as from previous years, for all seasons, scriptures, and occasions.

Step 9: Praise God! Worship planners, worship teams, and congregations make use of material and ideas that come from churches across Canada and beyond, enhancing their worship of God! Then you send us your ideas to share with other worship planners. What an amazing process!

GATHERING: A TIME LINE



1974: John Ambrose, Special Assistant–Worship, creates *Getting It All Together* “to provide fresh resources for congregational worship and an outlet to share the creative things congregations were doing.” The first issue was for Lent–Easter 1974. Geo. L. James became the Editor and Marilyn James the Graphic Designer.

1979: Fred McNally becomes Special Assistant–Worship and manages *Getting It All Together*.

1984: *Getting It All Together* becomes Gathering with the AC 1983/84 issue. A new cover design of block symbols in the colour of the season is created by Marilyn James.

1985: Sylvia Dunstan becomes Editor.

1988: Kathryn Lingwood comes on as Copy Editor.

1988: Fred Graham takes over the Worship Desk and Gathering.

1989: Thomas Harding becomes Editor and Lydia Pederson the first Music Editor.

1990: Creation of the Gathering Advisory Board, established to support creation of *Worship for All Seasons* volumes.

1991: Marilyn James retires as Graphic Designer after 17 years. Gathering switches from coloured cover and paper stapled at the top to white cover and paper stapled at side.

1993: Kenneth Inkster is guest Music Editor for two issues.

1993–1994: publication of *Worship for All Seasons* (three volumes based on the church seasons), edited by Thomas Harding.

1994: Sharon Beckstead becomes Music Editor.

1995: Marilyn Leuty becomes Editor.

1998: Switch to magazine format rather than stapled pages.

1999: Paul Sales becomes Music Editor.

2001: Nancy Hardy becomes Editor. Stewardship Links premieres as a section in Gathering. A new column, “Worship Words,” by Bill Kervin also begins. Bill continues this column

for 10 years, concluding with the publication of his book *Gathered for Worship* (UCPH, 2010).

2002: Switch to a glossy cover.

2003: Mark MacLean takes over the Worship Desk and oversight of Gathering. Prières en français are now included. Ian Ball joins the team in Graphic Design and Production.

2003: Susan Lukey becomes Editor.

2004: Ross Bartlett begins the “Preaching Pointers” column and writes for 18 years, concluding with the publication of his book *Gathered for Preaching* (UCPH, 2021).

2004–2006: Publication of *Worship for All Seasons II* (three volumes: Year A, Year B, Year C), edited by Thomas Harding and Bruce Harding.

2004: The Worship Sparks page is introduced.

2005: “Reflections for the Season,” a new column by Ed Searcy, is launched. Ed writes for 10 years.

2006: Lloyd MacLean becomes Music Editor.

2007: Betty Lynn Schwab starts at the Worship, Music, and Spirituality Desk.

2007: “Banner Bytes,” a new column, is launched and runs for two years with contributions from Janet Saunders and Carol Zacharias.

2008: “Nourishing the Worship Leader’s Soul,” a new column by Kate Crawford, begins and runs for two years.

2009: Gathering celebrates 25 years (35 years since the launch of *Getting It All Together*). Joyce Crosby designs new multicolour covers for Gathering with images related to each season.

2010: Drama and More Files are offered to subscribers by email request.

2011: Prayers for Worship are offered as a downloadable file through a code entered into UCRD online, so that people can copy and paste the prayers into bulletins.

2011: Wendy MacLean begins the “Inspiratio” column.

2012: The LEP 2012 issue features a colour centrefold of artwork. John Ambrose serves as Interim Music Editor for two issues. Tammy-Jo Mortensen begins as Music Editor. Alydia Smith takes the Worship, Music, and Spirituality Desk.

2013: A fourth issue per year is added by splitting the Summer–Autumn issue into Pentecost 1 and Pentecost 2 in order to provide more resources for subscribers. For Future Reference section becomes the Exploring section. The Pentecost 1 issues now offer photocopy-ready bulletins for summer services.

2014: Gathering celebrates 30 years (40 years since *Getting It All Together*). “From the Editor” becomes the back-page “Postlude” column.

2015: Kathryn Lingwood retires after 27 years with Gathering. Catherine Dorton joins Gathering as Copy and Production Editor.

2018: Christine Marie Gladu begins writing the “Digging Deeper” column. New branding logo is created by Ian Ball for Gathering.

2022: Launch of GatheringWorship.ca in February, the long-dreamed-of website to work in conjunction with the print magazine.

2022: Teresa Burnett-Cole begins writing the “Worship Wonderings” column.

2024: Gathering celebrates 50 years since the launch of *Getting It All Together*.