

A presbytery-wide initiative by the Presbytery of Seaway-Glengarry, Ontario May 2021 based on *Hear the Good News*, a synod-wide initiative by the Session of Zion Presbyterian Church in P.E.I.

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## FOREWORD

One of the last things Jesus told his disciples was to go and make disciples of people everywhere, baptizing them, and teaching them to obey everything he had commanded us (Mt 28:18-20). The vision of the Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC) is to do just that – to proclaim the love and good news of Jesus Christ through our words and actions and by relying on the power of the Holy Spirit. The PCC Vision Statement sums this up as:

**Disciples of Christ – Empowered by the Spirit – Glorifying God and Rejoicing in Service**

This is also the vision statement of the Presbytery of Seaway-Glengarry. As a presbytery we come together for business and fellowship. An important part of our fellowship gatherings is to encourage, equip and engage in ministry and mission through discussion, workshops, speakers, and learning from one another. One way we do this is by sharing ideas that different congregations in the presbytery have implemented. This booklet entitled *“Hear Seaway-Glengarry's Good News”* is a collection of such initiatives.

The idea for gathering initiatives into a presbytery booklet came from a project entitled *“Hear the Good News”* initiated and published by the Session of Zion Presbyterian Church (P.E.I.) with a goal in mind of sharing the best ideas the member churches of the Synod of Atlantic Provinces had to offer. By ‘Good News’, they meant special services, fellowship events, fundraising projects and such that had worked well for any of these congregations. They felt that every congregation had at least one unique and successful event that was worthy of sharing with their brothers and sisters within the Atlantic Synod and with other presbyteries.

Once members of the Presbytery of Seaway-Glengarry read Zion Presbyterian Church's booklet, we decided to initiate our own *“Hear the Good News”* project in our presbytery.

The Presbytery Ministry Animator, the Rev. Dr. Cheryl Gaver, agreed to spearhead the initiative. She contacted congregations, collected their stories, edited their contributions which they then reviewed and corrected as needed, and put everything together in this booklet. Thanks to Rev. Cheryl and the contributors, and to the many, many individuals in the congregations who work so faithfully to serve the Lord and build up his body on earth.

If you want more information about any of the initiatives or events in this book, please check our website (<https://www.pcc-seawayglengarry.ca/>) for current contact information and email addresses.

# **PRE-COVID ACTIVITIES**

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## **AVONMORE – ST. ANDREW'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

### **Youth-Led Christmas Eve Service**

#### **Description:**

For many years, the Sunday school from St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church has contributed to the Christmas Service held the last Sunday before Christmas. This has turned into a wonderful event where the entire service is led by the youth.

When our Sunday school attendance was higher, there would be plays, skits, readings, and lots of singing with the senior students leading the service. Times have changed and we have far fewer students in our Sunday School but, amazingly, many of our former students (now in college and universities) return to keep this tradition going, continuing to participate in and lead the service.

This event is enjoyed by the congregation, extended family and friends who come out to enjoy the service along with the time of fellowship to follow. After the service, everyone is invited to join us downstairs in the Sunday school room for a delicious potluck lunch.

This is a wonderful way to celebrate the Advent season and we are tremendously grateful for all of the members of the congregation who have volunteered and supported this event.



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## BROCKVILLE – FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

### PA Day Events

#### Description:

How can we reach out into the community? Where is there a need that we might be able to meet?

These were some of the questions that led to our offering PA Day Camps for local children. Each PA Day Camp includes stories, games and a movie as well as crafts and a **Mission Project**, which is an opportunity for the campers to give back to the community. The PA Day Camps have proved to be a very popular outreach initiative and, after five years or so, a great way to connect with families in our community.

Last January, we hosted our fourth PA Day Camp for the 2019-2020 school year. Twenty campers, plus volunteers, enjoyed a fun, active day, making valentines for veterans and other Valentine's Day crafts and activities. In addition to stories, games and a movie, children also got to do some line-dancing and work on their Mission Project.



The Mission Project for the January camp was to support the Ontario SPCA (Leeds and Grenville Branch). Campers made pet treats for their furry friends, and brought in donations of items based on what was listed on the SPCA website. In the afternoon, the manager of the Leeds and Grenville SPCA brought in her doggy friend Tucker to visit the children and talk about the work they do in caring for and re-homing animals that come into the Centre.

Many thanks to **Denise Kent**, First Church's Christian Education coordinator, to our wonderful volunteers, and to all who continue to support this outreach to the children and families in our community.

If you would like more information about the PA Day Camp, please contact the Rev. Marianne Emig Carr at [rev.marianne@myhighspeed.ca](mailto:rev.marianne@myhighspeed.ca)

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## CAINTOWN – ST. PAUL'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

### Caintown Choir Ministry

#### Description:

The Caintown Choir has been singing together for twenty years. Eight women lead the music at our weekly Sunday services adding an anthem and offertory hymn to the usual congregational hymns. Over the years the choir has organized special events at the church for Anniversary, Christmas, Easter and spring concerts. Many guests have been invited to perform on these occasions and, for the past ten years, six men have joined the choir to form the Caintown Chorus.



A special part of the Choir's mission has been outreach into the community. The choir is frequently invited to sing at local events, including conventions, Christmas parties, church anniversaries, fund-raising evenings, retirement homes, weddings, funerals, and celebrations of all kinds. Members of the choir regularly sing at local community events such as the Legion Remembrance Day Service, Christmas Tree Lighting and Canada 150 celebrations.

From 2010 to 2015, and in response to requests from church members, we produced 3 CDs with recordings of favourite hymns: *Joyful Songs* (hymns and gospel songs); *A Caintown Christmas*, and *Travel Our Road* (folk and gospel songs). These proved to be very popular and were a major fundraiser for our church.

During the recent COVID restrictions and once the church was allowed to re-open, we have continued to make music a major part of each service. Choir members have taken turns leading the hymns, singing duets, introducing new songs, and playing guitar and banjo to accompany hymns. We try to "Sing a new song unto the Lord" each week, as well as play a song from a CD each Sunday to add to the musical repertoire.

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## CHESTERVILLE – ST. ANDREW'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

### St. Andrew's Ladies

#### Description:

Someone once said that “women are the backbone of the church” and have been since the days of the early church (read Acts!). Not only do women make up the majority in many congregations, but women have supported the Church in so many ways – from being missionaries, supporting missionaries through the Women's Missionary Society and doing many of the odds-and-ends activities in congregations to supporting congregations through various fundraising projects.

St. Andrew's Ladies are no exception. A few years ago, we began a baking project as a fundraiser. Each fall, women come together in St. Andrew's kitchen to bake pies ... a lot of pies. In 2019 we baked and sold approximately 2000 pies! Most are dessert pies: apple, apple crisp, blueberry, cherry, mincemeat, mixed berry, raisin, raspberry, rhubarb, and strawberry-rhubarb. We also offer a selection of savoury pies: chicken, turkey, and tortière.

What began as a small project to raise funds for the church has blossomed into a large-scale operation and outreach into the community. We welcome others (even Rev. Bruce) to join us for our pie-making activity, and others in the community who have come to know us feel welcome enough to come and ask to borrow some of our equipment for special events they are holding!

Of course, as we have come to know each other better, we have also come to know some of the needs in the community. We now put on monthly community luncheons in the church hall on the last Wednesday of every month (except July, August and December).

Unfortunately, our pie-making activity was cancelled for 2020 because of the pandemic.

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## CORNWALL – ST. JOHN'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

### Let the Organ Thunder

#### Description:

For many people music is an important part of the life of the church. Music can stir our hearts or still our souls. Many of us define a congregation's worship style by reference to their music. St. John's Presbyterian Church (Cornwall) is blessed to be the home of a fine organ and the congregation recognizes it as a vital part of our worship ministry.

Having a fine organ, however, opens the door to new ministry opportunities. In 1996, the St. John's congregation received a bequest from the estate of Mrs. Isabelle McGaughey and the Isabelle McGaughey Organ Scholarship Fund Prize was established. Each year, St. John's invites an organ student from one of the surrounding universities to prepare a recital of music which is offered to the community as a free concert, but it's not just about the organ. The McGaughey recital allows us to showcase the versatility of our organ, the vital role music plays in the life of a congregation, and the skill of at least one gifted organist (and possibly other musicians as well). The recital has been welcomed by the Cornwall community and our average attendance is around 50.



The McGaughey Prize is also opening new opportunities for St. John's to reach out into the larger community. When we reached out to music schools for recommendations for the prize winner a couple of years ago, an Adjunct Instructor of Music Theory, Organ from the Crane School of Music, SUNY Potsdam expressed an interest in arranging additional concerts as a means to grow the appreciation of organ music and to encourage young people to pursue the organ as a course of study. The initiative was put on hold because of the pandemic and border closures but, once COVID is past, we look forward to pursuing this opportunity to invite people gather at St. John's to enjoy the music provided by the organ.



St. John's is honoured to be the trustees of Mrs. McGaughey's gift and vision for church music; and we are pleased to be able to encourage new church musicians in their development and to offer their skills to our community.

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## DUNVEGAN – KENYON PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

### Dunvegan Summer Social

#### Description:

Ahhh – the good old days. Many of us have grown up with fond memories of summer socials that used to happen in the 1950s and 1960s. These were fun events with music, entertainment, games, and just plain old-fashioned fellowship. The people at Kenyon are no exception, except that we did something about it.

