

Dedicated people refuse to let rural church die

"These have been the only changes to the church other than some cosmetic improvements such as painting and a new roof. The church today stands as it did almost 150 years ago, right down to the pews, pulpit and even the Bible."

The Ketcheson family has had a long association with the church.

His father, grandfather, great grandfather worshipped in the church. And Daniel Ketcheson, his great great grandfather helped build the church.

"The original names involved with building this church included Ketcheson, Harris, Moorcroft and Burnside. And some of these names currently sit on the board of trustees, like myself, our chairman Harold Harris, treasurer Bryan Moorcroft, and board member

Katherine Burnside," he said.

As a youngster, Ketcheson sat with his family in the second last pew at the back of the church.

"I remember curling up on my dad's knees and playing with car keys during Sunday afternoon



Hazzards Corners Church was built in 1857.

services. I'm 60 years old now but I still remember that vividly."

For many years, the church congregation consisted of 18 families where everyone knew everyone.

"It was like one big family."

The church was also the centre of activity in Hazzards Corners. That's why there was no thought other than to keep the church open

even after it was closed by the United Church of Canada in 1967.

"In the minds of the people of the congregation, there was never any discussion about the fact it might be torn down or sold. It just wasn't going to happen. We were determined that the church would remain and continue to be a focal point of the community."

Church members have kept their word.

Its trustees have looked after the church in the ensuing years, putting on a fresh coat of paint periodically, carrying out minor repairs when needed and keeping it clean.

The board is in the midst of completing a cedar shingle roof on the church, a project that is costing around \$8,000.

"There is a church fund where money can be taken out for projects like this but we do rely on donations. Appeals will be made to families in our area to help out financially. Based on faith, people have always come through for us in the past."

Ketcheson said the church opens its doors every August for its anniversary service and that's normally attended by more than 150 people. In addition, it holds a service on Good Friday and a special — and popular — candle-light Christmas service a few days before Christmas.

Extra chairs have to be brought in for the Christmas service, he noted, with attendance hovering around 250.

Even though there is no electricity inside the church (it was cancelled four years ago because of the cost), generators are brought in to provide the power for the services.

Two original woodstoves located at the back of the church supply the warmth.

A pump organ, donated to the church in 1902, continues to be used for modern services.

A clock in the back of the church, donated in 1900, still keeps time inside the facility.

"The inside of the church looks like it's ready for next Sunday's service," Ketcheson said proudly.

The church's future is in the hands of the next generation, said Ketcheson.

"I hope people in the community will carry on after me and the other members of the church board because this church is too good to die. There is too much history here to allow it to crumble."