



Mount Seymour United Church

~ Nurturing Spirit ~ Being Community ~ Living Generously ~



2023

Annual Report



~ Nurturing Spirit
~ Being Community
~ Living Generously

LIVING THE CORE VALUES OF

- Trusting in the goodness of life.
- Treating ourselves, others and our world with grace and compassion.
- Honouring each individual's spiritual journey.
- Empowering people to claim their Spirit-given gifts.
- Striving to practise the way of Jesus.

The welcome we extend in this church is as broad and deep as we can make it. We welcome you wherever you are on life's journey, no matter how young or old you are, whatever your marital or economic status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, ethnic or cultural heritage. We welcome those who consider themselves to be Christians, those who are part of other faith traditions and all who seek to explore the mysteries of life and serve the ideals of compassion, justice and peace.

MOUNT SEYMOUR UNITED CHURCH

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

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COUNCIL CHAIR | MARY SPARKS



Mount Seymour is a busy vibrant place that continues to grow and respond to the needs of our community. I am so grateful to be a part of a church whose ministry has expanded far beyond Sunday services! We value the small groups like Pilgrim's Path, yoga and Men's and Women's breakfast that help us connect in deep and meaningful ways and foster a sense of belonging. Peter and Ellen Muirhead have helped bring us together with delicious meals. We continue to post our services online in order to serve members who are unable to attend a service as well as reach out to the wider community.

Like many churches, we are still recovering from the strain that Covid put on our resources. We are so grateful to all who support us financially. Over the past couple of years, the Kerr bequest has enabled us to maintain our level of service as well as look toward areas of growth. Three key areas of growth include the Café Space, Sacred Garden and Mental Health Ministry. In order to maintain this momentum, a small sub-committee of Council met throughout the year to discuss ways to manage our resources going forward. We spent time reviewing the work of our core ministry staff and considering ways we might redistribute their work in the coming years. We anticipate consulting with the congregation about this in the future.

The Thrift Shop continues to be a vibrant and important part of the Mount Seymour community. We thank Carla, our manager Alexis, assistant managers Rebecca and John and all the volunteers for their hard work. The café continues to grow and thrive bringing volunteers and community members together for conversation, fantastic coffee and delicious food. We so appreciate our café manager, Jenn Farrell and assistant manager Nayana Sunderam, whose hard work and expertise is integral to the success of the cafe. We are grateful to all who support this ministry, especially to Andrew and Nancy Stonkus who generously replaced our industrial dishwasher when the old one broke down.

During Covid, we realized that our outside space has the potential to be as important as our inside space. We started to dream of ways to welcome and support the spiritual growth of our community through a sacred garden. We worked with landscape architects, Leila Zeppelin and Catriona Hearn and a small group of interested church and community members to develop a plan which we have started to implement. Thanks to Mag Caron and Steve Wellenbrink, our entrance way has been transformed with a beautiful prayer wall, pillars and stone benches.

We are so blessed to have the talent and skill of our core ministry staff, Nancy and Carla. I know that I am not alone in feeling grateful for the inspired services that seem to give me exactly what I need. I cannot begin to name all the ways that they lead, support and inspire our community. But whether it is connecting with Thrift Shop volunteers, leading Pilgrims' Path, book study, or walking with us in the toughest times, we are truly grateful!

We were sad to say goodbye to Jenn Farrell, our office administrator at the end of 2023, and we are grateful for her contributions to our life together. We thank Katie Savoy and Isla Fraser Rae who welcome our children on Sunday mornings with warmth and kindness. Thanks to Daniel who faithfully tended the sound system this year. I so appreciate playing music with Julian, our inspired pianist and music minister. We continue to be touched by Marcus Mosely and Dominique Hogan's amazing musical gifts on Gospel Sundays. And we have been so grateful to Dominique for filling in while Julian was away. Carol Pettigrew and Brenda Fawkes have added beauty and artistry both inside and outside our church. Thank you all!

I want to acknowledge Ward Branch, Kathryn Ferriss, Kelly Nobles, Kirsten Harkins, Younes Skhissi, Lorna Leckie, Steve Wellenbrink, Heathir Naesgaard and Jen Towers, our committed members of Church Council. Thank you to Catherine Branch for all her support with the Ministry and Personnel Committee and to Steve who works so hard as head of the Property Committee.

As we look into 2024, I have an ever increasing gratitude for the blessings of our church and the ways that we are caring for our wider community. Thank you to all who volunteer and support Mount Seymour in so many ways.

With love and blessings to you all,

Mary Sparks

LEAD MINISTER | REV. NANCY TALBOT

“This too shall pass...”



Although not a biblical quote, some attribute the phrase “this too shall pass” to King Solomon. Whatever the origin, our Christian faith does promise that in every ending there is a new beginning and perhaps that is why as the worst of the pandemic passed us by in 2023, there was new life to notice and celebrate.

Last year we reported that the Council had three projects it was initiating to reach out to our community and soften the threshold of the church: A Sacred Garden, A Mental Health Ministry Initiative and The Café Project. After presenting our plan for a Sacred

Garden to the congregation in late May, we were happy to see some progress over the summer with the removal of the climbing equipment and fence around the playground. By the end of December we were prepping the front entrance of the church in anticipation of a new prayer wall and a refreshed oculus.

In September, the Mental Health Ministry team made a concerted effort to advertise the funds we had available for individuals in need of financial resources for counselling services. A well placed press release resulted in interviews with the North Shore news and CBC radio. Almost immediately we had inquiries about the program and were able to assist a number of people to find support for their mental health challenges.

Throughout the year, the Café continued to grow as we hired new staff, including an assistant manager and a young adult who came to us by way of The North Shore Foundry youth employment program. New customers continued to show up each week to try out the new food establishment in the neighbourhood. Many kept coming back week after week. Creating a place of belonging that feeds the body and the soul has proven to be a good idea for our community.

In addition to these “new things,” our Thrift Shop added 20 new volunteers this year while our sales continued to grow. New shoppers find their way to our doors each week not only in search of low cost gently used items but to find the same kind of welcome we strive to extend in all aspects of our life together.

In September, I was pleasantly surprised to discover that there were over a dozen people interested in becoming new members of our congregation. By the time we held our two membership Sundays in October and November that number had risen to 15. New faces have also appeared around our Council

table and on our Worship and Christian Development team. I see all of this as a sign that although the pandemic was a very challenging time for us, life we could not have anticipated has emerged on the other side.

Every new year brings change. In 2023 we were grateful to welcome Nayana Sunderam to our Café Ministry team. Her experience and skills in the kitchen provide quality and consistency to our operation. At the end of June, we were sad to say goodbye to our Children's Ministry Coordinator Ross Shearer but delighted that Katie Savoy and Isla Fraser Rae were willing to pick up where Ross left off when the children returned in September.

Heathir Naesgaard and Jen Towers were new faces around our Council table whose contributions have been a welcome addition to our team. Along with continuing members Mary Sparks, Kirsten Harkins, Ward Branch, Kathryn Ferriss, Younes Skhissi, Steve Wellenbrink, Kelly Nobles and Lorna Leckie they make thoughtful and sometimes difficult decisions on behalf of the church while keeping an eye on the big picture and planning for our future. Both Mary Sparks and Ward Branch will be leaving Council at the end of June 2024. We are indebted to them for their faithful service and ongoing commitment to the life of our church.

This year, the Ministry and Personnel Committee has worked especially hard to support me in my leadership and our staff in general. I offer them a particular word of thanks.

The Thrift Shop Leadership and Strategic Teams, the Property Team, Worship and Christian Development Team, Garden Team, Mental Health Team and all the individuals who volunteer in a variety of ways to "keep our ship afloat" ministering within and beyond our walls are such a blessing. You will read about their work throughout this report. I am so grateful for all the time and effort each one offers as well as your financial contributions that sustain us.

Our core staff team consisting of Carla, Alexis and Jenn worked tremendously hard throughout the year to serve our community. Our part time staff Cheryl, Ross, Katie, Isla, Dani, Marcus, Dominique, Julian, Rebecca, John, Nayana and Sabrina are highly valued for their excellent work with us. My heartfelt appreciation to each one.

Beyond Mount Seymour, I continued to serve on the Board of Naramata Center representing Treena Duncan, Executive Minister of Pacific Mountain Region until I completed my term in June. I did a very brief stint as Pastoral Charge Supervisor for Squamish United Church in August and September. I also continued to serve on the Fundraising Cabinet for the First Forward Campaign to redevelop First United Church. In November I was asked to serve on the Theme and Worship committee for the 2024 Annual General Meeting of the Region.

