

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

January 14, 2026 – 7pm; Mount Seymour United Church

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### 1. Opening & Land Acknowledgement

Kirsten Harkins opened the meeting at 7:08 with a land acknowledgement. Rev. Deb Bownam shared a reading from Aaron Miller, *Weird in the World*.

In attendance: Kirsten Harkins, Doug Querns, Jeff Smith, Catherine Branch, Jeff Smith, Steve Wellenbrink, Younes Skhissi, Rev. Deb Bowman and Rev. Carla Wilks

Regrets: Tierney Ness

### 2. Approve Previous Council Meeting Minutes

- **Motion to approve December 10, 2025 Meeting Minutes, with reports attached.**

**Doug/Steve PASSED**

### 3. Minister's Report – Rev. Deb Bownman

Report attached. Rev. Deb Bowman shared an overview of the survey results and themes. She also provided an MPS committee update. The Regional minister will be attending the next meeting of the MPS Committee on January 21<sup>st</sup>.

Shared information about upcoming Festival of Faith leadership conference in Prince George.

### 4. Minister's Report – Rev. Carla Wilks

Report shared in advance - attached.

Solstice Event was very well received, huge success. Good planning in place for next year.

### 5. Financial Report

Jeff Smith

- Update on Compensation for Employers of Reservists Program Application – has been completed and is ready for signatures and submission.
- Update on budget  
2025 was positive. 2026 is starting in a good position.  
Budget conversation will start soon.
  - Will not need to draw from regular finances for the mental health ministry.
  - Planning for a 3% increase in revenue and inflation impact on expenses.
  - Transitional costs around new staff will need to be considered.
  - Committees should have their budget requests in by end of Feb.
  - Trustee meeting will be arranged.
  - Tentative budget will be prepared for February 11 meeting.
  - Proposal to cover the costs of a new thrift shop shed as a capital expense. This will be added as a maintenance item to the budget.
  - MPS budget will be needed.

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- Discuss rental revenue vs. use of church sanctuary for spiritual practice

Rental revenue discussion of inquiries that coincide with spiritual practices – confirmed prioritization of yoga scheduling on Mondays.

### 6. Property Report

Steve Wellenbrink provided brief overview

- Stucco repair job planned for next budget.
- Discussion of snow budget.
- Headset purchase
- Credit card arrangements will be made to transfer administrator role to Doug Querns.

### 7. M & P Report

Catherine Branch – working on budget this month.

### 8. New Business

- Thrift Shop donation to First United
  - 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 of gross and net income) – Rev Carla calculated and shared a draft report. This will be published in the annual report, with revisions for clarity.
- Christmas Eve donation to be finalized.
- Donation software has been launched.

### 9. Next Council meeting

- Wednesday, February 11, 2026

### 10. Meeting Adjournment 8:53pm

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Debra Bowman Report for Council

Jan. 13, 2025

I am continuing to enjoy working with the people of Mount Seymour. There are so many interesting things happening and the congregation is very responsive.

- The Ministry Profile and Search Committee (MPS) continues their work, meeting more often and for longer as more information is gathered. They prepared a questionnaire which has had an excellent response of 98 people. One of the findings is the high importance of ‘community and belonging’, which is consistent with what we heard at the gathering in September and has implications of course for the kind of staffing needed. The good news is that people enjoy being community together. The challenge is how to include new people and let others know about this community when the ‘insider’ community bonds are already tight. The committee members have also been in contact with other congregational leaders regarding staffing models and work distribution. I am attaching the latest summary of the questionnaire.
- Related to the questionnaire, Jocelyne has purchased the Survey Monkey software and is offering to help other congregations with doing questionnaires, for a donation to Mount Seymour. I will let regional ministers know about this resource. It’s a wonderful gift.
- I have done some pastoral visits, particularly with people who are new to the congregation and looking for connections.
- Related to that, I wonder what we can organize as a way to connect newcomers with regulars, and to connect newcomers with each other; events that will help ‘fold in’ people who have started coming and need to be included to feel welcomed beyond coffee hour.
- Pilgrims’ Path had a half day gathering Jan. 3. There were 20 participants. It is a good event to invite newcomers to if they are interested, although as a high commitment group the people need to truly be invested and the group is already quite large. This of course relates to my point above.
- It was heart-warming to see how many people responded when I wrote to some members of the congregation and asked about including a new family in their Christmas activities. Both the need for that kind of welcome and the response are signs of the possibilities and future activities.
- Carla and I took turns taking a Sunday and some days off after Christmas. It was good to be able to catch my breath.
- The Christmas Eve services were lovely. At the 4:00 a family came that I knew from Ryerson days. The now dad was a young man when I was there, and then I did his wedding. It was so nice to see him and his wife and two children! enjoying the service. At the 7:00 there was a wonderful crowd and the music and choir were outstanding. It was fun to see how much the young men in particular enjoyed the Lord of the Rings clip.

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Dec. 28 had a good turnout for such a ‘low Sunday’ and it was fun to do a service with Kelly again (we worked together years ago at Capilano United).

