

# Approved Minutes: Meeting of Mt. Seymour United Church Council

Dec 10, 2025 – 7pm; Kirsten Harkins's house

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## 1. Opening & Land Acknowledgement

Carla Wilks opened the meeting at 7:30pm with a reading  
Kirsten led the land acknowledgment and check-in

In attendance: Kirsten Harkins, Rev. Carla Wilks, Kim Branch, Younes Skhissi (virtual),  
Doug Querns, Tierney Ness

Regrets: Catherine Branch, Rev. Deb Bowman, Jeffrey Smith

## 2. Approve Previous Council Meeting Minutes

- **Motion to approve November 12, 2025 Meeting Minutes**

**Younes/Steve PASSED**

## 3. Minister's Report

Deb Bowman provided in advance – Kirsten reviewed

## 4. Minister's Report

Carla Wilks provided in advance

## 5. Financial Report

Jeff Smith provided in advance

- Update on Compensation for Employers of Reservists Program Application by Carla: in process.
- Update on donation software summary provided by Doug. First payment made. No offshore information storage. Users will be set up. Access and import will occur in the next week.

## 6. Property Report

Steve Wellenbrink provided an update on continuing upgrades. Lighting is being addressed this week. Carpet in Treasure Cove is being replaced. Thermostats repair. No snow expense as yet.

## 7. M & P Report

Catherine Branch - tabled

## 8. New Business

- Sacred Garden Update – Steve Wellenbrink

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- Nature play area proposal received. Will include harvest tables. Custom-made equipment, professional installation. Holland Landscaping will begin construction.
- Winter solstice event – December 21<sup>st</sup> recognition of Andrew and Nancy Stonkus.

**Motion to approve a budget of up to \$1000 towards expenses toward the Solstice Event**

**Steve/Doug PASSED**

Low maintenance and indigenous plantings have kept maintenance costs down.

- Thrift Shop donation to First United – work is ongoing (Carla/Jeff)
  - A graphic report will be prepared showing the financial contributions of the church community, including the Thrift Shop (\*Thrift shop income/expenses/First United contributions as a percentage year over year for the past 10 years?)

### **9. Next Council meeting**

- Wednesday, January 14, 2026

### **10. Meet Adjournment at 8:52pm**

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### December 2025 Minister's Update to Council – Rev Carla

- Since our November meeting, I had two weeks of study leave and participated in worship on Nov 30 (Advent 1) and then led worship on Dec 7 (due to Deb being ill).
- I met with three families about memorials this month. I had one Dec 8 and one upcoming on Dec 17 and 27).
- I helped coordinate with the Muirheads for the turkey lunch on Nov 30.
- Met with Sacred Garden team about the solstice event and with individuals about various aspects of the event.
- Met with Caring Connections team and planned out the poinsettia delivery list for the season. Purchased poinsettias for delivery. Coordinated refreshments with the team for Blue Christmas.
- Met with North Shore (United Church) Clergy for lunch in Lynn Valley
- Visited one person in the hospital and made 3 home visits, a few in my office (both walk-ins and congregation members) and several phone check ins.
- Checked in with Katie about some plans for Advent Sundays with the children.
- I led monthly meditation once since our last meeting.
- I checked in with Thrift volunteers during their shift and during tea time, and with customers in the shop and café on shop days.
- I managed the Mental Health project correspondence and processed payment for therapy appointments for 4 ongoing applicants and two new applicants. Referred two completed applicants on to Trinity United in PoCo for their program.
- Lined up some Advent/Christmas advertising and updates to the website/social media
- I met with and checked in with staff regularly.
- Coordinated the Giving Tree assembly and Christmas tree in the sanctuary for Advent 1.
- In wider church work, I coordinate the gatherings of the North Shore United Church Clergy, and we had a lunch together in early December. I also had a meeting with the Lay Leadership Support Team of which I serve as a regional duty.

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Council Report Dec. 10, 2025

Rev. Debra Bowman

The Ministry Profile Committee is meeting regularly and has just sent out a questionnaire to all those on the newsletter mailing list as well as the Thrift Shop volunteer list. My hope is that the Profile, including recommendations for staffing structure and position descriptions, will be ready to bring to a congregational meeting before mid-February.

The book study on *Separating Church and Hate* was very well attended. There were 12-15 people for 4 sessions in the daytime and 6 or 7 for one evening session. People were engaged in the topic and conversation about how to be in relationship with people who hold what could be harmful views based on their interpretation of the Bible.

Last month I reported that I would be staff liaison for the Sacred Garden Group, but Carla and I are revisiting that. She already of course has significant history with the group and as they recently have been meeting on Mondays, when she is also at the church for meditation once a month, it seems to fit better for her to continue to be the liaison.

The Property group continues to be amazing in how they respond to issues that arise. Sometimes it is not clear to me whether it is Fouad who should be responsible for addressing some of the things that arise rather than the property volunteers. This is something that we can continue to consider and clarify. Tomorrow, Dec. 11 and 12, electricians are coming to fix the lighting in the sanctuary and to change some lightbulbs in the Thrift Shop. I'm grateful to Steve for moving this forward once we had the quotes we needed (or couldn't get some quotes, indicating some electricians weren't available). We will have dimmer switches for lighting candles on Christmas Eve!

I have requested that Fouad and the Property Committee develop an Operations Manual so that you don't need to rely on personal memory as to how things work, and new staff or volunteers can find the information they need. How the lights work in the sanctuary will be page one.

As part of Epiphany, we have invited Rev. Aaron Miller to come to Mt Seymour on Jan 25 to preach and then stay for a discussion about his just released book, *Weird in the World: Living Towards the World God Wants*. We are going to offer this book as the next one for a study group. Aaron is a wonderful preacher and beautiful writer and I'm excited to have the congregation hear him and think about his ideas about being the church.

I continue to be grateful that members are wearing name tags to worship, and I know those attending are glad for them also. I know there are permanent name tags from the past, but we need to make sure they are up to date so everyone feels included.

Alexis and I met to consider how the Thrift Shop could include in some way the themes of Sunday worship. She has made little tags that people can name their hopes on and hang somewhere. I hope we can continue this kind of overlapping and help the volunteers understand the purpose.

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I attended a three-day consultation about future ways of thinking about how to be church, particularly through the lens of 'commoning', of sharing land and space as commons. It seems to me that Mount Seymour has already moved a distance in that direction, with so much of the property accessible to the community.

I am sorry to not be with you at the meeting. The bug I have has taken the wind out of my sails literally, and I'll continue to not spread it around.

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Jeff's 2025 December Financial Report:

Super-quick (E-Z reference) financial report (should I dial in past my agenda time this evening)

Financial summary: All good. On track.

Cash on hand (in account) as at 3 p.m. Pacific time today: \$116,483.90 (with mid-month payroll or circa \$18K likely to be withdrawn tomorrow or Friday.)

Payables: Nothing significant or unplanned.

Receivables: Nothing significant.

Trust investments: Doing well, in line with financial markets performance after June. Figures pending from our trustees.

Commentary: Solid retail revenues and modest rents from church facilities use have kept our financial ship stable, even buoyant. No restrictions or changes in spending are contemplated or recommended. No substantial risks are envisioned for the next quarter. Guidance to interested stakeholders for budget-making in 2026 will be offered in the coming days.

- The Treasurer