

Interfaith concerts raise funds to build new homes

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Few things unite people of different faiths and cultures more than the power of music.

That's why, to wrap up the second annual Interfaith Week that's currently underway across Calgary, a pair of concerts will be held next weekend featuring musical groups and performers from across a wide spectrum of faiths.

Appropriately called Building Sacred Bridges, the concerts will be held on Saturday, Feb. 10 at Knox United Church, 506 — 4th St S.W. and the following evening at the Beth Tzedec Synagogue, 1325 Glenmore Trail S.W. Both events begin at 7 p.m.

The lineup is the same on both nights and includes choirs, groups and individual musicians from Christian, Muslim, Jewish and Sikh religious backgrounds, with a grand finale featuring all the performers on stage together singing Love Can Build A Bridge.

The concerts are fundraisers to help local families finally be blessed with a home of their own through the efforts of southern Alberta's Habitat for Humanity organization.

An interfaith build is currently underway in the Calgary neighbourhoods of Bowness, Pineridge and Silver Creek. Religious groups are contributing sweat equity — ministers, rabbis and imams, side by side, on the construction sites — as well as an overarching fundraising campaign aimed at reaching the \$1 million mark.

So far, about \$750,000 has been raised towards that total, which will provide homes for 10 hard-working families in Calgary.

Dalton Harding is a volunteer with the Interfaith leadership team and is involved in the ongoing build, as well as the organization of the Building Sacred Bridges concerts. It's the second year the event will be held and he hopes audiences will surpass the 500 Calgarians who turned up each night in 2017.

"There is so much in the world that divides us and creates intolerance and stereotypes and erects barriers for us to be united, so this musical event is a way of celebrating our religious and cultural diversity. It is a wonderful opportunity for the Muslim, Christian and Jewish communities to come together and celebrate music," said Harding.

"Music just brings a spirit of unity. It emotes such a good feeling. Eating together and singing together are the greatest ways of being together. It helps to express

each of our religious traditions there is wonderful music. This is a great way for us to celebrate," he added.

The concerts will feature at least 10 performances, including an opening melodic Muslim call to prayer, a joint performance by Jewish and Mormon children choirs, a Sikh wedding celebratory song and a Catholic choir choral ensemble's appearance.

"This is the culmination of Interfaith Week and we believe it's such a great and joyous way to end it," said Harding.

It's hoped \$20,000 will be raised from the Building Sacred Bridges concerts, all of which will go toward the interfaith build project in the city.



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Those attending are urged to make a minimum donation of \$20 per person. Reserve a seat online at: fundraise.habitatsouthernab.ca/campaign/2018-building-sacred-bridges. The site also takes donations.

Those who wish to turn up on the night itself can still give at the door. Both venues are large enough to accommodate the expected audience, so latecomers will be welcome.

Harding said Habitat for Humanity's efforts in Calgary provide the perfect cause to unite those on stage and in the audience.

"It is such a great organization. It takes families who would never ordinarily get into a home — hard-working families with children — and allows them this opportunity to integrate into a community," he said.

All money raised goes directly toward the building of the homes. The families, who are screened in advance, also work on construction.

They later pay a mortgage, which goes toward further home building projects.

"It's about community and families — building a home together,