For my continuing education time this year I attended the Festival of Homiletics in Minneapolis. I also offered leadership for two nine day silent retreats at Rivendell Retreat Center on Bowen Island as part of my ongoing learning in spiritual direction.

Many new things are definitely springing up in our midst. It's the ongoing promise of God to make all things new. I give thanks for our ministry together and the privilege to serve our community.

Rev. Nancy Talbot

ASSOCIATE MINISTER | REV. CARLA WILKS



When I look back on 2023, I am inclined to say that it finally felt like we were back to our pre-Covid levels of activity. Some things evolved and changed. New things were developed. We were back to a bustling hub of daily activities.

One of the new projects we launched this year was the mental health project. This was begun as a project of the Kerr bequest. Anyone from the North Shore can apply for this funding to help ease the financial burden of private therapy and long wait times for publicly funded therapy. The program funds eight sessions of private therapy with an opportunity for eight additional sessions if needed. This Mount Seymour United Church program has supported 8 people on the North Shore in 2023 to receive therapy. This is a project that quietly happens in the background of church life, but it has been life changing for some of the applicants.

One of the highlights for me this year was when Ilham Abdalrazeq, the Palestinian woman we met and offered some help and advocacy to, whose husband was a journalist unable to leave Gaza, was reunited with her husband, Nabil, after five years apart. He came to Canada in the spring after a lengthy but successful application process, and we had the opportunity to meet and hear from Nabil in the fall.

The Thrift Shop continued to be open three days a week – Thursday, Friday and Saturday, with the new café also being open those days as well. New volunteers joined our Thrift Shop team and we had a few retirements as well. The Shop was in the very capable hands of our Manager Alexis Doss, along with Assistant Managers, Rebecca Gabriel and John Andreychuk. I have worked with the leadership team who helps to manage the day to day operations and I led the strategic planning team, who is keeping an eye on the big picture goals of the shop. I am so grateful for the commitment and dedication of the volunteers that put in many hours and their hearts into making the thrift shop what it is. It is such a joy for me to see

the community, friendship and support that has been created and nurtured for these many years among the volunteers and shop customers.

Book studies continued to be sources of beautiful conversations and learning, with Brene Brown's Atlas of the Heart during Lent, and then another in our Indigenous Book Study series - Truth Telling by Michelle Good in the fall.

Our family board games night had a faithful few in the first half of the year who enjoyed our time together, but we took a break from monthly gatherings in the fall, and we had a successful Christmas afternoon of games during the holidays.

Our monthly meditation night continued throughout the year with a lovely group of participants gathering both in the sanctuary and online, with meaningful conversations and opportunity to meditate together in community.

This year, separate from but as a complement to ministry at MSUC, I answered the call to chaplaincy in the Canadian Armed Forces and became the Chaplain for the Seaforth Highlanders of Canada. My continuing education time and vacation and some of my spare time was spent this year doing leadership training for chaplaincy, completing Basic Military Officer Qualifications and participating in a battlefield tour to Italy. The training and the work I have done so far with the Seaforth Highlanders has really been an affirmation of my passion for ministry and love of people.

As a United Church minister, we have a responsibility to the wider church, and so this year in my wider church work I continued to serve on the Lay Leadership Support Committee and was also asked to serve on the transition team at Lynn Valley United Church.

2023 was another year of being a place of community and connection in our neighbourhood. It is a privilege to be doing ministry with you, and I want to express my gratitude for each one of you who contributes to making Mount Seymour such a special place. I am grateful for the many ways that you share your gifts and your faith and life journeys in this place. I am so blessed to be working in such a supportive ministry team with Nancy, and with such a dedicated staff, Council and group of volunteers. I pray that God will guide us toward even more meaningful ministry in our community and beyond in the year ahead.

With Gratitude,

Rev. Carla

THRIFT SHOP MANAGER | ALEXIS DOSS

Mount Seymour United Church Thrift Shop: A Year of Community Impact and Growth



As I reflect on the past year, I am filled with gratitude for the remarkable journey we have embarked on together, achieving milestones that have not only shaped our growth but have also deepened our commitment to serving the community with dedication and compassion.

I want to take a moment to express my deepest gratitude for the unwavering support and kindness that was shown to me during one of the most challenging times of my life.

In May 2023, when I faced the unimaginable loss of my brother, your support and willingness of the volunteers to step in for me during the time when I couldn't be there due to overwhelming grief meant more to me than words can express. Your presence and care were a beacon of light during my darkest days, and I will forever be grateful for your compassion and understanding.

Your actions truly embodied the essence of community, nurturing, and giving. The way you rallied around me and lifted me up during a time of such profound sorrow has left an indelible mark on my heart. Your kindness and support have made a lasting impact on me, and I am so thankful to have you all as a part of my life.

Thank you for being there for me when I needed it most. Your generosity and empathy have touched me in ways I cannot fully articulate. I am blessed to have such a wonderful MSUC family, and I cherish each and every one of you.

Highlights of 2023

Fundraising Triumphs

In 2023, our Thrift Shop's fundraising efforts were nothing short of extraordinary. We raised an impressive \$47,466 for First United to support their programs and advocacy work in order to ensure that those in need receive the assistance and care they deserve. This is a testament to the generosity and support of our community.

Sales Soar

Our total sales in 2023 reached a record-breaking \$319,773, a clear indication of the unwavering support and trust bestowed upon us by our patrons. Furthermore, our Craigslist sales exceeded \$5,000 in 2023, showcasing our adaptability and innovative approach to reaching a wider audience.

Digital Expansion

We expanded our social media presence with 520 Instagram followers and 753 Facebook followers. The launch of a dedicated Craigslist Instagram page is growing, with 66 followers so far and has allowed us to connect with our community in new and engaging ways, fostering stronger relationships and outreach.

Team Resilience

John and Rebecca's dedication and commitment to our mission have been unwavering, contributing significantly to our continued success. With the welcoming of 20 new volunteers, our team now stands at 135 strong, each member playing a vital role in our operations and impact.

Sustainability and Community Support

Our commitment to sustainability was evident through our active recycling initiatives, minimizing waste and environmental impact. Moreover, our steadfast support for community organizations such as Yarn for Prayer Shawls and North Shore Youth Safe House exemplifies our holistic approach to community service, ensuring that we make a meaningful difference in the lives of those around us.

Celebrating Our Volunteers

We extend our deepest gratitude to all our volunteers. Their unwavering commitment and passion embody the spirit of community and camaraderie that defines our organization, enriching the lives of all who walk through our doors.

Giving and events for 2023

- Christmas gift certificates to the Lions Housing Society and the Tsleil-Waututh Nation.
- The Thrift Shop supported 5 refugee families with goods.
- Continued our support of household goods to Shelter to Home.
- Donated baby equipment to Mamas to Mamas and North Shore moms' groups.
- Summer community fair in partnership with Cedar Springs.
- Bonus Christmas shop day in partnership with Cedar Springs.
- Annual grad sale
- Antique market exhibit in Lonsdale.

As we look ahead to the future, the Mount Seymour United Church Thrift Shop remains steadfast in its mission to explore new avenues for growth, impact, and community engagement. Together, we will

continue to uplift and support those in need, spreading kindness and compassion throughout our neighbourhood and beyond.

To our supporters, volunteers, and community members, we express our deepest appreciation for your continued support and belief in our mission. Your contributions have been instrumental in our growth and success, and we are honoured to stand alongside you as we strive to make a positive difference in the world.

Thank you to the members of the Leadership Team who help with day-to-day operations, working through shop issues and coordination of events: Jill Greengrass, Irene Huva, Ginny Lovelidge, Maja Regehr, Toni Rivera, Mavis Simmons, Eileen Wegwitz, Judy White, Gail Whitney, Alexis Doss and Rev. Carla Wilks.

Thank you to the Strategic Planning Team, who look at the longer term goals and bigger picture issues of the shop: Roger Brain, Kim Branch, Dale Kobewka, Judy White, Gail Whitney and Rev. Carla Wilks.

With heartfelt thanks and warm regards,
Alexis Doss, Manager, MSUC Thrift Shop

MINISTRY & PERSONNEL | CATHERINE BRANCH

Mount Seymour is very lucky to have such a dedicated group working with and for us every day.

