



The Beacon

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Sunday Services—Inspiring Learning and Spiritual Growth

Each Sunday brings a rhythm of gathering, music, reflection, and connection. Here's what you can expect when you join us:

- 10:10 am: Approximately twice a month we have a pre-service sing-along and we invite you to sing or just listen. Our next sing-alongs are scheduled for January 18th, February 8th and 22nd. On other Sundays you can socialize before the service—in person and online. At the hall, please help yourself to a tea or coffee.
- 10:30 am: Our service starts. In person, we meet at Sapperton Community Hall in New Westminster (318 Keary St.) and online using the Zoom platform. You can register

for the Zoom link on our website homepage (on the righthand side of the page): beaconunitarian.org. The services are 60–70 minutes long. Each Sunday offers something a little different—sometimes thought-provoking and reflective, sometimes creative and hands-on. We invite you to join us for a few services and experience the full spectrum of what Beacon has to offer.

- After our service, we hope you can stay a while for connection and conversation (in-person and online). Light refreshments are served in Sapperton hall.

We list [upcoming service descriptions](#) on our website and in our weekly e-newsletter, *Beacon This Week*.*

If you're a newcomer, general Sunday [service information](#) is located in the second link of the footer menu on our website. Our services are designed for adults *and* we welcome all ages! If you would like us to follow up with you and get more information, you are invited to fill out the [Beacon Connecting Form](#) (on our website homepage).

*To receive *Beacon This Week*, our weekly e-newsletter, please contact adminsupport@beaconunitarian.org to be put on our emailing list.

We welcome your feedback and ideas for songs, discussion topics, and new elements in our services. You can also reach our worship team anytime at worship@beaconunitarian.org.

If you'd like to see past [recordings](#) from our services, they are linked from our website's homepage. Come and be part of our caring and questing community.

We look forward to connecting with you and getting to know you!



Soup Lunches

Sunday, January 18th
Sunday, February 15th

Please join us after the Sunday service for lunch in the downstairs hall. Suggested donation is \$5 or as you are able—free for newcomers! Last minute participants welcome. Anyone able and willing to bring soup, salads, buns and butter, or desserts please phone Augusta Hamilton, 1 (250) 741-7924.

Connecting,
Inspiring,
Transforming!



Beacon
Unitarian
Church

Awakening Wonder

From the [Meaning Making Theme Packet, January 2026](#)

These days, it seems easier than ever to find answers and certainty. As artificial intelligence begins to transform our everyday experience, we can quickly learn how to solve problems that used to bewilder us. We have solutions in our phones and at our fingertips. So what's the use of wonder?

As a lifelong songwriter, I've depended on wonder for my creative and spiritual nourishment for a very long time. In fact, I believe that wonder may be the core of my spiritual life: its most essential ingredient! Without regular infusions of surprise and delight, life would lose its magic for me, so I'm happy to introduce the topic of wonder as our Meaning Making topic this month.

It may seem counterintuitive, though, to associate "wonder" with "meaning." Where's the meaning, or the satisfaction, in *not* understanding something? In seeking rather than finding? In wondering instead of determining? It seems to me that wonder opens us up to new

possibilities, unseating our fixed assumptions and encouraging us to be more humble and welcoming to others. The others can include other human beings, the earth, our deep selves, and that which is beyond our understanding.

When it comes to human relationships, an attitude of open-hearted curiosity is often more fruitful than a definite opinion. Listening to another's story and being curious about their experience can lead to the deepening of a relationship. As well, by cultivating a sense of wonder for the world around us, we approach the planet with the awe and respect that reminds us of our place in it. We are but tiny fragments in a vast, mysterious universe. The world is not here for our amusement, mastery and consumption, but for our reverence and care.

I hope that you find in this packet many invitations that lead you to wonder, and that the delight you experience will continue to strengthen and inspire you.

Love and blessings,
—Rev. Lynn Harrison

IN FOCUS: AWE, WONDER & WELLNESS (abridged)

Along time ago, while grieving a personal loss, I would take regular walks along the beach. One afternoon, as I sat on a log by the water feeling that loss acutely, I sensed something above me. Looking up, I saw an eagle flying directly overhead—close enough that I could see each feather. A tingling sense of awe moved through me, and something shifted inside. When the moment passed, I felt more open than I had in a long time, curious about what had just happened.

