

Reverend swims hard for community

By Sarah Sobanski

Rev. Lynn Watson is swimming to raise money for local churches and Social Justice Without Borders (SJWB).

Watson swam four kilometres on Fraser Lake last Friday to raise money for Carlow United Church. On Aug. 5, Watson will swim Baptiste Lake. Carlow will then make donations to the Bancroft Pentecostal Tabernacle, St. Matthew's United Church and SJWB. Half of funds raised will go towards the churches and half will go towards SJWB ? founded in March to help with the Syrian refugee crisis.

?Carlow United Church gets a lot of good support from its community and really doesn't have a financial crisis. So I said ?do we really need to have a fundraiser' and they said ?no.' So I [asked], ?can it go towards something else'?? explained Watson of how she and the Carlow congregation chose to support the churches.

The Pentecostal church often rents out its sanctuary space for large funerals. It has been a community space for over 25 years.

?It's not wheelchair accessible; the whole building. You can get into the sanctuary no problem, but if they're having a lunch downstairs, [someone without full mobility] has to get someone to take [them] out of the building, down and around and through the basement door, into their lower hall,? said Watson. ?So they've been looking at putting in an elevator. We want to support that. They've got a lot of stuff they have to do before they get started, so the money will go to them without qualifications to put to use to whatever they need to use it for.?

On Baptiste Lake, Watson will swim from the public docks to Millionaire's Island, and back. This second swim will be for donations to St. Matthew's. It had to invest in a new roof last year, and a new steeple. The money contributed to the church will go towards stabilizing its expenses.

Watson said she didn't train for the swims except for being active in her everyday life. She enjoys running and biking.

?I'm not a long-distance swimmer, I'm more of a long-distance floater,? joked Watson. Her first swim, however, raised over \$1,000. She hopes to raise the same amount or more with her second swim.

?I've been criticized for naming myself as an activist. I remember doing a funeral for a woman I had known for her entire life. When her children wrote her obituary, or tribute, at her funeral they called her an activist. She basically was someone who believed in something and got out there and did it,? said Watson, explaining why she works to be an active member of the community. ?I think if you really believe in something, then you have to act. That's what I'm doing.?

SJWB plans to donate its portion of the money raised to North Hastings Community Trust.