

Two feasts build solidarity and understanding

Written By Marni Walsh

The ecumenical justice organization Dufferin KAIROS will host 'A Feast of Gifts' on April 21st. A gathering aimed at community building with Indigenous and newcomer neighbours, the event will take place at High Country United Church, 346255 15th Side Road, Camilla in Mono Township from 11 am to 3pm.

KAIROS is a faith-based social justice organization of ten Canadian churches and religious organizations focusing on Indigenous rights, international human rights, and ecological justice. The organization addresses issues of 'common concern, advocates for social change and joins with people of faith and goodwill in action for social transformation.'

According to KAIROS Canada, the non-profit organization 'has long been involved in reconciliation gatherings between Indigenous and settler groups.' The Dufferin event brings neighbours together for a day of conversation, teachings, music, art, speakers, and children's activities. It is hoped that the local community will see this event as an opportunity 'to build relationships of respect and solidarity with others, and to learn through the exchange of ideas where we come from and what gifts we may offer one another.'

There will be discussions with representatives of indigenous, migrant and new comer communities in the Dufferin area led by Reverend LeeAnn McKenna of Partera International, who just recently returned home to Mono from her crisis and conflict resolution work in the Philippines.

Planning members for the event include Reverend Janet Jones of High Country Church, and KAIROS Dufferin members Penny Lewis, Ruth Cruikshank and Jim Lindsey. Every community includes Indigenous people, newcomers to Canada and long time settlers, says the committee, 'Yet these groups are often isolated from one another. KAIROS aspires to build indigenous and newcomer friendships for a just and inclusive community.'

In addition to 'A Feast of Gifts' there will be an evening of 'Dinner and Conversation with Muslim Friends' at Trinity United Church in Shelburne on April 22nd between 4 pm and 7:30 pm. Trinity and Primrose United Churches have invited Imam Omar Subedar to bring friends to Trinity Church on Owen Sound Street for a late Sunday afternoon get together.

With the changing demographic in Shelburne and area, Rev. Bist stresses how important it is to meet and understand one another. 'One of the best ways to do this is to sit down to a meal and have a conversation,' she says, 'Both events essentially do this, just with different groups of people.'

Those in attendance at 'Dinner and Conversation' will be participating in a structured dialogue followed by a meal and a short, joint teaching spiritual service. Only a limited number can be accommodated at the dinner, so those who would like to participate in this evening must let Trinity know at 519-925-2233. However, all community friends are most welcome to attend the 6 -7 p.m. educational session. Reverend Candice Bist of Trinity United Church says, 'This is sure to be a rich evening of multi-faith education and celebration for everyone.' All are welcome, but this event is best suited to adults.

'A Feast of Gifts' on April 21st welcomes all ages and is free to everyone. Freewill offerings will be appreciated. If able, guests are invited to bring a favourite food from their culture to share in the potluck feast. Stories, music, art and dance are also all welcomed during this event of sharing.