Ringing in hope

By Chris Drost

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the bell at St. Paul's United Church has been rung almost every evening at 6 p.m. in honour of those who have put themselves out over the past year. On Wednesday, March 17 the Church held a special event where the bell was run 365 times, one representing each day of the past year.

?This is about recognizing front-line and essential workers and giving hope,? says Judy Edgar, church secretary.

The event is also in part, a fundraiser for the church. With the building being closed for much of the past year there is a need to raise funds. Through a social media campaign, individuals were invited to donate $10 towards one of the 365 rings. ?Most people have been more generous than that and the fundraiser is doing better than expected,? says Edgar.

Funds raised will go to the Church and its outreach programs. St. Paul's provides assistance to various organizations in the community and also grocery cards for those who need it. ?They [the grocery cards] go fast. All the ones for March are already gone,? explains Edgar. In the past the Church has helped North Hastings Community Trust, North Hastings Community Cupboard, The Switchyard and North Hastings Children's Services.

The task of ringing of the bell during the past year has primarily been looked after by Reverend Watson, Judy Edgar, Heather Johns and Susan Prentice. (not the local one according to Edgar) ?We stopped for about six weeks and people were really sad, so we started up again,? says Edgar.

Churches are currently limited to the size of congregation that can gather. Edgar says that there is currently a 40 per cent cap but they prefer to keep it at 30 per cent. Altogether she says that they are getting out about 14 people at most.

While services continue on Facebook and Zoom, they are looking at ways of introducing other technology. Just last week the Church learned that its application for a New Horizons Grant was successful. This will provide much needed funds for new technology that will hopefully do a better job.