

Reverend Watson gives last church service at Village Playhouse



By Mike Riley

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Reverend Lynn Watson's farewell church service and sermon to the Bancroft-Carlow pastoral charge took place Sept. 25 at 10:30 a.m. at the Village Playhouse in Bancroft. It was well attended by many community members who wanted to hear her give her last service here in Bancroft, reminisce about her time here and say goodbye to a respected minister, friend and a beloved community member. Next month, Watson will begin giving weekly services at the Norwood-Westwood pastoral charge.

Watson's final service on Sept. 25 at 10:30 a.m. at the Village Playhouse here in town had many congregants and community members wanting to say goodbye to a respected minister and fellow community member who was such an integral part of the community for so many years.

Watson has come up with many initiatives to help the community through the years she has been here, including Theology on Tap, which was bringing people of different faiths together over a pint to discuss spirituality, initiating the sponsorship of a Syrian refugee family and bringing them to Bancroft (despite the controversy it caused in the community) and opening up the church as a warming centre to the homeless during the winter of 2019/2020, among many other good deeds.

Watson's sermon on Sept. 25 focused on reconciliation, resurrection and redemption, and the challenge to believe they are possibilities and that they happen all around us all the time.

She said the challenge for the attendees was will they be the church and if they are already, will they find their place to serve and use their gifts to reconcile and make new. Will they show that there is life beyond this life and know that things that are broken can be fixed.

With Truth and Reconciliation Day coming up Sept. 30, she said that we will be hearing a lot of reconciliation over the following week. She liked reconciliation to banking, in that you count up all your debits and your credits and hope that they're somewhat balanced, with the credits coming out on top.

?But if you don't count the debits and spend willy nilly like we have a lot of credits, we are not reconciled. Marsha shared her story of her family's legacy with the residential schools, the results of the Indian Act. If we don't acknowledge that there are some debits, we cannot spend our credits. So, reconciliation is about us coming together and finding out how we can be a country that is on the

plus side of what it means to be a nation,? she says.

Music group the Revelins performed several songs during the service in Watson's honour, including I Will Rise, If It Be Your Will (Leonard Cohen cover), Better Times Will Come and The Beautiful Sunday (Daniel Boone cover).

After doing the Land Acknowledgement, Marsha Depotier offered up a prayer of reconciliation and told her story as a second-generation residential school survivor and the impact it has had on her and her family. She then offered up a prayer song on her hand drum for everyone, and for Watson, as she goes on her journey.

Watson told the congregants that when she started here in Bancroft in July, 2012, the first service she attended at the United Church, the first hymn sung was Let Us Build a House. She offered that song as the last hymn to be sung to conclude her final service here in town, before she departs for the Norwood-Westwood pastoral charge next week.

?May it be a prayer for us, may it be a call for action, may it be a call for justice, may it be a call for inclusivity, may it be a call to affirm all humanity as we seek to build a house. Let's build a house,? she says.

Judy Edgar spoke next, recounting how she'd met Watson decades ago when they both worked at TD Canada Trust, recalling that she had been ?a worse teller? than Watson, and credits her with getting her to come back to the church.

?And then I became very involved with the church. I was in the choir, I was a secretary in several committees, and then I became the administrative assistant for four years and worked with Lynn and she was great. And that's why there's so many people here today because of you, what you do for the community. There's so much I can say that you've done for us but I'd be here for hours. I just want to say thank you,? she says.

Edgar introduced some ladies of the Bancroft-Carlow pastoral charge, who then gifted Watson with a beautiful wooden paddle, with a burned in etching of the two churches, courtesy of local artist Arne Roosman. Watson gratefully accepted and thanked everyone.

Of the many congregants there Sept. 25, Elaine White was among them. She was there with her husband Milton, and said that Watson had been their minister for many years, married her and her husband, and that she was friends with Lynn's sister Ardyth.

?But we've known Lynn for a long time. Many years ago, Lynn and I worked together at the IDA store before I went into nursing and she went into ministry. I think that people are going to miss her. She's been good for this community and is just like a breath of fresh air. She didn't perhaps fit the norm of a church minister but that's good. She a burst of energy and she's got great ideas. She's a happy person and she's not afraid to take on the issues, that's one of the big things about her. She's a great, dedicated person,? she says.

Tony Klompmaker, there with his wife Rita, said they were going to miss Watson.

?She's part of this community in a big way. We're not regular members, but we come just to see her,? he says.

Janice Sears, there with her friend Eileen Carr, said Watson's departure left her feeling sad.

?Lynn and I have been friends since we were four years old and we still walk together, her and her dog Cohen and my dog. So, yeah, she will be missed.?