Some of us experience moments of profound awe—a sense of being in the presence of something much larger or more significant than ourselves. These moments are often followed by wonder: a feeling of amazement, openness, and curiosity.

Not everyone has these large awe experiences, and even when they occur, they are rare. Over the past decade, researchers such as Dacher Keltner have explored the connection between awe, wonder, and wellbeing. Their findings suggest that the intensity of awe matters less than its frequency. While powerful moments can help us through difficult experiences, small, regular experiences of awe and wonder also play an important role in supporting our wellbeing.

—Karen Fraser Gitlitz

I stand here dazzled with my heart in flames at this world of wonders...

—Bruce Cockburn,
World of Wonders



"I think us here to wonder, myself. To wonder. To ask. And that in wondering bout the big things and asking bout the big things, you learn about the little ones, almost by accident. But you never know nothing more about the big things than you start out with. The more I wonder, the more I love." — from *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker



The feeling of awed wonder that science can give us is one of the highest experiences of which the human psyche is capable. It is a deep aesthetic passion to rank with the finest that music and poetry can deliver. It is truly one of the things that make life worth living and it does so, if anything, more effectively if it convinces us that the time we have for living is quite finite.

—Richard Dawkins, *Unweaving the Rainbow: Science, Delusion and the Appetite for Wonder*
Photo by: Jana Lenzova

Board Bitz

Our last Sunday service before Christmas was on the winter solstice, the day in the year with the fewest hours of sunlight. The day with the longest night. From there the days open up again with each one bringing more brightness in.

Rev. Christopher Wulff spoke about the darkness of this time of year in his homily that Sunday, encouraging us to welcome the dark as a time to slow down, rest and reflect. I take the opportunity in these Board Bitz to reflect on Beacon's passage through the first part of our church year.

September began with Beacon's change to being community-led. Being community-led and continuing to have weekly services for this year—quite a challenge for our two-person Worship Services team of David Kristjanson and Glenn Wootton. The challenges involved in this were on the minds of the board members attending the board summer retreat. Brainstorming can lead to interesting results, and out of that brainstorming came the idea of a Homily Club. Beacon is a creative, involved community. Perhaps having fun, being creative and being involved could expand to include creating services. The first meetings of the Homily Club have been well attended, with interest and energy shown by those who were there. The club is intended to meet the interests and wishes of those who attend. Please make sure it does!

September also began with a transition involving a key part of Beacon's community building, the soup lunches. After several years of organizing them, Peggy Lunderville retired from that role. Fortunately Augusta Hamilton stepped in to take her place. We have had two very successful soup lunches, and two turkey lunches, this fall. I love the

soup lunches and have huge thanks to Peggy for starting them again after COVID. Many thanks to Augusta for stepping in to continue them. Blessings to both of you!

Before the beginning of this church year we had another transition. The April AGM welcomed

To keep Beacon growing and thriving, your participation truly matters.

Richard Hollins as Beacon's new treasurer. He took over from Carol Woodworth, Beacon's longtime treasurer, who decided to step down. Carol began her time as treasurer with almost zero knowledge of accounting, learned a great deal of it during her time, and did an excellent job. I have huge appreciation for her willingness to learn accounting jargon! Now the ledger has passed to Richard, who has been working with Carol to learn the ins and outs of Beacon's system. He was front and centre when he presented the 2026 budget at a successful congregational budget meeting in December. Thank you, Richard!

The board looks after the overall wellbeing of Beacon. When the

board presented the congregation with the plan to be community-led for this church year, we were aware of what that would entail. We knew work would be required to discern a path forward in future years. The Consultations Team was formed and a mandate was given to them: work with the congregation to determine what ideas they have and report back to the board in April. Look at what is wanted, what is feasible, what is affordable—a substantial mandate. And a substantial opportunity for community participation.

Our community is vibrant and deeply valued. To keep Beacon growing and thriving, your participation truly matters. We are grateful to everyone who has been involved—supporting recent transitions, helping to make Beacon the welcoming and healthy community it is today, and imagining a sustainable future together.

Here's to the light that is flowing in after the winter solstice. Welcome to the new year and may it be a good one for all of us.

