

St. John the Evangelist Ottawa to host an exhibition of posters telling the story of the 1945 atomic bombings

BY LEIGH ANNE WILLIAMS

In August, people around the world will solemnly remember the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan 80 years ago on August 6 and 9, 1945.

Leading up to the anniversary of those events, St. John the Evangelist, Ottawa, will host an exhibition of 35 posters that tell the story of the bombings and depict the death and devastation suffered by the citizens of those cities.

The exhibit, which will be held at the church from May 23 to May 30, is being organized by Ban the Bomb Ottawa (BtBO) and the United Nations in Canada's National Capital Region Branch [UNA-Canada (NCR Branch)]. BtBO is a group of individuals from faith-based, nongovernmental and local community organizations and groups working for peace and nuclear disarmament.

Debbie Grisdale, a parishioner at Church of the Ascension in Ottawa, is a member and is working on organizing the exhibit. “

“I have been involved for decades in peace and nuclear disarmament efforts – both as staff and as an activist. BtBO, of which I am a member, annually hosts the commemoration of the anniversaries in August. That ceremony, held along the Rideau Canal, includes the Japanese tradition of setting paper lanterns afloat, symbolizing the guiding of souls of those who have left the physical world and now exist spiritually,” she explained..

“Our hope with this exhibition is that, in addition to commemorating this important anniversary, visiting school groups and the public will learn about the devastating humanitarian and environmental impacts of nuclear weapons and will become aware of civil society's efforts for a nuclear weapon-free world. It seems like this is more urgent than ever. We are grateful to St John's for their willingness to host the exhibition,” she added.

The Rev. Canon Gary van der Meer, St. John the Evangelist's



Paper lanterns set afloat on the Rideau Canal at the annual commemoration in Ottawa of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

PHOTOS: KOOZMA J. TARASOFF



incumbent, said, 'When we learned about the Hiroshima exhibit, we felt it aligned with St John's ministry and deep roots in Jesus' words "Blessed are the peacemakers." The exhibit will be mounted in the Warriors Chapel, recently enclosed as a separate space from the chancel and nave as part of this past year's renovations. In the chapel, the Hiroshima posters will be juxtaposed with the chapel's prominent monuments and names of the fallen from the two World Wars for a shared story about the cost of war and continued work for peace. We look forward to welcoming visitors for an immersive experience in remembering and peacemaking." The posters were donated by the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, thanks to the intervention of Setsuko Thurlow, who survived the bombing of Hiroshima as a 13-year old schoolgirl and later immigrated to Canada where she has worked tirelessly for the abolition of nuclear weapons with several organizations including Voices of Women, the Canadian Council of Churches and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

In cooperation with Carleton University's Centre for Public History Several additional posters have been developed to depict Canada's relationship with nuclear weapons past and present, the current status of nuclear arsenals world-wide, local activism for nuclear disarmament and the history of workers involved and exposed to radioactive material during the production of nuclear weapons.

Organizers are also discussing opportunities for the exhibit to be displayed at Ottawa City Hall in August, as well as St. Basil's Roman Catholic Church in September, and Carleton University this fall.

For information about the exhibition, please email: 80thcommemoration@gmail.com