

## Last chance to see exhibition honouring 200 years of Aurora United Church

**By Brock Weir**

It is an exhibition that was 200 hundred years in the making, and, to mark its opening, the Aurora United Church filled the Aurora Cultural Centre's Brevik Hall for the grand opening of a new show celebrating the congregation's bicentennial.

The sounds of EmBellished, the Aurora United Church's (AUC) hand bell choir filled the air as new and long-time members of the community took a stroll down memory lane.

Aurora United Church: 200 Years at Yonge and Tyler ? The Journey Continues is an exhibition at the Aurora Museum & Archives guest-curated by congregants Helen Roberts, Mary Smith, and Bill Newman. Having opened this past spring, it winds down this Monday, October 1 following this Saturday's Culture Days celebrations.

?The lot at the corner of Yonge and Tyler stands empty today,? say organizers. ?Four years ago, a devastating fire destroyed the home of the congregation of the Aurora Methodist/United Church. But it was not the first fire that members of the church had experienced. Nor was it the first struggle they had faced in their two hundred year history. Through wars, depressions, rebellion; through changes in their community from farmland to the commuter town, through change from Methodist to United, the spirit that drove that early congregation remained.

?And that spirit remains today -- 200 years later as we celebrate and honour our 200 years at the corner of Yonge and Tyler and look forward as our journey continues.?

Attendees of the Grand Opening began their guided tour fittingly at the beginning at 1818, when what is now the AUC congregation formed in a log cabin at the crossroads before Aurora was even an idea. Known then as Tyler's Meeting House, it was served by a saddlebag preacher, but, as the community grew so did the church.

Lost in the fire, however, was much of the church's own archives, lovingly curated by Ms. Roberts, AUC's long-time resident historian and archivist.

But, tasked with this exhibition, she pulled together what survived the fire, what was able to be salvaged from the records, as well as items in the collections of individual church members.

?I am thrilled with the way it turned out, I am thrilled with the number of people who came out tonight,? said Ms. Roberts, who was joined at the opening by three generations of her family, all of whom are very familiar with AUC. ?They are happy with it and it brings back a lot of memories to people, particularly people who have been long-time members and they are really pleased. I don't know what to say!

?Everybody is enjoying it. How could you not? These designers have done such a fantastic job of setting things up, I just find it mind boggling what they can do. I think it is amazing that Shawna [White, Curator of the Aurora Museum & Archives] offered us this space, that it was available to us. If we had our own building, we would have put up a display and it would have been available to members of our congregation and that's it. Whereas here, everyone can come in and see it.?

The Museum is located inside the Church Street School at 22 Church Street.