—Susan Tarras
Beacon co-president

Music Jams

Join us on the **second Thursday of every month, 7:00–8:30 pm** for Beacon's **Music Jams** — a joyful time to **sing, play, and share music together!** Whether you bring an instrument, a favourite song, or simply your voice and enthusiasm, all are welcome to participate or just come and soak in the spirit of community.

January 8 (Vista common room, 820 6th Avenue, New Westminster) and **February 12** (near Poirier St. & Regan Ave., Coquitlam).



Susan Tarras
Co-president

Update from the Beacon Consultations Team

The Consultations Team is reviewing the results from the very successful November session, when we had 29 participants! (in-person, on-line and email submissions.)

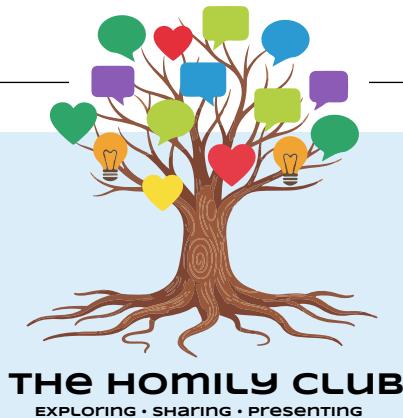
November's session began with the question; what brings you JOY at Beacon? The results touched on themes we've noted before: Community & Sharing of Food, Music, Spirituality, and Pastoral Care.

We asked participants to reflect on which aspects of ministry we can continue to offer as a community-led congregation, and which might benefit from professional ministry or professional leadership.

In December we are analyzing the feedback and preparing for the next consultation session to be held in January (in-person and on-line).

Get in touch with the team via consult@beaconunitarian.org

—Teresa Morton



Homily Club has a very strong start!

Next meetings: Jan. 25th and Feb. 22nd after the service!

Homily Club held a wildly successful initial session! 23 people attended. The club will meet on 4th Sundays after the service. We hope to add focused training in writing homilies and in storytelling, these sessions will likely need to be held outside of Sunday mornings due to time constraints at Sapperton.

The Homily Club (a collaboration of our Worship Services Team & the Co-Presidents) is a support for people seeking to participate in Sunday mornings, ranging from lighting the chalice through to preparing a complete service, including a homily. There will be mentoring & training to help individuals or teams contribute to our Sunday experience.

Questions or suggestions? Connect via president@beaconunitarian.org

—Teresa Morton

Pre-Service Sunday Sing-Alongs

Come early — **music begins at 10:10 am!** Let your voice join the circle as we celebrate the power of song and the light it brings to our community. Coffee and tea available too.

- **January 18 and Feb. 22nd:** led by *Kate Smith & Bill Marshall*
- **February 8th:** led by *The Beacon Singers*



Caregivers—You Are Not Alone.

The strain of caregiving for a family member or friend can leave you feeling exhausted, anxious, and isolated. To support caregivers, Century House is offering a five-week *Care for Caregivers Zoom series*, which offers participants a chance each week to pause, connect, and feel supported from the comfort of their own home. Open to caregivers aged 50+. A Zoom link will be emailed prior to each session (we can assist with navigating Zoom).

Dates & Time: Tuesdays, 1:30–2:30 pm (Zoom room opens at 1 pm)

Jan. 6–Feb 3: [Register here](#);

Feb. 17–Mar. 17: [Register here](#);

Mar. 31–Apr 28: [Register here](#)

Location: Online only, via Zoom

Registration: Century House front desk: 604-519-1066.

Registration Fee: Free

Contact: For more information: peggy.hinkley@gmail.com

Creating a Welcoming Space for Transgender and Gender-Diverse People at Beacon

Inspired by a CUC-sponsored workshop with Transforming Hearts Collective; written by Laura Redmond, with support from ChatGPT.

At a recent CUC-sponsored workshop led by *Transforming Hearts Collective*, we were invited to think gently and honestly about what it means to create spaces where *everyone* can arrive as their full selves. One of the themes that stayed with me was this: welcoming transgender and gender-diverse people does not require us to have all the answers — only a willingness to listen, learn, and signal care.

Most of us grew up with the idea that there are two clear and fixed genders, determined at birth. Yet nature itself tells a more complex story. About 1–2% of humans are born with sex characteristics that don't fit neatly into "male" or "female" categories — roughly the same proportion of the population as people born with red hair — and this kind of natural variation is also seen throughout the animal world. Beyond biology, many people discover over time that the gender they were assumed to be at birth does not fully reflect their inner sense of self.

