

Reverend Lynn Watson to hold final service at Bancroft Village Playhouse on Sept. 25



By Nate Smelle

The community in North Hastings is preparing to say farewell to one of the region's most engaged public servants, Reverend Lynn Watson. Whether in her role at St. Paul's United Church, or as the Bancroft Legion's public relations officer, Watson has had an extraordinary influence on the community through her service to others. As a community volunteer and member of the congregation at St. Paul's United Church, Judy Edgar has worked closely with her Watson. Describing her friend and colleague, she said Watson is "a minister who believes that she is sharing the message of Jesus by being like Jesus in our community. She has been there for all of the people of North Hastings. She has networked with all the pastors, ministers and priests in the area showing there are no boundaries. She believes all people need to be cared for and loved." Highlighting some of the initiatives that Watson has spearheaded, which speak to her devotion to community service, Edgar first recalled how she brought people of different faiths together to discuss spirituality at the local pub, through a program she called, Theology on Tap. Edgar also pointed out how Watson instigated the sponsorship of a Syrian refugee family she helped bring to Bancroft, despite the controversy it caused in the community. In addition, she said Watson also led events such as a triathlon as part of outreach for St. Matthew's United Church in Baptiste Village; and, promoted alternative programs at St. Andrews in L'Amable such as a labyrinth, introducing people to other beliefs and the blessing of the animals. In the winter of 2019/2020, Edgar said Watson also organized a team of volunteers to offer the church as a warming centre for everyone who needed to get out of the cold. Edgar said Watson has also always taken time to visit people when they were sick or needed emotional support, whether they were a member of her pastoral charge or not. On Oct. 1, Watson will begin providing a weekly service to the Norwood-Westwood pastoral charge. Although she feels sad about leaving

Bancroft when thinking of the friendships she has made during her time in North Hastings, she is excited to share her stories with a new congregation. "The folks at the four churches of the Bancroft-Carlow pastoral charge have been the most courageous people I know," said Watson. "They have stepped up to every challenge to be agents of grace whether it's sponsoring a refugee family or opening the doors as a shelter. There have been conflicts of course but churches are supposed to be peddlers of mercy and reconciliation and we've lived that out in beautiful ways." Acknowledging that the church is going through a time of transition, Watson believes that it still has a future. Noting how much the world has changed, she said it has especially become clear during the pandemic that people need a community that can speak hope into the midst of chaos. "I believe The United Church of Canada is positioned to be a voice for justice and radical inclusion," Watson said. "The biblical scholarship and the progressive theology can say something that can make a difference in this country." On Sunday, Sept. 25, Reverend Lynn Watson will hold her final service at the Village Playhouse in Bancroft. The service will begin at 10:30 a.m. and feature live music by The Revelins. Watson said Sunday's service will be a celebration of God's presence in the Playhouse, and the theme will focus on creating a hopeful future through reconciliation. All are welcome to attend.