

Congregation: St. Andrew's and First Presbyterian Churches, Pictou, NS
Contact: Rev. Shelly Chandler
Email: revshellychandler@gmail.com
Phone: 902-485-5924
Event: Maundy Thursday Joint Service
Description: Building Community through Communion

When I was called to this new 2-point charge in 2018, it was with the understanding that the churches wanted to do something new. With the Sessions' cooperation and blessing, we set out to draw the two communities closer together through joint worship services and times of fellowship. Worshiping together on Christmas Eve, Holy Week and Easter, and during the summer—alternating venues—has helped to build a sense of community between the sister congregations.

Our joint Maundy Thursday worship service last year is a standout worship and fellowship experience that moved many. Rather than gathering in a sanctuary, we gathered in one of the church halls over a potluck meal. The tables were set up in the shape of a horseshoe to re-create the idea of a shared supper. The configuration of the tables did not allow for friendship groups to gather around various tables, encouraging people to sit beside or across from, people they may not know well from their sister congregation. There was a sense of 'unknowing' amongst everyone as this was very new and drew 50 people to 'supper.'

Our service opened in the traditional way, with a call to worship, hymn, and prayers of adoration and confession. This was then followed by grace and enjoying the potluck supper. Following our meal, I delivered a short meditation followed by Communion by intinction. But this wasn't a usual intinction service. I started the elements at one end of the horseshoe (one set of elements for each side of the table) and the participants shared the elements to the person next to them. As the elements were passed around the table, from one person to the next, barriers between individuals were removed and an intimacy between the communicants was developed as they shared Christ's meal with one another. Many people came to me following this service and the weeks following, to share how moving an experience this service was. And, as we enter the Lenten season again, many have expressed a hope that we will do it again.

As we worship and break bread together, as we serve one another, we draw closer to one another as well as to Christ. It has been a joy to see how members of both congregations have grown to enjoy and appreciate our times of joint worship and fellowship as we build a new community in Christ.

I would be pleased to share more information and the order of service for this Maundy Thursday Communion service upon request. revshellychandler@gmail.com.

Congregation: Iona Presbyterian Church, Dartmouth NS
Contact: Irene C. Rose
Email: Ireneandtomrose@eastlink.ca
Phone: 902-829-2783
Event: Soup Sundays
Description: A fellowship event on several Sundays throughout the winter

Our Congregational Life committee is committed to strengthening the sense of community among members of the congregation through social and supportive activities.

Like many congregations we have members who live alone and find getting out in the evenings challenging so potluck suppers etc., are not the preferred option for congregational activities. Winters are especially daunting as it is dark early and just harder to get about. In an attempt to support and nourish members and support community, we launched Soup Sundays. For the past 10 years there have been at least 5 Soup Sundays through the winter months. The choice of when they are held depends on what else is going on in the congregation. The number of requests on volunteers is always a consideration. Our usual schedule is Oct, December (Anniversary Sunday) February (Annual Meeting) March (depending on Easter) April & May.

Soup Sundays are volunteer supported. After posting a date in the bulletin, a signup sheet is posted on the bulletin board looking for donations of soup. An average of 6 pots of soup are needed for 40 + diners. The pots arrive on Sunday morning and are kept warm during the service. Rolls and cookies usually accompany the soup and are also donated. Soup is served immediately after the service.

Soup is the catalyst for the fellowship that occurs. Many who stay are those identified above, living alone and isolated in winter months. Some make a special effort to be there on those specific Sundays. The chatter is energizing, and no one rushes away. The bonus to this program is that a free will offering is suggested and the funds are directed to specific projects each time. Examples include PWS&D relief campaigns, Canadian Food Grains Bank. Presbyterian Sharing and other campaigns. Offerings average \$100.00 +

There is also an outreach aspect to this activity. Remaining soup is offered for take home in recycled containers and also delivered to members who are house bound. These drop offs are a high point for many.

The popularity and support for Soup Sundays has remained strong for over 10 years.