

Sessions and Presenters are as follows:

Week 1: Oct. 26, 2026

Robyn Brown-Hewitt: The Person in the Pulpit

Worship – what is it and why are we drawn to it? Before examining the ingredients that compose a worship service (ex. prayers, sermon, music) we'll explore the wider context. How is worship different from a show at Neptune Theatre? How might worship in the United Church be distinct from other churches? Before we prepare to lead worship, what do UCC worship leaders need to keep in mind?

Robyn Brown-Hewitt (she/her/Rev) has 40+ years' experience serving the United Church in pastoral and educational settings. As far as worship is concerned, she has served congregations in the Maritimes and British Columbia, as an editor of 'Celebrate God's Presence: A Book of Services', as Worship Team Convenor for the General Council Meeting in 2003, and as Coordinator of the Licensed Lay Worship Leader Atlantic program at Tatamagouche Centre. Robyn draws on her studies in theatre (BA Acadia), theology (MTS, AST), and narrative practice (Master of Narrative Therapy & Community Work, UMelbourne).

Week 2: Nov. 2, 2026

Rev. Dr. Andrew O'Neill: Liturgy

In this session focusing on liturgy, we'll explore what worship in the United Church of Canada has in common with all Christian worship and what makes it distinct. To begin, we'll consider the UCC concept of Ordered Liberty: that an established format and ethos give our worship its shape, but that a great deal of faithful reflection and creativity goes into worship planning. Practically, we'll consider the elements of worship, including the basic forms of prayer that comprise a UCC liturgy, how scripture readings are chosen each week, how this informs the theme of worship and the sermon, and the importance of scriptural, inclusive, and expansive language in all our prayer and praise.

After completing his MDiv at Emmanuel College (University of Toronto) in 2002, Andy completed his PhD in philosophical theology at New College (University of Edinburgh). In 2007, he returned to Canada and spent fifteen years serving congregations in New Brunswick. During that time, Andy served numerous UCC committees, including the Theology Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee, and was a frequent worship leader and speaker for UCC events. He was very pleased to join the faculty of Atlantic School of Theology (AST) in July 2021, where he taught courses in liturgy, theology, pastoral ministry, and ethics.

Week 3: Nov. 9, 2026

Rev. Dr. Ross Bartlett: Bringing a Word-intro to preaching

In this introduction to preaching participants will learn how to choose scripture passages for reflection, how to craft a compelling sermon, and some basic techniques for effective verbal communication. They will be provided with some suggested templates for messages and important do's and don'ts for sermon delivery.

Rev Dr Ross Bartlett is the United Church Formation Director at the Atlantic School of Theology where he also teaches in other United Church-related subjects. The preaching columnist for

Gathering magazine for 15 years, he is the author of *Gathered For Preaching: A Sourcebook for Clergy and Lay Preachers* (UCPH, 2021) and has taught preaching and public speaking in a wider variety of settings.

Week 4: Nov. 16, 2026

Thea Burton: Music as Worship

Anytime we sing we pray twice (Augustine), give glory to our Maker, and heighten the emotional connection to and understanding of the scriptures. When we unabashedly “Make a joyful noise unto the Lord,” our connection to community and personal healing is enhanced. This session will orient you to the tools of our music making in the United Church of Canada: *Voices United*, *More Voices*, and the newly released *Then Let Us Sing!* We’ll talk about where music fits into liturgy and how to imagine worship that includes and supports communal singing with confidence, as the occasional leader of worship.

Currently, the Music Director for Orchard Valley United Church, Thea Burton began her professional life in theatre and then spent 34 years working in the public schools as a Speech-Language Pathologist. She continued to channel her passion for the theatre into directing school musicals and directing her church choir. She brings her spiritual learnings from childhood (a daughter of 2 ministers), to her love of sharing the Word through music and building community with song.

Week 5: Nov. 23, 2026

Janice MacLean: Prayers of the People

In this practical workshop, we’ll explore how to craft Prayers of the People that invite everyone to find themselves in prayer. Using a handout with both traditional and creative forms of pastoral prayers (ready for use in worship), we’ll reflect on the theological and pastoral power of praying—considering its possibilities and important cautions. You’ll also receive a template for designing your own prayers and a list of helpful resources to deepen your practice and create meaningful prayers for your community of faith.

Janice Maclean lives in Cape Breton, where she was born and brought up. The land, the waters, the trees of many places deepen her spirituality and find their way into her praying. You’ll hear Celtic notes from working with the Iona Community, sense of place from living in Israel, pastoral awareness from serving part-time pastoral charges where leading worship carries so much pastoral and educational weight. She is the host of Prayer Bench, a website sharing digital resources to support and inspire the spiritual path.