In 2014, we decided to organize our own Dunvegan Summer Social. The Board of Managers set up an organizing committee to set the wheels in motion. Our congregation is fortunate in that we have several well-known local musicians who are members; they persuaded other talented local musicians to contribute their talents to this worthwhile cause.

We picked a date in July – Tuesday evening instead of a weekend. We set up the event on the front lawn in front of our church hall. A large hay wagon was decorated as the stage, and we had a large open tent over the stage in case of rain. We encouraged to bring lawn chairs but did provide some benches, just in case.

July 7, 2015



We knew that not everyone (i.e., children) would be interested in the music, so we rented an inflated Bouncy Castle for them to use with adult supervision. We also set up a children's activity area with balloons, face painting and a fish pond game.

Of course, who could forget food? The ladies of the congregation baked a multitude of pies, cakes, cookies and other goodies, which were set on long tables laden with jars of jams, jellies and pickles – all available for sale inside the hall before the musical program began.

Other members volunteered to help in the parking lot, work at the entry gate, grill hot dogs on BBQs, sell drinks and snacks.

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That typical warm summer evening truly a fun time, with a large crowd of members and local community people enjoying the music and socializing happily with friends and neighbours. We enjoyed seeing the fellowship, and listening to wonderful Celtic music with fiddles, guitars, piano and vocals on a warm summer evening under the trees and stars. We even had highland dancers practicing their steps in the wings, excitedly waiting to perform.

The event was so successful that we have been holding it every year from 2014 to 2019, and we hope to keep on holding it once the pandemic has run its course. Not only is it a successful fund-raising event, and not only does it bring back nostalgic memories of the 1950s and 1960s, but also it is creating new and good memories of what fellowship and being part of a community are all about.

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## **DUNVEGAN – KENYON PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

### **Local Mission Initiatives**

#### **Description:**

We are very much a rural church and our numbers are small but not our hearts.

In 2019, one of our Session members contacted the local public school to find out if they knew of any family in need and, if they did, what were the specific needs that we could fill. The congregation was then asked to donate items and/or money. The Session member purchased the needed items and a Christmas food basket and then delivered it to the school. The principal then gave the family the gifts on behalf of Kenyon Presbyterian Church.

This was the beginning of our new local mission initiative but it wasn't the only project we undertook. As many congregations do, we have a special "White Gift Sunday" during Advent. This has morphed into our partnering with the St. Vincent de Paul Food Bank and into our asking, at the food bank's request, for cash donations rather than food items. Cash goes further than dry food goods.

Of course, the pandemic and the lockdown hampered some of our activities, but we were able still able to do both in 2020 and it looks as though the "Local Mission Initiative" is going to be a regular part of Advent.



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## FINCH – ST. LUKE'S-KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

### Mother's Day Roast Beef Dinner

#### Description:

Fellowship is such an important part of church life. It's not just a matter of being together but also a matter of having fun and maybe even doing something a little off the wall a bit. Our Mother's Day Roast Beef Dinner was one such event that we used to do when we were a larger congregation. Tickets were sold ahead of time but, if any were left over, we sold them at the door.



Yes, we served roast beef. Members looking after the main course would cook the roast beef at home and then bring it to the church to be sliced. Other members on the "Food" team would prepare vegetables and salads at the church. One member usually made her famous salad dressing. Of course, we also had the choice of one or two desserts prepared by the church ladies, and the food was always great.

What made our event different from ordinary meals was the atmosphere. We are blessed with having members who are good at decorating and they would prepare the church to look like a restaurant. Each year we had a different theme so each year we would offer a different restaurant atmosphere. Being in a rural area where going out to a different type of restaurant usually meant a one-hour trip each way to a nearby city, having the restaurant "come to us" was a big deal. Tables were set up for two, four, six, or eight people. Other volunteers served pre-assigned tables. We even had "wine" (ginger ale) on occasion.

When guests arrived for dinner, the maître d' took their name, checked up what kind of table they wanted (for 2 or 8) and then escorted them to the sanctuary where they would wait until their table was ready. While waiting, they were served punch. Once seated at their tables, they would be waited on by their servers. Can you think of a better way to treat mothers on Mother's Day?

The evenings were a total success! Everyone enjoyed the time of fellowship whether they were guests or the volunteers who helped in so many different ways. It was a great way for people in the community to come and get to know us better, and the people in the community looked forward to this event each year.



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## FINCH – ST. LUKE'S-KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

### Seniors 80+ Recognition Service

#### Description:

As people get older and start losing friends and family, it's easy for them to begin feeling alone and even forgotten. We decided to hold a special Sunday service in which we recognized the seniors (age 80+) in our congregation. But we did it in a special way.

We identified the seniors in our congregation and then appointed one person from the congregation (a relative if possible) to write up a narrative on their specific senior. We also asked them to find out what their favourite hymns were. Members of each senior's family were also invited to this special service.

During the service, each senior was recognized, and the hymns were those selected by the seniors. Sunday School children also participated in the service honouring the seniors. After the service, we had a potluck luncheon and a special cake made by a local member of the community.

The celebration and time of fellowship was enjoyed by all!



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## GRAVEL HILL – ST. JAMES-ST. ANDREW'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

### We are the Church

#### Description:

Gravel Hill is a very small community – not even a town now – outside of Monkland. Our congregation is even smaller. In fact, we no longer hold regular services in our building and the church is open one month a year plus a couple of Sundays for our cemetery and anniversary services in the fall. In fact, we are now part of a three-point charge, with St. Andrew's in Avonmore and St. Luke's-Knox in Finch.



We might be small and we don't have an outreach program into our community, but that doesn't mean we aren't active. In fact, we are very active. Our children are involved in Finch's Sunday School, and our elders generally attend services in Avonmore. Some of our members are in retirement or nursing homes, so we make sure they are visited on a regular basis. Since we no longer hold regular services in our own building, our organist plays in other churches when needed.

We are the Church. We're proud of our church building and work to keep it in good shape and use it as best we can. But we also know that as a church community our witness is not limited to a building but to how we live our lives, and interact with and support one another. That is our Christian witness in the community.

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## HAWKESBURY – ST. PAUL'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

### Soup & Sandwich

**Description:**

St. Paul's is a small congregation in a community that has a good-sized French-speaking population but that doesn't mean that there's no place for us.

Actually, we are blessed in any number of ways and are active. One of the highlights of our year is the *Soup & Sandwich* event held on the first Friday of June. People within the congregation, as well as those whom we call "Friends of St. Paul's," gather to decorate, and prepare soup and sandwiches.

Yes, it is a fundraiser but it's also a 'fun' raiser. We enjoy live music and great fellowship as well as raising much-needed funds. Our church hall is filled with laughter, conversation, music and good food. We look forward to the day when the church building will once again be able to re-open and life can begin to return to normal – or at least, a new normal.

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## INGLESIDE – ST. MATTHEW'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

### Community Suppers

#### Description:

We're so used to people *coming* to church that it's been easy to forget that we're actually called to *go out* into the world with the Gospel. The challenge for us at St. Matthew's was *how do we reach out into the community to connect with the people?*

After a couple of false starts and, since St. Matthew's has a fairly big and modern kitchen, we decided one way would be by hosting monthly community suppers with us providing both a nutritious meal for all and a craft table for children. We advertised on our website. Prices are reasonable, thanks to a grant from the Presbytery, but we did insist on RSVP 5 days before just to make sure we had enough food on hand.

We started small and our team was small – about 5 to 6 volunteers – but thanks to their dedication and commitment, we have been able to serve dinners for, on average, 80+ people each month. One month, we extended a special invitation to the local school and had 150 students!

The program has been as successful as we had hoped. We have begun building relationships and developing trust with non-church people in the community. We have even heard people have begun talking about us as being “their church” even though they never actually step into the sanctuary.

Of course, once the COVID-19 pandemic hit, everything stopped, but not quite. We are using this enforced break as a time to get specialized training on food handling for larger numbers, as well making plans for re-introducing our community suppers once restrictions are eased. One idea that we are developing is to make short video clips (~4 minutes) with a Christian message that we can show during the suppers.

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## IROQUOIS – RIVERVIEW PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

### Movie Night

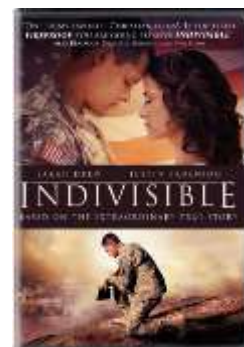
#### Description:

In many congregations, summer means declining attendance Sunday mornings as people go on vacation or head out for weekends away at summer cottages. At *Riverview*, we decided to use the season to reach out into the community.

Since 2010, we have been holding weekly movie nights in the church hall during the month of July. The community is invited to bring a comfy lawn chair, and, free of charge, come to view a range of family-friendly Christian-based movies, licensed from their respective distributors. They enjoy the films, the refreshments (movie popcorn, snacks and drinks), and – of course – the community.

Our *Movie Nights* audience ranges from 15 to 35 people. Usually one-third (or more) of those in attendance are from outside our congregation's faith family.

