

Refugee sponsorship group formed



Rev. Jonathon Kouri of St. John's Anglican and Rev. Lynn Watson of St. Paul's United at the Refugee Sponsorship organizing meeting last Wednesday. TONY PEARSON Special to This Week

By Tony Pearson

?Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat? - Isaiah 55 (King James version)

Rev. Lynn Watson remembers seeing this verse when some of the Dead Sea scrolls visited Canada about a decade ago. It came back to her mind during the current debate over assistance to refugees. When discussing whether a local group should sponsor a Syrian family, a number of people have commented that we have our own problems with poverty and its consequences that need our attention.

For Watson, the verse from the Book of Isaiah meant that we should look to our abundance, not to our scarcity. Following this concept, the local United Churches decided to raise money, not just for refugees, but for local people in need as well.

Last Wednesday, a committee was formed during a meeting at St. Paul's to work on the various aspects of this challenge ? fundraising, public relations, accounting, and all the paperwork that goes with dealings with government. Judy Edgar will get the ball rolling as interim coordinator. Melanie Lord, Joan Kay, Anna Myers, Stephanie Henderson, Linda Crick, Kim Potvin, and Karen Berry will take on various tasks; they expect more to join as awareness spreads.

The United Church will be joined by other churches in the effort. Our Lady of Mercy, the Bancroft Gospel Hall, St. Ignatius in Maynooth, St. John's Anglican, and The Bridge have all expressed a desire to help.

The goal is formidable: \$30,000 is the estimate to sponsor a family of four, and the group therefore wants to commit to an additional \$30,000 for the North Hastings Community Trust, which helps local residents in need. Edgar is already working on another ?Broads-Way? show at the Playhouse, probably this fall. Money for the two goals will be raised together.

The campaign will likely officially kick off with a multi-faith cultural celebration, involving several Christian denominations plus representatives of the Muslim and Jewish faiths.