

Minutes: Meeting of Mt. Seymour United Church Council

April 8, 2026 – 7pm; Mount Seymour United Church

1. Opening & Land Acknowledgement

Rev. Debra Bowman opened the meeting at 7:05 with a reading about joy by Kate Bowler. Kirsten shared a land acknowledgement from Edmonton/Treaty 6 territory.

In attendance: Kirsten Harkins (virtual), Younes Skhissi, Kim Branch, Steve Wellenbrink, Catherine Branch (virtual, partial), Jeff Smith, Rev. Carla Wilks, Rev. Deb Bowman

Regrets: Tierney Ness, Doug Querns

2. Approve Previous Council Meeting Minutes

- **Motion to approve March 11, 2026 Meeting Minutes, with revisions noted Jeff/Steve PASSED**

3. M & P Report

Catherine Branch

- Job descriptions have been approved by Regional Council for the ministry team.
- Rev Carla's position call form needs to be finalized.
- Search committee has received training modules.
- Rev. Deb's contract ends May 31. Proposal to continue at 60% with 2 days in the office, will cover Rev. Carla's vacation and continue to preach three Sundays/month. Stewardship and transition support to continue, pastoral care as needed. Time period of 6 months with option to end or extend. Catherine will send out motion by email for vote to be recorded in next month's minutes (May 13).
- Facilitators are being sought out to support team leadership. May also help with M&P work.
- Overall staffing is being reviewed. Will be further discussed at May meeting.

4. Ministers' Reports

- Rev. Debra Bowman

Submitted by email. With additions: Newcomers Nacho Night. Focus on stewardship. Coaching consultants have been identified to assist with team leadership and M&P role.

- Rev. Carla Wilks

Submitted by email. Committees are submitting reports to the Annual Report.

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5. Financial Report

Jeff Smith

- Affirmed strong position for first quarter.
- Typically at this time, the Trustee would be contacted regarding a transfer from the Kerr bequest. Budgeted at \$105,000 annually on basis of converting the last of the Ken Fowler estate funds. Three instalments are needed to ensure comfort level for the bank balance. A request will likely be made in May for a transfer of \$45,000.
- Property and liability insurance will come up in June.

Discussion of budget proposal

- Inflows and expenditures are as expected. 3% inflation lift assumption on revenues and expenditures (primarily in staffing budget).
- Discussion of thrift shop and café revenues and expenses.
- Thrift Shop revenues are \$370,000, with a First United donation of \$53,000 which represents 25% of net revenue.
- Added new items for recruitment expenses (\$3,000), staff coaching (\$10,000), relocation expense (\$25,000)
- Recommend adoption of the budget at AGM.
- Donation to cover increased maintenance costs in perpetuity for Sacred Garden has been discussed with the donor.

MOTION to approve adoption of the budget at the AGM

Jeff/Younes PASSED

6. Property Report

Steve Wellenbrink

Discussed as part of budget item.

7. New Business

- AGM date: April 26th
- Annual Report to be finalized April 9th (must be circulated by the 12th)
- Review Council terms (June-May); possible new nominations

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CURRENT COUNCIL MEMBERS AND TERMS:

- KIM BRANCH – term ends 2027
- STEVE WELLENBRINK – term ends 2027
- TIERNEY NESS – term ends 2027
- KIRSTEN HARKINS – term ending 2026, ending
- JEFFREY SMITH – term ending 2026 to be renewed as treasurer
- CATHERINE BRANCH – term ending 2026, ending
- DOUG QUERNS – term ending 2026 to be renewed
- YOUNES SKHISSI – term ending 2026, ending

*TRUSTEES WERE ALL ELECTED AT 2025 AGM FOR TERMS ENDING 2028

Kathryn Ferriss has agreed to be nominated and serve as council chair.

Rev. Carla has reached out to potential council members and M&P committee members.