Over the years, the movies shown have included: *Fireproof*, *Courageous*, *War Room*, *God's Not Dead 1 & 2*, *To Joey with Love*, *Soul Surfer*, *Rust*, *Back Roads and Lilies*, *Mom's Night Out*, *The Mighty Macs*, *Summer Snow*, *Unconditional*, *The Shack*, and *I can Only Imagine*.



## KEMPTVILLE – ST. PAUL'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

### Annual Gingerbread House Decorating Party & Pizza Night

#### Description:

Fellowship is such an important part of congregational life and Christian witness and we look for opportunities where we can gather together, celebrate and have fun, and strengthen our sense of being a welcoming family community that cares about others.

At St. Paul's, one event we plan is an annual *Gingerbread House Decorating Party and Pizza Night*. It's held in late November and is a community outreach for children of all ages. Our regular Youth and Sunday School members bring friends and families, tripling the size of the group. So much fun and so many edible houses are created with a great variety of candy and icing. Laughter emanates from the church hall that can be heard in all corners of the church and actually spills out onto the streets as we sometimes have over eighty people attending!

The final results are not only beautiful, but delicious! Each house, in turn, is displayed for judging and admiration by all. Photo ops and smiling faces are the focus of that day, and beyond, as this precious time together is shared by all in the following weeks. We see pictures published in our church newsletter and proudly displayed in individual homes.

But the event is more than gathering together and having fun for ourselves. Participants give as well as receive. In addition to decorating gingerbread houses, they also colour Christmas cards that are later distributed to seniors in our local Residence Home, and non-perishable goods are collected and forwarded to the local Salvation Army Foodbank.

Our Gingerbread Housemaker and "ambassador", Judy Messenger, has been making these delights from home for many years – each wall and roof section is assembled with love. But it takes a team to corral all the treats and bag all the icing, as well as guide little fingers, so great appreciation goes to Nancy Messenger and all her helpers. Who knows how long these gingerbread treats last once they arrive home, but what a sweet treat, and the sweet memories are good news, indeed!



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## KIRK HILL – ST. COLUMBA PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

### St. Columba Celebrates 200 Years

#### Description:

In 1962, the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the church building was celebrated and the booklet, *“Historical Sketch of St. Columba”* was written by Rev. Leo Hughes. We felt the need to produce an updated, reader-friendly version for the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our founding as a congregation, which occurred on June 2, 2019.



The book we produced, *“St. Columba Presbyterian Church Celebrating 200 Years: 1819-2019”*, contains a timeline of events as well as write-ups and pictures of the history of the church, the ministers, the various organizations and artifacts. Most importantly, it contains a collection of stories about the people and families who make up our church family.

The book became the catalyst for a year of celebrations which included a visit on May 12<sup>th</sup> from the Rev. Daniel Cho, Moderator of the 2018 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. On May 18<sup>th</sup>, we held a Victorian tea and fashion show with members of the congregation and other guests modeling clothes on loan from the Dunvegan Museum.

Many people from the congregation and community loaned artifacts and helped set up displays of foregone days within the church for our Anniversary service on June 2<sup>nd</sup>. Our guest speakers there were Rev. Jean Franklin Harms, who had spent her formative years attending St. Columba, and Rev. Leo Hughes, a beloved former minister. In keeping with the traditions of our forefathers, people stood to pray and stayed seated to sing. Several of the hymns were sung without accompaniment. Gaelic was used for Psalm 23, with the congregation echoing the words of the precentor, Darrel MacLeod, while Donaldson MacLeod offered the Lord's Prayer in Gaelic.

After a catered lunch under a huge tent, guests returned to the church for a concert by the Campbell Trio followed by a slideshow of photos collected over the years. Despite the rain, which presented a few challenges for our outdoor activities, turnout was huge with many people coming from the community and other parts of the Presbytery.

As a follow up to our year-long celebrations, a CD of the Anniversary service and a memory stick of St. Columba from 1819-2019 were available for purchase. On Nov. 19<sup>th</sup>, 2020, Rev. Jim Ferrier dedicated the commemorative plaque that was installed in remembrance of the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

St. Columba Church has stood the tests of time. The book and the events reached out to and involved former members of the church, friends and neighbours from near and far. It was time to record the history of St. Columba and the memories of the people. We are grateful that we were able to do it and that we had the support of so many people.





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## LANCASTER – ST. ANDREW'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

### Welcome Table

#### Description:

These days, it's easy for congregations to become isolated from the larger community. We decided to increase our presence in the community by hosting a "Welcome Table" once a month. Our goal was to increase our presence in the community and, in particular, to reach those who are lonely or struggling financially.

So, the first Thursday of every month, we would provide soup and sandwiches as well as a social time where people could simply get together. We even had prizes at special times such as Christmas and Easter, and could offer bags of groceries for anyone who was struggling financially. The people who actually came, however, were the seniors.

Our Welcome Table has grown. Before the pandemic hit, we were able to feed 30-60 people at our Welcome Tables. While the goal was not to specifically increase church attendance or membership, one couple and a couple of seniors who came to know us through the Welcome Table now attend church regularly.



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## MARTINTOWN – ST. ANDREW'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

### Web presence

#### Description:

A couple of years ago, the Presbytery of Ottawa held a workshop on website design. We decided to “bite the bullet” as it were and develop a web presence and, specifically, both a website and a Facebook page.

We found someone to look after the Facebook page and keep it current, but no one felt confident enough to develop a website. The Presbytery Ministry Animator agreed to develop the site and worked with members to create a site that we could look after and maintain.

The website has key information for visitors: names, address, times of service and such. We didn't realize it at first, but developing that site forced us to take a fresh look at ourselves, what it means for us to be “a small country Church with a big country heart”, and who we are as the church. We had to consider what we are doing and offering, and how we are supporting others and our community.

Exploring who we are led to us reflecting on our past and where we came from. We ended up creating a section on our website where we could celebrate our church history. We also discovered a place where we could share photos from our events, gradually building a virtual scrapbook of church life.

Did we know what we were getting into when we decided to start? No. Is the web presence as effective a means for outreach as we had imagined? Probably not, though Facebook has become an important way for us to communicate during pandemic. Do we have a better sense of who we are? Absolutely. And, being grounded in God, and rooted in our past allows us to face the future stronger and healthier. Every so often, reflection is good for the soul.

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## MAXVILLE – ST. ANDREW'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

### Carols by Candlelight Service

#### Description:

What can we do to make the Advent season special for adults? We know what to do for children and youth – the Christmas play and possibly a Christmas party with a visit from Santa – but what can we do to make the season more meaningful for adults?

That was a question we asked years ago. The answer was to have a special service, led by the church choir and organist with community members in the congregation. So that's what we did but over the years, the event has gradually evolved over 40 years into a production with guest directors and musicians – our Carols by Candlelight Service. To top it off, we have created an ambience conducive to Christmas with the scent of apple cider and the many lit candles.

More than that, our Carols by Candlelight service, held in early December, has become truly ecumenical over the years. People from all four denominations in Maxville (United, Anglican, Catholic and Presbyterian) join the choir, read scripture, usher and perform as guest musicians.



The service has been embraced by the surrounding community. We generally have so many people that our church sanctuary is filled and we have to open the doors to the adjoining Sunday School room for extra seating!

The evening ends with a time of fellowship, of sharing Christmas sweets and warm apple cider, and of creating good memories and a sense of Christmas spirit.

Unfortunately, we were not able to hold our Carols by Candlelight service in-person this year because of the pandemic and social distancing rules, but did our best to hold it virtually. Hopefully, next year, we will be back in the church building in December 2021 and people will once again be able to welcome the season in person.

## **MOOSE CREEK – KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

### **Turkey Supper / Silent Auction**

#### **Description:**

Moose Creek is a small town in eastern rural Ontario, but we are fortunate in that we have a modern building with a good-sized kitchen and hall that allows us to reach out into the community by hosting dinners and other events.

One popular dinner/event was our Turkey Supper & Silent Auction. This was a major fund-raising event for our congregation. This event was popular with people coming not only from Moose Creek but also from surrounding communities, and we would serve around 170 people.

Of course, times change and we are no longer able to hold this event but hopefully, once the pandemic is over, we'll be able to start back with hosting dinners.

## **MOREWOOD – MOREWOOD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

### **Making a 3-Point Charge Work**

#### **Description:**

Rather than focus on any single event, we thought we'd talk about the challenges of being a 3-point pastoral charge and how we have made it work.

Like many rural congregations, we were struggling to support a full-time minister and, in 2010, became a 3-point charge with St. Andrew's (Chesterville, with whom we were already partnered) and St. Paul's (Winchester).

We discovered the key to making it work was our respect for each other, our willingness to accommodate based on the needs of the other churches, and a strong desire to make it work. St. Andrew's in Chesterville moved to an earlier service time while we at Morewood moved to a later service time, with St. Paul's in Winchester filling the middle slot. To make the situation more challenging, our minister does not live in the area.

St. Paul's soon realized there was little time to chat with the minister or discuss any issues Sunday mornings. The minister ran in from the Chesterville service and ran out afterwards to get to Morewood on time. Not a problem for us – someone from the Chesterville congregation closes their service so the minister can leave just a bit sooner, and someone from Morewood opens the service! The minister guarantees to arrive in time for the children's story.