Ministry

Rev. Nancy Talbot continues to provide outstanding leadership and oversight, supervision to our ministry team and lay staff, worship, pastoral care, faith formation and spiritual practices to our church community. Is there anything that she can't do!!

Rev. Carla Wilks, has been working diligently and pastorally supervising the volunteers and staff in the Thrift Shop, engaging with the local community, leading worship, book study and the meditation group. This year she has also taken on a chaplaincy in the military, which training and travel she has brought home to us in sermons, teaching and management. Carla – we salute you!!

In September, we hired Katie Savoy and Isla Fraser Rae who have been minding our children's group and leading them in the Godly Play program. How lucky are we to have the children we raised giving back to the next group of children?!

Music

Julian Pattison remains our Music Minister. He leads our worship three Sundays a month with a selection of moving, meaningful and joyous music and we are so grateful to have him. While family issues required him to take a leave of absence this Fall, we were blessed to have our Gospel Choir accompanist and former music director, Dominique Hogan, fill in the gap. We are so grateful to have her.

Marcus Mosely and Dominique Hogan are back with our much-loved Gospel Choir Sundays ten times per year. Gospel Sundays are a source of joy for many in our congregation and Marcus and Dominique share their talents with us with grace.

Thrift Shop

Alexis Doss, our fearless Thrift Shop Manager, has kept the Shop running like clockwork and taken on new ways of reaching out to the community. We are lucky to hire summer students through a Federal government employment grant each year and this was no exception. Alexis has taken this program for students and expanded it beyond just work experience. She has programming for the students to make it a more enriching experience.

We have been very lucky to have Rebecca Gabriel and John Andreychuk join us as Assistant Managers. We now have twice the flexibility to cover holidays and other absences.

Café

In our new café, we were grateful for the initiative of Jenn Farrell who played a large role in getting the project started. We are now running three days per week – Thursday, Friday and Saturday – over the lunch hour.

Nayana Sunderam is our wonderful head chef. Qualified as a Red Seal chef and a nutritionist, she brings her creativity, organization, ability to work on a budget and inclusion of volunteers to make this enterprise function!! And ask anyone who has eaten there – the food is amazing!!

We also have a junior worker in Sabrina Guistano. She is an extremely hard worker and is enjoyed by all.

Administration

Jenn Farrell has worked away, both in her office and out! Her main role is as our office administrator, creating PowerPoints for Sunday, putting together the e-news weekly, upkeeping the website and then taking care of all of the other office items and financial paperwork that comes across her desk. Outside

of the office, she took on a contract to get our Café up and running! She used her skills in food management to help get the kitchen ready, staff in place and everything started. She did the baking. Cheryl Shott continues as our bookkeeper. While she is travelling a lot in her semi-retirement, she is in touch and working when we need her.

Thank you so much to the Ministry and Personnel team this year: Michelle Coulombe, Kirsten Harkins, and Dale Kobewka and a special thank you to Kirsten for attending Council meetings on our Committee's behalf.

Catherine Branch

Chair, Ministry and Personnel Committee

WORSHIP AND CHRISTIAN DEVELOPMENT

After all the adjustments we had to make due to Covid-19 over the past several years, 2023 felt like a bit of a return to normal.

We started the year once again with our tradition of distributing star gift words on Epiphany Sunday. The sharing about how individual star gifts had guided people in the previous year was truly inspiring. We spent the rest of the season learning about the National United Church's strategic plan with weekly themes around Bold Discipleship, Daring Justice and Deep Spirituality. A highlight was a visit from Russell and Charlene Burns who came from Alberta to speak with us about the work of the National Indigenous Church. The following Sunday we were blessed to have Alexis Doss share her personal history with us during our annual Black History Month celebration with our Gospel Choir.

On Mardi Gras (the eve of Ash Wednesday) we hosted our first Pancake Supper in a few years. Thanks to our excellent cooks Morgan and Susan Wilks for helping in the kitchen. This was followed by an Ash Wednesday service the next day to launch our Lenten series "Looking for Love." On Lent One we were grateful to be able to engage in spiritual practice stations once again. Our theme was expanded by a book study of Brene Brown's "Atlas of the Heart." Rev. Carla and Rev. Nancy hosted both online and in-person gatherings for discussion.

After a rousing Easter service featuring Marcus Mosely and the Gospel Choir, we settled into our most popular series of the year "Emerge." Using the process of metamorphosis a caterpillar goes through to become a butterfly, we reflected on our own transformative life experiences. We were grateful to have Marc Coulombe and Kathryn Ferriss step in for one Sunday during this series when both Rev. Carla and Rev. Nancy ended up being on study leave at the same time due to an unexpected opportunity that

arose for Carla. They did an excellent job! On Pentecost we engaged in spiritual practice stations relating to the ways we had emerged and been made new during the Easter season and how we might share our gifts with the world.

In June we were delighted to have the Rev. Wade Lifton return to lead worship while Nancy and Carla were away at the Pacific Mountain Region Annual Meeting. We also hosted our annual barbecue Sunday and ended the “year” with a Gospel Choir worship service.

During the summer season of “Ordinary Time” Nancy and Carla preached lectionary based sermons, and the pattern of our services followed a simpler format. As summer drew to a close, the weather finally cooperated for our annual Labour Day Sunday outdoor worship service at Cates Park. It was a great day to launch our season of Creation during which we worshiped with the Oceans, Cosmos, Storms and Fauna.

On the Sunday closest to the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, we were honoured to have Billy Harasymow speak to us about his Metis heritage and his work on the Church’s National Indigenous Council. The next week, during our all-ages Thanksgiving service we launched a series called “Come to the Table” in which we explored the various meanings of our communion liturgy through Tables of Hospitality, Love, Grace, Peace and Joy. Our Table of Grace Sunday included welcoming twelve new members to our community: eight who joined by profession of faith; five who transferred memberships from other United Churches; and one who was baptized.

We were proud to have our newly minted Captain the Rev. Carla Wilks lead worship on Remembrance Day in her Seaforth Highlanders uniform. Her reflections on her experiences with the military along with the music of the Gospel Choir made for a meaningful service. On the official last day of the church year (Reign of Christ Sunday) we welcomed another group of new members: two by profession of faith and one who was baptized. We were also grateful that day to hear from various members of our community about their financial stewardship.

Our Advent theme was a repeat of the popular “Angels Among Us” series. Each week the scriptures were dramatized by Tierney Ness, Brenda Fawkes, Marc Coulombe, Steve Wellenbrink and Jolene Verdicchio, who helped bring the various angel visitation stories in the Bible to life. On Peace Sunday we welcomed Ilham and Nabil Abdalrazeq to light our Advent wreath and share their experiences with us as Palestinians longing for peace between Israel and Palestine.

We offered our annual Blue Christmas service in conjunction with the Caring Connections Team.

We had two services on Christmas Eve. The first for young children and their families included a pageant with several of our youngest members participating. The 7pm service featured several stories of “Angels

Among Us” including Ann Kerr who left a bequest to the church, Heather Macdonald who has been an angel of hope to countless refugees and Jeff Smith who has brought joy through justice with his work in East Timor and Western Sahara. Our Christmas Choir headed by Catherine Branch with Kelly Nobles accompanying did a beautiful job relaying angelic messages through music. Their many hours of rehearsal definitely paid off.

Carla led the gathered community in reflecting on the year that was ending and the one to begin as we finished off 2023.

Adult Faith Formation

The Meditation Group, led by Rev. Carla, met both in person and via zoom once a month from January to June and September to December. Thank you to Heather Fleming who filled in for Carla when she was away for military training in the fall.

Pilgrims’ Path, led by Rev. Nancy, met monthly to worship and engage in Spiritual Practices. Together they explored Lectio and Visio Divina, Centering Prayer, Imaginative Contemplation, Mandala making, Soul Collage and Dream analysis. They held day-long retreats in January, June and October. There were 24 participants enrolled in Pilgrims’ Path this year.

Healing Yoga was offered on Monday evenings by Kirsten Harkins. Donations for the United Church Healing Fund in support of Residential School Survivors were collected each week. Thank you to Kirsten for offering this ministry which reaches out to the community and supports a worthy cause.

Online and in-person book discussion groups were offered during the seasons of Lent and Advent. During Lent we read “Atlas of the Heart” by Brene Brown and for Advent we read “The Angels of Christmas” by Susan Robb.

