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MODELLING PEACE: UN INTERFAITH HARMONY WEEK

The Calgary Interfaith Council celebrates faith diversity



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How do you teach dignity, understanding and respect to the next generation, so they'll have good relationships with people outside their own communities?

This is what Feb. 1 – 7, United Nations World Interfaith Harmony Week, is all about. Proclaimed by the Province of Alberta and the City of Calgary, the theme of this year's events, presented by the Calgary Interfaith Council for the second year in a row, is 'Sharing sacred stories from generation to generation.'

And Rabbi Shaul Osadchey hopes that Calgarians will gain a greater appreciation of how the diversity of Canada's religious traditions "really enriches all our lives and our community. This is an opportunity to model what we would ideally like to exist in the community," says Osadchey, Rabbi at Calgary's Beth Tzedec Congregation and co-chair of Calgary's 2018 UN World Interfaith Harmony Week.

Here are some of the highlights (all events are free of charge unless otherwise noted):

Launch event, Feb. 1 at Calgary City Hall: The program brings together elders with teens for a brief conversation about the importance of faith, and sharing highlights of their faith. There will also be a presentation on Calgary Interfaith Council members' trip to Jordan last April, to receive first prize in the HM King Abdullah II of Jordan Prize for World Interfaith Harmony Week 2017. "It's a proud moment in the city's life to see this kind of activity taking place," Osadchey says. "For us to have had the good fortune of being the first prize winner last year is another testament to Calgary's valuing diversity, and to our commitment to make that happen."

Youth Program, Feb. 2, at the AJC Islamic School of Calgary. Teens will share their faith stories and the most important thing about their religious tradition they are proud of.

Feb. 5, Breaking Barriers, Building Bridges, an interfaith breakfast at 8 a.m. at Beth Tzedec Congregation. RSVP (403) 255-8688 or info@bethtzedec.ca

Feb. 5, My Story, Mount Royal University. Share stories of how faith shapes people's lives.

Feb. 2 – 4, Open house events at various places of worship (There are also a number of open house events scheduled during the week of Feb. 5 – 10).

Feb. 7 Concluding dinner and celebration (Please RSVP by Feb. 1. Suggested \$20 per person donation).

Feb. 10 and Feb. 11 Building Sacred Bridges Concerts, Knox United Church (Feb. 10) and Beth Tzedec Congregation (Feb. 11). Suggested donation \$20. To reserve seats, habitatsouthernab.ca/bsb

Everyone is welcome to take part in as many events as they wish. In particular, Interfaith Harmony Week is for people wanting to know more about other faith traditions; people searching for a religious anchor; people engaged in community building; and young people interested in meeting with their peers from other communities, Osadchey says.

Are these the kind of stories your organization has to share?

Even if someone is unaffiliated with a religion– for example, those who describe themselves as ‘spiritual but not religious’ – they would still find this week of interest, according to Osadchey. “Because whether you believe in God or not, the fact is that religion plays a major role in societal life and global affairs. So if you want to have better insight into the dynamics of religious beliefs and practices, and how that impacts society, this is a good venue to explore that,” he says.

After this week, Osadchey hopes more people will join with the Calgary Interfaith Council as the Council expands its efforts to launch a multi-faith dialogue.

And he hopes that people will participate with the Interfaith Council in other ways as well, including the Council’s social justice activities and service projects, such as its ongoing Habitat for Humanity project.

To RSVP and for more information, please contact calgaryinterfaithcouncil.org or call (403) 255-8688 ext. 2.