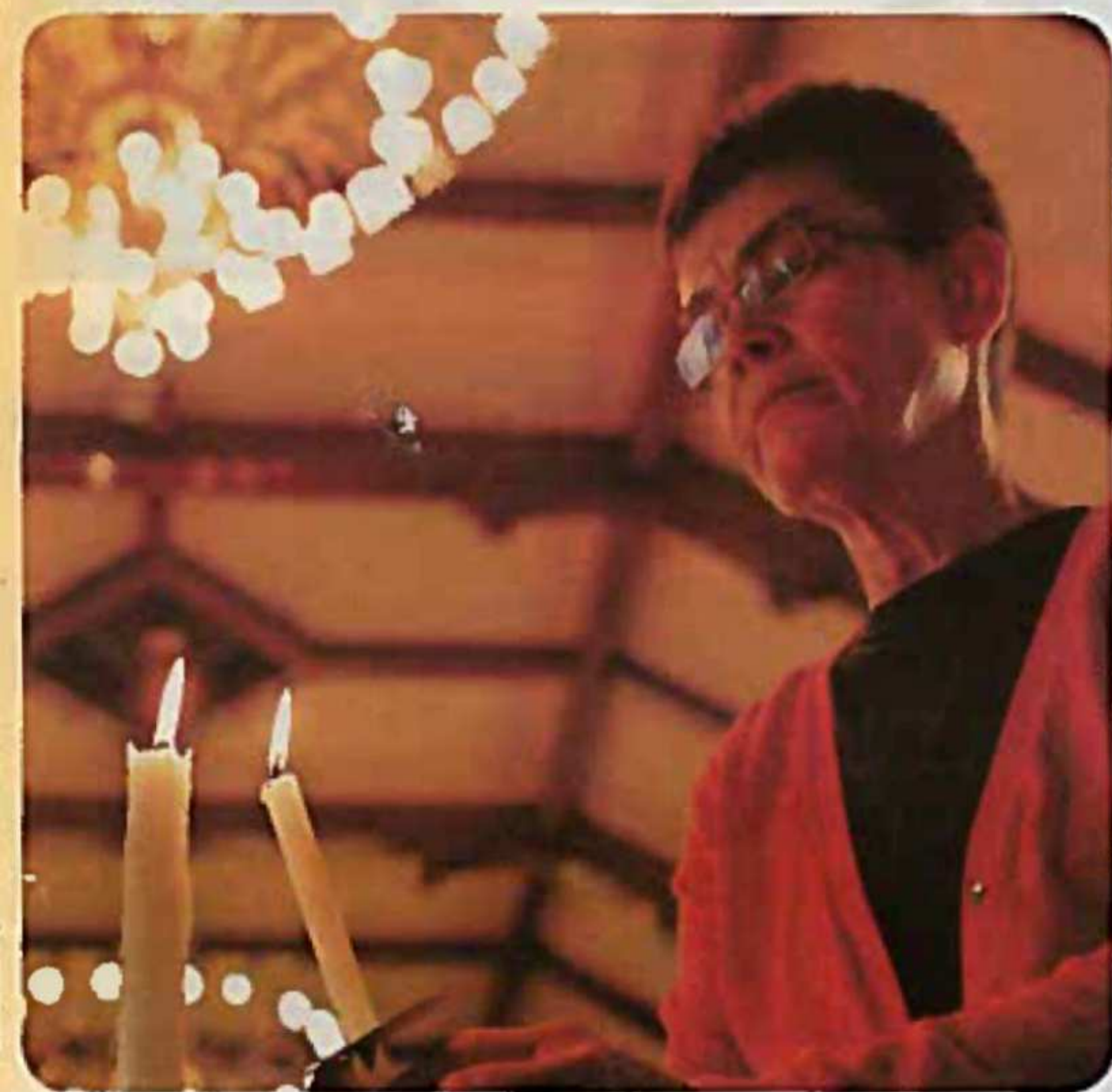


Hospice Northwest Memorial Service

A Light in the Darkness *By Susan Wade*



Candles have long been part of the holiday tradition, whether flickering on the mantle or decorating the tree. They also hold powerful symbolism, offering light and hope in the darkest times. Candlelight is at the heart of a memorial service presented by Hospice Northwest on December 6 at Trinity United Church, starting at 7 pm. Open to everyone in the community, the non-denominational service features readings and music. It's one way Hospice Northwest is reaching out to offer support at this time of year. "People need to have their grief acknowledged, their losses validated," says Joan Williams, executive director. "This service offers a special space to express feelings of sadness and loss amidst the busyness of the holidays."

Patricia Luomala found comfort when she attended last year's service just months after her husband Matti died. "It's knowing other people have the same feelings I have," she said. "It's

important to realize you're not alone." In a gesture of community support, AIDS Thunder Bay and The Compassionate Friends are partnering with Hospice to present the memorial, expanding the collaboration already established with Trinity United and St. Paul's Anglican Church. Lakehead University's Gender Issues Center will also take part, remembering the lives lost during the December 6 massacre at École Polytechnique.

In a moving tribute, participants will light keepsake candles in quiet reflection. Hospice will also be selling their Wings of Remembrance Ornaments, another way to commemorate a loss. Whether candlelight or decorations, Joan Williams sees these symbols as a way to offer hope during the holidays. "They are tangible signs of how our loved ones remain part of our lives even in their absence. They also offer hope that one day the pain will lessen and lives can be re-built."

For more information, visit hospicenorthwest.ca.