We have continued this practice now for several years with the minister arriving a bit early to chat with folks at Chesterville, staying a bit later to chat with folks at Winchester, and staying after our service to chat with us. What has also happened, however, is that we have taken more of a leadership role in the congregation. We stepped up to the challenge and have become stronger as a result.

We have also begun reaching out in new ways to people. The Memorial Service has been one of our special services, but recently, we began inviting those who usually attend to bring in pictures of their loved ones, and to tell us a little bit about the person during the Memorial service in a time of sharing. This year, of course, we could not hold the Memorial Service as usual.

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## MORRISBURG – KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

### Community Breakfasts

**Description:**

Morrisburg is a small community in eastern Ontario, and home to Upper Canada Village. Over time, we came to realize that the “old days” when people looked for churches to join when moving to the area were gone. We knew we had to reach out into the community if we wanted to be effective witnesses to the Gospel.

We explored what the needs of the community were and how we could perhaps meet those needs. Of course, we hoped that once people came to know us, then they would want to learn more about who we are and why we care about what happens to others.

After a few false starts, we decided to do something similar to what our “sister” congregation was doing and was quite successful in doing – offering meals. While St. Matthew's-Ingleside offers community suppers, we decided to offer community breakfasts and were getting the resources and training needed to start.

Then the pandemic hit and all plans stopped – at least for the time being.

In the meantime, we're praying, seeking God's will for us, and keeping an eye out for more opportunities.

## MOUNTAIN – KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

### Ecumenical partnerships

#### Description:

Knox Presbyterian is a very small rural congregation. Our numbers may be limited but our vision is not. We are a mission-minded church, looking for ways to put out faith into action and help those in need.

Two years ago, we began an outreach program called, "Let's Do Lunch Together." This was a once-a-month program inviting the less fortunate people in our community to come for a free hot meal. It was a great success and, on average, we would have 15 to 20 people show up for lunch – more people than we have in our congregation!

The program was obviously needed but our resources were limited. Although the lunch is free, some people did contribute financially. That money, along with money from our congregational giving, was put back into the program.

What we were doing caught the eye of the House of Lazarus, "a community outreach mission that offers food, clothing, and household goods to those in need" and tries to "fill in the gaps in services and resources for residents in the surrounding communities when and wherever possible".

In April 2017, Cathy Ashby from the House of Lazarus approached about the possibility of using our facilities to do a once-a-week dinner. Their "Dinner on the House" is a program geared to people who have little or no income, seniors, people on minimum wage, and people in the country who have little or no money for food.

Our Session recognized the need in the community and welcomed the House of Lazarus to use our facilities for free. We also decided to stop our once-a-month program so we could better support House of Lazarus' "Dinner on the House". Their program has been running since May 2017. It feeds 75 to 100 people every week. All expenses relating the project (e.g., use of kitchen, Hydro, heating, etc.) are paid by us.

The impact in the community has been far broader than we ever imagined, with other organizations also reaching out to help with the meals: the United Church, the Anglican Church, the Rotary Club and the Lions Club! What began as a small initiative by a small but dedicated group of Presbyterians has blossomed into a partnership with so many others. We are able to have an impact on community, and cannot help but feel Christ has brought all of us together to be his presence in the community.



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## PRESCOTT – ST. ANDREW'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

### Artistic Outreach

#### Description:

Prescott is a small town on the banks of the St. Lawrence River, about halfway between Brockville ("City of the Thousand Islands") and Morrisburg (site of Upper Canada Village). We are about an hour from Ottawa, Cornwall, and Kingston, and have become a hub for a variety of artistic programs. The St. Lawrence Shakespeare Festival runs its program in Prescott's outdoor amphitheatre over the summer; Showtime South Grenville is a community group that promotes the performing arts in the region, and is part of the Festival of Small Halls which shares big music in "small, cherished places across Eastern Ontario".

St. Andrew's is blessed by having a fairly large sanctuary with excellent acoustics. A few years ago, fundraising was undertaken to enlarge the stage area. After that was completed, we decided to reach out into the community by offering our space for use by the different artistic groups. Actors rehearse, musicians practice, and budding actors (yes, Prescott even has a program for younger people who would like to become actors) can learn their craft.



Along with the above groups, we have been hosting community plays sponsored by the St. Lawrence Shakespeare Festival – Cabaret, Oliver, Dicken's Christmas Carol over the last few years and recitals by dance groups, youth groups and community choirs.

We hoped that by making available our facilities, we would expand our presence in the community. It was typical for most performances to have the sanctuary filled to capacity. This certainly is not outreach in a traditional sense, but partnering with others has enabled us to get a grant for installing a vertical lift to improve accessibility for the congregation and community.



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## SPENCERVILLE – ST. ANDREW'S-KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

### Catering

#### Description:

St. Andrew's-Knox in Spencerville aspires to be a positive presence in our community while, at the same time, helping with church finances. We looked at our gifts – at what we can offer to our community – and realized we like food and cooking and the church has space for hosting meals!

Like many congregations, we often cater meals after funerals, but we also began catering for special events such as Anniversary dinners and receptions. On one occasion, we served a fancy prime rib dinner to 30 people, with our well-dressed men working as waiters.

People in the community (and even beyond) have come to us as welcoming and friendly people who are willing to do something to make special events special. Each year, the Edwardsburgh-Cardinal Fire Department asks us to cater a roast beef dinner which means that each year we are serving about 80 people when we include their wives and Township Council members.

Another regular catering occasion is the traditional Christmas meal that we put on for the retired women teachers of Upper Canada East. They provide the décor while we provide the meal for about 85 women.

The Thousand Islanders Ladies' Chorus of 25 –30 members have enjoyed our venue for their Installation banquet or a few Christmas parties.

Being a Christian isn't about numbers or how many people we get on a Sunday morning. Christian witness isn't about throwing Jesus and the Bible into people's faces. Yes, being rooted in our faith is important as is us coming together in corporate worship, but being a Christian is about living our faith every day and using the gifts that God has given us. While catering has been an important part of our ministry, our church hall has been regularly used for the Optimist Club dinner meetings and some 4-H clubs have made use of it for their meetings.



We are always happy to serve the needs of any groups who enjoy making use of our facility. After the pandemic is over, we look forward to being able to resume our community service.

## SPENCERVILLE – ST. ANDREW'S-KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

### Spencerville Community Choir

#### Description:

The church is not a building. The church is not the minister. The church is the people of God, including the minister, who meet in a building. We all know it, but sometimes God helps us remember it in unusual ways using gifts he has given us. One of our gifts at St. Andrew's-Knox is music. We are fortunate to have many members interested in music ministry.

Years ago, the Spencerville churches were going through a period of transition. Long-time ministers had left; congregations were in different stages of getting new ministers. Our community is small so we decided to contact other congregations in the area, inviting them to join us in forming a community choir. We also extended invitations to friends who did not identify with a congregation.

The result was the creation of the Spencerville Community Choir. While it was composed primarily of members from our church choir, it also included choir members from other churches in the area: *Spencerville United Church; St. Laurence O'Toole Catholic Church, and Faith Missionary Church* as well as those who had no church affiliation. Performances were held at St. Andrew's-Knox Presbyterian. We got the music books from a Christian book store in Brockville, and sang with taped music (which was new to all of us). Music was our common passion, and we enjoyed the gift of one another's company.



We had wonderful years, gathering as members of the area, singing together at practices as well as performing. Since not everyone could read music, we created tapes which they could take home and practice with if they so wanted. Even Father Stitt from St. Laurence O'Toole Catholic Church joined our group. This was particularly special for Gloria since he was from her home town and she had known him all her life.

So, for two evenings close to Christmas and Easter every year, the Spencerville Community Choir of about 40 people would perform a Christmas musical, accompanied by taped music. We would perform in St. Andrew's-Knox and the church would be full. The money we raised would be given to the local food bank, but the friendships across denominational divides and outreach into the community are things we treasure even today.

After a number of years, Gloria Purcell stepped down as leader. We have been blessed with her successors who have also provided excellent leadership. The group continues, albeit with smaller numbers and fewer performances but the experience has been rewarding and we were blessed to have been able to work with so many wonderful friends.

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## **VANKLEEK HILL – KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

### **Messy Church**

#### **Description:**

Our people come to Knox Sunday morning to worship, but we know there are many in our community who don't have a place of worship and who aren't interested in traditional Sunday morning services. How do we reach them? What can we offer that they might need?

We have brought in speakers to speak on different topics that were of interest to the community, held Book Sales, and began offering an evening non-traditional worship service, "Knox at Night".

A little over a year ago, we began hosting a Messy Church program. Children and their parents attended a meal, followed by some teaching and crafts and then out the door so young children could get to bed, ready for the next day. It was a huge success and we were reaching the people we wanted to – non-Knox people not involved with Sunday morning or evening worship.

Messy Church has done more than bring Christianity to non-churched people; it has provided an opportunity for volunteers to serve and reach others in the community. We have no intention of trying to integrate Messy Church people into our regular Sunday worship – our Messy Church family is its own congregation.

Unfortunately, Messy Church was forced to stop once the province went into lockdown. We look forward to the day when we can once again meet and have fun together as a family, celebrating our faith.