In the Spring, Rev. Nancy led a discussion group around the spirituality of aging based on Parker Palmer’s book “On the Brink of Everything.” In the Fall, Rev. Carla led an Indigenous Book Study gathering on Michelle Good’s latest book “Truth Telling: Seven Conversations about Indigenous Life in Canada.”

Rev. Nancy offered a four session Seekers Group in September for those wanting to become full members of the church.

Children and Youth

From January to June, Ross Shearer continued to coordinate our Children's Ministry each Sunday. Using the Godly Play and Holy Moly curriculums, Ross provided a safe and supportive environment for children to explore their faith. We are very grateful for his time with us.

Ross was always keen to participate in our Games Nights which provided an opportunity for people of all ages to come together and have fun. Carla and Billy Harasymow hosted monthly games nights in the first half of the year and again during the Christmas holidays.

In the summer months, a variety of our youth took turns welcoming the children who came to worship and engaging them in both indoor and outdoor play.

With only a few children attending on Sundays, in September we decided to resource our children's program in a new way. Katie Savoy was hired to lead our children's community program on Sunday mornings beginning in September and then in October she was joined by Isla Fraser Rae. Both Katie and Isla were trained to tell stories using the Godly Play curriculum. Each Sunday, Rev. Nancy chooses a story for them to go with our theme. Katie prepares to lead the story ahead of time and on Sundays Isla comes to help on site. This not only provides a quality program for our children, it helps our youth hone and share their leadership gifts. Thank you to Katie and Isla for their commitment and to everyone who has helped out in the Children's Community this year.

Music Ministry

We are so blessed at Mount Seymour with wonderful musicians. Julian Pattison, our primary music leader has such a gift for interpreting the worship experience and expressing it through music. His music supports, uplifts and inspires our worship experience from beginning to end. Marcus Mosely and Dominique Hogan led us one Sunday per month as well as leading the drop-in Gospel Choir. Marcus' energy through his voice and presence, and Dominique's style and support on the piano brings the Gospel Choir alive and brings the congregation to their feet. Marcus and Dominique were regularly joined by Dan Morrison on drums, and many Sundays Mary Sparks beautifully accompanied the music on her flute. In the summer, we had a roster of musicians, including Ruth Townsend, Sean Bayntun, Dominique Hogan and Arielle Balance. In November, Julian took a temporary leave of absence from his position at the church, and Dominique generously stepped in and played most Sundays. Thank you also to the Rev. Blair Odney, Marc and Michelle Coulombe and Diane Lines for filling in when Dominique was unavailable. On Christmas Eve we had a lovely ensemble who sang, including Heather Andrews, Catherine Branch, Tierney Ness and a friend, and Mary Sparks, and they were accompanied by Kelly

Nobles. Thank you to all our musicians, who share their gifts and support our worship in such an important way.

Audio Visual

Dani Durland has done a great job running the power point and sound system on Sunday mornings throughout the year. Sheida Canary filled in for Dani on occasion as did Heather Wilks. Angela Wilks continued to edit the video recording of our services from Waterloo, Ontario where she attends university. This allows people not able to be with us in person to watch the service online after it has been posted.

Our weekly worship services and faith formation programs are planned and executed by a small but dedicated team made up of staff and most importantly, volunteers. Carol Pettigrew continues to enhance our worship experiences through beautiful visual displays based on each season's themes. This year she was assisted by Lisa Williams. Kathryn Ferriss makes sure we have bread to share and cups to bless for communion each month. Carol Ballard has been a great help in offering guidance and input for our children's programs. To each of you who has said "yes" to reading scripture, sharing a story about your life of faith, serving communion or lighting the Advent wreath, singing a duet, solo or in our Gospel or Christmas choirs, we say thank you for enriching our worshipping life. To Jocelyne Cottier and our greeters who do such a wonderful job of welcoming us each Sunday and then grabbing people to help take up the offering, we offer our heartfelt appreciation. Thanks also to our "alumni" who returned home at Christmas and so willingly stepped into the roles of greeting, lighting candles and taking up the offering.

Respectfully submitted by Rev. Nancy on behalf of the worship team: Kathryn Ferriss, Carol Pettigrew, Carol Ballard, Lisa Williams, Julian Pattison, Rev. Carla Wilks and Ross Shearer

MISSION AND OUTREACH

Throughout 2023 we participated in a number of outreach projects. In February we had a team in the Coldest Night of the Year walk. We raised money for First United Church and walked 5km together through downtown.

We were involved in some advocacy and support for a local Palestinian refugee, Ilham, who finally was reunited after five years separated from her husband, Nabil, who was a journalist in Gaza, whose life

was in danger and was living under constant threat for his writings against Hamas. We had Nabil speak with the congregation in the fall about his experience and his wish for peace in their homeland.

Our Thrift Shop continues to be a significant place where outreach to the community happens. We provide goods in need to a number of organizations. On several occasions in 2023 we provided goods for some families in need who were new to Canada and for families who had experienced loss of income. We continue to donate good used clothing and bedding to organizations in the Downtown Eastside.

In September we had a table at Parkgate Days. We had some great opportunities to share about Mount Seymour United's programs and activities to members of the community, and hear about Mount Seymour's impact and community focused reputation from members of the wider community.

In 2023 once again we participated in the Blueridge Cares Christmas hamper program. We provided Thrift Shop gift certificates to all of the individuals who were supported by the hamper program.

Our Giving Tree was a success again in 2023, with many items collected for both Hollyburn Family Services (North Shore Youth Safe House) and First United Church.

Thank you for remaining committed to the ways that we reach out to the community beyond our walls and help to make a difference in people's lives. If you would like to join a group of people who want to look at ways to reach out in our community, please let Rev. Carla know.

Submitted by Rev. Carla

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

Sunday Morning Coffee

We have enjoyed coffee and tea served out of our café window each Sunday. Sometimes there are even leftover café goodies for purchase by donation. Thank you to everyone who stays to drink the coffee and tea and for the ones who seek out new people to talk to and welcome. Thank you to everyone who comes in early on Sunday mornings to make coffee and tea and stays to clean up afterward. Thank you to Pat Wall who coordinates the Sunday morning coffee team.

Sunday Lunches

On Shrove Tuesday in February we had our annual Pancake Supper, with pancakes and sausages cooked by Susan and Morgan Wilks. In February we had our first annual Chili Cook-off. We had about 13 entries, with the winners earning the first spot on the new trophy. The winning team was Sharon,

Roger, Becky, and Melanie. In April, Peter and Ellen Muirhead hosted our AGM lunch with their lamb and ham specialty (with vegan options). Our Church Picnic in June was coordinated by our Council, and it was enjoyed by many. In October we had a congregational lunch of soup and cornbread, hosted by our Café team. Peter and Ellen hosted a well attended annual Turkey Lunch fundraiser in November.

Gathering around tables with good food, great company and meaningful conversations helps us to deepen our community and get to know each other better. Thank you to everyone who helped with lunches throughout the year.

Men's and Women's Breakfast

Both groups have seen growth during 2023 welcoming new members into their fold. The women meet in the café space on Saturday mornings for coffee and the men meet on Thursdays and purchase their breakfast from the Café. Men's and Women's Breakfast are the longest standing groups at the church. The mutual support and belonging they offer one another is a vital part of our ministry.

Caring Connections Team

The team, made up of Ruth Townsend, Sherrill McLeary, Judy Frey, Mardi Joughin, Jen-Beth Fulton, Carla Wilks and Nancy Talbot, meet once a month. In between meetings they pray for, phone, visit, deliver prayer shawls and send cards to people in need. They offer hospitality for our Blue Christmas service and deliver poinsettias to those who live in care homes or those who have had a challenging year. Carla also oversees Meal Trains as needed.

Prayer Shawl Ministry

Judy Frey coordinates this ministry. She ensures that there is wool available for knitters and organizes the shawls that have been made. Thank you to Judy and to everyone who has donated wool, knit and delivered shawls to those in need of care.

The Library

Since moving to the hallway in front of the offices, the library has seen much greater use. Thank you to Sharon Brain and the volunteers who keep up the library with well curated books, who assist in returning books to the proper sections and adding new books as needed.

Quilt and Art Shows

In April 2023 we had a beautiful collection of quilts and fabric art on display in our north narthex. These quilts were lovingly made by Fay Butterfield, Lima Branch and Carol Pettigrew. We are grateful to them for lending us these precious works of art for display and for sharing the stories about their creation.

Later in the year we had a fantastic display of a collection of paintings by Brenda Cross and Stan Joughin.