This inner sense — often called gender identity — is deeply personal. It is simply how someone knows themselves to be in the world.

In many personal accounts of gender exploration, a familiar beginning appears: growing up, they felt quietly out of step with expectations — nothing dramatic, just a persistent sense that the roles, language, and assumptions placed on them didn't quite fit. For years, they tried to "make it work," assuming that this kind of discomfort was something everyone felt. It wasn't until adulthood that they encountered the language — and the permission — to ask whether their experience could be trusted.

Choosing a gender identity, they explained, wasn't about rejecting others or seeking attention. It was about relief. About alignment. About finally being able to breathe a little more easily in their own skin. "Nothing about me changed,"

they said. "What changed was that I stopped pretending."

For many people, naming their gender — whether as transgender, non-binary, or something else — is a quiet act of honesty.

This brings us to pronouns.

When we include chosen pronouns on our church name tags, we are doing something simple but meaningful. We are signaling that we understand not everyone should be assumed to be "he" or "she," and that we respect each person's right to name themselves. Importantly, this practice benefits everyone by reducing guesswork, fostering fairness, and supporting clear, respectful communication.

For those who wonder whether this is "necessary," it may help to think of pronouns as we do names. We would never insist on calling someone by the wrong name because it matched our assumptions. Pronouns function in much the same way: they are a form of respect.

For a congregation like Beacon — largely older, largely white, and often insulated from these conversations — this can feel unfamiliar or even unnecessary. But hospitality is not only about what we need; it is about what helps *others* feel safe, seen, and welcome. Many transgender people enter new spaces bracing themselves for misunderstanding or harm. Small signals of awareness can make the difference between someone staying or quietly leaving.

Creating a welcoming space does not require ideological agreement. It asks only that we act from our shared values: compassion, dignity, and the worth of every person.

At Beacon, remaining open to learning, and listening with curiosity are simple ways we live those values — not perfectly, but sincerely. To become more informed on this topic I invite you to [download the "Engaging with Trans Solidarity Toolkit" here](#). If you would like to view a series of educational videos from the workshop please contact me.

A parallel framing: Faith Identity (or Lack of One):

Most Unitarians expect the freedom to say "I'm Christian," "I'm humanist," "I'm spiritual but not religious," or "I don't believe in God". We expect not to be corrected or argued with about that self-description.

We already understand that faith is something people name for themselves. Gender identity works in much the same way — it is a personal, internal sense that others cannot determine from the outside.

Please see Laura Redmond if you would like your name tag updated with your chosen pronouns.



Beacon Programs

We invite you to explore these great ways to connect to the Beacon community and to yourself!

The Humanist Discussion Group

(online) likes to think about and discuss our common humanity, and our place as individuals and collectives in this dance of life. As a group we welcome different points of view and discuss a wide range of ideas. We meet the last Sunday of the month at 7:30 pm, via Zoom.

Sunday, January 25th, 7:30 pm:

Join us for a special conversation with **Don Shafer** — broadcaster, scholar, and recent PhD graduate from UBC — as he shares highlights from his dissertation, *Sticks & Stones, Roots & Bones: Exploring the Power of Words in a Polarized World*.

Don will guide us through key moments from his thesis defence — complete with audio clips and stories — before opening the floor for a **conversation on how language, identity, and empathy shape our most difficult dialogues**.

This promises to be a thought-provoking and deeply human evening. **Participants are encouraged to read the [abstract and Chapter 4](#) of Don's dissertation beforehand.**

Sunday, February 22nd: Topic TBA.

Please check the weekly e-newsletter for updates and the Zoom link. If you would like to receive regular emails from the Humanist Group, please contact Marilyn Medén at humanist@beaconunitarian.org.

Book Club (in person) meets on fourth Fridays at 1 pm at John's place in New Westminster. Book selections appear in *Beacon This Week*. Please read the book ahead of time so we can dive right into discussion. See the box on page 7 for our current books and contact details. Newcomers and drop-ins are always welcome!

Lunch Bunch (online)

meets every Tuesday from noon until 2 pm, year-round, currently via Zoom. Bring your lunch and share in lively and topical conversation. Contact Laura Ramsay at 604-816-5331 for the Zoom link or check the *Beacon This Week* email. Newcomers are welcome!