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## WINCHESTER – ST. PAUL'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

### St. Paul's Community Garden

#### Description:

In 2016, St. Paul's decided that we needed to be more involved in our community. Since we had extra land beside the church building, we decided to partner with Community Food Share to start a community garden.

Four years later, the garden has become a great success in Winchester with all the food harvested going to Community Food Share. In 2020, we grew pea, beans, beets, radishes, peppers, spinach, cabbage, cucumbers, spring onions, kale, Swiss chard, and tomatoes. Our volunteer garden manager coordinated schedules for the 35 volunteers as well as the planting, growing and harvesting of crops. We harvested and donated over 535 lbs of produce that went to Community Food Share.

But the garden has been more than what one congregation has done and even more than producing food. It really reflects a partnership with so many in the community. The local lumber company donated the lumber for eight raised beds. A local construction company donated the soil. Ontario Hydro donated wood chips for walkways. A local business donated T-shirts for volunteers, and another local company donated money for a water drip line to water the plants. The North Dundas Township provided grant money and even the Winchester United Church (whom you might think is our 'competitor') made beautiful plant markers. One year, one class from the public school even came over every Friday morning to help. Our presence in the Winchester community and our connections to the people here have certainly been strengthened because of this project.

We have even grown in other ways. In 2019, St. Paul's Community Garden partnered with St. Paul's Church to host a Gospel fest that included many local musicians. The Gospel fest was free but donations went to assist with garden costs.



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As a footnote – we just received a “Community Spirit Award” from the Province of Ontario and the residents of Stormont, Dundas and South Glengarry.

This is an example of one way a Church can move outside their building and be part of their Community. We strongly encourage other Church congregations to find ways to be more involved in their community.

## WOMEN'S MISSIONARY SOCIETY (WMS)

### Brockville Presbyterial's Guest Speaker Program

#### Description:

The Women's Missionary Society (WMS) was started when women had very few opportunities. Few were permitted to attend university; marriage meant that work outside the home was frowned upon; and, women had no vote, including no vote in any of the church courts. Not only were women denied ordination to the ministry of Word and Sacrament, but also they were denied ordination to be Elders. It was in this environment that Presbyterian women organized themselves as a missionary society whose original purpose was to encourage and support missionaries, as well as to provide opportunities for women to be more active in church life, hold leadership positions, and support one another.

Over the years, society and the Presbyterian Church in Canada have changed; women are now seen as having the same rights and privileges as men. The WMS mission has broadened now "to encourage one another and all the people of the church to be involved in local and world mission through prayer, study, service and fellowship." The WMS itself is organized hierarchically: local; presbyterial; synodical; and national.

The *Brockville Presbyterial* includes more than First Presbyterian in Brockville; it also includes Morewood, Morrisburg and Kemptville branches as well as people, like Rev. Cheryl, who don't belong to a local branch but do belong to the presbyterial. We used to meet four (4) times a year but have since reduced the number of meetings to three (3) because of challenges posed in poor winter driving conditions. While there is a business portion to these meetings that is often limited to WMS members, the meetings themselves begin with guest speakers and are open to anyone.

In the past few years, we have had: **Dorcas Gordon**, Principal Emerita at Knox College in Toronto, leading a presentation on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and sharing experiences from a recent mission trip to the area; **Pat Grainger** sharing experiences from her mission trip to Malawi; **Bruce Kemp** talking about his school building project in South America; **Cheryl Gaver** talking about cross-cultural challenges when sharing the Gospel; and **Stephanie Chunoo** telling us about her work in Hungary with refugees.

These events educate us about church challenges, initiatives and successes around the world. They are also a great way to reach out to others in our communities, informing them (and us) of just how active the Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC) is and how seriously we take the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20.

It is through learning about how others serve God through the PCC and its partners that we gain an appreciation of the needs of the people and how these needs are met. In the process, we discover how we at home can support these initiatives through prayer and study, our givings, and our telling others about our contribution to Lord's work in the world.

# **COVID ACTIVITIES**

## PASTORAL CHARGE OF AVONMORE, FINCH & GRAVEL HILL

### Virtual Bible Study

#### Description:

Once we realized that in-person congregational activities were not going to happen because of the pandemic and lockdown, the challenge for us was figuring out how to continue as a community and grow in our faith. While Internet connections in rural eastern Ontario are limiting and many of our members do not have Internet access, we still decided to offer a virtual Bible study via Zoom. That would provide some fellowship, allowing attendees to interact with other, as well as providing an opportunity for them to grow in their faith adventure.

We began with a study on parables, advertising in the congregational newsletter and on the congregational website and Facebook page. After each session, the minister would record the Bible study, incorporating comments and reflections made by those who had attended the Zoom study. Those who attended found one advantage to the Zoom meeting: **Not having to wonder about the weather and drive in hazardous winter conditions!** Posting the recorded studies online led to a second advantage: people beyond the congregations were checking them out and adding their own comments.

That first virtual Bible study led to others, and people from beyond our congregations began joining. The first ones were people related to members but who live outside our area. Next to join were people from congregations currently without a minister; then came people whose congregations aren't offering online Bible studies during the pandemic or who are simply interested in the topic.

We also introduced a second "Bible study" called *Puzzles 'n Faith*. Each week, the minister deals with one question in about 5-10 minutes. This is the place where you can raise questions that you always wondered about but were too timid to ask – questions like, "Who was Mrs. Cain and where did she come from"; "What is the 'right' way to celebrate communion?"; "Why do some denominations baptize babies but others refuse to?"; "Where does free will come into the picture?"; and "When will the world end?" People are free to comment and post their own questions. Again, we're reaching people beyond our congregations.

If the pandemic has closed some doors, it has also definitely opened others. Zoom Bible studies – and possibly, if Internet connections and speeds in rural areas of Ontario improve, hybrid studies as well – are here to stay and have a place in the church's *Building Back Better* initiative.



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## BROCKVILLE – FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

### Virtual Big Give 2020

#### Description:

*First Presbyterian Church* in Brockville participated in *The Big Give 2020* again this year, even in the middle of COVID-19! Though *First Church* was not able to host same activities, the MOVE Committee came up with a new pandemic-safe way to bless our community.

Volunteers from the MOVE Committee filled 25 "*Blessing Bags*" with clients of the Brockville and Area Food Bank. Blessing Bags were created for both families and individuals. For families, the bags were filled with small toys, crayons, books, bubbles, fruit snacks, and some treats for parents. The bags for individuals held personal care articles and snacks.

Each bag also contained a handwritten postcard from our church, letting the recipients know we are praying for them, and providing current church contact information to enable them to keep in touch.

Thank you to Linda Osmond for sewing up the bags to be filled with blessings, to Alison Robb for writing the postcards, and to Janet LeBrun for helping to fill each of the bags!

The Blessing Bags have been so popular with the Food Bank's clientele that more Blessing Bags will be filled and delivered to the Food Bank for distribution this summer.



## CAINTOWN – ST. PAUL'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

### Church Anniversary Service

#### Description:

We are a small congregation in rural eastern Ontario, and our Church Anniversary is always a big deal because it's a time when we get together and celebrate. Our service is Sunday morning, but our celebration begins Saturday when we hold our community potluck and Musical Concert. Even former members who have moved away and local people who aren't members join us. In 2019, we had between 50 and 60 people, and 4 musical groups provided entertainment: the

*Handbell Choir* from First Presbyterian Church in Brockville, the *Caintown Choir*, composed of 8 women, the *Caintown Chorus*, composed of 8-10 men who join the *Caintown Choir*, and the *Covey Country Bluegrass Trio*.



This year, our 144<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Service was quite different due to the Covid-19 pandemic. We were unable to host our potluck and musical evening, but were able to hold an in-person service Sunday morning in the sanctuary with an outdoor picnic lunch afterwards. People brought their own picnic lunch and chairs, sat on the lawn and enjoyed fellowship with one another – even while following all the requirements of the region's Health Department and the PCC. We may not have been able to sing, but we were able to listen to spiritual songs that the *Caintown Choir* had recorded on a CD ten years ago. Who could imagine that one day we would need to play our own songs for our service on a CD instead of having our live choir singing?

Next year, hopefully and God willing, we will be able to gather for a more traditional celebration.

## **CORNWALL – ST. JOHN'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

### **Live-streaming Services**

#### **Description:**

Like many congregations, St. John's has been dabbling with technology for a while. A few years ago, we installed screens in the sanctuary and upgraded our sound system to enhance the in-house experience. Screens allowed us to "go green" and reduce that amount of material that we had to print in the bulletins each week.

Once the pandemic hit and congregations were shut down, however, we made a radical shift to live-streaming services online. While the building was empty, we were able to cobble together the hardware required to livestream our worship each week. It wasn't pretty, but it worked. With the prospect of people returning to the sanctuary for worship, we recognized that we could not have monitors and cables strewn across the front of the church; so some upgrades were going to be necessary. Since June we have invested in a new computer with sufficient memory to handle livestreaming and a digital video camera which is able to produce a high resolution image from the back of our large sanctuary. Thankfully, we are blessed with a number of "tekkies" in the congregation: one runs the soundboard; one deals with the camera, which is set up on a tripod; and one runs the studio software putting it all together. Recently, we have added a primary camera with remote pan, tilt and zoom features to further enable and enhance our production.