Thank you to the artists and also to Sharon Brain for the creation of these beautiful events, spotlighting some talented artists in our midst.

PROPERTY | STEVE WELLENBRINK

2023 Highlights

It was the year of the door: doors that wouldn't open, doors that didn't close properly, and doors that slammed shut noisily. We managed to get a contractor to repair the North Narthex sticky door issue (fire marshall #1 issue), and by the end of the year we had all the parts to repair the rest of the door issues.

For those of you who have seen the light, perhaps it is because we had Boillieu Electric replace all the parking lot light fixtures with nice, bright, energy saving LED fixtures that are longer lasting and use a fraction of the power.

We switched snow removal/salt contractors for winter 2023/24. Ray Contracting is a local company that is providing us with better service and lower cost. They service Parkgate Shopping Centre very early in the morning, so we are perfectly located to be taken care of when they are already in the neighbourhood.

The dishwasher was replaced this year. It served us well for over 30 years and didn't owe us anything. It was replaced with the same make and model as the original so as to avoid modifications to the kitchen. The costs were completely funded by a very generous donation by Andrew and Nancy Stonkus.

Holland Landscapers provided biweekly landscape maintenance starting in 2023. They proved to be very efficient and professional. They are typically on site every second Friday at about midday. Thank you to the dedicated team of volunteer gardeners, who bring a personal touch to our lovely gardens.

Wheelchair access to the Southeast corner of our parking lot was achieved with some alterations to the curb and path. Also, chain link fences and the playground equipment were removed.

By the end of the year we had finalized the decision to hire Sharpe Sound Studios of North Vancouver to provide upgrades to the sound system. We look forward to this occurring in early 2024.

November 18 was fall cleanup day. Thank you to all the fantastic volunteers who gave up a Saturday to put a little extra shine and polish on our lovely building.

Kindly,

MSUC 2023 Property Team

Steve Wellenbrink, Heathir Naesgaard, Brenda Fawkes, Frank Luba, Jocelyne Cottier, Jenn Farrell (ex-officio)

RENTALS

In addition to the many church-related activities taking place in our church building, many community groups rent our facilities on either an ongoing or occasional basis.

Concerts, Rehearsals, and Recitals

- Windsor Secondary School
- Seycove Secondary School
- Marcus Mosely Chorale & Roxie Giles
- Little Mountain Brass Band
- Bursting with Broadway
- Universal Gospel Choir
- Ambleside Orchestra
- Harmony Mountain Singers
- North Shore Chamber Choir
- Lions Gate Youth Orchestra
- Deep Cove Music
- Small Private Music Recitals

Annual General Meetings

- Parkgate Manor
- Alliance Realty

Community Groups

- 11th Seymour Scout Group
- Fresh Air Learning
- Wonderkids
- Small Family Dinners

Ongoing Rentals & Partnerships

- Deep Cove Coffee House
- Lynn Valley Gardening Club
- Comfort in the Cove
- ManOToMasih Iranian Farsi Church

TREASURER'S REPORT | WARD BRANCH

We have finally shedded the major effects of the COVID virus, but we still have some lingering symptoms. This Annual Report contains the 2023 financial results and delivers our 2024 budget.

2023 Income Statement and Balance Sheet

The bottom-line news is positive to the extent that we did somewhat better than we projected last year, although that means that we were running a \$121,000 cash flow deficit rather than the projected \$180,000. This is not a crisis situation, in that we are able to draw down on the large Kerr Fund to support our efforts. Even after this deficit, the Kerr Fund still sits at about \$916,000 at year end.

Our revenue side was a mixed bag. Our regular givings appear to have plateaued. We were hoping for another increase, but it did not happen. On a more positive note, revenue from the Thrift Shop has thankfully continued its year-over-year increases within its larger space and with more staff support. Rental income was also back up over \$10,000 for the first time since the pandemic.

Our expenses are relatively controlled. There were no new staff hirings this year. However, we did have some unexpected shocks, such as an incredible increase in the cost of snow removal and a major jump in our janitorial expenses. We are taking steps to bring down both those line items for the upcoming year.

2024 Budget

We are not proposing any material changes to our ministries for the upcoming year. We are projecting stable revenue, which history tells us we may be able to beat given the Thrift Shop's history of doing such amazing work. This "stand pat" budget means that we will run a deficit again next year. However, the projected deficit support from the Kerr Fund will still leave the Fund over \$800,000 at year-end. The council is still committed to coming back to the congregation before the Kerr Fund goes below \$800,000. It does look like we will hit this level by the time of our next 2025 Annual General Meeting. We will have to decide at that time whether we want to simply re-adjust whether we need to keep that large a sum reserved or whether we'd be comfortable with a somewhat lower number, such as \$500,000. If no

change is made to our targeted reserve, we will have to make major cuts to our regular ministries. But that is a problem for next year!

Off to one side from our regular operating expenses, we will also be continuing with our special projects. Our Mental Health counselling support will be allocated a further \$10,000 from a special gift this year, which should be adequate given the demand on the program to date. We have already used the Kerr Fund to give about \$10,000 towards the construction of our wonderful Prayer Wall. We also hope to implement Phase 2 of our Sacred Garden project, but we will withdraw the estimated \$30,000 in funds required from the separate Memorial Fund. We are also withdrawing \$10,000 from our separate Sabbatical Fund to cover the additional expenses associated with Reverend Carla's planned sabbatical away from us this year.

Our bookkeeper, Cheryl Shott, continues to do tremendous work keeping our financial house in order. She is assisted by our office administrator, who writes the cheques and handles our day-to-day banking. Our capable counters, Verna Wilson, Doreen Habkirk, Gladys Johnston, and Marlene Plezia, help ensure that our givings are well recorded. Donna Pawluk continues to complete our weekly deposits. Doug Querns has seamlessly moved into Fay Butterfield's long-time role as our Envelope Secretary. We thank them all for their service.

Ward Branch, Treasurer

SPECIAL PROJECTS

The Café Project

One of the most exciting developments at the church this year was the continued growth of our café project. The café was launched in the fall of 2022 to create a place of community and belonging while providing reasonably priced, nutritious food and drink. It has also had a goal of providing work opportunities for students and those who are hard to employ. The positive response of the community to this project has kept us on our toes in this first full year of operation. Many adjustments have been needed to accommodate both the challenges and opportunities running the café has presented.

Jenn Farrell served as our Manager in charge of operations as well as providing delicious baking on a weekly basis. In January, we hired Nayana Sunderam, a Red Seal Chef, to run the kitchen during operating hours. We also moved from being open 11 to 3pm on Thursday, Friday and Saturday (when the Thrift Shop is open), to adding an extra hour in the morning, to open from 10 to 3pm. This has allowed us to take advantage of an extra hour of sales each day while lunch is being prepped.

One of the biggest challenges we faced this year was how to move the café towards sustainability when only open three days a week. Jenn and Nayana started offering take-out sales where folks could pre-order a whole quiche (or other items) for their meal at home. These “off sales” reached a peak during Thanksgiving and Christmas when patrons responded favourably to the opportunity to purchase baking for their various celebrations. The Mother’s Day High Tea, attended by over 30 customers, was also a popular event. We were grateful to receive a donation to make tickets available for those who might not otherwise be able to attend. The café staff also provided catering for a variety of rental and church groups as well as for Memorial Services. On the Thursday before Christmas, one of the last days the café was open in 2023, Ruth Townsend and her Parkgate Singers hosted a Christmas Carol Sing-along providing an extra measure of cheer for our customers.

We were grateful to continue to receive financial support from the Kerr Bequest and the Pacific Mountain Region of the Church this year. We also applied for and received a grant from the United Church National Seeds of Hope Fund. In addition to these sources, we were very pleased to develop a relationship with Vancouver Coastal Health and The North Shore Foundry who provided funding for us to hire a young adult for three months as part of one of their work placement programs. We appreciated receiving a couple of financial donations from individuals who have wanted to show their support for the project.

The café has welcomed many “regulars” who come every week for coffee or lunch, and we get new patrons every week as well. Some people call it the best kept secret in town! We are grateful for their support.

We would not be able to run the café without the dedication of our volunteer team including Sylvia Keith, Dennis Shaw, Mavis Simmons, Gurmeet Kubicek, Jen Monahan and Heathir Naesgaard. In addition to these volunteers, Sabrina Guistano has been our faithful paid student helper in the kitchen each Saturday. It’s been great to watch her develop her skills through this experience. Thanks to all our staff, volunteers and customers for contributing to the success of the café this year.