Film Club (online and in person)

meets 1st and 3rd Fridays at 7 pm via Zoom. Some in-person events are arranged from time to time. For more information see page 7 or email Marilyn Medén: filmclub@beaconunitarian.org. The Zoom link is in Thursday's email, *Beacon This Week*.

Beacon Men's Group

In our diverse community, we recognize that many men seek spaces to:

- Reflect on their personal journeys and spiritual growth.
- Navigate life's challenges in dialogue with others who understand.
- Explore topics such as relationships, identity, vulnerability, and purpose in an atmosphere of mutual respect and acceptance.
- Build meaningful friendships and a sense of community.

We meet every second week at 7:00 pm at various locations. If you're interested in joining or learning more about us, please email mensgroup@beaconunitarian.org.

Women's Groups are discussion groups—held both in person and online—for women who attend Beacon. To join a group please contact Beth Connelly or Cathy Burpee. Please check the Breeze directory for contact information.

Environmental News: Enviro-bees & Hope Matters!

Upcoming Enviro-bees:

Jan. 11th & Feb. 8th

I've been monitoring the environment news



Teresa Morton

(positive & negative) and I've collected lots of signs of climate progress which I want to share with you. I hope to see you on January 11th & February 8th! We get together after the service finishes (allowing ten minutes for everyone to get coffee/tea and a snack). The Envirobee is for both in-person and on-line participants.

'Hope Matters'

Beacon Unitarian and Century House Seniors again presented a four-session series 'Hope Matters', an exploration of the critical role which hope plays in our climate emergency response. elin kelsey's new book '*How to be Hopeful*' provided much of the material for the last session on December 12th.

The series was held in person (in New Westminster) and online. It was an opportunity to explore eco-grief, eco-healing and finding your eco joy. We had a visit from the New West Climate Action Hub and the New West Environmental Partners.

—Teresa Morton

Film Club (via Zoom)

View the film in advance, then come to the Zoom meeting to chat about it. In addition to our Zoom meetings, we will plan some in-person theatre events.

The Zoom-films selected are all available from YouTube for a rental fee (from free to \$6.99). They may also be available for streaming from other internet sources, so if you have a subscription to a streaming service, do check there first. To rent a film from YouTube, just search for the title in YouTube and look for the video that has a blue “Buy or Rent” box next to it. For more information, please connect with Marilyn Medén: filmclub@beaconunitarian.org. The Zoom link is in Thursday’s email, *Beacon This Week*.

Friday, Jan. 2, 7 pm



Annie Hall, presented by Judy Villett, is a 1977 American satirical romantic comedy-drama film directed by Woody Allen. The film stars Allen as

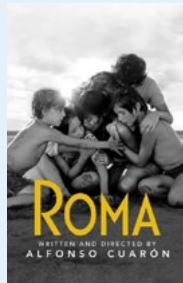
Alvy Singer, who tries to figure out the reasons for the failure of his relationship with the eponymous female lead, played by Diane Keaton in a role written specifically for her.

Friday, Feb. 6, 7 pm



Ghandi, presented by Pauline, is a 1982 epic biographical film based on the life of Mahatma Gandhi, a major leader in the Indian independence movement against the British Empire.

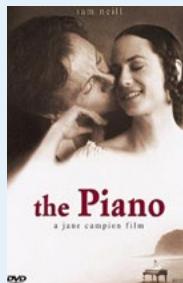
Friday, Jan. 16, 7 pm



Roma (Netflix), presented by Rhea Kikkert

Set in 1970 and 1971, *Roma* follows the life of a live-in indigenous (Mixteco) housekeeper of an upper-middle-class Mexican family. It is a semi-autobiographical take on Cuarón's upbringing in Mexico City's Colonia Roma neighborhood.

Friday, Feb. 20, 7 pm

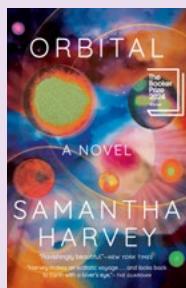


The Piano, presented by Judy Villett, is an historical romance film written and directed by New Zealand filmmaker Jane Campion. The film focuses on a mute Scottish woman who travels to a remote part of New Zealand after her arranged marriage to a settler.

