

Exciting Things Happening with a “New” United Church in Port Moody!

After much deliberation, heartache, conversation and dreaming, there’s a new kid in town! Well, sort of. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say there is a new expression of a long-held and richly storied tradition that for decades has served the communities of IOCO and Port Moody.

It is no secret that mainline churches are finding pews more empty, and are struggling to compete with the myriad options available to the general populace on a Sunday morning. With the banishing of the Sunday shopping laws in the 1980’s, and with sports and other youth activities available 7 days a week, the idea of church being THE place to find and build community is long gone. Hanging out a sign that says “Join us! All are welcome!” is not good enough anymore, and more and more churches are having to reimagine both their spaces and their programming in order to continue to serve in ways that are relevant and useful.

And, while all of the above is true...being a human being in 2019 is increasingly difficult. There is more anxiety, more stress, more isolation and more separation than ever before. Many people long for meaning and for connection and for a place to be able to bring hard questions to wrestle with, without judgment. People long to be heard, to be seen and to belong.

Two local church congregations are now coming together to refresh and renew how to be “church” in our increasingly secular and busy society in an effort to be that kind of place, where people of every description are welcomed and included, and where learning and growing and questioning, community-making and service to others are key concepts.

On April 1st, 2019, the congregations of St. Andrew’s United Church and IOCO United Church officially became one combined new entity, allowing for renewed energy and exciting possibility. This newly amalgamated faith community will temporarily be called “St. Andrew’s-IOCO United Church” until a new name can be established.

The church will be **keeping** both the beautiful heritage IOCO building (the “Lil’ White Church on the Corner of IOCO Road and First Avenue) that so many in the community have come to love, AND will be using a temporary space in PoCo (1551 Salisbury Avenue) as they await the building and completion of the new complex on St. John’s Street where the old St. Andrew’s Church building used to stand.

This new United Church is being served by both Rev. Julie LeBrun and Rev. Jennifer Swanson and has plans to offer a number of services and events going forward, including regular Sunday morning worship experiences, community events and opportunities for people to get involved in ways that serve the wider community. Merging together two groups takes time and huge effort and so while it may be slow at first, many new opportunities and events will bubble up and begin to flourish as this coming together progresses. We are looking forward to being more involved in Port Moody.

Information as to where the St. Andrew’s-IOCO United Church congregation will be each week (and how to get involved) is posted on the church Facebook page as well as on the website at www.sauc.ca.

Rev. Jennifer Swanson