

**To All Registered for the Diakonia of the United Church National Gathering
Kelowna, British Columbia September 15-18, 2026**

(This letter can also be found on the National Gathering page at ducc.ca.)

Welcome!

In less than three weeks we will be gathering for our DUCC National Gathering. We are so excited to have everyone in one place again (and online!). Central Okanagan United Church (721 Bernard Ave, Kelowna) is also busily getting prepared to have us in their space and is excited to host us.

Sleeping, Eating and Navigating the Area

Accommodations for your stay will be at Accent Inn, 1140 Harvey Ave #2, Kelowna. The hotel is about a fifteen minute walk from Central Okanagan. We encourage folks to walk, although there will be some parking at the church for those who need to drive. If the church lot is full, there is free two hour street parking on Bernard and Lawrence Avenue, east of Richter Street (The parking is metered west of Richter St.). For those with mobility challenges, the planning team will ensure you have a ride back and forth.

All meals, except breakfast, will be served at Central Okanagan, beginning with dinner on Tuesday and ending with lunch on Friday, which will be a bag lunch. The Accent Inn restaurant, Ricky's, provides a complimentary breakfast (voucher given at hotel registration). Ricky's was called to see if they will accommodate various food issues, e.i. gluten free, lactose, etc., and they said that customers only need to explain their needs to their server when ordering. As well, any extra meals needed (especially if arriving early or staying later) can receive a 10% discount if staying at Accent Inn.

The caterer has been made aware of those who have specified dietary restrictions. A separate email will follow from the caterer to those who listed allergies or dietary restrictions.

WiFi will be available at Central Okanagan, and it will be available for all to use.

Please avoid bringing food items that contain nuts to our gathering space.

Please refrain from using any scented personal care products during your stay.

Transportation and Registration

By now, all who have registered should have provided their transportation requirements.

If you haven't provided your transportation needs, please do so at the following link: <https://forms.gle/zZtYBcxwffd5tJ2d6>

For those of you arriving by plane, **Letitia Berger** is organizing your pick up. Her cell phone is **403-818-4069**. Some of you may be required to wait for a short period at your

arrival point in order to arrange for a carload of passengers. To facilitate loading and packing the cars, please restrict your luggage to a small bag in addition to a purse/small backpack. If you have questions with regard to transportation, contact Letitia Berger at minister.aldergroveuc@gmail.com or call 403-818-4069. Please keep this number handy upon your arrival in case there is a delay in your flight or a concern with regard to pick up.

When you arrive at Central Okanagan on Tuesday, there will be someone to greet you and give you your name tag and any other items you'll need for the week. Helen Reed, our treasurer, will connect with you if there have been any concerns with payment. If you have not been able to check into your room, there will be space at Central Okanagan to store your luggage.

Agenda for the Gathering

A draft agenda and all other documents can be found on the website. Please note the following with regard to the agenda:

- We will begin with registration at 11am. Our gathering will begin at 2pm. No lunch is being offered on Tuesday. There are a number of local restaurants within a block of Central Okanagan United Church or near the hotel.
- On Thursday afternoon, we are offering a variety of optional site visits or educational opportunities. These options are listed below.
- Our MCs are Keith Simmonds and Kathy Platt and our Zoom host is Kim McNaughton.

Educational Opportunities or Site Visits

Currently there are four options for educational opportunities or what we have formerly called site visits. Please go to our [Google form](#) for information on each option and give us your first and second preference. Please **sign up by September 8th**, so we can make transportation arrangements.

Travel Pool

Travel Pool applications should be submitted to our treasurer, Helen, before lunch on Wednesday. If you need information about the Travel Pool, you can find it on our website: <https://www.ducc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/DUCC-Travel-Pool.pdf>

Checking Out on Friday

Check out from Accent Inn is at 11am. You are invited to bring your luggage to Central Okanagan with you on Friday morning. We will have a room to store it. We will have a bagged lunch to go at 12:30pm. Departure from Central Okanagan on Friday will be

coordinated by using posted sign-up sheets at the gathering. Please provide this information by the end of the day on Wednesday so there is time to coordinate rides.

DUCC Auction

Throughout our gathering, we have a silent auction set up in the gathering space. Folks are welcome to bring diaconal or DUCC/duck connected items to sell in the auction. We usually have quite the display of items from a variety of places. We will choose a local charity to whom we will donate the proceeds. You can pay with cash or e-transfer to our treasurer, treasurer@ducc.ca.

Typical Weather for Kelowna

Mid-September in Kelowna brings comfortable, mild early-fall weather as the summer heat begins to taper off. The mild afternoons are ideal for getting outside with a cooler, less intense sun.

- **High Temperatures:** Typically range between 19°C and 23°C (66°F to 74°F).
- **Low Temperatures:** Average between 6°C and 11°C (42°F to 51°F) overnight.
- **Conditions:** Expect a pleasant mix of sun and clouds, with skies remaining clear or partly cloudy roughly half the time.
- **Precipitation:** The region stays relatively dry, with only a 13% to 21% chance of brief, light showers on any given day.

What to Bring

Here is a list of recommended items to bring:

- Reusable mug & Water bottle
- Clothing and footwear suited to walking
- A reminder to wear black in solidarity with the “Thursdays in Black Movement to End Violence”
- Notebook, Pen/Pencil
- Already, our gathering has a guitarist, pianist and drummer. We welcome a flute and any other instruments.
- Your energy, humour, wisdom, and your precious self!

In Peace, Deborah Laforet

– on behalf of the DUCC Planning Team and Coordinating Committee

Added note from our Theme team on next page:

Sad News

It is with regret that we've recently learned that the Canadian Government denied Mable Kifwabantu, our theme speaker, a visitor visa in order to travel to Canada. Despite providing all the necessary documents proving that Mable has travelled extensively and always returned, in proper order, to Zambia AND that all of her costs were being covered by DUCC and the UCC, the visa officer stated that they were not satisfied that she would not overstay her visa.

To be clear, this outcome is not on Mable. Our General Council staff speculates that the decision had little to do with Mable herself and more about the number of visas granted per quarter. Mable's application arrived at the 'wrong' time.

The Theme team has approached Mable to seek ways to reorganize her presentations and facilitated discussions. While very disappointed, Mable is now working to provide us with videos and documents for the conference. As well, we've scheduled time for her to join via Zoom, god willing and the creek don't rise. 😊

So much of what we do as the diaconate - especially in the years since March 2020 - has been about adapting and meeting the needs of the moment. We are looking forward to sharing Mable's faith-filled extensive knowledge and expertise with all of you next month. See you in Kelowna! (Vicki on behalf of the DUCC 2026 Planning Team)