Beacon Book Club (in person)

Fourth Fridays at 1 pm, in person in New West. Contact John at bookclub@beaconunitarian.org. Please read the book ahead of time. Newcomers and drop-ins are always welcome!

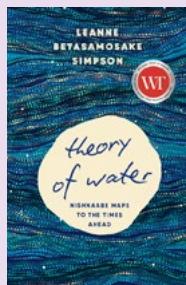
Friday, Jan. 23, 1-3 pm



Orbital by Samantha Harvey, presented by John Hagen. *Orbital* is a 2023 novel by English writer Samantha Harvey that

incorporates elements of science fiction, literary fiction, and philosophical drama. It follows six fictional astronauts over 24 hours on an orbiting space station.

Friday, Feb. 27, 1-3 pm,



A Theory of Water, Nishnaabe Maps to the Times Ahead by Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, presented by Gail Thom-

son. Acclaimed Nishnaabeg writer takes a revolutionary look at that most elemental force, water, and suggests a powerful path for the future.

Food Bank collection is taken on the first Sunday of the month at Beacon.

In addition, donations can be made online (<https://bcvfd.foodbank.bc.ca/participant/124/417/>) or mailed directly to Share Family and Community Services at 104 - 3020 Lincoln Ave., Coquitlam BC, V3B 6B4. Thank you for supporting your neighbours with your donations.

Sharing Our Faith 2026: Orientation Session

Thursday, January 15: 4:30 pm PT (60 minutes)

Sharing Our Faith is an annual opportunity for Canadian Unitarian Universalists to explore a shared spiritual theme, deepen our connections with one another, and support congregational growth across the country. Each year, the Canadian Unitarian Council offers a worship packet and conversation guide that congregations can use to shape a Sunday service, a discussion group, or a community gathering.

The 2026 theme—Practicing Hope: Facing the Future with Gratitude, Imagination, Courage & Action—was developed collaboratively by more than 50 UUs from across Canada who participated in Canadian UUs Read this fall. Their wisdom, insights, and shared longings helped shape a national conversation about how we live our values in rapidly changing times.



Nationwide Congregational Conversations

2026 Fresh Start

Thursday, [January 22](#): 10:00 am PT or Saturday, [January 24](#): 10:00 am PT (90 minutes)

Ministry Updates 2026

Thursday, [February 19](#): 10:00 am PT or Saturday, [February 21](#): 10:00 am PT (90 minutes)

In 2026, we invite you into a renewed season of Congregational Conversations—online spaces where UU leaders and seekers gather not simply to learn, but to practice the spiritual work of community.

Each session is an opportunity to pause, breathe, reflect, and reconnect with the deeper purpose of congregational life. When you attend, you are not only nurturing your own leadership—you are offering a gift to your congregation and to our wider movement. Your presence helps strengthen the ecosystem of Unitarian Universalism across Canada.

These conversations are moments to ask: What is emerging in our communities? What is being asked of us now? How can we lead with courage, imagination, and care? Together, we cultivate wisdom that no congregation could generate alone.

RAMP! applications are now open!

The CUC's pilot program, RAMP! (Reciprocal Annual Mentorship Program) is growing sustainability & resilience for our Unitarian Universalist congregations & communities. RAMP! has two interconnected parts: an intergenerational mentorship stream, and a skill-building workshop stream.

Is RAMP! for you?? [Learn more!](#) Applications open until February 8, 2026.

Dismantling Barriers: Lessons from the Ontario Railroad Towns

February 19: 4 pm PT (90 min)

Join us for our next session in shared learning about Black Canadian history. During this Black History Month, we will build on last year's lessons from Hogan's Alley and Africville and explore the five settlements in Ontario that developed at the end of the Underground Railroad, and the lasting implications and effects of those settlements.

We'll be working with the Black History Month tool kit created last year, with addendums added for each learning session. [You can find a copy of that tool kit by following this link here!](#)

A reminder that this is a shared learning space—an opportunity to support our lifelong work of unlearning anti-Blackness and deepening our understanding of the Black Canadian experience as we strive to be better accomplices and allies in the anti-racism movement. We look forward to learning with you!



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Proofreading: William Marshall
and Catherine Smith.
Deadline for submissions
is the 15th of the month
preceding Sep. 1, Nov. 1, Jan. 1,
Mar. 1, May 1, and July 1.