8. Next Council meeting

- Wednesday, May 13, 2026 (invite newly-elected council members to attend) at Kirsten's house

9. Meeting Adjournment 9:10

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March/April 2026 Minister's Update to Council – Rev Carla

- Our last meeting was partway into Lent so I continued with our Lenten series, The Way. I had a week of vacation which took me away for Palm Sunday but returned and led the Good Friday service and Easter Sunday.
- The hosted labyrinth walks during Lent were scheduled for Tuesday morning and Sunday afternoon. The Tuesdays didn't have anyone join, but the Sunday time had a few participants. I think it is a good thing to continue to do on occasion.
- Craft group is still going strong with new members each week. It has been a good and simple thing to begin and host. Lots of great conversation and sharing.
- Our Coldest Night of the Year walk team of three members, who raised money for First United, raised \$3275!
- For my regional responsibilities I have helped plan a Lay Leader gathering before the regional meeting in Kamloops for any Lay Leaders in the region (that includes Council members like you!).
- Due to the holiday weekend, monthly meditation will be next Monday.
- Received three new applicants this month for the mental health project. Actively supporting about 7 right now.
- Spent some time this month with families planning two upcoming memorials for Gert Zandberg on April 11 and Bonnie Wudrick on May 11.
- Did my usual amount of pastoral visiting and checking in with people and staff.
- I have spent a lot of time getting multiple reports written for the Annual Report.

Just point form highlights for you today because I have several other reports to write for the Annual report!

**Debra Bowman Council Report
April 6, 2026**

This is my first report since our Council meeting on February 11th. In the intervening time I was away in Mexico for a month of vacation, which was a deeply relaxing and restorative experience, notwithstanding ‘Narco Sunday’ and some village wide power outages. I came back feeling renewed and grateful for the opportunity to be away with friends and then family.

During my time away I was so glad to see that the congregation adopted the recommendations of the Ministry Profile Team, which marks an important moment for the congregation. I cannot stress enough how hard the members of the committee worked in their discernment about the needs and desires of the congregation, the calling of God, and the kind of staffing configuration that will, with God’s grace, allow you to follow the Way into your future. I will be less involved with the Search Committee. While I will offer support in any way I can, I cannot be seen to be influencing decisions regarding your next call.

During my time away, Pilgrims’ Path was led by Jocelyn Cottier and Kelly-Lynn Evergreen. I am very grateful for their capable and thoughtful leadership. Following that gathering, they created a video presentation, which was shared in worship on Palm Sunday. The video included slides of some of the participants’ favourite photos and some reflections regarding insights they have had as they walk the pilgrims’ path. It was wonderful that through the music, photos and reflections they could take us all on a brief pilgrimage during worship.

Later this month I will be offering a sermon series on the letters of Paul, focusing on Thessalonians, Corinthians, and Philippians. This series will be based on my recent travels in Greece, where I intentionally visited these locations in preparation. Looking ahead, I excited that on May 3rd, Rev. Dr. Brian Thorpe, a former minister at Mount Seymour United, will join us as a guest preacher. During that service, we will also hear from some of the ‘Originals’, congregational members who were present during the construction of this new building. They will be invited to share stories, and we hope to include photographs from that time to enrich the experience. This Sunday Brittany Donovan has graciously offered to sing a solo during worship. I am glad of these opportunities for involvement of members of the congregation in worship. In early May, I will be attending a three-day consultation on the theme of ‘the church and the economy’. Those invited to the consultation will be continuing conversations we’ve been having about how the church can continue to engage faithfully in economic justice work in this century.

I have been connecting with individuals for visits and conversations, offering support as people reflect on their faith and consider life changes. These encounters remain deeply meaningful for me.

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I am particularly excited about the upcoming 'Nacho Average Taco Gathering' for both newcomers and regular members. It feels like an important moment in this time of transition for the congregation. You have been through a period of change, loss, and grief. While grief never leaves us, I am hoping this will be a fun event that continues the congregation's vision of building connections and deepening relationships and offers a chance to celebrate the new beginnings emerging among you. It is particularly encouraging that one of the key organizers of this event is a newcomer, reflecting growing engagement and leadership within the community. I hope all Council members will be able to attend and welcome those who are new or relatively new to the congregation and maybe lend a hand with set up or clean up.

- I have spoken with Catherine Branch about my time here and what will happen when my contract is finished at the end of May. I am willing to stay longer and help however I can, although I would like to reduce my hours. Catherine and I will discuss further, and she will bring a recommendation to the next Council meeting.
- I want to start some kind of focus on Stewardship. What kind of focus do you think would be good? A series of Sundays about Stewardship? A full on campaign with a 'consultant'?
- I've been thinking about the money being set aside for coaching for staff. I think it would be a good idea to have some coaching support available for M&P also. M&P sometimes must have complicated discussions with staff and can find it difficult. Having coaching or facilitation available could lighten the load and perhaps make it easier to find someone to take the position.