

Sylvan United Church – Council Highlights (April 9, 2026)

A friendly update from your Church Council

The Council met on April 9, 2026, with Co-Chair Kathy Sellers opening the meeting and Rev. Susanna Bates offering prayer. The gathering focused on celebrating a meaningful Holy Week, continuing improvements around the church, and planning for upcoming spring events and stewardship initiatives.

Correspondence & Upcoming Events

- Lay leaders across the region will gather in Kamloops on June 3–4.
- A workshop on the new United Church Hymnal will be held May 2 at Brechin United Church in Nanaimo.

Finance

George Power presented the March financial report:

- The church is slightly ahead of budget at this point in the year.
- A deficit is still projected, but the Line of Credit has not been used. The report was accepted by Council.

Minister's Report – A Joyful Holy Week

Rev. Susanna shared highlights from Holy Week and Easter:

- **Maundy Thursday** included lunch, Communion, and symbolic hand-washing.
- **Good Friday** combined a short sanctuary service with a meditative walk through the church gardens.
- **Easter Sunday** brought a full and joyful congregation, celebrating resurrection and decorating a flower cross.

Looking ahead, Rev. Susanna plans to refresh several church documents, including wedding and funeral information leaflets and a welcome brochure for visitors.

Office Administration

Kelly Campbell reported on ongoing updates:

- New Lent and Good Friday pages added to the website.
- Events and rentals are now visible online for easier booking.
- A refreshed homepage and new history page are live.

- A “volunteering” page and online sign-up forms are in development.
- Photo Directory work continues, with more photos being collected.
- Country Grocer receipts continue to come in steadily.

Property & Environment

Anne Marie MacLean shared encouraging updates:

- Lighting upgrades around the buildings and parking lot are complete.
- Birdsong’s heating issues have been resolved.
- In-floor heaters in the Fireside Room and hallway were cleaned and restored.
- Driveway repairs are scheduled for late April.
- Spring cleanup is underway, with Brentwood students joining on April 11.

Council approved donating **\$300** from spring cleanup contributions to the **CMS Food Bank**.

Hospitality

Hospitality volunteers supported Holy Week with care and creativity:

- Maundy Thursday lunch and Communion
- Easter treats including hot cross buns and rice-crispy “bird’s nests” Hospitality also continues to support congregants experiencing illness or loss.

Food Safe certification will be revisited next year.

Outreach

The Outreach Team is preparing for the **Food for Thought** potluck and film night on **April 12**, featuring *Tea Creek*, a film highlighting Indigenous food sovereignty and environmental stewardship. Invitations were sent to Cowichan Tribes, Malahat, Young Agrarians, and others.

Due to limited volunteer capacity, Sylvan will not host a booth at the Cobble Hill Fair this year.

Worship

Pulpit supply is confirmed for the coming months:

- April 12 – Rev. Wilda Cottam
- May 24 – Rev. Allen Tysick
- June 28 – Rev. Dr. Murray Groom

M&P

M&P expressed gratitude for the exceptional work of staff and volunteers during Lent and Easter, noting how smoothly everything came together.

Music

Music programs continue with strong community partnerships and seasonal offerings. A volunteer will open the sanctuary for the Cowichan Vocal Collective's upcoming event.

Business Arising

- Draft ACM minutes were received and will be approved at the next congregational meeting.
- **Covenanting Service** for Rev. Susanna will be held **May 3, 2026**.
- **Spring Fling** fundraiser is set for **May 9**, featuring plants, baking, clothing, "best buys," and a hot dog stand.
- Rev. Susanna will donate pottery for the sale.

Birdsong Nature School

Council representatives will continue to be Marian Davies, Judy Duncan, and George Power. A review meeting will be scheduled after Council examines the Birdsong contract.

New Business – Slaying the Deficit

Council discussed several approaches to strengthening finances:

- Encouraging increases in PAR and envelope giving
- Launching a fall stewardship program (team formed: Rev. Susanna, Cassidy Marat, George Power)
- Planning a Goods & Services Auction
- Exploring small monthly fundraisers
- Considering a soup-and-bun lunch in June

Next Meeting

Thursday, May 14, 2026 at 7 pm (or at the call of the chair)