The online services were a great way to keep in touch with our members and to hold onto a sense of community during the time when we could not gather in the sanctuary, and continues to be well-received by those who do not feel comfortable in live worship yet. We also discovered, however, that livestreaming services has allowed us to welcome some of our shut-ins back to worship!

Our church has re-opened, and worship is gradually returning to normal but our online ministry continues. We are thankful that we found a new way to reach people who cannot normally attend for one reason or another normally attend for one reason or another.

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## DUNVEGAN – KENYON PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

### Memorial Day Sunday

#### Description:

On the first weekend of September, the Labour Day weekend, Kenyon Church always holds their Memorial Day Sunday. This has always been a well-attended service celebrating the lives of the ancestors and families of our congregational members and those of local community people who are buried in our church cemetery.

Traditionally, the whole weekend is filled with special activities. Floral tributes are placed on the graves of loved ones from Friday to Sunday afternoon. The Sunday service is often a musical one, filled with fiddles, bagpipes and vocals to celebrate our Celtic heritage. A lunch following the service provides time for families and friends to visit and socialize with one another. The event brings people from near and far and the church is usually full.

As you can imagine, the pandemic year of 2020 made it impossible for us to celebrate the way we normally do, so we improvised. Our church building had been closed since March 15, 2020 so this was our first service where we were back together with our members and friends.

As usual, our beautiful and well-maintained cemetery was adorned with many floral tributes. Families stayed after the service to visit graves of their loved ones.



The service itself was held outdoors and God co-operated by providing a warm, sunny morning. People brought their lawn chairs and set them up ensuring that social distance protocols were followed. Everyone wore a face mask. As people entered, we got their contact information, and they were encouraged to use the sanitizing station which had been set up. The walkway to the hall became the pulpit and stage area where musicians and the minister could do what they had to do while keeping socially distant from everyone else. Our Youth Kenyon String Fiddlers played during the service, accompanied by a keyboard brought in by the musical leader for the day.

We didn't want to risk anyone's health by having people take off masks to eat, so lunch was not provided, but no one was in a hurry to leave. The event was well attended (about 65 people) and well-received. Even so, we hope that we will be back to "normal" for September 2021!

## **GRAVEL HILL – ST. JAMES-ST. ANDREW'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

### **Gravel Hill Cemetery Memorial Service**

#### **Description:**

The Gravel Hill Cemetery was created in 1862 as the local cemetery for Protestants in the area. It was supported by both the Presbyterian Church in Gravel Hill, and is actually located beside the church, and the Methodist (later United Church) Church in Monkland. The cemetery board is made up of community members who have family in the cemetery.

Since the 1940's, the Memorial and Decoration Day Service for the cemetery has been held in our church building the first Sunday of September. Services are led either by the United Church minister or by ours.

Needless to say, the 2020 pandemic brought many changes and restrictions. We were still able to hold services in August. The weather cooperated most Sundays so that we could worship outside, under the shade of the trees, and using recorded music. We even attracted visitors from other congregations which were still closed. The one Sunday we were forced to worship inside because of rain, a few people stayed away because they knew our church building was not big enough to maintain social distance.

The church building is usually full for our Memorial and Decoration Day services. Given the size of our building and the size of the crowd we could expect to come, we realized there was no way we could conduct the service inside and maintain social distance. We had to move the service outdoors, and pray for good weather. God answered our prayers for good weather. Our minister, the Rev. Dr. Cheryl Gaver, conducted the service outside using CDs for music and hymns.

The crowd this year may not have been as large as usual, but we were able to keep people safe with social distancing, and raise funds for maintaining the cemetery. In fact, this year's offering was one of the largest in our history, with people who were not able to attend sending money to the Secretary/Treasurer. In all, we raised about \$1,500!

## **IROQUOIS – RIVERVIEW PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

### **Pastoral Care Initiative**

#### **Description:**

The Church has a responsibility not only to preach the Gospel but also to nurture and care for the body. Some 10 years ago, our congregation had a Pastoral Care Team. The leader moved away, and, while we planned on replacing her, one thing led to another and that pastoral care team basically disbanded.

We then invited the Presbytery Ministry Animator to facilitate a pastoral care workshop. That led to renewed interest in this ministry. A retired VON nurse took on the leadership role. Things started happening. Today, once again, we have a Pastoral Care Team of 6 people with a number of other volunteers that can be called on as needed. This newly-formed Pastoral Care team was just getting established when the pandemic hit. The team was no longer able to meet in-person or provide the kind of pastoral care they had anticipated, but it hasn't stopped them from being creative and coming up with new ways to help.

Many in our congregation are elderly or otherwise health-challenged. Many were nervous about going out, particularly in the early days of the pandemic. Pastoral care evolved into practical care as well. We picked up groceries, mail and prescriptions for people. We took cars to get serviced. We transported people to medical appointments. And we stayed in touch by phone or internet. Online pastoral care is an interesting adventure.

We hope to continue to find new and creative ways to be the church, the body of Christ to each other and to those in our community through this ministry of compassion and caring.

## **KEMPTVILLE – ST. PAUL'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

### **Virtual Monthly Fun Night**

#### **Description:**

COVID certainly changed how we interacted with each other in the church. Not willing to let go of fellowship while social distancing and recognizing how important fellowship is during national emergencies (which is what the pandemic is), our congregation developed a Virtual Fun Night open to all via ZOOM.

We advertise the event in a number of ways. The date and activity is posted in our weekly bulletin that an Elder emails out; the event is also published in the "Announcements" section of the actual YouTube service and in the church newsletter. Perhaps most importantly, people who have attended and enjoyed themselves talk about it with others! Closer to the time of the next event, the minister emails the Zoom link out to those who have asked for it.

It's a fun time together – all are welcome to attend. Much laughter and many happy moments are shared with those who participate in such games as Bingo, Bible Knowledge, Family Feud, Wheel of Fortune and Jeopardy. This is a great opportunity to feel connected, to support one another and to share joy in ministry for at least an hour or so.

Our minister, Rev. Samer Kandalaft, hosts each game for our congregants, while Anne Carmichael leads the games for ease and enjoyment of all. While it is somewhat competitive, everyone feels the camaraderie of a family time together. In addition, the winners receive a small gift token to congratulate their success and commemorate our time together. This could be anything from a bingo dauber to a box of home-made goodies donated by a member – always appreciated by the recipient.

All who attend certainly look forward to the next time we can laugh, and love, together. We will not take for granted anymore our cherished events in which we could all share fun, purpose, and outreach with each other in the same space. Isn't this what we all so greatly need right now?



## KIRK HILL – ST. COLUMBA PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

### Memorial Sunday Outdoor Open House and Slide Show

#### Description:

St. Columba celebrated Memorial Sunday with a successful outdoor open house on August 9, 2020 with EOHU protocols in place.



Our Interim Moderator, Rev. Jim Ferrier brought greetings and opened with prayer while Bruce Blaney, Piper, entertained us with Highland tunes. Those present continued the longstanding tradition of placing flowers on the graves of dearly departed loved ones and friends to honour their memory. People brought lawn chairs, had lunch and socialized in their social bubbles in the shade under the trees. Despite the two-metre distance we were forced to maintain because of the pandemic, the day brought happiness to many as this was the first time since the March lockdown where we could see congregational friends.

For those unable to attend, we posted a memorial slideshow, "A Tribute to our Highland Ancestors" to the St. Columba website. This 60-slide presentation contained background music from Steve Thrasher's bagpipe tune, "The Day Thou Gavest, Lord, Is Ended" along with Selah's rendition of "God Be With You 'Till We Meet Again." The slides highlighted special historical events held to commemorate milestones such as the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Kirk Hill settlement, along with centennial and bicentennial celebrations.

Special tribute was made to individual members, clergy and church groups for their long-standing service as well as the young men from the congregation who gave the supreme sacrifice in World Wars I and II. Many in-memoriam gifts generously donated over the years in memory of loved ones were also presented. In order to make everyone, including those who could not attend, feel part of the annual event, people were asked to submit photos of their ancestors' graves for inclusion.

Based on positive feedback, St. Columba's outdoor event and slideshow provided an ideal opportunity for all to reflect and remember with gratitude and respect the dedication and service of all those church members who have gone on before us, leaving a rich heritage which we continue to preserve.

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## LANCASTER – ST. ANDREW'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

### Monthly Book Club / Bible Zoom Study

#### Description:

While the pandemic has closed church buildings and challenge in-person gatherings, we have managed to keep in touch with members and continue some of our regular events.

When church buildings were allowed to re-open, we resumed our monthly Book Club get-togethers. Each month, 15 to 18 women would come together for a time of fellowship and to discuss the book of the month. So far this year, we've looked at *The Hiding Place* (Corrie ten Boom), *Night* (Elie Wiesel), and *The Bridge* (Karen Kingsbury).

In pre-Covid days, one person would be responsible for providing lunch, and we were blessed with a variety of meals. These days, one person is responsible for picking up box lunches from a store in Cornwall. Not as much variety in terms of food but at least everyone is keeping safe and socially distant while eating.

The other event that has emerged and changed during the pandemic is our Bible Study which used to be in person but is now done through Zoom. On average, 12 people attend this weekly Bible study.

