

Citizens celebrate the audacity to hope



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By Nate Smelle

On Thursday, April 18, a small group of local residents gathered at St. Paul's United Church in Bancroft for an event called The Audacity to Hope. Reverend Lynn Watson opened the gathering, explaining that it was meant to be a celebration of the community's diversity and the important day on the Christian calendar known as Maundy Thursday. She said it was also a way for the community to come together in the wake of the mass shootings at two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand. During the service, Watson led the congregation through a series of hymns, as well as a reenactment of when Jesus washed the feet of his disciples. She explained to the congregation that this ritual is symbolic a act of compassion representing the spirit of service to one another, people and communities need to embody to promote a peaceful and happy quality of life for all.

?It seems only fitting as we remember and dare to hope for peace on earth and goodwill to all, that we also hope for an end to violence and war, like the senseless violence that recently took place in Christchurch,? said Watson.

?Also, for us to participate in the pouring out of our living and our loving in service to one another. We all belong to each other. Without each other, without the planet, without the furry creatures, the finned creatures and the winged creatures we are less than human.?

As a Jewish-born woman and one of the organizers of the service, Judy Edgar shared insight into the significance of Passover and how it's message of liberation relates to people of all faiths. Speaking of the dangers of religious persecution she encouraged those in attendance to live with compassion while having the audacity to hope for a better future during troubled times.

?Persecution breeds persecution, and hatred breeds hatred,? explained Edgar.

?So why am I dwelling on the negativity of persecution? Because hopefully you will see that we as a people are maturing and changing. I believe there is hope for us and that we will come to love each other no matter our differences.?

Although watching the news can leave one feeling pessimistic about the future, Edgar said she sees a light at the end of the tunnel. The outpouring of love and compassion from people of all faiths and races following the white supremacist terrorist attack in Christchurch is one example of where she found hope in times of darkness, she said.

Before wrapping up the service with one last hymn, Jo-Anne Reynolds from Harvest the North and the North Hastings Community Trust spoke about some of the initiatives going on throughout the community to help those in need. When talking about hope, she said it is important for people to ask themselves what hope means to them. When contemplating what it means for herself, Reynolds said she thinks about how daring to hope together and leading by example are the most humane paths to walk during troubled times. She said it is time for people to turn their hope into action by embracing radical thinking that is solution-oriented.

Referring to her work with Harvest the North, Reynolds said this time of year is always very exciting for her because she is planting

seeds to grow food. Watching them sprout and grow gives her hope for the future, she said.

?My hope when I start my seeds is that they will all be viable and strong enough to produce food to feed me and my family during the long, cold winter here,? Reynolds said.

?As they grow I can see my hope growing too. Harvest the North is like a seed as well. It started in 2015 with just 10 beds and now five years later there are close to 30 beds thanks to the community and the people who genuinely care for the success of this radical concept of growing our own food, and thus becoming less reliant on corporations to grow our food for us.?