

Daring to be the Church

To the Editor,

Pierre Burton published a book 50 years ago entitled, *The Comfortable Pew*. It was a critique of Western Christianity's seeming comfort in a society that, for all intents and purposes, was being blown apart by hate, prejudice, marginalization of the weak, war, and fear.

Peter Finley Dunn who was the creator of the syndicated Mr. Dooley sketches of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, stated that the role of the church was to "comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable."

I have been blessed as a minister to be called to my hometown to be the minister in The United Churches of Baptiste, Boulter, Bancroft and L'Amable. I love these churches and I love The United Church of which we are a part. Is the church perfect? By no means. But are we striving to be faithful? You bet!

I have hope that the churches I serve and the people who fill the pews have taken seriously the call to bear one another's burdens; to provide safety and support to the most marginalized in our community, which includes the poor, the homeless, the sorrowing and the sick. But it also includes offering the same things to the LGBTQ community, the immigrant/refugee, and the person whose faith is different than our own.

Jesus' teachings and life are provocative and threatening to those with power and privilege, and to follow faithfully is to illicit the scorn and ridicule of even those who would call themselves, religious. Over the last few weeks we have been considering the theme of "daring" - daring to get involved, daring to speak the truth and to seek reconciliation with our aboriginal neighbours. It takes guts to be the church!

It takes guts to stand with those who inhabit the edges of our community. It takes courage to say, "We're sorry." It takes courage to speak truth to power. It takes courage to say to the bully, "You are not welcomed here." It takes courage to be silent in the face of criticism and to stay the course. It takes guts to trust the Spirit's lead and God's promises for a redeemed society and earth. It takes guts to be the church.

Do we dare to be the church? You bet!

Starting on June 19 the Sunday service times for all three churches in the Bancroft - Carlow Pastoral charge are changing for the summer months: Carlow United in Boulter is moving to 9 a.m., St. Paul's in Bancroft will start at 10:45 a.m. and St. Matthew's in the Baptiste Village begins at 12:15 p.m..

Lynn Watson, Minister