One study focused on *Fruit of the Spirit* and that led us to asking ourselves what more we could be doing. We're still seeking God's direction, but one project we have begun is collecting socks for the Indigenous Centre in Montreal, and reaching out to the jail in Montreal where many Indigenous women have been incarcerated.

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## MARTINTOWN – ST. ANDREW'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

### Cookie Runs

#### Description:

The pandemic posed some definite challenges for rural communities with poor internet access. How do you keep in touch with people who cannot get to church and cannot access online services? How do you let them know they have not been forgotten? Phone calls are a definite help but so too are “care” packages from the congregation.

That is precisely what we at St. Andrew's, Martintown did as a Christmas project. We prepared care packages made up of home-baked cookies, and the recent issue of *Our Daily Bread* which were personally delivered to shut-ins in the community by the minister just before Christmas.

We couldn't get into the nursing homes but did manage to connect with many members, and the visits – even with social distancing – were much appreciated.



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## **MOOSE CREEK – KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

### **Reaching Members during a Pandemic**

#### **Description:**

As so many congregations did in March 2020, we were forced to close our building because of the pandemic. This was a particularly difficult situation as we were also vacant at the time and just beginning our search for a new minister.

We encouraged members to listen to online services, and done other things to reach members who could no longer attend in-person Church services, and eagerly looked forward to in-person services when church buildings could re-open. At the same, we realized there were many members who could not attend Christmas services because of age or health. We wanted to do something to make Christmas special for them and let them know we were still thinking of and praying for them. We sent them poinsettias and Christmas cards.

Our congregation is a church family and we have relied on our members to communicate with each other and keep in touch during the pandemic. We look forward to when everyone has been vaccinated and we can return to some kind of “normal”.

## **MOREWOOD – MOREWOOD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

### **Zoom Worship & Fellowship**

#### **Description:**

Like all churches in Ontario, we closed our doors in March 2020 due to the pandemic. In an attempt to remain in touch and maintain some sense of community, we started a coffee hour conference call on Wednesday mornings, eventually moving to ZOOM coffee hours. We're fortunate that the majority of people in our small congregation can access the internet. While we had quite a learning curve to learn to use ZOOM, the ability to actually see each other was worth it. Even if people don't ZOOM, they can and do participate in the conversation – someone calls them and then puts the phone on speaker beside the computer!

Using ZOOM has other benefits as well. Our WMS is once again meeting regularly, and would like to continue using ZOOM during the winter months, regardless of any pandemic restrictions.

We also stepped up postings on the Facebook page, to try to keep everyone informed. Rev. Kemp provided and still provides a video version of the service which is posted both on Facebook and on our website. He videotaped special services for our Memorial Day and for our Anniversary, both in June.

In preparation for re-opening the church, we needed to think about how we would keep everyone safe and have a meaningful service within the pandemic restrictions. At the same time, our long-time organist was retiring. We now have internet access and WiFi at the church. We project the service onto the front wall of the church, and use You Tube videos for our music. People are encouraged to either hum along or sing quietly. It is certainly not as good as our own organist and singing in the church, but it allows us to have music as part of the service without spreading virus particles.

Of course our special services have also been impacted by the pandemic. We could not hold our Memorial service in the church, but Rev. Kemp presented a special service by video which featured some history of the cemetery. We also invited people to send in pictures of their loved ones along with a write-up about the person if they wanted; these were posted on Facebook and on our website. It was a way of remembering and honouring those who we have lost. This Facebook page received many positive comments from people within the church, and from those who are not part of the church. Who would have thought our response to a pandemic would have such an outreach?

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## PASTORAL CHARGE OF MORRISBURG & INGLESIDE

### Website Presence

#### Description:

We've realized for a while that our traditional worship is essentially "preaching to the choir" and have been wrestling with how to take Gospel into the world – how to reach the unchurched.

Then pandemic hit, and suddenly we were forced to develop a stronger web presence than we previously had. We were also fortunate in that our minister's wife, *Reine*, is also a minister, serving St. Timothy's in Ottawa so we had both *Feras* and *Reine* and their children helping to develop an online presence.

We soon learned basic film editing and began incorporating movie clips, music, and live-action children stories along with traditional worship service elements. We uploaded everything onto youtube and advertised it on our website and Facebook pages. Sixty to seventy people began checking into our services; we knew we were onto something.

We used Youtube's analytics to see who was watching, how long they were watching, and what they were most focused on. We discovered that traditional services don't work, so began to change our format, throwing out parts of the service where the audience seemed to lose interest, and expanding those parts that were drawing them in.

By Easter, we were drawing 500-600 visitors. Once we boosted attendance on Facebook, we started reaching 3200 people! The more we invest in it, including learning what works and what doesn't, the more rewarding this ministry has become.

We are also discovering that online ministry is becoming a ministry in its own right, and is something that transcends our individual congregations. We are reaching people who are not affiliated with religious institutions but who obviously are searching for something.

One thing we have discovered is that people tend not to watch long services, but do watch short clips with a clear message. Just as the *Bible Project* offers short clips on the Bible and different topics or themes, we see ourselves offering short clips with a Christian message. If that ministry develops the way we believe it will, we may have discovered a niche for ourselves online. It's an exciting and rewarding adventure that God is leading us on.

## PASTORAL CHARGE OF PRESCOTT & SPENCERVILLE

### Communication in an Age of Covid

#### Description:

Like many other congregations, the Pastoral Charge of Prescott (St. Andrew's) and Spencerville (St. Andrew's-Knox) was forced to close its buildings in March 2020, and to find new ways to reach members.

We were blessed to have someone who was able to film and edit video so were able to get a YouTube channel and provide online worship. Our Facebook page also became more dynamic with us posting regular updates and links to our online worship. We also did a Zoom Bible study using "*The Bible Course*", developed by the Canadian Bible Society. Our organist, Eugene Janssens, recorded music that was also posted online.

We discovered, unfortunately, how many of our members either did not have a good Internet connection or were uncomfortable navigating new programs and new ways of communicating online. Zoom is not for everyone. Even Facebook is limited in what it can offer.

That led us to go back to some tried and true methods from "long ago." We called people. We mailed (both e-mail and snail mail) copies of sermons and Bible study material to people. We set office hours where people could all in, and encouraged them to call in with questions from the Bible study material. We kept in touch to make sure everyone was looked after.

Technology is great and it is a useful tool but it has its limitations too. Not only are there limits to the Internet itself (how often did it crash? Or freeze?), but also there are limits to how much time and energy people are willing to put into learning new technologies!

Christianity isn't a matter of what you believe or even of how you behave. Christianity is about our relationship with God and, growing out of that, with one another. The pandemic has reminded us of just how important that personal contact with each other is. Jesus does teach us in unexpected ways, doesn't he?

## **VANKLEEK HILL – KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

### **Partnership**

#### **Description:**

In March 2020, the province went into lockdown because of the pandemic. We could no longer meet in-person and were forced to close our church buildings. While some explored other forms of worship, we were also concerned about reaching those in our community who were isolated due to the restrictions – particularly those who lived alone or had physical challenges that put them at higher risk than others.

We didn't try to do everything ourselves but reached out to other groups to see what together we could do. Volunteers from Knox partnered with the local Rotary Club and with a local catering company that has personal connections with Knox to distribute meals and provide social contact with these people. Following social distancing and sanitizing protocols, we brought a hot meal, and provided a face with a smile underneath the face mask.

Those who received the meals not only enjoyed the food but also the contact with another person. For us at Knox, this was a successful mission and ministry project but it also showed us how important partnerships are in reaching out to the vulnerable in our society. While we look forward to a return to in-person worship, we also look forward to strengthening those partnerships in future initiatives. God's people are not limited to those who show up to Sunday worship!



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## WINCHESTER – ST. PAUL'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

### Going Digital

#### Description:

The Province of Ontario went into lockdown March 15, forcing church buildings to close. While we were able to reopen in July, we were forced to close again around the second lockdown December 26.

During the first lockdown, our minister, Rev. Bruce Kemp, arranged for online services. This included him using his musical talents to share hymns and special music as part of these services. We even had a virtual communion where viewers were invited to bring their communion elements when they watched the service. Some even brought red wine!

Even though we were able to re-open in July, we missed having our usual coffee hour and visiting time after church where we could catch up with the news. We did, however, have three baptisms. Family members and visitors were able to keep socially distant and, in a unique adaption to Eastern Ontario Health Unit's protocols, Rev. Kemp read the baptism words while the parents marked the sign of the cross on their child!

Other protocols put in place which limited the use of printed material led the Board of Managers to install three 75" televisions in the sanctuary. Instead of printed bulletins, the order of service, scripture lessons, hymns and prayers were displayed on the screen. As we have installed WIFI in the church, we can now also project videos of special music, readings or presentations as well. This allows us to use some of the wonderful resources we have found online. Announcements are projected before and after worship for people. While expensive, we believe the system will pay for itself as we will no longer need to print or copy material.

Unfortunately, Rev. Kemp retired at the end of the year but thankfully, our Interim Moderator, Rev. Samer Kandalaf, has encouraged us to worship online with his own congregations of St. Paul's (Kemptonville) and Knox (Mountain).

