

## Local churches ring bells to salute front line workers



June 3, 2020

By Michael Riley Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Taking inspiration from online videos of people around the world saluting front line workers in a variety of ways, Bancroft's St. Paul's United Church decided to ring in a new way of showing solidarity with our essential workers; by literally ringing their bell daily. Unfortunately, the bell has broken and is no longer safe to toll until it gets fixed. Reverend Lynn Watson credits organist and choir director Heather Johns for coming up with the idea of ringing the bell, and decided to go ahead with it about a week after everybody went into social isolation. Judy Edgar is the office administrator at St. Paul's United Church, and says that she, Reverend Watson and Heather Johns have all been taking turns ringing the bell. "We also invite other people in who are comfortable doing it as not everyone wants to leave their homes. We do Facetime on Facebook and tell the people on Facebook that we are ringing the bells to thank all the front-line workers and essential workers and we've had lots of good responses, no negatives. The bell broke because it was at least 120 years old. Edgar says that the Reverend actually thinks it was moved from another church so it could be much older than that. "It's a cast iron bell and you can see the cast is breaking. The rope had come off its wheel, it had basically jumped its tracks. Somebody went up there and put the rope back on and that was when he saw there was damage to the bell. So. we can ring it but we're not sure what we want to do at this point. It has to be treated very gingerly, because at some point the bell is going to crack," she says. The good news in all this is that another local church, St. John the Evangelist Anglican, has joined in with them so they're all ringing the bell together now at St. John's. "I'm not sure how long that will go for. We may alternate and come back here and ring our bell gingerly. Reverend Lynn has been going over there on Facetime and showing off St. John's bell and just thanking the frontline workers and essential workers," she says. Edgar says that they have a lot of things to consider about getting the bell fixed, and they have a committee that will have to make that decision. "If we do, church bells are pretty costly, so we would need to find the funds to do it so that would be a big challenge. I think that our community is wonderful that way. If there's a need they're always there to help," she says.