If you haven’t had a chance yet, stop by for lunch or coffee and some fresh baking! Bring your friends!

Submitted by Rev. Nancy, Ministry Staff support for the Café Project

Sacred Garden Project

The Sacred Garden Team met a total of 6 times in 2023. In May we presented the Landscape Concept Plan to the congregation prepared for us by landscape artists Leila Zeppelin and Catriona Hearn who we contracted in 2022 to help with the project. The guiding principles of the plan include utilizing natural

materials and indigenous species, enabling activity and contemplation, encouraging communication on many levels and recreating outside the building what goes on inside the building. Suggested areas for development include a nature play area, an improved Thrift Shop precinct, a community commons and labyrinth, a contemplative grove, a permanent prayer wall and refreshed oculus in the entranceway and the beautification of the area immediately outside the sanctuary windows. Thank you to Mag Caron for creating a three dimensional version of this presentation in our foyer.

In the summer, Steve Wellenbrink brought in members of his staff to remove the fencing around the playground in preparation for the nature play area that will eventually inhabit that area. We were delighted that we were able to donate our playground equipment to the River Woods Co-op.

Steve and Mag spent time in the fall researching possibilities for a new garden shed as well as materials for the prayer wall and oculus. In November we asked Holland Landscapers to provide a quote for completing work on the entranceway portion of our project (also called Phase 1) early in 2024.

Thank you to everyone who has given time to the project this year and to those who have added words of encouragement, enthusiasm and support. As the project continues, we welcome those who wish to join us and share their passion for creating sacred spaces.

The core team for this project includes Mag Caron, Steve Wellenbrink, Pam McFarlane, Mary Sparks, Kirsten Harkins, Tierney Ness, Rev. Nancy and members of Council as they are able to join us. We are grateful to Alexis Doss, various Thrift Shop volunteers, Rev. Carla and members of the regular gardening team for their willingness to provide input as the project unfolds. Thanks to the Kerr Bequest for financial support.

Submitted by Rev. Nancy on behalf of the team

Mental Health Ministry

Mount Seymour United Church is committed to supporting the mental health of our community.

In that respect, we have identified a gap in the availability of counselling for those suffering from mental health challenges, particularly given the limitations on the extent to which counselling is covered by public or private insurance plans.

To assist in remedying this problem, last year Mount Seymour United Church created a pilot project to fund various initiatives, including financial assistance to support individuals who are seeking therapy. In 2023 we had a mental health talk, where we learned about mental health supports for children and youth on the North Shore. We also supported eight individuals by funding up to 16 sessions of therapy for each of them. The Mental Health Project team consists of Rev. Carla, Ward Branch, Tierney Ness,

Laura Staude and Mary Sparks. There is more information, a collection of mental health resources and an application for the project on the church website.

Submitted by Rev. Carla on behalf of the team: Ward Branch, Tierney Ness, Mary Sparks and Laura Staude

PACIFIC MOUNTAIN REGION | STEVE WELLENBRINK

The 2023 annual general meeting of the Pacific Mountain Region (PMRC) was held in Abbotsford June 1-4 at the campus of the University of the Fraser Valley. I attended in person, representing MSUC, along with Nancy and Carla. The theme was Refining Fire: Living Stones, and was presented by the keynote speaker Rev. Dr. Jacqui Lewis. Her church in New York literally burnt to the ground, and much of her theme came from the amazing transformational things/learnings that happened as a result of that fire. The lesson for us is that our United Church of decades past has burnt down. “The Comfortable Pew” of the sixties no longer exists. That refining fire will yield precious gifts/tools/structures for us to use in our evolving ministries. Perhaps her message could be partly that you need endings before you get new beginnings with new, exciting opportunities and challenges for this United Church of ours.

From the national church, we received Remit 1: Establishing an Autonomous National Indigenous Organization for our consideration as a pastoral charge. This is a Category 3 remit, so rather than a congregational vote, it required a vote by Council. MSUC Council voted in favour of the remit prior to the March 31, 2024 deadline. More information on this critical remit for our work in reconciliation with our Indigenous siblings in Christ can be found at generalcouncil44.ca .

Throughout the year PMR staff have continued to provide resources to support the wide diversity of ministries within PMRC. You can learn all about PMRC by exploring their website pacificmountain.ca . They all work very hard on our behalf, and we are grateful.

Kindly,

Steve Wellenbrink

MSUC PMRC lay representative

PASSAGES

We Remember

- James (Jim) Mateer Andrews (July 19, 1949 to April 9, 2023) service May 5, 2023
- Hana McGiverin (April 13, 1971 to July 27, 2023) service September 9, 2023
- Marga Catharina Johanna Dowling (June 27, 1949 to September 1, 2023) service October 14, 2023
- Elizabeth Ann Preston (October 3, 1934 to October 18, 2023) service December 13, 2023
- Nancy Anne Stonkus (January 3, 1957 to December 5, 2023) service will be held in 2024

Celebrations

Church Membership

Through Baptism

- Carol Lee Mayfield Clamp
- Jennifer Crawford

by Reaffirmation of Baptismal Vows

- Jocelyne Duquette Cottier
- Michelle Cecille Cratchley
- Eunice Jean Findlay
- William Joseph Harasymow
- Linda Christine Matthews
- Heathir Rhoda Lissel Naesgaard
- Nicola Christine Sims-Jones
- Suzanne Elaine Slack
- Jennifer Elizabeth Towers

By Transfer of Membership

- Carol Ballard
- David Ballard
- Marilyn Ballard
- Susan Chambers
- Jeffrey Smith

APPENDIX 1 | 2022 MINUTES ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Minutes of the 2022 Annual General Meeting of Mt. Seymour United Church

1200 Parkgate Avenue and via Zoom

Sunday, April 23, 2023

The following 45 members/adherents were present:

Members/Adherents:

Katie Savoy, Catherine Branch (acting Chair), Ward Branch (Treasurer), Rev. Carla Wilks, Judy Frey, Joyce Jones, Ruth Townsend, Bette Shippam, Verna Wilson, Lorna Leckie, Ian Jarvis, Carol Pettigrew, Sylvia Zandberg, Marianne Hanson, Jen-Beth Fulton, James Fulton, Mark Labrecque, Younes Skhissi, Jen Skhissi, Marc Coulombe, Michelle Coulombe, Tierney Ness, Heathir Naesgaard, Jen Towers, Doug Querns, Meg Clarke, Bill Mathieson, Roger Brain, Sharon Brain, Jim Crook, Mike Hetherington, Barry Fenton, Jocelyne Cottier, Steve Wellenbrink (Property Team), Kirsten Harkins, Todd Harkins, Lima Branch, Burton Branch, Ellen Muirhead, Peter Muirhead, Kathy Andrews, Iain Andrews, Heather Andrews, Rev. Nancy Talbot, Kim Branch (recording secretary)

1. **Acting Chair Catherine Branch** welcomed those present and called the meeting to order at 11:56 am. **Rev. Carla Wilks** opened the meeting with a prayer.

2. Catherine Branch confirmed there was a quorum of over 30 members present.

3. **Motion to give adherents the right to vote**

M/S (Jim Crook / Doug Querns) that adherents can be permitted to vote. **Carried unanimously.**

4. **Motion to adopt AGM Agenda**

M/S (Barry Fenton / Jen-Beth Fulton) that the agenda be approved. **Carried unanimously.**

5. **Introduction of Council members and staff**

Catherine Branch introduced Council members and appointees.

(a) Mary Sparks (Chair), Steve Wellenbrink (Property Committee), Ward Branch (Treasurer), Kelly Nobles (Recording Secretary), Kirsten Harkins (Member-at-Large), Kathryn Ferriss (Member-at-Large), Younes Skhissi (Member-at-Large), Lorna Leckie (Member-at-Large).

(b) Council Appointee – Fay Butterfield (Envelope Secretary) has changed to Doug Querns as council appointee with a title change to Givings Administrator.

6. **Motion to approve AGM Minutes of April 3, 2022**

Amendments from the floor received for corrections to name spellings and a repeated sentence in the draft minutes.

M/S (Jim Crook / Sharon Brain) that the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of April 3, 2022 be approved as amended. **Carried unanimously.**

7. **Ministers' Report:** Rev. Nancy Talbot provided a summary of 2022 activities, highlighting the full restart of activities such as tea time and congregational lunches, and gratitude to volunteers and colleagues.