During the summer, the church bells were rung every Wednesday to honour the frontline workers in our community. This was a community initiative spearheaded by the Winchester Visioning Committee. Church families took turns ringing the bell for 15 minutes each Wednesday evening at 7 pm. On Christmas Eve, Heather and Dwayne Pemberton rang the church bells at 6 pm as part of a worldwide bell ringing to unite the world in making the 2020 holiday season a bit brighter.

Another change the pandemic has brought is we are using our webpage more. Thanks to Webmaster Heather Pemberton we now have a Calendar of Events, the Online Worship Service Links posted, Announcements and Weekly Activities for the Sunday School children and families.

We claimed our Canada Helps Donation Button and we put a Donate Button on each page of the website. We arranged for an e-transfer option for those who wanted to send their donations electronically when the church was closed or those who were not comfortable attending worship during the pandemic.

One of the outdoor activities we did in September was an appreciation day for all the volunteers who worked on our Community Garden. Rev Kemp provided special music and children enjoyed some games and everyone was treated to ice cream for the Cup of Joe's and cake. It was wonderful to gather outside on the lawn and to stroll through the garden area. Thanks to the Winchester United Church for the colourful garden markers and to all the volunteer who helped tend and harvest the produce.

As Sunday School has not been part of our worshipping, the Sunday School teachers arranged for video where each of the 12 families shared one of the twelve symbols of Christmas. This was played on our Family Sunday on our sanctuary TV's on December 13<sup>th</sup>. It was truly a joyous time for the children who shared and for the congregation who watched. This was one day where the congregation truly missed the children and what they learn in Sunday School.

The choir meet and recorded a series of musical selections that were played for the congregation on our TV's every Sunday of Advent. It was a way for the choir to contribute to worship in a safe way and for members and our organist Arlene to showcase some of their very special musical talents.

COVID has changed the way we view the world and how we safely move within our community. It has made us think of others and their safety as well as their health and well-being. One special thing Ladies Aid did was to present a card and a jar of homemade jam to each of our families. As well our homebound members received a card and a Presbyterian Church in Canada 2021 Calendar. Many people appreciated the thoughtfulness during the Christmas Season and the note to say we are thinking of you.

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## WOMEN'S MISSIONARY SOCIETY (WMS)

### Lemons to Lemonade - Building Zoom Fellowship & Outreach

#### Description:

The saying, "when life hands you lemons, make lemonade" certainly describes the Women's Missionary Society (WMS). In the past, when women had few opportunities beyond home, marriage children and opportunities in the Church were even fewer, women still came together, organizing themselves into the WMS in order to find ways to serve the Lord. Whenever we have been faced with challenges, we have simply dug our heels in and figured out ways to turn the challenge into opportunity. The pandemic is no different.

The pandemic has thrown our lives into disarray but it has also reminded us that the Church is not limited to a church building. The building may be closed. Travel may be restricted. Our work has not. The challenge has been figuring out how to reach out to others to show God's love and care while staying home and keeping socially distant!

Do we have to meet in person within a physical building to be a community? Of course not. We send out cards. We ensure that people in need or those who are lonely are called on a regular basis. We make up gift packages with special treats and drop them off. It may not be possible to hug at the moment, but that hasn't stopped a very determined group of women from finding other ways to reach out and express God's love. A word that was unknown and unheard of by many before the pandemic can now be heard time and time again: *Zoom*. We discovered that meetings held to keep the business of the WMS running smoothly can now be held using Zoom. Planning for the annual general meeting? Simple – schedule a Zoom meeting!

The Morewood chapter of the Brockville Presbyterial WMS never stopped their monthly meetings; now, they meet using Zoom. Not only did they find a way to keep connected with their people, they have welcomed others to join in their worship and fellowship.

Something similar happened at the national level. The National WMS moved to holding meetings online; they also developed a series called, *Come Together*, that brought together members from across Canada, including members of a sister organization, the Atlantic Missionary Society (AMS). The virtual format has led to fascinating discussions with those working within the worldwide Church and our numbers have grown! With a larger mailing list that now includes both e-mail and postal addresses, we are able to distribute even more literature to members and adherents. Planning for large events for down the road? Stay tuned for a National Gathering in Toronto in 2022 and a Regional Gathering in Montreal!

We know that one day in the not-too-distant future we will be able to meet once again in-person and are grateful. We thank God for using the pandemic to remind us that our community is so much larger than a building. He has given us lemons and worked with us to turn them into lemonade. We face the future with hope and courage, knowing that physically present or distant, we are bound together in our faith and through modern technology.

# **ABOUT THE PRESBYTERY**

## THE PRESBYTERY OF SEAWAY-GLENGARRY

The Presbyterian Church in Canada is organized into a hierarchy of courts: congregations, sessions, presbyteries, synods, and General Assembly. The core unit is the presbytery. Each presbytery is made up of Teaching Elders (ministers) and Representative Elders (one Ruling Elder from each pastoral charge). Together, they represent the pastoral charges (worshipping communities) within a specified geographical region.

The Presbytery of Seaway-Glengarry represents Presbyterian congregations and clergy serving in Eastern Ontario. Our Presbytery spreads from Winchester in the north to the St. Lawrence Seaway / 1000 Island region in the south, and from Hawkesbury in the east to Caintown in the west and comprises thirteen (13) pastoral charges.

Visit our website (<https://www.pcc-seawayglengarry.ca/>) for more information about the presbytery, including links to the congregations' websites and/or Facebook pages and youtube channels.



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## THE CONGREGATIONS

### Pastoral Charge of Avonmore, Finch & Gravel Hill



St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church  
3256 County Road 15  
Box 104  
Avonmore, ON K0C 1C0



St. Luke's-Knox Presbyterian Church  
28 Front Street  
Box 220  
Finch, ON K0C 1K0



St. James-St. Andrew's  
17335 Gravel Hill Road  
Monkland, ON K0C 1V0  
(mailing) c/o Bryce Robinson  
17341 Arnell & Renald George Rd., RR 1  
St. Andrew's West, ON K0C 1V0

### Pastoral Charge of Brockville



First Presbyterian Church (Brockville)  
First Presbyterian Church  
10 Church St., Box 885  
Brockville, ON K6V 5W1

### **Pastoral Charge of Caintown**



St. Paul's  
14 Caintown Road  
Mallorytown, ON K0E 1R0  
(mailing) c/o Ms. Angela Cowan  
344 old River Road, R.R. #3  
Mallorytown, ON K0E 1R0

### **Pastoral Charge of Chesterville, Morewood & Winchester**



St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church  
30 Mill Street  
Chesterville, ON K0C 1H0  
(mailing)c/o A. Langabeer,  
Box 671  
Winchester, ON K0C 2K0



Morewood Presbyterian Church  
13727 County Road 13  
P.O. Box 204  
Morewood, ON K0A 2R0



St. Paul's Presbyterian Church  
517 Main St. W., Box 879  
Winchester, ON, K0C 2K0

### **Pastoral Charge of Cornwall**



St. John's Presbyterian Church  
28 2nd St. E.  
Cornwall, ON K6H 1Y3

### **Pastoral Charge of Dunvegan & Kirk Hill**



Kenyon Presbyterian Church (Dunvegan)  
1630 County Road 30, RR 1  
Dunvegan, ON K0C 1J0



St. Columba Presbyterian Church  
20950 Laggan-Glenelg Rd., Box 81  
Dalkeith, ON, K0B 1E0

### **Pastoral Charge of Iroquois**



Riverview Presbyterian Church  
22 Church St.  
Iroquois, ON K0E 1K0



### **Pastoral Charge of Kemptville & Mountain**



St. Paul's Presbyterian Church  
319 Prescott St.  
Box 797  
Kemptville, ON, K0G 1J0



Knox Presbyterian Church  
2227 Simms Rd.  
Box 35  
South Mountain, ON, K0E 1W0

### **Pastoral Charge of Lancaster & Martintown**



St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church  
20389 Church Street  
Box 524  
Lancaster, ON, K0C 1N0



St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church  
4866 County Road 20  
Martintown, ON K0C 1S0  
(mailing) c/o Heather Buchan  
4186 Squire Road, R.R. #1,  
Apple Hill, ON, K0C 1B0

### **Pastoral Charge of Maxville & Moose Creek**



St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church  
21 Main St.  
Box 7  
Maxville, ON, K0C 1T0



Knox Presbyterian Church  
1 St. Polycarp Street  
Box 328  
Moose Creek, ON, K0C 1W0

### **Pastoral Charge of Morrisburg & Ingleside**



Knox Presbyterian Church  
10 First Street  
Box 1042  
Morrisburg, ON, K0C 1X0



St. Matthew's Presbyterian Church  
15 Memorial Square  
Box 520  
Ingleside, ON, K0C 1M0

### **Pastoral Charge of Prescott & Spencerville**



St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church  
425 Centre St.  
Box 94  
Prescott, ON, K0E 1T0



St. Andrew's-Knox Presbyterian Church  
48 Bennett St.  
Box 81  
Spencerville, ON, K0E 1X0

### **Pastoral Charge of Vankleek Hill & Hawkesbury**



Knox Presbyterian Church  
29 High Street  
Box 269  
Vankleek Hill, ON K0B 1R0



St. Paul's Presbyterian Church  
166 John St.  
Hawkesbury, ON, K6A 1X9