



# Mount Seymour United Church

Spirit Nurturing ~ Living Generously ~ Being Community

## Minutes of the Regular Meeting of Mt. Seymour United Church Council

### Held via Zoom

**February 10, 2021**

**Present:** Rev. Nancy Talbot, Rev. Carla Wilks Kim Branch, Mary Sparks, Catherine Branch, Barry Fenton, Frank Luba, Steve Wellenbrink, Kirsten Harkins

C. Branch opened the meeting at 6:35 pm

#### 1. Opening

N. Talbot opened the meeting with a check-in.

#### 2. Approve Previous Council Meeting Minutes

The January 13, 2021 regular and in camera minutes were reviewed and approved as amended. (M/S B. Fenton / F. Luba). Subsequent to the January meeting, a notice to the congregation was sent by C. Branch regarding the Mount Seymour Preschool rental agreement. The notice is attached to these minutes.

#### 3. Ministers' Report

Rev. Nancy and Rev. Carla submitted written reports prior to the meeting and shared highlights.

- The Chief Public Health Officer Dr. Theresa Tam has asked faith leaders to have a role in influencing vaccine acceptance.
- Rev. Carla shared that the Indigenous issues book club is interested in continuing on.
- The branding of MSUC has been revitalized, thanks to our office administrator Jenn Farrell.
- Interest in online worship continues to be strong. Coffee hour participation is also seeing regular participation.
- Rev. Nancy's sabbatical coverage in May and June has been arranged with Rev. Janet Gear. Details of July coverage will be worked out, similar to last year.



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## 4. Financial Report

B. Fenton provided an update of financial issues.

- Approval has been received for the federal loan program.
- Annual financial reports are being prepared.
- Givings have continued to be strong in 2020.
- Thrift shop is seeing higher sales.
- A smaller deficit than forecast is likely

## 5. Incoming Council

- New council members have been approached, with all positions covered. These will be presented at the AGM on April 18<sup>th</sup> for congregational vote.
- A retreat will be scheduled to discuss council priorities and training. New members typically attend May and June meetings.

## 6. PARC Agreement

K. Harkins shared an update on the PARC discussions. The draft agreement has been revised and sent to PARC.

## 7. Use of Space

- A draft letter was prepared by C. Branch to the Mount Seymour Preschool Society regarding their rental space agreement.
- Council has reviewed communications and authorizes the Chair and the Lead Minister to meet with the Preschool Leadership as soon as possible.

## 8. Correspondence

- A thank you note has been received from the Mohammed family.
- Rev. Carla has organized a MSUC team to participate in the Coldest Night of the Year fundraiser with donations directed to First United.



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## 9. Closing

C. Branch called meeting to close at 8:00pm.

**Next Regular Council Meeting**  
***Wednesday, March 10, 2021 6:30 pm***

**Minutes Approved on March 10, 2021**  
**Catherine Branch, Council Chair**  
**Kim Branch, Secretary**



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## **Notice to Mount Seymour United Church Congregation and Thrift Shop regarding the end of the Mount Seymour preschool's rental**

We are writing today to let everyone know that, after much discussion, thought and prayer, Council has made the difficult decision to end our rental agreement with the Mount Seymour preschool effective **June 30, 2022**. This provides for the preschool to finish this current school year and have time to find alternate accommodation. The not-for-profit preschool's board of directors is sharing this news with affected families today as well. They will announce a Special Meeting for members of the preschool Society to occur in just over two weeks' time seeking support as well as to decide the future of the preschool. This vote may result in the preschool closing as early as June 30, 2021.

As you know, Mount Seymour United Church has had a wonderful relationship with the preschool for over 50 years. Much has been shared and learned from each other. The Church created the preschool as an outreach ministry to the community in 1969 to provide a kindergarten experience before that was part of the public school system. In 1971, when the district implemented kindergarten, the preschool began enrolling three- and four-year old children in a new program. The preschool was first located in a portable classroom on the grounds of the old Berkley Road church. When our current building was built in 1989, the preschool took its existing space. We have worked together to improve space through fundraising, and, from the beginning, the preschool has donated a portion of its income to the church each month.

Given the direction in which the Church is moving, particularly with the work we have been able to do through our Thrift Shop for those in our community who do not have the resources to purchase goods and the charitable work that we can do through monetary donations, the Thrift Shop has become an integral part in our ability to live into our values of Nurturing Spirit, Living Generously and Being Community. In all our discussions, we looked to the calling of our Church and the amount of benefit that we can provide to our community and the broader community. It is clear that the Thrift Shop has become the primary outreach calling for Mount Seymour United and it touches so many people from volunteers to those who recycle to those who need affordable goods to contributions we can make to other organizations and First United Church with the work that is done.



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This move came as a result of many levels of consideration. It started when we had a consultant in to help us produce a strategic plan for the Thrift Shop. On March 8, 2020, we had a meeting with the congregation and the Thrift Shop volunteers that provided input into that plan. A Strategic Committee for the Thrift Shop was convened as a result of that report to act upon implementing some of the recommendations by adding their own discussion and thoughtfulness and then making their recommendations to Council. In this case, the recommendation from the Committee to Council was that, given the current situation within the Thrift Shop, managing the flow of goods during Covid and needing to keep volunteers distanced and safe into the future, we have an immediate need for space. In order to gain space without doing any further building or making any layout of funds, the logical step was to take back the preschool space. Council was not comfortable doing this on a short timeline. Another meeting was held with the Council and the Strategic Committee together to discuss whether to make this decision, how to make this decision in the spirit of ongoing community with the staff and families of the preschool, and when would be the appropriate time. While the space is needed immediately, we determined that it was fair, not only to provide for the preschool to finish their school year but, given that they have started advertising for the Fall and given the potential difficulties in finding affordable rental during Covid times, that another year of rental would be appropriate in the spirit of ongoing cooperation and community.

We have thanked the preschool for our special relationship that we have had and the ministry of love and cooperation that we have been able to share in our time together. We look forward to opportunities in the year to come to join with them in celebrating their good work in the community.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this decision, please direct them by email to [catherinebranch@shaw.ca](mailto:catherinebranch@shaw.ca). I will either answer by email or make arrangements to speak by telephone.

With blessings,

Catherine Branch, Chair, Mount Seymour United Church Council