Rev. Carla Wilks shared that the family from Palestine that the congregation supported has fully arrived. Mount Seymour United has received a Queen's Platinum Jubilee award for community service.

The floor was opened to questions. No questions posed.

8. Thrift Shop Report: Rev. Carla Wilks provided an overview of Thrift Shop activities in 2022. Currently, there are over 100 volunteers, including 15 new volunteers that have been embraced. The breakdown of volunteers is 32% from the congregation, 62% from the wider community and 6% in transition. Eight summer students were hired through the federal Canada Summer Jobs program and were provided leadership training. The Thursday hours have been shortened to a closing time of 6pm (from 8pm). The contribution to First United is currently 15% of sales, which represented over \$37,000 this year. In addition, goods are also donated to a variety of organizations. The Thrift Shop also assists local families in need. The Strategic Planning team has been revitalized with lots of support. The values of the church are extended to the Thrift Shop.

The floor was opened to questions. Jocelyne Cottier suggested that it be emphasized to the wider community the variety of contributions made by the church. Catherine Branch committed to review the website.

9. Team Reports

Ministry and Personnel: Catherine Branch serves as Chair, with Kirsten Harkins reporting to Council in her role as Member-at-Large. The team is responsible for HR issues. Staff were introduced: Rev. Nancy Talbot (Lead Minister), Rev. Carla Wilks (Minister of Community Outreach & Pastoral Care), Ross Shearer (Children), Julian Pattison (Music), Marcus Mosely & Dominique Hogan (Gospel Ministry), Jenn Farrell (Office Administrator), Cheryl Shott (Bookkeeper), Alexis Doss (Thrift Shop Manager), Rebecca Gabriel and John Andreychuk (Assistant Managers), Nayana Sunderam (Assistant Café Manager), Sabrina Gustiano (server).

The opening of the café was a key highlight of the year. The Thrift Shop is now fully functioning. The Children's Community will return to a casual position in September.

The floor was opened to questions. No questions posed.

Property: Steve Wellenbrink provided an overview of building maintenance activities, such as fixes to doors and the dishwasher. Proposals to improve the sound system have been received. A landscaping company has been hired to maintain the gardens every second week, to bolster volunteer efforts.

The floor was opened to questions. Sharon Brain asked about the Peace Garden, which is tended separately. Bill Mathieson noted that the dishwasher is 35 years old and has been well used during that time.

Roger Brain asked about the plans for the Sacred Garden. Rev. Nancy provided an update. A plan has been developed and will be presented to the congregation on May 25. A budget of \$10,000 has been used towards the multi-year project.

Jenn Farrell shared an update on the café project. She thanked the congregation for their support since the opening in October. The café will provide vocational opportunities for those with barriers to employment. Through a partnership with Vancouver Coastal Health (the Foundry), a three-month grant was accessed which can be extended. It also serves as a space for conversation. Sales are increasing and are currently at almost \$5,000, with great momentum.

Doug Querns asked if the café will be reported separately. Ward Branch responded that the café will be budgeted for in the 2023 operating budget. Rev. Nancy has shared that we will continue to access grants and donations. A National Church grant is forthcoming. Catherine Branch thanked Jenn for all of her efforts.

10. Treasurer's Report 2022 Financial Statements and 2023 Budget (W. Branch):

W. Branch presented the Financial Statements for 2022.

From the Balance Sheet (Appendix 2) and Preliminary Income Statement (Appendix 3, including budget), it was noted that:

- The snow removal budget has been reduced by \$2,465 this year.
- Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, the focus of the endowment fund was towards investing in the life of the church. For 2022 we had budgeted that \$222,000 would be put towards these activities, the actual draw down was \$197,000 which works out to \$25,000 less than anticipated.
- Givings are up this year. Thank you to Meg Clarke for her fundraising efforts.
- Thrift Shop revenue is back up to pre-pandemic levels and is projected to continue to increase.
- Rental income is still down.
- We have made larger investments in staffing.
- Council will stay the course and keep investing in projects and staffing.
- Proposed growth initiatives are budgeted for 2023:

Mental Health Ministry: \$35,000

Sacred Garden: \$20,000

- The proposed 2022 budget will result in a deficit of \$250,000. This is reduced by \$70,000 in amortization expenses (an accounting line item that does not represent cash loss). The proposed budget will draw down the endowment fund by \$180,000 in 2023 bringing the balance of the fund to \$900,000. We have time to turn around our financial position.

The floor was opened to questions.

A question from the floor sought clarification on the wage subsidy owing of \$37,000 (Doug Querns). This amount is related to the student positions.

Mike Hetherington confirmed that the sabbatical fund is being addressed properly. The fund currently stands at \$15,632 and is refreshed currently. Rev. Carla will be taking a sabbatical in 2024.

Jim Crook asked about the need for parking lot repairs. Steve Wellenbrink responded that we will wait until the garden redevelopment to assess impact.

Barry Fenton sought clarification on the endowment fund earnings. Conservative investing means that the interest earned was 4%, consistent with the goal of 3-4% interest.

Motion that the Budget for 2023 as set out in the Annual Report be approved. M/S (Roger Brain / Jim Crook) Carried unanimously.

Motion that the Financial Statements for 2022 as set out in the Annual Report be approved. M/S (Barry Fenton / Doug Querns) Carried unanimously.

Motion to approve the 2022 Annual Report. M/S (Bette Shippam / Jen-Beth Fulton) Carried unanimously.

11. Council Elections

In summary:

- a. Continuing Council:
 - Mary Sparks (2016 – 2020, 2021 – 2023) Chair

- Kirsten Harkins (2020 – 2022) Ministry & Personnel Team representative
- Kelly Nobles (2021 – 2023) as Recording Secretary
- Ward Branch (2021 – 2023) as Treasurer
- Kathryn Ferriss (2021 – 2023) as Member-at-Large
- Younes Skhissi (2022 - 2024) as Member-at-Large
- Lorna Leckie (2022 - 2024) as Member-at-Large
- Rev. Nancy Talbot (Minister); Rev. Carla Wilks (Minister) as ex-officio

b. 2023 Nominations:

- **Heathir Naesgaard** (2023- 2025) as Property Team representative
- **Jen Towers** (2023- 2025) as Member-at-Large
- **Steve Wellenbrink** (2023- 2025) as Pacific Mountain Region Representative

Motion that Heathir Naesgaard be voted in as Member-at-Large. M/S (Kirsten Harkins / Steve Wellenbrink) Carried unanimously.

Motion that Jen Towers be voted in as Member-at-Large. M/S (Marianne Hanson, Lorna Leckie) Carried unanimously.

Motion that Steve Wellenbrink be voted in as Pacific Mountain Region Representative. M/S (Sharon Brain / Jim Crook) Carried unanimously.

12. Constitution updates: Rev. Nancy explained that the constitution needs to be amended to confirm the new structure of council. A four-week notice is required.

13. Closing Prayer: Rev. Nancy Talbot

Catherine Branch adjourned the meeting at 1:25 pm, with thanks shared to Peter and Ellen Muirhead for the organization of the lunch and Jenn for the preparation of the Annual Report.

