

Music, dance and picnic for Partera and Peace on July 15

Written By **MARNI WALSH**

The peace building organization, Partera International is holding a barn dance and picnic this Sunday, July 15th in Mono. Organizers say there will be a silent auction, games, food and drinks, as well as dancing to the music of Bruce Ley and The Campfire Poets.

The fundraiser is for Partera's project in North East India, working with women to make peace in a region where 600,000 people have been killed in recent decades. Trinity and Primrose Churches of the local United Church Pastoral Charge are supporting Partera International and founder Reverend LeeAnn McKenna in her work.

'The churches are promoting the event and several members are donating items for the silent auction,' says Rev. McKenna. 'The pastoral charge partnered with Partera for a number of reasons,' says Reverend Candice Bist, Minister for the Shelburne and Primrose Churches. 'We see the way forward as a spiritual entity to be partnering with all people, projects and inclinations that further the way toward a more compassionate society.'

Rev. Bist says Partera came to their attention because LeeAnn McKenna is an adherent at Primrose United Church, and as she and her husband Jeff Cottam became more involved in the church, the congregation came to understand the training and services that LeeAnn was offering in Canada and throughout the world.

'The churches no longer have the people or resources to be doing all this work themselves,' says Rev. Bist. 'By supporting Partera, we have an international voice for peace that we could not possibly have on our own.'

Partera, which began as LeeAnn McKenna's vision, has evolved to incorporated status governed by a volunteer board. 'The organisation has many partners with whom we have worked for many years,' says Rev. McKenna, 'in places like the Mindanao, the Philippines, several states in North East India, Thailand; Kenya, Uganda, Sudan and South Sudan, Congo; Colombia, El Salvador, Mexico. The local footprint now provided by this partnership will enable a kind of 'echo' of the work in other countries ' with trainings in conflict transformation, difficult conversations and diversity ' using the same experiential tools we use in zones of conflict.'

Rev. McKenna says, the North East region of India is ethnically distinct from the rest of India with a majority of Christian and tribal people. 'In the last year or two, the women of the seven regions of the North East have begun to organise, requesting training in non-violence and conflict transformation, certification to undergird their determination to take leadership in building a culture of peace,' she says. 'They are the ones all too often left to pick up the pieces. They want to play a central role.'

'I consider the work that Partera is doing - teaching the ways of proactive peace - to be imperative, both locally and internationally,' says Rev. Bist. 'Anyone paying attention to anything these days knows that the way forward is not through further contention. We have to learn another way, and Partera has the tools of teaching to offer.'

The Barn Dance and Picnic for Partera International will be held on July 15th from 3 pm to 8 pm. at the home of Jeff and Sabine Rohner-Tensee: 715527 First Line EHS Mono. Barn will be available in case of rain. Tickets are \$20 at the gate. Please call 519 925 1612 or write lee@partera.ca if you would like to donate a silent auction item.