- I’m excited about our guest preacher Rev. Aaron Miller on Jan. 25 and having members of the congregation read his book. He writes about being Christian in this time and is specific about worship and prayer and other ways of living in the Way. I hope it will stir people’s imaginations about future possibilities for the congregation. There will be a lunch after worship and time with Aaron to talk about his book. We need to consider whether to do a potluck or just get in sandwiches. Any advice as a time for community building?
- On the same Sunday, Jan 25 we will offer information about Vancouver School of Theology. They will send us some materials for distribution and Aaron may say something about the school.
- Katherine Querns invited me to attend her book club for their discussion about the book *Separating Church and Hate*. There were about 20 women there and it was a privilege to be able to in some ways represent the church and be part of the conversation. I probably talked too much in my enthusiasm.
- I really encourage some of you to attend this gathering being offered by LeaderShift, a leadership training arm of Pacific Mountain Region, and/or encourage some lay leaders to attend. The focus is on community partnerships which I believe will be important in any work of becoming a ‘community hub’ and expanding the impact of Mount Seymour. Save the date and I’ll let you know when I get more details. Also, is there a budget to send some people to this? Maybe I could go along with a small group and we could mull over implications for Mount Seymour? It helps when a team goes to events like this, it is easier to get engagement when back home.

### Festival of Faith North

Friday, April 17, 2026 7:00 p.m. - Sunday, April 19, 12:00 p.m.

Trinity United Church 3555 5th Avenue Prince George

Festival of Faith North is happening, this April 2026 - an opportunity for lay leaders and ministry personnel to gather around the theme of cooperative ministry.

Worship, keynotes on the theme, and a variety of workshops, with celebration worship to close on Sunday morning. Workshops will include affirming ministry, first third ministry, pastoral care teams, alternative forms of governance, part-time ministry best practices, community partnerships, truth and reconciliation, leading worship as a lay person, and more.

**December/January 2025/26 Minister's Update to Council – Rev Carla**

- For Advent I led/preached two of the Sundays (Advent 2 and 3) and participated in the others and took the lead on the 4pm Christmas Eve service. I had the Sunday after Christmas off and then led the first two in January, with this past Sunday being a wonderful Star Gift Sunday with some great stories shared once again! It was an unusual Advent with three funerals in December as well (8<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>). I led the Blue Christmas service on the 17<sup>th</sup> as well. The 17<sup>th</sup> was the day without power at the church, so that was a first – I did the funeral in the afternoon with no power (thank goodness for a sanctuary with lots of natural light). It just meant we had no microphones or powerpoint, but it was a small crowd, who gathered close, and we used the hymn books for the singing of the hymns. We could boil water for tea on the gas stove once we manually lit it. We set up for Blue Christmas with all the lanterns and it was dark but very candle-lit and then the power came on 13 minutes before the service began! When there was a question of cancelling, I decided against it since most of the people who would be coming wouldn't know the power was out all day at the church, and most of the people who come to Blue Christmas are there because they really need to be there. It was a beautiful night and very memorable due to the power outage! Began looking ahead to Lent worship plans.
- As mentioned above, I worked with three families through their memorials. All three families plus the November memorial I did, received a personal invitation to Blue Christmas and they all attended (except for the family whose memorial was earlier that same day). One of the widows has started attending church fairly regularly, which she says has been really good for her.
- Met with Sacred Garden team members about the solstice event planning and details, helped with the set up and the event itself. I put the ad through the wider church network and also created a boosted ad on Facebook/Instagram to be advertised through user profiles in a 2 mile radius of the church. The event itself exceeded my expectations. It was pouring rain but people still came – and I was so thrilled that I did not know about half the people here... which meant that our advertising reached people! (signs on the parkway – Lions sign on the deep cove corner, sharing on Social media, newspaper ad, posters around town). There was a lot of great feedback about the event, and we have already booked the church for this year! We had a meeting this week as well where we debriefed about the event and also worked through the next phase, the nature play area, which is beginning construction in the next month. One complication which added unnecessary stress to the day was the time conflict with the Iranian church, so it will be well laid out for next year with clearer boundaries.
- Had a very successful community carol sing on Thursday December 18, the last Thursday before Christmas, led by Ruth Townsend on piano, and singing support by the Parkgate Singers (of which I'm apparently an honorary member now!). There

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were about 60 people in attendance, and it was a lot of fun. Really put me into the Christmas spirit! And I think did the same for others as well.

- The Caring Connections team delivered 17 poinsettias this year to congregation members who are struggling/grieving/shut in/need a little extra love.
- Had several pastoral visits coordinated with poinsettia delivery and otherwise. Made several pastoral phone calls.
- Coordinated with Katie for Christmas Eve help in handing out the props.
- Got the manger set up for Christmas Eve and helped the team undecorate last week and get everything put back upstairs.
- 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 popped in for the thrift shop Christmas party for volunteers (it was while we were setting up for the solstice event).
- I managed the Mental Health project correspondence and processed payment for therapy appointments for ongoing applicants. The MLAs office called last week about grief support, so I told them all about our mental health project so that they could refer people to us who are in need.
- Coordinated a staff Christmas lunch for the week before Christmas.
- Delivered Giving Tree contents to the North Shore Youth Safe House just before Christmas. They were thrilled and overwhelmed by the generosity. I put a tally of all that was collected this year into the newsletter this week. There were \$1260 in gift cards alone. A volunteer is taking the First United donations down to First this week.
- I was invited by the 'women's breakfast' (Saturday morning group) to come and tell them about my stoles, so last Saturday I came and had a fun 'show and tell' where I talked with them about clergy vestments in general and then told them the stories associated with each of the stoles I have and wear.
- I also had a meeting with the Pacific Mountain Region's Lay Leadership Support Team of which I serve as a regional duty.