Catherine Branch, Acting Chair

Kim Branch, Recording Secretary

APPENDIX 2 | BALANCE SHEET AS AT DECEMBER 31, 2023

ASSETS	2023	2022
Current Assets		
Cash	37,781	65,668
GIC/Term Deposits	988,953	1,145,628
Accounts Receivable	5,223	37,886
	1,031,957	1,249,181
Property, Plant and Equipment		
Land	425,151	425,151
Building	2,053,258	2,048,963
Building depreciation	-584,245	-523,126
Furniture and Equipment	152,002	110,229
Furniture and Equip Depreciation	-96,670	-87,349
Café - Bldg Improvements - Cost	11,424	11,424
Café - Bldg Improvements - Depreciation	-676	-228
Café - Equipment	4,860	4,860
Café - Equipment - Depreciation	-1,361	-486
	1,963,743	1,989,437
TOTAL ASSETS	2,995,699	3,238,619
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Accounts payable	14,306	2,061
CEBA Loan	0	40,000
Mission and Service	9,106	6,725
Misc. Funds	118	668
First United Church	730	393
Syrian Refugee	4,989	4,989
Provision - Youth & Leadership	0	960
Payable to First United - Thrift Shop	24,581	19,453
Youth ProVision Grant	0	0
	53,830	75,249
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		
VIM Loan	305,045	305,045
TOTAL LIABILITIES	358,876	380,294
EQUITY AND FUNDS		
Funds		
Sabbatical Fund	15,632	15,632
Memorial Fund	47,564	35,714
Peace Garden Memorial Fund	29,623	29,982
Endowment	930,517	1,216,213
Building Contingency Fund	37,596	57,641
	1,060,932	1,355,181

Equity			
	Opening Balance	1,503,143	1,665,370
	Surplus/Deficit - Operating	-128,824	-92,279
	Record Prev Year Losses to Endowment	273,336	
	Surplus/Deficit - Depreciation	-71,763	-69,947
		1,575,892	1,503,143
TOTAL EQUITY AND FUNDS		2,636,823	2,858,324
TOTAL LIABILITES, EQUITY AND FUNDS		2,995,699	3,238,619

APPENDIX 3 | INCOME STATEMENT

FOR YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2023 & 2024 BUDGET

	2023	2022	2024
	Actual	Actual	Budget
	31-Dec	31-Dec	Annual
REVENUE			
Offerings - Envelopes, PAR, & Other	156,125	149,355	153,050
Open Offering	3,745	2,889	4,000
Special Offering	28,000	14,000	26,000
Fund Allocation from Equity Funds	33,365	53,500	45,000
Total Givings	221,236	219,744	228,050
OTHER REVENUE			
Rentals	11,426	7,125	15,000
Memorials & Weddings	2,072	693	2,000
Thrift Shop	319,773	253,984	320,000
Interest	27,031	22,516	20,000
Endowment Investment Income	(44,668)	4,630	10,000
Fundraising (Coffee House)	1,748	399	2,000
Fundraising (Youth/BBQ/Turkey Lunch)			1,000
Mental Health & other Donations/Grants	9,500		
NHSP - New Horizons Seniors Grant		6,250	
Café	51,999		50,000
Misc		5,438	
Total Other	378,881	301,036	420,000
TOTAL REVENUE	600,117	520,780	648,050
EXPENSES			
A Team			
Copier	4,900	4,880	5,000
Office Supplies & Postage	3,845	1,434	3,800
Telephone	1,680	1,680	1,700
Bank Charges	9,770	5,993	6,000
Accountant	3,863	1,281	3,900
Investment Management Fees	14,361	14,861	14,000
Computer/Misc	1,558	3,124	2,000
Total Administration	39,976	33,254	36,400
Property			
Bld Maintenance	4,904	4,984	5,000
Equip Maintenance	2,029	195	2,000

	2023	2022	2024
	Actual	Actual	Budget
Property - cont'd	31-Dec	31-Dec	Annual
Grounds/Handyperson	8,823	2,287	11,000
Sound Maintenance	86	1,115	500
Bld Heat Maintenance	835	320	1,000
Security	478	1,193	800
Janitorial	34,141	22,268	25,000
Garbage	5,954	4,586	6,000
Water & Sewer	1,439	1,807	1,400
Gas & Electric	11,189	13,272	12,000
Snow	17,764	2,465	15,000
Telephone Office	1,234	1,182	1,200
Insurance	15,860	13,663	16,000
Kitchen Supplies	3,643	492	2,500
Special Projects	see below	see below	see below
Café - Food/Supplies	37,719		24,400
Thrift Shop Improvements	12,035	13,957	12,000
Total Property	158,133	83,786	135,800
TOTAL ADMINISTRATION TEAM	198,109	117,040	172,200
Worship & CD			
Pulpit Relief	550	100	600
Mental Health	see below		
Youth	1,280	470	3,150
Library/Misc	0	9	200
Adult Christian Development	450	1,041	500
Congregational Meetings			500
Music Supplies	394	569	500
Music Director Relief	3,730	1,800	2,000
Volunteer Training			500
Music Piano/Organ Tuning		726	750
Worship Misc Supplies	861	1,836	900
Sound Production	4,627	6,828	5,000
TOTAL WORSHIP & CD	11,892	13,379	14,600
COUNCIL			
National UCC Assessment	24,233	19,618	21,704
Other Expense	153	256	500
TOTAL COUNCIL	24,386	19,874	22,204

	2023	2022	2024
	Actual	Actual	Budget
	31-Dec	31-Dec	Annual
CONGREGATIONAL LIFE			
Advertising	935	617	1,200
Fellowship (Lunches/welcoming)	-926	1,436	500
Mandate Magazine	-50	200	200
Sundays - Coffee	2,722	868	1,000
Pastoral Care	348	301	400
TOTAL CONGREGATIONAL LIFE	3,029	3,421	3,300
CONG. MISSION			
Mission and Outreach			
First United Thrift Shop Donation	47,466	37,239	48,000
Help Fund			500
TOTAL MISSION	47,466	37,239	48,500
MINISTRY & PERSONNEL			
Wages	346,592	298,260	343,879
Ministers' Travel	956	622	1,000
Sabbatical Fund			10,000
Staff Dev. Cont Ed	7,441	4,262	6,280
Honorariums			
CPP	12,268	12,883	12,268
EI	5,308	5,792	5,308
Employee Benefits	48,154	48,797	48,154
M&P Discretionary		1,107	300
Work Comp	823	617	823
Hosting	895	673	700
Other Payroll	9,264	9,264	9,264
TOTAL MINISTRY & PERSONNEL	431,700	382,279	437,976
TOTAL EXPENSE	716,582	573,232	698,780
Operating Surplus/Deficit	(116,462)	(52,452)	(50,730)
Amortization/Depreciation of Assets	(71,763)	(69,947)	(71,763)

Cont'd

	2023	2022	2024
	Actual	Actual	Budget
	31-Dec	31-Dec	Annual
GROWTH INVESTMENTS			
Mental Health Ministry	(3,860)		(10,000)
Café Space 2022 Expenses		(24827.68)	0
Sacred Garden 2022 Expenses	(8,500)	(5,000)	(30,000)
Oculus and Prayer Wall			(14,385)
First United Building Contribution		(10,000)	0
SURPLUS/DEFICIT	(200,587)	(162,226)	(176,878)
Outreach Contributions			
M&S	16,034	13,212	
Thrift Shop Contribution to 1 St United	47,466	37,239	
NSYSH		58	
Ukraine Relief Fund	913	45	
All National Elite Basketball			
National Indigenous Healing Fund	210	550	
First Forward Contributions - Sunday Offering		640	
First United	1,765	888	

APPENDIX 4 | 2023 STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN FUND BALANCES

Year Ended December 31, 2023

	2022 Balance	Deficiency of revenue over expenses	Contributions	Withdrawals	2023 Balance
Equity	\$1,503,142	-200,586	273,336		\$1,575,892
Funds					
Sabbatical Fund	15,632				15,632
Memorial Fund	35,714		12,000	-150	47,564
Building Contingency Fund	57,641			-20,045	37,596
Endowment Fund	1,216,213			-285,696	930,517
ProVision Fund for Youth	0				0
Syrian Refugee Fund	4,989				4,989
Redlinger Peace Garden Memorial Fund	29,982			-359	29,623
	\$2,863,313	\$(200,586)	\$285,336	\$(306,250)	\$2,641,813

Previous Year

Year Ended December 31, 2022

	2021 Balance	Deficiency of revenue over expenses	Contributions	Withdrawals	2022 Balance
Equity	\$1,665,368	-162,226			\$1,503,142
Funds					
Sabbatical Fund	15,632				15,632
Memorial Fund	36,364			-650	35,714
Building Contingency Fund	57,641				57,641
Endowment Fund	1,256,213			-40,000	1,216,213
ProVision Fund for Youth	0				0
Syrian Refugee Fund	7,989			-3,000	4,989
Redlinger Peace Garden Memorial Fund	29,982				29,982
	\$3,069,189	\$(162,226)		\$(43,650)	\$2,863,313

Notes to Financial Statements
Year Ended December 31, 2023

1. PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT

	Cost	Accumulated Amortization	2022 Net Book Value	2021 Net Book Value
Land	\$425,151		425,151	\$425,151
Buildings	2,064,682	584,922	1,479,760	1,537,033
Café Equipment	4,860	1,361	3,499	4,374
Computer Equipment	2,236	1,507	729	1,621
Furniture and fixtures	149,766	95,163	54,603	21,258
	\$2,646,695	\$682,953	\$1,963,742	\$1,989,437